PERIPHERAL VISION: IMPLICATIONS OF SPATIAL CONTEXTUALISATION FOR COMMUNITIES SURROUNDING HERITAGE SITES

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INTRODUCTION

The immediate setting of a heritage site has a strong influence on its overall significance (Aplin 2002), often providing protection from encroaching modern land use. More recently modern cultural heritage management has often formally incorporated the wider surrounding landscape, which on its own may have little or no inherent heritage value. As the setting, or spatial context of a site can now operate at multiple scales, the influence of cultural heritage management often extend beyond the conventionally defined borders inscribed on a heritage list.

With increased efforts to include local communities in the heritage management process, there has been a focus on the populations that reside within the bounds of heritage sites (Smith 2000), especially where the heritage site is the whole (or part) of a city (Evans 2002). While the positive and negative impacts of heritage management processes on the immediate heritage site are now understood in broad terms (Aplin 2002), the implications of these processes for the larger geographical area that often forms the spatial context of a heritage site remain poorly understood. Conservation of heritage areas is unlikely to succeed if the surrounding communities do not support, or feel alienated from, the site and associated management processes (Worboys *et al.* 2001; Green 2001). It has been recognised that the most successful way to ensure the preservation of heritage sites, particularly in developing countries, is the integration of heritage with improvements in the quality of life for the host population (Hackenberg 2002). This requires the balancing of different lifestyles and *senses of place* - the way that a person knows and understands the world around them (Cresswell 2004) - that compete for the same space at the same time (Dietvorst and Ashworth 1995). As the geographical area influenced by heritage management increases, there is an even greater need to ensure management processes incorporate greater sensitivity for surrounding communities.

This paper will consider the implications of the spatial contextualisation of cultural heritage sites. Using the Angkor World Heritage site (Cambodia) as a case study, it will explore potential stakeholder conflict over the relationship between the heritage site and its geographical setting. By examining current senses of place, the study will investigate the implications of difference between the sense of place of those who recognise Angkor for its universal heritage value and those who understand it through its local cultural heritage significance.

ANGKOR AND ITS SURROUNDS

1 Angkor

Between the ninth and fourteenth centuries AD, a series of great cities were built across the alluvial plains on the northern shore of the Tonle Sap Lake in Cambodia (Wager 1995) (Figure 1). Following their demise sometime after the fifteenth century, they were repossessed by vegetation. Today, all that remains are giant stone monuments, thrusting up from the jungle that engulfs them. Despite the decline of the once powerful Angkorian Empire and its opulent capital of Angkor, the significance of the ruins for the Khmer people runs deep (Endo 2002; Thibault 1998), the region has often been described as *"the soul of the Khmer"* (Ang Chouléan in Boukhari 2002). With its 'discovery' by French explorers in the mid-nineteenth century, the area also found a place within the global collective imagination (Wager 1995), culminating with the inscription of Angkor on the World Heritage List in 1992.

In the intermediary period between the decline of the royal city and the arrival of Europeans, Angkor was not abandoned, but occupied and used by much smaller settlements (Dagens 2002). With the arrival of the French, the monuments of Angkor were isolated from the surrounding landscape (Winter 2002). Angkor was no longer part of the modern landscape, but *"a lost city"* (Pym 1968:188), *"as lonely and deserted as formerly it must have been full of life and cheerfulness"* (Henri Mouhot 1864 in Pym 1968). The monuments of Angkor became discrete locations, isolated from each other and their surrounds (Taylor and Altenburg 2005). The aesthetics of decline and decay created by the intense tropical climate and flora helped situate Angkor within a setting that was discrete from the surrounding environment, temporally, culturally and

spatially (Winter 2002).This distinction emphasised the importance of protecting the ruins of Angkor from the modern Cambodian landscape.

Over the last one hundred and fifty years, the jungles often described as bearers of destruction consuming the remnants of the Angkorian city (eg. Brodrick 1956; Pym 1968), have become its protection from the outside world. The mature forest vegetation provides a strong contrast with the surrounding predominantly flat agricultural landscape. In recognition of this the creation of the Angkor Archaeological Park in 1925 protected the shielding forests in addition to the monuments. The dense jungle environment became the immediate setting for the ruins, supporting the global image of Angkor as a 'lost city' (Winter 2002). Early visitors, after making the journey up the Mekong and across the vast inland sea of the Tonle Sap, had to venture through thick jungle to reach the temples (Rooney 2001). Exploring the piles of stone through the enveloping jungle, modern day visitors to the park can also experience (to some degree) what it would have been like to 'discover' the temples, some of which have been deliberately preserved entangled amongst the roots of giant trees.

2 Siem Reap

Siem Reap lies seven kilometres to the south of Angkor (Figure 1). As the sole gateway to the World Heritage site, the town is one of the more significant in Cambodia (Thibault 1998). Travelling through to Angkor in the nineteenth century, European explorers described Siem Reap as an unimportant and sleepy village (Rooney 2001). In 1907 the Angkor region came under the influence of French colonial administration. Having previously commenced research at Angkor, the French strengthened their involvement in the region by establishing a headquarters in Siem Reap (Thibault 1998). The Siem Reap River formed the backbone of the town (Rooney 2001). Colonial villas surrounded by landscaped gardens spread along the east bank of the river and the administrative and commercial centre lay on the west bank (Thibault 1998). The Khmer population of the town was located to the east, expanding the town away from the river (Thibault 1998). Growth in tourism in the early-twentieth century gave rise to changes in the Siem Reap townscape, with guest bungalows and hotels being opened (Rooney 2001), including the Grand Hotel d'Angkor *"an immense and dazzling white concrete palace that looked more at home on the Cote d'Azur"* (Ponder 1936:148 in Rooney 2001:70-1). Siem Reap's civilised colonial life provided a comfortable base from which tourists could explore the 'lost city' in the wild jungles to the north.

Following Cambodian independence from France in 1953

(Kamm 1998), tourism prospered but the Siem Reap townscape remained relatively unchanged (AusHeritage and ASEAN-COCI 2003) until the Vietnamese War spilled across the border into Cambodia in 1970. The American bombing led to the abandonment of restoration, conservation and research activities at Angkor (Wager 1995). In 1975, the political movement known as Democratic Kampuchea, or the *Khmer Rouge*, took control of the country. With the intention of creating large self-sufficient Maoist agricultural communes, the Khmer Rouge evacuated all the major urban centres including Phnom Penh and Siem Reap. In 1979, the Vietnamese entered Cambodia and deposed of the Khmer Rouge. While the Khmer population remained on the periphery of the urban landscape, the Vietnamese invested in the towns (Thibault 1998). For Siem Reap, this meant renewed occupation of its colonial core. In 1991, formal Peace Accords were signed in Paris ending twenty years of conflict. Against this backdrop Angkor offered a unique opportunity to integrate tourism and cultural heritage management to assist with economic reconstruction and development (Durand 2002).

CULTURAL HERITAGE MANAGEMENT OF ANGKOR

Angkor was inscribed on the World Heritage List at a time when Cambodia was under temporary administration by the United Nations. Due to a lack of legal mechanisms and management procedures for the protection of the site (Lemaistre and Cavalier 2002), Angkor was placed on the List of World Heritage in Danger until the necessary administrative requirements were finally met in June 2004. To manage the World Heritage site, the Authority for the Protection and Management of Angkor and the Region of Siem Reap (APSARA) was established. APSARA is directly responsible for the protection, conservation and enhancement of Angkor as well as tourism and urban development in and around Siem Reap (AusHeritage and ASEAN-COCI 2003; Lemaistre and Cavalier 2002). APSARA works in co-operation with the International Cooperating Committee for the Safeguarding and Development of the Historic Site of Angkor (ICC). This committee oversees and monitors the participation of different countries and organisations in all conservation and research projects.

In order to ensure the protection of the Angkor World Heritage site from a modern landscape that was poised to undergo rapid post-war development, the Cambodian government with assistance from UNESCO and the international community created the Angkor Zoning and Environmental Management Plan (ZEMP) (Wager 1995; Fournier *et al.* 1993). The Angkor ZEMP from its outset

acknowledged that the long-term protection of the heritage site was linked to the sustainable development of the surrounding areas (Wager 1995), the alleviation of poverty, and improvements in the quality of life (Vann 2002). Tourism and its flow-on industries were acknowledged as being able to achieve this and, thus, the ZEMP encouraged 'appropriate' tourism to assist in the conservation of the archaeological resources (Durand 2002). The central outcome from the ZEMP was a series of 5 zones (Figure 1) that offered increasing levels of modern development with distance from the monuments (Wager 1995), effectively spreading the impacts of heritage management into the surrounding landscape. Zones 1 and 2, containing the temples, are assigned the highest level of protection, and thus all new construction is prohibited. Zone 5 covers the entire province of Siem Reap, and the emphasis is on appropriate development rather than total restriction of modern construction and growth (Wager 1995).

Plans to increase the accessibility of the monuments to the outside world were expected to cause a surge in the tourism industry (Fournier *et al.* 1993). Accompanying the social and economic changes expected with the influx of the heritage tourism industry, a profound transformation was anticipated in the urban structure of Siem Reap (Fournier *et al.* 1993). The town was predicted to swell, as a result of growth in the town's population by those keen not to miss out on the tourism boom. Those in charge of managing the World Heritage Site were afraid not only of the physical damage that uncontrolled development could cause to the temples, but also the effect that large scale modern development could have on the atmosphere of the heritage site (Wager 1995). Furthermore, the colonial core of Siem Reap, that had survived twenty years of war, was at risk if development was not controlled (Fournier *et al.* 1993). Angkor's perceived value as a 'lost city' now depended directly on the nature of development in the surrounding area, and in particular the town of Siem Reap.

The management authorities sought control of the townscape by preserving Siem Reap's unique character through conservation of its dense vegetation, spacious habitats and low skyline (APSARA 2003). Tourism and urbanisation strategies (see Figure 2) were developed to complement the development controls placed on the town by the ZEMP and aimed to maintain the 'authentic' Siem Reap (Wager 1995). These strategies emphasised the colonial atmosphere and structure of the town with those areas formerly occupied by the French becoming the focus of tourism, commercial and administrative development (Thibault 1998). Two areas were assigned to accommodate urban expansion. These were primarily intended as areas for the local population and were designed to extend Siem Reap

out along the major transport routes that crossed in the centre of the town. These areas were located away from the immediate vicinity of Angkor. To minimise negative impacts of the local population, a hotel zone was created, in the hope that it would restrain and control large-scale tourism development (Vann 2002). Larger resort-style hotels would be located there, while smaller businesses that were more sympathetic to the colonial atmosphere would be integrated into the townscape.

By exerting considerable control on post-war development outside the confines of the Angkor World Heritage site, the ZEMP has contextualised Angkor within the wider landscape. Thus the impacts of cultural heritage management processes now extend out into the surrounding cultural and natural environment. The impacts of cultural heritage management processes on the populations that live within the confines of the Angkor Park have been investigated (eg. Miura 2005; Ballard 2003). However there has been no investigation into the implications of the spatial contextualisation of heritage for external communities that come under the control and influence, both direct and indirect, of Angkor heritage management.

THE IMPLICATIONS OF SPATIAL CONTEXTUALISATION OF HERITAGE FOR SURROUNDING COMMUNITIES

1 Urban growth in Siem Reap

Heritage and urban planners recognised that post-war Siem Reap was not a static landscape, but had enormous development potential as a result of its proximity to the heritage site. Therefore they have attempted to control changes in the landscape to protect the heritage site, both physically and atmospherically, through preservation and enhancement of Siem Reap's unique character (APSARA 2003). In order to examine the spatial implications of the Angkor management plans for Siem Reap, it is first necessary to determine the type and magnitude of urban development in and around Siem Reap in the ten years since the ZEMP was implemented.

Using spatial analysis methods that incorporated remotely sensed data and field observations, patterns of urban growth were quantified and compared to the urban management plans. To determine the extent and nature of urban change from 1993 to 2005, an urban classification scheme was developed for Siem Reap. As 'urban' is a subjective term (Stilwell 1992), strict spatial boundaries may not exist between urban and rural regions but rather an area of transition (Fisher 2000; Hansen 2003). Thus a spectrum of land covers was developed that allowed for regions that were in transition from rural to urban. The classification

scheme was then applied to the analysis of aerial photography (1993) and Airborne Synthetic Aperture Radar (2000). It was also utilised in the collection and analysis of field data (2003 – 2005). Each of these various datasets provided a stage in the growth of Siem Reap, and they were combined within a Geographical Information System (GIS) to determine the overall patterns of change. The GIS also allowed direct comparison with the spatial information and plans of the ZEMP.

The findings of this study (Butland 2003) demonstrated that, while the town had undergone some expansion in the early 1990's, political stability and the opening of the international airport in 1998 had triggered an acceleration of urban growth associated with a rise in heritage tourism. Despite the rapid and large-scale change, development appears to have generally conformed to the management plans. While the specified hotel zone remains devoid of hotels at present, the areas zoned for administrative, cultural and commercial activities (including smaller-scale tourist facilities) have developed to accommodate these purposes. With building-height restrictions, the conservation and replanting of avenues of trees and landscaped gardens, as well as the incorporation of colonial-style architecture into the rebuilding process, Siem Reap still possesses a rural character reminiscent of its colonial past. However, there are some potential sources of conflict between the ideals of the management plans and the trajectory of development.

Restrictions on development, not only within the Angkor World Heritage site, but also between the monuments and the highway (National Route 6 – see Figure 2) that cuts through the north of Siem Reap, mean that there are increased pressures on the surrounding land and population. Siem Reap is facing a huge increase, not only in tourism-related development, but also in population, as people outside the town and province are attracted to the economic and lifestyle opportunities available. With construction limited on the northern side of the highway and restricted by the floodplains to the south, development is being pushed to the east and west of the town, expanding along the major transportation routes and incorporating former agricultural land. Consequently, the town is being forced into an economic transition, from subsistence farming to tourism and related service industries focussed on Angkor.

Heritage-related tourism within Siem Reap is concentrated in certain areas of the town, particularly the more central urban areas where land prices are the highest in Cambodia (Sophal and Acharya 2002). As land prices rise and poorer families see the opportunity to exchange land for money, Khmer locals are being pushed to the edges of the town. This is creating areas that are no longer local 'lived space' but rather transient 'foreigner space'. This is particularly the case in and around areas zoned for commercial use.

While the town largely maintains the rural atmosphere that contrasts with other Asian urban environments, such as Phnom Penh or Hanoi, planners are concerned about the nature of development along the main highway east and west of the town. This is a road that all foreigners travel and represents the first and last impressions that tourists gain of the Angkor region. On the western approach to the town (entering from the international airport, and beyond that, the Thai border and Bangkok) are a number of large hotels catering mainly for the mass tourism market. The construction of such hotels in close vicinity to each other is perceived by APSARA's urban planning department as having the potential to compromise the atmosphere of Siem Reap. There are concerns over the eastern approach to the town (the main overland route from Phnom Penh), due to the intense nature of settlement (commercial and residential) that reflects a modern Asian urban environment rather than a French-colonial or traditional Khmer environment. Structures have limited (if any) space separating them. There is minimal vegetation surrounding the buildings or bordering the road. The atmosphere here is in stark contrast with both the older areas of the town and the densely vegetated Angkor World Heritage site.

2 Differing senses of place

The common thread through all these conflicts is the differing perspectives of Siem Reap, or differing *sense of place*, held by multiple stakeholders. What some people consider progress, others may view as detrimental to the heritage environment. Every place has its own identity and sense of place and this can change over time (Cresswell 2004). Sense of place is how a person relates to a particular space and locates it within their life. It is the subjective and emotional attachment a person has to a place (Cresswell 2004). There can be many different and simultaneous perspectives on the sense of a place (Massey 1993). Contextualisation of heritage, temporally and spatially, is linked to the development of a sense of place and identity relating to that heritage object (Bianchi and Boniface 2002). Conflicts have the potential to arise if one sense of place is favoured above others (Hayden 1997). As the management process at Angkor has had minimal public participation, it is hypothesised that the issues concerning the changing Siem Reap townscape are due to conflicts in perceptions of place held by the planners and the local Khmer community. If the spatial contextualisation of heritage through the broadening of heritage setting is affecting the sense of place of others, then there is a need to examine these impacts.

An integrated quantitative and qualitative methodology is required, in order to explore the impacts of spatial contextualisation on the sense of place of Siem Reap held by the local population. At present UNESCO is promoting the increasing use of GIS within cultural heritage management. Simultaneously, they are also encouraging the incorporation of local populations and knowledge within management processes. Yet conventional GIS is seen by some to be undemocratic, disempowering and controlling (Schuurman 2000), suggesting pervasive contradictions in this approach. However, there has been a movement towards the development of alternative forms of GIS that enable the incorporation of local knowledge and the participation of the wider public (Weiner *et al.* 2002). These have been embraced by heritage practitioners, particularly the use of cognitive mapping. Yet there are still a number of issues associated with the combining of GIS and participatory methodologies, namely the inclusion of qualitative data and its integration with quantitative data. The issue of GIS and local participation is particularly pertinent at Angkor as the use of GIS in the creation and management of the ZEMP has been the UNESCO model for the use of GIS within cultural heritage management (Box 1999). Thus the potentially contrasting and conflicting senses of place for Angkor and Siem Reap held by various stakeholders can be explored through the utilisation of participatory GIS methodologies.

3 A spatial context for Angkor

To examine the impact of Angkor spatial contextualisation, it is necessary to determine the spatial context, or setting, of Angkor. This involves identifying potential conflicts between the universal significance of Angkor as a World Heritage site identified by management authorities (specifically APSARA, UNESCO, and ICC) and international visitors, and its local significance to the Khmer population of Siem Reap. From the starting point of the management plans (ie. the ZEMP) and the associated literature, those who value Angkor for its universal significance appear to perceive two separate entities on the Angkor landscape. There are, firstly, the monuments and the jungle that protects them. Secondly, there is the town that both threatens (through modern development) and contributes to (enhancement of the Angkor experience) the heritage values of the World Heritage site.

While the local significance of Angkor, such as its role in post-war nation building, has been explored, the wider geographical setting of Angkor from the local perspective has not previously been documented. Therefore it was necessary to undertake interviews to gain insight on the perceptions of the local Khmer community in Siem Reap. Interviewees were asked questions concerning Angkor and its relationship to the surrounding landscape, physically and aesthetically. Aerial imagery was utilised to provide a spatial frame of reference and assist in conducting spatial analysis.

Initially, in order to compare the universal and local perspectives, interviewees were asked whether they thought the appearance of Siem Reap was important for Angkor. Most people (85%) responded positively to this. However, further questioning revealed that for many interviewees this was perceived as being only important for tourists (50%). In the hope of furthering these enquiries, questions were asked about perceptions of the spatial relationship between Angkor and the surrounding area, for example, definition of the spatial extent of Siem Reap and whether Angkor was inside or outside of the town. Approximately half (48%) of the sample population perceived Angkor as being part of the town, and approximately half (46%) viewed it as distinct from the modern city. Interviewees were also questioned about the importance of a buffer zone around the temples. Most respondents (86%) considered the idea of an area devoid of modern structures separating the Angkor Park and modern development as important. Reasons presented included the protection of the forest, protection of cultural heritage and for the appearance of the temples. Further questions concerning the contrasts in landscape between the Angkor Park and the surrounding landscape reveal that the strong contrast in climate, vegetation and the built environment is important for the Khmer population.

From these preliminary investigations it appears that for the local Khmer population of Siem Reap, there are two main senses of place associated with Angkor and its surrounding landscape. The first of these is *Angkor as a Monument*, where Angkor is isolated from the wider environment. While it may be contained within the borders of Siem Reap town, the dense vegetation provides a sanctuary from the heat and hassle of the outside world. Interviewees enjoy Angkor as a place to watch the tourists, picnic and play football with friends. However, unlike the universal sense of place, there is no contextual relationship between Angkor and Siem Reap. In contrast, the alternative sense of place held by the local population, *Angkor as a Wat*, reflects strong linkages between the town and the heritage site. The wat (Buddhist temple) in Khmer society is the centre of the community, providing religion, education and social life (Vann 2003). Angkor was viewed by many interviewees as more important than the modern wats found throughout Siem Reap, but it fulfils a similar function as the centre of the Siem Reap community. *"Because pray in city, Angkor Wat is in the town, as Wat Phnom is in Phnom Penh"* was how one interviewee described the relationship between the town and temple. Another described Siem Reap as *"Angkor town"*.

INFLUENCING A SENSE OF PLACE

For the local Khmer population, there does not seem to be a significant relationship between the sense of place of Siem Reap and the heritage values of Angkor. However, it is those responsible for cultural heritage management at Angkor who have the greatest influence over the landscape through their control over the direction of development and planning instruments such as the ZEMP. If assuming that Siem Reap is a significant part of the spatial context of Angkor, provided it presents the correct character (sense of place), then the implications of this must be considered. Specifically, research is needed to determine how the sense of place held for Siem Reap by the local Khmer population is impacted upon by the sense of place of those holding the 'universal' values of Angkor.

Analysis of urban growth since 1992 using remotely sensed datasets suggests that there may be areas in Siem Reap where heritage-related tourism space is replacing local Khmer space. Analysis of spatial change in commercial activities in Siem Reap combined with interview data concerning daily activities and perspectives on certain areas of the town, suggests that Angkor management practices have influenced the townscape so that there are now effectively two 'Siem Reaps'. The first is the colonial-foreign Siem Reap which occupies the older part of the town (centred on Phsa Chas). In the last five years buildings that do not fit the French-colonial aesthetic have been replaced with new 'appropriate' structures. This has often meant that commercial activities oriented towards the Khmer population (such as those selling household products or providing recreational space) have been replaced by restaurants and souvenir shops servicing the tourist market. Khmer see this space as belonging to foreigners, and their space as being symbolised by Phsa Leu, the new larger market on the eastern side of the town. Phsa Leu effectively forms the main node of urban life for the local Khmer population, and is situated right in the middle of the modern Asian urban settlement that Angkor management would like to minimise within the town. This is the *other* Siem Reap – the urban everyday Siem Reap.

Heritage management processes associated with the Angkor World Heritage site have created a sense of place that draws on the region's colonial past. As part of this the nearby town of Siem Reap must play a supporting role forming part of the heritage site's broader spatial context. However, preliminary investigations suggest that the local population is being displaced from certain parts of the town by the production of the 'universal value' driven sense of place. Further investigation is therefore required to determine whether the sense of place for Siem Reap held by

the local Khmer population has changed as a consequence of the spatial contextualisation of Angkor.

Abstract

By recognising the importance of a setting or spatial context for heritage sites, the interests of cultural heritage managers often extend beyond the conventionally defined borders inscribed on a heritage list. The impacts of heritage management practices on populations that live within the bounds of heritage sites are understood in broad terms, but the impacts of these processes on the wider area that forms the spatial context of a heritage site remain poorly understood.

The Angkor World Heritage Site (Cambodia) is an ideal case study to investigate the implications of spatially contextualising heritage. As a condition of the site's inscription on the World Heritage List (1992), a modern management scheme was established that sought to create an Angkor 'experience'. Angkor was contextualised within the wider landscape, in part, by exerting considerable control on post civil-war development outside the confines of the heritage site (primarily the town of Siem Reap). Through the adoption of participatory methodologies and GIS-based spatial analysis that allow integration of local community and management perspectives, the study seeks firstly to define - spatially and descriptively – the setting of the Angkor World Heritage Site. It then explores the implications of heritage management for the modern landscape surrounding Angkor.

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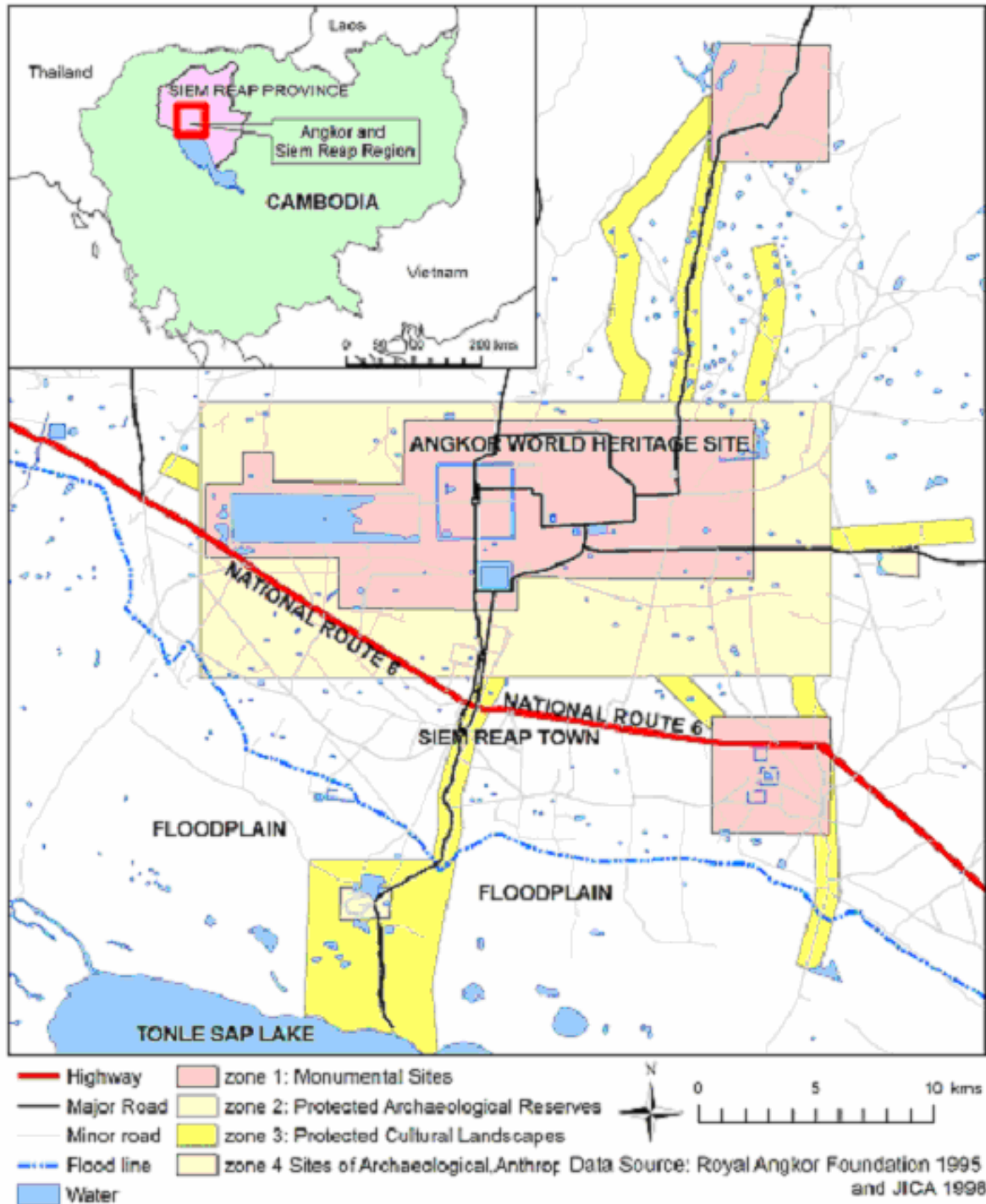
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Fig.1 Map of the Angkor World Heritage Site, showing four of the zones defined in the Angkor Zoning and Environmental Managament Plan. The fifth Zone covers the entire Siem Reap Province.
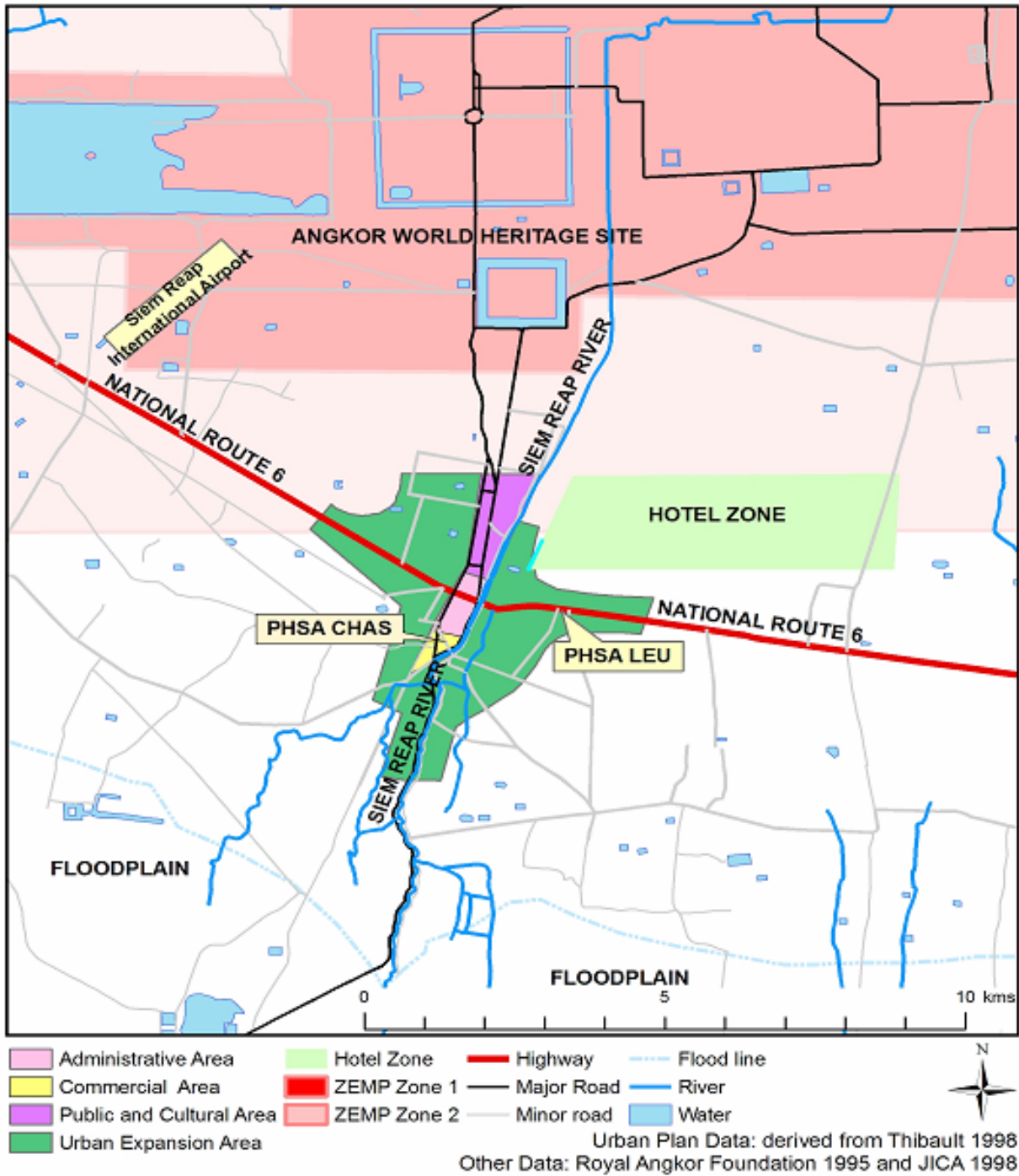
Fig.2 Plans of Tourism and Urbanisation stratcgics dcvclopcd for Sicm Rcap as part of the Angkor Zoning and Environmcntal Managcmcnt Plan (1993)