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Intersections of Climate Change Mitigation Policies, Land
Grabbing and Conflict in a Fragile State: Insights from
Cambodia

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Abstract

Thirty years after Cambodia's 'democratization' by the United Nations Transitional Authority (UNTAC), the transition to a market-based economy is raging at full steam. Democracy remains elusive, but policy interventions from Cambodia's "development partners" color the political, social, and environmental landscapes. This paper attends to the land grabs characteristic of market transitions and to the climate change mitigation strategies currently enhancing conflicts over land and resources in contemporary Cambodia. Climate change mitigation projects and large-scale land deals are highlighted in recent research as potential instigators in conflicts over land and resources. However, this literature tends to view climate change policies and land grabbing as separate processes occurring in discrete geographies where displacement or contested claims occur. Working at the intersections of large-scale land acquisitions and climate change mitigation strategies viewed through a landscape perspective, several researchers and activists have come together to examine more systematically the intersections between these processes. Through the MOSAIC research project, they focus on the complex interactions within and across social, ecological, and institutional arenas. Reviewing the literature on land grabs, conflict, and climate change mitigation strategies in Cambodia shows their interplay and the social and ecological spill-over effects embedded in the historical processes, institutional agendas, and environmental particularities in which they take place. The multi-layered interactions of historical conflict and resource use at the landscape level intervene into contemporary projects to increase gross domestic production while mitigating the effects of climate change. Timber barons, for example – politicians and military officers who acquired massive stores of capital during the post UNTAC years of conflict¹ – currently hold economic land concessions (ELCs) which enable their timber trade and the development of industrial agriculture. Both the World Bank and United Nations Development Program (UNDP), referred to locally as Cambodia's "development partners", support these ELCs. They encourage policy makers to promote "pro-business" environments and the intensification of industrial agriculture – increasingly pointed toward flex crops that stand ready for the market to demand clean-green biofuels. These projects play out in the undeveloped, but far from empty, landscape of Cambodia's forested hinterlands; their execution requires the forced removal of thousands of families and the violent destruction of hundreds of villages. Moreover, the trade in timber and the still-strong power structures of politico-military elites are both embedded in the country's recent attempts to administer UN-REDD carbon-capture programs. Military land concessions and elite cultivation of logging capital conspire to both divest villagers of vital forest products and to thwart international attempts to capture the planet's few remaining forests. By attending to these intersections and spill-over effects at the intersections of land grabs and climate change projects in Cambodia, this paper will present the ways that a landscape framework and innovative research methods can provide inroads for preventing, resolving or transforming conflicts into more cooperative scenarios.

¹ This capital accumulation was fueled in part by trade in timber, touted early in the 'transition' to be one of Cambodia's few viable export commodities.

1 Introduction

Twenty years after Cambodia's 'democratization' by the United Nations Transitional Authority (UNTAC), the transition to a market-based economy is raging at full steam. Democracy remains elusive, but economic policy interventions from Cambodia's "development partners" continue to color the political, social, and environmental landscapes. This paper attends to the land grabs characteristic of market transitions and to the climate change mitigation strategies currently enhancing the restriction of access to land and resources in contemporary Cambodia. Climate change mitigation projects and large-scale land deals are highlighted in recent research as potential instigators in conflicts over land and resources. However, this literature often views climate change policies (Knight 2013; Salehyan 2014; Sunga 2014) and land grabbing (Borras et al. 2011; Baird 2011; Peluso and Lund 2011) as separate processes occurring in discrete geographies where displacement or contested claims occur. Working at the intersections of large-scale land acquisitions and climate change mitigation strategies viewed through a landscape perspective, the MOSAIC project currently underway aims to provide a lens with which to study complex interactions within and across social, ecological, and institutional arenas (Hunsberger et al. 2015). Three literature streams are reviewed for this purpose: that on land grabs in the form of economic land concessions (ELCs), on conflict, and on climate change mitigation strategies in Cambodia. This review shows the interplay of these issues embedded in multi-layered interactions of historical conflict and resource use, their current social and ecological spill-over effects, and how the historical and contemporary processes intervene into projects to increase gross domestic production while mitigating the effects of climate change.

For example, politicians and military officers who acquired massive stores of capital during the post UNTAC years of conflict—fueled largely by trade in timber, touted early in the 'transition' to be one of Cambodia's few viable export commodities (World Bank 1992; Hughes 2003) – are today holders of ELCs through which they continue to trade in timber and develop industrial agriculture (Davis 2005; Un and So 2011; Neef, Touch, and Chienthong 2013). Cambodia's "development partners", like the World Bank and USAID, support these ELCs. They encourage policy makers to promote "pro-business" environments and the intensification of industrial agriculture (USAID 2010; World Bank 2014), which is increasingly pointed toward flex crops that stand ready for the market to demand clean-green biofuels (Borras, McMichael, and Scoones 2010; McMichael 2010). These projects play out in the differently developed, but far from empty, landscape of Cambodia's forested hinterlands (Fox 2002; Baird 2011; Springer 2011; Harms and Baird 2014). Their execution involves the forced removal of families and the violent destruction of villages and ecosystems. Furthermore, the long-standing trade in timber and the still-strong power structures of politico-military elites (Davis 2005; Le Billon and Springer 2007) are both embedded in the country's recent attempts to administer UN-REDD carbon-capture programs (Yeang 2012; Milne 2013; Poffenberger 2013). Military land concessions and elite cultivation of logging capital conspire and divest villagers of vital forest products and also thwart international attempts to capture the planet's few remaining forests. By attending to these intersections and the multiple layers of power and use, one community forest based carbon capture initiative in Oddar Meanchey (the monk's forest) has successfully negotiated forest conservation for international carbon capture amid the interests of local forest users and the politico-military groups cutting luxury wood for profit (Bradley 2009; Yeang 2012; Poffenberger 2013; Thuon 2013). In Cambodia the institutions that could effectively prevent

or transform resource conflicts are weak where they are most needed and we find that individuals, not laws, resolve conflicts. This paper will explore the intersections of land grabs and climate change projects in two field landscapes in Cambodia and will suggest that such a lens can offer insights into the preventing, resolving or transformation of conflicts into more cooperative scenarios.

The brief example above of conflict mediation from the Oddar Meanchey province in Northwestern Cambodia has its distinctive social and environmental peculiarities that helped lead to a positive conflict mediation (Poffenberger 2009). The MOSAIC project will focus on two different landscapes in Cambodia, each with their particular social, political, and environmental characteristics. Within these distinctive landscapes a collaborative action research approach will combine the skills and efforts of grassroots communities, activist civil society organizations, and academic researchers to help transform conflict situations for the benefit of the poorest and least empowered residents (Hunsberger et al. 2015). Residents in each area are directly affected by ELCs and/or the climate mitigation policies of REDD+ implementation and biofuel production. The first landscape is the greater Aural region that spans three provinces: Speu, Chhnang, and Pursat. The second landscape is the Prey Lang forest, which spans over 615,000 ha of dense primary forest at the adjoining center of Thom, Preah Vihear, Steung Treng, and Kratie provinces.

The Aural landscape is affected by two major ELCs. The first is the Phnom Penh Sugar plantation in Speu, situated at the eastern edge of the Cardamom Mountain range. PP Sugar is owned by a powerful businessperson (who is also a senator in the government's ruling party) and began operation in 2010 by clearing dense secondary forest land to plant sugar cane. In the process, homes, temples, rice fields, forest plantation land, and spirit forests were also razed. The company later expanded into the densely forested Aural Protected area in the mountains and continues to expand beyond the borders of their officially recognized concession. A sugar refinery built on plantation land sells processed sugar to the global market, produces ethanol for its own operations, and defiles local water sources with its runoff. The second ELC in the Aural landscape is the Pheapimex concession in Chhnang and Pursat provinces. This ELC also encroaches on the Aural Protected area, and is also owned by a businessperson/ senator (his wife is the face of the operation). Most of its operations are in areas of once-dense secondary forest flatlands. Their original concession agreement was to grow eucalyptus trees for pulp stock and re-forestation. With the spike in cassava prices in 2005, the companies ripped up the young trees, planted cassava, and expanded their operations into other forested areas of the concession. A new biofuel factory was built within the concession area in 2012, and work on a major irrigation system is currently underway that further threatens local land holdings and water access.

The Prey Lang region is a massive old-growth flatland forest, one of the few remaining lowland forests in Southeast Asia. The rights organization ADHOC estimates that there are over 33 ELCs in Prey Lang – a region which had been classified as a production forest until 2011, when a sub-degree designated it a protected conservation area (Titthara 2013a; Lambrick et al. 2014). This region hosted large scale timber concessions through the 1990s, some held by the abovementioned Pheapimex. With tighter restrictions on logging, ELCs (largely rubber) were issued. Not all agricultural initiatives in the Prey Lang region are ELCs; many are state-run enterprises and it is difficult to determine what kind of land-use changes are underway in the region. The people who live in and around the forest face continuing

land and forest loss from companies as well as from the well-armed and well-connected loggers who work outside concession boundaries. The region is targeted for the expansion of the REDD+ program, and international NGOs are currently working to secure Community Forest tenure for its implementation.

In order to understand the intimate intersections of conflict and cooperation amid climate change mitigation policies and land grabs in Cambodia, this paper will first lay out the history of state formations and land-use practices upon which contemporary events unfold. It will then move to a discussion of cadastral systems in Cambodia, which sets the stage for the processes of inclusion and exclusion that ignite conflicts and cooperation within particular landscapes, and also opens the discussion for economic intensification. Logging concessions, recommended by World Bank advisors, were Cambodia's first strong move toward raising GDP and focusing on economic growth (World Bank, UNDP, and FAO 1996; World Bank 2002, see also Le Billon 2002). The rollout of these concessions laid the groundwork for further ELCs and other land-use practices geared toward economic intensification. These resulted in local resistance and conflicts that I will briefly map as they relate to our research sites. I will then discuss the climate change mitigation policies currently at play in the country, focusing on the REDD+ program and biofuel adaptation, leaving the discussion of hydroelectric power for a later version of the paper. Land grabs for both economic intensification and climate change mitigation policies flow into the country on the waves of global capital and development assistance. Both also give rise to many salient acts of conflict and cooperation in village-level local power relations, in the relations between ministries and local and national government agencies, and between ministries and donor agencies. This paper will describe the landscape of power as it folds up from the ground entangled in multiple strands of bureaucratic structures. In conclusion, I will rearrange the bounded sections of the paper into broader analytical rubrics that consider the intersections and interactions of climate change mitigation strategies and large-scale land grabs by attending to the landscapes in which these occur and the conflicts they engender. The overarching goal of this project is to find strategies through which to resolve conflicts by better understanding the social, political, and environmental landscapes from which they emerge.

2 Historical Conditions of Economic Extraction and Elite Capture

The area currently occupied by Cambodia has experienced multiple waves of agricultural intensification. Imperial projects using Hindu inspired state systems began in the first century and waxed and waned across the region until the appearance of French colonial enterprises in the early 1800s. The extraction and intensification projects of the early kings included wet-rice agriculture, palm sugar production, and the extraction of timber, fish, and forest products (Herz 1958; Chandler 1974) and were legitimated through the cult of the *Devaraja*, or the God-king, who laid temples atop powerful spirit places and thus gained ownership rights to that territory (Beban and Work 2014). The king did not personally administer the rights of ownership and use, but instead appointed high-ranking officials called Okya. The Okya exercised patrimonial power through the patronage of district and provincial representatives, whose interpretations of royal decrees were local and personal (Diepart and Dupuis 2014, citing Greve 1993). There is little documentation of Cambodia's middle period, between the fall of Angkor in the 15th century and the rise of the French in the late 19th, but the existing sources do suggest the existence of codified systems of resource extraction, like tax

collection codes relating to forest exploitation during Ang Kuong (1845-1859) (Poffenberger 2013).

The colonial era expanded this extractive process by adding other products, like rubber, cotton, and pepper, and by adding mechanized transport technologies. Rice and corn started to be grown on a large scale for export, rubber linked these exports to emerging global markets, and railways and roads connected the extraction zones to markets (Chandler 2008). Colonial era concessions were originally designed for French nationals, but smaller concessions were later also allocated to non-Europeans and local elites (Slocomb 2010). Amid economic extraction, multiple attempts at cadastral management dotted the administrative landscape (Springer 2013; Diepart et al. 2006; Guillou 2006; Guérin 2012). The extraction of colonial era resources and land-use practices went largely unchanged once Cambodia gained its independence. Energy production, export commodities, and the banking sector had all been in foreign hands, and the big intervention was to transfer the key industries of energy, transport, and mines to state control. Conservation efforts underway in the colonial era expanded with the independence, but retained their focus on protecting economic resources (Munson et al. 1963). Moreover, while the other industries retained foreign influence, and development programs for infrastructure and industry were sponsored by foreign banks, the state was able to intervene in all sectors of economic production (Slocomb 2010). With the nationalized economy arose patronage-based systems of governance – never far from the surface in the colonial era (Edwards 2007) – and their attendant political factionalism and patronage politics (Kiernan and Boua 1982; Osborne 2011).

During the Khmer Rouge years of disruption and the subsequent era of Vietnam-supported socialist development, the focus on economic development and market extraction was limited. However, patronage systems were again never far from the surface and continued to determine access and use rights (Vickery 1984; Gottesman 2004; Mertha 2014). With the fall of the soviet system and the intervention of the United Nations Transitional Authority of Cambodia (UNTAC), large-scale market-based extraction projects were again a government priority (World Bank 1992; Russell 1997; World Bank 2005). Despite the social and economic disruptions of the socialist era, the elite channels that determined access to land and resources were accommodated through the transition. In their current form, Cambodian land-use policies and practices follow land-use practices familiar from the colonial state, such as economic intensification initiatives (LICADHO 2009; Ung 2011), cadastral projects (Guillou 2006; MAFF 2010; Un and So 2011; Grimsditch, Leakhana, and Sherchan 2012;) and conservation agendas (ICEM 2003; Killeen 2012; Poffenberger 2013). However, these policies are administered along the long-standing systems of elite patronage that have determined resource access and use rights in every era (Hughes 2006; Springer 2010; Diepart and Dupuis 2014).

In contemporary Cambodia, land use and resource extraction practices are changing amid global food, energy, and carbon security initiatives instigated in the face of global climate change (Scoones et al. 2013; White et al. 2012; S. Borras and Franco 2012). While rubber, rice, and fish remain important commodities for Cambodia in the global market place, biofuel feed stocks (Malik et al. 2009; Hought et al. 2012) and forest carbon capture schemes are now influencing land-use policies and re-defining contemporary terms of access (Milne 2012; Yeang 2012). In addition to these economic intensification projects, conservation initiatives

by the Cambodian government have marked 23 regions for various levels of protection and limited use (ICEM 2003; ODC 2015).

One benefit of using this historical perspective to examine Cambodia's economic production is the re-historicizing of economic extraction, a practice often treated as being of colonial origin. Clearly the contrary is true, and this region has experienced multiple waves of extraction and land control that embed and inform contemporary systems (Baird 2011; Work 2014). More importantly, however, a historical perspective on the landscape can help us better understand and contextualize the emergence of conflict and cooperation in current contests over land-use rights and entitlements.

3 Cadastral Systems

Just as the story of economic extraction recounted above is often attributed colonial origins, narratives of land reform in Cambodia often begin with the confusion of the post Khmer Rouge period. Efforts to privatize land by registering certified titles into a national registry, however, date well before the post Khmer Rouge period and begin (perhaps ironically) with the colonial era. In 1884, the French recorded their transformation of traditional land use patterns (in which need determined access, the plough established claim, and presence ensured title) in an effort to divest king Norodom of his authority over land and buildings in the capital. The French established four categories of property ownership: royal property, public property, inalienable public reserves that could be leased, and inalienable private property (Edwards 2007). They envisioned a general census of the productive regions in Cambodia (and all of Indochina) with royal ordinances issued in 1902, 1908, and 1912. Each attempt to implement land ordinances failed amid incompatible conceptions of land tenure and bureaucratic weakness. A 1925 decree, followed by three other declarations in 1926, 1930 and 1931, re-launched the land registration process in Cambodia with the use of aerial photography, but the overall execution of a cadastral map remained largely incomplete. Independence from France did little to alter Cambodia's land tenure arrangements, and while King Sihanouk made attempts to expand the registry, it remained limited. Moreover, it was utilized primarily by powerful elites in the provinces, wealthy civil servants, and businessmen, whose large land holdings increased the incidence of tenant farming arrangements. It was also used to institute land titles for smallholders that eventually translated into unpayable debt and subsequent landlessness (Guillou 2006; Guérin 2012; Springer 2013).

Following the land collectivization of the Khmer Rouge era, the importance and power of local elites in the control and distribution of land become more apparent, as each province, district, and village implemented the collectivization strategies of the People's Republic of Kampuchea (PRK) in their own way (Guillou 2006; Work 2014). In parts of Cham, people immediately returned to their previous land holdings, adding land to the extent that their connections and power allowed. Speu abandoned collective land practices in the early 1980s and people reclaimed previous holdings (again, adding where possible). In Prey Veng, collective ownership was strictly adhered to, and, when abandoned by government decree, local authorities issued land according to the policy of 0.2 ha per person. There was great disparity of land access and allocation across the country and migration in search of land was a common practice. To a great extent, traditional land use and access practices resumed when the fighting actually stopped.

“Traditional” in this case refers to the long-held practice of acquisition by the plough. Through the years of sovereign kingship (when the king owned all land), through colonial rule, through independence, and the post-Khmer Rouge era, Cambodian people have had use access to land. They exercised this right by claiming and clearing unclaimed forest land for uses as family homesteads and farms. Their claims were supported, witnessed, and agreed to by their communities and by the spirit owner of all the land (Work 2014), and the ‘owned’ use-rights to the land. The underlying social convention for this type of land acquisition is that the forest is an open resource, owned by the spirit owner of the water and the land; with proper negotiation, this common resource is available for all to use for subsistence needs. These needs are met through collecting, using, and trading in forest products, felling trees for home, bridge, and temple constructions, clearing rotational swidden plots, and clearing land for homes or paddy land. These customary land claim practices were retained in the French land law and in the 2001 post-UNTAC law – both acknowledge customary land claims when there is peaceful possession of unregistered land, in public and in good faith, continuously and unequivocally, for five consecutive years (Russell 1997; So 2010).

Post-war land pressure was acute and in addition to over-crowded villages, the refugees from Thailand had returned. Cleared land was scarce, local exclusions were many, and thus peacetime ignited large scale migrations to forested regions in search of available land and following work in the logging business (Le Billon 2002; Diepart and Dupuis 2014; Work 2014). In step with the transition, the Cambodian government introduced a series of laws that gradually established the private right to own, occupy, and sell land, eventually enshrined in the 2001 Land Law (Springer 2013). National land administration and registration expanded throughout the past decade with support from several donor agencies and parallel programs of “sporadic land registration” (where individuals can apply for land title issuance) and “systematic land registration” (SLR) (where provincial teams from the Ministry of Land Management, Urban Planning and Construction (LMUPC) adjudicate designated areas and issue titles to land users) in place since 2002. These programs granted over two million titles, but have been criticized for focusing on non-disputed areas and therefore not providing security to those most at risk of dispossession (Dwyer 2013; Grimsditch, Leakhana, and Sherchan 2012; Beban and Pou 2015).

The 2001 land law also allowed the granting of ELCs up to 10,000 ha for national development. However, ELC granting was suspended in 2012 with the issuance of Order 01BB on Measures for Strengthening and Increasing the Effectiveness of the Management of Economic Land Concessions (RGC 2012). This Order had two main parts. First, it temporarily postponed the granting of new ELCs, and allowed the government to take back ELC land from companies not in compliance with their contracts. Second, it initiated a country-wide titling campaign to provide land title to people who occupy and use state land seized by ELCs, forest land, and other land for state development². The order was issued to gain control over ELCs, the vast majority of which had been (and still are) issued in violation of Cambodia’s 2001 Land Law and its 2005 Sub-decree. Studies show that requirements regarding size, prior Environmental and Social Impact reports, prior consultations and consent of affected communities, transparency, and fair and adequate compensation have been routinely ignored (LICADHO 2012).

² This provision was added one month after the original objective.

Order 01 was a true show of power and efficiency on the part of Hun Sen's government and shows his ability to effect change (Biddulph 2014). Nonetheless, it did not live up to its expectations – instead, it followed the established pathways of previous cadastral projects in which well-connected individuals with access to capital were able to gain substantial holdings through the titling campaign, sparking conflicts, dispossession, and further deforestation in the wake of its implementation (LRAN 2013; Milne 2013; Work and Beban, in press). In addition, new fields of land classification were deployed, such as Social Land Concessions (SLCs) that were designed to provide land for landless villagers. In many cases, these have become another avenue for the elite to capture land (Neef, Touch, and Chiengthong 2013). The lasting effects of Cambodia's most recent cadastral project are still playing out, but numerous reports of land insecurity continue (Titthara 2012c; Beban and Pou 2015). Preliminary research in the MOSAIC project suggests that ELCs are being replaced by state development initiatives run by private companies, as the latter continue to expand in the Prey Lang region. In this slippery zone, local claims "by the plough" are confronted by national claims to "state land" that is open for development and acquired by elites via state-issued title.

4 Economic Intensification in the Contemporary Era

4.1 Logging Concessions

The civil war of the PRK years from 1979-91 was mostly funded by external international players and the Cambodian forests. Once international backing failed, the many factions depended on timber extraction to fund their engagements. Thai and Malay logging companies, having exhausted their own forests (Vandergeest and Peluso 1995; Peluso and Vandergeest 2001), were active in facilitating this trade with leaders from all the various factions. From among them rose an elite group of players who, while fighting each other, were meeting at the watering hole of international logging companies (Le Billon 2000). By the time of the 1993 UNTAC elections, the logging sector was dominated by warlords, and thousands of Cambodians engaged in logging in the lawless environment of the emerging economy – an economy that the military was especially well positioned to exploit (Le Billon and Springer 2007). Subsistence farmers supplemented their income in this trade, and landless Cambodians from around the country migrated to take advantage of wage earning opportunities at concessions, along the railroad, and at the borders (patterns that persist into the present).

The role of the military is important here on many levels. Large land concessions were awarded to soldiers as part of their integration after the civil war (Davis 2005; Milne 2013; Diepart and Dupuis 2014). Moreover, the military had access to the trucks necessary for hauling timber (Le Billon and Springer 2007), and was (and is) able to protect their interests with firearms. As the fighting slowed, military control over large areas of forest land and their already active role in logging made them key players in the logging concessions that were issued to international companies and prominent Cambodian businesspeople³ (Milne 2013). The military were generally the overseers of the actual harvesting for these concessions, and facilitated substantial kickbacks to government officials (Davis 2005). These informal arrangements worked to link businessmen, the military, forestry bureaucrats, and politicians in an arena where official government policies reflected and supported the flow of timber

³ They were locally referred to as *Okyna*—the connection to the Angkorian era administrator is deliberate.

profits (Le Billon 2002; see also, Peluso and Vandergeest 2001). Six of the Cambodian concessionaires were appointed senator seats with Hun Sen's ruling party.

The unfolding of the timber industry during Cambodia's transition directly affects both economic land concessions and REDD+ conservation initiatives. Many ELCs were awarded to timber-concession-holding Okyna after Hun Sen 'cracked down' on logging following the 1998 elections. With the 2001 land law, he suspended all logging concessions, and drafted the criteria under which ELCs could replace them. Some of which were awarded in densely forested areas, and the companies have only cleared the trees (with military involvement) and not invested in plantation activities (Un and So 2011). In other cases, like with the Tumring Rubber company, they requested rubber concession rights to 'degraded forest' in the Prey Lang region of Thom that turned out to have marketable trees and locally used community forests. In the Phnom Penh Sugar company concession in Speu, and the Pheapimex concessions in Pursat, the companies first cleared their densely forested concessions and then planted biofuel feed crops, sugar cane, and cassava respectively.

These cases show the relationship between transition economics, timber concessions, and ELCs; in terms of climate change, the deforestation aspect of these endeavors is stark. However, the most pressing factor for individuals living in these areas, especially in the Prey Lang region, is the military and company sponsored logging, both inside and outside the concession lands. Conflicts are many in this region, and the militarized nature of resource extraction in Cambodia creates a situation that Le Billon described as "neither peace nor war" (Le Billon 2002), in which official combat gives way to the continued violence of extraction and elite claim-staking. The 'illegal' logging in this volatile environment typically uses ad hoc, sub-contracted loggers who work under military supervision, facilitated by local officials and well connected outsiders. Local efforts to maintain the community forests for local subsistence are untenable in this situation, and as a consequence, so are government efforts to execute their REDD+ readiness roadmap.

4.2 Economic Land Concessions

The earliest ELC was awarded in 1996, while logging concessions were still in force but after international pressure began to curtail easy logging. New ELC awards intensified in 1999, and the 2001 land law codified and structured their issuance. The law allows the granting of ELCs up to 10,000 ha for national development. Before the law, a controversial 315,000 ha Pheapimex concession – owned by a former timber concessionaire and a current senator – was granted, spanning the Chhnang and Pursat provinces (image 1). After the law, concessions over the limit continued to be issued (LICADHO 2009), and even after the 2005 sub-degree to *really* limit the size of ELCs and to scale back those awarded, there remain numerous examples of ELCs exceeding the 10,000 ha limit. This restriction is easily circumvented by granting adjoining plots to two or more companies that are only different on paper. This was the case for the Phnom Penh Sugar company and its sister organization, Speu Sugar (image 2) in the Speu province (Pred 2013), and for the Seng Keang rubber plantation in the Prey Lang region of Thom (Global Witness 2007).

Image 1: Economic Land Concessions

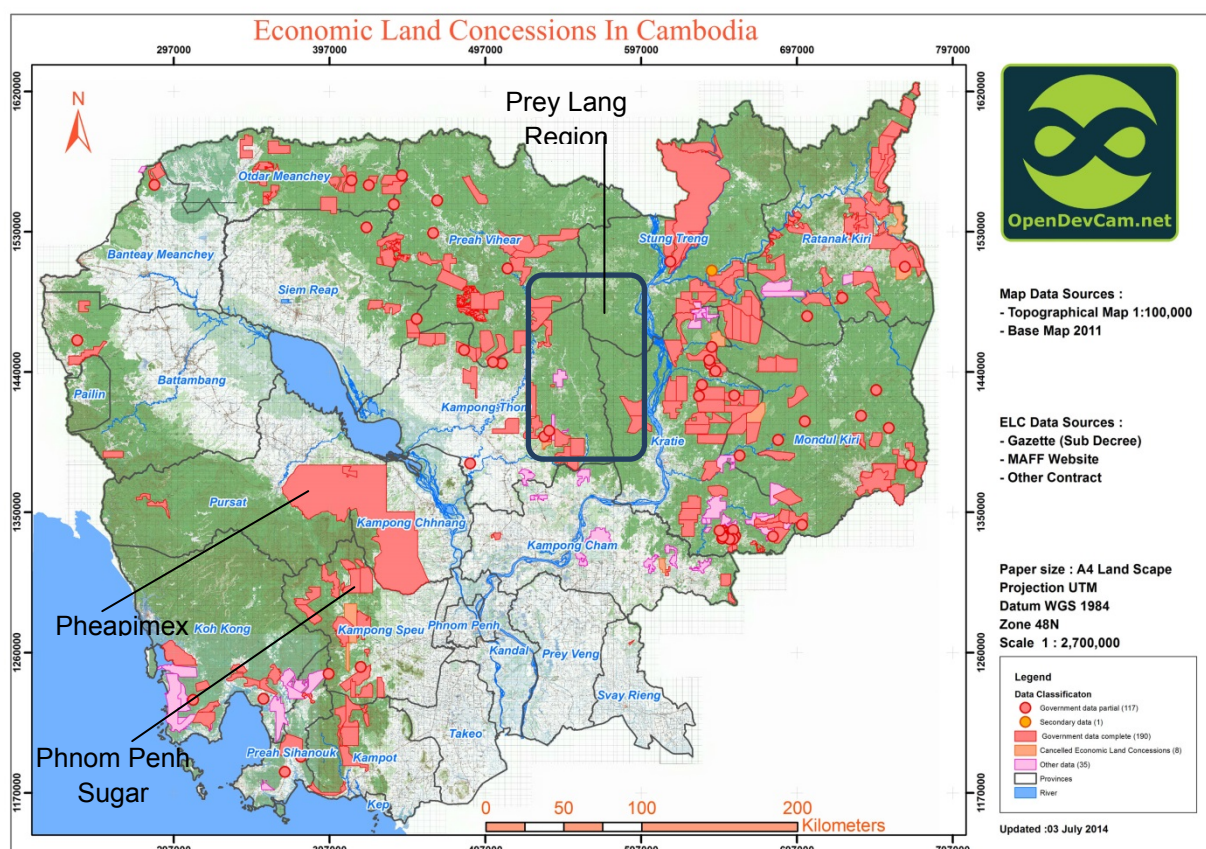
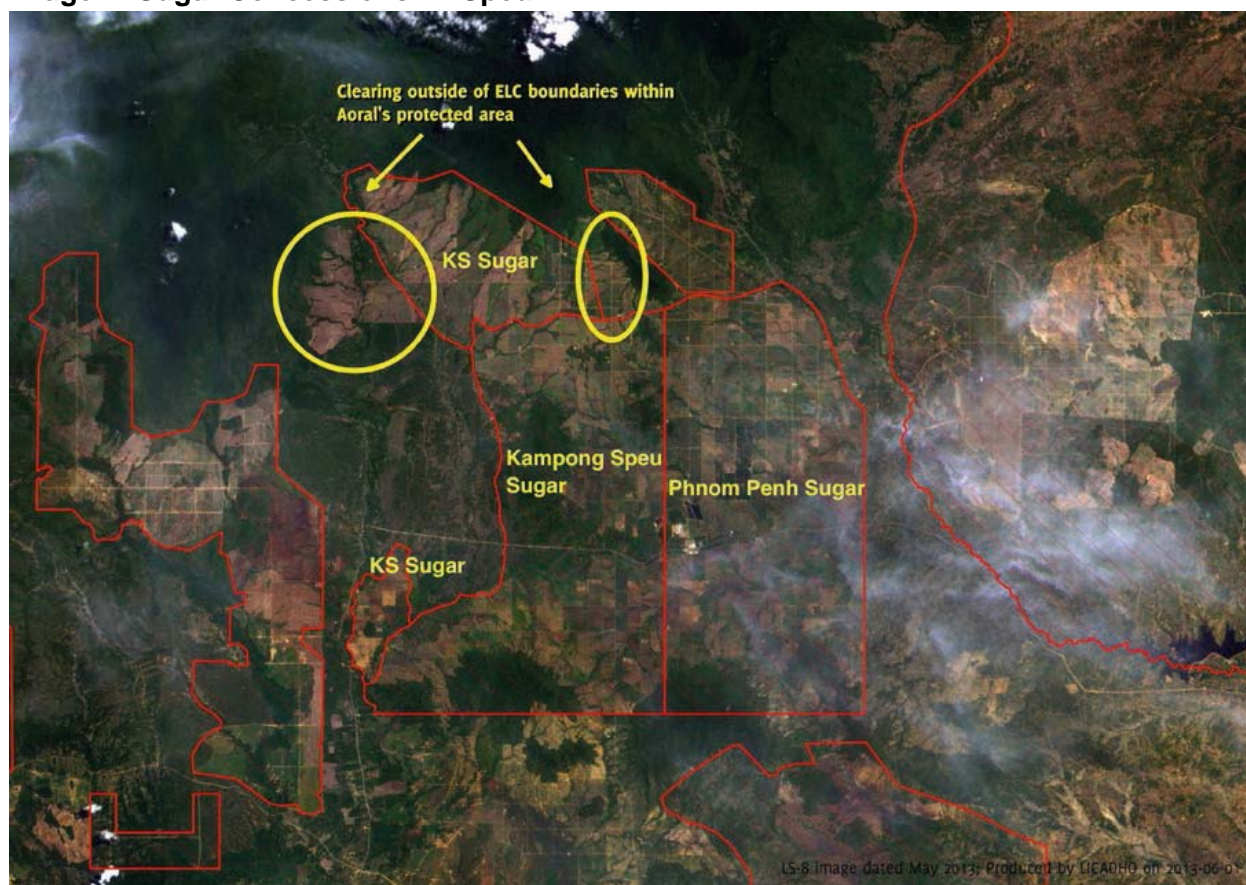


Image 2: Sugar Concessions in Speu



Due to a widely acknowledged lack of transparency in the way ELCs are granted, it is difficult to assess exactly how many ELCs have been approved, which of them are active, and how much state revenue has been raised. The Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry, and Fisheries (MAFF) website documents signed ELC contracts with 118 companies between 1996 and June 2012, covering a total land area of 1,204,750 ha (MAFF 2010). However, some NGO reports have claimed the figure is closer to 2 million hectares. The reason for this discrepancy is not clear, although it is known that other authorities have approved land concessions for agricultural purposes. For example, until 2008, provincial authorities had the power to grant ELCs of 1,000 ha, and the Ministry of Environment has approved concessions in some protected areas like the Prey Lang protected forest (Global Witness 2007) and the Aural Protected region (Samean 2007; Roeun 2011).

The Order 01 initiative attempted to rein ELCs in, and figures from the Ministry of Land Management, Urban Planning and Construction indicate that, by March 2014, over 330,000 hectares had been cut from existing ELCs. The long-term impacts of this measure have not yet played out, but preliminary research suggests that the clause compelling companies to implement a “leopard skin formula” that ensures ELCs do not affect farm lands, community forests, graveyards, or spirit places is routinely ignored.

5 Power and Access in Cambodian Concessions

Systems of local power that have grown up over the years of Cambodia’s transition continue to give village heads, commune chiefs, military officers, and provincial governors substantial power and influence. This affects the administration of cadastral projects, economic activities, and resource management initiatives. The climate in any given region can vary dramatically depending on the personal proclivities of local leaders, the strength of military influence, and the elite communities they both cater to. This is a fascinating and important dimension affecting the lives of marginalized people in Cambodia that continues to surprise researchers and international policy makers. Local officials typically have enough critical distance from the powerful center to interpret laws and policies in ways that further their own agendas. Additionally, positions in the government’s key ministries are typically ‘sold’, via donations, to individuals with the right connections and sufficient capital to take advantage of them. This is especially the case for positions in the Forest Administration (FA) and the MAFF, some of the key players in concession administration (Scopis 2011).

There are other individuals who can buy, or donate, their way into governance positions in Cambodia, and who exert powerful force over governance policies, economic extraction, and construction. They are referred to as the *Oknya*. This is an ancient title, as described above, that has an expanded meaning in the contemporary era. To become an *Oknya*, one makes an initial ‘voluntary’ donation to the government of \$100,000 and agrees to sponsor development projects. These prominent businesspeople are then systematically invited by Senior Ministers to “sponsor” projects of “national development”. In turn, they are granted major business facilitations and honorary titles, an *Oknya* is referred to as His/Her Excellency (H.E.). These tycoons control strategic resource sectors like timber and mining; agricultural concessions like rubber, rice, and (more recently) sugar cane and cassava; and enjoy preferential access to lucrative concessions (Scopis 2011). One of the first land concessions was offered to Mong Reththy, who now also holds (among many other investments) a

100,000 ha concession in the Prey Lang region of Steung Treng to plant acacia and rubber, as well as cassava, sugarcane, and jatropha, for biodiesel. The company has cultivated only 1,200 hectares of this land – only slightly over 1 percent of their total concession area (Chan 2014). My research in the region suggests that, while there is little cultivation, there is a great deal of logging in the concession area.

The processes described in the previous sections are entangled in the contemporary era by these Oknya, their families and close colleagues. The following quote (lengthy, but descriptive) highlights some of these processes and gives the reader a feel for how the Oknya came to hold enough capital to become players in their own game of intensive extraction.

We have to go back to the history of the country in the 80s. The economy was communist. There was an embargo [...] Our people were so hungry, so thirsty [...] It was tragic. So, once you knew the right channels, you could find a way to smuggle some basic commodities from Singapore, Malaysia and Thailand. At the time I can tell you it was easy money. The government was just (unable) to provide basic products. There were no import taxes; a minimum of 300 percent profit was normal [...] Additional easy money came in the 1990s when they opened the door [to international trade]. At the time, all the State Enterprises were privatized. The administration needed money [...] and some people in the private sector who got the money could make amazing deals [...] In 1993, full peace was achieved and the markets were opened further. We did a lot of speculation when there were rising prices in the real estate. Remember the market boom? We bought something for 10, we sold for 20, and gradually we bought for 5 and sold for 30 [...] In 2003 the economy reached the peak. It lasted until 2008, a lot of investment, especially from Korea, Taiwan, and China [...] So, a lot of easy money, we were just those who saw the opportunities and we had the connections [...] I think the best way to promote development is for people like us to work hard and build what is needed for the people [...] [Only] some people have power and see chances [...] In my opinion this is ok [as long as] the people who can get very rich [...] commit to give something back to the society [...] Now with prosperity and stability, we cooperate more with the government. [This is] what they call the “culture of sharing” (Oknya, quoted by Scopis 2011, 116–17).

This quote emphasizes an important discrepancy in the literature. While the privileged position of businesses and the cronyism of Cambodian business culture are extensively analyzed (Springer 2010; Un and So 2011; I. G. Baird 2014b), the contextual understanding of power, social responsibilities, and benevolence attached to this system, and the complex understandings of elites in terms of business pacts and national stability, are worth further investigation (Scopis 2011; Biddulph 2014). The culture of sharing described here takes on special significance, however, through the stories that follow. These stories were taken from MOSAIC research sites situated at the intersections of land grabs and climate change mitigation strategies, most of which are financed and facilitated by powerful Oknya.

6 Climate Change Mitigation

6.1 BioFuel

Two of the landscapes in which the MOSAIC project is currently conducting research are dramatically affected by the growing importance of biofuels in the global commodities market. They are each operated by powerful Okyna, senators in the government of Cambodia's ruling party. Phnom Penh Sugar was cleared and planted in 2010 in direct response to the global market for flex crops that continues to accelerate, playing a part in the larger global land rush (Scoones et al. 2013; Baird 2014b; Geisler and Makki 2014; McMichael 2014). Biofuels have been promoted in Cambodia since the early 2000s as ways to insulate Cambodia from market instability, provide rural communities with cheap, green energy, and create a new cash crop that could bolster the agricultural sector (Barton 2008; Timilsina and Shrestha 2010; RGC 2014). The rollout of biofuels in Cambodia confirm McMichael's suggestion that the idea of green fuel embedded in market environmentalism is just a distraction from the new "profit frontier" (McMichael 2010).

While the biofuel boom folds into the larger phenomenon of elite land capture across the globe, it is markedly different in terms of its expansion speed, the multiple origins and directions of the implemented capital, and the discourse of environmentalism that underwrites it (Borras, McMichael, and Scoones 2010). The industry raises multiple other concerns as well, including competition for food production (Malik et al. 2009). Of highest concern, however, is the interplay between the environmental discourse of this technology (embedded in the biofuel standards of developed nations) and the continued lack of environmental and social safeguards surrounding the technology's expansion (Levidow 2013; Hunsberger et al. 2014).

For the small holders in MOSAIC research areas, biofuel production has none of the clean energy, climate justice, or economic opportunities attributed to it by global discourses. Rather, it is a zone of poverty where issues of land security, forest protection, and labor justice are of primary concern. In the site of Phnom Penh Sugar, the concession was awarded on land that was used by subsistence farmers for generations. Many families resettled their previous holdings after the Khmer Rouge and had cultivated the area until 2010, when the concession began clearing land. Some farmers were offered small compensation for their lands, and those who did not take the deal lost their lands anyway and continue to struggle to receive compensation from the company and its international donors. The promised jobs offer employment for only three to four months of the year, and farmer earnings are only a fraction of what families could make on their farms before dispossession (Haakansson and Saracini 2011; Borras and Franco 2011).

In the Pheapimex concession area, farmers were not initially displaced for biofuels; in 2002, the company divested farmers of their holdings and cleared dense forest areas to grow acacia and eucalyptus. When the market for biofuels increased in 2005, the company uprooted its trees and planted the region with cassava, expanding the land under cultivation. There are 13 companies producing in this concession, all of them producing cassava. An ethanol and noodle factory opened on the concession in 2012, which grows cassava on 36 ha in addition to buying from the surrounding plantations. Additionally, a large-scale irrigation project is underway to provide water for the factory and the plantations. Local residents lost farmland and community forest resources to the plantations and are not preferred for jobs on

the plantations or in the factory due to tensions between the communities and the companies. As a result, most plantation labor comes from outside the region and local residents report having no local source of livelihood. Further, the plantations use local water sources for mixing fertilizer and irrigating their fields. All nearby water sources have been poisoned by company activities and local fish and frog populations have plummeted.

Local losses are extreme in this region and hundreds of families have lost land and livelihoods to the intensification of plantation agriculture currently feeding the biofuel industry. Extensive forest lands have also been put under cultivation, and residents report the loss of community forest areas (where they would gather fruit and rattan) as among the most acute losses of income.

6.2 Community Forests

In the brief five-year interval between 2000 and 2005, an average annual net loss of 7.3 million hectares of forest are estimated to have occurred globally—5.8 million hectares (79.5%) of which were primary forest—mainly as a result of forest conversion to agriculture. Africa and South America experienced the greatest net losses (Charnley and Poe 2007).

In the face of timber concessions in Cambodia, and following other initiatives in regions with threatened forests (Poffenberger 2009; Poffenberger 2013; see also, Peluso 1992), community organizers and NGOs began devising ways to initiate Community Based Natural Resource Management schemes, which evolved into the idea of Community Forests (CF). In Cambodia, a sub-degree was drafted in 1996 to support community involvement in forest management. The Department of Nature Protection and Conservation and the Department of Forestry and Wildlife established Community Forest Units in 1998, and the National sub-degree on Community Forests was implemented in 2003 (Bradley 2009; Mahanty et al. 2013). Despite the sub-degree, it is very difficult to get CF status and the process involves many meetings with MAFF officials and the accumulation of copious documents and signatures. Few communities can execute this process without the help of an NGO – the earliest CF award was in the Seam Reap province in 2007 a full four years after the national program was implemented.

Each of the MOSAIC field sites report issues with community forest degradation – in some cases the issue is the complete destruction of community forest and common land holdings – and funding to support these sustainable forest management transitions has been erratic and inadequate. The hope is that REDD+ programs can create a framework for financing community-based forest conservation on a global scale and long-term basis (Poffenberger 2009).

6.3 REDD+ Program

The REDD+ program is a climate change mitigation policy designed to decrease deforestation by providing economic incentives to protect, rather than use, the forest. As H.E. Ty Sokhun, head of Cambodia's FA, claimed:

Under our 2006 Community Forestry Guidelines, communities across the country are obtaining legal tenure rights to forest resources, laying the foundation for significant future

expansion of the community forestry/REDD model. The Forestry Administration is excited to exploit the full potential of this mechanism, which promises to greatly enhance our efforts to both protect our valuable forests and achieve our nation's goal of alleviating rural poverty (cited in, Bradley 2009).

REDD+ creates a potential alliance between an important national government agency and hundreds of forest communities. This relationship is mediated, however, by multiple levels of NGO and donor interventions and program facilitations. The multiple stakeholders in the REDD+ program and their divergent interests drive a myriad of philosophical, material, and operational difficulties that underlie REDD+ promotion, preparation, and implementation. It remains to be seen whether REDD+ revenues can provide sufficient income to meet national economic development goals, sufficient access to livelihoods for forest residents, and numbers that reflect biodiversity conservation, carbon capture, poverty reduction, and economic development for the NGO and donor organizations. Stakeholder needs seem to contradict one another and these conflicting interests emerge in the various difficulties described in case studies of REDD+ implementation sites. From an international donor perspective, providing monetary compensation for forest conservation will stem the tide of deforestation currently driving climate change. From a governmental perspective, demarcating specific protected forest areas secures state claims to all other forest and access to potential carbon capture funds. And from a village perspective, the program provides leverage against powerful outsiders currently encroaching through ELCs and illegal logging.

The project runs against multiple obstacles in Cambodia. The most glaring is that the basic premise of commodification of forest resources privileges the objectives of elite resource capture over the local conceptions of appropriate forest use – a fundamental gap that contributes to the unsustainability of projects currently underway (Corbera 2012; Pasgaard and Chea 2013; Aggarwal 2014). Another challenge – unfolding from the first – is the way that payment for environmental services (PES) projects recentralize forest governance procedures and remove local communities from decision making processes (Phelps, Webb, and Agrawal 2010). The difficulties of actually getting funds to the local communities protecting the carbon are similarly challenging (Mahanty et al. 2012; Milne and Adams 2012; Mahanty, Suich, and Tacconi 2013). Local communities are further marginalized in favor of donor and governmental (elite) objectives in terms of securing local tenure in REDD+ sites and curtailing the elite capture of resources (Brown and Corbera 2003; Yeang 2012; Thuon 2013). These are just a few of the difficulties that must be addressed before the REDD+ policies can meet their stated goals of protecting forests and alleviating rural poverty. While there are many who see REDD+ projects as good options for achieving these goals (Bradley 2009; Baird 2014a), addressing the problems outlined above rests on the appropriate execution of numerous safeguards that remain elusive.

Cambodia started implementing the Roadmap in 2011 using funds from UNFCC, aiming for full implementation by 2014 (FAO, UNDP, and UNEP 2010). The project design received much attention and input from policy makers at the NGO's head office, and it was influenced directly by ideas emerging from the World Bank, donors, and international consultants (Milne, 2009; 2012). At the time of writing, the project goals did not meet the 2014 deadline and were nowhere near completion. Nevertheless, more funding was received in 2014 from UNDP/FCPF to continue with the roadmap (RGC 2014). Moreover, the bureaucratic

structures of a REDD+ Task Force have been created, and two pilot REDD+ programs were implemented: one in the Oddar Meanchey Province in northwest Cambodia (Yeang 2012; Thuon 2013; Khoun 2014), and the second in the Siema protected area, in Monduliri province of eastern Cambodia (Milne 2013).

The Oddar Meanchy project was established by Cambodia's FA, along with Pact and Terra Global Capital, and was the first Cambodian REDD+ carbon offset project. The project involves 13 CF groups comprised of 58 villages, which protect 67,783 hectares of forest land in the Northwestern province of Oddar Meanchey. Outside of the successful 'monk's forest' mentioned in this paper's introduction, the project is fraught with difficulties – from controlling illegal logging and solidifying local tenure claims, to actually selling the carbon. The Seima Protection Forest REDD+ project started in 2008 and is being implemented by the FA and the Wildlife Conservation Society in Monduliri province. The project focuses on a core area of the Seima Protection Forest, which covers 187,983 ha and includes 20 villages (5000 people) that are expected to benefit from REDD+ payments as a result of managing and protecting the forest area. This paper will not detail these projects, but will focus on the ways they impact individuals in the MOSAIC study area of Prey Lang.

In Cambodia, the REDD+ program is designed with community forestry as the foundational mechanism through which carbon will be captured, measured, and paid for by its consumers. Beyond the formal programs described above, Cambodia is involved in other REDD+ initiatives in which donors have supported other protected forest projects in cooperation with the FA. These include the Central Cardamom Protected Forest (CCPF) (see, Milne and Adams 2012 for a critique of this project), the Preah Vihear Protected Forest (PVPF), and protected forests in Western Siem Pang, Veun Sai-Siem Pang, and Prey Long, as potential sites for conservation and the sustainable management of forests under REDD+.

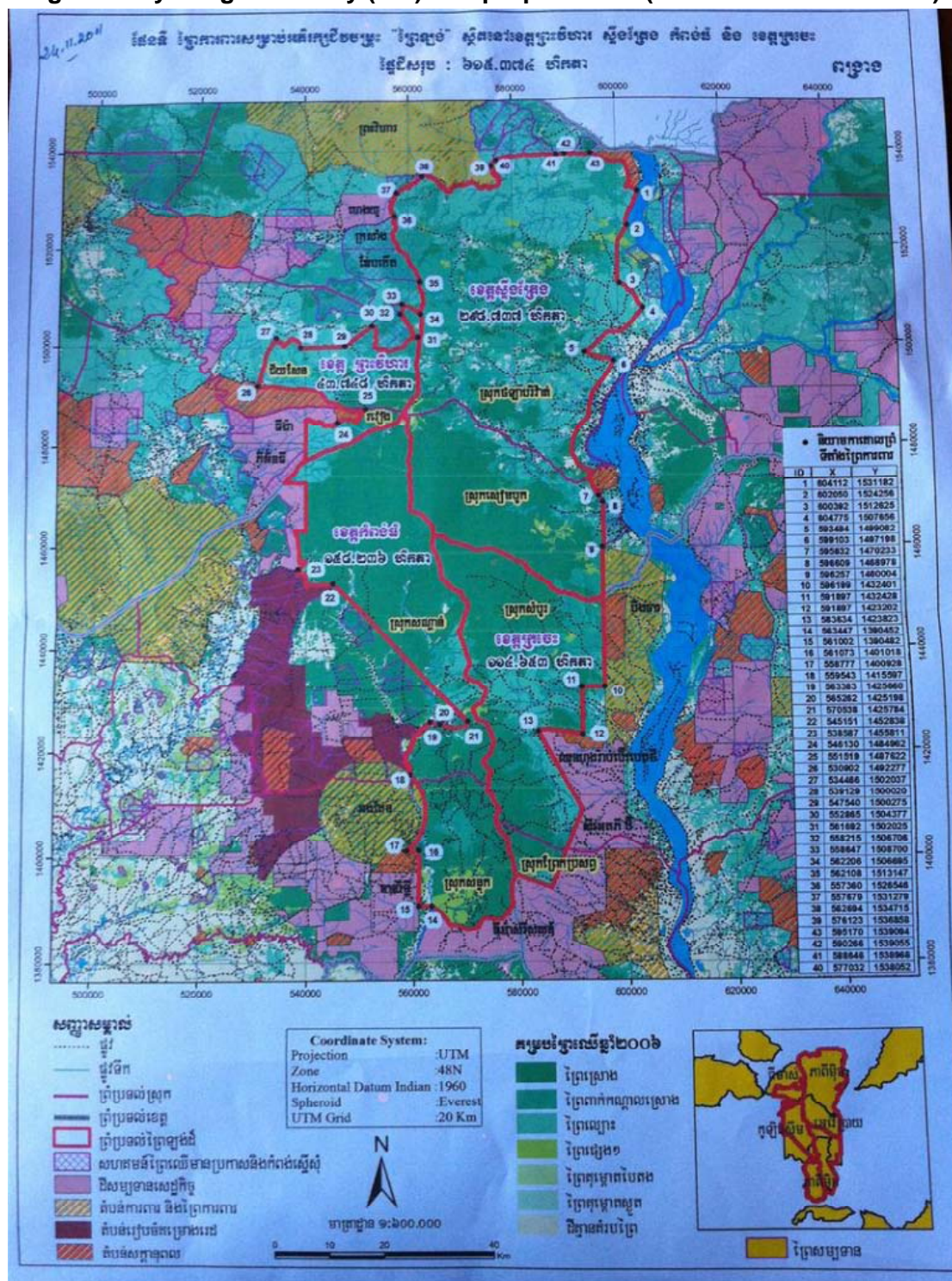
Prey Lang was established as a 'forestry protected and biodiversity conservation area' by a 2011 sub-decree. The proposed action of this sub-decree, in consort with the FA and two INGOs, was to establish 40 community forest sites around the perimeter of the Prey Lang region (RGC 2011). This act of governance was established without community involvement, and members of the Prey Lang Network opposed the proposed community forest establishments on the basis that it would divest communities of all authority over forest use, break up the region, and open non-community forest areas to further or continued exploitation. Forest residents wanted the 'protected forest' status, but did not want the accompanying CF demarcations and restrictions (RGC 2011; PLN 2013). A representative of Winrock International, which along with partner INGO RECOFT was promoting the sub-decree, claimed the idea was to establish a 'protected boundary' around the larger forest (image 3). While FA officials agreed to this strategy, local residents were more familiar than the INGO with the historical processes of elite capture and forest exploitation, and many have continued to object. Governmental partnerships, like cooperating with the FA, are a key strategy of INGO activities. Such strategies, however, privilege elite interests, and as such, were destined to not achieve conservation goals. The sub-decree is currently stalled, but community forest initiatives continue through INGO and FA partnerships.

Forest residents view the community forestry initiatives advocated by the INGOs as a possible avenue to preserve their threatened forest resources, despite their limited access. The restrictions on forest use required by the sub-decree guidelines dramatically change the

ways that local people can use the forest. For instance, all shifting agricultural practices must be suspended, and tree cutting is allowed only with permission from the FA and the Commune Chief. Collecting resin and other non-timber forest products are permitted, and the community can gather these freely. However, protecting the forest is the community's responsibility, and this is the major conflict zone. Even though the FA and the Commune Chief are involved in the establishment of the community forest, there is no assistance from local and provincial level authorities to control the constant threats of illegal logging. In fact, forest residents patrolling the forest consistently find that illegal loggers are connected to company and government officials, and protected by the military. When confronted with this, the authorities often arrest or harass forest protection committees (Titthara 2012b; Vida 2015). Villagers are willing to change their lifestyles in the service of the global elites and consumer capitalism, but conflicts arise when consumer capitalism continues to encroach on their designated protected zone. Neither the INGOs nor the FA have any funds to help forest residents pay fuel expenses necessary for forest patrol.

In general, the relationship between residents and NGOs is becoming more fraught as the problems experienced by villagers are not going away despite intensive interventions from NGOs. A certain fatalism underlies the ways that forest residents embrace the community forest agendas that are the basis for REDD+. Many residents are not aware of REDD+, but they are willing to accept the decreased authority to manage their forest resources as the lesser of the many evils currently affecting their lives.

Image 3: Prey Lang Boundary (red) and proposed CF (note shaded ELC areas)



7 Entangling Power

7.1 Local Resistance

The Cambodian newspapers report daily on protests from disenfranchised individuals amid multiple land disputes that range from elite capture of land and timber to ELCs. Despite land law reforms, environmental impact assessments, declarations of human rights, and many other well intentioned instruments designed to protect vulnerable people, the suffering

continues. People living in MOSAIC research sites are faced with dispossession of land and resources, few and/or ineffectual avenues for protesting or making claims, and incarceration and armed intimidation when they confront the abuses of economic extraction. This section will describe the research sites and the areas of conflict that have ignited at the intersections of land grabs and climate change mitigation policies.

7.2 Phnom Penh Sugar

Encouraged by Cambodia's policy to establish large-scale agriculture under the Economic Land Concessions (ELC) scheme, and incentivized by the European agreement with least developed countries – “Everything but Arms” (EBA) – Phnom Penh Sugar Co Ltd. received approval from the Cambodian government for an economic land concession of approximately 9,000 ha in the Thpong district in February 2010. On the same date, Kompong Speu Sugar Co. Ltd. was awarded an adjacent ELC of 9,052 ha in the Aural district. These sister companies are owned by a Cambodian Okyna Senator and his wife (Borras and Franco 2011; Axelrod, Cristofolletti, and Le Coz 2013; IDI 2015). On March 21st 2011, Prime Minister Hun Sen signed a sub-decree allowing land in the Aural Wildlife Protected Area to be reclassified, and the Kompong Speu Sugar concession to be expanded by 4,700 ha. This brought the total landmass of the adjoining concessions to over 23,000 ha – more than twice the size permitted under the Cambodian Land Law.

Phnom Penh Sugar and its sister company, Kompong Speu Sugar Co. Ltd, began plantation operations immediately, seizing homes, rice fields, orchards, grazing land, and community forests relied on by over 1,500 local families in at least 21 villages in the Thpong and Aural districts of Kompong Speu province. The evictions were resisted in various ways, from protests, small-scale arson and throwing stones at company equipment, to highway barricades (Borras and Franco 2011). The company used the police and the military, including the former Khmer Rouge “Battalion 313”⁴, to intimidate people into accepting inadequate compensation for their losses, including infertile replacement land.

Many affected families have been forced to remove their children from school to work with parents on the sugar plantation. Work at the plantation has become the only livelihood option for most residents and the wages earned are not only significantly less than families earned before the plantation, but they are not even enough to pay school fees and purchase basic school supplies. The degraded lifestyle offered by Phnom Penh Sugar is enhanced when the company dumps its waste water each year, and the runoff flows into community streams and other water sources, killing fish and affecting the health of villagers and their livestock. The dispossessed people who protested these injustices by the company were jailed or faced other legal harassment due to complaints filed by the company.

Interventions by MOSAIC partner Equitable Cambodia (EC) helped some residents receive additional compensation from the company, which originally involved degraded relocation sites and inadequate cash outlays (Borras and Franco 2011). EC has since discovered that ANZ was a major funder of this project and did not ensure that the social and environmental risks identified by their requested report would be mitigated. On October 6th 2014, Inclusive

⁴ Battalion 313 is officially sponsored by Phnom Penh Sugar and has worked as a private army to protect its concession (Pred 2013).

Development International and EC filed a complaint to the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) against ANZ on behalf of 681 families who were forcibly displaced and dispossessed by Phnom Penh Sugar. ANZ severed its ties with Phnom Penh Sugar and now asserts that, because it is no longer a financier to the sugar firm, it has no responsibility for the project's outcomes (IDI 2015).

7.3 Pheapimex

In the wake of decreasing access to long-active forest concessions in the Northeast (Global Witness 2007; Bou and Phelim 1999), Pheapimex requested and was awarded a massive 315,000 ha ELC that spans Kompong Chhnang and Pursat provinces. The original proposal was to grow pulp trees and build a pulp factory (Sophal, Saravy, and Acharya 2001; MAFF 2010). In the year 2000, Pheapimex attempted to start operations in an area of 6,800 ha in Ansa Chambak, Pursat Province. However, the inhabitants were successful in halting plantation operations (Bou 2001). Resistance involved road blockades, lawsuits, and challenging the government. Between 2001 and 2004, Pheapimex carried out no further work on site and people believed the company had given up. In 2004, however, hundreds of workers and heavy equipment returned and proceeded to bulldoze the forest and build roads into the forested area (Narin and Pyne 2004).

The people attempted to stop the operations at the district level, and several hundred villagers demonstrated along highway 5. In an effort to keep the bulldozers out, villagers watched over the machinery and eight were injured when someone threw a grenade into the sleeping group. The government immediately announced the temporary suspension of company activities until the outstanding problems were solved (Ernst 2007). The day after the attack, local police accused the villagers of throwing the grenade at themselves, without producing any supporting evidence (Gerber 2014). On the same day, the authorities organized a meeting and made several promises to local inhabitants (most of which were not kept); after a week of inactivity, the company resumed its operations. As operations continued to expand in the region, Pheapimex did not change their tactics, and protests and conflicts continued to ignite in lands newly claimed by the company in 2009-10 (Khouth 2010; Titthara 2010; Mondul 2011; Titthara 2012a; Beban and Work 2014).

The recent land titling efforts of Order 01 have exacerbated land conflicts and further pushed local residents away from their land and access to resources. The order was supposed to secure land tenure in contested areas and to reclaim concession land for return to local residents. The long-standing structures of land and resource access described above did more to dispossess than entitle, and local elites, business people, and authorities laid claim to unclaimed land and community forests through sub-decrees and instructions added to the original scope of the order (Work and Beban, in press). Residents were threatened and coerced into accepting disadvantageous land title agreements, received titles that did not reflect what was measured, or were simply left with no secure holdings (LRAN 2013; Milne 2013; Neef, Touch, and Chiengthong 2013). Residents in MOSAIC research sites report an increased loss of access since Order 01 was implemented, especially access to community forests that fell prey to outside capture (Work and Beban, in press).

7.4 Prey Lang Resistance

The Prey Lang forest is a rich and diverse ecological and social region that has been deeply affected by the exploits of market extraction policies. The population was predominately indigenous swidden agriculturalists, but most have altered their lifestyles through the changes to their environments. Prey Lang hosted many early logging concessions implemented by the military and powerful Cambodian businesspeople, as described above, and has since become the home of at least 33 ELCs and an unknown number of state-sponsored economic ventures. The bulk of these are cultivating rubber, but some are growing pulp trees and flex-crops. In addition to pressures from ELCs and illegal logging, Prey Lang residents feel the pressure from dramatically increased migration into the forest. Over 10,000 new families have settled in the region, many coming for the lucrative logging or the wages paid by freelance loggers, and others in search of available homestead land. Order 01's award of land titles to residents was not implemented in the Prey Lang region, but residents were subject to some of the shifting land classifications that the project created, as well as new opportunities for land insecurity (Titthara 2013b).

The strong military presence hindered community protests, but local resistance has grown steadily since 2005, after efforts by NGOs and watchdog groups like Global Witness began to investigate the process (Ashwell, Miller, and Dummer 2004; Naren and Vrieze 2012). While economic concessions are divesting Prey Lang residents of their land, the greatest concern for people in MOSAIC field sites is the continual and seemingly uncontrolled logging that persists outside of concession areas. Both the concessions and the freelance loggers are rapidly destroying all sources of subsistence in the region. Residents are especially affected by the destruction of community forest land, held for common use.

Resistance flows from grassroots community networks and emerges from community efforts to patrol their forests and the surrounding region. A 2008 film put the struggle on the international radar (Roy 2008), and after the opening of Vietnamese owned rubber company CDCK in the Sandan district of Kompong Thom province, local networks have begun to fight back (Titthara 2011b). Since then, the residents patrol their forests and confiscate heavy machinery, logs, and lumber from freelance loggers. The logs and lumber are often destroyed in the forest and the machinery held for negotiations (Phak and Titthara 2013). Sometimes, network members are forced to turn over their contraband to local officials or the FA – both complicit in the illegal activities, as outlined above (Naren and Vrieze 2012; Titthara 2013a) – and have also faced legal harassment, surveillance, and incarceration by the same local officials (Titthara 2011a; Titthara 2012b).

8 International Power

The role of international aid and development agencies cannot be underestimated in the land grabs and climate change mitigation policies outlined above. Early in the transition, the World Bank and the UNDP supported resource extraction – especially timber, as discussed above – and have continued to support and encourage large-scale agricultural development. In addition, Cambodia's "development partners" continue to promote ties with the private sector and the creation of a "competitive domestic business environment" to enhance development (World Bank 2005).

What MOSAIC field research bears out so far is that people do not want the jobs promised by the companies, which do not provide adequate livelihood. People want land. In the last several years, landlessness has risen to 20%, and 40% of households have farmland that is less than 0.5 ha – the minimum required to meet basic nutritional needs (ODC 2014). People do, however, want infrastructure: roads, schools, and hospitals. And this is what gives the plantations their leverage.

The European Union's EBA trade initiative has received staunch criticism for the impact that its trade deals have had on the land rush in Cambodia, especially related to the rapid expansion of cassava and sugar cane production for biofuels (Borras and Franco 2011; Haakansson and Saracini 2011; Pred 2013). Nonetheless, biofuel related flex crops continue to be cultivated, and the favorable trade agreement remains in place, with the EU declining to comment on its negative impacts (Levidow 2013).

The UNDP and its numerous climate related offshoots (UNEP, FCPF, FCCC, UNCC:Learn) are busy promoting healthy functioning ecosystems, sustainable forestry practices, and biodiversity conservation programs, while at the same time promoting green energy technologies with known adverse effects, like biofuels and hydroelectric projects. The UNDP is involved in Cambodia's REDD+ program and was instrumental in developing partnerships with carbon trading projects operated by USAID and the INGO Pact. However, neither of these organizations was able to deliver on their promised carbon payments, and the community forests established for the project in Oddar Meanchey are riddled with problems.

This is not to say that the international organizations are inherently evil – that issue remains to be determined. Certainly, individuals working in these organizations act with good hearts and true intentions. Nonetheless, programs continue to be implemented with little oversight and copious funding, amid a myriad of reports (from several regions around the global south) that environmental safeguards, human rights, and international labor standards are being ignored.

9 Conclusion

This paper treated land grabs and climate change mitigation strategies as separate issues, something that MOSAIC project research will deconstruct. It is useful however, to lay them out here in order to point to them in subsequent publications. Throughout the paper I have attempted to highlight the intersections between land grabs and climate change mitigation strategies embedded in the two research landscapes of this project. In addition, I attended to the multiple layers of conflict and cooperation that ignite across the regions. In so doing, I also point to the ways that international policies in conjunction with local systems of power and resource access are divesting the most vulnerable citizens from their claims to land – affecting their livelihoods and those of future generations. The land transformations underway in Cambodia generate acute suffering and climate changes in the region. The Cambodian communities in the MOSAIC study already take a landscape perspective to recent events and understand clearly the effects outlined by Hunsberger et al. (2015). They report direct links between forest loss in the hinterlands and rainfall loss/ changes across the country, they connect companies in other districts to the water contamination in their own back yards, and they see the potential effects of soil runoff from forest loss disrupting Cambodia's vital river systems.

The connections I draw point to the delicate dance between Cambodian politicians, national and regional business elites, military power, and international standards and recommendations for bureaucratic and economic development that underscore and promote land grabs. There are layers of patrimonial power always at work under the bureaucratic structures that seem to facilitate and ensure the elite capture of resources. I have also tried to show that academic perspectives on land and resource use tend to obscure deep historical roots that connect imperial projects of land and resource capture over time, leaving traces of themselves in each subsequent enactment through time. Through intensive engagement with grassroots partners and civil society activists, the MOSAIC project intends to disrupt this often literature-based academic gaze by situating it in the messy spaces of lived experiences amid the multiple lines of power and process that inform land-based climate and economic strategies.

In addition, groundwork is laid here for future investigations of international governance instruments on both sides of the economic land grab – those that promote economic agendas encouraging land grabbing activities, and those that attempt to mitigate the known horrors and climate disruptions of the former agendas. With this groundwork, MOSAIC research will question the extent to which the policy interventions and voluntary pro-poor guidelines that emerge from economic development activities have been and will be implemented. What are the conflicts that emerge in this arena? How can they be resolved once present, and how can they be avoided in the future? Along these lines, a further question to explore is whether the international policy makers are actually concerned with the implementation of policies addressing environmental and human rights abuses.

Coming research will also investigate the extent to and conditions under which REDD+ initiatives constitute land grabbing under the guise of conservation and biodiversity protection, and whether REDD+ is feasible in the extractive and power-laden climate of contemporary Cambodia. What conflicts will emerge when the poorest of the world's poor are asked to be responsible for "selling the air" to polluting industrialized nations? And, to what extent does a community's heightened vulnerability, from the effects of ELCs and intensive logging, make international conservation initiatives an attractive option. Research will further question to what extent increased production of biofuel crops and additional biofuel factories will increase poverty, landlessness, and environmental degradation? What are the economic and energy benefits of biogas production and do, or can, they outweigh the human and environmental costs already accounted for? What kinds of conflicts will emerge with continued biofuel expansion, and how will the claims to environmental benefit be confronted in the future?

The landscape perspective of the research underway attends to two distinct regions: one low-land forest area that still holds great biodiversity and dense forest, and two large-scale plantation sites that cleared vast regions of dense secondary forest growth in the lowlands and encroach on protected forest regions in the western mountains. In both regions, plantation activities affect local access to land, water, and livelihoods in ways that do not require direct contact with the ELC and spill out across the landscape. Poisoned water flows beyond the boundaries of the plantation and rainfall patterns are disrupted over the entire country as a result of the rapid forest loss. Land pressures come from forest loss due to ELCs, forest loss due to carbon capture and other PES schemes, and also from the

cadastral projects instigated to facilitate ELC and carbon capture programs. The promised jobs that economic development is supposed to deliver offer far less income than what people could generate from family agriculture and non-timber forest products, and these jobs further promote migration into the region by other more marginal populations. The movement of marginalized populations ties this process again into the long history of economic exploitation in the region. Current extraction trends are moving away from the traditional trails of population disbursement, low-land crops, and river-centered commodity flows and a significant research focus in these landscapes is the movement of people and capital into the 'hinter-lands' of dense forest and mountain regions, previously protected by years of disruption and war.

While Cambodia has officially been 'at peace' since 1998, the intensity and frequency of local conflicts, the violent dispossession of smallholders, and the military protected groups of illegal loggers that decimate the country's remaining forests, make the idea of peace somewhat suspect. In this state of neither peace nor war, powerful local officials can determine and/or influence the level of conflict, exploitation, and care visited upon local communities. However, the power and impunity of national level Oknya and the private armies they can muster cannot be controlled at the local level. Beyond the exploitation and appropriation of land and resources implemented by companies and government officials, current land policies are also inciting internal conflicts at the village level. In so doing, they divide communities over such issues as jobs vs. conservation, or the myriad problems of in-migration in an environment of high landlessness.

By attending to conflicts at the landscape level in direct cooperation with grassroots and civil society activists, and by placing large-scale land grabs alongside emerging climate change mitigation policies, current research in the MOSAIC research project will open new territory for considering the drivers and diffusers of violent conflict. As economic extraction continues its rapid expansion, increasing the effects of climate change on communities across the globe, attention to conflict and its negotiation are of the utmost importance.

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Mosaic Working Paper Series

This working paper series is part of a larger intellectual and political agenda of our consortium, trying to have a better understanding of the linkages between climate change mitigation policies, land grabbing and resource conflict – and how to effect change in favour of the oppressed. We aim to: (i) Understand the interplay between climate mitigation policies, land grabbing, and conflict or cooperation in Myanmar and Cambodia, and derive relevant insights from other countries. We adopt a landscape perspective that extends our analysis beyond single plots, and a human rights perspective on tenure rights that includes security on the land as well as decision-making control over its use and management; (ii) Contribute to grassroots and civil society partners' development interventions to promote socially just and inclusive mitigation strategies and land policies and practices. Strategies will include linking local and landscape-level initiatives with national and international governance processes, and (iii) Build capacity to address, through strategic collective action, conflicts associated with climate mitigation and land grabbing. Strategic collective action begins with localized understandings of justice, based on answers to the questions: Who ought to have what rights to which resources, for how long, and for what purposes? And, who ought to decide?

Peer reviewed papers from our research work will be published in this Series. However, we also invite submission from other researchers and activists who are not part of our project to consider submitting manuscripts to our working paper series. This will enrich the critical dialogue we want to pursue. Please contact any of the consortium members, or send email to Jun Borras at junborras5@gmail.com.

Notes on the author

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