

Mapping the Srok: The Mimeses of Land Titling in Cambodia

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In June 2012, Cambodia’s prime minister issued an order on land titling that deployed student volunteers to survey and map the country’s territory. Examination of this initiative at the theoretical intersections of mapping, mimicry and governmentality demonstrates the violent exclusions inherent in cadastral projects that restrict measuring and titling to only “productive” properties. In a field of speculation and local power the initiative dramatically refashioned the land to mimic in advance the expectations of the Map. The transformations altered land access and use in ways that told two stories about the power of the Map: “clear it or lose it” and “if you clear it, you can have it”. Neither story was fully realized, but the land was transformed nonetheless.

Keywords: land titling, Cambodia, mimicry, mapping, territorialization.

In July 2012, a group of university students and government representatives arrived at the village of “Sambok Dung”¹ in western Cambodia as part of a nationwide initiative that sent thousands of student volunteers out to the provinces to “measure the country” (វាស់វែងស្រុក) and issue land titles for smallholders.² On that day the students — dressed in military fatigues with patches from the Cadastral Commission (ក្រឹត្យស្នងស្នូលយោធិ៍) of the Ministry of Land Management, Urban Planning and Construction³ safety-pinned to their sleeves — called villagers to assemble at the school. The newly minted student representatives of the cadastral authority spoke passionately about the problems of the Cambodian countryside, about their training with the government on land measurement,

and the government's initiative to issue land titles to citizens. "The Chinese companies are moving in and taking people's land", they told the villagers.

We have been sent here by Prime Minister Hun Sen to protect you from them and to make sure you can keep your property.... The government helps you, protects you from the companies, and you will help the government too.... We will measure only cleared land, land that you use. We want you to use your land, to make it productive. If the land isn't working then we will remain poor.... We give you security from the companies, we will measure your land and give you title. You will produce rice, mangos....

[nods and murmurs of assent from the assembled]

But it has to be ready. You must solve all your disputes before we come; we will not measure disputed land or forest land.... You must clear the land.... You don't have to plant, just to clear the land. Once you have the title, the banks can help you to cultivate your land. But you must develop the land. If you haven't planted on it in five years you could lose your title...⁴

At the close of their speech, the students informed villagers that they would return in a few months to begin measuring the land. The meeting ignited a flurry of activity in which people attempted to transform their landholdings to meet the requirements of the coming cadastral project. Land needed to be cleared and put to use before the students returned. The order concerning land measurement and titling, along with the particular strategies chosen for its implementation, reconfigured both the landscape and local conceptions of land sovereignty, as villagers sought to ensure their holdings would be "on the map" (Fox 2002, p. 74).

Prime Minister Hun Sen's "Order 01" — launching Cambodia's most recent and most ambitious land titling project — set the stage for the events that we describe in this article.⁵ We do not direct our focus so much towards the implementation of the order⁶ as towards the events unleashed by the announcement of the project and in advance of the land measurement process. We describe how local people remade local social and environmental relationships in anticipation of land titling and in efforts to mimic the social

logics in which the cadastral project was embedded. The order was meant initially to address acute land disputes associated with the expansion of plantations and agricultural intensification. But the project that it launched grew in scope to include the measurement and titling of holdings on state land: economic land concessions (ELCs, ដីសម្បទានសេដ្ឋកិច្ច), state forest land (ដីព្រៃកម្មសិទ្ធិរបស់រដ្ឋ) and state development land (ដីការអភិវឌ្ឍរបស់រដ្ឋ). Our study of two villages in “Srai Thmae” commune, Kompong Chhnang province, examines this initiative through intersecting theoretical lenses. We focus on mapping as an act of governmentality that sparks spatial transformations, creates particular subjectivities and gives rise to mimetic activities that embed all levels of our story. Intersecting both governmentality and mimeses is the enactment of power at the local level to facilitate and foreclose claims to land and resources. We adopt these two theoretical lenses in order to consider the ways that they both overlap and do not quite meet, and we attend to the unexpected events within both the overlapping and interstitial zones.

Our first theoretical lens draws on mapping and titling scholarship with an eye towards the Map’s mimetic qualities and towards its use as a tool of dispossession and appropriation. What we show is the messy process of events in real time and real space, violently divorced from the discourse of inclusion and protection that surrounded the measurement and titling project. The Map is a notorious tool, one held culpable in the historic transformations of state-building and in territorial claims. Through abstract spatial representations that “anticipated reality”, maps have legitimized governance and brought administrations and armies into being to fill the empty spaces that they have foretold (Thongchai 1994, p. 310).⁷ The Map, however, works in ways that go beyond disciplining the absolute space in which experience and perception occur (Lefebvre [1974] 1991, p. 164). As an interpretive and mimetic representation of space, the Map at once anticipates and brings into being alternate forms of reality, through which governing bodies create and sanction land use policies (Frewer and Sopheak Chan 2014, pp. 267–81).⁸

Our second theoretical lens brings into view the enactment of power and authority at the local level. State-building and subject-making in Cambodia, as in other areas of Southeast Asia, rest on states' attempts at "territorialization" — defining spatial boundaries and controlling people's activities and access to resources within those boundaries. However, territorialization is unstable, and competition on the ground from the messy operations of state agencies and in the form of local resistance challenges the abstract space of property rights indicated on cadastral maps (Vandergeest and Peluso 1995, p. 391). Control of land is therefore not just about legal rights. It is also about the formal and informal "bundle of powers" that mediate actors' ability to benefit from natural resources and other resources — including technology, capital, markets, labour, knowledge, authority, social identities and social relationships such as trust and patronage (Ribot and Peluso 2009, p. 172). Despite the agency of diverse groups of people in clearing their land and preparing it for legibility on the Map, even in a national-level land titling initiative the local authorities are decisive in controlling access to land in Cambodia (Diepart and Dupuis 2014, pp. 445–68). In many other places as well, authorities have both the knowledge and power to exclude or constrain certain groups while enhancing their own holdings (Hall et al. 2011, pp. 32–39).

We engage with literature on the power of the Map and the relations of power enacted across its field, but we do not focus on the actual implementation of Order 01, the technologies of mapping or on the effects of land titling. Rather, we concentrate on the "land rush" that occurred before the surveying began and on the effects of this rush following the conclusion of surveying. Following the visit from the students described above, in an anticipatory mimetic representation of the Map amid a field of expectation, speculation and local power, local residents frantically refashioned real space. People reconfigured the contingent and relational spaces of their lives in order to be recognized as being entitled to land. Studies that focus on the implementation of land policy from the moment surveying begins are at risk of missing the anticipatory effect of the

Map. In the context of Order 01, this anticipatory transformation of the physical landscape reorganized social relations in ways that may overshadow the effects of the Map itself.

Unsurprisingly, those people who were already disenfranchised lost the most in the frantic refashioning of land and shifting social relationships. The student volunteers add complexity to the story: they formed sympathetic relationships with villagers, but were also a node of authority between local officials and the prime minister. Taussig describes as “mimetic excess” the spillover effects of the performance of recognition enacted by those who require both protection from (1993, p. 255) and recognition by power (Ferguson 2002, pp. 551–59). The mimetic excess we describe occurred both in social relations and on the landscape itself. The Map, however, does not anticipate or create the territory in the case that we describe. Rather, the territory is transformed in order to look like the Map, creating highly contextualized spaces through which — and not in which — governance is enacted.

We begin by exploring the territory of the Map and the productive spaces between the abstract and the concrete. We next trace episodes in the history of Cambodian land tenure schemes to think about the tension between land use for family subsistence and land use for profit, development and economic expansion (Springer 2013, pp. 521–22). We then describe the conceptual framework of Order 01, before using our case study of two villages in Srai Thmae commune to explore the effects of the Map. Born at the intersection of preventing land grabs, promoting agribusiness and undermining alternative claims to land (Oliveira 2013, p. 278), the Map not only anticipated the yet unrealized land allocation but also had unforeseen spillover effects, which transformed the landscape in anticipatory mimicry of the Map’s criteria for recognition.

Site Description and Methods

Srai Thmae commune lies at the northwestern edge of Kompong Chhnang province and the eastern edge of the Cardamom mountain

range. It is also at the edge of the forest, in an area where long-established villages were reinhabited after the displacement that characterized the Khmer Rouge era. Since the late 1990s, military-sponsored logging and the availability of unclaimed forest land induced settlement in areas between established villages and along the railroad tracks. The result is an area of both long-term residents and newcomers, located in the middle of the large and controversial Pheapimex land concession.⁹ As of 2012, the concessionaires had not yet begun plantation activities in the area. Therefore, as a site of no immediate land conflicts between villagers and companies, it was one of the areas surveyed early in the rollout of Order 01.

Working on independent projects, the authors conducted research in the area separately. Work has conducted ethnographic fieldwork in the site of Sambok Dung since 2007. She was present when the students came to announce the land titling project in July 2012 and during the weeks afterward, as villagers scrambled to clear their own parcels and lay claim to other parcels. During this time, she visited land plots, took notes and conducted informal interviews with ninety-six villagers about their activities and concerns. Work returned to Cambodia in January 2014 and conducted interviews with student volunteers who had participated in land titling. The post-election atmosphere in Cambodia was still tense at that time, and this research trip thus permitted visits to only three temples and meetings with only seven former student volunteers. Work then returned to Sambok Dung in June 2014, after the completion of the titling project, to conduct informal interviews with twenty-seven community members from different parts of the village.

Beban arrived in the area in December 2012 for an initial two-month stay; she undertook fifteen months of ethnographic fieldwork there during December 2013–February 2015. Staying with local families in each village several times per month throughout this period, she was able to observe the rollout of Order 01, including land surveying, the public posting of preliminary survey results and titling ceremonies. She spent a week in the field with a student volunteer whom she met through a mutual friend in Phnom Penh.

She also conducted informal interviews with 104 community members from Sambok Dung and “Tropaing Dtuk” villages, including those whose land was surveyed and those who laid claim to land that was not surveyed. In the case of members of the former group, Beban interviewed some individuals both before and after they received title to land. In addition, she undertook interviews with village chiefs in both villages and with commune- and provincial-level authorities. During discussions between Beban and Work in 2014–2015, the ways that our data overlapped and were complementary became clear.

On the Map: Multiplicity, Mimicry and Anticipation

As a representation of space, the Map is renowned for both its capacity for abstraction and its compulsion for the concrete. Stories of the emergence of the Map highlight its power to represent anticipatory space. Lines of longitude and latitude made visible abstract, “empty spaces”, the representation of which made it possible to claim them (Padrón 2002, p. 31; Thongchai 1994, pp. 47–61). This filling of empty space, constitutive of contemporary forms of governance and production, gave rise to the enactment of multiple spatial imaginaries informed by the interrelated environments of action and ideas (Lefebvre [1974] 1991, pp. 229–91; Harvey 2006, p. 275). The Map thus quickly went from representing “empty” space yet to be claimed and conquered to serving as a “mirror of reality” that could represent the productive landscape in ever more exacting detail (Balchin 1985, p. 3, citing Cunningham 1559). In Jorge Luis Borges’s story *On Exactitude in Science*, cartographers produce a map that “coincided point for point” with “the Empire” (1999, p. 325). In other imperial moments, the value of the Map lay in its capacity to represent conquered territory “wholly detached from its geographic context” (Anderson 2006, p. 174). The Map could represent sovereign claims in a way that erased the diversity of people and landscapes — suggesting the reality of homogeneity that supports the “code”, allows the “organization of cities” and “fix[es]

the alphabet and language of the town” (Lefebvre [1974] 1991, p. 47). Lefebvre suggests that this code harmonizes the spatial imaginary that moves between the Map and the landscape, as planners enact their representations in the lived environment. Our story illuminates this spatial imaginary, and multiple planners move between the land and the different images of what the Map will represent.

In the case of Siam, Thongchai Winichakul suggests that “a map created a nation” (Thongchai 1994, p. 174). Grounded in discourse and representation, the technology of the Map confirmed the existence of the place. More than confirming existence, the Map confirms who will exist in the territory that it displays. This latter process of confirmation drove the “land rush” that we describe below, the desire to be recognized as existing on the Map, the desire to be included. Individuals and groups are included and excluded through “technologies of land control” (Peluso and Lund 2011, p. 668). These technologies can take the form of land laws executed through the issuance of titles and the preparation of maps. Those who lack the former can be erased without consequence from the abstracted reality of the latter (Adler et al. 2008, p. 2; Fox 2002, pp. 65–78; Lawson-Remer 2012, p. 168). Geo-referencing technologies and detailed geographic information systems (GIS) imaging maps attempt to counteract such erasure, and studies report a dance of map and counter-map, as the previously silent and displaceable people living in a state map themselves into existence (Cooke 2003 pp. 265–84; Peluso 1995, pp. 383–406). Often, however, the representational exactitude that such technologies promise enacts and legitimizes truths about the landscape that can undermine the claims of marginalized communities (Frewer and Sopheak Chan 2014, pp. 267–81; Milne 2012, pp. 698–700). What we describe below is not the creation of a counter-map, however. It is anticipatory mimeses of the Map. Smallholders, local elites and external wielders of capital all worked to fashion land in Srai Thmae into an image that the Map would recognize, an image that would in turn determine their inclusion among the ranks of titled landholders.

The promulgation of Order 01, and the maps and land titles prepared as a result, legitimized the Cambodian government's claims that it acted to protect citizens from future dispossession. The government introduced the new policy without the assistance of international organizations concerned with governance, such as the World Bank. But it sought to follow those organizations' protocols (Springer 2013, p. 527; Lerch 2014, pp. 137–68), even as it promoted so-called economic land concessions, or ELCs, and protected companies that forcibly removed “untitled” residents from their homesteads (Grimsditch and Henderson 2009, pp. 1–73). It is important to note that, while the forceful removal of people from their land does not number among the stated objectives of the programmes of the World Bank and other development lenders, converting land into spaces designated for global market commodity production, like an ELC, most certainly does (World Bank 2013, p. 24). These concessions and skyrocketing prices on global land markets underlay the cadastral initiative undertaken through Order 01; they also fuelled the insecurity and speculation that reshaped the forest, violently evicting unacknowledged citizens, in an attempt to mimic the Map.

In the intimate space of our case study, the Map does more than create reality in an abstract form, preceding the rationalization and utilization of space. It also marks spaces created by citizens who feel that they “have to map, there is no alternative, you are either on the map or you run the risk of being gnawed away” (Fox 2002, p. 74). Many individuals and communities support the idea of titling and registration, and local responses to the coming of the Map can include not only opposition to centralized control through national registration (Scott 1998, pp. 181–305) and acquiescence and accommodation (Cooke 2003, p. 275), but also the active reshaping of the landscape to comply with the Map. At the scale of individuals and communities the Map can mark discrete spaces inside of which citizens are permitted or excluded from acts of production (Neocleous 2003, p. 413) or through which citizens can contest appropriation (Peluso 1995, pp. 383–406). These acts of inclusion, exclusion

and contestation make places visible in a certain way through the Map. What we describe is different. Our case studies demonstrate a compulsion to be mapped, to mimic the space created by the Map so as to become visible.

Mori Ram describes the work of mimicking space “desired” by the engineers of landscapes. He writes of the making of middle-class recreation space in the Israeli-occupied territories of Palestine so as to make the landscape visible to travelling global, especially white European, elites who may visit Israeli territory (2013, pp. 736–53). Michael Taussig suggests that “in some way or another” the making and existence of the artefact that portrays something, like a playground for global elites, gives one power over that which is portrayed (1993, p. 13). In Cambodia, attempting to mimic spaces of cleared, productive agricultural land is indeed an attempt to enact some power over the coming allocation of land, as Taussig suggests. But it is also, as James Ferguson points out, an enactment of desired belonging (Ferguson 2002, pp. 555–69). With this mimicry, people say, “We are members of this community. We are entitled.” Or perhaps they are asking, “What must we do as members of this community to be entitled?”

This, for Ferguson, is the work of mimicry. It haunts and destabilizes the smoothness of elite boundaries as it displays the characteristics according to which members of society are measured for entitlement and through which individuals claim rights to which they are entitled (Ferguson 2002, p. 553). The frantic reshaping of forested land so that it appears to be agricultural land is a part of the horror of the representation that Bhabha (1984) describes among colonial officials. For them, “mimicry is at once resemblance and menace”; the mimicry is “almost the same, *but not quite*” (p. 127, italics in the original) and that “not-quiteness” unsettles colonial masters and ruptures colonial discourse to reveal its “strategic failure” (ibid.). The not-quiteness of cleared forest in Srir Thmae, we suggest, mimics this revelation of strategic failure. We take this further and will show, following Taussig (1993), that the menace lies in the ways that the copy influences that of which it is a copy

(p. 250). This frantic attempt to mimic the imagined space of a map that has not even been made reveals not only the comical farce of empire to which Bhabha calls attention, but also the menace of a difference between the imagined and the real that is almost total, but not quite (Bhabha 1984, p. 133).

The violent and haphazard reshaping of forest land in anticipation of the Map, the multiple abuses of power that inscribed inclusion and exclusion at the local level, and the unfinished, unstable partiality of title intended — it was promised — to solidify entitlement are effects of this menacing mimesis. These effects are what Taussig calls “mimetic excess”, which allows the actual becoming of the other, “any Other”, he suggests. The Other can be the excluder or the excluded, and the excess of representation in the interstitial space between these subjects creates a space to “engage the image with the reality thus imagined” (1993, p. 255). Taussig predicts a certain emancipatory effect from this ability consciously to become the Other. Our data do not suggest emancipation, and the horror that we describe lies in the implications of exactly which Other the possibilities of violent appropriation embedded in land laws imagine and exclude.

The violent mimicry described below is not performed by those who control the space, but by those within the space being controlled. Each individual is intentionally making her or his land visible to the Map and is engaged in her or his own acts of territorialization by exercising whatever pieces she or he has of the “bundle of rights” that adhere to the notion of property (Peluso and Lund 2011, p. 673). Ram (2013, pp. 736–53) describes the way that the Israeli projection of global elite travel on to the Palestinian landscape does more than just claim property; it also violently claims the space of an Other to create a certain type of property destined for a particular type of use and a particular group of users. The anticipatory mimeses sparked by Order 01 were enacted in a similar way, but by different actors. When a man explained to Work in 2012, “I don’t want to clear this land, but I have to. If I don’t clear it, I will lose it. I have to clear it so they will measure it”,¹⁰ he was not only being forced to

comply with the land law and become entitled. He was also wresting a forested landscape, the space of so many unacknowledged Others, away from any and all other possible uses in order that it become available for a particular type of use and a particular group of users.

This compulsion to clear is an effort to exercise the right to land title. What we point to here is not the alternative maps created by local uses, practical way-finding, or everyday practices (Certeau 1984, p. 98) — or the subversive and productive potential of this lens. We highlight, rather, the ways that the local practices put themselves in the service of the Map, as subjectivities rapidly disciplined to create an appropriate representation of the particular imaginary of space recognizable by the Map. This is not the map of Borges's cartographers growing in scale until it represents, inch for inch, the imperial territory (1999). It is, rather, the frantic, inch-by-inch refashioning of lived space in order to represent the Map, to be recognized as worthy of inclusion. Such are the implications of mimesis and its potential to effect what it attempts to represent. The messy and violent processes described below accurately represent the social vision implied in the Map, a vision of land destined for elite human production and profit.

The History of Land Tenure in Cambodia and the Framework of Order 01

Narratives of land reform in Cambodia often begin with the confusion of the post-Khmer Rouge period, but efforts to privatize land and to create a national registry of titled land have a much longer history. 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 (Diepart 2015, p. 19) — in an effort to divest King Norodom (1860–1904) of his power over land and buildings in the capital. The French established four categories of property ownership: royal property, public property, inalienable public reserves available for lease, and inalienable private property (Edwards 2007, pp. 44–45). As in the rest of Indochina,

they envisioned a general census of the productive regions in Cambodia, with royal ordinances issued in 1902, 1908 and 1912. Each attempt to implement land ordinances failed because of incompatible conceptions of land tenure between colonial administrators and their Cambodian subjects, and colonial bureaucratic weakness. A 1925 decree, followed by colonial “declarations” in 1926, 1930 and 1931 (Guérin 2012, p. 447), relaunched the land registration process in Cambodia with the use of aerial photography, but the execution of a national 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 coverage of the registry, that coverage remained limited. Wealthy civil servants and businessmen, whose large landholdings increased the incidence of tenant farming arrangements, made primary use of the registry, and Sihanouk also used it to institute land title for smallholders. Issuance of title often led smallholders to contract unpayable debts and to suffer subsequent landlessness (Guérin 2012, pp. 447–55; Guillou 2006, pp. 304–5).

Following the collectivization of land during the era of the Khmer Rouge’s Democratic Kampuchea (1975–79), each province, district and village implemented the new collectivization strategies of the People’s Republic of Kampuchea (1979–93) in its own way. In parts of Kompong Cham province there were no ក្រុមសហមធ្យី (“solidarity groups”, or land cooperatives). Parts of Kompong Speu abandoned collective land practices in the early 1980s, and people reclaimed their previous landholdings. In Prey Veng, authorities strictly adhered to the ក្រុមសហមធ្យី model; following a government decree to terminate the existence of the groups in 1989, local authorities issued land according to the policy of 0.2 hectares per person (Guillou 2006, pp. 308–10).

Official distribution of such small landholdings had an impact on post-war patterns of land acquisition. To a great extent, traditional practices concerning land use and access to land resumed when the fighting stopped. “Traditional” in this case refers to acquisition by the plough. Through the years of sovereign kingship, when the king

notionally owned all land, and through colonial rule and independence and into the post-Khmer Rouge era, Cambodians had access to land for their own use. They exercised this right by claiming and clearing unclaimed forest land for use as family homesteads and farms. Their communities supported, witnessed and agreed to their claims, and they were considered owners of the land on which they lived and which they cultivated. The underlying social convention governing this type of land acquisition is that the forest is an open resource, owned by the spirit owner of the water and the land (ម្ចាស់ទឹក ម្ចាស់ដី) and, with proper negotiation, available for all to use to meet subsistence needs. People met these needs by collecting, using and trading in forest products; felling trees for home, bridge and temple construction; establishing plots for rotational swidden agriculture; and clearing land for homes or the cultivation of rice. These customary land claim practices were retained in a 1920 French land law that reads,

in matters of real estate, the holder becomes legitimate when there is peaceful possession of unregistered land, in public and in good faith, continuously and unequivocally, for five consecutive years. (Russell 1997, pp. 102–3; also see Springer 2013, pp. 520–46, and Thion 1993, pp. 20–32)

This discussion is not to suggest that the acquisition of land was easy in either the pre-colonial, colonial or pre-war era or that landlessness is a new post-war phenomenon, as suggested by earlier studies (see Guérin 2012, p. 456). Colonial-era records offer clear evidence of land pressure, landlessness and unequal land distribution. Nonetheless, the difficult work of leaving established but land-scarce villages to look for land in the forests and fields nearby remained an option even into the post-war period. Post-war land pressure was, however, acute. In addition to the problem of overcrowded villages, refugees had returned from Thailand. Cleared land was scarce, and many would-be cultivators were excluded from land by local elites. Peacetime also ignited large-scale migration to forested regions on the part of people in search of available land and to follow opportunities in the logging business (Le Billon 2002, p. 579; Work 2014, pp. 1–97).

In step with Cambodia's transition into a market economy, the 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, p. 528). This law mandates that any person who can prove uncontested use of land for a period of at least five years before 30 August 2001, the date when the law came into force, is entitled to request a title to private ownership of that land. National land administration and registration have expanded throughout the past decade, with the support of donor agencies, including the World Bank, Finnish and Canadian development agencies and the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ, the German Agency for International Cooperation). All these development partners, save GIZ, have since pulled out of the land administration sector; we return to this matter below. The national system instituted parallel programmes of "sporadic land registration", under which individuals can apply for title and "systematic land registration", under which provincial teams from the Ministry of Land Management, Urban Planning and Construction adjudicate claims within designated areas and issue titles to land users. These programmes have been in place since 2002. They have led to the granting of more than two million titles, but critics say that they have focused on areas without disputes over land tenure and therefore failed to provide security to those most at risk of dispossession (Beban and Sovachana Pou 2015, pp. 19–27; Dwyer 2013, p. 314; Grimsditch et al. 2012, pp. 46–79).

The 2001 Land Law also allowed the granting of ELCs of up to 10,000 hectares for purposes of national development. It created a slippery zone in which local claims by the plough confront extra-local claims to "state land" open for development. The rollout of ELCs was by no means smooth, and the state failed to uphold essential preconditions for granting them. It granted concessions exceeding the 10,000-hectare limit before 2001, and even after the promulgation of the 2001 Land Law concession holders easily sidestepped the limit on concession size (Grimsditch 2015, p. 22). In addition, the state awarded concessions in protected areas (Global Witness 2013,

p. 21; Grimsditch 2015, pp. 22–23). These complications, coupled with the violent unrest that accompanied dispossession of farmers on land granted as ELCs, caused Prime Minister Hun Sen to issue a new order, “Directive 01BB: Measures Reinforcing and Increasing the Efficiency of the Management of Economic Land Concessions” (ការបញ្ជា០០១: ពង្រឹងការវាស់វែង និង បង្កើន ប្រសិទ្ធភាព នៃ ការគ្រប់គ្រង ដីសម្បទានសេដ្ឋកិច្ច), or “Order 01” (RGC 2012a), on 28 June 2012, in the run-up to national elections. The desire to control tensions within the government itself may have also been a consideration in the announcement of the new directive (Muller 2012).

This order had two main parts. First, it temporarily postponed the granting of new ELCs (RGC 2012a, p. 1) 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 occupied and used state land seized from ELCs, forest land and other land designated for state development. This second part of the agenda emerged one month after the announcement of the order, with a directive to measure and grant private land and to employ an army of 2,000 to 4,000 university student volunteers to help with its execution. The central government decided on areas to be adjudicated. It then sent teams comprised of student volunteers and officials from the Ministry of Land Management to demarcate and measure land borders. They determined legitimate ownership rights and granted title to residential parcels and agricultural parcels “actually occupied and cultivated with annual or perennial crops” (RGC 2012a, p. 10). The teams could grant land use rights in the form of “small-scale economic concessions” (សម្បទានដីសេដ្ឋកិច្ច ដែលមានទំហំតូច), with leases of up to ninety-nine years, for land that had been cleared but not occupied or cultivated (RGC 2012b). It is the second part of Order 01 — concerning the issuance of title for people on state land, ELC land, and forest land — that set the stage for the events at the centre of this article.

The Rollout of Order 01

The titling campaign under Order 01 represented in many ways a continuation of the land registration efforts previously conducted under the policies on sporadic and systematic land registration. Indeed, the minister of land referred to the campaign as “old policy, new actions” (Im Chhun Lim 2012). But in other ways it marked a radical departure from previous policies. First, Order 01 moves away from a focus on low-conflict areas, and instead was aimed specifically at less-secure forest and ELC areas. Hun Sen called for a “leopard skin” approach to future ELCs, in which concessions left intact temples, graveyards, farmlands and community forests (RGC 2012*a*). Second, in contrast to the systematic land registration programme, under which recipients paid a small fee for titles, under Order 01 authorities issued titles at no cost to recipients, although our research found that people often gave some money or other gifts, as we detail below. Third, the speed and scope with which the state initiated and carried out the campaign was a departure from the slow issuance of title in both the colonial and the post-socialist eras. According to an official 2014 release from the Ministry of Land Management, Urban Planning and Construction, the campaign’s achievements totalled 357 communes adjudicated; more than 710,000 declaration forms completed by land claimants; 710,000 parcels surveyed; 710,000 parcel maps displayed to the public; and 550,000 land titles delivered (MLMUPC 2014, p. 1). The declaration forms, confirming land ownership and use, were the first step in land surveying. Further, Order 01 required the public display of parcel maps at each commune for at least one month before the titles themselves were confirmed.

The release also states that the Royal Government of Cambodia has reclassified a total area of more than one million hectares, more than 360,000 hectares of which it took back from 129 companies holding ELCs, along with nearly 230,000 hectares from sixteen forest concession companies. The total also included the reclassification of 510,000 hectares of state land and Forest Administration–controlled

forest land (*ibid.*, p. 1). The government carried these actions out within a period of just one year, with no assistance provided — or even allowed — by the international donor community, which as mentioned above had pulled out of all land administration initiatives. This titling push was impressive in both its speed and scope. It bypassed two of the main problems that national land titling programmes typically confront: cost (Sjaastad and Cousins 2009, pp. 3–4) and long implementation time (Toulmin 2009, p. 17). It achieved this success through the use of volunteer students, who received limited training and were housed at local temples, and of funds raised from officials, politicians and wealthy figures in Hun Sen’s networks.¹¹ For all the criticism of the implementation and potential long-term negative impacts of Order 01 (Focus on the Global South and Heinrich Böll Foundation 2013, pp. 20–44; Milne 2013, pp. 331–36; Rabe 2013, pp. 17–24), this policy did demonstrate the power of a directive that came from the prime minister himself in a context of personalized neo-patrimonial politics (Kheang Un et al. 2014).¹²

This radical action was nonetheless fraught with contradictions and alterations as it rolled out. The rules changed rapidly, as the central government issued new orders. Originally, the instructions required ELC concessionaires to demarcate both personal and communal land plots, and also aimed to survey land claimed by multiple parties in order to resolve active land disputes between concession companies and villagers (RGC 2012*a*). But subsequent amendments instructed students to measure only families’ personal plots up to a maximum of five hectares of cleared, cultivated land, and to avoid surveying lands under dispute (Rabe 2014, p. 132).

Furthermore, while the order officially halted the granting of new ELCs, those concessionaires who had already won approval could proceed with their plans (Adhoc 2013). Small land concessions of more than five hectares could also be granted for “agri-industrial development” and with a land use plan detailing a programme of full cultivation of land covered by the concession within five years, as noted above (RGC 2012*b*). This latter policy has the potential to

bring in state revenue and to decrease the incidence of landholdings maintained for speculative purposes. But it also delimits the type of land use allowed, and explicitly favours commercial agriculture over subsistence agricultural practices, including fallow periods and non-commercial forest holdings. Because of the requirement to occupy and actively to cultivate land in order for it to be measured (RGC 2012c), people whose land was already under cultivation by companies in ELC areas generally could not regain control of their land through the Order 01 titling campaign. People who could prove that they had cultivated land prior to the announcement of the policy on 7 May 2012 could apply for a social land concession (SLC, សង្ឃ័រទាន សង្កមកិច្ច), which authorities may grant for small areas of residential and farm land, depending on the applicant's needs and on available land. However, our research in Kampong Chhnang and Pursat provinces suggests that some of the promised SLC land has not yet materialized.¹³

The focus of Order 01 on giving individuals title to actively cultivated land sets up a tension between individual and communal claims. It also discourages certain types of land use, especially swidden rotation, deemed illegitimate in the current era (Fox et al. 2009). Reports from highland areas of Cambodia suggest that people have lost land as a result of the process set in motion under Order 01, and that marginalized people engaged in subsistence agriculture in such areas were the most affected (Milne 2013, pp. 335–36; Rabe 2014, pp. 22–24). Rabe (2014, p. 18) reports further that the student volunteers measured land only inside the official boundaries of ELCs, even if the concessionaires had occupied land spreading outside the allotments. Members of indigenous groups who were in the process of applying for Communal Land Title (CLT)¹⁴ report facing pressure from student volunteers and local officials to apply for private land titles and to quickly resolve complicated disputes (Rabe 2014, pp. 137–48). This pressure has caused tensions in communities between those who prefer to wait for CLT and those who opt for private title (Milne 2013, pp. 332–36). Beyond the confusion of the multiple instructions and letters issued under the

order and the limitations of a campaign focused on granting individual title, reports suggest that local power dynamics also, unsurprisingly, affected the implementation of the order. One NGO research team reported people being asked to pay for measurement, and reported a company's appropriation of titled land after measurement (Focus on the Global South and Heinrich Böll Foundation 2013, pp. 28–29).

In Sambok Dung and surrounding villages, many people reported giving informal payments to the student measurement teams to facilitate land measurement, payments ranging from a chicken or a meal to a substantial sum of cash. They did not necessarily see these payments as a case of official corruption, but rather as normal and mildly obligatory gifts to acknowledge the work of the student volunteers. One woman who had a large plot of land near a stream recalled,

We gave them things, like a chicken, like something to eat, because they walked all day to measure. I didn't give money, but some did. My sister gave a small amount for each plot. It was the rainy season when they came here; they had to swim to measure our land!¹⁵

While people generally did not see these small, informal payments as corrupt, several people described other forms of payment as more serious corruption. Some people said that they had received bribes from members of the village elite in return for bearing witness to other people's land claims. Others said that they had received money from local officials and members of the provincial elite to claim land as their own during the campaign, presumably because these latter had already claimed more than the maximum land allowance under the order. They were then expected to give the title to this land to those members of the elite and to thumbprint a deed of sale. People described these practices as the unethical behaviour of rich people “eating money” (မိန့်ကံဗာဒ်လျှံလျှံ).

Our research reveals various strategies to grab land. Some people had prior knowledge of the students' campaign and the resources to clear forest land before their arrival. In other cases, powerful local players managed to exceed the maximum limit of five newly

titled hectares for a single household by offering money to other villagers in return for their laying claim to an area of forest land and thumbprinting a deed of sale, as described above. Some members of the local elite cleared large areas of forest land prior to the students' arrival and then had it titled in the names of their relatives or political supporters. Such strategies often left poorer families marginalized while wealthier families gained, because the poor did not have the political connections or family capital necessary to take advantage of the reform in such ways. The reform thus served to widen the resource gap among local residents. In Sambok Dung, an area at the forest frontier, many people report feeling satisfied with the measurement of their residential and rice plots. However, in the initial "land rush" that we detail below, those with resources and political connections claimed a disproportionate share of the land. These claims, often involving the land-grabbing strategies described above, resulted in the skewed appropriation of forest land. Also, companies and wealthy landowners who had previously claimed land, legally or illegally, sometimes received title to that land and were thus able to legitimize their prior land grabs.

The Student Volunteers

The involvement of "student volunteers" made the high-profile campaign of land titling undertaken under the provisions of Order 01 even more popular than it would otherwise have been. For the first phase of the project, the government recruited students primarily from among members of student associations, often connected with the ruling Cambodian People's Party, at major universities in Phnom Penh. Such recruits included the largest group, more than 300 students from the Royal University of Agriculture. In the second phase, it also recruited students from among the rural youth, known as "temple boys" (ក្មេងវត្ត), who live in the Buddhist temples of Phnom Penh. The temple boys, many of whom the government had already organized into student leadership groups, represent at once an asset and a threat to the national government.

The temple boys come from poor families and live at no cost in Buddhist temples, where they assist with domestic chores and the transport of monks in return for shelter and food from the monks' leftovers. Buddhist temples are precarious zones for the government because of the moral authority of the community of Buddhist monks (សង្ឃ) in the eyes of Khmer people, and monks and rulers take part in a delicate dance of legitimizing authority as various political parties try to rein in monks and win their support (Gyallay-Pap 2007, pp. 93–94; Harris 2008, pp. 92–96). Temple boys are thus in a particularly liminal position. They are students who aspire to the comfort and prestige of urban life, they are from poor families and have known the hardships of recent years, and they live in Buddhist temples, where moral authority can permit political dissent.

The government first cultivated student leaders in the temples in advance of the 2008 national elections, when it both extended special favours to monks and students and visited threats on them.¹⁶ In advance of the 2013 elections and in conjunction with Order 01, the government mobilized student leaders to recruit temple boys, and it paid particular attention to recruiting those not attending school.¹⁷ In a series of interviews about their participation in the execution of Order 01, temple boys from three temples in Phnom Penh spoke of variations on a story of civic engagement, adult responsibility and contributing to a change for the better in the rural areas in which they had grown up.

I was happy to be called to help my people and my country. Land titles are important to protect our farms from the companies and to improve our lives.¹⁸

In the village we were important. We went there and we did good work for the people. We wore military uniforms.... I still have the boots! They should last for fifty years. But they didn't give me a gun!¹⁹

I was happy, because we helped bring the land to the people, to the villagers. When they saw us coming, they smiled.... They were very happy. We weren't going to take money from them.²⁰

Following two days of training in GPS technologies, the government sent these temple boys to specially designated sites with members

of the Ministry of Land Management, provincial-level officials, and doctors.²¹ As the programme evolved during implementation and under conditions on the ground, that implementation was subject to interpretation at any given moment. The instructions initially issued by the students to villagers in Sambok Dung stressed the need to clear land so that it could be measured. But these instructions were quite different from the instructions issued publicly, stating that only cultivated land was to be measured. Ethnographic data collected after the completion of land measurement suggest that decisions about which land to measure varied among the specific groups of students, authorities and the claimants involved.²² The following case study explores the creation of the Map and the intersections of landscape transformation, local power and the GPS coordinates gathered by barely trained young men and women.

The Land Rush in Srail Thmae

After the students finished their presentation on the prime minister's land titling initiative to Sambok Dung villagers in July 2012, the villagers were thrilled. Although both villages studied here lay within the country's largest ELC, the 315,000-hectare Pheapimex concession, the concessionaire had not cleared or planted the land in the area. The landscape comprised mainly rice fields, smallholder tree crops and forest land. Most residents saw the Order 01 initiative as a protective measure undertaken by the state against the destructive capacity of big business.²³ The people were pleased, but they were also suddenly worried. The students had instructed them to clear their land so that it could be measured, but many people lacked the labour or financial resources to do this so quickly. Many were concerned about losing their uncleared and uncultivated land.

Srail Thmae commune is in the northwestern corner of Kampong Chhnang province, where the fertile flood plains and the Aural mountain range meet. Since the end of fighting there in the late 1990s, people have come from all over Cambodia to work hauling timber along the railroad tracks and to try their hand at clearing forest plots and making a new life for their families (Work 2014,

pp. 1–30). Land claims to forest plots are common in this frontier location, but not as communal claims. The claimants are wet-rice agriculturalists, and their claims are to rice fields and crop land of their own, and to forest land held for future conversion or for future generations. People laid claim to uncleared forest in this area by marking out the land with poles to the knowledge of neighbours who witnessed the purchase, or through government-issued social land concessions.

The requirement in Order 01 that land be cultivated, which led to this rush to clear forested areas, reflected very different notions of what land is. Cambodian state policy and most large donor agencies see land as an input of production — a resource for national development in the imaginary of the “leopard skin” (ស្បែកក្រចក), in which large-scale plantations and productive smallholder plots will exist side by side. Smallholders and local state actors in this commune see land variously as a source of food and livelihood, as an “insurance policy” that they can sell in a crisis, as the potential for future household revenue from cultivating forest land, and as the main asset passed on to children when they marry, a practice central to Cambodian society. People in this area also use unclaimed forest land for livestock grazing, the collection of timber and non-timber forest products and sites for upland rice nurseries. Some land under private cultivation for part of the year is used communally at other times. In a context in which more than 80 per cent of the population is involved in agriculture, land is often a family’s most valuable asset, and many people lay claim to forest land with an eye to ultimately dividing it among their children. In Sambok Dung and other nearby villages, the ability to make land legible on the Map by clearing the trees as the students asked proved especially difficult for poor households with few financial resources or little manpower.

We were using the land a little, but not all of it, because we didn’t have money to clear it. What if they don’t measure the land that people use for growing? What will the people do without land to give to their children?²⁴

This land was for my children, but you see they're still small.
I can't farm that much land by myself; it was for my daughters....
Maybe I'll rent it.²⁵

It is just my daughter and I.... I am a widow since the war time....
I bought the land to keep for when my daughter found a husband.
How can we clear that land by ourselves? We are so poor; we
have no money.... We'll just have to do it or we will lose it.²⁶

Villagers' primary concern was that they would lose land that remained uncleared. Most residents of Sambok Dung had another fear, too: fear that their families lacked the capacity to clear the land that they claimed. The clearing of land for subsistence agriculture is often a gradual process, undertaken when there is a confluence of need and energy. The energy can be the force of one's own body, of the bodies of many sons, or of money to buy the labour of others. Order 01 revealed that many villagers with claims to unproductive forest land lacked the resources either to clear or cultivate their holdings. Those with large families or money or both could clear much more land than those without such resources, and the former already had larger holdings when Order 01 was announced.

The impetus to clear land rapidly came from Order 01, an external initiative disconnected from cycles of need, family size and land use. Nonetheless, for many people the rapid clearing of land was about trying to ensure access to those cycles in the future. Villagers were suddenly embroiled in a game in which their poverty and limited family resources not only placed them at risk of losing land in the coming measurements but also excluded them from the possibilities engendered by the process of mapping. Unlike local officials, they had no access to holdings larger than the official limit and were left vulnerable by the naivety of the student volunteers.

While poor villagers were concerned about their undeveloped landholdings after the students' announcement in Sambok Dung, wealthy members of the village elite were also concerned. But the elites' problem was not, "how can I clear my land?"; rather, it was, "how much land can I clear?" A privileged few politically

connected members of the local elite knew that one could possibly obtain title for as much land as one could clear through the kind of corrupt practices described above. The result was a local land rush, ignited at the intersection of speculation and the law. Work was present when the village head and the two top-ranking soldiers in the village²⁷ went house-to-house among the large landholders in the village looking for others who wanted in on the action. The next day these three travelled out to the edge of the commune border with the village police and three of the largest landholders, and the seven of them grabbed about five hectares of unclaimed, uncleared forest each by clearing trees and placing boundary markers. Those large landholders who declined to participate did so for reasons of time, because of their limited capacity to clear extra land or for ethical reasons.²⁸

Similar land rushes occurred throughout the area, although they varied considerably with the situation of villagers and the strategies of local authorities. In Tropaing Dtuk, a larger village to the south of Sambok Dung, local authorities controlled the rush to clear land prior to the students' arrival more tightly. According to villagers, the local authorities there held a meeting before the students arrived and offered forest land to some people in the community if they shared it with the authorities. Some villagers experienced this offer as a pre-election gift to encourage support for the ruling party, in a situation not unlike the gift economy described by Hughes (2006, p. 469). Hughes notes that political gift giving practices in Cambodia come with a sense of threat, reinforcing dependence on benefactors and limiting space for resistance. In Tropaing Dtuk, the authorities' "gift" caused disputes, as it put prior claims to land into conflict with the instructions of the authorities.

We had a meeting before the students came. A meeting with the village chief.... Everyone went to cut the forest when they heard about [the titling]; they cut almost the whole area. When we went to cut the wood we went in groups with the head of our neighborhood group.... This was before the harvest time. About one month before the students came to measure the land. [The authorities] said that, if we wanted the land measured, we had

to give some land to the students, the commune chief, and the deputy commune chief and others. So if we cleared five hectares we had to give them two hectares and keep three hectares. Because they said this was forest land, therefore we had to give some to them.²⁹

People in Tropaing Dtuk also described the ways that the land rush involved extra-village political and business elites. They often observed to Beban that the main beneficiaries from the increased area of cleared land in which the rush took place were wealthy outsiders.

អ្នកម៉ែន [the wealthy] cooperated with the village authorities before the students came; they paid for example 200–300 dollars per hectare to get the land from the forest cleared before the students came. So they could get this land. So businessmen got this land, and we don't have the forest.³⁰

A central element of the process of exclusion so vividly described here was the control of information prior to the students' arrival. Local authorities had access both to the changing guidelines for the implementation of Order 01 and to the powerful elites determined to take advantage of the results of the campaign.

The people in the village didn't know that the students were going to measure the forest land; they just knew about the measurement of the village land. So we couldn't go out and get a lot of forest land, but other people that knew, people that came from far away ... they went and got a lot of forest land before the students came.³¹

It's a story of money. They say it's a story about protecting forest land.... The people don't understand.... They [officials] think only about their own money. Maybe no one has the map.³²

These quotations, from two neighbouring villages, illustrate the many dimensions of money and power that connect our ethnographic examples. We can identify three main interweaving themes. The first concerns the composition of households and the acceleration of longstanding patterns of legitimate land acquisition by clearing unclaimed forest land for family production. The second concerns the power of local authorities to control the distribution of information through political networks prior to the 2013 elections. The third

theme concerns people from outside the villages coming in to claim land, using the influence of local authorities and the labour of local people.

The student volunteers were another outside force in the reconfiguration of land under Order 01. They were at the same time an inside force. The situation in Srai Thmae contrasted with that reported in other parts of the country, such as the areas of northeastern Cambodia populated by non-Khmer minorities in which the encounter with students had an ethnic dimension and was often perceived as hierarchical and negative (Rabe 2013, p. 22). Many informants in Srai Thmae described the encounter between rural landholders and the young men and women volunteers, some of whom were rural born and urban educated, as positive on both sides. Several student volunteers discussed bending the rules to measure more land for those villagers whom they considered needy.

Our orders were to measure the land that people grew on. We couldn't measure the land if it was all forest. But we talked to the people.... When I saw the poor widow and she only had a small [plot of] rice land, just 10A [0.1 hectare], and then some small land that she cleared with trees she hadn't cleared yet, I measured her forest land too, because otherwise she would have no land. But we couldn't measure if there was a dispute, or if they asked us to measure too much land that wasn't planted. It was hard, because sometimes I wanted to measure the land ... but I couldn't.³³

People thought we could do anything because we were holding the GPS. The company invited us to have food and drinks with them and the village chief, and they explained about how they had rights to the land. But when we walked through the village with the GPS, the villagers tried to take us over to show us their land.³⁴

These quotations demonstrate the way that the student volunteers operated in a field that connected local officials, private companies and the central government to local residents in shifting networks of power. As Hun Sen's personal volunteers, the students wielded an unusual amount of power in their relationships with local authorities:

they could theoretically report back to the prime minister if they encountered any problems. But they also described following the directions of local authorities.

In the morning we ate rice together — sometimes they gave us eggs in the morning, but when we went to measure their land they often gave us chickens and beer. We were drunk every day! Sometimes they had a dance party too! When we measured their land, they brought us beer and food.... We didn't take money — they watched for that. But if they gave us food that was OK; that was their choice. We followed the claims of villagers; if they grew rice on three hectares we measured three hectares. We looked at forest land too — but we couldn't measure it — but if they had spread some rice or were making a garden, then we would measure it — or if they told us. The village head or commune chief, they would say, "measure this, it's always been their land", and we would.... Hun Sen told us to take the side of the people.³⁵

This account from a student volunteer suggests that people were happy for the volunteers' services. It also makes clear that in this case village- and commune-level officials were the final arbiters of what land the volunteer would measure and for whom. This young man encountered very few conflicts, and the two that he reported were settled simply by means of a decision not to measure the disputed land. Countering claims that Order 01 was exclusionary and illustrating further the flexible interpretations of student objectives and obligations, one large landholder described the measuring process as follows.

Here, we don't have any problems! They came to measure the land for all of us! Someone with forest land, they measure it for them; someone rich, someone poor, they measure just the same.... If we don't have land for them to measure, they don't measure.... When they arrived to measure [the land of] those of us that have proper landholdings, like me, the village and commune authorities, they know that land A and land B here, they have owners, even though the land is not yet cleared. This is where the problems come from.... When we buy the land through the proper channels, we have the only [official] story. The authorities have [this official] story and they say, "measure this, don't measure that"...³⁶

In reality, the measuring process was far more ambiguous than this landholder describes. The authorities frequently did have the “only story” that made it on to the Map, denying the many other stories of less-connected land claimants. But those other stories also made their mark on the Map, if in ways often partial and ambiguous and always contingent on the students’ and other actors’ interpretations. Through these alternate stories, we learned that many smallholders in the commune found that students measured a small amount of cleared land but not people’s entire plots.³⁷ In some cases, even if villagers had cleared a large area of forest before the measurement team arrived, the team did not measure it.³⁸ After the students measured the land, each villager received a document with her or his plot number, her or his photograph, and a disembodied geographic shape that conformed to the measurements of their plot — also recorded on the Map. But many villagers who held these documents had still not received full title to the measured land at the time of this writing.³⁹ Despite initial plans to award full title soon after measurement and after a public display period, some villagers in Srai Thmae commune still waited. People murmured that they doubted that they would ever receive title, and many worried about what this meant for the security of their tenure in the future. While in the eyes of villagers the ownership status of much of the land at the edge of the two villages is currently uncertain, the transformation of the landscape itself is less ambiguous. Large, previously forested, areas are now devoid of trees, and villagers face the situation described succinctly by one man quoted above: “businessmen got this land, and we don’t have the forest”.⁴⁰

Mapping, Property and State Formation in Southeast Asia

The Southeast Asian context has inspired much work on state and nation formation, critical property relations and peasant studies that informs current scholarship on land (Anderson 2006; Hall et al. 2011; Hart et al. 1989; Scott 1976, 1998). This body of work complicates state/civil society dichotomies, recognizing that state-

building and subject-making ultimately depend on states' attempts to define property rights for land access, use and ownership (Scott 1998, pp. 181–305). Recent work on state power and authority in Southeast Asia recognizes that we can no longer see “the state” or global forces as privileged and separate sites of action (Lund 2011, p. 886; Peluso and Lund 2011, p. 670). Rather, and as our case study brings out, diverse groups of local people actively engage in reshaping the landscape and property relations. Scholars must examine processes of land titling and cadastral mapping through attention to their implementation at the local level, because it is always local actors who interpret and contest the policies that govern the titling process (Hall 2013, p. 122). The case study in this article, involving two villages in a single commune, shows how local authorities, volunteer students with the backing of the prime minister, wealthy outsiders and diverse local people, each in their own ways, attempted to be placed “on the Map”, or at least to decide who was placed there and where they were placed.

This article also builds on work on the politics of titling and mapping, recognizing that titling is not just a process of formalizing rights but rather one that irrevocably changes rights (Hall 2013, p. 124). This perspective moves the titling debate beyond a discussion of the effects of title on land productivity, land concentration and poverty reduction (de Soto 2001, pp. 160–80)⁴¹ to focus attention on the local political processes of mapping and titling. Our case study illustrates the ways that this process reconfigures not only property rights, but also the very landscape itself, as people rush to clear the land in order to make it visible to the coming Map.

Land titling, the formalization of property rights and cadastral mapping are supposed to confer legibility. However, they can also lead to confusion and opacity when the standardized rights represented by title do not represent local practices when they are not implemented as laid out in the law or — as in the case of Cambodia — when the letter of the law diverges strongly from local practices (Springer 2013, p. 537). Hall, Hirsch and Li (2011, p. 12) argue that the fuzziness and opacity of land administration in Southeast Asia are

not merely a question of deficient state capacity or land grabs but are also productive. They enable, that is, different groups to argue that right is on their side, or that what their side wants is right. Our discussion of tenure schemes from the colonial era suggests that elite capture of land rights is constitutive of land titling projects, and that those projects allow smallholders some flexibility but are most productive in allowing local officials to use their power to grab resources selectively (Hall et al. 2011, p. 12). Springer usefully draws out both how land ownership underscores the notion of exclusion, wherein non-elites are non-owners of land, and the long history of these exclusions in Cambodia from the Angkorean period through to today (2013, p. 526, citing Russell 1997). The pre-colonial king “owned” all the land and parcelled it out when and to whom he wanted. What is distinctive about contemporary governmentality is the land title and the way that the Map is used.

The notion developed in Hall, Hirsch and Li (2011) about all property claims being fundamentally exclusionary, points to the many ways that it is not only state and market actors that impose exclusion from the outside. Exclusion may also emerge within rural communities. The situation in Srail Thmae commune as we describe it suggests the sort of “mimetic excess” that Taussig invokes (1993, p. 255). The legibility required for recognition by the state — or the spirit, in Taussig’s example — required power. The idea that one must use power in relations with power is already embedded in those seeking recognition. Mimetic representations have, that is, an anticipatory element. They call into being and make concrete an idea of the power imbedded in encounters between elites and poor farmers. The acts of exclusion at the hands of local elites described here mimic exclusions already enacted on the national and international scales, which in turn mimic similar exclusions under colonial and royal systems of land use. In Srail Thmae, farmers rushed to lay claim to forest land before the other villagers, local officials or corporate interests also rushing in could claim it. They hoped to win more or lose less through the exclusions of mapping technologies. What we see in our case study is neither full exclusion

nor full access. Rather, most people with whom we spoke experienced partial, shifting exclusion or inclusion, according to their family capital and personal connections. Importantly, though, state actors, corporate concerns and smallholders had differing abilities to use exclusionary powers. Some could better mimic the state and corporate interests than others. The smallholders who could only attempt to mimic the Map by clearing the forest in order to make it legible were not always successful in gaining access to that land.

Conclusion

The frantic land clearings that we describe in this article reflect particular stories about ownership and access that played out in the micro-level interactions among students, authorities, local people and powerful outsiders. When the student volunteers returned to Sambok Dung in 2012, they measured and titled much of the cleared forest. However, many who rushed to clear their forest plots did not have all their claims measured, and untitled swathes of land, now devoid of sustaining forest, remain. In honour of the Map, vast stretches of land were cleared in a rush that told two stories about the power of the Map: “clear it or lose it” and “if you clear it, you can have it”. Neither story was fully realized but the land was transformed nonetheless.

Villagers bear the economic impact of the project’s folly. The folly comes not only from the power of local authorities at the confluence of bureaucratic laxity and patrimonial cohesion, but also perhaps from the project of land titling itself — fraught as it is in a long history of disenfranchisement. We are not apologists for Prime Minister Hun Sen, but wish to point directly to the precedents on which land titling initiatives in the post-colonial era were built. Our study also points directly to those hardest hit by these initiatives designed to protect land claims. Time and again (Neocleous 2003, pp. 417–22; Oliveria 2013, p. 272; Rabe 2013, pp. 22–24), we learn of increased landlessness and decreased access to resources as a result of technologies delivered under the auspices of “pro-poor” initiatives

to demarcate landholdings. Typically, the blame for these failures is visited on national governments. Our study, which examines a titling project from before the arrival of the Map, contributes to a different story. In this story, the failure of the project to help the poor stems from limited interpretations of appropriate land use and the disruptions to the project caused by low and up-and-coming contestants in the race for resources that defines today's global system. Our study shows the reproduction of colonial-era land tenure strategies after efforts at socialist collectivization, as illustrated by the mimetic qualities of GIS mapping in relation to the aerial mapping of the French colonial era. It further illustrates how each system, both that of the colonial era and that promoted in Cambodia today, has favoured wealthier, large-scale landholders and caused many others to lose their land (Guérin 2012, pp. 455–57; Guillou 2005, pp. 304–5). The events that we describe follow the logic of land as a vehicle for production that mocks the idea of land use according to need. It is not those that need the land who are entitled to its use. Rather, the land goes to those who can render it productive and profitable.

Mimetic mockery also inhabits Cambodia's cadastral maps, which today remain unfinished and subject to dispute. At the intersections of the acceleration of traditional land-clearing patterns, the power of local authorities and the influence of wealthy outsiders, the Map could not contain the concrete. But it has yet to achieve full abstraction. Representations of title-worthy land in the form of cleared forest spilled over the Map's possible boundaries, and much remains unmeasured. Mocking the imperial imaginary of homogeneity, but nonetheless igniting the "code" of rural dispossession that is instrumental to the "organization of cities" (Lefebvre [1974] 1991, pp. 268–69), the Map was messy and contingent. But there are little bits of paper: land titles accessible to some claimants that confirm the existence of the place and begin to delegitimize the claims of those not on the Map.

Our story is not yet finished, and the fields of power that surround the Map continue to shift, as transformation of the land to match the Map proceeds. People are forced to reconceptualize their

connections to land as family patrimony and their connections to available forest as means of subsistence. Present with the people, but woefully underrepresented in our story and most other discussions of land use, transformation and tenure, are a whole host of other living entities: trees, bees, ants, and plants. These are also forced into a reconceptualization of their relationship to the land. When the living forest is cut to mimic in advance the requirements of land title awarded for cultivated land, land is destined only for production that benefits humans. The violence of the Map is therefore directed towards both the villagers who are forced to take on new relationships with land, and towards non-human nature. We suggest, in closing, that the violence of the Map that we describe does not come from the ineffective implementation of sound land use practices. Rather, the violence that we describe mimics the violence from which those land use practices arise and makes concrete the horrors of a system in which all life is subordinated to human consumption.

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NOTES

1. The names of the villages and the commune used in this paper are fictional, to protect the anonymity of informants.
2. ស្រុក (*srok*) is a Khmer term with many meanings. In general, it means

“country”. It is also the name of a state administrative unit — the district — between the commune and the province, and it is colloquially used to refer to the countryside. Our use is first colloquial, and it refers to the countryside, but also to the country. Our informants refer the event described here as when “the students came to measure” (និស្សិតមកវាស់). This expression was often followed by “the village” (ភូមិ) or, in reference to the larger initiative, “the country” (ស្រុក). The Khmer verb to measure is វាស់, which can be joined with nouns into compounds like, for example, វាស់វែង or វាស់ដី (to measure length and to measure land, respectively).

3. ក្រសួង is the Khmer term for a government ministry, and, while the cadastral commission (គណៈកម្មការសុរិយោដី) is part of the Ministry of Land Management, people generally refer to it as the “cadastral ministry”.
4. Fieldnotes (Courtney Work), 17 July 2012, Sambok Dung.
5. The formal title of this order is “Directive 01BB: Measures Reinforcing and Increasing the Efficiency of the Management of Economic Land Concessions”.
6. For an excellent discussion of this see, Grimsditch and Schoenberger (2015).
7. See also Landes (1983).
8. See also Ferguson (2002, p. 564).
9. The Pheapimex corporation, owned by a ruling party senator and his wife, was awarded a 315,028 ha concession in the year 2000. The concession spans Kampong Chhnang and Pursat provinces, and its boundaries indiscriminately encompass villages, towns, and farmland. It was awarded before the 10,000-hectare limit on ELCs was instituted in 2005 and has since been reduced by more than 85,000 hectares as a result of the Order 01 land titling initiative. It remains the largest ELC in the country, but the substantial cuts to this and other concessions are worthy of note.
10. Fieldnotes (Courtney Work), 17 July 2012, Sambok Dung.
11. Detailed information on who contributed to the campaign was not made public (Grimsditch and Schoenberger, 2015, p. 76); however, the Prime Minister claimed that he used a large amount of his personal money for the campaign, and political figures and companies also made donations (Hun Sen 2015; Phorn Bopha 2014). Officials of the Department of Agriculture working in Kampong Chhnang said that their supervisors asked them to contribute personally to the campaign (Fieldnotes [Alice Beban], 20 November 2014, Kampong Chhnang town).
12. For literature on Cambodian patronage politics over land, see Cock (2010); Le Billon and Springer (2007); Marschke (2012); and Springer (2010).

13. In Sambok Dung, several villagers told us that they applied for SLC plots through a “lottery” held by local authorities before the student volunteers came to survey land in the village. However, they had not heard anything about the status of those plots since 2012, and most people felt that the SLC land would not be granted (Fieldnotes [Alice Beban], 12 December 2014, Sambok Dung).
14. Baird (2013) provides a detailed account of the complex history of indigeneity in Cambodia. While the term “ethnic minority” (ជនជាតិភាគតិច) is common in Cambodia, the concept of indigenous people (or more literally “original ethnic minorities”, ជនជាតិដើមភាគតិច) was first used in the late 1990s. It appears in the 2001 Land Law, which gave indigenous people the right to CLT. Amendments to the law introduced in 2009 set out guidelines for registering Indigenous communities as a precondition for securing CLT.
15. Interview (Alice Beban), 29 April 2014, Sambok Dung.
16. Fieldnotes (Courtney Work), August–September 2008, Sambok Dung.
17. Fieldnotes (Courtney Work), January 2014, Sambok Dung.
18. Interview (Courtney Work) with 23-year-old temple boy, 14 January 2014, Vatt Maha Montri, Phnom Penh.
19. Interview (Courtney Work) with 19-year-old temple boy, 11 January 2014, Vatt Steung Mien Chey, Phnom Penh.
20. Interview (Courtney Work) with 21-year-old temple boy, 13 January 2014, Vatt Toul Tom Pong, Phnom Penh.
21. Interview (Alice Beban) with 22-year-old university student and Order 01 volunteer, 12 December 2014, Phnom Penh.
22. Fieldnotes (Alice Beban), March 2014–March 2015, Kampong Chhnang.
23. In the context of the Pheapimex concession, the separation between state and business may seem indistinguishable, as the owner of the concession is a prominent ruling party senator. Nonetheless, the companies that are actually on the ground are not owned by the senator, and the tension between state and business is salient, especially from the perspective of villagers and student volunteers.
24. Interview (Alice Beban) with 44-year-old woman, 4 December 2013, Tropaing Dtuk village, Kampong Chhnang.
25. Interview (Courtney Work) with 46-year-old male, 26 July 2012, Sambok Dung.
26. Interview (Courtney Work) with 54-year-old woman, 16 July 2014, Sambok Dung.
27. Soldiers were among the earliest permanent residents here after the war

- and were instrumental in the illegal wood trade along the railroad tracks (Work 2014, pp. 1–94).
28. Fieldnotes (Courtney Work), 12–28 July 2012, Sambok Dung.
 29. Interview (Alice Beban) with 52-year-old man, 22 September 2014, Tropaing Dtuk.
 30. Interview (Alice Beban) with 34-year-old man, 2 October 2014, Tropaing Dtuk.
 31. Interview (Alice Beban) with 32-year-old woman, 3 October 2014, Tropaing Dtuk.
 32. Interview (Courtney Work) with 50-year-old man, 20 August 2014, Sambok Dung.
 33. Interview (Alice Beban) with 24-year-old male and former student volunteer, 3 November 2014, Phnom Penh. An “A” (អ៊ា) is a Cambodian unit of land measurement, commonly used for small areas of land in Kampong Chhang. One A = 0.01 ha.
 34. Interview (Alice Beban) with 27-year-old male and former student volunteer, 1 February 2015, Phnom Penh.
 35. Interview (Courtney Work) with 26-year-old male and former student volunteer, 11 January 2014, Vatt Steung Mien Chey, Phnom Penh.
 36. Interview (Courtney Work) with 56-year-old man, 18 January 2014, Sambok Dung.
 37. Fieldnotes (Alice Beban), March–July 2014; in more than thirty household interviews conducted in Sambok Dung and Tropaing Dtuk, villagers told Beban that only some of their land had been measured, with considerable variation among households.
 38. Interview (Alice Beban) with 40-year-old woman, 20 July 2014, Tropaing Dtuk; interview (Alice Beban) with 32-year-old male, 12 June 2014, Sambok Dung.
 39. Fieldnotes (Alice Beban), 15 November 2015; some households in Sambok Dung received land title to land plots in late 2014, but many households had not received land title by November 2015.
 40. Interview (Alice Beban) with 34-year-old man, 2 October 2014, Tropaing Dtuk.
 41. For one of the many critiques of de Soto’s approach, see Hirsch (2011).

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