Forced to follow: Indigenous women’s engagements with industry in New Caledonia

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Women and mining
Research questions

• How do indigenous women’s socially-conditioned possibilities for engagement with industry help define the wider community’s responses?

• How do companies shape women’s possibilities for such engagements?
The Northern and Southern Refineries
PACTE POUR UN DEVELOPPEMENT DURABLE DU GRAND SUD
Kanak women’s social positions: Subordination

- Domestic abuse
- Leadership – men only
Kanak women’s social positions: Transformations

• Fighting for rights
• 2000: Law on parity
Wishing for a leader near the Northern Refinery

• “Maybe in the South there are a lot of fishers – men, that is. But here, just women. That’s why.”

• Potential leaders only men
Following the leader around the Southern Refinery

• Forced to follow a senior male leader
• Anger at Pact
KNS’s marginalization of women

‘One cannot but notice that [the women] don’t have any... [chuckles] well, any real impact on decision-making.’
Vale’s exclusion of women

• ‘Personally, it shocks me, the place of women in Custom.’
• Separate meetings would have been acceptable
• Rhéébù Nùù included over customary authorities’ objections
Conclusions

How did Kanak women’s possibilities for engagement with the companies affect the wider community?
• Cultural norms prevented women’s leadership
• Lack of leadership harmed resistance

How did the companies shape women’s possibilities for engagement with them?
• Companies excluded women
• Claimed cultural sensitivity
• Ignored and undermined women’s progress
• True cultural sensitivity recognizes cultures’ dynamism
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