Reframing Possession for Transformation
Strategies to recognise community and reposition negotiation for Phnom Penh’s urban poor

In partnership with ACHR and CAN-CAM
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table of contents

09
BEGINNING
Possession, Transformation in a time of transition, Introducing the transversal axes: community and negotiation.

13
UNDERSTANDING
History, Laws & Policies, People & Institutions

21
CONCEPTUALIZING
Scaling up and down and back again, Lenses of analysis, Methods on site

27
SITUATING
Six sites in Phnom Penh, People Built Environment, Natural Environment, Gender Challenges & Opportunities

39
STRATEGIZING
Goals, Strategies in Smor San Strategies for City-wide upgrading

49
BEGINNING ANEW
The role of the practitioner, Reframing possession for transformation
ACCA  Asian Coalition for Community Action
ACHR  Asian Coalition for Housing Rights
ADB  Asian Development Bank
ADHOC  Cambodian Human Rights and Development Organisation
AU  Accessibility Upgrading
AusAID  Australian Agency for International Development
BCV  Building Community Voices
Budd  Building and Urban Design in Development
CAN-CAM  Community Architects Network - Cambodia
CDF  Community Development Fund
CDMC  Community Development Management
CDRI  Cambodia Development Resource Institute
CIDA  Canadian International Development Agency
CLEC  Community Legal Education Center
COHRE  Centre on Housing Rights and Evictions
COLLPI  Civil Ombusman League on Land-use Policy Implementation
CSNC  Community Savings Network Cambodia
DPU  Development Planning Unit
EV  Eco-Village
FSMP  Flooding Season Mitigation Programme
GDG  Google Developer Group
GIZ  Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (German International Cooperation)
HIV/AIDS  Human Immunodeficiency Virus/ Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome
IESM  Improved Electrical System and Maintenance
IMF  International Monetary Fund
ISF  Indochina Starfish Foundation
ITC  Institut de Technologie du Cambodge
JICA  Japan International Cooperation Agency
LCOV  Let's Clean Our Village
LGT  Let's get together
LMAP  Land Management and Administration Project
LOOC  Let's organize our community
LTAOW  Let's talk about our water
MLMUPC  Ministry of Land Management, Urban Planning, and Construction
MPP  Municipality of Phnom Penh
NGO  Non Governmental Organisation
NTTI  National Technical Training Institute
NU  Norton University
ODA  Official Development Aid
OHCHR  United Nations High Commissioner
PNBC  People's Network for a Better City
PSE  Pour un Sourire d'Enfant
RGC  Royal Government of Cambodia
RUFA  Royal University of Fine Arts
RWB  Reporters Without Borders
SDI  Slum Dwellers International
SLMG  State Land Management Group
SLWG  State Land Working Group
SSS  Sewage System and Sanitation
STT  Sahmakum Teang Tnaut
TIF  Teach it Forward
TPC  Trees that Protect the Community
UCL  University College London
UDFI  Urban Development Fund International
UN  United Nations
UN-HABITAT  United Nations Human Settlement Programme
URC  Urban Resource Center
VOICE  Voluntary Organisations in Cooperation in Emergencies
WB  World Bank
WCHS  Waste Collection for Healthier Spaces
This report offers critical strategies aimed at city-wide urban transformation in Phnom Penh, Cambodia. It is the culmination of five months of research on and in Cambodia, the city of Phnom Penh, and several unique urban settlements, with a particular focus on Smor San. The research was conducted by students pursuing a Master of Science in Building and Urban Design in Development (BUDD) at the Development Planning Unit (DPU) in the Bartlett School of the Built Environment at University College London (UCL).

Chapter 1 outlines our research question, which concerns the construction of possession in Phnom Penh. It elaborates on both the historical context of possession and its current condition. We provide definitions of transformation and transition and explanations of community and negotiation, the two transversal elements of our study.

Chapter 2 deals with Cambodia’s political history and the evolution of land development. We summarise the legal framework and policies surrounding land and housing and name the key actors and institutions that influence transformation in Phnom Penh.

In Chapter 3 we discuss our conceptualisation of urban transformation through the lenses of gender and the built and natural environments. We address

the city and local scales to illustrate how we utilised these lenses to identify and understand certain challenges. We then introduce Smor San, the settlement in which we spent the most time, and outline some of the methods we used there.

Chapter 4 situates our understanding of the challenges and opportunities we saw across the six sites we visited. Here we offer a more in-depth picture of the challenges as they relate to our goals and we map these to demonstrate the complexity and connectivity of Phnom Penh’s development.

In Chapter 5 we build upon our challenges and goals to devise city-wide strategies. The strategies are part of a coordinated effort to apply pressure on the government to recognise poor communities and meet their demands.

Chapter 6 concludes with our proposition that transformation begin anew through the repositioning of the urban poor in socio-political-spatial negotiation. We charge the media with its responsibility to make emerge their stories in an accountable manner while drawing attention to the wider narrative of development in Phnom Penh. By reframing the understanding and application of possession there emerges an opportunity for all citizens to unite through the reclaiming of the city.

executive summary
From the start of our research, we often circled back to the same question: What does it mean to possess land in Phnom Penh? This provoked a number of subsidiary questions: What rights and responsibilities accompany possession? How long does it last and what could cause a change in status? What is the difference between individual, collective, and institutional possession? What about public and private?

According to Meinzen-Dick and Pradhan (2002), “conventional conceptions of property rights focus on static definitions of property rights, usually as defined in statutory law. However, in practice there is co-existence and interaction between multiple legal orders such as state, customary, religious, project and local laws, all of which provide bases for claiming property rights” (Adler, Ketya, and Menzies, 2008: 12). After the war in Cambodia ended in 1979, the new government rapidly re-established a system of private property as the country transitioned from war to reconstruction to development. The pace of change has left in gaps in the legal framework, which Cambodians themselves have filled (Payne, 2005), resulting in a patchwork system that is unevenly applied.

The people we spoke with in Phnom Penh linked possession to the right to determine how specific land is used or not used. It meant knowing you could stay, at least for a period of time and under certain circumstances. It also allowed you to transfer possession to someone else. In our study site, Smor San, we found that some residents connected housing quality to a sense of security, while for others the duration of their occupation was the most salient factor for rightful possession.

In sum, possession has both legal and moral dimensions: your right to possess and the righteousness of your possession. In the course of post-conflict transformation in Phnom Penh, “Authorities at all levels have favored business interests over the recognition of people’s legitimate rights by referring to the latter as ‘squatters’ or ‘new-comers’ and using the development narrative to illegally evict them” (ADHOC, 2013). As a result, low-income residents are left making increasingly precarious claims to a decreasing share of urban space. Amnesty International estimated that 2.2 million residents of Phnom Penh were evicted during the last quarter-century (Eimer, 2015), even while the government was drafting and passing laws to protect the urban poor.

Our strategies seek to drive counter transformations through confronting these contradictions, enabling all residents—especially the urban poor—to contribute to change as active subjects central to a new discourse of development. The perceptions of these shifts are closely connected with the ability to tell a story and the means of transmitting that story to a wide audience. As practitioners, our proximity and access to certain actors influences the story we tell, providing us with the agency to disrupt the dominant narrative of “might makes right.” In this way, we can influence the trajectory of transformation, making it more equitable, driven more by people and less by money.

Based on our research and experience, then, there must be an additional impetus before Phnom Penh’s low-income residents are sufficiently united and powerful to negotiate with the government from a position of strength. Our strategies seek to build awareness, increase visibility, disseminate information, and direct the government on how best to respond to the realities of Phnom Penh’s low-income residents.

“The gap between regulations and realities has inevitably been filled by the people themselves, and land not allocated for productive use has been extensively settled throughout Phnom Penh” [171]
Phnom Penh has seen many political and economic transitions over the past 100 years. As in many other emerging cities, the current one is rooted in a neoliberal approach to land possession and capital accumulation. This has triggered transformations in both the aesthetics of the built environment and in the promulgation of an individualistic social class. This transition remains incomplete and it is in this intermediate stage when class conflict, inequality, and injustice must be vigorously contested before they become systematised, enabling the urban poor to reposition themselves as viable development partners (Boano and Kelling, 2013).

Repeated instances of exclusionary decision-making in Phnom Penh have undermined the rights of citizens, reinforcing the idea that “poverty isolates, geographically and socially” (Boonyabancha et al, 2012: 447). The paradox of a government that is both paternalistic and negligent subjects citizens to a convoluted process of achieving land ownership.

The Community Development Foundation (CDF)—one of the few NGOs that the municipality recognises—builds upon Lefebvre’s concept of “the right to the city” in maintaining that the urban poor are equal members of society who have the same rights to space as any other citizens. In elevating the status of low-income residents, CDF seeks to amplify and unify their voices, enabling them to work together effectively. This is easier said than done, however, since residents in several of the settlements we visited had little trust in community savings groups and were more interested in individual possession over collective negotiation.

Rancière discusses two ideas that could resolve the dilemma between negotiation and collective action. The first is to treat the diversity of views and experiences as an asset, moving “from consensus back into dissensus, especially in the realm of design and spatialities, thus increasing the potential for innovation” (Boano and Kelling, 2013: 52). Groups like CAN-CAM could host creative debates or participatory design charrettes to contest the prevailing conditions and behaviours within a settlement while ensuring equality of voices.

The second approach is to provide tools that enable people to think beyond their reality. “Art reflects an experience of life, it can create a feeling of recognition, of finding a previously unexpressed feeling or experience finally expressed” (Boano and Kelling, 2013: 54). This could blur the divisions between poor and wealthy, titled and untitled, offering a less homogenous perspective of the urban poor that legitimises their place in spaces of power.

“The question is not how to ‘train’ the urban poor or change their behaviour but rather to identify how development interventions can nurture and develop the strength that already exists, letting people make change” (Boonyabancha, Carcellar, and Kerr, 2012: 444).
UNDERSTANDING
a. history

“It is estimated that more than 150,000 Cambodians live under threat of forced eviction, including approximately 70,000 in Phnom Penh” (COHRE Cambodia, 2008: 3).

Figure 2-1 Land Growth Pattern (diagram produced by group)
“It is estimated that by 2020, only 100,000 out of the city’s 1 million poor living will be living in the four central districts, whereas the rest will be living on the outskirts of Phnom Penh” (Crosbie, 2004 quoted in Heinonen, 2009: 102-103).
ii. a history of possession

Figure 2-4 History in Political and Regional Dimensions

- 1979
  - Khmer Rouge forms its own province in exile
  - Chan Sy becomes Prime Minister

- 1980
  - Hun Sen is appointed Prime Minister, introduces “new socialism”

- 1981
  - Peace talks between four major factions commence in Paris

- 1982
  - CPP, Khmer Rouge and other communist factions continue to war

- 1983
  - Hun Sen abandons socialism to attract capitalist investment

- 1984
  - Vietnamese installed government declares Collective Land

- 1985
  - Growth of informal settlements

- 1986
  - Vietnamese installed government declares Collective Land

- 1987
  - Vietnamese installed government declares Collective Land

- 1988
  - Vietnamese installed government declares Collective Land

- 1989
  - UN led transitional government

- 1990
  - CPP, Khmer Rouge and other communist factions continue to war

- 1991
  - New Land Law declared

- 1992
  - Land Law collapses due to the pressures of the market economy

- 1993
  - Norodom Rinariddh is elected First Prime Minister and forms a coalition government with CPP headed by Hun Sen
Our work in the field was rooted in history. Some of Smor San’s residents arrived in the cemetery in the late 1970s as part of the first wave of migration to the area after the collapse of the Khmer Rouge. Their housing stories provide a glimpse into the survivalist nature of their living conditions early on, with many of them settling inside or underneath the morgue for several years before obtaining the materials to begin constructing houses. Subsequent waves of migration happened in 1993 after the UN peace accord and in 2007 when the riverbank collapsed.
b. laws and policies

On the surface, Cambodian laws are clear in their basic answers to questions about possession. The 2001 Land Law declared that all people have the right to land ownership and that anyone occupying the same dwelling “for at least five consecutive years, peacefully, unambiguously, and with the public acknowledgement” was entitled to continue living there (Pho, 2012). Nine years later, the National Housing Strategy reaffirmed those rights and additionally stated that the government seeks to provide housing to all Cambodians. Relocation, it said, was “a last option, used in accordance with the principles of voluntariness, good governance, transparency, accountability, and participation from the affected settlers” (General Secretariat of Council for Land Policy, 2010: 5). The government published a supplementary, non-binding clarification, Circular 03, the same year, which for the first time described a process that would legalise illegal occupation. It also provided a framework for just resettlement of communities where on-site upgrading was impossible (Lindstrom, 2013).

Under scrutiny, however, this straightforwardness begins to unravel, especially for the urban poor. To start, the Land Law gave longer term residents the right to continue living in their homes, but that did not mean they could claim full ownership (Pho, 2012). The government communicated this distinction poorly and since the law’s passage, many residents with certificates of possession have nonetheless found themselves under threat of eviction (ibid). The legacy of the Khmer Rouge period, during which private property, maps, and official records were abolished, further complicates land issues. When the regime collapsed in 1979, Cambodians streamed back into Phnom Penh and established themselves wherever they could. The new government nullified all legal claims to land prior to that year and registered most urban land as private. The remainder was classified as state public—which included roads, railways, ports, schools, etc.—and state private—belonging to state institutions. State public land had to remain public, but state private land could be fully privatised (Payne, 2005). Over time the government has increasingly, and often legally, sold off state private land to developers (AD-HOC, 2013). For its part, Circular 03 lacks the specificity to truly resolve many of the existing ambiguities in the law and, in any case, not being a law itself, it is subordinate to previous legal documents (Lindstrom, 2013).

There are significant demand-side barriers that inhibit people from using the law to their advantage. This is the result of limited awareness of rights, entitlements, and the process for making a legal claim, as well as low literacy levels and a lack of availability of legal aid. In addition, implicit or explicit threats discourage people from seeking legal recourse. Weak rule of law in Cambodia has reduced citizen confidence in established legal mechanisms, making it even more unlikely that people will turn to the law to resolve their problems (Bugaliski, 2012b).

“The more legal it gets, the harder it gets for the poor” - Maurice Leonhardt, ACHR
In 2009 the Royal Government of Cambodia (RGC) stated that it would, “administer, manage, use, and distribute land in an equitable, transparent, efficient, and sustainable manner” (Bugalski, 2012b). The declaration arrived on the heels of the premature cancellation of the World Banks’ Land Management and Administration Project (LMAP) designed to create a policy framework to settle disputes over land titles in state land across the country. The Bank said that, “The project design under-estimated the complexity and politically fraught nature of state land management and failed to address directly and seek to overcome the commonplace corruption throughout the system” (World Bank, 2011: 7).

One aspect of the complex transformation in Phnom Penh is who is involved. We thus grouped actors based on scale and relationships. In terms of scale and resource consumption, the rapid urban growth prompted by developers, government, and wealthy investors far outpaces the progress that civil society groups, which rely heavily on individual donors and foundations, have made. For example, ACHR, recently dissolved its ACCA programme after the main financier stopped prioritising urban upgrading. The actor map also shows that there is an absence of media in the discourses on urban growth.
03 CONCEPTUALISING
a. scaling up and down and back again

By examining the city and the sites simultaneously, we created a continuous loop of analysis at both scales.

b. lenses of analysis

In conceiving of transformation in Phnom Penh, we used three lenses of analysis: the built and natural environments and gender. The two environmental lenses examine the conditions and the quality of urban space. The final lens seeks to disaggregate the impact of gender—women, men, girls, and boys—on how the urban poor live.
“Mapping is a process, with an aim that goes beyond making a piece of paper with lines on it. The success of mapping need not be measured solely by the production of a physical map; if the process leads to a common understanding and increased dialogue by community members about their relationship to their living space and their community’s relationship to the wider environment, then this also is an indicator of success” (Archer, Luansang, and Boonmahathanakorn, 2012: 118)

“I wish my dream house would fall from the sky”
- Manet, Smor San Community, 6 May 2016
ii. plan of action

This is a diagram of our work in Smor San, a settlement of approximately 100 households in and around a cemetery in the centrally located khan Chbar Ampov in Phnom Penh. It also illustrates how our actions related to our analytical lenses.

In the spirit of co-producing knowledge, though we formulated a detailed plan of activities for each day, we consistently modified it mid-workshop based on responses from community members, our lenses of analysis, and the topics we wanted to bring to the fore.
Exercise: Mapping of flooding phenomenon into the site. Physically identifying areas of deposit of garbage. Recognizing the flows of domestic water.

Link community concerns with issues like public open spaces and community spaces. Exercise: Make a profile of 5 residents based on housing and income. Little transect walk to see the housing conditions. The main leaders as many people are women who take care of the children while husbands are working.

Reaffirmation of topics like flooding and waste management as the main problems.

Exercise: mapping the tombs into the community. Observe the physical uses of tombs by the residents as public and private furniture.

Interview to 3 women to be aware of their daily routines. Observation: gender is an important factor that defines everyday life.

Feedback from community: Strategies of waste collection by the residents were supported.

Feedback from community: Residents were not very interested in proposals about public space. Strategies about adequate electricity provision and improving size of the road were welcome.

Observation: The female community leader showed strong interests in presenting the results of the workshops to the local authorities.
Sketches made by Maria José Martínez Gertner
SITUATING
### Issues
- Waste Management
- Flooding Risk
- Drainage and Sewage System
- Threat of Eviction (private land)
- Lack of Trust
- Insufficient electricity provision
- Unilateral Communication
- Risk of Fire
- Extreme Living Condition
- Division of Groups

### Positive Aspects
- Documentation Book as Negotiation Tool
- Close to Job Factories
- Central Location
- Good Access to Public Services
- Democratic Leadership
- Partnership with Organisations
- Social-Physical Scale
- Saving Group
- Access to Public Facilities
- Human Resource
- Experiences of Self-upgrading
- Biggest Community Saving Group

### Figure 4.1
Studied and visited sites in Phnom Penh, registering negative issues and positive aspects (map produced by group)
b. people

We divided the actors connected specifically to Smor San into two groups: those that affected the settlement from the outside and sub-groups within the settlement. Satellite images from the past 10 years show development projects encroaching upon the community, further isolating it and contributing to its stigmatisation. In addition, a number of NGOs including World Vision, Indochina Starfish Foundation (ISF), and Friends International, each with its own agenda, has studied and/or provided resources to the community.

Like any other community, Smor San is not homogenous. When we first met the community leaders, they maintained that their first priority in upgrading their neighbourhood was creating a “green community,” a term they used to refer to the removal of the graves to free up space for the cultivation of food, plants, and livestock. Once we began working with a larger cross-section of people, however, we learned that the importance of a “green community” paled in comparison to more specific needs regarding waste management and improving electricity infrastructure. We further observed divisions between those who participated in the savings group and those who did not, and those with and without land titles. These and other internal divisions impede residents’ ability to organise for collective action, as well as the ability of public sector and civil society organisations to intervene in ways that benefit all residents.

Figure 4-2: Actors Involvement in Smor San (diagram produced by group)
Shatkin (2008) refers to a process of ‘bypass-implant urbanism’ through which a “diversified portfolio of integrated urban mega projects are linked by a growing network of rail and toll roads. Phnom Penh lacks the ‘bypass’ component, resulting in a vision that only involves a disconnected array of relatively isolated implants” (Palling, 2012: 904).
Understanding environmental concerns is all about balance: striking the right chord between the built and natural environments, ensuring that all residents have access to health and sanitation services, and promoting growth while protecting natural resources.

As in many cities, the government is unable to tackle these every issue alone and must rely on assistance from private providers and residents themselves. Without adequate regulation, incentives, and subsidies however, decentralisation results in lower calibre or sometimes nonexistent services for people who cannot afford to pay or who live in places that the government deems illegal. Land and environment are additionally linked through the elevation of economic growth over social development, for example when flooding occurs because land is reclaimed to make more space for a satellite city. Together, these circumstances result in greater vulnerability for the already vulnerable, and further impoverishment for the already poor.

In Smor San, the community’s profanation of the tombs into housing foundations, cooking surfaces, play equipment, beds, firewalls, chairs, areas to wash and dry laundry, and more, has transformed a cemetery from a place for the dead into a place for the living. Similarly, in other informal settlements throughout Phnom Penh, low-income people have modified places not envisioned as residential areas into neighbourhoods, appropriating sometimes unexpected spaces into homes, businesses, and community infrastructure.

Figure 4-5 Electricity Distribution in Poor Settlements (photo taken by Muhammad Nelza Mulki Iqbal)

Figure 4-6 Favorable Housing conditions in north end of Smor San (photo taken by Yuxuan Tu)

Figure 4-7 Precarious Housing Conditions in central area of Smor San, during Flooding Season (photo from http://www.ngoinsider.com/2012/10/living-amongst-dead-doeum-slung-phnom.html)

Figure 4-8 Tombs and Public Spaces in Smor San (sketches produced by Yuxuan Tu)
Private developers in Cambodia have 99-year leases on almost 50% of the arable land in the country (Tuy, 2007), making productive land vulnerable to the pressures of development. Specifically, urban growth in Phnom Penh shows not only the rapid expansion of the city’s core, but also significant infilling of bodies of water to make room for satellite city projects such as Diamond Island, Cam-Ko City, and, most controversially, Beoung Kak Lake City. The filling of Boeung Kak Lake in 2010 not only displaced thousands of residents reliant upon the river for their livelihoods, but also led to severe flooding in adjacent areas.

Similar environmental destruction has occurred on the banks of the Mekong River due to massive excavation for the construction of Diamond Island and around the village of Prek Takong. In the latter, infilling resulted in the disappearance of fertile agricultural land for growing rice to make way for a mega-city project that will completely redirect the Mekong’s natural water run-off. In Smor San, many of the residents’ most critical concerns centre on environmental hazards: not only the threat of natural disasters, but the disposal of sewage and trash and the precariousness of electrical wires that run through dead trees, increasing the risk of fires and power outages.
Figure 4-10 Natural Environment in Smor San: flooding areas mapped according to community members, to understand flooding patterns (map produced by Maria José Martínez Gertner). Sections in page 62.

Figure 4-11 Children in Flooding Season (photo from http://www.ngoinsider.com/2012/10/living-amongst-dead-doeum-slung-phon.html)

Figure 4-12 Living Environment and waste in Smor San (photo taken by Yuxuan Tu)
Sophal and her family were the subject of a profile conducted by Amnesty International in 2011. Sophal lost her job and her extended family network because of forced relocation. This story helps to spatialise and understand the gendered impacts of relocation on everyday life and livelihoods.

We chose to concentrate on gender because of the relative absence of explicit focus on the topic despite its clear relevance. We saw photos of women at the front lines of conflicts with law enforcement, playing the role of peacemakers while also bearing the brunt of aggression if things turned violent. We read about NGOs that address children, education, and health issues, including HIV/AIDS, all of which affect people differently depending on their gender. We understand that statistics for literacy, primary school attendance and survival, and more Cambodia are not always equal for girls and boys (UNICEF, 2013).

As we delved deeper into our research, we came to understand the social expectations and realities of reproductive and productive roles, and the gendered impact of eviction and relocation. We found that women tended to participate in community savings groups at higher rates than men. While women dominate community engagement in Smor San, that was not the case in every community. Indeed, men delivered almost every official presentation at the start of the urban upgrading workshop whereas women played mostly supportive roles. We repeatedly heard certain generalisations, like that men did not manage money as well as women did, and we saw some evidence of those expectations being borne out in behaviour: there were almost no idle women in Smor San, but we observed groups of young men playing games.
In depth interview for understanding daily routine

PROFILE:
- 53 years old
- Moved to Smor San in 1990 after land slide
- Husband: Construction painter and independent moto-taxi driver
- Children: 2 girls & 3 boys
- No payed work; was vegetable seller before
- Participates in community saving groups
f. challenges & opportunities

The larger map to the left, offers a broad picture of several driving forces acting upon Phnom Penh. The smaller map depicts the same forces acting upon Smor San. The large map shows areas impacted by flooding, satellite cities and the market value of land. We believe all of these elements interact with each other to produce conditions which are hostile to communities in need of housing. We also highlight opportunities such as green space and public buildings. The challenges we identified on the city scale come from our analysis of the six sites. These illustrations contextualise the spatial conditions underlying our strategies.

“The local authority has almost no involvement here and that’s been the case since 1979 when I moved to build my own home”

Resident, Smor San

Figure 4-21 City Synthesis of Analysis: Phnom Penh (map produced by group)

Figure 4-22 Site Synthesis Analysis: Smor San (map produced by group)
Figure 4-22 Site Synthesis Analysis: Smor San (map produced by group)

- Health Hazards
- Risk Of Fire
- Poor Housing Quality
- Poor Living Conditions
- Flooding Risk

Figure 4-23 Processes of Defining Citywide Challenges and Opportunities (diagram produced by group)

**Challenges**

- Environment
  - Health Hazards
  - Risk Of Fire
  - Poor Housing Quality
  - Poor Living Conditions
  - Flooding Risk

- Services
  - Waste Management
  - Electricity Distribution
  - Drainage System
  - Sewage System
  - Poor Accessibility

- Housing, Land & Income
  - Under Employment
  - Uncertain Land Tenure
  - Threat Of Eviction
  - Low Income

- Trust & Sense Of Belonging
  - Distrust Between People
  - Lack Of Trust In Government
  - Hinders Saving Group
  - Unilateral Communication

**Group Of Issues**

- STEUNG KOMBOT
- HEAM CHEAT
- SMOR SAN
- STENG MEACHEY
- STENG SENCHYEY
- PONGRO SENCHYEY
- PREK TAKONG

**Group Of Positive Aspects**

- Support From Ngos & International Organisations
- Connection With Local And International Universities
- Kids As Human Resource
- Democratic Leadership
- Close Relationship & Cooperation With Actors Around The Community
- Experiences Of Self-Upgrading
- Documentation Book As Negotiation Tool
- Saving Group
- Central Location
- Access To Public Facilities
- Social-Physical Scale
- Large Farm Land Around
- Adequate Methods To Generate Income

**Opportunities**

- Accessible Support From Civil Societies And International Organisations
- Human Resources
- Successful Community Self-Upgrading Examples
- Others
Poster made by group on-site
05

STRATEGISING
This diagram depicts the logic of our analysis. Specifically, peering through the lenses of the built and natural environments and gender while maintaining a focus on community, we used the continuous loop described above to connect challenges and opportunities with goals at the site and city levels.

“Negotiation is better than fighting”
- HE Mann Chhoern, Director of Housing, Ministry of Land Management and Urban Planning, RUFA, 1 May 2016
b. strategies in Smor San

The following section describes the strategies that we co-produced with the community and that they presented to officials from the local government.

**STRATEGY 1: IMPROVED ELECTRICAL SYSTEM AND MAINTENANCE**

Improve electrical connections into buildings and in public spaces and mitigate potential causes of electrical shock and power outages. To ensure a safe living environment for residents, the local authority replaces the electrical pole. Electricité du Cambodge, Cambodia’s utility company must keep electrical infrastructure in good working order, just as it does in other parts of the city.

**STRATEGY 2: FLOODING SEASON MITIGATION PROGRAMME**

Inspired by successful waste management programmes in other parts of the city, including Steung Meanchey, this initiative seeks to minimise waste in advance of the flooding season through environmental education and activism.

**STRATEGY 3: WASTE COLLECTION FOR HEALTHIER SPACES**

Because the width of Smor San’s main throughway is insufficient for garbage trucks to enter, place rubbish bins throughout the community to encourage proper domestic waste disposal. Additionally, place a dumpster at the northern end so it is accessible for pickup by a passing truck.
STRATEGY 4: TEACH IT FORWARD

Create a network for sharing information concerning employment opportunities and requests for services to make it easier for residents to find out about jobs while providing an impetus to build their skills to suit market needs. Take advantage of existing NGO-led on-site training programmes to maximise the impact of current initiatives.

Figure 5-5 Community Assets (map produced by group)

STRATEGY 5: SEWAGE SYSTEM & SANITATION

Implement an adequate system of domestic water running from dwellings to the standard utilities network. Surveys will provide data on current toilet coverage and sanitation conditions within the settlement.

Figure 5-6 Sewage System Proposal, raised in the presentation to the Local Authority (map produced by group)

STRATEGY 6: IMPROVING ACCESSIBILITY

Remove certain tombs and re-block sections of the main road to widen it enough to allow the passage of garbage trucks and emergency vehicles.

Figure 5-7 Removals for Re-blocking in Smor San (map produced by group)

Figure 5-8 Re-blocking for Inner Accessibility, proposed after presentation as a reflection over the work done (map produced by group)
c. strategies for city-wide upgrading

The following three strategies are grounded in our understanding of the study sites and how they compare with broader urban transformations in Phnom Penh. We acknowledge both their ambition and their limitations. While we designed the strategies as interconnected to enhance their impact, we recognise that that may be impractical. At the core of each strategy is an emphasis on data, providing poor residents with essential information for their own development and to use as a bargaining chip, and enabling them to track instances of social and spatial injustice. Relying on open data ensures that this information is equally accessible to women, men, girls, and boys, implying that all people, regardless of gender, have the right to be heard and to effect change according to their needs and experiences.

“By gathering all the collected information into a database, residents can create a valuable tool for planning purposes, having to hand the necessary information about financial resources, skills base, disaster risks and infrastructure needs, among other things” (Archer, Luansang, and Boonmahanathanakom, 2012: 118).
PNBC is a live application aimed at creating a rich source of information for all to access. In providing this platform, it holds the government and other actors accountable. Any user can upload content via mobile phone. This data is then sorted into maps, diagrams, and statistics and made available to the public on a dedicated website. The application organises the information into categories such as housing construction, infrastructure projects, government/NGO activity, community action, etc. The NGO Forum on Cambodia monitors and verifies the data, which is promoted to other NGOs and media outlets to raise awareness of current issues in Phnom Penh.

**CONTEXT**

A 2014 study showed that 81.4% of Cambodians own cell phones and 51.7% of those are smartphones. There are roughly 2.9 million smartphone users accessing applications like Facebook on a daily basis. Several organisations promote app development including IOSKhmer (an application development forum in Khmer) and Google Developer Group Phnom Penh, which holds free monthly training sessions for Cambodians interested in making their first app (Phong and Solá, 2015).

App development could provide a public platform to the urban poor in a city where the media devotes little attention to their concerns and information from NGOs rarely reaches a wide audience. In addition, members of poor communities tend to be isolated within their settlements, confronting challenges without recognising that they fit into patterns of injustice throughout the city.

**STAGES**

**Stage 1**
Initial proposal for the app is submitted to Google Developer Group (GDG) by the NGO Forum - Google Developer Group nominates young developers to lead the app creation with targeted calls for proposals in informal communities - App is built and tested - Launch of the PNBC

**Stage 2**
- Continual input from public users (both community members and NGO workers)
- Application rapidly sorts data, publishes it to the appropriate categories, and maps the location of the information source
- NGO Forum routinely monitors data and mapping, looking for errors and/or contradictions in the information and verifies it
- Media utilises the data by reporting it through their own channels as news stories
- Other NGOs utilise the data to understand the challenges and conditions of the urban poor

**Stage 3**
- The data becomes part of an archive grouped by year to create an accurate picture of urban transformation over time
- Translation of data into English to facilitate use by international media

**SCALE**
The PNBC is meant to create links between local activity and the broader city. It is a live resource that serves people in Phnom Penh, multi-national organisations, and local, national, and international media.

**ACTORS**

**Civil society:**
NGO Forum on Cambodia

**STT**

**VOICE**

**Media:**
Beehive Radio
Phnom Penh Post

**Private:**
GDG- Phnom Penh
ioskhmer.com

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*Figure 5-10 Processes of How to Achieve Ecological Collective Actions (diagram produced by group)*
Eco-Villages are parallel activism and education campaigns to improve public space and services for everyone in Phnom Penh. These campaigns could create a symbiotic relationship between residents and local authorities to address environmental challenges. Local authorities offer in-kind matching rewards to incentivise residents to upgrade their built and natural environments through, for example, collecting waste, cleaning canals and open spaces, maintaining trees, gardening, and more. In doing this, the government saves time and money on public service provision. An additional investment in education campaigns seeks to change behaviours from an early age all the way through university level. All of the initiatives could begin as pilot projects, perhaps in the six communities we visited.

Local media coverage as well as links with PNBC facilitate connections between environmental organisations, creating a network for sharing information on ecology and preservation and sparking action on a larger scale. Shining a spotlight on these initiatives—and on the conditions that make them necessary—could put pressure on the government to “clean up its act.”

**CONTEXT**

Though Article 31 of the Cambodian Constitution guarantees all Cambodians the right to an adequate standard of living (Kingdom of Cambodia, 1993), there is a severe lack of basic service provision to settlements not recognised by the government, and efforts to provide services often come at a heavy cost. Exacerbating these issues is the low level of environmental education in Phnom Penh, particularly among the urban poor. Students and faculty at RUFA, NU, ITC, and NTTI are well positioned to kickstart these campaigns since they are familiar with urban poor communities and the environmental challenges they face.

**STAGES**

Stage 1
NGO Forum identifies existing community organisations that could participate in neighbourhood greening, such as the Cambodian Sanitation and Recycling Organisation and the Association for Protection Development for Cambodia Environment
Appointment of an inter-university committee on environmental curriculum development
Alerting local media and urban poor community leaders of the start of the parallel campaigns and providing initial talking points

Stage 2
Initiation of pilot community projects
Presentation and publicising initiatives through local media channels
Representatives of initiatives seek and hold meetings with government officials to negotiate in-kind matching schemes
Drafting of environmental curriculum and identification of teacher trainers throughout the city

Stage 3
Refining and expanding community projects
Presentation of curriculum to Ministry of Education, Youth, and Sport with a period for public comments
Rollout of curriculum to teacher trainers

**SCALE**

This strategy could begin as a series of pilot micro projects that could grow in reach and scope with time, success, and publicity. Ideally these projects will attract the attention of local and national media, government, and civil society organisations, all of whom already acknowledge the importance of environmental issues at all levels in Cambodia.

**ACTORS**

**Civil society:**
Students and faculty at RUFA, NU, ITC, and NTTI
NGO Forum and the community organisations it recommends
PNBC

**Government:**
Teacher trainers
Ministry of Education, Youth, and Sport

**Media:**
Beehive Radio
Phnom Penh Post

**Figure 5-11** Processes of How to Achieve PNBC (diagram produced by group)
COLLPI is an independent advocacy and legal organisation initiated by community activists and supported on a voluntary basis by researchers, attorneys, and university students to promote and monitor the implementation of pro-poor land and housing policies. It necessitates close collaboration with the media, especially investigative media outlets, and other organisations that promote transparency.

CONTEXT

Land and housing legislation in Cambodia is both unevenly implemented and insufficiently specific as described in Section 2b above. Further, knowledge of legal recourse and confidence in the judicial system are limited, especially among the urban poor.

STAGES

Stage 1
- Students who participated in the city-wide upgrading workshop partner with community activists to develop a proposal for the COLLPI project
- Pitch the project to local universities and solicit participation from attorneys and researchers
- Seek institutional capacity building support from NGOs and international organisations such as Building Community Voices (BCV), Transparency International (TI)

Stage 2
- Pursue partnership with Open Development Cambodia (ODC) to seek media coverage and advocate for transparency and clarification to land and housing legislation.
- Collaborate with STT, ACHR, and MLMUPC, especially State Land Management Group (SLMG) and State Land Working Group (SLWG) to propose revisions to the National Housing Strategy and Circular 03
- Begin public awareness campaigns on traditional and social media to improve knowledge of land and housing rights and available legal resources and link these initiatives to the Eco-Villages campaigns

Stage 3
- Publish a layperson’s guide to housing and land policies in Cambodia that is revised on a regular basis
- Solicit broader participation on and offline including compiling a list of local, national, and international organisations working on these issues and seeking to connect them to each other
- Develop feedback mechanisms
- Exert concerted pressure on government and other interest groups to achieve desired changes, at the same time partner with Reporters Without Borders (RWB) to defend the freedom of reporters in Cambodia.

SCALE

While COLLPI would operate on a city scale, its impact would be national: reduced corruption, greater government transparency, improved collaboration, and more clarity in land and housing policies. While the number of people formally involved in COLLPI may remain small, the data and resources available would grow, enabling an increasing number of people to advocate for themselves, seek assistance when necessary, and demand accountability from their elected and appointed representatives, all of which would contribute to more secure tenure in informal settlements.

ACTORS

Government:
MLMUPC
MPP
SLMC
SLWG

Private sector:
Media
Attorneys

Civil Society:
STT, BCV, TI
RWB, ACHR, PNBC, Students and faculty at RUFA, NU, ITC, and NTTI
Eco-Villages campaign leaders

iii. civil ombudsman league on land-use policy implementation (COLLPI)

Figure 5-12 Processes of How to Achieve COLLPI
(diagram produced by group)
BEGINNING ANEW
Reflecting on our role as students and as practitioners throughout this project, we can identify four key themes: trust, discursivity, possibility, and the ability not to do. Co-production requires trust and faith, never more so than in challenging conditions. Arriving in Cambodia armed only with what we had read and only being able to scratch the surface during our short stay, our greatest asset was our willingness trust in the lived experience of the people we met, their knowledge, and their expertise.

Maintaining discursivity in our work required our readiness to diverge from our well-laid plans and adapt and respond to feedback almost instantaneously. Despite conflicting opinions and stories, we listened intently and strived to continue building upon existing momentum. In many instances, we were internal actors—especially in Smor San and with our Cambodian student counterparts—just as much as we were external observers.

We consistently attempted to position issues as opportunities. Indeed, when we presented our most ambitious interpretations of these opportunities to the community for the first time, they rejected our proposals. They were interested in possibility, but it needed to address their concrete and pressing issues. When the community leaders picked up the poster we made and began to rehearse their presentation to local authorities, we relinquished control of the process, realising at that moment that we had made a significant contribution. It was our ability not to do that enabled all of us to avoid generic solutions and make way for knowledge co-production.

Figure 6-1 The Role of Practitioner (produced by group)
b. reframing possession for transformation

To change the current trajectory of development in Phnom Penh is to change a socio-political-spatial environment riding powerful currents of globalisation and personal capital accumulation. The belief that each person rises or falls based on her will to succeed excludes many people and fundamental changes must occur before the narrative is reframed in favour of the masses.

In the meantime, we proposed strategies that “let people be the solution,” to quote main slogan of ACHR (Somsook Bonyabancha). We believe all of us have an unrelenting capacity to begin anew, to transform our lives for the better and reposition ourselves to gain visibility in spaces of power. Cambodia’s turbulent history has demanded that its people embark upon this process more than once.

Despite the potential we see, we nonetheless acknowledge the challenges of bringing people together. Unity requires celebrating difference while rallying around shared ideas. Transparency, data-sharing, and self-reflection can provide the fodder for negotiating with powerful actors from a position of strength. Equally, it is the the media, shared by all, that must hold every actor accountable, itself included. Harnessing this power in service of Phnom Penh’s poor would rewrite the city’s narrative of development, capturing realities that rarely emerge from the communities in which they originate. With this in mind, we hope for yet another paradigm shift in a city already in flux. To echo ACHR, “People make cities; poor people do too.”

We observed notable social capital in Smor San and in the other settlements we visited: bold women, resourceful men, and countless curious and energetic children. Though financial hardship stigmatised their conditions, “the power of their numbers takes the place of the missing power of money” (Boonyabancha et al 2012: 444), which is to say that social ties can spur collective action. Our proposals—disseminating information generated from within on an accessible platform, catalysing environmental improvements, and establishing accountable mechanisms for implementing pro-poor policies—could be a starting point.

Figure 6-2 View of City Development from Urban Poor Settlement
(photo taken by Hye Jung Park)
The following numbers of the appendix are broken into parts corresponding to the chapters of this report.

(02.a.) statistics of land ownership and eviction threats
(02.c.) actors’ relationship
(03.a.) study of Phnom Penh: general information
(03.a.) study of Phnom Penh: statistics on urban poor
(03.b.) study of Smor San: statistics and general information
(03.b.) daily routine of women in Phnom Penh (before and after relocation)
(04.e) daily routine of women in Smor San
(03.c.) housing information collection
(03.c.) daily participation of the community
(04. b.) study of Phnom Penh: mapping information
(04.c.) study of Phnom Penh: mapping information
(04.c., d.) study of Smor San: mapping information

Figure 6-3 Group photo with Smor San Community
(02.a.) statistics of land ownership and eviction threats

An information collection and a practice to understand level of eviction and find consequence to urban development in Phnom Pehn, including understanding the voices upon tenure security in different location.

- land ownership characters, types of eviction threats, and types of developments causing eviction.

Figure 1: Eviction in Phnom Penh (diagram produced by group)
Figure II Relationships of Actors in Terms of Government, Civil Society, Support for City Development and DPU (diagram produced by group)

(02.c.) actors’ relationship

Additional actors’ relationship diagrams to make clear understand complexity of actors; based on categorized relationships between actors, 4 main groups are divided - relationship of the central government, relationship of civil society, support for city development and DPU’s relationship in general.

Relationship
- Partnership
- Tension
- Support
- Govern
- Direct
- Indirect

Category of Actors
- Locals
- International Organisation
- Government & Public Sectors
- Private Sectors
- Civil Societies
- Financial Partners
- Academias & Medias
(03.a.) study of Phnom Penh: general information

A practice to understand the city scale of Phnom Penh by comparing with London; followed before and after practice of reading urban context such as road, density of city center, and amenities, following activities in lecture, defining scale, understanding scaling up in urban environment.

Followed by searching type of land established, parallel to urban poor families in and outside of Kahn, aiming to understand correlation of owners of the land and residential area of urban poor.
(03.a.) study of Phnom Penh: statistics on urban poor

**Figure IV** Type of Land Established (diagram produced by group)

**Figure V** General Information in Cambodia (produced by group)
(03.b.) study of Smor San: statistics and general information

(right) Figure VI Case Study of Smor San before Trip (produced by group)

(above) Figure VII Smor San and Public Facilities (map produced by group)
Figure VIII: General Information in Smor San (map produced by CDF)

Figure IX: Growth of Smor San (map produced by group)
(04.e.) daily routine of women in Phnom Penh (before and after relocation)

DEY KRAHORM: 1990/2009

SCHEDULE 1
: Sophal picks up nephews from school in the afternoons

BOREI SANTEPHEAP PI: 2009/today

SCHEDULE 2
: Sophal lost her business, Sokah spends 1 extra hour in transport

The following graphs show the impact on time poverty caused by relocation in the lives of the family described in section 04. e. gender.

Figure X Relocation Impact on Daily Schedule of Sophal (charts produced by group)
(04.e) **daily routine of women in Smor San**

### MANET
- 39 years old
- Moved to Smor San in 2003, because of marriage. Her husband moved there in 1980s
- Husband: Construction worker. Used to borrow motorbike from relative for going to work, but now has to live on site.
- Worked as librarian and librarian trainer for other communities
- Currently also cooks breakfast for selling in the community
- Community leader assistant (non-elected)
  - Seeks help from NGOs for community
  - Participant in other community nearby
  - News deliver
  - Mediator of conflicts in community
  - Participate in community activities

![Manet and Her Home](photo_taken_by_Yuxuan_Tu)

![Time Distribution of Manet's Family](charts_produced_by_group)

### E DANY
- 49 years old
- Moved to Smor San in 1990 after land slide
- Widow
- Children: 1 boy & 1 girl
- Used to work as cleaner at NGO, but stopped for health problems. Diary according to working routine
- Participates in community saving group

![E Dany and Her House](photo_produced_by_Yuxuan_Tu)

![Time Distribution of E Dany](chart_produced_by_group)
(03.c.) daily routine of women in Phnom Penh (before and after relocation)
Map of combined information from CDF and site exercise: both qualitative and quantitative data of housing condition (gathered by observation), status of land tenure and members of Community Savings Group included.

Figure XXI Ventilation of the House in Smor San (sketches produced by group)

Figure XXII General Housing Conditions in Smor San (sketches produced by group)
(03.c.) daily participation of the community

5 days of working in community including 4 days of community members’ participation:

- the first day of participation focusing on prioritizing communities’ main issue through the talks in sub-groups. Outdoor space was provided, 4 sub group with 4-5 community members each.

- the second day, focusing on main issues and the conversation upon them. House visiting, village facility check and short meeting with other organization went along together.

Figure XXIII Activities and Outcomes, Day 1 and 2 (photos taken by Yuxuan Tu, Muhammad Nelza Mulki Iqbal)
the third day, one-to-one interview to each residents to collect their own story in Smor San and to make collective understanding through different stories; housing history, and daily diary

the fourth day, the presentation of our analysis and strategies to the community, based on participatory work for last three days; learning how to deliver strategies, 'why you can do this'.
(03.c.) negotiation & rehearsal with community

The process of re-framing strategies building evidence of ‘why the community can do this’, which is essential to negotiate and make community members feel confident to be a part of the presentation to the local authority.

Figure XXV Feedbacks from Community (produced by group)

Figure XXVI Presentation Rehearsal to Local Authority by Community Members (photo taken by Yuxuan Tu)
SMOR SAN: UPGRADE: BUILDING THE FUTURE

CHALLENGES
1. ENVIRONMENT
2. SERVICES
3. HOUSING & INCOME

GOALS

STRATEGIES
1. Establishing a community garden
2. Implementing a community health center
3. Improving sanitation facilities
4. Enhancing access to education
5. Promoting local crafts
6. Encouraging sustainable practices

Figure XXVII Presentation Poster to Local Authority (poster produced by group)
(04. b.) study of Phnom Penh: mapping information

Figure XXVIII Bridges in Phnom Penh (map produced by group)
Figure XXIX Projected Building Heights in Central Phnom Penh (map produced by group)

Figure XXX Settlements in Phnom Penh (map produced by group)
(04.c.) study of Phnom Penh: mapping information

Figure XXXI: Comparison of Temperature and Rainfall between Phnom Penh and London

Figure XXXII: Flooding Areas in Phnom Penh (map produced by group)
Figure XXXIII: Elevations in Phnom Penh

Figure XXXIV: Green Areas in Phnom Penh (map produced by group)
Smor San Community - Deum Sleng village

Indirect formal connection

Direct informal connection

Satellite City
Koh Pich - Diamond Island

Bassac River

National Hwy 1

National Hwy 2

Preah Monivong Blvd

Street 357

Pier for more than 10 small boats
Pier for less than 10 small boats
Paths-connections into water
Primary ways
Secondary ways

(left) Figure XXXV Smor San and Diamond Island (map produced by group)
(right) Figure XXXVI Connectivity of Smor San (map produced by group)
(04.c., d.) study of Smor San: mapping information

(left) Figure XXXVII Flooding Impact on Smor San (map produced by group)
(above) Figure XXXVIII Section Views of Smor San (produced by group)


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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Figure</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5.8</td>
<td>Re-blocking for Inner Accessibility in Smor San (map produced by group)</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.9</td>
<td>Synthesis of Citywide Strategies (map produced by group)</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.10</td>
<td>Processes of How to Achieve Ecological Collective Actions (diagram produced by group)</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.11</td>
<td>Processes of How to Achieve PNBC (diagram produced by group)</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.12</td>
<td>Processes of How to Achieve COLLPI (diagram produced by group)</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.1</td>
<td>The Role of Practitioner (produced by group)</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.2</td>
<td>View of City Development from Urban Poor Settlement (photo taken by Hye Jung Park)</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.3</td>
<td>Group photo with Smor San Community</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I</td>
<td>Eviction in Phnom Penh (diagram produced by group)</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II</td>
<td>Relationships of Actors in Terms of Government, Civil Society, Support for City Development and DPU (diagram produced by group)</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III</td>
<td>Comparison between London and Phnom Penh in Scale (map produced by group)</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IV</td>
<td>Type of Land Established (diagram produced by group)</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V</td>
<td>General Information in Cambodia (produced by group)</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VI</td>
<td>Case Study of Smor San before Trip (produced by group)</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VII</td>
<td>Smor San and Public Facilities (map produced by group)</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VIII</td>
<td>General Information in Smor San (map produced by CDF)</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IX</td>
<td>Growth of Smor San (map produced by group)</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>X</td>
<td>Relocation Impact on Daily Schedule of Sophal (charts produced by group)</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>XI</td>
<td>Manet and Her Home (photo taken by Yuxuan Tu)</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>XII</td>
<td>Time Distribution of Manet’s family (charts produced by group)</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>XIII</td>
<td>E Dany and Her House (photo produced by Yuxuan Tu)</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>XIV</td>
<td>Time Distribution of E Dany (chart produced by group)</td>
<td>68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>XV</td>
<td>Typical House Type in Smor San (sketches produced by group)</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>XVI</td>
<td>Section View C of the map shown in Figure 4-10 (sketches produced by group)</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>XVII</td>
<td>Section View D of the map shown in Figure 4-10 (sketches produced by group)</td>
<td>71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>XVIII</td>
<td>Section View A of the map shown in Figure 4-10 (sketches produced by group)</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>XIX</td>
<td>Section View E of the map shown in Figure 4-10 (sketches produced by group)</td>
<td>73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>XX</td>
<td>Section View B of the map shown in Figure 4-10 (sketches produced by group)</td>
<td>74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>XXI</td>
<td>Ventilation of the House in Smor San (sketches produced by group)</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>XXII</td>
<td>General Housing Conditions in Smor San (sketches produced by group)</td>
<td>76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>XXIII</td>
<td>Activities and Outcomes, Day 1 and 2 (photos taken by Muhammad Nelza Mulki Iqbar, Yuxuan Tu)</td>
<td>77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>XXIV</td>
<td>Activities and Outcomes, Day 3 and 4 (photo taken by Muhammad Nelza Mulki Iqbar, Giorgio Talocci, Hye Jung Park)</td>
<td>78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>XXV</td>
<td>Feedbacks from Community (produced by group)</td>
<td>79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>XXVI</td>
<td>Presentation Rehearsal to Local Authority by Community Members (photo taken by Yuxuan Tu)</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>XXVII</td>
<td>Presentation Poster to Local Authority (poster produced by group)</td>
<td>81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>XXVIII</td>
<td>Bridges in Phnom Penh (map produced by group)</td>
<td>82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>XXIX</td>
<td>Projected Building Heights in Central Phnom Penh (map produced by group)</td>
<td>83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>XXX</td>
<td>Settlements in Phnom Penh (map produced by group)</td>
<td>84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>XXXI</td>
<td>Flooding Areas in Phnom Penh (map produced by group)</td>
<td>85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>XXXII</td>
<td>Comparison of Temperature and Rainfall between Phnom Penh and London (charts produced by group)</td>
<td>86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>XXXIII</td>
<td>Elevations in Phnom Penh (map produced by group)</td>
<td>87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>XXXIV</td>
<td>Green Areas in Phnom Penh (map produced by group)</td>
<td>88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>XXXV</td>
<td>Smor San and Diamond Island (map produced by group)</td>
<td>89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>XXXVI</td>
<td>Connectivity of Smor San (map produced by group)</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>XXXVII</td>
<td>Flooding Impact on Smor San (map produced by group)</td>
<td>91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>XXXVIII</td>
<td>Section Views of Smor San (produced by group)</td>
<td>92</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
University College London
The Bartlett Development Planning Unit
MSc Building and Urban Design in Development

Final Report
Transformation in a Time of Transition
3rd International Workshop
City Wide Upgrading Transformation in Cambodia 2016

In partnership with CDF, ACHR, CAN-CAM and DPU