

## Colonial Past in Textbooks

### Colonial Photography in French, German, and Austrian History Textbooks since the 1980s: Towards Postcolonial History Didactics?

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#### Abstract

Colonial Past has become a « controversial issue » in European societies. Since the 1980s, Postcolonial Studies have renewed historical scholarship about colonisation. Indeed, Postcolonial Studies give special attention to the role of iconography in the construction of colonial representations. History didactics also renewed the analysis of visual documents, following, in particular, the ascent of Cultural Studies and Deconstructionism. Deconstruction is now considered an essential competence for the construction of the historical consciousness of students. This study is part of a research for a doctoral thesis in German Studies about colonisation in French, German and Austrian history textbooks since the 1980s. This study focusses on the treatment of photographic images of colonised people in chapters dedicated to European colonisation between 1850 and 1914 in French, German, and Austrian History Textbooks of the 1980s and of the 2010s. The goal of this study is to assess the extent to which concepts and methods deriving from Postcolonial Studies percolated in History didactics in three countries with three different Colonial Pasts. The analysis shows common evolutions in the three countries despite national differences – or regional ones in the case of Germany. The number of pictures increased. If the pictures are part and parcel of a critical discourse about colonisation, their treatment does not often correspond to a methodological deconstruction of the colonial discourse; rather, it rather corresponds to the global evolution of pedagogical approaches which cannot be reduced to postcolonial didactics.

#### Materials 48 History Textbooks

for the first level of secondary education

	1980s	2010s
Austria	6	7
Germany	East 2 / West 8 (Bavaria, Berlin, North Rhine Westphalia)	11 (Bavaria, Berlin, Brandenburg, North Rhine Westphalia)
France	7	7

74 occurrences = 50 pictures

Of which 3 in 2 countries / 5 in 2 decades

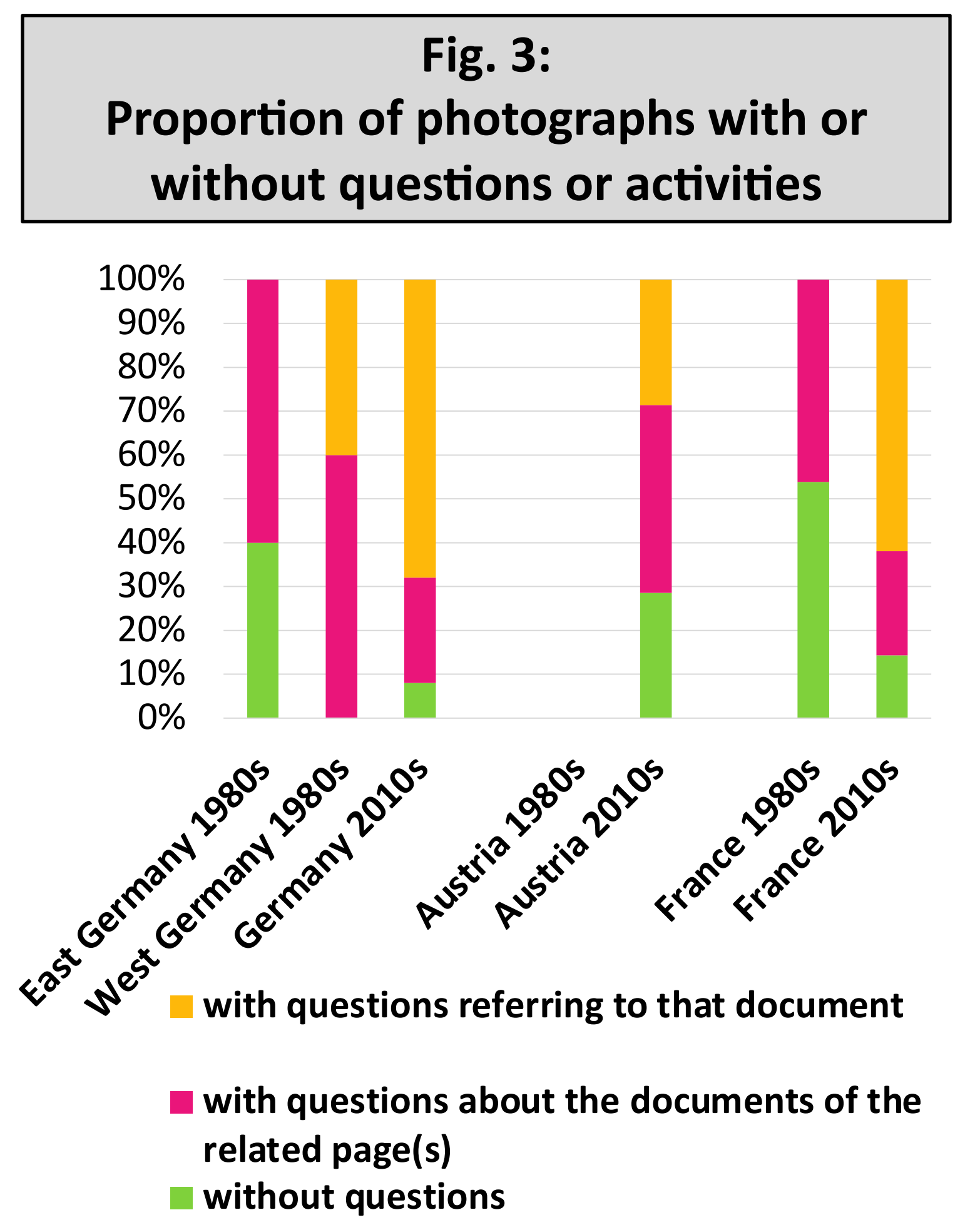
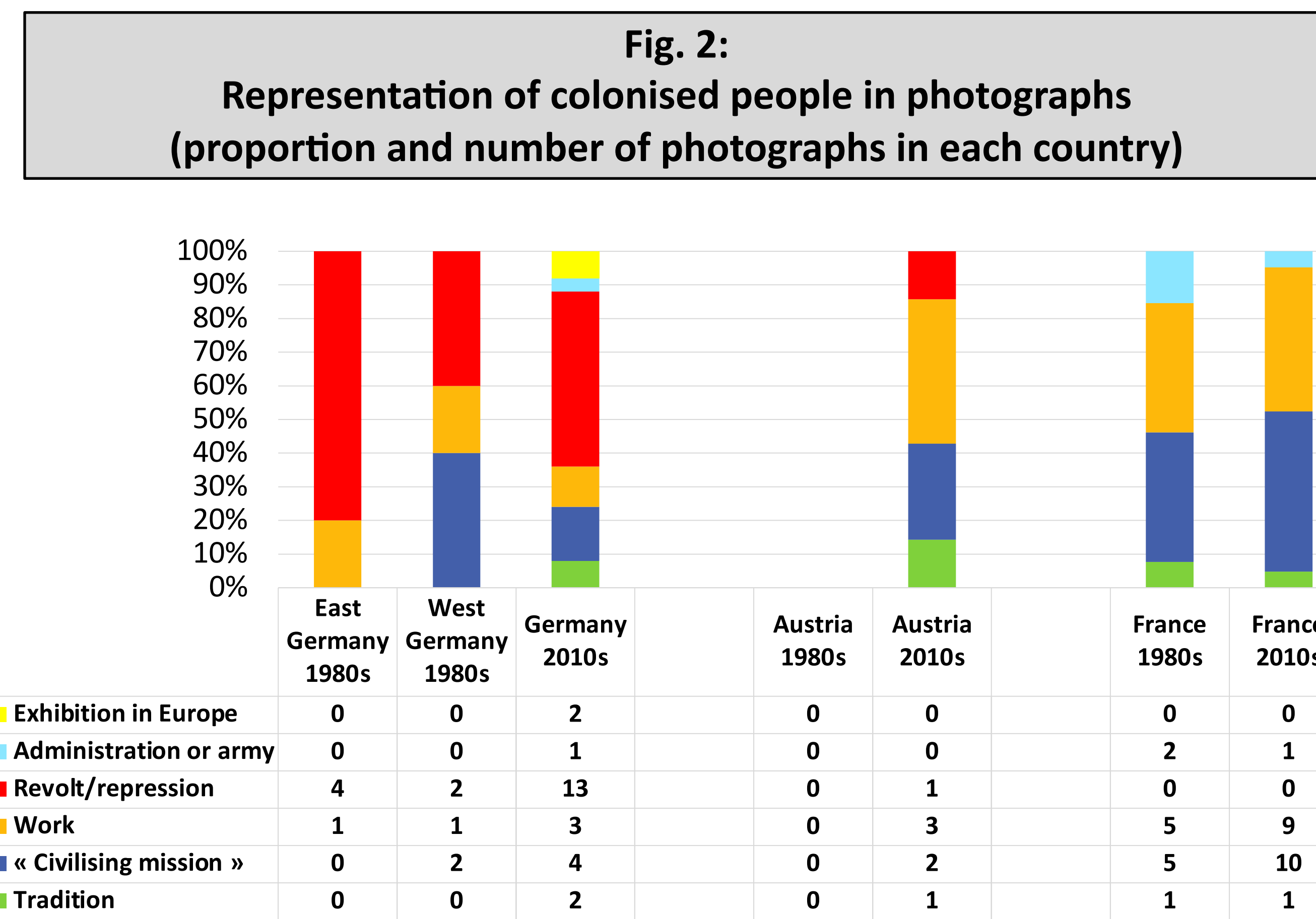
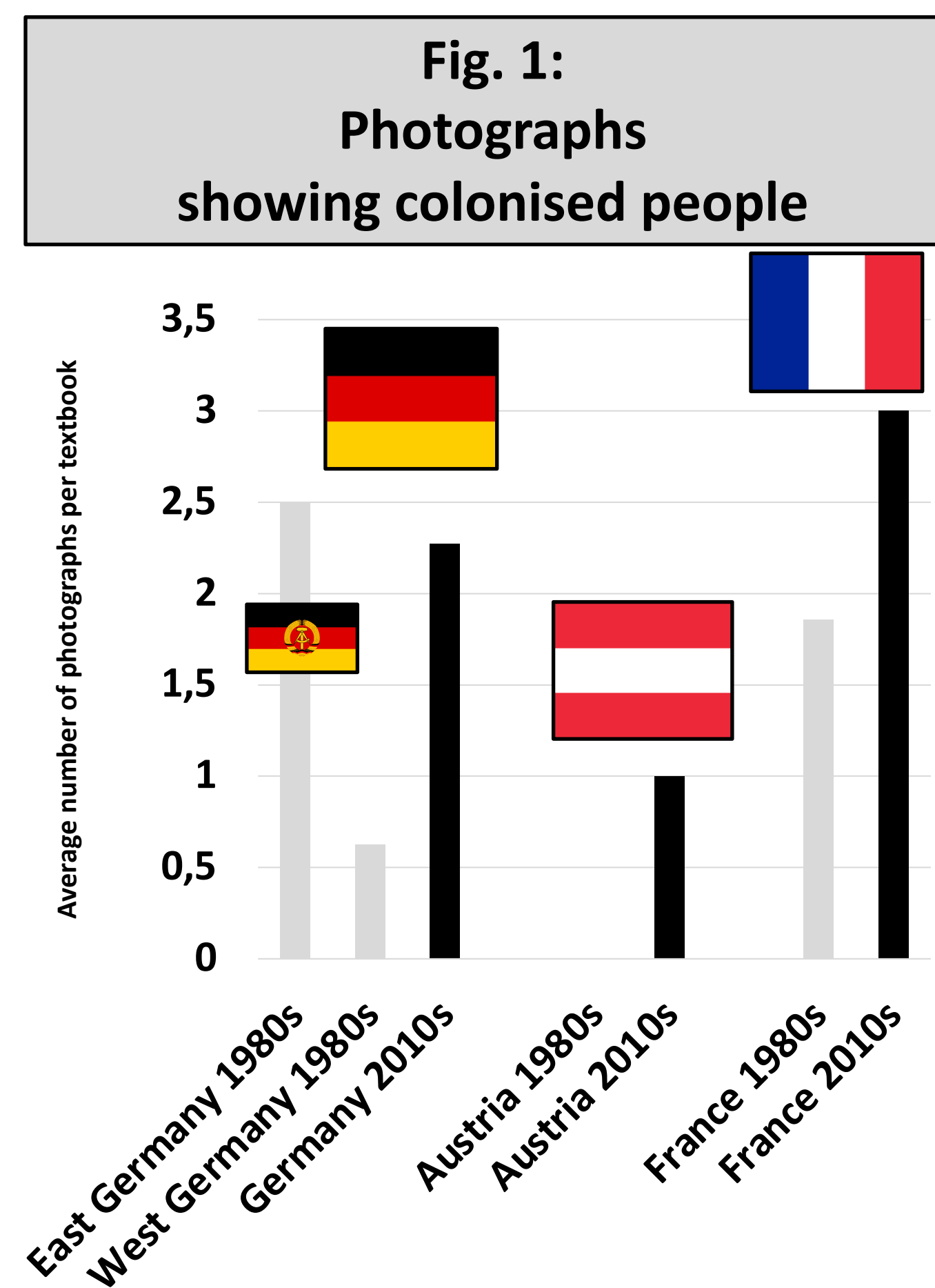
#### Methodology

- Diachronic and synchronic analysis
- Quantitative analysis of the all corpus
- Qualitative analysis of two series of examples
  - 5 pictures from the 2 decades to have a historical comparison
  - 3 pictures showing the « civilising mission » in the 3 countries in the 2010s to have an international comparison for the present situation.

#### Question

Do approaches deriving from Postcolonial Studies percolate in History didactics?

#### Quantitative analysis



#### Qualitative analysis

Fig. 4: Photographs and goal(s) of the questions or activities	
End of the 1980s	End of the 2010s
<p>- to judge the attitude of the German colonisers</p>	<p>- to describe the situation of the Herero in the concentration camps</p>
<p>- to compare Witbooi's or Bebel's texts with other documents</p>	<p>- to work on the immediate consequences of the insurrection</p>
<p>- to describe the process of the conflict</p>	<p>- to describe the document</p>
<p>- no question but a paratext about exploitation</p>	<p>- to describe the document</p>
<p>- to select the best document to illustrate imperialism</p>	<p>- to describe the document</p>
<p>- no question</p>	<p>- to explain the large diffusion of that kind of document</p>
<p>- to judge the school from the perspective of a colonised pupil</p>	<p>- to assess the relationship between colonised people and colonisers</p>
<p>- to explain how France developed North Africa</p>	<p>- to use the document to write a press article as an American journalist</p>

Fig. 5: Questions about photographs on the « civilising mission » in textbooks of the 2010s		
<p>Hatier Histoire-Géographie 4<sup>e</sup> 2016 p. 131</p>	<p>Klett Geschichte und Geschehen 9/10 Berlin Brandenburg 2017 p. 16</p>	<p>ÖBV Zeitbilder 3. Klasse 2018 p. 48</p>
Change of perspective ? Extra-European perspective ?		
<p><b>Yes</b> by giving voice to a colonised pupil</p>	<p><b>Yes</b> by assessing the school from the perspective of a pupil from that school</p>	<p><b>Yes</b> by presenting the consequences of colonisation from the perspective of an African boy or girl of the beginning of the 20th century</p>
Deconstruction of colonial representations/discourse ?		
<p><b>No</b> - only a description of the picture - the paratext describes the role of the missions (health, education, religion) without critical points or limits. - although that aspect appears in the text of the lesson: « Des écoles (...) ne scolarisent qu'une petite partie des enfants indigènes »</p>	<p><b>No, but</b> - the question about describing the picture is linked with a question about the diffusion of that kind of picture. - the text of the lesson points out the negative consequences of colonisation without mentioning the schools</p>	<p><b>No</b> - although the text of the lesson points out the negative consequences of colonisation</p>

#### Conclusion

Common trends since the 1980s:

- structure of the textbooks (more pictures, more exercises ...)
- treatment of colonisation (more pages and/or singularisation with a dedicated chapter, a more critical discourse with a special attention paid to the colonised people ...)

National differences - or regional ones in the case of Germany:

- diversity of the subjects of the pictures
- irregular interest for the question of the representation of colonised people, partially in connection with the questions in the curricula (for instance « Feindbilder » in Berlin-Brandenburg)

Increasing popularity of postcolonial subjects in the textbooks, but the treatment of the pictures cannot be reduced to postcolonial didactics :

- permanence of the illustrative function of photographs
- weakness of postcolonial questioning using postcolonial concepts (othering, agency, criticism of Eurocentrism ...)
- the deconstructionist approach also corresponds to a global evolution of pedagogical approaches

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