The plan is always an intention, a desire to be something else. Urban planning documents predict future activity distributions and physical forms according to fundamental assumptions and aspirations based on an idea of the unitary city. From the beginning of the last century seeing the city as a single entity to manage and control was closely related to the ideals of regulated transport, water, energy, and communication networks symbolizing universal rationality. According to Stephen Graham and Simon Marvin, integrated networked infrastructure became a key element in two further developments: the idea of the comprehensive urban plan and an influential range of utopian schemes (2001). Both rely on a tale, an alternative narrative told by an urban planner imposing the authority of professional values.

However, the “professionally imagined” future is inevitably challenged by present individual values of citizens. Robert Cover in his writings defines law “as a system of tension or a bridge linking a concept of a reality to an imagined alternative” (Minow,
Ryan, Sarat, 1995). Seen as connective tissue, the device of narrative has an exceptional capacity not only to represent these two world models but also to introduce the logic of adjustment to them.

Legislative narratives articulate intentions that are open to a number of interpretations. The trajectories introduced by them remain in a constant state of reconfiguration. Is this ambiguity their strength? A good and compelling narrative can invite readers, residents or investors to imagine new realities and transform urban rules accordingly. But the intentional vagueness of planning documents also can be seen as an act of withdrawal of the city administration. Acknowledging a plurality of individual futures? Or a shift of responsibility?

• Author(s) Biography (200 words each):

Masha Hupalo is trained as an architect, with degrees from Saint-Petersburg State University of Architecture and Civil Engineering (MSc) and University of Applied Arts, Vienna (MA). She is currently pursuing a doctoral degree concerning urban territories, new technologies and networked infrastructures at Aarhus School of Architecture, Denmark. In her research project, she is investigating a potential of parking policies and requirements to influence urban configurations and a speculative nature of planning documentation. Besides working for three years in Coop Himmelb(l)au and Falkeis Architekten practices in Vienna, she took part in several group exhibitions in Europe and Asia. The results of her research projects were shown in Kunsthalle Vienna and during Shanghai Design Biennale among others. Her writing on architecture, mobility, technology, and urbanism has appeared in magazines and online publications like Eikon, ARCH+, and MONU.