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SZABADTÉR-HASZNÁLATI MINTÁZATOK KÉT ROMÁK LAKTA TELEPÜLÉSEN

PATTERNS OF OPEN SPACE USAGE IN TWO ROMA-INHABITED TOWNS

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ABSZTRAKT

A magyarországi cigányság által használt szabadterek, a gyakran szegregált lakóterületek használata általában magán hordozza a szegénység és a sajátos cigány kultúra jegyeit. A különböző kulturális háttérrel rendelkező közösségek egymás mellett élése a sajátos területhasználatokon keresztül konfliktusok forrása lehet, illetve erősítheti a szegregációs folyamatokat, ami egyes közösségek leszakadásához vezethet. A kutatás eredménye a településtervezés előtt álló kihívás leküzdéséhez nyújt segítséget a különböző cigány csoportok sajátos térhasználatának a mélyebb megértését szolgálva két különböző vidéki település, egy Budapest közelében fekvő kisvárosi szegregátum és környéke, valamint egy Nyugat-magyarországi belső periférián elhelyezkedő falu különféle cigány csoportok által lakott területeinek vizsgálatán keresztül. A település és a telkek szerkezetére vonatkozó szakirodalmi kutatás kiegészül a csoportos és személyes interjúkból, valamint terepbejárásokból származó információkkal. A vizsgálat legfőbb eredménye a tapasztalt sajátosságok dokumentálása, valamint a megvalósult, szabadtérfejlesztések eredményességének leírása, a tapasztalatok ismertetése. A tanulmányban bemutatott cigány közösségek területhasználati szokásai rámutattak továbbá a különbözőségeken keresztül a települési fejlesztések megkezdése előtt szükséges, az adott település, településrész és az aktuális közösség mélyreható megismerésének fontosságára.

Kulcsszavak: Monor Tabán, Zalakomár, szegregáció, roma közösségek, roma/cigány térhasználat

ABSTRACT

The open spaces used by the Roma community in Hungary, as well as their often segregated residential areas, generally bear the hallmarks of poverty and the distinctive Roma culture. The coexistence of communities with different cultural backgrounds can be a source of conflict due to distinct land-use patterns, and conflicts may reinforce segregation processes, which can lead to the marginalization of certain communities. The results of this study help address the challenges facing urban planning by providing a deeper understanding of the specific space usage of different Roma groups through an examination of two distinct rural towns inhabited by various Roma groups. One of them is a segregated section close to a small-town near Budapest, the other is a village located in south-western Hungary. The review of literature on settlement patterns and plot structures is complemented by the information from group and individual interviews as well as field surveys. The main outcome of the research is the documentation of observed characteristics, as well as a description of the effectiveness of the implemented open-space developments and a presentation of the experiences gained. The land-use patterns of the different Roma communities presented in the study also highlighted the importance of developing a thorough understanding of the specific settlement, neighbourhood, and community in question before undertaking any urban development initiatives.

Keywords: Monor Tabán, Zalakomár, segregation, Roma communities, Roma open space usage

INTRODUCTION

The coexistence of communities with diverse cultural backgrounds often leads to divergent land-use practices, which may give rise to spatial conflicts (Crețan, Covaci, & Jucu, 2023). These conflicts can be further intensified by changing environmental and economic conditions, to which different social groups may respond in distinct ways (de Jong et al., 2021). In addition, spatial policies—particularly prevalent in Central and Eastern Europe—frequently contribute to the segregation of Roma communities within settlements, thereby reinforcing existing patterns of marginalization (Virág, 2024). Addressing such segregation represents a major challenge for urban planning, and necessitates a nuanced understanding of both the local context and the perspectives of the stakeholders involved. This study seeks to contribute to this understanding.

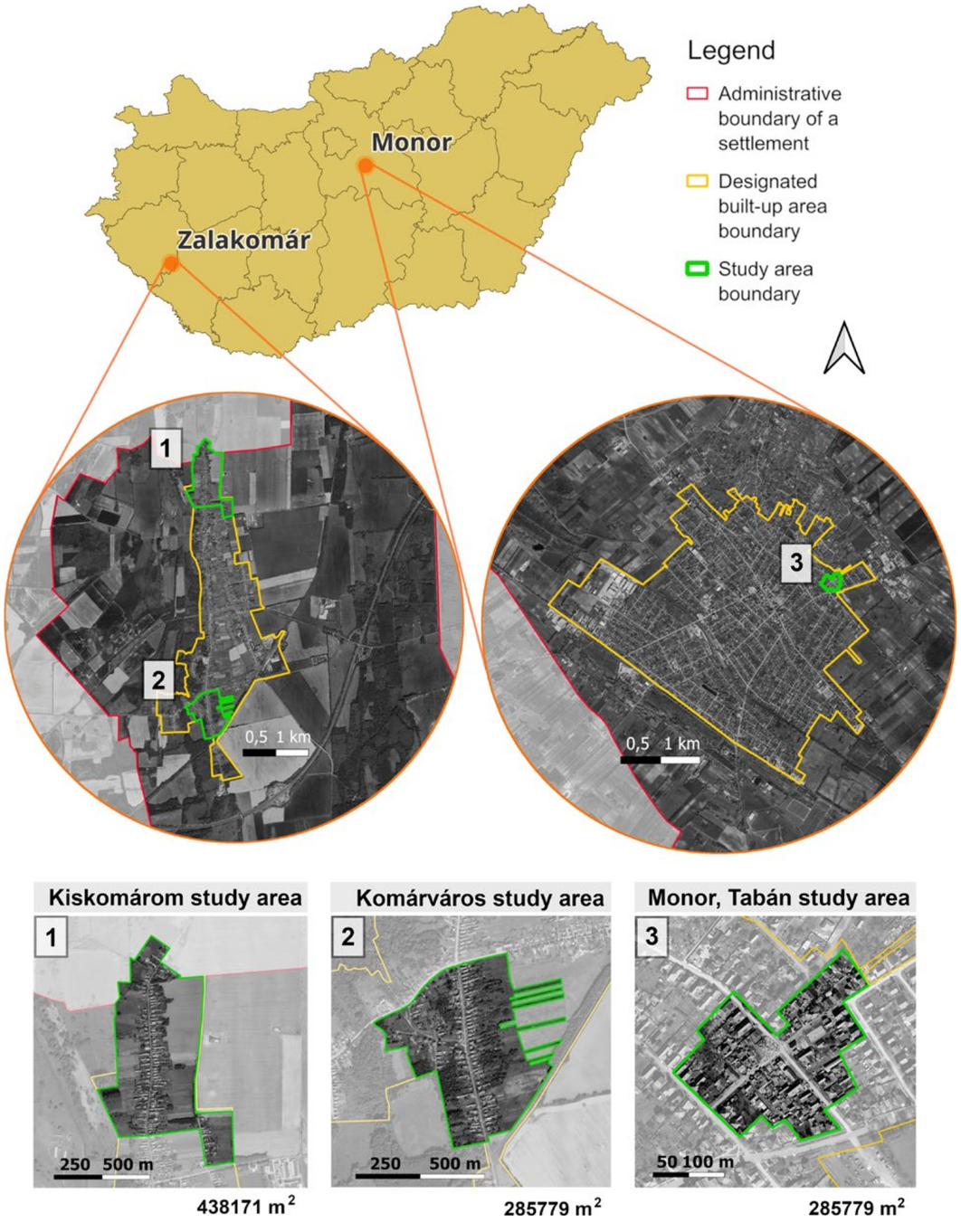
The primary purpose of the study is the systematic documentation of observed spatial characteristics, accompanied by an evaluation of the effectiveness of implemented open-space development interventions. Our research focuses on areas inhabited by rural Roma populations, namely one small town and one village. At the outset, we assumed that the lifestyles and socio-economic conditions of urban and rural Roma communities differ significantly, just as notable differences exist among various Roma groups themselves. Our findings confirm that these distinctions are indeed substantial, particularly as regards land-use practices. They underline the importance of considering both settlement type and the diverse origins of Roma groups when analysing spatial patterns and planning interventions.

Various Roma groups in Hungary arrived in successive waves from the 15th century onwards, and have endured numerous hardships throughout their long history (Cserti Csapó, 2018; Szabóné Kármán, 2016). While this study does not aim to provide a comprehensive historical overview, it highlights two key processes that have fundamentally shaped the present conditions in the areas studied: the dismantling of segregated Roma settlements in the 1960s, and the socio-political transformations following the end of communism in Hungary in the 1990s. The latter brought about the establishment of local self-governments, accompanied by diverse interpretations of municipal autonomy.

In Hungary, the largest Roma group at present is the so-called Romungro, or Hungarian Roma, comprising over 70% of the Roma population. They are the longest-established group in the country as well as the most assimilated, with Hungarian as their primary language. In this study, we refer to two additional groups who arrived in the territory of present-day Hungary from the 18th century onwards—according to some authors, primarily in the 19th century. These include the so-called Vlach Roma (Oláh Roma), who speak dialects of the Romani language, and the Boyash (Beás), who speak a language derived from Romanian (Dupcsik, 2018).

The areas examined in this study primarily correspond to those managed by the Hungarian Maltese Charity Service (MMSZ), which do not fully coincide with the officially designated segregated areas. According to Government Decree No. 419/2021, segregated areas and

Figure 1: Location of study areas
EDITED BY VERONIKA CSURGAY. SOURCE OF BASE MAP: GOOGLE SATELLITE (GOOGLE LLC), EDITED WITH QGIS 3.36.1



areas at risk of segregation are delineated within municipal planning documents based on two statistical indicators: (a) the proportion of individuals without earned income, and (b) the proportion of working-age individuals with no more than primary education. However, this simplified methodology is open to criticism from both an urban-planning and a social-policy perspective (Szarvák, 2025).

This limitation is further illustrated by the discrepancy between the MMSZ's operational areas and the officially designated segregated zones. Drawing on our field experience, it appears necessary to reconsider and refine the concept of segregated areas; however, the development of more robust and context-sensitive criteria requires further research.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The two research areas (Figure 1) included in this study, with its predominantly rural focus, were selected based on a set of complementary criteria. One key consideration was the administrative status of the settlements, ensuring the inclusion of both a small town and a village. In addition, we took into account the diversity of spatial configurations in Roma communities: in some settlements, Roma groups live in relative spatial integration with the majority population, whereas in others there have emerged clearly segregated, settlement-like enclaves, characterized by distinct spatial structures and markedly different living conditions.

Based on prior knowledge, it was hypothesized that the differing lifestyles of various Roma groups would also be reflected in their land-use practices. From a practical perspective, the selection process was further shaped by the need to conduct interviews and field documentation, which required both a safe research environment and a sufficiently open and accessible community context. Accordingly, the final selection comprised two settlements participating in the Hungarian Maltese Charity Service's Presence Programme: the town of Monor and the village of Zalakomár.

Drawing on the literature that presents field-based studies examining patterns of coexistence among different ethnic groups (Bakó, 2006; Bakó, 2017; Stewart, 1994), several key dimensions of land use were identified and subsequently applied as an analytical framework in our observations of the two settlements. These dimensions include:

① Multigenerational cohabitation and its influence on the use of gardens and outdoor spaces
② The presence and function of fences, as well as practices such as outdoor laundry drying
③ The internal division of garden spaces and their multiple functions, including communal use, work-related activities, cultivation, storage, and animal husbandry
④ The role and purpose of animal husbandry, along with its specific spatial and land-use characteristics
⑤ The use of semi-public spaces, such as front yards, sidewalks, and embankments.

To complement the perspectives derived from the literature review, our field experiences led us to extend the analytical framework applied in the interviews and in the interpretation of our findings with the following additional aspects:

① The use of food and ornamental plants in gardens, as well as garden maintenance practices
② The use of public green spaces.

The description of the current conditions of the studied neighbourhoods and their existing land-use patterns is based on field observations, as well as the results of semi-structured group and individual interviews conducted in the selected areas. Interviews were carried out in both settlements with staff members of the Hungarian Maltese Charity Service (MMSZ) and local residents. The interviews took place in 2025, in the so-called "Presence Houses" *(Jelenlét Házak)*. They included three MMSZ staff members in Monor and two in Zalakomár. The number of participating residents varied over time: typically, one participant remained throughout the entire interview, while an additional two to three individuals joined intermittently, contributing to specific questions before leaving. During the field visits, we toured the facilities of the Maltese Charity Service. In Monor, we walked through the streets of the settlement on foot, while in Zalakomár, due to the larger area and the less safe environment, we visited the segregated areas by car, together with a colleague from the Maltese service. We also took photographs during the field visits.

In this study, observations have been documented according to the above criteria. At the same time, we have also examined the differences between the two types of settlements—namely, the more urbanised neighbourhood





◂◂**Figure 2:** Street scenes in Monor-Tabán
PHOTOGRAPHY BY EDINA DANCSOKNÉ FÓRIS, 2025

Figure 3: Photographs from the Zalakomár study area
PHOTOGRAPHY BY EDINA DANCSOKNÉ FÓRIS, 2025





and the rural setting—and, based on the findings from the Zalakomár case study, we further analyse the variations in spatial practices among different Roma groups.

Several Roma communities of diverse origins were living in Monor when a wave of evictions began in the 1990s. These interventions aimed to relocate Roma families from dispersed locations across the town into a segregated neighbourhood. As part of this process, the local government purchased circus wagons, which were placed on a municipally owned plot in the centrally located, long-established "Tabán" Roma neighbourhood.

Living conditions in the area were extremely precarious. Most dwellings were not connected to the water supply; instead, residents relied on a hand pump and a few shared wells for the entire neighbourhood. Many homes also lacked basic sanitation, including toilets, as former residents recall.

In response to an emergency call in 2004, the Hungarian Maltese Charity Service (MMSZ) began working in the neighbourhood. Its initial aim was to improve housing and living conditions, while also supporting residents through a comprehensive approach spanning early childhood development to employment, and fostering community organisation (Kiss, 2011). To support these activities, MMSZ acquired several plots of land and buildings, including the "Biztos Kezdet Gyermekház" (Sure Start Children's House), the "Tanoda" (after-school tutoring centre), and the "Hangár" community space. The latter, a converted Dutch tulip greenhouse, initially operated as a "Jelenlét Pont" (Presence Point) and later evolved into a broader communal venue. Over time, additional facilities such as a community bathhouse and laundry service were also established (Schuchmann et al., 2015).

Beyond supporting children's development, these institutions also provide spaces for adult education and vocational training, including programmes such as training to be an assistant pastry chef or mason's apprentice (INT-01). Despite these interventions, residents of the segregated area continue to depend on support services, and consistently call for further improvements in their living conditions and overall quality of life.

Within Monor's Tabán neighbourhood, the Roma population lives in conditions resembling a shanty-town (Figure 2), largely segregated from the majority society. The area is home to members of several Roma groups who coexist in close proximity, forming a socially and culturally diverse but spatially marginalised community.

In Zalakomár, the original Roma settlement was historically located on the outskirts of the present-day village. Following the dismantling of Roma settlements that began in 1962, families were progressively relocated to surrounding villages (Tóth, 2000). For Beás Roma families in particular, housing was mainly provided in the Kiskomárom part of the settlement, where vacant houses became available due to depopulation or outward migration. In many cases, these properties were already in poor condition, consisting of deteriorating mudbrick or cob structures at the time of resettlement.

As the Beás population grew, additional makeshift and shack-like dwellings constructed by Roma families appeared within the village area [9]. Oral histories also indicate that, even around the turn of the millennium, some families were still living in mobile homes clustered within the inner parts of the settlement, reflecting the persistence of highly precarious housing conditions well into the post-socialist period.

The Olah Roma, often referred to locally as "knife grinders," settled in the area voluntarily, primarily arriving from nearby Somogy County. According to the literature, the first families likely originated from the village of Miháld, south of Zalakomár (Tóth, 2000). Owing to their traditional occupations—such as horse trading, herbal remedy preparation, metalwork, and market trading—they had already been frequent visitors to Komárváros prior to their permanent settlement.

A more substantial wave of migration occurred from the 1970s onwards (Tóth, 2000). New arrivals moved into former farmhouses or newly built dwellings constructed with social welfare assistance. However, housing conditions were often modest, and many of the properties were small, poorly maintained, and of low structural quality, with some already in a state of disrepair at the time of occupation (Marton, 1991) (Figure 3).

After settling in Komárváros, the Olah Roma largely maintained their traditional livelihoods, continuing to work as merchants, market traders, and horse dealers, thereby preserving a degree of occupational continuity across generations.

In Zalakomár, the Roma population generally lives intermingled with the majority society; however, intermingling between the Olah and Beás Roma is not typical. Based on the 2011 census, four segregated areas were identified (MMSZ, 2022).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

We present our results grouped according to the land-use aspects examined.

Multigenerational cohabitation and its Impact on Garden Use

Multigenerational Cohabitation is a common feature in both settlements, although it is particularly pronounced in Zalakomár. Here, former farm buildings are frequently repurposed into living spaces, allowing extended families to live under one roof or within a shared homestead. The form of shared courtyard use described by Bakó (2017) is also evident in the study areas, where everyday cooperation is typical. Household activities are often carried out collectively in outdoor spaces, including airing laundry, washing dishes, cooking in cauldrons, and undertaking occasional maintenance or informal work in the garden.

In Monor, by contrast, multigenerational cohabitation is somewhat less prevalent due to the dense concentration of informal housing and the complexity of property relations. Nevertheless, the settlement's semi-informal, village-like structure means that extended family

Figure 4: Laundry hanging on a street-facing fence in Zalakomár
PHOTOGRAPHY BY EDINA DANCSOKNÉ FÓRIS, 2025

Figure 5: This small garden has room only for a terrace
PHOTOGRAPHY BY EDINA DANCSOKNÉ FÓRIS, 2025, MONOR

▸▸**Figure 6:** Storage and display functions in the gardens of Zalakomár
PHOTOGRAPHY BY EDINA DANCSOKNÉ FÓRIS, 2025

▸▸**Figure 7:** The Accumulation of functions in the garden
PHOTOGRAPHY BY EDINA DANCSOKNÉ FÓRIS, 2025, ZALAKOMÁR





members continue to live in close physical proximity. Even where multiple generations occupy separate houses on the same plot, courtyards—particularly on larger parcels of land—are often not formally divided, reinforcing everyday spatial and social interdependence among kin groups.

Fences and laundry hanging

Málovics et al. (2019) highlight that in deprived neighbourhoods there is an increasing need for households to establish physical and symbolic boundaries, driven by factors such as child protection and the emergence of income inequalities. In Monor's Tabán neighbourhood, this tendency is visible in the widespread use of tall, visually obstructive corrugated metal/fibre cement fences (Figure 2). These structures not only demarcate private space but are also perceived by residents as offering a degree of protection against undesirable behaviours, such as drug use.

In Zalakomár, by contrast, the spatial organisation of household boundaries follows more traditional village patterns. Street-front areas and actively used front gardens are typically enclosed with slatted wooden or metal mesh fences, while the rear sections of gardens are often left entirely open. In the parts of the settlement inhabited by Olah Roma communities, fully enclosed yards and animal pens are also common, reflecting practices linked to horse-keeping and animal husbandry.

Within the literature, the practice of hanging laundry in highly visible locations—such as street-facing fences—has also been interpreted as carrying symbolic meaning (Szuhay, 1999). While this practice is observable in both Monor and Zalakomár, interviewees in our study did not ascribe any symbolic significance to it; instead, they described it as a purely practical solution. In many cases, fences are deliberately constructed to facilitate drying laundry (Figure 4). One MMSZ field worker also suggested that the frequent washing and conspicuous display of laundry in some households may function, at least in part, as a way of signalling cleanliness and respectability.

The Structure and Functions of Gardens

In Monor, the urban setting, limited availability of space, and the growing reliance on services that have replaced







earlier forms of self-sufficiency have collectively led to a decline in outdoor gardening activities among residents. Private outdoor areas—often in the form of spacious terraces—are therefore used primarily as spaces for rest and leisure (Figure 5).

In both Monor and Zalakomár, however, storage functions remain important, particularly within the Olah Roma community, where income-generating scavenging activities require space for sorting and storing materials.

In Zalakomár, animal husbandry plays a more prominent role in shaping the use of residential space in both study areas. Dedicated areas for livestock keeping—such as barns, pens, cages, and sheds—are commonly present. These activities are typically concentrated in the backyard and, in many cases, are physically separated from the rest of the household yard by fencing. Side-yard outbuildings are frequently used for animal care as well as for storing crops and animal feed in barrels or sacks. Within the Olah Roma community, these auxiliary structures also accommodate horse-drawn carts. Materials used for heating, such as firewood branches, along with hay bales for animal fodder, are often stored in an unstructured manner across the plots.

Among the Beás community, small kitchen gardens are also present on several properties, contributing to household subsistence. Whenever possible, these gardens are located in the backyard; where space is limited, cultivation is shifted to front or side yards. In addition to small-scale vegetable production, it is also common for households to lease land behind residential buildings or to cultivate cereals such as wheat and maize for their own consumption.

Kitchen gardens are relatively uncommon among the Olah Roma; however, when they do engage in cultivation, it is typically on larger plots of land. Traditionally, the Olah Roma have been involved in metal trading and the repair of metal tools, and these activities continue to shape the organisation of domestic space. The yard often functions as a multifunctional work area, used for storing and repairing machinery as well as various means of transport, including bicycles and motorcycles.

At present, scavenging also forms part of their primary livelihood strategies. In this context, the plot serves as a temporary storage and sorting area for collected scrap and other items considered valuable, as well as a space





◂◂**Figure 8:** A covered area and playground equipment in the garden of Tabán Tanoda to support outdoor activities
PHOTOGRAPHY BY VERONIKA CSURGAY, 2025, MONOR





Figure 9: Murals on the fence of the Tabán School
PHOTOGRAPHY BY VERONIKA CSURGAY, 2025

for display. In some cases, sections of the yard are paved, and goods are systematically arranged on racks for easier handling and sale (Figure 6).

Sales take place both directly from the household premises and through regular visits to regional flea markets in towns such as Nagykanizsa and Nagyatád, as well as to various fairgrounds where trading activities are carried out.

For the Roma community in Zalakomár, communal space plays a central role as an extension of the household, often functioning as a shared garden area and an important gathering place for the entire extended family, particularly during holidays and special occasions. Both the Beás and Oláh Roma communities frequently arrange seating in close proximity, supporting both everyday relaxation and collective activities.

A key characteristic of these spaces is the accumulation of functions and the relatively blurred separation between them (Figure 7). Thanks to the flexibility of movable furniture, areas used for storage, sitting, conversation, and work often overlap, allowing a single space to serve multiple purposes simultaneously.

Within the Beás community, we observed fewer instances of permanent functional overlap, but a greater reliance on mobile and temporary uses of space. While activities such as animal processing are primarily associated with the backyard, the associated equipment—such as tables used for preparation—is typically placed there only temporarily and moved as needed.

Animal Husbandry and Its Characteristics in Terms of Land Use

In Monor, animal husbandry is present on a smaller scale, with pigeons kept in several households, alongside occasional pigs and poultry. These animals are primarily raised for household consumption rather than commercial purposes. According to local accounts, pigeon breeding was once more closely linked to trade, whereas today it is predominantly maintained as a hobby or companion practice.

In Zalakomár, levels of self-sufficiency vary between the Beás and Oláh Roma communities, reflecting different livelihood strategies and traditions. Beás Roma households typically keep pigs (including domestic breeds and Mangalica), poultry (various types of chickens, ducks, and geese), and in some cases rabbits. Oláh Roma households, by contrast, are more commonly engaged in the keeping of goats, sheep, and horses (including ponies).

Beyond contributing to household subsistence, animal husbandry also plays an important economic role, as animals are frequently processed and sold, generating supplementary income. For the Oláh Roma in particular, the trade in live animals—especially horse trading—can constitute a primary source of household livelihood.

The Use of Useful and Ornamental Plants in Gardens, and Garden Maintenance

The Tabán neighbourhood in Monor is characterised by vegetation that varies considerably from household to household but is generally of modest quality. This is partly a reflection of residents' preferences, but also of structural constraints such as limited space and compacted soil conditions. In several households, ornamental plants are present, most commonly in potted or hanging arrangements. In a few cases—particularly in homes with larger garden areas—planting practices and overall garden maintenance are more deliberate and carefully tended.

In Zalakomár, the Hungarian Maltese Charity Service (MMSZ) has provided notable support for crop cultivation activities. On the basis of voluntary applications, seed mixtures were distributed to 33 Beás and three Oláh Roma households, in exchange for documentation of the cultivation process. It is important to emphasise, however, that crop cultivation is a long-standing practice within the Beás Roma community. Garden owners also possess considerable knowledge related to seed saving and exchange, often purchasing seedlings independently and sharing seeds within their social networks according to seasonal and household needs.

Overall, gardens in Beás Roma households tend to be better maintained, whereas among the Oláh Roma, less managed or overgrown vegetation is more frequently observed. A notable feature across both communities is the portability of ornamental plants, which are typically grown in pots and can be moved as needed. Direct planting into the ground is largely limited to trees and shrubs. In Beás Roma gardens in particular, herbaceous ornamental plants are widespread, often arranged along side walls or fences in front gardens, contributing to the impression of a more structured and visually cared-for environment.

Use of the Front Garden, Pavement, and Ditch Bank

In the Tabán neighbourhood of Monor, the built environment lacks formal elements such as front gardens, sidewalks, or drainage ditches. In areas without fencing, property boundaries are often indistinct or visually unmarked. Traffic, however, is uncommon within the neighbourhood, and as a result, the uncurbed and in some cases unpaved streets function as shared social spaces. It is typical to encounter pedestrians, children cycling or playing in the street, and residents—most often women—engaged in conversation while seated on chairs temporarily brought out from their homes.

In Zalakomár, the street likewise plays an important role as a social meeting space, serving as a key site for everyday encounters with relatives and acquaintances. The placement of seating in front of fences—often on a temporary basis—is a common practice in both Beás and Oláh Roma communities. This is particularly visible among the Oláh Roma, where chairs are frequently placed directly on the property facing the street, creating informal outdoor gathering points.

The emergence of these seating arrangements is closely connected to the historically widespread, and still

Figure 10: A small park at the intersection of Kisfaludy and József Attila Streets, outside the neighbourhood
PHOTOGRAPHY BY EDINA DANCSOKNÉ FÓRIS, 2025, MONOR

Figure 11: Presence House in the Olah Roma segregated community
PHOTOGRAPHY BY EDINA DANCSOKNÉ FÓRIS, 2025, ZALAKOMÁR





culturally significant, practice of socialising along the edges of ditches and embankments, which continues to shape patterns of outdoor interaction in the settlement.

Use of Public Spaces

In the Tabán settlement in Monor, both spontaneous and more intentionally organised forms of community space currently coexist in the use of public land. The areas informally "designated" by residents—primarily women—are concentrated around the bathhouse and laundry facilities, where seating for conversation is typically temporary and arranged on an ad hoc basis.

In contrast, the larger garden areas connected to the Hungarian Maltese Charity Service (MMSZ) facilities, such as the Biztos Kezdet Children's House and the Tanoda, have undergone more structured development. These spaces now include a range of improvements, including outdoor play equipment, a small football pitch, a covered communal area (Figure 8), and a compact playground, all of which contribute to more formalised opportunities for recreation and community interaction.

As the Presence Point moved to the edge of the settlement, it has come to serve as a welcoming gateway.

▸▸**Figure 12:** The garden of the Presence House in the Beás Roma segregated community
PHOTOGRAPHY BY VERONIKA CSURGAY, 2025, ZALAKOMÁR

▸▸**Figure 13:** Sports field and playground
PHOTOGRAPHY BY EDINA DANCSOKNÉ FÓRIS, 2025, ZALAKOMÁR

▸▸**Figure 14:** A model garden created on the grounds of the Presence House, located in the Beás Roma neighbourhood
PHOTOGRAPHY BY VERONIKA CSURGAY, 2025, ZALAKOMÁR

This role is reinforced by the cheerful murals on the fence, which reflect Romani culture (Figure 9). Children and young people who live outside the neighbourhood also visit the school and the vocational training centre.

Outside the neighbourhood, a small park was created in an area that is a gathering point for workers before the start of the workday. The landscaping has been largely preserved, with neither the benches nor the young trees having been damaged (Figure 10).

Unfortunately, by the time of the field visit, both the saplings and the benches had disappeared from the playground located in the centre of the neighbourhood. At present, the playground no longer functions as a space for young children but rather as a meeting place for young adults, who have damaged and dismantled elements of the playground equipment. As a result, the playground development within the housing estate cannot be considered a successful intervention.

In Zalakomár, Presence Houses (Figure 11) were established in an area inhabited by Beás and Oláh Roma; in the courtyard, community spaces were created by converting a barn and adding suitable garden facilities (Figure 12).







The multifunctional sports field with a synthetic turf surface (Figure 13) and the playground adjacent to it encourage people to spend their free time in a meaningful way.

A model garden has been created on the grounds of the Community Centre on Árpád Street (Figure 14) with the help of public works employees. It serves an educational purpose.

The local government is also committed to supporting the social inclusion and wellbeing of the disadvantaged Roma population in the town. In the Komárváros area, a public park has been created, while in Kiskomárom a playground was established and trees were planted along selected streets. During the site visit, both the newly planted trees and the playground were found to be in good condition—contrasting with the situation observed at the Tabán pilot site in Monor.

The programme can thus be considered successful not only in terms of the survival and maintenance of the planted greenery, but also as a form of informal environmental education (Zalakomár, 2020). The playground is regularly used by Beás Roma women and their children, providing a shared space where children can play while adults engage in conversation.

Similarly to the Tabán neighbourhood in Monor, the Presence Houses in Zalakomár also feature wall paintings, colourful fencing, and garden furniture, reflecting elements of Roma aesthetic and colour culture.

Overall, the developments implemented in Zalakomár can be assessed as largely successful in both physical maintenance and community use.

CONCLUSIONS

Our research examined the specific characteristics of Roma outdoor space use in two towns; therefore, our findings cannot be generalized. However, the differences between the two types of settlements studied were striking in terms of plot size and housing density. In urban settlement conditions, the available open space allows only very limited subsistence-supporting agricultural activities, particularly in terms of the cultivation of plants and the maintenance of green spaces. The differing nature of urban and rural areas is also evident in relation to public open spaces.

We also observed differences in the attitudes of Roma groups of various origins toward gardens and public green spaces, a phenomenon in which their differing traditional occupations may play a role.

However, the applied research methodology and the findings identify several aspects that are particularly relevant for urban planning, especially in the design of public green spaces and land development. These aspects help reveal the diversity and unique characteristics of Roma communities, which can be understood and utilised as valuable resources.

Our findings point to several specific development opportunities that we recommend considering not only in relation to the settlements examined, but more generally as well.

Definition of segregation areas

In the Tabán district of Monor, the vast majority of working-age residents are employed, and currently all children complete primary school; nevertheless, the segregated character of the settlement has not ceased to exist. Therefore, the official definition of a "segregated area" needs to be revised, taking into account utility infrastructure provision, the condition of buildings, population density, the use of green spaces, and the overall townscape.

Bright colours

The studied sample areas are characterised by the use of bright colours in outdoor furniture, fences, house façades, and murals. The Urban Image Handbooks and related Urban Design Regulations typically support more restrained colour usage; therefore, it is justified to adapt the content of these handbooks and related regulations to the observed characteristics of neighbourhoods inhabited by Roma communities.

Public tree planting

In Zalakomár, the success of public tree planting in the neighbourhood inhabited by Beás Roma (as opposed to the area inhabited by Vlach Roma or the mixed population of Monor) raises the possibility that, for the Beás community—originally engaged in woodworking—trees may have greater cultural or material value. As a result, planted vegetation may have a higher chance of survival in areas inhabited by them than in settlements or neighbourhoods inhabited by other Roma groups. However, further research is required.

Dense housing in the urban settlement

In the case of the Tabán district of Monor, the extremely high population density may also be partly caused by unclear property relations (informal, self-built, potentially illegal housing on unpartitioned municipal land). Clarifying property ownership could support the development of larger living spaces and a more orderly townscape.

Streets and ditches as community spaces

Pavements, small open spaces, and ditch edges serve as places for social interaction. In spatial planning affecting Roma communities, designing streets with adequate width, grassing drainage ditches, and creating seating-friendly embankments could help support the community's dignified use of public space. ⦿

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