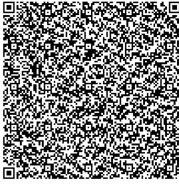

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Thinking Kanaky Decolonially

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Abstract

Decolonial investigations often take the "after" of decolonization as a point of departure, arguing that modernity/coloniality does not end with independence. This article challenges the taken-for-granted assumption that political decolonizations are over and aims to orient us toward thinking decolonially from Kanaky-New Caledonia, a non-decolonized country currently in an institutional process of decolonization from France, and with people currently fighting for independence. In this paper, we explore three axes of reflection: the coloniality of relations, thinking beyond independence, and pluriversality. The paper highlights the importance of radical relationality as a worldview, which can be found in Kanak ways of inhabiting the world, in order to resist the logic of separation of modernity/coloniality and patriarchal, racist, colonial, and capitalist systems of oppression and domination.

Keywords: Kanaky, New Caledonia, independence, decoloniality, coloniality, gender, racism, Kanak, Indigenous, settler colonialism, relations, pluriversality, Oceania

1. Introduction

when what it's really about
is a country being born
where we may continue the every day struggle
one day at a time

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time passing
so we ourselves
may
be born
create
so we may be
together
"Fear" – Déwé Gorodé(!)

In their epistolary exchange entitled "Towards a Decolonial Dialogue in the Country of the Unsaid", militants working within associations writing under the name "la bande des feuilles endémik.e.s de la vallée" ("the endemic leaves of the valley gang") start their first letter with the following:

> We are currently looking for alterity in our country. Looking for a society that acknowledges the other with their differences, taking into account questions of race, class, and gender. A society that would accept the other in their dignity and freedom, however they understand it. A society that would admit that the other flourishes based on a different model. Therefore, a society that accepts its plurality, without division, without socio-economic inequality, and without social injustice.(@) (Pérrochaud et al., 2018, p. 262)

Kanaky, New Caledonia, or Kanaky-New Caledonia, depending on one's worldview and political orientation,(~) is currently a French settler colony in Oceania. While the history of the islands and the peoples that would later call themselves Kanak do not start with settler colonialism,(#) the installation of this system of power fundamentally transformed life in the islands. After becoming a French possession in 1854, New Caledonia became a penal colony for French and Algerian convicts who were condemned to forced labour by France. Between 1868 and 1946, the Indigénat or Native code was put in place, confining Kanak to reserves which they were only able to leave for forced labour. As in many settler colonies, Indigenous people resisted their displacement, killing, racial discrimination, negation of their lifeways, and segregation over the years up to this day.

During the “colonial period”, the “importance of securing a supply of cheap and ‘docile’ labour to provide a foundation for the colonial economy and administration” (Henningham, 1994, p. 152) was emphasized by French settlers and officials. Therefore, on top of the forced labour Kanak performed, Oceanian indentured workers, mainly from the New Hebrides (now Vanuatu), were brought to the islands from the 1860s (Shineberg, 1999) and Javanese and Vietnamese indentured workers from the 1890s (Merle, 2019).($) France also practiced an immigration policy to encourage people from Hexagonal France and the French empire to move to the islands to minoritize Kanak (Leblic, 1993). This was an explicit agenda as demonstrated by the infamous letter that Prime Minister Pierre Mesmer wrote to his then Secretary of State for Overseas Departments and Territories (DOM-TOM) in July 1972:

> The French presence in New Caledonia, a world war excepted, can only be threatened by nationalist claims on the part of indigenous populations supported by a few potential allies in other communities in the Pacific. In the short and medium term, the mass immigration of French citizens from the metropolis or originating in the overseas departments (Réunion) should ensure that this risk is avoided, by virtue of maintaining or improving the demographic balance between communities. (quoted and translated in Waddell, 2008, p. 76)

When nickel was found in the main island, more foreign labourers came to work in the mines. Today, the main communities present on the islands, Kanak, “European”, Indonesian and Javanese, Vietnamese, Wallisian-and-Futunianare are constituted by this history.

In the 1970s, the country saw the emergence of an independence movement fuelled by Kanak’s struggle for land, racial discrimination, and lack of Indigenous autonomy. By the end of the decade, the intensity of racial and political unrest and tension, mainly between supporters and opponents of independence, led to a civil war in the 1980s and the signature of political agreements: the Matignon Accord in 1988 and the Nouméa Accord in 1998.(%) These agreements initiated a process of institutionalized

decolonization and the gradual pass over of responsibilities between the French State and New Caledonia. To this day, justice, public order, defense, currency, and foreign affairs remain under the jurisdiction of the French State. Among the pillars that hold this process of decolonization are the three referendums for auto-determination that seek to determine the status of Kanaky-New Caledonia within France. The first and second referendums took place in 2018 with 43.3% of voters in favour of independence, and in 2020, with 46.7% of voters in favour of independence. The last referendum planned within the Nouméa Agreement should take place on December 12, 2021.

From colony to "overseas territory", the islands were once described as "violent land" by the author Jacqueline Sénès in her 1993 colonial narrative of the same title ("Terre Violente"). By contrast, today, the motto of the country is "land of the spoken word, land of sharing" ("terre de parole, terre de partage").(^) Juxtaposed to this is the coining of the name "country of the unsaid" by local historian Louis-José Barbançon to refer to the predisposition to conceal painful pasts and the dismissal encountered when one tries to acknowledge their history. For Barbançon, "the unsaid is an institution, a constant [...] which is unavoidable" (2019, pp. 24-25). In light of this, we need to interrogate the evolution of the status of Kanaky/New Caledonia in relation to France but also question the image of New Caledonia that is projected by official powers in New Caledonia and France in order to remain vigilant about the histories, lived realities and coloniality that "overseas territory", "decolonization", "land of the spoken word, land of speaking" can obscure.

This text challenges the taken-for-granted assumption that political decolonizations are over and aims to orient us toward thinking decolonially from a non-decolonized country and with people currently fighting for independence.(&) In this paper, we explore three axes of reflection: the coloniality of relations, thinking beyond independence, and pluriversality.

2. Coloniality of Relations

In Kanaky/New Caledonia, one of the first questions that one will be asked upon meeting someone new or being in a new space will be "where are you from?". This question should not be understood as having the same intentions as to when it is asked in a western context, as a way to assign people to imagined geographical places and cultural and racialized communities. In Oceania, the question "where are you from?" generally means "who are you in relation to me/us?". You may answer with a name, which will tie you to a clan, a tribe, a territory if you are Kanak, or if you are a settler, mostly Caldoche,(*) your name may tie you to a family, a place. When I am asked this question, I often feel that it does not make space for my ignorance about my genealogy, as well as the complexity of privilege and violence of our history in this country. My father was a white French and Italian settler who came to New Caledonia after the civil war for his military service and to follow my mother, whom he had met when she was studying in France. His stay was temporary. My mother is the illegitimate daughter of a Caldoche man and a Vietnamese woman, whom herself descends from Tonkinois workers who went back to Vietnam when she was a teenager. My mother was taken away from her young single mother as a baby and was therefore in the custody of the state. She grew up in a "children's home" in Pwâdiiwîîmiâ (Poindimié). Even though I was raised by my mother, I bear the surname of my father due to French patrilineal name-giving and because of the shame my mother associated with her Vietnamese surname. Therefore, when I answer the question "where are you from?" I always feel a sense of frustration saying my Italian surname, which has no history or marker in the country. My Italian surname does not give the information that my interlocutor is asking for, or at least, it does so in an incomplete way. In this sense, it is non-performative. That is why I then share my mother's surname. However, it is Vietnamese and not part of the dominant histories of the country (Kanak/Caldoche), which then leads me to say that my mother grew up in a children's home in Poindimié if the situation allows. The children's home, and by association, the taking away of a child from their kin, is the point of departure for my family story. I give this example to show the corrosiveness of coloniality for relations,

how lineage and ancestry become unknown, and how questions that are meant to make relationality visible become tricky to answer with histories of displacement, (forced) migration, state intervention, colonial and patriarchal violence, colonial policies, dispossession. In Nina Bouraoui's (2005) "Mes Mauvaises Pensées", the Algerian-French main character comments "I don't see death on my dad's side, it is on the French side, on the other side of the sea." Through this, Bouraoui alludes to the racialized and colonial processes that make it impossible to see death, pain, and suffering when lived by non-white non-western kin. This not seeing death on her father's side, on the Algerian side of her family, can be explained by a lack of relationality with this side of the family. In this process, histories, kinship ties, joys, struggles, pains are silenced, while "the French side, on the other side of the sea" is always present, visible, and felt.

Today, New Caledonia is a group of islands where, depending on the place, Kanak live alongside settlers who have diverse histories that tie them to the country.(-) Angélina Pérrochaud, Pascal Hébert and Pierre Wélépa write that:

> After the civil war of the 1980s, Caledonian society became conscious of the presence of the Kanak people, which had been negated until then. For the past thirty years, Caledonians have convinced themselves that they were living a "Common Destiny".(+) While until now, they have only been co-habiting. The identity of the Kanak people is admitted, but it is still not accepted, even though it is the Indigenous people (Pérrochaud et al., 2018, p. 263).

In a settler colonial context, identity remains significant to political society since it is around it that injustice and pain that are organized. Therefore, positioning oneself and making one's locus or place of enunciation visible is essential to the exploration of "the coloniality of relations and its consequences on the continuation of privileges and mechanisms of domination and oppression" (Pérrochaud et al., 2018, p. 280). Recently, Kanak sociologist Jone Passa (2021, p. 5) encouraged us to think the political situation in Kanaky/New Caledonia beyond "identity," reminding us that the referendum vote is a political act: "that is to say an act that commits us to the vital necessity to change." For him, the focus on identity

keeps us in a situation of “living-together-in-segregation” that too many are comfortable in. For “la bande des feuilles endémik.e.s de la vallée,” in order to “live with the ‘other’, ‘the others’, it is crucial to first understand and acknowledge the different cultural codes, while deconstructing, on the other hand, the hegemonic ways of thinking that are within us” (Pérrochaud et al., 2018, p. 264). This echoes Catherine Walsh’s praxis of “thinking-doing” that “delinks, that undoes the unified – and universalizing – the centrality of the West as the world and that begins to push other questions, other reflections, other considerations and other understandings” (Mignolo & Walsh, 2018, p. 21). Likewise, in order to learn the different cultural codes, knowledge, ways of being in the world, especially those which have been silenced by modernity/coloniality, we must go through an unlearning of hegemonic ways of thinking and being, and a relearning of other ways of thinking and being that centre life – as Upolu Lumā Vaai and Unaisi Nabobo-Baba put it, “there is no rethinking unless there is an unthinking” (2017, p. 5). Indian feminist Chandra Talpade Mohanty (2020) spoke of “being fluent in each others’ histories”, which requires a commitment to the other, to relationality, without fetishization.

I would like to use a photograph taken by Bruce Connew in Numèa (Nouméa) in 1984 as an example of "thinking-doing" in the public space.

The caption of the photograph written by Vernon Wright provides us with some context:

> New Caledonia in general and Noumea in particular are almost defined by graffiti. Add to it the political polemics and the glib irrationality of race and there is a picture of a troubled society, which is more to the point than the tourist images of bikinis, beaches, bathing and boats, New Caledonia, December 1984.

In this black and white picture, Bruce Connew captured a dialogue. The first graffiti in capital letters reads "KNK DEHORS" ("KNK OUT"), referring to the racist colonial spatial policies keeping Kanak and non-Kanak separated, especially in Nouméa, the capital. The text is then crossed out, and next to it is written "ni nous sans vous" in small cursive letters and below "NI VOUS SANS NOUS" in capital letters ("neither us without you, NEITHER YOU WITHOUT US").

The exchange inscribed on the wall opens with a pull toward the logic of separation and segregation of modernity/coloniality and toward Indigenous disappearance required by settler colonialism. Indeed, as Native feminist scholars Maile Arvin, Eve Tuck, and Angie Morrill (2013, p. 12) argue, "[i]n order for settlers to usurp the land and extract its value, Indigenous peoples must be destroyed, removed, and made into ghosts". The response to this violent injunction for Kanak to vanish from the settler space is the crossing out of the words - the first graffiti is not erased with paint, nor sprayed over in a way that would make it unreadable, which signifies a wish to be in conversation, to respond and to stay with the first utterance, but also not to ignore the history and reality of racism and settler colonialism the first message is embedded in - and the proposition of a different worldview, that of radical relationality, that orient us toward a humanizing of both Kanak and settlers. At the same time, the fact that "NEITHER YOU WITHOUT US" is written in capital letters signals an acknowledgement of the imbalance in power dynamics and puts

the onus on settlers to see and acknowledge their relation to Kanak. The relational character of the response is “shaped by the relational values and principles of the Pacific itulagi [lifeworld], such as the embodiment of life, interconnectedness of all, harmony, dialogical communication, practical reciprocity, reception of the other who is different, as well as truthfulness” (Vaai & Nabobo-Baba, 2017, p. 11; see also Vaai & Casimira, 2017) and is reminiscent of the notion of Ubuntu. In doing so, the response moves us in a different direction, it delinks, and it shifts the geography of reasoning (see Mignolo & Tlostanova, 2012, p. 12) from western epistemology to a Pacific perspective that centres the communal. “neither us without you, NEITHER YOU WITHOUT US” (re)affirms Kanak existence in the city and in the country more generally, an existence that is weaved to settlers’ who are being challenged to unthink themselves in order to rethink themselves relationally. The response goes against separation, colonialism, and racism. It proposes another possibility in which settlers cannot be uncoupled from Kanak and vice-versa, therefore, changing the terms of the conversation.

3. Beyond Independence

Decolonial investigations often take the “after” of decolonization as a point of departure, arguing that modernity/coloniality does not end with independence. In Oceania, while the Pacific islands have different histories of decolonization, Vaai and Nabobo-Baba (2017, p. 3) observe that, “even apart from the Pacific countries that are still colonized by foreign powers, countries that are self-governing still carry the legacy of colonial powers and non-relational thinking in their system, forms of government, frameworks and structures.” According to Stewart Firth (2000, pp. 316-317), Pacific Islands’ decolonization have been framed by ideas of and beliefs around “race”, “nation” and “culture” which “constitute the legitimating underpinnings of the modern nation-state” and thus, by creating or aspiring to be modern states, “colonialism redefines forms of political legitimacy.” Additionally, the patriarchal aspect of nationalism and decolonization has been notably critiqued by Ni-Vanuatu poet Grace Mera Molisa, amongst others, who in her poetry, shows how “[f]or indigenous women, political freedom and Independence occur simultaneously with gender-based

oppression" (Marsh, 2014, p. 4). This was also evident in the chant of Kanak feminists from the GFKEL (Group of Exploited Kanak Women in Struggle) in the 1980s: "No Kanak liberation without women's liberation!".

As Tracey Banivanua Mar (2016, p. 159) has shown, while Indigenous people in the Pacific have always resisted and refused colonialism, "decolonization in the Pacific […] had a distinct dynamic, where degrees of independence were explicitly envisaged in continuity with, and as an extension of colonial rule." In Kanaky, this is notably exemplified by the ways in which France considers independence. Stéphanie Graff points to the way in which France gives away more autonomy to New Caledonia, which allows it to save money while keeping the sovereignty of the territory. In doing so, France aims to please pro- and anti-independence protagonists to "perhaps make them forget the question of independence and keep its interests in New Caledonia" (Graff, 2012, p. 82). In a similar vein, in a document written by Survie (2020) aiming to warn the pro-independence movement in Kanaky/New Caledonia against a situation similar to Françafrique, the organization notes that in a report requested by the French state on the institutional future of New Caledonia, independence is rarely considered as a total rupture from the state. Instead, France privileges independence through a partnership which it sees as reduced independence. According to Survie (2020, p. 11), the report in question "reveals the multitude of options considered in order to avoid real independence."

Specific to Kanaky/New-Caledonia is also the fact that independence is voted by referenda. Those who can vote in the referendum are required to answer "yes" or "no" to the following question: "Do you want for New Caledonia to access full sovereignty and to become independent?." This has led to a crystallization of the political debate around being for or against independence. In light of this, Pérrochaud, Hébert and Wélépa (2018, p. 263) ask: "is this political decision more important than the deconstruction of mechanisms of domination and oppression inherited from colonisation?". They further write:

> We think that the question of sovereignty will not in any away resolve coloniality and the mode of cohabitation

> between Caledonians. As long as the path of deconstruction and their structural mechanisms will not be taken into account, it will be difficult, if not nearly impossible, to contemplate a "renewed social bond" between the citizens of the country (p. 265).(=)

The crystallization of the political debate around this closed and binary question imposes an epistemic universalism that negates the multiplicity of possibilities and makes it difficult to uncouple thinking-doing liberation from thinking-doing independence. The centering of independence projects a fantasy of radical change (positive or negative depending on one's political orientation) post-independence and demands that the people think about their life and relations through the prism of the nation-state. While the question of sovereignty is significant on many levels, it limits our imagination and cultivates a logic of opposition and competition rather than relationality. It also encourages simplifications and allows instrumentalization rather than nuance and complexity. For example, when thinking about the place of women in the (post-) colony, the framing of the question leads to wondering whether women live better and more equal lives with or without France,(!!) rather than asking what are the conditions that make women's lives un- or less livable? In Kanaky/New Caledonia, Kanak women have fought collectively for independence, aware that (colonial and Kanak) patriarchy would not end with independence.(@@) However, anti-independence discourse frequently mobilizes colonial narratives of Kanak cultural backwardness when it comes to gender equality, instrumentalizing women and feminism as part of a civilizing/modern/colonial project.

Alongside the threat of a hyper-patriarchal and heteronormative independent state (which New Caledonia currently is, under French sovereignty), anti-independence discourse also cultivates a fear of the unknown and of economic "misery". For example, it is not uncommon to hear jokes or negative comments about the "misery" of Vanuatu, the last Pacific islands to obtain its independence from the British and French condominium. Vanuatu, in the modern French Caledonian mind, plays the same role as Haïti in the French Caribbean. Joao Gabriel argues that "[i]n Guadeloupe, for the guarantors of the French order, Haïti acts as a

foil" (Courtois, 2021). In Kanaky, Vanuatu is a cautionary tale against independence. In this sense, in the modern French mind, while they have different histories, Haïti and Vanuatu are imagined as failed states without acknowledging the ways in which France hampered both states politically and economically. According to Banivanua Mar (2016, p. 259), Pacific islanders were frequently perceived as incapable of engaging in politics or thinking in a sophisticated way by the colonizing metropoles, which would then justify delaying decolonization or reframing it as an extension of colonial rule. This perception was/is steeped in antiblackness. In the case of Kanaky, Survie (2018, p. 8) lists six reasons motivating France's wish to keep New Caledonia as one of its "overseas territories": its capacity to influence the policies of the Pacific region through regional bodies, its military presence and ability to conduct operations throughout the region, the exploitation of land and sea resources in the EEZ, financial flows originating from New Caledonia, its status as a world power and its imperial identity, its hold on other overseas territories, including those in the Caribbean, which could be inspired by Kanak independence. This notably explains the mobilization of a "China threat" discourse by French and pro-French powers. The decolonial and pro-independence Facebook page *Les Sévices Pénitentiaires* (2021) noted how various settlercontrolled and French media used the "China threat" discourse with regards to possible independence in New Caledonia.(##) According to Grydehøj et al. (2020, p. 1), "Western and metropolitan powers use warnings about a 'China threat' to maintain and deepen colonial influence in island societies around the world", including the Pacific and the Caribbean, disregarding islanders' agency in determining their own future.

As Catherine Walsh (2020, p. 1) explains:

> Decoloniality does not mean the absence or overcoming of coloniality. Rather it references and marks the postures, positionings, horizons, projects, and practices of being, thinking, sensing, and doing that resists and re-exist, that transgress and interrupt the colonial matrix of power, and that resurge and in-surge from the borders, margins, and what I refer to today as the fissures or cracks, building

> possibilities of what we have come to understand as a decolonial otherwise.

Decoloniality, therefore, goes beyond an anti-stance (Walsh, in Mignolo & Walsh, 2018, p. 18) and beyond the political independence of nation-states as a horizon. An example of this posture can be found in the great chief of Nengone and Foulard Rouge militant Nidoïsh Naisseline. In what he calls "a kanak practice of Fanon," Eddy Banaré (2017, pp. 161-162) shows how Naisseline was profoundly inspired by Martinican psychiatrist Frantz Fanon. Through this praxis, Naisseline was capable of both participating to formal decolonization in the preparation of the Nouméa Agreement, which he contributed to, but also renouncing it when he did not find the means to make sure that the Kanak way of inhabiting the world is respected within this framework. In this way, Naisseline was thinking-doing decolonially in that he recognized that the denial and negation of "knowledges, subjectivities, world senses and life visions" (Mignolo & Walsh, 2018, p. 4) could take place within decolonization and therefore hinder re-existence.

4. Towards Pluriversality

Building on the notion of the multiplicity of realities and possibilities, decoloniality goes against the idea of a single totality as universality instead promoting pluriversality as what should be universal (Mignolo, in Mignolo & Walsh, 2018, p. 146). In her recent essay "On decoloniality: a view from Oceania", Katerina Teaiwa (2020, p. 2) demonstrates that:

> Today, Pan-Pacific resistance to Euro-American imperial and neo-colonial forces epitomizes Mignolo and Walsh's description of pluriversal and interversal decoloniality beginning with actions, values, stories and relations grounded in kinship, landscapes, seascapes and skyscapes. These are the bases of decolonial thought, pedagogy and praxis.

Through this text, I contend with her affirmation in the context of Kanaky. For Jean-Marie Tjibaou and Philippe Missotte (1976, p.

112), pluriversality is essential to the Kanak way of being in the world:

> Because this ethic that is located at the heart of Kanak culture identifies itself with the cultural inspiration of all human groups. It is the answer that each collectivity gives to questions that humanity has been asking itself since forever: - Who are we? Where are we from? Where are we going?
>
> Faced with these questions, there are no hierarchy of answers or degrees of evolution for humanity, there are only different ways of answering which engender cultural diversity. This allows men to mutually enrich themselves because they are different.
>
> Coming to consciousness is slow, but it progresses, and it is without return.

This proposition from Kanak culture is not only for Kanak or for Indigenous peoples but “to and for the world” (Walsh, in Mignolo & Walsh, 2018, p. 22), including non-Kanak living in Kanaky who should see themselves in this relational “we”. The question “where are we going?” re-appears in Patricia Goa’s (2020) recent intervention in the panel discussion “New Caledonia – towards a new Pacific nation?”, as she is reflecting on the past year:

> We are capable. We really have to rethink our model, wherever we are, and especially on customary land. And something that is a struggle today is 'what do we want for tomorrow?'. We are at the end of the path. Everything that you have imagined, everything that we are going through, we are at the end of the path. We have to change our thinking in everything we are doing today. But it's not just only us, it's the whole world that has the remodel the way we want to be for our future generation.

Goa invites us to think about the crisis which we are currently living and to disidentify ourselves with dominant ways of thinking and being. As Mignolo (2018, p. 104) suggests, possible alternatives and solutions cannot come from the “builders and managers of the present chaos”, and therefore western counties are unlikely to

imagine, let alone offer, a non-patriarchal, non-capitalist, non-racist, non-colonial, and radically relational possible. The other possibility could be as simple and radical as "living with the purpose of generating more life", according to Michi Saagiig Nishnaabeg scholar, writer and artist Leanne Betasamosake Simpson (cited in Walsh 2020, p. 607). This commitment to life requires a collective responsibility and the recognition that "all existence is radically interdependent" (Escobar, 2020, p. 4). In Kanaky, while the political process of decolonization has acknowledged the colonial past, Kanak identity and sovereignty, common existence is not (yet) a reality. For the FEOUI collective,($$) independence is seen as a "lever" rather than a "magical wand" that will solve the colonial situation (Trolue, in La Voix de Kanaky, 2021, p. 4-5). In order to refuse consumer society, they centre what they call humanist values, such as sharing, respect and harmony with nature, as well as women coming together beyond cultural or racial differences (ibid.), therefore creating cracks in the colonial, patriarchal, racist and capitalist concrete that has been poured over the land.(%%)

> in the name of what is
> and what is not
> or of mine who are no more
> in the name of those
> at the frontline
> of a country yet to be born
> to the laughter of the children
> to come
> "Creation" – Déwé Gorodé

End Notes

(!) - Translated from French by Raylene Ramsey & Deborah Walker. See Ramsay, R. & Walker, D. (Eds). (2004). Selected Poems of Déwé Gorodé: Sharing as Customs Provides. Pandanus Books. https://openresearch-repository.anu.edu.au/bitstream/1885/128839/1/Sharing_As_Custom_Provides.pdf
Déwé Gorodé is a Kanak author, teacher and pro-independence feminist activist, from Pwẫrâîr̃iwâ (Ponérihouen). She became a

politician and assumed several roles in the Governement of New Caledonia.

(@) - All translations from French are my own except when specified otherwise.

(~) – I use the name "Kanaky/New Caledonia" to highlight the lack of political consensus on and "conflictual logics" of the country's name, "New Caledonia" being the colonial name given by James Cook in 1774 and "Kanaky", the name put forward by Kanak since 1985. Kanaky/New Caledonia also marks the "divided and divisive" political imaginary between Kanaky, which expresses Kanak sovereignty, and New Caledonia, which expresses Caledonain sovereignty within France. See Mokaddem (2013; 2014; 2018).

(#) - See Sand, Bole and Ouetcho (2006) for a prehistoric chronology of New Caledonia which challenges a colonial history of the islands.

($) - Dorothy Shineberg writes that "[w]orkers imported from other islands, mainly from the New Hebrides, formed the backbone of the workforce in nineteenth-century New Caledonia, so their story is important in its own right. It is a missing piece of the history of New Caledonia, as well as of the Pacific Island labor trade" (1999, p. 8).

(%) - While the majority of people who are politically for independence are Kanak and the majority of those who are against it are non-Kanak (white, non-Kanak Oceanian, Asian), there are Kanak who are not in favour of independence (see for example Trépied 2013; 2015). There are also non-Kanak who have been invested in the political struggle for independence such as famous militant Pierre Declercq, whom the Union Calédonienne referred to as "the first white martyr for Kanak independence" (Union Calédonienne, n.d.) after his assassination in 1981, as well as several Oceanian pro-independence parties such as the Rassemblement Démocratique Océanien (RDO) created in 1994 by Aloïsio Sako, and the Mouvement des Océaniens Indépendantistes (MOI), created in 2019 by Arnaud Chollet-Leakava and nine previous RDO members (N Cla1ère 2019). These are largely under-researched, although Pierre Declercq and the RDO are mentioned

in David Chappell's (2014) "The Kanak Awakening: The Rise of Nationalism in New Caledonia".

(^) - The *parole* (spoken word) refers to "a specifically Melanesian way of navigating the living world". According to George Saumane, a Solomon Island colleague of Kanak political leader Jean-Marie Tjibaou, "the strength of the message resided in its assertion that the spoken word belongs to everybody and nobody, that it flows through people and is shared, that it creates and cements relationships, thereby giving sense to an individual as a member of a group; it encapsulates a place, a point in time in a long trajectory, a rank, a sense of meaning and of purpose" (Waddell, 2008, p. 27).

(&) - See for example Aníbal Quijano (2007, p. 169): "in spite of the fact that political colonialism has been eliminated, the relationship between the European – also called 'western' – culture, and the others, continues to be one of colonial domination." The struggle for decolonization is often written and spoken about in the past tense by academics, referring to the Asian and African continents, obscuring notably the demands of Oceanian Indigenous people in territories under the control of colonial powers such as Kanaky/New Caledonia, Mā'ohi Nui, Guåhan and West Papua.

(*) - "Caldoche" is a term introduced by the French media and now used in current language which refers to white Caledonians "rooted in the country since at least the generation of their parents (more generally, since several generations descending from settler or penitentiary migrations); who live or have lived in the bush." See Pauleau (1997).

(-) - In 2019, the Kanak population represented 41% of the population of the islands, while 24% of the population was "European" (term used in the census) and 8% was Wallisian-and-Futunian. The other "communities of belonging" (term used in the census) each represented less than 2% of the overall population, except for the category "Other" which represented 21% - of which 53% are people with mixed origins - of the population (ISEE, n.d.). Spatially, 52% of Kanak live in the South Province, where the capital, Nouméa, is located. The South Province is also where the majority of non-Kanak is concentrated (92% of Europeans live in

the South Province and 56% in the capital). Contrastingly, 72% of the total population of the North Province and 94% of the population of the Loyalty islands Province is Kanak (ISEE, n.d). This means that the population is unevenly scattered based on their racial background. Indeed, there is a spatial division between settlers and Kanak and Oceanian people in the capital, as well as outside, between "Kanak villages and European townships"which local philosopher Hamid Mokaddem has described as "an ethno cultural partition" (2017, p. 25).

(+) - "Common Destiny" ("Destin commun") is a term introduced in the Nouméa Agreement. Cadey Korson (2018, p. 1) describes it as "a discourse that embodies a sense of cooperation and the invention of a unified New Caledonia society that encourages equal opportunity and the integration of indigenous knowledges."

(=) - "Renewed social bond" is a term used in the Nouméa Agreement.

(!!) - In his 2021 new year wishes, Sébastien Lecornu, the Minister of Overseas Territories, listed "what will be the rights of minorities, women's rights, gay rights?" as a question Caledonians asked themselves in case of independence. See https://outre-mer.gouv.fr/voeux-de-sebastien-lecornu-ministre-des-outre-mer-aux-caledoniennes-et-aux-caledoniens

(@@) - Aymara women in Bolivia call "entroquepatriarcal" (translated "patriarchal juncture" by Aleida Luján Pinelo) the coming together of western patriarchy and Indigenous patriarchy, which allows them to "rebuild themselves together, fusing and renewing themselves" (Gargallo, 2014, cited and translated in Luján Pinelo, 2015, p. 57). See Hélène Nicolas (2017) for an exploration of Kanak women's oppression through the prisms of decolonial feminisms from Abya Yala.

(##) - *Les Sévices Pénitentiaires* is decolonial and pro-independence Facebook page which is followed by 6706 people at the time this article is being written. Their publications are a mix of research and personal opinions based on academic and non-academic resources touching a variety of political and social themes in Kanaky/New Caledonia. Their publications are shared by individuals as well as pro-independence political parties and associations. While the

administrator of the page has recently revealed she was a woman, her identity remains anonymous.

($$) - FEOUI refers to "Femmes engagées pour le 'oui', une campagne pour l'indépendance" ("Women engaged in the 'yes', a campaign for independence").

(%%) - The "cracks" are a reference to Catherine Walsh notion of "decolonial cracks," see Mignolo, W. & Walsh, C. (2018). On *Decoloniality: Concepts, Analytics, Praxis.* Duke University Press. The "concrete poured over the land" refers to the poem "The Land" by Kanak poet Déwé Gorodé, see Ramsay, R. & Walker, D. (Eds). (2004). *Selected Poems of Déwé Gorodé: Sharing as Customs Provides.* Pandanus Books. https://openresearch-repository.anu.edu.au/bitstream/1885/128839/1/Sharing_As_Custom_Provides.pdf

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