Mixed-Race Kanak in "a World Cut in Two": Contemporary Experiences in Kanaky/New Caledonia[1]

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Abstract: This article interrogates how the profound history of spatial segregation across colonial, racial, and cultural lines appears in contemporary narratives of mixed-race people in Kanaky/New Caledonia (K/NC). By tracing the moments that specific spaces, such as "the city" and "the tribe," are mentioned in these narratives, the article shows how the colonial divide structures selves, relations, spaces, and society and manifests itself in discussions with self-identified métis/ses Kanak-White people, especially in the context of the formal decolonization process K/NC is going through. The research draws primarily on interviews with self-identified métis/ses Kanak-White people that took place a few months before the 2018 referendum for independence. The primary question this article seeks to answer is: how does French colonialism spatially determine the lives of métis/ses in K/NC? For this purpose, it analyzes how métis/ses Kanak-White people navigate the variety of spaces they inhabit through experiences of everyday racism and explores how spatial polarization appears in their stories, particularly given the significance of the land for Kanak identity. Notably, the article shows how colonial rhetoric transpires in these different spaces by way of regulating whether the métis/se body belongs within a particular space.

Keywords: Kanak, settler colonialism, mixed race, space, racism

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The colonial world is a world cut in two.

– Frantz Fanon[2]

Consider the duality of space in New Caledonia today. We have to imagine possible solutions to overcome the irreducibility of these two spaces that oppose each other. If it is impossible to organize the city to integrate the tribe, let's attempt to organize the country to achieve the simultaneous integration of the city and the tribe.

– Jean-Marie Tjibaou[3]

* I am grateful for the comments, suggestions, and feedback from the editors of the journal and special issue; peer reviewers; and Shirley Anne Tate, Magdalena Kmak, Anita Kittery, Karin Louise Espejo Hermes, and Milka Njoroge.

[1] I use the name "K/NC" to underline the "divided and divisive" political imaginary between Kanaky, which expresses Kanak sovereignty, and New Caledonia, which expresses Caledonian sovereignty within France. See Mokaddem, "Kanaky ou Nouvelle-Calédonie"; Mokaddem, *Kanaky et/ou Nouvelle-Calédonie?*, 27; Mokaddem, "Logique de l'imaginaire clivé," 151–78.

[2] Fanon, *Wretched of the Earth*, 29.

[3] Tjibaou, *La présence kanak*, 157–58. All translations are by author unless otherwise noted.

Introduction

At the "Métis en Calédonie, Té ki toi !" (Mixed race in Caledonia, who are you!) conference at the University of New Caledonia in 2017, Marie-Madeleine Lequatre, whose mother is Kanak from Drehu/Lifou and father is White French, spoke about growing up in a Kanak environment on the east coast and feeling different because of her métissage.[4] She underlined the importance of acknowledging "where we are speaking from, where we are from, and in which milieu we have grown up to live or define ourselves as métis/ses."[5] She added that what she describes as her racial ambiguity was more an advantage, "a key," in other geographies, such as in hexagonal France, whereas in Kanaky/New Caledonia (K/NC), her "Kanak part" was invisibilized: "I lived my métissage as the invisibilization of a part of myself but a part that was visible enough so that my Kanak environment judged it different."[6] In her testimony, *space* emerges as a constitutive element of the métisse experience.

While narratives of "being caught in the middle" or of "suffering" are ever-present in discourse on métissage in K/NC, this article is not an attempt to resist them. Rather, it explores the spatial component by embedding contemporary mixed-race experiences in the history of settler colonialism in K/NC. Maile Arvin, Eve Tuck, and Angie Morrill define "settler colonialism" as "a persistent social and political formation in which newcomers/colonizers/settlers come to a place, claim it as their own, and do whatever it takes to disappear the Indigenous people that are there." Within this structure, settlers extract value from the land, a project that demands that Indigenous people are "destroyed, removed, and made into ghosts."[7] To achieve this, the colonial space is organized to separate the natives from the settlers. Frantz Fanon illustrates this violent division and Manichean dualism that are found at the socio-spatial level of the French colony.[8] For Kanak, it is through relationships to the land that collective identities are formed and told.[9] Therefore, the removal of Kanak people from their ancestral land required by settler colonialism had dramatic consequences for tribes and clans, as it is their "whole world that is shaken, their network of relations with their brothers, with the efferent protocol that ends up mired in general confusion."[10]

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[4] College of Psychologists of New Caledonia, "*Métis en Calédonie.*" The names of municipalities are written first as the Kanak name and then as the French name, with a forward slash in between, except for the city of Nouméa. While I do not wish to naturalize French settler colonialism in Nouméa by solely using the French name, the South Province, the Customary Senate, and the Académie des Langues Kanak have not replied to my inquiry about the Kanak name for Nouméa or were unable to answer. When interviews are quoted, only the name used by the interviewee will be used.

[5] In this article, I use the term *métis/se* (or *métis/ses* in its plural form), the French equivalent of "mixed race," interchangeably with "mixed race" simply because it is the term used in K/NC.

[6] College of Psychologists of New Caledonia, "*Métis en Calédonie.*" The term "hexagonal France" is used rather than "metropole" to refer to France to challenge the acceptance of the colonial relation that is presupposed in the term "metropole." This shift in terminology has been suggested as part of the decolonization of language. See Cris d'Océanie, "MÉTROPOLE"; Sciences Ô, "Pourquoi faut-il arrêter d'utiliser le terme 'Métropole'?"

[7] Arvin, Tuck, and Morrill, "Decolonizing Feminism," 12.

[8] See Kipfer, "Fanon and Space," 710.

[9] Bensa, "Terre kanak," 108.

[10] Tjibaou, *La présence kanak,* 69.

In this article, I interrogate how the history of spatial segregation across colonial, racial, and cultural lines appears in contemporary narratives of métis/ses in K/NC. I show how the colonial divide structures selves, relations, spaces, and society and how spatial division manifests itself in discussions with self-identified métis/ses Kanak-White people, especially in the context of the current formal decolonization process in K/NC. I draw on interviews with self-identified métis/ses Kanak people conducted several months before the 2018 independence referendum. The primary question here is: how does French colonialism spatially determine the lives of métis/ses in K/NC? At the heart of this article is Daphne V. Taylor-García's acknowledgment that "the person that experiences the world as 'mixed race' is not the problem, but rather the problem is the coloniality of being that demands the politics of purity," a legacy of French colonialism.[11] In making visible the country's colonial history and what has been left unsaid, this project understands métis/ses people as "subjects of historical, social, and cultural processes rather than simply objects of analysis."[12] It also takes seriously Minelle Mahtani's question: "what would an anticolonial mixed race studies look like?"[13] If settler colonialism in Oceania overlaps with White supremacy, both the analytics of settler colonialism and the sociohistorical process of racial formation are necessary to reveal the contours of race and mixed race in K/NC.[14]

This article falls into two parts. The first introduces how settler colonialism reorganized spaces and peoples and how both settler colonialism and Kanak nationalism have shaped the evolution of métissage across time. Drawing on Fanon, space and geography are understood as existing "in a relationship to time and history," which métissage does not escape.[15] The second part explores mixed-race people's relationship to space principally as alienating and divided in their experience of everyday racism and the colonial spatial divide between "the city" and "the tribe." The particular focus on history and geography addresses Mahtani's observations that "many analyses of multiraciality tend to be largely ahistorical and ageographical" and therefore tend to evade the colonial histories of families and individuals in specific times and places.[16] This focus, therefore, reflects how the stories that métis/ses people told me are deeply informed by the colonial history of K/NC.

Methodology

This six-month ethnographic work, carried out around the 2018 independence referendum in K/NC, focuses on interviews with people who self-identified as métis/ses. The data comprises fifty-five interviews conducted in Nouméa, in Koohnê/Koné, and online for those working and/or

[11] Taylor-García, *Existence of Mixed Race Damnés*, 107.
[12] Barbançon, *Le pays du non-dit*, 24–25. Barbançon writes that in New Caledonia "the unsaid is an institution, a constant … which is unavoidable." He describes New Caledonia as "the country of the unsaid," referring to historical concealment of painful moments and the dismissal encountered in acknowledging this history (ibid.). See also Daniel et al., "Emerging Paradigms," 8.
[13] Mahtani, *Mixed Race Amnesia*, 30.
[14] Arvin, "Possessions and Whiteness," 215.
[15] Kipfer, "Times and Spaces of (De-)Colonization," 97.
[16] Mahtani, *Mixed Race Amnesia*, 46.

studying abroad. Interviewees were found through personal networks, an online call for participants in local discussion groups on Facebook, and posters displayed in Nouméa and on the car I was using. Here, "self-identification as métis/se" refers to *their* recognition of mixed raceness and willingness to talk about it. However, it does not necessarily mean that they mainly identify as métis/ses or at all. They may identify as Kanak or Caledonian primarily and may actually rarely use "mixed race."

During the interviews, I followed a set of questions on the broad themes of identity regarding mixed race, belonging, and politics, especially in the context of decolonization. The research began as an opportunity for mixed-race people in K/NC to share personal experiences and political opinions but also "emotional and intellectual expectations about the outer and inner limits of race/ethnicity, and/or culture in their everyday lives."[17] Some interviews depict long conversations and exchanges unmediated by the guiding questions.

Métissage across Settler Colonial Time and Space in Kanaky/New Caledonia

Métissage exists in space and geography and in relation to time and history. Multiraciality and its expression (or lack thereof) is contingent on the political situation of the country and its evolution over time and through spaces. David Chappell recognizes three phases in the historical trajectory of colonial settlement in New Caledonia. I use these phases to show how they coincide with the evolution of métissage and the "métis question" across time. Chappell's phases are "the colonial era (1853–1946), post–World War II decolonization, regression and revolt (1946–1988), and the era of negotiated peace accords that have proposed economic 'rebalancing' and seeking a 'common destiny' for the nearly equal settler and indigenous communities (1988–today)."[18] The French annexation of New Caledonia is marked by Kanak uprisings as resistance to the loss of lands and tampering with Indigenous ways. After the creation of the penitentiary for French convicts and political prisoners from the Paris Commune and Algerian rebels in 1864, most French settlers were convict laborers in coffee plantations and later in nickel exploitation. Toward the end of the nineteenth century, free settlers from France arrived and received lands expropriated from Kanak for farming through convict, Kanak, Oceanian, and Asian labor. White settlers today are the descendants of those involuntary and convicted settlers who were unable/prohibited to return after their sentence and free settlers attracted by economic ventures.

Kanak were confined to native reserves created by the French. On the main island known as "Grande Terre," these reserves represented only 10 percent of the total land surface, whereas the outer islands (today known as the "Loyalty Islands") were entirely native reserves. The colonial administration randomly organized different clans into tribes, attributed tribal chiefs, introduced a "head tax" to be paid only by Kanak who were then forced to work for settlers, and appointed gendarmes to police their movements. From 1887 to 1946, the Indigénat colonial system structured and limited Kanak life, displacing and confining Kanak further into reserves. This attempted

[17] Franklin, "I Define My Own Identity," 465.

[18] Chappell, "Settler Colonialism in New Caledonia," 410. See also Terrier, "Calédoniens ou métis?," 65–80; Muckle and Trépied, "Transformation of the 'Métis Question,'" 116–32.

destruction of Kanak life was based on the fact that Kanak people are defined by their ancestral link to the land. As Jean-Marie Tjibaou and Philippe Missotte explain:

> A clan that loses its territory is a clan that loses its personality. It loses its land, its sacred places, its geographical and sociological points of reference. The whole universe of the group is affected, its network of relations with its brothers and with protocol finds itself in a state of general confusion. In this chaos, everyone loses a part of their identity since as we have seen, the name is related to land.... Space as it is conceived in this way is not a separate thing; it is the fabric, impregnated of the network of human relations, in the middle of which men live.... The space is used as a living archive of the group; it is even one of the fundamental elements constituting canaque personality.[19]

In this context, through land spoliation and expropriation, France created the conditions for the disappearance of Kanak "naturally," since "by being deprived of their lands, they were deprived of the very meaning of life."[20] New Caledonia is an exceptional case in the French Empire as the only territory in which native reserves were created based on the US and Australian colonial models.[21] This exception can be attributed to the fact that "France imagined the Kanak as *unassimilable* others, barely human at all—beyond the reach of France's civilizing mission"—which justified the French declaration of *terra nullius* and extraordinary juridical regimes.[22] By the end of the "colonial era," "two countries in one had developed, the settler colony and the indigenous reserves."[23]

This first period was marked by an ideological refusal of métissage dominant in colonies in the nineteenth century. However, the lack of White women in the colony resulted in mixed unions, more prevalent in "the bush" since bourgeois city settlers could look for White partners in Australia. In *Empire's Children*, Emmanuelle Saada investigates the condition of the métis through the lens of French colonial law and argues that there was an absence of the métis question in New Caledonia. She attributes this to the fact that métis/ses children were absorbed in Indigenous, settler, or immigrant societies since "both colonizers and colonized were willing to care for children of mixed blood." Drawing on the work of French anthropologist Alban Bensa, she further suggests that another reason why there was no métis question could be that "there was no common stage on which it could have played out" since the populations were kept separated.[24]

Yet, in the late nineteenth century, métissage was significant between Kanak and Europeans on the main island, especially on the coasts.[25] Louis-José Barbançon advances that in the first half of the twentieth century, this was still the case and that "when the métis chooses to live in the tribe or the

[19] Tjibaou and Missotte, *Kanaké*, 60–62.
[20] Donroy, *Politics in New Caledonia*, 43.
[21] Merle, "De l'idée de cantonnement," 217–18.
[22] LeFevre, "Creating Kanaky," 280.
[23] Chappell, "Settler Colonialism of New Caledonia," 414.
[24] Saada, *Empire's Children*, 31, 32.
[25] Terrier, "Calédoniens ou métis?," 67.

village, he is considered as a Kanak or a white."[26] The integration of métis/ses was motivated by social interests on both the Kanak and European sides. From a Kanak perspective, métis/ses children served "the socio-political reinforcement of the clan through the expansion of its membership using widespread adoptive practices."[27]

In Kanak culture, métissage is not understood in terms of "race" but in terms of culture, belonging, and group identification. Kanak societies are structured according to relations established through customary practices between different clans and, in the case of children, between maternal and paternal clans. Hamid Mokaddem argues that "within this perspective, the welcoming of allochthone clans by the guardians of the land clans provides the foreigner with a status and position in the group."[28] Similarly, Nidoïsh Naisseline, high chief of the Guahma District in Nengone (Maré), has stated that "in Lifou, there are people who are different by their race, there are blonds with blue eyes at the Luengoni tribe who identify as canaques, in other words, there are white people, métisses, or canaques who refer to the same culture, the same values. That is why it is essential that we distinguish the notion of culture from that of race when we speak."[29]

There are significant disparities in identities resulting from unions between settlers and Kanak between the group of islands currently called the Loyalty Islands and the main island. The Loyalty Islands were declared reserves in the late nineteenth century, which meant that comparatively very few settlers were living there. These families could not own land, had to live in reserves, and thus could not live in White society. This difference forced these settlers to integrate and root themselves within Kanak society when marrying Kanak women. In the context of Nengone, Elsa Faugère notes that this is "why, today, their descendants proudly claim their *nengoneity* and *Kanakeity.*"[30] The existence of White villages and Kanak reserves on the main island did not motivate such an integration.

On the White side, the integration of métis/ses children benefited "the transmission of family inheritance during a period when 'white' women were relatively scarce."[31] As in other colonial contexts in the Pacific, the emphasis on culture on both sides resulted in phenotypical markers not being indicators of belonging in either one of these social groups, since Whiteness and Kanakness were more matters of culture.[32] Of course, culture operates alongside race since "the discourse of racism operates in a world of Manichean opposites—them and us, primitive and civilized, light and dark—which creates a seductive black-and-white symbolic universe."[33] As will be shown later, we should remain critical of the emphasis on culture at the expense of race in studies of mixed-race people in K/NC. Isabelle Merle reaches the same conclusion, highlighting that it is the environment in which a child is socialized that determined their legal status and social identity, while noting a "latent … but always

[26] Barbançon, *Le pays du non-dit*, 70.
[27] Muckle and Trépied, "Transformation of the 'Métis Question,'" 117.
[28] Mokaddem, "Nouvelle-Calédonie," 537.
[29] Nidoïsh Naisseline, quoted in ibid.
[30] Faugère, "La fabrique identitaire," 632.
[31] Muckle and Trépied, "Transformation of the 'Métis Question,'" 117.
[32] See Bensa, "Colonialisme, racisme et ethnologie," 193; Merle, "La Nouvelle-Calédonie," 7; Mokaddem, "Nouvelle-Calédonie," 537; LeFevre, "Creating Kanaky," 274.
[33] Hall, "Race," 71.

present" colorism. She gives the example of a dark-skinned métis being raised in a village (therefore outside of the reserve and the tribe) by his White settler father and his Kanak mother.[34]

She argues that he would consider himself and be considered White and he will tend to marry a mixed or White woman. She argues that he "will be, in this case, more or less well accepted depending on his success as a settler. In the case of failure or disagreement, he will be reminded of his Kanak origin, revealing a latent skin-related racism, but nevertheless always present. His social identity, however, cannot totally be challenged." She adds that, by contrast, a light-skinned child who was raised in the tribe and therefore the reserve by his Kanak mother "will be tied to a lineage, a clan, custom, and Kanak culture. He thinks himself undoubtedly Kanak, and even if, sometimes, he is 'whiter' than the settlers from the neighborhood, he enters, at the beginning of the century, the category 'native.'"[35] This passage exemplifies that while skin shade did not determine legal status or social identity, it was not irrelevant in the social lives of métis/ses.

In the 1960s, as a result of state immigration policy implemented by the French administration during the "nickel mining boom" to minoritize Kanak, settlers, including White, Asian, and Pacific Islander communities, became a majority, worsening relations between White settlers and Kanak and providing fertile ground for the idea of independence. While the Indigénat was abolished in 1946, enabling Kanak to become citizens rather than colonial subjects, colonial spatial segregation persisted.

In 1975, an independence movement emerged, fueled by Kanak struggle for land, against racial discrimination and lack of Indigenous autonomy. By the end of the decade, the intensity of racial and political unrest and tension led to what is commonly called "The Events" (Les Evènements), a euphemism alluding to civil war. This historical period is marked by the 1984 ambush in Hyehen/Hienghène in which a group of seven settlers, described as a "clan of *métis*" by the local media, murdered ten Kanak men, including two of the brothers of the pro-independence leader Jean-Marie Tjibaou. Throughout the trial of the murderers, their métissage was used by the defense to temper the racial and political character of the murders and to weaken "not only the prosecution's argument but [also] the entire premise of the Kanak political struggle."[36] This instrumentalization of métissage by settlers gives rise to the discourse of métissage as being against Kanak independence.[37]

If métissage was taboo until "The Events," some Caldoches later asserted they descended from Kanak as a way to claim their legitimacy in the country, which fueled anti-independence politics.[38] This was relayed by French media and politicians, and the idea that, in New Caledonia, most Caldoches are métis/ses especially aimed to convey the notion that Kanak independence was divisive and racist, an idea that still prevails today for some loyalists. This instrumentalization paired with the immigration policy that aimed to minoritize Kanak people implies that métissage can be read as the

[34] Merle, "La Nouvelle-Calédonie," 7.
[35] Ibid.
[36] LeFevre, "Creating Kanaky," 310. See also Chanter, "Contested Identity," 19–20.
[37] Muckle and Trépied, "Transformation of the 'Métis Question," 123–27.
[38] "Caldoche," a term introduced by the French media and now used in current language, 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, "Calédonien et caldoche," 48.

continuation of what Tate LeFevre has identified as the "project of disappearance" of Kanak.[39] This is why people who self-identify or claim to be métis/ses are often associated with anti-independence politics and are seen as politically suspect within pro-independence circles.[40]

Population statistics show that spatially Kanak represent the largest population in the North Province (72 percent) and in the Islands Province (95 percent), with a growing presence in the South Province (29 percent).[41] Nevertheless, in 2019, 52 percent of Kanak lived in the South Province. The "European community" remains concentrated in the South Province (92 percent), where non-Kanak communities are predominant. In the North Province, the "European community," which represents 10 percent of the overall population, remains concentrated in villages on the west coast. This spatial divide prompted commentators to argue that K/NC is divided in two: "the cultural, material and mental Kanak universe" and "the European universe." This separation is unequal and reflects the colonial history of the country: "K/NC has produced an ethno-cultural partition defined by territorial demarcation lines between Kanak villages and European townships and the sole city/capital, located in the South, Nouméa. Within the city boundaries, around the city centre, radiate out segregated social spaces between the 'poor' northern neighbourhoods and the 'rich' southern ones." This results in communities "living side by side, in juxtaposed and not intermingled social spaces."[42] If colonial delineations still affect contemporary spatial organization, when it comes to métissage, revealing one's mixed-race heritage is no longer taboo. For Eddy Wadrawane, this is because métissage is now at the center of a strategy of appropriation, integration, and social progression.[43] Indeed in a political context in which the future of the country is based on "shared destiny" and "living together," LeFevre notes that mixed-race identity is now promoted and celebrated to a greater extent in popular and political discourse and, more specifically, by anti-independence political parties.[44] For Adrian Muckle and Benoît Trépied, the process of decolonization has given a "new currency" to this "métis question."[45]

Space of Everyday Racism

Racism is a foundational and organizational element of New Caledonian society. Bensa writes of a "radicalized racism" that "functions as a bloc to proclaim an incommensurable difference between, on one side, all Kanak and, on the other, Europeans, rich or poor, urban or bush settlers, mixed-race or not."[46] According to the same logic, Kanak, rich or poor, whether they live in the city, villages, or tribes, mixed-race or not, are seen as incommensurably different from "Europeans."

In many interviews, people recalled their experiences of racism in the contexts of the family, education, and work. These instances are spatialized stories that affirm settler entitlement to certain

[39] Lefevre, "Creating Kanaky," 313–39.
[40] Muckle and Trépied, "Transformation of the 'Métis Question,'" 126.
[41] ISEE, "Communautés," accessed December 15, 2021, https://www.isee.nc/population/recensement/communautes.
[42] Mokaddem, "Kanaky-New Caledonia," 24, 25.
[43] Wadrawane, "Métissage et culture du métissage," 27.
[44] LeFevre, "Creating Kanaky," 117.
[45] Muckle and Trépied, "Transformation of the 'Métis Question,'" 127–29.
[46] Bensa, "Colonialisme, racisme et ethnologie," 193.

spaces and Kanak confinement to others. This is evident in the case of Anne-Marie, a twenty-nine-year-old whose mother is White British and Kanak from Drehu/Lifou and whose father was born in New Caledonia to White French parents.[47] Anne-Marie recalled the difference in treatment she experienced when her family moved to Nouméa after spending ten years of her life in Drehu/Lifou and going to school in the capital:

> So, I had my childhood, my personal education, that landed in Nouméa and that was confronted to the city, to the ways of children who have always grown up in more or less urban areas. And when I speak of hardship, I'm mostly referring to ways of living, to the human in itself. Because children are even worse. They are very mean to each other and many told me when I arrived here that I was under-gifted, or stupid, because I came from Lifou. So from that point, there was a personal questioning that was very difficult. People would look at me weird because I had always lived in Lifou, even though I was really good at school in Lifou. I continued to be good [in Nouméa]. So I had to "prove" to them that I wasn't stupid. But I was so distraught by it that I would write a note to my teacher at the end of every paper: "I apologize for the stupid mistakes I made." So really, it was really difficult.

Anne-Marie specified that she was called and treated as "stupid" by her schoolmates specifically because she was from Drehu/Lifou. She associated this negative experience with "the city" space. She alluded to "the ways of children who have always grown up in more or less urban areas," which, according to her, have an impact on their way of being in the world and their way of being human. I asked Anne-Marie whether she had been made to "feel different" prior to this experience, and she insisted that it only happened to her in Nouméa. Initially, Anne-Marie did not use the word "racism" to describe these experiences. When I asked her if she considered this racism, she replied: "clearly, I was discriminated against because of my place of origin. That's called racism." It should be noted that Anne-Marie described herself as "White and blond with straight hair," but she does not pass nor trespass, as it is her "place of origin," Drehu/Lifou, that is the basis of this racism rather than her phenotypical traits.[48]

I argue that this racism linked to "place of origin" is anti-Kanak racism, since, according to the 2019 census, 94 percent of the inhabitants of Drehu/Lifou are Kanak and only 3 percent are "European."[49] Anti-Kanak racism racially and culturally delineates the right to a space, here Nouméa, based on the French colonial construction of the "savage" Kanak and the "civilized" European, projecting unbelonging on the body of the (mixed) Kanak child from Drehu/Lifou.

Domination relies on the colonial legacy of keeping Kanak *in place*, specifically reminding Kanak children they do not belong in the "civilized" space of the urban school because of their supposed intellectual inferiority. Similarly, LeFevre writes about how young Kanak are criminalized and represented as deviant when they are physically present in the public space, because they challenge

[47] The names of interviewees have been replaced by pseudonyms chosen by them.
[48] Anne-Marie, interview by author, July 23, 2018, Nouméa, Kanaky/New Caledonia.
[49] ISEE, "Communautés," accessed December 15, 2021, https://www.isee.nc/population/recensement/communautes.

the colonial narratives around the urban space as "civilized" and "white."[50] Confining Kanak to a particular place is a legacy of the Indigénat.[51] Anne-Marie's childhood memory echoes the reality of métis/ses who have been raised in Kanak societies, maintain relations with their Kanak kin, and experience predominantly settler spaces not as métis/ses but as Kanak.

Often mentioned in my interviews was the family as a space in which racism is embedded. Sera, a thirty-four-year-old métisse woman currently living in Nouméa, recalled the fraught political and social context that pushed her family to leave the east coast (more specifically, the Kanak country known as Hoot Ma Whaap) for Nouméa during "The Events." Both her parents are métis/ses Kanak-White and were raised at a time when métissage was considered shameful. Sera explained with difficulty and hesitation the tensions within her family: "Because before we were ... and they were stubborn.... That is to say, that on one side, there I was.... For me, there was racism because I'm sorry ... On one side ... I was raised on both sides. So my father, he was completely pacifist. He was for everyone, the family.... The Black is our family and all. But on my mother's side it was completely racist. It was the White, it's our family, the other one is not our family."[52] Sera added that both her parents were raised "on both sides," that is, "in the tribe" and on the "White side."[53]

Despite this, she portrayed anti-Kanak racism on her maternal side:

> Even when her [Sera's mother's] parents got married, my grandfather did not want to put [Kanak] custom in all this so as to not embarrass my grandmother. Because otherwise my grandfather had to practice custom because of his mum you know.... And then, my grandfather's family were mad at my grandfather because he did not do the custom. He did not know what to do or choose because he was dating the White woman with blue eyes, you see. And on the other side, everyone wanted the yams, and all of that.... So that's it, they still got married but it was a little in secret. Let's say that they got married in secret.[54]

The situation Sera recalled illustrates how for métis/ses children, acceptance in White settler society was dependent on their rejection of their and their mother's Kanakness.[55] Indeed, métis/ses children living within Caldoche society had to show their loyalty to this local Whiteness by "critiquing their Kanak neighbors (and parents) more than average and by refusing, at least publicly, to practice custom and to respect the ancestral ways of their maternal lineage."[56] Frédéric Angleviel notes that there were similar practices among Kanak. While I am not aware of such practices historically, a few contemporary examples of those practices were anecdotally brought up to me in interviews. For

[50] LeFevre, "Nous ne sommes pas des délinquants!," 256.
[51] See Merle and Muckle, *L'Indigénat*.
[52] Sera's difficulty to find her words and finish her sentences could be attributed to Barbançon's "unsaid" (see note 12) and to the fact that New Caledonian history is taboo and prevents people from talking about difficult pasts. Barbançon, *Le pays du non-dit*, 24–25.
[53] Sera, interview by author, September 1, 2018, Nouméa, Kanaky/New Caledonia.
[54] Ibid.
[55] Guiart, *La Terre est le sang des morts*, 101.
[56] Angleviel, "Le métissage en Nouvelle-Calédonie," 20.

example, a métis man who was not raised in a Kanak milieu recalled being asked whether he would vote for or against independence in the middle of a pro-independence family discussion. In both contexts, these practices show a defiance toward métis/ses children, who are expected to show their loyalty to the culture and/or the political struggle. In this political context, métis/ses can, therefore, be perceived as suspect by anti-independence and/or pro-independence family members, demonstrating that the political axis characterized by the division between Kanaky and New Caledonia structures and orients intimate relations in K/NC.[57] This is in spite of the fact that there are Kanak who position themselves against independence, even though they remain marginal.

Sera also highlighted the significance of yam not being gifted to the family. This decision to marry in secret and not to follow Kanak customary gestures marks a rupture with Kanak ancestral kinship. Patrice Godin explains that "what grows in the earth is nourished by the dead; therefore, the yam is nourished by the dead and nourishes the living. There is a cycle in which men and yam are in a reversed mirror relationship, and it is yam that creates the social link."[58] Consequently, the colonial dynamics at play that created the conditions for Sera's maternal grandfather to decide against this relational gesture severed the link to the land and the people and was a starting point to her family being uprooted.

Sera noted that these painful stories were not talked about openly in her family and that she and her siblings only learned about them through family conflicts. She illustrated this when she recalled some of her mother's anti-Black and anti-Kanak comments: "no, they're not my family, they're Blacks."[59] This rejection of family members based on their Blackness and Kanakness is reminiscent of Sharon Patricia Holland's concept of "blood strangers," which illustrates the impossibility of miscegenation in the context of the United States: "While race creates the possibility for blood strangers, it also employs its primary ally and enforcer, 'racism,' to police the imaginary boundary between blood (us) and strangers (them). Racism transforms an already porous periphery into an absolute, thereby making it necessary to deny all kinds of crossings."[60]

This quotidian racism appears in the familial sphere and requires seeing the family as the intimate space(s) divided by racial, cultural, and political conflicts but also as divisive in the pressures met by individuals to align themselves racially, culturally, and politically. Sera also remembered the sadness of her White maternal grandmother when recalling "The Events" and the impact it had on their family, including having to move away from their village to the capital, which was a refuge for White settlers at the time. Sera explained that she had never felt at home in Nouméa and that she feels at home and well when she is back on the east coast: "It's because I grew up here [in Nouméa]. I was forced to grow up here, even in these apartments, but in reality, it was not our life. That's why we've never ... It's been difficult for us to create an identity here." She notably linked the feeling of having no roots to their native place to the suicide of one of her siblings: "I think I lost one of my brothers

[57] See Mokaddem, "Logique de l'imaginaire clivé," 151–78.
[58] Cited in Qalue, "La quête identitaire," 13.
[59] Sera, interview.
[60] Holland, *Erotic Life of Racism*, 6.

because of this *mal-être*."[61] He did not have an identity, he had nothing, and he left young. He killed himself maybe because he had no roots, nothing at all.

Sera's story exacerbates the colonial and racist intimate histories that led her parents to sever links with their Kanak kin and land and led to the displacement of her family following racial conflicts on the east coast. It is this being *out of place* that has obstructed the construction of Sera's and her siblings' identities and psychological well-being. Unlike Anne-Marie, Sera grew up away from Kanak kin due to the shame her maternal grandmother had of being associated with Kanak people and culture. Despite the overt racism of her mother and the trajectory of her family moving from the village to the White city, she demonstrated a wish to reconnect with her family in Hoot Ma Whaap, notably, through a customary gesture of forgiveness between families that she described as "already linked by blood."[62] Sera manifested a "desire to move beyond an encounter that has in fact already occurred in the blood, and yet in time and space remains a nonoccurrence."[63] Blood may not be the only important factor to take into account in this equation, as such a gesture would inscribe itself in a relational group logic that encompasses complex dynamics of alliances, coalitions, divisions, and reconciliations that make the social field in K/NC.[64]

"The Tribe"/"The City"

The division of space between settlers and Kanak is also reflected when métis/ses speak in *sides* that are opposed to each other. These sides can be cultural, mental, or familial and are evident through and in space. This can be seen in Anne-Marie's use of the word "confront" several times to refer to what she described as two diametrically opposed worldviews and systems of representation.[65] Anne-Marie explained that "in Lifou, I had a version of life: Kanak. And then when I got here [in Nouméa], the two versions *confronted* each other." She added that she grew up in Drehu/Lifou: "So, in the end, I only had one side. I was rarely *confronted*, except when I used to come here [in Nouméa] some weekends to see my father's family, I was rarely *confronted* with the other side. And it was when I had to root myself and live here [in Nouméa] that I was *confronted* with the world of Europeans and that hardships started. Because before I didn't ask myself the question actually ... where I came from."[66]

Her métisse experience echoes the fact that, historically, métis/ses Kanak-White people live in either one of these social worlds. Moreover, she illustrated the mirror relationship between Kanaky and New Caledonia and between Kanak nationalism and European colonialism. Indeed, as Mokaddem points out, Kanaky does not make sense without (French) New Caledonia and vice versa.[67] It is the encounter of those opposing systems of representation that provoke the "identity crisis" that is often

[61] Sera, interview. I am reluctant to translate *mal-être* to "unease" or "unhappiness. *Mal-être* is a combination of the word *mal*, which is translated to "bad" or "ill," and *être*, which means "to be" or "being."
[62] Sera, interview.
[63] Holland, *Erotic Life of Racism*, 18.
[64] Mokaddem, "Logiques métisses et espace social," 154–55.
[65]Ibid., 155.
[66] Anne-Marie, interview, emphasis added.
[67] Mokaddem, *Kanaky et/ou Nouvelle-Calédonie?*, 27.

alluded to in discourses on youth and métissage. Narratively, this is often brought forward by the oppositional spaces of "the city" and "the tribe," which are deployed in a similar mirroring relationship. This is notably illustrated by a Kanak interviewee in Fagou Qalue's master's thesis on Kanak people's "quest for identity" who commented: "I would like for the younger generation to learn to respect different cultures instead of rejecting them. I have a friend who is métisse French and Kanak who has had a difficult adolescence, searching for her identity, lost between the city and the tribe, but with maturity, she has managed to find a balance so that's encouraging."[68] Being "lost between the city and the tribe" is used as a metaphor to show the challenging task of forming a cultural identity in a society structured around divisions between settler and Kanak societies.

This colonial organization of space is both real and imagined: real because spatial segregation is a social reality in K/NC and imagined because, in this construction, "the city" and "the tribe" are imagined as culturally impermeable spaces that do not communicate with each other. This geographical metaphor takes root in the historical pathologization of multiraciality. Indeed, the imagined space between "the city" and "the tribe" becomes a transitory space in which mixed-race people are suspended or trapped in between until they find a cultural and psychological balance and become "whole," therefore contributing to the "stereotype of the damaged mixed race soul."[69] This balance is often said to be developed over time as individuals age, relinquish the social pressures to be "either/or," or anchor themselves in one of these "worlds." On the other hand, the social reality points toward a skillful navigation of these spaces by métis/ses people specifically and Kanak more generally. While Anne-Marie spoke about this "confrontation" in the context of métissage, this experience is common to many Kanak whether or not they identify as métis/ses.

In fact, Tjibaou also referred to the "identity crisis" and "cultural alienation" that have resulted from French colonialism and that "make the colonized strangers to themselves and render Kanak anonymous."[70] This suggests that the individualization of the question of métissage (through the psychologization of the métis/se question, for example) and a perception of the "métis/se experience" as exceptional and unique in K/NC should be avoided. This exceptionalization of the "mixed-race experience" can contribute to anti-Black and anti-Indigenous, here manifested as anti-Kanak, racism in mixed-race scholarship and discourse.[71] Moreover, as mentioned earlier, mixed race as a category of analysis is not always relevant and it is not necessarily the most determinant factor in one's experience of racialization or cultural alienation. This being said, while many multiracial Kanak people experience the colonial world as Kanak primarily, they may experience Kanak society differently based on their multiraciality.

Farida Fozdar and Kirsten McGavin note that a recurrent theme in the exploration of mixed-race identity in the Pacific is "the complex ways in which history, and colonial history specifically, has generated mixed-race populations and current challenges for many regarding questions of authentic

[68] Quoted in Qalue, "La quête identitaire," 23.
[69] Mahtani, *Mixed Race Amnesia*, 44.
[70] Tjibaou, quoted in Bensa and Wittersheim, *La présence kanak*, 22.
[71] See Mahtani, *Mixed Race Amnesia*, 42–44.

indigeneity, and ensuing rights."[72] The opposition between tribe and city, traditional and modern, Kanak and settler also permits the association of métis/ses with assimilated identities. In fact, métis/ses people who travel between these different spaces can be made to feel as though they are cultural invaders. For example, César who was thirty-four years old when we met, is the son of two métis/ses Kanak-White parents from the main island. His grandmothers are Kanak from Waa Wi Luu/Houaïlou and Bu Rhaï/Bourail and his grandfathers are Caldoche and from hexagonal France. As we were discussing various ways he has felt othered by both "sides" of his family, he recalled: "Myself, I know that, for example, when I would go to the tribe, a silly thing, I would walk in flip-flops and someone would comment 'ah but that's typical White people's way not to walk barefoot' or something like that. So that is to say that it was as much on one side as it was on the other that we would sometimes get negative comments for which, at the time, we did not have the weapons to defend ourselves against."[73] César's wearing of flip-flops is related to his "White ways" (les manières de blancs) and therefore settler ways. The flip-flops become a marker of his otherness in the Kanak space. He does not belong because he is not barefoot, a characteristic that is put forward as more "authentic," quintessential to Kanakness and to symbolic Indigeneity more generally. Fanon notably writes: "*The settler's feet are never visible*, except perhaps in the sea; but there you're never close enough to see them. *His feet are protected by strong shoes* although the streets of his town are clean and even, with no holes or stones."[74]

In César's memory, the flip-flops are called on to show that he is culturally unfit as Kanak. Later in our conversations, César told me about having had to learn the "codes" of the "European world" and those of the "Kanak world" and to master when to use these "codes" in order to feel at peace with himself. When I asked him if he had ever been made to feel that his métissage was the cause of him not understanding or mastering these "codes," he answered: "I'm going to say yes, it was very rare but ... I'm still going to say yes. But it wasn't due to being métis. It was more related to the fact that I had grown up closer to the city. I'm not saying 'urban,' because I was never urban. But with too much contamination of the city."[75] César is from Pweyta/Païta, a town approximately twenty-seven kilometers from Nouméa, where he was predominantly raised by one of his Kanak grandmothers. César used the word "contamination" to explain the city's cultural influence on him. Pollution, dirt, and contamination can be used "as analogies for expressing a general view of the social order."[76] In using the analogy of "contamination," César alluded to his "impure" cultural identity, which he was reminded of when his "White ways" were commented on. Bringing his "White ways" in Kanak spaces disrupted the (imagined) social order of the Kanak tribe.

Craig Santos Perez, a CHamoru (Chamorro) poet and scholar, wrote in a tweet about diasporic identities: "Geography quantum is real. The closer natives live to the homeland the more

[72] Fozdar and McGavin, "Introduction," 7.
[73] César, interview by author, September 27, 2018, Koohnê/Koné, Kanaky/New Caledonia.
[74] Fanon, *Wretched of the Earth*, 30, emphasis added.
[75] César, interview.
[76] Douglas, *Purity and Danger*, 3.

'authentic' we are considered. The further away, the less 'authentic.'"[77] Drawing on the concept of "blood quantum," Santos Perez illuminates a similar colonial strategy aimed at subordinating Indigenous cultures and dividing Indigenous peoples based on colonial understandings of Indigeneity being confined to specific spaces. In this fantasy of Indigeneity, "authentic" Kanak people live in tribes, according to "traditional" knowledges, and those who do not are simply assimilated into dominant Caledonian/settler culture.[78] While this strategic essentialism comes from the long-standing devaluation of Kanak lifeways and should be read as a response to colonialism and resistance to cultural domination, this policing of bodies also reveals territoriality by suggesting that there is a correct "authentic" way of being Kanak and that there are places where Kanakness belongs more than others. Through this lens, one may assume that métis/ses who are raised and socialize primarily in "the tribe" are closer to what is imagined as the "quintessential Kanak" than those who are not.

If, as Fanon puts it, "the settler's town is a town of white people, of foreigners," then, according to César's experience, the city can mark one as/make one White.[79] Indeed, César attributed his past inability to understand "Kanak codes" (and, by association, his "White ways") to growing up in proximity to the city. Kanak sociologist Jone Passa alludes to the importance of mastering these codes for Kanak people who must perform according to the milieux they are in so that "Kanak must be able to have a [European] way of expressing themselves and go home and have another way of expressing themselves, and not make any mistakes in these ways, to be coherent within the society in which they live."[80] This is reflected when César stated that he felt he had "two brains," which, with training, can automatically adapt to the system of representation of the environment he is in or person he is interacting with. The divided spaces of K/NC create a double consciousness which requires that Kanak, mixed or not, become experts at understanding the codes of a specific space and use them adequately.[81] While not only is this skill required of métis/ses people specifically, but given the particularity of Kanak métis/ses, especially those who have relations with non-Kanak family members, this skill also needs to be used with family as well as in the public sphere, and poor performance of this skill may be attributed to racial impurity. For César, it is the mastering of this code-switching skill, to the extent that he no longer has to think about it because "it's automatic," that allowed him to be "at peace with [him]self."[82]

César's reflection also illuminates the place of Indigenous people in the city. In fact, his feeling of being "contaminated" by the city is in line with "discourses that [define] Indigenous peoples and their culture as incongruous with modern urban life."[83] Here the pollution of and by the city is so strong that César has never lived in an urban milieu, but he is still culturally contaminated. Furthermore, it is not impossible for métis/ses Kanak who have grown up among Kanak to have their

[77] Craig Santos Perez, "Geography quantum," Twitter, September 23, 2019. 6:07 p.m., https://twitter.com/craigsperez/status/1175894471885541376.
[78] On the fantasy of Indigeneity, see Paradies, "Beyond Black and White," 359.
[79] Fanon, *Wretched of the Earth*, 30.
[80] Passa, "Être parents en Nouvelle-Calédonie."
[81] See Gilroy, *Black Atlantic*.
[82] César, interview.
[83] Peters and Andersen, introduction to *Indigenous in the City*, 1.

identity challenged in "the tribe." Indeed, Anne-Marie, who grew up in Drehu, also raised the issue of authenticity:

> I have been a little traumatized by language when I was little because people would see me, blond with small curls. I was White and blond with straight hair and people would ask my mum "but does she speak Lifou?" and my mum would say "of course." Then people would say "go on, say something," but what do you say?... If you say "hello" they will think it's too easy, so what do you say to someone to prove them that.... So you see, even when I was little, I had to prove, despite being young.... It was only through language, but it's a reality I've always known.[84]

In their research on linguistic microaggressions experienced by students at the University of New Caledonia, Elatiana Razafimandimbimanana and Fabrice Wacalie put forward that the phrase *qene drehu* means both "to speak Drehu" and "to be Drehu," highlighting the significance of language as a marker of Kanak identity.[85] The reclaiming, teaching, and safeguarding of Kanak languages were at the heart of the pro-independence movement in the 1970s in a context in which cultural affirmation is fundamental to the survival of Kanak identity.[86] While the affirmation of Kanak languages still represents a political challenge today, Razafimandimbimanana and Wacalie identify the entrenchment of nativist myths in which cultural practices outside the city are perceived as "truer," "purer," and "more authentic." However, while in the city it was her "place of origin" that marked her as Other, in this instance, Anne-Marie identified her skin color, eye color, and hair type as raising suspicion as to her *Drehuness*.

This would convey that despite claims that Kanakness and Whiteness are cultural, we should not be too quick to dismiss the relevance of racial hierarchies. Indeed, because of these markers, Anne-Marie was required to participate in a "project of belonging" in which she was asked to perform *Drehuness* through speaking Drehu. According to Holland, "racism requires one to participate in ... a *project of belonging* if the work of producing racial difference(s) is to reach fruition." She uses the term "project of belonging" to indicate two sets of relations: "One is a 'real,' biological connection, a belonging that occurs at the level of family (blood relation). A crude understanding of race is that it is always already the thing that happens in the blood.... The second set of relations is the result of the work of identifying with others, a belonging usually imposed by a community *or* by one's own choice."[87]

Since it does not suffice that her mother is Kanak and that she confirmed that Anne-Marie speaks Drehu, Anne-Marie was asked to speak as a way to assess her *Drehuness*, which is put into question by the fact that she "looks White." Razafimandimbimanana and Wacalie argue that this is a form of contempt, which, in this case, signifies to the individual a refusal to be socially acknowledged

[84] Anne-Marie, interview.
[85] Razafimandimbimanana and Wacalie, "Une forme insidieuse de mépris," 21.
[86] Roche, "Les langues kanak."
[87] Holland, *Erotic Life of Racism*, 3–4.

as Drehu.[88] Among other microaggressions related to skin color experienced by their students, they, with Sylvia Frain, list: "You're mixed-race so why are you white?" and "Yeah right you're Kanak! But why are you light skinned?"[89] For some Kanak students, it appears that both culture and race are relevant in determining their "legitimacy" in the social group. This colonial discourse aims to classify Kanak according to their "authenticity" and "legitimacy" based on their degree of assimilation and proximity to French Caledonian or French culture and Whiteness. As is the case in Australia, this creates a hierarchy of Indigeneity that can "either descend or ascend, from authentic, primitive black to inauthentic, civilized or light-skinned Aborigines."[90]

While the tribe is born out of violence and forced occupation, it is also paradoxically the only customary space in the colonial landscape whereby "Kanak social life inscribes its identity and its mode of being."[91] For this reason, the tribe has become "a space to protect, to perpetuate, to save, a new meaning-making space, a safe space," but it is also a space where identity is acknowledged and denied. Indeed, Passa writes that the tribe "is simultaneously a place-bearing identity, and a place of identity imposture. A place depositary of real and symbolic identity toward a place of identity dispossession, a place stripped of meaning." For Passa, "legitimacy and place" are indicators of the reality of social mutations in K/NC. While he does not write about mixed-race people specifically but about Kanak more generally, his reflection on legitimacy and the tribe may allow us to consider what is at stake in questioning the legitimacy and authenticity of some métis/ses Kanak in the tribe. In recognizing the tribe as both a safe and unsafe place with regard to identity, Passa concludes that "this is most definitely about place. The place of Kanak in the tribe, the place of the tribe in the Kanak, and the place of Kanak society in the entity that is New Caledonia." The tribe as the "spatial creation of the Other" is the mirror of the city. If the tribe claims authenticity, it does so in a "silent struggle with the urban" against symbolic and real assimilation.[92] The policing of the boundaries of Kanakness within the tribe can be read as a survival strategy as well as a way for Kanak society to *make place* in K/NC. Some young Kanak, métis/ses or not, who are not firmly anchored in the tribe find themselves in the midst of this silent struggle. Therefore, Passa's political and symbolic understanding of the tribe allows to interrogate the place of (mixed-race) Kanak youth in the tribe, the place of the tribe within them, their place in K/NC, and "Kanak society's capacity to digest the impact of colonization."[93]

[88] Razafimandimbimanana and Wacalie, "Une forme insidieuse de mépris."
[89] Frain, Razafimandimbimanana, and Wacalie, "Speaking Back."
[90] Cowlishaw, "Racial Positioning," 184.
[91] Mokaddem, "Apollinaire Anova," 9.
[92] Passa, "Addictions et délinquance," 440–42.
[93] Passa, "Parler vrai." While it is beyond the scope of this research, an exploration of mixed race in relation to customary access to land would be beneficial since métis/ses access to land is not always guaranteed. Land reforms in K/NC designated three different types of land: customary land, private land, and land that belongs to public collectivities. Customary lands are governed by custom and texts that govern these lands, which means that civil property law does not apply to customary land. According to the Agency for Rural and Land Development (ADRAF), access to customary land depends on an individual's clan's land rights and their rights within their clan, and therefore to the "place" of individuals within their clan and of their clan within the chiefdom to which they belong. For métis/ses, access to customary land varies, depending on their parents: 1. those "born to a Kanak father and a non-Kanak mother benefit from the land rights of the father. However, the acceptance of the individual within the group remains linked to their ability to integrate;" 2. those

Conclusion

The social reality of K/NC is that seven decades after the end of the Indigénat, social inequalities persist; the concept of space is a fruitful lens through which to investigate these inequalities. While métissage is not new in the country, its celebration departs from the civil war and the Nouméa Accord, which lays the foundation for Kanak people and non-Kanak to construct a community based on a "shared destiny." Métissage has historically been used as a way to undermine the Kanak political struggle and to assert non-Kanak legitimacy in the country. The history of métissage parallels the power dynamics at play in the political sphere. If "Kanaky" and Kanak nationalism mirror "New Caledonia" and Caledonian attachment to France, métissage hardly troubles their reflection. Indeed, métissage is hardly a cultural reality in K/NC.

This article does not offer any solution or ways to move forward, but it does provide a glimpse of what embodying two opposing racial, cultural, and political groups looks like through the prism of space in a settler colonial context. When it comes to the relationship between claims of métissage within the context of anti-independence politics, Anne-Marie, César, and Sera did not identify as loyalists or anti-independence proponents. César is pro-independence and Anne-Marie and Sera were critical of the bipolar political landscape in K/NC. This calls for a more nuanced approach to the political identities of mixed-race people and to the political portrayal of mixed raceness.

Perhaps for métis/ses, a politics of partiality can be adopted, as Anne-Marie concluded: "There are situations in which we can conciliate the two, and there are some in which we can't," conveying ease and comfort in fluctuation rather than "psychic restlessness."[94] A politics of partiality would require métis/ses to be self-conscious of the limits of métissage and métisse identity in a colonial context and to resist totalizing identities.[95] Métis/ses is not a biological category but a political construction, which has indeed gained currency in recent decades, especially in its instrumentalization against Kanak sovereignty in the South Province and in anti-independence politics. This is why métis/ses should be conscious of what is done politically when métissage is claimed and deployed. At the same time, while the responsibility to build political and cultural bridges should not fall on métis/ses, being métis/ses Kanak refers to specific lived experiences that bear similarities to the lived experiences of Kanak and colonized people more generally. Perhaps, it is bridges between these experiences that should be built. Métis/ses identity will remain split as long as settler colonialism underwrites relations in K/NC.

"born to a Kanak mother and a non-Kanak father have difficulties in accessing land which can be resolved by adoption by the mother's family." Therefore, access to land is dependent on the patrilineal character of Kanak society's organization but also varies according to the practices of specific regions. For example, the ADRAF notes that in some regions of the Grande Terre and the Loyalty Islands, "where the evolution of social practices is more favorable to the integration of individuals from outside the clan or the chiefdom," métis/ses encounter fewer issues in accessing customary land. ADRAF, "Accès au foncier coutumier," accessed November 16, 2022, https ://www.adraf.nc/dossiers-thematiques/acces-au-foncier-coutumier#.

[94] Anne-Marie, interview. On "psychic restlessness," see Anzaldúa, *Borderlands/La Frontera*, 100.

[95] See Ang, "I'm a Feminist," 190–206.

Since independence politics crystalize the political debate and social life in K/NC, Mokaddem notes, there is a need for a "mental," "intellectual," "spiritual," or "thought" revolution for Caledonians and Kanak to constitute a nation together.[96] This will be a difficult endeavor since Caledonians and Kanak mostly do not inhabit the same sociohistorical spaces. Nevertheless, the development of new modes of consciousness will be necessary to transgress racial, cultural, and political codes and to develop relationships across these divided worlds. The study of mixed race in K/NC has the potential to illuminate how the colonial and racial divide persists in structuring selves and society by corroding relationships to space, land, and people; erasing histories; and regulating life. In this way, it opens the door to think through and imagine new possible modes of consciousness through which "les gens du pays" (people of the country) must develop a tolerance for ambiguity, contradiction, and ambivalence.[97]

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[96] Mokaddem, *Kanaky et/ou Nouvelle-Calédonie?*, 28.

[97] See Anzaldúa, *Boderlands/La Frontera*, 101–2.

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