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The natural and social basis of the transforming Órség

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I. INTRODUCTION AND AIMS

The Órség is typically the region of Hungary where you yearn to go back once you have visited it. The visitor is captured by something unexplainable, which might be called the spirit of the place – in any case it is the ever changing, transcendental, creating power radiating from a natural or man-made environment, which can only be experienced then and there. The mediating features are the natural or man-made environment, the cultural landscape, the local society (JANKÓ F. 2002).

The diversity and the individual features of the Órség have always attracted researchers from a variety of scientific fields, but only few have ventured on a synthesizing approach, as it is difficult, almost impossible to melt together what the past and present of the region encompass. Thus its literature is unlimited, nevertheless incomplete. The monography of the Órség, or today's Órség Book is yet to be written. The present thesis does not intend to fulfill this enormous task but aims to contribute to studies up to the present.

Firstly I would like to highlight the question of delimitation, a problem which has not yet been resolved reassuringly. Researchers from different areas have made very differing interpretations of the Órség. It would be topical to reach a consensus, with an innovative, interdisciplinary outcome that takes the dynamically changing outside world and the opinion of the local people into consideration.

It is essential to review the most pressing problems of the area. The social difficulties of the region are in part thoroughly researched, in other aspects hardly examined. While the aging and migrating population, and unemployment is a commonplace, the ongoing active population change in the region generates a set of problems that are not getting adequate attention. During my research I aimed to reveal the root of the above problem, then to shed light on the social concerns.

As with every process, fortunately, possible solutions arise. It is essential to examine the prospects of proceeding further. In agreement with rural development experts, the main breakout point is to be found in agriculture and tourism. However, I need to point out that in their present state neither of the above-mentioned fields help the growth of the region adequately. The relevant part of the survey questionnaire aims to assist the research, which clearly shows that the local population does not regard their living environment as a complex touristic destination. Mapping the hidden touristic potentials could contribute to further improvement. Boosting the

agriculture would not only relieve the lack of job opportunities but could be a solution to conserving protected field areas.

Taking all the above into consideration, the questions and aims of the present thesis could be summarized as follows:

- To review the natural environment and – from the domain of human geography – the historical, settlement-related and economic features which determine the current features of the Órség.

- After reviewing the results of past research, is it possible to determine the present borders of the Órség? If yes, on what grounds would it be possible? Based on my assumption there is a realistic solution that would bridge the gap between the narrowest, historically based and the arbitrarily broad interpretation of the delimitation of the Órség.

- In our rapidly changing world how is the society of the Órség capable of processing its past grievances, and is it able to keep up with progress? In my hypothesis they are rather quiet observers of events happening beyond their control and they do not adequately take part in the bloodstream of their environment and in shaping their own future

- Tourism, which had been deemed as the future of the region, is still an unexploited aid in relieving their living problems. Is it possible to shed light on the reasons behind the fact that the multiplying effect of tourism does not fully prevail at present? Are there any other breakout points in agriculture for the population of this region?

II. PREVIOUS RESEARCH AND RESEARCH METHODS

An essential part of research methodology was the processing of primary resources. The topic itself requires the synthesis of results from different scientific fields (geography, ethnography history, social science), thus researching, sorting and integrating the sources was essential in the first phase of the research. The region of the Órség has always raised the attention and curiosity of researchers, thus its rich literature: its 1983 bibliography is an inch-thick book.

The first – and so far only – monograph of the Órség was written by NEMESNÉPI ZAKÁL GY. in 1818. The literature of the area's history applies resource processing primarily based on documents in the archives (notably: PAPP V. 1970, 1971, BÁRDOSI J. 1972, STAHL F. 1974). The historical literature reviews the formation and significance of the border line (gyepű)

at the time of the first settlements in the Órség (KARÁCSONYI J. 1901, TAGÁNYI K. 1913, FODOR F. 1936, BELITZKY J. 1940). An interesting historical sideline relating to the genealogy of the people in the Órség is the idea of being related to the Székelys, referred to by a number of researchers (KOGUTOWICZ K. 1930, HERÉNYI I. 1998, BELUSZKY P. 2005a), some of them deeming it probable (SZÖLLŐSY K. 2004, AMBRUS T.–CSAPÓ O. 2007, AMBRUS T. 2010). Relating to the later history of the area, researchers were mainly interested in the lawsuits pertaining to the privileged rights of the people of Órség.

The ethnographic literature of the Órség contains broad-spectrum studies such as NAGY E. (1998), TÓTH J. (1975) and BÍRÓ F. (1975, 1995), more recently the architectural and interior design studies of U. NAGY G. (2002), or the works of KARDOS L. relating to folk nutrition (1943). The most significant comprehensive research includes studies by DÖMÖTÖR S. (1960), PÁVEL Á. (1976) and VAKARCS K. (1949). In addition, there are studies about so-called “tóka”s (artificial ponds), Órség sökfa (wooden headstone) cemeteries, and agricultural tools, making pumpkin seed oil, pottery, and collections of folk traditions. Reviews in the field of intellectual ethnography (such as folk poetry and folk music) are notable, however, the literature of dialect research needs to be noted as well, which is of more importance for the present research, namely the delimitation of the Órség. Pertaining to the old dialects in the Órség, the work of VÉGH J. (1954, 1959), IMRE S. (1971), VÖRÖS O. (1980), MOLNÁR Z. M. (1999) are significant; more recently BAZSIKA E.–GYURICZA L. (2008) deals with the separation of ethnographic areas (partly) based on linguistic studies.

The present research topic is, at several points, located on the border of numerous scientific fields. The special settlement type or the special economic features of the area arise in the historical description of the Órség as well as in the examination of delimitation. Previous research on these issues may be found in geography, although they have many ethnographic features.

The national literature of village research is vast and dates far back in time. If we aim to review past research, there are various approaches from the viewpoint of the region. The formation and survival of the “szer”-type settlement structure typically found in the Órség is in close connection with the features of the natural environment and the farming opportunities determined by it. Highly acclaimed researchers and settlement historians have published theories about the formation of this typical settlement type (PRINZ GY. 1922, MENDÖL T. 1963, SZABÓ I. 1969, MAKSAY F. 1971,

MÜLLER R. 1971, BELUSZKY P. 2003, 2005b, BALOGH A.–BAJMÓCY P. 2011), several of them referring to the fact that the formation of the settlement type following the free land reservation and the conservation of the settlement system was in close connection with the way of border use. BELÁK S. (1963), PORPÁČZY M. (1963) deal with the relationship between farming and the settlement system in detail, as well as the landscape ecology publications of VÖRÖS A. (1970), BARTHA D. (1998), TÍMÁR G.–ÓDOR P.–BODONCZI L. (2000), GYÖNGYÖSSY P. (2003), TÓTH Z. (2004), who emphasize the features of farming.

There is a vast literature dealing with settlement types, the present special status of small settlements, the literature of the countryside, and the features of small villages. This includes essential literature (ERDEI F. 1940, MENDÖL T. 1963, ENYEDI GY. 1980, BELUSZKY P. 2003, BELUSZKY P.–SIKOS T. T. 1982, 2007) as well as more specialized research. One segment of rural research literature deals with the infrastructural, social and economic status, underdevelopment and the problems of the countryside (e.g. BAJMÓCY P.–BALOGH A. 2002, BELUSZKY P.–SIKOS T. T. 2007, G. FEKETE É. 2007a, BALOGH A. 2008), and more importantly, emphasizes historical considerations and the disadvantages of being located on the border (in connection with the Órség: CSAPÓ T. 1996, GÖNCZ L.–NAGY Z. 1998, MOHOS M. 2000, 2008, GYURICZA L. 2002). The sociological and psychological research on problems of rural areas show loss of values and identity in rural societies (A. GERGELY A. 1990, BÖHM A. 1999, LAKI L. 1999, BUGOVICS Z. 2007, LÁNYI A. 2010).

The literature of different aspects of rural development is also significant. Experts see and offer several possibilities and directions for development for – differentiated – rural areas. Experts agree on the fact that the Órség has a good position among Hungarian small villages (BAJMÓCY P.–BALOGH A. 2002, BELUSZKY P.–SIKOS T. T. 2007, G. FEKETE É. 2007a). The force behind the revival of the region could primarily be the strengthening of the economic potential, the optionally maintainable specialized farming methods, the creation of jobs and the expansion of tourism. From the viewpoint of the present thesis, strategically important documents urging a complex development of the Órség need to be noted.

I especially have to highlight BELUSZKY P.'s book entitled Órség – Vend Region – Upper-Rába Valley (2005a), which my research topic has primarily been based on, and which has been tremendous help in my thesis. I also think that this book is the most comprehensive publication dealing with the Órség in recent years.

The different statistical databases available created a separate group of resources. I used the database of KSH (Central Statistics Office) and VÁTI (Hungarian Non-profit Limited Liability Company for Regional Development and Town Planning) for the characterization of the socio-economical development (censuses, micro-censuses, statistical yearbooks of the area, TEIR /SIS/), creating further developed databases for own purposes by filtering and selecting, using MS Excel.

The research results have been illustrated using spatial information technology software (Arcview GIS 3.3, MapInfo 4.1) and an image editing software (Jasc Paint Shop Pro 8).

The theoretical part of the research was complemented with non-representative field work involving randomly distributed survey questionnaires, the number of which was proportioned based on the population of the studied settlements.

The research was conducted in 2010-2011 in several phases in 27 Órség and border-area settlements, in the form of structured interviews mainly conducted by trained interviewers. The number of questionnaires voluntarily filled in was low, 10 altogether. The main concept was to proportion the number of questionnaires based on the settlement size, thus fewer were needed in villages with a lower population and more in case of a higher population (*Table 1*). Altogether 215 questionnaires were processed, 193 of which were resident questionnaires. The questionnaires of the Óriszentpéter primary school students needed to be processed separately as they received a questionnaire with a number of different items, and because they filled in the questionnaire in a homeroom class individually. Later, another survey among the settlement leaders was added to the field work. This questionnaire contained specialized questions focusing on the knowledge and opinion of officials. From the 18 settlements 11 replies were received which could be processed.

In conclusion, the field work was the most informative phase of the research, as the interviewers unintentionally collected additional information during the interviews, which could be further investigated, and which influenced the direction of the research, as it is best to get an answer to an arising question locally.

Table 1: Number of questionnaires filled in by the settlements

SETTLEMENT	population (2010)	number of questionnaires
Alsószenterzsébet	78	2
Bajánsénye	475	11
Csöde	85	4
Felsőjánosfa	178	5
Felsőmarác	281	2
Felsőszenterzsébet	15	2
Hegyhátszentjakab	269	6
Hegyhátszentmárton	64	3
Ispánk	95	5
Ivác	700	5
Kercaszomor	198	9
Kerkáskápolna	97	4
Kisrákos	206	7
Kondorfa	538	11
Magyarföld	51	4
Magyarszombatfa	264	10
Nagyrákos	282	11
Órimagyarósd	219	4
Óriszentpéter	1160	34
Pankasz	413	7
Szaknyér	57	4
Szalafő	208	7
Szatta	66	5
Szentgyörgyvölgy	456	11
Szőce	370	9
Velemér	89	4
Viszák	242	7

Source: KSH (CSO) 2010 Year Book, as well as own questionnaires. 2012.

III. INTRODUCTION OF THE REGION

The Órség is a heterogeneous, colorful and diverse region of the western corner of Hungary. From a natural geography point of view it is located on the area of four small regions (MAROSI S.–SOMOGYI S. 1990, DÖVÉNYI Z. edit. 2010), its landscape diversity is the result of the encounter of different landscape items. The lack of landscape uniformity was proven by geological, surface morphological and hydrogeological studies.

The natural aspects of the region (relief, hydrogeology, soil types, extensive woodlands) largely influenced settling conditions and possibilities. As the effect of the various conditions, special settlement and farming methods formed and survived. The possibilities given by the natural environment not only determined the creation of the unique settlement structure, the zonality and mosaicity of farming but also – as a result of no other farming options – the survival and conservation of the century-long heritage. The transmission of the survived szer-type settlement structure and farming culture became endangered in the 20th-21st century. The causes are a diverse set of problems related to various scientific fields, which the present thesis aims to shed light on. All in all the following can be stated that:

- The Órség can be called a curiosity from a natural geography and a cultural history point of view.
- The mutual effect of the natural environment and society on each other caused the creation of the settlement-morphological features, the one-time farming methods and conditions, and the mosaicity of the landscape. The Órség National Park, which was recently (2002) created, is responsible for the protection and preservation of this unparalleled natural, architectural and cultural heritage.
- Its population can be regarded as continuous from the time of the Hungarian Conquest (the Hungarians arriving in the Carpathian Basin), as it was exempt from considerable relocations, although its population decreased significantly in certain historical periods. After the Turkish rule, the most significant drop in population has happened recently (starting in 1949). Some villages of the area, mainly containing small villages, have suffered a 70% population loss since 1949 (such as Velemér, Kercaszomor, Kerkáskápolna). Until the 1970s the main reason behind the population loss

was a negative migration balance, since then it has been a negative reproduction rate.

- Due to its unique – and unfortunate – population structure and processes, the Órség is an area with serious problems. However, another recent trend is the change of population: the immigrants have diverse cultural backgrounds and identities, while they are influential and dynamic.

IV. RESULTS

IV. 1. The question of delimitation

The problem of delimitation is a result of its exceptional complexity. Not only because "all things are allocated somewhere in the social-geographical sphere and are of sociological importance relating to space, spatiality and spatial processes" (TÓTH J. 1998) but also because it requires the knowledge and use of the aspects of various scientific fields (BUGOVICS Z. 2007). The present study undoubtedly approaches the issue from the viewpoint of human geography, but at the same time, as a result of aiming for completeness, ethnography, historical and natural geography need to be taken into consideration as well.

In connection with the delimitation of the Órség an essential question to answer is whether we view the Órség as a natural, sociological or historical-ethnographical unit. In my previous studies (CSAPÓ O. 2008, BALOGH A.–BARANYAI O. in press) it was proven that the Órség cannot be analysed as a uniform natural geographical landscape. We cannot expect natural geographical landscape categorizations to mark the borders of the Órség, however, in the case of small landscape areas appropriate terminology would be important, and as traditional folk landscape names do not appear in the hierarchical category system of landscapes.

The separation of the Órség as a historical-ethnographical landscape seems simple, as there is no doubt about its historicity: charters document which villages used to constitute the Órség. The first charter of the Órség people issued by King István II, dating back to 1270 reviews their status and proclaims that they are not noble but they are free by law. In 1280 King László IV confirms the privileges of the Órség people in a book, in which the settlements (*Figure 1*) are listed (STAHL F. 1974). Although the privileges of the guards have decreased, a number of them could be retained for a long time (CSAPÓ O. 2008).

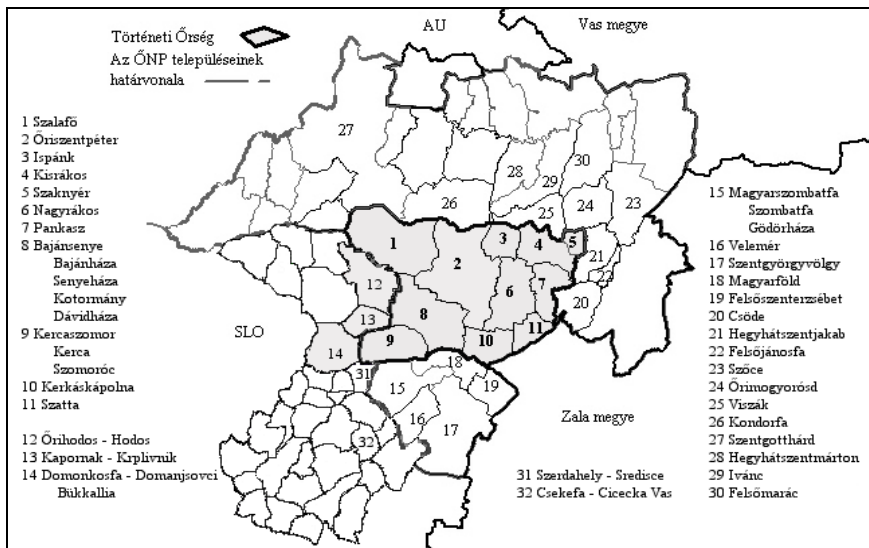


Figure 1. The settlements of the free guards based on the 1280 book. 1-14 are the villages of the historical Órség, 15-23 are the periphery settlements; AU-Austria, SLO-Slovenia, ÓNO-Órség National Park

The definition of the historical Órség is simple based on the resources available to us, but several researchers expanded the borders for various reasons (e.g. KOGUTOWICZ K. 1930, DÖMÖTÖR S. 1960, TÓTH J. 1975, BÍRÓ F. 1975, BELUSZKY P. 2005a, 2011). The experts of different scientific fields still draw the border of the Órség based on their own research areas. No consensus has been reached about the territory of the Órség.

In ethnographical studies primarily the borders of cultural features instead of the (natural) geographical ones are the norm. However, ethnographers cannot always deal with the problem of the cultural border successfully. In neighbouring societies the interaction between cultures is natural, usually they show a smaller difference in the material culture and a bigger one in intellectual ethnographical features (TÜSKÉS T. 1994). This is true for the Órség as well.

During my research those ethnographical features were examined which could help delimitation, and which can – at least partly – be observed in the present. One of the typical ethnographical features of the Órség determining the image of the landscape is the transitional settlement type,

the “szer” settlement structure. However, delimitation is problematic based on the existence of the terminology and typical settlement structure. On the one hand these can also be found outside the borders of the Órség, and on the other hand, at present they cannot be found everywhere inside the Órség.

Ethnography-based delimitation could be helped by agricultural practices and farming tools of peasants determining the formation of the heterogeneous Órség landscape. However, these days the distribution of tools referred to in the literature cannot be examined, as it can be claimed that only few farms are not mechanized in the present.

As for the intellectual aspects, the language and the dialects have suffered losses as well, and the elderly appear to carry the special features of the local dialect to the grave. Numerous research confirmed that the Órség dialect used to exist (VÉGH J. 1954, 1959, IMRE S. 1971, MOLNÁR Z. M. 1999), some researchers even used dialects to help them in the delimitation of West-Transdanubia landscape units (BAZSIKA E.–GYURICZA L. 2008). The latter publication contains an illustration as a result, on which the extent of the ethnographic landscapes on the Hungarian-Slovenian border area defines the position of the Órség; however, the delimitation of the settlements listed as part of the core territory of the Órség is wider than the historical one, let alone the extended Órség. Nevertheless, I have to agree with the problem arising as a final conclusion in their work, namely that the need to change the marking and delimitation of the examined landscapes on Hungarian maps is by all means justified.

Relating to the Órség, NAGY Z. (1999) deals with the delimitation of newly formed ethnographic landscape units. Based on his results, although the borders of ethnographic features appear to have blurred in the middle of the 20th century, a map divided into the Órség and a periphery area becomes distinct, which shows great similarity with the results of my map of the Órség and its border settlements (CSAPÓ O. 2008).

My survey contained the question “*In your opinion, what delimits the villages of the Órség from other villages?*”. The opinion of the people living in the area is summarized in *Table 2*.

Table 2. The distribution of answers to the question “In your opinion, what delimits the villages of the Órség from other villages?”.

Notion referred to	References (public)		References (school)	
	number	%	number	%
settlement structure	45	26,8	-	-
habits	27	16,1	15	71,4
past	22	13,1	11	52,4
architecture	21	12,5	-	-
agriculture	17	10,1	6	28,6
terrain	16	9,5	4	19,1
traditions	16	9,5	-	-
language, dialect	13	7,7	3	14,3
there is no longer such a thing, nothing	12	7,1	-	-
religion	10	5,9	2	9,5
handicraft industry	9	5,4	5	23,8
landscape	8	4,7	-	-
solidarity	8	4,7	-	-
pottery	7	4,2	1	4,7
forest	6	3,6	-	-
identity	4	2,4	-	-
national park	3	1,8	-	-

Source: compiled based on my questionnaire 2011

During my research the examination of the Órség as a religious island was an important issue as well – with the majority of the population belonging the Reformed Church as a historical heritage. These days this difference between the Órség and the neighboring villages appears to be fading away, due to the fact that religion is losing its importance for people, and the fact that many of the immigrants are Catholic.

Based on my research, from an ethnographic point of view, it needs to be noted that the life, culture and traditions of a region and its people happen in continuous transformation, disintegration and renewal. In our mobilized and information-rich world, however, renewal can result in the fading of special features and the conservation of schematic values. The preserved traditional ethnographic features of the Órség have been forced into the shop window in a reservation-like manner, typically restricted to architecture (outdoor ethnographic museum, a number of protected houses, belfries), the settlement structure (the “szer”s can only be found in a few

settlements), the gastronomy (regional food on restaurant menus and in some homes, oil pressing at a few houses) and performed traditions (log-pulling, pottery). These are gradually disappearing from everyday life (such as farming, family life, and community life), thus the ethnography-based delimitation of today's Órség is not relevant these days, it cannot be carried out accurately.

As one of the most important results of the survey questionnaire, the opinion of the people about the borders of Órség is unavoidable. An issue can be proved scientifically in many ways, but if the people do not feel it is their own, the scientific result will be distorted and useless in everyday life.

The analysis of the question "*In your opinion, which settlements are part of the Órség – today?*" shows that the respondents interpret the historical Órség as a wider area than today's Órség (*Figure 2*).

Naturally there is no doubt about the existence of the historical Órség. Linking the five villages on its northern border (Kondorfa, Viszák, Felsőjánosfa, Hegyhátszentjakab, Órimagyarósd) to the Órség is not obvious, but their inhabitants and a high percentage of the people living in the area (<70%) consider them as part of the region. From the south it is the county border, from the north it is the state borders and the Vend Region that draw the distinct line for the people living in the region. The separation from the northern and north-eastern villages is more difficult. The public opinion probably shows the result of the process in which they first became the edge of the Órség, then the border settlements of it, and finally they have become part of the Órség. Their endeavours were supported by information publications expanding the borders of the region, the small region borders, associations that formed here, some agile mayors and organized marketing.

Thus, based on the image of Órség in the present I consider the following settlements to be part of the Órség (the settlements above 70% on *Figure 2*):

1. the villages of the historical Órség in present-day Hungary: Bajánsenye, Ispánk, Kercaszomor, Kerkáskápolna, Kistrákos, Nagyrákos, Pankasz, Szaknyér, Szalafő, Szatta and the town of Óriszentpéter,
2. the villages of the inner-Órség: Magyarszombatfa and Velemér
3. from the villages of the outer-Órség: Felsőjánosfa, Hegyhátszentjakab, Kondorfa, Órimagyarósd and Viszák.

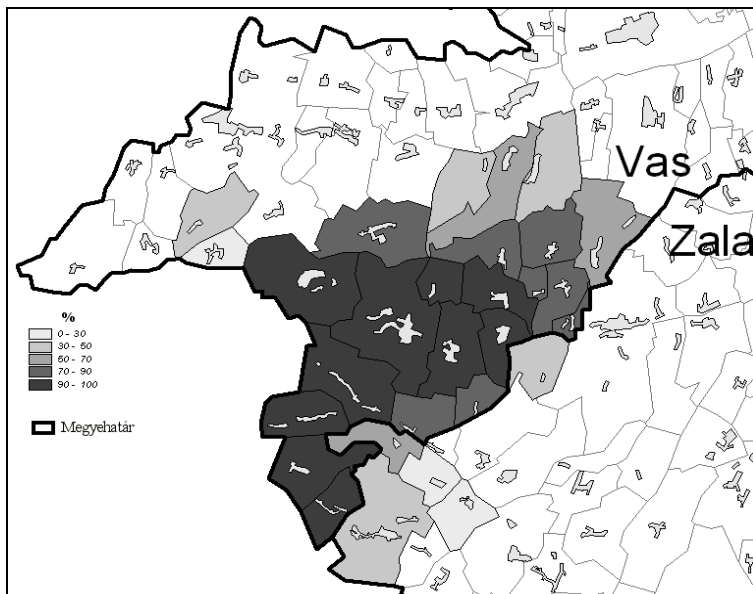


Figure 2: The strength of belonging to the Órség in the public opinion
 Edited by Baranyai, O. 2012

IV.2. Present-day social change and its effects

The villages of the Órség – as the Hungarian countryside in many places, but typically in the small village regions – had to face tragedies in the past 50-60 years. There are various explanations for impoverishment, degeneration, futurelessness. Mainly the economic and political trends are blamed, or less often the lack of ability for innovation on the part of villagers. Research that aims to ask and understand, then embrace the society itself can rarely be found. The creating power of communities is essential in the recovery of this region that has endured so much, so that it could deal with the loss in life, money and knowledge, and so that it could gain a firm footing on its own land.

The root of the changes happening in the Órség can be found in the events of the recent past. Thus in my research I analysed misfortunes of historical significance following World War I. The present study touches upon:

- losses suffered after World War I, which, after the new borders had been drawn, resulted in economic losses, unwillingly changed geographical division of labour, and the halt in the demographic increase in an incomplete Őrség.

- the new ideologies following World War II which had a serious effect on the population of the Őrség: the preference of common property instead of private property. The anti-class relocation beheaded rural societies, which determined its character significantly, while forced relocations had a deep effect on not only the relocated families but also on the ones that stayed,

- the disadvantages of being on the borderland as well as the regional problems of the artificial new agricultural collectives. It can be stated that the stratification in employment, the large-scale migration of the youth started at that point generating a significant set of problems

- the regional aspects of the adverse world politics. The 1971 National Settlement Development Concept had an adverse effect on the development of the Őrség. The continually cancelled developments did not facilitate the preservation of the youth and job opportunities. Commuting, then moving became frequent.

- the reforms concerning property issues and farming conditions after the change of the regime, which could still not solve many of the accumulated problems.

Immigration in the transforming society of the Őrség was given great attention in my research. As a result of the survey questionnaire it was found that:

- there is strong rejection and disapproval towards immigrants on the part of the original inhabitants.

- the immigrants usually bring new culture, attitudes and a different identity-consciousness, and with their assimilation they largely affect the locals despite the above-mentioned rejection.

- at the same time the immigrants are often more highly educated and have dynamism (and often capital) to boost the economy of the region.

Regarding the transforming society of the Őrség the legitimate question arises whether the identity of the people is changing, as the presence of the processes acting against regional identity conservation (mobilization, globalization, internet) typically causes an identity crisis.

In my research it was proved that this process is present in the Órség: the once again transforming population of this landscape unit is coupled with a distorted identity. When examining the spontaneously forming regional identity units (attachment to one's place of residence, attraction towards the region) it is clear that while the attraction to their settlement is strong among the original inhabitants (I assume that they take the landscape for granted), the young people and the immigrants are more attached to the landscape, the rural features (peace and quiet). Identity research is underpinned by the results of my survey questionnaire, namely that the consciously formed categories of regional identity have a negative effect on it. Although the infrastructural state of the small-village region does not affect the population to an extent that it would cause loss of identity, high rates of unemployment, the lack of vision of future and trust have a significantly negative effect. These coupled with the shortcomings of the educational-intellectual-cultural environment weakens not only regional identity but also the renewal of the Órség community.

IV. 3. Opportunities for proceeding

It can be claimed that although the development strategies of the Órség are not appointed by the population, a lot depends on their cooperation, competence and attitudes. The most significant of the solution possibilities for the towering problems of the countryside is tourism, as well as the restoration of agriculture and the revival of small peasant farming.

The youth

In my research I aimed to shed light on the significant role of the youth and young adults in forming the future, the vision of future in the Órség. In these two studied age groups (ages 0-14 and 15-39) a longing to get away is very common, and few are planning to stay in the Órség. Although their view of the future is not negative, they sense the lack of job opportunities thus they would like to work in more remote towns. The urge to leave as a result of few job opportunities is stronger in the young adult population, there are few young adults who are satisfied with their lives and have found what they were looking for. Typically it is the immigrants and/or the people working in the service industry that have a positive view of the Órség's future and would not want to move.

Regional tourism and the public opinion

We can get an idea about the volume of growth in tourism if we analyse the regional statistics, as the number of guests and guest nights, as well as private accommodation have been showing an increase since 2005. Based on the questionnaire survey the following can be concluded:

- The inhabitants of the region, while realizing the significance of tourism, do not or not adequately take advantage of its real potential. It needs to be realized that the landscape features and the rural accommodation in themselves are not appealing enough. Their views can be characterized by their replies to the question “*What comes to your mind when you think of rural tourism?*”, where the dominant answers are about providing accommodation and “tourists come here”.

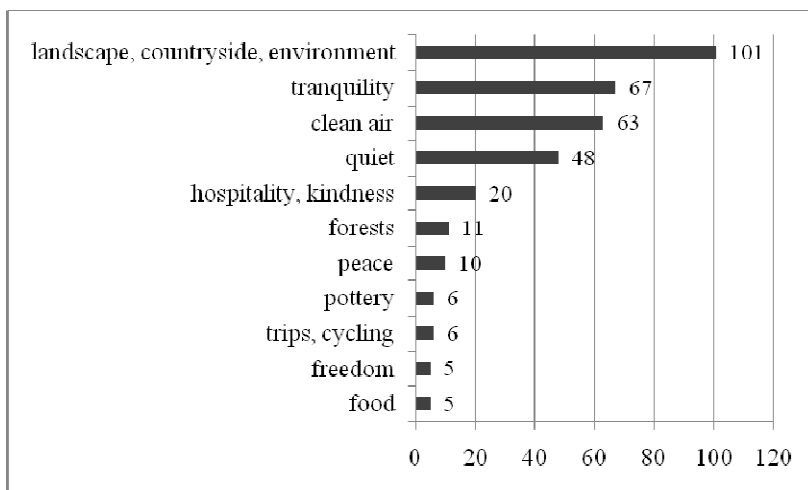


Figure 3: The attraction of the Órség according to the public (number of appearances)

Based on the survey questionnaire, own editing, 2012

The number of people who mention other notions related to tourism such as local food, pottery, trips etc. is low. The population considers the landscape, the fresh air and the peace and quiet as the main attractions of

the Őrség (Figure 3). Very few mention notions such as tourist attractions, programs or old buildings.

- It is interesting that primarily the buildings and cultural values are emphasized (Figure 4), the beautiful Őrség landscape is taken for granted, and not viewed as an attraction to be displayed. It is important to note that in the minds of the locals there are tourist attraction items that are known Őrség-wide and there are some that are only known locally, among a few neighboring settlements. Making these latter values – potential attractions – known to a wider audience would enrich the list of tourist attractions in the Őrség.

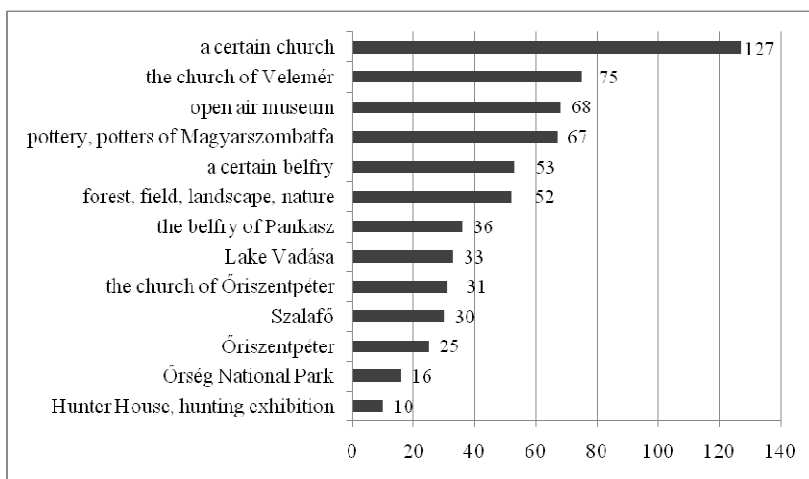


Figure 4: The most common answers to the question “What would you show people visiting the Őrség?”

Based on the survey questionnaire, own editing, 2012

- The third biggest base in the list of Őrség attractions is the festivals and more major programs, in which the knowledge and attendance of the locals is varying. The Fair of Őrség and the International Pumpkin Festival (the two major events) are the most widely known and attended, while the wider spectrum cultural-entertaining art festivals proved to be less available for the local people. It is unfortunate that the otherwise emblematic gastro-cultural or traditionalist festivals are not attended by a great number of locals.

I believe that the touristic potentials and its benefits are not taken advantage of effectively. The locals are not fully aware of the attractions of their living environment and/or their settlement and they utilize few touristic opportunities (typically providing accommodation, less commonly preservation of traditions).

- The outcome of the survey questionnaire is that it highlights the special relationship between the population of the region and the Órség National Park (ÓNP). The majority of the population does not recognize the activity of the ÓNP (or even the reason for its existence) in the organization and maintenance of tourism, in appointing the directions for the region (ecotourism), or its values it aims to preserve. The main source of conflict lies in carrying out its official duties and enforcing laws, which leads to a negative attitude, passivity or occasionally a lack of cooperation in the local population. At the same time they are not motivated in becoming familiar with the natural values of their environment. This is well illustrated in the results of the survey questionnaire: the knowledge of the study paths is very low. Two thirds of the respondents do not know/cannot name a single path, and they mainly named non-local species when asked about protected animals and plants. Only few people know the emblematic protected values of the Órség (marsh gentian, orchis, black stork, landrail, triturus), apart from some exceptions (yellow lilies, Snake's Head Fritillary).

The transforming agricultural region and the sustainable agriculture

On the protected and sensitive natural area of the Órség the sustenance of farming is the primary condition in preserving biodiversity and landscape character. The state of natural resources and systems fundamentally determines its agricultural opportunities, cost-effectiveness, long-term operability, and the quality of its products and the resulting competitiveness on the market.

The Órség used to be a uniform agricultural landscape with a largely self-sufficient population. The decrease in the number of people living off the land resulted in a change in the ratio of area use. The deserted ploughland, the forestation of fields and pasture-land endangered by the decline in animal husbandry have caused changes in the mosaicity of the landscape. The population of the transforming agricultural region has also gone through significant changes. Agricultural expertise and professional calling are fading away among the original inhabitants (although many households do smaller scale farming), while the immigrants, although

dynamic and agile, are still in the process of learning the rules of farming. The regional development of human resources and the resurrection of the social capital of communities are essential in strengthening farming that is relying on local conditions.

Despite all the above the land market is picking up on the part of immigrants-to-be from bigger towns, foreigners or the state. Of course the problem of pocket contracts is a current issue, but the majority of foreign farmers has been living in the region for many years or even decades and they have been working in accordance with national agricultural and nature conservation policies. The fragmented property structure and ownership issues, however, have made the formation of bigger farms more difficult, so the lease of farmland is common. In recent years the biggest purchaser of land is undoubtedly the Hungarian state through the ÖNP. Land purchase by the state is on the one hand aimed at winning back territories lost by pocket contracts, and on the other hand it is directed at the increasing ownership of protected areas.

The best opportunity in the future of the region would be the revival of animal husbandry. However, at present the number of farmers keeping cattle is very low, only a few settlements have above average numbers of cattle. The livestock of the ÖNP in Óriszentpéter is significant, there is a farm in Órimagyarósd operating on the territory of the former cooperative, and there is a farmer each in Szalafő and in Szaknyér owning relatively large livestock (50-100 cattle). However, most farmers owning livestock in the Órség are elderly citizens, keeping only 1-3 cows as a hobby or a routine. These households are commonly self-sufficient and they have little extra income from animal husbandry, if they can sell the milk. In addition, they do not contribute significantly to the maintenance of fields as many of them do not take their livestock to the pasture land, instead they carry the straw to the animals. All the same, reviving animal husbandry has been put in the focus by the current government, and several projects have started in the Órség National Park to help this process. As part of one of the currently running heifer distribution programs 33 calves have been placed at farmers in the Órség.

Animal husbandry not only facilitates landscape preservation but also provides job opportunities, products and a living. However, only few people work in produce processing, it is more common to sell raw milk. The biggest processor of milk is the Órség Milk Factory in Szalafő, which, although it does not process milk from the Órség, it provides employment for 13 residents.

Only a small percentage of animal farmers in the Órség apply for agricultural aid. In the first half of 2012 only 53 applications relating to cattle raising have been accepted, complemented by 34 milk support applications. The agricultural possibilities of the region are limited due to its natural conditions, thus numerous applications are received for plough land aid. The most popular is the territory-based assistance (270), but several agri-environmental (40), unfavourable environment (28) and Natura 2000 (28) applications have been accepted. However, settlement leaders and farmers indicated that the application procedures are often very complicated, and that the checks are overwhelming, occasionally taking up days – at least for animal farmers. In the case of plough land checks it is a different scenario, the sowed crop sometimes only yields aid money. Pursuing sustainable farming in the region is highly difficult, the aid is frequently income supplement, or additional resource in making a living. These days having a multifaceted business, one that relies on diverse resources and activities, is a must. Realizing this, a growing number of family farms focus on not necessarily farming-related but rather regional products. Thus we can find households making pumpkin seed oil (e.g. Batha and Jakosa Houses) or pottery shops (especially in Magyarszombatfa), and a few distilleries and orchards aiming to preserve the local, regional tree varieties (Tündé kert and Csörgő alma). These micro-farms with household farming and supplementary activities can be the future of the traditional, sustainable farming. A curiosity in the Órség is the Zsohár Garden Shop which does not do any agricultural activity but they cultivate and cross breed plants. It started as a family farm but it has grown into a four acre farm. Its peculiarity lies in the fact that it employs 33 people, which makes it the second biggest employer in the region, only preceded by the National Park.

The possibility of linked production and service, already used by a few businesses, needs to be noted: they are engaged in agriculture and in addition to this, extended their touristic profile (by providing accommodation, setting up a model farm) and they sell their products locally (e.g. Ferenc House in Szalafő). The local sale of the produce is not resolved, and only few farmers can afford to travel to more remote markets. It would be important to improve and, by regulations, promote the opportunity of buying and using up the produce for example by local restaurants and shops. To support this the ÖNP has created the “Product of the Órség National Park” trademark. The aim is to support local businesses, farmers and business associations, to improve the esteem of their products

and to widen their prospects on the market. To be eligible for the use of the trademark businesses need to apply, its long-term effects are worth paying attention to.

Despite the encouragement of a growing number of panels, and the popularity of organic products, organic farming is an untapped field in the agriculture of the region. The quality of local products and their production could strengthen local tourism, as they can contribute to the formation of a more sophisticated gastro-tourism or the creation of places introducing rural life (animal handling, swine feast).

In regard to the fact that the background necessary for the development of the Órség villages is not all that negative, the directions of development can be determined by the utilization of available resources, the inhabitants' attitude, the quality of the support coming from outside/above and the creation of jobs.

V. DIRECTIONS OF FURTHER RESEARCH

Although I need to put an end to the thesis, several further directions for further research arose during my work.

I find it essential to further support the results of delimitation. I see the possibility of this in the re-examination of geographical-ethnographical units: starting from the territory structure and settlement morphology and assessing the state and condition of the region's settlements examining the houses of the "szer"s. In my opinion the above method can prove or refute my arguments in extending the northern borders of the Órség.

More in-depth research into the issue of Órség Székelys can provide us with further vital information, in which the participation of several other scientific fields could be instrumental. Utilizing the special historical features of the borderline (gyepű) system in the Carpathian Basin some territory parallels raise the attention to the similarities in border line areas, and show the directions for further research.

The most comprehensive and most necessary research needs to be an exploration regarding the society issues of the Órség. The hopeless society, not being able to keep up with the progress and lacking vocational training needs help. This is a human geographical issue, it requires comprehensive knowledge and experts, and it foreshadows interesting further research.

V. LIST OF PUBLICATIONS AND CONFERENCE PRESENTATIONS

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