

MANORS AND SCATTERED FARMS: SPECIAL SETTLEMENT FORMS OF OUTSKIRT AREAS IN HUNGARY

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Abstract

Manors and scattered farms: special settlement forms of outskirt areas in Hungary

The Hungarian settlement network is very varied and multiple. In the teeth of its small territory we can find many area-specific settlement forms in the country. These settlement forms are usually not independent municipalities, but mostly occupied the outer areas of some towns and villages. In this study we try to demonstrate two types of these special settlement forms: scattered farms and manors. Scattered farms are sporadic, lonely settlements of the Great Hungarian Plain, which are centres of agricultural works and generally the centres of economic activities now, but they used to serve as winter shelters for the livestock. Most of the manors could be found in Transdanubia. The leader utility is the agriculture, but among others we found manors with industrial, sanitary, tourism functions also.

Key words

Hungarian settlement network, outskirt areas, scattered farm, manor, Great Hungarian Plain, Transdanubia

1. Introduction

The settlement network of Hungary has many special characteristics, the majority of which – at least in traces – serve as a still tangible, very good basis for their in-depth analysis, and for the mapping of their changes. Despite the relatively small geographical extension of the country, the characteristic features within the settlement network usually coincide with rather definite spatial segregation. The reasons for that are to be found in the history of the Hungarian nation, the orography of the country, the farming habits, the settlement order and traditions of the different ethnic groups living in Hungary, and not last in the settlement policy changing from time to time.

The present essay focuses on two dominant elements of the Hungarian settlement network which are products of different times in the medieval ages, they were born in large numbers, and whose development path is well demonstrated by the subsequent phases of birth–maturity–decline, and which, although in very much decreased numbers and in most of the cases after the change of their original functions, are living in the shadow of their glorious days gone by. These two types of settlements are usually not independent municipalities, they did not become sovereign during their history; they functioned and still function as auxiliary settlements. One of them is the so-called scattered farms, most typical of the Great Hungarian Plain, the other one can more typically be found in Transdanubia, these are the manors or manors. In our analysis we demonstrate major socio-economic differences between the two.

2. Definition and birth of the scattered farms and the manors

2.1. Scattered farms

The most general definition of scattered farms is provided by István Györffy: in his words scattered farms are the sporadic, lonely settlements of the Great Hungarian Plain, which are centres of agricultural works and generally the centres of economic activities now, but they used to serve as winter shelters for the livestock. Scattered farms are not a type of sovereign settlements; they belong, together with their estates, to a town or a large village (Becsei 2001, 155). Actually Györffy's definition was taken over by Ferenc Erdei when he defined the characteristic features of scattered farms as follows: they

1. are lonely settlements, buildings or groups of buildings located outside the closed blocks of towns or villages;
2. serve agricultural or in more general smallholders' purposes, i.e. they are locations of animal husbandry or field cultivation, or forestry or fishing;
3. are the dwelling places of those active in production for a shorter or longer time, but never simply the places of permanent settlement (Becsei 2001, 155).

The general conditions allowing the birth of scattered farms were as follows:

- Large outskirt areas of settlements that were impossible to cultivate intensively and economically from the inner parts;
- The need or constraint of intensive farming (cereals production, later viticulture and fruit production);
- The refusal of prohibition of final settling out from the towns (i.e. the establishment of new villages in the more distant outer areas of existing settlements), for different reasons (insistence on rights and advantages

gained in the country boroughs, or the insistence of the community of the country boroughs to keep their inhabitants (for taxation and fiscal purposes);

- Individual ownership of (one part of) the towns' outskirts and free land use (Beluszky 1999, 98).



Fig.1: A scattered farm in the Great Hungarian Plain.

Scattered farms are most often seen as successors of the “outskirts gardens” having gone through a change of function. Outskirts gardens were land areas in private use and appeared as early as in the 16th and 17th century. They originally served the purposes of animal husbandry: they were winter shelters for the livestock taken out from the common herds or flocks, they were the places where fodder was collected and stored, and manure was used to cultivate the land. In other words: animal husbandry was accompanied by the cultivation of the land. If the cultivation of the land and stable-based, indoor animal husbandry became more important in the farming structure of these dwellings, i.e. when a more permanent settlement took place, a scattered farm was born (Beluszky 1999, 100). The first scattered farms thus were economic units established in the outskirts gardens, dividing the vast pastures of the “puszta”, the waste land (Frisnyák 1990, 86). The majority of the scattered farms was later established independent of the outskirts gardens, when it became necessary or possible to create “farming centres” on the outskirts (e.g. after the formerly common lands became private holdings).

2. 2. The manor

It is a settlement form even more ancient in its look than the scattered farm; also, its appearance and penetration precedes that of the scattered farms by some 200 years. Although they were also established in the Great Hungarian Plain in large numbers (e.g. in Békés county), they were basically a special residential and

economic unit typical of Transdanubia. On the basis of its development, a manor is a double concept: it means a piece of land that is the management and administrative centre of a large estate, on the one hand; on the other hand, it is a form of settlement, i.e. the residential place of the farming workers or even the owner of the estate (Balogh and Bajmócy 2011, 13). Manors in their initial form appeared in the early or mid-13th century, but their appearance in large numbers only took place in the 16th century. The majority of lands was in private property in Hungary by the 12th century. Estates were scattered all over the place, which was due to the typically self-sustenance farming. Different branches of agriculture (plough lands, orchards, vineyards etc.) all required different types of soil, so it was natural that different parts of the estate were in areas of different endowments (Herber and Martos and Moss and Tisza 2002, 184). In the privately owned lands, so-called *praediums* were established, which were the scenes of economic activity, i.e. they can be considered as the economic units of the landowner but they also served as residential places of the people working there. The *praediums* were inhabited by serfs who were obliged to do boon work for their landowners (Kristó and Barta and Gergely 2002, 87). The *praediums* thus contained some economic site of the landowner (a stable, a barn, a workshop etc.), so in its original meaning a *praedium* was an economic plant. In the first half of the 13th century this kind of working organisation was strikingly declining, as the serfs living there were uninterested in production, as opposed to the more and more widespread serfplots which came to Hungary from Western Europe (the very first datum of such a unit is from 1214), used by families possessing a house and land. They harvested the crop themselves and paid a contribution in kind to the owner of the estate. If the serfs fulfilled their obligations to their landowner, they could not be deprived of their land (Kristó and Barta and Gergely 2002, 88). The largest part of the *praediums* thus disintegrated and peasant farms were born in their stead; landowners hardly kept any land – right until the early 16th century – for their own farming purposes. If they ever did so, they had these lands cultivated by serfs and – in a smaller proportion – day labourers, i.e. the “prototypes” of manors appeared (Frisnyák 1990, 20). Their size hardly exceeded that of the serfs’ sites. As these manors were organised in the “stead” of the former landowners’ economic units, in many references the term ‘*praedium*’ was still used for a long time – but with a totally different meaning: it meant a piece of land and not a landowner’s estate. After some time even the expression went out of use, replaced by the term ‘manor’ (Balogh and Bajmócy 2011, 14).

Similarly to the scattered farms, manors mostly occupied the outer areas of some towns and villages, a smaller part of them have by now become parts of the respective settlement, and we can even find manors which by now have become administratively independent settlements. On the whole, a manor is a spatial unit with usually 10 to 50 inhabitants, located on outskirts most of the times, segregated from the other elements of the Hungarian settlement network both in its birth and its original morphology, which initially functioned as the management and administrative centre of a large estate and as the residential place of the people working there (Balogh and Bajmócy 2011, 15). A significant difference between scattered farms and manors is that in its classic age a manor always meant an area around the castle or – in case of less affluent landowner – the mansion of its owner, with an area ranging from a few hundred acres to thousands of acres, including the totality of the cultivated lands and the settlement. In the case of scattered farm this is unknown; scattered farms had much closer ties to those towns in whose outskirts they were located.



Fig. 2: A manor in Transdanubia.

3. Development path of scattered farms and manors

3. 1. Scattered farms

The history of the scattered farms is a sequence of continuous transformations, decays and rebirths (Becsei 2001, 156). The system of scattered farms on plough lands was actually established by the mid-18th century. During the 18th and 19th century scattered farms as settlements and economic units were the largest sporadic settlements in Europe (Frisnyák 1990, 86). The further development of the scattered farms can be demonstrated with the change of the residential functions of the farms (Beluszky 1999, 102):

1. In the beginning, only "sleeping places" were established on the outskirts, without more durable buildings, and family members only lived there in the season of agricultural works.
2. Later more durable buildings were erected and wells were dug, so the family members could move to the farms for the summer months.
3. A more intensive form of livestock breeding using stables required the permanent stay of some member of the family on the farm. More durable and heatable buildings and heated pig pens were built.
4. The separation of the residential house of the farm and the stable allowed the longer stay of the family on the farm, but they did not sell their homes in the town. It was typical for the families to move into the town houses for the winter months.
5. Finally – from the late 19th century – people of the farms gave up their houses in the towns and the scattered farms became real sporadic settlements (Beluszky 1999, 102).

River regulations also had a significant contribution to the penetration of scattered farms. Regulations doubled the extent of arable lands, but this was not accompanied by the birth of new villages; areas saved from floods increased the territories of existing county boroughs and villages. The owners possessing lands in these now flood-free areas were only able to cultivate their lands – often located at a distance of 20 to 25 kilometres from the towns – if they moved there permanently, i.e. established scattered farms. The period from the turn of 19th and 20th century until the end of World War II is a new era in the life of the scattered farms. The number of the permanent population of farms kept on increasing. Thereby the character of the scattered farms changed from being auxiliary settlements; the birth of sporadic settlements with permanent population became typical. In addition, new forms of farms, i.e. lease farms appeared (Becsei 2001, 160). After 1945 the destruction and differentiation of the system of scattered farms started. The collectivisation of agriculture, the preference of urban settlements, the radical fall in the number of agricultural employment, the penetration of industry and then services led to the decrease in the number of the inhabitants living on the outskirts (Tab. 1).

Tab. 1: Changes in the number of outskirts population in the Great Hungarian Plain

Year	Number of population living on the outskirts
1850	50,000
1870	200,000
1910	700,000
1949	1,107,798
1960	771,222
1970	572,387
1980	323,208
1990	206,988
2010	173,038*

*Total of residential areas and outskirts of agricultural function

Source: Magyarország Helységnévtára 2010 (Gazetteer of Hungary 2010).

3. 2. Manors

From the 16th century, the extension of lands in the own management of the landowners started to increase. The Hungarian manors, however, were not so important at this time – due to the shortage of labour typical in Hungary – as their Czech, Polish or East German counterparts. The manors established in the estates of the landowners were not created at the cost of the peasants' lands, but in derelict, uncultivated or cleared lands. In addition, the boon work and thereby the transfer of the technical level used by the serfs blocked their development (Kristó and Barta and Gergely 2002, 237). What was a progress is the spatially more optimal location of the manors, on the one hand, determined by the transport tracks and market centres of the time; on the other hand, the introduction of many species of cultivated plants never known before – in addition to cereals –, like Smyrna melon, Persian peaches, several species of cherry, nut, strawberry, chestnut etc. (Frisnyák 1990, 42). After the 18th century, expropriations of the serfplots contributed more and more often to the growth of the manors. After the liberation of serfs and induced by the growing demand for food, a new solution had to be found for the effective cultivation of the lands. This solution was the farming of the manors. Landowners settled down their liberated serfs on the lands of their manors (as paid servants) and they went on cultivating their lands. The notion of manor thus expanded from the second half of the 1800s: manors as settlements were born. Manors as a piece of land and as a settlement were present in landowners' estates right until 1945. On the one hand, manor was the piece of land owned by the

landowner and cultivated by the descendants of the liberated serfs and the day labourers of the nearby villages; on the other hand, it was also a settlement, with a special society and agriculture related economic activity (Pócsi and Bajmócy and Józsa 2008, 323). After World War II, following the distribution of lands in 1945 manor as a piece of land lost its reason for existence and survived as a settlement type. Parallel to this, their decline and decay started. The utilisation of the former demesne lands and their buildings – provided that they still existed – brought a rather strong differentiation of their functions.

One of the most populous types of outskirt settlements in the Carpathian Basin was manors in the early 20th century (Balogh and Bajmócy 2011, 20). In the territory of the historical Hungary, by the Census of 1900 approximately 8,000 manors were identified, the Census of 1910 registered 6,000 of them. The distribution of the manors, however, was far from being balanced in the Carpathian Basin. In 1910, half of the manors (3,030) were in Transdanubia. Another 1,400 manors existed on the other side of the Danube, in the northern areas, in the western half of Upper North Hungary. In addition, a significant number of manors could be found in the Danube-Tisza mid-region (210), in the Northern Middle Mountains (430) and in the Banat region (440). The Transdanubian majority of manors is shown by the fact that in 1910 Somogy county had the largest number of them (approximately 11% of all of them), other counties with the largest number of manors included Tolna, Fejér, Veszprém, Vas and Zala (Tab. 2).

In 1910, a total of 431 thousand people, i.e. 2.4% of the population of Hungary lived in manors, which means that one in every forty persons was an inhabitant of manor. Of them, 233 thousand (54%) lived in Transdanubia (Balogh and Bajmócy 2011, 21).

Tab. 2: The number of manors in the counties with the largest number of manors in the territory of the historical Hungary, 1910.

	County	Number of manors		County	Number of manors
1	Somogy	654	11	Baranya	201
2	Nógrád	468	12	Hont	182
3	Fejér	375	13	Torontál	180
4	Zala	362	14	Gömör and Kishont	177
5	Veszprém	288	15	Pest-Pilis-Solt-Kiskun	172
6	Pozsony	282	16	Sopron	162
7	Vas	281	17	Bihar	155
8	Tolna	257	18	Győr	149
9	Nyitra	250	19	Temes	114
10	Komárom	221	20	Bars	106

Source: Hungarian Central Statistical Office, Census of 1910.

4. The present and future of scattered farms and manors

4. 1. Scattered farms: a case study from the Homokhátság (The Sand Hills)

In 2005 the Hungarian government assigned the VÁTI Hungarian Public Nonprofit Company for Regional Development and Town Planning and the Great Plain Research Institute of the Centre for Regional Studies, Hungarian Academy of Sciences to explore the situation of the areas accommodating scattered farms and

map their development possibilities. The target area of the survey was 104 settlements in the so-called Homokhátság (The Sand Hills) area. The Homokhátság area, situated in the Danube-Tisza mid-region, is not a selected area on its own; however, it is one of the most active fields of researches on scattered farms. A significant proportion of all Hungarian scattered farms can be found here, accommodating approximately half of the total population of these farms. During the survey the typifying of the scattered farms was also done, identifying the following categories (Csatári and Jávör 2005, 14):

- A. Scattered farms gone by
- B. Scattered farms with economic functions (28% of existing farms in the Homokhátság)
- C. Scattered farms with residential functions (50%)
- D. Uninhabited farms (22%)

A. Scattered farms gone by: territory of former farms whose buildings have collapsed by now, their place has been occupied by field cultivation (e.g. plough lands) or other activity (Fig. 3).

B. Scattered farms with economic functions: farms where economic activity is done either on its own (without residential function) or together with residential function. This type of farms is one of the viable groups of the scattered farms. The following sub-types can be identified (Csatári and Jávör 2005, 15):

- 1. farms engaged with small-scale agricultural production (71% of the farms with economic functions) (Fig. 4);
- 2. farms engaged with large-scale agricultural production (13%);
- 3. agricultural self-sustenance without residential functions (4%);
- 4. farms engaged with rural tourism (2%);
- 5. farms engaged with other economic activities (10%).



Fig. 3: A decaying scattered farm, Kiskunmajsa.

Source: Czene 2008.



Fig. 4: A farm doing agricultural activity, Szatymaz.

Source: Czene 2008.

C. Scattered farms with residential functions: farms without economic activity but with residential function (Fig. 5). Farms with residential functions can be:

1. farms with residential functions and maybe also with agricultural self-sustenance as an auxiliary activity (44% of farms with residential functions). They make the other group of viable farms;
2. farms inhabitant by elderly people, those with financial problems or homeless (41%);
3. hobby farms (15%).



Fig. 5: A suburban residential farm on the outskirts of Kecskemét.

Source: Czene 2008.

D. Uninhabited farms: former farms with farm buildings, ones that now do not have inhabitants or economic activities. Their survival is more than questionable. Of the scattered farms of Homokhátság area, every fifth belongs to this category now (Csatári and Jávör 2005, 16).

4. 2. The manor: a case study of West Transdanubia

West Transdanubia is one of the seven planning-statistical regions of Hungary. Its borders follow administrative boundaries. It consists of three counties, from north to south these are Győr-Moson-Sopron, Vas and Zala. In the summer of 2010 and 2011, 184 manors of the region were visited; photos and databases were made of them, the use of which allowed the typifying of the manors.

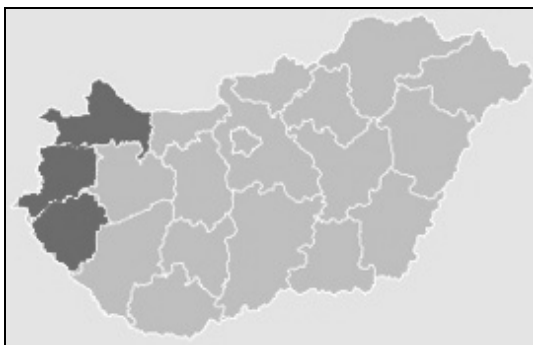


Fig. 6: The region of West Transdanubia.

The main grounds on which typifying took place were as follows (Balogh and Bajmócy 2011, 39):

- A. Physical condition of the manors
- B. Their population
- C. The present function of the former manor houses (or their manors)

A. Physical condition of the manors: the physical conditions of the 184 manors included in the survey are very heterogeneous. (We must not forget, however, that the majority of the manors have disappeared without a trace in this region too, so physical conditions only relate to those manors that still exist at some level.) The outskirts with original demesne buildings were either in the categories "in ruins" or "in bad physical condition". Almost one-third of the 184 manors belong to this type (Fig.7).

Those former manors whose buildings are in "average" or "good" condition (approximately two-thirds of the manors surveyed) no longer contain or only partially, sporadically have original, authentic manor buildings.

B. Population of the manors: the 184 manors in our examination can be classified in three groups on this ground (Balogh and Bajmócy 2011, 40):

- 1. uninhabited (26% of demesne lands)
- 2. inhabited: with population below 25 persons (43%)
- 3. inhabited with substantial population: with more than 25 inhabitants.



Fig. 7: A manor house in bad condition on the outskirts of Mikosszéplak.
Source: Balogh and Bajmócy 2011.

Although manors – similarly to scattered farms – are usually located on the outskirts of towns and villages, there are 9 allodiums in West Transdanubia that have become sovereign settlements by now. All of them are in the category with a substantial number of inhabitants. On the other hand, a significant proportion of the outskirts with original manor buildings are often inhabited by disadvantaged, impoverished social layers.

C. Present functions of manors: typifying manors on this ground is an extremely complicated task, as the way the outskirts formerly operating as manors is rather varied; in addition, in the larger part of them we often find 2-3 functions mixing with each other. (This is why the total of the proportions of manors belonging to the respective categories exceeds 100%: as a consequence of multiple functions, one unit may belong to more than one category.) Of the 184 establishments in the survey, 91% have some function (Balogh and Bajmócy 2011, 72). The main subtypes are as follows:

1. manors with residential functions, only: 27% of the units in the survey;
2. agricultural function: in 42% of the manors we find agricultural activity. It is usually combined with residential functions but can also be the exclusive function. Within agricultural activity, animal husbandry is more frequent than plant cultivation. The buildings used can be old demesne buildings and brand new ones as well (Fig. 8).
3. Industrial function can be found in 7.5% of the manors. It is more typical of the ones with a substantial number of inhabitants; it only appears in two cases without permanent local labour force and never as a sole function. The industrial activities pursued are extremely varied: wood processing, metal industry, construction materials industry, printing industry, packaging industry, food processing industry etc (Balogh and Bajmócy 2011, 73).
4. Tourism is an economic activity in 13.5% of the manors. This is mostly the provision of accommodation (Fig. 9), or equestrian schools, in fact, the two can be combined in some cases. It is usually not the original manor buildings

that are used but it happens in some cases, especially for keeping horses. In five manors – one in Győr-Moson-Sopron and four in Zala county – touristic activity can be a function on its own (wellness, equestrian schools, animal petting, reserve, holiday resort).



Fig. 8: Modern pig farm on the outskirts of Pusztacsó.

Source: Balogh and Bajmócy 2011.



Fig. 9: Equestrian tourism in Mórchelypuszta, a part of Nagykanizsa.

Source: Balogh and Bajmócy 2011.

5. Basic services (in 12.5% of the manors) are typical in the former outskirts areas with the largest number of population, often functioning as sovereign settlements by now. Coming from the nature of the function it must always be accompanied by residential function. The contribution to the improvement of the local living conditions can be a grocery, a pub, a church, a local government, maybe a post office.
6. The 'other' category includes a wide range of activities including intellectual, transport, nature protection, social, sports and recreation etc. activities. These services can be found in 11% of the manors. It is especially ones with social care functions that utilise authentic manor buildings, especially castles and mansions. A permanent population is not an absolute necessity, as in many cases those in search of recreation are awaited by holiday homes, weekend gardens or excursion facilities (Balogh and Bajmócy 2011, 73).

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Summary

Scattered farms and manors are two characteristic settlement forms of outskirt areas in Hungary. Both of them are after their heydays, in decline. Their future is uncertain, and their number is continuously decreasing. They have already lost the major part of their original buildings and functions, it is only their location on the basis of which they can still be called scattered farms or manors, but not their activities any longer in many cases. Their already ongoing differentiation is expected to continue, during which process the major part of them will become farms with sheer residential functions, agricultural functions, tourism or other economic activity. On the other hand, both scattered farms and manors are important elements in the Hungarian settlement network, the Hungarian architectural heritage, which makes their preservation in some way important. There are better chances for this in the case of manors, but even in their case it is the more "spectacular" castles and mansions that are more likely to be saved from destruction, whereas a large proportion of servants' houses, stables, barns etc. will certainly disappear in the future. For the existence and re-development of the farms it is not the number of holdings that matters but the size of the estates, the quality of the land and the agricultural activity pursued. For those for whom these farms are only places of residence, it is a makeshift, only that will be abandoned immediately when these people get hold of a home in the nearby village or town, because their jobs are in the closed settlement. While formerly people lived in the towns and had their workplace in the farms, now most of the farm population has their jobs in the towns. On the whole, both scattered farms and manors will encounter processes that do not favour their survival. Their transformation will continue and this "metamorphosis" may not only mean a changed morphology and functions but eventually even a total physical annihilation.