

Dealing with experiences of racism

The German internet portal *Indernet*



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Structure

1. Experiences of racism in Germany
2. The Internet: space for negotiation
3. The strategy of negating racism

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Racism in Germany

- racist structuring of society
 - informed through colonialism (direct/indirect)
 - based on enlightenment (incl. ‚German‘ thinkers)
- formal (institutional) and informal
- markers for exclusion:
 - physiognomic
 - ‚blood‘
 - ‚culture‘

Islamophobia in Germany

- historically established
- mechanism of exclusion applied to
 - increased presence of migrants, who were socialised in Muslim societies and their descendants
 - demands by Muslims
- legitimised by
 - ‘war on terror‘
- refers to
 - physiognomic and social markers
 - considered hereditary
 - also to those who are ‘assimilated‘
- closely linked to racism

Imagination of 'Germanness'

- according to Paul Mecheril:
- norm of natio-ethno-cultural unambiguity
- imagined 'Standard German'
 - vague
 - but implicitly: 'White', 'Christian', male, heterosexual, middle class, etc.
- others defined as deviating
- impossibility of multiple belongingness
- implemented formally and informally
- resulting in othering and exclusion

Experiences of racism in Germany

- 'Indians of second generation'
- experience sense of multiple belongingness
- are considered to deviate from 'Standard German'
- unquestioned belongingness to Germany refused
- othered and excluded
 - institutional and discursive
 - mostly implicit, hardly open
 - everyday experience

'Indians of the second generation'

- definition:
 - socialised in 'Germany'
 - marked as 'Indians'
- relatively few in numbers
- legally, economically, socially well established
- living in 'White' environments
- minimise deviation from standard as much as possible
- faced with exoticism
- racism does not endanger their existence

The *Indernet*

- internet portal: <http://www.theinder.net>
- founded by three 'Indians of second generation'
- in summer of 2000
 - internet boom and '*Kinder statt Inder*'
- as plattform for 'Indians of the second generation'
 - for communication and information
- and information portal for 'Germans'

‘Space of the second generation‘

- norm: multiple natio-ethno-cultural belongingness
- shared experiences of multiple belongingness
 - belongingness to several contexts
 - experiences of othering and exclusion
- familiarity
- absence of othering
- shared reference to transnational context

Space for dealing with experiences of racism

- developed in context of “*Kinder statt Inder*”
- no explicit reference to othering in project description
 - new: reference to integration
- little explicit reference in discussions
- but implicit negotiation
 - space of refuge
 - absence of othering
 - negotiation of ‘Indianness’
 - exchange of information for dealing with questions
- space for multiple natio-ethno-cultural belongingness

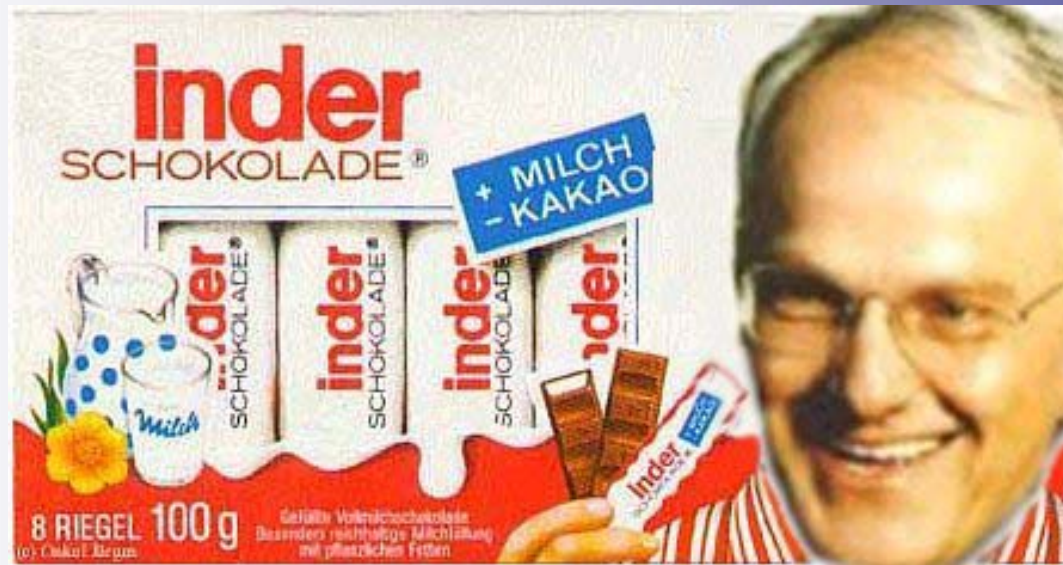
Why not explicit?

- privileged position
- strategy of ignoring/ negating experiences of racism
- protecting from hurt/ humiliation/ degradation through acknowledging experiences of racism
- focussing on surviving in racist context
- developing strategies of coping
- within the existing structures
- concentrating resources on this
- distancing oneself from those with less resources

Consequences of negating

- individually
 - enabling to be effective in racist context
 - positive self-definition within racist context
- society
 - reproducing structures of racism
 - encouraging essentialising
 - lacking resistance to mechanisms
 - but: shifting images and norms

Thank you!



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