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Countering Colonial Amnesia in Switzerland: Decolonizing and Pluralizing Knowledge towards Transformative Change

GEO 511 Master's Thesis

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Abstract

Despite an increase in awareness regarding the country's colonial legacies, public discourse in Switzerland is still marked by "colonial amnesia". This thesis draws on qualitative interviews to examine how actors involved in the field of Swiss colonial histories and Indigenous issues perceive their works' contributions towards decoloniality in German-speaking Switzerland. The analysis links decoloniality and the pluralization of knowledge as central aspects of broader transformative change. The research explores methods for disseminating decolonial knowledge and for avoiding the reproduction of colonial hierarchies of power. It further underlines the transformative potential of these endeavors, concluding that existing efforts towards decoloniality in Switzerland have the potential to pluralize knowledge and be scaled upwards and outwards towards broader transformative change.

Keywords: Colonial Amnesia, Decoloniality, Pluralization, Transformative Change

Trotz eines gestiegenen Bewusstseins für das koloniale Erbe des Landes, ist der öffentliche Diskurs in der Schweiz immer noch von einer «kolonialen Amnesie» geprägt. Die vorliegende Arbeit baut auf qualitativen Interviews auf und untersucht, wie Akteur*innen im Bereich der Schweizer Kolonialgeschichte und indigenen Themen den Beitrag ihrer Arbeit zur Dekolonialität in der Deutschschweiz wahrnehmen. Die Analyse zieht Verbindungen zwischen Dekolonialität und Pluralisierung von Wissen als zentrale Aspekte eines breiteren transformativen Wandels. Die Forschung untersucht Methoden zur Verbreitung dekolonialen Wissens und zur Vermeidung von der Reproduktion kolonialer Machthierarchien. Sie unterstreicht zudem das transformative Potential dieser Ansätze und kommt zum Schluss, dass bestende Bemühungen um Dekolonialität in der Schweiz das Potential haben, Wissen zu pluralisieren und in Richtung eines breiteren transformativen Wandels hochskaliert zu werden.

Schlüsselwörter: Koloniale Amnesie, Dekolonialität, Pluralisierung, Transformativer Wandel

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Rose Nelson, August 2024

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1. Introduction

"Teach your children
what we have taught our children --
that the earth is our mother.
Whatever befalls the earth
befalls the sons and daughters of the earth.
If men spit upon the ground,
they spit upon themselves.

This we know.
The earth does not belong to us,
we belong to the earth.
This we know.
All things are connected
like the blood which unites one family.
All things are connected.

Whatever befalls the earth
befalls the sons and daughters of the earth.
We did not weave the web of life.
We are merely a strand in it.
Whatever we do to the web,
we do to ourselves."

from the words of Chief Seattle[1]

To respond to pressing issues such as global inequality, climate change, and biodiversity loss, transformative change involving diverse knowledge systems that span disciplines and bridge the gaps between and beyond academic fields is required (Lam et al., 2020; Deutsch et al., 2023). A prerequisite for including diverse knowledge systems is the recognition of traditionally marginalized voices such as Indigenous knowledge (Lam et al., 2020). Indigenous knowledge has proven resilient to diverse crises and is based on an alternative, holistic understanding of human-environmental interconnectedness compared to dominant Western worldviews (ibid). The presumed distinction and separation between the natural and the human spheres rooted in Western epistemology influences nature conservation and sustainability efforts, which could be positively transformed by including Indigenous-informed thought (Theriault et al., 2020). For transdisciplinary endeavors situated in the West and rooted in Western epistemology to include and be enriched by plural knowledge systems, knowledge, institutions, and research must be decolonized (Edwards et al., 2020). Traditional Western and scientific knowledge systems must become decentered, allowing for the inclusion of additional, nonscientific knowledge (Lam et al., 2020). Decolonization is a continuous process of unlearning and relearning and an

[1] O, Sweet Nature (2024).

anti-colonial struggle where colonial histories are unpacked and reexamined from new perspectives (Datta, 2018).

In countries such as Switzerland, openly addressing the country's colonial legacy is complicated by the popular self-conception of Switzerland as a colonial outsider because it did not have formal colonies abroad (Lüthi et al., 2016; Purtschert, 2015). The proposition that Switzerland has nothing to do with colonialism is reproduced in history lessons, politics, media, and everyday conversations (Purtschert et al., 2012a). Despite the popular image of Switzerland as an outsider or "neutral" onlooker to colonialism as a country without colonies abroad, Swiss society benefited from and engaged in the colonial project (Kuhn & Ziegler, 2009; Lüthi et al., 2016). The inability or unwillingness to reckon with one's own colonial past and present has been described as a sort of "amnesia" (Purtschert, 2011).

Although the colonial aspect of our history is something that has received increased attention in recent years, arguments embedded in "colonial amnesia" still arise in public debates (Appiah & Mireku, 2020; Darman & Schär, 2023). Different organizations and networks in Switzerland are dedicated to countering this amnesia by spreading information on Swiss colonial histories, Indigenous communities, and speaking about (de)coloniality. Their work is central to the cause of decolonization within Switzerland due to its ability to revisibilize colonial histories and entanglements and contribute to an alternate understanding of Indigenous knowledge and communities beyond stereotyping and exotification. Furthermore, decoloniality has an important role to play in deconstructing colonial power hierarchies that negatively affect certain members of marginalized groups in Switzerland. This thesis reflects on the work that is already being done in the intersections of decoloniality, knowledge pluralization, and transformation, utilizing the topics of colonial histories and Indigenous knowledge as a proxy. The argument builds on insights gained from qualitative interviews with experts from the fields of Swiss colonial history and Indigeneity. Based on the data gathered in interviews, I evaluate the potential of this type of work to contribute to decolonizing and pluralizing knowledge in Switzerland and affect transformative change. It thereby contributes to the academic debate surrounding decoloniality and transformative change in Switzerland. This thesis investigates these topics by applying the following research question:

How do actors involved in work on the topics of Swiss colonial history and/or Indigenous peoples understand their works' contribution towards decoloniality in Switzerland?

The specific geographic focus is the German-speaking part of Switzerland. Although efforts towards decoloniality exist in the other language regions of Switzerland as well (see for example the Musée d'ethnographie de Genève), my personal embeddedness in the German-speaking context, comfort with (Swiss) German communication, and ties to local persons and organizations led to my limiting my analysis to this region. To approach the central research question, the thesis considers three sub-questions*: (1) How do these actors believe decolonial knowledge can best be disseminated in Switzerland? (2) How can this work avoid reproducing colonial hierarchies and dependencies? (3) How can these endeavors affect transformative change in Switzerland?*

Following a literature review that introduces the conceptual underpinnings of this thesis and delves into the scientific debate on Swiss colonial histories and legacies, the methodology section contextualizes the qualitative research approach and introduces the people and organizations consulted. The results and discussion section attempts to answer the three research questions.

2. Literature Review

To approach the research topic of decoloniality in Switzerland, this section begins by introducing the conceptual underpinnings of decolonization, decoloniality, pluralization, and transformative change. It then continues by exploring the scientific debate surrounding Switzerland's colonial involvement and how this has shaped the contemporary. The space conceptualized as Switzerland is critically examined, followed by an introduction to post_colonial[2] studies and their role in Swiss institutions. The narrative of Swiss neutrality is analyzed as an aspect that informs public opinions surrounding coloniality (or lack thereof) in Switzerland. Next, historic Swiss colonial entanglements are touched upon before the role of colonial remnants within Swiss society are discussed through the concepts of othering, racialization, and gender. This section thus aims to clarify key concepts and compile existing research on (de)coloniality in Switzerland.

[2] The choice of writing post_colonial rather than postcolonial or post-colonial is used by some researchers to question the implication of a temporal rupture by using the prefix "post". It is meant to allude to the intertwinement and continuation of the colonial past in the present. See e.g. Jain et al., 2012.

2.1 Conceptual Underpinnings

Colonialism describes a practice of military, economic, and political domination, control, and subjugation of a people and territory by another (Mignolo & Walsh, 2018). It is both a historical moment located loosely in the modern era between the end of the 15th century and the middle of the 20th century, and a trope for societal subjugation, domination, and violation (Dirks, 1992; Cooper, 2005). There are many ways to conceive of colonialism, where, for example, settler colonialism involves the migration of populations to the colonized territories, often with detrimental consequences to the local populations (Mignolo & Walsh, 2018). Coloniality, decolonization, and decoloniality are concepts and practices that evolved in response to colonialism and will be detailed below. Pluralization of knowledge and transformative change are also interlinked concepts that presuppose an understanding of these concepts, and definitions of both will follow. These concepts are central to the analysis and argument of this thesis.

2.1.1 Decolonization

Before trying to define the theoretical approaches of decolonization and decoloniality, it is important to realize that assuming one decolonial universal truth or definition undermines the very basis of that which is decolonial, as there is not one agreed upon way to conceive of it (Mignolo & Walsh, 2018; Tuck & Yang, 2012). Raghuram and Sondi approach decolonization as “a demand for continuous and continual process of transfer of power towards those who have suffered most acutely due to colonialism and its aftermath“ (2023 p. 3). They view an approach to this transfer of power in “dismantling the colonial matrix of power across several domains such as economy, authority and knowledge as they intersect with gender and sexuality […] and race” (Raghuram & Sondhi, 2023 p. 3). Other understandings of the term view it as an anti-colonial process that calls for a critical view of colonial histories and their contemporary legacies and that enable a centering and restoration of Indigenous knowledge, sovereignty, and land (Datta, 2018). Fostering critical consciousness, described by Frantz Fanon as “decolonizing the mind” is thus a critical first step towards decolonization (Fanon, 1963; Tuck & Yang, 2012).

As the term decolonization has gained traction in academia and beyond, it has become somewhat of a buzzword or “fashionable paradigm” (Raghuram & Sondhi, 2023, p. 4). Decolonization has thus taken on the role of an umbrella term for broader social justice frameworks (Tuck & Yang, 2012). Tuck and Yang have expressed concern over this

metaphorical usage of the term, suggesting that it distracts from the original meaning, which centered on land repatriation in a very literal sense (ibid). According to their understanding this metaphorical usage relieves settler guilt without bringing about the unsettling disturbance of land concessions (ibid). This ultimately maintains the colonial status quo and impedes the transformative potential of decolonization (ibid). One possible response to the conflicting meanings associated with the term decolonization is found in decoloniality, as elaborated on by Walter D. Mignolo and Catherine E. Walsh (2018).

2.1.2 Coloniality and Decoloniality

Mignolo and Walsh adopt the traditional understanding of decolonization as independence movements within formerly colonized territories, while recognizing that the term has undergone a significant historic change in meaning (2018). The concept of decoloniality, defined as having "emerged from the shortcoming of decolonization" (Mignolo & Walsh, 2018 p. 124), follows different aims compared to this understanding of decolonization.

Their understanding of decoloniality is based on the idea of coloniality. Coloniality is a term used to describe the colonial matrix of power, as enunciated by Aníbal Quijano (Quijano & Wallerstein, 1992). Coloniality as a concept originated within the so-called Global South as a critique of "development" and dependency theory and modernity (Mignolo & Walsh, 2018). Coloniality is different from the historic term of colonization and is understood as "a concept that uncovers the underlying logic of Western civilization, its formation and planetary expansion" (Mignolo & Walsh, 2018 p. 227). Decoloniality is embedded in this understanding of coloniality just as decolonization can be considered in response and resistance to colonization as a historic, social, and economic phenomenon (ibid).

Decoloniality as approached by Mignolo and Walsh implies delinking from the colonial matrix of power and is understood as a process of creating alternatives to and within the "modern/colonial/capitalist/heteropatriarchal order" (Mignolo & Walsh, 2018 p. 101). They describe it as follows:

> "Decoloniality denotes ways of thinking, knowing, being, and doing that began with, but also precede, the colonial enterprise and invasion. It implies the recognition and undoing of the hierarchical structures of race, gender, heteropatriarchy, and class that continue to control life, knowledge, spirituality, and thought, structures that are clearly intertwined with and constitutive of global capitalism and Western modernity" (Mignolo & Walsh, 2018 p. 17).

It is important not to view decoloniality as “a point of arrival” or static condition, but rather as an attempt at making different positions visible alongside and in contrast to hegemonic Western thought (ibid, p. 76). This does not mean that these attempts have the end goal of eradicating Western thought or coloniality itself, which are unlikely to completely disappear (ibid). Rather, it promotes moving towards alternative and plural ways of thinking and existing within the current world order. Decoloniality should not be viewed as the final truth, nor should it be enforced in the same controlling and dominating manner that is associated with the very colonial matrix of power from which it aims to delink (ibid). This is important to keep in mind as we discuss ways of disseminating knowledge that may further decoloniality as an option within Swiss society.

2.1.3 Pluralization

Understanding the concept of pluralization and its role in relation to decoloniality is central to this thesis. Mignolo and Walsh write that “decoloniality promotes pluriversality as a universal option— which means that what “should be” universal is, in fact, pluriversal, and not a single totality” (2018 p. 147). Legitimizing plural knowledge systems is an important approach when it comes to decolonizing knowledge (Lam et al., 2020). The pluralization of knowledge thus contributes to decolonization of knowledge and decoloniality. A decolonial lens allows us to critically reevaluate colonially embedded dichotomizing systems and recognize that binaries are not neutral, but serve to reconstruct power structures (Bischoff, 2012). Dualistic paradigms that have developed through colonizing structures include traditional versus modern, oral versus written, individual versus communal, nature versus culture, agrarian versus urban/industrialized, subsistence economy versus highly productive economy, and human versus non-human (Escobar, 2019; Mudimbe, 1988 in: Bischoff, 2012). Arturo Escobar calls for an acknowledgement of radical interconnectedness and plurality to counter these dominant dualisms (2011).

In “Provincializing Europe” Dipesh Chakrabarty points to the European origin of dominant ideas such as development, modernity, history, and nations, and shows how European expansion is what gave them “universal” validity (Chakrabarty, 2002; Dejung, 2012b). The dominant role of universals within modern ontology is disturbed by the concept of the pluriverse – a multiple world where many worlds become possible (Escobar, 2011; Sultana, 2022). Understanding the world’s diversity as infinite enables us to see the world as “made up of multiple worlds, multiple ontologies or realities that are far from being exhausted by the Eurocentric experience or reducible to its terms” (Escobar, 2019 p. 43).

This allows for a resistance to and challenging of Western hegemony (Sultana, 2022). Inter- and transdisciplinary efforts are believed to drive knowledge pluralization and allow societies to recognize plural epistemologies and ontologies (ibid). Indigenous thought and tradition are also central to the endeavor of pluralization, as pluralizing knowledge would include the recognition of Indigenous knowledge systems (Tengö et al., 2014; Lam et al., 2020; Latulippe & Klenk, 2020). This directly ties the concept of pluralization to decolonization and decoloniality.

Pluralizing knowledge in Switzerland in the context of a decolonial effort means giving us the chance to be informed by marginalized understandings of the world while decentering – which is not to say erasing – the hegemonic Western epistemology that has influenced our past and present. Conceptualizing decolonization, decoloniality, and pluralization ties into the concept of transformative change, which will be detailed next.

2.1.4 Transformative Change

Transformative change involves diverse knowledge systems that span disciplines and bridge the gaps between and beyond academic fields in response to the pressing global issues of inequality, biodiversity loss, and climate change (Chapin et al., 2012; Deutsch et al., 2023; Lam et al., 2020; McGregor et al., 2020). Sustainable transformation research focuses on system changes towards more “just, equitable, and sustainable futures” (Lam et al., 2020 p. 1). There is no single agreed upon definition of how transformation can be defined, however there is a consensus that it “involves fundamental change that is non-linear and non-teleological” (Fisher et al., 2022 p. 3). Additionally, Mehta et al. write that transformation “requires innovation and a profound shift in the way we think and act, including our values, consumption patterns and conceptions of well-being, which are closely associated with understandings of culture, place and identity” (Mehta et al., 2021 p. 111). This requirement alludes to the role of pluralization towards transformation.

Transdisciplinary collaborations are seen by experts to be effective measures towards transformative change (Deutsch et al., 2023). Transdisciplinarity involves research partners across academic disciplines as well as beyond academia to pluralize and maximize different voices, knowledge, and creativity and bridge the gaps between academia, policymaking, and society (ibid). Still, researchers have noted that the baseline understanding of transformation within such research tends to be influenced by Western scientific knowledge (Lam et al., 2020). Other knowledge systems such as Indigenous and

local knowledge are often excluded (ibid). A prerequisite for including diverse knowledge systems is the involvement of traditionally marginalized voices, and Indigenous knowledge has long been recognized to play a major role in transformation (Lam et al., 2020; McGregor et al., 2020). Indigenous forms of inquiry and attitudes towards human and non-human environments play an important role in informing sustainability science and fostering reciprocal relations (Whyte et al., 2016). Additionally, Indigenous viewpoints aptly draw lines between the current ecological crisis and injustices and colonialism, thereby underlining the importance of decolonization for environmental pathways (McGregor et al., 2020). Transformation and transdisciplinarity thus presuppose decoloniality and plurality, as these processes are interlinked and complementary.

Western research has only recently begun to recognize the potential of Indigenous knowledge in sustainability research, based on the holistic relationships between communities and their socio-ecological environments as well as proven abilities to overcome a variety of crises (Lam et al., 2020). The conceptualization of human-nature connectedness that these knowledge systems are rooted in differs to dominant Western worldviews and could prove insightful for successful transformation (Lam et al., 2020; McGregor et al., 2020). The deliberate inclusion of additional, nonscientific knowledge systems is an important part of decentering – though not displacing – Western, scientific knowledge within successful sustainability transformation research (Lam et al., 2020). This also directly ties to pluralization and decolonization of knowledge and research. It is, however, important that Indigenous knowledge not be treated in a transactional, extractivist manner but that efforts towards decolonizing or indigenizing institutions center around collaboration, partnership, equity, and empowerment at every stage (Latulippe & Klenk, 2020). Theriault et al. remind us that even collaborative or participatory research can be deeply embedded in colonial systems, suggesting that the consistent struggle against this would influence the transformative potential of such efforts (Theriault et al., 2020).

Mehta et al. write that “for any meaningful transformation to occur, we need to engage with change at the individual and collective (i.e. patches) as well as institutional levels” (Mehta et al., 2021 p. 113). They define “patches of transformation” as sites where unique bottom-up processes serve to reimagine societal change (Mehta et al., 2021 p. 112). These patches can consist of alliances or initiatives which challenge development trajectories and dominant power relations and “create spaces in which new practices

emerge" (ibid). The concept of "patches of transformation" will be touched upon again in the discussion.

Scoones et al. propose three separate approaches to transformation, which are not mutually exclusive and can function to complement each other (2020). They elaborate on so-called structural, systemic, and enabling approaches (ibid). While structural approaches focus on changes to the underlying ideological foundations and configurations of politics, economy, and society, systemic approaches focus on managing system dynamics as concrete targets for change (Scoones et al., 2020). This means that systemic approaches are less focused on transforming underlying structures, but rather function within preexisting structures (ibid). Enabling approaches, on the other hand, prioritize the empowerment of people and communities and the capacities that forward community involvement and action (ibid). Compared to the previous approaches, enabling approaches are more focused on processes and capacities rather than outcomes; they recognize transformation in small-scale action, or rather view the potential of individual and small-scale change to contribute to larger mobilization (ibid). These approaches are of interest when discussing on what scale decolonial action occurs in Switzerland and evaluating its transformative potential.

These four separate yet interrelated concepts of decolonization, decoloniality, pluralization, and transformative change are central to the approach taken in this thesis. They will guide the analysis and discussion as I ascertain to what extent actions in Switzerland can forward decoloniality and plurality and how this may affect transformative change. The next chapters of the literature review introduce the pre-existing literature on (de)coloniality in Switzerland by discussing research on Switzerland's colonial entanglements and how they have affected the country's past and present.

2.2 Conceptualizing Switzerland and Colonialism

Attempting to elucidate the role of "Switzerland" in colonialism is complicated by the historical timeline of the colonial project and the founding of the state of Switzerland. Dirks writes that "colonialism can be seen both as a historical moment – specified in relation to European political and economic projects in the modern era – and as a trope for domination and violation" (Dirks, 1992 p. 5). This historical moment tends to be located loosely between 1492 and the 1970s (Cooper, 2005). Although the Swiss founding myth proudly proclaims the Rütli oath of 1291 as the origin of the Swiss national identity, the

federal state was functionally founded in 1848, well into the colonial era (Komorowski, 2010; Speich Chassé, 2012). We can imagine the space that is today conceptualized as Switzerland as a product of transnational flows and processes throughout history (Purtschert et al., 2012b). The idea that states are spatially and temporally fixed entities throughout history is unhelpful and does not reflect reality (Randeria, 2012). This is as true for Switzerland as for any other modern state. The post_colonial approach centers transnationality and deconstructs the idea of limitless national sovereignty as a Eurocentric myth (Purtschert et al., 2012a). Rather than imagining European history as a conglomerate of parallel national histories, underlining historic entanglements better allows for an understanding of our colonial history as a shared European legacy (Purtschert et al., 2012a; Randeria, 2012). After understanding the nature of these transnational connections and processes, they can then be analyzed from the viewpoint of a specific place (ibid). The place chosen for the present thesis is the territory of modern-day Switzerland.

Rather than write about the activities of a “Swiss nation”, discussing the implication of historic actors in colonialism centers members of society and municipalities of important cities located within modern-day Switzerland, as well as industry and academic institutions belonging to what constitutes today’s Swiss territory. Researchers use the term “colonial complicity” to describe the way that actors in places such as Switzerland partook in hegemonic Western discourse and ruling practices and universalist thought (Purtschert et al., 2012b p. 26). While the term complicity can be helpful at times, it should not be interpreted as the intentional actions of involved actors (ibid). My aim here is to contextualize historic and contemporary coloniality, not to assign blame to individual actors.

2.3 Post_colonial Theory and Switzerland

Much of the literature that critically reflects the Swiss role in colonialism and coloniality is embedded in post_colonial theory. Post_colonial approaches try to sensitize us towards power structures and legacies of colonial thoughts and categories in everyday and institutionalized knowledge (Randeria, 2012). It can be understood as a critical approach to certain dominant understandings of cultures and histories that questions notions such as eurocentrism, modernity, or enlightenment (Purtschert et al., 2012b). Post_colonial theory can prove insightful in localizing and theorizing resistance, as it points to the way

that colonial power asymmetries must constantly be reproduced (Bhabha, 2000; Purtschert et al., 2012a). Recognizing this means recognizing the social constructedness of colonial power and the perceived hierarchies between social categories (ibid). A central endeavor within post_colonial studies is the analysis of and political resistance towards the contemporary power structures that are understood to be colonial remnants (Franzki & Aikins, 2010; Purtschert et al., 2012a). This necessarily includes the analysis and resistance towards systems that position people as subordinate due to, for example, racial, religious, or gendered terms.

Notable contributions include the edited volumes “Postkoloniale Schweiz” by Purtschert, Lüthi, and Falk (2012) and “Colonial Switzerland” by Purtschert and Fischer-Tiné, (2015). Purtschert located the difficulty in bringing topics such as racism, sexism, and colonialism into the mainstream in Switzerland because of the popular idea that these things do not exist here (2011). She writes: “The urge to understand and change Switzerland’s racist and post_colonial legacies is not only seen as troubling and unnecessary. It is seen as harmful and injurious” (Purtschert, 2011 p. 201). Additionally, reconstructing historic cases can be complicated by the time and resources that flow into research endeavors, as well as the difficulty in accessing certain archives that are in private ownership or located abroad (Brengard et al., 2020). Still, the amount of research being published within Swiss universities on the country’s relationship with colonialism has increased considerably in recent years (Erdede et al., 2020).

Following the murder of George Floyd the discussion surrounding colonial monuments and racism as a colonial remnant took off in many countries, including Switzerland (Brengard et al., 2020; Pinto et al., 2022). Brengard et al. write: “it is part of the nature of history that it is constantly written with new questions”[i] (2020 p. 47, translated by the author), arguing that adding contextualization in the form of critical evaluation of history and its legacies in public and private spaces meaningfully adds to the history. This can encourage social debates as to who and what is remembered in urban spaces (ibid).

2.4 Reckoning with Historic Entanglements

Although Switzerland did not engage in the colonial project to the same extent that other classic colonial powers did, the country can still be described as colonially complicit (Hilbrandt & Ren, 2022; Lüthi et al., 2016). The term “colonial complicity” refers to the practice within Swiss society of engaging in the colonial discourse that reproduces the

"West" as dominant and the Western knowledge system as universal (Lüthi et al., 2016 p. 4). Purtschert wrote "despite Switzerland's seeming abstinence from formal colonialism, colonial fantasies were and are prevalent for the development of its self-conception" (2016 p. 2f) and focuses her analysis on the way "techno-colonial fantasies" put forward notions of white superiority and normative concepts of progress and modernity in Switzerland (2016 p. 3). Hilbrandt and Ren draw lines between complicity and Swiss neutrality and write that "understanding the functions of complicity in the context of Swiss neutrality politics can begin by considering how complicity can function by exploiting neutrality, when it "neutralizes" or depoliticizes profound political questions like national identity" (2022 p. 596).

Switzerland's self-conception as a colonial outsider is tied to the country's history of political neutrality. The logic/mechanism of technically defined development aid and implications of neutral politics make the Swiss case of postcolonial research special (Randeria, 2012). Today Switzerland imagines itself as an ideal mediator between historic colonizer and colonized societies, envisioning itself as a party known for neutrality and humanitarianism (ibid). The idea of neutrality is the very humanitarian basis of the country (Erdede et al., 2020). Its official neutrality does not mean that Switzerland has always acted neutrally, and functionally hides economic interests along with the immaterial benefits of humanitarianism (Speich Chassé, 2012). These benefits include moral prestige and international reputation (Purtschert et al., 2012a).

Looking back at the historical evolution of "Swiss humanitarianism" paints a picture of opportunism; historically constructed Swiss neutrality resulted in isolationist politics amidst a post World War II world and Switzerland's non-membership in the United Nations (Speich Chassé, 2012). Promoting an image of Switzerland based on solidarity with the less fortunate in the world was a way of compensating for this isolationism (ibid). The image of Swiss humanitarianism harmonized with that of Swiss neutrality and was heavily aided by the happenstance that it was a Swiss citizen who had founded a politically neutral NGO in the 19th century, the red cross (ibid). Critically unpacking the origins of narratives surrounding Swiss neutrality and humanitarianism could lay bare the profits gained from this image and allow for a reevaluation of Switzerland's colonial complicity.

Past research has considered the ways that Switzerland made economic profits from colonialism (see e.g. Debrunner, 1991; Dejung, 2012a; Franc, 2017; Schär, 2015; Zangger, 2013, 2014; Zürcher, 2013). Many discussions around Swiss involvement in

colonialism have focused on unpacking the entanglements with slavery and slave trade (David et al., 2023; Fässler, 2005; Haenger, 2016; Kuhn & Kägi, 2010; Kuhn & Ziegler, 2009; Kuhn & Ziegler, 2007; Stettler et al., 2004; Strehle, 2017). Although this systematic research started only 20 years ago, Swiss implication in slavery had been known for over a century (Brengard et al., 2020). Early contributions on Swiss actors' involvement in slavery were covered by e.g. Bodmer (1946) and Peyer (1968) (Kuhn & Ziegler, 2009). Contemporary modern history research sees Swiss involvement in slavery and slave trade as self-evident (ibid).

Slavery has been a central institution of the modern age in enabling colonizers to economize land through plantation economy and stolen labor (Brengard et al., 2020). An estimated 12,5 million persons were taken from the African continent between the 16th and 19th centuries and enslaved on plantations (ibid). Switzerland was entangled in this process in multiple ways; Swiss industry was embedded in trading structures of the transatlantic slave trade, as fabrics produced in Switzerland were traded for people in Western Africa (Brengard et al., 2020; Purtschert, 2015). Throughout the 19th century, most cotton used within the Swiss textile industry was of American origin, grown and harvested by enslaved populations (Brengard et al., 2020). The Swiss textile industry, which had a key role in the beginning of industrial production in Switzerland, was thus deeply embedded in slavery, slave trade, and the commodification of land and labor (ibid). Industrialization in Switzerland came about as part of a process of global division of labor that had developed during the 18th century on the foundation of the stolen work and enslavement of laborers (ibid).

The city of Zurich invested in slavery and the trade of enslaved persons for most of the 18th century, and multiple members of Zurich high society owned plantations abroad, often utilizing stolen labor of enslaved persons (Brengard et al., 2020). Throughout the late Middle Ages and the following centuries, Swiss mercenaries were widespread and became involved in the colonial expansion from the 16th century onward (Appiah & Mireku, 2020; Koller, 2012). Their involvement included areas such as army service, surveillance on ships and on plantations in the colonies, and searching for self-emancipated enslaved persons (ibid). The direct involvement of Swiss citizens has been verified in 100 ship crossings, directly implicating them in the enslavement of between 18'000 and 25'000 individuals (Brengard et al., 2020). Furthermore, including the financial involvement of Swiss shareholders in charter companies indicates an indirect Swiss

involvement in the fates of between 169’000 and 176’000 enslaved persons (ibid). This amounts to approximately 1,4% of historical transatlantic slavery and, given that not all voyages have been thoroughly investigated, Swiss involvement was likely higher (ibid).

Rather than judging historic Swiss actors’ ties to slavery through the lens of contemporary ethics and moral standards, considering political debates and anti-slavery movements of their contemporaries is more fruitful in understanding the controversial nature of their actions at the time (Kuhn & Ziegler, 2009). This evades the risk of an ahistoric judgment of persons and societies as morally corrupt (ibid). Movements against slavery can be found in Switzerland from the late 18th century onwards, with the topic culminating in strong political and moral debates by the mid-19th century (Brengard et al., 2020). The public figures Heinrich and Alfred Escher were reproached for their direct involvement, and prominent newspapers such as the Neue Zürcher Zeitung published many articles on the topic of slavery with strong critiques of the treatment of enslaved persons in the Americas (ibid). At the same time, the Swiss economy had massively benefitted from its ties to slavery and despite society’s critical stance, records show fears about the economic impact of ending slavery and the potential collapse of the cotton industry (ibid).

2.4.1 Colonial Loot

Further proof of the involvement of Swiss actors in the colonial project can be seen in the large quantities of ethnological objects that originated from Indigenous communities abroad and are now held in various Swiss collections (Kuprecht, 2022). Some of these objects qualify as colonial loot, and, although the public discussion pales in comparison to countries that were former colonizers, Swiss public awareness as to historical wrongs has risen along with calls to decolonize collections (ibid). This has been translated to the political stage, where motions for regulations and federal strategies for colonial loot have been filed (ibid). The federal council officially supports more general provenance research (ibid).

Collections have responded self-determinedly with exhibitions that discuss colonial loot such as those curated at Museum Rietberg and Museum der Kulturen Basel (Kuprecht, 2022). This includes the organization of exchanges and cooperation with source communities, such as the Ethnological Museum of the University of Zurich and the Museum der Kulturen Basel (ibid). Collection practices have begun to shift away from ethnological objects and towards modern Indigenous artists (ibid). Speaking in the context

of the library, Erdede et al. call for decolonial knowledge to be presented alongside contested items underlining critical thinking, accessibility, and context (2020). They also emphasize the importance of allowing for opposing positions to coexist in libraries, describing the decolonial knowledge pluralization that is equally important in other public and private spaces (ibid). Simply acknowledging past wrongs is unlikely to be transformative for the populations affected if present-day societal disadvantages stemming from historical legacies are not recognized and changed (Kuhn & Ziegler, 2009). This means that moral or financial reparations alone mean little if they are not accompanied by the amelioration of the group's collective position in society (ibid). This is important to consider in discussions of decoloniality and reparations.

2.5 Swiss Society and Colonial Influences

The colonial world order goes beyond the territorial rule of the non-European world by European colonial powers (Dejung, 2012b). This order also includes the symbolic categorization between the "Western" and the "non-Western" world (ibid). On a cultural scale Switzerland has always been conceptualized as part of the "West", a world which became self-defined in relation to the "non-West" (ibid). Swiss society engaged in the colonial discourse that continues to reproduce the "West" as dominant and the Western knowledge system as universal (Lüthi et al., 2016). A Swiss understanding of self as part of a Western world is only made possible by comparing and differentiating oneself from that which is seen as not belonging to the West. Frantz Fanon (1963) described Europe as a product of the "third world", with societies of both colonizer and colonized being mutually constitutive (in: Randeria, 2012 p. 7). Edward Said (1979) wrote about the "Orient" in this context as an idea that helped define Europe as a contrasting place and a place that came about largely due to European romanticizing, exotifying, and othering (Erdede et al., 2020). The next section will elaborate on this process of othering before connecting it to racialization as a ubiquitous colonial remnant.

2.5.1 Othering

Wilopo and Häberlein wrote: "If Switzerland wants to develop further as a racism-critical society and create the scope for anti-racist action, racism and its deeply rooted traditions in our society must be recognized"[ii] (Wilopo & Häberlein, 2022 p. 93, translated by the author). The next sections elaborate on this deep-rooted tradition.

The process of othering is influential in identity building in colonial and postcolonial times (Purtschert et al., 2012b). Othering refers to the process where a group becomes seen as inherently different and regarded as inferior and subordinate from the viewpoint of a dominant group (Jensen, 2011). This process then further discursively affirms group identities as superior or inferior (ibid). Social identity theory explains othering as a result of the categorizations and self-categorizations that humans are apt to make about themselves and others around them (Hogg & Smith, 2007). As we begin to self-identify with a given group identity, we tend to adapt our own behavior to adhere to a group prototype (ibid). This prototype is an imagined ideal group member exhibiting all the characteristics, including stereotypes, associated with the group in question. Adversely, in-group identity is strengthened by dis-identifying from other groups, or out-groups. The in-group and its prototype maximize differences towards the out-group, which is imagined based on its own prototype (Hogg, 2006). Social categorizations in and of themselves are not necessarily problematic, however, when the out-group or other becomes stereotyped and discriminated against based on their group identity, a harmful process of othering is underway (Hogg, 2006; van Houtum, 2021). In this case othering is a form of categorization building on an imagined hierarchy, where the group that is othered is judged to be lesser than the dominant group.

Othering in (post-)colonial times means that the “modern nation” comes to define itself based on a rhetoric that looks down on the premodern/archaic/primitive other (Purtschert et al., 2012b). Within Switzerland, alpine and nomadic peoples as well as the Jewish population were categorized as internal others throughout history (Falk, 2012; Pinto et al., 2022). This internal othering functionally bolstered the Swiss national identity (Pinto et al., 2022). Othering processes paralleled the othering of Indigenous peoples in the colonies. Both so-called “primitive peoples” as well as alpine populations were idealized as groups living in harmony with nature, putting them in direct comparison to the technologically advanced modern populations of the European cities (Purtschert, 2015; Schär, 2008). The alpine population was at times understood as a local likeness to Indigenous groups (Purtschert et al., 2012b). While European societies were imagined and portrayed as having a history leading up to a point of contemporary “development”, Indigenous peoples were presented ahistorically and likened to early European societies (Dejung, 2012b). Popular narratives in Switzerland surrounding Indigenous peoples were largely influenced by othering processes and colonial discourse. Renschler has written about the Indigenous communities of North America and the othering and prejudice they faced (Renschler,

1980, 1981). The next section delves deeper into the concept of “racialization” as a categorization process that is linked to othering.

2.5.2 Racialization

The construct of “race” can be understood as a result of processes of categorization that construct and create inequalities (Pinto et al., 2022). Contemporary notions of “race” within a given context can be analyzed as a remnant of colonial structures (Lüthi et al., 2016). Writing about everyday racism and stances towards migrants, Andall and Duncan write “colonialism is embedded in the contemporary” (Andall & Duncan, 2005 p. 21). In Switzerland, intellectuals and general society can be seen as participating in colonialism by reproducing racializing discourse promoted by the colonial project on academic and societal scales (Lüthi et al., 2016; Michel, 2015; Purtschert, 2015). Racist imaginaries circulated then, and continue to do so now, both within and beyond national borders in Europe (Purtschert et al., 2012b). Even in colonial times Switzerland was not a mere bystander but actively participated and shaped imaginaries of race with long-term effects.

Research has considered how Swiss scientists were involved in efforts to prove a scientifically founded “race theory” and how Zurich’s own institute of anthropology held a leading role in this endeavor (Kuhn & Ziegler, 2009; Purtschert, 2015). In the colonial project, science and power thus became mutually constitutive: scientific research of “race theory” built on colonial thought and tried to legitimize and categorize human difference through science (Purtschert et al., 2012b). These research efforts built on subjective and racist methodologies including the research of bodies, craniology, and “mental capacity” in an attempt to prove the superiority of an imagined “European race” (ibid; Germann, 2015 p. 42). Swiss scientists participated in this and promoted eugenicist discourses (Michel, 2015). Pascal Germann suggests that this, at the time, highly influential research deeply influenced which features came to be associated with racial differences (Germann, 2015). Locating the roots of contemporary racism in colonialism is not meant to suggest that there was no form of precolonial differentiation and subordination between different groups of humans (Darman & Schär, 2023). Many aspects of the pre-colonial “protoracism” later became essential basics of modern racism; categories of differences included physical appearance such as hair and skin color, facial and bodily characteristics, as well as ancestry and “purity” of blood (ibid). However, this so-called protoracism did not yet systematically result in hierarchical exploitation and power asymmetries (ibid).

Through the processes described above the notion of “race” thus becomes constructed and constantly reconstructed as a category of human difference (Bischoff, 2012). Skin color becomes a racial marker, and Blackness becomes a “race” – one that is conceptualized from a White vantage point (ibid; Kilomba, 2021). Whiteness, however, does not see itself in racial terms; it is invisible and unmarked, and thus reproduced as the norm (ibid). Everything else – everything conceptualized as non-White – becomes an abnormality or other. Colonial exhibitions or “Völkerschauen”, wherein humans belonging to diverse ethnic groups were exhibited in practices likened to “human zoos” across Europe reproduced colonial imaginaries of “race” (Michel, 2015). They engender the specifically colonial practice of representing and understanding the world as an exhibit or stage to be explored, a world where non-Europeans become objects of intense curiosity (Randeria, 2012). Rea Brändle wrote extensively about this practice of displaying persons from colonized regions for the benefit and entertainment of a White audience (Brändle, 2007, 2013; Darman & Schär, 2023). The most recent such exhibition in Zurich took place in the 1960s (Purtschert et al., 2012b).

The racialized other (e.g. “Black” or “African”) provided Switzerland with a group to collectively disidentify with, bolstering the Swiss identity as White and European (Michel, 2015). Colonial concepts, imagery, and language reproduced White superiority on socio-cultural and political scales and became “part of our collective stereotype reservoir” (Purtschert et al., 2012b; Schuhmann, 2007 p. 108). Everyday racism in images, children's books, and alpine poems shaped the identities of generations of Swiss people (Randeria, 2012). The long-term effects of this can still be recognized today within the unquestioned association of Swissness and Whiteness, as well as contemporary forms of racism (Michel, 2015). Purtschert notes that “the notion of Switzerland as inherently white is also currently being challenged by a growing historical strand of research that sheds light on non-white accounts of Swiss history” (Purtschert, 2019 p. 80). This research shows the nation’s Whiteness as an exclusionary construct while anti-racist activities challenge the notion of the nation as inherently White (ibid). By critically analyzing the central role of “race” in the imagination of the Swiss nation, it can be linked to discussions surrounding othering and coloniality (ibid).

Analyzing the history of racialization in Switzerland must necessarily include non-White, anti-racist histories and voices. Darman and Schär wrote: “The (hi)story of European colonialism and racism is always also a (hi)story of resistance”[iii] (2023, p. 100, translated

by the author). People of Color have been speaking about racism and headlining anti-racist movements in Switzerland for decades; however, it was not until recent years that increasing numbers of White members of society started to engage (Pinto et al., 2022).

Contemporary research lays bare today's racism and anti-migration discourse in Switzerland and draws links to colonial histories. Falk (2012) and Kaya (2012) describe the condemnation and illegalization of migrants and immigration as a continuation of colonial violence that has shifted from former colonies to processes within Western countries. Lüthi and Skenderovic (2022) and Wilopo and Häberlein (2022) dissect the racialization of migrants in discourse on asylum processes, where the latter draw lines to the image of Switzerland's humanitarianism:

> «An examination of racialized immigration enables a critique of the image of "humanitarian" Switzerland, which is challenged by the presence and practices of resistance of rejected asylum seekers. Because Switzerland's emergency aid regime is anything but humane» [iv] Wilopo & Häberlein, 2022 p. 93, translated by the author).

Additionally, Michel (2022) and Schilliger (2020) analyze racial profiling in Switzerland, with Schillinger positioning it as "a manifestation of how the state produces the exclusion of racialized subjects from citizenship on an everyday level" (2020 p. 532). She links this practice to othering and additional related aspects of colonial discourse (ibid).

The collection volume "Un/doing Race: Rassifizierung in der Schweiz" contains insightful analyses on the issue from different perspectives (Pinto et al., 2022), including chapters touching on anti-racist horizons (Jain, 2022; Ohene-Nyako, 2022; Pétrémont, 2022). Other notable contributions include Bischoff's (2012) analysis of racialized discourse in Swiss media, Lavanchy's (2015) analysis of whiteness in the Swiss context, and Minder's (2011) influential contributions concerning public discourse in Switzerland regarding the African context in "La Suisse colonial". Khazaei (2022) and Späti (2022) analyze islamophobia and antisemitism in Switzerland, while Boulila (2019) discusses how racial denial in Switzerland connects to the harmful discourse surrounding Muslim communities as "backward", "barbaric", and "dangerous". Boulila writes about "raceless racism" in this context as a Swiss approach that denies any embeddedness in European coloniality and colonial history (2019). Racial categories are intimately intertwined with gendered categories, which are approached in the following section.

2.5.3 Gender

Brengard et al. (2020) explain why a gender dimension is missing from most research on Swiss colonial involvement, explaining that data about women and the poor is sparse – and glossing over the fact that men also have a gender. Yet we come to understand certain gender dimensions of colonial discourse when analyzing the different ways of writing about men and women from colonizer and colonized societies. Darman and Schär write that racism is always gender specific, alluding to the fact that insights into colonial narratives surrounding racial, sexual, and gender categories are best understood through an intersectional lens (2023). For example, a parallel form of "feminization" can be seen when writing about so-called "savages" and homosexual men from a colonial perspective (Purtschert, 2012). When analyzing sexuality and homosexuality amongst colonial legionaries, the "exotic" surroundings of the colonies are made responsible for their sexual deviance (Koller, 2012). Concurrently, sexual fantasies were projected onto colonized lands and peoples (Falk, 2012; Koller, 2012). The hyper-sexualization of Black women and men that persists in Switzerland today can be viewed as a harmful remnant of these colonial imaginaries (Falk, 2012).

Modern-day discourse on femininity and masculinity as they intersect with "race" and heritage are ripe with colonial ideas of difference. Calderaro and Lépinard (2021) explore the intersection of feminist emotional dynamics and race in Switzerland as a "color-blind" context. Kaya's analysis of the Swiss context shows how the Western perspective degrades "Third World women" while painting Western women as emancipated (2012 p. 121). This directly correlates with imaginings of Third World men, which Kaya explains in terms of islamophobic narratives in Switzerland: "While the Muslim man is always already sexist by virtue of his culture, the sexism of the Swiss man is viewed as an individual problem that has nothing to do with his culture"[v] (Kaya, 2012 p. 123, translated by the author). Unpacking the narratives surrounding gender as they intersect with "race" and other social categories is central to decolonial discourse in Switzerland. While my analysis alludes to potential impact and involvement of marginalized groups, a more detailed analysis is beyond the scope of this thesis.

3. Methodology

3.1 My Positionality

It is important that I reflect on my own positionality in writing about decoloniality here. I was born and partially raised in a settler-colonial country, the United States, to which I am not Indigenous. My ancestry is European, and my ancestors arrived in the U.S. in the 19th and early 20th centuries, fleeing poverty and pogroms. I came to Switzerland as a first-generation migrant as a child, where I had the privilege of becoming fluent in Standard German and the local Swiss German dialect, gaining dual citizenship, and partaking in Swiss higher education. This partially influenced my decision to focus the analysis on the German-speaking part of Switzerland, as I was able to interview people in Standard and Swiss German and was more familiar with the local context and culture.

My family's background means that our migratory position aligns more with the so-called "expatriate" community, referring to privileged migrants from generally higher income countries than to the lower income migrants who are imagined as non-White, non-Western, and non-elite (for a critical analysis of the category "expatriate" and its link to coloniality, see Kunz, 2016). In Swiss society my Whiteness and fluency in the German language allows my migratory background to go unnoticed. I am similarly at ease in navigating U.S. society. My upbringing and education have thus taken place within and been influenced by the Western context. At the same time, I believe my cross-cultural upbringing gives me a somewhat nuanced vantage point when it comes to the Swiss context, inhabiting space as both insider and outsider to certain imaginings of the "Swiss nation."

As a queer Jewish woman, I have a certain level of insight into the embodied experience of marginalization on religious, sexual, and gendered terms. At the same time, I am privileged in the intersectionality of my own identities and generally have the privilege of being able to choose whether to disclose these aspects about myself with others. Neither my religious background nor sexuality are immediately apparent or visible as I move through society as a White cis-gender woman who mostly adheres to superficial gender norms. Aside from my migratory background, my religious identity is one that has made me feel to be an outsider to the dominant imagining of a Swiss nation as White and Christian (Pinto et al., 2022). I have reflected on this both personally and academically

and concluded that it is immediately necessary to pluralize the concept of the Swiss national and depart from the White, Christian prototype (ibid). This is a topic that I will touch upon later in my analysis.

My multi-faceted identity means that I have first-hand experience in how coloniality and power dynamics intersect with gender, sexuality, and racialization. I believe this enables me to empathize with other marginalized persons' struggles, and to view our emancipatory struggles as different but interconnected. At the same time, I recognize my own privileged position in Swiss society and beyond, and I see my experiences as my own and different to those both of people belonging to my own diverse communities as well as other marginalized communities.

I began to occupy myself professionally with the topic of Indigenous culture and rights in 2023 when I participated in a six-month internship at Incomindios, the International Committee for the Indigenous Peoples of the Americas, which is based in Zurich. This experience bolstered my identity as an ally to Indigenous rights movements, and I had the chance to engage in these movements on multiple occasions at the United Nations. I was able to make lasting contacts and gain a deep appreciation for the work of diverse Indigenous activists and knowledge holders at international fora such as the Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, the Human Rights Council, and the Forum on Business and Human Rights. It was during this internship that I officially began this thesis. My work at Incomindios and the networking opportunities it opened for me were influential in the partnerships that have made this research possible.

3.2 Data Collection

The research question asks how actors focused on Swiss colonial history and/or Indigenous peoples understand their works' contribution towards decoloniality in Switzerland. To approach this question, I engaged in qualitative research building on expert interviews. I conducted 11 qualitative interviews with a total of 12 participants who are involved in work that aims towards sensitizing people in Switzerland to the topics of Indigenous peoples and/or Switzerland's colonial history. My reasoning in the number of interviews conducted was that I quickly recognized certain reoccurring themes and felt a point of saturation had been reached. Interviews held later in the data collection phase served to bolster previously gained insights while fewer new topics arose. Interview

partners were based in different cities in the German-speaking part of Switzerland and involved through paid or unpaid work in a variety of networks and organizations.

My personal involvement in Incomindios gave me an entry into this field, and I was able to benefit from personal and organizational contacts. My sampling method took on a hybrid form, starting out as a purposive sampling method in which I reached out to contacts within the field that were representative of the type of work in which I was interested (Lune & Berg, 2017). This included personal contacts that I had made through my previous internship at Incomindios as well as organizations which I had come across through my involvement at Incomindios and during early research, choosing to reach out when it came time to plan my interviews. One limitation of purposive sampling is its lack of wider generalizability (Lune & Berg, 2017). Given the qualitative nature of my research focus, and the fact that this area can still be described as somewhat niche in Switzerland, I judged this sampling method to be appropriate. However, as some of the organizations and people I reached out to did not respond or were unable to accommodate time for an interview, I was able to include additional expert interviews through a snowball (chain referral) sampling method. This method allowed me to reach additional people who were referred to me by other experts, including my own interview partners as well as people who were unable to join my research as interview partners.

I conducted the interviews with the aid of the interview guide in the appendix, audio-recorded them with the partners' consent, and later transcribed them. The interviews followed the guide in a semi-structured manner and many of the supplementary questions were not asked in conversation. I tried to allow the conversation to flow and make space for digressions and unexpected topics throughout. One of the interviews ended up diverging quite heavily from the script due to time constraints, and the interviews ranged in length (see table 1). Additionally, given that some of my interview partners do not work directly around Indigeneity, I skipped or adapted the questions formulated around this in some of the interviews.

Table 1: Information on the individual interviews

Interview	Name/ Pseudonym	Interview Date	Duration of Interview (recording)	Interview Language	Location
1	Ann	05.01.2024	1:47:31	Swiss German	In person, Café

2	Monique Ligtenberg and Stephanie Willi	10.01.2024	45:53	High German	Zoom
3	Simon Meyer	29.01.2024	59.53	Swiss German	Zoom
4	Helena Nyberg	31.01.2024	2:15:55	English	Zoom
5	Karl Johannes Rechsteiner	05.02.2024	1:36:28	High German	Zoom
6	Stephan Wittmer	06.02.2024	30:26	High German	Zoom
7	Christoph Wiedmer	07.02.2024	35:27	High German	Zoom
8	Lucas	06.03.2024	1:23:11	Swiss German	Zoom
9	May	20.03.2024	21:46	English	In person, Café
10	Nora	03.04.2024	40:59	High German	In person, Bar
11	Manda Beck	05.04.2024	57:09	Swiss German	Zoom

3.3 Organizational Background

The organizational and personal involvement of the experts interviewed is diverse and covers a range of fields. My interview partners and their organizational backgrounds are briefly detailed in the following table, following the structure of the interviews as detailed in Table 1. This information is an integral part of understanding why and how their work is being framed as decolonial in the following analysis.

Table 2: Individuals and Organizations

Name	Field	Organization(s)
Ann	Anthropology, advocacy, provenance research	Currently involved in two Indigenous rights' advocacy organizations, past involvement in provenance research

Monique Ligtenberg and Stephanie Willi	History of Science, colonialism	Zürich Kolonial (co-founders) [website offers virtual guides of Zurich's colonial history and in-person tours facilitated by Anny-Klawa-Morf association]
Simon Meyer	Art, curator, photo-documentation,	Museum Nienetwil, 2024 Inninoo exhibit on Indigenous Stereotypes (curator)
Helena Nyberg	Interpreter, translator	Incomindios (involvement since 1980, members' magazine and UN mandate), involved in Swiss Energy Foundation; Amerindias (founding and board member); Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF) (board member)
Karl Johannes Rechsteiner	Communications consultant, knowledge dissemination, documentation, education	Connexion (co-founder) [database on Swiss involvement in slavery, city tours on Bern's colonial history (as well as other Swiss cities)]
Stephan Wittmer	Artist, photographer	Inninoo exhibit at museum Nienetwil; personal involvement in U.S. reservations Rosebud and Pine Ridge
Christoph Wiedmer	Teaching, non-profit management	GfbV [Gesellschaft für bedrohte Völker] (former co-director) [advocacy organization with focus on human/ minority/ Indigenous rights; regional focal points include Indigenous peoples of arctic region, minorities in China, intersection of economy and human rights, conflicts between companies and local communities] former involvement in Greenpeace
Lucas	History, curator	Research on Indigenous cultures, histories, postcolonial visibilities; exhibition on Indigenous culture (museum D)
May	Environmental engineering, art-science	Network A [network of mostly academics interested in decoloniality]
Nora	Provenance research	Independent collaborator at museum A
Manda Beck	History, colonialism, afro-diaspora	Exhibition "Blinde Flecken – Zürich und der Kolonialismus" [blind spots – Zurich and colonialism] a 2023 exhibition on the colonial history of Zurich in the city government office of Zurich (freelance co-curator); it was the most visited exhibition in the history of the office (Stadt Zürich, 2023).

With regard to sensitizing the Swiss public to the topic of Indigeneity and contributing towards decoloniality and knowledge pluralization, many interview partners shared the view that Swiss colonial history should become part of our general knowledge in Switzerland. Much of the work done by these people, organizations, and networks can be described in terms of knowledge dissemination: knowledge on Indigenous communities and/ or Swiss colonial history is spread among the population through their various involvements in educational areas, museums and exhibits, guided tours, and advocacy. Cooperaxion, Zürich Kolonial, and Manda's work communicates knowledge on colonial histories and entanglements within Zurich and Bern respectively; Nienetwil, Museum A, and Museum D disseminate knowledge about Indigenous peoples and cultures through temporary or permanent exhibits; GfbV spreads information on threats to Indigenous communities and other minority groups through social and mainstream media channels, with a focus on environmental aspects.

The potentially decolonial nature of this knowledge is that it encourages a reflection on our own colonial histories and, while certain efforts detailed above focus more specifically on Indigenous peoples, lines are also often drawn to other minority groups (Datta, 2018; Mignolo & Walsh, 2018). In discussing how this work can be positioned in terms of decoloniality, I base my analysis in an understanding of decoloniality as continuous work (Mignolo & Walsh, 2018). This work is not done with the goal of reaching an end point of decolonization, as I do not view decolonization or decoloniality as an end goal that can be achieved and completed. I locate the decolonial potential of this work in the attempt to revisibilize colonial histories and their legacies and contribute to a critical reflection. This can include questioning power dynamics that have led to certain forms of knowledge being more dominant and allowing for a holistic appreciation of diverse forms of knowledge as entailed in the concept of knowledge pluralization (Chakrabarty, 2002; Escobar, 2011). I also consider work that purposefully points to ways the colonial matrix of power shape our everyday experience as contributing to a decolonial endeavor (Raghuram & Sondhi, 2023). Importantly, this is not to say that this work alone can or should be sufficient in decolonizing knowledge and institutions – it is a contribution, and in my opinion a necessary one.

Decoloniality was additionally centered by laying a focus on Indigenous peoples, cultures, and knowledge as being central to decolonial approaches (Datta, 2018). In drawing lines

to the Swiss context, I view it as necessary for an analysis of decoloniality to include marginalized groups within Swiss society. Furthermore, the focus on Indigeneity is not shared by all expert perspectives, but a critical consideration of how these topics may connect with the racially, religiously, sexually, or otherwise marginalized in Switzerland proved overall insightful. I locate a decolonial potential of this work in its ability to make power hierarchies within Swiss society visible. Attempting to dismantle these hierarchies and recognizing the plurality that already exists in Swiss society would be an important step towards decoloniality.

3.4 Ethical Concerns

Before conducting each interview, I shared an informed consent form with the participants, introducing the purpose and process of the study and informing them about their rights and confidentiality. One of my later interview partners questioned my original decision to anonymize the names of the experts interviewed, raising the issue that this undermined my data. They felt that being able to name my experts would bolster my arguments and findings. I ruminated on the ethical implications of asking participants who had given interviews under the impression of anonymity to reconsider and have their names affiliated with my thesis. I decided to reach out to the participants with an explanation for why I was considering adapting this part of my methodology. However, it was important to me that no one felt pressured and that I make it clear that I would fully understand and honor any decision to retain anonymity. Still, I felt names would also give credit where it was due. Responses differed and, while the majority decided to fully dissolve anonymity, some asked to retain it and for me to use a pseudonym.

Some of the questions in my interview guide [see annex] asked about “the Swiss general public”, “broader society”, or “people’s reactions”, which caused a moment of contention in some of my interviews as one or two of the experts pointed out that “the question is: what does broader society mean?” (- Stephan). This was a valuable reminder to me not to essentialize Swiss society. After all, some of my questions specifically touched on the issue of marginalization and minorities within Switzerland, not to mention the central role of plurality within my interview guide. Would pluralizing and recognizing multi-culturalism and diverse life experiences within Swiss society not complicate the idea that experts could make claims about “the Swiss public” or society? A critical reflection on power

relations and colonial legacies positioning some people within Switzerland as “more” or “less” Swiss and, thus, more or less constitutive of the Swiss public is necessary.

Understanding how a certain image has come to be viewed as prototypically and stereotypically Swiss, can build on insights from inter-related social theories; social identity theory (Hogg, 2006; Hogg & Smith, 2007), groupism (Brubaker, 2007), or Benedict Anderson’s “imagined communities” (Anderson, 1991), as well as the theory of othering as elaborated on above in section 2.5.1 prove insightful. The overarching idea was that, as individuals categorize themselves and others as part of a group, a prototypical group member springs to life in the minds of both those identifying with and dis-identifying with a given community. Because of the complexity of peoples’ social identities, no true member fully adheres to this prototype (Hogg, 2006; Hogg & Smith, 2007). These complex processes are seen as a breeding ground for stereotypization and discriminatory behavior (ibid). In taking a decolonial approach my aim is not to reproduce imaginings of Swiss society based on an essentialized prototype, but to recognize the internal diversity and the plurality that already exists in Switzerland.

3.5 Language

Interview languages varied between Swiss German, Standard German, and English. I gave the participants who spoke all three languages the option of choosing which language they were most comfortable in, though I expressed my preference for English and Standard German for transcription purposes. It is important to mention the interconnectedness of language and coloniality here. In Swiss German speaking regions of Switzerland, Standard German is still used as the primary written and taught language, seeing how Swiss German never functionally underwent the process of becoming a written language with standardized grammatical rules and standardized vocabulary – to this day it remains a way of speaking, or dialect. Still, many Swiss German speakers view it as their first language, feeling Standard German akin to a second language (Studler, 2017). Nonetheless, many of my interview partners agreed to an interview in Standard German.

Two of my interviews were held in English. The hegemony of English as a colonial language across domains directly ties into the discussion surrounding colonial legacies (Sahlane & Pritchard, 2023). The dominance of the English language means that knowledge produced in English has the advantage of becoming more universal and is thus more valued (Müller, 2021). This means that for non-native English speakers to be heard

more widely, they are expected to express themselves in English (ibid). Depending on levels of fluency this can be fraught with the discomforts of communicating in a second or third language.

To accommodate my process, many of my research partners endured the somewhat uncomfortable situation of speaking in a manner which would ease my transcription process. While many agreed to switch to Standard German without complaint and navigated the conversation without any issues, at least one person told me after their interview that it caused them quite some effort to converse in Standard German. Notably, almost all conversations began and ended in Swiss German (including one of the ones conducted in English), exemplifying the ease and perhaps more informal feeling of Swiss German conversations. One of my interview partners specifically insisted on conducting the interview in Swiss German, drawing on the coloniality of English and Standard German languages and elaborating on the points mentioned above. The interplay between languages and coloniality is well worth remembering and reflecting on.

3.6 Analyzing the Data

Upon completing the interview transcripts, I developed a coding system using an inductive-deductive approach. First, I developed a coding system deductively based largely on the interview guide and preconceived codes derived from it. This was then supplemented and adjusted inductively with the consideration of the data in the transcripts. The result was a coding system with 46 codes, consisting of 6 main codes and 40 subcodes [see Annex]. After coding the dataset in MAXQDA with the finalized coding system, 735 individually coded sections emerged.

In the analysis section I attempt to balance the use of direct quotes, which allow experts' thoughts to be reflected in their own (albeit translated) words. I consciously decided against including the quotes in their original language, with the exception of the two interviews that were held in English. This decision is meant to further protect the anonymity of those experts who chose to remain anonymous, as I believed the Swiss German quotes are more easily linked to individual linguistic regions. Due to the differences in lengths of the interviews as well as different focal points certain voices are reflected more visibly than others. The quotes included are, however, only a small subset of the insights upon which the analysis builds, and every single interview partner contributed immensely.

4. Results and Discussion

I begin my analysis of the data by contextualizing my interview partners rationales for working in this field and potentially contributing towards decoloniality. This approaches the central research question by helping to contextualize how they view their works' contribution towards decoloniality in Switzerland. Later, the analysis section focuses concretely on answering the research questions. The main research question regarding how actors working on Swiss colonial history and/or Indigenous peoples understand their works' contribution towards decoloniality in Switzerland is approximated by the following questions:

1. How do they believe decolonial knowledge can best be disseminated in Switzerland?
2. How can this work avoid reproducing colonial hierarchies and dependencies?
3. What is the potential of these endeavors to affect transformative change in Switzerland?

4.1 Reflecting on the Swiss Role

In the interviews I asked experts why they felt it important that topics pertaining to Indigenous peoples and coloniality are discussed in Switzerland. The following quotes and explanations give some insight into the connections people draw. Their statements help us understand their rationales for engaging in this line of work and contributing to decoloniality in Switzerland. This sheds light on how people evaluate the importance of their work and how this can be connected towards decolonizing and pluralizing knowledge in Switzerland.

> "It starts here where we live, so it starts in Switzerland. And when you and me - and I - are asked why do you work for Indigenous- Why do you do things for Indigenous peoples? It's because we are connected to them. They have problems […] because of us. And they have solutions to the problems we create." – Helena

> «There have been different events or exhibitions on the subject of colonialism here. And there's always the question of what it actually has to do with Switzerland? […] Well, this is just a discussion that has to be held everywhere nowadays. Especially to first of all show how the entanglements are and how today's behavior contributes to continuously taking advantage of colonial structures." – Nora

The question of “what it actually has to do with Switzerland” was discussed in most of the interviews. The connections people drew showed why they felt it important to spread the word and become involved with these issues personally and/or professionally. Some of the people I spoke with recognized the so-called “colonial amnesia” that has dominated public discourse in Switzerland (Purtschert, 2011). They mentioned a variety of colonial entanglements and historic significance to which they attributed importance. They problematized the image of Switzerland as historically “neutral”, spoke about Swiss colonies and Swiss settlers abroad (e.g. New Bern), as well as the role Swiss missionaries and mercenaries played in the lives of certain Indigenous communities. As Lucas put it: «well Swiss history doesn’t just end at the border, right? These so-called transnational entanglements exist». Recognizing these transnational entanglements would be an important step in reflecting our own history and present-day situation (Purtschert et al., 2012b). Seeing these aspects of colonial history and entwinements as a “blind spot” (– Ann) that many people share thus potentially motivates the idea of revisibilizing certain colonial histories and connections.

> «What motivates me to work in this area is kind of that you realize that especially the Swiss population, that a lot of the Swiss population realizes that the wealth that you have isn’t stupidly said God-given, right? This is how it seems to me sometimes, as if it were, as if you have some intrinsic right to this wealth and stuff. And just to sensitize a bit that hey, hey it’s actually at the expense of someone. […] basically the hope is that it can show that the resource distribution is unjust, so it does have a part of an understanding of justice, I’d say, or a demand of mine, that this work is done, counts a bit as part of social justice actually.” – Ann

This reflects that not only the historic entanglements tie Switzerland’s reality to the lands and lives of Indigenous communities, but that present-day colonial remnants and patterns of exploitation should be recognized as such (Michel, 2015; Purtschert, 2015). The Swiss role in economy, commodity trading, and extractivism dominated many conversations about relating colonialism and Indigenous communities to Switzerland. As Helena summed it up:

> “So all the resources we use here have blood of Indigenous peoples spilled that we can use those resources. So that's a connection that binds us very strongly to Indigenous peoples today. You see there's a whole span from the historic connection, through the economy, the colonization up to the very present with all the involvement as to extraction, resource extraction.” – Helena

Monique similarly drew lines between the historic background of present-day economic power asymmetries in the so-called Global South and Global North. She touched on

asymmetries in access to markets and detailed the way that the mining, processing, and profits made from raw materials reflects colonial patterns to this day. She described this process as a colonial relic that still needs decolonizing.

In touching on the perceived need to decolonize global wealth gaps and asymmetries, this approach calls for an understanding and transformative restructuring of the global interconnectedness of wealth and power disparities. In the more local context Zurich Kolonial connects relearning our history to forming a critical consciousness about the contemporary:

> "We see ourselves explicitly as an anti-racist educational project. So that goes hand in hand with a very specific awareness or a very specific understanding of history, so not simply- It wasn't just about telling something from the past that is just exciting or unknown. But rather to use the past to trigger thoughts about the present in relation to global inequalities, in relation to racist stereotypes and so on." – Monique

This shows an additional motivator to touch on coloniality and Indigeneity: the ability to open a broader conversation about racialization and social justice (Raghuram & Sondhi, 2023). Discussing these topics is often not only meant to start a critical reflection on our ties to and interactions with people in distant regions; rather, learning about the functioning of colonialism can help us understand certain contemporary social hierarchies as colonial remnants (ibid). This allows us to better situate ourselves within a system that positions many Swiss people on the margins and potentially motivates us to move through spaces with more consideration.

4.2 Disseminating Decolonial Knowledge

This chapter centers on the question of how experts believe decolonial knowledge can best be disseminated in Switzerland. The rationale for describing the work discussed in decolonial terms was detailed above in chapter 3.3. In the conversations some trends arose concerning the challenges and different methods of disseminating knowledge on Indigeneity and colonial histories. I detail five overarching categories of challenges and approaches to knowledge dissemination. First, the challenge of framing an output in a way that it can reach people with different backgrounds and political views was one that was discussed repeatedly. An approach that multiple actors shared was covering topics in a way that did not directly assign blame and result in feelings of guilt or shame in visitors or participants. A next approach for sharing knowledge in a meaningful way proposes inputs

that show participants ways these topics connect to their own lived realities and initiate a process of self-reflection. The potential of artistic reprocessing of topics was also recognized by multiple people. Finally, the accessibility of these topics was mentioned, where language and content should be designed in such a form that it is accessible and understandable for a wide range of people. Approaches to better disseminate information on colonial histories and Indigeneity in Switzerland contribute to the decolonization and pluralization of knowledge in Switzerland (Datta, 2018; Mignolo & Walsh, 2018). Discussing concrete strategies that organizations and networks use for decolonial knowledge dissemination thus sheds light on experts' perceptions of their works' contribution towards decoloniality in Switzerland. These different approaches and their potential to advance decoloniality and plurality are further detailed below.

4.2.1 Bridging Political Divides

> "It's just an unbelievably complex thing that you're doing here… and it quickly goes away from Indigenous peoples towards the Swiss situation, political situation, right. Sometimes you can't split them. " – Helena

One of the central questions that arose regarding knowledge dissemination and "reaching a broader public" was that of political divides preselecting who would feel encouraged to engage with this type of work. Stephan mused "how can this be carried further or more deeply into other perception groups? And of course this is continuous hard work. I think that's also definitely politically, politically - there's still a lot to be done there." Some of the people I spoke to believed there was a preselection regarding who makes use of their offers. For example, Monique and Stephanie both felt that due to the topic itself and because the Anny-Klawa-Morf Stiftung, which is affiliated with the leftist Social Democratic Party, runs the city tours, these would be much more likely to reach people within a left political bubble. Although they did recognize diversity within visitors, they felt a tendency towards leftist, urban, and educated people to show interest in the city guides. Ann reflected on how to open the topic to new groups of people and shared her thoughts on how she feels radical activism is perceived in the Swiss context:

> "But I do believe that in principle, NGO work, activism work can or perhaps should find a form in order to appeal to more people who are not specifically interested in the topic, but who are not fundamentally disinterested. The way in which activism is lived or performed can, I think, appeal to more or fewer people. So, now I think in, especially in Switzerland, I just have the feeling that it's very

> quickly far too radical [laughs] […] I feel like activism like that is difficult in Switzerland. So that kind of radical activism that can be disruptive. " – Ann

Contributing to the pluralization and decolonization of knowledge would presuppose that a certain type of knowledge would be made accessible to a variety of people (Raghuram & Sondhi, 2023; Tuck & Yang, 2012). The above quote suggests such approaches should find the balance between disrupting the status quo and not feeling disruptive to the point where people feel inhibited in interacting with the work. Framing topics in a way that people are not entirely forced to break from their preconceptions can help people to position new knowledge alongside their preexisting ideas, thereby accepting multiple realities, or pluriversality (Escobar, 2011; Mignolo & Walsh, 2018; Sultana, 2022). Stephanie mentioned the tendency of certain city guide participants to defend certain historical figures, such as the infamous Johann Caspar Lavater, a pastor and philosopher from Zurich whose work on physiognomy helped "race" research enter the mainstream in the 18th century (Zürich Kolonial, 2024). They encourage dialogue and generally try to share the perspective of certain historical figures as ambivalent characters who may have contributed positive things to society alongside their direct colonial involvement. This approach opens a conversation surrounding multiperspectivity, which can potentially contribute to an openness towards plural forms of knowledge. The approach also allows people to draw their own conclusions rather than forcing an external interpretation or judgment upon them. In so doing, topics may be made more palatable to people of different political affiliations while also contributing to a pluralization of knowledges.

One approach that multiple interview partners shared was to avoid making visitors feel they are being morally lectured on a topic. When learning about new topics the moral and ethical demands associated with them are interpreted differently as people make their own meanings of things (Hulme, 2015). It may therefore be more helpful to encourage people to make sense of new insights on their own rather than lecture them and try to convince them of a position (ibid). In this context categories such as "wokeness" and activism were viewed in a critical manner by some of my interview partners. Lucas explained that his approach was not to lecture people but to encourage interactions and spaces for encounters with Indigenous peoples. When questions arose in the exhibit about what can or cannot be said or worn, Lucas would encourage people to ask the Indigenous peoples' representatives present. This would enable a dialogue and first-person narration rather than putting Lucas in the position of lecturing visitors and representing a topic on behalf

of someone. It would thus help sensitize people to other peoples' realities and ways of knowing the world and potentially further decolonization and pluralization of knowledges on an individual level.

The role of an organization's reputation, and in turn associations people make with the organization, can open certain topics and events to a broader group of people. This then contributes to knowledge pluralization and decolonization on a larger scale. As mentioned above, Zürich Kolonial's affiliation with the Anny-Klawa-Morf association, and the SP political party by proxy, was perceived as something that might hinder people who are critical towards the SP's politics from engaging with Zürich Kolonial's city tours. Manda, however, partially attributed the success of the exhibition she co-curated to the fact that it was run by the city of Zurich itself:

> «Since it also came from the city Zurich, it comes across very official, where perhaps people are more likely to find access because they have a different relationship to a city for example, than maybe to certain other institutions that don't represent their opinion, and where they maybe wouldn't even go to see an exhibit." – Manda

She believed that the location in the city government office and initiating party, the city of Zurich, resulted in the knowledge represented being able to reach people that might tend to be more critical towards topics such as Swiss colonial history and decoloniality. This would have the potential to spread decolonial knowledge and plural perspectives among people from diverse backgrounds.

Although this section mentions political divides in the title, I urge readers to recognize that political identities in a healthy democracy can be fluid and complex, and that recognizing diversity as well as shared values is fruitful for discussions about plurality (Hulme, 2010, 2015). The idea of broadly splitting Swiss society into two political camps – the left and the right – was a recurring theme in some of my interviews. Both sides were conceptualized as being at odds with one another and virtually unable to enter a dialogue. Additionally, one side tends to be perceived as generally closed off to topics such as social justice, Indigeneity, and colonial history. I would like to critically reflect on this notion here. Although many participants did not portray this precisely as such, the idea that the right is less open to these topics was reproduced by many. Discussing how to disseminate decolonial knowledge more broadly often implicitly touched on how to approach the topic among the political right. It is not my wish to reproduce a binary view of Swiss society.

Rather, in recognizing plurality, I believe that attempts to disrupt this binary could be helpful in encouraging more people to engage with decolonial knowledge. For example, centering common values over political affiliations might help in bridging the perceived gap and building of blocks (see for example Trainor (2006) on different realms of values of natural resources; Hulme (2010, 2015) on global forms of knowledge and political divides within the climate change debate; or Fisher et al. (2012) on political polarization within climate change debates). A recognition of Swiss plurality begs us to remain critical of binary political notions.

This section showcased that the manner of approaching knowledge dissemination and the political associations that people do or do not make can influence peoples' openness to engage with topics relating to decoloniality and plurality. The next section explores how the conflicting feelings that may arise as people immerse themselves in these topics can be approached by organizations.

4.2.2 Circumventing Guilt

Learning about one's own privileges within a racialized system can lead to feelings of guilt and anger (Helms, 1995; Kilomba, 2021). This guilt can encourage further learning and understanding of one's own identity, but it can also lead to people dismissing the guilt they feel and returning to upholding the status quo (ibid). Similarly, after learning how one's own privileged position in society relates to colonially embedded hierarchies of power feelings of guilt may arise. Manda expressed this as follows:

> «Now that we have the knowledge, what do we do with it? Do I have to feel guilty now because I used to act in a certain way or because I used to dress up for Fasnacht[3] in a way that you aren't supposed to? And there are a lot of uncertainties there. And also, a fear so that you dismiss being blamed a little bit, so do you suddenly become a guilty person, even though you had no knowledge of it? You acted without having the knowledge. And I think that's something that leads to uncertainty on many levels." – Manda

While such uncertainties may arise, an idea shared in multiple interviews was that efforts to disseminate knowledge about coloniality and privileges would likely be more successful if their aim was not to assign blame or elicit reactions of shame among visitors. Karl

[3] Fasnacht refers to a form of carnival celebrated across Switzerland as well as other Germanic spaces, which has a tradition rooted in Christianity.

explained his approach as one based on “positive approaches rather than blatant criticism”, and expressed the reactions to this approach as follows:

> «Well, it's actually amazing. We hardly ever have any negative experiences. This is extremely interesting. Maybe it has something to do with the fact that we are not activists. We try not to assign blame. People can do that themselves. » – Karl

The work within this context was categorized along the lines of knowledge dissemination and described as specifically distinct from activism, a form of involvement that is suggested to be more aligned with assigning blame. Interestingly, Karl does not suggest that there is no blame to be assigned, but rather that it is not his job to be the one to assign it. This would encourage people to come to their own conclusions and allow for them to consider plural perspectives and realities.

An additional approach to difficult topics that was brought up by two of my interview partners was humor. They both felt that a humorous approach could open the topic to a broader group of people and felt that shaming or blaming people was the wrong approach.

> “If they come to the exhibit and you just confront them with accusations of how they, as old White men, ruined the whole world, you won’t achieve anything, and he won’t spread the word. But if you can pass something on with a certain level of humor, you’ll just achieve a lot more. Not that that is generally an approach but it’s my approach. To approach the thing with a certain humor, with a certain sarcasm as well, but just open it up for the people so it isn’t just blocked, and I think then you can bring it to all sorts of people.” – Simon

Simon notes that this is his personal approach, and one that he has had success with. He invites people to reflect on the stereotypes that they personally are confronted with in his guided tours to start a process of self-reflection. There appears to be potential in this approach, as many people in our society belong to marginalized groups in some way or form, and stereotypes exist concerning just about every social category (Martiny & Götz, 2011). Simon also discussed the topic of stereotypes that exist in relation to Indigenous peoples (with a focus on the North American context) with a certain level of cynicism, all the while pointing out the absurdity of certain popular imaginaries.

While both Simon and Karl feel able to discuss these topics with a certain level of humor (where appropriate), this may be a more accessible approach to those who are not personally affected by such forms of discrimination. Discussing issues such as stereotyping, racism, or discrimination may elicit traumatic responses for people who are personally affected (Kilomba, 2021). While it is an inclusive approach for Simon and Karl

that allows them to engage in fewer tense conversations with people of diverse backgrounds and political affiliations, the same approach may not feel equally lighthearted and comfortable for everyone (ibid). Nonetheless, the humor approach is well worth mentioning and reflecting on as we consider a plurality of approaches to these topics.

Fostering a welcoming atmosphere in museums and exhibitions has the potential to make the knowledge shared within more palatable. While the exhibit on Zurich's colonial entanglements specifically invited visitors to reflect on their own privileges, it also tried to be as welcoming as possible, as described by Manda:

> «We'll create an exhibition that should welcome all people to engage with the topic and look at it and we'll try to invite and receive them as warmly as possible and not scare them off, accuse them, and provoke them. And I do think that's something that had a bit of an influence on the fact that we - that it was received relatively well, or that people were open to the topic». – Manda

Their high visitor numbers and positive reactions to the exhibit might suggest that they were successful in fostering a welcoming atmosphere (Stadt Zürich, 2023). Questions that touched on individual privileges were generally asked in an accessible and non-judgmental manner. This may have encouraged people to engage with the plurality of perspectives shared in the exhibit. The idea to ask visitors to an exhibition to reflect on themselves will be elaborated on in the next section, which discusses the approach of connecting topics to peoples' first-hand experiences in order to begin their own process of self-reflection.

4.2.3 Showcasing Connectivity and Encouraging Self-Reflection

Many of my interview partners explained different methods they use to connect topics such as colonial history and Indigenous peoples' realities, both past and present, with visitors' lived realities. Ways to show our interconnectedness include touching on food, wealth, commodities, climate change, and the lived realities of minorities and people who experience discrimination in Switzerland. The goal of making connections clear is to encourage people to feel implicated; perhaps being able to place new knowledge within the context of our own lives makes it more relational and enables us to better engage with plural knowledge systems (Mungwini, 2019). Helena suggested that "as long as you're not touched by yourself you don't change", meaning that it is important to make these connections to peoples' own lives to foster a sense of responsibility and connection. Along these lines Ann underlined the importance of disseminating knowledge on certain topics

which would “otherwise really fall through all the cracks, […] not because people aren’t interested, I wouldn’t even say that, but because it maybe doesn’t directly affect them in their everyday”. Both statements suggest that fostering a sense of responsibility by making people feel a personal connection to a topic would be important in making interconnectedness between colonial past and present more visible, thus contributing to an underlying decolonization of knowledge.

The following excerpt shows a particular understanding of this historic interconnectedness:

> “I’m also allowed to say something that is not yet completely embedded in science. For example, today there are very few historians who actually say as scientists: Europe's prosperity is based on the colonial exploitation of Black and Indigenous peoples. And almost no one says that yet. And then I sometimes say that and say you know, I'm a storyteller, I can say that, look, three quarters of our staple foods come from the Americas and were gifted to us by the Indigenous peoples. […] And we can actually say that it is the wealth of the Indigenous peoples. But that is what created our prosperity. Then slavery made us prosperous. The treasures from the Americas, as they say.” – Karl

In city tours on colonial history, Karl talks about the historical background of a place and connects stories to broader social processes. He touches on Switzerland’s wealth and how it was and remains contingent on transnational entanglements and systems of exploitation. Drawing historic connections to Indigenous communities can also lead to furthering our understanding of contemporary connections and contribute to the recognition that is central in moves towards decoloniality and plurality (Datta, 2018; Lam et al., 2020). Understanding past connections and processes puts forward a better understanding of the present and perhaps leads to a reflection on what types of futures we might aspire towards.

In touching on our staple foods Karl gets to another important connecting point, namely that of consumption. Reflecting on our staple foods and their own colonial histories can allow people to draw connections to their everyday lives and perhaps reflect on how often they unknowingly interact with food items that have rich colonial histories (see Purtschert, 2019b for an analysis of racialized narratives and colonial entanglements as they intersect with the Swiss chocolate industry). As a country that tends to self-identify as a “chocolate-land” or “chocolate-nation”, the colonial history and present-day conflicts within value chains came up in almost every single interview. Chocolate is something that many can identify with and a product that is connected to a certain level of passion among many

people. Cacao and coffee, both incredibly popular products in Switzerland, were brought up by multiple interview partners to show connections (SECO, 2022). Coffee and cacao can be discussed in terms of their colonial histories and processes through which they became near ubiquitous in our lives; they also open questions about neocolonialism and consumption patterns and have the potential to show connections to people in diverse geographies (Pettenati et al., 2018; Purtschert, 2019b). Taking a closer look at food items can thus make visible human connections across the globe:

> "Recognizing that all of us together, we all are relatives, we're all related to one another, we're all connected. Without meaning that esoterically, it's just a fact. Because if I do something here in Switzerland, it has consequences. If I go shopping in Coop, Migros, wherever, that has consequences on people on other continents. " – Simon

For Simon the question of food, or more general consumption, has the potential to show the global interconnectedness between people. This goes beyond presenting the colonial histories of different food items towards making visible the different roles people play in the value chain. A reading of our consumption patterns can put us in relation with people beyond geographical divides. Beyond food, some experts spoke about connections in the economic sphere, commodity trading, and precious metals (including the discussion of smartphones and other electronics) as connecting points. The relations that undergird our consumption patterns are often made invisible through complex processes such as globalization, financialization, and commodification of land, labor, and natural environments, as well as global supermarketization (Lawrence & Dixon, 2015; Vivero-Pol, 2018; Vivero-Pol et al., 2018). Recognizing these (neo)colonial entanglements could encourage a reflection on global interconnectedness and the role of decoloniality on different scales.

Zurich Kolonial aims to start a reflection process on global inequality and racism as detailed above regarding their explicitly anti-racist ideology and self-conception. The question of connecting (de-)colonial knowledge to one's own positionality in society was also discussed by Manda:

> "So we also asked clearly about privileges in the exhibition. And invited people to become aware of their own privileges. And I think that's something, I wouldn't say, that it's met with resistance. But more like what we discussed before, insecurities, […] And I think it's also important to differentiate a little bit, because there are a lot of people especially in Zurich or Switzerland who are affected by racism. And then they see it completely differently. So, for them there is less resistance, for them

there are completely different feelings associated with it, perhaps insecurities, but perhaps also anger and frustration and sadness and fear." – Manda

Drawing connections to the colonial contingencies of social categories such as "race" may result in processes of self-reflection (Darman & Schär, 2023; Raghuram & Sondi 2023). For societally and racially privileged individuals this might include a reflection of one's own privilege and the way that categories such as "race", gender, or religion – to name a few – are (re)produced in our everyday interactions (ibid; Ahmed, 2004). This is an important part of decolonizing knowledge and deconstructing the colonial matrix of power (Raghuram & Sondi 2023). Looking into the histories of the modern-day hierarchies that prevail may help denaturalize them (Mignolo & Walsh, 2018). In a plural society, such as the Swiss one, recognizing internal diversity and plurality as a strength is an important part of decoloniality. For people who belong to a marginalized group this connection may already be clear and may help foster empathy towards people who are marginalized or racialized differently[4] (Boushel, 2000). This was touched on by Ann, who suggested that people in Switzerland may feel more implicated in discussions surrounding minorities than ones focused specifically on Indigeneity, further underlined by the fact that many Swiss people belong to a minority group in one form or another (Nixon, 2019; Pinto et al., 2022).

Colonial legacies affect us in many ways, including when it comes to our current understanding of racialization and other distinct forms of marginalization that persist today (Mignolo & Walsh, 2018; Raghuram & Sondhi, 2023). The idea of Switzerland as a colonial outsider interplays with understandings of local racism, as certain people – notably those who do not negatively experience racialization themselves – tend to locate structural racism abroad and not as something that exists here (Purtschert, 2011). Reconnecting us to our own colonial histories and recognizing the interplay between the colonial matrix of power and "race", gender, and other social categories allows us to take a closer and more critical look at why, how, and who is marginalized in Switzerland today (Pinto et al., 2022); the next step is to deconstruct this and put the onus on Swiss plurality.

[4] "Experiential affinity" refers to the ability to relate to and sympathize with a marginalized person's situation based on one's own position of oppression within a system of inequality (Boushel 2000).

4.2.4 Artistic Reprocessing

Art was recognized by many participants – beyond those coming from a background in the arts themselves – as a way to reprocess knowledge and pluralize the perspectives and voices represented in exhibitions and city guides. Museum D used art, poetry, and traditional songs as approaches, and network A organized events around artistic storytelling. Artistic rendering can aid in knowledge dissemination by adding a plural understanding of a topic and allow for different voices beyond scientific ones to be heard – a central endeavor to knowledge pluralization more generally (Lam et al., 2020; Sultana, 2022). Monique explained how Zurich Kolonial's approach intentionally aimed at pluralizing the knowledge they convey by including voices from art and activism alongside research-based perspectives. This approach aims to do multiple perspectives justice.

Artistic endeavors have the potential to pluralize methods of knowledge dissemination and the voices heard (Born & Barry, 2010). These endeavors can also allow people to interact with new topics in a different manner (ibid). Simon felt that art has the potential to ease access to certain topics, explaining that art can create a medium to understand scientific topics while enabling people to discuss them differently than they would a primarily scientific output.

> "And with us it was actually an artistic reprocessing, using the medium of art to show what it's about and there you have different standards. You don't have to go do pedagogy. Right, you can enter into a conversation with people way differently and on a completely different level. And I realized this during the exhibit that that's very important. Because people then don't feel pushed into a corner but can discuss things or talk without it somehow having to become too serious." – Simon

This perspective suggests that engaging in colonialism and Indigeneity through art allows people to engage in the subjects more lightheartedly compared to situations where they feel they are being lectured on a topic. Simon suggests that this allows people to engage with and accept new insights more readily. While more scientific or activist approaches may feel sobering and pedagogical, the artistic approach has the possibility of easing conversations and allowing for a more relaxed interaction with decolonial topics. This would further the potential of the knowledge disseminated to contribute to decoloniality and a recognition of plurality.

Recognizing the aesthetic and artistic value of visual inputs can not only make a topic more attractive for the public but can also forward a pluralization of knowledge and

perspectives (Born & Barry, 2010; Hopfener & Zitzewitz, 1990). A central aspect regarding the artistic side of knowledge dissemination is the value of aesthetics within exhibitions, where Manda explained the importance of graphics in designing an exhibit that aims to reach a broad population. She explained how the curator team worked closely with the scenography office “Stilgraf” to create an exhibit that would be visually and aesthetically welcoming and engaging for visitors. Others also underlined the importance of visually appealing materials such as posters or flyers to pique interest in events and exhibits. Allowing the aesthetics of an event to speak for itself may also be a method of pluralizing which form of knowledge we recognize and give power to, and which audience we can potentially reach (Born & Barry, 2010; Hopfener & Zitzewitz, 1990).

4.2.5 Accessibility

Making discussions about Indigenous peoples and (de)coloniality accessible includes using language that is accessible and understandable for people from different backgrounds (Mungwini, 2019). When it came to naming the network and website, Connexion and Zürich Kolonial opted for Bern Kolonial and Zürich Kolonial, respectively. Zürich Dekolonial was avoided as a name because the network felt that “decolonial” was too academic of an expression, and they wanted their name to be more accessible for a broad public. Monique explained that “we decided against using too much jargon, both in the name of the tours and in the texts, in order to reach people who wouldn't necessarily interact with this”. The same thought process informed the naming of Connexions website, Bern Kolonial: “So for example I named our website “Bern Kolonial” and not “Decolonial”, right? Because it's actually about people still understanding: What is that anyway? And if we want to reach the broad public then we can't move forward so quickly” (– Karl). Along similar lines Lucas explained that it is important to him that the way he writes is accessible and understandable for people. This accessibility enables the knowledge conveyed to reach a plurality of people, thereby potentially furthering pluralization of knowledge as well as contributing to a decolonial engagement across scales.

Karl explained how his approach towards which terms to use and not use can result in conflicts:

> «We approach it journalistically, we approach it popularly. And then there are clashes with activists because, for example, a small example, abbreviations and Anglicisms are generally taboo. You don't write “BIPOC” in an article. That simply doesn’t work, it's simply not acceptable. That you first have

> to explain a term. Or People of Color. I do not like it. Now, if I say this in English, I should also be able to say it in German, or then I'll find another form. So, these things are related to the target audience. So, who are we talking to? We don't want an insider audience. And then sometimes we are not politically correct and fashionable enough for certain people. " – Karl

He mentions adjusting information and speech according to one's target audience. When the target audience is defined as broadly as possible conflicts may arise, as outlined by Karl. An important reminder here is to consider the power of words to (re)produce or unsettle certain colonial hierarchies and status quo (Darman & Schär, 2023; Eaton, 2022). Words hold power, and approaching knowledge decolonially involves reflecting on this (ibid). Karl's statement relates to the case where certain terms are borrowed from other languages and may thus be harder to understand for certain people. Renegotiating terminologies and finding locally accessible ways of approaching the topic respectfully would thus be an important part of decolonizing and pluralizing knowledge in an accessible way (Eaton, 2022).

Multi-media inputs are more likely to be consumed and understood when they use accessible language that is targeted towards their audiences (Ravelli, 1996). This means reflecting on the target group itself and sharing knowledge in a way that it can be made accessible to different groups, including those with little to no preexisting knowledge on the topics discussed. Importantly, the question of accessibility in a very literal sense asks whether these spaces are geographically and financially accessible to a broad range of people in Switzerland. In this sense accessibility could be furthered by making knowledge virtually, physically, and financially accessible. Virtual access allows people in different geographic regions to access it. Physical accessibility is for people with different accessibility concerns (which could include for example pluralizing the media knowledge is shared in so that offers are available for the hearing or visually impaired, besides basic structural accessibility) (Duarte & Fonseca, 2019). Financial accessibility relates to low-income households. The decision of what languages to make content available can additionally make it accessible for people from the different linguistic regions in Switzerland as well as migrants.

4.2.6 Summary

This chapter centered on the question of how the experts interviewed believe decolonial knowledge can be effectively disseminated in Switzerland based on their first-hand

experience in this area of work. While the section was broadly split into five sub-sections, the approaches detailed within these sections overlap and relate closely to one another. The role of bridging political divides (4.2.1) was discussed, where it was suggested that approaches geared towards pluralizing knowledges could prove more effective. The practice of circumventing guilt (4.2.2) was detailed, and different approaches were identified that could potentially aid in this and contribute to more plurality in Switzerland. Next, the importance of showcasing global and historic connectivity (4.2.3) was mentioned, with topics such as food, wealth, and commodities used to illustrate global interconnectedness. The role of artistic reprocessing (4.2.4) as a way to disseminate knowledge, enrich conversations through transdisciplinary collaborations, and pluralize knowledges was mentioned. Finally, the role of accessibility (4.2.5) was analyzed as central in making information available to people from diverse backgrounds. These strategies allow us to gain a deeper insight into how experts working on Swiss colonial history and Indigeneity position their works' contribution towards decoloniality in the Swiss context.

An underlying attempt of certain strategies detailed in chapter 4.2 is to make decolonial efforts more palatable for people who might be disinterested or uncomfortable with the topic. A question that arises is whether these strategies coddle privileged people who are uncomfortable in recognizing their own privilege. When it comes to learning about and critically reflecting on racism, White people as a racially privileged group (recognizing the intersectionality within this group) must first come to recognize and accept their own racial identity and the privileges associated with it in order to deconstruct dominant Western ideas (DiAngelo, 2011; Helms, 1995; Nixon, 2019). Robin DiAngelo maintains that White people must build and maintain stamina to break out of the White Fragility that causes some people to respond to conversations about "race" and "racism" in a defensive or avoidant manner (2011). DiAngelo positions anti-racist education as central in this endeavor, suggesting that starting conversations on an individual level before connecting to the societal and institutional levels of racism can successfully kick start this process (ibid). In this context, Sara Ahmed critically analyzes how anti-racist education intersects with class elitism; she questions the idea that racism is a product of ignorance, which suggests that more education – often reserved for privileged classes – would dismantle it (Ahmed, 2004). This underlines the intersectional role of class and privilege dictating what kind of knowledge is available to whom in the present discussion.

Answering the first research question on knowledge dissemination reflects on a point mentioned in the beginning of the analysis about the risk of essentializing “the Swiss public”. If the goal is to disseminate a certain type of knowledge amongst “the public”, there is a preconception as to who this public might be, what it already knows, and what issues may arise for it. Some of the strategies detailed are implicit responses to a certain type of resistance imagined within parts of society. These are strategies that experts in the field have utilized successfully. It is important to note that many people do not exhibit this resistance and are already involved in moves towards decoloniality (Pinto et al., 2022). Notably, conflicts may arise, especially where diverse target groups come together with diverging expectations of museums, exhibitions, or tours. The dialogue that may ensue has a potential to produce meaningful outcomes and allow people to gain insight into different perspectives. The possibility of being confronted with alternative values and worldviews is important and productive. The next section departs from knowledge dissemination and analyzes ways that the organizations and networks discussed can avoid reproducing colonial power hierarchies and dependencies.

4.3 Centering Decoloniality

While the previous section analyzed different approaches towards disseminating decolonial knowledge in society based on insights from expert opinions, the following section takes a closer look at how this type of work can avoid reproducing colonial hierarchies of power and dependencies that can result from these. It does so by centering decolonial practices within the different endeavors that have been detailed above. The importance of self-representation, as summarized by the principle of “nothing about us without us”, is detailed before a section on reflecting Western rationales. This is followed by a section on decoloniality within organizational structures and, finally, a reflection on decoloniality across scales. Remaining aligned with the understanding of decoloniality represented means it is not an end goal that can realistically be achieved. The strategies detailed below should be seen as contributions towards decoloniality in that they deconstruct colonial power hierarchies and dependencies; these strategies should not, however, be viewed as an exhaustive checklist of things to do and not to do in order to reach a point of decoloniality. Rather, they are a further contribution to the overarching question of how experts position their contribution towards decoloniality.

4.3.1 Self-Representation

> "I mean I think that as well, I think that's the approach of we can't talk about other people, we can always only talk about ourselves. Or in art we say you can't write about something else, you can only write about what you yourself have experienced. " – Simon

Since many of the organizations discussed work on topics relating to Indigenous peoples, the importance of Indigenous peoples' self-representation was stressed. Lucas's approach to research is that affected groups make themselves heard and tell their own stories, and he sees the role of historians and other researchers in contextualizing this. He stressed that this approach was an overarching concern of his in research and explained that "our concept was we don't speak about Indigenous peoples but with them». In line with this approach, the exhibit closed the day the Indigenous collaborators returned home. Although the exhibit had been met with strong interest and would likely have continued to be popular had it stayed open longer, in remaining aligned with the principle of self-representation the original plan was adhered to. The principle of "nothing about us without us" was first used in the disability rights movement and has gained traction in different minority rights movements, including the Yenish, Roma, and Sinthi of Switzerland (United Nations Enable, 2004; Tages Anzeiger, 2023). The principle critiques the practice of researchers and policymakers speaking about and on behalf of minority groups without group members themselves being represented and participating in dialogue (ibid). Ann explained her interpretation of this within the museum context, where exhibits aimed to depict Indigenous voices and invite Indigenous communities' representatives when possible: "well it's a big difference if you- if I tell "I heard that…" or "someone I know told me that…" or if the affected people themselves can really tell it themselves." Indigenous self-representation is an important aspect of contributing to a recognition of Indigenous knowledge and thereby directly related to decolonization and pluralization of knowledge (Datta, 2018; Eaton, 2022).

Ann reflected critically about speaking on behalf of a group of people and connected it to the practice of essentializing, or reproducing, an image of a group as homogenous:

> "The other thing is that in the museum area you try to get away from trying to represent something, to speak on behalf of a group of people. So, kind of this essentializing that just still happens, because you're in that very quickly, I feel, when you talk about something: "yes, these and these people are so and so or I don't know, with the Inuit it's like this and that." And then you actually lose sight of the diversity, actually the radical diversity, in each community there are different opinions, there are

> different views. Yeah, that you're just very careful, careful or just mindful. That you don't construct a picture of this homogeneous unity of a community, because these are communities, if you look at your own communities, that you move in, then you'd never- it would never come to mind, somehow... " – Ann

Ann connects the idea of essentializing a group to our own experiences as members of diverse social groups. When we imagine a group as homogenous, we begin to imagine a prototypical group member that exhibits prototypical group behavior and characteristics that can result in stereotypes emerging (see section 2.5.1 on othering). Ann suggests countering this by portraying the "radical diversity" within groups. This can be approached by not only encouraging self-representation by group members, but by pluralizing perspectives within the group and pointing to the lack of in-group conformity (Hogg, 2006). Such an approach bypasses the risk of tokenism, in which minority members are included in a superficial public gesture. Their inclusion might relate more to a company's public image than to centering their perspective and insights into bringing about social or institutional change (Cambridge University Press, 2024). The risk of tokenism has been identified as one of the possible dangers of intellectual decolonization by Northern academics (Neuhaus, 2022). Simon similarly spoke about Indigenous stereotypes and said: "I mean "THE" Indigenous person doesn't exist, there isn't an "Indian", and he's like this and all the others are too. That's nonsense". Centering diversity within groups could help break down group stereotypes and ultimately contribute to group members being recognized as individuals rather than group representatives (Reimer et al., 2020). It would thus contribute to a more plural understanding of the group.

Advancing Indigenous self-representation also contributes to a pluralization of dialogue, as plural voices and inputs can be considered regarding a given topic (Lam et al., 2020). Manda explained that when it comes to the topic of coloniality "actually, there can never be enough voices with a topic like this. So, it would be nice to let a whole bunch of voices pour in." This also goes beyond furthering Indigenous self-representation towards promoting the inclusion of diverse voices in order to advance plurality or multiple perspectives on topics such as colonial legacies and lived experiences of discrimination. This is an approach that would be apt in many different contexts within Switzerland and could focus on promoting minority representation as well as transdisciplinary collaborations towards transformation.

In the museum context, Nora saw interacting with source communities' representatives as a potential towards decolonial action and brought up the aspect of restitution:

> «So I think the contribution to decolonization is partially cultivating a direct contact with the source communities. And showing appreciation there and giving the possibility to have their own say, for example by allowing objects from the collection to be assessed and asked to be returned. It's a direct act of decolonization and appreciation." – Nora

She aptly recognizes the importance of restitution in discussions surrounding decolonization (Kuprecht, 2022). As an independent provenance researcher, this ties directly to her role within museum A. She explained how the sheer number of cultural artifacts within collections around the world is too overwhelming for communities to assess every case individually. She views it as the museums' responsibility to ease the restitution process for communities by making insights into collection items easily accessible and highlighting potentially problematic pieces. This way the amount of unpaid labor expected from community members engaged in conversations regarding restitution could be kept to a minimum. She also expressed support for more such paid positions to be created and made available to community members, thereby removing barriers and enhancing self-representation. The practice of removing these types of structural barriers and making resources available to Indigenous peoples is an important part of impact towards transformation and supports representation (Latulippe & Klenk, 2020).

4.3.2 Reflecting on Western Rationales

While speaking about topics such as Indigenous peoples, rights, and cultures is important and central to decoloniality, Western researchers and actors involved in this area must be aware of their own positionality. Lucas raised the issue of researchers building their careers on the fates of certain groups, bringing up the example of historians specializing in certain areas, such as human rights, to further their careers. He sees this as an instrumentalization of human rights if it is done in a way that does not reflect the researchers own positionality and ensures that the minority groups concerned have a platform and a central role within the research itself. This concern surrounding people building their careers on others can thus be raised in the context of Indigenous peoples' rights as well as human rights more broadly. Avoiding intellectual extractivism and furthering self-representation of affected groups towards a decolonization and

pluralization of voices and knowledge wherever possible is an important step in this process (Lam et al., 2020; Latulippe & Klenk, 2020).

In the organizational context it is important to actively decenter one's own rationales and sense of entitlement and listen to affected populations (Broido & Reason, 2005; K. E. Edwards, 2006; Nixon, 2019; Park et al., 2020). Christoph explained how certain Western organizations tend to further their own ideas of sustainability, making it especially important to listen to affected peoples and alternate perspectives on issues. He explained that in working in forest conservation in Congo he was forced to unpack the "White ideal conception that only a completely virgin forest is a good forest".

> "For example, in Congo with Greenpeace I fought the timber industry completely and said that it only causes social problems. Until I was there with them, and I had a lot more inquiries from people: "can't you get more companies like this that will use our forest but do it in a responsible way and respect our rights?" And from Greenpeace it came like this: "Yeah, every chainsaw in the rainforest is a sin. This must be prevented." And then we saw that the people who live there and have lived there for a long time, that it's their only source of income. So, I had to throw away my own green-colonialist thoughts myself. And you know, the compromise, so to speak, is actually not even that difficult, because the usage, for example a certified usage according to the FSC, Forest Stewardship Council, and so on, allows the forest to remain. The Pigmy and the Bantu can still use the forest. And there is simply a rotation system, but there is no destruction and the timber industry itself ensures that the foresters do not come into the forest by making roadblocks etc. So, there are solutions there." – Christoph

He explains how the answers do not always perfectly align with organizations' philosophies. Rather than strictly enforce a Western ideal, such cases present organization members with the chance to reevaluate their own assumptions and biases and open themselves up to new perspectives and other ways of knowing. This is another case where especially ecological organizations such as Greenpeace must be careful not to instrumentalize Indigenous communities to further their own agenda or co-opt movements (Broido & Reason, 2005; K. E. Edwards, 2006; Latulippe & Klenk, 2020). Rather, organizations would do better to consider a plurality of knowledge systems and, especially, heed the voices of those directly affected and respect their right to self-determination (Datta, 2018).

In the line of work discussed here, it is especially important to reflect on power hierarchies and paternalistic tendencies, and question whether the organization or people involved are positioning themselves as benevolent saviors to a group perceived as weak and

passive (K. E. Edwards, 2006; Massey, 1994; McKittrick, 2011). Nora touched on this aspect in discussing the question of “giving someone a voice”.

> «And another great quote, recently at an event at the museum C where someone who I believe comes from the North-African context got terribly upset over this thing that people say “we give someone a voice”. He said “thank you very much, I already have a voice”. And that’s it actually, these people already have a voice and especially at museum A we really contribute to this, because we bring all sorts of different people together.” – Nora

When framing an interaction in terms of «giving someone a voice” a power hierarchy is reproduced which presupposes that one party has the power to give – or take away – the voice of another (Holmes IV, 2020; Nixon, 2019). It is generally the member of a dominant group that is thus heard in society and does not have to be “given” a voice, whereas it is their act of benevolence that allows for their non-dominant counterpart to find and express their voice (Boushel, 2000; Nixon, 2019). Such subtleties are well worth reflecting on to destabilize colonial hierarchies and power dynamics and ensure that Indigenous voices and knowledge are treated in a holistic and non-extractive manner.

Calls to include Indigenous knowledges and cultures risk reinforcing Western dominance in several ways. First, when calls within Western academia ask to decenter Western knowledge and include marginalized and Indigenous thought, they risk reproducing hegemonic relationships (e.g. who is doing the decentering, who is allowing whom to become included, and who could just as well decide not to do so) (Boushel, 2000; Holmes IV, 2020; Massey, 1994; McKittrick, 2011). Second, idealizing Indigenous knowledge systems for their alternative understanding of human-nature interconnectedness or spirituality risks reproducing colonial discourse that positioned Indigenous populations in the colonies as more connected to nature (Pinto et al., 2022; B. Schär, 2008). Ultimately, this leads to a dehumanizing image of an exotic other (ibid). Rather than imagining Indigenous peoples as spiritually connected with nature, we must recognize them as holders of important ecological knowledge and capable of translating these into proposals and policies (Lam et al., 2020; McGregor et al., 2020; Whyte et al., 2016). The structural advantages and dominance of Whiteness mean that the White outlook becomes universalized, affecting People of Color and resulting in a connection between Whiteness and universalism (Frankenberg, 1988; Pinto et al., 2022). This results in a structural devaluation of non-White knowledge, described by Grada Kilomba as: “they have knowledge, we have experiences” (Kilomba, 2021 p. 26). The focus must be on creating

equitable and horizontal dialogue rather than reproducing the uneven hierarchies that have burdened generations.

4.3.3 Decoloniality within Organizations

When centering decolonial action, organization practices have the potential to reproduce or disrupt colonial power hierarchies. Hiring practices can ensure as many perspectives as possible influence the organizations and their work. These practices can either hinder or enhance internal diversity (Gomolla, 2017). Hiring people from different fields and different social backgrounds enables more perspectives and experiences to be included in the organizations' work. This can contribute to fewer "blind spots", foster plurality, and positively influence the work in general (Escobar, 2019; Sultana, 2022).

The practice of removing barriers and allocating resources, including funds and media reach, is an additional part of organizational work that can further decoloniality (Latulippe & Klenk, 2020). Practices can do so by adjusting internal hiring practices and by offering funding for Indigenous peoples and marginalized community members to advocate for themselves and by sharing access to their own broader networks. Organizations such as GfbV and Incomindios fund and accredit Indigenous peoples' representatives to international organizations such as the United Nations, thereby directly allocating material (money, travel, and board) and immaterial (access to relevant UN fora, individual support) benefits towards Indigenous communities' representatives. This allows for otherwise less visible perspectives to be shared with a broad group, and organizations who can directly fund activists additionally support their work which otherwise often remains unremunerated. This contributes to knowledge pluralization as well as decoloniality by centering and uplifting Indigenous knowledge (Lam et al., 2020).

4.3.4 Decoloniality across Scales

For endeavors that implicitly or explicitly aim at a decolonization or pluralization of knowledge, May raised the question of whether thinking along the lines of impact and reaching a specific number of people reproduces certain colonially rooted ideas.

> «Yeah, then here, the question is, to what extent would you like to have a super big impact, mobilizing hundreds of people versus doing something that is also a bit between the layers, between the possibilities or the system, with certain human beings around you?" – May

Understanding decoloniality as “the continuous work to plant and grow an otherwise despite and in the borders, margins, and cracks of the modern/colonial/capitalist/hetero-patriarchal order” (Mignolo & Walsh, 2018 p. 101) could mean reveling in the smallest scale interactions and interpersonal methods of uncoupling from coloniality. While change on an individual level may seem irrelevant at first, even large-scale societal transformations can start with individual people, meaning that small scale decolonial positions may be an important starting point (Gomolla, 2017). Lucas sees contributing to a change in thought and actions in a small number of people as potentially transformative, as he suggests that processes of critical reevaluation may spread laterally within society and ultimately function as multipliers. He brought up the example of piquing the interest of a handful of Swiss people in Indigenous cultures and histories. Were these people to bring this interest to their next trip to North America they might put a different focus on their local interactions and exhibit more responsibility towards and interest in Indigenous communities. Bringing their experiences back to Switzerland might then sensitize others within their social circles and spread an appreciation. These processes would benefit most from people interacting beyond their immediate social and political bubbles, linking back to the previously mentioned issue of political block building.

Similarly, Ann shared an understanding of decoloniality as something that each person can “perform” or approach individually:

> “I believe every person can also perform decoloniality by themselves, so every single person can perform that [laughs] to a limited extent, of course, but like the ways of thinking that are naturalized but that are actually based on a hierarchy, that you try to break through those”. – Ann

Encouraging people to denaturalize certain colonial legacies and thoughts is an important step in encouraging a decolonial process (Raghuram & Sondhi, 2023). Nora suggests that individual objects and even small organizations have the potential to encourage decolonial reflections: “we’re a small house here compared to others. And I always say, small house, big topics, because even a single object can function as an entrance to this overall complex.“ These viewpoints further underline decoloniality “between the layers”.

Stephanie suggests a somewhat alternative viewpoint regarding decolonization and societal change:

> “I think the most important thing is simply to understand that city tours or anti-racism workshops and so on ... are just the tip of the iceberg when it comes to bringing about decolonization or a change in

> society. And it is actually much more important to change the current social structures. And if we just stick to giving guided tours of the city or running anti-racist workshops then... we are fighting symptoms, but not solving the actual problem. Exactly." – Stephanie

She mentions how to "solve the actual problem", meaning how to affect transformative change on a societal and institutional level. The small actions that May, Ann, and Nora might regard as contributing to decoloniality would be seen as "symptom control" here, and not as transformative on a deeper, structural level. Keeping in mind that decoloniality is not something that aims to enforce itself upon anyone or become a "missionary imperative" (Mignolo & Walsh, 2018), we might allow ourselves to reframe the work discussed here as contributing to decoloniality. Is this work mere "symptom control", or a decolonial option that is emerging within the cracks of the colonial order? Does its small scale mean it is necessarily irrelevant? Or can we view this work as an alternative and resistance to a preexisting order? If the larger aim is transformative and structural change, is it not this type of grassroots work or "patches" that are worth noting? Chapter 4.4 will focus on the discussion of how transformative change interacts with the topics and strategies discussed here and tie in the framing of small-scale initiatives as potentially transformative.

4.3.5 Summary

The previous section considered the question of how the type of work discussed here can avoid reproducing colonial power hierarchies and center decoloniality. While four overarching approaches were recognized within the interviews and detailed, this should be viewed as a non-exhaustive list. Firstly, the importance of marginalized communities being able to represent their own concerns was detailed (4.3.1), and the principle of "nothing about us without us" was elaborated on. Next, the question of Western rationales and power hierarchies within such efforts was approached (4.3.2) begging us to critically reflect on how we frame this type of work and the Western organizations who are involved in such a way to not reproduce a colonial hierarchy. A third section analyzed decoloniality within organizations (4.3.3) with a focus on resource allocation. The final section discussed decoloniality across scales, underlining how small-scale individual moves towards decoloniality can be impactful. It reminds us to question whether certain ideas about impact may be colonially informed thoughts themselves. The question arose whether individual level and small-scale interventions can truly affect societal and structural transformation, and the danger of treating decoloniality as a missionary

imperative was considered. The concept of transformative “patches” was introduced in chapter 2.1.4 and will be discussed in the next chapter. It points to the framing of small-scale interventions as transformative.

Centering decoloniality and aiming to deconstruct colonial power hierarchies within organizations relies on the continual work of all involved to relearn and unlearn certain lessons; it is an approach that must not be seen as teleological, but which must be constantly re-practiced and re-centered. The approaches detailed above arose in interviews and illustrate how certain influences of coloniality can be deconstructed within organizations. They further our understanding of how experts evaluate the decolonial potential of the work they are involved in. These efforts are seen as contributions towards decoloniality that certain organizations are already taking, and not as an exhaustive formula towards an imagined end point of decoloniality.

4.4 Transformative Potential

The previous chapters considered insights gained from different organizations and networks that are committed to working on the topics of Switzerland's colonial history and narratives surrounding Indigeneity. In this chapter the potential of these endeavors to affect transformative change in Switzerland will be discussed. To summarize the conceptualization of transformative change found in chapter 2.1.4, transformative change involves fundamental, non-linear and non-teleological changes towards a just, equitable, and sustainable future (Fisher et al., 2022; Lam et al., 2020). This sort of change is believed to be brought about by innovation and shifts in thought, action, consumption, values, and ways that we conceive of well-being (Mehta et al., 2021). Transformative change is thought to benefit from transdisciplinary collaborations and other attempts to pluralize knowledge by bridging voices within academia, policymaking, and society, as well as by heeding marginalized voices while decentering dominant Western knowledge systems (Deutsch et al., 2023; McGregor et al., 2020). It is intimately related to the concept clusters of decolonization, decoloniality, and plurality, and involves recognizing strengths within Indigenous knowledge systems and pushing for their increased inclusion (ibid). Transformative change involves changes at individual, collective, and institutional levels (Mehta et al., 2021). On the small-scale, collective level, Mehta et al. (2021) conceptualize patches of transformation as bottom-up approaches towards transformative changes to development paradigms, power relations, and society. Scoones et al. (2020)

conceptualized three separate yet interrelated approaches to transformative change in the structural, systemic, and enabling approach.

The next section will discuss insights gained from chapters 4.2 and 4.3 in response to this concept. It details how efforts towards pluralizing knowledge in the Swiss context can contribute to transformation and discusses the potential of transdisciplinary endeavors within organizations. The transformative nature of shifting thought and action towards just and sustainable futures is discussed. Next the framing of organizational initiatives as patches of transformation is brought up. Finally, the categorization of the work discussed in terms of structural, systemic, and enabling approaches is approached. These separate yet interrelated arguments contribute to a recognition that work targeting Swiss colonial histories and Indigeneity have a transformative potential in Switzerland.

4.4.1 Pluralization towards Transformation

The previously discussed efforts have the potential to contribute to a pluralization of knowledge and voices within the Swiss context. Knowledge pluralization is important in forwarding transformative change and transdisciplinary collaborations (Deutsch et al., 2023). The next section delves deeper into this aspect by detailing how approaches taken by the organizations and networks discussed contribute to a potentially transformative knowledge pluralization.

Some of the approaches for successfully disseminating decolonial knowledge suggested that organizations position knowledge in a way that allows for multiple realities to coexist. The approaches refrain from lecturing people in exhibitions and tours. By sharing knowledge in an open manner and not positioning it as the universal truth, such approaches have the potential to contribute to a pluralization of knowledge (Mignolo & Walsh, 2018). Allowing visitors to recognize the complexity and multi-perspectivity of the topics discussed would thus be more fruitful (ibid). While this approach may start at the individual level, I suggest that it would allow for a more diverse group to engage with and benefit from a certain type of knowledge. This approachability could thus have the potential to mobilize more people and move insights from an individual to a collective level.

In discussing the possibility of sharing knowledge through art, the opportunity to pluralize what form of knowledge is valued arises. Recognizing the value of art and aesthetics would thus implicitly tie to a pluralization of what medium of knowledge dissemination is assigned value and legitimacy (Born & Barry, 2010). Rather than forwarding more

scientific and pedagogical forms of knowledge, recognizing the value of art can empower us to regain respect for diverse forms of knowledge dissemination (Lam et al., 2020; Sultana, 2022). This does not mean that we dismiss other more scientific approaches, but rather that we view them as one of many possible ways to share information on a topic. Pluralizing mediums of knowledge dissemination thus allows for different disciplines and forms of knowledge to be considered (ibid).

Formulating approaches in a manner that is accessible for people from different political and educational backgrounds as well as different ages, geographic and language regions, and abilities was understood to be instrumental. Accessibility thus has an impact in pluralizing knowledge if it makes interacting with alternative ways of knowing more available and palatable to the people engaging in these offers. Additionally, the transformational potential of dialogue was touched upon. When offers can be made accessible to a diverse group and foster dialogue among them, people gain the possibility of benefitting from perspectives different from their own. Considering accessibility is thus an important part of pluralizing knowledge and encouraging people to engage with new viewpoints.

Paying attention to marginalized voices and recognizing the strengths of Indigenous knowledge systems are central to knowledge pluralization and transformative change (Datta, 2018; Lam et al., 2020). The aspect of self-representation that was discussed in chapter 4.3.1 must be considered here. Enhancing Indigenous self-representation was seen as a method for organizations to center decoloniality, contribute to a plurality of voices represented, and decenter certain colonially embedded power hierarchies. Indigenous peoples' representatives were broadly recognized to be important activists and spokespersons. Their deliberate inclusion in the Swiss context thus furthers peoples' insights into Indigenous realities, breaks down stereotypes, and avoids the problematic situation of speaking about and on behalf of another group. Additionally, centering Indigenous voices within relevant research endeavors contributes to a pluralization of voices within the research itself (Lam et al., 2020). Promoting Indigenous self-representation enables local people to encounter other knowledge systems and further the pluralization of knowledge in Switzerland (ibid).

The rationale of self-representation and inclusion of marginalized groups in discussions affecting them also pertains to marginalized groups within Switzerland (Tages Anzeiger, 2023). The deliberate goal of reflecting the multi-perspectivity within Switzerland in

organizational outputs could reproduce an image of Swiss plurality. The empowerment of marginalized voices and recognition of internal diversity is important to further pluralization within and amongst Swiss society (Pinto et al., 2022). This is a central endeavor in affecting transformative change that surpasses moves towards knowledge pluralization and affects societal power relations, social justice, and conceptualizations of the nation itself (McGregor et al., 2020; Theriault et al., 2020).

4.4.2 Transdisciplinary Collaboration towards Transformative Change

The rationale of knowledge pluralization connects to the approach of transdisciplinary collaboration as an approach that is valued in research on transformative change (Deutsch et al., 2023; Lam et al., 2020). Some of the organizations and networks discussed revolve around transdisciplinary work. This means that their work already relies on voices across different (academic and non-academic) disciplines. The networks and organizations that are organized in a transdisciplinary manner are thereby connected to pluralization and transformation.

The deliberate inclusion of voices from the art world was an approach favored by multiple organizations. This allowed them to include different perspectives alongside scientific ones and thus pluralize the voices represented. It additionally represents an approach where different knowledge systems and disciplines are recognized for their ability to complement one another (Born & Barry, 2010). Bridging art and science is a transdisciplinary effort that is already in use in different networks and organizations discussed here (ibid).

Accessibility and the usage of accessible terminology arose in the analysis as a method to make information available to people from different backgrounds and with different levels of pre-existing knowledge on the topic. This could enhance the ability for a transdisciplinary involvement with a topic or exhibition, as inputs would be deliberately formulated in a way that avoids complicated jargon. Additionally, involving transdisciplinary teams in organizational endeavors could further contribute to overall accessibility, as planning efforts could benefit from multiple perspectives (Escobar, 2011; Sultana, 2022).

Committing to multi-perspectivity by enhancing Indigenous voices and self-representation where possible is an additional approach towards transdisciplinarity (McGregor et al., 2020). Many of the organizations and museums discussed benefit from this form of

transdisciplinary collaboration where Indigenous knowledge can be complemented by knowledge based in a Western scientific background. This form of transdisciplinary collaboration has the potential of being well received in Switzerland, as it combines local, perhaps more trusted knowledge systems, and more foreign or unknown ways of knowing (Reid et al., 2021).

The internal diversity within organizations is an additional area where inter- and/or transdisciplinary collaboration benefits outputs (Sultana, 2022). Many of these organizations already work with a diverse team of people with knowledge embedded in different academic fields as well as people from non-academic fields. When it comes to formulating knowledge and other approaches, the inclusion of inter- and transdisciplinary voices is mutually beneficial (ibid).

Furthering transdisciplinary collaboration within these organizations and networks also allows for Western rationales to be decentered, while other knowledge systems are given their due consideration (Escobar, 2019; Sultana, 2022). This calls for active listening to collaborators within a given space or project. Centering marginalized voices, decentering Western scientific ideals, and efforts to bridge voices across academia, policymaking, and society are steps towards transformation (Chapin et al., 2012; McGregor et al., 2020). These are steps that are to a certain extent taken individually as well as collectively by some of the work discussed above.

4.4.3 Shifting Thought, Action, Consumption towards more Just, Equitable Futures

One of the important considerations that was elaborated on in the analysis was the idea that exhibitions and tours encourage processes of self-reflection among their visitors. Multiple strategies for knowledge dissemination were discussed that could kick start such processes. The expectation is that by encouraging people to reflect on their own privileges and the colonial remnants that impact Swiss society, a shift in their thoughts and actions towards more equitable and just futures might follow (Mehta et al., 2021; Raghuram & Sondhi, 2023).

Experts suggested that showcasing global connectivity could aid people in accepting new knowledge on past and present colonial entanglements. Feeling a connection to one's own life situation and geographic surroundings can then potentially make people feel implicated in the lived realities of other human and non-human entities. Possible strategies

to showcase global connections were recognized in the topic of the global food system, as well as the origins of Swiss wealth and the role of extractivism and commodity trading for the Swiss economy. These are topics that people encounter daily. Storytelling and informing people about the connections between their everyday interactions and the lived realities of people around the globe can thus influence how they think about their own interactions and consumption patterns.

The role played by certain organizations and networks in resource allocation towards historically exploited and marginalized peoples was analyzed as a form of decolonial action within organizations. This action is one that members of society can enhance in multiple ways. First, individuals can shift their own actions and support this work through donations (monetary or other). Second, individuals can collectively put pressure on political institutions to contribute to various forms of resource allocation. The act of removing structural, material, and discursive barriers for Indigenous peoples (and other minorities) is central to transformation (Latulippe & Klenk, 2020).

Exhibits and city tours that encourage visitors to learn about and reflect on their own societal privileges and unpack global inequities and racism were analyzed as a way to start processes of self-reflection regarding people's own positionalities and showcase connectivity. When societally privileged people engage individually with questions of racism and privilege, they begin to build the stamina necessary to enter conversations on these topics (DiAngelo, 2011). These discussions are important for the Swiss context as certain members of Swiss society have yet to recognize racism as a pressing local issue (Purtschert, 2011). The contribution of many of the endeavors discussed above to enable people to reconsider coloniality within Switzerland has the potential to start an overarching conversation on internal processes such as racism (Datta, 2018; Pinto et al., 2022). Inequities and social injustice must first be recognized to work towards more equitable and just futures on societal, institutional, and structural scales.

4.4.4 Patches of Transformation

Mehta et al. describe patches of transformation as:

> "Sites and exemplars amidst largely unsustainable processes where hybrid alliances, and their innovative initiatives, reimagine sustainable development and inspire transformative societal changes that can be scaled up and out […] where relations of power and knowledge are being reconfigured in more heterogeneous and deliberative ways to challenge dominant framings of nature-society relations and create spaces in which new practices emerge" (Mehta et al., 2021 p. 112).

Chapter 4.3.4 on decoloniality across scales discussed the decolonial potential of small-scale action and viewed decoloniality as something that people can practice individually. It also recognized that larger movements and structural as well as institutional transformation starts with individual people. The rationale of patches can aptly describe these small-scale processes with the potential of acting as multipliers (ibid). Treating individual and collective action as patches that “can be scaled up and out” not only empowers the individual but may also inspire hope and allow us to frame diverse initiatives that are already being enacted as potentially transformative.

I have argued that the work detailed in this thesis contributes to the decolonization and pluralization of knowledge in the Swiss context. This is where I locate its transformative potential. The framing of patches of transformation underlines the connection between the diverse contributions to decoloniality and the potential for these initiatives and networks to act as multipliers and be scaled up and out. Reading these efforts as patches of transformation allows us to recognize their merit and connect the work discussed to calls for transformative change.

4.4.5 Structural, Systemic, and Enabling Approaches

Many of the approaches taken by the organizations and networks discussed can be loosely categorized as structural, systemic, and enabling approaches as defined by Scoones et al. (2020). These approaches are meant to aid in the understanding and advancement of transformations (ibid).

Structural approaches refer to changes in the (perceived and ideological) underpinnings of society, politics, and economy with a focus on consumption and production within a society (Scoones et al., 2020). Conversely, systemic approaches focus on systems and are geared towards adaptive and normative goals rather than addressing underlying structural issues (ibid). The dissemination of knowledge on the colonial legacies that go unquestioned in Western society can be understood in terms of a structural approach. This relates to the idea that for social ideologies to change they must first be understood to be socially constructed and inequitable. A central role of the work discussed in this thesis is to contribute to insights into the colonial legacies that continue to influence society, economy, and politics in Switzerland. By fostering a critical consciousness for these topics among members of Swiss society, the need to transform them may follow.

Efforts towards building this consciousness can be analyzed as potentially structural approaches towards transformation.

The concept of pluralization is important for structural and systemic approaches, as societal, political, economic, and systemic change towards transformative change must include multiple perspectives and insights across and beyond disciplines (Lam et al., 2020; Deutsch et al., 2023). Although structural and systemic approaches tend to downplay individual agency, it is important to recognize that larger structures are made up of individuals (Scoones et al., 2020). Pluralizing the knowledge systems represented within socio-political structures is thus an instrumental aspect of transformative change.

In contrast to structural and systemic approaches, enabling approaches aim at empowering individuals and communities and view transformative potential in small-scale, individual level action and activism (with the potential for upscaling) (Scoones et al., 2020). Enabling approaches are thus fitting in analyzing some of the approaches and "patches" detailed above in terms of their transformative potential. The empowerment and advancement of Indigenous voices that is a central goal of organizations, such as Incomindios, GfbV, museum A, and museum D, is an enabling approach. These organizations aim to support Indigenous peoples' representatives' capacities. Their ability to advance community rights is supported by gaining access to international institutions and media; they are supported in their work financially as well as ideologically; and they are empowered to speak on behalf of themselves and their communities rather than having Western actors speak on their behalf. By supporting this form of activism organizations take on an enabling approach towards transformation.

Similarly, the potential of such approaches when translated to marginalized communities within Switzerland aligns with enabling approaches. The education of privileged members of society regarding local injustice and racism could function as a step towards building marginalized group members' capacities. Many group members are already empowered and mobilized agents and are already taking action on their own behalf (Pinto et al., 2022). Still, the necessary shift within broader system states leaves space for improvement.

4.4.6 Summary

This chapter examined the potential of the work discussed in this thesis to affect transformative change in Switzerland. The role of knowledge pluralization for transformation was analyzed, as well as the promotion of transdisciplinary collaborations

towards transformation. The potential of different inputs on Swiss colonial history, as well as the contribution of narratives surrounding Indigeneity to shifts in thought and action, was discussed. This can showcase global connectivity and enhance individual and systemic changes towards justice and equity. Inputs were framed in terms of patches of transformation, recognizing the potential of smaller scale actions towards broader movements towards decoloniality and transformation. Finally, efforts were categorized into structural, systemic, and enabling approaches. The importance of transforming societal ideologies and systems that are rooted in coloniality was considered. The role of enabling approaches to enhance Indigenous communities' capabilities was also recognized within some of the organizations detailed. I conclude that the work presented here has a transformative potential across scales, as both small-scale actions of empowerment and larger scale moves towards societal transformation were recognized.

5. Conclusion

This thesis shed light on the multifaceted role of decoloniality and pluralization of knowledge towards broader transformative change in the Swiss context. It has analyzed how actors involved in work on topics of Swiss colonial history and Indigenous peoples understand their works' contribution towards decoloniality in Switzerland. In order to approach this systematically based on insights from expert interviews, the analysis section was organized around answering three sub-questions. By detailing people's rationales to partake in this work, insights were gained into how they evaluate their work and its potential to affect a positive change in Switzerland. Chapter 4.2 addressed the first sub-question and elaborated on concrete strategies for disseminating decolonial knowledge detailed in the expert interviews. Approaches to knowledge dissemination focused on bridging political divides, circumventing guilt, showcasing connectivity and encouraging self-reflection, artistic reprocessing, and ensuring accessibility. By furthering these strategies, organizations and networks contribute to decoloniality in Switzerland. The next chapter analyzed insights into how the work can avoid reproducing colonial hierarchies and dependencies. Fostering opportunities for marginalized community members to represent their own concerns is integral to this. Organizations are encouraged to reflect on Western rationales to maintain a focus on decoloniality. Finally, the research has underlined the potential of these endeavors to affect transformative change. Their potential to contribute to the knowledge pluralization necessary for transformation was

highlighted, the influence of transdisciplinary collaboration was detailed, as was the potential to shift thought, actions, and consumption patterns. The efforts discussed vary in scale, with both small-scale and broader systemic shifts having a transformative potential. The work on colonial histories and Indigeneity discussed plays an integral role in furthering decoloniality, pluralization of knowledge, and thereby affecting transformative change in Switzerland.

The theoretical nature of this thesis is also one of its limitations; despite building on expert opinions from different disciplines, my output remains theoretical and academic and does not directly impact the lived realities of the communities discussed here. It is unable to directly enter into dialogue with more practical approaches towards decoloniality as praxis (see Mignolo & Walsh, 2018). Furthermore, in engaging in qualitative research my own positionality and ways of knowing have influenced the research process, influencing my choice of research partners and interpretations of data. I depart from the colonially informed view of the methodological research process as “neutral” or “objective”, and fully recognize that my subjectivity as a researcher has influenced my output. I would encourage other student researchers engaging in decoloniality on an academic level to explore this. Bridging our roles as researchers, students, activists, and members of civil society could result in fascinating outputs that depart from strictly theoretical frameworks.

Future research endeavors could focus more specifically on systematically analyzing changes in discourse and understandings of Swiss colonial histories and Indigenous communities in Switzerland. Extrapolating insights on broader societal stances and discourses is complicated by the qualitative nature of this thesis and the limited number of interviews conducted. An extensive discourse analysis as well as large-scale surveys could shed more light on the extent to which knowledge on colonial complicity is represented in Switzerland. Research could specifically focus on narratives within media as well as educational settings. This approach was beyond the scope of this thesis. However, such an approach could analyze to what extent the work conducted by organizations and networks detailed here is already transforming public discourse.

While the research focus here has remained on efforts involved specifically in Swiss colonial history and popular narratives pertaining to Indigenous peoples, the potential impact on marginalized groups within Switzerland and dominant imaginings of the “Swiss nation” was also considered. An analysis of anti-racist initiatives and other grassroots social movements within Switzerland would benefit from the framing employed here

around decoloniality, pluralization, and transformation. Recognizing existing endeavors in these areas as patches of transformation could be helpful. Building on this framing, future transdisciplinary collaborations organized around scaling such initiatives up and out towards societal transformative change could be useful in affecting change for different communities. Such collaborations would benefit immensely from including partners from diverse fields with activist stances. Future research endeavors in this area could bridge the gaps between academia, activism, and policy, and affect real and transformative change.

"Whatever befalls the earth
befalls the sons and daughters of the earth.
We did not weave the web of life.
We are merely a strand in it.
Whatever we do to the web,
we do to ourselves."

from the words of Chief Seattle

6. Literature

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7. Annex

7.1 Interview Guide

Although the interview guide is rather extensive, some of the topics would arise organically in relation to a different question, meaning that I did not strictly follow the script for every interview. Questions that are indented and/or cursive were optional from the beginning and often did not need to be asked.

1. Open Question/ Introduction

Please introduce yourself and [the organization you're involved in].

- How long have you worked there?

- How did you become interested in [organization]?

- People with involvement in multiple organizations: how does your work at organization A relate to organization B?

2. Indigeneity

- How do you define "Indigenous"?

- What makes something an "Indigenous issue"?

- Why is important to talk about Indigenous issues in Switzerland?

- What does it have to do with Swiss society?

- How do people talk about Indigenous issues in Switzerland? [public discourse, media, popular culture, personal level, where you work]

- In what sense do you feel the way people talk about this topic has changed in recent years?

- How does your work at [organization] contribute to changing this narrative/ way of speaking on indigenous issues?

- Have any experiences at your work made you worry about the future development of this topic in Switzerland? *If yes, how so?*

- Have any experiences at your work made you hopeful about the future development of this topic in Switzerland? *If yes, how so?*

- How do you feel narratives surrounding indigenous peoples intersect with more general narratives on race and gender, for example?

- Do you feel that your work contributes to society questioning why certain groups are marginalized? How/ How not?

3. Decolonization

- How do you define colonization?
- How would you define decolonization?
- What does decolonization mean to [your organization]?
    - *What about to you personally?*
- How do you see your work as interacting with decolonization?
        - *Is it decolonial and how so?*
        - *Do you contribute to decolonization in Switzerland?*
    - Is this a word that you use in your work?
    - *If yes: how do members of Swiss society react to it?*
    - *If yes: have you seen changes in reactions in recent years?*
    - *If no: discuss decolonial aspects of their work -> how do members of Swiss society react to this? Have there been changes in reactions in recent years?*

-Does your work at [organization] disrupt the way that colonial legacies influence our day to day lives?

- *Do you feel things are changing? Or not?*

4. Swiss society/ Pluralization

-How do you understand the phrase “pluralization of knowledge”?

- What potential do you see in your work contributing to the pluralization of knowledge in Switzerland? (Meaning the understanding that there are multiple perspectives out there and that we can respect and include different ways of understanding the world?)
    - *Does it have the potential of reaching members of broader society and how?*
    - *Or does it only reach a specific group?*
- Do you feel it is important to sensitize Swiss citizens to different worldviews? Why?
    - Do you feel people are resistant to this or not?
    - *If yes: why do you think that is?*
- How do you believe your work might affect the lives of certain members of minorities living in Switzerland, such as ethnic, racial, or religious minorities?

5. Ending

-How can institutional endeavors to sensitize the Swiss public to the topic of indigeneity contribute to broader decolonization and pluralization of knowledge and institutions in Switzerland?

Transformative change:

- Do you imagine talking about these issues can influence the way Swiss society talks about sustainability?

- Do you think these issues can have effects on environmental conservation in Switzerland?

- What would you like to add to the conversation? Have we missed some important aspects of the discussion?

7.2 Coding System

The coding system was generated with an inductive-deductive approach. The codes that the analysis in chapters 4.1, 4.2, and 4.3 built on are noted in parentheses.

1. Background (Organizations and People)
2. Indigeneity
    - 2.1 Definition
    - 2.2 Relation to Switzerland (4.1)
        - 2.2.1 Economy/ Extractivism (4.1)
        - 2.2.2 Colonial Entanglement/ Amnesia (4.1)
        - 2.2.3 Climate Change (4.1)
    - 2.3 Narratives
        - 2.3.1 Exoticization
        - 2.3.2 Stereotypes
        - 2.3.3 Semantics/ Cultural Appropriation
    - 2.4 Discrimination
        - 2.4.1 Black Lives Matter
        - 2.4.2 “Woke” Culture
        - 2.4.3 Diversity
3. Decolonization/ Decoloniality
    - 3.1 Understanding Colonialism
        - 3.1.1 Oppression Mechanisms
        - 3.1.2 Othering
        - 3.1.3 Multiple Dimensions
    - 3.2 Understanding Decolonization/Decoloniality

3.2.1 Scale (4.3)
3.2.2 Self-Reflection (4.2)
3.3 Role within Organizations (4.3)
3.3.1 Museum (4.3)
3.3.2 Hiring Practices (4.3)
3.3.3 Resource Redistribution (4.3)
3.4 Disrupting Colonial Legacies (4.2)
3.4.1 Anti-Racism/ Social Justice (4.2)
3.4.2 Education (4.2)
3.4.3 Language
3.4.4 Connections
3.5 Challenging Narratives (4.2)
3.5.1 Exhibitions (4.2)
3.5.2 Self-Representation (4.2) (4.3)
3.5.3 Art (4.2)
3.5.4 Humor (4.2)
3.5.5 Dialogue (4.2)

4. Plurality
   4.1 Understanding Plurality
   4.2 Contributing to Pluralization
   4.3 Reactions/Resistance (4.2)
   4.3.1 Shame/Blame (4.2)
   4.3.2 Political Values (4.2)
5. Sustainability/Conservation
6. Society

7.3 Original Language Quotes

[i] „Es liegt im Wesen der Geschichte, dass sie stets mit neuen Fragestellungen geschrieben wird“ (Brengard et al., 2020 p. 47)

[ii] «Wenn die Schweiz sich als rassismuskritische Gesellschaft weiterentwickeln und anti-rassistische Handlungsspielräume schaffen will, müssen der Rassismus und seine historisch tief verwurzelten Traditionen in unserer Gesellschaft anerkannt werden» (Wilopo & Häberlein, 2022 p. 93)

[iii] «Die Geschichte des europäischen Kolonialismus und des Rassismus ist immer auch eine Geschichte des Widerstands» (Darman & Schär, 2023, p. 100)

[iv] «Eine Auseinandersetzung mit der rassifizierten Illegalisierung ermöglicht eine Kritik am Bild der «humanitären» Schweiz, welches durch die Präsenz und Widerstandspraxen von abgewiesenen Asylsuchenden herausgefordert wird. Denn das Nothilferegime der Schweiz ist alles andere als human» (Wilopo & Häberlein, 2022 p. 93)

[v] "Während der muslimische Mann qua seiner Kultur immer schon sexistisch ist, wird der Sexismus des Schweizers als ein individuelles Problem betrachtet, welches nichts mit seiner Kultur zu tun hat" (Kaya 2012, p. 123)

7.4 Personal declaration

I hereby declare that the submitted Thesis is the result of my own, independent work. All external sources are explicitly acknowledged in the Thesis.

Signed, Rose Nelson, 25.08.2024