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Author:

[Robinson, Cervin](#)

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Afghanistan Over Time

Photographs by Edward Grazda

A “place” can be a structure on a site; alternatively, it can be a region, even a nation. Glimpses of people on the move can form part of our sense of a place, as can evidence of change over time. The proportions of these ingredients can vary widely with circumstances.

The photographer Ed Grazda has visited Afghanistan and described it with his camera periodically during the last twenty-five years. During the Soviet occupation in the 1980s, on foot and over mountainous terrain, he accompanied Afghan *mujabideen* whose purpose was to “ambush tank and truck convoys. They also [blew] up the electric power transmission towers to Kabul.” His pictures then were mostly of the men he was with in the landscapes they were crossing.

After the departure of the Russians, Ed made repeated visits to cities. Eventually the Taliban, coming to power, banned the photography of people, and a Grazda picture of a disapproving Taliban in 1997 was featured on the cover of Ed’s *Afghanistan Diary: 1992–2000*. The banning and the fact that he was less constantly on the move are presumably the reasons he turned more of his attention to structures.

The first two pictures reproduced here show a Kabul building in 1992 and in 2004—mostly there in the first picture, much destroyed in the second but with some signs of modest reconstruction.

The subsequent pictures are of a wall in the same city. Ed writes, “I first photographed the wall near the Ministry of the Interior with the map of Afghanistan and the soldier painted on it in 1992 just as the civil war was starting in Kabul. By December 2001 the wall had deteriorated—the map and the soldier were almost gone. By January 2004 the wall was painted over and the ‘new’ Kabul—SUVs, cell phones and suits—was starting to emerge. In September 2004 the wall had become part of the entrance to a ‘Non-Governmental Organization’ (NGO), the Institute for War and Peace Reporting.”

— *Cervin Robinson*











