



# RETHINKING TOURISM IN ASIA

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**Abstract:** Recent years have witnessed a seemingly relentless surge in the movement of tourists “of Asian origin”. It is confidently predicted that over the coming decades Asia will have one of the fastest growing tourist populations in the world. Despite such forecasts, tourism *in Asia by Asian tourists* has received little attention to date. This paper sets out to redress this imbalance by examining recent developments at the World Heritage Site of Angkor, Cambodia. It argues that Western-focused policies have inadequately restrained an explosion in facility construction principally aimed at a tourism market from Northeast Asia. The various implications arising from this situation are examined. **Keywords:** Angkor, Cambodia, Asia, urban, networks. © 2006 Elsevier Ltd. All rights reserved.

**Résumé:** Pour repenser le tourisme en Asie. Ces dernières années ont vu une montée en flèche de la circulation de touristes d’origine asiatique. On prévoit avec confiance que lors des prochaines décennies, la population touristique asiatique pourrait connaître la plus forte croissance au monde. Malgré ces prédictions, peu d’études se consacrent au thème du tourisme des populations asiatiques en Asie. Cet article a pour but de rectifier ce déséquilibre en examinant les développements récents au site du patrimoine mondial à Angkor, au Cambodge. On soutient que des politiques axées sur l’Occident ont limité de façon inadéquate une explosion de construction de ressources touristiques destinées principalement au marché de tourisme de l’Asie du nord-est. On examine les différentes implications résultant de cette situation. **Mots-clés:** Angkor, Cambodge, Asie, urbain, réseaux. © 2006 Elsevier Ltd. All rights reserved.

## INTRODUCTION

Despite the recent surge in the number of tourists originating from countries across Asia, the literature on tourism on the region, published in English, remains dominated by encounters between Westerners and their Asian hosts. As yet, little attention has been given to either the motivations and values of tourists from Asia, or the broader social, cultural, and political implications arising from this fast-growing industry. This paper aims to redress this imbalance—albeit in a very modest way—by examining the effect Asian tourism is having on the World Heritage Site of Angkor. Located in the northwest of Cambodia, Angkor has undergone an extraordinary growth in international tourism.

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From 9,000 in 1993, ticket sales to the site have grown to around 750,000 a decade later, a staggering increase of 8,000% (Ministry of Tourism 2003). More recently, much of this growth has been driven by the rapidly accelerating Japanese, Chinese, Taiwanese, and South Korean markets. In this respect, Angkor, and its study, offer some valuable insights into the future of the region.

The paper conceptualizes tourism in terms of networks, scapes, and flows in order to argue that current policies for Angkor's development, built on a foundation of tourism as a Western industry, have inadequately restrained an explosion in facility construction principally aimed at a Northeast Asian market. The implications for the region's fragile environment, infrastructure, and cultural heritage arising from this situation are also examined. The paper draws upon two one-year periods of fieldwork conducted in 2000/01 and 2003/04. A wide variety of primary and secondary data sources are incorporated, including newspaper articles, policy reports, government publications, conference transcripts and documents, and a range of semi-structured interviews conducted with hoteliers, tour operators, government officials, and heritage organizations like UNESCO. In presenting the data from this research, it is argued that the situation facing Angkor illustrates why tourism studies needs to pay more attention to the profound societal changes which are now occurring across Asia because of a fast-growing regional tourism industry. In addition, the case of Angkor illustrates why more rigorous understandings need to be cultivated concerning how China and overseas related communities are economically and culturally influencing regions like South-east Asia.

## SHIFTING PARADIGMS OF TOURISM

To date, the literature published in English has been strongly biased towards understanding the encounter between Western, northern-hemisphere tourists and their Eastern, southern-hemisphere hosts. In seeking an explanation for this analytical disposition, a number of obvious empirical factors can be cited. However, attention also needs to be directed towards the prevalence of certain theoretical directions and the predominance of European and US based universities, which, together, have been instrumental in creating this situation; one notable example being the (somewhat unfortunate) enduring grip held by MacCannell's (1976) conceptualization of the tourist as the alienated subject from industrialized societies seeking authenticity in the premodern. This situation means that much of the literature has invoked and relied upon a number of universalistic theories which, in turn, have often been based upon conceptual binaries between traditional/modern, authentic/inauthentic, hegemony/resistance, and local/global.

One of the reasons why these analytical threads have remained so prevalent has been the ongoing influence of globalization studies. Beginning with theories of a world system and modernization in the

70s, through to more recent accounts of glocalization, this literature has underpinned countless studies exploring the impact of a *global* tourism industry on a *local* environment or destination. Within these studies, greater emphasis has been placed on the local, often at the expense of rigorous and critical understandings of what is actually meant by the global. Despite recent studies on Asia by authors like Lew and Wong (2005), Oates (1998), Sum and So (2004) and Tan et al (2001), a paradigm of tourism largely rooted in a notion of west-to-east, and north-to-south flows reflects how the field continues to draw upon outmoded conceptions of globalization as a process of Westernization. By implication, far less attention has been paid to tourism and internal tourist flows within regions like Asia, Africa, and the Middle East.

This paper focuses on Asian tourism in Cambodia to illustrate why this imbalance needs to be addressed urgently. In so doing, it adheres to Castells' assertion that networks constitute "the new social morphology of our societies" (1996:469) in order to understand tourism as a series of intersecting networks and flows of capital, knowledge, and people. Geographically located at the heart of mainland Southeast Asia, Angkor, and the nearby town of Siem Reap, have recently become encapsulated within a highly interconnected industry dominated by the region's economically more powerful countries such as Malaysia, Thailand, and Vietnam. In this respect, the region's industry is a vivid example of what Clammer refers to as a "complex constellation of transnational transformations of cultural, social, political and economic life characteristic of the interrelated and interdependent nature of the contemporary world" (2002:62).

In order to pursue such an analysis of Angkor today, Urry's recent distinction between "scapes" and "flows" is considered useful here. Adopting the conceptual language of Arjun Appadurai, Urry (2000) suggests scapes are "the networks of machines, technologies, organizations, texts, and actors that constitute various interconnected nodes". In contrast, flows consist of "peoples, images, information, money, and waste, that move within and especially across national borders" (2000:35–36). At the core of his distinction is the greater degree of structure associated with scapes. In developing this idea further in his book *Global Complexity*, Urry argues flows—this time discussed as "global fluids"—"result from people acting upon the basis of local information but where these local actions are, through countless iteration, captured, moved, represented, marketed, and generalized within multiple global waves" (2003:60). He suggests, by implication, that such localized flows deliver unpredictability within today's globally integrated networks. In offering such an account, Urry recognizes that, far from being mutually exclusive, scapes and flows continually intersect, with the former providing a partial structure—a global order—within which fluidity can emerge and thrive.

It will be seen shortly that an institutional structure of organizations, corporations, and other transnational institutions has formed around Angkor since it began re-emerging as a major destination in the early to mid-90s. In Urry's terms, the presence of bodies like UNESCO and

major international hotel brands represents a structural rigidity that “roam[s] ... across the surface of the earth” (2003:57) delivering predictability and reliability. Considerable analytical clarity arises from contrasting these institutional scapes with the more liquid flows of “people, capital, images, and culture” (Meethan 2001:4) which now constitute a series of region-wide and localized tourism-related networks. However, the situation at Angkor also reveals why tourism studies needs to move beyond Urry’s account of a networked “globality” to identify interconnectivity at the regional level. This geography too often remains overlooked within a discourse of local–global relations and the challenges, or opportunities, such processes pose to the nation-state today. However, it should be stated at this point that while an analysis of scapes and flows provides considerable clarity for understanding Angkor’s recent situation, this distinction should not be adopted as a tool for characterizing, or indeed categorizing, Western versus Asian forms of tourism or capitalism.

In order to extrapolate some of the implications arising from these intersecting scapes and flows, the paper considers the relationship between space and capital at the local level. While numerous studies have foregrounded ideas of place and space in recent years, the bulk of attention has been given to accounts of spatial performance (Edensor 1998, 2001), consumption as praxis (Crouch 1999, 2001), the symbolic objectification of landscape, (Sheller and Urry 2004; Terkenli 2002; Urry 1990), or the spatialized nature of intersubjective memories and tourist identities (Dwyer 2003; Küchler 2001). Together these approaches have endeavored to transcend the binaries of production and consumption or the symbolic and material which underpinned much of the earlier literature.

During the early 90s authors such as Sassen (1991) and Zukin (1991) called for a better understanding of the spatialization of capital and the ways in which it becomes embedded within, and across, localized landscapes. Zukin, for example, illustrated how the cultural value of place becomes directly related to economic value through its abstraction into “market oriented ... franchise culture” (1991:27), a process which involves varying amounts of sociospatial transformation. Within the tourism literature these themes have been adopted to a limited extent. Journals such as *Tourism Economics* and *Tourism Management* have successfully developed a field examining the impact/potential of tourism at the local level, often based on economic modeling and policy-based approaches. Meanwhile recent studies by Teo et al. (2001), Sharpley and Tefler (2002), and Smith (2005) have adopted more geographical perspectives to analyze space, capital, and tourism at the national or regional level. This regional approach needs to be further pursued in order to highlight how shifting patterns of tourism have radically transformed a particular landscape in unexpected ways. Flows associated with Asian tourism are contrasted with the institutional infrastructures of world heritage policies to illustrate how regional and global networks of capital, knowledge, people, and politics are converging on one of Asia’s most important cultural heritage landscapes in fractious and problematic ways.

*Modern Cambodia: Decades of Turmoil and Recovery*

As the 90s began, Cambodia was embarking upon a road of recovery after a period of history characterized by genocide, civil war, and more than a decade of Vietnamese occupation. The country's turmoil began in the late 60s through its involvement in the Vietnam–America war. Despite numerous proclamations of neutrality by Norodom Sihanouk, Cambodia's Prime Minister at that time, the conflict spilled over into the country's eastern provinces in what [Shawcross \(1993\)](#) famously dubbed as the war's "Sideshow". In response to Vietnamese communist forces moving further and further westwards across Cambodian territory, the United States maintained devastating bombing campaigns over a number of years. As the country's political landscape became increasingly factionalized and characterized by major ideological fissures, it plunged into further turmoil. ([Mabbett and Chandler 1995](#)). On 17 April, 1975, Cambodia witnessed the start of one of the most radical and brutal social experiments ever inflicted upon a nation. Promising to free the country from the tyranny of both Vietnamese and American intervention, Saloth Sar, latterly known as Pol Pot, proclaimed the end of two thousand years of history and the return of Cambodia to "year zero". ([Ponchaud 1978](#)).

Bearing similarities to Maoist and Marxist-Leninist doctrines, the Khmer Rouge revolution abolished all religious practices, private property, and even the most basic human rights. ([Chandler 1996](#)). The imposed ideology of collectivist production and consumption rapidly began to fail, and with widespread corruption, poor harvests, and increasing foreign hostilities came ever greater levels of brutality. By the time the country was liberated by an army of one hundred thousand Vietnamese troops in early 1979, over one and a half million people had died, or one in seven of the population. As the 80s progressed, profound problems persisted, and a political and military stalemate set in, with the Soviet-backed Vietnamese administration in Phnom Penh locked against a Chinese- and Western-backed Cambodian resistance which included a farcical alliance between Pol Pot and Sihanouk ([Gottesman 2003](#)).

The conclusion of the cold war era provided a window of opportunity to resolve Cambodia's problems. Under the guidance of the largest United Nations peace-keeping operation to date—costing in excess of US\$ 2,000,000,000—an attempt was made to move from a political climate of single-party authoritarianism towards multi-party democracy, and replace the country's socialist-style command-economics with an open, free-market economy. After nearly 25 years of civil war and decline, trust and confidence in the country's institutions had to be rebuilt. Politics had to be transformed from jungle conflict and guerilla tactics into non-violent, democratic debate. Abject poverty needed to be replaced with sustained and stable economic growth. And a sense of cultural and political sovereignty needed to be reclaimed; an immense challenge in itself given the lack of skilled human resources and billions of dollars of foreign aid pouring in to the country at that time ([Winter and Ollier 2006](#)). Embarking upon such roads, early-90s

Cambodia was a place of optimism, hope, and progress. One of the sites where these aspirations and various challenges converged most intensely, was the templed landscape of Angkor.

Typically described as one of the cultural highlights of Southeast Asia, Angkor represented the principal, if not sole, attraction a recovering Cambodia could offer in a highly competitive regional industry. As noted earlier, tourism at the site would increase by a staggering 8,000% in the ten-year period after 1993. In contrast, the number of arrivals to the northeast of the country would rise by only a few thousand in that same decade. Indeed, government efforts to cultivate a more nationwide tourism industry were greatly hampered by shattered social and physical infrastructures. In addition to roads, seaports, airlines, and hotels, the country's travel agents, guides, visa arrangements, and brochures all desperately needed upgrading. Not surprisingly, within a fragile political climate, attitudes towards development were short-termist. Rather than investing millions of dollars in long-term infrastructure projects, the political elite looked to swiftly maximize Angkor's value as a "cash-cow" of development.

Given the highly challenging and fast-changing environment, UNESCO set about establishing a framework of protection for Angkor. Recent history had left Cambodia with desperately inadequate administrative and political infrastructures, and a complete dearth of expertise in monument conservation, archaeology, and tourism development. Having listed Angkor as a World Heritage Site in December 1992 and included it on the List of World Heritage in Danger, UNESCO established an institutional structure for overseeing its restoration and development as a tourist site.

The International Coordinating Committee for the Safeguarding and Development of Angkor (ICC), identified a two-pronged strategy of cultural conservation and socioeconomic development. It was widely recognized that international tourism would represent the convergence of these two areas, albeit in paradoxical and conflicting ways. In the face of inadequate legislative, executive, and judicial branches of the transitional state, the ICC needed to safeguard Angkor from the various threats and dangers posed by an anticipated rapid growth in tourism. To this end, a party of 25 international experts in the fields of cartography, history, ecology, and hydrology were brought together in 1993 to draw up a landscape management plan (Wager 1995a). Authorized by a Royal Decree in May 1994, the resultant Zoning and Environmental Management Plan, or ZEMP as it became known, spatially demarcated protection and development zones for the site of Angkor and the neighboring town of Siem Reap.

In essence, the ZEMP scheme reflected three key concerns: "archaeological conservation, urban growth, and tourism development". (Wager 1995b:425). This paradigm led to five zones of administration: Monumental Sites; Protected Archaeological Reserves; Protected Cultural Landscapes; Sites of Archaeological, Anthropological or Historic Interest; and the Socioeconomic and Cultural Development Zone of the Siem Reap Region (UNESCO 1996:194–197). Not surprisingly, the scheme placed the highest priority on the protection of Angkor's

ancient monumental heritage. In this respect, however, it can be seen that ZEMP acted as a “spatial form of knowledge” (Harley 1988:300), reaffirming the scientific, architectural orientations of the ICC. Within such a framework, tourism was overwhelmingly perceived as a threat, and a danger to be contained, as the following excerpt illustrates:

Tourism threatens to damage this Khmer cultural legacy far more swiftly and decisively than did any ancient invaders, or even the clandestine raiders of today. Savage, unregulated commercial ventures purposely designed to facilitate the “consumption” of Angkor, exploiting the Khmer heritage only in order to siphon private profit out of the region if not out of the country, constitute a current and very real threat (UNESCO 1996:166–167).

To counter this threat, the ZEMP scheme included plans for a hotel zone. Concerned about rampant and anarchic development, the scheme recommended that key facilities such as hotels and a visitor center be isolated in an area of land between the Angkor Park and the town of Siem Reap. It was argued that regulating development in this way would preserve the “traditional spatial and social organization” of Siem Reap, reduce the strain on the region’s resources and infrastructure, and ensure that the various organizations involved with tourism, such as hotels, travel agents, restaurants, and souvenir shops, all remained geographically separate from the Angkor park itself (UNESCO 1996:199). The ICC unequivocally adopted ZEMP’s recommendations and retained the hotel zone as the keystone of their tourism management program throughout the 90s. Under the guidance of the ICC, the Cambodian-run body for developing the Angkor region—the Authority for the Protection and Safeguarding of the Angkor Region (APSARA)—secured the necessary legal framework for the hotel zone, in the form of a subdecree in 1995, and set about purchasing the land. However, 12 years after the initial ZEMP recommendations, the project has failed to materialize. In early 2005, rather than being a space of luxury hotels and landscaped gardens, the zone is little more than a grid of roads and kilometers of wire fencing. In an attempt to account for this situation, the evolution of Siem Reap’s tourism industry as a series of discordant economic, cultural, and political scapes and flows is explored here.

### *Gazing West*

As noted in the introduction of this paper, 9,000 international tourists visited Angkor in 1993. It was widely predicted that this number would increase significantly over the coming years. A rhetoric of “explosion” and “onslaught” in documents produced by the international community overseeing Angkor’s development indicated how tourism was regarded as a long-term horizon of danger and irreparable damage (UNESCO 1993,1996). In an attempt to legally and politically protect Angkor from its immediate environment UNESCO created a local management body to act as a bridge between the international community and the domestic government. Created in 1995, the

APSARA authority would adopt the ZEMP scheme as its legislative framework for monitoring development in both the Angkor Park and the neighboring town of Siem Reap.

The Authority for the Protection and Safeguarding of the Angkor Region's political positioning—in between the Royal Government of Cambodia and the ICC—would have a major impact on the development of Siem Reap. As the 90s progressed, a number of stories circulated within the Cambodian media concerning “masterplans” for the town. The highest profile of these was a memorandum of agreement drafted in November 1995 between the government's Ministry of Tourism and the Malaysian YTL Corporation. Signed in front of Cambodia's co-premiers, the agreement centered on two key projects: a sound-and-light show at Angkor's largest temple Angkor Wat, and a major “Tourism Development Zone”, which would “attract more than \$1 billion in investment by the time it is complete” (Peters 1996:7). Similar in location to the hotel zone of the ZEMP scheme outlined earlier, the proposed development zone would cover more than 1,000 hectares. The ambitious YTL project involved the creation of a canal network, a number of large hotels, and “a commercial centre, a cultural centre, sports facilities and a hospital” (Cambodia Times 1996:6). At that time YTL's managing director Francis Yeoh was confident construction on the complex would commence in early 1996. However, as the project became delayed over the coming months, it was apparent the government's Ministry of Tourism had acted without the full backing of the APSARA authority or the ICC. Indeed, shortly after the authority confirmed they were rejecting the proposed scheme on the grounds that it not only encroached on land protected by the ZEMP scheme, but also gave YTL a monopoly over hotel contracts and other future developments. Careful not to alienate his counterparts within the government, Cambodia's premier architect and close ally of the king, Vann Molyvann, confirmed APSARA's position to the Cambodian press:

The Royal Government has given 560 hectares to the Authority for the Protection and Safeguarding of the Angkor Region that has been designated as a hotel zone. YTL proposes to use this land and expand to 1,000 hectares through a 70 year lease. This land was given by the Royal Government—not to YTL—but to APSARA by Royal Decree. YTL has no right to lease land which does not belong to them. We want to develop this zone ourselves and warmly invite YTL, or other hotel groups, to build within the 560 hectare zone (Vittachi 1996).

Despite Vann Molyvann's efforts to present a unified voice for APSARA and the government, a spokesperson for the Ministry of Tourism stated that “as far as the [the Ministry] is concerned, YTL's billion dollar investment in Angkor-Siem Reap is going ahead as planned” (Vittachi 1996). Over the coming months, the ICC put sustained pressure on the government to have this agreement rescinded, and succeeded in ensuring the project never advanced beyond the drawing board. In spite of APSARA's lack of funding at that time, the eventual

squashing of the YTL masterplan ensured they could continue with their original plans for developing the hotel zone. While the ICC was deeply concerned about rapid, short-term development, Tamara Teneishvili, a UNESCO representative for the ICC, confirmed that they were aware major steps had to be taken to address the escalating level of tourism at that time (personal interview in 2001). Accordingly, towards the end of the 90s APSARA began relocating thousands of villagers living in the area (Thet Sambath and McPhillips 2000).

International arrivals during this period were increasing at an annual rate of around 25% (APSARA 2000). The political stability which Cambodia had enjoyed since the early 90s and the opening up of the country's air space in 1997 had provided the necessary foundations for such growth. However, as David Chandler pointed out, Angkor's development as a destination entered a new phase with the election of Hun Sen as sole Prime Minister in 1998 (personal communication in 2001). The newly elected government has been looking to the tourist dollar as a major source of revenue in their efforts to improve the country's dire socioeconomic situation. With Angkor's development now central to government policy, UNESCO and the ICC responded by organizing a number of seminars and conferences on tourism. Attended by a diverse range of consultants from Europe, the Middle East, and Asia, as well as representatives from the Royal Government and APSARA, these events attempted to steer Cambodia towards a model of "cultural tourism". Most notably, during a conference hosted by the World Tourism Organization held in Siem Reap in December 2000, it was observed that a number of presenters stressed the importance of cultivating an industry based around a vision of "high quality, cultural tourism". This theme was also central to the speech delivered by the director of APSARA's tourism department:

Tourism in Cambodia must first and foremost be cultural tourism ... The policy of cultural tourism that Cambodia intends to implement must have specific goals in order to prevent it from turning into commercial tourism ... [we must] ... promote quality cultural tourism, and avoid mass tourism by raising the level of accommodation and the quality of services offered (Chau Sun Kérya 2000:1-4).

Clearly the language of cultural tourism being advanced in the conference reflected an attempt to bring together Cambodia's cultural assets with the socioeconomic benefits of tourism in a mutually beneficial relationship. However, as Chau Sun Kérya confirmed in an interview after the workshop, the cultural tourism framework being offered during this period was principally conceived around, and driven by, the pragmatics of providing high quality services. Predictably, it was an approach which once again reaffirmed the validity and importance of developing the hotel zone.

As a result, the project gained a new momentum in 2001 and was re-branded the "Angkor Tourist City". This ensured the project remained pivotal to the ICC's and APSARA's attempts to transform Angkor into a "high quality" destination. The following excerpt from

the brochure produced for potential investors illustrates the vision for the site:

Angkor Tourist City will be developed in compliance with current planning regulations, but in keeping with Khmer architectural traditions. Green areas and buildings will be blended together. The area will contain tourist and leisure facilities only. It is reserved exclusively for luxury and first class hotels with a capacity of over 60 rooms (APSARA 2001:4).

In order to help develop the city, the ICC recruited the assistance of expert teams from France specializing in the development of countries like Cambodia. Over recent years, these teams have played a crucial role in guiding APSARA's efforts to landscape and develop the entire Siem Reap region as a destination. Along with the ongoing conservation and research efforts of the *Ecole Française d'Extrême Orient*, such assistance programs reflect the strong ties between France and Angkor today. As a former colonial power in Southeast Asia, France retains a strong cultural and political investment in Cambodia. Described by Norindr (1996) as the "jewel in the crown" of French Indochina, Angkor remains closely connected to the former *Métropole* through the Paris-based world heritage infrastructure of UNESCO. Although Angkor's listing as a World Heritage Site led to a web of assistance involving over a dozen countries, the political configuration of the ICC undoubtedly reflects the long-standing connections between Cambodia and France.

In such a context, attempts to develop the Angkor Tourist City were principally directed towards securing contracts with hotel chains operating with headquarters in either Europe or North America (personal interview with Chau Sun Kérya in 2001). Presentations given during the December 2000 cultural tourism conference summarized the efforts made to attract companies like Accor or Four Seasons, and, in so doing, illustrated how a design for an integrated resort of multiple hotels was largely conceived with aesthetically desirable, Western, transnational hospitality corporations in mind (APSARA 2001:4).

Therefore, it can be seen that the desire to resist certain forms of capital such as the YTL proposal seen earlier—perceived to have undesirable and unpredictable consequences—has led to a policy oriented towards a familiar, predictable, and highly structured tourism industry. Within the ICC framework, it has been common practice to raise and present key projects like the hotel zone to the organization as a whole during one of its biannual meetings. The time frame for decisionmaking has been further expanded by the need for a system of checks and balances with major projects requiring multiple signatures and approvals from the international community, APSARA, the provincial authority, or the Phnom Penh-based government.

Understandably, this complex bureaucratic web has arisen through the ICC's desire to develop the region in a cautious and restrained way. For the ICC, it has been essential that policies and legislation have been as rigid as possible. However, as noted above, maintaining a level

of predictability and rigidity by using familiar and “trustworthy” institutions has led to a reliance upon certain “scapes” primarily oriented towards Europe. In recent years such policies have come into contact with, and been profoundly challenged by, an entrepreneurial regional tourism industry characterized by certain flows of capital, people and knowledge, as the following section illustrates.

### *Economies of (a Regional) Scale*

While the statistics presented earlier document the extent of the growth in overall arrivals during the 90s, they fail to reveal a major shift which took place over this period. Initially, the reestablishment of Cambodia’s tourism industry was dominated by arrivals from either Europe or North America; an unsurprising situation given the particular meaning both Angkor and Cambodia hold for tourists from France and the United States, albeit in very different ways. However, as the decade drew to a close, a significant shift took place, with an increasing proportion of Angkor’s tourists now coming from within Asia itself (Ministry of Tourism 2000, 2003; UNDP/WTO 1992). Initially led by Japan, this pattern of growth continued to gain momentum with ever-increasing numbers arriving from Taiwan, Korea and, more recently, China. By 2003, nearly 60% of all tourists entering Cambodia originated from Asia, with around two-thirds of that figure accounted for by countries in the northeast of the region (Ministry of Tourism 2003).

A range of factors can be legitimately cited for explaining this rise in the Northeast Asian market, including regional economic growth, rising disposable incomes, and decreasing travel costs. However, in order to fully account for why Siem Reap has emerged as such a popular destination within Southeast Asia’s highly competitive industry, it is also important to consider the establishment of a Siem Reap-based infrastructure. Since the mid-90s, the town has witnessed an extremely rapid expansion in the number of businesses catering to the Northeast Asian market. Beginning with small guesthouses, the infrastructure familiar to an inbound industry steadily took root and grew in its level of sophistication. By the end of the decade, a high level of integration had evolved between numerous travel agents, restaurants, souvenir shops, and hotels, all targeting markets from Northeast Asia.

Crucially, this network of businesses had two distinct characteristics: a particular geographic distribution and an extremely high level of entrepreneurialism. Although the center of Siem Reap was steadily developing as a hub of travel agents, guesthouses, and restaurants during this period, these businesses were largely catering to an audience of Western tourists. But those businesses targeting a fast-growing Asian market sought locations away from the town center, along one particular road: National Highway No. 6, connecting Siem Reap’s international airport with the town itself. With the majority arriving by air, the highway is consistently busy with buses, taxis, scooters, and tuk-tuks. Highly convenient for routing guests back and forth to the Angkor

Park, as a number of hotel owners confirmed by interview, it also represents a prime location for situating accommodation facilities. For these simple geographical reasons, it was not surprising that this two-kilometer stretch of road emerged as a key artery of commerce. Few predicted, however, the sheer scale and speed of development which would occur in this area. Beginning in the mid-90s, a quite remarkable boom in construction has taken place with thousands of hotel rooms, along with numerous restaurants, souvenir shops, and travel agents all entering operation along the road.

One of the reasons for this level of expansion has been the nature of the facilities offered. Rather than aiming at the high end, luxury sector, virtually all the hotels and restaurants have been constructed with the mid range package-tour market in mind. Moreover, while many of the hotels enjoy a clientele with a broad geographical base, a number of managers confirmed in interviews that the owners of their operations have specifically targeted the fast-growing Asian market. As a result, in addition to road signs and restaurant menus scripted in Korean and Chinese, the travel agents, airline offices, and hotels here-all now depend upon staff speaking one or more Northeast Asian languages.

In order to understand why this area has developed in this way, one must return to the 80s and early 90s. Under the Khmer Rouge regime in the late 70s private land ownership was abolished in Cambodia. Not surprisingly, property rights and the governance of land have remained contentious issues since that period (Vann Molyvann 2003). Cambodia's transition towards peace and political stability has involved an ongoing program of demobilization. As part of that process, and in anticipation of Angkor's future as a cash-cow of tourism, key plots of land lining Highway No. 6 were given over to high ranking officials within the Cambodian military. One of the principal aims of the ZEMP scheme was to protect Angkor from anarchic forms of development and an environment of inadequate, or even nonexistent, land laws. However, in spite of legislation being passed covering the stretch of Highway No. 6 crossing over into the Angkor park, restricting construction in this area has proved difficult over the last ten years (personal interview with Tamara Teneishvili in 2001). Disputes over planning permission have often resulted in construction projects being granted largely because of the nature of the capital investment involved. Personal discussions with land owners and their agents has confirmed that, rather than operating through major hotel corporations, they have looked to capitalize upon their property by either undertaking construction projects themselves, establishing private lease agreements, or entering into partnerships with other individuals. In other words, the transformation of this area has been dependent upon an entrepreneurial form of capitalism.

Momentum for the area's development has also come from investments being made from outside Cambodia. Since the late 90s Siem Reap has witnessed a rapid growth in Korean, Japanese, and Chinese expatriates operating in its tourism industry. Indeed, as the second major economic hub of the country, the town is now home to a signi-

ficant proportion of the estimated 30,000 mainland Chinese living in Cambodia today (Beech 2005). In many cases, the investments made by these communities also intersect with Cambodia's well-established, and often wealthy, ethnic Chinese population. The nature of these partnerships makes it virtually impossible to accurately assess the magnitude of tourism-related foreign investment arriving from Northeast Asia today. This problem is identified in a recent article published by Time magazine focusing on Chinese trade investments in Cambodia and other Southeast Asian countries:

there's really a black hole of Chinese FDI [foreign direct investment], ... the data are missing lots of small and medium-sized enterprises and one man bands, as well as money that goes through ethnic Chinese or via other countries. It's impossible to know how much investment isn't being picked up (Beech 2005:20).

While a small number of the Asian expatriate community in Siem Reap are employed by overseas tourism companies or hotel chains, the vast majority are involved in family-run businesses. Travel agents, along with souvenir shops, restaurants, and karaoke bars have all been funded and operated by individuals from Japan, China, Taiwan, and South Korea. Interviews conducted with members of this community indicate that small businesses often rely upon so-called local partners for organizing logistical or bureaucratic details. Discussions about business strategies revealed the centrality of product differentiation and creative forms of diversification. Through the ongoing development of further partnerships, both within and beyond Cambodia, it is common for a single entrepreneur to have a stake in various tourism-related products, including souvenirs, hotel rooms, boat trips on the nearby Tonle Sap Lake, night-time entertainment, catering, and even imported alcoholic spirits. The openness and space for innovation afforded by e-commerce and ICT, about which Castells (2002) speaks, has enabled this community to rapidly put in place a portfolio of such facilities and tailor them to specific agents and tour operators across Northeast Asia. As a consequence, the vast majority of Japanese, Chinese, Taiwanese, and South Koreans visiting Angkor now eat, sleep, and shop along this short stretch of road. As the product offerings continue to expand and diversify in accordance with a steadily increasing number of arrivals, the flows of people, information, and capital move "rather like waves through the social order" (Urry 2003:74) that was put in place by UNESCO, APSARA, and the ZEMP team.

Put more specifically, this form of regionally networked commerce, characterized by individuals moving back and forth between Cambodia and various countries across Northeast Asia, has emerged below the radar of existing world heritage policy frameworks. Indeed, the gap which has formed between the rigid institutional scapes of policy seen earlier and the more fluid, organic flows of an entrepreneurial investment culture has been pivotal in shaping the ways in which capital has spatially embedded itself across the Siem Reap urban landscape. The final section explores some of the implications of this situation.

*Strains on the Landscape*

In recent years, both APSARA and the ICC have publicly expressed their concerns about the scale of development which has occurred along Highway No. 6. Many of the large hotels built in this area have succeeded in side-stepping regulations for construction laid out in ZEMP and various subsequent APSARA reports. In addition to contravening legislation concerning the maximum height of buildings, a number of tourism-related projects have threatened to damage features in the landscape associated with the Angkor period. One high profile example of this—extensively reported in the Cambodian media—involved the construction of a large hotel across part of the Angkorean canal network.

The somewhat chaotic development of this area has also undermined attempts to create a cohesive program of urban planning for the town. During a number of ICC conferences and workshops held in Siem Reap in 2003, it was apparent that the pace of construction around that area had placed major strains on the town's water, sewerage, and electricity infrastructure (ICC 2003). It was observed that many conference participants were particularly concerned that the tourism industry was putting significant demands on the underground water table, a situation that would impact on the structural stabilities of the Angkor temples themselves. The unregulated development of Highway No. 6 was cited as a major contributory factor to this problem.

On a more abstract level, the development of Highway No. 6 has also had a major impact on the spatial aesthetics of the town. During the early 90s, numerous consultancy reports on the development of Siem Reap stressed the dangers rampant tourism growth would have on the "charming atmosphere" or "character" of the town and its surroundings (Miskell and Thomas 1998). Indeed, preservation of these qualities was a principal goal behind the hotel zone scheme. The visual impact made by dozens of hotels, restaurants, and shops along one of the town's major highways severely questions the validity of describing Siem Reap in such terms today.

Finally, as part of Angkor's world heritage listing, UNESCO and the ICC recommended the relocation of the existing airport (Wager 1995a). In addition to being inadequate in its facilities, the airport's location in Zone 1 (Monumental Sites) represented a growing danger to the nearby temples. Noise vibrations from low flying aircraft were cited as a problem only likely to get worse as air traffic increased over the coming years. Therefore, plans were drawn up to build a new airport further south, closer to the planned hotel zone. However, by the end of the 90s, it was apparent this project was coming up against a number of political hurdles (Kay Kimsong 2003). Around this period approval had also been given by the Cambodian government for a major expansion program for the existing airport. A critical factor behind this scenario was the hotel infrastructure now in place along Highway No. 6. With a number of officials in the government holding personal investments in Siem Reap's business sector, and in these

hotels, a strong political will existed for maintaining the road as the town's key thoroughfare. Today the current airport has not only been largely rebuilt and expanded through a loan from the Asian Development Bank, but is also having a dedicated international terminal built on land adjacent to the existing structures. Thus, it is highly unlikely that this airport will be closed down and relocated to the area proposed by the ICC in the foreseeable future.

## CONCLUSION

Recent years have witnessed a seemingly relentless surge in the movement of tourists of Asian origin. Yet, to date, tourism *in Asia* by Asian tourists has received little academic attention, with studies remaining isolated and limited in scope. This paper has examined recent developments at the World Heritage Site of Angkor, Cambodia, in order to argue that both academia and the industry itself need to pay far greater attention to this area than they have done previously. It has been suggested that much of the literature on tourism continues to conceive globalization in terms of Westernization, resulting in attention being principally given to the broader social, cultural, and economic consequences arising from the consumption practices of a prototypical Western, tourist subject. The case of Angkor also indicates how global heritage tourism today continues to base policies around a Western-centric network of organizations and technologies. The emergence of a social and physical infrastructure geared towards a regional Asian market raises major questions concerning the validity of such policies and the governance of urban and heritage landscapes in Asia.

This paper has conceptualized Western tourism in terms of "scapes", and contrasted that with an Asian industry characterized in terms of "flows". This approach has been adopted to interpret the particular situation Angkor finds itself in today, and in so doing reveal a form of capitalism "from below" that has led to an unwieldy development of an urban landscape, both socially and physically. It is not offered, however, as an analytical distinction applicable for analyzing these two regional industries generally. Ranging from Singapore to Halong Bay, Angkor to Macau, locations are being re-packaged and re-scripted to meet the preferences, desires, and aspirations of the Asian tourist. The ongoing rise of tourists of Asian origin promises to redefine the political terrains of place, culture, and memory, demanding fresh approaches to questions of governance, sovereignty, and the ties among traditions, identity, and modernity. While this paper has concentrated on the transformation of a single urban landscape, the arguments offered vividly illustrate why a consolidated, sustained examination of the social, cultural, and political implications of Asia's transformation from mere host destination into a region of mobile consumers is urgently required. **A**

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