

SUPPLEMENT TO VOLUME #15

MARCH 2008

# SECURECITY PUBLIC

KABUL

کابل

**AFGHANISTAN – AN ESTIMATION**

Area: 647,500 sq km, 34 provinces  
Population: 32 million

**Age structure** 0-14 years 44.6%,  
15-64 years 53%, 65 years and over 2.4%

**Languages** Afghan Persian or Dari (official)  
50%, Pashto (official) 35%, Turkic languages  
(primarily Uzbek and Turkmen) 11%, 30 minor  
languages (primarily Balochi and Pashai) 4%

**Ethnic groups** Pashtun 42%, Tajik 27%,  
Hazara 9%, Uzbek 9%, Aimak 4%, Turkmen 3%,  
Baloch 2%, other 4%

**Religions** Sunni Muslim 80%, Shi'a Muslim 19%,  
other 1%

**Border countries** China, Iran, Pakistan,  
Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan

**Elevation** lowest point: Amu Darya 258 m,  
highest point: Nowshak 7,485 m

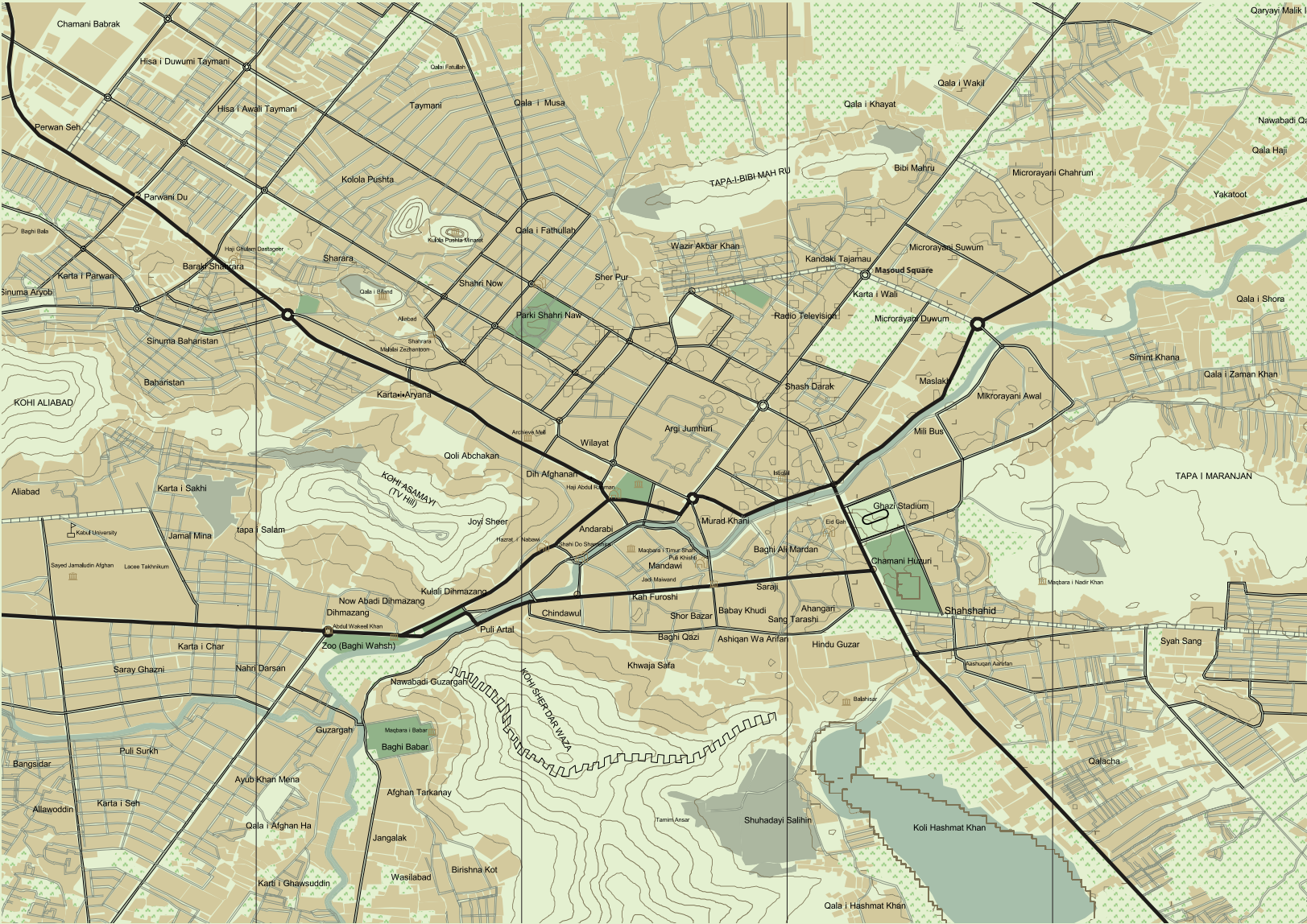
**Natural resources** natural gas, petroleum,  
coal, copper, chromite, talc, barites, sulfur,  
lead, zinc, iron ore, salt, precious and semipre-  
cious stones

**KABUL**

Time zone: UTC+4:30  
Area: 4,500 sq km, 18 districts  
Population: 3 - 4 million

source:  
<https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/af.html>  
<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kabul>

**KABUL**  
—  
SECURE CITY, PUBLIC CITY



34°31'N, 69°11'E

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# KABUL RSVP

EVENT OCTOBER 2007

## برنامه

### INTRODUCTION



RSVP team on the Tapa Bibi Mahroo (Bibi Mahroo Hill).

Kabul, Afghanistan is an emergent metropolis where glimpses of hope and progress are immanent in every corner, where construction in the private sector is booming, where people are determined to restore their city, where they can finally use a comparatively peaceful phase in their history to start recovering, marrying, organizing their lives, embellishing their surroundings, and catching up with the rest of the world in terms of education, culture and technology. And yet there are multiple obstacles: Kabul is also a place where there is still no progress in solving civic urgencies, where international organizations' inclination to self-protection disrupts residents' everyday life, where an emerging se-

curity-industrial complex is driving an urban civil war, where public spaces are economically and politically contested, where urban planning ideologies collide, and where authorities face the challenge of land titling as a venture that will ultimately reveal the very nature of nation building and human rights in Afghanistan.

**glimpses of hope and progress are immanent in every corner**

Three decades ago, Afghanistan was the battlefield where a colonialist

Soviet military and the U.S. backed Mujahideen resistance forces fought the end game of the Cold War. During the ensuing civil war, the Mujahideen – a heterogeneous cocktail of warlords – divided into different political factions and started a devastating war that was only ended by the infamous, oppressive Taliban forces who in turn were swept away by an internationally backed Northern Alliance.

That long string of wars destroyed the entire social and physical fabric of the city. To this day, six years after the liberation of Afghanistan, all the violent forces mentioned above still manifest themselves in the public realm. Colonialism wears a more homogenous global dress nowadays and the social and spatial privileges of the expatriate community are constantly justified by the honorable, but half-hearted ambitions of the 'aid industry'.

Kabul city is growing at an amazing pace. Within six years the city is said to have grown from 300,000 to approximately 4-6 million. The majority of building projects take place within the private sector. Governmental institutions and the Kabul municipality differ regarding the direction of planning; the different factions are split between those who favor the implementation of the 1978 Master Plan (according to which most of the current city is illegal) and those who seek to find contemporary solutions.

Security and public space was the focus of the Kabul RSVP event in October 2007. The goal of the trip was to examine the situation beyond the Western media, power and security bubble. The RSVP team undertook an exploration of public spaces in Kabul in collaboration with a variety of Afghan stakeholders (architects, designers, artists, students, residents, academics, NGOs, municipal officials, construction companies, developers, etc.) to compile an inventory of needs and possible actions/projects to improve the city's public spheres. Local experts and residents guided visitors to public gardens and parks, prominent mountainsides, the ruins of a Soviet

cultural center, settlements on grabbed land, gated areas, shopping malls, and the new and historic city center.

It became clear that it was not only the probability of random suicide attacks that threatened security in public spaces. We also witnessed obscene space consumption by international agencies for security reasons that ultimately violates residents' freedom of movement. Moreover, their social privileges justify the creation of constricted public spaces to which Afghans are not permitted entry. On the other hand, public spaces and public services are contested by powerful Afghans who continue their civil war on parliamentary and municipal seats. In the Western media it is the Taliban who receive most of the attention and are portrayed as the enemy. In reality various forces are the enemies of common welfare and guard their own group's and affiliate's interests.

**As non-governmental, non-institutional, non-restricted guests, we were easily able to traverse the city**

As non-governmental, non-institutional, non-restricted guests, we were easily able to traverse the city and engage with all its different peoples. Whether local architects, students, expat aid workers, diaspora business men, foreign researchers, international military or the occasional artist, we discovered that they know their segment of the city extraordinarily well and are connected by their strong beliefs, courage and doubts about the current situation.

Our conversation about 'security and public space' is ongoing; a follow-up meeting was already organized in Kabul after we left (see outcomes in the agenda). This supplement comprises contributions from the professionals we met in Kabul as well as the RSVP visitors and it aims to both continue the discussion and collaboration *and* invite you to join in.



### DIARY part 1

George M. AGNEW

### RATTLING THE GATES A GUIDE THROUGH SECURE ZONES IN KABUL

## 'FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND INTERNATIONAL TRADE CANADA ADVISES AGAINST ALL TRAVEL TO AFGHANISTAN. CANADIANS IN THIS COUNTRY SHOULD LEAVE.'

Official Canadian Foreign Affairs, [www.voyage.gc.ca](http://www.voyage.gc.ca)

Despite receiving the usual concern from family and friends, 'Isn't that a bad idea? Don't people get killed there all the time? Isn't the situation unstable?' and so on, I joined the RSVP trip to Kabul. To be perfectly honest, while the initial culture shock and visible poverty take a little getting used to, I was not uncomfortable, least of all afraid during my week there, except for a few hours one afternoon.

On the second to last day we met Anne Feenstra, a Dutch architect with a busy practice in Kabul. Anne had immersed himself in the ways of the city and the country at large. Among his many interests and concerns in Kabul was the prevalence of 'security' and the way it had destroyed Kabul's public realm piece by piece. It turns out that Mr. Feenstra takes it personally when organizations set up their walls with blatant disregard for those around them, a practice taken very much for granted - so much so that most of the embassies and missions have completely ignored a decree straight from President Karzai to remove them.

Over lunch Anne showed us the impressive collection of security badges he had accumulated during his time in Kabul. I found one particularly interesting; out of frustration Anne and his office (AFIR) had created their own security badges to combat useless and meaningless checkpoints. The tag was an AFIR badge identifying himself as an employee of AFIR and stating that he had clearance to enter any secured area



and had access to all information. 'You wouldn't believe how often this works,' he told us.

Our plan was to pick a few areas in the city secured by various check-points and essentially off limits to the public and see how far we could get as a group of eight or nine with his security badges. Along the way we witnessed the extent of the city which had been cordoned off as property adjacent to embassies or government offices and see first hand the often arbitrary and sometimes useless screening process at these checkpoints. My father had always told me that if you act like you belong somewhere you usually won't be bothered. I had a feeling we were about to put this to the test in the most extreme way. (P.15)

# URBAN PLANNING IN KABUL طرح

PIETRO CALOGERO

Urban planning in Kabul today is essentially a clash of modernities. On the one hand there is the technocratic, developmental state tradition which began in 1919 and ended in 1992 when Dr. Najibullah's regime was toppled by the Mujahideen and civil order collapsed. On the other hand there is community-based, participatory planning that was introduced in 2002 under a neoliberal framework when the Karzai regime was established.

Western planners tend to assume that the newer, participatory method is better than the older, technocratic method. After all, we had the same technocratic tradition in the West. Demolition of historic urban cores happened in American and British cities at the very same time that they started in Kabul. The 60-meter wide Maiwand Avenue was cut through the old core of Kabul in 1949, destroying much of the historic urban fabric of the Old City. The three Master Plans, all prepared with Soviet technical assistance, were designed to turn Kabul into a modern city à la Le Corbusier. The third Master Plan, authorized in 1978, has yet to be implemented. If it is more than half of the existing informal housing in Kabul would have to be destroyed to make room for wide urban highways and orderly high-rise apartment blocks.

Such top-down, technocratic planning seems like an imposition on the people and Afghans have suffered enough of that. So a swarm of NGOs and intergovernmental organizations arrived in Kabul in 2002 with a strong consensus: that urban planning in Kabul should be

done using the latest and greatest community-based methods being applied in the Anglosphere and Europe. Engineer Yousuf Pashtun, Karzai's Minister of Urban Development, strongly endorsed this new approach.

It has derailed, however. One can explain this as a national failure: the Karzai regime never became effective due to insufficient foreign aid; the Af-

ghan economy did not grow enough and civil war has returned. These national problems are serious, but this failure – and a possible route to success – can be understood better from a different level of analysis. The key is the relationship between society and the state, and in Kabul that is not a simple story.

## The three Master Plans, were designed to turn Kabul into a modern city à la Le Corbusier.

Even if top-down, the old technocratic method was developed locally by a 'developmental state' over five decades. As this term suggests, a developmental state sees itself as a major participant in the development of the economy and society it governs. It sees itself as a modernizer of an undeveloped society. Such terminology is dated within Western academic circles, but consider the implications: a developmental regime is deeply engaged with the people it governs. The Afghan developmental state

began in the 1920s. Foreign agencies gave technical assistance, but the Afghan state had to negotiate with the people locally in order to implement their plans. That negotiation was not democratic, since Afghanistan was either a Kingdom or a dictatorship during this period. Nor was it equitable: Maiwand Avenue was cut through the old urban core of Kabul to serve the interests of wealthy merchants. Even the Soviets sought to continue this type of state through the 1980s. And as soon as the Soviets began to withdraw in 1988, Dr. Najibullah's regime began to negotiate intensively at the local level to try to gain support as an independent government. Westerners may object to the autocracy involved in technocratic physical planning, given the anti-authoritarian shift of the late 1960s,

but the process was effective in creating a clean, orderly capital for a country known as the 'Switzerland of Asia.'

On the other hand, the recent participatory method was implemented under a Neoliberal framework. One of the core assumptions of Neoliberalism is that states are inefficient and if something can be done by a non-state agency it will be done faster, cheaper and better. In Kabul that means a mix of NGOs and private consulting agencies. Two examples from Kabul illustrate this. First, the Kabul Urban Reconstruction Project is funded by the World Bank which contracted the American firm Bearing Point which in turn subcontracted the Australian firm SMEC to hire Afghan engineers in the Ministry of Urban Development to develop neighborhood upgrade plans in

conjunction with local residents. Still more private firms are contracted to implement the plans. Actual construction finally began in 2007, five years after Karzai was placed in power. The plans are good and residents within the recipient neighborhoods are happy; but it is too little, too late to keep up with the rapid pace of Kabul's growth. Moreover, this contract project is being carried out at a separate office location and does not seem to be adopted as an integrated function of the Ministry. The ideological framework assumes that private contracting is more efficient, but that contracting process blocks the integration of this project into regular government functions.

Another example is the land titling process, funded by USAID which con-

tracted with EMG to implement the work with Afghan staff. This is essentially an implementation of Hernando de Soto's ideas from the 1980s to legalize all the informal settlements in Kabul. Since about 70% of Kabul's built-up area is informal in some way this project has major implications for the social and economic development of the entire city. Only a few pilot projects have been carried out thus far, but if implemented across the whole city formalization will make it impossible to implement the 1978 Master Plan for Two Million. If the irregular, dense growth that has occurred in the last twenty years is legalized and allowed to remain, the Kabul planners will not be able to demolish those areas and re-plot them with straight streets and rectangular lots.



Microrayan, four large-scale settlements built with Soviet support in the 1970s.



A wedding hall building among the ruins and informal settlements in Karte Seh District.

Many Afghans remember Kabul of their youth and idealize the image of the 1970s, city as a golden age

Road construction in Sherpur, an area with luxury mansions built on grabbed land.

View of Kabul's city center, with Haji Abdul Rahman Mosque, Zarnegar Park, Serena Hotel and the 'Communication' Tower.



At first glance it seems like a good thing to legalize the informal settlements rather than bulldoze them just to make a grid. But here is the problem: no one tried to win over the local planners in the municipality before implementing this project. Many have been working in the municipality since the 1980s. They may be technocrats, but they know the city well and understand the local regime. Despite the violence of the last three decades, that urban regime of property owners and influential families is still intact in Kabul. So the municipality has a surprising ability to implement local projects and the capacity to block unwelcome ideas from the outside if they so desire.

There is another important issue here: nostalgia and an attempt to recover a lost past in the face of present uncertainty. Many Afghans fondly remember the Kabul of their youth and idealize the image of the 1970s clean and orderly city as a golden age. Recovering that lost, modern, urban image is for them an attempt to somehow recover lost decades of their own lives. Many were children at the time, so they do not remember the political unrest or the troubles of the Daoud dictatorship. For them the restitution of a clean city is literally a yearning for emotional restitution. It is about the literal, physical image of the city, not about effective processes or urban management, let alone the deeper structural questions of urban governance.

In contrast to the ineffective present government, for many Kabulites technocratic planning does represent an era of effective governance. Since first working as a volunteer in the Ministry of Urban Development in 2003, I have observed the steady loss of public faith in the Ministry and, by association, in the communicative/participatory method it espouses. I have seen the municipality resume its implementation of the urban freeway system according to the 1978 Plan over the objections of Karzai's national government. Through numerous interviews and encounters I have learned of the widespread support for the widening of roads, even if it involves expropriations and demolitions.

One taxi driver explained in detail how a row of houses facing demolition was built in open violation of the 1978 Plan and expressed no regret in seeing them demolished. Those squatters had not obeyed the rules and above all Afghans want people to obey the rules now.

The mindset of engineers at the municipality is also very different from what outsiders had initially described. They are aware that their ideas are dated and asked me directly for new ideas, new standards and new planning methods. They asked me because as an instructor at Kabul University and the Polytechnic I was integrated into the Afghan system. Also, I had read the National Economic Development Plans and had made some

**The problem is not the legality of housing, but the accessibility and the security of tenure**

attempt to learn Dari (Ed.: the official name for the Persian language spoken in Afghanistan). Furthermore, I had obtained formal permission from the vice Mayor to allow my students to attend a lecture by the chief planning engineers about how Kabul planning had evolved. In other words, I had demonstrated respect for local institutions and lines of authority; in return they revealed their willingness to change and innovate.

Here are a few recommendations for urban policy design in Kabul. First, study the Master Plans of 1964, 1970 and 1978 to understand how Afghans have understood planning over the last several decades. Second, respect that they want to modernize Kabul and make it a symbol of national pride. European cities are good examples of modernity without grid planning, so I strongly recommend that we introduce Afghan planners to images of European urban modernity from Amsterdam to Zurich. Right now their best local model is Dubai and even Emiratis would probably agree that the implementation of such a clean — shall we say sterile? — model would inflict horrible damage on Kabul's character. Third,

help the vast majority of poor Kabulites. The problem is not the legality of housing, but rather the accessibility of housing and the security of tenure. That is a much messier process including dealing with housing supply, the cost and quality of transit, the availability and terms of loans, and the availability of jobs. Where to start? Maybe where the Najib regime left off in 1992: with industrial development and partial price controls. Maybe even the resumption of public housing construction. Yet a secondary question is even more important: how should foreigners participate in urban policy in Kabul? Probably not as elite consultants making US \$10,000 per month, living in a security-bubble, and not being answerable to the Afghan government. If we participate as guests, Afghans will protect us. When we hear ideas that may seem obsolete in our home cities, we should listen to the different context and learn from it even if we disagree with it. Once we get in that close we are in a position to present our own ideas through our understanding of the local context. We will have disagreements with Afghan planners, but a peer-to-peer exchange will equip them to reach their own conclusions. That is what they need to be able to do.



Kabul city center.

PIETRO CALOGERO is a doctoral candidate in City and Regional Planning at the University of California, Berkeley. He worked as a volunteer at the Ministry of Urban Development and Housing in Kabul in 2003. In 2007 he taught urban theory and an urban design studio at Kabul University, and lectured on planning theory and urban economics at Kabul Polytechnic. [www.calogero.us/Kabul/journal.html](http://www.calogero.us/Kabul/journal.html)



# THE FATE OF PUBLIC SPACE

## تقدير

JOLYON LESLIE

Public urban space in Afghanistan has long been contested. In revenge for a humiliating defeat in 1842, the British destroyed the Char Chatta bazaar which had been the economic hub of Kabul since the 17th century. Rulers of the modern Afghan state in the early 20th century carved public squares and boulevards out of the dense traditional fabric as part of efforts to 'modernize' Kabul. Intended as places where the might and order of the modern state could be displayed, official pomp and ceremony in public spaces gave way much of the time to itinerant hawkers, mobile playgrounds, traveling fairs,

### Some spaces were also the focus of political protest

buzkashi, kite-flying and an ever-curious Afghan public. Some spaces were also the focus of political protest – and the retribution that often followed in the form of public floggings or executions. Rendered unsafe by the indiscriminate rocketing of Kabul from the outskirts by the Mujahideen from the mid-1980s, public outdoor events where possible took place in walled spaces to avoid deadly shrapnel. In the ensuing inter-factional conflict during 1992-93 it was snipers who preyed on those who dared

use public spaces or the avenues that had symbolized progress to previous generation of Kabulis.

Nearly 15 years after the nightmare of factional conflict, the primary threat to public open space in Kabul is now the lack of effective urban management in the face of growing pressure on urban land and a general climate of impunity on the part of both domestic and international players. At one extreme, since 2002 powerful Afghan interests have been involved in the rendition of government land for which documents are obtained to enable its 'sale' to others – who then conveniently claim ignorance as to its provenance. Kabulis can be forgiven for questioning why the diplomatic missions, consultancy firms and media outlets who urge them to uphold the rule of law occupy expensive property that has often been rendered in this way. Normally, however, the process of occupation is more subtle and gradual, as has long been the case with the assimilation of peri-urban villages and the piecemeal settlement of the hillsides that now house nearly three-quarters of the population of Kabul. As with these residential areas, pockets of open space are quietly occupied for commercial or residential use in return for protection money paid to municipal staff and the local police. But this is nothing new, as is borne out by examination of the history of formal and informal transformations

wrought on a cross-section of urban spaces in Kabul, effected in turn by commerce, waste, greed and fear.

Originally surrounded by an extensive walled charbagh or formal garden, the transformation of the open space around the mausoleum of Timur Shah is inextricably linked to the development of the center of 'new' Kabul. As settlement spread in the early 20th century north from the 'old city' to the banks of the Kabul river, the charbagh was built over with bazaars and in the 1920s the first secondary school in the country. By the 1970s the mausoleum stood in a small municipal park hemmed in by commercial buildings. It was into this open space that cloth-sellers and tailors gradually moved during the 1990s,



A demonstration in front of the Timur Shah Mausoleum in the 1970s.

eventually comprising a bazaar of some 300 stalls made from sections of steel shipping-containers. On one level this transformation represented a pragmatic response to the rising cost of rented workshop premises and to the evident demand for cloth and tailors in the city center. On the other hand, this and other such impromptu bazaars illustrate the weakness of urban management and the corruption of official institutions at all levels. The case of Timur Shah Park also demonstrates the strength of the protectors of the tens of thousands of stall-holders who, though they may have appeared marginal, were able to avoid re-location for more than four years before the park was finally cleared and landscaped. The reclamation, however, may prove to have been a pyrrhic victory for the citizens of Kabul – even before the perimeter walls around the park were complete, a series of deep niches



Timur Shah Mausoleum during its reconstruction by the Aga Khan Trust for culture and before relocation of informal merchants. The now cleared and landscaped park will soon be opened to the public.

intended for use by the passing public had been let by a local power-broker for commercial use.

Baghe Qazi provides another example of a complex web of vested interests, in this case resulting in the transformation of a public open space into a garbage dump. Originally a private garden, this low-lying land was one of the few open, green spaces between the densely-packed neighborhoods of the adjoining old city. Having appropriated the site, the municipality built a district office on one corner of the garden in the 1980s and leased almost half of the open space for commercial storage. What had eluded municipal staff, however, was the fact that the space flooded every spring. Until halted by public protests, the municipality then began using the site as

a dump for domestic waste which was then covered with a layer of excess soil from nearby road works and graded, so it could be leased out by the municipality to park large trucks serving the adjoining (illegal) depots owned by powerful business interests. Despite strong community support, the ongoing process of reclaiming Baghe Qazi from its present state as a sump/dump/parking lot and transforming it into a viable open space faces formidable environmental, commercial and political challenges.

In contrast, the landmark hill of Tapa Bibi Mahroo has been transformed by a process of 'suburban creep', driven largely by human greed. Historically an important ridge for the military defense of Kabul, Bibi Mahroo now adjoins one of the most expensive areas in Kabul where

most diplomatic missions rent modernist villas built in the 1970s. It was at this time that the government built an Olympic swimming pool on the crest of the ridge, although the space continued to be more popular among kite-flyers than swimmers. Used by heavy artillery during the factional fighting during 1992-93 and criss-crossed with trenches, recreation on Bibi Mahroo ridge was a hazardous affair indeed. By 1994 the self-styled 'liberators' of Kabul began to requisition land for homes in the green belt that sur-

Similarly, anyone who tried to stand in the way of the international capture of public space in Kabul would need considerable courage

rounded Bibi Mahroo. Since then private 'development' has encircled the ridge and begun to creep up its once-forested slopes. Along with the infamous rendition of government land, parts of which were 'bought' by senior politicians, in the adjoining Sherpur area – now crammed with massive, vulgar villas – this represents little more than the capture of public property by the ruling elite. It would be a brave Afghan indeed who attempted to stand in the way of this process.

Similarly, anyone who tried to stand in the way of the international capture of public space in Kabul would need considerable courage. Occupying sizeable swathes of property in the city center, international civilian and military interests (and increasingly their Afghan counterparts) have seen fit to create protective cordons around themselves, seemingly

oblivious of the fact that this is an inhabited city. Unable any more to distinguish friend from foe, primary urban roads have been blocked, trees cut down and entire sidewalks filled with razor-wire or towering walls of concrete and hescos (gravel-filled gabions) topped by sinister watch-towers. Never before – even during the Soviet occupation – have residents of the city witnessed such an intrusion on their space and disruption to their lives in the interests of the security of others. This is a phenomenon that both embodies the fear of those who inhabit these compounds and instills fear among all who approach while trying to go about their daily lives.

Indeed, public space remains contested in contemporary Kabul.

*Kabul, January 2008*

The Olympic swimming pool on top of the Tapa Bibi Mahroo (Bibi Mahroo Hill).

Trained as an architect, JOLYON LESLIE has lived and worked in the Middle East and central Asia for the past 25 years, where he has managed recovery and development programmes for the UN and NGOs. His interests range from indigenous building to the post-conflict recovery, and in 2004 he co-authored an analysis of the transition in Afghanistan (*The Mirage of Peace*, Zed Books). He currently manages the programme of the Aga Khan Trust for Culture in Afghanistan.



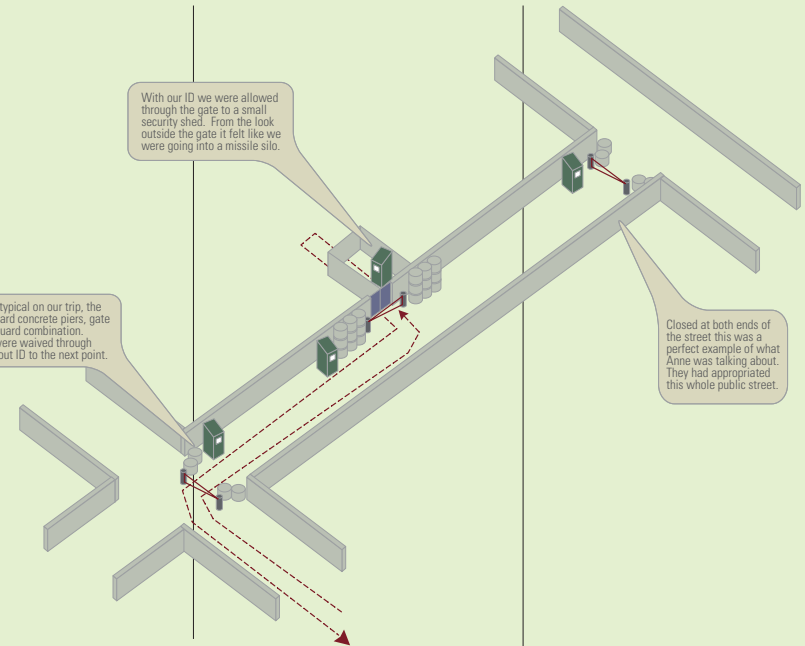
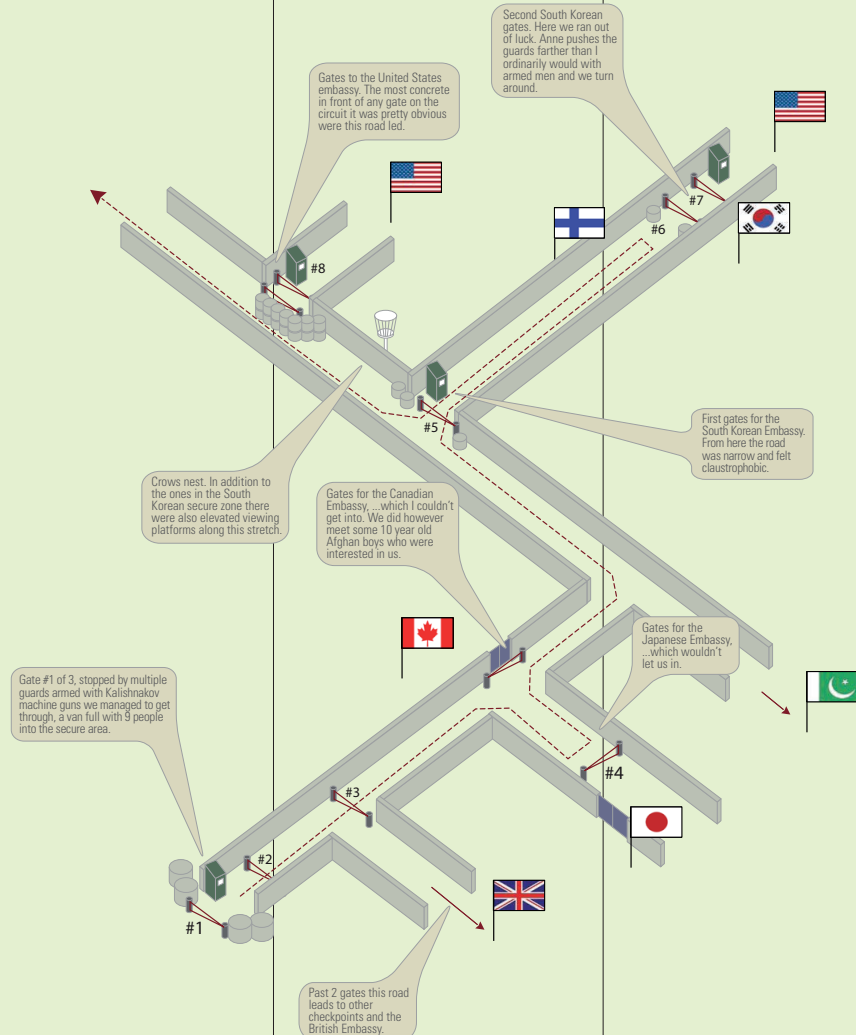




DIARY part 2

George M. AGNEW

# 'IRONICALLY, OF ALL THE PLACES WE VISITED, I WAS UNABLE TO GET INTO ONE'



Our first stop was an area of the city known as Wazir Akbar Khan, an area home to quite a few embassies. Not surprisingly the US embassy is the largest and most heavily secured not just in that area but in all of Kabul. Our initial point of entry was a gated checkpoint along a road which led to the Canadian, Pakistani, Finnish, South Korean, British and Japanese embassies. We were stopped at the gate by Afghan guards who demanded our papers. To make our way into a secure zone we had to clear three gates through which we were funneled by huge concrete pylons blocking the rest of the road. Three or four armed men in military uniform congregated by the first gate. This was a common sight in Kabul. We had been continuously filming from the van, carefully excepting secure areas and gated checkpoints. This became a little difficult to do now on a tour of secure areas and gated checkpoints.

Once through the first set of gates, we were stopped at two more checkpoints in succession before finally entering a zone of eerie calm. A wide, empty street with a group of armored embassy SUVs were parked at one end; there was little sign of people. We drove the van up to the gates of the Canadian embassy, got out and started tooling around. Although we

had easily passed through, walking around this empty street was quite unsettling. Even as the only westerner I felt more comfortable walking through a busy street market than there. Standing in a canyon of reinforced concrete walls while having every move presumably watched really made me aware of my strategic disadvantage. During the entire excursion I felt pressure to leave, immediately.

Ironically, of all the places we visited I was unable to get into the one to which I was legitimately entitled; the Canadian embassy was closed for the weekend. I'd have to come back tomorrow, I was told by the guard. I returned to the group who were now talking to two young Afghan boys on bicycles adorned with Canadian flags. How they managed to be there I have no idea but they were the only other human beings in this deserted street and seemed as though they often were. They tried selling us maps and books and told us how much they liked Canadians (most likely because they sensed a sale). They were curious about our presence as we didn't seem to be going anywhere in particular. Given that we were in a secured area and wandering around with our cameras out it was kind of funny that the most attention we received was from these two 10-year-old boys. [p. 18]



# URBAN CANVAS

## RSVP KABUL ACTION PROPOSAL

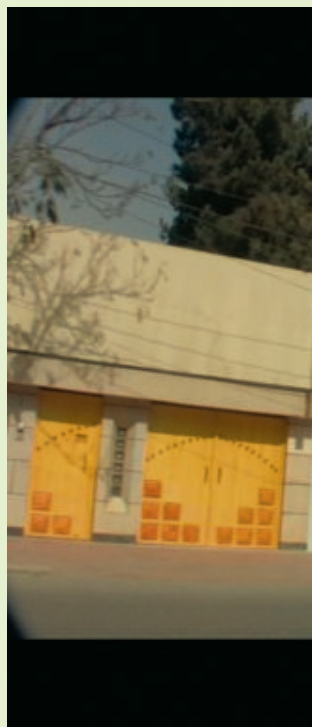
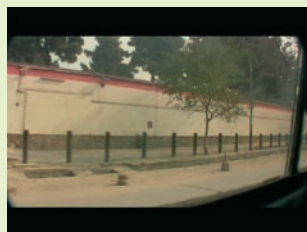
GEORGE M. AGNEW

Many of the streets of Kabul are lined with walls. There are miles and miles of these walls. Ominous, opaque, and a

reminder of violence past and future they are an untapped resource. In many other parts of the world, in a city the size of Ka-

bul, these surfaces would be bombarded by image. From the obnoxious form of advertising to subversive street art and graffiti, these surfaces would be treated as a canvas to express one's voice.

Kabul needs to make its voice heard; it needs to make its walls talk. I propose that the students of art in Kabul begin with a corner and begin to illuminate the walls which stare blankly back at them. What would they say? It's up to them to decide. Once started the sight could be infectious. Color throughout the city, thoughts provoked, voices heard.



DIARY part 3

George M. AGNEW

## 'IT WAS HERE THAT WE REACHED OUR LIMIT'



After making a right and being denied at the Japanese embassy, we ran into a middle-aged Canadian (with a Canadian flag tattooed on his arm!). He was kind enough to stop and talk to us although when I asked if he could let me inside the embassy he told me he was the only one there. I thought this a strange admission to make given the paranoia about security. After my suggestion to storm the Canadian embassy was quickly turned down by the rest of group, we moved down the road to another checkpoint. We noticed a sign advertising a restaurant on the block which no doubt was there before the area was cordoned off by makeshift concrete walls and nervous guards. I wondered if the restaurant was still open and what other businesses and families had been forced to close or relocate. This was something that would come up again in our tour that day.

The next gate was the first check point for the South Korean and Finnish embassies. This time on foot, we were forced to wait a little longer before they accepted Anne's UN credentials. We were led through a single gate flanked by concrete walls into a much narrower street. Other than the occasional government employee in business dress walking past us to the gate, it was deserted. This street also felt different. Because the street was narrower you could tell

that many of the walls facing the street were not original to the compounds as at the Canadian or Japanese embassies but had been added after the South Koreans moved in. Also evident were crow's nests where guards could see into the street from above the walls. At the end of this block was another gate, staffed with Afghan guards. It was here that we reached our limit. Anne tried very hard to talk his way in to the point that the guards became visibly annoyed. Talking our way past armed guards at a security checkpoint was undoubtedly the most unnerving part of my trip. As Anne persisted, asking to speak to supervisors, the guards at the gate became increasingly suspicious of us. It's not as though they became hostile, but the simple change from credible passer-bys to potential threat was palpable. Knowing when to back off, we decided this was far enough and headed back the way we came. Anne explained that the South Korean embassy backs onto the American embassy which is why it was more difficult to gain entry.

Leaving through another street, we passed a heavily fortified gate which looked like a bunker due to the 12-foot high concrete walls built around it. We were told that this was an entrance to the American embassy, but we didn't slow to look. [▶ p.27]

# AFGHANISTAN: KEY HISTORICAL EVENTS

ASSEMBLED BY FATMA WAKIL

**1919** - Afghanistan regains independence after the Third Anglo-Afghan War.

**1926** - Amanullah is formally crowned king and introduces social reforms which eventually lead to resistance from conservative local forces.

**1929** - Amanullah resigns after civil unrest over his reforms, flees to India and finally seeks asylum in Italy.

**1931** - Nadir Shah takes control of Afghanistan. His response is combination of pacification and authoritarian rule.

**1933** - Zahir Shah, the son of Nadir Khan, is declared the new king. This period was largely peaceful and stable. External relations expanded and modest economic progress was achieved.

**1942** - During the Second World War the Afghan government adopts a policy of strict neutrality. Shah Mahmud becomes Prime Minister in 1946.

**1950** - Tribal unrest along the frontier with Pakistan leads to difficult relations between the two nations, including a Pakistani blockade on petroleum products to Afghanistan.

**1953** - Shah Mahmud is succeeded as Prime Minister by Daoud Khan, Zahir Shah's brother-in-law. Daoud Khan tries to negotiate an arms deal with the Americans; when negotiations brake down he turns to the Soviet Union.

**1956** - The Afghans launch their first five-year plan with advice from Russian planning experts. America reacts and wants to invest in economic assistance and non-military education. The Americans develop the first national airline, Ariana.

**1958** - Under Daoud's regime the army becomes mobile, educational opportunities expand, women are emancipated and infrastructure is modernized. Afghanistan gains the reputation of being a non-aligned nation. Substantial assistance comes from the Communist and Western powers, amounting to 80% of total developmental expenditure.

**1961** - The Pakistanis, now under the leadership of President Ayub Khan, sever diplomatic relations with and close their border to Afghanistan. The closure not only affects Afghan trade, but it also prevents the transit of supplies needed for American aid agencies. The Soviet Union reaps significant political and economic gains from this development. Later that year, Radio Afghanistan announces that Daoud has resigned and will be replaced by Dr. Yousof.

**1964** - A Loya Jirga (Grand Assembly) formally approves the constitution and it is signed by Zahir Shah. The constitution includes a provision that the royal family must not participate in political parties. Under the constitution there is a provision for a bicameral parliament with a fully elected lower house and a partly elected, partly appointed upper house.

**1966** - The constitution provides for a more open political system. As a result, parliamentary opposition and student militancy quietly plants the seeds for a Communist Party which in turn will eventually lead to the formation of the Parcham (the Banner) party.

**1970** - Beginning in the early 1970s, conflicts between leftist and religious groups become increasingly prevalent at schools and universities. This unrest results in growing divisions within Afghan society between members of the urban, educated middle classes and those with traditional, rural backgrounds. The economy goes from bad to worse with the slowdown in foreign aid. In 1971 there is widespread famine in Afghanistan.

**1973** - Daoud Khan reemerges and stages a bloodless coup while Zahir Shah is in Italy for medical treatment. Daoud Khan abolishes the monarchy and declares Afghanistan a republic. Daoud excludes the Parcham from effective power and ignores overtures from the Khalq (the People's Democratic Party). Daoud also clamps down on Islamist religious groups.

**1974** - Mohammad Niazi, leader of the Ikhwan-i-Musalam (the Muslim Brotherhood), is jailed.

**1975** - Daoud founds his own party, the Hezb-i-Inqilab-i-Melli (National Revolutionary Party) and assembles a Loya Jirga that approves a new constitution and elects

him as President for a six-year term. The new constitution provides for a unicameral parliament and a one-party state.

**1978** - Daoud is overthrown and assassinated in a communist uprising known as the Saur Revolution. Power is handed over to a joint military/civilian Revolutionary Council of the Democratic Republic of Afghanistan with Taraki as President and Prime Minister. The Parchamis favor a gradualist approach, whereas the Khalqis and Hafizullah Amin in particular are determined on a root and branch social and economic revolution.

**1979** - The Soviet Union invades Afghanistan, kills Hafizullah Amin and installs a puppet regime under the leadership of Parcham leader Karmal. Uprisings and unrest in countryside continue and Afghan army forces disintegrate.

**1980** - The old rivalry between the Khalq and the Parcham reemerges and the two factions fight bitterly. The Soviet invasion alters the position of the Islamic groups which had begun to organize themselves in Pakistan. They become known as the Mujahideen (Freedom Fighters).

**1984** - The Mujahideen receive billions of dollars in military and logistical aid from the United States and other countries to stop further Soviet expansion in Afghanistan.

**1985** - The Mujahideen come together in Pakistan to form a coalition against

Soviet forces. Half of the Afghan population is now displaced by war; many flee to neighboring countries such as Iran and Pakistan. The new Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev declares his intent to withdraw Soviet troops from Afghanistan.

**1986** - Karmal is replaced by Najibullah as head of the new Soviet-backed regime.

**1989** - Soviet troops withdraw from Afghanistan. The last Soviet troops leave, but civil war continues as the Mujahideen move to overthrow pro-communist leader Najibullah.

**1993** - Mujahideen factions agree on the formation of an interim government with Burhanuddin Rabbani as President. Factional fighting continues and the predominantly Pashtoon speaking Taliban appear as the major challengers to the interim government.

**1996** - The Taliban capture Kabul and impose a fundamentalist version of Islam, banning women from work, and institute Sharia law. Rabbani flees to join the anti-Taliban Northern Alliance, led by Ahmad Shah Massoud.

**1997** - Pakistan and Saudi Arabia recognize the Taliban as the legitimate rulers of Afghanistan. Other countries continue to regard Rabbani as head of state. The Taliban gain control of about two-third of the country.

**2001** - Ahmed Shah Massoud is assassinated by suicide bombers in September. Four civilian aircrafts are later hijacked by terrorists and flown into New York's World Trade Center and the Pentagon. America names Osama Bin Laden as the primary suspect of these attacks. When the Taliban refuse to turn Bin Laden over, America and its allies begin daily air strikes. The Northern Alliance manages to take over the key cities of Mazar-i Sharif and Kabul. The Taliban regime collapses entirely when its troops flee to Kandahar.

**2001** - Afghan political groups sign the Bonn-Agreement for an interim

government. The Loya Jirga elects Hamid Karzai head of a 30-member interim power-sharing government. The Taliban finally give up their last stronghold of Kandahar.

**2002** - In April former king Zahir Shah returns to Kabul, although he makes no claim to the throne. The UN Security Council extends its mandate of International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) until December 2002. Western powers continue their military campaign to hunt down remnants of al-Qaeda and Taliban forces. President Karzai, Pakistani leaders, and Turkmen leaders agree to a deal to build a gas pipeline through Afghanistan which will carry Turkmen gas to Pakistan.

**2003** - NATO takes control of the security in Kabul. This is NATO's first operational commitment outside Europe.

**2004** - The Loya Jirga accepts a new constitution. Presidential elections are held; Hamid Karzai is declared the winner with 55% of the vote.

**2005** - The first parliamentary and provincial elections are held in more than 30 years.

**2006** - NATO troops take over the leadership of military operations in southern Afghanistan. Heavy fighting occurs when these forces try to extend government control to areas in which Taliban influence is strong. At the beginning of 2007, NATO and Afghan forces launch Operation Achilles, the largest offensive to date against the Taliban in the southern provinces of Afghanistan.

**2007** - In late 2007 two senior EU and UN envoys are accused by Afghan officials of making contact with the Taliban and are expelled from the country.

**2008** - In early 2008 NATO begins operation Patan Ghar in Uruzgan.

**1** Martin Ewans 'Afghanistan. A short history of its people and politics'

**2** Louis Dupree 'Afghanistan'





# THE SECURITY INDUSTRY امنیت

ARCHIS RSVP IN CONVERSATION WITH MOWDOOD POPAL



A guard's bed on top of the Kuhe Asamay (TV Hill).

**PC:** Do you know what security consultants get paid? I heard a rumor that they earn US\$2,000 a day.

**MP:** Most clients do pay the security companies \$2,000 per security employee. Then the company pays the employee \$1,000 or less a day depending on his level of experience in the military. Top level security consultants trained in the US Special Forces or British SPS or SAS go for about \$2,000 per day. Then we have middle range security, either South Africans or Europeans, and then you have the Ghurkas who are paid a little more than Afghans. They range between \$500 and \$1,000 a month. The Afghans go for \$200 to \$500 a month. For a static guard – that means standing in one place with a gun – they usually use Afghans.

**JJ:** How do security companies drive the politics of fear in this city?

**MP:** The security companies know they are the legitimate security in Afghanistan in as much as accountability is currently

uncertain in Afghanistan. If something happens to you while using their services they are accountable. In Afghanistan the government is corrupt; the police are some the worst in the world. There is no real security for the expatriate community except for the security companies. The security companies use their advantage to promote fear among the expatriates so they listen only to them in order to make their profits.

**NT:** The NGO community gets regular messages from every security company. These include security newsletters with warnings and text messages. That flow of messages naturally scares you...

**JJ:** Do you have one of these SMSs? What do they look like?

**MP:** I don't get these messages but I have heard of messages like 'threats south of Kabul' or 'something is going to happen in different part of the city or country'. And there are text messages like 'don't go out'.

**NT:** Regarding things that already happened – like 'there was a suicide bombing. Don't go out' – those messages can be useful, because they inform about a fact. But most of the warnings are too general and are designed only to spread fear.

**JJ:** First you create fear within a population, then you provide the security.

**MP:** Absolutely, different organizations and governments have used fear to control people.

**PC:** What is the security industry here? What are the companies?

**MP:** There are local companies, American companies including the big ones DynCorp and Blackwater, and a mixture of companies from different countries.

**PC:** In my UN house we have what I call UN-guards. Does the UN run its own security service?

**MP:** No, I think UN guards are really independent contractors, some from different companies.

**PC:** There are accusations against some local security companies that they were robbing banks or convoys and kidnapping people. Have big international companies done this as well? Has DynCorp, for example, kidnapped anyone?

**MP:** The accusations are related to the minor local companies you haven't even heard about. The majority of the large local companies are not at fault. It's the minor ones that use the security company name as a front. As for the big international companies like DynCorp etc., there is no evidence that they've been involved in kidnappings.

**JJ:** Can you remember that about a year ago there was a news item that Afghan security forces entered an American security company's building and actually found some kidnapped Afghans who had been beaten for information?

**PC:** That was John Idema. He's an ex-Marine and who's now jailed in 'Pole Charkhi'.

**MP:** He was the leader of a group of bounty hunters that was actually looking for Osama Bin Laden; they wanted to go

for the big prize: \$25 million. They came to look for Osama Bin Laden and used all the wrong methods to find him. That was not a security company.

**GA:** We were talking earlier about the security of the compounds and UN standards. Given your training as an architect and your eye for architecture, do you notice local people in their homes adopting the UN techniques or certain measures of security on their own?

**MP:** Yes, absolutely. Most of those using them do so on their own homes; most are former warlords and expatriate business men, local Afghans with decent salaries don't need security. Actually, if you look at the qualas, mud brick houses, they were originally designed like fortresses or forts, not really as houses for everyday life. In Afghanistan, traditional architecture was basically little homes with arched roofs in the south and sloped roofs in the north surrounded by a perimeter wall

that was very high and wide; they were really fortified. That's been the typical Afghan style. Even today you can see them in the rural areas. In the cities as development increased they moved away from the military qualas toward western style construction. Large qualas were broken up as a result of the expansion of the families that built them, the scarcity of land and the advent of urban planning. Adapting modern methods of construction and design also changed the style of homes.

For a static guard – that means standing in one place with a gun – they usually use Afghans.



Static guards in Sherpur.

**MP:** Mowdood Popal  
**PC:** Pietro Calogero  
**JJ:** Joost Janmaat  
**NT:** Niloufar Tajeri  
**GA:** George M. Agnew



# MINIMUM OPERATING SECURITY STANDARDS (MOSS)

MOSS is a policy document for all UN field operations. It was developed in response to the United Nations requirement to ensure that minimal essential security practices are established and maintained in the delivery of security support to United Nations staff. MOSS is a system-wide initiative that is managed by UNSECOORD.

Financial Implications: MOSS implementation has certain financial and resource implications at the country level and funding for this remains the responsibility of the Country Team; UNSECOORD does not have funds for MOSS implementation.

## inside compound

SECURE OFFICE AND ACCOMMODATION COMPOUNDS WITH 3.8 METER HIGH WALLS

BARBED WIRE AROUND COMPOUND

ARMED GUARDS OUTSIDE COMPOUNDS

CIVILIAN GUARDS INSIDE COMPOUNDS

BLAST FILM ON WINDOWS TO PREVENT FLYING GLASS CAUSED BY EXPLOSIONS

BUNKER, OR A SO CALLED 'SAFE ROOM'

## outside compound

DAYLIGHT TRAVEL ONLY (CURFEW AT 23:00)

UN VEHICLES MUST BE ABLE TO BE IDENTIFIED AS UN VEHICLES AT ALL TIMES, AND MUST BE CORRECTLY REGISTERED AND INSURED IN THE COUNTRY

ONE VEHICLE, FITTED WITH VHF, HF AND PORTABLE SATELLITE COMMUNICATIONS, WITH A MINIMUM TWO PERSONS, PLUS DRIVER, TRAVEL IN LOW RISK AREAS ONLY

HF VHF RADIOS AND SATELLITE TELEPHONES ON ALL ROAD MISSIONS

24/7 RADIO-COMMUNICATION WITH HIGHER HEADQUARTERS

VHF HANDSETS FOR ALL INTERNATIONAL STAFF AND SELECTED NATIONAL STAFF



**1** Guidelines MOSS Instruction Paper 2002  
<http://www.uniraq.org/operations/dss.asp>

**2** Election Observation Afghanistan 2005  
'Threat Assessment' by Arild Nodland

UNSECOORD is the Office of the United Nations Security Coordinator



DIARY part 4

George M. AGNEW

## 'TYPICAL EXAMPLE OF SECURITY MACHISMO'

Second on our trip was a block which was home to the Asia Foundation, an economic trade group. Anne pointed out the standard compound walls and the marks on the sidewalk where larger concrete fortifications had been built. We spoke to a security guard at an adjacent site and he explained that prior to the Asia Foundation occupying that site it was home to DynCorp, an American security company. During that time a car bomb had been detonated next to it and done severe damage to the neighboring area. DynCorp then left and the Asia Foundation arrived. As mentioned, all NGOs and embassies had been instructed to dismantle their fortifications by presidential order. The Asia Foundation

obliged and what we saw was the pared down version. We were told that since they had done this the residents of the neighborhood felt much safer as by creating the outward appearance that they were trying hard to improve security, the compound still remained a target. This was a typical example of a kind of 'security machismo' which was rife in Kabul. I would guess that more than half the people we saw driving in big, armored SUVs were doing more harm than good by calling unnecessary attention to themselves. I felt perfectly safe for the duration of our stay in our small, unassuming Toyota van. I'll take stealth over strength any day. (p. 34)

# EXTREME CAUTION: RE-LEGALIZATION OF PROPERTY IN PROGRESS

# احتياط

JOOST JANMAAT

In Afghanistan land is wealth and power and meaning. In Afghanistan land can kill. The bloody suicide attack in the Afghan province of Baghlan last November that claimed the lives of over 75 people, including six parliamentarians remains unresolved, but there are suspicions. The parliamentarians were in Baghlan researching a suspect property deal in which a sugar factory was sold by the government at a tenth of its market price. Among the rumors it was said that the killing was organized by powerful

landlords as a signal to anyone trying to intervene in Afghanistan's post-conflict redistribution of property.

Violence, business, coercion and construction are the hallmarks of the new Afghanistan. This is probably nowhere as apparent than in the country's booming capital. While war still rages in other parts of the country, Kabul is developing at an amazing pace. The city is experiencing relentless construction involving millions of forced returnees

from refugee camps in Iran and Pakistan, powerful land grabbers (especially in the more expensive areas of the city), and a government that is appropriating or reclaiming land all over the city.

Parallel to the extreme physical changes Afghanistan has witnessed over the last few centuries, administration is an equally dynamic mess. The courthouse records that track the history of property and land ownership in the country have been eaten by mice, burned or otherwise destroyed. In Kabul these days it is not hard to get a counterfeit deed to prove ownership.

This is the paper reality in a city where it is thought that a staggering 80% of the inhabitants are 'illegal'. Based on a 2005 survey, the World Bank recently calculated that within the city limits of Kabul 2.44 million people live in fear of bulldozing.<sup>1</sup> These people are generally returnees and live in the large and expanding informal settlements surrounding the center which are creeping up the slopes of the nearby hills and mountains.

They do not figure in the land administration system. In Afghanistan the set of structures and institutions which should implement the land policy, effect rights, deliver titles and deeds, and manage information are officially the responsibility of the local courts, the Makhzans. In reality property rights seems to belong to anyone who can get away with them and the management of deeds and other crucial information is heavily influenced by those who can influence it.

These are the circumstances in which the Afghan government, with the support of a range of foreign countries, donor agencies and international institutions, is trying to bring about economic development and responsible growth. Part of the international scheme for the reconstruction of Afghanistan is a major push for privatization and private sector development. Private ownership is deemed pivotal to Afghan economic de-



Construction on grabbed land in Sherpur.

velopment. To that end, starting in late 2004 the USAID LTERA project (Land Titling and Economic Restructuring in Afghanistan, [www.ltera.org](http://www.ltera.org)) began restructuring the provincial registration courts and archives of ministries and municipalities in order to reorganize the legal basis of property in Afghanistan.

The project has thus far digitalized more than six million deeds and aims for nothing less than the creation of a sound, orderly, publicly accessible data system on property rights in Afghanistan. This gargantuan effort seeks to end decades of ambiguity. What was typically fuzzy, informal, based on half truths and verbal agreements, subject to constant negotiation and renegotiation according to circumstances is now being digitalized in the new cadastration project. Truth has never been so static.

What is about to happen in Afghanistan is that illegal or extralegal property is being legalized. This is taking place in a (post-)conflict environment, an environment that is not stable at all and in which anyone with power can influence this process. Property rights in Afghani-

stan are being formalized and legalized at a time when there is no functioning legal system and no rule of law. If you can get your name on a deed now you are IN the system and secure. The USAID land titling project could turn into a massive

## Violence, business, coercion and construction are the hallmarks of the new Afghanistan.

land and property grab, all under the veil of the legal system and supported by international donor money. With the war still raging in parts of the country and a very feeble and corrupt government in place, perhaps this is not the best time for title registration.

I propose acknowledging the risks of abuse and manipulation.

There are no functioning mechanisms to protect this very sensitive operation from abuse and manipulation. Will we witness a dove-tailing of disaster capitalism and conflict-entrepreneur-

ship? Is this a lucrative dance between third world organized crime (brokers in coercion, extortion and violence) and first world organized crime (brokers in political information, financial networks and international tenders) in which the impulse for economic development overtakes the imperative to keep the peace?

The re-legalization of land rights and the legalization of extralegal property as it is taking shape in the reorganization of the cadaster should be the final stage of the nation-building project in Afghanistan. As long as the truth is the most dangerous asset in Afghanistan - one that can even get an entire parliamentary committee killed - we should handle it with extreme caution.

**1** The World Bank, Kabul Urban Policy Notes Series n.4: *Informal settlement in Kabul* (September 2005).

JOOST JANMAAT is a historian and social scientist. He is co-founder of Partizan Publik, an Amsterdam-based office for social engineering. Besides teaching a course on social engineering and the praxis of social interventions at the University of Amsterdam, he is devoting his time to a variety of projects in Yerevan, Beirut, Kabul and Detroit. [www.partizanpublik.nl](http://www.partizanpublik.nl)



On the Tapa Bibi Mahroo (Bibi Mahroo Hill), view  
of Kabul's Northern Sprawl.



# ARCHITECTURAL EDUCATION AND HUMAN RIGHTS:

## KABUL A CASE WORTH STUDYING

# حقوق بشر

AHMAD FAHIM HAKIM

Every one  
has the right to life,  
liberty, and security  
of person

Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Article 3.

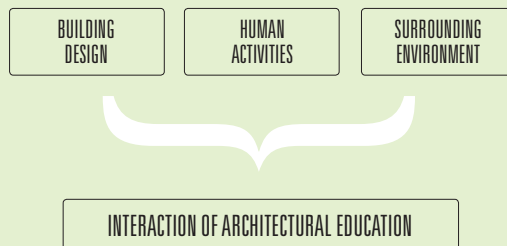
As Abraham Maslow highlighted in his famous Hierarchy of Needs theory, human beings have constantly struggled for a better life moving from basic life needs to personal growth and fulfillment. Meeting these basic needs has kept human beings motivated to find ways to address those fears which have never been absent from their experience and to seek protection from danger.

The way human beings adapt themselves to different and volatile contexts to accommodate their socio-behavioral as well as cultural needs and activities into space and the surrounding environment demonstrates the evolution and diversity of architecture. Architecture for change and architecture for the common good.

Architectural education in this sense is therefore much more than

architectural design. It goes beyond the very basic interpretation of architecture as the creation of a three dimensional space and form. Architecture education needs to equip future architects and practitioners with the required empirical and systematic knowledge and analytic tools to turn people's dreams and socio-behavioral aspirations into a creative, meaningful space and environment.

The following chart highlights that architectural education consists



of interaction between human activities and socio-behavioral needs, building design and the surrounding environment. These enable us to better understand

the effectiveness of function, appropriateness of form, and the identification of suitable space and locations. A new discipline for architectural education!

If understood and analyzed well, the enhanced interaction among human activities, building design and functionality, and the surrounding environment would ultimately enable future architects to shift their thinking from subjective *architecture design* to *objective architectural education*.

A lack of adequate knowledge regarding objective architectural education would result in the failure to create a meaningful and suitable environment and would further complicate urban problems as one can easily observe in Kabul's rapid growth.<sup>1</sup> Land grabbing and the transformation of public and green areas into private commercial buildings, the speedy development of shanty housing along the foothills of Kabul (perceived by authorities as unplanned housing schemes), and alien architecture in the construction of houses owned by warlords are all contributing factors to the degradation of the city's façade as well as the environment. It is appalling to learn that out of a population of some 32 million only five million Afghans have access to clean drinking water and a mere 2.6 million to sanitation throughout the country.<sup>2</sup>

Architectural education is therefore not limited to knowing about different schools of design. It covers a wide range of disciplines such as art, science

and skills enabling human societies to enjoy their living environment and enhance their interaction with the outside world.



Sherpur: Last remaining squatter houses that will be ultimately bulldozed to make way for more powerful land grabbers..





Workers in the Old City district of Murad Khane which is being reconstructed by Turquoise Mountain Foundation.

### Architecture: Art or Therapy?

Quality of life and good living standards, as fundamental human rights, require access to appropriate shelter, education, health and social welfare services as cornerstones for liberty and personal security. Therefore to understand architecture solely as the art of design and construction, which is how it is defined in most dictionaries, even if technically correct overshadows the educational and instructive role of architecture and ignores its direct relation with humans in general and in particular the users' socio-behavioral aspirations and needs in architectural space.

With its growing urban challenges Kabul has a completely new social fabric as compared to its last three decades. Diverse groups are now living in Kabul with different needs, activities and aspirations. These returnees, internally displaced people, stranded poor and

the homeless consider the foothills and mountains an easy choice for their accommodation and shelter. Illness, crime, poverty, domestic violence, disaster and environmental degradation are the direct impact of poor urban planning. The inadequate knowledge of architectural education complicates the already compounded urban problems even further.

Architectural education requires future architects to learn more about themselves and human beings; it requires them to be able to reflect on the ambitions and demands emanating from their actual and perceived needs. It indeed requires future architects to see architecture as a **therapy** rather than an **art** of ordering form and space. Architecture must be seen as a healing measure to address psycho-social as well as socio-cultural activities in terms of space need, structure and architectural design.

Analyzing architecture is much broader than the information and ana-

lytic tools of architectural delineation and construction. Analyzing architecture sheds more light on specific gender-based needs and its accommodation in architectural space within the surrounding environment. Analyzing architecture as a dynamic process enables architects to create an appropriate and functional environment for diverse groups living together. Considering architecture as a therapy creates an *interactive society* and *inclusive neighborhoods*.

One may conclude that architecture as an art is very much self-centered or architect-based and is therefore very subjective, while architecture as a therapy is people-oriented and user-based and is thus objective.

### Architectural education and human rights: which promotes which?

As an architect and human rights activist and advocate I find myself in a

difficult position when commenting on whether human rights function as a basis for architectural education or analyzing architecture promotes human rights.

There is no doubt that both architectural education as well as human rights focus on human beings. Architectural education tries to enable future architects to create meaningful structures of space and form to appropriately accommodate diverse and relevant human activities, while human rights emphasizes that all humans are born free and equal in dignity and rights.<sup>3</sup> Thus there should be no discrimination against anyone for any reason.<sup>4</sup> No one should be denied access to a good standard of living.<sup>5</sup>

One provides quantity, while the other quality. Both are needed for an acceptable living standard. Everyone in Kabul should have tap water (quantity) and safe drinking water (quality). As regards the current situation in Kabul, quantity is not satisfactory and it is far too early to talk about quality!

If left unmet, the right to safe water will cast a long shadow over the right to health care. Unhealthy citizens hamper the constructive interaction between and among citizens and their

There is no doubt that both architectural education as well as human rights focus on human beings.

environment. Unhealthy citizens form an unhealthy environment and city.

Some two-thirds of Kabul's population lack proper road access to their residential area as they live in unplanned housing schemes. Emergency vehicles have poor access and thus these people have poor access to these services. Obviously this is not in compliance with the minimum living standards and human rights norms as well as citizenship entitlements. Why? Does this not constitute discrimination and exclusion?

The answer is that it depends on the angle from which one looks at the question. For example, should a neighborhood provide protection to its resi-

dents from actual or perceived danger? Should it promote the rights to shelter and proper living standards? If the answer to the latter question is yes, then it must be complemented by the provision of safe drinking water, appropriate drainage and sanitation, ample and adequate access, and green and public areas. This would of course also apply to other facilities such as health clinics and schools. Do we see these as just physical facilities or as a means to offer social services like health and education?

The reason we are witnessing such shortcomings in our cities and such trouble in societies such as Kabul is mainly due to the inadequate professional knowledge of architectural education and ignorance of its interconnectedness with human rights. Both must be thoroughly understood and considered for the well-being and enjoyment of all.

**1** Kabul, the capital city of Afghanistan, has an estimated population of 4-5 million which doubled in the last couple of years. Social services and facilities are very limited in the city. According to the city and the Ministry of Urban Development, the unplanned development and growth of shanty housing comprises 65 – 70%. The initial, Soviet-supported master plan from 1978 was only very partially im-

plemented, although set a target of 800,000 as the ultimate population of Kabul. The population of Afghanistan is estimated roughly 32 million. There has not been a census in three decades.

**2** State of the World's Children 2008 report released by UNICEF on January 2008.

**3** Article 1 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, 10 December 1948.

**4** Article 2 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights emphasizes that 'Everyone is entitled to all the rights and freedoms set forth in this Declaration, without distinction of any kind, such as race, color, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status.'

**5** Article 25, section 1 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights states: 'Everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of himself and of his family, including food, clothing, housing and medical care and necessary social services, and the right to security in the event of unemployment, sickness, disability, widowhood, old age or other lack of livelihood in circumstances beyond his control.'

AHMAD FAHIM HAKIM graduated from the Architecture department of the Faculty of Engineering, Kabul University in 1980. He has worked as an architect within governmental and non-governmental institutions and lectured at the Faculty of Engineering from 1976 to 1987. He got his Master's degree on Post-war Recovery at the PRDU, University of York, UK in 1998 and has been actively involved in civil society activities since then. Currently he is Deputy Chair of the Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission.



DIARY part 5

George M. AGNEW

## 'I WAS GLAD TO GET BACK TO THE UN-WALLED CITY'

Last on our stop was the Asian Development bank. Given the current situation, the bank had closed the street in front of it along the entire block. At each end of the block were gates surrounded by huge concrete pylons. We made our way through the check-point to the middle of the block in front of what outwardly was the most heavily fortified compound we saw all day. In addition to the original walls, massive concrete slabs stacked three high well above the height of the original walls had been added. We entered the compound through the small gate and checked in. We spoke to a representative

who refused to answer questions even about how he personally felt about working in such a place. We left, ending our field trip for the day. Without embarrassment I can say I was glad to get back to the un-walled city, where I felt much safer.

GEORGE M. AGNEW is an architect in New York City interested in security and informal/improvised design. He is author of the blog "The Architecture of Fear" and contrary to popular belief, is not afraid of architecture. [www.george-agnew.com](http://www.george-agnew.com)

## THE NIGHTINGALE OF KABUL

Ahmad Zahir was the most celebrated Afghan music phenomenon of his era and for many the purest embodiment of modern Afghan music. Even today, 30 years after his death, his songs still permeate Afghan culture. His life and career are important for many Afghans both at home and among the Afghan Diaspora.

Ahmed Zahir died on June the 13th, 1979. His grave is at the Shuhada-e-Saliheen (The Pure Martyrs) cemetery, located at the western edge of town. Every year on the anniversary of his death and on New Year a crowd of fans gathers at his small, white, marble monument tomb: he is a living memory.

During the Taliban regime his tomb was destroyed and his face erased from the posters on the tomb. This image represents the clash within Afghan society about common culture, tradition and history.

The grave of the musician Ahmad Zahir at the Shuhada-e-Saliheen (The Pure Martyrs) cemetery.



## 2008 2009+

DRAWN UP BY THE KABUL AND INTERNATIONAL RSVP TEAM

Proposal for a two-week design studio on public space in Kabul with debate, research and practical interventions to be held september 2008.

**What to do?**

**Map** the loss of public and/or urban open space across the city.

**Analyze** some aspects of environmental degradation at a single site in the city.

**Examine** how a specific place is used in time and space by examining historical records and recording behavior on film or with photography.

**Interview** people regarding their perceptions of open spaces and record anecdotes for use in the local media as part of a campaign to raise awareness.

**Document** negative contributions to urbanism by highlighting specific cases demonstrating a lack of professional integrity.

**Intervene** in public spaces to create a dialogue with the users of that space.

**To consider:**

Establish the right scale of research and/or intervention – take into account both accessibility and the potential impact on the population or environment. Focusing on a single site/phenomenon risks skewing complex sets of issues and possibly excludes those wanting to participate.

Mind the balance between physical and mental spaces – take into account growing urban divides along class, ethnic/tribal and confessional lines.

Ensure that any intervention is exemplary and clearly demonstrates a public good.

## Urban Research Center Kabul and Post-Graduate Studies Program

To establish an Urban Research Center Kabul charged with the task to collect and process city-related data concerning land use, urban and socio-economic development.

To establish a post-graduate program for University and Polytechnic graduates (architecture, art, social sciences) including an internship at the Urban Research Centre

These formats incorporate collaboration and support from Kabul Municipality, the Ministry of Urban Development and Housing, the Ministry of Information and Culture, Kabul University, and the Polytechnic.

Get involved at: [rsvp@archis.org](mailto:rsvp@archis.org)

**COLOPHON**

**KABUL – SECURE CITY, PUBLIC CITY** is a supplement to Volume Magazine #15 // **ARCHIS EDITORIAL TEAM:** Lilet Breddels, Christian Ersten, Arjen Oosterman, Niloufar Tajeri, **DESIGN:** Nicolas Bourquin, Jeannette Gaussi, **PHOTOGRAPHERS:** George M. Agnew p.17, 26 (top), Ole Bouman p.26 (below), Jeannette Gaussi p.1/2, p.5, 6, 8, 9 (upper 2), 13/14, 21/22, 23, 24, 28, 29/30, 32, 33, 35/36, 39/40, Joost Janmaat p.10, 18, Ajmal Maiwandi p.12, Niloufar Tajeri p.9(below), 37 // This supplement is published in the wake of the Archis RSVP Event # 11, KABUL // **PARTICIPANTS:** *AFIR* Anne Feenstra, *Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission* Ahmad Fahim Hakim, *Aga Khan Trust for Culture* Mohammad Yasin Hejrat, Jolyon Leslie, Ajmal Maiwandi, Abdul Najimi, Anna Soave, *Archis* Lilet Breddels, Niloufar Tajeri, *Centre for Contemporary Art Afghanistan* Rahraw Omarzad, *Civil Engineer* Hamed Wardak, *Columbia University* George M. Agnew, *Ehsaan Construction Company* Mowdood Popal, *Kabul Municipality* Hasan Abdullahi, Pushpa Pathak, *Kabul University Faculty of Architecture* Sayed Maqbool Pietro Calogero, *Kabul University Faculty of Fine Arts* Ghulam Hazrat, Kabir, Jamil, Khalid, Jehanara, Soheil, Abdul Wahab, *Netherlands Architecture Institute* Ole Bouman, *Partizan Publik* Joost Janmaat, *Property Consulting Afghanistan* Torialai Bahadery, *Society for the Preservation of Afghanistan's Cultural Heritage* Ana Rosa Rodriguez Garcia, *Turquoise Mountain Foundation* Grahame Hunter, Rory Steward, Anna C. Woodiwiss, Fatma Wakil, *Visual Artist* Jeannette Gaussi // **SPECIAL THANKS TO** Anne Feenstra, Tarek Noor, Anna Soave and Said-Taher for helping us find our way in Kabul. // The RSVP event #11 Kabul was initiated by Archis Interventions, the branch of the Archis Foundation dedicated to providing cities in need with clues and concepts to revive the public domain, re-energize urban spirit and revitalize trust in dialogue as the essence of civic life. // [www.archis.org](http://www.archis.org)

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# Volume

Ahmad Shah Massoud Billboard on the Tapa Bibi Mahroo (Bibi Mahroo Hill).

