



Ethnographic Journal of Urban Phnom Penh

A study of urban anthropology of Phnom Penh city

Department of Sustainable Urban Planning and Development, Royal University of Phnom Penh.



ETHNOGRAPHIC JOURNAL *of*
URBAN PHNOM PENH



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ETHNOGRAPHIC JOURNAL *of* URBAN PHNOM PENH

DEPARTMENT *of*
SUSTAINABLE URBAN PLANNING
and DEVELOPMENT

A study of Urban Anthropology in Phnom Penh city.



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We thank Dr. Mira Kakonen, from the university of Helsinki and Australian National University for her eagerness to read through our editorial note. His Excellency So Vanna from the Ministry of Land Management, Urban Planning and Construction (MLMUPC), for his time to read through some selected articles written by the students.

Finally, we wish to thank our staff, volunteer students, faculty members, and senior administrators from the university, in particular Prof. CHET Chealy, rector of Royal University of Phnom Penh for his support.

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FOREWORD

Professor CHET Chealy

Rector of Royal University of Phnom Penh

Ms. Meloney C. LINDBERG

Country Representative, The Asia Foundation, Cambodia



Prof. CHET Chealy

Phnom Penh's Path Toward Sustainable Urban Future

Cities are living testaments to human aspiration—shaped by the choices we make, the communities we nurture, and the responsibilities we carry toward future generations. As the pressures of climate change, urban growth, and social inequality intensify, the need for thoughtful, sustainable urban development has never been more pressing. At this pivotal moment, the perspectives of young scholars offer not only fresh ideas, but also hope grounded in sincerity, insight, and lived experience.

This volume presents a collection of student works that reflect both academic rigor and a genuine commitment to the well-being of their communities. Through their research, designs, and analyses, these students explore pathways toward cities that are more resilient, inclusive, and environmentally conscious. Their contributions demonstrate not only technical understanding, but also empathy—an essential quality for those who seek to shape human environments with care and responsibility.

The development of this ethnographic compilation has been made possible through the invaluable support of the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) through the Asia Foundation's Ponlok Chomnes: Data and Dialogues for Development in Cambodia program. DFAT's dedication to strengthening regional collaboration and advancing sustainable development has provided students with opportunities to engage meaningfully with complex urban challenges. I wish to extend my

sincere thanks to Ms. Meloney C. Lindberg, country representative, and Mr. Men Pechet, program manager from the Asia Foundation for their commitment to cultivating research and promoting a culture of dialogue within universities. I also extend my sincere appreciation to scholars of Royal University of Phnom Penh (RUPP), whose commitment to academic excellence and student empowerment continues to foster an environment where young minds can explore, question, and innovate.

What distinguishes the works in this book is the sense of purpose that underlies them. Many of the ideas presented here draw from personal observations, community encounters, and the everyday realities of urban life. These students write not from abstraction, but from genuine concern for the people and places that shape their identity. Their work reminds us that sustainable urban development is not solely a scientific or technical pursuit—it is a deeply human endeavor that requires understanding, reflection, and empathy.

It is our hope that this collection serves not only as a record of student achievement, but also as an invitation—to scholars, practitioners, policymakers, and community members—to engage in ongoing conversations about creating cities that are equitable, adaptable, and sustainably designed. The insights offered here reflect a generation ready to contribute thoughtfully to the future of urban development.

Professor **CHET Chealy**

Rector of Royal University of Phnom Penh



The Asia Foundation

I would like to share how deeply inspiring it is to see this collection of ethnographic journals come to life. These writings by students of the Department of Sustainable Urban Planning and Development at the Royal University of Phnom Penh capture something profoundly important, the art of seeing and listening closely to the everyday lives of people in our communities.

Each journal entry reminds us that research is not only about data or theories, but about curiosity, empathy, and connection. Through their observations, the students have shown how Phnom Penh's streets, markets, classrooms, and households hold stories that reveal both the beauty and the complexity of social change in Cambodia. These voices, authentic, diverse, and grounded in lived experience, are what make research meaningful and relevant.

At The Asia Foundation, we believe that lasting progress begins with local voices and ideas. Through the Ponlok Chomnes: Data and Dialogue for Development in Cambodia program funded by the Australian Government, we work to create spaces where Cambodian researchers, policymakers, and communities can come together to exchange evidence and dialogue. An important part of this effort focuses on supporting the next generation

of Cambodian thinkers, university students, young scholars, and emerging leaders, who will shape the country's future knowledge landscape.

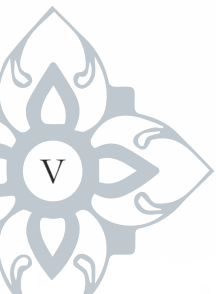
The Ponlok Chomnes program is pleased to fund this important initiative. We applaud the Royal University of Phnom Penh for this outstanding work, especially Dr. Try THUON, Zhiyi WANG and Sethik RATH who led the initiative with dedication and vision, and Professor CHET Chealy, Rector of Royal University of Phnom Penh, for his leadership and commitment to creating an enabling environment for research and learning.

Through scholarships, mentorship, research fellowships, and networks like SheThinks, Ponlok Chomnes encourages young people to build confidence as researchers, communicators, and change-makers. The enthusiasm and insight reflected in these student journals are exactly what inspires our work every day.

May this journal encourage many more young Cambodians to ask questions, to document their surroundings, and to see research as a way of contributing to a more inclusive, evidence-informed society.

Ms. Meloney C. LINDBERG

Country Representative, The Asia Foundation, Cambodia



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EDITORIAL NOTE

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Editorial Note

Urbanization has been an unstoppable global trend for the last several decades, but how it works varies across different locations. In Cambodia, urbanization is most evident in the capital city, Phnom Penh. Other provincial capitals and towns are also experiencing rapid urbanization and development. The Phnom Penh Urban Journal is an intellectual product of a collective initiative of urban anthropological research on Phnom Penh. In the first volume, our dedicated authors-undergraduate students from the Department of Sustainable Urban Planning and Development (DSUPD) at Royal University of Phnom Penh – portray the city with their local eyes. After receiving training in urban theories and ethnographic methods during a workshop on anthropology of cities, the students conduct fieldwork to document the urban landscape and everyday practices of the urban residents. Accompanied by discussion and analysis, this journal aims to provide ethnographic records of contemporary Phnom Penh and serve as a source of insight for future urban development and urban policymaking in Phnom Penh and Cambodia.

The journal entries are organized into five fundamental urban themes: Business, Housing and Built Environment, Infrastructure and the Environment, Social Space, and Traffic and Mobility. Following a line of urban scholarship that conceives the urban as an ongoing process shaped by the interplay of

multiple factors instead of a fixed form (Lefebvre 2003[1970], Massey 1994, Harvey 2001, Simone 2004, Brenner 2014), we acknowledge that these themes are not always clearly demarcated. Some contributions naturally overlap across categories including the emerging green urbanism (Beatley, 2000) and biophilic design concepts (McDonald & Beatley, 2021). Nevertheless, this classification serves to guide our authors and readers in focusing on specific phenomena as observed in different areas of Phnom Penh.

In the first section, Business, the authors map out the various forms of commerce that permeate urban Phnom Penh, traditional and modern, informal, and formal. They explore the selling practices of street vendors, shopkeepers, and sales assistants. As well as their interactions with the customers in diverse commercial spaces, ranging from traditional markets to modern shops and malls. Attention is given to accessibility, affordability, and the application of new technologies to evaluate the effectiveness of these economic activities. Beyond the business practices themselves, the authors also demonstrate how these enterprises are embedded within the socio-economic, spatial, and demographic context of Phnom Penh's urban landscape.

Authors of Housing and Built Environment present the diverse living conditions of Phnom Penh



residents. Amid a rapidly expanding property market in Phnom Penh, new housing forms have emerged to accommodate the city's growing population. The authors not only demonstrate the different types of housing, ranging from single-level houses and multi-occupancy apartments, to luxury condominiums and multiple-story houses in gated communities. It also includes the intersections of material and social infrastructure, local business and industry arrangements, and demographic factors. Through including these relevant factors, the authors remind us that Phnom Penh residents share many of the same concerns as urban dwellers in cities around the world.

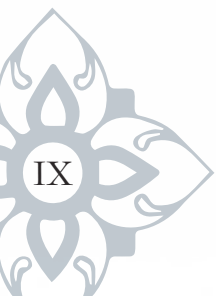
While Infrastructure is relevant in all these topics, we have chosen to dedicate a separate section to it, recognizing it as one fundamental domain of urbanization in relation to Environment. The authors pay attention to various forms of infrastructure, material and immaterial, and grand and mundane, demonstrating how these systems are established and managed to facilitate urban life. These pose challenges for urban residents who struggle to work things out by and among themselves when state support is insufficient. From the authors' observations, it becomes evident that different types of infrastructure are developed unevenly as the state advances its urban agenda. This raises further questions, especially when considering the prevalence of environmental issues associated with material transformations in the city.

In the section that follows, the authors guide us through various sites of Social Space in Phnom Penh, be it "public" space regulated by the state,

spaces within public institutions, or even privately owned properties. The empirical observations of human activities in parks, public universities, and commercial centers invite us to rethink the definition and narrative of the Western-rooted concept of a "public space." By examining different kinds of spaces that are perceived as accessible or shared by the general publics or specific social groups; the authors engage with everyday challenges of management, efficiency, and accessibility in Phnom Penh's urban spaces. Ultimately, these discussions contribute to a deeper understanding of people's "rights to the city" (Soja 2010), the search for the third space (Soja 1996), and how ownership and user-ship intersect and interact in practice.

The final section features three journals focusing on issues of Traffic and Mobility in Phnom Penh. These contributions provide empirical insights into different modes of transportation and routes such as alleyways (Gibert and Imai 2020), while also addressing congestion as a severe and pressing problem requiring timely solutions. We look forward to more contributions to this topic in future volumes, as mobility remains one of Phnom Penh's most urgent urban challenges. Additionally, while we do not have a separate section specifically dedicated to Disability or Gender, we note that our authors already integrated such perspectives into their analyses of the respective topics.

Ethnographic methods, while rooted in anthropology, have been widely adopted in other disciplines such as urban planning, development studies, and sociology. This method is an effort to understand the actions and behavior of specific groups of peo-

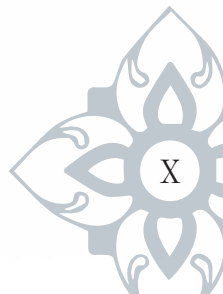


ple living in specific sites and locations known as ground theory practice (Chen, Orum and Paulsen 2018). Its purpose is to produce rich, qualitative data that can be generated with more insight from the local context. For urban planning in Cambodia, as in many emerging cities across the global South, ethnography provides a powerful tool for engaging with the existing urban fabric and uncovering the

lived realities of residents. Through revealing people's everyday living conditions and adaptive strategies, these urban journals enable researchers, planners, policymakers, and other stakeholders to better understand the lived experiences of Phnom Penh's urban life. As well as to identify embedded challenges that demand practical and inclusive solutions.

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This theme explores specific locations of business and their types of business, such as stores, stalls, or street vendors. The authors also investigate further means of payment, either using traditional modes of payment or through modern electronic payment using QR codes. These types of businesses include formal and informal, locally available on the street, vs those with a modern mall. There are also key interesting points about who is involved with such a business and what the preference for each social group is, the level of negotiation, and the technology involved. Through observations of markets, malls, street vendors, neighborhood shops, and service spaces, the authors examine how commerce structures daily routines and social interaction. Attention is given to affordability, accessibility, and the use of digital technologies such as cashless payments and online platforms. These studies reveal how business activities are embedded within specific spatial, social, and demographic contexts. Together, the chapters present business as a flexible and adaptive force that sustains livelihoods and animates urban life.

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This theme explores the locations of housing and its surroundings, and the type of urban infrastructure services available in place. These include water supply, electricity, markets, supermarkets, green space, and waste collection services. It also examines the types of housing and residents, including families, migrant workers, and foreigners, as well as how technology is involved in their everyday living environment. These studies illustrate how housing and the built environment remain central to broader aspects of urban lives, both formal and informal, within the built environment landscape.

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This theme examines infrastructure and environment. Authors pay attention to what type of infrastructure and who is responsible for infrastructure provision. Are they the government or the public sector? Are they private companies or individual responsible persons? The authors explore further how infrastructure interacts with the environment, what the positive and negative impact and how these built infrastructures impact local people's way of living, health, and other aspects of urban life. How does technology become involved with the built infrastructure and the environment? The authors explore how residents navigate transportation, utilities, drainage, waste management, and public services across the city. Infrastructure is seen not only as a technical system but as a lived environment affecting mobility, health, and safety. Environmental concerns—flooding, pollution, heat, and resource management—emerge alongside development, highlighting tensions between rapid urban growth and ecological sustainability. The chapters show how residents adapt to infrastructural limits while managing environmental pressures in a transforming city.

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This theme explores Social Space as a space of interaction, negotiation, exchange, and contestation within established physical features of the space, to gain access or to get information through diverse activities within the space. Through ethnographic observation, the authors examine how people occupy, share, and negotiate spaces that are commonly understood as public, semi-public, or privately owned yet socially accessible. These include parks, university campuses, commercial centers, cafés, sidewalks, and informal gathering areas embedded within everyday routines. Rather than treating public space as a fixed or purely physical entity, the authors emphasize how social norms, regulations, and everyday practices of social space are produced and constructed.

AUTHORS

SOCIAL SPACE



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The authors document diverse patterns of use shaped by age, gender, occupation, time of day, and institutional control. Issues of accessibility, comfort, safety, and management recur throughout the studies, revealing how inclusion and exclusion are experienced in subtle and practical ways. By examining who are allowed to use space, how long they can stay, and under what conditions, the chapters engage critically with the idea of shared urban space in a rapidly transforming city. Collectively, these contributions deepen the understandings of how Phnom Penh's residents claim, adapt, and redefine social spaces, offering insights into everyday expressions of belonging, social interaction, and the right to the city.

AUTHORS

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Urban traffic and mobility have become central strategies and tactics among everyday commuters who travel from their homes to workplaces, schools, markets, and other destinations within the city. In this theme, the authors have explored locations near markets, pagodas, residential areas, schools, and offices, and how traffic plays out at different times of day. They have examined different types of vehicles, gender of relevance, purpose of the trips at different times of the day, and the drivers' and street users' obedience to and non-compliance with traffic regulations

This section focuses more on how drivers and other users of streets follow and respect the rules, types of traffic violation and types of vehicles that violate the regulation. The authors also observe the status of the infrastructure where they selected as the case studies, mostly those that they experienced more frequently or those areas next to their living place. These include sidewalks, street vendors occupying sidewalk space, and other forms of sidewalk invasion practice. The authors have also brought up the use of alleyways as a form of emerging traffic and mobility tactic in avoiding congestion. Knowledge on using technology has also been explored by the authors to see how traffic congestion is being mapped and displayed in real time. The authors also advocate for the urgency of inclusive, evidence-based mobility solutions and position traffic management as a critical dimension of Phnom Penh's sustainable urban future.





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晚餐 អាហារពេលល្ងាច

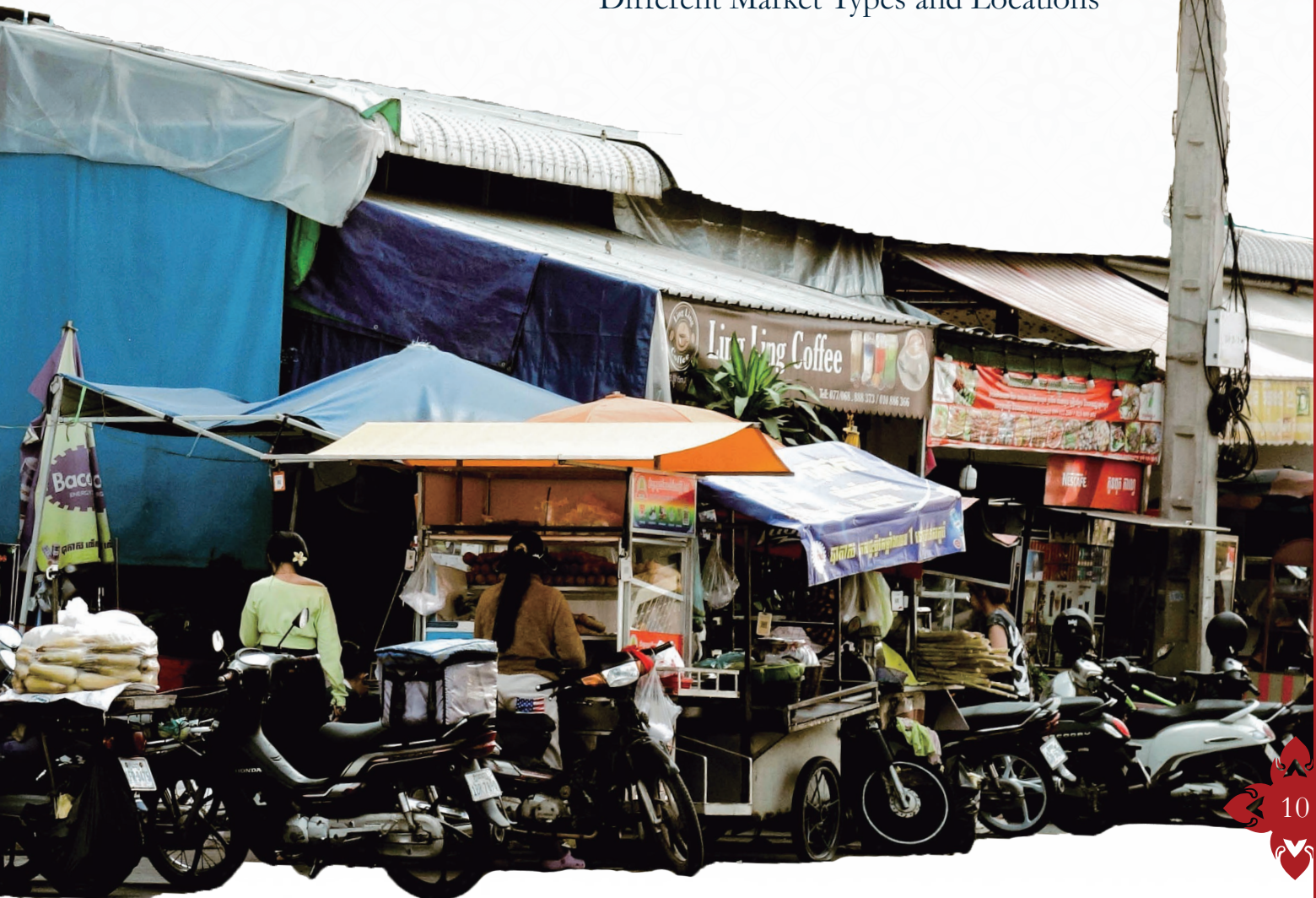
Aeon Sen Sok Residents' businesses alongside the road.



01

BUSINESS

Different Market Types and Locations



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Shopping Mall and the Adaptive Street Vendors

Maliza HENG

Informalities are often seen as an obstacle to urban development. And instead of trying to understand, developers prefer to push out or block informalities from forming in their establishments in order to make their space organized and presentable. In Cambodia, however, these informalities, especially the economic ones, help make daily living more affordable for the working class. My journal brings this claim to light by highlighting the importance of informal business that helps sustain hundreds or even thousands of workers and households at a former remote peri-urban site in Phnom Penh, which has been turned into a bustling suburban neighborhood known as AEON Mall Sen Sok City or AMSSC.

AEON Mall Sen Sok City is located on St. No 1003, Bayab village, Sangkat Phnom Penh Thmey, Khan Sen Sok, Phnom Penh, Cambodia. I learned that before the mall's construction, the land used to be a paddy field for rice production. Now, the area is more developed with many prominent landmarks such as the Premier Centre, Sensok's Wedding Hall, and Borey Piphup Thmey Sensok. The mall is branded as a stylish, modern retail center with various kinds of goods, including food, clothes, home appliances, etc. Moreover, AMSSC also provides diverse and fun activities and entertainment in addition to shopping, such as carnival games, an indoor soccer field, and movies, just to name a few. But not everyone can afford to enjoy the service provided by AMSSC. Instead, they choose to rely on the in-



Figure 1: Residents' shops alongside the road.



Figure 2: Vender stalls alongside the road.

Maliza HENG

formal business dotted near the mall where our site observation took place.

During my first observation, I was immediately greeted by the contrasting vibrancy of street vendors lining the sidewalks. The aromas of grilled meats, fried noodles, and fresh produce filled the air. It was an intense sensory experience, but in the best possible way. At the Borey part, close to the mall, I noticed a few vendors selling skewered meats, their small grills sizzling away. The prices were incredibly affordable, and the locals seemed to be enjoying the offerings. This informal sector not only provides cheap meals for those on a budget, but also supports many families, with small businesses being able to thrive easily just by providing food and beverages. Other locals sell goods in front of their houses; some rent space, others use their vehicles, and some even modify their vehicles for better service provision. The most common examples are a stainless-steel shelf for side display and a portable oven for mobile on-demand cooking. For those sellers who own a house or rent space, they offer chairs and tables for customers to sit, relax, and eat. For a student like me, those goods are affordable enough, but can vary in quality, unlike those provided by the mall.

Along the way, I spotted a cart selling “num banh chok,” a beloved Cambodian dish of rice noodles topped with fragrant fish curry and served with a variety of fresh herbs and vegetables. The vendor, an elderly lady, was a master in her element, gracefully layering each component and garnishing it with sprigs of mint and slices of cucumber. The dish was served on a plastic plate. These disposable plasticware can pose a problem to the environment, and the vendors are aware of that. The vendors

understand their responsibility and try their best to keep the area free from garbage by regularly cleaning where their business is situated. Additionally, motorbikes or carts are also equipped with small bins or plastic bags to properly collect and dispose of waste. And for those who are able to afford to buy a house or rent out a space, they have small bins dotted close to where their customers would sit, and bigger bins to collect all of the waste accumulated. However, rain can be a challenge for vendors who do not have their own place, as they are forced to wait out the rain in cramped spaces where they are currently selling at. Bad weather can greatly affect the business for all types of vendors, especially for those not protected from the environment, thus reducing the number of customers they are able to attract.

Customers can also choose to eat in or have take-out. If customers want to eat in, there are small tables and chairs behind each cart, and dishes will be served directly. For takeaway, the Khmer noodles will be packed separately along with different ingredients, allowing the freshness to be maintained when they are mixed and enjoyed. Although prices can vary, they are still reasonably affordable enough for a student like me, with one plate of Khmer noodles costing 3000 riels or around \$0.73, with two soup options for you to choose from. From my observation alone, prices can range from 1,000 riels or around \$0.24 to 10,000 riels or around \$2.43, which is relatively cheaper when compared to what AEON Mall Sen Sok City provides. Aside from food, there are also health services and stores that sell clothes, books, accessories, and skincare, but these are not as busy as food services. Overall, these informal economic activities provide job opportunities for traders and increase accessibility for customers.

Throughout my observation, QR payment has also become a new trend among businesses in Cambodia, regardless of their formality. This new form of payment has been adopted by most local sellers in the area, slowly becoming a convenient payment option. QR codes can help both sellers and buyers by eliminating the need to carry a large amount of cash, reducing the risk of robbery or misplacing cash. Tech-savvy sellers, they use social media to communicate and sell with their customers. But even with the new technology implemented, bargaining persists. Personally, I find that the prices are acceptable, as not many customers would bargain for a discount or even ask for extra products.

However, as we move closer to the mall, the number of vendors also seems to be decreasing. For me, it seems that AEON Mall Sen Sok City has some influence on the nearby informal activities, as there are no vendors close to the mall entrance or sidewalk at all. Yet, the vendors are still able to benefit from the increased customer traffic in the area. Some customers would buy from the outside to eat inside the mall, while others would remain outside or visit local restaurants. Additionally, rental price may also be the cause behind the dwindling numbers of vendors as the price of shophouse can start from \$600 per month, with space renting for mobile vendors ranging from 50,000 riels to 100,000 riels per month, or around \$12.44 to \$24.88. For vendors who prefer a more stable location, they can rent out space in front of someone's house with a negotiable price starting at \$100 per month. For some street vendors, they can also rent out a small space in front of someone's house with direct payment to them, but they still need to pay for local security on road safety and informal protection with about 1,500 riels per day.

Aside from that, informal markets can be crowded and disorganized, presenting a significant challenge to the general public. With no marked lanes for the motorbikes and cars on the two-way street, a traffic accident is a potential risk. All of the vendors seem to be in good physical condition, while the customers vary in age, size, physique, and workplace. Parking can be limited, as vendors spill out onto the road, narrowing it. Additionally, the customers of AMSSC also use the same road to enter the mall, putting more pressure on the limited road space, or aggravating congestion, especially during weekends, along with the wedding halls that might be occupied from time to time. This high level of traffic concentration could reduce the air and noise quality during rush hours, as these informal economic activities occur mostly from 9:00 A.M. to 9:00 P.M., with sellers here and there throughout the night. From my observation alone, activities would peak in the afternoon and evening, with the morning being used for setting up and preparing their businesses before kicking up the momentum from 11:00 A.M. and subsiding at 1:00 P.M.

If we move a little bit from the Borey side near AEON Mall, we will see there are also the informal business along the road near the undeveloped site in front of AEON Mall Sen Sok City with similar products to the vendors I mentioned above, but their main customers are traveling customers such as tuk-tuk and auto rickshaw drivers, delivery men, and those in a hurry. Although selling near the road increases access for customers, it also increases the risk of traffic accidents for both sellers and customers, worsening the traffic flow. Security can also be unreliable outside of the mall, which prompts customers to be more proactive in taking care of their vehicles.

Maliza HENG

Overall, it is very interesting to find how many opportunities can be generated with the establishment of a big shopping center. The interactions between street vendors, customers, and the residents create a lively and vibrant atmosphere for the neighborhood. Yet, the lack of safety and waste management, along

with the accessibility for disabled groups, should be a concern, alerting local authorities to be more proactive. Informal economies should be seen as the core of Phnom Penh's urban lifestyle, not as a threat.



Figure 3: QR Codes for payment.



Figure 4: Resident shops close up.

Human and Economic Activities at K Mall, Veng Sreng Blvd, Phnom Penh.

Rida HOY

This article uncovers the activities people tend to do at the K-Mall, particularly those who they come with, and what economic activities that taken place inside and outside the mall. I also discuss the environment surrounding the K-Mall area. Malls have become one of the most popular places in Phnom Penh where people like to go with their family members, friends, or partners to eat, play, or shop, since they have a wide variety of shops for people to explore and many activities for visitors to enjoy. There are a lot of malls in Phnom Penh nowadays, but I decided to choose K-Mall because it has a unique design and a good atmosphere.

The design considers the environment, including greenery in the buildings. Moreover, the design al-

lows air and natural sunlight to flow in and out freely, since it has a lot of space, which can contribute to the reduction of electricity use. The whole building is energy-saving and cost-effective as a result. K-Mall was built on an area of 12,000 square meters, and its location is easy to access; it only takes 5 minutes to get there from Stueng Mean Chey Roundabout, and 15 minutes from Phnom Penh International Airport. The land on which K-Mall is located used to be empty land without any buildings. K-Mall took several years to construct and was finished in 2021. K-Mall had its soft opening, which opened its doors to the public on November 5, 2021, and it welcomes visitors daily from 9:00 A.M. to 10:00 P.M.



Figure 5: Inside the central area of K-Mall.

Rida HOY

At K-Mall, shoppers were mostly browsing through the stalls. There are many types of stalls mixed on each floor. For instance, the second floor consists of a movie theatre, arcade, restaurants, etc. Conversations flowed freely, creating a sense of community among locals and visitors alike. The mall was designed to have a lot of open spaces with benches near the parking lots, and there is also an open sitting area with lots of greenery on the upper floor. I mostly spent my time observing in the evening, after class. During the time I was observing, I mostly saw parents bringing their children to grab food at the restaurants in K-Mall. Those children seemed to have just finished school (because the majority of them wore school uniforms). I saw two adults with two children who also seemed to be students walked into Lucky Burger and bought something from there. They had a chit-chat with one another, possibly a school update as they were eating. Some parents brought their kids to play at the playground area. Moreover, I also saw a group of teenagers walking to the Lucky Supermarket to buy some groceries. The mall also has Legend Cinema, and especially teenagers were going to watch movies with their friends, mostly on the weekend, since they have more free time.

The most popular shop with K-Mall customers is Mixue, which is an ice cream and milk tea shop. Mixue's price range is more affordable than other places, and the taste is quite good for food at that price, which makes it a popular place among kids and teenagers. Next to Mixue, there is a pharmacy as well. People who don't feel well can buy prescription medicine from that pharmacy. This shows that K-Mall not only has fun activities and restaurants for people to enjoy, but it is also a place that caters to people's well-being.

Many events have been held at K-Mall in the large space on the ground floor. For instance, the Miss Grand Cambodia event used to be held at K-Mall, and many people attended. The car display event also took place at K-Mall last year.

According to my observation for the past few days, I can assume that the groups of people that are most likely to come to K-Mall are teenagers or middle-aged adults who bring their children to enjoy leisure time after they finish school. It seems that there were more people who came to enjoy the food at different restaurants than to shop in stores. Additionally, the types of customers differ depending on the time of day. On the weekend, most people who visited seemed to range from children to young adults, whereas there were mostly only teenagers and adults on the weekdays, for example.

There are both formal and informal businesses happening within the K-Mall area. Since many factories are located nearby, some people who work there come to have fun or simply sit and chill on the benches at K-Mall after their work. From my observation, I can easily recognize them as most of them wear the work uniforms. Factories around the K-Mall area include garment, footwear, food, etc. They mostly come to K-Mall in the evening since the weather is cooler and it is the time they get off work. However, there are also people from different backgrounds, such as students, office workers, and others at the mall at that time, etc.

Some people come to the K-Mall to purchase things that they need from the stores because the K-Mall has a lot of stores that can satisfy human needs, such as supermarkets, accessories stores, clothing stores, restaurants, cinemas, pharmacies, etc. Some other people come here to just relax and sit on the

bench, especially in the cooler evening weather. I also saw some groups of people come to work at Brown Coffee, and some just came to meet with their friends. Brown Coffee at the K-Mall branch has a really nice atmosphere and cool design, and it also has big spaces that allow people to do their work or study comfortably. Customers can pay via QR code or in cash at all stores, making it easy for people to buy things.

However, handicapped people cannot get access to K-Mall easily compared to other malls like Aeon because they do not really provide space for handicapped people to move around. Moreover, K-Mall only has an escalator but not an elevator; therefore, it is almost impossible for handicapped people to go upstairs. I saw some street vendors outside K-Mall's exit, which distinctly shows the occurrence of informal businesses at K-Mall. Those street vendors are not always there as they often move from one place to another. During the time I was there, there were sometimes street vendors who sold sugar cane juice, and sometimes vendors selling other types of street food. There are also a lot of shophous-

es in front of K-Mall, which allow people to open businesses and restaurants. Shophouses are located in the opposite direction from K-Mall and consist of office buildings, banks, restaurants, clinics, and many more businesses.

Next to the shophouses and located on the main road is the ISI tower, which is a commercial office building. The building has 9 floors in total, and the parking lot has space for up to 100 cars. Moreover, the tower is also included in the same project as K-Mall, called KMH Park, which was developed by UrbanLand company. UrbanLand is a real estate company that claims they aim to create livable and inspirational spaces for people to live, work, and play. The company has finished several big projects so far, such as Raintree, Embassy Central, KMH Park, Borey Chankiri, etc.

In conclusion, my time at K-Mall underscored the close relationship between people and commerce. It was a reminder of how economic activities shape community life and how people interact with one another in our daily lives.



Figure 6: The outside of K-Mall.



Figure 7: Brown coffee, K-Mall.

IBC Stung Meanchey - Bookstores as a Third Space for Knowledge Exploration

Soknang MAO

Steung Meanchey was once a sparsely populated district in the suburban that functioned as Phnom Penh's main landfill. However, this landfill was decommissioned in 2012, and turned into a highly populated area, bringing new forms of urban life and services along with infrastructure development that helped kickstart and facilitated intensive industrial labor work, attracting more urban migration and all types of business services to the current time. Given the strategic location and my regular commute to my university, I found one interesting place that functions as an educational business center known as the International Book Center (IBC).

Their business model doesn't just provide school and office supplies, but for me, as a university stu-

dent, the IBC's built-environment and design also serve as a third space (Soja 1996) where knowledge can be explored, and creative thinking can be enhanced.

According to the locals, what is now IBC used to be a local bank for two years before being used as a clothing store for three years, which later became IBC. Located on Monireth Boulevard. (271) of Steung Meanchey district, the International Book Center has been known for selling a variety of study materials and office supplies since 2019. According to my research and interviews with the staff, IBC is one of the largest and well-known book centers in Phnom Penh, with 12 stores operating in Phnom Penh and 1 operating in Siem Reap. During my ob-



Figure 8: The front of the IBC.

ervation, the Steung Meanchey branch has three spacious floors, including the ground floor, first floor, and second floor.

The inside of IBC is well organized, with most of their general materials stored on the ground floor, ranging from books, office supplies, kitchen supplies, toys, and household tools. The cashier is also situated here, where customers can pay in cash or cashless via credit card or QR. I find the first floor to be more interesting. It is often filled with students studying, researching, or completing their assigned tasks. The first floor is actually the book section, filled with various kinds of books. The second floor is only accessible to staff members, and from what I've heard according to the staff themselves, is used to store various company goods. The interior of each floor is very spacious, making shopping very easy for customers. In particular, the wide aisles prevent bumping into each other. The exterior is also spacious and provides ample and convenient parking for cars and motorcycles, and is guarded by security. There is also room for pedestrians, cyclists, and motorcycles to maneuver when traffic is congested.

In the morning, the bookstore is very quiet, perfect for those who like to read. IBC allows the books to be read on the second floor without purchase. Readings were very comfortable and reminded me of reading in my own home. Not only that, the staff was very polite and knowledgeable when speaking to customers, informing them about the items and guiding them throughout the purchasing process. In the afternoon, customers included students and some office workers, who can sometimes be quite crowded. But since the interior is spacious and comfortable, it helps smooth out the shopping process by making it simple and enjoyable. I noticed that

the International Book Center is very busy on the weekend, with most of the customers being school-children buying school supplies for back to school. Throughout the week, I noticed that the evenings are the busiest, especially at the beginning of the week. This is likely because the evenings are when people leave work. Most of the time, there are few students, and most customers are housewives buying kitchen appliances. On the first day of the week, IBC can get very busy between 7 and 8 pm because it is easy to travel between these hours on Monireth Boulevard; there is not much traffic congestion. I prefer to travel between these hours to study at this place. This IBC Bookstore has a lot of special features and provides services to people, especially students. It is a place to study new knowledge and improve schoolwork. The bookstore is a safe place to shop, free from racial discrimination. I noticed that there is always more staff in the evening than in the morning. This is likely due to increased customers in the evening, buying school supplies and work materials. As a result, there are more staff between 7:00 P.M. and 8:00 P.M.

This is also the scene along Monireth Boulevard, along which I go to school every day. I noticed that there are a lot of traffic jams between 10:00 A.M. and 11:00 A.M., because it is the lunch-time and a time when most students take time off from school, and workers go to work, especially factory workers and construction workers. This is also the reason why there are not many people buying materials and equipment at IBC, and between 10:00 A.M. and 3:00 P.M., the weather can become very hot, which makes it difficult for people to travel. I have also noticed that a small number of people came to buy some materials, and others also went to read books during that time. Moreover, we can use various social media platforms such as Telegram, Facebook,

Soknang MAO

and Messenger to order things electronically. You can also order directly from IBC's website. I find that IBC is very thoughtful, especially for those with mobility issues. Unfortunately, IBC Steung Meanchey has no disabled parking or accessibility ramps. But this does not mean that all disabled people cannot use or are being prohibited from using the services of IBC. I hope IBC puts more consideration into accessibility in the future.

In addition, when it comes to the atmosphere or environment around the International Book Center, there is also a slight disturbance from the external location. The outside environment is reserved for parking with minimal artificial shading instead of trees. The staff put great efforts in maintaining the

environmental hygiene as this is a private property. It is really good both inside and outside. The view and atmosphere inside are spacious, equipped with good equipment such as air conditioning and security cameras. Compared to the outside, IBC puts more emphasis on ensuring the customers' experience inside.

In conclusion, the International Book Center that I got to observe functions as one of the crucial spaces in the ever-thriving district that is Steung Meanchey. By prioritizing customers' experience inside, people can feel more welcome to shop longer, along with young readers who are allowed to stay without making any purchase.



Figure 9: Atmosphere inside the IBC.



Figure 10: Aisle sections of the IBC.

Accessibilities within the Density - The informal and formal businesses along Borey 100 khnong street

Vuthymary NGAM

In this article, I will explain the observations I have made here during my studies. I have only been living here for a short time, but I have observed some things that I will mention to discuss, observe, solve, and talk about the problems that exist. The location at hand is Borey 100, Sangkat Teuk Thla, Khan Sen Sok, Phnom Penh, which is far from the 7 Makara Bridge; turn right.

I have noticed much about the place where I live today, which is called “Borey 100”, located in Sangkat Teuk Thla, Khan Sen Sok, Reach Phnom Penh. It is not so far from the 7 Makara Bridge along Russian Blvd, turn right. Many people are living there, and there will be rooms for rent for students who come to continue their studies from other provinces. Next

to the entrance road, there are also some companies. Note that it is Sangkat Teuk Thla, and there is a market, a school, and houses for rent, making the area convenient to live in. This location is opposite to Sangkat Teuk Thla, a small market, where there are all kinds of shops for those who want to do business, selling rice, vegetables, fish, meat, and all kinds of food for convenience.

In the market, people live and sell in the same place. According to my personal inquiry, the businessmen have been in Sangkat Teuk Thla for a long time and can say that they are experts in general, especially in their food, which is easy to buy and convenient for the workers nearby, as most of the customers are students who might not have enough time cooking



Figure 11: A sign says “Do Not Sell” on the wall.



Figure 12: Residents' businesses

Vuthymary NGAM

for themselves. Here, there are all kinds of things, all kinds of fish and meat, which are convenient and affordable for the residents. Not only that, but both business owners and customers now rely on a digital platform for their payment just by scanning QR codes.

Moreover, in terms of the environment, it is a little unfortunate that there is garbage and waste from sales, which causes bad odors and property damage, etc. Garbage collectors can be inconsistent with timing, further contributing to the odors and mold, especially for people who rely on the collectors and throw the waste out on the street instead of taking the responsibility upon themselves. It is also difficult that since this is a small market, there is no proper space to dispose of waste, which causes garbage to be dumped all over the road. If possible, I will ask the commune chief to help by telling waste management companies to come and pick up the garbage 2 to 3 times a day so that there is no smell. I will also tell street vendors to help clean up their places of sale, collect garbage and put it in bags properly, and not litter the streets, making the streets clean and environmentally friendly.

The road we drive on is narrow, and there may be many pedestrians passing by. Along the sidewalk, there are also businesses. This can cause traffic congestion every day, with many travelers day in and day out. In the morning, people have to go to school, work, and pedestrians have to come to buy vegetables, fish, and meat to eat. Therefore, it is very congested in the morning. In addition, when it rains heavily, there are always blockages in the

streets, which cause flooding. If it rains heavily for 2 to 3 hours, it can flood the sidewalk. There are also animals that we need to be cautious with, such as dogs and cats, but something that we have to deal with the most is the people in this neighborhood. If there are events such as festivals or ceremonies, they also cause traffic congestion, with short-term road closures, which makes it difficult to travel. The roads are narrow and difficult to avoid, but it's not a problem for security or public safety. They have come to accommodate travelers if there are occasional events and on normal days, with the usual congestion.

When it comes to safety in the Sangkat and the village, since I came to live here, there has been no theft, robbery, any other kind of crime, or even gangsters. Security, trust, and communication are not a problem in my area, which greatly benefits the locals and the business. Security, trust, and communication are useful for building trust among people and organizations. In a Sangkat, one needs good knowledge and the ability to restore communication that doesn't cause further harm.

In conclusion, the problems that we need to improve and solve are traffic jams and pollution. If I were the one to solve them, I would like to solve the traffic problem by asking the commune head and the commune head to come down and look at the people who are street vendors and pedestrians, and tell them to park their motorbikes so that there is a path for pedestrians to pass. The waste collection schedule must also be consistent and adaptive to local events.

Calmett Hospital - Accessibility Through Affordability

Takma KAM

My site is in Khan Daun Penh, Sangkat Sras Chok, on street 80 between Calmett hospital and the French Embassy. Other landmarks such as the British Embassy, hotels, banks, and the ASEAN Road 11. Additionally, there is a roundabout and the old stadium, which the locals called it Start Chas. I want to bring attention to this site because it is congested with all the vendors on the sidewalk and human population while being surrounded by tall buildings, highlighting its economic potential.

The area is filled with people doing business in their own stall in front of their house or in a shop they rent or own, with other people choosing to sell on the street. The business is very diverse, not just in how it is sold, but also the types from edible items

such as fruits, vegetables, cooked meals, snacks, sweets, and drinks, to medicine, clothes, cosmetics, money transfer, and parking. The foods and drinks here are quite affordable, but you cannot bargain with the sellers, unlike non-edible items like clothing and medicine. I think the food here is affordable enough for those outside of the city, especially people who come here to get medical care at the Calmette Hospital, helping them save more money. You can also spend money to take a shower or use the toilet at the designated parking spaces for 1000 riels. There are two payment options: cash or digital. As technology progresses, the sellers also adapt new methods for their business, with one of them being QR payment.



Figure 13: Street vendors.



Figure 14: Residents' businesses.

Takma KAM

However, the atmosphere can be a little chaotic, especially in the morning, as there are many sellers on the street with many incoming traffic with cars and motorbikes of different sizes traveling in and out of the area, along with the parking, street vendors, and hawkers, leading to congestion in the area. The afternoon and evening are much quieter because there are fewer sellers, unlike in the morning with its rush hour, making it easier and stress-free to move around. However, with the quiet street comes fast drivers, so you have to be cautious when near the street to avoid getting hit. The small road also contributes to the congestion by making it hard to turn from one side to another, especially for vehicles trying to cross the street with the ongoing traffic. Additionally, there is not much space for pedestrians as it is taken up by the sellers. I learned that some sellers have to rent the space to sell. While it impacts the walking experience negatively, this can also be a safety hazard for all pedestrians. The uneven roads and blockage make it inaccessible for disabled groups.

Street parking is also another problem behind the congestion, with the nearby authority attempting to mediate it. You can park at designated parking spaces provided by the hospital, private businesses, or shops, with the price starting from 1000 riels, depending on your duration.

While the nearby business helps the visitors to get by and improve the economy of the locals, the congestion and pollution can pose a health risk for them as well, from noise pollution to mismanagement of waste, to stress, and to low-quality products. Local authorities should look into ensuring the affordability and accessibility for the people while minimizing and mitigating the negative factors, such as creating selling and non-selling hours, policemen guiding the pedestrians, and improving the walking experience around the outside of the hospital.



Figure 15: Parkings on sidewalk.



Figure 16: Car Parkings on sidewalk.

Activities around on Preah Kossamak Hospital

RattanakBopha MAO

Located in Toul Kork District, the streets around the Cambodia-China Friendship Hospital, also known as Preah Kossamak Hospital, attract a multitude of human activities. While being one of the primary healthcare institutes in Phnom Penh city, the surrounding area offers a variety of activities for those within the hospital, visitors, and locals alike.

The first thing I noticed is the business area on the south side of Preah Kosomak Hospital with small businesses along the streets and houses on street 150. There are many vendors selling clothes, kitchenware, fruits, and rice cakes, which are for the patients who come to rest and the people who live around here, including passer-by, who can also buy foods that are reasonably priced. During my observation, it seemed to be bustling with friendly and lively vendors, working hard to maintain the flow of customers.

From what I learned from asking around, running your business here is not free, but you can choose to pay monthly or annually to the commune hall or the city hall. There are also some rumors here and there talking about how things operate here not being the same anymore as old businesses being replaced by newer ones or being continued generationally. Another change that happened is the payment method. While cash is still accepted per usual, E-banking offers flexible options through QR or ID codes for buyers and sellers who do not want to carry cash around.

Another thing is that it is next to the motorcycle parking lot of Preah Kossamak Hospital, which makes it even more crowded. The space here is narrow with vendors selling on the sidewalk and the buyers often stop their vehicles for a short period of time or park on the sidewalk or the street when purchasing something. There is also another parking lot on the sidewalk outside of the hospital, narrowing down the street even more and making traveling difficult amidst the daily high traffic without any solution just yet.

On the other hand, you can find a small temple that has been built as a Buddhist shrine on the eastern side of the hospital. It is the reason behind the origin of why the locals dubbed the hospital as Monks Hospital. No monks are residing in this temple unlike what is usually expected from a normal temple, but every day, monks from surrounding temples come to practice their routines for the people around the hospital. The idea of building this temple was probably to be a place to do “temple work” for the monks coming to check-on the patients in need of spiritual reliefs.

Overall, the area around Preah Kossamak Hospital has contributed greatly to those who come to receive treatment and the people who live here with some organizing to be needed to maintain the flow of the area amidst the flow of the traffic.

*Times Square III Condominium Building adjacent
Street 317 and 335.*





02

HOUSING & BUILT ENVIRONMENT

How Homes and Buildings Shape Urban Life

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A Walk Down Street 317 - Luxury and Peace Amidst the Chaos of the City

Vongproseth THACH

Phnom Penh thrummed with its usual Sunday morning energy as I set out to explore Street 317, where I have lived for one year. Street 317 in Toul Kork, Phnom Penh, has transformed since I have lived there over the last few years, from a residential area into a more modern and urbanized neighborhood due to rapid urbanization, population growth, and increasing demand for mixed-use buildings. Proximity to the main roads, schools, and shopping complexes like TK Avenue and AEON Mall 2 has made the area coveted for domestic and foreign investors seeking alternatives to over-saturated city center districts like BKK1. With improved infrastructure, a better road network, and the acceleration of high-rise developments in the past few years, condominiums, offices, and retail shops have

replaced the former quiet villas. As housing prices climb higher, developers are moving up, rather than out, to capture the highest returns and attract businesses and individuals. The change has given Street 317 a vibrant, mixed-use character with residential, working, and recreational space that reflects Phnom Penh's overall trend toward urban densification and modernization. It features institutions like the Methodist School of Cambodia, new developments, and improved infrastructure, evidencing the city's rapid development and urbanization.

The observation from my regular walking habit was made at 6:00 A.M., when Street 317 was still quiet and peaceful, creating a calm and refreshing morning atmosphere. At this hour, only a few early risers,



Figure 17: Times Square III Building.



Figure 18: Vendors alongside the 316 street.

Vongproseth THACH

joggers, and food vendors could be seen preparing for the day. However, the scene changes completely during rush hours, especially from 11:00 A.M. to 2:00 P.M. and again from 5:00 P.M. to 7:00 P.M. During these times, the road in front of Indradevi High School becomes busy and crowded. The four-way intersection near the school does not have a traffic light, which often causes confusion and traffic congestion as students, parents, and workers pass through. Around the school area, many small informal vendors set up food stalls and drink stands along the fence, narrowing the road and adding to the lively yet chaotic atmosphere.

Despite the congestion during rush hours, the neighborhood remains generally safe and friendly. At night, the street becomes quieter again, and there is a sense of security throughout the area. In my one year of living here, I have never heard of any serious safety problems—only small traffic accidents that occur occasionally. Around 9:00 P.M., it's common to see police patrolling the street, ensuring everything is calm and in order. Their regular presence helps residents feel protected and at ease. People here can sleep peacefully, knowing that their community is secure and that Street 317 remains a comfortable and safe place to live, even as it becomes more urbanized and congested during the day.

Unlike the busy streets of Phnom Penh filled with motorbikes and noise, Street 317 in Toul Kork feels calm and organized. The wide, tree-lined roads separate car traffic from spacious sidewalks shaded by greenery, creating a peaceful and refreshing atmosphere, something rare in the city. Along both sides of the street, cafés and restaurants invite people to sit down, relax, read, or work comfortably. The balance of nature, open space, and convenience makes Street 317 a perfect place for a quiet walk or a short escape from the usual city chaos.

What caught my attention first was the housing. The old, rundown shop houses and small apartments that once filled this area have nearly all disappeared, replaced by modern, high-rise buildings that completely change the look and feel of the neighborhood. The most eye-catching of these are Times Square II and Times Square III's tall, shiny towers that dominate the skyline. These buildings are part of the Times Square Condominium series, developed by Megakim World Corp, a well-known Taiwanese company. Megakim has several projects in the Toul Kork area, including Time Square II, Time Square III, and the new Time Square VII, which is currently under construction. Each building combines residential and office spaces designed for modern city living, offering amenities like swimming pools, gyms, rooftop lounges, and even the stylish High-Ground Sky Bar, where visitors can enjoy beautiful views of Phnom Penh. These facilities attract both locals who want a more comfortable lifestyle and investors who believe in the area's growing economic potential. Construction of Times Square VII began around 2024, with completion expected in the late 2020s. As more of these modern developments rise, Street 317 continues to evolve from a quiet residential area into one of Phnom Penh's most modern and dynamic neighborhoods. With its mix of convenience, greenery, and contemporary design, Street 317 perfectly reflects how Phnom Penh is changing—blending its old charm with the rapid pace of modernization.

Even the detached villas lining the street boasted manicured lawns and security gates. Online listings suggest that a three-bedroom apartment here could cost \$2,000 per month or \$450 per month for a studio room, a significant disparity from the average Phnom Penh rent.

The traffic on the road itself reflects affluence. Sleek SUVs, Toyotas, and Lexus brands gleam in the morning sun. It was rare to see motorbikes passing by, and the few I saw were mostly driven by young people in trendy helmets, a sharp contrast to the common motorbikes used for work and errands in most of the city.

Even the businesses spoke of a clientele with discerning taste. Instead of street stalls and corner shops, there were chic cafes with American pastries displayed in immaculate glass cases. A glance at the menus revealed coffee prices that would make most Phnom Penh residents blink; a single cappuccino could cost more than a day's wage for many.

The people I saw further emphasized the neighborhood's exclusivity. Those walking the sidewalks were dressed in workout gear; joggers and yoga enthusiasts exude a healthy glow that comes from access to leisure time and expensive gym memberships. They chatted in English, Chinese, Khmer, and more languages, a cosmopolitan mix that hinted at a globalized lifestyle. In contrast, the occasional delivery drivers or construction workers who passed by seemed to move with a different purpose; their clothes were old but practical.

However, it wasn't just about outward appearances. The air quality of Street 317 felt different. There was a sense of quiet security, a lack of the usual Phnom Penh hustle. Security guards quietly watched the entrances, and well-kept gardens showed the work of landscapers.

Even the pets seemed pampered. Instead of the scrawny dogs that navigate Phnom Penh's streets, I noticed a couple of sleek pugs being walked by a woman in a designer dog stroller. The contrast was almost comical.

So, why is Street 317 such an affluent neighborhood? It's a combination of factors. The luxurious housing, the wide, clean roads, the high-end businesses, and the overall sense of security all paint a picture of a place designed for those with means. The people who live here, and those who frequent it, project an air of affluence, from their designer clothes to their high-end vehicles.

It's a world apart from the bustling, energetic chaos that defines much of Phnom Penh. But for those who can afford it, Street 317 offers luxury and tranquility in the heart of the city.



Figure 19: 316 street.

Urban Sidewalk as private space in ChamKar Doung Borey - Quality Sidewalk, Quality Lifestyle

Chbeko MENGHOR

During my observation at Borey Chamkar Doung, I explored how private spaces are designed, used, and experienced by residents and visitors in daily life. Borey Chamkar Doung was developed by New World Group and completed in 2013, representing an important moment in Phnom Penh's residential development. Covering approximately 88 hectares, the project includes thousands of houses 3,724 flat house E0 units (start with ground floor), 1,035 flat house E1 units (ground floor plus first floor), and 36 twin villas. This housing diversity provides opportunities for people of different income levels and family sizes to live within one structured environment. The Borey model of development aims to provide not only housing, but also an integrated quality lifestyle through modern facilities and social

infrastructure. Urban sidewalk, playground, local market, and family shops are also taking place. At the Borey as the whole, there is also parking space close to public parks, market, waste collection services and security both with the guards and CCTV surveillance reflecting new urban identity or creating as modern dream of urban lifestyle.

The physical design of Borey Chamkar Doung clearly reflects a vision of order, safety, and community living. The layout of this gated community includes structured rows of houses with organized internal roads, sidewalks, and open green spaces. The private spaces such as gardens, sidewalks, and courtyards are not only for access but also for social interaction and relaxation. The developers inten-



Figure 20: Open Space inside the Borey.



Figure 21: Night exercise activity.

tionally designed these areas to improve residents' quality of life by providing safe and pleasant environments for walking, resting, and meeting others.

The sidewalks are made of concrete for durability and low maintenance, while some areas include trees, plants, and small green patches that make the environment visually appealing and environmentally friendly. Benches are placed in shaded areas so that elderly residents and visitors can rest comfortably. Playgrounds were specifically designed for children's physical and emotional development, giving families a space to spend time together. These facilities help create opportunities for people to connect beyond their household boundaries. The design of Borey Chamkar Doung also seek to provide balance between privacy and community. Houses are enclosed and secure, but the shared outdoor spaces are open and inviting. These areas act as "social connectors", encouraging casual encounters between neighbors. This kind of semi-private design allows residents to enjoy both individual comfort and collective life, making it a model for contemporary Cambodian residential design.

Safety and sustainability are additional design goals. The Borey includes lighting systems along sidewalks, green spaces to reduce heat, and parking lots to minimize congestion. The design of walkways and open spaces encourages walking and reduces the use of vehicles for short trips inside the community. This promotes a healthier lifestyle and reduces traffic noise and pollution within the compound. However, as with many developments, regular maintenance is crucial; some sidewalks have uneven surfaces, cracks, or poor drainage, especially during rainy seasons. Addressing these issues would further enhance accessibility and long-term usability.

In daily practice, the private spaces in Borey Chamkar Doung are far from empty—they are vibrant and constantly active, especially in the afternoon and evening. After work or school, residents leave their homes to enjoy the open air. Parents bring their children to the playground, elderly people gather to talk or take short walks, and teenagers come out to socialize. The sound of children playing, people chatting, and street vendors selling snacks fills the area, creating a lively and warm atmosphere. In the early morning, the sidewalks also serve as spaces for exercise and movement. Some residents walk or jog, while others ride bicycles around the inner roads. These activities help promote health and wellness while strengthening informal relationships among neighbors.

During the day, the sidewalks may be quieter, used mainly by workers, vendors, and delivery people. However, by sunset, the spaces become centers of social interaction once again. Different social groups use the spaces for different reasons. Families with young children use the playground for recreation and bonding. Elderly residents enjoy the garden areas for relaxation and light exercise. Teenagers and youth often gather in open corners to talk, listen to music, or take photos for social media. Workers and housewives take breaks outside to catch fresh air or chat with nearby neighbors. Additionally, small vendors frequently set up temporary stalls in the evening to sell food, drinks, or small toys. These informal activities contribute to the Borey's lively social atmosphere as well as additional economic opportunities for the residents.

One notable observation is that the private spaces are used not only by residents living in Borey, but also by people from nearby non-borey areas. Many outsiders come to walk, exercise, or let their

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children play because the borey environment feels safer, cleaner, and more organized compared to surrounding areas. This shared use of space creates an interesting social mix; people from different backgrounds, ages, and lifestyles are interacting in one setting. This social diversity demonstrates that Borey Chamkar Doung's private spaces serve a semi-public function. Although the borey is privately managed, the open design and welcoming environment allow inclusivity. It becomes a meeting place where boundaries between residents and visitors blur, strengthening community relations across social and spatial lines.

In this way, the borey not only functions as a private housing compound but also contributes to the broader urban community network in Phnom Penh. The sidewalks and open areas in Borey Chamkar Doung show how urban design influences social behavior. These spaces enable people to move, communicate, and share experiences. They provide

safety and convenience while also allowing freedom and spontaneity. For example, the well-lit walkways encourage people to go out even after dark, while green areas create a calming and friendly environment.

Moreover, the design indirectly shapes social order and behavior. Because the borey enforces certain rules such as cleanliness, no littering, and restricted vehicle speed the public image of the space remains organized and secure. This influences how people act; they tend to behave more respectfully and cooperatively in shared areas. At the same time, the presence of security guards and surveillance cameras increases the feeling of safety, especially for women, children, and the elderly. However, the private control of space also brings limits. While the borey's management maintains order, it can also restrict some informal uses, such as open vending or community events, which are more common in non-borey neighborhoods. Still, in Chamkar Doung



Figure 22: Evening activity.

Borey, informal activities continue to thrive in smaller forms, showing that residents and visitors adapt to the regulations while still finding ways to express community life.

Overall, the private open spaces in Borey Chamkar Doung illustrate how thoughtful design and community use can turn ordinary infrastructure into meaningful social environments. The sidewalks, gardens, and playgrounds were designed to serve practical functions such as movement, safety, and recreation. However, in reality, they have become broader social living spaces that foster connection, diversity, and shared identity. The design encourages inclusivity, physical health, and social well-being. Families, children, youth, and elders all find their place here, and even outsiders from nearby communities feel welcome. This blending of users shows that private developments can contribute positively to urban social life when spaces are designed with openness and accessibility in mind. At the same

time, the borey faces challenges such as maintenance issues, limited lighting in some areas, and the need for more shaded or green zones. Addressing these would further enhance comfort and safety. Nevertheless, Borey Chamkar Doung stands as a strong example of how urban residential design in Phnom Penh can create not only housing but also community, culture, and connection.

Through this observation, it becomes clear that private spaces can evolve into semi-public places that support social harmony. However, they must be designed with human needs in mind. Borey Chamkar Doung's sidewalks and gardens are not just physical features; they are living parts of the urban landscape where people of different backgrounds meet, communicate, and build a sense of belonging. In a rapidly changing city like Phnom Penh, such spaces are vital for shaping a more inclusive, healthy, and connected urban future.



Figure 23: Driving activity.

Informal economy and security between Gated Community and a Non-gated Community

Chandany NGOV

This article reflects my observations on the rapid urban growth of Phnom Penh. Specifically, it outlines the dichotomy of the living environment between gated Borey communities and non-gated or non-Borey communities. For me as student of urban planning, we define Borey's are typically constituted as modern, well-planned residential spaces surrounded by walls and gates. It is a typical modern residential space with a well-planned surrounding wall and gated entrance. Equipped with proper infrastructure, security, and community facilities, the communities attract mostly middle or upper-income households who have stable jobs and higher purchasing power. Life in Boreys is often more organized, with access to clean water, sanitation, playgrounds, exercise areas, and security

systems, while residents tend to engage in more formalized social interactions and structured community events. Non-Borey areas represent the naturally forming built-environment, which consist of traditional housing, mixed with organically emerged informal settlements, representing mixed social class and ethnic and economic activities. This informality includes street vending, casual labor, or transportation services. These communities are characterized by lively street markets, stronger informal social networks, and lower costs of living. However, aside from economic activities, key challenges remain ranging from poor infrastructure, unreliable access to utilities, pollution, flooding, and limited public services.



Figure 24: Night-time atmosphere.

Borey residents are found to be more prosperous than their non-Borey equivalents because of the growth of the city infrastructure, residents, and well-planned street networks in providing better social and economic services in general. In this case, I wish to share some aspects of the residential life. The following description compares the economic activities and security between Borey and Non-Borey.

The Borey is inhabited by a mix of individuals, ranging from the middle- to upper-income level, and those working in stable, well-paid jobs in the business, government, banking, and management, beauty salons, food stalls, motorcycle repair, and automobile repair fields, and a few who are entrepreneurs or business owners who operate businesses outside of Borey. Further, the residents are well-connected among each other in everyday life, such as co-workers leaving together in the morning. Elsewhere, residents frequently have a shared way of life, including dependence on private cars, preference for modern facilities, and a focus on privacy and exclusivity. Social interactions are typically more codified, happening in organized settings such as community events (e.g., neighborhood block parties, community meetings). Spatial context of privacy and authorized access can also restrict the chance of encounters among neighbors. However, this non-Boreys are also characterized by organization and a sense of order. Borey residents are routinely adherent to rules about noise, cleanliness, and shared space usage. But the community feeling is often formal and transactional, in contrast to non-borey environments. When considering the environment in which Boreys are created with the intention to promote living conditions of high standard, they live healthy, they can enjoy clean water, they have good hygiene and they have a sandbox for

children and an exercise station for old people, and as for safety it is very safe, because in the area of the Borey, there are security cameras working on a regular basis. Consumers tend to have higher spending propensities on branded items, private education, new medicine and recreational activities, they like to go to dinner or travel. Routine waste management and sanitation services help create a better environment and better paved roads, drainage networks and well-planned layouts which mitigate pollution and increase mobility. Restricted access roads to Boreys minimize traffic and noise. During the holiday, Borey living people are known to have more planned, resource-oriented festive activities, often using the planned environment, and settled community life as a platform. Residents often decorate their homes for holidays, such as Khmer New Year, Pchum Ben, or for events being celebrated by others, such as Christmas. Borey residents exhibit typical shopping behaviors at one-stop shopping malls, restaurant, entertainment facilities during the holiday. During the holiday, there are no impact on the streetscape.

Non-borey residents have similar activities, but such activities are differently achieved. For instance, lively street markets and roadside shops are common, providing cheaper goods and services as compared to borey shops. Informal work as such small-scale production, transportation like tuk-tuks, and casual labor are ubiquitous in urban environments. Non-borey sites are occupied by a heterogeneous mix of income groups, and such ecology includes a variety of economic activities, from subsistence trade to high-scale commercial operations. The majority of the non-borey population moves from their hometown in search of living-work. Lack of access to services such as steady electricity, water and transport may inhibit economic growth in some non-borey communities. But this also presents a

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chance for new development and entrepreneurial ventures. These areas may have more access to the natural environment, yet fewer public green spaces within the city itself. At the same time, crowded streets in non-borey areas have higher air and noise pollution. Informal settlements can be situated near factories or waste dumps, thereby polluting the air and water. Improper drainage system results in waterlogging and flooding when it rains heavy, while improper or absent garbage collection results scattering pollution waste left in the streets. Non-borey residents can be seen traveling back to villages to visit their families for holidays.

Most residents of Borey are engaged in formal economic sectors such as banking, government services, private companies, or formal businesses. Some also operate small shops in front of their homes, but these businesses still follow structured rules such as asking permission from Borey manager for an operation. Through my survey and direct observation, I confirmed these occupations were common. For example, I saw residents wearing company or bank ID cards, and some government employees driving motorcycles or cars with official government license plates. In contrast, residents in non-Borey areas often depend on informal economic activities such as street vending, tuk-tuk driving, day labor, or small-scale household production. These jobs make income less predictable but allow for more flexible entry for non-Borey, especially for rural migrants seeking work in the city. Boreys, such as Borey Phipup Tmey, are gated communities with 24-hour security guards, CCTV cameras, and regulated entry points, which help reduce crime and create a strong sense of safety among residents. The main gates are always monitored, and visitors are required to register before entering. I noticed security guards regularly patrolling the areas, and cameras installed

at key points such as entrances, parking areas, and playgrounds. This organized security system makes residents feel protected and comfortable, especially families with children. In contrast, non-Borey areas do not have formal security systems. There are no fences, guards, or CCTV cameras, and the streets are more open to outsiders. Residents depend on informal neighborhood watch practices or trust within the community to maintain safety. However, petty crimes such as small thefts, disputes between neighbors, or noise problems occur more frequently. Despite this, many non-Borey residents still express a sense of community and cooperation, often helping each other when issues arise.

In Borey, traffic is well-organized and controlled. The internal roads are private and properly paved, with clear layouts that separate residential areas from main access routes. Parking spaces are usually provided in front of each house, and some residents even have private garages. The roads are wide enough for two-way traffic, and speed limits are enforced by security guards to ensure safety, especially for children playing outside. During my observation, I saw that traffic flow inside the Borey was smooth and there were no serious congestion problems. Streetlights and drainage systems are also properly maintained, helping to prevent flooding during heavy rain. In contrast, non-Borey areas face many traffic-related challenges. The streets are often narrow and crowded, shared by cars, motorbikes, street vendors, and pedestrians all at once. Parking is unregulated, with vehicles frequently blocking pathways or parked on sidewalks. The road conditions are poor, with uneven surfaces, potholes, and limited drainage, causing frequent flooding during the rainy season. Moreover, there is little to no formal traffic management, leading to congestion and unsafe conditions for pedestrians, especially near mar-

kets or schools. Despite these issues, the non-Borey roads remain active and vibrant as Borey, while their residential lifestyles remain more informal and flexible in term of social interaction with less constrain with social class and hierarchy. Borey neighborhood also remain vibrant with community engagement, green space usage and growing amenities.

In Borey Piphup Tmey, cooperation among residents usually occurs through formal homeowners' associations (HOAs) or management committees. These groups are responsible for maintaining shared services such as security, waste collection, street cleaning, and the upkeep of public areas like gardens or playgrounds. Residents pay monthly service fees, which are used to fund these activities. Communication often happens through group of people, notice boards, or announcements from the Borey management office. During my observation, the residents tend to follow organized systems when solving problems, such as reporting maintenance issues to the management team rather than handling them individually. This formal structure promotes order and convenience but sometimes limits direct social interaction between neighbors.

Borey houses are equipped with modern and comfortable facilities. Each home has private bathrooms, clean running water, and stable electricity connected to the national grid. Drainage systems are properly built, helping to prevent flooding and keep the area clean. Many houses also include air conditioners, water heaters, private parking spaces, and tiled floors, reflecting a modern lifestyle. Comparatively, most residents of non-Borey communities also have access to city water and electricity, but the quality and reliability can vary. Some areas experience low water pressure or occasional power cuts. Houses are often built closer together, and the

drainage systems are usually smaller or poorly maintained, causing flooding or unpleasant smells during heavy rain. Many homes use simple construction materials such as bricks, wood, or metal sheets. While the facilities, such as [observation], are not as modern or organized as in Borey neighborhoods. Also, they can adapt well to their environment and often maintain their houses through personal effort or help from neighbors.

It is important to note that non-Borey areas are not slums. Non-Borey neighborhoods in Phnom Penh usually have basic housing, electricity, running water, and access to small businesses or services. While the living environment may be more crowded or less organized, most residents maintain clean homes and have stable livelihoods. In contrast, slums often lack proper housing, sanitation, drainage, and security altogether, with residents living in temporary or unsafe conditions. Therefore, non-Borey areas represent informal but functional urban communities, not extreme poverty zones.

Residents of Borey generally belong to the middle-to upper-income group and they tend to have stable jobs in the formal sector, such as working in banks, private companies, or government offices. Because of their higher and more stable income, their spending often focuses on modern lifestyles including branded goods, private education for their children, quality healthcare, and leisure activities like dining out or family trips. In contrast, non-Borey households generally have lower and less stable incomes. Most residents prioritize basic necessities such as daily food, transportation, and affordable schooling. They often buy from local markets instead of supermarkets and prefer low-cost goods. Despite limited income, many families still value education and try to send their children to local schools.

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The lifestyle here is more modest but community-oriented, with neighbors often sharing resources or helping one another. In non-Borey neighborhoods, there is a wider economic gap. Some residents operate small shops, rent out rooms, or run local businesses, allowing them to live more comfortably. However, many others remain poor, relying on daily-wage jobs such as construction work, street vending, or motorbike taxi driving. This income is often unstable, depending on daily demand or weather conditions. The economic diversity creates visible inequality within the same neighborhood; some houses are newly built or renovated, while others are made from simple or temporary materials.

In Borey Piphup Tmey, the environment is clean, organized, and well-maintained. Streets are regularly cleaned, garbage is collected on schedule, and green spaces with trees and small gardens add to the pleasant atmosphere. The drainage system works efficiently, reducing flooding during the rainy season. Borey management also ensures that residents follow waste and cleanliness regulations, which helps maintain a healthy living environment. Also, the community is organized but tends to be more formal and structured. Interactions among residents often happen through planned events, such as community meetings, religious celebrations, or Borey-organized festivals. Most communication is done through online group chats, management announcements, or during monthly meetings led by the Borey committee. While this system helps maintain order and communication, social interaction can sometimes feel limited because many residents are busy with work or prefer privacy. However, when issues arise such as maintenance problems or neighborhood events, residents usually cooperate effectively through the formal complaint

system with written letter submitted to local environmental units and local authority in charge. This may be because of more educated or government civil servants reside. These rules include maintaining cleanliness, controlling noise levels, managing pets properly, and not altering the house façade without permission.

Security guards help enforce these rules and remind residents when violations occur. This creates a peaceful and orderly environment, but some residents feel the rules are too restrictive, especially regarding parking or outdoor activities. But in non-Borey areas, environmental problems are more noticeable. Garbage mismanagement is common; some residents leave waste in open areas or along the roadside due to irregular waste collection. Drainage systems are often small or blocked, leading to flooding and unpleasant odors during heavy rain. Streets can be muddy, and there is generally less greenery compared to Borey areas. Despite these challenges, residents still try to keep their surroundings clean through community efforts or self-initiated cleaning days. The sense of community is more informal, spontaneous, and personal. Neighbors frequently interact through daily activities, such as chatting while cooking, helping with small repairs, or watching each other's children. During community events like weddings, funerals, or festivals, everyone usually joins together to help with preparations and cleaning.

This close social connection creates a strong feeling of belonging and mutual support, even though the community lacks official organization or formal management. There are no written rules or formal enforcement. Instead, people rely on customary practices and informal negotiation to keep peace. If someone plays loud music or blocks the

road, neighbors often discuss it directly or involve a respected community member to mediate. This flexible approach helps maintain harmony but can sometimes lead to repeated conflicts when there is no strong authority.

In Borey Piphup Tmey, disputes such as noise complaints, parking issues, or property disagreements, are usually handled by the Borey management office or security guards. If the problem continues, it can be reported to the developer's representative or local authority. This formal system helps maintain fairness and prevents open conflict among residents. In non-Borey communities, conflicts are solved through informal means. Elders, community leaders, or village chiefs often play a key role in settling disputes. For example, if two families argue about land boundaries or noise, a respected elder may talk to both sides and help them reach an agreement. Only serious cases are taken to local authorities or the police. This traditional way of problem-solving reflects trust, respect, and social closeness among neighbors.

The comparison between Borey Piphup Tmey Chamkar Doung 1 and non-Borey areas in Phnom Penh shows clear differences in lifestyle, income, and living conditions. Borey residents, mostly from middle- to upper-income groups, enjoy modern houses with clean water, electricity, drainage, and strong security. Their environment is clean, organized, and well-managed, with formal rules and limited but structured social interaction. In contrast, non-Borey residents rely more on informal jobs and focus on daily needs. Their neighborhoods are more crowded, with weaker infrastructure and traffic problems, but people have strong community ties and help each other in daily life.

Overall, Borey areas represent planned and secure urban living, while non-Borey communities reflect informal yet supportive lifestyles. These differences highlight the social and economic gap within Phnom Penh's urban development, showing two sides of the city—modern growth and traditional community life.



Figure 25: Shops



Figure 26: Market.

Veng Sreng Boulevard Street Vendors – Sacrificing Quality for Affordability

Putheary MEAS

At first glance, Veng Sreng Boulevard is among one of the busiest roads in Phnom Penh, connecting people near and far to their designated locations to attend their day-to-day duties in the capital of the Kingdom of Cambodia. However, underneath the paved path and dense human activities lie a deep scar that most Cambodians, especially long-term residents, are afraid to talk about. Veng Sreng boulevard used to be a space that fostered resistance, where the exploited could voice their concerns and demand changes to better livelihoods. My heart ached just listening to the elders recalling their tales and reading the stories published on the internet, recalling the event that took place in 2014. It shows the rapid urban grow through industrial attracting mass employment, but encountered with violence

and justice as one elderly widow cried out,” how can his son was killed for joining the protest demanding for the increased salary for a decent work with only \$160 per month as garment factory work”. Another widow also claimed, “My husband died, when my daughter was just two months old, for joining such a violent protest”. As the only daughter and an orphan living with widow mother, my body shivered walking past the entrances of nearby factories, imagining the same situation happening right in front of my eyes. Veng Sreng Boulevard has grown so much in the past 10 years, yet the scars are still prominent during my observation.

Starting near Phnom Penh International Airport, the boulevard connects people from the Chom



Figure 27: Street Vendors.



Figure 28: Congestion.

Chao Flyover and Bypass in Chom Chao district to the Steung Mean Chey Junction in Mean Chey district. From Mean Chey, two other boulevards break off into Samdach Monireth Boulevard to the Northeast and the Chamkar Donung Boulevard to the South. Stretching 6.4 kilometers, Veng Sreng Boulevard was once dotted with factories mixed in with the formal and informal built environment. And now that Phnom Penh has expanded its territory further, the land along Veng Sreng Boulevard has become a gold mine for developers and investors. In mid-2024, there was a contrast between the new developers wanting to reap the benefits of the now-bustling urban community, and the factories continuing to benefit from Veng Sreng Boulevard's positive externalities, regardless of its dark past. The military bases near the airport are a reminder of the Khmer Rouge's troops continuing their resistance even after 1979. The factories as evidence of the garment workers who protested for livable wages. Now, the newer and taller buildings show how far Phnom Penh has come.

New things have the tendency to replace or push the old things away. This can also be applied to urban development, where new developments hold power over older developments, prompting them to redevelop or make changes in order to catch up. Many new developments such as K-mall, ISI Tower, and Vattanac Industrial Park look out of place surrounded by garment factories, storage units, and affordable room rentals. While educational institutions, such as Cambodia Institute of Agriculture and Technology and AI Language Center, along with other commercial services, reflect the evolution of space alongside people's needs. Even if their paychecks may not be enough to cover all those luxury expenses, there are still affordable ones close-by. Question remains on how long will this accessibili-

ty last? Will the rents remain the same? Groceries? And if the cost of living does get more expensive, will the salary of the factory workers respond to it accordingly?

Places near the boulevard or close to factories often have higher rents than areas further away. Small rooms, usually rented for \$150 to \$300 per month, are mostly occupied by low-income workers, especially factory laborers and informal sector employees. Larger apartments and houses, costing \$500 to \$800 per month, cater to middle-income families seeking more space and privacy. The smaller, cheaper rooms are often crowded, with poor ventilation and shared toilets. In contrast, the newer apartments near the main road are more modern, with better facilities, but they are unaffordable for most workers. Many people desire to live close to their workplaces to save time and money. However, some need to move further away from the main road as they cannot afford with the new rent. This is because of more new workers move in, land and house owners raise the price of the rent.

On the morning of May 15th, 2024, I walked along the area once again at 5:49 A.M. I observed that this difference in rent shows how Veng Sreng is changing — high demand and land development are increasing costs, while long-term low-income residents are gradually pushed to smaller, more distant areas. Small businesses, like food stalls and motorbike repair shops, becoming more common. These shops make the area more active and economically valuable, but they also make it harder for low-income renters. I feel that Veng Sreng Street is changing very fast. It used to be mostly an industrial area, but now it's becoming a mixed commercial and residential place. The difference in rent prices shows this change, it's a sign that the area is turning into a

Putheavy MEAS

modern industrial city zone or something in where that the higher-ups need to be taken into consideration for the future of the area's development. Additionally, the growing number of concrete apartments and small Boreys (Gated communities) are appearing beside old, informal houses. Some older rental units were demolished, and land prices rose, encouraging small owners to sell their plots to developers. These changes bring better infrastructure, lighting, and drainage, but they also contribute to making the area more expensive and reducing the availability of affordable housing.

Despite these challenges, residents continue to find ways to live and work here, demonstrating resilience and adaptability. I saw children playing in narrow alleys, women preparing food outside small rental blocks, and workers rushing to factories. The street is crowded, yet people have adapted to the limited space by creating informal kitchens, communal washing areas, and shared living arrangements. Networks are formed from people helping each other out with childcare, small repairs, and finding work.

I also observed the environmental challenges. Some neighborhoods are prone to flooding due to the poor drainage and services like waste collection are inconsistent. Many households rely on informal economic activities, like street vending or tailoring, to survive. Certain areas may also feel unsafe for a woman like me to traverse during nighttime. But no matter how resilient the people are, the rising land

prices and redevelopment projects stand as a threat for the long-standing communities, creating tension between economic growth and social stability.

Unfortunately, I am not knowledgeable enough to bring forth the heartbreaking history of Veng Sreng Boulevard. As part of the next generation, I am able to highlight the changes that take place during my time, while reflecting on what I have learned from the past. Housing on Veng Sreng Street is more than just a place to live, it highlights the everyday lives of people trying to balance their own duties, survival, and community.



Figure 29: Street's atmosphere.

Arakawa Resident-An Interesting Feature Around Affordable Housing

Lima CHEA

The “Arakawa Residence Area” is ideal for budget-conscious buyers seeking ownership in a house located behind “Royal Phnom Penh Hospital” on Russian Federation Boulevard, Sangkat Tuek Thla, Khan Sen Sok, Phnom Penh. It was developed by Arakawa Co., Ltd with units completed as of early 2023. The project aims to provide affordable homes for middle and low-income individuals and has seen successful sales. Arakawa Residence supplies about 1,632 condominium units with 4 varieties of types to pick from, a 22.7 sqm studio unit, a 23.9 sqm corner studio unit, a 46.3 sqm 2-bedroom unit, and a 47.5sqm corner 2-bedroom unit. Each unit is equipped with basic house furniture such as a kitchen and bathroom sink, a kitchen cabinet, a toilet, and more. Each type of studio unit will be priced

around \$30,000 to \$40,000, and the 2-bedroom units will cost around \$50,000 to \$60,000. Despite this, it has 2 options depending on the situation: people can buy this house by themselves, or they can rent it. There are three floors in each building dedicated to parking for cars, motorcycles, and bicycles. Additionally, each building has a floor filled with market and shopping stands, including cafés, salons, stationary stores, and AEON Max Value. International schools, restaurants, supermarkets, and almost every destination are within a 20-minute drive. That is close to the downtown areas, meaning that Arakawa Residence provide their residents with convenient access to the rest of the city.

Rent in Arakawa is generally lower than in other



Figure 30: The road during normal days.

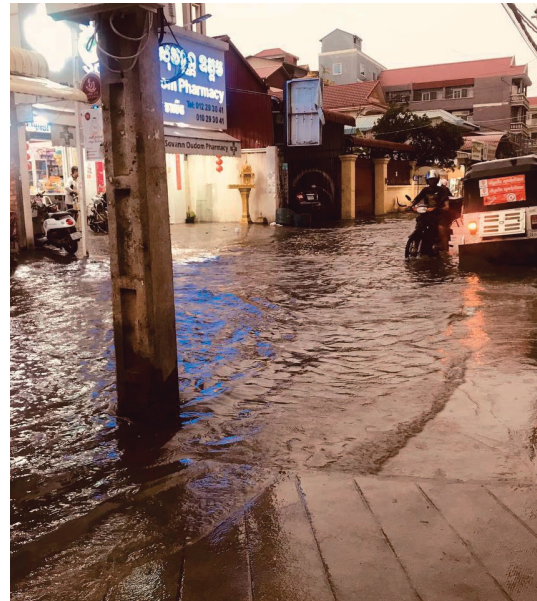


Figure 31: Flash Floods during rainy seasons.

Lima CHEA

central areas of Phnom Penh. In 2025, a small single room costs about \$80 to \$150 US dollars per month, depending on the unit size and its furnishings. While a larger room that includes 4 people costs about \$50 to \$90 US dollars per person. By contrast, near Toul Kork or Boeung Kak, similar rooms can cost \$200 to \$300 US dollars per month. The additional management fee for Arakawa Residence varies, with some rental listings including it for free and others charging around \$15 to \$40 per month, depending on the studio or unit size. This fee is separate from utility bills like water and electricity, cleaning services, taking out trash, and supplying the overall administration. Furthermore, both renters and buyers have to pay the motorcycle parking fee, which is around \$3 per month, and car parking is approximately \$44 per month. Monthly utilities are affordable, with water at \$0.70/m³ and electricity at \$0.25/kWh. Nearby food options range from street food at one or two dollars per meal to small cafés where meals cost roughly one to five dollars per day.

These factors together explain why the area is considered convenient, despite some prices seeming high compared to rural areas. Arakawa offers several free or low-cost amenities that improve residents' well-being. Public seating with free Wi-Fi under the AEON Max Value building is used by people for studying and socializing without paying for home internet. Artificial greenery and small parks create a calming environment without high maintenance costs. In addition, a vehicle-free road section is used for walking and exercise, and to reduce stress. Sometimes, the road is a priority for cars with pregnant women, disabled people, or heavy items. A children's playground is open to children who are under 8 years old, fostering social inclusion while decreasing screen time. These features reduce the

need for paid leisure spaces and help make city life more livable and supportive.

From a resident's point of view, living at Arakawa offers both comfort and both internal and external challenges. The environment generally feels safe, with security guards and cameras on each floor. Nearby traffic can make certain areas of the residence louder at night. The smaller units make it difficult for large families to store belongings or create private space. Maintenance issues, such as slow repair services or occasional water leaks, make residents seek outside services to fix these problems. The terrace in front of the residence is mostly used for clothes hangers, which does not allow for leisure. Compared to rural areas, it can be hard to trust new people in the city. Even though I live near other people's units, we never know each other. Sometimes my neighbor smokes a cigarette in front of the terrace, which spreads the smell of cigarettes to other people's units, including mine. Living there not only has internal problems, but also includes environmental troubles. Flooding during the rainy season adds health risks and makes driving difficult. However, most residents still prefer staying here because the price is affordable compared to other houses rented in the city. It also has the added benefits of a convenient location, safety measures, and easy access to modern facilities like the AEON Max Value supermarket, among other desirable stores.

In conclusion, the Arakawa Residential Area reflects a growing trend of compact and convenient housing developments designed for middle-income residents in Phnom Penh. Its location behind Royal Phnom Penh Hospital and along Russian Boulevard provides easy access to transportation, schools, supermarkets, and workplaces. With modern facilities, parking areas, and mixed-use spaces like AEON

Max Value, it offers a lifestyle that suits students, office workers, and small families seeking comfort and convenience within the city. However, living in Arakawa also comes with several challenges. The limited space of each unit makes it less suitable for large families, while noise, crowded shared areas, and occasional maintenance issues can affect daily comfort. Management and parking fees may also be difficult for tenants with lower incomes.

Despite these issues, the project shows how thoughtful urban design can improve accessibility and livability for residents. Overall, Arakawa Residence represents both progress and limitations in Phnom Penh's housing landscape. It provides valuable lessons for future projects on how to balance the cost of housing, urban comfort, functionality, and social well-being.



Figure 32: New Year decoration.



Figure 33: Open Space near Arakawa.

Chbar Ampov Market General Atmosphere in Front of the Market.



03

INFRASTRUCTURE & ENVIRONMENT

Essential Systems that Support the City



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Urban Environmental Challenges at Chbar Ampov Market - A Study of Waste, Traffic, and Hygiene

Kimlong THENG

Chbar Ampov Market is located along National Road number one, located in Sangkat Chbar Ampov 1, Khan Chbar Ampov in Phnom Penh. The market has an area of roughly 1ha and is located just 6 kilometers southeast of the city center. It is known for the fresh products, meats, and seafood that are sold at affordable prices for the local community.

This market used to close in March 2018 due to a fire outbreak caused by a stall within the market. The rebuilding project started one week later. Traffic congestion worsens as narrow roads become overloaded with merchants, automobiles, and pedestrians, resulting in delays and bad air quality. This has a direct impact on the health of the residents,

food vendors, and customers, particularly those who work long hours at the market. Urban and environmental factors also relate to collaborations between locals and authorities to improve the quality of life. This article discusses the areas and the sites surrounding the market related to urban and environmental challenges affecting the Chbar Ampov Market, which include waste, traffic, and hygiene, impacting local people.

Chbar Ampov market becomes active as early as midnight, but most active activities start from three o'clock in the morning when the sellers begin setting up their stores with fresh fruits and vegetables. At six o'clock in the morning, the area around the market starts to echo louder and louder as local



Figure 34: Chbar Ampov Market.

Kimlong THENG

people start their days. These visitors often arrive at the market using their motorcycles, especially those coming from farther areas. Nevertheless, walking is still more convenient and common, so most of the residents who live nearby prefer to shop on foot. In the morning, there were more people than at night because most of the customers are housewives and the elderly, who come to the market to buy food and have breakfast. Around half past seven, commuters flow onto the market road on different means of transportation (motorcycle, bicycle, remorque, and rickshaw), causing a traffic jam on the main street. People use this road as a shortcut, but the narrow road is already congested with vendors, small food stalls, piles of trash, pedestrians, and customers. In addition to congestion, most of the vehicles are old and release Carbon Monoxide (CO) that affects air quality, creating an unhealthy environment for the visitors who shop and eat around the market.

At the market, I noticed that the sellers were women around 40 years old, while a few middle-aged men also had stalls. Also, people living near the market were middle-income families who mostly owned business-like jewelry shop, money exchange, pharmacy, and some are selling daily item. A small percentage of the people who live there come from low-income families, most of them were street food vendors and there were also waste collectors. Everyone is affected by this congestion, as it lowers the air quality that affects food hygiene and customer health who sit at there too.

However, congestion is not the only cause, because many more sellers didn't care or think of ways to increase their product hygiene. Instead, they use low-quality products and sell a lot of unhealthy food. While sitting, I saw people and some street vendors throw the trash in one place until it became

a big pile of waste. Some vendors sell near these trash piles and their food becomes swarmed by flies. Even though the seller's products are not hygienic, there are people who come to buy from them. The reason is that the price of the food is cheaper than a normal restaurant. This draws in people who are working or students, to buy it for their daily breakfast or lunch.

Even though the customer brings their own packaging, they still use plastic to separate the different foods. I even saw some customers throw the trash on the ground next to the food stall even though the food stall has a trash bin. Almost eighty percent (80%) of the sellers use plastic for packaging. Furthermore, most customers do not bring their own bamboo handbag or hand-woven plastic bag for carrying around, but only around thirty percent (30%) of people use it and around seventy percent (70%) use plastic bags.

Most of the sellers are autonomously involved in waste clean-up around the market. They usually gather the waste in one spot, making it easier for waste collectors to pick it up later. In addition, some residents living nearby take part by cleaning their own front yards using personal tools such as brooms and dustpans. These house owners then place the trash neatly by the roadside, ready for collection. Thanks to these collective efforts, waste collectors can work more efficiently without spending extra time piling up the trash themselves. This shared responsibility also encourages social interaction and strengthens the bond among neighbors.

In the evening around 6:00 P.M., most people come back from work and they come to the market to eat, buy food, and products they need. The scene was lively than in the morning activity. The market

at night has a lot of street vendors that sell food at an affordable price. The price is around three thousand riels for the soup and rice for around five hundred to thousand riels. These vendors also package their food with plastic and foam paste, adding even more waste on the waste piles. Because the price is low, the customers are often construction workers and overtime workers. Interestingly, I saw that street vendors have their own trash can but most of the trash overflows. Most of the waste is the mix of the leftover fruit, damaged food, organic waste, and plastic. This creates an awful odor that makes it uncomfortable for those around it like pedestrians, the motorists, and sellers too. There were around 4 piles of waste that were located at different places. After I saw those piles, I waited, and I saw the waste collector (come with their cart that can push around to collect the trash). There are several piles of waste that are located around the market and there are only two places that have one big container to put all that waste. Afterward, there is a waiting period

for the garbage truck to come and collect it. Despite this system, the containers are always overflowing with trash.

In the morning, the market and the surrounding area are much cleaner than at night. This is because waste collection happens at midnight or around two or three in the morning. The waste collectors that comes to take it out are hired by a major waste management company operating in the area, called CINTRI. Although there is a trash collector, people around the market were helping them by cleaning and piling waste in one place to make collecting easier. This action has become a social norm. Not all people come to help, but they are also involved in making the market cleaner through the trash fee.

The infrastructure, narrow roads crowded with vendors and customers, and vehicles all limit equal participation in shopping or selling activities. Moreover, there are no designated parking spaces or sup-



Figure 35: Piles of Trash at the Chbar Ampov Market.



Figure 36: Dumping Site near the Market.

Kimlong THENG

port services for disabled individuals. This shows that the market is not yet inclusive for all members of the community. Improving accessibility and promoting inclusive design is essential to ensure that people with disabilities and older people can enjoy the same rights and opportunities as others in public spaces like Chbar Ampov Market.

Additionally, the market is still inaccessible to those with disabilities, with no ramps, wide walkways, or support services in place. This lack of inclusive design prevents disabled individuals from participating equally in economic or social activities on the market, hence perpetuating social inequality. Despite these worries, efforts by waste management authorities like CINTRI, as well as contributions from local vendors and individuals, have helped to ease some of the problems. Their work is especially visible during the morning when the atmosphere is cleaner. However, there are more works to be done which include improving waste management, en-

couraging food hygiene, controlling traffic flow, and constructing accessible infrastructure. These are the important steps toward making Chbar Ampov Market a cleaner, safer, and pleasant places for both the local and everyone from outside.

In conclusion, Chbar Ampov Market is a thriving and important element of Phnom Penh's local community, offering affordable commodities and daily necessities to people of all backgrounds. However, this thriving market is beset with serious urban and environmental challenges that endanger both public health and quality of life. Uncontrolled rubbish, transportation congestion, food hygiene issues, and a lack of adequate infrastructure to promote cleanliness and safety are all significant challenges. Excessive plastic consumption, overflowing garbage cans, and inadequate waste separation continue to harm the environment and generate unpleasant odors, especially in the evening when waste accumulates.



Figure 37: Sellers at Chbar Ampov market.



Figure 38: Sellers at the corner of the Market.

Basketball court in Royal University of Phnom Penh - Education, Leisure Space, and Mental Health

Sodane TANG

One of the places I most appreciate is often known as a public space within Basketball courts in the Royal University of Phnom Penh. As a student, I often come to school by motorbike and park at another section known as University Reservoirs in front of Building A and Hun Sen Library. From there, I often take a walk across the Basketball court to my class located in another building known as Building B. Throughout this walking distance, I have appreciated the street connection, the formation of space within these basketball courts that entails diverse activities of people movement, as well as sport and economic activities.

The basketball court is an open space where, during the day, the sunlight provides warmth and energy

to people, plants, and animals in this space. Most of the people who come to visit the area are not just students from the Royal University of Phnom Penh, but students from other universities, staff members, or local community residents who are seeking somewhere to relax.

I asked my friends and some of the people who came to visit the basketball courts, with their responses being somewhat similar to one another; for a spacious seating area, sports, and the fresh air. It is very common to find university staff and students participating in activities together, such as sports (basketball, badminton, football, basketball, and volleyball), singing, and playing guitar. However, the crowd subsides when it becomes too hot,



Figure 39: Boule Pétanque Court.



Figure 40: Basketball Court and Open Spaces.

Sodane TANG

especially from the late morning until 4:00 P.M. or 5:00 P.M., when most people would come back to gather again.

Spacious seating allows for a clear view of the playing field with enough room to also serve as a table for eating or as a workbench for those with books and laptops. The lack of restrictions related to how students can use the bench is likely beneficial for their physical and mental health. People seem to feel free on the benches and the courts. In this space, I have seen people talk about the feelings and hardships they experienced, both good and bad. People say that the basketball court helps them to feel good while helping them breathe fresh and healthy air. Feeling good, while reducing stress and anxiety, adds energy to life.

It is just the lack of trees and shading that doesn't allow people to sit during the day. Additionally, the falling leaves could be distracting and messy to the calming atmosphere of the place. Surrounding the court, there are trees that provide shade, protecting from sunlight, generating good air quality, and providing a cooling system for both humans and animals. I have noticed that most people like to visit in the evening from 4:00 P.M. to 7:00 P.M.; they like to sit where there is the most view so they can see everything around them. A few months ago, the basketball court was used as a motorbike parking lot due to a new enrollment and alumni meeting event. Turning this place into parking lots as a response to the lack of space within the university, and a chance to earn some income from parking services. But this also affected students who use the space for recreation.

At the corner of the basketball court is a water tank that is accessible to everyone. I noticed that there

was enough water for the students to drink, but now there is no hot water and only cold water. There is shade to protect you while you fill your water bottle and it saves you a lot of money if you plan to reuse your bottle. If you don't want to use the water fountain during your time playing sports or studying, there is also a nearby café known as "Café Nisset shop" located on the west side of the basketball court, next to Hun Sen library, where you can get clean bottled water, but not for free. The café also serves as an open space for students, food, and soft drinks to be sold. There are lots of chairs and tables to sit at, work, and enjoy the view near the lake and the shade of the trees. At the same time, the chairs and tables are old and can be unsafe. On the eastern side of the basketball court is a restaurant that sells breakfast and lunch as well as pastries and drinks (coffee, orange juice, milk, orange juice, etc.) Most students will be there before class or during break times. As for hygiene, there are always cleaners, so it is uncommon to see any trash outside the garbage bins.

Since the area is popular for students, it is also a space used for organizing events, mainly live music festivals during public holidays, and charity days. I believe it would bring more opportunities to the space by creating community events such as competitions and sports clubs to attract more funding. Additionally, around the basketball court, there are two business areas with a café and a market within walking distance, so you can go buy water or snacks after you get tired from playing or eat there while watching others play. Sometimes the basketball court is also used as another parking space when there is a big event, and currently, it is being used as a parking lot because of the new construction block, Building B parking lots.

In conclusion, while it can be inaccessible sometimes, mostly during public charity events or other public events, the basketball court at RUPP is very multi-purpose and filled with services that create a welcoming atmosphere for students, staff, and locals alike.



Figure 41: Basketball Complex being used for parking.

Wat Slaeng Junction (Ring Road No.3) - The Push and Pull Effects of Ring Roads

Dina RET

Land use change and infrastructure development are seen as one of the major factors in urbanization and capital accumulation through the circulation of land values and investment. This often-taken place, not only within inner cities, but also in the surrounding greenfield located suburban areas, has been used to turn into an urban center and transportation zone. As time passes by, infrastructure improvement in peri-urban areas remained limited. Most villages remain isolated and rural. There is a lack of basic amenities that most people take for granted today.

In this article, I am very much interested in the newly constructed Ring Road No. 3, connecting Phnom Penh to the newly developed airport from NR3 and

then extended to NRN2 and NR21 linking Phnom Penh and Kandal province. The Ring Road No.3 is also known as Xi Jinping Boulevard. The name that give honor to the current president of the People's Republic of China (PRC). I chose a location at the Third Ring Road overpass, crossing National Road No. 2, located in Ambeus village, Cheung Kar commune, Kandal Steung district, Kandal province. There is a seasonal floodplain and paddy field, obtaining seasonal water from Prek Thnot river originated from Aural Mountain, through Kampong Spue province, and with water from Basac river, the Mekong tributary, starting from Phnom Penh down to Kandal and to Vietnam before reaching the South China Sea. I observed that the 3rd Ring Road was built with the aim of reducing traffic con-



Figure 42: Vendors under the bridge.

gestion in Phnom Penh while also creating traffic capacity on the outskirts of the city.

When I went to study the road, I saw that many vendors were under the bridge, but their businesses seemed to be safe. As a result of their business being under the bridge, it caused danger to them and created traffic congestion. Each vendor did not have to pay rent. When I asked some of them, they told me they are only open from morning to evening. As I rode by every day, I noticed there was no electricity under the bridge. Therefore, each vendor, such as a rice seller or a food vendor, must bring water from home to cook (using gas from a gas cylinder, which they also brought from home) for the people who travel there. Additionally, there are no toilets under the bridge as it is originally planned in the construction design. This is problems for the vendors or the people who stop there to pay their bills. As for each of their sales, I sat down and saw that they made the effort to keep the surroundings clean. None of the vendors had any garbage on the street or in the place where they sold their goods. They cleaned it up well when they finished, they took their garbage, burned it, and went home.

The reason they do not stay open at night is that there is no electricity under the bridge, so they only stay open until 6:00 P.M. Each of their sales pose's safety and security issues due to the lack of a formal connection to electricity grid. While there are streetlights on the bridge above, they remain on throughout the night, providing a semblance of safety. However, the lights beneath the bridge are unreliable, often flickering out, leaving the area in complete darkness. This unpredictability adds an element of fear to the otherwise quiet nights, as the surrounding area becomes enveloped in darkness. Business operations in the village are heavily reliant

on gas engines. The engines provide the necessary power for the electric appliances needed to run the shops and stalls. These gas-powered systems are not only inefficient but also serve as a reminder of the village's need for modern, reliable power sources. As night falls, business activity ceases, as there is no electricity to power the appliances. This creates a clear demarcation between the working day and the quietness in the evening.

There are no proper bathrooms or a reliable dumping site for waste. However, in an effort to maintain cleanliness, local vendors and villagers burn the trash, trying their best to keep the area clean despite the primitive methods. The lack of sanitation infrastructure is a constant reminder of the gap between the village's past and present needs.

While the village does offer space for children to play, it's not the most ideal environment. The absence of safe and structured playgrounds or recreational areas means that children are often left to play in more dangerous and unsupervised places. The lack of access to monks and religious services has also impacted the spiritual life of the village. Traditionally, monks would visit various communities to offer blessings and guidance. However, this village has been left without this spiritual connection, contributing to a sense of isolation. Additionally, the lack of access to clean water forces residents to carry water from their homes or from distant sources, further complicating daily life.

For me personally, I want to develop a plan for the businesses under bridges. There are two stages to this plan. First, I want to design a protective barrier and install equipment such as a copper and stone fence to stop people from selling under the bridge. Second, I want to choose a new location for them

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to sell their goods without the high risks they face under the bridge. I want to create a message for the sellers to be safe. Having access to proper clean water, toilets, and electricity makes it easier for vendors to conduct their business. This would also make it safer for travelers while reducing traffic congestion. Improving safety and proper environmental management remain the key for both the local authority in charge and the nearby residents who make use of the space for business.

In conclusion, the village, once surrounded by forests and rice fields, now stands as a blend of past and present struggles. The beauty of nature has been replaced by the challenges of modernity, leaving the village to cope with its environmental, infrastructural, and social difficulties. Yet, despite these hardships, there is a resilience and determination among the people to continue, trying their best to adapt and survive in an ever-changing world.



Figure 43: Essential Items of the Vendors.



Figure 44: Vendors adjacent to highway road.

The Change of Atmosphere in the Sub-Urban of Phnom Penh after a Road Development

Somanith CHAN

I haven't thought about this road for a while, and it was only after I had laid my foot on the smooth concrete for my first observation that I started to reminisce of how things used to be. In the past, reddish brown dirt would stretch as far as the eyes could see, and aside from the three or so houses, everything else was just green; cultivated or wild. After the road development, the reddish-brown dirt is no more and instead replaced by a concrete road, which is also the name of the area nowadays that is known locally as the Plov Betong (ផ្លូវបេតុង).

I used to live near the Old Market in the Daun Penh district of Phnom Penh, so I wasn't sure when the road development happened. But I remember how I would come here to visit my grandparents, who

were living in my uncle's house; the same house that I am currently taking care of, as everyone has moved away. It was such a big shift from Psar Chas commune of Daun Penh district, one of Phnom Penh's city centers, to Prek Thmei commune of Chbar Ampov district on the southeast edge of Phnom Penh.

Throughout February and March of 2024, the site of our observation that stretches at 102.57 meters, contains a laundromat, a tailor shop, a bowling yard, rental rooms, and four street businesses: three shops and one stall. Furthermore, there was once a graveyard here, but it was demolished, and the land is now up for sale, while the rest of it was replaced by scrap yards. However, if we look further, within



Figure 45: Day and night comparison of the site facing the west

Somanith CHAN

a 1-kilometer radius from the centermost position of our site, the residents have access to various services ranging from religious and recreational, child-care and medicine, education and job opportunities, hospitality and daily essentials. Furthermore, there is a roundabout leading to a bridge that would take you to Takmau City, where most of the nearest bus stops are located. Another highlight of the area is Monisovann monastery, known by locals as Campus Ka'ek monastery.

I noticed how human settlements in Phnom Penh tend to spread out from the main road or some kind of landmark that draws people to. And for this area, human concentration also follows a similar pattern, spreading from the main road to the area closest to the monastery before reaching the smaller roads. This urban periphery has been transformed by road development. The concrete road gives both the locals and outsiders easier access to the area by using it as an alternative route from the nearby congestion or road blockage. But since some of the nearby roads that connect the Concrete Road to other areas are not available on digital maps, outsiders are prompted to rely on their courage and ingenuity.

If you think this area is quiet, it's because you are here at the wrong time. There are three rush hours in this area. The first from 3:00 A.M. to 7:00 A.M., the second from 11:00 A.M. until 1:00 P.M., and the third from 4 P.M. to 6 P.M. This is a result of devoted Buddhist attending their morning recital, health enthusiast exercising inside and near the monastery, adults and children attending their duties, shopkeepers opening their doors, etc. Business activity seems to shift throughout the day, with canteens switching out their breakfast menu and fast-food carts rolling in during the evening. The traffic mostly consists of pedestrians, motorbikes, and bicycles, with the oc-

casional medium-sized and heavy vehicles carrying recyclable and construction materials.

Mobile vendors can also be seen passing by on their bicycles, motorbikes, and rickshaws, bringing unique goods to the site. I was able to haggle a good deal with them, but they are often hard to catch because they tend to be very speedy. I was also shocked to know that some of the vendors, both locals and mobiles, aren't well-versed with QR code scanning for e-payment. Most of them blame their age, but some show a reluctance to adapt. Since everyone can come and go as they please, accountability and security can be an issue. Contacts would be exchanged if the locals are satisfied with the quality provided by the new vendors. This ease of access brings forth the concern for safety and security, especially in a low-density peri-urban environment.

The shift in atmosphere can be felt the most during nighttime when everything used to be pitch black with only one dimly lit streetlamp. Even after the road development, there is not an abundance of public lighting. However, this prompted locals to install electrical and solar lighting in front their property. While they are only doing this for their own sake, their lamps also light others' path unintentionally. Aside from lightings, watchdogs are also employed by the residents to tighten their security. I find it funny how bad things rarely happened at night during my observation. There was one incident when my sister's shop got robbed in the quiet afternoon. Although there is always local authority nearby, there weren't many human eyes to help us identify the perpetrator.

The height of human activities in this area is during weekends, national holidays or when there is a funeral or wedding. Their activities breathe life into

the site from 8:00 P.M. to 11:00 P.M. but things quiet down at 11:00 P.M. due to the law that prohibits late-night noise in non-commercial areas. During my observation, many weddings and funerals were held on the developed road, blocking the area for the residents' day to day life for one to three days. I was told that a request is needed if people want to use the road as a venue while monetary compensations are only necessary for officers or local authorities who would assist the traffic flow and security. People would still hold these events even if the road development didn't happen, but the site has become more attractive as it is now higher, more solid, and able to evade seasonal flooding, unlike other areas with more built environments. Many of the locals chose to mitigate the flood by building higher foundation to keep the water from entering their homes rather than creating more openings for the rain.

Road parking and waste management should be discussed. While on the road I observed is vast, the road parking ended up minimizing it and pushing pedestrians closer to the ongoing traffic while blocking both the pedestrians and the vehicles' view. Even if I didn't encounter any physically limited individuals, the situation combined with the smooth concrete road can be dangerous for the pedestrians who are often elders or children. And although there are times when no one is parking on the street, another issue that would arise is waste management. The designated dumping spots along the road actually do a great job of maintaining order. Yet, waste management could still pose a problem because of how unprotected they are from the environment. Since there is no garbage can, the waste is often packaged into plastic bags of various size and quality that the locals could find. The waste from low quality packaging and management could easily fly away, release harmful chemical into the air, or seep

into the soil; in addition to people choosing to litter the site whenever they felt like it. Oftentimes, people like to blame CINTRI, the waste collecting company in my district, for being incompetent and not using a bigger truck, unaware of the small entry points into the area. Although CINTRI was very competent during my site observation, most of the time, the waste would pile up from recent local events, shops, or people moving out of their rental rooms, posing more risks to the environment and local accessibilities from the unprotected waste disposals.

Ecological destruction is always expected from the urbanization process. There were a lot of tree and foliage in the past ten years or so. There are some locals who are still able to maintain the greenery as they continue to rely on agriculture since the area is quite close to the river, allowing them to utilize the Bassac mass to fertilize their land. The most common orchards in the area are Longan and Luck Bamboo. As I have mentioned before, green is being replaced by grey and sooner or later all the local ecology might be gone if we aren't careful. Factories, room rentals, and markets are all essential to a growing city, but too many of them could be detrimental to the people's well-being and the surrounding areas. Local authorities should be on high alert regarding the rising negative externalities due to rapid urbanization and growing population.

In retrospect, it is obvious for development pattern to move from the main road to the smaller and more secluded roads. Local infrastructure and services are able to sustain the neighborhoods with additional inputs from outsiders. I believe that the locals' quality of life would be drastically improved if attention is paid in tackling those minor issues such as flash flood, waste mismanagement, and nightlight. Local

Somanith CHAN

authorities need to monitor the urbanization rate to ensure adequate development while maintaining the image of the suburbs. The road network should be expanded and further connected for more accessibility. Green space and water bodies should be preserved to maintain the local biosphere and mitigate climate change. People's accessibility, safety, and security should be the number one priority.



Figure 46: Junkyard Parking.



Figure 48: Tomb Demolition.



Figure 47: Waste dumping.



Figure 49: Mobile Night Vendor.



Figure 50: Monks.



Figure 51: Human activities of the site near the junkyard to the east.

Observation near IFL traffic light - Traffic Density and the Opportunities for Vendors

Socbeat CHEN

The Russian Federation Boulevard is often known to be one of the busiest roads in Phnom Penh as it connects many different areas together, from business to education to market to residential. My site is in front of the gate of the Institute of Foreign Language, the section between street 261, connecting from Kampuchea Krom Blvd, where congestion would show up every now and then, even outside of the rush hours.

This journal entry documents the activities of street vendors in front of the Traffic light at the Royal University of Phnom Penh. Unfortunately, and rather ironically, the presence of vendors, motorcycles, and pedestrians contributes directly to its congestion and safety issues. This environment encap-

sulates both the positives and negatives of an urban lifestyle in Phnom Penh. On the one hand, it is lively and offers great potential. On the other hand, it fails to bring about safety, accessibility, and orderliness.

The area near the front of the Institute of Foreign Language reflects the dynamic life of the city. It's a place where commerce, education, and everyday movement come together. Despite its small size, it attracts a large crowd daily, especially students who come to eat, socialize, or rest after class. The mix of food vendors and small businesses makes it an affordable and convenient destination. However, the same elements that make it lively—vendors, motorcycles, and heavy pedestrian use- also create congestion and safety problems.



Figure 52: The Russian Federation Boulevard sidewalk.



Figure 53: Trash bins along the street 261.

As a student, I used to work part-time for Food Panda delivery. I often visit and travel to the areas opposite the traffic light near the Royal University of Phnom Penh. I paid attention to the people's manner when they moved and arrived in the area. It is a rather busy site, especially at night. There are many pedestrians, vehicles, food vendors, and small shops on the street. Many people would stop by to purchase food or snacks, including students, workers, and travelers.

During my observation, I saw that the area is heavily congested, but people can still maneuver through the space comfortably. There are no real pedestrian pathways, and therefore walking is unsafe, as people walk in the traffic lanes with vehicles. Some local businesses will hire private security staff to assist them with vehicle traffic and people crossing, or people parking their vehicles. Traffic management has become normalized in Phnom Penh, which is a place where traffic congestion has become a normal part of routine.

One of the biggest problems here is traffic congestion. It really builds up during busy periods such as 7:00 A.M. to 8:00 A.M., 11:00 A.M. to 12:00 P.M., and 4:00 P.M. to 7:00 P.M. The main causes of the congestion are the lack of respect for traffic laws, as well as bad discipline on the road. For example, many drivers disregard the traffic direction and stop their vehicles in the middle of the road to buy food, or park them inappropriately. Street food vendors also set up along the side of the road, which occupies the space for cars and motorcycles. Pedestrians walk on the road, making it even worse, as they are also in danger since there is no pedestrian path.

The traffic light itself is another issue I discovered. The intersection does not have a left-turn signal,

which obliges the left-turning vehicles to cut across the flow of forward-going traffic from the opposite direction. This results in more confusion and can also block the traffic flow completely. The road shoulders that could be sidewalks are full of parked vehicles or street vendors. The students and other pedestrians now walk on the road and next to vehicles. There are no proper sidewalks or systems to organize the movement. Cars and motorcycles park on the roadside, blocking walking paths. People with disabilities are particularly disadvantaged because the area lacks accessible routes. It is possible for them to enter the area, but it is very hard and unsafe. There are no accessible paths, ramps, or walkways for people with mobility problems or in wheelchairs. Access is almost impossible unless you get help in the face of blocked sidewalks and traffic constantly going by. The traffic congestion during rush hours is made worse by careless parking, the absence of left-turn traffic signals, and general rule violations. The street is fairly narrow, just wide enough for two lanes of traffic. Public buses do not travel this way, so the street is mostly busy with small vehicles, tuk-tuks, and motorbikes.

I also noticed that most of the food here is quite affordable and tasty, especially for the students and nearby workers, with many of the shops being open for 24 hours to accommodate the night owls still studying or working past their bedtimes. This realization helps me understand the safety and security level of the site after seeing how lively the area continues to be from day to night. Additionally, the food options and restaurant setups help us understand the range of age groups that often come into the area, ranging from young people to middle-income working customers, focusing on fast and convenient meals. The street is full of small businesses, each trying to attract students and those passing by.

Socheat CHEN

The availability of food carts and small businesses adds to the affordability of the area for students and visitors. In this area, we found street vendors as well as several shops selling food, grilled skewers, seafood, and coffee.

While this neighborhood isn't flawless, it exemplifies the daily rhythm of Phnom Penh: lively, noisy, and occasionally frenzied, yet teeming with life. It's a blend of urban growth and local heritage. One can see people adapting to poor infrastructure to

make things function; they either park on the side, walk on the red, or set up small food stalls. However, this informality also reveals the weaknesses of urban planning in the city. The lack of pedestrian paths, traffic management, and accessibility design shows that the area grew without much coordination. As Phnom Penh continues to expand, such areas highlight the urgent need for better planning, safety rules, and public spaces that consider everyone—including people with disabilities.



Figure 54: Intersectoin between IFL's gate, The Russian Boulevard, and Street 261.

The Trade-off for Road Development

Sreyich MAO

The road conditions in my village known as Phum Thmey, Sangkat Baek Chan, Khan Kamboul, Phnom Penh, hadn't been developed until the middle of 2024. People in my village have a difficult time traveling on the road due to the fact that it is too slippery and muddy when it is raining. This journal is from my observation of the before and after the road development.

As I have mentioned, the road used to be very slippery and muddy, so it was dangerous to ride while it was raining, but it was possible to travel if you were not in a hurry. The villagers don't seem to look very busy either, because most of the villagers are working outside of the village, and most of them don't have much free time at home. A majority of

the people in the house are old people who couldn't work much, while the kids would go to school or play nearby. Every day, before my village was developed into a paved village, the villagers were less active on the road. People were just riding back and forth. It was not only from my perspective, but I also asked one of the villagers, who told me how the weather used to be very hot and dusty to travel, making it difficult for everyone, especially when it would rain, where it very scary. In the pictures provided, we can see the road that was cleaned by the government with concrete being poured in, about 900 meters long in the village, and the result is clean, spacious, easy to travel, and less slippery.



Figure 55: Street's atmosphere.

Sreypich MAO

The neighbors also started to put up fences around their property. In addition to pouring concrete, the government has provided many light poles in the village, making it easier to travel at night. Many activities after the concrete and paved roads were developed, rickshaws and trucks start to come to sell things and food in my village almost every day. For the elderly, in the evening, at 6:00 P.M. and 7:00 P.M., they would go for walks to exercise. As for the children, they also played on the street. Speaking of full night activities, in my village, at 9:10 P.M., it is not yet quiet with all the motorbikes still traveling in the village. It is very dark on the road with small lights next to the fence in front of the villagers' houses. If you come here for the first time, you would think it looks a little scary, but the villagers don't think so because it is their home, so it is not so bad. We can

see in the picture here the road atmosphere in my village at night. The area is now equipped with a lot of lights along the road from the beginning of the village to the end of the village, which makes it easy to travel without fear at night. Although it is easy to travel, there is one thing that makes it difficult in the village: the garbage is piled up in front of people's houses because the garbage truck cannot get in. As the road was just finished recently, vehicles with a heavy load are not allowed to travel on it yet to avoid damage.

In conclusion, this road development has changed my village a lot. It makes our lives easier when it comes to traveling and enjoying our evening. But other problems started to arise with reckless drivers and waste piling up.



Figure 56: Sidewalk alongside the pagoda.

The Usage of a Sidewalk at a Small Alleyway Street Near Royal Hospital

Theara SON

There is a topic that I would like to write about: a small street with no sidewalks, in the place where I live. The location is in Sangkat Teuk Thla, Khan Sen Sok, Phnom Penh. It is known to be a bustling residential area filled with not just apartments, rooms, or houses for people to live in, but also the diverse and ever-changing street culture and business as well.

At 7:00 in the morning, the road is very congested because of the large number of commuters residing in the apartment building in this area who leave their home for work, causing traffic. In the afternoon, from 12:00 P.M. to 1:00 P.M., the road is less congested because some people have not left work yet, but at 5:00 P.M., it is very congested as

everyone comes back to their apartment or rented rooms. Everything becomes quiet at 9:00 P.M. to 10 P.M. Additionally, next to the road in the area, there is a pagoda that is a place for worship and a place for gathering during religious festivals. The monks would come to give alms at 10 A.M. every day. As for garbage collection time, it is generally collected between 1:00 A.M. and 2:00 P.M. At noon, most of the garbage in this area is not that much compared to other areas.

This area is surrounded by mainly apartments and houses. There is also a condominium in this area with many high-rise apartments. It is part of the windbreak, but if there are many such buildings in the area, this could cause wind loss or collapse. On



Figure 57: Walking on the site.



Figure 58: Plumber Posters on the wall.

Theara SON

the other hand, when there is heavy rain, this area is prone to flooding for a long time, 2 to 3 hours, then it subsides. This road also has no trees or green spaces. It is a type of concrete road with small gaps along the road. There are food stalls on the side of the road. It is difficult to travel by motorbikes, bicycles, cars, and pedestrians. Most of the people passing through the area are students and workers. The activities include buying food on the street, traveling, doing business, and providing services for other travel purposes. The road there is narrow and difficult for people with disabilities to travel because there are no clear signs to divide the road.

There are no sidewalks for pedestrians, and sometimes it is dangerous to walk. From what I see every day, street vendors block the road for cars, motorbikes, and pedestrians. This road is difficult for people with disabilities and for walking in general. There are no parking spaces for motorcycles and cars along this road. There is not much lighting infrastructure on this road, but one does see security cameras in each house, because the houses in the area are rented houses and houses for business. Another problem is the lack of a good enough drainage system in the construction of the roads, causing flooding when it rains. The other issue is damage from the water, making it difficult to walk and sometimes even dangerous. Another risk is that the wiring is very messy.

On the other hand, if we look at the infrastructure, the power lines are placed on poles along the road, which makes it difficult for fire trucks to reach and

intervene immediately in case of an emergency. The security and order in this area are not very chaotic because in this area, most people raise animals to be guards and take care of the houses. If you look at the garbage disposal is not good at all. The garbage is placed on the streets without proper tying. This could disturb people's living, such as health, hygiene, and work, or clog the drainage system, which, once again, causes flooding.

I used to live in this area before, and I think it is a very nice place, but after my observation, it has become very clear with the many problems coming from the area. I hope people and the authorities are aware of these issues so it would not become more severe.



Figure 59: Small Local Business.

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Royal Palace Park Activity on the Park at an Afternoon.





04

SOCIAL SPACE

Places where people gather, interact,
negotiate and exchange ideas

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RUPP Canteen - An ethnographic study on public space and food services

Linna PHEAV

The university canteen is a pivotal component of campus life, functioning as more than a food service provider. It plays a crucial role as a space for social interaction, connections, and meeting diverse needs of the entire university community across all levels, including students, faculty members, alumni, and visitors. At the Royal University of Phnom Penh (RUPP), there are five distinct canteens, each possessing its unique operational and spatial characteristics. Among these five canteens, I decided to select one of them for my focused observation. The canteen is located towards the center-north of the main academic and administrative building complex on the RUPP campus. My choice was driven by three key aspects: its unrivalled central location, its consistent seven-day operation, and its role as an

inclusive venue welcoming both members of the university and external visitors.

If one has ever visited this university campus, one will undoubtedly recognize the strategic location of this particular canteen. It stands precisely in the heart of RUPP, amidst a cluster of major academic buildings and administration buildings. This central positioning places it right next to Building A, the oldest structure on campus. Nowadays, this building serves thousands of students and administrative staff. Surrounding the canteen are other crucial academic hubs, including Building B, D, T, and STEM. Furthermore, this canteen is enveloped by extensive public open spaces. These include various sports facilities, such as basketball and volleyball courts, a



Figure 60: Rupp Canteen.

Linna PHEAV

huge football field, an artificial pond, and peaceful garden areas perfect for relaxing and socializing. As a direct result of its unbeatable location, the canteen has become the most visible, accessible, and essential place for students and staff to meet their fundamental need for food and refreshment.

What truly sets this canteen apart from all others is its uninterrupted daily operation. It runs continuously from early morning until late at night, ensuring that every student across all three study shifts (morning, afternoon, and evening) can access its services when needed. Even on official holidays for the students and staff, this canteen remains open, ready to serve food and beverages to individuals engaged in self-study, leisure visitors, and attendees of various campus events. Witnessing this level of commitment, activity, and constant use, I have affectionately named this establishment the “Active Canteen”.

Beyond its role as a food provider, this canteen performs a far more important function. I see it as a place that acts as a crucial communal space—a welcoming, neutral ground for everyone who steps onto the university grounds. The canteen draws a diverse crowd for alumni returning to reminisce, students from other provinces and cities continuing their education, and general visitors enjoying the campus open spaces. Crucially, I have observed that its patrons are not limited to just Cambodian students. It frequently hosts groups of international students, including those from China and Laos, often socializing in groups of two or more. This dynamic mix solidifies the canteen’s role as the genuine, diverse, and vibrant social heartbeat of the entire university community.

The structure of the canteen consists of two rows of structures facing each other, with ten food plots in each row. Constructed from brick with corrugated iron roofs and tiled floors, each food stall is uniform in size and design. They present a compact, medium-sized backroom dedicated to cooking and dishwashing, with an open front space furnished with tables and chairs for dining. The design also creates a central walkway that separates the food stall rows as a convenient shortcut for people navigating the canteen. Between these two rows, there was an open central space, featuring planted trees and surrounding cement benches, intended to provide shade, natural atmosphere, and good air circulation, creating a clean environment. An integrated surface drainage system was also installed to control water runoff.

However, this intended design for free movement has been significantly compromised. The open central area is now densely occupied by over ten more vendors selling snacks and supplementary food items in crowded proximity, poor space conditions, and messiness. While their specific offerings differ, they are differentiated by stall decoration, food item innovation, and hygiene practices. This concentration of vendors in the open walkway, combined with high customer traffic during peak hours, has led to severe spatial congestion within the canteen. My daily observations reveal that the facility’s key competitive advantages are its food diversity, ease of access, and, most importantly, its operational consistency.

The restaurant’s menu is heavily influenced by the time of day and the popular culinary preferences of the customers. Its operation is defined by three predictable peak hours, demanding high flexibility from vendors to control and facilitate it. Firstly, the

morning peak at 8:30 A.M. to 9:00 A.M. coincides with the first break time when most students come to serve their breakfast. Secondly, the lunch peak, around 11:15 A.M. to 12:00 P.M., is the busiest period for lunch when every student finishes their class, and the staff's lunch time. Lastly, the afternoon peak, around 3:00 P.M. to 3:20 P.M., is just before students are ready to depart home.

During these rushes, vendors must do more than serve food; they act as social coordinators. When seating runs out, they proactively ask seated patrons to share their tables. They also manage customer expectations by offering reassurance when cooking times exceed the norm. However, the crowded nature of the canteen means patrons rarely linger. The combination of limited space, noise, and the visual pressure of others waiting for a seat encourages a quick dining turnover.

Foot traffic is lighter between 6:00 P.M. and 8:00 A.M., mostly attracting customers who need an early coffee and tea to start their day, even if they have not had breakfast yet. From 6:00 A.M., the best-selling morning items are rice with pork, hot noodles, and rice porridge. Vendors have to adapt to this pattern by practicing pre-cooked components like fried meats and eggs to facilitate fast, efficient service. By noon, vendors are stocked with fresh ingredients, such as vegetables, meats, and fish, that were bought from the market. They offer made-to-order dishes, such as stir-fries (ginger stir-fry, beef and vegetable mixes), various soups and stews (sour fish soup, Machu Kroeung soup, Machu Yuon soup, etc.). Rice with pork remains a constant option due to its convenience, flavor, affordability, and speed relative to custom orders. In the mid-afternoon, from 2:00 P.M. to 4:00 P.M., the canteen remains active, serving students on break time. Popular snacks include

Pâté bread, sandwiches, fried potatoes and bananas, fried meatballs, grilled eggs, steamed buns, and pickled fruits. In the evening, students form groups to have special evening dishes like papaya salad, fried noodles, and fried rice.

Pricing is highly accessible, ranging from \$0.50 to \$2.50 (2,000 riels to 10,000 riels), which the majority of students can afford. Prices for common items are fixed and rarely change; for example, rice with pork is consistently priced at \$1.00 to \$1.25 (4,000 riels to 5,000 riels). The consistency means regular customers often bypass asking for the price and simply pay the expected amount, speeding up transactions. This affordability is a key factor in the canteen's constant activity, ensuring students, particularly those from provinces, can enjoy regular meals.

Vendors gain the right to operate through a bidding process, and many observed vendors have family members or relatives working within the university. For rapid, smooth operation, each stall is staffed by at least three people, typically family members, such as spouses, siblings, and cousins. However, there is one stall that employs current female university students to assist with plating, serving, hosting, and dishwashing. Their work is highly synchronized. Roles requiring specific expertise, such as beverage preparation and head chef, have low turnover and are staffed by individuals with formal training or work experience. Less specialized roles, such as customer service, snack sales, and cleaning, rely on continuous on-the-job training.

Financial management is typically overseen by one specific person per stall. The canteen primarily uses the traditional method of cash payment. However, the introduction of QR codes and bank transfer payments has provided a more convenient,

Linna PHEAV

time-saving, and reliable alternative. Even so, this modernization presents challenges, such as slow internet, which can force customers to ask for credit, some customers accidentally overpay, and vendors occasionally worry about unconfirmed payments. Furthermore, the overall canteen remains low-tech. Vendors continue to operate using traditional methods, which necessitates a larger human workforce for every task, including equipment management, cooking, cleaning, cash handling, and quality control are all human-dependent processes.

Based on my daily observations, I have noticed that most patrons visit in groups of two or more; they can be friends, classmates, or regular companions, and they often introduce their friends to each other. The long, communal arrangement of the tables has a significant influence on student interaction and access to information. It forces them to sit close, creating organic opportunities for conversation. Groups discuss a wide range of topics (academic,

work, and social issues), allowing for the informal exchange of ideas and perspectives, indirectly offering new knowledge and behavioral change to those seated nearby. However, it is worth noting that not all individuals are inclined toward group seating; some prefer quiet and privacy, for whom separated tables would be a better option.

Dining becomes a simple yet profound way to deepen relationships. Ordering, sharing food, and chatting while waiting or eating increase intimacy and trust. Group members can observe and learn about each other's preferences and consumption habits. The act of sharing food, for example, a light eater offering food to a heavy eater, becomes a reciprocal act that begins a culture of sharing, which can extend to mutual aid in other areas. Furthermore, the vendor's affable demeanor is a major draw. They attract customers by showing respect and value, providing service with a smile, and striving to fulfill requests quickly. The relationship often evolves



Figure 61: Eatery



Figure 62: Shops

beyond a simple transactional exchange (provider-customer) into a personal connection where they know each other by name and engage in friendly conversation.

When patrons intend to dine with friends from outside the university, my observation is that they tend to choose dining locations that are more spacious, aesthetically pleasing, and have higher food quality, often venues they frequent regularly. This suggests that while the campus canteen is ideal for daily utility and spontaneous social connection, special social occasions often demand a more intentionally curated dining environment.

In conclusion, the university canteen's strengths lie in the genuine sense of community fostered by affordable, consistent service and vendors' friendly, adaptive approach. However, the dining experience is fundamentally hampered by severe physical congestion due to the unsanctioned proliferation of snack stalls in the central space, which compromises hygiene, comfort, and the ability of patrons to linger. To address this, the university should reclaim and reorganize the central space to restore circulation and natural ambience and modernize the overall service delivery.

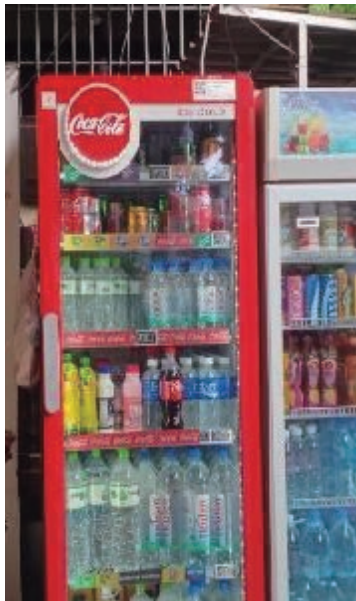


Figure 63: Drinks.



Figure 64: Coffee Shop.

K-Mall Supermarket Public Space - Battle Between Quality and Accessibilities

Koemnea HUN

K-Mall supermarket is located along Veng Sreng Boulevard in Phnom Penh, Cambodia.

Before its establishment, the area was part of a dusty industrial ring road. This space transformed into a vibrant community hub as part of the KMH Park master plan, which includes ISI Tower, 40 shophouses, and a football stadium. K-Mall officially opened its doors to the public on November 5, 2021, during a soft opening ceremony. This area is known for its bustling activity and is situated in the southwestern part of the city. The mall serves as a convenient shopping destination for nearby residential and industrial areas. The mall is known for its spacious layout, clean environment, and convenience for the local community who live around

that place. K-Mall is a shopping center that is managed by a private entity. However, it is also open for all people to access not only the commercial space, but also provides a public space for relaxing, entertainment venues, and community spaces, all within a thoughtfully designed and accessible environment. Based on what I see, K-Mall was built as a modern, structured layout that follows the plan designed like a green building.

My first impression of K Mall in Phnom Penh was that it was contemporary and well-planned. Located in the maturing Khan Sen Sok area, which is recently gaining attention for its suburban middle-class housing projects and modern infrastructure, the mall confidently portrays being part of the future



Figure 65: Outside area of K-Mall.



Figure 66: Lucky Burger, K-Mall.

Phnom Penh envisions. In contrast to older commercial buildings in Phnom Penh, where sidewalks are cluttered or non-existent, this place has clean, unobstructed breathing space. When I first walk into the K-Mall supermarket, the space immediately feels fresh, open, warm, and welcoming, where natural light pours in through the large transparent roof, giving enough brightness and circulation to strengthen the biophilic design to incorporate many natural elements and human connection with nature. For K-Mall, there's greenery everywhere with plants hanging from above, little garden corners, and open areas that make the place feel more like a park than a typical mall. The walkways are wide and easy to move through, and the layout feels thoughtfully designed, with places where people can sit, meet up, or hang out. Moreover, I observed that the supermarket design provides enough security for people to go there during off-peak hours in the morning or at night. I observed elements such as lighting and security to ensure the safety and comfort of visitors, while also conserving energy. At night, the lighting is set up to enhance safety and visibility for the visitors. Public spaces such as entrances, corridors, parking areas, and outdoor walkways are bright, which creates a sense of security for all the people walking or visiting the mall.

K-Mall's design has integrated both greenery and open space. Spending time observing K-Mall, one feature that kept attracting my attention was the way green space and open areas are integrated into the design. It might not be a park in the traditional sense, and you wouldn't exactly call it a green oasis, but the presence of trees, open walkways, and simple seating areas evokes a quiet place. This supports that while the space is popular, people feel at peace here. In a district like Sen Sok, where new buildings rise almost weekly, and traffic seems to multiply by

the hour, this slow and relaxing atmosphere feels like something rare, something needed. As I walked from the road toward the mall, it became clear that the landscaping wasn't just an afterthought. Small trees, neat bushes, and tidy patches of greenery lined the walkways, softening the look and feel of the place. These touches might seem small, but they really change the atmosphere. There's something about watching trees shift in the breeze and the way the sunlight filters through the leaves that makes the environment feel gentler, especially in a city known for its heat, noise, and construction dust. The wide plaza in front of the entrance caught my eye, too. It's not overly engineered, but it works. The open space allows people to move freely, to stop and chat, or to simply take a breath before heading inside. The paving is smooth and unobstructed, with no small booths or random advertising cluttering the way. The designers clearly understood that not every corner needs to be commercialized. Sometimes, space just needs to exist for people to exist within it. What really stayed with me, though, was how people use this space. No signs say "park" or "community zone," but people treat it like one anyway. I saw kids riding scooters, looping around the edge of a planter like it was a racetrack. There was an elderly man reading a newspaper on a shaded bench. Teenagers lounged on the steps, chatting and scrolling on their phones, while a young couple leaned against a tree, drinks in hand, simply watching life go by. Most of them weren't shopping, and that's the beauty of it. The space welcomes people whether or not they've come to spend money. Even the greenery, modest as it is, seems to carry emotional weight. In a city like Phnom Penh, where concrete spreads faster than trees and noise rarely stops, just seeing plants (real ones) growing in the ground gives you a strange sense of calm. The trees don't just provide shade. They remind you that nature still has a place,

even in the most urban corners. They soften the lines, both physical and psychological. One thing I quietly appreciated was how the parking lot hadn't taken over. So many developments in Phnom Penh let cars dominate the ground floor, but here, the layout kept a balance. There's parking for sure, but it doesn't push pedestrians to the margins. People can walk, meet, and sit without dodging vehicles. That's a rare design choice, and it changes how the space feels.

K-Mall has also valued the importance of social inclusion and its accessibility to the public space. I began to notice how its design allows people from different backgrounds to share the same space comfortably. Although it's a commercial development, the way its public areas are laid out feels more welcoming than restrictive. Whether you're there to shop, meet friends, take a break, or just pass through, there's a sense that you belong — which is not something you can say about every modern shopping center. These features may seem small, but they make a big difference in how freely people can move, especially those who might be excluded in more cramped or inequitable spaces. But accessibility isn't just about physical design. It is also about whether people feel socially comfortable being there. One thing I appreciated about K Mall is that there doesn't seem to be any pressure to spend money to use the space. The people can sit on one of the benches outside, wait in the shaded areas, or meet someone by the entrance without being asked to move along. No one is checking whether you've

made a purchase. That kind of freedom is rare in private spaces, especially in a city where many public spots are limited or overcrowded. What also stood out was the variety of people using the space. This mix of users gives the place a sense of social balance; it doesn't feel like it belongs to just one group, and no one seems out of place. On the weekends, the public areas around the mall grow even livelier. And because there's no fee or restriction to join in, people from all walks of life can participate, even if they're just browsing or enjoying the atmosphere. Of course, the mall is still a private development, and the freedom people experience depends on how it's managed. But based on what I observed, the overall approach seems generous rather than controlling. There are no loud warning signs, no security guards watching over every corner, and no signs that say "no loitering." That kind of relaxed attitude helps people feel at ease, and in a way, that's what makes the space socially inclusive.

In conclusion, based on what I observed in K Mall during 5 study periods, I saw this shopping complex as not only a shopping center, but as a well-prepared public space which included room for people to walk, shop, and exercise around the walkways. The space additionally provided a sense of security for the people who frequent the space. K-Mall also acts as more than a mall because of the landscaping, which evoked a feeling of being in nature, while also making the people feel enclosed with the natural form and green space around the supermarket.

Sisowath quay - Openness and Its Effects on Public Spaces

Pisethkethya PUM

Friday, 29 November 2024, at 3:24 P.M., I was sitting at a coffee shop that is near the Royal Palace in Phnom Penh city. There was a good vibe, and the weather was good. Sisowath Quay has a good flow of traffic, and it is easy to access. Many people enjoy this moment while others are walking on the sidewalk at Riverside. Further, when I have a look at Preah Ang Dangkeu Shrine, I see some people are buying flowers, fruits, and candles. I have been told that people come to seek blessings, offer prayers, and express gratitude to the deity for fulfilling wishes or providing protection.

At around 5:14 P.M., during rush hours, “I was sitting at a coffee shop and talked with three people”. The first person I talked to was a Cambodian man.

When I asked him what comes to mind when he sits here, he said this place is a special landmark in Phnom Penh—a Cambodian heritage site that reflects the country’s traditional culture. He often comes here to enjoy a cup of coffee after work, even though the air isn’t very clean. He likes to sit for about an hour to relax and release stress. Sometimes, he also walks along the riverside for some light exercise.

The second person I spoke with was a man from Israel who works as a graphic designer for a company in Phnom Penh. I asked him what he doesn’t like about the place. He told me that, since moving to Phnom Penh, this place has become one of his favorite spots. However, he dislikes the streets around



Figure 67: Sisowath Quay.

Pisethkethya PUM

the Royal Palace. It's difficult to move around because the traffic is heavy, and the streets become narrow and overcrowded during this time. The coffee shop also lacks parking space, so some of the sidewalks are used for parking. Despite that, he enjoys sitting here, observing the art and architecture of the Royal Palace, which often inspires his own design ideas.

The last person I interviewed was a young woman who was also a university student, walking along the riverside. When asked about her perception of coming to this place, she praised the beauty of the areas along the Tonle Sap River, mostly during the weekend. As the sun sets, the Royal Palace glows in golden light, creating a breathtaking view. Sometimes she takes a boat tour to enjoy the fresh air from the river. She also mentioned that the area in front of the Royal Palace is a popular spot for pigeons. She feels happy feeding them with corn kernels or grains, especially because it's fun to watch children running around trying to catch the pigeons.

Monday, 02 December 2024, at 8:05 P.M. After I left my college, I drove across Sisowath Quay. The traffic flows on the road are better than traffic from 5:00 P.M. to 7:00 P.M. It's easy to access the road, but along the Riverside, mostly street vendors are present. Restaurants around the Royal Palace are providing their services. People enjoy their nightlife, but I can see some issues still emerging, such as parking spaces still not being enough and not being standardized to organize, and the tok-tok or pass apps are stuck on the road waiting for their passengers. Sisowath Quay is a narrow street. One problem is that people do not respect the traffic light; even when the light is red, they still go through. It was really dangerous for me while I was stuck at the traffic stop. I always look at my motorcycle mir-

rors to see the vehicles that come from my backside because of the reckless behaviors of drivers. They are; they increase the speed while they are driving at night. If you have a chance to visit the Royal Palace in Phnom Penh, you should be careful when you try to cross the street.

Saturday, 07 December, 2024, in the morning around 7:30 AM. I am going to these places again. After I got a coffee, I came out to spend 30 minutes walking along the Riverside. This month in Cambodia is a windy season, so it really has fresh air and a soft feeling in the morning. During my walk on the promenade zone, I can see people who come from different places in Phnom Penh City engaging in morning exercises (especially old people, which is why they need to think about their health). Their ages are probably around 50-70 years old. Some of them are running for their physical exercise, and other people are gathering in small groups to do their morning exercise. They have a coach for leading their exercise, such as warm-up, dancing with sound, aerobics, half squats, and more. At this time, I decided to ask to join them. The coach for exercise dancing charged me 2000 riels, or \$0.50. It is the best price for people who join them, and I can also get new experiences for workouts at the public space like this, because people always go to the gym and might think they can't do that at a public space due to embarrassment. People are friendly, and the space even teaches me how I can get a good feeling, make my heart have a good flow, and relieve stress. One more thing that I can see on the riverside in the morning is that people can ride bicycles, but it is different in the evening, as it is not allowed.

The royal palace and riverside are the most important locations for the celebrations of big events, such as Independence Day of Cambodia and the Water

Festival (Bon Om Touk). I have been there celebrating on the first day of the Water Festival this year, which is a good time for me to do my observation. The boat race event started at 1:00 P.M. on the Tonle Sap River. I arrived there around 3:00 P.M. The Sisowath Quay and several roads surrounding the Royal Palace were blocked by the local authorities; we could only access them by walking. More than ten thousand people come to celebrate and watch the boat race. This gathering point becomes overcrowded; people use the space in front of the Royal Palace, even though the green people were walking and use the plastic mats to sit on them to relax.

There can be misbehaviors in the public space. Sometimes I see people throw the sticks of meatball and spill sauces on the grass. The lack of public toilets and restrooms during the big event shows that the local authority has to take care of it. There is also an issue about the bad odors in the air. I stayed and enjoyed myself until the fireworks show. It was shown at 7:00 P.M. People looked so happy and peaceful. After that, people try to leave these areas, but it's not easy to leave because people are trying to move at the same time. Even though on the event day, these areas could only be accessed by walking, with no vehicles allowed, I still got stuck there for at least 30 minutes. Due to my observation, I can say that the Royal Palace, Riverside, and Sisowath Quay are easy to access on a normal day, especially in the morning, around 8:00 A.M. to 10:00 A.M.

On February 1, 2025, the Sisowath Quay was launched as a pilot project to transform from a narrow street with a high volume of traffic congestion to a huge, beloved public space to ensure urban life

in Phnom Penh. Every weekend from 6:00 P.M. to 11:00 P.M., Sisowath Quay turns into a pedestrian street/zone, with vehicles not allowed to enter. At those times, I can see that this street becomes a gathering point for ethnic societies, families, children, and couples who come to get a new experience of urban nightlife. We can walk through this street without any harm, enjoy several tastes of fast food from the street vendors, and hear the sound of laughter mixing with the river breeze. It makes me feel very different from the busy weekdays—the air is calmer, and everyone seems to move more slowly, just enjoying the view of the Royal Palace and the Tonle Sap River. This weekend walking street gives Phnom Penh residents and me a special place to spend our spare time and connect with the city



Figure 68: Corner of Royal Palace Park.

Between the River and the Palace: Changing life in riverside park

Seangfu HENG

This article reflects my experiences and observations as a person who has lived and grown up next to the Royal Palace Park. I will compare the past and present conditions, their transformation in social and functional aspects, atmosphere, and community interaction. Though the park has been physically preserved, its identity and functionality have significantly evolved and been shaped by time, culture, and the rhythm of the city.

Located across the Sisowath Quay, this public space was once a garden reserved for the noble elite and privileged individuals with limited access. My first memory of this place dates to around 2010, when I was a toddler. I visited with my grandmother during

the early morning. The park was simple and quiet, and I remember feeding some pigeons at the park as I felt the soft breeze of wind and the sound of vehicles passing by. That early morning stayed with me and painted a picture of calmness in the heart of this prosperous and growing city.

At five o'clock in the evening, I was strolling across the busiest area in the district. It feels strangely different, yet very familiar. The sounds of people chatting, children laughing, and the moving traffic along the street fill the air, which somehow evokes a sense of nostalgia. The sun is setting, and it paints the image of a blue and red sky that resembles the kind of cinematic shots you would see in a movie. Even



Figure 69: Royal Palace Park landscape.

without a personal history attached to this place, it is possible to feel the connection, and it radiates almost universally. Interestingly, the park has been preserved with respect to its historical significance. Once a sacred space reserved for royal families and elites, it has evolved in identity and function, yet continues to serve the public as one of Phnom Penh's busiest urban spaces. The crowd is larger, the pace is faster, but the park remains an old friend, never far away and never changed.

As evening approaches, groups of families and friends begin to gather. Around half past five, the park comes fully alive. With my observation, I notice a soft kind of isolation amongst the crowd, where people rarely interact with strangers. The common interaction was asking others to help take a photo for them. I've also noticed that although the number of tourists has increased compared to my previous experience, it feels as though there are fewer of them. This is likely because the local population has grown significantly. Years ago, there was a clearer balance between locals and tourists. However, with improved connections to Koh No-rea and Arey Ksatr, the overall number of visitors and residents has continued to rise, making the area increasingly busy. Nowadays, this place has become one of the landmarks in Phnom Penh city and a must-visit place for newly arrived tourists.

The fondest memories I have of this place are feeding the pigeons with my grandmother. This activity is seen as a way of earning merit for locals. People coming here won't forget to feed the pigeons, as sometimes it is not only a religious act, but a way to bond with the community and relax. Another famous practice was "Release the Bird" (ប្រសែតទាប), which symbolizes passion and spiritual cleansing. People can practice it by paying vendors who catch

a large number of birds and put them into a cage. Vendors will grab one or more if they pay more, then release them into the sky. Obviously, this practice had disappeared because of the growing awareness of animal welfare and a shift from traditional merit-making to more urbanized forms of leisure.

Vendors are an essential part of the park's identity. From my observation, they can be divided into two main groups: the stationary vendors and mobile vendors. Stationary vendors include large food stalls and small goods sellers such as popcorn or toy vendors. The larger stalls are not allowed inside the garden area and are placed on the road nearby instead. I remember when people used to rent mats from these vendors and eat inside the park, but nowadays, it is nowhere to be seen. I speculate that due to the impacts on the atmosphere and environment, authorities had to stop vendors from selling mats. Nonetheless, people need somewhere to sit; the solution to this was to sit on the grass, and anywhere that is suitable for them. On the other hand, mobile vendors sell beverages, fruits, and snacks while moving through the crowd. They bring a dynamic rhythm to the park, blending with the movement of the people and adding to its sensory vibrancy. One might ask: But if people still bring food into the park freely, would there still be an environmental impact? Littering is almost nonexistent, as security personnel and numerous trash bins are placed throughout the area to prevent it. This effectively addresses one of the major issues in public spaces and helps preserve both the atmosphere and the environment.

As night falls, the park itself has transformed once again. Silhouettes of people strolling, the shimmering lights of the Royal Palace, and the soft reflections along the Mekong River create a stunning

Seangfu HENG

view. It feels both alive and calm. It is a quiet beauty. Gradually, people begin to leave while others pause to take photos. The space shifts into a different mood, one filled with nostalgia and stillness, an ambient moment frozen in time. Throughout all these years and transformations, the park has remained more than just a public space. It is a living archive of Phnom Penh: a place where the past and present quietly coexist. Whether one comes to enjoy food, the views, or simply a moment of stillness, this space offers the continuous comfort, connection, and sense of belonging we look for.

In conclusion, the riverside park stands as both a witness and participant in Phnom Penh's transfor-

mation. Its physical structure endures, but its social and cultural meanings continue to shift with the people who inhabit it. Families now gather where the older generation once strolled, and young people fill the spaces that used to be quiet. For me, this place holds a deep sense of nostalgia. Every visit brings back faint memories of how it once was: the sounds, the vendors, the slower pace of life. Yet, it also carries a feeling of continuity, as if no matter how much the surroundings shift, the park still belongs to everyone. It reminds me that cities are always transforming, but the emotions tied to certain places, the sense of comfort, belonging, and memory, remain timeless.



Figure 70: A large group of Pigeons at noon.



Figure 71: Woman Selling Kites.

Activities at the RUPP Basketball court – A sense of belonging through its public space.

Kinny SAMM

The RUPP's basketball court is one of the most popular places I love to go to every day. As a student at this university, it is no surprise that I would get involved with some of the activities within this space. The RUPP basketball court is located in the Royal University of Phnom Penh, which is a well-known university in Cambodia, situated in the Toul Kork neighborhood on Asian Road 11. There are a lot of sports that people play at the place, such as volleyball, basketball, badminton, Pétanque, and shuttlecock. Although the facilities do not look modern, the design is very useful and attractive. The basketball court is built from cement that people can easily use, and the environment around it is beautiful. We can see the greenery, the building, the pond, and so on around it. It was designed with everything and their target needs. The designer had

put a lot of thought into the space because it has everything for all ages.

The most common sport that I saw there was basketball. There are so many adults playing in two teams, each with two to three members. The court is not used by a single team, but by multiple teams. I think they played for their physical exercises because I saw some of them wore professional sportswear but some of them did not; but wearing school uniforms or simple clothes. It is interesting because at first, I saw only 2-3 members in the team, but after that, more people came to play with them. As a result, the court is always full of people, which poses a risk for players to get injured. We can see that the ground is not as smooth as the indoor court which makes it easier for players to get hurt



Figure 72: Basketball Complex's Scenery from Above (Taken from S.T.E.M. Building).

Kinnry SAMM

We can also see people playing volleyball. On the volleyball court, I saw 4 men who were playing and some students who were watching them. The 4 men were not young; they seemed to be 30-40 years old. They were playing in a style that I had never seen before. There are 2 members in each team. The role of a man was to pass the ball, and another man was to catch up to the ball and pass it to the other team. I don't know how they win, but I saw they played it until night. The volleyball court was busy from the time I started to observe until I left. On the other hand, there was another team that played volleyball, but they did not use the court to play. They played it in the free space in the middle of the basketball court. There were only 2 people who played it. Player needs to pass the ball to each other as a team, but this can be dangerous as the other teams are playing nearby and the students sitting nearby.

The most interesting sport is Pétanque. I saw they used the iron ball and threw it on the ground. Today, I saw only two people in that court, who looked like students. I saw they held the iron ball in their hand and threw it down on the ground again and again. When they started the new round, I saw they held the iron ball in their hand 2-4, and then pulled it again. They have their court to play, but fewer students are playing this than professors, so they don't use much space. Sometimes when the space was not occupied, I saw people using this space for playing badminton or shuttlecock, but because it is under the tree, it is not easy for them to play badminton or hit the shuttlecock as high as they please.

When I looked at the space next to the volleyball court, I saw people kicking a shuttlecock. I saw them standing in a circle, and another team stood up on different sides, passing it from person to person. They didn't have as much space, but made the

most of the space and had a really good game.

However, I saw people also playing badminton at that place. I saw they took their racket and played with their friends. In badminton terms, some of them play in double which is four players, and some of them play in singles, which is, of course, two players. They hit the badminton shuttlecock to one another. They are playing on the university's designated badminton court. Somehow, if that place is full, then students can play in any free and safe space around the area, too. It is really good that people make use of the small available spaces to fulfill their health needs.

For many months, one of the courts has been closed and turned into a parking lot. It is not only the basketball court, but it includes all of the badminton courts at that place, which obliged the badminton player to move to play at another place. We can see that it can accommodate a lot of motorbikes. But it is really hot, which can have a bad effect on all the motorbikes. On the day that I had the exam, I saw that the place was full of cars. The basketball court is not only used for sport but it is also used for parking. Following this, we can see that most people go to sit and communicate. I saw that most people love to sit and talk, and others are playing on the phone, reading books, and eating. It is a good design that provides people with access to every situation they want.

The President of the university and the team of the Federation of Cambodia Youth Union of Royal University of Phnom Penh សសយក្ក collaborated with the screening program to organize the movie "Far Away" which is based on the true story of the mother in killing field in the Pol Pot regime. The screening program was organized under the super-

vision of our university rector, which also shows that the space is not only for sports but also for fun and joy activities.

Furthermore, the basketball court is useful for organizing many activities. In this case, when it is nearly the Khmer new year basketball court was organized as a concert place where many people can come and play together. The place was full of people from that event. That means it is a public place that people from anywhere can access that place if they want. It is not only for people to enjoy, but it is also a driver for economic activities as people seek food and merchandise.

IT is the references show that all the activities support the concept of Multifunctional public open space for sustainable city (Živković et al. 2019). IT is a space designed or used for more than one activity at different times or simultaneously. In this case, the basketball complex, which includes basketball,

volleyball, pétanque, and badminton are also used for screening concerts, parking, etc. Moreover, it also follows the concept of place making that is a process and philosophy in planning or design that leverages community use, identity, and social interaction to make public spaces vibrant, meaningful, and inclusive. Your court is not just for sports but also for social gatherings, community events, etc.

All in all, on the basketball court, they don't play only basketball, but they use it to play many sports. From my perspective, I am also a person who always goes to sit there. There are really good facilities such as volleyball courts, basketball courts, badminton courts, and anything else. It is really for every person who comes to play sports as I do. Moreover, it is open for everyone to come in, so it is an opportunity for people to communicate with each other at that place. From what I observed, different groups interact naturally through their shared use of the space. Students, professors, and community



Figure 73: People Play Badminton near Basketball Court

Kinrny SAMM

members may come for different purposes, but they still communicate and respect each other's space. For example, when one group finishes playing basketball, others quickly organize for volleyball or shuttlecock kick without conflict. It is good when a university is located in the center of the city, and it is open for everyone to access, so it is shown that the designer of this campus really thought about the well-being of the people before they built this structure. It helps people stay active, build friendships, and feel a stronger sense of belonging to the university. In my view, the court shows how good design and open access can make one simple area become an important place for connection, health, and happiness.



Figure 74: People play Basketball, and Volleyball



Figure 75: Basketball Complex used for parking.

AEON 2 - Business and the Illusion of Public Spaces

Chariya SEM

AEON Mall is a modern and well-known shopping center in Cambodia. Although there are three AEON locations, I will focus on the branch in Sen Sok, commonly referred to by Cambodians as AEON Mall 2. In this journal, I will discuss the location, functions, atmosphere, and social meaning of AEON Mall 2, and explain why it has become one of the most important urban places in Phnom Penh. AEON Mall 2 represents more than just a shopping destination; it's a public space where modern lifestyle, community values, and accessibility come together.

This branch is larger than the first AEON MALL, built on a land area of about 10 hectares, with a total floor space of over 151,000 square meters. It

features a large parking area that can accommodate up to 2,500 cars and around 2,000 motorcycles. From real-life observation and online maps, AEON Mall 2 is located along Street 1003 near the Sen Sok roundabout. It is close to Russian Boulevard and accessible from major connecting roads. Nearby landmarks include Phnom Penh Mega Mall, Borey Piphup Thmey, Northbridge International School, commercial office buildings, and several banks. There is also a bus line that passes not far from the mall. This urban area has been expanding quickly in recent years, making it a good place to build AEON Mall 2 because of its growing population, rising incomes, and infrastructure support. AEON Mall is also designed to provide a highly enjoyable experience. The combination of various retail shops,



Figure 76: Crowds of people watching an event.

Chariya SEM

entertainment zones, and food options offers great satisfaction, making it a popular destination. The mall's pleasant atmosphere, modern architecture, and outstanding customer service attract both local residents and tourists. The mall is spacious, clean, and modern. It is organized across multiple floors, each with its own function. The ground floor usually hosts cafes, restaurants, and a large supermarket. The second floor focuses on fashion, beauty, and branded goods. The upper levels are designed for entertainment, such as cinemas, game arcades, and family play areas. There are also banks, mobile service centers, and lifestyle shops. Clear signage, escalators, elevators, and wide corridors make it easy for visitors to move around. Its layout is designed for people to enjoy the mall whether they are shopping, dining, relaxing, studying, or walking around. AEON Mall 2 is not only a commercial area but also a lifestyle destination, designed to meet the daily and leisure needs of urban residents.

AEON Mall 2 is open daily from 9:00 A.M. to 10:00 P.M. At 9:00 A.M., many food stalls and cafes on the ground floor open first, such as Starbucks and Brown Coffee. Customers who come early include working adults buying breakfast, elderly people walking for exercise, and supermarket shoppers. Between 6:00 A.M. and 8:00 A.M., only the ground floor and supermarket are active, while the upper floors open around 10:00 A.M. In the morning, the mall is relatively quiet. By noon, however, it becomes crowded. Around 12:00 P.M., students and workers come for lunch during their break time. Food court restaurants and fast-food chains like KFC, Pepper Lunch, and Lucky Burger get busy. People choose the mall not only for meals but also for its clean environment and air-conditioned space. In the afternoon and evening, visitors come for different reasons. Teenagers hang out with friends or

play at game zones; parents bring children to play areas; couples go to the cinema. From 8:30 A.M. to 10:00 P.M., many food stalls, especially bakeries and sushi bars, offer large discounts of 10% to 70%. This attracts smart shoppers who buy items to store or share at home. This time-based change in business types shows how AEON Mall serves people differently across the day: morning for shopping and quiet meals, afternoon for socializing, and evening for saving and entertainment. Despite the price of some goods, AEON Mall is Affordable to all. There is no entrance fee, and many people go there just to walk, rest, or take photos. It has become a space that welcomes all students, workers, children, families, and older adults regardless of income level. The shared experiences of eating, shopping, and relaxing together make the mall feel like a fair, inclusive, and equal public space.

A safe environment is essential in any public space, and AEON Mall 2 provides security through cameras, trained staff, and emergency exits on every floor. Security guards are visible throughout the mall, especially near entrances and exits. They help manage crowds and monitor activities. During the COVID-19 period, temperature checks, hand sanitizer stations, and signs were added to promote health safety. If someone feels unsafe, there are information counters where staff are ready to help. I once saw a child get lost, and within minutes, the staff made an announcement and helped reunite the child with their family. There are also emergency buttons and clear fire escape signs on each floor. For people with disabilities, AEON Mall 2 is very accessible. It has elevators and ramps, wide walkways, and accessible restrooms. Wheelchairs are available upon request at the information desk. The design ensures that someone in a wheelchair or with vision problems can still move through the mall

easily and enjoy the services. In terms of mobility, the mall is surrounded by sidewalks and bike paths, but crossing the road outside can be risky because traffic is heavy and not all intersections have clear stoplights. Public buses pass nearby, and tuk-tuks and Grab drivers are always available at the front gate. The large parking lot helps people who come by car, and motorbike parking is also well organized. Overall, the mall provides a safe, mobile, and inclusive environment for everyone, regardless of age, ability, or transportation type.

In conclusion, AEON Mall 2 is more than just a place to shop; it is a multifunctional urban space where people eat, relax, meet, play, and express their modern lifestyles. It reflects ideas of community,

equality, and access. With its clean environment, wide variety of services, strategic location, and thoughtful design, AEON Mall 2 plays a valuable role in the everyday life of Phnom Penh residents and visitors. It certainly connects to the core layers of the fabric of city life in Phnom Penh. Through providing accessibility and a broad, inclusive experience, shopping centers bolster public life in many different ways. But we also face challenges, such as the displacement of informal vendors or small businesses being unable to compete. Therefore, planners and policymakers must ensure that both big and small businesses grow at the same time. Public spaces like AEON Mall should be built not only for economic reasons but also to improve people's lives fairly and sustainably.



Figure 77: The atmosphere in AEON2

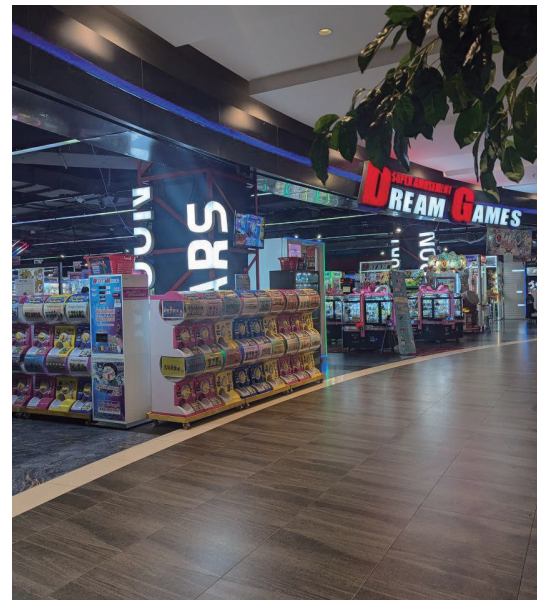


Figure 78: Dream Games (Game Area) in AEON2

Sidewalk near Phnom Penh Airport - Southeast Asian Street Culture in an Unexpected Place

Lisa TORNH

On a Friday evening, I went to the airport in Phnom Penh. The Phnom Penh International Airport is spacious and easy to navigate. It generates revenue through air cargo for the Cambodian economy. The airport is located on the Russian Federation Boulevard (110), making it easy to travel, and there are plans to build pedestrian crossings. Many people live there, and it is easy to do business there and earn income for the family. For people using the road, they can use the walking path for everyone, whether the elderly or the young, because the road is public. The airport in Phnom Penh is a place for international and national passengers, and for the transportation of goods. There are not many green areas around the airport. Mostly, there are shops, businesses, schools, and hospitals nearby. In

the area around the airport, there are a few, mostly small, trees under which drivers can rest while they wait to be transported to and from the airport. In the evening, near the airport fence, there are street vendors, and many people come to eat and watch planes take off. I noticed that the environment there was not properly cared for.

The airport fence does not match the aesthetics of the airport. There is a factory with a market for residents. There are only a few trees, leading to low air quality, which harms the health of the residents who live near the airport.

Some of the vendors are middle-class, while most are from the low-income groups. Vendors can be



Figure 79: Activities on the Sidewalk.

both men and women; some of them obtained some degree of education, which means at least basic literacy. Most of them are local Khmer. Roads and streets are congested in the morning between 6:00 P.M. and 7:00 P.M. because vendors are traveling through them. The congestion gets better later in the day.

Congestion peaks up again between 5 P.M. and 6 P.M., as people are travelling home from work or school. In the evening, many people come to rest and eat on the road near the airport fence. Sellers use the roadside to sell their wares and earn money. As for the environment there, there is not much waste, smell, or dirty water because there are trash cans that are emptied every day. Daily travel there is not much of a problem as long as the drivers there are careful in their driving, respecting the traffic lights. For the benefit of travelers, when the roads are wide and less congested, they can save time on their journey and will not be bored waiting for a long journey.

Near the airport, there is a garment factory and two or three private schools. As for the location, they have their own stops for taxi drivers or tricycle drivers. There are different parking areas for cars and vendors, and there is also a path for disabled people. Public transportation is accessible to both domestic and international visitors. There are garbages on the road because of the street vendors, who do not manage the garbage properly. This is a problem, since there is a loss of local aesthetics, and people traveling to and from the airport can see the garbage.

The road near the airport is wide, but can be dangerous. The road has appropriate markings for passengers to cross, and markings for bus stops waiting to pick up passengers. Soon, there will be markings for people with disabilities to cross, with bright markings for them. When the airport is closed, I don't think it has much of an impact on traders, because they can sell elsewhere. In conclusion, the roads near the airport can provide easy access to travelers, with wide roads and paths for pedestrians and people with disabilities to travel. Phnom Penh's sidewalks are often multi-purpose, where informal businesses can thrive. With further regulations, I believe we could improve the situation much more.



Figure 80: Excavator parking on the sidewalk.

Between two sidewalks- Public and business interaction

Palleap KEAT

In my observation of the two sidewalks facing each other near Pochentong Airport in Phnom Penh, I noticed that locals and travelers use them differently due to their respective layouts.

The sidewalk along the airport has many trees, large and small, that provide shade for people from the heat while keeping the space green and fresh. It is wide, safe, and decently accessible for everyone, including people with disabilities. Some areas even have tiles to help blind people navigate the sidewalk, alerting them when they need to turn or go straight, but sometimes the tiles don't match or are missing. There are not many crosswalks, and existing ones show signs of damage, making it difficult for people to cross to the other side, considering the wide roads and heavy traffic.

There are some public spaces in front of the airport. Some are used by residents to set up temporary and mobile shops, providing services such as food, drinks, and repairs to make a living. It can look a bit chaotic, but people can rest in the shade while eating or just enjoying the view. This is a great way to relax for those who have been traveling from out of town for a long time or those who are waiting for relatives to land at Phnom Penh International Airport.

The informal businesses here help to support people and their families. In addition, there is no electricity or clean water for them, as they are informal and mobile businesses. They rely on rechargeable solar panels for solar energy and clean water that

they carry from home. As mobile vendors occupy the sidewalk and turn it into an informal market, pedestrians have less space, which is why people choose to use the road less for walking.

Taxi and tuk-tuk drivers also use the road as parking lots, waiting to pick up and drop off passengers or tourists.

On the sidewalk alongside the opposite road of the Phnom Penh International Airport, there are no continuous sidewalks, meaning pedestrians can only walk on the sidewalk in some places. There is electricity and clean water available because there are large shops such as food stores, convenience stores, furniture stores, and hospitals. There is a garbage collection service operated by the Mizuda Group, and there are many trees to protect pedestrians from the sun.

However, unlike the sidewalks near the airport, which have many informal businesses, the businesses in front of the airport are formal. There are stores that sell construction materials, furniture, and clothing, as well as restaurants and cafe. The sidewalks here are not wide enough to be used for parking by cars or motorbikes, which could lead to congestion or cause traffic accidents.

Compared to its counterparts, this area has more buildings. These are mostly shops, hospitals, hotels, and two to four-storey residential buildings. This area has more connections with the road network that takes people to factories, temples, churches,

and schools. This contrasts with the first location close by the airport, where if someone wants to go to the other side of the airport, they have to go around.

There is a lot of traffic on weekdays, from Monday to Friday, in the morning and evening, as people commute for work or school. It is not as congested on Saturday and Sunday, as only some companies and schools operate during the weekend. However, congestion always occurs on Sunday evenings, when people return from their vacations. From my observations, there tends to be a lot of vendors in the evening from 4 p.m. to 5 p.m., and the number of parking spaces on the street also increases with the congestion getting worse, unlike in the afternoon.



Figure 81: Sidewalk alongside the airport.

On the other hand, in terms of doing business in this area, they do not rely only on the airport; they also rely on other areas because they can also attract people from outside to relax. It is a town with many people living in a bustling area and many people passing by and sitting around, both from afar and from nearby. These can also provide a decent income for those who have informal businesses.

However, until now, Phnom Penh Airport has been closed. However, people continue to trade normally, but their trade may have changed from before, with some income decreasing because there are not as many people coming to relax, have lunch, or dinner as before. But at least they still have a place to do business and earn a daily income to support their families.

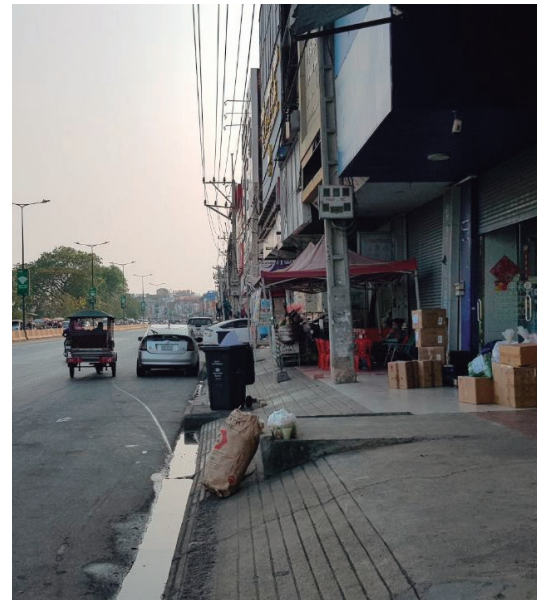


Figure 82: Sidewalk opposing the Airport side.

The Football Field of RUPP

Seyha SEAN

One of the iconic locations in RUPP is the football field, where friendly and competitive football matches can be seen being hosted from time to time. When not being used to host football matches, this football field becomes a gathering space when the weather is right.

Situated in one of the most prestigious public universities in Phnom Penh, the football field of the Royal University of Phnom Penh has a total area of around 7,900 square meters with a width of around 72 meters and a length of around 107 meters. The RUPP's football field is located near the center of the Royal University of Phnom Penh, with nearby surroundings such as the Choun Nath garden, the Institute of Foreign Language, and other buildings for the university students to study or enjoy.

From early 2023 to mid-2024, I used to work at the canteen near the football field selling sugar cane juice, sugar cane, and other food. During this period, I was so intrigued by this football field. It gave me a great view of the university campus even during my busiest day. Our canteen would be packed with customers when matches were hosted, so I think the owner of this shop chose the right location to set up their business. Other shops can be a bit too far, but being far means they are safer than us from flying balls. There is a net to protect us, but I'm worried sometimes the net would break or the ball would fly higher than it. I have never experienced that during my time, and I hope no one has to. Aside from the canteen and shops, there is also a parking lot and toilets nearby. The football



Figure 83: Students Activity on the Football Field.

players would get changed there, and they would flex their bodies there, too. I didn't get to enjoy the football matches much because I had to go to class after my shift.

When there is no match, the football field is often left open for public use. Vegetations would grow thick to the point that they look like they could swallow you entirely. I am a bit tall, so it doesn't bother me much, but I am worried about the insects and critters lurking beneath the grass. Many people assume that the grass is fake, but don't be fooled by that. Please be careful when walking or running in the football field because you might get trapped by something or slip on the mud. I wore white shoes during my observation in September 17th of 2025, so I hope you won't make the same mistake as I did. There is somewhat of a sewage system to help clear the water faster, but during my observation, it was overgrown with thick plants. However, during the dry season, the staff needs to periodically water the grass or else they would die out. The grass does come back during the rainy season, but the university needs to maintain the appearance of the football field, which is why they need to spend some water it. I'm curious what the football field would be like when it is late at night. Will there be lots of mosquitoes? Just how different is it from the other times I went there? The university did host a camping event once at the football field. I hoped they would do it again, so I am able to find my answers.

From my observation on September 17th, 2025, there were a lot of people enjoying the football field. It was around 5 pm to 5:30 pm. The weather wasn't too hot or cold, and the dirt was a little wet from the rain a few hours ago. Some area haven't dried out yet, so we had to be very careful trying to navigate the football field for our observation. Be-

cause there was going to be a football match soon, the football field looked less overgrown than usual. The people sitting here didn't seem to mind the grass either. Most of the people you can find here are students from the Royal University of Phnom Penh. There are people from outside sometimes, such as during football matches, other visiting students, or the locals exercising nearby. The activities were varied. One can find people sitting in a group and chatting or eating. Some even study or do their assignment. Others can be seen playing badminton or exercising. All in all, they looked like they were having a good time during my observation. Other people prefer sitting nearby, like at the shop I used to work in. Some even park their motorbikes or bicycles near the football field and sit on the sidewalk. The people here seem to feel secure and safe. But for me, at first, I started my school and had only a bicycle and parked it unconsciously next to the field, in front of building T. It was lost.

My sense of place and nostalgia with the football field of the university reminds me of both good and bad memories. The former reminds me of the loss of the only means of transportation, and I need to walk from my rented room to school every day, sweating. This reminds me of the importance of being alert to security and precaution. The latter it turns out, the more positive the outcome. My professor and other faculty members started to seek humanitarian support for humanitarian in supporting poor students like me. I managed to get one bicycle the following month, and another 32 bicycles were also mobilized by that time. Raising fund and donations for bicycles for educational purposes has been informally established by the faculty of development since then on. As for the football field, it remains a space that symbolizes our university's physical attraction, a sense of camaraderie for those

Seyha SEAN

who join the field and play, and a place where students and staff can feel connected through the match or other forms of leisure activities on the field. I hope more efforts can be enhanced from our university to improve the field as increased maintenance, establishing proper surrounded sidewalk, running tracks, sitting places, better fences constructed, and installing security cameras for a better safety net, increased sports services, and humanitarian activities in the field.



Figure 84: Another aspect of the football field.

The Garden Public of Royal University in Phnom Penh - The Relationship Between Education, Green Space, and Mental Health

Engly KEO

Some might think that green spaces need to be big in order to fulfill their purpose as “Green Space,” but I find that as long as they are accessible, it is enough for me. In the Royal University of Phnom Penh, there are various spaces made up of greenery that fit the category of what most would consider a “Green Space,” yet one site has caught my attention for how it can blend in so well with the surroundings to the point that it serves as a transitional site connecting many areas.

My site observation is a small green space in RUPP, with an area of around 0.1ha. The area was once a swimming pool that has been repurposed into a garden with a pond at the upmost center shaped like the Tonle Sap Lake. With a length of around 52

meters and a width of 22 meters, the site contains various pathways to the Students Office, the STEM Building, Building B, the RUPP Canteen, Building A, and the RUPP Sport Court. Additionally, there are two toilets accessible to all, regardless of their gender or physicality.

The garden is spacious for sitting and eating. From morning to evening you can find people sitting on the bench or the grass. However, the seats become most occupied from 11:30 A.M. to 4:30 P.M. once the heat starts dying down. Utilizing nature-based solutions such as tree shading and the pond, the area does not get that hot at all at high noon. There are also more seating areas on the grass and the paths leading to the canteens. The pond has fish in it and



Figure 85: Study Office's Pond.

Engly KEO

people buy fish food to feed to them. Cleaners are often seen caring for the areas, maintaining the inviting atmosphere. I feel great walking or sitting in this area. It is such a nice break from all of the built environment.

I noticed that many people did not know about the two statues that greet everyone entering the site. I read online that this green space is also a symbolic space for the university with two statues that commemorate past rectors, one statue for Professor PHUNG Ton the first rector of RUPP, and one for H.E. VARSIM Samreth the third rector. According to the fourth and current rector of RUPP, Professor CHET Chealy, photos of Dr NGOHOU Bonwath the second rector are untraceable so it was not possible to make a statue for him. Since the site is near the Students Office, it made sense for the statues of the past rectors to be here to symbolically highlight the university's history while strengthening the students' sense of belonging with their understanding of the space. I just wish there was more information near the statues for us to learn more about each rector.

I noticed that the garden does not have much infrastructure aside from the benches. There is not much lighting, and the space relies on nearby buildings for lighting. Aside from the trees, there is not much protection from the environment nor separation from other people. People can also trip and fall easily as the paths are a mixture of grass, dirt, and tiles that might be hard to travel for those with disabilities. Moreover, waste management could be a problem as there are only three trash bins with proper labelling and they are often overflowing and unseparated, making it a challenge for waste collectors to address the issue.

Overall, the garden is a nice place that I enjoy walking through from my class to the canteen and I enjoy sitting there while eating. On the surface, it is just a small green space that happens to be situated almost at the centre of the Royal University of Phnom Penh. But through further reading and observation, I have realized the space is a prominent landmark highlighting the history of RUPP while serving as a transitional point between various buildings on campus.



Figure 86: Poems Plaque at the Study Office's pond space.



Figure 87: Professor PHUNG TON.

Open Air, a Roof and Some Seating - A Case Study of a Public Space in a University

Sovann SOY

The Royal University of Phnom Penh is one of the most iconic public institutions in Cambodia that offers a variety of public spaces on campus. Among them are three sites that I find to be intriguing because of how students, staff, and the public make different uses of the spaces, and how they highlight a sense of belonging and understanding.

Situated in the Toul Kork district, the Royal University of Phnom Penh is close to landmarks such as the 07 Makara Overpass, the Preah Kosomak Hospital, and the Russian Federation Boulevard. The nearest bus routes are on the West of RUPP, and along the Russian Boulevard, there are plenty of businesses catering to both the students, staff, and the public, while the inside of RUPP contains many

educational and recreational facilities such as classroom buildings, libraries, canteens, and green spaces. Among all of these, three of the spaces caught my attention the most. The Study Office, the Hun Sen Library, and the Main Building's Reservoir, all located in different places, are interrelated to each other in terms of aesthetics and functions. Everyone seems to find their own way of using the spaces, from chit-chatting under the roof of the Study Office during the rain, working and napping at the ground floor of the Hun Sen Library, to hosting a picnic near the Main Building's Reservoir, one of the iconic reservoirs for RUPP.

Located at the center of RUPP, the Study Office's main function is to host the Administrative Office



Figure 88: Study office's public space.



Figure 89: the Pond in front of Building A.

in Building A for the students' registration and other administrative purposes. The nearby surroundings contain the Choun Nath Garden, the RUPP Canteen, Building A, RUPP Sports Court, the STEM Building, and Building B, with toilets accessible for everyone, including the physically-impaired, dotted near each building. Aside from that, there once was a swimming pool in between the canteen and the Study Office, but now it has been converted into a small green space. You often find students sitting down alone on the grass or hanging out in groups when the weather is nice.

Although I always walk near the area to attend my classes at RUPP, I started my first thorough observation on August 29th, 2025. It was raining lightly when I arrived, so there were already a lot of people taking shelter. Some of the uneven tiles enable flooding while posing difficulties for the physically-impaired. Perhaps the uneven tiles are there intentionally to deter unauthorized driving, but you can still find the RUPP staff uses it as a shortcut. Another highlight of the site is the abundance of seating for human gatherings. The primary intention of the seating is to accommodate students during the registration period. There were not a lot of activities going on when I went again on September 7th at 6:00 A.M. The Study Office closes around 5 P.M., so if you need to process any documents after that time, you would have to come again the next day. There was adequate lighting at the office during my observation period, and students continued to use the space, especially those attending the night shift or finishing their work before heading home.

I moved on to the Hun Sen Library by walking through the RUPP Sports Court. On August 29th, the atmosphere here felt more relaxing, even with

similar activities at the Study Office. I think this is because the place doesn't have much human mobility like the first site. If you need to go somewhere, you do not have to cross this area and can instead take the road where most prefer traveling. But security can be a problem for people who need to leave only for a moment, going to the toilet or the canteen, so they either ask their friends to look over their belongings or ask nearby strangers to help. There is a toilet on the ground floor of the Hun Sen Library, but it could be hard for physically impaired people to traverse the area with all the slopes, uneven paths, and stones. There is also a pond behind the Hun Sen Library that functions as a reservoir in case of flooding. There is a small café called Nisset Café that serves those who do not want to walk to the RUPP Canteen. I went to observe the library again at around 1:00 P.M., and everything was similar to my initial observation. I came back at around 5:30 P.M., and the human activity had not stop yet. Everyone continues to work under the light provided by the library even while the surroundings got very dark due to the limited lighting. I was not able to access the toilet under the library because the staff was cleaning it.

The last site is a lot bigger than the others. Unfortunately, you cannot walk comfortably around it because of the parking lot and the uneven path, so accessibility is a problem here. There used to be a small farm by the Department of Biology, which it has been demolished. Although you can study here, most people prefer to relax instead by looking at the scenery, chit-chatting during a picnic, or napping on a hammock. It is a space where we can find young people among university students and youth being a bit more intimate with each other. The trees do provide protection from natural elements, but I

do not think it is the same as a solid structure like the previous two sites. And unlike the previous two sites, there are no toilets nearby; the closest toilet is under the Hun Sen Library. You also need to be alert because this is a public space after all, so anyone or anything can enter during the opening hours. I went to observe again on September 7th 2025 and this time there were more people because it was a Sunday. Usually, people prefer going in pairs or in groups, either with a friend or partner while others also bring their children or pets along. The pond is quite deep and dirty so people are not allowed to swim in it. I remember seeing a staff member swimming in the pond to collect overgrown plants, but that was the only time I saw anyone in it. I came back around 5 pm and the area started to become scary. There is no lighting or anything to ensure people's safety and security. I think it's because RUPP

closes their gates at around 8-9 pm and there are always security guards nearby, but I feel like there should at least be adequate lighting so everyone can enjoy the area longer.

In essence, each of the public spaces mentioned varied in their own ways. They were all designed with different intentions but can be used in more ways than what is intended. The human-centered designs encourage human activities and engagement along with the connectedness of the space design that links every space and building cohesively. There are good utilizations of nature-based solutions, from the water reservoir to green shading, which highlights the importance of nature in our day-to-day life. I wish to see more public spaces like these outside of RUPP.



Figure 90: RUPP library.

Phnom Penh - Araya Ksatr Riding ferries.



05

TRAFFIC & MOBILITY

How people move and experience the city?



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Veng Sreng blvd traffic - Congestion and Street Connectivity

Sothary NHIM

This article examines traffic congestion on Veng Sreng Road, a major road connecting the city center to several industrial areas in Phnom Penh, Cambodia. From morning rush hour to evening rush hour, the study tracked traffic patterns and identified the main causes of congestion. The results showed that severe traffic congestion is caused by several factors, including high vehicle volumes, narrow roads, ineffective traffic management, and the presence of small and large trucks, street vendors, and pedestrians. Despite the efforts of traffic police, traffic conditions improved slightly in the afternoon, but mornings and evenings remain the busiest with delays and traffic jams. The congestion remains a recurring problem, highlighting the need for stronger enforcement, improved traffic management, and in-

frastructure improvement to reduce congestion on Veng Sreng Road.

Aside from the conflict associated with traffic overflow, flexible arrangements of roads and street layout connectivity are a major contributor to worsening traffic. The combination of disorganized streets, a lack of adequate signs, little accessibility for disabled people and pedestrians, and the shortage of advanced technology results in a poor mobility experience for residents. To ease the process of making urban networks highly reachable and interconnected, there is a need to examine the interrelation between user behavior and infrastructure.



Figure 91: TukTuk shipment.



Figure 92: General aspect on the road.

A major road in Phnom Penh, known to everyone as Veng Sreng Road, connects the city center with many industrial areas, including factories, schools, hospitals, supermarkets, shopping centers, food markets, and more. For locals, travelers, and commercial transport, it is a vital route. Analyzing traffic patterns and identifying the main causes of congestion are the goals of my observations. Veng Sreng Road serves not only as a commercial link, but also as a corridor passing through residential areas, local markets, schools, pagodas, and office zones. The diversity of land use causes high-density traffic from various users, leading to high traffic levels throughout the day. Inadequate street connectivity in some parts is created by narrow side streets that end in unexpected locations, leading to congestion as all vehicles are forced to use the major thoroughfare. These problems are exacerbated at peak times when thousands of commuters attempt to move through limited road spaces.

More than a thoroughfare for travel, Veng Sreng Street serves as a stage for social interaction. Due to the construction of the street, it is shared by vendors, travelers, and residents of the area who pass by it every day. However, random violence can be expected in this space due to the chaotic traffic flow, lack of pedestrian infrastructure, and numerous traffic violations. As it functions as an industrial hub and a center of education, commerce, schools, businesses, housing markets, and factories, driven by the mixed-use activities located there, Veng Sreng Street contributes to a highly congested areas due to this concentration. In addition, limited alternate routes, poor traffic enforcement, and a lack of public transportation efficiency contribute to the overwhelming volume of traffic during peak hours.

Veng Sreng Road, which is about 6.3 kilometers long, is a major thoroughfare for commerce and transit in the city. National Roads 3 and 4, which connect it to other parts of the city and beyond, are among the prominent features located near the road. Depending on the orientation, the following general guide will tell you how to get to Veng Sreng Road in Phnom Penh, Cambodia if you are coming from the provinces: From the North, such as Siem Reap and Kampong Thom Travel south on National Road number 6 (NR6) toward Phnom Penh. Proceed along NR6 until you get to the junction of NR5 close to the suburbs of Phnom Penh. To get to the city core, head southeast on NR5. At the roundabout close to the Toul Sangke neighborhoods, get off NR5 into National Road No. 4. Continue southwest on NR4 until you get to the Veng Sreng Street crossroads. Head north on National Road No. in the direction of Phnom Penh. The description of all these destinations is only for those from other provinces who are not familiar with the geography of Phnom Penh.

In the morning, I saw the traffic begin to build up with a noticeable increase in the number of vehicles, including motorcycles, cars, and trucks. According to most of my observations, congestion occurred near the four intersections that vehicles had to cross. A few traffic police officers tried to control the congestion, but their efforts were unsuccessful due to the volume of vehicles. Drivers complied, but when the police left, it started again due to the lack of understanding, drivers disobeying the traffic rules. The congestion reached an unmanageable level, with cars barely moving for a few minutes around 8:00 A.M., as motorbikes began to weave between the large vehicles, creating chaos. Public buses were stuck in the jam, frustrating riders, who were mostly students, monks, and the

elderly. Horns blared frequently as drivers showed their impatience. Traffic was still heavy but was starting to “show signs” of easing as the early rush hour began to subside. Some vehicles were diverted to the sidewalks, seeking alternative routes. Traffic congestion eased slightly at 9:00 A.M., although the road remained busy. The presence of trucks carrying factory workers along the road continued to slow traffic. Traffic police seemed more efficient as the number of vehicles decreased, which helped smooth the flow of traffic. Traffic began to thin out as the morning eased. Vehicles moved more steadily, although intersections were still clogged with illegal driving and intolerant behavior. Traffic police were able to manage more effectively with reduced volumes. Public buses still faced delays but showed some improvement. The most common vehicles on the road include motorbikes, tuk-tuks, delivery trucks, private cars, and public buses. Morning traffic is mostly of workers who commute to factories, school buses, and small businesses that make deliveries. Male drivers constitute most of the motorcycle and truck drivers, whereas female drivers use tuk-tuks or vehicle booking from the apps more frequently. All modes of transport are used for a mixed trip purpose throughout the day.

The traffic volume at noon has decreased compared to the morning. There is less traffic flow, but congestion continues near market areas and intersections. Street vendors are busy, attracting customers and sometimes causing traffic jams as cars stop to buy. However, vendors often operate in unsafe and unsanitary conditions, exposed to dust, pollution, and vehicle hazards. During rain or heat, many rely on plastic sheeting, umbrellas, or dirty roofs, which often worsen the obstructions and increase the risk to pedestrians. Street vendors take up a large portion of the sidewalk, forcing pedestrians onto the

road and reducing the space for vehicles. Lack of proper sidewalks, poor drainage, and potholes also slow traffic and increase the risk of accidents. Road connectivity is poor in some areas, which encourages more traffic on the main road. Pedestrian activity is still high, especially near markets. Traffic volume begins to increase again when schools finish in the morning, and people start heading out for lunch.

As it approaches 5:00 P.M., traffic congestion increases significantly as the evening begins. The intersection and other major intersections were heavily congested. Motorbikes, cars, and trucks all competed for the road, leading to roadblocks and slow traffic. I observed that driving was not following the rules, and there were more verbal altercations. Public buses faced significant delays, frustrating passengers. Pedestrians crossing the road added to the complexity of traffic management. The congestion peaked in the evening at 5:30 P.M., which was similar to the morning rush hour. Many vehicles, but hardly any movement, moving only a few meters at a time. Traffic police were again heavily involved in management, but their efforts were hampered by the sheer volume of vehicles. Pedestrian activity increased as students and workers returned home. Disrespect for traffic laws contributed significantly to the congestion. Common violations include disobeying traffic lights, illegal driving, riding in the wrong lane, and parking on the sidewalk. Motorcycles and tricycles are the main culprits due to their size and ability to navigate traffic, often disregarding pedestrian safety. The presence of large trucks transporting goods to industrial areas has exacerbated the congestion. Street vendors have continued to operate more. By 7:00 P.M., traffic has eased. The flow is more consistent, with fewer stops. Vehicles are moving more and more, although intersections and narrow sections still cause minor delays. Traffic

Sothavy NHIM

police have managed more effectively with reduced volumes. The roads are still busy, but the overall level of congestion has decreased significantly compared to peak hours.

Currently, technological support for traffic management is limited. There are few functional traffic lights, no intelligent traffic control systems, and no use of real-time data to manage flow. Various modes of transport are visible, including motorbikes (mostly driven by men), tricycles (often used by women), trucks (industrial transport), private cars (middle-class users), and public buses (students and the elderly). Large motorbikes often violate traffic laws. Pedestrians and cyclists are forced to compete with motorized transport because the infrastructure does not prioritize their safety or comfort. The road offers poor walkability due to damaged pavements, illegal parking, street vendors, and unsafe crossings. There is little infrastructure for people with disabilities, and pedestrians often walk on the road, increasing the risk of accidents. Access to public transport and services is also hampered by a lack of signage, bus stops, and shaded pedestrian walkways.

In conclusion, according to my observation of Veng Sreng Boulevard, which is combined and intersected by many smaller roads, several notable factors exacerbate the traffic congestion problem, especially in the morning and evening. Some of these factors are the excessive number of vehicles, the narrow sections of the existing road, the lack of traffic management, and the widespread problem of

trucks, street vendors, and foot traffic at the same time. Solutions to these problems will be found in improved traffic management, widening of key areas, and better enforcement of traffic violations. Only with these measures can traffic congestion on Veng Sreng Road be alleviated for all road users. Infrastructure planning to ease congestion on Veng Sreng Road should not focus solely on widening the road. Improving road spacing, prioritizing pedestrians controlling pedestrian traffic, and other traffic signal methods should be undertaken to enhance the integrated mobility of people with disabilities. Closer, integrated urban design that balances all road users is the key to sustainable mobility.



Figure 93: Businesses and Activity on the road.

Escape Sidewalk at Stueng Meanchey: options between congestion and walkability

Vichea NGOEURN

Introduction

Congestion is inevitable for urban areas; especially for a city that is home to roughly almost three million people like Phnom Penh, the capital of the Kingdom of Cambodia. Many roads in Phnom Penh suffer greatly from its externalities and Samdech Preah Monireth Boulevard is one of them.

The boulevard itself roughly spans for 3.4 kilometers from Mean Chey District (locally known as Khan Mean Chey) until almost reaching the Olympic Reservoir, passing iconic landmarks such as the Chenla Theater, Doeurm Kor Market, Steung Mean Chey Skybridge, Steung Mean Chey Market, and the New Steung Mean Chey Market. The area in Mean

Chey District, where the Samdech Preah Monireth Boulevard cut through before reaching the Steung Mean Chey Skybridge used to be a prominent dumping site of Phnom Penh, now known as Steung Mean Chey Mui (Khmer for number 1) and Steung Mean Chey Pir (Khmer for number 2). For the observation, the current dumping site of Phnom Penh is in Dangkao District. We can see how the neighborhood has been formed as evident to the organic road structure stemming from unauthorized urban settlements before the economic development propels it into a dense neighborhood varied in facilities from industrial, educational, religious, and business.

The boulevard



Figure 94: Night Aspect of the site.

Vichea NGOEURN

My site observation is on Preah Monireth Boulevard, known for its high density of traffic and settlements, as well as various monasteries, education and health facilities, high and low-end shops, and vendors. The first thing that many would notice is how congested it is, especially when someone has to make a turn or stop. The second thing they would notice while waiting is the abundance of street vendors and hawkers near the boulevard, from as small stalls big enough to fit one person, and also a unit room on the ground floor being converted into a shop, to them carrying their whole business literally on their shoulders, to being transported on a cart or vehicle. Some sellers take up so much space from the sidewalk and the boulevard that pedestrians use, which worsens the congestion further. The road is wide and dangerous for pedestrians during congested periods with low visibility from the congestion, and non-congested periods with rapid traffic movement. As for the types of vehicles on the road, there are cars, motorcycles (many types), cars (many types), and bicycles, mixed with rickshaws and public buses. A boulevard of around 22 meters in width takes time for everyone to cross safely, along with the road barriers made up of concrete decorated with grass and shrubs, which are not sufficient to ensure organization. We should have some techniques such as putting up stop lights, putting up barriers and signs, and adding bumpers to increase the drivers' alertness. Local authorities should be more active during rush hours to ensure people's safety.

On the other hand, in terms of business, there are many businesses such as banks, shops, clothing stores, retail stores, mobile phone stores, hair salons, and many other stores. Most of the shops and buyers do not use cash; instead, they use QR codes. Surprisingly, there wasn't much waste on the street

during my time of observation. Aside from people stopping their vehicles to buy from the vendors, street parking is also fairly common as the road is wide enough for 3-4 cars to drive or 7-8 motorcycles, depending on their types.

On October 8, 2024, from 9:10 A.M. to 11:30 A.M., I went to study on Preah Moniret Boulevard in Steung Meanchey District. From my observation, this road has many people driving through it every day, but it is only congested at different times because of work and travel hours, not most of the time. I saw that from about 9 am to 4 pm there were no traffic jams because people had not yet come from work or school, but from 5 pm onwards it was blocked until 9 pm because I experienced it myself when I drove through the road.

The Alleyways

I also noticed that the reason for the heavy traffic jam is that Preah Monireth Boulevard is connected to many other roads. In one area, the boulevard splits into two roads: one road goes to the Coconut Farm (locally known as Chamkar Duong) and the other goes to Veng Sreng. The two main roads also intersect with many small roads, so when people come home from their duties, such as schools or work, they come together and cross each other. However, people in the area certainly have methods to solve problems. One way is to use the alleyways as a bypass or a shortcut. This alleyway can be a small road, or a path for pedestrians or an access road for small vehicles or modes of transportation aside from large cars or trucks. The paths are not as familiar to most people as the main roads, except for the locals who are keen on avoiding the congestion by using their knowledge of the area. For my own experience when I first came to study in the

city, I didn't know any other roads or detours other than the road to school and back home, and in order to know the shortcuts or other roads, I spent a year just getting to know the roads in that area.

When I conducted my observation on Preah Maniret Street, I looked at the place and listened to the people who talked about their thoughts about the place. I noticed the bypass (small road or shortcut) that was at the end of Preah Maniret Street, and it was a road that helped the people in that place travel quickly and reduce congestion on the main road. But from what I saw, most people did not know that there was a bypass in that place that made them travel quickly and easily. However, maybe some people just came to live there, or they knew, but they were afraid to ride because their vehicles blocking. If they knew all the shortcuts then maybe the main road would not be blocked, helping ease the traffic congestion. But I saw that most school students knew

those roads well, which made it easier for them to get to school on time.

Most people would think that the alleyways are quiet. This may be true if they are there during the slow hour, but the atmosphere is starkly different when you enter during the rush hours. The place I'm talking about is a village in a place called Phum Russey, which the people there have set up to be a community in the area. And the path in Phum Russey has an average width of 3-4 meters. But sometimes people park or sell and build too close to the road, so the road becomes narrower. The road is attractive to the growing number of low-income migrants with newly developed industrial zones. Sometimes street vendors also block traffic. Furthermore, those roads are often unnamed, and are known for previous use by drug dealers and kidnapers. Certainly, in recent years, the street safety has improved a lot, whether it is day or night, there is



Figure 95: Some posters on barricaded wall alongside the street.



Figure 96: Sidewalk.

Vichea NGOEURN

no theft, robbery, burglary or any other crime, and the streets are even equipped with solar lights to make people feel safe at night. The streets and alleys have childcare facilities and clinics, even if the locals prefer caring for their own kids. The way the area is planned and managed seemed to focus more on the main roads, leaving small streets and alleyways to develop on their own. Some places are safe and some are not, such as nomads digging up the sidewalks, and there is also the development of areas after the landfill, which was there before serving as the city's main dumping site, making them more walkable and accessible.

In conclusion, this study area attracts many people from migration, and a strategy for coming to live around here is to understand the access to the place, and offer improvements if possible. Traffic congestion not only makes us feel tired and frustrated, but also causes pollution to the environment around us, generating health costs and economic loss. When there is a lot of traffic congestion, pollution also increases and may lead to severe environmental problems, which affects people, animals, and plants. And for the government and city managers, the evolution of human settlements must also be considered in dealing with the area to make it sustainable and prosperous.



Figure 97: Night-street activity.

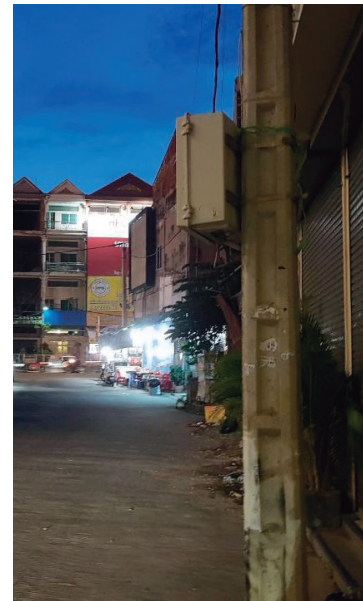


Figure 98: No sidewalk.

Crossing the Mekong: A Reflection on Ferry Transportation between Phnom Penh and Arey Ksatr

Seangfu HENG

I moved to Arey Ksatr a month ago. It is located in Kandal Province, opposite to Phnom Penh capital, to the east. Interestingly, from there, the only transportation to the town is by Ferry boats across the “four faces of the river”, but mostly dominated by the Mekong River section. Ferry boats have been the only option of transportation for locals in the Arey Ksatr and Koh Norea. Later, when the Norea bridge was built, most ferry boats from Phnom Penh to Norea Station moved to assist on the routes from Phnom Penh to Arey Ksatr and from Phnom Penh to Chrouy Changva station. However, there has not yet been any establishment of how many ferry boats are in Phnom Penh or in Cambodia as a whole.

In this journal, I will reflect on the experience, social interactions, identity, and opinion of the ferry boats from the capital to Arey Ksatr.

First, understanding the key concepts and systems of the ferry boats is a good start. Ferry Boats have been around in Cambodia for approximately fifteen years. It plays a crucial role in facilitating the services between the capital and Kandal or other provinces. Based on my observation, the station from the Capital to Arey Ksatr or (PP-AKST) has roughly six ferry boats.

They have three sizes and interesting names, or specifically, two of them have a very interesting name. The two big ferries’ names are Vishnu (វិស្ណុ) and



Figure 99: Getting on the ferries.

Brahma (Ta Prum/តាព្រហ្ម). Obviously, those are Hindu deities' names, and I speculate that the reason they name the vehicles like that was to give them charms and properties. People tend to use powerful names or a deity to cast a good luck charm or bring luck. It is very much like how the Chinese people put posters of Zhong Kui in front of their door to scare away ghosts, as Zhong Kui in the Chinese mythology is viewed as a Taoist deity and a heroic guardian who vanquishes evil spirits, this made me realize how religious views can influence the identification of something and in this case, a form of public transportation. Interestingly, Vishnu was donated by Finland, and Brahma was donated by Denmark. There are other big ferries too and they do not have those unique names, and their destination is only from Svay Jrum to Chrouy Changva, and I never ridden them before. And the rest of the ferries, regardless of size, do not have any deity's name, more of a "Slogan" with the number of that ferry. Example the small ferries have names like "ចន្ទមាន ប្លង់" then Numbers (The moon has Aura/Divine Power), or the big ferries, aside from the special Two, named like "សម្ព័ន្ធ" then Numbers (To Unite).

Another observation was how the ticketing system works. Before entering the station, I have to drive past a few employees wearing blue uniforms. They are there to collect money from passengers. Each entry costs 1,000 riels, which is \$0.25 for one motorcycle and one person, and if there are two people and one motorcycle, it costs 1500 riels or \$0.175. For cars, it costs 6000 riels for each entry, which is \$0.75. After entering the station, I met a few other employees whose job was to guide drivers to the right ferry. I noticed that they are not only assisting with which way to go, or how to go, but they are also assisting in helping them to go. Sometimes I see Moto-Vendors stuck or trying hard to drive into the

ferry, and the employee rushing to push and assist them safely onto the ferry. The same goes for those who are struggling to go up, such as motorcycles, bicycles, and cars. And with that in mind, whenever I enter, I don't feel unfamiliar or afraid to go in, and realize that the workers and the system not only provide service and safety, but also bind the connections, making it feel safer and more reliable.

However, there is a small fee at the ticket entrance. They divided the big entrance into two sections. One is big enough for the cars, and one is narrow enough for only motorcycles and rickshaws to pass through. The problem was that people do not go through the designated path. Motorcycles often go through the cars' side, and the ticket officer cannot control everyone. Why is consider a problem? When passing through the ticket entrance, all vehicles will stop at a point to wait for their turn to proceed. Normally, the car side will get passed more often than the motorcycle side because of the quantity and size. But some motorcycle drivers exploit the system and go straight through the car side, avoiding the ticketing officer's warning and passing before other passengers who came before. It creates an unfair sight, sometimes.

After getting on the boats, I did what other people do: sit, specifically, on my motorcycle, or if I am on a ferry that has benches (some ferries do not offer any benches to sit, and usually the benches are located on the rear side of the ferry along the edge), I can leave my motorcycle and sit there. However, there is another option, which is walk up to the upper platform/floor to relax and sit if there are any seats. Subsequently, the upper floor/platform on some ferries have shading structure, making staying there better when commuting during a scorching hot day. Moreover, the operator of the ferry is, of

course, on the upper floor, making it very interesting every time to see how they actually drive the ferry, personally.

At the time, it was a cloudy evening, and the sky was painted gray and red with beams of light streaking through the sky. The cold breeze of the Mekong River touches my face. I can feel the calmness of the river, the chaos of the waves, and how quiet it is on the ferry. Very much like other ways of transportation, people tend to mind their own business, meaning that not a lot of interaction takes place. In my experience, on subway or bus rides in Korea, nobody talks to anyone unless they know each other, and it is safe to assume a similar thing also happens to the majority of people using public transportation in developed and non-developed countries. Apparently, we call that social distance, but strangely, the conditions on the ferry were different. It does not feel tense, and there is no obligation to remain silent or unobtrusive, plus, I can barely hear my own voice, is sat at the rear of the small ferry because the engine is terribly loud, so talking there is quite challenging but not impossible.

One instant, I saw an uncle getting off his motorcycle and starting small talk with another stranger, nagging and complaining about their lives, which is very heartwarming to see. Some even went upstairs to see the view and started socializing, or taking pictures of the view, especially the sunset.

Another instance, there was a Moto-Vendor who sells porridge. A few minutes after the ferry took off, he started wiping and preparing his stall to sell after taking off, and surprisingly, a small number of people started coming to buy his porridge. One middle-aged man even gets out of his car, bought the food, and started a what seems like a roughly 3-4

minute conversation with the vendor. As a matter of fact, there is a stall-vendor on the ferry itself that sells snacks and water. Therefore, I concluded that ferry boats are not like most generic public transportation; they allow people to relax, to do business, or to do whatever else they want to except smoking. Arriving at the destination, workers began to help guide cars to go down the ferry, and other people rushed to go down as well. It takes around five to ten minutes for all the vehicles to leave the ferry, after which it is ready for new passengers to board.

I asked two people who had experienced using it before seeing it whether they had the same opinion or experience. One of them says, “The ferry is quite useful, but I feel a bit frustrated because there are no clear divisions for car ferries and motorcycle ferries, so it felt unsafe.” Another guy said, “One of my friends used to go to Arey Ksatr for work and had to use the ferry boats. It was her first time using it, and she almost rolled over with her motor when getting on the ferry, if it wasn’t for the workers there helping her. I had noticed the same thing. To me, cars and motorcycles driven by the same ferry were not the issue. However, I can see how it might be a problem for others since cars take longer to go up the ferry and require assistance from workers, and it’s not just one or two. With every car I observed coming aboard, they all needed support, which could potentially congest traffic further. It is safe to say that regardless of who uses it, we can see the impact of social interaction between the workers and the ferry, and all others who use it.

In summary, I believe this mode of transportation holds great potential for the future. However, at present, it still feels somewhat temporary and flawed, especially considering it has existed for nearly two decades. In future developments, plan-

Seangfu HENG

ners should aim to create a faster and more efficient system that better serves all stakeholders. It is also important to preserve this mode of transportation despite the availability of alternative means of travel to the provinces, as it functions not only as public transport but also as a source of care, connection, and community bonding.



Figure 100: Interesting Sight while riding the Ferry.



Figure 101: Small Ferry name “ចង្កោនប្លូឡិណ”

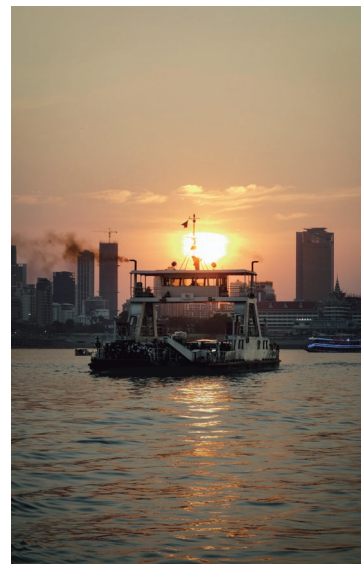


Figure 102: Sunset Scenery on the Ferry.

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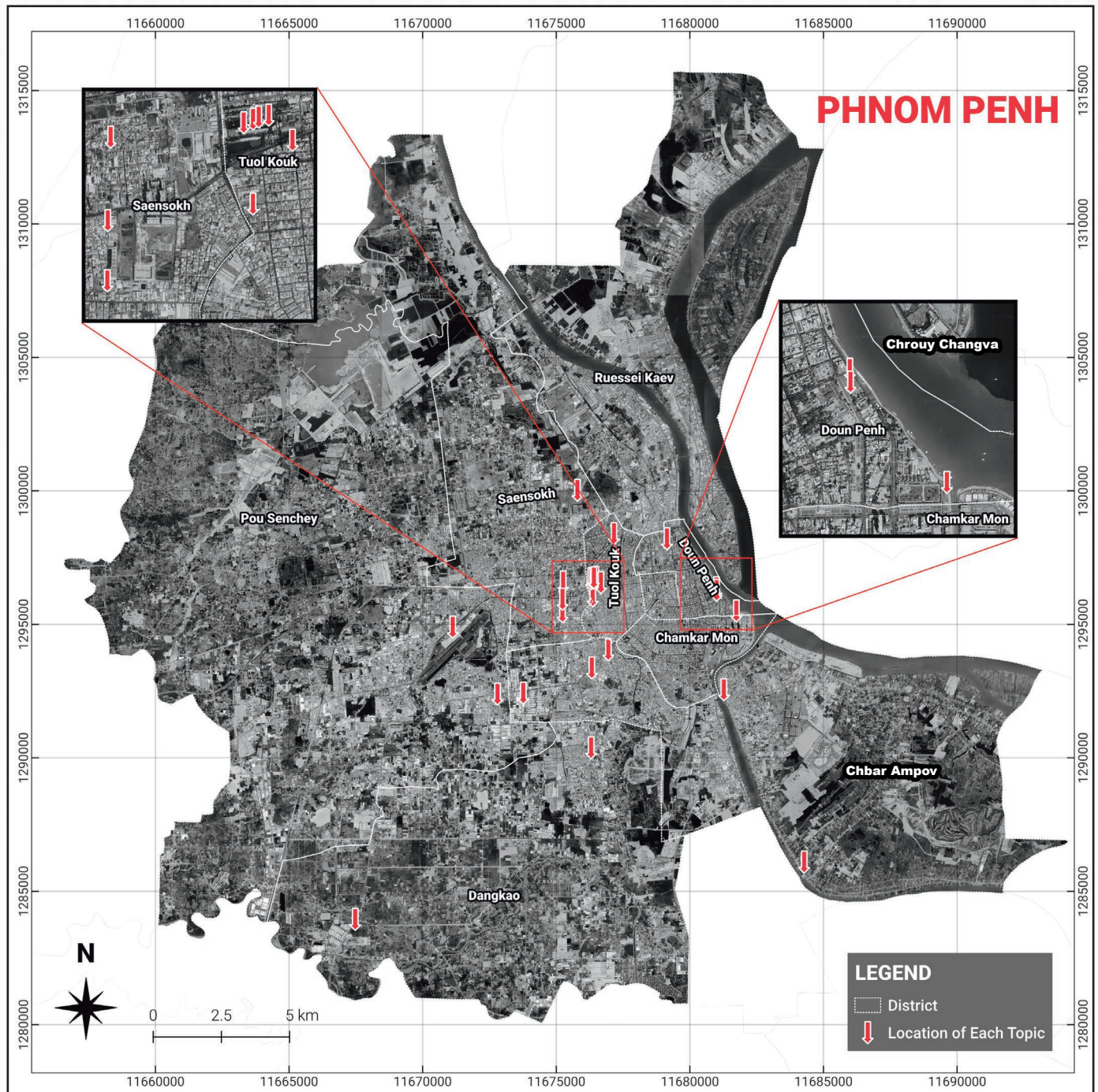
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MAP



The Ethnographic Journal of Urban Phnom Penh documents an ethnographic fieldwork conducted by the undergraduate students from the Department of Sustainable Urban Planning and Development at the Royal University of Phnom Penh. It offers a vivid, local-level portrait of a rapidly changing city across the capital's diverse neighborhoods and urban spaces, covering emerging key five thematics which include Business, Housing and Built Environment, Infrastructure and Environment, Social Space, and Traffic and Mobility.

The journal presents contemporary urban life through local lens. The authors document everyday practices, examine emerging urban challenges, and analyze how Phnom Penh's residents adapt and resist themselves to the changing landscape shaped by uneven urban development, infrastructure deficit, and the transformation of cultural, social, and economic life.

Blending grounded urban theories with people's lived experience, this first volume provides both an ethnographic record and a meaningful resource for urban planners, researchers, policymakers, and others who seek to gain a deeper understand the complex urban life of Phnom Penh Capital.



By the Students of DSUPD

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