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Author

D'Hautesserre, Anne-Marie

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New Caledonian Development and the Kanak Voice

ANNE-MARIE D’HAUTESERRE

Prolonged stays in French Polynesia and Madagascar and later in the state of Connecticut awakened my interest in Indigenous culture and its preservation, colonial imposition and appropriations, and postcolonial relations between the colonized and colonizers. Such research could seem unreasonably rash because, according to Lyotard, Indigenous people are different, “irrepresentable,” for Europeans.¹ Stokes too cautions to “tread warily as this is not our geography.”² As a bilingual researcher in the Pacific, I feel compelled to bring knowledge of the French-speaking territories and some understanding of their different and differing political contexts to the attention of the English-speaking world I live in. Research in Pacific Island countries, including French *pays*, requires that its methodology and approaches be decolonized so that the Kanak (in New Caledonia) or the Polynesian (in French Polynesia and the Territory of Wallis and Futuna Islands) voice “enunciates” or spells out their concerns and priorities rather than mine.³

This article analyzes how tourism, because it is possible to establish it from the grass roots, encouraged within New Caledonia by the French government is used to (try to) overcome decades of colonial rule in spite of political and colonial resistance by the white settler community known as Caldoche (see fig. 1). Caldoche also often includes other white groups who have settled in New Caledonia, even if only temporarily. The article will first justify the postcolonial framework used for this analysis, including its limitations. It will then describe the (post?) colonial context of New Caledonia. Tourism is examined from a postcolonial geographic perspective to determine its validity as a tool to rebalance economic wealth in New Caledonia through economic growth in areas where the Kanak population is predominant. One aim of tourism is to counter emigration so that people remain on and exploit the tribal lands located in the

Anne-Marie d’Hauteserre was educated at the French School of Geography and now teaches tourism from a social science perspective at the University of Waikato in New Zealand. Her research focus is on critical issues (raised by French theorists and post-colonial writers) and problematic relations engendered by tourism development in different parts of the world.

two provinces where the Kanak are the majority. Land alienation, in spite of the recent return of some land, has been a major issue because of the role of land in Kanak identity (see “A Postcolonial Geography of the Kanak” below).

Meethan tells us that “different interests create and consume different forms of knowledge.”⁴ Knowledge develops both in academia and by practitioners; expression of such knowledge should be accorded to each group. Interaction between all sets of knowledge is important also and not just in the field of tourism development. I do not presume to speak for the Kanak or express how they view or undertake tourism activities. I do intend to examine and monitor the colonial imprint (or its abandonment or absence) in the implementation of plans for tourism development in New Caledonia and to report the results in anglophone publications.

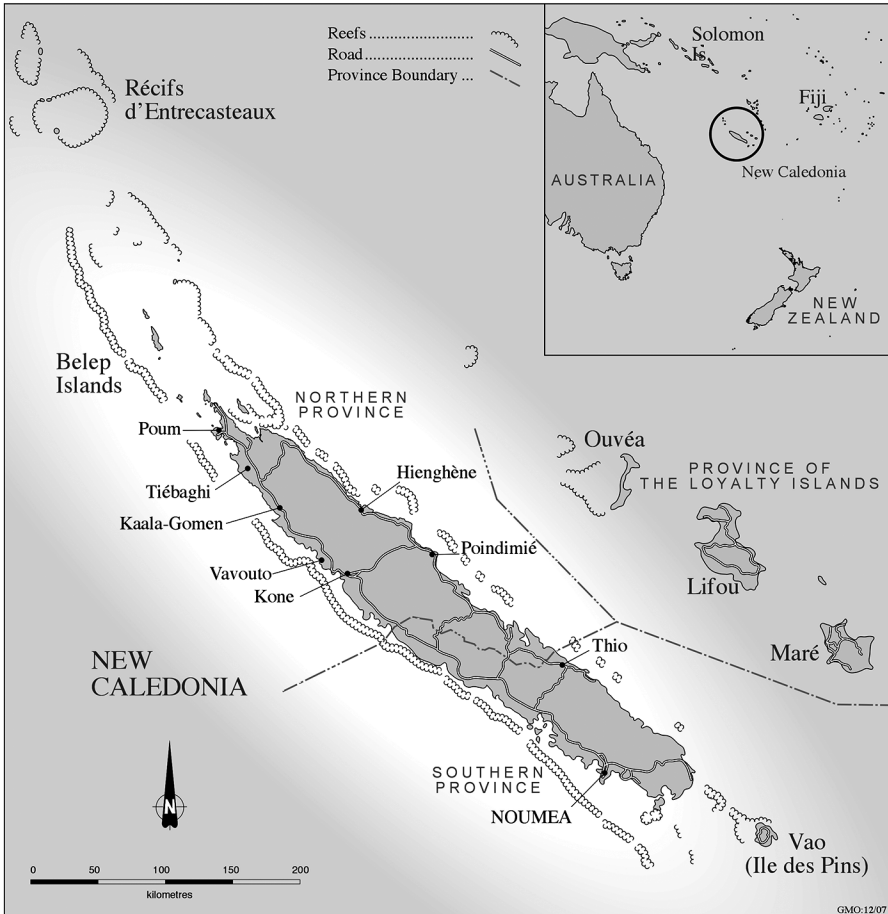


FIGURE 1. Map of New Caledonia. Map by Max Oulton, 2008.

A POSTCOLONIAL FRAMEWORK

Why a Postcolonial Framework?

Most authors contend that postcolonialism critiques Western structures of knowledge and power in a theoretical way. It constantly questions existing relations and demands that one rethink the terms by which knowledge has been constructed. Postcolonialism focuses on restructuring inequitable colonial inheritances and the relations they created. The colonial, which is based on a Eurocentric concept of time-space, must be displaced as the focus of postcolonial critique. However, one must not believe that the precolonial period was quite pleasant. We need to weave a more complex narrative of continuity and change because many “colonialisms” existed and not just European ones. Such contestations of colonial narratives force us to remember differences and variations that had been there all the time, including prior to European colonization. They also demonstrate how past colonial discourses resurface in the postcolonial present. Decolonization, in many parts of the world, and especially in the small island states of the Pacific, has not meant an end either to unequal relationships or imperialism.⁵

The question remains about how to respect the alterity of the other without making difference a one-size-fits-all concept. Stokes warned against the danger of reducing people to a common “essence” (denominator), for example, in the forms of labeling used when doing research on “Indigenous” issues or when seeking to “describe facts,” as if findings and a local solution could be applied in a universal manner to all Indigenous peoples. She underlined how the term *Māori* obscures the fact that different Native cultures within New Zealand evolved over several centuries of pre-European occupation by different Polynesian groups whose arrival was sometimes contemporary (*Tainui waka* and *Te Arawa waka*) but sometimes sequential (as in the case of the prior arrival of the *Mori*ori).⁶ The Kanak too are often represented in a monolithic manner, which overlooks their many differences: they still speak twenty-eight different languages, each of which is incomprehensible to the speakers of the other twenty-seven languages.

Postcolonialism does lead to the recognition that the Kanak “represent the unfinished business of decolonisation,” even if postcolonialism is still strongly resisted by the white settlers.⁷ In my research, during several trips to New Caledonia, but also in Wallis and Futuna and in French Polynesia, I have integrated cultural protocols and values when approaching the Indigenous subjects I sought to interview. I have sent photographs to subjects who had accepted in order to demonstrate certain cultural practices and provided copies of published articles or of posters to government offices in which they are accessible to the public. I do recognize that my research has not prioritized the perspective of Indigenous people so that it could determine policy. However, I have put forward a testimony about issues of concern to them, as in, for example, contesting government promises of support in tourism development or government actions in favor of migration in French Polynesia.⁸

A Critique of Postcolonialism

McClintock points out that “the singularity of the term effects a recentering of global history around the single rubric of European time.”⁹ The term *post-colonialism* represents a time “after” colonization, even though decolonization is still incomplete, and not just as an “aftereffect.” Colonization has left strong imprints even after colonizers have left, while some areas/Indigenous people are still effectively colonized. Critics reproach postcolonialism’s acceptance and support of Western actions and power because many postcolonial writers are located in Western universities where they participate in Western intellectual traditions. The colonized remain “condemned only to use a telephone, never to invent it, fixed in zones of dependency and peripherality, stigmatised as . . . underdeveloped . . . ruled by a superior, developed or metropolitan coloniser.”¹⁰ Stokes also underlined the ethnocentric way of depicting “heroic” settler societies when their “successful colonisation . . . automatically implie[d] the dispossession of territory belonging to the indigenous inhabitants . . . and completely transformed the Māori landscape.”¹¹

Critics charge that postcolonialism has managed to silence all oppositional discourses, especially how the ideology of economic development was part of the colonial action frame. It has flattened the differentiating impacts of colonialism while its opposition to (neo)colonial interests wavers as it becomes increasingly institutionalized.¹² Postcolonialism directs attention away from the incredible inhumanity that characterizes present inequities (political, economic, and/or discursive) in the global system and that is committed daily in the name of profit, efficiency, and modernization. Representations are an ideological vehicle of power, which uses them to impose its point of view; but it is difficult to forgo their use, even for postcolonial writers. It has led to weakened resistance to capitalist models of modernization. As a cultural form of discourse used to describe what are considered peripheral areas, postcolonialism can only obscure their complexity and specificities as they are generalized under the term *third world*. Narwal El Saadawi comments that the First World academic “postmodern vision and thinking fragmented us into a colourful mosaic. . . . But the other was not of great weight, not of real value in the future of the world.”

Parry comments that much postcolonial discourse devalues the narratives of anticolonial struggle as nativist when its geographic and linguistic limitations do not keep it essentially mum about Indigenous liberation struggles (as it silences the search for independence of the Kanak under the guise that only a small minority is really interested).¹³ Communities and their discourses are thus necessarily at odds with each other when they try to apprehend the same reality or to share the same space. Khaira adds that postcolonialism tends to “steal” the voice of the post colonial subject in its very bid to re-assess it.¹⁴ I do retain, for this article, postcolonialism as a theoretical framework because it allows one to maintain a critical distance from the hegemonic discourses of modernity. The postcolonial is an attitude and a point of view, inscribed in a critical intervention that seeks the “becoming-ethical” of human societies: societies need to recognize difference in their midst rather than seek to

eradicate it. I use the postcolonial as a critique (through deconstruction) of (neo)colonial practices and a way to move forward, remembering that colonization and colonialism have not provided just a long litany of atrocities.¹⁵

POSTCOLONIALISM AND TOURISM

Tourism and Colonialism

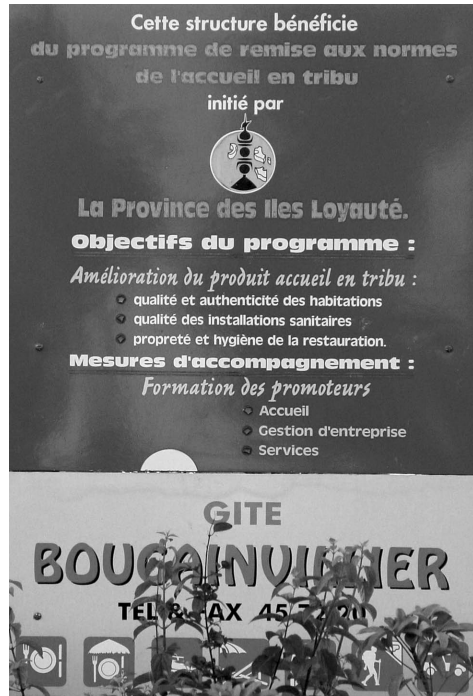
Tourism, like postcolonialism, has its roots in colonialism as a theoretical construct and a perceptual mechanism, as demonstrated in the publication *The Last True Explorer*.¹⁶ Today the geographies of destinations are imaginary ones based on images and representations that are supposed to describe potential sites of leisure/pleasure. They have been organized into a system whose reach is global but whose articulation remains colonial. Western tourism discourse controls the production and dissemination of tourism—hence its nature and shape—and thus articulates and maintains uneven development and unequal territorial relations. The continued celebration of difference and otherness by tourism should be seen as a process hardly distinguishable from the process of empire. The production of tourism destinations has responded to the interests of the metropolitan center. Destinations today, just like colonized people of the past, consume narratives and images of themselves that are imposed on them. The discourse of tourism in the West determines where tourism will be developed in the rest of the world, including or especially in the periphery, the third world. No space in the world can offer an experience truly uncontaminated by Western intervention because of colonization and imperialism.

The tourist is not a free subject of thought or action nor is the host.¹⁷ The consumer is continuously encouraged to believe that she or he is an agent, when she or he is at best a chooser. Many tourist sites have also been developed in areas that are still colonized. Tourist representations draw heavily on cultural memories produced elsewhere even though the destination is layered with Indigenous cultural inscriptions. The choice about what is included and what is excluded as well as how to depict what has been retained is not haphazard. Erasing or obscuring is fundamental to the collective process of social memory. Publicity for New Caledonia as a tourism destination long downplayed the presence of the Kanak, their culture, and their ownership of the lands the resorts are built on. They were either erased from the New Caledonia landscape, or they were assimilated to “nature” from which civilization would rescue them.¹⁸

Indigenizing Tourism

Indigenization of the production of destinations (see fig. 2) means enabling Indigenous ownership of tourism enterprises. It would give Natives a say in the use of their resources, and they would reap direct benefits from exploiting the resources. Din has called it “indigenising modernity.”¹⁹ Unfortunately, the tourists they serve and the capital circuits (flows of capital created by investors as they decide how much and where to invest or disinvest) they would get

FIGURE 2. Panel indicates the commitment of the government of the Loyalty Islands Province to the development of tourism in tribal areas. Its objective is to improve hosting by tribes through guaranteed authenticity of the structures, quality sanitary facilities, and safety of food products. It also targets the training of the hosts. One can see icons that indicate other tourist activities offered by this enterprise. Photo by the author, 2007.



inserted in do not change. Visitors come from the wealthier parts of the world: to promote their destinations, many Natives must still resort to “inferiorizing” images that emphasize their difference, which resides in their “primitiveness” and their “naturalization.” In New Caledonia, one of the best-developed products at this time is a guided walk through tribal lands to discover their biodiversity and have a quick encounter with the culture. For other authors, such indigenization could become a mimic “whose mimicry is neither a real understanding of western culture nor a form of resistance against western hegemony, but rather a half-conscious attempt to belong to a ‘civilized’ world which promotes and feeds on this misguided desire for its own profit.”²⁰ When indigenization has been successful it has caused a backlash of accusations of practices detrimental to the area and of “lucky” circumstances rather than recognition of visionary management by the tribal group.²¹

The more recent demand by tourists to penetrate the farther peripheries has occurred in parallel to the quest to affirm identities by the “other.” One can question whether this penetration of the periphery is a continued conquest (even if only at the individual level) rather than a true search for a personal identity from interactive appreciation. At the same time, is the “other” a true interlocutor, as postcolonial discourses would have us believe? Can she or he truly demand interaction so as to extract recognition through active encounters rather than being merely gazed at? Both sides should become co-implicated and mutually constituted through these struggles.

The ability of Indigenous peoples to interpret their own cultures, defend the integrity of their cultures, and receive compensation for the use and enjoyment of their cultural manifestations by others becomes increasingly challenged. Existing legal systems rely on an ideological structure that still relegates Indigenous peoples to a category incapable of ingenuity and creativity. It also forces on them a system of individual ownership that is inimical to their cultural practices, which require communal land ownership.

(POST?) COLONIALISM IN NEW CALEDONIA

Colonial History

The word *colonial* here refers to the more complex geopolitics of today's power relations while it retains some continuity with its nineteenth-century meaning. This discourse is not an apology for the past actions of the French state. New Caledonia's Kanak were placed under the "*indigénat*," a brutal French colonial rule that was not lifted until 1946 and that removed the Kanak to reservations whose size decreased over time. The Kanak were denied freedom of movement, education, and citizenship and were required to provide labor when demanded by the French administration. The government then appropriated their lands for the French settlers it encouraged to migrate to the territory. Violent subjugation became the inevitable duty of the French government, even though it had caused the uprisings in response to a construed savagery of the Natives.²² De Certeau points out that it was "first of all not the stupid savagery that propaganda is claiming it to be."²³ The northeastern part of the island where the four-year-old Christian mission of Balade was destroyed by a Kanak uprising in 1847 thus remained long out of bounds to most white colonial settlers.

Many European settlers of the South Pacific were often banished from their country of origin (by the legal system, poverty, or depravity) and then unburdened their lack of self-esteem on the Indigenous groups. These two communities, European and Kanak, could never meet. Before "Melanesia 2000," a showcase of Kanak culture scheduled from 13 to 15 September 1975, that culture was ignored. The Caldoche community resented the search for a Kanak identity, and their effort was violently stopped.²⁴ It took another thirteen years before the 1988 Matignon Accord funded an agency for the development of Kanak culture and identity, the Tjibaou Cultural Centre (see fig. 3). The colonial order maintained and perpetuated unequal political and economic relations so that, as late as 1984, Jean-Marie Tjibaou, one of the foremost Kanak political leaders of his time, responded that "one needs to remember, in order to understand our unease and our aspirations, that we have not yet been decolonised: modernity continues to impose on us the weight of colonisation, which diminishes us, which castrates us."²⁵

Kanaky (Kanak Culture) and Postcolonialism

Kanak agency, born of history and geography, has produced positions from which the people have proclaimed their own narratives and cultural practices,



FIGURE 3. *The Tjibaou Cultural Centre, symbol of Kanak culture looking to the future, blends in its architecture Kanak culture and (post)modernist elements (by Renzo Piano). It was commissioned by the French President Mitterrand to recognize the existence and vitality of Kanak culture today. Photo by the author, 2003.*

which have enabled them to maintain a Kanak landscape in the face of global intrusion. This is not to say that such a landscape is more “authentic” or primitive. Unfortunately, it is also true that primitivism is now exalted as a means of redressing past Indigenous marginalization. It is often used as a trope to attract Western tourists (see fig. 4 and 6). One must forestall any mythologized return to pure and primitivized origins, as there is no primitively “authentic” Native tradition. The point is not to preclude the past. The narrative of the present must remain open to its heritage or roots while we must remember that the past does not wait around like an object to be recuperated.²⁶ Nabudere has suggested the use of posttraditionalism to promote new people-centered and Indigenously generated alternatives to the colonial and the modern in order to create a “rich tapestry of crosscutting continuity and change; of old, new, and hybrid identities.”²⁷ Tjibaou was convinced of the validity of such an attitude.

The trope or representation, for several centuries, of Indigenous peoples was of vanishing races, dying remnants of once vigorous and populous tribes.²⁸ Stokes concurred that “it suited Anglo Saxon arrogance. . . The destruction of an indigenous population and culture was an inevitable result of the operation

of a ‘natural law’” that relieved the colonizers of any misgivings about the consequences of their encounter.²⁹ Within the overseas French empire, it is in New Caledonia that this trope has been most unanimously and assuredly believed: “what is more, their extinction occurs only if they are truly savage.”³⁰ Others had written that Kanak revolts were useful because the French lost few troops during repression, and “one of the consequences is that one can immediately confiscate all their land which increases the public purse and that of the settlers.”³¹

The Kanak never considered themselves to be vanquished. They continued to maintain a measure of Indigenous culture despite extreme pressure. For Lyotard these differing subjectivities resisted through their “enunciating capability,” their will to continue to resist.³² The political organization of the territory that followed the 1988 Matignon Accord was an attempt at giving the Kanak a stronger voice in the daily running of their affairs and to put an end to relations, within New Caledonia, which had become violent.³³ The Matignon Accord divided New Caledonia into three distinct provinces (see fig. 1). The government of the provinces is in charge of economic development, including tourism policy. These provinces are politically divided because of the dominating ethnic groups: Kanak in the Northern (77.9 percent in 2004) and Island provinces (97.1 percent) and Caldoche white settlers and

FIGURE 4. *Kanak sculptures.* Photo by the author, 2007.



other minorities in the Southern Province. At the level of the whole territory, because the capitol is located in and capital continues to be concentrated in the Southern Province, the Kanak voice remains muted, especially because the Caldoches resent the Kanak's desire for independence.³⁴

A Postcolonial Geography of the Kanak

The Kanak place was and is the setting for action, the stage on which things happen. As geographers point out, places produce meaning and that meaning can be grounded in place. Tourism sets stages too. As these stages exist in specific locations that have special characteristics, tourism is dependent on geography. A single physical landscape can be multilocal only in the sense that it shapes and expresses a variety of meanings of place for different users. Multilocality is also predicated on connections, on the interaction of different places and different voices in various geographical, cultural, and historical contexts.³⁵ This connectedness creates an "environment of trust" in kin relations, local communities, cosmology, and tradition. It establishes complex social patterns.³⁶ It also harkens back, in New Caledonia, to the insecurity of precolonization time, when much energy was spent on nurturing alliances in case (or as prevention) of war.

Identity for the Kanak is grounded in place and thus in the land. Lived space emphasizes individuals' experiences in the world. Narratives of places are not told just with words. Ancestral associations between Kanak tribes and their land remain and continue to determine their worldview (see figs. 3, 4, and 6).³⁷ Some stolen land has been returned to the Kanak, for example, 90,000 hectares between 1989 and 1998.³⁸ The Kanak culture depends on a network of places that exists in a wider geographical milieu than that defined by the language spoken in any given area and certainly beyond the reservations that they were assigned to by French colonial power. Kanak places are local, multiple, and still networked and performed throughout New Caledonia, which is a relational way of creating landscape through active engagement: Kanak cultural landscapes did not disappear with colonialism. We thus find two kinds of maps of New Caledonia: those printed officially and those preserved in the memories and acts of the Kanak, which describe the landscapes and their toponyms, the extent of social groups, the existence of local societies, and their relational trails.

TOURISM DEVELOPMENT IN NEW CALEDONIA

The Kanak Economy

In this territory, a Kanak subsistence economy, without exchange on the basis of money, but with large, important egalitarian transfers (for example, of goods, food, and banknotes) that reinforce and stabilize family links and alliances (for example, the relational aspect of landscape constitution), still coexists with a capitalist economy that relies on permanent financial aid from France. Which one is the truly economically dependent group is a legitimate

question. These forms of exchange, which are the basis of the Kanak systems of knowledge, do not reveal “ignorance, distortion and error; they are the practical means of a community to express itself.”³⁹ Money, however, has penetrated further and further into Kanak society.

Kanak are not the majority, although they are the most numerous demographic group (86,788, or 44 percent of a total population of 196,836 in 1996; 230,810 in 2004). There were 67,151 Europeans (35 percent), and others (21 percent) included 17,763 from Wallis and Futuna (9 percent) in 1996. Because of a misunderstanding and political motivations, the census stopped recording ethnic origins as of 2000. The majority of the population is concentrated in greater Nouméa (134,546 in 1996; 148,245 in 2004), though the percentage there has decreased from 67 to 62 percent of the territory’s population.⁴⁰ It could mean that more people have chosen not to migrate to the territory’s main job center. The Southern Province, which contained 68.4 percent of the territory’s population in 1996, registered 71.2 percent in 2004.

The Kanak are encouraged by the French state, though they were practically prohibited by the territorial government until then, to participate in the diversification of the territory’s economy.⁴¹ Development, including the geography of development, as its proponents mostly approach it, continues colonial forms of interaction. Said reminds us that anthropology (or geography) studied the manners and mores of the “other” so that colonial masters could better control the colonized other(s).⁴² Such forms of relationships that diminish the worth of the other party are to be contested and overthrown through the narratives of subordinates, women, and other marginalized groups. In the case of tourism development, it would allow these groups to entertain a more equal rapport with visitors and to resist disappearance from the tourist imagination and especially from networks of capital accumulation. We need to contest the notions that place Indigenous people in a “third world” and to challenge property laws and socioeconomic inequities engendered by capitalist and colonialist representations. Encouraging the colonized to speak can give them a voice only if we question the colonial context of development whatever its forms.

Impediments still exist though they are less visible. As Farred remarks, “subjugation continues as an insidious process because it silences constituencies even as it gives voice and face to their culture and histories.”⁴³ Kanak areas need jobs because they were maintained in poverty for so long. The problem is the fetishization of development and capital as beyond control. Development and investments are to be accepted gratefully by those on whom Western investors or the government bestows them. No action by local people could change the amount or the direction of such largesse. However, one needs to avoid a politics of economic assistance in the name of repairing past mistakes because that would prevent the Kanak from making their own history.⁴⁴ The French state would probably finance Kanak projects even at a total loss, but such support of Kanak projects is contrary to its leaders’ desire for self-sufficiency. Charity only contributes to the maintenance of hegemony. Kapoor adds that “‘aid’ and ‘assistance’ to the Third World is belied by what can be called the ‘business’ and ‘conditionality’ of development.”⁴⁵



FIGURE 5. *Unprocessed nickel exports from a pier at Vavouto in the Northern Province, the site of the future nickel-processing factory. Photo by the author, 2007.*

Part of New Caledonia's wealth is derived from mining (see fig. 5). Tourism provides 3.9 percent of the gross national product (GNP); nickel mining provides 7.9 percent. The new factories will triple the output when they are built, hence the economic role of nickel. It is a strategic activity that has determined the demographic composition of the country, its land uses, and the infrastructure provided as well as attitudes.⁴⁶ Public administration, much of it subsidized by the French state, provides 21 percent. The wealth from mining remained in the territory because French settlers could participate in the activity. A factory was also built to add value to some of the nickel prior to its shipment overseas. The white settlers owned all the mines. They were appropriated with the help of the French state, which led one of the beneficiaries to erase collective guilt by declaring that "we are not colonialists, the French State is."⁴⁷ None of that wealth ever trickled back to the Kanak. There were grand promises of a factory for the Northern Province (especially because a second factory is being built in the Southern Province) that did not materialize and left the Kanak ever further behind from an economic perspective. An agreement was finally signed in October 2007; construction of the northern factory should start soon. Some politicians are well aware that the future of New Caledonia (as an independent entity or not) depends on economic well-being for all, and this decision is based on the continued development of mining and tourism.⁴⁸

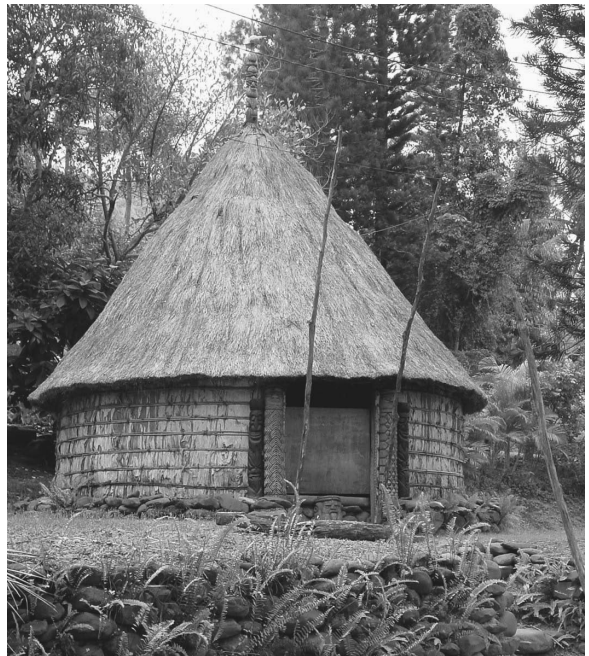
Tourism as a Tool of "Economic Rebalancing"

Tourism is believed to be an appropriate tool of economic development because it is a consumer of space that can be adapted to the customary, communal form of land tenure prevalent among the Kanak. Many decision makers also believe that it is a labor-intensive activity (6.7 percent of jobs versus 3.9 percent of the

GNP in 2004) that does not require skills.⁴⁹ Those who implement the tourism plans in New Caledonia have discovered that small entrepreneurs need to be taught basic knowledge about how to conceive and sell their product and mostly about how to interact with the visitors to foster positive outcomes for both parties. The Kanak people do not refute economic development; they want it within the Kanak concept of land use. In tourism, though, spatial continuities have been abolished to create spatial and visual colonial extensions of the Western need for exploration and discovery. They represent a “reactionary politics of an aestheticized spatiality.”⁵⁰ True Indigenous presence is hidden behind policies that transform Indigenous space so as to appeal to Westerners. Often times the local residents find themselves “out of place” as their space is appropriated for the staging of “experiences” to maximize the pleasure of white tourists. In travel, Minca adds, “destinations become increasingly packaged versions of themselves, ‘hyperreal’ places.”⁵¹ Our postcolonial desire should not be to objectify, consume, or displace “others” but to respect the uniqueness of their being: “place,” according to Oakes, “is authentic to the extent that it defies objectification.”⁵²

Images of an “authentic, traditional Kanak way of life” are used to lure domestic tourists who search for “exotica” or “ecstasies of experience” (see fig. 4 and 6). This local uniqueness must not, however, become a “commoditized good,” an “aestheticized” novelty for the tourist gaze. Two other arguments have been raised against the use of Kanak culture as a “unique” attraction in order to validate the lack of effort put in by the territorial government in the past. First, officials are too prompt to underline how building a tourist product

FIGURE 6. *Traditional Kanak case with details of the interior.*
Photo by the author, 2007.



would be difficult as a genuine, continuous Kanak culture reduces potentialities (for example, Kanak culture requires sharing: all would share while only a few would work; shops and other facilities would close whenever their owner would have to attend a tribal event). Globalization creates constraints the Kanak would not know how to face because they would consider the needs of the tribe ahead of their responsibilities toward investors or the tourists. Communal ownership of land prevents its use as a collateral for investment. Kanak culture is perceived as an obstacle to development.

The second issue is that heritage tourism, which markets traditional culture, seeks to satisfy the desire to “visit” authentic landscapes as a means to experience imagined perfect communion between humans and between humans and nature. To tourists, places become “unreal and fake” when the locals start to commoditize their landscapes in exchange for earnings. It is translated as “fake” modernity because the locals abandon their “authentic” traditional lifestyles but could not possibly become modern. A more valid question would be: how does one present Kanak culture and respect its continued daily practice? Can one devise meaningfully creative ways of interaction between visitors and visited?

KANAK TOURISM DEVELOPMENT TODAY IN THE NORTHERN PROVINCE

The number of international visitors to New Caledonia is small and has remained stagnant for the past ten years, hovering around one hundred thousand per year. The situation reflects, in part, New Caledonia’s geographic isolation as a French- and Kanak-speaking entity in a predominantly English-speaking southwest Pacific as well as its remoteness. The closest large land mass is Australia, fifteen hundred kilometers away. It is also symptomatic of a lack of interest in its programmed development. The main markets for the Northern Province tourism enterprises are thus the residents of the Southern Province and the visitors from the French metropolitan centers. Visitors are solicited to discover the “uniqueness” of the Northern Province. In 1998 it meant first the “beautiful and varied landscapes” as well as “the authentic way of life of rural and tribal people.” The forty-page brochure mentions only two possible stays in Kanak areas and only a couple of activities run by Kanak people on tribal sites or elsewhere. Only in the Hienghène area could one find more Kanak activity in tourism. The illustrations about the colonial history of the area in that brochure (there is no mention of a precolonial period) consist of two photographs of Kanak men in the nude except for long penis sheaths and threatening-looking axes. Only one paragraph on the next page describes tribal life.

Hienghène is the area Jean-Marie Tjibaou came from. It had become politically important to demonstrate a will for economic development of Kanak areas in the 1980s even though official decision making regarding neo-Caledonian tourism was and long remained mostly improvised. However, no valid tourism policy can be implemented without the cooperation of the Melanesians and without offering them jobs (other than unskilled labor).⁵³ This led to a program in cooperation with Club Med, the famous international

provider of resorts based in Paris and inspired by the Polynesian lifestyle. A hotel with bungalows and several traditional “Kanak cases” (see fig. 6) occupies Kanak land along the coast south of Hienghène. The final agreement, following long *palabres* (discussions) stipulates that the hotel could lease the land for twenty-five years; in exchange, Club Med was to train all personnel recruited in the local tribe(s), up to and including the managerial level. Reality has fallen short of these lofty goals, and the Northern Province has bought back the hotel. Beautiful beaches, the lagoon, and striking lindaralic, a type of limestone (see fig. 7), formations are the area’s attractive features for the different enterprises that have been developed by the local Kanak. Tjibaou’s widow owns a small bed and breakfast in the village; one can buy accommodation and/or meals in several tribes that settled in and around this valley. A cultural center was built in the late 1980s.

The relative success of developments in Hienghène gave more impetus to efforts at implementing tourism in other parts of the Northern Province. In 2001 a number of initiatives were started that now bear fruit. Weekends of Discovery were organized by the tourism board of the Northern Province to introduce the numerous cultural and natural attractions of the province to the residents of the Southern Province and their visitors. These weekends were also designed to stimulate local people to discover the potential of or for tourism in their area, especially because training sessions were available for those who wanted to create a long-lasting enterprise. Today, almost every settlement gets its yearly promotional weekend: they are greatly appreciated both by the hosts, most of whom are Kanak, and the visitors.

People were also encouraged to set up activities such as guided walks that would attract visitors. In 2004 these were on the drawing boards, but today a brochure describes fifteen different itineraries with a detailed map, contact details, level of difficulty, and requirements for each. Since 1999, sixty-seven guides have been trained in the Northern Province. Few of them have made it a permanent activity because demand remains insufficient, but it provides some revenue that enables those who so desire to stay within their tribe. Telephone links are the main challenge, as some valleys lack mobile phone coverage. Others complain of the lack of publicity. Associations are being created in some areas. The Kanak describe their pleasure at sharing their knowledge with visitors who enjoy the discovery and the exercise.⁵⁴ Many sporting events are organized throughout the Grande Terre, the main island, on a regular basis during the year, and they include meals, rest stops, and/or overnight stays in tribal areas. More than six hundred people registered for the “Trans Caledonia” run from the Hienghène lindaralic “Hen” (fig. 7) to the Heart of Voh mangrove that took place over the weekend of 7 and 8 July 2007. It meant many beds rented and meals sold as well as new jobs: five youths from the Tiendanite tribe were recruited for the safety of participants.⁵⁵

Enterprises remain small in size and number, but Kanak participation has increased and exists in a variety of activities such as accommodation for two or three to a maximum of fifteen guests, guided walks and visits, management of camping grounds, horse trekking, or specialized farm visits. Some activities are single events, even if yearly. Most regular yearlong jobs exist in hotels,



FIGURE 7. *The lindaralic “Hen” of Hienghène. Photo by the author, 2003.*

restaurants, and attractions owned mostly by Caldoche or foreigners. They do not hire only unskilled manual labor. In Koné, the only female Kanak chef in New Caledonia runs the restaurant of one of the three-star hotels: her creativity is splendid and confirms that “outsiders” can no longer “aspire to eclipse indigenous knowledge and representation.”⁵⁶ All enterprises are self-motivated. It is illegal for anyone to pressure Kanak people into any kind of activity, economic or otherwise, but this is especially true of members of any level of government. Meetings (for *palabres*) are set up to inform tribal chiefs or representatives of social or cultural organizations, nongovernmental organizations, or civil society about available financial help programs, possibilities for training and educational opportunities, or government plans for economic development. However, the initiative must come from the grass roots. The Kanak entrepreneurs must fill in applications for help with their own description of the project they wish to create; they can be assisted but not prodded.

Some events are of a more defined cultural nature and concern all forms of culture in New Caledonia. The general public is invited and encouraged to attend: a night of traditional Kanak dances hosted by the Bondé tribe, on 9 August 2007 for example, or traditional Indonesian rituals for the New Year in Koumac.⁵⁷ The products of the Northern Province have also been highlighted in events scheduled on the main square in the center of Nouméa. Different parts of New Caledonia can display and sell their products and produce for one Thursday evening from 5:00 PM to 7:00 PM. Other initiatives have been set up by both Kanak and Caldoches: guided visits to the Tiébaghi chrome mine by a local Kanak couple who belong to the association for its restoration and maintenance; visits to view the Heart of Voh mangrove made famous by the aerial photographs of Yann Arthus-Bertrand, which are organized by different guides; and diving centers in Koumac.⁵⁸ The tourism board of the Northern Province is supportive of all initiatives as they provide activities for visitors or people who will stay in hotels, some of which are being renovated, while others are still on the drawing boards.

CONCLUSION

Le passé a été le temps de la colonisation. Le présent est le temps du partage par le rééquilibrage. L'avenir doit être le temps de l'identité dans un destin commun.

In the past was colonisation. Today we share to rebalance. For the future we must find our identity in a common destiny.

—Préambule de l'Accord de Nouméa, 1998⁵⁹

The Kanak did and continue to demand recognition of their dignity in all ways possible. The first article of the Nouméa Accord recognizes how Kanak identity must be taken into consideration: Kanak languages are now taught in schools and researched by universities, Kanak toponyms are to be reestablished, sacred sites will be protected, and so forth. New Caledonian society and tourists must concede the Kanak their place, but their place is not simply “back there, in a separate and foreign time and place.” The Nouméa Accord and, in particular, its preamble admit the evils of past colonization and seek to turn New Caledonia toward a more equitable future. Colonial imprints will not disappear overnight as the Kanak represent the “*heredita damnosa*” of the Caldoche and of the French State.⁶⁰ Traces are still visible in some representations of the Kanak in tourism promotion materials, their unemployment rates, and other statistics. Article 4 of the Nouméa Accord also declares the need to train Kanak to take on managerial and decision-making positions to oversee the economic rebalancing (though it is questioned whether there ever was economic equality) that the French state invests in as part of its *mea culpa* but mostly to support New Caledonia's shared future economic development.

Tourism development in Kanak areas has moved forward. Kanak own enterprises of various sizes and host visitors mostly on their terms. However, while many enjoy featuring their way of life and appreciate the training made available to those interested, such development is still insufficient to provide revenues that would “rebalance” the economy of New Caledonia. It would require a major effort for the promotion of New Caledonia as a tourist destination on the international market together with a greater encouragement of domestic tourism. It would also demand that quality education be available throughout New Caledonia, based not just on Western but also on Kanak knowledge, to reduce the number of Kanak children who leave school early. The future factory of the northern province is the only hope to reestablish some economic equality at the provincial level. For individuals and their families much remains to be done to ensure minimal revenues to the Kanak as a group. My study can report a slight decrease in colonial ways of perceiving and representing Kanak and some of the other ethnic groups who live in New Caledonia. Interaction between the various groups is more open even if progress is much slower than idealists would want it.

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NOTES

1. Jean-François Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1984), xi.

2. Evelyn Stokes, “Māori Geography or Geography of Māori,” *New Zealand Geographer* 43 (1987): 129.

3. New Caledonia was the first French territory to be called *pays* in deference to the increased autonomy it had acquired. French Polynesia demanded a similar status though it did not manage to obtain as much autonomy under the same label. Linda Tuhiwai Smith, *Decolonizing Methodologies* (London: Zed Books, 1999).

4. Kevin Meethan, “To Stand in the Shoes of My Ancestors: Tourism and Genealogy,” in *Tourism, Diasporas and Space*, ed. Tim Coles and Dallen Timothy (London: Routledge, 2004), 82–95.

5. Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, *Empire* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2000). See also Susan Najita, *Decolonizing Cultures in the Pacific* (London: Routledge, 2006).

6. Evelyn Stokes, “Ko Waikato Te Awa: The Waikato River,” in *Te Hononga Ki Te Whenua: Belonging to the Land*, ed. E. Stokes and M. Begg (Hamilton: New Zealand Geographical Society, Waikato Branch, 1997), 37–51. Differences matter to people, as indicated by Stokes. In New Zealand, different Polynesian groups peopled the land: for the Moriori their early arrival places them ahead of everybody else, as first settlers among Maori.

7. F. Wilmer, *The Indigenous Voice in World Politics* (London: Zed Books, 1993), 5.

8. These issues are described in Anne-Marie d’Hauteserre, “Planification économique et migration en Polynésie française,” *Revue Européenne des Migrations Internationales* 20–21 (2004): 119–40; Anne-Marie d’Hauteserre, “Développement touristique et dynamiques migratoires dans les archipels éloignés de Polynésie française,” *Espace, populations, sociétés* 2 (2003): 291–302.

9. A. McClintock, “The Angel of Progress: Pitfalls of the Term ‘Postcolonialism,’” *Social Text* 31, no. 2 (1992): 82–88.

10. The quote is from E. Said, *Reflections on Exile* (London: Granta, 2000), 295. The phenomenon is also illustrated by the images used on the envelope of Air Calédonie plane tickets in 2007: on one side, two Kanak dance as if trying to catch up with an Air-Calédonie plane flying high in the sky, above a clear, turquoise lagoon to be crossed with a “traditional” sailing canoe, ready on the right-hand side of the picture. On the left-hand side, two smiling Kanak children, decorated with green wreaths, run toward the onlooker against a typical background of transparent lagoon, white sand, and coconut trees.

11. Evelyn Stokes, *A History of Tauranga County* (Palmerston North, NZ: Dunmore Press, 1980), 12–13.

12. The term (*neo*)colonial as used in this text refers to both colonial practices of today and yesteryear as well as to contemporary practices of economic exploitation. See also P. Mongia, ed., introduction to *Contemporary Postcolonial Theory: A Reader* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2000), 1–18.

13. Narwal El Saadawi, “Why Keep Asking about My Identity?” in *Post-colonialism*, ed. D. Brydon (New York: Routledge, 2000), 1335.

14. B. Parry, “Current Problems in the Study of Colonial Discourse,” *Oxford Literary Review* 91, no. 2 (1987): 34–40.

15. H. Khaira, “Postcolonial Theory: A Discussion of Directions and Tensions with Special Reference to the Work of Frida Kahlo,” *Kunapipi* 20, no. 2 (1998): 41–51.

16. The preamble to the Nouméa Accord, signed in 1998, recognizes France’s colonial domination and its evils, in particular against the dignity of the Kanak as a people and their culture; the French state apologizes for its faults and the necessity to return the Kanak people their identity. It asks to admit that “colonial times were not without positive elements,” so that all residents of New Caledonia can cooperate for a better future for all for the next twenty years, when their political future will be put to a vote. For more details, see Jean Yves Faberon and Jean Raymond Postic, *L’Accord de Nouméa, la Loi Organique et autres documents juridiques et politiques de la Nouvelle-Calédonie* (Nouméa, New Caledonia: Ile de Lumière, 2004).

17. Philip Temple, *The Last True Explorer* (London: Godwit, 2002).

18. Said, *Culture and Imperialism*.

19. Anne-Marie d’Hautesserre, “Representing New Caledonia: Images of Kanak in Tourism Promotion,” submitted to *Tourism Geographies*.

20. Kadir H. Din, “Indigenization of Tourism Development: Some Constraints and Possibilities,” in *Pacific Tourism*, ed. M. Opperman (London: CAB, 1997), 76–81.

21. M. Al Nowaihi, “The ‘Middle East?’ Or . . . Arabic Literature and the Postcolonial Predicament,” in *A Companion to Postcolonial Studies*, ed. H. Schwartz and S. Ray (Oxford: Blackwell, 2000), 282–301.

22. For a critical analysis of the successful growth of Foxwoods Casino Resort, which is continuously criticized by surrounding white residents, see Anne-Marie d’Hautesserre, “Foxwoods Casino Resort: An Unusual Experiment in Economic Development,” *Economic Geography* March (1998): 112–21, Special Issue for the Annual Meeting of the Association of American Geographers, Boston, MA, March 1998; Anne-Marie d’Hautesserre, “Lesson in Managed Destination Competitiveness: The Case of Foxwoods Casino Resort,” *Tourism Management* 21, no. 1 (2000): 23–32.

23. Couze Venn, *Occidentalism: Modernity and Subjectivity* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 2000).

24. Michel de Certeau, *Cultures in the Plural* with a preface by Luce Giard (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997), 10.

25. Anne Pitoiset, *Nouvelle Calédonie* (Paris: Editions Autrement, 1999).

26. This quote was taken from Alban Bensa, *Nouvelle Calédonie, un paradis dans la tourmente* (Paris: Gallimard, 1990), 103.

27. Paul Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic* (London: Verso, 1993).

28. Dani Nabudere as cited on page 238 in David Simon, “Rethinking (Post) Modernism, Postcolonialism, and Posttraditionalism,” *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 16 (1998): 219–45.

29. B. W. Dippie, *The Vanishing American* (Kansas City: The University Press of Kansas, 1982).

30. Stokes, *A History of Tauranga County*, 312.

31. Bernard, 1894, in Bensa, *Nouvelle Calédonie*, 297.

32. J. Garnier, *Voyage autour du monde: Océanie, les Iles des Pins, Loyauté et Tahiti* (Paris: Plon, 1871), 214.

33. Jean-François Lyotard, *Just Gaming* (Minneapolis: Minnesota University Press, 1985).

34. In 1984, the Kanak erected barricades, burnt houses and property, killed cattle, and attacked Europeans. Europeans organized an ambush in Hienghène in which ten Kanak were killed. The last event on Ouvéa saw two soldiers and nineteen Kanak killed.

35. In her research, Jacqueline Dahlem, *Nouvelle Calédonie, Pays Kanak, un récit, deux histoires* (Paris: l'Harmattan, 1996), shows how difficult it is to erase stereotypes that have been used to describe people since colonial times (over several generations). David Chappell, "New Caledonia in Political Reviews—Melanesia," *Contemporary Pacific* 18, no. 2 (2006): 399–413, offers more recent views of both sides regarding their futures. What often falls between the cracks are the thoughts and the realities of several minorities (e.g., Javanese, Japanese, Wallisians, and Tahitians) who live in New Caledonia and were brought there to work in the chrome and nickel mines because it was a French colonial territory.

36. Margaret Rodman, "Empowering Place: Multilocality and Multivocality," in *The Anthropology of Space and Place*, ed. Setha Low and Denise Lawrence Zuniga (Oxford: Blackwell, 2003), 212.

37. Anthony Giddens, *The Consequences of Modernity* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1990), 102.

38. The Jean-Marie Tjibaou Cultural Centre was built at the behest of President Mitterrand to demonstrate the will of the French state to support Kanak identity, Kanak dignity, and Kanaky (Kanak culture) as a continuing project (as inspired by Jean-Marie Tjibaou) rather than relegating the culture and hence Kanak identity and dignity to some museum, away from politics. A museum does exist to preserve artifacts of the past. Alban Bensa, an anthropologist, has written several texts on Kanak culture, including *Chroniques Kanak: L'ethnologie en marche*, vol. 10 (Paris: Ethnies-Documents, 1995) and with Isabelle Leblic, *En Pays Kanak* (Paris: Editions de la Maison des Sciences de l'Homme, 2000).

39. Gérard Vladyslav, "L'identité fondée sur le lien à la terre," in *Identité, nationalité, citoyenneté outre-mer*, ed. Jean-Yves Faberon and Yves Gautier (Paris: la Documentation Française, 1999), 57–72.

40. Sandra Jovchelovitch, *Knowledge in Context: Representations, Community and Culture* (London: Routledge, 2007), 165.

41. Institut de la Statistique de Nouvelle Calédonie, *Tableaux de l'économie calédonienne* (Nouméa, New Caledonia: Institut de la Statistique de Nouvelle Calédonie, 2006).

42. Edward Said, *Culture and Imperialism* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1993), 152.

43. See Jean Guiart, *Les Mélanésien devant l'économie de marché* (Nouméa, New Caledonia: Le Rocher-à-la-Voile, 2004) and Cécile Perret, ed., *Perspectives de*

développement pour la Nouvelle Calédonie (Grenoble, France: Presses Universitaires de Grenoble, 2002).

44. Grant Farred, "Untitled Contribution to Race and Racism: A Symposium," *Social Text*, 42 (1995): 21–26.

45. See Bensa, *Chroniques Kanak*; Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, *A Critique of Postcolonial Reason: Toward a Critique of the Vanishing Present* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999).

46. Ilan Kapoor, "Hyper-self-reflexive Development? Spivak on Representing the Third World 'Other,'" *Third World Quarterly* 25, no. 4 (2004): 634.

47. Institut d'Emission d'Outremer, *La Nouvelle Calédonie en 2006* (Paris: Institut d'Emission d'Outremer, 2007), 15.

48. Jacques Lafleur, *L'assié: 25 ans de vie politique. Une histoire partagée avec la Nouvelle Calédonie* (Paris: Plon, 2000), 125.

49. Alain Descombels, *Quelle économie pour la Nouvelle Calédonie?* (Nouméa, New Caledonia: private publication, 2007)

50. Institut d'Emission, *La Nouvelle Calédonie en 2006* (Noumea, New Caledonia: Institut d'Emission, 2007).

51. David Harvey, *The Condition of Postmodernity* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1989).

52. Claudio Minca, "Reinventing the 'Square,'" in *Travels in Paradox*, ed. Claudio Minca and Tim Oakes (New York: Rowan and Littlefield, 2006), 155–84.

53. Tim Oakes, "Get Real! On Being Yourself and Being a Tourist," in *Travels in Paradox*, ed. Minca and Oakes, 241.

54. Guiart, *Les Mélanésiens*.

55. Personal observation of guides when participating in short guided treks, October 2007.

56. "Transcalédonienne 2007: de la poule au cœur," *Le Pays Magazine* 21 (2007): 18–24.

57. Margaret Jolly, "Imagining Oceania: Indigenous and Foreign Representations of a Sea of Islands," *The Contemporary Pacific* 19, no. 2 (2007): 508–45.

58. "Danses traditionnelles à Bonde," *Le Pays Magazine* 22 (2007): 28–30.

59. Faberon and Postic, Preamble to *L'Accord de Mouméa*.

60. Yann Arthus-Bertrand, *La terre vue du ciel*, 3rd ed. (Paris: Editions de la Martinière, 2005). The original photograph was taken in 1990 in defense of nature, including mangroves. Mangrove then spread over only half of the original area in New Caledonia; this fragile environment continues to recede as its resources are exploited. Agricultural and urban demands together with pollution also take their toll. However, mangrove remains a crucial habitat for much marine fauna as well as for the health of coastal areas and of the local economy.

