

# LOCAL FOREST DEPENDENCE IN CENTRAL EASTERN EUROPE: BULGARIA AND POLAND

CAEDMON STADDON\*, STANISLAW GRYKIEN’\*\*

This paper charts differences in the relations between communities and their forested hinterlands in two postsocialist regions: southwestern Poland and southwestern Bulgaria. The analysis presented here suggests that whilst there are similarities in experience there are also many differences, reflecting different initial starting points, development trajectories (what Stark and others have called “path dependence”) and indeed relative geographical location. In other words, just as there was no uniform experience of state socialism, neither, it transpires, is there a uniform experience of post-socialism. We explore also the issue of attachment to place as a contributory factor in local environmental attitudes and the findings are surprising. Some implications for the study of community-environment relations and for policy-making in post-socialist localities are presented by way of conclusion of this brief paper.

**Key words:** Bulgaria, Poland, forests, postsocialist transformation, forest dependence.

## INTRODUCTION

This paper explores the geographical variation and changing relations between two postsocialist communities, in Poland and Bulgaria, and their forested hinterlands, particularly in terms of their informal (non-commodity) dimensions. While there has been much attention paid to general and national-scale issues in postsocialist environmental reconstruction (e.g. Carter and Turnock, 2001; Peterson 1993), relatively little research exists that examines the specifically *local* impacts of broader postsocialist transformational processes. Moreover there has been a tendency, in some circles, to see the postsocialist localities as very much “of a piece”; that is to say as undifferentiated social settings (but see studies in anthropology including Bridger and Pine 1998; Burawoy and Verdery 1999; and Turnock and Staddon, 2001). Environmental issues especially have tended to be treated at the national scale and through the relatively generic lenses of either policy reform (Moldan and Klarer, 1998), overall environmental quality assessment (Stanners and Bourdeau, 1995) or

---

\* University of the West of England, UK, caedmon.staddon@uwe.ac.uk

\*\* Wroclaw University, Poland, grykien@geogr.uni.wroc.pl