



The Lakshmi Mittal and Family

SOUTH ASIA INSTITUTE

HARVARD UNIVERSITY

Extreme Urbanism: A View on Afghanistan, Session 3

Contemporary Architecture and Urbanism in Afghanistan

Seminar Transcript

Until recently, Afghanistan was omnipresent in global news for the past two decades for all of the wrong reasons. As part of the Option studio, Extreme Urbanism VII: Imagining an Urban Future for Ishkashim, offered at the Harvard GSD in the fall of 2020, this workshop/lecture series aims to propose to interested audiences the opportunity to get an updated, informed view on the country.

Addressing primarily architectural, urban, and territorial aspects of Afghanistan, this cycle of talks aims to create a platform where varied topics ranging from vernacular architecture and building traditions to infrastructure and cultural specificities are discussed in conjunction with issues related to historic settlements and contemporary planning in Afghanistan. The speakers will include academics from Harvard University and Kabul University, in addition to global experts, and practitioners working in or on Afghanistan.

Chair

- **Rahul Mehrotra**, Professor of Urban Design and Planning, Harvard Graduate School of Design

Speakers

- **Ajmal Maiwandi**, Director, Aga Khan Trust for Culture
- **Anne Feenstra**, Founder and Principal, Sustainable Mountain Architecture, Kathmandu; Former Dean of Architecture, CEPT University, Ahmedabad
- **Koukaba Mojadidi**, Architect and Founder, Wingspan Architects
- **Ramin Sadiq**, Head of Urban Planning and Design Department, Kabul University

Chelsea Ferrell: Hello and welcome to today's seminar, which is the third and final session in our series on 'Extreme Urbanism: A View on Afghanistan.' Today's topic centers around 'contemporary architecture and urbanism in Afghanistan.'

I'm Chelsea Ferrell, the Assistant Director of the Lakshmi Mittal and Family South Asia Institute at Harvard University. The mission of the institute is to engage through interdisciplinary research to advance and deepen the understanding of critical issues relevant to South Asia and its relationship with the world.

Before we get started, we have a couple of housekeeping items for today. During the question and answer session, you can submit questions directly to the moderator via the Q&A function on Zoom. There will be a short survey automatically sent to you at the end of the session, we would ask that you kindly fill this out. Finally, today's session will be recorded. Without further ado, I'd like to introduce the moderator of today's session, Dr. Rahul Mehrotra. Dr. Mehrotra is the Founder Principal of RMA Architects. He divides his time between working in Mumbai and Boston and teaching at the Graduate School of Design at Harvard University where he's Professor of Urban Design and Planning and the John T. Dunlop Professor of Housing and Urbanization. His new book is to be released later this month is titled 'Working in Mumbai,' and is a reflection of practice of over 30 years, and discussion on the book is slated for next month, and is scheduled to take place on Friday, November 13 from one to 2 PM Eastern Standard Time. Thank you for being with us today. Dr. Mehrotra.

Rahul Mehrotra: Thanks, Chelsea. So, let's get going. Thank you very much for the introduction, thank you for organizing this. Thank you to the Lakshmi Mittal and Family South Asia Institute at Harvard University for supporting this event. I want to start by thanking my colleague, Charlotte Malterre-Barthes, who is teaching with me. We're doing a studio, which uses the same title 'Extreme Urbanism,' and we're looking at planning architecture urban design in Afghanistan.

And so, this series of three seminars, really, the idea for this series of three seminars emerged from the discussions in the studio and expanded to also meet the interests of the South Asia Institute. And really, to set up a platform, and I hope it will be ongoing, a platform for conversations around architecture and urbanism in Afghanistan, in South Asia, I think a region that has been underrepresented, but I think the world has a lot to

learn from the experiences of practitioners on the ground and thinking through really challenging, and often wicked problems in these areas.

So this last session, which is going to focus on 'Contemporary Planning and Architecture' is, as I said, part of three sessions we've had. The first focused purely on planning and urbanism, the second one looked at traditional architecture in Afghanistan and conservation linked to traditional architecture. And here, we decided to focus on what were the pressing and contemporary issues focused on architecture and how one might frame those and we have a great group of presenters, all folks who are really engaged on the ground, and I'm going to just start off by introducing our panelists so we can go into the presentations and then we can have a discussion with the time that we have at the end.

So, our four panelists are Ahmad Ramin Sadiq, Ajmal Maiwandi, Anne Feenstra, and Koukaba Mojadidi. And I'm going to start, we're going to start with Ahmad Ramin Sadiq, who is a lecturer in Urban Planning and Design at the Department of Engineering Faculty in Kabul University. He has been working at Kabul University since 2009 in the Architecture Department and now actually moved to the Urban Planning and Design Department, which has just been established in 2018, and he is the Chair of this department. So, it's quite pathbreaking that he's getting a whole department going and established and so it's great that he could join us to share his experiences. He studied in Kabul, has been mentored by professors from Kansas State universities and also has a master's degree from Nagoya Institute of Technology in Japan, and his research has focused on the feasibility study of land readjustment projects in Afghanistan. And so we're going to start with his presentation because it might set up some challenges for us in the planning sphere.

This will be followed by Ajmal Maiwandi, who studied architecture at SCI-Arc, the Southern California Institute of Architecture and also obtained a Master's Degree from The Bartlett School of Architecture. He is currently the Director of the Aga Khan Trust for Culture in Afghanistan and prior to that, he's worked as an architect in Japan, the US, Germany, and then established a multidisciplinary practice in London and has been writing and speaking about these issues. And now finally, has returned in a way to situate himself in his home country and contribute there towards reconstruction, conservation and really fascinating projects.

Third speaker, Anne Feenstra, is an architect who studied at TU Delft and has joined us, and you'll see him in a foggy-ish background because he is in the northern parts of India where he's working on a project for a reservation for snow leopards. So we might have him often on the video depending on his connection, but Anne thank you so much for taking the trouble of connecting with us. Anne has spent many years in Kabul University, where he taught pro bono and worked with Afghan colleagues to update the curriculum. So, he contributed to institution building there and worked on several projects there, including the first national parks in the country, a national museum, and other projects for the government. He then moved and started working in Delhi, has now relocated himself in Kathmandu. He was also Dean of CEPT University, which is a well-known architecture school in Ahmedabad, India. And so, as you can see from all of this, his engagement on the ground in South Asia over the last two decades has been quite intense. And so, thank you Anne for joining us and contributing to these discussions.

Our last presenter in this list is Koukaba Mojadidi, Founder of Wingspan Architects. She studied at the Cooper Union for the Advancement of Science and Art, graduated in 2001 and she has been working on a range of socially conscious projects in areas of conflict, natural disaster, and projects that involve reconstruction, leading complex design projects through all phases of development from concept to implementation, because sometimes a gap there in these regions is quite large. And every project for her has been an opportunity to create spaces that thrive at the intersection of community, social impact, and justice, and she divides her time with her practice in New York, but a very intense engagement with work and questions, issues and emerging questions of architecture and urbanism in Afghanistan.

So, as you can see, we have a really fantastic range of speakers and very much look forward to these presentations, and we'll club all the questions and the discussions at the end. So with that, I'm going to request, Ahmad Ramin Sadiq to share his screen with us and start his presentation. Thank you very much.

Ahmad Ramin Sadiq: Thank you very much, Professor Rahul. Hello everyone, and thank you for arranging today's session. My presentation is focused about 'Land Readjustment and Urban Redevelopment Projects in Afghanistan,' which is quite new and recent methodology adopted in the system of Afghanistan. The content of my presentation goes from introduction then about the problems and issues of land acquisition, which is one of the key challenges in urban projects implementation, then I will focus a little bit about need for alternative

methods and jump to the introduction of LR and UR methods, and moving on introducing the Afghani model of LR/UR methods. And finally, what sort of legal system establishment has been done for these projects.

I think Afghanistan is one of those countries that its rural areas is almost three times larger than its urban areas. On the other hand, from these urban areas, which is 24% according to UN Habitat report in 2014, more than 65% of these urban areas have been developed informally and these informal areas have been developed during the conflict almost more than 40 years or 35 years and only 35% have been developed formally. So this sort of concept or situation made a lot of challenges to the whole Afghanistan and even rural areas or urban areas. As an example, we can see the Kabul city situation, which is the capital of Afghanistan and almost near to 60% of the whole country's total urban population is concentrated to this city and even in the Kabul city around or even more than 70% of the city is developed informally. And a lot of challenges and a lot of impacts has already happened in Kabul, like inadequate infrastructure, chaotic city development, and many more.

You may see the development of Kabul, especially in terms of population growth almost around one century, starting from 90,000 population coming to 2015 to more than 4.5 millions and you may see the dramatic population increase in the Kabul city, especially during 1990 until now. On the other hand, besides the informal development, even in the formal development, we have another type of informality or violations.

There are a lot of shortages, drawbacks in the monitoring and infrastructure in the implementation of the projects. As an example, you may see that during 15 years in Kabul city, from 2002 until 2017, according to Kabul municipality's data, in four districts of Kabul city, 3, 4, 6, and 9, around 80,000 building permit have been released, and among these 80,000, you may see that around 60,000 or 58,000 is without permits. I mean, they just took those permit or even developed everything informally and the ones who got the permit and went to decide to implement them, from them only 10% confirmed those permits and built whatever is inside the permit. And more than 10,000, which is 14%, they even violated a lot of items which is inside the permit, vertically and horizontally, I mean, in the area and also in the height. This is another sort of problem that right now you may see a lot in Kabul City right now.

If we talk about the problems of Kabul or problems of Afghanistan, one of the main topics is about the process, about the method, how you're preparing the projects and how you're going to implement. Almost more than 50 years, only land acquisition process has been used for the implementation of projects in Kabul City and throughout Afghanistan. Land acquisition is a compulsory element and beside it's all merits, there are a lot of shortages or challenges inside this process that some major ones could be from the acceptance of the residents, the compulsory nature of the process, no participation of residence at all, there's no social justice in the system and the system of land acquisition, it is a little bit time consuming because several years it takes for only one small project. And the most complicated one is that the previous community is totally displacing or totally destroying because they just purchase and sell the land, and this is the the main item in the land acquisition.

Furthermore, in the land acquisition, if we see after the implementation of these projects, there is no sense of ownership and responsibilities to the residents of the area and that's why residents of the area don't care about the proper use of the infrastructure, the facilities, and they don't care about the maintenance of these items. So, from the government's point of view, the maintenance fee of these facilities, these infrastructure in the long run is really challenging. You may see that Kabul city or many other provinces that they have built something after some years even one year or two years a road or a mosque or something they have prepared for this for a project, it is totally damaged or nobody cares. From these perspectives land acquisition has a lot of shortages, and from social, cultural, legal, financial and technical point of views, only use of land acquisition for implementation of project is something impossible or illogical to the government side and to the residents' side as well.

Part of these questions, it was found that there should be something new or something should happen to the land acquisition, only use of land acquisition will not respond everything. Some other processes or methods should be added to the system to enrich the system and expand further doors to the development of Afghanistan. And one of the main topics should be the participation of the residents, participation of the communities within that process, how they are contributing how they're engaging and how they will participate in the system, in the project. From these perspectives, Kabul municipality, eight years ago, through technical support of JAICA started to think about this and work on this process and JAICA's technical experts could adopt the land readjustment and urban redevelopment methods by studying the methods in Japan, in Turkey and India. And after all, the study of these methods they come up with an Afghani model of these two methods

and even right now, after approval of the KUFD and SDFs for the five major cities, these two methods were potentially recommended as major tools for the implementation of these frameworks.

In this slide, this is the introduction of land readjustment, which is a method or a tool of development to be used for readjusting, reshaping, and regularizing of the land to provide them infrastructure and social or public facilities through contribution of the landowners and within the project area. On the other hand, we have urban redevelopment project, which is quite different and focus area of this process is a little bit special because this will be only used for the mid-rise and high-rise land use areas and the concept is it's an intensive utilization of land that it will merge all the lands as a one land plot, and then part of the vertical development, every land owner will get a floor inside the building. This is like conversion of the land to a floor and land readjustment is conversion of land to land. These are like land readjustment is horizontal conversion and urban redevelopment is a vertical conversion. Part of the merits of land readjustment and urban redevelopment methods was, the major one is, the successful experiences of other countries like Germany, Japan, Turkey and other developing countries. Another one is the participation and engagement of communities and people inside the project. Provision of the basic infrastructure, which is one of the major issues right now in all cities of Afghanistan, whether it is formal or informal. Provision of land for infrastructure and public facilities part of this contribution. And land value capture or land increment value which is something really new in Afghanistan, it takes time to get familiar with that one.

The self-financed mechanism because both of these projects are self-financed because contribution make everything easy for the financial and for the technical aspects. And part of these studies, JAICA also found that these two methods much more efficient comparing to the land acquisition process, and it will provide an opportunity for a joint collaboration between government, between the private companies or developers, and people, residents. And one other benefit is that in most cases, there's a very less chances for relocation or displacement of the residents from the project area after the completion of the project.

This table shows a very general comparison between LR/UR methods and land acquisition. You may see that there are a lot of positive points comparing to the land acquisition like self-financing, participatory approach, the location of the land boundaries, and also furthermore about the regularization of the existing landscapes, which land acquisition don't touch at all, and also about reserve land and funding the product by itself and relocation, which I already discussed right now.

Through all of these studies, JAICA could establish the Afghani model of this through these two methods and these are the key items that they have. They are all included in the LR/UR regulation, which has been approved recently two months ago. The main topics or participation of the residents, the urban planning and urban redevelopment, the self-financed mechanism, the provision of infrastructure, social justice, which is very sensitive, and the preservation of historical areas and cultural values and sense of ownership and responsibility of residents because once they contribute something, it is for their own. I mean, they will take care like their child, they will take the responsibility and of course they will use it properly.

About the legal system, JAICA could conduct several studies jointly with Kabul municipality and with Ministry of Urban Development and Land and they could establish the whole system, starting from the land acquisition law and in the two articles, they have added the provision of these two methods as alternatives of land acquisitions by municipalities and other governmental agencies. And moving on, they have established a specific regulation for these two methods, which contains 32 articles and it recently approved in May 2020 and, furthermore, they have established a package of other related documents, starting from the manuals from the procedures on different aspects like the procedure for the LR/UR specifically, and also about the financial land and financial floor management, the relocation procedure, the coordination committee procedure, the relocation manual, the formal settlement regularization manual, the public participation and consensus building manual, land ownership clarification manual, and guidelines for LR/UR technical committee.

The LR/UR regulation, it will be used on national level, not only for Kabul or Kabul municipality, but the rest of documents, especially procedures and manuals, they are all prepared for Kabul municipality, other provinces, they can adopt these documents, but they have to customize them according to the need of their own provinces. So, these are the whole system how JAICA and Kabul municipality could prepare something not only for informal areas, but also for former areas. So, whatever we want to develop or we want to do something, to not use land acquisition, we have two other options to use, either land readjustment or urban redevelopment. These are some further details about each of these documents, how this process was started, starting from the land acquisition, how we added the provision and moving on how the regulation was established, how this system and articles have been written and how they have been enriched by all the urban sector of Afghanistan,

I mean IDLG, Ministry of Urban Development, and other agencies. And these are the screenshots of these procedures, manuals, and other documents related to land readjustment and urban redevelopment projects. And I'm sure for this specific project in discussion, these two methods could be potentially used because it has all the potentials for Afghanistan to be used because it is especially customized for Afghanistan. Thank you very much.

Rahul Mehrotra: Thank you, Ahmad. Thank you very much. And thank you for what you have done to kick this off because you've actually given us a much broader context and raised many important questions that we will, I think, return to in the discussion. But really, I think, for you to have set up the context to show us the proportionality of the urban, rural, the formal, informal, the mechanisms that are being used. One of my colleagues here at the Graduate School of Design Jerold Kayden always says to design and to plan is human, but to implement is divine. And so I think for you to have put that right up front is a very good contextualizing of the problem as we see now interventions at the architectural scale. And I think the other very important question that you have raised, which I think creates a fantastic context for the other three presentations is the question of capacity, the question of the bridge between governments and people and what civil society, the NGO sector foundations, people who try to bridge this gap are doing and I know that the next three presentations really address that question. Even as a model of practice in the context of South Asia, and Afghanistan in particular, in very interesting ways. So, thank you for having set up that framework, and set the context really for the rest of the discussions in some ways, and we'll return to questions at the end. Thank you again, Ahmad Ramin.

Ajmal, can I ask you to share your screen and go into your presentation? Thank you.

Ajmal Maiwandi: Good evening, everyone. I appreciate the opportunity to be able to share a lot of information that's been collected here on the ground in Afghanistan in the past two decades. I think it's quite important to talk about development, urban development of Afghanistan in the context of social development, and social development in the context of history, particularly all the twists and turns of recent Afghan history and I can think of nowhere better to begin than with the first half of the 19th century, and some of the earliest depictions of the context, the environment, both socio economically, but also in terms of architecture in Afghanistan. These are a series of sketches or renderings that were prepared by James Atkinson, who was part of, or at least attached to the invading British Army in the first Anglo Afghan war and they depict a landscape, a very harsh mountainous landscape, occupied by farmers and shepherds and bandits and nomads living in the decay of past civilizations and they're quite interesting in that perspective. On this image on the lower right, you can see the minarets of Ghazni, which still stand today and also the fortifications behind. So, a combination of fortified settlements as well as nomadic people's moving from one context to another.

This is as the invading army moves across southeastern Afghanistan into Kabul. This is a series of depictions of Kabul itself. On the top right image, you can see this mud brick or low-rise city far in the distance with vibrant markets and fruits stalls, as well as some royal architecture down at the bottom is the Bala Hisser or the royal palaces in fortifications of Kabul. To the bottom right, you have the Babur gardens, which again is a natural landscape in a historic garden established by Babur, one of the well, in fact, the founder of the Mughal Empire, as well as the costumes and the depictions of people. I think a lot of this is very ceremonial, it's very colorful, and I think it talks about the rank in the nobility and the entourage that are associated with it. The top right image is Shāh Shojā and the coronation of Shāh Shojā, who accompanied the British Army and was installed as a king in Afghanistan. As well as some of the scenes, the right image is a market in Kandahar and as well as some of the the costumes and the decorations representing rank of the king and courtesans. This is some of the earliest information that we have, again cartography and maps made by the British Army of settlements in Kabul and they reflect very clearly a very dense urban settlement at the base of the Asmai mountains to the bottom left. And then as, well in fact, with fortifications from the mountain in geographically with the Kabul River and then far our settlements in terms of these fortified forts, which litter the landscape. These are, again, in fact, during the Anglo-Afghan war, with the invention of photography and photographic equipment, these are some of the earliest depictions of the environment around the city. Top right is the Bala Hissar citadel, again a Mughal era structure and bottom left is a bazaar in the sporadic and spontaneous outgrowth of residential areas around the Bala Hissar.

This is the top panoramic, again, is taken from the Bala Hissar and it shows the city was essentially a low rise city. On the bottom left of the top image, you can see two circular holes in the ground and these are essentially refrigerators where snow would have been put in and then compacted and then used throughout the summer. It's a walled fortification, and it's quite interesting in that way because the architecture is built along the wall. This is a an image again at the same time by John Burke, which shows a regiment of sepoy and British troops

and also their Afghan collaborators setting up a defensive positions along the rich with a settlement down at the bottom. And then in the far distance, you can see these fortified residential compounds which have been built around the perimeter. Most of Kabul of course this time is green, natural, agricultural landscape.

In 1880, with the establishment, the reestablishment of a semi-independent Afghan monarchy, the Afghan monarchy sets out on a program of building palaces essentially or royal buildings, which you can see here in the center of this building is what we call today the attic complex. This is still where the presidents of Afghanistan are based, including the current president. And in the foreground, you see the sporadic organic development of residential areas around these contexts. These are a set of postcards prepared in the early 20th century, which catalog the range of buildings and already we can see an influence of eastern architecture in the more traditional building topology with pediments, Greek triangular pediments above the windows, a more rounded arches and openings as opposed to the pointed arches and openings. Very idyllic scenes of royal gardens, especially the one on the bottom left depicting kind of a Greek temple setting. This is also the time where King Amanullah Khan, in 1919 he becomes the king, and he expands this program of construction into a more modern state building program in the sense that previously royals were building buildings for themselves, but from this point forward, there's much more focus on civic architecture. This is the Darul Aman Palace, which is at the center of a new city, which was planned to the south of Kabul, which was meant to become a kind of administrative hub, moving our government functions to this location.

Aside from the palace itself, this is a view looking back from the palace towards Kabul, which is essentially at the base of the mountain in the in the distance. Aside from the Darul Aman Palace, there are a number of buildings, including today's National Museum, and at that time, the Department or the Institute of Archaeology, very few of these buildings were built because along with his modernization programs, there was a very intense or deep focus on modernizing or educating the Afghan society as well. And there was a backlash to that modernization program, particularly within the conservative elements of the country at that time. So these programs were seeing to be moving too quickly towards modernization, and, in fact, Amanullah Khan was deposed just before 1930 and 1929. His successors, I think, learned a lesson from him, and while the modernization programs continued, they continued to the much slower rate and took significantly longer time. This is the British Embassy compound, which was established after the third Anglo-Afghan war in 1919 where Afghanistan obtained its independence over foreign affairs and this is one of the earliest buildings that I think, aside from the arches and the columns and the pediments, I think this is maybe one of the earliest buildings representing a modern era. This would have been done during the Edwardian time in British architecture where a lot of the influence comes from mainland Europe, where there would have been also during visits by the royalty Afghan royalty to England and Germany, for example.

So, in the 1930s to the 1970s, Afghanistan sets out on an ambitious program of building infrastructure, dams, factories, roads, tunnels, as well as factories scaling up industrial production. In the beginning, a lot of this was funded directly by the Afghan government itself, in fact, Morrison-Knudsen who built the Hoover Dam and set up the Tennessee Valley Authority also set up the Helmand Valley Authority. There was a lot of cooperation, back and forth. And this was also the beginning of an exchange between Afghanistan and Western countries in terms of technical support and development support. Setting up, not necessarily a conflict, but setting up a race, an aid or development race between what was then the Soviet bloc in the West. So, various countries sponsored various large-scale infrastructure projects in the country, including the Kandahar airports on the top left, which was a US funded project, and likewise then the Kabul airport was funded by the Soviet Union at that time. So, these buildings are a stark departure from the traditional architecture of Afghanistan. They're quite contemporary, quite modern, the Ministry of Finance building in the bottom right, again, represents how Afghanistan wants to be seen in the middle of the 20th century.

Along with a change, in fact I would say, hand in hand with change in the urban environment and architectural environment, there's change in the social environment and by the 1970s, a lot of programs have enabled education for women and for a wide range of people from various contexts. This is the Kabul Expo, and I think this also represents the outward looking Afghanistan in 1956 and particularly with this geodesic dome by Buckminster Fuller, and also some mobile exhibitions. This was also the time that Duke Ellington first visited Afghanistan, so a kind of mingling or exchange between the West and the East. These are some scenes of Western Kabul, in fact, Eastern Kabul, where you can see these new parade grounds on the top image in the foreground, and modern architecture that time was also meant to be used as a veil to conceal traditional architecture.

Traditional architecture had the stigma associated with it that it was backwards and it was something that people generally didn't aspire towards. So, on the top image you can see kind of urban armature being cut

through, this is Jade Maiwand through the old city, and lined with modern buildings essentially giving the city another face. A lot of civic and educational buildings were also built at this time. These are what are called the Mikrorayon, which are prefabricated housing. I mean, I think a lot of Eastern Europe and also the Soviet Union or the Russian Federation now is littered with these types of prefabricated houses, and a lot was done in Afghanistan. And this also marks a change in the customary way of occupying space because you know I've tended to live in freer lands or compounds and houses that had courtyards, and this was a departure from that, in the sense that multi storied buildings that require people to use the same entrance and live one on top of the other. Also, in the 70s, 1960s and 70s, there was a lot of tourism in Afghanistan. So, there was an architecture that was spawned by tourism essentially. This is a hotel that Marcel Breuer designed. In fact, a number of designs that were done for Afghanistan never built, but others like these on the top left were built, and they're quite contemporary very, very modern. The top one is between Kabul, in the north of Afghanistan and Khindzhan, and the one on the bottom left is a hotel between the Kandahar and Herat highway. This was also a time where a lot of experiments was going on in contemporary forms of single family homes and the sketches on the right represent that. There are large sections of Kabul that have homes, quite modern homes that were built in the 1950s and 60s.

This on the top left is a general plan, again with assistance from the Soviet Union at that time, which looked at densities in the city and where high-rises could be built. The image on the top right is to prefabricated mid-rise buildings. One is thirteen storied and the other one is eighteen storied that were built in the 1980s in Kabul. So, while the plan was laid out in the 1960s, the buildings weren't actually built well after the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. The bottom left is, again, quite a brutal concrete structure clad in stone, but it was the Soviet Cultural Center in Afghanistan. I mean, it has some implications to their plan for Moscow and some derivatives of that. Bottom right is a bread factory, the Silo bread factory, again, built in that same time. This is a very, very interesting example, not built with Soviet assistance, this is an Italian architect Andrea Bruno, and his design for the Italian embassy in Kabul, which again is a very, very good good example, not only of architecture that was happening in Afghanistan, but I think of influences of a similar period outside of Afghanistan.

With all of this development, what I think Ramin also pointed out, was the rural-urban divide, a fraction of Afghanistan was being developed in this way while the vast majority of the urban population lived in poverty and lack of education. Again, the three decades of war began in the 1970s, these are a couple of cartoons that depict the Soviet invasion, and also highlighted by fears of the fragmentation of Afghanistan as well as different provinces being taken by different countries. These are the warriors. This is a photograph in Herat, which shows the extent of the damage during the 30-year conflict. These are a couple of photographs of Kabul, the one on the left depicts that same festival grounds and the armature that cuts through the city, and the one on the right shows the Kabul River and the density at that time.

This is a series of images that show the current situation in Kabul between 2002 and 2020, which is expansive development, uncontrolled development. Also the confiscation of state land and the development of private construction architecture and also the securitization of the city. This is, I would not context that or define it as architecture, but this is development in construction that's happening in the city and very much represents a new desire by people of Afghanistan. This is a catalog of various types of buildings that have been built in the city, I think only a small example. And again, the difference between poverty and how people occupy the vast majority of people, how they occupy the city as opposed to this development that comes in, as well as the extreme securitization of large swathes of the city and also its impact on the public space, urban sprawl density, as well as the living conditions, for the vast majority people remain incredibly poor.

I also wanted to put a couple of examples of contemporary architecture, stuff that's happened in the last 20 years that represent, in my opinion, very, very good examples of the use of typology, the use of materials. This is the Afghan Center at Kabul University, Nancy Dupree's brainchild and it's a courtyard topology building clad in local stone, and it's a research center and a resource for students. This is a project which was proposed for the National Museum in 2010 and it's still ongoing, designs are being further developed, and one day in the near future construction may begin on this project.

This is a project that Koukaba will talk about, this is a cultural center in Bamiyan, which was selected on the basis of an international competition with significant number of entries. So, there's this project. And this is the Chihilsitoun Gardens project done by Agha Khan Trust for Culture, which I represent. It's a public garden, it's about twelve and a half hectares. I'm just going to go through a couple of slides of the architecture. I want to depict what's being currently done, what the latest is from the city. It's a twelve and a half hectares site with a number of public facilities and buildings. And the buildings are built using rammed earth, this is a sports facility and sports fields. This is the Chihilsitoun Palace, in fact, it's a historic building that have been expanded

multiple times, but this is the reconstruction, essentially, of a building that was largely destroyed by conflict. This is also the main space on the left within that building, as well as some of the elevations of the sports spaces, all done in rammed earth, the auditorium within that space as well as the exhibition hall within the garden, and some entrance buildings around, together with an exhibition hall and the kind of administrative buildings.

In essence, a snapshot of architecture and development in Afghanistan over the past hundred years. And this is also the public and how they use the space and how they intermingle. In fact, there was a comment recently about civic space and the ability of people to mingle. I think that there are those spaces and it's a critical aspect of programs. I'll stop there. Thank you.

Rahul Mehrotra: Thank you, thank you very much Ajmal. I mean, that was a fantastic overview of architecture, the modernization process, and of course, lots to discuss but thank you for a wonderful overview and I'm sort of so glad you ended with the rubric of reimagined Afghanistan because in, at least the examples you've put, I hope we can discuss these. You know that there is a deep understanding clearly in those projects about traditional practices, whether it's materiality, but also space-making and the disruption of public space in terms of its imagination with the socialist architecture of the Soviet Union and the many interventions over time. So, let's pick up those conversations but thank you, thank you very much for a fabulously clear and insightful overview.

Anne, would you go next and share your screen. Thank you.

Anne Feenstra: I think someone is putting the screen up, right? Yeah, so thank you so much Ahmad Ramin for your presentation, and thank you Ajmal. It was a very good kind of historic overview. We will need to have a little discussion about whether the British embassy is really modernism or not, but I'm happy to have that discussion later.

I am going to pick it up where Ajmal kind of left it. I think there are many discussions about what has happened to the explosion of Kabul after the Mujahideen and the Taliban, it seems, according to many people, including Joel Leslie that the amount of people living in Kabul dipped under 1 million people towards 700,000- 800,000, and that exploded now towards four and a half- five million. And the growth partly came from many Afghans who came back from Pakistan, from Iran, from Europe, from the US. So, compared to other, let's say relatively fast growing cities, we really have an extreme situation in Kabul.

Next slide. So, in the foreground, you can see a rather bland Kabul and then towards the hills on the top of the image, you have this kind of, I think what Adam called 'rich architecture, 'basically it's poverty. Next slide. So, people live here without electricity, without water, without sewage, and especially in the winter, the worst that I've had in Afghanistan was minus 25 degrees. So good luck on the hill in those situations. Next one. It seems to be in a trend in South Asia to densify, to randomly do things. This is Kirtipur, a part of Kathmandu valley in Nepal, also this rampant kind of densification in an earthquake prone zone is ongoing. Next one. This is a satellite image of NASA of Kathmandu Valley in Nepal and it almost seems like this is a kind of a bacteria kind of spreading out. Next one. So, it's not a Coronavirus, but it's maybe something else that is spreading fast. Next one. This is what Ajmal already showed a little bit, I gave it a name at a certain moment, called the 'Wedding Cake Houses. 'There's nothing wrong with a wedding cake, but if that becomes the size of a house. Next slide. Then it is maybe not such a good idea, and all older "so called" beauty or gaudiness, I leave that up to your judgment, is put on the outside of the building. All these toilet tiles and colored glass and stuff is, it's unbelievable how much stuff is put on the outside of these buildings.

Next one. Next slide. So, they literally pop up, and the reason that I use the word "pop up" is that some of it is financed by opium, poppy money. In a traditional country like Afghanistan to make this kind of rampant planning, where people literally paint their windows because then they have the privacy of not seeing their neighbors, it's bizarre typology of that has been imported, you also see it in Riyadh in Saudi Arabia, you see that it Peshawar in Pakistan, this style of buildings. Next one. So, this is the opinion of the local boys.

Next one. So, I'm going to switch now from the urban and from Kabul and the kind of the Urban scrawl. Thank you for giving that number Ahmad Ramin of 65% informality. I'm going to talk about the slowness of Afghanistan and that the culture, the things that survive that have been built up in over a longer period of time. Next slide. So, this is about trying to find a balance like these boys did in the previous slide, or to see, to really look at Afghan families in this case in the north of the country. This is a family in the Wakhan Corridor, and if you really look carefully in the eyes of the Afghan families and especially of the kids, this is, I think, for the master

students, these are your clients, these are the people why I think you are in the studio and why you should be trying to make a positive change.

Next slide. Next one. So, when I was asked with my team of Afghan architects to design the second national park in the Wakhan Corridor, where you have blue sheep and Marco Polo sheep and snow leopards, we actually started by looking at how in the north of the country they make stone walls. They've been making stone walls for many, many, many years, and they're very good at it. And if you analyze these kind of patterns. Next slide. There's nothing wrong with your eyes, it's just a bit of a saturated kind of blurry thing. Next slide. So you actually see that in the patterns of these stone walls, there is nothing really horizontal and nothing really vertical. So, if that is the case, and everything is a little bit crooked, a little bit diagonal, asymmetrical network kind of pattern, maybe that should also be reflected then in the windows of the building. If you want to give that a contemporary kind of expression.

Next one. And this is looking from the inside of the visitor center and community center in Qal'eh-ye Panjeh in the Central Wakhan Corridor towards the south. So, the big white mountains in the background is actually Pakistan. Next one. The first building that we made is a small gatehouse that is the entry of the national park. It's difficult to pass this without being noticed because there is a guy watching you. Next one. The larger building that we designed is the community center and visitor's center, large is a big word because it's only 80 square meters. The central area is where the explanation of what's happening in the national park and the flora and fauna takes place and then you have three rangers on the right side, they sleep there, you have a little bit of an administrative kind of work. What is very important, if you read this plan, is to see the difference towards the south and the north. The north has a very thick wall, it's 75 centimeters thick, a combination of stone and sun-dried brick and the southern wall is a very open wall with double glazing, but based on the basic principles of energy. Next one. So this is a sketch of that that section, the plinth that we made for the outside because there's quite a bit of snowfall, we used horizontal flat stones and. Next slide. And this is during the making of the roof. My colleague Farat Jahan is on the roof there.

We used 12 layers in different mixtures of mud and straw, the latest layers have a lot of clay in it for the waterproofing of the room. Afghanistan has a fairly arid climate and most of the snow that falls is dry snow and there is not so much rainfall. Next one. In the building, if you look carefully, the other contemporary kind of expression that we gave is use the four different stones that we found locally in the surrounding hills on the east side where the Pamir winds hit the building, we used the hardest stone, which is a white-gray kind of granite and then it slowly merged towards the north into a gray-green stone. Next one.

If we move to the roof of this small building, we found that in that area, it's about 3,000 meter altitude, slightly higher than Ishkashim of course because the river kind of goes down. So, there's about 400 meters of that river kind of goes down over that amount. We found poplar trees and willow trees quite abundant at that altitude still, so we used planks of the poplar trees and we used the sticks of the willow trees that grow back every year. We also do it in the Netherlands. So, it was a fairly straightforward kind of thing, and the only thing that we did is, kind of, say, make it in a fish bone pattern because that is better for the earthquake resistance and kind of the dealing with the horizontal forces in the building. Next slide. So, to make it waterproof, you need to kind of put a little bit of clay and mud on the edges. And I don't know, but I'm not a big fan of Frank Gehry but I, personally, very much like these kind of crafted architecture kind of exercises. Next one. This is inside the building, you can see the sunlight coming from the south, if you look up, you see the ceiling. There is community meeting going and the poster in the background is from the Wildlife Conservation Society, who have a snow leopard kind of program against poaching.

Next one. So I think I have something with snow leopard Rahul. If you get the warmth into the building, it's important that you keep the warm inside. It's very difficult to import double glazing from Dubai, or China or whatever because when it breaks in the middle of nowhere, there's no way that it's going to be repaired. So, much better to sit down with the carpenter, ask him if he can use a slightly bigger piece of timber and then have that four centimeter air gap between the two single sheet panes of glass. Next one. This is a small model that we built before we kind of to test out how much sun is actually coming into the building. Next one. The sun is also used by the king, I don't know if you remember this small chalet of the last the king Mohammed Zahir, on the south side he built a kind of a winter garden to warm it up and he used that trapped warm air to heat up the rest of the building. Next one. This is one of the lessons that I hope you guys to keep in mind. Next one. What is important is also to look at people and and try to design something that is user-friendly. I'm sitting at this moment on a chair, I'm sure, you are also sitting on a chair, but in Afghanistan, very often. Next slide. I'm not sure how this one came here, but that's all right. Next one. It's a building I designed in Kabul. Oh yeah, this is about the flat stones, etc. Sorry, can you go back once. Yeah, so, if you look at the floor level, if you can

check out the steps that go into the building and how deep we have detailed the windows, lower window sill down that comes back in the next slide. So, we used a bit of a more contemporary graphic in this building. Next one. This is not a design by me, this is, I don't know who, if there is an architect, maybe it's an engineer, maybe there is nobody but if you see the dotted orange line, this is a building in Ishkashim, below that line, you see two windows and this is very useful for getting the warmth into the building. So they're relatively low. Next one.

And that makes sense if people roll out the carpets, most of the time, there's a basic carpets on the floor, and then on top of it, that is a beautiful carpet. Next one. So, the idea of comfort and the idea of whether it's, especially for residential buildings, it's very important to understand how people live and what is used in that culture. Next one. Those pictures were from Band-e Amir, which is about 3000 meter altitudes. So looking at typologies and living, this is something that is made by friend of mine, Maarten Kloos. Next one. Typology development of houses they used to have in Amsterdam. Room and a kitchen and then both of them had two bedrooms kind of almost in cupboards. Next one. When the topology developed in the 1930s, you enter your house, on the left side you have a room for the guests, on the right side is for the rest of the family. And then, next one. And now it's all kind of like a khichdi, it's all kind of mixed up, people can go wherever they go. Next one.

So perhaps, this exercise is also about inventing a new typology, rather than really to talk about architecture. Next one. This is a topology I developed for maternity waiting homes. The idea was to have very low window, so the women could look outside, but people from outside could not look inside. Next one. This is one of the buildings we made, five of them all over Afghanistan, this is Herat. Next one. We used, they have very good bricks there and we use that kind of in the architecture of the building. Next one. We gave it a courtyard, I think that this was, Ayaz had already kind of emphasized on the idea of courtyard that might work the the building maybe looks more inwards and outwards. Next one. This is the kitchen. Next one. I'm speeding up a little bit because I'm getting some hints.

Next one. Yeah, here you can see the courtyard in the back. Next one. So in the studio, I guess this is the question what for you master students is your added value. Next one. Are you going to make a guidebook? Next one. Like this lady in Brazil, Patricia, has made. This is a guidebook for public space. Next one.

Are you going to make a one solution where you pack it all up? Next one. This is De Peter Yi, Beijing 2014 ID, where the whole program is packed into one building. Next one. Or are you going to make blueprints, like the Italian architects in Herat did for a school. Next. I mean, it's a blueprint of a kind of an interesting kind of scattered thing within a boundary wall. Next one. And they used a lot of blue paint, the Italians, the national team also wears azure blue shirts, but I guess this was a reference to the burqa. Next one. Is your building going to be climate responsive or your design? Next one. This is a project by a group of people, including University of Washington, where they very much designed a school in Mazar-e-Sharif in the north, based on air movement and they have a summer school and the winter kind of mode. Next one.

Exposed bricks, these are the architects in the lower page. Next one. You're surely going to end up with a future scenario I hope in the studio and look at the fourth dimension how it develops in time. Next One. These kinds of patterns, next slide. And I hope you really come up with a network where you use your analysis and your predictions to kind of see if you can make a better future for Ishkashim. Next slide. Perhaps something like this. Next slide. Thank you very much.

Rahul Mehrotra: Thank you, Anne. Thank you for the range of issues you put on the table, but also, I mean I think you asked the question that, you posed the question of new typologies and I would extend that in many ways. It's about typology's ways of making a static that gets implied as a result of those new approaches. But, you know, thank you very much for bringing it down to the scale and reminding us that God also lives in the detail and you know and situating that within a much broader and evocative, provocative range of questions about context, about cultures, about people, about users so. So, thank you very much for that, and let's pick up some of this in the discussion. And with that, I'm going to ask Koukaba to share her screen and start with her presentation.

Koukaba Mojadidi: Thank you, Rahul. Thank you the South Asia Institute for putting this panel of speakers together and bringing awareness to these areas of the world, which I hope continues to grow. So I'm going to sort of dive into just one specific project, I think previous speakers did a really good job on preparing and laying out the general context of Kabul and Afghanistan. And this notion of extreme urbanism, I was contemplating to myself, as to what is interesting about 'extreme 'that word in Afghanistan is, you know, for me, it was really

that moment where in the last 20 years there's been a surge of an international development community that has come into Afghanistan to really stabilize and to find an equilibrium for the country after 30 years of its destruction and its war and its civil war. And that need and that overwhelming demand that that created really was something that every person, all of us are working in Afghanistan confront because you know the reality on the ground in Kabul is really something so extreme. And when you compare to these demands, so there's sort of an expectation there that always has to be managed and when, I'm going to just go into this specific project I worked on, which was the international competition for the Bamiyan Cultural Center and Bamiyan, I'm sure everybody has seen the video, which I'll just start to share on my screen here.

So, this is the World Heritage site in Bamiyan, in 2001, the Buddha's were destroyed as an act of terrorism. Sorry. Do we have that video. I'm sure everybody has seen this video that is that in 200, there's a, basically, the day before 9/11 was the destruction of the World Heritage Site, where the two big monumental statues of Buddha along the Silk Road there was destroyed and the UNESCO would like to create this competition international competition around a cultural center building that was basically on a site that was directly opposing this area.

And here you can see the site. This this picture here is taken from the actual site of the building and we're looking directly onto this Buddhists side about where these statues were created and this area was created about 1500 years ago and it's still today very much a part of the national identity of Afghanistan, these monuments, these statues, this cultural site is very much a part of Afghan life. People do not practice Buddhism in Afghanistan, but this was always dear part of the culture and the history of Afghanistan. And so the loss of this was quite devastating and not only to the whole world but also to Bamiyan, which is a very small village in the central part of Afghanistan that is here located in the central part at a very high altitude, very difficult winters, very difficult to get to during the winters. It's isolated during the winters and they just newly built an airport there that flies frequently from Kabul to Bamiyan.

So, this project, to start from the beginning it was difficult because at one point, did the mandate of having this international competition was determined by UNESCO, it was a proposal that they had written to the Korean Embassy, and they wanted this to be a public competitive competition. And I think as practicing architects these days, we are faced in Afghanistan and in these areas with a responsibility to not only create and rebuild and reconstruct decades of people who are now in need institutions, schools, facilities, hospitals, infrastructure, but that also that we at the same time are asking ourselves important questions that really answer to the responsibility of how architecture impacts everyday people on the ground. And so, keeping that in mind, that was really interesting part of the program is how to convey a place to the rest of the world and to also Afghans, maybe who have not traveled to Bamiyan frequently, about the nature of this building and the nature of this competition.

How do we create a new national identity through this building and I just remember standing opposed to the Cultural Center site, and this was actually very close to where they film the destruction of these Buddhas or right on this side was the question of how when we look at this, do we look at the past and how do we, how does this building relate to the past and if we're talking about the past, then we're also simultaneously speaking of the future. And, you know, these are just questions that I think everybody sort of processes in working in a place like Afghanistan, because what you do impacts many people, not just kind of where we're used to in these types of architectural practice, where buildings like this are meant for a certain group of people sometimes like a very, very, very elite group or or a privileged area. This is an extremely poor area in terms of compared to, you know, international standards and it was really important that whatever our architects abroad or in within the country proposed that the that it wasn't going to be about another building that was in a magazine or published or creating a kind of narrative around the design process. But really speaking to this area and having a responsibility to giving back to this area. So, this we created, I created a brief that went with this competition for everybody to engage in and read and this for me was a way of mapping out for people who are very, it's very difficult to find information on this area. I mean, if we had to Google it, I felt also kind of responsible to document the current situation, their photographs and also what sort of illustrative, what sort of a picture are we painting of this place.

And when faced with all those questions, it really was, if there was a simple answer at the end it was just who is this building serving, what were the functions that needed to exist, how do we keep this building sustainable, how do we make this building, not only a building for culture, but also building that would help revive and help this village grow as a community. So, this brief was handed out and I'll just quickly go through this, the pages of this brief. So this is the site, this the image on the site. We have a small introduction about the area and the history, and then here we have like a collaged set of images of not only Bamiyan, but the outside

outskirts of Bamiyan in the natural environment. There's nothing more significant about these areas in terms of how architecture meets the landscape. And this is a huge, this is an aspect architecture that you can see all around through Afghanistan, even through some of the images that Ajmal showed with the gardens and integrate with the housing and the courtyards. So, this was a big aspect that I felt like was needed to really be highlighted.

And, you know, I'm not sure if this even does it justice because it's one of the most beautiful places. And so, there were also elements of this competition that were also having to balance out all the different mandates that existed around this competition. Not only the World Heritage Site and their requirements, but also the requirements of the Bamiyan municipality and the local community and the local cultural community of the village. There were also demands, just in terms of the architecture and what was available with resources in the area, there are. There were also demands as to how we were going to really execute the competition from Kabul. So, there was quite a few things.

So, and then this image, this page here in the brief was to show the myriad of the artisanal culture and what really goes on in Bamiyan and what would take place in an ideal environment side of this cultural center. So, there's a long tradition of weaving in this village where they take natural wools and they dye them, and there's women in there weaving beautiful fabrics for coats and there's painting and there's music and there's a cultural festival every year here. There's some people doing I think jujitsu or some kind of wrestling. And this city really does take its culture to heart and it really, it's quite amazing how it's very well preserved. And I should actually, they always say, Bamiyan was one of the areas that were probably the safest areas in Afghanistan. So, there was definitely a sense of like walking around there and things felt like kind of a normal mountain type area.

And this is an image of Kabul here looking from a mountain, and just to show what's happening on the outskirts. So, you know, we have to imagine that like one of the extreme things about building in Afghanistan is that we have a demand from the external world, and sometimes I think if I had to paint a picture of it, it's very close to, if you had to talk about a city like Dubai. You know, the world is moving so fast, we're procuring at lightning speed, we're manufacturing where there's a huge industry. Afghanistan has just rebuilding history from zero and that industry is a really delicate one. And you've seen those images of the Pakistani style homes all throughout Kabul and you know that, sort of, if we had to be thoughtful about our approach to architecture, I think these are the moments that are really in demand to do that kind of thinking, and to do it rigorously and critically.

So one of the things with this competition was I wanted to have some historical reference of a vernacular. So, we show some images of the other architecture around Afghanistan and then also we show one specific page. These are images of the site that were given illustrating the location, and then just to quickly get to this one sheet. So this sheet here sort of depicted all the kind of vernacular that I thought were critical for this area and really important and they're not vernaculars that are modern. There are older vernaculars that actually exist right now in the city one and they were sort of delineated and giving the competitors a tool, some architectural tools to not feel limited by but to also be able to have a strong foundation when moving forward in the building process. You know there were certain things that were always keeping me up, like, oh gosh what if this building is like all glass or what if this building was just impossible to construct. And when you see to a place like this, what a building like this can mean, there are a set of questions that just naturally come up.

So, the first typology that was described is carved spaces. So, there's a quite a vernacular inside of this cliff of these carved areas that were used for meditation and there's quite a bit of painting that goes on inside of these caves and with all the iconography from the Buddhist era, and that is seen throughout Bamiyan and also the wall, which is a type of mud wall construction and straw. The baked brick and mud brick, which is also very readily used, wood frame construction, which is primarily used in the roof, and all the members to construct the floors in the roof. And also courtyard and landscapes and those were the building blocks for the competition.

And this was also an image of the site looking from the Buddha to the side so you can see that it's, I mean this view probably hasn't changed much in the last century or so, which is quite incredible. I mean the the energy in this in this city is untapped, it's a very, very natural environment. And so these are also some more urban plans and site plans of the area. We had designated, so one of the things that is so interesting about working in Afghanistan is that as an architect, you aren't just working within a pre-existing condition of building department requirements, but that you're also building the infrastructure of the practice of architecture simultaneously as you're building a project. So, for instance, this side, we had to meet with the Bamiyan municipality, and we literally here determined what the land area was together.

So, there was a general idea of a plot of land and they ended up giving us quite more, many more acres of land for this competition to make sure that it was a success. And then, this is a good example, which is interesting too, Ramin was saying earlier that JAICA was involved with this new zoning and implementation but this was actually created by us and on the left here, it says the site requirements in terms of zoning. You know, the left side of the site, the higher elevation was only allowed to be maximum of one story and the right side was a two story building and that was determined during the competition. And, we had a meeting, we made sure that everybody understood and had agreed on the basic guidelines. These are some views of the site that were given to the applicants, and then the program was developed very closely with the cultural entities that exist in Bamiyan and what they need and what they currently do and what and also possibility for expansion in the future. So, that sort of concludes the competition and then the winning entry we had was a group of architects from Argentina, and this was the selected design, we really, really appreciated.

A number of qualities that this project proposed and I feel like one of the hardest things to do is to try to design a building that you've never actually been to or visited the site or really visited the country at all. And we felt that this building had not only really taken in consideration the context, the architectural vernacular, but also it was a type of construction that could envision building on a new type of architectural language, and while respecting and embracing the old. So, here you see, when you enter the site, you see really no building, you just see this beautiful view of a World Heritage Site and really celebrating the landscape. And these are some interior images sections. And that's it, thank you.

Rahul Mehrotra: Thank you very much, thank you. Thank you very much. So we've got about 15 minutes for some questions and I'll just start by just making some comments. I think every presentation sort of opened up the conversation in interesting ways. I think, starting with the first one Ahmad where you set up for us the context of the rural, urban, the formal, the informal, but I think very importantly, the gap between what you were calling authority or government and what you were saying were people and modes of that could set up structures for participation and that connection. You also, I think, in very interesting way set up the land readjustment, the Afghani model, and the urban redevelopment which is the aggregation and it just struck me as being very interesting because even in the South Asian context, the British town planning schemes were really about that kind of land readjustment and I think how that's been taken to specifically become an Afghani model is very interesting. And not for discussion, but just to highlight that the urban redevelopment, which is about the aggregation of often low-rise high density and aggregating it, one of the big problems with that is the disruption of urban form. I mean, it has many advantages in terms of the equity it creates and it's not compensation, but people get located in the same location vis-a-vis relationship to jobs, but it can disrupt the urban form because it changes the paradigm. I think Anne was warning us about how one has to be sensitive to these typologies and so that would be an interesting question.

I think in Ajmal's presentation, as I said it was a wonderful spectrum, and I think the way you've structured it to show us so clearly the disruptions that modernization created and the 56 images of the Afghan Expo I'd never seen before. So that was just fantastic. I didn't even know that the Fuller dome had been built there. So, that was a wonderful surprise, but I think one of the things that I took away from it was the disruption, especially when you show the socialist model. I mean, the two things that happened, one is, and this is true for South Asia, suddenly through the modernization process, the architecture object becomes very autonomous, it becomes detached from its contextual bearing. And I think in one slide, you said in passing, but it really struck me was in the background there were two or three of these fortified residential units where people accumulate homes and then fortify it with a small wall, domestic in nature, but it's really, it creates a context, even in an agrarian field, in a sense, an urban context of aggregation, which the autonomy of the object in the western paradigm, including, the British embassy, which you flagged off as a starting point is very striking and then in the Soviet model, public space gets very ambiguous because it was about shared public space and not privatizing public space, which we've had traditionally, which actually creates a mess of another kind because people can't then relate to each other through the spatial dimension. I think that was very, very beautiful.

And Anne, I think, as I said, the challenge of inventing typology, creating an aesthetic. I mean I think in yours and in Koukaba's presentation this intersection between culture, landscape and architecture and how it all lands together is really something that you surface. The one common thing before we go to questions, I'll have a question for you all, and then we'll go to a few questions that have come up. What struck me in all these conversation was models of engagement, so to speak, the first conference we did in this series was on planning, where we had projects that Sasaki presented that were from the World Bank, IMF, it was state-driven, top down, of course, they tried to set up mechanisms for participation from the bottom up, but it was really driven by the state.

And what's very interesting about your four voices, and you also represent that the Aga Khan Trust. I think Koukaba, in a sense, as a consultant, but as an individual agent, so to speak, Anne with the people you've engaged with, Ahmad Ramin with the university that you be part of, you are all in that zone of civil society, which actually is the bridge zone between the authority and participatory processes. Correct. And I think whether its foundations, trusts, universities, or people with individual agencies aligning with NGOs and other such institutional structures. You have all demonstrated kind of the role and agency of civil society in making architecture and urbanism in Afghanistan.

So, I just thought we could start with just a round of your reflections really quick, one minute reflections on is that an accurate description, and I think in the context of Ahmad Ramin sort of provocation of how do we build these bridges to create the connection between the bottom up and top down, whether he asked us in the context of land readjustment, but I think it's also in the context of Koukaba, as you said, so building social and cultural infrastructure and many other domains. So it would be interesting, Anne maybe I'll start with you. You're muted.

Anne Feenstra: It's very interesting to be put on the same pile as the other three contesters or committee members. I definitely feel a link with Ahmad Ramin because I've been teaching myself for a couple of years at the Kabul University, and also with Koukaba who's more of a consultant, are you based in Afghanistan now or?

Koukaba Mojadidi: No, no. I am not in Afghanistan right now.

Anne Feenstra: Okay, so then, then it's slightly more difficult because I was never an in and out consultant, and I think the Aga Khan has set up a gigantic kind of network machine to come up with guidelines to support the government who in several fields is quite ill-equipped. So, let's say the support that the support the Agha Khan Trust for Culture has given to the Ministry of Culture and Information and specifically in the field of research and in supporting Abassi and the people who look after historical monuments, I think is great. There are of course also other organizations like The Turquoise Mountain Foundation and a few other people who also try to do this, but I think Agha Khan Trust for Culture has been quite consistent in building a portfolio and a kind of also a benchmark of where they believe the quality of build projects should be. And I think that's very important. I think what I have tried to do in Afghanistan is and that's something that I had hoped for Koukaba to see today, several examples of contemporary architecture of the competition in Bamiyan.

So, I hope we can do that at some other stage, I'm very curious. But I think this is something that is really missing, there is a lot of effort in conservation and restoration etc. but in contemporary architecture and picking up the historical perspective that Ajmal presented, there's been really, really a struggle to find a new language.

Let's say there is a new generation that graduates, either from the Polytechnic University or in Mazar they have a school for architecture, Kabul University, of course. But where is that pool of new architects and urban planners, where are they going to work, where are the young practices? And this is very, very challenging and very, very difficult because I strongly believe that architecture and urban design can only work if young practitioners have a place where they can actually practice, rather than let's say larger agencies who are very well-funded, who are very well-oiled machines, but to figure out things yourself and to find new ways of expressing yourself, that's been a serious struggle in Afghanistan. And the donor community does not particularly help with it. So the USAIDs and the big million dollar kind of funders, they very often kill very carefully produced cultural programs or initiatives which are very much kind of grass-rooted. So, I think that's a struggle, but let's say it's a challenge. Thank you.

Rahul Mehrotra: Thank you. Koukaba, you want to, your experiences being an agent of these kinds of transformation.

Koukaba Mojadidi: Yeah, absolutely. I was in Kabul full time for about four years until I decided that I would relocate, but you know more than what's important for me. I wasn't even going to show the finalists that won the competition, even the design. I mean because there were over 1000 designs for the submission of this building. Every single one of them was filled with ideas and energy that filled the room. I couldn't, it was impossible to make the decision. But we were under a deadline. So, I think what's more important than looking at what these buildings actually look like is the process. And, I think that that is really what is missing and lacking in terms of the current environment as architects in Afghanistan, because you can have a myriad of results of what the new building, what the new contemporary, what the new modern, urban form or function is

but I think what's more important is to really try to answer these hard questions and one of those is how do you develop a design process for a building that will sustain itself in this environment. And that is a question that a lot of these buildings don't ask at the very beginning, and what happens is millions and millions of dollars, very opportunistic projects for place like Kabul, a place like Bamiyan, they go to waste. And these buildings, they don't function after just a month of being open and they and there's tons of corruption that is involved as well in these projects.

But as architects in Afghanistan through this new role as architects in Afghanistan, trying to be the middle person between all these entities, we really do take on a whole new role. It's no longer a client and architect, it is much bigger than us, it's much bigger than everyone and you're required to fill the role, and you have a responsibility for that role.

And I think that what the building looks like is not really the most important matter, what's what's really important is, are we building processes and infrastructures and systems that will sustain Kabul, the people of Kabul, these new engineers, these new architects, the new contractors. How are we feeding the economy, are we building an economy that's local to Afghanistan or are we deterring a local economy. And I think I would love to show all of the entries for this competition one day. I mean there's just so many amazing, such an outcry of presentations but more importantly, I think with the discussion of the future of building in Afghanistan, it's important to understand where we came from and how we're moving forward.

Rahul Mehrotra: Thank you very much. I just, I don't need you to answer this because you've already answered it, but I just want to flag it out because Charlotte had a question for you, which was in your presentation, you spoke of an attempt to construct through architecture and design a new national identity, how do you see the project you presented on Bamiyan as part of the task and you sort of answered that in these broader ways. And if we have time, maybe you could come back to it, but I just want to put that on the table.

So let's go to Ajmal next. I think in the case of your engagement, it's at many levels, naturally, because you have a relationship with the country but you're also now working with the Agha Khan Trust for Culture. And when we talk about this sort of bridging and civil society, actually, one big component is patronage, which takes different forms, it could be state patronage, it could be patrons who are individual citizens. And I think in the case of Agha Khan Trust for Culture, you are working as part of civil society, but you also have the kind of, as Anne was alluding to, the networks and the support also for patron who plays a great role. And so just being curious to see your reflections.

Ajmal Maiwandi: No, I think it's an interesting question, and not only do I wear various hats as part of my work in the organization, but I think the organization does multiple things. There is a vibrant civil society in Afghanistan, it's vibrant, it's vocal what comes politically with respect to political issues, especially with respect to political issues, it's quite amazing to see it at work. I think for us as an organization, what we tend to do is bridge between the various constituencies, whether they be state or communities, whether they be educational institutions, students or formal planning institutions. And I think our responsibility is to demonstrate potentials, that's how I see it, essentially in a context where there's so little focus on architecture and planning and where there is, the tendency tends to look externally.

I think our, our key objective and some of the work that we do certainly is to set up different modalities of how things may be done, whether it be engagement or buildings or architecture. And I also think that reflects and I think, you know, these potentials or demonstration of these potentials, in many ways, reflect aspirations and aspirations are critical to things moving, to things changing, to things being developed in a different way. A lot of our young architects, and we tend to take them quite young directly out of university, and they work with us for years before they move on.

A lot of our young architects are now in key positions, whether they be in various ministries, or whether they be in the municipalities or even in the private sector. There are three or four very, very good young firms, addressing the challenge of a dearth in the architectural realm, private, 95% of what's being built in Afghanistan is private. It's not state. It's not done by NGOs or organizations, it's done by the private sector. And whether we agree or disagree on what the manifestations of the buildings are, they represent something. I think if you look at it in a more deep way, they represent aspirations as well. They might not be the aspirations that we would like to see here as architects, as professionals with other experience, but a lot of these buildings are reflective of a deeper social, contextual, cultural, whether it be abundance or lack of. And in that sense, I think our key role is to bridge between processes, between constituents, and demonstrate what is potential, what is possible in this context.

Rahul Mehrotra: Thank you. Thank you, that was a really comprehensive response. And we've run out of time, but Ahmad, I'm going to, if you can very quickly, maybe interject with how you see the role of the university because a number of questions here point to capacity building, to whether it's done through projects which results in capacity or Anne's question to you very pointedly is who are the architects we are producing?

Ahmad Ramin Sadiq: Yeah, I think university or the source of these productions, especially in terms of knowledge and skills and I appreciate Mr. Anne Fenestra, Mr Maiwandi from a courtesy that all the time they have done something to through the university, even by signing our universities in their projects or assignments or whatever. But what we are seeing right now that day by day, the knowledge and the skills are getting better. Of course, it takes time, maybe some years, but the market and also the scales are getting much more better. And on the other hand, if we look to the government side, especially in the last 10 years the importance of especially planning is very increased, especially from the presidential office.

Many larger projects in terms of urban planning have been enacted and approved by the President himself. It shows something that there are some potentials and President himself believes that there are many positive points, many energy in the planning aspects and in the urban design aspects. And the approvals that he and not only him, but also Ministry of Higher Education, given to the three departments of planning and the three universities of Afghanistan's, it means, that there is a way that we're moving, there's a light at the end or on the way. So we are trying our best to these parts, through these meetings, through these discussions to enrich our knowledge and find the proper way. Are we going to the right track or we have to change something we have to add something or even we remove something. So we are trying to learn and enrich the system.

Rahul Mehrotra: Thank you. Thank you very much, thanks. And you know, that's a nice note of hope and hopefully, we can carry on these conversations. I'm sorry, we've run out of time, and these are all things that happened quicker than we hope they will happen, but inshallah, one of these days we'll all meet together even physically but till such time, we're going to try very hard through the institute here to carry on these conversations and this will be on YouTube. So, you will have many more viewers over the next days and we'll direct questions or give you feedback if we receive that.

So, thank you very much for your participation. I hope some of you will come and see our work in the studio, we'll keep you posted, and I really, behalf of Charlotte, myself, the Lakshmi Mittal Family South Asia Institute, Chelsea and Selmon, thank you for participating and hope to see you soon. Thanks.

Ahmad Ramin Sadiq: Thank you.

Ajmal Maiwandi: Thank you..