

Transecting security and space in Phnom Penh

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Abstract:

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