# **BEYOND MADRID'S HEAT** A Deconstruction of Madrid's Urban Heat Crisis

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Fig. 1: An elderly couple seeking shade. Madrid Street Life by photographer Lena Ivanova (2019)

#### Tutors

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Baja el avión por fin, The plane finally lands, I am descending into the city of August. estoy bajando a la ciudad de agosto. La sombra de las alas deja huellas azules The shadow of the wings leaves blue traces sobre la tierra seca on the dry earth and travels across the fields with the vibration y recorre los campos con una vibración de película antigua. of an old film. Estoy bajando, llego I am descending, I arrive a la ciudad tomada por los brazos desnudos, at the city taken by bare arms, Estoy en la ciudad del calor soportado, I am in the city of endured heat, in the city that lives at the rhythm of transfers. en la ciudad que vive a ritmo de trasbordo. el caribe metálico de los ventiladores. the metallic Caribbean of the fans, the shadow of their blades on the ceiling, la sombra de sus aspas en el techo, o las huellas azules, or the blue footprints, las alas del avión que vuelve a irse, the wings of the plane that leaves again, en la ciudad de agosto, in the city of August, en un piso segundo, on a second floor, in a corner of the wind. en un rincón del viento.

> Part of "La Ciudad de Agosto" with its English translation by Luis García Montero

#### **Keywords**

Climate Adaptation Climate Justice Urban Climate Resilience Urban Excessive Heat Urban Heat Island Effect Moreno, H. L., Giancola, E., & Egido, M. N. S. (2020). Evaluation of weather conditions in urban climate studies over different Madrid neighbourhoods: Influence of urban morphologies on the microclimate. Atmosphere, 11(5), 435.

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# **Beyond Madrid's Heat**

## A Deconstruction of Madrid's Heat Crisis

When settlements began to form in the region that is now Madrid during the 9th century, the area was characterized by a temperate climate with dry, hot summers and mild, cool winters, classified as a hot-summer Mediterranean climate in the Köppen-Geiger system (Moreno et al., 2020). Over time, increasing human interventions transformed these microclimatic conditions. Natural land cover was replaced with more dense urban development, and anthropogenic activities and energy consumption increased. These changes led to the Urban Heat Island (UHI) effect, where urban areas retain significantly more heat than the rural surroundings. Madrid is a prime example of a city experiencina severe UHI impacts, with temperature differences between the city center and the rural surroundings of up to 8.5 degrees centigrade (Arup, 2023). This has made Madrid one of the most extreme urban heat hotspots globally, with implications for infrastructure, public health, comfort, and social equity. The impacts of the UHI effect are not experienced equally. Marginalized populations are disproportionately affected, facing heightened health risks during heat waves (López-Bueno et al., 2020) and increased social isolation. These vulnerabilities are compounded by infrastructural challenges, as systems struggle to address the dual pressures of rising temperatures and growing energy demands. Despite these challenges, opportunities exist. Six neighborhoods, identified as housing relatively higher proportions of marginalized populations, provide potential sites for intervention. These neighborhoods present potential sites for interventions, in terms of physicality (e.g. urban excess heat recovery systems) as well as social (e.g. Barcelona's Climate Shelter Network)

"How can localized architectural interventions and urban infrastructures address the vulnerabilities of marginalized populations in response to Madrid's Urban Heat?" Mohtat, N., & Khirfan, L. (2021). The climate justice pillars vis-à-vis urban form adaptation to climate change: A review. Urban Climate, 39, 100951. This study is framed around the principles of climate justice, specifically the pillars of recognitional, procedural, and distributive justice (Mohtat & Khirfan, 2021). It aims to move beyond merely mitigating urban heat, instead leveraging it as a lens to address systemic inequities. Through a mixed-methods approach, this research will examine how urban infrastructure functions, or fails to function, in the face of extreme heat. The findings will inform the design of more inclusive and resilient urban systems.

"Addressing the **UHI effect** is not solely about reducing temperatures but also about rethinking the **socio-spatial** systems that shape cities, ensuring they are**inclusive**, **resilient**, and **just**."

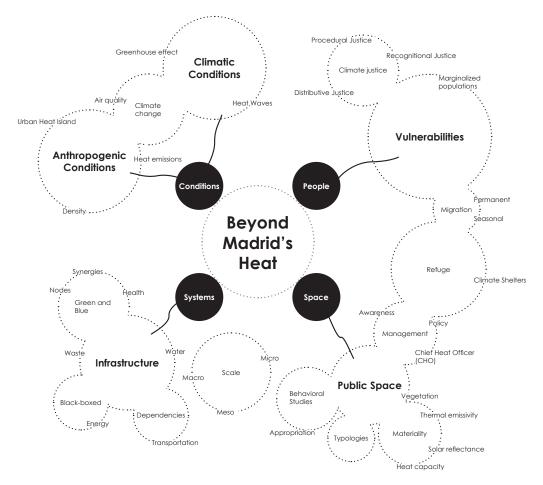


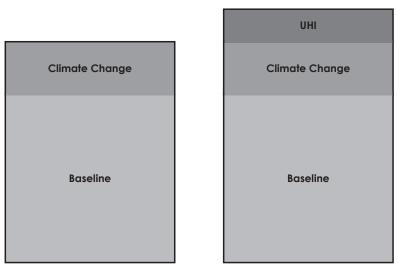
Fig. 2: Systemic Diagram, Showcasing the different fields associated with Madrid's Urban Heat by Author



**Fig. 3:** Modification of Land Surfaces , a change from cobblestone to tarmac in Madrid's Lavapiés by Madrid No *Frills (2023)* 

## Theoretical Framework

Philipp, C. H., & Chow, W. T. L. (2020). Urban heat vulnerability analysis for Singapore. ETH Zurich. To effectively address the challenge of Urban Heat, it is essential to define and understand its origins and impacts. The "Singapore 2.0" framework (Philipp & Chow, 2020) suggests that urban heat is based on an elevated baseline temperature, which has increased due to climate change. These shifts in temperature are globally impactful, demanding worldwide interventions to achieve meaningful mitigation. A particular phenomenon, the Urban Heat Island (UHI) effect, differentiates urban areas



**RURAL AREA** 

URBANIZED AREA

NUSEnterprise. (2022). Cooling Singapore 2.0 Building a Digital Urban Climate Twin. YouTube.

Arup. (2023). Madrid suffers most extreme urban heat island hot spot, new international survey shows. Arup.

Amorim-Maia, A.T., Anguelovski, I., Connolly, J. & Chu, E. (2023). Seeking refuge? The potential of urban climate shelters to address intersecting vulnerabilities. Landscape and Urban Planning, 238, 104836.

**Fig. 4:** Differences in temperature between urbanized and rural areas by Cooling Singapore 2.0 (NUSEnterprise, 2022)

from rural areas by significantly higher temperatures (Fig. 4), which in the case of the city of Madrid can be as high as 8.5 degrees centigrade (Arup, 2023). As a localized issue, UHI can be mitiaated through localized interventions and is primarily driven by three factors: (1) Modification of land surfaces (Fig 3.), (2) Anthropogenic heat sources, and (3) Climatic conditions. Such extreme heat events affect human health and comfort across all demographics, with the most severe consequences disproportionately impacting vulnerable groups. A socio-ethical perspective is needed in examining how marginalized populations (Fig. 5) suffer disproportionately from environmental challenges due to socio-economic and demographic disadvantages. For example, Amorim-Maia et al. (2023) highlight the role of urban climate

Mohtat, N., & Khirfan, L. (2021). The climate justice pillars vis-à-vis urban form adaptation to climate change: A review. Urban Climate, 39, 100951

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López-Bueno, J. A., Díaz, J., Sánchez-Guevara, C., Sánchez-Martínez, G., Franco, M., Gullón, P., Núñez Peiró, M., Valero, I., & Linares, C. (2020). The impact of heat waves on daily mortality in districts in Madrid: The effects of sociodemographic factors. Environmental Research, 190, 109993.

Graham, S., & Marvin, S. (2001). Splintering Urbanism: Networked Infrastructures, Technological Mobilities, and the Urban Condition. Routledge.

Graham, S. (2010). Disrupted cities: When infrastructure fails. New York: Routledge.

shelters in mitigating intersecting vulnerabilities, emphasizing how unequal access to cooling resources contributes to environmental injustice. Mohtat and Khirfan (2021) distinguish three pillars of climate justice: (1) Recognitional, (2) Procedural, and (3) Distributive. Recognitional Justice entails acknowledging the unique identities and needs of marginalized communities. Procedural Justice promotes inclusive decision-making processes. Distributive Justice emphasizes fair resource distribution, addressing the socio-economic challenges faced by vulnerable populations, especially in energy-poor neighborhoods (Martín-Consuegra et al., 2023). Such communities in Madrid often lack access to air conditioning or insulation, making them vulnerable to heat stress. High mortality rates during heatwaves, as López-Bueno et al. (2020) discuss, often go hand-in-hand with socio-demographic factors, underlining the necessity of more resilient design strategies for these marginalized demographics. Additionally, extreme urban heat stresses infrastructure and increases energy demands. Urban climate resilience, the capacity of urban systems to adapt and recover from climatic stresses, serves as a framework for understanding how infrastructure deals with heat stress. Graham & Marvin's (2001) frame resilience through the lens of networked infrastructures, emphasizing the interdependencies of the infrastructures. Graham's (2010) work on infrastructure failure underscores the interdependence of these systems and how disruption in one can cascade into others, intensifying urban vulnerabilities. Moreover, the physical infrastructures rely on workers (Fig. 6), who

themselves are vulnerable to extreme heat, further increasing pressures on systems that depend on their labor.

This theoretical framework addresses two primary approaches to managing urban heat: mitigation and adaptation. Urban heat mitigation focuses on reducing heat absorption and enhancing cooling in urban areas. Green infrastructure shade and cool through evapotranspiration, proving highly effective in reducing urban temperatures (*Philipp &* 



**Fig. 5:** Vulnerable demographics , Elderly people (>65 years old), Children (<12 years old), People with preexcisting health conditions (Respiratory and Cardiovascular conditions), People with a migration background & People in low-income areas by Author

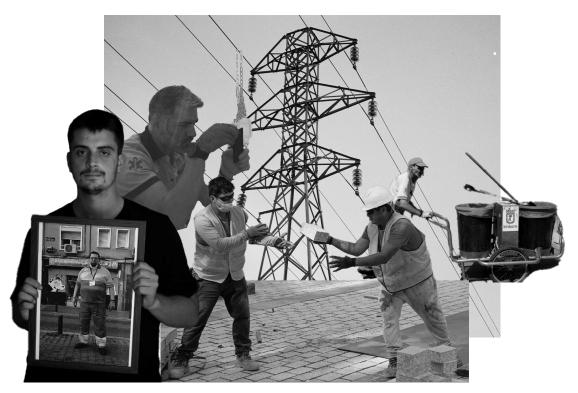


Fig. 6: Vulnerable workers, Outside workers who keep the urban infrastructures running. (e.g. waste management workers) by Author

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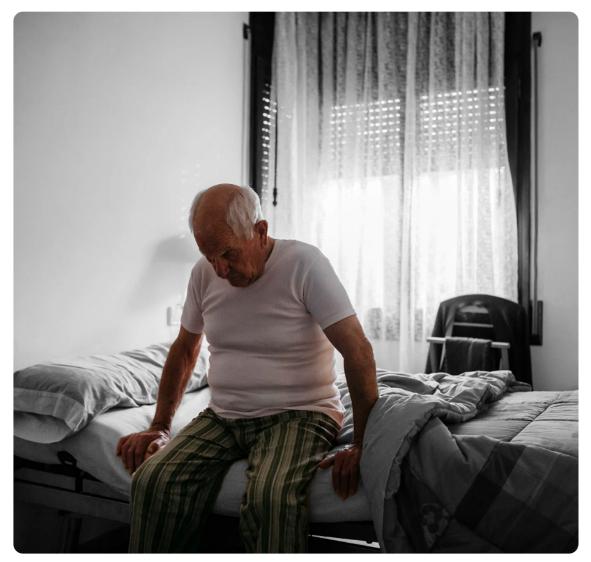
Lygnerud K, Nielsen S, Persson U, Wynn H, Wheatcroft E, Antolin-Gutierrez J, Leonte D, Rosebrock O, Ochsner K, Keim C, Perez-Granados P, Romanchenko D, Langer S, Ljung M. (2022). Handbook for increased recovery of urban excess heat.

Cresswell, T., & Merriman, P. (2011). Geographies of mobilities: Practices, spaces, subjects. Ashgate Publishing.

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Chow, 2020). Reflective building materials represent another strategy to decrease heat absorption and improve urban comfort (Martín-Consuegra et al., 2024). Cities similar to Madrid offer multiple relevant mitigation strategies, potentially applicable to Madrid's specific context. In addition, Zhana (2022) explores the possibility of harnessing the UHI effect's positive aspects, suggesting that while some heat can be used for energy efficiency, excess heat remains a health hazard and infrastructure challenge. Excess heat in Madrid impacts energy demand (Garrido-Perez et al., 2021), social spaces, and the well-being of Madrileños. Research by Sandvall et al. (2021) illustrates the potential of recovering excess heat for district heating, where urban waste heat is repurposed for cooling or heating. This adaptation model could mitigate heat stress in housing, a sector particularly vulnerable to extreme temperatures (Alonso et al., 2024), especially for marginalized populations. The European ReUseHeat project (Lygnerud et al., 2022) advocates for integrating renewable energy and heat recovery as fundamental components of urban resilience.

Besides the physical implications, urban heat presents social challenges as well. Understanding how people respond to heat stress informs the eventual intervention. Cresswell and Merriman (2011) examine the social practices of mobility and adaptation, suggesting that vulnerability shape peoples' perceptions. These behavioral insights help design targeted interventions in neighborhoods where residents may lack the awareness or resources to effectively use cooling infrastructure (López-Bueno et al., 2020). For example, public awareness campaigns during heatwaves could mitigate risks for vulnerable populations in Madrid, as we see further in one of the Comparative analysisses the "Climate Shelter Network" in Barcelona. Extreme urban heat events can cause populations, particularly vulnerable groups, to stay indoors in order to survive the intense heat (Fig. 7).



**Fig. 7:** Social isolation , Lonely senior man sitting on bed at home by photographer Josep M Rovirosa (2021)

## Methodological Framework

The methodology for this research is based on a mixed-methods approach, integrating both quantitative and qualitative research methods to evaluate the problem from social as well as spatial and physical perspectives. Urban heat cannot be fully understood through its physical dimensions alone, as it represents socioeconomic, -demographic, and technical hybrids encompassing interconnected spatial and social components. An analysis of one would be insufficient to understand its systemic functions. Rather than analyzing the separate domains, these methods investigate their interconnections and influences. The key methods are outlined below.

#### Statistical Data Analysis

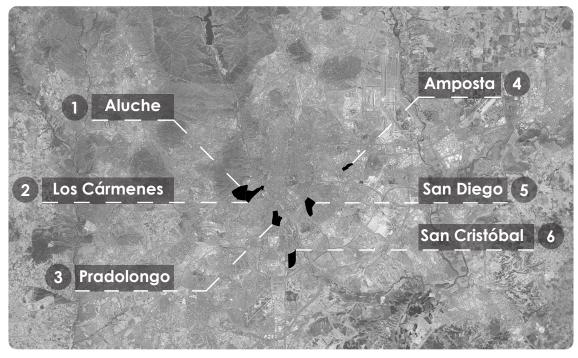
A statistical approach will be employed to analyze the quantitative dimensions of the research. This includes identifying six neighborhoods (Fig. 8) with a relatively higher concentration of vulnerable populations exposed to urban heat, as determined through statistical data (Appendix B). Moreover, statistical analysis will provide a basis for assessing temperature patterns and projecting future scenarios under various urban interventions, facilitating the evaluation of their effectiveness. It will also support the analysis of building energy efficiency and resilience. Additionally, this data will be applied to examine the performance of infrastructure in vulnerable neighborhoods across Madrid.

### GIS Mapping & Remote Sensing Analysis

GIS mapping and Remote sensing analysis will be utilized to map the spatial distribution of infrastructures and urban heat in and around the vulnerable neighborhoods of Madrid, enabling the identification of hotspots and their relation within the vulnerable neighborhoods. This method will also analyze the location and density of green spaces, shading devices, and water features throughout the city, aiding in the visualization of heat intensity and the identification of areas prone to overheating.

GIS (Geographic Information System) mapping is a method that captures, stores, analyzes, and visualizes spatial and geographic data. It visualizes relationships, patterns, and trends through maps, integrating layers of data (e.g. demographics, climate, infrastructure).

Remote sensing analysis uses satellite sensors to study Earth's surface (e.g. tracking temperature, vegetation, urban changes) without physical contact.



**Fig. 8:** Six vulnerable neighborhoods, The neighborhoods exhibit relatively higher levels of demographic vulnerability by Author

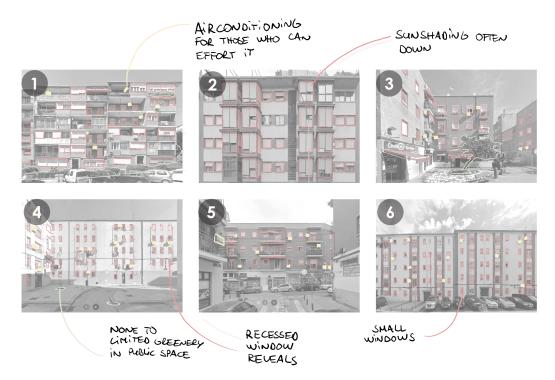


Fig. 9: Preliminary analysis of neighborhoods, Recording the factors that contribute to and influence urban heat through Google Maps by Author **Digital Modeling** 

To enhance the understanding of statistical data models, climate modeling serves as a valuable tool. My interest in Digital Twins stems from their potential to analyze the interactions between systems and is a valuable tool regarding the urban heat phenomenon. The "Cooling Singapore" project, for instance, employed a "Digital Urban Climate Twin" (DUCT) (NUSEnterprise, 2022) as an interactive platform for analyzing the impact of design interventions on urban morphology and climate conditions. In the eventual design phase, the parameters influencing the design will become critical. This approach aligns closely with a researchby-design methodology. Applying this method in this project may require adaptation. Instead of citywide applications, scaling down the concept to an urban block or building level may provide a more manageable and focused scope.

#### **Comparative Analysis**

Many cities worldwide face challenges similar to those experienced by Madrid concerning urban heat and its associated vulnerabilities. Several cities have already established frameworks to ad-dress these challenges (Philipp & Chow, 2020) and even have implemented various mitigation strategies. Studies like "Cooling Singapore" from ETH Singapore, or the "Climate Shelter Network" in Barcelona provide relevant strategies that can be relevant and adapted to the unique situation in the vulnerable neighborhoods in Madrid. Comparative analysis enables the evaluation of these frameworks and strategies, providing insights for potential climate adaptation interventions in the city of Madrid. For instance, strategies such as reusing excess heat for infrastructure cooling or developing climate shelters can be relevant for Madrid.

NUSEnterprise. (2022). Cooling Singapore 2.0 Building a Digital Urban Climate Twin. YouTube.

Philipp, C. H., & Chow, W. T. L. (2020). Urban heat vulnerability analysis for Singapore (D 2.4 – Vulnerability Map). ETH Zurich.

#### Literature review

The literature review serves as the foundation for understanding climate justice, emphasizing frameworks that incorporate equity into climate adaptation strategies. It highlights approaches that address the social dimensions of vulnerability, making it especially relevant for examining the needs of marginalized populations regarding urban heat. The research thusfar has primarily focused on reviewing existing literature, which offers insights into the disproportionate impacts of urban heat on vulnerable groups. The literature review establishes a theoretical framework for analyzing climate justice.

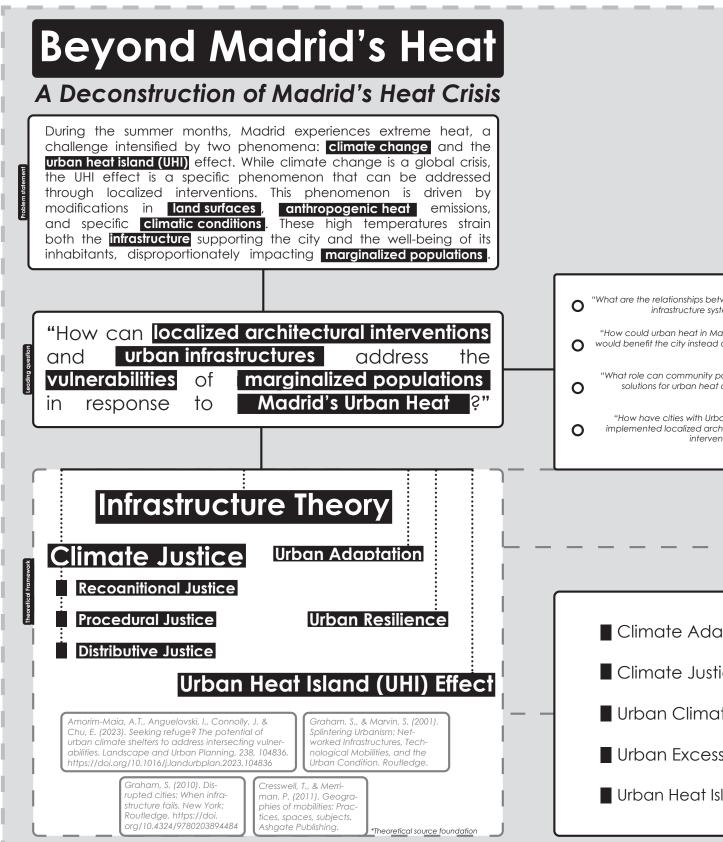
### **Policy Analysis**

Policy analysis will involve the examination of urban heat policies in Madrid. This method aims to understand how past and present strategies have addressed, or often times failed to address, the needs of vulnerable populations regarding urban heat. It provides insights into the priorities and gaps in Madrid's climate adaptation strategies. This method grounds the research in a more critical understanding of institutional responses and policy impacts.

#### **Field research**

Building on the preliminary Google Maps analysis of the route through the six neighborhoods (Fig. 9), I will conduct a physical walkthrough of these areas during my field trip to Madrid. During my fieldtrip, I have to account for the seasonal context of November. My investigation will focus on urban infrastructures, including transportation, water systems, green spaces, waste management, energy facilities, shaded areas, and air-conditioned public spaces. I will observe behavioral patterns in public spaces and note climatic conditions, while also evaluating social facilities like community centers, healthcare clinics, and libraries as potential climate shelters. Additionally, I will identify urban nodes with urban excess heat to explore opportunities for heat recovery.

**Research Diagramming** 



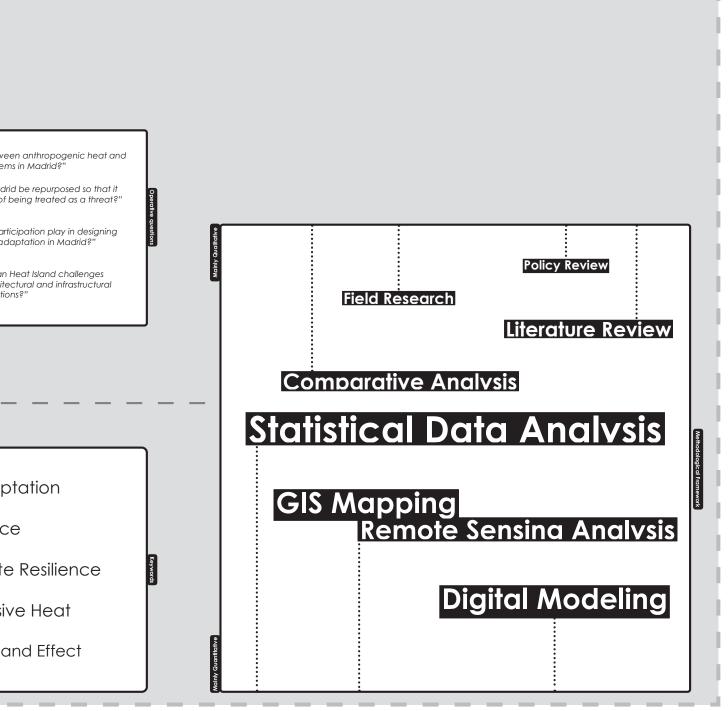


Fig. 10: Research Diagram by Author

## Reflection on Relevance

The urgency of this research is heightened by the recent growing frequency and severity of climaterelated disasters worldwide. From evacuations for Hurricane Milton to the recent devastating flood in Spain, these events underscore the critical consequences of inadequate adaptation to a changing climate. No longer isolated incidents, these recurring phenomena disrupt urban systems, threaten public health, and deepen existing social inequalities. In Madrid, the climate-related challenge is the effects of the Urban Heat Island (UHI). Summers have become endurance tests, with heatwaves now a regular occurrence. For many, especially those lacking access to cooling infrastructure or shaded public spaces, navigating the city during such conditions is sometimes impossible.

By prioritizing marginalized populations, the study underscores the social relevance of the challenge. Vulnerable groups face disproportionately higher risks during extreme heat events, making it important to address these inequities as primary considerations rather than secondary. With climate justice as a framework, this research bridges the gap between technical solutions and their socio-spatial impacts, providing a framework for equitable and inclusive design interventions.

Although this study is focused on the city of Madrid, the findings of this research have broader implications for cities worldwide facing similar challenges. The proposed strategies for mitigating and adapting to urban heat can serve as a model for other contexts, offering a framework for cities seeking to address their own challenges regarding urban heat.

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Spatial mobility Vulnerable populations Spatial dynamics

Urban infrastructure failures Infrastructural vulnerabilities

Fragmented infrastructure access Inequalities

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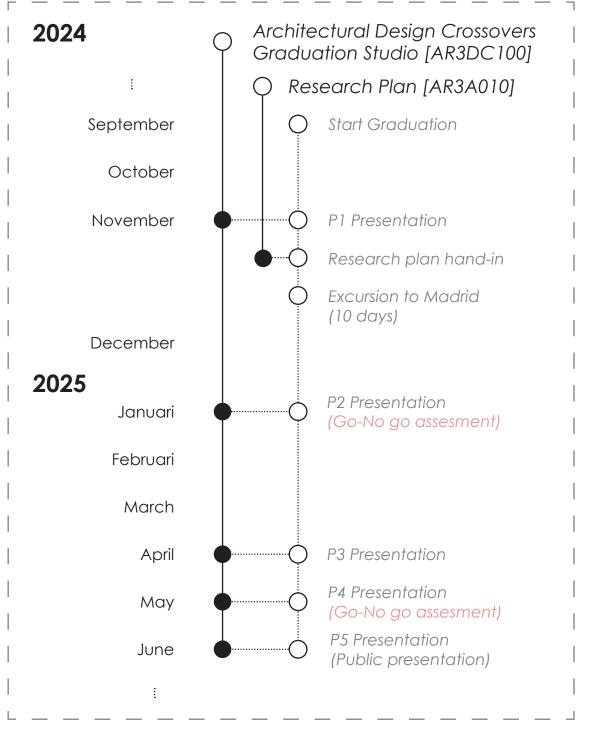
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## Appendix



**Appendix A:** Graduation Schedule , an overview of assignments/ deadlines for the Graduation year.

Websites		
https://idem.madrid.org	Education Statistics	This site provides data on education, including resources for students and educational institutions in Madrid.
https://www.madrid.es	Municipal Services	Offers information on public services, events, and municipal policies affecting the city of Madrid, including environmental data.
https://www.meteoblue. com	Weather Forecast	Provides detailed weather forecasts, climate data, and histori- cal weather information for various locations, including Madrid.
https://geoportal.madrid. es	Geospatial Data	Contains geographic information and maps related to Madrid, including infrastructure, land use, and environmental data.
https://edificioseficientes. gob.es	Energy Efficiency	Offers data on energy-efficient buildings in Spain, including guidelines and statistics on building performance and sustain- ability.
https://weatherspark.com	Climate Data	Contains detailed climate reports and weather history for different cities, including temperature, precipitation, and wind patterns.
https://www.aemet.es	Meteorological Data	Spain's national weather agency provides real-time weather updates, climate trends, and alerts for natural hazards.
https://map.purpleair. com	Air Quality Moni- toring	Displays live air quality data from global monitoring stations, including pollution levels and particulate matter concentration in Madrid.
https://www.windy.com	Wind and Weather Maps	Offers live weather maps with wind, temperature, precipitation, and other environmental conditions globally, including Madrid.
https://www.openstreet- map.org	Open Map Data	A free map resource that offers user-generated, editable maps with extensive details on streets, land use, and geography.
https://widgets.elpais. com/mapbox/renta-ine	Income Distribution	An interactive map showing income distribution and socio-eco- nomic data by regions in Spain, including Madrid.
https://datos.comunidad. madrid	Open Data Portal	Madrid's open data portal provides a wide range of datasets, including demographics, health, education, environment, and urban infrastructure.
https://www.statista.com/	Statistical Data	Offers a wide variety of statistics on Madrid, covering topics like population, economy, and living conditions.
http://portalestadistico. com	Statistical Data Platform	A platform providing access to statistical data on various top- ics, including demographics, economy, and society in Spain.
https://www.ine.es	National Statistics	Spain's national statistical institute offers comprehensive data- sets on demographics, economy, housing, and labor.
https://www.elconfiden- cial.com/	Political Data (2019)	Provides political news and analysis, with articles and reports on Spanish and Madrid-specific elections and policies.
https://www.numbeo. com	Cost of Living Data	A crowdsourced database offering data on the cost of living, crime, healthcare, and quality of life in cities worldwide, includ- ing Madrid.
https://www.who.int/	World Health Or- ganisation	
https://onebillionresilient. org/	Chief Heat Officer Network	
https://unhabitat.org/	Chief Heat Officer Network	Eleni Myrivili
https://www.tech- nologyreview. com/2021/07/10/1028172/ climate-change-human- body-extreme-heat-sur- vival/	Human body tolerances when it comes to heat	

**Appendix B:** *Preliminary data collection*, An overview of different sources for data on Madrid.

During my ten-day excursion in Madrid, I have developed a preliminary itinerary to guide my activities and field research. Prior to the visit, I identified six neighborhoods with relatively high concentrations of marginalized populations regarding urban heat. While visiting these areas, I will use a range of methods, trying to capture the impact of urban heat on these communities. Given that the excursion takes place in November, during autumn, I will interpret my findings with **seasonal context** in mind. My research will begin with an **examination** of urban infrastructures within and surrounding these neighborhoods, focusing on elements such as transportation networks, water systems, green spaces, waste management, energy facilities, shaded areas, and air-conditioned public spaces. I will also observe **behavioral** patterns in public spaces to gain insights into how people use these areas, simultaneously noting down the climatic conditions. Additionally, I will assess the social facilities, including community centers, healthcare clinics, and libraries, which could serve as potential climate shelters for vulnerable populations. Finally, I will identify urban nodes experiencing excess heat to evaluate their suitability for potential heat recovery (and potential integration into district heating or cooling systems). This way I hope to get a better view in what ways these urban infrastructures support or fail to support the residents of these neighborhoods.

Itenerary		
6/11/2024		
0/11/2024	Research plan	
7/11/2024	Posograp plan	
7/11/2024	Research plan	
	Plaza Juan Pujol (UHI Hotspot)	
	La Bicicleta	
0/11/0004		
8/11/2024	Research plan	
	Padel lesson at 17:00 (Arena Rio Padel)	
	Madrid Rio Parque	
	Círculo de Bellas Artes	
9/11/2024	Pradolongo	
// / / / 202 /	C. de Nicolás Sánchez, 113	
	12 de Octubre University Hospital	
<u> </u>	Parque de Pradolongo	
10/11/2024	Aluche	
10/11/2024	Depósito 8 Metro Madrid	
	Parque de Aluche	
	Los Carmenes	
	C. del Concejal Francisco José Jiménez Martín	
11/11/2024	Amposta (Tutors in Madrid)	
	Centro de Servicios Sociales Luz Casanova	
	Arturo Soria Plaza	
	Centro comercial Alcalá Norte	
	Parque El Paraíso	
12/11/2024	San Diego (Tutors in Madrid)	
	Centro de Servicios Sociales San Diego	
	Paque Nautilus	
13/11/2024	San Cristobal (Tutors in Madrid)	
	Casa San Cristobal de la Montemadrid Foundation	
	Puente de Colores	
	Hospital de dia Madrid Sur	
	Health Center San Cristobal de los Angeles	
14/11/2024	Check-in at Downtown Hostel Madrid	
14/11/2024		
	Segovia / Toledo	
15/11/2024	Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía	
,	Museo del Prado	
16/11/2024	Arturo Soria Plaza	
	Estadio Santiago Bernabéu	
	Hospital Universitario Ramón y Cajal	
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**Apendix C:** Itenerary Excursion Madrid , An (preliminary planned) overview of activities during the 10 day excursion to Madrid.



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