



Vernacular Architecture in the Central Danube Region
Once and now

Pictures - Observations - Ideas

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Part I: The vernacular Architecture in the Central Danube Region

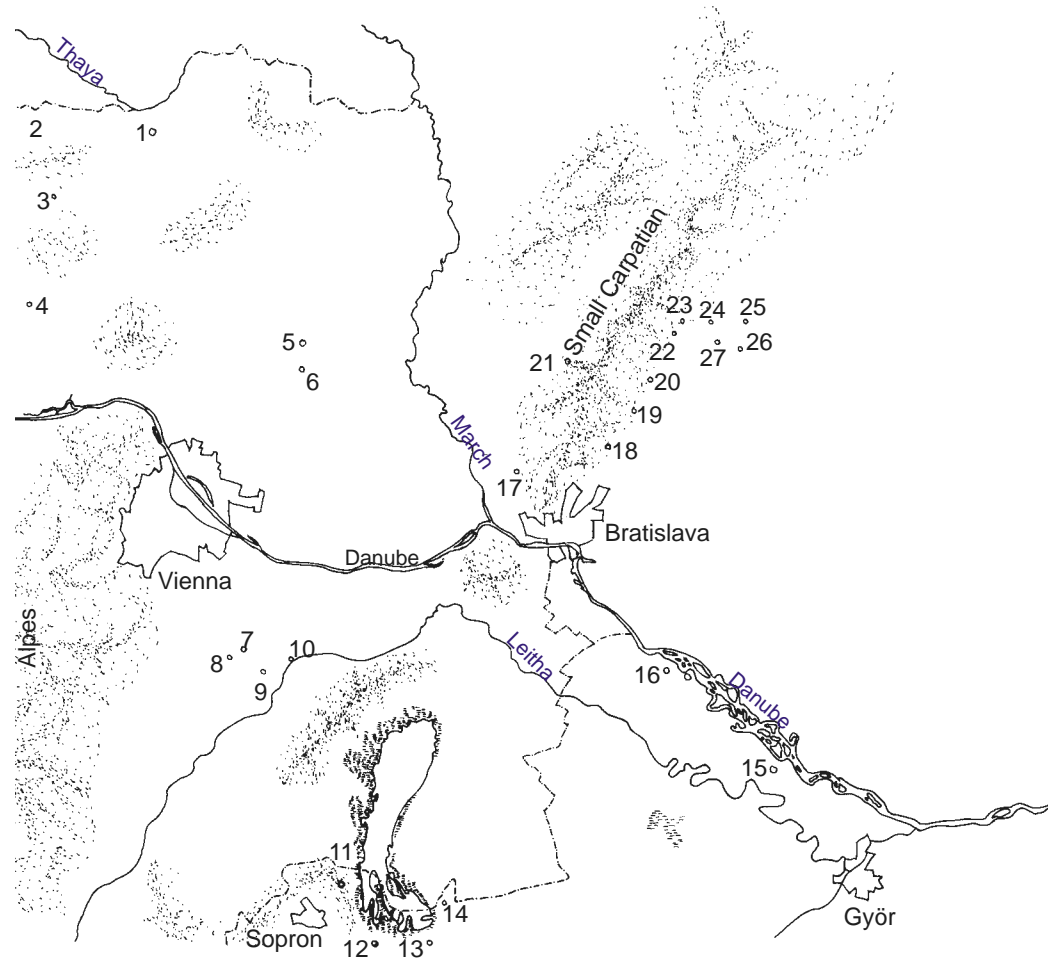
Trimesterpaper I: Vernacular Architecture in the Central Danube Region
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Eva Hody, Januaray 2001

The vernacular Architecture in the Central Danube Region

- 1 Hanfthal
- 2 Unterretzbach
- 3 Schöngrabern
- 4 Göllersdorf
- 5 Groß-Schweinbarth
- 6 Auersthal
- 7 Gramatneusiedl
- 8 Moosbrunn
- 9 Reisenberg
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- 11 Fertőrákos
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- 26 Ruzindol
- 27 Borová





The vernacular Architecture in the Central Danube Region

The Landscape - Impressions

- > wide and almost flat and open
- > smaller hills, brooks and hollows
- > cultural landscape formed throughout centuries:
 - . fields for cultivating vegetable, vineyards and fruit-tree avenues
 - . villages with a high density of small and flat houses snuggle in the landscape and with their church-towers they are landmarks

--> natural environment is rare, human activities are recognisable everywhere

Today: Many of the villages are deserted, poor and unpleasant, they reflect the structural changes of the last 50 years:

- modern large scale agriculture
- new methods of renovation
- too large roads through the settlements
- very big and today useless village green
- newer expansions outside of the villages with modern one family houses

--> no self-confidence is recognisable and identity of the rural population is not visible

But: The principal structure of the settlements and the agricultural activities as base for living seem to be still almost intact; to renew not only vernacular buildings for their historic value but also to bring back live into this region is a high potential that has to be recognized.



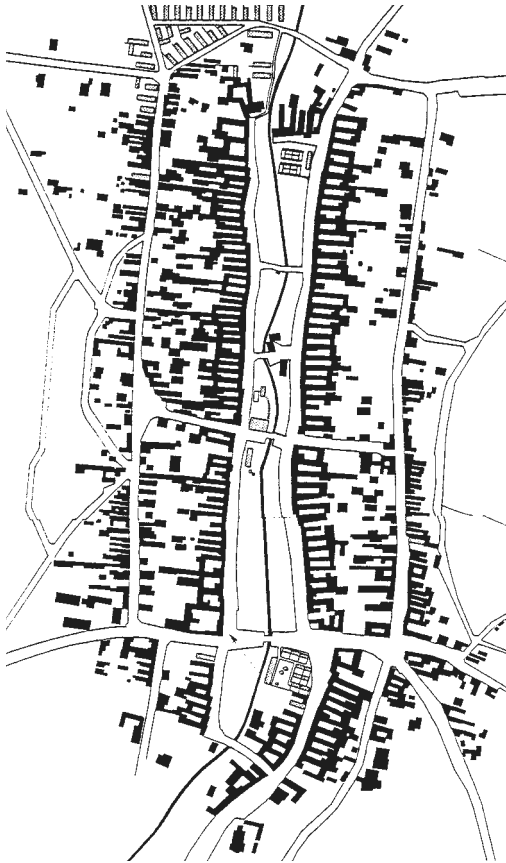
The Settlement Structure

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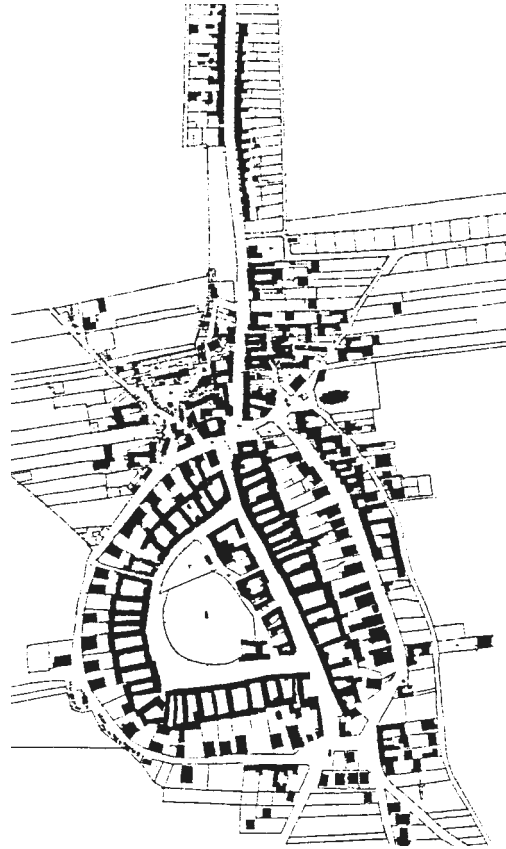
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The Settlement Structure



Unterretzbach: The village green with a brook in the middle is rectangular.



Hanfthal: The central village green is almost circular.



Fertőrákos: The public space is a large street.



The Courtyard

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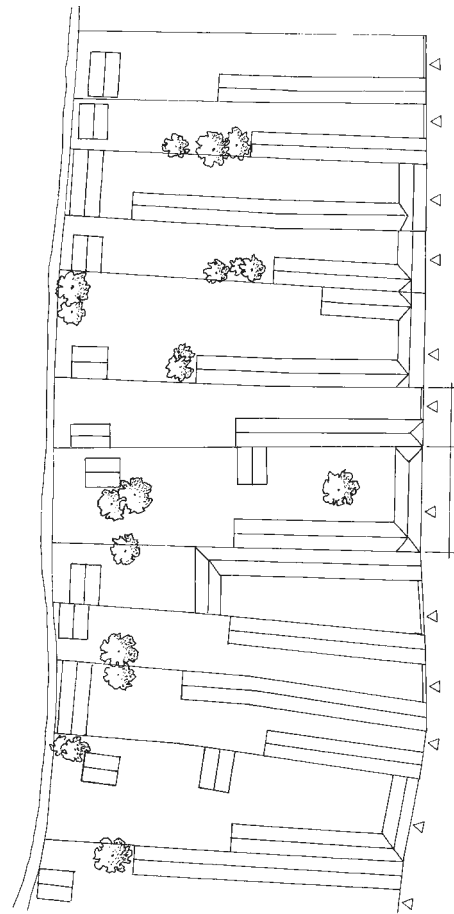
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The Courtyard

Spatial Plot Structure



Principal:

- long and narrow plots
- compact long buildings under
- one long saddled roof
- windowless firewall separates one courtyard form the other

The plot is divided into two parts:

1. the long sequence of buildings with ranged functions
2. the yard

The courtyard connects the inner public space of the village with the outer environment:

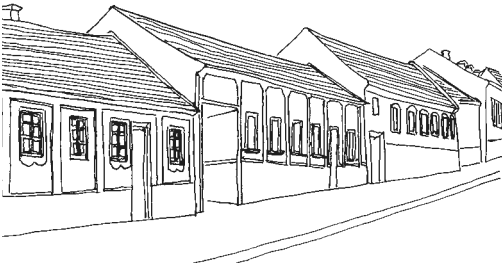
1. a gate in a wall
2. a barn at the end build the borderlines

Size:

The smallest width of a plot is 12 to 15 meters only, but its length can reach up to 70 meters.



Facades of one-wing and angled built-up areas of courtyards:



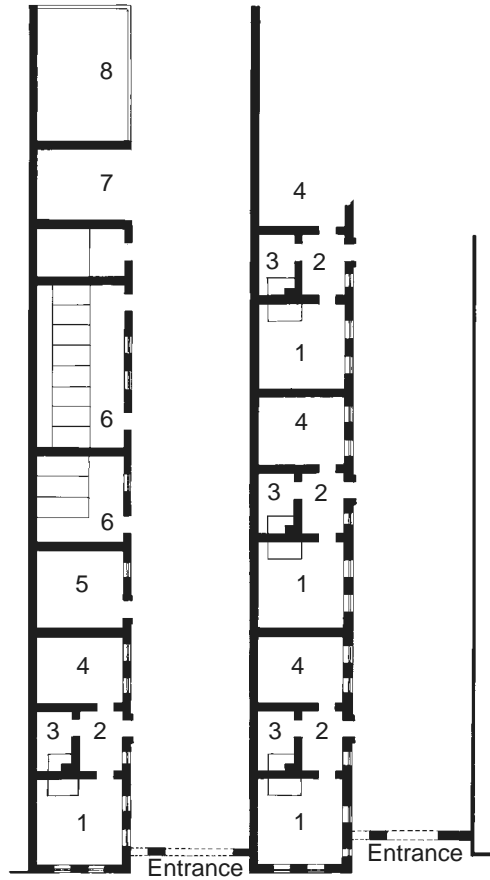
Facades of angled built-up areas of courtyards:



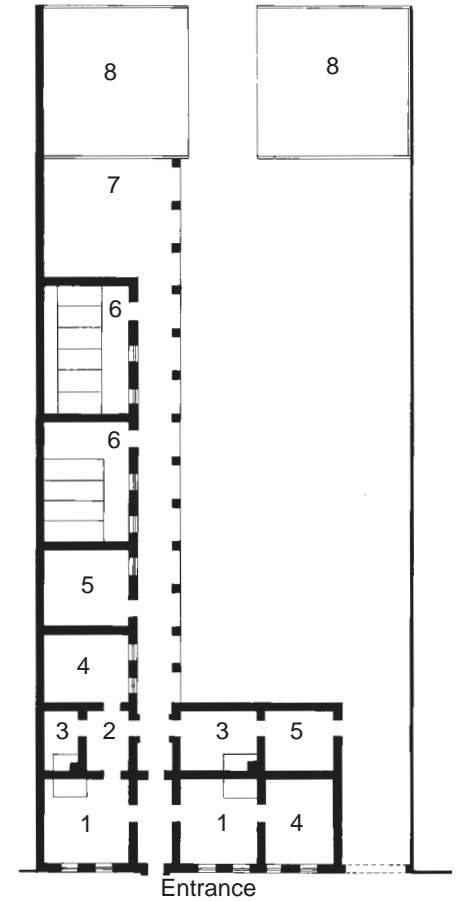
Facades of one-wing built-up areas of courtyards:

The Courtyard

Types of Courtyards:



One-wing built-up area of a courtyard:



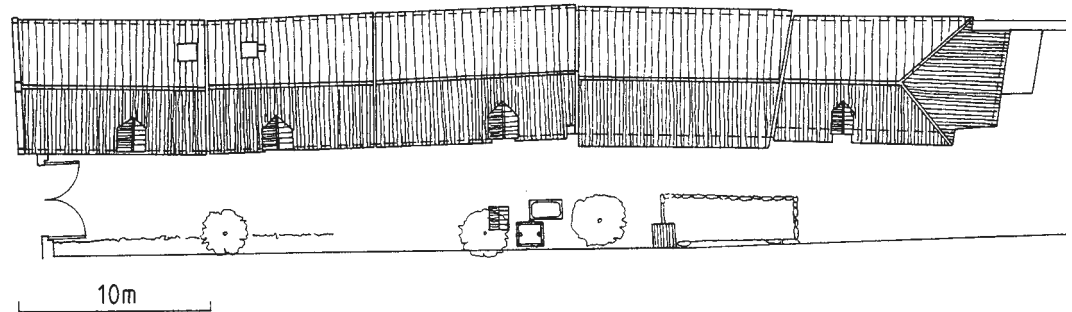
Angled built-up area of a courtyard:

- | | |
|-----------------|-------------|
| 1 Living-room | 5 Stockroom |
| 2 Entrance hall | 6 Stable |
| 3 Kitchen | 7 Shed |
| 4 Chamber | 8 Barn |

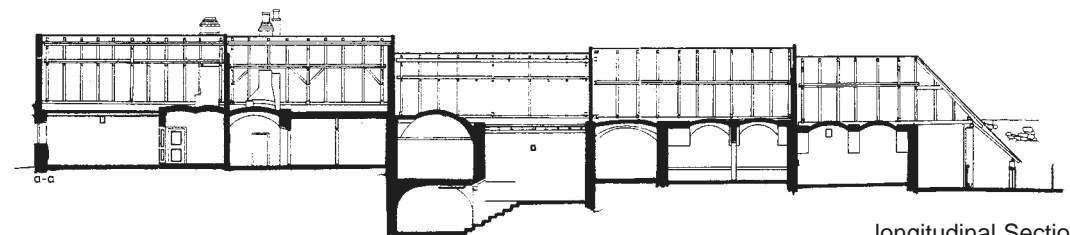
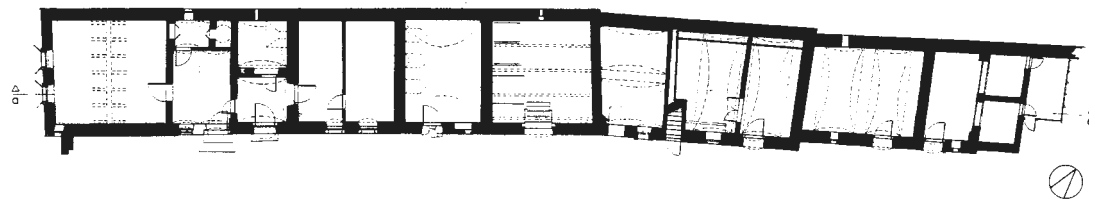


The Courtyard

The Ground-plan:



Ground-floor Plan



longitudinal Section

One-wing built-up area of a courtyard,
Fertőrákos, Zollerhof (ICOMOS 1992):



The Courtyard

Construction and Materials

The traditional building material was air-dried clay-bricks. The load of the roof and the poor weather-resistance of the bricks limited the size of the buildings. It was not possible to built higher and larger than one room. But the construction of a rafter roof allows an unlimited addition of rooms along the ridge. These limitations were form giving.

People used all materials available as

- clay, bricks and fieldstones to built walls
- wood was used for the roof structure
- straw and reed and later
- tiles were the common materials to cover it.



Part II: **Qualities and Values of Vernacular Architecture**

Qualities and Values of Vernacular Architecture

House and Landscape

Cultural landscape is the result of human activities in a natural environment. Rural buildings are the differentiated answer of men to the natural conditions as climate, soil, geology and geomorphology. Landscape, settlements and buildings once have built one unit.

Villages

The village was the most important place of agricultural activities and housing for the rural population. Only small groups of persons as craftsmen, traders, teachers, parsons were responsible to cover economical and cultural requirements of the villagers.

Integration

The appearance of rural settlements in harmony with the environment reflects the integrative living style of peasants.

Vernacular Architecture is visible Information

Structural peculiarities and shapes of folk dwellings are the result of the possibilities given by nature and the mental potential of men. Social and cultural factors, climate, farming techniques, the shape of land, the limited availability of building materials, constructive necessities and the functioning are interacting.



Qualities and Values of Vernacular Architecture

Function

Space in old vernacular buildings is more than a physical reality. Space is a perceivable quality of an attitude. Small chambers and large living rooms correspond to the different requirements of privacy or community. The size of each room is in accordance to its social function.

Proportions

The house can be seen as the enlargement of a person. All the measurements of rural buildings are related to measures of the human body and his working-power. There are units like a step, a foot, a yard, a hand or the size of a person.

Materials

A few different building materials limited the task of construction, as their availability depended on factors like climate and nature.

Construction

Manpower and horsepower were the only available energies to get materials and to construct the building. Limitations to basic needs were the most determining factor for rural buildings. The economical construction was the guarantee for fine proportions.



Qualities and Values of Vernacular Architecture

Individuality

Each building had some individual features and they expressed the individuality of the inhabitants.

Individuality was given by manufacturing and by the design of many details.

The same local mentality, the same objectives, similar fates and working conditions of the people in a settlement led to special building traditions. People depended on each other. The community was more important than the individual and the requirement to join the community was stronger because life was hard, live in community was the strategy to survive.



Qualities and Values of Vernacular Architecture

Old Rural Buildings are Modern Buildings

Present architecture everywhere has almost lost its ability to offer at the same time esthetical and functional solutions, which make inhabitants feel homely. Through centuries builders were able to create buildings that had tangible qualities we almost miss today. It is the unity of constructive and functional needs, which lead to an esthetical solution as well.

Traditions and Changes

Baroque, classicist sobriety and historicism became also fashion in rural areas. The appearance of the buildings changed, the principal housing structure was preserved.

The building traditions in rural areas were always influenced by architecture. Today's buildings in the countryside are influenced as well, but the suggestions are almost of technical nature, impulses of modern formal aspects are superficial. Imitation of an architectural style without context of sense is the result.

Aspects of Preservation

The living qualities in historic courtyards are still today very high and this must be emphasised. Houses located at a main road or central village green combine the advantage of their central location with its peaceful and private court.





Some of the pictures show us what has been preserved, others let us know more about the changes. I had to reduce my field of vision to show the values of rural settlements and buildings in the Central Danube Region. If you find some pictures showing buildings, which seem to be in harmony with nature keep in mind that this is always a filtered reality.

