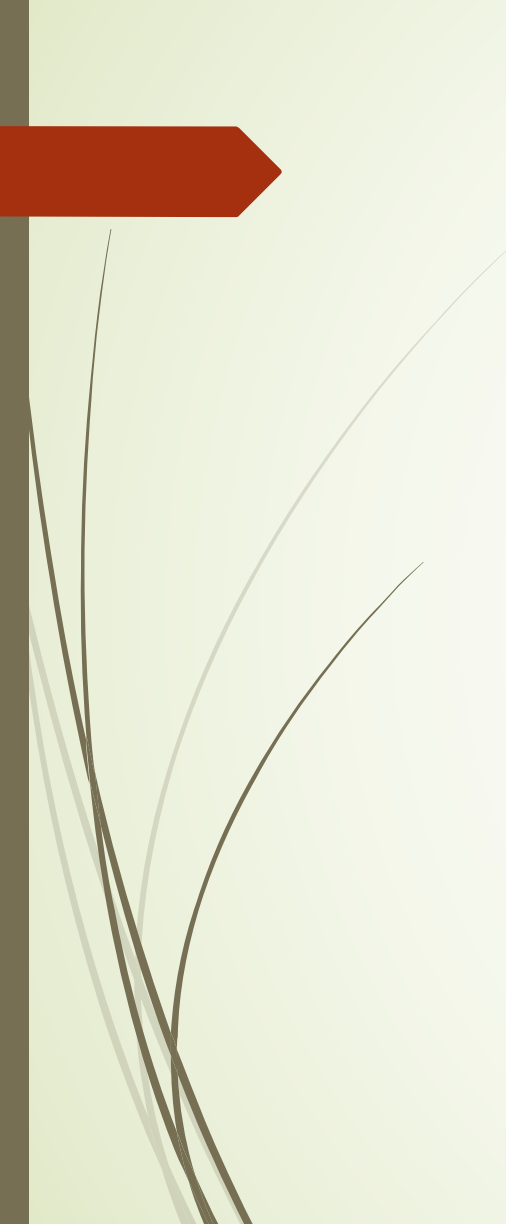


# **Enacting Popular Music from the Margins: Female Musicians in New Caledonia**

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➤ “If there is a message to pass to others, if you like music, do not hesitate to get started. It's a passion, it's something that will help you in your daily life. I know it helped me a lot. I went through difficult times and it allowed me to let go and escape. My message for young Melanesian women, I would say don't be afraid, be confident regardless of the difficulty and do not put yourself in the shadows”.

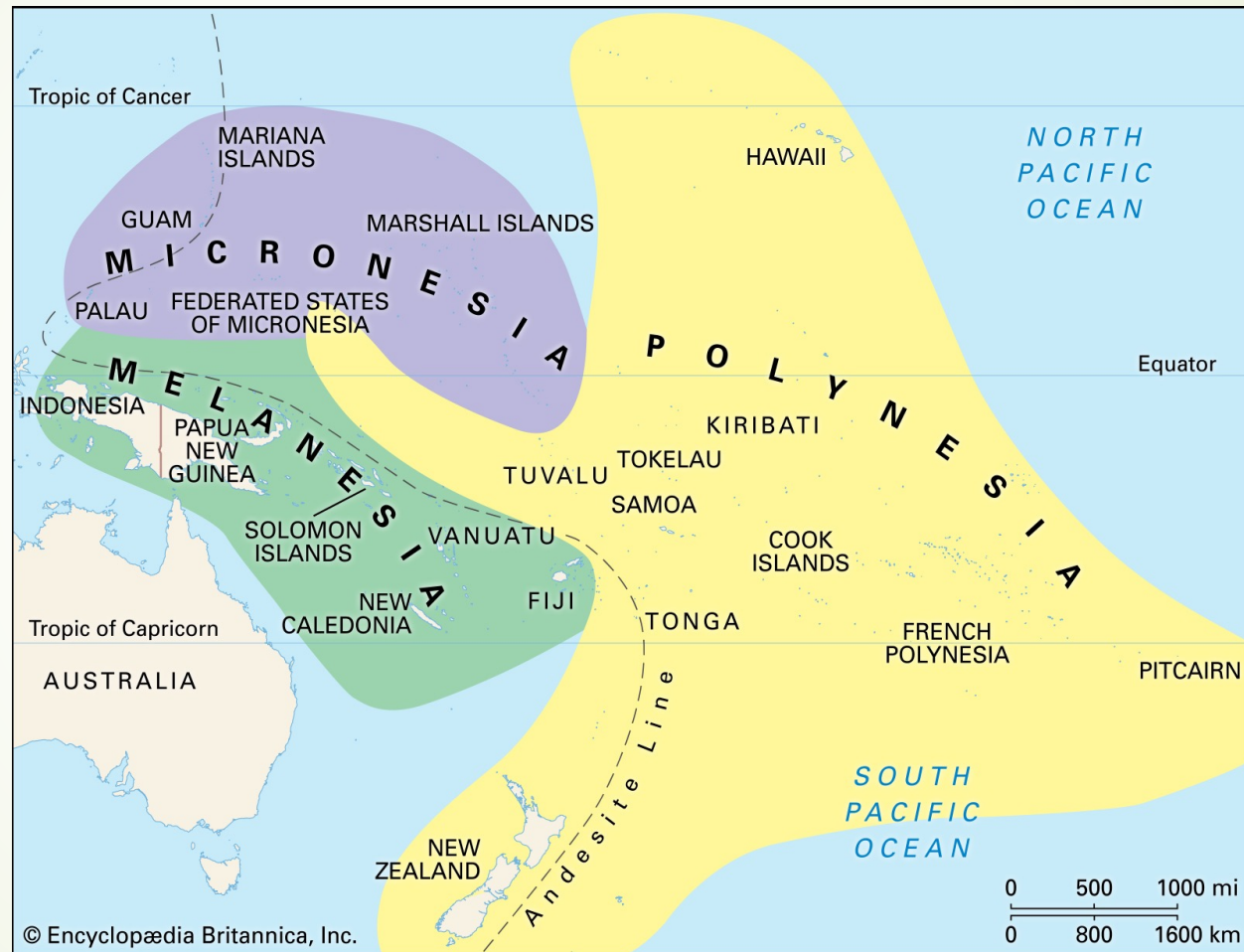
➤ (Interview with Marie, New Caledonia, September 2019).



## Background

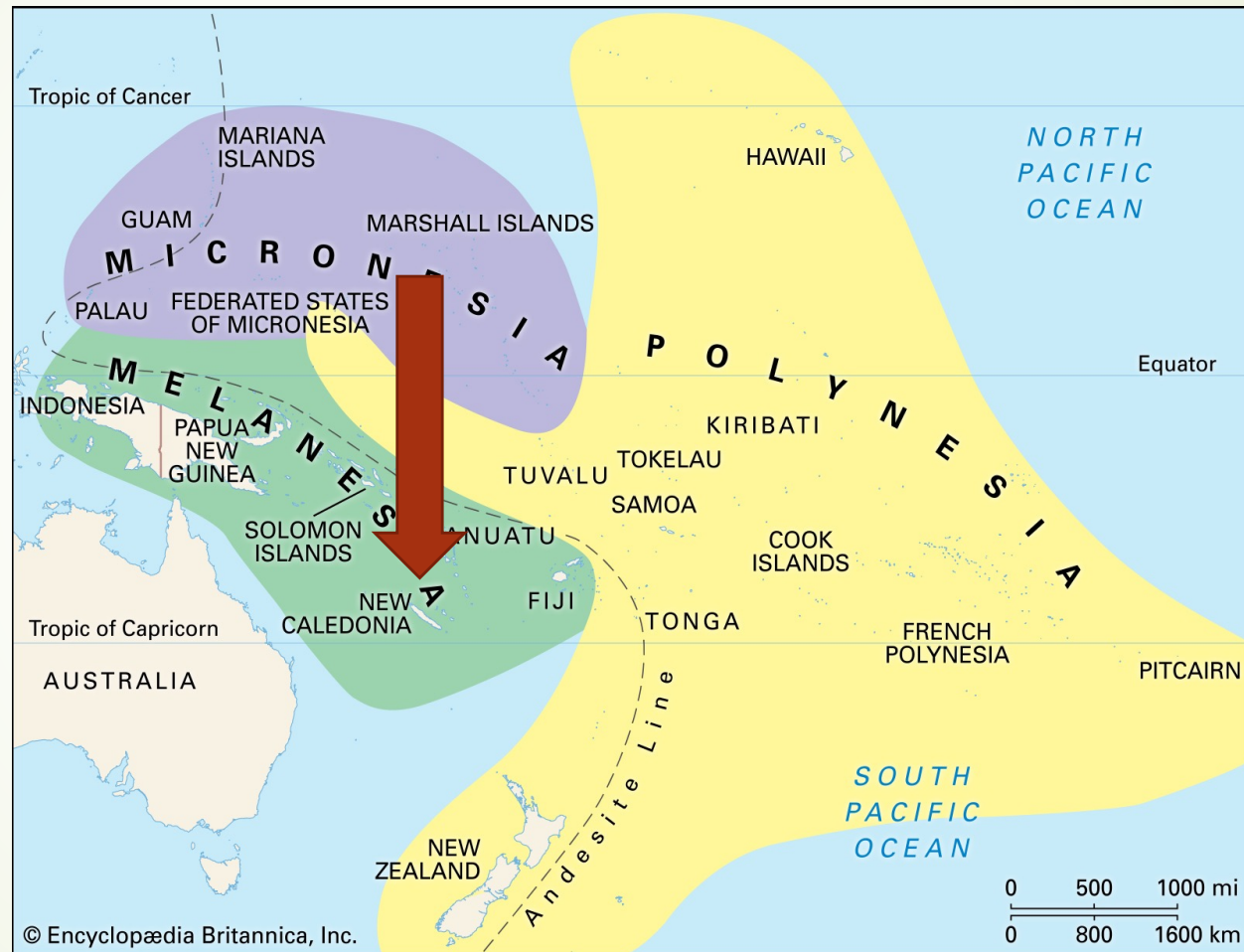
- Music and non-western cultures
- Music, globalization and digital cultures
- Minimal research relevant to women, non-western cultures, the global

# The Pacific Islands & New Caledonia



<https://www.britannica.com/place/Pacific-Islands>

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# Understanding New Caledonia

- A multicultural collectivity of France in the south Pacific Ocean.
- French & 28 Kanak languages
- Possibility of a third referendum in 2022



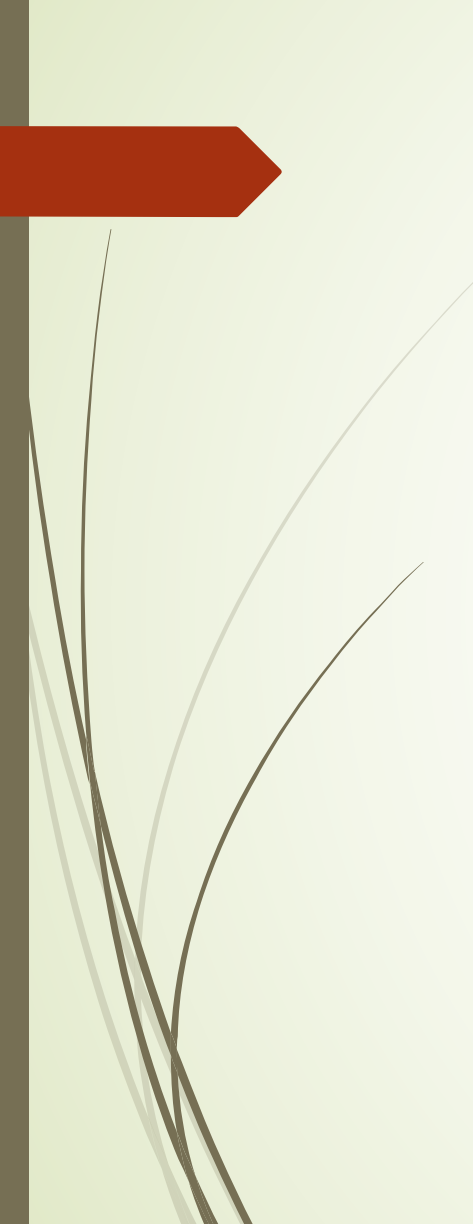
## The musicians – on YouTube





# Methodology

- Semi-structured interviews
- Questions designed to explore:
  - participants' journeys with music
  - their engagement with technology
  - how they connect to audiences beyond the Francophone islands
  - future plans
- Female women contacted, interviewed September 2019
- Interviews in French then transcribed to English
- Themes identified and across four areas:
  - Music through culture
  - Nature and island life
  - Musical practices
  - Technology
  - Making connections within and beyond the islands



Participant (pseudonym)	Age group	Language & Cultural Background	Status	Activities
<b>Thea</b>	35-45	Pacific-French, Wallisian, Futunian, Tahitian, Drehu, English	Married with children	Workshops in schools Private and public concerts
<b>Jess</b>	25-35	Pacific-French, English	In a relationship	Private and public concerts Acting
<b>Marie</b>	25-35	Pacific-French, Drehu	Married with children	Private and public concerts
<b>Alex</b>	35-45	Pacific-French, English	Married with children	Private and public concerts



## Music through culture

- Music and life are intimately connected

- "I always used to have music around me. My father plays music. The mums sing, the uncles, the aunts. Whether it's Tahitian, Polynesian, international, pop music, all of it" (Thea)

- Music starts at a young age:

- "... singing in the choirs, in the tribes, often sang religious songs with our mums, our dads and our old people" (Marie)



## Nature and island life

- Belonging, home, inspiration
- Opportunities in France but home is a key source of inspiration
- All four interviewees were very clear about its importance
  - “There is always the link with nature” (Thea)
  - “... when we make music we are inspired by what we see, what we feel and so living on an island, so yes it can be felt through my music” (Jess)
  - “ ... living on an island influences my inspiration” (Marie)
  - “Kanak culture, rhythms, sounds and lyrics, these are unique things” (Alex)



# Musical practices

- Concerts & Touring
- Song writing
- Recording
- Projects
- School workshops
- Radio
- Weddings
  
- Women increasingly coming to the fore:
  - "... there are more and more women now coming forward ... In the 2000s we began to see more women on stage in New Caledonia" (Marie)



# Technology

- Social media has extended the reach for these artists
  - “I use a lot of technology for my work. I upload videos online” (Thea)
  - “When I have short samples, I post them on Facebook” (Marie)
  - “There are many artists who use it...it is a way of breaking the distances a bit ... But at the same time there are so many things online, it can be hard to get noticed. Not all of us know how to use it well. You have to stand out and it is not easy” (Jess)
  - “... we are surrounded by technology. We have parties with music that is already done. We put YouTube on and that’s it. We no longer just grab our guitar and sing together. When I go to the far North of the main Island, I see our young people, they are listening to international music and DJs ... This is such a pity” (Thea)
  - “There is the internet but it is not the same thing. We can watch videos but it is not the same thing in terms of creating relationships. We must create real exchanges, opportunities for spontaneous conversations around a coffee” (Alex)



# Making connections

- Some travel opportunities to other islands and France
- Few opportunities to travel to Australia (despite proximity)
- Support for travel is seen as very important and valuable:
  - “... opportunities to travel have always been thanks to music. The first time, I flew on a plane was in 2005 to play music in Vanuatu. Before that, the furthest I had been was in the North of New Caledonia” (Thea)
  - “I had the opportunity to travel as a vocalist and I had the chance to accompany a group to tour in France and Morocco” (Marie)
  - “To travel is necessary because when one stays in one’s island, their mind remains closed to what is happening abroad. Going to see what’s happening outside the island is necessary to see what opportunities could become available” (Alex)
- Cultural responsibilities were also an important factor:
  - “In our culture we have obligations. We have customary work...I have a role in the clan of my family” (Thea)
  - “It was not easy as a Kanak woman to put yourself forward but there are more and more women who are starting to do so” (Marie)



## Discussion/Conclusions

- Small sample
- Music is a part of life
- Family, nature, island life is critical
- Travel has a transformative effect (particularly to France)
- Technology is a double-edged sword
- The lack of links to Australia is a concern
- Further research is desperately needed