

The Making and Breaking of Collective Identities: Analytical Inspirations from the New Marxist Anthropology

Ingo W. Schröder

MAX PLANCK INSTITUTE FOR SOCIAL ANTHROPOLOGY, HALLE (SAALE), GERMANY/SOCIAL ANTHROPOLOGY CENTER, VYTAUTAS MAGNUS UNIVERSITY, KAUNAS, LITHUANIA

S U M M A R Y : Current conceptualisations of identity in the social sciences have been criticised for their postmodern vagueness which blurs the distinction between analytical and political readings of identity at a time when collective identities are enthusiastically proclaimed while simultaneously being increasingly undermined by the forces of global capitalism. This article seeks to overcome these shortcomings with reference to recent writings of some Marxist anthropologists that refer to the concept of hegemony to analyse identity as a cultural practice situated between local and global political economies. To investigate the analytical potential of Marxist ethnographies, the examples of Gerald Sider, Gavin Smith and Kirk Dombrowski are presented. Finally, the author's own findings on the situation of Catholicism in Lithuania are introduced as a case for comparison.

Key words : IDENTITY, HEGEMONY, CULTURE, MARXIST ANTHROPOLOGY.

Why Marxist anthropology?

Within the modest framework of this article, I will try to sketch a perspective on the anthropological understanding of identity – theorised almost to a detrimental extent by social scientists over the past three decades – that aims to avoid some of the pitfalls of the main current approaches. The notion of hegemony will be identified as a particularly useful concept from the Marxist toolkit for the analysis of collective identities.

The standard criticisms against current conceptualisations of identity have been poignantly summarised in the often-cited article by Rogers Brubaker and Frederick Cooper (2000) in which they go so far as to suggest that identity should be completely abandoned as an analytical concept. The reasons they give for this are, briefly put, twofold: on the one hand, postmodern understandings of identities as multiple, fluid and ephemeral constructions have rendered the idea of identity ubiquitous and thus, ultimately meaningless. Moreover, such understandings tend to trivialise the transformations of the real world as matters of taste or as a selection among

variables. On the other hand, social scientists have been easily tempted to assume the factual existence of identity – especially in the case of national or ethnic identities – merely on the basis of political discourses that claim its existence, thereby obfuscating the boundary between folk or lay understandings and categories of social analysis. For these reasons, the standard study of identity has become a mostly redundant undertaking with predictable results. A much more interesting shift of focus is the study of the conditions under which political proclamations concerning identity are made (by state actors, identity entrepreneurs and social scientists); what interests they serve; and why they succeed or fail. This focal shift requires the renunciation of currently dominating symbolist or subjectivist approaches to identity in favour of others. These can be found in anthropology's Marxist tradition. Unlike those concepts of identity that view it as a flexible construction subject to all kinds of short-term manipulations, the Marxist perspective considers culture – and culturally generated discourses like identity – first of all, as the product of material conditions of life and historically grounded relations of domination and subalternity. I echo Smith's description of this approach as "historical realism". The use of this term reflects the need to understand social conditions, firstly in terms of the historical processes that they reflect and to emphasize the realness of history over its constructedness.

The key idea that I intend to adopt from Marxism-inspired anthropology, which promises a more precise understanding of identity as an element of culture produced under the above-mentioned conditions, is that of hegemony. Marxist ideas in American anthropology, which used to be quite popular during the 1960s and 1970s, have been marginalised for decades under the onslaught of postmodernism, however, they have undergone a moderate renaissance during recent years under the label of 'New Marxist Anthropology'. The first generation of Marxist anthropologists in the United States and Canada had rallied around the protest against the Vietnam War and support for Third-World liberation struggles and other emancipatory politics.¹ Key figures of this generation were Eleanor Leacock and Eric Wolf; other important scholars included Kathleen Gough, Joseph Jorgensen, Sidney Mintz, Gerald Sider and William Roseberry in the United States; and Richard B. Lee and Gavin Smith in Canada (Marcus and Menzies, 2007b; see also Patterson, 2001; Roseberry, 1997). The recent New Marxist Anthropology is composed mostly of former students of the first generation of the New Marxist anthropologists and calls for a struggle against the "wasteland of doubt, despair, and pessimism" (Marcus and Menzies, 2007a: 4) in a post-ideological,

¹ There were, in fact, earlier forerunners of Marxist anthropology, the most well-known among them being Oscar Lewis, Elman Service and Leslie White.

postmodernist, culturalist disciplinary field. It aims to revitalise a politically engaged anthropology that has at its heart the Marxist principle of the close connection between theory and action in academic studies, as well as to resuscitate Marxism as an agenda for a politically engaged, critical social science that resists global neo-liberalism and the pauperisation of increasing numbers of people without the presence of any other credible counter-hegemonic ideology. On the methodological side, Marxist anthropology strives for the connection of subjective ideas to objective conditions, for grounding ideas like culture in a concrete political-economic environment and power hierarchies. Representative of this new, self-labelled ‘generation of 2000’ Marxist anthropologists are the journals *New Proposals: Journal of Marxism and Interdisciplinary Inquiry*, launched in 2007 by Anthony Marcus and Charles Menzies and *Dialectical Anthropology*, since 2008 edited by Anthony Marcus and Kirk Dombrowski.

It would exceed the scope of this article to enter into a more detailed evaluation of the New Marxist Anthropology in general. The main point of reference for my argument is a provocative comment by Gerald Sider in the inaugural issue of *New Proposals* (Sider, 2007). In this short article, he outlines the key features of anthropological inquiry today that pertain in important ways to the study of collective identity. Sider reflects first on the production of “locality”:

We need to change our frame of reference from working in a locality or in several localities, to examine more closely the production of locality itself. This should include the production of local cultures, both in the hinterlands and in the heartlands, for the production of local cultures is completely integral to the production of local inequalities. ... The characteristic feature of locally specific cultures, necessarily dealing with social relations formed in the context of local and non-local processes of domination and appropriation, is thus the unavoidable and unresolvable contradictions and tensions that local cultures incorporate at their core (2007: 12–13).

While local inequalities have on the whole supported both local and non-local élites and processes of appropriation, recent globalisation intensifies political and social inequalities on a larger scale and increases differentiation within and between localities in the process of their more intense appropriation to the global economic sphere. This has deep and far-reaching consequences for the social reproduction of localities. Sider concludes that “a reinvigorated Marxist anthropology might well situate itself not in terms of finding underlying patterns or structures or processes but in the increasing difficulty of social reproduction in localities, in regions, and in nations: *the increasingly intense production of locality and the simultaneous failure of this productive process*” (2007: 13; emphasis author’s own).

In other words, Sider recognises two simultaneous processes in the contemporary world: on the one hand, people are increasingly unable to reproduce local social relations because of their dependency upon larger political-economic structures that leads to an increasing resentment of any kind of political action. On the other hand, capital and the state also fail to harness the vulnerability of the majority of local people to any productive end of their own. Thus terrains for new forms of organisation among the dispossessed local people may open up. Sider concludes that anthropology “now needs to look more closely at the social relations that emerge with chaos, uncertainty, and under the unpredictabilities of domination and intense appropriation, and find in these relations, these needs, these hopes, these fears, these terrors, ways that dispossessed and becoming-dislocated people reach toward different tomorrows” (2007: 13).

With regard to concepts of identity, these statements can be understood as follows: identities at any level – local as well as national, global, etc. – are cultural products of specific historical processes and shared positions in social space, and therefore, represent different interests. Local identities are expressions of local culture shared among people that inhabit a distinct locality or are members of a distinct social group. Such local cultures have always been under attack by more powerful agents that propagate their own hegemonic ideologies of identification, namely, the state and its various representatives, as well as capitalist economic élites dominating the global marketplace. In the contemporary world, under conditions of neo-liberal capitalism where the forces of the market have more or less amalgamated with, or superseded, the state as a powerful actor in its own right, pressures of economic exploitation, appropriation and domination are impinging upon the everyday lives of local people in ways and degrees never before experienced. In the course of these economic pressures, tensions within local life-worlds have become so intense that in most places people are no longer able to sustain and reproduce viable notions of local identity, just as local social relations are disintegrating. In a desperate effort to reclaim some of their hold upon society, states are propagating hegemonic ideas of “the nation” that aim to amalgamate the diversity of local identities into the vision of a national destiny that leads straight from past to future.

Local ideas of culture, belonging and a shared history are thus eroded by two powerful hegemonic narratives: a neo-liberal economic ideology of individual success and responsibility, and a state-sponsored ideology of nationalism. Faced with such powerful forces, local people are no longer able to reproduce their social relationships and realise their vision of a decent livelihood. They are also coerced into political apathy and hardly able to articulate their common interests in terms of a political idiom that

resists the hegemonic vision of the world. A prime example of this process of hegemonic silencing is the obliteration of class in public discourse, even under the conditions of the current global economic crisis (cf. Schröder, 2008). While hegemonic ideologies thus succeed in eroding local cultures and harnessing local people to the goals of the market, these ideologies are failing to sustain new identities that stimulate people's identification with overarching forms of locality such as the state, or even, for that matter, trust in the moral authority of the market as the ultimate producer of the common good. In other words, identity politics are failing practically on many levels, yet political visions of identity still continue to be passionately advocated by a plethora of actors at every occasion.

The concept of hegemony becomes indispensable for the analysis of identity from a Marxist perspective as advocated by Sider. Hegemony can briefly be summarised as the dominance of a social élite through the inculcation of a coherent view of the world that structures people's perception and experience of their everyday reality in such a pervasive way that it is accepted as absolute by members of a society. A very concise definition has been provided by the anthropologist Daniel T. Linger who states: "Hegemony is the maintenance of a political structure through the cultural shaping of experience, obviating or lessening reliance on illegitimate force" (1993: 4). The concept of hegemony was introduced by Antonio Gramsci in his effort to theorise subaltern consciousness as the product of power inequalities (cf. Gramsci, 1971; Crehan, 2002; Kurtz, 1996; Morton, 2007). In Gramsci's writings, hegemony encompasses a wide range of power relations from direct coercion to willing consent, which structure a world of inequality where subaltern people are prevented from producing coherent accounts of the world from their own perspective. More recent uses of the concept by Marxist anthropologists like Donald V. Kurtz, Gerald Sider and Gavin Smith have followed the influential reading of Gramsci by Raymond Williams (1977) that identifies hegemony more or less with culture and more specifically, with notions of 'tradition'. Thus Sider describes hegemony as "the dominance of one particular class in the domain of culture ... expressed in, and through, the specific institutions of 'civil society': churches, schools, newspapers, public buildings and spaces, systems of status symbols, and so forth" (2003a: 208). By providing pervasive views of culture and tradition, of what defines "us" against "others", hegemony also defines who belongs to "us" and who does not – in other words, it establishes a vision of collective identity.

In summary, then, from the view-point of Marxist anthropology identity as a form of symbolic classification has to be understood as part of a culture, as a way of expressing sameness and difference in a specific cultural code. In this view, culture must be seen as the outcome of actually existing social

relations and strategies of ordering the world and as such is subject to hegemony, the expression of a vision of the world that is imposed by the dominant groups in society upon the others. Although such hegemonies are created by people through purposive action, one must never forget that they (echoing Marx) act under conditions not of their own choosing. For this reason, culture always reflects accumulated history and a political-economic framework, the “objective” conditions of its creation. So far these were very abstract theoretical reflections. In the following section, I will flesh out this hypothesis with reference to the ethnographic work of three Marxist anthropologists: Gerald Sider, Gavin Smith and Kirk Dombrowski.

Marxist ethnographies of culture, identity and hegemony

Gerald Sider, one of whose books (Sider, 2003a) has inspired the title of this article, has conducted long-term field research at two sites in North America: rural Newfoundland and among the Lumbee, a Native-American group of the Carolinas that have been claiming the right to federal recognition since the 1950s. His Newfoundland study (Sider, 1980, 1986, 2003a) has focused on the relationship between merchant capitalist élites and the rural fishing villages from colonial times to the present. He seeks to explain why the fishermen have been unable to mount a concerted resistance against élite domination despite their increasing impoverishment as the result of mounting exploitation in the course of the gradual incorporation of local production into the global market. Sider explicitly links the concept of culture with that of class: “Culture enters the dynamic of class because ... it is where class becomes dynamic, where the lines of antagonism and alliance come together and apart” (2003a: 68). In this context, he provides a detailed definition of his view of culture:

The core of culture is the form and manner in which people perceive, define, articulate, and express their mutual relations. In class societies this form of social perception and this mode of behavior mediate between, on the one hand, the relatively egalitarian aspects of work and daily life and the collectively self-determined aspects of reproducing this domain over time, and, on the other, the primarily unequal domain of the appropriation of the product and the reproduction of appropriation (2003a: 210).

Hegemony is seen by Sider as that aspect of culture that most directly seeks to extend economic appropriation into the dominance of daily life. Of course it operates not only in the realm of culture, but through the combination of political, economic, and cultural pressures. Their persuasiveness and effectiveness are in fact based exactly on the merging of cultural expressions with more direct economic and political pressures (2003a: 210–211).

Sider argues that the historical success of the hegemony imposed by merchant capitalists over these village fishermen has been rooted in the absence of strong ties between families that would have provided the basis for an increasing development of a culture of confrontation; in other words, of a counter-hegemonic strategy. This structure of social relations has been upheld successfully by a combination of élite politics and economic pressures since colonial times. The Newfoundland example shows that while local culture can have the potential to confront domination, it appears not be effective as an idiom of resistance against capital or the state. As envisioned by Gramsci, the local culture's outlook tends to be fragmented and individualised. In this case, the inability of subsistence production to meet people's economic needs – a condition that itself is the product of a long history of merchant capitalists harnessing local economies to their specific needs and increasingly embedding these communities, and their economies, in the world market, thus steadily increasing their dependency – and contradictions between social relations of commodity and subsistence production set social processes in motion “that served to individualize experience and intentionality and, thus, to undermine the political assertiveness of outport [fishing village] culture” (2003a: 306). Due to the individualised nature of local village culture, it is less collectively confrontational and apparently passive and backward and, therefore, useless as a vehicle for developing political claims. Finally, Sider stresses that it is not the content of culture but the contradictions between multiple existing cultural forms that defines culture's role as mediator between the state and the economy on the one hand and daily life on the other (2003a: 305).

Sider's study of the Lumbee (Sider, 2003b, 2006) presents a case where culture has been successfully mobilised as a collective resource of identity politics vis-à-vis the state. Culture is, however, still caught up in a much larger field of contestation over position, place and equality, in the tension between the forces that unify people socially and politically, and the forces that divide and fragment them. Culture serves the interest of the local élite to a much greater extent than that of the majority of the local population who are facing increasing impoverishment and hardship. Sider sees culture as “a major terrain for the production and reproduction of inequalities among a people – especially the kinds of locally-specific inequalities that root a people within and against their place in a larger social formation, within and against their place in the state, among and against each other” (2006: 286).

Gavin Smith has undertaken field-work among peasants in Peru and the Alicante region of south-eastern Spain (Smith, 1989, 1999, 2006; Narotzky and Smith, 2006). Like Sider, he aims to investigate how particular cultural meanings and practices are shaped by “currently prevailing and historical

fields of power” (1999: 252). For Smith, culture is always connected to hegemony:

Insofar as it includes the sanctions and expectations that go along with certain behavior patterns, culture has the sense of a taken-for-granted regulation of everyday life, while, as a result of its referring to practices carried out over time, there is also a generative element to culture. Cultural expression, then, becomes a means by which people articulate their participation in a group: claims and responsibilities vis-à-vis the collectivity that are not directly mediated by formal state institutions (Smith, 1999: 203).

Smith identifies hegemony as constituted through what he calls “the dialectics of history and will”, the diachronic engagement of local people’s interests with power hierarchies. Hegemony “threads its way through a set of interwoven social processes – the various forms through which capitalism is reproduced, the accumulated history of power struggles, attempts to *produce* hegemonic fields, and hegemony understood as a cultural field of that which is taken for granted” (1999: 228–229).

In his recent work with Susana Narotzky on Spain, Smith proposes a field-work methodology that approaches the issue of the hegemonic production of culture from three different perspectives: (1) political economy, comprised of structural power relations and the conditions of social reproduction (called “concrete abstractions”, following Marx); (2) instituted social practices that organise agency; and (3) “structures of feeling”, people’s interpretation of the social world they live in (Narotzky and Smith, 2006: 4–5). At the same time, he urges for a historical perspective that takes into account different conflicting histories in order to show how concrete abstractions, instituted practices and structures of feeling have developed and are simultaneously conditioning and enabling (Narotzky and Smith, 2006: 5–6).

In their ethnography, Narotzky and Smith bring this theoretical framework to bear on the study of working people in the Vega Baja del Segura region of Spain who have experienced a long history of uncertainty and state dependency. This condition has been exacerbated during recent decades by the rapid transformation from an agricultural to a predominantly industrial economy. Identity politics that invoke either a local or a regional culture are omnipresent in the area, but are perceived by the locals as having little connection to their historical experiences and daily lives.

In fact, the politics of culture becomes an ersatz of collective identity and of culture as politics, a mere aggregate of individual consumption tastes, one, moreover, that effectively voids of political intent the sharing and communicating of experience. These manifestations of new civic engagement have little connection to the lived histories or memories of those called to participate in them, and also little connection to the everyday duress of their lives (Narotzky and Smith, 2006: 198).

As in the case of the Newfoundland fisherman studied by Sider, imagined cultures promoted by identity politicians thus serve the interest of élites and the regional economy but do little to enable local people to resist the increasing exploitation and hardship of their lives. This is because the same political-economic conditions that require the creation of cultures and identities “from above” have been responsible for the rising individualisation, informality and uncertainty of peoples livelihood, which makes them wary of “the political” and barely capable of engaging in collective action of any kind (Narotzky and Smith, 2006: 199–200).

The work of Kirk Dombrowski (a former student of Sider at the City University of New York) brings the issue of identity change into focus. Dombrowski has studied the role of Pentecostal Christianity among the Tlingit people of south-eastern Alaska. As with the Newfoundland fishermen and Spanish peasants, the Tlingit’s traditional livelihood based on fishing is increasingly under threat by global capitalist incorporation, but remains of crucial symbolic value for the identification with indigenous culture. Over the recent decades Pentecostal churches have been increasingly successful in attracting members of the Tlingit community, thereby alienating them from their existing social relationships and splitting villages into religion-based factions. Dombrowski is interested in religion and culture “insofar as the elements that make them up come to be part of specific social strategies, strategies of making the world meaningful and thus livable: strategies that necessarily involve and invoke action on, with, and against other people” (2001: 10). The key importance of culture and religion in this situation lies in their ultimately collective nature. Whatever reasons people have to join a Pentecostal Church – or any other identity project – beliefs and identities are always social entities that position the individual alongside, or in opposition to, others. Cultural meanings are created, perpetuated or constrained by power relations in society. As everywhere in Native North America, indigenous culture is a highly politicised issue among the Tlingit and does not allow for an ambivalent attitude. One either fully participates in it or is considered to be outside of the cultural community. For this reason, Pentecostalism means not simply a different religious identity but a rejection of the politics that are indissolubly tied to the project of indigenous culture. The difference between Pentecostalism and the Russian Orthodox Church (the dominant religion among the Tlingit since the nineteenth century) thus represents a clear statement in the embattled field of identity politics, a statement for or against culture (Dombrowski 2001: 14–15).

Like Sider and Smith, Dombrowski finds culture to be less a consensus about values and meanings within a group, as conventional anthropological wisdom would suggest, but rather a field of struggle over the hegemonic

understanding of these values and meanings. The role of culture in ongoing processes of social differentiation must therefore be examined from the perspective of history and political interest. While cultural meaning cannot simply be reduced to historically contingent political expedience, the idea of culture must take these dynamics into account and one should no longer see culture as a fixed view of the world. Dombrowski suggests speaking rather of a process of “culturing”:

In such a view, what seems most important is how people of a particular geographic and historical locale are able to make meaningful the world around them, or, less innocently, how people are made to accept some meanings they would prefer not to. Either way, the focus would be on how they do one or the other (and most of them both) in ongoing fashion, over and over again, in ever-changing contexts and amid ever-changing desires, hopes, and worries, and with different access to the resources need to do these things, amidst others trying to do similar things, for different reasons, with different access to these same resources (2001: 185).

Echoing Eric Wolf (1982, 1999), among others, Dombrowski concludes from his field research that local culture and religion continue to be important under conditions of global historical processes as idioms of a shared identity. However, while culture provides a system of meaning to people that enables them to order the world and encourages those living on the margins of power to pursue their subsistence activities against the odds of increasing hardship, it does little to change the power inequalities in the world and put an end to the elements of daily life that make it so close to being unlivable. For these reasons, individuals may change their identity and ally themselves with forms of hegemonic culture that promise a more tolerable life:

This, it seems to me, is very much what is at stake for those who join Pentecostal churches – and who in the process lose their place in “family,” “identity,” and “native culture.” The results they seek, though quite ordinary by middle-class American standards, are extraordinary given the lives they lived before becoming church members. Ironically, it is those who find themselves “against culture” who find they must culture the world on their own, often “against” the only lives and “cultures” they have ever known or are likely to know (Dombrowski, 2001: 194–195).

How hegemonic identities are made and broken: a glance at Lithuania

As the above examples illustrate, hegemony encompasses not only overt political processes of asserting ideologies, but a wide range of everyday practices in both state institutional fields and civil society that create and

reproduce a certain culture in everyday contexts, thereby sustaining a notion of normalcy with regard to power hierarchies and social inequalities. In a well-known contribution, William Roseberry has summarised this situation as follows:

I propose that we use the concept [of hegemony] ... to understand struggle, the ways in which the words, images, symbols, forms, organizations, institutions, and movements used by subordinate populations to talk about, understand, confront, accommodate themselves to, or resist their domination are shaped by the process of domination itself. What hegemony constructs, then, is not a shared ideology but a common material and meaningful framework for living through, talking about, and acting upon social orders characterized by domination. That common material and meaningful framework is, in part, discursive: a common language or way of talking about social relationships that sets out the central terms around which and in terms of which contestation and struggle can occur (1994: 360–361).

When we understand culture as the historical outcome of such ongoing struggles within the context of domination, then identity can be seen as a common code for talking about the past, the present and future aspirations. “Cultures then, as collectivities, if they exist at all, are constituted through quite specific historical fields of force”, as Smith notes (2004: 111–112).

To compare some of the previous ethnographic analyses with findings from my own research, I will briefly discuss the case of Catholicism in Lithuania.² Due to its dominant position in the religious field of Lithuania throughout the twentieth century, the Catholic Church can be assumed to be well-positioned in the hegemonic struggle. Seeking to answer the question posed by Smith “at what points hegemony can be secured ... by evoking notions associated with ‘culture’ and what the political implications are for these kinds of attribution” (2004: 112), I suggest that three conditions must be met to identify a Catholic hegemony *strictu sensu*, that is, as the unified “historical bloc” of civil and political society envisioned by Gramsci: (1) the alignment of Church and state politics; (2) the encompassment of religious “popular culture” by hegemonic Catholicism, thus preventing the articulation of a popular religious discourse against the dominant narrative; and (3) political-economic conditions that serve to sustain élite power and preclude the development of everyday practices and counter-hegemonic ideas that produce a sense of alliance among subaltern groups. In twentieth-century Lithuanian history, such conditions were met probably only within

² Field-work in Lithuania has been carried out since 2008 (particularly between April 2008 and April 2009) as part of the international research project “The Catholic Church and Religious Pluralism in Lithuania and Poland”, based at the Max Planck Institute for Social Anthropology and funded by the Volkswagen Foundation.

two short periods, during the early first republic (before the seizing of power by Smetona in 1926) and in the years preceding and immediately following independence in 1990.

When taking a closer look at the latter historical moment, it is obvious that the Catholic Church played an important role in the independence movement, successfully promoting among the population a shared understanding of a national Lithuanian culture that closely identified Catholicism with Lithuanian identity (cf. Christophe, 1997, 2002; Klumbyte, 2003). During the 1990s, however, the Church lost its ability to provide a common cultural narrative, while at the same time the economic conditions worked to erode social relations in people's daily lives. The Catholic Church's hegemonic aspirations failed for a number of reasons. Firstly, its relationship with the political élite turned out to be rather ambivalent: while Christian Democrats and the conservative Homeland Party have cultivated close connections with the Church hierarchy, to the Social Democrats and a number of populist parties of various political persuasions religion plays no significant political role. Secondly, the official narrative of a "national culture" in independent Lithuania is centred on the celebration of the medieval Grand Duchy of Lithuania and a view of tradition that downplays the role of Catholicism in the country's history. Finally, the Church hierarchy and most of the clergy have lacked the ability to create a rapport with the majority of the population that is caught between feelings of existential insecurity and the urge to emulate western capitalism at any cost without much concern for the common good. The Church has failed to marshal a successful response to the increasing individualisation and religious indifference among the people that reduces Church affiliation to a superficial habit of occasionally attending the rites and services which it offers, as well as the general loss of trust by the people in institutions and political projects of any kind. It is apparent that the very forces of rampant neo-liberal capitalism that are eroding local people's daily social networks and concepts of local culture and identity based on shared histories and experiences and are thus making them increasingly vulnerable to economic exploitation and political manipulation, at the same time prevent the successful establishment of a hegemonic notion of a national culture that has the potential of producing loyal citizens. The élite's position, just as the statistical dominance of the Catholic Church, is currently sustained mostly by default, by the lack of counter-hegemonic ideas and practices that take hold in society. Echoing Roseberry's statement cited above, it can thus be said that the Catholic Church has failed to assert its own view of culture in public discourse, leaving the issue in a vague state of uncertainty between ideas of Christianity, national heritage and western capitalism. Therefore it has not

succeeded in propagating a vision of Lithuanian identity that is essentially shaped by Christian ideas.

These observations take us back to Sider's argument cited at the beginning of this article and the apparent paradox of the simultaneous making and breaking of collective identities through hegemonic struggles. Sider summarises his view as follows:

In the most concrete terms the situation before us can be characterized by the fact that people's own social relations are inadequate to reproduce their own social relations with their own means. The ensuing dependency and vulnerability might well be taken to be the framework for a pervasive and widespread depoliticization. But the increasing inability of capital and the state to harness the dependency and the vulnerability their own actions produce toward any productive or useful end leaves open a terrain for organization among the discarded and the dispossessed (2007: 13).

The political economy of the modern world thus simultaneously serves to make and break hegemonies – just as it serves to make and break a local common sense that carries within itself the seed of potential oppositional political action. On the one hand, global capitalism creates the hardship and vulnerability alluded to by Sider, but it obviously fails to produce pervasive cultural narratives or collective identities of its own. While local cultures are broken, on the other, by the erosion of their potential for reproduction, within the prevailing hegemonic system interstices might open up that could see new social relations and new ideas emerge “with chaos, uncertainty, and under the unpredictabilities of domination and intense appropriation” (Sider, 2007: 13). In my view, the same can be said with regard to Catholicism in Lithuania as it is understood by an earnestly religious minority, but lack of space forbids elaborating further on this here (cf. Schröder, n.d.).

What I aimed to have shown in this article is the advantage of understanding identity as part of a culture that has been generated over time through hegemonic struggle. In this way, we resist the temptation to blur the idea of identity even further by dividing it into different processes or variables (as Brubaker and Cooper do in the second part of their article; see also the recent effort by Donahoe *et al.* 2009). This Marxist approach also refutes the romantic view of culture and identity as expressions of individual agency and choice by focusing rather on the histories of their constitution through long-term power hierarchies and the objective conditions of local and global political economies. Indeed, it insists on the essentially historical nature of cultures and identities. Finally, the focus on the dialectic of the active production of hegemonic fields and their reproduction offers a research agenda that promises to identify the actual workings of hegemonies under specific socio-historical conditions.

SOURCES:

- Brubaker, R. and Cooper, F. (2000). Beyond “identity”. *Theory and Society*, 29(1), 1–47.
- Christophe, B. (1997). *Staat versus Identität. Zur Konstruktion von “Nation” und “nationalem Interesse” in den litauischen Transformationsdiskursen von 1987 bis 1995*. Cologne: Böhlau.
- Christophe, B. (2002). When is a nation? Comparing Lithuania and Georgia. *Geopolitics*, 7(1), 147–172.
- Crehan, K. (2002). *Gramsci, culture and anthropology*. London: Pluto Press.
- Dombrowski, K. (2001). *Against culture: Development, politics, and religion in Indian Alaska*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press.
- Donahoe, B., Eidson, J., Ferissa, D., Fuest, V., Hoehne, M.V., Nieswand, B., Schlee, G. and Zenker, O. (2009). *The formation and mobilization of collective identities in situations of conflict and integration*. Max Planck Institute for Social Anthropology Working Paper 116. Halle/Saale: Max Planck Institute for Social Anthropology.
- Gramsci, A. (1971). *Selections from the prison notebooks* (Q. Hoare and G. Nowell Smith, Ed. and Trans.). New York: International Publishers.
- Klumbyte, N. (2003). Ethnographic note on *nation*: Early post-socialist nationalism in Lithuania. *Dialectical Anthropology*, 27(3), 279–295.
- Kurtz, D.V. (1996). Hegemony and anthropology: Gramsci, exegeses, reinterpretations. *Critique of Anthropology*, 16(2), 103–135.
- Linger, Daniel T. (1993). The hegemony of discontent. *American Ethnologist*, 20(1), 3–24.
- Marcus, A.A. and Menzies, Ch.R. (2007a). Renewing the vision: New proposals for the 21st century. *New Proposals: Journal of Marxism and Interdisciplinary Inquiry*, 1(1), 1–5.
- Marcus, A.A. and Menzies, Ch.R. (2007b). Towards a class-struggle anthropology. *New Proposals: Journal of Marxism and Interdisciplinary Inquiry* 1(1), 14–39.
- Morton, A.D. (2007). *Unravelling Gramsci: Hegemony and passive revolution in the global economy*. London: Pluto Press.
- Narotzky, S. and Smith G. (2006). *Immediate struggles: people, power, and place in rural Spain*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Patterson, T.C. (2001). *A social history of anthropology in the United States*. Oxford: Berg.
- Roseberry, W. (1994). Hegemony and the language of contention. In G. M. Joseph and D. Nugent (Eds), *Everyday forms of state formation: Revolution and the negotiation of rule in modern Mexico* (367–377). Durham: Duke University Press.
- Roseberry, W. (1997). Marx and anthropology. *Annual Review of Anthropology*, 26, 25–46.
- Schröder, I.W. (2008). The classes of ’89: anthropological approaches to capitalism and class in Eastern Europe. In I.W. Schröder and A. Vonderau (Eds), *Changing economies and changing identities in postsocialist Eastern Europe*. Halle Studies in the Anthropology of Eurasia 20 (3–25). Münster: Lit.
- Schröder, I.W. (n.d.). *Catholicism in Lithuania: Hegemony or common sense?* (Manuscript in progress).
- Sider, G. (1980). The ties that bind: culture and agriculture, property and propriety in the Newfoundland village fishery. *Social History*, 5(1), 1–39.
- Sider, G. (1986). *Culture and class in anthropology and history: A Newfoundland illustration*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

- Sider, G. (2003a). *Between history and tomorrow: The making and breaking of everyday life in rural Newfoundland*. Peterborough: Broadview Press.
- Sider, G. (2003b). *Living Indian histories: Lumbee and Tuscarora people in North Carolina*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press.
- Sider, G. (2006). The walls came tumbling up: The production of culture, class and Native American societies. *The Australian Journal of Anthropology*, 17(3), 276–290.
- Sider, G. (2007). Remaking Marxist anthropology. *New Proposals: Journal of Marxism and Interdisciplinary Inquiry*, 1(1), 12–13.
- Smith, G. (1989). *Livelihood and resistance: Peasants and the politics of land in Peru*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Smith, G. (1999). *Confronting the present: Towards a politically engaged anthropology*. Oxford: Berg.
- Smith, G. (2004). Hegemony: critical interpretations and beyond. *Focaal*, 43, 99–120.
- Smith, G. (2006). When “the logic of capital is the real which lurks in the background”: Programme and practice in European “regional economies”. *Current Anthropology*, 47(4), 621–639.
- Williams, R. (1977). *Marxism and literature*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Wolf, E. (1982). *Europe and the people without history*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Wolf, E. (1999). *Envisioning power: Ideologies of dominance and crisis*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Kolektyvinių tapatybių kūrimas ir keitimas: idėjos analizei iš naujosios marksistinės antropologijos

Ingo W. Schröder

MAX PLANCK SOCIALINĖS ANTROPOLOGIJOS INSTITUTAS, HALLE (SAALE), VOKIETIJA /
SOCIALINĖS ANTROPOLOGIJOS CENTRAS, VYTAUTO DIDŽIOJO UNIVERSITETAS, KAUNAS, LIETUVA

S A N T R A U K A : Šiuolaikinė tapatybės samprata socialiniuose moksluose dažnai kritikuojama dėl postmodernistinio neapibrėžtumo, ištrinančio skirtumus tarp analitinio ir politinio tapatybės supratimo. Ši kritika itin aktuali šiuo metu, kai daugelis kolektyvinių tapatybių yra entuziastingai deklaruojamos, tačiau tuo pat metu silpninamos globalaus kapitalizmo veikimo principų. Straipsnyje pateikiamas alternatyvus kolektyvinių tapatybių analizės būdas remiantis naujausiais marksistinės antropologijos autorių darbais, kurie vartoja hegemonijos sąvoką analizuodami tapatybę kaip kultūrinę praktiką, įvietintą tarp vietinės ir globalios politinės ekonomikos. Siekiant išnagrinėti marksistinių etnografijų analitinį potencialą, straipsnyje pristatomi GERAL SIDER, GAVIN SMITH ir KIRK DOMBROWSKI darbai. Straipsnio pabaigoje autorius pristato savo paties tyrimą apie katalikybės situaciją Lietuvoje kaip atvejį palyginimui.

P a g r i n d i n i a i ž o d ž i a i : TAPATYBĖ, HEGEMONIJA, KULTŪRA, MARKSISTINĖ ANTROPOLOGIJA.