

Discoveries Speaker Series
UFV Geography and the Environment

OCTOBER 20, 2016
2:00-3:30 pm
Room A413 (Abby)

Spiriting away the homeless: Cambodia's new apocalypse



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This talk examines the plight of homeless peoples in Phnom Penh, Cambodia as a consequence of their enmeshment in a new logic of urban governance being effected by city officials and municipal planners. The widespread adoption of free market economics has produced conditions of globalized urban entrepreneurialism, from which Phnom Penh is clearly not exempt. The (re)production of cultural spectacles, enterprise zones, waterfront development, and privatized forms of local governance all reflect the powerful disciplinary effects of interurban competition as cities aggressively engage in mutually destructive place-marketing policies. In this regard, this talk examines the ongoing pattern of violence utilized by municipal authorities against homeless peoples in Phnom Penh as part of a gentrifying process that the local government has dubbed a 'beautification' agenda. Of particular concern is how city officials have begun actively promoting the criminalization of the urban homeless and poor through arbitrary arrests and illegal detention, holding them in 're-education' or 'rehabilitation' centres. Yet these centers are not what they seem, where such euphemisms attempt to mask the systemic abuse of marginalized peoples who are unwanted on the streets of the capital city as they are deemed to present a negative image for Phnom Penh.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR: Simon's research agenda explores the political, social, and geographical exclusions that neoliberalization has engendered, particularly in post-transitional Cambodia, where he emphasizes the spatialities of violence and power. He cultivates a cutting edge theoretical approach to his scholarship by foregrounding both poststructuralist critique and a radical revival of anarchist philosophy. Simon's books include *The Anarchist Roots of Geography: Towards Spatial Emancipation* (University of Minnesota Press, 2016), *The Discourse of Neoliberalism: An Anatomy of a Powerful Idea* (Rowman & Littlefield, 2016), *Violent Neoliberalism: Development, Discourse and Dispossession in Cambodia* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), and *Cambodia's Neoliberal Order: Violence, Authoritarianism, and the Contestation of Public Space* (Routledge, 2010). His edited books include *The Handbook of Neoliberalism* (Routledge, 2016), *The Handbook of Contemporary Cambodia* (Routledge, 2016) and the *Anarchism, Geography and the Spirit of Revolt* trilogy (Rowman & Littlefield, 2016). Simon is also the 2016 recipient of the Canadian Association of Geographers's Julian M. Szeicz Award for Early Career Achievement and the 2015 recipient of the Stanley D. Brunn Young Scholar Award from the Political Geography Specialty Group of the American Association of Geographers.



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