

BAMIYAN STRATEGIC MASTER PLAN

ماستریپلان استراتژیک بامیان



EDIZIONI POLISTAMPA

LAGES – LABORATORIO DI GEOGRAFIA SOCIALE, UNIVERSITÀ DEGLI STUDI DI FIRENZE

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Italian Agency for Development Cooperation



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SAGAS
DIPARTIMENTO DI STORIA,
ARCHEOLOGIA, GEOGRAFIA,
ARTE E SPETTACOLO

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Abbreviations and Acronyms

4G	4th Generation Mobile Telecommunication Technology	MoC	Ministry of Culture, Information and Tourism, Islamic Republic of Afghanistan
5G	5th Generation Mobile Telecommunication Technology	MoE	Ministry of Education, Islamic Republic of Afghanistan
AAN	Afghanistan Analysts Network	MoL	Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs, Martyrs and Disabled, Islamic Republic of Afghanistan
AASHTO	American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials	MoMP	Ministry of Mines and Petroleum, Islamic Republic of Afghanistan
ACDC	Aachen Center for Documentation and Conservation	MoPW	Ministry of Public Works, Islamic Republic of Afghanistan
ADB	Asian Development Bank	MoT	Ministry of Transport and Civil Aviation, Islamic Republic of Afghanistan
AIHRC	Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission	MRRD	Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation and Development, Islamic Republic of Afghanistan
AIMS	Afghanistan Information Management Service	MUDH	Ministry of Urban Development and Housing, Islamic Republic of Afghanistan
ANDPF	Afghanistan National Peace and Development Framework	NRRC	National and Regional Resource Corridor Program
ANDS	Afghanistan National Development Strategy	NUFFIC	Dutch Organisation for Internationalisation in Education
AREDP	Afghanistan Rural Enterprise Development Program	SPACH	Society for the Preservation of Cultural Heritage in Afghanistan
AREU	Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit	SSS	Simplified Sewerage Systems
ATRA	Afghan Telecommunications Regulatory Authority	SWMP	Solid Waste Management Plan
CSO	Central Statistics Organization of Afghanistan	UITP	Union Internationale des Transports Publics
DAFA	Délégation Archéologique Française en Afghanistan	UNAMA	United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan
EFA	Afghanistan Education for All	UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
FAAHM	Food Agriculture and Animal Husbandry Information, Management and Policy Unit, Ministry of Agriculture, Animal Husbandry and Food, Islamic Republic of Afghanistan	UNEP	United Nations Environment Programme
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations	UNESCO	United Nations Education, Science and Culture Organization
FHWA	US Federal Highway Administration	UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
FSM	Fecal Sludge Management	UNHABITAT	United Nations Human Settlement Programme
ICOMOS	International Council on Monuments and Sites	UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
IHMR	Indian Institute for Health Management Research	UNWTO	United Nations World Tourism Organization
IMF	International Monetary Fund	WADSAM	Afghanistan Business News Portal
JICA	Japan International Cooperation Agency	WFP	World Food Programme
LaGeS	Laboratorio di Geografia Sociale, Università di Firenze, Italia	WHC	World Hazara Council
LTE	Long Term Evolution Mobile Telecommunication Technology	WHO	World Health Organization
MAE	Ministero degli Affari Esteri, Repubblica Italiana	WMP	Water Management Plan
MCIT	Ministry of Communications, Information, Technology, Islamic Republic of Afghanistan		

INTRODUCTION

I.1 Developing the Bamiyan Strategic Master Plan

■ Bamiyan became sadly famous among the international public in 2001, following the destruction by the Taleban government of part of its precious historical and artistic heritage, in particular the two giant statues of Buddha sculpted in the rock, the westernmost examples of Buddhist culture, dating from the sixth to the ninth centuries (see Chapter II.4).

The decision by UNESCO to include the valley in the World Heritage List (2003), and the consequent convergence in the area of many cooperation initiatives by international organizations, have meant that Bamiyan has become the symbol of Afghanistan's rebirth after the long period of wars and warfare following the Soviet invasion of 1979. In reality, it soon became clear that the rebirth of the country and the valley would be neither rapid nor linear in time, despite the strong positive drive given by this title.

All the same, today Bamiyan is the city in Afghanistan which shows the highest rates of demographic increase and school enrolment, promising farming and even – thanks to the security conditions it manages to guarantee – a significant increase in domestic tourism.

These favourable conditions, together with the population's great expectations of an improvement in their economic and housing conditions, impress the region with a positive dynamism, but inevitably exercise growing pressure on the regional resources and generate potential conflicts as to their use.

For these reasons, it is urgent to prepare urban and sectoral planning tools that can guarantee the effective governance of the region and a forward-looking management of resources, in a national picture in which the sequence of wars has seriously hindered and almost put an end to administrative practices of this kind.

The Strategic Masterplan (SMP) presented here forms an important testimony to the renewed attention towards these topics and the increasing commitment in this direction by both the central and local administrations.

It is the result of a systematic programme of analysis and planning of the urban area, which was undertaken in February 2017 with the financial support of the Italian Agency for Development Cooperation and the University of Florence, in conjunction with the Afghan Ministry of Urban Development and Housing (MUDH) and Bamiyan Municipality.

The intention is to replicate the intervention model that the partnership between the MUDH and the University of Florence successfully developed in Herat, in just a few years managing to produce some essential urban¹ and sectoral² planning tools, but also bringing the topic of governing the territory back to the centre of the public debate³.

Far from being based on a static vision of urban space, the adopted planning approach is an attempt to harness the most significant aspects of change and development, while at the same time ensuring full consideration of the specific geographic, cultural and social aspects of the area within a multidisciplinary approach.

¹ The Herat Strategic Masterplan (LaGeS 2013).

² The detailed plan for District 9 of Herat (LaGeS 2015a), and the Herat urban plan for sustainable mobility (LaGeS 2015b).

³ This is shown by the opening in 2014 of the new degree course in Urban Planning at the University of Herat, the second in the whole country.

⁴ The adopted approach is

The SMP has been created along the following principles⁴:

- *Strategic approach*: the plan is intended as a set of guidelines for the medium and long term, according to a systemic vision of the urban context. The plan takes an overarching perspective, without getting mired in detail, and its strategic strength lies in its internal coherence and hence its ability to generate further levels of operational planning;
- *Multidisciplinary approach*: the plan embraces a wide range of disciplines. Far from being limited to the strictly urban sphere, it encompasses such areas as the social system, the physical environment, mobility, economic prospects, cultural heritage, etc., all of which contribute to the creation of the urban environment as a whole;
- *Sustainability*: the plan takes account of the pressing need to pursue the sustainable development of the urban system within a context of rapid changes influenced by technological development, a globalized economy, environmental emergencies and social and behavioural transformation: in other words, sustainability means safeguarding those factors which are fundamental to urban quality, social well-being and environmental awareness;
- *Sharing*: the plan aims to build a shared vision; through the systematic involvement of the local community and population, as well as the competent bodies and stakeholders, the plan aspires to the sustainable development of the valley of Bamiyan by enhancing what already exists, boosting housing and public spaces, developing the local economy and affirming the concept of the valley not as a static space but as an evolving process.

The University of Florence has taken responsibility for the scientific coordination of the project, which has been conducted by an interdisciplinary team working out of the Social Geography Laboratory.

In line with the philosophy of cooperation adopted, developing the SMP has become a means towards general social development, through the strengthening of institutions and grassroots democracy. In this paradigm, importance is given to participative practices to facilitate a deeper understanding of the place, its internal dynamics and workings, and finally, a process of virtuous change. In putting together the plan, great importance was therefore attached to the way in which the participative processes were formulated.

consistent with the new Afghan Urban Law (2016), which defines a masterplan as 'a fundamental long-term document which regulates land use and zoning of the residential, cultural, industrial, economic, commercial, institutional and agricultural areas, municipal and urban facilities, communication and transportation networks, airports, ports and necessary levels to create urban establishments and facilities in accordance with the laws and regulations relating to all the above'.

Fig. I.1 Master's students at the completion of the degree.

Fig. I.2 Meeting with the Provincial sura.



Dependent upon this point are the opportunities for the interlocutors in Bamian to take ownership of the technical content of the plan, and, above all, of the know-how behind it. This in turn affects the sustainability of the cooperation project, that is, the ability of the local parties to be able to independently reproduce content and know-how in the future.

Fig. I.3 Meeting at Bamian University.

This involvement included both the institutions directly or indirectly involved in urban planning (technical staff of the relevant departments, university lecturers) and the wider public of stakeholders as well as society at large, and it took various forms.

Fig. I.4 14th Expert Working Group Meeting for the Safeguarding of the Bamian Valley World Heritage Property in Tokyo.

As regards institutional personnel, first of all the effective cooperation in preparing the Plan was created by facilitating the participation of MUDH personnel (10 persons) in the 2017 Master's course in Urban Analysis and Management at the University of Florence.

Fig. I.5 Public Conference on SMP at Hotel Noorband in Bamian.

This solution provided a suitable space-time context to be able to jointly deal with complex technical aspects.

Fig. I.6 Meeting at MUDH on 26th June 2018.

In addition, numerous meetings were organized which were also open to other members of the MUDH and the other ministries, directorates and bodies interested in the plan: the Ministry of Information and Culture, UNESCO, the Ministry of Public Works, the Governmental Power Agency, the Independent Department for Local Government, the Afghanistan Urban Water Supply and Sewerage Cooperative,



the University of Bamiyan and the Municipality of Bamiyan. In the initial phase, the goal of these meetings was to present and discuss the adopted methodological approach; subsequently, they enabled an in-depth exchange of opinions on the results of the investigations conducted in the analytical phase of the plan; finally, they aimed to illustrate and discuss the possible scenarios of development and the strategic choices of the Plan (Table I.1):

Date	Type of meeting	Location
13 September 2017	Technical meeting	MUDH, Kabul
1-2 October 2017	14th Expert Working Group Meeting for the Safeguarding of the Cultural Landscape and Archaeological Remains of the Bamiyan Valley World Heritage Property	Tokyo University of the Arts
12-24 April 2018	Workshop	Florence University
17 April 2018	Conference: Afghanistan in the balance - geopolitics and daily life	Florence University
23 June 2018	Technical meeting	Bamiyan Governorate
25 June 2018	Public conference on Bamiyan SMP	Hotel Noorband Qalla, Bamiyan
26 June 2018	Technical meeting	MUDH, Kabul
27 June 2018	High Council for Urban Development	Presidential Palace, Kabul

Table I.1 Technical and public meetings to illustrate the SMP.

Lastly, through the inter-university cooperation partnership drawn up between the University of Florence and the University of Bamiyan it was possible to involve local researchers in dealing with the specific topics necessary for the construction of the knowledge base.

This volume, which sets out the process followed in building the Plan, is divided into three parts. Part 1 (Analysis) reconstructs the regulatory framework surrounding the Plan (Chapter II.1) and offers an updated view of the socio-economic and demographic context (Chapter II.6, II.8), land use (Chapter II.5), housing (Chapter II.7) and infrastructure (Chapter II.9, II.10), transport supply and demand (Chapter II.11), and the environmental (Chapter II.2) and cultural resources (Chapter II.4). Part 2 (the Masterplan) sets out the forecasts for the demographic evolution of the valley (Chapter III.1), describes the vision inspiring the Plan, as well as the operational choices and rules (Chapter III.2), and the interventions on infrastructure (Chapter III.3). Part 3 (Implementation and Monitoring) supplies the guidelines for the implementation of the Plan (Chapter IV.1) and, for each sphere dealt with by the Plan, it details the nexus between goals, actions, implementing bodies and monitoring indicators (Chapter IV.2).

This proposal is a joint project of the Florentine team. The texts in this book have been written by the following: Mirella Loda: I.1.,I.2, II.6, II.7, II.8, III.6; Gaetano Di Benedetto: II.5, III.2, III.4; Giulio Giovannoni: II.1, II.12; Manfred Hinz: II.3, II.4.3; Masanori Nagaoka: II.4.1; Matteo Puttilli: II.2, II.4.2; Mario Tartaglia: II.9, II.10, II.11, III.1, III.3, III.5, III.6, IV.1, IV.2; Stefano Bartolini carried out the GIS data processing; Stefano Sultan Vasile interpreted the satellite photograph.

Having reached the end of this part of the journey we would like to thank, above all, the city of Bamiyan, for the extraordinary welcome we received on all our visits, as well as the governor Tahir Zohair and mayor Mohammad Aman Aman for their practical support during our fieldwork.

We would like to thank the institutions of Bammiyan which so efficiently cooperated with our university, overcoming the geographical distance with such ingenious solutions; we thank the outgoing Chancellor of the University of Bammiyan Dr. Masuma Khawary, and the present Chancellor Prof. Mohammad Arif Yousufi; the engineer Zahir Schewa and Abdur Ahmadi from the Department for Urban Development.

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I.2 Building the Knowledge Base

■ The decision to precede the planning phase by a systematic and in-depth analysis of the local context is one of the prime points of the approach to the regional planning and cooperation developed by the University of Florence team.

Work on building the updated knowledge base began by collecting all the data and information available in the literature and from the ministries and official Afghan (Ministry of Education, Ministry of Public Works, Ministry of Transport and Civil Aviation, Central Statistics Organization) and international sources (United Nations, World Bank, International Monetary Fund etc.).

The following original studies were also performed in order to acquire non-available data and to further investigate specific topics:

1. Land use. Knowledge of the land use is the first step towards getting to know the local context. The study was carried out through interpretation of a satellite photo taken in May 2017, and vectorialization on the basis of 24 items. The outcome of the photo-interpretation was subsequently validated with the aid of technicians from the Bamiyan offices of the MUDH, and through surveys.

2. LaGeS Household Survey 2017. A direct survey was carried out in the period of April-May 2017 in order to remedy the differences in the available statistics on the population resident in the valley. The survey dealt with the number of families, their composition and socio-economic conditions, and it was performed following consolidated international analytical standards on a random sample of families, and specifically by interviewing one family out of every four resident in the valley. The interviews were carried out using a standardized questionnaire written in Dari. The investigation also included a section dedicated to discovering the resident population's mobility habits, including the possession of means of transport, the daily sequence of journeys, the points of departure, the destinations, the reasons and timing of the trips, the means of transport used and the frequency of the journeys.

3. Building survey. Given the recent, extremely rapid expansion of the built-up area, it was deemed opportune to acquire additional detailed information on the size and characteristics of the residential buildings. The information was collected from the same sample selected for the household survey with standardized questionnaires. For each household, the questionnaire contained questions regarding the main technical characteristics of the building the household was living in.

4. Stakeholders' vision. Building a shared vision of the future of the urban development, which is a substantial part of the Plan creation process, requires a focus on and coordination between the positions assumed by the institutional players and the various stakeholders. To this end, a series of semi-open interviews were conducted with representatives both of all the local institutions (governorate, municipality, provincial *sura*, university, chamber of commerce) and civil society.

5. Existing plans and projects. Regional plans and projects are an extraordinary source of information about the visions for the future of the city. Therefore, an analysis was made of all existing plans and projects, dedicating particular attention to the most

recent ones or those with an important strategic value, such as the 2004-2007 Cultural Masterplan and the project to build a new bypass contained in the 2013 Masterplan.

6. Economics. Analysis of the economic fabric provides essential information on the resources existing in the local system and the potential that can be activated for future development. In addition to analysis of the farming sector a specific study was therefore carried out on the bazaar, which in recent years has gained growing importance in the local economy. A comprehensive survey was carried out of all the activities located there, with a census and interviews using the standardized questionnaire written in Dari for the permanent businesses; and a census and classification on the basis of the type of goods sold and the physical support structure for the mobile businesses. Specific attention was also dedicated to the tourist infrastructures, owing to the extraordinary importance that the sector could assume in the economy of the valley and the province.

7. Traffic flows. Since through the LaGeS Household Survey 2017 it is not possible to find out the traffic flows of the non-residents in Bamiyan, a specific survey was carried out in order to identify traffic coming into and passing through the city, henceforth known as the 'LaGeS Cordon Traffic Survey 2017'. This investigation counted the traffic flows, divided by vehicle type, in all the points of access to the municipal area. A sample survey conducted through interviews with the drivers of a subset of the vehicles was also connected to this count. Through the interview, it was possible to find detailed information both on the journeys (places of departure, destinations, times, reasons, etc.) and on the vehicles (age, maintenance conditions).

8. Facilities and utilities. Lacking detailed sources on the facilities and utilities in Bamiyan, a survey campaign was carried out covering the whole municipal area. As far as facilities are concerned, the geographical positions and main dimensions and functions of the health facilities, schools, parks, sports facilities, hammams, libraries and mosques were noted. As far as the utilities are concerned, a survey was carried out of the main utilities in the urban area: the water system, the sewerage and solid waste management system, the power network and the telecommunications system. The survey included both the geographical position in the region and the main characteristics of the utilities taken into consideration.

9. Cultural heritage. Lastly, considerable attention was dedicated to analysis of the tangible and intangible cultural heritage, given the importance that this factor holds both in terms of identity and self-recognition of the local collectivity, and in the prospect of sustainable tourism development. The tangible cultural heritage was analysed through collaboration with UNESCO, the main repository of knowledge on the state of preservation of the heritage and the main interventions that have and are due to take place on it. The study of the intangible cultural heritage was conducted through the systematic recognition of the main social practices, festivities and associations. Furthermore, the aim was to grasp the make-up of the local collectivity through the experiences of the representatives of the different social groups, surveyed with the help of audiovisual techniques by the combined University of Florence 'Audiovisual Techniques for the Analysis of the Intangible Cultural Heritage' laboratory.

10. Demographic model. In addition to the surveys carried out to gather information on the current state of the urban system in Bamiyan, it was necessary to create forecasts on the demographic evolution of the city, without which it would not have been possible to proceed with the planning activities. This forecast was obtained through the construction and application in Bamiyan of a demographic mathematical model. The characteristics and results of this model are illustrated in Chapter III.1.

ANALYSIS

II.1 Regulatory Framework and Actors

■ The regulatory framework on which the Comprehensive Urban Plan (Master-plan) is based is undergoing a tumultuous period of transition involving both the juridical and administrative aspects of planning, which is naturally a reflection of the complexities surrounding the formation of the new Afghan State.

Within this framework, some surviving traces of former juridical and administrative agencies linger on. In particular, some laws made by the last and strictest of these, established by the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan (Taliban), are still in force for the simple reason that they still have not been altered or replaced, despite the fact that they contradict the general principles introduced by the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan in its 2004 Constitution. However, the recent approval, in December 2017, of a new urban development and housing law clarifies some important aspects regarding the subjects and tools of planning.

At the same time, the needs of a rapidly changing economic and social situation are pressing for disciplinary measures which are particularly focussed (and thus quite alien to the generalist tradition of the Islamic system) and which are often introduced and implemented by decree in exceptional circumstances.

There are four juridical areas that planning actions must take into account:

- the right to planning, with the related actors and tools;
- the right to expropriation, with the related legislation;
- the right to build and to invest in real estate;
- the right to the environment.

Furthermore, two legal areas of an administrative nature have an effect on planning action:

- the competence framework of government and sub-government bodies;
- administrative territorial circumscription.

■ II.1.1 THE RIGHT TO PLANNING, ACTORS AND TOOLS

The right to planning on a regional and urban basis is granted exclusively to the national government. The recent approval of the new urban development and housing law has not changed this fundamental aspect of the Afghan planning system. However, it has clarified and specified the functions of the Ministry of Urban Development and Housing (MUDH) and defined various planning tools which act at different scales. In addition, the law established the High Council for Urban Development (HCUD), which is the highest decision-making body in the planning field. The HCUD is made up of the main ministers more or less directly involved in the planning process and of the directors of the main government agencies and

trade associations involved in urban transformation and development. The MUDH mainly has a technical, design and proposal role, while the HCUD is responsible for the approval of the plans. The tasks of the HUDC include defining general strategies and policies, approving comprehensive national plans, urban masterplans, urban development projects and programmes, and urban and housing development criteria and procedures. The MUDH's competences include, among other things, the definition of development strategies and programmes and monitoring of their implementation, the design and management of plans at different scales (from national comprehensive plans to detailed plans), the location of settlements and modification of their development boundaries, the definition and implementation of housing policies, and the planning of public works.

As said, a fundamental aspect of the new urban development and housing law is the definition of planning tools. The law identifies four planning levels (national, regional, municipal and neighbourhood) and various types of plans (comprehensive plans, strategic plans, guide plans, corrective plans, adjustment plans and improvement plans). The National Comprehensive Plan operates at the scale of the entire country, for which it defines the creation of new cities and new industrial, agricultural, tourism and service centres. The Regional Plan has a coordinating role and is aimed at ensuring a sustainable use of resources and coordinating infrastructure and development policies for each region. The Comprehensive Urban Plan (Masterplan) defines land uses, identifying the different functional areas (residential, cultural, industrial, commercial, institutional, infrastructure, etc.) in accordance with current regulations and laws. The Detailed Plans act in accordance with the rules and standards of the Comprehensive Urban Plan and define the detailed design of the settlements.

The afore-described plans are comprehensive plans relating to geographical units of different levels. The law then identifies: the strategic plan, which defines the overall visions and objectives of urban development, in order to translate the national strategies into urban plans consistent with them; guide plans, which offer short-term responses to cities that do not have comprehensive plans; corrective plans, which modify existing plans that are no longer tailored to current needs; adjustment plans, which make changes to the detailed plans; and improvement plans, which aim to improve infrastructure provision and reduce the environmental problems of unplanned areas.

For the purpose of ensuring greater pertinence to local situations, the Ministry avails itself of peripheral organs (directorates or departments) in the main cities of Afghanistan, which gather local data and examine the plausibility of the development proposals. The plans, however, are drawn up by the central departments of the Ministry.

■ II.1.2 THE RIGHT TO EXPROPRIATION, WITH RELATED LEGISLATION

Expropriation in Afghanistan is regulated by the Law on Expropriation from the year 2000 which, under the Taleban regime, replaced the Land Appropriation Law for Public Welfare of 1935, and which in its turn was amended in 2005 and 2010.

For public works, the right to expropriation is granted to all bodies with the necessary expertise to carry them out. The expropriation of the property is subject

to the payment of prior and appropriate compensation, based on the market price of the land. A special right of expropriation is granted for areas allocated for the building of new towns or suburbs according to approved plans.

The exercise of the right of expropriation is governed by the law, which protects the landowners' civil rights, both as regards procedure and indemnity. The practice of expropriation must take into account the customary rules of each place (Alden Wily 2012).

■ II.1.3 THE RIGHT TO BUILD

The law grants landowners the right to build. The exercising of this right must conform to the plans in force.

Building controls and any penalties for non-compliance come under the administrative responsibilities of the municipal council which, for technical controls, avails itself of the cooperation of the peripheral departments of the MUDH.

What happens in practice is that the builder applies to the municipality for permission to build. The municipality verifies ownership of the land or the deed (e.g. domain concession or leasing), draws up a site layout plan for the lot in question and sends it to the Urban Development Department. The Urban Development Department verifies if the work proposed complies or not with the prescriptions of the Masterplan and Detailed Plan. If the project plan conforms, it is sent to the applicant who draws up the building plan (an architectural plan and a structural plan signed by an architect or qualified engineer) and submits it to the Department for approval. The Department examines the plan and, if there are no problems, approves it and charges the duties for technical proceedings, after which the file with the approved plan is sent to the municipality which applies further duties (municipal tax) and grants the owner permission to build. During building work the municipality is responsible for inspecting the work and verifying that the builder is keeping to the approved plan.

Afghan law makes no reference to the figure of work supervisor who assumes responsibility for the technical conformity to the plan, and who gives the necessary guarantee of quality, also for insurance purposes (Yawary 2013, Qayoomi 2013).

Closely linked to the right to build is the right to invest in real estate. This is governed by the Private Investment Law issued in 2003, which repealed the preceding Law on Domestic and Foreign Private Investment in Afghanistan, of 2002. According to a specific decree (Legal Decree Concerning Transfer of Government Property, no. 89 of 2003) government-owned property which is not used for institutional purposes can be allocated for investment.

Investors have the right to lease the property for a period of between 10 and 50 years. Allocation is decided by a High Commission on Investment (Alden Wily 2012).

■ II.1.4 THE RIGHT TO THE ENVIRONMENT

Recognized in principle by the Constitution of 2004, protection of the environment is based on the Environment Law (also cited as the Environment Act) of 2007, which replaced the Law for the Protection of Nature of the year 2000.

Protection of the environment is fostered by the National Environmental Protection Authority, which has the usual powers of dialogue of non-governmental departments. The National Authority is divided into Subnational Environmental Advisory Councils, usually one per province, which exercise environmental control on a local basis.

The NEPA oversees a number of functions, including the delimitation of protected areas, the drawing up of mitigation plans, the protection of water resources, authorization for practices which are harmful to the environment, and inspection and penalties for environmental violation.

An important presidential decree (No. 1840/2013) makes a fundamental contribution to the protection of the environment. It prohibits the construction of new buildings and settlements in green areas, forests and agricultural areas, thus safeguarding the entire environmental heritage of the country.

■ II.1.5 COMPETENCE FRAMEWORK OF GOVERNMENT AND SUB-GOVERNMENT BODIES

The Afghan central executive is organized into ministries. As we saw in § II.1.1, the MUDH is accountable for the planning and promotion of urban development. This ministry is in charge of strategy, planning, coordination and control initiatives to do with urban growth and transformation. It coordinates its work with that of other ministries responsible for territorial changes (Interior Affairs, Public Works, Energy and Water, Mines, Finance, etc.). The plans drawn up by the MUDH are approved by the HCUD, which, as previously mentioned, consists of the main ministers and institutional actors involved in the planning processes.

Afghanistan is currently divided into 34 provinces, each of which has a governor assisted by an elected provincial council. The provinces are divided into districts and municipalities. The former correspond to rural areas, the latter to urban or suburban areas. There are 217 municipalities in the whole of Afghanistan and about 20% of the country's population live there (Ayobi 2013).

Each province is responsible for economic development strategies in its own area, and for fostering initiatives which transform strategy into action, as well as coordinating the actions of the peripheral bodies of the ministries.

Each municipality has a mayor, flanked by a variable number of deputies and a municipal administrative council, both of which are appointed by the government. The law (Municipalities Law of 7 October 2000) conferred on them certain responsibilities which were increased in principle by the Constitution of 2004. It is to be expected that their responsibilities will increase further over the next few years, allowing local administrations to address the growing organizational and political problems arising from the city's economic, social and cultural growth.

Currently, local departments are responsible for 46 competences enumerated and controlled by the Municipalities Law:

- 15 relate to the provision of city services (including the creation – directly or involving private investors – of roads, urban facilities, cemeteries, canals and ditches, wells, aqueducts and drainage networks, the parcelling out of land for building purposes and the organization of urban transport);

- 12 relate to executive functions (including expropriation of lands for public utility, the demolition of run-down buildings, the tackling of illegal building);
- 10 relate to coordination (including the adoption of provisions for healthcare and protection of the environment, the development of sports and exercise, providing incentives for outdoor life through the creation of green areas, protection of the historical/cultural heritage, the conduction of censuses and the storage of statistical data);
- 9 relate to administrative functions (including the civil registry office and the publication of periodic statistical reports).

Even though this list of competences is still far from being wholly implemented, it has been subject to updating in compliance with the Constitution of 2004, which bestowed more effective powers on the municipalities.

It is hoped that, as well as other new competences, municipalities will have the power to establish economic organizations for the management of public services and other entrepreneurial initiatives, as well as greater taxation powers (Ayobi 2013).

■ II.1.6 ADMINISTRATIVE TERRITORIAL CIRCUMSCRIPTION

Territorial circumscription is subject to continual adjustment which strives to keep up with local developments. The unification of territories is an attempt to overcome the need to coordinate administrative action, which would require sophisticated juridical tools. The Bamiyan Masterplan contains a proposal to redefine the city boundary, to ensure that recently developed urban areas (both planned and informal) and new urban development areas identified by the plan fall within the administrative boundary and are subject to the authority of the municipal administration and of the Masterplan.

■ II.1.7 INFORMAL SETTLEMENTS

A persistent problem is that of informal settlements which have increased to an astounding extent over the last decade. This is due to the very rapid population growth of Afghan cities and to the age and inadequacy of the plans in force, which in some cases date back to before the Soviet invasion. It is estimated that in the early 2010s around 70% of the urban population in Afghanistan lived in informal settlements (Alden Wily 2012). One of the main goals of the Masterplan is to expand the supply of housing in order to respond to growing demand and contain the proliferation of informal settlements. The Masterplan also contains rules for drawing up Detailed Plans for the redevelopment and improvement of existing informal neighbourhoods.

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