

# International Aid Cities: A By-Product of Reconstruction in Postwar Cities

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Cities witness various remarkable phases in their life cycle. War is one such remarkable phase, a dark and unforgettable one which many cities undergo. Some of them also witness the next phase, which brings them into limelight, a long and seemingly never-ending phase of *Reconstruction*. This paper, a specific case study of Kabul, analyses the structure, character, and dynamics of such *temporary* aid cities as well as their effects on, and latent potentials for, the host cities.

In the remarkable process of reconstruction of a postwar city, what goes un-noticed is the metamorphosis of a seemingly temporary urbanism that is *happening* parallel and simultaneously to this reconstruction process, which initiates enormous activities that re-structure the urban fabric of the city. It brings the International Aid Community into the postwar city, both as providers and consumers, creating a breeding ground for new trades, economies, politics, lifestyles, cultures and traditions. This generates a new *side effect urbanism*: an urbanism with intersive dynamics of its own, an urbanism which responds to Western standards and needs, an urbanism that gives birth to a *temporary city*, which coexists within the *to-be-reconstructed host city*. Characterized by imported urban and social values, it remains an insoluble bubble within the fluid of the almost dying, victimized city. Kabul, Afghanistan, serves as an excellent example for such a dual layered urbanism.

The needs and the luxuries for the numerous UN agencies, international peace-keeping forces, NGOs and INGOs inject delirious, Western urban elements and symbols into the *hungry for basic infrastructure* Kabul. Apparently temporary in nature, they creep in as a package with complete infrastructure: expensive nouveau cuisine restaurants, bars, golf courses, red light districts, etc., therefore, creating restricted areas for the locals, abnormal traffic jams, and the total destruction of indigenous public spaces within the city.

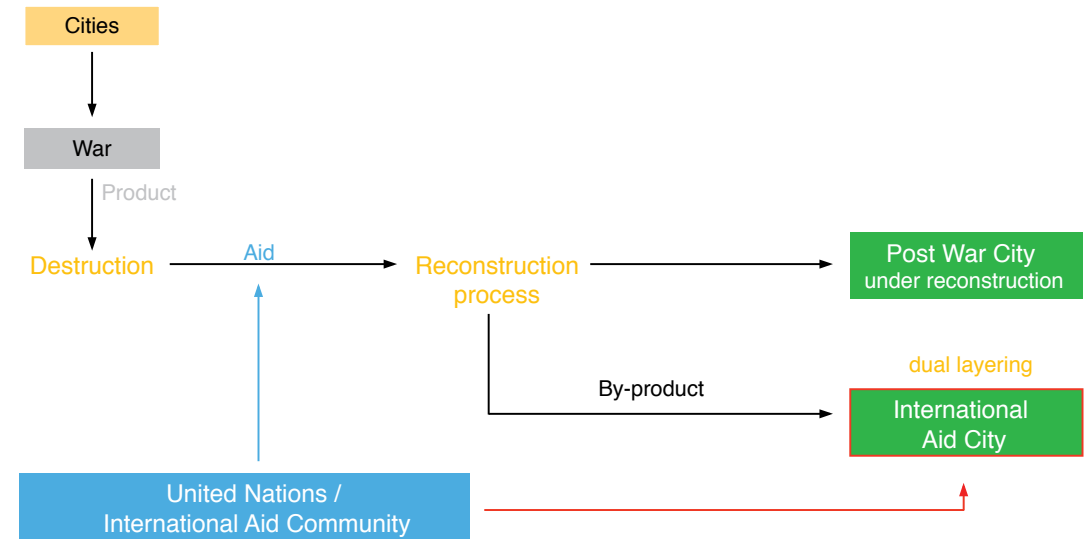


Fig. 1: Phases in the life cycle of a post-conflict city.

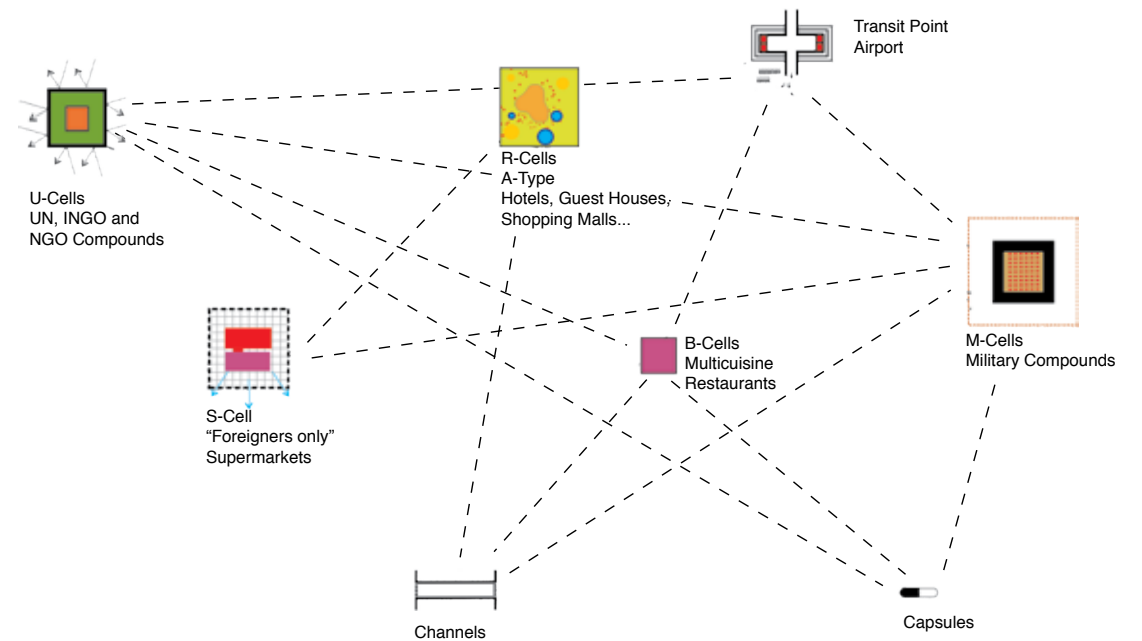


Fig. 2: Anatomy of the organism – The international aid city is analogous to an organism of cells and connectors.