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Veröffentlichungsversion / Published Version
Forschungsbericht / research report

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Empfohlene Zitierung / Suggested Citation:
Theesfeld, I., & Boevsky, I. (2003). *A breach of tradition during socialism: the case of water syndicates in Bulgaria.* (CEESA Discussion Paper, 17). Berlin: Humboldt-Universität Berlin, Institut für Wirtschafts- und Sozialwissenschaften des Landbaus, Fachgebiet Ressourcenökonomie. https://nbn-resolving.org/urn:nbn:de:0168-ssoar-111689

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A BREACH OF TRADITION DURING SOCIALISM – THE CASE OF WATER SYNDICATES IN BULGARIA

INSA THEESFELD AND IVAN BOEVSKY

CEESA Discussion Paper No. 17 | 2003
ISSN 1616-9166

Abstract
During the post-socialist transition period, the Bulgarian irrigation facilities deteriorated to a large extent and no longer meet the needs of the new landowner and agricultural production structure. The Bulgarian government therefore enacted two new laws to encourage collective action and to establish water user associations in order to achieve sustainable water management. In this article, we will question the frequent argument that water user associations could easily be established in Bulgaria, because they are rooted in the water syndicates.

Empirical findings from village case studies reveal that limited collective memory exists today about former water syndicates' rules-in-use and patterns of action. We will explain this breach of tradition by the migration from villages to cities, the suppression of pre-communist so-called capitalist behaviour, and the length of the communist period. Moreover, the analysis of the historical cooperative development in Bulgaria shows that the water syndicates were enforced by a top-down approach and did not have much in common with the classic cooperative principles.

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ISSN 1616-9166 (Print)
ISSN 1616-9174 (Online)

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1. INTRODUCTION

A closer look at the agricultural sector within Bulgaria shows an uneven distribution of natural water resources over time and space, making irrigation necessary to reduce production risk. The irrigation sector, until recently a major water user in Bulgaria, has been drastically affected by the political and economic changes that followed the collapse of the socialist system. The Bulgarian irrigation system was built to serve large production units during socialism and does not meet the needs of the new agricultural structure, which combines small-scale subsistence producers with medium and large-scale agricultural producers. At present, the facilities have largely deteriorated, and only a small percentage of the fields equipped with irrigation devices are actually irrigated (Petkov, 2000: 49). In the irrigation sector, we observed chaotic water appropriation rules and insecure and ineffective property rights.

The Bulgarian government enacted two new laws -- the Bulgarian Water Law, implemented in January 2000, and the Water User Association Act, which came into force in March 2001. Both legal acts should encourage collective action and facilitate water user associations (WUAs) in an effort to achieve sustainable water management in agriculture. Their aim is to reform and decentralise the former centrally planned water sector and to increase the involvement of local actors. Numerous World Bank projects, such as the "Irrigation Rehabilitation Project," have attempted to set up WUAs since 1991 (World Bank, 1999).

The introduction to the Water User Associations Act (2001) describes the motivation behind its creation. The act refers to similar organisational traditions by quoting the Law on Water Syndicates (WSs), which was in effect between 1920 and 1954. The World Bank likewise refers to Bulgaria's irrigation tradition, including thirty years of WS's activities (World Bank, 1999: 7; Annex 4). Experts interviewed in Sofia at the Ministry of Agriculture and Forest (MAF) and at the offices of the World Bank corroborated the argument that WUAs can be established more easily in those regions where WSs existed before World War II. They use this tradition to justify their actions.

The frequent argument that WUAs could easily be established because of their WSs history has neither been questioned nor empirically studied. Challenging research questions remain: Is it possible to tie into the tradition of WSs from before 1954 in order to successfully establish WUAs in present times? Does the local population remember the rules-in-use and action patterns that originated in the WSs -- i.e., did this knowledge outlast the socialist period?

We will offer empirical evidence that the local population does not remember cooperative traditions of water management originating in the WSs. Moreover, we will show that the state's immense intervention in water syndicates has hindered the emergence of those kinds of collective action principles that government authorities presently depend upon.

In addition to explaining the basic definitions underlying this article, Section Two provides the context of the sociological debate: is it possible to tie into cooperative traditions from the pre-socialist period? The study's analytical approach is presented afterwards. In Section Three we summarise the research methodology before Section Four reviews the historical cooperative development in Bulgaria in general and the development of the WSs in particular. Section Five presents the empirical case study. Empirical findings support the hypothesis that only limited cooperative rules-in-use and action patterns of water management have outlasted the socialist period. We introduce possible reasons for this breach of tradition in

Section Six: the migration from villages to cities, the suppression of pre-communist so-called capitalist behaviour, and the length of the communist period. Section Seven draws conclusions.

2. UNDERSTANDING TRADITION

The notion of tradition in this article refers to Elster (1991: 104), who defines tradition as "mindlessly repeating or imitating today what one's ancestor did yesterday. The subject matter of tradition, thus understood, is how to build a house, when to sow and when to harvest, how to dress when going to church on Sunday and so on." In line with this, tradition is understood as knowledge transfer between generations, in the sense of keeping the knowledge of rules and patterns of actions. In other words, keeping a "collective memory" of certain "rules-in-use" alive.

According to Ostrom et al. (1994: 37-50), an institutional analysis relevant to field setting requires the understanding of the working rules, or rules-in-use, that individuals apply. Most formal analyses focus primarily on the structure of an action situation. Ostrom et al. indicates this as the surface structure of formal representations. The rules are part of the underlying structure. All rules are the result of implicit or explicit efforts to achieve order and predictability among humans. Rules-in-use govern the patterns of interaction among the different actors in the system. They represent the set of rules to which participants would refer if asked to explain and justify their actions to fellow participants.

Halbwachs (1985: 76) approaches "collective memory" as a picture of similarities of the same group of people. He stresses the importance of belonging to a group. A person is very much interested in a certain event. Nevertheless, he cannot remember anything. Even if others explained the event to him, he would not be able to remember it. According to Halbwachs (1985: 8), this is possible because the person has left the group in which it had happened and whose members jointly remembered it. Moreover, in order to keep the collective memory, it is important to keep in contact with the group in which the person experienced the event and to talk with the group about it. "I could not restore to life the memory, because I had nothing in common with my former companions for a long time" (Halbwachs, 1985: 12). This is neither the fault of the group's nor of an individual's memory, but is due to the deletion of a broad collective memory (Halbwachs, 1985: 12; 99).

Based on Halbwachs (1985: 66-71; 99), we will use tradition similar to collective memory. By combining this with Ostrom's approach, however, we will limit ourselves to the remembrance of rules-in-use and pattern of behaviour.

2.1 BREACH OR TRANSFER OF TRADITION– A SOCIOLOGICAL DEBATE

We would like to place our research question within the context of the sociological debate that questions whether new institutional rules can be tied into traditions before 1944. The debate comprises many facets, which range between two views. I) There is a cooperative tradition from pre-socialist times in Bulgaria. New cooperative forms could easily be established. II) It is problematic to ignore the history of the last 45 years and to set up institutions from the pre-socialist period.
Advocates of the first view state that the rich pre-socialist cooperative tradition in Bulgaria promotes the revival of the present cooperative system (Todev et al., 1992: 144). Begg and Meurs (1998: 249, 266) argue that households are choosing cooperative forms today because

collective labour and collective land use is rooted in traditions that have spanned centuries. Up until 1944, Bulgaria's economic structures were imprinted by a highly developed cooperative system. Todev et al. (1992: 144) assume that it is possible to build on these rich experiences while establishing a market economy. According to Todev et al. (1992: 208), experts call for a revival of those structures that endured until the communist takeover. Similarly, Weber et al. (1992) indicate the role of cooperatives in the transition period and the chance to tie into its tradition in Bulgaria.

Todev et al. (1992: 220), however, qualify this simplistic argument in at least one point: "The true history of cooperatives in Bulgaria is absolutely unknown to present generations. It was falsified by the former communist regimes to such an extent that existing publications couldn't be used for a current public relation campaign. Without such campaigns, it will not be possible to recollect the intellectual and historic roots of the Bulgarian cooperative movement."

Arguments in favour of the second view, which hark back to before the historical socialist period, are presented by Kanev (2002: 79), who analysed religion in Bulgaria after 1989 in the context of its own historical tradition. He describes the Bulgarian history as interrupted, characterised by a shortage of historical memory and a loss of established traditions. Brazda and Schediwy (2001: 40) also support the second view, as they see a problem in the transfer over generations. They refer to different authors and emphasise that "the cooperation model may be somewhat less stable than the market model or the hierarchy model, as it is based on a special type of collective enthusiasm that is hardly transferable over the generations."

Kostova and Giordano (1995: 102) and Giordano (1993: 9; 2001: 11) point out that people try to recreate the conditions of the pre-socialist era as if socialism never existed. Reforms would often refer to the glorious pre-socialist past, which is seen as decisive for the transformation of the present and the design of future change. Giordano (1993: 8) uses a metaphor for illustration: "When one wishes to come out of a dead-end street, then one must return to the original point of entry." According to Giordano (1993), the socialist period has so thoroughly altered the rural social structure and the consciousness of the people that the attempt to recreate the conditions of 1946 can only be seen as illusory and fictitious.

The authors (Kostova and Giordano, 1995; Giordano, 1993; Kaneff, 1998) take the example of the restoration of land ownership relations from 1946. Kaneff emphasises that tensions persist in the rural communities, although in 1997 approximately 64 percent had been restored to the pre-communist owners[1]. Giordano (1993: 9; 2001: 12) calls this attempt to recreate the conditions of 1946 a reprivatisation without farmers, which can be designed on paper but cannot be put into practice. The scholars stress that the socialist period formed certain perceptions and power structures that cannot be ignored while establishing new rules.[2]

[1] See Swinnen (1997) for the reasons behind the local communities' reluctance. He explains the agricultural reform legislation, property rights restitution, and collective farm transformation policies after 1989 as the outcome of a political bargaining game between radical reformers and followers of the former communist party.

[2] The particular way in which privatisation has been carried out – that is, through the restitution of land to those who owned land in 1946 – emphasises the importance of kinship rather than work in defining rights over land ownership, which has led to the development of a whole range of tensions. An additional factor not to be

Creed (1998: 278) argues that socialism, including social relations, systematic interlinks in the economy, and cultural identities, created a distinctive historical context from which transition proceeds. Swain (1998: 5) gives a similar premise for his framework of the analysis of post-socialist rural change: current developments in the post-socialist countryside cannot be understood in isolation from the experience of the socialist past and the constraints it imposed.[3] Also, Giordano and Kostova (2001: 17) conclude that innovative forms of cooperatives combining economic efficiency with democratic management are still unknown in Bulgaria. The traditional characteristics of collective decisions, collective action, and collective control are hard to find in modern-day Bulgaria (Kozhukharova 2001: 79).

The sociological debate's two views are described by Begg and Meurs (2001) as a) the "separatist" perspective, a disjunction from communism expressed in a history of change and b) the "organic" perspective, emphasising historical continuities and persistence. They present a third perspective c) where emerging institutions and behaviours are neither entirely artifacts of the new conditions nor pure continuities from the past. In their view, households draw on production traditions in order to form responses to changing conditions.

2.2 ANALYTICAL APPROACH

Two reasons were decisive in choosing the WSs as examples for a breach of tradition during socialism. First, the topic is of current interest, because of the recent development in the Bulgarian legislation. The Bulgarian Water Law, implemented in January 2000, and the Water User Association Act, which came into force in March 2001, give highest priority to the establishment of WUAs. Second, WSs were not gradually restructured like the other agricultural producer cooperatives after 1944. Instead, they were abruptly nationalized (see Section Four), thereby representing a special case in the history of the cooperative system in Bulgaria.

We will draw on the second strand of the sociological debate, which assumes limited chances to tie into a cooperative tradition from pre-socialist times. We will try to validate the hypothesis, that the tradition of the WSs did not outlast the socialist period.

3. METHODOLOGY

The validation of the hypothesis is based on a review of documents in the Bulgarian National Archive, at the Archive of the National Library, and at the library of the law faculty in Sofia. Legislation, legal interpretations, and documents from the Bulgarian National Archive from 1920 to 1965 were translated and analyzed. Some of these documents were not made public until the 1990s. Expert interviews at the MAF, the World Bank, and at the Irrigation System Company (ISC) were conducted in Sofia.

Empirical material from four village case studies in the Pavel Bania region of central Bulgaria contributed to this study. WSs were active in this region before and after World War

overlooked is the dramatic decline in living standards that has occurred across rural Bulgaria since 1989, as well as its implications for the popularity of collective farms (Kaneff, 1998: 165).

[3] Swain compared the transformation processes in Hungary, Czechoslovakia, and Poland and introduced a point that should not be overseen, that is, that the collective farms profound social and cultural roles in village life (Swain: 1993: 28).

II. These case studies were embedded in broader empirical fieldwork, which investigates possibilities for collective action in Bulgaria's irrigation sector.[4]

Qualitative research methods predominate these case studies (Yin, 1994: 1-17). To gain an overview and collect statistical data from the region, several interviews were carried out with experts at the regional level, such as at the ISC state firm and the District Agricultural Office. In the villages, the first interviewees were key persons such as the mayor, the managers of the cooperative farms, tenants, or the water guard, who were questioned according to an interview guideline. As a second step, farmers were selected by random sampling and questioned with informal open-ended interviews to verify the information obtained. In addition to observation and interviews, emphasis was placed on the inclusion of participatory research methods, the most fruitful of which were map drawings and group discussions with farmers.

4. HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT OF COOPERATIVES AND WATER SYNDICATES

The following section explains the history of the cooperative system in Bulgaria, in general, and the development of the WSs, in particular.

The Bulgarian cooperative movement went through many stages. The notion "cooperative" was used in different contexts, sometimes with a political purpose, therefore it must be considered with great care. Brazda and Schediwy (2001: 36) differentiate between "real cooperatives" and "lifeless cooperatives." In this article, the term "classic cooperative" is used, instead of real cooperatives. Classic cooperatives are managed and operated according to the cooperative principles set up by Hermann Schlulze-Delitzsch and Friedrich Wilhelm Raiffeisen, who created the modern cooperative system in Germany.[5] The term "pseudo-cooperative" is used for what Brazda and Schediwy call "lifeless." It stands for the centrally administrated, hierarchically managed, nationalised cooperative system that is no longer active according to the cooperative principles of the classic cooperatives. The socialist collective enterprises belong to these pseudo-cooperatives.

4.1 PRE-PERIOD OF COOPERATION

This period lasted from the first settlement of people on the Bulgarian territory until the Russian-Turkish war (1877-1878). The beginnings of cooperative groupings on Bulgarian soil can be traced back to the Thracian tribes. The organisational structure was the clan, which provided protection and security to its clan members. Similar formations with only minor changes could be found later, during the settlement of the East-Slaves and Bulgarian ancestors on the Bulgarian territory (Popov, 1924: 1-2; Sapundziev, 1947: 48-52). With the gradual disbandment of the clans, new forms of collaboration developed -- household com-

[4] The process of institutional change in Bulgaria's irrigation sector can best be analysed with a dynamic research methodology. The complete study is therefore based on six months of empirical fieldwork, subdivided into three phases over a period of two and a half years. The authors conducted 18 village case studies in three regions of Bulgaria.

[5] The guiding principles of the cooperative concept are: 1) the advancement mandate, i.e., the advancement of its members' economic development, 2) the identity principle, i.e., those willing to cooperate should establish and maintain a jointly owned and operated enterprise on the basis of self-help, and 3) the democratic procedure principle, i.e., a decentralised structure of self-reliant units with entirely voluntary entry and exit (Aschhoff and Henningsen, 1996: 16-25; 141-147).

munities (*zadruga*[6]) in the plains and harvesting cooperatives (Zetvaska tscheta) in the hilly regions. The first trade associations had already emerged in Bulgaria by the tenth century. Simultaneously, the guilds (esnafski sdruzenija) appeared (Boevsky, 1997: 263). The described period formed a fruitful basis for the further development of cooperatives in the period following.[7]

4.2 PRIME PERIOD OF COOPERATION

This period commences at the end of the Russian-Turkish war in 1878, an event that marked the fall of the Ottoman Empire (1396-1878), and finishes in 1945. Attempts to form agricultural cooperatives in Bulgaria date back to the turn of the nineteenth century. "Oralo," the first cooperative not only in Bulgaria but in the Balkans as well, was founded in 1890 under the Raiffeisen principles (Zentralverband der Konsumgenossenschaften, 1986: 85-87). Nonetheless, the first rise of cooperatives was delayed until the passing of a cooperative law in 1907 (Palasov: 1946: 317). The rapid development of the cooperative system was due to the country's land ownership structure. Bulgaria was dominated at the time by small landowners (Todev et al., 1994: 31). An remarkable development in the cooperative system occurred during the period of the peasant party government (1919-1923), which represents a peak in the development of the cooperative system in Bulgaria (Todev, 1992: 168).[8] In 1921 there were 870 cooperatives, and in 1923 the number increased to 1,423 (Madrow, 1938: 564). By 1939 there were 3,502 cooperatives in the country. A sign of this prime period was that the rural intelligentsia -- including teachers, priests and clerks -- were substantially represented among the cooperatives' members, sometimes working as bookkeepers or agronomists in the cooperatives (Kozhucharova and Rangelova, 2001: 22).

Even after the Russian-Turkish war, legal decisions in Bulgaria were influenced by the Ottoman legislation. First steps to regulate water use were taken in 1882 with the Law on Regional and Local Administration (Michaelvo, 1935: 52). In 1897 a law that regulated public goods, including water use, was enforced. Thereafter, a law on estate and property was adopted from Spanish and Italian civil law that regulated the ownership of water.

Eventually, in 1920, the Bulgarian parliament passed the Law on Water Syndicates, which was based on the Prussian water law from 1913. One of the objectives was to regulate water use according to cooperative principles because the state lacked the financial means to manage it on its own. The law supported the establishment of WSs under cooperative principles, but the self-administration of the syndicates was limited. The public interest and state policies had priority (Milenkov, 1943). For example, the law required the approval of a minister in order to found a WS, because the WSs' measures had to serve the public interest or contribute to public economic utility (Michaelov, 1935: 68; Law of Water Syndicates, 1920: § 8). In other words, the right of free choice of membership was violated. Some of the established syndicates had compulsory membership (Michov, 1986: 410), which was justified in their definition as cooperatives yielding a benefit for all landowners upon establishment.

[6] The *zadruga* was a patriarchal system of joint farming, in which all property was commonly owned by extended families, and labour was performed collectively (Begg and Meurs, 1998: 268).

[7] For historical details about the cooperative movement in Bulgaria, from the first settlement until recent times, see Boevsky (1997).

[8] Among scientists a discussion came up on whether these cooperatives were initiated and enforced by the government. This argument leads to the theory that these cooperatives were not classic cooperatives, and that the period could not be called a prime period in the sense of the classical cooperative principles. This argument is not followed within the scope of this article.

Compulsory membership applied even to those landowners who did not benefit from the activities of the WS, but their membership simplifies the WS's activities. If those compulsory members bore disadvantages, they should be compensated according to the law (Michaelov, 1935: 63; Law on Water Syndicates, 1920: § 42).

Three categories of water syndicates were established and all were named water syndicates (WSs): 1) syndicates for irrigation, 2) syndicates for correction of rivers and drainage, and 3) syndicates for electricity. On 25 November 1921, "Strascha" -- the first WS for irrigation -- was established in the village of Boschula, located in the Pasaschik district. Seven WSs for irrigation were founded in 1921, eight in 1922, and an additional five in 1923 (Michov, 1986: 414). By 1928 the total number of WSs of the first category amounted to 27. In 1933 the statistics reported 31 WSs for irrigation, which included 11,545 natural persons and 80 legal entities as members (Michov, 1990: 71, 188).

4.3 SOCIALIST PERIOD - BREACH OF TRADITION

The socialist period (1945–1989) can be considered a "breach of tradition." Socialist reorganization of the producer cooperative was initially supposed to be on a voluntary basis, but was actually accomplished under coercion (Todev et al., 1994: 31). Both incentives and coercion were used. After Zhivkov became the communist party's secretary general, forced collectivization was pushed once more and finalized in 1958 (Todev et al., 1992: 177; Todev and Brazda, 1994: 32). The complete triumph of the "cooperative system in agriculture" was officially declared in 1958. Later, in the 1970s, a further process of centralization took place with the establishment of the Agricultural Industrial Complexes (Todev and Brazda, 1994: 33). Despite the regime change in 1944, statistics show an increase in the number of local cooperatives -- from 4,114 in 1944 to 6,160 in 1947.[9] This was due to information and public relation work on the part of communist leaders, who pushed the concept of cooperatives. Essential for classic cooperative systems is the integrated corporate structure of local cooperatives and regional and national cooperative associations. By 1948, however, the number of national cooperative associations had dropped to one, a good indicator of the onset of an era of pseudo-cooperatives.[10] Here we can observe one consequence of the 1948 law on cooperatives, which marked the beginning of the nationalisation and top-down management of cooperatives.

Figure 1 illustrates a model of thought on the relevance of the classic cooperative system in Bulgaria. Due to the important distinction between classic and pseudo-cooperatives, the scale of this development cannot be measured by membership development alone. The relevance of a movement in society includes the support of an idea, which is difficult to measure in proxy variables. Therefore, Figure 1 does not depict a graph with absolute or quantitative numbers. Instead, the relevance of the development is set in relation to historical stages.

[9] The number of local cooperatives totalled 4,114 in 1944; 5,078 in 1945; and 6,160 in 1946. The number of regional cooperative associations was 53 in 1944; 62 in 1945; 65 in 1946; and 85 in 1947. (National Statistical Institute, 1947-1948: 207)

[10] The number of central cooperative associations totalled 19 in 1944, 19 in 1945, 20 in 1946, six in 1947, and one in 1948. (National Statistical Institute, 1947-1948: 207)

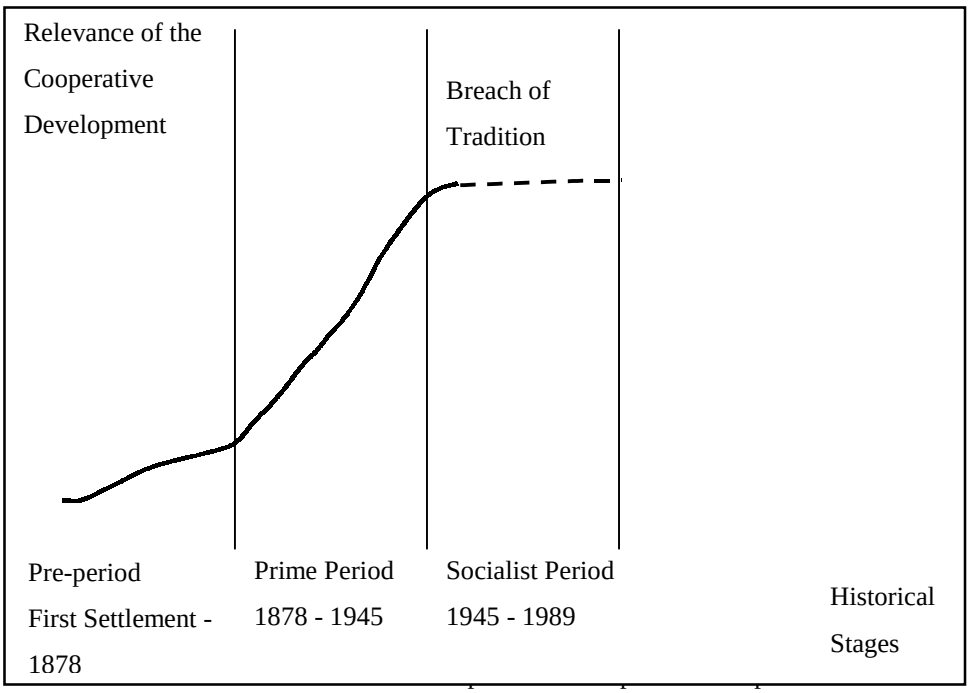


Figure 1: Development of the Cooperative System I

By 1947, a total of 67 WSs existed in Bulgaria. On 20 February 1947, the Association of WSs was founded. The goal of this umbrella organization was to support and coordinate all actions of the compulsory member WSs (Bulgarian National Archive, 1962: Historical Report of Fond 167, 1947-1952).

Since 1947, the Ministry of Agriculture has had diverse regulations that have exerted influence on the activities of the WSs. The impact of these regulations on the WSs' decision-making has increased over the years. Documents from 1950 reveal various levels of secrecy with regard to WS activities. For example, the annual balance sheet and the irrigation structure development plan were classified as "top secret" (Bulgarian National Archive, 1950: Fond 167, record number: 1 record unit 692, sheet 1, 2). In 1953 employees were spied upon and turned in if they offended the rules of secrecy (Bulgarian National Archive: Fond 349, record number: 1, record unit: 9, sheet 1, 2).

In 1951 the Association of WSs lost its independence when it became affiliated with the ministry. Moreover, close collaboration with the communist party was defined as one of the goal of the association (Bulgarian National Archive, 1951: Fond 167, record number: 1, record unit 7, sheet 1-4).

Thereafter, the association of WSs was liquidated according to the Decree No. 11 of the Council of Ministers from 10 January 1953. The Directorate for State Drainage and Irrigation Systems at the Ministry of Agriculture was founded. The WSs' assets were transferred to this new directorate. In the years 1954 and 1955, individual WSs were liquidated and thereby abruptly nationalised (Bulgarian National Archive, 1962: Historical Report of Fond 167, 1947-1952).

The irrigation systems have been financed by the state since 1955. Several of the Ministry's reorganisation of its directorates increased the process of centralisation. According to Regulation No. 168 of the Council of Ministers from 1962, a Directorate of Water Management was implemented at the Ministry of Agriculture. With the Decree No. 562 coming into force in December 1962, the Directorate was no longer working under the ministry, but instead was directly affiliated with the Council of Ministers (Bulgarian National Archive: Historical Report of Fond 349).

5. CASE STUDY – WATER SYNDICATES IN PAVEL BANIA REGION

Recent trends in Bulgaria's legislation and development aid activities have shown that political decision-makers and international donor organizations expect an awareness of cooperation mechanisms and patterns of collective action among the local population which are rooted in the WSs' history. As mentioned above, we oppose this assumption and argue that tying into a cooperative tradition from pre-socialist times is restricted. Based on the following empirical case study material, we will validate our hypothesis that the tradition of WSs did not outlast the socialist period.

5.1 RESEARCH SITE

The Pavel Bania commune belongs to the District Stora Zagora, and the state firm ISC's Stora Zagora branch is responsible for its irrigation affairs. WSs in this region were active before and after World War II.[11] Pavel Bania is situated in a valley between the Stara Planina and the Sredna Gora mountain ranges. Excluding grazing land, the agricultural area in the Pavel Bania commune amounts to 9,300 hectares, two-thirds of which were under cultivation in 2001. The excellent water supply from natural resources is rare. Several mountain rivulets and rivers flow through the valley. Moreover, the groundwater level in some areas is at two meters and could easily be used for irrigation. Nevertheless, the existing water management problems are striking. The fact that problems in the irrigation sector are not related to natural water shortage makes this region unique. Their problems concern distribution, appropriation, and responsibility.[12] Experts believe that soil structure and rainfall distribution only allow for grain to be cultivated without irrigation. Irrigation, however, is inevitable for perennials, such as mint and roses.[13] Their yields will decline to 50 percent if crops are not irrigated.

Figure 2 illustrates the irrigation catchment area of the Pavel Bania commune. The rivers rise in the two mountains enclosing the commune, pass through the valley, and fill the Koprinka water dam. Villages with WSs are indicated by the symbol ✤ in Figure 2. Pavel Bania commune's irrigation infrastructure presently comprises a complicated network of thirteen micro-dams, pumping stations, weirs, and canal systems built for the most part by collective farms during the socialist era. The WSs already constructed the basic network of irrigation canals before World War II, as indicated in Figure 2.

[11] The following examples of WSs are described in the literature: "Slatna Reka" Water Syndicate in Stora Zagora covers an irrigation area of 1,200 hectares. "Reiska Reka" Water Syndicate in Bogomilovo in the Stora Zagora region covers an irrigation area of 1,700 hectares. (Michaelov, 1935:152, 158)

[12] For a more in-depth analysis on water appropriation conflicts, see Theesfeld (2000).

[13] Pavel Banja commune is located 25 kilometres west of the city Kasanlak. Its "Valley of Roses" has been cultivating roses for four hundred years. About 80 percent of the world's production of attar of roses is located here.

The Pavel Bania commune comprises twelve villages and the municipality Pavel Bania. WSs existed in six out of twelve villages. Under these premises, the town of Pavel Bania and three of the villages that formerly housed WSs were chosen for case study analyses: Alexandrovo, Gabarevo, and Taza (Figure 2).

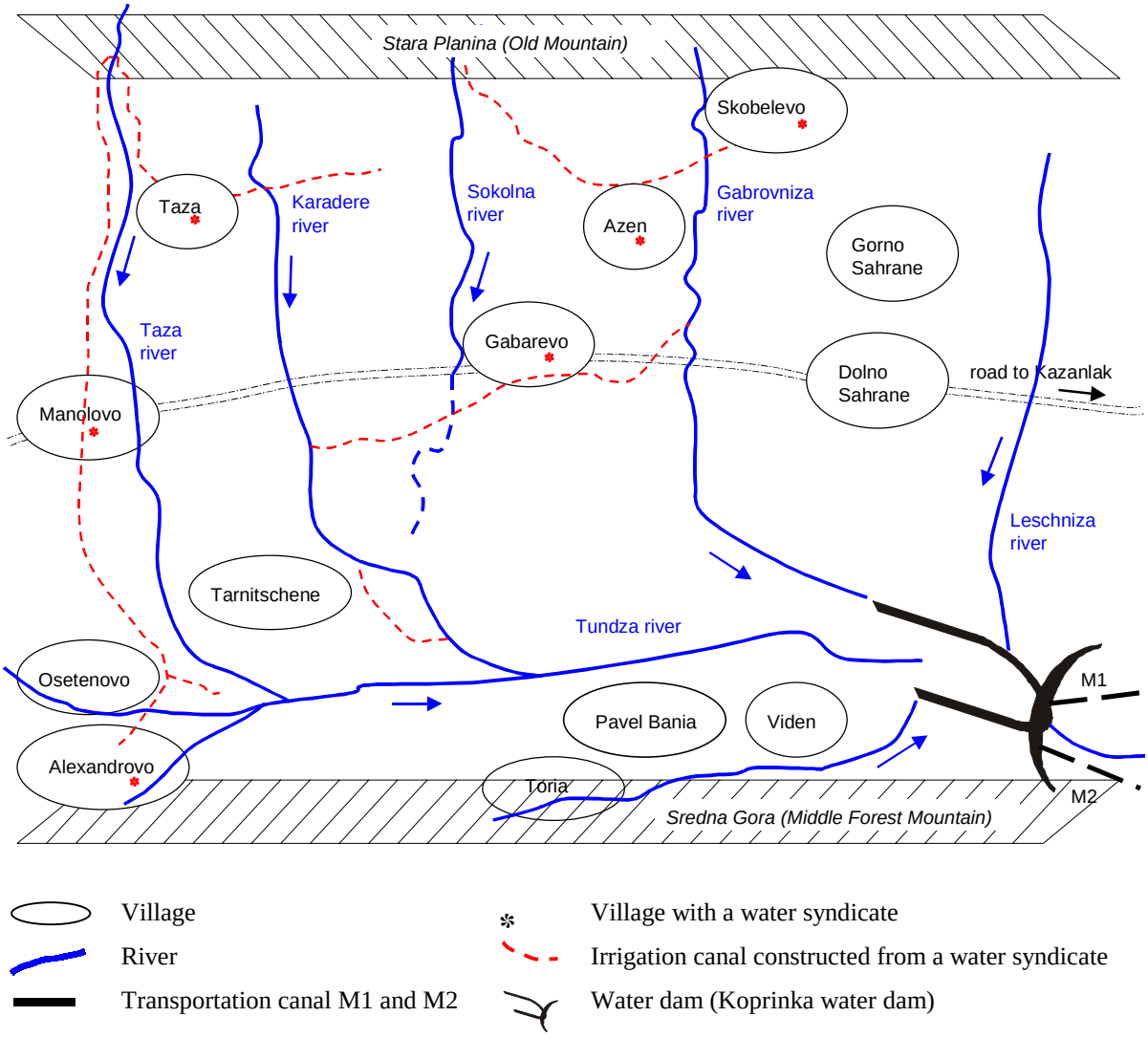


Figure 2: Irrigation Catchment Area - Pavel Bania Commune

Source: Developed from local maps, mind mappings, information from the state firm ISC's Stora Zagora branch.

5.2 EMPIRICAL OVERVIEW

It turned out to be very difficult to find people in the four villages with knowledge about WS performance. Some villagers could confirm their existence but did not remember any details. There are diverse opinions on the origin, purpose, and activities of the WSs. We will illustrate this with some statements to support this interpretation.

In the village of Taza, the otherwise knowledgeable mayor and the son of the village eldest did not know anything about the previous existence of a WS, although an expert for the irrigation systems in Stora Zagora stated that one existed.

In the village of Gabarevo, a 77-year-old man was able to give some details but emphasised that the knowledge of WS rules and organisational structure is very limited among the local population.

The favourable natural conditions for water are well known by the local population and are expressed by the proverb: *"He walks with his feet in the water, but he is always thirsty."* In other words, those possessing enough water do not value it and the organisation of its management becomes more difficult. This proverb's use emphasises that the knowledge of rules for water resource organisation and management that existed with the WSs are no longer alive among the local population. The expression "everyone is waiting for somebody else - or the mayor - to do something" exemplifies the lack of motivation to cooperate.

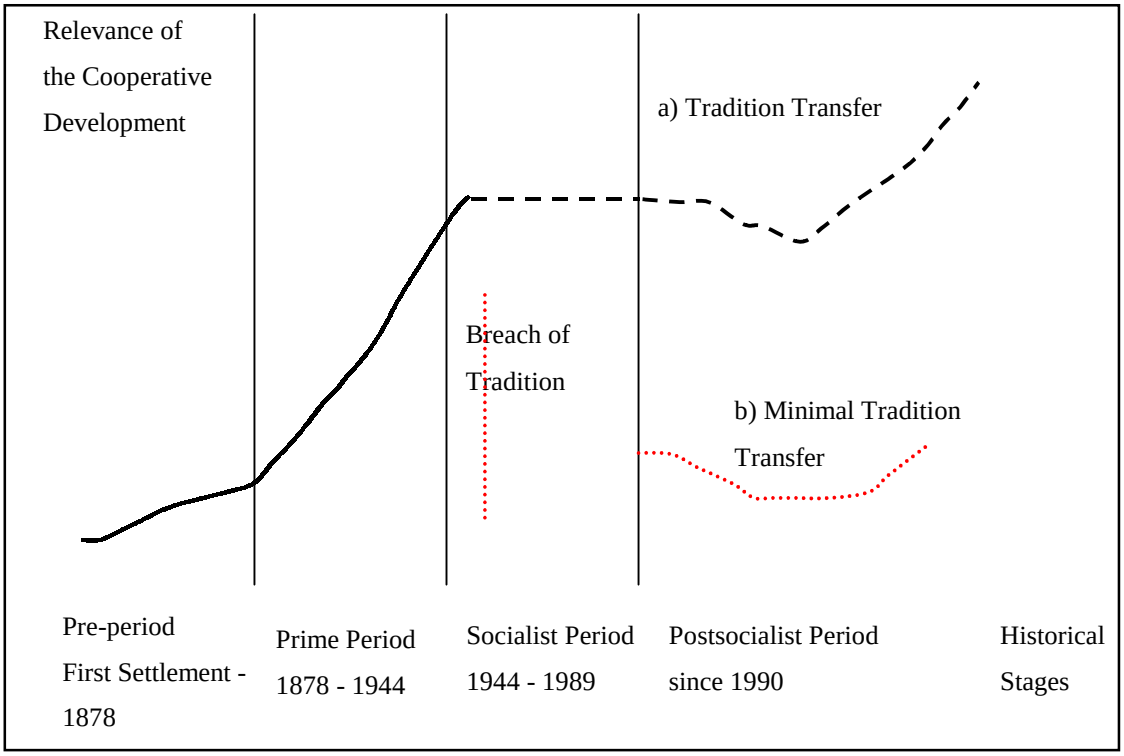
The following statement illustrates the perceptions of the heritage of the WS during socialism. An interviewee in Gabarevo explained that WS canals were not used or extended during the communist era. "Instead new, unreasonable canals were built."

During a number of informal interviews, it was expressed that pre-communist so-called capitalist behaviour or recounting those times was suppressed: "Talking about the WSs was forbidden for a long time." Moreover, villagers reported that several people suffered greatly under the communist regime; they were imprisoned or their relatives killed.

6. EXPLAINING THE BREACH OF TRADITION

We believe that it is problematic to tie into the tradition of pre-1954 WSs in order to establish WUAs today. The empirical findings (Section Five) verify the hypothesis that the WS tradition did not outlast the socialist period. With reference to the case study material, there is little commonly held information about water appropriation rules, water fee collection rules, or sanctioning mechanisms. Knowledge about their existence and rules-in-use is too uncommon to be a significant variable in determining the establishment of water user associations in the present day and age.

Figure 3 illustrates that the ideas and opportunities for a cooperative movement have changed following a breach of tradition during socialism. Development pathway (a) represents the view that there is an unchanged line of tradition and that it is unproblematic to tie into pre-socialist traditions. Pathway (b) supports the view that local people have limited knowledge of the classic cooperative tradition. In addition, their feelings and views may have changed during the communist era, and it is not easy to tie into traditions from the past while ignoring recent history.



Development pathway of the cooperative development

Development pathway with minimal impact on the socialist period

Classic cooperative development after the breach of tradition with restricted and changed tradition transfer

Figure 3: Development of the Cooperative System II

What are the impediments in tying into collective action from the pre-socialist era? To analyze this, we classified the material on cooperative development and the tradition transfer during and after socialism in Bulgaria. We derived three explanatory variables for the breach of tradition: a) the migration from villages to cities, b) the suppression of pre-communist so-called capitalist behavior or recounting those times, and c) the length of the communist era. The crucial point found in all three arguments is the interruption of communication.

6.1 MIGRATION FROM VILLAGES TO CITIES

At the end of World War II, 80 percent of Bulgarian citizens lived in the countryside and in extended families. During the 1970s and 1980s, a large transfer of labor from agricultural to nonagricultural sectors took place as a result of continuing industrialization. The strongest wave of collectivization occurred between 1955 and 1958 (Jivkova, 1994: 12-14). Migration from village to town was significant at that time and was the result of land collectivization combined with the state's priority to invest in the industrial sector (Giordano and Kostova, 2001: 8; Begg and Meurs, 1998: 248). Private farmers were forced to give their land to the collectives. Larger land plots and mechanization required fewer workers. Industrial centers attracted the village population, mainly the youth, which led to a de-population of villages and imbalances in the rural age structure (Kozhucharova and Rangelova, 2001: 29). Jivkova (1994: 12) analyzed factors leading up to this migration and even revealed a crisis in vil-

lages' demographic development, which destroyed the rural population's traditional way of life. With the onset of compulsory collectivization, the rural population decreased from 70 percent of the country's total in the 1940s to 30 percent in the 1980s (Kaneef: 1998: 163; Kostova and Giordano, 1995: 102).

The political and ideological purpose was to drive a wedge between the generations. The migration destroyed the extended families as household unit. As Halbwachs put it (1985), there was no longer a group that functioned as a keeper of remembrance. Many former landowners are pensioners today, and their children have grown up in the cities, unwilling to return to the countryside (Todev, 1992: 211). Kozhucharova and Rangelova (2001: 36) emphasize that, even after 1989, urbanised rurality is considered as a mark of progress, whereas traditionalism is a sign of backwardness.

6.2 SUPPRESSION OF PRECOMMUNIST CAPITALIST BEHAVIOR

During the socialist era, only limited knowledge transfer from the old to the young was possible. Political leaders interpreted the adherence to old lifestyles, as with those from precommunist times, as supporting capitalism (Jivkova, 1993; 1994). The communist strategy was to erase any kind of so-called capitalistic behaviour that could be analysed in the communist ideology. Moreover, the communists did not stop at the systematic destruction of the true past. For instance, after the 1946 agrarian reform, Bulgarian leaders -- especially the local communist authorities -- destroyed land records during the course of collectivisation. Such destruction of the records of everyday life symbolised the ease with which the unacceptable past could be eliminated (Giordano, 1993: 7). It was similarly replaced by a how-it-should-have-occurred reconstruction of history. The rewriting of history in the sense of ideological correctness was a common means of communist propaganda (Kuran, 1997: 249).[14]

As shown in the empirical material, thought that differed from the socialist doctrine was denounced as faulty consciousness. A huge propaganda machine was developed to disseminate the ideologically correct position for every "fact" imaginable (Kuran, 1997: 249f.). The communists used the fear of death or harm to relatives as a strategy for keeping people silent.[15]

Kozhukharova (2001: 73ff.) reveals the increasing diminishment of rural initiative -- once decisive in promoting institutions such as the village school, the cooperative, or the village cultural club -- under conditions of central planning, which regulated rural life from the outside in the form of national programs. Kozhukharova (2001: 75) deplores the resulting passivity. The village community leaders have always relied on the state, expecting solutions to their local problems and even now are waiting for the state to become stable before they do something for their village.

6.3 LENGTH OF THE COMMUNIST PERIOD

The communist era lasted 44 years; in other words, the collective farms were a fact of (rural) life for over forty years. This period comprises more than one generation. Nowadays, there is limited overlapping of knowledge keepers and those people supposed to start the new forms of institutional arrangements. Swain (1993: 22) argues that the generation opposed to collectivisation is now either retired or has abandoned agriculture long ago. Most of the WSs

[14] An example is Zivhov's era, when the invention of Bulgarian folk culture of a mono-ethnic nature was not doubt closely connected with the policy to expulse the Turkish minority (Giordano, 1993: 8).

[15] Pressure exerted by the regime is described in Todev (1994: 47) and Kuran (1997: 140-151, 247-267).

were founded between 1920 and 1935, with the youngest founders between twenty and thirty years old. These founders were about 85 years old as communism came to an end in 1989. Based on an average life expectancy of 67 years for men (National Statistical Institute, 1963: 66; 1992: 22; 2000: 48), it can be concluded that most of these knowledge keepers are no longer alive.

7. CONCLUSIONS

We have shown that the local population does not remember cooperative traditions of water management that originate in the Bulgarian WSs before World War II. Its rules-in-use and action patterns did not outlast the socialist period. This is due to a breach of tradition during socialism facilitated by a) the migration from villages to cities, b) the suppression of pre-communist so-called capitalist behavior and c) the length of the communist era.

The analysis of the historical development of WSs reveals additional constraints for tying into cooperative traditions in water management of pre-socialist times. It becomes evident that the WSs were not classic cooperatives, as they had little in common with their principles. It is almost impossible to develop a collective memory of self-help and collective action principles, because there has never been a history of a bottom-up approach. People have not developed an increased awareness of the WSs due to their top-down implementation and their abrupt liquidation. For this reason, these pseudo-cooperatives do not represent collective action examples for the establishment of WUAs. The influence of the state and the communist party on the WS association was observable when, in 1951, the association of WSs lost its independence and became affiliated to the ministry. With this in mind, one must ask whether the WSs resemble a myth, which government officials and donor agencies use to justify their actions. Hence, the state's role in Bulgaria's WSs should be investigated in further sociological and historical research.

To summarise, the existence of former WSs does not facilitate the establishment of WUAs in present times. Instead, the "limited influence of tradition" is a transformation-specific feature that has to be taken into account when analysing transformation processes.

Nevertheless, a persistence of traditions is possible for other subjects. Further sociological, empirical work could shed light on the questions: How were other traditions or mentalities adopted? What kinds of new forms were developed during the socialist period? And finally, which traditions persist?

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