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Territoriality and State Power in Cambodia: The Case of Demarcation in Tonle Sap

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A thesis submitted in fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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Abstract

This thesis topic arises out of the tension between, on the one hand, attempts to de-centre the power of state and, on the other, internal state territorialisation where state increases its control over communities by controlling the space in which they operate. It aims to describe how state through territorial resource governance exercises power over the society. Power is conceptualised beyond the physical manifestation of force to include coercion and dominance. This thesis uses resource governance as a lens through which power is looked at. Thus a state project to demarcate conservation and agricultural zones in Tonle Sap areas was selected.

This thesis finds that the Cambodian state depends on the international discourse of environmental protection, and the expansion of a modernist state in resource governance, in order to legitimise its interventions in resource governance. Once the need for intervention is justified, the neo-patrimonial state exercises power over the society into two ways. First, through not bureaucratic expertise but a system of personal power and patronic network, the state formulates a hasty national policy of environmental governance. Second, at implementation level, the agents representing the central state subdue the logic of rational resource governance under their own street level logic in pursuit of their rent-seeking interests.

This thesis concludes that the nature of state power over society as expressed through territorialised resource governance is not based on an absence of laws and regulations, but on personal power exercised in an outwardly rationalistic framework of conservation, resource regulations and state modernisation.
Acknowledgements

I would like to thank Professor Philip Hirsch for his important role in my PhD project. I thank him for inspiring and encouraging me to undertake this PhD project. I would also like to thank him for taking me in as one of his students on top of his many responsibilities as a professor and the director of the Australian Mekong Resource Centre.

I would also like to thank Dr. Robert Fisher for his contributions, guidance and encouragement. Although, he is only my associate supervisor, a role that does not entail major formal responsibility at the University of Sydney, Dr. Fisher has been playing an important role in the production of this thesis. He listened to my thesis ideas and challenged me on a theoretical level to always find ways to improve this thesis. He also helped with reading the manuscript and giving comments for improvement.

I would like to express my deepest gratitude for the Australian government for granting me the scholarship to undertake this study. The generous funding not only makes it possible for me to afford higher education in Australia, but also provides me with the privilege of not having to worry about earning a living, but focusing full time on my study.

I would also like to thank the Cambodia Development Resource Institute, commonly known as CDRI. As a research institution, CDRI focuses its attention not only on producing research outputs but ensuring an inclusive process of research training. It places attention and allocates a large amount of its limited resources to bringing development experts and leading scholars to serve as research mentors, an approach that I myself had benefited from tremendously during my employment as a research there. This reminds me of the need to thank some of my research mentors. I would like to thank Dr. David Craig and Dr. Joakim Ojendal from whom I learned a great deal of social science theories and research methodology.

I would like to thank many of my close friends and family members, whose names are not listed here, but whose care, encouragement and even assistance have been essential in allowing me to complete this thesis project.

Finally, I would also like to thank the participants of this thesis project, and dedicate this thesis to those who were affected by the demarcation in the study commune. The empirical data of this thesis is collected from the demarcation project that affected an estimated 550 hectares of floating rice. However, it is not just a loss of land and livelihood, but the loss of a dignified life. Let this thesis speak for those whose loss and sufferings are
silenced, and let it be known that they are not criminals, but victims of the territorialisation process that saw the replacement of their lived space of floating rice by the representational space as protected flooded forest.
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<tr>
<td>ADB</td>
<td>Asian Development Bank</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BLDP</td>
<td>Buddhist Liberal Democratic Party</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>CARERE</td>
<td>Cambodia Resettlement and Reintegration</td>
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<tr>
<td>CDRI</td>
<td>Cambodia Development Resource Institute</td>
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<tr>
<td>CNNM</td>
<td>Cambodia National Mekong Committee</td>
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<td>CPP</td>
<td>Cambodia People Party</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>D&amp;D</td>
<td>Decentralisation and Deconcentration</td>
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<tr>
<td>FA</td>
<td>Forestry Administration</td>
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<tr>
<td>FiA</td>
<td>Fishery Authority</td>
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<td>FUCINPEC</td>
<td>National United Front for and Independent, Neutral, Peaceful and Cooperative Cambodia</td>
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<tr>
<td>GPS</td>
<td>Global Positioning System</td>
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<tr>
<td>KR</td>
<td>Khmer Rouge</td>
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<tr>
<td>LDP</td>
<td>Local Development Fund</td>
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<tr>
<td>MAFF</td>
<td>Ministry of Agriculture, Fishery and Forestry</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>MIME</td>
<td>Ministry of Industry, Mines and Energies</td>
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<td>MoE</td>
<td>Ministry of Environment</td>
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<tr>
<td>MoI</td>
<td>Ministry of Interior</td>
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<tr>
<td>MOWRAM</td>
<td>Ministry of Water Resources and Meteorology</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>MRD</td>
<td>Ministry of Rural Development</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>NGO</td>
<td>Non Governmental Organization</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>NRD</td>
<td>Norodom Ranariddh (party)</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>PDoE</td>
<td>Provincial Department of Environment</td>
<td></td>
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<td>PDOWRAM</td>
<td>Provincial Department of Water Resources and Meteorology</td>
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<tr>
<td>PIF</td>
<td>Provincial Investment Fund</td>
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<tr>
<td>PRK</td>
<td>People Republic of Kampuchea</td>
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<td>PWG</td>
<td>Party Working Group</td>
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<td>SRP</td>
<td>Sam Rainsy Party</td>
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<td>TSBA</td>
<td>Tonle Sap Basin Authority</td>
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<td>Tonle Sap Environmental Management Project</td>
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<tr>
<td>TSMO</td>
<td>Tonle Sap Management Organization</td>
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<td>UNESCO</td>
<td>United Nation Environment, Social and Cultural Organization</td>
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<tr>
<td>UNDP</td>
<td>United Nation Development Programme</td>
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<tr>
<td>VDC</td>
<td>Village Development Committee</td>
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<td>WB</td>
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Chapter I: Introduction

This thesis topic arises out of the observation of the tensions between, on the one hand, attempts to bring good governance practices to Cambodia, and on the other hand the nature of the Cambodian state. The past 20 years have seen many internationally driven governance reforms aimed at strengthening democracy in Cambodia. These reforms include: the shift from a one-party state to a multi-party democracy in 1993, the empowerment of the local state through Siela program launched in 1996, and the full swing nation-wide decentralisation and deconcentration (D&D) reforms program launched in 2001. Together, these reforms ambitiously aim to produce a more accountable government and a greater role for citizens in the conduct of the state.

But Cambodian state has a deeply-engrained un-democratic nature. For the most part of Cambodian history, particularly contemporary history, the state has been a source of fear and insecurity. Cambodian society, in different periods of time, has been torn apart by invasions from neighboring countries, successive civil wars and violent repressions. This signifies the complexities and difficulties of relations between the state and society, and the failure of the state to fulfill its duties. Bit (1991) argues that the Cambodian state has a history of wide scale militaristic conflicts as well as imposing physical violence on its citizens. Observations of contemporary Cambodian history point towards such problems of the state. The most extreme form of state intrusion occurred when the Khmer Rouge (KR) regime was in power. It was responsible for forced labor, torture and executions that claimed the lives of over 1.7 million people during its reign from 1975 to 1979 (Chandler, 1983, 1993; Kiernan, 2008; Peou, 2001; Tyner, 2008). Ojendal and Kim (2011: 2) argue that when the KR regime was toppled in 1979, Cambodia was under the management of another form of state that was generally regarded as ‘authoritarian, power-oriented, centralised and based on fear and coercion’. Although this regime may have seemed comparatively benign in comparison to its predecessor, the state ruled by coercion, fear and insecurity (Gottesman, 2004; Mabbett & Chandler, 1995). For many Cambodians, the local state has been an oppressive force and cause of insecurity and other problems (Ojendal & Kim, 2011).
Two decades on, evidence of improved state-society relations is limited. The effect of governance reform, particularly the (D&D) has been observed to be limited to producing a perception of democracy and the feeling of accountability, rather than significant and substantial changes (Ojendal & Kim, 2011). Evidence of persistent and prevailing state domination over society, continues to come up through publications in the NGO and academic fields (Global Witness, 2007, 2009; Hughes, 2003; Peou, 2000; Rusten et al., 2004; Un, 2005, 2006, 2009; Un & So, 2009). This leads to a general understanding that the state is still far from being responsive and accountable to society (Un, 2005). The pursuit of political and economic reforms over the last two decades has resulted in a hybrid political system where elements of a liberal democracy coexist with that of the traditional client patronage system (Roberts, 2008). The governance reform that aims at promoting democratic development has not fully transformed Cambodia into a fully democratic state, but rather a procedural democracy where elements of democratic process such as elections mainly give the appearance of a democracy but have no significant democratising effects (Hughes, 2009; Un, 2005, 2006, 2011). Un (2006) argues that Cambodian political elites employ patronage and corruption to advance their interests and further strengthen their position by providing benefits to members and patronage networks in ways that weaken vertical and horizontal accountability. This leads Global Witness (2009) to label the state as a kleptocracy. What is interesting to note is that the Cambodian democracy has not wholly matured over the past two decades, and old elements of the state do not come to be replaced by democratic practices, but rather elite capture of democratic institutions has increasingly occurred (Slocomb, 2011). In this sense the hybrid political system in Cambodia seems to have mutated. In his article ‘Cambodia moving away from democracy?’ Un (2011) argues that the Cambodian political system is becoming a hegemonic party system where power largely rests in the hands of the ruling party and the Prime Minister (PM). How this development affects the nature of state power over society is the subject interest for this thesis.

This thesis aims to show the extent to which the state retains its power over the society. To this end, this thesis uses an example of resource governance to provide a lens through which the exercise of power is looked at. The thesis combines the disciplines of political science and political geography to give insights into these complex relations. While political science concerns the nature of the state, political geography is concerned with the study of how politics informs geography, and at the same time how geography
informs politics (Agnew, 2002). Political geography looks at how state power gets translated over space, particularly how this power is discursively and practically produced and spatially operationalised in both territorial and non-territorial forms (Cox & Low, 2003). One area of focuses in this discipline has been the study of the role of the state in everyday life (Marston, 2003). Political geography also looks at how the concept of territory confines, or defines the power of the state. Bakker and Bridge (2008) argue that the production of nature involves the exercise of power which can be reflected in the geographical networks of knowledge and control. Thus, resource governance offers an excellent example for the study of state society power-relations. States claim a responsibility to manage resources in order to extend their active control over both human and non-human nature within their territorial control (Huxley, 2008). The control of space within the territorial boundary of the state is referred to as internal state territorialisation, where the state actively controls the space in which society or communities operate (Vandergeest & Peluso, 1995). The state has sovereign authority over a bounded territorial space.

The two disciplines provide important conceptual understandings of the nature of state power over society, as they provoke an examination of the territorial strategies of states. In particular they point towards the way in which a state decentralises while simultaneously extending bureaucratic control over an extended territory. In time of war, the state may mobilise resources to defend its national sovereignty and protect its territorial boundaries. In time of peace the state employs internal territorial strategies to intensify its control over space within its territorial boundary (Lanegran, 2007). The state uses modern science as the basis for its claim over the governance of both human and non-human nature. For example, Menzies (2007), in his book, *Our forest, Our eco-system, Their timber*, looks at local community struggles to protect village-managed natural resources from the invading presence of state agents (Menzies, 2007). Another such scholar is Scott (1998), who in his book, *Seeing like a State*, describes how the central state imposes its technical vision over nature with often disastrous impacts for local ecology. Nguiffō (1998) describes two broad manners in which the state affects the everyday livelihoods of its citizens. On a broad scale, at the level of state planning and management, the state actively claims forested areas which used to be under the management of local people. This is done under the rubric of natural resource management which the state promotes as necessary to save forest from local degradation and destruction. The state forces people out
of forested areas on which they had lived and often depended for livelihood. However, this strategy of territorialisation is not in the service of nature but resembles what Harvey (2003:147) terms ‘accumulation by dispossession’. Here, the state creates laws that legalise the sale of timber to create revenue. But regardless of the reasoning and agendas behind these acts, the result is the intrusion of the state into community level management of natural resources.

Research Problem
This thesis looks at the issues of state-society relations in Cambodia. It asks how the Cambodian state exercises power over society. Unlike other studies on the Cambodian state, this thesis takes an ethnographic approach to look at the exercise of state power which, as Lukes (1974) argues, can be present without being exercised. Unlike the natural sciences with their dependence on positivism which treats reality as objectively existing outside of meaning and human experience, this thesis treats reality as constitutive of human experience and existing within the area of meaning. As Tedlock (2000:471) argues, social experience cannot be singular but is ‘dependent on a multiplicity of locations and positions that are socially constructed’. The essence of ethnography is to put words or action in their context. Thus, ethnographic data is collected in the context of its surroundings, which can be achieved only when the researchers are immersed in close and relatively prolonged interaction with people in their everyday lives (Manen, 1988). Such an approach enables this thesis to more closely look at the concept of power and the state as it is embedded in a particular context.

Sack (1983:19) argues, ‘territory is socially and geographically rooted’. It is an ‘attempt by an individual or group to affect, influence or control people, phenomena, and relationships by delimiting and asserting control over a geographic area’. Understanding state territorialisation is understanding the nature of power relations between the state and society. Territorialisation involves inclusion and exclusion of certain groups. Thus, this thesis seeks to understand the connection, or interaction, between territoriality and power in Cambodia. To this end, the thesis is divided into three sub-questions.

1. How does the state engage territorialisation?

2. How does power work in a neo-patrimonial state?
3. What mechanism does society have to demand accountability from the state?

Through the case study of a state-managed project to demarcate the Tonle Sap protected area, this thesis aims to advance understandings of the Cambodian state in three ways. First, by way of description, this thesis aims to show how the state retains its power over society. The thesis will give a detailed account of how the state, under the influence of neoliberal theory, managed to design and implement an environmental protection project which has had profound impacts on the lives of hundreds of thousands of floating rice farmers in Cambodia. Secondly, it aims to explore the internal complexity of the neo-patrimonial state in order to account for the differences between the intentions of state policy, and the effect of state action on the ground. In this line of thinking, this thesis proceeds to give a full account of how power works within a neo-patrimonial state. The third aim focuses on the mechanisms that society can or cannot employ to demand accountability from the state. This is based on Gramsci’s (1971) idea that power is the result of a constant war of positions between the dominant and the oppressed. But the possibility of resistance depends on many factors, and attention will be given to both formal and informal attempts by the society to counter the power of the state.

**Thesis Layout**

The thesis is organised as follows: Chapter I forms the introduction. Chapter II is a review of related literature. It covers political geography concepts such as space, place and territory, which are essential for an understanding of power. Some of the key concepts in political science are discussed in this chapter. The three concepts of power are discussed in detail to provide a framework for understanding its mechanisms. The concept of the state is also examined, and the different types of state and political regimes are brought into the discussion in order to improve understandings of the operation of state power. Finally, the chapter discusses the structure of power in a neo-patrimonial state. This discussion serves to provide an analytical framework for the study of state power in Cambodia; a state that is generally characterised as a hybrid, or neo-patrimonial state. To provide a complete discussion of the concept of power, the chapter finishes off with a discussion of the literature written around the theme of resistance. In this section of the chapter, attention is given to the end point of power flows by examining the potentials and limitations of social movements.
Chapter III provides the context of the study. It first gives a brief review of the historical and contemporary development of the state in Cambodia. It then describes the various changes that have been crucial to the structure and nature of state power in Cambodia. Some of the specific topics are: the adoption of a free market economy in the 1980s, the end of the civil war, and the introduction of a liberal democracy in the early 1990s along with subsequent governance reforms. This chapter also discusses the limitations of those reforms, and the emergence of a hybrid, neo-patrimonial political regime. The rest of this chapter aims to provide background information on the governance of the Tonle Sap Lake in central Cambodia. It covers the geography of the area, the existence of human and non-human nature, and the different regimes of resource governance that have been applied to the lake. It also provides a discussion of contemporary development in resource governance and extraction practices that gives rise to state intervention.

Chapter IV is dedicated to methodological discussions and explanations of how the research problems have been addressed. Detailed explanations are given as to how empirical data essential for understanding state power, was collected. Also discussed are the challenges and difficulties in collecting and verifying data that concern such controversial issues such as corruption, interpersonal tension and informal politics.

Chapter V presents the findings derived from the case study. By way of description, this chapter attempts to provide an answer to the first research question of how the state employs its territorial strategies. It offers a detailed account of what factors led the state to demarcation in the first instance, and the project’s impacts in terms of encroachment on village farmland. Also covered here are accounts of how the central state justified the project, and how state agents took charge of the affairs in ways that override and delegitimise local claims to resources.

Chapter VI provides an answer to the second research question of how power works in a neo-patrimonial state. Based on an ethnographic account of the encounter between the state and citizens in the process of territorial demarcation, this chapter describes how the state is represented by its field agents, and how central state policy intent is subverted by the street level logics and agendas of field agents. It also describes how the implementing agents advance their interest, and how they dominate local levels state, and non-state, agents.
Chapter VII is structured around the third research question which asks what mechanisms are available to members of society to demand accountability from the state. Based on local attempts to reverse the effects of the state project, this chapter describes the problems and difficulties of going through a formal appeal processes, and how the likelihood of success was at the whim of central agents. This chapter also describes the ways in which local citizens explore different avenues for resolving their grievances, and the restrictions they come across within a neo-patrimonial state system.

Chapter VIII discusses the case study material in reference to the conceptual framework. It brings all of the empirical data together to form a comprehensive account of the everyday exercise of state power over society. It aims to show how territorial strategies are adopted, adapted and applied in a neo-patrimonial state, and when that happens, what mechanisms society can or cannot employ to demand accountability from the state. This chapter also discusses the empirical data in light of the existing body of literature on decentralisation and neo-patrimonialism within Cambodia. Finally, the thesis concludes, in chapter IX, that territoriality, as a strategy or attempt to influence and control others, becomes a dangerous form of domination when employed by a neo-patrimonial state. Due to the arrangement of duties and structure of power in a neo-patrimonial state such as that of Cambodia, territorial strategy does not follow the process as postulated by Sack (1986). According to Sack, such a strategy involves changing the logic of resource governance, communication of the intention to control, demarcation, and enforcement. Instead, within Cambodia, territorial strategy flows through hierarchical patronage networks encountering transformations and resistance along the way. Without reviewing debates surrounding state territorialisation in detail, it can be said that territorial strategy is prone to inaccuracy and inefficiency, as well as facilitating the imposition of elite interests over society. In the absence of a system of accountability, members of society are denied a position as recipients of state services. Therefore, the combined effects of territorial strategy and neo-patrimonialism place contemporary members of society in a position of severe vulnerability.

It is hoped that this thesis can serve to remind us that neo-patrimonial states such as Cambodia are not willing to relinquish their strong grip on social relations, as scholars of neo-liberalism would often have it (Harvey, 2005). Instead, using the power of environmental discourses, in combination with their neo-patrimonial power, states continue to play an active role in resource governance in ways that gravely undermine the
needs and wants of communities. The implication is that scholars and practitioners need to pay more attention to the presence, and the role of the state in the management of natural resources. The state continues to employ powerful police technologies to facilitate violent repression and control of populations.
Chapter II: Theoretical Discussion on Territoriality and State Power

This chapter aims to provide a theoretical understanding of the nature of state power. It combines concepts from political geography such as space, place and territory, with political science theories of state and power. The chapter is divided into two main parts. First, it looks at key concepts in political geography. Secondly, it discusses the political science concepts of state and power and their application to the neo-patrimonial state. These concepts from the two disciplines are important for the framing of this thesis seen in Chapter III.

Key Concepts in Political Geography

Political geography is the study of how politics informs geography, and at the same time how geography informs politics (Agnew, 2002). One area of focus in this discipline has been the study of the role of the state in everyday life (Marston, 2003). Central concepts within this discipline are space, place and territory. An understanding of these concepts is essential for an understanding of how politics works, and how states expand their power over society.

Space

The concept of space is very important for the discussion of power. Penrose (2002) argues that space relates to power in two ways. Space has material power to sustain life, and it has the power to provoke certain emotions. Penrose (2002) argues that the material power of space comes from the fact that within space there are material resources such as land and water on which lives depend. The emotional power of space comes from human experiences in space. This experience shapes the human understanding of space beyond the seeming image of emptiness of space, and it creates sense of attachment and provokes a certain kind of feeling and reaction when the sense of space is altered or evaded.

For its two dimensions of power, the concept of space is important for the discussion of how states exercise power. The understanding that space holds special emotional power for humans allows for an understanding of how the control of space is the exercise of power. In this line of thought, Allen (1999) argues that the control of space is the exercise of power.
To understand how space is controlled in service of power, it is important to understand how space is conceptualised. Lefebvre (1991) divides the concept of space into lived space and representational space. Lived space is space of meanings and attachment which connects different people who have relations and experience with a particular space. The quality of these experiences may by relational, situational and directional. This conceptualization of space corresponds to the argument that space holds special emotional power over the human lives. Human experience of space becomes meaningful and memorable when a familiar territory becomes linked to abstract thinking, knowledge and emotion. Penrose (2002) describes lived space as space whose meaning and significance are given by the human experience in those spaces. These meanings and feelings are not just based on imagination but on past experience of being in the space. In other words the meaning of space is socially produced. Penrose’s (2002) conceptualization of space supports Shields (1991) who argues that the meaning of a geographical space is constructed by those who experience it, and those meanings become guides for action, or constraints upon action. That is, space is a place of meaning influenced by human history which sets in motion certain feelings about it. Representational space, on the other hand, conceptualises space as abstract and empty of meanings. It consists of sameness and is devoid of human experiences (Staeheli 2003). Lefebvre (1991) argues that this way of conceptualising space allows for a geographical imagination where scientists, planners and conservationists subdivide space in particular ways to suit their purposes. The two conceptual understandings of space allow for an understanding of power relations and struggles arise in space. It suggests that the re-representation of a certain space is inherently an exercise of power over those for whom the space contains past engagement and experience that serve as a point of attachment. The view of space as abstract often allows for the representation and reclassification of space in ways that tend to displace the lived space, affecting the human connection to the space concerned and it creates a certain kind of emotional response. In resource governance, the tensions over how space is treated often arise between the state officials who tend to see space as abstract and those local commoners who have experience and emotional attachment to the space on top of their dependence on it for daily livelihood. This leads Sack (1986) to argue that the abstract space, as seen by the state, is often different from lived space, with great consequences for society.
The two concepts of space are important for his thesis which attempt to understand the exercise of power through the control of space of Tonle Sap. Sack’s (1986) argument that space in its abstraction can be made and remade to create new territories in ways that displace the significance of lived space allows for the understanding of the state’s attempt to re-divide and re-classify Tonle Sap areas as a potential process of power over the local communities in the Tonle Sap catchment. This perspective is supported by Huxley (2008) who argues that through spatial planning the state can exercise effective control over social relations. Similarly, Lefebvre (1991:79) sees abstract space as ‘a site where socio-technological practices of control are employed in the service of power’. Agents in power, mostly the state, engage what Lefebvre (1991:98) terms ‘spatial homogenization’ to reproduce space, by emptying the lived space of human presence and experience and transforming it into the abstract space of sameness. The abstractness of space can help the state achieve its purpose of imposing an abstract homogeneity over territory. Huxley (2008:164) terms this process ‘the silencing’ of lived space. This often results in social disruption and ecological loss (Scott, 1998), and it can also cause a lot of damage to the historical conditions that produce a certain space. To enhance the understanding of the process of power and control in the tension between the two conceptions of space, there is a need for a discussion on the elements of space which include the concept of place and territory, the discussion of which follows.

**Place**

In space exists various places (Penrose, 2002). A place has the characteristics of both as a geographical point of reference and emotional attachment. As Entrikin (1991) argues, it has both the ontological status of objective existence as well as a subjective relational meaning and significance. Entrikin’s perspective of place is based on Agnew (1987) who sees place as having three important aspects: location, locale and sense of place. For Agnew, the locational aspect of a place refers to its geographical location as can be represented by the grid line or Global Positioning System (GPS). That is, it is a point of existence on the earth’s surface. The locale of a place is the material setting of the place which makes it a site of social interaction, such as market place. Sense of place refers to the set of feelings, emotions and attachments that a place holds to people who inhabit it. This third aspect of place is created out of human experience in a place, connecting vivid
memories and emotions to it, and it relates place to the understanding of the concept of lived space. Jones et al. (2004) write

Places are socially constructed by individuals and groups who draw on their experiences, beliefs and prejudices to imbue places with particular characteristics, meanings and symbolism. (p.115)

Places do not often stay the same, and there is nothing surprising about it. Cresswell (2004) and Jones et al. (2004) argue that a place is a particular point in space that is always in a process of being defined. It is in this process that sense of place is separated from human experience. But what is interesting is the question of who cause the changes, and this is a subject of a power analysis. As a place gets redefined, it can be voided of human experience and emotional attachment often in ways that suit the interests and purposes of those in control. This leads Tyner (2008) to argue that the dehumanization of place is often pursued by those in power to achieve a certain political or economic purpose.

The understanding of the three different aspects of place and the power embedded in the process of place making and remaking is of significant relevance for this thesis particularly as it guides the analysis of the demarcation of Tonle Sap areas. It serves to suggest that the reclassification of Tonle Sap areas, which could potentially cause some places, i.e. floating rice, grazing areas or a particular local tree or pond, in Tonle Sap areas, to be reclassified, is not simply an act of rational resource governance but a process in which power is exercised by one group of actors over others. Thus, this thesis will examine place making through the case study of the Tonle Sap demarcation project. This will be done as a means of identifying the power dynamics between state and society in rural Cambodia. However, a comprehensive discussion of power in the process of re-representation of space and reclassification of place requires an understanding of another political geography concept of territory.

**Territory**

Territory is a specific place in space with a clearly marked boundary, and it is often occupied by individuals, social groups or institutions for a particular purpose (Jones et al. 2004). Broadly, territory concerns two distinct scales. The first scale, which is the predominant scale of analysis of political geography, is of the international. Here the primary problem to be addressed concerns how states claim territorial sovereignty. At this scale, Gottman (1973:75) talks about territory as ‘defensible space’, where one nation-state can set itself apart from another with the support of boundary demarcation. Secondly,
territory can be understood at a narrower scale where instead of looking at how nation-states make efforts to expand or defend their national territorial demarcation, the focus is on how states attempt to increase control over space within their territories. This scale of territoriality bears important relevance to the concept of space and place, particularly the process of their representation and classification. It diverts the territorial attention away from how countries go to war with one another to look within the boundary of a nation-state to understand how the state creates and recreates territory to legitimise its attempt to impose control over different space within the state boundary.

This leads to Sack’s (1986) concept of human territoriality. Sack (1986:19) argues that a ‘territory is socially and geographically rooted’. It is an attempt by an individual or group to affect, influence or control people, phenomena, and relationships by delimiting and asserting control over a geographic area’ (Sack, 1986: 19). Territorial claims are backed by maps which depend on geographical points of references and the art of geographical representation to mark the divisions between different places. Vandergeest and Peluso (1995) argue that states are actively engaged in the making and remaking of territories within their national boundaries, and in the process of doing so, states control society by controlling the space in which it operates. This understanding of territory allows for an understanding of the connection between territory and the remaking of space and place, and the potential of power and control. For this thesis, this way of understanding territory is important for the analysis of power in the process of territorial demarcation.

**Process of Territorialisation**

Sack (1986) argues that territorialisation is a process that involves a shifting of logic in the field of resource governance, mapping, communication, demarcation and law enforcement. The process of territorial demarcation often involves the state actively employing techniques and policies of classification, registration and mapping, and in the process, the state rearranges or re-orders the social-spatial ordering and representational space (Sikor & Lund, 2009).

Territorialisation is a process that involves both changing the theory and the logics underpinning resource governance. In forest protection in Thailand, for example, Vandergeest and Peluso (1995) discuss three types of territorialisation. The first is positive territorialisation which involves redefining the status of land area as protected forest. The second is negative territorialisation which involves defining land as protected forest in the
absence of an active cultivation regime. In the first type of territorialisation, land classification is done on the basic of the broad categorization of the zones, i.e. state forest land, protected areas and so on. In this line of thought, villagers’ cultivation land located within the area designated as protected state land is indiscriminately viewed as the property of the state. In the second type of classification, a certain area of land is designated as protected forest for forestry production simply on the basis of an absence of an active cultivation regime. Both types of land reclassification practices allow for what Lefebvre (1991:79) calls the ‘representations of space’ where space is treated as abstract and empty of meaning. This facilitates a certain geographical imagination which allows scientists, planners and conservationist to subdivide space in particular ways to suit their own purposes. Representations of space are central to the knowledge and claims of truth (Shields, 1991). In a similar line of thought, Vandergeest and Peluso (1995) argue that territories are often created and recreated to achieve certain purposes, be it the establishment of protected areas, or special economic zones. In doing so, social experience gets displaced by abstract space which meets the agendas of those in power (Lanegran, 2007; Radcliffe, 1999). This is done with the assistance of a map, the power of which shall be discussed in the following section.

Territorialisation also involves demarcation of boundary lines (Sack, 1986). Once new maps are produced to represent space, there is a need to demarcate the new boundary lines on the ground. This tends to occur either by way of locally recognised reference points (such as a tree or a pond) or through points provided by the Global Positioning System (GPS) (Peluso, 2005).

Territorialisation, as it creates and recreates new territory, results in new forms of authority and new sets of power relations (Sack, 1986). Delaney (2005) argues that territorialisation allows the state to engage processes of inclusion and exclusion in order to achieve various ends. Consequently, territorialisation is a process that inevitably results in enclosure of certain local spaces, and the exclusion of certain social groups (Peluso & Lun, 2011; Vandergeestan & Peluso, 1995; Gottman, 1973). How an area becomes enclosed, and who becomes excluded are questions of political geography. Lund (2011) suggests that the exercise of authority can be observed in the process of territorial demarcation. This authority may be partial but it is of crucial significance to political geographers trying to understand power relations (Sassen, 2005).
In *Powers of Exclusion*, Hall et al. (2011) describe four forms of exclusion. They argue that exclusion can occur as a result of regulation, legitimation, the market, and through force. Their discussion of these forms of power is particularly useful for this thesis which attempts to investigate how the state, through territorial resource governance, exercises power over society especially in the context of resource governance, land management and market integration. It suggests that physical manifestations of power are only part of the different forms of power that processes of territorialisation and exclusion depend upon. The idea that power is derived from regulation, legitimation and force, directs attention to other forms of power that are not based on force. I will use the understanding of these forms of power, in combination with Sack’s (1986) concept of territoruality as the framework for my investigation of state territorialisation of the Tonle Sap lake.

**Maps and Power of the State**

From a general level of understanding, maps, a product of cartography, are graphic representations of a certain territory, either geographic or administrative. It provides evidence of existence and documentation, as it serves to delineate the territory. However, the use of maps has evolved from serving to document the existence of a territory to projecting it. Baudrillard (1988:1) argues that ‘The territory no longer precedes the map, nor does it survive it… the map precedes the territory…’. Baudrillard’s point here is similar to a Cambodian concept of ‘cutting the head to fit the hat, instead of making the hat to fit the head.’ It suggests that mapping can hold great potential power of representing space, remaking places and shaping territories, and in the process it can alter the ecological and social landscapes in significant ways. Harley (1988:278) argues that maps are an essential element in geographical representations of space, and are constructed purposefully, and thus are to be regarded as ‘refracted images contributing to a dialogue in a socially constructed world’. With this kind of hidden power of maps, the state, which claims legitimacy over resource governance, can employ maps to exercise control over society (Radcliffe, 1999). This leads Lanegran (2007) to argue that mapping is a tool that states use to gain control over space. Tyner (2008:121) argues that maps are ‘graphic and material representations of a geographical imagination’, and they are not ‘primarily inert records of morphological landscapes or passive reflections of the world of objects’. Within its territory, the state employs maps for the purpose of economic and regional planning.
where maps are tools for the powerful (Harley, 1988; Wood, 1992). They are used as a tool for the justification of a certain policy or practice (Harley, 1989). Thus, maps are at the heart of knowledge and power relations. Harley’s (1988) and Wood’s (1992) points on maps being a tool of power by the powerful is relevant for this thesis which concerns the process of demarcation. However, the concept of the powerful needs to be further examined particularly with reference to a political context of weak state where the sphere of state operation is captured by the private interest of both the state officials and powerful private actors (see Global Witness, 2007, 2009). This kind of understanding of the complex elements of the powerful allows for a further conceptualization of the power of maps and the danger they can pose to the common interest and that of the weak and powerless segments of the population.

Technically, Map makers are engaged in a process of selecting, translating, organizing and shaping the world being constructed. Monmonier (2007), in his chapter on ‘How to lie with maps’, argues that the art of map making inevitably involves some degree of simplification and distortion in order to meet the cartographer’s goal of highlighting certain features. The more serious issue is that maps tend to be made in ways that misrepresent reality beyond the point of necessary simplification in order to achieve a certain intention (Monmonier, 2007). Because of this, maps are seen to have facilitated the possibility of state reclassification of agricultural land, a process that often changes local property regime in ways that displace local customary rights, reclassify agricultural land as state protected forest or communal land as economic concession areas, and in doing so it alters the human landscape as well as causing inclusion and exclusion of certain social groups. This leads Harley (1992) to argue that maps omit and depict social reality in ways that create new types of power relations. This is possible because, as Cosgrove (2005:29) argues, map making allows ‘the distanciation between the observers and the space observed.’

These aspects of map making and the power it holds bear great significance for this thesis. It provides the necessary conceptual understanding to look at maps beyond what they represent and to question their ontological status, by looking at how they are made. This discussion on map making also points to the potential consequences certain maps post for the local community and the society at large. For this thesis, this discussion leads to a focus on not only what territories the new map of Tonle Sap delineates but also the process of its
making. This discussion also raises the needs for an understanding of some important concepts in political science, the discussion of which is presented as follows

**Political Science Theories of State and Power**

**The Concept of the State**

So much has been written about the state and from so many different perspectives and disciplines that the concept is in danger of not having a clear and coherent meaning. Dunleavy and O’leary (1987:1) argue that the state is ‘not a material object but a conceptual abstraction’. As a concept, the meaning of the term varies according to what perspective one uses to view it (Hay & Lister, 2006). The concept tends to involve an assumption that the state is the source and centre from which power is transmitted intact across a territory. However, Marston (2003) argues that the state is not the source but the effect of power. This suggests that a state has no ontological status apart from the process that constructs it. Thus its form and nature vary in accordance with the social process that shapes it.

In terms of the physical manifestation of state, Swanton (1942) argues that a state is not a single entity. Swanton’s perspective falls in line with Weber (1978[1922]) who argues that a state consists of different layers of institutions run by a network of bureaucrats. Those who work in the state may not even share a common understanding of what the state is (Robinson, 2008). Jessop (1982) argues that the state consists of different agents and apparatuses which act in their own right, and according to different or even opposing strategies. This leads Robinson (2008) to argue that

The state has to be understood as a tension between being a relatively unified actor across a clearly defined territory with a strong narrative and means for intervention, and a porous, fractured agent that has to actively engage with a local environment and people. (p.186)

Robinson’s point of view is linked to Allen’s (1999) discussion of the structure of the state under the plural view of power; the state is not unitary, and the actions of its agents at each layer can mitigate or amplify its effect as they act on the basis of their belief and value system. State officials act in their own right (Jessop, 1990). This suggests that different parts of the state operate according to different or even opposing strategies. Huxley (2008) seems to confirm this view when he writes:
The state is a heterogeneous, contingent and unstable, conflicting and converging assemblages of institutions, regulations, practices and techniques of rule and the exercise of power is neither automatic nor uniform nor carried out in the furtherance of a particular or general interest group. (p.132)

On resource regulation issues, Robinson (2008) suggests that state agents often hold different and even contradictory views about the environment. The result is the emergence of a state system which is susceptible to being captured by powerful interest groups who attempt to shape state policy according to their own needs. In a similar manner, Tew (2002) argues that social agents have dual identities. An agent has to be understood as acting on the basis of their own values and beliefs. At the same time, they have to operate in compliance with the prevailing economic, discursive and emotional regimes of the society in which they live. The two identities are seen to be at war with each other (Wartenberg, 1990).

Wartenberg (1990) argues that when agents realise that power is being exercised over them, they would first look towards available alternatives that can resist the dominating force. Wartenberg’s argument here reinforces the non-unitary perception of the state, by emphasizing the effects of individual actions. It also suggests that one must go beyond categorizations of state agents as simply power abusing individuals.

However, Wartenberg goes on to acknowledge that in various cases, state agents are, by force or deception, made to believe that no other alternative is possible. In a similar line of argument, Corbridge (2008)writes:

The state has effectively produced and reproduced agents who are not bureaucratically independent but who see themselves as regimented, and their actions as being closely watched by a super-system of control. They thus become isolated and self-policing subjects of the state’s control. (p.52)

Corbridge’s point on state agents as being the subject of state power contrasts with Weber’s (1978 [1922]) concept of the ‘state’ as an ideal type to be used as a basis for analyzing actual states. In this ideal type, the state is seen as a corporatist type of entity functioning like a bureaucracy of different layers of institutions with dedicated personnel. This suggests that state agents act according to their institutional mission and independent of any interference. Corbridge’s point, on the other hand, suggests that state agents cannot act independently as prescribed by their bureaucratic position.
The discussion of these aspects of state is highly relevant for this thesis. The view that state is an abstract entity allows for the conceptualization of state as not based in any place, and the argument that it is not a single entity leads thesis project to view state action not uniform across different level of state. That is, one cannot speak of one state. Moreover, the discuss above suggests that instance of power struggle in the relation between the state and the society does not just happen between them, but also within the state, thus any attempt to analyse state power must first begin with what happen within the state which, in the real world, is different from Weber’s heuristic model of state due to the differences in the types of political regimes in operation. This will be discussed in the section that follows.

### Types of Political Regimes

Three concepts are essential for any discussion of the evolution of the Cambodian state. These are: the legal-rational bureaucracy; patrimonialism, and their hybrid, neo-patrimonialism. First, the legal-rational bureaucracy is a political system that places emphasis on impersonal power, rule of law, and meritocracy. According to Weber (1978 [1922]), an ideal type of bureaucracy has the followings distinctive characteristics: power is not based on the individual, but on administrative office; the individual holding office has to have the desired capacity to perform, and this capacity is obtained through detailed training in the field of specialisation. Weber (1978: 957 [1922]) argues that the term office refers to a ‘body of officials working in an agency, along with the respective apparatus of material implements and the files’. The file is the established rule encoded in writing which specifies the jurisdiction of a particular office. The rules are in the form of written documents and are stable, exhaustive and can be learnt. The office jurisdiction is marked clearly with a system of hierarchy of offices, in which the higher office supervises the lower one, but the higher office does not have official jurisdiction to take over the duty of the lower one.

As it evolves, a complex legal bureaucratic system develops, so does a type of political system characterised by free, fair and frequent elections, respect for human rights, political participation, independent media, and separation between the three branches of state (executive, legislative and judicial). Most importantly the system requires that subjects internalise the duties of liberal citizenship and accept the judicial mechanism. However, Erdman and Engel (2007) argue, and as Weber (1978 [1922]) acknowledges,
such a pure type of legal-rational bureaucracy does not exist in the real world. According to Weber, the use of this pure form of the legal-rational bureaucracy is that it provides a comparative framework for governance reform to aspire to.

The second form of political regime is the patrimonial state. Patrimonialism is a political system based on the concept and practice of patriarchy. Weber (1978 [1922]) argues that patrimonialism is a political system where power is personalised. The power of a leader is not derived from his or her political legitimacy or ideology, but on the basis of kinship and patron-client relations. In this kind of political system, the role of law is replaced by a system of reciprocity between the patron and the political clients (Laruelle, 2012; Roth, 1968). Bratton and Van De Walle (1994) argue that in patrimonialism

The chief executive maintains authority through personal patronage, rather than through ideology or law... Relationships of loyalty and dependence pervade a formal political and administrative system... Leaders occupy bureaucratic offices less to perform public service than to acquire personal wealth and status. (p. 458)

In a patrimonial state, public positions are not based on merit but on the system of personal connections, favours, promises and privileges. The informal operation of political practices is so widespread that one can speak of institutionalised informality (Erdmann & Engel, 2006).

Roth (1968) argues that there are two kinds of patrimonialism. The first is traditionalist patrimonialism, where power resides within semi-divine persons such as kings and princes. The second is patrimonialism where personal rule is built on the basis of loyalties that do not require any belief in the ruler’s unique personal qualities. Rather they are inextricably linked to material incentives and rewards (Laruelle, 2012; Roth, 1968). Both types of patrimonialism often face crises of legitimacy. Thus, regimes of these kinds over time seek to legitimise their mandate by incorporating legal-rational bureaucratic features offered by a good governance reform agenda, such as elections, participation, freedom of speech and accountability mechanisms.

However, most of these reforms are not demand-driven but are initiated by the ruling elite themselves, and they are often designed and carried out in ways that ensure the survival of their political interests. Good governance reforms could also be externally imposed. Countries under patrimonial regimes are often dependent on a partially subsistence-oriented agricultural economy, and frequently depend on international
development assistance. The imported reforms often fail, as the recipient countries do not have the necessary historical, social and political conditions for meaningful reforms to take place (Bratton & Walle, 1992). Fukuyama (2004) also argues that ruling elites are not likely to allow reforms to happen if they see their interests being at risk. Fukuyama (2004) writes

> Holding on to a certain structure of political power is often a life and death issue for leaders of poor countries, and no degree of external public goods financing …will be sufficient to offset losses of power and prestige… (p. 49)

For that reason, most governance reforms do not succeed in establishing a legal-rational bureaucratic regime to replace the patrimonial one, but instead the development of a hybrid regime of neo-patrimonialism.

The third concept is then neo-patrimonialism, which has the appearance of a legal-rational bureaucracy, but with the characteristics of a patrimonial regime (Bratton & Walle, 1992; Brinkerhoff & Goldsmith, 2002; Erdmann & Engel, 2006, 2007). Medard (1982) argues that within the neo-patrimonial system, political power is transferred from the office and the bureaucrats to the patron and his kinship networks. Synder (1992:379) argues that despite the appearance of a legal rational bureaucracy the neo-patrimonial regime is a regime that contains ‘an extensive network of personal patronage, rather than ruling through ideology or impersonal law’.

In this type of political regime, a leaders’ authority is based on personal patronage networks not ideology or law. Drawing from the experience of African countries, Bratton and Walle (1992) argue that there are no formal governing coalitions between the state and social interests. The state is a private instrument of the powerful. Personal relationships displace the rule of law, and takes over the bureaucratic system at all levels of government from the top to the bottom (Bratton & Walle, 1992). Simultaneously, the line between the party and state becomes blurred (Rakner & Svasand, 2005).

There are two distinct elements of neo-patrimonialism; clientelism and patronage (Bratton & Walle, 1992; Eisenstadt, 1973; Erdmann & Engel, 2007). Clientelism is the exchange or facilitation of exchange of specific services and resources for political support (Erdman and Engel 2007). It involves relations of unequal power between the patron – the ‘big people’, and the client – the ‘small people’. Patronage, on the other hand, refers to a politically-motivated distribution of favours. Erdman and Engel (2006) suggest that patronage is the relation between powerful individuals and the larger group.
For this thesis, I am interested in the neo-patrimonial state. Thus, I will further discuss the power structure found in such a state system, and later come back to the role of territorialisation within the neo-patrimonial system of governance in Cambodia.

**Neo-patrimonialism and Structure of Power**

Allen (1999) makes a crucial contribution to the understanding of state power by discussing the difference between a centred view of power, a plural view of power, and power as mobilised resources. Two of these views of power are worth mentioning here. The centred view of power treats power as able to be possessed and being located within the hands of a specific group of people or particular state institution. Power in this centred view is transmitted from the central state intact, and the society is contained within the state’s territorial space. This perspective sees the state as a single entity with no discrepancies in the way power is exercised between different levels of state. The plural view of power, on the other hand, sees power as not located in any specific place. Even if it is, power is transferred (not transmitted) and it often deviates from its original form. Under this view, the state is seen as consisting of different layers of apparatuses which form the chain through which power is transferred. Each link is capable of affecting or modifying power from the central state (Allen, 1999).

The two views of power are important for an understanding of the structure of state power. From the existing writing on neo-patrimonialism, the structure of power seems to have an un-compromising momentum of upward accountability to the top person. This is based on a few prominent studies. Bratton and Van de Walle (1992) characterise the neo-patrimonial regime as presidentialism, which does not necessarily refer to a presidential political system, but a system where political power is concentrated in one leader. Bratton and Van De Walle (1992: 458) argue that the leader maintains authority through ‘personal patronage, rather than though ideology or law’. In a similar manner, Soest (2006) argues that a neo-patrimonial political system always features the concentration of political power in the hands of a single leader where personal favours and the mis-use of state resources are common occurrences. In this system, the right to rule is given to a person rather than coming from the capabilities of someone occupying an office (Hale, 2005; Theobold, 1982). Political power is personalised (Clapham, 1985; Medard, 1982), and positions in office are not based on meritocracy, rather they are based on personal connections which are essential in securing a public position of office (Bratton & Walle, 1992). Top leaders
can award public positions to those with close connections to them (and equally retract people from these positions at will). In this kind of political system, the leader also uses the tactic of removing key government figures from office as a way of protecting political power (Soest, 2006).

In addition to the fact that the political machinery is built around the hierarchical kinship networks of the leadership, the top leader also employs a range of mechanisms to maintain power. Firstly, the leader prevents any possible political challenges by way of reducing the length of term of those in high ranking positions. Snyder and Mahoney (1999) suggest that the leader often rotates the positions of the political elite to prevent them from establishing their own independent power base that can challenge the tenure of the leader. At the same time, the leader also uses tactics of removing any key government figures from office as a way of protecting political power (Soest, 2006).

Secondly, the leader uses state apparatuses to monitor officials. Darden (2001), in his article, ‘Blackmail as a tool of state domination’, argues that there are three mechanisms of state control: (1) state leaders’ firstly accept and even encourage corruption, (2) leaders then use state surveillance to document wrongdoings of officeholders and private actors and (3) this information is used to blackmail relevant political, economic or social actors with payment in obedience. In addition, Darden (2003) argues that those neo-patrimonial systems which have evolved from former communist states, generally have a strong surveillance capacity. Top leaders use corruption as a means to ensure compliance from their subordinate officials. Due to low state salaries, those officials are allowed to engage in rent-seeking activities. But the state, through active surveillance, documents corrupt activities of bureaucrats. The top leaders, through the surveillance organ, can then use documentation to ensure continued compliance from subordinates. The bureaucrats under this type of state have a strong incentive to maintain loyalty, as a failure do so not only risks the loss of position, but also personal assets and the livelihood of the officials and their family. This leads Laruelle (2012) to argue that everyone in the neo-patrimonialism system is directly subordinate to the leader. Thus, the use of state machinery as personal property, the short-term tenure of key state positions, and continual compliance-ensuring surveillance operations leads to the concentration of power in the hands of the top leaders.

Such a description matches the centred-view of power relations previously described, where power is transmitted intact from the centre to the peripheries of society.
Together with the concept of presidentialism or strongman politics, this view of state power suggests that the structure of power in a neo-patrimonialist state consists of a linear and straightforward flow of power from the leader to the lowest levels of society without any distortion. However, this perception of political power in a neo-patrimonialism is problematic, and it is inconsistent with the reality of political conducts in neo-patrimonialism at large. Brinkerhoff and Goldsmith (2002) argue that informal institutions consist of a set of implicit rules and norms that are not written but are based on common understandings of socio-cultural norms, routines and traditions. The coexistence of formal and informal institutions often leads to major inconsistencies in the practice of government where public officials must be adept at knowing when to apply formal rules and when to apply informal ones, leading to situations of insecurity, inconsistency and unpredictability. Erdmann and Engel (2006) argue that neo-patrimonial rule is characterised by insecurity. They write:

All actors strive to overcome their insecurity, and they do so by operating on both the formal as well as the informal logics of neo-patrimonialism… Within such a pattern of social and political relations formal state institutions cannot fulfill the universalistic purposes of public welfare. (p.19)

This gives rise to the concept of the plural view of power, and it is supported by the observation that power and rules can be bent, and sometimes the implementation of a top leader’s order is not consistent. What explains this inconsistency will be explored in this thesis.

The Concept of Power

Allen (2003) defines power as not a thing that can be owned, but as a relation between unequal groups. Weber (1978:1111 [1922]) defines power as the ability to affect outcomes, or ‘the capacity of an individual to realise his will, even against the opposition of others’. Three concepts of power are worth discussing here. First is ‘power to’. This concept of power refers to the ability to do things, or to make things happen (Morriss, 2006). Beetham (1991) argues this kind of power is derived from the possession of physical assets, or derived from means of coercion such as the armed forces. Wartenberg (1990) argues that this kind of power is only present at the time of its exercise, and it is more associated with the ability to prevent things from happening. An example of this is when police power is used to prevent a public demonstration from taking place. Without the presence and actions of the police, there is no such kind of power to stop the demonstration from taking place.
The second concept of power is ‘power over’. In this concept, power is defined as the ability to affect outcomes even against the will of others (Weber, 1978[1922]). Similarly, Lukes (1974) describes this power as making others do things that they would not do otherwise. The oppressed realise that they are being subjected to this kind of power, but are unable to resist it (Lukes, 1974). This aspect of power amounts to coercion which involves the threat of force and deprivation.

The third concept of power is power as dominance. Lukes (1974) argues that this form of power is more subtle and widespread than the concept of ‘power to’ or ‘power over’ in that the oppressed do not even realise that they are being subjected to instances of power. He writes

… power is real and effective in a remarkable variety of ways, some of them indirect and some hidden, and that, indeed, it is at its most effective when least accessible to observation, to actors and observers alike. (p. 64)

What is meant here is that even in the absence of a physical power imposition, power relations are still present. When this kind of power is exercised, the dominated are not even aware that they are being subject to it. Lukes (1974) argues that dominant groups can subvert the power of subordinates in a way in which they don’t even realise.

The understanding of the three concepts of power is important for this thesis which attempts to look at how state exercises power over the society through territorial resource governance where the representation of Tonle Sap space entails the exercise of power. At one level, it suggests that the absence of the physical manifestation of power, force, is not the absence of power. Thus the demarcation of Tonle Sap and the potential effects on the local human landscape might not be done by force, yet a lot of instances of power, particularly the second and third dimension of power can be observed. This leads to an argument advanced by Foucault (1978) who argues that power works through an indirect technique of self regulation in what he calls the normalising process of subjectification. In this process, one submerges others in his power sphere through, not violence, but indirect methods of suggestion, prescription and guidance of behavior (Foucault, 1978). Similarly, Allen (2003:28) argues that domination can be achieved by means of ‘close discipline, continuous control and supervision’. This kind of power is more pervasive and at the same time, more elusive.

At another level, it suggests that the analysis of power needs not be confined to the exercising end of power but also the receiving end of it. Deacon (2002) argues that:
Power relations become more effective the more they infiltrate into everyday life, as they shift from being externally imposed to being internally invoked, from being authoritarian to being participatory and from acting primarily upon bodies to acting in addition and more particularly upon souls and actions. (p. 106)

In Luke’s (1974) language, this concept of power is referred to as the third dimension of power. According to Lukes (1974), this kind of power is even more radical in its conception. This way conceptualizing power positions the oppressed in the analytical frame in which their action and behavior become important subject of observation. In this line of thinking, power is exercised through the control of the mind, which, as Beck (1976) argues, is more influential in shaping people’s response to social phenomenon. This is done through the control of belief, desire and value. A person’s belief system is controlled, making oppression seems normal. In this process, Spinoza (1958[1677]) argues that a person’s mind is duped by the reason of other agents. That is, how he sees the world is shaped by the dominant. The individual can also be trained to possess a certain desire. As Tilly (1990:701) writes ‘compliance draws multiple advantages of money, goods, defense, and access to pleasure which is denied to less powerful people’. Social agents are conditioned to desire the social materials offered by the powerful, effectively turning them to support the system that is set up to oppress them. Meanwhile, the dominated individual’s value system can be controlled by the dominant. Dowding (2006) defines value as a complex mixture of belief and desire. Here desire is internal to actors, and cannot be externally rationalised. This statement suggests, for one thing, that value is subjective and there is nothing rational about a set of values. To understand one’s value is thus to look at what belief system one holds and the accompanying structure of desire. Dowding (2006) uses the example of a group of Indian women who are thought to be subject to power and domination by their husbands as they insist on feeding their husbands before themselves. He argues that their values are justified by their belief that if they do not take care of their husbands, he will become sick, and the whole family’s livelihood would be at risk. Her value is based on the desire to be an ideal woman, whose role and image is constructed socially around the woman’s role and responsibility to take care of her husband.

Overall, these conceptual understandings of power allow this thesis to view power as being present beyond the instance of state and local community interaction especially at times of encounter. It suggests that one needs to pay attention to preceding historical, social and political events that shape the beliefs, desires and value systems of those who...
are affected by the process of Tonle Sap demarcation. This view of power finds support in Foucault’s (1978) work where he argues that the question of power concerns the tension between the technology of domination, and the technology of the self. This statement is significant in that it suggests that force and coercion may be essential elements of power, but production of the oppressed is not to be overlooked. As Lukes (1974) writes:

It [power] takes many forms… from straightforward censorship and disinformation to the various institutionalised and personal ways there are of infantilising judgment, and the promotion and sustenance of all kinds of failures of rationality and illusory thinking, among them the naturalisation of what could be otherwise the miss-recognition of the sources of desire and belief. (p. 149)

In sum, these three concepts of power are crucial for an understanding of how power works. They suggest that the study of power cannot only be based on obvious manifestations of power, such as violence and coercion. The exercise of power does not have to involve the use of force, and by the same token, the absence of the employment of force cannot be taken to mean the absence of the exercise of power. Foucault (1980) refers to this aspect of power as the knowledge production of power. The technology of the self as Foucault puts it, involves what Camilleri and Falk (1992:30) call ‘the capacity of institutions to manage and manipulate information’. This ability to control perception is more effective in preventing resistance than simply using the technology of coercion. These concepts of power serve as a useful analytical framework for understanding how power should be studied. Power not only manifests itself physically and materially, but also mentally, and this leads to the need to discuss how other non-physical forms of power work. This brings to light the relevance of knowledge and its relation to power, for Tew (2002) argues that those in charge of knowledge production are also in control of power. The following section looks at how knowledge is used as a technology of power.

**Knowledge as Power**

Knowledge has important role in resource governance particularly as it serves to provide legitimacy to the state’s claims of control over nature governance. The relation between knowledge, power and legitimate authority can be seen in the field of resource governance where states actively claim authority over nature, through the production of knowledge. Bakker and Bridge (2008) argue that natural resource regulation is a field of governance that has progressively expanded since the 1950’s. Through the project of state modernization, non-human nature increasingly comes under the jurisdiction and
dominance of the state (Tew, 2002). Within this process clashes between scientific and traditional knowledge, and the expert and the local, inevitably lead to unequal power relations.

The state generates science-based knowledge of the world, and in the process, establishes itself as the legitimate manager of nature through the creation of modernist state institutions, such as forest departments and catchment authorities (Bakker & Bridge, 2008). Partly made possible by the appeal to scientific reason which began to rapidly displace the traditional authority of religion and kings, these institutions, on the basis of their alignment with scientific rationalities, have legitimised the state’s claim as the central manager of natural resources. Society, with its lack of expert scientific knowledge, is invited to take the role of a passive follower. Bakker and Bridge (2008) write

The modernist project has seen the role of professional practice and discourses in maintaining and inserting people into their appropriate slots in the social order. Practices, discourses situated the professional as the experts who are socially established as the rational subject who are to do unto the patient, criminal, client and service user who are invited to take on a role of passive recipient. (p. 25)

The categorization of society into experts and non-experts has meant that only the knowledge of state experts has been seen as important for resource management regimes, thus rejecting local knowledge as lacking scientific rigor. This effectively creates a systematic and un-reciprocal transfer of knowledge between state bureaucrats and citizens, giving the bureaucrats what Foucault (1977:184) calls ‘the ability to give a normalising gaze, a surveillance that make it possible to qualify, to classify’ nature.

However, knowledge has no ontological status. Its existence is subject to a process of production to which power relation is a part. Tew (2002: 85) argues that knowledge is not value free; rather it is ‘guaranteed by the principle of scientific objectivities or rational enquiry. Such principles may themselves be seen as parts of the very ideological structures that may underpin the position of elites, or function as a mechanism of social control. Tew (2002) goes on to argue that

Those in power are also in control of the process of accrediting or, accrediting the knowledge in ways to suit their social and political interests. (p. 86)

In a similar manner, Lowe (1999) argues that knowledge only occurs in the ‘validating material framework of other larger patterns of discourse’. For Lowe (1999: 78) discourse
‘locates the potential identities and speaking position of subjects’. This conception of discourse is advanced further by Tew (2002) who describes discourses as constructing certain ways of thinking or seeing as right and others as wrong, vesting authority in the hands of experts, or forcing certain groups to take on specific positions of subordination. The state can use its position as the legitimate producer of knowledge to erase, displace and replace other discourses for its own purpose. In the process, Robinson (2008) argues, local knowledge of ecology and people are subdued.

Robinson (2008) argues that the state establishes itself as a resource actor through an institutionalisation of its own epistemology which simultaneously erases and produces environmental knowledge. This ability allows the state to retain what Robinson (2008:212) calls ‘a near monopoly on responsibility over what is broadly accepted as non-human nature’. The state can create a discourse of environmental crisis in order to justify the reproduction of a hierarchical ordering of knowledge which further legitimises its control over resources. For instance, Menzies’s (2007) description of the Ugandan state’s project to modernise a rural logging village, or Scott’s (1998) description of the commercialization and homogenization of forest in Russia, and Nguiffo’s (1998) analysis of forest concessions in Cameroon, are all examples of the state’s ability to actively control society through territorialised natural resource projects suggesting that there is nothing neutral about knowledge, and that knowledge can serve as a tool for elites.

The connection between knowledge and power provides a crucial conceptual understanding of how the state might utilise its control over knowledge production to justify action in the field of natural resource management. The understanding of the nature of existence of knowledge suggests that it can be used as a tool of power in the interest of those in charge of producing it. In the context of territorial resource governance, for instance, knowledge of nature can be produced to justify the representation of space and reclassification of local resource systems in ways that displace customary knowledge with grave consequences for the ecology and human community. Within this framework of understanding, this thesis pays attention to the process in which knowledge of Tonle Sap governance is produced. Instead of taking knowledge at its face value, this thesis will pay attention beyond the mere statement of knowledge but to the questions of who produces knowledge about nature, and for what purposes it is produced. That is, careful attention is given to the epistemological issue of environmental knowledge production.
Resistance

In line with the conceptualization of power as involving both the exercising and receiving ends of power, resistance seems to be an appropriate topic of discussion to conclude the theoretical chapter on how state exercises power over the society. This is because, as Gramsci (1971) argues, power is the result of a constant war of position between the forces of oppression and the forces of resistance. Thus, any discussion on power would be deemed incomplete unless both ends of power are examined.

Gramsci’s point also suggests that oppression is not the work of the dominant alone, but also the result of an inability on the part of the oppressed to defend themselves. In a similar line of argument, Foucault (1978) writes:

He who is subjected to a field of visibility, and who knows it, assumes responsibility for the constraints of power; he inscribes in himself the power relations in which he simultaneously plays both roles; he becomes the principal of his own subjection. (P. 202-3)

Writing from an idealist perspective, Medina (1990) argues that citizens of a country do not have a moral obligation to obey all commands state puts forward. They should reject unjust laws (Medina, 1990). Generally, resistance can take the form of physical acts of defiance such as demonstration or a subtle form of ideological challenge or even total avoidance (Scott, 1990b, 2009). In the literature of resource governance, there are some examples of subtle physical acts of defiance against the state. The local citizens employ counter-mapping as a way of resisting the power of the central state which attempts to impose a new territorial control over their local communities (Peluso, 2005). However, the instances of successful resistance are scarce in number, and it is not common to resource communities. At large, the possibility of resistance and the likelihood of its success have to be viewed in relation to the concept of power, particularly the one which suggests that the oppressed might not always realise that they are being dominated (Lukes, 1974). As seen in the discussion earlier, dominant groups control the production of knowledge in order to give them the ability to make what is not normal seem normal – to ‘normalise’.

On this particular matter of state-society relation, the likelihood of resistance has to be understood as originating from beyond just the self-awareness of individuals within a system of oppression, but from a collective sense of oppression, which can potentially form social movements or mass actions. Mass mobilisation is a mechanism through which the oppressed can collectively express their grievances against an oppressive state. It
represents what Allen (2003) calls ‘mobilised power’ which occurs where individuals or
groups collectively pool their resources for the sake of pursuing collective grievances
agendas. The strength of this kind of power depends not only on the amount and size of
resource but also on the strength of links between disparate groups and individuals
(Arendt, 1970). This depends on a sense of collective oppression which can be derived
either from a personal experience of oppression, or an objective sense of social justice. But
as important as it is to the possibility of social movement, a sense of collective oppression
can be an important tool of control the powerful can exploit.

In addition, Marshall (1991) argues that two conditions must exist for a social
movement to take place. Firstly, the social movement has to be initiated by a discourse
which refers to the existence of the social movement itself\(^1\). Secondly, social movements
depend on a collective ability to mobilise resources which will allow for the movement to
continue beyond a moment of collective action. This understanding is important for the
study of social movement as it brings attention to the role of discourse and resources.
Discourse consists of various narratives, the stories by which individual or collective
experiences may be organised (Tew, 2002). These narratives are constitutive of experience
which is crucial for the emergence of social movements as they both open up or close
down the possibilities for perception, action and making sense of oppression (Tew, 2002).

Meanwhile, resistance has to be viewed in relation to the specific cultural, social
and political context. For the specific context of neo-patrimonial Cambodia, resistance can
be seen in the form of seeking assistance from patrons. A study on how the poor represent
themselves in Cambodia argues that the Cambodian poor tend to approach key political
figures to seek interventions and solutions into their local problems (Center for Advanced
Study & World Bank, 2006). However, this option is often unsuccessful as the literature on
neo-patrimonialism suggests that access to key political figures is strictly guarded. Szeftel
(2000) argues that access to state officials is controlled, and only at the offering of material
incentives, can one gain access to such officials. This leads to the realisation that the
challenges to social movements do not come just from the intrinsic problem of social
collective action, but also from external constraints imposed by the state.

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\(^1\) Lowe (1999:78) defines discourse as locating ‘the potential identities and speaking position of subject’ and
as a way of telling narratives or a way through which the speakers expresses their understanding of their
heroism and sacrifice and stories of great success or failure.
The understanding of this aspect of resistance, i.e. social movements, is very important for this thesis, particularly for its analysis of state-society relations of power in the process of demarcation of Tonle Sap areas. The discussion on the role of discourse on social movements serves to provide a frame of understanding of the likelihood of social movements of Cambodia. It guides the research attention to the issue of how both the state and the local citizens talk about the demarcation, and how it constrains a collective sense of being oppressed which is essential for social movement to take place. On this basis, it also is important to examine the question of who controls discourse, and how it encourages or constrains the formation of social movements. It also suggests that the analysis of the local ability to mobilise resources collectively can provide insights into the relations of power between the state and the local community of resource users.

This leads to the need to understand the role of local leaders in resistance/social movement. Local leaders or local opinion leaders can play an important role in resistance for they are more likely to understand instances of oppression and able to lead public opinion in a certain way. In the context of rural Cambodia, there are four broad types of leaders, leaders based on administrative positions, customary leaders, economic-political leaders and leaders based on knowledge in development. The administrative leaders consist of village chiefs, commune chief and commune councilors, while customary leaders are those who are elders and or who are religious figures. Economic-political leaders are those wealthy local business persons and those who have political connections to patrons. Often this group is viewed with negative connotations of illegal business or corrupt practices. The last group of leaders is viewed by villagers as leaders out of respect for their knowledge of, and role in, development (Thon et al., 2009).

This knowledge of the composition of local leadership in Cambodia is important for the analysis of power struggle in the process of Tonle Sap demarcation. It guides the analytical attention to who might serve to actively promote local resistance.

**Chapter Summary**

This chapter discussed, in the first part, the concepts of space, place and territory, and related them to the concept of power. Lefebvre’s (1991) conceptualisation of space as lived space and representational space allows for an understanding of space as being made and remade in certain ways. Together with Penrose (2002) who sees space as being imbued
with both material and emotional power, this chapter has showed that the control of space is the exercise of power.

The process in which space is made and remade is called territorialisation. Sack (1986) argues that territorialisation is the attempt to influence or control others. But territorialisation is often employed by states as a way of controlling society, as states use their responsibility over resource management to extend their control over societies.

In the second part, this chapter looked at the concept of the state and the concept of power. It showed that the state is not a single entity, but consists of different agents whose behaviour has to be understood in relation to the type of political regime in operation. The chapter showed that there are three different types of political regimes: legal-rational, patrimonial, and neo-patrimonial. Understanding the different types of regime is essential for understanding the relationship between state and society, as the nature of power differs significantly amongst different regimes.

Finally, this chapter discussed the concept of power. It showed that there are three important concepts of power; power to, power over, and power as dominance. Based on these concepts of power, this chapter showed that the exercise of power occurs even when it cannot be observed. Thus the study of power must pay attention to more than just the use of physical force. Power has to be also understood as an unequal relation between social groups. This conceptual understanding calls for the study of power relations to look beyond the modality of domination. This chapter has also discussed different aspects of social movements and how they function.

All of these concepts however need to be contextualised within the scope of this study. Thus the next chapter will give background information to the Cambodian state, and the characteristics of resource governance within Cambodia, which will help to better contextualise the case study.
Chapter III: Context of State and Resources in Cambodia

This chapter aims to provide a context to the case study. It is divided into two major parts. The first is allocated to providing contextual information essential for an understanding of the nature of the current Cambodian state. This part discusses the historical development of the Cambodian state, covering the period between the reign of King Norodom in the early 1880s and the State of Cambodia in the late 1980s. It then describes the changes that have occurred from the 1990s to the present, with a consideration of how these changes shape the characteristics of the contemporary Cambodian state. The second part provides the context to an analysis of governance in the Tonle Sap lake. It gives details of the geography of the Tonle Sap, its uses, and an account of the conditions of increased resource extraction and contestations that led to the establishment of the Tonle Sap flood plain demarcation project. Finally, this chapter provides a brief background to the specific study site within the Tonle Sap flood plain.

Historical Development of the State and its Relations with Society

The Colonial Period

In his book, Colonial Cambodia’s bad Frenchmen, Muller (2006) offers an in-depth account of the nature of patrimonialism under the reign of King Norodom. As in some other monarchies, the king’s power was derived from his perceived divine status and occupation of the throne. Muller (2006) describes the personal characteristics of King Norodom as carefree, easy-going and un-interested in state affairs. His power is set above the state public bureaucracy, and everything within the state territory is his personal property. For example, Muller writes that land was legally considered as the personal property of the King who gave his subjects a temporary right to occupy and use the land. In describing the justice system at the time, Muller (2006) cites Boulanger’s a description which is worth reciting in whole here:

There is political life, because the regime is despotic; public life is rudimentary, for half of the people are slaves and the other half live in fear of the courts; personal security is a myth, because it depends on the venality of a judge or the fantasy of a tyrant. (p. 109)
This description, although subject to the authors own hyperbole, reflects the relationship between the state and society in Cambodia at that time. Moreover, Vickery (1986) argues that the kings ruled and treated everything within the country as their own personal property. The kings owned all land and decided on the careers of state officials.

Even in the contemporary period, state-societal relations remain more or less unchanged where society is continually subsumed within the sphere of the state. Between 1863 and 1953, Cambodia was under the protectorate of the French, and during those 90 years of colonial rule, Cambodia experienced what is described in the state’s text books in the 1980s as an era of oppression and exploitation by the French-led government. This may appear as propaganda of the then government of Cambodia, and the text books themselves have been removed from the national curriculum, but scholars of Cambodian history seem to generally support this reading of the French colonial era (Kiernan, 2010; Vickery, 1986). One of the biggest sources of tension to arise between the state and society then was over the issue of personal income tax. The French administration was condemned for imposing a heavily exploitative tax regime on the local citizenry (Tyner, 2008; Vickery, 1986). Agricultural taxes were set at an extremely high level, which, in many cases, farmers could not meet. In some cases, the administration showed no considerations for the realities of farmers. For instance, in bad years where crops were destroyed, the administration still demanded the full tax payment.

Such extreme repression led to many instances of local protests against the administration. One well-known case was the violent uprising in Kampong Chhnang Province, where Cambodian villagers killed one French official and his Cambodian staff in 1925 (Vickery, 1986). The killing prompted the French administration to violently retaliate. Meanwhile, taxes were maintained at the same level, and those who protested ended up in jail. The anger of the local people and the ensuing violent retaliations of the French further created a feeling of frustration and resentment against the state.

There was also a notable form of distrust, and tension, between regular citizens and those Cambodians serving in the administration (Vickery, 1986). The French set up an administrative system in which their own personnel occupied all positions of decision-making power. Then, the administration was run, at the lower levels, by Cambodians who were more interested in securing their position in the system than representing the public
interest (Muller, 2006; Vickery, 1986). The behaviour of those Cambodian officials further added to the tensions between the state and society. Vickery (1986) argues that when local protestors were joined by local Cambodian elites, their real objective was not to oppose French rule but to demand access to state positions that provided privilege and wealth. That led to the feeling of mistrust and betrayal, where the local population saw those officials as putting their own personal interests above the emancipation of their own people. These experiences led to an antagonistic relationship between the state and society. The state was seen as unaccountable, distant from the interests of the citizens, and violent in its efforts to ensure compliance.

**Sihanouk and the Lon Nol Regimes**

Cambodia gained independence from France in 1953 thanks largely to King Sihanouk’s endeavor and struggle against the French (Schier & Schier-Oumn, 1985). Soon after independence, he created his own royalist party - the *Sangkum Reas Niyum*, which the king and his supporters propagated as a populist party with serious interest in granting citizens full freedom and prosperity. *Sangkum* literally means society. *Reas* means people or citizen, and *Niyum* is an adjective, which means popular. *Sangkum Reas Niyum* means a people-oriented society or people-centred society. However, its existence was not an indication that Cambodia was moving away from patrimonial rule. Instead the king exercised tight personal control over the management of state affairs (Osborne, 1994). For example, any criticism of the king or his *Sangkum* was often met with brutal repression where many dissidents were punished or killed. Within the bureaucracy those who failed to demonstrate absolute loyalty were quietly demoted or dismissed (Osborne, 1994). At the same time the patron-client system became entrenched. State officials, who were willing to compromise their bureaucratic duties for personalised relations with the political elite, would find themselves in positions of power and be rewarded with material gifts.

King Sihanouk was also associated with the act of royal gift-giving, which reinforced the tradition of gift-giving created by past kings. This act is, in a way, the key feature of patrimonialism, in which loyalty and obedience are rewarded through gifts. This procedure effectively deflected people’s attention away from the inability of the state to provide secure welfare to its citizens. State officials often visited economically depressed areas or those that were stricken by flood or drought. State-sponsored media would then present the king as sharing his heart and soul with the unfortunate and relieving their
suffering through gift giving (Kiernan, 2008). In this process, people were taught to refrain from blaming the state for failure to ensure livelihood security, but rather to be thankful for the supposed acts of generosity on the part of the state.

A worsening economic situation together with growing discontent with the Prince’s personal style of politics resulted in a coup on March 18, 1970 in which General Lon Nol came to replace Sihanouk as the head of state (Schier & Schier-Oum, 1985). Under Lon Nol, the country continued to be plagued with civil war, with Lon Nol’s troops, backed by the U.S, fighting the rebel communists. This resulted in major disruptions to everyday life for Cambodian people including death and suffering (Kiernan, 2008). The Lon Nol regime ended on April 17, 1975, when the Khmer Rouge (KR) took over the management of Cambodia.

**Democratic Kampuchea/ Khmer Rouge**

Originating from a revolutionary movement founded in 1953, one of the goals of the KR regime was to provide a better standard of living for all Cambodians (Vickery, 1986). But once in control of Cambodia, the KR did exactly the opposite. Intending to use Cambodia as an experiment for a non- monetary-based peasant society of total economic equality, the regime forcibly relocated populations to the countryside (Becker, 1998). Private property was abolished, and a system of forced communal work was established. In that system, the state owned everything from farmland to farming tools. Citizens had to live in shared houses, and work collectively on communal farms. In the process, people were subject to forced labour, torture and execution. By the end of the regime in 1979, it is estimated that 1.7 million people had lost their lives (Gottesman, 2004).

It is hard, if not impossible, to place the Pol Pot regime within any pre-existing categorizations of government. What the regime does represent was an unprecedented level of state domination over society. During this time the state could decide on the life and death of its citizens (see Kiernan 2008). The state decided how much people had to work, and to how much food they were entitled. The state could persecute, without the need to even prosecute. In sum, the regime delivered what Tew (2002:89) terms ‘the totality of the people’s experience of oppression’, a systematic process of diminishing, injuring or holding back members of oppressed groups from even contemplating the possibility of challenging the oppressor. That is, citizens knew that they were being
oppressed, but they could not do anything to deal with this as they were stripped of the means to defend themselves.

People's Republic of Kampuchea
In 1978, a group of former KR soldiers backed by Vietnamese troops launched an offensive against the KR, and on January 7, 1979 the group declared victory over the genocidal KR regime. A Vietnamese-backed government known as the People’s Republic of Kampuchea (PRK) was established to manage the country. From a comparative perspective, Gottesman (2004) argues that people who lived under the PRK regime regained some sense of normality to their lives. People could return to their homes, and were allowed to trade in the markets. PRK, at the same time, tried to overcome food insecurity by organizing the population into a shared work arrangement known as KromSamakei.

However, the state-society relation at large remained problematic, and the hope of a fully accountable government to serve the interests of the society remained far from a reality. The development of a new government and the consolidation of power within the PRK in the 1980s was a defining time in terms of state-society relations in Cambodia. One aspect of this was the consolidation and entrenchment of patron-client relationships. When the PRK came to power in 1979, it faced a number of immediate tasks, one of which was rebuilding a basic bureaucracy. The KR had effectively eliminated all state institutions, and the government was under immense pressure to urgently rebuild them (Gottesman, 2004). One particularly daunting challenge was to overcome a complete shortage of staff, as the previous regime had killed most of the country’s intellectuals and bureaucrats (Chandler, 1983; Gottesman, 2004). The newly established Cambodian leaders dealt with this situation by altering the criteria for recruitment to simply being based on a willingness to work, rather than having specific qualifications (Gottesman, 2004). Anybody, regardless of their gender, educational background, or work experience was allowed to apply for any position they wished. In addition, Gottesman (2004) notes that positions were announced by words of mouth through friends and family members.

This procedure of recruitment, stemming from the early years of the regime, had a significant influence on the characteristics of the emerging state institutions in Cambodia, especially in regard to its patrimonial nature. The fact that people were recruited into
positions based on their willingness, not capacity, plays a large role in explaining the general weakness of the state bureaucracy. There is a general understanding that state bureaucrats could not be expected to effectively perform their bureaucratic tasks, as they did not have proper training for their positions (Pijpers, 1989). Meanwhile, the recruitment system effectively gave rise to what is currently known as a system of *Ksaeknong*, patron-client relationship. This resulted in groups of related individuals, whether by blood or friendship working in the same institutions (Gottesman, 2004; Lambert, 2012).

Patrimonialism in Cambodia was further strengthened by the role of the Vietnamese advisers, whose jobs were to assist the newly-established government in Cambodia, but whose service helped the Vietnamese government to continue a strong influence in the Cambodian politics in the early 1980s. During those times, Vietnamese personnel served as senior advisers to Cambodian officials (Gottesman, 2004). Yet in many cases they played a more significant role than merely acting as advisers but direct supervisors. The Cambodian officials had to be fully accountable to Vietnamese advisors, who held power to promote, demote or dismiss Cambodian officials. The criteria for performance assessments were not based solely on ideology, but submission and compliance to the Vietnamese government in Hanoi. Two high profile figures give contrasting examples of how the Vietnamese government strengthened patrimonialism in Cambodia in the 1980s. The first post-KR Cambodian PM was Chan Si. He was educated in Vietnam, and appointed by the Vietnamese government into his position as the Cambodian PM. But he was opposed to a Vietnamese presence in Cambodia. He was arrested and jailed in Vietnam on 2 December 1981 for offending a chief Vietnamese advisor to the PRK. Rumor had it that while under Vietnamese detention he was injected with poison that resulted in his death. Although it is most likely, merely a rumor, it had significant effects on the psyche of Cambodian bureaucrats. Inside Cambodia, there was a common understanding that Vietnamese capacity to maintain strict control over Cambodian bureaucrats was not to be underestimated, as the case of Chan Si demonstrated.

The second example comes from Hun Sen who strategically maneuvered Vietnamese imposed constraints with great success. Gottesman (2004) argues that the Vietnamese were under pressure to withdraw from Cambodia, but rapid withdrawal was not an option. Vietnam needed to first ensure that the PRK could stand on its own feet. Losing trust in the Hanoi-trained veterans, Vietnam saw their interests as being best served
by Hun Sen, who had built himself up as a loyal and powerful politician. While serving as the foreign minister under Pen Sovan’s premiership, Hun Sen, as a pragmatist, did not openly oppose the presence of the Vietnamese government (Gottesman, 2004). In addition, he was willing to conclude border deals in ways that favoured Vietnam, which earned him trust. He also had other qualities that Vietnam saw as necessary to lead Cambodia. Gottesman (2004) writes

He [Hun Sen] has the ability to accumulate power, the willingness to wield it in ways that supported the regime's military and diplomatic campaigns and the capacity to construct a power base that could withstand a partial or complete Vietnamese withdrawal. (p. 206)

In addition, Hun Sen also had a close alliance with high ranking Vietnamese officials, who had influence in shaping the attitudes of the Vietnamese government and its course of action in Cambodia. In 1985, Hun Sen became the PM of Cambodia.

In terms of state-society relations, the PRK may have put an end to the atrocities committed under the murderous reign of Pol Pot, but it was also a highly oppressive regime in itself. Forced military conscription in the early and mid-1980’s represented a major assault on the ability of young men and unmarried women to live dignified lives. A high proportion of this demographic were forced to serve for a minimum period of five years in the military – where large losses of life were of little concern. Gottesman (2004) writes of the men and women who were sent to the western frontline to clear forest where the remaining KR army was based. He details wide-spread accounts of soldiers being without sufficient food and equipment – sometimes to the point of starvation. Relatives of those recruited were not only miss-informed about the deployment of family members, but were often not informed in cases where family members were killed at the front line.

On the front line, the regime instilled fear and insecurity through excessive use and abuse of power. Gottesman cites a drafted report prepared by state bureaucrats for the central state meeting in 1985 as follows:

Arbitrary searches, arrests, detentions, and imprisonments occur practically everywhere. Arrests, detentions, and imprisonments are getting more abusive. There are arrests without actual evidence, without a clear investigation, and without a file. Most arrests are followed by imprisonment based only on the report of a single person or merely on suspicion. ….there are hundreds of people detained for months or years. The arresting and detaining organizations have no intention of sending detainees to the organizations responsible for prosecution. Adjudications
don’t occur, because there are no files and no evidence at all, and yet detainees are not released…

Officials abuse their power, frequently assaulting people over small matters… a cadre drew a pistol at a merchant in his house simply because the merchant refused to sell him a case of beer. After they argued face to face, the cadre beat him, breaking his face and his mouth and sending him to the hospital. That didn’t satisfy him: the cadre used his personal influence to get the Phnom Penh police to arrest the merchant in the hospital, while he was still receiving serum…. The chief of the provincial military beat a commerce cadre…and injured one of his eyes because he didn’t provide some goods on time…. A policeman used his own gun to shoot and kill a school teacher over a case involving the teaching of children. … police cadre shot and killed someone merely on suspicion of having connections to the enemy, and another police cadre in the province shot and killed another person while arresting four people drinking beer.

Many searches of homes occurred without proper authorization or beyond the limits of what the law permits. And the confiscation of objects is not limited to the tools of offense or the fruits of the offense. There is also the confiscation of family property and the property of other people who are present. (Quoted in Gottesman p. 239-240)

These accounts show that the then Cambodian state penetrated into the deepest levels of society. Its power over its citizens was raw and unchallenged. These accounts also show how state apparatuses were used to rob citizens of a dignified life.

**State of Cambodia**

In 1989, Cambodia changed its name to the State of Cambodia, and it used this name until the first post-war general elections in 1993. The period between 1989 and 1993 saw an intensive consolidation of power in the hands of the Hun Sen regime, a process which Gottesman (2004:205) describes as ‘A masterful bureaucratic in-fighter, Hun Sen, was quietly taking charge of a country.’ Gottesman gives a comprehensive account of how Hun Sen acquired and consolidated power in Cambodia. First, he employed a tactic of weakening the party system by placing power in his own personal network of patron-clientelism. Rather than assigning positions to the Hanoi veterans, he built up the state machinery with his former KR cadres. Gottesman (2004) argues that these people had more political experience and were less ideologically-oriented and more pragmatic. Gottesman (2004) writes

The former Khmer Rouge cadres…had already survived political battles that were more treacherous and deadly than those they faced under the PRK. They had learned over the course of their revolutionary careers that whereas ideologies are
subject to unpredictable shifts, loyal patronage systems are the key to political survival. (p. 212)

These qualities made them suitable elements in Hun Sen’s kinship based state machinery.

Secondly, he divided and took over the management of key state institutions and appointed his close allies to run them. One example was the control of the distribution of humanitarian assistance which was moved from the Ministry of Commerce to the Council of Ministers in 1985.

Gottesman (2004) describes Hun Sen as the right person the Vietnamese government was looking for to take over Cambodia. He not only had the ability to consolidate power but was willing to use it. By 1987, Hun Sen had managed to build a strong political network consisting of state officials who were close to him and who held key positions. This signified the emergence of the new Hun Sen regime which had distinctly predatory characteristics. In this kind of regime, the state is run by a group of personally connected individuals who hold key state positions (Evens, 1989).

The discussion of the historical evolution of the Cambodia state provides important contextual information for understanding the character and nature of the contemporary Cambodian state. This is crucial to understanding the dynamics of governance reform programmes, which are discussed in the following section.

**Regime Change**
The decade of the 1990s saw several fundamental changes to Cambodian politics. It marked the end of a long running civil war, and the signing of a peace deal between all Cambodian warring parties, which later came to be known as the 1991 Paris peace accords. The Paris peace agreement paved the way for the UN sponsored elections held in 1993, which signified an important change in the political landscape, which to that point had solely featured a one-party political system.

The 1993 elections introduced the concept and practice of multi-party democracy, where Cambodian citizens were able to cast their votes for a party of their choice from a lit of over 20 political parties. It also introduced the liberal democratic principle of one person, one vote. Over 96 percent of the country’s eligible population had registered to vote, and 90 percent of them actually voted. The election resulted in a coalition government of the two main parties; The National United Front for an Independent,
Neutral, Peaceful and Cooperative Cambodia (FUNCINPEC) (which won 45.47 percent of the vote), and the Cambodian People’s Party (CPP) (which won 38.23 percent of the vote).

However, elections proceeded with great irregularities. The dominant political party had been accused of employing a range of tactics including vote buying, violent and non-violent intimidation against other participating parties, and murders before, during and after the elections in a bid to secure electoral victory (Amnesty International, 2010; Hughes, 1999). Another important point is that the current lack of violence before elections is not due to democratization, but an entrenchment of patron-client relationships (and the domination of the major political party) right down to the local level. The multi party election was primarily a quantitative indicator of democracy and good governance, but it does not reflect the quality of democracy (Ojendal, 1996). Up until the time of the general elections in 1993, Cambodia was a communist, one party state, with all the state’s most senior bureaucrats being members of the central committee. There was no distinction between the state and the party. The 1993 elections that gave rise to a multi-party system came as a shock to the one-party state system. FUNCINPEC was set to take lead of the government, but the main political objective at the time was national reconciliation, rather than bureaucratic transformation. FUNCINPEC’s entry into the state system did not displace the previous power holders (the CPP), but instead resulted in the creation of a new shadow bureaucracy which sat beside the already existent one (Hughes, 2002, 2003).

After the general elections in 1993, more political parties were created. One of the most notable ones was the National Party, which was created in 1995 and was renamed the Sam Rainsy Party in 1998. It was named after its leader, Sam Rainsy who received his tertiary education in France and remained living there for the time of the Cambodian civil war. In the period leading up to the elections, he presented his party as the new light of hope as symbolised by a candle on the party logo. It quickly gained popularity among the educated segment of the population (mainly in Phnom Penh), which gave the party 15 of the 123 national assembly seats in the 1998’s election (Ear, 2012). For the next five years, the party continued to rise in popularity as evident in its ability to secure 24, and 26 out of the 123 seats in the national assembly in the 2003 and 2008 national elections respectively (Ear, 2012).
Meanwhile, the CPP actively tried to maintain its dominance through what Un and So (2009:134) call ‘mass-based patronage politics’. During this time the CPP went on an aggressive party recruitment drive and managed to enlist almost all state bureaucrats as party members. The positions of key bureaucrats also became linked to their ability to secure seats in the electorates they were assigned to. For that reason, those officials would make frequent trips to visit their electorates in the name of CPP. Un (2011) writes

Since 1998, the CPP has retooled the working group-known as the Party Working Groups (PWG)-transforming them into development agents hierarchically and systematically linked to the CPP's networks of patronage and the state structure. These working groups systematically permeate, supersede and in some cases operate parallel to state institutions to channel centrally controlled resources to local communities. (p. 556)

Those CPP members bring with them cash and other gifts, essentially filling in the gap that has been left by the states abysmal attempts at service delivery. They build schools, temples, and road and irrigation networks in the name of the CPP. With the majority of the population living in poverty in rural areas, the CPP has successfully molded itself around the rural constituency, which has led to it becoming the dominant party (Un, 2001).

The CPP has also put in place strategies of harassment and intimidation in order to weaken opposition parties (Ojendal & Antlov, 1998; Un, 2011). One extreme example was the factional fighting of 1997. Since the establishment of the coalition government in 1993, the two partners in government had been at odds over political ideology, personal differences and most important of all, competition over the control of key state ministries. There was a military build-up between 1993 and 1997. The tension escalated to outbreaks of violence on July 5, 1997 that led to the ousting of the first PM, Prince Ranariddh, and the assassinations of many high level politicians from the FUNCINPEC party (United Nations, 1998).

The fighting in 1997 symbolised a major threat to the new multi-party system, in that both political parties depended on military power to solve their political conflicts. The international community described the event as a CPP-coup against FUNCINPEC (Peou, 2000). Inside Cambodia, the fighting signified the end to political rivalries where CPP firmly held a monopoly on the legitimate use of violence. With the head of the FUNCINPEC party out of the country, CPP resumed its supremacy in the Cambodian political arena once again. The CPP allowed FUNCINPEC to remain a coalition partner,
on the condition that it replaced its leader. Subsequently FUNCINPEC chose one of its most liberal members, the then Minister of Education, to take the Prince’s place and be the first Prime Minister in partnership with the CPP.

In the aftermath of the fighting, FUNCINPEC went into steep decline. There were widespread allegations of corruption among the FUNCINPEC officials, which stood in stark contrast to the earlier expectations that the voting public had toward the party. In terms of performance, FUNCINPEC did not bring any significant changes in the way the government functioned. Un (2011) argues

Due to its inability to transform itself from an armed resistance movement to a political party, poor leadership and internal division, FUNCINPEC has disintegrated. (p. 556)

In the period that followed, the CPP was actively involved in the policy of divide-and-conquer in its treatment of the opposition. Taking advantage of disillusionment surrounding FUNCINPEC, the CPP aggressively tried to incorporate FUNCINPEC members into its own ranks (Peou, 2000). By the second general election in 1998, FUNCINPEC received only 31.71 percent of votes compared to 45.47 percent in 1993 (Gallup, 2002). Internal conflict and external pressure from the CPP led to further decline (Poole, 2009). FUNCINPEC was split into two, the old FUNCINPEC and the Norodom Ranariddh (NRD) party led by Prince Ranariddh. According to the Cambodian Information Centre, in 2008 FUNCINPEC received 5.05 percent and NRD 5.62 percent of votes where both parties were heading for further decline, passing the position of primary opposition party to SRP which received 21.91 percent of votes in the same election (Ear, 2012).

Once it had become the main opposition party, the SRP became the target of the CPP. SRP policies have been seen to directly confront those of the CPP. Sam Rainsy has been an outspoken critic of corruption and inefficiency which has occurred under CPP leadership. In 2005, Sam Rainsy was charged with defamation and was sentenced on December 22, 2005 to 18 months in jail, and was ordered to pay a fine of USD 14,000 (Yun, 2005). He was only acquitted after Prime Minister Hun Sen requested the then King Sihanouk for a royal pardon. However, Sam Rainsy’s outspoken criticism of the government continued. Particularly, he strongly criticized Prime Minister Hun Sen for his attitude towards the Vietnamese government, accusing him of being a Vietnamese puppet. On October 25, 2009, Sam Rainsy was charged with racial incitement for his role in an
earlier protest that led to the removal of border poles alleged to be unilaterally placed by the Vietnamese government on Cambodian land (Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada, 2010). There are now more new opposition parties in Cambodia, but it is not clear what affect their existence and operation will have on the Cambodian political system. What is clear now is that the Cambodia political system remains dominated by the CPP. This supremacy has been attained and sustained by its tactic of mass political rallying as well as tactics of intimidation and incorporation (Amnesty International, 2010; Un, 2011).

The above detailed discussion of relation between the ruling and the opposition parties is essential for understanding the political processes that shapes the Cambodian state, and it is relevant for the understanding of the process and likelihood of success for political reforms to be discussed in the following section. Bratton and Walle (1997) argue that the existing political regime has negatively affected the likelihood of success of any governance reforms. Thus, knowing the political process and the behaviour of the state is important for understanding why certain governance reform programmes might succeed or fail to bring bureaucratic change to Cambodia.

**Good Governance Reforms**

As Cambodia came to be accepted as a multi-party democracy, further reforms have been introduced in order to further strengthen newly created institutions. One of the most important of these reforms has been the decentralisation and deconcentration (D&D) of governance. D&D originated from a United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) project. With the end of the civil wars, UNDP carried out the Cambodia Resettlement and Reintegration (CARERE) project to repatriate refugees and the internally displaced back into Cambodia. To facilitate their integration, the CARERE project created a food for work programme that focused on the restoration and reconstruction of damaged infrastructure. Developed on this model, CARERE II (1993-1996) evolved into a pilot project to improve local institutions and local capacity for service delivery. CARERE was designed to promote decentralised systems of planning, financing and implementation, by directly involving provincial authorities in financial planning and the implementation of local development projects.

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2 While acting against opposition parties, CPP, at the same time, has been openly accepting individuals from other parties who have defected to the CPP, welcoming them by rewarding them with better state positions. This has been seen as an effective strategy to CPP employs to weaken the opposition parties.
In 1996, CARERE II was replaced by the Seila programme. Seila in Sanskrit means foundation stone, and as the name suggests, the Seila programme was an experimental governance reform program that aimed to achieve poverty alleviation by strengthening local government capacity, especially at the provincial and commune levels. In its first phase, from 1996-2000, Siela’s main achievement was the establishment of a nationwide network of Village Development Committees (VDCs). This signified a shift from top-down governance to local level ownership of development.

In 2001, the Commune/Sangkat\(^3\) Law and the Law on Commune Elections were passed, marking the formal beginning of decentralisation reform in the country. The passing of the law was followed by the communal election in 2002, where commune authorities were directly elected by the local constituency. Meanwhile, the Seila program continued to assist in the strengthening of local capacity. In its second phase, from 2001-2005, Seila was up-scaled from being a parallel system to administer development, to a national program of decentralisation and deconcentration (D&D). It operated at a national level, to mobilise and coordinate development assistance, and it also introduced a new system of development financing where local governments were given funds that allowed them to be fully responsible for the development plans of their own localities (Niazi, 2011). Two important mechanisms here were the Commune-level Local Development Fund (LDF) and the Provincial Investment Fund (PIF).

D&D aimed to create a system of unified administration (Royal Government of Cambodia, 2005). In line with that, the government adopted the Strategic Framework for Decentralisation and Deconcentration Reform in 2005 that paved the way for the creation and adoption of the Law on Administrative Management of the Capital, Provinces Municipalities, District and Khans, in 2008. The law is known as the Organic Law, and it serves as the basis for the establishment of directly elected province/municipality and district/Khan\(^4\) councils. The strategic goal of D&D was to strengthen and expand local democracy, promote local development and reduce poverty. These were to be achieved by a list of principles that are worth citing at length here.

Democratic representation: the reforms will strengthen the roles of councils at provincial/municipal, district/khan and commune/sangkat administrations to be

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\(^3\)Sangkat is an administrative unit similar to commune, but this term is used specifically Phnom Penh area.

\(^4\) Khan is an administrative unit similar to district, but this term is used specifically Phnom Penh area.
established in accordance with the principles of democracy by expanding the powers, duties, responsibilities and resources.

Participation of the people: the reforms will introduce systems and procedures so as to ensure that people, especially women, vulnerable groups and indigenous minorities can participate in decision-making at provincial/municipal, district/khan and commune/sangkat levels.

Public sector accountability: reform will strengthen accountability at all levels of administration and facilitate citizens’ oversight of the administrative and financial affairs of those administrations.

Effectiveness: reform will bring public services closer to users by allowing citizens to participate in planning and monitoring public services in order to meet local needs and priorities. The reform will also improve administration and coordination, strengthen the management capacity of provinces/municipalities, districts/khans and communes/sangkats in order to promote the quality of services and expand the delivery of public services.

Focusing on poverty reduction: the reforms will strengthen local capacity in using resources to support poverty reduction activities, especially vulnerable groups, indigenous minorities and women and children in order to achieve the Millennium Development Goals of Cambodia (Royal Government of Cambodia, 2005: 5-6)

In short, D&D reforms aim to achieve a system of democratic governance at the sub-national and local government level through local representation by means of popular participation in decision-making processes, It also aims to close the gap between the state and society through the improvement of service delivery, and reduction of poverty. But as discussed earlier, governance reforms such as the D&D often face challenges from the ruling elites who see reforms as a threat to their position and livelihood. This could result in a situation where old and new elements of governance coexist.

**Effects of Reforms on Governance Structure**

Bratton and Walle (1992) argue that externally imposed governance reforms are not often able to bring about substantial changes to the operation of host states. The experience of governance reform in Cambodia is no exception. It has been over two decades since attempts to bring democracy to Cambodia first began, and opinions are divided over the effects of those governance reforms. There seems to exist two camps of scholars of the Cambodian reforms studies. The first one makes up of those who tend to look at the effects of reforms from a comparative perspective with empirical evidence collected at local levels, while the second group comprises those who more or less adopt a normative perspective in their studies. Some of the most well-known and most recent work by
scholars of the first camp include Ojendal and Kim (2006, 2007, 2009, 2011), Heng et al (2011) and McAndrew (2004). Ojendal and Kim (2011), for example, argue that the effects of D&D are beginning to take place. They argue that in general, democracy is beginning in Cambodia, and the political space has opened up in ways that improve the relations between civil society and the local state. Commune councilors believe that the new decentralised governance system is different from the old one in that fear and anger are replaced by respect and trust. They argue that the improved relationship between the local state and society is evident by public perceptions that the authority of the commune level government was more respected by ordinary citizens in 2009, compared to the pre-decentralisation period style of government of fear and distance. The local state's legitimacy is derived from its ability to deliver development, while simultaneously having an image of being non-authoritarian and non-corrupt. At the same time, commune councilors must feel that they are primarily accountable to the people. In regard to how much the D&D reforms have led to a democratic-deepening, the authors argue that there is a widespread public perception that commune councils are democratically elected. The public believe that they can hold the commune authority accountable for their actions through the mechanism of elections.

However, the basis on which these evaluations are made is debatable. The authors point out that these judgments are based on the perceptions and feelings of the public which can be entirely distinct from the actual practices of local government. While an increase in local awareness of democratic principle is undoubtedly occurring, it remains unclear how deep democratic reforms are penetrating. This leads to the argument of the second camp, which is comprised of such work done by Hughes, (2009); Un (2005, 2006, 2009, 2011) and Blunt and Turner (2005). Blunt and Turner (2005) argue that Cambodia does not have the necessary social and political conditions for good governance reforms to take place meaningfully. Historically, popular legitimacy had never been the source of power in Cambodia. The state rules by creating fear among the citizenry and distance between the ruled and ruler (Mabbett & Chandler, 1995). Cambodian society is a hierarchical society, with social and political relations categorised by a practice of patron-clientelism (Blunt & Turner, 2005; Chandler, 1993; Ojendal, 2005). Similarly, Smoke and Morrison (2008) argue that the process of decentralization in Cambodia is challenged by the country’s history of centralization and its institutional structure non-characteristic of
decentralised governance. As a result, D&D reforms have failed to introduce fundamental liberal democratic practices into Cambodian politics (Ashley, 1998; Heder, 2005; Rusten et al., 2004). Instead, the level of success was limited to what some would term procedural democracy (Diamond, 1999). Since the launching of governance reforms in 1993, elections, both communal and national ones, have been held at a regular interval to allow the citizens to select their representatives. However, Hughes (2003) argues that the actual conduct of elections does not entail the deepening of democracy, and elections themselves generally have no real impacts on policy formation and implementation. In an essay discussing the conduct of elections in Cambodia, Hughes (2009) argues that elections in Cambodia serve to legitimise political authority but this authority is not necessarily legitimate in the sense of a pluralist democracy. This is because, electoral victory in Cambodia depends not on personal quality of the candidates but on their ability to mobilise voter support through the inspiration of fear and the promise of security.

Attempts to limit the power of the central state have also failed. In terms of decentralisation, the 2002 and 2007 commune elections did not succeed in creating an accountable local government. Blunt and Turner (2005) argue that central government agencies retain control over communes in a complex and overlapping system, ensuring that political interests are safeguarded while the communes remain ineffective. Rusten et al. (2004) argue that local authorities have been unable to achieve meaningful autonomy. They categorise Cambodia as a centralised democracy, where orders still largely flow from the top to the bottom. The most important change that has occurred from these reforms, is that Cambodia now has the appearance of a democratic regime, without making substantial changes to the way power flows (Ashley, 1998; Heder, 2005; Hughes, 2009; Kim & Ojendal, 2009; Un, 2011). In the wake of reform, the system of upward accountability remains strong. State institutions are appropriated by powerful individuals (Un & So, 2009), where recruitment of civil servants is still governed by loyalty and personal ties to the leadership as well as pre-entry payments and monthly loyalty payments (Eng & Craig, 2009).

Un (2006) argues that Cambodian political elites use their networks to further strengthen their position by providing benefits to clients in ways that weaken vertical and horizontal accountability. In addition, Un (2011:555) argues that the Cambodian state is ‘becoming an authoritarian state with a stable hegemonic party system dominated by the
CPP’. That is, party affairs take priority above all other affairs. At one level, Un’s (2011) argument emphasises the problems that arise from the fusion of state and party. At another level, Un’s (2011) inclusion of the term ‘hegemonic’ in the description of the Cambodian party system suggests that the dominant political party does not just coexist alongside the state, but is a key institution where power is held which supersedes the state. Lemarch and Legg (1972:176) argue that in this system, modernization could not take place as a result of an ‘excessive volume of demands imposed upon the system via party-directed patronage’. As a result, state institutional capacity is replaced by direct party interventions (Niazi, 2011).

With all these developments, the D&D objective of improving local accountability, participation, representation and responsiveness are highly questionable if assessed from a normative perspective. A system of bottom-up democracy that reforms tried to get at is at best shallow, raising doubt over the societal group ability to demand accountability from the state. This entails serious complications for the relations of power between the state and the society, and it gives rise to instances of the exercise of illegitimate power. Together with territorial strategy, which, as seen in the earlier section, can serve as an effective tool of power, the hybrid nature of political power in Cambodia could potentially be dangerous.

In summary, the Cambodian state is a neo-patrimonial state. It has evolved through a variety of non-democratic regimes, from the French colonial period, to the monarchy, the genocidal KR regime, and the post-conflict regime. Attempts to introduce democratic reforms to ease the transition from a centralised one-party state have not succeeded in bringing about a new democratic regime. Rather, what has emerged is a neo-patrimonial regime. The legacy of communism and the subsequent good governance reforms have shaped the development of the Cambodian political system in ways that give the contemporary regime distinctly neo-patrimonial characteristics.

Research Framework
The Cambodian state is characterised as a neo-patrimonial state which according to the literature of neo-patrimonialism has the following characteristics:

- Power is derived from personal connections and relations of loyalty and dependence (Bratton & Walle, 1992)
- Power is personal and it is based on a person not an office (Medard, 1982; Theobold, 1982)
Public offices are used for personal wealth accumulation (Bratton & Walle, 1992)
Insecurity of state agents and weak state institution (Erdmann & Engel, 2006)
Behaviour of state agents and institutions is unpredictable with combined elements of formal and informal logics (Erdmann & Engel, 2006)
There is no distinction between the dominant political party and the state (Rakner & Svasand, 2005)

This thesis seeks to further explore how this kind of state, through territorial strategies, exercises its power over society.

This thesis takes Bakker’s and Bridge’s (2008) argument that states use resource regulation as an arena for expanding control over society. Though modernization projects, states claim responsibility for natural resource governance and in doing so they manage both human and non-human nature (Bakker and Bridge 2008). Vandergeest and Peluso (1995) refer to this kind of control as internal/state territorialisation where states do not control societies directly, but through the control of space in which societies operate.

With this conceptual understanding of the relation between states and societies, this thesis employs Sack’s (1986) concept of territoriality as the framework of analysis for how states exercise power over societies. Sack (1986) argues that territorialisation processes involve:

- a changing logic of resource governance
- mapping
- communication of the intention to control
- demarcation, and
- enforcement

The thesis uses these concepts of territorialisation to understand how the state employs power over society. But ‘the state’ is not an unproblematic concept. This thesis also benefits from a discussion of different types of states and the nature of their power. Power in a legal rational state is more impersonal and based upon the rule of law, while power in a neo-patrimonial state is more personal and less predictable. The thesis incorporates this concept of neo-patrimonial power with an understanding of territorial strategy, to examine how a neo-patrimonial state engages these processes.

This thesis also benefits from a conceptual understanding of the connection between territoriality and power. Central to this conceptual understanding is Lefebvre’s
(1991) concept of space as lived space and representational space, and the process by which representational space takes over lived space. Also important is Penrose’s (2002) discussion of space as having the material power to sustain life, and the emotional power created out of a sense of connection. This allows for a conceptualisation of space that sees the control of space as the exercise of power.

In investigating power, this thesis benefits from a discussion of the concept of power as; power to, power over and power as dominance. This thesis conceptualises the exercise of power as not just the observable use of physical force, but also as more subtle non-tangible forms of power such as coercion and discourse.

Power is also conceptualised as an unequal relation between different social groups. This conceptualisation expands the framework of analysis to going beyond simple power-exercising. Thus to make the study of power complete, this thesis also looks at the receiving end to find out how power affects those who it is aimed at. To this end, the thesis uses resource governance as a lens through which the exercise of power is examined, with a particular focus on a state project to demarcate the Tonle Sap area, which forms the case study of this thesis. The following section provides the context to this project.

**Tonle Sap Governance**

**Geography and Usage of Tonle Sap**
Locally known as Boeng Tonle Sap (Tonle Sap lake) and internationally known as the great lake of Tonle Sap, Tonle Sap is one of the biggest natural fresh water lakes in Asia. It covers an area of 3000 square kilometers in the dry season, and it expands between five to six times in the rainy seasons (Asian Development Bank, 2005b). It is situated in the middle of Cambodia, stretching across six of Cambodia’s 24 provinces. The Tonle Sap lake is also connected to the Mekong River by the Tonle Sap River. In the rainy season, when the Mekong’s water rises as a result of rain and the melting of ice in Tibet, the Tonle Sap lake swells, flooding much of the surrounding vegetation in those six provinces.
The Tonle Sap area is divided into three main areas. First, the core area consists of the lake itself. This area sees a high degree of fishing which has given the lake a reputation as one of the most significant sources of fresh water fish the region (Asian Development Bank, 2005b). It has an estimate of annual fish harvest between 180,000-280,000 tones (Campbell et. al, 2006). It contributes 60 percent of Cambodian inland fish production to serve both the domestic and regional fish market (Matsui et al, 2006).

Secondly, surrounding the core area is a ring of seasonally flooded forest, also known as the inundated forest area. It covers an area of 795,000 hectares (Asian Development Bank, 2005). In this area, there are many different varieties of trees which are highly adaptive to flood and drought conditions. One variety, known locally as anchagn (*Diospyros cambodiana*), can grow up to 1.5 meters per year, and can withstand being submerged under flood waters for most of the wet-season, while surviving drought and even wild fire in the dry season. The flooding of the forest coincides with the fish hatching season, making the flooded forest a breeding, nursery and forage area for fish of the Mekong River basin. This makes it one of the most important environments in terms of fish productivity (Asian Development Bank, 2003a; Petr, 2000). This area also serves other purposes for local residents. In the dry season, this area serves as an important source of firewood and provides building materials for local residents (Asian Development Bank, 2005b).
The third area is referred to as the transition area or locally known as the floating rice area. This area is located between wet season rice paddy fields and the seasonally flooded forest area. In this area, Cambodian farmers cultivate floating rice crops, a local rice variety commonly known as, *Srov Via* (*Oryza rufipogon*). *Srov* means rice, and *via* can be literally translated as crawling, which also connotes a notion of tying to keep up. This rice variety earns its name as *Srov Via* for its ability to keeps up with the rising level of water which can reach up to heights of three and a half meters.

**Figure 2: Sketch of concept of the three areas in Tonle Sap flood plain**

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**Issues of Tonle Sap Governance**

Although there are three areas in the Tonle Sap flood plain, from a practical and ecological point of view, there is a need for only one line of boundary demarcation. This is due to the fact that flooded forest exists for the purpose of fish productivity, and from a land use perspective is indistinguishable from the core area. This is because both fall under a protected zone, and the expansion of one does not harm the other. The boundary line between the flooded forest and floating rice area is entirely different. The expansion of one results in an incursion into the other as both are of a limited amount of land and accompanied by different land use practices.
However, the division between the flooded forest and floating rice area has not been clearly marked on the ground. The earliest and perhaps only time, when any such boundary poles were placed was during the French colonial era. According to Zalinge et al (2000), the earliest legal document on territorial division between the three areas was the fishery law introduced by the French in 1911. Zalinge et al. (2000) suggest that the law was introduced not primarily for the purpose of flooded forest protection, but for fish harvest governance and taxation. The flooded forest became a topic of concern due to its significant role in fish production.

However, the boundary poles have since entirely disappeared on the ground due to war, negligence and vandalism. Historically, Cambodia has been endowed with abundant natural fish resources. In addition to the abundant fish resources in the Tonle Sap lake, Cambodians have freely been able to access and benefit from fish resources which are abundant in the nations many river systems, natural ponds, lakes and rice fields. Thus, for much of Cambodia’s history, the issue of fish scarcity has been irrelevant, with protection of fishery areas not arising as a significant issue.

Politically, Cambodia had gone through a series of regime changes which have paid little attention to the issue of boundary demarcation at the Tonle Sap. The KR regime, for example, emphasised farming intensification, but not environmental protection. During the three years and eight months under its reign, Cambodia saw expansion of farmland and the development of irrigation systems at great human and environmental cost (Pijpers, 1989). When the PRK came to power, the regime’s immediate priorities of the time were food security and defense. To feed the starving population, PRK gave rice production the highest priority. People were encouraged, in fact required, to work in collectivised groups known as Krom Samakei. In some areas where there was a land scarcity, the groups were encouraged to clear forest and flooded forest to increase rice cultivation. Meanwhile, the PRK was under constant attacks from the remaining troops of the KR who fled and hid in the forested area of the Tonle Sap flood plain. Thus, it was desirable for farmers to clear those forests for farmland.

Meanwhile, despite the absence of physical demarcation, the boundary line had been more or less respected by local floating rice farmers. Despite the fact that the poles had long disappeared, knowledge of the boundary had been passed on through local oral
histories, and local markers such as trees and ponds have played a role as boundary markers. This is not to suggest that local wisdom can substitute for a clear property regime. There have also been important economic disincentives to clearing flooded forest as it is forms an unproductive and unpredictable landscape for farming.

However, the situation in the Tonle Sap area has changed rapidly as a result of the country’s development. The 1980s and 1990s saw intensified extraction and exploitation of natural resources as Cambodia liberalised its economy (McKenney & Prom, 2002). In the same period, the Tonle Sap also experienced intense resource exploitation from powerful internal actors (Global Witness, 2009; Gum, 2000; Lopez, 2002). The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (2001) notes that the once public fishing space of the Tonle Sap Lake were sub-divided into private fishing lots, and in 2001, the number of large-scale private fishing lots reached 239. The intensified harvest of fish, together with the increased use of illegal fishing gear, resulted in a nationwide concern for the well-being of the Tonle Sap.

There are a numbers of studies which point out the negative consequences of the fall in annual fish harvest from the Tonle Sap lake. They point to a number of causative factors emerging from international to local scales; from the damming of the Mekong River to the increasing uses of illegal fishing tools in the lake itself. However, the reduction in annual fish catch from the lake is mainly linked to the disappearance of flooded forest (Asian Development Bank, 2005b). The Asian Development Bank (2005b) reports that flooded forest area fell from 795,000 hectares in 1985 to 370,000 hectares in 1992, and then less than 20,000 hectares in 1997. Evans et al (2004) argue that 50 percent of the area of flooded forest around the Tonle Sap lake was destroyed between 1980 and 1998.

The disappearance of the flooded forest has been blamed on the absence of a clearly marked boundary line on the ground. This has allowed for the expansion of rice cultivation at the cost of the flooded forest (Asian Development Bank, 2003a, 2005b). Due to the importance of rice cultivation within this story, I shall give a detailed account of floating rice cultivation in the following section.
General Context of Floating Rice Agriculture
Floating rice cultivation is a common agricultural practice in the flood plain of the Tonle Sap lake. Traditionally, local farmers would begin floating rice cultivation after they had planted and harvested their wet season crop. The reason for this arrangement is that the cultivation of floating rice is regarded as a secondary activity. Farmers depend on wet rice paddy for both food supply and as a cash crop, while treating the harvest from floating rice as an additional income source. Farmers, by tradition, started to plough their fields in March, using the traditional plow pulled by buffaloes. The ploughing is often labour intensive and time-consuming, lasting usually until early April, depending on the rainfall pattern for that particular year. Then later in April, or in some years in May, the farmers broadcast seeds onto the plowed field, which would later be harrowed, so that the seeds become covered by soil and protected from wild birds. Once the rain starts to fall, the seeds absorb water and they begin to germinate, thus beginning the cycle of the rice plant.

The practice of floating rice farming is totally dependent on the weather. Farmers time the broadcasting to ensure that the saplings growing pattern matches the rainfall pattern in order to ensure a maximum chance of crop survival. The timing of the broadcast has to be selected very carefully, and is usually done in accordance with the prediction that takes place in Phnom Penh during the royal ploughing and rain prediction ceremony. If it is predicted that the rain fall would come late, the floating rice farmers will choose to delay their time of seed broadcasting. If the time is chosen correctly, the rice plants will grow rapidly and anticipate the arrival of flood waters that occurs in late August. In late April or early May, there is often minimal rain, thus there is barely enough water to sustain the young plants. Once they grow bigger and require more water, there is usually rain to assist the growth. The rice plants are then left to depend totally on rainfall for growth, generally until the beginning of September when the water from the expanding Tonle Sap lake reaches the area. By this time, the rice plants are mature enough to keep up with the rising level of flood water, which could, in some years, reach as high as three and a half meters. If the flood water is not too erratic, the rice plants will grow to keep up with the rising water levels. The whole area will remain flooded until the end of November, or in some years, the first or second week of December. By this time the rice plants are seven months old, and they already have panicles. When the flood water retreats, the rice plants subside, and under the weight of the grains, they all lie flat in the field. Then it takes another three
or four weeks for the panicles to mature and the grains to dry before the farmers begin harvesting.

Irregular rain fall patterns and the great variation in the level of Tonle Sap flood water makes floating rice cultivation highly vulnerable to variable climatic conditions. According to local accounts, in good years, the farmers can, at best, get only one and a half tonnes per hectare. In bad years, they could get as little as 100 kg of harvest per hectare.

However, according to recent local trends in farming, there are more bad years than good ones. Often the rain does not come soon enough, leaving the rice seed vulnerable to wild birds. In other years, the rainfall is not evenly spaced, making the young rice plants either too wet or too dry. In case of either too much water or too little, the rice plants do not grow properly, meaning they will be unable to cope with the arrival of the flood waters. Local farmers describe the likelihood of success of floating rice farming as: ‘for four total crop failures, there will be one decent harvest’. For this reason farmers do not attach a high level of importance to floating rice cultivation. As a result, most local farmers have a tendency to abandon floating rice cultivation land to other land uses. By the early 1990s, few local farmers could be found who consistently farmed floating rice. Then there came the big flood of 1996, when all floating rice crops in the area were damaged, which effectively brought an end to the floating rice cultivation in the area.

After this there was a steady decline in the amount of land dedicated to floating rice production. For the remaining area, although private property was still recognised, the floating rice area came to be used as common space for villagers. It is a space that serves many functions of the local community. It provides a space for subsistence fishing, a space for animal herding, and a space for the collection of building materials and firewood. In the dry season, particularly around early February, groups of local villagers, mostly women, go into the area to harvest a local grass which can be used as a roof thatch. Some would harvest roofing materials needed to fix their decaying roofs or those which were destroyed during the previous monsoon season. By late April or early May, the vegetation becomes very dry and the temperature reaches a high of almost 40 C, making wild fires a common occurrence. Groups of local men go into the area to collect firewood from tree branches broken off during high winds in the monsoon season, or those left over after wild fires, to stock up for use throughout the wet season.
After decades of neglect, the area of floating rice received renewed interest once again when, at the beginning of the 2000s, a few farmers in Siem Reap, one of the six provinces around the Tonle Sap, stumbled upon a new possibility for farming in the area. It was, to start with, a simple idea. The floating rice area has many natural ponds and lakes which are filled by flood water from the expanding Tonle Sap lake. In the dry season, when the flood water retreats, a sizable volume of water remains trapped in those ponds and lakes, making them a potential source of irrigation water. Seeing the presence of water in those ponds and lakes, those farmers grew dry season rice by pumping water from those ponds to irrigate their fields. It proved to be a success. Unlike growing floating rice which is totally at the mercy of the rainfall and flooding pattern, dry season rice farming allows the local farmer a greater flexibility in the cultivation time and control over the management of water supply to the field, which is one of the most important factors for success in rice farming. Thus, the risk of crop failure is minimised, while the benefits of using a high yielding production system are capitalised upon. The new yield was reported to reach an impressive rate of four tonnes per hectare (some cases of up to eight tonnes) compared to an average of just under one tonne for floating rice and 2.3 tonnes for the national average for the wet season rice harvest.

**Figure 3: Sketch of dry season rice cultivation and natural pond**

![Sketch of dry season rice cultivation and natural pond](image)

A sketch of an early irrigation scheme in Siem Reap province. When Tonle Sap flood water retreats, some water is trapped in these natural ponds, and it can be pumped to irrigate dry season rice in the surrounding areas. But the amount of water is limited due to the size of the ponds.

However, there was a limitation. The innovation of dry season irrigation resulted in a higher crop yield, but it was inefficient in the sense that it required a proportionally larger area of water storage. Most of the natural ponds and lakes in the area are not big enough,
nor deep enough to store a significant amount of water. With an average size of less than one hectare, and depth of less than a meter, one pond can often supply enough irrigation water to only two hectares of rice field. Thus, the success is limited to small-scale farming. It was not until early 2000s, when farmers with greater access to capital, took up a new innovation in engineering. These people were not originally farmers but business people and government officials who reside in the provincial towns or the capital city of Phnom Penh, and who have been looking for investment opportunities. Instead of relying on natural ponds and lakes, they built retention reservoirs to trap the flood water and stored it to use for dry season rice farming. The reservoirs, instead of being dug in the ground, sit on the surface of the land area with earthen embankments made from piles of soil. When the area is flooded in the wet season, flood water is allowed to enter the reservoir through a series of strategically placed water gates, but as the flood retreats, those gates are closed, trapping the water.

This particular design offers two economic advantages. First, it costs much less to construct. To dig a conventional pond, one has to dig up and move all of the soil to make the pond. The innovative design of the retention reservoir in the area does not require digging the ground. The construction cost is minimised to only the cost of moving the soil to build the embankment, which is estimated to be one tenth the value of material required for a conventional one. Second, the design allows for a low cost irrigation system based on gravity. Unlike the original idea of pumping water from the ponds, the retention reservoir has its water storage area above the area to be irrigated, thus making it possible for the farmers to practice gravity irrigation and minimise or even eliminate the cost of pumping.

**Figure 4: Sketch of retention reservoir design**
A sketch of a private irrigation scheme in Kampong Thom province. Unlike in the earlier model, an irrigation reservoir is built on the surface of land in the command area. It is made up of raised embankment. There are two distinct advantage of this design. It costs less to build and it costs less to operate as it depends on gravity.

These retention reservoirs resulted in significant changes to the floating rice area. Prior to the creation of the retention reservoirs, the floating rice area was of little productive value, as nothing can grow on it due to the extreme dry conditions in the dry season, and deep flood water in the wet. But the innovation not only makes the area cultivatable, but also one of the best and most fertile types of land for cultivation. On top of the advantages of low construction and operational costs of irrigation, the area is strategically situated in the flood plain area, where soil fertility gets replenished every year by flood waters. According to a private irrigation scheme owner in Kampong Thom province, the presence of an irrigation system helps to achieve a high yield of up to five tonnes per hectares, with an average of four tonnes per hectare. These figures represent an increase in average yield of twenty times compared to that of floating rice, and also a significant increase in the certainty of a harvest.

However, these new innovations have not resulted in an even spread of dry season rice cultivation across the Tonle Sap flood plain. Among the six provinces that have a floating rice area situated in the Tonle Sap flood plain, only Siem Reap and Kampong Thom provinces, which are situated on the north side of the lake, witnessed this new dry season rice cultivation. By 2005, an estimated ninety percent of the floating rice area that had been abandoned since the late 1990s in the two provinces, was reclaimed and converted into dry season rice fields. The other provinces of Banteay Meanchey, Battambong, Pursat and Kampong Chhnang saw a much more gradual uptake of dry season rice cultivation. However, the potential of the new irrigation technique was hijacked by wealthy and powerful individuals, who indiscriminately cleared the flooded forest to make way for retention reservoir-building and dry-season rice farming in Kampong Thom and Siem Reap. This prompted a national project to demarcate the area between the floating rice area and the flooded forest, which is the subject of investigation in this thesis. The next chapter will give a methodological explanation of how this study is conducted.

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5 This sentiment can be seen widely in the way the local farmers refer to their ownership of the land as “Just some floating rice land”.

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Chapter IV: Methodology

This chapter will give a detailed account of how the researcher went about answering the research problem of how the state, through territorial resource governance, exercises power over society. It is divided into three main parts. First, this chapter will discuss the different research methods, and it will give an explanation of why a particular research method was used. Secondly, it will then continue to touch on the issue of data collection with regards to issue of validity and reliability. Given the fact that this thesis deals with abstract concepts of power and politics in resource governance, this chapter pays particular attention to how data on these social phenomena can be obtained, and with what degree of certainty. Some of the challenges to data collection, and validity, will also be discussed. Finally, this chapter will give an explanation of how the data will be interpreted and represented in the text.

Research Method

This thesis employs a qualitative case study approach to investigate the role of the state in resource governance. It specifically looks at the construction and representation of the state across time and space, and how its power is exercised over society. The choice of methodological approach is based on theoretical and philosophical debates in human geography.

The positivist perspective, as in the tradition of quantitative research methods, proposes that there is an objective and knowable reality accessible to humans. Truth is understood as being value-free and not subject to any personal or philosophical judgment. It sees or assumes a clear separation between phenomenon and context, and it employs experimentation in its theorizing of reality. Reality, under the positivist perspective, is assumed to objectively exist outside the area of meaning (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000). That is, reality exists on its own terms independent of our perceptions, interpretations and representations. This research tradition treats the researchers as having no influence on the outcome of research. It is believed that with the right design, and the rigorous application
of the methodology, any researchers carrying out the work should come up with the same
results.

The constructivist perspective, on the other hand, treats reality as constitutive of
human experience and exists within the area of meaning. Tedlock (2000: 471) argues that
social experience cannot be singular but ‘dependent on a multiplicity of locations and
positions that are socially constructed’. Under this perspective, Denzin and Lincoln (2000)
argue that social phenomenon cannot be fully understood if taken out of its context. Here
they see positivist perspective as ‘silencing too many voices’ (Denzin & Lincoln 2000:10).
Researchers are thought to play a significant role in not just designing and carrying out the
research project, but in potentially affecting the findings as a result of their philosophy,
ideology and beliefs (Fielding, 1998).

In this thesis, the study of the state is treated as the study of meaning, perception
and experience, for which there is no single reality as proposed by the positivist research
tradition. Marston (2000) argues that the state has no ontological status and its existence is
only possible under the justification for its purpose, which is socially constructed, making
it more suitably studied by qualitative research methods. Such research methods are
situated and locate the observer in the world, and involves an interpretive approach to the
world (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000). The study of power is the study of a very complicated
concept of social relations that requires more than quantitative measurement in order to be
understood. Lukes (1974) suggests

That power is real and effective in a remarkable variety of ways, some of them
indirect and some hidden, and that, indeed, it is at its most effective when least
accessible to observation, to actors and observers alike. (p. 64)

Within the tradition of qualitative research methodology, this very question of how the
state is constructed across time and space, and how its power is derived and exercised over
the society requires a case study approach. Yin (2003) argues

A case study is an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon
within its real-life context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon
and context are not clearly evident. (p. 13)

The choice of a case study methodology is the most appropriate choice of method for this
thesis, as the intention is to understand the nature in which the state intervenes in resource
governance. A qualitative case study is the most suitable method for understanding the
many interconnected phenomena and contexts in which resource governance takes place. It investigates the process involved in a state project, and how certain outcomes are shaped by power relations between different actors. It allows the researcher to understand the wholeness of one phenomena in relation to, or as shaped by other phenomenon. As Schramm (1971) states, in discussing the strength of a case study as an approach to studying decision making processes ‘a case study approach tries to illuminate a decision or set of decisions: why they were taken, how they were implemented and with what result’. (quoted in Yin 2003)

Yin (1984) proposes four types of case study designs: a single case with a single unit of analysis, a single case study with embedded units of analysis, multiple case studies of single units of analysis, and multiple cases with embedded units of analysis. A single case study with embedded units of analysis is used in this thesis, and a detailed explanation of the choice is as follows.

**Research Design**

To seek answer to the question of how the state exercises power over the society, this thesis depends on a single case with embedded units of analysis. The case is about a state project to demarcate Tonle Sap areas, and the units of analysis include the policy process of the demarcation, the process of demarcation itself, and the process of appeal. Analyses of the three processes are essential for an understanding of the phenomena of power.

Yin (2003) presents fives rationales for a single case design. First, a case study is employed when it is crucial in testing a well-formulated theory. The main objective of research under this rationale is to confirm, challenge or extend the theory. Secondly, a single case study is employed as a method when the case being studied represents an extreme case or a unique case. That is, when the case is so rare, that there has been little or no literature written about it. Third, a single case is employed for what is believed to be an everyday or commonplace situation. In this instance, what is known about this one case is thought to reveal the general characteristics of other everyday phenomenon of the same nature. Fourth, a single case option is suitable when the goal of the research is revelatory of a phenomenon previously inaccessible to scientific investigation. The goal of this type of method is to reveal the general nature of social problems that may be common, but that are inaccessible to the research community. Thus, it is justified when the researcher stumbles
upon the possibility of collecting data and insights of a case of a similar nature. Finally, the fifth rationale for a single case study design is for research projects that require longitudinal study.

This thesis chose to employ a single case study method design for reasons closely associated with Yin’s third and fourth rationales. The case of the state’s role in natural resource governance is common everywhere in the world, and the phenomenon of states exercising their power over civil society is an everyday reality in developing countries. It is a well-known reality that the state, such as that of Cambodia, dominates civil society (Hughes, 2003). But the question is how and how it is possible. This thesis picks a single case of a state project in order to gain insights into how state power is exercised. The case chosen for study is a state’s project to demarcate the protected area around the Tonle Sap lake. This project was designed and implemented in ways that marginalise local farmers. Thus the sub-processes within this project serve as a crucial unit of analysis that could yield important insights into the structure and processes of state power.

The observations, and analysis of state power captured in this case study will serve as revelatory of other instances of state power in society. Stake (1994) refers to this kind of case as an instrumental case study; one on which choice is made to advance the understanding of something else others than the case itself. Stake (1994) writes

A particular case is examined mainly to provide insight into an issue or to redraw a generalisation. The case is of secondary interest. It plays a supporting role and it facilitates our understanding of something else. (p. 437)

This particular case of the state’s project to demarcate the boundary between the protected area and the floating rice area is chosen as the case study for the researcher has what Yin (2003: 42) calls, a researcher’s ‘opportunity to observe and analyze a phenomenon previously inaccessible to scientific investigation’.

The researcher has a great amount of familiarity with the local landscape as it is in his own home town where he was born and raised. The familiarity gives him the privilege of knowledge of the history and background to the case being studied. This familiarity includes the lived knowledge of the geography of the protected area, the history of the floating rice area, and serves as background knowledge which is instrumental for understanding the nature of the state demarcation project.
In addition, the researcher also has access to the case beyond his capacity as just an outside researcher. Due to his prior connections with people in the study site, the researcher can obtain a level of trust and acceptance, which makes it possible for the researcher to create rapport with the people being studied. This gives the researcher privileged access to participants’ knowledge of the issues under study. It also allows the researcher to enter into the lived space of the participants, which would often be denied to outsiders. As a result, the researcher can engage in conversations with participants in a natural setting, which is crucial for gaining insights into power relations. This facilitates not only an understanding of people’s attitudes towards the state, but also provides insights into the decision making processes of participants in the context of resistance to the state.

The other advantage of this methodological approach is that the researcher has the privilege of close familiarity with those affected by the state demarcation program. The researcher is able to genuinely sympathise with participants as he has a shared memory of living in the village, and will also be personally affected by the actions of outsiders who take village lands. With his prior knowledge of the area and on-going engagement with the local farmers, especially in their effort to challenge the authority and save their farmland, the researcher can secure a strategic position to witness power relations between the dominating state agents and the dominated local farmers. This position allows the researcher to observe and analyze the interaction between state officials and local farmers in the context where they most occur.

Unlike the quantitative research approach, this qualitative case study approach requires the researcher to consider all events as data; from the day to day conversations that take place between resource users, to interactions between villagers and local state agents. The strength of this research approach is that the researcher can understand social phenomena in the setting in which they occur. This allows the researcher to treat conversations and events not as isolated phenomena, but as part of a much wider context surrounding social actors. What is being said at one point in time cannot be taken at its face value, but it has to be analyzed against the background of what was said before, and by whom and with what speaking position. The same is true of social action or inaction. The fact that a local resource user community chooses not to react to a certain state behaviour, cannot be taken as a sign of passivity on their part. Rather effort needs to be made to understand what Wartenberg (1990) calls ‘their action environment.’ In his work on
different forms of power, Wartenberge (1990) argues that when power is exercised on a social agent, the agent would look at their action environment in search for any alternative set of actions available to them before they decide whether to comply or resist. Wartenberge goes on to argues that the agent does not just choose any action, but only action that make sense to them. Thus this research pays attention to the set of actions available to social agents, to understand their decision to comply or resist power that is exercised over them.

Site Selection

Pursat province is chosen as the study site for this thesis project. Located some 200 km west of Phnom Penh, Pursat is situated on the south side of the Tonle Sap lake. The province covers a land area of 12,692 square kilometers. It has a population of 426,758. According to the Pursat Investment Profile, 85 percent of the province’s total population is directly or indirectly dependant on agriculture. The province is classified as one of the poorest provinces in Cambodia (Asian Development Bank, 2006a). The majority of the population in the province is highly dependent on natural resources of the Tonle Sap lake.

Figure 5: Map of Pursat Province
There are no official statistics on the size of floating rice area in the province, but based on an informal source close to the provincial governor, the province has an estimated 8000 hectares of floating rice land. Pursat province consists of five districts, three of which are located in the flood plain of Tonle Sap. Those district are Krakor, Kandieng and Bakan.

SrieSdok commune of Kandieng district in Pursat province was chosen as a study site. The commune has a total land area of 19,234 hectares. For its location in the flood plain of Tonle Sap, the commune has an interesting landscape consisting of three main areas: the residential and wet season rice area, floating rice area, and flooded forest area.

**Figure 6: Map of the case study commune**

This commune was chosen for three strategic reasons. First, the arrival of the Tonle Sap Demarcation project in the commune, which is the main focus of the study, coincided with the timing of the thesis fieldwork. Secondly, the commune was chosen due to the researcher’s familiarity with it. The commune is located in the researcher’s home province, which means that he is familiar with its history, geography and natural resource usage.
history. This provided an important opportunity to match theoretical and comparative insights with the details afforded by familiarity. Third, perhaps more importantly, the commune was selected due to the researcher having access to key people involved in the Tonle Sap Demarcation project. As this thesis examines the sensitive topic of power and dominance of the state, obtaining access to, and gaining the trust of the larger community of respondents was crucial. This meant spending large amounts of time with the local community and building up trust with key participants. This allowed the researcher to gain insights into behaviours, perceptions and attitudes toward the topic under study.

Data Collection Methods

After deciding to employ the case study approach, the next step in the research process was to choose a data collection method suitable for the research problem. Data was categorised into two main types. First, the researcher collected historical data on the rationale underpinning the state’s demarcation project. This kind of data can be obtained from the collection and analysis of documents and archival records pertaining to the case being studied. These documents and records can include project documents collected from state departments, and other literature obtained from non-governmental organizations as well as donor agencies. This source of data can provide precise information on which particular state agencies are involved in the project, dates of key events, and other important details of events (such as the size and scope of sub projects). However, this kind of data source presents its own set of problems. These documents and records are often written by state agencies with their own biases and subjectivities. Gallaher et.al (2009:7) argue that ‘knowledge production is not neutral but political, and all truth claims are constitutive of political orders of which they are apart’.

This problem is probably more serious in countries where the state bureaucratic system is dominated by a neo-patrimonial political regime which tends to control the knowledge production processes. These formal documents are not sufficient for a detailed understanding of what actually happens as part of such a program, as they only give records of formal meetings and dates, and only record what officials want the public to know. In other words, they contain the official truth, and the official truth as it is known is only an account of success stories and the achievements of the government (Scott, 1990a). Even then, the researcher is not always given access to those materials. Foucault (2002)
argues that in reconstructing historical knowledge, what is important is not just what is being said or already said, but also what is un-said. Foucault (2002) writes,

all manifest discourse is secretly based on an ‘already-said’; and that this ‘already-said’ is not merely a phrase that has already been spoken, or a text that has already been written, but a ‘never-said’, an incorporeal discourse, a voice as silent as a breath, a writing that is merely the hollow of its own mark. (p. 27)

Limitations with these kinds of data require the researcher to depend on other methods, such as ethnographic data collection. This is because, states are argued to be a social phenomenon and hence to understand their inner workings requires an in depth understanding of the social context they operate in. As Redman (2001) shows in his book, *The Dance of Legislation*, behind every state project, there is a long process of negotiation, coordination and facilitation, and in those processes, state actors are heavily involved within informal politics, and personal networks which are behind the formation of any state policy. An understanding of these largely hidden aspects of state processes can be accomplished by means of ethnographic data (Manen, 1988).

This discursive aspect of power emphasises the importance of symbolic exchange and communication which occurs as part of the day to day work of state agents. Manen (1988) argues that social realities can be represented by an ethnographic account of how actions and words are understood within their context. This method is believed to be capable of representing the wholeness of social experience as it emphasises both phenomenon and context. Thus, ethnographic data is data collected within a context, which can only be achieved when the researcher is immersed in close and relatively prolonged interactions with participants. In terms of this study, the researcher attempted to complement information already on the state demarcation project, by using interviews, direct observations and participant-observations. This is based on Geertz’s (1963) study of social and economic changes in two Indonesian towns. Writing from both an outsider’s perspective of a social scientist and an insider’s perspective resulting from his submergence in those towns, Geertz (1963) gives detailed descriptions of the everyday social interactions and the economic activities in the local market of specific places involving specific people and communities.

The advantage of ethnography is that it allows the research to capture the depth and richness of the problems being studied, especially from the viewpoint of ordinary people at
the village level. This study will focus on three categories of data: data surrounding events and literature which preceded the actual implementation of the demarcation, descriptions of events that occurred during the project, and what happened after the demarcation.

**Interviews**

Yin (2003) describes interviews as guided conversation where the researcher can pursue a line of inquiry on how things happened the way they did in an unbiased manner. Here people being studied become not respondents but informants who reveal their insights of the subject matter in a natural conversational style. Yin (2003:90) also argues that those informants can ‘suggest sources of corroboratory or contrary evidence and also initiate access to such sources’.

In the course of this study, informants were divided into three broad categories, local farmers, state officials and outsiders who are not involved in the benefits and costs associated with the outcomes. Their positions may be more or less sympathetic to one side or another, but they are in a position to express expert knowledge of the case being studied. Firstly, for the farmer informants, the researcher took great care in making sure they feel comfortable in participating in the research. The researcher understand that the culture and value of the people recruited as participants, was to be respected, and more importantly, their situation be taken seriously. In the context of Cambodia, politics can rarely be discussed in public, and asking questions that are politically sensitive is extremely difficult. Thus, interviews were loosely structured to ensure a friendly, comfortable and safe environment for the participants. No fixed interview guides were employed. Instead, the researcher let the interviewees take control over the direction of the interview, only steering conversations in the directions of key issues such as the politics of the demarcation project.

The data from farmer informants was crucial for the construction of historical accounts of the place being studied. Farmer accounts constitute the local reality, the lived experience of that space, and the meaning of their farmland. However, the researcher discovered that most farmer informants had little or no knowledge of state demarcation projects. This led to further interviews with state agents.

For the second group of participants – state agents, difficulties were also encountered. Although state agents involved in the demarcation project would agree to an
interview, it was often difficult, if not impossible, to actually secure an interview. What is more, even when interviews were possible, the researcher found that accounts given by these agents were confined to official version of the truth, which can only be used to understand the official position of the state agents on the matter of boundary demarcation. This revealed the manner in which environmental crisis was engineered by state agent in order to expand their territorial and political control over society. However, this data could not be independently verified. Thus, the researcher depended on other sources of data, which came from a third category of informants.

This third group of participants comprised of expert groups who are not formally in charge of the demarcation project, but who were involved in the preparation of the project. Also included in this group are those who have access to high ranking state officials who have been involved in the project. Their insights are crucial in the verification of information, and for understanding the dynamics of power both within and between the state and society.

To ensure the highest possible data quality, the researcher cannot just depend on a one time encounter with participants. People only start to open up and reveal their perspectives when they feel they can trust the researcher, and trust takes time to build. Thus, the researcher maintained contact with most of those key informants throughout the course of the thesis project. This strategy pays off. Some important pieces of data came out of simple telephone conversations and at the least expected times.

**Direct Observation**

To understand state’s power requires more than just data from policy documents and interviews, but also the researcher’s direct observation of how power is unfolded. Lofland et al. (2006) argue that only direct observations can result in the researcher being able to get close to fully understanding the lives and social worlds of the respondents. They write:

The central reason for observing and/or participating in the lives of others is that a great many aspects of social life can be seen, felt, and analytically articulated only in this manner... The researcher seeks to witness how those studied perceive, feel and act in order to understand their perceptions, feelings and behaviour more fully and intimately. (p. 3)

The researcher becomes what Tedlock (2000:458) calls a ‘doubled-agent who, although they also may be induced into full group membership, do so with the sole intention of
describing the setting and then departing’. Yin (2003) argues that this technique of data collection is advantageous for two reasons. First, it allows the researcher to witness social phenomenon as they occur. Because the researcher directly observes the social phenomenon, all data are the result of a first-hand experience in which the researcher sees the event, hears the actual words of the people being studied, and captures all other important sensory data himself. This avoids the potential problem of data being misrepresented by intermediary agents. Secondly, the researcher, through direct observation, not only witnesses the reality being unfolded but also captures the context in which it takes place. This allows the researcher to treat social data as not isolated phenomenon, but as connected to a particular setting. This is deemed essential for the analysis of power in resource governance, especially in the context of a theoretical frame in which power is not seen merely as power to do things, but as ability to influence outcomes (Wartenberg, 1990). The close familiarity makes it possible for the researcher to be able to meticulously follow the tedious and mundane aspects of the demarcation project in a way that allows him a position to better understand the phenomenon of power.

**Participant Observation**

In the context of understanding power and control, there are times when interviews or discussions with participants, are not sufficient to yield an understanding of the phenomenon of power. Resource governance is the governance of wealth extraction and distribution, and it involves practices that are best kept away from the knowledge of the public, and especially researchers. Thus, the researcher had to employ participant observation as a technique of collecting data on sensitive issues. Participant observations allow the researcher to achieve a human understanding by learning to see, think, feel and sometimes even behave, as an insider (Tedlock, 2000). During the course of data collection, the researcher spent a lot of time in people’s rice fields, transecting the floating rice area, participating in rice cultivation activities, and taking part in discussions among the affected local farmers. This technique allowed the researcher to understand local attachment to the floating rice area, and how it is related to their life histories and experiences. As Brewer (2000:74) writes: ‘language and setting are so closely tied that it is sometimes possible to reconstruct from a fragment of conversation the whole social world that produced it.
Observation allowed the researcher to understand the reasoning behind local reactions to the enclosure of their floating rice area. Altheide and Johnson (1998) argue

… capturing members words alone is not enough for ethnography. .. Good ethnography reflects tacit knowledge, the largely unarticulated, contextual understanding that is manifested in nobs, silences, humour and naughty nuances.

(p.297)

However, during the course of data collection, the researcher found himself more than just being a pure observer, but an activist. First, as Fine et al (2000) argue, when researching such topics as poverty and inequality, the researcher has a social responsibility to seek out and suggest what is possible in the hope of improving the position of the marginalised people under study. On the issue of enclosure, those friends and relatives had contacted the researcher for ideas on how to deal with the matter. For that reason, the researcher could not always pretend to be a pure outsider observing the phenomenon, and leave the farmers to struggle in a sea of confusion and disorientation. The researcher became deeply involved in the process of seeking information about the project, facilitating local meetings, and participating in local discussions to find solutions to their enclosure problems.

Fine et al. (2000) argue that this can pose the danger of researchers going native, where they become too involved in the process and forget the role of observing and making sense of what happens. To deal with this problem, in some instances it was necessary to step back from certain social situations in order to make sense of farmers’ actions. This allowed an appreciation of the social realities of the farmers, while maintaining at least some degree of objectivity. Tedlock (2000) argues that the researcher has to be passionately involved, but objectively neutral. In addition, great efforts were made to ensure that those involved would not, and could not be exposed, or implicated in anything that could harm them personally.

The advantage was that data was collected as events transpired which allowed for the observations of the actual words of officials, and the gestures of local farmers. Access to this kind of detailed data is considered crucial in order to make sense of state domination and local resistance in all the subtle forms that it takes. It allowed the researcher to observe the nature of interaction between state officials and local citizens in the setting in which they occur, and gain insights into corrupt behaviours of state agents, which one would not otherwise be exposed to.
Challenges to Data Collection

During data collection, challenges were encountered. The first one concerns collecting historical data. To fully understand the politics and power of the state requires a full understanding of demarcation projects from inception to implementation. But the project was already underway by the time of thesis conception, resulting in a reliance on documents and archives for information on rationales and methodologies. These data sources were deemed important to understand the politics of resource governance and especially in relation to the way in which power was exercised leading up to the demarcation. But the problem encountered was that public documents by nature, and especially within Cambodia, tend to follow their own logic, which is not always linked to the reality of the issue on the ground. The prime goal of many of these documents is simply to record the achievements of the state, while leaving out controversies over power and politics, which is the core interest of this thesis.

Bakker and Bridge (2008) argue that the researcher has to go beyond the officially-provided truths of policy documents. To complement data found in formal state project documents, the researcher had to rely on interviews with state agents currently in positions of authority. However, many such agents were new to their jobs, and despite the researchers best efforts to conduct interviews with them, he found that the information gathered through formal interviews was very superficial. Those stake-holders tend to give only the officially-provided version of the truth, and what they say during interviews tends to strictly follow a political culture that places more attention on the appearance of formality, uniformity, progress and achievement of the state.

The researcher solved this problem by resorting to outside information sources. For information on the Tonle Sap Basin Authority (TSBA), which was one of the main actors in the demarcation project, the researcher had to consult with external actors who were not at the time employed by TSBA, but who had had in-depth insights derived either from past or on-going engagement with it. For information on the origin and nature of the TSBA, the researcher had to depend on information obtained from those serving in the Tonle Sap Management Organization (TSMO), an organization that was replaced by the TSBA. Interviews, with them yielded an insiders’ account of what happened inside this state agency in the period leading up to the demarcation. This knowledge was crucial for an understanding of internal politics, patronage- systems and the politics behind the
appointment of staff members. It also shed light on the performance, and more importantly, on the lines of accountability of those state agents who were assigned the task of boundary demarcation.

The second challenge concerns the researcher’s access to information, particularly official meetings concerning the demarcation project. This limited any chance of directly observing the interactions between different state agencies of various levels. To cope with this, the researcher had to depend on accounts from people present in such meetings. In some cases where direct data could not be obtained, the researcher had to depend on a method of drawing inference from the known. This technique involves the role of plausible inference in research (Christians, 2000). For example, during the course of data collection, it was not possible to ask the district chief directly why he acted in ways that hampered local attempts at appealing the demarcation project. But it was possible to arrive at a conclusion that the district chief had an economic incentive to block these appeals, based on certain pieces of information. It was discovered that he was part of a team that had earlier shown an intention to acquire part of the contested land. During project implementation, one of the team members claimed that the team to which the district chief belonged had influenced decisions to transfer the enclosed land from being public protected land, to an economic land concession. This then allowed him, along with other investors, to acquire the land. Whether the district chief could do it as he claimed or not was unimportant, but the claim reflected the attitude of the district chief and his inclination to represent the local interest, and this was an important piece of data for this study.

One might argue that this method of data collection can lend itself to potential validity problems. Firstly, the research could easily become opinionated. Depending on third parties for information means that the researcher does not get direct access to the original source of information. The risk is that the data is being filtered by the perceptions, values and agendas of the third party informants. But Christians (2000) argues that a degree of certainty can be ensured by employing a number of methods. Careful measures were taken to ensure that personal perceptions were not shaped by the judgments of the informants. The information that participants gave was carefully assessed on the basis of the circumstance in which they spoke and their relative speaking position. Then, the researcher triangulated this information with information collected from other sources, and any point of inconsistency was carefully followed by further inquiries. Then, the researcher

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followed up links to the persons most able to reliably provide information. Informants selected in this manner, were usually those who were not officially part of the demarcation project, but those who had had direct experience with the TSBMA. These people are not likely to have any hidden agendas when commenting on the matter.

In relation to sensitive questions on power abuses and corruption, the researcher had to take great care to ensure that no participants were in any way implicated in saying or doing anything which may later negatively impact them. The challenge here was that due to the nature of the research, it would be difficult to cover any of the main topics without the risk of participants saying something which may potentially place them in a difficult situation. A delicate decision had to be made as whether to reveal the true identity as a researcher, and risk being rejected by participants, or to conceal identity in order to obtain necessary access to the respondents. The guidance to get out of this ethical dilemma comes from Punch (1994) who argues that a strict application of research codes may restrain and restrict a great deal of innocuous and unproblematic research. In order to gain access to a wide variety of information, it was necessary to maneuver gate keepers and other barriers. For example, the map on which the Tonle Sap boundary line was based was not made available to the public. As Huxley (2008) argues, a map is a tool used by the state to exercise its control over society. It is made to achieve a certain purpose and does not always represent local realities. Judging how representative a particular map is, requires a combination of technical GIS competency together with knowledge of local land characteristics. But it seems that few people involved in the map making process possess both of these competencies. State agents have technical GIS knowledge, but have no knowledge of local land conditions. This prevents them from making sense of how farmers demarcate land and how state produced maps interact with the lived experience of people at the village level. Local farmers on the other hand, have local knowledge of the land, but have no technical knowledge on map making, or map interpretation. This deprives them of the ability to judge whether a technical map represents their interests as they are largely unable to interpret and access it.

To fill in this gap, GPS locations of boundary poles were recorded that had been placed as part of the demarcation project. An intelligible and accurate map that farmers could relate to was then produced. This ability to superimpose the rationality contained
within the state map, onto the realities of local lived space gave farmers the ability to better interpret the logic and impacts of the demarcation project.

This approach of data collection can both compliment and provide a means of triangulating information obtained from state agencies. The combination of official versions of truth, and the complementary insights collected over an extended period of time, allowed for what can best be described as a composite truth; a body of truth whose epistemological status rests in Lefebvre’s (1991) concept of lived space and representational space.

Challenges to Validity and Reliability
Bakker and Bridge (2008) argue that the process of knowledge production is not a neutral or value-free process. It is influenced by, among other things, the researchers own perceptions, attitudes and philosophy. In qualitative research methods, Lofland et al. (2006) argue that the researcher becomes the main instrument of research. The researcher is the lens through which the social reality of the respondents is looked upon, interpreted and represented. This is significant for a research project such as this one which employs an ethnographic method as the primary data collection method. For this reason, Hammersley and Atkinson (1983) argue that the researcher needs to be reflexive, and identify the contingencies that lead to the creation of data.

Social science researchers also have obligations and responsibilities to the people under study. Fine et al. (2000) argue that researchers need to take care to ensure that the interventions into the lives of others are accompanied with careful attention to the connections between our ‘self’ and ‘others’. They argue that the self of the researchers has to be seen as a potential source of contaminant. They are the co-producer of the narrative they are supposed to collect, thus there is a need for them to reflect their position which may have a significant effect on the knowledge produced in the research process (Fine et al., 2000). In the interest of this matter, the researcher wishes to state a few things about himself.

The researcher was born and raised in Pursat province, a province known as one of the largest rice producing provinces in Cambodia. He grew up in a rice growing community located just outside the provincial town. Being brought up in this community, the researcher has the privilege of having already acquired a practical knowledge of
farming that allows him to comprehend farmer life experiences beyond the mere description. For him, the joy of harvesting in a good year has a deep meaning which goes beyond income. Bad years of drought and flood, on the other hand, connote food insecurity, inability to afford other basic commodities, and more dauntingly the possibility of losing farmland.

From personal experience in rice growing-communities, the researcher came to be very passionate about rice growing, and this passion extends into his choice of education. Prior to his higher education, the researcher held the belief that the failure in farming in Cambodia was largely due to the inability of the farmers to adopt new farming techniques and technologies. He believed that farmers needed to revolutionise their farming techniques, but the problem was they were not willing to change their traditional farming practices. Thus, when the researcher did his Master’s Degree in the U.S.A, he focused his interest on mass communication theory, with special attention to how farmers communicate development and technological innovations in farming.

The researcher also enrolled in another master’s degree, international economics, where he learnt the theory of international trade and financial banking. It was this academic training that instilled the idea that agriculture, although a low profit sector is also the most stable sector of all. Agricultural development should take priority not just due to its stability, but for the sheer number of people it employs. The sector employs an estimated 85 percent of the population who depend both directly and indirectly on it.

The combination of childhood experience and academic training has cultivated a strong passion for rice farming. He believes that in the context of Cambodia where an estimated 80% of the population is employed in agriculture, in which rice production dominates, the development of the rice sector should take first priority. Currently, the yield rate is low compared to what is achievable in neighboring countries and other countries in the region (Asian Development Bank, 2003b). In 2008, the average yield was reported to be at 2.75 tons per hectare compared to 4.4 in the world (Ministry of Agriculture, 2009). Improving yield meant expanding production and thus economic growth. For local farmers, a higher yield rate means more food security and the greater affordability of other basis commodities as agricultural crops serve as both food and cash crops.
Production land, in the meantime, is plentiful, but it is not being used to its full potential. According to the ADB, in 2003, Cambodia had 2.6 million hectares of farmland, with only 19% of farmland with access to irrigation (Asian Development Bank, 2005a). By 2010, the ratio of farmland to irrigation had changed little (Yu & Diao, 2011). Yet these figures speak only of patterns at the national scale. At the local level, access to irrigation varies widely depending on how politically important the area is. Fukuyama (2004) refers to this phenomenon as neo-patrimonialism, where officials tailor state duties to serve the needs of their clients. Close personal connections result in favourable state interventions, and areas with little or no connections see few public services (Horn & Craig, 2008). This applies to the distribution of irrigation infrastructure.

The solution to these deficiencies came from international aid donors who proposed the rolling out of Public Private Partnerships (PPP’s). This initiative was at first applied to road building, especially in Phnom Penh, where local residents had to contribute up to 50% of the cost of road construction (Pak, 2011; Pak & Craig, 2008). But such initiatives are less common within the agricultural sector. Instead, private actors, or in some cases small landholders, take agricultural development into their own hands. Yet unlike a neo-liberal state that would support private initiatives through technical assistance and legal backing, the Cambodian state is often entirely absent from these schemes. The state seeks rent by charging the private sector for work that the state itself fails to do.

In addition, the researcher enters this thesis project with a profound political commitment to creating Cambodia as a just society with equality of opportunity under the law. He believes that state bureaucrats should live up to their description as civil servants – i.e. literally serving civilians. Currently civil servants in Cambodia are largely unaccountable for their actions and are often able to unscrupulously exploit those below them. Poor rural farmers on the other hand are often at the mercy of patrons. A farmer should enjoy protection, respect and dignity as a human being in a similar fashion to other members of society.

In sum, the researcher is passionate about rice farming. He sees it as the most appropriate solution to lifting poor Cambodians out of poverty, but the constraint, he believes, lies in the state. The state is not only inactive in serving the interests of its citizens, but its actions gravely hinder development and growth. This thesis is an
investigation of how the power of the state works to exclude those who are the most disadvantaged – rural farmers.

**Challenges of Achieving Textual Representation**

One of the biggest challenges to writing up case studies involves what Denzin and Lincoln (2000) call the crisis of representation. An important aspect of writing up a rich case study is providing detailed descriptions of the social world. However, this often requires unintentionally revealing the identities of participants, which can potentially put them at risk. Representation is particularly important for this thesis as it touches on the topic of power and domination. The findings of this thesis may provide rare insights into the structure and processes of the Cambodian state and how it exercises power over society. It provides insights into the nature of state interventions in the field of natural resource governance, and gives descriptions of how crude power is experienced by the local farmers. The behaviour of state agents was witnessed as it happened and in its wholeness. As this thesis challenges official narratives over the nature of state power in Cambodia, the crisis of representation was an issue within the writing up (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000).

Soderstrom (2005:11) argues that representation is an extremely complex concept and ‘any discussion of the notion of representation is bound to be partial and incomplete’. The essential question is how to write up a research report which deals with sensitive topics, in a way that allows the text to fully represent the meaning of events being described. In addition, the burden of textual representation for this thesis project is heavier for the researcher as there is a strong need to protect the identities of the participants. The author of this thesis paid particular attention to the identity of participants to ensure maximum anonymity and personal safety. Thus, efforts were made to ensure that the writing and analyses were reflective of state behaviour and not about any particular individuals. The author also made an effort to avoid revealing particular names or locations that could serve as potential clues to finding out the identity of individuals.

**Chapter Summary**

This chapter explained how the researcher went about trying to answer the research problems. It argued that a case study is the most suitable approach for this thesis as it involves an analysis of relations between state and society. This chapter also described the way in which data was divided into two categories; historical and empirical data, and how
each category of data was collected. It explained in detail how the empirical data was
collected through interviews, direct observations and participant observation. It also
discussed the opportunities and challenges the researcher faced in using each of these
techniques. Finally, the chapter discussed the issue of textual representation, showing how
the researcher intends to present the findings in ways that contribute to an understanding of
the wider issues of power and corruption in a state system.
Chapter V: Policy Making/Engaging Territorialisation

This chapter describes the different processes that led to the creation of national policy on the demarcation of the Tonle Sap. It will start with an account of floating rice cultivation in the case study commune. It will then situate this local practice within the context of the growth of the neo-patrimonial state, as well as the growth of environmentalism. Interactions between these two processes will be considered with a particular focus on the way in which territorial strategies are employed by the state under the rubric of environmental protection. This analysis will also describe the way in which state territorialisation unevenly affects local farming practice. One of the major conclusions of this chapter is that un-even implementation of state demarcation projects (territorialisation) results in environmental crisis that further prompts state intervention.

Local Development of Floating Rice Cultivation

Floating rice cultivation in the commune under study, shares a similar history with floating rice cultivation within the broader Tonle Sap flood plain, as described previously. Local farmers stated they have grown Srov Via, for several generations. In the early 1980s, when food security and rice expansion was the priority of the government, land dedicated to floating rice cultivation expanded at the cost of the flooded forest area. According to a map of land use in the commune, the floating rice area expanded into the flooded forest area by up to two kilometers in some part of the commune.
The researcher found this map hanging on the wall of the meeting hall of the commune office. The source of the map was unclear. According to the commune chief, it was made in 2006 by local farmers during a participatory mapping exercise facilitated by an NGO. Based on the amount of land under cultivation in the mid 1980s, this map shows that the floating rice area in the commune expanded beyond the French era boundary line.

However, after years of abandonment, the floating rice area was covered by shrub and vegetation. By 2003, the flooded forest area had expanded into the area that was previously used for floating rice cultivation. The exact amount by which it expanded is unknown, as official data is not available. But based on accounts by the participants within this study, only an estimated 20 hectares of the 700 hectares of floating rice area in the commune was under active cultivation. This suggests that the remaining 680 hectares had been retaken by the flooded forest.
The mid 2000’s marked a turning point for floating rice cultivation in the commune. Attracted by the rising price of both farmland and rice grains, and encouraged by successive years of moderate natural flooding, floating rice farmers in the commune began re-cultivating their abandoned land. According to local accounts, by 2005 the area of land under floating rice cultivation had increased to 50 hectares. The return to floating rice was further encouraged by the discovery of new irrigation techniques, and the successes of floating rice farmers in Kampong Thom and Siem Reap provinces. Starting from 2004, floating rice land in the commune began to be sold to both local farmers and to outsiders who were interested in cultivating rice, or land speculation.

But the return of floating rice faced two important problems. Firstly, from a technical point of view, local farmers did not have the capacity to work their land. After years of abandonment, the floating rice area was covered with a thick shrub (especially the fast-growing *Anchagn*). The presence of this vegetation had made it impossible for local farmers to plow using traditional animal-pulled methods. According to local accounts, farmers had to hire tractors in order to clear the land, yet the high cost of tractors against
the low return on floating rice cultivation, meant that few farmers would see profit from such efforts. Secondly, and perhaps more importantly, the floating rice farmers who intended to re-cultivate their land faced restrictions from state agents who a claimed duty to protect flooded forest. This problem is discussed in detail in the following section.

**The Expansion of Modernist State**

The early 1990s saw the creation of many state ministries. After the signing of the 1991 peace agreement, which paved the way for multi-party elections in 1993, Cambodia saw the integration of previously warring parties into the formal state. To accommodate this expansion, new ministries were rapidly created. Such new ministries included the Ministry of Rural Development (MRD), the Ministry of Environment (MoE) and the Ministry of Water Resources and Meteorology (MOWRAM).

However, these state institutions did not have clearly defined roles and responsibilities. Their institutional mission statements tended to be broadly defined, which gave rise to the problem of institutional rivalry, and overlapping roles and responsibilities. For example, MRD has an institutional mission to ensure sustainable development in rural Cambodia. MoE has an institutional mission to protect and manage the nation’s environmental resources, while MOWRAM has a broad mission statement of managing the nation’s water resources. The Ministry of Agriculture, Fishery and Forestry (MAFF) was also separated into two different administrations; the Fishery Administration (FiA) and the Forestry Administration (FA). FiA has an official responsibility for “all fisheries matters in Cambodia”. In many cases, a single geographic area would come under the jurisdiction of multiple departments. The Tonle Sap flood plain is a case in point where its management came under the joint jurisdiction of MRD, MoE, MOWRAM, MAFF and FiA.

At the local level, overlapping territorial claims have played out in a number of different ways. Interviews suggest that only agents from FiA and the Provincial Department of Environment (PDoE) were actually active in managing the floating rice area. Their presence however, was not solely aimed at protecting fishery resources and the environment, as per their ministerial mission statements. They also sought to advance rent-seeking activities under the pretext of territorial enforcement. Initially, FiA declared that the entire Tonle Sap was a sensitive and nationally important fishing zone which came under its jurisdiction. That is, any area which the Tonle Sap flood waters reach during the
year is subject to its control. To reinforce this claim, the administration produced a map which delineated flooded forest from the surrounding areas.

**Figure 9: Map of floating rice area based on local customary knowledge**

**Figure 10: Map of FiA representing the local space**
Meanwhile, agents from PDoE claimed that they had a joint jurisdiction over the Tonle Sap flood plain due its status as protected forest. In the early 1990’s they began a nationwide forest protection campaign with the popular slogan ‘cutting down trees is destroying the environment’. They particularly focused the efforts of this campaign on the Tonle Sap basin. PDoE agents actively administered fines to all those who were found cutting trees within the area.

The territorial claims from these two agencies transformed the Tonle Sap flood plain from being a site of resource management and conservation, to a site of struggle between local floating rice farmers who wish to re-cultivate their land, and state agents from PDoE and FiA who wanted to expand rent seeking activities. With the creation of the map from FiA which delimited the flooded forest area, floating rice cultivation effectively lost its status as a legitimate land use, where it was incorporated into the fish spawning area of the lake which required strict protection. Parallel to the production of this map, a discourse emerged from state departments which portrayed local farmers as the destroyers of flooded forest. On the basis of these official maps, the FiA began to apprehend any rice farmers who cleared vegetation in the basin. Government agents began to refer to these farmers using derogatory titles such chun kel koch⁶ and chun bang plang phrey lectek⁷. Such terms frame farmers as being guilty of destroying common resources, which has led the public to interpret those farmers as being responsible for the decreasing fish stocks in the Tonle Sap lake.

Starting from 2006, FiA staff frequented the area, and armed with their map of the flooded forest, threatened to arrest anyone caught farming in the area. According to floating rice farmers in the case study area, farmers could not openly cultivate their land, as anyone caught clearing vegetation in the Tonle Sap flood plain, faced charges of destroying protected forest. In 2009, FiA, on two occasions, managed to seize two tractors which were involved in ploughing floating rice fields. The tractors were taken to FiA headquarter in Pursat, and the owners were fined 1500US dollars each. It was reported later that the tractors were released on receiving an additional payment of 1500 US dollars for each tractor. The threat of being arrested and having tractors impounded caused a

⁶ Chun kel koch is a Khmer term which literally means bad citizen. The term comes to be used to refer to those who smuggle timber or those who steal state assets. Increasingly, the term now suggest involvement with criminal activities.

⁷ Chun bang plang phrey lectek literally means people, who encroach the flooded forest.
general fear among floating rice farmers in the province. The majority of them henceforth decided to leave their land uncultivated, which resulted in Pursat lagging behind other provinces in terms of the re-cultivation of floating rice areas.

Based on field observations, only an estimated 250 hectares of floating rice in the commune was under cultivation in 2010. This left 550 hectares as vegetation. Meanwhile, local farmers struggled to escape from state produced narratives which portrayed them as forest destroyers. As will be further described below, these narratives fit neatly into the state’s new found environmental concerns.

The Rise of Environmentalism

A distinct discourse on environmental protection, which centres around the Tonle Sap lake, can be seen to have emerged within Cambodia over the last decade. By the late 1990’s it was widely recognised within government circles that the Tonle Sap lake holds important bio-diversity values, and that it was under serious threat. In October 1997, the government nominated the lake as a biosphere reserve under the UNESCO program of Man and Biosphere, which recognises the interconnection between ecology, society and the economy. The nomination paved the way for the establishment, in 2001, of a new government body which would provide advice on the lake - the Tonle Sap Biosphere Reserve Secretariat. In line with UNESCOs efforts, the Asian Development Bank (ADB) launched an environmental project known as the Tonle Sap Initiative. It provided technical assistance to determine the state of the Tonle Sap environment which resulted in awareness for the need to establish a basin-wide management organization. In 2002, the ADB provided technical assistance for the Tonle Sap Environmental Management Project (TSEMP), which was to be carried out by the Cambodia National Mekong Committee (CNMC). The first stage of the program was to carry out an environmental and social assessment of the lake’s ecological health and management. The project findings suggested that the main challenges to the lake’s sustainable management was over exploitation of the lake’s resources and a lack of coordination among the different concerned agencies. The report led to the conclusion that sustainable management of the lake could only be achieved through a basin-wide approach.

Meanwhile, according to a report by ADB, CNMC faced severe coordination problems (Sokhem & Sunada, 2006). In carrying out the TSEMP, CNMC had recruited 10
ministries as members. But it was not possible to foster collaboration among them due to problems of institutional rigidity and rivalry. In 2003 the ADB introduced the Tonle Sap Basin Strategy, a project which attempted to ameliorate some of these issues. The first project report led to the realisation that there needed to be greater coordination in development planning, and in the extraction of resources in the basin. The report recommended an “integrated, cross-sector, cross-boundary, and multi-disciplinary institutional framework that operates at the basin level” (Asian Development Bank, 2003:2). The report called for a basin organization to be established to serve as a forum for concerned state agencies to meet, plan and coordinate their activities. In 2006, with funding from ADB, an organization called the Tonle Sap Basin Management Organization (TSBMO) was established (Asian Development Bank, 2006). TSBMO was set to be chaired by MOWRAM with MAFF, MOE, Ministry of Industry Mines and Energy (MIME) and Ministry of Interior (MoI) as members.

It appeared as if the ADB has successfully engineered a solution to the previously mentioned problems by recommending a basin-wide management approach. The concept of basin-wide management implies integration of all interests, including conservation and development. As Mitchell (2005) writes, the concept of a biosphere reserve emphasises both biodiversity conservation and sustainable development. In line with this thinking, local human activities and material development cannot be separated spatially and economically from underlying conservation ideals.

However, the rise of environmental concerns emanating from the state resulted in an awareness of the lake’s important biodiversity values, yet without any substantial efforts to address the factors which were negatively impacting the lakes biodiversity. The ADB project stalled as the newly created basin organization was paralyzed due to institutional rivalry as different ministries and line departments were fighting to maintain control over their jurisdictions and the benefits that flowed from them (Middleton, 2005; Sokhem & Sunada, 2006). In addition, as Middleton (2005) argues, the TSMO faced tough challenges from line departments and local authorities who saw an integrated approach as a threat to their ability to extract revenues. Within the Tonle Sap flood plain itself, the destruction of flooded forest in Kampong Thom and Siem Reap Continued unabated. This produced a nationwide discourse that saw the Tonle Sap in environmental crisis.
The Discourse of Environmental Crisis in Tonle Sap Areas

The territorial claims of the PDoE and the FiA did not evenly affect rice farmers in the Tonle Sap area. While their presence prevented floating rice farmers from re-claiming and re-cultivating their land in the study commune in Pursat, PDoE and FiA agents in Kampong Thom and Siem Reap province were less active, making it possible for local farmers to reclaim their floating rice land. By 2006, all floating rice land in Kampong Thom and Siem Reap had been reclaimed and was under dry season rice cultivation, which was made possible by the development of retention reservoirs.

In addition, local farmers in these two provinces discovered that the retention reservoirs did not just provide water to irrigate dry season rice, but also to trap fish. At the end of the cultivation season, the water level in the reservoirs runs low, and the owners discovered that the reservoirs trapped significant quantities of fish. Fish species of the Tonle Sap are known to follow the expansion and retreat of flood waters. Just before the flood water recedes, the farmers stuff tree branches in the reservoirs to lure the fish to stay behind. At the end of the irrigation season, farmers harvest the fish from the reservoirs. Thus, starting from 2005, most of the retention reservoir owners tried to expand their profit by focusing on both dry season rice farming and fish harvesting.

Large increases in rice productivity, and the additional revenue from fish catch in the reservoir, attracted the attention of wealthy and powerful investors. Starting from 2006, high ranking government officials, from provincial governors to the head of the national military police, came with heavy machinery to clear flooded forest on a large scale. They then set up retention reservoirs for dry season farming and fish exploitation. Each project on average occupied an area of up to 500 hectares (Kemrith, 2010). The clearing represented a gross violation of the informal and formal boundaries which had been established between the floating rice area and the flooded forest. The result was widespread destruction of the flooded forest. But due to the involvement of powerful interests in these activities, no known formal action was taken by either local state agents nor from MAFF, MOWRAM, FiA and MoE who all claimed responsibility for managing the Tonle Sap area.

The rise of the discourse of environmental destruction in the lake took place amid growing contestations amongst state agencies. The revenue extracted from fish catch and
dry season rice cultivation, led to wrangling between the different agencies as to who had the jurisdiction to manage these revenues. This led to tensions between MAFF (which FiA is a part of), and MOWRAM. MOWRAM is in charge of water extraction while fishery related matters fall under the responsibility of FiA. So the control of taxes and unofficial revenues from these activities caused deep rivalries. The revenue from fish extraction, where reservoir owners received licenses to operate from MOWRAM, was seen by FiA as a loss of revenue share. Meanwhile, fishery authorities were under pressure from fishing-lot operators to do something about the large numbers of fish being caught in retention reservoirs. They alleged that the catching of fish in those reservoirs had resulted in a dramatic decrease in fish stocks in the Tonle Sap lake, which reduced their ability to harvest fish over the long term. But because of the powerful interests behind these reservoir fishing enterprises, no state agency took any action.

This concern over decreasing fish stocks in the lake, together with concerns over the destruction of the flooded forest, stirred up a national discourse of environmental crisis in Tonle Sap area, and prompted the Prime Minister to issue an executive order to demarcate the boundary line between the flooded forest and floating rice areas. The following section explains how the order was interpreted and implemented.

**The Prime Minister’s Order**

In response to the public outcry over depleted fish stocks and deforestation in the Tonle Sap areas, the PM intervened by way of issuing an executive order. In a series of public speeches (some of which went for up to three hours), the PM called on all concerned state agencies to cooperate to clearly demarcate the boundary line between the flooded forest and the floating rice area in the Tonle Sap flood plain.

Analysis of the PM’s speeches, in which he gave the order to demarcate the Tonle Sap areas, suggests that the message was unclear, with an emphasis that oscillated between conservation and development. In the first wave of his televised speeches, a balance was struck between forest protection, and the needs of rice farmers:

… mark the boundary line clearly so that people know where is the farmland and where is the forest area…This will make it easy for them [farmers] to carry out their farming activities… But once there is a clear line, anybody, no matter how
big, still continuing to clear [beyond the line] will be in trouble with me. [Prime Ministers speech, 5February 2010]

This suggests that although his main message was to protect the forest in the flood plain, there was an acknowledgement of the need for agricultural development, particularly for the rice growing communities in the area.

However, in the second wave of televised speeches, the PM’s position evolved, and his message placed more emphasis on conservation. In a later series of televised speeches, the PM no longer mentioned development, but only emphasised the need for forest protection to take the utmost priority:

I cannot let Tonle Sap disappear under my leadership….Our ancestors have left it for us, so we have to take necessary action to preserve it…I don’t want to be condemned by history. … Our fish depend on those forests and I warn you [those who clear flooded forest], even if you get [rice yield of] 50 tonnes per hectare, I will not let you grow dry season rice. Anybody affected [by the demarcation] had better stay away, if you are smart. [Prime Minister’s, speech, 6 April 2010]

The PM’s emphasis on forest protection, and the forcefulness with which he spoke of the need to demarcate the boundary line between the flooded forest and the floating rice area, put land demarcation in the Tonle Sap as a national priority.

Emerging Actors and Assignment of Responsibilities

The new discourse of environmental crisis in the Tonle Sap lake solidified into a multi-ministerial body which included ten government ministries in the governance of the Tonle Sap lake. However, in response to the PM’s order to demarcate the boundary line between flooded forest area and floating rice area, the Ministry of Water Resource and Meteorology (MOWRAM) positioned itself to become the main actor and implementer of the order.

Firstly, the introduction of the Water Law in 2005 effectively placed MOWRAM as the most important actor in terms of the governance of the Tonle Sap basin. The law has three important provisions: (1) all rivers, ponds and lakes within the Cambodia’s national boundary belongs to the state; and (2) MOWRAM is the one state agency that is entrusted with the management of all water-related issues; and (3) all water extractions are subject to regulation by the state, i.e. MOWRAM. Individuals have to apply for water licenses to use water either for agricultural or industrial purposes. These provisions further legitimize
MOWRAM as an important actor in regulating floating rice cultivation and irrigation use. As the main area of floating rice is situated in the Tonle Sap flood plain, this area by law comes under the jurisdiction of MOWRAM.

Secondly, MOWRAM was personally assigned by the PM as the agency to implement his orders. Although ‘cooperation among all concerned agencies’ was mentioned during speeches, the PM would often specifically turn to the accompanying minister of MOWRAM during a speech, and command him to ‘go do it’. This was interpreted by many to mean that MOWRAM was the legitimate leading agency of all Tonle Sap related initiatives. All state officials interviewed during fieldwork saw MOWRAM as being the main agency that had been personally entrusted by the PM, to carry out all Tonle Sap related projects. Staff members of provincial departments described MOWRAM as being given a king’s sword - a Khmer idiomatic expression which means un-rivaled legitimate authority to act on a matter.

The minister of MOWRAM also acts as the chairman of another state body known as the Tonle Sap Basin Authority (TSBA), which is another notable actor. Being the successor of TSMO, TSBA was established in 2007 to specifically help ensure sustainable management of the Tonle Sap Basin by coordinating all development activities that take place in the basin. Its mission statement outlines that TSBA has the role and responsibility for facilitating development initiatives, coordinating planning, and monitoring development activities that take place in the Tonle Sap Basin. That is, it would serve as a forum where all stakeholders could come together to discuss, plan and coordinate their activities in the basin. But, TBSA claims in its mission statement that it does not hold any executive power.

However, the word authority in Khmer - Anmaight, connotes a sense of monopolistic power in a particular jurisdiction. The TSBA mutated itself to holding greater power than its former TSBMO. It added to its mission statement a broad but significant addition - TBSA is to ‘carry out tasks as assigned by the government’. The inclusion of this clause effectively displaces all previous statements concerning facilitation and coordination, and it serves to justify TBSA control of all activities. Meanwhile, there was a wave of staff reshuffling and purging where liberal-minded bureaucrats were replaced by those connected to, and submissive to the new chairman, who was the nephew of the
minister of MOWRAM. This created a strong patrimonial bond between TBSA and MOWRAM which extended from the PM, who had close personal relations with the minister of MOWRAM, down to the head of TSBA who was related to the minister. This is a strong example of the way in which government agencies seek to gain control over territories through patrimonial bonds, rather than through bureaucratically defined rules and functions.

State’s Response to the Prime Minister’s Order
Initially it was not clear how the demarcation was to be done. In all of the PM’s speeches concerning the demarcation, he only use the phrase ‘place the boundary pole’ (bos bangkol prom), but never elaborated on how the boundary line was to be drawn. The vagueness of the PM’s order left room for interpretations by lower level state implementers. Interviews suggest that MOWRAM and TSBA responded to the PM’s order in two ways. Firstly, MOWRAM and TSBA established a commission made up jointly of MOWRAM, MAFF and FiA, accompanied by police and military police. The joint commission was to oversee the demolition of illegal retention reservoirs built in flooded forest areas while also making technical assessments of the potential impact of retention reservoirs on fish migration. The commission would then report back to MOWRAM with a recommendation as to what to do about these reservoirs, which are mostly located in the provinces of Siem Reap and Kampong Thom. The establishment of the commission with its power to decide the fate of the retention reservoirs created potential rent seeking opportunities for MOWRAM and TSBA.

However, over time the joint commission was gradually replaced by MOWRAM and TSBA. At the national level, the working team of the commission consisted solely of staff from MOWRAM and TBSA, while other state agencies kept clear of what they were told was MOWRAM’s and TBSA’s ‘technical matter’. Both agencies had full support from the PM, whose executive power rules above the state. Based on interviews with state officials, an agent’s proximity to the PM is one of the most important factors which define his influence. Thus, the fact that the Minister of MOWRAM is the PM’s close confidant serves as a powerful reminder to other state officials to stay clear of MOWRAM activities.

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8This is based on a private discussion with a retention reservoir owner in Kampong Thom province in 2010. The reservoir concerned was believed to be located in an area classified as a floating rice area, but the actual demarcation pole did not then exist on the ground, making the owner feel uncertain about the assessment decision of the commission. At the time of the discussion, the owner revealed that he had to, and he did, prepare to pay a bribe to secure the legal status of his reservoir.
The idea was that MOWRAM was assigned as the PM’s special envoy on the matter, and for that it is endowed with power beyond its normal institutional jurisdiction.

MOWRAM and TSBA began to align all their actions with the speeches of the PM. They aggressively began to implement demarcation policies under the banner of ‘the wise leadership of Samdec’ Hun Sen’. Typical of a neo-patrimonial state, the use of the leaders’ name is observed to be effective not only in protecting individuals from institutional entanglement, but landing them the legitimacy to impede into the institutional territory of other agencies. By August 2010, the act of demolishing illegal reservoirs was fully under way. MOWRAM and TSBA also responded to the PM’s order to demarcate the area by producing a new map of the protected area.

Second, MOWRAM and TSBA responded to the PM’s order with the creation of a new map of the Tonle Sap basin. At the national level, MOWRAM claimed that the new map was made with reference to satellite images of land use in the Tonle Sap flood plain taken in 2005, and was done in a participatory process, in which all actors concerned fully participated. However, the reality at the provincial and local levels was different from the impression TSBA and MORAM gave at the national level. Interviews showed that none of the potentially affected people, or the concerned state agencies at the provincial and local levels, was involved in the making of this new map. None of the staff members at the provincial departments interviewed knew what the map looked like, or who made it. Local farmers and local commune and villages chiefs were completely excluded from the process of making this new map. Local farmers and local authorities interviewed were aware of the new map only through rumor and guesswork. Some thought that the new map was based on the map of the Tonle Sap made during the French colonial period. Others claimed that it was based on aerial images of the lake taken in 2005. However, it was impossible to confirm these claims. Interviews also suggested that none of the officials at either provincial or local levels, nor local farmers, were aware of the impact of the new map on local floating rice growing areas.

\[^9\text{Samdec is royal Khmer prefix which denotes royal power.}\]
Prior to the PM’s order, a map that showed the different zones and land uses in the Tonle Sap flood plain had been in use among NGOs, donors such as the ADB, and government agencies including MOWRAM.

In this map the water body of the lake is represented by the pale blue area in the middle. Flooded forest is represented by an light green shade with a more or less straight line separating it from floating rice and residential areas. This is a map of what was supposed to be the old boundary demarcation. Posted on MOWRAM’s website up until 2008, this map recognised the old boundary line and the existence of floating rice areas in the study commune. The map was removed from the website in the wake of the new map. Meanwhile, the new map is not available to the public.
In the wake of the PM’s order, this map was removed from MOWRAMs website and ceased to be available to the public.

A number of factors can explain why the map was re-created at this particular time. Firstly, the character traits of the minister can go a long way in explaining events. With his particular brand of environmental idealism, coupled with an unstoppable confidence in his own abilities to rectify the problems of the Tonle Sap, a particular emphasis was placed on the rapid production of a demarcation map. Following the order of the PM to clearly demarcate the boundary line between the floating rice and flooded forest area, the minister of MOWRAM only spoke of the environmental and ecological significance of flooded forest, and without consultation or debate, he declared that 645,800 hectares of flooded forest had to be protected. According to the Asian Development Bank (2005b), the area of flooded forest was 795,000 hectares in 1985, but by 1992 only 370,000 hectares remained due to a range of reasons including those described in Chapter IV. The desire of the minister of MOWRAM to protect 645,800 hectares of flooded forest failed to take into consideration what had already happened over the previous 15 years.

Another factor in the maps’ production has to do with the weak nature of state institutions. With the minister determining the size of the area to be protected at 645,800 hectares, TSBA’s cartographers had to make a map to support these territorial claims. As mentioned earlier, in the two provinces of Siem Reap and Kampong Thom, powerful interests were involved in dry season rice farming which involved the conversion of flooded forest into agricultural land. The map makers also had to accommodate these interests. Thus in making a map of the area, the cartographers shifted the protected area southward, effectively representing large sections of the floating rice area in Pursat as protected forest.

The third important factor concerned the distance between the cartographers and local lived space. Interviews suggested that the map was made by central state agents in Phnom Penh who had no working knowledge of the locality. This is reflected in an interview with one of the former staff member of TSBA.

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10 This figure varies between 640,000 hectares and 645,800 hectares. For example, the Minister of MOWRAM was quoted by Kohsantepheap Daily on 8 June as saying 640,000 hectares, while in a press conference, the figure was given as 645,800 hectares.
For them [TSBA staff], the shifting of the map is nothing more than a slight shift in the green shade in relation to the country map, and on their computer screen in Phnom Penh the shift is so insignificant that it should not make much of a difference. They are so far removed from the local that they have no idea of how hurtful it could be to lose the farmland like that. To them it is just a piece of land. [Interview with a former TSBA staff, Phnom Penh, 24 March 2011]

According to the new map, the area known by customary knowledge as floating rice effectively became a part of the protected area of the flooded forest of the Tonle Sap flood plain. For Pursat province, some 50 percent of its floating rice area was represented as flooded forest. At the commune level, the new map resulted in an estimated loss of 864 meters in width of the commune’s floating rice area.

Figure 13: New boundary line based on the new map

Pole-Placing Phase I
When it actually came to implementation of the PM’s directives, MOWRAM and TSBA hastily rolled out a demarcation project in all provinces surrounding the Tonle Sap lake, but which was done in accordance with their own political objectives. To show that they fully complied with the PM’s order, MOWRAM and TSBA pushed for the demarcation to be completed within an exceptionally short period of time. After the new map was made,
MOWRAM and TSBA assigned the task of field demarcation to a group of surveyors and local authorities. It was their job to place physical boundary poles, using GPS navigational equipment, at the boundary points which had been marked on the map.

But on the ground, the demarcation team faced many barriers. The first barrier they faced was the weather. The PM’s order was televised at the beginning of the monsoon season. MOWRAM and TSBA, wasted no time and within weeks had assembled the field demarcation team and started deploying them. However, when the team arrived in the commune, the Tonle Sap flood waters had already reached the area to be demarcated, making it extremely difficult for the team to access the area. On 18 July 2010, a demarcation team consisting of officials from MOWRAM, PDOWRAM, PDoE and FiA accompanied by two armed guards, in a hit-and-run manner, placed poles 43A and 43B at the end of the village road in the study commune, just at the beginning of the floating rice area. The positions of these two poles, was not based on an accurate translation of the MOWRAM map into on-the-ground boundaries, but simply involved placing boundary poles in the closest area to the identified map points that the team could easily reach during this period of flooding.

The demarcation team drove their pick-up trucks as far as they could, got off and placed the two poles. But you can’t go far when the area is flooded like this! [Interview with a local farmer who witnessed the demarcation, Pursat, 10 February 2011]

The MOWRAM map already represented a 50 percent reduction of floating rice land in the commune, yet the actual demarcation process, resulted in an even greater loss. The positions of poles 43A and 43B saw an additional loss of 97 meters in width, making for a total loss of 971 meters in width of the floating rice area in the commune since 2008.
The manner in which poles 43A and 43B were placed deeply contrasted with the impression that MOWRAM and TSBA gave out during national seminars and speeches. They went to great lengths to emphasise that the project was seamlessly progressing according to the logic of a rational and bureaucratic mode of natural resource governance. They were also quick to boast of the high degree of cooperation between all levels of government, and the exceptional participation of local farmers. Interviews however suggested that there was no form of public consultation, or even announcement of the project. None of the local authorities was aware of the placing of the poles. Local authorities only knew of the presence of the boundary poles after they were placed. Field agents who were part of the demarcation team also took advantage of the fact that they were accompanied by armed military police. During Phase I of pole-placing, the demarcation team threatened to arrest any local farmers who tried to challenge the position of pole 43A and 43B. One of the local farmers interviewed who was among a few present at the scene, had passively protested against the new position of the boundary poles. However, his protest was met with the threat of being handcuffed, arrested and jailed.

Such threats went beyond just local farmers where commune chiefs and village chiefs were also threatened with arrest if they did not give their utmost cooperation. The chief of the study commune, who had openly voiced his opposition to the placement of the
poles, was met with the threat of being handcuffed and jailed. At the same time, rumors were circulating in the villages that police were looking for, and ready to arrest those who tried to organise any form of protest. The threat of arrest, whether real or rumored, had created a general understanding amongst local farmers that they should not protect against the project.

In the aftermath of the pole placing, there was no apparent reaction or objection from local authorities. Form a technical point of view, the local government saw the demarcation project as an area of pure technical expertise that only MOWRAM and TSBA were capable of implementing. Politically, local authorities knew that they did not stand a chance of challenging the decisions of MOWRAM and TSBA, especially as the closeness between the minister of MOWRAM and the PM was well known. Local officials clearly understood that refusing to give way to MOWRAM and TSBA is not politically wise, as it could easily be interpreted as opposing or defying the orders of the PM. With MOWRAM and TSBA acting together in unison, without opposition from other ministries, they were largely unconstrained in their activities. The fact that the minister of MOWRAM had special access to the PM added to the perception that the demarcation was supported by powerful backers. This perception is captured in the quote below.

That guy [the minister of MOWRAM]…. is very dangerous. You have to be careful before you want to do anything. If he is happy, you may be ok. If he is not, he can just go straight to the Prime Minister, and who knows what he would say. Then just a phone call from the Prime Minister, I can be kicked out of my office. [Interview with the governor Pursat, Pursat, 20 March 2012]

Local authorities such as the district, commune and village chiefs had intimate knowledge of the physical layout of their local jurisdictions, but had been denied access to information about the new map, nor had they been included in any part of the demarcation process.

As for local farmers, there were no significant public reactions. Despite talk of the need to demarcate the area, local farmers had never been a part of the map preparation process, nor did they ever see the new map, or have any knowledge of the demarcation project prior to its implementation. Farmers were not only denied information, but were also denied an opportunity to react to the position of the boundary poles as the demarcation team carried out their task of placing the concrete pole on the ground in a secretive manner.
Only a few villagers happened to be present at the time the poles were placed, and they were threatened with jail terms for displaying their objection to the placement of the poles.

Even when news of the new boundary poles began to spread in the villages, there was no substantial reaction from concerned farmers who were of the opinion that the presence of the new poles was not going to affect the status of their land, due to their long history of cultivating the area. ‘Nobody is going to take this land [floating rice land]. It has always been farmland, and besides what would they do with it?’ [Interview with a female farmer, Pursat, 20 February 2011]. In addition, the commune and village chiefs had been assuring local farmers that their land was going to be unaffected by the demarcation project regardless of where the new poles were placed.

Elsewhere in Cambodia, the placement of boundary poles within farming land had sparked a strong negative reaction from local farmers. For instance in Battambong province, floating rice farmers who were affected by the shifting boundary line organised a public gathering and demanded that the local governor returned their land to them. Repeated confrontations and antagonisms between farmers and local authorities were eventually picked up by the media. Although those in charge of the project at both provincial and national levels attempted to prevent these problematic aspects of the project from reaching their superiors – as is often the case within the hierarchical system of project implementation in Cambodia, news of these events eventually made its way to the PM. This sparked the second phase of the demarcation project.

The Prime Minister’s Renewed Order

In a televised speech on 12 August 2010, the PM expressed his disappointment over the news that the demarcation had enclosed local farmland. His disappointment can be captured by a phrase he employed during his speech, in which he said, ‘kom tveu oy...kom roch ay chav’. This is a common Khmer phrase meaning ‘you either do nothing as your supposed to, or you over do it and ruin everything’. In a speech that lasted almost an hour, the PM issued a new order which contained two main messages concerning the demarcation of the Tonle Sap flooded forest area. First, the PM called for immediate action to ensure the hasty completion of the demarcation in all six provinces around the Tonle Sap. He also called on all concerned state agencies to cooperate closely with one another in carrying out the task of demarcation. Secondly, the PM emphasised the need for
development within those communities that are located in the protected area. It is worth quoting him at length here:

We need to preserve the forest, but we don’t do it to the point where the local farmers lose their land... Don’t place the poles in a way that results in the boundary line going through their [local farmers’] land... Draw the boundary line in accordance with the real condition of local land use... Draw the line around the existing farmland... Don’t place the pole in the middle of the farmers’ farmland. [Prime Minister’s, speech, Phnom Penh, 12 August 2010]

The PM’s order to respect existing farmland had two implications. Firstly, MOWRAM and TSBA were no longer the sole agencies in charge of the demarcation matter - they now had to work with other state agencies particularly local authorities, who were familiar with the local landscape. Secondly, the order to respect existing farmland reduces the power of planners and technocrats to represent the space of the Tonle Sap basin however they wanted. Field officials were officially given some flexibility and discretionary power to adapt the position of the poles in accordance with the actual land uses and characteristics of the local landscape.

However, once again, the PM’s revised order came out when all of the Tonle Sap flood plain was fully submerged under flood waters. Thus, the demarcation project was postponed until after the flood waters had retreated. MOWRAM announced that the demarcation would resume in May of 2010.

**Chapter Summary**

This chapter has described how floating rice cultivation in the case study commune has been embroiled in the messy politics of the post-war, neo-patrimonial, Cambodian state. In doing so, this chapter has showed the clashes in the ways the space of Tonle Sap is viewed by different groups. It reveals that despite its rich history of cultivation and prolonged experience and human existence, Tonle Sap space is viewed by the state, at large, as abstract space free of human existence. This view allows the state to represent Tonle Sap as homogeneous space of protected flooded forest. The chapter has showed that the state depends on its claim of legitimate authority in resource governance to dictate a certain environmental policy, whose implementation reflects an instance of territorial strategy. It has showed that such modern state institutional actors as MOWRAM, TSBA, PDoE and FiA materialised the power of the state and attempted to impose a new regime of control over the space of Tonle Sap through a process of territorialised resource governance. In
doing so, they depend on the power of maps to legitimise their territorial claims in ways that support Baudrillard’s (1997) point of maps preceding territories.

This chapter has also showed that the process in which the lived space of Tonle Sap gets displaced by the representational space as imagined by the state is subject of a complex web of power. It shows that hierarchical personalised networks have been the most important factor for determining which actors are involved in a particular state’s project, and with what authority they can act, rather than non-personalised rules and formal policies. Actors used these networks to shield their activities from public and state scrutiny which allowed them to continue unabated in benefit extraction from within their territories.

Based on field work from within the case study commune, it was shown that the state not only lacked the institutional capacity to assist farmers with the adoption of new farming techniques, but also hindered rice cultivation practices in the flood plain of the Tonle Sap lake. This was mainly due to the problem of a failure to assign clear roles and responsibilities at the national level, which opened opportunities for rent seeking at the lower levels. The chapter also showed how the discourse of environmentalism was captured by patrimonial interests, which used the logic of bureaucratic natural resource governance to legitimise operations and activities which were primarily concerned with consolidating power.

The chapter also showed how weak state institutions resulted in uneven agricultural development. Here, floating rice cultivation was heavily restricted in the politically unimportant case study commune, while expanding in the much more politically important areas of Kompong Thom and Siem Reap.

The resultant destruction of the flooded forest caused public concerns for the future of the Tonle Sap fishery, and created an opportunity for the PM to intervene by way of issuing an executive order which detailed a demarcation program. The PM dictated what was to be done and assigned the task to specific actors. In this particular case, the PM called on all concerned state agencies to cooperate in clearly demarcating the boundary line between the two contested zones. This chapter showed that state policies are not created through democratic means, nor do they go through democratic processes of consultation, debate and scrutiny. Rather state policies are created by the PM in an impromptu manner, resulting in broad policies with unclear plans. In the case of land demarcation, the PM strongly emphasised the need to demarcate the boundary line between floating rice land and flooded forest land. However, it was not clearly defined how the demarcation was to
be carried out. The problem of unclear state policy is coupled with the problem of neo-patrimonialism where public duties are not defined purely by Weberian bureaucratic principles of employing state agents with technical qualifications, but through patron-client networks. Field research showed that the task of demarcating the boundary line was assigned by the PM directly to the minister of MOWRAM based on personal ties.

Finally, this chapter showed that within a neo-patrimonial state, the hierarchical manner in which state policies flow, and the manner in which responsibilities are assigned, leaves significant room for interpretation by implementing agents. Field agents represent a crucial link for understanding how state power is actualised. Policy outcomes are largely dependent on the way in which street level bureaucrats inject their own political and economic incentives into their day to day work. When that happens, there are no formal mechanisms which allow citizens to hold state agents accountable for their actions. Solutions to public problems tend to occur through informal mechanisms which are based on patron-client relations. For example, in the case of farmers in Battambong who protested against the loss of their floating rice land, it was ultimately the sympathy that the PM afforded them, rather than any formal mechanism, which rectified the situation. But this does not necessarily mean that the PM is in full control of state affairs. The next chapter will look at how the PM’s original order, and his subsequent demand to respect farming land, was translated into action at the village level by state agents.
Chapter VI: Ground Level Implementation

The previous chapter showed that the PM had dictated a state policy to demarcate the area of flooded forest and floating rice. In his order, the PM emphasised the need to protect flooded forest by drawing a clear line of demarcation between the forest area and the floating rice area. He also made clear the need to respect the exiting floating rice land, instructing agents in charge to make sure that the boundary line goes around, and not through local farmland.

This chapter looks at how on the ground implementation of the demarcation differed from the PM’s original intentions. During field research, the researcher had the rare opportunity to directly observe interactions between state agents and local farmers as they occurred in the case study commune. This chapter presents these observations and tries to give a picture of the way in which the central state is represented by the demarcation team.

To that aim, this chapter follows the process of policy implementation, and it pays particular attention to two events: the pre-demarcation meetings, and the actual demarcation. These two events shed light on the process of power distribution within the Cambodian state, and provide an understanding of what accounts for the difference between the central state’s policy intentions, and actual implementation at the local level.

The Meeting
Unlike pole-placing phase I, pole-placing phase II was preceded by a meeting at the provincial office. Based on field interviews with government agents, it appeared that the aim of the meeting was to ensure that mistakes made in the first phase of pole-placing would be avoided. This created an impression that pole-placing phase II would be a more inclusive process where local actors would be allowed to participate in the decision making process. Another aim of the meeting was to exchange information between the demarcation team and local authorities, who were familiar with the local landscape. These aims had widespread political support as they were seen as the corollary of the PM’s order to ensure ‘cooperation’ between all relevant actors.
However, interviews with those who participated in the meeting revealed that MOWRAM and TSBA were more concerned about giving an impression of inclusiveness, rather than actually succeeding any decision making power to other actors. On the 25 February 2011, the provincial governor and concerned line departments, including PDOWRAM, PDoE, PDAFF and FiA, were asked to attend a meeting in the provincial office of Pursat. Also present at the meeting were local authorities, which included commune chiefs from all concerned communes. In the meeting, the demarcation team leader gave instructions to the local government agents on how the demarcation was to be carried out in the province. According to the commune chief, the central state agents briefed the participants on the demarcation plan, which had already been prepared in advance.

We were not asked about our local landscape. We were just told about how the demarcation would proceed. He [the demarcation team leader] told us that the team will contact us when the demarcation reaches our area and that on that day we need to help carry food for the demarcation team. [Interview with commune chief, Pursat, 1 March 2011]

Contrary to the expectation that local authorities would be asked for information on the physical characteristics of land within their communes for accurate map making, the meeting was a forum where central state agents simply gave out orders to line departments and local authorities.

**The Demarcation**

Late in the afternoon On 7 March 2011, the chief of Srie Sadok commune received a phone call from PDOWRAM staff informing him that the demarcation was set to take place in his commune the next day. March 8th, however, is international women’s day and a public holiday. State officials are required to not come into work, and working on such a day could be interpreted as defying state policy. But in the case of the demarcation, the commune chief had no choice but to comply with the central agent’s schedule.

On the morning of 8 March, 2011, the demarcation team arrived in the commune in three pick-up trucks and one home-made truck. The team consisted of officials from PDOWRAM, PDoE, PDAFF, FiA and two armed personnel, and it was led by an official from MOWRAM. The home-made truck was hired for carrying the concrete boundary poles. As the group approached the target area, the team members left their pickup trucks
and they all got in to the pole-carrying truck in preparation for their trek to the would-be position of the boundary poles.

The commune chief joined the group on his motorbike, and his job was to lead the team to where they needed to go. That is, to find the position of pole 22. For that purpose, a GPS expert accompanied the commune chief who led the team off the main village road toward the end of the wet season rice area. At around 9 am, the GPS indicated that the team was approaching their destination. The GPS expert got off his motorbike and walked into a rice field. Soon after the GPS operator found the location where the pole was supposed to be placed, the team leader arrived in the pole-carrying truck and requested the rest of the team members cross check the position indicated by the expert, by making sure the position correlated to the location on their own GPS devices. As soon as the team members confirmed the position, the leader gave the order to dig and plant pole 22.

The position of pole 22 was even closer to the village area then those poles placed during Phase I, indicating an even bigger loss of floating rice for the commune. A group of around 15 villagers whose land was located in the contentious area had gathered at the demarcation site to witness the demarcation, but no one said anything as the demarcation team was protected by two men dressed in police and military uniforms armed with two assaults riffles.

After pole 22 was planted in the ground, the demarcation team asked the commune and village chiefs to sign a witnesses document, which they were reluctant to do but eventually did so. More on this point will be discussed in the next section. But before the demarcation team left the area, the team leader asked the local farmers to join in and take a group photo. His words are worth quoting in full here.

Since everyone is here, let us stand around the pole for a group photo as evidence of our working together. This is a rare opportunity to be a part of the historic moment in the history of Tonle Sap protection, and you should be proud to be a part of it. [The demarcation team leader, Pursat, 8 March 2011]

After 20 minutes, the team finished placing pole 22 and packed up all their tools in the truck, and left the area as if nothing of the unusual had happen. However, viewed in line with the concept of power as discussed in chapter II, the encounter reveals high levels of power relations both within the state and between the state and society.
Central State Policy and Local Implementation

The manner in which pole 22 was placed shows a significant gap between the central government policy, and the conduct of field agents representing the state. The PM had called for a clear line of demarcation between the floating rice area, and the protected forest area. The main objective, as he puts it, is to protect the flooded forest, but he also emphasised the need to respect existing floating rice land. However, the field agents representing the central state carried out this policy to a different effect, as the positions of the boundary poles spelled the loss of significant amounts of floating rice land. Two of the poles placed in phase I, pole 43A and pole 43B are located somewhere in the middle of the floating rice area, marking the loss of half the floating rice land in the commune. In accordance with the new order to respect existing farmland, these two poles should have been moved 971 meters north so that the boundary line does not cut through existing floating rice land. But instead of correcting the position of the two poles, the field agents placed pole 22 in a way that moved the boundary line even further into the floating rice area. Pole 22 was just at the beginning of the floating rice area, spelling the loss of an even bigger area of floating rice in the commune compared to the poles placed in phase I.

Figure 15: Map of pole 43A, 22 and 23
The position of pole 22 placed the entire area of floating rice almost entirely within the protected area. Instead of the commune having an area of floating rice three kilometers in width, it now has a small strip of less than 500 meters. An estimated 580 ha of floating rice in the commune had become part of the new flooded forest area. This raises an important question of what constitutes a state, and which layer or layers matter the most in terms of state-society relation.

**Explaining the Differences**

The difference between the central policy of conserving nature and accommodating development in the flood plain of Tonle Sap, and the local implementation that resulted in the enclosure of floating rice area could be explained by the fact that the central state policy was not clearly defined, leaving room for individual interpretation. Two main points of the central state policy are worth analyzing here: cooperation between central and local authorities, and respect for existing farmland.

**Interpreting Cooperation**

At the national level, the guidelines for demarcation emphasised the need for cooperation and involvement from all concerned state agencies, both at the national level and at the local. The emphasis on cooperation among all actors was aimed at empowering local authorities to take a greater role in the process to ensure fair representation of local interests. Commune chiefs and village chiefs have traditionally be the ones who authorise local land transactions. The PM’s instruction to respect existing farmland meant that the commune chiefs should have played a significant role in the demarcation process.

But according to empirical evidence collected from Pursat province, the agents representing the central state used the term ‘cooperation’ to ensure compliance from the provincial and local government. The term cooperation in Khmer *sahaka*, has two different meanings depending on who is using it. When central agents or state officials of superior status speak of cooperating with provincial or local officials, they mean that they engage local officials as assistants to provide logistical support. For instance, the central agent in charge of the demarcation, used the term ‘cooperation’ with local authorities to refer to the fact that he expected local authorities to attend briefings and to be present during demarcation. A quote from an official from PDOWRAM seems to capture this point:
Local authorities …fully participate in this [demarcation] process… they were at the briefings and they accompanied us [demarcation team] everywhere we went. [Interview with a staff member of PDOWRAM, Pursat, 20 March 2011]

But where lower level officials cooperate with officials of higher status, what is meant is that they display unconditional compliance with the ideas and orders of their superiors. Consequently, if a low level official were to disagree with his superiors, or to oppose him, he is said to be uncooperative.

In the case of demarcation, the term ‘cooperation’ was used against local authorities in three ways that undermined their ability to represent local interests. Firstly, local authorities were expected to be present at briefings and pay full attention to the instructions of team leaders. Prior to the demarcation, all local authorities were asked to attend a meeting in which they were briefed on how the demarcation would take place, and what was expected of local authorities. Any questions or suggestions concerning how the boundary line should be drawn, would be seen as obstructing the progress of the meeting, and hence interpreted as a sign of being uncooperative. Secondly, when the demarcation team marked the position of pole 22, local authorities were not expected to voice any objection despite the fact that it impeded on existing farmland. Any objection would be seen as challenging the decisions of the senior officials.

I was trying to ask him [the demarcation team leader] to reconsider the position of the pole [pole 22] too, but he pretended he didn’t hear me. I tried a few times to tell him of the existence of a floating rice field beyond the pole, but he didn’t look. I can’t say too much about this though. [Interview with commune chief, Pursat, 8 March 2011]

Thirdly, after the boundary pole was placed, local authorities were asked to sign a document. Their signature was to endorse the position of the pole as correct. Although the commune and village chief disagreed with the position of the pole, they were forced to sign. Not signing would be interpreted as defying the national policy that called on all concerned actors to ‘cooperate’. Local authorities perceived any sign of defiance or non-cooperation on their part as a risk to their security, as commune chiefs elsewhere in Pursat had faced arrest for refusing to sign an acknowledgment of the pole positions. ‘I can’t refuse to sign. If I did, they [the demarcation team] could just handcuff me’ [Interview with commune chief, Pursat, 8 March 2011]. In this sense the term ‘cooperation’ more accurately signified accommodation. That is, officials at lower levels have to accommodate
officials from a higher level at all costs. Low level officials have to follow the ideology, ideas and actions of higher officials, keeping aside their doubt or disagreement and focusing on implementation. Higher level officials’ perception of cooperation is based on a vision of lower level officials unquestioningly carrying out tasks.

**Interpreting Existing Farmland**

The other emphasis of the central government was respect for existing farmland. The PM, for example, had repeatedly emphasised the need to respect existing farmland by drawing boundary lines around rice fields.

> Don’t draw the boundary line in ways that cut through existing farmland… the need to protect the environment is one thing, but the need for development is another. If they [farmers] have been living there since the time of their ancestors, we cannot just ask them to move out. We have to let them stay there and provide assistance to them so as to increase agricultural productivity and reduce the need to clear forest for more farmland. [Prime Minister’s speech, 22 September 2010]

Unlike the initial phase of demarcation, the PM’s emphasis on respecting existing farmland meant that the boundary line could not be pre-determined from a distance and simply implemented on the ground. The existence of local farmland needed to be taken into consideration.

However, the criteria for determining the status of existing farmland was not clear, and contradictions between representations of local space on state maps, and customary knowledge of local land use further complicated the matter. Prior to the emergence of the state demarcation project, there existed a zoning map of Cambodia with a particular focus on the different zones in the Tonle Sap flood plain. The map could be accessed from the MOWRAM website, and according to the map, the boundary point between the floating rice area and the flooded forest in the case study commune lay some 13 km from the shore of the Tonle in the dry season. The information on the map is consistent with customary knowledge. A local elder, known as Ta Sahan, witnessed an old boundary pole, believed to be placed during the Sihanouk’s regime. He testified that the pole was located near a local pond known as Beoung Andong, which also supports the information found in the map. Although the pole has disappeared and the floating rice area had been left uncultivated, private ownership of floating rice plots in the area were still fully respected.
Meanwhile, local land use has evolved in complex ways. Across the Tonle Sap flood plain, a combination of historical changes in agricultural practices, and resource appropriation over the past four decades, has resulted in several different types of land use in the contested area. Some areas that were under floating rice cultivation in the late 1980s were currently covered with forest due to abandonment. Other sections of flooded forest had more recently been cleared, and were now under cultivation as either dry season, or floating rice. There are presently eight different customary land types which include:

- Type 1: had always been used for floating rice, and was currently used for floating rice.
- Type 2: had always been used for floating rice, and was currently used for dry season rice.
- Type 3: known to belong to the floating rice area, was not cultivated, but was recently cleared for floating rice.
- Type 4: known to belong to the floating rice area, was not cultivated, but was recently cleared for dry season rice.
- Type 5: known to belong to the floating rice area, not presently cultivated, thus currently under flooded forest cover.
- Type 6: known to belong to the flooded forest area, but recently cleared for floating rice.
- Type 7: known to belong to the flooded forest area, but recently cleared for dry season rice.
- Type 8: known to belong to the flooded forest area, never been cleared and still forested.

The case study commune had an estimated 700 ha of floating rice. According to interviews with local farmers, all, except an estimated two percent\(^{11}\) of these areas were left uncultivated after a big flood in 1996. But floating rice farmers gradually returned to their land and by the time of the demarcation in 2010 and 2011, an estimated thirty percent of this land was under floating rice cultivation again.

\(^{11}\)There is no official data. This number is just a rough estimate based on the tabulation of local recollection and field data collected in 2010.
Meanwhile, some dry season rice cultivation could be observed in the commune, but at a small scale. An estimated two percent of the former floating rice farmers converted to dry season rice farming by extracting water from natural ponds. The rest of the floating rice land in the commune was still uncultivated and covered with shrubs.

Given the complexity, the establishment of what constitutes existing floating rice land rests in the hands of the implementing agents who were given the discretionary power to make a demarcation boundary.

**Discretionary Power and Rent Seeking**

The emphasis on respecting existing farmland and the vagueness in the way it is defined gave implementing agents discretionary power to determine the actual boundary line between flooded forest and floating rice land. The aim was to let field officials break away from the constraints imposed by the centrally-made map, and allow them to meet the objective of respecting existing farmland. However, the empirical data showed that field officials used this power to advance their interests through rent seeking. This was achieved in a range of ways. First, information surrounding the demarcation process, especially where the boundary line would lie, was strictly kept private. As a result, nobody knew the future of their farmland, until the actual boundary pole was placed. Those in charge of
pole-placing have significant discretionary power to place the pole in any position that they claim is flooded forest.

Second, the affected farmers consisted of both small land holders and medium-size farmers, and it was the latter group that the pole-placing team focused their rent-seeking interests on. Threats were used against this group in order to extract informal payments. The farmers were put in a situation of having to weigh up their option of losing their land, or paying to save it. The pole placing team expected that some of the larger land holders would approach them to seek sam rol, meaning a financial gift, in exchange for the favour of saving their land. Prior to the discovery of the new irrigation technique that allows for the conversion of floating rice land into dry season rice land, floating rice land in Kampong Thom and Siem Reap, like the rest of the provinces in the Tonle Sap flood plain, had a market value of as low as 25 US dollar per hectare. But by 2009 one hectare of land in Kampong Thom, for example, had a market value of up to 3000 US dollars. This suggests that the affected farmers in the study commune were willing to pay a significant amount of money in order to maintain their increasingly valuable land.

But when no rent was offered, the team had no incentive to demand sam rol, and their discretionary power was put in use to punish local farmers. The consequence was that more land was lost. This is reflected in a comment made by one high-ranking provincial official:

…like I said, those people [pole-placing team] don’t have money and they were expecting some offer. But nobody gave anything to them. So they did it however they wanted to, and it seems purely technical. Who can say they are wrong?
[Interview with the governor of Pursat, Pursat, 20 March 2012]

The combined effect of unclear central state policy, and a high level of discretionary power afforded to field officials resulted in pole placing of phase II that saw an even larger proportion of the floating rice area in Pursat province being lost to the new area of protected forest. At the same time, land of type seven (flooded forest land that has recently been cleared for dry season rice), of which the majority belongs to powerful figures on the opposite side of Tonle Sap lake, became legally recognised and legitimised by the state.

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12 One may question the reliability of this statement as it concerns the ability of the researcher to predict the mind of others. While it is not possible to know what those officials had in their head, particularly on that topic at that time, interviews with other state agents, at a later date, clearly indicate that it was the case.
Central Agents Vs Sub-national Government

Field research suggests that the demarcation project leader managed to pursue his rent-seeking interests due to having the ability to dominate the sub-national government.

Central Vs Provincial Government

Despite the rhetoric of close cooperation, relations between central agents and the provincial government can be categorised as extremely unequal. Central agents saw the provincial government as an actor who they needed to inform of the demarcation, but from whom no input was sought. Central agents informed the governor’s office of the demarcation project, and invited him to preside over the meeting, but they did not give him any opportunity to meaningfully participate in any of the activities.

Meanwhile, the governor saw the demarcation as a purely technical operation which was the domain of central state agencies, and kept a respectable distance from their work. Prior to the day of demarcation, the governor had told his staff that half of the 8000 hectares of floating rice land in the province would be lost to the new flooded forest protected area. However, throughout the demarcation process, there were no noticeable form of objections from the governor. According to the commune chief, the governor, addressing the meeting prior to the demarcation process, spoke of the importance of the demarcation project and called on all provincial and local authorities to cooperate closely with central agents to ensure the highest possible level of success and accuracy.

The order to demarcate the protected area came from the PM, who is referred to as *pres en*. In Buddhism *pres en* is the chief of heaven, and he is in charge of all affairs of the universe. Likewise, the PM is treated with the same respect. Voicing objection of any sort could potentially be interpreted as going against the will of *pres en*, something all politicians in Cambodia know can result in an end of their political career. In the Cambodian political lexicon, the term ‘challenge’ tends to be negatively defined. If one does not totally agree with their superiors, one is said to ‘challenge’ their superior’s decisions. To mount a challenge is always interpreted as negative, and it often carries negative consequence for those who mount it.
Central Vs Line Departments

Relations between central and line department agents are not based on equality, but are highly differentiated. Line departments involved in the demarcation matter were PDAFF, PDOWRAM, PDoE and FiA. As discussed earlier, under the rubric of cooperation, those lines departments were only called on to assist central agents. Throughout the process of demarcation, the role of line department agents was limited to organizing meetings, and accompanying central agents to the sites of demarcation. They were not given the chance to participate in decision-making concerning the position of the boundary poles. However, most did not seem to see any problem in this. They are trained to see themselves as subordinates who are to provide assistance when asked, and never ask back. They repeatedly referred to the demarcation project as an ‘order from the top’. This phrase is used to convey a sense of urgency and necessity where low level officials have to accept and perform as asked to. They were proud to be allowed to join the team even when just acting as an entourage.

This demarcation project is the order from the head of state. Nobody should challenge it. We, the line departments, are Senatika who have to implement it. [Interview with a staff member from PDOWRAM, Pursat, 26 February 2011]

The use of the term Senatika perfectly captures how officials in line departments feel about their position in relation to central state agents. In Khmer, the term Sena refers to the bodyguards who accompany the king or high ranking officials when they travel. Tika is a suffix, used to transform a verb into a noun. Senatika is a noun that means the act of accompanying. By describing themselves as Senatika of the central government, the line department agents see their role as being the Sena to accompany and to protect the central agents.

Central Vs Local Authorities

The manner in which the demarcation project was implemented reflects the true dimensions of power between the central and local authorities. It is worth noting that the central state is represented on the ground by central agents in charge of the demarcation process.

Prior to the day of demarcation, the commune chief had been trying to inform the demarcation team leader of the layout of the commune area, especially the layout of the floating rice area in the commune. Realising his commune is located much closer to the
Tonle Sap waters, the commune chief feared that the central agents would draw a straight demarcation line through the middle of the floating rice fields. In the afternoon, just before the day of demarcation, the commune chief offered to take the team leader around the floating rice area in his commune, but the team leader turned down the offer.

On the morning of the demarcation, the commune chief made several other attempts to brief the central agents of the local landscape. While the central agents were approaching the demarcation site, the commune chief once again tried to explain to the team leader the general layout of the floating rice in the commune, but was once again ignored. Against the attempts of the commune chief to explain the local layout, the leader of the demarcation team decided to place pole 22 in a way that saw the loss of an estimated 90 percent of the floating rice land in the commune. When the demarcation team requested the commune authority, which included the commune and village chief, to sign in recognition of the presence of the boundary pole, they felt obliged to sign it without protest.

The reaction of local authorities to the demarcation process may seem insufficient, but they had few avenues for recourse. The demarcation was perceived to be a central state project, and since it came from the order of the PM, it has to be treated with the highest priority and supremacy. Also, it was implemented by a technical branch of the state, where there was little or no room for input from lower level authorities. At the same time, a nation-wide discourse against local authorities was at its peak. Prior to the day of demarcation, commune authorities across the country had been accused of protecting wealthy farmers in exchange for ‘gifts’. In the period leading up to the demarcation, commune chiefs had been repeatedly warned about protecting farmland that belongs to middlemen - chamoun. On top of this, there was also a perceived threat that force would be used against any local authorities who protested the position of demarcation poles. Rumors were circulating among local government officials that a commune chief in the province was handcuffed while trying to challenge the position of a demarcation pole.

**Central Agent and Local Farmers**

In the case study commune, farmers can generally be divided into three strata. First, subsistence farmers are those who own less than one hectare of wet season paddy in the village, and one or two hectares of floating rice land. This group of farmers does not travel
much outside the village as they are preoccupied with farming and subsistence, or semi subsistence fishing in the Tonle Sap area. The second group of farmers consists of those who own between one and two hectares of wet season rice paddy, and four or five hectares of floating rice fields. This group of farmers does not travel much outside the village, but tend to spend most of their time fishing in the Tonle Sap area, and engaging in other small business ventures in the village. The third group of farmers consists of those who are engaged in other professions including civil servants, teachers and farmers from other communes. Farmers in this group own up to 20 hectares of floating rice land, and they tend to be well connected to outside networks, and were better informed about the demarcation process.\textsuperscript{13}

Interactions between central agents in charge of the demarcation project, and local farmers, reveals significant power inequalities where central state agents dominated local farmers by ways of reducing the possibility of resistance. Central agents used identity politics, the discussion of which is as follows, to stratify the affected farmers, effectively preventing local unity, and then employed the tactic of controlling the flow of information and diverting confrontation.

\textbf{Criminalisation of the Middle -Stratum Farmers}

The term ‘middle stratum farmers’ is used here to refer to farmers of the upper stratum as described earlier. This group of farmers consists of those who own a sizeable amount of floating rice land, and are better connected with the social world outside of the farming village. They tend to be those who are well informed of government policies, and thus likely to challenge the results of demarcation. They are more informed of state policy as they tend to have more connections with people outside of their villages, especially friends and relatives who live and work in the provincial town, or in Phnom Penh. Those upper stratum farmers also have greater access to information both directly from broadcasting media, and to a lesser extent print media, and indirectly through their exposure to public discussions at local gathering places such as coffee shops. They also tend to be better connected to state bureaucrats and subsequently, to information (for instance on the matter of demarcation). Access to such information is essential for initiating any local movement of resistance against unjust state action.

\textsuperscript{13}These data are based on local accounts collected during field work in 2010.
However, any resistance actions of this group were preemptively blocked by the central agents in charge of demarcation. They reduced the possibility of resistance by displacing middle-stratum farmers who made up an essential component of social movements. In the process of demarcation, those upper stratum farmers were given a criminal status in national discourses as unscrupulous forest destroyers and greedy land speculators. First, in the period leading up to the actual day of demarcation, the Cambodian state, as represented by MOWRAM and TSBA with the assistance of the media, had been engaging a discourse against middle-class farmers. They were labeled as bad people, and their greed-propelled actions which resulted in the disruption and destruction of nature around the Tonle Sap lake. They were alleged to be behind the massive clearing of flooded forest to expand their area of dry-season rice farming. They were labeled as *chamoug*н, which is literally translated as middlemen.

Within in the Khmer language this term has predominantly negative connotations. It is increasingly used by media as well as politicians to refer to those who are unscrupulous in their pursuit of personal gains with no respect for nature. Over the past few years, there is a tendency in both the broadcast and print media to use this term to describe people who smuggle drugs, endangered wildlife or illegal timber. An article in Koh Santepheap Newspaper, reporting a high speed police chase involving a wood smuggling vehicle is a case in point. The chase ended in a collision in which the driver of the vehicle was killed at the scene. The article referred to the dead driver as ‘a *chamoug*н engaged in illegal business, and tried, but failed to escape from law enforcement agencies’ (Koh Santepheap Newspaper, 2010). In the demarcation process, the *chamoug*н were told to stay away from the demarcation team or they would face arrest.

The term *chamoug*н, although commonly used in relation to the demarcation process, has never been clearly defined. In one of his follow-up speeches the PM, in a mocking manner, defined *chamoug*н simply as those farmers who employ machinery in their farming practices as opposed to the traditional animal-pulled plough. As he put it ‘it is not hard to determine who is *chamoug*н and who is not. Anybody who uses a tractor to farm is a *chamoug*н’ [Prime Minister’s speech, 24 February 2011]. Field officials often have a different set of criteria for determining who is a *chamoug*н where they emphasise the size of a land holding and the place of residence. For them, in order to be qualified as a local farmer, one must not own more than one or two hectares of rice land, and one has to
reside in the village in which the land plot is located. Anyone else is not considered as a local farmer, and labeled *chamougn*.

Through this criminalisation of *chamougn*, and their association with all middle-class farmers, such farmers were prevented from taking part in any actions that challenged the decisions of field agents. The labeling also rendered them a new legal status as criminals and vulnerable to prosecution from law enforcement agencies, namely FiA, PDoE, PDOWRAM and the police. The state agents warned that they should keep clear of the whole process, and their appearance and participation in any demarcation process would be met with arrest and a jail term.

**Central Vs Local Farmers**

With the local government only playing a tokenistic role in the process, and the criminalisation of the middle-class, it was up to local farmers themselves to oppose the actions of state agents. This section describes the micro-politics of domination and control by the state as represented by MOWRAM and TSBA.

MOWRAM and TSBA strictly controlled all information available to the wider public, and particularly to the farmers concerned, which effectively pre-empted the possibility of local resistance. MOWRAM and TSBA consistently presented their actions as strictly in line with the policy vision of the PM which led to the impression that local farmers’ interests would be given the highest priority. The PM would often be quick to proudly assert himself as ‘the son of a farmer’. In addition, he is known for his rectangular strategies, *yotasas chatokon*, which strongly emphasises, among other things, the development of rice farming in Cambodia. He also portrays himself through televised speeches as someone intimately engaged with rice farming. During his election campaign, he visited local farmers within the study commune, engaging in their activities of examining rice plants, transplanting, and harvesting.

In the wake of the PM’s reaction to the first phase of demarcation, MOWRAM and TSBA went into damage control. In an interview in September of 2010, the minister of MOWRAM assured the public that the purpose of the boundary demarcation was to set a clear line between farmland, more specifically the floating rice area, and the flooded forest around Tonle Sap, so as to ‘prevent further clearing of the flooded forest’. He added later in the interview which was aired on the national TV, that the marking of the boundary will
not affect farmland. ‘In fact, we will leave a bigger area for people to farm’ [Minister of MOWRAM, press conference, Phnom Penh, 29 September 2010].

Meanwhile, PDOWRAM claimed that

The placing of the first-phrase was a trial. It was designed to just locate the rough location of the poles and to see how local famers would react to it. In doing so, people will have a chance to react if the poles enclose their land. Then a team from Phnom Penh will assess the situation on the ground and make recommendation for how the map could be adjusted. [Interview with a PDOWRAM staff member, Pursat, 4 October 2010]

These statements had two positive effects for MOWRAM and TSBA. On the one hand, it gave the public an impression that MOWRAM and TSBA would do nothing less than provide the best service. Their past mistake was now interpreted not as a mistake as the farmers had accused, but as a necessary step to ensure accuracy during map making. With the explanation that local farmers were to be included in the adjustment process, attempts were made to convince the public that the entire process was going to be done with the utmost regard for democratic principles and effectiveness.

On another level, their statements were a pre-emptive strike against any resistance which farmers were likely to offer. MOWRAM and TSBA described the presence of poles placed during phase I as not having any real impact on the status of farming land. The poles were said to be merely a part of the trial and error phase of the project, and were placed to give field officials an idea of how much to adjust the positions of poles in Phase II. Moreover, local farmers had been assured by the commune chief and line department staff that poles were only placed for the sake of marking, and it would not be enforced to the detriment of floating rice land.

Second, MOWRAM and TSBA strictly inhibited information flow to the would-be affected farmers, leaving them to operate in a state of uncertainty. The process of pole placing was scheduled to start in the first week of March, but neither the local authorities nor, concerned personnel of provincial departments such as PDOWRAM, had seen the map on which the pole placing was based:

Who knows where the pole is going to be? We don’t know on what basis they [the demarcation team] determine what is floating rice and what is flooded forest. [Interview with village chief, Pursat, 5 March 2011]
All they were told was that the demarcation would start from the southern tip of the province, and push northward as fast as possible to reach the northern border. When exactly the team would reach a certain point in the province was not known.

When the team did arrive at the study commune and began to place the boundary poles, the field officers told local farmers and local authorities that the pole positions were not yet final. This further gave a sense of flexibility hence farmers reduced their anxieties over the pole position. They were told that a further round of corrections would occur, where local farmers would have the opportunity to tell authorities where they think the poles should go. It is worth quoting at length the team leader as he spoke to the farmers:

Please! Don’t look at the pole and become disappointed. Disappointment is a negative force. This pole is placed here only to serve as the basis for us to consider. If your land is on that side [what is now flooded forest], please don’t be disappointed. You can communicate with your village chief, commune chief and district chief so that they can send your complaint to the provincial governor who can forward the information to us. Our committee will come to assess the issue and decide what to do. [The demarcation team leader, instruction to local farmers, Pursat, 8 March]

Through these words the team leader effectively reduced the likelihood of local resistance. At the moment of pole placement, the local farmers who had previously expressed grave concern about their livelihoods, stood passively and watched the pole being placed in silence. No remarks were made, and no one showed any sign of objection to the location of the pole. It created an impression that there was no real objection amongst the local farmers. However, this impression does not represent the reality. The local sentiment, particularly of those present at the site of pole placing, consisted of feelings of anger over the fact that they just lost their ownership over their floating rice land. As the group was dispersing to go to their own home in the village, some local farmers were talking of secretly coming back at night to remove the boundary pole. But this talk of resistance by way of counter-territorial strategy did not materialise, given the prevailing context of threat of jail terms.

There was also a public perception that the demarcation was only perfunctory. That is, nobody was going to take it seriously. The presence of the pole was not going to change anything. Prior to the pole placing day, an official for PDOWRAM assured farmers that the boundary line was only there to serve as an indication of where the forest is, and to
prevent further clearance of the forest. He assured them that the entire process would not affect farmland. Farmers would still be able to go into their farmland regardless of whether it was in Zone II or Zone III. These assurances that farmland would not be affected significantly reduced the prospects of farmers protesting during the actual demarcation process.

**Chapter Summary**

This chapter showed how maps are not simple and inert representations of geographical conditions, but tools of geographical imagination advanced by those in power. It showed that the new map of protected flooded forest does not represent the actual ecological and human landscapes, but represents Tonle Sap space on the basis of political power and personal interests of the state agents in charge. Along this line, this chapter provided in-depth insights into how power works its way down through patron networks, within a neopatrimonial state. By focusing on two events, the pre-demarcation meeting and actual demarcation implementation, this chapter has shown how power flows downwards from the central state through line. It showed that agents representing the central state took advantage of the concept of cooperation in order to exercise dominance over the provincial and local governments. It showed that the concept of cooperation, as used in Cambodian state agencies, does not empower local government to represent local interests. Rather, it is used by the central agents to ensure compliance from the provincial and local governments.

This chapter also showed that discretionary power not only gives implementing agents autonomy and flexibility in carrying out their tasks, it also provides them with rent-seeking opportunities. As this case of demarcation shows, the discretionary power of the implementing agents, instead of helping to achieve the central state’s dual objectives of conservation and rice expansion, actually resulted in enclosure of the floating rice land.

This chapter also showed the lines of accountability of different state offices, especially the provincial and local governments. However, when talking about provincial government, a careful distinction should be made between the governor's office and the line departments, such as PDoE, PDOWRAM and FiA. The governor was more concerned about protecting his own position than representing the interests of his constituency. He looked at the demarcation project as a top-down project which was the sole responsibility of technical agents. He feared that his intervention would offend high ranking agents,
which could potentially bring an end to his governorship. The provincial line departments were more accountable to the central agents than to the people in their province. Despite decades of decentralisation and deconcentration, the line departments do not see themselves as equal counterparts working side-by-side with the central agencies to ensure effectiveness in the demarcation project. Rather they see their main duty is to act as helping hands. This attitude is captured by the choice of words they used to describe themselves- *senatika*.

This chapter also showed that local government or local authorities are more likely to act in the interest of local farmers. Many commune and village chiefs attempted, although without success, to protect the existing floating rice land in their localities. Their ability to represent the local farmers was compromised by the wider politics of framing the entire issue where local authorities are accused of corrupt practices.

This chapter also showed that central agents representing the state dominate local farmers. They first exploited the concept of *chamough* to displace the upper stratum farmers, who are well-informed and well-connected, and who are likely to challenge their work. They then used their ability to control information concerning the demarcation to ensure an atmosphere of compliance from the rest of the farmers.
Chapter VII: The Appeal

The location of pole 22 placed on 8 March 2011, affected 121 farmer households in four villages. A total of 580 hectares of former floating rice area in the commune was lost. The manner in which pole 22 was placed left local farmers no room to react, yet they were told of a possibility for appeal. This chapter looks at the processes and difficulties that local citizens have to go through to demand accountability from the state.

This chapter looks at two appeal mechanisms, one formal and one informal. By way of ethnographic description, this chapter describes the responsiveness, capacity and accountability of the local government in relation to appeal processes. The chapter also describes the role of local leaders and the manner in which they actively seek solutions to local problems. This chapter will also describe the possibilities and limitations of political party-based solutions to local problems. Finally, it also describes the potential role that the media can play in solving local solutions in the neo-patrimonial state system.

Formal Mechanism of Appeal

This section of the findings details the process through which local actors formally appealed the placement of boundary poles. The information in this section is based on ethnographic field data, as the researcher was permitted to go along with local group leaders as they made their official appeals. The researcher was allowed to be present at all local discussions, as well as at meetings between village and commune chiefs. Thus the researcher gained significant insights into the process as it unfolded.

The Complaint Letter Version I

After their land was marked as a part of the protected forest, local floating rice farmers were told by the central agent in charge of the demarcation that they could go through a bureaucratic appeal process, in which local farmers were required to contact their village chief, commune chief and district chief to prepare a formal document requesting the examination of the position of the pole:

Contact your village chief and bring eka sa trum trov. The village chief will forward it to the commune chief, then district chief, and the governor who will
forward it to our committee who will access the case. [Demarcation team leader, instruction to local farmers, Pursat, 8 March 2011]

The term *eka sa* means document. *Trum trov* can literally be translated as correct, right or appropriate. *Eka sa trem troy* is a term most frequently used within the Cambodian bureaucracy, and all requests for state intervention must have it. However, what exactly constitutes *eka sa trum trov* is not universally defined. For instance, the central agent in charge of the demarcation process, although telling farmers that any appeal was contingent upon them bringing *eka sa trum trov* to their local authorities, was not specified what should be contained within such a document. Nor was it automatically obvious to farmers which particular ‘correct document’ they should bring.

To add to the uncertainty of what constitutes the appropriate document, there was also a restriction on who could take part in the appeal process. State agents had stressed that only those who were directly affected by the demarcation could participate in the appeal process. That is, only those who owned farmland in the contested area were allowed to take part in the appeal. The restriction prevented the majority of local farmers or villagers who disagree with the displacement of the floating rice, but who do not own any farmland in that particular contested site, from being a part of a local collective action to challenge the state. Moreover, the central agents placed further restrictions on which group of affected farmers could appeal ‘… *chamougn* are not allowed to appeal… and I have to warn you that you cannot lend your name to *chamougn*…’ [Demarcation team leader, Pursat, 8 March 2011].

As seen in the previous chapter, the term *chamougn* refers to those farmers who use modern farming machinery. At the time of the appeal, the term came to be defined as those who own more than 2 or 3 hectares of cultivated land, and who live outside of the contested area. With these definitions, the exclusion of *chamougn* meant that the number of local farmers eligible to take part in the appeal process was reduced to only those who own less than 2 or 3 hectares of contested land and those who live in the contested area.

Such restrictions have strategic implications. First, appealing against the state is perceived as a high risk, and affected farmers were not willing to take such a risk for small parcels of unprofitable land. ‘I’d rather lose the land. I don’t want to go to jail’ [Interview with local farmer, Pursat, 9 March 2011].
The second implication concerns *eka sa trum trov*. Field interviews suggest that none of the farmers in the eligible group had knowledge or skills required to fill out official paperwork as part of the appeal process, nor did they have any connections to outsiders for opinions or assistance.

The situation was made worse by the fact that farmers were asked to submit their identification papers. Having to submit a copy of photo identification in order to officially appeal the demarcation is not only a bureaucratic hurdle but a means to incite fear of being seen to officially oppose the state. Villagers were afraid to protest against the state because they had the perception that the state can track them down. In the appeal period, there was a rumor going around the commune that the central government had dispatched plain clothed police officers to the commune to keep an eye on irregular local action. The rumor could never be confirmed, but the villagers seemed to believe that the presence of plain clothed policemen was real, and that officers were capable of tracking down and arresting those who were active in opposing the state.

On top of this, local farmers were under pressure to produce the appeal documents within the small time frame allocated. The pole placing team leader stated that if by the time the team finished their demarcation in the province without official objection, it would be accepted as correct and become formal and enforceable by law. Although he did not specifically mention how much time the local farmers had to appeal, it was understood from media reports that a formal meeting was going to be held at the provincial office as soon as the team finished boundary demarcation. If by the time of the meeting, there was no objection, then the governor would be asked to officially endorse the placement of the poles. That effectively meant that local farmers had five days to come up with the required appeal documents.

After three days of the poles being placed, no formal complaints had been given by the villagers. Affected farmers were told to contact their village chief, but few villages had the confidence to involve their village chief in the matter. Typically, information is spread in the opposite direction. The commune chiefs are the ones who contact villagers to spread information or to give instructions about a certain matter. In the case of an appeal
document, almost all of those who had lost land wanted to appeal, but all of them were of the attitude that they should wait for others to appeal first.

At the national level, there was growing public support for the project as the media had been echoing the PM’s directive as well as continually reminding the public of the urgent need to save the Tonle Sap flood plain and prevent ecological destruction. It was alleged that flooded forest has been cleared on a large scale, and the media has been making strong links to farmers as the perpetrators. Media reports were often accompanied by local testimonies from farmers and fisherman about the depleted fish stock in the lake backed by stories of how they could catch less and less fish. Meanwhile, MOWRAM and TSBA continued to propagate images of the projects successes, showing photos of smiling local farmers standing around the boundary poles.

At that stage, local farmer leaders began to emerge. Due to the need to protect their identities, the name of each local leader is represented by a letter. Three of these leaders, Mr O, Mr N, and Mr B, within the commune are detailed here:

Mr. O who owns five hectares of land in the contested area. He acquired the plots through purchase in 2005, and had been cultivating floating rice since then. However, he lives in a village outside the contested area. Both the size of his land holdings, and his place of residence gave him the title chamougn according to the criteria of the demarcation team. Mr. N, on the other hand, lived within the contested area. He owned eight hectares of floating rice land, three of which he inherited, and the rest of which he acquired through a purchase in 2004. By place of residence, Mr. N was eligible to take part in the appeal, but by land holdings, he was a chamougn thus not allowed to appeal. In addition, his land was never cultivated.

Mr. B also lives in the contest area, and he owns 5 hectares of land, two of which he inherited from his family while the rest was purchased in 2006. Prior to the demarcation, two hectares of his land had been dedicated to water melon cultivation, and the rest was left uncultivated. He too had a complicated status within the appeal process. He was only considered eligible by place of residence, but by the size of his land holdings, he was a chamougn.
Mr. O was more exposed to networks outside his village, thus he was more informed of the demarcation process. After a lengthy discussion, the three agreed that they needed to mobilise more people to take part in filling out complaints. They went about inconspicuously encouraging people to fill out complaint forms. Each of them went to the houses of those known to be affected, and asked if they wanted to appeal. Most affected farmers however, believed that it was the duty of village chiefs to collect family books and identity cards in order to submit an appeal document. Out of all of the four village chiefs concerned, only one witnessed the pole placing process and directly heard details of the appeal procedure. When the leaders approached the one village chief who was present, they found that he was not at his home. Other residents told them that he was busy herding cattle and farming.

The two local leaders went to the next village chief. But the village chief refused to take up the matter until he received instructions to do so from the commune chief. Although the country has implemented the process of D&D, which in principle emphasises local initiatives and ownership over the development process, the actual practice of development remains highly hierarchical. ‘I have heard of the need to appeal, but I have to talk to the commune chief first. If he lets me go ahead with it, I will’ [Village chief, speaking to local leaders, Pursat, 10 March 2011]

Village chief’s acting on their own without permission from superiors is uncommon. Statements from the different village chiefs suggested that the key to getting the appeal process started lay with the commune chief.

Among local authorities, the commune chief had been the most active in defending the floating rice area. As mentioned in the previous chapter, he had made efforts to brief the central agents of the local landscapes. On the day of demarcation, he also spoke up against the position of the pole. However, the commune chief was of the opinion that initiating the appeal process could be interpreted as an anti-government action. The government had recently been labeling local protestors as opposition party-members. Interviews with the commune and village chiefs suggested that local authorities were

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14As seen in Chapter III, the D &D reform program, officially launched in Cambodia in 2001, aims to promote local accountability, representation and responsiveness through local participation in development planning.
cautious of MOWRAM and TSBA accusing them of being opposition party members – something that would quickly destroy their political careers.

For legal advice, Mr. O had asked for the assistance from one of his cousins in Phnom Penh, Mr. S. But Mr. S was not eligible to be a part of the appeal. He lived in Phnom Penh, and did not own any plot of land in the troubled area. By the criteria of the pole-placing team leader, Mr. S was a pure outsider. In addition, the demarcation team leader had warned that any outsider intervention would be investigated with severe consequences for those found to be provocateurs. Thus, like the local leaders, Mr. S did not dare to openly involve himself in the process.

For his long standing experience as one of the labour union leaders in Phnom Penh, Mr. S was familiar with the workings of the Cambodian government, especially formal bureaucratic processes of appeal. Thus, Mr. S suggested that the formal appeal document be comprised of (1) a cover letter that stated the objective of the appeal, and (2) thumbprints of all of the affected farmers. Mr. S then assisted with the drafting of the letter.

However, local leaders encountered a major setback when trying to collect thumbprints. The villagers would not act without involvement from village chiefs, who were also waiting for permission from the commune chief. But the commune chief had recently been told by the district chief not to act on the matter, thus he refused to take any action. The commune chief was understood to be in a difficult situation and his decision to back out was unsurprising. He had seen the arrest of a fellow commune chief for challenging the demarcation process and was rightfully afraid of the same thing happening to him. He had also been warned at various times not to side with the chumoung in their appeals.

There was also little chance of the district chief supporting those who appealed the demarcation. The district chief is known to belong to a social group consisting of the district police chief, a district policeman and one person who identifies himself as a three-star general of the PM’s body guard unit15. In the previous year, the general had produced a map of agricultural land in the area which he planned to sell to investors. The map covered an area of 5000 hectares and included much of the farming land in question.

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15In public opinion the PM’s body guard unit is even more powerful that the state’s ministry of national defense.
Moreover, Mr. O was told by the district policeman not to engage in the appeal process. According to Mr. O, the policeman said the following:

Don’t appeal. You can’t expect to win in this case because this is a state project. Once the poles are placed, the new boundary line becomes established. The land on this side is farmland, but the land on the other side of the line is state land. No farmers are allowed to work there. But my group can seek a special arrangement with the state and we can later sell that land, then we can give you some money back. But if you tried to appeal, and you lose, they [his group] will not give you any money’. [Interview with Mr. O quoting the words of the District officer, Pursat, 12 March 2011]

The policeman’s remark suggested that the district chief and his group had a hidden agenda in regards to the land. Driven by the suspicion, Mr. O requested to meet with the commune chief.

At the commune chief’s house, a few men were gathering around an outdoor bed with a carton of beer. During Mr O’s meeting with the commune chief, two men arrived at the house, but were quickly ushered away around the back of the house. The commune chief repeated his earlier message to Mr. O, and his words are worth quoting in whole here:

Yes, the district chief just called this morning to tell me not to do anything on this matter. The district authority is now taking charge of the matter… the district was a more appropriate level of authority to facilitate the people’s complaint. [Conversation between the commune chief and Mr. O and Mr. S, Pursat, 13 March 2011]

At that time, the tone of the commune chief seemed to suggest that he was relieved to be free from the matter. However, Mr. O and Mr. S tried to convince the commune chief to pursue the matter. Trapped between, on the one hand, wanting to do something for his people and, on the other, his superior’s order, the commune chief strategically made up a story that the villagers had been gathering at the commune office, as well as his home, to demand an intervention. The story of a public gathering seemed to get the attention of the district chief. In addition, with the commune council election scheduled for the following year, the mention of a popular movement was taken seriously

Ok, if they are there [commune office and commune chief’s home] already, you can welcome them. But don’t make any promises. We cannot do anything to change these poles. It has already been decided. [Conversation between the commune chief and the district chief, Pursat, 13 March 2011]
With these words from the district chief, the commune chief felt that he could act on the appeal process without being seen as disobeying instruction from his superior.

After two hours, the meeting between the commune chief and the two village leaders concluded with a general agreement that the villagers could go ahead with their appeal to the governor. The problem they now faced however was that they had only that afternoon to collect thumb prints in order to meet the demands of the district authorities. This was doubly made difficult by the fact that they had to do this on a Sunday afternoon. The commune chief told the village leaders that he and his councilors would be able to complete all these tasks by themselves. Though, it was not clear how soon the commune chief and his councilors would act on the matter. The commune chief was known to be a regular drinker who often met with colleagues in his free time at the local bar. On that particular afternoon, he was just about to start his drinking ritual, when he had been interrupted by the meeting with the two village leaders. Mr. O and Mr. S felt that they should still stay engaged in the process as they were worried the commune chief would get distracted in his task.

After the meeting at the commune chief’s house, the two traveled to meet the other two local farmer leaders, Mr. N and Mr. B. They divided the task of collecting thumbprints between them. But no one knew exactly how to go about the task. The pole-placing team leader had instructed them to contact their village chief and take with them their family book and national ID cards. But that was all the information they had been given. The local farmers were left wondering whether they were required to only give their ID papers to the village chief, or whether they were supposed to thumbprint a particular form. It should be noted here that the appeal letter is ultimately destined for the minister of MOWRAM. Based on an interview with a former TSBA staff member, the minister is known within government circles to be very particular about formalities of documents addressed to him. He is very particular about the format, character, font size and wording of documents addressed to him. ‘He [the minister of MOWRAM] would not read your letter if it does not follow the style he wants’ [Interview with a former TSBA staff member, Phnom Penh, 28 March 2011].

In the commune, the local leaders and affected farmers were not aware of his strict requirements. They struggled to figure out what to include in the appeal document. Mr. S
suggested that the group buy a big notebook, and columns be made for people to state their name, age, gender, land holding, thumb print and ID number. Mr. B was willing to go around in his village to collect the thumb prints of the affected farmers, and he estimated that there were at least 60 households in his area.

The village chief had collected thumb prints of all of his villagers whose land was affected. Mr. O and the Mr. S then proceeded to look for the chief of the other village, which is one of the four villages in the commune which had lost land during the demarcation. It was estimated that some 50 households were altogether affected by the new boundary line in that village. Unfortunately, the village chief was away and was not scheduled to return for three days. The chief’s wife had also heard of the demarcation, and was strongly opposed to it. She then suggested that the deputy village chief take charge of the matter of thumb-print collection. Then she went off and quickly returned later with the deputy chief. The two then explained the situation again to the deputy chief who agreed to help. Mr. S showed him the sheets and drew the columns for him the same way they did for other villages in the hope of maintaining some sort of unity. To give the deputy chief a sense of urgency, the two told the deputy chief that the peoples thumb prints from all villages had to be collected and then combined together that afternoon so that the commune chief could have the appeal form with him at the meeting in the provincial office on the morning of the next day.

It is a custom that some financial payment is given if citizens seek any service from state officials. On the basis of that reality, Mr. S gave him 10000 riel (around 2.5 US dollars). Mr. O and Mr. S returned to the villages again at around 4 pm to collect the thumb prints that each of the other local leaders had collected. Mr. N managed to gather 15 names and thumb prints, while the village chief collected 30. Mr. B managed to collect 50 thumb prints, but there was a problem with one of the columns. Instead of recording the ID number, the leader had got confused and asked the villagers to write their date of birth. The Cambodian bureaucracy is known to be strict, or unnecessarily bureaucratic with heavy emphasis on forms and procedures, i.e. right form, right format and under a particular time frame. If submitted that way, the appeal letter would be labeled as incorrect, and rejected. But due to the time of day, it would have been unrealistic to ask villagers to fill out the form again. So the group decided to take it as it was.
As Mr. O and Mr. S were leaving the village chief’s house, the commune chief and his councilor arrived. The commune chief asked about the number of villagers concerned. At that stage, it was not clear yet how many farmer households were affected, and that would not be known until figures from all villages could be obtained. The commune chief expressed his reservations about the appeal process. His mood suggested that he was still worried and unsure about the entire process. He queried who was to take the appeal letter to the governor the next day. Mr. O and Mr. S were of the opinion that the commune chief was the most suitable person to hand in the appeal letter. But the commune chief was not convinced. For most of Cambodia’s contemporary history, persons of higher position are the ones who give orders and issue directives, and the lower level authorities are expected to carry them out. At that movement, the idea that the commune chief would carry the appeal letter to the governor, hence skipping his superiors, seemed to deeply go against the norms of hierarchy. In addition, the commune chief was not comfortable with the idea of having direct contact with the governor, as the distance in status was seen as too far apart. Although the commune chief is locally elected, he could lose his position if he loses his party membership, for he is nominated by his political party to run for election. The nomination is made by the party office at the district level, for which the district chief is often the head. Thus, offending the district chief would entail some long-term, if not immediate, consequences. Typically, it would be the district chief who is the most appropriate to communicate with the governor. From the chiefs stand point, taking up this challenge could mean a lot of unpredictable but potentially harmful threats to not just his political life, but also his every day livelihood. His job as a commune chief had been his livelihood for all of his life. If the consequence of delivering the letter was to be expelled from his job, he would lose not only his livelihood, but also respect, something that most politicians in Cambodia are not willing to lose. But both Mr. O and Mr. S tried to assure the chief that nobody would get into any trouble:

We are doing this just to respond to the instruction of the pole placing officials. They told us that we need to contact the local authorities to let them know that our land is affected, otherwise this new boundary line will be accepted as correct and it will become permanently endorsed by the sub decree. [Mr. O, speaking to the commune chief, Pursat, 13 March 2011]
As you see, we have carefully written the letter in a way to make it look like it is from the local people directly to the governor and you are just being asked to relay the message. If something happens, you can say that you don’t know. You just act as requested by your people and you don’t have a choice. [Mr. S, speaking to the commune chief, Pursat, 13 March 2011]

The two quotes here suggest that local farmer leaders played an active role in pushing the commune chief to act on the matter. In the end, the commune chief agreed to take the letter to the governor. After the conversation, the Mr. O and Mr. S headed to the next village to collect the last batch of villagers’ names and thumb prints. There the work of the second village was slowed down by the fact that most of the villagers concerned were not at home. Thus he had to wait for them and did not manage collect all the names until after 6 pm. The group managed to collect a total of 121 thumb prints. The sun had already set by then, and Mr. O and Mr. S were still out in the middle of this remote village some 25 kilometers away from the provincial town where they would be able to find a place to photocopy the documents. It would take them 45 minutes to get to town, which would mean that by the time they get there, it would be almost 7 pm. Pursat town, beings a small provincial town, closes up most of its shops at around 6pm. But Mr. S, for his familiarity with the Cambodian bureaucracy, insisted that copies of the appeal document be made, and local leaders keep the original for future reference.

If you submit the original document to them, you are finished. If they want … they can just throw your document away and pretend you never submitted it. So we have to submit the photocopied one and keep the original. If they throw it away, we have proof. [Mr. S, conversation with Mr. O, Pursat, 13 March 2011]

On that consideration, the two debated whether to submit the original appeal form, but Mr. S insisted that a few copies of it be made and only the copied one be submitted while the original should be kept for future reference. The two rushed to the photocopy shop in town. Five copies of the form were made, one of which was to be taken to the commune chief at dawn of the next day so that he could take it to the meeting at 8 am.

**The Finalising Meeting**

In accordance with the project procedure, the demarcation occurred in three stages; the pre-demarcation meeting, the demarcation, and the finalising meeting. The finalising meeting was designed to allow all concerned stake holders to meet and report on progress to date, achievements, or to raise any objections. It was also for the demarcation team to report to the provincial government, in the presence of the local authorities, and to give records of
the boundary pole positions. The governor then needed to sign to endorse the position of the poles, so that he could conclude the project.

On Monday 14 March 2011, six days after the placing of pole 22, the meeting was scheduled to take place at the provincial office. The meeting was attended by the provincial governor, key officials from the provincial line departments, and local authorities (except the village chiefs). To the pole placing team, the meeting was a chance for them to declare the completion of the project. It was an opportunity to report to their superiors, the minister of MOWRAM and TSBA, the date of their completion. The team was to be awarded for their timely completion of a difficult project. Many in the team, who were from distant provinces, were also eager to complete the project so they could return home. Since the start of the demarcation project, the team had been in the province for almost two weeks, and had been working seven days a week, through weekends and public holiday. It was implied by their superiors that they could not go home to Phnom Penh until they had completed all field activities. To the provincial authorities, the meeting signified the transfer of the matter into their jurisdiction. The pole placing team had finished their job of marking the boundary line, so the role of the provincial authorities was to enforce it.

But the meeting failed to conclude the process of demarcation. Armed with the local letter of complaint and thumb prints, the commune chief managed to gather enough confidence to inform the governor, prior to the meeting, of the local people’s intention to protest against the new boundary line. According to the commune chief, the governor said the following at the meeting:

I think the pole placed at Toul Cha is not correct. I remember that when I was young I used to herd my animals in the area, and from the current pole position to the edge of the farmland, you have to spend almost a whole morning walking.
[Interview with the commune chief, 15 March 2011]

The governors objection, however passive it might appear, effectively prevented the meeting from recognizing the legality of the new line, and it was decided in the meeting that reassessments of the pole positions were needed before it could be formally recognised as correct.

However, the farmers’ complaint letter was not formally accepted. The governor told the commune chief not to submit it as the appeal document was not qualified as eka
sattrum trov. It did not follow the correct format used in the Cambodian administrative system. It had to be re-made using the right format.

The Complaint Letter Version II

In the days that followed, the process of making the second letter began in earnest. All village chiefs had to pick up a form from the commune clerk. It was a busy scene at the commune office on that particular day. All of the concerned village chiefs were waiting for the clerk to give them forms. Some of the farmers whose land had been affected were also at the commune office waiting to sign their name.

But since, the commune authority had no prior experience in dealing with matters of that nature, there was no official form. Thus, the clerk had to make an ad-hoc form to be used by all the villages. By noon, one day after the meeting, the village chiefs had recorded all of the names of those present at the commune office. However, many farmers were also unaware of what was happening in the commune office on that day. They were at home or in the field. The pole-placing team leader had warned that only farmers whose names were on the list could be given their land back. Thus the village chiefs had to go around to the villagers concerned to collect their names and thumb prints. At the end of the day, the whole name and thumb print re-collection procedure had just managed to be completed.

At this point, the role of the local leaders had been taken over by the commune clerk. But the commune clerk had been complaining about having to do the job at his own expense. Thus, Mr. O gave the clerk 50,000 Riel (12.5 US dollars) to help cover the gasoline and photocopying costs. Copies of the document had to be made and sent to the governor the next day.

By noon of the next day, Tuesday 15 March 2011, the commune clerk reported to the commune chief that the second complaint letter had been completed to comply with the prescribed format, and that it had been submitted to the governor’s office. However, on 17 March 2011, the leader of the demarcation team refused to accept it, telling the commune chief that the form (the second one) was also incorrect. The reason for the rejection was that the appeal letter contained some names of chamourn. According to the team leader it also incorrectly included other farmers who do not live in the villages in which the farmland was located. The out- village farmers are those with larger land holdings, up to
twenty hectares in some cases. So according to the team leader Mr. O could no longer be eligible to be a part of the appeal process.

At that time the commune chief became aware of the strategy that the higher authorities were using. If he started preparing the third version of the complaint letter, he would have to go around asking villagers to re-sign for the third time, an onerous task for himself and all those involved. Local villagers are never fond of paper work, and signing for the first time was already hard, not mention the second and now third times. Thus, the third version of the complaint letter was never made.

Nevertheless, the second complaint letter seemed to work, at least partially. The announcement of the official recognition of the new boundary line in the province was delayed, and news emerged that the pole placing team had gone back to the area to re-evaluate the local landscape. Once again, the commune chief’s level of confidence was raised. However, the modification of the pole position was still beyond the control of either the commune chief or the local villagers. Two weeks after making the second complaint letter, the commune chief was informed by the pole-placing group that they would go to re-assess the area, and that there was a possibility of people being able to reclaim their land.

The commune chief was asked to hire a truck to pick up one boundary pole from PDOWRAM in the provincial town. On Tuesday 29 March 2013, the truck picked up the poles and went to the commune office to await further instruction from the pole-placing group. The commune chief had understood that the pole position reassessment would happen on the afternoon of that Tuesday, thus both the truck operator and the commune chief waited at the commune office. But the pole-placing group never turned up on that day.

On Saturday 2 April 2011, four days after the original date, the group turned up to finish adjusting the boundary line. However, none of the farmers, whose land was affected and whose names were listed in the appeal document, had been summoned to the site of demarcation. Nor was there any rigorous procedure to incorporate local land claims. Only the commune chief was asked to accompany the pole-placing group leader.
On arrival the team leader ordered another pole be placed near a huge straw pile\textsuperscript{16}. The decision to place the pole near the straw pile, on one level represented the demarcation agent’s ability to ignore the order of the PM. The straw pile was one of the many left behind by local farmers after the harvest, but it was the only one that survived the seasonal wild fire\textsuperscript{17}. The presence of the straw pile on the ground serves as an indication that the land had been under rice cultivation, which under the PM’s order should be respected. On another level, it shows the demarcation team’s ability to discredit local knowledge of lived space.

The pole is located around 400 meters away from pole 22. It was estimated that only 5 of the 121 affected farmer households got their land back from the re-assessment.

\textbf{Figure 17: Map of pole 43A, 22, 23 and the adjustment pole}

\begin{figure}
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{map.png}
\caption{Map of pole 43A, 22, 23 and the adjustment pole}
\end{figure}

\textsuperscript{16} Most Cambodian farmers do not harvest by combined harvesters which, after threshing, only keeps the gains while dumping the straws in the field. By tradition, farmers harvest by hand first and tie the harvest in bundles which are then collected for threshing. The threshing can be done by ox walking on it, or by threshing machine. The straw is often piled up and stored for animal feed in the wet season.

\textsuperscript{17} The local referred to it as wild fire, but in fact it is mostly man-made. The area is a floating rice area which has cluster of natural pounds. When Tonle Sap Lake water retreats at the beginning of the dry season, local villagers often come into the area for fishing. They make fire to cook their meals which at time cause wild fire. Because the area is an open area fire often spread in the whole area consuming what is in its path including the straw piles and even in some year harvest.
Researcher’s Own photo of the adjustment pole. According to customary knowledge, the floating rice area stretches until the edge of the flooded forest in the horizon which, as seen in this photo, is around 2 kilometers away from this pole. But as this pole dictates, the area up to the pole is floating rice area and the area beyond this pole is the flooded forest.

The appeal document stated the nature of the enclosure, detailing who was affected and how much land was involved. It also contained a detailed proposal for how the boundary line should be adjusted in accordance with local customary knowledge of the landscape. However, the manner in which the central agents in charge of the demarcation responded to the local appeal demonstrated how little impact the letter had on their conduct. Regardless of the amount of effort and trouble that had gone into to procedure, the appropriate appeal document was not even used as a factor in the reassessment process.

**Informal Mechanism of Appeal**

Local farmer leaders explored other informal mechanisms which would more directly bring their complaints to those in power. Based on participant observation of the appeal process, this section describes two neo-patrimonial appeal mechanisms, and their limitation in solving local problems.
The Party Solution

The CPP party (the party in power) is known across Cambodia for its aggressive election campaigning strategy, which involves long-term engagement with local people. This is contrary to typical party campaigning which involves only a brief period of intensive pre-election propaganda. CPP party membership is divided into two main categories - the core team, and the regular party members. The core team consists of those holding key state positions. In addition to their state duty, those people are assigned a particular locality with a mission to rally electoral support for the CPP. In Cambodian political terms, these people are called ‘the political working group’ or the ‘CPP working party’. These groups constantly engage people within their electorates to persuade them to support the CPP party through the provision of material and financial gifts. They also take up the concerns and requests of the electorate, that the local state government has failed to act upon. News of how the demarcation affected the local floating rice area reached the CPP working party.

With the commune election scheduled for the following year, there was a sense of optimism that the CPP working group would seriously take up the matter. However, there were major barriers preventing the working group from engaging with the issue. First, although it was the working groups aim to engage with local concerns, the political working group does not communicate directly with the local villagers. As in the case of the demarcation project, the working group relies on reports from key local officials, especially the commune chief.

On the enclosure issue, the leader of the CPP working party was scheduled to visit all commune chiefs involved. Unfortunately, the commune chief was outside the province at a relative’s wedding. The commune chief thus assigned his deputy chief to represent him at the meeting. The deputy commune chief had not been seriously involved in the demarcation process. Local farmers were unsure of his stance in the matter, as he had been overheard expressing a strong personal view in support of the enclosure.

Second, there was a conflict within the working group itself concerning the head of MOWRAM and the head of MIME. The demarcation project was implemented by MOWRAM and TSBA. MIME does not have any formal involvement in the demarcation, but its minister serves as the head of the CPP working group for Pursat province. For that, he was expected represent his constituents’ interest. According to interviews with
MOWRAM personnel, there had been lingering tensions between the ministers over the issue of sand extraction. In the period of a construction boom in the country, MOWRAM and MIME were at odds over who should collect revenue from sand extraction. MOWRAM, which is in charge of the demarcation project, for its official duty to manage state water resources, including rivers, lakes and swamps, claimed that it is in charge of managing sand in the rivers. Meanwhile, sand is considered an essential raw material for the construction industry. Thus, the Ministry of Industries, Mines and Energy claimed that it should be under its management. Although the tension never surfaced publicly, it still persists, making it unlikely that the leader of the CPP’s working group could secure a deal with MOWRAM. Moreover, MOWRAM has established itself as not only the expert ministry for the job of demarcation, but also as the sole institution to be given the power of the PM’s order to demarcate the area. It could selectively accuse anyone interfering with its job of defying the PM.

As a result, there had been no significant action by the working party on the matter of enclosure. In the appeal period, the head of the working party for Pursat province only told the commune chief to contact the pole placing leader on his own, and submit the required document.

**Direct Appeal to the Top**

Two months after the placing of the poles, a group of farmers in Kampong Thom province managed to get their land back as a result of a direct intervention by the PM, who even granted local farmers an additional ten percent of their existing land holdings (Rasmei Kampuchea Daily Newspaper, 2011). But the space between the citizens and the PM is vast, meaning that most citizens are unable to gain access to the PM. This section describes two options the local farmers explored, and shows why they failed.

Option 1 involved local attempts to seek help from high ranking officials who had access to the PM and who had the political will to pass information regarding situation of the farmers onto the upper CPP officials. One likely candidate for the job was a member of the CCP working party based in Pursat. The assistant to the deputy head of the CPP working party, had heard about the case, and made a verbal promise to pass it onto the PM.

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18The working party is a unique arrangement by the CPP. It is a political group assigned to a particular locality to maintain local electoral support for the party.
But for weeks, nothing had happened. From past experience, the CPP working party has the executive power to intervene in any issue, and is much more responsive and effective in bringing about solutions than state offices. The working party can report directly to high officials in Phnom Penh who have political leverage over various local state institutions, and in the context of a lack of horizontal coordination between different line departments those officials are in a position of perceived authority to call for *samrol*\(^{19}\). When this happens, line departments no more operate like state institutions, but assume an upward political accountability to central officials. This overrides their differences, and united under one party, they come to have a common goal of solving public problems in the name of the party. But the issue of demarcation was of a different nature. It involved a conflict between the state that has established itself as the over-arching provider of social and environmental order, and the citizens that have been described as the destroyers of the environment. Moreover, it was not just an ordinary agency of the state, but a branch of state, MOWRAM, that has strong neo-patrimonial connections. Interviews with state officials suggested that none of the Cambodian bureaucrats, or politicians knew how to approach the matter in the interest of the locals, without being seen to challenge MOWRAM. This is reflected in the quote below:

> This time MOWRAM is wrong, but next time you can be wrong. If you screw them this time, you would be in trouble when you make a mistake in the future for they will get revenge. [Interview with CPP official, Phnom Penh, 20 March 2012]

By refraining from pointing out other’s mistakes, party officials prioritise harmonious relations with each other, rather than dealing with outside interests. Party officials are more accountable to their own political and economic interests, which are secured under the watchful eyes of the PM, than to the distant interests of local constituencies.

The second option involved local attempts to publicise the issue through the media. As discussed earlier, the Cambodian government employs every possible strategy to prevent its public image being harmed. It especially takes great care to avoid being portrayed as neglecting poor farmers. It would undermine its electoral campaign which heavily relies on vote-buying-through-gift- and-donation tactics. The idea was for local farmers to have their voice heard by powerful political figures including the PM, who,

\(^{19}\) In the Cambodia governance practice, *samrol* is a term used to refer to an act of softening one’s bureaucratic position or allowing or making possible what would not be permitted by law if it were to be enforced strictly, and in exchange for a gift or financial reward.
according to past experience, the farmers hoped would issue an executive order that could override existing arrangements, and overturn the decisions of the demarcation team. Besides, the PM had made clear that his teams were to respect existing farmland. News of the enclosure would indicate to him that his officials had failed to follow his instruction, something that past experience showed, would often prompt a quick reaction.

There are many news entities in the country, ranging from the fearless, opposition newspaper, to the cautious, but most read papers such as, *Dam Ampil*, *Kos Santipap*, *Kampuchea Thamey* and *Rasmey Kampuchea*. Choosing the right media outlet is crucial, not only in terms of reaching an audience, but also in securing a positive response from the head of state. For this particular case, Mr. S had advised the local farmer leaders not to approach the opposition newspaper as it had a limited readership, and a bad relation with the government which would not positively reflect the farmers interests.

*Dam Ampil* presented itself a good option for the case. It is not associated with the opposition party, which is one of the most important criteria. In addition, the chief of the newspaper had won the heart of *pres en* who even announced his appreciation of the paper in a televised speech which sent out a strong message to the public that this person has the PM’s patronage, thus he has a high level of political privilege. With his newly obtained backing from the PM, the chief of the newspaper had been flexing his political muscle and been trying to build a reputation of presenting the interests of the poor, even if he has to take on big government officials. For a while, his paper was perceived as a new branch of the CPP, with a mission of searching and providing justice for the poor and powerless. The public perception was that he is the person they could access, in order to seek help fighting against powerful officials.

But the newspaper’s reputation was only temporary. His challenges against big officials did not win him many friends, and in a patrimonial political system, his political clout faded when his enemies started to unite. In addition, he had been recently summoned to appear in a court on a defamation charge due to comments made alleging that a powerful

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20 Translated as Tamarind Tree. It is not clear why the Papers is named after the Tamarind tree.
21 Translated as Island of Peace
22 Translated as New Cambodia
23 Translated as Light of Cambodia
24 In Cambodia, it is observed that what the Prime Minister said in his televised speech is taken more seriously than the state law, and it is often implemented instantly.
tycoon was involved in miss-conduct. Thus there was a dilemma for the farmers as to whether they should approach him or not. There was the potential that following such an avenue would result in a strongly negative reaction from local officials. The farmer leaders did not want to risk reducing the likelihood of getting the land back.

The pressure was mounting for the farmer group leaders. There were words of TSBA and MOWRAM trying to push through the sub-decree to formalise and legalise the new map. There was another suggestion that the farmer leaders approach Kampuchea Thamey newspaper, which is also owned by the PM’s daughter. With the help of a friend who works in Phnom Penh, local farmer leaders found the contact number for the news desk, which then referred them to the local reporter for Pursat province. The local farmer leaders then called the reporter and expressed an intention to seek his help in covering the news.

Mr. O managed to convince the reporter that the local reality of the whole issue was different from the prevailing public perception that presented local farmers as forest destroyers. Thus the reporter agreed in principle to look into the matter. Mr. O sent the documents which included the letter to the governor and a copy of the 121 thumb prints to the reporter together with 100,000 Riel (25 US dollars) of his own money to help cover the cost of petrol for the reporter to travel to the village. The provision of money to the local reporter is a common practice due to an acknowledgment that reporters receive a low salary. Besides, it is understood that without providing money, the chance of them going out of their way to investigate the matter in the village is very limited.

A few days had passed, but nothing happened. Although the reporter had learned about the nature of the problem, he dared not report on the issue unless there was physical evidence of the farmers’ disagreement with the new map. The reporter told local leaders that they should organise some form of public appearance in which he could take photographs as hard evidence of the problem. But protesting is unprecedented in the history of the commune. Back in the village, everything remained calm as if nothing had happened. There emerged no form of public action. Three of the farmer leaders, with the word from the newspaper report, spent two days trying to encourage the villagers to rally at the commune office so that the reporter could take photographic evidence of movement. But the effort failed. The villagers refused to go to the commune office for fear of physical
violence. ‘We lose the land, and that is bad enough, so we don’t want to go to jail’
[Interview with one female farmer, Pursat, 17 March 2011]. Her position reflected those of the majority of the villager’s. But without the farmers coming to rally, the reporter refused to cover the story, and thus nothing happened.

At that point, local farmer leaders seemed to have depleted all possible options. The formal letter submitted through the administrative line did not get far, not even to the governor of the province. The hope of organizing a public rally faded away as farmers refused to come together to protest at the commune office. No official of any rank had been willing to take the matter to the PM as it could create tension with the minister of MOWRAM and the director of TSBA. The news reporter refused to cover the story unless there was hard physical evidence of the public disagreement, something which had never happened in the commune. Thus, that was the end of it. The local farmers had already accepted the fact that they would lose their land.

**The Emerging Possibility**

Based on the analysis of public documents, TV and newspaper reports in the period that followed the demarcation, this section describes how affected farmers elsewhere managed to exploit the populist politics of the government. Based on follow-up telephone interviews with the local leaders, this section shows how this option failed in the study commune.

On 10 May 2011, the PM was seen on the news in Kampong Thom province intervening in the conflict between local farmers and the pole-placing working group. As Hughes (2002) argues, public protests can serve as a forum for individuals or groups to represent their interest or demand accountability from the government in Cambodia. Somehow, the farmers in that province managed to have their case heard.25 The PM responded in his conventional style by flying to the site of conflict and assessing the situation himself. He announced in his televised speech that he had decided to give the farmland back to the farmers because he deemed the contested land to actually be

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25 This area is out of the scope of the study, thus the researcher could not verify the information himself, but rumor had it that the farmers in this particular area were hostile to the pole-placing team. They employed violence resistance where they brought axes and long knives to confront the group. The pole-placing group responded by arresting and jailing some of the local farmers, thus information about the incident spread widely among members of the public and eventually the Prime Minister.
farmland. In addition, in a gesture of apology\textsuperscript{26}, the farmers were given an extra ten percent of their original land holding. The news of the PM’s intervention in Kampong Thom province was followed, two days later, by news reports from Rasmei Kampuchea Daily Newspaper that the PM had issued an order to MOWRAM and TSA to adjust the boundary line for a group of farmers in Bantey Meanchey province. On 31 May 2011, 200 farmers representing 301 families in Banteay Meanchey province appealed to the provincial governor who then forwarded the case to the PM. The PM ordered MOWRAM and TSBA to re-assess the demarcation line in the area. The intervention of the PM resulted in a decision to readjust the location of the poles back to what the local farmers claimed to be the original positions. As a result, some 72164 hectares of floating rice land was given back to local farmers on 3 June 2011 (Svay, 2011).

In an interview aired on Bayon TV channel, the farmers were asked about how they got their land back. Those farmers had faced a very similar problem to those within the case study commune in Pursat. They organised themselves into groups of farmers - one representing each affected village. The farmer representative was in charge of collecting ideas, putting them down on paper and submitting appeal letters to the provincial governor. According to the farmers’ account, the governor passed the appeal letter to the central ministries, and possibly the PM, who by means of his executive short-cut, decided to grant the farmers their land back.

The development provided the local farmers in Pursat with a fresh and more positive way of looking at their problems. The local farmer leaders, upon hearing of the news, spread it among their group who became convinced that they might be able to seek a solution similar to that of the Banteay Meanchey farmers. The idea was to choose four farmer representatives - one from each of the villages. The representative would have to work with local farmers to draft a new appeal letter, and then submit it to the village chief who would have to sign for authentication purposes, and pass it on to the commune chief. It was expected that the new appeal letter would reach the governor, who would pass it on to the central ministry, thus a response could be expected to follow.

\textsuperscript{26} It should be noted here that the time of intervention was very close to the time of the upcoming election for the commune council, thus the gesture of apology could very much be interpreted as a part of the political calculation as captured by a political science term, the debt of gratitude.
But even then, the message from the PM was not clear. In the televised speech from his intervention in the Kompong Thom case, he had stated that ‘problems in every other province such as Battambong and Kompong Channang, have been resolved’ [Prime Minister’s speech, 10 May 2011]. The phrase ‘every other province’ could be interpreted by officials to mean that the case has now been entirely resolved, and is thus closed. If new appeals surfaced in provinces other than Kompong Thom, it would contradict the PM’s words, suggesting that he had been miss-informed. But the PM is known among officials as being careful in what he says, always checking details before he speaks in public. Thus any contradiction in this case would cause him to inquire into it. Thus it is in the best interest of the pole-placing team to block any new appeal from surfacing.

Back in the village, there was a new scandal involving a number of village chiefs and the commune chief. A group of local individuals who identified themselves as part of the commune authority had approached the farmers whose land was affected, and asked for 30,000 riel ($7.5 US dollars) in what they called ‘a contribution fee’, if they wanted their land back. With that money they claimed that they would seek a solution that would result in the farmers getting their land back. Two weeks prior to this, the commune chief and some of his village chiefs in the affected commune of Pursat, were summoned by the governor for questions of alleged corruption concerning the money collection. It should also be noted here that the contemporary political climate has evolved in an interesting way. Officials in Cambodia were afraid of being accused of corruption due to the recent creation of a powerful state body known as the Anti-Corruption unit. This unit was led by close associates of the PM. What is significant about this is that since its establishment, the unit has acted decisively against a number of officials charged with corruption. The head of the unit is the close associate of, and has the blessing of, the PM. In a recent incident, the anti-corruption unit, prosecuted the Pursat provincial court director, and jailed him for 35 years.

The prospect of success of a new appeal from local farmers depended heavily on how the commune chief saw the matter. However, in light of the anti-corruption activities, supporting the local farmer’s movement could be interpreted as supporting corrupt activities. Prior to the demarcation project, national TV and Radio stations actively accused local authorities of colluding with land speculators to forge documents to support their otherwise illegal ownership over land. Thus it is not likely that the commune would want
to be involved in the farmers’ case. The commune chief’s earlier summons by the governor re-enforced that feeling. But without the commune chief’s permission, the village chiefs would not be willing to let farmers organise themselves. Thus there was little possibility of the appeal happening. The only way forward was for the commune chief to gain approval from the governor to allow farmers to appeal again in the wake of the PM’s speech. As the head of the province, the governor was expected to make the phone call, but he did not. Without that phone call, it was still not clear if the governor would welcome, thus facilitate the farmers new appeal process, or whether he would be more inclined to block it, should the farmers decide to go ahead with their new appeal.

Meanwhile, it was in the best interest of the pole-placing group, MOWRAM and TSBA, to block any attempts at appeal in any province where the PM had stated that all problems had been dealt with. Otherwise, MOWRAM and TSBA would be in danger of being seen to lie to the PM. Without delay, the pole-placing group swiftly pushed for the governor of those provinces, including Pursat, to sign in recognition of the closing of the pole placing phase. The signature of the governor was needed for the sub-decree to be passed. On 13 June 2011, the governor of Pursat signed the document which was part of the sub-decree, and that signifies the end of the farmers hope for appeal, formalising the loss of their long-held farm land.

On Monday, 27 August 2011, the PM signed the sub-decree that fully endorsed the status of the newly demarcated area of protected flooded forest. The governor who knew of the enclosure of farmers’ land welcomed the sub-decree in a manner that gave no impression of all the contestations that had so far occurred.

It is very necessary to demarcate flooded forest and protect it… I’ve already had to order local authorities and watch dogs to protect [flooded forests] against offenses in my area. [Governor of Pursat, quoted in Phnom Penh Post, 31 August 2011]

In the end, the farmers of Pursat lost their farmland. The state, as represented by MOWRAM and TSBA, with the assistance of an un-critical media, labeled local citizens as criminals for the crime of cultivating their own land. These farmers earned a reputation as those whose ‘…harmful activities damaged the Tonle Sap and its buffer zone [flooded forest], with no thought of national and common interests’ (Yem, 2010). On Monday, 9 April 2012, Dam Ampil Newspaper published an article, under the title *TSBA interdicts 4 tractors while ploughing flooded forest in Pursat*. The article reported that TSBA
confiscated four tractors that were used to encroach the protected flooded forest in Pursat. The article concluded that the four illegal tractors were impounded at the commune office and the law-breaking owners were ordered to promise not to repeat the offense (Eng, 2012). However, the accompanying photo in the article featured an old tractor ploughing an open field of old farmland. There are no signs of trees, not to mention forest. This confirms Camilleri’s and Falk’s (1992:30) understanding of power as ‘…the capacity of institutions to manage and manipulate information’. However this case shows that institutions in a neo-patrimonial state consist of only a few personally connected individuals who hold power.

**Figure 19: Picture of enforcement activities**

Source: Dam Ampil Newspaper. This tractor is being seized by PDOWRAM in collaboration with the police force on charges of illegal ploughing activities in the area marked as flooded forest. However, as evident in the photo itself, the field has the characteristic of a typical floating rice land with old straw left over from the cultivation of the previous year. The little bush under which a man and his dog are taking refuge from the sun is used by the arresting authority as evidence of remaining forest, but based on field observation, it is a typical make-shift shelter constructed to provide protection from the sun.
Chapter Summary

This chapter has given an account of how knowledge of the environment is transferred from the state in an un-reciprocal manner to the society. In doing so, this chapter showed that within the Cambodian neo-patrimonial state, formal mechanisms for appeal are dominated by central state agents. It has shown how citizens are subjected to complex layers of bureaucratic red tape, with an emphasis on strict adherence to formal procedures, which often has the intention of inhibiting local appeals. The likelihood of the emergence of a local movement was further minimised by the actions of local government. Despite the rhetoric of decentralisation and deconcentration, the conduct of local government is strictly hierarchical. Village authorities cannot act on a local matter without approval from the commune authority, which also needs approval from the district authorities, and so on. Meanwhile, citizens have not realised their democratic rights, and still operate in fear.

This chapter also showed that the local government consists of so many layers at different levels that we cannot speak of a single coherent local government. This suggests that within the neo-patrimonial state, local government is not simply comprised of local authorities that reflect the interests of citizens back to higher level authorities as D&D would aim for. The superficial appearance of a functioning local government gives the impression of a clear distinction between village, commune and district authorities. Yet what the case of the appeal process has shown is that at local levels there is a strong upward line of accountability where the village and commune chiefs are more accountable to informal hierarchical networks than the local people. Only one of four village chiefs concerned, showed an initiative in the appeal process. The commune authority can be classified as more active in representing local interests, but it operates in a framework of strict upward accountability. Thus, the extent to which the commune authority can actually represent local interest is determined by superiors, notably the district chief. The district authorities, as the experience from the demarcation shows, do not identify with local interests. They not only failed to act on behalf of local interests, but also have a vested interest in hampering local efforts to appeal state decisions. The district authority does not see enclosure of local farmland as a negative outcome of central government activities, but as an opportunity for it to pick up the mess and use it to its own interests.

This chapter also showed the potential problems of using party mechanisms to represent local interests. Its ability to represent local concerns is compromised by the
manner in which party officials gather local information, and by personal rifts within the party.

This section also showed how local leaders outside of the state system could contribute to local protest and appeal. They are an important source of information, vision, initiative and resources. Their actions may be motivated by their own personal interests, but they nonetheless play an important role in pushing local interests. They are also progressive, and persistent in exploring all potential means for solving the local problems.

This chapter also showed the role of the media and its limitations in representing the concerns of local interests. The media, as the findings suggest, could bring local problems such as the enclosure, to the attention of leaders. Yet its failure to follow any interests other than its own erodes its legitimacy. Its practice of relaying, instead of seeking, news turns it into a tool of state propaganda. In addition, its existence within the neo-patrimonial politics of Cambodia means that the media is severely restricted, where they are required to exercise a great deal of caution and self-censorship.

Overall, this chapter is about how neo-patrimonialism manifests itself in practice. It showed the nature of personal power, institutional instability, the effect of informal networks on the formal operation of the state, and the unpredictability inherent within the governance system. These points will be discussed further in the following chapter.
Chapter VIII: Discussion

The case study material gained from the Tone Sap demarcation project is useful for giving insights into the manner in which territorial strategies are employed by state agencies within a neo-patrimonial system. This chapter brings together the material presented in Chapter V, VI and VII. It then discusses the significance of this material from two theoretical standpoints- territorial strategies, and neo-patrimonialism.

Lessons from the Case Study

From the outset, the demarcation of Tonle Sap gave an impression that the demarcation of Tonle Sap is carried out in the interest of the ecology and the nation at large, by protecting the flooded forest and the species in the Tonle Sap area and protecting the nation’s fish resources. However, a closer examination, as given in Chapter V and VI, revealed that the demarcation of Tonle Sap is an act of state internal territorialization, in which the state actively engages territorial strategies to extend its control over the society. Those strategies include a changing rationale of Tonle Sap governance, mapping demarcation and enforcement.

The case study material presented in Chapters V suggests that the state capitalises on the international discourse of environmental protection. The state interventions colonise the language of environmental protection, sustainable resource governance, and rational land use planning in order to claim legitimacy in its actions of managing resource-rich areas such as the Tonle Sap. The use of this language and its role in resource governance lends legitimacy to state interventions, which allows the state to engage in its territorial strategies to expand its jurisdiction to the realm of resource governance. This has meant gaining control over important territories by claiming that modernist state institutions are not only the best placed, but the only possible legitimate actor, to sustainably manage vulnerable ecosystems. Chapter V also showed the problematic nature of map making. It showed that map of the protected areas of Tonle Sap is not an accurate representation of the Tonle Sap space, but it is a tool those in power use to project their geographical imagination.

Chapter VI and VII investigated the territorial strategies and they reveal the pervasive nature of personal power in the neo-patrimonial state. Here, power is based on
persons holding office rather than on state institutions per se. The material presented in Chapter V, VI and VII shows two broad levels of personal power that underpin state’s territorial strategies. At the policy level, the PM personally initiated the national policy on Tonle Sap demarcation. His wish, expressed through televised speeches, rapidly became the national policy on Tonle Sap demarcation, which was quickly acted upon by state agents. At the level of implementation, as shown in chapter VI, the agents representing the central state exercise state power vested in them to carry out the demarcation project as if it were their personal property. They took the assigned task of Tonle Sap demarcation as power given to them personally by the PM and came up with a course of action that more suited their personal circumstances than serving the interest of the nation at large. This course of actions, although in the name of Tonle Sap protection, included the assessment and demolition of private reservoirs in Kampong Thom, the drawing of the new map of Tonle Sap protected area whose shifting of the green shade representing flooded forest area to the south side of Tonle Sap reflects political considerations over ecological protection, and the placing of the demarcation pole in ways that reclassify floating rice land of the local farmers as forest land. With these personalised powers, the logic of rational resource governance is replaced by the agents’ own street level logics, and pursuit of rent-seeking interests.

The way Tonle Sap space is represented in the demarcation project affects human relations with the places in Tonle Sap areas in important ways. First, it serves to erase the history of human existence and the experience of floating rice farming in the area. Second, it rearranges the local property regime in ways that displace customary rights arrangements which have served to govern access to land and resources in the Tonle Sap area. The representation of Tonle Sap space also alters the sense of place the locals had. In the aftermath of the delineation of the new boundary line, the locals no longer referred to the area by their customary knowledge of a certain natural pond, local tree or somebody else’s farmland but by position of the poles which serve as a point of a clear separation between what is legal farmland and what is protected area of simple homogeneity.

The case study material presented in Chapters V and VI capture state internal territorialization, where the state actively attempts to exert control over the space within its national sovereignty. The account of the internal state territorial strategies reveals an important role of maps which were made not on the basis of ecological considerations or
local landscapes, but to serve the specific political and economic interests of modernist state agents.

The personalised nature of power that flows within the neo-patrimonial state results in the problem of national policies which are unclearly defined. This allows implementing state agents to distort policy, which imposes a significant cost on society. The case study also shows that when such an imposition occurs, the less powerful actors in a neo-patrimonial state cannot demand accountability from the state. Chapter VII shows how personal power in the neo-patrimonial political system allows central state agents to dominate society. The personalised networks of power pervade formal state institutions, and prevent social actors from expressing any interests which go against the state.

While providing answers to the question of how the state, through territorial resource governance, exercises power over society, the case study material also offers some important contributions to the literature of territoriality and neo-patrimonialism, which will be discussed in the sections that follow.

**Territorial Strategies in a Neo-patrimonialist State**

The case study material presented in Chapter V, VI and VII contributes to Sack’s (1986) notion of territorialisation. His framework is centred on five key processes: resource governance, mapping, communication, demarcation and law enforcement. This framework has been useful in analyzing the territorial strategies of states. However, the case study material suggests that within different contexts of different political regimes, territorial strategies take on different forms.

From the experience of the Tonle Sap demarcation project where territorial strategies unfolded in the context of the neo-patrimonial state of Cambodia, such strategies are pursued and implemented in unique ways.

The need to change the logic of resource governance is replaced by the command of the PM. As seen in chapter V, the PM, concerned with environmental protection, decided that the Tonle Sap needed to be governed in a new manner. So he enacted a new national policy on Tonle Sap governance and ordered for a clear physical boundary line to be demarcated. His order replaced any attempts to debate the logic of Tonle Sap resource governance. Thus, there were no formal processes of consultation with state experts, nor rigorous debates.
Formal map making in this context was done according to the prejudices and particular circumstances of MOWRAM staff and their political clients. The case study material suggested that the logic underpinning the production of the new map of Tonle Sap was primarily due to the minister’s desire to keep a certain amount of flooded forest area protected. This kind of mapping was not done with the prime interest of representing the lived space of farmers, but done in order to realise the vision that those in power had of space within the basin. Map makers were able to successfully convert the vision of the minister of MOWRAM, with all the attached values and prejudices, into a map. However, for those cartographers, map making is determined by political concerns rather than geographical or ecological. As seen in Chapter V, the map of the Tonle Sap protected area represented a significant shift in farmland from the north side of the lake to the south side. This reflected the interests of powerful figures within the north compared to the politically marginalised farmers in the south.

The need to communicate the intention to control the new territory was replaced by a system of personal assignment. The case material showed that the PM personally assigned MOWRAM to take charge of the demarcation project, effectively handing over power to control the new territory. The case study material showed that the personal assignment not only gave MOWRAM the responsibility to control the newly constructed space, but also political protection from other state agencies. Insights from interviews and observations from state agents at national, provincial and local levels confirmed that most perceived the Tonle Sap project as belonging to MOWRAM. This was also reflected clearly within the actual demarcation process.

The demarcation process was conducted as an exclusive territorial project by a certain group of state agents with close personal and political connection to the PM. The case study showed that the demarcation of the Tonle Sap area was in effect performed by agents representing MOWRAM and TSBA. There was no evidence of the use of local maps. No effort to survey the landscape was made, and there was no room for local participation. Demarcation was carried out on the basis of street level logic and personal interests in rent seeking.

The case study suggests that the territorial strategies of the neo-patrimonial political system are a powerful tool for the state to extend its control over society. What makes it dangerous is that in a neo-patrimonial state such as that of Cambodia, the local population could not demand accountability from the state. But having said this, it is not to suggest
that the notion of the state itself is un-problematic. This will be discussed in the following section.

**Cambodian Neo-patrimonialism Reconsidered**

The Cambodian state may have the appearance of a modern state, with legislative, executive and judiciary branches, but the insights from the case study suggest that it does not function as a bureaucratic and corporatist state, but instead as a neo-patrimonial one.

Observations of the Tonle Sap demarcation project revealed important features of the Cambodian political system. The case study showed that political power in Cambodia is derived from personal connections, and relations of loyalty and dependence. The power of MOWRAM, perceived or real, was based mainly on its proximity - political and personal, to the PM. The minister of MOWRAM was seen as a senior member of the ruling party and was believed to be a close ally of the PM. This was supported by constant public appearances where he stood next to the PM and also by the fact that he was directly assigned by the PM to take charge of the demarcation project. It was further confirmed by the remark of the provincial governor, quoted earlier in the chapter as saying:

> That guy [the minister]…. is very dangerous. You have to be careful before you want to do anything. If he is happy you may be ok. If he is not, he can just go straight to the PM, and who know what he would say. Then just a phone call from the PM, and I can be kicked out of my office.

This quote gives a strong indication that Cambodia is far from the model of a legal-rational bureaucracy, and that the Weberian perspective of an ideal state as consisting of layers of institutions with dedicated personnel, is distant from Cambodian realities. The Cambodian state is a neo-patrimonial political system where one’s power is based not on his or her publicly-defined position, but on political and personal connections to the PM.

The case study also showed that political power in Cambodia is based on individuals and not the office, as observed to be the case elsewhere (Medard, 1982; Theobold, 1982). Two points are worth noting here. The first concerns the power and effectiveness of the Tonle Sap Basin Management Organization (TSBMO) in managing the Tonle Sap basin. As its name suggests, TSBMO was created as a state organization to manage the Tonle Sap basin. However, it failed in its tasks due to a lack of coordination and cooperation from concerned agencies. When the organization became the Tonle Sap
Basin Authority (TSBA), it came to be respected as a powerful authority even though it has the same institutional mission. The only difference was that the new director of the TSBA was the nephew of the Minister of MOWRAM. This shows that power is based on personal connections, where the individual is more important than the office.

The second important observation concerns the local government’s ability to represent its own constituency. In the aftermath of the demarcation project, floating rice farmers in all of the six provinces around the Tonle Sap were affected. However, not every province managed to appeal the process due to different state institutional arrangements and the personal characteristics of key power brokers. The person in charge of demarcation for the provinces of Kampong Chhnang and Banteay Meanchey were more in touch with local needs, and allowed for more input from the local state. The person in charge of the demarcation in Pursat is known to have connections to the PM, and he did not have any meaningful dialogue with local actors. The governor of Pursat was afraid of MOWRAM’s close proximity to the PM, and thus refused to intervene on the side of local farmers. These observations confirm the neo-patrimonial features of the Cambodia state, where power is based on the person not the office.

Drawing on the experience of African countries, Bratton and Walle (1994) argue that officials within a neo-patrimonial state do not see formal connections between their bureaucratic life, and the interests of wider society. In a neo-patrimonial state, public office is not a place where public interests are served, but a place where state officials pursue their own private interests. Empirical evidence from the demarcation project showed that officials in Cambodia use public office for personal wealth accumulation. The behaviour of the demarcation project leader serves as a case in point. As seen in the case study material, the PM’s order to demarcate flooded forest was carried out by central state agents in ways that displaced local lived space. After initial complaints however, the demarcation project leader was given discretionary power in his pole placing duties in order to ensure that flooded forest was protected while farmland would remain unaffected. However, the project leader exploited his position, and used his power to seek rent from those he was supposed to serve with his discretionary power.

The behaviour of the district chief serves as another good example of using public office to pursue personal interests. As part of the local government, the district chief was in a position to challenge the decisions of central agents in their pole placing activities. However, the district authorities did not react to the position of poles, even where
significant amounts of farmland were under threat of enclosure. This shows that officials were more interested in protecting their position than fulfilling their official duties. Moreover, the district authority was not only deaf to local appeals, but saw a benefit in blocking them. The enclosure of the floating rice land facilitated the transfer of those lands to state property, which could then be leased to private investors by the district authorities. Regardless of whether such plans would materialise, local perceptions that district authorities had private interests in the land, were a strong deterrent from following through formal district level appeal processes. As seen in the case study chapter, the district chief acted to block local attempts at protest. This shows that the district chief did not see himself as having a duty to resolve the local crisis, but rather saw an opportunity to make personal gain. However, the behaviour of the district chief was not unconstrained. The case study suggest that in advancing his personal interests, the district chief had actively assessed the opportunity for profit against the local ability to amount pressure on him. Only when it appeared politically unviable to block appeal attempts, did the district chief stop pursuing his land interests.

As the case study of the demarcation showed, the Cambodian bureaucracy operates with a high degree of unpredictability. Evidence showed that officials, particularly at the provincial and local levels, operate according to a host of factors which originate at higher levels. The governor, for example, knew about the displacement of local farmland in his constituency, to which he objected. However, he did not dare to openly air disagreement for fear that that he may be displaced from his position. This fear is not just based on irrational thought, but is legitimate in the context of Cambodian politics. As Un (2011) argues, political power is concentrated in the executive branch of the government, especially within the inner circle of the PM. Past experience shows that he can readily remove any of his officials from office. In the case of the demarcation, MOWRAM had been directly assigned to carry out the demarcation. Thus the provincial governor felt unable to fulfill his duty, and challenge the work of MOWRAM. This suggests that officials actively access their political environment when they are confronted with local problems, and the case study suggests that the political power of agents is defined by their relative proximity to the PM. Those who have access to the PM are considered to have significant political power, and tend to dominate those state agents below them.

The bureaucrats at the provincial line departments also operate in an atmosphere of fear of losing their office. Apart from their sense of identity as *sena*, which has
connotations with giving unconditional obedience to superiors, some of those bureaucrats, who are familiar with the space of floating rice in the province, also disagreed with the demarcation line. But they were not willing to open dialogues, or give suggestions in the interest of protecting such land. Instead, they saw their own positions at risk from acting in any way that would offend their superiors. Throughout the period of data collection, the phrase ‘order from the top’ was frequently cited by low level bureaucrats when asked by the researcher about their indifference to the local enclosure.

At the local level, a sense of instability was also evident. The commune chief and one of the village chiefs were the most active in trying to challenge the demarcation line. But in doing so, they were fully aware of the associated risks. They were afraid of being accused of being non-cooperative, and instead of mounting an open challenge to the demarcation project leader, the commune chief offered to take the project leader on a tour around the local area to ‘show him the local layout’. When it became clear that the demarcation line was going to enclose local land, the commune chief and the village chief showed disagreement only by way of expressing concern over the impact of the enclosure on local livelihoods. The sense of instability can also be seen in the appeal process. Local authorities, particularly the commune chief, were afraid of being accused of leading a local protest against the state, which could have serious consequences for them. As Hughes (2002) observes, movements and protests are often seen as the work of opposition parties. A quote in the case study chapter captures the essence of the commune chief’s fear: ‘I can’t just go around and tell people to enlist their name in the appeal document, for I can be accused of leading a local movement against the state’.

The case study also showed that the behaviour of state agents and institutions in Cambodia is highly unpredictable. As Erdmann and Engel (2006) note, such unpredictability is the result of a combination of formal and informal logics which inform the actions of state agents. First, on the issue of institutional unpredictability, the case study showed that the Tonle Sap area has had an existing demarcation regime which separates between two contested areas. Although the line has never been officially recognised, at the national level it is endorsed by the maps used by state agencies, including MOWRAM itself, NGOs and donors. At the local level, the line was marked by old concrete boundary poles that remained in place until the late 1980s. In the absence of those poles, the boundary line continues to be endorsed by local customary knowledge, as seen in the previous chapter. If institutions were to provide predictability and stability, as
Peters (2005) argues, the call for a clear demarcation line should result in the reinstitution of this line. But instead, a new map was made which both replaced the old one, and displaced the value of local knowledge. This shows the manner in which a certain institutional logic at one point in time can be easily replaced by another later in time.

In terms of the behaviour of state agents, the demarcation project showed a high degree of unpredictability. The behaviour of the demarcation project leader is worth analyzing here. The case study suggests that the behaviour and the course of action of the demarcation project leader were highly unpredictable. The demarcation was a state project that arose out of the need for conservation and development of the Tonle Sap areas by clearly demarcating the boundary line between the floating rice and flooded forest area. The two objectives are a reflection of the institutional mission of TSBA for effective management of Tonle Sap basin. Thus the agent leading the demarcation project was expected to achieve these goals. From a neo-patrimonial point of view, the demarcation project leader was expected to follow the PM’s order of protecting the flooded forest and respecting existing rice area. However, the case study showed that the actual behaviour of the agents leading the demarcation project was determined by personal interests and rent seeking. As Lipsky (1980) argues, the central state can put in place any law and policy guidelines, but the bureaucrats at the street level choose to behave in ways that are suitable to their everyday routines. The demarcation team for instance placed pole 43A in an area they could easily gain access to, rather than in an area based on a careful consideration of farmland. In the second round of implementation, the project leader’s behaviour was driven by his rent-seeking interests. Thus, the actual position of boundary poles defies the formal programmatic logic of the demarcation.

In addition, the case study suggests that what made the behaviour of state agents highly unpredictable was that it was not just based on their street level logics and rent-seeking agendas, but also on the particular space which they occupied within the neo-patrimonial hierarchy. State agents actively assessed their own power in relation to other agents who may not approve of their rent-seeking behaviours, and the local people from whom they wish to extract rents. Although there was no data from other areas to allow for a cross-commune comparison, the data available to the researcher suggested that the behaviour of the state agents during the demarcation project differed greatly in different localities. In Kampong Chhnang province for example, the demarcation project leader allowed the line departments and local authorities to participate in decision making
processes that resulted in a respect for exiting cultivated land. In Battambong, farmer protests against the position of the poles resulted in a revised demarcation policy. In Pursat however, farmers were unable to mobilise in opposition to the pole positions due to the inhibitory actions of local authorities.

Another example of the unpredictability of the state agent’s behaviour can be seen through the district chief’s actions. As seen in the empirical chapter, the demarcation project leader told the affected farmers to contact their village chiefs, who needed to contact the district chief, in order to file a formal appeal document. Superficially, this process appears to be a straight forward, genuinely bottom-up process. However, the case study showed that the appeal process had to be initiated by the district chief. The farmers would not act without permission from the village chiefs, who felt they had to receive approval from the commune chief first. In the same manner, the commune chief, was not willing to take any action unless the district chief allowed him to, placing the likelihood of the local appeal in the hands of the district chief. From a legal-rational political point of view, the district chief was in a position to represent local interests. According to this logic he should be expected to support the local appeal process. But the case study showed that the district chief did not act in ways that protected local interests, nor did he support local efforts at appeal. The set of decisions and courses of action that the district chief chose could not be predicted, nor could they be understood from his formal bureaucratic position. The case study showed that the set of decisions and courses of action that the district chief took, were chiefly explained by his personal interests in the matter. Without insights into his personal hidden agendas in the contested land, one would not be able to reason why the chief behaved the way he did.

The most interesting example of a state agent’s unpredictable behaviour can be seen in the commune chief. As shown in this study, the commune chief was the one most active in protecting the interests of the floating rice farmers. He was actively seeking ways to influence the decisions of the project leader in order to save the floating rice area in his commune; he was also most enthusiastic about local efforts at appeal, and he went out of his way to get the district chief to agree to the local appeal. But as evidence from the Tonle Sap demarcation showed, when the opportunity came, the commune chief also sought rent in conducting his public duties, by charging a service fee from those affected farmers. To the local farmers the effect of this kind of behaviour is more than a mere financial loss, but a reduction in the possibility, and hope of a local action against state decisions. The chief’s
rent seeking behaviour resulted in him being called into question by the governor. Being implicated in what could potentially be a corruption charge, which as Darden (2001) points out can be a serious case for officials in a neo-patrimonial state, the commune chief saw the appeal as potentially dangerous, and came to distance himself from it. Without his involvement, the possibility of local appeal became even more remote. This strongly reflects the instability and unpredictability of the behaviour of state agents.

All of evidence from the Tonle Sap demarcation project suggested that Cambodia has a neo-patrimonial political system which is categorised by office holders who retain power based on personal connections and relations of loyalty and dependence. Political power in Cambodia is personal and it is based on the person not the office, and public offices are not primarily created in order to serve the public interest, but for acquiring personal wealth. This point confirms Un’s and So’s (2009:134) argument in which they state that the CPP’s ultimate focus is on the ‘accumulation of wealth’. The case study also showed that state agents in Cambodia could not be expected to perform their public duty when they are faced with the constant fear of losing their position. At the same time, the case study suggests that the structure of the state is not to blame alone. The behaviour of state agents themselves is unpredictable when they combine rational–bureaucratic logics with informal neo-patrimonial logics. The case study material showed that those agents would typically choose to advance their personal interests with little or no consideration for the cost it imposes on the wider society. This resulted in the divergence between the original intentions of the PM’s speech and what actually happened on the ground. This suggests the need for an analysis of the structure of power in neo-patrimonial states, which comes in the following section.

**Structure of Power in Neo-patrimonialism Reconsidered**

The data from the demarcation of the Tonle Sap challenge the notion of the top leader within a neo-patrimonial state having ultimate power. The literature of neo-patrimonialism suggests that the top man occupies the highest position of power (Bratton & Walle, 1997; Sandbrook, 1985; Soest, 2006). The top man exercises this power as personal property (Clapham, 1985; Medard, 1982), through personal networks (Pitcher et al., 2009). In addition, the top man employs a range of measures to ensure compliance and prevent the possibility of resistance from his officials. Those measures include short-term tenure (Soest, 2006), rotation of public figures (Snyder & Mahoney, 1999) and close surveillance
(Darden, 2001, 2003). This leads Laruelle (2012) to argue that everyone in the neo-patrimonial system is directly subordinate to the ultimate leader. Thus, the exercise of power as personal property, short-term tenure, and the continued compliance-ensuring operations of surveillance, lead to the concentration of power in the hands of the top leaders. In other words, the top man, to use Allen’s (1999) language, is the source and the centre of power, and this power is transmitted intact to the receiving end.

The Tonle Sap demarcation project suggested that the Cambodian state consists of three main actors: the PM, the minister of MOWRAM and the implementing agents. The PM issued an order which was translated into state policy. The minister of MOWRAM took ownership of the order, and together with TSBA, translated the policy into a suite of actions to be carried out by the demarcation team. This created a system of strong upwards accountability, where implementing agents were directly accountable to the minister and the PM. However, the case study suggests that the state functions in a complicated manner which involves more than just the PM and a small group of his personally connected agents. The structure of power in this kind of state does not follow a linear line in which power flows from the top person of the state to the population.

The case study suggested that the PM may be the source and the centre of power, but that his power is not necessarily transmitted intact to the receiving end. In the case of the Tonle Sap demarcation project, the PM is responsible for initiating state policy, with the intention to both protect the environment and maintain floating rice land. The final outcome of his policy however was the displacement of floating rice farming. The case study showed that the PM has the power to initiate state policies, but the final effect of his power is modified or even distorted as it is transferred through different state organs. Of particular importance is the space between the PM and the receiving end of power, and this space is where most attention should be given when analyzing power within a neo-patrimonial state.

The case study suggested that after the state’s demarcation project was initiated, power was transferred from the PM to the minister of MOWRAM, who came up with the idea of a new map of the Tonle Sap. Without permitting consultations with the public, or other state agencies, MOWRAM made the map to suite its ambition of protecting 645,800 hectares of forest, a size, MOWRAM argues, that was necessary to sustain Tonle Sap biodiversity. However, this size reflects the state of the flooded forest in the early 1980s, and the decision to use this figure as the basis of demarcation in 2010 and 2011 means
ignoring, or ever undoing, local development over the last 30 years. In the context of Cambodia as a post-conflict and developing country, agricultural expansion has taken place rapidly, and as seen in Chapter III and Chapter V, there had been substantial agricultural development within the Tonle Sap flood plain. But to suit MOWRAM’s particular environmental idealism, the map represents a 50 percent loss of the floating rice land, which contradicts the intention of the PM to both conserve and develop the flood plain.

Moreover, the case study showed that the effect of power changed as authority to conduct the demarcation was transferred from MOWRAM to field agents, particularly the demarcation project leader. The case study showed that this group of officials did not operate in strict compliance with MOWRAM, but rather in accordance with their street level logic to advance their rent-seeking interests. As the case study material showed, the final effect of the demarcation project saw a loss of an estimated 70 percent of the floating rice area in the study commune.

Based on Weber’s (1978:1111[1922]) definition of power as ‘the capacity of an individual to realise his will even against the opposition of others’, the case of the demarcation project suggests that the PM of a neo-patrimonial political system does not hold the ultimate power. Rather, the power of the leader can be mitigated or amplified by those who occupy the space between the leader and the population, and this space, as the demarcation project showed, is occupied by a few men who are personally connected to the PM (i.e. the minister of MOWRAM and the demarcation project leader). Based on the same definition of power, the Tonle Sap demarcation project suggests that what matters for society is not necessarily the direct orders of the PM, but what emanates from those under him. Within this mid-space, different sub-groups compete to show their loyalty and political worthiness to the PM in exchange for his trust and patronage. Such trust serves to secure the position of well-connected elites and allows them to further their own personal interests.

The case study material showed that power is exercised not only over society, but also over low level state agents including the provincial government and local authorities. To explain this, I shall use Lukes’s concept of power as discussed in Chapter II. Lukes (1974) argues that there are three concepts of power, power to, power over, and power as dominance. The case study suggested that all three concepts of power were employed by the central agents leading up to the demarcation project, in order to seek compliance from
state officials at provincial and local levels. The evidence showed that the concept of power being used against the governor is based on the concept of ‘power over’. The governor did not agree with the demarcation in his province, but he could not resist it.

At the same time, the line department experienced a third dimension of power – ‘power as dominant’. Despite their being treated as assistants, instead of participants in the demarcation process, most local officials did not even realise that they were being subjected to unfair treatment. They have been trained to think that it is normal to be subordinate to central agents. At the local level of the bureaucracy a slightly different form of power was mobilised. The first two concepts of power were observed to be in use. The central agents in charge of the demarcation used the threat of force to ensure compliance from commune and village chiefs who intended to challenge the position of demarcation poles. Central agents also depended on the concept of power as ‘power over’. The commune chief and the village chief were aware that the demarcation process represented an act of injustice for their constituency, but there was nothing they could do to resist the power of the central agents.

This leads us to another important concept of governance, accountability. Scheldler (1999) defines accountability as answerability or being able to account for one’s own action. This concept connotes genuine respect or care for the cause of an action. Eng and Craig (2009) argue that in Cambodia, officials are more accountable to their superiors than their constituencies. For example, accountability to the PM means conducting activities in a manner which places the orders of the PM at the forefront of all decisions. However, findings also suggest that the term accountability has different meanings within the neo-patrimonial political system. Here it means giving the impression of full compliance. During the course of the Tonle Sap demarcation project, the minister of MOWRAM spoke of his full support for the PMs concept of Tonle Sap governance, stating that the demarcation project emerged from the ‘wise leadership’ of the PM. MOWRAM also showed its swift response to the orders of the PM through its commitment to achieve them within a short time frame.

However, the case study suggests that officials in a neo-patrimonial state do not always strictly comply with the wish of their superiors. Under the impression of full compliance, officials seek to advance their personal interests as long as they can hide them from their superiors. This suggests that accountability in a neo-patrimonial state is not based on respect, but fear of superiors. Decisions surrounding the location of the boundary
poles serve as a good case in point. The location of boundary pole 22 stands as a stark contrast to the intentions of the PM as it encloses large tracts of local farmland. It was placed on the basis of the demarcation project leader’s hidden agenda of rent-seeking. The PM however does not directly receive details of the demarcation, as information is filtered by mid-level agents in order to ensure that their actions are reflected in a positive light. Speediness of implementation is also used as a strategy to mitigate against complexities and failures of implementation. This suggests that in neo-patrimonial state, accountability means presenting or giving the impression of total obedience. Agents only real fear comes from superiors clearly knowing what they are doing. The space between the PM and the citizens is occupied by isolated line ministries which are made of key individuals with connections to the PM. The PM leases this space to them in a reciprocal arrangement where they have to conduct the affairs of the state as he dictates, in exchange for their position. State offices are sub-divided under the pretext of bureaucratic specialisation, but are more actively influenced by neo-patrimonial connections with the PM.

The relations between the PM and his officials are reciprocal relations evolving around the exchanges of favours and gifts. In neo-patrimonial Cambodia, the concept of the gift is distinct in that state officials have to be accountable to the PM not for direct material and financial gifts, but for the privilege of keeping state positions, which is not an end in itself, but a means to achieving compliance while simultaneously pursuing their rent-seeking activities. The difference between direct gifts and privilege of position explains the difference between upward accountability and the inability of the PM to strictly control all policy outcomes.
Accountability Mechanisms in a Neo-patrimonialist State

The case study suggests that there are three different forms of mechanisms that people can employ to demand state accountability. These are: formal mechanisms, party-based mechanisms, and direct appeals to the elite. The results of the fieldwork suggest that these mechanisms are weak, un-reliable and highly un-predictable.

First, the case study material showed that formal mechanisms are extremely ineffective. Evidence suggested that local accountability mechanism are scarce, and at worse, absent. As seen in Chapter VII, in the aftermath of the demarcation project, local farmers who were affected could not depend on local authorities to oppose the central state. The experiences of appeal suggest that village authorities do not have the capacity to represent the interests of local farmers. Five out of the six chiefs of the affected villages did not know about the enclosure until after boundary poles had been physically placed on
the ground. It should also be noted here that the effectiveness of the village authorities to act on local issues is also reduced due to a lack of resources and minimal salaries which cannot realistically allow them to do their day to day duties. During the period of appeal, the researcher had great difficulty in accessing village chiefs as they were often outside of their villages herding animals. The data also suggests that the village authority’s inability to represent local interests was partly due to the fact that their roles are not clearly defined within demarcation and appeal processes. In addition, the village authorities were still operating under a political culture where they were expected to await for permission from superiors, to conduct even basic activities. This is captured by the fact that the village chief refused to initiate the process of appeal until he received approval from the commune chief. This shows a system of strict upwards accountability, and the absence of formal accountability mechanisms which citizens have access to.

Second, evidence surrounding local efforts to find solutions to the demarcation problem demonstrates a strong presence for political party mechanisms to solve contestations. However it also showed that party based resolution mechanisms are unreliable due to a host of problems. One of the problems observed was that whether or not local problems were taken up depended on connections to mediators. The head of the party working group for instance did not gather information on the local problem of the enclosure directly from his political constituents, but through local officials. Hence whether or not a local problem is taken on by a party official is highly dependent on local officials. The risk inherent in this type of arrangement is that local official’s personal views, attitudes and interests can greatly shape how party official view a problem and its solutions.

Another problem of the party mechanism concerns internal rivalries between different patrimonial networks. Although these networks are directly connected to the PM, the case study showed that they do not always cooperate in the name of a common party. The case of local appeal suggests that the personal values and relations between different party officials are crucial determining factors of the success of party mechanisms. In the case of the demarcation project, the Cambodian People Party (CPP) could not solve land issues of floating rice farmers in Pursat, as the head of the CPP working group for Pursat had a personal conflict with the minister in charge of demarcation. They are both senior members of the CPP, and they are both close confidants of the PM. But they each have different personal and political interests. One sees the solution to the floating rice land in
Pursat as a way of enhancing the reputation of the CPP among local farmers, while simultaneously winning the favour of the PM. The other sees it as making a contribution to his enemy’s success.

The third mechanism for solving local problems is informal attempts to reach directly to the PM. As Adler et al. (2006) argue, protest movements in Cambodia often try to directly appeal to officials in the central government for assistance in solving local problems. The case of the demarcation showed that in the absence of a formal bureaucratic mechanism, affected local farmers made attempts to directly access the PM as they believe he has the power to overturn state action in their favour. This strategy was successfully employed by farmers in Kampong Thom and Bantey Meanchey provinces. However, the evidence showed that this mechanism is highly unpredictable, as it is heavily dependent on obvious manifestations of local discontent and demonstration. The case study revealed a range of limitations to local demonstrations or public rallies. For one thing, protest is highly politicised. If not approached properly, protest could be labeled as supporting opposition parties, and could provoke a negative reaction from the ruling party which dominates the state. The other limitation has to do with local citizens themselves. In a country with few historical occurrences of local protest movements, but a long history of state control over civic life, local people often feel unable to mobilise and organise to represent themselves. They are still trapped in traditional practices of waiting for initiatives from the state. Affected farmers could not initiate the process of appeal unless their village chief initiated, and actively lead the process.

The likelihood of a local movement is strictly under the control of central state agents. The demarcation experience showed that central state agents control the discourse that disables local movement. As Painter and Jefferey (2009) argue, social movements take place under appropriate discursive and material resource conditions. Discourse consists of the various narratives by which individual or collective experiences may be organised. As Tew (2002:69) argues, narratives contain ‘persuasive politics of meaning which are nuanced, with the potential to be empowering or oppressing’. The experience of demarcation showed that local communities such as those in the case study commune do not have a rich discourse of local heroism, but rather a discourse focused around themes of insecurity (i.e. imprisonment that prevents the possibility of a collective social movement).

In addition, central agents strategically block possible attempts at appeal or protest by those who have available resources. As Painter and Jefferey (2009) argue, social
movements arise out of the objective and subjective experiences of oppression. But the case study showed that the state only permits those directly related to the demarcation to take part in the appeal. As Ebihara (1968) argues, Cambodians are already atomised, and any such state restrictions greatly reduce the number of potential social movement participants. The data show that not all of the affected farmers were allowed to participate in the local appeal process. The central state agent furthermore eliminated the middle-stratum farmers from participating in any protest actions. The evidence from the demarcation suggested that this group of farmers is more informed of state issues as they tend to travel outside of their villages and have better connections to political elites, than average farmers. But the experience from the demarcation also showed that these groups of farmers do not stand a chance of representing themselves against the state agents when labeled as unscrupulous, greedy and unreasonable social deviants whose actions threaten the environment. As Herbert (2008) argues, this kind of labeling can justify state action against citizens for they are defined as ‘deviant, as beyond the pale of normal society’.

This challenges Ojendal’s and Kim’s (2006) sense of optimism of the improved relations between state and society in Cambodia. Ojendal and Kim (2006) argue that the political culture at the local government level is changing. In their study of the social and political changes in Cambodia after the implementation of decentralisation and deconcentration (D&D) reforms, they argue that the Cambodian social and political system is changing from being a top-down, traditional authoritarianism, or mono-structural patronage system, to a more participatory democracy. Looking at local perceptions toward commune authorities, they note a change in local attitudes toward local authority from ‘fear’ to ‘admiration’. In another study that asks if democracy is deepening in Cambodia, Ojendal and Kim (2011) argue that in general democracy is beginning in Cambodia, and the political space has opened up in ways that improve the relations between civil society and the local state. The commune councilors believe that the governance system arising as a result of the D&D is different from the old one in that fear and anger are replaced by respect and trust, and the exercise of power is no longer raw. According to them the public are of the perception that the commune authority had more respect for ordinary citizens in 2009, compared to the pre-decentralisation period style of government of fear and distance. Local state legitimacy is derived from its ability to deliver development, and at the same time, commune councilors feel they are primarily accountable to the people. The public
believe that they can hold the commune authority accountable for their actions by the
democratic mechanism of elections.

First, the experience of the local appeal process suggested that the perception of
improved accountability on the part of the local authorities, to local citizens, is not
commonly observed in practice. Perceptions and feelings of accountability on the part of
those local authorities are one thing, but how they actually behave is quite another. The
experience of local efforts to approach local authorities in their appeal process showed that
in practice, local officials’ accountability greatly varies from individual to individual. For
example, the district chief’s behaviour did not exhibit any signs of accountability to local
people, while the commune chief acted in a more accountable manner. The case study
material also showed that even where there are signs of local accountability, it is highly
unstable, and the neo-patrimonial nature of personal gain through rent-seeking can easily
subordinate the sense of a general public duty as reflected in the behaviour of the
commune chief.

Second, evidence showed that despite some signs of improvement in terms of local
accountability, the central state still maintains its ability to intervene in ways that bypass
all exiting local arrangements. In high-stake affairs such as the demarcation of the Tonle
Sap, the bureaucratic mechanism of local accountability is taken over by an ad hoc
working arrangement typical which reflects the particularistic nature of the neo-patrimonial
state in Cambodia. As seen in Chapter VII, central agents set the conditions of the appeal
process in a manner that allowed them to control the likelihood of success. Thus, the case
study material suggested that the local formal bureaucratic mechanism of accountability is
highly unreliable in terms of producing accountability from the state.

The findings also challenge Un (2011) who argues that Cambodia is becoming a
stable hegemonic party system. For Un (2011) the Cambodian political system is moving
away from a democracy to being a party state, where party affairs dominate state functions.
The term stable also implies that this system has an internal structural integrity that allows
the system to operate as a unified party. But evidence from the Tonle Sap demarcation
project shows hegemony on the part of the party system, but not stability. The case study
material suggested that different elite groups only gave the impression that they are
working under a unified party system under the watch of the PM. But behind him, those
groups are not working together under the image of a single party, but are competing
against one another for their own group interests, be it financial or political. In this
instance, therefore, state affairs are beginning to move away from party affairs to personal territorial control. Their battles and rivalries determine the outcome of state action, and the ability of the party to intervene in ways that affect citizens of the state. This suggests that neo-patrimonial Cambodia is becoming more than just a party state, but is becoming the personal territory of key state officials.

But amid the absence of formal state-society relations, and the weakening of informal party mechanisms, the case study suggested that there is an important role for local leaders in the appeal process. This group of leaders emerges from among local farmers, but those who are more educated, more connected, and more financially equipped to act in ways that could potentially challenge the actions of central state agents. Although they failed to achieve any significant results, the case study suggests that this group was crucial in initiating local appeal processes. They served as opinion leaders who rely and interpret the message of the central state on the demarcation matter, and they mobilised local farmers, reinforcing the idea of appeal.

The evidence also showed that those local leaders fostered communication between commune chiefs and village chiefs. They also worked closely with local officials to devise strategies to effectively challenge their superior’s decisions. Their collaboration with the commune chief in negotiating with the district chief was a case in point. Initially, the district chief did not allow the local authority to be involved in any local appeal processes, which as discussed earlier effectively meant that the local movement had no chance of taking place. The commune chief was not willing to challenge the decisions of the district chief, but the local leaders’ analysis of the motives of the district chief, and the revelation of his plan to grab the land in question, helped the commune chief to gather enough confidence to lie about the local protest.

**Chapter Summary**

The empirical findings of this thesis make a significant contribution to understandings of territoriality and neo-patrimonialism. This thesis has shown that territoriality as a human strategy to influence or control others is dangerous when applied in a neo-patrimonial system. Here it becomes the strategy of key individuals who occupy position of power to advance their personal interests at a high cost for the society at large.

The case study material also contributed to an understanding of the operation of power in a neo-patrimonial system. It showed that in a neo-patrimonial system, state power
may be initiated by the top leader, but it is not transmitted intact to the receiving end. The case study showed that the power of the top leader is actually transferred through the different layers of state, where the effect of it gets influenced or modified by the values and personal interests of key state agents. It suggests that in a neo-patrimonial state, the biggest threat to society is not necessarily the top man, but those who occupy the space between him and society.
This thesis concludes that the nature of state power over society as expressed through territorialised resource governance is not based on laws and regulations, but on personal power exercised in an outwardly rationalistic framework of conservation, resource regulations and state modernization. From the outset, state power may be viewed as legitimate as it is harboured in the image of good governance under the rhetoric of accountability, representation and responsiveness, but material from the case study suggests that power is carried in the manner of a neo-patrimonial system characterised by, among other things, personal networks in combination with the power derived from territorial strategies. Exactly how the state engages territorial strategies is a matter of complex interaction and combination of influences, the understanding of which depends on the knowledge of political history, governance reforms and the resulting neo-patrimonialism.

As far as neo-patrimonialism is concerned, the state depends on the logic of the modernist state of division of control based on scientific expertise, as in MOWRAM, TSBA, MOE, MAFF and FiA, to legitimise its course of action, for instance the Tonle Sap demarcation. An aspect of power, knowledge as proposed by Foucault (1980) can be observed here. The societal groups are instilled with a value and belief system that accepts the state as the sole legitimate body to manage the societal and environmental affairs. This kind of power, as Lukes (1974) suggests, is radical in that it is exercised on the societal groups without them realising that they are being subjected to it.

With the pre-existing acceptance of the role of the state in the management of the human community and the accompanying natural resource pools, power relations between the state and the society are already unequal, and all the more so if the state concerned is non-democratic. In this framework, Sack’s (1986) notion of territorial strategies is materialised in a unique way. Territorial strategies in neo-patrimonialism consist of the orders of the PM as implemented through his personally assigned agents who could exploit all of the power exercising features of resource reclassification, map making and territorial enforcement to their own personal benefits.

As Vandergeest and Peluso (1995) suggest, territorial strategies are powerful tools the state employs to control society. The case study shows that territorial strategies are
dangerous in neo-patrimonial states where the logic of rational resource governance such as conservation, protection and resource regulation, through rational planning can be used to advance personal interests through rent-seeking and land-grabbing. Central state agents are the ones who make decisions on every matter, from designing a new map, to overseeing the pole-placing process. But what makes territorial strategy dangerous in the context of a neo-patrimonial state is that the power-exercising features embedded in the territorial strategy is not accompanied by the stake-holder verification and consultation processes assumed to exist. In a neo-patrimonial state such as Cambodia, territorial demarcation is done by the state, without any involvement from concerned communities. The state, as the case study shows, is comprised of the PM and a group of personally and politically connected individuals. The PM gave an order to demarcate the Tonle Sap protected area, and he assigned responsibility to carry out the demarcation to his closely connected political clients. Those men have the political power to implement the demarcation project in ways that bypass all existing state institutional arrangements, making the demarcation project their political space. In addition, they serve as evaluators of their own work and report back to the PM of their progress. Local knowledge of officials and affected farmers alike has been ignored; their role in the process, as concerned individuals or as one of the main actors, has effectively been displaced, and their voices have been effectively silenced by the processes of intimidation.

This thesis has also reflected on the question of what state is. The Cambodia state features the PM who is at the centre of power. Between the PM and citizens exist three elements of power- the personal networks of the PM, the CPP political working groups and state bureaucrats. These elements are not necessarily mutually exclusive, which make up the body of the Cambodian state.

The personal networks of the PM are the most important elements of the state that bring power of the PM to bear on citizens. This consists of two layers of agents, those the PM personally assigns, and those who are personally connected to the first layer, and who play a role as implementers. The first layers take direct orders from the PM and the second layer takes on orders to actualise policy. Agents of both layers are selected from the pool of state bureaucrats whose positions are formally defined (such as the minister of MOWRAM or staff members of Tonle Sap Basin Authority). The direct and personal assignments as given by the PM provide them with political power which cuts through
existing state institutional arrangements, making them effectively the sole actors for the matter in question.

The CPP political working group consists of those who are personally and politically closely connected with the PM. For the purpose of voter relations, this group exists and operates in parallel to the formal state structure, but the central purpose of this group is to respond to political crises.

State officials occupy formal positions that exist as part of state institutions, as defined through legislation. Yet in reality, as was shown through the demarcation process, this group has no real ability to represent citizens. This group consists of officials at provincial and local levels of government, often with little or no personal and political connections to the PM.

The three elements of state, although organised around the PM, do not always work in conjunction. Often they find themselves in conflict with one another, but this thesis has emphasised that such conflicts arise not out of attempts to fulfill public duties, but competition for personal benefit either in the form of a patron’s favoritism or financial and material gains. What this thesis has tried to draw out is that in the process of state territorialisation, the state does not operate as a single entity in exercising its power over society. In achieving its dominance over society, the state first dominates its own agents at the central and provincial levels, before exercising power over the society.

When power is unjustly exercised over the society, there is often no reliable mechanism for the society to demand accountability from the state. The experience of the demarcation shows that the formal mechanism to demand accountability from the state is, at best, weak. Despite the D&D reform that aims at improving local accountability, representation and responsiveness, societal groups, as this instance suggests, cannot depend on the local state authorities such as the village and commune chiefs to represent their interests, for those local authorities view themselves as largely inferior and thus at the mercy of the central state agents who possess the power of the PM. Those central agents, also managed to position themselves in strategic control of the appeal mechanism by setting the conditions under which the appeal can take place. But often those conditions consist of a time frame and material demands so unrealistic that the locals cannot meet them given the prevailing political and bureaucratic red tape in the country.

This leaves the option and likelihood of accountability to the informal mechanisms of patron-client networks. But this is proven unreliable as a lot depends on the Party
officials, their patrimonial interests and the wider political sentiment of the time. Meanwhile, the likelihood of a radical democratic solution such as through public protest is absent. The locals, by oppression manifested through the threat of violence or by self reservation, cannot organise themselves to publicly protest against the state action. The state takes advantage of the absence of a strong social fabric, perhaps due to prolonged history of violence, centralism and state surveillance.

Finally, this thesis concludes from the experience of the Tonle Sap Demarcation project that the power of the state over the society originates in the logic of the modernist state that positions itself as the sole legitimate actor and manager of natural resources. With this justification, the power to implement its modernist project such as resource demarcation is exercised as a personal prerogative of the PM who serves as the source and centre of power. However, the final and actual effects of the state’s power over society in Cambodia is shaped by the implementing agents, who carry out the PM’s order in accordance with their circumstances and personal interests, and, on the basic of a weak local formal accountability mechanism, do what they possibly can to block the locals from demanding accountability from the state.

**Significance**

In the opinion of the researcher, this thesis has made two significant contributions. First, this thesis serves to remind environmental NGOs and donors funding conservation projects, that their objectives of creating sustainable local livelihoods through rational resource governance and conservation cannot be un-problematically realised on the ground. Such objectives are often colonised by host governments and used as a tool to affect those the projects originally set out to benefit. Conservation NGOs and donors need to understand that leaders, or some leaders, in some countries are what Liddle (1992:798) would call ‘political animals’. They would do what they can to benefit themselves regardless of the social cost.

This directly concerns the current model of donors’ and NGOs’ engagement. Donors mostly engage with the initial stages of a conservation project, writing the rationale and objective of a project, while leaving the implementation to host governments. But it is not the writing of rationales and objectives which is the most important. It is the implementation. The Tonle Sap demarcation project bears an important testimony of the
flaw in this arrangement. It shows that the state feeds on the rationale given by donor(s) and implements projects to the detriment of local people, and when that happens, social actors have no one to turn to. Once the project has expired; the mandate of donors has ended.

Second, from a methodological point of view, the work of this thesis is significant in that it is not just a study of the impacts of an event, but a study of an event in a particular place and time. For this thesis, the researcher followed the demarcation of the Tonle Sap project from its inception at the national level to the implementation of it at the local level. This allowed the researcher to follow the event as it unfolded and observe social interactions in real time. The addition of the time dimension made qualitative data on power relations more complete and more accurate. It also reduced, if not eliminated, the problem of researcher dependency on participants’ ability to recall historical data, which is a major challenge to the collection of accurate data.

This raises an important question concerning the role of an in-depth ethnographic approach and how useful it is as a research methodology for the examination of zoning policies, the politics of mapping, and the grounded implications of demarcating environmental resource and conservation zones. The experience of this thesis’s field work suggests that resource governance is highly political, and resource arrangements and allocation are governed by power relations, which make its discussion highly sensitive. As it concerns powerful interests, people do not generally talk about it. However, for its important role in their everyday livelihood, people constantly think about it and act with reference to it. A broad implication of this is that the data on resource governance such as those of Tonle Sap demarcation and the struggle over it need not come solely from people’s words. Their actions, which have to be understood with reference to a specific time with specific historical events and political consideration, can also serve as a rich source of data. As Foucault suggests, a statement is beyond the words themselves, and attempts need to be made to ‘rediscover the silent murmuring, the inexhaustible speech that animates from within the voice that one hears, re-establish the tiny, invisible text that runs between and sometimes collides with them’ (Foucault 1972:27). Only an in-depth ethnographic approach can do this, for it could capture the discursive aspect of power study (discourse) which emphasises the importance of the existing wider patterns of statement, symbols and understanding.
Limitations
There are some important limitations that are worth mentioning here. The first limitation of this thesis concerns the generalisability of the findings. The conclusion of this thesis is drawn mainly from data collected from one commune. Thus, the finding of this thesis should only serve to reveal some aspects of state power, not as a generalisation or theorization of how the state works in Cambodia.

The second limitation concerns issues of data reliability. The main focus of this thesis has been on processes of policy making, process of decision making, and social interaction. Important data sets for these units of analysis come from interviews, direct observations and participant observation. During the course of data collection, the researcher did not have access to many key government officials for interviews. This prevented the researcher from accessing first-hand information which may be important for understanding state agent action and behaviour. Instead, the researcher depended on information collected from other sources. Despite the researcher’s effort to ensure that the information best reflected reality, the researcher cannot claim to know how the mind of others works.

Suggestions for Further Research
A few interesting observations arise as a result of this thesis, and some of these observations could be, and should be taken for further investigation. First, the findings suggest that state power primarily emanates from mid-level agents rather than the central political elites. It suggests that this problem is mainly due to the missing link between citizens and the political elite in the central government. This leads to the question of what mechanism allows for dialogue between top government officials and regular citizens in a neo-patrimonial state. How would this kind of mechanism help citizens represent their interests, in the absence of strong state institutions? This question may sound obvious but it remains a crucial question in relation to Cambodia as it continues to experience problems of land related conflicts. This situation takes on a particular priority due to the poor continually finding themselves in a subordinate position to those in power.

Second, during the course of field data collection, the researcher noted the emerging role of local leadership that did not necessarily depend on connections to the political elite. Experience from the demarcation project suggests that local farmer leaders play an important role in initiating and sustaining local movements. They serve as opinion
leaders, sponsors, and as an active force behind appeals. Further research should be conducted to understand these local leaders, and their potential, and limitations in promoting local democratic action.

Third, and more specific to Cambodia, is the observation that the political party system, especially the CPP working group, is unable to represent local citizens. This observation, in a sense, contradicts Un’s (2011: 555) argument that Cambodia is a ‘hegemonic stable party system’ (current author’s emphasis). These thesis’s findings suggest that Cambodia may be a hegemonic party system, but its stability is far from enduring. Further research is needed to investigate whether the internal dynamic of the CPP is changing and in what direction. More important is the question of how the changing dynamic of the CPP is shaping political operations in Cambodia, and what will be their impacts on the country’s democratic reforms.

Finally, the study sets certain directions for research into zoning practices and other manifestations of territorialised resource governance. There should be further studies in these directions, looking as such questions as how zoning and community recourse planning empower local communities or whether it facilitates a process of wealth transformation between different social groups; then which groups benefit or who lose and how.
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