Universität Zürich[UZH]

Geographisches Institut

Discourses on Decolonization in Switzerland: A Media Analysis of Colonial Entanglements

GEO 511 Master's Thesis

Author: Simon Perlmutter, 20-706-859

Supervised by: Dr. Sierra Deutsch

Faculty representative: Prof. Dr. Norman Backhaus

21.08.2026



Universität Zürich[UZH]

Discourses on Decolonization in Switzerland: A Media Analysis of Colonial Entanglements

Geo 511 Master's Thesis

Author

Simon Perlmutter

20-706-859

Supervised by

Dr. Sierra Deutsch

Faculty representative

Prof. Dr. Norman Backhaus

21.08.2026

Department of Geography, University of Zurich

Abstract

For decades, Switzerland's national self-image rested on narratives of neutrality and non-involvement in colonialism, despite the country's economic and social entanglements with colonial systems. This thesis examines how decolonization is negotiated in Swiss media and how this negotiation connects to global debates on Indigeneity and Indigenous and Local Knowledge (ILK). Drawing on postcolonial and decolonial theory, as well as epistemic and environmental justice, the study analyzes a corpus of German- and English-language media articles using a qualitative content analysis and frame analysis. The findings highlight five narratives within this corpus, namely a Swiss-specific narrative of neutrality that continues to shield the state from accountability, the individualization of colonial responsibility, colonialism as an ongoing system, decolonization as a symbolic rather than structural project, as well as a persistent epistemic subordination of Indigenous and Local Knowledge. Across the narratives identified in this corpus, colonial entanglements are increasingly recognized, yet this recognition is rarely translated into structural or political demands.

Keywords: Decolonization, Colonialism without Colonies, Swiss Media Discourse, Postcolonial Theory, Indigenous and Local Knowledge (ILK)

Für Jahrzehnte stützte sich das nationale Selbstbild der Schweiz auf eine Erzählung von Neutralität und Nicht-Beteiligung am Kolonialismus, trotz wirtschaftlicher und sozialer Verflechtungen mit kolonialen Systemen. Diese Masterarbeit untersucht, wie Dekolonisierung in Schweizer Medien verhandelt wird und wie diese Verhandlung mit globalen Debatten zu Indigeneity sowie zu Indigenous and Local Knowledge (ILK) verbunden ist. Aufbauend auf postkolonialer und dekolonialer Theorie sowie auf epistemischer und ökologischer Gerechtigkeit analysiert die Studie einen Korpus deutsch- und englischsprachiger Medienartikel mittels qualitativer Inhaltsanalyse und Frame-Analyse. Die Ergebnisse zeigen fünf dominante Narrative, nämlich ein Schweiz-spezifisches Neutralitätsnarrativ, dass den Staat weiterhin von Verantwortung entlastet die Individualisierung kolonialer Verantwortung, Kolonialismus als fortbestehendes System, Dekolonisierung als symbolisches statt strukturelles Projekt, sowie eine anhaltende epistemische Unterordnung von Indigenous and Local Knowledge. In den im Korpus identifizierten Narrativen werden koloniale Verflechtungen zunehmend anerkannt, wobei diese Anerkennung selten zu strukturellen oder politischen Forderungen führt.

Schlüsselbegriffe: Dekolonisierung, Kolonialismus ohne Kolonien, Schweizer Mediendiskurs, Postkoloniale Theorie, Indigenous and Local Knowledge (ILK)

Contents

1. Introduction 5
2. Theoretical Framework 7
2.1. Colonialism 8
2.2. Postcolonial Theory 9
2.2.1. What is Postcolonial Theory 9
2.2.2. Historical Development 10
2.2.2.1. Origins of the Anti-Colonial Movement 10
2.2.2.2. Emergence as an Academic Field 11
2.2.3. Key Concepts 11
2.2.3.1. Orientalism 11
2.2.3.2. Subalternity 12
2.2.3.3. Internalization & Identity 12
2.2.3.4. Postcolonial Critique of Modernity 12
2.2.4. Critique of Postcolonial Theory 13
2.3. Decolonial Theory 14
2.3.1. Definition 14
2.3.2. Origins 14
2.3.3. Concepts 15
2.3.3.1. Coloniality of Power 15
2.3.3.2. Coloniality of Knowledge 16
2.3.3.3. Coloniality of Being 16
2.3.3.4. Modernity 16
2.3.4. Distinction from Postcolonial Theory 17
2.4. Supplementary Concepts 17
2.4.1. Epistemic Justice 17
2.4.2. ILK: Local Knowledge & Indigeneity 18
2.4.2.1. Indigeneity 18
2.4.2.2. Indigenous and Local Knowledge (ILK) 19
2.4.3. Environmental Justice 20
2.5. Media & Discourse Theory 21
2.5.1. Content Analysis 22
2.5.2. Frame Analysis 22
2.6. Relevance for Research 23
3. Context: Swiss Colonial Entanglements 24
3.1. Historical Entanglements 25
3.1.1. Economic Involvement 25
3.1.2. Knowledge & Science 26
3.1.3. Individual Entanglements 27
3.1.4. Political & Moral Dimensions 28
3.1.5. Slave Trade Entanglements 29
3.2. Why the Entanglements were invisible for a long Time 30
3.2.1. Switzerland's national Self-Image of Neutrality & Innocence 30
3.2.2. Why the Topic remained invisible for so long 31
3.3. The Role of Indigeneity in Switzerland 32
3.4. Current debates & societal Change 33
3.4.1. Scientific Debates 34
3.4.2. Media Coverage & Public Debates 34
3.4.3. Museums & Institutions 35
3.4.4. Political & Social Involvement 36
4. Methodology 37

4.1. Research Design & Approach 37
4.2. Data Corpus, Sources & Sampling Strategy 38
4.2.1. Corpus Content & Exclusion Criteria 38
4.2.2. Media Sources 38
4.2.3. Language & Time Frame 39
4.2.4. Data Collection & Search Strategy 39
4.2.5. Sampling Principles & Selection Criteria 39
4.2.6. Corpus Structure 40
4.3. Analytical Method 40
4.4. Coding Procedure & Category System 41
4.5. Reflexivity & Positionality 44
4.6. Ethical Considerations 45
4.7. Limitations of the Method 45
5. Media Analysis & Findings 46
5.1. Switzerland's Self-Image: Neutrality & Entanglements 47
5.2. Colonial Responsibility: Individualization & Continuity 49
5.3. Decolonization as a Symbolic Project 55
5.4. Indigenous & Local Knowledge 58
5.5. Trend Analysis 62
5.6. Summary 64
6. Discussion 65
6.1. Switzerland in the Global Decolonization Discourse 65
6.1.1. Switzerland in Comparison 66
6.1.2. The Individualization of Colonial Responsibility in Switzerland 67
6.1.3. Symbolic instead of cultural 67
6.1.4. The Black Lives Matter Movement as a global Catalyst 68
6.2. Indigeneity & Sustainability 68
6.2.1. Indigenous & Local Knowledge in the global Discourse 68
6.2.2. Indigenous & Local Knowledge in the Swiss Discourse 69
6.2.3. Indigeneity without Indigenous Politics 70
6.2.4. New Epistemic Hierarchies 71
6.3. Swiss special Case: Neutrality Myth & Individualization 71
6.3.1. Neutrality as a Narrative of colonial Innocence 72
6.3.2. Individualism as a possible cultural Explanation 72
6.4. Answering the Research Questions 73
6.5. Critical Reflections & Limitations 76
6.5.1. Limitations 76
7. Conclusion 78
7.1. Synthesis of the Findings 78
7.2. Contribution of the Study 79
7.3. Beyond the Swiss Case 79
7.4. Outlook 80
7.5. Concluding Thoughts 80
8. Bibliography 81
9. Appendix 95

9.1. Corpus Overview 95
9.1.1. Core Corpus 95
9.1.2. Context Corpus 98
9.2. Code Book 100
9.3. Graphics & Visualizations 103
9.4. Personal Declaration 104

1. Introduction

For decades, Switzerland's national self-image rested on a narrative of political neutrality and non-involvement in colonialism. In recent years, this narrative has begun to unravel. Exhibitions, newspaper coverage, and academic research have started to expose the extent to which Swiss banks, trading houses, and citizens were economically entangled in colonial systems. Therefore, this master's thesis examines exactly this unraveling, the discourses on decolonization in Switzerland, on a media level. While one can argue that Switzerland never possessed colonies of its own, many Swiss actors were economically involved in colonial systems. Swiss banks helped finance colonial enterprises and Swiss trading houses profited from the import of colonial goods such as cotton, coffee, and sugar. It has also been proven that Swiss actors were involved in the ownership and trade of slaves (Fässler 2024). A legacy that continues to produce social and racist repercussions to this day (David et al. 2005) and continues to show that Switzerland's clean slate is not so clean after all. These indirect involvements and long-term economic entanglements also contributed to the country's economic upswing, as Behrendt already established in 1932.

While these entanglements were repressed or dismissed as harmless for a long time, in recent years there have been social changes regarding colonial structures in Switzerland. A great example was an exhibition at the "Landesmuseum" from 2024 to 2025 discussing the colonial history of Switzerland ("kolonial – Globale Verflechtungen der Schweiz"). Other examples are newspaper articles like one by Peter Schürmann from 2020 titled "Switzerland has a colonial past, without having colonies" or an exhibition by the ETH in Zurich titled "Colonial traces – Collections in their context". The change is also visible on an academic level as various authors either historically analyzed Switzerland's past (Zangger 2011 or Franc 2008) or use postcolonial or decolonial theory to analyze Switzerland's colonial entanglements (Purtschert et al. 2016, Appiah & Yeboah Mireku 2020, or Fässler 2024).

The change observable within the analyzed media corpus regarding the decolonization discourse in Switzerland as well as its connection to global topics like Indigenous and Local Knowledge (ILK) will therefore be analyzed in this master's thesis. Furthermore, the thesis will analyze how the discourses are connected to broader global debates like epistemic justice and environmental justice. These dimensions are intersected as decolonization not only addresses historical and cultural aspects but also talks about whose knowledge counts and who has the authority to speak about nature, the environment, and sustainability. In this context ILK is important as it represents forms of knowledge and environmental management that are often highlighted in global sustainability debates (Roue & Nakashima 2018). Examining how Swiss media and institutions refer to such notions can reveal how decolonial ideas are localized within the Swiss context. Therefore, it can be examined how global concepts like "Indigeneity" can be used or are negotiated on a local level. This thesis will therefore not only give its contribution to research in Switzerland but to postcolonial research on a middle European context.

Purtschert et al. (2011) summarized the issue very well as they wrote that the opinion that Switzerland had nothing to do with colonialism was not only visible in history classes but also in media coverage. But as mentioned before there has been a change in the Helvetic context about decolonization. Despite these developments, a systematic analysis how these discourses take place in Switzerland's media is missing. It is important to examine how the discourses have changed over time as well as how they are connected to the global decolonization movements and discussions about Indigenous and Local Knowledge. Especially challenging in this regard may be the handling of the concept of Indigeneity as Switzerland does not have colonized Indigenous communities in the classical sense which therefore raises the question how "Indigenous perspectives" are interpreted or adapted.

Based on the problem statement the following research question has been formulated to analyze the decolonization discourse in Swiss media:

"How are discourses about decolonization manifested in the Swiss media, and how do they connect to global debates on "Indigeneity" and the growing recognition of Indigenous and Local Knowledge?"

To address this question, the thesis analyzes narratives and frames related to Switzerland's colonial past, explores references to epistemic and environmental justice, and investigates how global decolonial concepts are interpreted within the Swiss media context. By focusing on German- and English-language sources, the media analysis captures both national debates and transnational perspectives. In order to address the central research question, the thesis explores these sub-questions:

"What narratives and frames are represented in the Swiss discourses about the colonial past and decolonization?"

"How are global trends like epistemic justice and environmental justice, as well as the increasing recognition of ILK, reflected in the Swiss media?"

"How is the term "Indigeneity" understood in Swiss media?"

"How did these discourses change over time and what trends have developed?"

Having outlined the subject and research questions of this thesis, the remainder of this introduction sets out its structure. In order to analyze the decolonization trends in Switzerland's media landscape and answer the research questions, this master's thesis will draw on various concepts that together allow for a deeper understanding of the subject. These concepts will be presented in the theoretical framework, the first part of the thesis, which situates them within the broader global debate before applying them to the Swiss case. Following the theoretical framework, the thesis will present a deeper analysis of literature

regarding Switzerland's history in a separate chapter. There the historical background, current debates, and political context of Swiss colonial entanglements are discussed.

In a next step a media analysis is conducted for which a corpus containing media articles was built. Examples can be museum websites, exhibition articles, or online-newspapers which will then be analyzed with a content analysis (Mayring & Fenzl 2019). MAXQDA24 will be used to perform the analysis as the program can display various media and examine them. It allows the entire corpus to be coded in the program. Furthermore, it will be analyzed how the topics are framed. Here the thesis will rely on Entman's theory of frame-analysis (1993). Through this an analysis can be made, if for example Switzerland was mostly seen as neutral or as a profiteer of colonial structures. To analyze the discourses over time a trend analysis will also be made. With this, the frequency of the key concepts (post-colonialism, decolonization etc.) can be examined over the selected time-period which helps to analyze shifts in public and institutional attention toward decolonial topics. This will be elaborated in more detail in the methodology section of this thesis, while the analysis, discussion and conclusion section will be used to answer the research questions, summarize the thesis and give recommendations for further research and practice.

2. Theoretical Framework

In order to analyze the decolonization trends in Switzerland and answer the research questions, this master's thesis draws on various concepts that together allow for a deeper understanding of the subject. In this chapter various frameworks will be discussed that play an important role when talking about decolonization. First postcolonialism will be reviewed. As the thesis deals with coloniality to a great amount, postcolonial theory is very important. This chapter will also be used to briefly discuss colonialism as a concept as the topic is linked to postcolonialism and the general theory of this master's thesis. The framework of postcolonialism will furthermore help to uncover how colonial power structures persist in modern day discourses. A second key concept for this master's thesis is decolonial theory. The inequalities associated with this topic are encapsulated by a proverb that can be used to illustrate these dynamics. "Until lions have their own storytellers, the story of the hunt will always glorify the hunter" (Thiong'o cited in Tuhiwai Smith 2019: 5). Applied to colonial history, the proverb points to a structural imbalance. Those who hold the power over narratives decide which version of the past becomes dominant. Decolonial theory challenges this imbalance by insisting that the colonized be recognized as narrators of their own history rather than as its subjects. This issue is directly relevant to the present thesis, which asks whose narratives and knowledge systems shape Swiss debates about history and colonial entanglement.

While postcolonial and decolonial theory serve as key concepts for this master's thesis other concepts will function as complementary conceptual frameworks. Epistemic Justice, Indigenous & Local Knowledge as well as Environmental Justice will be examined one by one and serve to connect the decolonial thought to the environmental part of the thesis as the debates around sustainability often draw on colonial histories of resource usage as this is also important for Switzerland. Indigeneity is another complementary concept with significant importance for this master's thesis. It will help to draw a connection to Switzerland and analyze how the term is used there. Since the concept of "Indigeneity" is not commonly applied to local communities in Switzerland, the question arises as to whether Swiss media and institutions use Indigenous voices primarily as a metaphor for sustainability (Tuck & Yang 2012). Two final concepts that will be examined will be important for the media analysis in chapter 5. These are Mayring and Fenzl's (2019) qualitative content analysis and Entman's (1993) frame analysis, both of which are introduced briefly here and developed in full in the methodology chapter. These theories provide a strong theoretical lens which makes it possible to trace how colonial power relations, epistemic hierarchies, and environmental discourses intersect in Swiss media narratives about decolonization as well as to situate them on a broader global level.

2.1. Colonialism

Colonialism is not merely a historical episode but a structural process that reorganized political, economic and cultural relations across large parts of the globe. Thornton (1962: 336) explains it as the "seizure of a country or region by imperialists, accompanied by the subjection, brutal exploitation, and sometimes annihilation of the local population". Understanding colonialism in these structural terms is a necessary starting point before turning to postcolonial theory, which examines how these structures persist beyond the formal end of colonial rule. To put it objectively colonialism started in the 15th century with the Spanish and the Portuguese and the first ocean voyage to the south and north American continent, as well as to India (Quijano 2000, Bolt 2022). Another peak of colonialism came at the end of the 19th century with the "scramble for Africa" (Bolt 2022).

Colonialism, however, is not a monolithic phenomenon but takes on different forms depending on its aims and mechanisms. Tuck and Yang (2012) distinguish between external colonization, in which resources and labor are extracted from a territory to enrich a colonial center located elsewhere, and internal colonization, in which the exploitation and policing of populations occurs within the boundaries of a single nation-state. Settler colonialism constitutes a third, distinct form, in which colonizers arrive with the intention of permanently occupying the land rather than merely extracting resources from it (Tuck & Yang 2012). A fourth relevant form is plantation colonialism, in which colonial economies were organized around the large-scale cultivation of cash crops such as sugar, cotton, cocoa or tobacco for export to the metropole, typically relying on enslaved or forced labor (Lees 2017). While plantation colonialism is most commonly associated with direct colonial powers, its economic networks extended far beyond formal colonial territories, drawing in trading houses, banks and industries in countries

without colonies of their own. This dimension is particularly relevant for the Swiss case, as the following chapter will show, since Swiss trading companies, textile industries and financial institutions were closely entangled with plantation economies despite Switzerland's formal absence from the colonial map (Zangger 2011).

Colonialism brought destruction and death for the benefit of the motherland. Wolfe (2006) addresses this topic in his work on settler colonialism. He writes that settler colonialism is based on the "logic of elimination" (Wolfe, 2006), as new settlements require land to be seized and Indigenous populations to be eradicated in order to occupy and exploit their territories (Bonds & Inwood 2016). In relation to settler colonialism Mishra and Hodge (2005) took apart the word colonialism to examine how "colony" describes something invasive which before just was a term for settlement. Hand in hand with this goes a question that Rukundwa and Van Aarde posed back in 2007: "When does a settler become colonizer, colonized and postcolonial or in the human history of migrations, when does the settler become native, Indigenous, a primary citizen?" (Rukundwa & Van Aarde 2007: 1173). They show how postcolonial theory is linked to race and culture while, through these questions, highlighting how challenges for postcolonialism can arise.

It is important to note that colonialism, understood as a historical and structural process with a formal beginning and, at least nominally, an end, must be distinguished from the term of coloniality. As Maldonado-Torres (2007) argues, colonialism denotes a political and economic relation in which the sovereignty of one nation or people rests on the power of another, whereas coloniality refers to the long-standing patterns of power that emerged from colonialism but continue to shape culture, labor, social relations and knowledge production well beyond the formal limits of colonial rule. Coloniality, in this sense, survives colonialism. This distinction, developed within decolonial theory, will be examined in detail in the following sub-chapters.

2.2. Postcolonial Theory

2.2.1. What is Postcolonial Theory

Botella-Ordinas (2012) argues that postcolonialism as a discipline analyzes the outcomes that result from colonialism on societies and individuals. Darian-Smith (1996) goes further than that and explains that postcolonialism is fundamentally used to separate colonialism and its structures from the self-determination of formerly colonized nations. In addition to that she highlights the various connections between postcolonialism and theories of "imperialism, modernity, racism, ethnicity, cultural geography and postmodernism" (Darian-Smith 1996: 291) which is also defined by Botella-Ordinas (2012: 1) as an "interdisciplinary methodology" based on post-structuralist and postmodern criticism. While as shown before postcolonialism, which is concerned with colonial discourses and epistemologies, cannot be reduced to a fixed point in time.

One can go to the end of the second world war, to a time where a lot of former colonies around the world gained their independence (Betts 2004), to set postcolonialism into a time-frame, but Rattansi (1997: 481) explains that there is no sense to reduce the "postcolonial" to a singular moment but to look at it as a "series of transitions situated between and within the moments of colonization/decolonization". Darian-Smith (1996) makes a similar point, arguing that colonialism and imperialism are not merely historical topics, but are continuously reproduced today as methods of colonial rule. This can be summarized by saying that postcolonialism and its use, which had a profound change in usage since the beginning of its terminology (Lazarus 2011), deals with the experiences of colonialism in both a past and present manner, and does so on both a local and a global level (Quayson 2005). As Mishra and Hodge (2005: 377) note: "The postcolonial survives into the present precisely because of its status as past". While Switzerland as a country never had any colonies, individual entanglements (Zangger 2011) led to the proposition that Switzerland was a "part-time colonial power" (Fässler 2005). In this regard Purtschert et al. (2016) argue how important it is to apply terms like "colonial exceptionalism" to the Swiss context and that colonialism also concerns countries without former colonies. Therefore, it is evident that postcolonial structures can also be applied to the Swiss case.

2.2.2. Historical Development

2.2.2.1. Origins of the Anti-Colonial Movement

The fundamental idea of postcolonialism is the political and cultural struggle against European imperialism. Well before "postcolonialism" became an academic field, anti-colonial thinkers articulated critiques of colonial domination that combined political resistance, cultural affirmation, and theoretical innovation. A name that has to be mentioned while talking about independence and the fight against colonialism is Frantz Fanon. He "produced an excoriating critique of bourgeois nationalist anticolonialism, a discourse aimed at the (re)attainment of nationhood through means of the capture and subsequent "occupation" of the colonial state, and which on Fanon's reading represented only the interests of the elite Indigenous classes" (Lazarus 1993: 71). Another example for an important writer is Aimé Césaire who, as well as Fanon, used the lived experience of colonial violence and the fight for liberation as motivation for his writing. Frantz Fanon's Black Skin, White Masks (1986) and The Wretched of the Earth (1969) analyze the psychological, cultural, and structural dimensions of colonial oppression and decolonization. He illuminated how colonialism creates internalized hierarchies of race and culture, producing what he famously described as an "inferiority complex" among the colonized. Aimé Césaire, in his "Discourse on Colonialism" (1955), exposed the brutality and hypocrisy of European "civilizing missions", arguing that colonialism dehumanized both colonizer and colonized.

These works share a common emphasis in that colonialism is not only a political or economic enterprise but also a cultural and psychological one as seen in the work of Fanon. This early anti-colonial tradition laid the groundwork for later academic debates by highlighting the multiplicity of colonial impacts and the complexities of post-independence realities. Postcolonial theory would later draw heavily on these insights, translating them into a more systematic critique of representation, discourse, and power (Patel 2023).

2.2.2.2. Emergence as an Academic Field

While anti-colonial writers provided the conceptual foundations, postcolonialism emerged as a distinct academic field in the 1970's. The decisive factor in this was Edward Said's "Orientalism" from 1978. Said argued that Western representations of the "Orient" were not neutral descriptions but integral to imperial domination. He also believes that the consequences of colonialism in the form of chaos, coups, corruption, civil wars and bloodshed, which prevail in many of these countries mainly due to the remnants of colonization, continue to exist (Abbas et al. 2014). With his work, Said demonstrated how knowledge production is entangled with power, positioning *Orientalism* as a key text for the study of colonial and postcolonial cultural formations.

2.2.3. Key Concepts

2.2.3.1. Orientalism

The results of colonialism, which postcolonialism analyses, lead to a separation of the parties, which however, are linked by postcolonial theory and thus take the imperial process into account (Rattansi 1997). This separation can be observed in Edward Said's book "Orientalism" which shows how the West has constructed the "Orient" as its counterpart (1978). Said's work is looked at as the cornerstone of postcolonial theory where he shows how the west always produced a false image on the Orient where it is looked at as a primitive and uncivilized "Other". In his critique of the West, Said presents the geographical field as symmetrical, thus defining Occidentalism as the counterpart to Orientalism (Said 1978: 163). Said (1978) argues that colonialism has exacerbated Western ignorance, with the West viewing the East as exotic or alien, something that must be molded into a replica of Europe or "incorporated into theatrical stage whose audience is Europe" (Jensen 2011:64). He refers strongly to religion and shows how Islam is viewed as the sin of the Orient, drawing on Dante's Inferno (Said 1978: 182). Thus, the West is seen as the original, with aspects such as "'being white', Christianity, rationality, civilization, modernity, sexual discipline, and masculinity" also belonging to it, while colonial processes project the opposites onto the "Other" (Rattansi 1997: 482). Building on this, Seth (2011) argues that the centrality of Europe is thus called into question, as are the legal characteristics that arise from colonial encounters.

2.2.3.2. Subalternity

Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's concept of subalternity poses the question of who really has a voice in colonial and postcolonial systems. With her essay "Can Subalternity speak?" she argues how, through colonial structures, marginalized groups are systematically silenced (Spivak 2001). With this, she pushes one step further then Said (Larsen 2005) and highlights how the subaltern is systematically dominated by western discourses. Spivak (2001) explains this as a process of epistemic violence which is seen as a form of power that is not physical but takes place on the knowledge level. This is further elaborated by Mignolo (2000) who argues that the western civilization has the epistemic privilege of projecting their histories onto the universal history.

2.2.3.3. Internalization & Identity

Postcolonial theory can furthermore be expanded through the psychological dimensions of colonial dominance which is highlighted by Frantz Fanon. Colonialism does not only act structural and political but also deep within the subjects. Fanon describes how colonial power is forming identities and distorts self-images. In "Black Skin, White Masks" he (1986) writes how the colonized person's consciousness is haunted as they struggle to define themselves in relation to the colonizer's perspective. "For not only must the black man be black; he must be black in relation to the white man" (Fanon 1986: 110). This perspective helps to understand how colonial thinking and power relations continue to persist, even after political independence. This is important because not only do these colonial subjectivities and perceptions persist (Quijano 2000, Maldonado-Torres 2007), but they also occur in countries without former colonial power like Switzerland (Purtschert et al. 2016). Here these narratives take on the forms of neutrality, progress, development or cultural superiority (Loftsdóttir & Jensen 2012, Michel 2015).

2.2.3.4. Postcolonial Critique of Modernity

Postcolonial thinking as seen in Said's "Orientalism" criticizes Eurocentric thinking or the "provincialization of Europe" (Seth 2011: 169) which is built on a European structure from the middle-ages on (Said 1978). It argues that European modernity cannot be conceived independently of colonial exploitation. This modernity is "being sold as a package trip to the promised land of happiness" (Mignolo 2007: 450). But concepts like rationality, development and civilization are historically closely linked to colonial hierarchies. Lazarus (2011) complements this with the statement that postcolonialism complements poststructuralism. At the same time, this and other critiques of postcolonialism have prompted scholars to turn toward decolonial theory.

2.2.4. Critique of Postcolonial Theory

Quayson (2005) argues, that postcolonial theory, even though heavily influenced by western philosophies, is producing an interaction between western and non-western intellectual practices. Lazarus' (2011) work builds on this, arguing and critically questioning Said's view that he homogenizes the West too much, thereby turning it into a coherent and unified body of imperialism. It is argued that postcolonialism was shaped within the academic elites of the west, even though it should destabilize western assumptions, therefore becoming almost colonial itself (Botella-Ordinas 2012). This criticism underscores the standardization of the discourse of West vs. non-West. The binary thinking which Lazarus (2011) criticizes about Said's work is important as it slows down postcoloniality and the interactivity promoted by Quayson. Of course, Said's work is of utmost importance for postcolonial theory, even if the binary is to be expanded, as is done, for example, by the concept of whiteness. Thus, the discourse of West and other can also be applied to white and non-white, whereby a colonial framework promotes whiteness, as do Western aspects (Bonds & Inwood 2016).

To summarize postcolonial theory, it can be said that it is based on the experiences of people founded in colonialism, who then were engaged in fights for liberation all over the world (Rukundwa & Van Aarde 2007). Still, what is missing from the discourse of postcoloniality is the epistemic framework that moves away from western thinking. This is where the decoloniality moves away and even beyond the postcolonial (Mignolo 2007). As Frantz Fanon (1969: 31) argues in "The Wretched of the Earth": "Dissolving the colonial world does not mean that, once the borders have been torn down, transitions between two zones will be established". This means that the underlying epistemic, ontological, and political foundations of both zones, and not just the Western one, must be examined. And this is precisely where decolonial theory comes in.

2.3. Decolonial Theory

2.3.1. Definition

Decolonial theory is the second key concept that will be implemented in this thesis. It complements the postcolonial perspective by focusing on knowledge and epistemic hierarchies. While postcolonial theory often focuses on representations and cultural images, decolonial theory goes one step further. It asks how colonial power relations are embedded in our current knowledge systems. Rukundwa & Van Aarde (2007: 1185) write how the process of decolonization "begins with a positive change of mind" while the main idea for decolonization is that of national self-determination (Collins 2016). It functions as a "counteract, reverse or termination" of the colonial phenomena (Collins 2016: 1). A great example of decolonial work is Frantz Fanon's book "The Wretched of the Earth" (1969). In it, Fanon makes it clear that decolonization is not just a discourse, but a profound break with colonial power relations. Decoloniality, in this sense, refers to the epistemic, political, and existential project of confronting and undoing the enduring structures of coloniality, rather than merely marking the historical end of colonial rule (Mignolo & Walsh 2018).

This theory helps to understand colonial structures represent, appropriate or depoliticize certain forms of knowledge. With it, disciplines are pushed to disentangle their histories of imperial domination and racial hierarchy (Getachew & Mantena 2021). In this regard, the radical nature of decolonial theory can be linked to protests and confrontational movements, as seen in Noxolo (2017). As mentioned, the decolonial perspective, which does not focus on historical material, is regarded more as an epistemic project (Nott 2025), and can be viewed as a form of care and love for ancestors and relatives (Mukavetz 2018). This theory attempts to "recover, recognize, recreate, represent and research back" (Archibald et al. 2019: 6). As Fanon (1969) argues, decolonization transforms spectators who have sunken into insignificance, into privileged actors who regain their land and their lives through decolonization (Tuck & Yang 2012).

2.3.2. Origins

As already established before, decolonial theory did not develop from the same contexts as postcolonial theory. While postcolonial approaches emerged primarily from the experiences of European colonial rule (e.g. Fanon and the French colonial rule) and from literary and theoretical debates in Anglophone academia, the decolonial perspective arose from a comprehensive critique of European modernity, which theorizes globalization from a Eurocentric standpoint (Quayson 2005), as it had been practiced in the Americas since the 16th century (Quijano 2000). Colonial contact began there much earlier than in many other parts of the world and is inextricably linked to the emergence of modern global power structures (Quijano 2000).

Decolonial theory emerged specifically from the Latin American context, where the encounter with European colonization gave rise to a distinct intellectual tradition. Aníbal Quijano's concept of coloniality of power, discussed in detail below, provided the foundational impulse for this tradition. Several Latin American and US-Latin intellectuals built on Quijano's ideas and are often referred to today as the Modernity/Coloniality/Decoloniality (MCD) group (Nott 2025). In addition to Quijano, the most important voices include Walter Mignolo, Nelson Maldonado-Torres, Arturo Escobar, among others. Their common concern is to deconstruct the idea of modernity as a one-sided, Eurocentric project and to reveal colonial exploitation as its prerequisite (Nott 2025). It should be noted, however, that decolonial theory and the MCD group have themselves been criticized for reproducing certain Eurocentric academic conventions in the very act of opposing them, and for a degree of theoretical generalization that does not always account for the specificities of individual regional or national contexts (Nott 2025). This tension is particularly relevant for a thesis applying decolonial concepts developed in a Latin American context to the case of Switzerland, and it is a limitation this thesis remains attentive to throughout the analysis.

2.3.3. Concepts

Despite these limitations, the following concepts remain central to decolonial thinking and form the theoretical basis for the analysis of current debates on decolonization. As was made clear above, decolonial theory tries to analyze and make visible the deeply rooted power- and knowledge structures that resulted from colonialism and carry on to the present. Unlike postcolonial approaches, which focus primarily on representation, discourse and cultural production, the decolonial perspective focuses on the fundamental epistemic and ontological dimensions of modernity as seen through the concepts of decolonial theory. The following concepts are considered central key concepts of decolonial thinking and form the theoretical basis for the analysis of current debates on decolonization.

2.3.3.1. Coloniality of Power

Coloniality of power by Aníbal Quijano is considered as the starting point of decolonial theory. As already discussed, he argued how the colonial push by Europe from the 15th century (Quijano 2000) led to a new global power structure. This power structure was based on the principles of racial hierarchy and the reorganization of labor, knowledge and political authority (Quijano 2000). This order did not disappear with the lowering of the colonizers flag but got integrated into modern state and economy systems (Quijano 2007). Race, division of labor, property, gender and culture are therefore embedded in a permanent pattern of colonial hierarchization. "Since Euro centered coloniality of power has proved to be longer lasting than Euro centered colonialism" (Quijano 2007: 171) it is clear why colonial power relations still continue to have an effect in today's social and political processes.

2.3.3.2. Coloniality of Knowledge

Coloniality of knowledge shows how Eurocentric knowledge is seen as the dominant. As discussed before, Mignolo (2000) argues how the western civilization has an epistemic privilege of narrating which put western knowledge as the normative standard. The dominance of the Eurocentric forms of knowledge have been regarded as universal, objective and scientifically legitimate since early modern times (Mignolo 2000). Knowledge from the Global South, Indigenous knowledge systems, and local ecological practices, on the other hand, have been systematically devalued, marginalized, or depoliticized as "traditional". This epistemology of modernity continues to determine what knowledge is considered valid and who is recognized as a legitimate producer of knowledge (Quijano 2007).

2.3.3.3. Coloniality of Being

With the concept of coloniality of being the structures and knowledge systems are being overcome, and the focus is shifted onto the existential and ontological effects of colonial violence. Colonial rule does not only form institutions but also shapes subjectivity, humanity and social relationships (Maldonado-Torres 2007). Coloniality therefore produces different forms of subjectivity as some people are considered fully human, rational and modern, while others are labelled as inferior, backward or "different". This way of thinking continues to have an effect today for example in racializing public discourses or the exclusion of certain groups from political decision-making processes. Maldonado-Torres (2007) writes how this decolonial theory closely connects to Fanon's analysis on colonial subjectivity.

2.3.3.4. Modernity

As shown with Coloniality of knowledge, Eurocentric forms of knowledge are closely linked to modernity. A key idea of the decolonial theory is the inseparable linking of the terminology of modernity and coloniality. Different authors (such as Dussel (1993)) describe modernity as a European project driven by rationality, science and emancipation. While the reader certainly starts to think about eurocentrism right about now, Walter Mignolo (2007) shows how this progressive project historically was based on exploitation, dispossession and colonial violence. The idea that modernity is a neutral or universal project therefore obscures the colonial foundations of the present. With the concept of modernity, decolonial thinking attempts to make this dual structure visible.

2.3.4. Distinction from Postcolonial Theory

While the postcolonial theory was formed in academic contexts the decolonial theory developed from Latin-American, intellectual traditions and focuses on the colonial expansion of the 16th century which makes it historically older (Quijano 2000, Nott 2025). Concepts such as Quijano's coloniality of power (2007) or Mignolo's critique of Eurocentric knowledge production (2007) illustrate that decolonial theory focuses more on epistemic and ontological dimensions than on discursive representation. Rather than to analyze how colonial power continues to have an effect in texts and cultural representations like postcolonialism, decolonial theory asks why this power persists in the first place and how they are rooted in global structures (Mignolo 2007, Quijano 2007). Furthermore, decolonial theory criticizes how postcolonialism relies excessively on European theories and thereby reproduces Eurocentric categories partially (Mignolo 2007, 2009). Decolonial research methodologies, as described by Archibald and colleagues (2019: 6), still "do not totally dismiss Western methodological approaches" but encourage the connection of different world views (Blair 2019). Despite these differences, both perspectives complement each other productively. Postcolonial theory offers tools for analyzing discourses and representations, while decolonial theory reveals the underlying epistemic and structural power relations.

2.4. Supplementary Concepts

While the postcolonial & decolonial theories are the key concepts for this master's thesis other concepts will be used which will function as complementary conceptual frameworks for the main concepts.

2.4.1. Epistemic Justice

Postcolonial as well as decolonial theories show how colonial power not only shaped territorial and economic structures but also how it is deeply embedded in knowledge systems. This is why the question of who is allowed to define, legitimize and spread knowledge is central to epistemic justice. Epistemic justice offers an analytical approach to making these mechanisms visible and questioning the privileged positions of certain knowledge producers (Cummings et al. 2025). With her concept of epistemic injustice Miranda Fricker (2007) developed two different forms of epistemic injustice: testimonial injustice and hermeneutical injustice. Testimonial injustice occurs when a person loses credibility because of stereotypical attributions, while hermeneutical injustice describes situations in which marginalized groups do not have the socially accepted terms to make their experiences understandable because the dominant culture has not incorporated these experiences into its interpretative framework (Fricker 2007). With this Fricker shows how inequality arises and is preserved at the level of knowledge as a process that is particularly relevant when Indigenous voices are systematically ignored or misunderstood in the media, politics or academia (see the works of Cummings et al. 2025 or Lackey 2022 as examples).

This theory is then radicalized through the decolonial theory, as seen especially with Walter Mignolo's concept of coloniality of knowledge. As discussed before Mignolo (2000) argues that the western modernity has created a global epistemic framework which positions certain knowledge forms, especially the Eurocentric, as the universal or dominant. Other knowledge systems (e.g. ILK) have been historically devalued and classified as a "myth", "tradition" or "folklore" and therefore epistemically disempowered (as seen in Behrendt 2019). Together Fricker and Mignolo show how the question of who is allowed to define knowledge is not neutral. Instead, it is deeply connected to power. Epistemic justice therefore not only means giving the marginalized voices an ear but to change the epistemic structures, a framework that chooses what knowledge is, who acts as an expert on this knowledge and what perspectives stay visible, themselves. This goes hand in hand with the de-linking discussed in Mignolo's work from 2007.

2.4.2. ILK: Local Knowledge & Indigeneity

2.4.2.1. Indigeneity

Before the concept of Indigenous and Local Knowledge is explained, it is necessary to go into the concept of Indigeneity. Indigeneity, coming from the terminology of indigenous (Merlan 2009), does not merely refer to cultural identity or a socio-spatial status (Radcliffe 2017) but rather to a political and epistemic status that has been historically shaped by colonial violence and ongoing structural inequalities (Hunt 2014, Trigger & Dalley 2010, Weaver 2005). Indigenous groups are defined through the attributes that differentiates them from the "other" (Merlan 2009) such as territory, language and knowledge (Weaver 2005) which all are marginalizing factors used by the colonial powers to systematically threaten them (Trigger & Dalley 2010). Epistemically indigeneity must be de-linked (Mignolo 2007) from the western science and technology epistemologies because it refers to knowledge systems that are relational, land-centered and collective (Radcliffe 2017). At the same time, the term is politically controversial, as various states render Indigenous presence invisible or only recognize it in terms of cultural policy but not in terms of territorial or sovereignty policy (Merlan 2009).

It is therefore important for global sustainability debates that indigeneity should not be confused with romanticization, closeness to nature or cultural authenticity. Indigeneity is not primarily a cultural metaphor, but rather an expression of historical continuities of colonial power and contemporary struggles for self-determination, representation and epistemic recognition (Tuck & Yang 2012). It should be noted that Tuck and Yang's (2012) critique of the metaphorical use of indigeneity is employed here analytically, that is, to examine how such framings operate in Swiss media discourse, rather than to reproduce them within this thesis itself.

2.4.2.2. Indigenous and Local Knowledge (ILK)

With this information one can better understand Indigenous and Local Knowledge as a knowledge system which embodies the specific social, ecological and cultural practices of Indigenous peoples (Roue & Nakashima 2018). ILK encompasses not only practical environmental techniques or nature-related knowledge but is also an expression of a complex epistemic framework structured by indigeneity. A concrete example of such an epistemic framework is Lilyology, an Indigenous Australian methodology developed by Nerida Blair, which draws on the growth cycle of the lily plant as both metaphor and structuring principle for research and pedagogy. Lilyology frames knowledge production as a relational and cyclical process, embedded in Country, rather than a linear, disciplinary one, thereby offering a concrete illustration of how ILK operationalizes relational and land-centered ways of knowing within academic contexts (Blair 2019). This means that ILK is not "local knowledge" in a neutral sense, but part of a world view of "Indigenous knowledge" that encompasses relationships between people, land, history and community as described by Roue & Nakashima (2018). Since the 1980's ILK is increasingly recognized as a valuable resource in the global sustainability discourse (Brondízio et al. 2021).

Brondízio and colleagues (2021) explain how Indigenous practices are considered important contributions to biodiversity conservation, sustainable land use and ecological monitoring. This acknowledgement is rhetorically enhancing ILK, but its epistemic base is often subordinated by understanding Indigenous forms of knowledge as "complementary" to Western science rather than as independent epistemic systems (Roue & Nakashima 2018, Hunt 2014). Here Miranda Fricker's (2007) work on epistemic justice comes in: Who can choose whose knowledge counts and which aspects of ILK are "relevant"? The concept shows how Indigenous voices are classified as less believable or wrong. Mignolo's (2000) coloniality of knowledge also shows that these inequalities are structurally embedded in global knowledge systems. Thus, a connection can be drawn back to coloniality as this was the starting point for the fate of ILK with modernity, religious persecution and the ontological shift driving the Eurocentric world view (Gómez-Baggethun 2022).

Through its position there is a functional instrumentalization of Indigenous knowledge in the sustainability discourse. ILK is being extracted, depoliticized and reduced to an ecological expertise, ignoring for example the importance for cultural heritage (Benyei et al. 2019) while collective land rights, political sovereignty or historical power relations are hardly considered (Brondízio et al. 2021, Gómez-Baggethun 2022). Indigeneity is thus presented as a moral or ecological resource, but not as a political position with its own claims to knowledge, space and decision-making power (Tuck & Yang 2012)

In summary ILK and Indigeneity are connected and in the global sustainability discourse, as both concepts are oscillated between recognition and epistemic marginalization. From a decolonial perspective, it becomes clear that this tension is an expression of the continuing coloniality of knowledge. As long as Western epistemologies remain universal, Indigenous knowledge systems can be made visible, but not truly recognized on an equal level (Mignolo 2009). This epistemic exclusion is also closely linked to issues of environmental justice, as environmental pollution, land loss and climate change often affect precisely those groups whose knowledge is marginalized (Cummings et al. 2025). This opens the perspective of environmental justice, which focuses not only on ecological inequalities, but also on the unequal distribution of epistemic rights and decision-making power in environmental issues.

2.4.3. Environmental Justice

The concept of Environmental Justice extends ecological questions regarding social, political and historical dimensions. Originally emerged from environmental rights movements in the USA (Mohai et al. 2009) "environmental justice aims towards direct inclusion in environmental decision-making, equity in environmental values, laws, and policies, as well as recognition in framing environmental institutions and knowledge" (Figueroa 2022: 767). It opposes the unequal distribution of environmental impacts and resources which affects categories such as class, gender, race and territorial affiliation (Mohai et al. 2009). In a global context, it quickly becomes apparent that these inequalities do not arise by chance but are deeply rooted in colonial power structures. The environmental justice approach is thus directly linked to decolonial thinking (Wilkens & Datchoua-Tirvaudey 2022).

From a decolonial perspective, ecological inequalities are an expression of the coloniality of power. Since the 16th century, the exploitation of land, resources and human labor, exemplified by the transatlantic slave trade and the plantation economies it sustained in the Caribbean and Brazil, has formed the basis of capitalist modernity (Quijano 2000, Mignolo 2007). The territories of Indigenous and local communities have been disproportionately affected by extractive industries, large-scale projects and environmental pollution, while at the same time their political and epistemic rights remain restricted as seen in Cantzler and Huynh's work (2016) with their example of rights to fish[1].

Environmental justice therefore emphasizes that ecological and epistemic justice are inextricably linked. Decisions on land use, climate policy or nature conservation are mostly based on Western technocratic forms of knowledge, while Indigenous and local perspectives are often marginalized, instrumentalized or dismissed as "unscientific" (Figueroa 2022). This form of epistemic inequality reproduces colonial

[1] Cantzler and Huynh (2016) examine the decades long struggle of Native American fishing tribes in the Pacific Northwest to reclaim treaty-based fishing rights over salmon resources. Drawing on the 1974 Boldt Decision, they argue that the tribes' efforts represent a form of decolonization, combining legal action, political negotiation and the revitalization of Indigenous knowledge systems.

hierarchies and asks the question of who is allowed to define sustainability and environment as well as the depoliticizing of decolonial struggles by framing Indigeneity as a moral or ecological symbol rather than addressing the structural dimensions of coloniality (Tuck and Yang 2012). This tension is particularly evident in international climate negotiations as Indigenous groups are disproportionately affected by climate change but have only limited opportunities to have their say (Wilkens & Datchoua-Tirvaudey 2022). At the same time, their knowledge is increasingly being exploited (Tuck and Yang 2012) without their political demands for sovereignty, land rights and decision-making powers being truly recognized (Wilkens & Datchoua-Tirvaudey 2022). Environmental justice therefore demands not only fairer ecological conditions, but also a transformation of the decision-making structures that perpetuate colonial power relations to this day.

The adaptive concepts presented in this subchapter are important to understand the colonial continuities not only on a historical and structural level but also discursively. ILK, epistemic justice and environmental justice show that colonial power structures not only persist through political and economic structures but also through those systems of knowledge that determine whose perspectives appear visible, credible and relevant to action. A strong theoretical lens is provided by these theories, which makes it possible for the intersection of colonial power relations, epistemic hierarchies and environmental discourses in Swiss media narratives about decolonization to be traced, as well as for them to be situated on a broader global level.

2.5. Media & Discourse Theory

In this master's thesis decolonization in Switzerland will be analyzed on a media level. Here it is important to mention that the analysis of media discourses not only functions as a methodological challenge but requires an understanding that media do not report neutrally, but actively produce, legitimize and stabilize meanings (Sutter 2010). This shows that for example journalistic articles do not represent neutral images of reality but actively construct meanings and reproduce social knowledge systems (Winter 1999). Through an epistemic justice lens, it becomes apparent that the media decide what can be said, which voices are granted legitimate authority, and which forms of knowledge remain invisible (Guin & Gupta 2025). This understanding is particularly important in the context of Indigeneity, ILK and environmental or epistemic justice, as colonial power relations are largely continued through patterns of representation, for example when media coverage of international climate negotiations foregrounds Indigenous participants as symbolic or moral authorities on environmental issues while giving comparatively little attention to their political demands for land rights and self-determination (Wilkens & Datchoua-Tirvaudey 2022). Against this backdrop, qualitative content analysis and frame analysis, which will be used in the media analysis of this thesis, serve not only as technical methods, but also as instruments for systematically revealing those discursive mechanisms. The following two subsections introduce the two analytical tools used in the media analysis, qualitative content analysis and frame analysis, only briefly, while the detailed methodological discussion (coding

procedures, category development, reliability) is presented in chapter 3 (Methodology) and is not repeated here.

2.5.1. Content Analysis

After collecting a sufficient corpus of media documents, the sources will be analyzed. To identify key topics and narratives a content analysis based on the work of Mayring & Fenzl (2019) will be made. It offers a structured, rule-based approach to the systematic interpretation of text material be it transcripts, documents, newspaper articles or internet media (Mayring & Fenzl 2019). The central idea is that meanings are developed from the material, but in a transparent and comprehensible analytical process. With the method large amounts of media with the technical know-how of quantitative content analysis, while staying qualitative and interpretative in a transparent and comprehensible analysis process (Mayring & Fenzl 2019). The authors wrote how the "qualitative analysis of content is based on the assumption that the content of a text is not only determined by its form, but also by its meaning" (Mayring & Fenzl 2019: 633). This makes it ideal for work that combines existing theory (e.g. ILK, indigeneity, epistemic justice) with empirical material.

For this work this means that relevant passages of text are gradually reduced, paraphrased and classified into systematically developed categories. Mayring & Fenzl (2019) emphasize the importance of contextualization, transparency and iterative feedback between material and theory. The method thus enables a precise reconstruction of how indigeneity, local knowledge or sustainability are addressed in Swiss media while examining which narratives dominate, which meanings are attributed, and which perspectives are omitted.

2.5.2. Frame Analysis

Furthermore, it will be analyzed how the topics are framed. Here the thesis will rely on Entman's theory of frame-analysis (1993). It provides an analytical tool for understanding how the media interpretatively structure certain issues. Frames are not random linguistic patterns, but selective frames of reference that "define problems, diagnose causes, make moral judgement and suggest remedies" (Entman 1993: 52). Entman (1993) describes framing as selecting certain aspects of a perceived reality in order to make them "salient" which means to emphasize them and thus significantly influence the audience's interpretation. This perspective is central to the analysis of ILK and decolonization, as the media not only report that there is an issue, but also how this issue should be understood (or not). For example, frames can romanticize indigeneity, depoliticize it or technicize it while key political dimensions remain invisible. In the Swiss case it can be analyzed if for example Switzerland was mostly seen as neutral or as a profiteer of colonial structures. Frame analysis thus complements qualitative content analysis. While the former systematically develops categories from the material, frame analysis examines which

interpretative patterns and discourses structure these categories. In combination, both methods allow for a multilayered analysis of media articles that encompasses both content and discursive levels of meaning.

2.6. Relevance for Research

In this chapter various key concepts have been presented which make it possible to examine decolonial structures, epistemic hierarchies and environmental injustices systematically on a media level. In this subchapter these concepts will be connected to each other to develop a clear analytical framework which helps structure the media analysis. The framework assumes that power relations do not only have a material, political or historical impact, but are also significantly shaped by knowledge, representation and discourse.

Reviewing the literature for this thesis postcolonialism and decolonial theory were analyzed with a first observation that colonial power structures did not vanish with the supposed end of colonialism. Postcolonial approaches are highlighted by discursive mechanisms through which colonial ideas are continued in language, media as well as cultural representations. Decolonial theory goes one step further and places greater emphasis on global structures of modernity in which colonial ideas are embedded. Both concepts complement each other. Postcolonial theory explains colonial ideas through images and interpretations, while decolonial theory shows why these representations continue to matter and the historical structures to which they are rooted.

Also important for this thesis and connected with the main concepts are Indigeneity and ILK. Indigeneity refers not only to cultural identity, but also to a political and epistemic status shaped by colonial experiences and ongoing power asymmetries. ILK, in turn, is not merely “local knowledge”, but rather an expression of relational, land-based, historically grown epistemic traditions that are closely linked to Indigeneity. It is increasingly recognized as a valuable resource in debates on biodiversity conservation and sustainable land use, even though its epistemic status is often reduced to a merely complementary role vis-à-vis Western science (Brondízio et al. 2021). Furthermore, it is made visible through Miranda Fricker’s concept of epistemic justice how the marginalization of Indigenous is not random but structurally rooted. Hermeneutic and testimonial injustices determine whose voices are considered credible and whose experiences can be made socially comprehensible. Mignolo’s coloniality of knowledge deepens this perspective by showing that modernity itself has created a global order of knowledge in which European epistemologies are set as universal, while Indigenous forms of knowledge have been historically devalued. This is why this thesis assumes that media depictions of indigeneity and ILK can only be understood if they are looked at on an epistemic dimension. The media in this respect decides whose knowledge counts.

With the concept of environmental justice, the theoretical base of this thesis is furthermore extended to an ecological dimension. Environmental pollution, land loss and climate disasters affect Indigenous and local communities worldwide. These injustices are not only the material consequences of political decisions, but also an expression of deeper colonial structures. Environmental and sustainability narratives are not purely ecological discourses but also places where epistemic rights are negotiated. The question of how Indigenous voices are represented or omitted is therefore always also a question of ecological justice.

While the concepts of the content analysis and of the frame analysis do not play a part in the analysis of this thesis but mainly for the methodological part of the thesis it was still important to present the theoretical base that will be used there. Furthermore, it is shown how colonial continuities are manifested on different levels and that media is a central place for reproduction. Linking postcolonial and decolonial theory with epistemic and ecological justice creates an analytical framework that goes beyond mere criticism of representation. It allows for a systematic examination of how knowledge, voices and ecological responsibility are distributed in media discourse. With this a base for the empirical analysis of this thesis is made. While the following chapters apply this framework to a qualitative analysis of the Swiss media, it is first necessary to consider the Swiss context. The next chapter will examine and discuss the history of Swiss colonial entanglements.

3. Context: Swiss Colonial Entanglements

When discussing Switzerland in the context of colonialism it is important to mention a factor which various researchers recognized and argued before. It is the "strong amnesia surrounding colonialism" (Purtschert et al. 2016: 289) of the Swiss population and the idea that Switzerland, as a neutral and peaceful nation-state, was never involved in colonial entanglements (Purtschert 2016, Fässler 2024, Appiah & Yeboah Mireku 2020). This gave Switzerland an ideal position to, on one side act as a mediator between colonized countries as well as the decolonizing colonial powers (Purtschert et al. 2016) and on the other side profit from the colonial structures with the benefit of being part of the "European colonial elite" (as a Western developing country). An issue that arises with this positionality is the difficulty to assume a different approach to Switzerland regarding its colonial entanglements with a postcolonial perspective because of its neutral and humanitarian image (Purtschert 2016). In her work on racism in Switzerland, Boulila (2019) elaborates the problematics of this issue and shows how it exacerbates the public discourse on racism and leads to a silencing of the terminology which can be transferred to the topic of this thesis.

Now as colonial and slave trade related entanglements of Swiss actors have been investigated on various levels (Fässler 2024, Purtschert 2016), the concept of "colonialism without colonies" is of upmost importance. It shows how countries without former colonies still profit from colonial structures. Purtschert and colleagues (2011) describe Switzerland in this context as a "lachende Dritte" (third party that benefits) as Swiss companies profited during the decolonization phase through its innocent way. The proven entanglements of Swiss actors in colonial structures are more and more discussed in the media, museums and academia. Now, to analyze the media discourse on decolonization in Switzerland this master's thesis will first present where and when these historical colonial entanglements took place and how Switzerland and Swiss companies profited from colonial structures.

3.1. Historical Entanglements

While, as already mentioned, Switzerland never had any colonies of its own, Swiss people were partly entangled in colonialism or in colonial structures. There is a big literature on these entanglements. Examples are Andrea Franc's "Wie die Schweiz zur Schokolade kam" (2008) (How Switzerland got its chocolate), "Das Heimliche Imperium" (The secret empire) by Lorenz Stucki (1969), or Andreas Zangger's "Koloniale Schweiz" (2011) (Colonial Switzerland). These works make visible how individual actors were involved in colonial structures. Therefore, Switzerland can be seen as an indirect, profit-oriented player as various individuals were involved (Zangger 2011). This subchapter wants to show how these different entanglements were happening in different areas from economic, political or academic perspectives.

3.1.1. Economic Involvement

Stucki (1969) explains how, from early on, Switzerland had to rely on import/export-oriented trade as the arid grounds of the country could not bear a large variety of raw materials. Behrendt (1932) wrote how a capitalist and strong economy needs and relies on imperialism. Furthermore, he explains how Switzerland still benefited from colonial constellations (Behrendt 1932). The reason for this were Swiss citizens, who were already trading all over the world, including in colonies, in the first half of the 18th century (Stucki 1969). So Swiss traders began setting up their trading houses all over the globe with the expansion of their exports. Regarding this topic Zangger (2011: 25) wrote how "trading companies are an indispensable link between the export industry and export countries". In addition, Swiss people were also involved in plantation capitalism in Sumatra (Zangger 2011). So, through trading houses and companies all across the globe, Switzerland was able to profit from colonialism through such indirect means alone (Franc 2008).

This network facilitated the import of colonial commodities such as sugar (Stucki 1969), tobacco (Zangger 2011), and cocoa (Franc 2008) into Switzerland, with Swiss companies' capital boosting the domestic economy. After the First World War, the consular network additionally strengthened the ties between Swiss citizens living abroad and their homeland (Zangger 2011). Further economic ties to the mother country were also established by companies that set up subsidiaries in various port cities (Stucki 1969, Zangger 2011) as well as investments of Swiss banks into colonies or colonial trade companies (Appiah & Yeboah Mireku 2020, Schär 2018).

Taken together, these developments demonstrate that Switzerland's economic prosperity was closely linked to colonial systems of production and exchange. This form of indirect economic involvement complicates narratives of Swiss neutrality and exceptionalism and illustrates how colonial power operated not only through political domination but also through trade, finance, and mobility. Understanding these economic entanglements is therefore crucial for analyzing how coloniality continues to shape Swiss self-representations and discourses of colonial racism. Zangger (2011) demonstrates this through examples of the paternalistic and condescending attitudes Swiss actors displayed toward Chinese and Indigenous populations.

3.1.2. Knowledge & Science

The Swiss economy was not the only sector that profited from colonialism. While Swiss citizens left their home country to travel the world, a lot of them did so in the name of science. Foreign cultures, geographies, religion (often trying to spread Christianity or just helping to spread civilization (Franc 2008)) flora or fauna were explored by Swiss expatriates. Zangger (2015) explains how Swiss natural scientists travelled to foreign lands to gather experience and inspiration in order to keep up with the latest developments. Knowledge was thus accumulated, classified and catalogued in the centers of the colonial empires (Zangger 2011) and came to Switzerland, along with many foreign objects, animal and plant species. A great example for this is the CSRS (Centre Suisse de Recherches Scientifiques), Switzerland's first research center in colonial Africa, based in Ivory Coast (Meier 2015). Meier (2015) explains that such research shows how a large part of Swiss research history did not originate in Switzerland, but rather in the colonies. This shows that Switzerland, which is considered a very technologically progressive country, has its technological origins in colonial structures (Purtschert 2016).

Before discussing the ownership of colonial artefacts, the issue of naming must also be addressed. For example, Johann Jakob von Tschudi sent over 1,000 animal specimens to the Natural History Museum in Neuchâtel on behalf of the museum, naming many of them in the process (Reymond 2025). These colonial achievements leave a bitter aftertaste, as condescending names were also used for the Indigenous people (Reymond 2025). ETH Zurich also possesses many colonial artefacts, either collected by researchers on behalf of the university or donated. These too were unlawfully taken from their country

of origin in the name of research and show the colonial heritage Switzerland has. Hand in hand with this goes art in Swiss museums that was taken from colonial countries.

3.1.3. Individual Entanglements

Because Swiss discourse on colonial entanglements has centered on the narrative of neutrality, the Swiss population has remained confident that Switzerland was never implicated in colonialism. As this matter is very central in the colonial discourse in Switzerland it is mentioned in this thesis more than once. David et al. (2005) argue that this discourse partly lives on as common knowledge as the Swiss or rather Switzerland was founded in the years in which the slave trade was about to be abolished. So how can Switzerland stand in connection to the slave trade or colonialism? Zangger (2011) writes how this impasse on the subject of colonialism in Switzerland comes from the focus on Switzerland. If one were to speak instead of Swiss people a completely different picture would emerge.

In this regard there is a lot of evidence of Swiss individuals who profited from colonial structures which allowed them to get rich very quickly (Zangger 2011). Individual missionaries, traders, scientists and entrepreneurs were involved. Zangger (2011) also writes how these individuals were on one side attracted to foreign lands and romanticized the image of distant and unknown countries but on the other side were the result of failed family businesses, fugitives from love affairs or extinct noble families that fled their home country in hopes for a better future. However, Switzerland's economic success was soon linked to overseas trade, and it became standard practice for young men to work for ten years in imperial trading houses abroad before finding their place in industry or commerce in Switzerland (Zangger 2015). Added to this was the emergence of the import-export business, which depended on the right connections and played an important role for Swiss citizens living abroad due to the country's exceptional foreign policy role (Stucki 1969). Stucki (1969) also argues that Swiss expatriates tended to do business with one another, which led to a strengthening of the economy, even though a lot of Swiss people were "lost" due to complete migration.

Furthermore, Swiss citizens abroad must be regarded as intermediaries (Zangger 2011). Zangger (2011) describes how, as is usually the case with colonial powers, these people stand between the colonial elites and the colonized. And this also applies to Swiss merchants abroad. Switzerland was thus able to profit from colonial structures through Swiss companies. It was therefore indirectly involved in colonialism, which could also be described as free riding (Franc 2008). While Switzerland itself held no colonies and therefore produced no colonial knowledge through formal colonial heritage, Zangger (2011) describes how individual players nonetheless produced colonial knowledge, legitimized colonial hierarchies religiously and morally, and shaped a cultural image of the "other" that still continues to have an impact on Switzerland today.

3.1.4. Political & Moral Dimensions

The involvement of Switzerland in international trade or science networks, which are coined by colonial power structures, shows that Switzerland had to be entangled in colonial structures on a political level (Zangger 2011). The absence of direct colonial rule therefore did not mean political disengagement but rather enabled a specific positioning within colonial orders. This becomes visible when looking at Switzerland's positions as a "free rider", as its companies were able to make business with former colonies remaining its innocent image while on the other hand Switzerland assumed "the position of a country that backed imperial powers while representing its own interests" which was, as Purtschert and colleagues (2016: 291) mention, "completely consistent with the country's own self-image".

Politically, Switzerland profited from the integration into multilateral structures that regulated and secured global trade. As a trading nation, it depended on stable international relations and participated in diplomatic negotiations, consular networks, and economic agreements that facilitated access to colonial markets (Stucki 1969). These forms of diplomatic presence replaced colonial administration in a sense and enabled Switzerland to protect its economic interests in colonial areas without exercising formal responsibility for colonial rule. The Swiss neutrality did not lead to a distancing from colonialism but to a position between colonizers and colonies, which allowed a flexible cooperation with different colonial powers (Purtschert et al. 2016).

Morally, Switzerland built itself as a humanitarian, civil society-oriented and politically neutral nation. But these characteristics are not a sign of imperial inactivity (Purtschert et al. 2011), as this self-description helped to obscure or depoliticize colonial interdependencies. While colonial violence, exploitation, and racialization were often portrayed as problems caused by the European colonial powers, Switzerland was able to present itself as an uninvolved observer or even a moral mediator (Purtschert et al. 2016). This moral positioning made it possible to profit from colonial structures without having to openly address their political and ethical consequences.

Now despite these points, Zangger (2015: 95) highlighted three points that would define the Swiss trade network as colonial:

A first point is how the Swiss called their settlements “colonies” within the context of colonialism of other nations. A second argument is that the Swiss in colonies of European powers were part of the western elite and therefore shared their privileges. And a last point shows how Swiss textile manufactures overseas displaced local manufactures using local techniques through their technological advantage (Zangger 2011). Switzerland was not a colonial center in the traditional sense, but it was a systematically integrated player within colonial structures. Its political restraint went hand in hand with structural co-responsibility, as it profited from colonial exploitation without bearing the formal costs of colonial administration.

3.1.5. Slave Trade Entanglements

Switzerland also benefited from its involvement in the slave trade. Various studies focused on making these structures visible (Fässler 2024, Purtschert 2011, David et al. 2005), but this part of Swiss history is almost more hushed up than its colonial past. In her 2011 work, Purtschert describes how slavery in relation to Switzerland was also denied in the international political arena. As an example, she shows how in 2001 the Swiss Minister for Human Rights stated that: “Switzerland has nothing to do with slavery, slave trade and colonialism” (Purtschert 2011: 95). Despite these statements, it has been proven that Switzerland profited from slavery. On the one hand, profits were made from the slave trade (Fässler 2024) and, on the other hand, from keeping slaves on Swiss plantations (Zangger 2011). However, the economic benefits of slave labor remained largely invisible, while at the same time contributing to the accumulation of capital.

As Purtschert (2011) argues, Swiss neutrality is based on this invisibility. David et al. (2005) describe how Swiss citizens were also responsible for equipping slave ships, which also contributed to the slave trade, but was perhaps dismissed as harmless. Other Swiss actors were active as plantation owners, investors or administrators in colonial regions and were thus directly involved in systems of slavery. Historical studies show that Swiss families and companies held shares in plantations or invested in the transatlantic slave trade (Zangger 2011). These individual involvements contradict the notion that Switzerland was merely a passive beneficiary of colonial structures.

The examination of Swiss involvement in slavery is also relevant because it exemplifies how colonial violence was depoliticized in national narratives. For a long time, slavery was seen as a moral crime committed by other nations, while Switzerland’s own role was reduced to economic neutrality. This separation between moral condemnation and material involvement continues to have an impact today and shapes current debates on responsibility, reparations and the culture of remembrance.

3.2. Why the Entanglements were invisible for a long Time

Even though, as established in the recent subchapters, Switzerland was in fact involved in economic, scientific, knowledge structures coming from colonialism, these entanglements stayed invisible from the public discourse for a long time. Only since the turn of the millennium there has been increased social, scientific and media debate about Switzerland's colonial past and present[2]. This delayed discussion is no coincidence, but rather the result of specific national narratives, political constellations, and institutional practices that systematically marginalized or ignored colonial interconnections.

3.2.1. Switzerland's national Self-Image of Neutrality & Innocence

A key point leading to the long invisibility of the colonial entanglements is Switzerland's self-image as a neutral, humanitarian and uninvolved state (Appiah & Yeboah Mireku 2020). The idea that colonialism was primarily a project of imperial powers, while Switzerland stood outside these power relations, proved to be extremely influential as it saw itself as "small, Alpine, neutral and landlocked" (Fässler 2024: 3). In this context Michel (2015) writes how even though the country has a plurality of languages and religions this aforementioned self-image portrays a homogenous nation aligned with white Europeanness. She goes on to mention the difficulty to discuss and denounce racism and its colonial genealogy in Switzerland (Michel 2015).

Purtschert and colleagues (2016) argue that the colonial involvements of Switzerland fit the term of "colonial complicity" (Vuorela 2009). It "implies participation in hegemonic western discourses and their universalistic modes of thought and practices of dominance (Purtschert et al. 2016: 289). Although closely related, these concepts capture different aspects of one underlying dynamic. This thesis uses colonial complicity (Vuorela 2009) as the overarching term for Switzerland's implication in colonial power structures without formal colonial rule, while colonialism without colonies (Purtschert et al. 2011) and free riding (Franc 2008) describe two specific historical mechanisms through which this complicity took shape. Colonial complicity therefore helped Switzerland in the role of a secondary actor, while not trying to colonize on its own, to operate in the shadow of the colonial powers (Appiah & Yeboah Mireku 2020). This allowed colonial ties to be portrayed as marginal or irrelevant while the image of neutrality helped to distance symbolically from colonial exploitation. Hand in hand with this goes the term "white innocence" which as a byproduct of colonial denial also leads to racial denial in Switzerland (Boulila 2019). This is a perfect example for an issue that come from the Switzerland's "neutral" stance toward colonialism as racism for example is deemed harmless and looked at as outdated (Boulila 2019).

[2] As will be discussed in the Trend Analysis (Ch. 5.5.).

Switzerland can or wanted to, through its national identity, be looked at as an exception in a colonial world. Colonialism was understood as an external problem that primarily affected other nations. Recognizing its own colonial ties would have called this self-image into question and undermined the clear distinction between colonial powers and Switzerland as an uninvolved observer. It should be noted that the concept of colonial complicity is not without its critics. McLennan (2014) cautions that "complicity" risks becoming an overly sweeping category in postcolonial scholarship, one that can flatten meaningful differences between direct economic exploitation, symbolic entanglement, and mere historical proximity into a single undifferentiated verdict of guilt. This thesis nonetheless adopts the framework, while remaining attentive to this methodological concern in the analysis that follows.

3.2.2. Why the Topic remained invisible for so long

In addition to the previously discussed national self-image, structural and political factors also contributed to colonial ties hardly ever being considered publicly for a long time. One decisive aspect is the comparatively low political and social pressure to come to terms with the past, which goes hand in hand with the discourse of Switzerland not being a colonizer country. Examples for this are for one the confrontation of the Swiss government in 2003 about Switzerland's participation in the transatlantic slave trade, that has been broader than believed. Purtschert and colleagues (2016: 290) explained how "The Swiss Federal Council responded to an inquiry on the subject by stating that the legacy of the slave trade was something that needed to be dealt with on an international level". Unlike former colonial powers, Switzerland does not have an Indigenous population from former colonies that could collectively demand redress for experiences of colonial violence and exploitation. As a result, for a long time there were no social movements that publicly addressed colonial continuities.

Educational and cultural institutions also contributed to the invisibility of colonial interconnections (Schär 2018). For a long time, museums, school curricula and popular science presentations conveyed little knowledge about the colonial dimensions of Swiss history (Fässler 2024). Ethnographic collections were often presented in a depoliticized manner, with colonial acquisition contexts rarely addressed. Colonial power relations appeared as footnotes in global history, but not as part of national responsibility which led to the belief that the Swiss success came from hard work, tax competition or direct democracy therefore from within instead from colonial entanglements (Schär 2018).

This institutional void meant that colonial interdependencies were perceived as neither structurally significant nor relevant to the present. It was only with the rise of postcolonial and decolonial research, the internationalization of social debates and increased media coverage of racism and global inequality, that this situation began to change slowly. Examples for this are for one the Black Lives Matter (BLM) Movement in 2020 that also got a lot of attention in Switzerland or the realization that Swiss industrial hero Albert Escher was involved in the slave trade (Fässler 2024). With this shift, the power of the West

is being challenged, and as Schär (2018) writes, Switzerland stands at the center of it, raising questions about the role it has played in the past and continues to play in the creation of global inequalities, ongoing structural racism, and global environmental destruction, as well as its connection to Indigeneity, which will be discussed in the next subchapter.

3.3. The Role of Indigeneity in Switzerland

Unlike classic settler colonial states such as Canada, Australia or the USA (Wolfe 2006), Switzerland has no Indigenous population in the strict sense of international law. This structural absence of Indigenous groups within the national territory has a significant impact on the way "Indigenousness" appears in Swiss discourse. Indigenous actors are not treated as political subjects with concrete claims to land, knowledge or sovereignty (Behrendt 2019) but are often seen as symbolic figures within global narratives of sustainability, originality or moral authenticity (Tuck & Yang 2012). In addition, Indigenous people are often seen as "backward" as seen in newspapers about the rural Indigenous population of Peru as discussed by Sanders (2015).

This specific constellation means that Indigenous perspectives in the Swiss context are primarily conveyed, translated and curated, for example by museums, the media, NGOs or academic institutions. Indigenous forms of knowledge often appear decontextualized from the colonial power relations in which they originated and are instead embedded in universalist discourses. This is particularly evident in debates on the environment and sustainability, in which Indigenous Knowledge is presented as a harmonious, nature-loving alternative to Western modernity (Tuck & Yang 2012).

This form of representation carries the risk of epistemic reduction. As Tuck and Yang (2012) argue, invoking Indigenous concepts in Western contexts can easily become a metaphorical use of indigeneity that obscures political demands for land, self-determination or reparations. Applied to Switzerland, this means that Indigenous voices are made visible, but often without recognition of the colonial power relations that have led to their marginalization and without reflection on one's own historical entanglement in these relations.

Museums play a central role in this context. Ethnographic collections and temporary exhibitions increasingly address Indigenous perspectives, questions of provenance, and colonial violence. At the same time, it remains controversial to what extent these institutions actually open up spaces for epistemic equality or reproduce existing knowledge hierarchies. The curatorial framing of indigenous objects and voices usually takes place within Western knowledge systems, which raises the question of epistemic justice once again.

3.4. Current debates & societal Change

There has been a change in Switzerland regarding how colonial entanglements are handled. Topics which have been deemed historically irrelevant moved into the focus of scientific research, media coverage and even political debates. This change did not happen abruptly but was the result of a gradual intensification of various discourses that re-examined colonial continuities in the global North. Examples from Switzerland that fuel this change are the discussion on an involvement in the slave trade in 2003 (Purtschert et al. 2016) or the highly controversial sheep poster for the far right-wing (Swiss People's Party, SVP from German) SVP's deportation initiative (Ausschaffungsinitiative). The posters from 2007 which led to an increased handling of the (post)colonial past of Switzerland depicted a black sheep being kicked out of Switzerland by white sheep and is widely discussed in various scientific papers on Switzerland's colonial entanglements (Purtschert et al. 2011, Purtschert et al. 2016, Michel 2015 or Boulila 2019). Switzerland is a particularly revealing case in this regard, as colonial responsibility as well as racism are negotiated not through formal colonial rule, but through indirect involvement.



Figure 1: SVP election poster for the Deportation Initiative featuring a black sheep being pushed off the Swiss flag by white sheep (NAU.ch 2020).

3.4.1. Scientific Debates

Academic research also played a central role in the reevaluation of Swiss colonial history. While books like the ones by Stucki (1969), Franc (2008) or Zangger (2011) analyze and discuss the involvement of Swiss players in colonial structures and what they meant to Switzerland especially the work of Patricia Purtschert marked a turning point in the historical and cultural studies debate on Switzerland's colonial ties focusing on postcolonial theory. With "Eine Bestandesaufnahme der postkolonialen Schweiz" from 2011, Switzerland and "Colonialism without Colonies" from 2016 (both together with Barbara Lüthi and Francesca Falk) and later publications, it was argued systematically for one of the first times that colonialism could not be understood exclusively as territorial rule, but was also effective through economic, cultural and epistemic networks (Purtschert et al. 2016). This perspective made it possible to analyze Switzerland as an integral part of colonial power structures.

Research into missionary work, the history of science, trade, finance, and museums revealed the extent to which Swiss actors were deeply involved in colonial processes. Historical studies such as those by Thomas David and colleagues (2005) or Hans Fässler (2005) not only helped to bring colonial involvement to the attention of a wider public, but also to discuss the issue of slavery in relation to Switzerland. Furthermore, the topic of racism in Switzerland is also discussed in various works connecting colonialism, slavery and racism with Switzerland (Boulila 2019 or Michel 2015). Through the denial of a colonial past the production of racism was long deemed restricted in Switzerland as it was thought that racism comes from outside the nation (Cretton 2018). These academic debates created an epistemic foundation on which later media and institutional debates could build. Colonialism was thus no longer regarded as an external exception, but as an integral part of national history and identity formation.

3.4.2. Media Coverage & Public Debates

In the Swiss media landscape, there is a visible change regarding the discourse of Switzerland's colonial entanglements or terms like post-colonialism. This change manifested itself, among other things, in critical and reflective articles about its own history. Articles such as Schürmann (2020) on the statement "Switzerland has a colonial past without colonies" mark a shift from defensive narratives to cautious self-questioning. At the same time, these contributions show that colonial responsibility is often still being negotiated without fully acknowledging the depth of structural interdependencies. Colonialism is often seen as a moral problem of the past rather than a continuing structure. Now articles such as "Blood sticks to the legendary bronzes from Benin" by Christoph Heim (2021) for the Tages-Anzeiger lead us to the next topic that surrounded a lot of discussion in recent years.

3.4.3. Museums & Institutions

Museums and scientific institutions played a central role in recent social change, as they made colonial interdependencies visible and publicly negotiable for the first time. As places of knowledge production and mediation they not only act as a reflection of public debates but also as an active archive. This is why a lot of Museums as well as archives were put under pressure to decolonize their stock and even return some of the art to their places of origin (Strehle 2019). As answers came large-scale exhibitions that explicitly addressed colonial interdependencies.

A good example for this is the exhibition by the Swiss national museum titled: “Colonial – Switzerland’s Global Entanglements” (2024-2025). The exhibition was one of the first in a leading national museum to show how Switzerland’s economic, scientific, and cultural activities were intertwined with colonial power structures. The focus was deliberately placed on indirect involvement in order to challenge the widespread narrative of colonial non-involvement. The exhibition marked an institutional turning point, as colonial history was no longer treated as a marginal topic but presented as an integral part of the national past.

Similar but on an institutional basis the ETH Zurich (2024) positioned itself with the exhibition “Colonial Traces” which addressed colonial traces in science, technology and knowledge production. Particularly relevant here is the self-reflection of an academic institution that was historically involved in colonial research networks. The exhibition questioned not only historical actors, but also epistemic practices, such as the role of research expeditions, collections and classifications. In this way, colonial interdependence was made visible not only as a historical phenomenon, but also as a structural condition of modern knowledge production.

However, these institutional initiatives were accompanied by intense debate. Questions of provenance research and the restitution of colonial collection objects took center stage. There was critical discussion about the extent to which museums are actually prepared to relinquish power over interpretation and ownership, or whether colonial recognition remains primarily symbolic in nature (Kuprecht 2022). The disputes surrounding restitution make it clear that coming to terms with colonialism is not only a question of historical knowledge, but also a political and ethical challenge. Museums thus become central venues where questions of responsibility, reparation and epistemic justice converge.

3.4.4. Political & Social Involvement

Parallel to institutional debates, increased initiatives to address colonial ties also developed at the political and civil society levels. At the municipal level in particular, cities such as Zurich (ZH Kolonial 2024), Bern (Bern Kolonial 2020) and St. Gallen (Fässler 2023) began to critically evaluate street names (Metzler 2021), monuments (Cherix 2020) and public collections with colonial connotations. These processes mark an important step, as colonial history is no longer only discussed in academic circles or museums but is entering the public sphere and political decision-making processes. The re-evaluation of street names and monuments is highly controversial. While supporters see it as a necessary form of historical responsibility, critics often perceive it as "symbolic politics" or an attack on national traditions (Brun 2025). These conflicts illustrate how deeply colonial narratives are linked to questions of national identity. Public space thus becomes a central place where cultural memories, historical politics and social power relations are negotiated.

This once again points to Switzerland's unique situation, in which colonial responsibility is negotiated not through state colonial rule but through indirect interdependencies. Civil society initiatives (e.g. ZH Kolonial), protests (e.g. BLM protests) and academic networks have played a key role in bringing these issues into the public discourse. At the same time, political processes often proceed more slowly than social debates, leading to tensions between demands for reappraisal and institutional reluctance. Both museum and political initiatives form a central frame of reference for media discourse on colonialism and decolonization in Switzerland. Media reports pick up on these developments, but frame them differently, for example as signs of social progress, moral self-criticism or controversial identity politics. Analyzing these media frames makes it possible to reveal how colonial responsibility is acknowledged, relativized or reinterpreted. To summarize this view on the Swiss context regarding colonial entanglements gives a good historical basis to combine with the theoretical framework and furthermore to analyze Swiss media talking about these processes.

4. Methodology

4.1. Research Design & Approach

To analyze the discourse on colonial entanglements of Switzerland as well as decolonization in Switzerland on a media level, this master's thesis pursues a qualitative research approach. The aim is not primarily to record the frequency or statistical distribution of certain terms, but rather to examine the attributions of meaning, patterns of interpretation and narratives (Przyborski & Wohlrab-Sahr 2019), through which the colonial past and present are constructed in public discourse. As the research questions ask to make complex social power and knowledge structures visible as well as to represent different media outputs a qualitative approach is particularly suitable (Traue et al. 2019). The choice of a qualitative approach is also crucial because quantitative content analyses can provide information about the prevalence of certain topics or terms (Klein 2019), but they hardly capture how colonial interrelationships are interpreted, relativized or problematized (Taddicken 2019). Particularly in the case of normatively charged topics such as colonialism, restitution debates or epistemic justice, an interpretative approach is necessary in order to critically reflect on hegemonic knowledge orders and power relations (Traue et al. 2019).

The analysis is laid out as an explorative-interpretative study. It is exploratory because media negotiations of colonial responsibility in Switzerland have only been examined systematically to a limited extent to date (Purtschert et al. 2016), and this work aims to identify key discourse patterns and frames. The approach is also interpretative, as the analysis assumes that media content does not represent an objective reflection of social reality, but actively produces meaning through linguistic, visual and narrative means (Traue et al. 2019). Accordingly, media reports are understood as discursive artefacts that shape societal perceptions of history, responsibility and belonging (Winter 1999, Sutter 2010, Traue et al. 2019). In connection to the theoretical framework, which stresses that colonial power structures don't vanish after the formal end of colonialism but continue to influence knowledge production, representation, and language (Quijano 2000, Purtschert et al. 2016), the analysis of media discourse is therefore understood as a key approach to revealing and questioning these persistent structures. In this sense, the research design combines qualitative media analysis with a critical postcolonial and decolonial perspective on social negotiation processes in Switzerland.

Methodologically the thesis pursues an analysis based on a qualitative content analysis (Mayring & Fenzl 2019) as well as a frame analysis (Entman 1993). Through the content analysis the key topics and narratives can be identified which will help to answer the research questions. Furthermore, with the frame analysis it will be analyzed how the topics are framed. Frames are understood as interpretative frameworks that highlight certain aspects of a topic while obscuring others, thereby suggesting specific problem definitions, causes and approaches to solutions (Entman 1993). The analysis aims to identify recurring frames and narratives, for example in relation to neutrality, historical distancing, moral responsibility or victim-perpetrator constellations. Through this an analysis can be made, if for example Switzerland was mostly seen as neutral or as a profiteer of colonial structures. This approach makes it possible to reveal both explicit patterns of argumentation and implicit assumptions and evaluations in reporting. To analyze the discourses over time a trend analysis will also be made.

4.2. Data Corpus, Sources & Sampling Strategy

4.2.1. Corpus Content & Exclusion Criteria

The corpus for this study consists of journalistic media articles, blog posts of NGOs or museum newsletters to name a few. The articles deal thematically with the colonial entanglements, colonial responsibility as well as actual debates regarding decolonization, provenance or the return of cultural goods. The focus is on analyzing texts that explicitly address these topics and discuss them in a public context. Short news items, agency texts without editorial commentary, and purely image-based content were excluded, as they offer limited analytical value for qualitative discourse and frame analysis. Academic texts, while thematically relevant, were also omitted as they operate within a different discursive register than the public media discourse under examination. Social media content was also not regarded for the corpus selection.

4.2.2. Media Sources

The media reports examined originate from established Swiss media outlets with national reach, including SRF, NZZ, Tages Anzeiger, WOZ or Republik. Further media articles are from websites of museums or NGOs as well as academic institutions. Both public and private media outlets were considered in order to capture different institutional perspectives within the Swiss media landscape. The selection was guided by the outlets' wide reach, institutional authority, and discursive influence in shaping public opinion on political and cultural issues.

4.2.3. Language & Time Frame

The thesis focuses on the German speaking discourse in Switzerland, since German is the most widely spoken language, accounting for approximately 61% of the country (BFS 2023). English-language materials will be included to capture transnational perspectives such as publications by NGOs, academic institutions, or museum communications aimed at international audiences[3]. The period under investigation spans several decades, with the corpus stretching from 1960 to 2025, allowing for both current debates and their discursive embedding. More input regarding temporal factors and their discourses will be discussed in the trend analysis.

4.2.4. Data Collection & Search Strategy

The data was collected from digital media archives, online platforms of media companies, and publicly accessible press databases like Swissdox or E-newspaperarchive. General search engines were also used for non-journalistic sources. The identified articles were imported into MAXQDA and systematically processed there. Search terms included, among others, „Dekolonisierung“ and „Schweiz“, „Kolonialismus“ and „Schweiz“, or „Postkolonialismus“ and „Schweiz“, as well as their English equivalents and morphological variations (e.g., „dekolonisieren“, „decolonial“ etc.). The search terms were iteratively adjusted to cover both historical references and current debates.

4.2.5. Sampling Principles & Selection Criteria

The selection of articles followed a theory-driven, purposive sampling strategy aimed at building a corpus that reflects central discourses on colonial entanglements in Swiss mainstream media while enabling in-depth qualitative analysis. Rather than statistical representativeness, the focus was on discursive relevance and interpretive richness. New texts were added until central frames, narratives, and patterns of argumentation recurred consistently, and no substantially new interpretive frameworks emerged which is a principle analogous to thematic saturation in qualitative research.

[3] Unless otherwise noted, all German-language quotations were translated into English for this thesis.

4.2.6. Corpus Structure

After an initial screening of all available files, each was assigned a relevance rating from low, medium, or high, based on its thematic fit with the research questions. The 83 files rated as highly relevant formed the initial core corpus. During the coding process, this number was reduced to 73, as some articles proved less relevant upon closer reading or were moved to the context corpus due to their length or selective thematic focus.

The core corpus of 73 articles served as the basis for in-depth qualitative coding. An additional 26 texts were designated as the context corpus. These texts addressed relevant topics only partially or selectively and were therefore not coded in their entirety but instead they were used to contextualize findings and identify overarching discursive trends while being assigned to one of the key narratives. The selection of context corpus texts was likewise theory-driven and oriented toward criteria of temporal dispersion, media diversity, and thematic breadth. Before the actual coding procedure, a pilot coding was conducted with a test corpus containing 14 media articles.

4.3. Analytical Method

The analysis of the media corpus was conducted through a qualitative content analysis as well as a frame analysis which integrated discourse-oriented elements. With these methods it became possible to identify those interpretive frameworks, narratives, and patterns of argumentation which are constructed, evaluated or categorized through media coverage regarding colonial entanglements of Switzerland. The analytical focus, therefore, is not only on explicit statements, but also on implicit assumptions, problem definitions, and normative premises. Methodically the analysis follows a combined deductive-inductive approach. Deductive codes were derived from the theoretical framework of the study, particularly from postcolonial theory, framing approaches, and concepts related to Indigenous and Local Knowledge. Assumptions were also drawn from historical accounts and studies on Switzerland's colonial past and applied to the media context. These codes and their subcodes served as an initial analytical framework. At the same time, the material was interpreted with an open mind toward new, empirically emerging patterns of interpretation, allowing the category system to be iteratively expanded and adapted during the analysis process.

For the coding as well as the analysis MAXQDA, a coding software, was used. In a first step all articles were imported into the program, differentiating between core corpus, context corpus and pilot corpus. While the pilot corpus, containing only 14 articles was used as a coding test run, every article was tagged with its meta data in an excel table. The meta data consists of a publication date, text type, author, language, and an individual ID number consisting of number and the year of publication (e.g. 023_2020). This structure made it possible to conduct a targeted comparative analysis of different media, time periods, and text types at a later date. After the coding of the pilot corpus the coding system was again

edited which was followed by the systematic coding of the articles during the coding phase. The subsection on "Coding Procedure and Category System" describes the specific coding procedure in more detail.

After the coding the different code groups and subcodes were grouped into categories at a higher level. In the process, patterns were identified that recurred across multiple texts and revealed consistent interpretive frameworks. After that MAXQDA was used to compare code frequencies, analyze the co-occurrence of codes, and systematically identify typical text passages within individual frames. These functions were not intended for quantitative analysis in the strict sense, but rather to support qualitative interpretation and the identification of stable discursive patterns. Initial interpretations were reviewed, refined, or revised as the coding process continued, with the Context Corpus serving as a reference. Key analytical decisions were documented in memos to ensure the traceability of the interpretation. In this way, the chosen analytical method combines a systematic approach with the interpretive openness required for the study of complex postcolonial discourses. As a contextualizing factor to the interpretive and qualitative analysis of the content and the various frames, a descriptive-interpretive trend analysis of the articles was conducted, comparing the publication dates of the articles with the frequency of articles in different years, as well as key topics and key dates (e.g., the BLM Movement) which will be used as a supplementary, descriptive element in the analysis.

4.4. Coding Procedure & Category System

The text corpus was analyzed using a multi-stage qualitative coding process based on methods of qualitative content analysis. After a first draft the code book was drawn up in MAXQDA, which helped with the systematic management of the codes as well as the categories at a later stage in the coding procedure as shown in Kuckartz (2007) work on computer-assisted content analysis. In addition to a simple code describing the type of media article, which allowed for cross-media comparisons, codes were created to indicate the tone of each article, as well as codes to define the framing within the article which were built according to Entman's (1993) design. Codes were thus established for problem definition, attribution of causes, moral evaluation, and recommendations for solutions in regard to the discourse on decolonization across the Swiss media.

In addition, a code was created for content-related topics, which includes subcodes pertaining to Switzerland and its colonial history, as well as colonial violence in a general sense (including mentioning of racism), decolonization in institutional contexts, and thematic descriptions of ILK. Another code group was created for "Discursive & Narrative Constructions". This group included narratives about Switzerland, as well as codes related to "Processes of difference-making", which included narratives about the topic of othering. Subcodes regarding topics and narratives such as "Responsibility and Relativization", "Knowledge and Authority", the discursive usage of decolonization as well as the discursive framing of ILK were found in this code group. There was an active differentiation between

thematic references as well as discursive patterns and framing elements in the code system. Through this differentiation it was made visible that topics such as colonial history or decolonization were made visible but framed differently depending on discursive or tonal embedding.

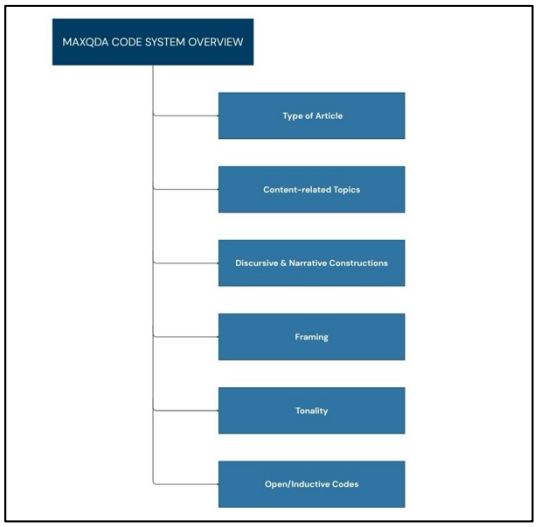


Figure 2: Overview of the coding system in MAXQDA at the first level, created by the author.

One code was dedicated to open codes where new ideas were noted. These codes decreased over time of the coding procedure. First 14 articles were coded as a pilot corpus to test the coding system and to analyze further key topics, argumentative patterns and recuring terms which had to be included into the code system[4]. After the editing of the codes the core corpus containing 73 was coded. Throughout the coding process, memos were used as a central tool to support reflexivity, structure the analysis, and document emerging interpretations. In MAXQDA, the memos were attached to each document. This allowed for a systematic documentation of analytical thoughts during the coding process. It was already noted which patterns were repeating themselves, if codes were appearing together, if differences between the media types can be recognized, as well as ideas and patterns regarding framing and tonality. During the coding process, a difficulty that became evident were some articles which were initially included in the corpus but were not sufficiently relevant to the research question in terms of content or showed only a limited connection to Switzerland's colonial entanglements. These were therefore replaced.

After the coding of the core corpus different categories were constructed to start with the analysis (Kuckartz 2007). These categories serve to structure the qualitative analysis and form the basis for the presentation of the results: (1) narratives about Switzerland, (2) depiction of colonialism, (3) responsibility and relativization, (4) discourse of decolonization, and (5) knowledge and ILK. In addition, memos were written for each category to summarize them:

[4] The entire code book is viewable in the appendix.

1) This category encompasses media portrayals of Switzerland's role in the colonial context, particularly narratives of innocence, interdependence, and ambivalence. The observation is on how Switzerland is positioned as an actor, as well as which discursive strategies are used to legitimize or challenge these positions.

2) Here it is examined how colonialism is portrayed in the media reports. This includes explicit references to colonial violence, racism, and oppression, as well as their integration into contemporary discourses (e.g., in the context of Black Lives Matter).

3) The third category brings together discursive examinations of responsibility in the context of the colonial past and present. The focus is on the extent to which colonial structures are criticized, relativized, or defended. It encompasses both explicit criticism of colonial continuities and strategies of denial, relativization, or trivialization.

4) This category examines how "decolonization" is used and interpreted in media discourse. It distinguishes between various dimensions of meaning, such as decolonization as a structural/political process, as a moral appeal, or as a symbolic practice. It also analyzes specific institutional contexts (e.g., museums, monuments, universities) as well as proposed measures. Important to mention is that in the articles the term "decolonization" is often not mentioned but it is used as a theory or described without naming.

5) The last category focuses on the representation and evaluation of knowledge within the context of colonial and postcolonial discourses. Particular attention is paid to the role of Indigenous and Local Knowledge, as well as its recognition, marginalization, or instrumentalization. The category also analyzes existing hierarchies of knowledge between Western academic knowledge and Indigenous knowledge, as well as the associated power asymmetries.

Based on the category system developed in this way, the actual analysis was then conducted. The coded text segments within the individual categories were comparatively evaluated in order to identify recurring patterns, dominant narratives, and discursive tensions. In addition, relationships between categories as well as differences with regard to media type, temporal developments, and tone were examined. The aim of the analysis was to go beyond mere description and to identify the underlying interpretive structures and media frames in the discourse.

4.5. Reflexivity & Positionality

Because this thesis is framed through a critical postcolonial research framework, it is assumed that knowledge production is not neutral. Instead, the assumption persists that it is shaped through social power structures, epistemic hierarchies as well as the position of the researcher. Accordingly, I reflect my own role in the research process and understands it as part of the analysis. I am a white man with Swiss citizenship and thus part of the societal majority position from which Switzerland's colonial entanglements have historically often been overlooked, relativized, or presented as marginal.

The analysis of colonial discourses in Swiss media is therefore not conducted from a neutral external perspective, but from a position within the society under study. This proximity to the research object entails both risks and analytical potential. On the one hand, there is a risk of unconsciously reproducing dominant narratives or normalizing certain problematic representations. On the other hand, being situated within the Swiss context enables a more differentiated analysis of implicit self-images, for example with regard to neutrality, historical responsibility, or moral distancing. To address these tensions methodologically, particular emphasis was placed on reflexive distance throughout the research process. Key analytical decisions, uncertainties, and interpretative steps were documented in research and coding memos. In addition, text passages were read repeatedly, and alternative interpretations were consciously considered, especially in cases where media representations implicitly reproduce national narratives of liberation.

The aim of this reflexive practice is not to overcome or neutralize the researcher's own position, but to make it transparent and critically incorporate it into the analytical process. In this way, it seeks to prevent the researcher's perspective from becoming the unexamined standard of interpretation. Instead, the researcher's positionality is understood as part of the very social power and knowledge relations that become visible in the media negotiation of colonial entanglements.

4.6. Ethical Considerations

This master's thesis relies exclusively on publicly accessible media articles. It does not survey personal or sensitive individual data. Still ethical considerations are an important component of the research design. This applies in particular to the responsible handling of issues such as colonialism, historical violence, racism and cultural dispossession as the analysis of such topics demands reflexive sensitivity toward the power structures and lived realities involved (Friedrichs 2019). When analyzing and quoting media reports, care was taken not to reproduce problematic representations, stereotypical attributions or marginalizing narratives without comment. Quotes were always contextualized and analyzed in order to highlight their discursive function without normalizing or legitimizing them. Furthermore, the work is supposed to be a contribution to critical knowledge production that questions dominant media perspectives and draws attention to structural inequalities in the representation of colonial history. The ethical responsibility of research thus lies less in protecting individual actors than in the reflective analysis of social power and knowledge relations.

4.7. Limitations of the Method

Despite its careful methodological approach, the study has several methodological limitations that must be taken into account when interpreting the results. Firstly, the analysis is based on a limited number of selected media reports and does not claim to be representative in a statistical sense. The results cannot therefore be generalized to the entire Swiss media landscape but refer to the discourses examined within the selected corpus. Secondly, because of the chosen focus, certain perspectives may remain underrepresented. This is because the analysis focuses on media articles. Pictures for example are not regarded. Social media articles or articles that are not in German or English are also excluded. Thirdly, qualitative discourse and frame analysis are necessarily interpretative and influenced by the researcher. Although systematic coding, memos and iterative analysis steps were used to increase the traceability of the results, subjective interpretation cannot be completely ruled out. Fourthly, the coding and analysis were carried out by a single researcher. No second coder was involved to cross check the categorization or to calculate intercoder reliability. While the systematic and iterative approach described above was intended to increase transparency and consistency, the absence of a second perspective means that individual blind spots or interpretative patterns may have gone unnoticed. Finally, the study is limited in time and reflects media debates within a specific historical context. Changes in reporting or new discursive developments after the completion of data collection are therefore not considered.

5. Media Analysis & Findings

In this chapter, I present the findings of the qualitative media analysis, which forms the central focus of the thesis. The overarching argument that runs through all sections is this: Swiss media are increasingly acknowledging colonial entanglements and framing colonialism as a structural and contemporary problem, yet they do not translate this recognition into structural political demands or into an epistemic equivalence between Indigenous and local forms of knowledge on the one hand and Western knowledge systems on the other. In Swiss media discourse, this structural diagnosis rarely translates into a structural response as decolonization appears primarily as a cultural and moral project, while its political and material dimensions remain largely unaddressed

This chapter is organized into five parts. It begins by examining Switzerland's self-image of neutrality and innocence, which sets up the central tension between the increasing acknowledgement of colonial entanglements and the persistence of a narrative of national innocence. Building on this tension, I present how colonial responsibility is negotiated in the material. It shows how responsibility is systematically shifted from the state to individual actors, and how, alongside this individualizing narrative, a second, more coherent narrative frames colonialism as an ongoing structure that persists in contemporary racism, economic inequality, and knowledge hierarchies. In the third part I examine the narrative of symbolic decolonization, showing that regardless of how the problem is framed, the proposed solutions remain remarkably consistent. Decolonization is recognized as necessary but is implemented almost exclusively through cultural and institutional measures, while structural demands remain largely unspoken. In the fourth part I turn to the portrayal of Indigenous and Local Knowledge, while examining the extent to which Indigenous forms of knowledge are recognized as equal expertise or remain embedded in colonial knowledge hierarchies and show how this narrative reproduces the same pattern of recognition without structural transformation. Findings throughout are illustrated with concrete passages from the core corpus. Each of the following sections draws on Entman's four framing functions, problem definition, attribution of causes, moral evaluation and recommendation for solutions, to structure the analysis of the respective narrative. Finally, I present the trend analysis, which complements these qualitative findings with a descriptive account of how the discourse has developed over time. This functions in terms of publication frequency, shifts in media and genre, and patterns among contributing actors.

5.1. Switzerland's Self-Image: Neutrality & Entanglements

First, I will examine a Swiss-specific feature that emerged during coding and which frames much of what follows, namely the tension in Swiss media discourse between the growing recognition of colonial entanglements and the persistence of a national self-image of neutrality and innocence. The analysis shows that the media discourse is characterized by a fundamental tension. On the one hand, Switzerland is increasingly described as part of colonial structures, while on the other hand, the image of Switzerland as a neutral, humanitarian, and non-colonial nation remains prevalent. The discourse thus oscillates between acknowledging colonial ties and perpetuating a narrative of national innocence. A key feature of the material examined is that Switzerland is frequently portrayed as a special case. Numerous articles refer to traditional self-images such as neutrality, humanitarianism, or Switzerland's role as a mediator in international conflicts. These portrayals present Switzerland as a morally positive actor and distinguish it from the traditional European colonial powers. Blum (2020) writes for the Tages-Anzeiger, that "the image of Switzerland as a humanitarian actor was reinforced, while the colonial reality was glossed over". Another good example is given by dos Santos Pinto and colleagues (2011) who elaborated in a WOZ article how Switzerland managed to "position itself as a seemingly disinterested mediator between former colonizers and formerly colonized peoples". These quotes make it clear that the problem lies not only in the colonial past, but also in the way that past is remembered or ignored.

Switzerland does not appear as a colonial power, but as a country that for a long time failed to recognize its colonial ties as part of its own history. This worked so effectively that, "as late as 2003, the Swiss Federal Council responded to an interpellation by St. Gallen National Councilor Pia Holenstein concerning Switzerland's contribution to addressing slavery by framing its role solely as a mediating one" (Dean 2023), a pattern that foreshadows the individualization of responsibility examined in the following section. At the same time, most of the articles clearly show that Switzerland was economically, scientifically, and culturally embedded in colonial structures. 67 of the 73 articles analyzed address these connections. Trade networks, financial structures, missionary work, scientific expeditions, and the involvement of individual Swiss actors are highlighted particularly frequently. "Through companies, scientific enterprises, and religious missions, the country was involved in the colonial project in a wide range of ways" (Surber 2016). In this regard, Marti (2023) wrote in the *Tages-Anzeiger* that "Swiss actors, in a sense, operated in the wake of the colonial powers, making profitable deals, venturing into new markets, and carving out niches there".

The attribution of causes thus follows two distinct lines of reasoning. On the one hand, colonial interdependence is explained in structural terms. On the other hand, the historical invisibility of this interdependence is often attributed to national self-perceptions. The root of the problem thus lies not only in colonial structures themselves, but also in a specific culture of remembrance that long positioned Switzerland outside of colonial history. The moral evaluation is largely critical. Numerous articles challenge the notion of a Switzerland that was uninvolved in colonialism and call for a more critical

examination of the country's own past. The nation's self-perception is increasingly being called into question. At the same time, the criticism often remains limited to the realm of historical acknowledgment. The main demand is usually to bring colonial connections to light and to correct the national narrative of history. Examples of this include „young ethnologists, folklorists, and historians who in recent years have developed city walking tours that outline stories of colonial trade relations in Basel, Neuchâtel, Lausanne, and Zurich" (Brändli 2015).

It is striking, however, that the proposed solutions rarely go beyond this level. As will become visible with the other narratives, educational initiatives, public debates, exhibitions, and historical research dominate. Calls for political consequences, institutional accountability, or material reparations remain comparatively rare. Switzerland is expected to acknowledge its colonial past, yet there is rarely any discussion of what political consequences might result from this acknowledgment. This creates a tension, which also will get clearer with the other narratives, in that while structural interconnections are recognized, the proposed responses remain largely symbolic.

The results can be interpreted with the concept of "colonialism without colonies", which is discussed in the work of Patricia Purtschert, Barbara Lüthi, and Francesca Falk (2016). The authors argue that, despite lacking formal colonies, Switzerland was closely integrated into colonial structures. Economic ties, scientific expeditions, missionary work, and the production of racist knowledge enabled Switzerland to benefit from colonial power relations without possessing a colonial empire of its own. It was precisely this unique position that fostered the emergence of a national self-image that largely externalized colonial responsibility. The tension observed in the material between acknowledging colonial connections and simultaneously maintaining a positive national self-image corresponds exactly to this finding. Switzerland appears to have been involved in colonialism without seeing itself as a colonial actor. Particularly relevant here is the "perspective of Switzerland's self-representation as neutral and humanitarian", which "does not contradict its imperial behavior" but rather stands in a "constitutive relationship" to it (Purtschert et al. 2016: 293). This is because, through its neutrality, Switzerland constructs itself as a morally exceptional state that is fundamentally different from the European colonial powers. Although this point is increasingly questioned in the analyzed material, it remains an important reference point in the reporting.

In addition, this finding can be explained by the concept of colonial amnesia, as documented in works by, for example, Boulila (2019). She argues, drawing a comparison between colonialism and racism in Switzerland, that colonial history in Switzerland has long been perceived as the history the others (Boulila 2019). This gave rise to a form of collective memory politics that systematically erased colonial connections from the national self-image (Speich Chassé 2012). This colonial amnesia is closely linked to the tendency to deny racism, as Boulila (2019) also describes. When the colonial past is not understood as part of one's own history, contemporary racism often appears to be an imported problem from other

countries. The increasing focus on colonial connections in media discourse can therefore be interpreted as an attempt to break this historical amnesia. At the same time, the material shows that acknowledging colonial connections does not automatically lead to the abandonment of established national narratives. Michel's (2015) analysis of the Swiss narrative of homogeneity also offers an important perspective. Michel demonstrates that Switzerland's national identity is often constructed around notions of cultural unity, social cohesion, and historical distinctiveness. Colonial ties challenge this self-image, as they highlight Switzerland's role within global power structures and inequalities (Michel 2015). The tensions evident in the material can therefore be understood as a conflict between a traditional narrative of homogeneity and an increasingly transnational perspective on Swiss history.

Taken together, these theoretical perspectives make it clear that the central question of the narrative is not whether Switzerland was involved in colonialism. These connections are largely acknowledged in the source material. Rather, what remains a point of contention is the significance of these connections for the nation's self-image. Media discourse thus oscillates between the deconstruction of colonial innocence and its simultaneous reproduction. This oscillation between recognition and innocence forms the backdrop against which I examine how colonial responsibility is negotiated in the material, from its systematic shift onto individual actors to its reframing as an ongoing structural continuity

5.2. Colonial Responsibility: Individualization & Continuity

In this narrative, it becomes visible that colonialism is consistently described in the articles as a structural system. It is rooted in economic dependencies, global power imbalances and racist hierarchies. However, the question of who bears responsibility for Switzerland's involvement in these structures is repeatedly reduced to individual actors, families or companies. In this section I will examine how this shift operates discursively, what frames underlie it, and what theoretical implications it has for understanding the Swiss discourse on decolonization.

When it comes to the problem definition, a striking dichotomy can be observed in the coded material. In most articles, Switzerland is described as somehow economically entangled in colonial structures or the transatlantic slave trade and colonialism in the articles is framed as a structural, economically funded system in which Switzerland was involved through trading companies, investments, and individual actors. Meanwhile, the root causes of Switzerland's colonial entanglements were almost always attributed to private actors. Examples of this are merchants, entrepreneurial families, missionaries, or scholars who operated within colonial structures. The Swiss state, by contrast, is portrayed in these accounts as a passive observer that, while benefiting from colonial developments, did not play an active role itself (Fässler 2019).

This framing is particularly evident in the recurring references to official statements by the Federal Council. For example, an article by Eugster (2020) for swissinfo notes that "the Swiss state left the

pursuit of this profit in the colonies entirely to private initiative", reflecting the Federal Council's characteristically neutral refusal to take responsibility. A similar shift can be found in an article by the Fair Observer (Betz 2020), which notes that while the Swiss government acknowledges the role of Swiss nationals in the slave trade, it cautions that Switzerland was not a "colonial power and therefore not implicated in the slave trade", in other words, that it was private citizens, not the Confederation, who were involved. A passage from Republik (Hanimann 2021) takes a similar stance, in which the Federal Council clarifies that Switzerland as a state had nothing to do with slavery, but "that it is possible that individual families, traders, and companies may have profited from one form of colonialism or another". A similar pattern emerges in an article by Schär (2025), who notes that Switzerland was "closely intertwined with European expansion through missionary work, trade, mercenaries, research, and emigration" and "served as its service provider".

What these passages have in common is a specific discursive logic. Although colonialism is recognized as a global, economically interconnected system, both the attribution of causes and the assignment of responsibility are systematically individualized, and the state's complicity is correspondingly overlooked. Notably, 30% of the core corpus articles explicitly reaffirmed that Switzerland never possessed colonies. This repeated assertion functions as a discursive distancing strategy rather than as a neutral historical clarification. The articles' moral evaluation is predominantly critical. Switzerland's involvement in colonial structures is viewed as problematic, and there are growing calls for a historical reckoning and public acknowledgment. Yet accountability, too, is individualized, as it typically takes the form of an examination of the legacy of specific individuals. This is exemplified by the intense media debate surrounding Alfred Escher, whose monument at the main station in Zurich has become the focal point of a broader discussion about individual colonial guilt (Strehle 2019, Illien 2020, Tobler 2020, Fässler 2024). Other individuals singled out in various articles include Johann Jakob von Tschudi (Dschen 2021), Henri Dunant (Freudiger 2023), and David de Pury (e.g. Meyer 2023). The call for a collective, state-led reappraisal of colonial structures, by contrast, appears much less frequently in the material.

This is illustrated, for example, in an article by Marti (2023), who notes that "the Swiss, in a sense, did good business in the wake of the colonial powers" and proposes a solution where "it is only right that we become aware of [this complicity]". Marti's framing is telling. By describing Swiss profiteering as simply "doing good business" rather than as active complicity, colonial involvement appears less as a structural wrong than as an opportunity any actor of the time would have seized. Because responsibility is framed this way, as an understandable pursuit of opportunity rather than a systemic injustice, the suggested response follows the same logic. It remains at the level of individual awareness, while structural consequences are not addressed. An example of this is the discussion in Zurich about whether racist house names should be removed, as reported in a 2021 article in the Tages-Anzeiger (Metzler 2021). The city's decision was that removal and renaming were not possible. Instead, information

plaques will be installed to encourage critical engagement with the colonial past. This outcome reflects a related but distinct variant of individualization. Rather than holding the named individuals to account, the decision implicitly treats them as products of their time, whose legacy can be contextualized but not revised, therefore leaving the symbolic status quo intact while still gesturing toward critical engagement.

Various articles by or about Hans Fässler (e.g. an interview with him conducted by Hanimann for Republik in 2021) deal with the idea of reparations, official apologies or structural redistribution. The Swiss historian and activist strongly supports the idea of Switzerland officially apologizing and paying compensation to several Caribbean nations. Fässler's position stands out precisely because it is the exception. While there are calls for a reckoning with the past, these primarily refer to symbolic gestures such as renaming buildings, removing statues, acknowledging the historical guilt of individual families, or raising public awareness. Structural demands such as calls for reparations, institutional accountability, or an explicitly state-led process of coming to terms with the past remain largely absent from the discourse elsewhere in the material, a contrast that makes Fässler's voice analytically significant despite, or rather because of, its marginality. What is left unsaid is just as analytically relevant here as what is said. The absence of structural solutions is no accident. Rather, it reflects the underlying framework that views colonialism as an individual problem rather than a state-level one.

This pattern also reflects Purtschert and colleagues' (2016) "colonialism without colonies" concept, where Switzerland, by positioning itself as a neutral, non-colonial power, developed a discursive immunity to shared responsibility for colonialism (Purtschert & Fischer-Tiné 2015, Purtschert et al. 2016). This immunity rests on a long-standing assumption within Swiss historiography itself. The absence of formal colonial rule has been read as evidence of political innocence (Purtschert & Fischer-Tiné 2015), and as the analyzed material shows, this same reading persists in contemporary media discourse. By projecting colonial entanglement onto individuals, the Swiss state can appear to be a structurally uninvolved actor, even though it benefited from colonial economic structures.

As already explained in the chapter on the Swiss context (Ch. 3), Zangger (2011) has pointed out that this impasse in the Swiss colonial discourse stems from the focus on Switzerland as a state. Shifting the focus to Swiss people does not resolve this impasse but relocates it. From this perspective, merchants, scientists, missionaries, and entrepreneurs were just as integrated into colonial power structures as intermediaries, producing colonial knowledge and legitimizing colonial hierarchies (Zangger 2011). Media individualization thus continues a historiographical tradition that personalizes colonial involvement and thereby depoliticizes it. Franc (2008) characterizes Switzerland's position within colonial structures as that of a "free rider", profiting from colonial power relations without bearing formal responsibility for them, a framing Purtschert and colleagues (2011) echo in describing Switzerland as a "third party that benefits". Switzerland benefited from colonial structures without bearing the formal costs of colonial responsibility, and this pattern is replicated in media discourse,

where those who profited are named but structural consequences are avoided. Mouffe (2005) offers a useful concept here. What she calls “the political”, the fundamentally contentious, unresolved question of collective responsibility, reparations, and state action, is defused when the focus shifts to individual actors. What is framed as a moral problem for individual actors need not be negotiated as a political demand on the state. Individualization thus functions not only as a historical misinterpretation but also as a discursive strategy that prevents structural debates. Read together with the self-image of neutrality discussed above, this gives rise to a discursive constellation in which recognition and the rejection of responsibility are both possible at the same time.

Alongside this individualizing narrative, the material reveals a second, more coherent pattern. Colonialism is framed not as a closed chapter of history, but as an ongoing structure that persists in contemporary racism, global economic inequality, and epistemic hierarchies. 39 out of 73 articles (53%) view colonialism as an ongoing, structural system. Here I present how this continuity is constructed discursively, which frames are employed in the process, and how this pattern can be theoretically situated within postcolonial and decolonial theory.

The problem is explicitly defined as structural, understood through its continuity into the present, rather than split between a structural description and an individual attribution of responsibility, as in the previous narrative. Colonialism is not treated as a historical event, but rather as a set of structures that continue to have an impact in the present day, whether in the form of racism, the economic dependence of formerly colonized regions, or the marginalization of non-Western knowledge. This is particularly evident in an article by swissinfo (2024), which quotes museum director Denise Tonella. She emphasizes that it is important to educate people about this part of Swiss history as well, since colonialism “shaped a racist worldview among the population based on a supposed sense of superiority”. This statement explicitly attributes the root cause of contemporary racism to colonial ways of thinking. Thus, the attribution of causes here is not based on individual factors, but rather on structural and socio-historical ones. A similar perspective is found in an article in the WOZ (Albisser 2025), which notes that while the transatlantic slave trade and slavery in the colonies may be long past, their effects are still felt today. Global economic inequality, and with it the ongoing exploitation of people in the former colonies, is built on this foundation. Here, an explicit causal link is established between historical colonialism and contemporary global inequality. An article in the Tages-Anzeiger (Blum 2020) puts it in even more fundamental terms. In it, historian Tanja Hammel explains the term “post-colonial” and elaborates that it does not mean colonialism is over, but rather that the present is shaped by numerous colonial legacies which appear in culture, the economy, academia, and politics. These legacies demonstrate how relevant colonial history remains to this day.

This claim of continuity can be broken down into various social spheres within the source material. On the economic and environmental level, this is evident, for example, in an SRF article (Reymond 2025),

which notes that the historical exploitation of natural resources in the Global South remains "active to this day". Colonial extraction dynamics are explicitly framed here as an ongoing process rather than a historical event. At the institutional level, a similar logic can be found in an article by Willi (2024), which describes how "these colonial entanglements of Switzerland are also reflected in the Swiss archives". Continuity is evident here not only in terms of content but also in terms of physical archives. It is also evident in terms of economic prosperity. This is shown in an article by ZH Kolonial (2024) that notes that Swiss actors, in collaboration with colonial powers, were able to generate a level of prosperity "from which many still benefit today". This directly links the colonial past to current economic privilege. Finally, this continuity is also evident at the discursive level itself, as Santos Pinto and Boulila (2020) note that "colonial-racist discourses are strongly reflected in both cultural and political debates", a finding that points to the media's own self-reflection on its colonial imprint.

When it comes to attributing causes, a pattern emerges that differs significantly from the narrative of individualization. Whereas the former attributed the cause of colonial entanglement to individuals, the latter explicitly locates the root of current problems such as racism, inequality, and knowledge hierarchies in historical, structural processes. At first glance, the two narratives appear to contradict each other. The same media discourse acknowledges colonialism as an enduring structure yet also narrows responsibility for it down to individual actors. However, this contradiction is only apparent because the two narratives answer different questions. The individualizing narrative addresses the question of who is responsible for addressing Switzerland's colonial past and provides individual answers. In contrast, the structural narrative addresses what continues to shape the present and identifies structures as the answer. These two narratives can coexist without any logical inconsistency precisely because they operate at different levels within the same discourse, which is what makes this pattern so effective in diagnosing colonialism as structural without holding anyone or anything structurally accountable. This dynamic is explored further in the theoretical discussion below.

The moral evaluation in the articles that follow this narrative is predominantly critical and makes a clear normative claim. Colonial continuities must be identified, brought to light, and integrated into Switzerland's historical self-perception. Unlike in the first narrative, this criticism is not primarily directed at individual actors, but rather at a societal silence or collective ignorance. Museums, educational institutions, and the media themselves are positioned as key players who must bring colonial continuities into the public discourse. Accordingly, when it comes to recommended solutions, the call for visibility and education dominates. As Tonella's (2024) statement quoted above suggests, the proposed response to the recognition of colonial continuity is the dissemination of information, not a structural or political measure. A report by SRF (Stöckl 2024) makes a similar argument, noting that colonial ideology persists, which is why it is important to "examine the history and origins of racism". Here, too, the focus is on historical analysis rather than concrete measures. Occasionally, however, there are also voices that go beyond raising awareness. For example, in an interview conducted by Freudiger

(2023), historian Georg Kreis also argues that "awareness must be strengthened," but he links this to the concrete political demand that Switzerland should “engage in development cooperation and advocate for a more just global market order”. Another exception is Cedric Wermuth, cited in the WOZ (Albisser 2025), one of the few politicians seeking a compensation payment from Switzerland. These voices remain an exception in the material, linking the acknowledgment of colonial continuity to a structural-political rather than purely symbolic demand. Even so, as the synthesis of the frame analysis shows, this position remains rare against the dominant logic of raising awareness.

These observations lead to the central finding of this section, one that recurs throughout this chapter. Regardless of whether colonial responsibility is framed in individual terms or explicitly as an ongoing structural phenomenon, as discussed above, the proposed solutions converge on the same register of raising awareness, education, and visibility. The shift in problem definition, in other words, is not matched by a corresponding shift in the proposed response. It is this discrepancy between structural analysis and symbolic resolution that becomes the central focus of the next narrative. The finding of colonial continuity can be understood through Edward Said’s concept of the colonized “Other” (1978), whose construction provided the starting point for colonial activity. One can also refer to Aníbal Quijano’s concept of the “coloniality of power” (2000, 2007). Quijano argues that the global power structure established by European colonialism, based on racial hierarchies, the division of labor, and knowledge hierarchies, did not disappear with the formal end of colonial rule, but was instead integrated into modern state and economic systems. His statement that “Eurocentric coloniality of power... [is] more enduring than Eurocentric colonialism” (Quijano 2007: 171) provides the theoretical basis for precisely that claim of continuity which recurs throughout the analyzed material. Colonialism as a structure outlives colonialism as an event.

In the Swiss context, this can be linked to the work of Purtschert et al. (2016), who argue that colonial entanglement in Switzerland was not primarily manifested as territorial rule, but rather as economic, cultural, and epistemic networks, and it is precisely these networks that, according to the analyzed material, continue to exist to this day. The media’s portrayal of racism as a colonial legacy can also be linked to Boulila (2019), who demonstrates how the denial of Switzerland’s colonial past has long led to a denial of racial discrimination today. Racism is seen as a phenomenon imported from outside, not as a homegrown colonial legacy (Cretton 2018). When the media now explicitly draw a connection between the colonial past and racial discrimination today, this marks a discursive break with this tradition of externalization. At the same time, the tension between structural diagnosis and symbolic resolution described in the previous paragraph can be linked to Fanon’s (1969) distinction between the identification of colonial structures and their actual dismantling. Fanon emphasizes that decolonization must be a material, rather than a discursive, break with colonial power relations. The tendency observed in the material to acknowledge colonial continuity while limiting the response to it to the level of

awareness and education suggests that the "acknowledgment" of colonial structures in Swiss media discourse cannot yet be equated with their "dissolution" in Fanon's sense.

This narrative of colonial continuity, then, shows that Swiss media increasingly view colonialism as an enduring structure that persists in contemporary racism, global inequality, and hierarchies of knowledge, a shift that can be theoretically conceptualized through Quijano's "coloniality of power" (2000, 2007) as well as Purtschert's understanding of colonial networks (2016) and marks a significant departure from the earlier externalization of colonial guilt (Boulila 2019, Cretton 2018). As shown above, however, this structural diagnosis is not matched by a structural response, a discrepancy examined further in the following section, which turns to how decolonization is recognized as necessary but implemented primarily in a symbolic manner.

5.3. Decolonization as a Symbolic Project

Regardless of whether colonial responsibility is framed in individual terms or as an ongoing structural continuity, as shown in the two preceding narratives, the material converges on a strikingly similar response. This third narrative therefore differs from those discussed above in that it does not primarily describe how colonial responsibility is framed, but rather what follows from it. Throughout the articles analyzed, decolonization is consistently recognized as necessary and legitimate. Its concrete implementation, however, is limited almost exclusively to symbolic, cultural, and institutional measures. In 59 of the 73 articles (80%), decolonization is primarily discussed within an institutional context. Examples for this are exhibitions, educational programs, proposals for renaming, provenance research, or commemorative initiatives. Structural demands, such as calls for reparations, political accountability, or a redistribution of decision-making power, are largely absent (and if they are present, they are mainly coverage about the reparation story from other countries (e.g. France)). This narrative is therefore shaped less by what is explicitly stated than by a characteristic gap. Decolonization is, in a sense, "said without being said", that is, recognized as a concept but never articulated in all its political implications.

In contrast to the first two findings there is a visible shift in the problem definition of the third narrative. While colonial entanglement or its persistence was the issue in the first two narratives, here the very process of coming to terms with the past implicitly becomes the subject. Particularly revealing in this regard is an article in the Tages-Anzeiger (Dean 2023), which explicitly states that decolonization "is easier to implement in museum collections, historiography, and politics than when it comes to the deep-seated prejudices in our minds". Habits, physical practices, and preferences are linked to unconscious worldviews that are not so easy to shake off, since "the laws of the colonizers have been inscribed into the bodies of the colonized" (Dean 2023). This quote is significant because it not only describes the prevailing practice in the material of negotiating decolonization through institutions, but also implicitly identifies it as inadequate, without explicitly stating this conclusion.

A similar institutional shift is evident in an article by Lendenmann (2024), who notes that Switzerland's colonial past is currently the focus of numerous cultural and memory institutions, and that museums and archives are re-examining "how they handle their collections from colonial contexts". A good example for this is the Rietberg museum in Zurich which was written about in various articles. The attribution of causes is implicitly institutional in this context. Galleries, archives, and educational institutions are positioned as the key players in the process of coming to terms with the past, not parliaments, government agencies, or civil society movements with political demands.

This narrowing of focus is particularly evident in the article by Lendenmann (2024), who explicitly attempts to define what is meant by the "decolonization" of collections and archives. The colonial past, he argues, "cannot be erased, but rather must be re-presented and reflected upon in a (self-)critical manner". This is followed by a list of concrete measures, including contextualizing racist imagery, provenance research, online publication of collection inventories, collaborations with cultural institutions in countries of origin, as well as workshops and guided tours for school groups and museum visitors. This list is analytically revealing not because the measures mentioned are meaningless, but because the definition of decolonization is already framed here in such a way that structural demands, such as the actual return of objects, legally binding restitution, or financial compensation, do not even appear as possible answers. The scope of action is defined before the question is even posed.

The moral evaluation in this narrative is largely positive toward the institutional initiatives described examples of which include exhibitions such as "Colonial – Switzerland's Global Entanglements" and "Colonial Traces", (both from 2024), which are recognized as important steps forward. However, this positive assessment is analytically double-edged, because by framing institutional measures as progress, it implicitly suggests that these measures are sufficient to address colonial responsibility appropriately. The question of what else might be necessary beyond these institutional measures is not raised in the vast majority of articles. This is precisely the methodological core of this section. The point is not to highlight what the articles say, but to systematically document what they do not say. Calls for reparations, for a legally binding restitution policy that goes beyond individual cases, for the participation of formerly colonized communities in decision-making processes, or for an official state apology appear only sporadically or not at all in the core corpus.

The structural diagnosis combined with a symbolic mode of resolution becomes particularly evident in the material where concrete criticism is met with minimal institutional responses. An illustrative example is provided by an article by Wirth (2024), which reports on how Zurich Zoo responded to criticism concerning its inadequate representation of colonial entanglements. Zoo director Severin Dressen announced that the relevant information panel would be "updated during its next scheduled revision". Meanwhile, the Lewa Wildlife Conservancy stated that it "recognizes the complexity and sensitivity of certain aspects of Kenyan history", without specifying any concrete consequences. Both responses

follow the same discursive logic. The problem is acknowledged, yet the response remains documentary and institutional, while questions of structural participation, the redistribution of decision-making power, or material responsibility remain unaddressed. Against this dominant pattern, the analyzed material contains one notable exception. In his contribution, Hans Fässler (2019) advances an explicitly structural and political demand. He describes it as his "small dream" that Switzerland be added to the list of countries against which CARICOM has directed claims for reparations, and he concretely proposes a "joint commission of prominent figures and historians from Switzerland and the Caribbean" to examine how such reparations claims might be fulfilled. Within the core corpus, this voice remains a rare exception. Nevertheless, it is analytically significant because it demonstrates that structural demands are entirely conceivable within the discourse, even though they remain marginal.

This narrative can be conceptualized theoretically on several levels. First, Tuck and Yang's (2012) distinction between decolonization as a political project and decolonization as a metaphor provides a key starting point. When decolonization is primarily addressed through museum practices regarding collections, educational programs, or commemorative initiatives, it risks becoming a metaphor for social self-reflection that is disconnected from concrete political demands such as land return, restitution, or self-determination. Tuck and Yang (2012) explicitly emphasize that decolonization must not be understood "as a metaphor for other things that need to be improved". The pattern observed in the material, namely decolonization as cultural and institutional self-improvement, runs counter to this very demand. A second interesting aspect is the characteristic gap in this narrative, which can be understood in terms of Laclau and Mouffe's (2001) concept of antagonism. A discourse is constituted not only by what it includes, but also by what it excludes. In the Swiss media discourse on decolonization, the notion of reappraisal is defined precisely by the fact that structural demands such as reparations or political participation are systematically excluded from the realm of the sayable. This absence is not a coincidence, but rather part of the discursive structure itself. It signifies the boundary of what constitutes a legitimate form of engagement with the colonial past within the Swiss context.

Finally, this narrowing of focus to institutional and documentary measures can be linked to the concept of the non-performativity of diversity and equity work. Ahmed (2007) describes how institutions, through the production of documents such as reports, mission statements, or exhibition concepts, give the impression that a problem is being addressed, while the creation of the document itself becomes the end goal. Her 2007 work is aptly titled "You end up doing the document rather than doing the doing" (Ahmed 2007). Applying this to the Swiss discourse on decolonization, one could argue that exhibitions, provenance reports, and educational programs can serve a similar function. They are visible, documentable acts of resistance, though they do not necessarily entail structural changes such as the actual return of property, a shift in decision-making structures, or a redistribution of resources. Ahmed and Swan (2006) also show how diversity within institutions often becomes an end in itself, with the mere existence of relevant programs deemed sufficient to achieve this goal regardless of whether the

underlying power dynamics have changed. This logic can be directly applied to the narrow focus on decolonization and institutional visibility observed in the material. The exhibition is in this case the answer, not a step toward an answer.

This narrative brings to light what the preceding sections had already suggested, from the tension between Switzerland's self-image of neutrality and its colonial entanglements to the individualization of responsibility and it's reframing as ongoing structural continuity. In each case, recognition of colonial entanglement, in whichever form it takes, does not translate into structural political demands in Swiss media discourse and remains confined to institutional, cultural, and documentary measures. Decolonization thus becomes a project that, on the one hand, enjoys broad support and is viewed positively, but on the other, in Ahmed's terms, runs the risk of exhausting itself in its own visibility (2007). The question of what decolonization in Switzerland might entail beyond exhibitions and educational programs remains largely unanswered in the analyzed material, a gap that, in light of Laclau and Mouffe (2001), must itself become the subject of analysis.

5.4. Indigenous & Local Knowledge

While the previous sections were looking into how colonial responsibility, colonial continuities and decolonization are being portrayed in the Swiss media discourse, this section focuses on a closely related aspect. Here the representation of Indigenous populations and Indigenous and Local Knowledge will be observed. Since decolonization involves not only coming to terms with historical responsibility but also recognizing marginalized forms of knowledge (Mignolo 2009), the analysis of ILK offers an important lens through which to examine whether colonial hierarchies of knowledge are reproduced or challenged in media discourse. As with the individualization of responsibility and the symbolic mode of decolonization discussed in the preceding sections, the analysis below shows a similar gap between growing recognition and structural transformation. Indigenous populations, indigeneity, or Indigenous and local knowledge are mentioned in 44 of the 73 articles analyzed. The analysis paints a mixed picture. On the one hand, Indigenous communities are often portrayed as victims of colonial violence, whose experiences are invoked to highlight colonial exploitation and oppression. On the other hand, they are occasionally depicted as bearers of valuable knowledge and alternative worldviews. However, this recognition often remains selective and conditional. Indigenous actors are rarely portrayed as epistemically equal producers of knowledge but instead, they are depicted either as objects of colonial history or as symbolic representatives of sustainable ways of life.

In most of the analyzed articles, Indigenous peoples are primarily portrayed in the context of colonial violence, dispossession, enslavement, or exploitation. Their presence thus often serves to illustrate the consequences of colonial rule, while their own agency is pushed into the background. This pattern becomes visible in school material provided for the Landesmuseum exhibition "Colonial- Global Entanglements of Switzerland" (2024) that discusses the Congo free state. It describes how the local

population was compelled to perform forced labor in rubber extraction. Failure to meet the prescribed quotas could result in punishments “up to and including the death of family members or the workers themselves”. The regime of violence referred to as the “Congo atrocities” under Leopold II is estimated to have claimed around ten million lives, amounting to roughly half of the country’s population at the time. In this representation, the local population appears primarily as the object of an exploitative system in which Swiss nationals were also employed. Their experience is rendered largely through numbers and statistics, while their own voices, forms of resistance, and agency remain absent from the text.

This example illustrates how Indigenous peoples were reduced to objects of colonial rule within colonial structures. Similarly, numerous articles address the appropriation of Indigenous bodies, cultural artifacts, and ways of life by European institutions. This becomes evident, for example, in an article by ZH Kolonial (2024), which traces the colonial past and explains how researchers from Zurich travelled to the colonies to conduct scientific research. Evidence of these activities, the article argues, can still be found in museums today, where “thousands of ethnographic and zoological objects, and in some cases even human remains, are kept, most of which were removed from their local contexts through violence”. Zangger (2011) argues that these objects, as well as the knowledge obtained by the “travelers”, helped to build the Switzerland that exists today. An article by Gaja Pinoja (2023) argues that researchers disseminated their ideas through museums. Objects belonging to Indigenous communities, as well as human remains, were displayed in these institutions, serving to reinforce and legitimize prevailing scientific and colonial narratives without having “the slightest regard for the religious or sacred nature of these objects, resulting in a rise of racist theories” (Gaja Pinoja 2023).

In a smaller number of articles, Indigenous communities are portrayed as custodians of valuable knowledge. This applies in particular to ecological practices, traditional technologies, and local environmental knowledge. An example that makes this visible is an SRF article by Keller (2018) that explains how “Swiss polar explorer Alfred de Quervain admired the Inuit’s craftsmanship during his expeditions to the Arctic. He described their techniques for building canoes, traveling by sled dog, and, above all, their way of dressing warmly”. Such representations signal a partial recognition of Indigenous forms of knowledge. However, this recognition is often contingent on this knowledge being viewed as a supplement to existing Western knowledge systems. As a result, Indigenous knowledge is treated more as a useful resource than as an independent and equal system of knowledge. More often Indigenous knowledge is not even regarded as seen in Reymond (2025) where she explains how Swiss explorer Tschudi ignored “the local population’s knowledge of animals” while bringing home over 1000 taxidermized specimen, or even in Keller’s (2018) article where she argued how de Quervain stole and appropriated the local knowledge to make money off the way the Inuit’s dressed themselves.

Numerous articles highlight the historical injustice of colonial rule and call for greater visibility of Indigenous perspectives. Recognition, inclusion, and historical awareness emerge as central normative goals. At the same time, this positive assessment is often based on a specific portrayal of indigeneity. Indigenous populations are repeatedly associated with sustainability, a close connection to nature, or alternative ways of life. While these characterizations may seem complimentary at first glance, they can contribute to a romanticization of Indigenous communities. This romanticization becomes particularly evident in a contribution by the University of Lucerne (written by Huwyler (2024)), which raises the rhetorical question of whether "humans and their way of life are part of nature and therefore also worthy of protection". This formulation performs a notable discursive shift as Indigenous ways of life are not understood as expressions of political self-determination but are instead subsumed under the category of nature conservation, analogous to endangered ecosystems or species. Here, vulnerability replaces claims to participation. Indigenous ways of life are turned into objects of preservation rather than recognized as subjects of political demands.

Indigenous peoples are often portrayed in this way as a counter-model to Western modernity. As a result, complex social, political, and economic realities are reduced to a few stereotypical characteristics. This recognition is not based on epistemic equivalence, but rather on an idealized conception of Indigenous ways of life. A familiar pattern is also evident in the proposed solutions. The most common calls are for greater visibility of Indigenous perspectives in museums, educational institutions, and public debates. Examples of this can be found, for instance, in Willi's article (2024), where she argues that in recent years "in many countries, pathways towards a decolonial archival practice have been discussed (especially in Indigenous communities in North America)". Similarly, a report by the University of Zurich by van Moorsel, Loong and Wulf (2025) on a decolonization workshop at the Department of Geography (GIUZ) addresses approaches to conducting research in collaboration with Indigenous populations. This aligns with the aforementioned contribution by Huwyler (2024), which discusses approaches to conservation management that are "jointly managed by conservationists and Indigenous peoples". It is striking, however, that calls for a fundamental redistribution of epistemic authority remain rare. Only in isolated cases is it argued that Indigenous forms of knowledge should be recognized as equivalent expertise or that institutional decision-making processes should be fundamentally transformed. The proposed solutions therefore remain largely symbolic and procedural, while structural changes are rarely addressed.

The results can initially be interpreted using Miranda Fricker's two forms of epistemic justice (2007), both being visible in the analyzed material. Testimonial Injustice manifests itself when Indigenous actors, as producers of knowledge, are accorded less credibility than Western academic experts, a pattern that is evident in the material, for example, in the way Indigenous forms of knowledge are positioned as "complementary" to Western science rather than being recognized as independent epistemic systems. Hermeneutic injustice occurs when social practice has not yet provided adequate concepts and

frameworks to make the experiences of marginalized groups socially comprehensible. In the Swiss media context, this is evident in the fact that Indigenous political demands for self-determination, land rights, or epistemic equality are rarely incorporated into the interpretive framework of news coverage. These epistemic inequalities can be understood at a more structural level through Walter Mignolo's concept of the coloniality of knowledge (2009). Mignolo argues that Western modernity has produced a global epistemic order in which Eurocentric forms of knowledge are regarded as universal, objective, and scientifically legitimate, while other forms of knowledge, including ILK, have historically been classified as "traditional", "mythical", or "pre-scientific" and thus epistemically devalued. According to Mignolo (2009), this hierarchy is not the result of a neutral process of knowledge acquisition, but rather of a colonial power structure that determines whose knowledge is considered valid and who is recognized as a legitimate producer of knowledge. In Swiss media discourse, this order is reproduced in situations where ILK is made visible but not integrated into institutional decision-making processes as an equal.

Roue and Nakashima (2018) expand on this finding by demonstrating that ILK is not merely "local knowledge" in a neutral sense, but rather part of a complex epistemic framework that encompasses relationships between people, land, history, and community. Extracting ILK as isolated ecological expertise, detached from this relational context, therefore means fragmenting and depoliticizing the epistemic system from which it originates. This is precisely the pattern evident in the articles analyzed. When Indigenous practices are framed as sustainable resources, ILK is detached from its political and historical contexts and inserted into a Western ecological discourse that fails to reflect its original complexity. This finding is supported by Gómez-Baggethun (2022), who shows that the growing recognition of ILK in global sustainability debates is often accompanied by its instrumentalization. Indigenous knowledge is recognized only when it appears useful for Western sustainability goals, while collective land rights, political sovereignty, and historical power dynamics are largely ignored. Brondízio and colleagues (2021) confirm this pattern on a global scale and demonstrate how ILK is rhetorically elevated in international environmental and climate discourses yet remains epistemically subordinate to Western science.

The romanticization of Indigenous ways of life observed in the material can ultimately be critically contextualized in light of Tuck and Yang (2012), whose framework is applied here to analyze this romanticizing and metaphorizing move as it occurs within the corpus, not to reproduce it. They argue that the instrumentalization of indigeneity as a moral or ecological symbol, as a counterpoint to Western modernity, constitutes a form of metaphorization that systematically obscures the political dimensions of decolonization. When Indigenous communities are portrayed primarily as representatives of sustainability, a connection to nature, or holistic worldviews, their concrete political demands for land, self-determination, and epistemic recognition are rendered invisible. Tuck and Yang (2012) explicitly emphasize that decolonization cannot be a metaphorical project that is limited to the recognition of Indigenous values. It requires an examination of the structural conditions of colonial power.

The analysis shows that Indigenous peoples occupy an ambivalent position in Swiss media discourse. On the one hand, colonial power dynamics are increasingly being addressed, and Indigenous forms of knowledge are gaining greater visibility than in earlier phases of the discourse. On the other hand, this recognition often remains selective (Gómez-Baggethun 2022). As in the previous narratives, there is a discrepancy here between recognition and transformation. While colonial hierarchies of knowledge are increasingly being brought to light, they are only challenged to a limited extent. As with the symbolic mode of decolonization discussed in the previous section, the decolonization of knowledge in Swiss media discourse remains largely confined to symbolic recognition rather than a fundamental reassessment of epistemic authority. The same institutional and cultural register that structural demands rarely move beyond, regardless of which narrative is at play.

5.5. Trend Analysis

As mentioned in the methodology a descriptive-interpretative trend analysis was conducted parallel to the content and frame analysis to analyze the articles within the time frame of the core corpus. For this the core corpus with 73 articles was analyzed, but due to the sample size, no inferential statistical methods are applied, meaning that the findings refer to the core corpus, not to the total media output on the topic. The trend analysis looked at the corpus on three levels: temporal intensity, shifts in media and genre, and patterns among actors.

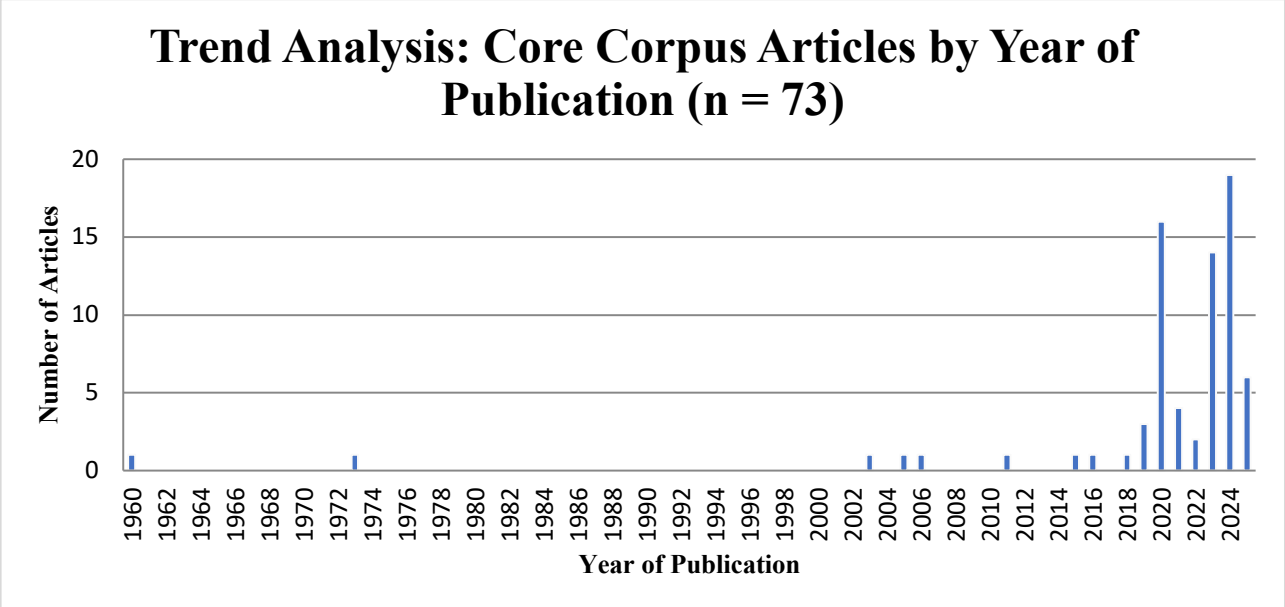


Figure 3: Distribution of the articles in the core corpus by year of publication (n = 73).

Regarding the temporal intensity of the articles, there is no steady increase over the entire period (1960–2025), but rather a clear structural break (see Fig. 3). Until 2018, there are only isolated precursors, while thereafter a sharp rise begins in 2019/2020 and remains at a persistently high level. This pattern does not resemble a short-lived spike in attention but rather a lasting shift in the discourse's overall intensity. The

rise in 2020 coincides with the global Black Lives Matter (BLM) movement, which appears to have acted as a catalyst rather than the sole driver of this development, which becomes visible when looking at the articles. Nine of the 17 articles published that year explicitly reference BLM, while the remaining eight address colonial entanglements independently of it. The continuation of elevated coverage well beyond 2020 suggests that BLM accelerated an already gathering discursive shift rather than triggering an isolated, temporary wave of attention.

This purely quantitative shift is underpinned by a shift in content, which can be discerned from the focus of the texts. The few early sources from before 2000 understand decolonization primarily as the liberation of colonized countries, in which Switzerland appears as an outside observer of events taking place elsewhere or even as an intermediary or as a humanitarian aid. From the early 2000s through to the 2020 peak, the subject position shifts with the contributions now coming predominantly from scholars or reports on their research into Switzerland's own colonial entanglements. The discourse thus shifts from reporting on foreign liberation processes to an academically grounded self-examination of one's own national history. It can be interpreted that this discourse was further amplified by the BLM movement (from 2020 onwards), which would explain the many other articles from this year that do not mention BLM. In the more recent phase, a material dimension is added, as debates over the restitution of museum objects shift the discourse from an abstract view of history toward a concrete engagement with objects, collections, and responsibility. (Since the relevant restitution-related articles belong to the context corpus, they are used here for illustrative purposes and are not included in the count of the core corpus.)

With regard to shifts in media and genre, it is worth noting that, up until 2018, the precursors were exclusively journalistic in nature (newspapers, online news). Institutional sources (museums, government agencies, or NGOs) did not begin to appear until 2019 and have gained significant prominence in the most recent phase. At the same time, the range of content types has broadened. In addition to the consistently dominant articles, exhibitions and other formats that were previously absent have been added. Both observations point to an institutionalization of the topic, which was discussed with the third narrative, which is moving beyond the purely media sphere and being addressed in museums, politics, and organizations. The aforementioned issue of restitution and provenance is part of precisely this development. It is the substantive expression of that material, an institutionally driven debate.

With 73 sources, the discourse is broadly distributed across a wide range of individuals. Only a few authors appear more than once. Examples for this are Hans Fässler or Patricia Purtschert among others, which belong to the academic frontrunners that started the early discourses on Switzerland's colonial entanglements. This repeated presence does not contradict the absence of dominant gatekeepers, as these authors act less as controllers of access than as anchor points that lend an otherwise dispersed field a

degree of coherence. All in all, it can be said that the discourse is shifting from reporting on liberation processes elsewhere and academic self-reflection on Switzerland's involvement to a substantive, institutionally supported debate. The frequency, organizational structure, and thematic focus of these efforts are evolving in parallel.

5.6. Summary

The analysis of the Swiss media discourse on decolonization shows a contradictory yet remarkably consistent pattern. Colonialism is being framed and accepted as a structural problem and phenomenon over all the observed narratives. The articles analyzed no longer portray Switzerland's colonial ties primarily as a marginal phenomenon or as a matter of exclusively foreign history, but rather link them to economic networks, racial continuities, hierarchies of knowledge, and contemporary global inequalities. With this a clear shift can be deduced in comparison to the past forms of colonial amnesia or colonial innocence (Speich Chassé 2012, Purtschert et al. 2016, Boulila 2019). At the same time, the analysis shows that these structural issues rarely result in structural consequences. When looking at the first narrative it becomes clear, that on one hand the media is recognizing the colonial entanglements the country has had in the past but on the other hand the national image of Switzerland stays effective. Through this a discursive constellation is the result, in which the recognition of colonial entanglements and the maintenance of colonial innocence can coexist. The individualization of colonial responsibility, as discussed above, shifts the responsibility away from an institutional or political level to single actors and individuals. The recognition of colonial continuities results in demands for visibility, education, and historical reappraisal. Decolonization thus appears as a cultural and institutional project which manifests itself in exhibitions, provenance research, renaming, or educational offerings, while political demands for reparations, institutional redistributions or general renegotiation of global power relations are thoroughly ignored. A similar pattern is shown through the depiction of ILK as discussed in the last finding. Even though Indigenous perspectives are being made more visible and their knowledge is recognized as valuable, this recognition often remains on a symbolic level. ILK is often looked at as an extension of western knowledge but rarely as an epistemically equivalent form of knowledge. The analysis therefore refers to continuing colonial knowledge hierarchies, that are being discussed more, however only questioned to a limited extent.

All in all, the analysis suggests that the Swiss media discourse regarding the matter is experiencing a transitional phase. Colonial entanglements are being made more visible in comparison to recent years and the legitimacy of decolonization is barely being questioned. The dominant discourses, however, largely remain at the level of recognition, visibility, and symbolic engagement with the past. A decolonization that fundamentally reconfigures political, material, and epistemic power relations remains largely marginal in the analyzed material. The central tension in Swiss media discourse thus lies between an increasing acknowledgment of colonial structures and a limited willingness to undertake their structural transformation.

6. Discussion

In the previous chapter five findings were constructed to observe the Swiss media discourse on decolonization. Swiss media increasingly acknowledge colonial entanglements and frame colonialism as a structural and ongoing issue. However, this recognition is translated neither into structural political demands nor into an epistemic equalization of Indigenous and local knowledge systems with Western scientific knowledge. Decolonization appears in the observed material primarily as a cultural and moral project which manifests itself in exhibitions, educational initiatives, renaming practices, and provenance research, while its structural dimensions, such as reparations, institutional accountability, or the redistribution of decision-making power, remain largely unaddressed. This finding will be used as a starting point for this discussion and will be further connected in this chapter. This will be put in comparison with other national contexts, with the theoretical framework of this study, and with regard to the research questions formulated at the start. Guiding this is the assumption that Switzerland participates in the global discourse on decolonization but does so in a specific manner, which is through recognition without consequence, through symbolism without structural change, and through an individualization that systematically renders state responsibility invisible. This assumption is treated throughout the chapter as an interpretation of the material rather than as an independently verified comparative finding, since the corpus itself was not designed to test it against other national cases.

To develop this argument, the chapter first situates the findings within the international discourse on decolonization and asks whether the observed pattern is a Swiss specificity or part of a broader trend. This is followed by a comparative discussion of the link between indigeneity and sustainability in a global perspective, before possible explanations for the Swiss "special case" are examined in relation to the myth of neutrality and a cultural tendency toward individualization, alongside alternative explanations that the material cannot rule out. Building on this, the research questions are explicitly addressed, after which the chapter concludes with a critical reflection on the limitations of this study and an outlook on future research.

6.1. Switzerland in the Global Decolonization Discourse

In the analysis a pattern was observed on how Switzerland on one hand recognizes its colonial entanglements, while on the other hand there is a refusal to implement structural consequences. A question that arises is, if this is a Swiss specific case or if countries with a similar colonial past have the same issues. The literature suggests that the shift from structural diagnosis to symbolic solutions is not necessarily a Swiss peculiarity but may reflect a broader mechanism, whereby recognition and acknowledgement come to stand in for structural change (Ahmed & Swan 2006, Tuck & Yang 2012). The specific form in which this pattern manifests itself in Switzerland, however, through the discourse of complicity and the tendency towards individualization, gives the Swiss case its distinctive character.

Furthermore, the pattern matters precisely because colonial relations do not belong to a closed past but persist as continuities into the present, visible in economic structures, knowledge hierarchies, and forms of racism. Recognizing colonial entanglement while declining structural consequences thus leaves these continuities largely intact.

6.1.1. Switzerland in Comparison

To compare Switzerland with countries with a similar colonial past one must not look at former colonial powers but at countries, whose colonial participation, like Switzerland, took place in complicity rather than formal rule. Purtschert and colleagues (2016) use the concept of "colonial complicity" on the Swiss case. This concept has its origins in the research on the Nordic countries, as seen in the work of Vuorela (2009) where she analyzes Finland's colonial positionality. Sweden, Norway, and Denmark likewise long understood themselves as external to colonial structures, even though they participated in colonial discourses, systems of knowledge, and the economic benefits generated by colonialism (Mulinari et al. 2009). Nordic scholarship has demonstrated how closely national self-images of neutrality, progressiveness, and moral superiority (which are looked at "as a big part of European history") are intertwined with a systematic obscuring of colonial complicity (Loftsdóttir & Jensen 2012: 1). This can be compared to the Swiss colonial context.

Similar dynamics have been described in other European contexts. In Germany, for example, colonial violence was long deemed as nonexistent and irrelevant (Steyerl & Gutiérrez Rodríguez 2003) behind a discursively constructed break with history (Nghi Ha 2003)[5], with the result that colonial history did not emerge as an integral part of national historiography until much later (Konz & Ortmann 2020). Also in Italy, a country that had colonies of its own, a lack of postcolonial perspective is visible (Purtschert et al. 2016). Another country very interesting for the analysis of the Swiss case is Austria, which shares a similar political stance towards its colonial past with Switzerland (Purtschert et al. 2016). Fässler (2024), in connection to this, explains how Switzerland played only a minor role in colonial activities compared to the major colonial empires. Nevertheless, even among major colonial players, there are some, such as the Netherlands, that have officially apologized for their involvement in the slave trade (Albisser 2025). Taken together with the Swiss case, these single-source examples are suggestive of a broader European structural pattern, a hypothesis that would need to be tested through systematic cross-country comparison beyond the scope of this corpus-based study. Colonial ties are often not recognized as an integral part of a nation's history but instead considered to be the responsibility of external relations (Purtschert et al. 2016). Switzerland, in this sense, is best described as consistent with a broader pattern of "colonial

[5] This parallels Nghi Ha's (2003) argument that symbolic "time markers",such as declaring 1955 the starting point of West German labor migration, construct an absolute break with a burdensome past, in which the act of historical repression itself becomes the foundation for subsequent discourse. Analogously, the symbolic closure attributed to 1945 allowed colonial continuities predating National Socialism to recede from historical attention, submerged beneath the dominant post-war narrative.

complicity without formal colonial rule". A comparable structure has been described for the Swiss racism debate (found in the corpus), where the existence of racism in Switzerland is treated as something to be proven before it can be discussed (Arežina et al. 2020). In both cases a presumption of national innocence shifts the starting point of the debate, so that involvement appears as the exception to be demonstrated rather than the premise to be discussed.

6.1.2. The Individualization of Colonial Responsibility in Switzerland

With this in mind one can again look at the individualization made in regard to Swiss colonial entanglements (as seen in chapter 5). It does not appear to be a certain feature of all complicit states, but rather a comparatively Swiss-specific characteristic that is particularly pronounced in this context. While the Nordic debate tends to address colonial complicity as a collective, societal pattern of repression (Palmberg 2009) the Swiss discourse systematically shifts responsibility onto individual merchants, families, and companies as seen in the work of Andreas Zangger (2011). This shift has a depoliticizing effect as colonial violence is not looked at as a result of systemic structures, but as a sum of individual acts. This specific form of individualization could represent a particularly pronounced form of engagement with colonial complicity compared to other European countries. Confirming this comparison would require dedicated cross-country research, which lies beyond the scope of this study.

6.1.3. Symbolic instead of cultural

Beyond the European case studies, another pattern of global significance can be identified in the shift from structural demands toward symbolic forms of decolonization. In many national contexts, decolonization is manifested through symbolic initiatives, such as public acknowledgments of the colonial past, initiatives related to the politics of memory, educational programs, or museum reforms, without these being accompanied by substantial political or material redistribution. Examples can be the demolition and removal of statues and monuments (Tobler 2020) that "symbolize slavery and colonial power" (Abraham 2021: 2), or even the missing apology of colonial powers as seen in Albisser (2025) which could result in the demand for financial repayment. Fässler (2024: 10) shows how problematic this can be as "the historic complexity loses its value as well as the discriminations that distinguish the local groups involved". For example, in a paper on the decolonization of the ETH Zurich archives, Willi (2024) suggests that "monuments and busts should be contextualized in order to reveal connections". The Swiss case also fits into this pattern. While recognition of colonial entanglements is growing, it remains largely confined to the symbolic level. Structural consequences, such as institutional reforms or material reparations, are largely absent. Switzerland is thus consistent, within the pattern observed in this corpus, with a broader international trend described in the literature in which decolonization operates primarily as a discursive and symbolic practice, while its structural dimension remains limited.

6.1.4. The Black Lives Matter Movement as a global Catalyst

The extent to which the Swiss discourse is intertwined with global movements is demonstrated by the shift identified in the trend analysis (Chapter 5.5) around 2020. The sharp increase in media coverage coincides with the global Black Lives Matter movement, which is explicitly mentioned in nine of the seventeen articles published in 2020. The global impulse was thus clearly taken up in the Swiss discourse, yet the way in which it was received is striking. While the movement explicitly called for structural change and a critical examination of systemic racism, this momentum was predominantly translated in the material into a greater symbolic acknowledgment of colonial entanglements rather than into structurally political demands (Fässler 2024). Global protest therefore served as a catalyst that intensified the debate, but in the Swiss context it was absorbed into existing interpretive frameworks of individualization and symbolic politics, so that its transformative potential was partially neutralized.

6.2. Indigeneity & Sustainability

As seen in the analysis Indigenous and Local Knowledge is getting more visibility in Swiss media coverage. This visibility stays ambivalent. On one hand Indigenous knowledge structures are described as valuable, sustainable, or alternative. This becomes evident, when looking at how the Natural History Museum of Neuchâtel (2024) frames its exhibition as opening a dialogue on the significance of "integrating Indigenous perspectives to overcome potential biases in our current understanding of the environmental crisis". Indigenous knowledge is thus explicitly acknowledged and tied to one of the most pressing contemporary challenges. Yet the very formulation already hints at the limits of this recognition, as Indigenous perspectives are to be "integrated" in order to correct biases in "our", that is, Western scientific, understanding, which frames them as a useful complement to an existing knowledge system rather than as an equivalent one. On the other hand, ILK is only rarely recognized as an epistemically equivalent form of knowledge. Considering this situation, the question arises as to how these findings should be contextualized in relation to international debates on sustainability and decolonization.

6.2.1. Indigenous & Local Knowledge in the global Discourse

On an international level, there has been a significant shift in the approach to Indigenous and Local Knowledge that goes hand in hand with the resource for addressing global environmental and sustainability crisis (Brondízio et al. 2021), while forms of Indigenous knowledge were long categorized as local, traditional, or premodern (Merlan 2009, Roue & Nakashima 2018). This shift is particularly evident in international institutions such as the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES 2023) or the United Nations, which becomes visible for example in a report from 2016 titled "Indigenous and Local Knowledge(s) and Science(s) for Sustainable Development". Brondízio and colleagues (2021) show that ILK is now regarded as an indispensable component of sustainable environmental governance. Indigenous communities possess detailed

knowledge of local ecosystems, long-term environmental changes, and sustainable resource use, which can complement, and in some cases even expand upon, scientific findings (Benyei et al. 2020). In international discussions on sustainability, there is therefore a growing call not only to document ILK but also to actively incorporate it into political decision-making processes (Benyei et al. 2020, Gómez-Baggethun 2022, Brondízio et al. 2021, Datta et al. 2024).

This development marks a significant break with colonial hierarchies of knowledge. While colonial systems of knowledge constructed Western science as universal and objective, there is growing recognition today that different systems of knowledge can represent legitimate ways of understanding the world (Archibald et al. 2019). The discussion thus shifts from merely bringing Indigenous perspectives to light to questions of epistemic justice and the equitable production of knowledge. At the same time, the literature points out that this recognition is not without its contradictions. Brondízio and colleagues (2021) as well as Gómez-Baggethun (2022) show that ILK is often given greater prominence when it appears to be useful for global sustainability goals. The political dimension of Indigenous demands, such as land rights, self-determination, or institutional participation is, however, often overlooked (Gómez-Baggethun 2022). Recognition of knowledge does not, therefore, automatically imply recognition of the communities that produce that knowledge.

6.2.2. Indigenous & Local Knowledge in the Swiss Discourse

The findings of this study suggest that Switzerland generally follows this global trend. In the material examined, Indigenous forms of knowledge are also increasingly portrayed in a positive light. Particularly in (the few) articles on biodiversity, nature conservation, or sustainable resource use, Indigenous communities are depicted as bearers of valuable knowledge and alternative perspectives (as seen in Huwyler 2024,). What is striking, however, is the form this recognition takes. Indigenous forms of knowledge are usually not discussed as independent epistemic systems, but rather as a complement to existing scientific approaches. This is evident, for instance, where Indigenous perspectives are framed as something to be “integrated” in order to correct biases in an existing, that is, Western scientific understanding (Natural History Museum of Neuchatel 2024), a formulation that positions them as an addition to the dominant system rather than as an equivalent to it. They are seen as a helpful resource for sustainability, but not as an equivalent alternative to Western forms of knowledge. The analysis thus reveals dynamics similar to those that Mignolo (2009) describes as the persistence of the “coloniality of knowledge”. Indigenous perspectives are brought to light, but they often remain within a framework defined by Western institutions and systems of knowledge.

This is particularly evident in the recurring portrayal of Indigenous communities as symbols of sustainable ways of life. Indigenous people are often depicted as having a special connection to nature or as advocates of alternative ecological values (Brondízio et al. 2021). In contrast, political demands for epistemic equality, self-determination, or institutional participation take a back seat. Swiss media coverage thus shifts its focus from political issues to moral and ecological narratives. Indigenous forms of knowledge are valued, but their bearers are rarely positioned as equal producers of knowledge. As a result, this recognition remains largely symbolic. It should be recalled that these observations are based on the subset of 44 of the 73 core corpus articles that mention Indigenous populations, indigeneity, or ILK at all, and refer to this subset rather than to Swiss media discourse as a whole.

6.2.3. Indigeneity without Indigenous Politics

One possible explanation for this pattern lies in Switzerland's unique position. Unlike traditional settler-colonial states such as Canada, Australia, or New Zealand, Switzerland does not have its own Indigenous communities in the colonial sense[6]. As Wolfe (2006) argues, settler colonialism operates as a structure rather than a singular event, organized around sustained access to land, a configuration that does not apply to the Swiss case in the same way. Consequently, many of the political conflicts that shape the debates in those countries are absent here. In countries with active Indigenous communities, the recognition of ILK is therefore rarely a purely epistemic matter. It is tied to concrete political claims regarding land rights, self-determination, participatory decision-making, and restitution. Here, the recognition of Indigenous knowledge and the assertion of political rights are closely intertwined, as land repatriation simultaneously affirms Indigenous governance and knowledge systems (Datta et al. 2024, Tuck & Yang 2012).

In the Swiss context, this connection is much less pronounced. Indigenous communities are primarily viewed as actors "elsewhere" and are mainly portrayed through international examples for example as victims of colonial structures. This creates an opportunity to recognize Indigenous perspectives as a source of moral or ecological inspiration without having to fundamentally question existing structures of power and knowledge. This observation ties in with the critique offered by Tuck and Yang (2012). The authors warn against allowing decolonization to become a metaphor. As soon as decolonization comes to stand merely for general goals such as diversity, sustainability, or openness, it loses its political substance (Tuck & Yang 2012). A similar process can also be observed in the way indigeneity is treated. Indigenous forms of knowledge are then understood not as an expression of political demands, but as a symbol of sustainable living or ecological balance. The analysis suggests that this very trend is evident in the Swiss discourse. Indigeneity often serves as a moral resource, while its political dimension remains largely overlooked.

[6] This was already discussed in chapter 3.

6.2.4. New Epistemic Hierarchies

This development raises a further question. If Indigenous forms of knowledge are recognized selectively, namely where they are compatible with existing sustainability goals, this may reproduce new forms of epistemic inequality. The findings of this study suggest that ILK in the Swiss media is portrayed positively above all when it is seen as contributing to nature conservation, biodiversity, or sustainable development. Less visible, by contrast, are calls for epistemic equivalence or for a fundamental restructuring of scientific and political decision-making structures. This creates the risk that Indigenous forms of knowledge will be valued, but at the same time reduced to specific functions (Gómez-Baggethun 2022). In this sense, it could be argued that the Swiss discourse does not fully overcome colonial hierarchies of knowledge, but rather partially reorganizes them. ILK is recognized but often remains within a framework defined by Western institutions. The question of who decides what knowledge is considered relevant and under what conditions it is integrated remains largely unanswered. The analysis therefore points to a tension that is also increasingly being discussed in international sustainability debates. There remains a significant gap between the recognition of Indigenous forms of knowledge and their actual epistemic equality (Benyei et al. 2020, Brondízio et al. 2021). In the Swiss context, this gap appears to be particularly pronounced, as the political dimension of indigeneity is often overshadowed by its symbolic and ecological significance.

6.3. Swiss special Case: Neutrality Myth & Individualization

To revisit the theme of individualization it is examined here as a Swiss "special case". The analysis of the articles revealed that responsibility and consequences are frequently shifted onto individual actors. The colonial responsibility is entrusted to merchants, entrepreneurial families, missionaries, or scientists. The State on the other side is usually portrayed as an indirectly involved or even uninvolved actor. This is really interesting regarding the fact that even cities started to take responsibility with examples like ZH Kolonial (2024). From an international perspective, this raises the question of why this individualization appears to be particularly pronounced in the Swiss context. While sub-chapter 5.1 showed how the tension between growing recognition of colonial entanglements and the persistence of the neutrality narrative manifests itself empirically in the material, this section shifts from description to explanation and asks why this tension is particularly pronounced in the Swiss case compared to other complicit states. The following considerations discuss two possible levels of explanation. First, the historical and political significance of the narrative of neutrality, and second, cultural patterns of pronounced individualism.

6.3.1. Neutrality as a Narrative of colonial Innocence

One explanation stems from Switzerland's specific political culture of remembrance. The analysis has shown that while numerous articles acknowledge colonial ties, they simultaneously cling to a national self-image that portrays Switzerland as a neutral, humanitarian, and non-colonial nation (Purtschert et al. 2016, Boulila 2019, or Fässler 2024). This tension highlights the special role of the narrative of neutrality in dealing with the colonial past. Purtschert and colleagues (2016) argue that, despite the absence of formal colonies, Switzerland was closely integrated into colonial economic, knowledge, and power structures. However, it was precisely the absence of its own colonial empire that made possible the emergence of a national self-narrative in which colonial responsibility could be largely externalized (Michel 2015). Switzerland appeared as an observer, mediator, or beneficiary of colonial processes, but not as a state engaged in colonial activity (Franc 2008, Purtschert et al. 2016, or Boulila 2019). Neutrality did not function as a counterpoint to colonial entanglement, but rather as a central prerequisite for rendering it invisible. Purtschert and Fischer-Tiné (2015) argue that in Switzerland "concepts like neutrality […] are often used to cover up and legitimize its economically oriented politics".

Boulila (2019) argues that this pattern can also be observed in the issue of racism, a topic on which Switzerland also considers itself neutral and also the findings of this study suggest that this interpretive pattern continues to have an impact to this day. Although the articles analyzed increasingly address colonial ties, state responsibility is often downplayed. Instead, the reporting focuses on individual families, companies, or historical figures. Even cities, as institutions, are taking on some of the responsibility, as can be seen in ZH Kolonial (2024), for example. On a state level this is not the case which allows the image of a fundamentally innocent Switzerland to be largely maintained. The acknowledgment of colonial entanglements thus takes place without completely calling into question the country's fundamental self-image. This is why Switzerland lacks a comparable tradition. Since colonial entanglements were long interpreted as the actions of individual actors, coming to terms with them is also seen primarily as an individual or societal task. The individualization of colonial responsibility observed in the analysis can thus be understood as a consequence of a historical narrative that positions Switzerland outside the narrative of colonial perpetrators. This makes it possible to acknowledge colonial entanglements without automatically giving rise to demands for state accountability.

6.3.2. Individualism as a possible cultural Explanation

In addition to this political-historical dimension, a cultural factor might also help to explain this phenomenon. Switzerland has traditionally been characterized by a strong ideal of individual responsibility. Its political culture and social identity often emphasize personal initiative, local solutions, and decentralized responsibility (Schwitter 2013, Naegeli 2016). Against this backdrop, it seems plausible that historical responsibility, too, is attributed more to individual actors than to state. The results of the analysis provide at least indirect evidence of this. When colonial interconnections are

discussed, the focus is often on individual figures such as Alfred Escher (Strehle 2019), David de Pury (Meyer 2023), or Henri Dunant (Freudiger 2023, SRF). The proposed solutions, too, often follow an individualistic logic. There are calls for raising awareness, education, or critical reflection, while demands for institutional reforms or state accountability remain comparatively rare. Responsibility thus appears primarily as a matter of individual consciousness rather than as a subject of political negotiation.

Taken together, the findings suggest that the pronounced individualization of colonial responsibility in Swiss discourse is neither coincidental nor explainable solely by the colonial past itself. Rather, it appears to arise from the interplay of historical and cultural factors. The myth of neutrality makes it difficult to conceive of the state as a perpetrator and encourages the shifting of responsibility onto individual actors. At the same time, a political culture that strongly emphasizes individual responsibility could further reinforce this tendency. Switzerland thus does not appear to be an exception in terms of its colonial entanglements, but it is an exception in terms of the specific way in which these entanglements are addressed in public discourse.

6.4. Answering the Research Questions

The aim of this study was to examine how discourses on decolonization manifest themselves in the Swiss media and how they are linked to global debates on indigeneity and Indigenous and Local Knowledge. Through the analysis of 73 articles, it became clear that the discourse on decolonization in Switzerland has intensified significantly in recent years. At the same time, it becomes clear that the growing recognition of colonial interconnections is only to a limited extent accompanied by calls for structural change. With this in mind one returns to the research questions of this master's thesis, which will be systematically addressed based on the analysis and discussion.

The main research question of this thesis is:
"How are discourses about decolonization manifested in the Swiss media, and how do they connect to global debates on "Indigeneity" and the growing recognition of Indigenous and Local Knowledge?"

This question was attempted to be answered through an analysis of narratives and frames related to Switzerland's colonial past, and a comparison of global decolonial concepts. After collecting a sufficient media corpus and analyzing it, it became visible that decolonization manifests itself in the Swiss media primarily as a discourse on recognition. The reporting addresses economic ties to colonialism, colonial systems of knowledge, continuities of racism, and issues of restitution and historical responsibility. In this regard, today's discourse represents a step forward compared to earlier forms of colonial invisibility or amnesia. However, this is only a first step, as in many cases this recognition is purely symbolic. While the analyzed contributions often address colonial structures as historical and contemporary power relations, they rarely derive demands for political, institutional, or material consequences from this analysis. Decolonization thus appears primarily as a project of making these structures visible, coming

to terms with the past, and raising awareness. The connection to global debates on indigeneity and ILK is also selective. International discussions on epistemic justice and the recognition of Indigenous forms of knowledge are addressed, but usually in a way that downplays their political dimension, as recognition tends to be granted where Indigenous knowledge appears useful for shared sustainability goals, while the associated claims to land, self-determination, and institutional participation recede into the background (Gómez-Baggethun 2022, Tuck & Yang 2012). ILK is often recognized as a valuable resource for sustainability but is rarely discussed as an epistemically equivalent system of knowledge. Overall, this reveals a pattern of selective appropriation of global decolonization discourses as global concepts are adopted, but their structural and political implications are addressed only to a limited extent.

The thesis also explored various sub-questions in order to address the main research question above and to explore the topics in greater depths. The first sub-question asks: "What narratives and frames are represented in the Swiss discourses about the colonial past and decolonization?"

The analysis examined five narratives that shape the Swiss media discourse. As seen in the analysis the narratives and the observed frames were connected which made it possible to trace not only how colonial entanglements are defined as a problem and to whom their causes are attributed, but also which solutions each narrative does and does not put forward. The first narrative describes colonial ties primarily through the lens of individual actors. Traders, entrepreneurial families, missionaries, and scientists are at the center of the reporting. As a result, responsibility is often attributed to individuals, while state or institutional responsibility receives comparatively little attention. The second narrative views colonialism as an ongoing system. Colonial power relations are not portrayed exclusively as a historical phenomenon, but are linked to contemporary forms of global inequality, racism, and epistemic hierarchies. Here, the problem is defined in a much more structural way than in the first narrative. The third narrative concerns decolonization itself. The proposed solutions focus primarily on visibility, education, research, exhibitions, or symbolic recognition. Calls for comprehensive institutional reforms, reparations, or a fundamental redistribution of power, on the other hand, remain rare. Taken together, these narratives form a remarkably coherent pattern. The causes of colonial inequality are often described in structural terms, yet the proposed solutions remain largely symbolic. The Swiss discourse on decolonization is thus characterized by a discrepancy between the structural problem definition and the limited extent of structural transformation.

"How are global trends like epistemic justice and environmental justice, as well as the increasing recognition of ILK, reflected in the Swiss media?" This is the second sub-question for which the analysis shows that global debates are generally taken into account and integrated into the Swiss discourse.

However, this integration is usually selective. ILK is often described as a valuable complement to scientific forms of knowledge but is rarely recognized as an epistemic system of equal standing.

Indigenous perspectives are often seen as a source of alternative solutions to environmental problems or as moral guiding principles in addressing sustainability (Brondízio et al. 2021, Gómez-Baggethun 2022). At the same time, key demands for epistemic justice often take a back seat. Questions of epistemic equivalence, institutional participation, or a fundamental restructuring of existing knowledge systems are addressed relatively rarely. The recognition of Indigenous forms of knowledge is therefore predominantly symbolic and instrumental. It enhances the visibility of Indigenous perspectives but only to a limited extent challenges existing epistemic hierarchies.

The third sub-question tries to answer, "how the term "Indigeneity" is understood in Swiss media".

Meanwhile, the findings suggest that indigeneity is primarily understood as a moral and ecological category in Swiss discourse. Indigenous communities are often seen as the bearers of sustainable ways of life, unique environmental knowledge, or alternative value systems. As such, they frequently serve as a counterpoint to Western modernity and industrial resource use. In contrast, the political dimension of indigeneity takes a distinct back seat. Demands for self-determination, land rights, political participation, or epistemic equality are addressed far less frequently than issues of sustainability or nature conservation. One possible explanation for this lies in Switzerland's unique situation. Unlike traditional settler-colonial states, Switzerland does not have its own Indigenous communities in the colonial sense. As a result, there is no direct political context of conflict, which is of central importance in countries such as the U.S., Canada, Australia, or New Zealand. Indigeneity can therefore more easily be used as a universal metaphor for sustainability, a connection to nature, or alternative forms of knowledge. The analysis thus confirms the critique formulated by Tuck and Yang (2012) regarding the metaphorization of decolonization. Indigeneity is often imbued with symbolic meaning, while its political dimension and the associated power relations remain less visible.

The fourth and final sub-question examines the time factor. All other aspects were considered collectively in order to explore "how these discourses changed over time and what trends have developed?"

This was answered with a trend analysis which shows a marked shift in the scope and focus of media coverage. While decolonization was only sporadically addressed until the 2010s, attention to the issue has increased significantly since 2019 and 2020. A key catalyst for this development was the global Black Lives Matter movement. The clear increase in media coverage in 2020, as well as the numerous direct references to BLM, underscore the strong transnational interconnectedness of the Swiss discourse. During this phase, the debate is increasingly shifting from a focus on colonial processes "elsewhere" to a critical examination of Switzerland's own colonial entanglements. At the same time, we are seeing an increasing institutionalization of the issue. Museums, universities, NGOs, and other organizations are increasingly addressing issues of decolonization and helping to ensure that the topic becomes a

permanent fixture in public discourse. Despite these changes, the underlying pattern of discourse remains remarkably stable. Recognition of colonial interconnections is increasing, the visibility of Indigenous perspectives is growing, and the discussion is becoming more diverse. At the same time, symbolic forms of decolonization continue to dominate. The central tension between recognition and structural transformation persists throughout the entire period under study.

In summary, it can be said that the Swiss media discourse has undergone a significant transformation in recent years. Decolonization has evolved from a marginal topic to an established component of public debate. The analysis shows, however, that this development is taking place primarily at the level of visibility, recognition, and symbolic politics. By contrast, a fundamental renegotiation of political, material, and epistemic power relations remains largely marginal. The central dynamic of the Swiss decolonization discourse thus consists of an increasing recognition of colonial interconnections, coupled with a limited willingness to transform them structurally.

6.5. Critical Reflections & Limitations

In this master's thesis the Swiss media discourse was analyzed focusing on the topics of decolonization, colonial entanglements and the effect of and on ILK in Switzerland through a qualitative analysis of 73 media articles. Like any qualitative study, this study also has methodological and empirical limitations that must be taken into account when interpreting the results.

6.5.1. Limitations

A first limitation concerns the selection of the study material. As explained in the methodology the media articles of the corpus are exclusively in German- and English language media, with German being the most widely spoken language in Switzerland and English capturing transnational perspectives. This means that important parts of the Swiss media system are not covered. In particular, the French- and Italian-speaking parts of Switzerland have their own media spheres (RTS and RSI), historical contexts, and political discourses, which can in some cases differ significantly from the debates in German-speaking Switzerland. Particularly with regard to colonial entanglements, it is conceivable that different narratives or forms of engagement might be found in French-speaking Switzerland due to its historical and cultural proximity to France (Udris et al. 2020). The findings of this study therefore do not allow for conclusions about the entire Swiss media discourse but refer specifically to its German-speaking segment. A second limitation stems from the chosen qualitative research design. Qualitative content analysis and frame analysis allow for a detailed examination of meanings, patterns of interpretation, and discursive structures. At the same time, qualitative research always involves interpretive decisions. The identification of narratives, frames, and patterns of discourse is based on the researcher's analysis, interpretation, and positionality. Other researchers might weigh individual passages differently or develop alternative interpretations. The results should therefore not be understood as an objective

representation of reality, but rather as a transparent and theoretically sound interpretation of the material under examination.

Added to this is the limited size of the corpus. The study is based on 73 articles that were selected as the core corpus and analyzed in depth. For a qualitative study, this represents a substantial body of material that enables a systematic examination of key discourse patterns. Nevertheless, despite the inclusion of additional contextual material, the corpus cannot claim to fully represent the entire Swiss media discourse. Additional articles, other media outlets, or different time periods could reveal further narratives or alter the weight given to individual findings. The results should therefore be understood as an analytical reconstruction of dominant patterns within the corpus under study, rather than as an exhaustive account of all existing discourses. Furthermore, the analysis focuses exclusively on published media content. Therefore, it allows conclusions to be drawn about how decolonization, colonial interconnections and ILK are portrayed, but not about how these representations come about. The editorial decision-making processes, institutional frameworks, and individual perspectives of media professionals are outside the scope of this study. As a result, it is not possible, for example, to definitively explain why certain topics gain more visibility than others or why structural demands are relatively rare in the discourse.

Overall, these limitations restrict the scope of the present findings, though they do not diminish their value. The findings describe prevailing patterns within a specific German- and English-language segment of the Swiss media discourse and shed light on how decolonization is portrayed, but not on the editorial and institutional conditions under which these portrayals arise. Within these limits, however, the discussion has succeeded in situating the Swiss case both comparatively and theoretically and in tracing a tension that runs throughout the material. Between the acknowledgment of colonial interconnections and the reluctance to translate these into structural consequences, between visibility and transformation, and between the recognition of Indigenous knowledge and the persistence of epistemic hierarchies. It is this tension that constitutes the central finding of this study and that the following chapter explores in order to summarize its broader implications.

7. Conclusion

The starting point for this thesis was a visible tension. Switzerland, which for a long time saw itself as neutral, humanitarian, and untouched by colonialism, has in recent years increasingly been described as entangled in colonial structures. In light of this situation, the present study examined how discourses on decolonization manifest themselves in the Swiss media and how they tie into global debates on "indigeneity" and the growing recognition of Indigenous and Local Knowledge. Based on a corpus of 73 articles, which were analyzed using qualitative content analysis and frame analysis, this study has reconstructed the narratives and frames through which the Swiss media address the colonial past and decolonization. The picture that emerges is as consistent as it is ambivalent.

7.1. Synthesis of the Findings

A recurring pattern emerges across the five reconstructed narratives, one that can be traced back to a common logic. That of recognition without consequences. Today, the Swiss media acknowledge colonial entanglements to an extent that breaks with earlier forms of colonial amnesia and innocence (Purtschert 2011, Purtschert & Fischer-Tiné 2015). Colonialism is described as a structural system of economic exploitation whose power relations and consequences continue to shape the present long after the formal end of colonial rule. Yet this acknowledgment is almost never translated into structural or political demands.

The various narratives vary on this basic theme. When colonial responsibility is discussed, it is systematically shifted from the state level to the individual level while the state appears as an uninvolved beneficiary. Where colonialism is identified as an ongoing system, the structural findings nevertheless lead to symbolic responses, such as visibility, education, and coming to terms with the past. Where decolonization is called for, it is primarily carried out through exhibitions, renaming, and provenance research, while reparations, institutional accountability, and a redistribution of decision-making power remain largely unaddressed. If Indigenous knowledge is brought to light, it is rarely treated as an equal epistemic source but rather as a complement to Western knowledge. And even when Switzerland's colonial entanglements are acknowledged, the national self-image of neutrality remains in force. As diverse as these narratives may be in detail, they converge on a discrepancy between the diagnosis of structural problems and their symbolic-moral treatment. The Swiss discourse on decolonization acknowledges colonial structures yet fails to draw the necessary conclusions from them. Decolonization appears primarily as a cultural and moral project, whose structural dimension remains systematically underemphasized.

7.2. Contribution of the Study

These findings yield several contributions to research. From a theoretical perspective, this study extends the concept of "colonialism without colonies" (Purtschert et al. 2016) into media discourse. It shows that the absence of a former colonial empire shapes not only the historical record but also the present-day discourse. Precisely because Switzerland never had a colonial empire, it is possible to acknowledge colonial entanglements without having to infer state responsibility from them. The absence of a formal colonial empire thus serves as a discursive resource that enables both acknowledgment and the avoidance of responsibility. From an empirical perspective, this work contributes to research on "colonial complicity" (Vuorela 2009) by highlighting the individualization of colonial responsibility as a characteristic that is relatively specific to Switzerland. Another contribution concerns the representation of ILK. The study shows that while Indigenous knowledge is gaining visibility in Swiss media discourse, it remains epistemically subordinate. This finding lends empirical support to Mignolo's concept of knowledge (2000, 2009), grounding it in concrete media material and highlights the gap between visibility and epistemic equality.

7.3. Beyond the Swiss Case

In conclusion, these findings can be placed within a broader context. The shift from structural analysis to symbolic engagement is unlikely to be unique to Switzerland. It resonates with a broader European dynamic in which recognition operates non-performatively (Ahmed 2007), and decolonization circulates primarily as a discursive figure (Tuck & Yang 2012) a pattern documented in particular for other colonial-complicity contexts (Keskinen et al. 2009). What is specifically Swiss is not the pattern itself, but its context. Specifically, the interplay of discourse on complicity, individualization, and a persistent myth of neutrality that consistently absolves the state of responsibility. The political significance of this finding lies in the fact that recognition cannot be understood here as merely a preliminary step toward change. Following Ahmed (2007), one can argue that the production of visibility, created through exhibitions, reports, and forms of coming to terms with the past, can become an end without shifting the underlying power relations. And as Tuck and Yang (2012) make clear, decolonization that becomes a metaphor for diversity, sustainability, or moral self-reflection loses its political substance. In this sense, the "recognition without consequence" observed in the material is not a neutral transitional phase, but rather an independent discursive operation. It makes it possible to identify colonial entanglement while at the same time keeping it separate from structural demands. In this way, the Swiss case has implications that extend beyond itself. It serves as an example of how a society and a state can confront a colonial past without addressing its structural legacy in the present, a constellation that is instructive for other countries that never formally established a colonial empire.

7.4. Outlook

While this study has identified consistent patterns across the Swiss media discourse, its scope was necessarily bounded. These limitations are not merely constraints, because they also open several possibilities for future research. A first step could involve expanding the study to French- and Italian-speaking Switzerland in order to systematically examine possible regional differences in how colonial ties and decolonization are addressed. This would help clarify whether the patterns identified in this study are in fact found throughout Switzerland or apply primarily to the German-speaking context. Another research approach would be to conduct interviews with journalists, editors, or other media professionals. Such studies could reveal which factors influence the media's portrayal of colonial issues and how editorial decisions contribute to the visibility of certain narratives. This would help to further highlight the connection between discourse analysis and media production. A comparative study with other countries that, like Switzerland, had no or only limited formal colonial rule but were nonetheless integrated into colonial structures also appears particularly promising. Comparative studies with Austria, the Nordic countries, or selected Central European states could help to better understand which elements of the discourses identified in this study are part of a broader European pattern and which can indeed be considered specific to Switzerland. A comparison between settler-colonial states and colonial-complicity states would be worthwhile.

7.5. Concluding Thoughts

What becomes visible in the Swiss case is a discourse between change and standstill. Over the past years Swiss media have shown significant changes in their coverage of the country's colonial entanglements. Colonial entanglements that were once externalized as the history of others are now widely acknowledged as part of Switzerland's own past and present. Yet this study has shown that this recognition has far outpaced any structural transformation. Colonialism is named as a structural and ongoing system, but the responses it generates remain symbolic, individual, and largely confined to the register of visibility. Indigenous knowledge is rendered visible but not yet granted epistemic equality while at the same time colonial responsibility is admitted but seldom attributed to the state. In this sense, the central tension running through the Swiss discourse is not a transitional flaw but a structuring principle. Recognition here does not necessarily precede change, as it can also stand in its place. The danger this study points to is therefore a subtle one. Namely, that every acknowledgment of colonial entanglement comes to function as a form of closure, allowing the discourse and the matter to feel resolved while the structural relations it describes remain untouched. Whether Swiss media discourse moves beyond this threshold and begins to confront the structures it has acknowledged remains, for now, an open question.

8. Bibliography

ABBAS, NIVINE; NADER, MANAL & LOVETT, JON C. (2014): EDWARD SAID: THE POSTCOLONIAL THEORY AND THE LITERATURE OF DECOLONIZATION. PROCEEDINGS, 2, 39-46.

ABRAHAM, CHRISTIANA (2021): TOPPLED MONUMENTS AND BLACK LIVES MATTER: RACE, GENDER, AND DECOLONIZATION IN THE PUBLIC SPACE. AN INTERVIEW WITH CHARMAINE A. NELSON. ATLANTIS, 42(1), 1-17.

ADVISORY BOARD OF THE UNITED NATIONS SECRETARY-GENERAL, SCIENTIFIC (2016): INDIGENOUS AND LOCAL KNOWLEDGE(S) AND SCIENCE(S) FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT: POLICY BRIEF BY THE SCIENTIFIC ADVISORY BOARD OF THE UN SECRETARY-GENERAL. UNITED NATIONS.

AHMED, SARA & SWAN ELAINE (2006): DOING DIVERSITY. POLICY FUTURES IN EDUCATION, 4(2), 96-100.

AHMED, SARA (2007): 'YOU END UP DOING THE DOCUMENT RATHER THAN DOING': DIVERSITY RACE EQUALITY AND THE POLITICS OF DOCUMENTATION. ETHNIC AND RACIAL STUDIES, 30(4), 590-609.

ALBISSER, RAPHAEL (2025): EIN WORT ALS MEILENSTEIN. IN: WOZ, URL: HTTPS://WWW.WOZ.CH/2550/DIE-SCHWEIZ-UND-DIE-SKLAVEREI/EIN-WORT-ALS-MEILENSTEIN/!A3K2AW23AD08. (FROM: DEC 2025/ ACCESS: DEC 2025).

APPIAH, JULIANA SAFOWAA & YEBOAH MIREKU, ROLAND (2020): DECRYPTING CRYPTO-COLONIALISM AND UNVEILING THE MASK OF INNOCENCE: SWITZERLND'S COVERT COLONIAL DESIGNS AND CONTINUITY IN AFRICA. CONTEMPORARY JOURNAL OF AFRICAN STUDIES, 7(2), 31-44.

ARCHIBALD, JO-ANN; XIIEM, Q'UM Q'UM; BOL JUN, JENNY; MORGAN, LEE & DE SANTOLO, JASON (2019): INTRODUCTION: DECOLONIZING RESEARCH: INDIGENOUS STORYWORK AS METHODOLOGY. IN: LINDA TUHIWAI SMITH: DECOLONIZING RESEARCH: INDIGENOUS STORYWORK AS METHODOLOGY, ZED, 1-16.

AREŽINA, ANDREA; CONZETT, ANJA & HANIMANN, CARLOS (2020): RASSISMUS IN DER SCHWEIZ - DIE FAKTEN. IN: REPUBLIK, URL: HTTPS://WWW.REPUBLIK.CH/2020/06/19/RASSISMUS-IN-DER-SCHWEIZ-DIE-FAKTEN. (FROM: JUN 2020/ ACCESS: DEC 2025).

BEHRENDT, LARISSA (2019): INDIGENOUS STORYTELLING: DECOLONIZING INSTITUTIONS AND ASSERTIVE SELF-DETERMINATION: IMPLICATIONS FOR LEGAL PRACTICE. IN: LINDA

TUHIWAI SMITH: DECOLONIZING RESEARCH: INDIGENOUS STORYWORK AS METHODOLOGY, ZED, 175-186.

BEHRENDT, RICHARD (1932): DIE SCHWEIZ UND DER IMPERIALISMUS. RASCHER & CIE., A.-G., VERLAG, ZÜRICH.

BENYEI, PETRA; ARREOLA, GUADALUPE & REYES-GARCÍA, VICTORIA (2020): STORING AND SHARING: A REVIEW OF INDIGENOUS AND LOCAL KNOWLEDGE CONSERVATION INITIATIVES. AMBIO, 49(1), 218-230.

BERN KOLONIAL (2020): KOLONIALE SPUREN AUFDECKEN. URL: HTTPS://BERN-KOLONIAL.CH/WILKOMMEN, (FROM: AUG 2020/ ACCESS: DEC 2025).

BETTS, RAYMOND F. (2004): DECOLONIZATION: SECOND EDITION. ROUTLEDGE.

BETZ, HANS-GEORG (2020): SWITZERLAND CONFRONTS ITS ROLE IN THE SLAVE TRADE. IN: FAIR OBSERVER, URL: HTTPS://WWW.FAIROBSERVER.COM/REGION/EUROPE/HANS-GEORG-BETZ-SWITZERLAND-ROLE-SLAVE-TRADE-HISTORY-RACISM-NEWS-14211/. (FROM: JUN 2020/ ACCESS: DEC 2025).

BLAIR, NERIDA (2019): LILYOLOGY AS A TRANSFORMATIVE FRAMEWORK FOR DECOLONIZING ETHICAL SPACES WITHIN THE ACADEMY. IN: LINDA TUHIWAI SMITH: DECOLONIZING RESEARCH: INDIGENOUS STORYWORK AS METHODOLOGY, ZED, 203-223.

BLUM, PASCAL (2020): KOLONIALES DENKEN WIRKT ÜBERALL NACH. IN: TAGES-ANZEIGER, URL: HTTPS://WWW.TAGESANZEIGER.CH/KOLONIALES-DENKEN-WIRKT-UEBERALL-NACH-831388410406. (FROM: JUN 2020/ ACCESS: DEC 2025).

BOLT, JUTTA (2022): THE PARTITIONING OF AFRICA. THE HISTORY OF AFRICAN DEVELOPMENT, GRONINGEN UNIVERSITY, 1-18.

BONDS, ANNE & INWOOD, JOSHUA (2016): BEYOND WHITE PRIVILEGE: GEOGRAPHIES OF WHITE SUPREMACY AND SETTLER COLONIALISM. PROGRESS IN HUMAN GEOGRAPHY, 40(6), 715-733.

BOTELLA-ORDINAS, EVA (2012): COLONIALISM AND POSTCOLONIALISM. ATLANTIC HISTORY.

BOULILA, STEFANIE C. (2019): RACE AND RACIAL DENIAL IN SWITZERLAND. ETHNIC AND RACIAL STUDIES, 42(9), 1401-1418.

BRÄNDLI, MAYA (2015): SCHWEIZER KOLONIALGESCHICHTE: SPURENSUCHE IM TRÜBEN. IN: SRF, URL: HTTPS://WWW.SRF.CH/KULTUR/GESELLSCHAFT-RELIGION/GESELLSCHAFT-

RELIGION-SCHWEIZER-KOLONIALGESCHICHTE-SPURENSUCHE-IM-TRUEBEN. (FROM: MAR 2015/ ACCESS: DEC 2025).

BRONDÍZIO, EDUARDO S.; AUMEERUDDY-THOMAS, YILDIZ; BATES, PETER; CARINO, JOJI; FERNÁNDEZ-LLAMAZARES, ÁLVARO; FARHAN FERRARI, MAURIZIO; GALVIN, KATHLEEN, REYES-GARCÍA, VICTORIA; MCELWEE, PAMELA; MOLNÀR, ZSOLT; SAMAKOV, AIBEK & SHRESTHA, UTTAM BABU (2021): LOCALLY BASED, REGIONALLY MANIFESTED, AND GLOBALLY RELEVANT: INDIGENOUS AND LOCAL KNOWLEDGE, VALUES, AND PRACTICES FOR NATURE. ANNUAL REVIEW OF ENVIRONMENT AND RESOURCES, 46, 481-509.

BRUN, ISABELLE (2025): KAMPF UM RASSISTISCHE HÄUSERNAMEN: «HEIMATSCHUTZ IST GESCHICHTSBLIND». IN: TSÜRI, URL: HTTPS://TSRI.CH/A/KAMPF-UM-RASSISTISCHE-HAEUSERNAMEN-NIEDERDORF-M-WORT-HEIMATSCHUTZ-IST-GESCHICHTSBLIND-SCHAER, (FROM: FEB 2025/ ACCESS: DEC 2025).

BUNDESAMT FÜR STATISTIK (2023): SPRACHEN. URL: HTTPS://WWW.BFS.ADMIN.CH/BFS/DE/HOME/STATISTIKEN/BEVOELKERUNG/SPRACHEN-RELIGIONEN/SPRACHEN.HTML.

CANTZLER, JULIA MILLER & HUYNH, MEGAN (2016): NATIVE AMERICAN ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE AS DECOLONIZATION. AMERICAN BEHAVIORAL SCIENTIST, 60(2), 203-223.

CÉSAIRE, AIMÉ (1955): DISCOURSE ON DECOLONIZATION. MONTHLY REVIEW PRESS: NEW YORK AND LONDON 1972.

CHERIX, YANN (2020): WARUM STATUEN VOM SOCKEL SOLLEN. IN: TAGES-ANZEIGER, URL: HTTPS://WWW.TAGESANZEIGER.CH/WARUM-SCHWEIZER-STATUEN-VOM-SOCKEL-MUESSEN-338340021664, (FROM: JUN 2020/ ACCESS: DEC 2025).

COLLINS, MICHAEL (2016): DECOLONIZATION. THE ENCYCLOPEDIA OF EMPIRE, 1-14.

CRETTON, VIVIANE (2018): PERFORMING WHITENESS: RACISM, SKIN COLOUR, AND IDENTITY IN WESTERN SWITZERLAND. ETHNIC AND RACIAL STUDIES, 41(5), 842-859.

CUMMINGS, SARAH; MUNTHALI, NYAMWAYA & SITTONI, TONI (2025): EPISTEMIC JUSTICE AS A "NEW NORMAL?": INTERROGATING THE CONTRIBUTIONS OF COMMUNITIES OF PRACTICE TO DECOLONIZATION OF KNOWLEDGE. SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT, 33(3), 3228-3245.

DARIAN-SMITH, EVE (1996): POSTCOLONIALISM: A BRIEF INTRODUCTION. SOCIAL & LEGAL STUDIES, 5(3), 291-299.

DATTA, RANJAN; CHAPOLA, JEBUNNESSA & ACHARIBASAM, JOHN BOSCO (2024): RESPONSIBILITY IN INDIGENOUS LAND-BASED KNOWLEDGE AND ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY. INDIGENOUS LAND-BASED KNOWLEDGE AND SUSTAINABILITY: SETTLER COLONIALISM AND THE ENVIRONMENTAL CRISIS. ROUTLEDGE, 179-186.

DAVID, THOMAS; ETEMAD, BOUDA & SCHAUFELBUEHL, JANICK MARINA (2005): SCHWARZE GESCHÄFTE: DIE BETEILIGUNG VON SCHWEIZERN AN SKLAVEREI UND SKLAVENHANDEL IM 18. UND 19. JAHRHUNDERT. LIMMAT VERLAG, ZÜRICH.

DEAN, MARTIN R. (2023): MEIN GESCHICHTSLEHRER UND ICH WAREN DER MEINUNG, DASS DIE SCHWEIZ NICHTS ZUM KOLONIALISMUS BEIGETRAGEN HAT. IN: TAGES-ANZEIGER, URL: HTTPS://WWW.TAGESANZEIGER.CH/MARTIN-R-DEAN-UEBER-KOLONIALES-DENKEN-MEIN-GESCHICHTSLEHRER-UND-ICH-WAREN-DER-MEINUNG-DASS-DIE-SCHWEIZ-NICHTS-ZUM-KOLONIALISMUS-BEIGETRAGEN-HAT-754944347054. (FROM: OCT 2023/ ACCESS: DEC 2025).

DOS SANTOS PINTO, JOVITA; LIENHARD, MARINA & PURTSCHERT, PATRICIA (2011): WARUM ZIRKULIEREN SOLCHE BILDER UNGESTÖRT IN EINER BREITEN ÖFENTLICHKEIT? IN DER SCHWEIZ IST DIE MEINUNG WEITVERBREITET, DIESES LAND HABE NICHTS, ABER AUCH GAR NICHTS MIT DEM

KOLONIALISMUS ZU TUN. IN: WOZ, URL: HTTPS://WWW.WOZ.CH/1132/DIE-POSTKOLONIALE-SCHWEIZ/WARUM-ZIRKULIEREN-SOLCHE-BILDER-UNGESTOERT-IN-EINER-BREITEN. (FROM: AUG 2011/ ACCESS: DEC 2025).

DOS SANTOS PINTO, JOVITA & BOULILA, STEFANIE (2020): WAS BLACK LIVES MATTERS FÜR DIE SCHWEIZ BEDEUTET. IN: REPUBLIK, URL: HTTPS://WWW.REPUBLIK.CH/2020/06/23/WAS-BLACK-LIVES-MATTER-FUER-DIE-SCHWEIZ-BEDEUTET. (FROM: JUN 2020/ ACCESS: DEC 2025).

DSCHEN, MEILI (2021): JOHANN JAKOB VON TSCHUDI: NATURFORSCHER UND RASSIST. IN: SRF, URL: HTTPS://WWW.SRF.CH/KULTUR/GESELLSCHAFT-RELIGION/SCHWEIZ-UND-KOLONIALISMUS-JOHANN-JAKOB-VON-TSCHUDI-NATURFORSCHER-UND-RASSIST. (FROM: JAN 2021/ ACCESS: DEC 2025).

DUSSEL, ENRIQUE (1993): EUROCENTRISM AND MODERNITY (INTRODUCTION TO THE FRANKFURT LECTURES). BOUNDARY 2, 20(3), 65-76.

ENTMAN, ROBERT M. (1993): FRAMING: TOWARDS CLARIFICATION OF A FRACTURED PARADIGM. IN:MCQUAIL'S READER IN MASS COMMUNICATION THEORY, 390, 397.

ETH ZÜRICH (2024): COLONIAL TRACES – COLLECTIONS IN CONTEXT. URL: HTTPS://LIBRARY.ETHZ.CH/EN/NEWS-AND-COURSES/NEWS/NEWS-ARTICLES/2024/07/NEW-EXTRACT- EXHIBITION-COLONIAL-TRACES-COLLECTIONS-IN-CONTEXT.HTML. (FROM: AUG 2024/ ACCESS: DEC 2025).

EUGSTER, DAVID (2020): DIE SCHWEIZ UND DER KOLONIALISMUS. IN: SWISSINFO, URL: HTTPS://WWW.SWISSINFO.CH/GER/GESCHICHTE/DIE-SCHWEIZ-UND-DER-KOLONIALISMUS/45900498. (FROM: JUL 2020/ ACCESS: DEC 2025).

FANON, FRANTZ (1969): THE WRETCHED OF THE EARTH. SUHRKAMP VERLAG, FRANKFURT AM MAIN.

FANON, FRANTZ (1986): BLACK SKIN, WHITE MASKS. LONDON: PLUTO PRESS.

FÄSSLER, HANS (2005): REISE IN SCHWARZ-WEISS: SCHWEIZER ORTSTERMINE IN SACHEN SKLAVEREI. ROTPUNKTVERLAG.

FÄSSLER, HANS (2019): PIGGYBACKING ON THE COLONIAL POWERS: SWITZERLAND'S SLAVERY PAST. ENSURING RECOGNITION, JUSTICE AND DEVELOPMENT, GENEVA.

FÄSSLER, HANS (2023): ST.GALLER STADTRUNDGANG VOL. III «IM WESTEN VIEL NEUES». STADT ST. GALLEN.

FÄSSLER, HANS (2024): A ZURICH MONUMENT TOPPLED: THE (POST-) COLONIAL CASE OF SWISS INDUSTRIALIST AND ENTREPRENEUR ALFRED ESCHER (1819-1882). ATLANTIC STUDIES: GLOBAL CURRENTS.

FIGUEROA, ROBERT M. (2022): ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE. IN: THE ROUTLEDGE COMPANION TO ENVIRONMENTAL ETHICS, TAYLOR & FRANCIS, 767-782.

FRANC, ANDREA (2008): WIE DIE SCHWEIZ ZUR SCHOKOLADE KAM: DER KAKAOHANDEL DER BASLER HANDELSGESELLSCHAFT MIT DER KOLONIE GOLDKÜSTE (1893-1960). 180, SCHWABE VERLAG, BASEL.

FREUDIGER, NICOLE (2023): SELBST EIN HENRI DUNANT WAR KEIN SAUBERMANN. IN: SRF, URL: HTTPS://WWW.SRF.CH/KULTUR/GESELLSCHAFT-RELIGION/SCHWEIZER-KOLONIALGESCHICHTE-SELBST-EIN-HENRI-DUNANT-WAR-KEIN-SAUBERMANN. (FROM: JUN 2023/ ACCESS: DEC 2025).

FRICKER, MIRANDA (2007): EPISTEMIC INJUSTICE: POWER AND THE ETHICS OF KNOWING. OXFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS, ONLINE EDITION.

FRIEDRICHS, JÜRGEN (2019): FORSCHUNGSETHIK. IN: BAUR, NINA & BLASIUS, JÖRG: HANDBUCH METHODEN DER EMPIRISCHEN SOZIALFORSCHUNG. SPRINGER, 67-76.

GAJA PINOJA, LETIZIA (2023): SWITZERLAND: THE ART OF DECOLONIZING A COUNTRY WITHOUT COLONIES. IN: JUSTICE INFO, URL: HTTPS://WWW.JUSTICEINFO.NET/EN/119703-SWITZERLAND-DECOLONIZING-COUNTRY-WITHOUT-COLONIES.HTML. (FROM: JUL 2023/ ACCESS: DEC 2025).

GETACHEW, ADOM & MANTENA, KARUNA (2021): ANTICOLONIALISM AND THE DECOLONIZATION OF POLITICAL THEORY. CRITICAL TIMES, 4(3), 359-388.

GÓMEZ-BAGGETHUN, ERIK (2022): IS THERE A FUTURE FOR INDIGENOUS AND LOCAL KNOWLEDGE? JOURNAL OF PLEASANT STUDIES, 49(6), 1139-1157.

GUIN, RAJESH & GUPTA, ANITA (2025): EPISTEMIC INJUSTICE IN THE DIGITAL AGE: SOCIAL MEDIA, SILENCING, AND THE POLITICS OF CREDIBILITY. JOURNAL OF HUMANITIES AND EDUCATION DEVELOPMENT, 7(3), 18-22.

HANIMANN, CARLOS (2021): DAS VERMÄCHTNIS DES HANS FÄSSLER. IN: REPUBLIK, URL: HTTPS://WWW.REPUBLIK.CH/2021/06/11/DAS-VERMAECHTNIS-DES-HANS-FAESSLER. (FROM: JUN 2021/ ACCESS: DEC 2025).

HEIM, CHRISTOPH (2021): AN DEN LEGENDÄREN BRONZEN AUS BENIN KLEBT BLUT. IN: TAGES-ANZEIGER, URL: HTTPS://WWW.TAGESANZEIGER.CH/AN-DEN-LEGENDAEREN-BRONZEN-AUS-BENIN-KLEBT-BLUT-193636783600, (FROM: AUG 2021/ ACCESS: DEC 2025).

HUNT, SARAH (2014): ONTOLOGIES OF INDIGENEITY: THE POLITICS OF EMBODYING A CONCEPT. CULTURAL GEOGRAPHIES, 21(1), 27-32.

HUWYLER, CORINNE (2024): NATURSCHUTZ UND DIE RECHTE VON INDIGENEN – EIN WIDERSPRUCH? IN: UNIVERSITY OF LUCERNE, URL: HTTPS://WWW.UNILU.CH/EN/NEWS/NATURSCHUTZ-UND-DIE-RECHTE-VON-INDIGENEN-EIN-WIDERSPRUCH-8466/. (FROM: APR 2024/ ACCESS: DEC 2025).

ILLIEN, NOELE (2020): BANKING AND SLAVERY: SWITZERLAND EXAMINES ITS COLONIAL CONSCIENCE. IN: THE GUARDIAN, URL: HTTPS://WWW.THEGUARDIAN.COM/WORLD/2020/NOV/19/BANKING-SLAVERY-SWITZERLAND-EXAMINES-ITS-COLONIAL-CONSCIENCE. (FROM: NOV 2020/ ACCESS: DEC 2025).

IPBES (2023): REVIEW OF THE INCLUSION OF INDIGENOUS AND LOCAL KNOWLEDGE IN IPBES FUNCTIONS AND DELIVERABLES. DEVELOPED BY THE IPBES TASK FORCE AND TECHNICAL SUPPORT UNIT FOR INDIGENOUS AND LOCAL KNOWLEDGE.

https://files.ipbes.net/ipbes-web-prod-public-files/2023-06/Review%20of%20Indigenous%20and%20local%20knowledge%20in%20IPBES.pdf.

Jensen, Sune Q. (2011): Othering, identity formation and agency. Qualitative Studies, 2(2), 63-78.

Keller, Christoph (2018): Was ein Anorak über unsere koloniale Vergangenheit aussagt. In: SRF, URL: https://www.srf.ch/kultur/gesellschaft-religion/koloniale-spuren-in-zuerich-was-ein-anorak-ueber-unsere-koloniale-vergangenheit-aussagt. (From: Oct 2018/ Access: 2025).

Klein, Harald (2019): Quantitative Analyse von Zeitungsartikeln und Online-Nachrichten. In : Baur, Nina & Blasius, Jörg: Handbuch Methoden der empirischen Sozialforschung. Springer, 1149-1156.

Konz, Britta & Ortmann, Bernhard (2020): Postkolonialismus und Interkulturelle Theologie in Deutschland: Einleitende Verortungen. In: Wetz, Christian: Postkolonialismus, Theologie und die Konstruktion des Anderen, Leiden. Brill, 8-22.

Kuckartz, Udo (2007):Computergestützte Analyse qualitativer Daten. In: Buber, Renate & Holzmüller, Hartmut M.: Qualitative Marktforschung: Konzepte, Methoden, Analysen. Springer, 713-730.

Kuprecht, Karolina (2022): Colonial Loot and Its Restitution – Country Report: Switzerland. Santander Art and Culture Law Review, 8(2), 343-358.

Lackey, Jennifer (2022): Epistemic Reparations and the Right to be Known. Presidental Adress- Central Division, 54-89.

Laclau, Ernesto & Mouffe, Chantal (2001): Hegemony and socialist strategy: towards a radical democratic politics. Verso.

Landesmuseum Zürich (2024): koloniAL – Globale Verflechtungen der Schweiz. Exhibition (13.9.2024-19.01.2025). URL: https://www.landesmuseum.ch/kolonial.

Larsen, Neil (2005): Imperialism, Colonialism, Postcolonialism. In: Schwarz Henry & Ray, Sangeeta: A Companion to Postcolonial Studies. Blackwell Publishing, 23-52.

LAZARUS, NEIL (1993): DISAVOWING DECOLONIZATION: FANON, NATIONALISM, AND THE PROBLEMATIC OF REPRESENTATION IN CURRENT THEORIES OF COLONIAL DISCOURSE. RESEARCH IN AFRICAN LITERATURES, 69-98.

LAZARUS, NEIL (2011): WHAT POSTCOLONIAL THEORY DOESN'T SAY. RACE AND CLASS, 53(1), 3-27.

LEES, LYNN HOLLEN (2017): INTRODUCTION. IN: PLANTING EMPIRE, CULTIVATING SUBJECTS. CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS, 1-16.

LENDENMANN, JONAS (2024): ARCHIVE UND MUSEEN «DEKOLONISIEREN»? IN: ARBIDO, URL: HTTPS://ARBIDO.CH/DE/AUSGABEN-ARTIKEL/2024/DEKOLONIALISIERUNG-VON-ARCHIVEN-DECOLONISATION-DES-ARCHIVES/ARCHIVE-UND-MUSEEN-DEKOLONIALISIEREN. (FROM: JAN 2024/ ACCESS: DEC 2025).

LOFTSDÓTTIR, KRISTÍN & JENSEN, LARS (2012): INTRODUCTION: NORDIC EXCEPTIONALISM AND THE NORDIC "OTHERS". IN: LOFTSDÓTTIR, KRISTÍN & JENSEN, LARS: WHITENESS AND POSTCOLONIALISM IN THE NORDIC REGION. ROUTLEDGE, 1-12.

MALDONADO-TORRES, NELSON (2007): ON THE COLONIALITY OF BEING: CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE DEVELOPMENT OF A CONCEPT. CULTURAL STUDIES, 21(2-3), 240-270.

MARTI, MICHAEL (2023): DIE URSCHULD DER WEISSEN MÄNNER. IN: TAGES-ANZEIGER, URL: HTTPS://WWW.TAGESANZEIGER.CH/POSTKOLONIALISMUS-DIE-URSCHULD-DER-WEISSEN-MAENNER-THOMAS-MAISSEN-IM-INTERVIEW-662951773394. (FROM: NOV 2023/ ACCESS: DEC 2025).

MAYRING, PHILIPP & FENZL, THOMAS (2019): QUALITATIVE INHALTSANALYSE. IN: BAUR, NINA & BLASIUS, JÖRG: HANDBUCH METHODEN DER EMPIRISCHEN SOZIALFORSCHUNG. SPRINGER, 633-648.

MCLENNAN, GREGOR (2014): COMPLICITY, COMPLEXITY, HISTORICISM: PROBLEMS OF POSTCOLONIAL SOCIOLOGY. POSTCOLONIAL STUDIES, 17(4), 451-464.

MEIER, LUKAS (2015): THE OTHER'S COLONY: SWITZERLAND AND THE DISCOVERY OF CÔTE D'IVOIRE. IN: PURTSCHERT, PATRICIA & FISCHER-TINÉ, HARALD: COLONIAL SWITZERLAND: RETHINKING COLONIALISM FROM THE MARGINS. PALGRAVE, 73-88.

MERLAN, FRANCESCA (2009): INDIGENEITY: GLOBAL AND LOCAL. CURRENT ANTHROPOLOGY, 50(3), 303-333.

METZLER, BEAT (2021): DIE RASSISTISCHEN HÄUSERNAMEN DÜRFEN BLEIBEN – VORERST. IN: TAGES-ANZEIGER, URL: HTTPS://WWW.TAGESANZEIGER.CH/DIE-RASSISTISCHEN-

HAEUSERNAMEN-DUERFEN-BLEIBEN-VORERST-792736857525, (FROM: NOV 2021/ ACCESS: DEC 2025).

MEYER, ALAIN (2023): SWISS CITIES DUST OFF THEIR COLONIAL PAST. IN: SWISSINFO, URL: HTTPS://WWW.SWISSINFO.CH/ENG/CULTURE/SWISS-CITIES-DUST-OFF-THEIR-COLONIAL-PAST/48468166. (FROM: APR 2023/ ACCESS: DEC 2025).

MICHEL, NOÉMI (2015): SHEEPOLOGY: THE POSTCOLONIAL POLITICS OF RACELESS RACISM IN SWITZERLAND. POSTCOLONIAL STUDIES, 18(4), 410-426.

MIGNOLO, WALTER D. (2000): LOCAL HISTORIES/ GLOBAL DESIGNS: COLONIALITY, SUBALTERN KNOWLEDGES AND BORDER THINKING. PRINCETON UNIVERSITY PRESS.

MIGNOLO, WALTER D. (2007): DELINKING: THE RETHORIC OF MODERNITY, THE LOGIC OF COLONIALITY AND THE GRAMMAR OF DE-COLONIALITY. CULTURAL STUDIES, 21(2-3), 449-514.

MIGNOLO, WALTER D. (2009): EPISTEMIC DISOBEDIENCE, INDEPENDENT THOUGHT AND DECOLONIAL FREEDOM. THEORY, CULTURE & SOCIETY, 26(8), 159-181.

MIGNOLO, WALTER D. & WALSH, CATHERINE E. (2018): INTRODUCTION. IN: ON DECOLONIALITY: CONCEPTS, ANALYTICS, PRAXIS. DUKE UNIVERSITY PRESS, 1-12.

MISHRA, VIJAY & HODGE, BOB (2005): WHAT WAS POSTCOLONIALISM? NEW LITERARY HISTORY, 36(3), 375-402.

MOHAI, PAUL; PELLOW, DAVID & ROBERTS, J. TIMMONS (2009): ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE. ANNUAL REVIEW OF ENVIRONMENT AND RESOURCES, 34, 405-430.

MOUFFE, CHANTAL (2005): ON THE POLITICAL: THINKING IN ACTION. ROUTLEDGE, TAYLOR & FRANCIS, NEW YORK.

MUKAVETZ, ANDREA R. (2018): DECOLONIAL THEORY AND METHODOLOGY. COMPOSITION STUDIES, 46(1), 124-140.

MULINARI, DIANA; KESKINEN, SUVI; IRNI, SARNI & TUORI, SALLA (2009): INTRODUCTION: POSTCOLONIALISM AND THE NORDIC MODELS OF WELFARE AND GENDER. IN: KESKINEN, SUVI; TUORI, SALLA; IRNI, SARNI & MULINARI, DIANA: COMPLYING WITH COLONIALISM: GENDER, RACE AND ETHNICITY IN THE NORDIC REGION. ROUTLEDGE, 1-18.

NATURAL HISTORY MUSEUM OF NEUCHATEL (2024): NAMING NATURES: NATURAL HISTORY AND COLONIAL LEGACY. EXHIBITION: HTTPS://NAMING-NATURES.CH/. (FROM: DEC 2024/ ACCESS: DEC 2025).

NEAGELI, PATRICIA (2016): SOCIAL POLICIES AND GOVERNANCE IN GENEVA: WHAT ABOUT

SOCIAL INNOVATION? IN: DEKKER, PAUL & ZIMMER, ANNETTE: NONPROFIT AND CIVIL SOCIETY STUDIES AN INTERNATIONAL MULTIDISCIPLINARY SERIES SERIES EDITORS. SPRINGER, 97-124.

NGHI HA, KIEN (2003): DIE KOLONIALEN MUSTER DEUTSCHER ARBEITSMIGRATIONSPOLITIK. IN: STEYERL, HITO & GUTIÉRREZ RODRÍGUEZ, ENCARNACIÓN: SPRICHT DIE SUBALTERNE DEUTSCH? UNRAST, MÜNSTER, 56-107.

NOTT, LAVANYA (2025): CAN THE PHILOSOPHER CHANGE THE WORLD? THE ENDURING RELEVANCE OF ANTICOLONIAL MARXISM IN AN ERA OF DECOLONIALITY. ANTIPODE.

NOXOLO, PATRICIA (2017): DECOLONIAL THEORY IN A TIME OF THE RE-COLONISATION OF UK

RESEARCH, ROYAL GEOGRAPHICAL SOCIETY, 42, 342-344.

PALMBERG, MAI (2009): THE NORDIC COLONIAL MIND. IN: KESKINEN, SUVI; TUORI, SALLA; IRNI, SARNI & MULINARI, DIANA: COMPLYING WITH COLONIALISM: GENDER, RACE AND ETHNICITY IN THE NORDIC REGION. ROUTLEDGE, 35-50.

PATEL, SUJATA (2023): ANTI-COLONIAL THOUGHT AND GLOBAL SOCIAL THEORY. FRONT. SOCIOL., 1-13.

PRZYBORSKI, AGLAJA & WOHLRAB-SAHR, MONIKA (2019): FORSCHUNGSDESIGNS FÜR QUALITATIVE SOZIALFORSCHUNG. IN: BAUR, NINA & BLASIUS, JÖRG: HANDBUCH METHODEN DER EMPIRISCHEN SOZIALFORSCHUNG. SPRINGER, 105-124.

PURTSCHERT, PATRICIA (2011): CHEWING ON POST-COLONIAL SWITZERLAND: REDIGESTING WHAT HAS NOT YET BEEN SWALLOWED. IN: CHEWING THE SCENERY, EDITED BY ANDREA THAL, ZÜRICH: EDITION fiNK, 173–202.

PURTSCHERT, PATRICIA; FALK FRANCESCA & LUTHI BARBARA (2011): EINE BESTANDESAUFNAHME DER POSTKOLONIALEN SCHWEIZ 1. POSTKOLONIALE SCHWEIZ. FORMEN UND FOLGEN EINES KOLONIALISMUS OHNE KOLONIEN, 13-64.

PURTSCHERT PATRICIA & FISCHER-TINÉ, HARALD (2015): INTRODUCTION: THE END OF INNOCENCE: DEBATING COLONIALISM IN SWITZERLAND. IN: PURTSCHERT, PATRICIA & FISCHER-TINÉ, HARALD: COLONIAL SWITZERLAND: RETHINKING COLONIALISM FROM THE MARGINS. PALGRAVE, 110-132.

PURTSCHERT, PATRICIA (2016): AVIATION SKILLS, MANLY ADVENTURES AND IMPERIAL TEARS: THE DHAULAGIRI EXPEDITION AND SWITZERLAND'S TECHNO-COLONIALISM. NATIONAL IDENTITIES, 18(1), 53-69.

PURTSCHERT, PATRICIA; FALK FRANCESCA & LUTHI BARBARA (2016): SWITZERLAND AND 'COLONIALISM WITHOUT COLONIES'. INTERVENTIONS, 18(2), 286-302.

QUAYSON, ATO (2005): POSTCOLONIALISM AND POSTMODERNISM. IN: SCHWARZ HENRY & RAY, SANGEETA: A COMPANION TO POSTCOLONIAL STUDIES. BLACKWELL PUBLISHING, 87-113.

QUIJANO, ANÍBAL (2000): COLONIALITY OF POWER AND EUROCENTRISM IN LATIN AMERICA. INTERNATIONAL SOCIOLOGY, 15(2), 215-232.

QUIJANO, ANÍBAL (2007): COLONIALITY AND MODERNITY/RATIONALITY. CULTURAL STUDIES, 21(2-3), 168-178.

RADCLIFFE, SARAH A. (2017): GEOGRAPHY AND INDIGENEITY I: INDIGENEITY, COLONIALITY AND KNOWLEDGE. PROGRESS IN HUMAN GEOGRAPHY, 41(2), 220-229.

RATTANSI, ALI (1997): POSTCOLONIALISM AND ITS DISCONTENTS. ECONOMY AND SOCIETY, 26(4), 480-500.

REYMOND, ISABELLE (2025): WIESO ES WICHTIG IST, WER TIERARTEN DEN NAMEN GIBT. IN: SRF, URL: HTTPS://WWW.SRF.CH/WISSEN/NATUR-TIERE/DIE-NATUR-BENENNEN-WIESO-ES-WICHTIG-IST-WER-TIERARTEN-DEN-NAMEN-GIBT, (FROM: JAN 2025/ ACCESSED: DEC 2025).

ROUE, MARIE & NAKASHIMA, DOUGLAS (2018): INDIGENOUS AND LOCAL KNOWLEDGE AND SCIENCE: FROM VALIDATION TO KNOWLEDGE COPRODUCTION. THE INTERNATIONAL ENCYCLOPEDIA OF ANTHROPOLOGY, 1-11.

RUKUNDWA, LAZARE S. & VAN AARDE, ANDRIES G. (2007): THE FORMATION OF POSTCOLONIAL THEORY. HTS, 63(3), 1171-1194.

SAID, EDWARD W. (1978): ORIENTALISM. THE GEORGIA REVIEW, 31(1), 162-206.

SANDERS, ANGELA (2015): 'WONDERLAND' PERU: MIGRATION AND THE MAKING OF AN ANDEAN SWITZERLAND. IN: PURTSCHERT, PATRICIA & FISCHER-TINÉ, HARALD: COLONIAL SWITZERLAND: RETHINKING COLONIALISM FROM THE MARGINS. PALGRAVE, 110-132.

SCHÄR, BERNHARD C. (2018): RÖSTI UND REVOLUTIONEN. POSTKOLONIALE VERSTRICKUNGEN DER GLOBALEN SCHWEIZ. WIEDERSPRUCH, 71(18), 9-20.

SCHÄR, BERNHARD C. (2025): DIE SCHWEIZ WAR NIE EINE KOLONIE. IN: TAGES-ANZEIGER, URL: HTTPS://WWW.TAGESANZEIGER.CH/SCHWEIZ-ALS-KOLONIE-HISTORIKER-SCHAER-WIDERSPRICHT-MILO-RAU-398423937985. (FROM: NOV 2025/ ACCESS: DEC 2025).

SCHÜRMANN PETER (2020): DIE SCHWEIZ HAT EINE KOLONIALE VERGANGENHEIT OHNE KOLONIEN. IN: SRF, URL: HTTPS://WWW.SRF.CH/NEWS/RASSISMUS-UND-DIE-SCHWEIZ-DIE-SCHWEIZ-HAT-EINE-KOLONIALE-VERGANGENHEIT-OHNE-KOLONIEN, (FROM: JUL 2020/ ACCESS: DEC 2025).

SCHWITTER, KARIN (2013): NEOLIBERAL SUBJECTIVITY -DIFFERENCE, FREE CHOICE AND INDIVIDUALISED RESPONSIBILITY IN THE LIFE PLANS OF YOUNG ADULTS IN SWITZERLAND. GEOGRAPHICA HELVETICA, 68(3), 153-159.

SETH, SANJAY (2011): POSTCOLONIAL THEORY AND THE CRITIQUE OF INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS. MILLENNIUM: JOURNAL OF INTERNATIONAL STUDIES, 40(1), 167-183.

SMITH, LINDA TUHIWAI (2019): DECOLONIZING RESEARCH: INDIGENOUS STORYWORK AS METHODOLOGY. BLOOMSBURY PUBLISHING.

SPEICH CHASSÉ, DANIEL (2012): VERflECHTUNG DURCH NEUTRALITÄT: WIRKUNG EINER SCHWEIZER MAXIME IM ZEITALTER DER DEKOLONISATION. IN: PURTSCHERT, PATRICIA; LÜTHI, BARBARA & FALK, FRANCESCA: POSTKOLONIALE SCHWEIZ. FORMEN UND FOLGEN EINES KOLONIALISMUS OHNE KOLONIEN, BIELEFELD, 225-244.

SPIVAK, GAYATRI CHAKRAVORTY (2001): CAN THE SUBALTERN SPEAK? IN: IMPERIALISM: CRITICAL CONCEPTS IN HISTORICAL STUDIES. ROUTLEDGE, LONDON. CHAPTER 48, 171-219.

STEYERL, HITO & GUTIÉRREZ RODRÍGUEZ, ENCARNACIÓN (2003): EINLEITUNG. IN: STEYERL, HITO & GUTIÉRREZ RODRÍGUEZ, ENCARNACIÓN: SPRICHT DIE SUBALTERNE DEUTSCH? UNRAST, MÜNSTER, 1-16.

STÖCKL, SUSANNE (2024): DER RASSISMUS, DER AUS DEN SCHLAGZEILEN VERSCHWAND. IN: SRF, URL: HTTPS://WWW.SRF.CH/NEWS/DIALOG/DISKRIMINIERUNG-VON-SCHWARZEN-DER-RASSISMUS-DER-AUS-DEN-SCHLAGZEILEN-VERSCHWAND. (FROM: MAY 2024/ ACCESS: DEC 2025).

STREHLE, RES (2019): DAS DUNKLE GEHEIMNIS DER SCHWEIZER MUSEEN. IN: TAGES-ANZEIGER, URL: HTTPS://WWW.TAGESANZEIGER.CH/DAS-DUNKLE-GEHEIMNIS-DER-SCHWEIZER-MUSEEN-177098008846, (FROM: MAY 2019/ ACCESS: DEC 2025).

STUCKI, LORENZ (1969): DAS HEIMLICHE IMPERIUM: WIE DIE SCHWEIZ REICH WURDE. 3, SCHERZ VERLAG, BERN, MÜNCHEN.

SURBER, KASPAR (2016): IN DEN KLEINEN SCHWEIZEN RUND UM DIE GANZE WELT. IN: WOZ, URL: HTTPS://WWW.WOZ.CH/1635/DIE-FORSCHUNG/IN-DEN-KLEINEN-SCHWEIZEN-RUND-UM-DIE-GANZE-WELT. (FROM: SEP 2016/ ACCESS: DEC 2025).

SUTTER, TILMANN (2010): MEDIENANALYSE UND MEDIENKRITIK. VS VERLAG FÜR SOZIALWISSENSCHAFTEN.

SWISSINFO (2024): SWISS COLONIAL EXPLOITATION HIGHLIGHTED BY NATIONAL MUSEUM. IN: SWISSINFO, URL: HTTPS://WWW.SWISSINFO.CH/ENG/FOREIGN-AFFAIRS/NATIONAL-MUSEUM-HIGHLIGHTS-COLONIAL-SWITZERLAND/87536075. (FROM: SEP 2024/ ACCESS: DEC 2025).

TADDICKEN, MONIKA (2019): ANALYSE VON ZEITUNGSARTIKELN UND ONLINE-NACHRICHTEN. IN: BAUR, NINA & BLASIUS, JÖRG: HANDBUCH METHODEN DER EMPIRISCHEN SOZIALFORSCHUNG. SPRINGER, 1156-1164.

THORNTON, A. P. (1962): COLONIALISM. INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL, 335-357.

TOBLER, ANDREAS (2020): WIE SCHWEIZER VOM SKLAVENHANDEL PROFITIERTEN. IN: TAGES-ANZEIGER, HTTPS://TDA-HORTON-FILES-PROD.S3.EU-CENTRAL-1.AMAZONAWS.COM/TA/2020-06-29/25/F202006/TA_20200629_0_0_25.PDF?X-AMZ-ALGORITHM=AWS4-HMAC-SHA256&X-AMZ-DATE=20260714T083231Z&X-AMZ-SIGNEDHEADERS=HOST&X-AMZ-EXPIRES=3600&X-AMZ-CREDENTIAL=A-KIA4HE6DDY6SAOQJ6SO%2F20260714%2FEU-CENTRAL-1%2FS3%2FAWS4_REQUEST&X-AMZ-SIGNATURE=D1E4BA47F57B04DF69116104A1CCECBC725640E247586E0B71C7715AA0F868EB. (FROM: JUN 2020/ ACCESS: DEC 2025).

TRAUE, BORIS; PFAHL, LISA & SCHÜRMANN, LENA (2019): DISKURSANALYSE. IN: BAUR, NINA & BLASIUS, JÖRG: HANDBUCH METHODEN DER EMPIRISCHEN SOZIALFORSCHUNG. SPRINGER, 565-584.

TRIGGER, DAVID S. & DALLEY CAMEO (2010): NEGOTIATING INDIGENEITY: CULTURE, IDENTITY, AND POLITICS. REVIEWS IN ANTHROPOLOGY. 39(1), 46-65.

TUCK, EVE & YANG, K. WAYNE (2012): DECOLONIZATION IS NOT A METAPHOR. DECOLONIZATION: INDIGENEITY, EDUCATION & SOCIETY, 1(1), 1-40.

UDRIS, LINARDS; EISENEGGER, MARK; VOGLER, DANIEL; SCHNEIDER, JÖRG & HÄUPTLI, ANDREA (2020): MAPPING AND EXPLAINING MEDIA QUALITY: INSIGHTS FROM SWITZERLAND'S MULTILINGUAL MEDIA SYSTEM. MEDIA AND COMMUNICATION, 8(3), 258-269.

VAN MOORSEL, SOFIA; LOONG, SHONA & WULF, HENDRIK (2025): DECOLONIZING SCIENCE: «IT'S A JOURNEY, NOT A CHECKLIST». GIUZ, UZH, URL: HTTPS://BLOG.GEO.UZH.CH/DECOLONIZING-SCIENCE/. (FROM: JUN 2025, ACCESS: DEC 2025).

VUORELA, ULLA (2009): COLONIAL COMPLICITY: THE 'POSTCOLONIAL' IN A NORDIC CONTEXT. IN: KESKINEN, SUVI; TUORI, SALLA; IRNI, SARNI & MULINARI, DIANA: COMPLYING WITH COLONIALISM: GENDER, RACE AND ETHNICITY IN THE NORDIC REGION. ROUTLEDGE, 19-33.

WEAVER, JACE (2005): INDIGENOUSNESS AND INDIGENEITY. IN: SCHWARZ HENRY & RAY, SANGEETA: A COMPANION TO POSTCOLONIAL STUDIES. BLACKWELL PUBLISHING, 221-235.

WILLI, STEPHANIE (2024): SCHWEIZER ARCHIVE DEKOLONISIEREN. IN: ARBIDO, URL: HTTPS://ARBIDO.CH/DE/AUSGABEN-ARTIKEL/2024/DEKOLONIALISIERUNG-VON-ARCHIVEN-DECOLONISATION-DES-ARCHIVES/DEKOLONIALISIERUNG. (FROM: JAN 2024/ ACCESS: DEC 2025).

WILKENS, JAN & DATCHOUA-TIRVAUDEY, ALVINE R. C. (2022): RESEARCHING CLIMATE JUSTICE: A DECOLONIAL APPROACH TO GLOBAL CLIMATE GOVERNANCE. INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS, 98, 125-143.

WINTER, RAINER (1999): CULTURAL STUDIES ALS KRITISCHE MEDIENANALYSE: VOM «ENCODING/DECODING»-MODELL ZUR DISKURSANALYSE. KULTUR-MEDIEN-MACHT, 49-65.

WINZENRIED, KATHRIN (2018): SCHWEIZER INVESTMENT VERDRÄNGT INDIGENE. IN: SRF, URL: HTTPS://WWW.SRF.CH/NEWS/SCHWEIZ/WINDPARK-IN-NORWEGEN-SCHWEIZER-INVESTMENT-VERDRAENGT-INDIGENE. (FROM DEC 2018/ ACCESS: DEC 2025).

WIRTH, TIM (2024): DIE GESCHICHTE HINTER DER LEWA-ANLAGE FORDERT DEN ZOO HERAUS. IN: TAGES-ANZEIGER, URL: HTTPS://WWW.TAGESANZEIGER.CH/ZFF-KRITISCHER-DOKFILM-UEBER-PROJEKTE-WIE-JENES-DER-LEWA-SAVANNE-IM-ZOO-ZUERICH-252939112281. (FROM: OCT 2024/ ACCESS: DEC 2025).

WOLFE, PATRICK (2006): SETTLER COLONIALISM AND THE ELIMINATION OF THE NATIVE. JOURNAL OF GENOCIDE RESEARCH, 8(4), 387-409.

ZANGGER, ANDREAS (2011): KOLONIALE SCHWEIZ: EIN STÜCK GLOBALGESCHICHTE ZWISCHEN EUROPA UND SÜDOSTASIEN (1860-1930). TRANSCRIPT.

ZANGGER, ANDREAS (2015): PATRIOTIC BONDS AND THE DANGER OF ESTRANGEMENT: SWISS NETWORKS IN COLONIAL SOUTH-EAST ASIA, 1850–1930. IN: PURTSCHERT, PATRICIA & FISCHER-TINÉ, HARALD: COLONIAL SWITZERLAND: RETHINKING COLONIALISM FROM THE MARGINS. PALGRAVE, 91-109.

ZH KOLONIAL (2024): EIN STADTRUNDGANG DURCH ZÜRICHS KOLONIALE VERGANGENHEIT. URL: HTTPS://WWW.ZH-KOLONIAL.CH/DE, (FROM: MAR 2023/ ACCESS: DEC 2025).

9. Appendix

9.1. Corpus Overview

9.1.1. Core Corpus

The core corpus comprises the 73 articles that were coded in full using the qualitative content analysis and frame analysis outlined in the methodology section.

No.	Title	Author	Medium	Date
1	Archive und Museen "dekolonialisieren"?	Jonas Lendenmann	Arbido	01.01.2024
2	Auch die Schweiz hat eine Kolonialgeschichte	Daniel Goldstein	Infosperber	31.08.2023
3	Banking and slavery: Switzerland examines its colonial conscience	Noelle Illien	The Guardian	19.11.2020
4	Bern und der Kolonialismus	Bernisches Historisches Museum	Bernisches Historisches Museum	01.07.2024
5	Cocoa Beans Do Not Grow in the Swiss Mountains: Swiss Public Museums of Modern and Contemporary Art and the Winds of Decolonial Change	Marie-Laure Allain Bonilla	EuropeNow	21.02.2023
6	Colonial Entanglements in Basel	Claske Dijkema	Visionscarto	06.06.2023
7	Colonial Traces - Collections in Context	ETH Zürich	ETH Zürich	30.08.2024
8	Colonialism à la Suisse	Yolda	Yolda	20.08.2025
9	Darf man das noch denken?	Gina Bachmann und Rafaela Roth	NZZ	02.06.2024
10	Das belastete Erbe	Thomas Zaugg	NZZ	17.02.2023
11	Das Vermächtnis des Hans Fässler	Carlos Hanimann	Republik	11.06.2021
12	Decolonizing science: "It's a journey, not a checklist"	van Moorsel, Lang, Wulf	UZH	26.06.2025
13	Dekolonisierung der Agenda 2030? Die Zivilgesellschaft in der Verantwortung	Leschhorn, Vladović& Bissegger	Plattform Agenda 2030	17.01.2024
14	Dekolonisierung in einem Land ohne Kolonien	Andrea Tognina	Swissinfo	14.06.2022

No.	Title	Author	Medium	Date
15	Der Rassismus der aus den Schlagzeilen verschwand	Susanne Stöckl	SRF	13.05.2024
16	Der Schweizer Anteil an der Sklaverei	Bruno Vanoni	Tages-Anzeiger	14.03.2005
17	Die Arbeitsgruppe Dekolonialisierung der Archive und Sammlungen ETH Zürich	Spano Roberta & Willi Stephanie	Arbido	01.01.2024
18	«Die Frage ist: Mit welchen Verbrechen hängt unser Reichtum zusammen?»	Daniel Ryser	Republik	02.05.2023
19	Die Geschichte hinter der Lewa-Anlage fordert den Zoo heraus	Tim Wirth	Tages-Anzeiger	04.10.2024
20	Die Menschen wollen hören, dass unser Wohlstand auf Blut aufgebaut ist	Michael Marti	Tages-Anzeiger	27.07.2024
21	Die Migros sucht einen "Fachleiter Kolonial"	Adrian Hopf-Sulc	Tages-Anzeiger	14.11.2020
22	Die rassistischen Häusernamen dürfen bleiben - vorerst	Beat Metzler	Tages-Anzeiger	27.11.2021
23	Die Schweiz hat eine koloniale Vergangenheit ohne Kolonien	Peter Schürmann	SRF	23.07.2020
24	Die Schweiz und der Kolonialismus	David Eugster	Swissinfo	14.07.2020
25	Die Schweiz und der Zusammenbruch des Kolonialismus	Der Bund	Der Bund	27.12.1960
26	Die Schweiz war nie eine Kolonie	Bernhard C. Schär	Tages-Anzeiger	27.11.2025
27	Die Urschuld der weissen Männer	Michael Marti	Tages-Anzeiger	11.11.2023
28	Ein Stadtrundgang durch Zürichs koloniale Vergangenheit	ZH Kolonial	ZH Kolonial	01.03.2023
29	Ein Wort als Meilenstein	Raphael Albisser	WOZ	11.12.2025
30	Eure Vergangenheit ist genauso kolonial wie meine	Giorgio Scherrer	NZZ	30.03.2023
31	Europa provinzialisieren	Patricia Purtschert	WOZ	04.05.2006
32	Fast alles war mit Sklaverei verbunden	Res Strehle	Tages-Anzeiger	20.02.2019
33	Georg Kreis: "Ideologie-Vorwurf ist oft ideologistisch geprägt"	Roger Lange	SRF	06.02.2024
34	Ich sehe was, was du nicht siehst und es ist weiss	Kaspar Surber	WOZ	18.06.2020
35	In den kleinen Schweizen rund um die Welt	Kaspar Surber	WOZ	01.09.2016
36	Interview: Swiss Colonialism Exhibition	James Blake Wiener	Website	10.12.2024
37	Johann Jakob von Tschudi	Meili Dschen	World History Encyclopedia	14.01.2021
38	kolonial - Globale Verflechtungen der Schweiz	Landemuseum	Landemuseum	13.09.2024

No.	Title	Author	Medium	Date
39	Koloniale Spuren aufdecken	Bern Kolonial	Bern Kolonial	28.08.2020
40	Koloniales Denken wirkt überall nach	Pascal Blum	Tages-Anzeiger	22.06.2020
41	"M-Wort" statt Mohr, "Z-Wort" statt Zigeuner	Michael von Ledebur	NZZ	13.10.2025
42	Mein Geschichtslehrer und ich waren der Meinung, dass die Schweiz nichts zum Kolonialismus beigetragen hat	Martin R. Dean	Tages-Anzeiger	27.10.2023
43	Naming Natures	Natural History Museum of Neuchatel	Natural History Museum of Neuchatel	15.12.2024
44	Naturschutz und die Rechte von Indigenen – ein Widerspruch?	Corinne Huwyler	Univesität Luzern	23.04.2024
45	Patumbah liegt auf Sumatra. Eine Villa und ihre kolonialen Wurzeln.	Judith Schubiger	Arbido	01.01.2024
46	Piggybacking on the Colonial Powers: Switzerland's Slavery Past	Hans Fässler	Speech (in Text)	09.12.2019
47	Postkolonialismus in der Lehrer:innen-Bildung	PH Zürich	PH Zürich	05.06.2023
48	Rassismus in der Schweiz – die Fakten	Andrea Arežina, Elia Blülle, Anja Conzett und Carlos Hanimann	Republik	19.06.2020
49	Ready for the past? On the state of decolonization in Swiss Museums	Bernhard C. Schär & Thomas David	Infoclio	04.05.2022
50	Schweiz leistet wirksame Entwicklungshilfe, könnte aber ruhig mehr tun	Neue Zürcher Nachrichten	Neue Zürcher Nachrichten	25.06.1973
51	Schweizer Archive dekolonisieren?	Stephanie Willi	Arbido	01.01.2024
52	Schweizer Kolonialgeschichte	Maya Brändli	SRF	16.03.2015
53	Selbst ein Henri Dunant war kein Saubermann	Nicole Freudiger	SRF	18.06.2023
54	Sensationslust passé: Die bewegte Geschichte des Basler "Zolli"	Sarah Herwig	SRF	10.05.2024
55	Swiss cities dust off their colonial past	Alain Meyer	Swissinfo	30.04.2023
56	Swiss colonial exploitation highlighted by National Museum	Keystone-SDA	Swissinfo	12.09.2024
57	Swiss involvement in colonialism	Alexandra Hees	ETH Zürich	13.07.2020
58	Swiss take steps to 'decolonise' cultural artefacts	Julia Crawford	Swissinfo	22.11.2020
59	Switzerland Confronts Its Role in the Slave Trade	Hans-Georg Betz	Fair Observer	11.06.2020

No.	Title	Author	Medium	Date
60	Switzerland played key role in the slave trade	Hans Fässler	Swissinfo	22.08.2003
61	Switzerland: The art of decolonizing a country without colonies	Letizia Gaja Pinoja	Justice Info	21.07.2023
62	The transatlantic slave trade	Noemi Crain Merz	Swiss National Museum	25.09.2019
63	Warum zirkulieren solche Bilder ungestört in einer breiten Öffenlichkeit?	dos Santos Pinto et al.	WOZ	11.08.2011
64	Was Black Lives Matter für die Schweiz bedeutet	dos Santos Pinto und Boulila	Republik	23.06.2020
65	Was ein Anorak über unsere koloniale Vergangenheit aussagt	Christoph Keller	SRF	16.10.2018
66	Was hinter der postkolonialen Theorie steckt	Naomi Jones	Der Bund	09.02.2024
67	Wenn sich Rassismus doch nur so leicht entfernen liesse	Andreas Fannin	NZZ	16.04.2023
68	Wie die Schweiz vom Sklavenhandel profitierte	Andreas Tobler	Tages-Anzeiger	29.06.2020
69	Wie dunkel ist die Schweizer Schokolade?	Pascal Blum	Tages-Anzeiger	21.10.2020
70	Wie Zürich vom Sklavenhandel profitierte	David Sarasin	Tages-Anzeiger	30.09.2021
71	Wieso ist es wichtig, wer Tierarten den Namen gibt	Isabelle Reymond	SRF	21.01.2025
72	Zürich hat von der Sklaverei profitiert	Adi Kälin	NZZ	30.09.2020
73	Zurich Was Linked to Slavery through State Bonds, Trade and Plantations	UZH	UZH	29.09.2020

9.1.2. Context Corpus

The context corpus comprises 26 additional texts that addressed relevant topics only partially or selectively. These were not coded in full but were used to contextualize findings and identify overarching discursive trends and were each assigned to one of the key narratives.

No.	Title	Author	Medium	Date
1	A question of neutrality: Switzerland's role in 19th-century imperialism	Kristen de Groot	Penn Today	25.08.2023
2	A study of art and architecture revisits Swiss colonial history	Sandrine Perroud	EPFL	11.06.2024
3	Albert Schweitzer - verehrt und verdammt	Odette Frey	SRF	25.04.2013
4	Alfred Escher ab in die Limmat?	Andreas Tobler	Tages-Anzeiger	12.06.2020

No.	Title	Author	Medium	Date
5	Alle legen sich Geschichte zurecht	Michael Marti	Tages-Anzeiger	22.09.2020
6	Austausch statt Polemik: Uni Basel stellt sich der Postkolonialismus-Debatte	Michel Schultheiss	Basel Jetzt	08.05.2024
7	Baselbieter Politik hinterfragt die Heldenfigur General Sutter	Regionaljournal Basel	SRF	27.01.2023
8	Den Afrikanern wird gar nichts zugetraut	Christof Münger	Tages-Anzeiger	19.03.2010
9	Der Professor, der überall Rassismus sieht	Rico Bandle	NZZ	12.09.2025
10	Die Schweiz entdeckt ihren «Kolonialismus ohne Kolonien»	Jürg Steiner	Swiss Community	16.09.2020
11	Die Schweizer Kolonial-Komplizen	Fabian Renz	Tages-Anzeiger	12.05.2015
12	Festschreibung von globaler Ungleichheit: Erhellende postkoloniale Perspektiven	Martin Leschhorn Strebel	Medicus Mundi Schweiz	02.04.2019
13	Koloniales Erbe der Schweiz	EKR	Schweizerische Eidgenossenschaft	01.01.2023
14	Muss die Schweiz die Nachfahren von Sklaven entschädigen?	Hans Fässler	Republik	11.06.2021
15	Neues Wissen, dank neuen Fragen zu Afrikas Kolonialgeschichte	Christoph Keller	SRF	12.01.2017
16	Rassismus, hausgemacht in der Schweiz	David Streit	Tages-Anzeiger	15.06.2020
17	Ready for the Past? On the State of Decolonisation in Swiss Museums	Fabio Rossinelli	Infoclio	07.06.2022
18	Schweizer Forscher zwischen Humboldt und Humbug	Denise Chervet	SRF	15.11.2015
19	So umfassend profitierte die Schweiz vom Kolonialismus	Andreas Zangger	Swissinfo	14.08.2020
20	Spuren europäischer Arroganz	Michael Feller	Tages-Anzeiger	29.09.2022
21	Vor 60 Jahren: Das Afrikanische Jahr und die Schweiz	Christoph Koller	Schweizerisches Sozialarchiv	10.07.2020
22	Was hat die Protestbewegung in der Schweiz erreicht?	Hannah Krug	SRF	13.07.2023
23	Wichtig für den Weltfrieden	Marianne Bürkli	NZZ	29.11.2023
24	Wie rassistisch ist der "Mohrenkopf"	Ronald Wermelinger	SRF	15.08.2014
25	Zuchtkühe, Hippies und der "Markt der Zukunft"	Marc Tribelhorn	NZZ	06.12.2024
26	Zurückgegeben wird noch nichts	Ewa Hess	Tages-Anzeiger	03.12.2018

9.2. Code Book

The codebook below reflects the code system as it was actually used during the coding process, comprising six code groups: Type of Article, Content-related Topics, Discursive & Narrative Constructions, Framing, Tonality, and Open/Inductive Codes[7].

1. Type of Article
   - Newspaper Article
   - Online-News Article
   - Institutional Article
   - Article from museum
   - Article from NGO

2. Content-related Topics

2.1 Switzerland & Colonial History

2.1.1 Switzerland's historical entanglements
   - Switzerland as uninvolved
   - Switzerland portrayed as (economically) entangled
   - Positive effects for Switzerland through entanglements highlighted
   - Swiss involvement with slavery mentioned

2.1.2 Colonial violence & oppression
   - Violence/oppression mentioned
   - Racist narratives / racism explicitly mentioned
   - Influence of BLM on topic / BLM mentioned

2.2 Decolonization & Institutions

2.2.1 Decolonization in institutional contexts
   - Exhibitions
   - Renaming
   - Monuments
   - Academia

2.2.2 ILK & Indigeneity (thematically)
   - ILK presented as expertise
   - Indigenous peoples exploited

[7] The five analytical categories used to structure the results (Narratives about Switzerland, Depiction of Colonialism, Responsibility & Relativization, Discourse of Decolonization, and Knowledge, ILK & Epistemic Power) are described in detail in the Methodology chapter (Section 4).

- Musealization of Indigenous livelihoods

3. Discursive & Narrative Constructions

3.1 Narratives of Switzerland

3.1.1 Switzerland's neutrality narrative

- Switzerland's neutrality mentioned
- Switzerland portrayed as morally superior
- Switzerland portrayed as innocent
- Denial of racism in Switzerland
- "Switzerland did not have any colonies, but..."
- Colonialism without colonies

3.2 Discursive strategies of differentiation

3.2.1 Processes of difference-making

- Othering
- West portrayed as dominating/superior
- Critique of West

3.3 Responsibility & Relativization

3.3.1 Critique of colonial structures

3.3.2 Denial/relativization of colonial responsibility

- Deemed harmless
- Sarcastic framing

3.4 Social criticism of postcolonialism

3.5 Knowledge & Authority

3.5.1 Whose knowledge is legitimized

3.5.1.1 Academic/Western knowledge

- Power asymmetries

3.5.1.2 Indigenous/local knowledge

- Inclusivity

3.5.2 Knowledge hierarchies

- Addressed
- Ignored

3.6 Decolonization (discursive usage)

- Decolonization as structural/political process

- Decolonization as moral appeal
- Decolonization as trend/buzzword
- Decolonization as conflict

3.7 ILK & Indigeneity (discursive framing)

- ILK romanticized / depoliticized
- Indigenous voices referenced indirectly
- Indigenous perspectives instrumentalized (symbolic)

4. Framing (Entman 1993)

4.1 Problem definition

- Debate/Knowledge deficit
- Lack of reappraisal

4.2 Attribution of causes

- External or diffuse causes (no responsibility)
- Economic actors (profiteer frame)

4.3 Moral evaluation

- Defensive/relativizing
- Critical/morally positive (self-praise)

4.4 Recommendations for solutions/actions

- Symbolic solution
- Structural responsibility

5. Tonality

- Critically against Switzerland
- Neutral/analytical
- Defensive/relativizing
- Activist/politicizing

6. Open/Inductive Codes

9.3. Graphics & Visualizations

Figure 1: SVP election poster for the Deportation Initiative featuring a black sheep being pushed off the Swiss flag by white sheep (NAU.ch 2020). 33
Figure 2: Overview of the coding system in MAXQDA at the first level, created by the author..... 42
Figure 3: Distribution of the articles in the core corpus by year of publication (n = 73)..... 62

9.4. 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.

21.08.2026

Simon Perlmutter

