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# *Serfdom and social capital in Bohemia and Russia*<sup>1</sup>

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The ‘horizontal’ social capital generated by networks and communities is widely regarded as inherently antagonistic to ‘vertical’ hierarchies such as serfdom. This article examines this view using evidence from pre-Emancipation Bohemia and Russia. It finds that serf communes generated a substantial ‘social capital’ of shared norms, common information, and collective sanctions. But communal social capital was manipulated by village elites who collaborated with overlords in taxation, land regulation, and demographic control. This benefited communal oligarchies, but harmed ordinary serfs and the wider economy. Horizontal social capital and vertical hierarchies, the article demonstrates, can as easily collude as conflict.

‘Social capital’ is the name given to the benefits that are supposed to be generated when a network of individuals invests resources in repeated interactions and multi-stranded relationships among its members.<sup>2</sup> These relationships, it is argued, foster trust by creating shared norms, improve contract enforcement by easing information flow, and facilitate collective action against deviant or opportunistic behaviour. This social capital of norms, information, and collective sanctions is held to make markets and governments work better, and to benefit the entire economy.<sup>3</sup> Policy makers

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For ease of understanding by English-speaking readers, throughout this article place-names are given in the German version used by Friedland serfs at the time; but it should be recognized that nowadays these places are known by their Czech names.

<sup>2</sup> For the basic propositions behind the theory of social capital, see Coleman, ‘Social capital’; Putnam, Leonardi, and Nanetti, *Making democracy work*; Putnam, *Bowling alone*; and Putnam, Feldstein, and Cohen, *Better together*. For a representative selection of recent work making use of the concept, see Dasgupta and Serageldin, *Social capital*. On social capital in the context of pre-industrial European social institutions, see Ogilvie, *Bitter living*, esp. pp. 21–2, 340–52.

<sup>3</sup> See Coleman, ‘Social capital,’ esp. pp. 101–2; Putnam, Leonardi, and Nanetti, *Making democracy work*; Fukuyama, *Trust*; Dasgupta, ‘Economic progress’; Putnam, *Bowling alone*; Putnam, Feldstein, and Cohen, *Better together*.

in organizations such as the World Bank now widely advocate investment in social capital to address the challenges facing developing economies. Conversely, economic stagnation and social inequities are blamed not on failures of governments or markets, but on lack of the social capital generated by the 'horizontal' networks of civil society.<sup>4</sup>

A major reason why such networks are thought to be beneficial is that they are believed to limit the power of hierarchies. A *network* is an organizational form in which the members are similar to one another, so they form *horizontal* relationships among near-equals, based on shared interests and capabilities. In a *hierarchy*, by contrast, members are graded or ranked relative to one another, and consequently form *vertical* relationships among unequals, based on dissimilarity of interests and power. According to social capital theorists, networks and hierarchies are 'two broad equilibria toward which all societies . . . tend to evolve and which, once attained, tend to be self-reinforcing'.<sup>5</sup> Networks foster egalitarian fellowship, reciprocity, and 'mutual solidarity', making it possible to resist the 'power asymmetries, exploitation and dependence' characteristic of hierarchies.<sup>6</sup> Thus beneficent networks such as communities, guilds, associations, and religious confraternities counteract baleful hierarchies such as feudal systems, patronage networks, authoritarian states, and the Catholic Church.<sup>7</sup>

Networks create *norms* of cooperation, it is argued, which counteract the opportunistic norms within hierarchies. Networks generate a trustworthy flow of *information*, which enhances cooperation, it is claimed, while hierarchies transmit unreliable data corrupted by the threat of exploitation. Networks impose collective *sanctions* 'that support norms of reciprocity against the threat of opportunism', while hierarchies fail to penalize the powerful. Lastly, networks facilitate *collective action* against abuses, while hierarchies block collective resistance to exploitation.<sup>8</sup>

European history is widely deployed to support this model of economic and social interaction, with *communes* adduced as exemplars of beneficial networks, and feudalism or *serfdom* as the embodiment of harmful hierarchies. Putnam, one of the originators of social capital theory, argues that the successful economic development of northern Italy since medieval times resulted from its strong communes, whose horizontal bonds generated a social capital that constrained the hierarchical yoke of feudalism; southern Italy failed to develop, he claims, because weak communes encouraged the

<sup>4</sup> On the rich west, see Coleman, 'Social capital'; Putnam, Leonardi, and Nanetti, *Making democracy work*; Putnam, *Bowling alone*. On 'transition economies', see Raiser, 'Informal institutions'. On modern developing economies, see the essays in Dasgupta and Serageldin, eds., *Social capital*.

<sup>5</sup> Putnam, Leonardi, and Nanetti, *Making democracy work*, p. 177.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, *Making democracy work*, p. 135.

<sup>7</sup> For claims to this effect, see Putnam, Leonardi, and Nanetti, *Making democracy work*, pp. 123–35, 167, 171–8, 181; La Porta, Lopez-de-Silanes, Shleifer, and Vishny, 'Trust in large organizations'.

<sup>8</sup> Putnam, Leonardi, and Nanetti, *Making democracy work*, pp. 174–5.

survival of feudalism and its 'vertical ties of dependence and exploitation'.<sup>9</sup> In a similar vein, the economic backwardness of eastern Europe is ascribed to the stifling of peasant communes and other horizontal networks under serfdom. In Putnam's analysis, 'many of the formerly Communist societies had weak civic traditions before the advent of Communism, and totalitarian rule abused even that weak stock of social capital'.<sup>10</sup> According to Niemelä,

social capital in the Nordic countries is still essentially influenced by their long tradition of freedom. In the Nordic countries, slavery ended around the 13th century, whereas in Eastern Europe serfdom continued until the 19th century . . . These kinds of traditions have great power and their traces are seen for a long period of time.<sup>11</sup>

Birner and Wittmer argue that contemporary developing economies must learn from the fact that

Social capital formed by villagers [in western Europe] for the purpose of communal resource management [was] converted into political capital and used in their struggle against domination . . . The peasants of western Europe were able to abolish serfdom, unlike their peasant fellows in eastern Europe who—in the absence of communally managed natural resources—did not have such social capital, which could have been converted into political capital.<sup>12</sup>

According to one World Bank report, both in Europe under serfdom and in present-day developing economies, the stifling of communal institutions by authoritarian landlords diminished social capital, thereby blocking agricultural development.<sup>13</sup> The difficulties experienced by Russia and other eastern European 'transition economies' since 1990 are frequently blamed on a lack of social capital that is claimed to result from a long history during which hierarchies choked off networks.<sup>14</sup>

European history, specifically the impact of serfdom on communal social capital, is thus used to draw far-reaching lessons for contemporary economic development. But are these lessons from history justified? Did the hierarchical yoke of serfdom indeed choke off the horizontal bonds of peasant communes? Can economic stagnation in eastern Europe really be blamed on the systematic stifling of communal social capital by serfdom? More generally still, do horizontal social capital and vertical hierarchies inevitably work in opposing directions?

To answer these questions and put some substance into these 'lessons from history' requires detailed empirical investigation of how serfdom and

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., *Making democracy work*, pp. 101–4, 107, 115, 124–31, 173–82. Considerable doubt has been cast on the empirical basis of this characterization by historians of Italy; for recent surveys of the evidence, see, for instance, Brucker, 'Civic traditions'; and Muir, 'Sources of civil society'.

<sup>10</sup> Putnam, Leonardi, and Nanetti, *Making democracy work*, p. 183.

<sup>11</sup> Niemelä, 'Nordic way'.

<sup>12</sup> Birner and Wittmer, 'Converting social capital into political capital', p. 1.

<sup>13</sup> Deininger, *Land policies for growth and poverty reduction*, p. 19.

<sup>14</sup> See, for instance, O'Brien, 'Social capital'; Stiglitz and Ellerman, 'New bridges'.

communal social capital actually worked. The system of hierarchical relationships binding European landlords and peasants had many variants, ranging from the classic 'feudalism' that prevailed in most parts of medieval Europe, to the 'refeudalization' experienced by some early modern Mediterranean regions such as southern Italy, to the resurgence of 'manorialism' (or the 'second serfdom') in eastern-central and eastern Europe after 1500.<sup>15</sup> In this article, we select two very different manifestations of strong manorialism—Bohemia between 1580 and 1740 and Russia between 1775 and 1861—for a comparative investigation of how horizontal social capital and vertical hierarchies interacted under serfdom.

Pre-emancipation Russia and early modern Bohemia were in many respects very different serf societies. Russia was a vast and autonomous nation-state, Bohemia a much smaller territory that was only a part of the 'composite state' of the Austrian Habsburgs. The technological possibilities and international pressures constraining economic activity differed between the early modern period, during which we analyse Bohemia, and the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, during which we analyse Russia. The two societies had many differences of detail in their institutions governing taxation, labour, landholding, market exchange, and demographic behaviour. Bohemian serfdom is supposed to have been relatively mild (although intensifying in the period under analysis), whereas Russian serfdom is regarded as one of the most coercive systems ever observed, often compared to slavery in nineteenth-century America.

Given these acknowledged differences, it is all the more surprising that Russia and Bohemia display remarkable parallels in how their village communes and manorial authorities interacted. The two economies also manifest an astonishing resemblance in the central role played by strong communal 'social capital' in the functioning of the whole system of serfdom. The emergence of this uniform pattern from two such different societies as Russia and Bohemia has important implications for understanding both serfdom and social capital. Social capital theory, we argue, must reconsider its assumption that horizontal networks and vertical hierarchies are inherently antagonistic. Under serfdom, the horizontal network of the commune often cooperated with the vertical hierarchy of serfdom, deploying communal social capital to enforce manorial interests in exchange for benefits enjoyed by a communal oligarchy. This benefited the village elite and the manorial lord—but harmed poorer serfs and damaged the whole economy.

These findings emerge from the analysis of detailed, micro-level databases compiled for two serf estates in Bohemia and Russia. We begin by comparing the forms taken by serfdom and serf communes in these very different societies. We then examine the deployment of communal social capital in three key economic spheres—tax-paying, access to land, and demographic

<sup>15</sup> Thoughtful recent reflections on the many variants of European serfdom may be found in Melton, 'Serfdom'; and Schmidt, *Leibeigenschaft*, esp. pp. 127–44.

decisions. Far from being stifled by serfdom, it emerges, communal social capital played a central role in regulating serfs' economic lives and enforcing manorial interests locally. This was not because overlords created or dominated serf communes, but because village elites perceived benefits in collaborating with the manorial administration. Nor was this coercive use of social capital brought into being by serfdom. It was a pre-existing phenomenon universally generated by strong communities throughout pre-industrial Europe—east or west—and merely co-opted by serf overlords. This collaboration between communal social capital and manorial regulation had important economic effects, including corrupt resource allocation, proliferation of monopolies and market privileges, constraints on the welfare of ordinary serfs, and coercion of vulnerable social groups. These findings, we argue, have far-reaching implications for prevailing theories about the role of social capital in developing economies.

## I

Both early modern Bohemia and pre-emancipation Russia had strong manorial regimes that sought to regulate many aspects of economic life. But their serfs also lived in village communes with institutional powers to regulate many local activities. What was the relationship between these two—potentially competing—institutions?

Theoretical approaches to this question fall into three main schools of thought: 'manorial dominance', 'communal autonomy', and communal-manorial 'dualism'.<sup>16</sup> The 'manorial dominance' view argues that serfdom destroyed the powers of peasant communes—the assumption adopted by social capital theory. Superficially, it might seem self-evident that strong feudal overlords would seek to eradicate competing rural institutions. But more recently an alternative view has arisen, claiming that serf societies were characterized by strong communes within which peasants led their lives independently, largely impervious to the institutional apparatus of serfdom. This 'communal autonomy' approach does not dispute that overlords *desired* to weaken serf communes, but claims that they lacked the *ability* to do so.

Our findings for Bohemia and Russia cast doubt on both the 'manorial dominance' and the 'communal autonomy' view. Instead, we find, under serfdom *both* manors *and* communes were strong. To collect dues for themselves and taxes for the state, overlords had to intervene inside serf communes much more than the 'communal autonomy' approach acknowledges. But obtaining the information needed to tax and regulate serfs required local agents, creating incentives for overlords to foster strong communal institutions to a much greater extent than is recognized by the

<sup>16</sup> Ogilvie, 'Communities and the "Second Serfdom"', esp. pp. 72–5; Dennison, 'Economy and society', esp. ch. 3.

'manorial dominance' theory. Only a theory of 'dualism' between serf communes and manorial authorities does justice to both sets of empirical findings.<sup>17</sup>

One source of prevailing misconceptions is that much of what is written about serfdom is based on literary and legal sources that reflect normative views of communes and manorial administrations, but seldom how they worked in practice. This article instead focuses on the actions of serfs themselves as they went about their everyday lives, interacting within social networks, deploying social capital, and having it deployed upon them. To this end, we select two very different serf regions for micro-analysis: the Bohemian estate of Friedland between 1580 and 1740 and the Russian estate of Voshchazhnikovo between 1775 and 1861.

Friedland was located in the northern hills of Bohemia, roughly 75 miles northeast of Prague. It was part of a larger estate-complex, governed from 1558 by the noble family von Redern until it was dispossessed after taking the Protestant side in the Bohemian Revolt; then by the legendary Albrecht von Wallenstein until his assassination in 1634; and lastly by the Imperial general Matthias von Gallas and his successors from 1635 into the nineteenth century. Because of poor soils and high altitude, Friedland serfs specialized in cattle-raising, forest industries, and proto-industrial linen production for export, although they also cultivated grain for local consumption. In 1651, a time of post-war depopulation, the estate contained 5,747 villagers living in 1,486 households; by 1722 the number of households had risen to about 1,700.<sup>18</sup>

The entire population of the estate (apart from a handful of manorial officials and migrant servants) was legally subject to a form of serfdom termed 'hereditary subjection' (*Erbuntertänigkeit*), which is regarded as having been less severe in some respects than the 'personal bondage' (*Leibeigenschaft*) observed in Russia.<sup>19</sup> Despite differences of detail, however, the civil status of the rural population of Bohemia before the 1781 Emancipation corresponds in most respects to Mironov's seven-point checklist of the characteristics of serf dependency in Russia: juridical subjection, migration regulations, legal attachment to a particular social status, subjection to communal payments and duties, limited right to private property, limited choice of occupation, and unprotected personal dignity.<sup>20</sup> Friedland serfs rendered feudal dues in money and kind (*Zins*) and through labour services (*Robot, Hofdienst*). Even more important were licence fees to practise crafts

<sup>17</sup> For a recent outstanding exposition of this view (although without using the term 'dualism'), see Scott, 'Introduction', esp. p. 8. A similar approach is used by Aleksandrov in his path-breaking study of Russian serf communes, *Sel'skaia Obshchina*.

<sup>18</sup> Státní Ústřední Archiv Praha, Soupis Poddaných Podle Vírý 1651, and Tereziánský Katastr 1722, listings for the estate of Friedland.

<sup>19</sup> For a highly perceptive and up-to-date analysis of the whole range of terms and definitions used for early modern serfdom, see Scott, 'South-west German serfdom'; and Scott, 'South-west German serfdom reconsidered'.

<sup>20</sup> Mironov, 'When and why?', p. 323.

and proto-industries, and especially compulsory purchases of beer and spirit quotas from the demesne at fixed prices, providing huge monopoly profits to the overlord.

Bohemia is sometimes portrayed as being part of a zone of 'weak' communes east of the Elbe, contrasting with the strong communities of western Europe.<sup>21</sup> Within Bohemia, Friedland was located in the zone of 'Magdeburg Law', which is supposed to have had slightly stronger communal institutions than the zone of 'Slavic Law', although still weak by western European standards. However, these stylized characterizations of the relative strength or weakness of Bohemian communes are based on a very slight empirical foundation and have been questioned in recent historiography.<sup>22</sup>

Friedland consisted of two small towns and 38 villages. In 1651, the villages ranged in size from 10 to 100 households. Each had its own communal court (*Gericht*), chaired by the village headman (*Scholz*) and manned by four to 10 sworn-men or elders (variously termed *Schöppen*, *Geschworenen*, or *Ältesten*); record linkage indicates that these communal officers were recruited from the top rural social stratum in each village. Although the village court met regularly, its sole written record was a register of land transfers.<sup>23</sup> The activities of the commune emerge vividly, however, from surviving manorial court records,<sup>24</sup> 'decree-books' containing digests of serf petitions and manorial responses to them,<sup>25</sup> and a wealth of other local documentary sources (pledge-books, minutes of annual serf assemblies, reports from communal officials, and so on). Together, these documents provide a rich picture of the relationship between commune and overlord under this variant of serfdom.<sup>26</sup>

The Russian estate of Voshchazhnikovo was located in Yaroslavl' province, roughly 200 miles northwest of Moscow and 30 miles southeast of the provincial capital, Yaroslavl'. Voshchazhnikovo was owned by one of the wealthiest landholding families in Russia, the Sheremetyevs, who owned over 30 estates, in 17 different provinces.<sup>27</sup> In 1796, 3,786 serfs lived on the estate, all of them owned by the Sheremetyev family.<sup>28</sup> Nearly one-third resided in the village of Voshchazhnikovo, for which the estate was named. The remainder lived in 29 smaller villages, which ranged in size from six to

<sup>21</sup> For one of the most influential statements of this view, see Blicke, *Kommunalismus*.

<sup>22</sup> For a summary of this literature and new empirical findings, see Ogilvie, 'Communities and the "second serfdom"'; and Himl, '*Armben Leüte*'.

<sup>23</sup> Štefanová, 'Zur Stellung der Untertanen', esp. pp. 221–2; Ogilvie, 'Communities and the "second serfdom"', pp. 78, 80–1.

<sup>24</sup> Státní Oblastní Archiv Litoměřice, Pobočka Děčín, Fond Rodinný archiv Clam-Gallasů, Historická Sbíрка (hereafter SOAD HS), Amtspr., Kart. 77–80, 1583–1692, 1781–7.

<sup>25</sup> SOAD HS, Kart. 81–2, Dekretb., 1652–1738.

<sup>26</sup> For more detail on how Bohemian serf communes worked, see Ogilvie, 'Communities and the "second serfdom"'; and Himl, '*Armben Leüte*', esp. pp. 277–93.

<sup>27</sup> Shchepetov, *Krespostnoe pravo*, pp. 19–21.

<sup>28</sup> Rossiiskii Gosudarstvennyi Arkhiv Drevnikh Aktov (hereafter RGADA), f. 1287, op. 3, ed. khr. 555, l. 21 (Estate Instructions, 1789–1807). Russian serfs were considered the private property of their lords, and could even be sold by them.



50 households.<sup>29</sup> Serfs worked in a wide variety of sectors, including agriculture, rural industry, trade, migrant labour, and service. Most households were by-employed in several sectors. Dues were paid to the overlord in cash and kind (*obrok*) rather than labour (*barshchina*). The comparative analysis in this article is thus rendered the more intriguing by the presence of labour dues (usually viewed as a stricter, more 'backward' variant of serfdom) on the Bohemian estate and prevalence of cash and grain payments (seen as more 'progressive') on the Russian one. This further difference between the Russian and Bohemian case studies makes it all the more striking that they display such similarities in how communal social capital collaborated with the manorial hierarchy.

Russia is renowned for its strong rural commune, or *mir*, particularly in the pre-revolutionary period.<sup>30</sup> Although some have argued that the *mir* was only brought into being in 1722 to support state and noble fiscal initiatives, with the result that Russian communes were not as strong or historically rooted as western European ones, this view has been refuted by evidence of active communes before this date—including for Voshchazhnikovo.<sup>31</sup> Nevertheless, within this framework of strong Russian communes there was considerable variation. Communes are thought to have been stronger on estates with absentee landlords, for instance, or those where lords failed to employ an intendant or bailiff.<sup>32</sup> Although the Sheremetyevs were absentee landlords, they actively managed their estates and thus could constrain the power of communal officials to some degree. As a result, communes on the estate of Voshchazhnikovo, while strong, were probably at the weaker end of the continuum for Russia.<sup>33</sup>

Voshchazhnikovo had 30 separate *village communes*, one for each of its rural settlements. Each village commune had its own set of officials, which usually included an elder (*starosta*), selectman (*vybornyi*), and clerk (*zemskii*). There was also an *estate commune*, consisting of the male household heads of all 30 villages. The estate commune was headed by a bailiff (*prikashchik*), assisted by 10 to 12 additional officials (elders, selectmen, clerks, tax collectors, constables, and scribes). Record linkage indicates that communal officials either were selected from among the wealthiest serfs or, as discussed below, had close ties to the top stratum. Much of what we know about communal activity at Voshchazhnikovo comes from the communal resolutions (*mirskie prigovory*), recorded by a scribe after every

<sup>29</sup> RGADA, f. 1287, op. 3, ed. khr. 2553 (1834 soul revision).

<sup>30</sup> The commune is perhaps the most studied feature of Russian rural life. According to Mironov ('Peasant commune', p. 33) it is the subject of some 3,000 books and articles.

<sup>31</sup> This view of the commune has been put forward most recently by Peter Blicke in *Kommunalismus*, pp. 103–8. In the Russian historiography the debate over the origins of the commune has focused mainly on the practice of land repartition. See, for instance, Pushkarev, *Krest'ianskaia pozemel'no-peredel'naiia obshchina*. For a summary of the debate in English, see Moon, *Russian peasantry*, pp. 212–20.

<sup>32</sup> See Aleksandrov, *Sel'skaia Obshchina*, ch. 2; Leonard, 'Landlords and the mir'.

<sup>33</sup> For instance, the communes described by Hoch at Petrovskoe (in *Serfdom and social control*) and by Melton at Baki ('Household economies') appear considerably stronger and more coercive than communes at Voshchazhnikovo (see Dennison, 'Did serfdom matter?').

meeting of the estate commune.<sup>34</sup> But communal activities also emerge from serf petitions, manorial court records, manorial ordinances and decrees, and reports from manorial and local government officials.

This article uses these two micro-studies to examine whether communes under Russian and Bohemian serfdom did generate significant social capital, how the horizontal network of the commune interacted with the vertical hierarchy of manorial authority, and how this relationship affected serf economies. It focuses on three central spheres of economic life—taxation, access to land, and demographic choices—which reveal a daily interaction between communal social capital and serfdom characterized by interdependence much more than antagonism.

## II

A central component of serfdom was the right of overlords to tax their peasants, whether in cash, grain, labour, military service, or forced purchases of demesne output. If the ‘manorial dominance’ view were right, one would expect to observe overlords depriving communes of all fiscal discretion. If the ‘communal autonomy’ view were correct, one would expect intra-communal relationships to be hardly affected by manorial fiscal demands. It is therefore the more remarkable that in both Bohemia and Russia, we observe a close, cooperative relationship between manorial taxation and communal social capital.

Under Bohemian and Russian serfdom, the overlord collected taxes for both himself and the state. The state devolved almost all fiscal responsibility to overlords by stipulating the size of the levy—whether of taxes or of conscripts—and leaving overlords to determine its allocation and collection. In turn, overlords devolved almost all fiscal responsibilities—for both state and seigneurial taxes—to communes, again through simply stipulating the total levy and leaving communes to allocate and collect it. Each serf commune was thus collectively responsible for the tax burdens of its members. In the Friedland commune of Göhe, for instance, Gotfried Neuman was refused tax-freedom in 1667 on the grounds that ‘the taxes and levies which apply to him cannot be unjustly burdened onto others’; only if the whole commune agreed to shoulder his tax-burden could he be freed.<sup>35</sup> In 1804, the Voshchazhnikovo estate commune had to reallocate the taxes of five ‘lost souls’—serfs who absconded or died before paying dues, thereby burdening the rest of the commune.<sup>36</sup> In 1846, the Voshchazhnikovo village commune

<sup>34</sup> Some 50 volumes of *mirskie prigovory* have survived for Voshchazhnikovo, covering the period 1750–1858.

<sup>35</sup> SOAD, HS, Kart. 81, Dekretb. Frýdlant 1667–8, p. 13, 12 May 1667: ‘die ihme Von einer Zeit Zur andern betreffende Stewern . . . Andern, wied. die billichkeitt, auf gebürdet werden’.

<sup>36</sup> RGADA, f. 1287, op. 3, ed. khr. 652, l. 10: ‘na vseobshchim mirskom skhode edinoglasno prigovorili za upalye v proshlom godu piat dush na kotorye pri razvode prikhodilo sobrat’ obrochnykh i podushnykh i mirskikh deneg’.

acknowledged that Ivan Tupitsyn's death meant that 'his dues would have to be covered by the commune'.<sup>37</sup>

Collective fiscal responsibility created incentives for the commune to put pressure on each villager. In the Friedland village of Weisbach in 1627, for instance, one peasant was told in public in the village court that by failing to pay manorial dues on his yarn-trading, he was 'cheating his overlord and the whole community'.<sup>38</sup> In 1804, the Voshchazhnikovo commune of Stomar'eva made Aleksei Murav'ev's emigration conditional on his brothers' formally contracting 'to take on Aleksei's share of the feudal dues'.<sup>39</sup>

The overlord benefited from this arrangement as he did not have to employ numerous manorial officials to collect taxes but could free-ride on communal officeholders. Nor did he have to spend resources on repeatedly collecting information about who owed taxes, as long as he provided communal officeholders with incentives (spot checks backed by penalties) to provide such information. Lastly, he did not need to incur the costs of resolving disputes about tax allocation since communes—or at least their more powerful members—generally preferred to resolve conflicts internally. As one village officer in the Friedland commune of Mildenau put it after an internal communal conflict in 1650, it was unnecessary for villagers to 'inform and run to the manorial court, because this matter could well have been agreed out there in the village court'.<sup>40</sup> Or, as the Voshchazhnikovo estate commune put it in 1791, it was important for serfs to assemble as a commune and allocate seigneurial burdens 'among [themselves], respectfully . . . so that no-one causes offence to anyone else in any way'.<sup>41</sup>

Conversely, the oligarchy that dominated communal office-holding benefited by cooperating with manorial tax collection. If the communal oligarchy provided information about who owed taxes that spot-checks by manorial officials showed to be more-or-less accurate, then the oligarchy would be free to allocate these taxes among community members in ways that benefited itself. If the oligarchy collected these taxes reliably, the manor would seldom intervene in how taxes were distributed and would probably tolerate a share of tax receipts sticking to the oligarchs' fingers. And if the oligarchy resolved fiscal conflicts internally, it retained its autonomy in dispensing patronage and penalties within the commune. Thus both the communal oligarchy and the overlord had incentives to foster a communal

<sup>37</sup> RGADA, f. 1287, op. 3, ed. khr. 1712, l. 8 (report): 'poetomu odna dusha ostaets'ia na shchetu obshchestva'.

<sup>38</sup> SOAD HS, Kart. 78, Amtspr. 1627, fo. 2v, 5 Feb. 1627: 'Er betrüge sein herschafft Vndt die gantze gemeine'.

<sup>39</sup> RGADA, f. 1287, op. 3, ed. khr. 652, l. 32 (communal resolutions): 'plait' za nego kak kazennye ego ravno i podushnye a tak zhe krest'ianskie podati za budushchei revizii'.

<sup>40</sup> SOAD HS, Kart. 79, Amtspr. 1649–55, fo. 95v, 31 May 1650: 'es wehre aber nicht Vonnöthen gewehsen, dz er derthalben, dz Gräf.: Amt behölliget, Vndt vberloffen, Weilln dise händel woll in den gerichtten daraus hette Vertragen Khönnen Werden'.

<sup>41</sup> RGADA, f. 1287, op. 3, ed. khr. 2518, l. 6 (communal resolutions): 'zdelat' . . . nam krest'ianam mezhdou soboiu dobroporiadochno . . . [chtoby] drug druga ni v chem neobizhat'.

social capital of norms, information flow, and sanctions against deviance, and use it to facilitate tax-collection.

In practice, it was precisely because serf communes generated a rich social capital of norms, information, and collective sanctions that this fiscal system worked. The most important of the communal *norms* mobilized to ensure tax collection concerned 'good householding' or proper economic behaviour. Thus, for instance, in 1645 the Friedland commune of Raspenau complained that the peasant Adam Neuman was 'householding poorly, ruining his farm, and giving nothing at all to help the community',<sup>42</sup> and that the cottager Christoff Hiebig was failing to keep his cottage in good repair 'and giving nothing to the community'.<sup>43</sup> A related norm regularly invoked by Bohemian communes was that a female was not a 'full' or 'capable' householder (*tüchtige Wirt*) who could be relied on to pay her share of the communal tax burden. Communal officials and male relatives mobilized this norm to persuade manorial administrators to eject women from their farms.<sup>44</sup> Similar norms were held on the estate of Voshchazhnikovo, where in 1825 the commune of Malakhovo accused Ivan Sal'nikov of 'making no attempt to cultivate his fields at home; to this day, harvested grain stands unmilled, while that which has been milled lies in heaps; he even feeds his livestock unmilled oat sheaves'.<sup>45</sup> In 1841, the estate commune justified expelling Aleksandr Dolodanov on the grounds that 'he sits idly at home, neither engaging in any cottage industry nor cultivating his land', thereby burdening the rest of the commune with his unpaid taxes.<sup>46</sup> In 1843, the village commune of Voshchazhnikovo imposed two years' forced labour on Ivan Kalinin for 'drinking himself into a state of extreme poverty and leaving his mother and wife with nothing to live on',<sup>47</sup> while the Uslavtsevo commune likewise penalized Nikolai Zhelvakov for being 'extremely dissolute' and 'not cut out for peasant life'.<sup>48</sup> Norms of good householding were mobilized against these Voshchazhnikovo serfs precisely because, as deviants from such norms, they endangered the fiscal performance of their communes.

<sup>42</sup> SOAD HS, Kart. 78, Amtsprot. 1645, f. 25v, 31 May 1645: 'daß er übel hause, sein guet verwüste, vnd der gemeine ganz nichts zu hülf gebe'.

<sup>43</sup> SOAD HS, Kart. 78, Amtsprot. 1645, f. 25v, 31 May 1645: 'gibt auch nichts zu der Gemeine'.

<sup>44</sup> For a detailed examination of this practice, see Ogilvie and Edwards, 'Women and the second serfdom'. For an empirical and theoretical analysis of how communal social capital was deployed against women in western Germany at the same period, see Ogilvie, *Bitter living*; eadem, 'How does social capital affect women?'

<sup>45</sup> RGADA, f. 1287, op. 3, ed. khr. 914, l. 1 (petition): 'buduchi pri dome neimeyet po krest'ianstvu nikakogo staraniya poseyannoi im v poliakh i szhatoi uzhe khleb do nyneshnego vremeni stoit nemolochen, est li zhe chto i izmolocheno to vorokha lezhat' ... skotinu svoego kormit on ovsiannymi neobmolochennymi snopami'.

<sup>46</sup> RGADA, f. 1287, op. 3, ed. khr. 1537, l. 8 (petition): 'on po mnogim trebovaniem zaplatit' ne mog ibo promyslom nikakim ne zanimaliya v dolzhnost' ni v kakuju byl negoden i zhil pri dome svoem prazdno'.

<sup>47</sup> RGADA, f. 1287, op. 3, ed. khr. 1614, l. 6 (estate report): 'v p'ianstve dopel do krainogo bednogo sostoyaniia'; 'mat' i zhenu ostavil vo vse bez propitaniia'.

<sup>48</sup> RGADA, f. 1287, op. 3, ed. khr. 1614, l. 6 (estate report): 'ves'ma rasputen'; 'v krest'ianstve byt' vo vse ne godit'sa'.

The second component of communal social capital that sustained the fiscal system of these two serf societies consisted of accurate *information* flow within the face-to-face network of the village. This information was used by serf communes to monitor individual compliance with shared norms and, when necessary, to mobilize manorial pressure against deviants. Thus, for instance, in the early 1640s the Friedland commune of Hermsdorf observed that Simon Apelt had been 'leaving his farm lying and the longer it lies the more ruined it gets'; when Apelt applied for tax exemption in 1645, his commune conveyed this information to the manor, which authorized the commune to confiscate Apelt's farm unless he conducted his household better and paid his entire tax burden.<sup>49</sup> Mobilization of communal information flow was also central to taxation on the estate of Voshchaznikovo, where in 1807 any serf discovered not cultivating his communal allotment (on which seigneurial grain taxes were paid) was supposed to be fined, along with the communal officials for not reporting him and 'the residents of his village, since everyone ought to know whether their neighbours are cultivating their lands'.<sup>50</sup>

Collective *sanctions* were a third component of the communal social capital that sustained manorial taxation. In 1606, the Friedland manorial court explicitly authorized such communal sanctions, authorizing the village of Friedlanz, which had complained that one of its peasants was trying to avoid manorial labour services, 'to impose a half-*Taler* fine each time on anyone who fails to come [to do labour services] with his complete draft team or who altogether remains away'.<sup>51</sup> An even more costly sanction, endorsed by the manorial court, was for the whole commune to drink for an evening at the expense of villagers who failed to render their dues, as in 1613 when the Friedland commune of Raspenau drank at the expense of the shirking Matz Krausse and his son Christoff,<sup>52</sup> or in 1670 when three Friedland communes ran up a beer-tab of three *Gulden* at the expense of members who had absented themselves from demesne services.<sup>53</sup> Friedland communes also expropriated and ejected tax-dodgers, as in 1645 when the manor authorized the commune of Hermsdorf to eject one of its peasants and fill his farm with another holder unless he paid his dues within eight days,<sup>54</sup> or in 1685 when the widowed Anna Schmiedin was only reprieved from a communal attempt to eject her from her smallholding if she paid dues promptly in future.<sup>55</sup> The same communal sanctions, with the same

<sup>49</sup> SOAD HS, Kart. 78, Amtsprot. 1645, fo. 17v, 27 May 1645: 'last daß Guet ligen vnd ie lenger ie mehr verwüssten'.

<sup>50</sup> RGADA, f. 1287, op. 3, ed. khr. 555, l. 24: 'i togo seleniia zhiteli ibo kazhdoi o sosede svoem dolzhen znat' obrabotyvaet li on svoiu zemliu'.

<sup>51</sup> SOAD HS, Kart. 77, Amtsprot. 1604–6, fo. 50v, 7 Oct. 1606: 'wer aber mit seinen Zug nit vellig kommen oder gar aussenbleiben wurde, denselben solle so offt es geschehet, dj anderen aff ein [gstr. thaler] halber thaler zu vortrucken macht haben'.

<sup>52</sup> SOAD HS, Kart. 77, Amtsprot. 1611–16, fo. 61r, 30 July 1613.

<sup>53</sup> SOAD, HS, Kart. 82, Dekretb. Frýdlant 1677–8, p. 66, 14 Feb. 1678.

<sup>54</sup> SOAD HS, Kart. 78, Amtsprot. 1645, fo. 17v, 27 May 1645.

<sup>55</sup> SOAD HS, Kart. 709, Amtsprot. 1685–7, fo. 10v, 8 May 1685.

manorial endorsement, were imposed on Voshchazhnikovo serfs. Thus in 1804, the Voshchazhnikovo commune sentenced Dmitri Kouzov, Andre Kouzov, and Sergei Fyodorov to forced military service because they were 'constantly drunk and sowing discord' and 'living the most dissolute lives', thereby endangering the fiscal capacities of the entire commune.<sup>56</sup> In 1843, the estate commune passed a resolution ejecting nine serfs for failing to pay their dues.<sup>57</sup> Among these was Fyodor Gagarin of Semyonovskoe, who was ejected for 'drunkenness and a lackadaisical attitude to peasant life',<sup>58</sup> and Dmitry Shumilov of Voshchazhnikovo who 'works as a tailor and could very well pay his dues, but his drunkenness has put him in arrears'.<sup>59</sup> When Aleksandr Kotkov of the village of Strelki failed to pay his 1843 dues, his commune blocked his passport renewal unless he paid up.<sup>60</sup>

Mobilization of communal social capital for fiscal ends is brutally visible in the sphere of conscription. Both Bohemian and Russian communes mobilized collective norms, information, and sanctions to ensure smooth functioning of the military draft for the manorial administration. In 1712, for instance, the Friedland commune of Arnisdorf nominated for conscription its peasant Hanns Geörg Lünck, 'who for some time has shown himself a poor householder, and has been leading a dissolute, drunken life'.<sup>61</sup> Communes on the estate of Voshchazhnikovo elected as conscripts Gavriilo Skotkov of Semyonovskoe in 1804 for 'living a dissolute life as a vagrant, and not paying his taxes',<sup>62</sup> Ivan Sal'nikov of Malakhovo in 1825 for 'bad behaviour', poor householding, and 'suspicious activities',<sup>63</sup> and Filaret Plotnikov of Voshchazhnikovo in 1831 for vagrancy and 'unreliable behaviour'.<sup>64</sup> Being selected for conscription was not a mild communal sanction, as shown by the drastic step taken by Abraham Sommer, a cottager from the Friedland commune of Heinersdorf, who in 1739, 'for fear of having to become a recruit, iniquitously caused great injury to himself on two fingers of his left hand',<sup>65</sup> or by Semyon Sugrobov from the Voshchazhnikovo village

<sup>56</sup> RGADA, f. 1287, op. 3, ed. khr. 652, l. 37 (communal resolutions): 'vovsegdashnem p'ianstvom . . . i v razdorakh'; 'samye rasputnye zhizny'.

<sup>57</sup> RGADA, f. 1287, op. 3, ed. khr. 1614, l. 8 (report).

<sup>58</sup> RGADA, f. 1287, op. 3, ed. khr. 1614, l. 8 (report): 'nakopil na sebya nedoimki ot lenosti i neradenie po krest'ianstvu'.

<sup>59</sup> RGADA, f. 1287, op. 3, ed. khr. 1614, l. 8 (report): 'Shumilov zanimaets'ya portnichestvom i mog by oplachivat' podat' bezdoimochno . . . a v nedoimkakh cherez mednoe p'ianstvo'.

<sup>60</sup> RGADA, f. 1287, op. 3, ed. khr. 1635, l. 13 (communal resolutions). Russian serfs were required by law to hold passports if they wished to travel beyond the boundaries of the estates on which they lived.

<sup>61</sup> SOAD HS, Kart. 710, Bürgerbuch 1703–24, fo. 7v, 21 Jan. 1712: 'Welcher Zeithero Einen üblen Würth abgeben, Vnd Ein liderl.: Versoffenes leben geführt'.

<sup>62</sup> RGADA, f. 1287, op. 3, ed. khr. 652, l. 100 (communal resolutions): 'za zhitia tam v rasputstve i shataiushchem bez pachporta a tak zhe i za neplatezh i podatei'.

<sup>63</sup> RGADA, f. 1287, op. 3, ed. khr. 941, l. 8 (petition): 'krest'ianina Ivana Sal'nikova v rekrut otdat' za khudoe ego povedenie'; 'podozritel'nye postupki'.

<sup>64</sup> RGADA, f. 1287, op. 3, ed. khr. 1100, l. 1 (report): 'ego nepostoiannoie povedenie'.

<sup>65</sup> SOAD HS, Kart. 710, Bürgerbuch 1737–85, fo. 5r, 17 Feb. 1739: 'welcher sich auß forcht ein rekrout werden zu müssen, frehwentlicher weyß an 2 füngern an den Lincken hand grossen Schaden Verursachet'.

of Denis'evo, who was prosecuted in 1840 for seeking to avoid conscription by cutting off a finger on his left hand.<sup>66</sup>

It might be argued that at least communes were deploying their social capital for the collective benefit of all their members within the harsh vertical hierarchy of serfdom. But was this really so?

Communes enjoyed wide discretion in allocating taxes among their members, so 'the favour of the community' was crucial for an individual to survive the crippling dual burden of seigneurial and state taxation. Thus, for instance, in 1666, the highly indebted Martin Werner in the Friedland village of Tschirnhausen petitioned the manor for tax relief, but was told that first 'the community must be heard'.<sup>67</sup> In 1671, the poverty-stricken cottager Hanß Lindner petitioned for tax relief to help him feed his brood of small children, but the manorial court sent his petition 'over to the headman in Lieberwerda, so that [the headman] may consult the community'.<sup>68</sup> In 1685, the tax burden on a poor widow's smallholding in Hermsdorf was made explicitly dependent on her obtaining 'a good word from the community'.<sup>69</sup> On the Russian estate of Voshchazhnikovo, too, communal approval was essential for an individual to secure a favourable tax allocation. Thus in 1821, Andrei Sokolov of Nikolai na Pen'e petitioned to be assessed for dues separately from his father, but the manorial officials ordered that the commune 'should reach a decision about whether the petitioner should be allowed to be assessed separately'.<sup>70</sup> In 1841, when Vladimir Alekseyev of Arkhipovo petitioned to purchase a conscript rather than doing army service personally, the overlord made any favourable decision dependent on 'a resolution from the estate commune'.<sup>71</sup>

In practice, the favour of the commune often meant the favour of a privileged group of richer villagers and communal officials. In both Bohemia and Russia, ordinary serfs widely regarded communal fiscal decisions as instruments of a self-serving oligarchy. In 1649, for instance, serfs in the Friedland village of Bernsdorf began to suspect the small group of communal officers—the *Geschworenen*—of making excessive tax demands and keeping false registers. The conflict was only resolved by deciding that 'whenever a levy is proclaimed, someone from the community as well as a *Geschworener* shall help collect this levy from house to house, and the

<sup>66</sup> Russian serfs on other estates also resorted to self-mutilation to avoid the army. See for instance Hoch, *Serfdom and social control*, pp. 151–2.

<sup>67</sup> SOAD, HS, Kart. 81, Dekretb. Frýdlant 1665–7, p. 57, 15 May 1666: 'muß hierunter die gemeinde gehöret'.

<sup>68</sup> SOAD, HS, Kart. 81, Dekretb. Frýdlant 1669–72, p. 66, 1 June 1671: 'Dem Scholtzen Zu liewerde . . . auf daß Er sich mit der Gemeinde bereden'.

<sup>69</sup> SOAD HS, Kart. 709, Amtspr. 1685–7, fo. 10v, 8 May 1685: 'ein guttes wordt bey der gemeine'.

<sup>70</sup> RGADA, f. 1287, op. 3, ed. khr. 797, l. 3 (petition): 'pros'bu siiu otoslat' v voshchazhnikovskoe votchinnoe pravlenie dlia uchineniia s obshchestvom zakliuchenie, možno li i po chemu iskluchit' prositel'ia Sokolova iz ocherednoi knigi ot semeistva otsa ego'.

<sup>71</sup> RGADA, f. 1287, op. 3, ed. khr. 1532, l. 1 (petition): 'istrebovat' chrez Voshchazhnikovskoe votchinnoe pravlenie ot mirskogo obshchestva prigovora'.

registers shall also be properly kept by both parties'.<sup>72</sup> In 1833 Voshchazhnikov serfs accused their former estate clerk of working with the 'first-rank peasants' (*pervostateinnye krest'iane*)<sup>73</sup> to embezzle communal funds and forge communal accounts.<sup>74</sup>

Such views by ordinary villagers were justified. Fiscal cooperation between the vertical hierarchy of serfdom and the horizontal network of the commune gave communal officials power to allocate taxes in ways that benefited themselves. Thus, for instance, in 1586 the headman of the Friedland commune of Mildenau was known to have benefited personally by 'remaining silent about the dues owed by Jacob Willer there, and never reporting this man when the dues were paid'.<sup>75</sup> In 1610 a widow in Haindorf was punished by the communal court when she claimed that 'the communal elders take a mug of beer and speak as the headman likes to hear them' and that 'the community headman speaks a good word in the manorial court and then someone's linen yarn would be well accepted'.<sup>76</sup> Bribery was so common on the estate of Voshchazhnikov that the Count Sheremetyev issued a decree in 1768 that 'forbade under threat of fine the bribing of any communal official',<sup>77</sup> an ordinance that had so little effect that another anti-bribery decree was specially formulated in 1800.<sup>78</sup> Even then, it was well-known among Voshchazhnikov serfs in 1835 that 'if any serf should wish to request something, he must not go to [the bailiff] empty-handed'.<sup>79</sup> In present-day less-developed economies, corruption not only significantly reduces economic efficiency, but its costs fall disproportionately on the most unfortunate members of society; this makes it the more probable that the corruption encouraged by communal social capital in pre-modern economies damaged equity as well as efficiency.<sup>80</sup>

Communal officials exploited their fiscal powers not only by demanding bribes, but by distorting tax allocation in their own interests. In the Friedland village of Schönwalda, it emerged in 1685 that the senior community elder 'does not go out to do the *Roboten* [manorial labour services] with his draft

<sup>72</sup> SOAD HS, Kart. 79, Amtsprot. 1649–55, fo. 19v–20r, 7 Dec. 1649: 'hinführo ie Vndt allezeit so oft ein Steuer od. anlage angesaget Wurden, nebst einen geschwornen einer Von d. Gemeinde . . . gedachte Steuer Vndt anlage Von haus Zu haus einnahmen helffen, Vndt beynebst ihre Register Zu beyden theyllen richtig halten'.

<sup>73</sup> These were the wealthiest serfs on the estate. The 'first rank' included only those who could claim earnings and assets worth over 1,000 roubles.

<sup>74</sup> RGADA, f. 1287, op. 3, ed. khr. 2556 (communal resolutions).

<sup>75</sup> SOAD HS, Kart. 77, Amtsprot. 1583–92, fo. 26r, 27 May 1586: 'er Jacob willern daselbst, mit den Zinsen vier Jahr hero vorschwiegen vnd denselben wen man die Zinß erlegt Zu Kainer Zeit angemeldet'.

<sup>76</sup> SOAD HS, Kart. 77, Amtsprot. 1609–11, fo. 34r, 16 Mar. 1610: 'die Eltesten nehmen eine Kannenbier, Vnnd redeten, wie der Scholtze gerne hörete, Item ettwan ehr im Amt. ein gütte wort geredet hette, wehr das garn wohl angenommen worden'.

<sup>77</sup> Rossiiskii Gosudarstvennyi Istoricheskii Arkhiv (hereafter RGIA), f. 1088, op. 7, d. 505 (decree): 'o zapreshchenii pod ugrozoi shtrafa davat' vziatki dolzhnostnym litsam votchinnogo pravleniia'.

<sup>78</sup> RGADA, f. 1287, op. 3, ed. khr. 555, ll. 56–8 (instructions).

<sup>79</sup> RGADA, f. 1287, op. 3, ed. khr. 1256, l. 3 (petition): 'est li kto iz nas nizhaishikh k nemu Tizengauzu iavit'sya i prosit onago, to s pustymi rukami ne khodi'.

<sup>80</sup> For evidence on the effects of corruption on equity and efficiency in the modern less-developed world, see, for instance, Hunt, 'How corruption hits people when they are down', pp. 1–4, 19.



animals when he is ordered along with the other peasants, but rather pursues his own trade and affairs, and sends his draft team out into the countryside, whereby . . . the rest of the serfs [in the commune] are burdened the more'.<sup>81</sup> On the estate of Voshchazhnikovo in 1835, it was widely known that bailiff Tizengauzen was 'using his position for his own self-interest' by arbitrarily levying new taxes from ordinary serfs for his own profit.<sup>82</sup>

Not just the communal officials, but a wider oligarchy of their cronies and kin, exploited the fiscal cooperation between manor and commune to their own ends. On the estate of Friedland, for instance, in 1591 the headman of Einsiedel was known to be leaving himself and his friends off the village swine-register, thereby avoiding manorial dues.<sup>83</sup> The same happened on the Russian estate, where in 1807 the Voshchazhnikovo bailiff was allowing his friends Nikolai and Kozma Popov, along with other wealthy serfs, to under-report earnings and dodge taxes.<sup>84</sup>

In particular, the upper rural social strata exploited their control over communal offices by allocating taxes at the expense of the less well-off. In the Friedland commune of Rückerdsdorf in 1645, the stratum of full peasants, in collusion with the village officers (all themselves full peasants), sought to alter the communal allocation of taxes to their own advantage, at the expense of the (much poorer) smallholders and cottagers.<sup>85</sup> By 1687 the smallholders in Raspenau regarded the full peasants who dominated communal offices with such suspicion that they absolutely refused to contribute to an extraordinary communal levy for paying off the village arrears, 'desiring to separate themselves from the peasants' and the communal officeholders.<sup>86</sup> At Voshchazhnikovo, it was frequently complained that wealthy serfs conspired with communal officials to avoid dues by under-reporting earnings.<sup>87</sup> An 1833 petition against the former estate clerk, Ivan Slasnikov, described 'dissatisfaction on behalf of many residents of the village of Voshchazhnikovo because, on the instructions of the first-rank peasants of Voshchazhnikovo village, Slasnikov was collecting up to 2,000 roubles each year from other estate villages, which they [the first-rank peasants] distributed among themselves, and for which they rendered no accounts'.<sup>88</sup>

<sup>81</sup> SOAD HS, Kart. 709, Amtspr. 1685–7, fo. 11v–12r, 22 May 1685: 'dz Er nebst den andern Pawren wan Es gebothen wirdt, mit seinem Zueg Viech, nicht Auf die Robothen, aufZiehe, Sonndern suchte sein handel und wanndel, vnndt schicket sein Zueg ins Lanndt, dardurch . . . die übrieg. unterthannen dardurch destomehr beschweret'.

<sup>82</sup> RGADA, f. 1287, op. 3, ed. khr. 1256 (petition): 'v pol'zu ego korystoliubie'.

<sup>83</sup> SOAD HS, Kart. 77, Amtspr. 1583–92, fo. 88r, 20 Nov. 1591.

<sup>84</sup> RGADA, f. 1287, op. 3, ed. khr. 668 (petition).

<sup>85</sup> SOAD HS, Kart. 78, Amtspr. 1645, fo. 20r, 29 May 1645.

<sup>86</sup> SOAD HS, Kart. 709, Amtspr. 1687–92, fo. 26r, 8 Nov. 1687: 'sich . . . von denen Pauren ab sondern wollen'.

<sup>87</sup> RGADA, f. 1287, op. 3, ed. khr. 2556 (communal resolutions).

<sup>88</sup> RGADA, f. 1287, op. 3, ed. khr. 2556, l. 33 (communal resolution): 'po iz'iavlennomu ot mnogikh odnogo togo sela Voshchazhnikova zhitelei neudovolstviia, chto on Slasnikov s prochikh Voshchazhnikovskoi votchiny selenii, po porucheniiu pervostateinnykh sela Voshchazhnikova, sobiraet sleduiushchuiu semu summu prostiraiushchuiusya kazhdogodno do 2000 rublyev rasporiiazhatsya po svoemu proizvolu, i im v nei nedaet otchetu'.

In these two serf economies, therefore, the horizontal network of the commune collaborated with the vertical hierarchy of feudalism to ensure tax collection. Under both widely differing variants of serfdom, communes generated a rich social capital of shared norms, low-cost information, and effective sanctions against deviants. Serf communes used this social capital not to evade manorial exactions but to collaborate with them. One reason was to protect the whole commune from manorial retribution for failure to pay taxes. But communal social capital also enabled a well-off village elite to engage in rent-seeking, redistributing resources to itself from poorer villagers.

### III

A second major sphere in which horizontal social capital and vertical hierarchies collaborated under serfdom was in controlling access to natural resources.<sup>89</sup> Because serfs paid taxes to the manor on land, woods, and water, the overlord had an interest in intervening to ensure that such property was owned and used only by those who would reliably pay. In principle, the overlord reserved the right to disallow any allocation or transfer of property rights. Thus the Friedland manorial court annulled a land sale in Liebwerda in 1607 on the grounds that it had only gone forward on the basis of a forged manorial ratification certificate and hence ‘seller and buyer had dealt counter to the lord’s ordinance’.<sup>90</sup> In 1840 the Voshchazhnikovo serf Vasily Slasnikov was prohibited from selling any part of the land he owned in the district of Uglich unless he petitioned the manorial officials for permission.<sup>91</sup>

But, as these two cases illustrate, the serf commune was also closely involved in regulating property rights: the Liebwerda sale of 1607 involved presenting forged documents in the *communal* court, and the Voshchazhnikovo petition of 1840 involved securing approval from commune as well as manor. Manorial officials were too few, too costly, and too distant to monitor and enforce compliance with rules governing land access and property rights. As a result, overlords had an interest in making communes, with their unpaid local officeholders, collectively responsible for evaluating resource issues and enforcing manorial rules, while reserving manorial veto rights. Thus, for instance, in 1675 the lord of Friedland only permitted Christoph Neuman to divide his full peasant holding and sell one-half to a new holder, ‘in consideration of the fact that the community in Hermsdorf

<sup>89</sup> Conflicts between overlords and communes about tenure rights and inheritance practices (particularly partibility versus impartibility of farms) did not arise on the estates of Voshchazhnikovo or Friedland, unlike the situation described for southwest Germany in Sabeau, *Property*; and Sreenivasan, *Peasants*.

<sup>90</sup> SOAD HS, Kart. 309, Amtsprot. 1607–8, pag. 1337, 15 Dec. 1607: ‘weil . . . verkauffer vnd keuffer wieder des herrn ordnung gehandelt’.

<sup>91</sup> RGADA, f. 1287, op. 3, ed. khr. 1480 ll. 2–4 (petition).

does not have any objection to the petitioner's application'.<sup>92</sup> In 1840, when a serf petitioned for permission to sell some of his landholdings, the Voshchazhnikovo manorial administration referred to his commune, which ultimately permitted the sale after ascertaining that 'none of us serfs on the estate wishes to purchase the land'.<sup>93</sup>

Communal officials had several incentives to cooperate with manorial land regulations. For one thing, collective responsibility for tax quotas gave the commune good reason to allocate property rights to reliable tax-payers. Second, the communal officers were penalized if they failed to report known violations of land regulations. Lastly, as long as communal officers reliably regulated property rights in matters that affected manorial interests, in matters irrelevant to the overlord they enjoyed wide discretion, which they could then exercise to benefit themselves. The communal oligarchy and the overlord thus had strong reasons to encourage the use of communal social capital to monitor and regulate land access.

Unsurprisingly, therefore, access to land under serfdom depended crucially on the social capital of norms, information, and sanctions generated by serf communes. Shared communal *norms* ensured that individuals who used their land 'incapably' were regarded as deviants endangering the whole village. This resulted in 'statistical discrimination' against subgroups—such as women—whom communal norms defined as incapable. Thus, for instance, one Friedland commune reported in 1645 that the village council had 'found' (that is, decided, based on the norm that women were not 'full' or 'capable' farmers) that Hans Huebner's widow 'cannot manage this farm', and for this reason intended to eject her and sell it, against her protests, to a male farmer. It might be argued that this was not a communal norm, but rather simply an objective fact, were it not for the belief of this widow that she could manage her farm; many other widows held the same belief. Indeed, the male holder preferred by the commune was himself unable to pay the burdens on the farm and had to be bribed with a year's tax exemption to take it on.<sup>94</sup> The same gender norms about who was a capable user of land can be observed on the Russian estate, as in 1775 when the widow Alyona Fyodorova was regarded as not being an acceptable holder of an allotment of taxable land in Voshchazhnikovo and was ejected from it 'by communal resolution, because she has only daughters and no sons'.<sup>95</sup>

Communal social capital also took the form of *information* transmission, whereby an individual's use of his property swiftly became known to other

<sup>92</sup> SOAD, HS, Kart. 81, Dekretb. Frýdlant 1674–6, p. 39, 29 May 1675: 'In Consideration, daß die Gemeinde Zu hermsdorff, gegen Supplicantens Ansuchen nichts Ein Zu wenden'.

<sup>93</sup> RGADA, f. 1287, op. 3, ed. khr. 1480 ll. 2–4 (petition): 'kak na pokupku oznachennoi pustoshi Metlinou iz sredi nas odnovotchinnykh krest'ian okhotnikov net, a potomu k prodazhe onoi na storonu so storony svoei prepriadstviia ne imeetsya'.

<sup>94</sup> SOAD HS, Kart. 78, Amtsprot. 1645, fo. 58v, 01 July 1645: 'die Gerichte auch befund., daß die hinderlassene Wittib solchen guet nit vorstehen . . . könnte'.

<sup>95</sup> RGIA, f. 1088, op. 7, ed. khr. 551, l. 1 (petition): 'po mirskomu prigovoru otnimaetsya dlia togo chto imeiu ya nizhaishaia docheri a ne synov'ia'.

members of the village and was reported to the overlord. Thus in 1645 it was commonly known within the Friedland commune of Liebwerda that Michael Leubner was 'leaving his farm standing deserted, yet making use of the plots and grasseries on it, and is doing no services for the manor, and paying nothing to the help of the community'. This horizontal information flow within the village was transmitted via a complaint from the commune to the manorial court, which authorized the commune to 'sell the farm and fill it with another holder'.<sup>96</sup> Likewise in 1839 the information that Ivan Yablokov had arranged to sell a piece of his own privately held land to an outsider became known within his commune of Vioski, which transmitted it to the manorial administrators, who duly declared the sale illegal on the grounds that 'he did not offer the land to his fellow estate serfs'.<sup>97</sup>

A final component of communal social capital consisted of collective *sanctions*, imposed at the discretion of the communal officeholders. In 1650 when the Friedland commune of Heinersdorf complained that one of its peasants had been stealing wood, abusing village officers, and causing conflict among neighbours, the manor agreed that 'because with the situation as it is Tobias Streit can do no good from now on in the community, the village council and commune shall find another purchaser for the farm, with whom the farm shall be feudally registered and with whom they [the commune] can be satisfied'.<sup>98</sup> Likewise in 1775, when the commune of Voshchazhnikovo decided that a particular widow was unable to cultivate her taxable allotment and satisfactorily render the taxes on it, she was summarily ejected from the land 'and forced to wander around the commune begging, which did make it possible for her to feed her children though not herself'.<sup>99</sup>

Communal officials did not just act as agents of the manor, but enjoyed wide discretion over the allocation of property rights. Consequently, obtaining 'the favour of the commune' was essential for securing access to essential natural resources, and lacking communal favour could be fatal. In 1617, the headman and sworn-men of the Friedland commune of Liebwerda appropriated a large section of Christoff Rösseler's smallholding 'so that they and many others could drive their cattle out and in'; their only justification was that Rösseler's father had never paid any dues on this section of

<sup>96</sup> SOAD HS, Kart. 78, Amtsprot. 1645, fo. 29r, 1 June 1645: 'daß er sich Vnderstehe auf seinem gutt welches er wüst stehen lassen die pläne vnd gräserej zugebrauchen, vndt der obrig. kein dienst thue, [inserted: auch der Gemain nichts zu hülfß gebe]'; 'die Gemain soll daß Guet verkhauffen vnd mit einem andern wüth besetzen'.

<sup>97</sup> RGADA, f. 1287, op. 3, ed. khr. 1438, l. 1 (petition): 'on ne otdaet v sodержanii odnovotchinnyim krest'ianam zemli'.

<sup>98</sup> SOAD HS, Kart. 79, Amtsprot. 1649–55, fo. 62v, 31 Jan. 1650: 'Gerichten Undt gemeinde . . . soltn . . . Weilln bey beschaffenen sachen förders in der gemeinde Thobias Streit nichts guthes schaffen möchte, Zu dem Guthe einen andern Kauffman ausrichten, hiermit dz guth geurbart, Vndt sie Mit friden Khenten bleiben'.

<sup>99</sup> RGIA, f. 1088, op. 7, ed. khr. 551, l. 1 (petition): 'i prinuzhdaet khodit' po miru i prosit' milostym chem zhe mogu prokormit' svoikh detei' a mne milostyneiu prokormit' ne mozžno'.

his land and they, as the major livestock owners in the village, wanted to use it.<sup>100</sup> In 1618, the headman, elders, and whole community of Neustadt ‘took two rented plots away from two persons’ before their leases were up; the only justification was that ‘it concerns the entire community and they are very worried about the herding’.<sup>101</sup> The same pattern can be observed on the estate of Voshchazhnikovo, as in 1824 when Vasily Krasavin found that his commune had allocated him a taxable allotment that was so far away he could not possibly cultivate it.<sup>102</sup> Likewise, in 1844 the Voshchazhnikovo commune of Dem’ian refused to allocate any communal land to Pytor Shepelev, even though he claimed always to have paid his manorial dues on time.<sup>103</sup>

In practice, the favour of the commune often meant the favour of a privileged subgroup within the village. Immigrants and non-relatives of the village oligarchy faced discrimination in communal land allocation decisions. In 1618 Michell Petzelt complained that the Lusdorf village council decided a boundary dispute against him because ‘he was foreign [*fremd*], and the village headman and village justices were each other’s kin’.<sup>104</sup> In 1650 an outsider who had taken on a peasant holding in Heinersdorf complained that ‘the headman and sworn-men were boozing away not only what he owned but what every person in the entire community owned’. This led the village officers to report him to the manorial court, demanding that ‘as an example to others, he be punished properly as an offender, defamer and disobedient serf’; ultimately they expropriated his farm and ejected him from the village.<sup>105</sup> In like manner, the Voshchazhnikovo village commune arbitrarily decided in 1791 that most of those villagers temporarily absent as migrant labourers in cities should lose their communal allotments—even though their families were cultivating and paying taxes on them—and that the land should instead be given local residents with the ear of the communal administration.<sup>106</sup> In 1844, one Voshchazhnikovo serf complained that communal officials were arbitrarily denying him access to communal land, instead leasing it to outsiders in return for lavish payments.<sup>107</sup>

Ordinary serfs on both estates regarded communal officials as profiting personally from their control over property rights—unsurprisingly, since the

<sup>100</sup> SOAD HS, Kart. 78, Amtsprot. 1616–19, fo. 29r, 11 Aug. 1617: ‘darmit sie Vnd meniglichen ihr Viehe Köndten aus Vnd eintreyben’.

<sup>101</sup> SOAD HS, Kart. 78, Amtsprot. 1616–19, fo. 110r, 7 July 1618: ‘Zwene Zins plähne Zweien Persohnen abgenommen’; ‘weil es aber die ganze gemeine betreffen Thuet Vnd dieselbe sonsten mit der hutung sehr betrübet’.

<sup>102</sup> RGADA, f. 1287, op. 3, ed. khr. 915, l. 2 (petition).

<sup>103</sup> RGADA, f. 1287, op. 3, ed. khr. 1635, l. 50 (communal resolution).

<sup>104</sup> SOAD HS, Kart. 78, Amtsprot. 1616–9, fo. 122v, 8 Oct. 1618: ‘ehr wehre Frembde, Schultes Vnd Schoppen wehre Freünde’.

<sup>105</sup> SOAD HS, Kart. 79, Amtsprot. 1649–55, fo. 63r–v, 31 Jan. 1650: ‘thette doch Scholtz Vndt geschworne ihm nicht allein dz seinige, sondern auch allen leüthen in der gantzen Gemeinde dz ihrige Versauffen’; ‘als einen Verbrecher, Iniurianten Vndt Vngehorsamben Vndterthannen andern Zum Exempel der gebühr abstraffen’.

<sup>106</sup> RGADA, f. 1287, op. 3, ed. khr. 2518, l. 6 (communal resolution).

<sup>107</sup> RGADA, f. 1287, op. 3, ed. khr. 1635, l. 50 (communal resolution).

collaborative alliance between the vertical hierarchy of serfdom and the horizontal network of the commune gave communal officials power to do precisely this. Thus, for instance, in the Friedland village of Hermsdorf in 1604, Jacob Geler accused the communal officers of taking bribes in return for favourable judgments on boundary disputes.<sup>108</sup> Throughout 1604 and 1605 Paul Hoffmann repeatedly complained that the Hohenwalda village office-holders were moving field boundaries and allocating communal wood fraudulently to profit themselves.<sup>109</sup> In 1606 Paul Seliger complained that a Bernsdorf communal elder, in inspecting the route of a village road, was 'taking gifts and donations in order to obtain a benefit for himself on his [Seliger's] farm'.<sup>110</sup> In 1611 Georg Walter of Mildenau complained that the community headman had for a long time been exploiting his office and seeking to get his hands on Walter's farm.<sup>111</sup> In 1685, two ordinary villagers accused the Priedlanz headman of taking sheep from the communal flock without payment, but were gaoled when the other communal officers testified in the headman's support.<sup>112</sup> Ordinary serfs on the estate of Voshchazhnikovo made strikingly similar complaints. Thus in 1820 the widow Michurina complained that the Voshchazhnikovo communal officers had confiscated privately held land purchased by her deceased husband and sold it to outsiders for their own profit.<sup>113</sup> In 1822, Fyodor Krasavin and Grigory Kliapyshev publicly accused the Voshchazhnikovo communal elder of selling wood illegally to outsiders, but were swiftly punished 'for rudeness and insubordination before the communal officials'.<sup>114</sup> In 1833, the communal clerk Ivan Slasnikov was found to be exploiting his office by illegally selling communal meadowland to outsiders 'for a significant sum'.<sup>115</sup> In 1844 Pyotr Shepelev complained that the Dem'ian communal officials were profiting at his expense by leasing his share of communal land to outsiders.<sup>116</sup>

Not just the communal officials, but a wider oligarchy of their kin and cronies, exploited communes' discretion over resource access in their own interests. In 1601 the headman of the Friedland commune of Haindorf was corruptly permitting friends and associates special access to fishing waters by virtue of his communal office.<sup>117</sup> In 1645, Hans Welsch complained that before he bought a farm in Liebwerda, the village headman had illegally sold off one of its oxen for his own profit and one of its arable fields to the

<sup>108</sup> SOAD HS, Kart. 77, Amtsprot. 1604–6, fo. 19r, 28 Aug. 1604.

<sup>109</sup> SOAD HS, Kart. 77, Amtsprot. 1604–6, fo. 13v, 10 July 1604; SOAD HS, Kart. 77, Amtsprot. 1604–6, fo. 44r, 20.10.1605.

<sup>110</sup> SOAD HS, Kart. 57, Bürgerschaftsbuch 1593–1610, fo. 76r, 4 Jan. 1606: 'er geschenck vnnd gaben nehme, Im ein dienstbarkait auf sein Guett zuetreiben'.

<sup>111</sup> SOAD HS, Kart. 77, Amtsprot. 1611–16, fo. 7r, 15 July 1611.

<sup>112</sup> SOAD HS, Kart. 709, Amtsprot. 1685–7, fo. 16r, 4 Aug. 1685.

<sup>113</sup> RGADA, f. 1287, op. 3, ed. khr. 745 (petition).

<sup>114</sup> RGADA, f. 1287, op. 3, ed. khr. 800, l. 8 (petition): 'o khudom povedenii i delaemykh . . . protiv nachal'stva grubostiakh i nepovinoventii'.

<sup>115</sup> RGADA, f. 1287, op. 3, ed. khr. 2556, l. 20 (communal resolution): 'prodaval postoronnyim krest'ianam . . . na nemaluju summu'.

<sup>116</sup> RGADA, f. 1287, op. 3, ed. khr. 1635, l. 50 (communal resolution).

<sup>117</sup> SOAD HS, Kart. 57, Bürgerschaftsbuch 1593–1610, fo. 48r, 30 Aug. 1601.

headman's own son-in-law.<sup>118</sup> The same pattern can be observed on the estate of Voshchazhnikovo, where in 1807 the bailiff Dmitri Slasnikov was corruptly allocating land to friends and associates: thus Slasnikov's crony Aleksei Chernikhin was allowed to use communal land for his brick manufactory despite protests from ordinary villagers.<sup>119</sup> Likewise in 1835 the Voshchazhnikovo bailiff Tizengauzen was 'using his position for his own self-interest' through allocating communal resources, particularly access to communal woodland, to favoured associates.<sup>120</sup>

Evidence on land access is fully consistent with findings on tax allocation. In both Russia and Bohemia, serf communes disposed of an impressive stock of social capital. This took the form of shared norms, by which land resources were allocated to 'capable holders', males, those regarded as likely to pay taxes reliably—or those who enjoyed the favour of the communal officials. Communal social capital took the form of swift information transmission, whereby any villager's use of land was known generally within the commune, making it possible to limit his access—even to supposedly 'private' property—if necessary by obtaining manorial endorsement. Lastly, communal social capital took the form of collective sanctions, whereby villagers could lose their access to land at the discretion of communal officials. As serfdom functioned on a day-to-day basis, communes used their social capital not to evade the overlord's regulation of land access, but to cooperate with it. One motive was certainly to protect the commune from collective retribution for individual violations of manorial regulations. But this collaboration between the horizontal social capital of the commune and the vertical hierarchy of serfdom also enabled a well-off rural oligarchy to redistribute resources to itself at the expense of weaker members of society.

#### IV

A third major sphere in which the vertical hierarchy of feudalism was assisted rather than opposed by the horizontal social capital of the commune was the regulation of demographic decisions. Emigration threatened manorial revenues, so would-be migrants were either altogether forbidden to leave, compelled to forfeit their property, or required to purchase expensive migration permits. Immigration was restricted if newcomers competed with established, taxpaying serfs or annoyed members of the village elite. Inter-village migration within the estate was controlled in the interests of maintaining the fiscal capacities of smaller villages or placating powerful groups within communes. Settlement was regulated through ejection of villagers who paid taxes poorly, behaved rebelliously, or irritated the communal oligarchs. Household structure was regulated by prohibiting household fissions that threatened manorial tax revenues or, conversely, ordering a

<sup>118</sup> SOAD HS, Kart. 78, Amtspr. 1645, fo. 28r, 1 June 1645.

<sup>119</sup> RGADA, f. 1287, op. 3, ed. khr. 668, (petition).

<sup>120</sup> RGADA, f. 1287, op. 3, ed. khr. 1256 (petition): 'v pol'zu ego korystoliubiia'.

household to split if internal conflicts threatened its taxpaying capacity. Lastly, nuptiality was regulated by requiring couples to obtain permits, which yielded fee revenue and prevented marriages that threatened manorial interests. Overlords also sometimes ordered individuals to marry or remarry, usually to ensure formation of a viable taxpaying household.

Manorial authorities in both Bohemia and Russia reserved the right to order and prohibit serf migration, settlement, and marriage. But in practice they devolved enforcement to the communes, which were held collectively responsible for monitoring local serfs' demographic behaviour. When the peasant Christoph Buchelt absconded from Arnsdorf in 1676, for instance, the Friedland manorial court ordered that

the headman, sworn-men, and community-people there shall get the said Christoph Buchelt back again and deliver him without fail to this place on pain of a fine of 30 *Schock*; otherwise they shall deliver without fail the said 30 *Schock* in money into our rent receipts, because it is impossible that everything of his running away had gone completely unnoticed and that there was therefore no knowledge of it in the community.<sup>121</sup>

At Voshchazhnikovo, likewise, a 1764 ordinance required serfs to report runaways to manorial officials within one week on pain of a communal fine.<sup>122</sup> In 1847, all Voshchazhnikovo serfs were ordered 'to engage in careful observation, and to report any unauthorized household divisions to the estate management immediately'.<sup>123</sup>

Communal officials had several strong incentives to enforce manorial demographic policies. For one thing, manorial devolution of demographic regulation to the communes put officeholders in the front line to be penalized if violations were detected. Second, collective tax quotas ensured that communes shared overlords' fiscal incentives to regulate migration, settlement, and marriage so as to reduce risks of tax default. Lastly, as long as communal officers reliably regulated serfs' demographic behaviour in matters that affected manorial interests, they enjoyed discretion to regulate other demographic matters in their own interests.

Communal social capital played a key role in enforcing demographic regulations. Villagers violating communal norms by 'householding badly', incurring debts, drinking excessively, or defaulting on taxes could find their demographic choices blocked. Thus in 1604 the Friedland commune of Oberweigsdorf decided that the widow Teschnerin was failing to maintain

<sup>121</sup> SOAD, HS, Kart. 81, Dekretb. Frýdlant 1676–7, p. 54, 19 Oct. 1676: 'daß der Scholtze, Geschworne, Vndt Gemeines-Leüthe daselbst, bey 30 sßo straff, besagten Christoph buchelt, hienwiederumben Verschaffen, Vnnd Vnnfehlbahr Zur stell bringen: Wiedrigen fahls sie erwehnte 30 sßo geldes, Vnnnachleßig in Vnßere Renthen abführen sollen, Weiln Vnnmöglichen ist, daß man in der Gemeinde, Von seinem weg Lauffen nicht solte waß Vermercket, Vnnd alßo wissenschafft gehabt haben'.

<sup>122</sup> RGADA, f. 1287, op. 3, ed. khr. 1305, l. 8 (instructions).

<sup>123</sup> RGADA, f. 1287, op. 3, ed. khr. 1766, l. 3 (decree): 'ob'yavit' . . . vsem krest'ianam s podpiskoi, chtoby pervye iz nikh imeli bditel'noe nabliudenie za samovol'nymi razdelami krest'ianami i donosili by votchinnomu pravleniiu o takovykh nemedlenno'.



her farm adequately, so she was given the choice between marrying off her eldest daughter or being ejected.<sup>124</sup> In 1629, Hans Eckert's widow was only permitted to remarry when her commune of Weigsdorf confirmed that she had sold her smallholding to an acceptable holder and paid her debts, 'so that there is no hindrance'.<sup>125</sup> In 1805, the commune of Voshchazhnikovo made Dmitry Slasnikov's marriage permit conditional on his commune's assessment of his 'financial status'.<sup>126</sup> In 1825 the commune of Malakhovo decided that one of its villagers, Ivan Sal'nikov, was 'suspect', on the grounds that 'he managed his household badly and had no way of providing for his family; what's more, people who were certainly thieves paid visits to him in the night'.<sup>127</sup> Consequently, 'the entire neighbourhood requested that the estate authorities remove this dangerous peasant from our village'.<sup>128</sup> Migration, marriage, and settlement were thus dependent on demonstrating compliance with communal economic norms.

A second set of communal norms governed gender. A woman who violated norms of sexual behaviour or occupational demarcations could face serious demographic penalties. The 26-year-old Helena Güntzelin from the Friedland commune of Göhe, for instance, was supporting her epileptic younger sister in 1681 by working as a farm labourer, when she was impregnated by her widowed mistress's 18-year-old son. On the widow's insistence, the commune ejected Güntzelin from the village 'so that she [the widow] could keep house with her son the more restfully'.<sup>129</sup> In 1841, the Voshchazhnikovo village commune opposed letting a 'suspect female' from outside the estate continue to lodge with a local peasant. Communal desires to eject her were based solely on a wild rumour that she 'makes her living by gathering information about the location of grain storage facilities in various villages, and giving that information to thieves who, in return, pay her a commission'.<sup>130</sup>

A third set of norms related to intra-communal conflict. The Friedland village of Heinersdorf ejected Anthonius Schwedler in 1590 for repeated conflict with his neighbours,<sup>131</sup> and in 1650 ejected Tobias Streit for stirring up unrest within the community.<sup>132</sup> In 1833, the village of Voshchazhnikovo

<sup>124</sup> SOAD HS, Kart. 77, Amtsprot. 1604–6, fo. 4v, 6 Mar. 1604.

<sup>125</sup> SOAD HS, Kart. 78, Amtsprot. 1629, fo. 9v, 12 June 1629: 'dz gar Kin Hinder nis'.

<sup>126</sup> RGADA, f. 1287, op. 3, ed. khr. 652, l. 47: 'kakoi on imeet kapital'.

<sup>127</sup> RGADA, f. 1287, op. 3, ed. khr. 914, l. 1 (petition): 'podozrevaem my Sal'nikova . . . ibo po domashnemu ego ne radeniiu o krest'ianstve za neimeniem khleba propityvaetsya emu s semeistvom ni chem a priezhchait'sya k nemu noch'iu liudi est' deistvitel'nye vory'.

<sup>128</sup> RGADA, f. 1287, op. 3, ed. khr. 914, l. 1 (petition): 'my vse sosedov'ia . . . prosim votchinnoe pravlenie sего opasnogo krest'ianina iz derevi nashei udalit'.

<sup>129</sup> SOAD HS, Kart. 61, Amtsprot. 1674–81, fo. 49r, 25 June 1681: 'auf das sie mit dem Sohn desto geruhsamer im Gutte haufhalten möchten'.

<sup>130</sup> RGADA, f. 1287, op. 3, ed. khr. 1537, l. 8 (petition): '[ona] imela i imeet svoi promysel tem chto razvedyvaet'sa i vysmatrivaet'sa v raznykh mestakh po okol'nym seleniem v mestopolozhenii gornits zhitnits i kladovykh podvodit'sa k onym dlia krazhi vorov i poluchaet ot nikh za to nagradu'.

<sup>131</sup> SOAD HS, Kart. 77, Amtsprot. 1583–92, fo. 63v, 5 Jan. 1590.

<sup>132</sup> SOAD HS, Kart. 79, Amtsprot. 1649–55, fo. 62v, 31 Jan. 1650.

‘resolved unanimously . . . to banish [Grigory] Pavlov from our community’ because he ‘created discord among neighbours’.<sup>133</sup>

A final set of communal norms related to mobility itself. An individual—especially a woman—regarded by her commune as excessively mobile might be refused the right to settle or receive poor relief, thereby ensuring that she remained a vagrant. The Friedland commune of Wiesa decided in 1687 to eject a deserted wife called ‘die Maxin’ as soon as she gave birth to her next child, on the grounds that she was a ‘vagrant’ and already bore a poor reputation from another commune.<sup>134</sup> Likewise, in 1824 the commune of Voshchazhnikovo denied a widow poor relief on the grounds that ‘if she were not . . . prone to vagrancy, she would be able to support herself with her own labour’.<sup>135</sup>

These village norms could not have been used to support demographic regulation without the second component of communal social capital—efficient *information* flow. The suspicious disappearance of Michael Walter from the Friedland village of Raspenau in 1610 was remarked by his neighbours and promptly reported to the manor partly because he failed to appear at the tavern on Sunday afternoon, as was customary for all male householders in the village.<sup>136</sup> In 1706, a communal ‘suspicion’ arose in the Friedland commune of Lusdorf that Zacharias Schmid’s widow ‘might abscond and leave her 4 small children behind’. The communal officials conveyed this information to the manorial court so that the widow could be compelled to provide pledges to stay put.<sup>137</sup> In 1785, the Voshchazhnikovo commune of Kanditovo possessed such extensive information about the economic circumstances of Stepan Shelekhov that when he applied for permission to migrate to another village of the estate on the grounds that ‘his house in Kanditovo had burned down and he was too poor to build another’, his commune was in a position to declare confidently that Shelekhov was not so poor as he claimed, and to demand that he remain in Kanditovo.<sup>138</sup>

Social capital also took the form of collective *sanctions* against those who deviated from communal norms. When Georg Nerger became heavily indebted in 1621, for instance, the elders of the Friedland commune of Heinersdorf ensured that he migrated elsewhere by coming to his cottage and ‘threatening to whip him out of the house’.<sup>139</sup> In 1685, when Michael

<sup>133</sup> RGADA, f. 1287, op. 3, ed. khr. 1183, l. 4 (petition): ‘privychka k . . . vzdoram mezhdru sosedstva’; ‘my edinoglastno prigovorili . . . ob udalenii Pavlova iz nashego seleniya’.

<sup>134</sup> SOAD HS, Kart. 709, Amtsprot. 1685–7, fo. 48r, 4 Dec. 1686.

<sup>135</sup> RGADA, f. 1287, op. 3, ed. khr. 902, l. 18 (report): ‘est li by ona . . . neimela sklonnosti k brodiachestvu, to mogla by soderzhat’ sebya sobstvennymi trudami’.

<sup>136</sup> SOAD HS, Kart. 77, Amtsprot. 1609–11, fo. 28v, 28 Feb. 1610.

<sup>137</sup> SOAD HS Kart. 710, Bürgerbuch 1703–24, fo. 3v, 2 Nov. 1706: ‘in Verdacht gehabt, das selbe mechte Entlauffen, Vnd Ihre Kleine .4. Kinder hinterlassen’.

<sup>138</sup> RGADA, f. 1287, op. 3, ed. khr. 480 (decrees), ll. 4–5: ‘v [Kanditove] pozharu dom ego sovsem stroeniem khlebom i pozhitkami zgorel besostatku ot chego i prishel v krainee raz’zorenie i nishchetu i domu sebe vystroit ne mog’.

<sup>139</sup> SOAD HS, Kart. 78, Amtsprot. 1630–1, fo. 1631.52, 22 Sept. 1631: ‘bedrawt Ihn aus dem hause zu prugeln’.

Schmiedt abandoned his cottager holding in Berttelsdorf and migrated without permission to another community, 'he was fetched by two swornmen from Berttelsdorf', who delivered him into prison at the castle, from which he was only released when he promised 'to betake himself immediately to Berttelsdorf and to build on the said cottage'.<sup>140</sup> Likewise, as we have seen, when Stepan Shelekhov lied about his economic circumstances in 1785, the Voshchazhnikovo commune of Kanditovo prevented him from migrating to another village.<sup>141</sup> In 1844, the Voshchazhnikovo commune of Strelki blocked the passport renewal—and hence the labour migration—of one of its members because he had failed to pay dues in 1843.<sup>142</sup>

To view communal officials simply as agents of manorial demographic regulation would thus be simplistic. As these examples show, communes exercised wide discretion in enforcing demographic controls. Losing 'the favour of the commune' could prevent a serf from migrating, settling, or marrying. Hans Kommer was refused permission to go on living in the Friedland commune of Neundorf in 1610 when communal officials reported that he was 'a dissolute stubborn fellow, who practises all sorts of uppishness with cursing, swearing and stealing, and the whole village would prefer to be rid and freed of him'.<sup>143</sup> Elisabeth Menzel was only granted permission to marry and move away from Ringenhain in 1630 when her communal headman testified that 'her parents, as long as they lived here in the community of Ringenhain, had behaved well and honourably', that she was legitimately born, and that she had no inheritance demands locally, 'and therefore there was no desire or thought of hindering her in her Christian intention'.<sup>144</sup> In 1824, Vasily Krasavin from Pukesovo was only able to move to the village of Voshchazhnikovo after securing permission from both communes.<sup>145</sup> Mikhail Shustov's daughter Lizaveta was only permitted to marry and move to another village on the estate in 1844 when the commune of Voshchazhnikovo confirmed that it 'had no objections to the marriage'.<sup>146</sup>

In practice, the favour of the commune often meant the favour of a privileged coterie of officeholders who manipulated demographic regulations in their own interests. Paul Hoffman was ejected by Hohenwalda

<sup>140</sup> SOAD HS, Kart. 709, Amtsprot. 1685–7, fo. 17v, 25 Aug. 1685: 'Ist Er durch Zwey geschworene von bærtelsdorff abgeholler'; 'sich naher bærtelsdorff baldt Zu [inserted: be=] geben, v. bedeütes haussel Anzubauen'.

<sup>141</sup> RGADA, f. 1287, op. 3, ed. khr. 480 (decrees), ll. 4–5.

<sup>142</sup> RGADA, f. 1287, op. 3, ed. khr. 1635, l. 13 (communal resolutions).

<sup>143</sup> SOAD HS, Kart. 77, Amtsprot. 1609–11, fo. 37v, 22 Mar. 1610: 'Weil ehr ein leichtfertiger muhtwilliger geselle, der sich allerhandt Vppigkeit mit fluchen schweren [inserted: vnd stelen] gebrauchen, Vnnd das ganze dorf seiner lieber h. lohß, Vnnd entledigt sein Wolten'.

<sup>144</sup> SOAD HS, Kart. 78, Amtsprot. 1630–1, p. 25, 7 Aug. 1630: 'dz sich Ihre Eltern, so lange sie alhier sich aufenthalten, vnd gelebet haben, Jn der gemeine Ringenhain wol v. ehrlich vorhalten haben'; 'als hat man sie an Ihrern Christlichen wercke, vnd vorhaben Zu hindern bedencken getragen'.

<sup>145</sup> RGADA, f. 1287, op. 3, ed. khr. 915, ll. 2–4 (petition).

<sup>146</sup> RGADA, f. 1287, op. 3, ed. khr. 1639, l. 2–6 (petition): 'k vypuske docheri ego Lizavety v zamuzhestvo za postoronogo my pripiatstia ne imeem'.

in 1606 because he ‘was always defaming the elders and the members of the village council’.<sup>147</sup> In 1610 the houseless lodger Jörge Schrötter complained that the Bullendorf headman had threatened that ‘he would bring it about with Her Grace the Countess that he should be hunted out of the country’.<sup>148</sup> When Juditta Pohlin absconded without permission to another village in 1704, the Lusdorf headman reported her to the manorial authorities, who ordered her to return to her commune and work for the headman himself in forced service, on pain of losing her financial pledge.<sup>149</sup> In 1824 the communal officials of Voshchazhnikovo demanded a payment of 300 roubles from a serf who wanted to move into their village.<sup>150</sup> In 1838 the Voshchazhnikovo communal officials sought to extort 400 roubles annually from an outsider, Afinogen Sheshunov, in return for permission to migrate into the village, and after prolonged negotiation allowed themselves to be bargained down to 200 roubles annually, twice the rate officially countenanced by the manorial administration.<sup>151</sup> In 1841, Aleksandr Dolodanov was forced to leave the village of Voshchazhnikovo when he told the communal officials to ‘mind their own business’, provoking a communal resolution that ‘such impertinence has made it clear that he does not want to answer to the authorities’.<sup>152</sup>

In both Russia and Bohemia, communal social capital was deployed to regulate serfs’ demographic behaviour. Those who violated communal norms of work, gender, conflict, and mobility found their demographic choices blocked. Within the horizontal network of the commune, information about deviations from shared norms was swiftly transmitted. This facilitated a third component of communal social capital, the imposition of collective sanctions against demographic deviants. Russian and Bohemian serfdom differed widely in other ways, but both depended on a day-to-day collaboration between communal officeholders and manor to enforce demographic controls. One motive was certainly to protect the commune from collective retribution by the overlord when individual villagers violated manorial regulations. But collaboration between the horizontal social capital of the commune and the vertical hierarchy of serfdom also enabled village oligarchs to manipulate demographic regulations in order to benefit at the expense of their weaker neighbours.

<sup>147</sup> SOAD HS, Kart. 57, Bürgerschaftsbuch 1593–1610, fo. 79r, 29 Jan. 1606: ‘allezeit . . . Richter Vnd Schöppen geSchmehet’.

<sup>148</sup> SOAD HS, Kart. 77, Amtsprot. 1609–11, fo. 49r, 11 May 1610: ‘ehr wolte souiel zuweg bring. bej der Gräfin Ihr. Gn: das ehr außm lande gejagt werd. solte’. For Schrötter’s probable social status as a houseless lodger, see SOAD, HS, Kart. c. 12a (Urbar, 1591–2, Herrschaft Friedland).

<sup>149</sup> SOAD HS Kart. 710, Bürgenbuch 1703–24, fo. 2r, 18 June 1704.

<sup>150</sup> RGADA, f. 1287, op. 3, ed. khr. 915, ll. 2–4 (petition). The average annual quitrent payment at this time was 15–20 roubles.

<sup>151</sup> RGADA, f. 1287, op. 3, ed. khr. 1385, ll. 1–9 (petition).

<sup>152</sup> RGADA, f. 1287, op. 3, ed. khr. 1537, l. 9 (petition): ‘ne Vashe delo’; ‘iz takovykh derzskikh otvetov, yasno bylo vidno chto Dolodanov ne khochet uzhe ni v chem davat’ otcheta svoemu nachalstvu’.

## V

Social capital generated by horizontal networks is supposed to counteract the baleful effects of vertical hierarchies, and is widely prescribed as a panacea for most economic ills. European history is widely mobilized to support this view, with communes exemplifying beneficent horizontal networks and serfdom embodying harmful vertical hierarchies. Economic and political backwardness in 'refeudalized' eastern and southern Europe are ascribed to the protracted strangulation of communal social capital by overlords. This interpretation of history is then used to draw sweeping lessons for contemporary economic development.

But are these lessons from history justified? Did the vertical hierarchies of serfdom indeed choke off the horizontal bonds of peasant communes? Can long-term development failures—whether in eastern Europe or elsewhere—really be blamed on the systematic stifling of communal social capital by vertical hierarchies? More generally still, do horizontal social capital and vertical hierarchies inevitably work in opposing directions?

This article argues that these lessons from history are false. The detailed, micro-level evidence it presents for Bohemia and Russia shows that communal social capital played a central role in the whole system of serfdom. Overlords did not stifle communal social capital but rather nurtured it and then manipulated it to their own ends, with the active cooperation of village elites. The hierarchical obligations of serfdom and the horizontal bonds of peasant communes were not antagonistic but mutually parasitic, benefiting overlords and communal oligarchs at the expense of weaker serfs and the wider economy. The emergence of this parasitic collaboration in two such different serf societies as Bohemia and Russia strongly implies that it was systemic rather than incidental.

These findings have far-reaching implications for understanding both serfdom and social capital. For one thing, the evidence from Bohemia and Russia presented in this article refutes the widely held view that the problems of eastern European 'transition' economies derive from a long-standing lack of social capital caused by the suppression of communities under serfdom. This is based on the 'manorial dominance' view, which assumes that overlords were all-powerful and would naturally stifle other rural institutions. But this assumption derives from literary and legislative sources recording normative views of literate elites. When we examine how economic agents actually behaved under serfdom, we find that the stylized picture of omnipotent landlords and supine communes is a myth. In both Bohemia and Russia serf communes were strong and active, generating a rich social capital of shared norms, information, and sanctions. This social capital played a key role in regulating economic and demographic behaviour, and there is no evidence of its depletion or depreciation, whether through manorial intervention or any other mechanism, during the centuries under analysis.

Second, the strikingly similar findings for these otherwise quite dissimilar serf economies refute the widely held view that horizontal social capital is inherently antagonistic toward vertical hierarchies.<sup>153</sup> Even proponents of the ‘communal autonomy’ theory, who acknowledge the strength and effectiveness of serf communities, assume that communal energies were primarily directed at evading and opposing manorial regulations. But whatever may have been the case in the exceptional arena of a serf uprising, in everyday life communal social capital was systematically used to enforce manorial regulations. This was not because serf communes were coerced into acting as manorial agents, but because village elites voluntarily cooperated with the manorial authorities.

Why did communal oligarchies collaborate with overlords? A major part of the answer must be sought in the system of legal privileges governing virtually every sector of serf economies. This made serf oligarchs dependent on overlords for the institutional arrangements that sustained their own wealth and position. On the Russian estate of Voshchazhnikovo it was the Count Sheremetyev’s legal and administrative framework that allowed some serfs to achieve a certain degree of wealth. This quasi-formal system of property rights and contract enforcement enabled serfs to engage in land, labour, and credit transactions. Without this manorial legal framework, such transactions would have been risky or impossible, since serfs had no formal rights under Russian law and could not rely on state courts to enforce contracts. Those who prospered under this system used their wealth to buy privileges from the overlord, including monopoly rights over the market square, estate mills, and fisheries. These were the same well-off serfs who dominated communal affairs.<sup>154</sup> Likewise, on the Bohemian estate of Friedland, securing an official permit or ‘privilege’ from the manor was an absolute precondition for engaging in a craft or proto-industry, setting up a saw-mill or linen-bleachery, building a grain-mill or potting-kiln, or trading in a vast array of products ranging from linen yarn to basic foodstuffs such as wheat, salt, and beer. Those who prospered under this system also dominated the village communes. The village elite thus had strong incentives to collaborate with the manorial administration, which alone guaranteed their economic rents.<sup>155</sup> This economy of rent-seeking and legal privileges helped to ensure that the interests of village oligarchies were, in normal times, closely aligned with those of the manor.

Ordinary serfs usually cooperated with the village oligarchy, not necessarily because they shared its norms and interests, but because they did not have a great deal of choice. For one thing, the village oligarchy exercised economic power, being the major employers of poorer serfs, operating the

<sup>153</sup> As argued, for instance, in Putnam, Leonardi, and Nanetti, *Making democracy work*, pp. 107, 136; La Porta, Lopez-de-Silanes, Shleifer, and Vishny, ‘Trust in large organizations’, pp. 336–7.

<sup>154</sup> See Dennison, ‘Economy and society’; eadem, ‘Did serfdom matter?’

<sup>155</sup> For a detailed discussion of the functioning of this system of economic privileges under Bohemian serfdom, see Ogilvie, ‘Economic world’; eadem, ‘Staat und Untertan’.

taverns and mills, allocating taxes and dues, and controlling access to common resources and infrastructure. For another, the oligarchs dominated the organs of communication and organization within the community, making it difficult to arrange collective action without their knowledge and agreement. Ordinary serfs did sometimes seek to resist, as we have seen from their complaints to the manorial authorities about abuses by communal officeholders and the first-rank peasants. But the village elite could readily exact private retribution from those who complained, and the communal officers could describe protesters to the manorial authorities as troublemakers endangering manorial fiscal interests or even fomenting peasant revolt. In the vast majority of cases the authorities took the side of the communal officers, on whom they depended to implement manorial interests locally. There was no possibility for serfs to appeal beyond village or manorial tribunals to royal (or urban or ecclesiastical) courts as had been common in western Europe since medieval times. As a general rule, therefore, ordinary serfs found it less risky to cooperate with the oligarchy, whether or not they shared its norms and interests.

Neither the coercive use of communal social capital nor its manipulation by village elites were brought into being by serfdom. Rather, they were universal features of strong communities everywhere in pre-industrial Europe, east or west, enserfed or 'free'.<sup>156</sup> Time and again, micro-studies of non-serf societies in western Europe reveal the coercive manipulation of communal institutions, often by oligarchies similar to those in Bohemia and Russia (richer peasants, officeholders, long-settled householders, married men) at the expense of the same vulnerable groups (poorer strata, immigrants, women). Serfdom, however, may have made the dark side of communal social capital even harder to escape, as overlords often prevented serfs from leaving a coercive commune and refused to intervene in communal quarrels irrelevant to manorial interests.<sup>157</sup>

The mutually parasitic relationship between horizontal social capital and vertical hierarchies that emerges from this analysis of communes and serfdom had wider economic ramifications. As we have seen, it resulted not only in coercion of the weakest in society, but also in corrupt resource allocation, constraints on economic decision-making, and perpetuation of economic privileges. For these reasons, we should regard claims such as those so widely advanced by the World Bank that lavishing resources on the social capital of horizontal community institutions will automatically bring

<sup>156</sup> Although Blickle and his followers regard 'communalism' as having been a beneficent feature of western European rural life (for an excellent survey, see Blickle, *Kommunalismus*), this optimistic view is increasingly cast into question by micro-historical analyses of the conflict, coercion, discrimination, and inequality prevalent in western European rural communities. See, for instance, Ogilvie, *State corporatism*; eadem, *Bitter living*; Olson, 'Family linkages'; Robisheaux, *Rural society*; Sabean, *Property*; Schofield, *Peasant and community*; Sreenivasan, *Peasants*; Wrightson and Levine, *Poverty and piety*.

<sup>157</sup> On overlords' reluctance to provide justice to serfs save in matters affecting their own direct interests, see Ogilvie, 'Communities and the "second serfdom"', pp. 110–15; Himl, 'Armben Leüte', pp. 157, 183.

beneficial economic outcomes with considerable scepticism. Such resources may simply be appropriated by a local oligarchy with centuries of expertise in profiting from collaboration with exploitive vertical hierarchies.

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