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## Transecting security and space in Phnom Penh<sup>†</sup>

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**Abstract.** Our paper examines everyday interactions of money, power, and security in Cambodia's capital city of Phnom Penh, informed by a series of transects and interviews. When Phnom Penh hosted the Association of the Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) Summit in April 2012, Prime Minister Hun Sen declared that “Cambodia is not for sale” in an angry exchange with journalists who had quizzed him about China's influence. However, the sale and enclosure of Cambodian land and property have yielded both profit and tensions. These are connected with the meanings and operation of security. The most powerful ‘security’ agency in Phnom Penh is neither wholly ‘public’ nor fully ‘private’, but hybrid; where public police and military personnel and their equipment are purchased. We argue that this is symptomatic of circulation/operation of state/capital in Cambodia.

**Keywords:** Cambodia, security, police, power

“Speculation is like a mold: its spores are always present in markets and are usually benign, but under favorable conditions it can very quickly become rampant and destructive.”

Dick (2003, page 466)

### Introduction

#### Selected history/restricted geography in global city research

As Dick (2003) notes in his socioeconomic history of Surabaya,<sup>(1)</sup> there is a tendency on the part of much contemporary writing about urban power and speculation to forget the scale and significance of earlier phases of the urbanization of capital—in the colonial empires during the 1920s, for example. Such selective history coalesced with restricted geography when work on *global cities* emerged in the 1980s. Contesting claims that some cities (in a so-called ‘Fourth World’) had become structurally irrelevant, excluded from the latest phase of ‘globalization’, Shaktin (1998, page 391) examined:

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<sup>†</sup>This paper is intended to be read in tandem with: Paasche T F, Sidaway J D, 2010, “Transecting security and space in Maputo” *Environment and Planning A* **42** 1555–1576, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1068/a43122>

<sup>(1)</sup>Now Indonesia's second-largest city, in the early 20th century Surabaya was one of Asia's leading ports, featuring on globes and world shipping maps, alongside Calcutta, Hong Kong, Singapore, and Shanghai. See Peters (2013) for a compelling account of (in)security and power in Surabaya.

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“the case of Phnom Penh, Cambodia to demonstrate some ways in which globalization has impacted on cities in least developed countries. The intent is not to assert that cities in other LDCs can be expected to experience identical forms of urban development, although it is worth noting the parallels with the experience of Maputo, Mozambique, which has experienced a similar transition from ‘peripheral socialism’ and intervention by an external peacekeeping force.”

By then, both Maputo and Phnom Penh were domains of new phases of state-enabled speculative development. And whilst core global cities were identified in the 1980s and 1990s as *the* sites where globalization and turbo-capitalism were especially legible (Sassen, 1991) the past decade has seen productive calls to bring globalization’s dynamics into another focus, via grounded analysis of more ‘peripheral’ cities (Bunnell and Maringanti, 2010; Robinson, 2002; Roy, 2009). However, Phnom Penh’s trajectory also foregrounds past and present geopolitical orders. The urban geography of security and conflict has loomed large in Phnom Penh. For many cities [and increasingly all of them (Graham, 2004; 2010)] the consequences of conflict pose multifaceted challenges to those who would narrate their past and presents. In this paper we approach the task through describing everyday intersections of money, power, and space with security. The paper develops two arguments. First, Cambodia’s recent past (including a UN peacekeeping mission in the early 1990s and the transition to a postsocialist economy) has produced a security landscape in which the connections between state and private security are blurred and a hybrid security-actor has emerged. Second, we note how this security landscape is closely connected with that of development. We present these arguments by examining everyday power-relations on the streets around and between key sites that embody commerce, development, and geopolitics. The paper therefore moves across different scales from superpower geopolitics to city streets and examines their interconnections. The security landscape becomes a point where these converge.

#### **Methods: supplementing transects**

Bearing in mind an extensive literature on street-level encounters with all kinds of cities, we utilize an approach to transecting security, power, and space expounded in similar encounters elsewhere: the ‘postsocialist’ capital city of Maputo (Paasche and Sidaway, 2010). That paper similarly transects “areas of wealth and power” (page 1559) and uses grounded encounters with security as a means to examine links across different scales, from geopolitics to street corners. Likewise in Saigon, Harms (2011, page 8) has pointed out how:

“even large-scale trends are always reconfigured by micro-politics, economic maneuvering and identity management of local actors navigating extralocal fields of power.”

In studying similar local/transnational connections through Phnom Penh, street-level transects are supplemented with interviews and blended with a ‘reading’<sup>(2)</sup> of the fabric and spaces of the city.

In this context, our mixed method of observation, conversations, and interviews offers a pathway through fields of power. Our initial fieldwork (conducted by three of the authors) took place in April 2012: in between the closing of the 20th ASEAN Summit (and the 45th anniversary of the founding of this regional community) and the opening of Cambodia’s first stock market<sup>(3)</sup> on the 42nd anniversary of the day after the fall of the city to the Khmer

<sup>(2)</sup>In this, we are also inspired by King’s (2011) *Reading Bangkok*. We realize, however, that our readings of Phnom Penh are preliminary and partial and only scratch the surface of its layers of security and their meanings.

<sup>(3)</sup>The exchange is a joint venture of the Korean Stock Exchange and the Ministry of Economy and Finance. It is on the 25th floor of the landmark Canadia Tower, in an area where new skyscrapers are evident. Although a dozen brokerages (half of whom are from other Asian countries) are licensed, to date they trade only one company: The Phnom Penh Water Supply Authority, which was part-privatized via an initial public offering on the exchange’s opening day.

Rouge.<sup>(4)</sup> Two coauthors conducted another short period of fieldwork in mid-September 2012. A third round of fieldwork was conducted by another co-author in mid-October 2012.

The transect routes (see figure 1) highlight historical and contemporary aspects of power. Whilst Phnom Penh has a series of edge-city projects and more are planned (Paling, 2012; Percival and Waley, 2012), we focus on the microgeographies of security around the symbolic core of the city and forms of security deployed around these core sites and symbols of power.<sup>(5)</sup> Besides the initial walks depicted on figure 1, we rewalked sections of each transect four times to generate detailed maps of the private security, police, and gendarmes present. Transects were conducted in early mornings, late afternoons, and early evenings. Our focus, however, is on the daytime when the city is formally open for business.

Since the ASEAN summit was winding down during the first phase of our fieldwork, the only other significant shift from the norm was around the royal palace during the third phase of fieldwork. This took place soon after the death of the former Cambodian King Norodom Sihanouk. After his body arrived, this zone was transformed. Streets were closed and hundreds of police and military personnel placed the area under high surveillance. However, both then and more widely, some difficulty in the mapping exercises arose from the similarity in the uniforms of private security (*Sante Barl*<sup>(6)</sup>) and police (*Nokor Barl*<sup>(7)</sup>). While it was possible to verify this on transect 2, this has proven to be difficult in parts of transect 1, especially around government buildings and the American embassy where our observations needed to be discreet.

The original transects and the additional surveying of the security landscape were complemented by eleven semistructured interviews with key informants from private security firms and NGOs. Each interview lasted between 30 and 90 minutes. Thematically, the interviews focused on everyday security in the city, as well as on wider issues such as the actions of political and economic elites. Five initial informants were identified from security-company websites and contacted via e-mail. Through utilizing their networks, more informants were identified. We also scrutinized the English and Khmer language press during our first research trip to the city. Both regularly report violence, inconsistency, and susceptibility to petty corruption on the part of armed forces and police (see table 1).

In Cambodia, public and private security landscapes are intertwined, and a powerful policing body emerges out of this; connected with capital and political power. While effective

<sup>(4)</sup> It is suggested that readers also browse the images taken that day in 1975 by the French photojournalist Neveu (2009). Many of the streets we transected are depicted in Neveu's images which can also be viewed via: [http://issuu.com/rnbk/docs/the-fall-of-phnom-penh\\_17april1975](http://issuu.com/rnbk/docs/the-fall-of-phnom-penh_17april1975)

<sup>(5)</sup> Clearly other routes and timings around these sites have potential—some are indicated in Osborne (2008) and another selection of walking encounters with the pasts and present of Phnom Penh has recently been compiled by Filippi (2012). Amongst routes not taken and sites not passed is the bridge where a crush killed over 350 people at the Bon Om Touk festival in November 2010 or past the Thai Embassy that was damaged in a violent protest in January 2003. Both these incidents generated extensive debates about police/security issues and the former one, although a tragic accident, has been related to Phnom Penh's political/development trajectories by one critical reading (Fauveaud, 2012).

<sup>(6)</sup> *Sante Barl* is the more formal Khmer term for what in English termed private security. *Sante* means peace, whereas *Barl* is a keeper/guardian. Hence *Sante Barl* means people or institutions responsible for keeping peace, but not those directly employed by the state. In everyday colloquial Khmer, however, people tend to say *Sante Sok* instead of *Sante Barl*. *Sok* refers to a state of well-being. *Sante Sok* hence signifies a state of well-being deriving from peace.

<sup>(7)</sup> *Nokor Barl* is the Khmer word for police. *Nokor* signifies nation/al, so *Nokor Barl* refers to a keeper or caretaker/guardian of a nation. *Nokor Barl* is organized into six departments (security, transport, public order, border, administrative, and judicial). These departments have their own units at provincial levels responsible to the Ministry of Interior. In addition, *Angkreak* (bodyguards) historically referred to soldier(s) guarding a king. Currently, the term refers to personal bodyguard(s), who escort and protect the king, the prime minister and others ministers, high-ranking officers, and tycoons.

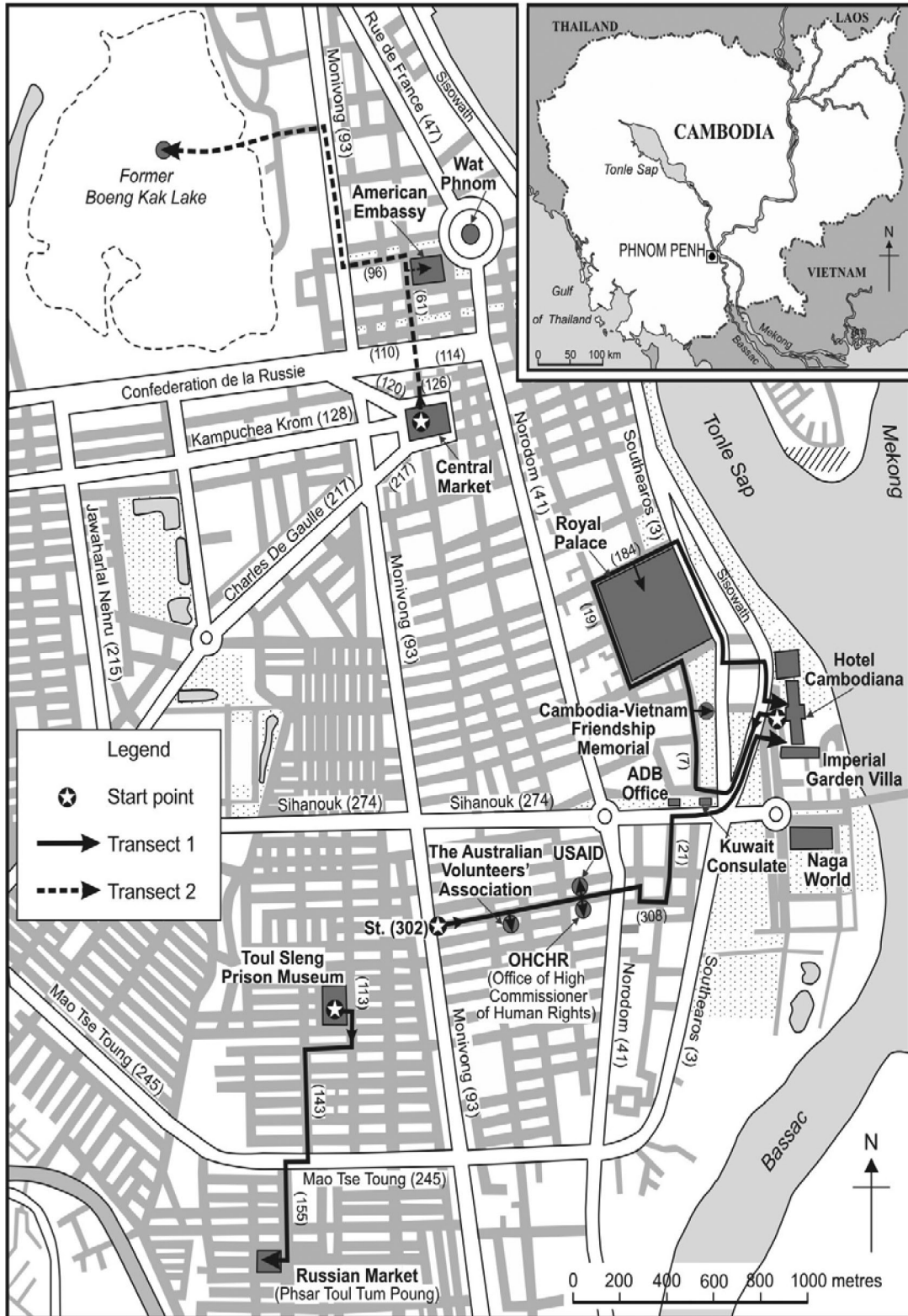


Figure 1. Routes of the transects.



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policing (ie, organized and armed) relies on private money, it is available only to elites and corporations, leaving the wider city unevenly policed. The paper joins other critical accounts of Cambodia, exploring how this nexus of private capital and profit-driven state interests plays out at different scales and shapes sociospatial interactions. The section below examines Phnom Penh's security landscape, drawing on a secondary literature, press coverage, and interviews with key informants, considering first police and the military, then private security companies before documenting their sociospatial interactions with each other and the city. Our transects map these.

### **Violence/security and cities of the global periphery**

The cities already mentioned in this paper have witnessed violent phases of contest for space and power. As King (2011) describes, the commercial centre of Bangkok was torched in the resistance and repression of May 2010. Maputo was cut off from its hinterland and swollen with refugees during the 1980s and 1990s years of encircling civil war in Mozambique (Sidaway, 1993) and Dick (2003, page 84) documents the destruction of Surabaya, three months after the Second World War ended, when 24 000 British-commanded troops invaded to displace Indonesian nationalists who had seized their city from the collapsed Japanese empire:

“The only party to benefit were the Dutch, who after November 1946 were able to reoccupy Surabaya as a battered, deserted and cowed city.”

A few decades later, combat, revolution, and invasion would envelop Phnom Penh. The halt to four decades of war in Cambodia in 1990s was the end point of the Indochina conflicts that dated from decolonization and the Cold War. Peace arrived in Cambodia, yet largely away from the world's media eye, violence continues or has resumed in less spectacular ways, usually operating behind the scenes. Describing more than a decade of “land grabbing” by local tycoons and senior politicians and thousands of evictions of the poor in Phnom Penh, Springer (2011, page 2567) notes that, whilst a politics of exclusion and patronage: “predate Cambodia's encounter with neoliberal ideas [coinciding with the 1990s], it is clear that such relations have since become inextricably bound-up in processes of neoliberalization”. Calling for “further grounded empirical research”, Springer sketches a patronage system that “has allowed local elites to co-opt, transform, and re(articulate) neoliberal reforms through a framework that has ‘asset stripped’ public resources ... [via] corruption, coercion and violence” (page 2555).

Similarly, Cock (2010, page 263) argues that: “The Cambodian state is a set of predatory mechanisms for the private exploitation and accumulation of the country's human, natural and financial resources.” Whilst access to the state is the primary basis for accumulation and enclosure, the state's evolution “has been closely tied to the nurturing of a ‘ruling class’ which consists primarily of the progeny of the communist party that held power in the 1980s” (page 250). These predatory mechanisms envelop Cambodia. Their dynamics are described by Milne and Adams (2012, page 133) as less accurately termed market forces per se than as “a powerful intervention masquerading as a market”. Although in motion by the 1990s (Le Billon, 2002), this has deepened since. In 2008 it was reported that almost half the land in the country had been sold in the preceding few years (Levy and Scott-Clark, 2008). Although much of this is taking place in the countryside (and coasts) where four fifths of Cambodians still reside, Phnom Penh is the seat of highly centralized power and capital, consumption and power are particularly visible there. As Hughes (2003, page 213) argues, the control of central Phnom Penh:

“represents an attempt to impose the kind of control over land and resources, both material and symbolic, that has been used across rural Cambodia. The logic of the new political economy of power in Cambodia turns on the ability to gain and defend control of land and the landscape, both as the basis of the subsistence economy in the countryside and as the space for conducting protests that will be visible nationally and internationally in the cities.”

Hughes (2003) and more recently Springer (2010), also describe how the reorganization of urban space since the 1990s coincided with Prime Minister Hun Sen's consolidation of power. The city was 'beautified'<sup>(8)</sup> as squatters were moved, parks rehabilitated, and the municipal administration recast as an appendage of the ruling Cambodian People's Party. Hughes (page 211) further notes that:

“the more profound impact of the beautification scheme is the reassertion of governmental control over public space vis-à-vis the more radical political challenge offered by urban protest movements of the 1990s.”

This (political, development, and security) order has been superimposed on and reworks prior cityscapes produced under successive (colonial, monarchical, republican, and revolutionary) political orders in Cambodia. The rich layering of these is beyond the scope of our paper [their cultural-political imbrications are richly dissected by Edwards (2008)]. However, we approach contemporary landscapes of power through a focus on the micropolitics of security. Cambodia has long been read through a focus on security—the geopolitics of the Cold War deemed it strategic, with dire consequences on the ground, where thousands of American bombs impacted as the country became embroiled in the wider conflicts over Indochina. When the *Khmer Khrachom* (Khmer Rouge) marched in to Phnom Penh in 1975, they forced its population into the countryside; in pursuit of a famously disastrous and deeply authoritarian agrarian revolution. One account of the Khmer Rouge notes how Cambodia then:

“lacked most of the characteristic features of modern states. The impression one gets from the accounts of visitors is that the government was little more than a temporary encampment of guerrilla leaders in the city they had conquered and emptied of its population in April 1975 ... no bureaucracy was established to implement policy (apart from Pol Pot's secret police)” (Evans and Rowley, 1984, page 105).

By early 1979 the Khmer Rouge had been forcibly deposed and Cambodia was occupied by the Vietnamese army (Morris, 1999). When Vietnamese forces occupied the country, they promptly installed a more orthodox communist government: a long conflict between this regime and remnants of the Khmer Rouge ensued. A UN-brokered peace agreement was subsequently enforced through thousands of foreign troops. These UN peacekeepers left Cambodia two decades ago, but the role of police and other security forces is immediately visible today in Phnom Penh. This paper examines their roles, informed by our interviews and the grounded transects through landscapes of power in the city.

The next section describes the broad security landscape of the city—the roles of police, gendarmes, and private security companies and their interactions with the structures of domination and accumulation. Subsequently, two transects interrogate these landscapes in a more literal sense; negotiating, observing, interacting, and narrating security and space. This leads to a conclusion that returns to Cambodia in comparative frame and to wider security/strategic orientations.

### **Phnom Penh's security landscapes: seeing like a security company<sup>(9)</sup>**

In a widely cited text on the relations between private security and public police, Jones and Newburn (1998) speak of different domains of security. The first domain is an informal security function that includes caretakers, conductors, concierges, and municipal staff in parks. The second domain is the formalized security function of private security companies, while the third domain of security refers to the police. Having described this categorization,

<sup>(8)</sup>See also Harms (2012) on the aesthetics and politics of such 'beautification' in Ho Chi Minh City.

<sup>(9)</sup>The notion of seeing like a security company is a play on Scott (1998). It invokes the optics of power and perspectives of governmentality (Berg, 2010; O'Connor et al, 2008) and connects with the development and security landscapes signaled elsewhere in this paper.

Jones and Newburn (1998) argue that, while the first informal domain of security has been shrinking, the second domain is expanding to fill its space. In this process private security companies inherit some of the prior ad hoc security functions and formalize them:

“surveillance and other forms of ‘low level’ social control had previously been part of the everyday job of staff such as receptionists, caretakers, and gardeners. They would, for example, take note of suspicious strangers, ask people if they need help, and open and lock gates and doors. These functions had been taken on by a more formalized ‘policing’ presence in the form of uniformed security guards” (page 169).

However, their core task is the provision of security. Jones and Newburn draw their examples principally from the case of London. Elsewhere, the second sector might also feature armed response companies or Business Improvement Districts and shopping-mall security staff whose operations increasingly structure urban spaces and lives (Bènit-Gbaffou et al, 2012; Németh, 2010; Paasche, 2012; Shearing and Wood, 2003). This growth of private security led scholars to explore themes of plural policing, describing a network of police, private security, and voluntary policing agencies (eg, neighborhood watches) (Button and John, 2002; Crawford et al, 2005; Jones and Newburn, 2006; Loader, 2000; Stenning, 2009; Yarwood, 2007). According to Abrahamsen and Williams (2011, page 3), these various security actors “interact in a field of tension structured by the opposition between the public and the private and their different forms of material and symbolic power.” Yet rather than private security companies simply eroding the power of the state, they should be seen as an integral part of policing networks, enfolded within the final authority of the state/law. A further theme linked to the policing network discussion is the outsourcing of some police and military functions to private security companies. This includes basic guarding activities, training, logistics, cash-in-transit, security in courts and prisons, and security around sports and other ‘public’ events. Duties that demand less training or demand very specialized knowledge and therefore cost more are being outsourced to private security companies to free the police and military for their core functions (Ayling and Grabosky, 2006; Leander 2005; Minnaar and Mistry, 2004; Minnaar and Ngoveni, 2004; Singer, 2005). This has offered lucrative prospects for private security firms.

Most of the literature and case studies of these processes cite Western cities (sometimes complemented by Brazilian or South African case studies). Focusing, as we do here, on a ‘peripheral’ city where these issues are less often reported requires sensitivity to Cambodian contexts. The next subsections of the paper thus describe public and private security in Phnom Penh and their interactions.

### **Cambodia’s public police**

Law and order in Phnom Penh is outlined in crime victim surveys and official police statistics by Broadhurst and Bouhers (2009) and Broadhurst (2002). Both indicate that recorded violent crimes have declined over the last decade and are at a relatively low level: this finding is reinforced by our informants. At the street level, there are police with scooters at major intersections, supplemented by visible Gendarmerie stations. The latter, the *Kong Reach Avut Hart*<sup>(10)</sup> or Royal Cambodian Gendarmerie force, are under the direct command of the Defence Ministry. However, despite these visible capacities, public confidence in the police

<sup>(10)</sup>This combination of four words includes *Kong* (group), *Reach* (king), *Avut* (weapon), and *Hart* (trained). It was established in 1953 by King Nirodom Sihanouk. Disbanded by the Khmer Rouge, the force was reestablished in 1993. The Royal Gendarmerie is also known as the Military Police. It serves a national defence mission and provides assistance to the military, administrative, police, and court agencies including policing operations against theft, drug trafficking, and terrorism. These multiple functions, however, overlap with the police and military. Like the *Nokor Barl*, the Royal Gendarmerie has units in all twenty-four provinces, but important decisions are made at the headquarters under the Ministry of National Defence.

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is checked by perceptions of corruption that relate to the low salaries, poor equipment, and poor training of the police. Broadhurst and Bouhours (2009, page 184) argue that:

“[In 2005] over half remained positive to police in Phnom Penh ... (compared to two-thirds in 2001). Despite the significant decline in criminal victimization ... this was not matched by greater public confidence in the police.”

However, whilst they note some improvement in perceptions of the extent of petty corruption in recent years, the bigger picture involves the state ‘security’ apparatus enforcing the evictions and exclusions that now form prerequisites of much business and power in Cambodia. Thus Broadhurst and Bouhours (2009, page 175) state that:

“[t]he potential emergence of a ‘shadow’ state and kleptocracy in the context of the rapid development of a market economy is also a significant constraint on the legitimacy of policing institutions.”

Our informants also describe an institutionalized petty corruption at many levels of the police, combined with a strong system of patronage. Those who do not have the means to participate in these networks seek to avoid them. Hence the foundation for legitimate policing is fragile at best. As a key informant centrally placed in the security industry put it to us: “you get away with murder if you have money and know the right people.” The notion that people try to avoid the police whenever possible has been confirmed throughout our research. One informant described a scenario where in a road traffic accident the involved parties would first feel out who has better contacts with the state forces. The outcome of this assessment would then determine whether the police would be called or whether there were other ways to solve the issue. Nonetheless, this does not mean that the police are always superfluous. In emergencies, it is assumed that the mention of money or a degree of (political) connections will speed up the arrival of officers. Reports of inconsistent or violent policing are common. Around the time of our initial field research in April 2012 the Cambodian press was full of allegations of violent tactics and even murder by security forces (see table 1).

Such a ‘sample’ of reports could readily be found for any other month in recent Cambodian history. However, as informants advise us, it would be far too simple to brand the public police forces as straightforwardly corrupt or violent. Instead, it is vital to analyze how they are caught up in overlaps of politics and business that connect Phnom Penh’s streets with what Springer (2009, page 317) has termed “an extra-local power geometry”.

#### **Private security/Sante Barl**

Phnom Penh has a booming private security industry. Uniformed male guards are in front of every mid-end or high-end shop, petrol station, hotel, or restaurant. Their ubiquity at commercial buildings is less evident than at private residences: for which only the more opulent tend to have uniformed security. Moreover, Cambodia’s history—notably, the 1990s UN mission and the transformation of the wider security situation accompanying peace talks and agreements—required disarmament of the civilian population and any private security firms. In the years after the UNTAC (UN Transitional Authority in Cambodia) mission, ongoing disarmament programs funded by the EU and Japan removed over 200 000 guns, leaving Cambodia with relatively few weapons in private ownership (Roberts, 2008). The ground rules for all private security companies therefore specify that no firearms can be carried (National Assembly of the Kingdom of Cambodia, 2005); limiting their equipment to batons or bamboo sticks, two-way radios, and occasionally handcuffs. It is immediately evident that many private security guards are ill equipped and untrained. Wearing sandals as footwear is common as is dozing on duty. It is usual on the streets of Phnom Penh to see such guards washing cars or sweeping property (see online figure A1, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1068/a46167>). The weakly professionalized nature of the industry combined with their lack of firepower renders private security (in itself) relatively ineffective when it comes to the core function of crime prevention. Thus private



security guards enact what electronic surveillance systems often do elsewhere: that is, watching who enters and leaves property and reporting this to a control room, customer, or supervisor. Yet, whilst private security alone is relatively ineffective as a physical security provider, the guards conduct other functions. These may include assisting customers when parking (in fact, numerous security guards are ‘armed’ with whistles and red sticks to manage traffic in place of batons), opening shop or hotel doors, acting as porters, organizing transportation, and handing out parking vouchers. In these respects, the function of a private security officer often resembles that of a concierge, groundkeeper, or door-guard. In the terms indicated by Jones and Newburn’s (1998) domains of security, the second domain of (private) security has taken on roles that (in the Western case that informs their study) are more often performed by the first domain of concierges and the like. There is a tendency for private security to become of a matter of prestige and customer service for shops and other business; similar to a concierge or doorkeeper. Moreover, whereas Jones and Newburn (1998) have emphasized how the uniform of security personal becomes an aspect of the formalization process, private security officers in Phnom Penh can frequently be seen out of their uniforms (see online figure A1).

#### **Phnom Penh’s policing networks**

In contrast to rural Cambodia (Kent, 2006), the policing network in the centre of Phnom Penh has limited voluntary or vigilante-style policing. Instead, the network relies on the public police and the relatively powerless private security. However, when they combine, a more powerful policing actor emerges. Since only the police, gendarmes, and soldiers may legally carry arms, arrangements have emerged whereby private security firms are able to hire armed and uniformed police officers. This privatization of the police can either be organized on a longer term basis [for example, in the case of recurring cash-in-transit (CIT) and the protection of banks] or in a more ad hoc manner if armed backup is required. As a prominent security company states:

“MPA’s license permits our company to work in liaison with the police for armed escort, armed executive protection, CIT operations or crime intervention” (MPA International, 2012a).

Furthermore:

“Our Rapid Response Teams work together with the police under license to quickly deliver an armed response if required 24-hours-a-day. MPA also has roving inspectors that are randomly inspecting all our sites. All of our management are available anytime to assist you with any security need” (MPA International, 2012b).

This extends to the services of the Royal Gendarmerie of Cambodia or Military Police [responsible for internal order and antiterrorism; see footnote (10)] that can also be hired for and by private security:

“In a controversial decision by Cambodia’s Prime Minister, multinational corporations and other local enterprises will now be able to hire the country’s royal armed forces” (Bennett, 2010).<sup>(11)</sup>

Today there are around 400 police and gendarmes working for private security companies (this does not include direct hiring by other commercial enterprises such as logging companies). As for the practicalities of hiring regular police officers, the security companies issue a contract with the police forces, specifying that they can call (and will pay) if armed police officers are required. The legalities are less clear. While the company mentioned refers to “licensed permits” (MPA International, 2012a), our informants tended to describe processes of cooperation with/contracting the individual police officers as “moonlighting”. As noted, however, this network of private security and bought-in police is

<sup>(11)</sup>Also reporting on the so-called ‘sponsoring’ of the army see Brady (2010).

**Table 1.** Police and gendarme reportage in the local media, March–April 2012.

No	Press name	Date	Titles/issues
1	<i>Koh Santepheap</i> (publishes in Khmer)	13 March	The deputy chief of a police station in Toul Sangke Sangkat, Phnom Penh, was detained by Khan Daun Penh Royal Gendarmerie for firing an unlawful gunshot in public.
		22 March	A First Lieutenant of the Royal Cambodian Armed Forces was detained by the Kirivong District Police in Takeo Province for threatening people.
		30 March	A drunken police officer from Siem Reap province who was tasked with guarding a pig slaughterhouse, fired unlawful gunshots before the visit of ASEAN delegates to Siem Reap province. However, this police officer, who is also the brother-in-law of a local tycoon who is the owner of a car garage and the slaughterhouse, was not punished. This news was covered up by the local police.
		2 April	A deputy chief of a police station in Prek Achi commune, Kompong Cham Province, was charged with killing a local villager whilst attempting to intervene in local conflicts. The police officer ran away after the incident.
		3 April	A deputy director of the Local Administration Department, who is also a colonel of the National Police, fired an unlawful gunshot in a restaurant to stop his friends from leaving the restaurant. The colonel was not punished for his conduct, although his driver was briefly detained.
		5 April	The Siem Reap provincial police confiscated a military truck illegally carrying seven cubic meters of <i>shorea spp.</i> (commercial timbers). The truck, belonging to Brigade 99, was temporarily sent to the Forestry Administration for court filing. The soldier driving the truck stated that he had paid the guards manning ten checkpoints a total amount of around US\$400 for making his way to a depot in Siem Reap province.
		17 April	A police officer from the Ministry of Interior was on the run after firing shots at a group of people. Three people were seriously injured.
		18 April	A military officer was on the run after unlawfully firing a shot to threaten his wife in Daungkor district, Phnom Penh.
		26 April	A major general and his three bodyguards brutally assaulted four men in City Hotel, Koh Kong province. The major general and his three bodyguards were placed in custody.
		2	<i>Nokorwat News Daily</i> (publishes in Khmer)
17 March	Three hundred villagers in Chheu Tom commune petitioned for the dismissal of the chief of Chheu Tom police station who is accused of being involved in a number of corruption cases.		

**Table 1** (continued).

No	Press name	Date	Titles/issues
2	<i>Nokorwat News Daily</i> (publishes in Khmer) (continued)	20 March	A Royal Gendarmerie officer in Khan Sen Sok, Phnom Penh, was charged for robbing foreigners on top of prior theft charges.
		24 March	A commander from the Border Protection Division 303, was involved in the mining and transportation of prime timber. His unlawful act was revealed when his vehicle ran over a landmine causing the death of his driver. The commander has denied any involvement with the illegal logging business.
		10 April	A police officer of Taprok commune police station in Kompong Cham caused the death of a villager in an attempt to intervene in local conflicts.
		19 April	Military officers of the Border Protection Division 204 were suspected of buying illegal timber as well as protecting and facilitating timber logging and transportation.
		26 April	Chhut Wutty, an environmental activist and the director of a nature protection organization, was shot dead on 26 March 2012, by the Royal Gendarmerie at a timber depot whilst he was trying to take a photo of the site. A police officer was also killed in obscure circumstances.
3	<i>The Phnom Penh Post</i> (publishes in English)	26 March	Two military police officers caught with drugs were released without a court hearing. According to officials, this matter would be dealt with internally. (See Kongkea, 2012.)
		28 March	The same newspaper reported cases of police using force against a peaceful demonstration of factory workers. The next day, the newspaper published a follow-up story, noting that the police had denied these allegations whilst printing the picture of a hospitalized victim. (See Nimol and Worrell, 2012.)
		4 April	Police officers were chased out from a press event as villagers accused the police of not providing them with adequate protection against crime. Two days later, there was a follow-up story about how the villagers tried to get a petition going, albeit unsuccessfully, for the police to guarantee their security.
4	<i>Cambodia Daily</i> (publishes in English)	2 April	A police officer was on the run after killing a villager with an assault rifle. (See Soenthrith, 2012a.)
		3 April	A military officer and a police officer were arrested for illegally discharging their weapons in public under the influence of alcohol. (See Soenthrith, 2012b.)
		4 April	Three police officers were given life sentences for shooting a moneychanger at point-blank range. (See Sovuthy, 2012.)

utilized only by banks, cash-in-transit, and other high-target institutions. Many shops, most hotels, and all petrol stations simply contract unarmed private security. These men frequently end up acting as car-park attendants, bag carriers, and concierges.

Yet, whilst private security is ineffective alone and with the police struggling for acceptance, the combination of the two, or better the combination of wealth with the right of the police to carry firearms, creates a powerful policing actor in Phnom Penh. While the private security industry buys in the services of police officers, the customers of private security companies consume a well-organized (expertise of the private security companies) and armed (sometimes military) security force. This policing network reflects Cambodia's recent history. The result, however, is paradoxical. The state introduced (legally) a monopoly on legally carrying arms. Yet this is eroded, and effective policing is commodified. Policing becomes a matter of power and connections. The state regulates the industry and sets rules for their code of conduct. This is, however, an opportunity for state forces to enter the market and profit from it. This nexus of state and private interests rests on the appropriation and exercise of violence. The interviews and transects explore aspects of these intersections and everyday street-level security around key sites (hotels, monuments, museums, markets, embassies, and development projects).

### **After ASEAN: transect 1**

The city is full of flags. We have arrived in Phnom Penh on the afternoon of the last day of an ASEAN summit, which has been preceded by a visit to Cambodia by China's premier Hu Jintao. The summit is soon closing. This is evident on the airport road; where diplomatic convoys moving in the opposite direction to us halt the traffic. Later, we walk into the Hotel Cambodiana on Sisowath Quay (Preah Sisovath). The hotel was conceived as an embodiment of postcolonial modernity in the mid-1960s. Twenty years later, writing in the aftermath of Vietnam's occupation of Cambodia (that had deposed the Khmer Rouge), Evans and Rowley (1984, page 302) noted how power plays between Vietnam, China, Thailand, and the superpowers had produced:

“a sequence of action and reaction that Machiavelli, well-versed in the problems of new states in early modern Europe, would have understood very well. However, he would have been unfamiliar with the rhetoric of revolution and nationalism in which conflicts between states have become enveloped. That is the mark of the modern era of mass politics. The peoples of Indochina have undergone a particularly traumatic initiation into that era, and there is no sign that the ordeal is over.”

Today, we pass layers of police and private security guards that complement each other. They have little to do and don't stop us walking into the hotel, through the airport-style metal detector gate. There are several diplomatic cars parked outside, bearing flags and containing bored drivers. The literature on hotels as diplomatic/commercial/social enclaves (see Craggs, 2012) comes to mind, but so too does the Cambodiana as a mirror to the tumultuous postcolonial trajectory of Cambodia. In the words of a hotel/travel website:

“The Cambodiana Hotel was conceived in the 1960s as part of Sihanouk's programme of building ambitious modern structures . . . . It was intended to stand on stilts providing views through to the river as part of a wider cultural and entertainment precinct. By the 1970s, Sihanouk had been deposed and the original plans for the site abandoned. Lon Nol's government made the hotel a military barracks . . . until the late 1980s, the Cambodiana was left in virtual ruin. . . . resurrected just in time for the arrival of UN officials, NGO personnel, journalists and international officials presiding over the UN mission . . . . The Cambodiana was the only show in town and everyone stayed here from celebrated journalists to Prime Ministers and Presidents. When foreign governments decided to reestablish their embassies in Phnom Penh the Cambodiana was the logical place to get things started” (Rusty Compass, 2011).



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These days the Cambodiana more often accommodates tourists, but on the night of our visit, the Cambodiana was a site of diplomatic dealing, duly secured. Subsequently we will retransect this section in the day: mapping security (see online figure A2) around these nodes of secular and symbolic power. On one side of Sisowath Quay is the Hotel Cambodiana enveloped by private security. Across the road is the Royal Palace. This enduring centre of symbolic and temporal power (since its construction under the auspices of the 19th-century French protectorate<sup>(12)</sup>) is surrounded by a density of police/gendarmes that makes it relatively distinctive within the wider core of Phnom Penh. Our first transect returned to Sisowath Quay, turning left past the rows of security at the gates of the Cambodiana to the giant traffic circle near Hun Sen Park, and four key sites—a casino, a Cambodia–Korea cultural centre, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, and the National Assembly—that epitomize power relations.

Where Preah Sisovath meets the traffic circle, the Naga World Hotel and Entertainment Complex contains casinos, karaoke lounges, restaurants, and fourteen floors of suites and rooms. On a subsequent visit, we witnessed the outer layer of Naga World's private security push men across the public road in front of the entrance where taxis congregate. Naga Corp is listed on the Hong Kong stock exchange (though registered in the Cayman Islands), chaired by a former FBI agent but has a Chinese-Malaysian CEO who, according to NagaCorp's website, is "an advisor to the Royal Government of Cambodia with Ministerial status" (NagaCorp, 2012a). The casino is enabled and functions through the close relationship between the state and private capital at different levels.

According to its corporate report (NagaCorp, 2012b), NagaCorp has a private jet to fly in "VIP customers". Those at the casino floor with piles of US\$100 bills, however, have mostly arrived on group tours from China and Vietnam (the company also has a limousine to bring casino visitors from Ho Chi Minh City). Naga World overshadows the nearby National Assembly. The latter may be part of the state apparatus—classically the entity claiming to bear the monopoly on the legitimate use of violence in a given territory. But, it is Naga World that has been granted a 41-year monopoly casino licence within a 200 km radius. Two buildings nearby enable and reflect Cambodia's articulations with the world beyond its borders: the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, and a Cambodia Korea Cultural Centre. The former is a site where loans and aid deals are brokered, the latter rests on over US\$2.77 billion of Korean investments since the mid-1990s (Sotharith, 2010).

Our transect, however, turns away from these sites, past a giant poster welcoming Hu Jintao's visit (online figure A3). On Preah Suramarit Boulevard we pass the police and Gendarmerie stations, the latter with a giant advertisement pole in its front yard, around which the gendarmes sit and chat. We turn right into Boulevard Samdach Sothearos, walking towards a monument that symbolizes a key strategic relationship. The Cambodia–Vietnam Friendship Monument is in socialist realist style. The occasional focus of protests, there are several security guards (online figure A4) at its base when we approach. There is an incense burner below this monument to fraternal socialist regimes.<sup>(13)</sup> We continue

<sup>(12)</sup>Edward (2007, page 44) notes how: "The desire to increase the "appearance of power would prove a central preoccupation of the protectorate, which, like the French protectorates of Tunisia and Morocco, sought to bolster its own superimposed order in Cambodia by buttressing what it considered ... traditional rituals, spatial patterns, and architectural ornament." The innovative construction, subsequent modifications, and alterations to the Palace mirrored the interactions and constructions of Khmer style in conjunction with those of French colonial modernity. In turn, they provided part of the basis for the construction and reimagining of Khmerness (see also Peycam (2012).

<sup>(13)</sup>As Evans (1998) shows in neighbouring Laos, the rituals and memorials of the post-1975 communist regime have also progressively been enfolded into deeper cultural/political structures.

around the Royal Place, past the offices of the Royal (Bodyguard) Police and development ministries, NGOs, and a private villa that is the residence of the British Consul. Outside it a G4S security guard nods at us from his booth, inside which is a poster depicting how/where to look for bombs under cars.

We are near the Tuol Sleng Museum. Often depicted as a destination associated with ‘dark tourism’ (Hughes, 2008; Lennon and Foley, 2000; Williams, 2004), the museum connects visitors with representations of past violence (Sion, 2011; Tyner et al, 2012; Violi, 2012). Occupying the former site of S-21 (security facility 21, which had once been a primary school), the entry gate opens onto a courtyard and the former cells bear photographic portraits of victims, instruments used for incarceration and torture, and disinterred human remains. The museum has few visible staff. We only noticed a woman at the ticket booth alongside two onlooking security personnel at the entrance of the museum. One of them had the prominent tag “Tourism Police” (in English) affixed to his uniform. Although markedly differentiated from the other privately hired security guard at the entrance to Tuol Sleng, it is unclear to what extent the tourism police took on additional responsibilities beyond maintaining order at the museum compound. The public–private security nexus is again evident. Leaving Tuol Sleng, we walked towards the Russian market. There are numerous ‘international schools’ along the road. According to Duggan (1997), by the mid-1990s it was increasingly common to find institutions offering European-certified courses (eg, Cambridge A-levels, and International Baccalaureates) in tandem with other foreign organizations and capital. These extralocal networks require the constant presence of security officers: there were several around the schools. Indeed, security guards are found everywhere here: a toy shop we passed had two security guards seated in front. So did a bakery located on the corner of a relatively quiet street. This is an example of the process we have noted, when security signals prestige/distinction (like a bright shop or office sign) rather than protection. On a subsequent visit to Phnom Penh, one of us rewalked this section of transect 2 in the early afternoon, when again private security outnumbered the lurching police by a ratio of more than four to one (see online figure A5).

Nearby there is a concentration of bars and restaurants. There is a homology between tourist and development landscapes<sup>(14)</sup>—they overlap and both require secured spaces. At the intersection between Streets 63 and 302 swanky apartments line the road. As usual, there are security guards. They were, however, missing from some of the stand-alone bungalows located further down the street—the only visible form of security for these dwellings was derived from high gates and walls. Besides such exclusive residential enclaves, Street 302 offers glimpses into the history of international peacekeeping and foreign aid in Cambodia. Such geopolitical circumstances have been documented by Peou (2005, pages 112–113), who notes that over the 1992–2004 period, international assistance in Cambodia covered a:

“ wide range of human security activities associated with peacekeeping and peace building (namely, international criminal justice, the promotion of electoral democracy and human rights, as well as economic reconstruction) with external actors generally sharing a set of liberal norms promoting security.”

Street 302 hosts a number of institutions that embody this security–development nexus (Chandler, 2007; Stern and Öjendal, 2010): the Australian Volunteers’ Association, USAID, and the Office of High Commissioner for Human Rights. As we approached this cluster of

<sup>(14)</sup>Their racialization is also striking: both are to a considerable degree what Loftsdóttir (2009) terms “landscapes of whiteness”. In turn, these bear complex relationships to colonial discourse. See Tegelberg (2010) on the reproduction of these discourses in the *Lonely Planet* guide to Cambodia, notwithstanding its intention to promote responsible tourism. Tourism, like development, arguably produces “a space in which only certain things can be said or even imagined” (Escobar, 1995, page 39), in which certain objects are foregrounded and others form a mere backdrop or are elided.

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development organizations, the number of guards increased. Turning around in the middle of the street, we could count employees of at least three different security companies. Those key organizations involved in human security/development issues have to be in turn secured by local security forces. Their collective presence forms a node in the network of secured sites of power, sanctuary, and humanitarianism.

### **Beneath the ‘development–security’ nexus: transect 2**

Our second transect started at the ‘Central Market’ (*Psah Thmey*) on 7 April at 10:30. The site embodies and reflects French colonialism. The dome-shaped main market building was erected in 1937, with French capital (arriving in the form of development aid) continuing to play an important role in its refurbishment from 2009 to 2011. Arriving at the north gate of the market, we were greeted by a private security officer who efficiently ushered us to the entrance. With only a whistle in hand and visibly devoid of any other security apparatuses (eg, baton), the main responsibility of the officer appeared to be regulating the flows of traffic/people in order to facilitate the ease of access to the market.

The market has four wings radiating outwards from the domed edifice. It is bustling and one of the few places on our transects with visible security cameras. On the way out we notice armed police. In direct contrast to the private security officer who ushered us in, these state police personnel take on a more active role in casting watchful surveillance on the compound. Outside, we walked westwards onto Street 61. Along the way, almost all commercial establishments (cafes/restaurants, schools, and gift shops) were minded by one or two security guards usually carrying only a baton. The ubiquitous and almost banal nature of their presence, however, did not mean that the core physical function of securitization is being effectively performed. Security officers appeared to take on auxiliary roles such as assisting customers with parking and opening doors for patrons.

We turned right onto Street 96, past sites of concentrated power, including the luxury hotel Raffles Le Royal and the US embassy complex. Contrasting with the unevenly tarred streets that we have traversed over the past few days, this stretch of road has clearly been well maintained. Uniformly spaced trees served as dividers for the broad, two-way traffic lanes; elaborately coloured tiles formed the surface of side pavements. If the American flag hoisted within the embassy ground failed to connote the place as a symbol of power, the high gates and the use of closed-circuit television to enforce and ensure the segregation/security of the property did. At each of the four corners of the rectangular compound, there was a booth that hosted three to four security staff who would carefully scrutinize passing pedestrians and vehicles. However, as with other security officers that we have witnessed thus far, their duty was not to patrol the public space, but rather to secure particular buildings (in this case the US embassy). Posters were displayed in front of the embassy’s main gate to warn people against taking photographs/videos of the site. There is nothing like this elsewhere in the city. We cannot linger. Once past the US embassy police are again replaced by private security (see online figure A6).

Maps still indicated the existence of a lake where we were standing, but Boeng Kak has been drained to enable development. As we advanced, we were abruptly stopped by a man who was sitting by the access way to the site. Sounding like the gatekeeper of the place, he waved us away and asked us not to take photographs. Sensing our reluctance to conform to his demands, he turned around and shouted, culminating in the prompt appearance of a uniformed security officer. Whilst we were forced onto an alternative path, it was instructive to witness the interactions between the two men—the ‘informal’ groundkeeper had to rely on hired security personnel to conduct effective policing. As such, mundane details of the uniform and logo of a security firm are imperative in portraying legitimacy during day-to-day performances of security.

The lake was drained by Shukaku Inc., a company closely linked to political power in Phnom Penh. Many of those evicted from the lakeshore have refused to leave the lake region and are protesting their eviction (Chakrya, 2012)—we passed a banner (online figure A7).

State and corporate powers converge here. A resident directed us to a bulletin board picturing the state police role in the evictions. Nearby there was another entrance to the construction site. Although it was ‘guarded’ by another two gatekeepers, their late afternoon napping granted us an opportunity to venture into the reclaimed lake (see online figure A8). Skyscrapers are being constructed beyond the lake. The plan is for more here. The draining of Boeng Kak exemplifies the fusion of capital and political power that resorts to evictions (involving amply documented violence) to enable ‘development’. The case is highly visible, but is by no means unique. Land grabbing and economic land concessions are occurring throughout the country, producing new forms of displacement. It exemplifies how convergence of security and development that others have traced elsewhere (see Reid-Henry, 2011; Stern and Öjendal, 2010) is predicated on insecurity and dispossession for some: accumulation by dispossession. Indeed, it is this development–security nexus that underpins capital accumulation, even as the reality on the ground may be, as Chandler (2007) suggests, a profusion of conflicting interests between development–security institutions and actors.

### **Conclusions: embodying (in)security**

For most states [in Asia], the core component of comprehensive security is still political survival.”

Alagappa (1998, page 625)

Kent (2006, page 358) has suggested that the ambivalence and complexity of security in Cambodia means that: “it is time to consider the mechanisms by which different discourses and practices of security are, in fact, secured.” This paper has also argued that (as in many postcolonial states that have experienced periods of violent convulsion), a lingering structural violence persists. Nordholt (2011, page 401) describes this (in the Indonesian case) as “a law of the rulers instead of the rule of law”.

Different claims about security have recently been articulated in Phnom Penh. As we have noted, Hu Jintao visited Cambodia prior to the April 2012 ASEAN summit. Premier Hu was on his way home from a meeting of the ‘BRICS’ community of large emerging markets in New Delhi when he stopped in Cambodia for two nights. The close relationship between Cambodia’s government and Chinese economic and political elites (see Sullivan, 2011) did not pass unnoticed amongst some of the other ASEAN delegations, who demanded ASEAN collectively take a strong line on territorial conflicts between other ASEAN members (principally the Philippines) and Beijing in the South China Sea. Cambodia has emerged both as business partner and as strategic ally for China preoccupied with territorial/‘security’ threats posed by an assertive United States, India, and Japan (Garver and Wang, 2010). The close relationships between the regime in Phnom Penh and Beijing caused tensions between Cambodia and other ASEAN members. In a press conference after the 2012 ASEAN summit, Hun Sen angrily denied that China had excessive influence over Cambodia, saying that the “media should not engage in crazy analysis” and “Cambodia is not goods to be bought by anyone as a sovereign state” (Lewis, 2012). Against this backdrop of the ASEAN summit, Phnom Penh became a diplomatic stage. Security was heightened; Phnom Penh was full of police and gendarmes during the state visit and summit. Tight control and clearing of ‘public’ space had occurred at a prior ASEAN summit in Cambodia in 2004 (see Springer, 2010 pages 115–116) and is common everywhere when summits occur. Beyond such symbolic



events, however, development, power, and ‘order’<sup>(15)</sup> are presented as the basis of Cambodia’s progress. Prime Minister Hun Sen talks of this development, order and progress, simultaneously drawing on a historical repertoire, invoking moral authority to construct Cambodia’s postconflict developmental trajectory (Norén-Nilsson, 2013). It is hard to disentangle these discourses from new and older networks of power or to clearly demarcate the boundaries between international and national power circuits (Davis, 2011; Kent, 2007; Paling, 2012). Such challenges are also evident in many other Asian cities (McKinnon, 2011; Roy and Ong, 2011).

In Cambodia, however, ‘security’ was on the agenda at the joint summit of ASEAN and East Asian Community in November 2012, when a recently reelected US President Obama met with premiers from ASEAN members and those of China, Russia, Korea, and Japan. Police reportedly had arrested at least eight people days before these meetings (Reuters, 2012). They had written slogans on their homes asking for Obama’s support because they faced eviction without compensation from housing that was being forcibly emptied in order to create a ‘security zone’ around the airport before the foreign leaders arrived. Those leaders had broader ‘security dilemmas’ (Tang, 2009) in mind, related to the balance of power in the Asia-Pacific. Away from their gaze, however, the grounded meaning of security/insecurity is made flesh; for those being cleared out of the way.

### Aftermath

Nine days after this paper was accepted for publication, Cambodia’s 28 July 2013 general elections saw significant advances by the opposition, who also claimed that electoral fraud had denied them a victory over the ruling *Kanakpak Pracheachon Kâmpuchéa* (Cambodian People’s Party/CPP). Since then, the opposition has mounted a series of rallies in Phnom Penh and refused to take their seats in the National Assembly.

Prior struggles over land rights and displacements, labour struggles (including garment-industry strikes), and street protests are now intertwined with the aftermath of the elections. Demonstrations have taken place almost every month. The press, and social media (in both English and Khmer) contain accounts and images of shootings by the state security forces, plainclothes vigilante assaults on demonstrators and strikers, as well as claims and recriminations about order, freedom, and responsibility, amidst bans on protest.

We have returned to Phnom Penh several times in this period. Cambodian colleagues describe a shifting political atmosphere. In the words of an informant, the government faces a “chaotic and hectic mandate”, the fallout from two decades of a development path of elite-enrichment, enclosure, and the nexus of state–party–private powers.

And that business continues: there was some capital flight in the uncertain postelection context. However, land prices in parts of central Phnom Penh are over US \$7000 per m<sup>2</sup>. Several spectacular new developments are visibly nearer to completion: shopping malls, condominiums, hotels. These resemble those of many other fast-developing Asian cities. However, Phnom Penh contains multiple layers and histories of security/insecurity and urbanization. These include the royal and colonial crafting of a capital in the century prior to Cambodia’s independence, real-estate boom in the 1960s, a war-swelled city in the early 1970s, followed by violent displacement (1975), invasion (1979), UN oversight (1992–93), and the deep transformations since.

<sup>(15)</sup> In Khmer, the most frequent term for development is *Ak Pee What*. *Ak Pee*, usually used a prefix, means a great deal of or significant quantity, whereas *What* means increase. *Ak Pee What* is used broadly; across scales and to signify economic, social, political, religious, and cultural development. In turn, *Kareachjomranh* is the progress that is part of *Ak Pee What*. *Reachjomranh* means a gradual increase or improvement (*Ka* converts this word into a noun). In Hun Sen’s speeches and wider government discourse both progress and development are linked with to *Banhjea* and *Lomdap-lomdouy*. The former refers to a command made by those in authority and the latter signifies a process adopted by group of people or institutions to manage or keep things in an orderly way.

Representations of Cambodia often place it temporally or spatially *alongside* or *after* conflicts and ruptures. For example, Cambodia became *Sideshow* (Shawcross, 1979) to the Vietnam War and the key subject of *The War After the War* (Chanda, 1986) or simply *Cambodia after the Khmer Rouge: Inside the Politics of Nation-building* (Gottesman, 2004). However attention to grounded, everyday moments/forms of security/insecurity problematizes a narrative that:

“places Cambodia in a recently invented category of ‘post-conflict’ countries suffering from pervasive violence and traumatic collective fragmentation, with a certain set of problems requiring a certain set of measures which fit the essentialised understanding of its political culture” (Öjendal and Sedra, 2006, page 508).

That political culture has wider and deeper structures (Gainsborough, 2012). As we have argued in the paper, it is vital to see security/insecurity as complex and multiply determined by intersecting scales, histories, practices, and vernaculars.<sup>(16)</sup> Yet our maps and interpretations have quickly been superseded by events. Revisiting Phnom Penh’s security-scapes would now require us to examine contests over ‘Freedom/Democracy Park’ (*Tilean Pracheathippatay*) near the route of transect 2, that became a focus of protest and sometimes violent state responses. The gendering of security/insecurity, a relatively neglected<sup>(17)</sup> theme in our paper, is also dynamic and complex. In simple terms, however, ‘private’, ‘public’, and ‘hybrid’ security are invariably male, whereas many of those who have been striking are women from Phnom Penh’s garment factories.

Meanwhile, security narratives at planetary and regional levels reposition Cambodia geopolitically. Mertha (2014, page 19) recently characterized China’s relationship with Cambodia during the Khmer Rouge period as “complicated, awkward and challenging to conceptualize”. Complexity endures, with Beijing recently instructing the CPP to settle differences with the opposition, whilst remaining a key economic and political ally. A month after the election *The Economist* (2013) magazine pointed to other historical ironies. The USA had complained to Phnom Penh about voting irregularities, whilst enhancing dealings with Vietnam; where there are no competitive elections. The reason for the difference:

“lies in the fact that the Obama administration has chosen Vietnam as an ally in America’s security ‘pivot’ towards Asia . . . . It is admirably robust in standing up to America’s new rival, China . . . Cambodia, by contrast is China’s main ally in the region . . . . Realpolitik, much in vogue in the 1970s, is back.”

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<sup>(16)</sup> Although we have indicated Khmer terms for the forms of security examined in this paper, a fuller account of lexicon of security in Cambodia is beyond our scope. For pointers from elsewhere in the region, see: <http://asiapacific.anu.edu.au/blogs/languagesofsecurity/>

<sup>(17)</sup> Shepherd (2013, page 20) claims “that to construct any account of security politics and practices *without* paying attention to gender is to construct a very thin and partial account indeed.” We acknowledge these and other limits to our accounts of Cambodian security/insecurity, especially those “Khmer perceptions of moral order, including notions of the wild and the civil” documented by Zucker (2013, page 13) or what Work (2014, page 7) describes as the intersections of power and violence “amid disparate conceptions of order and truth.”

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