



“Now the Forest Is Over”: Transforming the Commons and Remaking Gender in Cambodia’s Uplands

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Communal lands and natural resources in rural Cambodia have transformed over the past 30 years as the country attempts to transition from conflict to liberal democracy and integrates into global agricultural value chains. We find that gender relations are changing as a result of land privatization and the ensuing social and ecological crises of production and reproduction. The forest has become a space for the articulation of new masculinities modulated through class and racialised power, while women are increasingly relegated to the private space of the home and village, negotiating expectations that they perform care, farming and food provisioning work while juggling household debt. We ground our argument in a large sample of qualitative interviews conducted between 2016 and 2020 in the upland provinces of Kampong Thom, Kratie and Ratanakiri that provide narrative accounts of the transformation of common forest and grazing lands, logging livelihoods and food provisioning practices. Using a feminist political ecology perspective, we highlight the contradictory processes of enclosure of the commons, which operate simultaneously as sites of violence, resistance, adaptation and continuity.

Keywords: Cambodia, masculinities, femininities, commons, forest, food security, logging, land enclosures

INTRODUCTION

In this article, we analyse the gendered transformation of the commons through an examination of the forest and its associated livelihoods and food provisioning practices in the Cambodian uplands. Cambodia fuelled its transition from civil conflict to capitalism through waves of timber and land grabs, contributing to one of the highest rates of deforestation in the world (Black, 2017). The Cambodian ruling elite maintains power through male dominated neo-patrimonial networks in which government officials and supportive businesses receive lucrative resource concessions in exchange for loyalty (Le Billon, 2002; Un, 2006). The government’s strategic deployment of legal norms to expropriate commons resources articulates with transnational investments to legitimize dispossession and the privatization of communal land (Springer, 2012; Brickell, 2020). Rural Cambodians who previously saw themselves as rightful owners or custodians of land have become “illegal settlers” as state public land is rezoned into state private land to be leased to investors, or as public conservation areas (Springer, 2010; Loughlin and Milne, 2020). People now face fines, arrests and state-sanctioned violence for performing everyday livelihood and food provisioning

practices on communal forest land. Community protests against enclosure are met with repression from local authorities, supported by national laws that lend legitimacy to the state's privatization of common resources (Hinton, 2018).

Enclosure of the commons is the subject of much recent work in political ecology and agrarian studies. Processes of enclosure that accompany globalized capitalism distort communal relationships with land by squeezing these into hegemonic colonial definitions of ownership and usufruct rights (Cotula, 2020). Recent feminist political ecology (FPE) research argues for a postcolonial intersectionality that recognizes how gender and race are imbricated within the privatization of formerly communal resources (Mollett and Faria, 2012). A rich literature from Africa and South Asia shows how, in these patriarchal contexts, enclosures reproduce patriarchal power relations while simultaneously opening up spaces for women to assert control over land beyond the restrictions imposed by gendered customary land tenure systems (Whitehead and Tsikata, 2003; Jacobs, 2009). Less research attends to rural Southeast Asian communities where customary systems have afforded women some social power, such as the Cambodian communities we study that practice matrilineal and bilateral (rather than patrilineal) inheritance, and where women often manage household finances and share farm labor with men (Colfer, 2020). In these contexts, the enclosure of communal land may facilitate more unequal gender relations, destabilizing normative masculinities and femininities and redefining these in ways that make aspiring to be a "successful" man or woman out of reach for most poor rural people.

In this article, we argue that as communal forests are privatized, gendered subjectivities are being reconfigured. The forest as a space in which rural men and women worked together—land clearing and logging mainly deemed male work and food provision and tending crops deemed female work—is being remade by the rapid rise in commercial logging, plantation development, cash cropping, and social struggles over gendered subjectivities. With forests less accessible, women now rarely go to the forest to collect food, while the male work of logging and land clearing continues for those men who can insert themselves into new relations of commercial logging and plantation labor. Spaces are thus increasingly defined as "male" or "female" based on the forms of labor exercised there. To understand how gender is reconceptualised in relation to ecology, we analyse how people negotiate what it means to be a rural man or woman in this changing environment.

We analyse lived experiences of gendered transformations of the commons through the lens of feminist political ecology rather than explicitly framing our approach using the language of human rights, because rights discourse appeared to have little resonance for the majority of rural people who participated in our research. Cambodia's post-conflict Constitution, which was adopted under the auspices of the United Nations Transitional Authority (UNTAC) in 1993, contains a number of provisions on gender equality in the context of rights to an adequate standard of living, social security, work, land ownership and inheritance (Bourke Martignoni, 2021). In practice, these formal legal guarantees remain contingent upon

the gendered, class-based and racialized patronage relationships that determine who is able to assert private ownership and usufruct rights over land and natural resources in the neo-liberal economy (Kent, 2016; Brickell, 2020). While the 2001 Cambodian Land Law recognizes limited communal land rights through provisions on Indigenous Communal Land Title, in practice, few indigenous communities have successfully upheld their rights to common forest, grazing and water resources against the claims of private corporate investors backed by the government and, in some instances, by multilateral development institutions (Joshi, 2020b). Although some local and transnational civil society groups continue to invoke human rights-based arguments in their advocacy on access to land and natural resources, the authoritarian dimensions of Cambodia's political system means that the use of traditional human rights strategies including litigation, public participation in legislative and policy reforms, open debate in the media and public protests has frequently proven both counter-productive and dangerous for rural people (Bourke Martignoni, 2021).

The paper begins with an introduction to theoretical frameworks from feminist political ecology that explain the dynamics of land use change and gendered social relations in rural Cambodia. Following a description of the research methodology and study context, we structure our main argument in four sections: (i) Transformation of communal land; (ii) Transformation of gender and forest ecologies; (iii) Gendered impacts of forest enclosures; and (iv) Reinventing practices of communing. The first three sections address the implications of processes of enclosure for forest-based livelihoods, food provisioning and social reproduction. The fourth section explores the complexities of resistance and adaptation to forest enclosures and the reinvention of communing practices.

Feminist Political Ecology and the Gendered Geographies of Land Use in Cambodia

Feminist political ecology (FPE) demands a relational understanding of the ways in which gender shapes and is shaped by social and ecological change (Nightingale, 2006; Elmhirst, 2012; Lamb et al., 2017). In agrarian households, people's labor processes occur on, with, and through the land. This assemblage of diverse labor practices necessary for social reproduction produces a strong unity in subsistence agricultural communities between what are often seen as separate productive and reproductive spheres (Chung, 2017). Therefore, a FPE approach recognizes that shifts in access to land also alter the ontologies of how people relate to the environment and to one another. Global capitalism commodifies nature and labor by subordinating diverse practices of caring and food provisioning to the market (Harvey, 2005).

The "commons" are generally defined in FPE scholarship as areas that are owned collectively rather than being in state or private hands (Meinzen-Dick and Mwangi, 2009). This definition would suggest that when communal land is enclosed, it thus ceases to be commons. However, postcapitalist feminist

scholars argue that this “typical storyline” is constraining as it fails to recognize varied practices of commoning that are not completely overwritten by privatization (Harcourt and Nelson, 2015; Sato and Soto Alarcón, 2019). These scholars describe “commoning-communities” constituted through the process of negotiating “access, use, benefit, care and responsibility” for a common (Gibson-Graham et al., 2016, p. 2). From this perspective, focusing on the “reappropriation, reconstruction, and reinvention” of commoning practices enables us to see how these may continue, and new communal practices may emerge, in the face of processes of enclosure (Harcourt and Escobar, 2005, p. 2). Enclosure as a process is therefore not linear, nor predetermined. Contextual analysis is required to understand how enclosure takes place at different speeds in different places, and agrarian change is better understood as a contested transformation rather than a “transition” from a romanticized past to individualized capitalist relations (Borras, 2009; Li, 2014; Gyrovary and Lamb, 2021).

Rural Cambodians have lived through multiple waves of social change, including colonial plantation development, nationalist forced integration of indigenous peoples, and civil conflict. Narratives of enclosure in Cambodia often begin with the post-Khmer Rouge period or the recent land grabbing in the mid-2000s; however, efforts to privatize land in the country have a much longer history. In the colonial period, the French established rubber plantations on communal land and sought to establish a system of private titling (Edwards, 2006). This was largely unsuccessful, in part because it conflicted with local land use patterns of “acquisition by the plough,” in which families moved to forest frontiers to clear land for rotational cultivation, rice farming and housing (Diepart and Sem, 2016; Work and Beban, 2016). During the conflict era of the 1970s, the Khmer Rouge collectivized all land under state control; then, in the post-conflict period, the ruling Cambodian People’s Party (CPP) consolidated power by allocating land and mining concessions to politico-business groups that financed their campaigns.

In the mid-2000s, an influx of foreign investment in agribusiness and development programmes promoting commercialized agriculture fuelled the CPP’s dominance and precipitated widespread forest clearing and conflict. This period of transformation just prior to our research is notable for the speed and scale of deforestation in the study communities. Indeed, Cambodia had the highest rate of deforestation in the world during the mid-2000s, and this reached a peak around 2011–2012, encouraged by rubber and hardwood timber price booms, and the government’s agenda for economic development (Fox and Castella, 2013; Black, 2017). Land grabbing has had devastating effects in rural areas; 1% of Cambodia’s population owns as much as 30% of arable land (Neef et al., 2013), and more than 500,000 farmers have been displaced due to Economic Land Concession (ELC) expansion (Human Rights Watch, 2013). Indigenous peoples have been particularly hard hit by land grabs. Cambodia’s population is approximately 90% Khmer ethnicity, while the mountainous Northeast provinces, which have been a target for investors, are primarily inhabited by indigenous ethnic minority groups (collectively known as *Khmer Loeu*). These land deals are enforced through violence and “lawfare” that displaces

the former civil conflict onto land and resource grabbing, enacting dispossession that is deeply gendered, racialised and contingent upon class relations (Kent, 2016; Brickell, 2020).

Development agencies and the Cambodian government have attempted to rectify tenure insecurity through land mapping, registration and joint private titling. These reforms are widely celebrated as gender sensitive due to the fact that land is registered in the names of both husband and wife; however, there has been little discussion of the ways that land formalization may privatize commons and disrupt social norms in communities with matrilineal traditions of land inheritance. The focus on gender-sensitive land titling as a vehicle for women’s rights also fails to consider the political economy of inequality that leaves families who lack land and labor for off-farm work in a precarious position, particularly as the commons they depended upon for food and livelihoods have been enclosed (Park, 2015).

Many communities resisted the destruction of the forest, mounting legal challenges, marching to Phnom Penh, and working with NGOs to file, generally unsuccessful, claims for Communal Land Title (CLT) or Community Forest. The Cambodian Land Law (2001) recognizes CLT—only available to registered indigenous communities—and Community Forest. Areas demarcated for Community Forest and CLT are often degraded forest land, and delays and resistance from officials to titling these areas means that few communities that applied for CLT have actually received it (Lüke, 2013). Both recognized and untitled communal land is highly vulnerable to expropriation by the state and private investors.

Gender Dynamics in Rural Cambodia

Feminist literature attends to the changing dynamics of gender and social relations of production in agrarian communities (Deere, 1995; Jacobs, 2009; Razavi, 2009). Gender is the process through which differences based on presumed biological sex are defined, imagined, and enacted (Butler, 1990). Gender is therefore not constant nor predetermined, but rather becomes salient in environmental issues through work, discourses of gender, and the performance of subjectivities (Nightingale, 2006). In Southeast Asia, while there has long been a distinct gender division of labor in rural families’ subsistence farming tasks, both partners work the land together and tasks considered “men’s work” or “women’s work” are both considered to have value and status in the household (Errington, 1990; Colfer, 2020). Colfer (2020) terms this performance of gender “muted,” for while men still hold power across socio-economic and political domains, women are often the managers of family finances and businesses, and women’s status is reproduced in connection to land through systems of bilateral and matrilineal inheritance (Ledgerwood, 1996). Data from across Southeast Asia show that as commons land is lost and the agricultural system changes from shifting cultivation to settled cash cropping, gender roles have become more segregated (Cramb et al., 2009). The loss of access to commons, private land titling and the shift from an exchange or shared economy to a cash economy frequently advantage men who are able to access wage work and income to purchase land (Cramb et al., 2009; Maharani et al., 2019).

The meanings that are attached to gender in rural Cambodia are mediated through the lens of authoritarian leader Hun Sen's "patriarchal state" whose power is vested in patrimonial control over land and natural resources. This top-down structure stretches from the prime minister at the apex, through the ministries to the subnational level, all the way down to village authorities (Le Billon and Springer, 2007). With corruption rife and the law used as a weapon to dispossess rural people, farmers facing eviction or land grabbing tend to look to the Prime Minister and his patronage networks for support (Schoenberger, 2015; Beban, 2021). Gender is a central marker of political power in this system; men are generally perceived as having more power (*omnaich*) than women, and most formal and informal positions of power are held by men (Jacobsen and Stuart-Fox, 2013).

Historical texts that describe appropriate codes of social conduct still circulate widely in Cambodian schools and have significant cultural value and meaning in wider society (Brickell, 2016; Anderson and Grace, 2018). Within these behavioral "rulebooks," women are expected to maintain a harmonious household, including financial management, raising children, and performing domestic work, as well as engaging in trade and crop production; while men are tasked with protection and governance (Ledgerwood, 1996; Brickell and Springer, 2016). These normative guidelines on the feminine ideal are being remade in light of contemporary opportunities for women in urban garment factories (Derks, 2008; Brickell, 2011) and a growing feminist movement (Grace and Eng, 2015). As Evans (2019) notes, however, while gender norms in Cambodian cities are shifting with women engaging in traditionally "male" activities, rural areas are more resistant to change. Crucially, growing rural land scarcity resulting from enclosure has transformed customary inheritance patterns. These changes erode the social and economic status held by women in communities that previously practiced matrilineal land transmission, while also limiting the opportunities for women who inherit familial land to migrate to cities for education and work (Frewer, 2017; FAO, 2019).

At the same time, masculinities are also in flux, creating what Jacobsen (2012) has defined as a tension between the "good" and the "successful" man. The "good man," as outlined in the *chbab proh* ("rules for men"), is content with his place, hardworking, kind and compassionate; but a "successful man" must exhibit the earning potential and social power necessary to provide for his family in the new market economy (Work, 2018). The loss of commons land and growing landlessness means that few Cambodian men can perform ideal models of agrarian masculinity, a phenomenon also seen in other rural areas in decline (Carrington and Scott, 2008). In response, some men contest these normative subjectivities through invoking social difference, for example, by asserting masculinities based on care for family and the environment (Elliot, 2015), or by asserting strength through violence (Carrington and Scott, 2008).

CONTEXT AND METHODOLOGY

This study is part of a larger, Swiss government-supported research project on gender, land and the right to food

(DEMETER)¹. The article foregrounds a large number of narrative accounts that were collected between 2016 and 2020 in three Cambodian provinces: Ratanakiri, Kampong Thom and Kratie. Our research sites in Ratanakiri and Kratie include villages comprised of indigenous families from Charay, Tampuan and Steang ethnic groups, as well as Khmer (ethnic majority) who have migrated from lowland areas in search of land. Land tenure before the influx of lowlanders in the 1990s was based primarily on oral recognition of farming use rights for rotational cropping systems, with governance of communal land by village elders (usually men) (Bourdier, 2013). Within this system, the forest was an integral component of people's livelihoods, with the collection of non-timber forest products (NTFPs), hunting, fishing, and firewood gathering complementing resources from cultivation (Maffi, 2009). The Cambodian state has long sought to develop the uplands and in particular its indigenous groups—seen as backward and potentially dissident. Investments in infrastructure, education, large-scale natural resource projects, cash crops and settled agriculture aim to reduce poverty and "modernize" indigenous groups (Fox et al., 2008).

In the predominantly Khmer communities we studied in Kampong Thom, norms of private property are long established but rice fields are used communally as fodder for grazing cattle in the dry season with the manure providing fertilizer. Khmer communal relationships with communal land have been erased in development discourse that associates indigenous groups with communality and Khmer with private land use. Despite this, rural Khmer often describe the forest as a communal resource, owned by water and land spirits and available for all people in the community to use sustainably (Swift and Cock, 2015; Work and Beban, 2016). Khmer forest management practices include swidden cultivation practices; the tending of spirit forests; resin tapping; timber harvesting and foraging. As Swift and Cock (2015) point out, "Community forestry" as framed in contemporary Cambodian law fails to encompass the diversity of forest management practices traditionally undertaken by Khmer or indigenous communities.

The research team conducted 197 semi-structured interviews with farmers (women and men) in 2016 and 2017, and a second round of interviews in 2019 and 2020 with 217 farmers. Most of the respondents - both indigenous and non-indigenous—self-identified as farmers even if farming was no longer their main source of occupation or income. There was some overlap with the respondents in rounds one and two, however, this was not complete as some people had moved or were unavailable in the second round. We included 167 male respondents, 210 female respondents and 37 couples as well as people of different ages, wealth levels, and ethnicities. We held 10 village focus groups in 2019–2020. Each focus group included 6–8 people. Six focus groups were held with men only, three with women only, and one with a mix of men and women. We also undertook 45 interviews with local authorities at the village, commune and district levels. The local authorities interviewed were village heads and deputies (21), commune gender focal points (5), commune heads (5) and officials working in different capacities at the district level of

¹For more information concerning the DEMETER project in Cambodia and in Ghana see: <https://r4d-demeter.info/the-project/>.

governance in agriculture, gender and local development (14). All interviews were conducted in Khmer, Tampuan or Charay languages, and then transcribed into English. The core research team was composed of twelve Cambodian researchers (eight men and four women), with a number of additional local researchers who acted as informants, interviewers and interpreters for the interviews in the Charay and Tampuan languages. The authors conducted 20 interviews as part of the pre-testing of our open-ended interview question guide ahead of each round of interviews. These interviews were done in Khmer with the help of interpreters from the Cambodian team for Joanna while Alice, who is fluent in Khmer, was able to record and observe the interviews independently. The majority of the interviews were carried out by the Cambodian members of the research team in several intensive blocks of ~3 weeks in each province, with nightly team debriefs to ensure the contexts of the interviews were accurately captured. Research permissions were granted by provincial and communal level authorities in Cambodia and ethics approval was received from the Graduate Institute for International and Development Studies in Geneva. The written transcripts of the semi-structured interviews were analyzed with the research coordinators from the Cambodia team and then classified and inductively coded—using a collaborative, cross-checking methodology—by the authors with NVivo qualitative analysis software.

The research process was challenging due to the political sensitivity of discussions related to land rights and conflicts over resources in the authoritarian context of Cambodia. We took a number of steps to ensure the safety of our participants, including the adoption of a rigorous protocol for anonymising the data so that individuals cannot be identified. Given these political tensions—which have increased markedly since the suppression of all opposition political parties and the deregistration of a number of civil society organizations in 2017—we are deeply grateful to the participants for their willingness to share their stories in such rich detail.

The Transformation of Communal Forest Land in Cambodia

In Cambodian mythology, the forest has an ambiguity: it is both a realm of danger as a place beyond the boundaries of human control and also a place that signifies nurture and possibility (Chandler, 2019). Over time, Cambodians have established a range of rituals to regulate interaction with the forest that accommodates the necessity of moving between “*prei*” (the forest) and “*srok*” (the village) in search of food and resources (Hansen and Ledgerwood, 2008). In Ratanakiri, farmers traditionally practiced shifting cultivation on communal forest land, clearing and cultivating new land for 2–3 years, then moving to a new patch of forest while leaving the previous land fallow. In Kampong Thom and Kratie, the forest provided a “safety valve” for people from lowland areas as a place to find land and start over (Li, 2010). Communal forest land was interwoven with inheritance and social reproduction practices and newly married couples were able to establish their own farms by going into the forest and clearing land. This act of clearing forest land had to be done respectfully, for the forest was seen to have its own

agency; Indigenous and Khmer interviewees described rituals of buffalo slaughter, feasting and communal gatherings they traditionally held to propitiate land spirits and ask for permission to clear land.

These traditional practices have been through waves of transformations as discussed above, and we do not suggest that there is a clear “before” of romanticized peasant relations with the environment. However, it is notable that many farmers we interviewed spoke nostalgically of the recent past when they could access communal land:

In the past, we could use forest land for farming and now it is hard to do that. People compete with each other to take the land. Before we often moved from one land to another for farming, it was free for us to do that... the new land is more fertile. But we did only rice farming. Before we just farmed for our consumption, now people plant cassava for selling. (33 year old Khmer woman, Kampong Thom, 30 January 2020).

This farmer connects the enclosure of the commons with changing economies and social relations. Other narratives also stressed the shift from communality to competition, articulating their affective connections to the land and the non-human life that was disappearing:

[the forest disappeared] since the presence of the companies within the last 5 or 6 years. They bulldozed the whole area. No animals will survive. The next generation will never know the wild animals or types of trees. (55 year old Charay man, Ratanakiri, April 2016).

The speed with which the enclosures happened in these villages meant that households who had the labor and financial resources to rapidly clear forest and plant cash crops were able to accumulate large tracts of land, while families who were busy caring for young children were unable to claim land before it was no longer available. This created generational inequities, and several people spoke bitterly about how they were too young to accumulate land. A 30 year old indigenous man with five children noted:

During that time when we could clear community forest lands, our children were small, I didn't have enough labor for clearing. When my children grew up, there was no more land available. (Ratanakiri, December 2019)

The transformation of communal forest has reduced people's formerly multi-stranded livelihood activities to dependence on the production of cash crops such as cassava and cashew. The forest areas that remain are far from villages and most are within ELC boundaries or state-managed protected areas with steep fines leveled against those who venture in to cut wood or hunt. With few other dependable ways to earn a living due to land enclosure, rural families are reliant on the global cassava and cashew markets:

When there were forests, our livelihood was better. We could earn money from resin, rattan and wild animals. Now, we do not

know what to do to earn money... This year, there is no rain; no early rain. The crops are not good. Cashew does not fruit. The climate has changed. We don't know what to do. We do not have money for spending. (40 year old indigenous woman, Kratie, March 2016).

This material transformation of the forest has produced new mythologies of the human/nature relationship. While the forest was previously understood as a wild space that could provide sustenance if it was not over-exploited, people now experience it as a dangerous place due to the risks of violence enacted by other people. The everyday activities of gathering firewood, food, or wood for house building have become illegal:

The [company] does not allow us poor people to get into that area and take trees for building houses, firewood, making charcoal or selling to get income for buying food. If we went there... we would be arrested... Now, we cannot even walk into the forest. They will accuse us of stealing their trees. (45 year old Khmer man, Kratie, March 2016).

I cannot [save money]. Money is gone on food and everything. Fish and beef are expensive now. It is not like before when we could trap wild animals for food. Now, everywhere is plantations. Forest has gone away. . Today is not like the past when people only carried a knife and entered the forest and took food... they will catch and penalize us. (60 year old Charay man, Ratanakiri, November 2019)

Villagers are in a bind; if they do not go into the forest, they have few other livelihood options to support their families, but if they go into the forest, they may be fined or arrested. One single mother, whose house was burned down when an ELC claimed land she had cleared, described the difficulty of calculating whether to take the risk of land clearing:

The company just destroyed the farm land and burned our house. We did not know what to do besides accepting a small amount of money. Now I do not allow my children to expand onto the forest land again. Prime Minister Hun Sen also states that we should not expand onto forest land, it is illegal. But still some people keep expanding because they are not afraid, and they earn money from that. So my family is still poor because I do not allow my children to expand the forest land... I am afraid of the loss again, being caught and put in jail. (64 year old woman, Kampong Thom, February 2020).

The context-specific meanings that are attached to communal land use are mediated through the lens of Hun Sen's personalized patrimonial control over land and natural resources. The role of male patronage networks and the enhanced private access to communal land for public officials were described by a 29 year old Charay woman:

My husband works as a local police officer, we know district officials. If the ELC comes, we would ask them to keep the land for us, because we are local police here. We had no land to make a living. But it is lucky, afterwards... we got land title. (Ratanakiri, November 2019).

In practice, the boundaries of "legal" and "illegal" uses of communal land are defined by private companies with connections to the ruling elite. The threat and use of coercive state power are ever present as the livelihoods people try to maintain alongside the operations of the plantations are squeezed from multiple sides. The criminalization of communal forest use has implications for how people relate to this space, and for the reproduction of gender.

Transformations of Gender and Forest Ecologies

In this section, we first explore how the transformation of the forest is imbricated in the transformation of gender relations as women's work in the forest diminishes and the forest becomes a male space. We then focus in on how normative masculine ideals are being reshaped as the forest changes. Interviewees told us that previously, men and women went to the forest together; men primarily involved in land clearing, hunting, gathering wood, women tending to weeding crops, gathering food and non-timber-forest productions, and both sharing in the work of planting and harvesting. The physicality of clearing land, trapping animals, fishing, and the rhythm of shifting cultivation were all part of the performance of masculinity. Being a "good (rural) man" in this context meant being a provider, strong, connected with labor and with the environment and content with one's place. Women generally performed different work such as collecting, food, small firewood, and tending shifting cultivation plots, although some people relayed stories about women who "also climbed the big trees and chopped them down like the men" (Charay man, 58 years old, Ratanakiri, March 2016). As one indigenous woman in Kampong Thom noted of forest labor prior to the enclosure of the commons, "women did not allow men to do the work alone. We did the same work" (55 years old, September 2016).

Now, the patches of forest that remain are far from villages and everyday activities in communal forests are criminalized. Most women said they rarely collect wild food from the forest now, due to a lack of mobility (as many people deem it unsafe for women to travel too far from the village), the labor squeeze of their other productive and reproductive tasks, and the wide availability of food for purchase in rural areas. The forest has become a male space. Tasks previously performed by women, such as gathering firewood, fungi and berries, are now performed by men, who have motorbikes to reach the remaining areas of forest far from the village:

Before, we took axes, went into the forest, and broke firewood and carried it back home without any means of transport. Now we cannot find firewood nearby. If we don't find wood in bulk and transport it home, we will have no firewood to use. (40 year old indigenous woman, Ratanakiri, April 2016).

Forest clearing, which previously was part of the cycle of shifting cultivation, is now also a more dangerous occupation as a result of the coercive government and corporate power that is exercised to enforce private ownership and usufruct rights within the enclosed lands. Many people talked about how this work involves

men going into the forest alone for days at a time, working in “secret,” risking arrest from state authorities or violent retaliation from agribusiness companies. This new environment requires particular bargaining skills, labor and knowledge that many poorer smallholders are lacking. A 65 year old married woman whose husband was no longer actively involved in their family farm noted:

Before there was a lot of free land, but there are a lot of companies now. So we don't dare to occupy forest land like before. When we occupy land we have to clear the forest. If we don't clear that land it still belongs to other people. I am not clever at occupying land like other people. Other villagers are clever, so they occupy a lot of land for their children. I am not clever so I only have a small amount of land to share with my child. (Kampong Thom, March 2020).

People's ability to access the forest for land clearing and logging is deeply inflected with class status and political networks, yet this was often represented discursively as people showing “cleverness” or “daring.” These characteristics are associated with the successful rural man in this new economy, as we describe below.

Logging Livelihoods and the Successful Rural Man

Logging commercially is a male activity. In all our interviews we did not encounter any women involved in the business; rather, women stayed at home while men went out logging, and, due to the destruction of forest, these trips often involved up to a month away from home.

Men cut trees and bring them home to saw into pieces for various construction materials. I cut the trees. What we did is illegal, we were going against the law but if we didn't do it, we didn't have any other economic opportunities. (72 year old Khmer man, Kampong Thom, March 2016).

Normative masculine ideals are being reshaped as the forest changes. Being a successful man now depends on one's ability to navigate the market economy, and this was most difficult for families who did not have large farms. For many, logging became their main livelihood, as one Khmer migrant in Ratanakiri noted: “Frankly, if one entirely depends on Chamkar (farming), but is not involved with logging for extra income, then they won't have money to buy food. People here live better because they're involved with logging.” Other people discussed the difficulty of earning income now that the “forest is over” and there is no new farming land to acquire. Involvement in logging thus enables men to achieve “success” through the ability to accumulate status goods. Skillful loggers pointed out their sport motorbikes, new houses, and farm and forestry equipment. Others, however, referred to the risks associated with logging including checkpoints, surveillance, fines, double dealing and threats of violence.

Beginning in 2015, the Forestry Administration reasserted control over forests in the upland study areas. They banned logging and clamped down on small scale loggers who were blamed for forest loss and increasingly subjected to surveillance,

arrests, fines and the impounding of equipment. The forest has become a place in which rural men willing to continue logging try to create shadowy networks with the right people, while not getting cheated, drawing on their experience in the forest to remain invisible, taking little known routes and traveling at less common times. These small-scale loggers dangerously overload their motorbikes with timber to squeeze on USD200-300 of logs; the logs stretch out ~2 m long, and are prone to falling. One 36-year old indigenous logger from Ratanakiri noted, “eight people put it on the motorbike... many people died because of timber falling” (March 2016). Depending upon which road they take, and where the authorities are staked out, the loggers might meet up to ten checkpoints at which they need to pay bribes to in order to enter the forest: “We have to pay police USD5, soldiers USD5, customs USD10, Forestry Administration USD10 and we also pay to mobile authorities” (36 year old indigenous man, Ratanakiri, March 2016).

Many interviewees expressed frustration at the inequities within the logging industry, wherein some people had to pay fines or risk being arrested, while others with more power were able to negotiate a less onerous settlement. Small-scale loggers feel squeezed on one side by ELCs and agribusiness companies, and on the other side by the government restricting access to the forest in the name of conservation:

The Forest Administration does not allow people to clear the forest. The Forest Administration arrests them and seizes their chain saws... First, they restrict logging, then they sell people's land to land dealers and allow them to clear and plough freely on it. (45 year old man, Ratanakiri, January 2016)

Interviewees also constructed a moral distinction between their own small-scale logging and the extractive large-scale loggers:

If the government only let people harvest wood for their livelihoods, then it would be good. But with the companies, the logs are almost gone. The officers only see people transporting logs via motorbikes. They take photos, arrest people and try them. Some people died because the officers chased them... But for the companies who transport logs with big trucks, the officer never see it. (35 year old Khmer man, Ratanakiri, April 2016)

The forest has thus become a space for the articulation of new masculinities modulated through class and racialised power, where those with political connections, capital and machines are able to pass without being seen. Men continue to work in logging, both because they have no other options and sometimes because they are good at the job and enjoy it more than farming or cash laboring. For men who can navigate this new landscape, logging is both a source of anxiety and excitement:

It is not always a win for this activity. Sometimes we lose and when we lose we lose a lot... Like one guy from my hometown. He said that if he stopped logging he doesn't know how to earn money. I asked him, now law enforcement is stricter, how can you run this business? He replied, “when we are in the forest we know how to play the game because we know a lot of the authorities” (65 year old indigenous man, Ratanakiri, March 2016).

Like this man, others who were successful at logging highlighted their patronage networks. One 32-year old Khmer man credited his success in the industry with being a soldier, “because I know the police and they inform me about where checkpoints are before I transport logs” (Kampong Thom, January 2016).

Men also resisted this association of masculinity with logging livelihoods through discourses and practices of labor that asserted masculinities of care for the environment and for their families. Some men pushed against the extractivist approach to the enclosed forest by claiming that their methods of logging were more sustainable, “people cut trees one by one but the company does not cut one by one, they bulldoze them” (30 year old Khmer man, Ratanakiri, April 2016). Others asserted that farming was better for the environment than the destruction of the forest: “If people earn an income from economic activities that destroy natural resources, in the end nature will destroy those people” (50 year old indigenous man, Ratanakiri, April 2016). Other men sought to perform more nurturing masculinities based on familial connection. They faced difficult choices between being at home and unable to support the family financially, or working away in the forest in this dangerous occupation. Some families in Kampong Thom had resolved this issue (at least temporarily) in our latter round of interviews by turning to charcoal production, which is a low-income forest livelihood that they can operate as a family from home. For example, a 34 year old charcoal producer explained that he did not want to migrate for work but the trade-off was that he had to navigate the risk of having his machines impounded:

The farm is far from the village and my children cannot go to school. If I work on the charcoal oven I can stay home and my children can go to school ... If I work for others I will be away so I will miss my children ... When the authorities impounded my machine it was very difficult because I did not have money to buy another. I had to take a loan from the villagers to buy a new machine. If I don't buy machinery I don't have material to run the business ... if I don't have the business I don't have money to pay back the loan. (Kampong Thom, January 2020).

For other men who do not have the political connections or skills to succeed in logging and related activities, many said that forest livelihoods have been foreclosed as the timber supply diminishes and the industry becomes even more risky.

Gendered Impacts of Forest Enclosure on Food Provisioning and Social Reproduction

Forest enclosures also affect gendered practices of social reproduction in connection with food. The transformation from a communal food provisioning system centered around wild foods, homestead production and exchange labor has led to reduced autonomy for many poorer women whose limited mobility as a result of caring and farming responsibilities, along with structural discrimination in the agricultural labor market means that they are increasingly “working wives” reliant on male breadwinners to provide the money needed to purchase food and to service debts (Shrestha et al., 2019; Joshi, 2020a). Despite these changes in the political economy of

land use and agriculture, prevailing gender norms in Cambodia affirm that it is women who remain responsible for food provisioning, preparation and cooking as well as caring for dependent family members, household budgeting and financial management. Women who fail to fulfill their reproductive role may be subjected to violence. The cultural function previously performed by gathering, preparation and cooking of forest foods has also changed with their limited availability and the influx of migrants as lowland Khmer forms of eating, which have come to be associated with modernity and convenience, are steadily replacing indigenous food practices and the gendered knowledges and social relations attached to these. In this section, we explore the impacts of forest enclosure on these changing practices in three sub-sections: the declining accessibility of food from the commons; increasing indebtedness; and changing food cultures.

Gendered Implications of Declining Availability and Accessibility of Food From the Commons

Deforestation, the extension of private monoculture plantations, pollution from pesticide use and climate change have resulted in a precipitous decline in common food sources over the past decade. As a 35 year-old indigenous man observed:

We do not have any more forest so how can we have meat! We do not even have fish. It is not like in the past We've lost all the forest and the wildlife. (Ratanakiri, December 2019).

Even amongst those people who are still able to find wild food, many pointed out that this is less reliable as seasonal sources of food security. Some people also observed that the increasing price of market bought foods was partly a function of the lack of supply of local forest foods. The connections between enclosures, environmental change and the transition toward a wage economy are apparent in narratives about food provisioning and the fact that the accessibility of food is now almost entirely dependent on people having enough money to buy it:

It is easy to buy food from mobile sellers since meat, fish and vegetables arrive at home. But if we do not have money, they won't give us food. Before we could get what we want, but now, it's only when we have money that we can get it. (35 year old Tampoun man, Ratanakiri, December 2019)

These changing economic and environmental relationships have a marked effect on poorer women who, in the absence of forest food sources, struggle to fulfill their ascribed role of procuring and preparing nourishing food for their families. Many of our informants spoke of how the cash economy and women's triple burden of reproductive, farm and off-farm labor were undermining their ability to prepare good quality food at home for their families. A 35 year-old Charay man reflected on these changes:

When women sell labor, they don't have much time to cook food properly or do the housework ... They cook rice and Mahop (non-rice food) and keep a little for the kids and then leave for work.

The kids don't eat at regular times like they would if their mother was at home (Ratanakiri, March 2016).

In the same vein, a 50 year-old Khmer woman in Kampong Thom commented that even though women are increasingly working as agricultural day laborers to earn money, there is still an expectation that they will provide home-cooked meals for their families: "Sometimes if I go to collect cashew nuts and I'm very tired I might buy rice and soup at the market but I don't do this often because my husband doesn't like it. If a wife buys food from the market, her husband will be angry at her for not cooking good food at home." (Kampong Thom, April 2020).

Stereotypes about "working wives" not being able to adequately perform domestic tasks are also connected to deeply-held feelings of shame attached to laboring for others outside the family unit (Joshi, 2020a). This resonates with the view that women should be dedicating their time and energy to reproductive labor in the home and on the family farm. One woman discussed her secret wage work:

My husband works more to make money. I take care of the children at home and sometimes harvest cashew nuts for others to get additional income. My husband doesn't know that. If he knew, he wouldn't let me do it. He said that I should save my energy for working on our farm ... But if I don't work on other farms, I don't have cash to provide food for the children. What my husband makes is still not enough for what the family needs. (27 year old Charay woman, Ratanakiri, March 2016)

The limited availability of "free food" from the forest or subsistence farming also means that having a large family becomes a financial burden that is at odds with the tradition of desiring children for mutual support and to pass down land and the family name:

Before, we had access to food for free from the forest but now if we have too many kids, it will be very difficult because foods are bought from the market. In the past, it didn't matter how many kids we had because when they grew up they could find food by themselves in the forest or grow it and bring it to eat together at home. Now everything depends on money. If we don't have money, we also don't have food. (25 year old Charay woman, Ratanakiri, March 2016)

In some instances, the perception that a woman is not adequately carrying out her food provision duties results in violence. A 45-year old Khmer male government official in Ratanakiri noted: "since the forest products have gone, villagers face difficulty in finding food. Sometimes, domestic violence happens when a housewife cannot find food for the family..." (March 2016). Women also spoke powerfully about the food-related violence that has come to pervade their daily lives. One of these women, a 40 year old mother of school age children, vividly described how her husband, who works away, comes to town unannounced every few months demanding a meal and sex. Heavily indebted and struggling to find wage labor work locally, she often does not have food to feed him and he gets violent, "three times he has badly beaten me. One time I ran to the neighbor's house. And

then I went to the police to lay a complaint. But they didn't do anything. In fact, they blamed me. They said I must have made him mad!" (Kampong Thom, February 2020).

There are also racialized and generational elements to shifts in food provisioning and these are acutely felt by indigenous and older women. Purchasing food at the market requires a different set of skills than foraging. While the dominant Khmer culture has a long history of women being involved in purchasing and selling food, this way of obtaining food is novel for many indigenous women. Some said that the market was intimidating, particularly those who do not speak fluent Khmer and are not comfortable with bartering and handling money. As a Charay woman in her early twenties commented:

I rarely go to the main market. If I want to buy food, mostly I buy from petty trade. . . Some Charay woman don't even know how to count money and bargain. They really don't know how to buy. For me it is ok. We can buy, we can speak Khmer very well, because we are the younger generation (Ratanakiri, March 2016).

In another interview, a 30 year-old Charay woman who was widowed and then remarried with a Khmer man reflected on perceptions of indigenous women as "backward" and not equipped to function in the new food environment that requires money and an ability to prepare the meat heavy Khmer dishes that signify "development":

Q: So this means that the husband eats delicious food, but the children and his wife do not?

A: Yes, it is like that for us. We never eat out and we also do not know how to buy food at the market. For us, only men do it. My indigenous people used to buy good food when they were rich. But for us as the poor, we eat anything ... The Khmer men said that they dare not love indigenous women when we only eat wild plants, they look down on us (Ratanakiri, March 2016).

The gendered impacts of the cash economy on women's food security are also apparent from accounts in which women say that they must retain control over family spending out of fear that men will fritter family income away on leisure activities. A 17 year-old indigenous woman reflecting on her future observed:

Being a woman is very hard. I have to work hard in the family farm and also do housework. In contrast with men ... they have a lot of free time to relax after they farm. They have time to drink rice wine and eat something ... and they are full while I work at home a lot and I have less food to eat and I feel hungry. I think that if I let my future husband keep the money, it will decrease faster than if I keep it. Men really enjoy drinking and relaxing or sometimes they play snooker yet I would only use the money for food or buying something for the family (Ratanakiri, March 2016).

Our interviews with this 17 year-old and other young indigenous women revealed a deep ambivalence. They reproduced gender expectations through their work undertaking the "triple burden" of reproductive, farm and cash labor, and their discursive appreciation of how life was easy now that packaged food and wage work were easily accessible. But they also contested these

subjectivities, pointing out (sometimes in the presence of other family members) the injustice of men's free time and mobility. They often invoked social difference to make their point, like the 17 year-old above who drew on the social perception that women are more responsible with money to argue that she should control family finances in future. In this way, drawing attention to social difference acted to both contest male power over finances and to symbolically reproduce norms of women as responsible for food provisioning and care (Nightingale, 2006).

Increasing Indebtedness as a Result of Enclosure

The reduced availability of wild food connected to forest enclosures facilitates dependence on credit from local grocery stores and micro-finance institutions (MFIs) as the commons no longer provide a reliable food security safety net and market bought food is expensive (Bateman, 2012; Green and Bylander, 2020). While there have not, as yet, been any large-scale studies on the gender dimensions of indebtedness and land loss in rural Cambodia, it has been observed that more than 70% of micro loans are provided to women and many of these are given for the purposes of buying food and medicines or for servicing repayments on earlier loans (Green and Bylander, 2020). Our interviewees discussed indebtedness arising from and leading to food insecurity and the heavy mental load involved in managing household finances in a context where multiple loan repayments must be navigated. This is the case for an elderly widow:

I took the loan as you can see, I have small grandchildren and I cannot do heavy work anymore. So I took that loan just to buy food and medicine for them. I try to tell my (16 year old) granddaughter to work harder because we have to pay them back on time otherwise they will not give us a chance to take loans anymore. Sometimes we have to eat less eggs and fish sauce. I have to cook 3 meals for my grandchildren, because I don't have money for them to buy cookies or whatever so I only have rice for them. (Kratie, March 2017)

The interviews reveal the ways in which the gender division of labor within families with respect to loan repayments reflects the political economy of rural labor markets. Many of the people surveyed noted that it is husbands and sons who carry the main responsibility for earning income to service familial debt as women and older people are generally unable to find work that allows them to also care for dependent family members, and even when employment might be available to women it is less well-paid than an equivalent male job (Joshi, 2020b). There are a variety of experiences here, however, with some women reflecting on the fact that they can no longer "stay at home, doing the domestic work" because they must contribute income for loan repayments (36 year old Khmer woman, Kampong Thom, January 2016). Others, such as this 30 year-old married mother of two, commented on the manner in which indebtedness had cemented the gender division of labor in her family:

Before, we had time to stay at home. But after we took more loans we cannot stay with family, we need to earn money. For me, I stay at home to take care of the children. My husband and I work

harder than before. I pity my husband, but we need to do it for our family. (Kampong Thom, February 2020).

Food Adequacy and Changing Cultures of Eating

The changes in food provisioning occurring due to forest enclosure have been met with a degree of ambivalence. Some respondents regretted their reliance on expensive market foods that they felt were unsafe to eat as well as being less tasty than wild foods. Others claimed they preferred the convenience of purchasing food along with the year-round accessibility of a wide range of more "modern" Khmer food choices.

A recurrent theme was the idea that market-bought imported foods are making people ill. As one woman explained: "What I buy is like I buy chemical substances to eat. It is like we take the sickness into our own body... if we don't eat, we will be hungry. We can find nothing to eat besides that food" (55 year old Charay woman, Ratanakiri, May 2016). These accounts of unsafe food are connected to normative assumptions about women as guardians of their families' health. The perceived failure to provide adequately nutritious and high quality food, therefore, becomes a source of shame and worry about not being able to perform the feminine roles of "good wife and mother."

There is, however, also a feeling that the shift to pre-prepared and market foods may have some positive effects for women. For those with money, procuring store bought food is easier than spending time collecting wild food in an environment where this is less abundant. There is a divide in our interviewees between older people, who missed the sociability, availability and taste of food from the forest, and younger women who appreciated the practicality of market food. One woman noted that being able to purchase food was an important time-saving strategy for her: "now I do not have to get up so early because I can buy cooked food and I just need to cook rice" (25 year old Khmer woman, Kampong Thom, January 2020).

Even within the same narratives, though, we can see people exhibiting nostalgia about foraging for wild food, concern related to the safety of food they haven't grown or picked themselves, but also gratitude for the labor-saving attributes of market-bought food:

I think now it is more difficult in terms of food and income. Before we could find fruit or vegetables from the forest but now we need to buy from the market and we don't know where it is from ... Sometimes if we are not too busy we can grow food but sometimes we are very busy with chamka (crop farming) and rice so we need to buy it from the market (41 year old woman, Kratie, March 2017).

Many older, indigenous respondents also said they missed the conviviality of staying together on the family farm to cultivate subsistence crops and collect forest foods. They discussed how cash crop farming, wage labor and motorized transport had changed their way of living. These people also observed that there was less pressure a decade ago to earn income because they only ate food that they could forage or grow themselves but that the new ways of eating require them to buy specific ingredients that are not available from the forest. As one 56-year old male

indigenous village leader stated, “before we didn’t need money to buy monosodium glutamate (MSG) because we never ate it. But now, we buy MSG, we buy chili, salt, garlic, Prahok and so many food stuffs that we need cash.” (Ratanakiri, March 2016). Other people were more enthusiastic about these contemporary ways of eating and expressed the view that “food nowadays is more delicious and modern than before, though it is more expensive.” (40 year old Khmer woman, Kampong Thom, January 2020).

The cash-based food economy has also opened up livelihoods for some women as grocers or food sellers as well as external sites for male food consumption and socialization. A number of our female respondents were engaged in small food businesses that were seen as a more “family compatible” activity than farm or factory labor for women. Despite this increasing involvement of women in the cash economy as food entrepreneurs, we found that they are still less likely to eat outside the home than men. Men have greater mobility and disposable income, and have embraced food and drink-based social networking, while gender norms and time pressures limit women’s ability to do this.

Reinventing Practices of Commoning in Enclosure

This article focuses on the way gender is reconfigured as communal forestland is transformed. This story resonates with literature on processes of accumulation by dispossession, in which the privatization of the commons ushers in a move away from communal practices toward individualism and an ontological shift from nature as agentic to nature as a resource for human consumption (Chung, 2017). However, rural Cambodians continue to be actively involved in commoning practices through the “reappropriation, reconstruction, and reinvention” of collective relationships with land (Harcourt and Escobar, 2005). In this section, we explore three of these practices that were significant in our study sites: community rituals that connect humans and nature, collective resistance to privatization, and communal labor practices.

Practices of Commoning That Reproduce Non-market Ontologies of Communal Land

Non-market ontologies of land as agentic have been transformed by the enclosure of the commons and the diminishing areas available for burial sites and spirit forests. In the past, both indigenous and upland Khmer people reported making offerings to spirits prior to cutting trees, and ceremonies were an integral part of the swidden cycle (Swift and Cock, 2015). Now interviewees said there is less need to make offerings (*to sen*): “Some events are no longer done, like praying to the spirit when we cut the forest. Now there is no forest to cut” (65 year old indigenous man, Ratanakiri, November 2016). Focus group participants noted that only people who have their own land still perform harvest ceremonies, as those who rent “do not feel like doing them” (Charay women, Ratanakiri, February 2020). This means that these practices may become limited to more wealthy villagers.

The spiritual world is also affected by the reduction in grazing commons. Previously, rural families grazed cattle and buffalo near their villages as a source of food, sacrifice for ceremonies,

and as a safety net when they were in need of income. Today, few families raise livestock, as agribusinesses issue fines or even shoot animals when they wander onto plantations. As one person said

Now, it is difficult to raise buffaloes and pigs because there are no places for grazing. . . . They will fine us or catch our [animals]. . . . If we don’t bring money to pay them, they will keep our buffalo and not return it (42 year old Charay man, Ratanakiri, March 2016)

This has implications for agroecological systems, as the reduction in manure means chamkar crops require more synthetic fertilizer; for indebtedness, as livestock used to provide a safety net for hard times and now loans perform that role; and also for spiritual practices.

Before we could access from the forest to support daily expenses and when we want to buy something like a motorbike we could sell buffalo. When we needed money for something like a family wedding we sold the buffalo. Now if we have any events like this we need to sell land. Today we depend only on cassava. (38 year old Khmer woman, Kratie, March 2016)

For those families who continue to raise buffalo, the lack of commons land means that they have to travel for several days to take their buffalo to graze. This labor has gendered implications, as it is usually young boys who are responsible for rearing buffalo, and some families said their sons had to miss school when they took buffalo to graze:

Our indigenous tradition is that buffaloes are freely raised everywhere they want to go. But since the company came, we cannot do that anymore. When the buffalo go into the rubber plantation the owners are punished by workers at the company. On the other hand when buffalo is not freely raised as before, some of boys have to take time off school to guard it (66 year old Charay woman, Ratanakiri, March 2016).

Despite these difficulties, buffalo slaughter is still a central part of funerals, land blessings, house moving ceremonies and weddings. For many of our interviewees, these these spiritual practices remain embedded in their ontologies of land.

Practices of Collective Resistance to Loss of Communal Land

One of the ways women are renegotiating normative ideas about land and gender, is through their participation and leadership in collective protests over land grabbing and the destruction of forests. Women spoke emotively of their commitment to give their lives for their land if necessary:

We protested at the place where the company bulldozed our lands. . . . We decided to struggle until we die. When they used an excavator to dig a canal on the land, about 20 of us walked into the working excavator at the same time . . . It was women and even young girls in the front line. Men dared not stand in front, they were afraid that they are not patient enough and they might act violently with the company’s workers. In case women and girls face violence from the company’s guards, men behind would help.

But finally, we still could not win. (48 year old Steang woman, Kratie, March 2016)

Similar stories of women leading land protests have been noted by other researchers (Lamb, 2014; Hennings, 2019; Brickell, 2020), with some making the point that placing women in the forefront of violent protest exposes them to substantial physical and emotional risk without tangible rewards in the form of greater equality (Hennings, 2019). While women in our interviews frequently talked about leading land rights protests, this did not appear to be driven by men. One woman recalled a meeting at the Prime Minister's office in Phnom Penh, which she attended with other women from the village: "we did not want our husbands to go because we are afraid of violence ... we are afraid that men are not good in terms of negotiating and problems will happen." Here, this woman asserts her superior skill in negotiation and conflict resolution. These protest actions are remarkable both for the community's continued efforts to mobilize collectively and also in the ways that they open space for different gendered subjectivities. While the potential violence of forest livelihoods in commercial logging was seen to be something men had the skills and political networks to negotiate, our interviewees agreed that it was better for women to lead land protests because their presence could lessen the potential for violence. Thus, gendered ideas of risk are being reconfigured through women's protest actions.

Practices of Non-monetary Exchange Labor and Subsistence

Exchange labor persists alongside wage labor, and family farming. Prior to the rise in land enclosures in the mid-2000s, interviewees said exchange labor was widely practiced on rice farms and Chamkar for land clearing, weeding and harvesting, with people working in groups of 10–20 and rotating around the village fields. Now, wealthier farmers said they sprayed herbicide for weeds and hired labor for harvesting. However, most farmers said they continued to use exchange labor. Exchange labor practices can be particularly important for women and for older people, who are paid less or not chosen for wage labor work on plantations. One divorced woman said she is only able to maintain her farm as a single woman because she exchanges labor (50 year old Charay woman, Ratanakiri, March 2016). Others said that all participants are valued in exchange labor:

In labor exchange, people do not mind whether it is men or women or even older people as long as they can perform the work. They do the work equally. (39 year old Charay man, Ratanakiri, March 2016)

Even though some people felt that exchange labor was too time consuming, they still appreciated its sociality. The continuation of exchange labor can be viewed as a form of resistance to commercial labor relations and as form of community-building for poorer farmers, particularly for women and older people, who are marginalized in the wage labor marketplace.

Cooperation and non-monetary exchange also persisted with rice farming for home consumption. Some families noted that

a downturn in cassava prices, and high rice market prices, encouraged people to go back to cultivating some rice for home consumption. People who no longer have land said they help family members with the harvest and receive rice as compensation. Sometimes this exchange takes the form of a circular economy whereby those with rice land finance their seed and expenses early in the season by borrowing from relatives or buying food on credit, then repay them with rice at harvest:

They produce rice only for home consumption. When we start doing rice, we also borrow money from our relatives, pay them money or buy fermented fish from the neighbor during rice cultivation season. When we harvest rice, we repay them with rice. (46 year old Tampoun man, Ratanakiri, December 2019)

The continuation of labor practices in which women and men, and the broader family unit, works together, is also still visible in some family farming practices such as families who sleep together at the field (40 year old Khmer woman, 20 March 2020), which demonstrate that this concept of a "family farming unit" is present, albeit in a smaller measure than it used to be. Therefore, rather than a linear "before/after" story of land enclosures destroying communal practices, we found that these practices continue, and new practices of re-appropriation are emerging, such as people returning to food production and exchange labor. These practices are forms of resistance to the emerging norms of individualized commercial farming that simultaneously contest gendered subjectivities by creating spaces for community-building amongst women and older people marginalized in the formal marketplace.

CONCLUSION

Processes of communal land enclosure are redefining gender, class, generational and ethnic relations in the Cambodian uplands. In contrast to development narratives that depict upland people as homogenously desiring a return to shifting cultivation, our respondents described an ambiguous relationship with the social changes taking place (Elmhirst et al., 2017; Frewer, 2017). There is a deep sense of loss apparent in many accounts, particularly the older generation and young people who are reaching life stages at which the forest would formerly have provided wood and farming land. There is also an awareness that neo-liberal economies based on boom crops and credit have increased competition between smallholder farmers and that this frenetic pace of change rewards those who have the agility to seize opportunities when they present themselves. Families with young children and those headed by women are at a disadvantage due to their caring responsibilities and an absence of labor, capital and patronage networks. Some respondents expressed nostalgia for earlier, less stressful times when land was abundant and there was no need to worry about loan repayments or purchasing food at the market. But this sense of loss is mixed with a feeling that life today is easier. For many people, it is only when they need to depend on the forest that its former role in social reproduction is fully appreciated.

In this article, we argued that as communal forests are privatized, gendered subjectivities are being reconfigured. Enclosure has transformed the forest as a gendered space; where men and women previously went to the forest together, women's opportunities for labor in the privatized forest has diminished, and there is stronger spatial differentiation between the forest as a predominantly male space, and the feminine space of the home. Gender articulates with other aspects of subjectivity such as social class, age, ethnicity and patronage networks in redefining what it means to be a man or a woman (Nightingale, 2006). Normative ideals of masculinity are harder to perform, and what it means to be a successful man is changing. The successful rural man now has either accumulated sufficient land for farming or has the *savoir faire* and connections to make a livelihood from the forest. Other men turn to plantation work that is poorly paid and often regarded as shameful in comparison with running one's own farm. To be a "successful man" in the new forest space requires acceptance of risk, physical strength, and relationships with authorities and companies. In upland Cambodia, as in other contexts of agrarian decline, when men cannot perform idealized notions of masculinity, some resort to violence (Carrington and Scott, 2008).

Normative ideals of femininity continue to position women as the primary caregivers, but now women are performing care work at home as well as farming smallholder plots and seeking wage labor to buy food and household necessities, while juggling ever-increasing levels of household debt. Women are being relegated to the "private" sphere of the home and its associated reproductive labor and farm responsibilities and their social status accruing from matrilineal land inheritance practices is in flux. Those without land to inherit may not find someone to marry. Those who do inherit land find themselves tied to the farm and obliged to care for elderly parents. These processes of agrarian change are giving rise to what a number of feminist political ecologists have described as a "crisis of care" within which the "super exploitation" of the reproductive labor of women and the environment that is required for capitalist production can no longer be sustained (Mies, 2007; Fraser, 2017).

These gendered subjectivities are contested, however, through practices that assert continuity and reconfiguring of communal relations with land. While the commons are being enclosed in much of the Cambodian uplands, feminist political ecologists direct our attention to the ways in which collective relationships with land persist in practices of "reappropriation, reconstruction, and reinvention" (Harcourt and Escobar, 2005). The continuity of communal land use and associated economies of care—expressed in ceremonial practices, exchange labor and rice-sharing arrangements, as well as collective action to contest resource grabbing—can be viewed as forms of resistance to the erosion of community relationships with the commons

(Sato and Soto Alarcón, 2019). These communal practices attest to ongoing affective ontologies of social and environmental care. Practices of "re-commoning" are not immune from the gendered inequalities that are found in settings of individual land ownership. However, these collective labor, food and spiritual practices create spaces for community-building amongst women and older people marginalized in the formal marketplace, and thus provide openings for the reimagining of commons within settings of enclosure in ways that are potentially more sustainable and equitable.

DATA AVAILABILITY STATEMENT

The raw data supporting the conclusions of this article will be made available by the authors, without undue reservation.

ETHICS STATEMENT

Written informed consent was obtained from the minor(s) legal guardian/next of kin for the publication of any potentially identifiable images or data included in this article.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

All authors listed have made a substantial, direct and intellectual contribution to the work, and approved it for publication.

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