BEYOND THE PARK
FLEXIBILITY AS A MODE OF SPATIAL PRODUCTION

In partnership with WFW, ACHR, CAN, YTU and AMA
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Student Report
This work would not have been possible with the partnerships and friendships forged with the students of the Yangon Technical University, Thanlyin Technical University and the Community Bitukar Program. Kyi Kyi, Ye Thi, Thin Thin, May and Phyo were an integral part of the team in producing and reframing the knowledge which forms the basis of this proposal. We would also like to thank the local community members who opened their homes to us during the fieldwork process and worked patiently and tirelessly with us in producing new strategies around public space.

We are grateful to the local and regional organizations for facilitating our time in Yangon, in particular Women for the World, Asian Coalition for Housing Rights, Community Architects Network, Yangon City Development Committee and the Association of Myanmar Architects.

The support and guidance of our professors in our learning process has been invaluable, and so we would like to thank Azadeh Mashayeikh, Catalina Ortiz, Camillo Boano, Giorgio Talocci, Giovanna Astolfo and Ricardo Martens.
Like many countries in the region, Myanmar is currently experiencing a period of rapid urbanization and this is most evident in Yangon, the largest city in the country. Because of its history of isolation from the rest of the world, this urbanization has been occurring with an urgency to ‘catch up’ and meet international standards in development. But this urgency comes with it a price, personified in those who are being left behind and left out of the country’s process of ‘modernization’.

By looking at the history, politics and society of Myanmar, we began an investigation into the dimensions of citizenship in a country where in Yangon alone, up to 2 million people are potentially considered “stateless” (Rhoads, 2019), and who are the consequences of multiple and rapid socio-political transitions. We aim to challenge the conventional notions of citizenship and understand the agency of those who are decidedly pushed out of the system into ‘limbo’, where they are neither legal nor illegal but very much immovable from the city.

Through this approach, we strive to uncover the practices of everyday life in the planning of the city’s peripheries, areas formed out of the displacement by those continuously pushed outwards as Yangon perpetually expands. We believe that the planning that occurs outside the formal system is not only a legitimate practice but a necessary force to ensure balance in the growth of the city. Through on-the-ground research, we worked with the citizens of Yangon’s periphery to redefine this bottom-up planning – not just as an act of resilience but as a manifestation of citizenship, staking a claim to their right to the city.

Our joint research with the students and communities of Yangon has revealed a reality diametrically opposite to that currently being promoted in development plans for the city. What we have uncovered is trepidation and uncertainty of a future that is engulfed by ‘development’ that is slowly creeping to the periphery of the city, but also a pragmatism and resilience in the face of exclusionary policies. The result has been a series of strategies that aim to raise the voices of the people and bridge the gap between the formal planning system and the everyday life practices.

The strategies laid out in this report are not boldly declared as a solution to Yangon’s development woes, nor do they aim to repair decades of injustice. What is proposed here is an appeal to think differently, to change the perception and mindset towards the city’s diverse and vibrant communities. It calls on all actors to build the city together, rather than construct one rolled over the lives and practices of the people who are inherent in making Yangon the city it has always been.
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<tr>
<th>Acronym</th>
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<td>ACHR</td>
<td>Asian Coalition for Housing Rights</td>
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<td>Community Organizations Development Institute</td>
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<td>CSO</td>
<td>Civil Society Organization</td>
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<td>JICA</td>
<td>Japan International Cooperation Agency</td>
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<td>NLD</td>
<td>National League for Democracy</td>
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<td>NGO</td>
<td>Non-Governmental Organization</td>
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<td>PAR</td>
<td>Participatory Action Research</td>
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**Citizenship**
We focus on citizenship both as a legal status granted by the government but also as a social system born of actions, interactions and transactions that occur on the level of daily life, and which shapes micro identities. It acts as a tool of inclusion or exclusion, defining the limits of what is possible.

**City-wide Upgrading**
An urban intervention on a city level that is scalable from multiple starting points, is reflexive and iterative in relation to ongoing and uncertain transformations and transitions, and can be used as a tool of inclusion or exclusion, (re)distribution or austerity, connectivity or disconnectivity.

**Collective Space**
Public spaces in Yangon are utilized for a range of different uses, with this series of uses often occurring in the span of a single day. Because public space can imply a leisurely use in traditional urban planning, we have expanded the definition here to be more explicit in our aim to encompass the full range of uses of public space.

**Community**
A group of dwellers who live in close proximity to one another or who share common traits, and whose interactions and support systems form a social infrastructure, often in the form of a coordination center or religious building. However, the usage of community here does not imply a cohesive or homogenous body of people.

**Displaceability**
The condition of being displaceable; that is, being susceptible to forced evictions or vulnerable to disasters, often due to social class, religion, ethnicity or nationality. It can be characterized by uncertainty, instability, lack of rootedness and a lack of political rights, but can impart a certain level of agency.

**Entrenchment**
A rootedness to a place or community which comes from active participation in that community through social or economic interactions, characterized by interdependence, place-making and bonding.

**Flexibility**
Resilience and adaptability to political, economic and social processes, for dwellers to meet their basic needs and exercise their right to the city often outside the legal parameters.

**Grey Space**
The spectrum that often exists between given binaries, a liminal state where formal definitions do not apply, or a state of uncertainty. It emerges as a layer between the top-down imposition of politics and the existing realities (eg. formal/informal, public/private, etc.)

**Home**
A space of privacy, intimacy and safety, demarcated by boundaries (walls, fences, etc.) to separate it from public space. These boundaries are often very porous, and publicness can enter the home as much as the private space can extend onto the street.

**Informality**
A process, state or system of norms that allow people to govern themselves, which is considered as existing outside the formal structure and legal definitions of the state. As a state it can apply to territories, labour categorization and forms of organization.

**Land**
Both a physical commodity which is defined by territorial order and markets, as well as an abstract concept shaped by socio-cultural and religious norms. The multiple aspects of land determine city growth and people's movements around it.

**Mobility**
The capacity of an individual, family or community to move from one place to another. This movement can be sparked due to threats of existing in a certain location or by a desire to improve quality of life through increasing livelihoods, environmental conditions and other factors.

**Nalehmu**
A social system of understanding outside the realm of the law, often understood through mutual agreements and trust for the exchange of goods and services. In Yangon, two types of nalehmu exist, an agreement between members of society and one between these members and official state actors.

**Public**
The Burmese word for public directly translates to ‘concerning many people’. The public realm is a collective space of activity, action and interaction, a space of performing urban citizenship in the pursuit of meeting basic and higher needs.

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This glossary of terms is prepared in order to clarify the meaning and usage of terms in the report. It is not simply a definition of words but our understanding of life in Yangon through these concepts as they play out in the urban space.
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INTRODUCTION
ABOUT THE REPORT

“[There is a] susceptibility of people, groups and developments to be removed, expelled or prevented from exercising their right to the city. This concept expands the understanding of displacement from an act to a systemic condition through which marginalizing power is exerted through policy and legal systems.”

(Yiftachel, 2018)

This report is a product of 14 weeks of participatory action research in the context of city-wide upgrading in Yangon, Myanmar. Specifically, it looks at the effect of citizenship practices and policies in the making of Yangon with a view to proposing more inclusive approaches to the upgrading process. Ward 20 of the suburban township of Hlaing Thar Yar is taken as a case study and it is where most of the fieldwork has taken place.

Hlaing Thar Yar is a township that has been built through decades of displacement of dwellers from Yangon’s city center to the edges of the city. Forced evictions, disasters and government policies have led to the growth of Hlaing Thar Yar into the most populated township of Yangon, with one of the highest densities. Those who are displaced are more often than not some of the most vulnerable, often lacking formal citizenship documentation. For this reason, Hlaing Thar Yar is also one of the poorest townships in Yangon.

As Yiftachel notes, “one may observe that the greater the threat of displacement, the weaker the urban citizenship” (Yiftachel, 2018). This research can be seen as a response to Yiftachel’s call for theorizing the condition of displaceability from different cities, by challenging notions of citizenship, informality and stability in the pursuit of a more contextualized urban planning approach in Myanmar.
The process that we undertook in this research was iterative, constantly revisiting assumptions, definitions and frameworks, in order to ensure that the richness and depth of city-making in Yangon was well-represented and integrated into our proposal. For this reason, the report is structured in a way to highlight the reconfiguration that occurred throughout the research by the findings and analysis.

The first section details the initial research preparation, and how an understanding of Yangon was formed through a review of the political, economic and social history of Myanmar. From this understanding, we sketched out a preliminary framework using displaceability and public space as frames to define our research question.

The second section begins with an introduction to the fieldwork, and highlights the action plan, methods and findings of this phase. It also includes a reflection of our positionality as researchers in the field, and how this influences the findings.

The final section contains a synthesis of the findings and how they inform our overall vision for action. This action is translated into a series of strategies that are built upon our overall understanding of city-making in Yangon, and concludes with an overview of the process.

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Myanmar has had a tumultuous political history, marked by seismic events whose effects have rippled over time. The cold war era socialist policies following the creation of the modern nation-state led to a “development” trap in which there were no domestic savings, difficulty collecting taxes and an inability to access capital (Jones, 2017). The policies failed to create economic self-reliance and left Myanmar on the verge of bankruptcy, which led to the liberalisation of the economy, marked by ‘ceasefire capitalism’ resource exploitation (Woods 2011b), and largely led by the Tatmadaw military (Jones, 2017).

After the devastation caused by Cyclone Nargis, the country realised it needed to open up to the world in order to receive financial aid, and began a rapid transition from military regime to democracy, marked by elections and the rise of the National Defense League headed by Aug San Syu Kyi. But even as ‘reforms’ take place, the shadow of the military still undisputedly lurks over the governance of the country.
The effect of these transitions over time are most clearly seen in Yangon. Those who were displaced from their homes across the country due factors such as military-ethnic conflicts (such as Rohingya, Chin and Shan states), jade mining or forced evictions found their way to Yangon’s peripheries, leading to the city’s historic and current growth (Rhoads, 2018).

Yangon today is comprised of Myanmar’s hugely diverse ethnic, religious, and social fabrics, coalesced in intricate urban networks through the cultural practice of nalehmu. But this is a condition that although vibrant, can also lead to tensions between different social groups - particularly between minorities and the government - and it is these tensions that have shaped much of the space in Yangon.
A transition is a change of state or movement of a previous dynamic to another. It does not determine a definite state, and thus, it can be reverted. A transition in linguistics implies the ‘bridge’ or ‘relationship’ between ideas that provide cohesion. (Sýkora & Bouzarovski, 2012).

One of the key elements in Yangon’s development has been Myanmar’s political transitions, the most recent being from a military dictatorship into a democratic system of governance. This transition has opened up Myanmar to the rest of the world and catalyzed a process of transformation which has brought with it rapid changes on an economic, social and environmental level.

Our definition of transformation and transition in Myanmar is informed by this speed, scale and temporality of changes. We see the transition as a government-led political process which is multi-directional and reversible, and therefore does not determine a definitive state. The advent of telecommunications, social media usage, and the growth of the tourism industry are just some of the most notable changes brought on by this latest transition.
In social sciences, transformation refers to a change in society’s systemic characteristics and parameters. It is essentially a linear process that cannot go back to a previous state.

Myanmar’s transition has led to a systemic societal transformation as citizens and communities adapt to the country’s new socio-economic policies and exposure to the rest of the world. We understand this transformation as occurring in one-direction, an irreversible process that is reflected in the changing and expanding urban form of Yangon.
“For things to remain the same, everything must change”

(Boano and Marten, 2018)

“A competent urban humanitarianism should be one that speaks to current urban pressures, while also understanding that these pressures remain in constant flux and can suddenly change. At times, urban analysis will alternate between factual, data-driven information and speculative, subjective interpretations”.

(Boano and Marten, 2018)
Based on this understanding of Yangon’s transformation over time through a history of political transitions, our research began with an inquiry into the production of space in the city by looking through the frame of citizenship, land, heritage and finance. Built on an extensive secondary data review, it became apparent that citizenship is a key underlying element which affects land ownership, access to finance (such as savings groups) and questions around identity and culture. Citizenship in Myanmar is granted on the basis of ethnicity - which is inextricably tied to religion - in a process enshrined in the 1982 Citizenship Law (Kyaw 2015).

However, we expand our understanding of citizenship to encapsulate meaning beyond the legal status granted by a national government. Citizenship as social phenomena can also be understood as a practice of flexible activities among interpersonal relationships and social networks (Gray, 2018) which transcend formal documentation, disengaging from the state to find other means of integration (Yiftachel, 2009). This form of ‘social citizenship’, grounded in community solidarity and mutual benefits, can also become a mechanism to exercise political agency. We feel that these layers of nuance is crucial to understanding the role played by the “stateless” and marginalized dwellers of Yangon.
CITIZENSHIP AND DISPLACEABILITY

This alternative urban citizenship occurs in what Yiftachel terms “grey space”, often created by the state as a form of control through arbitrary definitions of people and space that can be quickly altered, but it is also a space in which citizens ‘in limbo’ can challenge dominant power structures through the ‘quiet encroachment of the ordinary’ everyday life (Bayat, 2013). It is within this grey space of citizenship that we seek to understand the role of Hlaing Thar Yar’s dwellers in the city-making process, by looking at the formation, growth and future of the township. For this reason, it is crucial to understand the role that displaceability plays.

Because of their existence within the grey space of citizenship, we initially understood the dwellers of Hlaing Thar Yar to live in a state of displaceability dominated by fragility and uncertainty. Spatially, this displaceability has been a factor in the growth of Yangon’s peripheries, caught between the official planning policies of the state and the everyday needs of the people. It became apparent that grey space was enmeshed between these two levels of urban production.
THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK
(pre-fieldtrip)

Figure 3. Pre-fieldtrip Theoretical Framework

Our pre-fieldtrip theoretical framework was structured upon two layers of urban production in the country: the ‘official’, manifested through government policy and top-down development, and the ‘every day’ that situates the rest of the population. These two layers are continuously debated and negotiated between a spectrum of existence with security and fragility as the two extremes on either side. These two concepts represent as well the overall situation in the country and how displaceability, as a condition, creates this transformation in between those states of dwelling.

Additionally, these two layers are constantly connected between three factors which cross-cut them: socio-economic practices, the spatial and the institutional. The theoretical framework aims to guide our overall understanding of the context of Myanmar and how displaceability and citizenship happen through these two life layers.
As part of the research preparation, it was necessary to integrate the research goals of the local partners to the wider research process. For this reason, we incorporated the element of public space into our framework. It offers an analytical opportunity to spatialize ‘grey space’ in Hlaing Thar Yar through the spectrum of public and private space. We also saw it as an opportunity to see performativity of urban citizenship in the public sphere and how it shapes and is shaped by it. We understood the public/private divide based on Madanipour’s (2003) idea that they are not polar binaries but interdependent spheres which are marked by gradual shifts in boundaries. We understood how the three factors that connected the official and the everyday life layers in the Theoretical Framework became the lenses through which we would analyse space in the field. We acknowledged as well that these lenses shaped the categorizations of the space between the private and public binaries. We were especially interested in the grey space in between this binary and how could it spatialize in the two main layers of our concern: the ‘official’ and the ‘everyday’
Our main purpose in the field was to understand public space and its functionality in between the two layers. We believed that the connection points between these two layers were going to give us the room for manoeuvre for a possible intervention in the field work.
We aimed to understand how displaceability (as a condition) shaped urban space, and how it was shaped by it.

Through this understanding, we wanted to explore how we could utilize public space as a mechanism to challenge displaceability.
WHO ARE WE?

During our research process we were conscious of our positionality as individuals as well as the institution we represented, and this was especially important during the fieldwork phase. Through a process of reflexivity we established a set of guiding values that was the basis of our ethical approach with our partners, local communities and authorities, and consisted of three key factors:

1. Respecting local knowledge, and being conscious to avoid imposing ‘outsider’ or expert knowledge
2. Knowledge production/sharing, and ensuring that the research process is two-way
3. Acknowledging our responsibility in anonymising any sensitive information gathered and our position as outsiders to the context

Because of the sensitivity of our topic as it related to practices of citizenship, we were also acutely aware of respecting the sovereignty of the state that was hosting us, by clarifying our research goals and being transparent in our aims.

However, during our time in the field, it became clear that our position as “international” students from a UK university affected the research process, and the local perception of what our mission was and what we were able to offer. This was most notable in the discussions around public space; while the initial conversation began with issues of the “park” in Ward 20, it became apparent that this was not the main issue with regards to the public realm, nor was it a priority for the people.

Reflecting on our positionality ensured that our research process was iterative and that we constantly revisited our framework, assumptions and data.
In order to address our initial primary research question that is centred around how uncertainty operates as a mode of production in the city of Yangon, three broad goals were established for our two weeks of fieldwork. We aimed to build a more comprehensive repertoire of actors and to further understand the relationships between them that shape the everyday life of the local residents.

In addition, we found it vital to investigate the social use of space and its temporality at different scales in order to define the spectrum of grey space between the public and private. The enactment of these goals was underpinned by our original theoretical framework and analytical approach in understanding the relation between displaceability and public space.

Therefore, we sought to analyze in greater depth the heterogeneous form of citizenship and its role as one of the prominent drivers of urbanization in Yangon.

Prior to the field trip, we had planned several methods of engagement and data collection for the three days of fieldwork. However once in the field these plans quickly changed as our preconceptions inevitably clashed with the reality of this sort of work - a reality in which there are few fixed variables to organise around, and decisions must be made on the go to maximise engagement and follow leads.
We utilized a number of PAR methods during our data collection phase, with the aim of uncovering the diversity within the community of Ward 20 and how that translated into spatial practices. The following tables detail which methods were used and the limitations we encountered for each.

### MethoDologies

#### Transect Walk

**Method**

Visited Section 6 and Section 10 in Ward 20 including the houses of the community members to identify the socio-spatial configuration: land use pattern, connectivity and mobility.

**Description**

Our analysis of the place is bounded by the observation of that particular moment. Things that were not visible during our observation might be overlooked. Additionally, time was short.

**Limitations**

#### Mental Mapping

**Women and Men**

Learning the everyday life processes of the inhabitants to uncover key spaces, people and processes.

**Vocabulary and translation constraint due to context gap.**

#### Dream Public Space

Drawing activity with the children to analyse their ideal public space.

**Vocabulary**
METHODOLOGIES

Transect Walk

Visited different types of religious spaces and observed livelihood activities.

Transparency and reliability with the stories told.

Accuracy and tendency of biases due to personal interest and political agendas

Social Network Mapping

A mapping activity to understand the existing social relations internally and externally of different scales (ward 20, Hlaing Thar Yar, Yangon and Myanmar)

One of the limitations of the social network mapping is that the community that we worked with do not represent the whole community in ward 20.
**METHODOLOGIES**

**DAY 3**

**METHOD**

**Dream Mapping with children**

This activity sought to analyze the pattern of daily routine of the children depending on different times of the day. Questions that were asked:

- What’s your favourite space in ward 20?
- What do you play or do in your free time?
- What you like or dislike about your residential area? Do you feel safe?

It started with the ice breaker, games and drawing. We tried not to impose any ideal public space or dictate what they should or should not draw in order to get open responses.

In the beginning of the process a member of the community informed the children to draw specific things as she misunderstood our explanation of the exercise – leading to different results than hoped.

**Limitations:**

Language barrier and translation.

**Personal Interviews**

Interviews were conducted with members of different faith groups, namely Muslims, Christians and Hindus, at their respective places of worship. As religion plays a significant role in determining citizenship and national identity, it was crucial to incorporate this diversity of experiences into our overall research.

Religion and ethnicity is a sensitive subject, particularly for Muslims currently in Myanmar, therefore questions must be strategic and respectful towards the current atmosphere.

**Focus Groups**

This activity explored what is meant by publicness and belonging from the point of view of the community. It aids with reconceptualizing our lenses and theoretical framework.
**METHODOLOGIES**

**Participatory Modelling**

The participatory design workshop aimed to understand the priorities and desires of the community in terms of public space and its feature. It is very useful to integrate this findings in devising the strategies.

Disproportion between the number of audience and the size of models. Not everyone had the chance to participate.

Hesitation to participate was detected.
METHODOLOGIES

Anatomy of a Ward’s Public Space

One of the aspects of our methodology has been to look at activity in the ward through time, and understand how spaces change during temporal increments (day, week, etc.).

The streets are active arteries of activities as residents start their day with breakfast in the tea shops and visiting the markets to buy products for the day’s meals. School are active during the morning and the school year is from June to February.

The main street becomes a node of activity during the afternoon as many restaurants and shops are located there. Religious sites also become more active. Many residents, primarily women, spend their afternoons watching television at home.

On the weekends, the streets turn into a network of markets as people sell their wares in kiosks and on mats. During this period it is wider to travel by bike or motorcycle due to the high volume of foot traffic. Many weddings take place in restaurants on the main road.
After collecting the data came the process of synthesizing and connecting all the information. A pattern in the findings emerged which allowed us to categorize them into four broad groups; planning, land, livelihoods and socio-cultural/religious activities. From there, three key findings were made that underpinned our analysis.

The main conclusion from our work in Yangon – while looking at the transformation of the city through the frame of displaceability as it relates to citizenship, and its manifestation through public space – is that much of life in the city is governed in gray space. There is very little in Myanmar that is black or white, and we interpret this gray space as flexibility, a mechanism that is used by the dwellers to cope with the rapid transition witnessed by the country. But flexibility alone has not been enough to manage the march of development, leading to increasing inequality. What we have found is that the issue is not that some citizens are more displaceable than others, but that in the face of top-down urban design approaches, all residents have the potential to be displaceable.
FINDINGS

1. There is flexibility in the pattern of land use such as: houses turn into shops and corner shops turn into play areas, restaurants turn into wedding hall.

2. YCDC allocated dumping site for waste collection services.

3. The absence of spaces for children, youth and women as most spaces for gathering are used by men (e.g. bars, tea shops and billiards).

4. There are many hostels in both formal and informal areas, they are filled with those displaced by Cyclone Nargis (they pay 50,000 kyat a month), those who can’t pay the hostel or rent a house live in the informal settlements.

5. Inadequate basic infrastructure and services

6. The urban safety of children in ward 20 has become one of the main concerns as they play on the streets and main roads due to lack of proper space to play. Thus, they are vulnerable to road accident, human trafficking and child labour.

7. The scarcity of land and unaffordable prices have led to the waste management issue (no proper dumping sites especially in the informal settlements).
FINDINGS

BEYOND THE PARK: FIELD TRIP

[ LAND ]
FINDINGS

1. Room for manoeuvre through multiple definitions of public space and the gray space between the dichotomy of public-private. This is evident due to the inconsistent use of the term that constitutes public space in JICA’s master plan (e.g.: open space, green space, public realm).

2. Public space doesn’t exist as mainstream planning understands it. It is not a land use destined to leisure, but rather a mobile space that happens wherever a collective function takes place. Thus, public space follows usability and planning follows people.

3. Lack of integration between the residents of formal and informal residents.

4. Top-down westernized planning system has influenced how YCDC contextualized public space mainly as a park.

5. Physical boundaries and immobility are adjusted through everyday life and social relations.

Figure 10. Findings - Planning
FINDINGS

Beyond the Park: Field Trip

[ PLANNING ]
**FINDINGS**

1. Space in Yangon is utilized to sustain livelihoods rather than for leisure purposes. The market and crossroad act as a node for both economic and social activities (e.g. the crossroad will be closed as a venue for monk’s speech). Leisure time is understood by the community as a moment of doing any activities outside their formal jobs such as voluntary activities (e.g. spraying car at workshops or babysitting).

2. Home ownership is an important foundation to stability (Burmese saying that we would be satisfied if we had a place to lay our head), as well as protection from exploitation of landlords (community groups aim to own both land and house). Therefore, the community saving group has a vital role because it reflects a form of solidarity that could resist land grabbing that often occur when securing a land or housing.

3. Small local businesses such as snack shops are very active around most of the crossroads. However, the informal nature of the economic activity indicates instability and uncertainty, which could impede the residents from joining the saving groups. Thus, affecting their social mobilisation and life chances.

Figure 11. Findings - Livelihoods
FINDINGS [SOCIO-CULTURAL ACTIVITIES]

1. Before 2008, public gathering of more than five people was banned by the government which has affected the usability and designation of public space in Yangon. Home was mentioned by the interviewees as the primary public space since social interaction was restricted before the ban was lifted. The house sets a relevant example of showing the flexibility that presents in the notion of public space.

2. Street = gathering spaces for celebration of events or festivals such as weddings.

3. Nalehmu as whole coherent ecosystem that goes beyond the narrow notion of citizenship. It raises a discourse of existing everyday life practice that contradicts with the westernized-system of democracy. Two types of Nalehmu: Citizen - Citizen and Citizen - Government.

4. Religion, ethnicity and identity are intertwined and cannot be understood as separate from one another (shrines in homes, offices, elevator, community center, etc.), savings groups operate in between groups or within one group.

5. The sense of belonging is perceived as an obligation to stay within the ward that would restrict their mobilisation-accessibility to basic infrastructure and social mobility. People feel obliged to stay as a means of proving their presence and commitment to the social ties that has been established between the community members (e.g. saving groups). The reputation of Hlaing Thar Yar as one of the poorest townships has become an aspiration for younger generation to move out in searching for better life opportunities.

Figure 12. Findings - Socio Cultural Activities
FINDINGS [SOCIO-CULTURAL ACTIVITIES]

Beyond the Park: Field Trip
**KEY FINDINGS**

**Planning: Functionality vs Leisure**

The multiple definitions of public space and the gray space that exists between the public-private dichotomy influences how space is utilized in Yangon. In brief, public space is regarded as mobile space of collective function that happens in everyday life practices but not for leisure activities.

**Home: Public-Private space**

The public gathering ban that was implemented in 1988 has resulted in home as the primary public space. It is also a flexible space that has dual functionality; not only as private abode but also as a public space for social gatherings and celebration of events.

**Sense of Belonging and Mobilisation**

The sense of belonging in the context of Ward 20 connotes social obligation instead of genuine sense of attachment to the place. The perception of the place and its condition influence the future aspiration for people to move.
DIAGNOSIS OF FINDINGS

Understanding the cracks in our key findings in order to find our room for manoeuvre.

Planning: Functionality vs Leisure

- Lack of leisure spaces
- Pursue of prosperity through mobilization
- Language and knowledge gap
- Top-down planning

CRACKS AS SPACES OF OPPORTUNITIES

- Citizenship, identity and social integration

Home: Public-Private space

Sense of Belonging and Mobilisation

Figure 13. Diagnosis of Findings
The first step in our analysis of the findings has been to reconfigure the key concepts of our framework.

This was evident even as we began working in the field that our theoretical and analytic approach to the context of Yangon needed to be adjusted. An example of this can be seen during the personal interviews when we asked residents if they felt “secure” where they were living. Our local student counterparts who were translating for us informed us that the question wasn’t clear, because they did not think of themselves in terms of ‘security’ or ‘fragility’.

Jayde Roberts has noted that Yangon’s city-making process is often subjected to “international circuits of authoritative knowledge” (Roberts, 2017, p.1). In order to avoid imposing our knowledge, we recognized the importance of adapting the language used about Yangon. For this reason, we reconceptualized our framework by redefining the meaning of our key terms.

**FLEXIBILITY**
Planning terminology often reflects the reality of cities in the Global North, and we believe that this is the case with the term ‘public space’. Because all available space in townships like Hlaing Thar Yar are utilized to serve a practical functionality rather than leisurely, this term was restricted to the space of the park. In order to highlight the presence of publicness in much of the space, we instead propose the term ‘collective space’, to extend the Burmese definition of public (concerning many people) into the English language.
DISPLACEABILITY

MOBILIZATION

The current theorization of displaceability frames it as a negative status synonymous with human rights violations. While we do not contest this framing, what we have found through our fieldwork has been a more nuanced condition of displaceability, in which the agency of those who are displaceable re-emerges as a form of resilience. By anticipating and working through displacement, people take back control of their lives in the form of mobilizations.
Our initial understanding of citizenship has been through the duality of official and everyday life processes. But the performativity of citizenship in everyday social interactions already had a name in Myanmar, ‘nalehmu’. The practice of nalehmu requires trust and solidarity, which are built up over time and within social networks. For this reason, we understand citizenship in Ward 20 as nalehmu; agreements and arrangements within society.
From shifting terminologies to more accurately reflect existing practices, we shifted our theoretical understanding of city-making in Yangon generally and Hlaing Thar Yar specifically. The configuration of mobilization and nalehmu around collective space - which begins with the home - is the dominant mode of spatial production, and we believe that this process should be integrated into the official urban planning and design procedures in order to reduce the widening gap of inequalities.

From the beginning of our research process we have avoided using the term ‘informal planning’ to describe the creation of Hlaing Thar Yar, in order to avoid the problematic binary of formal-informal (McFarlane, 2012). However, we also recognize that much of what occurs in the township is officially framed as being opposite to official government procedures due to issues such as land registration and residents’ documentation, among other things.

We also want to avoid romanticizing the ability of the people to help themselves as we do not want to render the role of the state as redundant (Roy, 2005), and thus leave city-making in the township outside formal planning processes. Instead, our theoretical understanding is based on Caldeira’s notion of ‘autoconstruction’, in which people inherently participate in the building of their own city (Caldeira, 2017), and include these processes into formal urban planning as a way to increase the security of the residents (Bhan et al, 2017).
As we continue to acknowledge the existence of the two layers, we believe that the ‘everyday life’ layer thickens since it largely determines the shaping of the city.

These two layers are cross-cut by different factors that can be divided into top-down, bottom-up or sideways actions. The space in between these layers, which is constantly affected by these four factors is call the flexible/grey space.

It is a determinant for the analytical phase and has led to a shift in our research question.

For this reason, our guiding principle shifted from entrenchment into finding new ways to approach planning in Yangon, and to propose a new system in urban design that works within this gray space.
As we are interested on understanding the grey/flexible space within urban design our approach will develop through the three layers where urban design happens: Governance, institutional knowledge, and people practices. In these three levels we will analyse through the four main lenses that resulted from our fieldwork findings.
RESEARCH DESIGN QUESTION

HOW CAN FLEXIBILITY BE INTEGRATED INTO THE NEW APPROACHES OF URBAN DESIGN, FOR A CITYWIDE UPGRADING THAT RECOGNISES THE DIVERSITY OF THE CITY?
VISION

We envision the everyday life practices as being acknowledged and incorporated into the city-making process of Yangon and recognised as a legitimate mode of spatial production.

PRINCIPLES

1. Include flexible approaches into planning
2. Recognise the multiplicity of life practices
3. Contextualise the approach of urban design and planning
4. Decolonize the production of urban knowledge
5. Recognize shared responsibility of service provision

GUIDELINES

Promote Knowledge
Promote alternative pedagogies for knowledge production

Connect Knowledge
Build bridges and enhance partnerships between people processes and government planning

Ground the Knowledge
Mainstream every-day people practices by exposing them inter-sectorally to planning frameworks
Our strategy attempts to put into tangible action our vision of acknowledging and incorporating the everyday life practices of Yangon into the city-making process as a legitimate mode of spatial production. This strategy does not seek to reconstruct the entire city-making process, but to recognise and build upon what already exists on all scales, and to consolidate their practices in a way that leads to the just recognition, redistribution, and sustainable production of the city into the future.

To achieve this, we have shaped our strategy based upon our methodological approach - being one that strived to be iterative and reflexive through the continual re-adjustment and re-conceptualisation of the framework depending on the resulting findings through practice.

Only in this way do we believe that the currently disconnected assemblages governing Yangon’s urban production - from the top-down governance structures of YCDC and JICA, to the every-day realities found in the Townships - can be flexible enough to consolidate each other and to operationalise the potentiality of this inbetween greyspace we identified in our theoretical framework.
STRATEGY

Issues to address

• Current pedagogical strategies of architecture/planning schools in Yangon follow a more standardised global conception of the built environment which de-contextualises, and thus obscures the specificities of urban production in the city

• Although built environment practitioners are beginning to coalesce and coordinate at multiple scales in Yangon, these networks are still hinged upon nationally external partners which reduces agency

• YCDC currently has very limited interdepartmental coordination resulting in inefficient and ineffective isolated interventions as showcased by work from the Asia Foundation

• JICA’s planning framework has limited consultation with non-governmental partners, and as such misrepresents the on-the-ground reality of practice in central Yangon and particularly so in the Townships

• Preripheral urbanism found in contexts such as the Townships have very little city-wide recognition and are often culturally stigmatised leading to a perpetuation of marginalisation

Process

The strategy has been split up into the 3 stages of promoting, bridging, and grounding knowledge, comprised of 7 interventions between them. Each stage will be initiated in consecutive order with each targeting a specific scale, however they will be ultimately leveraged and mobilised by each other, and will depend upon the multi-directional flows of knowledge and agency from the highest scale to the lowest in an interactive cycle.

Each stage will be developed through the construction of an actors diagram, which will be revealed in its full extent after the three stages. Each utilise a standardised key:
STAGE 1
PROMOTE KNOWLEDGE
Bridging the knowledge / situating the language

This stage focuses on the current pedagogical approach to the production of urban knowledge and its implementation into city-wide upgrading strategies in Yangon. It also aims to begin the strategic secretion of alternative and positive depictions of peripheral urbanism into wider civil society to alter perceptions on a broader city-wide scale.

Interventions

1a. Recalibrate pedagogy of knowledge institutions through an enhanced civil society network centered at The Association of Myanmar Architects (AMA)
1b. Promote knowledge sharing and training between JICA and this enhanced AMA body
1c. Promote imageries and practices of peripheral Yangon amongst wider civil society

Limitations

• Although knowledge institutions in Yangon have a history of radical politics, such as YTU being one of the ignitions of the 1988 civil-revolt against the military - it is still a nationalised institution and therefore under the umbrella of the Military regime, and as such is subject to suppression
• JICA is not only the designer/implementer of the city-wide masterplan, but also a major donor - and as such the institution carries a lot of weight making it resilient to change they may not approve of
• The Myanmar governance structures from the Union Govt. to the regional YCDC departments are very compartmentalised and slow in their bureaucratic procedures - and as such any change to the preexisting system will require a sustained effort on the long term
Evidence

JICA framework lacks civil society input
Currently JICA only consults one spatialised civil society actor, being Yangon Heritage Trust, which severely reduces their perception of city-wide practices.

JICA’s planning framework is rigid
Reflecting the lack of civil-society input, JICA’s planning frameworks offer fixed formulas for vastly differing contexts across the city - such as their rationalised imposition of governmentally controlled district + pocket parks which often sit without use for many years.

Stigmatisation
Many community member we spoke to in Ward 20 said they did not want their kids to grow up there due to limited opportunity. One mother detailed how her extended family would never visit the Ward due to perceptions of danger and poverty.
**STAGE 1**

1a) Recalibrate pedagogy of knowledge institutions through an enhanced civil society network centered at AMA

**Rationale**

The first step of this strategy involves building upon the pre-existing Association of Myanmar Architects which hosted our studio work post-fieldtrip, as well as who helped organise the very successful Housing for/by the People symposium we attended. Our vision is that they continue to do this sort of work, however become a more central actor in the organisation without the aid of external partners such as UCL, ACHR, or CAN in order to encourage more agency and an internal generation of reflexive practitioners. Alongside this, we propose the promotion of a reframed pedagogy of action research for built environment knowledge institutions in Yangon centered around this enhanced AMA framework. This idea grew strongly out of our work with the YTU and CBP students in the field who showcased an excellent technical expertise and enthusiasm to learn, however stated that they had very little experience with a reflexive praxis or even a politicised understanding of the built environment, and most had never visited the Townships. We therefore feel an intervention in this domain would have an enormous impact on the future generation of Burmese architectural practice.

(i) Continued support by external partners at AMA

- **External partners continue to support civil-society but work to enhance local capacity and provide training**

- **This capacity could be specifically geared towards the production of an annual/bi-annual symposium bringing together actors from governance, civil society, and local community in the same fashion as the Housing for/by the People conference**

- **Additional local grassroots actors should be facilitated and developed by the organisation to encourage Burmese local-practice initiatives**

![Figure 17. Facilitate AMA with external partners](image)
**ii) Knowledge institutions develop new pedagogy**

- **External partners** such as UCL, ACHR and CAN work alongside the enhanced AMA to develop a training course to insert the action research pedagogy into built-environment knowledge institutions. This could either be as an additional module to existing course structures in the short term (YTU is currently developing a new Urban Planning module for next year for example), or an entirely new Ba/Ma course.

- *Yangon architectural students* often take part in multiple workshops over the Summer season, which are currently only technically oriented. Therefore there could also be short-term training exercises for students at AMA that could take them into the Townships and increase student exposure to the multiple contexts.

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**iii) The AMA becomes self-supporting**

- **External partners continue partnerships and the transfer of knowledge**, but the AMA civil society becomes self-supporting and leads independent interventions akin to the work of ACHR, CAN, and UCL over the past few years.
Rationale

Currently, the JICA masterplan primarily consults governmental actors, with all other actors being grouped under the category of ‘other’ containing mostly private sector stakeholders and only one spatialised actor (YHT). As well as this, although the JICA study-team currently contains some Burmese facilitators, the integration of local partners is not an institutionalised process.

i) Connect the AMA as a key spatialised civil society consultant to JICA study team

- This will enable a balance between governmental and private sector guidance, and to provide a more contextualised knowledge base into JICA’s understanding of Yangon

ii) Connect the students

- Create a training scheme that pairs Yangon students through the AMA with the JICA study team to facilitate a more situated on the ground data collection practice as well as cross-cutting knowledge exchanges

- Create employment pathways from the Universities to the JICA Study team to ensure local representation in the JICA workforce and to ensure knowledge transfer
1c) Promote imageries and practices of peripheral Yangon amongst wider civil society

**Rationale**

As mentioned in the evidence section of this stage, city-wide perception of the Townships in Yangon are very poor, with common associations as revealed by our fieldwork interviews being those of crime and danger, or poverty and incivility. The most common perception however is the complete absence of one, with most residents in Yangon being in some ways completely unaware of the existence of the Townships. Therefore this step seeks to alter these perceptions through increased visibility of the Townships within civil society.

**i) Promote imageries of peripheral Yangon**

- The AMA can act as a platform to begin hosting exhibitions of local artworks in Townships like Hlaing Tharyar and to promote them across the city
- This can be fed into preexisting events such as the Yangon Art & Heritage Festival or the Yangon Photo Festival
- Articles and thinkpieces about life in the Townships could also be generated and shared amongst print and digital media - an approach that will scale alongside the influence and legitimacy of the enhanced AMA organisation

**Precedent**

The Yangon Art and Heritage festival (YAHF) that was first initiated under the theme of “My Home My Yangon” in March 2015 sets the perfect precedent in promoting contemporary art and cultural heritage by Yangon local artists. In line with its mission of creating collective platform for interdisciplinary art and for knowledge sharing, this strategy is feasible and has the potentiality to be scaled up to international level with the support of Andrew Patrick from the British Embassy.
STAGE 2
CONNECT KNOWLEDGE
Coordinating Assemblages

This stage is similar to the first in that it seeks to connect civil society built environment practitioners to the institutionalised city-building practices of JICA, but it also shifts the focus one scale below to operate on the day-to-day city upgrading practices performed by YCDC. The aim here is to showcase the efficiency to be found in coordination between multiple appendages in pursuit of a common goal, and to normalise this sort of approach in all sectors of governance.

Interventions

2a. Showcase how common issues facing YCDC departments could be solved more efficiently and sustainably through cooperation

2b. Create a new ‘Collective Space’ intersectoral commission as a pilot study focusing on YCDC interdepartmental cooperation alongside their engagement with wider civil society and community actors

Limitations

• This stage will not only request external cooperation with YCDC, but also internal cooperation amongst the departments - a process that will have to be primarily led by YCDC itself, and as such will be subject to indeterminate political affiliations and allegiances that will be difficult to predict

• The creation of an entirely new body (the Intersectoral commission) that seeks to coordinate multiple levels of governance alongside civil society and grassroots actors will be extremely complex and most likely the most challenging part of the overall strategy
Evidence

Asia Foundation
Representatives from the Asia Foundation in Myanmar informed us that the current key objective of their work was to figure out a way to encourage interdepartmental cooperation within YCDC and Regional Governance and to decentralise decision making.

Housing for/by People conference
During the workshop roundtables we had discussions with the Community Finance group, UN Habitat, and the National Infrastructure Committee who all agreed interdepartmental cooperation was a top priority in moving forwards.

Fieldwork
This was also confirmed in our fieldwork where we were often confronted with governmental/community interventions that were made redundant by issues such as waste not being solved in conjunction with issues such as disaster risk management.
STAGE 2

2a) Encourage YCDC interdepartmental cooperation

Rationale

Before the creation of the Intersectoral Committee on Collective Space, this stage seeks to first develop and strengthen the internal mechanisms for cooperation within YCDC to act as a stepping stone.

i) Showcase to YCDC how common issues could be solved

- Present a spatialised scenario in a series of workshops led by the enhanced AMA showing how the multiple issues of waste, water, public space, urban safety, and road maintenance are all interconnected and could be solved in conjunction
- Clearly outline how duties overlap

Figure 22. Integrate YCDC departments
**ii) Increase the remit of the YCDC Administration Department**

- Suggest an expansion of the current duties of the Administration department to explicitly target interdepartmental coordination

- Suggest coordination with the Asia Foundation to facilitate necessary restructuring due to their strong familiarity and relatively objective stance regarding current governance structures in Myanmar

**iii) Perform a pilot project bringing together multiple departments to solve a shared problem**

- A pilot project will be held in a series of targeted locations in Hlaing Tharyar due to its extreme examples of dysfunctional service provision and lack of YCDC presence

- A series of workshops can be held interdepartmentally to strategise new methods of coordinating delivery methods and consolidating tasks

- This will lay the foundation for the next step, which will plug the additional civil society appendage into these discussions

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*An example of a coordinated transformation of a crossroads in Ward 20 illustrated by YTU students*
2b) Create a ‘Collective Space’ Intersectoral Commission Pilot

**Rationale**

Building upon 2a, our aim for this step is to connect the appendages of the YCDC to the enhanced AMA civil society from stage 1 in order to create a mechanism for intersectoral discussion. This commission will be a pilot focused on the issue of ‘collective space’ provision, with aims to be expanded further to other consolidated issues. The aim is for these inputs to be collated and to eventually be connected to the JICA study team to shape future masterplans, and then to eventually be driven by the community action research outputs which will be outlined in stage 3 of this strategy.

**i) Foundation meeting**

- Lay down by-laws to discuss how the committee could operate
- Discuss the tasks and goals and set a series of targets
- Discuss the system of election/chair/etc - i.e. should there be a rolling presidency shared passed between each sector in turn
- Establish steering community that oversees and monitors

**Precedent**

Nin Benghazi, Libya, intersectoral committees were created to coordinate multiple actors working on crisis management. This committee ensured that authorities, NGOs and private sector actors worked together to cover gaps in the response and avoided duplicating work.

**ii) Steering committee meeting**

- Assess efficiency of committee and regulate outputs, and iteratively readjust and improve the collaboration and process if required
- Review the by-laws and amend if required
iii) Production of ‘collective space’ guidebook

- The first output will be a ‘collective space’ guidebook based upon the findings of the committee.
- Multiple versions can be produced to target different sectors, however the key actor targeted will be the JICA study team.
- The guidebook will be amended every year, and will be further recalibrated following Stage 3 of the strategy where the community input is bridged.
This final stage is the connecting of the entire planning process down to the ward level where the on-the-ground reality of community practices can be recognised, communicated, and implemented flexibly into the entire framework. The two previous stages have been developed specifically to maximise this input, and to allow the new pedagogy of action research to maximise the dispersal of its findings through all the planning appendages. This stage also strives to increase recognition of practices as they relate specifically to women and children due to our fieldwork findings showing a distinct lack of policy in this domain.

**Interventions**

3a. Build upon pre-existing networks between actors such as WFW and community governance in Hlaing Tharyar through a continued network facilitation with the enhanced AMA

3b. Continue participatory approaches in knowledge production in the Townships utilising students and practitioners reframed by the new pedagogical approach to produce a process that recognises the contextual flexibility on the ground

**Limitations**

- As our theoretical framework has highlighted the current top-down planning framework is far removed from the reality of practices on the ground, and so finding a shared rationality will be challenging

- Governance on the community level has many informal elements reinforced by ‘nahimu’ - as such detailed actor research will be need to be carried out in each locality in order to understand and determine the equitable channel of knowledge and priorities for each locality
CEDAW and JICA
Myanmar has not got a National youth policy, has not ratified CEDAW, nor does JICA make any extensive mention of a specified framework for taking into account the needs of women and children.

Asia Foundation
Another key aim of the Asia Foundation has been to mainstream recognition of women in politics and planning. Although much progress has been made, there are still huge gaps in policy frameworks at all scales.

National Urban Design policy document
UN Habitat has just launched the National Urban Design policy document for Myanmar, and it makes no mention of pluralistic spaces for youth, women, or religion.

Fieldwork
One of the most frequent issues raised by community members interviewed was the danger posed to women and children on the streets, reinforced by the absence of policing. This was a key driver for our push to move ‘collective spaces’ into the street network and to consolidate community surveillance and mobility.
Rationale

This step involves institutionalising community architect/facilitator NGO’s currently working in the Townships by connecting them as a legitimate appendage and channel for community governance structures on the ground.

i) Regularise connection between community architects and enhanced AMA

- Organise regular meetings for community architects at the AMA to discuss developments on the ground and to share capacity and knowledge

- Bring these community architects into regular circuits of association with governmental actors to regularise and normalise practice

ii) Integrate and replicate community governance frameworks that are successful

- Currently NGO’s such as CAN, ACHR, and WFW are providing targeted interventions in certain sections of the Townships - but the aim is to be able to expand scope to systematically include the full breadth of the township starting in Hlaing Tharyar and spreading across the entire periphery

- Therefore they will map actors and practices city-wide and identify areas lacking intervention.

- This can be consolidated with the Myanmar Information Management Unit (MIMU) which is a body attempting to coordinate datasets in Myanmar from all NGO’s and governmental bodies
Figure 25. Connecting Community Governance
This final step is when the updated pedagogies formed in the previous stages become grounded and the iterative process becomes circular from the institutional level all the way down to the every-day practices. This is when the flexible inputs for interventions can become visible and circulated through the whole planning framework after being developed on the ground, communicated through the community structures + architects, synthesised alongside governmental departments in the Intersectoral commission, and finally fed into the JICA Study team to shape the city-wide masterplan.

i) Community architects work in the field

- Supported by students training at AMA, community architects collect data in the field using participatory processes of knowledge production - as showcased in the methodologies section of this report - in order to understand the specificities of each Ward

ii) Findings are communicated to the Collective Space intersectoral commission

- These findings are disseminated within the Intersectoral Commission and synthesised into a tangible format that fits into YCDC departmental processes

iii) Intersectoral commission communicates output with JICA

- Findings are discussed with JICA and amended to be compatible with JICA framework or vice versa

iv) Framework is communicated back to community governance

- Framework is presented to community and additional amendments are made, and passed through stages (ii) and (iii) again in an interactive cycle
Beyond the Park: Post-Field Trip

Figure 26. Grounding Knowledge
SUMMARY OF STRATEGY

Stage 1 - Promote knowledge production

Recalibrate pedagogy of knowledge institutions through an enhanced AMA organisation

Promote knowledge sharing and training between JICA and the enhanced AMA

Promote imageries and practices of peripheral Yangon amongst wider civil society

Stage 2 - Connect knowledge

Showcase how common issues facing YCDC departments could be solved more efficiently and sustainably through cooperation

Create a new ‘Collective Space’ intersectoral commission as a pilot study focusing on YCDC interdepartmental cooperation alongside their engagement with wider civil society and community actors

Stage 3 - Ground knowledge

Build upon pre-existing networks between community architects/organisers and community governance in Hlaing Tharyar through a continued facilitation with the enhanced AMA network

Continue participatory approaches in knowledge production in the Townships utilising students and practitioners reframed by the new pedagogical approach to produce a process that recognises the flexibility on the ground
Beyond the Park: Summary of Strategy

1. **Enhanced AMA**
   - CAN
   - YHT
   - Doh Eain
   - Asia Foundation
   - UN-Habitat
   - YTU
   - TTU
   - CBP

2. **Collective space intersectoral comission**
   - Wider civil society
     - Art fair
     - Photo comp.
     - Media
     - Social media

3. **Community architects / NGO facilitators**
   - WFW
   - ACHR
   - CAN

4. **Community governance**
   - Ward leaders
   - Section leaders
   - 10 household leaders
   - Individuals

5. **Everyday practices**

6. **All stakeholders**
   - District + townships
   - YHT
   - Donors + Developers

7. **JICA study team**

8. **Government - YCDC**
   - Pollution control and cleansing Dpt.
   - Engineering Dpt. (water + sanitation)
   - Playgrounds, parks, and gardens department
   - City planning and Land administration
   - Engineering Department (Roads and Bridges)
   - Administration Department

9. **Civil Society**
   - Asia Foundation

10. **Community**
    - UN-Habitat

11. **State**

12. **International Actors**

13. **Pre-existing assemblages**

14. **New assemblages**

*JICA wording in policy framework*
EXAMPLE OUTPUT: A NEW ‘COLLECTIVE SPACE’

Due to the current designation of parks as specified in the JICA framework still lying unused after many years throughout Hlaing Tharyar, The ‘Collective Space’ Commission sets a goal to find a more efficient and reflexive method of utilising the spaces

i) Community architects enter the field
- Community architects facilitated by the AMA visit each ward and conduct participatory methods with community leaders and members
- Priorities are shared, sketches are drawn, aspirations are mapped
ii) Consensus found amongst community
- Each section comes to a consensus on what the top priorities to be included in the transformation of the open space are

iv) Refined proposal is discussed with JICA Study team
- Refined proposal discussed with JICA Study team and fitted into their framework allowing for flexibility in the production of ‘collective spaces’

iii) Community architects develop proposal from findings for Collective Space Intersectoral commission
- AMA and YCDC discuss proposal and make amendments and suggestions in order to increase compatibility with existing planning frameworks

v) The proposal is brought back to the community
- The community are presented the refined proposal by the community architects and additional amendments are made if necessary
- The proposal makes it way through the Intersectoral Commission again and is finally confirmed with JICA
- Proposal is integrated into the Urban Planning framework

vi) The community co-produces the park alongside YCDC
- The construction can be facilitated by the community to speed up the process and make for a more situated implementation
- The collective space is open and functioning and is accessed by everyone in the community

Figure 28. Example Output of Strategy
STRA T E GY IN T I M E + S PA C E

The diagram below represents how the strategy would look on the ground in the Township, with a series of different strategic focuses where the new coordinated assemblages work together to solve common problems with collective effort.

These efforts will be linked, sharing knowledge between all the scales of the planning framework connecting the every-day practices to the top-down governance structures.

The diagram on the right showcases the steps of the strategy working in tandem and shows their interconnections through time.
Figure 30. Strategy in Time

- Long term
  - Interventions
    - New assemblages
    - Pre-existing assemblages
- Medium term
  - State
  - Civil Society
  - Community
  - International Actors
- Short term
  - 1a
  - 1b
  - 1c
  - 2a
  - 2b
  - 3a
  - 3b

Legend:
- Civil Society
- Community
- State
- International Actors
- Pre-existing assemblages
- New assemblages
CONCLUSION

Our research began with a rigorous exploration of literature pertaining to the Myanmar context, and the result was a cohesive framework with which to begin our fieldwork and analysis. However, as outlined in this report, upon arriving in Hlaing Tharyar, although our conceptions were not entirely invalidated, they were completely readjusted and proven shallow in the face of the vast contradictions in rationalities and realities we encountered.

These contradictions were produced by the attempts of a centralised and distracted state trying to shape the growth of Yangon towards an idealised image in total contrast to the logic to be found in the streets, neighbourhoods and townships. To add to this, since opening its doors in 2011 Myanmar has become flooded with international actors, from private speculative financiers, to large-scale bureaucratic development organisations, to small-scale philanthropists providing targeted but often misdirected interventions. The sheer newness and concentration of these activities gives reason to be excited and optimistic at the potential of Myanmar’s future growth, but also uncertainty over whether these fractured global logics are truly suitable. It was hard to shake the feeling amongst our research team that since our own countries were certainly not functioning smoothly, was it such a good idea to start bringing our structures into this one?

It was this concoction of contradictions, uncertainties, and clashing realities that ultimately led to the development of a strategy that sought to not simply impose a series of material solutions, but instead to configure a way to give space to the diversity of what people actually needed, and to facilitate how they actually lived - being information only accessible through walking, talking and looking within each and every neighbourhood.

The challenge of this was attempting to insert such a flexibility and open-ended method of urban production into the compartmentalised and floating administration departments of YCDC and JICA. Therefore a large part of our strategy was not only configuring a structure that might allow the specificities of the every-day to enter the planning rooms, but also to attempt to insert a new pedagogy for approaching the city that could secrete its way through the lecture halls, administrative corridors, and social media pages that fill the country.

One of our most striking and rewarding experiences of the fieldwork was our collaboration with the YTU architectural students - who despite being faced with problems of colossal scale in their cities and homes, often remained far more resilient, optimistic, and enthusiastic to get working on the issues than many of the international actors present could hack. Their manner was representative of the majority of the diverse individuals we met, and revealed a freshness and energy not too often found in the so called ‘developed’ world. To us, this confirmed that if a new way forwards for Myanmar is to be found, it will be found by them, not by somebody else.
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Intervention Drawings

- Compound (verandah)
- Street
- Crossroads
- Park Space
APPENDIX

Community Profile

**U Soe Naing**
Section 2 leader who used to work on a farm before moving to Ward 20. He is a father of four children, and sold his previous house for his daughter’s education.

**Soe Soe Mar**
Section 3 resident of Ward 20
SuSu Mae is from an older generation of residents who was forced to relocate to Hlaing Thar Yar in the mid-90s due to a fire in central Yangon. She has seven children and volunteers her time at the local pre-school. She also enjoys spending time at the monastery where she feels most at peace.

**SuSu Mae**
A businessman who moved to section 6 of Ward 20 in late 2000s after a health issue led him to sell most of his construction business. Instead he invested in land in Hlaing Thar Yar, building and renting out hostel rooms to those displaced by Cyclone Nargis. He has four daughter, two of whom work in YCDC. He currently a member of the Ward Development Committee.
Win Naing Toe
Section 6 leader who is a member of the neighbourhood safety watch, ensuring that any issues are resolved. He has a passion for car repair and other volunteering activities. He works in the neighbouring township which bikes to every morning.

Su Su Phyo
A resident of section 10 who has recently completed her studies in the Ward 20 state highschool and has applied to begin studying at university.

Lei Lei Win
Section 10 resident of Ward 20
She moved to Ward 20 and currently has two children who attend the state highschool. She works at an international NGO (Terre des Homme) as a protection case worker, focusing on children’s rights.
APPENDIX

Transect Walk Routes
APPENDIX

Timeline of Events

1948
Creation of Burmese Constitution

1950's
Start of forced relocations

1962
Military takes power (single party socialist system)

1988
Citizenship Law passed, many become stateless

1988
Mass protests over corruption & food shortages. Army kills 3,000 and displaced thousands. Socialist system abolished

1990
Elections held. NLD won but San Suu Kyi placed under house arrest. YCDC created

2008
Cyclone Nargis kills 140,000 people. Military open the country

2010
Elections take place as reform begins. Aung San Suu Kyi released from house arrest

2011
Military hands over to civilian government. Constitution amended

2012
Elections re-held. State of emergency: ROH vs RAK

2016
Elections held. NLD wins majority

2016
Eruption of clashes again in Rakhine State

2017
Mass refugee crisis of Rohingya to Bangladesh

2018
US Sanction
APPENDIX

Temporal Use of Space

Morning

Afternoon

Night

Weekend/ Holiday