

Utjordar and the question of deserted farms – a case study of the parish of Svanshals

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This study is a part of a research project that deals with so-called *utjordar* and the problem of tracing deserted farms followed by the ‘Crisis’ of the Late Middle Ages. The late medieval decline is well observed in Europe and the Scandinavian countries although the consequences of the crisis have been much debated.¹ A well-known consequence is deserted settlement units, still present in the landscape in some locations. By the mid-fifteenth century a recovery can be observed but not all abandoned farms were resettled. Instead, a considerable number of deserted farms were taken over and cultivated by surrounding farms, sometimes converted into grass used for pasture or meadow. In Sweden this procedure is well documented in the Vadstena Abbey registers from 1447 to 1502.² The details on farm level in Sweden, however, typically first appear in the sixteenth-century cadastral registers, the early national taxation registers of farms.³ In this source deserted farms appear as uninhabited units referred to as *utjord* (pl. *utjordar*). Furthermore, *utjord* has an ambiguous meaning in the registers, as it also refers to assorted pieces of land, for instance land donated to the church.⁴ Hence, it has been questioned whether *utjordar* generally are a feasible indicator of desertion or not.⁵ So far the phenomenon of *utjordar* has rarely been studied, however, which motivates further research.

This paper aims to discuss the characteristics of *utjordar* in two sources: the cadastral registers dating from the 1540s and the large-scale maps dating from the 1630s. It focuses on whether *utjordar* are constant or fluctuating in the six-

teenth- and seventeenth-century. An assumption is made that the chronological depth of *utjordar* reflects a late-medieval origin. For example, if an *utjord* is preserved, and appears in records of the 1540s and 1640s, it is likely to originate from a late-medieval or older practice.⁶ The text follows two steps. First, on a national level all occurrences of *utjordar* in the large-scale maps from 1630 to 1655 are compiled by means of a recently published database.⁷ Second, a single parish is chosen for a close study comparing individual *utjordar* in cadastral records, large-scale maps and also younger maps, using a retrogressive approach.⁸ Nevertheless, having its focus on *utjordar* and the possibility to identify deserted farms, this text does not draw further conclusions on the Crisis of the Late Middle Ages and the Black Death aftermaths.

The possibility of describing the characteristics of *utjordar* has recently increased since about 12,000 Swedish large-scale maps dating from 1630 to 1655 have been published with text transcriptions and a coordinate-based database on the Internet. These maps are the oldest source for describing *utjordar* as they appear in the landscape. Together with the map’s text descriptions, *Notarum Explicatio*, the maps enable analysis by means of several criteria. The following criteria have been considered:

- 1) The total size of arable land and meadow.
- 2) The land ownership by social category; Freehold peasantry, the Crown and the Nobility.⁹
- 3) The pattern of contact between an *utjord*

- and a farm, for instance if one *utjord* belongs to one or several farms and vice versa.
- 4) If *utjordar* have their own names, place names or field names.

The parish of Svanshals was chosen for the case study. It is located in Tåkernbygden, south of Lake Tåkern, in the province of Östergötland. *Utjordar* were a common element in this region in the sixteenth and seventeenth century and are typically situated within the older hamlets.¹⁰ The various characteristics of *utjordar* in this area were first analysed by geographer Staffan Helmfrid, and this parish of Svanshals is therefore suitable for a further comparison of the results.¹¹ Another reason for choosing a parish located on the plains is because of the settlement units and boundaries in this part of Östergötland have long continuity. As discussed by geographer Clas Tollin, the seventeenth-century large-scale maps add few new hamlets, farms or lands for cultivation compared with the medieval pre-Black Death situation.¹² The maps are therefore suitable sources for the agrarian landscape of the Late Middle Ages.

Farm desertion in Sweden

The ‘Crisis’ of the Late Middle Ages in Sweden has probably been underestimated for a long time. According to agrarian historian Janken Myrdal, Sweden follows the trend seen in several European countries, ending with economic growth and expansion of arable land during the first half of the fourteenth century and starting with a general decline during the Late Middle Ages. Several major outbreaks of plagues in Sweden have been documented during the 1350s, 1360s and early fifteenth century and a depopulation of around half the population has been suggested by Myrdal.¹³

The pestilences are an obvious reason for not only increasing mortality but also farm desertion. The extent of farm desertion in Sweden, however, is still very unclear and gives rise to different assumptions. Deserted farms were studied by the Scandinavian joint project in the 1970s and 1980s. The project gained inspiration from

the previous studies of deserted settlements in England and Germany.¹⁴ The Swedish group provided six regional studies and a minor level of desertion was observed with one exception. In contrast the Norwegian studies presented the opposite trend, with a high level of farm desertion.¹⁵ The very disparate results were attributed to regional differences but were also criticized for being a consequence of two different methodological approaches. The Swedish group was probably too focused on explicit evidence of desertion and consequently only a minor level of all deserted farms during the Late Middle Ages were observed.¹⁶ A high level of deserted farms in the Vadstena Abbey registers of 1447 correspond to more recent observations made in the provinces of Värmland and the later Swedish provinces of Jämtland and Bohuslän, although desertion is a social process and not all regions were affected equally.¹⁷ A common understanding is that northern Sweden, for instance the provinces of Hälsingland and Västerbotten, were not affected by a similar desertion.¹⁸ Moreover, the allocation of deserted farms in the most populated areas in central Sweden, the provinces of Uppland, Östergötland and Västergötland is not well studied.

One reason why the level of desertion could be underestimated is because of hamlets in populated regions seldom totally disappear but rather shrink. Few works, however, relate to the changing agrarian structures, followed by increased mortality and farm desertion. The typical deserted farm is an isolated farm in a rather fringe remote location.¹⁹ Understandably the contraction of the arable land, followed by a great decline, started in the remote areas rather than in hamlets on fertile plains.²⁰ There are examples in the records where the arable land was converted into grass, used for grazing, meadow or pasture by other farms. Some of these locations could still be traced by remaining field patterns in the landscape or by preserved place names.²¹ Partial desertion or desertion within hamlets, on the other hand, is not as recognizable as a total destruction of settlements. Primarily smaller hamlets (2-5 farms) characterized the medieval Sweden. An abandoned farm in

a hamlet, with both arable and meadow land, could absorb into a neighbouring farm in the same hamlet, ‘disappearing’ without leaving a physical trace or being reported in the written records. In this scenario, occurrences of uninhabited units, *utjordar*, are anomalies, related to farms but kept separated.

The characteristics of *utjordar*

The first large-scale maps from the mid-seventeenth century are the most comprehensive source for enabling an actual description of *utjordar*. By analyzing the maps, the following four relevant patterns of *utjordar* apply (Figure 1):

- 1) *Utjordar* in hamlets with shares, allocated by parcels in the fields similar to regular farms.
- 2) *Utjordar* in hamlets without shares, as a separated block of both arable and hay meadow land.
- 3) *Utjordar* consisting of one or few smaller parcels of land, either arable or hay meadow land.
- 4) *Utjordar* in an isolated remote location, not part of an existing hamlet, sometimes with their own place names.

Obviously, the type of land occupied as *utjordar* alternates distinctly. They are situated either within hamlets or are found isolated in fringe areas, irrespective of the size of land. The size of land varies; corresponding to medium-sized and smaller farms or constitutes very small pieces of land. Moreover they comprise either arable land or meadow or a combination of both. By similar observation, Helmfrid and Brunius suggest *utjordar* comprise land of different age and origin; either originated from late-medieval deserted farms, or were the result of donations to the Church and monasteries or other fragmentations of estates.²² Furthermore, Helmfrid noticed how the number of *utjordar*, in the province of Östergötland, seemed to fluctuate over time, indicating they could be newly established, dating from sixteenth-century wars or crises. Consequently, the general relation between *utjordar* and farm desertion was questioned.²³ *Utjordar*

allocated in hamlets, according to nr 1 (Figure 1), have however not been much analysed. There are several examples of *utjordar*, corresponding to nr 2 and 4, being sites of late-medieval deserted farms, also confirmed by archaeological investigation.²⁴ Smaller pieces of land, nr 3 in Figure 1, have been related, by Brunius, to donations of lands to the Church (see note 4).

The origin of the term *utjord* is unclear, but was probably adopted from an older medieval practice of referring to the small pieces of land.²⁵ Although *utjordar* first frequently appear in the cadastral registers, followed by the regime of King Gustav I in the late 1530s onwards, rarely include any comments.²⁶ *Utjordar* are systematically surveyed in the first half of the seventeenth century, as manifested in the major instructions for land surveyors of 1634, 1635, 1636 and 1643 as well as in the headings of several collections of geometrical large-scale maps.²⁷ Also, the land surveyors in the seventeenth-century seldom add any details of why *utjordar* exist. Obviously, the cadastral registers and the maps had an economic purpose and further explanations on *utjordar* were not needed. It can be assumed, however, that the reason why *utjordar* emerged and were kept and cultivated separately had been forgotten in the early sixteenth century, indicating a medieval or late-medieval, origin. The ambition was obviously to identify all *utjordar*, however, not all physically appeared in the field through boundaries or field patterns. As noted by Helmfrid and Bååth, many *utjordar* had absorbed into nearby farms.²⁸ The surveyors added the local peasants’ reports and extracts from the registers but total concordance between the specifications of *utjordar* in cadastral registers and large-scale maps cannot be expected.²⁹ For instance, in a rare comment on *utjordar*, the surveyor Johan de Rogier makes a note regarding the hamlet of Husby, in the parish of Skönberga, that the peasants had not truthfully reported the details of several *utjordar*.³⁰

A national compilation of *utjordar* in the large-scale maps from 1630 to 1655 gives around 1,300 matches in the map database (Figure 2).³¹ *Utjordar* sometimes appear more than once in the same hamlet. Out of a total of 12,000

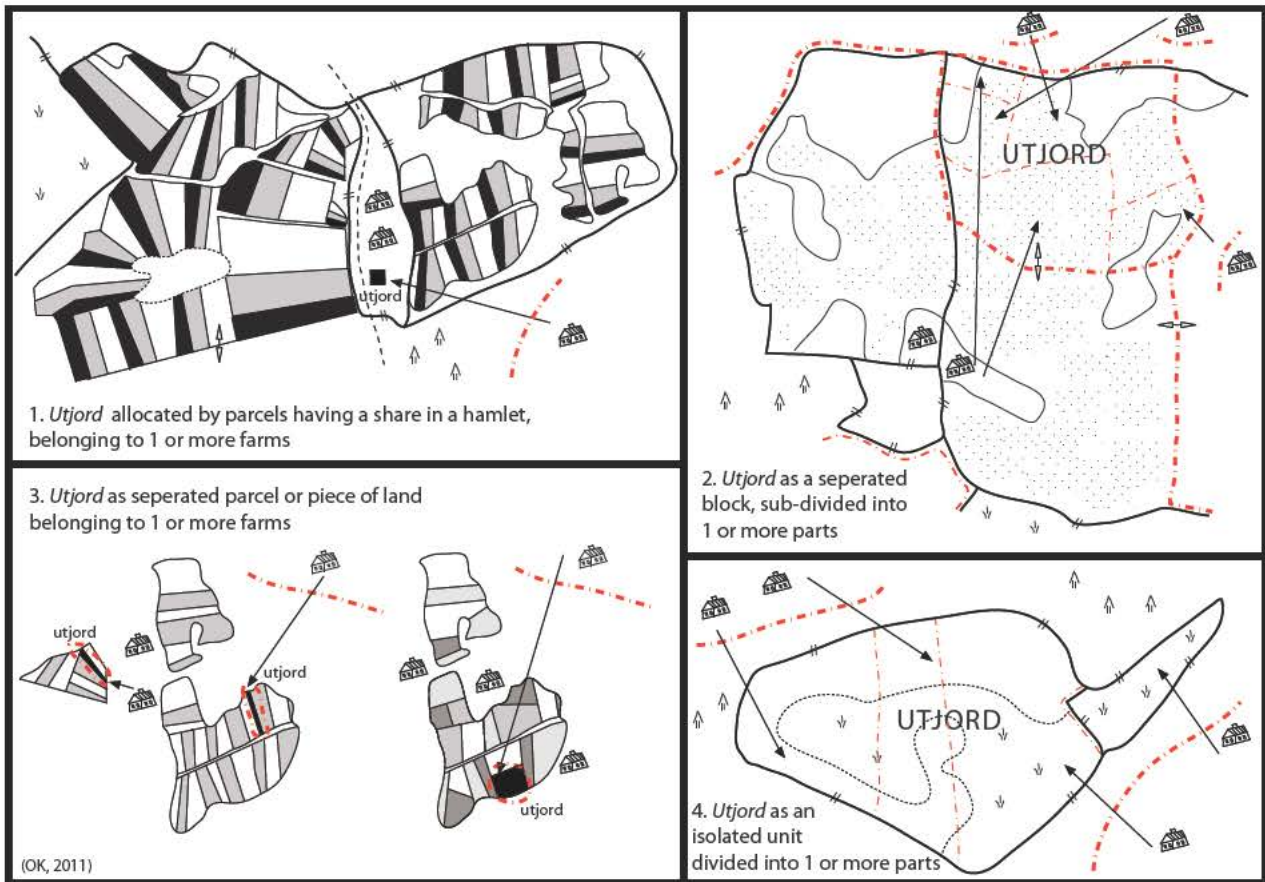


FIGURE 1. Four different patterns of *utjordar* as they appear in seventeenth-century large-scale maps.

settlement units 9 per cent contain the term *utjord* once or several times.³² *Utjord* is not the only term used by the surveyors when referring to uninhabited units and the terminology also alternates in the older cadastres.³³ Included but individually presented are *ödetorp/ödegård*, *torpställe* and *ängatorp* known as parallels to *utjord* and also indicators of deserted farms (400 matches in total).³⁴ *Utjordar* simply referred to as “arable land”, “meadow” or “toft” cannot be identified by database extraction, and are not included in Figure 1.

A very clear concentration to the south-east part of Sweden can be seen in Figure 1, in particular the provinces of Östergötland, Öland, Uppland, Södermanland and Västmanland. Frequently but in less detail the provinces of Småland and Värmland stand out, regions where

other terms indicating deserted farms are frequently mentioned. *Utjordar* are almost completely absent in the province of Västergötland and north of the province of Uppland. Also, the maps from the province of Närke contain few *utjordar*. How should the concentration in south-east Sweden be understood?

Undoubtedly, the majority of all *utjordar* in the large-scale maps exist in hamlets, located in pre-historically older settlement areas. In the map text about 50 per cent of all *utjordar* take part as shares in hamlets, similar to the first example in Figure 1, with parcels throughout the fields.³⁵ Such a regular open-field pattern in south-east Sweden is known as *solskifte* or ‘sun-division’. The toft is a juridical document, measured and proportional to all belonging in arable and meadow land and allows access to

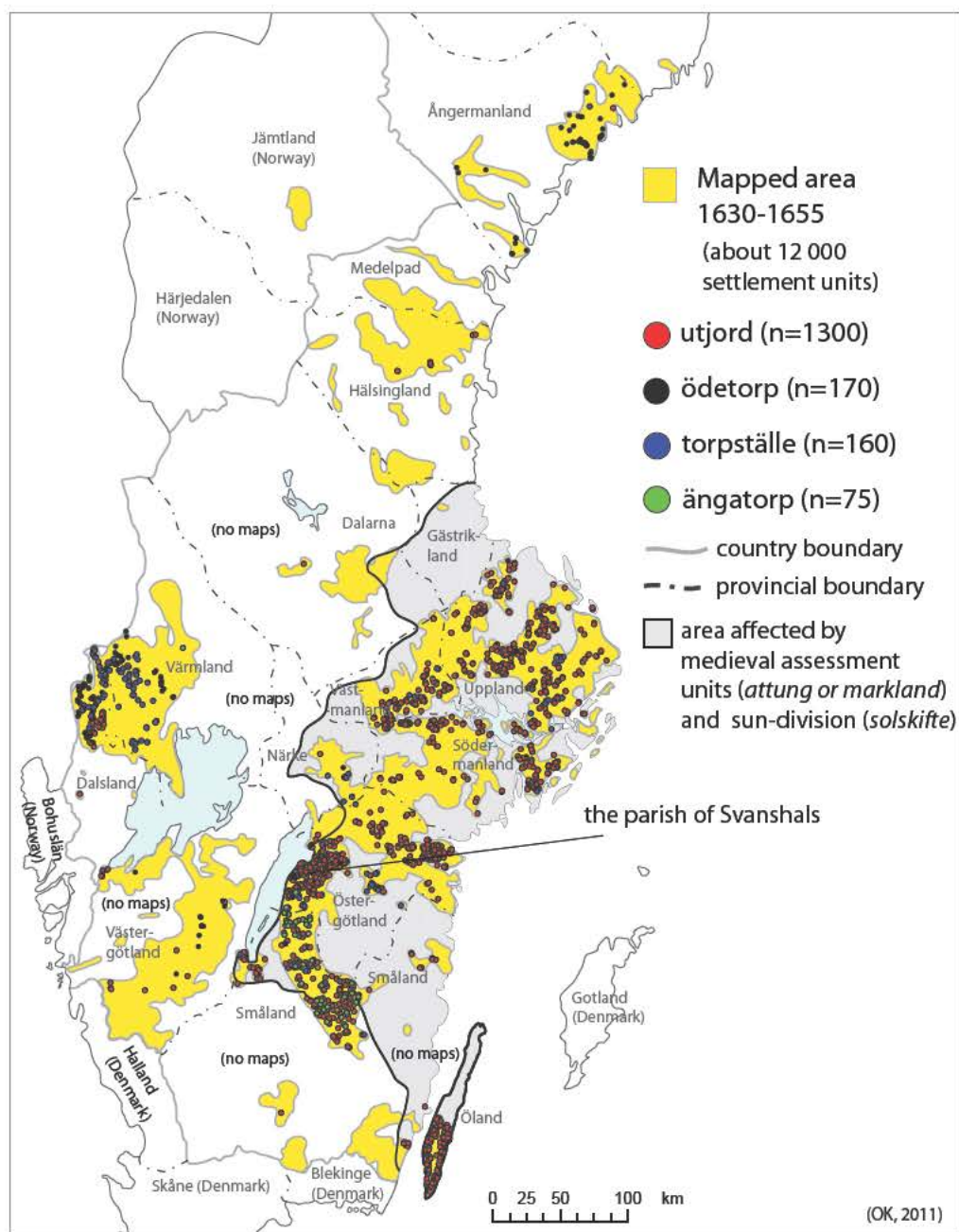


FIGURE 2. Allocation of *utjordar* in Sweden within the area covered by large-scale maps for 1630 to 1655. Of a total of 12,000 settlement units (hamlets and farms) 9 per cent have a relation to *utjordar* (red circles). The mapped area covers about 40 to 50 per cent of all villages, hamlets and single farms in Sweden in the mid-seventeenth century, excluding Finland. SOURCE: RA, www.riksarkivet.se/geometriska. NOTE: Area affected by *attung*, *markland* or *solskifte*, from Göransson, 1959, p. 104.

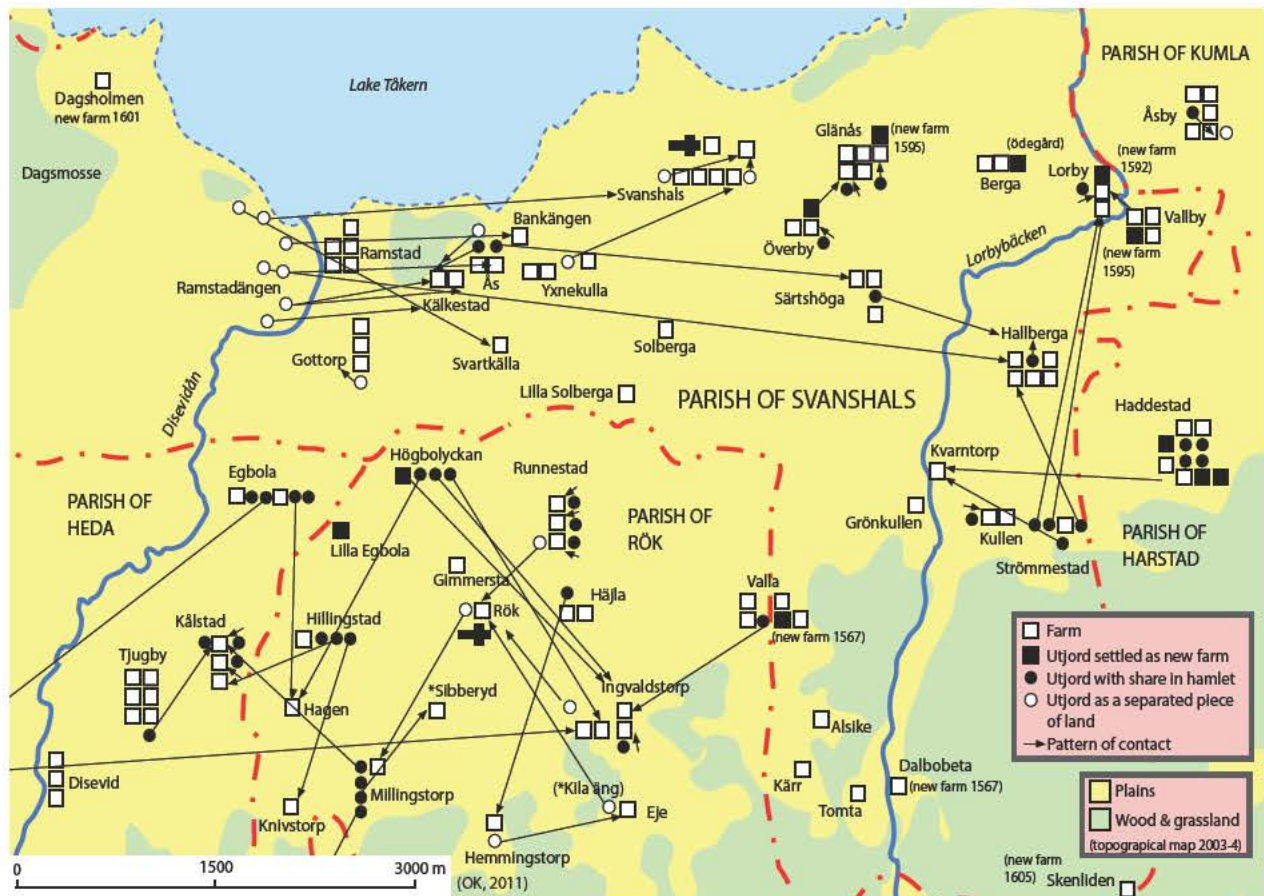
woodland, grazing and fishing when possible. Farms and *utjordar* have assigned parcels in the same order as each homestead toft's location in the hamlet, although there is no homestead building on the spot specified as an *utjord*. *Solskifte* is mentioned in eastern medieval law codes and was included in the first national law in the 1350s which remained in force until 1734, but the practice continued until the mid-eighteenth and early nineteenth-century enclosure reforms.³⁶ Extensive parts of Sweden never re-

formed into regular sun-divided hamlets as the law suggested, however. A detailed study of sun-divided hamlets in Sweden is still awaited, but the concentration to the south-east part is undisputed and the allocation of *utjordar*, located in hamlets, correlates to the territorial scope of sun-divided hamlets. The medieval practice of sun-division has, as it seems, helped to preserve the physical allocation of parcels and *utjordar* in hamlets.

FIGURE 3. Farms (white rectangles) and *utjordar* (black and white circles) in the parish of Svanshals and the adjoining parishes of Rök, Heda, Kumla and Harstad, by c. 1640. Högbolyckan, Lilla Egbola, Hillingstad, and Millingstorp stand out, since they are almost entirely occupied by *utjordar*. Five black rectangles can be seen, indicating *utjordar* already settled as a farm with a homestead c. by 1640. SOURCE: Collection of large-scale maps, D10b and D10a. NOTE: The arable land and meadow according to the present topographical map.

The parish of Svanshals c. 1640

The following case study of Svanshals parish in Östergötland in south-east Sweden reflects the phenomenon of *utjordar* in hamlets, seen in example 1 or 3 (Figure 1), either having a share in the hamlet or appearing as separate parcels of land. Except for four hamlets, the parish of Svanshals was completely mapped by land sur-



veyors in c. 1640, covering 23 settlement units (thirteen hamlets and ten single farms), with a total of 54 farms and nineteen *utjordar* (Figure 3; Table 1).³⁷ Notice the planned distribution of farms and *utjordar*, centred around rectangular geometrical tofts, closely attached in row formation (Figure 3 and 4).³⁸

The majority, fourteen out of nineteen *utjordar* comprise shares in hamlets. Those are located in Strömmestad (4 *utjordar*), Ås (2), Glänås (2), Överby (1), Lorby (1), Valla (1), Särtshöga (1), Hallberga (1) and Kullen (1). Strömmestad stands out, being a single farm with four *utjordar*. Two of them are indicated with tofts on the map 1640 and all four appear in the map's text. One without toft is specified along with an-

other and might share the same toft.³⁹ The other is noted in the map's text, and has no toft.⁴⁰ On a younger map of Strömmestad from 1698, however, all four have tofts along with two additional *utjordar* not present on the 1640 map. Whether the change is genuine or reflects incomplete specification in the older map has not been verified.⁴¹ In the hamlet of Ås two *utjordar* with tofts appear next to each other. Both measure sixteen ells in terms of share size and are half the size of the two farms in Ås. In the hamlet of Glänås two *utjordar* appears indirectly on the map from 1640. One is specified as an extra share in the fields, belonging to a farm in the same hamlet.⁴² The second is included as part of another farm in the same hamlet.⁴³ In a similar

TABLE 1: *Utjordar* in the parish of Svanshals by land ownership, size of arable, meadow and share in hamlet, c. 1640. SOURCE: RA, collection of large-scale maps D10a and D10b.

Settlement unit /name of hamlet	Land ownership by category	Arable land (hectare)	Meadow* (hay loads)	Share* (ells)
Strömmestad	Freehold peasantry	8.1	16.0	20
Valla	Freehold peasantry	6.9	8.0	65
Ås	Freehold peasantry	5.7	3.0	16
Ås	Freehold peasantry	5.7	3.0	16
Lorby**	Freehold peasantry	4.4	6.0	25
Kullen**	Crown	4.1	8.0	10
Strömmestad	Nobility	4.1	8.0	10
Glänås	Crown	4.0	7.0	6
Glänås	Crown	3.9	7.0	6
Särtshöga	Nobility	2.1	2.0	8
Strömmestad***	Nobility	2.0	4.0	5
Hallberga	Crown	2.0	3.0	7
Svanshals	Church	1.2	–	–
Strömmestad	Nobility	0.8	1.6	2
Yxnekulla	Church	0.5	–	–
Svanshals	Church	0.4	–	–
Ås	Church	0.4	–	–
Gottorp	Crown	–	2.0	–
Överby**	Crown	? (not specified)	?	?

* = Size of meadow refers to annual numbers in hay loads, 1 = c.

212 kilo. Size of share, 1 ell, c. 0.59 cm.

** = The specification is included with the farm which cultivates it

*** = Specified without geometrical toft

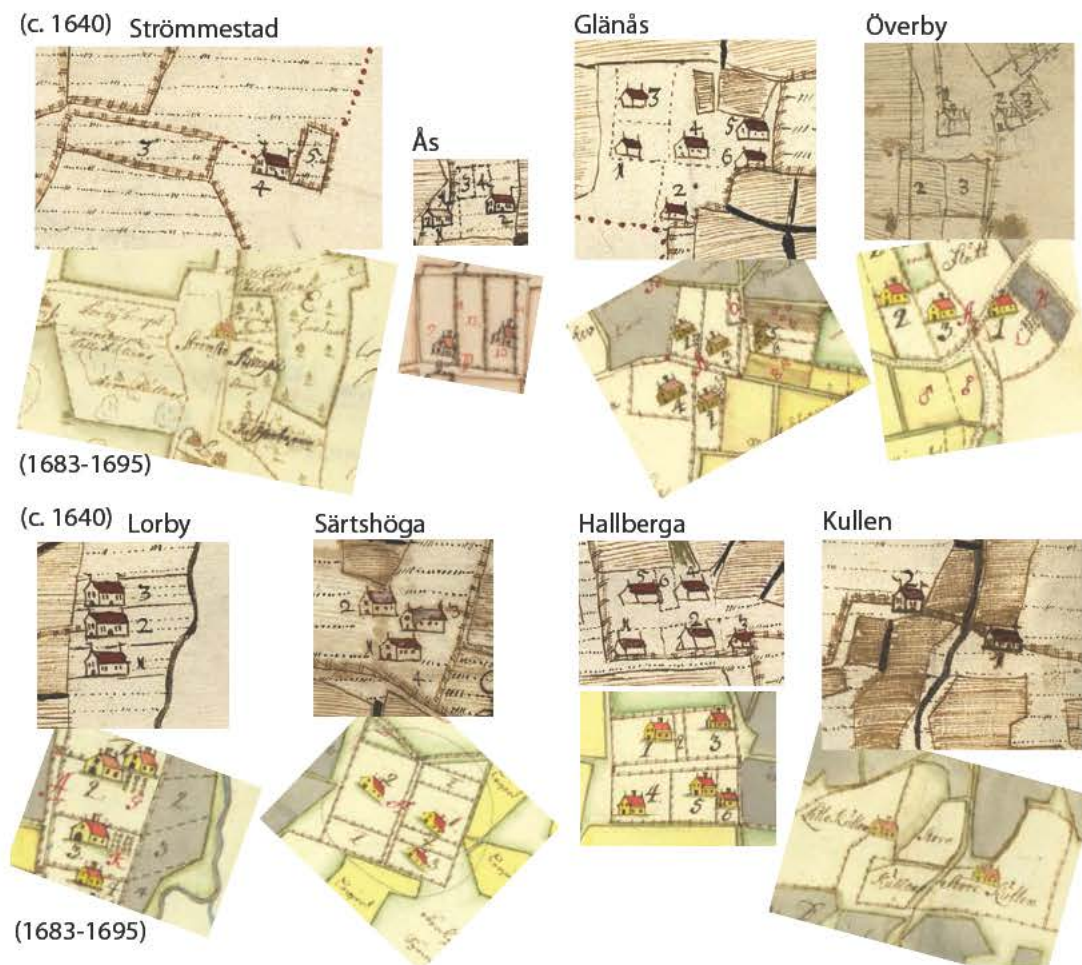


FIGURE 4. Examples of geometrical tofts, homesteads and *utjordar* in the parish of Svanshals in c. 1640 and c. 1683-1695. SOURCE: LSA; D10b:15-17, D10b:22-27, D134:18:1, D13:146-47, D108-7:1, D108-32:1, D108-16:1, D108-25:1, D108-10:1.

way *utjordar* appear as parts of existing farms in Lorby and Kullen.⁴⁴ The two *utjordar* in Glänås are also the same size, six ells, in this case corresponding to four hectare and seven loads of hay (1 load of hay c. 212 kilo). On a large-scale map from 1695 *utjordar* in Glänås appear in the same condition.

By 1640, there are several examples of *utjordar* already settled as new farms (indicated by black rectangles in Figure 3). Överby has a small farm referred to as an *utjord*, and is symbolized by a homestead building on the large-scale map.⁴⁵ It is not known when this *utjord* was settled because it does not appear in the older

registers. Three farms of 1640 can be traced as *utjordar* in the older cadastral registers; in 1567 an *utjord* became settled as a farm in Valla, 1592 in Lorby and 1595 in Glänås.⁴⁶ This development, *utjordar* being settled as farms, continues through the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. On a map from 1694 an *utjord* is settled as a farm in Lorby and on a map from 1786 another farm appears in Glänås that also derives from a previous *utjord*.⁴⁷ The possibility of tracing *utjordar* after mid eighteenth century is limited, however, as *utjordar* were often rearranged as a result of enclosure reforms. For instance, the *utjord* in Hallberga is not included

on the map from 1768.⁴⁸ An *utjord* in Särtshöga is on the other hand still present and uninhabited on a similar map dated 1766.⁴⁹

Five *utjordar* in Table 1 lack shares and geometrical tofts and are instead found as separate parcels of land, either in arable land or meadow, but not both. They are located in Svanshals, Yxnekull, Ås, and Gottorp, and are noticeably smaller in size than those with a share, with the exception of one *utjord* in Strömmestad. The terminology also differs. Four are found in the maps, described as *utjordar*, but commented as land belonging to the church or the priest.⁵⁰

The size of each *utjord* in Svanshals has been determined from the large-scale maps of 1640 (Table 1). *Utjordar* converted into farms before 1640, shown with black rectangles in Figure 3, are not included since their situation, size of land etc., may have changed after being settled. Obviously the largest *utjordar* have shares, parcels of arable and meadow, in the hamlets. A middle-sized farm in the parish of Svanshals has c. twelve hectare of arable land in total (two-field rotation), more than any *utjord*. Generally, *utjordar* are half or one-third of the size of a regular farm, but the arable is unevenly distributed. The size fluctuates from below one hectare to 8 hectares. The largest *utjordar*, however, having about four hectares or more, are comparable with the smallest farms in Svanshals.⁵¹

As shown on Figure 3, next to Ramstad and Gottorp a larger meadow referred as *Ramstadängen* is situated, west of the river Disevidån.⁵² In relation to *utjordar* this meadow has some similarities, being an uninhabited separated land, divided and cultivated by several farms. Besides Ramstad and Gottorp, Kälkestad, Svartkälla, Ås, Svanshals, Hallberga and Bankängen all have pieces or parcels of land in *Ramstadängen* (Table 2). These parcels are not called *utjord* on the maps, however. Instead, each part is referred to simply as ‘meadow’ and the regional term *hump*, meaning detached land. The largest parts belong to two farms in Kälkestad and they also have a block of arable land, one and a half hectare each. The origin and interpretation of *Ramstadängen* remains unclear, however, and the older cadastres provide no further information.

Ramstaängen express the difficulty of analysing *utjordar* based the terminology used in the sources. Moreover, not all uninhabited lands are classified as *utjordar* and not all *utjordar* are mentioned explicitly in the records. An unusual map on a scale of 1:2000 showing the geometrical tofts in Glänås in 1735 provides a closer look at the practice of shareholding, geometrical tofts and the allocations of *utjordar* in this hamlet (Figure 5). The map from c. 1640 shows six farms and two *utjordar*. The geometrical toft appears partly different in 1695 on another map

TABLE 2: A meadow *Ramstadängen*, cultivated by several farms in the parish of Svanshals. SOURCE: RA, collection of large-scale maps Diob.

Hamlet and numbers of farms taking part in <i>Ramstadängen</i>	Arable land (hectare)	Meadow (hay loads)	Share (ells)
Ramstad (5 farms/20 loads each)	-	100	-
Gottorp (3 farms/20 loads each)	-	60	-
Kälkestad (1 farm)	1.5	30	-
Kälkestad (1 farm)	1.5	30	-
Svartkälla (1 farm)	-	5	-
Ås (1 farm)	-	5	-
Svanshals (6 farms together)	-	16	-
Hallberga (1 farm)	-	2	-
Bankängen (1 farm)	-	3	-

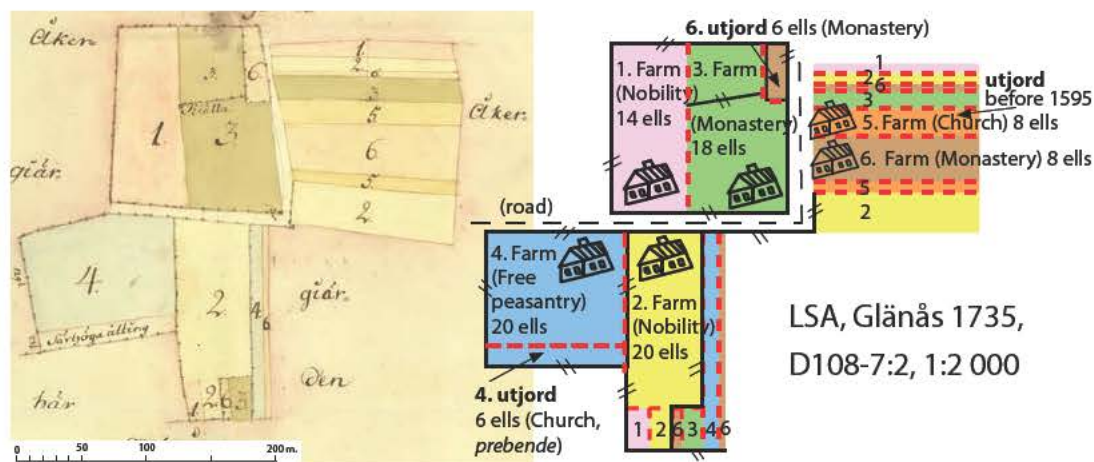


FIGURE 5. The allocation of geometrical tofts in Glänås in 1735 on a scale of 1:2000. The sketch to the right adds information on where *utjord*dar specified in older registers are located as well as size of share (ells) according to the 1640 map. SOURCE: LSA, large-scale map 1735; D108-7:2.

(compare Figure 4). The map of 1735 shows, however, that there are in fact another twelve uninhabited geometrical tofts or shareholding parts, in the same hamlet. These are allocated and appear in the same way as *utjord*dar, but the map of 1735 does not mention the term *utjord*. The twelve extra parts are numbered from one to six referring to the six farms in the same hamlet to which they belong. Despite having the character of being *utjord*dar, they are not specified in any older cadastral registers. One interpretation suggests these parts are a more recent, late seventeenth or early eighteenth centuries, separation of land. An alternative hypothesis is that they were left out of the cadastral registration as they do not have a cadastral status as *utjord*. All parts are cultivated within the hamlet and therefore do not necessarily affect the allocation of parcels. In conclusion, when analysing *utjord*dar the time-perspective is crucial. Is there a continuous change in the number of *utjord*dar over time, for instance divisions caused by inheritance, or how should the case in Glänås, or *utjord*dar in other hamlets, be interpreted?

Compilation of the Crown's cadastres 1543–1645

The question raised as to whether *utjord*dar are stable or fluctuate over time can be analysed

through comparisons of the cadastral records. Table 3 is a compilation of all *utjord*dar in the parish of Svanshals from 1543 to 1645, from the first record until the era of the first large-scale mapping c. 1640. In total, 29 cadastres have been compiled which provide a detailed view of a hundred-year period.⁵³

A stable group of at least ten *utjord*dar appears over the entire hundred-year period. Others are more difficult to trace and there are several factors to consider. Table 3 shows a trend of fewer *utjord*dar for the first years of 1543 and 1544 and a strong increase in number by 1545 with a maximum of 22 *utjord*dar in 1555 and from then on a decreasing trend until 1645 with minor fluctuations. The great differences between the highest number of 22 by 1555 and the lowest of 11 by 1543 can be explained by an incomplete specification in the earliest records. The impression gained from the first two early records is without doubt an exclusion of information generally, caused by a cadastral specification still not fully developed.⁵⁴ The records of 1543 to 1544 have a concise structure compared with 1545 when more details are provided. Between 1545 and 1555 four *utjord*dar are added. Again, the impression is of a backlog in the registration of already existing *utjord*dar. Hence, the total of 22 *utjord*dar in 1555 could well be the same as for the 1540s.

TABLE 3. Number of *utjordar* in Crown's cadastres in the parish of Svanshals, separated by land ownership, 1543–1645. The nobility's land was tax-exempt and do not appear in the cadastres. SOURCE: RA, ÖH 1543–1645.

Year	Crown	Church	Monastery	Priest	Freehold peasantry	Total
1543	6	4	1	–	–	11
1544	6	4	1	–	–	11
1545	6	8	2	2	–	18
1547	6	9	2	3	1	21
1548–1554 (no data compiled)						
1555	6	8	3	4	1	22
1556	6	8	3	4	–	21
1557–1566 (no data compiled)						
1567	4	7	3	2	–	16
1568–1574 (no data compiled)						
1575	4	7	3	2	–	16
1578	4	7	3	2	–	16
1579	4	7	3	2	–	16
1581	4	7	4	2	–	17
1582–1588 (no data compiled)						
1589	4	7	4	3	–	18
1592	4	7	4	2	–	17
1595	4	6	3	2	–	15
1601	4	7	4	2	–	17
1605	4	7	3	2	–	16
1611	4	7	3	2	–	16
1612–1616 (no data compiled)						
1617	4	7	4	2	–	17
1623	4	6	3	2	–	15
1624	4	6	3	2	–	15
1625–1634 (no data compiled)						
1635	4	5	4	2	–	15
1639	4	5	4	2	–	15
1645	4	5	4	2	–	15

Starting from 1555 there is a trend of a continuous loss in numbers of *utjordar*. Can the absence of seven *utjordar* between 1555 and 1645 be explained? And what causes the fluctuations from one year to another? One extra *utjord* appears between 1547 and 1555 as it was registered earlier in another parish. A change in the specification also explains why the only *ut-*

jord in the freehold peasantry category in Table 3 disappears after 1555 since it later appears in the adjoining parish of Rök. Hence, the same *utjord* can appear in different parishes over the years. Two examples of such changes have been confirmed in Svanshals.

The single most important factor for the reduction in numbers seen in Table 3 is the

conversion of *utjordar* into settled farms. The settlement expansion in sixteenth century is well observed in Sweden and in several European countries, although *utjordar* being settled in hamlets is not well noted.⁵⁵ As pointed out in Figure 3, this happened in Glånäs, Överby, Lorby and Valla during the second half of the sixteenth century. As soon as all four of them are settled they disappear as *utjordar* from the records to reappear as new farms.

The interpretation of fluctuating numbers of *utjordar* is complicated in some cases. Generally, it cannot easily be stated whether registration of new *utjordar* reflects true changes or a previous inconsistency in the specification. A possible new *utjord* appears, specified in the margin on the record 1589 as belonging to Egbola. Several assumptions are possible; it can be a new unit, earlier registered in another parish or previously existing but not registered. A similar case exists in Hallberga where another ‘new’ *utjord* appears in 1601. It can be repossessed as an older *utjord* in Hallberga, with the same tax assessment, appears between 1543 and 1556.⁵⁶ Whether these refer to the same or two different *utjordar* cannot be clarified. Complete disappearance occurs in at least two cases. An *utjord*, specified as meadow land, belonging to the hamlet of Svanshals appears from 1543 to 1547 but cannot be identified later. Another *utjord* appears between 1543 and 1552, situated in Ås and belonging to the hamlet of Svanshals, but by 1552 is erased from the record.⁵⁷

Comparing the large-scale maps and the cadastral registers

Nineteen *utjordar* were found in the large-scale maps from c. 1640 and those can also be compared with fifteen specified in the cadastral registers of 1639/1645. The discrepancy in numbers between the two sources could to some extent be explained by an absence of *utjordar* owned by the nobility and the freehold peasantry in the registers. Altogether, nine *utjordar* in the maps, are missing in the contemporary and older registers. An absence of the nobility’s land is expected, because the nobility’s land was tax-

empt and the cadastral registers provide much less detail on the nobility in general.⁵⁸ More surprisingly, *utjordar* classified as freehold peasantry land, are also under-represented. There is no such *utjord* after 1555 (Table 3) whereas the maps dating from 1640 specify five, two in Ås and one in Strömmestad, Lorby and Valla respectively. In addition a recently by 1640 settled *utjord* or new freehold farm in Glånäs can be added to the list. Why *utjordar* belonging to the freehold peasantry repeatedly are excluded from the records has no easy answer and whether the same pattern occurs in other parishes or provinces has not yet been studied. Accordingly, *utjordar* in large-scale maps and cadastres cannot simply be compared in terms of numbers. Moreover, the settlement of Bankängen has an *utjord* in the cadastres but was never mapped in the seventeenth century. Six other examples of differences between the information given in maps and cadastral registers have been observed.⁵⁹ The majority ten *utjordar* can, however, be identified in both sources and traced over an extensive period as rather stable elements.

Different farms and hamlets possess the same *utjord* over time. Hence, the pattern of contact in Figure 3, reflects a rather flexible system where different farms cultivate *utjordar* in shorter or longer periods. Obviously, this alternation and also the sometimes unsystematic registration complicate the possibility to trace and compare individual *utjordar*. The relation between farms and *utjordar* alternates, also in short period of time. This applies to *utjordar* of all sizes and kinds. For instance, a small separated *utjord* in Ås by 1547 is cultivated by three farms in the same hamlet until 1595 when it belongs to another farm in Kälkestad. Another example is Glånäs where six different farms, all in Glånäs, hold the same *utjord* within a thirty-year period.⁶⁰

Utjordar – an adequate indicator of farm desertion?

Utjordar have been seen as less important in the discussion of settlement history and previous research on farm desertion has viewed them as

a vague indicator of desertion. This text shows there are reasons to reconsider both these understandings. The two main arguments are: Most *utjordar* appear in the first records of mid sixteenth century and truly new *utjordar* cannot be stated 1540s-1640s, but rather a continuous registration of older *utjordar* appears over time. Secondly, a trend has been observed of *utjordar* being settled as farms. Before a scenario is sketched on how *utjordar* emerged the basic characteristics will be discussed.

In this study four main patterns of *utjordar* have been emphasized; *utjordar* similar to farms allocated by parcels in a sun-divided hamlet, *utjordar* as smaller pieces of land or larger blocks in hamlets or *utjordar* outside a hamlet community in fringe locations. In the parish of Svanshals, the first type of allocated parcels is the more common. These *utjordar* share the same attributes typical of a farm, categorized by land ownership, occupying arable land, meadow land and a geometrical toft next to other homestead in the hamlet. The two obvious differences between such *utjordar* and farms are the lack of homestead buildings and smaller size of land, likewise less valued as taxation objects. To less extent *utjordar* being small parcels of lands. Out of the 19 *utjordar* in the parish of Svanshals by mid sixteenth century five belong to the second category of smaller lands, which commonly belong to the land owners of the Church. As suggested in previous studies these lands are probably the result of older donations.⁶¹

A compilation from the database of the large-scale maps from 1630 to 1655 demonstrates how *utjordar* are a phenomenon almost entirely restricted to the south-eastern part of Sweden. This territorial scope corresponds to the medieval realm of *solskifte*, a regulated principle of cultivation. The medieval field patterns and principles of land assessment have been preserved in this area in many cases and could explain why *utjordar* appear in cadastral registers in 1540s and maps of the 1640s.

How should a phenomenon like *utjordar* be interpreted? Being long-lasting 'elements' in the landscape, most *utjordar* cannot simply be explained by either new cultivation or similar 'tem-

porary' land transactions.⁶² Several are settled as farms and this is an obvious factor relating *utjordar* to previous deserted farms. It would be a mistake to relate every *utjord* in hamlets to an older deserted farm, however. Since *utjordar* generally are the smallest units in hamlets, several *utjordar* together could constitute a single deserted farm. An alternative explanation could be the fragmentation of existing farms; for instance, shares separated through heritage. Moreover, the physical appearance of *utjordar* in hamlets may differ from the specification in the records. As noted on a map of the hamlet of Glänås (Figure 5) the tofts were subdivided into many smaller parts of which only two appear as *utjordar* in the older sources. The pattern of contact between an *utjord* and a farm varies, however. A flexible system, where a single *utjord* could involve different farms and different hamlets in a short period of time, cannot simply be explained by a common practice of division by heritage. Furthermore, *utjordar* are unevenly distributed in the parish of Svanshals. For instance the hamlet of Strömmestad possesses four, meanwhile *utjordar* are non-existing in the larger hamlets of Ramstad and Svanshals.

In conclusion, farm desertion and vacancy apparently took place, not only on the marginal land but also within hamlets on good soil. The preserved element of uninhabited units, *utjordar*, is one variable indicating this scenario. Further studies are needed in order to see how deserted farms in hamlets were maintained during and after the Crisis of the Late Middle Ages.

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Notes

- 1 Abel, 1966; Bois, 1984; Cambell, 1991; Dybdahl, 2010; Gissel (et. al.), 1981; Hybel & Poulsen, 2007; Myrdal, 2003; Postan, 1972; the ‘Crisis’ of the Late Middle Ages is one of the major debates in European historical research. Population decline, falling grain prices and rents, poverty, wars and social and political tensions have been observed for several European countries from c. 1300 to 1450. One debate is to which extent the arrival of the Black Death in Europe c. 1347 and other factors, for instance, climate changes, grain shortages, overpopulation and the Hundred Years War, caused the agrarian depression.
- 2 Bååth, 1983, p. 61; Myrdal 2003, p. 224; Norborg, 1958, p. 198; a new investigation of deserted farms in the Vadstena registers, by Alf Ericsson, is under way.
- 3 *Kronans jordeböcker*, also commonly referred to as *Årliga räknan*.
- 4 Brunius, 1980, pp. 48–49; Helmfrid, 1962, p. 89
- 5 Johansson, 1990, p. 61; Jutikkala, 1981, p. 120; Österberg, 1981, pp. 40–41
- 6 As discussed by Helmfrid, 1962, p. 91.
- 7 Tollin & Karsvall, 2011; the database was published on the Internet in October 2010 by the project ‘National Edition of the Oldest Geometrical Maps’; National Archives; www.riksarkivet.se/geometrisk.
- 8 Few contemporary sources exist in Sweden from the Late Middle Ages. Instead, much of the information has to be compiled, retrogressively, from later sources.
- 9 Category by land ownership, *jordnatur*, separates different kinds of land, both farms and *utjordar*. Lands belonging to the church and monasteries are by in the large-scale maps included within land of the Crown.
- 10 The term hamlet here refers to settlement units with two farms or more and is preferred to that of village.
- 11 Helmfrid, 1962, pp. 86–91
- 12 Beresford, 1971, p. 96; Tollin, 2010, pp. 22–28; the idea of using younger geometrical maps retrogressively, in the study of the medieval situation, has also been practised by for instance Beresford.
- 13 Larsson 1975; Norborg 1959; Myrdal 2003, 2010 and 2011; the late-medieval decline in Sweden, observed by for instance Norborg and Larsson, has surprisingly not been much researched until recently by Myrdal 2003. The plagues in Sweden have been compiled by Janken Myrdal and he estimates a reduction of the population in Sweden of 40% or 50% between c. 1350 and 1450.
- 14 Gissel, 1981, pp. 15–18.
- 15 Bååth, 1983, p. 206; Sandnes, 1981, pp. 103–104; A summary of the results by the “Scandinavian Research Project on Deserted Farms and Villages” was presented by Sandnes 1981. Käthe Bååth observed the highest level of desertion, 36 %, within the Swedish group.
- 16 Lagerås 2007 pp. 83–92; Myrdal, 2003, p. 169 and 2010, p. 41; Sandnes, 1981, p. 104; Österberg, 1981, p. 27; the method used has been criticized for underestimating the level of farming represented in Sweden. In the absence of demographic records in Sweden Janken Myrdal argues for a pluralistic method, combining sources of different kinds, for instance archaeological remains, pollen analysis, place names and written sources such as Peter’s Pence. Lagerås (2007) has observed a late-medieval decline using pollen diagrams from southern Sweden.
- 17 Antonsson, 2009; Framme 1985; Holm 2011; Jansson, 1993; Norborg, 1958; Bååth, 1983; such figures can be seen in the Vadstena Abbey cadastres for 1447, one of the most comprehensive record of the time.
- 18 Traces of desertion in the provinces of Hälsingland have been discussed by Brink 1990
- 19 The typical Swedish *ödatorp* and *ödesbol* are smaller single farms or small hamlets, often converted into pasture or meadow, maintained by surrounding farms.
- 20 This idea is widely accepted and often follows the arguments for a contraction in remote areas as discussed by Postan 1975, see also Gissel, 1981, p. 186.
- 21 Most well known in Sweden is probably the deserted farm Hemvidakulla in the province of Östergötland. It appears in the Vadstena Abbey registers of 1447 and 1457 as a farm and 1466, 1473 and 1502 as deserted. On a large-scale map dated 1799 it appears as a meadow land, belonging to the neighbouring farms in Skavarp, referred as *Skavarps torp äng*.
- 22 Helmfrid, 1962, p. 89; Brunius, 1981, pp. 47–51; Helmfrid assumes that some *utjordar* could be a result of tax burdens during the regime of Carl IX or possibly older fragmentations of estates from the Middle Ages.
- 23 Helmfrid, 1962, p. 87; Staffan Helmfrid compared the numbers of *utjordar* in parts of Östergötland the records of 1555 and 1635 and the descriptions on economic maps 1870–80 and noticed a decrease between 1555 and 1635 and also variations comparing 1635 and 1870–80.
- 24 Helmfrid 1962, p. 80; Dahlbäck (et. al.), 1973; Larsson, 1970, p. 41; Bååth, 1983, pp. 60–62; Brunius, 1980, p. 67–68; Jansson, 1993; Karsvall, 2007; Värmlands Museum 2007; Correlation between *utjordar* and deserted farms has been observed in the provinces of Uppland, Småland, Värmland and Östergötland. The *utjord* or *ödatorp* Lilla Ärtetjärn was investigated by Värmlands Museum in 2007 and confirmed to be a late-medieval deserted farm. Another similar example in the province of Uppland is *Lilla Ullevi, see Bäck 2008. An *utjord* Lingnåre, in the same province, appears in the registers of 1547 and has been related to farm desertion, see Dahlbäck 1973. Other examples of *utjordar* appearing to be deserted farms are *Varnäs and *Gunnertorpet, as discussed by Helmfrid 1962.
- 25 Fridell, 1993; Holmbäck & Wessén, 1979; Collins & Schlyter, 1827–1877; it is unclear whether the term *utjord* appear in medieval or late-medieval written sources. A few medieval diplomas from the late-thirteenth century mention *Uthiordh*, *Vmiord*, *vmyordher* in the context of *terra minuta* and *predia minuta*, meaning ‘small piece of land’; see DS1055, DS1167, DS1223, www.riksarkivet.se/sdhk; Compare with *umeghnum* in the provincial law code of Östergötland, see Collins & Schlyter, 1827–1877, p. 121 and *nytiabol* in medieval diplomas, as discussed by Fridell, 1993. In the Swedish provincial law codes *fjäll*, *urfiäll*, *hump* refer to lands belonging to a farm situated in another hamlet. These terms are translated in Holmbäck & Wessén, 1979 as *utjord*. The term

- utjord* are, however, not present in the Vadstena Abbey cadastres for 1447 to 1502, although numerous deserted farms in later registers appear as *utjordar*.
- 26 The headings in the Crown's cadastres for the province of Östergötland distinguish between tenant farmers (*landbor*), free holders (*skattehemman*), new farms (*nybyggen*) and *utjordar*, the uninhabited units.
- 27 The instructions are transcribed by Styffe, 1856, pp. 248–285; see for instance D6:Titelblad, 1633–1634, D8:Titelblad 1642–1643, A7:Titelblad 1640–1642, E4:Titelblad 1645 and Södermöre:Titelblad 1655–1656.
- 28 Helmfrid, 1962, p. 92; Bååth, 1983, pp. 60–65; *utjordar* absorbed into farms have been observed as two shares or 'extra shares' in the map text, *tuenne skiffte* or *tuenne bord*.
- 29 See for instance, D10b:87, D5:140–141, Smedby:8, C4:10–11
- 30 D2:161–162; Husby, parish of Skönberga; '...Häm dese utiorder äga är eij i sannings berätad'. Similar comments exist on a few large-scale maps, for instance D7:48–49, D1:291, E4:137, T3:228.
- 31 www.riksarkivet.se/geometriska
- 32 www.riksarkivet.se/geometriska; compiled from the map's text descriptions; *utjord*, *uthiord*, *vthiord* and similar spellings.
- 33 Larsson, 1970; Lars-Olof Larsson 1970 saw how the terminology concerning *utjordar* used in the cadastral registers often varied. The term used to identify a specific uninhabited unit could vary from one year to another.
- 34 Jansson, 1993, p. 45; Bååth, 1983, p. 61 and 199; Ulf Jansson noticed how the large-scale maps in the province of Värmland frequently used *torpställe*, *ängatorp* and *ödator/ödegårdp* as synonyms to *utjord*. Historian Käthe Bååth discusses a similar correlation between *utjord* and *ödebol*, *ödegård*, *ödatorp* in the north part of Småland, Norra Vedbo. Bååth also related several of these to deserted farms specified in the cadastre for 1447 belonging to Vadstena Abbey.
- 35 The seventeenth-century geometrical maps, with some exceptions, do not specify the individual parcels. Instead each proportional share is indicated in the map's text description, as a share, *byamål*, or an assessment unit, *markland*.
- 36 Göransson, 1961, p. 80; Ericsson, 2007, p. 118; the open-field system is mentioned in the provincial laws from the late-thirteenth and early-fourteenth century; *Östgötalagen*, *Upplandslagen*, *Västmannalagen*, *Dalalagen* and *Södermannalagen*. According to Ericsson (2007) this practice was carried out in Östergötland during the mid-thirteenth century and was based on the older assessment unit *attung*. The enclosure reforms in Sweden are *storskifte*, *enskifte* and *laga skifte*.
- 37 The settlement units of Berga, Bankängen, Grönkullen, Kvarntorp and Dagsholmen were not mapped by 1640.
- 38 Geometrical tofts known as *laga läga* are mentioned in the provincial law code of Östergötland.
- 39 D10b:23; 'skattevthiord ... med en frelse vthiord 2 alnar bred. som intit kan vthbrytas'
- 40 D10b:23; 'hafuer ingen tomp[t]'
- 41 D10b:23; D134:18:1; the specification of *utjordar* 1640 and 1698 is partly different. Two additional *utjordar* appear on the younger map, belonging to the nearby farms in Kullen.
- 42 See note 27.
- 43 D10b:15–016; '... brukas in med skattegården...Skattegården brukar både tomt och alla ägorne inne med sina ägor, och icke särskilt'.
- 44 D10b:23–24; D10b:25; Stora Kullen, 'Hafuer i byeskiffte tuenne bord'; Lorby, 'Hafuer i byemäll tuenne bord'
- 45 D10b:17; this *utjord* is settled as a small farm, 'äbr en half gård'
- 46 ÖH 1567:13; 1592:11; 1595:7; for example; 'Lorby prästutjord eller nybygge byggd på frihet'
- 47 D108:16:1; D108:7:1; D108:7:4
- 48 D108:10:1; D108:10:4
- 49 D108:25:2
- 50 D10b:14; D10a:13–14; the terms *kyrkojord* and *präståker* appear in connection to *utjord*; 'En kyrckejord i Yxnekulla som pastor brukar ...'; 'Pastoris åkrar'
- 51 Farms with 5 hectares of arable land or less exist in Vallby, Hallberga, Glänås, Särthöga, Kärr, Dalbobeta and Alsike.
- 52 D10b:19–20; D10a:19–20.
- 53 More cadastral registers exist for 1543 to 1645 but are partly damaged and incomplete. For some years, more than one register exist.
- 54 Johansson, 1990, p. 60; the incomplete specification in the first two cadastres dated 1543 and 1545 in the hundred, *häräd*, of Lysings has also been observed by Mats Johansson.
- 55 Larsson, 1972; the increase in population and settlement during the sixteenth century has been compiled by Larsson among others.
- 56 ÖH 1543–1556.
- 57 ÖH 1552:2.
- 58 ÖH 1543:6, 1544:2, 1549:10; one exception has been observed, since a nobility tenancy in Berga is noted as deserted, *ödegård*, 1543–1549. One other note on desertion regards a nobility tenancy in Hallberga in the record of 1544.
- 59 An *utjord* belonging to Ås in the cadastres cannot be found on the large-scale map from the same period. Another *utjord* in Kullen on the large-scale map cannot be traced in the cadastres. Here, the interpretation is unclear as a comment in the records of 1575 (ÖH 1575:6) tells how one *utjord* was absorbed into a farm in Kullen; '...uti Arffund Nilssons tid lades någon utjord till som ligger fjärrendes uti andre byar och sedan lades för hel skatt...'. An *utjord* in Yxnekulla belonging to Svanshals on the map for 1640 and two *utjordar* in the hamlet of Svanshals does not appear in the cadastres, however, pieces of land exist referred to by the names *Gillestomten and *Brannastöm (Brenneström); both are unidentified.
- 60 ÖH 1545–1578; one *utjord* in Glänås was cultivated in 1545 by a peasant, Joan, in 1547 by Håkan, in 1555 by Olof, in 1567 by Nils, in 1575 by Anders and in 1578 by Torbjörn.
- 61 See note 4.
- 62 Brunius 1980, p. 43; Hannerberg 1971; *utjordar* being the result of new cultivation has been suggested by Hannerberg. See also Brunius 1980.

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Utjordar and the question of deserted farms – a case study of the parish of Svanshals

by Olof Karsvall

Summary

This text discusses a new way to progress studies of the late medieval crisis, particularly partial desertion of hamlets, to which the occurrences of *utjordar* are undoubtedly related. In the Swedish Crown's cadastres, starting from the first half of the sixteenth century, the term *utjord* refers to uninhabited units and pieces of land. In seventeenth-century large-scale maps, these lands are identified with boundaries, measured and described. It is not known why such elements appear but an unknown, assumed large number, can be related to farm desertion and agrarian structural changes during and after the 'Crisis' of the Late Middle Ages.

On the basis of a compilation of *utjordar* in a database containing the Swedish large-scale maps from 1630 to 1655, the characteristics of various *utjordar* appear. The majority are located in hamlets, in the south-east part of Sweden in an area characterized by medieval assessment of land and systematized open-field patterns

known as *solskifte*. This study further examines *utjordar* in one parish, Svanshals, located on the western plains in the province of Östergötland. In terms of the size of arable land and meadow occupied as *utjordar*, about half of all *utjordar* in the parish of Svanshals are comparable to smaller farms. By means of retrogressive analysis, the maps are compared with contemporary and older cadastral registers. By tracing *utjordar* between 1540s and 1640s a continuous loss in numbers has been observed. There is no obvious trend of new *utjordar* emerging after the 1540s. Instead three main patterns appear; *utjordar* absorbed into nearby farms, developed new farms or remained as *utjordar* throughout the period. A long and stable continuity of *utjordar* is apparent and therefore a late-medieval or older origin is suggested. This indicates that farm desertion did not only take place on marginal lands as often assumed but also within hamlets.

Keywords: *utjord*, farm desertion, large-scale maps, cadastral registers, the Late Middle Ages