



## Institutional Framework for Collaborative Urban Planning in Afghanistan in view of the Transferring Process of International Urban Planning Systems

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### ABSTRACT

This article provides an overview of Afghanistan's urban planning institutional change in certain historical periods, particular dilemmas within the current urban planning system and its gradual shift from totalitarian urban planning approaches practiced during 1960s - 1980s to a different form of planning being practiced by the current government. In addition, it will seek to analyze the ease and tension caused by the three recent phenomena that have emerged after the establishment of a new democratic government in Afghanistan since 2001, such as private sector-led urban development, international funding community's and NGOs' role in planning and the delegation of certain roles given to different tiers of the government. Another purpose of this work is to analyze the collaboration among urban planning institutions, private sector, international funding community, NGOs and civil society within the current urban planning arena of Afghanistan and to identify the roles, responsibilities and functions of urban planning institutions in different levels of urban governance. Finally find out what possible and necessary institutional changes and framework are needed in order to foster grassroots based inter-institutional collaboration and partnership among various tiers of government. The methodological approach to the research is based on qualitative data analysis. For the analysis purpose, government urban planning data and in-depth, semi-structured, face-to-face interviews with Afghanistan's urban planning officials were thematically used, which provided in-depth information about involved actors in urban planning and their roles and relationships.

## 1. Introduction

This work attempts to overview the urban planning institutional changes in certain historical periods in Afghanistan particularly from 1960s to the present. During the periods between 1960s and 2000s Afghanistan has gone through a series of drastic and dramatic political regimes' changes, where most of the time the changes were negative in nature. And obviously every political regime change was followed by grave institutional transformation in the whole governance structure, which applies to urban planning institutions as well. Specifically this paper is focusing on urban planning institutional changes and their effects on the process of practicing urban planning. The causes for all the political changes are always directly connected to the interests of superpowers and sometimes the neighboring countries at each historical period, which can be one of the only reasons that urban planning practices in Afghanistan are excessively influenced by the presence of foreign countries, it also can be one of the reasons that Afghanistan was never able to have its own way of practicing urban planning.

Although the focus of this paper is on reviewing the urban planning institutional changes in order to understand the causes and effects of urban institutional changes and find out a practical and sustainable

transferring process of international urban planning systems, in addition it briefly explains the merits and demerits of the three recent phenomena that have emerged since 2001 in the arena of urban planning of Afghanistan. The phenomena are: private sector-led urban development, international funding community's and NGOs' role in planning and the delegation of certain planning roles given to different tiers of the government. Every one of the mentioned phenomenon is unique in its nature and has affected the urban planning system of Afghanistan in one way or the other. Besides, a part of the article is focused on analyzing the urban planning inter-institutional collaboration in the current planning system in order to find out the existing institutional disconnects in the planning system and finally based on research findings, some necessary changes in the existing institutional framework are proposed that can foster grassroots based inter-institutional collaboration and partnership among various tiers of government and stakeholders.

This article is structured in the following parts: the first part is discussing the historical urban planning institutional changes in some specific historical periods based on previous literature on Afghanistan's urban planning institutions and interviews with Afghanistan's urban planning officials; this is followed by the brief discussion on the urban planning practices since 2001 and the emergence of three unique

phenomena in the urban planning arena of Afghanistan and their merits and demerits; this is then followed by the analysis of the urban planning inter-institutional collaboration of the existing system in Afghanistan and the presentation of research findings and results. And finally the last part presents the concluding remarks.

## 2. Historical urban planning institutional changes

Afghanistan has a very long history of urban settlement and is known as one of the oldest civilization in central Asia which dates back to 3000BC. The crossing of Silk Road through Afghanistan has influenced significant development of some cities within the country. In Addition, for many centuries Afghanistan has been in the central focus of various superpowers and neighboring countries because of its strategic location in central Asia. The presence of foreign countries at every period was followed by extreme transformation of regimes that not only had negative impacts on the political institutions but also on urban planning and development institutions. As a matter of fact, every superpower during its presence in Afghanistan tried to structure Afghanistan's institutions similar to the systems of its country and that as result did not allow the country to develop its own way of practicing urban planning. Figure 1 represents a brief historical image of foreign countries' presence in Afghanistan in various historical periods.

The establishment of modern urban planning institutions in Afghanistan dates back to the beginning of the twentieth century during the reign of Amanullah Khan (1919-1929). When in 1919 Afghanistan became independent, modern urban planning and development projects were planned based upon Amanullah Khan's new administrative set up. During that period some new institutional changes were made that are not discussed here, because this article specifically focuses on the urban institutional changes from 1960s to the present. Based on the information from the Ministry of Urban Development Affairs, in 1961 urban planning and building construction departments were established in the Ministry of Public Works, which were responsible for making and

implementing plans in all cities of Afghanistan. And in 1964 one more urban planning institution which was specific to urban planning and providing urban services was established in the constitution of 1964 under the reign of Zahir Shah in Afghanistan. The institution was called Sharwali, which literally means municipality. According to the constitution of 1964, Sharwali was officially recognized as an urban planning institution that gave Sharwali institutional legitimacy to carry out all kinds of urban planning related activities, which resulted in producing master plans not only for the capital city Kabul but also for some other big cities within the country. Some sample responsibilities of municipalities are shown in Table1. After some years later in 1967 with the financial and technical assistance of the United Nations the departments of urban planning and building construction in the Ministry of Public Works were changed to the general directorate of urban planning and housing with a bigger organizational structure similar to a ministry. In 1974 based on the contract between the government of Afghanistan and USSR considering the national interest of the country in urban planning the USSR established a team of USSR and Afghan urban planners to make a master plan for Kabul city which was completed in 1979. Beside the presence of municipalities the government of Afghanistan established an organization called SHTAPA in 1978, which means Urban Planning and Building Construction Institute which later in 1984 was changed to PAMA that means Central Institute of Building Projects. PAMA was responsible for making and implementation of urban plans in all cities within the country, which was functional until 1992. And in 1992 the government of Afghanistan established a specific ministry for handling the urban planning affairs, which is called the Ministry of Urban Development Affairs. Based on the National Development Strategy of Afghanistan, the Ministry of Urban Development Affairs is playing a leadership role in terms of structuring urban policy, supporting municipalities, urban development and provision of urban master plans for all cities in Afghanistan, for the sample responsibilities of the Ministry of Urban Development Affairs refer to Table2. After 2001 two more institutions were established, IDLG (Independent Directorate of Local Governance) and DCDA (Deshabz City Development Authority). Both of the mentioned institutions are responsible for some urban planning related activities.

## 3. Urban planning in Afghanistan during 1960s – 1980s

Foreign countries' political influences are the most important factors that drive urban planning in Afghanistan. Therefore, Afghanistan was never given the opportunity to develop and master its own way of practicing urban planning. That is why most of the implemented urban planning projects in Afghanistan's cities reflect deep-rooted foreign political regimes' influences especially during the periods between 1960s and 1980s. During the mentioned periods the central governments not only decided urban planning related decisions, but also had the authority to enforce some special urban development acts related to urban area scale, layout design and style of architecture while implementing urban planning projects.

By the time the Soviet Union secured most parts of Afghanistan, it was the time to start thinking about transferring their urban planning practices into Afghanistan. In the early stages detailed urban plans for cities and large scale housing projects' plans were prepared in the Soviet Union. The Soviet Union also offered external consultation, design services and education to Afghan urban planners and engineers. In the early 1960s Afghanistan's experts were able to contact the Soviet Union for their planning and engineering consultation, which sometimes

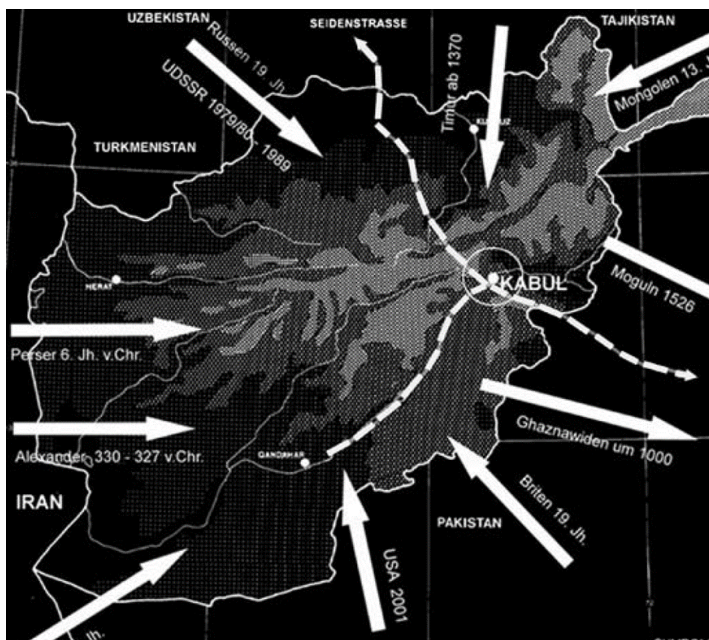


Figure 1 Historical Map of Foreign Presence  
(Source: Urban History and Development of Kabul City)

*Table1 Sample responsibilities of municipalities*

<b>Service Delivery</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• City Roads and streets construction</li> <li>• Road median construction and beatification</li> <li>• Ditches construction</li> <li>• Sidewalks construction</li> <li>• Waste collection and management</li> <li>• Provision of Safe, green and clean city</li> <li>• Construction of parks</li> <li>• Construction of slaughter houses/public latrines/bus stops/recreation centers</li> </ul>
<b>Administration</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Establish the institutional structures and mechanisms that will encourage community participation in municipal governance and administration and partnership with the private sector in municipal economic development.</li> <li>• Assist central agencies direct their plans and programs to reflect municipal sector priorities</li> <li>• Coordinate with the central government for compliance to urban development guidelines in implementing development projects within its jurisdiction.</li> <li>• Encourage the private sector to invest private capital within the municipality through clear regulatory and incentive frameworks.</li> <li>• Enter into corporate partnerships with the private sector in public economic ventures that aim to improve service delivery.</li> </ul>
<b>Regulatory</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Enact local legislations in support of national laws and municipal development priorities, as well as to improve efficiency and effectiveness of municipal governance and administration,</li> <li>• Establish regulatory and incentive frameworks for community involvement in municipal governance and in the provision of essential public services.</li> <li>• Impose and/or collect fines and penalties for non-compliance to governmental regulations.</li> <li>• Create local taxes, fees and charges and set rates to ensure full cost recovery.</li> </ul>
<b>Coordination</b>	Vertical and Horizontal

resulted in dispatching a professional team from USSR to Afghanistan who would work with Afghan urban planners and engineers to carry out the implementation of the projects. The process of transferring USSR's urban planning in Afghanistan particularly included three major groups: urban planning institutions, aid institutions and individual urban planning experts. Members of these groups worked together with Afghan engineers and urban planning experts trained in the Soviet Union, not only for modernizing Afghanistan's cities but also for influencing and encouraging Afghan nation to continue stand siding the Soviet Union.

The concept of urban planning in Afghanistan during 1960s and 1980s is basically based on top-down approaches, which represents a totalitarian way of planning practiced by the central government. Therefore, the central government in Afghanistan was responsible to make master plans for all cities within the country. The institutions that were involved in preparing master plans at that times were: departments of urban planning and building construction in the Ministry of Public Works, the general directorate of urban planning and housing, Kabul Municipality, SHTAPA and PAMA, which are briefly explained in the previous section of this article. During the mentioned period many master plans were prepared for some big cities and some large scale urban planning projects were carried out by international experts from various countries in different cities of Afghanistan. Among all other countries, the major role in preparing the master plans and carrying out the construction of large scale urban projects was mainly played by USSR's professional experts.

One of a good example of the mentioned urban planning activities could be the master plan project for Kabul city that represents the involvement of various foreign countries. The first master plan for Kabul city was prepared by the technical cooperation of the Soviet Union and French led team in 1962, which was considered for 80,000 residents. The master plan was covering 23,780 ha area and it was planned to be implemented in period of over 25 years. The mentioned master plan is quite similar to the master plans that were prepared for some European cities during 1960s. To be more specific, the master plan has some similarities with Geneva master plan that was prepared in 1965. The master plan of 1962 was not realistic enough to be implemented in Kabul city, because in the plan the true picture of Afghan society was not reflected and it was a complete replica of plans that were implemented in the Soviet Union or some European countries. Therefore, it was decided to revise the master plan of 1962, and in 1971 a second master plan was cooperatively prepared by the planners from Soviet Union, UNESCO led team and some Afghan planners who were trained in the Soviet Union. The second master covered 29,900 ha of area, which was planned for 1.4 million residents till 1995. Similarly, the second master plan was also full of imported ideas from the foreign countries, which replaced most of the traditional style housing and historical settlements by low rise apartment blocks. Different categories of low rise apartments were considered in the plan, which included 10% -15% of residential apartments of 9-10 floors, 65% - 70% of planed housing units were 4-5 floors, 20%-25% of them were 2-3 floors and 15% of remaining urban housing area was allocated for the single family courtyard housing. In addition, the master plan of 1971 proposed the demolition of existing historical old town to be replaced by the new residential low rise apartment housing, offices and shopping centers. Finally, in 1978 a third master plan was prepared and approved by the

*Table2 Sample responsibilities of the Ministry of Urban Development Affairs*

<b>Urban Management and Arrangement</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Making, approval and implementation of the National Urban Policy</li> <li>• Urban and regional plans for major urban areas</li> <li>• Preparing Plans for the regional development strategy for all the zones</li> <li>• Strengthening the capacity of municipalities</li> <li>• Improving revenue and capacity building programs in thirty four provinces and major cities</li> <li>• Urban development plans, including plans for infrastructure investments made in twenty five major cities</li> <li>• Institutional capacity supported by educational plans, institutional reforms for effective governance in the country's thirty four provinces and major cities</li> </ul>
<b>Urban Infrastructure and Services</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Planning on water policy</li> <li>• Completing the project of water-supply (funded by the ARTF / KFW), which aims to use the underground water for about 50 percent of families of Kabul to have access to piped water</li> <li>• Better facilities for discharging wastewater for 50 percent of families in the capital</li> <li>• Preservation of ancient monuments and historic heritage cities:</li> <li>• Better facilities for discharging wastewater for in some big cities</li> <li>• Preservation of historic areas</li> <li>• Provision and registration of historic areas</li> <li>• Detailed plans for protection of historic areas</li> <li>• Improvement in non-plan areas, land development and housing:</li> <li>• Fifty percent access to urban land and shelter</li> <li>• Thirty percent increase in the provision of public land for housing and urban development activities</li> <li>• Housing in 12 provinces</li> </ul>



**Figure2** *Third Master Plan of Kabul City*

(Source: Planning and Implementation Department of Kabul Municipality )

Soviet led team and Afghan planners. The thirst master plan covered 32,330 ha area that was planned for two people (See Figure2). Kabul municipality was given the responsibility to implement the master plan with cooperation of relevant ministries and institutions. It was only short time after the approval of the third master plan that the political situation in Afghanistan started changing due to the withdrawal of the Soviet Union during 1987 to 1989. By the end of 1980s, only about 20% of the third master plan was implemented because of insecurity and political instability.

#### 4. Urban planning in Afghanistan after 2001

Urban planning in Afghanistan took a complete new stance after 2001, due to an uneasy transition from a so called communist regime to an open democracy. Right from the beginning, the newly American established regime started transforming the institutional structure of Afghanistan particularly social institutions. The institutional transformation brought about many new issues and major challenges both for the newly established government itself and the citizens. Some new institutions appeared in the context of urban planning that were given varied responsibilities to deal with urban planning related issues. In addition, Afghanistan National Development Strategy (ANDS) was developed in 2008 that mainly focuses on poverty reduction and private-led economic growth. Afghanistan national development strategy revolved some certain authorities for provinces and municipalities to deal with urban planning issues. In terms of urban planning and developments ANDS encourages decentralization, participatory planning and free market-based approaches. Consequently, after the establishment of the new regime, the following three major phenomena have emerged in the urban planning arena of Afghanistan.

##### 4.1 *Private sector-led urban development*

The trend of urban development in Afghanistan has significantly changed since 2001. Since then, some of the mega scale urban development projects are led by private developers, while public sector is adopting a facilitating role. The public and private sectors' participation started to influence the overall urban development situation in Afghanistan. This change has affected the institutional

relationship between the two sectors while planning, managing and developing the projects.

The shift from a complete public-led urban development to a mix of public and private-led urban development system in Afghanistan has both positive and negative sides, which are briefly explained respectively. When the civil war ended in 2001, most big cities in Afghanistan have experienced a sudden unexpected huge influx of returnees. It has caused a severe pressure on urban services and the demand for housing was increasingly escalating. However, the government was not able to win against the unexpected urbanization pressure, because it was newly established and it did not have strong technical institutional capacity and financial resources. Therefore, private sector-led urban development was given the opportunity to side the government and deal with the urban challenges. Specifically the private sector have played a significant role in providing housing through developing small township projects in some big cities of Afghanistan that can be seen as positive side of the shift. The negative side of this change is that both the public and private sectors are newly exposed to the free market-based urban development in Afghanistan. Both actors find it difficult to follow the projects based on the principles of private sector-led urban development. As a matter of fact, the responsibilities and roles of public sector in private sector-led development defer than those managed by the public sector, which in some cases the public sector is not well aware that they have to deal with the situation form a different angle. Similarly, the private sector has many problems in understanding their responsibilities in cooperation with public sector. For instance, in some projects the private developers have played a dominant role by managing the whole projects' cycles that usually caused some institutional tension between the two and as a result affected the development progress of the projects.

##### 4.2 *International funding agencies' and NGOs' role in planning*

International funding agencies and NGOs have played an important role in supporting Afghanistan to become one of the democracy practicing nations in Central Asia, and their continued efforts are still underway in promoting citizen participation, consultation and representation all over the country. They have also contributed a lot to the urban planning and development in different regions of Afghanistan in coordination with other planning institution of the country.

There are many international funding agencies and NGOs that are currently involved in various urban planning related activities and the major ones are: The World Bank, Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA), United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (UN-HABITAT). The mentioned agencies are technically and financially supporting the government of Afghanistan in variety of urban planning activities such as master plan preparation and implementation, strategy and policy development and improvement, organizing home and abroad capacity development programs for young urban planners, urbanization, urban transportation, human settlement policies, planning legislation, etc. However, there are some complicated factors that are influencing the relationship between the public urban planning institutions and international funding agencies and NGOs, which slow down the progress of urban planning and development. In some cases the international funding agencies manage the planning activities on their own, functioning as an independent entity with limited involvement of the public institutions. In addition, some changes in political and security situation of the country affect the roles and

responsibilities of international agencies. Therefore, the international agencies are focusing on completing the projects by their own rather than waiting for a favorable political situation. But in some cases they have to wait depending on the scale of the urban planning projects. And in some cases the public institutions are not able to provide the international agencies and NGOs the right information and data that is needed for planning urban planning projects.

#### **4.3 Delegation of certain planning roles to new institutions**

The results of developing the Afghanistan National Development Strategy of 2008 were revolving some certain roles and responsibilities to municipalities and other newly established institutions. In order to that, the government established a new institution called The Independent Directorate of Local Governance (IDLG), which is responsible for strengthening good governance, provision of services, consolidating stability, accountability and transparency in local levels through strong and capable sub national government administrations<sup>1</sup>. Before the establishment of IDLG, ministry of interior affairs and ministry of urban development affairs were for managing and regulating the affairs of all municipalities of Afghanistan. And the purpose of establishing IDLG was to transfer all the civilian responsibilities from the ministry of interior to an independent institution. Under IDLG there is a specific directorate called The General Directorate of Municipal Affairs (GDMA), which is responsible for overseeing, managing and regulating the affairs of all municipalities of Afghanistan but Kabul Municipality<sup>2</sup>. Now both GDMA and Ministry of Urban Planning Affairs (MUDA) are dealing with urban planning related activities of all municipalities in Afghanistan. Though both of the mentioned institutions have signed a technical memorandum of understanding, there are still duplication of activities and challenges that affects the progress of urban planning processes.

One more independent urban planning institution called Dehsabz - Barikab City Development Authority (DCDA) was established in 2006 under a decree issued by the president of Afghanistan. The institution is a mix of key stakeholders, relevant government institutions, private sector and a French planning consultant, which is also technically and financially supported by JICA. The purpose of establishing this institution was to plan and develop a new city within of Kabul province that can enable growth and economic prosperity both on local and national levels. The establishment of the mentioned institution further complicated the institutional relationships, because there are already urban planning institutions that possess the same roles and responsibilities such as MUDA and Kabul Municipality. And it is still a question that why Kabul Municipality was not chosen to take over the planning and development related tasks of New Kabul City.

### **5. Inter-institutional collaboration**

After evaluating the involved institutions' roles and responsibilities in urban planning, the role of international planning systems and analyzing the effects of the three recent mentioned phenomena in the urban planning context of Afghanistan, some significant factors appeared that undermine the inter-institutional collaboration. The factors are classified into two categories, external and internal. The major external factor is the interests of some foreign countries in geopolitical location of Afghanistan. Such interests in the country

brought about regime changes, institutional transformation, different policies and regulations introduction and various urban planning systems' applications. And the major internal factor is the conflict of interest among the political parties. For example during 1980s most of the urban planning institutions were established by the Afghan government backed by the Soviet Union and most of the urban planners and architects were those who were trained in the Soviet Union. But after the regime changed, some new institutions have been established by the Afghan government backed by the United States and the existing institutions were transformed. And the experts in the newly established institutions follow different systems, which cause complication in the overall process of urban planning. All urban planning related institutions, international funding agencies and NGOs and private sector have a common goal, but every one of them follows a different system within an environment where inter-institutional collaboration is very weak. The main question this article tries to answer is: what possible and necessary institutional changes and framework are needed in order to promote grassroots based inter-institutional collaboration and partnership among various stakeholders?

The question is answered based on the theories of collaborative planning and organizational collaboration. Patsy Healey in her work 'the collaborative planning project in an institutionalist and relational perspective' explains that plans and programs that are carefully articulated inside within dynamic relations could not be imposed on outside world (Healey, 2007). She mainly insists on dynamic relations of stakeholders particularity citizen participation. In addition, Hord Shirley explains the relationship of Inter-institutional collaboration as the most formal one that involves shared authority and responsibility while planning, implementing and evaluating joint efforts (Hord, 1986). Both of the theories are used to understand the relationships among various stakeholders within the current system of urban planning in Afghanistan and to formulate a collaborative inter-institutional framework that can facilitate the transfer process of international urban planning systems.

Based on the above theories, the current urban planning situation of Afghanistan and the role and responsibilities of various stakeholders in urban planning in the country have been systematically analyzed. Finally, a collaborative inter-institutional framework for urban planning is structured that can facilitate the transfer of international urban planning systems and promote inter-institutional collaboration. The institutional framework proposed in this article classifies the stakeholders in three main groups, which are: National government, sub-national government and civil society. The national government stakeholder's group encompasses the central decision making institutions such as the ministry of urban planning affairs, other ministries involved in planning activities, IDLG and international funding agencies. The sub-national government stakeholder's group includes the service delivery and implementing institutions, for example provincial municipalities, district municipalities, line ministries departments and international NGOs. And the civil society stakeholder's group includes tribal councils, religious leaders, community leaders, village leaders, citizens and private sector. The framework is well integrated at all levels. The national government stakeholder's group will be working together with the sub-national government stakeholder's group on making policies and strategies and developing the professional and technical knowledge capacities. In addition, the national government stakeholder's group will be working with the civil society stakeholder's group on consultation and consensus building of the involved members. The civil society stakeholder's group will be working together with sub-national government stakeholder's group on sharing the perception of ground realities and priorities. In

the proposed institutional framework, the three stakeholders' groups can shape a common urban planning environment through inter-institutional collaboration. Each relation in the framework from one group to the other is based on shared authority and responsibilities. All groups within the framework can understand the ground realities through participation with each other so that they can decide understandingly in order to deal with the urban planning challenges. In addition, the proposed framework is totally open-ended that stakeholder's groups can easily reach other besides their different authorities and responsibilities.

## 6. Conclusion

The geopolitical importance of Afghanistan has always attracted superpowers interests. Therefore, Afghanistan has gone through many regimes' changes during the presence of various superpowers. Every regime change was followed by some grave institutional restructuring and transformation. Reviewing the urban planning institutional changes in this paper has revealed that urban planning institutions and practices in Afghanistan have also been extremely influenced by the presence of superpowers. Each of the foreign countries at the time of their presence in Afghanistan tried to transfer and implement their own urban planning systems. Consequently, Afghanistan became the practice ground for various urban planning systems at the same time, and this situation give the country hard time to find her own way of practicing urban planning. And after 2001 some new institutions and stakeholders with varied authorities and responsibilities emerged in the urban planning arena of Afghanistan.

The main conclusion that can be drawn is that currently there are various urban planning systems in Afghanistan, which are being practiced within a weak collaborative environment of urban planning institutions. Therefore, the current situation is difficult for the transfer of international urban planning systems. And it is argued in the paper that in order to transfer and practice any international urban planning system, it is crucial to develop an inter-institutional collaborative framework and some necessary changes are required in the role and responsibilities of institutions. The proposed institutional framework in this article will set the stage to possible the transfer of international urban planning systems in Afghanistan and promote collaboration among all the involved stakeholders.

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