

Phnom Penh as the "primate city" of Cambodia and its revival since 1979

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When in 1939, M. Jefferson introduced the term "primate city" into the geographical literature, it was defined as the demographical predominant urban centre of a country. In the meantime an expanded concept is now used by other scholars of socio-economic subjects. Up to now, however, the reasons for the existence and further growth of such "primate cities" could be confirmed only in a quite general way with references to some special functions. In the present article the same procedure has been adopted in analysing the development of Phnom Penh until the first years of Cambodia's independence. The dramatic evacuation of the city in 1975 and the data collected since its revival from 1979 onward enable us to give detailed reasons for the rapid socio-economic development in comparison with other urban centres and the rural areas of Cambodia. These facts may even be generalized, so that a "primate city" is defined as that city in a country in which all the basic needs of a society are located in the most differentiated way and with the greatest socio-economic dynamism. With all these functions the "primate city" exerts a stronger attraction than other urban and rural areas which contributes to an enormous population increase. Phnom Penh is the first example, for which extensive figures have been available for a more detailed analysis on this object.

I

When, in 1939, M. Jefferson presented "The Law of the Primate City", he understood by this the undisputed predominance of one urban centre and the remarkable difference in population size between the largest city and the others of a country. At this time there was no preliminary work on this subject, and over two decades his findings excited very little response. Only in 1965 did this "primate-city concept" attract further interest with an article by A. S. Linsky. His hypotheses are quoted in the following six points (Linsky 1965, pp. 506, 507): With the degree of primacy of a country's leading city he associated:

- negatively:
 - the areal extent of dense population,

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- its average per capita income;
- partly negatively, partly positively:
 - the ex-colonial status;
- positively:
 - the dependence of the country's economy on exports,
 - the proportion of a nation's work force engaged in agriculture,
 - a rapid rate of national population growth.

Thus, besides the two negative associations and the neutral one with the primacy of the leading city, A.S. Linsky identified three positive relations: the importance of exports and agriculture as well as an intense growth of the country's population. But even with regard to these variables the degree of association was "disappointingly small". His conclusion was that there existed "a need for studies systematically relating changes in degree of primacy with changes in the social, economic and geo-political conditions within countries" (Linsky 1965, p. 511).

The above-mentioned findings are not denied, but it is, nevertheless, astonishing that the argumentation is restricted solely to nation-wide views while the inner structure and functions of such a "primate city" have not been further investigated. This task has been undertaken by C.D. Harris and E.L. Ullman. But although, as early as 1945, both authors started systematic research on the general aspects of cities "as concentration points of specialized services" (Harris, Ullman 1945, p. 226), they ended by defining their urban model only by means of Central Business District (CBD), the manufacturing/industrialized and residential areas. Urban societies, however, dispose of more than these basic needs. At least general administration, socio-cultural and educational institutions, recreation and transport facilities should be taken into consideration as well (Zimmermann 1994, pp. 83 ff.). For a proper realization of all these functions the input of the production factors of capital and labour is needed. As capital accumulation is generally the result of the continued and concentrated production of goods, the purchase of commodities and their marketing, it seems that only a few urban centres can fulfil the criteria. The "primate city" may be regarded as the number one settlement in population size but there must also be a "favourable combination of trade foci with administrative, military, juridical, and religious functions of the highest order" as W. Credner (1935, p. 366) put it to define the Thai capital Bangkok, even before anyone had spoken of a "primate city". In a similar extended view D. Drakakis-Smith (1987, p. 5) speaks of "urban primacy, which is the democratic, economic, social and political dominance of one city over all others within an urban system". Only when these stimuli exist, does the "primate city" exert traceable pull-effects on the labour market, and - as a consequence - it also triggers off the influx of people from outside. As, nowadays, the term "primate city" is quite frequently used, it deserves further clarification. This will be attempted using the example of Cambodia's capital, Phnom Penh.

II

The founding of Phnom Penh, situated at the confluence of the Tonle Sap and the Mekong, dates back to the year 1434 (G. Coédès 1913). As it was burnt down by the

Thais in 1772, the city's real development started only after King Norodom, in 1866, left his residence in Udon to set up a new capital.

Even before fulfilling this function, Phnom Penh, in 1859, was described by H. Mouhot as "the great bazaar of Cambodia ... where, most of the fishermen returning from the great lake, stop to sell part of their fish ..., and a crowd of small merchants flock there to buy cotton... Descending the river toward the southern extremity of the city, we passed a floating town comprised of more than 500 boats, most of them in large size" (Mouhot 1864/1992, p. 228). The inhabitants of the settlement, according to his estimation, numbered 10,000; about the same figure may be added as "boat people". In both parts foreigners, especially merchants of Chinese, Annamite, Thai and Malay origin were present. Without doubt, Phnom Penh played a major role before becoming the royal residence. Perhaps the general appearance did not yet differ much from other settlements, so that F. Garnier, who passed there in 1867, could justly speak of a "grand village" (1885, p. 30). But even at this time Phnom Penh was surrounded by an earthen wall and a moat, and within this protected area, alongside the rice-fields there existed - even if only in modest size - a royal palace, some better-off houses belonging to the Cambodian aristocrats and several temples. The pagoda of the "phnom" (= hill), from which the name of the city partly derives,¹ was visited even by people living far away. Fulfilling the central functions, such as trade, royal authority and administration as well as being the religious centre, at least since the 2nd half of the 19th century Phnom Penh was not only seen as the capital but also as the country's "primate city" in the above-given definitions.

After the treaty signed between King Norodom and France in 1863, the French representatives undertook various measures which led to consolidate this position. Only about ten years later "the construction of brick houses, such as the Protectorate hotel, a school, a prison, and barracks" and some years afterwards "a bank, a Public Work office, a law court, and buildings to house health services" resulted in even more functions being centralized in this one city. As a consequence, people poured into Phnom Penh. In 1889 the capital disposed of between 25,000 and 30,000 inhabitants: "in 1897... its population had risen to 50,000, of whom 400 were French, 22,000 Chinese, 4,000 were Annamites, and 16,000 were Cambodians" (Igout 1993, p. 9). This growth continued incessantly, so that, in 1939, 108,000 people lived in Phnom Penh and, in 1942, the year of the country's occupation by Japan, the figure reached 111,000 inhabitants (Someth Uk 1975, p. 31).

The population increase forced the French colonial administration to transform the original "one-street settlement" into a square layout with well organized and located functions. Swampy areas were gradually filled in and, in 1914, a grid scheme of streets west of old Phnom Penh formed the new city. In the following years this urban terrain was enlarged further west and northwest in the form of "quarters" with more or less parallel streets following the existing grid system. With the modernization, since the end of the 19th century, came drinking water and electric power plants, a sewage disposal system and a large river port. Tree lined boulevards and recreation facilities, such as tennis courts, a race course and public gardens were set

1 Formerly called Chadomukh (= Four Faces), the city was renamed Phnom Penh: „Phnom“ = hill, on which an aristocratic lady, named „Penh“, had a Buddhist sanctuary built.

up. Furthermore schools and a college, now also for the training of future Cambodian civil servants, a cathedral and a museum were built, and from 1935 onward, the Great Market and the railway, which connected Phnom Penh with Battambang and run further on to the Thai border, were opened (Naval Intelligence Division 1943, p. 422).

Even if the traditional royal, Buddhist and commercial "foci" were still concentrated in the heart of the city, the colonial influence was clearly reflected in the newly allocated functions associated with the French power, and in the "quartiers" which originated from the astute use of western town planning concepts. No other city in the country could be compared with the capital. In 1953, the year of the official independence of Cambodia, Phnom Penh had about 350,000 inhabitants; the population of the second largest settlement, Battambang, was no more than 44,000 (Uhlrig 1971, p. 49).

Since independence the capital has expanded further in all three possible directions. This development is documented by the improvement of the streets, the opening of new markets and a national sport complex, the construction of ministerial and university buildings, hospitals, radio and television stations, an airport as well as hotels and factories. As a consequence, country people have poured into the city in a more or less uncontrolled way. Also, the political situation in Vietnam contributed to the urban growth of Phnom Penh. After the coup d'etat and the deposition of Prince Norodom Sihanouk as chief of state in March 1970 and the gradual success of Cambodia's communists, South Vietnam troops and US-bombers invaded Cambodia to demolish the rural strongholds of the Cambodian and Vietnamese communists. In the campaign thousands of people were killed. As a result by 1973 over 750,000 refugees had come to settle in Phnom Penh, and thousands more fled to the provincial capitals, such as Battambang, Siem Reap etc. (see: Chandler 1991, pp. 206 ff.; 1993, pp. 209 ff.)².

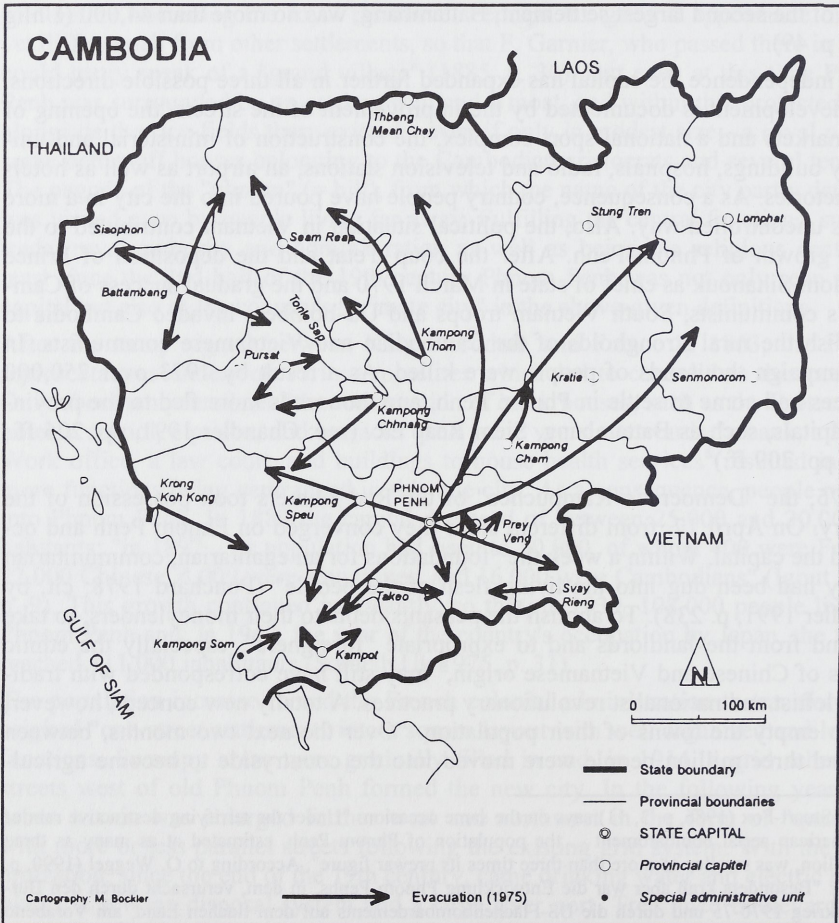
In 1975, the "Democratic Kampuchea" of the Red Khmers took possession of the country. On April 17, from different sides they converged on Phnom Penh and occupied the capital. Within a week the "foundations for an egalitarian, communitarian society had been dug into the living flesh of the people" (Ponchard 1978; cit. by Chandler 1991, p. 238). To abolish the peasants debts to their moneylenders, to take the land from the landlords and to expropriate "foreigners", especially the ethnic groups of Chinese and Vietnamese origin,³ may still have corresponded with traditional leftist and nationalist revolutionary practices. A totally new concept, however, was to empty the towns of their population. "Over the next two months, between two and three million people were moved into the countryside to become agricul-

2 M. Stuart-Fox (1986, p. 3, 11) says on the same occasion: "Under the terrifying destructive rain of American aerial bombardment ... the population of Phnom Penh, estimated at as many as three million, was swollen to more than three times its prewar figure". According to O. Weggel (1990, p. 83): "Besonders kraß aber war die Entwicklung Phnom Penhs, in dem, verursacht durch den Bürgerkrieg 1970-75 und durch die US-Flächenbombardements auf dem flachen Land, am Vorabend der Eroberung durch die Roten Khmer die Hälfte(!) aller Kambodschaner zusammengepfercht war".

3 In 1936, in Cambodia there were 106,000 Chinese and 191,000 Annamites (Naval Intelligence Division 1943, p. 212); in 1968/69 these minorities of foreign origin numbered about 400,000 and 500,000 people respectively (Fochler-Hauke 1969, p. 90; Norodom Sihanouk 1980, p. 46).

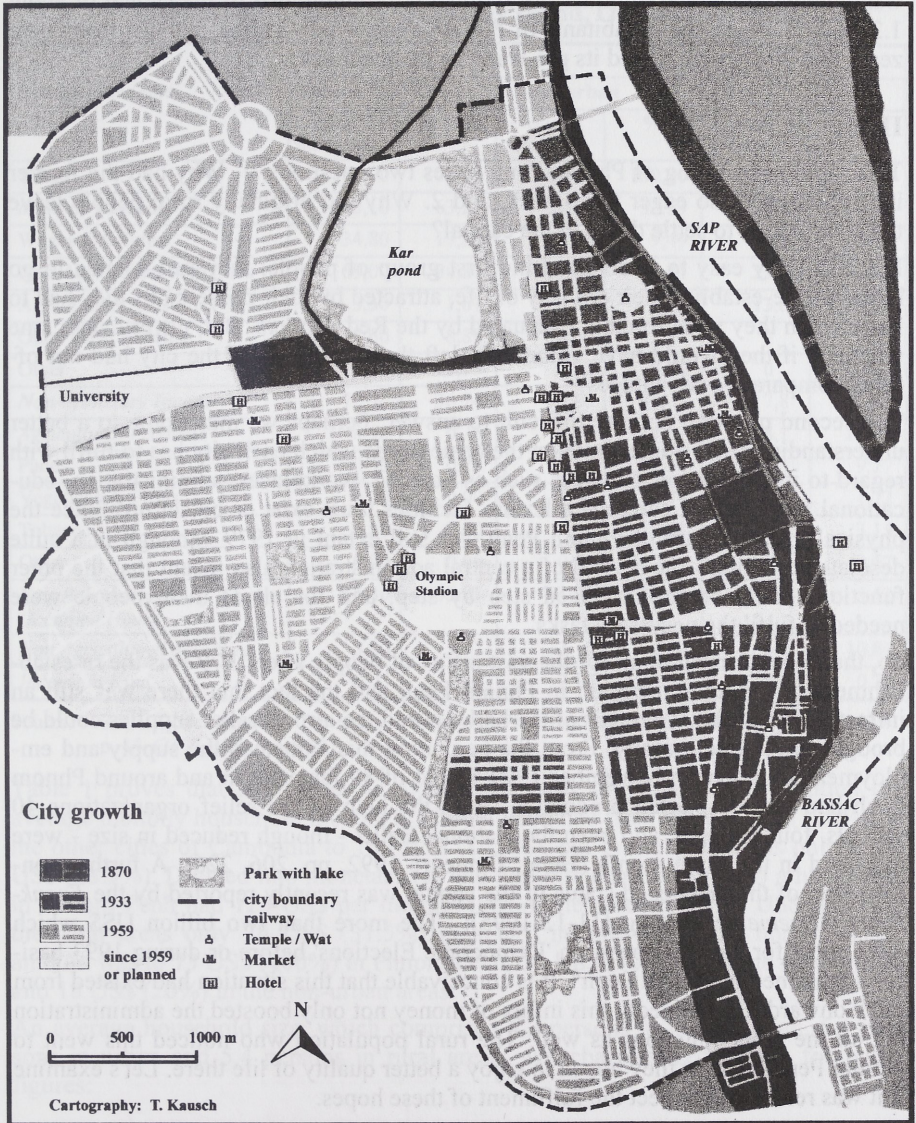
tural workers" (Chandler 1991, p. 247). Despite a few Khmer Rouge cadres, until January 1979, when the Vietnamese troops invaded Cambodia, that is "for more than three years and eight months, Phnom Penh remained empty and abandoned, a ghost town... Never in history of war has a city been so completely emptied of its inhabitants, as happened to Phnom Penh" (Igout 1993, pp, 18 f.). Almost immediately after the arrival of the Vietnamese in January 1979, however, people started to return to the capital, although initially there were restrictions. About 100,000 people had settled in by the end of 1979.

Figure 1: The evacuation of people from the cities after the Red Khmer takeover



Source: Board in the Tuol Sleng Museum, Phnom Penh.

Figure 2: City growth of Phnom Penh



Source: Different city plans, literature and own observations.

According to local sources and statistics the number had increased to 428,000 at the end of 1985 and reached 615,000 in 1990. In spring 1993, the total population was in the neighbourhood of 1.3 million inhabitants (Royal Government of Cambodia;

Ministry of Planning/National Institute of Statistics 1993, p. 1). Estimations put the Cambodian population in mid 1993 at about 9.5 million, that of the capital of about 1.3 million. Thus, the inhabitants of Phnom Penh which started in 1979 from 'near zero', had already surpassed its pre-war size by one third.

III

This rapid re-peopling of Phnom Penh raises two questions: 1. Why had the former inhabitants been so eager to go back, and 2. Why did originally rural people leave the countryside to settle down in the capital?

It is relatively easy to understand the first group of people: they just wanted to go home and re-establish their old way of life, attracted by their possessions they had to leave when they were forcibly evacuated by the Red Khmers. But, nevertheless, one wonders, if they would have voluntarily left the rural areas, if the city had not offered comparative advantages?

The second question is more difficult to answer. Perhaps we may come to a better understanding if we concentrate on the basic needs which each city has to fulfil with regard to its population. Services such as housing, workplaces, administration, educational and medical care, even leisure facilities must exist or be set up. Since the physical infrastructure of Phnom Penh was still extant in 1979 - though in a quite desolate condition - the revival of a central administration also meant that the other functions could be re-introduced step by step, and for all of them people were needed to fulfil the necessary tasks.

So, the initial starting point for the vast influx of people after 1979 was the re-establishment of the administration in Phnom Penh and the fact that there was still an infrastructure. After the repair of the harbour and the airport relief supplies could be brought in relatively easily. From the beginning this enhanced the supply and employment situation. In November 1979 53 out of 89 factories in and around Phnom Penh had already started production. With the help of the relief organizations 40 schools, four colleges, and even the National Ballet - though reduced in size - were reopened in the same month (Heng, Demeure 1992, pp. 206, 226). A further confirmation of the privileged status of the capital was recently reported by the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* (11-12-1995): "The more than two billion US\$ which were spent for the UN-operation 'Democratic Elections' before or during 1993 basically remained in Phnom Penh". It is conceivable that this situation had existed from 1979 onward. Undoubtedly this influx of money not only boosted the administration but all the other functions as well. The rural population who noticed this went to Phnom Penh because they hoped to enjoy a better quality of life there. Let's examine if it was realistic to expect the fulfilment of these hopes.

From a survey on Cambodia's socio-economic situation in 1993/94, which comprised app. 400 sample households in Phnom Penh, 250 in other urban centres, and 600 in rural areas, an overall table of the distribution of the average monthly income of households offers an initial insight:

Table 1: Distribution of average monthly income of households by source of income and stratum. First survey round, October-December 1993

Source of income	Stratum					
	Phnom Penh		Other urban		Rural	
	Average income (\$)	%	Average income (\$)	%	Average income (\$)	%
Total	197,90	100,00	160,10	100,00	57,2	100,00
Monetary income	125,10	63,21	84,20	52,59	39,4	68,88
Wages & Salaries	34,80	17,58	15,20	9,49	2,8	4,90
Non-Agricultural Activities	69,00	34,87	59,90	37,41	22	38,46
Agricultural Activities	3,30	1,67	4,40	2,75	13,6	23,78
Other Cash Receipts	17,60	8,89	4,60	2,87	1	1,75
Other	0,30	0,15	0,20	0,12	0	0,00
Non-Monetary Income	72,70	36,74	75,80	47,35	17,8	31,12
<i>Agricultural Products</i>	0,50	0,25	7,00	4,37	8,1	14,16
Paddy	0,50	0,25	2,10	1,31	5,3	9,27
Vegetables & Fruits	0,00	0,00	1,50	0,94	0,7	1,22
Tobacco	0,00	0,00	2,90	1,81	1,8	3,15
Other	0,00	0,00	0,50	0,31	0,3	0,52
<i>Net Rental Value of Owner Occupied House</i>	65,40	33,05	63,70	39,79	3,1	5,42
<i>Non Agricultural Activities</i>	3,80	1,92	3,10	1,94	6,2	10,84
<i>Income in Kind</i>	3,00	1,52	2,10	1,31	0,4	0,70

Source: Royal Government of Cambodia, Ministry of Planning/National Institute of Statistics, 1994, p. 44. (2475 Riels = 1 US\$).

Table 1 proves that after a period of only 15 years since its total evacuation the average monthly household income in Phnom Penh had risen to 198 US\$ (100%), in the other cities of Cambodia to 160 US\$ (80.9%), but in the rural areas only to 57 US\$ (28.9%). Divided into monetary (a) and non-monetary income (b) a household in Phnom Penh had 125 US\$ per month (100%), the other cities 84 US\$ (66.9%), the rural areas only 39 US\$ (31.5%) monetary income while the non-monetary amount was to 73 US\$ (100%) in Phnom Penh, 76 US\$ (104.2%) in the other cities, and 18 US\$ (20%) in the non-urban areas.

An average household size, which comprised 6.2 persons in Phnom Penh, 6.1 persons in urban and 5.4 persons in rural areas, was characterized by the following figures:

Table 2: Average household: demographic Characteristics

	Phnom Penh	Other urban	Rural
2.1 Sex ratio (number of males for every 100 females; in%):	94.4	94.5	88.2
2.2 Proportion of male population (%):			
• total population	48.6	48.6	46.9
• 18 years and over	49.1	45.2	43.8
2.3 Male-headed households (%):	70.6	79.2	79.9
2.4 Adult literacy rate (%):			
• both sexes	81.3	79.4	58.7
(Phnom Penh = 100)	100.0	97.7	72.2
• male	91.7	88.3	75.6
(Phnom Penh = 100)	100.0	96.3	82.4
• female	71.4	72.4	45.3
(Phnom Penh = 100)	100.0	100.3	63.4

Source: Royal Government of Cambodia, Ministry of Planning/National Institute of Statistics; 1994, pp. X, XI.

Table 3: Average household: housing facilities

	Phnom Penh	Other urban	Rural
3.1 Households with hard/permanent material (including wood/plywood) for walls in occupied units (%):	86.4	67.7	23.5
(Phnom Penh = 100)	100.0	78.4	27.2
3.2 Households using mainly other than firewood for cooking (%):	43.9	14.2	3.7
(Phnom Penh = 100)	100.0	32.6	8.4
3.3 Households with toilet facilities (%):	83.4	59.6	17.7
(Phnom Penh = 100)	100.0	71.5	21.2
3.4 Households using mainly electricity for lighting (%):	67.7	35.3	0.9
(Phnom Penh = 100)	100.0	52.2	1.3
3.5 Households with radio (%):	34.8	33.4	21.1
(Phnom Penh = 100)	100.0	96.0	60.6
3.6 Households with television (%):	52.5	25.3	5.7
(Phnom Penh = 100)	100.0	48.2	10.9

Source: Royal Government of Cambodia, Ministry of Planning/National Institute of Statistics; 1994, pp. XI, XII.

Better housing facilities in the form of spontaneous settlements, low-density, dense low-rise or medium-rise housing, are significantly more prevalent in Phnom Penh and other cities than in the rural areas.

Table 4: Average household: labour facilities

	Phnom Penh	Other urban	Rural
4.1 Persons in the labours force (persons 10 years old and over, who are available to contribute to the production of goods and services;%): (Phnom Penh = 100)	46,7 100,0	51,6 110,0	62,5 133,8
4.2 Unemployment rate (proportion of unemployed persons 10 years old and over to persons in labour force;%)			
• both sexes (Phnom Penh = 100)	10,9 100,0	5,1 46,8	1,4 12,8
• male (Phnom Penh = 100)	10,8 100,0	4,5 41,7	1,4 13,0
• female (Phnom Penh = 100)	11,1 100,0	5,8 52,3	1,6 14,4
4.3 Sectoral distribution of employment (%)			
• agricultural sector (Phnom Penh = 100)	12,2 100,0	30,3 248,4	86,5 709,0
• industrial sector (Phnom Penh = 100)	14,0 100,0	6,2 44,3	2,8 20,0
• services sector (Phnom Penh = 100)	74,0 100,0	63,6 85,9	10,8 14,6

Source: Royal Government of Cambodia, Ministry of Planning/National Institute of Statistics; 1994, pp. X, XI.

Although the labour-figures at a first glance look to be better in the rural areas than in Phnom Penh and the other Cambodian cities because of the lower unemployment rate, the sectoral distribution hints at the fact that industrial and service employment - the sectors providing cash income - are far more developed in Phnom Penh and the other towns than in the rural areas, without taking into account the often disguised under-employment or even unemployment of the rural population.

The household expenditures in general as well as in specific items reflect the figures for the other basic needs (Table 5).

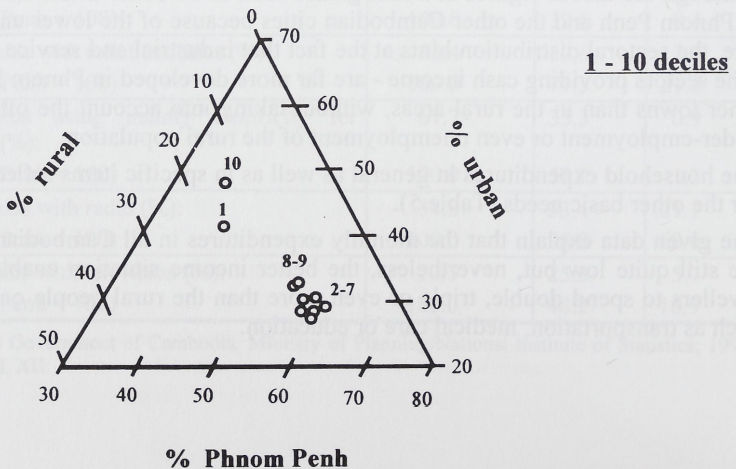
The given data explain that the monthly expenditures in all Cambodian households are still quite low but, nevertheless, the better income situation enables the urban dwellers to spend double, triple or even more than the rural people on basic needs such as transportation, medical care or education.

Table 5: Average household: household expenditures

	Phnom Penh	Other urban	Rural
5.1 Monthly average household expenditure (US\$,%): (Phnom Penh = 100)	357 100,0	258 72,3	97 27,2
5.2 Non-food expenditure to total expenditure (US\$%): (Phnom Penh = 100)	51,7 100,0	57,9 112,0	32,3 62,5
5.3 Average monthly expenditure on transportation (US\$,%): (Phnom Penh = 100)	25 100,0	25 100,0	3 28
5.4 Average monthly medical expenditure (US\$,%): (Phnom Penh = 100)	21 100,0	14 66,7	7 33,3
5.5 Average monthly expenditure on education (US\$,%): (Phnom Penh = 100)	12 100,0	4 33,3	2 16,7

Source: Royal Government of Cambodia, Ministry of Planning/National Institute of Statistics; 1994, p. XI.

These figures contain no information about the income distribution of the different socio-economic strata and disguises perhaps a concentration within the upper income classes, so a further differentiation into ten income deciles has been undertaken. These are generated "by sorting the household in the ascending order of household income. The first ten percent of the households and the poorest in the income ladder constitute the first decile, the next ten percent as the second decile, and the forth. The tenth decile represents the ten percent of the households who are relatively wealthy" (Royal Government of Cambodia, Ministry of Planning/National Institute of Statistics, 1994, p. 39). The results are as shown in Table 6. The best interpretation of the data is by means of a diagram (Figure 3).

Figure 3: Average monthly household percentage share of income by decile (October-December 1993). Phnom Penh, urban and rural sector

As shown in Table 6 and Figure 3 there is a great difference in total monthly household income between Phnom Penh and the urban and rural areas, and this difference is reflected in all the household deciles. Roughly speaking, from the second to the ninth decile the monthly income of the rural population in comparison with Phnom Penh amounts only to about 20%, in comparison with the other urban centres to about 40%. In decile 1 the comparable data amount to about 45%, and in the highest decile to 43% in comparison to the income of the people in Phnom Penh. In comparison to the other cities of Cambodia the rural monthly household income in decile 1 as well as in the highest decile amounts to about 33%. So, we not only have general urban growth with a concentration of per capita income of the better-off socio-economic strata in Phnom Penh but we can register a real higher urban development there, i.e. roughly equal growth in all deciles.

Table 6: Average monthly household income and percentage share of income by household decile. First survey round, Oct.-Dec. 1993 (US\$)

Decile	Phnom Penh			Other			Rural		
	Average Household Income US\$	% Share of income		Average Household Income US\$	% Share of income		Average Household Income US\$	% Share of income	
		Ph.P.= 100%	to total income		% Ph.P	to total income		% Ph.P.	to total income
All deciles	197,8	100	100,0	160,1	80,9	100,0	57,2	28,9	100,0
Lowest decile	13,3	100	0,7	13,9	104,5	0,9	6,0	45,1	1,1
2 nd decile	48,5	100	2,5	27,6	56,9	1,7	10,8	22,3	1,9
3 rd decile	76,5	100	3,9	40,3	52,7	2,5	15,3	20,0	2,7
4 th decile	102,1	100	5,2	52,9	51,8	3,3	19,6	19,2	3,4
5 th decile	130,7	100	6,7	65,4	50,0	4,1	24,8	19,0	4,3
6 th decile	158,2	100	8,1	80,1	50,6	5,0	31,2	19,7	5,5
7 th decile	192	100	9,8	101,0	52,6	6,3	39,0	20,3	6,8
8 th decile	231,3	100	11,8	136,1	58,8	8,5	50,6	21,9	8,9
9 th decile	323,6	100	16,5	191,4	59,1	12,0	75,2	23,2	13,2
Highest decile	686	100	35,0	889,7	129,7	55,7	298,0	43,4	52,2

Source: Royal Government of Cambodia, Ministry of Planning/National Institute of Statistics; 1994, pp. 40, 41. (2475 Riels = 1 US\$)

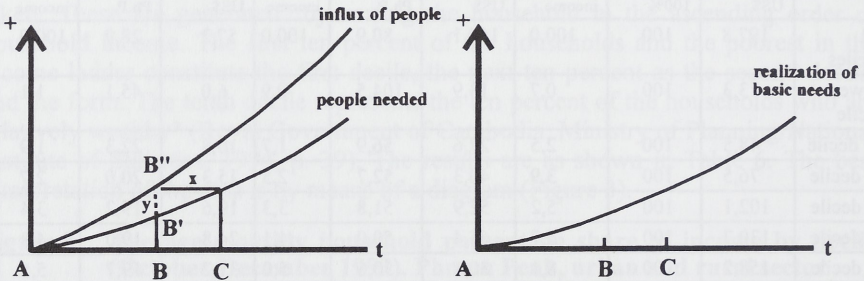
Comparing all the facts, there is no doubt that urban life, especially in Phnom Penh, is better by far for all socio-economic population strata than in the rural areas.

The major factors for the people to stay in the rural areas are without doubt their agricultural property and their homes in the economic sector and the village community in the social sector. But quite often the size of the farms are too small to provide a sufficient living (Delvert 1983, pp. 45 ff.). Additionally, the net rental value of the owner occupied houses in the country is rated with only 3 US\$ per month (Royal Government of Cambodia; Ministry of Planning, National Institute of

Statistics; 1994, p. 43). This very low average value reflects their generally quite modest quality. As a far-reaching result, if there is no longer enough land, the house alone does not bind the rural population to their birthplace, even if they enjoy a favourable community climate. As we have already seen, in times of need the supply situation for landless people is better in the cities and especially in the "primate city", where administrative and infrastructural facilities are concentrated. Since employment opportunities, educational institutions and medical care, and also leisure facilities are concentrated in cities, there are all the mobilizing factors which contribute to an influx of people into the urban centres and especially to the "primate city", though not everybody will find employment at once.

A short description helps to explain this in Figure 4: Phnom Penh, at A or from 1975 until 1979, had been a city void of people, and under such conditions the realization of the basic needs was understandably suspended. At B the situation had changed; people were needed to fulfil the tasks emerging from this change, but too many came all at once. This surplus ($B'' - B' = y$) is needed only at the point of time C, so that during the timespan x one - though a diminishing - part of the people coming to the city has no chance of permanent employment.⁴

Figure 4: Correlation between realization of basic needs, influx of people and people needed



Of course, planners like to realize their ideas about city development as a well-ordered procedure, and they want to avoid all the problems resulting from a daily influx of new arrivals. On the other hand, we often forget that the newcomers do not have the same expectations as the planners, but they compare their new situation favourably with the unbearable position of the rural areas which they have left behind. The objection that urban squatter settlements are more often centres for the outbreak of epidemics and that the crime rate may be higher than in villages, should not be neglected, but both these factors will not prevent the landless rural people from emigrating to the urban centres or especially to the "primate city".

Because of these quite different expectations it is easy to understand how especially urban centres meet the demands and exert a pull effect on rural people. If a country

⁴ Theoretically this unemployment gap may widen by an over-proportional influx of people while the further realization of basic needs stays at the same rate - or, if the people's influx remains stable but the development of the basic needs slows down or even decreases. Up to now, however, this situation has not yet taken place in Phnom Penh.

is comparatively small, there is no 'city-hopping' from little via medium to big cities, but the migration is mostly direct from rural areas to the economically most potent urban centre. If this centre also provides further functions, its position as the "primate city" is reinforced. As no other city, Phnom Penh - because of its sad past - has clearly demonstrated that this immigration of people into the city should not be regarded as a mistake. From the economic point of view of the landless rural people who went to Phnom Penh it was indeed the best thing to do.

IV

The enormous growth of the "primate cities" in Southeast Asia is caused more by population influx than by natural increase. It is also true that the majority of the jobless immigrants, at least initially dwell in squatter settlements mostly located on the outskirts of the cities. These are characterized by shortcomings in the physical and social sectors in the form of an almost total absence of paved streets, running water, sewerage, electricity, and educational as well as medical facilities. As a consequence, it is not surprising, that the policies of both the governments in general and the urban planners in particular aim at keeping the potential newcomers in the rural areas by strictly controlling their immigration, especially to the dominant urban centres. The reason why the relatively uneducated rural people do not follow the advice of the "sophisticated experts" can be seen in the example of Phnom Penh, where relatively reliable statistical data show that, despite all the regrettable inconveniences, life can best be endured in the "primate city".

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