THE ACADEMY OF URBANISM
young urbanists

THE YOUNG URBANISTS AGENDA

FOREWORD
DAVID RUDLIN

Twelve years ago when we first launched The Academy of Urbanism we published a manifesto. It was full of lovely phrases like 'Vibrant streets and spaces, defined by their surrounding buildings and with their own distinct character, should form a coherent interconnected network of places'. Which of course they should – no argument there. It's just that telling people that doesn't make them slap their forehead and say 'of course, here I have been creating dull lifeless streets all these years, if only I had realised how wrong I was!'

Actually there are not many people who don't agree that lively, mixed-use, beautiful cities are a good thing. It's just that something that we once found so easy is now somehow really difficult. At the Academy we are therefore thinking hard about creating a new manifesto which focuses as much on the process by which good places are created as the places themselves. This contribution from the Young Urbanists is incredibly useful to this process.

Unsurprisingly the original manifesto said nothing about digital urbanism and while it was strong on citizen empowerment it said very little about governance or funding. It also talked about walkability and permeability but surprisingly there was no explicit mention of public transport and perhaps most surprising of all the word housing is not mentioned at all.

It is testament to how far we have come that digital urbanism, funding and governance, transport and housing are at the core of this agenda. These are the issues that we must engage with as urbanists – indeed they are some of the most important issues of our time. If we can provide coherent compelling answers from the perspective of the city we will not only have made a difference, we may even have worked out how to create the beautiful mixed-use city that we all love.

This document is the collective work of a large number of people and I am hugely grateful for all of the work and creativity that has gone into it. It is am important contribution in setting the future course of the Academy and I look forward to working with the Young Urbanists to see it implemented.

CONTRIBUTORS

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Thank you to YU member Andrea Forsberg for the design of this document.

Photo credits
Front cover: Francesca Perry
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Event photos: Bright Pryde-Saha

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THE ACADEMY OF **URBANISM**

The Academy of Urbanism is a politically independent, not-for-profit organisation that brings together both the current and next generation of urban leaders, thinkers and practitioners. It seeks to recognise, encourage and celebrate great places and the people and organisations that create and sustain them.

Through our events, activities and programmes we draw out and disseminate examples and lessons of good urbanism. The Academy uses the evidence gathered to promote better understanding of how the development and management of the urban realm can provide a better quality of living for all.
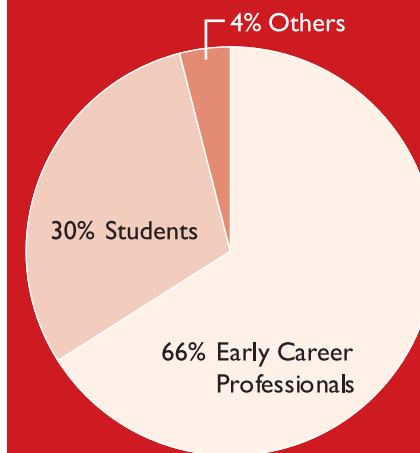
THE ACADEMY OF **URBANISM**
young urbanists

The Young Urbanist Network was launched in 2013 and brings together students and early career professionals that are keen to develop their knowledge of the principles, techniques and processes of good urbanism.
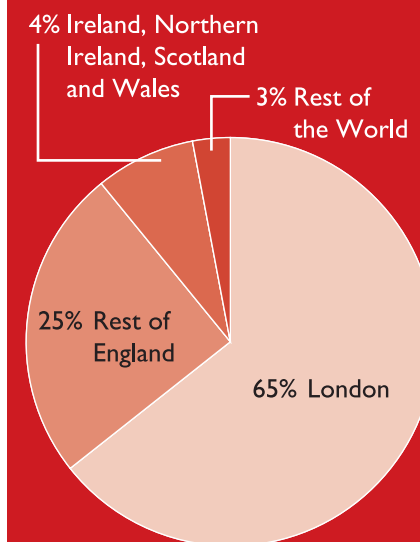
The Academy enables Young Urbanists to collaborate with one another, learn directly from Academicians and develop their own projects. With 250 members, the Young Urbanists have established themselves as a distinct and diverse network that attracts members from a wide range of disciplines.

250 MEMBERS

PROFESSIONS
of YU members

4% Others

30% Students

66% Early Career Professionals

LOCATIONS
of YU members

4% Ireland, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales

3% Rest of the World

25% Rest of England

65% London

THE YOUNG URBANISTS AGENDA

The Academy of Urbanism celebrated 10 years of 'learning from place' in 2016, and as part of that celebration the Young Urbanists wanted to take a vital look back, as well as forward, to draw up our agenda for the future of cities.

Our cities are facing rapid growth and rapid change. We are looking at a future where two-thirds of the world's population will live in urban areas by the year 2050. The past decade has witnessed many changes to planning, design and urbanism, particularly with the growth of digital products and services. The next 10 years are set to bring even greater changes as our technology, lifestyles and attitudes evolve even faster and even more dramatically.

But what have been the key trends to define these changes – and which have been the best improvements, and the most problematic developments? Crucially, what will – or should – be the key issues to shape and define urbanism over the next decade?

The Young Urbanists explored these questions throughout 2016, with an evolving programme of events, workshops and roundtables. We first began by consulting our members on what they believed to be the biggest priorities for urbanism over the next 10 years. Once we had gathered extensive feedback, we identified a range of issues and distilled them into four key themes: housing, transport, funding/devolution and the digital revolution.

In April we held a major event, hosted by Arup, which saw over 60 enthusiastic members in attendance. The key themes were introduced by a series of speakers (below), who shared with delegates short, provocative presentations on the various issues identified. Our speakers included:

- **Brian Deegan**, former Principal Technical Planner at Transport for London
- **Claire Bennie**, Consultant, Claire Bennie Ltd (former Development Director at Peabody)
- **Kirsty Austin**, Treasurer at Friends of Peckham Coal Line
- **Anastasia Vikhornova**, Project Lead, Strategic and Service Design at Future Cities Catapult
- **Chris Green**, Designer at Arup
- **Zach Wilcox**, Senior Consultant of City Economic at Arup

After the initial presentations, delegates split into groups to have more focused discussions on the four key themes. Through debate and discussion, each group came up with a draft set of points under each theme.

The Young Urbanists continued their exploration of the themes at The Academy of Urbanism's Annual Congress in London in June 2016. Hosting a workshop with leading practitioners, Young Urbanist members, Academicians, and the Academy's new Chairman David Rudlin, the Congress workshop allowed for a more in-depth look at the themes, considering the key challenges and opportunities for our cities in the coming decade.

To bring all the discussions together, the Young Urbanists then hosted a series of intense roundtable discussions throughout October 2016 to agree and refine the Agenda points as you see laid out in this document. While these points are primarily aimed at the UK context, we believe they can be applicable for cities around the world.

The Agenda poses a series of questions that urbanists will aim to answer in the next 10 years. If we find the right answers to them, then the future for our cities is bright.

DIGITAL REVOLUTION

Technological advances have been revolutionising industries at an unprecedented rate, and the built environment, though often criticised for being slow to adapt to modern times, is no exception. Digital technologies allow us to analyse cities and their processes with greater effectiveness and accuracy than ever before. With innovations such as Big Data, Internet of Things (IoT), Blockchain, and Building Information Modelling (BIM), digital technology is steadily transforming the way urbanists understand and shape cities. In addition to this, apps and digital platforms are democratising decision-making and enabling citizens to be more actively involved in urban change. Already, in both the UK and around the world, cities are setting up institutions that harness urban data and devise new ways of incorporating the information back into the cities. The challenge, then, lies in how we embrace this digital revolution and ensure it matures in the coming decade to support better cities and citizens.

As Young Urbanists, we propose to be prudently proactive in response to the digital revolution. While we resist the urge some may have to quantify everything and boil it down to data – because urbanism is about people, and the human element must not be lost – we also recognise the inevitable changes that digital technology will bring and the importance of spearheading those changes ourselves as urbanists, as opposed to passively receiving them. The digital revolution is not a historic event that will happen to us; we will be at the forefront of envisioning, designing, and embracing it, so that it ultimately helps us in achieving our ends: to create better cities for people.

PROACTIVE AND INTERDISCIPLINARY INVOLVEMENT

Urbanism is a broad interdisciplinary field and as practitioners we should proactively engage with those from disciplines different to ours to further the urbanism agenda. Urbanists should consider varying ways to integrate with technology itself and technological experts to combine expertise. **How do we make sure we use technological tools appropriately to meet our professional needs and promote good urbanism?**

BUILT-IN INTEROPERABILITY

Digital technologies offer a range of opportunities for cities and urbanists to provide innovative solutions to our urban challenges. Collaboration amongst professions can help to move these innovations forward and provide a more holistic solution. **How do we deploy these technologies within the built environment sector to encourage collaboration?**

STANDARDISED AND OPEN URBAN DATA

Our cities are producing urban data at an unprecedented rate. Such urban data should be structured, standardised, and made open so that it can feed into and encourage new urban innovations. **How do we make data accessible to practitioners in order to deliver practical and innovative solutions to our urban challenges?**

FLEXIBLE MINDSET AND SYSTEM

As society changes and technology advances, the definition of good urbanism will evolve over time. Urbanists should be receptive to the change, whilst critically guiding it. **How do we make the planning system more flexible and responsive to utilising live, quality data?**
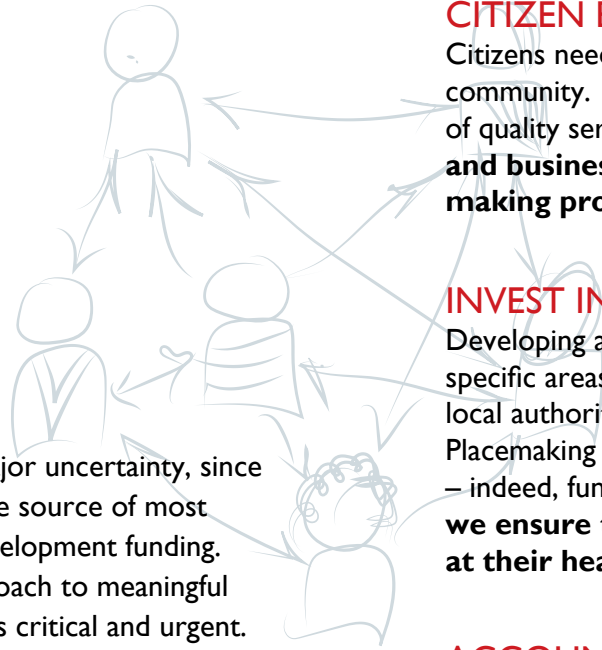
FUNDING AND DEVOLUTION

In the UK there has been a growing recognition of the need for devolution to cities and regions – to be more responsive to local needs and help close inter-regional divides. However, actual progress toward devolution has been slow and uneven, with shifts in the political landscape leading to frequent changes in approach.

Various structures have emerged to devolve powers to appropriate scales, for example LEPs or combined authorities. This has added to the patchwork of governance arrangements and can cause tensions in terms of accountability, division of competencies and, competition for funding. The Brexit result has evidently increased the urgency of this issue, highlighting the need to close regional gaps; it has also

wreaked major uncertainty, since the EU is the source of most regional development funding. A new approach to meaningful devolution is critical and urgent.

As Young Urbanists, we recognise that access to funding and coordination over its use are essential to creating successful places. With a vacuum in regional planning and anti-growth attitudes prevalent in many local authorities, regions across the UK are under-resourced to plan for their evidenced housing need. Stronger regional co-operation is needed to plan strategically for growth, with funding for large-scale infrastructure made conditional on regions delivering the growth needed to justify it.

CITIZEN ENGAGEMENT IN DECISION-MAKING
Citizens need to be able to connect to and feel ownership of their community. This begins with having a say in decisions around the provision of quality services in their areas. **How do we ensure that local residents and businesses have a genuine and meaningful role in the decision-making process?**

INVEST IN PLACEMAKING
Developing and maintaining quality spaces in accordance with the needs of specific areas should be a priority not only for citizens, but for developers, local authorities and central government in order to drive investment. Placemaking is an integral part of conversations about funding and devolution – indeed, funding should be built into the model of placemaking. **How do we ensure that discussions around funding and devolution include, at their heart, honest considerations for placemaking?**

ACCOUNTABLE LOCAL CHAMPIONS
City-regions have the opportunity to gain distinct advantages when they come together over shared economic interests and values, which is enhanced through collaborative working. Local and regional authorities should be held accountable for meeting their strategic targets, and strong Mayors can be champions for representing and delivering on local needs. **How do we rally round a shared vision to foster collaboration amongst stakeholders in city-regions?**

CONSIDER ALTERNATIVE FUNDING ARRANGEMENTS
Local and regional authorities are under increasing financial pressure, and although responsibilities are being devolved, the funding streams are not keeping pace. In order to manage this funding shortfall, and particularly in the coming years of uncertainty surrounding EU funds, local and regional authorities will need to develop collaborative relationships to meet their funding needs. **How do we make sure funding models serve a wider population?**

HOUSING

Housing makes up the vast majority of the built environment and has for many years been intrinsic to how we perceive place, community and identity – to live in an area is to belong. However, housing is also one of the most contested issues. Guaranteeing the basic right to shelter is one of the fundamental challenges a city faces, and, as our cities increasingly become globalised entities that represent unprecedented flows of human and economic capital, conceptions of property are decoupling from place. In the UK, we face numerous challenges as property has become an internationally-traded commodity, and the issue of predicting, procuring and providing the right type of housing in the right places has become fiercely politicised.

As Young Urbanists, we have a duty to promote enlightened thinking with regards to housing, bringing to bear both expert opinion and personal experience to the debate. As urbanists, we recognise that housing is a subject that is far more complex than the buildings produced. Issues with critical implications for land economy, social equity and sustainable communities abound: how land is released and developed and for whose benefit; how housing is bought or rented and how the mix is determined; and when and how it is renewed, etc. Most importantly, we understand that housing is above all about the people who live in it.

PROVISION OF SUFFICIENT HOUSING

We agree with the industry that there is not sufficient or appropriate housing being delivered for those who need it. We need to consider ways to free up land for house building as well as how we might use our existing land assets more efficiently. **How can we ensure that our policy frameworks support rather than hinder local authorities in delivering sufficient housing?**
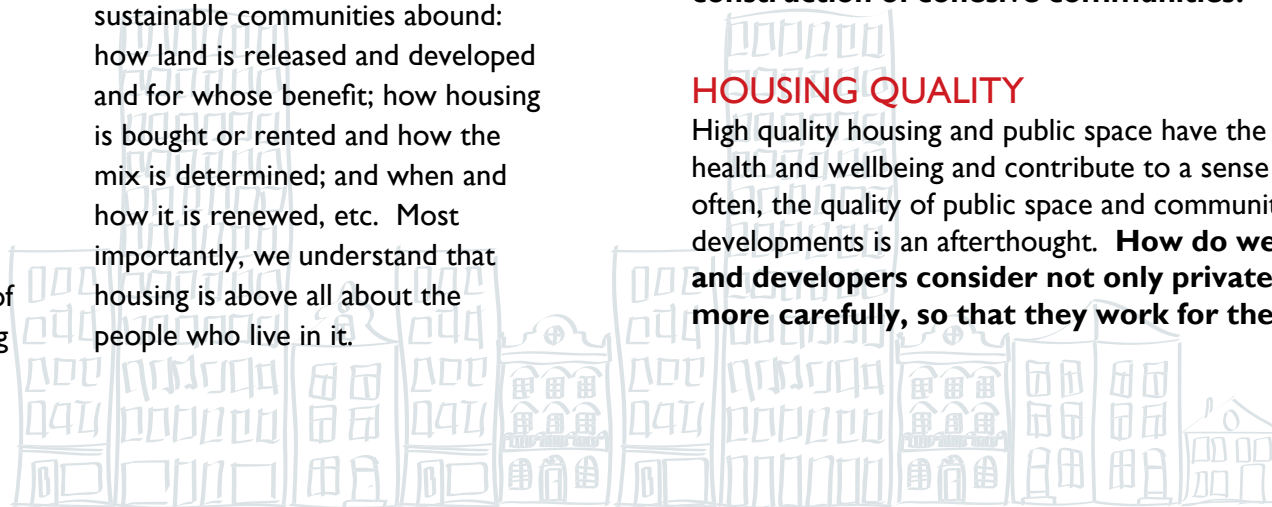
GENUINE AFFORDABILITY

Housing should be accessible to all and not be an undue burden on citizens' access to opportunity. Rather than linking affordability to the market rate, linking it to income may prove a better method of assessing need. **How can we encourage Government and developers to prioritise the provision of genuinely affordable housing?**

MIX OF HOUSING

It is well understood that developments with a mix of housing types and tenures promote healthy communities (both physically and socially) that cater to a range of needs. Self-build, community land trusts and temporary emergency housing are all seeking to address these broad needs. **How can we broaden the definition of housing to allow for the construction of more locally-based, bottom-up housing in order to facilitate the construction of cohesive communities?**

HOUSING QUALITY

High quality housing and public space have the potential to support residents' health and wellbeing and contribute to a sense of place and community. Too often, the quality of public space and community facilities within housing developments is an afterthought. **How do we make sure Government and developers consider not only private but also public spaces more carefully, so that they work for the people who use them?**

TRANSPORT

Urban transport is inseparable from the form of the city and the multiple connections that characterise human existence. As a means of access to the city, transport has tremendous potential to be inclusive. However, the current urban form directly reflects a skewed allocation of resources towards different transport modes and systems.

Transport is a question of economics that must be addressed via policy. A utilitarian approach is necessary, looking at the wider impacts of all transport systems. Today, the need for resilience in our transport systems is encouraging active travel modes and inviting technological advances to be integrated for more optimal results.

Great political will and vision is key to maximising the benefits of such changes in transport for the urban environment. Leaders who can articulate and deliver a vision for their city regions based on public transport and active travel within a high-quality urban realm will be essential.

As Young Urbanists, we recognise that transport must not be considered in isolation, but in relation with the wider city and the individuals that use it. We need to be well-informed on urban transport issues, and it is our responsibility both to understand how to integrate city planning and transport and to articulate this to others.

INTEGRATION OF TRANSPORT AND LAND-USE PLANNING

Urban transport is inseparable from the form of the city and has tremendous potential to be inclusive as a means of access to the city. An inescapable challenge is to integrate transport strategies with urban design and land-use planning to fully benefit from the advantages of increased accessibility. **How can we ensure that the urban form reflects the allocation of resources towards transport modes and systems?**

START FROM THE BOTTOM

Transport must be people-centred and cater for the needs of multiple types of users – it must be accessible, secure and healthy for all. Community-based transport solutions, or 'total transport' is a method of commissioning public transport at a local level in a way that improves the service offer to passengers, reduces duplication or resource, and drives efficiencies. **How can we make sure we encourage and enable community-based transport solutions?**

APPROPRIATE USE OF TECHNOLOGY

Changes in transport over the next decade will occur through a combination of technology and politics. The former must not be seen as a panacea, but as an opportunity to be examined through the lens of urbanism. The ability of technology to influence behavioural change should not be underestimated and our challenge is to pre-empt any unforeseen negative consequences. **How can we use technology as a tool to achieve our goals rather than as an end in itself?**

TRANSPORT AS A HOLISTIC SERVICE

Transport must be considered not primarily as a tool for economic growth but as a holistic service that supports and underpins economic, sustainable, and environmental development. We will need to question how we assess value in our transport projects. **How can we broaden the means of appraising major transport infrastructure projects in a more holistic way, to support and underpin economic, sustainable and environmental development?**

Images from The Urbanism Manifesto event at ARUP, 2016

MOVING IT FORWARD

The key challenge for the next generation of urban practitioners will be to discuss potential solutions that may enable action from Government and industry on the points laid out in this agenda in order to improve the way our cities develop. Ultimately, we must remember that urbanism is first and foremost about people. Improvements in technology, changes to our transport networks, the development of accessible and affordable housing, devolved planning responsibility and creative funding methods will all be important shifts in our capacity to improve our urban environments.

The Academy of Urbanism and the Young Urbanists have not only celebrated great places, but supported and promoted a better understanding of the processes by which these places are created. Through an ambitious programme of events and activities, the Academy is able to disseminate this learning to those who can influence the way our cities develop, and empower local authorities, community groups, business and academia to work together in creating and delivering a shared vision for their city.

The Young Urbanists Agenda will be our platform for facilitating discussion and action on the themes of digitalisation, funding and devolution, housing and transport over the coming years. Throughout the second half of 2017 and across 2018, the Young Urbanists will continue to explore these themes and how they might – as the next generation of urban practitioners – change mindsets from the traditional ways in order to achieve fundamental improvements for our future cities.

Keep your eye on our social media channels for information about events and activities related to The Young Urbanists Agenda.
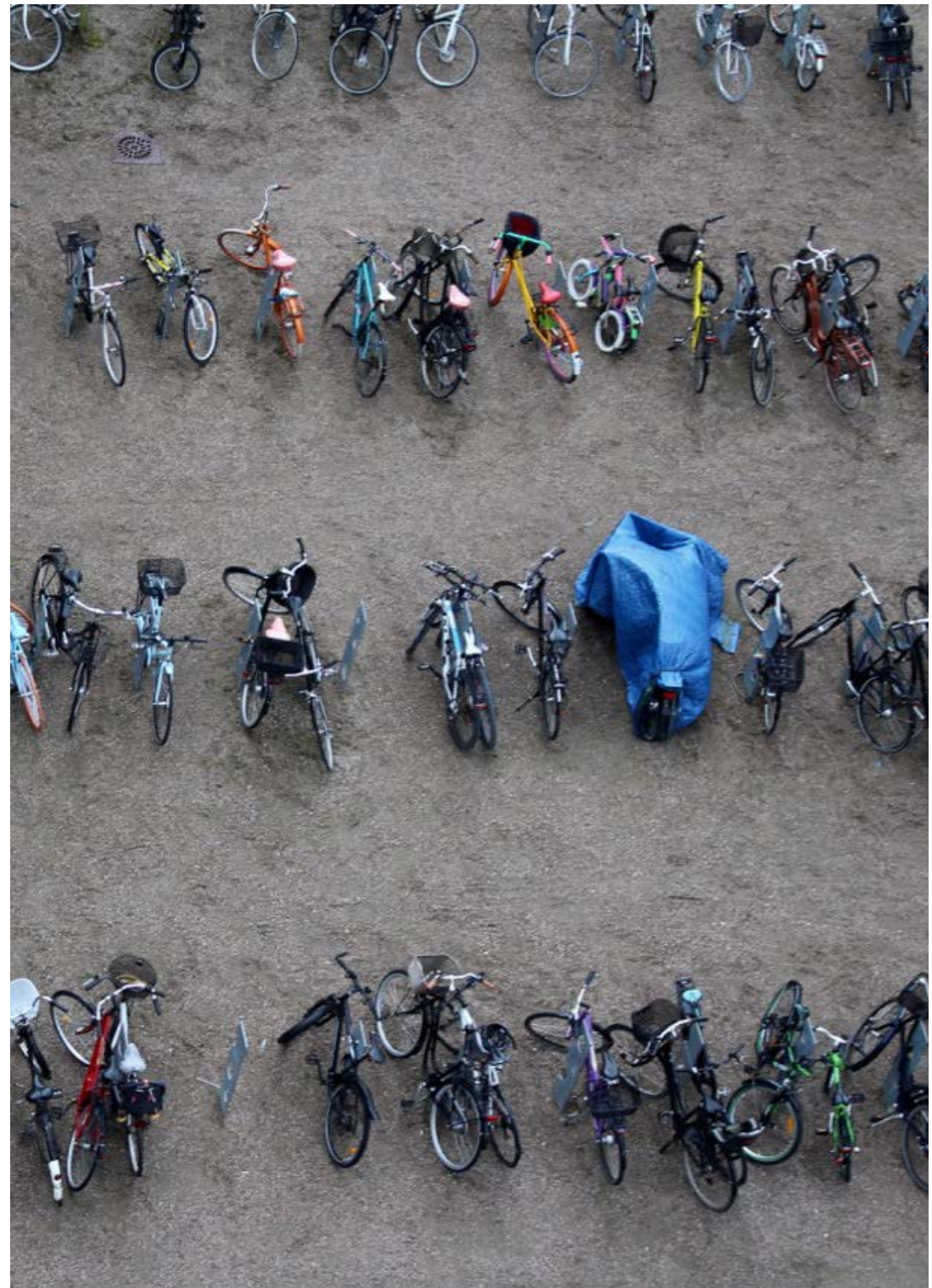
Website
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Images from workshops

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