Chapter Three: Planning as urban politics

In this chapter I explain the theoretical framework through which I describe the planning of Kabul. In Chapter One I give a critical introduction to the city through a retelling of my initial involvement and findings. Those findings provoked the question: How is Kabul being planned? In this chapter, that research question is answered in an argument that frames the entire dissertation:

Kabul is being planned in multiple *modes* that express different political rationalities. The three modes I identify in Kabul are formal planning, informal planning, and exceptionalist planning. The political rationality of each of these three modes is a different intersection of sovereign power and biopower.

Each mode of planning is analyzed in detail in Chapters Three, Four, and Five. This chapter introduces the relationship between each mode, and the political rationalities that drive them.

The first step in this multi-part hypothesis is to argue that multiple modes and rationalities in planning can occur together in one city. From interviews of Afghans and Westerners it is clear that one reason why they believed Kabul lacked planning was that there was not a *singular, unified* planning process. Two assumptions need to be challenged in order to argue the possibility of a plurality of planning. First, the assumption that "the state" is a monolithic, unified entity. Second, the assumption that rationality itself is singular and unified.

Governing regimes versus domination by "the state"

The First World War was a moment of tremendous political uncertainty in Germany, a country that had only existed for fifty years on a terrain of tremendous political conflict. The 'Westphalian settlement' of 1648 had established the practices of European nation-states as a strategy for avoiding mutual annihilation after thirty years of political-religious warfare.[1] Still, the concept of political regimes remained contested because in monarchies, "the state" was often conflated with the person of the king. Since the French Revolution, however, the practice of sovereign power began to be distinguished from the person of the Sovereign. During the political crisis in 1918, German activists were raising fundamental questions about what the German nation-state might be, and might become. In this context, Max Weber gave his famous formulation of the concept of state power to the Free Students Association:

> Today, however, we have to say that a state is a human community that (successfully) claims the *monopoly of the legitimate use of physical force* within a given territory.[2]

What is implied in this definition is that the state is an agent that can claim and act. In many respects this model corresponds to the perception of a government that its political leaders would prefer. The implicit metaphor of state-as-person projects an image of internal coherence and consistency which promotes the legitimacy of government. Gramsci points out how rule-by-consent is far more efficient and preferable than rule-by-

1 Wilson, Peter. 2009. *The Thirty Years War: Europe's tragedy*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
2 Weber, Max. 1918. "Politics as a vocation (*Politik als Beruf*)." Munich: Free Students Association.

overt coercion. But to project this unified image, it appears that nation-state republics appropriated an implicitly monarchist set of phrases and concepts (such as *raison d'etat*) that fundamentally mischaracterize how modern regimes operate.

Michel Foucault began to study the emergence of the modern institutions of the clinic, the asylum, and the prison through what was actually practiced in each site. Foucault became well known for his detailed investigations and their implications for how power operates in practice; however many of his Marxist colleagues began to criticize the absence of a critique of the state in his work. However the assumption that such a thing as "the state" existed as an autonomous entity—an agent in itself—did not reconcile with his findings from either his earlier 'archaeological' method nor his later 'genealogical' method of research.[3]

Instead, Foucault focused on the concepts of 'government and governing' because they fit both the micropolitics he observed in intersubjective relations, and the broader processes of regime power. The question of how one governs oneself fits his overall project of investigating "the relationship of the self to the self," and the way that political regimes govern populations fits with his methodological focus on techniques and practices. Individuals are expected to govern their own behavior and choices, while also expecting that they will be governed: a dual condition that corresponds to his double-entendre usage of the figure of the *subject* as both agent of action and *object* of domination.[4] At the social scale, governing describes a *relationship* rather than a stable *object*. Colin Gordon explains that for Foucault,

> the state has no essence. The nature of the institution of the state is, Foucault thinks, a function of changes in practices of government, rather than the converse. Political theory attends too much to institutions, and too little to practices.[5]

Rather than presume a coherent state, it is more useful to evaluate the *degree of coherence* between the various entities that govern a space. Foucault argues that the coherence of a political regime is an *effect* of the collective perceptions, habits, and expectations of the governed population—what he calls governmentality.[6]

This fundamental re-think of government fits particularly well with planning theory and practice. Karen Christensen argues that urban planning is inherently complex because of interagency conflict at multiple levels.[7] Agencies, she reminds us, are aggregations of people whose practices are shaped by discourse, organizational cultures, and interests which vary by site and by scope of responsibility. Even so, Christensen's site of analysis is a group of agencies that at least nominally identify themselves as part of the federated regime of government within the United States. The complexity and intensity of interagency conflict she describes is far greater in Kabul where multiple regimes, militaries, and agencies based both inside and outside the country are directly affecting

3 Gordon, Colin. 1991. "Governmental rationality: An introduction." Pp. 1-51 in *The Foucault effect*, edited by Burchell Graham, Colin Gordon, and Peter Miller. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, p. 4.

4 Foucault, Michel. 1983. "The subject and power." Pp. 208-26 in *Michel Foucault, beyond structuralism and hermeneutics*, Hubert Dreyfus and Paul Rabinow, eds. Chicago: U of Chicago Press, p. 212.

5 Gordon 1991, p. 4.

6 Foucault, Michel. 1991. "Governmentality." Pp. 87-104 in *The Foucault effect*.

7 Christensen, Karen Stromme. 1999. *Cities and complexity: Making intergovernmental decisions*. Thousand Oaks, Calif.: Sage Publications.

local politics.

The loss of governing coherence in Kabul, therefore, is not merely a product of a loss of coherence within a regime: it is a product fragmenting sovereignty. Foreign ministries and head offices of nongovernmental agencies far from Afghanistan make operational decisions—especially about risk-management—that profoundly affect urban space within the city, without local consultation or recourse.

During my work in Kabul I observed several incidents which indicated the degree to which sovereignty had fragmented in the governing of Kabul. When I worked for the Ministry of Urban Development and Housing in 2003 I was based in a back office on the second floor of the main building. On two occasions, staff-members from different international agencies wandered into our office, desperate to find anyone who would tell them where to get clear permission to build their various projects. We could not help them; we had no idea ourselves who actually gave final authority for building permits in the city at that time. After 2005, it became increasingly clear that the Municipality had wrested that power back from an attempted usurpation by the Ministry. Far from a unitary urban planning project governed by a unitary state, the multiple processes of planning in Kabul reflect the degree of fragmentation of the political regime.

This re-think of the nature of political regimes and government also affects development discourse and practice. Foucault's usage of government is also crucially different from the term *governance*, which connotes practices of administration as apolitical, technical processes. Governing encompasses administrative practices, but within the broader framework of politics and political regimes.

In *Global assemblages: Technology, politics, and ethics as anthropological problems*, a group of social theorists have adopted a much more nuanced concept of governing processes, using Gilles Deleuze's idea of "assemblage." In the following passage, Kris Olds and Nigel Thrift specify what they mean by 'assemblages of governmental power:'

> We do not want to think of these centers of calculation as homogeneous and tightly knit structures or even as a loosely linked constitution, but rather as "functions" that bring into play particular populations, territories, affects, events—"withs." They are not therefore to be thought of as subjects but as "something which happens." Assemblages differ from structures in that they consist of cofunctioning "symbiotic elements," which may be quite unalike (but have "agreements of convenience") and coevolve with other assemblages, mutating into something else, which both parties have built. They do not, therefore, function according to a strict cause-and-effect model.[8]

This concept challenges another assumption embedded in the idea of a unitary, personified state: that policies are intentional. If urban space is governed by such loosely-aggregated assemblages, the personified concept of intentionality becomes irrelevant. Instead, if there is any coherence at all, the 'cofunctioning' of different agents within an assemblage needs to be studied as shared techniques, practices, and rationalities of rule. Governing rationalities are analyzed in the following section.

8 Olds, Kris, and Nigel Thrift. 2005. "Cultures on the brink: Reengineering the soul of capitalism—on a global scale." Pp. 270-90 in *Global Assemblages: Technology, Politics, and Ethics as Anthropological Problems*, edited by Aihwa Ong and Stephen J Collier. Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, p. 271.

A plurality of rationalities

The second assumption that needs to be challenged in order to proceed with my central argument is the possibility of plural rationalities in urban planning. In a 1988 interview in *Theory, Culture and Society*, Jean-Francois Lyotard defended his work from accusations of irrationalism by explaining that "there is no reason, only reasons."[9] This is a succinct refutation of a modern assumption that reason is unitary, and that furthermore, the only legitimate mode of reasoning is empirical logic. Lyotard further argues that "it is easy to show that it is never a question of *one* massive and unique reason—that is nothing but an ideology."

The ideology Lyotard is referring to is positivism: the belief that the one legitimate form of rationality is empirical logic. This ideology deeply influenced the concept and practice of urban planning. John Friedmann traces the genealogy of planning to Saint-Simon and his erstwhile disciple, Auguste Comte. In 1822, Comte proposed the development of a rigorously empirical 'science of humanity' (*sociologie*) that deeply influenced modern assumptions about the study of the human condition, including the very term social *science*, in contrast to social *theory* or moral philosophy.[10] Positivism relies on older roots in natural philosophy, such as Occam's fourteenth-century logical argument that "plurality should not be posited without necessity." But the application of 'scientism' to knowledge-production well outside of the natural sciences reflects the prestige of the scientific method after the remarkable technological advances of the nineteenth century. In his reformulation of Political Economy into the 'scientific' discipline of Economics in 1890, Alfred Marshall explicitly notes the prestige of the natural sciences, and his hopes for a prestigious, reputable, mathematically-driven discipline stripped of the disreputable dimension of politics.[11]

Likewise, the positivist assumption of a singular rationality was formally encoded into planning practice through the adoption of the Rational Planning Model of Herbert Simon in the 1940s.[12] Here, urban planning overlaps with both military planning and development planning in ways that are relevant to this analysis of Kabul. The U.S. military also adopted the Rational Planning Model, and development organizations adopted a close variant known as the Logical Framework, or LogFrame, for the rational design and evaluation of aid and development programs. Thus, the assumption that there is a 'single rational way of planning' is embedded in the practices of many of the key agencies shaping Kabul after 2001.

Max Horkheimer began to challenge positivism in 1937 with his article, "Traditional and critical theory." The title of Horkheimer's article contains a peculiar inversion: what he calls "traditional theory" was the empiricist positivism that had become hegemonic only one hundred years earlier. "Critical theory", in contrast, referred to the much more

9 van Reijen, Willem and Dick Veerman. 1988. "An Interview with Jean-François Lyotard" in *Theory Culture & Society* 5:277.

10 Wallerstein, Immanuel Maurice. 2004. *World-systems analysis: An introduction*. Durham: Duke University Press, p. 4.

11 Marshall, Alfred. 2009[1890]. *Principles of economics*. Eighth edition (unabridged). New York: Cosimo Classics, p. 36.

12 Simon, Herbert Alexander. 1945. *Administrative behavior; a study of decision-making processes in administrative organization*. New York: Macmillan.

ancient Hellenic understanding of *theoria* as a virtuous struggle to 'see through' the distractions and distortions of prevailing opinion (*doxa*). Horkheimer argued that there was no such thing as 'disinterested' research and theorization, and that the positivist claim of neutral objectivity was itself a political assertion of domination by adherents to a particular mode of reasoning.

By the early 1970s, a sequence of events in the United States had combined to cause urban planners to doubt the positivist paradigm. Civil rights activists challenged the singular ideal of efficiency, with a demand that policies be judged on the basis of social justice as well. Anti-war activists had challenged the legitimacy Robert MacNamara—the 'whiz kid of numbers'—and his planning of the American involvement in Viet Nam.[13] Perhaps most quietly but most profoundly, environmentalists had challenged the inherent benefits of industrial and economic progress itself.[14] Social scientists and social theorists provided the language to articulate these doubts. Thomas Kuhn's *The structure of scientific revolutions* was reissued as a widely-read second edition in 1970;[15] Horkheimer's essays were translated and published in English in 1972;[16] and among urban planners, Horst Rittel articulated doubts about viability of positivist assumptions in "Dilemmas in a general theory of planning" in 1973.[17] A generation later, a strong German-British movement of 'post-postivist' planning theorists continues through the work of Frank Fischer,[18] Maarten Hajer,[19] Hendrik Wagenaar,[20] Philip Allmendinger,[21] and Mark Tewdwr-Jones.[22] These theorists do not reject the legitimate role of empirical reason in the planning process; but they point out that policy formulation and implementation also involve a substantial use of 'practical reason,' or *phronesis*.

Bent Flyvbjerg, the Danish planner and social theorist, initially brought the concept of phronesis to the attention of planners in the early 1990s.[23] He explored the idea further in his 2001 book *Making social science matter*.[24] Flyvbjerg cited passages in Book VI of Aristotle's *Nichomachean ethics* as the source of his understanding of phronesis. Aristotle distinguishes five "states" or "qualities" (*ois*) of mind "by which we achieve the truth."[25] These are:

nous (cognition itself);

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13 Halberstam, David. 1972. *The Best and the Brightest*. New York: Random House.

14 Carson, Rachel. 1962. *Silent spring*. Greenwich, Conn.: Fawcett Publications.

15 Kuhn, Thomas S. 1970. *The structure of scientific revolutions*. 2nd ed. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

16 Horkheimer, Max. 1972. *Critical theory; selected essays*. New York: Herder and Herder.

17 Rittel, Horst, and Melvin Webber. 1973. "Dilemmas in a general theory of planning." *Policy Sciences* 155-169.

18 Fischer, Frank. 2003. *Reframing public policy: Discursive politics and deliberative practices*. Oxford ; New York: Oxford University Press.

19 Hajer, Maarten A. 1995. *The politics of environmental discourse: Ecological modernization and the policy process*. New York: Clarendon Press.

20 Hajer, Maarten A, and Hendrik Wagenaar. 2003. *Deliberative policy analysis: Understanding governance in the network society*. New York: Cambridge University Press

21 Allmendinger, Philip. 2002. "Towards a post-positivist typology of planning theory." *Planning Theory* 1:77-99.

22 Tewdwr-Jones, M., and P. Allmendinger. 1998. "Deconstructing communicative rationality: A critique of Habermasian collaborative planning." *Environment and planning A* 30:1975-1989.

23 Sandercock, Leonie. 1998. *Towards cosmopolis: Planning for multicultural cities*. New York: John Wiley, p. 65.

24 Flyvbjerg, Bent. 2001. *Making social science matter: Why social inquiry fails and how it can succeed again*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

25 Flyvbjerg, Bent. 2001. *Making social science matter: why social inquiry fails and how it can succeed again*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

techne (knowing how to execute a specific task or skill);
episteme (reasoning from unchanging, universal principles);
phronesis (case-specific reasoning about specific problems); and
sophia (wisdom, derived from reflective accumulation of experience).[26]

Flyvbjerg identifies three of these five states as discrete modes of rationality. Of these three—*techne*, *episteme*, and *phronesis*—it is *episteme* which most closely matches the mode of empirical rationality implicated in the Rational Planning Model. However Flyvbjerg points out that *phronesis* is a mode of rationality that, by Aristotle's own description, seems to match the way planners actually deliberate and form policy. Aristotle argues that:

> Political wisdom *(politikè)* and practical wisdom *(phrónesis)* are the same state of mind...Of the wisdom concerned with the city[-state], the practical wisdom which plays a controlling part is legislative wisdom *(nomothetiké)*, while that which is related to this [*phrónesis*] as particulars to their universal is known by the general name 'political wisdom' *(politikí)*; this has to do with action and deliberation *(praktikè kaì bouleutiké)*, for a decree is a thing to be carried out in the form of an individual act.
> [Ross-Urmson 1984 translation, supplemented by the 1926 Rakham translation].[27]

In modern terms, Aristotle argues that the mode of reasoning for particular contingencies (*phronesis*) is distinct from the mode of reasoning for unchanging universals *episteme*).

Rationalities in relation

For urban planners, three crucial lessons need to be drawn from this analysis. First, that the conception of rationality as singular and unimodal is a peculiarity of nineteenth and twentieth century Western thought. In his refutation of a unitary Reason, Lyotard continues, “On the contrary, it is a question of *plural* rationalities, which are, at the least, respectively, theoretical, practical, aesthetic. They are profoundly heterogeneous, ‘autonomous’ as Kant says.”[28] Leonie Sandercock emphasized the importance of recognizing rationality as plural in “Exploring Planning's Knowledges” in 1998, citing Lyotard explicitly.[29]

Aristotle’s writings open up the possibility of conceiving of multiple modes of rationality. At least three of Aristotle’s “qualities of mind” are distinct modes of rationality—techne, episteme, and phronesis—but this is only a starting point. Through his studies of Kant, Lyotard also distinguishes aesthetic rationality, what I will call *aesthesis* for brevity. From my fieldwork in Kabul I suggest another mode: *ontological* rationality, meaning that some information ans assumptions are accepted as truth based upon one’s relationship of trust to the source of that information. As targets of decades of propaganda, Afghans today tend to believe only things that are told to them by a friend whom they trust, based on the moral character of that friend.

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26 Aristotle. circa 350 B.C. *Nichomachean Ethics* VI:iii. Bekker numbers: 1139b:15-18.

27 Aristotle. 1989 (Ross-Urmson trans., 1984). “Nichomachean Ethics.” pp. 363-478 in *A new Aristotle reader*, edited by J. L Ackrill. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, p. 423; and
Aristotle. 1934 [1926]. *Nichomachean Ethics,* trans. H. Rakham. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press. VI:iii:2, p. 333.

28 Ibid.

29 Sandercock, Leonie. 1998. *Towards cosmopolis: Planning for multicultural cities*. New York: John Wiley, Chapter .

If rationality is plural, then the relationships between these different modes of rationality are at least as important as the distinction between them. Each mode of rationality may operate as a 'verification-test' on reasoning done through another mode. For example, Albert Einstein once argued that "the only physical theories that we are willing to accept are the beautiful ones."[30] He is arguing that one of the truth-tests of epistemic reason is aesthetic reason (an insight that would have delighted Nietzsche). Even if *phronesis* is the primary mode of rationality used in policy deliberation, planners typically prefer to use data-analyses to confirm findings, an affirmation of *phronesis* via *episteme*. The 'workability' (Lindblom) and 'satisficing'(Simon) of pragmatic planning rely on experience to develop feasible plans, a relationship in which both sophia and *techne* affirm *phronesis*. Furthermore, a persuasive policy design often has what planners call 'elegance.' This, too, is an affirmation of *phronesis* via *aesthesis*. Rather than a substitution of one mode for another, planning rationality may need to be rethought as various reconciliations between multiple modes of rationality.

The second vital lesson from this analysis of Aristotlean thought is that phronesis is a context-specific mode of rationality. Distinguishing phronesis from episteme supports the post-structural challenge to universal, ahistoric rationality; or at least it compartmentalizes those 'universal truths' as a particular epistemological domain that does not encompass the whole of rationality, let alone reality. There is still a place for epistemological reason, but epistemology's relationship to context, and to contextually-sensitive phronetic reason, needs to be continuously re-evaluated.

The third lesson, for urban planners in particular, is that the phronetic mode of reason is political reason applied to cities. Aristotle's own example, cited above, is the context of public deliberation over policy. Sovereign political entities were not distinguished from the *polis* at the time. Thus, *politiki* meant both deliberation over urban policy. Far from the *techno*cratic conception of planning in the middle of the twentieth century, this reexamination of planning thought reintroduces politics to the core of the discipline.

While modern political science tends to focus on the nation-state as the fundamental unit of political analysis, urban politics persisted long after the concept of the polity was virtualized and expanded into the nation-state. Furthermore, as this research shows, tidy jurisdictional distinctions between urban government, national government, and transnational empire have been fragmented and eroded considerably. Both national politics and geopolitics bleed into, and help constitute, the urban regime of Kabul.

Thus far I have built on Flyvbjerg's argument that the primary mode of rationality employed in the practice of planning is phronesis, a form of applied political rationality. The following section explores a crucial differentiation that has emerged *within* political rationality which profoundly influences the practices of modern urban planning: the fission into sovereign politics and biopolitics.

30 Zeidler, Eberhard. 2000. *Quantum field theory: Basics in mathematics and physics,* Berlin, Springer-Verlag, p. 971.

Biopolitics and the pluralization of political reason

'Post-positivist' planning theorists argue that the primary mode of rationality used in actual planning practice is phronesis. I take a further step by arguing that Foucault's distinction of political reason into sovereign politics and biopolitics is central to the specific forms of political rationality employed by urban planners. Indeed, the emergence of modern urban planning is itself one of the chief expressions of 'the birth of biopolitical reason' as a response to industrial urbanization.

Foucault develops his theory of biopolitics by first identifying a style of governing he calls "pastoral."[31] This style of government was adapted from the Christian practice of caring for the souls of each and every member of a church congregation. The guiding metaphor for this practice was Jesus as the Good Shepherd who cares for all of his flock, including the least among them. In the eighteenth century, European political leaders adapted this pastoral model to develop *regimes of care* for the material well-being of their subjects. An early expression of this emerging political rationality is Thomas Hobbes' 1651 metaphor of the state as Leviathan—constituted from the bodies of the entire population, not the unique body of the monarch.

Here we return to the same time and place cited at the beginning of this chapter: the political crisis that defined the European nation-state. Religious schism among Christians had been mobilized by political interests, precipitating extraordinary violence. Hobbes' putative 'state of nature' was in fact a condition of regime-instability and revolutionary change in the social and personal role of religion. Bruno Latour points out that to prevent life from being 'nasty, brutish and short,' Hobbes believed that the political crisis had to be resolved by re-thinking the state.[32] While the Peace of Westphalia established a system of mutually recognized sovereign nation-states, Hobbes' argument set the basis for thinking of each nation-state as the totality of its population.

Foucault traces the articulation of this new political rationality through the idea of 'Police Science' (Polizeiwisseschaft) of German principalities:

> in the eighteenth century the police force was not invented only for maintaining law and order, nor for assisting governments in their struggle against their enemies, but for assuring urban supplies, hygiene, health and standards considered necessary for handicrafts and commerce.[33]

While the rationale for armed forces is to maintain sovereign control—to 'take and hold ground,' in military parlance—the rationale for police is to provide a regime of care.

Translations: political rationalities in the Afghan context

Before I proceed with Foucault's development of the concept of biopolitics, I need to translate two aspects of the argument thus far to the present situation in Afghanistan. First: the genealogy of *regimes of care* in Christian and Muslim societies is significantly different. What Foucault describes as emergent in Germany in the eighteenth century closely parallels the practices which Muslims developed with the founding of Islam.

31 Foucault, Michel. 1979. "Omnes et singulatim: Towards a criticism of 'Political Reason'." *The Tanner lectures on human values* 2:223-254.

32 Hobbes, Thomas. 1996[1651]. *Leviathan*. Rev. student ed. New York: Cambridge University Press.

33 Foucault, Michel. 1983. "The subject and power." Pp. 208-26 in *Michel Foucault, beyond structuralism and hermeneutics*, edited by Hubert L Dreyfus and Paul Rabinow. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, p. 215.

Like Christianity, Islam is centrally concerned with the salvation of every soul within the community of believers. But for Muslims this concern extends to the health and material well-being of the living believer. The Qur'an mandates the regular hygienic practice of ablution as an integral part of daily prayers, along with moderation in eating and drinking. By at least the eleventh century, Muslims had also institutionalized the care for 'the social body' through the office of the public inspector, the *muhtasib*.[34] The fundamental charge of the muhtasib is "the promotion of virtue and prevention of vice." In practice, this meant ensuring moral behavior in public spaces, as well as inspection of weights and measures, and the cleanliness of food preparation in marketplaces.[35]

During the mid-twentieth century, the Saudi Kingdom developed this office into a state bureau of religious enforcement. The Iranian Revolutionary Council developed a similar 'religious police' after 1980. This bureaucratization of the police-function seems to parallel the subordination of Muslim judiciaries to modernizing regimes, a process which Brinkley Messick traces in Yemen.[36]

The U.S.-backed Afghan mujahideen established a Committee for the Propagation of Virtue and the Prevention of Vice under President Rabbani in 1992. When the Taliban overthrew the mujahid Islamic State and established the Islamic Emirate in 1996, they promoted this agency to a Ministry and used it to restore order after four years of extremely chaotic civil war in the capital.[37] In other words, to reestablish spatial security, the Emirate employed the police apparatus.

The insecurity and politicized violence in Kabul throughout the 1990s echoes the "Hobbesean problem" of seventeenth-century Germany and England. Both the recurrence, and the recurrent misinterpretation of that problem, are striking. Again, a politicized mobilization of religion had produced intensely violent and intractable conflict. Again, foreign interventions had exacerbated the conflict. In seventeenth-century Europe, the Danish, Swedish, French, and Spanish monarchies intervened and prolonged the conflict in Germany in the name of religion, but in fact out of political interests. In Afghanistan, the Pakistani, Saudi, American, and Iranian regimes armed various mujahid factions against the Godless Soviets. These foreign meddlers had no interest in compelling their respective factions to cooperate with each other after the Najibullah regime was overthrown.[38] And again, a nominal settlement was achieved through fine-grained application of policing. To this day, both Afghans and foreigners tend to stereotype Afghans as 'naturally warlike.' But the conditions of violence in Afghanistan since 1980 are no more natural than the conditions in England and Germany that Hobbes was describing in 1651.

A second 'translation' to Foucault's line of argumentation is the relevance of context. Foucault argues against universals and 'grand narratives' in social theory. He insisted that

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34 Mottahedeh, Roy, and Kristen Stilt. 2003. "Public and private as viewed through the work of the *muhtasib*." *Social research* 70:735-48.

35 Mottahedeh and Stilt 2003, p.735.

36 Messick, Brinkley Morris. 1993. *The calligraphic state: Textual domination and history in a Muslim society*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

37 Rashid, 2000.

38 Rubin, Barnett R. 2002. *The fragmentation of Afghanistan: State formation and collapse in the international system*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.

the specific conditions of emergence in practices of government must be recognized and accounted for. He therefore cautioned against any generic application of his own work to other contexts. Post-colonial theorists, beginning with Edward Said's publication of *Orientalism*, have challenged the implicit Westernness in ostensibly universal knowledge-claims. These points of connection between Foucault's theorization and present-day Afghanistan are examples of 'the work of translation' that Dipesh Chakrabarty describes as part of the due-diligence of re-situating grounded theory.[39] When Chakrabarty argues for 'provincializing Europe,' this is not a contrived effort to marginalize political and cultural events that remain extremely important; rather, it is to set them in a genealogical context of actual spaces and practices. Chakrabarty uses this angle of critique to argue how key elements of modernity first emerged in sites outside of Europe. Here, I recognize the peculiar political conditions of modern and early-modern Europe for a different purpose. It is easier to translate concepts of political rationality from one definite site to another definite site, rather than try to apply a supposedly universal concept to an 'Other' site that betrays the Western—and in this case specifically Christian—genealogy of the concepts of sovereign political rationality and biopolitical rationality.

Chadwick's bargain and the Liberal limits of biopower

In this section I discuss the relationship of biopolitical rationality to the emergence of modern urban planning.

The political concern for the body politic intensified in Europe as that body increasingly became the political *demos* of republics and parliamentary monarchies at the end of the eighteenth century. But the extension of police-based regimes of care into a substantially new political rationality of biological care occurred through a series of developments in the nineteenth century. The first step in this shift was a dramatic increase in practices of measuring and knowledge-production about populations, through the development of statistics. Ian Hacking calls the sudden increase in population data-gathering after 1820 "an avalanche of numbers."[40] New techniques of methodical, spatialized data-collection and mapping enabled John Snow to identify the Broad Street Pump as the water-borne source of cholera contagion in 1854—despite prevailing belief that the only vector of contagion was 'bad air' (miasma), and forty years before the Pasteur-Koch germ theory of disease was widely understood.

One of the new British statisticians was Edwin Chadwick. After producing a series of shorter reports in the 1830s, Chadwick took three years to produce the *Report into the sanitary condition of the labouring populations of Great Britain* in 1842. The *Report* was immediately adopted by engineering schools across Britain to design pressurized municipal water systems and sanitary sewer systems, separated from stormwater drains. The *Report* also changed the discourse about the working poor. Through his fieldwork Chadwick discovered, and then convinced others, that corrupt morals were not a direct cause of poor health. Both virtuous and morally corrupt people were getting sick under

39 Chakrabarty, Dipesh. 2000. *Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial thought and historical difference*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, p. 17.

40 Hacking, Ian. 1982. "Bio-power and the avalanche of printed numbers." *Humanities in society* 5:279-94.

the same unsanitary living conditions. In direct opposition to prevailing opinion at the time, Chadwick argued that the unrelenting stress of unsanitary living conditions could corrupt the morals of the British working poor—poverty and sickness causing immorality, rather than immorality causing poverty and sickness. This argument moved a significant step away from the Christian focus on the moral well-being of the community, and towards a more functional concern for the material living conditions of the poor.

In his essay "The birth of biopolitics," Foucault identifies this moment as an indicator of the shift in governmentality that marks the emergence of this new political rationality of biopolitics. However he also sets biopolitical rationality in tension with the Liberal ideology of minimal government ensuring maximum individual liberty:

> I mean the endeavor, begun in the eighteenth century, to rationalize the problems presented to governmental practice by the phenomena characteristic of a group of living human beings constituted as a population: health, sanitation, birthrate, longevity, race...
>
> It seemed to me that these problems could not be dissociated from the framework of political rationality within which they appeared and developed their urgency. 'Liberalism' enters the picture here, because it was in connection with liberalism that they began to have the look of a challenge. In a system anxious to have the respect of legal subjects and to ensure the free enterprise of individuals, how can the 'population' phenomenon, with its specific effects and problems, be taken into account? On behalf of what, and according to what rules, can it be managed? The debate that took place in England in the middle of the nineteenth century concerning public health legislation can serve as an example.[41]

My first impression upon reading this passage was that the 'birth of biopolitics' corresponds directly with the birth of urban planning. Here we have infrastructure, the justification for enforcement of regulation for the benefit of the public, and the emergence of the regime of knowledge in which urban planning continues to operate. From this line of reasoning I initially began to equate urban planning rationality with biopolitical rationality. However Thomas Osborne points out what did not happen in this moment: the implementation of a regime of totalizing care.

Osborne points out that there were advocates of a regime of totalizing biological care at the time, notably Henry Rumsey;[42] and John Friedmann describes similar totalizing aspirations in France expressed Saint-Simon and Comte.[43] However Chadwick was concerned with governing efficiently, with the least cost and the lowest tax burden. Since 1832 he had been involved in the reform and administration of the New Poor Laws. This reform had been intended to make poverty relief more efficient and less prone to perverse incentives such as farmers underpaying laborers with the expectation that the wage shortfall would be compensated by parish relief. The new system was not working well. Impoverished workers were shifting from scattered riots to the more organized Chartist movement, and the public expense of poor relief remained difficult to control. Osborne therefore argues that Chadwick's concern for the underlying conditions of poverty may

41 Foucault, Michel. 2003. "The birth of biopolitics." Pp. 202-207 in *The essential Foucault*, edited by Paul Rabinow and Nikolas S Rose. New York: New Press.

42 Osborne, Thomas. 1996. "Security and vitality: Drains, liberalism and power in the nineteenth century." Pp. 99-121 in *Foucault and political reason: Liberalism, neo-liberalism and rationalities of government*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, p. 103.

43 Friedmann, John. 1987. *Planning in the public domain: From knowledge to action*. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press.

have been motivated by ethical compassion, but also by a public administrator's concern for efficient government.

Osborne also points out how Liberal ideology—now as much as in 1840—promotes an aversion to a more totalizing regime. For English-speakers, the neologism 'biopower' itself connotes totalitarian biological control of the type portrayed by Aldous Huxley in Brave new world. Thomas Osborne gives other examples:[44]

> Perhaps invocations of bio-politics or such like can seem to have rather a sinister ring to them; we conjure up visions of eugenics or the Nazi politics of life. And it is true that bio-politics can take a more or less, if not necessarily sinister, then totalizing form.

Liberal ideology portrays itself positively, from declarations of the Rights of Man and the sovereignty of the modern subject (Kant) to the liberty of the individual (John Stuart Mill). The converse of this optimism is a constant anxiety about the threat of over-governing, over-reach by the state.[45] Foucault describes this as a contradiction that is constitutive of Liberal politics: on the one hand, modern regimes continue to develop more sophisticated means of surveillance and fine-grained record-keeping on individuals and our behavior. On the other hand, Liberal ideology places strong emphasis on individual freedoms through the constraint of government interventions. Furthermore, Liberal philosophers emphasize the need to govern efficiently, with an economy of means. Foucault uses this tension to explain the manifestation of neoliberal reforms in the early 1980s; but stresses the longer genealogy of this tension.[46] Adam Smith published *An inquiry into the nature and causes of the wealth of nations* in 1776. In Book V Smith argues for parsimony in the administration of peacetime costs, especially because of the destabilizing burden of debt incurred by the cost of war.[47] Together with an ideal of maximization of individual liberties—personal sovereignty—the principle of parsimony in government has constrained the extension of biopower.[48]

This tension between sovereignty and biopower has governed the evolution of modern urban planning. In his history of housing in New York City, Plunz argues that the assertion of government authority to require minimum daylight and natural ventilation in apartment-buildings was initially resisted as an infringement on the *sovereign* property rights of landlords in the 1860s and 1870s.[49] In the *Euclid v. Ambler* decision, which has legitimized and shaped American land-use planning since 1926, the landowner protested that community regulation of land uses was an infringement on his sovereign right to dispose of his property as he pleased.[50] The 2005 Supreme Court decision in *Kelo v. City of New London*—that community economic development may be a justification for use of the power of eminent domain—provoked sharp populist opposition in the United States.[51] One group of opponents organized as the Castle Coalition, invoking the (gendered) adage that "a man's home is his castle."[52] It is an ideal of property-ownership quite

44 Osborne 1996, p. 100.
45 Osborne 1996, p. 101.
46 Foucault 2003.
47 Smith, Adam. 1993. *An inquiry into the nature and causes of the wealth of nations*. New York: Oxford University Press, p. 458.
48 Osborne 1996, p. 103.
49 Plunz, Richard. 1990. *A history of housing in New York City: Dwelling type and social change in the American metropolis*. New York: Columbia University Press.
50 *Village of Euclid, Ohio v. Ambler Realty Co.,* 272 U.S. 365 (1926).
51 *Kelo v. City of New London,* 545 U.S. 469 (2005).
52 http://www.castlecoalition.org

literally as sovereign power.

Formal urban planning, as it has evolved since the 1840s, continues to operate under this tension between sovereign political rationality and biopolitical rationality, shaped by Liberal ideals of efficient government and minimal interference by government into the liberty and sovereignty of the individual. I call this "Chadwick's bargain," referring both to the pursuit of efficient means, and to the negotiated deal between the capacity of a regime to govern lives and the desire by the governed to constrain that capacity.

Plural rationalities, plural modes of planning

Thus far in this chapter I have taken Lyotard's argument for the plurality of rationality, and used Flyvbjerg's work to specify both the nature of that plurality and the primary role of phronesis as the mode of rationality used by urban planners. A closer look at Aristotle's original arguments revealed that phronesis was understood as a type of political reason: the pragmatic, case-specific reasoning used in public deliberation about allocation of urban resources. Through Foucault's late work I then point out that political reason itself has become plural, and that modern urban planning seems to be shaped primarily by biopolitical rationality, rather than the older sovereign political rationality. The technologies of rule which Foucault cites as markers of the emergence of biopolitics are in fact the same technologies—population statistics, public health, urban infrastructure, building codes—that planning historians identify as the emergence of modern urban planning.

But a simple equation of planning rationality with biopolitical rationality ignores too much of planning practice. Planners a series of techniques (*techne*), statistical and spatial analysis and predictive modeling (*episteme*), and professional experience (*sophia*) in the practice of planning. In fact the mixed usage of each of these modes of rationality may be as important to theorize as the recognition of their distinctiveness. How do they interact? In his early (1959) critique of the Rational-Comprehensive model, Charles Lindblom provides a clue: the "branch" method of 'successive limited comparisons' may not just indicate an incremental approach, but also a way of using each mode of reasoning to cross-verify the other. The synthesis of partial and imperfect knowledge towards a 'best guess' policy is in fact legally defensible in the United States as 'the exercise of due care and best professional judgment' in decision-making. Phronesis, as characterized by Aristotle and more recently by Flyvbjerg and Frank Fischer, is the mode of reasoning which is practical in that it is integrative; but the integration is possible only because the focus is on the immediate context and problem, not a universal solution, not a 'best practice.' However, even if phronesis is the primary form of reasoning used to synthesize and implement urban policy, the differentiation of political reason triggers a further question: what is the relationship of sovereign political reason to biopolitical reason within urban planning?

The remainder of this study will focus on the relationship between the two rationalities that constitute political reason, and the ways that their interaction can manifest as very different modes of planning. Perhaps there are myriad ways that these two political rationalities can combine, but in Kabul I observed three.

Formal planning (Concrete)

The ideal-type of urban planning is a direct expression of biopolitics. Infrastructure gets built and maintained; care is taken to listen and respond to the interests of the whole population, including the least powerful; economic development is focused on promoting the general welfare; and plans are designed to optimize long-term biological survival through principles of sustainability.

This ideal-type is a fair characterization of what planners regard as the purpose, if not all the practices of the profession of urban planning. However it ignores the role of sovereign politics in planning. Even under conditions of strong social cohesion and low levels of internal political conflict, more powerful factions within a local urban regime exert their asymmetrical advantage in how discourse is shaped through public media. Denmark in the late twentieth century could be considered the paradigmatic example of peaceful democratic politics, where sovereign power is 'tame.' Flyvbjerg's study of the planning of a bus station in Alborg is therefore particularly valuable, because he shows how asymmetrical power-politics shapes the ostensibly neutral and rational public discourse even in Denmark.[53] Meanwhile, in the much more conflicted society of Israel, Oren Yiftachel began to trace how formal urban planning procedures could also be used to comprehensively harm a population. Initially Yiftachel described this as 'the dark side of planning.'[54]

Upon further reflection, Yiftachel now argues that this is a component of standard planning practice: the same technologies of rule that can benefit an entire population can also be withheld or directed in ways that harm whole populations, or deliver benefits very unequally. Ananya Roy points out that this more sober analysis of planning is consistent with well-documented practices of systematic deprivation, such as Drake and Cayton's vivid account of the politics of life in 'the Black Belt' of Chicago in the 1940s,[55] or the planned spatial segregation of Apartheid in South Africa.[56]

Government-controlled internment camps and prisons are (hopefully) the extreme expression of planned spaces where the political regime is concerned with the biological 'welfare' of the population. Giorgio Agamben focused on the way that biopower and sovereign power intersect in the Nazi concentration camp. The governing regime systematically stripped away political personhood of the inmates in a very planned fashion, leaving only the 'bare life' (*zoe*) to be experimented upon or eliminated without political consequence for the ruling regime.[57] Derek Gregory also theorizes the Global War Prison as an intersection of sovereign power and biopower, carefully arguing how spaces such as Guantanamo prison are construed as legal as a necessary function of

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53 Flyvbjerg, Bent. 1998. *Rationality and power: Democracy in practice*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

54 Yiftachel, Oren. 1995. "The dark side of modernism: Planning as control of an ethnic minority." in *Postmodern cities and spaces*, edited by Sophie Watson and Katherine Gibson. Cambridge, MA: Blackwell.

55 Drake, St. Clair, and Horace Cayton. 1945. *Black Metropolis: A study of Negro life in a northern city*. New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company.

56 Robinson, Jennifer. 1996. "Continuity, control, and the construction of state power: Professional discourses in urban government." Pp. 58-80 in *The power of Apartheid: State, power and space in South African cities*. Oxford: Butterworth-Heinemann.

57 Agamben, Giorgio. 1998. *Homo sacer: Sovereign power and bare life*. Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press.

democratic politics.[58] Pul-e Charkhi Prison in eastern Kabul, and the American detention facility at Bagram Air Base are also part of this Global War Prison; thus this extreme mode of spatial formation and rights-deprivation directly affects Kabul itself. One example of care for the biological welfare of the *homo sacer* within these American spaces is the blood-oxygen monitor used on prisoners being interrogated using the partial-drowning technique euphemized as “waterboarding.” ‘Simulated drowning’ is a misleading understatement because the risk of death by water-induced asphyxiation is real—hence the need for the blood-oxygen monitor. The survival of American political prisoners—ideally without visible evidence of torture—is necessary for maintaining the legitimacy of American sovereign political power.

What this range of policies shares in common is a particular type of interaction between sovereign power and biopower. In each case, from the milder ‘message control’ in Denmark to the coercive practices of the Global War on Terror, a political regime is capable of exercising *coherent spatial governing*. Even if the extreme examples are disturbing, they are recognizable a *planning.* The coherence of the political regime is sufficient to permit some personification of the regime as an intentional entity, a ‘state’ which ‘intends’ to help (or harm) a whole population through spatialized technologies of rule. This is my working definition of formal planning. The formal mode of planning in Kabul is the subject of Chapter Three.

Informal planning (Clay)

If the ideal of urban planning is for the regime to care for and promote the general welfare of the whole population, then a succinct way of describing urban informality is the condition in which the urban regime decides to limit the population, and the space, that it governs in this biopolitical way.

The specific ways that urban informality emerges are as diverse as the cities in which it occurs; but a few consistent themes pertain to Kabul. Many regions of Asia and Africa were colonized during what I call the era of ‘Industrializing Empire’ after 1830. European powers often experimented with new techniques of urban government in the colonies first, and then applied successful techniques back to the metropole. As Nezar Alsayyad argues in *Forms of Dominance,* urban modernity was used as a powerful rhetorical justification for colonization through the development of new, modern adjacent to existing cities.[59] The dramatic transformation of political economies under conditions of colonization transformed the existing cities as well: through rapid in-migration and restrictions on further growth of the ‘native’ quarters, the non-European quarters were often transformed rapidly into crowded slums. Newly-independent Asian and African regimes often kept development restrictions in place, in an effort towards self-modernization. Thus, as Alsayyad argues in *Urban Informality,* what had once been typical processes of urbanization became denigrated as un-modern, as “backward” in opposition to the “forward” progress of urban modernization.[60] Though the British never

58 Gregory, Derek. 2007. “Vanishing points: Law, violence and exception in the global war prison.” P. Chapter 11 in *Violent geographies: Fear, terror, and political violence*, edited by Allan Pred. New York: Routledge.

59 AlSayyad, Nezar. 1992. *Forms of dominance: On the architecture and urbanism of the colonial enterprise*. Brookfield, Vt.: Avebury.

60 AlSayyad, Nezar. 2004. “Urban informality as a ‘new’ way of life.” in *Urban informality: transnational*

governed urban modernization in Kabul, the political imperative of urban modernization was expressed vividly in the regime of King Amanullah from 1919 to 1928. Amanullah began to build a modern capital ten kilometers southwest of the extant city of Kabul in 1922.[61] This new city was not called 'new Kabul' (*Kabul-e Naw*), but *modern* Kabul (*Kabul-e Jadid*). Contrapuntally, the existing city became known not as the 'old city' (*Shahr-e Qadimi*), but the 'used, worn, dog-eared city' (*Shahr-e Kona*). Any subsequent urban development that was not planned as regular, orthogonal urban space was considered backward, and after the implementation of comprehensive master plans began in 1962, un-planned settlements were classified as 'outside the plan' in the sense of violation (*ghair-e Plan*). The municipality did not recognize right of tenure; did not grade the roads for paving and drainage; did not provide street-lighting or piped water. In political-theory terms, the sovereign authority of the urban regime was used to bound the limits of biopolitical care. Spatial sovereignty is often recognized in the establishment and enforcement of boundaries; in urban space, sovereign political rationality is used to establish a 'jurisdictional limit' to the regime of care, the regime of formal urban planning. Sovereign power continues to extend beyond this: the police (and the military) can exert coercive governing rule throughout the urban space, including spaces which are not recognized for purposes formal urban governing. Thus, both as a site of deliberate exclusion from biopolitical rule and as a site that remains governed by sovereign rule, spaces of urban informality are very much *governed space.* In this respect they are planned spaces, even if the method of planning amounts to calculated neglect.

Once urban informality emerges, it is also an efficient strategy for urban regimes to maintain for three reasons. First, biopolitical care is resource-intensive. Care that ranges from enforcement of building and traffic safety, through comprehensive infrastructure and services, to regional economic planning, can only be seen as worthwhile by a regime that expects to benefit politically from long-term returns on urban investment. Justifying such heavy investments in people and places is difficult in a transnational political environment in which deregulated markets are repeatedly presented as the most efficient ways of allocating *every* good and service, including municipal water, primary education, and security.

This laissez-faire ideology, extended to practices of urban government, reveals a second reason for allowing urban informality. Extending care for the biological welfare of a whole urban population exposes the urban regime to greater political accountability. By 'not counting' poorer urban households, any harm that comes to such households is 'not counted' against the urban regime. Ferguson and Gupta identify this as a process of "self-responsibilization" of governed populations.[62] By "allowing" poorer urban households to settle on flood plains and unstable hillsides; any consequent harm to that household becomes 'their own responsibility.' The most remarkable example of this political logic was expressed in January of 2010 when 250,000 Haitians in Port-au-Prince and Leogane died when buildings collapsed upon them in a moderate earthquake. The

perspectives from the Middle East, Latin America, and South Asia. Lanham, Md.: Lexington Books.

61 Wild, Roland. 1982[1932]. *Amanullah: Ex-King of Afghanistan*. Quetta: Nisa traders.

62 Ferguson, James, and Akhil Gupta. 2002. "Spatializing states: Toward an ethnography of neoliberal governmentality." *American Ethnologist* 29:981-1002.

preventability of these deaths was demonstrated one month later when an earthquake, fifty-eight times more powerful, killed only 507 people in Chile. The deaths in Haiti were caused by poor concrete construction under a regime that is almost completely informalized. In this context, the politics of self-responsibilization were stunningly effective in protecting the political regime of René Préval. Demands for accountability by the Haitian regime were almost completely absent.

The third benefit which urban regimes enjoy by maintaining spaces of urban informality is inexpensive voter clientilism. This strategy has been observed in Latin America for decades.[63] But one of the most vivid accounts is Ananya Roy's analysis of clientilism in southeast Kolkata.[64] Autocratic regimes in Latin America 'bought legitimacy' by allowing squatting; but Roy shows how a democratically-elected, avowedly Leftist regime used the same strategies to maintain electoral dominance in West Bengal. Furthermore, this tactic was attractive enough to the regime that she observed a deliberate expansion of informal urban space through a process she calls "unmapping."

The informal mode of planning in Kabul is the subject of Chapter Four.

Exceptionalist planning (Mirrorglass)

Beginning with the work of Peter Ward and Alan Gilbert,[65] the 'regularity of the irregular' in urbanization has been identified as a common mode of urbanization; and since the publication of *Urban informality,* this mode of urbanization is increasingly recognized as planned. However a third process—exceptionalism—has thus far been grouped together with urban informality, because both processes are extralegal. However exceptionalist urbanization looks profoundly different when viewed through a bifocal political lens that distinguishes sovereign politics and biopolitics. Whereas poorer households are more or less compelled to "quietly encroach" upon legal space in order to secure urban livelihoods, politically powerful households and groups can flagrantly violate the law because they are more powerful than the urban regime itself. In this mode of urban planning, sovereign power and biopower intersect very differently. In the process of *taking care* of themselves, urban elites take overt actions that compromise the legitimacy and effectiveness of the local regime, eroding its sovereignty. Repeated, systematic violations by urban elites produce both physical and political spaces of impunity.

Teresa Caldeira describes this process in detail in *City of walls,* where argues that the wealth of an urban community in São Paolo bears little association to its legal status.[66] Many working-class communities are entirely (or almost entirely) legal, whereas many upper-class developments are in violation of a zoning ordinance or irregular property

63 Soto, Hernando de, and Instituto Libertad y Democracia (Lima Peru). 1989. *The other path: The invisible revolution in the Third World*. New York: Harper & Row.

64 Roy, Ananya. 2003. *City requiem, Calcutta: Gender and the politics of poverty*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

65 Ward, Peter M. 1982. *Self-help housing : A critique*. Bronx, N.Y.: Mansell;
Gilbert, Alan, and Peter M Ward. 1985. *Housing, the state, and the poor : policy and practice in three Latin American cities*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

66 Caldeira, Teresa Pires do Rio. 2000. *City of walls: crime, segregation, and citizenship in São Paulo*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

documentation. The vital difference is that poorer illegal settlements suffer constant threat of eviction or violent incursion by the militarized police (sovereign power), whereas upper-class illegal developments suffer no such threats. Likewise, since 2005 Oren Yiftachel has recognized the production of urban 'gray spaces' by political regimes, and now distinguishes 'gray spacing from above' from 'gray spacing from below.'[67] However, if Assef Bayat's "quiet encroachment of the ordinary" characterizes the politics of urban informality, it completely fails to explain the flagrant impunity of urban elites.[68]

Aihwa Ong[69] and Giorgio Agamben both cite Carl Schmitt's definition of sovereign power as the 'power to declare the exception' to a legal regime.[70] In some cities, urban exceptionalism may follow this principle and therefore function as a perverse kind of 'formal' planning, where the local regime retains sovereign control over both legal and extralegal processes. In Kabul, however, the 'spaces of exception' are spaces in which local sovereignty begins to fragment through the practices of agencies beyond its control. Part of the challenge for the urban regime in any national capital is the relationship between the local urban government and the national government. But in Kabul this is compounded by the presence of at least three other agents: commanders who have not yet accepted the legitimacy of the Karzai regime; foreign militaries and the foreign diplomatic community; and transnational aid organizations ranging from little NGOs up to the United Nations Group of programs. Geopolitics plays a messy and intrusive role in the governing and transformation of urban space in Kabul. Furthermore, consistent with the arguments earlier in this chapter, geopolitics has also differentiated into a complex interactions between sovereign power and biopower. The particular manifestations of this exceptionalist mode of planning in Kabul are the subject of Chapter Five.

67 Yiftachel, Oren. 2009. "Critical theory and 'gray space': Mobilization of the colonized." *City* 13:246-263.
68 Bayat, Assef. 2000. "From 'dangerous classes' to 'quiet rebels:' Politics of the urban subaltern in the global South." *International sociology* 15:539-557.
69 Ong, Aihwa. 2006. *Neoliberalism as exception: Mutations in citizenship and sovereignty*. Durham N.C.: Duke University Press.
70 Schmitt, Carl. 1985. *Political Theology: Four Chapters on the Concept of Sovereignty*. Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press.

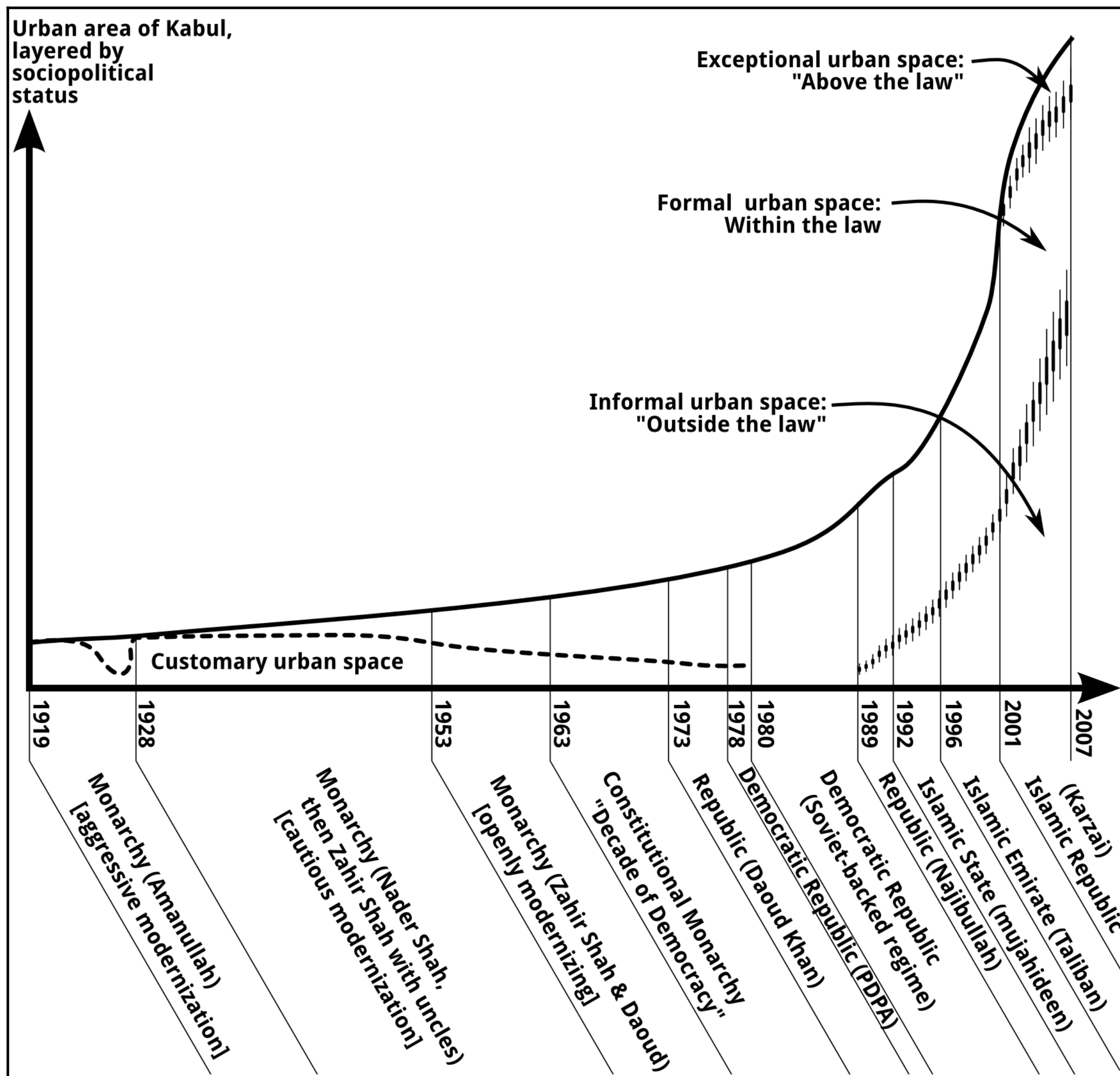

Figure 3.1. Modes of planning in Kabul, graphed by time against relative built area (Author 2010).

Graphing the pluralization of planning in Kabul

Figure 3.1 maps the arguments of this chapter to a graph of the development of Kabul since 1919. The structure of this graph was inspired by James Ferguson's essay, "Decomposing modernity" in *Global shadows,* his brilliant and disturbing analysis of Africa as a constituted object of development.[71] In a similar fashion I began by graphing Time against Sociopolitical Status. However because I am studying a single city, I realized that I could add considerably more detail. I layered higher-status modes of urban development on top of lower-status ones, and I marked of major political events in the history of Kabul since the year that King Amanullah won full political independence from the British Raj in 1919. At first I drew a square graph, which only showed the

71 Ferguson, James. 2006. *Global Shadows: Africa in the Neoliberal World Order*. Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, p.178.

relative proportion of formal urban space to customary, informal, and exceptionalist urban spaces. However, to get a better sense of how these modes have governed urban development over time, it is also important to understand both the slow and (relatively) steady formalization of the city from 1930 to 1990, and the subsequent dramatic growth of both informal and exceptionalist urban space since about 1990. I rescaled the graph to show a rough approximation of the built area of the city over this ninety-year period.

The graph remains diagrammatic because it is a representation of the *political meaning* of space in Kabul. A visual analysis of satellite maps of the city would not reveal this political division of space. Not only is exceptionalist development difficult to distinguish from formally-planned space, but in a number of areas formal and informal spaces would be confused for each other. The historic Chindawol neighborhood in the southwestern quadrant of the Old City looks like many informal spaces across the city; and yet it is fully documented and recognized as an historic district. Several villages have also been absorbed into the expanding city, such as Deh Bibi Mahro. Their status is ambiguous. They are not shown on the Master Plan and are, by implication, scheduled to be erased through modernization. However several Municipal Planners charged with the implementation of the Master Plan described them as historic areas that they had no intention of rebuilding. Conversely, some areas were platted with great regularity, and yet they were developed in violation of the Master Plan. These ambiguities will be explored in detail in Chapters Three and Four, but the issue needs to be raised here to warn against a reductionist characterization of Figure 3.1.

This graph implies a continuity, in contrast to Ferguson's central argument that the promise of progress through time has 'decomposed' with the general failure of development. Ferguson argues that once progress, and belief in progress is removed, the graph reorganizes into a permanent hierarchical stratification in which 'tradition' equates to low status, and 'modernity' equates to high status. Ferguson's grim prognosis applies to Kabul as well, especially in how representations of the country are produced and propagated through transnational discourse. Numerous Western accounts of Kabul since 2001 begin by portraying the country as non-modern, and this is a very interested discourse that profoundly shapes the scope and terms of funding for both humanitarian aid and longer-term development.

I agree with Ferguson's argument that hierarchical difference is reaffirmed and performed through transnational discourse. Ferguson's argument pertains to Afghanistan as much as countries in sub-Saharan Africa. At the same time Kabul *has* been modernizing very explicitly since 1919. Several books, such as Ikbal Ali Shah's *Modern Afghanistan* (1939) and Vartan Gregorian's *The emergence of modern Afghanistan* (1969) directly contradict the tone of contemporary American discourse, which relies on the assumption that Afghanistan is not, and has never been modern. The devastating civil war of 1992-1996 can be misinterpreted as 'a step backward' or 'de-modernization,' when in fact it was a product of very contemporary geopolitics. Not only was this the site of the last proxy war between Western and Eastern Bloc countries in the Cold War, but the overthrow of the Najibullah regime in 1992 was part of an ongoing process of shifting governmentality away from welfare regimes and toward 'lean government' in regimes

across the globe. The civil war that 'rolled back' the Afghan welfare state from 1992 to 1996 happened at exactly the same time as reductions in welfare and entitlements in Western countries. Not only is Afghanistan modern, but it experiences neoliberalization at the same time as other regimes across the world.

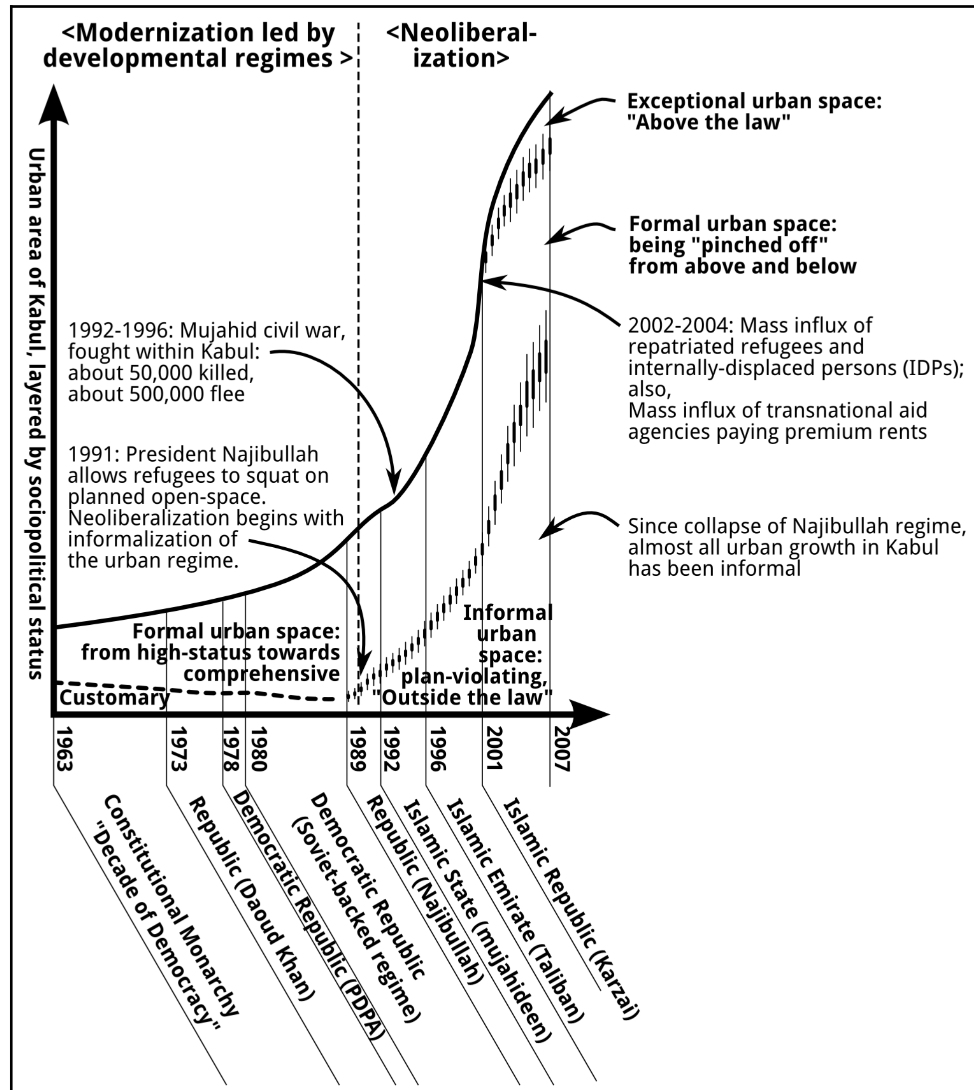

Figure 3.2. Modes of planning in Kabul after 1962 (Author 2010).

Figure 3.2 shows the latter part of the same graph shown in figure 2.1, focusing on the period of comprehensive planning and subsequent fragmentations of sovereignty. During the 'developmentalist' period, customary urban development was disparaged as 'substandard.' With the adoption of the 1964 Kabul Master Plan, the municipal government began to modernize the entire city, rather than develop new neighborhoods in a piecemeal fashion as it had been doing since 1935.[72] New, planned developments continued to be regarded as higher-status, but the Plan was to move the entire city up to

72 Arez, Ghulam Jailani, and Andreas Dittmann. 2005. *Kabul: Aspects of urban geography*. Peshawar.

this preferred condition.[73]

A survey map of the city in 1976 shows both formally-planned and irregular settlements. By that year, only about ten per cent of the city remained irregular. The third Master Plan continued to govern the modernization of the city until 1990, when President Najibullah began to violate the plan by allowing internally-displaced refugees to squat on public land slated for planned development. In figure 3.2, this moment is shown as a vertical dashed line that distinguishes the era of comprehensive modernization from the subsequent era of neoliberalization.

After 1991, almost all urban growth in Kabul was in violation of the third Master Plan. Thus, this new development becomes informal (rather than customary) as a political condition. *Techni*cally it is illegal; but the distinction of rationalities discussed at the beginning of this chapter is useful here. Insisting on the legality or illegality of any given development tends to be a political tactic in Kabul, deferring the fact that this condition emerges from urban politics in which legality is an effect, more than a cause. By 2003, Plan-violating irregular settlements comprised almost sixty per cent of the built area of the city. The distinction between formal development and irregular/informal/Plan-violating is increasingly unclear. This uncertain distinction is represented graphically in figures 3.1 and 3.2 by a change from a simple dashed line to vertical hachures between formal and informal urban development.

After 2001, a small but growing portion of Kabul began to be developed by agents whom the Municipality cannot control. Only Afghan citizens can purchase land in Kabul, with the important *exception* of foreign embassies. Afghan security forces control the territory of the nation (*zamin watani*), *except* for areas directly controlled by the Coalition Forces and ISAF. Afghans have the right to access all of the same spaces as foreigners, *except* for spaces in which alcohol is served. The Municipality maintains governing control over all documented property in Kabul, *except* for properties grabbed by commanders in the United Islamic Front ("Northern Alliance") when it Liberated Kabul in November 2001. In a case that involves both informalization and exceptionalism, the politically embarrassing distribution of land in Shir Pur to political elites in 2003 was in fact a distribution of military land by Muhammad Qasim Fahim, who was Minister of Defense at the time. I was surprised when Ramazan Bashardost—reputedly one of the most ethical and honest politicians in Afghanistan—insisted that the land-distribution in Shir Pur was *legal*. His point, though, was that the technical legality of this land-transfer discredited the political regime of Hamid Karzai and his cabinet.

Formal urban planning continues in Kabul, as Chapter Three will show. However, informalization and exceptionalism are two political processes which encroach on this formally-governed terrain. Like Oren Yiftachel, I use the spatial expression "from above" and "from below;" but in this formulation, the effect is a "pinching-off" of the formally-planned space in Kabul. This parallels the erosion of sovereignty by the Municipal government as its role in the overall urban regime of the city is infringed by the national government, foreign forces, and transnational development agencies.

73 Nemat, Abdul Khaliq. 1976. "A strategy for restructuring of the central business district of Kabul." School of Planning and Architecture.

Making sense out of a fractured planning process

This argument proposes several extensions to planning theory, and development theory related to urbanization. First, cities are planned insofar as urbanization is governed by an urban regime. Second: though political regimes use the moral individual as the metaphor for good government, the metaphor is misleading because urban planning does not meet the same criteria as personal intentionality. Normative propaganda notwithstanding, the multiple agencies that constitute the urban regime operate with widely-varying degrees of coherence. The Deleuzian concept of *assemblage* is a better descriptor for the loosely-aggregated character of urban regimes; and rather than a coherent intentionality, the techniques of rule by urban regimes can be better understood as an array of *rationalities*. These include technical, epistemological, and aesthetic rationalities, but the most important is practical political reason, or *phronesis*.

But wait: there is more. Political rationality itself has differentiated into sovereign political reason and biopolitical reason. The normative ideal of planning, within the profession, corresponds only to biopolitical reason: it directly corresponds to our origin-story. In practice, many different modes of planning manifest different intersections of sovereign and biopolitical reason.

The differentiation of these two political rationalities, as presently understood, emerged under very specific conditions in Europe. Their relationship to each other continues to change under conditions of transnational neoliberalization. In Muslim-governed spaces, aspects of biopower have co-operated with sovereign power since the seventh century. This includes both hygenic practices, and since at least the eleventh century, a well-articulated role of the public inspector (*muhtasib*). In Kabul under the present Islamic Republic, intersections of sovereign power and biopower manifest as three different modes of urban planning: formal, informalizing, and exceptionalist. Each respective mode will be analyzed in detail in the following three chapters.

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