The Indernet
An own space in a racist society

Dr. Urmila Goel
Europa-Universität Viadrina in Frankfurt/Oder
and University of Bergen
Bergen, 19th June 2007

Aim of presentation

- provide an overview of my research
    - approach
    - theoretical basis
    - interests
- in order to assess possibilities of cooperation

Structure

1. Introduction
2. Approach
3. Theory
4. Conclusions
5. Perspective

Urmila Goel

- researcher in cultural and social anthropology
- affiliated to European University Viadrina in Frankfurt/Oder, Germany
- visiting scholar at University of Bergen
- research projects
  - „The virtual second generation"
  - "Interdependent lines of difference"

„The virtual second generation"

- on the internet portal http://www.theinder.net
  – founded in the summer of 2000
  – by self-identifiying ‚Indians of the second generation'
  – for those categorised as ‚Indians of the second generation'
  – called the *Indernet*

- research topic
  – functions of this ethnically defined own space

Methods

- ethnographic study
- following principles of Grounded theory
- field research:
  - participant observation on-/offline
  - narrative interviews
    - editors
    - users
    - observers
- collection of tesserae
- arrange a mosaic from these

Theoretical foundation

- theories of racism
  - construction and naturalisation of the other
  - degradation of the other and exclusion
  - asymmetry of power
- critical whiteness studies
  - unmarked hegemonial position
- analysis of interdependency
  - racism, heteronormativity and class

Natio-ethno-cultural (multiple) belongingness

- Paul Mecheril (2003)
- analyses situation of those
- who belong to several natio-ethno-cultural contexts at the same time
  - transnational
- live in a racist society
- based on the idea of univocal natio-ethno-cultural belongingness
  - as shown in terms like 'Indian', 'German', ...

Deviation from the norm

- belongingness is questioned
- if one is perceived to deviate too much
- from the fictitious ideal type
  - of the „Standard German"
    - not representative
    - vague
- deviation is judged on basis of constructed and perceived physiognomic and social markers
- and results in exclusion from ressources

Natio-ethno-cultural monsters

- those who belong to several natio-ethno-cultural contexts at the same time
- deviate from the norm
- unite in themselves the ununitable
- are thus monsters
- which need to be eliminated
  - at least discursively
- need to develop strategies of dealing with this

Editors and users of Indernet

- are expressing feeling of belongingness
  - to (at least) Germany and India
- are thus natio-ethno-cultural monsters
- who experience racist exclusion in Germany
- which are softened by some privileges
  - within racist system: benevolent orientalism
  - class status

Indernet: an own space

- natio-ethno-cultural (multiple) belongingness is the norm on the Indernet
- thus
  - absence of natio-ethno-cultural othering
  - feeling of familiarity
  - protection from injury
  - negotiation of ethnic identity
  - resources to deal with experiences of racism
- is considered a form of segregation
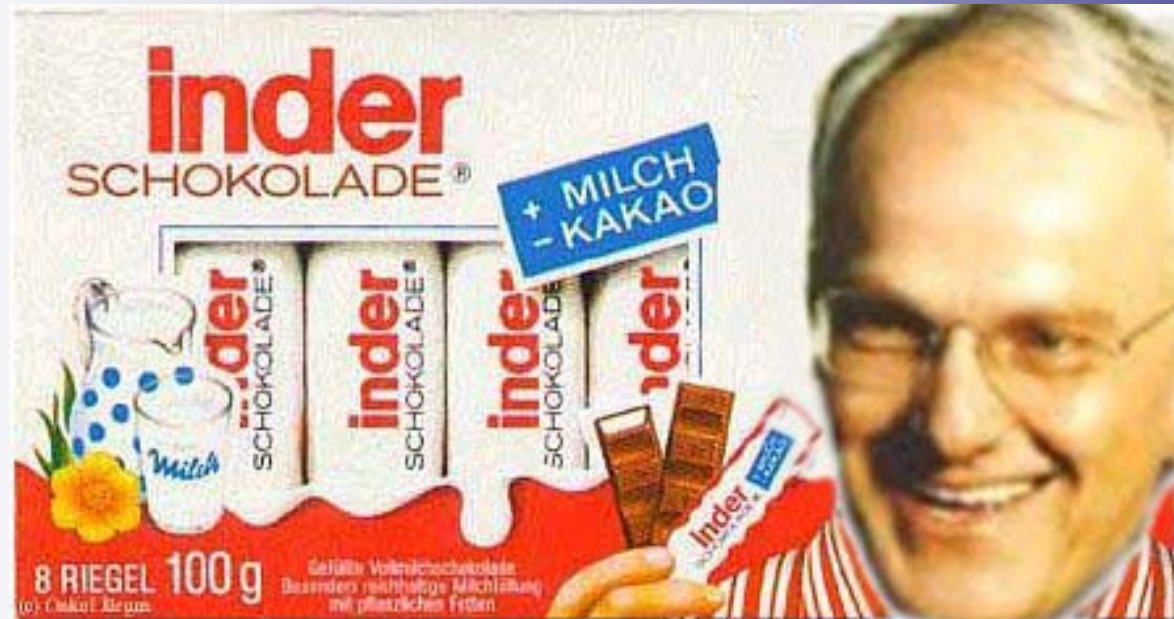- but clearly located in Germany

A space within the norm

- positioning within the racist norm
  - no explicit ressitance to it
  - though implicitly challenged
    - new ethnicity
- reproduction of hegemonial norms
  - essentialised ethnic identity
  - nationalism
  - class
  - heteronormativity

Perspective

- new research project:
- Interdependency of racism and heteronormativity
  - ethnographic field research
  - among nurses, who were recruited from Southern India and their families
- aim:
  - to deal with the complex interdependencies empirically

Thank you!

More information on www.urmila.de