INGO SCHRÖDER AND ASTA VONDERAU (EDS.): *CHANGING ECONOMIES AND CHANGING IDENTITIES IN POSTSOCIALIST EASTERN EUROPE*. HALLE STUDIES IN THE ANTHROPOLOGY OF EURASIA. MÜNSTER: LITVERLAG, 2008

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The book edited by Ingo Schröder and Asta Vonderau approaches the creation and recreation of identity in what is defined as postsocialist Eastern Europe. The book derives from the EASA conference in Bristol in 2006, where Schröder and Vonderau led the panel under the same title. The ambition was to find new theoretical approaches to and encourage more ethnographic research on the ways in which the past years' rapid development forged new conceptualizations of the individual self and of the self as a part of society in the previously socialist countries. The book by Schröder and Vonderau consists of four contributions from the workshop, including the editors own, and further embeds contributions from a range of scholars who were invited to provide a chapter for the book. It is inspired by the effects the socio-economic turnarounds the last years have had on different parts of the population and the various changes and outcomes of self-identification. This, according to the editors, takes place on two levels. One level is the construction of a collective identity (who are we?), often through the new class-divided society, with growing gaps between rich and poor. The other is the individual level, where people set out to redefine the question of the self (who am I?). Rather than assume that people living in the former soviet countries uncritically adapt to imported western lifestyles and self-conceptualization and adapt to what is presumed to be a western outlook on the world, the editors urge us to go back to the fields and look at the various ways the west is incorporated, or partly incorporated, or rejected both through collective and institutional negotiations and through individual renegotiations of the self.

The book is divided into three parts, each of which covers a specific angle of the theme. The first part concerns the re-constitution of collective identities after 1989. It sets out with a contribution from Schröder in which he prepares the ground by (re)introducing the concept of class when analyzing the previously socialist countries. Schröder sets out the argument that while we never have been able to speak of a classless society in the Soviet Union, we can not ignore the new production of classes, which rapidly came into being after 1989. Schröder thus suggests that we should not be afraid to speak about classes in the former Soviet countries; rather, it would be folly to ignore the new socio-economic divisions and the upward and downward mobilities among different parts of the populations, which articulates new ideas both about the self and others. Whereas Schröder's contribution is strictly theoretical and reflective, Neringa Klumbyte continues with her chapter, a well-written and novel account about the forced recreation of the past in light of the present at an (EU)sponsered cultural activity in Vilnius. Here we learn that just as right and wrong ideas about society and history were forced from above during the Soviet system, the very same forms of discourse and rhetoric are used in present-day Lithuania, only now to "cure" people who are sick with Soviet nostalgia. This is followed by a chapter on the newly emerging middle class

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in Poland, by Buchowski, and ends the first part with two contributions on new identities in the countryside by Pilichowska and Bogdanova.

The second part of the book concerns the establishment of individual identities after 1989 and starts out with a contribution from the second editor, Asta Vonderau, and her analysis of the new rich in Lithuania. This is followed by an account of the construction of new businessmen in Latvia by Agnese Cimdina. Vihra Bahrova's chapter on punk rock identity and the ways in which looks are transformed as a way to express resistance to the enforced westernization is a refreshing read in the midst of the book. De Munck's contribution on the new Lithuanians and the perception of wealth and knowledge creates a somewhat rigid division of capable and incapable Lithuanians in Europe. The last chapter in this section written by Pachenkov and Voronkova once again turns our attention to the concept of nostalgia (Ostalgia).

To round up the various and often unlike contributions, the editors have called for Steven Sampson and Elizabeth Dunn to take on the task to make some general statements and draw conclusions based on the scholars' contributions.

The strength of an edited volume is the variety of contributions and reflections on the same topic by a range of scholars, who offer different theoretical and ethnographic insights. However, this very same aspect is also the possible weakness of any edited volume, depending highly on the way(s) the editors manage to structure and subsume the outline and the arguments. In this edited volume, as in most others, contributors already have their own research agenda, which they stretch in the direction of the book's theme in so far as possible, but not too far. The novel job of the editors therefore is to make the contributions fit the overall ideas and concepts, so that the reader gains enriched knowledge about the theme of the book. The key to any successful edited volume, in my opinion, is in the subsuming introductory chapter and, if one is so lucky, a chapter offering some concluding remarks and reflections in the end. The present book is the first edited volume I encountered, which does not provide this crucial introductory chapter and thereby the reader gets on the wrong foot from the onset, as it makes his or her journey through the book more diffuse without the needed starting point, where both editors made common theoretical and empirical analyses and showed how and in which ways the chapters fit together, and point out the reasons for choosing these exact themes to underline their argument. The preface of the book, which is hardly more than two pages, ultimately does not satisfy this need, nor does it replace such an introductory chapter. I therefore read Schröder's chapter as an attempt of replacing this missing link, in which he offers thorough theoretical insights and urges us to return to the concept of class. However, this line is hardly followed throughout the book, except in Buchowski's contribution that likewise treats the concept of class seriously.

While individual chapters offer novel and interesting analyses, I will especially highlight the aforementioned contribution by Klumbyte, the reflections on the emerging Polish middle class by Buchowski and the refreshing analysis on punk identity in Bulgaria by Bahrova, I am not convinced that the volume as a whole offers new insights or raises questions, which have not been raised before. This is reflected in the term postsocialism, which the editors do not seem to be able to let go of (although Sampson does), which makes it a new volume on an old theme, and framed within in a by now all too well-known discourse of the "post". This scarcity of new insights is again apparent in the concluding chapters, where Sampson and Dunn attempt to round up the chapters, but instead end up reproducing some insights, which were manifested long before this volume came into being: we should not analyze the phase of change (transition) in terms of winners and

losers, since this is too simplistic and since all people have agency, as Sampson writes (which contradicts the messages laid out explicitly in De Munck's contribution and implicitly in Schröder's contribution). The conclusions further state the well-known truth that the phase of transition was mediated by individuals and subjectivism, which means that the direct path to a market economy never happened, as Dunn remarks. Still, despite lacking any particular new insights except the call for class analysis, the book is a well-written, worth reading contribution to an existing body of literature about postsocialist countries, and probably one of the last books which will be written under the heading of postsocialism.