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Abstract

Title

**Pteah17: A humanitarian intervention in Sihanoukville,
Cambodia.**

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This thesis explores, in its entirety, a humanitarian intervention in Sihanoukville (Cambodia) aimed at building homes for families affected by land grabbing phenomena, frequent in the suburban areas of the city.

The entirety of the process that leads from an idea to the realisation of an architectural element is rarely managed by a single designer.

In the field of humanitarian - or cooperation - interventions the architect assumes a multiplicity of roles that partially fall outside the specific skills of the traditional designer and lead him to actually act to create the object, supported by a network of contacts and in collaboration with local populations and end users.

Through two frameworks, operated at different scales, we introduce historical, economic and social issues, examined starting from institutional sources (UN reports, Japanese International Cooperation, The World Bank, Cambodian Government documents, etc.) as well as newspaper articles (The Guardian, The Economist, Phnom Penh Post, Khmer Times etc.) and specific papers.

Thanks to a territorial urban analysis carried out on the spot - with direct observations and interviews - we are able to identify land occupation patterns and the occurrence of new land grabbing phenomena, which may affect the success of the intervention.

The study of climatic data - both on a territorial and microclimatic scale - and the observation of specific case studies are finally functional to the identification of an abacus of technical-architectural solutions.

These analytical considerations support the development of two different housing projects. The first, which was actually implemented on site, it is the result of a participatory planning, in close collaboration with some experts and with the end users of the structure. Moreover the building phase, which took place during the stay in Sihanoukville, is the product of a collective tension of designers and locals.

The second project, not yet built, is defined as "aware": it overcomes the experience of the first intervention, in order to define an architecture that can still be perfectly inserted in the reference context, but it is more functional and experimental.

In order to solve problems affecting the settlements of the suburban fabric of Sihanoukville, we traced some guidelines that operate at a territorial dimension. While on the one hand the phenomena of land grabbing, as well as the problems related to the disposal of waste and hygiene, can be stemmed with actions of an educational nature aimed at increasing the awareness of the inhabitants, on the other hand the resolution of the instances related to the lack of drinking water must be addressed with structured designs. These solutions can be effectively implemented with close collaboration between institutions and NGOs, to frame each action within a coordinated program.

The last part of the paper reports, in a more personal form, the work of the designers and their role in four specific phases of the intervention: the research of the project, the

preparation for the arrival in situ, the management of the funds and the project closure. The difficulties encountered emerge in this section: the fundraising phase and the discrepancy between a theoretical project in Italy and its application in the Cambodian reality. Next to these we highlight the results obtained: the material ones, namely the construction of the house and the immaterial ones, the reciprocal transmission of skills and the relationships, born during the design process, that can be reused in the future.

This chapter is configured as an appendix to the whole thesis, able to report and transmit the good and bad practices identified during the humanitarian process.