

# A day in the life of an Urban GEOGRAPHER

Professor Ulf Strohmayer (Geography, NUI Galway) of the Planning and Sustainability Group takes us through his day.

## What is an urban geographer?

Urban geographers study a great variety of issues & processes that define cities across the globe.

## What inspired you to become an urban geographer?

An early love for maps and cycling to Paris with friends when I was 16: biking from the suburbs to the centre, it felt as if we'd never get there! The sheer scale of the experience was unlike anything I had experienced before.

## What does a typical day look like?

Most days start with a rigorous swim in the university's pool, followed by checking emails – from the sublime to the mundane! Then I'll quickly check the already revised lectures (another day's work) and make sure that our virtual learning environment is set up. The remainder of the day may see me grading, meet with dissertation supervisees or reviewing a submission for an academic journal. Later in the afternoon or evening I may participate in the gathering of a civic group, aiming to improve the quality of life in Galway.

## Where has been your most interesting field site?

My work addresses issues in major metropolitan areas like New York, Paris or Berlin – I love identifying problems, reading about proposed solutions and applying the learning to **engage in constructive forms of critique**.

## How would someone get into this area?

Study geography – and if this is for you, continue with a relevant Master's programme.

## What do you enjoy most about your job?

I thoroughly enjoy the diversity afforded by the everyday experience: being an academic, you quickly learn to appreciate that every student is different, which makes every conversation unique. Equally, my work in urban geography is constantly presenting new challenges and novel solutions that invite distinctive forms of engagement.

## How does your work make a difference to today's world?

More than half of the world's population lives in cities – reason enough to work on many of the problems that define urban forms of life! I apply my expertise to contribute to the **urban regeneration** of parts of Galway.

*"In great cities, spaces as well as places are designed and built: walking, witnessing, being in public ...."*



*.... are as much part of the design and purpose as is being inside to eat, sleep, make shoes or love or music...."*



*.... The word citizen has to do with cities, and **the ideal city is organized around citizenship** -- around participation in public life."  
(Rebecca Solnit, *Wanderlust: A History of Walking*)*