

CONSTITUTIONAL LOYA JIRGA : TENT COMPLEX : OVERHEAD SCHEMATIC

artist's rendering : not to scale

KABUL: CONSTITUTIONS

ANNOTATED GUIDE TO THE VIDEO & MAP

INTRODUCTORY NOTE

When we look back at an event like a constitutional assembly, knowing what decisions were finally taken and how the historical facts were finally inscribed, there exists a temptation to edit our records into a kind of retrospective sense, to work backwards from the ending we know to find the linear progression of actions and reactions that must have preceded it. For me, however, the unofficial histories of the Constitutional Loya Jirga – all the attempts to achieve different outcomes that were ultimately thwarted, all the side and back-room deals that happened under, over and alongside the idealistic and patriotic rhetoric showcased in speeches, even all the unglamorous details of the political, administrative and technical infrastructure that made the assembly run – were just as if not more interesting than the official narrative of what was or was not accomplished at the Jirga.

This particular documentary of the CLJ, therefore, is organized as a map. The spaces highlighted in the map correspond to videos that represent discrete moments extracted from two weeks of the month-long Jirga. In the installation version of *Kabul: Constitutions*, these videos are sequenced into three projections (or three videos rendered into one projection), while the map is presented on the wall or floor. The left and right projections cover the auxiliary tents, peripheral spaces and security structures where the unofficial narrative of the Jirga usually developed (respectively, those to the left and to the right of the plenary tent). These map points are described in the first section of this guide. The center projection covers the plenary tent, where the official narrative usually held sway. Those map points are described in the second section of this guide. In the current iteration of the installation, the videos corresponding to each map point are sequenced to run from the top to the bottom of the map, in roughly the same order (for each channel) that they are listed in this guide. In the web version of the project, accessible at kabul-reconstructions.net/constitutions, each map point functions as an interactive trigger, meaning that if you click on that particular area of the map, a new window will open that will show you a video of that particular space.

The map does not pretend to present a comprehensive view of “what happened” at the CLJ, from start to finish, or to explain why events developed in any particular way. Instead, it presents as comprehensive a view as possible of the political process embodied in the Jirga by presenting an almost completely comprehensive view of the political space in which that process unfolded. This format was inspired directly by the language of the constitutional assembly, which instructed the CLJ delegates (and their radio and TV audiences, who were concurrently debating the constitution throughout the streets of Kabul) to imagine their task as the construction of a new architecture of democracy. It struck me, listening to this phrase over and over again, that the CLJ itself was taking place in a uniquely literal exemplar of the architecture of democracy – a tent complex designed and built (by a German firm working to meld Afghan tribal council traditions with Western administrative specifications) to house the Emergency Loya Jirga of 2002, where the transitional Afghan administration was elected, and this Constitutional Jirga in 2003. The space mapped here, therefore, was constructed specifically for the construction of the architecture of democracy.

This version of the guide was reprinted for the fall 2012 exhibition ‘Absolute Democracy,’ curated by Carlos Motta and Oliver Ressler at rotor in Graz, Austria, in conjunction with the steirischer herbst festival. The content was very slightly edited, and a new layout was designed by Lyric Hunter. Printing and assembly were supervised by Eva Meran at rotor. Thanks to all involved for their support.

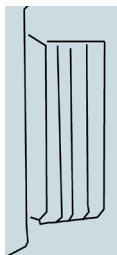
- Mariam Ghani, 2005/12

AUXILIARY TENTS, PERIPHERAL SPACES, SECURITY STRUCTURES



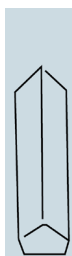
1: CONFERENCE TENT BEHIND PLENARY TENT

A tent for small group meetings, tucked up behind the plenary tent, and outfitted with an ancient overhead projector.



2: FENCED WALKWAYS

A soldier patrols the fenced walkways above the bleachers that line the courtyard on the left side of the plenary tent.



3: ADMINISTRATIVE TENT

There are four separate videos embedded in this section of the interactive map.

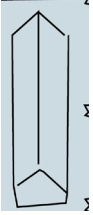
1) Foyer: The camera moves from the sign leaning outside the tent door to the foyer area directly inside it, where a number of people (mostly UNAMA employees) move in and out. The view then switches to the seating area on the left side of the foyer, where teacups, a tea urn and bottled water are arranged on a table next to armchairs and a couch. Finance ministry deputy Popal is sitting on the chair across from me, and I take the opportunity to quiz him on how the offices are being used. Another finance deputy chimes in with the history of how the whole \$2M complex was originally

built for the 2002 Jirga where the transitional administration was elected, and then kept in place until the Constitutional Loya Jirga because the administration knew it would be needed again.

2) UNAMA Office: Inside the Jirga office of the UN Assistance Mission to Afghanistan, the core administrative work of the CLJ proceeds, while on one side of the office, trained observers record complaints of intimidation, delegate election fraud and so forth to be forwarded to the Afghan Human Rights Commission.

3) Corridor: The camera passes down the corridor of the administrative tent, pausing in front of the open and closed doors of various offices, including those of Lakhdar Brahimi (then-head of UNAMA), Farooq Wardak (director of the CLJ Secretariat, and the man in charge of assigning passes), Jirga Chair Sibghatullah Mojadidi, the Executive Committee, and the Protocol Department. Then the camera is taken away and turned on me by Brahimi's special assistant Kawun Kakar, who takes the opportunity to offer his own narration of the tent's functions. Throughout, a group of tribal elders from Ghazni are waiting for a meeting with the Finance Minister.

4) Couch: An informal 5-minute interview with three UNAMA workers (Hashem, Zora and Sayed) who explain the role of UNAMA in the CLJ process.



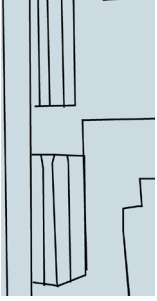
4: PUBLICATIONS TENT AND LEFT WALKWAY

The publications tent housed an archive of previous Afghan constitutions and other reference materials that delegates could consult; a publication center where CLJ administrative staff worked every night to put together the materials (copies of new amendments, voting procedures, etc.) that delegates would read the next day; and a rapporteur section, where the official documentation of the Jirga was compiled on an ongoing basis. A second video shows the walkway to the left of the plenary tent, running between the plenary tent and the publications and administrative tents. The walkway is seen first during the day, and then at night, with the curiously colored lights that gave the CLJ complex a surreal note.



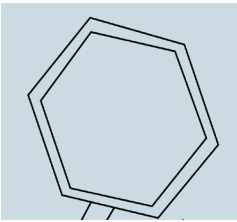
5: BEHIND THE BLEACHERS

Delegates walk behind the bleachers, with a quick peek into the bathroom facilities.



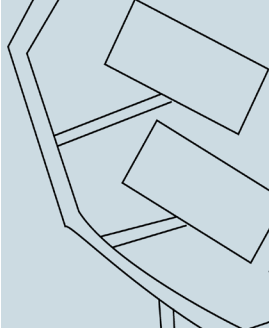
6: LEFT COURTYARD

Delegates and administrators walk through and cluster in the large courtyard bounded on the left by the bleachers and fence, on the right by the left side of the plenary tent, on the top by the publications tent, and on the bottom by the flagpoles, which are flying both the Afghan flag (red, black and green) and a white flag emblazoned with the CLJ logo.



7: CAMPUS MESS HALL

The cafeteria of the Kabul Polytechnic University, renovated and used by the CLJ as a mess hall for delegates and attendees. The video begins with a view of the exterior, a fantastic example of Soviet-funded and influenced geometric architecture, and continues into the interior, where workers bus and clean tables as our group settles in to a late lunch. A long shot down our lunch table shows the usual fare – you might note that we are all drinking soda as it is cheaper than potable water in Afghanistan – and a conversation in a mix of languages, mostly English, flies back and forth. The lunch group includes Hekmat Karzai (Hamed Karzai's son), Kawun Kakar of UNAMA, Aziz Hakimi of the President's office, and several others.



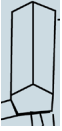
8: CAMPUS DORMS & WALKWAYS

For the CLJ, several Kabul Polytechnic dorms were also renovated and put to use as housing for out-of-town delegates. This short video shows several of the dorms in the evening and at night from the path that leads from the medium-security checkpoint tent to the mess hall.



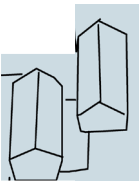
9: FRONT COURTYARD + MAP

The small, rectangular front courtyard stretches from the main entrance of the plenary tent to the three small tents across from it (the medium-security checkpoint tent, and the two meeting tents). At the moment when this video was shot, an emergency meeting of the Reconciliation Committee (called to determine a response to demands from the plenary session for a full vote on all amendments) had just broken up after a series of arguments and delegates had poured into the courtyard from the meeting tents, creating a chaotic flow of people and (mis)information through the space. A second, short video shows the map of the CLJ tent complex that stood in the courtyard to the left of the main plenary tent entrance – one of two maps on which I based my diagram. The second map, not shown in the video, was a flyer given to attendees that explained where you were assigned to sit in the plenary tent based on your role in the process and the corresponding color-coding of your security pass.



10: MEDIUM-SECURITY CHECKPOINT TENT

CLJ attendees had to pass through this medium-security checkpoint to exit the main tent complex and access the sections of the Kabul Polytechnic campus that were being used by the CLJ, such as the dorms and mess hall. Since those sections of the campus were still enclosed within the larger security structures of the overall CLJ complex, attendees did not have to swap “inside” passes for “outside” passes when going through this checkpoint, but did have to go through a metal detector and occasionally also a personal search. If you had a camera allowance (indicated, like a cell phone carrying permit, by an icon on your pass), you were usually required to turn on the camera each time you passed through a security checkpoint, and sometimes to take a picture with it as well, with the result that we all ended up with a lot of photographs (and video) of security personnel. This video shows the men’s side of the checkpoint first, manned jointly by army and security officers, then the women’s side, manned by a female security officer. The two women going through the checkpoint together, and playing out a photo scenario with the security officer, are a delegate and her Afghan-American niece, both distant relatives of mine. Later in the video you see the ANA (Afghan National Army) officers leaning against the back wall of the tent along with an ISAF observer (International Security Assistance Force, in the blue jacket).



11: MEETING TENTS

These tents, located directly across the front courtyard from the plenary tent’s main entrance, hosted the Reconciliation Committee meetings, additional committee rooms, and other small-group conferences within the CLJ.



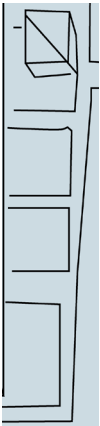
12: VIP TENT

There are four videos embedded in the VIP tent section of the map.

1) Meeting: This 5-minute video catches the end of a meeting of most of the cabinet ministers at that time, including foreign minister Abdullah Abdullah, finance minister Ashraf Ghani Ahmadzai, interior minister Ali Jalali, the ministers of Rural Development and Mines & Industry, and the president's brother Qayoom Karzai. Almost every morning of the CLJ, this group would convene in the VIP tent before anyone else arrived for the first plenary session, and determine their agenda for the day's proceedings. Although the government representatives were nominally present only as observers of the CLJ process – since the constitution ultimately had to be ratified by the elected delegates from all over the country -- in truth they had a fair bit of influence over how it progressed, and they tried to extend that influence as far as possible. At this particular meeting, the ministers are reacting to the latest drafts that have emerged from the committees' review of the Reconciliation Committee's working amended draft, and are determined to move forward with the working draft without incorporating further changes from the committee review, which promised to slow down the CLJ even more – at this point it had already been extended by 10 days over the original 2-week schedule. As the meeting breaks up, several representatives from UNAMA and the president's office come in to report further developments and hear what the meeting has decided.

2) Tea Table: At the tea table in the VIP tent (furnished with special, dainty cups and cookies), Jirga Chief of Protocol Farid Zikria and UNAMA Special Assistant Kawun Kakar have a conversation about the vote which they and others are trying to organize – and which proved quite difficult to pull off – a vote by the full plenary session on each of the proposed amendments to the draft. In the background the assistant to the American ambassador has a chat about security with an inaudible interlocutor.

- 3) Armchairs: From the vantage point of one of the deep armchairs in the clubby VIP tent, I simultaneously have and overhear conversations about current debates over proposed amendments to the draft constitution. The question of the hour is whether the national language and/or official language of instruction (not to mention the language of the national anthem) will be singular, dual or triplicate.
- 4) Exit: Word comes through to the VIP tent that the plenary session is about to restart after a prayer break and everyone files out in turn; a volunteer student usher holds the door.



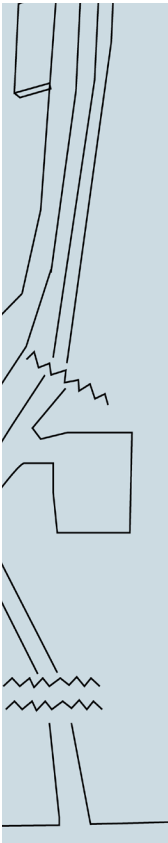
13: RIGHT COURTYARD

At the top of this map area is embedded a very brief video showing the area in between the VIP tent, VIP bathrooms, and the tent used by the American ambassador (at the time, Zalmi Khalilzad) for his private meetings. The yellow and orange tubes are the ducts of the heating system used to warm the tents (not much, but just enough) against the cold Afghan winter. You may note that I was totally unable to film inside the American tent. The rest of the courtyard area is seen in a quiet moment, when most attendees are inside the plenary tent for a session, as a lone soldier patrols the gravel paths. The satellite truck in the courtyard is transmitting the proceedings inside live over the national Afghan Radio & TV network.



14: VIP CHECKPOINT TENT

A very brief video showing the wall of passes in the VIP checkpoint tent, where arriving VIPs (government reps, foreign diplomats and observers, etc.) would hand over their white “outside pass” to the ISAF or ANA soldier manning the checkpoint and receive the corresponding blue “inside pass,” marked with symbols indicating whether the bearer was allowed to bring cell phones, cameras or other special equipment into the CLJ tent complex, before being searched by a male or female security officer according to the VIP’s gender.



15: DRIVING IN THROUGH THE VIP CAR CHECKPOINT

Video shot through the (tinted, bulletproof) windows of our SUV as we drive through a series of barriers, have the CLJ “car pass” checked by an ISAF soldier, have the car swept for bombs by an ANA soldier, and then continue through another series of barriers to pull up under the drop-off awning in front of the VIP checkpoint tent.

PLENARY TENT

GENERAL NOTE

The plenary tent was the setting where the official narrative of the Jirga unfolded, including the plenary sessions of speeches, debates, presentations and votes that were broadcast live over the national networks of Afghan Radio and TV, as well as the interactions between delegates and other participants during the five daily prayer/tea breaks, which were also observed and often documented by the Western media (whose presence at the CLJ was basically restricted to the plenary tent). Seating in the plenary tent was divided into assigned sections, which effectively delineated the different actors in the constitutional process: the elected delegates in one section, the appointed government “observers” in another, the constitution commission (responsible for the initial draft being debated in the CLJ) off to one side and foreign diplomats on another. The video that I shot in the plenary tent observes each of these different groups in turn, each in their designated areas of the political space, and also explores the areas of the plenary tent where all the groups mixed, like the tea table, entrances and exits, corridors between conference rooms, and cushions on the floor of the main walkways within the tent, which also served as the spaces for prayer.



16: LEFT EXIT

As I noted more briefly above, most of the ushers who worked the doors at the CLJ were students who had volunteered for the job in order to be present at this Jirga, which they felt would play a critical role in determining the structures (political, economic, educational, legal, and even social) within which their futures would unfold. You can see in this particular video that when an interesting moment started to develop on the “stage” of the front platform, this usher at least was paying more attention to the politics than to the mechanics of the door. The speech heard during this video is a section of the Finance Minister’s address to the plenary session; this particular section of his speech addresses the reform of administrative processes in the transitional government. This left exit was located in between the guest section, on its own discrete raised platform, and the constitution commission section, on the front platform.



17: CONSTITUTION COMMISSION SECTION

A view of the assigned seating section for the members of the constitution commission, which was located on the left side of the raised platform in the front section of the plenary tent. The first shot shows a few commission members in medium close-up on a morning in the second week of the Jirga, during the time given to the elected delegates to speak about the problems of the provinces they represented. You can see that the seats behind the members being filmed as they listen (or half-listen) to the speech translated in the subtitles are mostly empty, as the delegates' speeches became a bit repetitive as the days went on (most provinces having, it turned out, the same problems and needs), and attendance became somewhat desultory during the days allotted to this particular part of the proceedings. The second shot shows the whole section, almost full, on a day during the third week of the Jirga when then-Finance Minister Ashraf Ghani Ahmadzai addressed the assembly; one of the highlights of his speech was the moment when he took out the notes he had made during the provincial delegates' speeches and told them precisely how many miles of road, how many clinics, how many schools, and so forth they had requested, and then gave an estimate of how much it would realistically cost to fulfill those requests – a total that vastly exceeded the national budget.



18: CHAIR, DEPUTY CHAIRS, SECRETARIES

At the center of the raised platform, behind the speaker's podium, was a long table from which the Jirga Chair and Deputy Chairs, four men and one woman elected by the delegates from among the delegates during the first week of the Jirga, kept order over the plenary sessions. In the first shot of the video mapped to the Chair's table, you see their table during the break, as UNAMA assistants run papers back and forth to Chair Sibghatullah Mojadidi (who was briefly President of Afghanistan during the tumult of the civil war years). In the second shot, all of the deputies are back at their seats and trying their best to calm the uproar on the plenary floor, as delegates demand to know when they will be able to vote on the amendments they have proposed.

A second video mapped directly in front of the Chair's table shows the long table on a day towards the end of the third week of the Jirga, when it was taken over by the UNAMA staff working with the Jirga secretaries to organize a vote by secret ballot (on a series of proposed amendments) to be held that day.

To the right of the Chair's table was a smaller table that was generally manned by two of the three Jirga secretaries, in an informal rotation. The secretaries were responsible for maintaining the minute-to-minute order of proceedings, including determining the order of speakers and calling or announcing each speaker. As you can see in this video, the role they played meant that as soon as a break was called, the secretaries were usually mobbed by delegates eager to get their names on the master schedule. From a decidedly annoyed announcement made by Secretary Jamila Moujahed in another clip, it also appeared that some delegates suspected others of offering bribes to the secretaries in order to be moved up the list; but according to her, everyone simply had to wait their turn.



19: SPEAKER, SCREENS, PLATFORM INTERACTIONS

During the first week that I spent at the Jirga, which was in fact the second week of the assembly, the plenary sessions were almost entirely given over to the delegates, each of whom was given three minutes to address the plenary, ostensibly to speak about the problems of the province that delegate represented. Some delegates did exactly that, but others used the three-minute forum to air personal grievances, general frustrations with the current state of government, bitter memories of the war years and the lists of martyrs, calls for restitution from the Soviets for the years of war damages, or (most infamously) anger against the mujahidin (many of whom were present as delegates or even government representatives) who had fought each other throughout the civil war years and in the process devastated Afghanistan's infrastructure and civilian population.

Behind and to either side of the speaker's podium were suspended two giant screens, which usually projected the A roll and B roll of the live transmission going out over Afghan TV – showing not only the speaker to the audience, but also the audience to themselves – and thus effectively and continually mirroring back to the Jirga attendees their own participation in the process. During the

provincial delegates' speeches, one screen would show the speaker, while the other would show a digital clock counting down their three-minute time allotment. During breaks, the screens would sometimes be used to display slideshows of still images, mostly from in-progress or recently completed reconstruction projects undertaken by the government, UNAMA and/or UNDP. Two short videos mapped to the right of the speaker's podium show the platform at other times: first, arrayed with ballot boxes (which were ultimately not used) for the vote organized at the end of the third week of the Jirga; second, at the end of a day's plenary session, when delegates (and even some of the soldiers working CLJ security) would rush the platform to photograph themselves at the podium, or with the more famous attendees, documenting their participation in this assembly understood by all present to be a historical moment.



20: CAMERAS FOR AFGHAN TV

For their live broadcast of the plenary sessions, Afghan Radio & TV (the official government broadcasters, in operation since the 1970s) fielded two mobile cameras (generally providing B roll, panning across the different sections of listeners or alternating between multiple speakers during open debate sessions) and one stationary camera (generally providing A roll, fixed on the speaker's podium or jirga chair). While the stationary camera remained on its relatively unobtrusive raised platform behind the delegates seating section, the mobile cameras constantly made their presence felt in the assemblies, as they traveled primarily in between the raised sections (constitutional commission, government representatives, speaker, secretaries, chair and deputy chairs) and the floor-level sections (guests, press, delegates, diplomats), rotating to face first the former, then the latter, and almost always in between them. Both of the small circles on the map that stand for the two mobile cameras link to the same video, which follows the two cameramen alternately as they themselves follow different subjects. At the end of the video you see a bit of one of my favorite moments of the Jirga: during the Finance Minister's speech, as most of the

tent was rapt with attention, the cameraman manning the left mobile camera fixed his camera on a row of listeners and sat down on the edge of the platform to listen himself, head propped up on his chin, headphones around his neck. A command over the com system to those headphones evidently called him back to his post and he jumped up, the headphone cord jerking short and almost tripping him in his haste.



21: GOVERNMENT REPRESENTATIVES SECTION

There are two different videos embedded in the interactive map of the assigned seating section for appointed representatives from the Transitional Administration. The first shows the section from the front as the representatives, who are mostly cabinet members, listen to delegates' speeches. The second shows the section from the side at a later date in the Jirga, as the plenary session is inaugurated for the day by a Qari, singing a prayer, after which most of the representatives move their hands over their faces in the traditional gesture. Then the Jirga Chair speaks his opening piece, in both Dari and Pashto, suggesting that each province nominate two of its delegates to attend a meeting with the committee leaders to try to find a solution to the problem of the proposed amendments that are not currently slated to be put to a full vote. As the delegates murmur angrily, the Chair shuts down further discussion, and the government representatives (including here Finance Minister Ahmadzai, Education Minister Qanooni, and Interior Minister Jalali) begin to talk amongst themselves. The plenary session then breaks up and the ministers are soon surrounded by delegates who want to have a minute of their time.



22: RIGHT EXIT

Very brief clip of several student ushers opening and closing the doors of the right exit (positioned in between the government and the diplomats seating sections) as people enter and exit.



23: DIPLOMATS SECTION

The assigned seating section for diplomats and other international observers is first shown empty, in a series of close shots, which show the signs further reserving specific seats for specific embassies, ISAF, and other institutions. We next see the section from across the tent, relatively full, as the diplomats listen to a delegate's speech. Finally we see first a close-up and then a long shot of the diplomats listening to the Finance Minister's speech, during which he lists the exact amounts each foreign donor gave to Afghanistan during the last fiscal year, and then details how that money was spent. The French ambassador, Indian ambassador, Jirga Chief of Protocol, and American ambassador's assistant are all visible. Most of them are listening to the speeches through simultaneous translation headsets. The piece of machinery that seems to be floating in a pool of light above their heads is the projector for the screen to the right of the speaker's podium.



24: DELEGATES SECTION

There are 7 different videos embedded in and around the assigned seating section for the delegates on the interactive map.

1) Empty – Long view from the platform, and then down the side aisle, of the delegates section standing empty at the end of the day, as behind it the cameraman shuts down his equipment and everyone has their last interactions of the day before filing out of the plenary tent. This video is embedded at the top of the section.

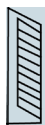
3) Listening1 – Opens with a shot of the seating section sign, which indicates that delegates from provinces beginning with the letters J-Z should sit on this side of the section. The next shot shows delegates listening to one of their own give a speech. The view then switches to a close-up, and then pulls back to show one of the student ushers waiting beside a microphone set up for delegate responses, as the delegates listen to and take notes on the Finance Minister's speech, which directly responded to their requests as expressed during their speeches. This video is embedded in the center left area of the delegates section.

4) Listening2 – Shows delegates tracking with attention the debate between other delegates speaking from the floor and the Chair and Deputy Chairs, who are trying to determine a procedure to go forward with the vote on proposed amendments. Finally the Chair calls for the plenary session to reconvene the next day with new rules distributed for everyone to read and then vote upon, after which the delegates gradually leave their section. This video is embedded in the center of the delegates section.

5) Reading – Viewed from the guest section on their left, delegates read over new materials distributed to them that day on the final voting procedures. The video is embedded in the bottom left area of the delegates section.

6) Uproar – Debate over the amendments and voting procedures on the plenary floor heats up and delegates are rising to their feet all across the section, as the Deputy Chair pleads for patience and understanding from the delegates. This video is embedded on the right side of the delegates section.

7) Break – A sequence showing the various interactions of delegates with each other and with other CLJ participants during the prayer breaks. At the end of the sequence, you can see two delegates being interviewed by two separate journalists; one of the delegates is the Kuchi (nomad) representative, and one of the journalists is Carlotta Gall of the New York Times.



25: GUESTS SEATING SECTION, WITH PHOTOGRAPHERS ALONG LEFT SIDE

There are three short videos embedded in this section of the map. The first shows the assigned seating section for guests, where I was sitting, from the front. This section included guests of official CLJ attendees, like the woman in black (the sister of a constitutional commissioner), but also functioned as a catch-all for people attending the Jirga who didn't fit into any of the other assigned categories, like the Qari who would sing a Koranic verse at the beginning of each plenary session.

The second video is shot from inside the guest section, looking out towards the delegates section. A woman's hand is visible taking notes, with her notebook propped up on the wooden half-wall dividing off the guest section. The woman is Nasrine Gross, the founder of Women for Afghan Women; she was the only woman who refused to cover her head at the CLJ.

The third video begins with a shot of the guest section from the front, during a break. You can see that the section was on a raised platform enclosed by the half-wall, with an entryway in the front wall. Qari Alizada, who would sing a sura from the Quran to inaugurate each plenary session, greets some other guests. Nasrine Gross exits in a red coat. The constitutional commissioner speaks to her sister. The video then continues with the same perspective on the guest section, now with a number of people (including the blind qari and Hekmat Karzai, son of the president) seated and listening to a delegate's speech, which invokes a parable from the Koran to ask the mujahidin to forget their feuds.

The fourth video, shot during a lively session towards the end of the Jirga, shows press photographers camped out in the aisle of the guest section's raised platform, and trading off perches on top of the innermost half-wall. This position was one of the few locations within the tent where they could get off shots of the assembly that did not include the Afghan TV camera crew and screens. The proceedings they are documenting in that particular moment: Jirga Chair Mojadidi is reading off the list of constitutional articles that have so far been approved by the majority of delegates in original or amended form.



26: PRESS BOX

This video shows the press box, which was positioned behind the guest section but on a higher platform, again enclosed by a half-wall. The first shot shows the side of the press box closest to the center aisle of the plenary tent. Here you see the camera operators charged with filming the plenary sessions for various news outlets, as well as Aziz Hakimi from the President's office, who was filming the sessions for an official documentary. The second shot shows the press box from the front, as the print journalists in the front row of the box listen to a speech by a disabled veteran and occasionally take notes. I had a funny experience while shooting the first half of this video – the woman in the orange headscarf, who you see conferring with her colleague, came up to me and asked me to “turn my pass around” so that she could inspect it – my all-important security pass had at some point twisted around so that the informative side faced backwards. She had of course already noticed from the back of the pass that it was blue (a guest pass) rather than yellow (a press pass) and wanted to see if I “even” had an allowance to carry a camera at the Jirga (which would be noted by a symbol on the pass). At this point Aziz Hakimi rescued me, since we had met earlier, and later we made a deal. He gave me an official armband, making me more or less indistinguishable from all the young AINA-trained Afghan women working on his documentary, and I agreed to give him access to my footage for his film. Apparently at least some members of the press objected quite strongly to being filmed; I do not know, however, whether this was because they were more attentive to controlling their own images, or whether they did not want to be seen as participants in, rather than observers of, the CLJ process.



27: CONTROL BOOTH

This brief clip shows a glimpse of the technical setup (which included switcher, mixer, and cameraman communication system) and personnel in place to control the live transmission of the CLJ plenary sessions over Afghan Radio & TV. The booth also controlled the in-house amplification system, linked up to the various mics on the platform, and the simultaneous translation system (transmitted over earpieces to most of the foreign diplomats attending the Jirga).



28: VOTING BOOTHS & BALLOT BOXES

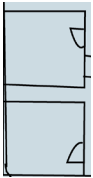
This short video begins with a view of the area just outside the voting booths, where the red, green, & black-striped ballot boxes were also kept until used later in the Jirga, followed by a look inside one of the voting booths. Still taped up on the wall of the booth is a quick guide to the candidates for Jirga Chair, and sitting on its interior shelf is a neat stack of unused ballots from the Chair elections held several weeks earlier.



29: TEA TABLE

As anyone who has visited Afghanistan knows, tea is the central element in Afghan hospitality, and by extension in Afghan diplomacy as well. (When you enter an Afghan house, the first question you are asked is usually “black or green?”) In the Loya Jirga tent complex, tea was on tap for self-service (in large, plastic, spouted samovars) in the administrative tent and publications tent. In the VIP tent and the plenary tent, tea was served by a group of men hired for that purpose, most from Kabul’s large working class. During prayer breaks the tea table, which was located in the wide area between the tent’s main entrance and the seating sections, with the small conference rooms on either side, would be surrounded by session participants, drinking, gossiping, and brokering deals. During the sessions someone would occasionally break away for refreshment, or pause at the table on their way in

or out, but for the most part the tea servers were free to watch the Jirga unfold, just like everyone else. These men, however, were among the very few in the plenary tent who were there without a specific political purpose, and for that reason I was especially interested in observing their reactions to the speeches and debates that took place during plenary sessions. I was struck by the quality of attention they paid to the delegates' speeches – in this video you can see them listening to a speech made by the delegate Tahera from Kapissa, which she begins with the characteristic invocation "In the name of the most merciful and compassionate Allah" – which contrasted with the sort of half-engaged, half-wandering air with which many others in the tent greeted that fourth day of speeches by provincial delegates. Later I asked some of the tea servers why the delegates' speeches had interested them; they explained that since they had never themselves had the opportunity to leave Kabul, they were fascinated to hear how the rest of the country had lived through both the war and post-war periods.



30: CONFERENCE ROOMS + CORRIDOR BETWEEN ROOMS

Most of the real constitutional work of the Constitutional Loya Jirga took place in these small conference rooms within the plenary tent, where the committees (carefully mixed small working groups of delegates) spent the first week of the CLJ discussing the draft constitution and then proposed amendments to the draft. Each group elected its own leader, who then took its proposals to the "Reconciliation Committee," where the committee heads, UNAMA facilitators, constitution commission representatives, and government "observers" tried to wrestle all the proposals into a manageable number of reasonable amendments that could be voted on by the full plenary session in order to arrive at the final constitution officially ratified by the CLJ assembly.

There are two different conference room videos embedded in the map. The first shows a series of empty conference rooms during a plenary session, some still configured for recent committee meetings. The second shows most of a committee meeting that

took place late in the CLJ process, during which the committee leader and UNAMA facilitator attempt to explain to the committee members that they need to vote on which of the proposed amendments approved by the Reconciliation Committee should be sent to the full plenary session for a second round of voting, which would then determine whether the amendments would be included in the final draft of the new constitution. Some of the controversial amendments being debated in this meeting include one (eventually ratified) that prohibits cabinet members from holding dual citizenship, and another that provides for free higher education for all Afghans.

A separate, short video shows several of the corridors between conference rooms, which were often used by delegates during prayer and meal breaks for private meetings and brief naps.



31: FLOOR CUSHIONS

Delegates often congregated in small groups on and around these cushions, both during sessions (as in the first shot) and especially during breaks (as in the second and third shots). The cushions were positioned on the floor outside the doors of the conference rooms, near the tea table in the long walkway through the plenary tent.



32: MAIN WALKWAY THROUGH PLENARY TENT

The “main drag” of the plenary tent was the wide walkway stretching between the tent’s main entrance at one end and the main seating sections at the other, with the small conference rooms on either side and the tea table in the center. Two videos are linked to this section of the map. The first, shot from just next to the main entrance, shows Jirga participants entering the tent and proceeding to their seating sections as the first plenary session of the day begins, inaugurated by the Qari singing a verse from the Koran. The second, shot from the opposite side of the main drag, shows a cleaning crew going through the plenary tent with brooms and vacuum cleaners, after the Jirga attendees have left for the night.

33: HEATING DUCTS, EXT + INT

Kabul is situated at about the same longitude as New York; the valley of the city is also surrounded by mountains that tend to trap weather inside, creating cold winters and hot summers. Very few buildings in Kabul have central heating (or at least that was the case in the winter of 2003-4, before Kabul's building boom) – a few government ministries, and perhaps some residential buildings that have been taken over by foreign diplomats or NGOs. Most houses and offices are heated with bokhari, wood-burning stoves, in the main living rooms and kitchens (where they do double duty for cooking purposes) and electrical space heaters in other rooms, which must of course be turned off before sleep (if the electricity is still running at night) to prevent fire hazards. The Loya Jirga tent complex was heated, as you see in this clip, by a complex system of inflated ducts pumping hot air into the tents. The large plenary tent didn't feel particularly warm, unless you stood directly in front of one of the vents, which is why you see that most people keep their coats on throughout the days of the Jirga.



34: MAIN ENTRANCE, EXT + INT

During my first few days at the CLJ, I was wondering why certain phrases kept recurring in almost every speech – “national unity (wahdati milli)” and “basic law” or “building blocks” (literal translations of “kanun assasi,” which also means constitution). Then someone translated the banner hanging over the main entrance for me, and I found at least a partial source. That banner reads: “The new constitution: national unity of Afghanistan,” and is shown in the first video embedded in the map at the main entrance to the plenary tent. A second video, located just above the first in the map, shows the same door from the interior of the plenary tent. A succession of shots present the student ushers opening and closing doors and CLJ attendees trickling in as the first session of the day begins, inaugurated by the singing of the Qari, then the Afghan National Army (ANA, in camouflage) and International Security Assistance Force (ISAF, in blue jackets) guys manning the door at a few different moments from the day, and finally delegates making for the exit as the plenary session ends.



map outside the Jirga plenary tent; one of the sources for my diagram

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