The Neoliberal 'Order' in Cambodia:
Political Violence, Democracy, and the Contestation of Public Space
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Abstract

Neoliberal economics have emerged in this post-Cold War era as the predominant ideological tenet applied to the development of the Third World. For many Third World countries, however, the promise that the market will bring emancipation from tyranny and increased standards of living has been an empty one. Instead, the free market has increased the gap between rich and poor and unleashed a firestorm of social ills. In Cambodia, the promotion of unfettered and intense marketisation is the foremost causal factor in the country's inability to consolidate democracy following a United Nations sponsored transition. Neoliberal policies further explain why authoritarianism remains the principal mode of governance among Cambodia's ruling elite, an inclination that is often elicited through the execution of state violence. In this paper, neoliberalism is conceived as effectively acting to suffocate an indigenous burgeoning of democratic politics in Cambodia. Such asphyxiation is brought to bear under the neoliberal rhetoric of 'order' and 'stability', which can be read through Cambodia's geography, and specifically through the production of the country's public space. The preoccupation with 'order' and 'stability' in Cambodia serves the interests of capital at the global level, and political elites at the level of the nation-state; however, Cambodians themselves fiercely contest these particular interests. This contestation is strongly evidenced in the burgeoning *geography of protest* that has emerged in Cambodian public spaces in the post-transition era. Recognition of the 'unmediated interaction' vision of public space many Cambodian's have championed allows a more 'radical' democracy to emerge, and hence a more just and equitable social order.

Introduction

Cambodia's transition to democracy marks an early example of the installation of the 'good governance' agenda in the Third World.[1] The furtherance of free market reforms, which Cambodia had been experimenting with in the late 1980s (Irvin 1993; St. John 1997; Um 1990), was a project simultaneous to the United Nations Transitional Authority in Cambodia's (UNTAC) peacekeeping efforts. Alongside a democratic constitution, a liberalised economy was a mandated outcome of what was at the time the largest United Nations (UN) operation in the organisation's history. Despite the fact that over a decade has now passed since UNTAC left Cambodia following the promulgation of a new constitution that marked the beginning of the country's new life as a democratic and free market state, conditions of repression, surveillance, intimidation, vote buying, and other behaviours commonly defined as 'undemocratic' continue as the prevalent modes of governance in Cambodia (see Human Rights Watch 2003a, 2003b; Peou 2000). The realities of Cambodian political life are far from democratic, open, fair, and just.

A common interpretation of the political turmoil in present day Cambodia is that the market has not penetrated deeply enough into the fabric of the Cambodian landscape (Ear 1997; St. John 1997; Kao Kim Horne 1998; Tith 1998) where only further infiltration and saturation will provide Cambodians with a means to political empowerment and deeper democracy (Hughes 2003b). To the contrary, this paper argues that unfettered and intense

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[1] The concept of 'governance', a mainstay of the current 'development discourse', inextricably links democracy with economic liberalism, and thus it follows that democracy will lead to 'good governance', rather than 'bad governance', only if the electorate chooses a government that adheres to a free market ideology (Abrahamsen 2000). This of course is an intrinsically undemocratic provision, in that it attempts to limit the range of political choice by predetermining the economic model, while preferences of the people are demoted to second-order importance. Rita Abrahamsen (2000: 56) further contends that the 'good governance' agenda serves to construct economic liberalism as a force for democracy, using this simple equation: "coercive power is perceived to reside exclusively in the state and public institutions, and any reduction in the size or reach of the state is therefore regarded as conducive to democratisation". In this way, the 'development discourse' continues unabated from its historical precedent of working to normalise the right of the First World to intervene, control, and reshape the practices and ways of life of the Third World (Abrahamsen 2000).

marketisation itself is the foremost causal factor in Cambodia's inability to consolidate democracy, and further explains why authoritarianism remains the principal mode of governance among Cambodia's ruling elite, an inclination that is often elicited through the execution of state violence. Neoliberalism is conceived as effectively acting to suffocate an indigenous burgeoning of democratic politics. Such asphyxiation is brought to bear under the neoliberal rhetoric of 'order' and 'stability', which can be read through Cambodia's geography, and specifically through the production of the country's public space. Furthermore, a geographic analysis of the neoliberal doctrine of 'order' and 'stability' reveals the 'good governance' agenda as mere pretence. Democracy is widely recognised as the only system of government to offer true legitimacy, and as such, neoliberals the world over pay lip-service to democracy in an effort to facilitate the complicity of national populations in allowing the market to reign supreme. While 'order' and 'stability' appear as worthwhile goals, we must ask why 'order' always seems to benefit the preservation of the status quo, and also in whose interest are our nations and cities being 'secured'? As Don Mitchell (2003b: 230, original emphasis) points out, "…the crusade to 'secure the city' is not new, and every attempt to reorder the city has served particular interests". The preoccupation with 'order' and 'stability' in Cambodia is viewed in this paper as serving the interests of capital at the global level, and political elites at the level of the nation-state. These 'particular interests' are fiercely contested by Cambodians themselves. This contestation is strongly evidenced in the burgeoning *geography of protest* that has emerged in Cambodian public spaces in the post-UNTAC years.

I begin this paper with a section that overviews the theoretical terrain of public space and violence. Here I emphasise that only an open and unmediated public space can provide

the opportunity for 'radical' democracy to emerge,[2] and thus public space is a highly contested domain where political actors of all stripes, both rich and poor, and the machinations of globalised capital continually stake their claims. Such contestation illustrates that a democratic space is never free from the risk of disorder, an observation that places democracy in conflict with the need for 'order' and 'stability' so that capital should flow smoothly. Public space, while having the potential of being truly democratic, is thus often also a space of violence, which is impelled and manifested both as *violence from above* and *violence from below*.[3] The following sections are empirical, and contextualise the geographical framework of public space and violence in the setting of post-transitional Cambodia.[4] I begin the empirical portion of this paper by situating Cambodia's recent geopolitical struggles, where I trace the country's movement from a proxy site of the Cold War to its emergence as a (neo)liberal democracy. I then offer an account of the Democracy Square movement following Cambodia's national elections in 1998, and consider the neoliberal response (both internally and externally) to this grassroots democratic uprising. In the following section, I consider the implications of Cambodia's democratic awakening by I

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[2] I resent having to use the descriptor of 'radical' for democracy, since democracy "is only shorthand for… an entity composed of two distinct elements: 1) freeing the people (liberalism) and 2) empowering the people (democracy)" (Sartori 1995: 102). All other forms of democracy add a third constituent to this basic equation and thus technically move away from the rudiments of the term in joining *demos* (the people) with *kratia* (power) (Lummis 1996). Regrettably it nonetheless remains necessary to affix a qualifying adjective given that as a political term, the word 'democracy' is mercilessly overworked, used to justify terror and compromise, revolution and mediocrity. I suggest *only* public space can engender democracy because if democracy is fundamentally about empowerment, how can we ignore issues of 'social justice', and if democracy also means the people, how can we ignore 'the public good'? The project of empowerment is ill fated without attention to social and economic justice as well as the public good; and putting power in the hands of the people necessarily entails their participation, which in turn requires a public space.

[3] *Violence from above* is often referred to as 'state violence', while *violence from above* is also known as 'political violence'. I have chosen to refer to violence as originating from 'above' and 'below', since all violence can be conceived of as having a political dimension.

[4] My interpretations weave together Cambodia-specific literature with empirical findings obtained from research conducted in Cambodia over seven months, from June to December, in 2004. These empirical findings are derived from three qualitative methodological tools: 1) participant observation; 2) a content analysis of newspaper articles pertaining to neoliberalism, violence, democracy and public space, collected from a local English-language newspaper, *The Cambodia Daily*, over a one year time period (from June 1, 2004 to June 1, 2005); and 3) in-depth interviews with thirty-two individuals covering a wide range of Cambodian political actors, cutting across political, generational, gender, urban/rural, and economic divides.

suggest that the population forced the RGC into the realisation that their overt control of public space could no longer be administered effectively without significant chance of upheaval. Next, I analyse the RGC's move to beatify its cities, a project launched soon after the quelling of the Democracy Square movement. The project of beautification marks the emergence more sophisticated measures of spatial control emerged where, along with a co-opting of America's rhetorical 'war on terror', it is used as a pretext to satisfy the donor community's concerns for 'order' and 'security', while simultaneously hardening the ruling Cambodian Peoples Party's (CPP) grip on power. In the following section I reflect on the anti-Thai riots of January 29, 2003, and consider how this event spawned a renewed overt crackdown on public space by the RGC, once again premised upon and framed within the neoliberal rhetoric of concerns with maintaining 'order' and 'stability'. I then situate this renewed crackdown in place with an analysis of the struggle for Hun Sen Park in Phnom Penh. In the final section, I draw some conclusions about the precarious relationship between violence, neoliberalism, and public space.

Public Space and Violence: Placing 'Order' and 'Stability' in the Neoliberal Context

French philosopher Henri Lefebvre (1991) draws a distinction between the visualisation and administration of space on the one hand, and its materialisation on the other. In Lefebvre's (1991) terms, public space that is controlled by government or other institutions, or whose use is regulated, is referred to as *representation of space*, whereas public space as it is actually accessed and used by various social groups is called *representational space*. This is an important distinction because it draws attention to the difference between the 'official' status of a space and the actual ability of various individuals and groups to use it (Arefi and Meyers 2003). Lefebvre's dichotomy hints at the underlying contestation of all public space insofar as recognising that space is "not merely an empty container waiting for

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something to happen, but *is both constructed by and the medium of social relations and processes*" (Cope 1996: 185, original emphasis). Thus, representation not only demands space, but also creates it.

Accordingly, public space can be conceived as the product of two competing ideologies (Mitchell 2003b). On the one hand, the 'ordered' view constitutes public space as the site of control, and is typically associated with authoritarian tradition where panopticism is used to maintain order and security. This vision is rivalled by the 'unmediated interaction' view, which conceptualises public space as the site where 'the voiceless' can materialise their claims and make their demands heard, as a medium for the contestation of power, and as the space in which identity is constructed, reified, and contested. In short, the 'unmediated interaction' view envisions public space as the crucible of democracy (Ruddick 1996). Thus, much like its counterpart in democracy, public space is a *process*, never a complete project, but is instead always in a constant state of flux between those who seek to deprive it and those who seek to expand it. While public space is never perfect and at times may be exclusionary, it nevertheless remains the only site where claims for inclusion can be made visible to potentially secure accommodation for excluded social groups (Atkinson 2003; Mitchell 2003b). Indeed, public spaces gain political importance when they are *taken* by marginalised groups, and restructured as *spaces for representation* (Mitchell 2003b). To demand inclusion in a space often means forcibly occupying the space of exclusion, an act that recognises that public space is *never* guaranteed, and by its very definition *must* be contested.

Representatives of mainstream institutions such as governments and international financial institutions (IFIs) such as the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Bank (WB) may challenge the collectively endowed values that citizens attach to public space and espouse the 'ordered' view because they seek to shape public space in a way that limits the

threat of democratic social power to dominant social and economic interests (Fraser 1990; Harvey 1992, 2001). Although they never achieve total political control over this space in the Foucauldian sense (see Foucault 1979), they may attempt to regulate public space by keeping it relatively free of passion (Duncan 1996). To remove the passion from public space, corporate state planners attempt to create spaces based on a desire for security more than interaction and for entertainment more than democratic politics (Crawford 1992; Goss 1996; Zukin 1995).[5] In this light, the struggle for democracy is inseparable from public space, as it is not *what* is said that is at stake, but rather *where* it is said. Public protest is easily silenced when the important gathering places in a city have all become highly policed public space, or its corollary, private property (Mitchell 2003a, 2003b).

Public space is ideally, in the 'unmediated interaction' view, a medium that allows for *embodied* self-representation. Thus, when public space is deprived, individuals cannot 'situate' their self-representation in the existential realm. Consequently, contestation is impermissible and self-representation becomes (almost) *disembodied* in form. When the pendulum sways too far in the direction of the 'deprivers', that is, the 'ordered' view, the resulting deprivation of public space has two apparent consequences: 1) the erosion of individual volition resulting in a submissive population, presumably the desired effect by those who seek to undermine public space; or 2) the materialisation of violent outbursts against those who oppress public space, which represents a rebellion against an oppressive dominant-subordinate relationship (Davies 1972), and is the undesired effect of the 'ordered' view. Violence becomes the only practicable form of public self-representation, and in this sense can be an invigorating and liberating process for those who participate (Ardent 1958).

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[5] The processes of increased surveillance, commodification, and 'private' usage have become known in the literature as the 'Disneyfication' of space (see Boyer 1992; Cybriwsky 1999; Davis 1992; Jackson 1998; Sorkin 1992; Stormann 2000).

Often it is only by being violent that excluded groups have gained access to the public spaces of democracy and acquired what Henri Lefebvre (1996) refers to as 'the right to the city' (Hewitt 1993; Honderich 1980; McCann 1999; Mitchell 1996b, 2003b). This is the paradox of democracy, because without competition and conflict, there cannot be a democratic polity. Any society that sanctions political conflict, however, runs the risk of it becoming too intense, producing a conflict-ridden society where civil peace and political stability are jeopardised (Diamond 1993; Mitchell 1996b, 2003b). Indeed, the classic passage by Thomas Jefferson which states "the tree of liberty must be refreshed from time to time with the blood of patriots and tyrants" (quoted in Le Vine 2001: 261), suggests that violence is imperative to democratic renewal. This quote also hints at the heroic side of violence, where despite arguments from those who seek to protect the status quo in the name of 'order' and 'stability', *violence from below* may generate reallocations of wealth and open paths to political empowerment (Apter 1997; Hewitt 1993; Honderich 1980; Iadicola and Shupe 2003; Mitchell 2003b).

Furthermore, we must remember that what constitutes 'violence' (much like 'crime') is often defined 'from above' (McIlwaine 1999). That is to say, violence is defined as legitimate or illegitimate as it relates to whether it furthers or threatens the social order of a society. Consequently, the exclusion of *violence from below* in public space has often been simply the exclusion of those who are *a priori* defined as illegitimate and thus threatening to the existing order (Mitchell 2003b). Moreover, the 'existing order', increasingly means the economic order, as there is "a growing corporate stamp on the monopoly on violence" (Atkinson 2003: 1834), which was formerly the hallmark of the nation-state (Hirsch and Perry 1973). The corollary of the corporatization of violence is neoliberalism. Accordingly it is the victims of capitalism (i.e. the poor), and the 'propertyless' (i.e. homeless people),

who are recast as both the transgressors of public space and as dangerous perpetrators of violence (see Davis 1992; Mitchell 1997b, 2003b).

The 'unmediated interaction' vision of public space, a view that understands a *collective* 'right to the city' is increasingly threatened everywhere that neoliberal ideology has planted its seeds (Mitchell 2003b). Amid such widespread privatisation (of space and otherwise), spending cuts, and globalisation, all of which are concomitant to IFI promotion of structural adjustment programs (SAPs), "violence has become… an attempt by embattled nation-states to regain their footing" (Ungar 2002: 49). Meaning *violence from above* is the result of a state that has been weakened by following the neoliberal doctrine and 'rolling' itself back. States that lack capacity exacerbate the social circumstances that underscore conflict, namely they perpetuate inequality, and ultimately resort to repression to protect their power and maintain control (Welsh 2002).

When democracies break down they usually do so when citizens become accustomed to resorting to violence to get what they want (Le Vine 2001). Preventative measures used to realise the 'ordered' view of public space, such as the prohibition of assembly may reduce the frequency and scale of demonstrations in the short term, but they ultimately alienate the population and spawn more violence as they increase the likelihood of clashes between police and activists on an extended timeline (Hewitt 1993; Tilly 2003). This is precisely why Warner (2002: 70) maintains, "any distortion or blockage in access to a public [space] can be so grave, leading people to feel powerless and frustrated". Therefore, as Feierabend and Feierabend (1973) have argued, violence begets more violence, which counteracts the ultimate goal of a non-violent society. Recognition and acceptance of *democracy as public space*, that is the 'unmediated interaction' view of public space, offers the only tenable solution to

this vicious cycle. Unfortunately, as this paper will illustrate, *democracy as public space* is a vision that neoliberalism is unwilling and indeed incapable of accommodating.

Cambodia's Geopolitical Struggles: From Cold War Proxy to the 'Washington Consensus':

The small Southeast Asian country of Cambodia has suffered tremendously in recent years. During the latter part of the twentieth century, Cambodia was host to nearly three decades of civil war, which was marked most significantly by three appalling atrocities. First, a merciless bombing campaign led by the United States (US) that left an estimated 600,000 dead after neutral Cambodia became a napalm inferno as the Vietnam War spilled across its borders (Herman 1997; Kiljunen 1984). Second, an auto-genocide at the hands of the Pol Pot regime, where in a population of seven million at the time, approximately one and a half million people died as a result of overexertion, malnutrition, and execution (Banister and Johnson 1993; Chandler 1996; Heuveline 2001; Kiernan 1996). And third, there was a decade of silence on behalf of the international community following the tragedy of the Khmer Rouge era. This inexcusable abandonment is attributable to America's embarrassment with their loss in Vietnam, as it was Vietnamese communist forces that had brought down the Khmer Rouge regime and continued to govern Cambodia as a client state throughout the 1980s (Chandler 1991, 1996; Kiernan 1996).[6] Accordingly, with Cold War geopolitics continuing to command the foreign policy agendas of First World governments, Cambodia became an instrument of Vietnam's punishment, and the Cambodian holocaust was all but ignored. As the Iron Curtain fell in 1989 the global political climate shifted, and

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[6] Washington compelled the UN to withhold development aid and impose an embargo that barred Cambodia from all international agreements on trade and communications (Pilger 1998; Roberts 1997, 2001). To this date, Cambodia retains the shameful distinction of being the only country in the world to have been denied development aid by the UN. As for the sanctions, they were absolute; not even Cuba or the Soviet Union were treated in such severe a manner (Pilger 1997).

thus the Cambodian question that had been allowed to fester for a decade could finally be answered. Democracy came to Cambodia in 1991 under a United Nations (UN) sponsored transition that was intended to provide a final solution to the country's ongoing civil war.

These unfolding of events in Cambodia took place during a time of monumental change at the global level. The Cold War, a war that Cambodia by way of proxy was all too familiar with, ended following the collapse of the Soviet Union, which itself was precipitated by a massive upheaval of global economics during the 1970s. Between 1973 and 1979 world oil prices rose dramatically sending the First World into a severe economic recession, while the Third World fell into a 'debt crisis' that would give rise to a condition of aid dependency that continues to this day. This unprecedented disruption of the world economy marked the beginning of an economic paradigm shift, as profound disillusionment with the record of state involvement in social and economic life swept over the First World, leading to an unsophisticated and naïve belief that the most efficient economic regulator would be to 'leave things to the market' (Rapley 2002; Simon 2002). The involvement of the state in the economy was deemed overly bureaucratic and thus an inefficient and unnecessary drain on public coffers. Hence, it was conceived that taxes should be reduced significantly by restricting the role of the state to regulate and facilitate the economy, and by selling off public enterprises and state owned corporations. This is the essence of neoliberalism, or what has been identified by Economist John Williamson (1990) as the 'Washington Consensus', an economic ideology that is fundamentalist in its execution, and seeks to deregulate markets as much as possible to promote 'free' trade.[7]

The emerging neoliberal doctrine quickly became the economic orthodoxy in the First World and was exported to the Third World via measures to address the debt crisis in

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[7] Neoliberalism traces its roots back to the neoclassical economics of Adam Smith and David Ricardo – hence neo (new) liberalism (Simon 2002).

the form of development aid, primarily though the auspices of the IMF and the WB. 'Market fundamentalism', as George Soros (1998) calls neoliberal economics, predicts that free market forces will lead to a prosperous future for the Third World, where all of the world's peoples will come to live in a unified and harmonious global village. While the globalisation of the economy is not a new experience for the Third World, and has deep historical roots in both Southeast Asia and Cambodia, the intensification of this process is new. Economic globalisation has heightened over the last 25 years under the programmes of the WB and the IMF. These structural adjustment programmes (SAPs) have facilitated the spread of a neoliberal, global, economic system dominated by multinational corporations and the governments of the First World, and enforced by the World Trade Organization (WTO). Geographer Barry Riddell (2003: 659) warns that this intensified process of economic globalisation in the Third World is "especially disturbing to many citizens and most states because there has been a marked decline in their ability to control, plan, and regulate the commanding heights, or revenue generating sectors, of their economies". The reality of a constricted ability to control economics has very often also translated into a contemporaneous condition of declining local control over social and political conditions. In short, what this has meant for Cambodia's political economy is that through processes of neoliberal reform, authoritarianism rather than democracy has been consolidated in the post-transition era.

Indeed, peace and democracy remain relative terms in post-transition Cambodia, as politically motivated killings are frequent during election times and often go unpunished. Political violence disgraced both the UN-sponsored national elections of 1993 (see Boutros-Ghali 1995; Brown and Zasloff 1995; Doyle 1997; Findlay 1995; Heder and Ledgerwood 1996; Um 1994), and the locally administered parliamentary elections of 1998 (see Bjornlund

and Course 1998; Downie 2000; Grainger 1998a; Hughes 1999, 2001d, 2002a, 2002b; Human Rights Watch 1998a; Neou and Gallup 1999; Sanderson and Maley 1998). Pervasive impunity is "a cancer at the heart of national life" (Amnesty International 1997: np), where the assassination attempt on opposition leader Sam Rainsy during a demonstration against judicial bias in Phnom Penh's Democracy Square on March 17, 1997, offers a flagrant example.[8] Although significant evidence exists to suggest that top CPP officials including Prime Minister Hun Sen himself were behind the attack, it is fittingly ironic given the focus of the protest Sam Rainsy led that fateful day, that no one has ever been arrested in connection with the incident (Shawcross 2000). Partisan fighting also continues to mar the Cambodian landscape, the most obvious incident being the bloody CPP-lead coup of July 1997. This effectively terminated the power sharing arrangement agreed to following the 1993 elections when the CPP, still in control of the military following a decade of rule as Hanoi-backed clients, refused to accept the electoral victory of Prince Ranariddh and his FUNCINPEC party.[9] Although the coalition government was officially continued, Hun Sen essentially handpicked Ranariddh's replacement, Ung Huot, who amounted to little more than a puppet (Peou 2000).[10] Nevertheless, most multilateral and bilateral donors refused to label the violent clash of July 1997 a coup, and their response was largely indifferent to the impact this event had on Cambodian democracy, as they were far more concerned with 'order' and 'stability'.

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[8] Democracy Square was given its moniker by Sam Rainsy following this bloody attack that claimed the lives of 16 protesters and seriously injured over 100 others (Hughes 2002a; Lao Mong Hay 1998b; Sanderson and Maley 1998).

[9] FUNCINPEC is a French acronym for National United Front for an Independent, Neutral, Peaceful, and Co-operative Cambodia.

[10] The legitimacy of Ung Huot can and can be viewed as an illegitimate replacement on the basis of three points: 1) his recent dismissal from FUNCINPEC by Ranariddh, who had the right to do so as party president under Provision 36 of party by-laws; 2) those party members who voted for Ung Huot lacked a quorum and thus the authority to nominate him; and 3) Ung Huot's nomination was not endorsed in an absolute majority, which required 17 members (Peou 2000).

Prior to the coup, donors had emphasised their support was contingent upon Cambodia's continued path toward political democracy. However, as Peou (2000: 379) points out, "a close reading of what the international community basically wanted did not contribute to further democratization. They required that Cambodia be stable. … Political stability for economic development was their top concern". In contrast to the 1993-1995 period when donors attached few conditionalities to their aid, the year 1996 marked the beginning of donor demands, primarily directed at the promotion of stability, a demand that may have "encouraged Hun Sen to justify his coup against Ranariddh" (Peou 2000: 385). Thus, while aid was reduced following the coup from the amount of US$475 million, pledged at the Consultative Group Meeting (CGM) just days before the coup on July 1-2, to US$375.4 million (Peou 1998a, 2000), the reduction was temporally insignificant as 'stability' was soon restored with Hun Sen at the helm.[11] Moreover, as early as late July during an ASEAN Regional Forum meeting, Secretary of State Madeleine Albright said Washington was already prepared to wipe the slate clean for Hun Sen (Peou 2000). The CPP was only required to denounce the use of force, and to allow Ranariddh to return to Cambodia and participate in the elections scheduled for 1998.

As for multilateral donors, the IMF did not have to get involved in responding to the incident, as it had been withholding Cambodia's SAPs since May 1996 due to its displeasure with the scandalous deforestation taking place as a 'shadow state' response to its prescribed forestry concession model (Le Billon 2000, 2002; Talbott 1998).[12] While the WB did

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[11] It should also be noted that the amount of aid actually dispersed to a recipient country rarely equals the amount pledged by donors. John Marston (2002) cites the Cambodian Development Resource Institute who suggest that Cambodia typically receives approximately 60 percent of the amount pledged each year. In this regard, 1997 may be viewed as a good year for Cambodia's aid market, as the actual disbursement figure nears 79 percent of the total pledged amount.

[12] The phrase 'shadow state' comes from William Reno (1995), which he uses to refer to the system through which leaders are drawing authority from their abilities to informally control markets and material rewards. Rather than oppose the dominant paradigm of neoliberal reform, Third World governments assimilate IFI

temporarily suspend aid to Cambodia in 1997, this seemed to be an act of solidarity with the IMF rather than disapproval of the July military confrontation, as the announcement was not made until September 23, 1997. The WB's announcement was prepared in conjunction with the IMF, who at that same time publicised that they were suspending further assistance to Cambodia, not because of the mockery that was made of democracy in July, but as a result of the RGC's "inability to meet its economic conditions" (Tith 1998: 119). Thus, "The negative responses of major donors to the coup in 1997 were not credible, and even legitimized Hun Sen's violent ascendancy in the end" (Peou 2000: 390).[13]

The insignificant reduction in aid and lukewarm response to the coup is not surprising if we consider the fact that observers like Tony Kevin (2000a, 2000b) and David Roberts (2001, 2002a) view the July upheaval as marking a transition from violence to politics, one that will supposedly bring about increased 'stability' as Hun Sen was able to consolidate his hegemonic position. Meanwhile, the trampling of democratic norms, while publicly described as regrettable, are given implicit support as long as such subversions run parallel to the project of 'stability' and 'order'. Speaking of the Cambodian context, Peang-Meth (1997: 290-291) comments on this very issue:

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interests and then reshape them into instruments of power. The 'shadow state' response allows elites to amass extraordinary amounts of wealth that are pocketed rather than put back into developing the country, as this money is obtained through unofficial channels (Reno 1995). Such practices also allow systems of clientelism and patronage to continue. Thus the neoliberal axiom which asserts, "if individuals are left to pursue their narrow self interests, society as a whole benefits" (Rapley 2002: 52), is clearly erroneous. See Le Billon (2002) for a detailed analysis of how elites have accomplished this 'shadow state' reshaping in the Cambodian context via forest exploitation and the instrumentalisation of disorder and violence, primarily through patronage networks, as a mode of control for accessing forests.

[13] China did not try to hide its favouritism of Hun Sen, saying it would not interfere with the "will of the Cambodian people" (Peou 2000: 395), a position also held by France, which made it known that it viewed Hun Sen as the only guarantor of stability (Bjornlund and Course 1998; Lizée 2000). Japan, the largest bilateral donor to Cambodia, vowed to maintain its assistance plan, and justified this position by contending that Hun Sen had promised to preserve the country's democratic institutions and coalition government (Bjornlund and Course 1998; Lizée 2000). The neoliberal pragmatism of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) was also evident. The group considered the CPP's use of force 'unfortunate' and Cambodia's admission into ASEAN was delayed 'until a later date' (Hughes 2002b; Peou 1998b), but at the same time, the principle of non-interference in the internal affairs of other states was reaffirmed and ASEAN investors continued to move in to Cambodia (Peou 2000).

"In today's international arena, non-Western states have continued to embrace stability and order as a first priority, but the West, notably the United States, which has preached individual rights, freedom and democracy, has declined to intervene in conflicts where order has been preserved at the expense of human rights and freedom. The United States has, by inference, sanctioned an international norm of conduct that prizes stability and preservation of the status quo when these would be threatened by aggressive advocacy and individual rights and freedom".[14]

Instead of coming from democratic consolidation, which is a long-term project for which the juggernaut of global capitalism is not prepared to wait, such 'stability' came in the form of Hun Sen consolidating his grip on power. Thus, while Cambodia's transition to democracy lay in shambles by the end of 1997, the transition to free market economics was in fine form as the neoliberal agenda was preserved.

Taking Space for Representation: The Democracy Square Movement and the Neoliberal Response

International donors negotiated the return of Prince Ranariddh on March 30, 1998, after nine months in exile, and Cambodia's political leaders agreed to hold parliamentary elections again in July of 1998 (Neou and Gallup 1999; Peou 1998a). The donor community had focused their foreign-policy responses to the 1997 coup on the need for the 1998 elections to be 'free and fair' (Sanderson and Maley 1998); however, Ranariddh's presence did little to improve the prospects of such conditions for the election. Although the 1998 elections saw fewer people killed than in the 1993 election, the campaign was nonetheless once again marred by coercion, intimidation, and CPP domination of the media (see Downie 2000; Hughes 1999, 2001d, 2002a, 2002b 2003b; Human Rights Watch 1998a; Peou 2000; Sanderson and Maley 1998). While this campaign of terror undoubtedly facilitated a CPP electoral victory, the post-election period saw something truly remarkable occur. In a strong

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[14] The rhetorical meaning of democracy in US foreign policy is corroborated by David Harvey (2003: 59) who argues, "…whenever there was a conflict between democracy, on the one hand, and order and stability built upon propertied interests, on the other, the US always opted for the later. The US therefore moved from a position of patron of national liberation movements to oppressor of any populist movement that sought even a mildly non-capitalist (let alone a socialist or communist) path to the improvement of economic well-being".

showing of solidarity, and taking quite literally Article 35 of the constitution, which states, "Khmer citizens of either sex shall have the right to participate actively in the political, economic, social, and cultural life of the nation" (Jennar 1995: 13), people from all over Cambodia converged in Phnom Penh following the announcement of the election results, taking to the capital's streets *en masse*. Cambodians began gathering by the thousands in Democracy Square on August 24, 1998, to protest the results of the election (Eckardt and Chea Sotheacheath 1998; Hughes 2001d, 2003b; Peou 1999, 2000).

Denying the 'from below' spirit of the movement, the opposition parties claimed responsibility for the demonstrations that followed and many Cambodia watchers and foreign diplomats uncritically accepted this claim (Grainger and Chaumeau 1998). Cambodia observer Caroline Hughes (2003b), who was on hand during the demonstrations and conducted numerous interviews with participants, paints a different picture, suggesting it is more likely that this was a spontaneous uprising. Hughes (2003b) suggests that many of the demonstrators were refugees from the provinces who fled following rumours of retaliation against those who failed to vote for the CPP. The urban protest environment provided a sense of empowerment and solidarity, as the security provided by the gaze of the international community and media was preferable to the panoptic conditions of the rural village where individuals were required to keep their views secret if they valued their physical and economic wellbeing. Moreover, according to Hughes (2003b) many protesters were not only expressing dissatisfaction with the election results, but also came to express their dismay with the social and economic marginalisation they faced in their day to day existence. This finding places Willner's (1972: 353) assertion that public protests are often "manifest expressions of deeper, broader, latent dissatisfactions" in the Cambodian context, where the 'latent dissatisfactions' expressed by participants were derived from the 'sacrifices' made for

development under the prescriptions of the neoliberal order, that is, the grinding poverty and socioeconomic insecurity of their daily lives. In this context, Democracy Square became a liberatory space in which those normally subjected to the panoptic surveillance of the village could situate their embodiment by actively *taking* the spaces of the capital for public unmediated use. To use Rappa's (2002: 44) words, Phnom Penh became an "accessible site of self-discovery, self-exposure, and self-flagellation" for the rural Cambodian.

The protests that began on Aug 24, 1998, lasted a total of three weeks, as demonstrators erected a tent city across from the National Assembly in Democracy Square (Hughes 2002b, 2003b; Human Rights Watch 1998b). The demonstrations took a violent turn on September 7, 1998, when Hun Sen found a pretext to move against the demonstrations following a grenade explosion near his home in Phnom Penh (Human Rights Watch 1998b; Moorthy and Samreth Sopha 1998). He called for the arrest of opposition leaders, and hundreds of riot police moved in, destroyed the encampment, and drove the protesters out of the park. Although *violence from below* was minimal, *violence from above* was apparent as the crowds were broken up by police and army personnel who resorted to using rifle butts and clubs to beat protesters into submission, which resulted in one civilian death (Hughes 2003b; Peou 2000; Phnom Penh Post 1998). When this failed to clear out the park, the police returned two days later on September 9, 1998, this time using electric cattle prods, gunfire, and a bulldozer (Peou 2000; Phnom Penh Post 1998). Two monks were killed in the protesters' skirmishes with police, which provoked a public outcry (Chea Sotheacheath and Eckardt 1998; Pok Sokundara and Beth Moorthy 1998). Hun Sen quickly moved to forbid monks from taking part in protests, and then banned demonstrations altogether. Many Cambodians defied the ban, and the following day about 8,000 people again took to the streets to participate in a march led by a large group of monks (Chea

Sotheacheath and Eckardt 1998; Hughes 2003b). Responding to the spectre of *violence from above*, some of the protesters reacted with the threat of *violence from below* as several marchers were armed with bamboo sticks, stones, and even guns (Peou 2000). Thus, the totalitarian armour of Cambodia's 'deprivers' of public space was starting to crack as their control over the public domain had become too intense. This dominance resulted not in the continued submissiveness of the population, but from the perspective of those in power, the undesired effect of violent outbursts 'from below' against the oppression of a exploitative social order.

The government crackdown continued and eventually the protests subsided, although the political deadlock persisted. In all, 26 lives were lost during the crackdown, and in the days following another 18 bodies were discovered lying in irrigation ditches, ponds, and rivers around Phnom Penh (Bou Saroeun 1998; Peou 2000). Finally, on November 25 1998 Ranariddh struck a deal with Hun Sen to form a new coalition government (Hayes 1998), while the opposition Sam Rainsy Party (SRP) was excluded from the deal (Peou 2000).

The manifestation of *violence from above* and near anarchism that swelled in the post-election period can be viewed as consequential to a lack of what Taylor calls (1991: 167) "independence of action", a situation that becomes acutely manifest during election periods in Cambodia given the predominance of voter intimidation. As Taylor (1991: 167) suggests, such lack of freedom results from *violence from above* creating a virtual absence of public space, which "enable[s] and facilitate[s] the expression of extremes of violence [from below]". In this sense, the mobilisation of the populace and the occasional manifestation of *violence from below* were insurrectionary acts against those in power. Cambodians were actively rediscovering that true power stems from themselves by *taking* public spaces and contesting the RGC's visualisations and administrations of these spaces by remaking them as *spaces for*

representation. The RGC's use of *violence from above* and the crackdown on the demonstrations, while successful in the immediate sense, can only have alienated large segments of the population. Accordingly, this suggests a crisis of legitimacy for the RGC, who as a state weakened by neoliberal prescriptions, cannot adequately address the demands of citizens to improve their living standards. This is why Hughes (2003b) found that so many of the demonstrators she interviewed expressed other 'latent dissatisfactions'. Constrained by market fundamentalism, the violent response of the RGC is akin to a caged animal, where 'showing teeth' so to speak is but a last ditch effort to save itself and maintain its authority. 'Strong' states have appropriate capacity and can legitimise themselves without recourse to violence by listening to and addressing citizens' demands, that is, through the practice of democracy (Welsh 2002). In contrast, the RGC, as a 'weak' state that lacks the capacity to meet the needs of the populace, predictably takes an authoritarian stance and resorts to violence to "regain [its] footing" when citizens begin to make their demands known in the spaces of the public (Ungar 2002: 49), a pattern that continues into the present as seen in *The Cambodia Daily* headlines presented in Table 1, where *violence from above* is a persistent feature of the RGC's attempt to govern the nation.[15] Therefore, from the perspective of a 'weak' government seeking to retain power, the attempt to create and enforce an 'orderly' public space takes precedence over the allowance of *democracy as public space*. In democratic public spaces, penetrating and scathing criticisms will inevitably arise to an extent unseen in accountable democratic regimes, and eventually such dissent will overthrow a 'weak'

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[15] *The Cambodia Daily* was chosen in this study in favour of other newspapers as it represents the only local daily English-language newspaper in Cambodia. The only other English-language newspaper available in the country, the *Phnom Penh Post*, is available on a bi-weekly basis. *The Cambodia Daily* was seen as more appropriate for this research inasmuch as it has a strong focus on political, economic, and social issues. In contrast, the *Phnom Penh Post* places a great deal of emphasis on editorial and entertainment pieces.

government as the neoliberal straightjacket it wears precludes its ability to actually respond to such criticism without recourse to violence.

Table 1: Symptoms of A Weak State: Violence From Above	
"Rights Group Reports Rise in Political Slayings"	18/06/2004
"Union Leader Found Gagged, Unconscious"	25/06/2004
"Groups Say Police Beat Protesting Villagers"	10/08/2004
"Villagers Demand Justice After Violent Clash"	11/08/2004
"Police Accused of Violence at Poipet Eviction"	15/09/2004
"Police Use Force to Prevent Demonstration"	20/09/2004
"Garment Workers Report Death Threats"	08/10/2004
"Kratie Burns 100 Squatter Homes on Forest Preserve"	29/11/2004
"Minister Condemns Stripping, Beating of Striking Policemen"	02/12/2004
"70 S'ville Land Dispute Participants Missing"	03/12/2004
"Timber Protesters Accuse Police of Intimidation"	15/12/2004
"Gunmen Fire at House of Opposition Activist"	17/12/2004
"Factory Protest Broken Up by Tear Gas, Force"	23/02/2005
"Police Disperse Protest with Rifles, Batons"	25/02/2005
"Police Kill 5 Poipet Protesters"	22/03/2005
"Sam Rainsy Activist Beaten to Death"	04/04/2005
"Soldiers Disperse Factory Strike With Gunfire"	06/04/2005
"2 Women Injured in Police Dispersal of Strike"	22/04/2005
	Source: Compiled from The Cambodia Daily.

In spite of the massive resistance that followed the 1998 election, a movement that reflected a burgeoning of democratic empowerment 'from below', the international community was quick to declare the elections 'free and fair' so that it could return to *business as usual* with the Phnom Penh government. This position represents an affront to the will of the Cambodian people, clearly illustrating the willingness of donors to lend support to an unpopular[16] and authoritarian-style leader in the name of 'order' and 'stability' (read business

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[16] Any claim that the CPP is 'popular' should immediately be dismissed as fanciful and unfounded. For example, David Roberts (2001: 187) strains his credibility when he alleges, "The external perception of the CPP and Hun Sen was that they were unpopular. This is clearly at odds with the vote outcome". In contrast to the assertion that "The dominant CPP won a majority of the votes" (Roberts 2001: 183), the reality was the CPP had not won a majority, rather it won only 42.4 percent. Furthermore, the findings of a Canadian assessment

interests and capital) in favour of the potential for true democratic awakening. Indeed, to some, the donor community's espousal of democracy now appeared as little more than a bold-faced lie:

> "…some people, some in the international community just come to pay the money in Cambodia, to do business, and play with the prostitutes, so I don't have any confidence in them. And also, one more reason is that in 1998, the election in 1998, when the whole people, a lot of Cambodian people [were] doing the demonstration about the election results in Phnom Penh city, but the international community still recognize and support the election results. … I also want the international country stop betray[ing] the Cambodia people because I think that some, some donor country was, when they donate the aid to Cambodia, I think some countries also have their own interests".[17]

Secured Hegemony or Forced Retreat? Demonstrations, Denial, and Democratic Awakening

Between 1999 and 2002, the RGC led by Hun Sen began to ease up on its overt domination of Cambodian public space, as authorities repeatedly turned a blind eye to most demonstrations held during these years (Hughes 2003b). This 'retreat' from public space coincided with the modified public persona of Hun Sen, who no longer portrayed himself as the strongman of Cambodia (Osborne 2000). While this may appear to suggest that the CPP was beginning to conform to international pressure to respect the country's constitutional freedoms of expression and assembly, given their position of aid dependency (Osborne 2000), the reality of this response is much different.[18] Peou's (2000) analysis provides one alternative interpretation, as he suggests that this development is better explained in terms of the CPP's renewed confidence following their 1998 election victory. The new coalition government was very much a one sided affair, as the FUNCINPEC was an internally divided party due to both its near break up in the wake of the 1997 coup, and the poor leadership

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mission to Cambodia, dispatched prior to the 1998 elections, indicated that that Hun Sen's lack of popularity was very apparent (Bosley, Owen and Armstrong 1997), a position the subsequent protests clearly corroborate.
[17] Interview, Small Business Owner, Male, Age 47, Sept. 23, 2004, Phnom Penh.
[18] In the first instance, we can recognise that the international pressure to conform to democratic norms was hardly acute, as I have illustrated above in the discussion of donor responses to the 1997 coup.

skills of Prince Ranariddh (Hughes 2003b; Peou 2000; Roberts 2001). The nuisance of the Khmer Rouge had also evaporated following the defection of several high-ranking soldiers in 1997 and 1998 (Hughes 2003b; Peou 2000), and the insurgents disintegrated altogether following the death of Pol Pot in April 1998 (Sainsbury 1998). This meant the hegemony of the CPP was relatively stable. With elections not set to occur again until 2003, public opinion and particularly demonstrations appeared, at least outwardly, to be of little consequence to the dominant party. Peou's (2000) theory of secured hegemony is supported by a report issued by the International Crisis Group (2000), that observes a marked decline in violence directed towards opposition members in 1999. The International Crisis Group (2000: 15) also warned, however, that,

> "…this should not lead observers to conclude the government or the CPP has qualitatively changed its ways. Rather, the reverse is true: with one party clearly in charge of the country – and in possession of most of the weapons – few are willing to mount challenges".

While overt violence against opposition elements may have decreased, the notion that few are willing to mount challenges is demonstrably erroneous.

Indeed, there has been a significant increase in the number of public protests in Phnom Penh since the 1998 election. In reference to the emergent trend of social mobilisation in the public spaces of the capital, Hughes (2003b: 183) comments that, "…the upsurge in protest over the past few years appears to be linked to the perception, on the part of a range of discontented groups in the city, that a space for public expression has emerged". Indeed, it would seem that through the threat of *violence from below*, or at least what 'from above' has been *a priori* defined as illegitimate and threatening, put the RGC back on its heels and forced the government into the realisation that it could no longer continue with such an overt strategy of spatial control. For the time being, in what was clearly a profound

victory for the ongoing *process* of democracy, Lefebvre's notion of the 'right to the city' had been won.

The lapse of overt CPP control over public space was, from the standpoint of absolute control, tactically risky. As the increasing frequency of demonstrations and protests in Phnom Penh following the 1998 elections suggest, this relaxation by the CPP allowed the democratic awakening fostered by the Democracy Square movement to grow considerably in the hearts and minds of Cambodians. Thus, although the Democracy Square movement may be viewed as unsuccessful in that authorities eventually dispersed it, the emerging protest trend is in fact indicative of the movement's success. Cambodians have clearly learned a number of valuable lessons from this movement. Most importantly, the public spectacle of this massive showing of solidarity allowed Cambodians to *take* the space necessary to rediscover themselves as both individuals and as an empowered collective. Thus, with this shared rediscovery of self that the Democracy Square movement inspired, Cambodians have begun to recognise that they themselves are the true source of power in their society:

> "I think [demonstrations] are a good way for Cambodia and especially for Cambodian democracy because it can help people to, to speak their voice up, to speak their ideas, yet before they don't have these kind of rights to say about what they want, what they [are] feeling, but right now [during demonstrations], we can say so that is good".[19]

> "Yeah, [when] the people discuss [with] each other or gather in the public space, it means they can speak about their ideas. It means, sometimes they can give advice to the government, and sometimes the government can tell about the problems that they have… it means we can show the experience of the people to the government, and the government to the people. So I think its very good for demonstrations to get, ah, to make a meeting at the public spaces and to [make] the gathering or to discuss about politics in the public spaces".[20]

> "It is very important for democracy [for people to be able to protest in public space] because the democracy means they need the many idea of the people, and [when people demonstrate]

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[19] Interview, Garment Factory Worker, Female, Age 24, Sept. 18, 2004, Phnom Penh.
[20] Interview, Monk, Male, Age 27, Nov. 3, 2004, Pursat Province, conducted in English.

they think about the people as bigger than the government… and because the people can say everything, can speak altogether no problem".[21]

"Ah, in my point of view, I think that demonstrations in Cambodia, we have a clear law which states about this. As well as in our constitution, we say that our country is a democracy and a multi-party system. So, in terms of this I think that people in Cambodia have the rights to speak or to demand or protest something that they feel is not good for them. …if the people see that the government convicted something wrong and people say and tell them that it is wrong [then the government should listen]. But the government did not listen and the government did not follow the people. So, one thing that [is] left for the people such as me, is [the ability to] demonstrate, so I decided to join many demonstrations".[22]

The CPP's response to this democratic awakening has been to deny its existence. The RGC has publicly tried to ignore demonstrations to the best of its ability, retreating from view when encountered by protesters and denying their calls for government accountability by simply not responding to demonstrators or their demands (Hughes 2003b).

Beautification and the War on Terror: Covert (Re)Productions of Space and Pretext as the CPP's New Modes of Control

The new public positioning of the RGC belies a covert strategy to reproduce Phnom Penh's public spaces, visually, administratively, and materially. The envisioned (re)production of space involves the expulsion of 'unruly' elements of the population from the city altogether, and the replacement of unregulated squatter areas with both monuments to CPP power (Hughes 2003a, 2003b), and symbols of capitalist wealth such as modern office, apartment, and shopping complexes (Berthiaume and Nhem Chea Bunly 2005). Accordingly, as *The Cambodia Daily* newspaper headlines presented in Table 2 illustrate, forced evictions, although contested, have become common features of the collective lived experience of the Cambodian poor. CPP municipal governor Chea Sophara, who in 2000 launched a beautification plan for the city, has spearheaded Phnom Penh's transformation (Hughes 2003a; Sodhy 2004). Sophara has suggested that the replacement of squatter

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[21] Interview, High School Teacher, Male, Age 25, Nov. 6, 2004, Pursat Province.
[22] Interview, Small Business Owner, Male, Age 47, Sept. 23, 2004, Phnom Penh.

settlements with "parks full of flowers" will represent a "symbol of peace, brotherhood, love, harmony, inhostility [sic], no violence and none of the harm that has created insecurity and turmoil in Cambodia for three decades" (quoted in Hughes 2003b: 208). He also comments that squatter areas "are difficult to control and get access to. The area is like a barrier preventing fresh air from blowing into the city, instead of a foul stink", and they "badly damage the beauty and well-managed social order of the capital" (quoted in Hughes 2003b: 208-209).

Table 2: Forced Evictions	
"Squatters Try to Fend Off Relocation"	10/06/2004
"PM Orders Eviction of Angkor Wat Squatters"	02/07/2004
"Villagers Would Rather Die Than Give Up Land"	30/07/2004
"Apsara Authority Moves to Evict Hundreds of Squatters"	11/08/2004
"People Evicted from Floating Community"	19/08/2004
"Police Bulldoze Homes to Enforce Court Order"	01/09/2004
"300 Villagers Protest Bulldozing of Property"	02/09/2004
"Evicted Families Reject Compensation"	06/09/2004
"Hun Sen: Angkor Squatters Will Be Relocated"	10/11/2004
"Villagers Facing Eviction Appeal to Annan"	08/03/2005
"Police Bulldoze Tents of Evicted S'ville Families"	14/03/2005
"200 Protest Evictions In Banteay Meanchey"	26/03/2005
"Families Facing Eviction Told Development Requires Sacrifices"	02/04/2005
"Poipet Casino Orders 218 Families to Move"	12/04/2005
"Complaint Filed Against Koh Pich Residents"	11/05/2005
"Villagers' Homes Razed While at Land Protest"	25/05/2005
Source: Compiled from The Cambodia Daily.	

Pamela Sodhy (2004: 170), an apparent champion of the neoliberal 'ordered' vision of public space, has a favourable view of the beautification scheme calling Chea Sophara "a force for modernity in Cambodia". Indeed, Sodhy is absolutely correct in this assertion insofar as the beautification scheme cuts to the heart of modernisation theory itself. Chea Sophara's visualisation and administration of space is representative of a colonial inspired

attitude of seeking to recreate so-called 'backward' people into 'properly' behaved citizens, which is nothing short of an erosion of the ability of the poor to define and take care of their own lives.[23] Beautification is a 'top down' approach to further the neoliberal agenda done in the name of comfort, safety, and profit, where "political activity is replaced in spaces like the mall, festival marketplace, or redesigned park… by a highly commodified spectacle designed to sell either goods or the city as a whole" (Mitchell 2003b: 138-139, see also Boyer 1992, Crawford 1992; Goss 1996, Zukin 1995). Thus, far from being concerned with the corporeal wellbeing of the citizenry, the beautification of Phnom Penh is little more than a sales pitch to would-be investors.

The rapid urbanisation that resulted in the numerous squatter settlements found around Phnom Penh's perimeter represent one of the many undesired effects of free market economics, and the CPP response to this problem should not be read as a manifestation of a supposed 'cultural' proclivity for authoritarianism (see Peang-Meth 1991; Heder 1995; Roberts 2001). Rather, it has everything to do with towing the neoliberal line. The relationship between the RGC's authoritarian behaviour and the neoliberal concern with 'order' is clearly illustrated by the periodic roundup and exile of the homeless from the capital, Phnom Penh (Botumroath Lebun 2004; Kuch Naren and Solana Pyne 2004a), as well as the tourist mecca of Siem Reap, home to Angkor Wat (Thet Sambath 2004). Although denied by authorities, homeless people, and particularly orphaned children, are regularly gathered up by the military and shipped by truck out to the provinces, where they are dumped and told not to return to the city (Botumroath Lebun 2004; Kuch Naren and Solana

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[23] For an overview of the history and application of modernisation theory, see Escobar 1995, Leys 1996, and Rist 1997. Briefly, modernisation theory is premised on paternalism, where so-called 'backward' peoples, who are conceived as having no agency, must be taken care of by the West. Under the trusteeship of the West, which comes largely in the form of foreign aid, the 'backward' peoples will modernise to become like 'us', and thus development and democracy will follow, as 'they' are re-created in 'our' image.

Pyne 2004a). The RGC's roundup practice has become an ongoing routine, as most of those disposed of eventually make their way back to Phnom Penh, which indicates that the poor are willing to mount challenges against the authorities' visualisations, materialisations and attempted administrations of city spaces, and in doing so they are demanding their 'right to the city'. Of course, this resistance does not go unnoticed by the RGC, and the criminalisation of the poor is increasingly seen in Cambodia, where street people often complain of being arbitrarily arrested and beaten by police for loitering (Reynolds and Yun Samean 2004). The homeless have no private space to call their own, no sanctuary to return to at the end of the day, and accordingly *violence from above* has become yet one more of the many injustices that street people must negotiate as they go about their daily lives.

The contestation of public space between those who have been relegated to a life of abject poverty by way of their state's adherence to a market ideology that 'squeezes' the poor right out of the system, and the manifestation of authoritarian government responses concomitant to such neoliberal preoccupation can be seen in *The Cambodia Daily* newspaper headlines collected in Table 3. The government's unspoken policy of dealing with the homeless was also very evident both during and in the days leading up to the recent weeklong Inter-Parliamentarian ASEAN summit held in Phnom Penh from September 12 to 19, 2004. Along with banishing the homeless from capital's streets, the RGC maintained tight control of the city's public space by enforcing a strict social order during the day of the meeting by forcing the removal of all visible signs of informal economic activity, such as street-stall fruit vendors and impromptu roadside gas stations.[24] Presumably, the RGC took these measures to project to ASEAN delegates an image of Cambodia as a 'modern' and 'ordered' society, and hence an economically vigorous one. At the same time, the car bomb

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[24] Participant Observation, September 13 – September 16, 2004, Phnom Penh.

attack on the Australian Embassy in Jakarta just days earlier on September 9, 2004, conveniently served as an ideal pretext for removing the marginalised from public space, as the RGC could cite 'security precautions' to effectively silence those critical of the government's 'ordered' approach (Lor Chandara 2004).

TABLE 3: The Battle of Homelessness and Poverty	
"Authorities Round Up, Detox Street Children"	10/07/2004
"NGOs Chastise City for Mass Arrest of Addicts"	12/07/2004
"Street Children Shipped to Banteay Meanchey"	13/07/2004
"Detentions are Common, Street Children Say"	15/07/2004
"Spiriting Away The Homeless"	07/08/2004
"Arrested Development: Villagers Leave Prime Minister's Development Zone to Beg in the Capital, Citing Chronic Hunger"	28/08/2004
"Hungry Farmers Stage March Through City"	10/09/2004
"Police Remove Beggars from Siem Reap Streets"	20/09/2004
"Villagers Stage Protest Outside WFP Office"	05/10/2004
"200 Famished Families Journey to City to Beg"	05/11/2004
"Rights Groups Protest Illegal Round-Ups of City Homeless"	22/11/2004
"Gov't says Begging Villagers Should Go Home"	29/11/2004
"Hungry Villagers Travel to Capital Despite Ban"	10/12/2004
Source: Compiled from The Cambodia Daily.	

Indeed, the RGC's tendency to suggest a concern with security as both a rationale and excuse for its own authoritarian behaviours has become commonplace in recent years. Kheang Un and Judy Ledgerwood (2002: 102) warn that there is "widespread concern that the government is using the global fear of terrorism, in the aftermath of the attacks on the United States, as a pretext to silence opposition parties". This became particularly manifest in 2000, when the CPP accused members of the SRP and FUNCINPEC of belonging to the Cambodian Freedom Fighters (CFF), an insurgent group led by Khmer-Americans based out of California (Marston 2002; Sodhy 2004). The group has vowed to take down the Hun Sen government and as the year 2000 came to an end, Cambodia witnessed a rare showing

of marked *violence from below* when the heavily armed CFF attacked government buildings in Phnom Penh (Hughes 2001a; Langran 2001; Marston 2002; Sodhy 2004).

Although labelled as terrorists by the RGC, the CFF maintains they are a legitimate group with 500 members in California and 50,000 supporters in Cambodia (Sodhy 2004). Many Cambodians are unconvinced of the group's legitimacy, but far from siding with the government, they believe the CPP staged the CFF attack to smoke out opposition to Hun Sen, as many FUNCINPEC and SRP members have been implicated in and arrested for the attacks (Marston 2002). Irene V. Langran (2001: 156) suggests that, "while the insurgency was quickly subdued, it served as a reminder of the recent and fragile nature of Cambodia's democracy". If the CFF is in fact a legitimate opposition group and not a CPP ruse, the counterpoint to Langran could also be argued. From this perspective, the attack could be viewed as evidence of democracy's functioning, since the paradox of democracy identified by Le Vine (2001) demonstrates that *violence from below* is an inherent component of the democratic practice, and often necessary for democratic renewal. Nevertheless, the fact that the guise of terrorism can now be extended at will by the CPP to include any political movement that may challenge their authority has profoundly detrimental implications for Cambodian public space.[25] Such use of subterfuge is a blatant attempt to restrict Mitchell's (1995: 115) notion of public space as "an unconstrained space within which political movements can organize and expand into wider arenas". As if the RGC's calls for an 'orderly' and 'stable' public space were not justified enough in the eyes of neoliberal donors, since "Without order [and stability], the argument goes, liberty is simply impossible. And that order must be explicitly geographic: it centers on the control of the streets and the

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[25] In recent months, the RGC has once again played the 'security' card, likening their silencing and imprisonment of those public figures that have been critical of the signing of a border resolution with Vietnam to the United State's passing of the Patriot Act following 9/11 (see Lor Chandara and Wasson 2005).

question of just *who* has *the right to the city*" (Mitchell 2003b: 17), even some cynics within the international donor community would now be prone to accepting such claims in the post-9/11 world. Hence, 'order' and 'stability' conceived as such, represent unquestionable threats to the democratic ideal of public space.

Undermining the Public Trust: The Anti-Thai Riots and the RGC's Renewed Crackdown on Demonstrations

The CPP's overt control of public space returned in 2003, as the year began with mob chaos in the streets of Phnom Penh. The violence erupted on January 29, 2003, when rumours began to circulate that Suwanan Khongying, a Thai actress who was also popular in Cambodia, had allegedly claimed on Thai radio that Angkor Wat rightfully belonged to the Thai people and should be repatriated to Thailand (ADHOC 2004; Albritton 2004; Phnom Penh Post 2003; Tin Maung Maung Than 2004). Some Cambodians responded to the claim by launching a public protest in front of the Thai Embassy, which ended with the embassy burned to the ground, and the subsequent looting of several Thai-owned businesses located in the capital (Albritton 2004; Post Penh Post 2003; Tin Maung Maung Than 2004).[26] While law enforcement was conspicuously absent for hours as the protest raged in front of the Thai Embassy (Tin Maung Maung Than 2004), the government response since has been to crackdown on virtually every protest or demonstration in the name of 'order' and 'stability' (ADHOC 2004). For the first time ever, the Ministry of Interior, the ministry responsible for granting licenses to hold public demonstrations, recently responded publicly to its ban on virtually all public demonstrations over the last two years. In a letter dated April 8, 2005, Interior spokesperson, Khieu Sopheak, responded directly to criticisms by union leaders and

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[26] The violence that erupted in Phnom Penh can only be understood in terms of the profound meaning of Angkor Wat to modern Cambodian identity, and the centuries of conflict Cambodians have faced from hostile neighbours and foreign aggressions since the decline of the Angkorean era, that is, through Cambodia's *geography of vulnerability* (see Chandler 1996, 1998a, 1998b)

human rights groups that the RGC has refused to grant permits for all demonstrations held since the anti-Thai riots and has used violence against those that do arise:

> "Organisers did not fill out forms or abide by the Law in Demonstrations, and some demonstrations did not notify the authorities or authorities could not give permission. … Participants always caused serious impacts to security and public order, which create opportunity for gangs, and other offenders to steal, snatch or commit other acts which cause damage to public and private property" (quoted in Pin Sisovann 2005: np).

Kieu Sopheak continued by blasting human rights workers and the critical reports they have written in response to the government ban stating, "[They] earn for their boss only, not for the interests of the Cambodian people. Their job is to criticize… if they do not write such reports their work would be finished" (quoted in Pin Sisovann 2005: np).

The RGC's response appears to be little more than a pretext to strip people of their constitutional rights, most prominently freedom of assembly, via the denial of access to public space. Indeed, if "The Cambodian people are the masters of their own country" and "All powers belong to the people", as Article 51 of the Cambodian constitution suggests (Jennar 1995: 16), then the RGC's banning of public protests, an activity that manifests people's empowerment, is emphatically a denial of such rights. Moreover, there is some evidence that the anti-Thai riots may have been fomented by CPP elements to serve as a pretext for the RGC's renewed crackdown on public space. The rumours concerning Suwanan Khongying's supposed accusations, which have never been substantiated, first surfaced in the pro-CPP newspaper *Rasmei Angkor* (Light of Angkor) on January 18, 2003 (Albritton 2004; Tin Maung Maung Than 2004). Hun Sen appears to have inflamed the incident by declaring the Thai movie star to be "not even worth a clump of grass at Angkor Wat" during the inauguration of a new school in Kompong Cham province just two days before the riot in Phnom Penh erupted (Tin Maung Maung Than 2004: 82). Finally, the Pagoda Boys, a pro-CPP group consisting of former monks who are often used to

'counterattack' public demonstrations, were identified by a confidential US State Department report as the leaders of the January 29 anti-Thai riots (Vong Sokheng 2003a). Speculation aside, the clampdown on public space is undeniable and has been tenacious. Table 4, which contains headlines collected from *The Cambodia Daily* over the last year, illustrates a protracted campaign by the RGC to deny freedom of assembly, and subvert the potential for the emergence of *spaces for representation*. Many Cambodians I interviewed expressed disdain for both the government and the armed forces for stopping demonstrations:

"For me I feel very painful and angry to the police and the armed forces who, who do something that only serve their leader. They are not afraid to fight or kill the demonstrators. They're not serving the people, they're serving their leader, their group leader".[27]

"I think they are wrong, they should not do like this [stop demonstrations] because their duty is to prevent people from committing any bad thing… their duty is [to provide] security to demonstrators… if they disperse demonstrators, that may lead to violence, some people may get killed, some people may get angry...".[28]

"I think about this and get very angry at the police that disperse the demonstrators… I am very angry at them, at the police, [and the] army that stop and disperse the demonstrators because the people, they want to get something to go down [like the gas prices, and] to have the democracy, so when the police stop like this, [it's] not good, it's very unfair".[29]

"Its not suitable for the police to come to disperse, to hit, [and] to break up the demonstrations and protests. Difficult, because when the people to do like this, they need to complain to solve the problem, [so they] make the demonstration. Its not good for the police come to disperse, or stop, or break up the demonstration".[30]

"I feel angry at the police because the police hit the people, some people they don't know anything [about their rights], so the police they hit, [and] use violence against the people. It's the police duty to protect the people or don't use violence [against] the people, only protect the people and allow the people to do the demonstration".[31]

"I am worried that when they [are] doing the demonstrations, and the policeman and the security they come to do, to use political violence on the demonstrators, and for me, I want the policemen to help the demonstrators instead of using political violence toward the demonstrator".[32]

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[27] Interview, Market Stall Owner, Female, Age 29, Sept. 20, 2004, Phnom Penh.
[28] Interview, Monk, Male, Age 33, Sept. 28, 2004, Phnom Penh.
[29] Interview, Vegetable Seller, Female, Age 30, Nov. 3, 2004, Pursat Province.
[30] Interview, Market Stall Owner, Female, Age 49, Nov. 7, 2004, Pursat Province.
[31] Interview, Nurse, Female, Age 38, Nov. 8, 2004, Pursat Province.
[32] Interview, Cook, Female, Age 33, Sept. 17, 2004, Phnom Penh.

These sentiments indicate that among Cambodians, there is a fierce desire for *democracy as public space*, and unwillingness to accept the rhetoric of the 'ordered' view of public space.

TABLE 4: Freedom of Assembly under Fire	
"Police Stop Peaceful Gas Price Protest"	02/06/2004
"Students to Sue Governor for Stopping Protest"	03/06/2004
"Khmer Front Party Questioned About Protest"	18/06/2004
"Protesters Defy Ban, Deliver Royal Petition"	23/06/2004
"Police Stall Gas Protest by Detaining Leader"	05/08/2004
"Groups Say Police Beat Protesting Villagers"	10/08/2004
"NGO Leader Plans Protest Despite Police Presence"	19/08/2004
"Two Men Arrested While Protesting Fuel Price"	21/08/2004
"Student Protest Forced Inside"	17/09/2004
"New Police Tactics Seen as Threat to Protesters"	21/09/2004
"Officials Go Too Far, Violate Right of Peaceful Assembly"	22/09/2004
"Police Crack Down on Gas Protesters"	04/10/2004
"Law Curtailing Public Demonstrations Upheld"	02/12/2004
"Top Monk Bans NGO Meetings in Pagodas"	17/02/2005
"Police Detain, Release Peaceful Protesters"	19/02/2005
"Police Break Up Opposition Meeting"	16/03/2005
"Gov't Boots Opposition From Restaurant"	28/03/2005
"City Denies Student Group Permission to Stage Rally"	06/09/2005
"Police Put Wraps on Student Demonstrators"	08/09/2005
Source: Compiled from The Cambodia Daily.	

Between 'Space for Representation' and 'Representation of Space': The Struggle for Hun Sen Park

With this renewed crackdown on demonstrations came an intensification of Chea Sophara's beautification plan. This was immediately evident when I arrived back in Phnom Penh for the first time in two years in June of 2004 to begin fieldwork for this research. A number of changes had occurred to 'beautify' the city, most noticeably a general cleaning up of the recreational waterfront area where the Bassac, Tonle Sap, and Mekong Rivers meet, and the beginning stages of the 'revitalisation' of Hun Sen Park, which is located next to

Independence Monument (*witmien-ie-kariac*) in central Phnom Penh. Over the course of the next several months, I watched as Hun Sen Park was transformed from an empty and unmanaged field where the homeless often gathered, to a symbol of urban wealth frequented by Cambodia's middle and upper class. Grass, shrubs, and trees were planted throughout the grounds, and an elaborate brick and stone walkway was laid down around the perimeter of the new park. While this appeared to be a positive development, as people began using the park for all sorts of recreational activities, the unrestricted usage of this space soon became highly regulated. It was not long before signs, along with armed police officers, were stationed in the park instructing visitors on its 'proper' usage, such as not walking on the grass, sitting only on benches, and not riding bicycles on the pathways (see Figure 1). On one occasion, I watched as a police officer told an elderly homeless couple that they were not welcome in the park, and needed to leave immediately.[33] One human rights worker I interviewed was acutely aware of the CPP's covert strategy to transform this *representational space* from a potential *space for representation* to a *representation of space:*

> "If they [the CPP] want to allow the people to demonstrate they should let the place [Hun Sen Park] be free… but they don't… there should not be a garden in that place. … Before there was no garden, so the people can be free [to demonstrate]. Now there are plenty of gardens with grass and flowers, so it is difficult for people to gather".[34]

FIGURE 1: Appropriate or Appropriated Usage of Public Space?

Indeed, like nearby Democracy Square, Hun Sen Park has become a heavily contested space, whereby the

004, Phnom Penh.
Male, Age 60, Sept. 28, 2004, Phnom Penh, conducted in English.

beautification of this park is symbolic of the RGC's desire to impose an 'ordered' view of Phnom Penh's public space, leaving the contending vision of 'unmediated interaction' as unwelcome in the spaces of the park. The RGC's (re)production of space in Hun Sen Park is not as absolute as the park's moniker would suggest however, as many have resisted this 'garden scheme' by holding demonstrations in the park in direct defiance to the government's visualisation and attempted administration of this space. On the morning of September 19, 2004, I visited Hun Sen Park following an announcement in *The Cambodia Daily*, a few days earlier that a demonstration against the high price of gasoline would be taking place near Independence Monument (see Yun Samean 2004a). When I arrived at 8:00am, approximately 20 demonstrators sat and stood quietly in the park holding signs. A few military police officers were already on the scene when I arrived, although at this point they had not yet taken any action, other than issuing orders through a loudspeaker for the protesters to leave. A very small crowd had assembled to watch from across the street, but traffic remained undisturbed at this point. About two minutes after I arrived, one police officer began confiscating the signs from protesters. The protesters did not resist the officer who took their signs, but they did stand their ground and refused to leave the park. At approximately 8:10am, a truck with several more army personnel arrived followed closely by another truck carrying about 50 plainclothes police officers. The use of plainclothes officers became increasingly common in 2004, and is used as a tactic to avoid the unwanted publicity that has arisen in relation to heightened police violence (Yun Samean 2004c). The arrival of the extra soldiers and police was announced by flashing lights and sirens, which caused the crowd of onlookers to grow considerably larger, and traffic stopped at this point. This force of about 75 police proceeded to push, punch, and kick the protesters, while several of the

soldiers who were armed with batons, freely wielded these weapons against the demonstrators, which included two visibly pregnant women.[35]

Officials vehemently refute such accounts. Ouch Sokhon, deputy police chief of Chamkar Mon district, denied that police used force to halt the protest in Hun Sen Park, and claimed that those who were seen beating the protesters were not plainclothes police but ordinary citizens who did not want the demonstrations to occur. He further said police merely detained the protesters to "educate" them not to hold any demonstrations because "They provoked disorder in the city, they think only of their interests" (quoted in Yun Samean 2004d: 13). Although evidently false in this instance, the claim that demonstrations cause disorder is a consistent refrain from the RGC. The only apparent 'disorder' was the disruption of traffic, which would not have occurred had the police not interfered with the demonstration. Moreover, the RGC's defence of breaking up demonstrations in an effort to secure 'order' and 'stability' in the city unmistakably falls in line with the neoliberal vision, echoing the denial of protester rights in other world cities such as Quebec, Seattle, Cancun and Genoa. Although some of the Cambodians I interviewed had internalised the idea that stopping demonstrations was necessary to avoid violence, most recognised that the violence related to public protest in Cambodia had a 'top down' trajectory:

> "For me, I think that political [violence] is, for example, the high ranking officials do something bad to the poor people that do something, that commit the right thing [like demonstrating], and the political violence is usually com[ing] from the high officials, high ranking officials towards the poor people, uneducated people".[36]

> "I think if they stop the demonstration, sometimes they have the violence, like a fight, fighting or sometimes shoot[ing]… I don't like this… and if we [are] just [allowed to] talk [we] won't have violence, I think its better that way. I hear all the time when [people] have demonstrations, [that they] usually have violence. Because usually the demonstrations are violent, but usually [it is] the police [that cause the violence], because the police have the guns or sticks, so they use violence [against] the demonstrators. … The police make

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[35] Participant Observation, September 19, 2004, Phnom Penh.
[36] Interview, Cook, Female, Age 33, Sept. 17, 2004, Phnom Penh.

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violence about it. The demonstrations just say about something, just talk about something but they don't want to have the violence by the police".[37]

"Political violence, I think, they… they have victim and perpetrator. So in [most] cases of incident… the perpetrator belong to the government official and the victim[s] [are] ordinary people, or political supporter… something like this. I call political violence".[38]

"I think it [violence comes] from the above, and… I think its from the people who commit the bad thing, the dictator, from the dictator to the democratic people. For me I think it [violence] happens through the police of the dictator, and it sometimes leads to killing. And one more thing is, which is very popular in a lot of case, happens through secret thing that they committed secretly, which they cannot show who is who. Yeah they conspire something that no… to kill, no one know who [did the] kill[ing], or who is behind this killing".[39]

As protests in Democracy Square have increasingly come under siege by authorities, demonstrators have often shifted the location of their resistance, where increasingly Hun Sen Park has become the space of choice. The RGC has adopted a similar strategy, and in response to the growing associations of place at Democracy Square, a proposal was recently launched to move the National Assembly away from this heavily contested space (Hughes 2003b). Although lacking the same awareness, or 'a-where-ness', [40] as Democracy Square in Cambodian's collective *geography of identity,* Hun Sen Park is still an ideal location for protest, as it too has a spatial orientation rich with symbolic allusions to power. Hun Sen Park is about one kilometre south of Democracy Square in central Phnom Penh, bordering Independence Monument to the west, and Hun Sen's house, Wat Botum-Vadei, and the

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[37] Interview, Khmer Language Teacher, Female, Age 25, Sept. 12, 2004, Phnom Penh, conducted in English.
[38] Interview, Human Rights Worker, Male, Age 60, Sept. 28, 2004, Phnom Penh, conducted in English.
[39] Interview, Market Stall Owner, Female, Age 29, Sept. 20, 2004, Phnom Penh.
[40] I borrow the term 'a-where-ness' from Brian Osborne (2001: 39) who suggests an awareness, or 'a-where-ness', of national identity is nurtured through mnemonic devices such as "landscapes and inscapes, myths and memories, monuments and commemorations, quotidian practices and public ritual", which when 'placed' in context form a geography of identity. The 'a-where-ness' of Democracy Square to Cambodia's geography of identity is accurately conveyed by Caroline Hughes (2003b: 197): "The park is bordered to the north by the Royal Palace, offering both continuity with traditional petitions to the king for assistance by the poor and oppressed and the shadow of the king's protection to demonstrators. To the east, it faces the National Assembly Building, the repository of representative democracy. To the west, it is bordered by Wat Botum-Vadei, one of the foremost pagodas in the capital. To the south, the park faces the Hun Sen gardens, containing the Cambodian-Vietnamese friendship monument – symbolic of the origins and continuation of CPP power. A broad lawn in the middle of these four buildings, which represent different branches of power in Cambodian state and society, Democracy Square represents an important symbolic space".

Cambodian-Vietnamese friendship monument to the north. The significance of the spatial proximity to power was demonstrated by the recent self-immolation of a Buddhist monk in an area of the park located directly in front of Hun Sen's residence, which although unsubstantiated suggests the suicide was an act of resistance directed at Cambodia's leader (Berthiaume, Phann Ana, Prack Chan Thul, Saing Soenthrith, Kuch Naren and Shaw 2004). The RGC's attempt to dismantle Phnom Penh's protest geography by the proposed movement of the National Assembly has been pre-empted by the new *geography of resistance* emerging in Hun Sen Park, as the location for the new parliament buildings ironically border the park to the southeast (Hughes 2003a).[41]

Conclusion

This analysis of Cambodian public space has exposed the rhetoric of 'order' and 'stability', commonly presumed as worthwhile and honorific goals that serve the interest of the populace, as in fact subversive to the interests of democracy. On the one hand, donors insist on 'order' and 'stability' to maintain a viable market economy. On the other hand, when states have been weakened by donor imposed reforms such as SAPs, 'order' and 'stability' can only achieved through *violence from above*, as the state has been 'rolled back' from the workings of the economy, so that it can no longer respond to the demands of the citizenry in meaningful, and non-violent ways. The neoliberal promotion of an 'ordered' vision of public space, most overtly via the privatisation of space, takes precedence over the

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[41] Participant Observation, December 19, 2004, Phnom Penh. The new National Assembly buildings were still under construction on the last day I spent in Cambodia during the research visit for this study.

method used to enforce 'order', and this explains why authoritarian governments, as long as they adhere to free market economics, are so complacently accepted by the neoliberal agenda.

Empowering the people themselves entails the simultaneous disempowerment of those who currently occupy a privileged position in society, and as such powerful elites will try to impede any movement towards a 'from below' vision of democracy and development, a view that is captured and made possible through the 'unmediated interaction' conception of public space. Such obstruction efforts apply equally to indigenous and extraneous elites. Those from within the country have an obvious and direct stake in wanting to maintain their hegemony, while those from outside are interested in preserving a political and socioeconomic hierarchy at the national level, as power for the few rather than for all represents the best way to avoid any interference with the market. Indeed, the only way a capitalist free market system can successfully operate is through a hierarchical socioeconomic and political system, since notions of egalitarianism that form the basis of 'radical' democracy stand diametrically opposed to the competitiveness of capitalism.

Public space, or at least the view that envisions it as the very site of democracy, is thus the antithesis of the neoliberal order, and it is for this reason that neoliberal reforms are so concerned with privatisation schemes. Public property, services, and goods, and more generally public space itself, are beyond the penetration and scope of the market, and only by privatising them can they become 'ordered' and subjected to the control of market forces. This also explains why the RGC's crackdown on public space, which this paper has shown to be a predominant feature throughout the transitional period, has not received the ire and scorn of bilateral and multilateral donors. The donor community, firmly entrenched in the market fundamentalist camp as they are, view the authoritarian action taken by Hun Sen and the ruling CPP as conducive to maintaining their own interests, although this of course

remains unspoken and hidden behind the rhetoric of both 'good governance' and the need for 'order' and 'stability'.

While protest is at times accompanied by *violence from below*, as those who champion the 'ordered' view of public space are quick to point out, this is certainly not always or necessarily the case. When the state shows a clear and defiant position of not listening to the demands of the people it is meant to represent, or is unable to respond to such demands, that is, it exhibits all the telltale characteristics of a state weakened by neoliberal reforms, then *violence from below* is certain to erupt as the frustrations of the general populace will assuredly boil over. The resultant contestation represents a move toward the collective empowerment of the people themselves, through which they will together seek to carve out and establish new kinds of 'stability' and 'order', built not on the fears of the rich, "but on the needs of the poorest and most marginalized residents" (Mitchell 2003b: 9). It is this conception of 'order' and 'stability' that this paper has shown the Cambodian people to be deeply committed to, and it is this vision that they will continue to struggle toward as their own *democracy as public space*:

> "Even though every time when we do the demonstration we are hit, [the RGC] crackdown, and we are killed by the army… our people still do the demonstration. That is our hope, that in the future we will win, we will get our demands".[42]

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[42] Interview, Small Business Owner, Male, Age 47, Sept. 23, 2004, Phnom Penh.

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