

The neglected barrier:

Bicycle theft and sustainable urban mobility

Data - Impact - Measures

Torsten PETERS, Co-Founder a.bike



Bicycle theft statistics.

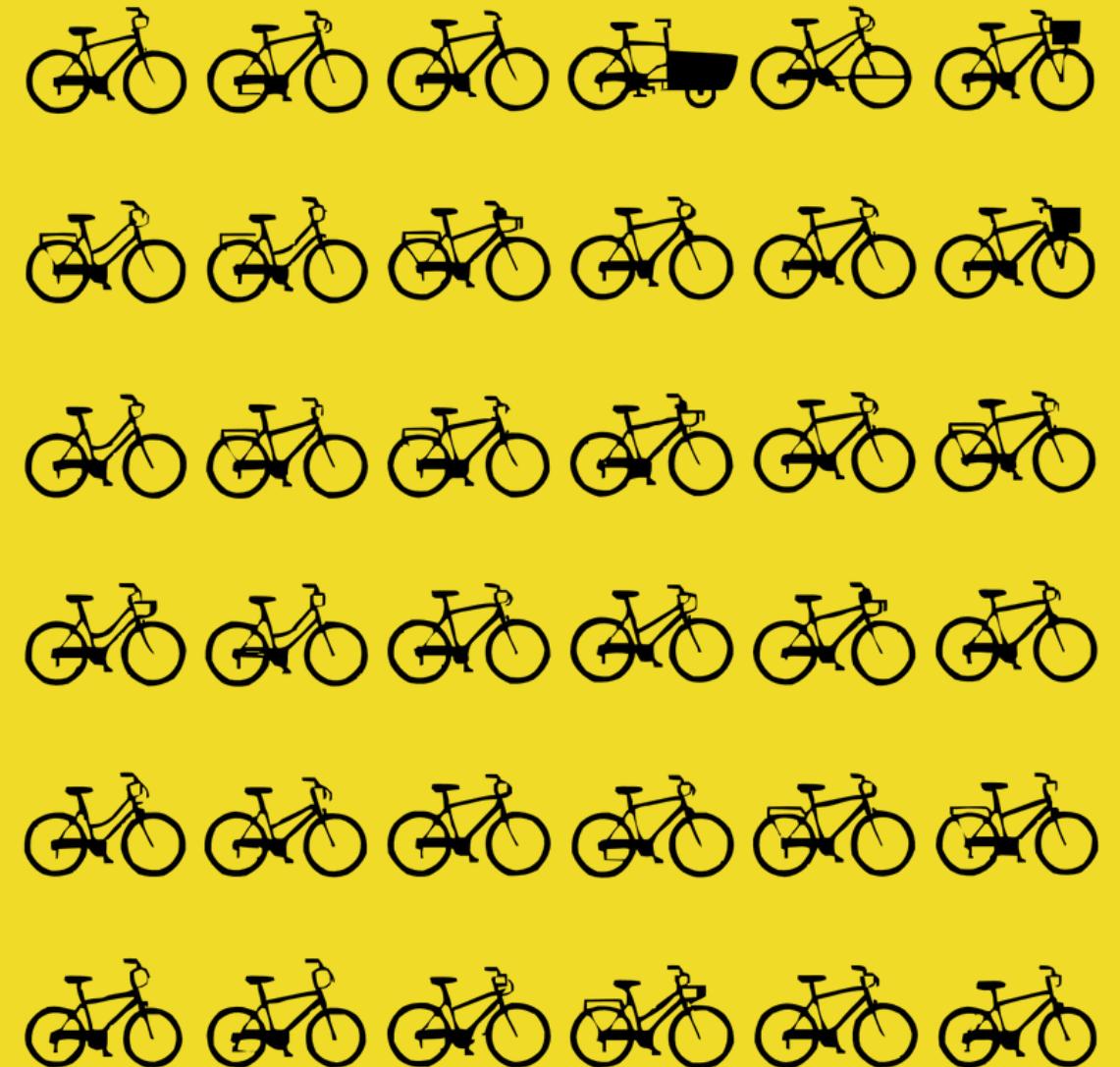
- Overview.
- Limited theft data (sometimes no national data).
- Underreporting.
- Limited data on secure bicycle parking and theft prevention.





>30 million stolen bikes*

**ECF Estimate 2023: 1.3m bikes/year reported stolen in Europe, plus 3m bikes/year stolen but not reported.
Average value of payout per insured bike 1000 €.**



***(EU, 2016-2025)**

<3% of victims get bike back.

The chances of getting a stolen bike back are low.

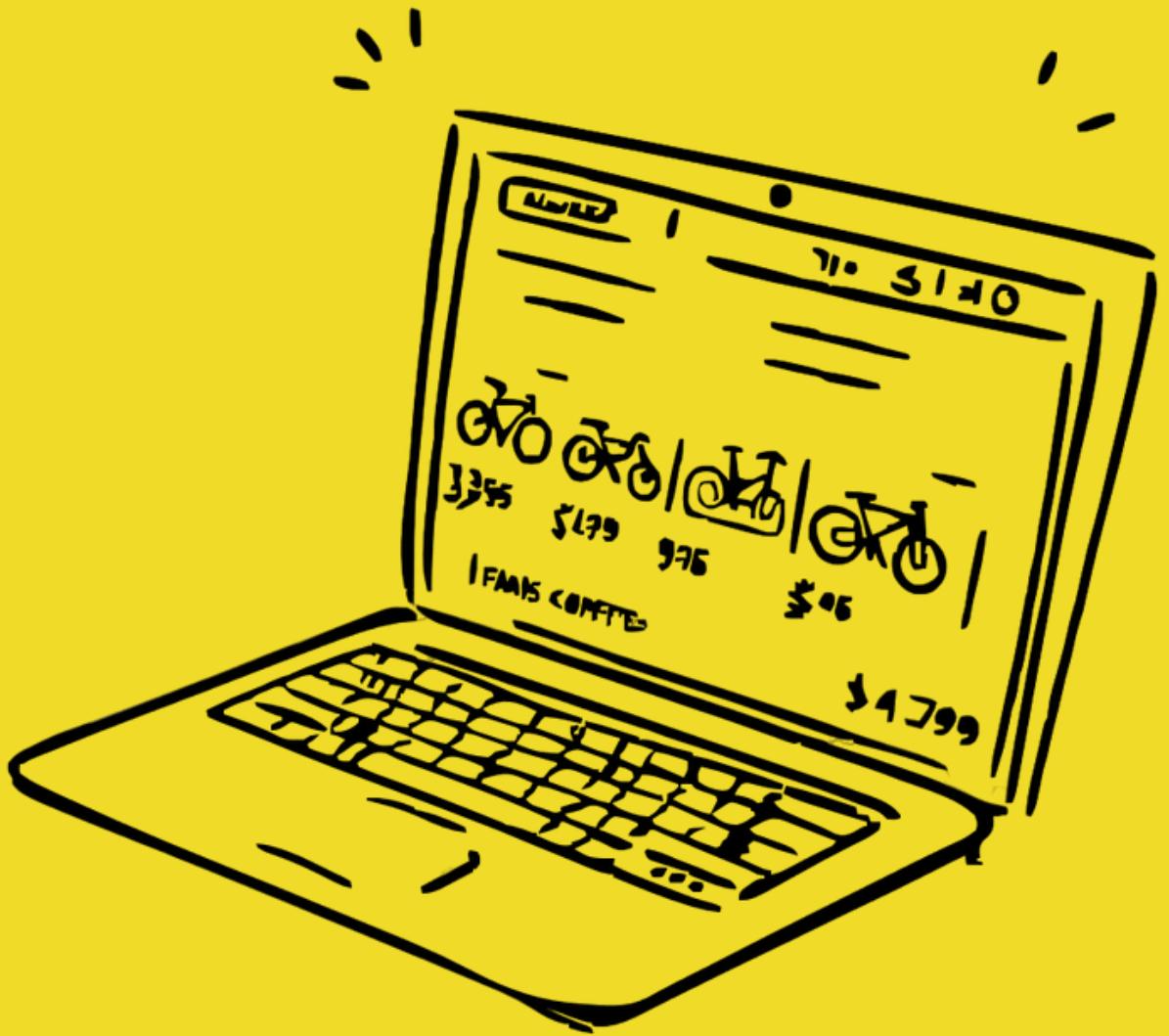
**1-3% of victims get their bike back, often after own
search in online marketplaces.**

>50% of cyclist already experienced theft.



>15 million stolen bikes resold?*

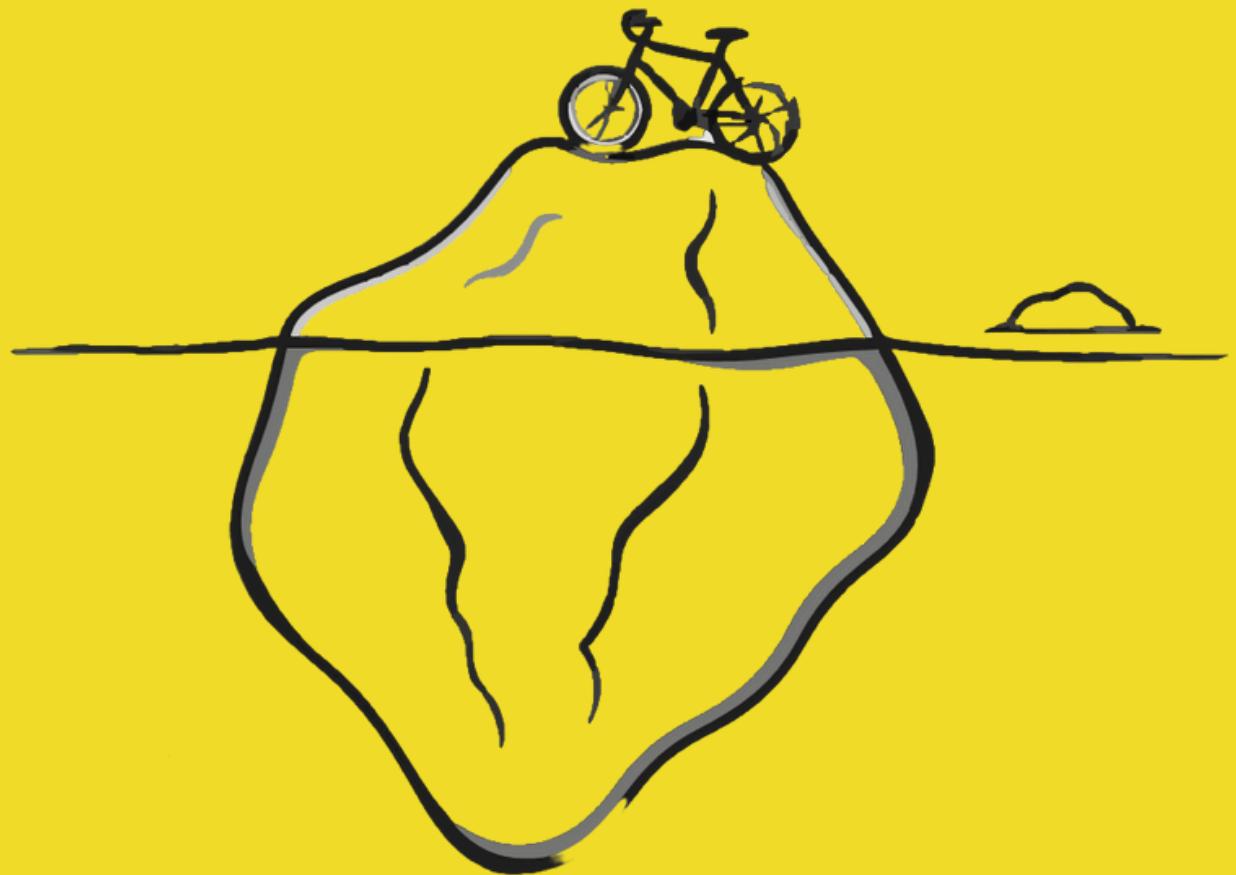
- Most thieves steal to sell.
- Very limited knowledge what happens to stolen bikes.
- Ratio Stolen bikes (resold?) to new bike sales: 20%



*EU 2016-2025

<5% of recovered bikes returned.

Decentral or absent databases on recovered bikes often make identification of owner impossible, esp. for bikes not reported stolen or not registered. Registration increases chance of getting bike back.



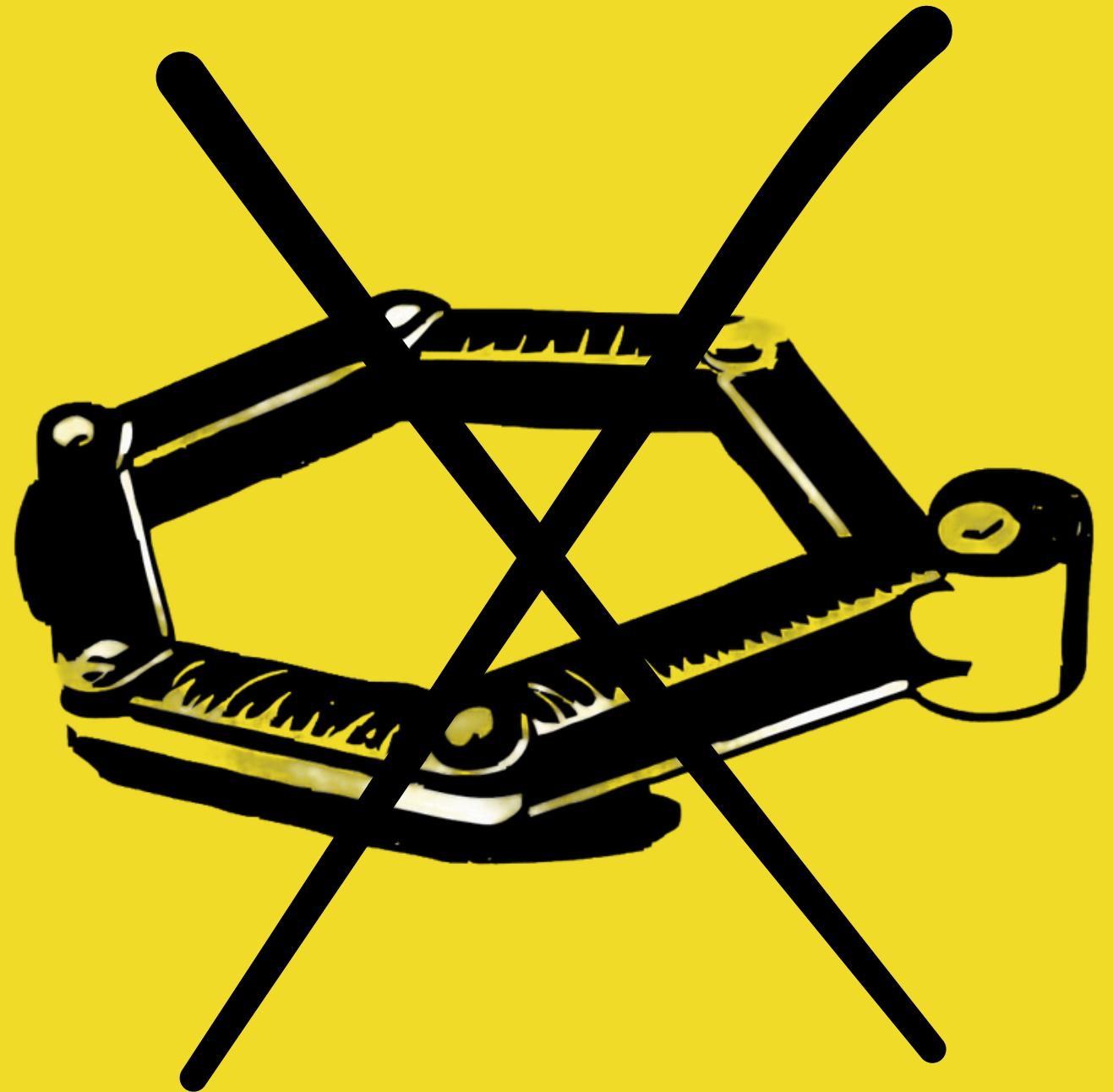
Risk-free crime?

- >90% of thefts unsolved.
- Almost no data on convictions/fines
- Anecdotal evidence for impunity,
- 1% of thieves identified and charged



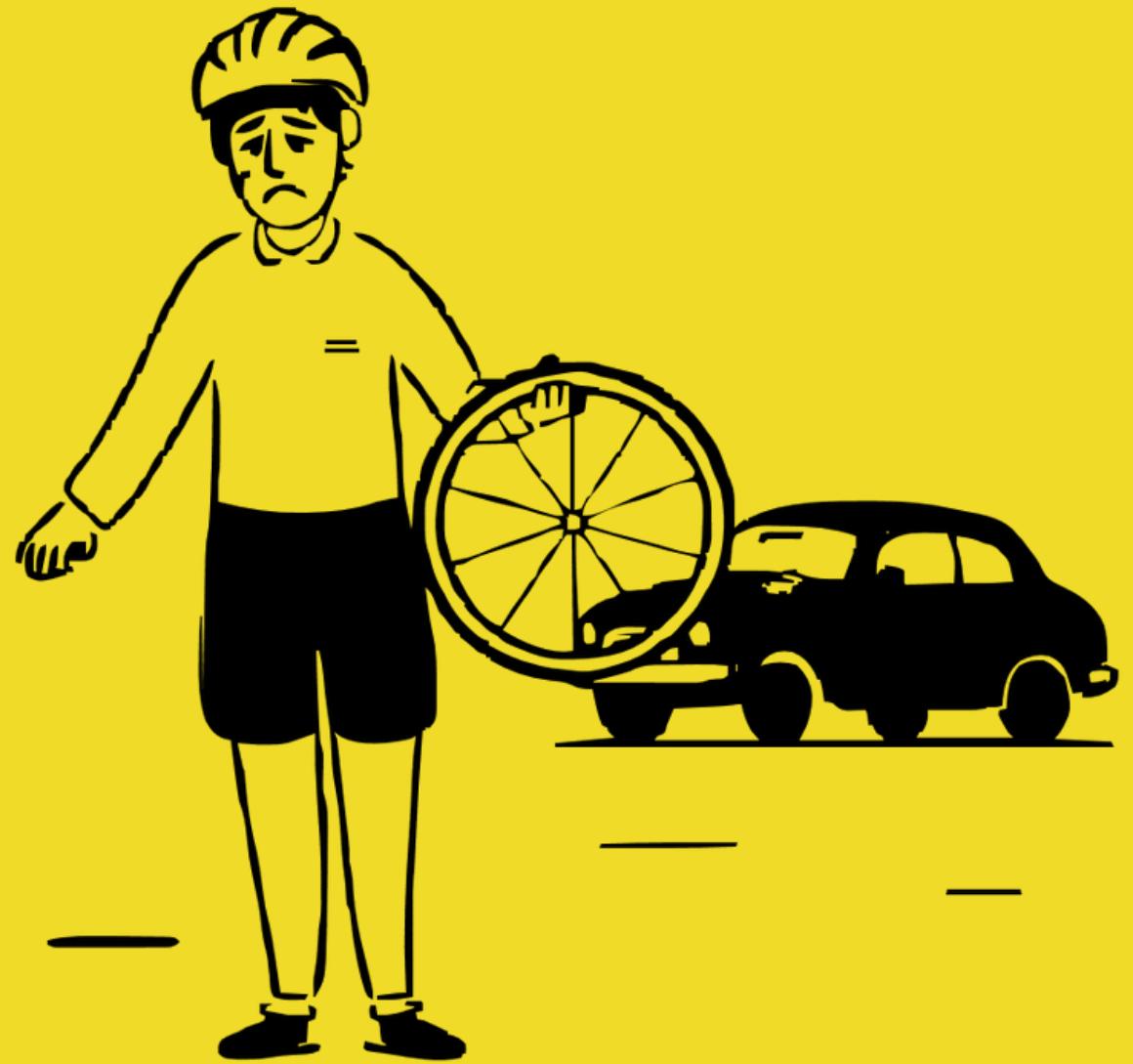
Negligence?

- **>60% of stolen bikes poorly locked.**
- **Less than 10% of EU bikes registered.**
- **>60% do not know frame number.**



>15 million cyclists less?*

- **>20% of victims stop cycling.**
- **>80% of cyclists cycle less because of theft risk.**
- **Theft risk is a key obstacle to start cycling.**
- **Vulnerable households particularly affected.**



No rocket science.

Many measures known to reduce bike theft.

No ‘silver bullet’ against bike theft, BUT:

Combination of often simple measures makes difference.



Awareness.

More can be done to educate cyclists, employers, landlords about bike registries, how to lock bikes, how to choose a lock, how to not buy a stolen bike etc.



Awareness campaigns don't have to be boring.



Bike Parking.

Supply of secure bike parking at nodes, work and at home needs to be increased further.

Indoor and outdoor, public or private, incentivised or compulsory, paid or free, short- or long term, standard or innovative.

Opportunity: EU EPBD* important step for new residential and office buildings.



*Energy Performance of Buildings Directive

Bike Registration.

- Bike registration facilitates recovery and enforcement .
- Lacking interoperability of registries.
- Often no national registry.
- No common EU frame number.

Opportunity: EU Digital Battery Passport (2027).



Toolkit.

Better statistics and data allows more research and measurement of impact; online market places; bait bikes, enforcement and sanction; round table and 'bike theft coordinator; add battery passport to registry. Add theft prevention to cycling strategies, interoperable register of found bikes, international law and police cooperation, clear division of responsibilities city, region, country, EU; ...



Coordination.

More often than not, responsibility for bike theft prevention is shared or not defined.

Creating an informal (part-time) role of 'bike theft coordinator' helps a lot.



Infrastructure.

Bike theft prevention is bicycle infrastructure.

- Bike infrastructure: >1bn€/year.
- Secure bike parking: ~10-20% (?)
- Theft prevention: <0.05%



Bike Theft Audit.

a.bike is starting to offer a comprehensive bike theft audit for cities. After questionnaire and desk research, cities receive a detailed analysis and recommended theft prevention actions ranked from easy/straightforward to more ambitious.

Ten POLIS25 conference participants receive a 200€ (66% discount) and pay only 100€ for a full theft audit.



About us.

a.bike is a positive impact organisation launched in May 2025. We raise awareness on bike theft impact and prevention, undertake bike theft prevention advocacy and offer advice and services to cyclists and policy makers.

a.bike complements the ongoing anti-theft work by cyclists' associations through its specialisation on bike theft only.



Open theft data.

We have curated hundreds of sources regarding bike theft and its impact on cycling.

An audio version of this POLIS25 presentation with detailed data sources will be available in January 2026:

www.a.bike/data





**Questions?
Remarks?
Happy to talk.**

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