



**OLA**

# **Open Landscape Academy**

Democratic Landscape  
Transformation:  
Towards an Open  
Landscape Academy

# Child-Friendly Vác

## Story of the OLA Living Lab

2026.04.15.



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the European Union

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WEHENSEPHAN - TRIESDORF  
University of Applied Sciences



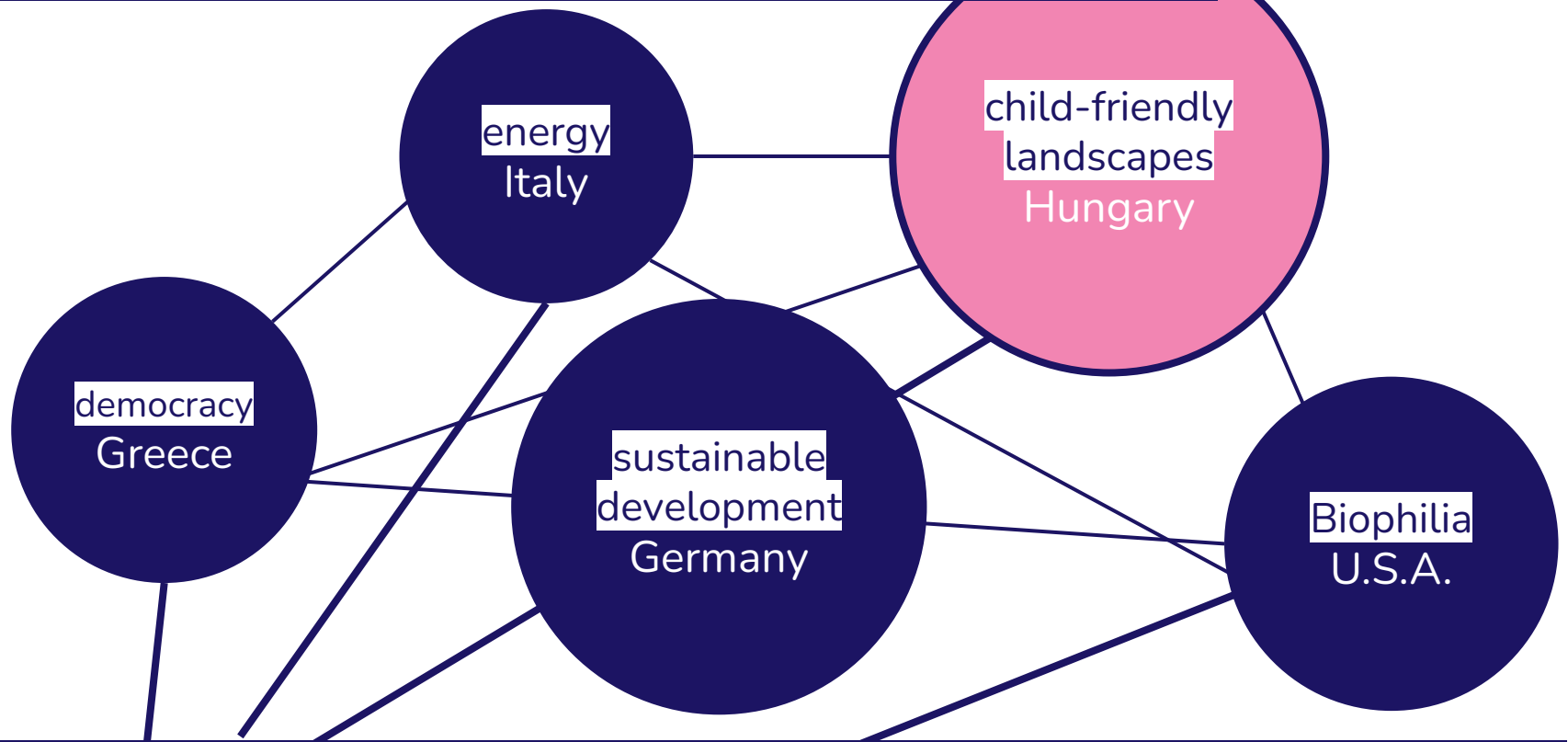
LENOTRE *Institute*  
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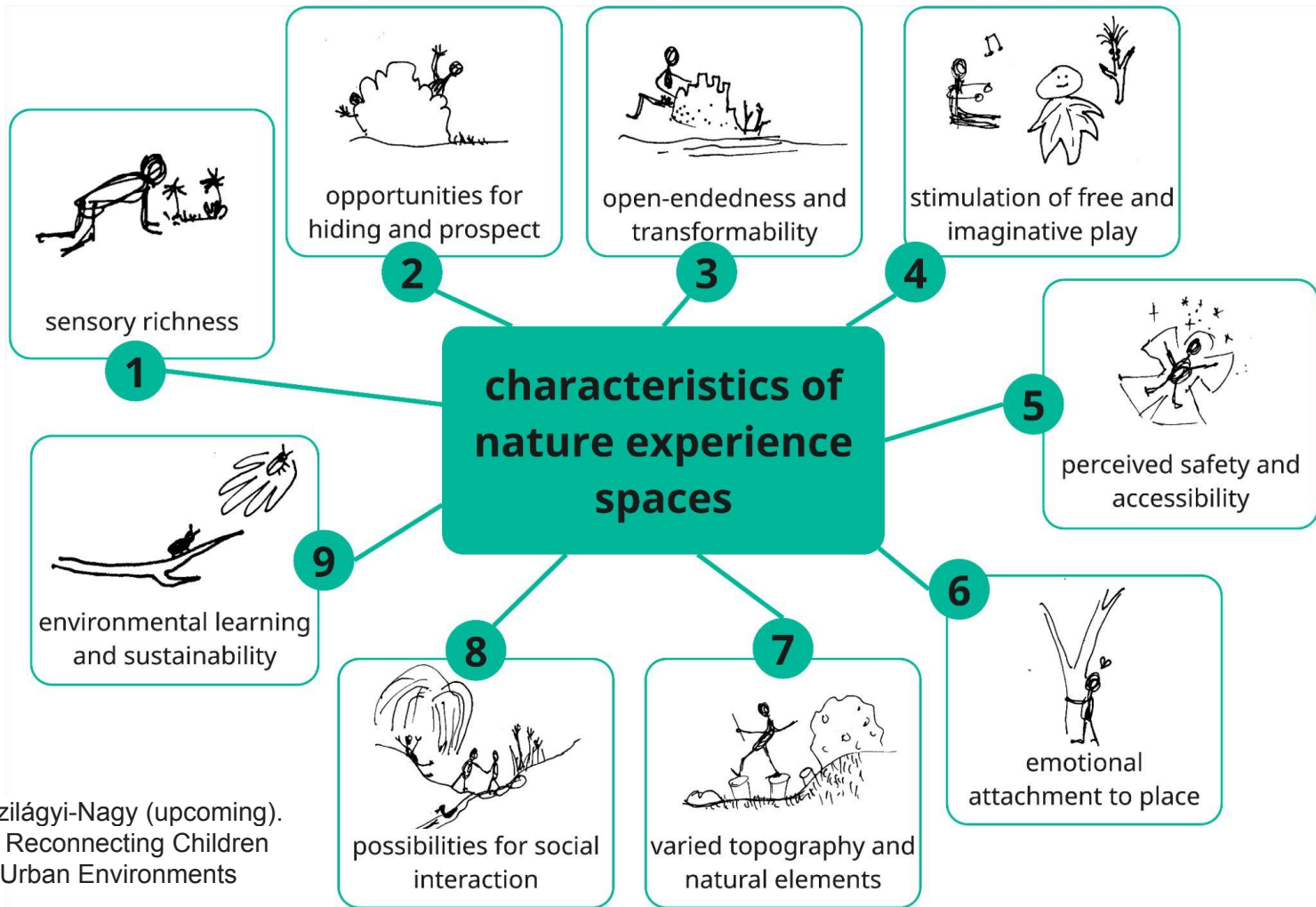
# **Living Labs**

are real-world collaborative environments where communities, researchers, and designers test landscape solutions that support more inclusive and sustainable spatial transformation (i.e. democratic landscape transformation).

# Democratic Landscape Transformation



explored through 5 thematic OLA Living Laboratories



E. Tóth & A. Szilágyi-Nagy (upcoming).  
 Geogames for Reconnecting Children  
 with Nature in Urban Environments

2024-09-01



2025-06-19





KULTÚRAKTÍV

playful  
participation of  
children

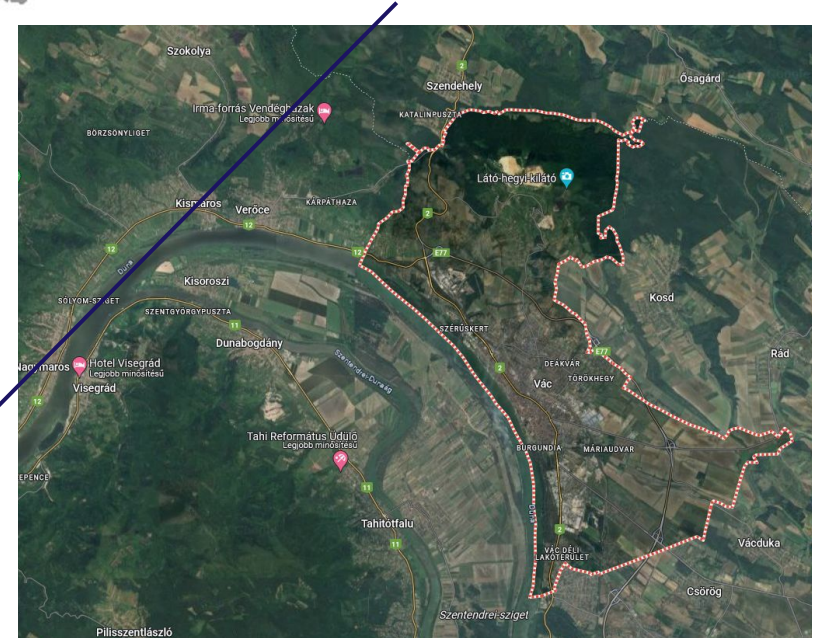


MAGYAR AGRÁR- ÉS  
ÉLETTUDOMÁNYI EGYETEM

research / design

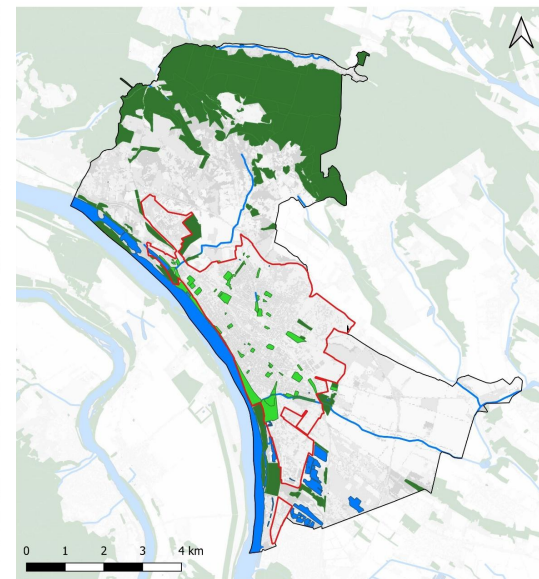
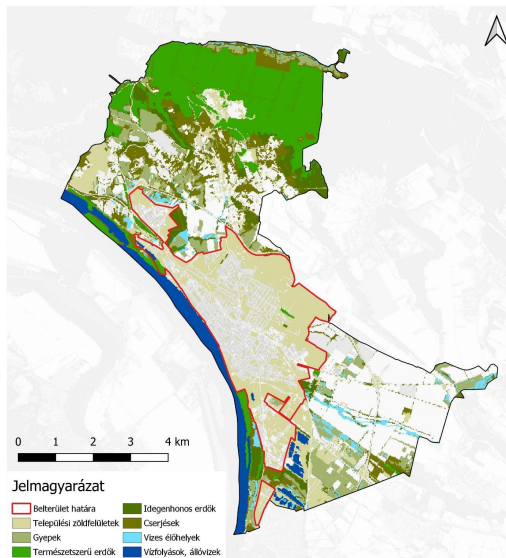


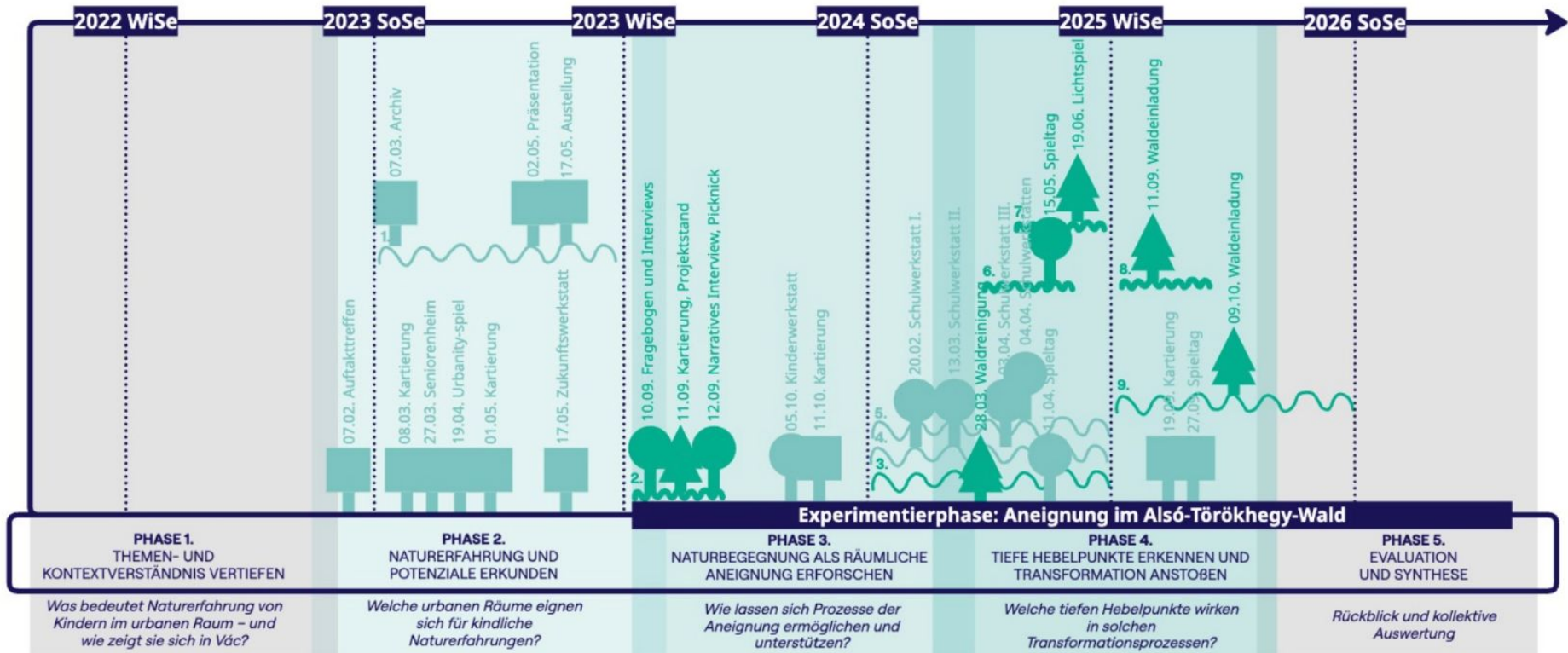
community of Vác  
real-world context



# Vác

- Population: 34.000 (2023. január 1.)
- Area: 61,6 km<sup>2</sup>





## STEP 1

### UNDERSTANDING CHILDREN'S NATURE EXPERIENCES AND DEVELOPING METHODS FOR CO-DESIGN



Developing participatory tools for child-inclusive spatial transformation.

Photos: ● Anna Szilágyi-Nagy.



Mapping how children relate to urban nature, identifying current outdoor spaces and spatial challenges.

Photos: ● landscape architecture students.



## Cycle 1: Understanding children's nature experiences in Vác

- **Challenge:** children's growing disconnection from everyday nature environments.
- **Goal:** understand where and how children experience nature outdoors in Vác.
- **Site:** city-wide mapping of outdoor play and green space use, historical aspect.
- **Key learnings:**
  - reduced access to unstructured nature
  - decline of autonomous outdoor play
  - mismatch between children's preferences and parental choices
  - play concentrated in popular locations

City

→ **Shift:** focus on everyday accessible but **underused green spaces** instead of already popular sites

## STEP 2

### APPROPRIATION OF THE ALSÓ-TÖRÖKHEGY FOREST THROUGH PLAY



Children exploring, imagining and claiming the forest through the “Spaceship Game,” building emotional attachment to place.

Photos: ● Gyula Csernok.



Community events for cleaning and reimagining the neglected forest site.

Photos: ● Gyula Csernok,  
● Anna Szilágyi-Nagy.



## Cycle 2: Landing in the Törökhegy forest

- **Challenge:** work with overlooked everyday environments rather than established play areas.
- **Goal:** understand the Törökhegy forest, explore its potential, and reconnect residents with the site.
- **Site:** Törökhegy and forest area.
- **Key learnings:**
  - strong hidden spatial potential despite neglect
  - importance of first encounters and perceptions of the place
  - need to build relationships between people and the forest before changing it



### STEP 3

#### CO-DESIGN THROUGH SHARED USE DURING THE “FOREST ENCOUNTER” PROGRAMMES

Through the “Forest Encounters” programme, families and children gradually shaped the forest—marking paths, forming forest clearings, planting seedlings and creating simple play elements through shared use and small-scale interventions.

Photos: ● Gyula Csernok,  
● Péter Oszkai.



## Cycle 3: Co-creating nature experience spaces

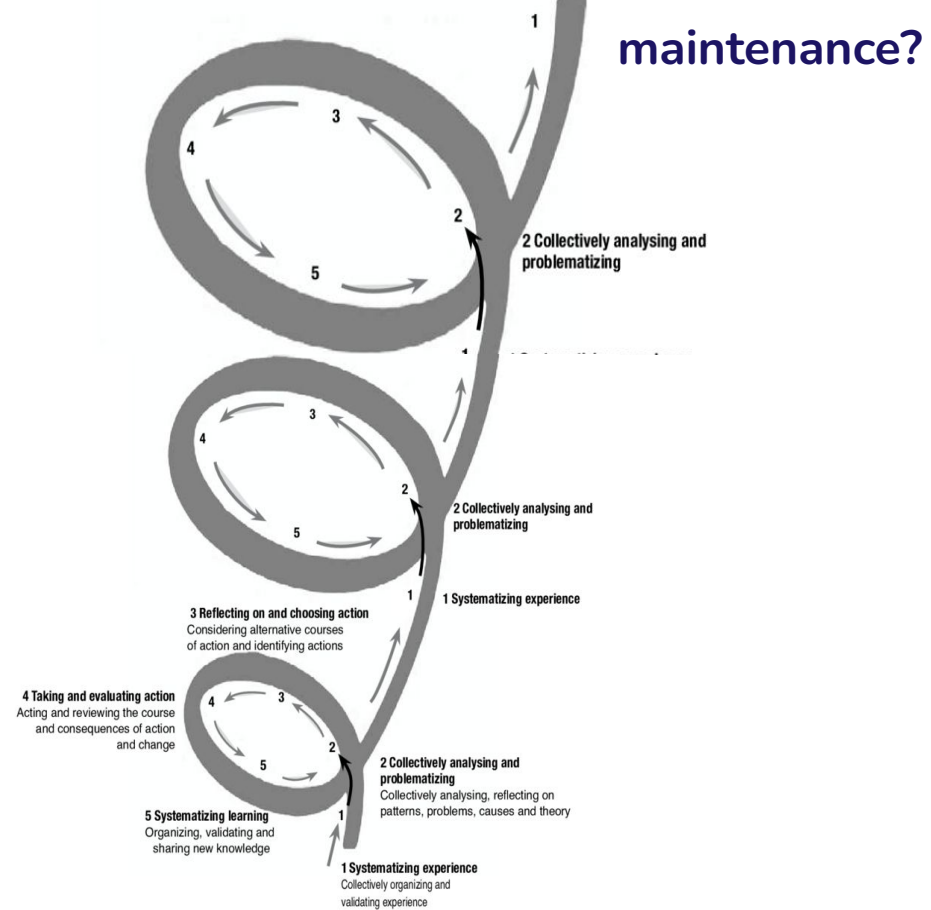
- **Challenge:** develop nature experience spaces together with children and families.
- **Goal:** test methods for co-designing everyday forest environments through iterative engagement.
- **Site:** Alsó-Törökhegy, forest
- **Key learnings:**
  - learning through being outdoors
  - following children’s interests as design drivers
  - step-by-step development between sessions
  - gradual co-creation of the environment with participants



**STEP 3**  
**CO-DESIGN THROUGH SHARED USE DURING THE "FOREST ENCOUNTER" PROGRAMMES**

**STEP 2**  
**APPROPRIATION OF THE ALSÓ-TÖRÖKHEGY FOREST THROUGH PLAY**

**STEP 1**  
**UNDERSTANDING CHILDREN'S NATURE EXPERIENCES AND DEVELOPING METHODS FOR CO-DESIGN**



Loewenson, Rene & AC, Laurell & C, Hogstedt & D'Ambruso, Lucia & Shroff, Zubin. (2014). Participatory Action Research in Health Systems: A Methods Reader.

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=\\_1BKE9aJK-k](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_1BKE9aJK-k)

2024-09-01



2025-03-28



2025-03-28



2025-04-04



2025-05-11



2025-05-15



2025-06-14



**Gyerekbárát Vác Élő Laboratórium**

**Gyerekbárát Vác Élő Laboratórium**  
Térmezterközeli élmények fiataloknak  
2022-2025

by kultúrAktív  
Playlist · 4 videos · 95 views

A Gyerekbárát Vác projekt a kultúrAktív Egyesület és a Magyar Agrár- és Élettudományi Egyetem (MATE) ...more

▶ Play all

Shuffle

1. Gyerekbárát Vác Élő Laboratórium  
Térmezterközeli élmények fiataloknak  
2:57
2. Let the Forest Be a Magical Place! – Alsó-Törökhegy Forest Allure 2.  
kultúrAktív · 24 views · 6 months ago
3. Let's Turn the Forest into a Playground of Wonder! – Alsó-Törökhegy Forest Allure 3.  
kultúrAktív · 43 views · 6 months ago
4. Let the Forest Be a Place... WISHES from Alsó-Törökhegy Forest Whisperer 3.  
kultúrAktív · 25 views · 6 months ago

Video collection about the project:  
[https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLhB271oaixLM\\_7tmlwt3Un-qSfYpYZp1p](https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLhB271oaixLM_7tmlwt3Un-qSfYpYZp1p)

18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 30 31 32 33 34 35 36 37 38 39 40 41 42 43 44 45 46 47 48 49 50 51 52 53 54 55 56 57 58 59 60 61 62 63 64 65 66 67 68 69 70 71 72 73 74 75 76 77 78 79 80 81 82 83 84 85 86 87 88 89 90 91 92 93 94 95 96 97 98 99 100

100% 1h 34:20:00

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.36249/4d.76.6427>

## GYERMEKEK TERMÉSZETHEZ VALÓ KAPCSOLÓDÁSÁNAK ÖSZTÖNZÉSE A VÁROSI TÉRBEIN

### RECONNECTING CHILDREN WITH NATURE IN URBAN SPACE

TÓTH ESTER | SZILÁGYI-NAGY ANNA | FÖLDI ZSÓFIA | VALÁNSZKI ISTVÁN

**ABSTRACT**  
 The increasing disconnect between children and their natural environment has profound implications for their development and well-being. This study examines strategies to foster reconnection by employing a Living Lab approach in Vác, Hungary, grounded in social-constructivist landscape theory. Through a mixed-method framework including drawings, narrative interviews, questionnaires, observations, and spatial mapping—the research explores how children, parents, and landscape architecture students perceive and engage with nature. The findings reveal significant discrepancies in these perspectives, particularly regarding the value of structured natural interaction versus structured urban green spaces. By highlighting these divergences, the study underscores the need for participatory planning approaches that integrate children's voices to design urban environments with both formal and informal green spaces that support spontaneous exploration.

**Keywords:** Urban nature, Children, Nature experiences, Child-Friendly city, Living Lab, Participatory Action Research

**INTRODUCTION**  
 Urban green spaces provide a wide range of health benefits [1], with various pathways through which nature can positively impact health, including enhanced air quality, increased physical activity, stress reduction, and improved social cohesion [2]. Nature experiences are particularly crucial for the holistic development of children, creating environments that actively promote health and well-being [3]. Despite increasing recognition of nature's role in fostering resilience, well-being, and social cohesion, knowledge gaps persist regarding effective strategies for embedding nature into urban planning frameworks [4] [5]. This gap is particularly pronounced when considering children's perspectives [6], which are often overlooked in the development of urban green spaces.

In Hungary, there is a growing focus on integrating nature experiences into urban and educational environments. Research [7] indicates that children's nature connectedness tends to decline with age, with significant regional differences, and varies according to settlement type, being lower in large cities and stronger in smaller towns. Moreover, studies have demonstrated the positive effects of environmental education programs [8] [9] and the green characteristics of school environments [10] on fostering nature connectedness. However, it remains unclear how the design and social integration of urban landscapes – and their subsequent use – affect children's ability to connect with nature within urban environments.

**RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**  
**Living Lab approach**  
 To address the challenges of incorporating children's nature experiences within urban settings, the Child-Friendly City Living Lab in Vác, Hungary, has been established as an experimental platform. The lab is co-run by the Department of Landscape Protection and Reclamation at the Miskolc University of Applied Sciences and Life Sciences at the Hungarian University of Agriculture and Life Sciences (MATE).

Tóth, E., Szilágyi-Nagy, A., Földi, Z., & Valánszki, I. (2025). Reconnecting Children with Nature in Urban Space. *4D Journal of Landscape Architecture and Garden Art*, 76, 16-23.  
<https://doi.org/10.36249/4d.76.6427>

# LE:NOTRE Landscape Forum 2025

## Budapest–Vác and the Danube Bend

**MATE**  
Hungarian University of Agriculture and Life Sciences  
Institute of Landscape Architecture, Urban Planning and Garden Art  
2025

**LE:NOTRE Institute**

Landscape Forum Booklet:  
<https://press.mater.uni-mate.hu/458/1/LeNotre%202025%20FIN.pdf>

Athens - Ravenna - Cento - Vác  
Nürtingen - Villaggio Solidale

# Open Landscape Academy 2025

## LIVING LABS

**OLA**  
Stories + Resources from the OLA Living Labs

Co-funded by the European Union

OLA Method Booklet:  
<https://www.openlandscapeacademy.org/>



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