



Kreis 4 through the lens of a heat camera.



HOT SPOTS

Zurich is heating up: urban heat islands are concentrated in areas with a high proportion of mineral surfaces, sealed and impermeable ground, limited vegetation, and little air circulation, turning summer heat into a growing risk. These effects are not evenly distributed; they exacerbate existing inequalities. As climate research shows, the qualities that make a neighbourhood more liveable – trees, cooler streets, energy-efficient buildings – also tend to raise land values and rents. Unless climate adaptation and social urban development are thought together from the start, the climate crisis risks widening the inequality gap even further.

The projects focus on Kreis 4 – one of Zurich’s densest neighbourhoods and among those most affected by summer heat. Its compact urban fabric, high proportion of sealed surfaces, and limited vegetation make it a particularly relevant field of investigation.

Our starting point is living within the existing fabric – both inside buildings and in the outdoor spaces of the neighbourhood. We examine existing floor plans and ask where adaptations could enable new forms and qualities of living. At the same time, we consider courtyards, streets, and squares as part of the living environment and ask how they can be adapted to increasingly hot summers. Additions and extensions offer opportunities to rethink existing typologies and create additional housing without demolition.

We understand façades, roofs, and outdoor spaces as an interconnected climatic and ecological infrastructure. Shading and vegetation can reduce overheating, while unsealed surfaces, roofs, and façades can collect and retain rainwater, making it

available for vegetation and evaporative cooling. At the same time, these surfaces can provide habitats for different species, strengthening biodiversity and reconnecting fragmented ecological networks within the city. In this way, new relationships emerge between inside and outside, building and neighbourhood, human and non-human life.

Individual interventions can perform several functions at once: a vegetated façade can improve the indoor climate while creating habitat; a transformed roof can combine additional living space, vegetation, water retention, and ecological niches; an unsealed courtyard can contribute to cooling while creating new spatial and social qualities. The projects investigate how spatial, climatic, ecological, and social improvements can work together.

We do not understand buildings as empty structures that can be transformed at will. They are already inhabited and form part of an established social fabric. Every transformation therefore also raises the question of whose living conditions are being improved, and how architectural and climatic adaptations can be developed in relation to existing residents and their ways of living.

We will approach these questions through a close analysis of the selected sites, considering heat, climate, and quality of life alongside their social and historical contexts. We will experiment with drawings that map these conditions, undertake detailed investigations of façade and roof construction, and build and photograph models. Exchanges with artists and experts in climate, ecology, and biodiversity, as well as excursions, will accompany the studio throughout the semester.