TEXTILE FACTORIES AND SUBSISTENCE PLOTS: RURAL WOMEN’S
LIVELIHOODS AND UNIQUE TRANSITION EXPERIENCES IN BULGARIA

DISSERTATION

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for
the Degree Doctor of Philosophy in the Graduate
School of The Ohio State University

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2006

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to explore rural women’s livelihoods under varying trajectories of transition, which might be unevenly distributed and experienced across space, generations, and ethnicity. Previous research has shown that post-socialist transitions are unique, complex, and spatially uneven processes, with multiple outcomes. Much, however, remains poorly understood regarding these processes.

The dominant macro-level focus of neo-liberal and evolutionary theories on transition has not been particularly helpful in understanding experiences of post-socialist rural women. It is therefore critical to complement this work with a focus on the micro-scale. Literature on transition ethnography, women and economic restructuring, and feminist political ecology has shown how insights at the micro-scale can begin to predict and explain the changes in rural women’s livelihoods. Overall, it is clear that incorporation in the global economy and the economic restructuring associated with transition has profound and differential impacts on women’s livelihoods and everyday lives. This literature does not make clear, however, whether rural women in particular are ultimately better or worse off, how transition experiences vary among rural women, and to what degree these are influenced by local uneven development. Finally, recent literatures on post-socialist countries show that people combine a variety of capitalist and
non-capitalist practices to make a living, but leaves unexplored how rural women’s reliance on such non-capitalist practices, including subsistence farming and barter, may change under economic transition, and what role natural resources play in these practices.

This study combines approaches that highlight multiple regional transitions and everyday life with a feminist political ecology approach that provides tools to study local experiences of women and their relationship to the environment. I use a regional comparative study of two villages to elicit the different transition paths evident in the research region. Semi-structured interviews with rural women, interviews with key persons, and relevant secondary data provide a thorough account of the experiences of rural women in Bulgaria.

Several findings from my research stand out. First, I show that uneven local development in the study area started long before the transition, but has been reinforced by the unevenness of the transition. Second, this study shows that the transition in Bulgaria has profoundly influenced rural women’s livelihoods in both villages, although just how their lives are affected varies with such factors as their age/life cycle, employment status, income, job, ethnicity, and residence. Third, this study also shows that non-capitalist practices, such as subsistence farming, continue to be a critical part of rural women’s livelihoods. Furthermore, these non-capitalist practices have become more important in relative terms for women who saw their household’s cash incomes decline. A final insight from this study is that local uneven development plays an important role in rural women’s livelihoods, because it produced different villages, which characteristics are reflected in the variety and kind of livelihoods found in these villages.
For Jan
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would not have been able to complete this dissertation without the help and support of numerous people. I want to start with thanking the people in Bulgaria who made this research project possible and enjoyable. I am greatly indebted to my respondents, who invited me into their homes or offices and were generous with their time. I also want to thank to Tanya Minkova, Vangela Chincheva, Plamen Shterev Manolev, Ventzislav Plamenov Panayotov, Vanya Podgorska, Atanaska Emilova Kostadino, Pavlina Ilieva Gavrilova, Professor Margarita Ilieva from the Institute of Geography at the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences, Aoi Shirane, Violetta Chincheva, and the ‘Women’s Alliance for Development’ in Sofia for their help, support, and time.

Writing a dissertation has very much been a learning process and I wish to thank my advisers Paul Robbins and Kendra McSweeney for their advice, support, encouragement, and time. I would also like to thank my committee members Linda Lobao and Darla Munroe.

I especially want to thank Jan for his support, encouragement, and most of all for his understanding in the last five years. I also wish to thank my family for the support I received through the years. And, I also thank my friends in Columbus and back home in the Netherlands for their interest and encouragement.
This research project would not have been possible without the financial support from the Office of International Affairs at The Ohio State University, The Graduate School at The Ohio State University, the Russian, Central Eurasian and Eastern European Specialty Group of the Association of American Geographers, the Hoffman award from the Association of American Geographers, and the Department of Geography at The Ohio State University.
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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

The transition from a centrally planned economy and authoritarian regime towards a free market economy and democracy (from this point forward referred to as ‘the transition’) in post-socialist countries arguably has no precedent in history. Research shows that post-socialist transitions are unique, complex and spatially uneven processes, which have multiple outcomes, some of which are not yet understood (Begg and Pickles 1998, Meurs and Begg 1998, Smith and Pickles 1998, Burawoy and Verdery 1999, Rainnie, Smith, and Swain 2002). For example, the outcome of the dismantling of socialist regimes and the transformation of state led economies into free market economies on women in Eastern and Central Europe is unclear. Many assumed that the transition towards a free market and democracy would bring better income opportunities, more empowerment, and more gender equality for women (Buckley 1997, Hardy and Stenning 2002). Transition studies thus far suggest something that is far more uncertain and nuanced. While some women benefit from the opportunities brought by the transition, others are marginalized by these same processes.
The impact of the transition on livelihoods and everyday life of women in rural areas that is among the least understood. Rural areas arguably experienced some of the most dramatic changes (Carter and Kanef 1999). Large state farms dissolved and many state owned industrial enterprises closed down (Begg and Pickles 1998). Rural households experienced a decline in cash income and relied more on non-capitalist practices, such as subsistence farming (Meurs 2002, UNDP 2004). It seems clear to many observers that the changes in rural areas in post-socialist countries have profoundly transformed women’s livelihoods and everyday lives. But, it is not clear how, why, and to what extent rural women’s livelihoods and everyday lives were changed. For example, did the transition improve or worsen rural women’s overall livelihoods and everyday lives? Have some aspects of rural women’s livelihoods changed for better or worse, while other aspects have remained the same? Are all rural women impacted in the same way? Or, do the outcomes of transition on rural women’s livelihoods vary over space and among generations? And, what is the role of natural and agricultural resources in rural women’s livelihoods? Unfortunately, there are too many gaps in current transition studies to answer these questions adequately.

1.2 Problem statement

Transition studies, so far, have focused on macro-scale processes and their outcomes in post-socialist countries. Many of these studies do no discuss the outcomes of transition on women (Hardy and Stenning 2002). Recently, the focus of transition studies is expanding to include everyday life and the links between large scale and small scale transitions (Burawoy and Verdery 1999, Cellarius 2000, Rainnie, Smith, and Swain 2002,
Smith 2002, Pavlovskaya 2004). This research shows that transition is a gendered process that differentially impact men and women’s everyday lives (Funk and Mueller 1993, Bridger 1997, Buckley 1997, Hardy and Stenning 2002, Meurs 2002, Pavlovskaya 2004). Although a focus on the impacts and outcomes of transition processes at the micro-scale results in a more complete understanding of transition processes in general, it does not fully capture how these changes in livelihoods vary among rural women.

Most of the transition studies have had a general or urban focus (Meurs 2002). Rural households, however, demand particular attention, because transition processes have effects and outcomes that are context specific to rural areas. As Meurs (2002, 124) explains, “Urban households tended to be closely integrated with the industrialized national economy under state socialism. Rural households were in the late industrializing socialist economy only partially integrated into the national centrally-planned economy prior to 1989.” Rural households used a mix of labor and economic practices to sustain a livelihood, depending on income received through participation in the formal labor force and on subsistence agriculture (Meurs 2002). During the transition factories and businesses closed more rapidly in many rural areas than in urban areas resulting in high unemployment rates (Pickles and Begg 2000). The unique character of rural livelihoods combined with the dramatic and swift changes in rural areas deserves more attention if we want to achieve a more complete understanding of the multiple transition processes playing out across Eastern and Central Europe.

This study examines one of the least explored facets of transition in post-socialist countries: women’s rural livelihoods under varying trajectories of transition, which may be unevenly distributed and experienced across space, generations, and ethnicity. Taking
into account the unevenness of transition outcomes in different localities provides an opportunity to explain (a) how transition plays out in rural women’s everyday lives, (b) the importance of non-capitalist practices, such as barter, subsistence production, informal exchange, and redistribution networks within the family (Cellarius 2000), and (c) the role of natural and agricultural resources in transition, e.g. trees, water, wildlife, non-domesticated food plants such as herbs and berries, and gardens. All of these crucial aspects are commonly overlooked in most transition studies.

This research will address these gaps, supplementing approaches that highlight multiple regional transitions (Stark 1994, Begg and Pickles 1998) and everyday life (Burawoy and Verdery 1999, Pavlovskaya 2004) with a feminist political ecology approach that provides tools to study local experiences of women and their relationship to the environment (Rocheleau, Thomas-Slayter, and Wangari 1996). I use a regional comparative study of two villages to elicit the different transition paths evident in the research region. Interviews and relevant secondary data provide a thorough account of the experiences of rural women in Bulgaria. The use of mixed methods will make it possible to contribute new insights to the broader fields of transition theory and feminist political ecology.

1.3 Regional context

Bulgaria is an excellent country for this research. I chose this country for the following reasons. First, the transition is still ongoing which makes it easier to capture the changes in livelihoods and transition experiences of rural women. Second, rural areas
have experienced dramatic changes due to the strong core-periphery patterns under state socialism and the slow restitution of land (Begg and Pickles 1998, Meurs and Begg 1998). Third, due to the slow pace of the transition processes people in Bulgaria have been burdened by the costs of the transition longer and to a more severe extent than people in most other Eastern and Central European countries (The World Bank 1999, Women's Alliance of Development 2002). In sum, Bulgaria is an excellent country to illustrate and study the changes in rural women’s livelihoods and everyday life, because the transition and its outcomes are still very apparent and observable.

Post-socialist Bulgaria is considered a laggard in the transition process compared to other European countries experiencing the shift from centrally planned economies to free markets (Stokes 1993, Gallagher 1998, The World Bank 1999). Privatization is occurring slowly and unevenly between economic regions and sectors. Foreign investment in Bulgaria is only a recent development (Meurs and Begg 1998, The World Bank 1999, UNDP 2004). Bulgaria’s Gross Domestic Product (GDP) decreased with an average of 2.7% annually between 1990 and 1997. Since then, Bulgaria’s GDP has been steadily increasing every year (Kabakchieva, Illiev, and Konstantinov 2002). However, Bulgaria’s GDP per capita in 2003 of US$ 2539 is still one of the lowest in Central and Eastern Europe. For comparison, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, and Romania have GDP’s per capita of US$ 8794, US$ 8169, US$ 5487, and US$ 2619 respectively (UNDP 2005).

In rural areas, transition has brought change in the form of decollectivization and deindustrialization. The reduction of economic diversification and decollectivization eliminated female jobs in the industrial and service sectors that were related to collective
farming (Carter and Kaneff 1999). Decollectivization also resulted in the emergence of small family-owned operations, mostly subsistence farms (Meurs 1994). Meanwhile, some areas experienced the inflow of foreign investment in terms of factories.

Bulgarians have also suffered loss of income due to inflation and cutbacks in government benefits. Bulgarian women are disproportionately affected by these changes in terms of social benefits. They are under greater pressure, moreover, because benefits for maternity leave and childcare are less generous than before the fall of communism (Dakova 1995, Lokar 1999). This makes it difficult for women to combine formal employment with childcare and housekeeping, as women remain responsible for the reproduction of the household.

1.4 Significance of study

This research project studies the impacts of transition from a micro level and comparative perspective. In the past, many studies on transition explored and theorized the different trajectories countries follow towards a market system and the interplay between market, democracy, and civil society. But, these studies’ focus on the macro level has obscured complementary analyses of micro level processes. Studying the consequences of transition from a micro level and comparative perspective will contribute to a better understanding of the different facets of economic restructuring, such as the role of the state and foreign investment levels, as they impinge on everyday livelihoods and interaction with the environment of individuals, households, and localities with differing characteristics.
This study focuses on livelihood strategies in transition economies of Europe. By contrast, most studies on changes in livelihoods as a result of economic restructuring have been carried out in the less developed world and increasingly in advanced industrial societies (Oberhauser 2002, Ellis and Mdoe 2003). Bulgaria, however, can in no means be considered a highly developed country, but its industrialized history and state socialist experience are significantly different from those of less developed countries (Bristow 1999, Meurs and Ranasinghe 2003, Vassilev 2003). Therefore, studying livelihood strategies in Bulgaria should result in a fuller understanding of how people make a living in different transition contexts and a more comprehensive understanding of livelihood strategies and the processes under which they change.

The research project focuses on rural women in post-socialist countries. After the collapse of communism, most studies on women in Eastern Europe have been conducted in an urban context and often focus on issues like abortion and violence. Rural areas are, therefore, underrepresented in empirical and theoretical terms. Focusing on gender relations and its outcomes in rural livelihood strategies will give a more complete view of women’s life in rural Bulgaria and also provide a window into women’s non-capitalist coping strategies.

The results of this research will be passed on to women’s organizations in Bulgaria, including the Women’s Alliance for Development, and to government institutes, like the Sandanski Municipal Council. By directing sustained attention to issues faced by rural women in transitional post-socialist countries, this research project hopes to draw attention to the experiences of women, their interaction with the
environment, and the way they cope with transition, so that this knowledge can be incorporated in future decision-making and opens the possibility of more progressive and less exploitative futures.

1.5 Organization of study

This study is organized as follows. In Chapter 2, I combine literature on transition processes with more general literature on women and economic restructuring to understand the possible changes and outcomes in rural women’s everyday life and livelihoods. In addition, I use contributions from feminist political ecology to offer insights on the use of natural and agricultural resources and gendered power relations. I draw on feminist geography to understand the diversity among women’s experiences. Combining the insights from these different fields and literatures provides new insights on the impacts of transition on rural women’s livelihoods and suggests four research questions that are answered in the course of this study.

This chapter shows that transition is an uneven process with outcomes that are still unclear, especially regarding rural women’s livelihoods. To gain more insights on rural women’s livelihoods a focus on micro level processes is necessary in order to capture aspects of everyday life such as non-capitalist practices and use of natural and agricultural resources. Furthermore, economic restructuring generally has contradictory outcomes for women’s everyday lives, based on factors such as age and ethnicity.

Chapter 3 provides a historical background on Bulgaria. I discuss the macro-scale changes that occurred during the communist period, in particular the organization of
industries, the collectivization of agriculture and resulting changes in rural areas, and social dimensions of communism particularly in regard to women. Then I provide an overview of the transition processes and its outcomes. I focus on the macro-scale processes of deindustrialization and industrialization, the flows of foreign investment, decollectivization accompanied with changes in rural areas, and social dimensions of change, particularly as they relate to rural women. In short, the chapter constructs a background against which rural women’s everyday life and livelihoods in Bulgaria can be understood.

This chapter shows that rural women’s livelihoods changed significantly under state socialism and again during the transition. Rural women’s livelihoods are influenced by the organization of industries and agriculture, government policies and foreign investment. These macro-scale factors play out unevenly across space and in everyday life.

In Chapter 4, I explain how I chose my general study area and the two research villages. Next, I discuss my overall research paradigm. Then, I outline and justify my field methodologies and data analysis techniques. I conclude with a discussion of the issues and problems I encountered while collecting and analyzing the data. This chapter shows why a comparison of two villages, using semi-structured interviews and secondary data, yields distinct and unique insights in transition processes in post-socialist countries.

In Chapter 5, I focus on my two research villages. I use Massey’s framework on regional differentiation and uneven development to explain the differences between these two villages. I conclude this chapter with a discussion on how uneven local development is expressed in rural women’s livelihoods. This chapter demonstrates that uneven
development plays a role in rural women’s livelihoods, because it produces different villages in terms of age and economy, which influence the ways rural women experience the transition and make a livelihood.

In Chapter 6, I present my research findings regarding rural women’s livelihoods and everyday lives. I begin with a descriptive overview of the collected data and discuss what the differences are among women with regard to the key aspects of rural livelihoods. Next, I characterize the different unique transitions rural women are experiencing based on categories that are suggested by the literature and descriptive data analysis. This provides answers on the four research questions.

The major findings in this chapter suggest that the transition in Bulgaria has profoundly influenced rural women’s livelihoods in both villages, although just how their lives are affected varies with such factors as their age/life cycle, employment status, income, job, ethnicity, and residence. This study also shows that non-capitalist practices, such as subsistence farming, foraging, and barter continue to be a critical part of rural women’s livelihoods. Furthermore, these non-capitalist practices have become more important in relative terms for women who saw their household’s cash incomes decline.

In Chapter 7, I present four transition narratives showing the actual lives of four rural women. These narratives illustrate the multiple dimensions of rural livelihood in Bulgaria and the similarities and differences in rural women’s livelihoods. Common themes observed in this chapter are dealing with low cash incomes, the economic relation between parents and children who do not live at home anymore, and the access and (in) direct use of natural and agricultural resources.
In Chapter 8, I summarize the study. I discuss themes and issues surrounding rural women’s livelihoods in Bulgaria. Common threads through this study are the dimensions of unevenness due to the transition, i.e., spatial differentiation and generational differentiation. In addition, despite the transition, rural women’s everyday lives illustrate the continuity between the socialist and post-socialist world, in particular regarding the use of natural and agricultural resources and exchange systems. I conclude with recommendations for future research.
CHAPTER 2

RURAL WOMEN’S LIVELIHOODS UNDER TRANSITION: LOOKING BEYOND TRANSITION THEORIES

2.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I give an overview of the different theoretical contributions in order to construct a conceptual framework in which to place the research problem. The question I want to answer here is: How do transition theories predict the impact of transition on rural women’s livelihoods? There are several contributions theorizing the transition from a centrally planned economy and authoritarian regime towards a free market economy and democracy. These theories, however, do not provide many insights on how transition plays out at the micro level and in people’s everyday lives, and to what degree transitions are gendered processes. In other words, these theories are inadequate to provide a fuller understanding of the everyday life of rural women in a post-socialist world.

To fill in these gaps I turn to literature on economic restructuring and women, including the vast literature on the ‘Maquiladora Industries’ of the global south and on ‘Newly Industrialized Countries’ both documenting feminized labor. Not all impacts of
transition can be found within the economic realm and therefore political ecology is included to more fully understand how natural and agricultural resources may play a critical role in helping people to cope with economic change. Finally, not all women experience the transition in the same way, according to such factors as their age and ethnicity. Combining these different theoretical contributions and insights suggests a richer and more detailed story of what happened to rural women after the disintegration of socialist rule. These then inspire four empirical questions, which I outline at the chapter’s end.

2.2 Transition theories

When communist regimes formally collapsed in Eastern and Central Europe in 1989, many proponents of neo-liberal reform considered this a victory for capitalism and the free market (Burawoy and Verdery 1999, Pavlovskaya 2004). Most of the transition literature, most of it originating from the fields of political science and economics, that appeared in the early 1990s reflected this euphoria and presented the transition in relative simple terms. This literature dealt with privatization, decollectivization, democratization, and the emergence of a civil society (Verdery 1996). For many neo-liberal politicians the main goal was to create economies in former socialist states, rather sooner than later, that closely resembled those of the ‘West.’ As Sachs (1990, 23) argues in The Economist: “the eastern countries must reject any lingering ideas about a "third way," such as a chimerical "market socialism" based on public ownership or worker self-management, and go straight for a western-style market economy” (Sachs 1990, 23). The best way to
achieve these western style markets is through rapid economic reforms, similar to those introduced in Poland, according to Sachs (1990). Soon it became clear, however, that the transition entailed more than simply introducing neo-liberal policies and democracy, because it occurred less smoothly as expected. As a response to this criticism, evolutionary transition theories provided a more nuanced view, stressing the influence of a communist past on the future. Both views consider transition processes as a progressive development (Burawoy and Verdery 1999). Studies focusing on transition processes at the micro-scale take issue with this position and show that transition processes are dynamic and non-linear, thereby complementing and challenging both the evolutionary and neo-liberal perspectives on transition (Smith 2000, Pavlovskaya 2004).

2.2.1 Neo-liberal view

After the fall of the Iron Curtain, many proponents of neo-liberal reform considered the transition to a free market economy and democratic society in post-socialist countries unprecedented, but relatively uncomplicated. They favored a free market with minimal state interference as the main force for organizing social, economic, and political life (Watts 2000). As Rainnie et al. (2002) point out: the neo-liberal transition model is build upon two assumptions. The first assumption concerns the Soviet system; this economic system was irrational, inefficient, and destined to fail. The second assumption concerns the capitalist system; this system is inherently self-regulating and self-generating. Therefore the neo-liberal model posits transition as a “relatively unproblematic implementation of a set of policies involving economic liberalization and marketization alongside democratization” (Smith and Pickles 1998, 2) – also called
“shock therapy.” According to proponents of neo-liberal reform, “the past does not have any redeeming features” (Burawoy and Verdery 1999, 5). The collapse of communism led to the total destruction of the Soviet economic system and social relations. In the wake of this, a new economic system and social relations are being constructed. Supporters of neo-liberal reform present transition as a process that builds an economic system and its social relations completely from scratch without continuity with the past (Pavlovskaya 2004).

In the last decade, however, it has become clear that transition is not a process of simply implementing institutional and market reform (Kovács 1994, True 2000). This idea has proven elusive since western capitalism cannot be easily replicated in Eastern Europe in any simple fashion (Stark 1994). Implementing a grand design like this risks a failure similar to that of the previous abrupt imposition of a centrally planned economy. For example, in post-socialist countries shock therapy has been demonstrated to be destructive economically as well as socially (Burawoy and Verdery 1999).

Many critics of neo-liberal reform argue that neo-liberal views on transition are colored by western ideology in that free market capitalism and democracy are seen as the ideal and inevitable outcomes of the economic transition in post-socialist countries (Verdery 1996, Berdahl 2000). In addition, some scholars consider the term ‘transition’ in itself problematic and a cultural construction of the ‘West,’ because it is a teleological term that refers to an ideal outcome of the aforementioned free market capitalism and democracy. ‘Transformation’ would be a more correct term as it assumes an unclear outcome (Burawoy and Verdery 1999, Berdahl 2000). The term ‘transition’ is still widely
used, however, even by those who agree with the criticism surrounding the connotations of the term, because their work often focuses on challenging these precise notions and demonstrating that transition is not a linear, but a far more complex process.

2.2.2 Evolutionary view

Given the vast differences amongst Eastern European countries and the legacies of previous governance, the prognosis for a uniform blueprint is unrealistic (Stark 1994). This has led to an evolutionary view, which proposes that there is not one transition in Eastern Europe, but multiple ones (Stark 1994, Stark 2001) –thus emphasizing that transition does not have a fixed end. These authors argue that key mediating factors influencing the path of transition are social institutions (Putnam 1993), class and power structures (Stark 1994), economic links with other countries (Altvater 1998), and property rights, social norms, and strength of the state (Begg and Pickles 1998); differing factors making one path of transition more likely than another (Meurs and Begg 1998). In the evolutionary model of transition (unlike the neo-liberal transition model) legacies play a crucial role, generating possibilities and limits in transition processes (Smith and Pickles 1998).

Although the evolutionary model is important in showing that transition does not have a fixed end, it shares with the neo-liberal view the tendencies to (1) focus on national and regional rather than local transformation (Burawoy and Verdery 1999), (2) focus on capital at the expense of examining people’s everyday labor and lives (Burawoy and Verdery 1999, Rainnie, Smith, and Swain 2002), and (3) overlook the co-existence of capitalist and non-capitalist practices (Pavlovskaya 2004).
2.2.3 Perspectives on women and transition

Nor do neo-liberal and evolutionary informed discussions of transition provide a discussion on how gender is interrelated with transition, or the ways in which transition impacts women. In order words, most of this transition literature is ‘gender-blind’ (Hardy and Stenning 2002, 99). In general, neo-liberal policymakers and scholars with a neo-liberal ideology assume that a free market and democracy improve people’s situation, generally without distinction among social groups. So, does this also imply that women also are better off with a free market and democracy? In other words, does the transition bring women more job opportunities, more empowerment, and more gender equality?

In fact, a vast literature has appeared that focuses on the impact of transition on women in Eastern and Central Europe and in the former Soviet Union (Buckley 1992, Einhorn 1993, Funk and Mueller 1993, Bridger 1997, Buckley 1997, Corrin 1998). According to Harding and Stenning (2002, 99): “One school of thought has unequivocally argued that women have born the brunt of transformation in suffering disproportionately from unemployment and encountering difficulties in finding new work.” In the beginning of the 1990s, there was also discussion about whether women in Russia and Eastern and Central Europe would return to the home, to their “traditional” gender roles. The idea was that communism had forced women into the labor force without bringing their emancipation (Ashwin 2002).

Indeed, many women have experienced dramatic changes since the collapse of communism, including the loss of jobs, maternity and child benefits, and health care. But it is, however, important to keep in mind that women cannot be considered as one
homogenous group nor as passive bystanders, but play an active role by responding to and negotiating changes and impacts brought by the transition. Thus, the impacts of transition on women are not as straightforward and uniform as some research has suggested (Ashwin 2002, Hardy and Stenning 2002). Besides gender, other factors including age, education, ethnicity, residence, and regional development influence how women experience and are impacted by the transition (Women's Alliance of Development 2002). Furthermore, there is a growing literature on masculinity and post-socialism documenting the difficulties that men encounter in post-socialist countries (Ashwin and Lytkina 2004).

2.2.4 Looking beyond neo-liberal and evolutionary views

Because they focus on changes and processes at the macro-scale, both the neo-liberal and evolutionary view (which together make up the majority of the contributions to the field of ‘transitology’) are not helpful in understanding how the transition impacts rural women’s everyday life and how rural women experience the transition. They overlook and fail to recognize what Pavlovskaya (2004) has called the ‘other transitions’ – the changes experienced and adjustments made by people in their everyday life. To gain a better understanding of the impacts of the transition on people’s everyday lives it is therefore critical to also look at processes and changes that take place at the micro-scale. Research at the micro-scale, with contributions from anthropology, sociology, and geography, not only challenges some of the assumptions of macro-scale research, but also complements and enriches the insights of macro-scale research. For example, micro-scale research illustrates that transition does not mean an absolute break with socialism, as
many neo-liberals studies would like to argue. On the contrary, micro-scale research shows that transition is a process that provides a continuity between the socialist and post-socialist world (Stark 1996, Burawoy and Verdery 1999, Berdahl 2000).

2.3 Everyday life in transition

Within the generic transition of macro-scale research, the fact that some people experience poverty, marginalization, exclusion and others experience affluence and wealth is hidden. The literature also obscures how macro-level transition processes necessitate constant economic, political and cultural responses and negotiations by people (Burawoy and Verdery 1999, Meurs 2002, Smith 2002).

2.3.1 Scale

Many transition studies focus on the national or regional level documenting general economic, political, and social changes. However, as Pavlovskaya (2004, 330) points out: “equally fundamental transitions take place at finer geographic scales and within the realm of everyday life.” Considering these finer geographic scales and the realm of everyday life has several advantages. First, post-socialist transition does not play out evenly across space. This creates spatial unevenness whereby areas and people are impacted differently. Some areas experience job loss and disinvestment, while other areas experience an influx of foreign direct investment and increase in employment opportunities.
Second, looking at finer geographic scales allows closer examination of changes in everyday life and the complexities and diversities of people’s everyday struggles. For example, Pavlovskaya (2004) argues that many of the macro-indicators measuring the progress of the transition, such as industrial output, do not provide any insight on the impacts of the transition on people’s day-to-day existence. Also, indicators used for measuring human well-being only grasp the difficulties that people are facing in post-socialist societies and rarely present a starting point from which to theorize the complexities of their ongoing negotiation and production of livelihoods. “Households use both formal and informal resources and employ economic and social practices not reflected in statistics and macro indicators will simply misrepresent people’s everyday lives” (Pavlovskaya 2004, 330).

Third, focusing on changes in small areas and on livelihoods allow us to look at dynamic relationships between large-scale processes, such as globalization, and small-scale processes, like power relations within the household. These small-scale processes (or “small transformations” according to Rona-Tas (1997)) direct and influence emerging institutions and markets as old structures break down, and new patterns emerge (Burawoy and Verdery 1999). In neo-liberal theory, it is assumed that households or individuals will respond to macro-structural changes in a calculated ‘rational’ market-oriented way. For example, The World Bank advised the Bulgarian government in 1991 on how to reduce the adjustment costs of the economic reforms and how to make the transition process go more smoothly. One of the suggestions was that “the objectives and overall vision of the reform program and its various components should be clarified and announced well in advance so that consumers and producers can make more informed
decisions” (The World Bank 1991, 66-67). In the eyes of mainstream thinkers, then small transformations are “expressions of large-scale state and economic structures” (Burawoy and Verdery 1999, 1). However, a critical literature has emerged that challenges this assumption in two ways (see Burawoy and Verdery 1999, Meurs 2002, Smith 2002). First, this literature challenges the structural nature of neo-liberalism by pointing out that there is room at the micro level for households or individuals to take autonomous initiatives. Second, state policies often have unintended consequences that influence the responses of households or individuals, which might not be those that state policies had intended (Burawoy and Verdery 1999, Meurs 2002), but which have the potential, in turn, to influence the macro structure. This notion is especially important in Bulgaria where the macro structure has been in a state of flux for the last fifteen years and micro changes have potentially important impacts on the new emerging structures as new space comes available for local initiatives as old structures break down (Burawoy and Verdery 1999). So, large-scale processes and structures are highly dependent on social and economic relationships in the workplace and the household – including gender processes.

2.3.2 Everyday life of rural women

The literature on transition provides few clues about the everyday life of rural women. Research in less developed countries reveals that incorporation into the global economy has differential and serious material and non-material impacts on women. Economic restructuring induces (a) reorganization of employment, (b) changes in the labor burden, (c) changes in empowerment, and (d) changes in access to, dependence on, and manipulation of natural and agricultural resources (Schroeder 1993, Carney 1996,
Rocheleau, Ross, and Morrobel 1996, Sachs 1996, Valdivia and Gilles 2001). While transition in some instances can provide labor opportunities for women (because many new industries, like textiles, prefer women as employees (Bullock 1994) – sometimes at the expense of male employment (True 2000)), research has shown that informal economic opportunities and exchange systems continue to thrive and often grow in importance for women (Meurs 1998, Cellarius 2000, Meurs 2002).

Among women, rural women in general are in the least favorable position under conditions of restructuring and depend most heavily on informal exchange because they often have fewer employment opportunities, resulting in (1) an increased labor burden in formal, informal, and household economies (Sachs 1996), and (2) declining control of and access to resources as privatization and capitalization of agriculture contribute to men’s increasing control over land, as well as over women’s labor and household income (Schroeder 1993, Carney 1996). As a result, any complete understanding of post-socialist transition requires serious attention to informal economies and non-capitalist economic relationships, like barter, exchange systems or subsistence farming (Cellarius 2000, Kostov and Lingard 2002) – all of which are typical in post-socialist countries and fundamental to economic change (Gibson-Graham 1996, Rainnie, Smith, and Swain 2002).

It cannot simply be assumed, moreover, that new industrial employment assures general empowerment of women, since empowerment extends beyond wage labor to include access to credit, control of productive (especially natural and agricultural) resources, participation in union and community organizations, and an overall sense of autonomy (Townsend 1995, Campbell 1996, Wangari, Thomas-Slayter, and Rocheleau
1996). The UNDP states that “paradoxically, the emergence of more democratic societies and the growth of civil societies has led, not to greater participation of women in decision-making, but to greater exclusion from public life” (1999, 66). Despite the fact that women achieved a fairly high level of participation in public life during the Soviet era, gender equality was not grounded in the patriarchal society of the Central and East European countries and the Baltic States (Waylen 1994, Pascall and Manning 2000, LaFont 2001). As a result, a focus on local economies, labor, and life, provides a clearer view of women’s actual empowerment than macro-scale analysis.

Not only in post-socialist countries do women experience major changes because of economic restructuring. In the last couple of decades, several regions and countries have undergone dramatic economic restructuring that change daily existence. In the next section, I review the literature on women in the maquiladora sector and women in newly industrialized regions in Asia in order to get insights on what economic restructuring means for women and consequently attempt to fill in some of the gaps in the transition literature on women.

2.4 Global economic restructuring and women

Global economic restructuring – generally based on neo-liberal economic models – brought many new employment opportunities to countries such as Mexico and Thailand. Free trade zones and other industrial zones developed in Asia around the same time as the maquiladoras (foreign owned assembly plants) in Mexico. Jobs were created in a variety of industries, including textile and electronic factories. Later on, jobs were also created in the service industry. A vast literature has documented the impacts and
outcomes of these forms of global economic restructuring on women. Topics include labor and gender regimes in and outside the factory, the feminization of labor, the proletarianization of women’s labor, empowerment, labor burden, migration, and construction of identities. This literature provides a detailed account of the material and non-material impacts of global economic restructuring on women and the changes in their daily lives.

2.4.1 Impacts of global economic restructuring on women

Today, the focus of most industries is on flexible specialization and production (so-called “just-in-time production”) which “implies small, decentralized firms oriented towards niche markets in contrast to large firms under postwar Fordism” (Freeman 2000, 26). This trend is accompanied by the development of new labor arrangements that are characterized by a high degree of flexibility and variation. These new labor regimes are based on the availability of female and minority workers who provide a cheap source of labor. These workers are employed in mass production, subcontracting and family type firms that make up the new industries (Ong 1991).

Newly industrialized countries, such as Thailand, Brazil, Mexico, and Indonesia, have therefore seen an increasing feminized labor force. Worldwide, women are seen as attractive workers, because they are perceived as docile, submissive, and tradition-bound. As Mills (2003, 42) states, “in varied and often locally specific ways international capital relies on gendered ideologies and social relations to recruit and discipline workers, to reproduce and cheapen segmented labor forces within and across national borders.” The gendered ideologies are not homogeneous, however: ideologies used to recruit and
control workers vary from portraying women as unmarried and subordinate daughters, using women’s status as wives and mothers, or to use female workers as sexualized bodies. But all the ideologies have the same goal: to strictly control the female labor force and keep wages low (Mills 2003). In post-socialist countries, an increasing number of factories can be found that supply cheap products to Western Europe and North America. In many textile factories, women make up the majority of the work force. As with the maquiladoras and industries in Asia, wages are low.

The increasing feminization of the labor force is accompanied by several other trends. One trend is the new proletarianization of women’s labor. In Asia, many women who are employed in the new industrial zones are coming from a non-capitalist production background, mainly subsistence farming. Many women are still engaged in these non-capitalist work practices in addition to their activities in the capitalist production sector, resulting in a hybrid mix of different work practices (Gills 2002). This situation is similar to countries in Eastern and Central Europe, where women and households in general support themselves in multiple ways, often including non-capitalist practices that do not involve formal paid work.

A second trend is the increasing rate of rural-urban migration of (young) women in many countries with new industrial zones. Migration of young women to urban areas results in social transformation generally and in changes for the individual woman. Rural women’s migration to urban areas “represents a sharp departure from established patterns of feminine behavior and notions of appropriate activities for women, especially unmarried daughters” (Mills 1999, 4). Social values and gender roles are changing because of women’s participation in these new industries. Moving between urban areas
and rural areas also means that women are often forced to adapt their identities accordingly (Mills 1999). Wolf’s study (1992) on factory daughters in Java, for example paints a picture of social transformation and changing gender roles as a result of women’s participation as wage laborers.

New industrial zones are common in many countries, but there is a wide diversity in the ways that they attract and control the labor force, as well as how factory women construct their own identities and means of resistance. For example, Lee’s study (1998) shows that in South China two similar factories each have a different labor force and a different way of controlling their workers. In the Hong Kong factory the labor force can be characterized as “matron workers” (older unskilled women who have few chances to find a job elsewhere), whereas in the same factory located a short drive north the labor force can be characterized as “maiden workers” or young unmarried women (Lee 1998). Both management and female workers construct identities to control and resist. As Freeman (2000, 42) argues, “local cultural traditions and, in particular, the meanings of gender influence the shape of transnational production in specific ways along the global assembly line.”

Another example comes from Cravey (1998). In her work on maquiladoras, she states (1998, 135) that “gender and household relations are dialectically connected to broader spaces of economic transformation.” These connections result in specific factory regimes that, in turn, also change gender relations. For example, prior to the maquiladoras employing mainly women, men had made up the majority of workers in Mexican factories. One aspect of this former factory regime was that it was more ‘family-oriented,’ meaning that wages of male workers were high enough to support a household.
In contrast, the new maquiladora regime underpays women, undermining family economies by making it impossible for a single wage earner to support a whole household on one salary (Cravey 1998).

Scholars do not agree whether women are better off or worse off with the employment opportunities in the new industrial zone. Wolf (1992), for example, argues that the effects of global capitalism are conflicting. On the one hand, women may benefit because they have more say in family decisions, they are able to escape from parental control, and they gain more financial independence because of their own wages. At the same time, wages are low and often insufficient to sustain a livelihood independently, control of workers is very strict, and women working in factories are viewed as sexually loose and immoral by their communities (Ong 1987).

Indeed, formal labor participation does not automatically result in more autonomy. Wolf (1992) shows that in East Asia, the arrival of global capitalism did not change the position of women within the household. Rather, factories often made use of women’s and especially daughters’ subordinate position within the household. By comparing Javanese factory workers with Taiwanese factory workers, Wolf demonstrates that “industrialization perpetuates and reinforces the position of women that existed before such shifts in the global economy and significant family change takes time to germinate” (1992, 257).

Female participation in the global economy is not self-evident and activities for women are changing. For example, Wright (2004) shows that a shift from Fordist production to a more flexible production process in maquiladoras results in the exclusion
of female workers. Currently, maquiladoras are in the process of training their employees
to be more skilled workers in order to remain competitive, but women are not generally
considered for such training.

In short, global economic restructuring brings many changes to women’s
everyday life, such as changes in labor opportunities, in labor arrangements, in gender
ideologies, in empowerment and autonomy, in traditions, and in household power
relations. It is clear that global economic restructuring plays out at fine geographic scales,
and is shaping and shaped by gender relations. However, regions and women are
impacted in different ways by global economic restructuring.

2.4.2 Global economic restructuring and post-socialist countries

The position of post-socialist countries is different from the other countries that
underwent dramatic economic restructuring. Since the fall of the Iron Curtain, post-
socialist countries opened up to the global economy and are attractive locations since the
wages are relatively low. There is an ongoing discussion whether the transition brings the
post-socialist countries closer to becoming a successful more developed country, or result
in a stagnating economy that has characteristics similar to less-developed countries

There are several components to these arguments. For example, Alvater (1998)
discusses several aspects that have to be taken into account when studying the ‘spatio-
temporal dimension’ of transition. First, because the Central and East European countries
are near the European Union and are culturally relatively homogeneous to the EU
compared with other world regions, this results in a strong “demonstration effect” and
aggressive strategies by EU companies to enter the markets of the post-socialist countries. Second, world trade did not experience high growth rates during the 1990s, thus creating a more difficult global economic climate for post-socialist countries to enter it than NICs had experienced in the 1980s. Also, the currencies of the post-socialist countries are now linked to a system of flexible exchange rates, which puts more pressure on the economy than under a system of fixed exchange rates (Altvater 1998).

Furthermore, Alvater (1998) argues that post-socialist countries are entering the global economy during a time that world trade is regulated by market forces and not, as in the Cold War period, by forming alliances with either the USA or the Soviet Union, which benefited the Asian NICs.

The direction and pace of the transition in post-socialist countries is, of course, not only influenced by global economic factors, but also by internal factors such as existing class structures, the implementation of policies, and the establishment of institutions that facilitate the development of a free market and democracy. For example, post-socialist countries have seen an increase in factories that produce goods for the global market and employ women. This does not mean, of course (as the previous section shows), that women are now only involved in capitalist practices. Rather, legacies of the past, in the form of traditional non-capitalist practices, still play a role in day-to-day existence.
2.5 Capitalist and non-capitalist economic and work practices

The transition to a free market economy does not imply the end of non-capitalist economic practices in post-socialist countries (Smith 2002, Pavlovskaya 2004). Many households use a diverse range of capitalist and non-capitalist practices to make a living (Smollett 1989, Chevalier 1999, Cellarius 2000, Meurs 2002, Smith 2002, Pavlovskaya 2004). These non-capitalist practices, such as barter, reciprocity systems, and non-paid labor, are not just a response to difficulties resulting from the transition. Instead, some are “derived from the legacies of the Soviet system, some that are historically resilient to ‘dominant’ economic forms and have their roots in the fairly recent peasant economies of land utilization and household economic practice even prior to the arrival of Soviet-style central planning” (Smith 2002, 234). Indeed, this mix is hardly unique to post-socialist countries. Gibson-Graham (1996), for example, challenges the notion that capitalism is the only organizer of economic and social life. By deconstructing capitalism these authors demonstrate that there is no single economy, but a plurality of economies, including non-capitalist practices.

Pavlovskaya’s (2004) work on multiple economies in Moscow also contributes to the idea of a plurality of economies and to the discussion that transition is not a linear process towards capitalism. She uses a framework that includes the multiple economies in the post Soviet society (including the state formal sector, state informal sector, private formal sector, private informal sector), each of which is divided into a public and a private sphere (Pavlovskaya 2004). This approach makes it possible to link various geographic scales and economies, and also “emphasizes the diversity of class and gender
processes within households, the connections between past and present social hierarchies, and the mutually constitutive nature of social and spatial change” (2004, 346). 

Similarly, Meurs’ study (2002) on rural households in the Rhodope region of Bulgaria demonstrates that during the communist period rural households were not only engaged in formal labor but also participated in informal practices (such as the production of food on small plots for own consumption). Since the collapse of communism, earnings from formal work have decreased, but, interestingly, this has not been accompanied by an increase in the production of food on the household plot, although the food production became relatively more important for the household survival (Meurs 2002). According to Meurs: “Rhodope household economies are thus better characterized as having been truncated by the new conditions, than as adapting to these” (emphasis in the original) (2002, 214). After the loss of formal work, women especially spend more time on these household plots. In the rural areas of many post-socialist countries, it therefore seems that natural and agricultural resources (wood, wild plants, and land) thus come to play an important role in non-capitalist practices.

2.6 Transition and local natural and agricultural resources

It is now well recognized world-wide that the division of labor is gendered, such that while men often have responsibilities for managing ecological systems and functions that are more commercially related, women have responsibilities for managing ecological systems or functions that are directly related to the reproduction of the household, e.g. the family food supply (Rocheleau et al. 2001). In post-socialist countries, this gendered
division of labor and responsibilities may be differentially influenced by transition. Bridger (1997, 2000), for example, describes such a situation for Russian women. On the new private farms, which are often registered in the husband’s name, women do most of the manual work, while men use (increasingly defective) machinery, as was the case on the former state farms. After the collapse of the USSR, “the private plots became even more important for the subsistence of rural households and supplying the cities with food than they were during communist times” (Bridger 1997, 49). Due to the increased acreage of the plots and output combined with the insecure contribution of men to the household income, the labor burden and the responsibility for the reproduction of the household increased significantly for women in terms of time and energy – and, to some degree, more independence for rural women (Bridger 1997). This example depicts increasing responsibility for the reproduction of the household, a heavier labor burden, and increased dependence on natural and agricultural resources (in the form of garden plots and agricultural land for rural women). However, it is not clear from this study how these new dynamics play out under different transition conditions.

The environmental component of differential transition extends to include differential understandings of the environment. Women and men commonly do not share the same environmental knowledge (Cashman 1991, Rocheleau 1991). In addition, environmental knowledges in differing groups – divided along lines not only of gender, but of class, ethnicity, and occupation – hold differing influence over the use and management of natural and agricultural resources. Since the prevalent power distribution favors men over women, women’s perspectives on environmental processes and systems have often been ignored. For example, in situations of environmental stress, strategies
proposed by agricultural extension services to reverse or stop processes of environmental degradation have often been biased towards men – even though the inclusion of women’s perspectives would have led to a fuller and more complete understanding of the ongoing process and more insights into a possible solution (Rocheleau 1991).

These issues are best approached through feminist political ecology, which studies the local experiences of women and their relationship to the environment. Feminist political ecology is a branch of political ecology, a field concerned with access to and control of natural and agricultural resources, and the uneven power relations governing environmental access and change (Schroeder 1993, Robbins 2000). Feminist political ecology focuses on the power-laden gendered aspects of the relationship between humans and the environment (Carney and Watts 1991, Cashman 1991, Rocheleau 1991, Schroeder 1993, Carney 1996, LaStarria-Cornhiel 1997). These struggles are important, because they acknowledge: (1) gendered knowledges of environmental processes and systems, and (2) different rights to access natural and agricultural resources and responsibilities for the management of various ecological systems and functions based on gender, race, and class (Rocheleau 1991, Robbins 2000).

Most feminist political ecology research has been conducted in a rural Third World setting (Cashman 1991, Rocheleau and Edmunds 1997, Jewitt 2000, Walker 2001). To date, however, no feminist political ecology studies appear to have focused on post-socialist countries in Europe and as a result little is known about the relation between rural women and the environment, in this case natural and agricultural resources, against a post-socialist backdrop. In the Bulgarian context, the economic malaise of late state socialism followed by the shocks precipitated by the fall of the Iron Curtain
increased the importance of women’s natural resource access and knowledge. In rural Bulgaria, these resources include several crucial, though often overlooked, components: (1) forests, where fuel wood, herbs, berries, and wild animals are harvested, (2) water that is used to water crops, (3) small livestock, including chickens, pigs, and goats, and (5) gardens and land, where subsistence vegetables and fruit trees are grown. Harvesting and maintaining these products is important for household survival, but also for cash to supplement unreliable formal income sources (Cellarius 2000). Transition is, therefore, rooted in the daily business of often overlooked environmental practices, although the environmental practices are not yet fully understood.

2.7 Differences among women

It has become clear that gendered processes are important in restructuring livelihoods and are linked to broader economic and social processes. The majority of the transition theories do not address gender relations and livelihoods and therefore cannot explain how people and in women in particular experience the transition. Literature on the ‘maquiladoras’ and the ‘Newly Industrialized Countries’ in Asia show that economic restructuring impacts women in multiple and different ways. Therefore, we cannot simply assume that all women in post-socialist countries experience the transition in the same way. It will be important to look not only for similarities, but also for the differences among women. Feminists argue that gender processes are important within households and at larger geographic scales, but other factors also play a key role – factors such as gender, ethnicity, class, sexuality, and age, and their intersection (Women and Geography
Study Group of the IBG 1984, Katz and Monk 1993, Sachs 1996, Haraway 1997). These foci emphasize that women have different experiences and identities. Accordingly, factors important for studying rural women’s experiences of transition are gender, age/life cycle, ethnicity and class.

Age/life cycle as a factor for differing experiences of women has not received much attention in geography. Older women are rarely a topic of research. Outside geography this topic has received more research interest, especially in sociology, psychology, and social gerontology (Sachs 1993, Harper and Laws 1995, Arber, Davidson, and Ginn 2003). Interestingly, the few geographers who do focus on ageing and ageism often publish in non geography journals, e.g. ‘Journal of Aging Studies’, ‘Research on Ageing’, and ‘Ageing and Society’ (Harper and Laws 1995). Most geographic research on this topic focuses on the spatial distribution of elderly people, service delivery, changing relations with the environment, and the social and personal implications of the ageing process (Harper and Laws 1995). But as Harper and Law argue, ‘age’ is more than only a category. Too often ‘age’ is only seen as control variable in research projects (Arber, Davidson, and Ginn 2003). Age is a socially constructed concept that changes through space and over time, for example changes in retirement age. Age should therefore receive as much attention in research as concepts as gender and ethnicity receive (Harper and Laws 1995). According to Katz and Monk (1993) ‘age’ should also receive more attention in geography research, because age/life cycle is a very important factor in women’s experiences. “Change throughout the life course is based not only in biology, but also in experiences of family, community, and history” (1993, 19-20). Besides the personal experiences of women, it is also relevant to learn more about
the generational cohorts to which women belong to get insight in some collective indicators, such as access to education, labor participation, and family role (Katz and Monk 1993). Also, the stage of life course will influence the access and use of spaces by women. In addition to age, ethnicity/race and class are other factors influencing women’s experiences and creating possibilities and restrictions with regard to access and use of spaces, labor market, appropriate behavior and traditional roles (Gregson, Kothari, and Cream 1997).

2.8 Conclusion

Standard, macro-level transition theories alone are poor in predicting and explaining the changes in rural women’s livelihoods in post-socialist countries for the following reasons: (1) the majority of the transition theories focus on the macro level and therefore cannot provide an understanding of the complex and multifaceted everyday life of rural women; and (2) most transition theories express a linear view with free market capitalism and democracy as the inevitable and ideal outcome of the transition. Consequently, they do not fully capture the changes experienced by rural women and do not capture the continuities from the socialist world into the post-socialist world that are experienced and carried on by rural women. Everyday lives and experiences need to be studied at fine geographic scales, such as the household, and then connected to larger geographic scales, such as the state and global economy to understand the dynamics and complexities of transition processes. Transition is a gendered process, impacting men and women differently by bringing different possibilities and restrictions for men and women.
Literature on transition ethnography, women and economic restructuring, and political ecology provides insights that help to predict and explain the changes in rural women’s livelihoods. The effects of economic restructuring are contradictory and it is uncertain whether women are better off or worse. It is clear, however, that everyday lives are undergoing dramatic changes as a result of transition. The economic practices employed by households and women are diverse, including both capitalist and non-capitalist practices, and are not necessary a response to the hardship caused by the transition processes. In rural areas, natural and agricultural resources play an important role in sustaining livelihoods and are often part of non-capitalist practices. The changes in rural women’s lives and women’s experiences are no the same, but differ based on factors such as ethnicity, age, and class.

Combining the insights from different bodies of literature suggests the following four questions:

1. How does transition influence rural women’s labor opportunities, labor burden, empowerment, and access to, dependence on, and use of natural and agricultural resources? Have these facets of rural women’s livelihoods increased or decreased? Hence, how are these connected?

This chapter has demonstrated that transition, which is a process that includes drastic economic restructuring, has profound impacts on livelihoods. Labor opportunities, labor burden, empowerment, access to, dependence on, and use of natural and agricultural resources, all aspects of women’s rural livelihoods, may change during transition, although it is not clear to what extent and in what ways.
2. Do all rural women experience the transition in the same way? If not, how and why do rural women experience the transition differently, with regard to labor opportunities, labor burden, empowerment, and access to, dependence on, and use of natural and agricultural resources?

Feminist research has shown that women do not constitute one uniform group. Together with gender, age, ethnicity, and class influence how women experience everyday life. It is not clear if, how, and why these factors influence rural women’s transition experiences.

3. Are non-capitalist practices becoming more important for rural women’s everyday lives and survival, or less? And what is the role of natural and agricultural resources in these practices?

Research on everyday life in a post-communist context demonstrated that non-capitalist practices, some of which are continuities from the past, play a very important part in how people make ends meet. It appears that natural and agricultural resources play a large role in these practices in rural areas. Not much is known, however, about how these practices are gendered.

4. How does uneven local development play out in rural women’s livelihoods?

Research has demonstrated that transition is a spatially uneven process. Transition is uneven due to macro-scale processes, but also as a result of processes that played out during the communist period. It is not clear what the dynamics are between spatial unevenness and rural women’s livelihoods and experiences.
CHAPTER 3

BULGARIA’S TRANSITIONS: FROM 1945 ONWARDS

3.1 Introduction

In the previous chapter, I demonstrated that transition processes and their outcomes are not easily captured in general theories and play out in different ways and at different levels. In this chapter, I discuss the characteristics of Bulgaria’s transition in order to provide a context in which the livelihoods of rural women can be understood. I start with a historical overview of Bulgaria from 1945 until the collapse of the communist regime. Then I discuss the changes in Bulgaria after 1989. In particular, I pay attention to the driving forces behind the transition that are relevant for understanding changes in rural areas, including (1) decollectivization of agriculture, (2) availability of foreign investment, and (3) industrial development.

3.2 Historical background

From 1945 until 1989, Bulgaria (see figure 3.1) was one of the most loyal satellite states of the Soviet Union (Bristow 1999). The country followed guidelines and
directions issued by Moscow very strictly and maintained a close trade relationship with the Soviet Union. The transformation of Bulgaria into a communist state after World War II resulted in dramatic changes: all industrial and agricultural property was collectivized, a state led economy was introduced, and the state became involved in people’s everyday lives to a great extent. The implementation of a very generous welfare system, which included including free health care, maternity leave, child benefits and free education, was also part of the new communist state. Any resistance to, or criticism of, the communist regime was met by harsh internal repression (Gallagher 1998). Similar to the Soviet Union, Bulgaria underwent rapid industrialization after WWII. The increasing supply of labor needed in the industrial sector was achieved by collectivizing agriculture and thus freeing agricultural workers (Bristow 1999). In the process, Bulgaria established strong trade links with the Soviet Union and other COMECON countries (COMECON stands for ‘council of mutual economic assistance’ and was an economic organization for communist states).

The transformation into a socialist country also brought drastic changes to rural areas. Besides the obvious change of collectivized agriculture, rural people’s identities changed from peasants into wage workers under socialism (Creed 1999). Some areas experienced depopulation as people moved to the cities to work in the factories. Later on, rural areas also saw the establishment of new, mostly small-scale, industries (Pickles and Begg 2000).

In the post-war years, Bulgaria initially experienced economic growth. This was achieved by taking advantage of the economies of scale that arose as a result of the consolidation of agriculture and the nationalization of industries, and by the increased
availability of labor for the industries. In the 1960s, however, economic growth stagnated and started to decline as Bulgaria was not able to increase productivity. For example, while in the 1950s annual real growth averaged 11%, by the 1960s 7.5%, it was 7% by the 1970s, and only 3% in the 1980s (Bristow 1999, 57). The low economic growth in the 1980’s was accompanied by an increasing dissatisfaction among the population about the lack of consumer goods and the instable political situation, partly fueled by an increasing familiarity with the living conditions in the ‘West’ due to the mass media (Curtis 1993, Bristow 1999).
Figure 3.1: Map of Bulgaria (adapted from ILO: http://www.ilo.org/public/english/region/eurpro/budapest/info/country/bulgaria.htm)
3.2.1 Organization of industries

During the communist period, the economic geography of Bulgaria changed dramatically. The nationalization of the industry was a priority for the new regime. By 1947, the state controlled all industrial properties (Lampe 1986). To facilitate economic development, the Bulgarian government put a strong emphasis on heavy industry, at the expense of lighter industries producing consumer goods. From the 1960s onwards, most of the industrial activity was concentrated in the core regions of the country in the form of large scale, fully integrated production units. Major industrial centers were Sofia (the capital), Varna and Bourgas at the Black Sea, and Plovdiv, Pleven, and Veliko Turnova (Pickles and Begg 2000). The core industrial regions were dispersed throughout the country in order to be close to natural and agricultural resources, but also to realize the government’s desire to eradicate spatial inequality (Begg and Pickles 1998). In peripheral regions, smaller industrial plants were developed. Despite this dispersion, the majority of the total industrial production took place in large-scale enterprises with more than 500 employees (Begg and Pickles 1998). Some industrial sectors in the core regions only consisted of a few enterprises, such as oil and gas, coal, metallurgy, glass and china, and paper industrial sectors. Industrial production of textiles, wood products, and agricultural processing was more geographically dispersed and took place in many small plants in the peripheral regions (Begg and Pickles 1998). This clear core-periphery structure shows that the Bulgarian government did not succeed in eradicating spatial inequality. Rather, its industrial organization reproduced earlier uneven forms of development.
The communist government realized that they did not diminish spatial inequality in the first decades of the command economy. In the second half of the 1960s, therefore, they started to relocate more smaller industrial enterprises to small towns and villages (Creed 1995). Further, the regional differences with regard to industrial development were addressed by the Bulgarian government in the form of the ‘New Economic Program,’ implemented in 1979. This program encouraged the decentralization of branch plants (including textiles, electronics, leather, wood products, and apparel industries) to border, mountainous and ethnic villages. The government intended for this dispersal to reduce rural-urban migration, to stop the depopulation of rural villages, and to address the shortage of agricultural labor. The ‘New Economic Program’ also intended to improve the standard of living in rural areas and to enhance the economic situation of the most marginalized communities (Koulev 1992, Creed 1995, Pickles and Begg 2000).

The decentralization of the apparel industry to the more marginalized regions was the most significant change and it coincided with an opening up of western markets in the 1980s. Western European countries started to outsource some of their apparel and textile production to Eastern European countries. “During the latter years of the command economy, the apparel industry grew rapidly as Bulgaria became part of the international production network supplying department stores, mass merchandisers, and discount chains in Europe and the United States” (Pickles and Begg 200, 192).

In sum, Bulgaria’s industrial development during the communist period (ca. 1945–1989) was uneven, despite the government’s efforts to encourage the decentralization of small industrial enterprises to more rural and marginal areas. Although the dispersal of industrial development brought industrial activities, some more
successful than other, to many areas where agriculture used to be the main economic activity, the mainstay of industrial activities remained in the industrial core regions. The transition would subsequently prove to be very difficult for many industrial enterprises in rural areas.

3.2.2 Organization of agriculture

The reorganization of agriculture proved to be more difficult than the reorganization of industry. Landownership in Bulgaria at the end of WWII was highly fragmented with about 1 million farms averaging 4 hectares (Kaneff 1996, Bristow 1999). The new communist regime decided to merge the private farms into collective farms (‘trudovo kooperativno zemedelsko stopanstvo’ or TKZS). By the end of 1940s, however, only 11% of agricultural land was consolidated into collective farms. In the 1950s, however, the consolidation process accelerated. By 1958, 92% of arable land was in state hands and divided into less than 1,000 collective farms with an average of 4,000 hectares each. Peasants were still allowed to cultivate a small private plot of land of 0.2 to 0.5 hectares and to keep a small number of livestock (Lampe 1986). In the 1950s and 1960s, both the country’s share of agricultural output, and the share of employment in agriculture fell steeply as a result of the government emphasis on industrialization (Bristow 1999).

In the beginning of the 1970s, the agrarian consolidation process continued as agro-industrialized complexes (‘agropromishlen kompleks’ or APK) were set up. These complexes merged many collective farms and transformed peasants into state employees, in order to free workers for the factories (Lampe 1986). “By the end of 1971, all of
Bulgaria’s 744 collective and 56 state farms had been merged into 161 agro-industrial complexes, mostly APK’s, averaging 24,000 hectares and 6,500 members” (Lampe 1986, 207). The collectivization of agriculture and consolidation of farms to free workers for the factories resulted in a depopulation of rural areas, changing Bulgaria erstwhile rural character (see Table 3.1).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Census Year</th>
<th>Share of Urban Population (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1934</td>
<td>21.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1946</td>
<td>24.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1956</td>
<td>33.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1965</td>
<td>46.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1975</td>
<td>58.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1985</td>
<td>64.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1992</td>
<td>67.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td>69.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3.1: Share of urban population 1934-2001 (Source: Statistical Yearbook 2003, Republic of Bulgaria, National Statistical Institute)

The industrialization of agriculture, which turned TKZS’s into APK’s, did not result in a dramatic increase in agricultural productivity. Interestingly, however, the output from personal plots (leased from the agro-industrial complexes) increased dramatically during this time. In addition, the overall share of output from the personal plots in the total agricultural output rose. Most of the produce from these personal plots were destined for the domestic market (Lampe 1986, Meurs and Begg 1998). “By 1989, 44 % of total livestock production and 25 % of vegetables came from personal plots”
The personal plots did not work in isolation from the collective farms, however. Rather, they were highly connected. The collective farm supplied seeds, chemicals and machinery to the personal plots and provided a market for products from the personal plots. In 1982, the government stimulated this development by allowing the collective farms to subcontract production under state guidance to groups of workers or families. By 1989, the subcontractors supplied 62% of grain, 80% of vegetables, and 70% of meat (Meurs and Begg 1998), thus playing an very important role in the Bulgarian agricultural system.

Creed (1995) shows that villagers considered the personal plots as an important part of their livelihood strategies. At the one hand, the personal plots provided the villagers with a range of products, which were not otherwise always available from the state sector – or, if available, were of low quality. At the other hand, the villagers could sell the products from the personal plots to the state. Since there was a shortage of labor in the industrial enterprises, villagers had the negotiation power to adjust their working hours to their agricultural activities.

By 1989, the dualistic Bulgarian agricultural sector consisted of large agro-industrial complexes producing industrial crops for export, and of small personal plots mainly cultivated by villagers for subsistence use and the domestic market (Swain 2000).

### 3.2.3 Social dimensions: women’s lives under communism

Profound social changes occurred after the creation of the communist state, many of which directly affected women. One was the massive incorporation of women into the paid labor force. The communist government guaranteed full employment for everyone
and in return everyone was expected to work. Formal employment became a duty, in effect, and not a right (LaFont 2001). Women thus began fully participating in the labor market, but compared to men they often held lower-status jobs with little decision making power, while managerial positions were mainly reserved for men (Dimitrova 2005). Women also earned less than men for equivalent work. Although the communist regime preached gender equality, in practice gender inequalities remained part of economic life resulting in the increased segregation and feminization of labor (Corrin 1998, Pascall and Manning 2000, LaFont 2001, Fodor 2002, Dimitrova 2005).

Despite the fact that women participation’s in the work force was high and was expected, women’s duties within the domestic sphere did not change much during communist times. Bulgaria is traditionally a patriarchal country and remained so during the communist period (Fodor 2002, Dimitrova 2005). Women continued to be the principle caregivers and remained responsible for the reproduction of the household, resulting in a double labor burden. In response, the government provided a generous maternity leave of 9 months, greater access to education, financial child support, child care, and guaranteed employment, but “failed to reconcile women’s role as producers and reproducers” (LaFont 2001, 206). They instead reinforced women’s reproductive and child rearing roles (Corrin 1998, Pascall and Manning 2000, LaFont 2001, Fodor 2002, Dimitrova 2005).

The government emphasis on gender equality also extended to political life, by guaranteeing women representation in the parliament and other governing bodies by assigning a certain number of seats to women. Although women were thus seemingly integrated into political life, they were strictly controlled and often not able to voice
women’s interests (Corrin 1998, LaFont 2001). Women were often recruited in order to fulfill quotas and not for their political aspirations or interests (this practice extended also to men’s representations in governing bodies). Women’s representation in the political sphere during the communist regime cannot be considered emancipation, but more of a formality as might be expected under a totalitarian regime (Pascall and Manning 2000, LaFont 2001).

In sum, women’s participation in the formal labor force increased during the communist era in Bulgaria, made possible by a generous welfare system. But, women remained the principle caregivers with a high labor burden since patriarchal practices and pressures continued. Furthermore, women’s participation in the political realm increased, but this ‘empowerment’ was largely superficial. The Bulgarian government held double standards; on the one hand, socialism was intended to bring gender equality, but at the other hand, patriarchal structures remained intact and were even reinforced.

3.3 Transition in Bulgaria

In 1989 when the Iron Curtain came down, Bulgarians faced a long period of uncertainty and many unanticipated challenges. Besides changes within the political arena (to a multiple party system and democracy), there were significant changes in the economic domain that had profound impacts on Bulgarians and their way of life. Collectivized land and nationalized enterprises were again privatized. The opening of domestic markets to international competition resulted in bankruptcy of firms and major lay-offs (Stokes 1993). In addition, there were serious cutbacks in the welfare system.
Pensions did not keep pace with the high rate of inflation, and childcare services and other social services deteriorated, affecting women disproportionately (Lokar 1999).

According to many observers, Bulgaria’s economic situation has been bleak over the last 15 years, although the situation has stabilized and has been showing signs of improvement in the last few years (The World Bank 1999, UNDP 2004). With regard to macro-economic indicators, during the 1990s Bulgaria’s GNP, industrial output, total exports, national income, and per capita income have dropped, while annual inflation increased (Bulgaria even experienced hyperinflation in 1996 and 1997) (Bristow 1999, The World Bank 1999, Vassilev 2003). The situation began to improve, however, when the Bulgarian Lev was coupled to the Deutschmark in 1997. In 2002, for example, the GDP of Bulgaria was 22% higher than in 1997 (UNDP 2004). This economic growth, however, was uneven. Some sectors, such as the service sector and industries, are thriving, while the agrarian sector in particular performs poorly and inconsistently: the agricultural sector’s gross value-added contribution to the national GNP decreased from 18.8% in 1998 to 12.5% in 2002 (UNDP 2004).

Because most of Bulgaria’s trade was within the COMECON and half of Bulgaria’s trade was with the Soviet Union, Bulgaria’s economic situation deteriorated dramatically when the COMECON disbanded and the Soviet Union disintegrated in 1991 (Bristow 1999). Since 1991, Bulgaria’s trade has reoriented towards Western Europe and other markets, but “gained only limited foothold in foreign markets” (Vassilev 2003, 350). So far this has not been enough to make up for the loss of the COMECON market (Bristow 1999). Furthermore, Bulgaria is burdened by a high foreign debt and has received structural adjustment loans from the IMF, the World Bank, and the European
Bank for Recovery and Development. This meant painful cuts in budget deficits and social programs. Also, Bulgaria experienced a drastic devaluation of the national currency in 1996. Although Bulgaria has liberal foreign investment laws allowing full foreign ownership and unlimited repatriation of profits, it attracts only limited capital (Vassilev 2003). One problem is that the Council of Ministers has repeatedly interfered in investment trajectories because they do not want Bulgarian enterprises winding up in foreign hands (Bristow 1999).

Overall, Bulgaria’s economic situation is improving and will continue to change, especially since Bulgaria is an aspirant member of the European Union hoping to enter in 2007. As such, Bulgaria has to implement laws and carry out reforms regarding the judicial system, monetary institutions, market system, and minority rights. Bulgaria also receives assistance from the EU, for example for the development of rural areas. If Bulgaria enters the Union in 2007, the role of the EU will even become more significant (UNDP 2004).

3.3.1 Industrial reorganization

The transition had severe impacts on the large-scale industrial enterprises in the core regions and the dispersed small enterprises in the more marginalized regions of the country. The small enterprises – many of them branch plants of the large industrial enterprises in the core regions – were the first to feel the impacts of the change to a free market economy, and the competition from world markets. Many of the large-scale industrial enterprises were able to continue for a longer time because of links to the government who continued to subsidize them. The closure of smaller, mainly labor
intensive enterprises in the peripheral areas led to mass unemployment. The reason for these closures was often not that these enterprises were less efficient, but because of political games played by the core enterprises wanting to protect their economic interests (Begg and Pickles 1998; Pickles and Begg 2000).

In the last decade, new economic opportunities have arisen in Bulgaria. After 1995, there was an increase of foreign investment in the apparel sector in peripheral areas, especially in the border areas with Turkey and Greece. These regions were attractive to foreign investment for several reasons, as described by Pickles and Begg (2000, 195):

“First, many small worksites were available, managerial and workers skills remained in the area, and established supply, transport, and marketing systems were still in place. Second, the investments of the state socialist regional policies, during the 1980’s resulted in a relative ‘newness’ of equipment in these factories and the opening of new non-CMEA markets in Western Europe. Third, the region had an available low-cost, trained workforce.”

Foreign investments in the textiles, clothing, leather, and the footwear industry have subsequently increased. During the period 1997-2000, US$ 196 million was invested in these sectors, mostly in production equipment (Ministry of Economy 2002). The textile sector enjoys relatively high growth rates in terms of foreign investment. Although foreign investment in the textile sector is only 5% of total foreign investments
made in Bulgaria, the textile sector experienced a 196% growth in foreign investment in the period 2000-2003 (National Statistical Institute 2004).

Many women find jobs in these new industries. The current gender ideology in these factories is not much different than the gender ideologies found in similar factories in Asia and Central America; i.e. women are submissive, obedient and have ‘nimble fingers.’ Although working days are long and irregular, unionization is often discouraged, and working conditions are poor, many women take these jobs, because the wages are relatively high (although part of the salary is paid off the record). Furthermore, there are often few other job opportunities available. Of course, they do not form an employment opportunity for all rural women in Bulgaria (Musiolek and others 2004). In the future, EU membership may improve social and labor legislation and its compliance and therefore improve women’s working conditions.

Bulgaria’s transition of the last 14 years, accompanied as it has been by industrial reorganization, has spatially uneven outcomes. Some areas have suffered closure of enterprises; elsewhere foreign investment is turning the tide in some areas as foreign owned factories are opened. Not all industries are benefiting to the same extent of foreign investment and not everyone is able to find employment in the new factories.

3.3.2 Agricultural reorganization

Rural areas experienced some changes that were directly linked to the specific economic and social structures of rural areas. For example, where agriculture and economic activities linked to agriculture are important income sources, transition has brought change in the form of decollectivization. This has resulted in a new dualistic
agricultural sector. On the one hand, many small family-owned operations emerged, mostly subsistence farms (Meurs 1994). At the other hand, large scale farms emerged that mainly produce for the market (see Table 3.2). A reduction of economic diversification accompanied the decollectivization process, eliminating many traditional female jobs in the industrial and service sectors in rural areas (Carter and Kaneff 1999).

The decollectivization of agriculture has been one of the most difficult sectoral reorganizations (Bristow 1999). In 1991, the government implemented a law that is still the basis for most of the land reform. “Previous owners or heirs have the right to be assigned without charge the land they owned before collectivization. When this is not possible, then an equivalent area or financial compensation may be received” (Bristow 1999, 63). As straightforward as this sounds, the decollectivization process is very slow and problematic, for at least four reasons. First, it has brought great uncertainty about land tenure resulting in stalled agricultural development. This is because, as mentioned before, personal plots played an important role in Bulgaria’s agricultural sector. Most of the personal plots yielded high output and were managed relatively efficient. Under the new laws, users suddenly have no security regarding their continued use of these personal plots. Second, investment initiatives have largely disappeared and there has been substantial disinvestment in the agricultural sector. Third, the current agricultural sector is characterized by small land holding, which discourages mechanization and commercial farming. Fourth, many people who are entitled to land do not have an interest in engaging in agriculture, which exacerbates low land productivity (Meurs and Begg 1998, Bristow 1999). Indeed, in certain areas of Bulgaria, much land is left fallow, as a result of these problems.
Table 3.2 illustrates that the decollectivization was a slow process in Bulgaria. Only in 1999 was all of the land fully restored to its previous owners, mainly on the basis of land-dividing plans. These plans stipulated that land could not always be restored based on past delimitations, because of subsequent changes in land use and the construction of buildings and infrastructure. In many instances, it was also difficult to exactly retrace the past borders of a plot due to a lack of documentation. Although, according to Table 3.2, all the land has been restored, many documents still need to be finalized and in many cases land needs to be divided among the heirs of the previous owners.

<table>
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<tr>
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<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Land restored to owners (1000 ha.)</td>
<td>1796</td>
<td>2687</td>
<td>3202</td>
<td>3710</td>
<td>4128</td>
<td>5454</td>
<td>5680</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Share of land approved for restoration (%)</td>
<td>33.8</td>
<td>49.8</td>
<td>58.3</td>
<td>67.0</td>
<td>73.9</td>
<td>96.4</td>
<td>99.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Land restored to owners with muniments (1000 ha.)</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>163</td>
<td>397</td>
<td>706</td>
<td>1011</td>
<td>4929</td>
<td>5112</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Share of land with muniments to land restored (%)</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>6.1</td>
<td>12.4</td>
<td>19.0</td>
<td>25.5</td>
<td>90.4</td>
<td>90.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of agrarian cooperatives</td>
<td>1876</td>
<td>2815</td>
<td>3213</td>
<td>3229</td>
<td>3269</td>
<td>3237</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3.2: Results of the agrarian reform process in Bulgaria (source: National Statistical Institute 1999-2001)
A slack agricultural sector combined with a low level of economic diversification in rural areas has resulted in lower income levels for rural households than for urban households. For example, cash income for rural households in 2001 was only 80% of the cash incomes for urban households. However, non-cash income, especially from subsistence farming, is 4.7 times higher for rural household than for urban households, which reduces some of the rural-urban income disparity (UNDP 2004). It is estimated that 1.5 million households in Bulgaria (51.5% of the total, including urban households) cultivate land, raise livestock, and/or possess agricultural machinery; most of them are not fully involved in the market (UNDP 2004). Small plots – averaging is 6.4 dekares\(^1\), are cultivated with traditional labor-intensive techniques for subsistence needs (Cellarius 2000, Meurs 2002, UNDP 2004). Subsistence farming, a non-capitalist practice, cannot be considered as simply a response to cope with difficult times, since subsistence farming has always been an important part of rural life in Bulgaria. Nevertheless, in many rural households cash income has decreased and non-cash income in the form of subsistence farming has become relatively more important (Meurs 2002).

In the last 10 years, the depopulation of rural areas has slowed. In 2002, 45% of the internal migrants moves between cities. The migration from villages to towns makes up 22.8% and from towns to villages 20.5%. The migration between villages is 11% of the total internal migration. But although rural depopulation has halted, the population in rural areas is ageing. The average age in rural areas is 44.6 years, compared to 38.6 years in urban areas – a result of a higher percentage of pensioners in the countryside.

Furthermore, rural young people are leaving for towns in search of jobs and better living conditions.

\(^1\) Dekare is an often used area unit in Bulgaria. 1 dekare equals 1,000 m\(^2\) and 10 dekares equals 1 hectare.
conditions. In contrast, some pensioners who left for the cities in the 1950s and 1960s are now returning to their birth villages, where their low pensions can be supplemented with subsistence farming (UNDP 2004).

The process of decollectivization can partly be blamed for the sluggish condition of the agricultural sector. Low levels of economic diversification and an ageing of the population aggravates the situation in many rural areas. Many rural households, therefore, supplement their low cash incomes with subsistence farming.

### 3.3.3 Social dimensions of transition: women’s lives

Among the many changes in Bulgarian life catalyzed by the transition, a significant one has been changes in the national mentality. During the communist period, there was a lack of civil society in Bulgaria. Civil society can be defined as the non-governmental grouping of people for social activities, such as women’s movements, animal rights groups, or environmental groups (Stokes 1993). These organizations are very important to democracy and in Bulgaria had to be built up almost from scratch. This is because, despite the many collective projects under socialism, the UNDP states that “paradoxically, the emergence of more democratic societies and the growth of civil societies have led, not to greater participation of women in decision-making, but to greater exclusion from public life” (UNDP 1999, 66). Despite the fact that women achieved a fairly high level of participation in public life (although artificial) during the Soviet era, gender equality was not grounded in the patriarchal society of the Central and East European countries and the Baltic States (Waylen 1994, Pascall and Manning 2000, LaFont 2001).
Labor opportunities for Bulgarian women depend on different factors, such as age, education, and the residence. In general, rural women have more problems in finding a job than do women in urban areas (Women's Alliance of Development 2002). There are, however, significant differences between rural areas. Some rural areas experience high levels of foreign investment, often in industries that offer jobs to women, such as textile industries. In other areas, the crumbling of the agricultural system and the disappearance of related industries dramatically diminished labor opportunities for both men and women. Some people decide to leave these areas for places with more employment opportunities. There are also areas where the state is still offering many jobs to both men and women, such as customs and immigration services.

Overall unemployment is still high. In September 2002, for example, overall unemployment was 17.3%. Unemployment rates were higher in rural areas than in urban areas (20.5% versus 16.2%) (National Statistical Institute 2003). The gender differences in unemployment rates are insignificant, but women are overrepresented in the group of long-term unemployed (60%). Older women over 45 years and young women have are particularly disadvantaged in finding a job. This is because older women are perceived by employers as less motivated; younger women face more difficulties, because employers are afraid that they will take maternity leave (Women's Alliance of Development 2002, Dimitrova 2005). In 2003, the retirement age for women was 55 years (National Statistical Institute 2003).

Regional differences in employment can be dramatic, not only in terms of the share of unemployed people, but also in terms of the percentages of unemployed men compared to unemployed women. There are areas, especially those that experienced an
inflow of textile industries, for example around in and around Sandanksi in southwestern Bulgaria, where the unemployment rate for women is almost zero, while that for men is significantly higher. In households where the earnings of the woman make up the majority of the household income, the position of the woman may improve, since she has more power to negotiate and more financial freedom. At the other hand, it may also lead to more tensions within the household, because traditionally the male household head supplies the majority of the household income (The World Bank 1999, Women’s Alliance of Development 2002).

There are also areas where a significant number of women have left the formal labor force and can be found more in the home or in the field. This means that work is no longer formalized and, coupled with patriarchal labor traditions, this makes the work of women less visible and remunerated (Meurs 1994). This leads to less financial independence and often to less negotiating power within the household. These areas are characterized by a peripheral location, minimal potential to attract new businesses, and few jobs in the service sector.

In many instances the labor burden has increased for Bulgarian women (WAD 2003), although the composition of this burden differs by woman. Some women spend long hours in textile industries. Others have a long commute to work. Keeping house and taking care of the children is often the responsibility of women, resulting in a double burden. Furthermore, childcare facilities have disappeared in many areas, making it more difficult for women to combine a full-time job and child care (Dimitrova 2005). Most households in rural areas have subsistence plots on which women work.
At the household level, we see that the economic malaise followed by the fall of the Iron Curtain increased the importance of the subsistence plots or garden plots for the rural household’s survival. However, the plots did not only increase in importance in terms of food supply, but also because agricultural products from the plots can be traded for other products. These barter economies typically emerge during periods of economic hardship (Cellarius 2000). Working on their plots and processing crops are often considered women’s tasks, increasing women’s responsibility for the reproduction of the household and the dependence on natural and agricultural resources.

Social costs of the transition in general and for women specifically have been significant in Bulgaria. In general, there is a widening gap between rich and poor and the middle class is shrinking (Vassilev 2003). Many people live below the poverty line and international migration of young people is on the rise. The social benefits that were provided during the communist period (full employment, high levels of provision of state-funded health care, education, and pensions) are no longer realistic nor feasible in a free market economy, and have disappeared. Women face difficulties finding jobs, especially young and older women. If women have a job, they have the difficult task of combining full time employment with childcare and domestic work. Many rural women also have to look after subsistence plots in order to supplement low cash incomes. Furthermore, women’s participation in the political arena has decreased, lowering the levels of empowerment. In sum, transition has had and still has profound impacts on everyday life and livelihoods.
3.4 Conclusion

In sum, women’s rural livelihoods transformed drastically under state socialism and then again during the post-socialist transition. Women’s rural livelihoods are influenced by the geographic and economic organization of industries and agriculture, the structures of family patriarchy, government policies, and systems of foreign investment. These macro-scale factors play out differently across space and in everyday life. For rural women the configuration of these macro-scale factors impacts job availability and access, the overall condition of the rural household, women’s labor burden, their degree of empowerment, and the importance of non-capitalist practices, i.e. the role of natural and agricultural resources.
CHAPTER 4

RESEARCH CONTEXT AND METHODOLOGY

4.1 Introduction

During fall quarter 2003, I collected secondary data in Bulgaria and conducted interviews in two villages in the southwestern part of the country. The aim of this chapter is (1) to provide background information on the study area and research villages (I use fictitious names for the research villages to ensure the anonymity of the respondents), and (2) to explain and justify my data collection and analysis methods. First, I discuss how and why I chose my study area, followed by an overview of the research villages. I then contextualize my choice of data collection and analysis methods within my overall research paradigm. Finally, I consider limits and potentials of my approach and how this influences the outcomes of the overall research project.

4.2 Study area

The two villages, Mladogradi and Ctara Džuna (see Figure 4.1), are located in southwestern Bulgaria near the Greek and Macedonian borders. Both are within the
Sandanski municipal area. This area was chosen during extensive preliminary research, personally conducted during summer 2002 (June-August 2002), based on informal interviews with members of women’s organizations that are allied to the ‘Women’s Alliance for Development,’ and on written surveys from women’s organizations from the entire country. I was in the Sandanski area for two weeks during which I explored the region, carried out informal conversations with a wide range of people, and conducted more formal interviews with government officials. I chose this study area in large part, because of its internal diversity, which makes it a good case study area to study the multiple transitions that are ongoing in Bulgaria and how they influence women’s rural livelihoods.

As discussed before, transition is an uneven process that is experienced differently across space, generations, and ethnic communities. To analyze the impacts of this uneven process, I needed to include villages that appear to be experiencing different trajectories of transition, and which have different demographic and ethnic compositions. Ctara Djuna is a good example of a village that has experienced depopulation and deterioration of services provided. Mladogradi is an example of a village that has experienced an increase in foreign investment resulting in an increase in the number of jobs available. Ctara Djuna has an ageing population, while Mladogradi has a relative young population. Finally, Mladogradi has a significant Roma (formally known as ‘Gypsy’) population. Also significant for practical reasons is that the two villages are in relative close proximity (15 minutes by car).

Part of the larger Blagoevgrad area, the Sandanski municipality consists of two towns and fifty-two villages, with a total population of 43,109. Between 1992 and 2001,
the population declined with 4.4% (National Statistical Institute 2002). The municipal center, Sandanski, has a long-standing chemical, machine building, food and wine, and marble industry, along with an increasing number of foreign owned textile firms. In the rural areas of the district tobacco, grapes, fruits, and vegetables are grown, although a large part of the land is currently in fallow (Domino 2001). As in much of the southern and southwestern parts of Bulgaria, agriculture, resource extraction (forestry and wood processing), and tourism are important economic activities (Staddon and Cellarius 2002).

During the communist period, the Sandanski area saw rural depopulation, which was most marked in small villages, where agricultural cooperatives were the main source of employment. Larger villages, with more economic diversification in the form of agricultural-related factories, did not experience depopulation to the same extent. Villages close to Sandanski, in turn, retained their populations because villagers could easily commute to the many factories and businesses in and around Sandanski.

After 1989, when the agricultural cooperatives dissolved and many factories closed their doors, the region experienced high rates of unemployment, as elsewhere in Bulgaria. Land was slowly restituted to the previous owners, although this did not result in the emergence of many commercial firms. Indeed, the Sandanski area currently has few agricultural cooperatives. One reason for this is that the traditional regional crops – vegetables, tobacco, fruits, and grapes – do not easily lend themselves for large-scale farming. And finally, cooperatives do not have long tradition here as they do in the western part of the country (Meurs and Begg 1998).

In Sandanski’s small villages, where no new employment opportunities have emerged over the past decade 10 years, are largely populated by seniors, or ‘pensioners.’
Some are pensioners who have returned to their old family homes after living for years in the city. Pensioners receive low pension benefits ranging from BGN 50 to 150 (approximately US$ 30-90 in October 2003), depending on the kind of jobs pensioners used to have. Since cash incomes are low for most pensioners, subsistence farming is an important economic activity for many pensioners. Not all pensioners, however, own land for subsistence farming, because some of them were forced to leave Northern Greece during WWII (some Greeks were forced to leave Bulgaria) and settled in the Sandanski area and have never owned land here.

In the last ten years, many Greek textile factories have emerged around Sandanski and along the highway to Greece. These factories have been set up with Greek capital and are often under Greek management. These factories employ mainly women. The result is that female unemployment rates are extremely low in this region, while male rates are higher. Most factories work according to the principle of ‘Outward Processing Trade’ (OPT): “a way of manufacturing and trading garments whereby the imported – mostly pre-cut- inputs are assembled and sewn and then re-exported to the input country of origin” (Musiolek and others 2004, 14). OPT is an attractive way of doing business for the supplier and buyer. Bulgaria is favored for OPT, because it has an already existing industrial infrastructure, a qualified work force, and low wage conditions (Pickles and Begg 2000). Furthermore, there is an absence of tariffs and quotas as result of the ‘Europe Agreement’ that came into force in 1982 and encourages assembly production (Pickles and Begg 2000, Musiolek and others 2004). OPT is often considered an
unsustainable situation, however, since suppliers and buyers are very flexible and can easily choose another factory (in another country) to assemble their garments (Musiolek and others 2004).

Working conditions and labor rights situation in these factories are often compared to sweatshops in Central America or South Asia. Employees are often paid part of their salary under the table. This means that social benefits like maternity leave benefits or sick leave are determined by the official wage which is often the minimum wage (Musiolek and others 2004). Women receive an average wage of approximately BGN 300 - 400 per month including overtime (approximately US$ 180-240 in October 2003). This is a relatively high salary compared to other jobs in the region, but still very low considering the cost of living. Working conditions are bad. Factories are very hot in the summer and very cold in the winter; they are often not well ventilated resulting in dusty conditions. Overtime work is very common and women are rarely told at the beginning of the day when their working day will end. Although workers in Bulgaria have the right to refuse overtime, many are afraid to lose their jobs if they do so. Sexual harassment by Greek owners or managers has also been reported (Musiolek and others 2004).

In the next sections, I will discuss in more detail the two villages where I conducted my interviews. In both it is clear that industrial development, foreign investment, (or the lack thereof), and decollectivization influence everyday life to a great extent. My descriptions of these areas are influenced by my conversations with their inhabitants.
Figure 4.1: Map of study area (inset shows location in Bulgaria) (adapted from Sandanski Municipality Map, source (Domino 2001)
4.2.1 Mladogradi

Mladogradi is the second largest village in the region with almost 1600 inhabitants, who live in about 450 houses. The two main groups in the village are Bulgarians (about 1200 people) and Roma (about 400 people). When asked about relations between the Roma population and the Bulgarian population, everyone indicated that these are harmonious in this village. Most of the Roma live in the northern part of the village; the Roma quarter.

Mladogradi has almost no unemployment and a stable population (see Table 4.1) – most of whom work in nearby industries. Recently, new households have moved into the village attracted by the factory jobs. Villagers say that if you want to work you can work here. Many women are employed in textile industries. While most of the population has a full-time job outside agriculture, villagers still depend heavily on natural and agricultural resources, in the form of mostly subsistence plots. They rely on these plots not only as a way to save money, but as part of along standing non-capitalist practice to ensure simple reproduction of the household; villagers also preserve vegetables and fruits for the winter.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Mladogradi</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1934</td>
<td>881</td>
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<tr>
<td>1946</td>
<td>1095</td>
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<tr>
<td>1956</td>
<td>1104</td>
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<tr>
<td>1992</td>
<td>1679</td>
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<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td>1559</td>
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</table>

Table 4.1: Population change in Mladogradi (source: (National Statistical Institute 2002)
The territory of Mladogradi is 1200 hectares including a residential area of 5.5 hectares; the rest is mostly agricultural land. In theory, 400 hectares can be irrigated, but the irrigation system has not worked since the disbandment of the agricultural cooperative.

Since the end of the 1950s, most of land was owned by the TKZS (collective farms), although villagers kept small personal plots. Under the TKZS, all agricultural land was in use. The crops that were grown included corn, tobacco, peanuts, and vegetables, such as tomatoes, peppers, and cabbage; there were also apple orchards. In addition, 1000 sheep were herded around the village. Many villagers used to work in the TKZS – between the 1986-1987, for example, 400 villagers worked in the TKZS. In the second half of the 1980s, many young people left the TKZS to work in the nearby factories in Sandanski. Sometimes local schools would send brigades of schoolchildren to work on the land to compensate for the lack of agricultural workers in this area.

In February 1991, the TKZS sent all their workers home. This meant the end of commercial agriculture in this village. Unlike other parts of Bulgaria where agricultural cooperatives were kept alive, cooperatives in this area were not an option because private land was owned by many people and fragmented. In response, the Bulgarian government together with the EU has set up the SAPARD plan (Special Accession Program for Agriculture and Rural Development) which encourages people to set up commercial farms. Villagers are becoming more interesting in commercial vineyard, but many vineyards are still small-scale and non-commercial.

In 1992, the first factory arrived in Mladogradi. Today there are eight Greek-owned factories including a wood-working factory, nylon factory, a factory that produces
children’s puzzles, and five textile companies (see Figure 4.2). In addition, there are two Bulgarian-owned textile firms and a Bulgarian company that washes and bleaches clothes. Many women have jobs in these factories, including Roma women. The unemployment rate is almost zero in this village.

Figure 4.2: Textile factory in Mladogradi (photograph taken by author, October 2003)
4.2.2 Ctara Djuna

Ctara Djuna is a small village of a little more than 100 people with a coop store and a local bar. No children have lived in this village since 1981. Many houses are empty or only used in the summer season (see Figure 4.3). Decollectivization, along with increasing prices for agricultural inputs and declining prices for agricultural products, caused the agricultural system to crumble after 1989. Many plots of agricultural land are left fallow. Since agriculture does not provide full-time employment anymore, the economic situation has deteriorated. The village’s elderly population therefore supplements their meager pensions with subsistence crops and small vineyards, but vegetables are difficult to grow because of dry conditions and the lack of irrigation water. Before 1989, irrigation was not a problem because a water pump station was nearby. However, the pump is not working anymore since most of the materials have been stolen. Most villagers have access to land, although, according to the mayor, the land restitution that started in 1997 in this village is not completed; some people are still waiting to get their land back.

Almost everyone in this village has a vineyard. Some villagers with larger vineyards sell some of their grapes to commercial firms. At the moment 800 dekares of vineyard are in use. Before the transition, 1200 dekares were covered with vineyards. Some vineyards have been bought up by commercial firms, but they require the planting of new vines to improve the quality of the grapes and make the vineyards commercially successful (during the communist period, not much attention was paid to the quality of the grapes).
Many people had already left this village before the transition, due to the lack of work and a declining level of services provided (see Table 4.2). Most people who stayed in the village during the communist period worked for the TKZS in the vineyards and tobacco fields. The TKZS did not use all the land available in Ctara Djuna, but only cultivated the best soil. Large tracts of dry and steep land were left fallow. Another income source for the village was the tourist home (with 100 beds) that was visited in particular by students. Unfortunately, no tourist has stayed in the tourist home since 1989 and the building is currently empty.

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<td>514</td>
<td>654</td>
<td>555</td>
<td>524</td>
<td>351</td>
<td>228</td>
<td>173</td>
<td>124</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.2: Population change in Ctara Djuna (National Statistical Institute 2002).
4.3 Research paradigm: justification of methods

The data collection and analysis methods used in my research project are related to my overall research paradigm. Hoggart et al (2002, 1) argues that “data collection and analysis are issues of method. Methodology is a more encompassing concept that embraces issues of method, but has deeper roots in the bedrock of specific views on the nature of ‘reality’ (ontology), and the grounds for knowledge (epistemology).” Specifically, my approach is influenced by the concept of ‘social constructivism’ – that is the idea that knowledge is constructed relative to a social setting. The researcher is part of
a social setting that is made up of assumptions, rules and practices, which are often taken for granted. This social setting influences the research process and therefore the knowledge that is constructed (Barnes 2000). This does not mean that there is no absolute truth, only that it is difficult or impossible to access the absolute truth. However, I am convinced that good research can help us better understand the world.

Scholars working in the field of social constructivism are often critical of the status quo, who benefit from ideas and ideologies that are taken for granted in everyday life. Some scholars actively want to change these ideas and ideologies by showing that they are not inevitable (Hacking 1999). It is not my main goal to actively change the world by using my research findings to convince policy makers as for example Kobayashi (2001) does. I do recognize that all research is political and that I need to be aware of its broader implications. Qualitative research situates the researcher as part of the research process (Denzin and Lincoln 2000) and emphasizes that everyone has their own situated knowledges. The research process is thus subjective and value-laden, making it crucial for the researchers to be reflexive and aware of their own positionality.

Since the world we know is socially constructed and has multiple realities, it is necessary to have research methods that allow for that. Feminist epistemology stresses that all knowledge is situated, according to one’s gender, age, ethnicity, class, life experience, and sexuality (Sachs 1996, Haraway 1997). Both researcher and researched have partial knowledge of the world around them. Good research should, therefore, be inclusionary and give voice to people no matter where they fit along the axes of gender, age, ethnicity, class, life experience, and sexuality. In practice, this means that one’s data collection methods needs to be flexible and that as a researcher one needs to be open to
all kinds of new issues or relevant data that you might not have considered before.

Conducting semi-structured, in depth interviews is a flexible research method that allows studying individual people and the meanings they assign to their everyday lives.

This said, it is important that existing theories not dictate the data collection and analysis, because there might be issues that are not covered by these theories and thus may be overlooked (Charmaz 2000). I think, however that each researcher also needs to take into account practicalities, such as limited time and funding, when designing a research project. Unstructured interviews may yield more new and unanticipated insights, but they also demand more time to complete a research project. Semi-structured interviews – questions are prepared, but with enough room for discussion and for new questions that may arise – are a good middle ground, because they allow a researcher to be flexible and to conduct research in more structured way that takes less time than more unstructured research methods.

### 4.4 Data collection methods

In the two research villages, I focused on collecting data on key aspects of women’s livelihood that the literature and preliminary research suggested were particularly important: 1) labor opportunities, 2) labor burden, 3) empowerment, 4) access to natural and agricultural resources, 5) dependence on natural and agricultural resources, and 6) use of natural and agricultural resources. Data were collected through (1) semi-structured interviews with fifty women and seven men in the two villages, (2) semi-structured interviews with ten key informants (as identified by other key informants
and through preliminary research), and obtained from (3) supplementary secondary data sources, such as statistical yearbooks and government documents collected in Bulgaria and through libraries in the USA.

4.4.1 Interview design

The semi-structured interviews consisted of closed and open-ended questions and elicited both quantitative and qualitative data in order to get in-depth insights in how people experience the transition and how they cope in everyday life with the changes (see Table 4.3 and Appendices for Bulgarian and English version). The interviewees, who I selected through a snowball method (discussed in 4.4.3) were first asked about basic demographic and household attributes such as age, ethnicity, place of birth, level of education, household members (relation to respondent, age, gender, and occupation), the head of the household, and the ownership of the house. The second part of the interview dealt with the occupational history of the respondents (now and before 1989); kinds of jobs, kind of payment, and the difficulty to find a job. The third part of the interview covered the time allocation of the interviewees in an average week. The fourth part asked for information on the types of adjustments made within the household since 1989. The fifth part covered respondents’ involvement in an organization or union now and before 1989 (membership, activities, and participation). The sixth part asked for information on the decision making process within the household, in particular regarding the control over household finances and decisions about purchases.

Finally, the seventh and longest part of the interview dealt with the role of natural and agricultural resources within the household. Interviewees were asked about land
ownership (size, use, location in relation to home), rent or lease of land, livestock, sale of produce or animal products, and water sources. Respondents were also asked for information on what kind of products they buy in stores and which not. Questions were also asked regarding the exchange of produce and other products (which products/produce, in exchange for what, with whom and why). In the context of the role of natural and agricultural resources in the household, respondents were also asked about the management of natural and agricultural resources, in particular land (who is taking care of the natural and agricultural resources and why, what are the specific tasks of each person, and who makes decisions about the management of natural and agricultural resources). Finally, respondents were also asked how often they eat products from their garden or plot.

The questions and topics for the semi-structured interviews were developed before fieldwork started and are based on issues identified in the literature and during preliminary research in 2002. At the beginning of the fieldwork the questions and topics were translated into Bulgarian by my interpreter, who has been trained as a interpreter at the University of Blagoevgrad and lives in Sandanski. I found my interpreter through a referral from a Bulgarian acquaintance. During the interview phase of my fieldwork, questions and topics were adjusted and some new items were added as I learned more about women’s livelihoods, for example, questions were added about savings and the role of children in the exchange of products and labor. The interviews lasted from twenty minutes to over one hour, depending on the respondent’s activities and on the amount of detail and additional information the respondent were willing to provide.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Data collection categories</th>
<th>Information elicited</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **Basic demographic and household attributes** | • Age  
• Ethnicity  
• Place of birth  
• Level of education  
• Household members  
• Head of the household  
• Ownership of the house  
• Types of adjustments made within the household since 1989. |
| **Labor opportunities** | • Occupational history now and before 1989  
• Informal or formal jobs  
• Kind of payment,  
• Difficulty to find a job |
| **Labor burden** | • Activities in an average week  
• Time allocation in an average week |
| **Empowerment** | • Membership of, activities and participation in an organization or union now and before 1989  
• Control over household finances  
• Decision-making on purchases |
| **Access to, dependence on, and use of natural and agricultural resources** | • Land ownership (size, use, location)  
• Rent or lease of land  
• Livestock  
• Sale of produce, homemade products or animal products  
• Use of different water sources  
• Kind of products bought in stores and which not  
• Exchange of produce and other products (which products/produce, in exchange for what, with whom and why)  
• Division of labor concerning natural and agricultural resources  
• Decision-making about the management of natural and agricultural resources  
• Frequency of consumption produce and homemade products |

Table 4.3: Breakdown of data collection categories and forms of data used to assess and measure categories
In addition, to the semi-structured interviews, questions were prepared for key informants, who included the mayors of the villages, members of Sandanski’s municipal council, librarians, members of a women’s organization, and a journalist. The main question that shaped these interviews was: which economic, political, and social changes have taken place in the region and how did these changes shape the livelihoods of the population? The topics that were included in the interviews with the key informants depended on the key informant’s expertise, background, and role in the community and the flow of the interview. The interviews with the key informants took between twenty minutes and forty-five minutes.

4.4.2 Conceptualization of research questions

For the first research question - How does transition influence rural women’s labor opportunities, labor burden, empowerment, and access to, dependence on, and use of natural and agricultural resources? Have these facets of rural women’s livelihoods increased or decreased? Hence, how are these connected? - I collected the following data. I used the semi-structured interviews to elicit information on women’s labor opportunities, formal and informal jobs, and changes in the kind of jobs available. I also assessed whether the position of women with respect to labor opportunities has increased or decreased, as well as eliciting historical data on labor opportunities.

For women’s labor burden I documented their labor activities and the time they allocate to each during an average week or day using the semi-structured interview. Labor activities of women include working in the formal and informal economy, household work, childcare, working in the garden, and collecting herbs and berries. It
was not easy for women to answer this question. It was not a problem to come up with a list of activities, but it was difficult, especially for older women, to assign the amount of time spent on a certain activity.

Following related research, I gauged from (a) membership in unions (Campbell 1996), (b) participation in community organizations (Wangari, Thomas-Slayter, and Rocheleau 1996), and (c) access to and control over capital by documenting the decision-making process within the household (Townsend 1995).

How I collected information on women’s access to, dependence on, and manipulation of natural and agricultural resources followed standard procedures (Rocheleau, Thomas-Slayter, and Wangari 1996, 11). I therefore distinguished four domains: a) control over resources; b) access to non-controlled resources; c) use of resources; d) gendered responsibilities to procure and/or manage resources for family and community use. General data on women’s access to and use of natural and agricultural resources was collected through the semi-structured interview as were insights into women’s dependence on natural and agricultural resources, the gendered use, responsibilities, processing, and marketing of products (Rocheleau and Edmunds 1997). The importance of all natural and agricultural resources for the household’s survival was also elicited through the semi-structured interview by asking for information on the household’s dependence on the supply of crops and other products from the set of controlled and non-controlled resources.

For the second research question - *Do rural women experience the transition differently? If so, why and how do rural women experience the transition differently, with regard to labor opportunities, labor burden, empowerment, and access to, dependence*
on, and use of natural and agricultural resources? – and the third research question – Are non-capitalist practices becoming more important for rural women’s everyday lives and survival or less? And what is the role of natural and agricultural resources in these practices? – I analyzed interview responses to see what the differences and similarities appeared among women. I then compared data across villages to tease out responses to my last question – How does the unevenness of transition play out in rural women’s livelihoods?

I placed the respondents’ information into a broader context with literature work related to (a) land and economic reforms (Verdery 1994, Meurs 1999, Meurs 2001), (b) foreign investment, (c) social condition and labor situation (Lokar 1999, LaFont 2001, Kay 2002), and (d) conditions in rural areas (UNDP 2004). I found other relevant data and information in statistical yearbooks, literature on Bulgaria and other post-socialist countries, and semi-structured key informant interviews with government officials and key persons from communities and women’s organizations.

4.4.3 Research sample

In Mladogradi twenty-eight female respondents and in Ctara Djuna twenty-two female respondents participated in semi-structured interviews. I also conducted semi-structured interviews with seven men from both villages (six from Mladogradi and one from Ctara Djuna), using a similar format. Most male respondents are the partner of a female respondent or the household head of a household in which a female respondent is living. In addition to the semi-structured interviews, I interviewed ten people about different aspects of the transition (including mayors, ex mayor, municipality counselors,
and other persons who had a significant knowledge of the villages and region, such as employees of the cultural center in Mladogradi).

I selected the respondents for the semi-structured interviews through a ‘snowball method’ and with the help of a so-called ‘gatekeeper.’ A snowball method means that respondents referred or introduced me to other villagers for an interview (Wright 2003). A gatekeeper is an individual who is able to provide the researcher with access to potential respondents and arranges opportunities to talk with respondents (Kearns 2000).

My initial plan was to take a random sample of each village. It proved, however, to be difficult to get access to a list of villagers in the Mladogradi on which to base my sample. When I started my research in September 2003, it was election time and a list of all villagers was considered politically sensitive data. I decided to do a random sample based on a street map of the village instead; i.e., interview women living in the second house on the right and the sixth house on the left measured from the village square. Yet, people were reluctant to talk to me without an introduction from someone they knew. I, therefore, ended up using the snowball method and gatekeepers to find new respondents. A high school student who wanted to practice his English and the mayor of the village acted as gatekeepers and introduced me and my translator to many villagers.

I tried to make sure that I interviewed women from different ages and from different parts of the village in order the capture the diversity of transition experiences. My sample has limitations, however, in that I was not able to interview many Roma respondents. Although a quarter of Mladogradi’s population is Roma, I did not interview more than three Roma women and one Turkish Roma woman. Even though villagers told me that relations between the Roma and Ethnic Bulgarians were harmonious, I was also
told that it was not a good idea to walk into the Roma quarter and no one seemed willing to accompany me into this neighborhood. Since I did not interview more Roma women, I cannot examine the relationship between ethnicity and rural women’s livelihoods and transition experiences, and am limited to a few observations. It was also difficult to interview women who worked in the factories, because of their long working hours and unpredictable schedules.

4.4.4 Data collection: issues and problems related to the method

I interviewed the respondents through an interpreter. Working with an interpreter has advantages and disadvantages. An advantage was that my interpreter was from a nearby town and it seemed that respondents related to her more easily. A second advantage was she was familiar with the customs in Bulgaria. A disadvantage of working with an interpreter is that researcher does not communicate directly with the respondents. Although I studied the Bulgarian language before going into the field and my Bulgarian improved during my fieldwork, I was not able to get all the details and expressions. Also dialects spoken by the respondents made it difficult for me to understand the respondents. All the interviews have been translated from Bulgarian into English and it might be possible that some information has been lost in the process. I realize that my dataset is perhaps less ‘thick’ as a result of the translation process.

At the beginning of my fieldwork, it became clear that respondents did not feel comfortable with the idea of the interview being tape-recorded. Therefore, I recorded the interviews on paper. These notes are extensive, but do not include all pauses, facial
expressions and sighs, although if there was some body language that caught my attention I recorded it. I do not think that this affects the outcome of the research project.

My initial intention was also to conduct individuals’ life histories. This proved more difficult than I expected. First, I was in the field for a relatively short time (only from September until December 2003), which limited the number of opportunities for life histories. Second, it appeared to be quite difficult for respondents to talk about their own life. This was especially the case for older respondents, who were the most willing to talk. The respondents seemed more comfortable or willing to talk about the past in terms of community events and history (perhaps because they considered group experience as more important than individual experiences). This influenced the quality and usefulness of the life histories. Third, I suspect that the dynamics of the conversation – information was passed from the respondent through the translator to me and back – were not conducive for eliciting life histories.

The design of my research and the questions for the semi-structured interview are based on literature review and preliminary research. Some might argue that my research is too much theory-based and therefore I overlooked issues and problems associated with the transition and rural women’s livelihoods (Glaser and Strauss 1967). I tried, however, to be flexible and to deal with unanticipated issues. The preliminary research (June-August 2002) that I conducted already made me aware of some issues which were not mentioned in the literature. This said, despite my preliminary research and my flexible research design, interesting issues arose in the field to which I could not devote enough attention, such as informal group dynamics and reciprocal systems of support.
With hindsight, I see that another shortcoming of my research is that I already decided on the attributes I desired in my respondents (e.g. gender) before going into the field. This was because of my reading on transition, economic restructuring, and political ecology indicated that gender has a differential effect on how people experience the changes in post-socialist countries. By selecting my respondents based on attributes such as gender I assumed priori, following Silverman (2000), that gender is important in my research project and left no room for other unexpected influential attributes. However, I think that I have minimized the effect of my choice by also interviewing men and asking for information on a wide range of topics, so that other attributes than gender can also be used to explain why people experience the transition differently.

Another issue is that I was not able to conduct “theoretical sampling” (Pidgeon and Henwood 1996, Silverman 2000). Theoretical sampling means that data collection continues during the analysis phase, because new questions and issues may arise as a result of the analysis. It is very likely that interesting questions or ideas come up during the analysis but is not practical to go back into the field and collect additional data by interviewing additional respondents or to ask previously interviewed respondents any additional questions. I was, however, still able to collect additional secondary data, like government documents and reports. A limited opportunity for theoretical sampling is certainly a limit to my research project, but also a limit that is inherent to time-limited dissertation research. Interesting ideas and questions can always be pursued in future research. In the field, I was able to change questions and ask additional questions based on previous interviews – a flexibility that is an important characteristic of qualitative research.
Many qualitative researchers consider the researcher to be an integral part of the research process who influences the outcomes of a research project (Dowling 2000). It is important, therefore, to be aware of the impact the researcher has on the research context and to scrutinize the relation between the researcher and the researched (Mohammad 2001). Being reflexive and aware of your own positionality as a researcher is a difficult part of the qualitative research process (Rose 1997), because a researcher is subjective and looks at the world through certain lenses.

I am sure that my own positionality influenced the research, although I do not know to what extent. When I had the idea that my own positionality influenced the research I made a note about it. For example, I was initially surprised that many young people complained about the lack of order in society, i.e. the lack of solidarity, excessive individualism, little security about what will happen in 6 months or a year. I associated these feelings with older people – that is, people who are nostalgic about the communist period. I did not think that young people also had similarly nostalgic feelings with regard to certain aspects of the communist period. It is very likely that there have been more instances that my positionality influenced the research, but that I was not aware of it.

The insider/outsider debate has received considerable attention in literature on qualitative research (Dowling 2000, Mohammad 2001). Being an outsider or an insider in a certain research context influences the research process and the relations between interviewer and interviewee. At the one hand, being a woman made me an insider regarding some aspects of the interview (e.g. power relations within the household). At the other hand, being Dutch made me an outsider and therefore respondents probably told me a different story about their transition experiences than what they would have told a
Bulgarian researcher. For example, people in Bulgaria know very well that living conditions are better in Western Europe. One afternoon, pensioners asked me about the living situation of pensioners in the Netherlands and the amount of pension benefits they receive from the government. Despite the fact that I did not know the exact amount of Dutch pension benefits and gave a rather conservative estimate, it was clear that the pensioners were shocked. The amount was unbelievably high for the Bulgarian pensioners. When I came back to the village the next day, it seemed that everyone knew the amount of pension benefits in the Netherlands. I tried to put this amount into context by explaining how much one loaf of bread costs in the Netherlands, but it was clear the Dutch retirees are better off than Bulgarian retirees. I am not sure if this episode colored the information the respondents gave to me in the interviews.

Qualitative research is often criticized for not being concerned about validity and reliability. There have been different responses, however, on how to ensure accurate representations and consistency (Bradshaw and Stratford 2000, Silverman 2000, Maxwell 2002). I agree with many qualitative researchers that there are multiple realities and that a researcher is not able to achieve a true, objective, all-encompassing representation of the truth (Nast 1994, Cope 2002). The world around us is socially constructed and research can help us to understand the world around us more fully. I think that it is important to have some criteria on which qualitative research can be evaluated. One important step that I have taken towards validity is that I am combining different kind of sources (semi-structured interviews with villagers, key informant interviews, government documents and NGO’s reports, and statistical data) in order to compare the findings of each source with each other. This response is called data triangulation (Silverman 2000).
To increase the accuracy of my research finding, it would be a good idea to go back to the respondents and ask if their stories have been represented in a correct way (Maxwell 2002). Unfortunately, it is not possible at this stage for me to do this. Validation of the research findings by respondents also raises questions about whose representation is more accurate; the researcher’s representation or the respondents’ representations? To compensate for not being able to validate my research findings with the respondents, peer review and literature review are very important (Bradshaw and Stratford 2000). Furthermore, to increase the reliability of my research I discuss in detail how I collected and analyzed my data, so that everyone can evaluate the research process. It is, however, unlikely that another researcher conducting the exact same research would come up with the exact same findings. Replicability is not possible and also not a goal of my research project, but giving others the possibility to evaluate the research process enhances reliability and rigorous research.

My research findings will not be generalizable in the quantitative sense of the word, because the research findings cannot be generalized to larger populations or different areas (Silverman 2000, Schofield 2002). I did, however, try to pick villages that are typical (Schofield 2002) with regard to transition paths in Eastern Europe. In this way, I hope that my research findings help to explain the impacts of the transition in other areas – although not fully, because specific processes are partly context-specific. But I do hope that people reading my research will perhaps derive new ideas about what to look for in similar situations.
4.5 Data analysis

4.5.1 Steps in analyzing data

My data analysis was structured around two key issues: (1) whether there are relationships between transition paths and rural women’s livelihoods, and (2) whether I could identify and explain common patterns among women and differences between women with regard to the key aspects of women’s rural livelihoods. I used several analytical steps to do this. First, I coded and categorized the data collected through the semi-structured interviews. I read all interviews and labeled information or concepts that seemed relevant to my research questions. I also labeled information that seemed interesting, although I was not sure yet about its relation to my research questions. A large part of my data were already arranged into sections, because of the format of the interview. For example, information about a respondent’s past and current occupation could be found in the same section. Labels such as ‘past occupation(s)’ and ‘current occupation(s)’ were assigned to the data. Then, I put the data into different categories, such a ‘store owner,’ ‘factory worker,’ and ‘local government employee.’

According to Pidgeon and Henwood (1996), it is important to start coding interviews at an abstract level and then refine your codes into different categories so that a tree of codes develops. For example, ‘access to land’ was divided into ‘owning land’ and ‘renting land.’ This was divided into even smaller categories such as ‘owning a garden,’ ‘owning a vineyard’ and ‘renting agricultural land.’ The process of coding is not linear and many codes will be redefined and refined when working through the data. For example, I changed ‘without formal occupation’ into ‘retirees,’ ‘unemployed,’ and ‘stay
at home mother.’ This means that the researcher has to be creative and go back and forth between codes, ideas, and data. It is very unlikely that another researcher would assign the same codes to the dataset.

Second, once codes were assigned and categories created, I examined the key aspects of rural women’s livelihoods. I was able to examine whether there is a relationship between ‘current occupation’ and ‘age,’ or between ‘collecting firewood’ and ‘residence.’ It is inherent to coding and categorizing data that some of the richness and details of the data are lost, but this approach does make it possible to count, compare, and present data in tables. Statistical procedures are not relevant for analyzing my data since the number of respondents is too low. To compensate for this loss of detail, the categorized data were supplemented by quotes from respondents in order to illustrate and explain similarities and differences in rural women’s everyday lives and livelihoods.

Third, I used the key respondents interviews, collected documents and statistical data to construct the historical and political-economic context and to back up the semi-structured interviews. The information from these sources was also labeled, but on a more abstract level. For example, information was grouped under labels such as ‘economic developments during the communist period’ or ‘women’s empowerment after 1989.’ The key interviews together with the secondary data provide insights on uneven development in the Sandanski region and its relation to the different transition experiences.
CHAPTER 5

TRANSITION GEOGRAPHIES: UNEVEN DEVELOPMENT IN MLADOGRAĐI
AND CTARA DJUNA

5.1 Introduction

The aim of this chapter is to examine uneven local development in the study area. In particular, I focus on how uneven development produced two different villages – Mladogradi and Ctara Djuna. As discussed in Chapter 2, transition is an uneven process resulting in spatially uneven development. Transition towards a free market economy builds on the relicts of the state-led economy and its outcomes, which consisted of well-defined patterns of uneven development and regional differentiation. Both research villages underwent drastic changes that started long before the transition. Today, the differences in the economic and demographic situation between Mladogradi and Ctara Djuna are considerable. To get a better understanding of these changes, I first describe differences in population and economy, and explain them in terms of historic economic development. I then draw on the work of Massey (1979, 1997) regarding regional change, spatial differentiation, and spatial division of labor to make sense of these inter-village
differences in the broader Bulgarian context. I conclude by linking uneven local development to rural women’s livelihoods, with particular attention to the issues of ageing and economic development.

5.2 Differences between Mladogradi and Ctara Djuna

There are significant differences between Mladogradi and Ctara Djuna in terms of their age and economic structures. Ctara Djuna has an ageing population, while Mladogradi has a relatively young population compared to Ctara Djuna. For example, no children live permanently in Ctara Djuna and almost all people are retired and older than 55 years. According to the Mladogradi’s list of eligible voters, only 23% of the eligible voters are older than 65 years. My survey sample reflects these demographic differences well. Figure 5.1 shows that the average age of the Ctara Djuna interviewees is significantly higher than that of Mladogradi interviewees (seventy years versus forty-four years).

Mladogradi and Ctara Djuna have currently very different economic structures. Mladogradi (the “younger” village) experienced the inflow of foreign investment in the form of textile factories and the opening of several privately owned stores and bars. The first factory arrived in Mladogradi in the beginning of the 1990s and the accompanying job opportunities were welcomed by the government and the people in this region. Many women and to a lesser degree men have found jobs in these factories. Today, Mladogradi is a village with almost no unemployment and a stable or slowly increasing population, most of whom work in nearby industries.
Ctara Djuna’s economic development has been limited with one cooperative store and a local bar. No new employment opportunities emerged in Ctara Djuna in the last 10 years. Some villagers do not express optimism with regard to the future of the village. Depopulation is perceived as a big problem, especially because there are no young people left. To bring back younger people, new economic activities (for example, commercialization of the vineyards) and a higher standard of living are needed, according to the villagers. Villagers also feel neglected by the current government and believe no one wants to listen to the old people in the villages.
The differences in the local economies of these two villages can also be observed in the current occupations of the fifty female respondents (see Table 5.1). The twenty-eight interviewed women in Mladogradi hold five different types of occupation currently. Note that I define as ‘other’ any woman who is unemployed, does not have a formal job, or works as a cleaner or shop assistant. In the category ‘entrepreneur’ I included women who are store owners or work as independent hair stylists. I included retirement as an occupation to be able to compare the respondents, although retirement is more related to employment status. In cases where a respondent has held different types of jobs, I selected the job she held for the most years.

The textile factories in Mladogradi appear to be the most important employer for women as eleven (39%) of them work in textile factories. Seven of them work as a seamstress, although four are currently on maternity leave. The other four work in other kinds of positions, such as quality controller or cutting of threads. In general, seamstresses earn a relatively good wage compared to other jobs, partly due to the long hours and frequent overtime work. The second biggest group in Mladogradi are the retirees as seven women (25%) are retired. These women experience low pension benefits as these benefits have declined in the last decade due to inflation and government cuts in social programs. The remaining women in Mladogradi have jobs as shop assistant, hair stylist, teacher, food storeowner, head of administrative services in the municipality hall, and surveyor/geodetic scientist. Three women are without a formal paid occupation; one is a stay at home mother, one is unemployed and participates in a social program for the ‘socially poor’ and one is unemployed. The two unemployed women are both Roma
and their husbands are also unemployed. Most of the jobs in Mladogradi have in common that one does not need higher education; except for the teacher and geodetic scientist, and career opportunities are rare.

The twenty-two interviewed women in Ctara Djuna now hold three different types of occupation. Retirees make up the biggest group with twenty (91%) of the twenty-two women. This is not surprising considering the age of women in this village and the low retirement age in Bulgaria. The remaining two women work as a cleaner and a shop assistant.

Most of the respondents said that they did not have problems finding a job. The storeowners mention that it was difficult to find the money to set up the store, but could use their house as collateral for a loan. A few women said that it was difficult to find a job for various reasons. A Roma woman, unemployed now for 7 months, mentions that it is difficult to find a job because there are no vacancies. Another woman with a nursing degree (who is currently on maternity leave and earns an additional income as a seamstress) found it difficult to find a job in either field, because according to her there are no jobs and you need connections to find one. A woman who works as a cleaner in a hotel says it is difficult to find a job, because all businesses are now privately owned. A Turkish Roma woman and a Roma woman who work both as seamstresses in a textile factory had difficulties getting a job. They blame the owners of the factories who prefer to employ non-Roma women.
### Table 5.1: Current occupation of interviewed women from Mladogradi and Ctara Djuna

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Occupation</th>
<th>Mladogradi ‘Young’</th>
<th>Mladogradi ‘Old’</th>
<th>Ctara Djuna ‘Young’</th>
<th>Ctara Djuna ‘Old’</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Retiree</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Factory</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Government</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Entrepreneur</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In sum, two local trajectories of transition can be observed in the study area. Mladogradi represents a transition trajectory in which an area attracts foreign investment, partly due to the availability of low wageworkers, and experiences an increase in the availability of jobs. Ctara Djuna at the other hand represents a transition trajectory that is characterized by ageing and disinvestment. The uneven local development cannot only be blamed on the transition processes, but can be traced back to uneven economic and demographic patterns under socialism.

#### 5.3 Historic economic development in the Sandanski region

During the communist time, several small-scale industries were located in the study area providing employment to people from Sandanski and villages in the region. In both Mladogradi and Ctara Djuna, land was consolidated into agricultural cooperatives to free labor for factories. The population of Ctara Djuna decreased as younger people moved to cities and towns to work in state factories. Mladogradi, on the other hand, did
not experience depopulation, because villagers could easily commute to the many state factories and businesses in and around Sandanksi.

The main employer in both Mladogradi and Ctara Djuna before 1989, was the agricultural cooperative or TKZS (see Table 5.2). In Mladogradi, nine women have worked for the TKZS and two of them retired before 1989. Three of these women also held various other positions, including working in a bakery and in a factory. Before 1989, eleven women were still in school, three women worked in a factory, one woman worked for the local government, one woman worked as a waitress, one woman as a shop assistant, and one woman used to work as a teacher.

In Ctara Djuna, sixteen respondents used to work for the TKZS and eleven of them retired before 1989. Two of them also held positions in a factory and as a cleaner. Three women have worked in a factory, and one woman used to work as a teacher. In sum, most jobs have in common that they are low-status jobs, except for the teacher and geodetic scientist. Women did not have difficulties finding a job before 1989, citing plenty of work in the region and the fact that sometimes the government arranged jobs.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Mladogradi</th>
<th>Ctara Djuna</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Student</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Factory</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agriculture</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Government</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5.2: Occupation of interviewed women in Mladogradi and Ctara Djuna before 1989 (n=50)
During the transition the agricultural cooperatives dissolved and many state factories closed their doors in the Sandanski region. This led to high rates of unemployment, similar to other areas in Bulgaria. Although land was returned to the previous owners, this did not result in the emergence of commercial firms. New employment opportunities emerged in the region in the form of factories taking advantage of the availability of low wage workers, and in privately owned businesses. The Bulgarian government encouraged foreign investors to invest in factories in order to increase jobs. In this region, these factories are only located around Sandanski and in villages close to the highway to Greece, such as Mladogradi (as discussed in chapter 4).

5.4 Massey’s framework on regional change

Doreen Massey’s framework (1979, 1997) on regional differentiation helps to understand how the processes of change in the Sandanski region fit into a pattern of economic processes that impact local economies differently and makes local areas unique. Massey argues that “structures of local economies can be seen as a product of the combination of ‘layers,’ of the successive imposition of new ‘rounds of investment,’ representing in turn the successive roles the areas have played within the wider national and international division of labor” (1997, 354-355). These new rounds of investment may impact local areas differently as a result of different pre-existing structures in these areas; i.e. areas have different histories with regard to social and economic structures (Massey 1979, 1997).
Massey’s framework (1979) on regional differentiation rests on several points. First, there always has been and always will be spatial inequality. Second, spatial inequality is the degree of attractiveness of a particular area to the dominant form of economic activity. Third, patterns of spatial inequality change, because over time there are changes in the geographical distributions of requirements needed for production and changes in the requirements for the production process itself. Fourth, the location of the dominant economic activity depends on the patterns of regional differentiation. According to Massey, the dominant economic activity will not just simply take place where most profit can be made. Instead, different forms of the dominant economic activity require different spatial divisions of labor. The spatial division of labor is part of the regional inequality. For example, in the first stage of production, highly skilled workers are necessary for the product development. These workers are often concentrated in large urban areas. In the second stage, production is not completely standardized and workers with high skills are still needed. The production in this stage takes place in and close to urban areas. In the last stage, production is fully standardized and the firm makes full use of the spatial division of labor and relocates its plants to areas with the cheapest labor.

In each round of investment a new form of spatial division of labor emerges. This new spatial division of labor is imposed on the existing spatial division of labor and therefore the new social structure is embedded in the existing structure. Each round of investments adds one new layer to the spatial division of labor and social structure and therefore each region has its own unique characteristics as a result of successive layering (Massey 1979, Massey 1997).
Industries benefit from regional differentiation as they locate in areas where they can find the most attractive labor force. In turn, local areas are impacted by the kind of economic activities taking place there. Branch plants where standardized production takes place are often located in areas with a low skilled, low wage work force, preferably with no history of unionization. These areas are highly dependent on core areas, experience outflow of profits and limited employment multipliers effects or spillovers. According to Massey (1979), these area have therefore limited potential for regional development and are highly vulnerable to new rounds of investments.

Massey (1979, 1997) explains diversity and growth of different areas by studying the different successive layers in an area. In each new round of investment a new layer is added to a region and this changes the already existing social structure and division of labor. Areas with high skilled labor will attract firms with innovative and high-end production. On the other hand, areas that have low skilled workers who can be paid a low wage will attract firms with low-end production and no multiplier or spillover effects. In these areas the prospects for growth and more prosperity are bleak. When the requirements for production or the requirements for production processes change again, industries will again look for areas with a suitable work force for their economic activities, adding a new layer to local areas. Some areas will decline in attractiveness and other areas will increase in attractiveness for a specific economic activity.

In Bulgaria, the first round of regional change during the communist time was characterized by an emphasis on heavy industry at the expense of lighter industries and agriculture. From the 1960s onwards, most of this dominant economic activity was concentrated in the core regions of the country. The geographical distribution of the
dominant economic activity was determined by the proximity to natural resources and government regional policies to eradicate spatial inequality (Begg and Pickles 1998). The latter is an example of the government’s iron grip on the country’s economic development and distribution. The government also had a strong influence on social structures in terms of the division of labor. One of the reasons for the collectivization of agriculture was to free labor for the industries. This resulted in major rural-urban migration and the emergence of peasant workers, i.e., villagers who work in factories but also maintain private subsistence plots. Despite the opening of small industrial firms in more peripheral regions, the majority of the industrial production took place in large-scale enterprises (Begg and Pickles 1998).

A second round of regional change in Bulgaria occurred in the second half of the 1960s when the communist government started to relocate smaller industrial enterprises to small towns and villages (Creed 1995). This changed the spatial differentiation to a small extent. The changes in the spatial division of labor continued as agricultural land was consolidated into APK’s (agro industrial complexes), merging many collective farms and transforming peasants in state employees, in order to free more workers for the factories (Lampe 1986).

A third round of regional change took place when the government addressed the uneven distribution of industrial development through the ‘New Economic Program’ at the end of the 1970s. This program encouraged the decentralization of branch plants to border, mountainous and ethnic villages, in order to slow down rural-urban migration and alleviate the shortage of agricultural labor (Koulev 1992, Creed 1995, Pickles and Begg 2000). As a result, more people became factory workers in the peripheral areas.
The transition in Bulgaria can be perceived as a dramatic new round of investment that brought profound regional changes. In rural areas, many jobs were lost when the agricultural cooperatives closed down. Furthermore, small industrial enterprises in more marginal areas were the first to feel the impacts of the change to a free market economy and the pressures of competing on the world market. Closure of smaller enterprises led to mass unemployment in the peripheral areas. Many of the large-scale industrial enterprises in the core regions managed to stay open longer (Begg and Pickles 1998; Pickles and Begg 2000). In the second half of the 1990s, Bulgaria experienced an increase of foreign investment in the apparel sector in the peripheral areas, especially in the border areas with Turkey and Greece. The attractiveness of these regions for foreign investment lies in availability of small factories with relative new equipment, a low wage trained labor force, and a fairly well developed infrastructure (Pickles and Begg 2000).

The spatial division of labor in Bulgaria is one of the factors that attract specific economic activities to these regions. These factories offer many jobs to the local population, often favoring women, resulting in low unemployment rates, especially for women. Not all rural areas, however, experience the inflow of foreign investment, which results in limited employment opportunities.

In sum, then, regions and local areas in Bulgaria have experienced many changes in the last six decades. Under socialism, a strong core-periphery pattern evolved with distinct patterns of spatial division of labor. Subsequent, the transition enforced the regional differentiation in many cases. Due to closure of state factories and agricultural cooperatives, many areas had and still have a reserve of low cost laborers. New economic activities are attracted to certain areas that have the right requirements for production and
production processes, including the division of labor. In rural areas along the Greek and Turkish border firms emerged that take advantage of the availability of low cost workers. Some areas, however, are becoming more marginalized as new economic activities pass them by.

Massey’s framework for understanding regional change and uneven development has limitations for my research project, since her framework applies to capitalist societies and the motives industries have for locating different forms of economic activities in different areas. In socialist societies, by contrast, it was the government who made decisions concerning the location and distribution of economic activities. Although it is not possible to fully understand the uneven development in the study area using Massey’s framework, it has some important advantages. Looking at local areas and uneven development as a result of successive layering has explanatory power because it emphasizes the interaction between macro and micro-scale processes. Furthermore, Massey’s stresses that local areas and economies have different histories that influence the kind of impacts that macro-scale processes have on local areas. In other words, there are continuities between the past, present and future. Economic change does not mean an absolute break with the past for local areas. The same argument is made in micro-scale research of transition processes (Burawoy and Verdery 1999, Smith 2000, Pavlovskaya 2004).
5.5 The production of different villages

Ctara Djuna and Mladogradi, although they are located in the same region, are impacted differently by the transition and exemplify uneven development. Local uneven development started long before the transition, but has been reinforced by the spatial unevenness of the transition. The two villages have different geographies in terms of demography and economic structures. Ctara Djuna has been left behind in the transition to a market economy and is becoming more and more marginalized, due to its ageing population and the current lack of economic opportunities. Indeed, although Ctara Djuna’s future does not look bright, this cannot be blamed on the transition alone, because the decrease in economic activities and depopulation already started during the communist period. Mladogradi has been able better able to benefit from the opportunities offered by transition, since it has a stable and younger population and plenty of job opportunities in factories. These labor opportunities, however, may turn out to be short term if the factories decide to relocate to lower wage regions.

Demographic processes and economic development are important and interlinked forces shaping the two villages. In the case of Ctara Djuna, depopulation was initiated by the lack of economic development relative to other areas. Of course, ageing, economically marginalized communities are not unique to Bulgaria nor to post-socialist countries in general. Countries, such as France, have experienced similar rural depopulation and ageing. Such marginalization of older rural people is often a social consequence of economic change in general (Sachs 1993).
In Mladogradi, by contrast the demographic composition is more diverse than in Ctara Djuna. Therefore, Mladogradi was a better source of low wageworkers after 1989, since many people lost their jobs and had not reached the retirement age. Furthermore, Mladogradi has a good relative location being close to the highway to Greece. These factors have been important for attracting foreign investment and opening of factories in the village. Demographic processes and economic development alone cannot fully explain the differences between the villages and the different transition trajectories they are taking, but looking at them provides insight about the differentiation in the area, the division of labor and the impacts of the transition.

As I will show in Chapters 6 and 7, the livelihoods of the interviewed women in these villages reflect these differences. The livelihoods of women from Ctara Djuna are relatively uniform as most women are retired and depend greatly on natural and agricultural resources. Women’s livelihoods in Mladogradi on the other hand are more diverse as some women have formal jobs and others are retired. Ultimately, though, I show spatial differences are outweighed by intergenerational differences.
CHAPTER 6

RURAL WOMEN’S LIVELIHOODS: EVERYDAY LIVES AND UNIQUE TRANSITIONS

6.1 Introduction

The aim of this chapter is to present my research findings and provide answer to four research questions. This chapter builds on the previous chapter’s attention to village level differences by exploring rural women’s livelihoods and transition experiences. I start out with a descriptive overview of the data I collected and discuss what the changes, similarities, and differences are among women with regard to labor opportunities, labor burden, empowerment, access to, use of and dependence on natural and agricultural resources, and non-capitalist practices. In this part, I also integrate some of the relevant insights obtained from the interviews with men in the two villages. Second, I synthesize the research findings and characterize the different unique transitions rural women are experiencing based on categories that are suggested by the literature and descriptive data analysis. I conclude with summarizing the results of this study and answering the research questions. The data I use here is collected through the semi-structured interviews and interviews with key persons. The names in this chapter are pseudonyms given to respondents in order to ensure their anonymity.
6.2 General background

In this section, I discuss basic information on the female respondents, such as ethnicity, household composition, housing situation, and adjustments made in the household. The aim of this section is to provide a background on the interviewed women in Mladogradi and Ctara Djuna against which the different aspects of rural women’s livelihoods will be discussed.

6.2.1 Ethnicity

Forty-six female respondents are ethnic Bulgarian and three female respondents identify themselves as Roma and one woman who identifies herself as Turkish Roma. These last four women live in Mladogradi. As mentioned before, the number of Roma respondents in my sample is lower than I intended, due to practical problems. In Ctara Djuna, all female respondents identify themselves as Bulgarian.

6.2.2 Household composition and housing situation

My sample shows some variation with regard to the household composition. Forty of the fifty women are married and the other ten women are widows. Except for two husbands who are Roma, all their husbands either have a job or are retired. These jobs include carpenter, factory worker, business owner, and truck driver. Nine women live in a single person household and are widows. Nineteen women live in a two-person household, seven in a three-person household, another seven in a four-person household, three in a five-person household, four in a six-person household, and one in an eight-person household. Fifteen interviewed women from Mladogradi have children that live at
home. In four of these households the children are adults, some with their own families. Five female respondents, four from Mladogradi and one from Ctara Djuna, live together with their parent(s) (in-law).

Almost all houses in Mladogradi and Ctara Djuna are detached. Many villagers have built their house in stages and it is not unusual to see an unfinished floor. It is common to find a house split in two apartments with a household living on the first floor and the parents or other relatives on the second floor. Many villagers have a garden next to the house, in which in some cases an outhouse is located. When the temperature starts to drop in autumn, many older villagers move their beds into the kitchen annex living room until spring, so that they only have to heat one room. It appears that more pensioners live in houses without modern-style kitchens and bathrooms than younger families. All interviewed women live in a house or apartment owned by the household, except for one woman who lives in a house assigned by the local government, because her husband is a veterinarian.

6.2.3 Birth place

Many female respondents were not born in the place where they now live, because they come from other villages in the region or from Sandanski. Only three (11%) of the twenty-eight interviewed women from Mladogradi were born there. It seems that most women moved to Mladogradi upon marriage. One respondent moved with her household from North Bulgaria to Mladogradi, because of the job opportunities in the village. In Ctara Djuna, twelve (55%) of the interviewed women were in born in this village. The other ten women moved to the village from nearby villages.
6.2.4 Education level

Comparing the education level of the interviewed women with age and residence (Mladogradi and Ctara Djuna), produces two main findings (see Table 6.1). First, it appears that younger women have a higher education than older women. Second, women in Ctara Djuna have a lower education level than women in Mladogradi. Twenty-nine women (58%) in my sample only attended elementary school (grades one through eight); seventeen from Ctara Djuna and twelve from Mladogradi. Fifteen women (30%) attended secondary school (grades nine through twelve) and fourteen women graduated with a high school diploma; four from Ctara Djuna and eleven from Mladogradi. Four women from Mladogradi and one woman from Ctara Djuna (10%) have a degree awarded by an institution for semi-higher or higher education. One Roma woman (2%) from Mladogradi has had no formal education.

Twenty-five (83%) of the thirty women who are fifty-five years or older attended only elementary school. In the same age category, four women attended high school and one woman attended semi-higher education. For example, Daniela (66 years, Ctara Djuna) started with two-year program for kindergarten teacher at the age of 38.

Eleven (55%) of the twenty women who are younger than fifty-five years attended high school. In the same age category, four women only attended primary school and four women attended (semi-) higher education. These last four women do not all have a job in their field. For example, Aleksandra (47 years, Mladogradi) has a teaching degree in biology and chemistry and has a job as a teacher and Lilyana (44 years, Mladogradi) has a degree in geodetic science and works a surveyor/geodetic
scientist for the local government. However, Violeta (42 years, Mladogradi) has degree from a semi-higher educational institution in engineering, but works now as a seamstress. Also, Tanya (32 years, Mladogradi) received her nursing degree (semi-higher education) and works now as a seamstress. One Roma woman in this age category has no formal education.

Many of the women who lived in Ctara Djuna when they were young, did not continue education beyond the fourth grade in part because higher education was not locally available. To continue formal education, students had to walk to another village as in the case of Katerina (73 years), who did so until grade seven. Another reason for low education levels was a lack of money, or the need for an extra hand – as in the case of Anka (72 years), who was the oldest in a family of six children. She went to elementary school until fourth grade. After that, her mother needed her help in the house. A final reason for discontinuing education beyond the fourth grade is, as one respondent put it: “There is no need for studying; there are only bulls out here” (Katya, 74 years).

It is not unexpected that the education level of the female respondents in Ctara Djuna in general is lower than the education level of women in Mladogradi, as it was more common fifty to forty years ago to quit education early and the average age is higher in Ctara Djuna than in Mladogradi. Furthermore, in Ctara Djuna there is less difference in women’s education than in Mladogradi, where three-quarters of the respondents attended only elementary school. In Mladogradi, by contrast, there is greater heterogeneity in education level, partly because there is a greater age range.

My sample also points to the fact that there is not seem a strong relationship between ethnicity and education level. Two Roma women (Radka, 30 years; Ana 32
years) have a high school diploma like many of their Bulgarian counterparts. The other two Roma have a lower education level than their age would suggest. Rosa (45 years) attended elementary school until 5th grade, and Elena (30 years) has no formal education.

Figure 6.1: Education level of interviewed women from Mladogradi and Ctara Djuna (‘young’ is fifty-four years and younger, ‘old’ is fifty-five years and older) (n=50)

In Bulgaria, the education level for younger women is often higher than for older women. This is also reflected in my sample, at least with regard to secondary education. It appears that women with higher education have moved to the cities, where there are more job opportunities at a level for which they are qualified. Therefore, they are not
included in my sample. The four women in my sample, who attended (semi) higher education did not all find a job at their education level. Two of them work as seamstresses in a factory. Although, there are many labor opportunities in Mladogradi, the variety of jobs is limited as will become clear in the section 6.3.

6.2.5 Adjustments in the household

The majority of respondents made adjustments in their households in the last fourteen years to cope with the changes brought by the transition. That is, they postponed major purchases, saved on food shopping or eating, and saved on household utility use. In addition, the majority of respondents does not have a financial buffer, i.e. some form of savings. Included in this section are also the respondents that set up their own household after 1989 and they are, therefore, not able to compare their current household situation to the situation before 1989. However, some of these respondents are carefully budgeting their cash income. A closer look at these adjustments offers insight in the economic and financial situation of a household.

The majority of women in both Mladogradi (57%) and Ctara Djuna (77%) have postponed buying consumer durables, such as a washer, refrigerator, or TV. For example, Anushka’s (61 years old, Ctara Djuna) washing machine is broken, but they do not have the money to buy a new one. Not everyone who did not have to postpone making major purchases has money to do so. Evdokiya (76 years, Mladogradi) explains she is not able to make large purchases, but she did not have to postpone major purchases, because her family helps her by buying her a TV, pots and pans, and kitchen appliances. A few
respondents, like Gergana (77 years old, Ctara Djuna), did not have to postpone major purchases because they bought everything they need before 1989.

Seven of the nine women in Mladogradi who did not postpone major purchases are Aleksandra (47 years), Atanaska (28 years), Nadia (30 years), Anetka (26 years), Yana (56 years), Radka (30 years), and Ana (32 years). They all have full-time employment (e.g., as a teacher, seamstress, factory worker, store owner or as a government employee). Nadia, who owns a store together with her husband, says that they try not to buy too many things, because that would make villagers jealous and be a disincentive to come to their store. The husbands of these seven women are also employed. Two of them have their own businesses. Three husbands have a second job. The other two women who did not postpone purchases are Mariika (64 years) and Nikolina (60 years). They are both retired, although Mariika works up to 10 days a month in a textile factory to supplement her income. They did not postpone major purchases in the last 14 years, since they already had everything they needed.

In Ctara Djuna, five respondents did not postpone big purchases. Vanya (58 years), Gergana (77 years), and Tzvetanka (71 years), all retired, did not have to postpone major purchases, since they already had everything, neither did Dana (51 years) who works as a custodian in a hotel in a nearby village. She and her husband, for example, bought a new freezer last year. Anka (72 years) and her husband, who passed away a year ago, made some major purchases. They bought a telephone, a fridge, and an electric stove – indeed, she was the only retired respondent who mentioned buying consumer durables. This may be because she and her husband sold 14 dekares (1.4 hectares) of land a few years prior.
When the female respondents were asked about postponing major purchases in the last 14 years, some compared the situation now with that from before 1989. None of these comparisons were favorable. For example, Ekaterina (77 years, Mladogradi) says: “During the communist times, we could buy everything we needed and now we do not have money.” Olga (77 years, Ctara Djuna) expresses a similar opinion: “Before 1989 everything was cheap and good, and now I cannot buy anything.”

The majority of interviewed women in both Mladogradi (75%) and Ctara Djuna (95%) do not have savings at the moment. The five women in Mladogradi (Alexandra, 47 years; Atanaska, 28 years; Elka, 28 years; Nadia, 30 years; and Ana, 32 years), who indicate that they have savings are all relatively young.

Reasons given for not having any savings vary. Many women mention that they used their savings before 1989. Olga (77 years, Ctara Djuna) gave her savings to her children before 1989. Some gave their savings to help their children buy an apartment or set up a business. Others used the savings to pay for a daughter’s wedding. The high inflation in the 1990s is also considered a reason. Emiliya (70 years, Mladogradi) says that the inflation ‘ate’ her savings. It also appears that some younger household have not been able to save money.

Twenty women (71%) in Mladogradi and nineteen women (86%) in Ctara Djuna try to save money when buying groceries and preparing meals. It is important to keep in mind that many respondents have a subsistence plot, which means that they often do not have to buy vegetables, or buy only a limited amount. For example, Emiliya (70 years, Mladogradi), tries to save money when grocery shopping and preparing meals by eating dry bread, because, she says, it takes longer to finish, and it is also cheaper to buy bread
that is one day old. Danka (75 years, Ctara Djuna) saves money by making her own soap from pig fat. Tanya (32 years, Mladogradi) rarely buys meat; she only buys cheap sausages once a month. Todorka (67 years, Ctara Djuna) only buys the most important things and tries to reach the end of the month with her pension benefits. Alexandra (47 years), Atanaska (28 years), and Ana (32 years) from Mladogradi do not try to save money when buying groceries and preparing meals (they also did not have to postpone purchases and they all have savings). Vanya (58 years) and Tatiania (62 years) from Ctara Djuna do not save money on grocery shopping and preparing meals either. They both say that they do not deprive themselves.

The majority of women (75% from Mladogradi and 91% from Ctara Djuna) try to save on utility use, such as electricity. The most common way to save on utilities is by cooking and heating on wood instead of using electricity or gas. Some respondents cook on wood year round, while others cook and heat on wood only in the winter. For example, Emiliya (70 years, Mladogradi) saves on utilities by going to bed early to save electricity and wood. Olga (77 years, Ctara Djuna) says she does not use her fridge in the winter. Alexandra (47 years), Atanska (28 years), and Ivanka (23 years) from Mladogradi do not do anything in particular to reduce their bills. Svetlana (55 years) from Ctara Djuna added that she does not save on utility use either because she has no time to cook on wood with her full-time job.

There are no clear trends among women with regard to the economic and financial situation of the household, except for the retired women. Pensioners have a low cash income, which hurts their ability to make purchases or to save money. Many of them try to budget by restricting their utility use and by buying a minimum of groceries.
Subsistence plots thus become important supplements to these low pension benefits. For women below the retirement age, it is clear that the financial and economic situation is not good even when the husband also has a job. In fact, a minority of the women I spoke with say they have savings, can buy what they need and do not have to save on utility use. Although women with a job have a higher income than women who depend on pension benefits, many have the same complaints about not having a sufficient income.

Ultimately, it appears that older and younger women have different expenditure patterns and wishes, for example women with a steady income are able to lease consumer items. Furthermore, many younger women have children, living at home or not, who are financially supported. And, the houses of many of the younger women are renovated and include modern kitchens and bathrooms and newer appliances.

In general, life became more difficult during the transition for most of the women. The period under president Zhikov (1954-1989) is perceived to be calmer and better by many of the older respondents. “I liked the communist times better. I went to the seaside every year. Now we do not have enough money” says Maria (53 years, Mladogradi).

Younger women are more positive about their everyday life and are more optimistic about the future. They refer to the opening up of economic opportunities, such as setting up your own business or working in a foreign country. Many of the respondents are familiar with international migration as they have husbands, friends, or family members, working abroad (sometimes illegally) in countries such as the UK, Greece, or Spain.
6.3 Labor opportunities

In this section, I analyze the differences, similarities, and changes in women’s occupation and income opportunities. I use the same categories as used in chapter 5 to analyze the current and past occupations of the respondents.

Comparing the women’s current occupation with the occupation they had before 1989, it is clear that only a few have the same occupation (see Table 6.1). The two most important transitions in occupations are, one, that most women who worked in the agricultural cooperatives are now retired and, second, that many of the women who were students before 1989 work now in the factories. The discontinuities in occupation can partly be explained by the fact that state farms and state factories have closed down and that many women have reached the retirement age. While many interviewed women worked in agricultural jobs, currently no one works in this sector. Furthermore, it was not possible to set up your own business before 1989, so entrepreneurial initiatives are a relatively new phenomenon. Also, many interviewed women are currently retired. Some of them retired before 1989, but I used the occupation they held before retirement in my analysis.

As presented in Table 6.1, there are several different occupational trajectories under transition. For example, seven of the eleven factory workers were in school before 1989. Two factory workers held positions in another factory before 1989. Another worker held a position as a shop assistant before 1989. One factory worker held a position in the TKZS (collective farm) before 1989. Twenty-five of the twenty-seven retirees held positions in the TKZS before 1989. One retiree used to be a teacher and the other retiree used to hold positions as an accountant and a factory worker. For the two women who
have a position in the local government, the head of administrative services was a student before 1989 and the surveyor/geodetic scientist had the same position before 1989. The two women who have paid work as a cleaner and a shop assistant, worked respectively as factory worker and a factory worker and cook before 1989. The stay-at-home mother, hairstylist, and one of the shop owners were in school before 1989. The second shop owner was a waitress before 1989, while the shop assistant had been a seamstress. The teacher held the same position before 1989. With regard to the two Roma women who are unemployed, one used to work in greenhouse and the other started to work in a factory at the age of twelve.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Occupation before 1989</th>
<th>Current Occupation</th>
<th>Retiree</th>
<th>Student</th>
<th>Factory</th>
<th>Agriculture</th>
<th>Government</th>
<th>Entrepreneur</th>
<th>Other</th>
<th>Total before 1989</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Retiree</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0</td>
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<td></td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>11</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Factory</td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td>4</td>
<td>8</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agriculture</td>
<td></td>
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<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Entrepreneur</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
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<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total currently</strong></td>
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<td>27</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6</td>
<td></td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 6.1: Women’s occupations in transition (n=50)
After comparing women’s occupations before and after 1989, it is clear that there is a high degree of discontinuity. Some trends are that most of the former students currently work in factories. On the other hand, the majority of the agricultural workers is now retired. And, women who had jobs in the government sector (local government and teacher) or in factories in the past have similar jobs now. Overall, there is generally more variety in Mladogradi with regard to occupation type or work status than in Ctara Djuna, largely because most women in Ctara Djuna have reached the retirement age.

Before 1989, the occupational picture of women in Ctara Djuna and in Mladogradi was fairly uniform, with almost all women working in agriculture. Those who worked in a factory lived in another place or commuted to factories in and around Sandanski. Currently, the jobs that are available in Mladogradi do generally not require (semi) higher education. Although there are a few women with (semi) higher education who work as seamstresses, it seems that many (younger) women who continued their education after high school have left the area. In Ctara Djuna, there are almost no job opportunities and most people are retired.

6.4 Empowerment

In this section, I discuss the differences, similarities, and changes in women’s empowerment. Women’s empowerment is assessed by combining their views on who is ‘the head of the household,’ who is in control of household finances, and who makes decisions regarding big purchases, and whether or not they are members of an organization.
6.4.1 Head of household

The majority (64%) of interviewed women consider their husband to be the ‘head of household’ (Table 6.2) – nine from Ctara Djuna and twenty-three from Mladogradi. They have different explanations for thinking this. For example, Aleksandra (47 years, Mladogradi) says that her husband is the head of the household because he earns more money. Anetka (26 years, Mladogradi), who is on maternity leave, explains that her husband is the head because the person who works gives the orders. “The man is the leader and thus the head of the household” explains Boyka (56 years, Mladogradi). Katerina (73 years, Ctara Djuna) states that her husband is the head of household and a woman has to be quiet and listen. Silvana (61 years, Ctara Djuna) simply says: “my husband of course.” Danka (75 years, Ctara Djuna) explains: “my husband is the head of household. He tells me everything. I cannot complain about my husband. Not a bad word in 50 years.”

Only three women indicate that they are the heads of the household. For example, Stanka (22 years, Mladogradi) explains that her husband is the head of household in principle, but it is the woman in practice. One women, Tanya (32 years, Mladogradi), says that all six household members are the heads of the household. Five respondents say that they together with their husbands are the heads of the household. Vanya (58 years old, Ctara Djuna) explains that the husband is the head and the wife is the neck of the household. “We have been family for thirty-five years and get along very well.”

Four of the seven interviewed men consider themselves heads of household. Dimitar (44 years, Mladogradi), Stoyan (30, Mladogradi), Vladislav (62 years, Ctara
Djuna), and Emil (45 years, Mladogradi) say that they are the head of household in principle. Sergei (39 years, Mladogradi) considers his mother the head of household, because she is the eldest and runs the household. Sergei lives together with his mother and sister. Boyan (94 years, Mladogradi) is a widower and lives alone. It is not clear what Asen’s (61 years, Mladogradi) views are on this topic.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Mladogradi ‘Young’</th>
<th>Mladogradi ‘Old’</th>
<th>Ctara Djuna ‘Young’</th>
<th>Ctara Djuna ‘Old’</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Husband</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>She</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Everyone</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Widow</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 6.2: Women’s views on who is the ‘head of the household’ (‘young’ is fifty-four years and younger, ‘old’ is fifty-five years and older) (‘everyone’ = respondent, husband and children, ‘together’ = respondent and husband)

As mentioned before, Bulgarian society is considered a patriarchal society. Table 6.2 shows that the majority of women consider their husband head of the household, which supports this statement. ‘Head of household,’ however, is a rather abstract concept and it might be possible that many women say that their husband is ‘head of household’ automatically, because this is the socially accepted answer.

6.4.2 Control of household finances and household decision-making

Table 6.3 and Table 6.4 show a more diverse picture than Table 6.2, indicating that women’s empowerment in the household is more nuanced than simply considering
who is the head of household. Table 6.3 shows that in only in three household in Mladogradi and in three households in Ctara Djuna does the husband control the household finances. In these households, the women (Stanislava (38 years old), Nikolina (60 years), and Lyudmila (69 years) from Mladogradi) explain that their husbands are in control of household finances, respectively because “he is a man,” “he is the head of the household,” and “my husband does the shopping.” Evginiva (73 years), Katerina (73 years), and Gergana (77 years) from Ctara Djuna say that their husbands are in control of the household finances, respectively, because “he keeps the money,” “he does the shopping” and “I cannot see very well.”

This said, many women (42%) from both villages, thirteen from Mladogradi and eight from Ctara Djuna, indicate that they are in control of the household. They say this for different reasons: because they do the shopping or they are better spenders (i.e., husband spends money on cigarettes or rakia (hard liquor)). A fairly large group of women from Mladogradi say that they jointly control of home finances with their husbands. For example, Nadia (30 years, Mladogradi), says they together control the household finances, because they both work.

Only two of the male interviewees mentioned that they are in full control of household finances. Dimitar (44 years, Mladogradi) controls the household finances, because he is the head of household. Vladislav (62 years, Ctara Djuna) says he in control of the household finances, because “he is the main supervisor.” Emil (45 years, Mladogradi) and Stoyan (30 years, Ctara Djuna) control the household finances together with their spouses. Sergei (39 years, Mladogradi), who lives with his mother and sister
controls his own salary. As with the women, then, men’s views on control over household finances are more varied than the views on ‘head of the household’.

Table 6.3 shows that although many women say that their husbands are the head of household, this does not mean that most husbands are in control of household finances. Many women indicate that they are in control alone or with their husbands. There does not seem to be a relation to age. It is, however, interesting that seven of the ten women between the ages of 21 and 30 years say that they alone are in control of the household finances. An explanation could be that many of these women are on maternity leave and stay at home. Another explanation could be that their husbands are often away from home for longer periods. At least two of the husbands have to travel for their job as truck driver and are away from home for long periods.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Mladogradi ‘Young’</th>
<th>Mladogradi ‘Old’</th>
<th>Ctara Djuna ‘Young’</th>
<th>Ctara Djuna ‘Old’</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Husband</td>
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</tr>
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<td>9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 6.3: Women’s views on who controls the household finances (‘young’ is fifty-four years and younger, ‘old’ is fifty-five years and older) (‘together’ = respondent and husband)

Table 6.4, like Table 6.3, provides a more nuanced view of the power relations within the households. Most interviewed women (52%) in both villages make decisions
together with their husbands on acquiring consumer durables. Only in a few households in Mladogradi the husband is the sole decision maker. The women, who indicate that their husbands are the sole decision makers, are between the ages of 25 and 30 years old. Elka (28 years) says: “If it is a big purchase, then my husband chooses and buys.” Also Nadia (30 years) explains that when it comes to big purchases, it is her husband who makes the decision. Anetka (26 years) says: “My husband mainly, because he works and thus gives the orders.” Elena (30 years), a Roma woman, explains that it is mainly her husband who makes the decision to make purchases, although her father-in-law also plays an important role, because he is considered the head of the extended family.

Seven women are the ones making the decision whether or not to acquire big consumer items for various reasons. For example, Nikolina (60 years, Mladogradi) says: “My husband does not have the need to buy new things.” Dana (51 years, Ctara Djuna) explains: “I make the decisions, because I make wiser decisions and think more about it.” In two households, the children make the decisions. One of these women, Maria (53 years, Mladogradi), lives in a multi generational household with her son and daughter-in-law. She explains that her son and daughter-in-law want new consumer items. The other women, Anushka (61 year, Ctara Djunas) says that her children make decisions concerning buying a new TV and freezer, because they visit her and her husband.

Among the interviewed men, there is also variation with regard to who makes the decision to acquire big consumer items in the household. Dimitar (44 years, Mladogradi) and Emil (45 years, Mladogradi) make decisions to buy new consumer items together with their spouses. Stoyan (30 years, Mladogradi) and Vladislav (62 years, Ctara Djuna)
make the decision alone when they buy a new consumer item, although Vladislav adds that nowadays he and his wife only produce (vegetables, wine, etc.) and do not buy big consumer items.

Again, the head of household is not automatically the decision maker. Many women make the decision to buy consumer durables together with their husbands, more so than regarding the control over household finances. Control over household finances is exercised more often on a daily basis than deciding to buy a durable good. Since more women than men do grocery shopping, and therefore handle the household finances, this could explain the difference.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Mladogradi ‘Young’</th>
<th>Mladogradi ‘Old’</th>
<th>Ctara Djuna ‘Young’</th>
<th>Ctara Djuna ‘Old’</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Husband</td>
<td>4</td>
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<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>She</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Together</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children</td>
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<td>0</td>
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<td>9</td>
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<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 6.4: Women’s views on who makes the decisions regarding acquiring big consumer items (‘young’ is fifty-four years and younger, ‘old’ is fifty-five years and older) (‘together’ = respondent and husband, ‘children’= adult children who live in the same household or not)

6.4.3 Participation in civil society

Membership of an organization, such as a community group, political party, or labor union, extends women’s empowerment beyond the household level into the
community, political arena, and work environment. Only five of the fifty female respondents are member of an organization at the moment – not one from Ctara Djuna.
Of those from Mladogradi, one of these women is Aleksandra (47 years, Mladogradi), who is a member of the Sandanski municipal council as a representative of the Radical Democratic Union. This party aims to develop a middle class by lowering taxes for small businesses. They meet once a week. She is also a member of a women’s organization, although they have not met in a long time. This organization tries to raise money for talented children. She is also member of a teacher’s organization that defends teacher’s rights. They only meet when there is a problem. A second women, Irina (35 years, Mladogradi), is a member of a cooperative, because she works in a store owned by the cooperative. This cooperative consists of small businesses and stores. The one hundred and fifty members of the cooperative are owners of either stores or small businesses, employees of these businesses, or retirees that used to work for the cooperative. The cooperative has stores in forty villages, eight ovens in a bread factory (which produce 80,000 loaves of bread daily), and eight trucks with which they distribute goods from the businesses to the stores. The third woman, Petia (30 years, Mladogradi), is a member of the Bulgarian Socialist Party, but she is not actively involved in the party. Evdokiya (76 years, Mladogradi) was a member of a community organization in Mladogradi until 1999. The goal of the union was to improve the conditions in the village for women and for people in general. A fifth respondent, Stoyanka (67 years, Mladogradi), is a member of a regional cooperative that manages and leases agricultural machineries formerly owned by the state farms. Involvement in organizations does not appear to be stratified by age.
Only two of the seven male interviewees are member of an organization. Dimitar (44 years, Mladogradi) is a member of the fishing and hunting association. Vladislav (62 years, Ctara Djuna) is a member of the Bulgarian Agrarian Nationalist Union that tries to improve the situation of farmers. Asen did not join an organization. He explains: “I hate every party and organization, because they only destroy these days.” Overall, both men’s and women’s participation in an organization is very low, especially for women from Ctara Djuna.

6.4.4 Membership before 1989

Before 1989, membership in an organization was more common, if not mandatory. Twenty-five women (50%) said that they were members of an organization, most of them related to the Communist Party, such as organizations for schoolchildren and students, and the agricultural cooperative. Many of the memberships were automatic; for example, schoolchildren and students were required to be a member of the Communist Youth Party and employees of the TKZS were automatically members of the cooperative.

Twelve respondents were members of the Communist Party; two women from Mladogradi and ten women from Ctara Djuna. Maria (53 years, Mladogradi) mentions that members of the Communist Party had some privileges regarding work and acquiring big consumer items. Most respondents from Ctara Djuna were members of the Communist Party when they were young and not married. They went to meetings specifically organized for young people. During these meetings, movies were shown with a projector, as one respondent fondly recalls. Margarita (63 years old, Ctara Djuna)
participated several times a year in events organized by the Communist Party. According to her: “In those days, people were more united and organized.” Olga (77 years) from Ctara Djuna participated in the Communist Party every Sunday when she was young. She tells that a teacher would come to the village, read books to them, and ask questions afterward. Some respondents from Ctara Djuna recall working on social projects during the week, such as digging channels for an irrigation system and planting trees. Anka (72 years old, Ctara Djuna) wishes that these times would come back. Two women used to be members of the Bulgarian Agrarian Nationalist Union.

Also among men, membership of an organization was more common before 1989. Both Stoyan (30 years, Mladogradi) and Sergei (39 years, Mladogradi) were members of the Communist Youth. Boyan (94 years, Mladogradi) worked for the TKZS and was automatically a member of the cooperative. He was not a supporter of the Communist Party. He calls the communists ‘dictators,’ who forced people to live in communist way. Vladislav (62 years, Ctara Djuna) and Asen (61 years, Mladogradi) were both members of the Bulgarian Agrarian Nationalist Union. Emil (45 years, Mladogradi) was a member of the Communist Party. Dimitar (44 years, Mladogradi) recalls that he was asked to become a member of the Communist Party, because his grandfather was a freedom fighter against fascism, but he declined.

**6.4.5 Women’s empowerment**

Women’s empowerment includes, of course, more than only power relations within the household and membership in organizations. For example, their empowerment is also shaped by laws that establish equal rights and access to education and information.
Nevertheless, my research hints at some key issues. First, most women in both villages, both young and older, consider their husband ‘head of the household.’ Second, with regard to control over household finances and decision-making about making new purchases, it appears that many women from both villages are in control of the household finances and are decision makers, either alone or together with their husbands. The head of household is thus not automatically the decision maker and in charge of the household finances. Third, fewer women in both villages are members of organizations than before 1989. The variation in views on head of household, control over household finances, and decision making about consumer durables by men, are similar to that of the women.

These findings show that patriarchy still seems to be an important social structure in Bulgaria, but that patriarchy does not always translate to minimal power for women in the household with regard to household finances and decision-making power concerning acquiring consumer durables. Furthermore, political participation by women has declined. One key-informant explains that it is more difficult to organize women these days for several reasons. First, there are fewer unions and organizations in the villages and region. Second, women are working long hours outside the house and are expected to carry out most of the domestic duties. This is difficult to combine and does not leave much time for other activities. Furthermore, she claims that people also have become more individualistic. Some scholars, moreover, have argued that women’s high political participation during the communist period was artificial and did not result in real political empowerment for them (see also Chapter 3). This also seems to apply to men in rural areas.
6.5 Labor burden

The labor burden of women in Mladogradi and Ctara Djuna (in terms of the labor activities in which the respondents are engaged weekly) is shown in Table 6.5. All the respondents with a formal job work full time for at least 40 hours a week, except for the teacher who spends 25-30 hours on her job and a woman who works ten to fifteen days per month in the factory. The women who work in or own a store report that they work eight to ten hours each day. In factories, women work at least 40 to 45 hours a week and working overtime and on the weekends is very common. Violeta (42 years, Mladogradi) tells that she works 6 days a week for 9 hours a day in a textile factory. Sometimes when they have to finish an order she works up to 20 hours consecutively. The overtime rate she earns is BGN 2 (US$ 1.20 in October 2003) per hour.

All respondents, except one woman, do household chores regularly. The time spent on this task varies. For example, Aleksandra (47 years, Mladogradi) spends 1 hour daily preparing meals. Her daughter-in-law who lives with them does most household work. Radka (30 years, Mladogradi) has a full time job and in addition does household chores for 4 hours a day. Of the seven men interviewed, only two mention that they do housework – Boyan (94 years, Mladogradi) is a widower and lives alone and Dimitar (44 years, Mladogradi) mentions that he does housework, but probably less than 1 hour a week.

Many younger women also take care of their children. Women with very young children are often on maternity leave. Women with older children often work full time. Sometimes grandparents take care of the children after school as in the case of Radka (30
Radka’s father is unemployed and takes care of her five year old son after he comes home from kindergarten. In Bulgaria, it is not uncommon to send young children to grandparents in a village for a few years, while both parents work full time.

All respondents in Ctara Djuna and fifteen women in Mladogradi work in the garden, vineyard or on the land every week. The time spend in the garden or on the land varies per season. Women are especially busy during spring, summer, and early fall. Not all women who have a garden, land or a vineyard take care of these natural and agricultural resources. Some have no time to work on the land or in the garden, in addition to a full-time job, childcare, and housework. Some households do not cultivate the land. Most retirees work daily in their garden or on the land. Tatiana (62 years, Ctara Djuna) says: “you need to work on your plot to survive.”

Especially older women mention that they knit and sew. These activities often take place in the late afternoon and evening and are more popular in the winter months. Many respondents do not buy new clothes frequently, so mending clothes and knitting socks and cardigans are important activities. For example, Daniela (66 years, Ctara Djuna), only buys underwear and does not have money for other clothes.

Not many women mention that they take care of livestock. Often goats and sheep are cared for by a herdsman. In Ctara Djuna, people pay BGN 3 per month per animal to the herdsman. Other activities incidentally mentioned are studying, engaging in political activities, collecting firewood, herbs, and berries, and volunteering. Many of these activities do not take place weekly.

As mentioned in Chapter 4, many retirees were not able to come up with an estimate of the time spent on activities. Vasilka (83 years, Ctara Djuna) describes her
day as a combination of knitting, stitching, cooking, doing domestic chores and working
in the garden, but mostly relaxing. Vasilka is not the only retiree who mentions that
relaxing is part of her daily routine. Katya (74 years, Ctara Djuna) tells that she sits and
lies down besides working in the garden, doing household work, and taking care of the
livestock. In contrast, younger women never mention relaxing or doing nothing as part of
their daily routine.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Mladogradi ‘Young’</th>
<th>Mladogradi ‘Old’</th>
<th>Ctara Djuna ‘Young’</th>
<th>Ctara Djuna ‘Old’</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
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<tr>
<td>Paid work</td>
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<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Domestic work</td>
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<td>9</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Childcare</td>
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<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Garden/land</td>
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<td>1</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Livestock</td>
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<td>8</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knitting/sewing</td>
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<td>8</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 6.5: Activities done by interviewed women in a week by age and residence
(‘young’ is fifty-four years and younger, ‘old’ is fifty-five years and older) (n=50)

Before 1989, many women also worked full time, but there were more facilities to
combine this with childcare than today. The decline in childcare possibilities is partly
absorbed by grandparents taking care of grandchildren. The long maternity leaves are still
in place, but the government benefits are very low. It is, however, also expensive to hire a
baby sitter. An additional problem for women employed in textile factories is the
irregular hours and frequent overtime work, which is more common now than in the past.
Refusing to work overtime is often not an option. Another reason for the high labor
burden is that household work is still considered a woman’s responsibility and not many men help in the house. Working in the garden or on the land is another frequently mentioned labor activity, although it is not new.

In sum, many Bulgarian women worked full time before 1989, but they had access to facilities that made it easier to combine childcare and a formal job. These services are less available now, thus making it more difficult to combine childcare, housework and a full time job. Overall, women’s labor burden did not decrease after 1989. Especially women working in the textile industry face challenges combining long and irregular hours, housework, and childcare.

6.6 Agricultural and natural resources

The access to, dependence on, and use of natural and agricultural resources is an important element of rural women’s livelihood. In the case of the interviewed women, natural and agricultural resources range from gardens, agricultural land, and vineyards, to herbs, berries, firewood, and water for irrigation. In this section, I first describe the women’s access to and use of gardens, land, vineyard, water and other natural resources. The dependence on these natural and agricultural resources is briefly discussed in this section, but receives more attention in next section. Second, I discuss the management of the natural and agricultural resources, including decision-making and maintenance of the garden and other natural and agricultural resources.
Many women from Mladogradi and Ctara Djuna together with their households have access to a garden, agricultural land and vineyards (see Table 6.6). Five women (10%), all of them from Mladogradi, do not have a garden. Four of them are thirty years and younger. Forty-five respondents (90%) have a garden, which is often located adjacent to the house (see Table 6.6 and Figure 6.2). Most respondents use their gardens to grow vegetables, such as peppers, tomatoes, and cucumbers. In addition, most respondents have a couple of fruit trees, like apple trees and peach trees, in the garden. Flowers are popular for decorative purposes. The average size of the respondents’ gardens is 0.45 dekare (or 450 square meters), although the size of gardens varies dramatically. These are rough estimates, since most respondents did not know the exact size of the gardens.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Mladogradi ‘Young’</th>
<th>Mladogradi ‘Old’</th>
<th>Ctara Djuna ‘Young’</th>
<th>Ctara Djuna ‘Old’</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Own garden</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Own land</td>
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<td>0</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Own vineyard</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rent land</td>
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<td>4</td>
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<td>0</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rent vineyard</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 6.6: Access to gardens, land, and vineyards by women (‘young’ is fifty-four years and younger, ‘old’ is fifty-five years and older)
Thirty-four female respondents (68%) own or rent land (see Table 6.6). Younger women in Mladogradi in particular have less access to land. Only five (36%) of fourteen women in the age of 21-40 years own or rent land. Ten women from Mladogradi and seventeen from Ctara Djuna own land. In addition, seven women from Mladogradi, who do not own land, rent land. Six of these women rent land besides the garden they own. Respondents rent land for BGN 20 – 50 (about US$ 12-30 in October 2003) per dekare per year. It seems that women from Ctara Djuna have greater access to land than women from Mladogradi, since eleven women from Mladogradi and only five women from Ctara Djuna do not own or rent land. An explanation for this might be that a number of families
settled in Mladogradi after the collectivization of land and did not own land in the village. Consequently, they were not entitled to land during the land restitution process.

Land is often located at the edge of the village or further away. Most respondents travel to their plots on foot or by donkey and cart. Respondents grow a variety of crops including peanuts, corn, tobacco, and a variety of vegetables, such as lettuce, cabbage, and peppers. The average amount of land the respondents own is 8.80 dekares and is often subdivided into smaller, scattered plots. The actual land holding of most women, however, is smaller, because a few women have land holdings up to 50 dekares, which skews the average. Nine women in Ctara Djuna do not know how much land they own, mostly because they do not have the documents detailing their land holdings.

Forty-six respondents often eat produce and products from their gardens and land. Especially, in the summer, most of them eat fresh vegetables and fruit from their land everyday. Many preserve part of the produce and fruits for the winter months (see Figure 6.3 and Figure 6.4). Some respondents buy additional vegetables and fruits to conserve in order to have enough to last until late spring. Two younger respondents from Mladogradi (Ivanka, 23 years and Anetka, 26 years) receive produce from their parents and parents in law. Only two respondents do not have or do not receive produce (Rosa, 45 years and Nadezhda 28 years). In sum, vegetables are not a popular product in the stores in the villages, because many respondents are partially self sufficient when it comes to vegetables. If respondents need to buy vegetables – for example when they do not have any produce from the garden or when they are conserving vegetables for the winter months – they buy vegetables in bulk from the market or from a large store in the region.
that only sells vegetables. It is clear that growing vegetables and other crops is an important addition to the household’s cash income.

Figure 6.3: Storage of conserved vegetables and fruits and wine in the basement (photograph taken by author, November 2003)
Four respondents from Mladogradi and seventeen respondents from Ctara Djuna own a vineyard. In addition, another four women from Mladogradi rent a vineyard (see Table 6.6). The average size of a vineyard is 3.23 dekares. Seven out of ten vineyards in Mladogradi are smaller than 1 dekare. In Ctara Djuna, there is more variety in the size of vineyards. Most of the grape harvest is used to make wine, often for own consumption. In some cases, part of the harvest is sold to a wine company. Many people from Ctara Djuna perceive the commercialization of the vineyards as a way to improve the economic situation in the village and attract younger people. There are plans to organize owners of
vineyards into small cooperatives, which will then receive financial support from the government to improve and commercialize the vineyards.

Although many respondents, forty-six out of fifty (92%), have access to a garden, agricultural land, or a vineyard, not all these resources are used by the respondents (see Table 6.7). It turns out that four women in Mladogradi have left their garden fallow. Furthermore, eight women from Mladogradi and fifteen women from Ctara Djuna have left all or parts of their land fallow. Since many women in Ctara Djuna were not able to give an estimate of the area size of their land holdings, it is not possible to get an accurate estimate of the amount of land left fallow. The size of land left fallow by respondents in Mladogradi ranges from 0.2 to 50 dekares per respondent. Five women from Ctara Djuna who were able to give an estimate of the amount of land left fallow, report that the amount of fallow land ranges from 1 dekare to 28 dekares per respondent. Ten respondents do not know how much fallow land they have. Eight of those respondents mentioned that the fallow land was undivided and therefore no proper documentation was available.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Mladogradi ‘Young’</th>
<th>Mladogradi ‘Old’</th>
<th>Ctara Djuna ‘Young’</th>
<th>Ctara Djuna ‘Old’</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fallow land</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fallow garden</td>
<td>4</td>
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<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 6.7: Number of female respondents from Mladogradi and Ctara Djuna that leave (part of) their garden or land fallow (‘young’ is fifty-four years and younger, ‘old’ is fifty-five years and older)
There are different motives why respondents leave their land fallow. One reason mentioned is that the land is located too far away. For example, Boyka (56 years old, Mladogradi) has 0.2 dekare of land that is left fallow. This piece of land is located in her birth village 50 kilometers away. Anushka (61 years, Ctara Djuna) and her husband have a third of 10 dekares of fallow land that is still undivided between her husband and his two brothers. The land is far away. Due to the land restitution process, many people have inherited land that is located in the area where their parents used to live and not necessarily in their own place of residence.

A second reason is that respondents have more land than they need or are able to cultivate. For example, Svetlana (55 years old, Ctara Djuna) has 1 dekare of fallow land that is part of large plot of land that is still undivided. In addition to this 1 dekare of fallow land, she has a garden with vegetables at home, 1 dekare of land with more vegetables, and 7 dekares of vineyard. Stoyanka (67 years, Mladogradi) has a vegetable garden at home and 4 dekares of land at the end of the village of which she only cultivates 1 dekare with tomatoes, peanuts, corn, potatoes and peppers. Evdokiya is a widow (76 years, Mladogradi) who has 4 dekares of fallow land that is part of a plot of 32 dekares that is undivided. In addition, she has a small garden and a small plot of land (0.2 dekares) on which she grows vegetables. Respondents mentioned that it is not easy to sell land, since many people still have to divide the land legally among siblings. It also costs money to draw up the legal documents. Furthermore, respondents said that there was not a big demand for agricultural land in this region.

A third reason is the poor quality of the land; the land is too steep or there is no water available. For example, Penka (69 years, Ctara Djuna) has 28 dekares of fallow
land in different locations, partly, because the land is very steep. Vanya (58 years, Ctara Djuna) has a garden, a vineyard and an unknown amount of land that is still undivided. They do not cultivate the land it, in part, because there is no water with which to irrigate it.

A fourth reason is that respondents do not have the money to start cultivating the land or it is not possible to make a profit off the land. Maria (53 years old, Mladogradi) has a garden of 1 are and 50 dekares of land, of which she and her family only cultivate 2-3 dekares with corn, peanuts, grass, peppers and other vegetables. They do not have any plans for remaining part of the land, because they do not have the money. Lilyana (44 years old, Mladogradi) has about 5 hectares of land divided in 5 pieces, which they received after 1989. Until last year, they cultivated wheat, but they quit, because it was not possible to make a profit.

6.6.2 Livestock

Many of the households in the two villages own livestock and poultry (see Table 6.8 and Figures 6.5 and 6.6). The most commonly kept animals are chicken, pigs, goats, sheep, and donkeys. Livestock and poultry provide a source for eggs, dairy products (milk, cheese, and yogurt), meat, and wool and – in the case of the donkey – a mode of transportation. Only one household owns a horse, and one family a bull, since bulls and horses are more expensive to keep than goats and sheep. Many households slaughter their pig in the autumn, so they have a supply of meat for the winter. The slaughtering of the pig is often a reason for celebration. Family members and friends come over to help and afterwards food and drinks are served.
In Mladogradi, nineteen women own livestock or poultry and nine women did not. Of these nine women, five women are in the age group of 21 to 30 years. To keep livestock you need in most cases at least a garden. These younger women do not have access to land. In Ctara Djuna, sixteen women kept livestock and poultry and six did not. These six women are 71 years or older; five of them are widows.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Own livestock and poultry</th>
<th>Mladogradi ‘Young’</th>
<th>Mladogradi ‘Old’</th>
<th>Ctara Djuna ‘Young’</th>
<th>Ctara Djuna ‘Old’</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Own livestock and poultry</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 6.8: Number of female respondents from Mladogradi and Ctara Djuna that own livestock and poultry (‘young’ is fifty-four years and younger, ‘old’ is fifty-five years and older)
Figure 6.5: Chicken provide a source of eggs and meat for many households (photograph taken by author, October 2003)
6.6.3 Other natural resources

Besides a garden, land, a vineyard and livestock, there are other natural resources that play a role in rural women’s livelihoods (see Table 6.9). As mentioned before, many women, especially older women, cook and heat on wood. Wood for heating and cooking is bought, received from the government, or collected around the villages (see Figure 6.7). Most women in Mladogradni buy firewood. Only two women do not buy firewood. In Ctara Djuna, ten women or their husbands collect all or part of the firewood they need.
in and around the village. Three women in Ctara Djuna receive firewood or coal through a government program that donates firewood or coal to people with low income.

Some interviewed women or their husbands collect herbs and berries, which is particularly more common in Ctara Djuna (64%) and less so in Mladogradi (21%). Herbs include mint, rosehips, linden blossom, oregano, and St. John’s Wort. Women from Mladogradi often pick herbs when they go into the mountains for a day or a short vacation, while women from Ctara Djuna pick herbs in the fields surrounding the village. They use these herbs mainly to make tea. Four women from Mladogradi and six women from Ctara Djuna collect berries, such as blueberries and wild raspberries. Berries are often an ingredient for stewed fruit drinks. Again, women from Mladogradi often collect the berries when they are in the mountains, while women from Ctara Djuna collect berries around the village. Many women from Mladogradi and some from Ctara Djuna mention that in the past they used to collect herbs and berries when they went on a trip to the mountains, but these days they do not go anymore, because they do not have the time or the transportation. For example, Margarita (63 years, Ctara Djuna) recalls: “Before 1989, we went into the mountains for several days every summer. We would pick berries and herbs. We would take a pig or lamb with us to grill. This was a celebration.” Besides herbs and berries, a few women pick mushrooms and chestnuts in fall. A few husbands hunt.

Overall, women from Ctara Djuna and their husbands are more often involved in gathering wood, berries, and herbs. An explanation might be that these products are more easily found around Ctara Djuna than around Mladogradi. Women from Mladogradi
often have to make a trip to the mountains to collect berries and herbs. Furthermore, women from Ctara Djuna and their husbands have more time for this activity as most of them are retired.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Mladogradi ‘Young’</th>
<th>Mladogradi ‘Old’</th>
<th>Ctara Djuna ‘Young’</th>
<th>Ctara Djuna ‘Old’</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gather wood</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gather herbs</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gather berries</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 6.9: Number of women from Mladogradi and Ctara Djuna who collect wood, herbs, and berries by age (‘young’ is fifty-four years and younger, ‘old’ is fifty-five years and older) (n=50)

The final natural resource I discuss in this section is water, in particular water to irrigate the gardens and agricultural plots. Thirty-five respondents (70%) do not use any other water sources besides tap water. Many complain that irrigating crops with tap water is very expensive. Before 1989, both Mladogradi and Ctara Djuna had an irrigation system. These irrigation systems do not exist anymore, because parts have been stolen and the systems were no longer maintained after the TKZS ceased to exist. Fourteen respondents do, however, use another water source. Twelve of these respondents live in Mladogradi. If a respondent’s land is located close to the river, river water is used to irrigate. A few respondents have drilled a well in the garden, which is used, among other things, for irrigation purposes. Some respondents use ‘old water’ to irrigate gardens and
agricultural land. This ‘old water’ refers to public water sources, fed with water coming from the mountains. These water sources were constructed during the communist period.

Figure 6.7: Delivery of wood (photograph taken by author, October 2003)

6.6.4 Management of natural and agricultural resources

Land resources are managed in different ways. Gardens, agricultural plots, and vineyards owned or rented by a household are taken care of by different persons. Twenty-one women from Mladogradi and twenty-two women from Ctara Djuna (86% of
interviewed women) have land under cultivation. Table 6.10 shows the person or persons that take care of these land-based resources. In both villages, it is most common to find women taking care of the garden, agricultural plots and vineyards together with their husbands (42%). Seven women from Mladogradi and eleven women from Ctara Djuna indicate that they take care of these natural and agricultural resources together with their husband. In Ctara Djuna, five women take care of their garden and other land resources alone. These five women are widows. In Mladogradi, four women indicate that they alone take care of these natural and agricultural resources. Of these four women, one is a widow. The other three mention their husband’s health problems as a reason why they are not engaged in taking care of the garden, plots, and vineyards. The parents or parents-in-law care for the gardens and land of six women in Mladogradi. The husbands of three women, one from Mladogradi and two women from Ctara Djuna, take care of the land. Two women mention that they do not have the time to work in the garden or on the land, given that they also have a job and domestic chores. The third woman cites severe allergies as a reason why she does not work on the land. The extended families of three women from Mladogradi and four women from Ctara Djuna take care of the land resources. Three of the four women from Ctara Djuna are widows and their adult children take care of the vineyard.

Table 6.10 lists who takes care of land-based resources on a day-to-day basis. There are, however, occasions when other people are involved. For example, two women hire a person to do the heavy work, such as digging, a couple of times a year. A second example is the harvest, which is often a family affair. When it is time to pick the grapes, (adult) children return to the village to help their parents with this task. It is interesting
that in Mladogradi, seven of the twenty-one women are not involved in taking care of the land resources. These seven women are younger than fifty-five years and have a formal job. In Ctara Djuna, only two women are not involved in these practices.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Mladogradi ‘Young’</th>
<th>Mladogradi ‘Old’</th>
<th>Ctara Djuna ‘Young’</th>
<th>Ctara Djuna ‘Old’</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>She</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Husband</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Together</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family (extended)</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parents (in-law)</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 6.10: Who takes care of the garden, plots and vineyards by residence and age (‘young’ is fifty-four years and younger, ‘old’ is fifty-five years and older) (‘together’ = respondent and husband)(n=43)

Although the work on the land is often shared between people, twenty-seven of the forty-three women (63%) indicate that there is a division of labor. Nine women from Mladogradi and sixteen women from Ctara Djuna describe that there are certain tasks that are carried out by a specific family member or a hired laborer (see Table 6.11), so a division of labor is more common in Ctara Djuna. Eighteen women mention that there is no division of labor in their households concerning the natural and agricultural resources. Four of these women live alone and do not receive help.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Labor division</th>
<th>Mladogradi ‘Young’</th>
<th>Mladogradi ‘Old’</th>
<th>Ctara Djuna ‘Young’</th>
<th>Ctara Djuna ‘Old’</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Labor division</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No labor division</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 6.11: Labor division concerning the use of natural and agricultural resources according to interviewed women by age and residence (‘young’ is fifty-four years and younger, ‘old’ is fifty-five years and older) (n=43)

Table 6.12 presents the tasks that are carried out by either the woman or her husband. It seems that heavy or dangerous work, such as digging, handling pesticides, or working in the vineyard are more often carried out by the husbands. Women are more often involved in working in the garden or collecting herbs, berries, and mushrooms.

Although twenty-five women say that there is a division of labor regarding the natural and agricultural resources, it is not possible to say that a certain task is, in general, only performed by a man or a woman. In some households, the husband collects herbs, while in another household, this is a women’s job. In addition, there are households in which husband and wife do not have a division of labor and carry out the same tasks in the garden, vineyards or on the land. It is important to keep in mind that seven women from Mladogradi do not work at all in the garden or on the land, which is a division of labor in itself. Their husbands or relatives take care of these resources.

Besides labor divisions between women and their husband, three households hire a worker to dig their land. Two of them hire a manual worker and one household hires a private tractor driver or member of the cooperative. Furthermore, in four households the adult children, who do not live at home anymore, take care of the vineyard.
Table 6.12: Frequency of men’s and women’s tasks according to female interviewees ('young' is fifty-four years and younger, ‘old’ is fifty-five years and older) (n=43)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Men’s tasks</th>
<th>frequency</th>
<th>Women’s tasks</th>
<th>frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Digging</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>Working in the garden</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spraying pesticides</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Collecting herbs</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Working in the vineyard</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Collecting mushrooms</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pruning vines</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Collecting berries</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collecting firewood</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Doing easier work</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Working in the garden</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Weeding</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collecting herbs</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Sowing</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Irrigating the land</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Collecting chestnuts</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Driving the tractor</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Making cheese</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Working in the vineyards</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Tying up tomato plants</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

So far, I discussed who takes care of the land-based assets such as gardens, agricultural plots, and vineyards, and the related division of labor. In order to understand the management of natural and agricultural resources more fully, it is important to look at who makes the decisions concerning the use of these resources. I look in particular at the cultivation of gardens, land, and vineyards, since these resources are the most important in people’s everyday lives.

Table 6.13 shows that in Mladogradi, most women make decisions concerning the cultivation of their land together with their husbands. For example, Nikolina (60 years, Mladogradi) explains that they take the decisions together and do not have different opinions, because they do it together for many years now. In Ctara Djuna, the largest group consists of women who make these decisions alone. Many of them are widows.

The second largest groups in Mladogradi with five women each, are women whose parents (-in-law) (help) make decisions concerning their children’s land resources.
The five women whose parents (in-law) are the decision makers, are thirty years or younger. For example, Elana (30 years, Mladogradi) explains that she and her mother-in-law decide together on what to plant, because they have to eat not only in the summer, but also in the winter. Her mother in law decides when to harvest and which chemicals to use, because she is older and knows more. In the case of two women from Mladogradi, the husbands make the decisions concerning the natural and agricultural resources. Three women from Mladogradi make decisions alone concerning natural and agricultural resources. In two cases, the husbands make the decisions. Violeta (42 years, Mladogradi) explains that her husband decides, because he has a lot of agricultural knowledge and she has not.

In Ctara Djuna, the second largest group, with six women, is women who indicate that they make decisions concerning the garden and their husbands or adult children do so concerning the vineyard – supporting the idea that vineyards are a men’s domain and gardens a women’s domain. Dana (51 years, Ctara Djuna) explains that in the garden she makes the decisions, because she knows what she needs. In the vineyards, her husband makes the decisions. Adult children often make decisions concerning the vineyard when their mother (in law) is a widow. In five cases, women from Ctara Djuna, make decisions together with their husbands. In the case of three women, husbands alone make decisions concerning the natural and agricultural resources.

In sum, fifteen of the twenty-one women (71%) from Mladogradi are involved in decision-making concerning the use of natural and agricultural resources, alone or with a family member. The six women that are not involved are fifty year and younger and work
full-time. In Ctara Djuna, at least, eighteen of the twenty-two women (82%) are involved in decision-making. The three women who do not make decisions, say that their husbands have a better understanding of agriculture.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Mladogradi ‘Young’</th>
<th>Mladogradi ‘Old’</th>
<th>Ctara Djuna ‘Young’</th>
<th>Ctara Djuna ‘Old’</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>She</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Husband</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Together</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Separate</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parents (in-law)</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unknown</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 6.13: Who makes decisions concerning the garden, plots and vineyards by residence and age (‘young’ is fifty-four years and younger, ‘old’ is fifty-five years and older) (‘together’ = respondent and husband, ‘separate’ = respondent makes decisions concerning the garden and husband or children make decisions concerning the vineyard)(n=43)

6.7 Non-capitalist practices and natural and agricultural resources

As discussed in Chapter 2, non-capitalist practices play an important part in how people make ends meet in a post-communist context. It appears that natural and agricultural resources play a large role in these practices in rural areas. This section discusses two non-capitalist practices, namely the exchange of products and subsistence agriculture. Both practices are common among the interviewed women. This supports the claim that multiple economies exist and that capitalism is not the only organizer of social and economic life (Gibson-Graham 1996, Pavlovskaya 2004).
6.7.1 Exchange of products

The exchange of products is very common among the interviewed women (94%). Goods most often exchanged are produce, home preserved vegetables and fruits, meat, eggs, milk and cheese, and to a lesser extent, seeds and clothes. Labor is exchanged, although less frequently. The respondents often have several simultaneous exchange relationships with different people, including neighbors, friends, villagers, relatives, parents, adult children who do not live at home, and traders. These relationships include exchanging goods between people (reciprocal), only receiving goods from certain people, or only giving goods to certain people (see Table 6.14). The exchange of products is not a new phenomenon and took place before and during the communist period.

Three respondents from Mladogradi do not receive, give, or exchange goods. Rosa (45 years, Mladogradi) says that she and her family do not exchange products, but she does acknowledge that they steal from other people’s gardens. Nadezdha (28 years, Mladogradi) does not have anything to exchange. Elena (30 years, Mladogradi) was not able to give a reason why she did not exchange goods.

Five respondents from Mladogradi only receive products. Atanaska (28 years), Petia (30 years), Elka (28 years), and Ivanka (23 years), all thirty years or younger, only receive goods, such as produce, eggs or meat, mainly from parents or parents-in-law. Ekatarina (77 years) lives together with her husband and receives produce, such as peppers, if she needs something from the neighbors who are also relatives. She says that they do not return anything, because the neighbors have everything they need. Two women only give products away. Anetka (26 years, Mladogradi) gives food, money,
clothes, and a great number of other things to relatives. They do not receive anything in return. Yana (56 years, Mladogradi) gives vegetables, meat, eggs, milk, and cheese to her children. The children do not give anything to their parents in return. Yana, however, adds: “we do not need it now, but we will need their help when we are old.”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Respondents</th>
<th>Type of exchange</th>
<th>Kind and frequency of relationship</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5 respondents receive from:</td>
<td>←</td>
<td>relatives (1) parents (4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 respondents give to:</td>
<td>→</td>
<td>relatives (1) children (1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>32 respondents exchange with:</td>
<td>↔</td>
<td>Neighbors, friends and villagers (30) traders (1) relatives (10) parents (3) children (16)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 respondents exchange with and give to or receive from:</td>
<td>↔</td>
<td>Neighbors, friends, and villagers (8) relatives (1) children (1) children (7)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 respondents do not exchange</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 6.14: Type and frequency of exchange relationships (n=50)

Forty women are involved in exchanging products. It is possible to divide these exchange relationships into three different kinds of exchanges. First, there is the exchange among family members (parents, children and other relatives), especially
between parents and their children who have moved out of the house and started their own families. Secondly, there is the exchange between neighbors, friends, and villagers (these categories are not exclusive). Thirdly, there is the exchange of products in large quantities with traders that come to the village.

Thirty-two respondents are only involved in the reciprocal exchange of products, mainly with neighbors, friends, and villagers, and with their children. A respondent can have several exchange relationships at the same time. Boyka (56 years, Mladogradi), for example, exchanges products with her neighbors and daughters. She says that it has always been like this. Sometimes they give something to the neighbors and after a couple of days the neighbors give something back, but there is no formal agreement. They exchange meat, sweetened pumpkins, peanuts, and other products. Boyka has the same arrangement with her daughters. Her children always help, including the sons- in-laws who bring and chop firewood for her.

Seven respondents exchange products with some people and give products to other people. Margarita (63 years, Ctara Djuna) exchanges mainly agricultural products with someone who also has a surplus of a certain good. Margarita explains that she is part of group of six women, who meet everyday in one of their houses to talk and drink. She exchanges products mainly with these women. She also gives many products to her children. She says: “We feed the cities. The children come, open the car, get the products, and go.” Another example is given by Tatiania (62 years, Ctara Djuna). She and her husband give fresh produce and home preserved products to their children in Sofia and also exchange with friends in the village. Their children do not give many products to them in return, but sometimes they receive some chocolate. Tatiania explains that life in
Sofia is difficult. They send packages with products to the children twice a month. It appears that the countryside subsidizes the city.

One respondent is involved in the exchange of products and receives products. Yordanka (79 years, Ctara Djuna) exchanges agricultural products and banitsa (savory pastry) with friends. Her children only bring food products and goods to her and do not take anything with them. One respondent mentioned that her household exchanges products with traders. Violeta (44 years, Mladogradi) exchanges, for example, 200 kilograms of grapes for 200 kilograms of potatoes with traders from North Bulgaria or from Bansko (a small town at the other side of the Pirin mountains).

It appears that younger women more often only receive produce and other products, especially from parents. Twenty-five women have an exchange relationship with their adult children, who do not live at home anymore. Three women from Mladogradi and five from Ctara Djuna only give produce and products to their children. Three women from Mladogradi and thirteen women from Ctara Djuna exchange products with their adult children. One woman from Ctara Djuna only receives products from her children. More women from Ctara Djuna are engaged in an exchange relationship with their children than compared to women from Mladogradi. This is not surprising, since more women from Ctara Djuna have adult children.

Thirty-eight women are involved in a reciprocal exchange relationship with friends, neighbors, or villagers. Seventeen women are from Mladogradi and twenty-one women are from Ctara Djuna. This is the most common exchange relationship. In Ctara Djuna, I noticed and was told that most women are part of an informal group. Most of the interviewed women mentioned that they frequently meet with other women from the
village to talk, knit, and sometimes to drink some wine or rakia. They will meet in the home of one of the women. Alternatively, when the weather is nice they will sit outside (see Figure 6.8). Walking through Ctara Djuna on a nice fall afternoon, I met different groups of women ranging in size from three to more than ten. These networks are also used for the exchange of agricultural products. If one has a surplus of a certain product, for example tomatoes, they will be given to someone who does not yet have tomatoes and a different product will be returned. It is not clear if these same group dynamics exist in Mladogradi.

Figure 6.8: Women enjoying nice fall weather in Ctara Djuna (photograph taken by author, November 2003)


6.7.2 Subsistence agriculture

The vast majority of interviewed women from Mladogradi and all interviewed women from Ctara Djuna cultivate land as discussed in section 6.6. Most women and their households engage in subsistence farming. The harvest is for household consumption or exchanged and given to, among others, children and neighbors. All these women grow vegetables. Some women who do not cultivate land receive vegetables from parents and parents-in-law. As a result, twenty-six of the twenty-eight women (93%) from Mladogradi and all twenty-two women (100%) from Ctara Djuna do not buy vegetables from stores or only buy some from stores if they are preserving vegetables for the winter months or when they do not have enough full grown crops. Most households are, thus, fairly self-reliant with regard to vegetables.

Commercial farming is rare. No one in Ctara Djuna or Mladogradi is a full-time commercial farmer. In the past, many people sold produce and homemade products as discussed before. The sale of the products to the agricultural cooperatives formed a substantial part of the domestic supply of vegetables and other agricultural products.

Today, the farming activities are more subsistence oriented. Only a few households sell some of their produce or homemade products. Six households from Mladogradi sell produce or animals. Tobacco is one of the crops that are grown with the purpose to sell it. Prices of tobacco have declined in the last couple of years and so have the number of people who cultivate it. People receive about BGN 2 per kilogram of tobacco. Radka (30 years, Mladogradi) and her extended family frequently sell lettuce, tobacco, and peanuts to traders who visit the village. Elena (30 years, Mladogradi) works on her father-in-law’s tobacco field. Her father-in-law sells the tobacco and she receives a
part of the profit. Lyudmila (69 years, Mladogradi) and her husband grow tobacco on 1
dekare of land and sell the dried tobacco leaves. Boyka (56 years, Mladogradi) also
grows and sells tobacco. Stanislava (38 years, Mladogradi) and her family have two pigs
and each year they sell piglets to other villagers. Stoyanka (67 years, Mladogradi) sells
peanuts to supplement her meager pension benefits.

Five households from Ctara Djuna sell grapes or wine. Margarita (63 years),
Katya (74 years), and Danka (75 years) sell grapes. Most of the grapes are sold to wine
producers. The money they receive for their grapes varies dramatically based on quality,
supply and demand. Dana (51 years) sells wine, rakia, and grapes to private persons.
Svetlana (55 years) also sells wine. The money received by these households is a
supplement to the household income. None of the women is entirely depended on the sale
of produce or products as the household income source.

6.7.3 Conclusion: non-capitalist practices and natural and agricultural resources

The women from Ctara Djuna and Mladogradi make use of capitalist and non-
capitalist practices to make a living. Cash income is derived from pension benefits and
formal paid labor, although in many instances part of the salary is paid under the table. In
addition to cash income, women and their households supplement the household income
and lower expenses with several non-capitalist practices, i.e., subsistence farming,
gathering of wood, herbs, and berries, and reciprocal exchange systems.

The majority of women and their households are involved in subsistence farming.
Vegetables, fruits, and other crops are produced on small agricultural plots. The majority
of women also keep livestock. Furthermore, some women collect wood, herbs, and
berries, especially women from Ctara Djuna. Many are involved in a reciprocal exchange system. Produce and homemade products are exchanged with neighbors, friends, villagers, family members and to a far lesser extent with traders. Women exchange products they have in surplus for products that they need in an informal way. Children often receive produce and homemade products from their parents. They do not always give something back in return. The sale of produce and homemade products is rare.

These non-capitalist practices are not just a response to recent difficulties brought by the transition processes. These practices have a long-standing tradition in Bulgaria. Subsistence farming and reciprocal exchange have been part of rural livelihoods for a long time and have continued through the communist period. However, many rural people also cultivated crops with the purpose to sell during the communist period. This is no longer the case and farming has therefore become more subsistence oriented. The practice of gathering wood, berries, and herbs appears to be less common today, especially among women from Mladogradi. During the communist time, more people had the time and transportation to engage in this activity.

The role of agricultural and natural resources, in particular land, is very important in rural women’s livelihoods. Subsistence farming, exchanging goods, and gathering wood, berries, and herbs, are practices that supplement rural household incomes and critical to their lives. The relative importance of these non-capitalist practices has increased for many households, especially for retirees, since the cash income of many households has decreased. Although there are no clear gendered patterns with regard to access and use of natural and agricultural resources, women remain responsible for domestic duties, including food preparation. In order to fulfill this responsibility partly,
rural women rely on natural and agricultural resources for subsistence farming, the exchange of goods, and to a lesser extent gathering wood, herbs, and berries.

6.8 Everyday life and livelihoods: similarities, differences, and changes

In the previous sections, I gave a descriptive overview of the differences, similarities, and changes in rural women’s livelihoods and everyday life with regard to labor opportunities, labor burden, empowerment, access to, use of, and dependence on natural and agricultural resources, and non-capitalist practices. Here, I synthesize these findings, to reveal to what degree the experience of transition differs among the interviewed women and why (see Tables.6.15-6.19).

Together, these tables provide answers to the first three research questions, i.e.,

(1) How does transition influence rural women’s labor opportunities, labor burden, empowerment, and access to, dependence on, and use of natural resources? Have these facets of rural women’s livelihoods increased or decreased? Hence, how are these connected?

(2) Do all rural women experience the transition in the same way? If not, how and why do rural women experience the transition differently, with regard to the above issues?

(3) Are non-capitalist practices becoming more or less important for rural women’s everyday lives and survival? And what is the role of natural resources in these practices? In section 6.9, I integrate the findings from Chapter 5 on uneven development with the findings from this section to answer the fourth and final research question, i.e.

How does uneven local development play out in rural women’s livelihoods?
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Labor opportunities</th>
<th>Change:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Jobs in agricultural cooperatives and state factories are lost.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• In Mladogradi, new jobs are found in (textile) factories and private businesses. Government jobs remained.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• In Ctara Djuna, no labor opportunities are available.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• The economic diversification remained low, which is reflected in the kind of jobs available.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Women working in factories are paid relatively well.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• For retirees the pension benefits have declined and are low.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Similarities among women:</td>
<td>Women are employed in jobs that do not require qualifications.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Differences between women:</td>
<td>Women employed in private stores are younger than forty years.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Roma women are more likely to be unemployed or have more difficulties finding a job.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Retirees have a very low cash income.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Variables that influence rural women’s livelihoods and transition experiences regarding labor opportunities are ‘age’, and ‘ethnicity’.

Table 6.15: Changes, similarities, and differences in rural women’s livelihoods and transition experiences in Mladogradi and Ctara Djuna: Labor opportunities.

This study suggests that the transition processes in Bulgaria have drastically altered rural women’s labor opportunities (see Table 6.15). Women no longer find jobs in agricultural cooperatives and state factories, but in privately owned businesses and factories. It appears that younger women are more likely to be employed in private stores, and that Roma women have more difficulties finding a job than Bulgarian women. Most of the jobs in this rural area do not require higher education and consequently women with different education levels are found in the same kinds of positions.

This situation is economically problematic for women in several respects. First, due to the low economic diversification in the area there are not many career
opportunities for women. Second, many jobs available to women in this area are in the factories. Since many of these factories work according to the OPT principle (‘Outward Processing Trade’, see 4.2), there is a change that these factories close down when cheaper labor can be found in another area, which means a loss of jobs for a given rural place.

A more general problem are villages such as Vinogradi, which lack any viable economic base. Their populations consist of pensioners, and numbers are in decline. These retirees depend on low government pension benefits for their cash income, which hurts their purchasing power and sales in local stores. Although the ageing and depopulation of such villages cannot be blamed on the transition alone, this issue is negatively impacting regional economies and the rural landscape.

In sum, rural women’s labor opportunities in Bulgaria increasingly depend on the influx of foreign investment (which is needed in many cases to set up a factory) and on privately owned small-scale businesses. As demonstrated in this study, factories are located only in certain areas, such as Mladogradi, while other areas, such as Ctara Djuna, are becoming more economically marginalized. Labor opportunities are available for all women, although there is little diversity in the kind of jobs available.
Labor burden

**Change:**
- Women were the principle caregivers in the household and full-time employed, resulting in a high labor burden.
- Childcare facilities disappeared.
- Women’s labor burden did not decrease after 1989.
- Labor burden for factory women and women working in private stores increased.
- Women have more difficulties combining childcare and a formal job.

**Similarities among women:**
- Women take care of housework and to a lesser extent work in the garden or on the agricultural plots.

**Differences between women:**
- Younger women take care of children,
- Retired women work more frequently in the garden or on the land.
- Women working in stores work long hours.
- Women working in the factories face long and irregular hours.

Variables that influence rural women’s livelihoods and transition experiences regarding labor burden are ‘age’ and ‘employment status,’ and ‘type of job.’

Table 6.16: Changes, similarities, and differences in rural women’s livelihoods and transition experiences in Mladogradi and Ctara Djuna: Labor burden.

The transition has impacted rural women’s labor burden in several ways (see Table 6.16). First, many Bulgarian women worked full time before 1989, but they had access to facilities that made it easier to combine childcare and a formal job. In contrast, these services are less available today, making it more difficult to combine childcare, housework with a full time job. Second, the labor burden of women working in private stores and in the textile industry has increased, due to long—and in the case of factories, irregular—hours, while domestic responsibilities remain the same. This problem is unlikely to be resolved, since in many cases work regulations are not strictly enforced in
the factories because local economies are so highly depended on the employment they provide. Third, many female retirees rely on subsistence agriculture to supplement their cash incomes. This activity is important since their pension benefits are meager. It is not possible to say that rural retirees would not spend the same amount of time in the fields if their pension benefits would be higher. However, there is little doubt that this activity is more important when cash incomes are low. Fourth, an aspect of the labor burden that did not change after the transition is that the majority of rural women remain responsible for housework and childcare and thus the double labor burden has not only remained, but intensified.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Empowerment</th>
<th>Change:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Communist government increased women’s political participation, although superficially.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Patriarchal structures remained intact, but household power relations are more differentiated.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Labor union activities are discouraged in many foreign owned factories.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Women’s empowerment in terms of membership of an organization has dramatically decreased among all women.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Similarities among women:**
- Most women consider their husband ‘head of the household.’
- Most women are in control of the household finances and make decision regarding buying new consumer durables, either alone or together with their husbands.
- Membership of an organization is low among women.

**Differences between women:**
- Most women, who are 30 years or younger, are in control of household finances alone.
- Only a few women from Mladogradi are members of an organization.

Variables that influence rural women’s livelihoods and transition experiences regarding empowerment are ‘age’ and ‘residence.’

| Table 6.17: Changes, similarities, and differences in rural women’s livelihoods and transition experiences in Mladogradi and Ctara Djuna: Empowerment |

This study shows that, notwithstanding communist edicts of gender equality, patriarchy still seems to be an important social structure in Bulgaria (see Table 6.17). Patriarchy, however, does not always translate into minimal power for women in the household, especially with regard to household finances and decision-making power concerning the acquisition of consumer durables. What has changed is that the transition seems to have impacted rural women’s political participation as women’s current participation in organizations has declined significantly (although many observers argue
that political participation during the communist period was rather artificial). Also
important to note is that in many factories unionization is discouraged. Women from
Ctara Djuna are not members of any organizations, so besides economic marginalization
Ctara Djuna also experiences a political marginalization – even the mayor is not elected
by the citizens of Ctara Djuna. In Mladogradi, there are few women who are members of
an organization. Overall, rural women’s participation in an organization, either political
or otherwise, is low, which results in a minimal say in important issues that are discussed
outside the household.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Change:</th>
<th></th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Most villagers used to cultivate 2 to 5 dekares of land.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Many villagers grew crops commercially and for subsistence.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Access to land changed in that women and their households now own</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>or rent land instead of being allowed by the state to use land.</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Many households experienced a decrease in cash income, so</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>subsistence agriculture has become an important supplement to the</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>household income.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Fewer women and their households gather wood, berries, and herbs</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>around the villages or in the mountains than in the past.</td>
<td></td>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Similarities among women:</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• The majority of women from Mladogradi and all women from Ctara</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Djuna have access to land.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• The majority of women, who own land, leave land fallow</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Women and their households farm for subsistence purposes.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Most women and their households are fully or partly self-subsistent</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>with regard to vegetables and fruits, supplemented in many cases</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>with products from livestock.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• A division of labor exists, when working on the land or in the</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>garden and vineyard, for a majority of women from Ctara Djuna and</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>almost half of the women from Mladogradi.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Decisions regarding the management of land are taken most often by</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>the women alone or with a family member.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Differences between women:</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Younger women have less access to land.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Pensioners are more dependent on natural and agricultural resources.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• More women from Ctara Djuna than from Mladogradi collect herbs,</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>berries, and firewood.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Many women from Ctara Djuna take care of land resources together</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>with their husband.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• For younger women, it is common that parents or parents-in-law take</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>care of garden and agricultural plots.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Women with a full-time job often spend little no time working on the</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>land and are less involved in related decision-making process.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Variables that influence rural women’s livelihoods and transition experiences regarding natural and agricultural resources are ‘age,’ ‘employment status,’ ‘cash income,’ and ‘residence.’

Table 6.18: Changes, similarities, and differences in rural women’s livelihoods and transition experiences in Mladogradi and Ctara Djuna: Access, use, and dependence on natural and agricultural resources.
The transition has impacted rural women’s access to, use of, and dependence on agricultural and natural resources in several ways (Table 6.18). First, access to land changed in that women and their households now own or rent land instead of being allowed by the state to use land ‘freely.’ Second, rural women and their households currently produce less for the market than they did before 1989 due to low agricultural prices. Third, more land is left fallow due, again, to low agricultural prices, as well as to a mismatch between land availability and ownership patterns, and to the high price of inputs (e.g., pesticides, fertilizers, and water). Fourth, many households have experienced a decrease in real cash income in the last decade, so subsistence agriculture has become an important supplement to the household income. Finally, fewer women and their households gather wood, berries, and herbs around the villages or in the mountains than in the past due to a lack of transportation and/or time.

Agricultural land and natural resource use shows some degree of gendered labor division, i.e., some tasks are more often performed by men, such as working in the vineyard or spraying pesticides, and others by women, such as working in the garden or weeding. This said, most decisions regarding the management of natural resources are made by women alone or in consultation with their husbands.

Rural women’s access to, use of, and dependence on natural resources varies within the sample in a number of respects. First, younger women generally have less access to land. Reasons for this may be that younger women have not received land in the land restitution process or that younger women are less interested in agricultural pursuits (given that the cost of involvement through land rental is relatively low). Second, pensioners, who have a low income, are more dependent on natural and agricultural
resources, particularly subsistence farming, than households who have a higher cash income and thus are more able to buy food. Third, more women from Ctara Djuna than from Mladogradi collect herbs, berries, and firewood. An explanation might be that these resources are more abundant in and around Ctara Djuna. Furthermore, most women from Ctara Djuna are retired and have more time for these activities. Finally, in the case of younger women, it is common that parents (in-law) take care of their children’s land, because younger women have less time than their (retired) parents to work in the garden and fields. Related to this finding is that women with a full-time job often spend little or no time working on the land and are less involved in related decision-making processes.
Table 6.19: Changes, similarities, and differences in rural women’s livelihoods and transition experiences in Mладогради and Ctara Djuna: Non-capitalist practices

The transition has impacted rural women’s involvement in non-capitalist practices in several ways (see Table 6.19). First, farming has become more subsistence-oriented and, second, collecting wood, berries, and herbs is less popular than in the past. These issues have been discussed above, but it is important to add that all women who have access to a garden or land do in fact engage in subsistence farming. Subsistence farming is a very common practice in rural areas of Bulgaria and has been for a long time.

Younger women have less access to land and thus engage less in subsistence farming, but they often benefit indirectly from their parents’ involvement in subsistence farming. This
leads us to the next finding: rural women’s involvement in systems of reciprocal
exchange. The majority of women exchange produce, homemade goods and other items
with villagers, friends, relatives, children, and neighbors. Women from Ctara Djuna are
more likely to engage in exchange with their children than women from Mladogradi,
since these women are older and often have children living on their own.

6.9 Conclusion: unique transitions

According to my research, the transition in Bulgaria has influenced rural women’s
livelihoods in Mladogradi and Ctara Djuna. The general trends and broader patterns are
that rural women no longer find labor opportunities in state factories or agricultural
cooperatives, but in textile factories and private businesses in Mladogradi. The variety of
jobs is still limited. Women over fifty-five depend on government pension benefits for
the vast majority of their cash income. The labor burden has increased for working
women, especially those with children and those who work long and irregular hours.
Changes in rural women’s empowerment are not straightforward. Political participation
has decreased as has their participation in other organizations. Men are considered the
‘head of the household,’ but women’s actual power in the household is more subtle.
Natural resources still play an important role in many rural women’s livelihoods. Access
to land and subsistence farming continued after the 1989, although commercial farming
has almost disappeared. Due to declining real incomes, especially of retirees, the
dependence on land through subsistence farming appears to have increased. Other natural
resources, such as herbs, wood, and berries, play a less important role today, especially
for women from Mladogradi. The management of natural and agricultural resources has a gender dimension, but not in all rural women’s livelihoods. When the management of these resources is gendered, vineyards are more likely to be a man’s domain and gardens a woman’s domain, although it is not possible to generalize.

When looking at a more individual level, it is clear that rural women in Mladogradi and Ctara Djuna experience the changes in livelihoods differently. Factors such as age/life cycle, employment status, income, kind of job, ethnicity, and residence play a role as shown in Tables 6.15-19, although less so with regard to empowerment than to other aspects of rural livelihoods. In many cases, these factors are interrelated. For example, the age of woman affects her employment status and her cash income—as in the case of women above the age of fifty-five, who are retired. Furthermore, in my research, age and residence are related as all women in my sample from Ctara Djuna are older than fifty years and mostly retired.

Women’s transition experiences are not easily put into categories, but it seems that several general observations can be made. First, age or life cycle appears to play a significant role in understanding a given woman’s livelihood trajectory since transition. This is partly because employment status divides women with formal employment from women who are not employed, i.e., pensioners and the unemployed. Employment status affects cash income, labor burden, dependence on subsistence farming and exchange systems. Of course, there are also differences between employed women. Women working in factories have different experiences than women working in private stores or for the local government, especially in terms of work regimes.
Furthermore, age or life cycle makes a difference in terms of the role of children in rural women’s livelihoods. Women with young children often stay home, although maternity benefits are low, because combining childcare and full-time employment is difficult. Even when children have left the house, women and their husbands continue to support their children financially and in-kind. These roles may reverse when children are in a position to support their parents. Age and life cycle thus also affects the kind of exchange relations rural women have.

A second observation is that ethnicity seems to play a role in rural women’s livelihoods and transition experiences, although caution is necessary here, since the number of Roma women in my sample is very low. Ethnicity seems to make a particular difference with regard to labor opportunities, in that Roma women experience more difficulties finding or holding a job. Being unemployed affects the cash income and makes the transition even more difficult. With regard to the other aspects of rural women’s livelihoods, ethnicity did not seem to play a significant role.

A third observation, although at a different scale, is that the uneven nature of local development plays a key role in rural women’s livelihoods. By combining the insights from Chapter 5 and this chapter, we see that two different villages have been produced by local uneven development in terms of demography and economic development. Ctara Djuna is left behind in the transition to a market economy and is becoming more and more marginalized, since it has an ageing population and no economic opportunities. Mladogradi is better able to benefit from the opportunities offered by the transition, since it has a younger population and plenty of job opportunities now. The livelihoods of the interviewed women in these villages reflect these differences. The livelihoods of women
from Ctara Djuna are more uniform as most women are retired and depend greatly on natural and agricultural resources. Women’s livelihoods in Mladogradi are more diverse as some women have a formal job and others are retired. Some women, especially those with a low cash income, use and depend more on natural and agricultural resources.
CHAPTER 7

TRANSITION NARRATIVES

7.1 Introduction

I present the narratives of four women highlighting the multiple dimensions and dynamics of rural livelihoods in southwest Bulgaria. These narratives illustrate the similarities and differences in rural women’s livelihoods, by introducing us to specific women’s lived experiences in the two research villages. I chose specifically to report the narratives of Lilyana, Ivanka, Evdokiya, and Vanya, because they are in different stages of their life, have different income sources and live in different family situations. Hence, together they represent a variety in livelihoods and transition experiences. Their narratives are drawn from the semi-structured interviews I conducted with them in October and November 2003. The names in this chapter are pseudonyms given to respondents in order to ensure their anonymity.
7.2 Lilyana

Lilyana is a forty-four year old, married Bulgarian. She was born in Mladogradi (the larger village with the factories) and still lives here. She has a degree in geodetics. Her household consists of two members; – herself and her husband Emil. Emil is forty-five years old and was also born in Mladogradi. They live on the second floor of a house located in the middle of the village. Her seventy-two year old father-in-law, who is ill, lives in the apartment on the first floor. Her father-in-law is seventy-two years old and ill. Lilyana and Emil have two daughters; one daughter is married and the second daughter studies in Svishtov – a city at the other side of the country.

Lilyana is employed as a surveyor/geodetic scientist with the local government of Mladogradi. She has held the same job since 1978. Finding this job was not difficult, because not many people at that time had a degree in geodetics. She says that it would be more difficult to find a similar job today, since more people now have the same qualifications. Although she has had the same job now for twenty-five years, the continuation of her job depends on the mayor, who can make staff changes after an election. For one month in 1993, she got a second job as a seamstress to supplement her income, because her salary was not even enough to buy two loafs of bread a day, due to the high inflation. In the past she also worked on the land they own in the evenings, but she stopped doing this a few years ago, because the agricultural prices were too low.

Emil was trained as a mechanic in high school. He worked as a mechanic in a factory from 1978 until the early 1990s when the factory was closed. Since then, he has worked as a bodyguard, a mechanic in a Greek factory, and for a short time in Greece.
His current employer is a private Greek factory in Mladogradi where he has worked as a carpenter for a year and a half. He says that at this moment it is not very easy to find a job. Fortunately, he knew some people who helped him to get his current job. He would like to have a second job, because he thinks that the family does not have enough money. Emil sent an application form and a fee to a company that promised to find jobs for Bulgarians in the Netherlands. He never heard back from them.

Every week, Lilyana works forty hours a week as a surveyor and sometimes more. In addition to her formal job, she spends two to three hours a day doing household work. In spring and summer, she works at least one hour a day in their vineyard or garden, where they grow vegetables. Her husband works forty hours a week in the factory. He rarely does any household work, although he makes repairs in and around the house and cleans the house when Lilyana is visiting relatives. He also works in the garden and in their vineyard. This work is very seasonal; sometimes he works in the garden or vineyard for a full day and sometimes only for an hour. He also chops the wood they buy to heat the house in the winter.

Lilyana says that they have little money and a large part of the money that they earn – was and still is – spent on the children. Emil earns BGN 200 (about $120 in October 2003) per month. It is not clear how much Lilyana earns. The children’s education was and is considered very important. “I will starve to pay for my children’s education,” Lilyana says. Every two weeks, she sends her youngest daughter BGN 110 (about $66 in October 2003) to support her studies. They do not always have the money to buy or repair consumer durables. For instance, their washing machine is broken, but they cannot afford to buy a new one. They had savings, but they spent it all on their
oldest daughter’s wedding. In the last 14 years, they have tried to save money on grocery shopping and utility use. For example, they only buy the minimum such as bread, eggs, cheese, milk, and sometimes meat. Emil says: “I did not go to a restaurant in the last ten years.” They are cutting down on their utility bills by putting 20 plastic bottles filled with water on the balcony, so the sun can warm up the water, which is then used for bathing. The only improvement they made in the house in the last 14 years was installing a modern bathroom. Emil adds: “I was more content before 1989. The fridge was always full and we could go wherever we wanted. We were able to afford a car in those days.”

Lilyana considers her husband ‘the head of the household.’ Emil also says that he is the head of the household. He adds, however (hesitantly) that in principle ‘the head of the household’ is the person who earns the most money. It seems that Lilyana receives the highest salary. They are both in control of the household finances, although Emil says that there is not a lot of money to control. They spent almost all the money every month. Lilyana often makes the decision whether or not to make a big purchase, because she has a fixed monthly salary and can buy products on credit.

At the moment Lilyana is not a member of any organization. She used to be a member of the Communist Party, although she was not an active member and participated only twice a year in a political event. Her husband also was a member of the Communist Party. “As a member you were supposed to receive privileges, but I never received any” he says. He only worked and never went to meetings organized by the Communist Party.

They have about 50 dekares of land in 5 different plots, which they received during the land restitution after 1989. It takes about 30 minutes to walk from Lilyana’s
house to the land. They left the land fallow this year. Until last year, they cultivated wheat, but they stopped doing so, because it was not possible to make a profit with the current low agricultural prices. They also have a vineyard. In their garden of 0.2 dekares, they grow vegetables and have fruit trees. To irrigate vegetable crops they use tap water, which is very expensive. They tried to drill for water, but unfortunately, there is no water beneath their garden. The central irrigation system that existed in Slave before 1989 does not work anymore, so they have to rely on tap water. They also have thirteen chickens. They do not sell the chickens or the eggs.

They both take care of the garden, vineyard, and livestock. Lilyana says that they do not have specific tasks when they work in the garden or vineyard. Emil adds that he mainly does the digging and Lilyana does the planting. Together they make decisions about the garden and vineyard. Emil says: “We do this already for many years, so we know how it works and what needs to be done.” They eat produce from their garden almost every day, especially in the summer. Parts of the fruits and vegetables are conserved in jars for the winter. When they had a car they went into the mountains to collect herbs and berries, but now without a car they no longer do so.

Lilyana exchanges produce with neighbors, her brother, and other relatives. For example, if her neighbor has beans and she has not, they will exchange. When her brother repaired the boiler in the house, she did not pay him but gave him some produce in return. She used to give wheat to her aunt in return for eggs. Her husband adds that sometimes they also exchange produce for money, although this depends on the price.
7.3 Ivanka

Ivanka is a twenty-three year old Bulgarian and married. She was born in Sandanski and now lives in Mladogradi. She finished high school with a gymnasium diploma. She also took courses in manicure and pedicure in Blagoevgrad (a large town one hour away by car). Her household consists of four members; herself, her husband, a five year old son, and a two year old son. Her husband is twenty-six years old and works at a gas station. Her oldest son goes to kindergarten. At the moment she is on maternity leave (which can last up to three years in Bulgaria), but otherwise she works as a seamstress. When she works as a seamstress she receives a monthly salary. Right now, she receives maternity benefits from the government. It was not difficult for her to find a job as a seamstress, because there are many textile factories in Mladogradi. Ivanka adds: “If you want something else, not in a factory, it is difficult.” Everyday she spends one hour doing household chores. Taking care of her youngest son is a full time job. Almost everyday, Ivanka meets with friends for a cup of coffee.

Ivanka considers her husband the head of the household, but she does not know why. At the moment she is not a member of an organization and she has not been a member of an organization in the past. She tells that she is in control of the household finances, although they have both access to the money. “We are reasonable spenders,” she says. They do not try to save on utilities. Since she started a household, they had to delay buying consumer durables. They do not have any savings. She makes most of the decisions about how the money is spent since she stays home. Her husband, however, makes the decisions if cars are concerned, because he is the one who drives.
Ivanka and her household do not own or rent any land or have livestock. When they go on a holiday, they sometimes collect berries and herbs. Her parents and parents-in-law, however, have land and livestock. She receives produce, meat, and eggs from both her parents and parents-in-law. Every day Ivanka and her family eat something that they received from them. She buys everything else in the store. Ivanka says: “If we would not receive produce and other products from our parents and parents-in-law, it would not be that bad. We could buy these items in the store, but our parents and parents-in-law have a lot of surplus, so we eat it.”

7.4 Evdokiya

Evdokiya is a seventy-six year old widow and lives in Mladogradi. She is Bulgarian, although she was born in northern Greece. She left Greece in 1927 for Bulgaria, just after she was born. She went to elementary school until she was fourteen years old. After school she started working on the land that was privately owned at that time. When the land was collectivized in 1951, she became an employee for the agricultural cooperative. She began as an agricultural worker, taking care of tobacco plants and corn. In 1975 she became a ‘cow woman,’ taking care of the cooperative’s cows after her doctor suggested to her to take a job that was physically less strenuous. She worked for the cooperative for 30 years and 10 months. Evdokiya retired in 1982.

Evdokiya says that she receives the highest possible pension benefits, namely BGN 150 (about $90 in October 2003). She explains that the pension benefits depend on the job that you had and the salary you received. Now she receives her husband’s pension.
benefits, because her husband received higher benefits, since he was a miner. Although she receives the highest pension possible, her children help her out with big expenses, such as fuel wood for the winter and dental cost.

Everyday, Evdokiya works in her garden for one to two hours. She also has a small plot of land on which she works once or twice a week for a short time. It takes her about fifteen minutes to get to this plot by cart and donkey. She spends two hours everyday doing housework. She also helps in the vineyard of her sons. She says she also knits and reads the newspaper. In the last 14 years she was not able to make big purchases, but her family bought her a TV, pots and pans, and kitchen appliances. “I cannot complain,” she says. She does not have any savings. Her husband was ill for 18 years. He had an accident in a mine. She had to run the household alone and was not able to save money. Every month she tries to save BGN 5 to 10 to buy wood for the winter. She only buys small quantities of food. She saves electricity by cooking with wood.

Evdokiya is not a member of an organization at the moment, although she has been prior to 1999. That organization tried to help women and people in general by improving the situation in the village, with regard to shops, water sources, medical center, kindergarten, bakery, and the municipal hall. Several men and women were members of this organization. They held meetings once a week or twice a month, more or less when needed. She was the chair for one year. They also organized social events for women with singing, knitting, and dancing. When she was employed, she was automatically a member of the agricultural cooperative. Besides working, the cooperative did not have any specific activities, although two or three times a year members of the cooperative participated in activities to improve the conditions in the village.
Evdokiya has a garden at home of 0.2 dekare and 0.2 dekare of land on which she grows vegetables and fruits. She uses ‘old water’ to irrigate her land (there are several free public water sources in the village that were drilled during the communist period and are referred to as ‘old water’). She is also entitled to one-eighth of 32 dekares of land – the inheritance to her and her seven siblings. The land has been returned to the family, but they have not legally divided the land among the siblings. They do not quarrel about it, because no one wants to cultivate the land. She had a goat, but a wolf killed the goat recently. She exchanges products, especially produce. If she has a surplus, she gives it to someone who needs it. “You need to help other people,” she says. She exchanges mainly with her neighbors. For example, she gives peppers to the neighbors and they give her some corn in return. Except for most of the vegetables, she buys everything she needs in the store. In summer, she eats fresh produce from her garden and subsistence plot. She conserves part of the produce for the winter. In autumn and winter, she also buys fresh produce from the store.

7.5 Vanya

Vanya is a fifty-eight year old Bulgarian woman from Ctara Djuna. She was born in Levounovo; a village in the Sandanski region. In high school, she specialized in architecture and received her diploma in 1965. Her household consists of two members; herself and her husband. Her husband is sixty-one years old and has been retired since 1997 or 1998. He says he feels very old. “When one retires, life is over in Bulgaria,” he says. Vanya retired in 2001.
They lived in Blagoevgrad for thirty years and recently moved back to Ctara Djuna. Vanya is not used to living in the village. When she comes back from a trip to the city, she says she feels very depressed. They moved to Blagoevgrad, however, because they had to think about their children’s education. They came back to Ctara Djuna to give the young family of one of their sons more space in the apartment they shared and also to live more calmly in the village. During the winter, however, they go back to Blagoevgrad to live with their son.

Vanya worked in a factory that assembled communication technology in Blagoevgrad for seventeen years. She also worked in the municipality hall of Melnik as an accountant for thirteen years. She did not have a difficult time finding these jobs, because there was enough work. These days she does household chores for three to four hours daily. She works in the garden for about one hour every day, although more in the summer. She also knits.

In the last fourteen years, they did not make big purchases, because they already had everything they needed. In the village there is no opportunity to spend money on entertainment. They do not have savings. They try to save on utility use, but they do not deprive themselves. They sometimes cook on wood and sometimes on electricity. In the last fourteen years, they did not change their shopping or eating pattern.

Vanya is not a member of an organization, but she supports the Bulgarian Socialist Party. She used to be a member of the Communist Party, of which she was the secretary in the factory where she worked. When asked who the head of the household is, Vanya says: “My husband is the head, I am the neck, so both of us.” They are married for
35 years and get along very well. Vanya is in control of household finances, because she does the shopping. She adds that they live in harmony. When they would have to make a big purchase, they make the decision together.

At home, they have a garden of 0.2 or 0.3 dekares, where they grow some peppers and tomatoes. They buy most of their vegetables, however, in a big store. In addition, they own 3 dekares of vineyard; one plot of 1 dekare is a 10-minute walk from their home, and one plot of 2 dekares is 20 minutes away on foot. They have more land, but they do not use it, because there is no water for irrigation. This land is still undivided. They do not know to how many dekares they are entitled, because they have no documents. They own a pig and two chickens. Vanya and her husband take care of the land, vineyard and livestock together.

They do not sell any of their produce, but they do exchange agricultural products. They exchange mainly with friends in the village. They also give products to their children. The children help them out a little in return. Vanya and her husband pick herbs for tea and collect berries around the villages. They buy fuel wood, but also collect wood around the village. In the summer, they eat fresh produce from the garden or they buy vegetables in the store. In the winter, they eat conserved vegetables from a jar.

7.6 Conclusion

These four stories show that rural livelihoods and transition experiences are different for each woman, although there are similarities. One common thread is that each woman is struggling to make due with a low cash income, which makes it necessary to
carefully budget the household income. The transition has clearly had a deleterious effect on the financial and economic situation of the households, although it is not possible to make this claim in the case of Ivanka. Another similarity is that the children who no longer live at home still play an important role. A striking similarity is that all four women have effective access natural and agricultural resources – land, wood, berries, and herbs. Indeed, access to land has even increased for the three older women in the last decade, although not all take advantage.

Some of the important differences include work status and where women are in their life cycle. Ivanka is on maternity leave, Lilyana works full-time, and Evdokiya and Vanya are both retired. The work status of the women is also reflected in the labor burden.

The financial and economic situation of households deteriorated in the last fourteen years. Evdokiya was retired and Lilyana and Vanya were both working when the communist system disintegrated. In the past fourteen years, all three experienced the decreasing value of their earnings and pension benefits. Jobs became less secure, as Emil experienced, affecting the financial situation of households. Ivanka receives maternity benefits. In the last fourteen years, these benefits did not increase at the same rate as the inflation. At the moment, maternity benefits are equal to the minimum wage of BGN 110 (about US$ 66 in October 2003). None of the four respondents has a financial buffer, because they were not able to save or the savings they are gone.

Children play an important role in household, even when they no longer live at home. Many children are financially supported far into adulthood by their parents in terms of education and weddings. In addition, many children receive produce and
homemade products from their parents. In Vanya’s case, her son and his family shared an
apartment with her and her husband. This is a common practice, particularly in cities with
housing shortages. Pensioners on the other hand, sometimes rely on their children to help
them with big expenses, since pension benefits are very low, as is the case with
Evdokiya. This is not always possible, especially when the children have young families
and do not have money to spare.

Lilyana, Vanya and Evdokiya all have access to land, but use only a small part of
it. The crops they grow are only for personal use and for exchange with friends, relatives
and neighbors. The respondents eat the produce fresh in the summer and conserved in the
winter. Lilyana and Evdokiya stress the importance of subsistence plots to supplement
their income. Ivanka does not own or cultivate land, but she receives produce from her
parents and parents-in-law, so she and her household benefit from their cultivation of
land. (Although she plays down the importance of the in-kind help she receives from
parents and parents-in-law for their livelihood.

The differences between the women are related to work status, age, and life cycle.
Lilyana and Ivanka are both of working age. Ivanka is on a long maternity leave, a legacy
of the socialist past, although the government benefits she receives are low. Women can
find work easily in Mladogradi as long as you want to work in a factory. Lilyana realizes
that it would be more difficult for her to find a similar job with the local government than
during the communist time, because there is more competition. Vanya and Evdokiya are
both retired. The pension benefits they receive are relatively low, resulting in financial
hardship. In sum, these four stories show the everyday lives and experiences of rural
women are not uniform, although they share certain similarities.
CHAPTER 8

CONCLUSION

8.1 Summary

The purpose of this study has been to explore rural women’s livelihoods under varying trajectories of transition, which are unevenly distributed and experienced across space, generations, and ethnicity. Previous research has shown that post-socialist transitions are unique, complex, and spatially uneven processes, with multiple outcomes. But much remains poorly understood regarding these processes, including how transitions impact rural women’s livelihoods and everyday life. Bulgaria is an excellent country in which to study this issue because the transition is still ongoing and rural areas experienced dramatic changes.

To date, the dominant macro-level focus of neo-liberal and evolutionary theories on transition has not been particularly helpful in understanding the conditions or experiences of post-socialist rural women. It is therefore critical to complement this work with a focus on the micro-scale. Micro-scale research—at the level of individuals, households, and communities—allows us to examine the possibility that transition processes do not mean an absolute break with the past, but provide continuity between the socialist and post-socialist world.
Literature on transition ethnography, women and economic restructuring, and feminist political ecology has shown how insights at the micro-scale can begin to predict and explain the changes in rural women’s livelihoods. Overall, it is clear that incorporation in the global economy and the economic restructuring associated with transition has profound and differential impacts on women’s livelihoods and everyday lives. For example, economic restructuring induces changes in women’s labor opportunities, labor burden, empowerment, and access to, use of, and dependence on natural and agricultural resources.

But this literature does not make clear, however, whether rural women in particular are ultimately better or worse off, how transition experiences vary among rural women, and to what degree these are influenced by the local economic development context. Finally, recent literatures on post-socialist countries show that people combine a variety of capitalist and non-capitalist practices to make a living, as they have for centuries. This literature leaves unexplored, however, how rural women’s reliance on such non-capitalist practices may change under economic transition, and what role natural resources play in these practices.

This thesis has therefore focused explicitly on these gaps in the literature. I chose Bulgaria as a field site because the country has experienced sweeping changes in the last six decades. After WWII, the socialist state introduced the collectivization of agriculture and industries, initiating dramatic social changes. A strong-core periphery pattern evolved because of regional economic policies—a pattern that was reinforced after the transition to a capitalist economy in 1989. Rural areas were the first to experience the impacts of the transition as many state factories were closed. Transition also brought the
decollectivization of agriculture and later the inflow of foreign investment to select rural areas. Rural women’s livelihoods were thus dramatically transformed under state socialism, and then again during transition. The question thus becomes: to what degree do rural women experience changes differently across space and in everyday life?

To address this question, I chose an internally diverse study area in southwestern Bulgaria. Economic, demographic, and ethnic differences between the two research villages, Mladogradi and Ctara Djuna, presented different trajectories of change and were thus ideal for a study of the multiple transitions and their influence on rural women’s livelihoods. Mladogradi has a relative young population, many employment opportunities in (foreign owned) factories, and a low unemployment rate. Ctara Djuna has no employment opportunities and a very elderly population. In both communities, I conducted semi-structured interviews, spoke with key persons, and collected secondary data.

Several findings from my research stand out. First, in concurrence with studies of other post-socialist settings (e.g. Begg and Pickles 1998), I show that uneven local development in the study area started long before the transition, but has been reinforced by the unevenness of the transition. In the case of my study area, demographic and economic differences have meant that one (Ctara Djuna) has been left behind in the transition to a market economy and is becoming more marginalized, while the other (Mladogradi) is better able to benefit from the opportunities offered by the transition due to its younger population and the abundance of factory-related and other work.

Second, this study shows that the transition in Bulgaria has profoundly influenced rural women’s livelihoods in both villages (see Tables 6.15-19), although just how their
lives are affected varies with such factors as their age/life cycle, employment status, income, job, ethnicity, and residence. Some general patterns concerning the transition’s impacts on rural women’s livelihoods, however, can be observed. One, the transition brought new labor opportunities to the region, while at the same time other labor opportunities disappeared. The variety in jobs, however, remains limited. In Mladogradi, many labor opportunities are available, in particular in factories and to a lesser extent in other privately owned businesses. Two, the labor burden increased for women who have to combine a formal job and childcare, since many childcare facilities disappeared, and for women who now work long and irregular hours in factories. Three, the political empowerment of women has decreased, since fewer women are members of organizations, although it is not clear though whether this indicates a real decline in political empowerment. Four, patriarchy continues to shape power relations within the household, although these dynamics are tempered by women’s actual decision-making power and control over household finances. Five, women’s access to and use of land has changed since many women now own land together with their husbands. However, a large amount of this agricultural land is fallow, because commercial farming has become less profitable. Nevertheless, many women and their households continue to grow crops for subsistence purposes. Finally, rural women, in particular from Ctara Djuna, continue to use other natural resources (firewood, berries, and herbs), although to a lesser extent now than in the past.

Third, this study also shows that non-capitalist practices, such as subsistence farming, foraging, and barter continue to be a critical part of rural women’s livelihoods.
Furthermore, and perhaps not surprisingly, these non-capitalist practices have become more important in relative terms for women who saw their household’s cash incomes decline.

A final insight from this study is evidence suggesting that local uneven development plays an important role in rural women’s livelihoods. Uneven local development produces different villages, which characteristics are reflected in the variety and kind of livelihoods found in these villages. In short – villages are not the passive product of transition, but are actively shaped by the interplay between macro level processes, such as flows of foreign capital, and micro level processes, such as the dynamics in rural women’s livelihoods.

8.2 Common themes and issues surrounding rural women’s livelihoods

There are several themes and issues interwoven throughout this study. The first theme is the unevenness of transitions processes. This study explored the unevenness of the transition at the micro level and from a comparative perspective resulting in an enhanced picture of the changes in rural women’s livelihoods and their day-to-day lives. Changes and processes at the micro level are interlinked with changes and processes at the macro level, and are as much part of the transition as changes and processes at the macro level. The first dimension of unevenness demonstrated in my study is that transition has spatially differentiated outcomes. Both previous research and my study show that transition impacts regions and areas differently. In my study area, Ctara Djuna and Mladogradi were shaped by local uneven development. This resulted in two villages
that have considerable differences influencing the variety and kind of livelihoods of women living there. Ctara Djuna is a village that is becoming more marginalized by the transition and this is also reflected in the kinds of livelihoods present in this village, i.e. similar livelihoods that depend heavily on natural resources due to low cash incomes. Mladogradi is more able to benefit from the transition in the form of textile factories and privately owned stores, which results in a more diverse mix of livelihoods.

The age and economic structures in these two villages are not static. Therefore, it remains to be seen whether Mladogradi will be able to retain the (foreign owned) factories and the associated favorable economic conditions. Ctara Djuna’s future is perhaps even more uncertain—will its population continue to age and decrease? And, will new economic opportunities develop, perhaps in the form of commercial vineyards or tourism?

The second dimension of unevenness is that transition impacts generations differently. Feminist literature (Women and Geography Study Group of the IBG 1984, McDowell and Sharp 1997) shows that women do not constitute a homogeneous group, but experience everyday life differently due to factors such as class, ethnicity, and age. My study illustrates this well. Older women (and older men) in post-socialist rural areas are marginalized in the transition and, so far, have been largely neglected as a topic of interest in the literature, although they make up a significant part of the population and seem to have suffered the highest cost of the transition with respect to income and livelihood uncertainty.

The second common theme running through my study is the continuity between the socialist and post-socialist world. Although post-socialist countries are moving
towards a market economy, this does not stop people from using a variety of non-capitalist and capitalist practices to sustain a livelihood—many of which are part of long-standing traditions that pre-date the communist period. My study shows that many women from Ctara Djuna and Mladogradi use non-capitalist practices, in which natural and agricultural resources play an important role. These activities are especially important to women who saw their household cash income decline. This finding contributes to the increasing body of literature on ‘multiple economies’ or ‘alternative economies’ (Pavlovskaya 2004, Smith 2002, Gibson and Graham 1996).

8.3 Limitations of this study

This study attempts to explore rural women’s livelihoods, but does not claim to have captured all the nuances in their livelihoods, due to several methodological issues (see also chapter 4). One issue is the small number of respondents (n=50), which makes generalization difficult. A second issue is the low number of Roma women in my sample, which hinders a closer analysis of the role of ethnicity in rural livelihoods. Third, because I spent only six months in Bulgaria (3 months of preliminary research and language study and 3 months of research in the two villages), the number and richness of the interviews I conducted was diminished. Finally, while analyzing the data, I ran into some issues that I wished I had given more attention to in the field. Unfortunately, I was not in the position to return to Bulgaria to ask follow-up questions.
8.4 Recommendations for future research

This study only manages to scratch the surface of the issues surrounding rural women’s livelihoods in post-socialist countries. Many avenues of inquiry remain. One recommendation for future research is to study in more detail the systems of reciprocal exchange in order to understand the interactions between women’s livelihoods. Systems of reciprocal exchange illustrate intergenerational interactions between livelihoods, interactions between urban and rural livelihoods, and group dynamics within the village.

A second recommendation is to look more closely at the issue of ageing in rural areas since this a pressing issue in many post-socialist countries and beyond. In particular, it would be interesting to look at how earlier life experiences and macro-scale processes shape older women’s everyday lives by conducting life histories. This way ageing is studied as a social change and not simply as an attribute (Sachs 1993).

A third and final recommendation for future research is to study in more detail the role of land-based resources. Many rural women own land together with their husbands as a result of the land restitution program. My study shows that large parts of land are left fallow, because households do not have the money, time, or interest to cultivate it. Some household express interest in selling the land but cannot find any reasonable buyers. When a land market develops, it would be interesting to see how this would change the landscape and agricultural sector in southwestern Bulgaria.
REFERENCES


APPENDIX A

BULGARIAN VERSION OF INTERVIEW QUESTIONS
СРЕДСТВА ЗА ПРЕЖИВЯВАНЕ НА ПРОВИНЦИАЛНИТЕ ЖЕНИ ПРИ ПРЕХОДА

Анмари Полнерман
Факултет География, Охайо Стейт Юниверсити

Номер:
Село:
Дата:

1. Възраст на отговарящия? __________

2. Пол на отговарящия?
   ○ М
   ○ Ж

3. Етническа група:
   I. Българин
   II. Ром
   III. Етнически турци
   IV. Бълг. Мюсулмани
   V. др.

4. Къде сте роден? _______________________________________

5. Най-висока степен на образование?
   ○ Начално училище
   ○ Гимназия Диплома / година на издаване_____________________
      Вид на образованието_______________________________
- Висше образование  Степен / година на издаване__________________________
  Вид на образованието__________________________

- Други__________________________________________________________________

6. Колко члена има вашето семейство? ________________________

7. Кой е глава на семейството/домакинството?____________________________

8. Кой е собственик на къщата?________________________________________

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10. Каква е вашата професия/и/?

   I. __________________________________________________  О/Н
   II. _________________________________________________  О/Н

11. Ако има повече от 1 работа: Защо имате повече от 1 работа?

12. Какъв вид заплащане получавате в замяна за работа?

13. Трудно ли ви е да намерите работа и защо?

214
14. Какъв вид работа / О/Н / сте имали преди 1989?
   I. _____________________________________________ O/H  Кога?____
   II. _____________________________________________ O/H  Кога?____

15. Защо имахте повече от 1 работа?

16. Беше ли ви трудно да намерите работа и защо?

17. Колко време отделяте всяка седмица за работа /и/домакинска работа, грижи за децата, работа в зеленчуковата градина, и др.?

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18. Какви поправки е направило вашето семейство/домакинство през последните 14 години?
   - Отложени големи покупки
   - спестявания
   - Променени начини на ядене и пазаруване на храна за пестене на пари
   - Намалена употреба на домакински полезни средства
   - Други______________________________________________________________

19. Член на коя организация или съюз сте в момента?

20. Каква е дейността на организацията или съюза?

21. Колко често участвате?
22. Член на кои организации или съюзи сте били преди 1989?
23. Каква бе дейността на организацияите или съюзите?
24. Колко често вземахте участие?
25. Разменяте ли продукти / продукция с членове на семейството, приятели, обществени членове, и други?
26. Ако Да, Кои продукти/продукция, в замяна на какво, с кой, и защо?
27. Кой контролира финансовете на домакинството и защо?
28. Кой взема решенията за покупки на нови предмети, като кола и телевизор, и защо?
29. Домакинството ви притежава ли някаква земя/размер? Да/Не
   I. Размер: ______ Употреба: ____________________________ Време за път от дома: ______
   II. Размер: ______ Употреба: ____________________________ Време за път: ______
   III. Размер: ______ Употреба: ____________________________ Време за път: ______
   IV. Размер: ______ Употреба: ____________________________ Време за път: ______
30. Домакинството ви дава ли или държи ли под наем някаква земя? Да/Не
   I. Размер: ______ Употреба: ____________________________ Време за път от дома: ______
   II. Размер: ______ Употреба: ____________________________ Време за път: ______
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31. Семейството ви обработва ли земя? Да/Не
   I. Размер: ______ Употреба: ____________________________ Време за път от дома: ______
   II. Размер: ______ Употреба: ____________________________ Време за път: ______
III. Размер: _______ Употреба________________________ Време за път_______

IV. Размер: _______ Употреба________________________ Време за път_______

32. Отглеждате ли добитък? Да/Не

33. Какво отглеждате и колко?

34. Продавате ли продукция / животински продукти?

35. Къде и колко често?

36. Купувате ли всичките си продукти от магазин, като храна, горски плодове, дърва за гориво, строителни материали?

37. Ако Не, по какъв друг начин се добивате с хранителни продукти?

38. Вие или вашето домакинство използвате ли други водни източници освен вода от чешмата?

39. Ако Да, какви водни източници и с каква цел?

40. Кой се грижи за градината, земята, и за други естествени ресурси, които използва домакинството ви и защо?

41. Какви са специфичните задачи на всеки човек, включен в грижите за градината, земята, и други естествени източници, които използва домакинството ви?

42. Кой от домакинството взима решенията за справянето с градината, земята, и други естествени източници, които използва домакинството ви, и защо?

43. Колко често ядете продукти от собствената ви градина или зеленчуково поле?
APPENDIX B

ENGLISH VERSION OF INTERVIEW QUESTIONS
Research Project: Women’s Rural Livelihoods under Transition

Annemarie Polderman

Geography Department, Ohio State University

Number:

Village:

Date:

1) Age of the respondent? ________

2) Gender of the respondent? M F

3) Ethnicity: Bulgarian Roma Ethnic Turks Bulgarian Muslim Other

4) Where were you born?

5) Highest level of education?
   - Elementary school
   - Secondary education Certificate (year of issue) __________
   - Type of education __________
   - Higher education Degree awarded (year of issue) __________
   - Type of education __________
   - Other:_____________________________________________________

6) How many members does your household have? ________

7) Who is the head of the household?

8) Who is the owner of the house?
9) 

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<tr>
<th>Household member</th>
<th>Relation to respondent</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Occupation 1 F/I*</th>
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* Formal or Informal: A person has a formal occupation if the person has a legal employment contract. A person has an informal occupation if the person has no legal employment contract.

10) What is your occupation(s)?

I. ________________________________ Formal/Informal

II. ________________________________ Formal/Informal

11) If more than 1 job: Why do you have more than one job?

12) What kind of payment do you receive in exchange for work?

13) Is it difficult for you to find a job and why?

14) What kind of jobs (formal and informal) did you have before 1989?

I. ________________________________ Formal/Informal When?__________

II. ________________________________ Formal/Informal When?__________

15) If more than 1 job: Why did you have more than one job?

16) Was it difficult for you to find a job and why?

17) How much time do you spend every week on jobs, household work, taking care of the children, working in the vegetable garden, etc.?
18) What types of adjustments did your household make in the last 14 years?

Did you postpone major purchases?

Did you change food shopping or eating patterns to save money?

Did you reduce household utility use?

Do you have savings?

Other?

19) Of which organizations or unions are you a member at the moment?

20) What are the organizations’ or unions’ activities?

21) How often do you participate?

22) Of which organizations or unions were you a member before 1989?

23) What were the organizations’ or unions’ activities?

24) How often did you participate?

25) Do you exchange products/produce with family members, friends, community members, etc.?

26) If yes, which products/produce, in exchange for what, with whom, and why?

27) Who is control of the household finances and why?

28) Who makes the decisions regarding buying consumer durables and why?
29) Does your household own any land (size)? Yes/No

I. Size:__ Use:__________________  Travel time from home: __________
II. Size:__ Use:__________________  Travel time from home: __________
III. Size:__ Use:__________________  Travel time from home: __________
IV. Size:__ Use:__________________  Travel time from home: __________

30) Does your household rent or lease any land? Yes/No

I. Size:__ Use:__________________  Travel time from home: __________
II. Size:__ Use:__________________  Travel time from home: __________
III. Size:__ Use:__________________  Travel time from home: __________
IV. Size:__ Use:__________________  Travel time from home: __________

31) Does your family cultivate land? Yes/No

I. Size:__ Use:__________________  Travel time from home: __________
II. Size:__ Use:__________________  Travel time from home: __________
III. Size:__ Use:__________________  Travel time from home: __________
IV. Size:__ Use:__________________  Travel time from home: __________

32) Do you raise livestock?

33) What do you raise and how many?

34) Do you sell the produce/animal products?

35) Where and how often?

36) Do you buy all your (food) products in the store? Yes/No

37) If no, in which other ways do you get (food) products?

38) Do you or your household use other water sources besides tap water?

39) If yes, which water sources and for what purpose?
40) Who is taking care of the garden, land, and other agricultural and natural resources your household uses and why?

41) What are the specific tasks of each person involved in taking care of the garden, land, and other agricultural and natural resources your household uses?

42) Who in the household makes the decisions about the management of the garden, land and other agricultural and natural resources your household uses (planting new crops, acquiring machineries, fertilizers, time of harvesting, etc.) and why?

43) How often do you eat products from your garden or land?