Cambodian Communication Review 2011

Department of Media & Communication
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Contents:

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PREFACE

The transformation Cambodia has undergone over the last two decades has brought about immense changes, but these changes have been analyzed and debated mainly in political and economic terms. The media and information and communication technologies (ICT) are integral to the development and transformation of a society, yet they remain little understood in Cambodia. The *Cambodian Communication Review* (CCR), the annual series of research studies and critical commentaries, is therefore intended to provide a space for engaging in the analyses and debates of Cambodia's social changes by locating the roles and implications of the media and ICTs within these changes.

This 2011 issue of the *Cambodian Communication Review* features two additional sections in order to engage a wider range of contributors as well as to provide our readers with not only more informational inputs but, more importantly, also a broader perspective on comprehending the media and ICTs in relation to the societal context of contemporary Cambodia. We include in this 2011 issue (1) a snapshot of the recent Cambodian media scene by presenting a number of contextual and substantive indicators, (2) two research studies by the faculty and a student of the DMC, (3) five commentaries on the Cambodian media and other issues in relation to the media, and (4), as an addendum, a guide to the usually overlooked libraries and archives that contain valuable resources on Cambodia from as early as the beginning of the twentieth century.

Although the research studies reported here have not been subjected to an academic peer review process, they provide unique empirical and analytical inputs for a better comprehension of the implications of the media and ICTs in contemporary Cambodia, and, more importantly, they have offered a space, however small, for scholarly exercises for the contemporary Cambodian academia – what has largely been missing for decades. Equally valuable, the commentaries, written by professionals from different areas of expertise but with a common interest in the Cambodian media, offer our readers insights into a range of issues, from media ethics to press freedom, from the political implications of the media to the experience of employing media outreach in social work. We hope the insights and arguments made by the authors of these commentaries will encourage interests, further analyses and debates by researchers and professionals alike. In other words, these commentaries are hoped to generate more questions, rather than 'answers', about the conditions and implications of the media and ICTs in contemporary Cambodia.

We are grateful to all the contributors for their articles, and especially their willingness and effort in engaging in the scholarly and professional exercise of analyzing, sharing and debating for a common good: the improvement of knowledge and hence positive social change. We keenly look forward to criticisms and comments, which will improve not only this publication but, most crucially, the quality of knowledge of the Cambodian media and the larger social conditions.

Peou, Chivoin
December 2011
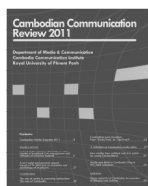
Cambodian Media Snapshot 2011

This section provides a number of indicators for grasping an overall picture of the state of media in Cambodia by assembling the currently scattered information related to the Cambodian media. Existing data are both limited in quantity and challenging in currency and accuracy. What is offered here is a brief snapshot by way of presenting existing indicators from a number of sources. The sources are acknowledged here for every indicator, so that the readers can further access and evaluate their currency and accuracy.

We first present a brief set of contextual indicators for Cambodia, both socio-economic and demographic, to allow the readers to draw a contextual sketch of the country to which the media indicators are related to varying extents. Then, we provide a historical outlook on one of the most critical issues in Cambodian path toward democracy: the situation of press freedom in Cambodia. Finally, we present relevant indicators, in order, for Cambodian newspaper, magazine, radio, television, cinema and audio-visual production, the Internet, and telephone.
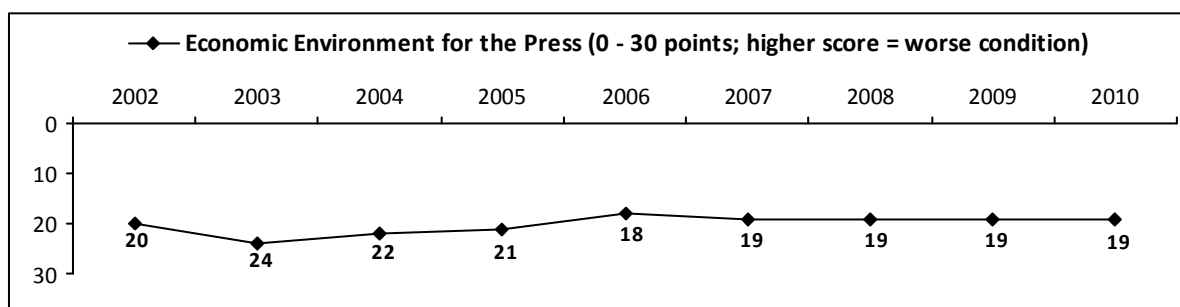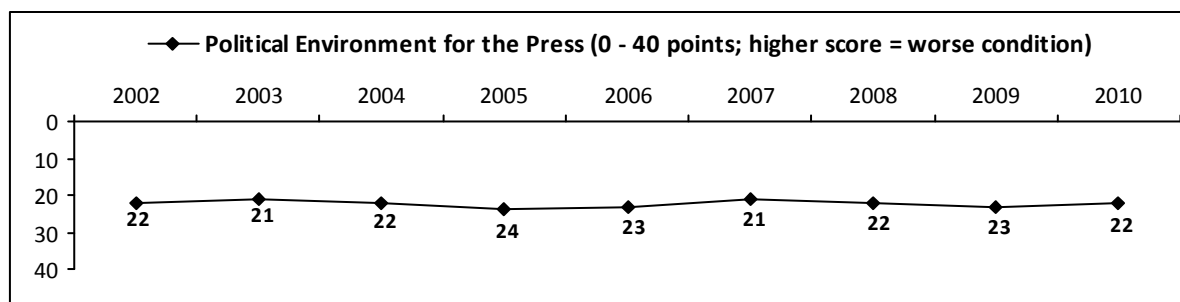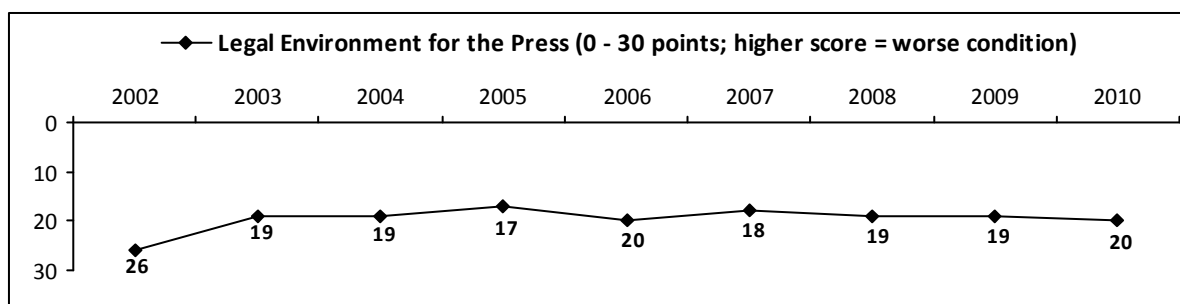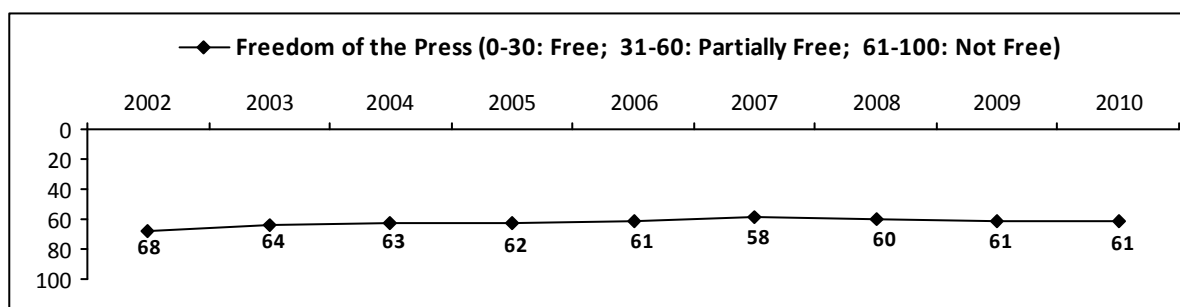
1. CONTEXTUAL COUNTRY INDICATORS

INDICATOR	FIGURE	SOURCE
Social and Economic		
Network Readiness Index 2010-11 ranking	111 of 138	World Economic Forum
Bartelsmann Transformation Index 2010 ranking	100 of 128	Bartelsmann Foundation
Bartelsmann Transformation-Democracy 2010 ranking	93 of 128	Bartelsmann Foundation
Bartelsmann Transformation-Market Economy 2010 ranking	90 of 128	Bartelsmann Foundation
Legatum Prosperity Index 2011 ranking	94 of 110 (low)	The Legatum Institute
Global Competitiveness Index 2010-2011	97 of 142	World Economic Forum
GDP per capita, 2010	US$ 830	National Institute of Statistics (2010)
Human Development Index (HDI) 2011 ranking	139 of 187	Human Development Report 2011
Higher educational institutions (countrywide), 2010	91	Ministry of Education, Youth & Sport (2011)
Higher educational institutions (Phnom Penh), 2009	39	Ministry of Education, Youth & Sport (2010)
People living on less than US$2/day (PPP), 2007	56.46%	World Bank (2011)
People living below national poverty line, 2007	30.14%	World Bank (2011)
Income share held by highest 20%, 2007	51.68%	World Bank (2011)
Income share held by lowest 20%, 2007	6.57%	World Bank (2011)
Demographic		
Total population, July 2001 estimate	14,701,717	CIA World Factbook (Jul 2011)
Urban population, 2008	2,614,027 (19.5%)	Population Census 2008
Phnom Penh population, 2009	1,519,000	CIA World Factbook (Jul 2011)
Population growth rate, 2011 estimate	1.70%	CIA World Factbook (Jul 2011)
Youth (15-19) population, 2008	31.53%	Population Census 2008
Urban youth (15-19) population, 2008	39.33%	Population Census 2008
Life expectancy at birth, 2011 estimate (M : F)	60.31 : 65.13	CIA World Factbook (Jul 2011)
Number of households (average size), 2008	2,841,897 (4.7)	Population Census 2008
Number of urban households, 2008	506,579	Population Census 2008
Adult literacy rate (countrywide), 2008	77.6%	Population Census 2008
Adult literacy rate (urban), 2008	90.4%	Population Census 2008
Adult English literacy rate, 2008	3.25%	Population Census 2008
Tertiary enrollment, 2010, % gross	10%	World Bank (2011)

2. PRESS FREEDOM

INDICATOR	FIGURE	SOURCE
Press Freedom Index 2010 ranking	128 of 178 (Difficult Situation)	Reporters Without Borders
Freedom of the Press 2010 ranking	134 of 196 (Not Free)	Freedom House
Local press-related associations[a]	29	Ministry of Information (2011)
Foreign news service representatives	12	Ministry of Information (2011)

[a]*The number of functional associations has not been verified.*

Historical Outlook on Press Situation (2002–2010):

Freedom of the Press (0-30: Free; 31-60: Partially Free; 61-100: Not Free)

2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
68	64	63	62	61	58	60	61	61

Legal Environment for the Press (0 - 30 points; higher score = worse condition)

2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
26	19	19	17	20	18	19	19	20

Political Environment for the Press (0 - 40 points; higher score = worse condition)

2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
22	21	22	24	23	21	22	23	22

Economic Environment for the Press (0 - 30 points; higher score = worse condition)

2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
20	24	22	21	18	19	19	19	19

Source: Freedom House

3. NEWSPAPER

INDICATOR	FIGURE	SOURCE
Registered Khmer-language newspapers[b] in Phnom Penh, 2011	396	Ministry of Information (2011)
Registered foreign-language newspapers in Phnom Penh, 2011	34	Ministry of Information (2011)

[b]*The number of regularly printed and circulated newspapers is much smaller, and 'registered newspapers' are of various forms, including dailies, weeklies and monthlies, and of various qualities including tabloids and classifieds sheets. The number here includes commercial and non-commercial papers.*

4. MAGAZINE

INDICATOR	FIGURE	SOURCE
Registered Khmer-language magazines[b] in Phnom Penh, 2011	200	Ministry of Information (2011)
Registered foreign-language magazines in Phnom Penh, 2011	30	Ministry of Information (2011)

5. RADIO

INDICATOR	FIGURE	SOURCE
Radio broadcasters countrywide, 2010	74 (36 in P.P.)	Ministry of Information (Nov 2010)
FM frequencies countrywide, 2010	73	Ministry of Information (Nov 2010)
AM frequencies countrywide, 2010	2	Ministry of Information (Nov 2010)
Foreign services in Khmer language, 2011	5	--
International broadcasters (in foreign languages) received in Cambodia, 2011	4	--
Commercial radio frequencies countrywide, 2010	52 (25 in P.P.)	Ministry of Information (Nov 2010)
Percentage of households owning at least a radio set, 2008	40.81%	Population Census 2008
Percentage of urban households owning at least a radio set, 2008	50.35%	Population Census 2008
Percentage of rural households owning at least a radio set, 2008	38.72%	Population Census 2008
Percentage of households owning two radio sets or more, 2008	1.48%	Population Census 2008
Percentage of urban households owning two radio sets or more, 2008	3.78%	Population Census 2008
Percentage of rural households owning two radio sets or more, 2008	0.97%	Population Census 2008

6. TELEVISION

INDICATOR	FIGURE	SOURCE
National broadcast channels, 2011[c]	10	--
Relay channels by foreign broadcasters, 2010	2	Ministry of Information (Nov, 2010)
State broadcaster, 2011	1	--
Relay stations by local broadcasters in provinces, 2010	43	Ministry of Information (Nov 2010)
Cable TV providers, 2011	2	--
Number of channels by cable TV providers, 2011	> 60	--

Direct-to-home satellite TV provider, 2011	1	--
Percentage of households owning at least a TV set, 2008	58.41%	Population Census 2008
Percentage of urban households owning at least a TV set, 2008	80.81%	Population Census 2008
Percentage of rural households owning at least a TV set, 2008	53.5%	Population Census 2008
Percentage of households owning two TV sets or more, 2008	3.18%	Population Census 2008
Percentage of urban households owning two TV sets or more, 2008	11.93%	Population Census 2008
Percentage of rural households owning two TV sets or more, 2008	1.26%	Population Census 2008

[c]*Two additional commercial broadcasters are said to start broadcasting in early 2012.*

7. CINEMA & AUDIO-VISUAL PRODUCTION

INDICATOR	FIGURE	SOURCE
Production companies registered, 2010	120	Department of Film & Cultural Dissemination (2010)
Number of local films licensed for production, Jan-Nov 2011	19	Department of Film & Cultural Dissemination (2011)
Number of local films licensed for showing, Jan-Nov 2011	12	Department of Film & Cultural Dissemination (2011)
Number of karaoke video volumes licensed for production, Jan-Nov 2011	91	Department of Film & Cultural Dissemination (2011)
Number of karaoke video volumes licensed for showing, Jan-Nov 2011	122	Department of Film & Cultural Dissemination (2011)
Commercial cinemas in Phnom Penh, 2011	3	--
Cinema houses in provinces, 2010	9	[According to an in-charge official at the Dept. of Film & Cult. (2010)]

TV dramas produced by TV stations do not require licensing from the Department of Film and Cultural Dissemination, so the data are not available from the Department.

8. INTERNET

INDICATOR	FIGURE	SOURCE
Internet users in Cambodia, by June 2011	329,680	www.internetworldstats.com (accessed November 2011)
Internet users per 100 inhabitants, by June 2011	2.2	www.internetworldstats.com (accessed November 2011)
Internet users per 100 inhabitants, 2010	1.26	ITU (2011)
Internet subscriptions in Cambodia, 2009	18,000	ITU (2010)
Internet subscriptions per 100 inhabitants, 2009	0.12	ITU (2010)
Broadband subscriptions in Cambodia, 2010	35,666	ITU (2011)
Broadband subscriptions per 100 inhabitants, 2010	0.25	ITU (2011)
Internet Service Providers (ISP) licensed, 2011	37 (16 in operation)	Ministry of Post and Telecommunications (2011)
Total domain names, by Nov 28, 2011	2,633	webhosting.info (accessed Dec 2011)
Ranking for domain names, Nov 28, 2011	117	webhosting.info (accessed Dec 2011)
Total .*kh* domain names, 2011	686	Ministry of Post and Telecommunications (2011)

Number of Internet cafés, 2009	229 (118 in P.P.)	Ministry of Post and Telecommunications (2010)
Number of Internet cafés, 2010 estimate	320 (120 in P.P.)	Ministry of Post and Telecommunications (2010)
Personal computer per 100 people, 2008	0.4	WB – ICT At-a-Glance (2010)
Percentage of households owning a personal computer, 2008	3.65%	Population Census 2008
Percentage of urban households owning a personal computer, 2008	15.76%	Population Census 2008
Percentage of rural households owning a personal computer, 2008	1.00%	Population Census 2008
Percentage of urban households owning two personal computers or more, 2008	2.60%	Population Census 2008

9. TELEPHONE

INDICATOR	FIGURE	SOURCE
Fixed telephone lines, 2010	358,850	ITU (2011)
	236,789	MPTC (2011)
Fixed telephone lines per 100 inhabitants, 2010	2.54	ITU (2011)
	1.71	MPTC (2011)
Mobile subscriptions, 2010	8,155,652	ITU (2011)
	6,986,057	MPTC (2011)
Mobile subscriptions per 100 inhabitants, 2010	57.65	ITU (2011)
	50.62	MPTC (2011)
Ratio of mobile subscriptions to fixed lines, 2009	22.7 : 1	ITU (2011)
Mobile operators, 2011	8	--
Mobile sets in use, by March 2010	7,115,246	Ministry of Post and Telecommunications (2010)
Desk phone sets in use, by March 2010	108,882	Ministry of Post and Telecommunications (2010)
Mobile phones per 100 persons, 2005	6.09	NIS – Statistical Year Book 2006
Mobile phones per 100 persons aged 15 and over, 2005	10.10	NIS – Statistical Year Book 2006
Percentage of households owning a telephone, 2008	1.13%	Population Census 2008
Percentage of urban households owning telephone, 2008	3.44%	Population Census 2008
Percentage of rural households owning a telephone, 2008	0.62%	Population Census 2008
Percentage of households owning at least a mobile phone, 2008	37.35%	Population Census 2008
Percentage of urban households owning at least a mobile phone, 2008	76.16%	Population Census 2008
Percentage of rural households owning at least a mobile phone, 2008	28.84%	Population Census 2008
Percentage of households owning two mobile phones or more, 2008	11.30%	Population Census 2008
Percentage of urban households owning two mobile phones or more, 2008	40.90%	Population Census 2008
Percentage of rural households owning two mobile phones or more, 2008	4.81%	Population Census 2008
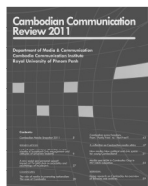
Lack of Rights-Conscious Citizenship or Civic Identity in Transition? Civic Engagement and Attitudes of University Students

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ABSTRACT

The wholesale transformation of Cambodia in the last two decades has brought about numerous changes and challenges. The importance and future orientation of its democracy project makes it inevitable for social and political stakeholders to pay attention to the civic engagement of young Cambodians today. In this article, we report the results of a survey of a sizeable number of students at a large public university to assess their civic engagement, civic attitudes and utilization of media and information and communication technologies (ICTs). The students appear to be attentive to news and information, suggesting a potentially informed citizenry. However, they lack the activism demanded of rights-conscious citizens as in developed societies and exhibit a vague sense of civic attitudes, while their media usage does not appear to significantly influence their civic attitudes. Both pessimistic and optimistic conclusions can be made out of this reality, and we should keep in mind that the civic identity being promoted in Cambodia is based on a Western, individualized notion of citizenship and democracy, suggesting that cultural learning and change needs to take place alongside the fostering of civic engagement.

Key words: *Cambodia, citizenship, civic engagement, civic attitudes, media, university students*

INTRODUCTION

Cambodia is a young country in a multiple sense: a youthful population, infantile democracy and emergent market economy. The last two decades has been radically transformative for the country, and it will remain so in the foreseeable future. Its most overarching concerns amidst this radical transformation have been concentrated on the economic and political development and outlook. This has recently been compounded by an additional focus on its demography. That is, the concerns over the economy and polity of Cambodia are implicated by its youthful population structure. This nexus of economic, political and demographic concerns has resulted in a boom in the number of youth organizations and youth-organized or youth-involved activities and projects in recent years. At the most macro-level of this nexus are two overarching agendas: youth employment and human capital development for the current and future economy, and youth participation in the civic and political processes.

While both agendas have received huge attention, only that of youth (un)employment has been empirically examined with a considerable number of studies. The issue of civic engagement has, however, been studied only to a minimal extent (only a few studies, limited in scope and conceptualization of 'civic engagement', are available, for example, Brown, 2008; Mysliwiec, 2005; Sen, 2008; UNDP, 2010), resulting in a knowledge vacuum of not only how much young Cambodians participate in the political/democratic process, but also whether or not they have the interest and capacity to participate. This current article attempts to strengthen the understanding of civic engagement in Cambodia, by not only conceptualizing civic engagement in an expansive manner but also exploring civic attitudes

and their relationship to media consumption. This article, however, focuses on only undergraduate students at a large public university in Phnom Penh. Such focus, though restricting the scope, gives a comprehensive insight into a critical group of actors, for the importance of higher education as an agent of developing civic engagement and future leaders is a consensus.

LITERATURE REVIEW

While concerns have generally been voiced regarding the lack of (opportunities for) political participation as well as of 'knowledge' required for democratic participation among Cambodian youth (for example, COMFREL, 2008; UNCT, 2009; UNDP, 2010), there have been attempts in recent years to directly engage young Cambodians in formal politics, especially the activities of the youth wings of the main political parties, such as staged debates and recruitment drives. Over the last several years, there has at the same time been a surge of interest and mobilization of resources among civil society groups, mainly non-governmental organizations and educational institutions, to promote 'civic engagement'. This is consistent with the trend over the last decade or so in advanced democratic countries of focusing on an expansive range of young people's participatory activities. Formal political activities such as voting and long-term political party affiliation have been argued by many in advanced democratic countries to become rather obsolete when trying to understand young people's 'participation', either political or civic, today (for example, Dahlgren, 2007; Loader, 2007).

Clearly, the recent spurts of participatory activities among young Cambodians are linked to this conceptual shift in understanding politically meaningful engagement among young people in advanced democratic countries. The surge of interest and mobilization to promote and support Cambodian youth's participatory activities has mainly been driven by the agenda set by actors of Western democracies, particularly donor and non-governmental organizations, which have invested in Cambodia's democracy project in the last twenty years. This section will therefore attempt to trace this conceptual shift of understanding 'civic engagement' in the context of political participation in advanced democracies, where the current understanding and promotion of youth engagement in Cambodia originated, so that a comprehensive and critically informed framework for conceptualizing and measuring civic engagement can be undertaken for this study.

Decline in Formal Political Participation by Young People and Conceptual Response: Civic Engagement beyond Formal Politics

In international literature over the last decade or so, a shift in conceptualizing 'civic engagement' or meaningful participation among young people is apparent. This shift has been set in motion first of all by a general observation that young people in advanced democracies have lost interest in formal party politics and become disinterested in voting, that is, apathetic to politics. Such a trend has been worrying for adult political actors as well as conservative political groups, apparently causing a sense of 'social anxiety' (Loader, 2007). The trend, as observed by Haste and Hogan (2006), is a "problem which urgently needs to be addressed if democracy, as we know it, is to survive" (p. 473). In this context, responses

have been generated by Western authors. These responses in the main converge in that the core of the problem lies in the formal political process and the currently changing world, rather than in young people (Haste & Hogan, 2006; Dahlgren, 2007; Li & Marsh, 2008; Loader, 2007). Simplified, the argument is that formal political process and requirements, such as remaining loyal to political parties and embracing formal politics such as voting and following parliamentary debates, are rather obsolete and fail to capture young people's interest and participation today, whose needs and understanding have changed in the contemporary world. Young people today, the argument goes, are more concerned with the quality of life and issues surrounding their everyday world, which needs pragmatic and flexible answers, rather than loyalty and long-term commitment to party politics and established political institutions, which are seen by young people as controlled by adults or even marginalizing young voices (Dahlgren, 2007; Harris, Wyn & Younes, 2010; Li & Marsh, 2008; Marsh, O'Toole & Jones, 2006).

Such feared 'political apathy' among young people today and the conceptual responses are well-known in Western democratic countries. For example, in Australia the anxiety over such 'political apathy' is criticized by Vromen (2010), who argues that too many studies on political behavior of young people have been preoccupied with 'formal' political behavior, or failed to "move beyond the 'good citizen' rhetoric" (p. 82). This criticism has also been voiced elsewhere. In Britain, for example, Haste and Hogan (2006) maintain that "the widespread disillusion with 'politics', described by many commentators, largely applies to activity within the conventionally defined political domain – especially voting" (p. 475). This means a whole range of other activities that are politically and civically meaningful for young people are left out of the picture, resulting in a distorted understanding of young people's civic and political lives. Haste and Hogan (2006), therefore, argue that political participation should encompass a more expansive menu of civic activities, including acting for social causes such as collecting money, signing a petition and marching in public. In addition, many have argued that the contemporary world is characterized by globalization, individualization, networks, deinstitutionalization and flexibility, therefore allowing young people today to practice a wide range of civic activities that are politically meaningful, though less direct and conventional, such as recycling, forwarding awareness-raising emails, etc. (Furlong & Cartmel, 2007; Loader, 2007). This shift in understanding what constitutes 'good' citizenship represents a change from seeing citizens as 'dutiful' to appreciating them as 'self-actualizing' (Bennett, 2008).

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Therefore, in this study we attempt to survey a rather expansive range of civic activities in trying to understand the extent to which the select undergraduate students are engaged in civically and politically meaningful practices. Such a descriptive picture of civic practices is currently unavailable, though generally talked about subjectively. The study also attempts to go beyond their activities by analyzing their attitudes toward civic and political identity required of a democracy. In addition, socializing institutions, such as the educational institution and media in particular, have been regarded as critical for civic learning and engagement (Livingstone, Nick & Tim, 2007; Lopez & Brown, 2006; NRC & IOM, 2005; Youniss et al., 2002). Therefore, while the study is confined to university students, the level

of media consumption is also included in the study to see how Cambodian media are implicated in the overall picture. The study is thus designed to answer the following sets of questions:

1. To what extent are the students engaged in civic activities and how do such activities vary among them?
2. What sorts of civic attitudes are held by these students and how are such attitudes different among them?
3. What are the general patterns of media consumption among the students and how are the patterns associated with their civic attitudes?

RESEARCH METHOD

Data

A cross-sectional survey was conducted in April 2011 with over 200 full-time students of a four-year program at a large public university in Phnom Penh (i.e., late into their academic year). Tutorial classes were chosen as selection units, and all the students of each selected class were asked to complete a structured questionnaire (each tutorial class is largely typical of all the classes in the program in terms of gender composition, age range, and subjects taught). In total, eight classes were selected, two randomly from each year level.

Measures

Civic engagement: In this study, we measure three dimensions of civic engagement: public action, voicing, and attentiveness to public issues (while electoral activities are not included due to their sensitivity in this context). These three dimensions comprise 21 activity indicators (see *Table 1*), adapted with contextual modifications from the indicators for civic activities, political voice and attentiveness devised by the Center for Information and Research on Civic Learning and Engagement (CIRCLE). To measure the level of his or her civic engagement, each respondent was asked to determine the frequency of their practice of the 21 activities in the previous three months.

Table 1: *Three dimensions of civic engagement*

Dimension	Activity
Public action	- Work with others to solve problems in your residential community - Volunteer for organizations or groups that work to protect the environment, to provide healthcare service, to help the poor, etc. - Participate in some type of informal groups that share interests, discuss common issues, regularly pursue common hobbies, etc. (for example, clubs at school, fun groups, sports groups, youth groups, etc.) - Participate in some type of formal associations, such as registered organizations or associations - Participate in public activities (such as marching or attending public events) - Donate money or items to 'charity' organizations - Help raise money for 'charity' organization by joining fund-raising campaigns - Recycle paper, bottles, household items, etc.

Voicing	- Write to a newspaper or magazine to express your opinion on an issue
	- Call in to a radio or TV talk show to express your opinion on an issue
	- Express your opinion on social issues on the Internet such as through writing blogs, writing on social networking sites, forwarding emails about social issues, etc.
	- Contact a public official (e.g. local authority, parliamentary members, etc.) to ask for help or express your concern about an issue, through any means
	- Boycott products (i.e. avoid buying a certain product because you dislike the political, social and cultural values attached to that product)
	- Help buy a certain product because you want to promote the political, social and cultural values of that product
Attentiveness	- Read news in a newspaper
	- Read news in a magazine
	- Listen to news on the radio
	- Watch news on television
	- Read/listen to/watch news on the Internet
	- Talk about current events with friends, colleagues or family
	- Try to update yourself on current government and public affairs

Civic attitudes: In addition to measuring the civic activities of the students, the study intends to gauge how they perceive the extent to which Cambodians and they themselves are able to effectively function as participatory citizens in their community or country, that is, their 'civic attitudes'. To measure such civic attitudes, we adopt eleven indicators from the 'civic attitudes scale' developed by Gastil, Black, Deess and Leighter (2008). The eleven indicators were asked on a five-point Likert scale, and an exploratory factor analysis was used to produce three dimensions of civic attitudes among the students (see *Table 2*):

Table 2: *Rotated factor loadings and Cronbach's α for civic attitudes*

Items	Factor 1	Factor 2	Factor 3
Factor 1: Perceived ability to effect change by Cambodians (α=.63)			
There are many legal ways for citizens to successfully influence what the government does.	.773		
The people have the final say about how the country is run, no matter who is in office.	.680		
Cambodians always do their part in trying to make their local community a better place to live.	.624		
When asked to do their part, most Cambodian citizens will make sacrifices on behalf of the nation.	.595		
Factor 2: Perceived personal contribution to community/society (α=.60)			
I take seriously my responsibilities as a citizen.		.730	
People like me play an important role in the life of my community.		.704	
I often fail to do my part to make my local community a good place to live.		.684	
Factor 3: Confidence in knowledge of politics and public/national affairs (α=.72)			
I think I am better informed about politics and government than most people are.			.870
I consider myself well-qualified to participate in politics and community affairs.			.809
I have a pretty good understanding of the important issues facing Cambodia			.497

Total variance explained: 57.98%; one item deleted to increase overall internal reliability.

1. Perceived ability to effect change by Cambodians: the extent to which one thinks Cambodians are willing and able to take action to bring about change for the country if required.
2. Perceived personal contribution to community/society: the extent to which one feels he or she is able to contribute to the society as a citizen.
3. Confidence in knowledge of politics and public/national affairs: the extent to which one feels that he or she is knowledgeable about public affairs in order to participate in the social and political process as a citizen.

Sample

The sample of the study comprises a total of 209 students, with comparable numbers of subgroups based on gender and year levels (see *Table 3*). The sample subgroups are also fairly comparable to those of the total population of the students in the program. In order to observe possible differences of civic attitudes among the students in terms of their socio-cultural background, we use 'parental residence' as a proxy variable. Even though 'parental residence' is conceptually incomplete, it has considerable practical utility for a survey of this scale and in the context of Cambodian society, where social stratification has historically been grounded on the rural-urban division. The big majority of the students are from Phnom Penh, while those coming from other urban areas make up about a quarter of the sample and only a small minority come from a rather rural background (11%), somewhat expected of the composition of university students in Phnom Penh although such demographic data of the undergraduate student population in Phnom Penh are not available.

Table 3: *Sample Characteristics*

N = 209	Respondents	Percentage
Sex		
Female	116	56%
Male	92	44%
Year level		
Year 1	45	22%
Year 2	54	26%
Year 3	53	25%
Year 4	57	27%
Parental Residence		
Phnom Penh	135	65%
Other urban	50	24%
Rural	22	11%

Notes: Figures presented with rounded percentages and a few non-responses for frequency.

FINDINGS

RQ1: Undergraduates' Civic Activities

In this study, we illustrate the level of civic engagement by the surveyed Cambodian undergraduates based on 21 indicators, adapted from measures and suggestions made in advanced democratic, particularly Western, societal context (*see* Literature and Research

Method sections above). It is therefore important to emphasize that while these indicators have strong conceptual utility, since the current interest and mobilization of resources to promote youth civic engagement in Cambodia are based on this Western notion of expansive engagement, they also exclude other forms of civic engagement that may be specific to the socio-cultural context of Cambodia or developing societies. With this acknowledge, this section presents a descriptive picture of the 21 indicators, while the conceptual discussion of this issue will be raised later.

Table 4 below shows the levels of civic activities (categorized into public action, voicing and attentiveness) the university students in the study had practiced over the last three months prior to the survey. Overall, the data present a mixed picture of civic activities practiced by the students. While they are highly engaged in certain activities such as making a donation, participating in informal groups, recycling, expressing opinions on the Internet, and following news, they are poorly engaged in other activities such as expressing opinions to public officials or the mass media. However, there appears to be a significant but subtle undertone that is worth noting. These students tend to disengage from activities that are relatively 'publicly-politicized' such as expressing opinions in the mass media like the print and broadcast channels or contacting a public official, while perceptively non-politicized activities like participating in informal groups and making donations or relatively less publicly-politicized activities such as expressing opinions on the Internet and talking with friends or family about current news are more common practices.

Table 4: Civic activities over last three months

Public Action	Never	Once	Twice	Three times	Four Times	Five times or more
Work to solve a community problem	71%	20%	4%	1%	1%	3%
Volunteer for an organization/group	46%	29%	7%	6%	1%	10%
Participate in an informal group	30%	27%	13%	8%	3%	19%
Participate in a formal group	56%	23%	8%	3%	1%	7%
Participate in public activities	49%	23%	11%	6%	2%	9%
Donate money	16%	30%	25%	13%	3%	13%
Raise money	43%	33%	14%	5%	2%	2%
Recycle	41%	16%	9%	6%	2%	24%
Voicing	Never	Once	Twice	Three times	Four Times	Five times or more
Write to print media	93%	4%	1%	0%	1%	1%
Call in to a radio/TV talk program	92%	5%	1%	1%	0%	1%
Express opinions on the Internet	47%	18%	8%	7%	1%	19%
Contact a public official	89%	8%	1%	1%	0%	1%
Boycott a product	79%	10%	3%	2%	1%	4%
Help buy a product	55%	22%	7%	5%	0%	11%

Attentiveness	Never	<1/week (occasional)	≥1/week (regular)
Read news in a newspaper	12%	34%	55%
Read news in a magazine	19%	50%	30%
Listen to news on the radio	11%	26%	60%
Watch news on TV	4%	12%	83%
Read/listen to/watch news on the Internet	6%	14%	79%
Talk about current news with friends, colleagues and family	3%	15%	82%
Update oneself on current government and public affairs	22%	23%	55%

The study also explores the variation of these activities among the subgroups of the respondents. In terms of the year level of their study, there is no significant variation among those in different year levels, suggesting that a longer participation in higher education does not guarantee any higher engagement in the measured activities. Comparing these activities by gender, we also note that there is no outstanding difference between male and female students, with the percentage differences of their engagement in these activities over the previous three months being relatively small (see *Figures 1–3*; the chi-square tests comparing the subgroups on every activity suggest no statistically significant difference). It is interesting, therefore, to point out that any normative gender expectation regarding civic engagement, such as men being more attentive to and more active in engaging with news and public affairs than women, is not applicable among these students, hence pointing to a positive role of higher education in neutralizing the gender gap commonly felt in Cambodia. However, it is worth noting that these comparisons are based on whether or not they have practiced these activities, but not on how frequently they have.

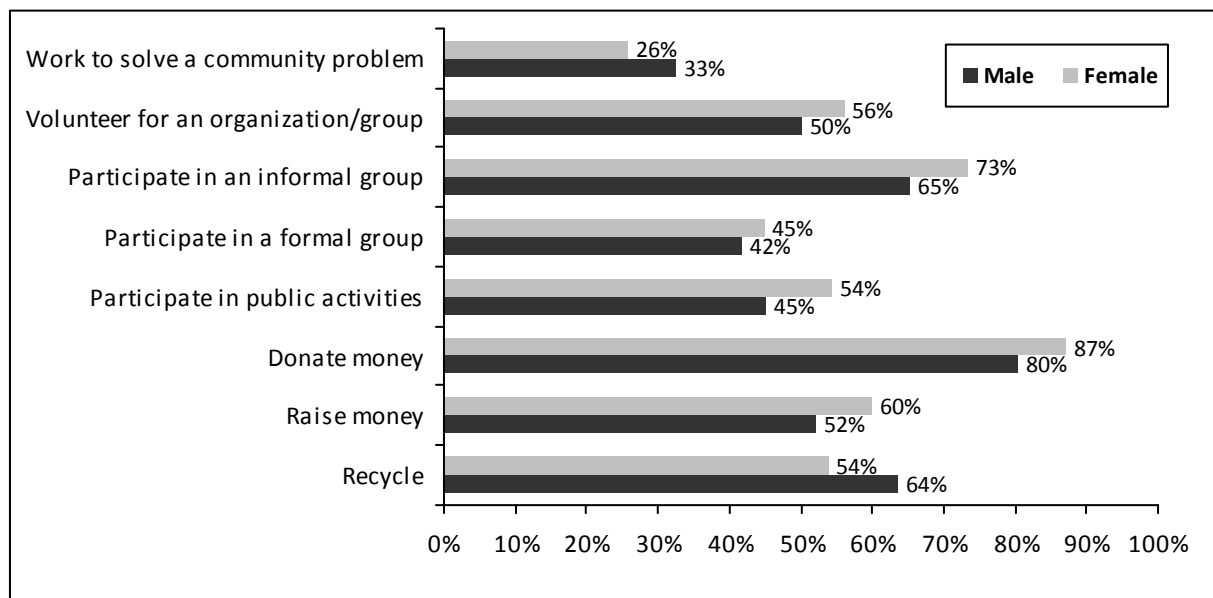*Figure 1: Experience of public action over last three months by gender*

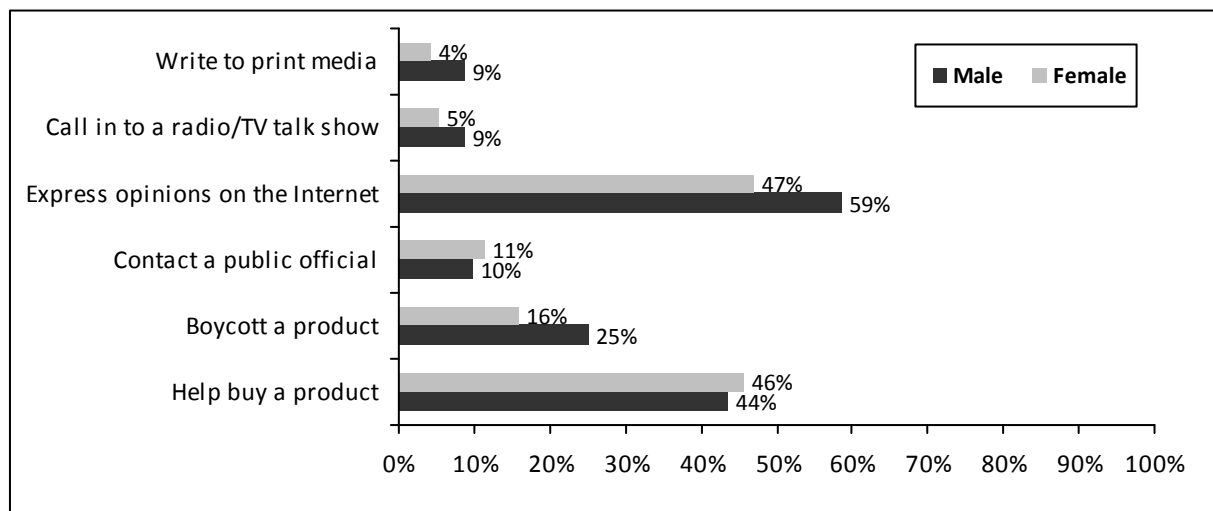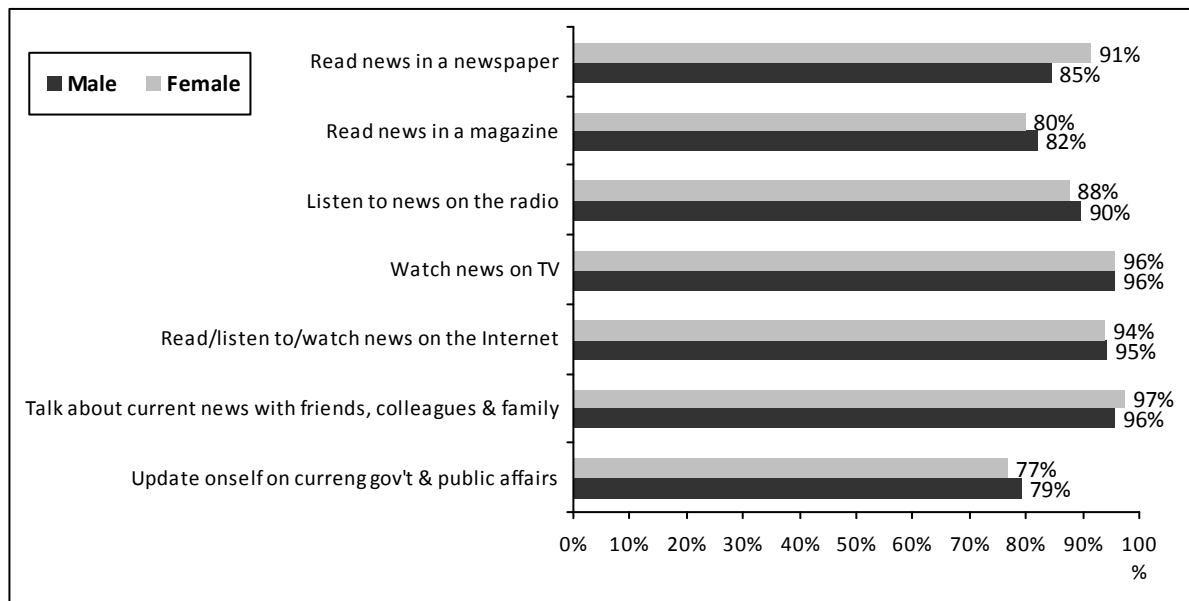*Figure 2: Experience of voicing over last three months by gender*

Figure 3: Experience of attentiveness over last three months by gender

RQ2: Undergraduates' Civic Attitudes

Three aspects of civic attitudes are measured in the study (see Research Method section for a detailed explanation of their construction):

1. Perceived ability to effect change by Cambodians: the extent to which one thinks Cambodians are willing and able to take action to bring a change for the country if required.
2. Perceived personal contribution to community/society: the extent to which one feels he or she is able to contribute to the society as a citizen.
3. Confidence in knowledge of politics and public/national affairs: the extent to which one feels that he or she is knowledgeable about public affairs in order to participate in the social and political process as a citizen.

These aspects reflect individuals' general perceptions of others' and their own ability to function or participate as engaged citizens in the community or country. Although the aspects measured here are not exhaustive, they illuminate critical elements of participatory citizenship by gauging the respondents' perceptions of their own and other Cambodians' rights, obligation and knowledge required for democratic and participatory governance (see the detailed indicators on *page 5*). While a five-point Likert scale is used to indicate the levels of their civic attitudes, we also use descriptive identifiers to make these levels readily meaningful:

- A score of 5 exhibits a <u>high</u> level of positive civic attitudes
- A score of 3 exhibits a <u>vague</u> sense of positive civic attitudes
- A score of 1 exhibits a <u>complete lack</u> of positive civic attitudes
- The scores of 2 and 4 are intermediary points on the 1-to-5-point scale

Figures 4 through 6 show the levels of civic attitudes expressed by the students and differentiated by their subgroups based on gender, year level and social background (i.e. parental residence). Across the board, the students exhibit a vague sense of positive civic attitudes (centered around a score of 3, see *Figure 4*), in terms of either perceived ability to effect change by Cambodians, perceived personal contribution to community/society, or confidence in knowledge of politics and community/national affairs. On the one hand, this can be disappointing, for these students lack a substantial sense of seeing Cambodians or themselves as influential and dynamic actors in bringing about change for their society and community, which is most critical for democratic and participatory governance and development. On the other hand, such a bleak outlook could be offset by the fact that the three aspects of positive civic attitudes are not totally absent. It is indeed important to recognize that Cambodia is a transitional society in both political and economic senses, and young people can be understandably vague in their perception of their changing world, one that is contested by developmentalist and democratic discourses, on the one side, and by traditionally conservative social norms of the previous generations, on the other. On a positive note, this vague sense of civic attitudes expected of advanced democratic and participatory citizens may in fact denote a transitional state of attitude of these young people – hopefully along the way to a higher level.

Comparing these civic attitudes across gender, year level and social background gives a similar picture: a vague sense of participatory attitudes across the board (see *Figures 4–6*). The levels of their positive civic attitudes are comparable, again centered around a score of 3, with little gaps among those of different gender, from different year levels, or with different social backgrounds (ANOVA tests to compare mean differences show no statistically significant differences). The only notable exception is the difference in the perceived ability to effect change by Cambodians between those from Phnom Penh and those from rural Cambodia (see *Figure* 5; a mean score of 3.24 for the former group and that of 2.81 for the latter group, with a statistically significant difference at $p < .01$). A tentative explanation would be that those with a rural background have been socialized, or were socialized during their childhood, into more conservative social norms, whereby any perceived change at the national or larger societal scale is relatively remote. The notable difference in this respect is therefore understandable due possibly to such socio-cultural background differentials.

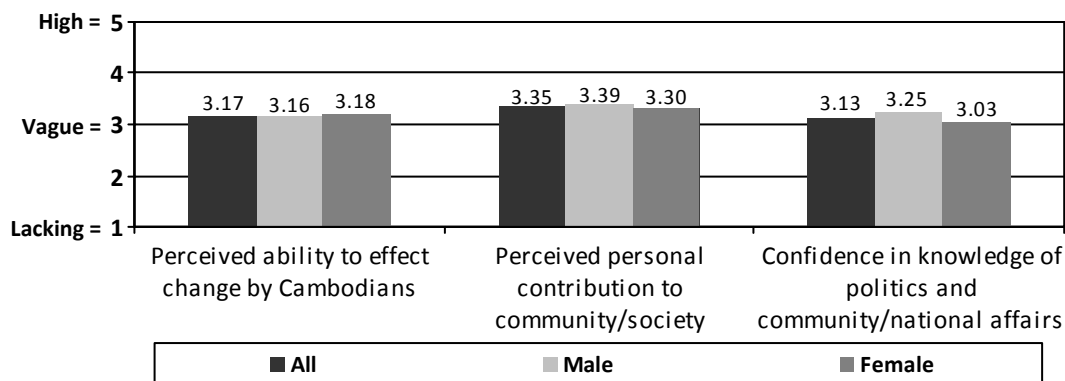**Figure 4:** *Civic attitudes of respondents (and by gender)*

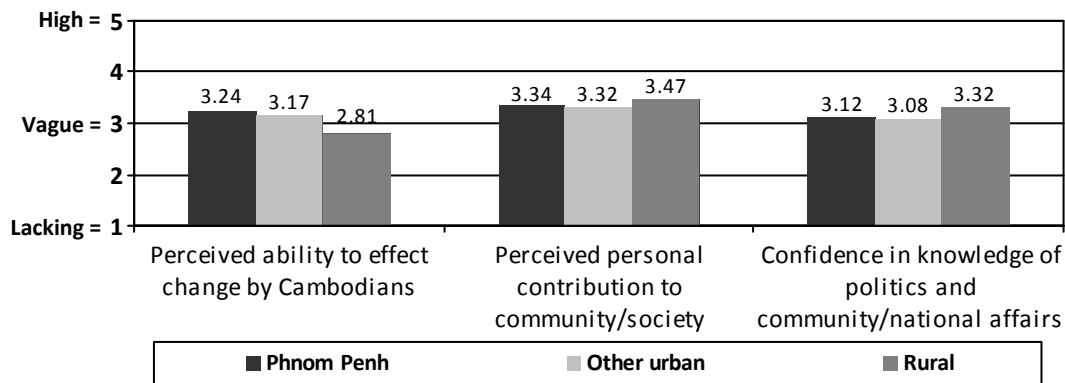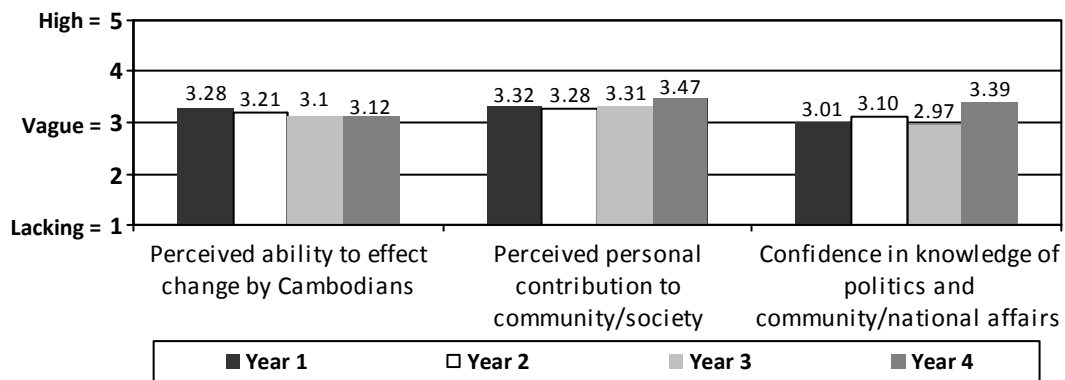***Figure 5:*** *Civic attitudes of respondents by parental residence*

Figure 6: *Civic attitudes of respondents by year level*


RQ3: Undergraduates' Media Consumption and Their Civic Engagement

Different types of media are generally thought of as an important agent in promoting civic engagement and positive civic attitudes (Livingstone, Nick & Tim, 2007; Lopez & Brown, 2006; Youniss et al., 2002). Therefore, this section will first illustrate the extent of media consumption by the undergraduates in the study and then attempt to see if the level and nature of their media consumption is associated with their civic attitudes.

It is generally thought that a reading habit is far from generally characteristic of Cambodians. Even among students, concerns have generally been voiced regarding the lack of a reading culture among Cambodian learners. Such a general notion is reflected in the levels of consumption of different media by the students surveyed (see *Figure 7*). TV is the most frequently consumed medium, while newspaper and magazine are the least. Almost all the students watch TV at least once per week and more than two-thirds do (more or less) every day. In contrast, almost half of the students read a newspaper less than once per week or read a magazine less than once per month. However, this should not lead to a rush confirmation of the lack of a reading culture among Cambodian students. One should be aware of the problems of poor reporting and shallow information common in the Cambodian press, both newspapers and magazines (Yinn, 2010). The consumption of the radio is also more frequent than that of a newspaper and a magazine, with half of the respondents listening to the radio at least a few times per week. The level of Internet use is

also very high among these students, with almost 90 per cent of them using the Internet at least a few times per week. This is reflective of the fact that university students, generally well resourced financially and technically, are among those who use the Internet the most and it has been highly integrated into the life of Cambodian university students, from seeking information to socializing, from accessing entertainment to completing academic tasks (Peou & Chea, 2010; Peou & Lwin, 2011).

Figure 7: *Consumption of media by the students over the last three months*
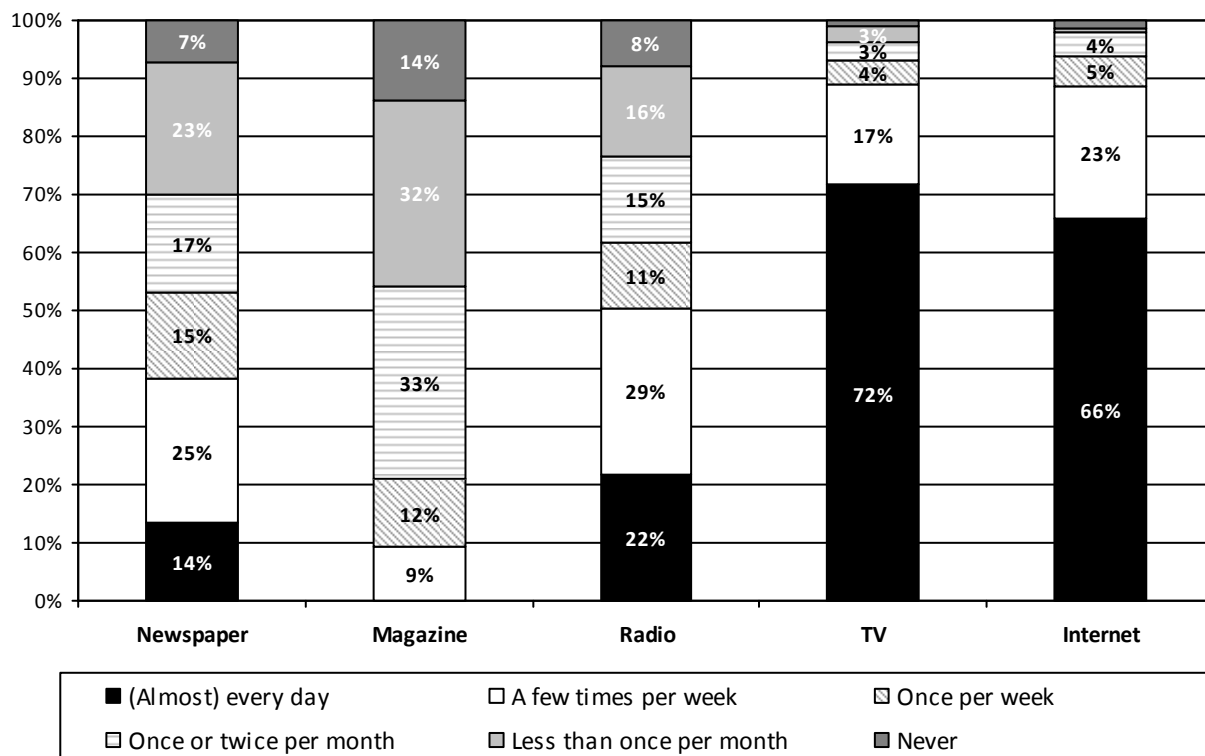
One way to see if the consumption of media is associated with the level of positive civic attitudes (i.e. perceived ability to effect change by Cambodians, perceived personal contribution to community/society, and confidence in knowledge of politics and public/national affairs) is to observe how the total consumption level among the students is correlated with their civic attitudes. Table 5 shows the correlation levels between the total level of media consumption and the three aspects of civic attitudes, and they suggest that media consumption in general has very little interrelationship with civic attitudes.

Table 5: *Correlations between media consumption and civic attitudes*

	Mean[a]	S.D.	Correlation Coefficients[b] Media consumption level
Perceived ability to effect change by Cambodians	3.17	0.69	.120
Perceived personal contribution to community/society	3.35	0.70	.268
Confidence knowledge of politics and public/national affairs	3.13	0.70	.234

[a]*Mean value for Media Consumption Level is on a 0-to-25-point scale, and mean values for Perceived ability to effect change by citizens, Perceived personal contribution to community/society, and Self-confidence in understanding of community/national affairs are on a 0-to-5-point scale.*
[b]*All correlations are significant at p<.01*

While overall media consumption has little interrelationship with the three aspects of civic attitudes, it is still interesting to explore how the consumption of each type of media may differently impact the civic attitudes held by the students, by conducting a series of multiple regressions (see *Table 6*). A summary of the results are as follows:

- First of all, it is confirmed that the overall impact of media consumption on positive civic attitudes is very little (see the Model Summary in *Table 6*).

- Second, the consumption of any medium appears to have no significant impact on the students' positive civic attitudes, except in few exceptional cases.

- Third, reading newspapers appears to be the only positive contributing factor to 'confidence in knowledge of politics and public/national affairs'.

- Fourth, TV consumption may even have an adverse effect, despite to a minimal extent, on 'confidence in knowledge of politics and public/national affairs'.

Table 6: *Multiple regressions of media consumption on civic attitudes*

MODEL SUMMARY	Perceived ability to effect change by Cambodians	Perceived personal contribution to community/society	Confidence in knowledge of politics and public/national affairs
R	.192	.409	.366
R Square	.037	.167	.134
Adjusted R Square	.012	.146	.112
Standard Error	.688	.628	.672
F value	1.48 (p = .199)	7.87 (p < .001)	6.03 (p < .001)

ANOVA	Perceived ability to effect change by Cambodians			Perceived personal contribution to community/society			Confidence in knowledge of politics and public/national affairs		
	df	Sum of Squares	Mean Squares	df	Sum of Squares	Mean Squares	df	Sum of Squares	Mean Squares
Regression	5	3.502	0.700	5	15.534	3.107	5	13.594	2.719
Residual	194	91.903	0.474	196	77.421	0.395	195	87.956	0.451

COEFFICIENTS	B	S.E.	Beta	T	Sig.	Part	(Part)^2
Variables	Perceived ability to effect change by Cambodians						
Newspaper consumption	-.007	.037	-.015	-.175	.861		
Magazine consumption	.067	.050	.110	1.343	.181		
Radio consumption	.054	.032	.125	1.663	.098		
TV consumption	.008	.049	.011	.154	.878		
Internet consumption	-.04	.054	-.057	-.742	.459		
Variables	Perceived personal contribution to community/society						
Newspaper consumption	.069	.034	.160	2.034	.043		
Magazine consumption	.182	.046	.302	3.968	.000	.259	.07
Radio consumption	-.003	.029	-.006	-.092	.927		
TV consumption	-.063	.045	-.09	-1.412	.160		
Internet consumption	-.009	.049	-.013	-.180	.857		
Variables	Confidence in knowledge of politics and public/national affairs						
Newspaper consumption	.125	.037	.274	3.406	.001	.227	.05
Magazine consumption	.009	.049	.015	.188	.851		
Radio consumption	.056	.031	.127	1.785	.076		
TV consumption	-.103	.048	-.151	-2.146	.033	-.143	.02
Internet consumption	.006	.054	.009	.116	.906		

DISCUSSION

Attentive but Inactive: Lack of Rights-based Citizenship or Citizenship in Transition?

Civic engagement and attitudes are critical for Cambodia and its young citizens. It is well accepted that civic engagement offers personal and psychological benefits for young people in that they offer meaningful goal orientation as well as a sense of identity – communal or national (Flanagan & Levine, 2010). The future of Cambodia's democracy and national development rests mainly, if not solely, on the civic and political attitude and participation of its young population. What emerges from this study on the students of a large public university is that the students are rather attentive yet inactive in their civic life. Both optimistic and pessimistic conclusions may be drawn from such a reality. This however has to be understood in perspective, especially with regard to Cambodia's socio-historical context.

Historically, Cambodia was basically made up of the King and his subjects (Chandler, 2008). The colonization-driven modernization that swept the country from the mid-nineteenth century to the mid-twentieth century brought about a new societal configuration establishing the state and its citizenry within a modern nation-state. This provided room for some form of democracy, along with other ideological ideals, in the much of the earlier part of the twentieth century, only for it to be crushed from the 1960s to the 1980s. Therefore, the current democracy project is relatively infantile, one that was only imposed on Cambodia in the early 1990s.

Two interrelated models of citizenship are apparently crucial for the form of democracy designed for Cambodia in the last twenty years: information-based and rights-based citizenship. While the former nurtures and relies on an informed citizenry, the latter promotes and requires a citizenry that is active in demanding their democratic rights and freedom and in contributing to collective causes (Schudson, 2003). Thus, both informed and activist citizens are critical to the democracy project desired for Cambodia, and the lack or absence of either means the democratic promise is not fulfilled to a satisfactory extent.

On the one hand, it is disappointing to see from the data that even though the surveyed university students are fairly attentive to news and information by rather frequently following news on different media available, they exhibit an overall profile that is lacking in activism for political and civic exploits. This means while these university students may be relatively informed citizens, they are not activist citizens, suggesting a low level of rights-conscious citizenship required for a strong democracy.

On the other hand, one may also take this situation as transitional, parallel to the macro-transition of the entire Cambodia. These university students could be seen as those at the forefront of a democratic transition for their relatively higher level of intellectual, cultural and economic resources, as compared to many other population subgroups. It is possible that they have taken the first step in pursuing a better democracy by getting informed about their society, communal or national. Therefore, it is not irrational to hope that their pursuance of rights-based citizenship, i.e. taking action to demand and achieve their rights for a better democracy as well as contributing to the collective good, is forthcoming. Indeed,

less politically obvious activities such as donating money and participating in informal groups may support such positive contemplation.

Cambodian Media: An Ineffectual Agent

The role of the media in promoting civic engagement and attitudes is well noted (for example, Livingstone, Nick & Tim, 2007; Lopez & Brown, 2006; Youniss et al., 2002). However, among the students surveyed, their media consumption has little influence on their civic attitudes, except the rather notable link between newspaper reading and confidence in knowledge of politics and public/national affairs and a relatively surprising link between magazine consumption and perceived personal contribution to community/society. In addition, the consumption of TV even tends to negatively impact the confidence in one's knowledge of politics and public/national affairs.

This suggests the ineffectual role of the Cambodian media as an agent for fostering civic identity for an important group of Cambodian population. An understanding of the Cambodian media landscape is necessary for making sense of this unfortunate reality. Some common problems of the Cambodian media are well documented: political biases and self-censorship of the press (LICADHO, 2008, 2009); sensationalism and shallow information widespread in Cambodian print media (Yinn, 2010); and the highly consumerist nature of Cambodian TV (Peou, 2009). The Internet has a potential for increasing meaningful civic action and identity (Dahlgren, 2007; Loader, 2007), yet for Cambodian students the Internet is integrated into various life aspects in general (Peou & Lwin, 2011) and not harnessed significantly for civic or political action. There is indeed huge potential for media and information and communication technologies to foster civic engagement and attitudes, yet young Cambodians themselves need to demand – as consumers – the materialization of such potential and – as users – to make the most of these media and technologies.

CONCLUSION: Coming to Terms with Individualized Civic Identity

Three main issues should be re-emphasized: the attentiveness but lack of activism of the students with regard to their civic engagement (particularly their lack of action in publicly-politicized domains), the vague expression of their civic attitudes, and the ineffectual role of the media and ICTs in fostering their civic attitudes. On a positive note, the attentiveness is encouraging for it is a characteristic of (potentially) informed citizens. Yet, the lack of activism among the students in their civic life, their relatively vague civic attitudes, and the wanting role of the media are rather concerning if a better democracy is to be achieved. Understandably such an achievement takes time. It is worth noting that the notion of civic engagement and identity being promoted in Cambodia is one grounded in a Western foundation, based on a durable belief in individuality that has evolved over centuries in Western societies. In contrast, Cambodia is a much less individualized society with its social organization and mobilization founded on tight family- and kin-based security and contribution. Recognize it or not, the Western-based democracy and its individualized civic identity needs time to build a good footing to realize the democracy project initiated in the 1990s and its vision of civic citizenship. The political project of building democracy and civic identity in Cambodia therefore needs to engage cultural negotiation and learning.

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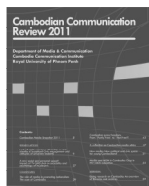
A New Social and Personal Space?
Impact of TV-SMS Chat[1] on Sociability and Psychology of Its Players[2]

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ABSTRACT

As new communication technologies have increasingly integrated into the social and personal lives of young Cambodians, implications of such technologies on their users' lives abound. In this study, I interviewed 20 young Cambodians who regularly play TV-SMS chat on youth-focus television channel MyTV and analyzed the interviews for how such engagement is implicated with their sociability and psychology. TV-SMS chat has both opened up a space for friends-making among the users and enforced their already existing bonds between friends. TV-SMS chat has also offered a space for their adventure into the realm of romance and dating as well as a tool for dealing with their real-life romance. It is, however, evident that there was some doubt on the authenticity and sincerity of such technologically mediated relationships. In addition, TV-SMS chat has also offered the participants an escape from the boredom and stress of everyday life.

Key words: TV-SMS chat, sociability, psychology, youth, texting, TV, Cambodia

INTRODUCTION

As the rate of mobile phone subscription has been rapidly rising in the last few years in Cambodia (with mobile subscription reaching 58% of the population in 2010, from just 8% in 2005, according to the International Telecommunication Union's data), mobile phones are bound to have a lot of social and personal implications for their users. In international literature, the consequences of mobile phone usage have been well documented in relation to a myriad of issues, especially in relation to relationship and identity. However, any vigorous and empirical understanding of the implications of mobile phone usage on the sociability and psychology of Cambodians is an outstanding absence. In the context of Cambodia, with a highly competitive market of mobile service (currently eight operators for the population of just over 14 million) as well as the common multiple subscriptions and the popular use of short message service (SMS), an understanding of mobile phone implications among the users is vital for evaluating the consequences of the new media and the societal change over the last decade. Therefore, this study will explore the implications of using mobile phone SMS to 'play'[3] in a TV-SMS chat program on a group of players, particularly in terms of their sociability and psychology.

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[1] TV-SMS Chat is an interactive TV function that allows mobile phone users to send text messages from their mobile sets to chat with other users with their messages displayed publicly on TV.

[2] Those sending text messages to TV-SMS Chat are referred to in this article as 'players', for the term is used consistently by the participants who regularly send messages to TV-SMS Chat programs. The participants generally take their participation in the TV-SMS Chat programs primarily as 'playing'.

[3] See footnote 2 above.

TV-SMS CHAT IN CAMBODIA

TV-SMS chat is an interactive TV function that allows mobile phone users to send text messages from their mobile sets to chat with other users with their messages displayed publicly on TV (*see* Figure 1). Interactive TV functions, such as TV voting and games through mobile SMS, have been common in many countries, but have only become popular in Cambodia over the last few years. In Cambodia, TV-SMS chat, despite some claim to have begun in 2005, only became a regular feature in 2008, when it was introduced on MyTV, the only youth-oriented broadcast TV channel in Cambodia. Very little is known about TV-SMS chat, yet one thing is clear: its popularity is growing. A newspaper report by Koam (2011) reported that MyTV received about 20,000 messages per day from TV-SMS chat players. In addition, the number of TV channels that feature such TV-SMS chat program has increased to four (out of nine broadcast channels and two cable providers), and it has become a daily program on some of them. Virtually nothing about TV-SMS chat players is documented. However, the themes and issues in the TV-SMS chat programs – generally about making friends and sending trivial messages on personal feeling, song dedication, birthday wish, etc., while political themes and offensive language are forbidden – suggest that TV-SMS chat players mostly comprise teenagers and adolescents. It is therefore inviting to think of such TV-SMS chat programs as a platform for personal and interpersonal adventures by these youngsters, similar to other mediated platforms of sociability such as Internet chat-room and online bulletin board. Therefore, before analyzing how TV-SMS chat can transform the personal and social space and activities of a group of TV-SMS players, this article will first briefly discuss some existing evidence of the implications of texting on mobile phones and online chat-room for its users.

Figure 1: *Interaction of TV-SMS chat*
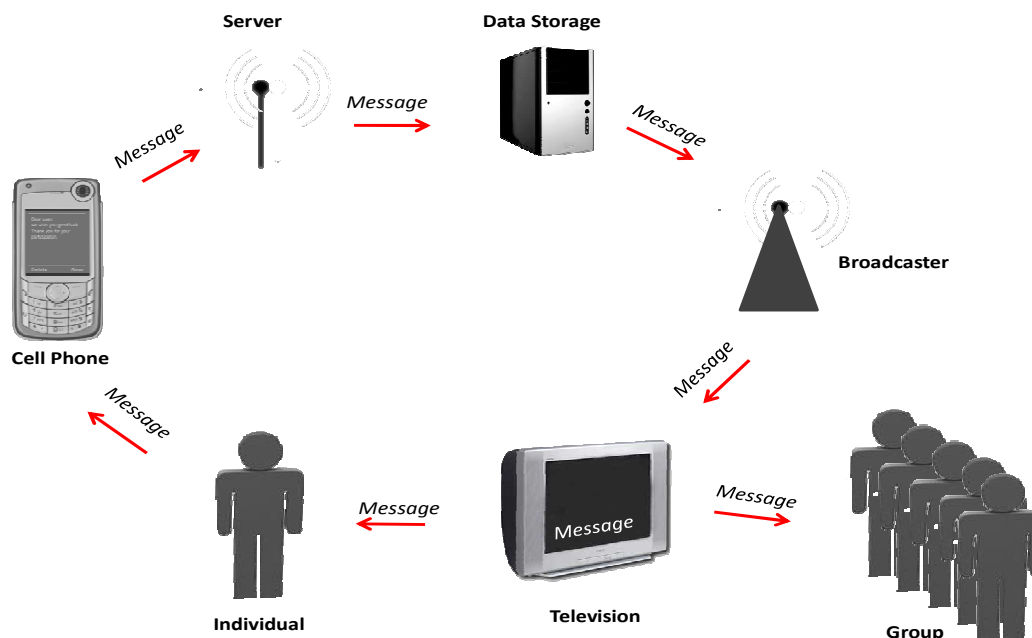
LITERATURE REVIEW –
IMPLICATIONS OF TEXTING ON MOBILES AND ONLINE CHAT-ROOM ON SOCIABILITY

SMS (short message service), text, or text message has become a popular function of mobile phone usage worldwide, especially among youngsters. Ling (2004) argues that SMS becomes popular because it is a mode of communication that is inexpensive, convenient and unobtrusive. In addition, the prompt conversational response that is required of oral conversation can be avoided, which is appropriate in certain circumstances (Ling, 2004). Sulaiman & Zolait (2010) argue that people use SMS because of its perceived usefulness, perceived ease of use, and expected enjoyment. Therefore, for practical and psychological reasons, texting can be a favorable choice of communication mode among young people. However, mobile phone SMS is generally intended for communication among those acquainted with each other for mobile phone is inherently a closed, interpersonal medium of communication. The Internet chat-room extends texting, as a mediated communication, beyond closed, interpersonal communication and allows both interpersonal communication to be visible to others and its participants to 'meet' strangers. In other words, Internet or online chat-room has opened a new space for social and interpersonal experiences in the spheres of friendship and romance (e.g. Ben-Ze'ev, 2004; Henry-Waring & Barraket, 2008; Mileham, 2007; Slater, 2008; Whitty, 2002). Texting, therefore, has allowed its users to become more open while remaining secure in distance in interpersonal interactions. As Ling (2004) argues, the development of texting has changed human communication.

The impact of texting on mobiles and online chat-room has been well documented as both positive and negative. For instance, Leung (2007) argues that people who are engaged heavily in interacting through SMS tend to be more comfortable with social communication. The Internet chat-room is, however, perceived in a relatively less positive light, especially in terms of online dating. For instance, Beebe et al. (2004) conclude from their survey study that Internet chat-room can be an agent of psychological distress and a tricky environment, exhibiting "a higher likelihood of risky behaviors" (p. 116). On the other hand, there are also counterarguments that online chat-room can be a harmless way of engaging with dating and intimate activities (Mileham, 2007; Subrahmanyam, Greenfield & Tynes, 2004).

THE STUDY

Research Objective

With the implications of texting discussed above in mind, this study will attempt to explore possible implications of TV-SMS chat among a group of young people who play TV-SMS chat to a rather extensive level. The rest of the article will therefore attempt to answer one main question: how could a group of youngsters' engagement with TV-SMS chat have consequences on their sociability and psychology?

Data Collection

As the study is exploratory in nature, I conducted twenty in-depth interviews with twenty individuals who regularly played TV-SMS chat on MyTV at the time of the study in early 2011.

To get in touch with potential participants, I recorded the phone numbers posted in the TV-SMS chat by the players. (These numbers were not those from which the messages were sent, but numbers posted in the messages by the players for others to contact them further beyond the program, for the numbers from which the messages were sent were not displayed by the program.) The aim of the recording was to build a reasonably sized pool of potential interviewees (i.e. a sampling frame). The recording was completed after several days when it reached a total of 100 phone numbers. With the sampling frame of 100 TV-SMS chat players, 20 numbers were selected based on a random systematic sampling. I contacted the 20 prospective participants, and 15 of them agreed to be interviewed for the study. Five further participants were recruited through the participants' referrals in a snowballing manner in order to ensure richer data for analysis. Of the 20 participants, ten were living in Phnom Penh and were interviewed face-to-face. The other ten were living in seven other provinces and were thus interviewed over the phone. Each interview was between 30 and 60 minutes.

Participants

This study was conducted with twenty participants who could be considered as regular players of TV-SMS chat on MyTV. By the time of the interviews, most of them played TV-SMS chat every weekend day and four to five times a week, and for each time they played it for at least about an hour (*see* Table 1). At the time of the study, one participant had just quit playing TV-SMS chat, citing other more interesting alternatives of making friends and seeking entertainment as the reasons for quitting. Twelve of the participants were male and other eight female. Nineteen of them were between 15 to 19 years old, and only one was at the age of 22. Sixteen of them were secondary school students (from grade 9 to 12), three university students, and one a non-governmental organization worker. Half of the participants were in Phnom Penh, while the rest were from seven other provinces (*see* Table 2 for the demographic information of the participants). All of them owned mobile phone(s) and were subscribing to at least two mobile operators (i.e. using two or more phone numbers), suggesting them to be heavy mobile phone users. Their general interests were mainly centered around casual entertainment and socializing activities, including watching TV, talking on the phone, hanging out with friends, playing sport and shopping, which consumed a lot of their everyday time.

Table 1: *Engagement with TV-SMS chat among the participants*

Length of Each TV-SMS Chat Session Played	Number of Participants
Over 3 hours	1
About 3 hours	2
About 2 hours	8
About 1 hour	7
Less than 1 hour	2

Table 2: *Participants*

(Total = 20)	Number of Participants
<u>Sex</u>	
Male	12
Female	8
Age	
15	3
16	5
17	4
18	3
19	4
22	1
Occupation	
Secondary school student	16
University student	3
NGO worker	1
Current Residency	
Phnom Penh	10
Battambang	3
Kampong Cham	2
Banteay Meanchey	1
Kandal	1
Siem Reap	1
Svay Rieng	1
Takeo	1
Residency status	
Living with parents	19
Living with other older relatives	1

TV-SMS CHAT AND ITS CONSEQUENCES: SOCIABILITY & PSYCHOLOGY

The participants in this study were asked a range of questions regarding their engagement with TV-SMS chat, demographic information, and motivations to play TV-SMS chat. Generally, the participants came to play TV-SMS chat either upon hearing about it or suggestion from peers or through coming upon it on TV. In both cases, they had to develop an interest in trying out the program and to maintain their engagement with the program. Their motivation and interest are not specifically analyzed here, for the focus is on the implications of the participants' engagement with TV-SMS chat on their social and personal action. However, these implications are essentially symptomatic of their motivation and interest in maintaining their engagement with TV-SMS chat. The rest of this article will therefore discuss the extent and nature of the implications of engagement with TV-SMS chat on certain aspects of sociability, particularly friendship and romance, and psychology of the twenty participants.

TV-SMS Chat and Friendship

For most of the participants, the friendship and sense of group belonging gained through the TV-SMS chat is real. In other words, TV-SMS chat is both (1) an alternative space for making friends and (2) utilitarian for reinforcing existing bond of friendship.

Many instances of friends-making by the participants interviewed best demonstrate TV-SMS chat as an alternative space for making friends. This is shown by an exemplary case of a male interviewee (*participant 7*): "I want to make more friends … My friends at school are not that close because we live in different places and we don't like to talk to each other. I can't make close friends at school." A typical process of such friendship building usually begins with openly calling for making friends with an SMS on the TV screen and providing his or her phone number for others to contact him or her. Some of the participants may then contact each other through texting or/and calling directly and privately. A female interviewee (*participant 10*) explains how she personally makes new friends through TV-SMS chat:

> I showed my phone number on TMS[4]. When we knew each other's phone number, we could arrange for a convenient time for texting each other. If we're afraid of showing our phone number to everyone, we can ask others to show their numbers instead.

For some participants, making friends through TV-SMS chat provides a psychological edge over initiating friendship in physical presence. This is possible because initiating contacts through SMS or phone call allows one to remain anonymous at the beginning, thereby essentially removing a potential awkwardness of approaching others with physical presence. The following examples among some of the participants very well explain how that is the case:

> [When using TMS] I feel I can communicate with strangers. In the past, when a stranger called me, I dared not speak with them. But now, anyone can just call me and chat. It makes me happy and I can talk with them … It changes my manner of communication. *(Participant 2, female)*

> In the past, if there was call from an unknown number, I wouldn't pick up. But since I started to play TMS on MyTV, there have been people calling me or giving me missed-calls quite often. Some have sent me a lot of messages. It makes me feel that I dare talk to many people now. It changes me from being a quiet person to being more friendly and funny. *(Participant 5, male)*

> At school, I was a quiet person. I rarely talked with strangers. But since I played [TMS], I dare to communicate more. *(Participant 11, male)*

In addition, making friends through TV-SMS chat can even extend the possibility of friends-making, whose initiation would otherwise be constrained by physical presence. For some of the participants interviewed, making friends with others from other distant provinces is a positive experience:

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[4] The TV-SMS chat program on MyTV is called 'TMS'.

> When I use it [TMS], I can make more friends. Now I have friends from Kampong Som, Siem Reap, and Takeo. I prefer to know people living in provinces. If I want to go to Kampot or Siem Reap, I can go to their places. *(Participant 1, male)*

> I've made friends in provinces. When I'm sad, they can help me. If I'm not happy, they can call me or send me messages. *(Participant 8, female)*

> We can make friends in provinces. For example, I have friends from Poi Pet, Bantey Meanchey and Battambang. *(Participant 14, female)*

It should also be noted that the friendship formed through TV-SMS chat is not virtual, but real. The interpersonal and group interaction is not limited to the TV screen, but extended into real-life socialization. It is common for some of the players to extend their virtual friendship to face-to-face and real-life group meetings and activities. For example:

> When I play it [TMS], I see many people reveal their phone number, and I start to know many people. I join groups and play together. When they go anywhere, they always ask me to come together. After school, we can ask each other to go out. Now we are like a family. Most of the time, we go out to eat or go to Karaoke. *(Participant 19, male)*

> My group has around 100 members, and I know around 200 TMS friends. The relationship is good because we often meet each other at school or go out together. Sometimes we meet each other, and sometimes I just send them messages. *(Participant 15, male)*

The group nature of TV-SMS chat also demonstrates its socializing utility. Many of the twenty TV-SMS chat players interviewed form groups of their own on the chat network, and such groups are of divergent sizes. A newspaper report by Koam (2011) claims a popular group like 'Kaka' has up to 500 members, while many groups joined by most of the participants contain only a handful of members. The strength of the group bond can sometimes be so strongly perceived to the extent that it either exhibits a stronger bond than friendship made in a physical space or is designated as an alternative 'family':

> I don't know why [I think TMS friends are closer]. But most of the time, friends on TMS speak to me every day. But for friends at school, I don't care much about them. We don't know each other's phone number even if we're in the same class. Friends in class don't understand me. In my class, people prefer dividing into small groups and hang out among themselves. They hang on to their groups, and I'm in my own group. There are three of us. We just talk as normal, but we don't know each other's phone number. *(Participant 14, female)*

> I have lots of friends and we have a TMS family. For me, I have a mother from TMS. Her nickname is Kakota Smile. There's also a dad. His nickname is Icon Cute Boy. They love each other, so then I call them mommy and daddy. *(Participant 14, female)*

Besides providing an alternative space for making new friends, TV-SMS chat can sometimes provide a means for reinforcing existing friendship or other types of peer bond. Trivial messages for friends such as casual greetings and song requests for friends are common on

TV-SMS chat, providing an opportunity for the players to stay connected beyond physical presence. In addition, not only can participation in TV-SMS chat initiate friendship, but it can also strengthen the existing one. As one male interviewee (*participant 20*) put it: "First, my friends were playing the TMS as a family of six. They invited me to be in their family. I decided to join as the 7th member, and we now chat as a family and have a stronger bond."

Despite the enthusiasm held by the most of the interviewees, there is nevertheless an acknowledged reservation regarding 'friendship' gained through the program by some of the participants, particularly with regards to the issue of sincerity and trust. The following three participants exemplify such reservation:

> I don't trust friends from TMS that much because we don't really know each other as well as those friends we make at school. I am not totally honest with them. It is only 80% sincerity because I think these friends may also not be honest with me. *(Participant 5, male)*

> I don't trust them so much. It may be 60% or 70% of trust. I've heard about such issue on magazine and Facebook … When we trust them too much, they will cheat us. I've told lies because I think they are only TMS 'friends', whose faces and real attitudes we never know. So it's useless to tell them my own true stories. *(Participant 10, female)*

> I don't trust them 100%. I tell them only things that I think I can reveal. If something is my secret, I won't tell them. Even among friends that we meet every day, we still don't understand each other completely. So what about people we never meet face to face? I speak about only what I want to. *(Participant 14, female)*

Such doubt on the authenticity and sincerity of technologically mediated 'friendship' is familiar feature of new communication technologies, particularly due to the distance one either maintains or is kept from others on such platforms as compared to communication in physical presence. For example, Baltraretu and Balaban (2010) demonstrate from their research on the use of social networking sites (SNS) among students in Romania that some of them, especially those who make less use of SNS, conceive such technologically mediated friends-bonding as superficial.

TV-SMS Chat and Romance

Romance and intimacy are generally accepted as realm of exploration among adolescents (Dacey & Travers, 2004, pp. 276-277); therefore, it is not surprising that TV-SMS chat, which is popular among youngsters, is implicated with the 20 participants in terms of their dealing with romance. Two salient issues are apparently most common among the participants with respect to romance: (1) using TV-SMS chat to seek 'sweethearts'[5] and (2) strategically exploiting TV-SMS chat for one's romance life.

First of all, as in the case of seeking new friendship, using TV-SMS chat platform to either seek out romance or engaging in flirtatious adventure is not exceptional. Such relationship

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[5] 'Sweetheart' is generally used among youngsters to refer to boyfriend or girlfriend, either involving or without involving sexual relationship.

usually starts with an exchange of messages through TV or providing one's phone number on the program. After a follow-up of two or three phone calls, one can usually move on. They either try to meet face-to-face or opt for virtual 'love' over the phone. Sometimes, pictures are exchanged through MMS, or Facebook profile names are exchanged to learn more about each other before committing to any relationship. However, one noticeable observation of such romance is that it tends to be short-lived and for casual, non-sexual encounter, and many of the participants also hold the reservation regarding the sincerity of such romance. A male interviewee (*participant 13*) explains how he has had many 'sweethearts' through TV-SMS:

> Since I started playing TMS, I have had many sweethearts. I have nearly 20 sweethearts so far. … We often went out dating and talked on the phone. … [Before getting into a relationship with each one of them] we talked for seven or eight times, but sometimes only once … We teased each other and it could become romance.

More interestingly, TV-SMS can also be used by some participants as a strategic tool for dealing with one's romance life. Such strategic exploitation can be used in both a supportive and adversarial manner. In one instance, TV-SMS chat is used to tussle in a romantic scuffle, where a female participant decides to get a 'boyfriend' through TV-SMS in order to hurt her 'ex-boyfriend'. It is a strategic choice since she learns that her ex-boyfriend is playing TV-SMS chat and expects him to know she is getting into a new relationship and hopes that will hurt him:

> First, I wanted to win. My TMS friend … told me that my ex-boyfriend was playing TMS. She then posted on TMS that I was looking for a boyfriend as well as my number. Then my prospective new boyfriend sent me messages. And I accepted him. I didn't expect the relationship to last long. I didn't think the new boyfriend loved me anyway because we just got to each other for a few days … I think he just played with me and I just play along. It depends on that guy. If he loves me for real, it isn't a problem … I accepted the new boyfriend because I wanted to win. *(Participant 14, female)*

In contrast, another participant uses TV-SMS chat to support her love relationship by expressing her love to her boyfriend in public:

> I want my friends on TMS to know that I'm honest with my boyfriend. When my boyfriend sees it, my boyfriend is also happy to read. Whenever I play TMS, I call him to read my messages … For example, I say 'I love you, honey, forever' … I feel happy to let my boyfriend know I love him. *(Participant 17, female)*

TV-SMS Chat and Flight from Boredom and Stress

Friends-making and other interpersonal or group interaction discussed above is linked to another dimension of the implications of TV-SMS chat among the participants. Besides the impact on their sociability, discussed above in terms of friendship and romance, most of the participants find TV-SMS chat almost like a therapeutic tool to get away from boredom and stress. Regardless of whether and how much the friendship and romance on TV-SMS chat is real, it does provide a space and tool for dealing with stress and boredom, which are

common for adolescents. The following instances demonstrate how TV-SMS chat can be very important for the participants psychologically:

> First, I just sent a message [on TMS] just to see what it was like … Sometimes when I reveal my number, there are people calling and talking with me … My boredom is gone and I have more friends. It makes me forget the stress and know many friends. *(Participant 2, female)*

> I used to show how sad I felt [on TMS]. I wanted everyone to know and chat with me to make me happy … They asked me to be a friend and we talked and had fun. It made me forget about the sadness. *(Participant 12, male)*

> I want to make more friends so that I can call them for a chat when I'm lonely … I can't make close friends at school. So, knowing friends through TMS makes me feel happy. When I'm alone, I prefer playing TMS chat. *(Participant 7, male)*

> First I didn't know how to play. But a friend who had studied with me since grade seven told me that playing TMS would make me happy and get many friends. After I tried, I've found out that TMS chat is really enjoyable and helpful, especially when I'm alone. *(Participant 10, female)*

As can be seen above, TV-SMS chat can be effective in dealing with stress and boredom among the 'players' in this study. This resonates with other studies on the psychological impact of new media and technological applications on their users, such as ICQ online chat (Leung, 2001) and Facebook and instant messaging (Quan-Haase & Young, 2010). What is central here is that pleasure and fun generated from such media or applications are instrumental to dealing stress and boredom.

CONCLUSION

> Many of the most valuable relationships in our lives, however, are not the new and developing ones. Rather, the fabric of our everyday existence is often woven with communication and relationships that we have had for many years – or even for a lifetime. Spouses, parents, siblings, long-term friends, and colleagues – communication within these relationships shapes our lifeworlds and meanings far beyond their early stages of social penetration or uncertainty reduction. (*Miller, 2005, p. 186*)

This study adds to the mounting evidence of the strong implications of new media integration into the lives of young people today. Internationally, it is well documented that new media, especially mobiles and the Internet, have transformed the social and psychological spaces and action of people in the contemporary digital age (e.g. Ling, 2004; Wallace, 1999; Wellman & Haythornthwaite, 2002; Young, 2004). In Cambodia, few studies exist to illustrate such social and personal transformation implicated by new media. For example, Saray, Chea and Peou (2010) show from their survey that socializing and maintaining friendship, together with seeking fun, are the main motivations behind the use of Facebook among Cambodian users, while Chea (2010) argues based on her multi-method research that blogging is a tool for psychological empowerment for bloggers. This study

offers another case of social and personal transformation induced by new media. On the basis of the twenty participants' experiences, it can be said that TV-SMS chat is as transformative as other communication technologies, such as the Internet and social networking sites (SNS), for the personal and social lives of young Cambodians: new friendship and bonding are forged, existing bonding is enforced, and new space for romance, entertainment and emotional release emerges. However, it remains evident that doubt on the authenticity and sincerity of such technologically mediated bonding persists.

However, it is hardly possible to foresee what the future holds for the increasing integration of such technologies into the lives of young Cambodians. New media are obviously a two-edged tool and space: both adding socializing and restricting real-life contact, both entertaining and harming at the same time. TV-SMS chat is a relatively new feature on Cambodian TV and in Cambodia, so the full-scale impact on its users remain to be seen as such technological application evolves. In addition, further implications of TV-SMS chat and other communication technologies require further rigorous studies paying attention not only to a bigger group of people but also other aspects of the implications of technological integration into social and personal lives. For instance, some participants in this study also pointed out other implications in relation to their study and family relationship. With increasing technological integration into Cambodian lives, especially young people, it is imperative that we need further understanding of these implications.

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The Role of Media in Promoting Nationalism:
The Case of Cambodia

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Benedict Anderson's (1983) influential book on nationalism, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, illuminates our knowledge about the role of printing technology in promoting nationalism. Anderson stresses the importance of the invention of printing and print-capitalism as the main factors leading to the rise of nationalism. He defines a nation as an imagined political community. The advent of printing and its process, print-capitalism, allowed the readers to imagine themselves as part of a political community, which he calls a 'nation'. In this brief commentary, I would like to trace the historical background of the Cambodian media and its contribution to Cambodian nationalism. First, I am going to present an insight about nationalism in Cambodia before I move on to discuss the role of the Cambodian media in promoting, reinventing, and reconstructing Cambodian nationalism.

According to the modernist view, the concepts of nation and nationalism in Cambodia are recent phenomena. They are the result of the French colonial rule of Cambodia from 1863 to 1953. Penny Edwards (2007) in her book, *Cambodge: The Cultivation of a Nation, 1860-1945*, argues that it was the French who brought the notions of nation and nationalism in Cambodia into light. During the colonial period, French scholar-administrators did a lot of things, which contributed to Cambodia's modern nation-building. They discovered Angkor in 1860, and a great deal of attention and vigorous effort to study the kingdom's past took place in the subsequent years. French administrators and scholars wrote many reports and articles about Angkor and they were published in journals in Paris. The French also helped build the grand palace, national museum, and Buddhist Institute in Phnom Penh. They also negotiated for the return of some of Cambodia's provinces lost to Siam, and they also created the modern 'geo-body'[6] of a Cambodian nation with boundary lines on maps. All of these are seen as the French effort to construct a meaningful history for Cambodia, which had an influence on the rise of nationalism in Cambodia in the early 1900s. A small number of Cambodian elites, especially those who had been educated in France or in French schools in Phnom Penh, Saigon, or provincial towns[7], started to imagine the glory and greatness of Cambodia's past.

In 1936, the first Khmer-language newspaper, *Nagara Vatta*, was established. It was a nationalist newspaper. It covered the issues of culture, territory and ethnic Vietnamese and Chinese, among others, in Cambodia. It is not known how influential the newspaper was since its targeted readership was small, perhaps a small number of urban elites. However, David Chandler (1986) argues that its weekly circulation of 5000 copies suggests that it was widely read. In post-colonial Cambodia, it was observed that the themes of Cambodian nationalism evolved around the concepts of glorious past, magnificent ancient temples with Angkor Wat at the centre of attention, lost territories to its larger neighbours Thailand and Vietnam, and the perception of the Thais and the Vietnamese as a threat. These themes,

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[6] I borrow this term "geo-body of a nation" from Winichakul (1994).
[7] For the discussion of the linkage between literacy/education and nationalism, see Gellner (1983).

carried through various forms of media, created and reinvented Cambodian national identities which have bound the Khmer together and made it possible for them to imagine their community, Cambodia, as distinctive from their hostile neighbours, Thailand and Vietnam. In the conflict with Thailand in the 1950s and 1960s concerning Preah Vihear Temple, the media in Cambodia took a nationalist campaign against Thailand. For example, the state-owned radio aired several episodes of the *Legend of Preah Ko Preah Keo*[8] for entire evenings. The episode relating to the flight and subsequent capture of Preah Ko Preah Keo by the Siamese left many listeners with tears in their eyes (Ang, 1997).

Contemporary Cambodian media, either those supporting the government or those anti the government, continue to play a role in promoting the country's nationalism. In 2003, *Rasmei Angkor*, a small pro-government newspaper, reported a rumour about a comment made by a famous Thai actress named Sovanan Kongying, known in Cambodia as *Phkay Proeuk* (Morning Star), that she would only ever accept an invitation to perform in Cambodia if the Angkor Wat was 'returned' to Thailand[9]. The report made many Cambodian people furious and led to an anti-Thai riot in Phnom Penh. The situation deteriorated and led to the burning of the Thai Embassy and physical attacks of Thai economic interests in Phnom Penh after the rioters heard a comment from caller into the Beehive Radio that the Cambodian Embassy in Bangkok had been attacked and several Cambodian people there killed by a Thai mob (Hinton, 2006). Both the rumours reported by the newspaper and the radio turned out later to be untrue, but they were not verified before the news was released. In the recent conflict with Thailand over the listing of Preah Vihear temple as a World Heritage site and the ownership of the land adjacent to the temple, the Cambodian media in all forms, the print, the broadcast and online blogs, reported news about the territorial encroachment by Thailand. Selective news reports on television channels, newspapers and online outlets showed photos, pictures, and maps at the 'contested' site between Cambodian and Thai troops. The news appealed to all Cambodian people to unite to protect the territory. The appeal also reached overseas Cambodians through online media. Despite living overseas, they actively engaged in debates and comments in favour of Cambodia[10]. The news, photos and pictures on blogs linked overseas Cambodians with local Cambodians in a time and space and they reinforced the imagination of the Cambodian nationhood.

In conclusion, the Cambodian media, either pro-government or anti-government, have continued to play a significant role in promoting and shaping Cambodian nationalism. In the past, the media had only local reach, but at present its reach is global. Thus, it can also involve overseas Cambodians in the discussion and debate about various issues, among which nationalism is one. Thus, it implies that there is a greater responsibility and greater demand for professionalism on the part of the people who work in the Cambodian media sector. The media should report news that sows good nationalism such as loving the country, valuing and consuming domestic product, etc. It should avoid releasing news that cultivates negative nationalism such as news that provokes racial discrimination, ethnic conflicts, religious conflicts, and the like.

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[8] The legend portrays Thailand and Thai people in a negative way. The Thais were seen as greedy, invasive and destructive to Cambodia's potential and resources for peace and prosperity. For an academic analysis of the influence of the legend on Cambodia-Thailand relations, see Ngoun (2006).

[9] For a detailed analysis of the anti-Thai riot in Phnom Penh in 2003, see Hinton (2006).

[10] This is what Anderson (1998) calls 'long-distance nationalism'.

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Cambodian Press Freedom:
From 'Partly Free' to 'Not Free'?

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Free press was introduced to Cambodia after the 1991 Paris Peace Agreement, yet it has improved only slightly during the last two decades. Although there is a remarkable increase in the quantity of newspapers, magazines, broadcast and online outlets, journalists still face challenges while fulfilling their roles to inform, educate, entertain, and especially to watchdog. Given that a number of journalists and activists have been physically and legally persecuted over the past years, freedom of the press has been a hot issue in the Cambodian media. In 2007 and 2008, the Cambodian press was ranked by the Freedom House in its World Press Freedom Index as 'Partly Free', but was downgraded to 'Not Free in 2009 and 2010. Given the critical role a free press plays in a democracy, such designation is a real cause of concern.

The Cambodian press has historically been an integral part of the country's political development and transformation. The first Khmer language newspaper, *Nagara Vatta*, was established in 1936, during the French colonization, by Pach Chhoeun, Son Ngoc Thanh and Sim Var. *Nagara Vatta* was shut down in 1942 and one of the founders was arrested on charge of 'leading demonstrations'. After the Kingdom approved its first constitution in 1947, more newspapers were published. However, in the 1960s, most newspapers 'served as mouthpieces' for the *Sangkum Reastr Niyum* Party and the press, especially the Western press in the country, which maintained a critical stance towards the government, was more tightly controlled (Mehta, 1997). In 1970, the media was censored after General Lon Nol overthrew Prince Norodom Sihanouk in a coup and a few newspapers were later on shut down because of their criticisms on the regime. During the Khmer Rouge regime, between 1975 and 1979, press freedom reached its zero point. Only one radio station and some magazines were used as propaganda tools of the Khmer Rouge. After the collapse of the regime, the state-owned media—AKP (L'Agence Khmer de Presse), four newspapers, a radio station and Television Kampuchea (TVK)—mainly published or broadcast the communist party's propaganda and its leaders' activities (according to Mehta, 1997). Following the Paris Peace talks in 1991, through which the ideas of democracy and free press were (re-)introduced to Cambodia, the country has had a freer press with a boost in the number of print publications.

This brief history demonstrates that the Cambodian press reflected and at the same constituted the political situations of the country. A free press and a country's political development are interconnected. Thus, by understanding the current situation of the press in Cambodia, one can also grasp a good understanding of the country's political health.

CURRENT PRESS SITUATION

Currently, there are more than 300 newspapers registered at the Ministry of Information, but just over a dozen of them actually publish regularly. Besides newspapers, Cambodia has two AM radio stations and at least seventy-two FM radio stations. On top of this, there are also several international broadcasters in Khmer language, including the Radio Free Asia, Voice of America, Radio France International, ABC Radio Australia, among others, which broadcast

select programs in Khmer language. In addition, there are ten TV channels, two cable TV providers, and a Direct TV provider.

However, these figures cannot prove that Cambodia has a free press. Journalists are still facing many challenges in doing their jobs. Those challenges include journalism education, access to information, freedom of speech, physical and legal harassment and other related issues. By the time the UNESCO established the Cambodia Communication Institute (CCI) in 1994, most of the Cambodian journalists did not have formal education in journalism and receive limited trainings. But since then, the CCI has been providing short courses and diploma programs for working journalists, and it was not until 2001 that a tertiary degree program in journalism was established. The Department of Media and Communication (DMC) at the Royal University of Phnom Penh has been running the Bachelor's degree program since ten with a total intake of around 25 students each year. In effect, both practicing and prospective journalists have been trained and the quality of reporting has also improved to some extent. However, some journalists find it hard to apply what they have learnt into practice because they either do not have enough freedom to do so or are working for the government-controlled or -aligned media organizations. Moreover, with a common perception that journalism is still a 'dangerous' and low-paid occupation or career, most journalism graduates are inclined to moving to other related occupations in communication or public relations.

So far, those journalists have been doing a good job in informing, educating and entertaining the public. However, they tend to face difficulties when doing their job as a watchdog. Access to information is limited and frustrating due to bureaucracy. More importantly, a number of journalists and opposition activists have been physically or legally attacked and threatened over the years although the freedom of expression is guaranteed in the 1993 constitution and the 1995 Press Law. Some journalists have fled the country for security reason. According to the Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ), at least eight journalists have been murdered in Cambodia since 1992 and the most recent case was that of a local reporter named Khem Sambo, who was shot dead just weeks before the national election in 2008.

'Legal' threats and attacks, on charges of defamation and disinformation, are another big challenge for journalists in Cambodia. Journalists had been charged with reference to defamation provision of the 1995 Press Law and the UNTAC Law before defamation was decriminalized in 2006. However, disinformation remains a criminal offense and those charged with such a count could be imprisoned while vague wordings in the provision allows for possible various interpretations against those being charged. According to the CPJ, one of the most remarkable legal harassments against journalists was the case of Dam Sith, editor-in-chief of pro-opposition *Moneakseka Khmer* Newspaper*,* who was arrested and charged of defamation and disinformation in 2008. In 2009, the publisher and editor-in-chief of the *Khmer Machas Srok* Newspaper, another pro-opposition newspaper, Hang Chakra, was charged with 'misinformation' and 'dishonoring public officials' after publishing an article alleging officials in a deputy prime minister's office of corruption.

Generally, TV and the radio are seen as the most popular media in Cambodia since many Cambodians, especially those who live in provincial rural districts, cannot read and write. Mostly newspaper has high readership in cities and urban areas where literacy rate is much higher than that in the provincial rural areas. However, the news on most TV and radio channels is unbalanced and of little substance. Most of it is obviously protocol information.

The question of who owns the media contributes a lot to the quality and types of news in Cambodia. While some media agencies are state-owned, some are jointly run by governmental bodies and private companies and the others are run by individuals who are allied to the ruling party. Yet, the audience can still find critical news in some of the radio frequencies like the Women's Media Center (FM 102) and other international broadcasters including Radio Free Asia, Voice of America, or Radio France International.

Since new media are emerging in this country, the Internet is considered a quick and convenient way of receiving and spreading information. But the Internet is only widely used and accessible in Phnom Penh and other urban areas. Based on the Internet World Stats, the number of Internet users in Cambodia in mid-2011 numbered over 300,000 (over 2% of the population), compared to just 6, 000 in the year 2000. More people, especially the young, are likely to spend much more time online and use social networking sites like Facebook, while more people are getting access to the Internet through mobile phones. In recent years, a number of Cambodian newspapers and magazines have set up their own web pages so that the readers can access their news online. A few TV and radio stations also have their own web sites as a supplement.

The Internet arguably is having more freedom than the print and broadcast media. Bloggers can comment and criticize more freely online. In this regard, the limited access, small number of users, and language of the web pages may be the reasons why Internet users are having more freedom. Lately, there has been speculation that the government has blocked (or attempted to block) a weblog called KI-Media, one of the most vocal critical voices against the government, although this has been refuted by the Minister of Information.

FROM 'PARTLY FREE' TO 'NOT FREE'

The Cambodian press enjoyed its two consecutive good years of being 'Partly Free' in 2007 and 2008. Unfortunately, it was designated as 'Not Free' in 2009 and 2010. But what does this change mean? And how is the rating prepared? According to the Freedom House's 2010 Press Freedom Index of 196 countries and territories, the score is given to each country based on a scale from 0 to 100, with the smaller score designating a better performance in the ranking. The descriptive designation of a country's press freedom is based on a three-tier categorization: 'Free' (0–30), 'Partly Free' (31–61), 'Not Free' (61–100). However, to better understand – hence whether or not to appreciate – the designation, we need to comprehend the methodology of the index. The Freedom House used 23 questions and 109 indicators, measuring three main areas in relation to the press: the legal environment (laws and regulations), the political environment (political control), and the economic environment (media ownership).[11]

A better picture of the designation of Cambodia's press freedom should be observed over the years and digested beyond the mere label of 'Not Free'. Between 2002 and 2010, the score for Cambodian press freedom actually slightly improved, from 68 to 61. The biggest improvement in the press environment was in 2007, when Cambodia scored 58 on the Press Freedom Index,

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[11] For the detailed description of the survey methodology and questions, see
http://freedomhouse.org/template.cfm?page=350&ana_page=376&year=2010

i.e. considered 'Partly Free'. Unfortunately, there had been a slip between 2008 and 2010, scoring 60 and 61, respectively (*see* page 4).

The situation of the Cambodian press freedom can also be examined in more detail for the three areas of the Press Freedom Index, i.e. the legal environment, the political environment, and the economic environment. The legal environment actually improved between 2002 and 2010, with an improving score from 26 to 20, respectively, albeit not a good–enough improvement. This can be attributed to the legal cases against journalists in recent years, particularly the two cases of Dam Sith and Hang Chakra raised above, who were charged and imprisoned for 'defamation' and 'disinformation', and 'misinformation' and 'dishonoring public officials', respectively. Although the 1993 Constitution and the 1995 Press Law ensure the freedom of expression, some critical journalists and political activists have faced lawsuits for the criticisms they have made against the political elites. In 2006, imprisonment, used to be a penalty for defamation, was abolished, but the charges of 'disinformation' and 'insulting public officials' can still result in imprisonment if the one charged is found guilty.

The political environment has unfortunately not improved, with the score remaining at 22 in 2002 and again in 2010. Political control and influence on the news content remains a concern, especially in the state-run media and some of the private media. Access to the information on the government's activities or records is still limited and restricted, or has to go through a long and complicated bureaucratic process. Some journalists have little access to interview some government officials, with bureaucracy and self-censorship among the main obstacles. Additionally, there are still cases where journalists and political activists have been threatened or even physically attacked for their publications of or critical expressions on sensitive issues. For the murder cases over the years in particular, no perpetrators have ever been identified and prosecuted.

In terms of the economic environment for the press, Cambodia's performance remained almost the same between 2002 and 2010, with only one-point improvement from 20 to 19. The Freedom House's measure of the economic environment takes into consideration a number of factors, including media ownership, transparency of operation, costs of establishing and operating media organizations, corruption and bribery, among others. Media ownership in Cambodia does contribute a lot to the freedom and quality of the press in Cambodia. There are few independent media organizations, while many are either state-run or joint state-private run, or owned by individuals who are allied to the government. This restrictive media ownership structure has produced censorship and self-censorship, hindering the flow of information and freedom of speech. Additionally, most of the news contents of those media are protocol news, and the line between news and propaganda is extremely blurred in Cambodian news media.

The most accurate description is, therefore, that the situation of press freedom in Cambodia has not improved over the last decade. Except in 2007 and 2008, the designation of the press situation has remained 'Not Free'. Additionally, the change in description designation (from 'Not Free' to 'Partly Free' in 2007 and from 'Partly Free' to 'Not Free' in 2009) reflected *no significant* change in the reality of press freedom, as the ranking scores fluctuated only between a few score points. Therefore, the cause for concern regarding the Cambodian press is that there has been little or no improvement over the last decade, not that it has deteriorated – as voiced by some commentators.

The reality is restriction, self-censorship and harassment still exist at present, but some critical voice can also be heard from a small number of foreign radio broadcasters such as the Radio Free Asia, Voice of America, and Radio France International. A few daily newspapers like the Phnom Penh Post and the Cambodia Daily can also be considered critical, though they can only reach a small audience. While the print and broadcast media seem very restricted, the Internet is somewhat free from government control. Internet users and bloggers can in principle criticize or comment without any restriction, yet the number of Internet users is still tiny, with the Internet penetration of just about 3%. It appears that although the Freedom House ranked Cambodia among the 'Not Free' countries, press freedom is not totally suppressed. There is still space for critical journalists or news agencies to fulfill their roles effectively and efficiently as long as professionalism is strongly valued and practiced. However, it must also be admitted that the legal, political and economic environment remains restrictive for professionalism. In short, there is still room for critical media in Cambodia to be found, but the critical space remains very limited.

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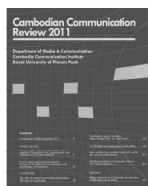
A Reflection on Cambodian Media Ethics

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On 23 October 2011, Cambodia marked the 20th anniversary of the Paris Peace Agreement signed by four warring Cambodian factions. The Paris Peace Agreement not only helped end the two-decade civil war, but also brought about liberal democracy and free press to Cambodia. Regardless of their size and color, different private newspapers began mushrooming in the country to engage in the new media business or to support various political parties participating in the UN-sponsored election in 1993.

However, these newly established newspapers were far from reaching the professional standards, making ethical infractions common among Cambodian media professionals. Many journalists would fill the pages of their newspapers with "news" that was often opinionated or with slanderous articles to sling mud at political parties and politicians or even at journalists working for rival media outlets. While revenue sources were very limited, some newspapers even published pornography to try to attract readers and sell copies of their papers. A foreign media observer once labeled the Cambodian media as a "mad dog" instead of a watchdog, its supposedly democratic role.

Having been overwhelmed with political news and information provided by the state-run media for so long, the information-hungry readers would try to read every story published in the newly established private newspapers no matter how poor the quality of their news products was. Before too long, the government passed the Khmer Press Law in July 1995 in an attempt to regulate and improve the media business and profession.

Nevertheless, nearly 20 years later this media environment has almost become a thing of the past. Most of the nearly 400 newspapers registered with the Ministry of Information have disappeared from the newsstands as they lost support from the audience. Journalists have learned to distinguish facts from opinions and would try to get the other side of the story to present conflicting perspectives from different sources. Pornography is almost non-existence. At press conferences or coffee shops, journalists from various political spectrums can be seen sitting side by side to compare notes or to share story ideas, putting aside their political differences. The main concern of these journalists is to fill their news newspapers with news about the *real* stories that readers want to read and to compete in the free marketplace of ideas.

In spite of these significant improvements, Cambodian media and journalists need to do more to further promote their professional standards as questionable ethical practices still continue to be committed by Cambodian media professionals.

In mid-October, a local newspaper published a color picture of six children and adults drowning after their boat capsized in a river, with no regard to the grief of the bereaved families. Another newspaper identified a victim of rape and murder in its news report

around the same period, ignoring the victim's (as well as her relatives') dignity and right to privacy. Two weeks earlier, three provincial reporters were arrested in a bribe-turned-extortion scandal over five U.S. dollars. The list goes on.

Mistakes in the professional conduct of these journalists and their media outlets can be attributed to the fact that these practitioners appear to lack sound knowledge of their ethical and professional responsibilities or, otherwise, they may not be aware of their blatant violations of moral conducts in the media profession. Many journalists, particularly those in the provinces, have few opportunities to attend professional training and might not think that accepting "envelops" or "gasoline money" is unethical – let alone their oversight in terms of preservation of privacy and avoidance of plagiarism. This problem is compounded by their low wages and the editors' lackadaisical commitment to promoting the professional standards of their journalists. Worse still, some editors do not have sound understanding of ethical decisions either.

In the newsroom of a professional press, editors would require their journalists to abide by strict professional principles such as telling the truth, being balanced, avoiding plagiarism and so on. When it comes to using images, they would make judgment based on what is known as "the Cornflake Test" to decide whether or not to publish a gruesome picture in the newspaper. With this test, they would pull off any ethically controversial pictures if the images can create uneasy feelings for readers who may throw up or stop eating while having their breakfast in the morning.

Some editors may break this rule in very rare circumstances. *The Phnom Penh Post* decided to publish the bloody pictures of protesters who were killed and wounded after unknown assailants had lobbed four hand grenades into their peaceful demonstration in front of the National Assembly in 1997. Likewise, *The Cambodia Daily* followed suit by running a gruesome picture of people slaughtered in the Philippines on their way to register in an election a few years ago.

By deciding to publish gruesome pictures like the two examples above, editors would have to weigh between the damage caused by their ethical infractions against public interest. When public interest outweighs ethical infractions, it is presumed that this practice should be allowed. However, public interest does not outweigh the ethical violation of printing the dead body of a child killed in a traffic accident, which is a common practice among many newspapers in Cambodia.

Apart from editors, journalism principles and practices are also in principle scrutinized by media experts as well as readers, where most power of the media business resides. Over the years, readers have developed a high level of media literacy. They can distinguish a good story from a bad one, a balanced and fair story from the one that is biased toward one side. With their media literacy continuing to improve, the readers also continue to have higher expectations from the media and journalists to uphold higher professional standards.

While the readers can punish an unethical newspaper by boycotting its "news" product, the worst comes when the government steps in. To avoid this problem, the Cambodian media professionals need to regulate themselves instead of being regulated by the government.

It is with these vision and objectives that a group of senior journalists and editors have joined together over the past year to form the Cambodian Journalists' Council for Ethics (CJCE). When CJCE fully functions, it will keep an eye on any ethical mistakes committed by Cambodian journalists and will give recommendations to improve their practices.

As a matter of the fact, it is in the best interest of the media and journalists to abide by professionalism and ethical practices. With higher professional standards, they can produce quality news products that can win the support of more readers and advertisers alike. With more revenue from advertisements and the sale of more newspaper copies, a newspaper can also pay a higher salary to their journalists who will also be committed to upholding media ethics and professional standards.

In effect, it goes without saying that professionalism is the best protection against any lawsuits brought against the media and journalists. Apparently, it is a gain without pain.

New Media: New Political and Civic Space for Young Cambodians?

Keynote Address at the Conference on 'New Media and Democracy in Cambodia: The Reshaping of Social Space for Young Cambodians'
Hotel Cambodiana, Phnom Penh, Cambodia
21 October 2011

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Let me start by clarifying first what I refer to by 'new media' in this talk. By new media I'm referring mainly to two technologies of communication: the mobiles and the Internet. The two obviously cover a wide range of communication media: cell phone, smart phone, iPad, and the Internet-based technologies including web sites, e-mail, social networking sites (e.g. Facebook), personal blogs, content sharing sites (e.g. Youtube), and the like. Some of you may talk of cell phones as 'old' and Facebook as 'new'. But how I take these technologies together as 'new' is by acknowledging that they are what only your generation has grown up with and seen as a 'natural' part of your life.

In what to follow, I will first point out why paying attention to the intersecting issue of young people and new media is crucial. Then I will get into the specifics of how new media may shape the political and civic space for young people today. Finally, I hope to offer some thoughts and cautions on realizing, or not, such political and civic opportunities for young Cambodians in the future. To clarify, I am not attempting to exert a moral and political path for you, but I am only hoping to open the space for thinking and especially for the debate to follow later in this conference.

YOUNG CAMBODIANS AND NEW MEDIA: WHY THEY MATTER

Today, obviously, we are talking about two very critical aspects for not only the contemporary world but also Cambodia in particular: young people and new media. To take the two issues together, we are dealing with a topic replete with optimism as well as pessimism. Indeed, few other issues would be more critical to Cambodia and its youth today. Let me try to explain why pitting Cambodian youth against new media deserves such significant attention.

Cambodian Youth: Two major agendas dominate the transformation of Cambodia over the last two decades: (1) economic development and (2) democracy. Any long-term success of the two agendas inevitably rests mainly on young Cambodians today, our prospective economic and political force. These two agendas must therefore dictate our attention when working with young people. On the one side, to ensure economic growth requires attention on youth vocationalism (and education) to warrant due returns from Cambodia's demographic dividend. On the other, to ensure any prospect of democratic development, we have to pay our attention to how young people are empowered to act in the civic and political spheres.

New Media: Now, where should we look for potential room for such empowerment for civic and political action? Of course, new media offer an interesting opportunity. Admittedly, while the use of mobile phone is high (close to 50% of the population), the use of the Internet – and Facebook – in Cambodia is still very low compared to many other countries (less than 3% of the population). But everyone seems to believe that the number of Internet users is climbing, and I have no trouble agreeing.

Now, let us look at what has been going on with young people and these new media. A huge amount of literature worldwide has one consensus: new media have become an indispensible part of young people's lives. My research in the last two years has apparently confirmed this is also the case for Cambodia (although currently only the advantaged groups of young people have regular access to the Internet). What are the consequences? The best answer seems to be: All sorts of consequences! All sorts of issues have arisen: privacy, identity, sociability, information authority, ego-exhibitionism, and the list goes on. Like it or not, the integration of new media into young people's lives is changing their ideas and action with regards to most aspects of life: romance, education, work, belief, identity, et cetera.

Civic and political participation is no exception! With the presence of new media, we have to rethink the way young people today can be empowered to participate in civic and political space and activities. Rather than prescribing, I would now like to sketch the possibilities and limitations of new media in empowering civic and political participation for a democratic society. Of course, I will do this by taking on an important assumption about democracy; that is, I am assuming democracy to be a system that can only be healthy with informed and active citizens – citizens that demand information and knowledge, and citizens that are active in pursuing rights and taking action for collective good.

NEW MEDIA AND INFORMATION-BASED CITIZENSHIP

First of all, we can look at how new media can enhance or weaken 'information-based citizenship'. Recognize it or not, the model of information-based citizenship is integral to democracy. For a healthy democracy, where people can enjoy the freedom to make expression and decision, we need informed citizens, who can make informed decision and act accordingly. Any hindrance to information and knowledge is in principle preventing the democratic process, and any aid to information reception and knowledge acquisition fosters democracy.

Within this frame of thought, new media (i.e. mobile communication and the Internet) indeed help advance democracy. A simplified formulation goes like this: *new media provide 'more' and 'quicker' information, which means more informed citizenry*. How does this work? In simplest terms, new media function in two basic modes for information provision: point-to-point communication and store of information and knowledge. [1] To put it crudely, your friends, family, colleagues and others can quickly send you information through mobile phones and Internet-based means, such as e-mail, Facebook and Twitter. The transmission of information in these channels is so fast that mass media institutions, governmental agencies and other institutions have to follow these channels to keep up. Obviously, the rise

of so-called 'citizen journalism' is a direct consequence of such change in information transmission landscape, and we now witness new and influential players in the landscape: personal blogs, Wikipedia, etc. [2] In addition, the Internet itself is arguably an ocean of information with unknown depth and breadth. Like it or not, the potential of information and knowledge offered by new media is absolutely huge. Given the right skills and resources, one can in principle find out about anything from tying a tie to reading news, to digging into information about a political figure.

We cannot deny the prevailing adage: "Information is power." But let me add, "And so is misinformation!" What we can have, therefore, are two irreconcilable powers. One is the power of the informed citizenry to act rationally; the other is the power to weaken the rationality and knowledge of the citizenry and their participatory democracy. Thus, the assumption made earlier can be exposed: more and quicker information is equated with 'better' information. This is a reckless assumption. On the one hand, 'misinformation' can be spread as quickly and easily as 'information' to cause confusion and distrust. On the other, too much amateurish and unreliable information may make life much harder for getting the right information for empowering ourselves and democratic process.

NEW MEDIA, ACITIVISM, AND RIGHTS-BASED CITIZENSHIP

From a 'rights-based citizenship' viewpoint, a healthy democracy is one where fundamental political, social and economic rights are guaranteed for the citizens. For such guarantee, activism, civic engagement and social movements lie at the core of the democratic process. Therefore, another way of understanding how new media can enhance democracy is to see their role in aiding activism, civic engagement and social movements. In other words, new media can foster democracy by permitting new and effective ways of mobilizing interests and action for activism and civic engagement. There are many concrete examples, both distant and recent: the influential role of the Internet in keeping democratic protest alive in Indonesia in the 1990s; the sharing of information and mobilization of people through mobile phone in ousting Joseph Estrada from power in the Philippines in 2001; the organization of WTO protests in Seattle in 1999 through the Internet; the political mobilization to protest the 2009 election in Iran; and, of course the now legendary story of, the use of Facebook to mobilize people in toppling the Tunisian President less than a year ago. Too dramatic? There are less dramatic yet as important examples: various works on youth mobilization worldwide through the Internet (for example, TakingITGlobal); using SMS to encourage young people to vote; and blogs and social networks on social issues by young people to share opinions and claim voices. Similar instances have indeed occurred in Cambodia as well, though to a lesser extent: promoting voting registration through SMS, and critical views on web-based technologies such as blogs and Facebook. The conclusion from these examples is that given the right skills and purpose, new media are effective and efficient tools for mobilizing interests and actions for collective causes.

But then, here are the downsides: they may be used by some regimes to crash democracy or they may become disengaged with the civic and political sphere. [1] Those who oppose their ruling regimes may be constantly monitored, identified and persecuted through their traces of online presence, and such regimes can also enhance their image by exploiting new media.

Examples are numerous such as in Iran, China and, just next door, Thailand. [2] In addition, most resources young people invest in new media may only be exploited for commercial purpose, rather than the civic and political empowerment. Some may argue that texting, Facebook connections, online game groups and the like provide some formation of virtual or real communities, but the question remains how civically and politically practical such communities are.

CONCLUSION: TAMING THE HYPE AND TAKING THE OPPORTUNITY

The potential of new media in empowering young people for their civic and political participation is real, and so are their limitations. A level-headed approach is needed through exploring and making use of the 'affordances' new media offer for civic and political participation. In my view, the potential of new media in enhancing democracy can be realized by young Cambodians if two major conditions are met.

First, we have to remember positive changes and democracy have long preceded new media. What these new media offer is new room for learning and action, and what is left to you is your activeness and action. Young people have to bother taking the time and effort to engage themselves actively.

Second, access to new media and skills in using them appropriately are indispensible if young people are to be able to harness the resources provided by new media. Social and institutional supports are important in this respect. New media may be the horse to ride to democracy, yet without the access to it and the skills to ride it properly, you will never reach the destination.

New media are out there; what really matters now is young people themselves to make the best use of it. They need to develop their interest and skills to exploit new media.
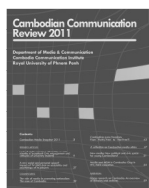
Media and MSM in Cambodia: Gap in HIV/AIDS Education

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Family Health International–Cambodia

Media researchers consider the media (i.e., newspapers, magazines, television, radio and the Internet) as the main sources of providing HIV and AIDS education and reducing people's risk behavior. They are considered as powerful and influential tools to educate the public about HIV/AIDS because they can attract great interests from the public and reach mass audience. However, are they always powerful and effective tools when they are used to educate a minority group, men who have sex with men? The term 'men who have sex with men', or generally known as 'MSM', refers to male persons who engage in sexual activity with members of the same sex, regardless of how they identify themselves.

THE DENIAL OF MSM'S HEALTH NEEDS

Now, let us look at what has been happening to Cambodian MSM when the society ignores them. It is worth noting that the denial and a lack of knowledge of male-to-male sexual behavior in Cambodia, coupled with high a level of stigma and discrimination, mean that MSM have remained relatively hidden and their concerns and sexual health have consequently been neglected. In recent years, both the Cambodian government and non-healthcare organizations have begun to recognize that many MSM are at high risk of getting contracted with HIV and other sexually transmitted infections (STIs). According to the UNAIDS 2010 report, the national HIV rate among Cambodian MSM in 2005 was 4.5 per cent, which was much higher than the rate of HIV prevalence among the general population.

In order to understand how MSM are at high risk to HIV and how HIV infection and STIs can be reduced among this group of people, I would like to give some background information related to this particular minority group. The MSM population of Cambodia is diverse and the two fundamental distinctions often used to describe MSM in Cambodia are: 'long-haired MSM' and 'short-haired MSM'. Long-haired MSM are men who present themselves with feminine characteristics and who may identify themselves as a woman; MSM of this category often dress as women. In contrast, short-haired MSM are men who identify and present themselves as men with normative male gender characteristics, and within this category, additionally, there are two further sub-groups: visible MSM and discreet MSM. Visible MSM are men who live their lives as typical men; they physically resemble a man with short hair but they prefer to have sex with men rather than with women. These visible MSM are recognizable because of their behavior and they are more open to their friends and families. As for discreet MSM, however, their male-to-male sexual behavior is kept secret. Many discreet MSM hide their sexual orientation from their families and parts of their social networks, but are open about it with close friends and partners. Discreet MSM usually have sexual intercourse with both men and women, and the majority of these men are married.

Many MSM in Cambodia are married, and having a female sweetheart is not uncommon among them. Regardless of marital status, it is common for Cambodian MSM to have sex with women in addition to sex with men. Thirty nine percent of the MSM in the 2005 STI Sentinel Surveillance (SSS) reported at least one female partner in the past year, with most of them having multiple female partners. This was confirmed by my study early this year, which found that a majority of the 250 respondents were in relationship with several partners and more than half of them reported having had sex with both men and women.

This indicates that MSM population can be a second wave of bridging HIV to the general population, and if there is no HIV prevention intervention among this group, the possibility of a new outbreak of HIV infection cannot be ruled out.

THE MEDIA AND GAP IN HIV/AIDS EDUCATION

The media generally play a vital role in educating the public about HIV/AIDS and they are thought to be effective in promoting safe sexual practices among most-at-risk groups. So, in order to reach out to MSM and provide information and intervention for promoting safe sexual practices among them, several organizations have made use of the media.

For the time being, two non-healthcare organizations in Cambodia are using media to promote HIV prevention among the MSM population. Family Health International (FHI) has created a web site known as *Khmer M-Style* since 2008 in order to reach out to the MSM, while the Khmer HIV/AIDS NGO Alliance (KHANA) supports the *No Means No* radio program on the Women's Media Center's FM102 to reduce social discrimination against and promote HIV prevention among MSM.

However, the effectiveness of these two media tools is rather limited. According to my study early this year, the two media tools (the *Khmer M-Style* web site and *No Means No* radio program) failed to reach out to the majority population of MSM in Phnom Penh in the past 12 months. My study indicated that only a minority of the respondents (28%) accessed the HIV prevention messages from the web site and radio program. This limited reach of the prevention messages from the two media tools implies that many MSM in Phnom Penh, probably also in Cambodia, are still most at risk to HIV and other STIs.

There are some reasons that cause the two media channels to fail to reach the majority population of MSM in Phnom Penh. First, Internet users like reading something new and interesting to them but the *M-Style* web site fails to update its contents, which could make the readers lose interest. Second, the access to the Internet and the knowledge of using it among MSM may relatively be limited. Third, MSM prefer entertainment to health education programs on radio.

CONCLUSION: IMPROVING COMMUNICATION STRATEGY

MSM is a hard-to-reach population and media have not been very effective in reaching this vulnerable group in Phnom Penh. In my view, promoting safe sexual behaviors among the

MSM population could be more successful if the following communication strategies are considered:

First, in order to bridge health communication gap among MSM, it is crucial to determine the most effective channels and sources of information to reach MSM with STD prevention messages. HIV/AIDS and MSM program implementers should identify the preferred channels of MSM within their program coverage for obtaining information about sexually transmitted diseases.

Second, stigma and discrimination from society, especially family, can cause MSM to become isolated and hidden, which makes them lose the opportunity to access STDs and other health information and services. This may lead them to commit unsafe sex, putting them at great risk to HIV infection. Therefore, in order to increase STDs knowledge among MSM and reduce their HIV infection risk, it is very important to change social perception and advocate for the entire society to recognize MSM's rights.

Third, improving outreach and educational activities on the Internet can be a new strategy to reach hidden MSM. It is noted that new social media networks, especially Facebook, should be considered in addition to the *M-Style* web site because it has become a popular network for MSM to make friends and seek sexual partners. In addition, in order to attract more MSM to visit the *M-Style* web site and keep them returning, it is very important to update its layout and contents.

Last, it is worth noting that the majority of MSM have mobile phones, so mobile communication can be integral to communication strategy. For instance, STDs prevention messages can be sent to MSM (subject to laws, if any, regarding sending unsolicited messages). HIV program can start by collecting the phone numbers of MSM through their peer network.

I believe that the HIV prevalence rate among Cambodian MSM will decline when social stigma and discrimination are reduced and the most effective channels to reach this vulnerable group are identified and mobilized to their fullest potential.
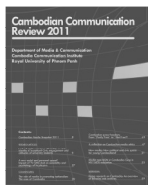
Doing Research on Cambodia:
An Overview of Libraries and Archives

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Visit the National Archive of Cambodia on any given day, and chances are that you will find some researchers from abroad sitting on the heavy wooden tables in the reading room and pouring over manuscripts from the colonial period or documents from the *Sangkum Reastre Niyum*. Scholars from abroad spend time and often a considerable amount of money to come to Cambodia to do research in one of the major collections of documents from the 'Union Indochinoise'.

Students and researchers who are looking for material for essays, a thesis, a dissertation or other academic works could have it much worse than in Cambodia. Despite the devastations of the past and severe economic limitations in one of the poorest countries of the world, there are a good number of archives and libraries that can be consulted by researchers. The libraries in Phnom Penh might not be on par with those in Western countries in terms of technical facilities, preservation and budget. But they make up for it with a surprising wealth of material that is of interest for researchers looking for information on the history of the country, especially on the colonial period. Institutions such as DC Cam or Bophana have built up unique collections on specialized topics.

In what follows I have put together an overview about the libraries, archives and collections in Cambodia that might be of interest to researchers from any discipline, plus an overview of some select international archives and the excellent online resources that have sprung up in the last couple of years.

LIBRARIES AND ARCHIVES IN CAMBODIA

National Library

Ave. 92, Khan Daun Penh, Phnom Penh
Tel: +855 (0)23 430 609
www.bibliotheque-nationale-cambodge.org
contact@bnc-nlc.info
Opening hours: Monday to Friday, 7:30 – 11:00 and 14:00 – 17:00

The National Library, housed in one of the most beautiful colonial buildings of Phnom Penh, is not first and foremost a research library, but they do have some rare material in their special reading room, including magazines and a few boxes with Khmer-language newspapers from before 1975. The Khmer Rouge used the library as a pantry and the garden to raise pigs, but surprisingly did not destroy its collection. That was left to the Vietnamese who pulped much of the sizable newspaper collection in order to have paper to print their own papers and propaganda fliers. Today, the special collections comprise over 8,000 documents, including material published in French between 1925 and 1970, plus books and documents published in Khmer between 1955 and 1975. The whole collection has recently been put in order, and is now relatively accessible. There is also a special

collection of 710 *sastra* or palm leaf manuscripts, which are available on microfilm. (For more on the history of the National Library, see Jarvis, 1995) The National Archive is currently digitizing some of its historical holdings to put them on the internet by early 2012.

National Archives of Cambodia
Street 61, Oknha Hing Pen, Phnom Penh
Tel/Fax: +855 (0)23 430 582
nacambodia.org
info@nac.gov.kh
Opening hours: Monday to Friday, 7:30 – 11:00 and 14:00 – 17:00

Despite its severe underfunding, this is the most relevant and useful archive in Cambodia. The collection includes the Fonds of the French Resident Superior, Records of the Pol Pot Regime, the Genocide Tribunal of 1979 and of the UNTAC, official journals and bulletins from various governments between 1920 and the present, the personal collection of Charles Meyer, Sihanouk's adviser and ghost writer during the 1960s (including his fantastic photo collection), maps and plans, etc., much of which can be located via their computer catalogue.

Library of the National Museum
Street 13, Sangkat Chey Chumneas, Khan Daun Penh, Phnom Penh
Tel/Fax: +855 (0)23 211 753
http://cambodiamuseum.info

A small, but significant collection of books and journals is hidden under the roof of the National Museum. It includes mostly books on art and archeology, and contains the personal collection of the late Ingrid Muan, co-founder of Reyum Gallery, that published some of the best books on Cambodian culture in the last decade.

Buddhist Institute
Sangkat Tonle Basak, Khan Chamkarmon, Phnom Penh
P.O. Box 1047
Tel: +855 (0)23 212 046
http://www.budinst.gov.kh

Founded in 1930 by King Monivong with support by the French Colonial Administration, the Buddhist Institute once was one of the prime research institutions in Cambodia, and published many important books including an unsurpassed seven-volume collection of Khmer fables and fairy tales. Today, the library of the Institute is a bit of a mess without even a card catalogue. However, given the long history of the Institute, they might have historic material at places that only truly persistent researchers will discover.

Library of the Cambodia Development Resource Institute (CDRI)
56, Street 315, Khan Tuol Kork, Phnom Penh
Tel: +855 (0)23 881 701
http://www.cdri.org.kh
cdri@cdri.org.kh

The CDRI library has mostly material on socio-economic and development issues among the over 15,000 titles they hold. New titles are acquired through exchange, subscriptions,

donation and deposits from other institutions and multi-lateral organizations such as the World Bank and ADB. The CDRI also publishes its own reports and analysis. The library offers memberships to the public.

Hun Sen Library

Royal University of Phnom Penh, Russian Blvd., Khan Tuol Kork, Phnom Penh
Tel: +855 (0)23 363 261
www.rupp.edu.kh
Opening hours: Monday to Friday, 7:30– 17:00; Saturday, 8:00 – 16:00

With its new, World Bank-sponsored building just opened, the Hun Sen Libary has added some attractive spaces to its formerly rather drab building. The Cambodiana Collection on the upstairs mezzanine floor has a wide range of publications by Cambodians and about Cambodia. Other special collections include the Education Research Centre, a collection of work on all aspects of education in Cambodia, and an UNTAC era survey of every village in Cambodia. The Library also has complete runs of the Cambodia Daily and Cambodge Soir, as well as the Khmer edition of the Official Gazette, covering the 20th century and earlier.

Bophana Audiovisual Resource Center

64, Street 200, Oknha Mén, Phnom Penh
Tel: +855 (0)23992 174
archives@bophana.org
www.bophana.org
Opening hours: Monday to Friday, 8:00 – 12:00 and 14:00 – 18:00; Saturday, 14:00– 18:00

Bophana has a collection of films, videos and audio material on and from Cambodia, the ranges from the shorts of Gabriel Veyre (the very first films shot in the country) to the water festival on the Mekong in the 50s, from the films of Norodom Sihanouk to Khmer Rouge propaganda radio broadcasts, from movies from the 'Golden Age of Khmer Cinema' in the 1960s and 1970s to recent television productions. The archive is constantly acquiring new material. Bophana also has a small library.

DC Cam

66, Preah Sihanouk Blvd, Phnom Penh
P.O. Box 1110
Tel: +855 (0)23 211 875
dccam@online.com.kh
http://www.dccam.org

DC-Cam has an extensive collection of primary documents from Democratic Kampuchea, including biographies of victims, confessions, diaries, telegrams and other official and personal documents. Unfortunately, there is no public card catalogue.

Center for Khmer Studies

Wat Damnak, Siem Reap
PO Box 9380
Tel: +855 (0)63 964 385
http://khmerstudies.org/library/
center@khmerstudies.org

The Center of Khmer Studies is one of the more comfortable places to do research in Cambodia. Housed in a sprawling, airy complex in Siem Reap's Wat Damnak, the collection of the Center includes periodicals such as *Kambuja Soriya*, the Bulletin de l'École française d'Extrême-Orient, Aséanie, Asian Perspectives and the journals of the Southeast Asian Ministers of Education Organization's Regional Centre for Archaeology and Fine Arts (SPAFA) and the Siam Society. They also have issues of old Cambodian magazines from the 1960s, such as *Kambuja* and *Réalités Cambodgiennes*. The Institute can also be the last resort for those looking for M.A. and Ph.D. theses from overseas universities as many researchers send copies of their work to Siem Reap. The Center also maintains a collection of research papers by Cambodian university students and fellows, and they have their own publication series.

EFEO Library
Beng Don Pa, Slakram, Siem Reap
BP 93 300
Tel +855 (0)92 993 502
dominique.soutif@efeo.net
http://www.efeo.fr/base.php?code=265&l=EN
Opening hours: Monday to Friday, 7:30 – 12:00 and 14:00 – 17:15

The École française d'Extrême-Orient (French School of the Far East), better known by its acronym EFEO, was founded in 1900, when Cambodia was a French 'Protectorate'. It is dedicated to the study of Asian societies, with a special focus on archeology and philology. During the French colonization of 'Indochina', its headquarter was in Hanoi. The Siem Reap Office, opened in 1907, was in charge of the conservation work in Angkor Wat. After the end of colonization, the headquarter was transferred to Paris, and from there EFEO today maintains an extensive network of offices not just in former French colonies, but also in Jakarta, Kuala Lumpur, Beijing, Bangkok, Kyoto, Seoul and other cities in Asia.

When they reopened in 1992, they established a small library that is mostly of interest to archeologists. The library holds 1,400 volumes in French, Khmer and English, a complete collection of maps of the country, and a number of digital resources. Most of the collection consists of material from the EFEO Angkor Conservation Office archives from 1908 to 1975, that is available on microfiche or CD-ROM. They also have material on ancient Cambodian history, archaeology and architecture, epigraphy, linguistics and ethnology. Since EFEO has been one of the first research institutions that opened after Cambodia regained its independence, they also have academic reports, theses, conference proceedings and other material from the 1990s that are hard to find elsewhere.

LIBRARIES ABROAD

There are a good number of international libraries that have significant collections on Southeast Asia in general and on Cambodia in particular. They are often better kept, more accessible and sometimes even more comprehensive than what can be found in Cambodia. For instance, issues on the weekly news magazine *Réalités Cambodgiennes* from the 1960s are scattered over various libraries in Cambodia. But if you are looking for a complete run of

this magazine, you need to go to an international library such as the British Library or the German Staatsbibliothek.

Many of the most relevant collections are in France. The French National Archive, in particularly its branch Archives nationales d'outre-mer (ANOM, in english: National Overseas Archives) in Aix-en-Provence, is the must-visit place for any historian who works on Cambodia prior to 1953, as it stores the archives from the ministries in charge of all French colonies, especially the *Ministère des Colonies*. It also has large parts of the old National Archives of Indochina that were partly transferred to France from Cambodia, Laos and Vietnam after their independence. Doing research on the history of these countries is often like a complicated puzzle game, where some pieces are kept at ANOM in France, while others are in the National Archives of the respective former colony.

But researchers interested in Cambodia might also travel to other countries. Monash University in Australia – where the Centre of Southeast Asia Studies, headed by the eminent Cambodia specialist David Chandler for almost two decades – received much of the personal archive of HM Norodom Sihanouk in 2005.

Then, there are the National Archives of Laos and Vietnam that contain documents from the common 'Indochinese' past. (Unfortunately, the Vietnamese archives are almost impenetrable for foreign researchers and the collection of the National Archive of Laos is rather modest: only one reading room on the first floor without any catalogue.)

Many U.S. universities also own specialized collections with documents on Southeast Asia. A comprehensive list of all the libraries that hold relevant material on Cambodia is beyond the scope of this article. (For a list of European libraries and archives with relevance to Southeast Asia, see Karni, 2003; for an international, though slightly dated, overview consult University of Washington Libraries, n.d., or the more up-to-date VLC Sources, n.d., which, however, is in French only.)

One library, however, deserves to be pointed out as relatively accessible in terms of both distance and user-friendliness:

Institut d'échange culturel avec la France (IDECAF)
28 Lê Thánh Tôn, Quận 1, Thành Phố, Hồ Chí Minh, Vietnam
Tel: +84 (0) 8 829 5451
http://www.idecaf.gov.vn
mediatheque@idecaf.gov.vn

Only six hours by bus from Phnom Penh, in Ho Chi Minh City, the Institut d'échange culturel avec la France appears to be at first glance another Institut français that offers language classes, cultural events and the like. However, tucked away in their spacious, bright médiathèque is a respectable collection of books and other documents from the colonial period, including useful material such as the Annuaire Générale yearbook and a good number of periodicals. Some of this material is also available online at the fabulous Gallica website, more of which below, but here one can actually hold those tomes in one's hand and scan or photograph illustrations.

INTERNET RESOURCES

Gallica
Web site: gallica.bnf.fr

Gallica is the digital library of the French National Library and an absolutely incredible resource. Since 1997, the library has scanned almost 200,000 volumes and 110,000 images, a good deed that will keep many researchers from making trips to French archives. A good number of the royalty-free documents that the library has put on the Internet deal with the colonial past, and there is some very good historic material on Cambodia.

Institut national de l'audiovisuel (INA)
Web site: ina.fr

The Audiovisual Archive of France has also put large parts of its collection on the net, where the material can be viewed, YouTube-style, for free. All of the footage can also be downloaded for relatively reasonable fees. The documentaries on Cambodia go all the way back to the 1940s. Colonial documentaries, news reels from the *Sangkum* period and the Khmer Republic, Khmer Rouge propaganda movies and footage from the UNTAC period, it is all there. Whether it is the looting of the Vietnamese embassy in Phnom Penh in 1970 or Ros Sereysothea as a parachutist in Lon Nol's army, there is a lot of interesting material to be found in the slightly confusing data base. Much of the material at Bophana originally is from the collection of INA.

Southeast Asia Digital Library
Web site: sea.lib.niu.edu

Hosted by the Northern Illinois University (NIU) Libraries, the Southeast Asia Digital Library has a wide variety of materials published or otherwise produced in Southeast Asia. From Cambodia there are more than 3000 photos, many of them taken in the 1950s and 1960s as well as pictures of the same places as they looked in 2007.

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