

Collection of Abstracts

# Quality of Life in a Changing World



**Collection of Abstracts from the Summer School  
Quality of Life in a Changing World, held in Maribor, Slovenia**





University of Maribor

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Faculty of Arts

# Quality of Life in a Changing World

Collection of Abstracts

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# Table of Contents

	<b>Foreword</b> Peter Kumer	1
<b>LECTURES</b>		<b>3</b>
	<b>Urban Regeneration and Social Inclusion in Marginalized Housing Estates and Fragmented Neighbourhoods</b> José Ignacio Vila Vázquez	5
	<b>Digital Media and Our Relationships With Other (Human) Beings</b> Aránzazu Pérez Indaverea	7
	<b>Ports, Cities and Networks: The Effects of Connectivity on the Changing Urban Quality of Life</b> Giuseppe Borruso	8
	<b>Blue, Green, Brown, Dark and Happiness Corridors in the City</b> Serge Schmitz	9
	<b>Reflections of Philosophical Anthropology (H. Plessner) on “Well-Being” in the City and the Countryside</b> Eberhard Rothfuss	10
	<b>“Urban Atmospheres” – Why They Matter for Planning &amp; How We Can Investigate Them</b> Eberhard Rothfuss	11
	<b>Welfare Spaces in the Contemporary City</b> Maria Chiara Tosi	12
	<b>Demographic Change and Quality of Life: The Concept of Smart Ageing</b> Pavel Ptaček	13
	<b>Serious Geogames - How Can They Contribute to the Quality of Life?</b> Alenka Poplin	14

	<b>Everyday Queer Mobilities</b> Tilen Kolar	15
	<b>Coping With Spatial Isolation in Rural Areas – Life Quality in Perforated Villages</b> Éva Máté	16
	<b>Climate Change Spatial Analytics</b> Danijel Ivajnsič	17
	<b>Microgeography and Terrain Analysis: From High-Resolution Elevation Data to Local Solutions</b> Danijel Davidović	18
	<b>Urban Public Spaces and the Quality of Life: Towards More Liveable Cities</b> Jarosław Dzialek	20
	<b>Museums, Social Capital, Creativity and Quality of Life</b> Monika Murzyn-Kupisz	21
	<b>Geographies of <i>Città Della Longevità</i></b> Peter Kumer	22
	<b>The Role of Universities in a Long-Lived Society</b> Lučka Lorber	23
<b>RESEARCH ACTIVITIES</b>		<b>25</b>
	<b>Environmental Change Spatial Analytics</b> Danijel Ivajnsič	27
	<b>Permaculture as Independent Living</b> Ana Vovk	28
	<b>Urban Agriculture and Quality of Life</b> Silva Grobelnik Mlakar	29
	<b>Ecological Network and Ecosystem Services</b> Serge Schmitz	30
	<b>Urban Atmospheres, Human-Centred Urban Planning</b> Eberhard Rothfuss	31
	<b>Welfare Spaces</b> Maria Chiara Tosi	32

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	<b>Social Inclusion, the Commons and Production of Public Spaces</b> José Ignacio Vila Vázquez	33
	<b>Emotional Mapping of Transport Infrastructure</b> Tilen Kolar	35
	<b>Discussing Development Opportunities of Perforated Rural Settlements With a Special Focus on Life Quality</b> Éva Máté, Pavel Ptaček	36
	<b>Assessing the Quality of Urban Public Spaces</b> Jarosław Dzialek, Monika Murzyn-Kupisz	37



## Foreword

PETER KUMER  
editor

What defines quality of life? Is it health and the absence of illness? Strong relationships with friends and family? Spirituality and faith? A peaceful, prosperous country with a robust welfare system? Or perhaps the environments we inhabit: well-designed homes, green and blue infrastructure, a circular economy, and clean surroundings?

Quality of life is a complex, multifaceted concept that cannot be reduced to a single definition. Addressing it holistically requires a multidisciplinary approach. This summer school focuses on the spatial dimensions of quality of life. Researchers from across Europe and the USA have come together to examine core themes, including:

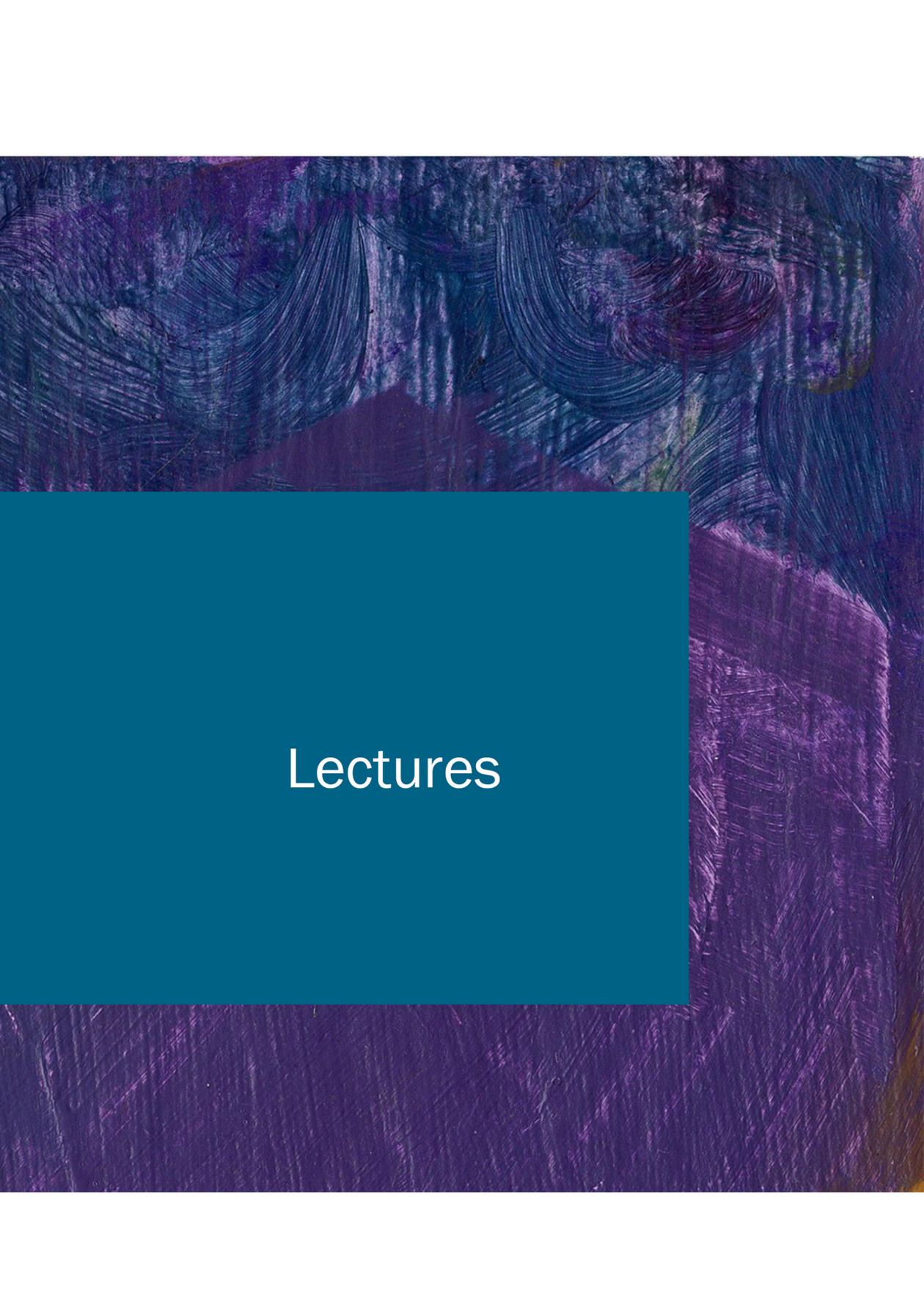
- Equality and inclusivity (inclusive neighbourhoods, participatory planning, queer mobilities)
- Urban and rural well-being (age-friendly spaces, welfare spaces, strategies to reduce spatial isolation)
- Healthy digital environments (emotional experiences in digital landscapes)
- Planning liveable environments (green infrastructure, smart cities, public spaces, sustainability)
- Sense of place (social connection, safety, creative spaces)

- Technology and climate action (GIS, digital twins)

These themes reflect the evolving realities of our world—urban and rural transformations, demographic shifts, digital advancement, and climate change. Each contribution in this collection offers unique insights into how space and place shape our experiences and aspirations for a better life.

This Collection of Abstracts includes descriptions of the lectures and student research activities conducted during the summer school in Maribor, Slovenia.

In a world of constant change, the quality of life is not a static ideal—but a moving target, shaped by where we are, how we live, and what we value. This volume invites you to reflect, rethink, and reimagine the spaces where life unfolds.

The background of the slide is an abstract painting. It features a mix of teal and purple colors, with visible brushstrokes and a textured appearance. A solid teal rectangular block is positioned in the lower-left quadrant, serving as a background for the text.

# Lectures



# Urban Regeneration and Social Inclusion in Marginalized Housing Estates and Fragmented Neighbourhoods

JOSÉ IGNACIO VILA VÁZQUEZ

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This lecture focuses on the impact of urban regeneration programmes on the quality of life of citizens. Both the talk and the workshop address the decay of various parts of metropolitan areas, notably in Europe. First, we will discuss how to deal with these issues in terms of physical degradation or deterioration of the urban fabric and, even more significantly, the growing challenges of increasing urban inequalities and social inclusion. Secondly, we will examine the marginalization of social housing estates across European countries, along with how urban regeneration strategies and programmes attempt to address these problems. The discussion will focus on different strategies, using a comparative approach, to propose solutions for a more inclusive and liveable neighbourhoods composed of marginalised social housing estates.

The workshop will consist of two parts. First, we will discuss in groups the implementation of a methodological approach of different housing estates based on preliminarily selected cases in various European metropolises. The second part of the workshop will be coordinated with the lecture on digital media. In this section of the workshop, students will participate in an immersive exploration of a selected neighbourhood using a digital platform aiming to gather their perceptions and emotions during a commented pathway while discovering the spaces. Meanwhile, other students will document their classmates' perceptions and emotions by interviewing their peers. The objective is to create an emotional map or deep map.

The final product will be a synthetic representation of the atmospheres and emotions related to these digital urban landscapes.

**Keywords:** inequalities, social housing, urban regeneration, public spaces, immersive emotional exploration

# Digital Media and Our Relationships With Other (Human) Beings

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We spend much of our lives in digital environments. This reality affects how we interact with our environments, other (human) beings and our quality of life. This lecture will reflect on how different digital tools and platforms mediate our everyday spatial practices; emotional networks and the memories associated to different places. The discussion will explore the affective dimensions of individuals and communities on digital platforms, many of which are becoming digital ruins (such as *Second Life* or the early version of *World of Warcraft*), and the growing need for their preservation. Finally, participants will be invited to collectively reflect on their personal experiences and emotions related to these synthesized digital urban landscapes. We will also explore strategies to enhance our interactions within digital environments aiming to foster strong communities and preserve our places and landscapes of memory sustainability.

**Keywords:** places of memory, digital worlds, social networks, digital ruins, emotions

# Ports, Cities and Networks: The Effects of Connectivity on the Changing Urban Quality of Life

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The lecture aims to provide an overview of the role of transport connectivity within and between cities, with particular reference to port cities and their relationships with surrounding areas and internal territories. It will examine how evolving transport networks – ranging from traditional port infrastructure to modern multimodal systems – have a profound impact urban quality of life. We will explore the historical co-evolution of ports and cities, analysing the challenges and opportunities brought by enhanced connectivity, including congestion, environmental concerns, and economic growth. The lecture will discuss how embracing "Smart City" and "Sustainable City" paradigms can leverage connectivity to foster resilient, liveable urban environments, balancing economic prosperity with social well-being and environmental protection in port-urban contexts.

**Keywords:** ports; cities; transport networks; urban quality of life; smart city; sustainable city

# Blue, Green, Brown, Dark and Happiness Corridors in the City

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The lecture encourages students to reflect on the ideas of corridors, green infrastructure, and ecological networks. After briefly introducing the different concepts and their applications, we will examine how the approach has evolved with respect to specific species. Finally, we will discuss the limitations of these approaches.

The workshop engages the participants in adapting the ecological network approach for urban populations, using Maribor as a case study. Can we envision creating happiness corridors within the city? What characteristics should we consider? Which spatial network would be most relevant, and why? How can we account for the diversity of the population? What benefits could this approach offer?

**Keywords:** green infrastructure, urban planning, well-being, ecological niche

# Reflections of Philosophical Anthropology (H. Plessner) on “Well-Being” in the City and the Countryside

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Central to Helmuth Plessner’s philosophical anthropology (1980 [1928]) is the concept of "eccentric positionality", which refers to the unique human capacity to perceive oneself from an external perspective that allows us to reflect on our own cultural & natural existence – in difference to animals and plants. According to Plessner's "The Stages of the Organic and Man" (1980 [1928]), philosophical anthropology provides a valuable framework for addressing contemporary debates on ecological urban and rural sustainability, as well as the treatment of nature. It shifts the discussion beyond fashionable, dramatic platitudes to a scenario that recognises the core issue: being human on earth. Only humankind is distinct from nature, only humans lack a natural place or 'logical' habitat on this planet. Therefore, humanity is forced to create cultural worlds (society) as a supplement – without which we cannot exist. This occurs both in distinction from and within a specific cultural appropriation of nature, revealing a fundamental dialectic of being human. This awareness is key to understanding how human beings relate to both urban and rural environments and how their well-being is experienced differently in these spaces.

**Keywords:** philosophical anthropology, eccentric positionality, human-environment-relation, urban-rural differentiation

# “Urban Atmospheres” – Why They Matter for Planning & and How We Can Investigate Them

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*Urban atmospheres* refer to the emotional, sensory, and affective qualities of city spaces. They are shaped by the built environment, lighting, noise, crowd dynamics, weather, and even smells. Unlike physical infrastructure, atmospheres are intangible but deeply felt, influencing how people experience urban environments (Hasse 2023). They emerge from the interplay between people, space, and time – a kind of “aura” of the city (“felt space” according to Böhme 2016). Urban atmospheres influence our ‘sense of place’, safety, and social connectivity. A cold, sterile plaza can feel alienating, while a lively street market might feel invigorating. Urban Planners who understand atmospheric dynamics can create more human-centred places and spaces of “well-being” (Gehl 2015) in cities.

The workshop is divided into two parts: an introductory session, where theoretical and methodological approaches are presented: and an empirical session in Maribor, where we investigate atmospheres in specific places. The collected data (observations, “go-alongs” with oral reflections) will be interpreted by using Bohnsack's “documentary method” (2020) to reconstruct the frames of orientation of the different urban milieus.

**Keywords:** atmospheres, felt space, urban life-world, urban planning, reconstructive methodology

# Welfare Spaces in Contemporary City

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The welfare spaces that were constructed in Europe in the 20th and 21st centuries – as places for socialization, collective life activities, services and infrastructure are focus of this lecture which is divided into two parts. In the first part, the concept of welfare space will be explained, along with its present relevance and application in contemporary urban design. The second part will examine spatial outcomes of welfare policies put in place, using the core region of Veneto as a case study.

During the fieldwork, students will be required to explore and map Maribor's welfare spaces.

**Keywords:** welfare, space, city

# Demographic Change and Quality of Life: The Concept of Smart Ageing

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Throughout different phases of human life, the perception of various aspects of quality of life also changes. A small child sees important things through different eyes than a young family, and they perceive it differently from the elderly. Population aging is a phenomenon that already affects and will increasingly affect how quality of life is perceived by a large part of the population in the future. It will not only affect the elderly themselves, but also their family members, social services and, of course, the physical environment of the settlements in which we live. Are our cities and villages prepared for the phenomenon of an ageing population? How do demographic changes impact the quality of life at present and how will they affect it especially in the future? The concept of smart aging offers technological integration, social and ecological perspectives and a proactive approach to improving the quality of life of seniors.

**Keywords:** demographic ageing, quality of life, smart ageing concept

# Serious Geogames - How Can They Contribute to the Quality of Life?

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This lecture reviews an emerging field of serious digital geogames. The topic is illustrated on developed and tested prototypes of geogames for community engagement. Exemplary applications come from Europe, Brazil and Northern America. The talk ends with a discussion on the role of geogames in improving the quality of life.

In the workshop following the lecture participants learn basic steps of geogame design. They brainstorm ideas for the implementation of serious geogames. Geogames are defined as games that concentrate on the well-being and regeneration of planet Earth. They are designed with a purpose that is more than just fun and entertainment, offering opportunities for learning, co-creation and communication. Geogames can be analogue, digital or hybrid, combining analogue and digital principles. Formal and dramatic elements of geogames are discussed, which can then be implemented in group work, based on ideas generated during the brainstorming session. The workshop ends with short group sharing/presentations of the designed serious geogame ideas.

**Keywords:** geography, cultural heritage, health, serious games

# Everyday Queer Mobilities

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Human experience is fundamentally an experience of (im)mobility across different scales. This lecture and workshop invite participants to reimagine the spaces and times of everyday life through the lens of mobility – the lines and environments we navigate when going about everyday activities, such as commuting to work, sharing meals, seeking intimacy, or celebrating at a party.

Everyday mobilities have often been treated as peripheral to social inquiry, seen merely as transitional times and spaces. The lecture instead places mobility at the centre of human experience, exploring how, in the act of moving – such as boarding a train or dancing in a club – we actively perform identities, encounter others, and negotiate difference. We will focus particularly on queer mobilities: how might queer movements through space differ from dominant patterns? Is there something distinctive about queer experiences of mobility? Where, when, and why do queer people move? What infrastructures enable or constrain queer mobilities?

Drawing on recent developments in mobilities research and queer theory, as well as empirical examples from ethnographic fieldwork, this lecture and workshop will critically examine how mobility shapes – and is shaped – by queer lives.

**Keywords:** mobilities, queer, encounters, everyday spaces, queer mobilities

# Coping With Spatial Isolation in Rural Areas – Life Quality in Perforated Villages

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We generally perceive rural spaces as calm, unchanging, and timeless. Nevertheless, in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, our rural areas are undergoing numerous transformations – ranging from the economic impacts of globalisation and the indirect effects of urban development to migration trends, counter urbanisation and rural gentrification. The theory of rural restructuring summarises the differentiation processes affecting the countryside.

Restructuring entails diverse developmental trajectories. However, many post-socialist rural areas were already in a deteriorated state when these changes began. The shrinkage that started in the second half of the 20th century, the failed transition to a market economy after regime change, and the ageing rural population have created an already marginalised spatial type – further pushed into spatial isolation by these transformations. This, in turn, has led to the disintegration of inter-settlement connections in rural areas.

In the resulting perforated settlement network, the functionality of local communities, social services, and the maintenance of institutional networks have become critical issues – not to mention the growing challenges of sustaining livelihoods. In my presentation, I will illustrate the everyday challenges and potential strategies to mitigate these problems using the example of Hungary's perforated rural settlements.

**Keywords:** rural restructuring, perforation, community-based strategies, leading attitude, local organisations

# Climate Change Spatial Analytics

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The spatial aspect of current and future climate conditions is a key component for assessing related impacts and risks in a given territory. A suitable combination of statistical methods and visualisation techniques allows the creation of outputs that support the interpretation and understanding as well as communication of the complex climate analysis to a wider target audience. In this lecture, several examples of climate change impacts on different environments or habitats will be presented from the spatial modelling perspective.

**Keywords:** urban systems, protected areas, biodiversity, heat stress, living standard

# Microgeography and Terrain Analysis: From High-Resolution Elevation Data to Local Solutions

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Microgeography is the study of spatial relationships, patterns, and processes at very small scales, ranging from individual buildings and land parcels to streets and neighbourhoods. It adds critical details and captures variations that are often generalized or overlooked in coarser models. Thus, microgeographical analysis provides a framework for understanding how localized factors influence space, environment, land use, and human experience in both rural and urban contexts. This became especially evident during the COVID-19 pandemic, when individuals were compelled to engage more closely with their immediate surroundings – underscoring the significance of micro-scale space.

Microgeography spans a wide range of topics. In the social sciences, it includes community interactions, market research, media outreach, housing supply, crime and policing, knowledge-sharing, innovation, economic specialization and tenant wellbeing. In the physical and environmental sciences, it addresses microclimate, topography, visibility, shadowing, resource distribution, biodiversity, and evolutionary processes. This lecture focuses specifically on the use of microgeographic approaches in high-resolution terrain analysis at the site level.

Digital Elevation Model (DEM) derived from LiDAR data provide a precise foundation for microgeographic analysis. By capturing subtle variations in elevation, DEM enables the extraction of key terrain parameters such as slope, aspect, curvature, roughness, topographic wetness index, solar radiation along with vegetation and built structures height. These outputs support a range of applications, including erosion risk mapping, flood area identification, spatial modelling, land

suitability assessments and design of nature-based solutions. The value of microgeographic terrain modelling is increasingly recognized in the context of climate change adaptation and sustainable land management. It supports the development of targeted, adaptive strategies and contributes to improved quality of life for local communities and households through more resilient, place-sensitive site planning.

**Keywords:** LiDAR, DEM, climate adaptation, site analysis, land suitability assessment, nature-based solutions

# Urban Public Spaces and the Quality of Life: Towards More Liveable Cities

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The quality of public spaces and the quality of life are deeply interconnected. Public spaces in cities – such as streets and promenades, squares and plazas, parks and green areas, and waterfronts – constitute a vital part of urban quality of life. They serve an important role as places for both planned and spontaneous encounters, offering opportunities for leisure, access to services, physical and mental well-being, and fostering a sense of community, local pride, and belonging.

A range of theoretical perspectives and practical experiences highlight the key factors that support the sociability, accessibility, inclusivity, functionality, availability of amenities, and overall safety and comfort of public spaces. In addition, given the growing challenges posed by climate change, their environmental quality and sustainability must also be considered in both design and management. This includes incorporating nature-based solutions, promoting biodiversity restoration, ensuring thermal comfort, improving retention capacity, and using permeable surfaces.

In this class, we will look at different types of urban public spaces and how they contribute to making cities more liveable.

**Keywords:** public spaces, placemaking, well-being, identity, sustainability

# Museums, Social Capital, Creativity and Quality of Life

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The changing definitions of museums, as reflected in the evolving standards of ICOM and contemporary museum practice and research, point to a broader recognition of museums' roles beyond their traditional missions of collecting, researching, preserving, and displaying material and immaterial heritage. Today, museums increasingly function as important community hubs—spaces where local identity is defined and expressed, and where social connections are fostered across different social and age groups. They serve not only as educational institutions but also as venues for leisure, community participation, creative endeavours, social inclusion, and meaningful social encounters. This lecture will explore the diverse dimensions of museum functioning and impact, arguing for a greater acknowledgment of their potential as social and creative spaces. As a follow-up to the lecture, a visit to a local institution—specifically the Regional Museum in Maribor—and a meeting with one of its representatives will offer students a practical complement to the theoretical discussion. Observations made during this visit, as well as those from individual explorations (through participatory observation) and digital research (including web and social media analysis), will form the basis of discussion and critical reflection in a post-visit workshop.

**Keywords:** heritage institutions, museums, social capital, local community, participation, creativity

# Geographies of *Città Della Longevità*

PETER KUMER

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Several studies on extreme longevity have shown that many factors play an important role in reaching old age, such as genetic traits that support adaptation to daily stress and disease resistance; diet (eating earlier, overnight fasting, and following a Mediterranean diet); a tendency to avoid conflict; the ability to respond positively to stress; strong family and religiosity; and moderate physical activity. In Europe, the number of centenarians (people aged 100 years or more) is projected to grow fivefold by 2050, reaching nearly half a million. Italian society is aging significantly, and the number of centenarians is also rising. As of 2022 there were an estimated 20,000 centenarians in Italy, 82 % of whom were women.

Although centenarians have been studied in various health-related sciences, they tend to be concentrated in specific regions called “Blue Zones.” Environmental factors such as climate, topography, and other ecological features play a key role in longevity. The environment strongly affects how long people live because it can influence how genes are expressed—without changing the DNA—helping the body function in a healthier way. In Italy, a couple of Blue Zones are often mentioned: Ogliastra in Sardinia and Cilento in Campania. Trieste, a city in northeastern Italy near the Slovenian border with a population of 204,000, also has a high prevalence of centenarians. As of 2020, there were 148 centenarians. About 90% of them are women, but the few men who reach this age are all in excellent health. This presentation focuses on the geographical factors in Trieste that contribute to extreme longevity among its population.

**Keywords:** longevity, centenarians, Blue Zones, geographic factors, environmental influence

# The Role of Universities in a Long-Lived Society

LUČKA LORBER

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Students learn that age-friendly universities are a long-term vision for sustainable development in modern societies. Slovenia has clearly defined the issue of inclusion and opening of the European higher education area in response to economic and social challenges—particularly in overcoming the consequences of demographic change and the pandemic, and in ensuring sustainable development in a long-lived society.

The European University Association (EUA) states in its vision "Universities without walls – A vision for 2030" that our evolution into knowledge societies has placed universities at the epicentre of human creativity and learning, which is fundamental to survival and societal success. Universities are thus taking responsibility for social and sustainable development that will ensure quality of life for all generations. The global Age-Friendly University Global Network, which has developed principles and goals for age-friendly universities, plays an important role in this.

Students will learn about key projects and challenges in creating an age-friendly environment, using the example of the university city of Maribor, which encourages cooperation and integration between generations.

**Keywords:** university, active ageing, long-lived society, quality of life, inter-generation cooperation





# Research activities



# Environmental Change Spatial Analytics

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This group will acquire, organize and analyse spatial data needed to evaluate thermal stress in urban and suburban systems. Different methodological approaches will be presented, used and integrated in spatial modelling. Heat stress maps will be produced by considering different CMIP6 climate change scenarios.

**Research topics:** geography, ecology

# Permaculture as Independent Living

ANA VOVK

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Permaculture is a sustainable design system that integrates land, resources, people, and the environment through mutually beneficial synergies. By applying permaculture principles, individuals can create self-sufficient lifestyles that reduce reliance on external systems. Permaculture emphasizes working with nature rather than against it, promoting harmony between human habitats and the natural world.

As part of the summer school, we will explore successful projects worldwide that are based on the responsible use of natural resources. I will introduce you to the International Self-Sufficiency Centre Dole and the Learning Polygon for Self-Sufficiency, as well as the Academy for Holistic Self-Sufficiency. We will analyse selected examples of good practices from permaculture movements and assess their contribution to sustainable living.

Permaculture encourages the use of renewable resources and the development of closed-loop systems to minimize waste and environmental impact. Through permaculture education, students learn to observe natural patterns and apply this understanding to create efficient and sustainable systems. Implementing permaculture principles can lead to increased food security, energy independence, and overall well-being.

**Research topics:** geography, environmental protection

# Urban Agriculture and Quality of Life

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Urban agriculture refers to the cultivation of food in and around cities, where it enhances food security, supports local self-sufficiency, and strengthens climate resilience. It plays an important role in promoting sustainability, active citizenship, and social inclusion. In the context of the summer school *Quality of Life in a Changing World*, we will explore the multiple dimensions of urban agriculture and its contribution to a healthier and more connected urban life.

Together with the participants, we will define urban agriculture and examine its impact on sustainable food production, community building, and urban green spaces. Special attention will be given to community gardens as places of learning, cooperation, and empowerment. We will visit a community garden in Maribor and review good practices from other cities, including students' home regions.

As a successful example from Slovenia, we will highlight school eco-gardens, which involve children and youth in hands-on learning about food, ecology, and responsibility. These gardens are valuable educational tools that foster environmental awareness from an early age and show how urban agriculture can become part of everyday life.

Ultimately, urban agriculture is not just about growing food — it's about cultivating sustainable, inclusive, and resilient communities.

**Research topics:** agriculture, community gardens

# Ecological Network and Ecosystem Services

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This study group will critically examine how ecological networks and ecosystem services approaches are applied in various European cities, focusing on the roles of both human and non-human stakeholders as well as the power dynamics involved.

**Research topics:** geography, ecology

# Urban Atmospheres, Human-Centred Urban Planning

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This study group will explore theoretical, empirical and methodological dimensions of “urban atmospheres” and will learn how to interpret the socio-materiality of urban neighbourhoods and city centres and how to reconstruct subject-based experiences of “felt spaces” for an adaptive anthropocentric urban planning policy.

**Research topics:** social geography, human-centred urban planning

# Welfare Spaces

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Students will be engaged in field research, surveying a set of collective spaces believed to improve the conditions of daily life: schools, libraries, playgrounds, gyms, outdoor sports areas, parks, playgrounds, plazas, bike paths, pedestrian spaces, etc. Students will be encouraged to critically examine how this network of spaces constitutes a public-collective infrastructure that supports practices aimed at community welfare and well-being.

**Research topics:** urbanism, collective spaces

# Social Inclusion, the Commons and Production of Public Spaces

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This research group will explore the evolving social division in urban areas, with a particular focus on vulnerability, residential segregation and social exclusion. The project aims to address these challenges by seeking ways to improve the quality of urban life within the broader framework of the sustainable urban development.

This research will concentrate on neighbourhoods characterised by large social housing estates. A comparative analysis might be carried out between a case study in Maribor and another European neighbourhood, which will be collectively selected by the group.

The project pursues two main objectives:

Assessment:

1. To analyse the current territorial contexts of both neighbourhoods, particularly in relation to social inclusion, access to public spaces and role of commons in everyday life.
2. To evaluate the effectiveness of past and ongoing regeneration strategies that has been undertaken to deal with marginality and urban decay.
3. Urban Planning Proposal:

To develop a strategic framework, proposing policy guidelines and/or conceiving urban interventions of local-based solutions for the identified problems. These proposals should aim to improve the urban fabric, strengthen the role of commons, and support the renewal of public spaces, among other relevant issues.

Based on prior research and key readings, the group will conceive and implement a methodological protocol. A mixed-method approach will be applied, placing strong emphasis on participatory techniques. These may include participant observation, semi-structured interviews and commented walks, ensuring the involvement of some residents and key stakeholders.

Ultimately, this group seeks to develop adaptive and sustainable solutions that enhance the liveability and the inclusiveness of the selected neighbourhoods. This will require a critical reflection on the significance of common goods and services, and on the long-term sustainability of interventions aimed at improving urban quality of life.

**Research topics:** urban geography, spatial segregation

# Emotional Mapping of Transport Infrastructure

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This group will qualitatively explore the emotional dimensions of transport infrastructure in Maribor. The research aims to examine how different forms of transport use elicit various emotional responses—such as feelings of safety or vulnerability, freedom or constraint, comfort or discomfort. The team will be responsible for selecting an appropriate qualitative method—or a combination of methods—to guide their exploration. Possible methodological approaches include surveying, ethnographic observations, semi-structured interviews, or maintaining auto-ethnographic diaries. Participants will actively engage with different modes of transport across the city, such as taking a train or a taxi, walking through diverse urban areas, or cycling along various routes. During these experiences, the team will document emotional reactions and reflect on the ways in which infrastructure mediates feelings and shapes the experience of mobility. Attention should be given to how these emotional responses might differ according to time of day, weather conditions, or individual positionalities, including gender, sexuality, or other aspects of identity. Following data collection, the group will collaboratively analyse and reflect upon the gathered material, identifying key patterns, tensions, and contrasts in emotional experiences across different infrastructures. The project will culminate in the creation of a creative emotional map of Maribor’s transport system. This map should visually and narratively capture the emotional geographies of mobility in the city.

Throughout the project, a reflexive approach will be essential, encouraging the team to critically engage with their own experiences and perspectives as part of the research process.

**Research topics:** geographies of mobility, sensory geography

# Discussing Development Opportunities of Perforated Rural Settlements With a Special Focus on Life Quality

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The lecture of Éva Máté will provide a solid foundation for theoretical challenges and practical issues of isolated rural communities. Knowing about these problems can inspire students in a discussion focusing on the following questions:

1. What are the major challenges that should be solved in isolated rural areas?
2. Which development tools could be useful in these settlements?
3. What strategic points should rural development plans include in such areas?

In this task, students would do quick and small research of rural development opportunities, based on literature and on the development strategies or plans of rural peripheries. Secondly, students will discuss their findings and organize them in SWOT analysis. Finally, they will form suggestions on how to increase the quality of life with rural development methods in perforated rural areas. With this activity, students will learn first steps of strategic planning, the know-how of SWOT analysis and how to implement these methods into spatial planning.

**Research topics:** rural geography, spatial planning

# Emotional Mapping of Transport Infrastructure

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In this group, we will discuss various methods for assessing the quality of urban public spaces. Together, we will select the most appropriate method and test it through field investigation. This will involve preparing a research tool, selecting an area for study, collecting data in the field, analysing and interpreting the findings, and ultimately proposing recommendations. The aim of this group work is to explore different dimensions of public space design and their impact on the quality of life of urban dwellers. Taking into account the current discourse on the functions and broader impact of cultural institutions such as museums and libraries, this analysis will consider the potential and specificity of these institutions in shaping the quality of public space.

**Research topics:** geographies of the built environment, place-making



# QUALITY OF LIFE IN A CHANGING WORLD: COLLECTION OF ABSTRACTS

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This *Collection of Abstracts* presents the lectures and student research activities conducted during the international summer school *Quality of Life in a Changing World*, held from 24 August to 3 September 2025 in Maribor, Slovenia. The volume reflects the work of an interdisciplinary group of scholars and students from across Europe and the USA, exploring how space and place shape experiences and aspirations for a better life. It documents key contributions on themes such as urban and rural well-being, digital environments, green infrastructure, inclusivity, mobility, and climate action. The summer school, organized by the Department of Geography, Faculty of Arts, University of Maribor, was funded through the ERASMUS+ Blended Intensive Programme and the GeoRegNet network, part of the Central European Exchange Programme for University Studies (CEEPUS). It combined spatial sciences with innovative teaching methods and hands-on collaboration with local communities and experts. The program included two preparatory online events (5 and 12 June 2025), followed by an intensive 11-day in-person program in Maribor (24 August–3 September 2025).

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