YANGON
RECONFIGURING
PEOPLE’S PRACTICES
TO SHAPE THEIR CITY

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Fig 1. Mind map of our process
Yangon today is at a critical juncture of development. Guided by the political transition of Myanmar, growth of the private sector, multiple imaginations of a future and coupled with rapid population growth - demand for jobs and housing have become real issues. Our vision for Yangon focuses not on a singular image of the city, but one that connects its various images as conceived by its people and institutions. We believe collective action can mobilise these existing disparate systems of building, economic exchange and infrastructure and be a way to realise such a vision.

Through our research, we found these different systems of building the city need recognition in order to bridge the gap between demand and supply - of housing, infrastructure and job opportunities. The larger industries share a symbiotic relationship with local economies and people living in informal settlements. People living in these settlements contribute positively to the city’s economy. We also found that collaborations between people and institutions is a potential opportunity to change the way they view and engage with each other and the city. Thus, we propose a reconfiguration of material and discursive practices of actors through the following strategies:

The Builders’ Network strategy stems from an understanding that people across the city build their homes in different ways using different materials and techniques, financial and legal procedures. So, through a builders’ network, we aim to connect people and institutions involved in these building practices and create a platform for knowledge and economic exchange. This platform also secures a degree of political agency for people living in informal settlements.

The Business Network strategy builds on the idea that existing local economies in informal settlements do not have enough political agency to negotiate with larger economies to increase their businesses and create new job opportunities. So, we propose that a network of local business owners be created in collaboration with labour unions of industries so they are recognized as important contributors to the city’s economy as a whole.

The Collective Infrastructure strategy uses collective building of physical infrastructure as a way of building and strengthening social infrastructure in the city. It addresses the existing gap in infrastructure provision by capitalizing on existing local practices of road building, managing waste, electricity provision etc. and creating a network of people and institutions involved in these practices.

Through our strategies, we hope to change the way informality is viewed by the government and private sector so that identities within informal settlements are validated. For example, changing the perception of people living in informal settlements from being “illegal immigrants” to “legitimate contributors to the economy” would imply a transformation of the city from being “rigid” to one that is “open” and “accepting”.

These strategies work to influence and reinforce each other through the particular practices, such as mapping, data collection, knowledge exchange, material exchange and entrepreneurial practices. This is expected to converge in a revitalised sense of political agency in the city, where people can participate in decision making processes and influence trajectories of transformation. These methods can together contribute to changing the culture of planning by incorporating the idea of strategic planning within dominant practices like masterplanning.

Overall, we envision a rebalancing of the mutually reinforcing relationships that already exist, or could possibly exist between people and institutions in the city, as a way forward that acknowledges the present trajectories of it’s transformation, and adds to it.
ACTS

1910

‘21 City Incorporated Rangoon Development Trust Act

1921 - 1955
Beginning of Governance

1958

‘58 Rangoon region Growth of satellite towns

1957 - 1975
Government Ministries established

1974 - 1997
Rise of Central Powers

1984

‘84 city renamed ‘Yangon’
‘85 Hlaing Tharyar settled

1997 - 2008
Ethnic crisis
Economic crisis

1997

‘97 Dagon Seikkan established

2008 - 2008
Supra-state activities

2010

‘14 World Monuments Watch
‘16 Minimum Wage Law

2011

‘15 NLD comes to power

2020

‘08 Cyclone Nargis

‘11 Real Estate and Private Sector boom

2011

Minimum Wage Law
As Myanmar undergoes a political transition from the military-led government to one governed by the National League for Democracy (NLD), the city of Yangon is at the heart of transformations that are shaping the future of Myanmar. Current developments in the city align with those of the country, which are primarily guided by a strong private sector. The growth of private sector and international investment since 2012 has catalysed the development of industry, telecommunications, non-governmental organizations, infrastructure, and more, all over the city, which has manifested into complex systems of governance at every level. The incoming industry and telecommunications have transformed the lives of people, making communication and connection somewhat easier. However, they have also stratified society and perpetuated social enclaves within the city, prompting the appearance of informal settlements, gated communities, and industrial zones in close proximity.
The rapid growth of the city has seen its limits expand into nearby villages and led to the creation of new townships, adding to the scope of responsibility placed on the Yangon City Development Committee (YCDC). In fact, UN-Habitat estimates the population will increase by 100% by the year 2040. This rate of growth is due partly to natural disasters, such as the Cyclone Nargis in 2012, which caused many to migrate from the Ayeyarwaddy region to the Yangon region. Yangon also experiences large-scale intra-city migration due to unaffordable rents and a reconfiguring of employment zones with industry-heavy townships such as Hlaing Tharyar. These processes of movement into and around the city, when seen as parallel processes to the private sector development occurring in the centre of the city, make visible the very different ways of shaping the city. They identify an urgent need to guide urban development to ensure socially just processes and outcomes.

As the city expands in population, economy, and geography, this period presents a critical juncture in the development of Yangon, where small changes have the potential to make a significant difference in the realities of people. This juncture is important to consider because in the early stages of developing its own meaning of democracy, the city of Yangon forms the base of operations for a variety of organizations, interests, and livelihoods. Thus, this juncture represents a moment in time when people’s participation in shaping their own lived experience is a very real possibility. A way in which it can be done is by widening channels of communication and collaboration among residents, the public and private sectors, and civil society. Our own experience in Yangon has made it clear the different systems of life at play in the city are strong in their own right and should be recognized, valued, and enhanced.

The potential lies in recognizing this inherent value - what people do, how they do it, and with whom.
1984 - untouched land

1998 - introduction of roads and buildings, the basic urban grid is visible and densification of certain areas have begun

2002 - the larger industrial grain is starting to be visible, the Pun Hlaing golf course is visible at the bottom right corner

2012 - proliferation of the industrial zones, spread of the settlement and intensive densification is observed

2016 - further densification, canalisation and reduction of river width, 555 informal township is visible

Fig 4. evolution of the Hlaing Tharyar township
555 neighbourhood of the Hlaing Tharyar Township was the location of our fieldwork. Across the Pan Hlaing River on the North Western periphery of Yangon, Hlaing Tharyar is one of the most populated townships in the city, as well as being home to the city’s largest collection of industrial areas consisting mostly of garment factories.

Prone to Myanmar’s complex system of land classification, Hlaing Tharyar exists as mainly ‘agricultural land,’ while the reality of the township is diverse in typologies and conditions. The township is home to the Pun Hlaing Golf course and housing estate, gated communities such as FMI City, various kinds of industry, and government-led low-income housing developments.

Informal settlements exist alongside these typologies and conditions, integrated seamlessly into the interstitial spaces of the township. They are a manifestation of the ‘logic of interdependence’ that drives Hlaing Tharyar’s growth, and are embedded in mutually reinforcing relationships with the formal areas of the township.
fig 5. configurations in the Hlaing Tharyar township

fig 6. 555 neighbourhood
Hlaing Tharyar, apart from the industrial zones are largely disconnected from city systems, especially of public transportation, major infrastructure, etc. This disconnect is felt especially by those living in the informal settlements, many of whom were previously displaced or moved to Hlaing Tharyar for work.

However, within the township, socio-economic relationships appear to be strong and numerous. One such example is the labour-income relationship between the industries and the informal settlements. Another is the method of acquiring resources such as water, involving water from a different township to be pipelined to the local monastery and subsequently distributed by an individual to the settlement daily.

The various existing systems to manage everyday needs show the interdependence of different actors in Hlaing Tharyar and thus, the township is symptomatic of the processes of development of Yangon at large. As the township at the forefront of the city’s industrial development, Hlaing Tharyar is a site of potential, where addressing the way interdependent relationships emerge, develop, and benefit from each other can catalyse a rethinking of development throughout Yangon.
fig 7. our purpose
As six students from various parts of the world, we came to London with completely different motivations, interests, and paradigms. Therefore, the reason we were in Yangon was the academic motivation, which brought us all to the Development Planning Unit at the same time. However, conducting fieldwork in Yangon with three Yangon Technical University students, our primary rationale was not academic; it was a curiosity of the city, which reminds some of ‘home’ and is ‘home’ to others. While our pre-trip research contextualized the country’s transition, we found the life of the city to be very independent and on its own, inspiring. This inspiration derived from the stories and smiles of the people we interacted with, who were so ready to share them with us, as well as a remarkable diversity of experience and outlook among the people we spoke to in different areas.

This report aims to address the disparity we observed in the city by acknowledging and enhancing the existing strengths of Yangon (including its people) by building partnerships. Our work aims at bringing to the forefront potential spaces and relationships that can be strengthened to ensure the process of urban development is equally driven by and beneficial to its people. Therefore, our purpose is to enable the realization of people-driven processes in Yangon, given the existing systems and potential for stronger connections across the city.

This report can be used by various actors who have a stake in the development of Yangon, and enable action at different levels. Our proposals aim to broaden the scope and increase the visibility of Women for the World (WFW) in Yangon and beyond, by providing opportunities to enhance their operation in different parts of the city. Academic institutions such as YTU will be vital conducting site and city-specific research to enable strategic planning. Strategic planning could be used by the YCDC as a complementary tool for master planning, thus incorporating a culture of co-production and enabling a paradigm shift in conventional planning techniques. The report can also be used by organizations such as YHT to broaden their scope of work to parts of the city outside the centre by encouraging city-wide partnerships. AMA can use the following ideas to connect grassroots organizations and movements to planning institutions to play an active role in policy and the shaping of the city. As international organizations, ACHR and CAN occupy important roles as connectors, capacity builders, and platform creators.
Yangon is already a city of action; its people are constantly acting to shape their world. By building their own homes, starting their own businesses, and creating their own systems of provision, people in different parts of the city have claimed individual responsibility of action. Thus, it is no stretch to say Yangon has the potential to be transformed, not just by the public and private sectors, but by its people.

Our vision is the actualization of this transformation through people-led processes, creating a city of mutually beneficial partnerships and relationships that will benefit and validate the aspirations of all people of Yangon, from FMI City to 555.

![Vision diagram](image)

**VISION**

**RESEARCH QUESTION**

We hope to realize this vision through the following proposals, which we’ve developed through our research aiming to uncover how modifying material and discursive practices can enable people-driven transformations. This research question has become evident over the entire three-month process, through which both our concept and method have evolved.
Transition, according to Sykora and Bouzarovski (2012; pg 46), is the “broad, complex, and lengthy process of social change, which proceeds through a multitude of particular transformations”. Social change is an asserting and strengthening of alternative imaginaries through the transformation of the conception and manifestation of identities. Thus, transition can be seen as the broader social, political, and cultural change that the country of Myanmar is undergoing after the democratic election of the NLD. Transformations, in this case, become the different manifestations of change in the city, including heavy migration into the city, opening up markets to FDI, etc.

These transformations can be analysed not only as a change in form, but as particular practices enacted by individuals, institutions, etc. This focus on practice is embedded in an understanding of the city as one where “meanings are materially enacted in practice” (2015; Orlikowski & Scott, 5), implying practices are not apolitical, but very much an enactment of socially produced identities.

This is important because the realities of individuals in S55 and the city at large are shaped by individual practices (such as building their own house, starting a business, working in a nearby factory) and the practices of institutions (such as the foreign investment policy that allowed industrial investment in the area, YCDC’s plan of forced relocation in designated ‘slum’ areas, etc.). These practices, as they are enacted simultaneously, create systems of operation, governance, and more within the city. Material and discursive practices thus allow for a better understanding of actions and the way in which they “configure reality” (2015; Orlikowski & Scott, 6). In this way, this framework emphasizes the building of the material through the discursive and vice versa as a strategic approach to address transformations in Yangon.

Over the past three months, creating a structure to frame our research has been an immense struggle. We found that as we were reading the situation, whether it was in London or in Yangon, we were simultaneously synthesising all the gathered information. Likewise, any attempt to operationalise indicated continuous analysis.

At the beginning of our journey, removed from the reality and saturated in remote research, our research led us to focus on the diversity of and struggle among identities to be the key driver of transformation in the city. While identity is a key consideration in the process of transformation, the evolution of our framework was triggered by a quick realization that identities are shaped and rendered visible by the practices of individuals and organizations, not just by their existence. Thus, our framework for this research is a cyclical process where our conceptual understanding and method of engagement and analysis constantly inform and influence each other.
EVOLUTION OF CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

01
This first attempt at developing a framework to understand transformation in Yangon used material and discursive practices as axes to frame the city as a site where multiple identities are present as drivers of transformation and active in the domains of land ownership, citizenship, finance, and heritage. Thus, our proposal inherent was to build identity through policies and practices which address each or all of the four categories.

02
Through this phase, we began seeing the constructed framework as not just a conceptual understanding, but a method that would allow us to operationalise that conceptual direction. We used the four domains of land, citizenship, finance, and heritage to frame associated questions for different sites of multiple identities, such as religious institutions, social housing developments, workplaces, etc. These questions helped make visible alternative or typically neglected identities, which emerged through certain lines of questioning. This phase of our process made clear the possibility of different trajectories in revealing existing identities, motivations, and practices and revealed designing questions as a tool of analysis.

03
The fieldwork in 555 provided immense clarity on the evolution of the framework we were employing, as the real stories and experiences of residents were able to replace the space of questions. This was done through mapping the material and discursive practices we were able to observe, collect data on, and experience in the domains of land and housing, risk management, finance, and mobility. This was fundamental in refining our scope of analysis from identities to individual and collective practices as the key drivers of transformation.

04
Taking this approach forward made us better understand Hlaing Tharyar. The township already has an existing ecosystem of actors, motivations, practices, and relationships, which has a logic and direction of flow. Thus, our framework had to be modified to see practices as constituting systems instead of existing independently, prompting a shift from an individual to a collective scale, which led to an independent and then an interdependent scale. So, the conceptual shift in this phase was in the identification of (dis)connected management systems of practice across the township as the key drivers of transformation.

The flexibility we employed in our method and concept has helped us redefine the idea of a strategy as an evolving entity that is characterized by adaptability and allows for navigation through processes and actors.
Building IDENTITY through policies and practices

Strengthen trajectories of ALTERNATIVE IDENTITIES

COLLECTIVISING individual practices

RE-CONFIGURING partnerships

Fig. 9. The evolution of the conceptual framework
Fig 10: Concept and method leading to strategic trajectories that influence trajectories of transformation.
This process of constantly adjusting concept and method to fit the realities of each situation has emphasized the importance and relevance of flexibility in a city as dynamic as Yangon. As Yangon is constantly transforming, so are its needs, its motivations, and its practices. This dynamism, for us, implies proposing a strategic trajectory through different strategies that could trigger people-driven processes of transformation, as opposed to fixed solutions that would become redundant or outdated given the rate of change in the city. While a trajectory can be defined as one path or curve, a strategic trajectory implies a curve that can be targeted and adapted to specific conditions to have the greatest possible impact. This gives it the required flexibility to navigate through the existing and evolving systems, prompting context-specific strategies or actions to emerge from the actors most relevant in the given context.

The proposed strategies will provide some idea of how these trajectories can operate given our observations and analysis of the existing systems of management and survival.
METHODS OF ENGAGEMENT

Gathering Information

Analyzing Information

Synthesizing Information

Observation

Semi-structured Interviews

Lectures

Research

Mapping

Designing question trees

Building conceptual framework

Mapping practices

Connecting practices between levels

Recalibrating theoretical framework

Connecting transformations to practices

fig 11. interlinked methods of engagement

fig 12. site interview
As these thought processes fed the way we worked in London and Yangon, our methods of gathering, synthesizing, and analysing information through the various phases stayed fluid to account for the changing needs and demands of each modification of framework.

One of the consistent methods we employed was mapping. Starting in London, we mapped the growth patterns of Yangon according to the differing grains that emerged over time, as observed from Google Earth. Simultaneously, we mapped a political, social, and economic timeline of Myanmar (Appendix D, Fig. 02) to bring forward the convergences at certain points of time, relying primarily on the discourse of the media, the government and international organizations that have released documents with historical context. We also mapped while we were walking through the 555 community (Appendix B), documenting the layout of the neighbourhood, existing social infrastructure, various types of practices, as well as patterns of movement in and out of the settlement.

Another method of mapping was as a tool in interviews (Appendix C), where we asked participants specific questions about their daily routines, and changes in experience when there was flooding. To address the aspirational aspect of our research we employed participatory mapping with five male students in the monastery-run school, who were asked to draw their house, their favourite thing about it, and the areas in which they play (Appendix B). The diversity of mapping techniques provided a multidimensional understanding of 555, Hlaing Tharyar, Yangon, and Myanmar at large. This was especially visible when the different maps were superimposed or compiled to make visible parts of everyday experiences that influence or are influenced by larger township, city, and country processes (Fig.03-05, 13-17 and Appendix D).

Using our framework in Phase 02, we developed a question tree (Appendix C) to be used in (and to complement) interviews. The primary motivation of this tool was to frame interview questions around tangible practices of everyday life, to capture the material and discursive practices that residents employed to transform their homes, their settlement, and their city. Observation through driving and walking through various parts of the city was fundamental in our process of understanding how the city of Yangon moved, worked, and lived. The question tree allowed us to redefine the act of interviewing to conversation and information gathering to understanding the underlying system from which answers emerged.
FINDINGS

This is a compilation of our analysis of material and discursive practices at the level of the 555 neighbourhood, the Hlaing Tharyar township and Yangon.

From mapping material and discursive practices on a scale ranging from Individual to Collective at the level of the Site, our scale shifted to Independent and Interdependent practices at the level of the township and the City.

LEGEND

sample   material practices
sample   discursive practices
←-→→→→→ trajectories of practices
Fig 14. Tracing homes in 555 neighbourhood
RISK INFRASTRUCTURE FINANCE DISCURSIVE LAND MATERIAL MATERIAL RISK

- lottery system
- building by private sector
- allocation of housing (state)
- building by YCDC
- construction labour
- migration after NARGIS into informal settlement
- providing drinking water to informal settlements (monastery, lake, community)
- outsourcing infrastructure construction, management, and maintenance projects (state, international agencies, private sector)
- existence of different ways of governance in different sites (villages)
- using multiple modes of transport to travel within and outside the city
- smart card to formal settlements
- provision of infrastructure (road, electricity, water) to the formal areas of the township (state)
- absence of infrastructure (road, electricity, sanitation, water) in the informal areas of the township (state)
- individual waste disposal & management (industries with support from the state)
- providing drinking water to informal settlements (industry)
- maintaining schools, roads, etc. by utilizing donations to religious institutions
- prioritizing the improvement of the industrial zones (YCDC)
- foreign schools built in HT (private sector aid agencies, communities)
- systems of microfinance (NGOs, ACHR, etc.)
- tax revenue from gated communities, industries commerce
- inaccessible loans to low income individuals (the idea of loans)
- paying unequal salaries to informal & formal workers (waste collectors, factory workers, daily wage labour, water delivery)
- cycle of profits in the township (management of industrial zones, state, factory owners, foreign investors)
- for high income individuals
- for private developers
- loss of tax revenue from informal settlements
- formal permission for using agricultural land (YCDC)
- designating SEZs (YCDC)
- designating land for industries (YCDC)
- waste disposal in land (industry, admin)
- land grab (private sector, industry, administration)
- to land
- donations to religious institutions
- savings groups (WFW, community members, ACHR)
- systems of microfinance (NGOs, ACHR, etc.)
- bank loans for high income individuals
- for private developers
- loss of tax revenue from informal settlements
- cycle of profits in the township (management of industrial zones, state, factory owners, foreign investors)
- for high income individuals
- for private developers
- loss of tax revenue from informal settlements
- cycle of profits in the township (management of industrial zones, state, factory owners, foreign investors)
- for high income individuals
- for private developers
- loss of tax revenue from informal settlements
- cycle of profits in the township (management of industrial zones, state, factory owners, foreign investors)
LEGEND

- sample
- material practices
- sample
- discursive practices
- trajectories of practices

Fig. 16: Participatory mapping
Myanmar government lack of budget for housing

lack of bamboo construction regulations (YCDC)

the push for low cost housing projects that NO ONE CAN AFFORD! (YCDC, private sector)

the push for making Yangon modern (YCDC, YHT)

push to make Yangon modern (YCDC, YHT)

land GRAB to form informal settlements

Rural-urban migration as disruptive

land reclassification by YCDC

management of SEZs!

(YCDC, private companies)

Chinese business men buying National identity cards to be able to own land

creating designating new townships as a way to deal with urban sprawl

land reclassification by YCDC

MoC involved in rehousing practices and OWNING LAND!

Creating designating new townships as a way to deal with urban sprawl

Budget allocation different to different townships

industries funded by private organisations or international investors rapidly expanding economy & creating jobs

(Private organisations or international investors)

Fig 17. Material and discursive practices in Yangon
Fig 18. Child 01 depiction of home

Fig 19. Mapping everyday movements
Even though we maintained a fluidity in our methods, there were unavoidable limitations of the methods we chose. The first is that the data collected from the interviews and mapping exercises came from a small sample of the community, due to limits of time and resource. Secondly, due to the limited sample of data collected and the challenges of communication, the depth and validity of the information can be challenged. For example, the challenge of gleaming cultural and local nuance through the process of translation added to the complexity of what we were trying to ascertain, which we attempted to mitigate by mapping daily routines. A challenge we discovered during the interview process was embedded in the question tree, which provided lines of questioning based on our interests. We quickly learned it was limiting having one question tree to apply to the whole settlement, as certain people were more willing to talk about certain topics than others. Additionally, the three YTU students who were helping us with translation were quick to guide or correct us when our lines of questioning became redundant or irrelevant.

Methods, we’ve learned, can be fundamental drivers of transformation, which was clear in our own process. Our main limitation was the incapacity to hone a repertoire of methods that could do justice to the people and places we were working with. Mapping can empower and disempower whole neighbourhoods, leaving a mark much beyond the imagination of those who conduct it. In this way, our decision was to experiment with different types of mapping to attempt to balance the consequences of each.
fig 20. snapshots of strategies
STRATEGIC TRAJECTORY FOR YANGON

As a guiding principle throughout our research, we have aimed to understand the city as a constant process of building through individual and institutional practices. Through the field work, Yangon appears as a collection of simultaneous practices and systems that are connected in different ways throughout the city.

So, in conceiving a strategic trajectory for the city, we maintain the principle of acknowledging and emphasizing context-specific systems that emerge from particular areas and configurations. Thus, our proposals aim to avoid replicating one system in different parts of the city. Instead, they imagine and advocate connecting the existing practices and systems to each other to enhance what is already working and uncover potential for more collaborative systems so transformation and development can be collectively directed.

The next three strategies demonstrate this strategic trajectory by identifying three strong existing systems of practice that can be strengthened through collectivization and collaboration at different stages of operationalisation. The strategies are examples made clear to us through our fieldwork, which galvanize individuals around building, business, and infrastructure, while promoting knowledge exchanges, building alliances to gain negotiating power, and strengthening social infrastructure through physical infrastructure. We believe the strength of these strategies lie in accounting for the simultaneity in the city and embracing this fact by providing for processes that can occur together and work to strengthen each other.

CHALLENGES AND LIMITATIONS

WFW’s key challenge is ensuring people are motivated to act in spite of pressure from local politics and dominant economic elite. These pressures can be strategically tackled through careful and firm negotiation by representatives within the network.

Another challenge would be to ensure that the network is continuously active and vocal about its activities so it is taken seriously by the authorities. Persistent involvement of WFW in facilitating collective brainstorming and activity will help maintain the energy of the network.

The idea of creating these networks also holds the risk of being institutionalized to an extent that it may become inaccessible to people by and for whom it was created. It is the prerogative of the smaller neighbourhood networks to device ways of maintaining their autonomy so the larger network does not get engulfed by established formal systems and market forces.
EVIDENCE

# of people living in informal settlements

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Government</th>
<th>WFW</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td># of houses</td>
<td>100,000</td>
<td>400,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rent per month (USD)</td>
<td>$9,000/house</td>
<td>$1,500/house</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cost (USD)</td>
<td>$960 million</td>
<td>$600 million</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td># of people</td>
<td>500,000</td>
<td>2,000,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

estimated number of people living in informal settlement by WFW are much higher than those by the government. In the WFW method cost of building a house is much lower than the standard method of government low cost housing.

fig 21. people versus cost

fig 22. rent per month for housing in Hlaing Tharyar

fig 23. individual home building in 555 neighbourhood
Building upon this idea of collective action, the first strategy aims to provide recognition to these dispersed skills and knowledges by enhancing and connecting them through a builders’ network. The acknowledgement of alternative materials and techniques of building can help secure a certain degree of political agency for those living in informal settlements, who are not typically seen as key actors in shaping the city. Knowledge exchange can thus build individual capacity to negotiate rights.

At present, the government-led social housing model is unable to meet the demands of the 2,000,000 people living in informal settlements in the city. This inability is conceived in terms of number of houses provided, affordability of each house and efficiency of design & implementation (Fig. 21). This is due to the incapacity of the system in estimating demand (government census accounts for only one quarter of the actual population of informal settlers) and a financial model that entails high, unaffordable rental prices (Fig. 22). The above, coupled with inaccessible & unclear bureaucratic procedures for land acquisition and home building has led people to create alternative, informal systems for the same.

Currently, individuals informally lease land through village leaders or any other individual or institution that controls land management in the area, a process locally termed as ‘nahlemu’. They are individually responsible for acquiring materials and building their house on the allotted plot. Finally, depending on the local needs, they gain access to or build their own infrastructure that supports their household. Although primarily individual, sometimes people organize themselves into groups with the support of institutions like the monastery.

This individual practice of home building is however, cumbersome, insecure and does not capitalize on the existing knowledges and skills dispersed across the city. It also does not contribute to building a sense of “community” and collective ownership of the neighbourhood which is vital for political agency. On the other hand, the WFW model of creating savings groups and collectively building the neighbourhood has proven to be economical, efficient, successful in catering to demand (Fig 21), and at the same time, created a sense of collective responsibility, motivation and belonging to the neighbourhood.

**FOCUS AND INTENT**

Building upon this idea of collective action, the first strategy aims to provide recognition to these dispersed skills and knowledges by enhancing and connecting them through a builders’ network. The acknowledgement of alternative materials and techniques of building can help secure a certain degree of political agency for those living in informal settlements, who are not typically seen as key actors in shaping the city. Knowledge exchange can thus build individual capacity to negotiate rights.
TRAJECTORIES

Implementation of this strategy orients development discourse towards inclusive and adaptable land policies and the promotion of alternative building materials and techniques in Yangon. On one hand, it creates a space for individuals to participate in the development of their city by advocating for their own needs, while on the other, it provides an alternative route for planning by incorporating strategic planning within the master plan for the city.

PROCESS

As shown in the diagram, we propose that this be done in 2 main phases, (1) creation of a neighbourhood builders’ network and (2) connecting these networks across the city with help from WFW, ACHR and YTU to form a city-wide builders’ network.

The first phase is focused on home building. It is proposed that after individually acquiring land and with organizational support from WFW, neighbours get together to exchange experiences and knowledge pertaining to home building. This would involve data collection and mapping (YTU), material sharing, collective building and road upgrading, etc., building a sense of solidarity among neighbours and collective ownership of the area.

The second phase is focused on infrastructure improvement, creating social networks & partnerships and creating job opportunities in the construction industry. Owing to the priority given to the physical development of the city, the city-wide builders’ network can act as a platform for political negotiation with the government and private real estate developers. It can also partner with the government in order to meet housing demands of informal settlers in the city.

Although each network will eventually develop its own system of working based on the context and demands, spatial proximity and accessibility will strengthen and render it more visible. The geographic limits will dictate its mode of operation in terms of transportation, mobilization of people, etc. Hence, apart from increasing the size of the network itself, scaling up would mean taking into consideration its spatial influence. Fig. 25 and Fig. 26 show how the above phases could manifest spatially.

EXISTING SYSTEMS
RECONFIGURATIONS

IMMEDIATE INTRODUCTION TO NEIGHBOURHOOD BUILDERS’ NETWORK, AS SOON AS INDIVIDUALS ACQUIRE THE LAND.

COMMUNITY

The builders network is based on the very tangible and necessary practice of construction and hence, it has a strong basis for mobilization. Belonging to a network also means institutional support, exposure and a feeling of security and confidence for people living in informal settlements.

GOVERNMENT

By partnering with the builders’ network, the government is able to reach out to a larger population of informal settlers and better understand their needs. This also helps in formulating policies that will cater to the rapid growth of the city and assess the feasibility of their implementation.

PRIVATE SECTOR

The builders’ network helps private real estate developers acquire an alternative form of labour supply. By gaining access to skilled labour and local knowledge, these companies have the scope to broaden their domain and adapt to different modes of building.

NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANISATIONS

NGOs like WFW can gain recognition and financial support through their involvement in the formation of this network. Such initiatives also boost their morale and help them establish a political ground for negotiations with the private sector and the government.

IMMEDIATE INTRODUCTION TO NEIGHBOURHOOD BUILDERS’ NETWORK, AS SOON AS INDIVIDUALS ACQUIRE THE LAND.

CREATION OF LARGER BUILDERS’ NETWORK WITH THE HELP AND COORDINATION OF WFW, ACHR, AND YTU TO CONNECT WITH OTHER SITES AROUND THE CITY.
Creating an inventory of materials and procurement sources to make the building process easier.

Percolation of organised home building into collective building of infrastructure connecting these homes.

Creating a network of people involved in self building and people with construction skills.

Creating a community of neighbours organised around collective road upgrading through the builders’ network.

Creating a database of builders and buildings and mapping neighbourhoods that need the involvement of the builders’ network.

Creating an inventory of materials and procurement sources to make the building process easier.

Percolation of organised home building into collective building of infrastructure connecting these homes.
A city-level database and mapping of the domain of the builders’ network, indicating locations and possible areas of influence.

02

Connecting and enabling knowledge and skill exchange between building networks located in proximity.

03

Developing a system of procurement, quality control and distribution of building materials by members of the builders’ network.

04

A city-level database and mapping of the domain of the builders’ network, indicating locations and possible areas of influence.

05

Creating a social and political presence stemming from a collective response to building.
BUSINESS NETWORK
LINKING SYSTEMS OF ECONOMIC EXCHANGE ACROSS THE CITY

EVIDENCE

fig 27. the drinking water industry
fig 28. informal vending
fig 29. the bamboo industry
“I do makeup/hair cleaning/foot care in my hairdresser ...I have a few female friends and we get together to talk about debt and love”
14 | Hairdresser and her friend

“My husband and I sell mohinga in front of the house. He also works at the market”
29 | Family who sells mohinga

EXISTING SYSTEM

At the moment, there are individual businesses in informal settlements from tailors to bike repair technicians to snack sellers (figure 27-29 & Interview Records). People buy and exchange things within or outside of the settlement. There are strong internal and informal economies where these businesses depend on each other for survival, but these economies are not recognized as contributors to the city economy as a whole.

Although some people have formal jobs in factories outside the village, they are subjected to job insecurity, inadequate social welfare services, inappropriate working conditions, and not given any space for creative expression. In this way, the entrepreneurial spirit of the settlement is not given an opportunity to grow.

FOCUS AND INTENT

Given the enterprising nature of people and the need for recognition of informal businesses as contributors to city’s economic development, we propose the creation of a business network. This strategic trajectory is aimed at creating an environment where individuals in informal settlements who operate their own business but are denied the identity of an entrepreneur or business owner can reclaim these identities. It focuses on enhancing the political agency of these business owners.

Using the existing socio-economic relationships between different areas in the township as a base, we propose that this network be created through collaboration with the existing labour unions. This will help increase the political reach of individual business owners and also help them gain institutional support to advocate their needs.

Unlike the builders’ network, there is no tangible entity that the functioning of these businesses are based on. So this is treated more as a supportive strategy that looks at improving people’s quality of life as a whole.
This reconfiguration promotes a culture of networking and learning from exchanging experiences. It will encourage existing business potential to be linked to larger markets. It aims to change the dominant perception of employment in the city, which links job opportunities to factory work. The network aims to validate other forms of employment and business. In addition, given the rapid industrial development and increased demand for labour across Myanmar, these collaborative practices can set an example for positive business processes.
Specialized networks are connected to related labour unions with support from YTU, WFW, and other NGOs. Sharing the platform of existing labour unions to collectively negotiate with industries.

**Benefits**

**Community**
By collectivizing workers, this business network can promote workers’ rights. The connections made through the network can create new business and job opportunities. Through networking within community and wider market, informal businesses are recognized as important aspects of the national economy.

**Government**
This network can provide comprehensive data about skills of various informal businesses. The government can use this data to design economic policy. It can also be a trigger to reconsider the regulations around working environment and which can be a basis for sustainable socio-economic condition.

**Private Sector**
The connections and skills database enables private companies to gain access to a large and versatile labour market as per their demands. The network also provides a base for alternative business strategies.

**Non-Governmental Organisations**
The business network aids NGO’s aiming at an integrated approach to housing by providing job opportunities to people who have been rehoused. It also helps them build a strong narrative for advocating entrepreneurship in informal settlements.
**SPATIAL MANIFESTATIONS**

01
Network of individual Business Owners - Shops, Drinking Water, Services

02
New Business opportunities through Knowledge exchange and increased accessibility by virtue of connections.

03
Increased profit and clientele through collaborative exchanges.

04
Increased political agency through collaboration of Labour unions of nearby industries.
Collective platform of individual business networks that enables exposure and enhances negotiation capability.

Manufacturing outsourced to local factory owners by international companies. For example, the garment industry.

Import of raw material and other resources from around the world.

Increased profit and clientele through collaborative exchanges affecting import duty.

Foreign Direct Investment into Business infrastructure influencing rate of export.

Recognition by the Government and Institutional support for local economies and Businesses.
COLLECTIVE INFRASTRUCTURE
BUILDING SOCIAL INFRASTRUCTURE BY UPGRADING PHYSICAL INFRASTRUCTURE

EVIDENCE

fig 33. infrastructure costs in the formal and informal sector

fig 34. informal electrical infrastructure

fig 35. informal road upgrading

fig 36. using refrigerator boxes as individual flood management devices
"I have a generator, so I supply electricity to some of my neighbours - profit is around 30,000 - 40,000 kyats a month"

"If the road is good, business will be good and other villagers will be happy. Transportation is a big problem... each family works on the road in front of their house"

"Flooding and fire are both high risks in the area"

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EXISTING SYSTEM

The current condition of infrastructure in informal settlements is insufficient. Some people try to improve it through individual initiatives, while some are just adapting to the situation.

In terms of electricity, there is a huge cost difference between government provision and informal systems (Figure 33). In the informal system, some people buy a collective generator to share, while some buy them individually. The cost of 1 light bulb for 180 hours of use is 2.2 USD. This is dispersed over numerous days since each house is allowed only 2-3 hours of use a day. The formal government system charges 0.3 USD for the same amount of electricity, but it is constant and allows for no limit on time. This disparity provides us with the opportunity to work towards integrating the informal with the formal system through collaboration with government authorities and other agencies.

The condition of roads is also an important aspect for the community in terms of improving accessibility and mobility within the settlement. Increasing the road level is also crucial to prevent water from floods. People individually upgrade the road in front of their house which leads to inconsistency and hence does not wholly contribute towards improving accessibility.

Although the settlement is under risk of flood, the area is not physically protected. By making an additional wooden floor and using refrigerator boxes to move around the settlement during floods, people deal with the natural disaster by themselves (figure 36). A collective approach to infrastructure could considerably change and improve the way people live.

FOCUS AND INTENT

Through our research, we found that there is a strong motivation for better infrastructure, which means that infrastructure can be identified as a crucial point of connection and mobilization. This strategy aims at a collective approach to infrastructure, in which social infrastructure can be built through physical upgrading of settlements. It links different systems of governance to better address tangible needs of residents from across the city. By collectivizing individual practices of electricity provision, flood management, waste management and road upgrading it motivates different actors to come together and address the social needs of the settlement.
As shown in the diagram, we propose the collective improvement of four different types of infrastructure. The detailed steps are different depending on the type of infrastructure, however, the common phases of those reconfigurations can be described as 1. Collectivizing individual practice, 2. Designing a way to act collectively to address the relevant infrastructure issue.

**Collective Generator** | First, people in the community put money together to collectively purchase generators and choose physical locations to ensure distribution is equitable. This can prove to be more economical and increase the reach of electricity provision. It also helps create a sense of collective responsibility.

**Waste Management** | First, individuals collect waste at waste collection points. Ideally this should be motivated by some financial incentives provided by governments or private recycling companies. Then, waste carriers collect waste from the collection point to waste facilities. The fee will be paid either by government or private recycling company. By doing so, this can not only create cleaner neighbourhoods but also provide new job opportunities around recycling.

**Road Upgrading** | First, individuals collect money as a group and under the facilitation of a leader in the community such as the monastery, WFW or village leader, upgrade the roads of the neighbourhood. This process is motivated by the desire to improve the neighbourhood and can allow for collective planning and upgrading of the neighbourhood.

**Flood Management** | In order to deal with mass flooding, community members, with facilitation/ encouragement from WFW, converge to design a way to deal with floods such as a flood management handbook, evacuation route mapping, etc. YTU is important in this process to provide technical knowledge of flood management techniques. Managing disasters not only increases security in the neighbourhood, but also entails a collective responsibility of the places and people in it.

Fig. 38 and Fig. 39 show how the above phases could manifest spatially.

**TRAJECTORIES**

Implementation of this strategy can directly improve the physical infrastructure. Through these processes, social infrastructure that responds to local needs throughout the city is built. These practices in localized areas can work to influence citywide actions, such as city level disaster management plan, road improvement across the city, raising financial support for infrastructure by international agencies, etc.

Using collective physical upgrading to address social infrastructure can be used as a basis for social policies formulated by the government. This can help to create a more physically and socially connected city.
Collectivize individual practice by discussing, pooling money, collecting waste, etc.

Designing a way to act collectively to address the relevant infrastructure issue

Collective action to improve living conditions

Community can acquire direct, tangible benefits in the form of better infrastructure. Additionally, through collective action, they can create a cooperative model for infrastructure provision, which can be used for other community actions. It can also create new job opportunities (i.e., waste collectors) within settlements.

This strategy can provide an alternative way to improve infrastructure at community level for the government. The process could give grounded reality and data to the government, which can be used for redesigning its further infrastructure policy to reach wider population of Yangon.

The strategy can create new business by initiating new projects such as an industry for recycled products, designing an evacuation kit, etc. It also provides an opportunity to find skilled workers around infrastructure. Infrastructure provision is also easily embedded in CSR programs of companies. This strategy can raise the interest of international investment beyond industry in Myanmar due to the innovative methods.

This tangible approach helps NGOs advocate for collective action and mobilize people. It also helps them build an expertise in supervising physical upgrading along with their community building activities. It can also share the knowledge and skills within international NGOs.
SPATIAL MANIFESTATIONS

01
Creating anchor points through collective ownership of infrastructure like generators and waste collection facilities.

02
Using local waste management system as a revenue opportunity and as a connection to the recycling market.

03
Neighbourhood infrastructure planning that capitalises on existing local skills and networks with the industry.

04
Community action plan for flood management using individual management skills and planning experiences.

05
Using existing social infrastructure as meeting and evacuation points.

06
Creating a system of public meeting points in different parts of the settlement.
01
Localised physically connected people driven infrastructure clusters across the city.

02
Enabling a culture of recycling by establishing a city-wide waste management system and recycling industry.

03
Financial support for infrastructure by international banks.

04
Technical, Financial and Human Resource support into people driven infrastructure by private sector companies.

05
Knowledge sharing and Social support systems backed by local and international NGO's and missionaries.

06
City level disaster management plan with strategies for large scale flood control - like canalisation, dam construction, etc.

07
Improving accessibility through physical connectivity between people driven infrastructure clusters across the city.
Entrepreneurial Practice
Social Networking within builders
Business Network
Recycling Product
Emergency Kit Production

Political Agency
- Influence on changing political sphere
- Participate in decision making process

Skill & Knowledge Sharing
Building Skills
Skill Database
Skill & Knowledge Exchange
Entrepreneurial Opportunity
Road Upgrading
Flood Management

Datat Collection
Housing Types, Materials & Techniques
Supply Chain Research
Electricity Usage & Generator
Waste Collection System
Flood Risk

Mental Network
Material Exchange
Material Procurement
Labour union of Material Industry
Private Recycling Company

Mapping Practice
Housing, Materials
Individual Business
Collective Generator
Waste Collection Point
Road Upgrading Map
Evacuation Route

Shared Space Creation
Builder’s Meeting Space
Shared Evacuation Space
Community Meeting

Private Sector
DHS HD
YCDC

Construction Industries
MOC
YTU
ACHR
WFW

Builders’ Network

Business Network

Collective Infrastructure

Linked Outcomes

Fig 40: Linking trajectories from three strategies
We see the following key proposed practices within all these strategies acting as nodes to connect these strategies to mutually influence each other and overall (Fig. 40), allow people-driven transformations to define the trajectory of Yangon. The diagram illustrates these key points and shows the actors who can support the practices at these points.

**Shared space creation:** Creating a shared space within the flood management plan (for evacuation) can open up its uses for other purposes, such as collective decision making, mapping activities, organizing, etc. Ideally, this shared space can be created by people in the beginning so that they can use it for other community practices.

**Mapping Practice:** Mapping in any one of the proposals can help the other processes, as accurate information on layout of community, etc. will be useful for all. Therefore, frequent mapping practice will be key in creating knowledge within the neighbourhood and coherent social network. WFW, ACHR and YTU can help connect in processes of mapping, as well as by doing other research and facilitation.

**Data collection:** Data collection can be very much supported by YTU, in terms of supply chain research, data collection for the builders’ network, etc. Collecting data for the builders’ network will be vital for any infrastructure projects that emerge. This data can also be an important resource also for the authorities.

**Skill and knowledge sharing:** Linking the different kinds of knowledge sharing happening (how to build, how to do business, how to deal with floods etc.) could help enable other practices in terms of efficiency and networking. For example, sharing building skills could help regulate the system of material procurement, making it easier, cheaper, and more efficient to get materials. WFW and ACHR can help these practices. It can also help academic institutions in catalysing further research on recycled construction materials, etc.

**Material exchange:** A connection between labour unions of material industry and the waste collectors and waste collection system within communities, can help improve relationships between the two and private recycling companies. This can be also connected to practices in the builders’ network for better material usage.

**Entrepreneurial Practice:** Social networks created by other practices can increase opportunities for start ups. Also the emerging resources (i.e. recycled materials) and demands (i.e. flood management) can encourage entrepreneurial projects that are more collective (i.e. recycled products, flood management kit).

These actions, individuals and communities could trigger new trajectories of development, which are embedded in the experiences and expertise of people.
fig 41. sunset over Yangon
We believe a small change in the practices of people and institutions can alter trajectories of transformation and enhance alternative identities for the better. Transformation implies not just a change in form, but a change in identity, derived through the way people, places, and institutions view and engage with each other. This, in turn alters the direction of transformation. It also implies a change in their agency and their practice. For example, if the government discourse on informal settlements as ‘obstructions’ changed to informal settlements as ‘key contributors to the city’s economy’, the designing of policies, prioritization in land use planning and the method of planning itself would change, thus driving the transformation of the city in a more people-centred direction.

Through our strategies, we hope to change the way informality is viewed by the government and private sector so that identities within informal settlements are validated throughout the city. Reconfiguring these practices as collective endeavours also means challenging existing political relationships between actors and strengthening the agency of hidden/unrecognised actors. We hope to change the discourse of development from an image driven idea to one defined and driven by its people and their experiences. If Yangon can legitimize the identities and practices within 555 as it does those of YCDC, then the discursive and material development of the city can be re-directed to be beneficial for all residents. This means a change in the culture of planning and envisioning the city and opting for strategic planning within dominant institutional practices like masterplanning.

This critical juncture of development presents a time of immense potential for shaping and reshaping identities of people and that of Yangon as a whole. The transformation of the city in this time of transition must thus be directed by not just the institutions, but by the actions of its people.


ACHR. (2014). Myanmar - Cyclone Nargis Opens up New Possibilities for People


Images
Google Earth (2017). Yangon map. [image].

Trimble (2017). Yangon map data. [image].
all images and figures are produced by the group apart from the ones mentioned below

fig 1. mind map of our process
fig 2. events in yangon in context of events in myanmar (see appendix D for detailed timeline)
fig 3. map of yangon with industrial zones
    reworked on top of GIS data of Yangon from the Trimble marketplace, JICA masterplan of Yangon and an analysis of the builtform from Google Earth in time between 1986-2017
fig 4. evolution of the Hlaing Tharyar township
fig 5. configurations in the Hlaing Tharyar township
    from the Hlaing Tharyar township presentation at Yangon on the 17.05.2017
fig 6. 555 neighbourhood
fig 7. our purpose
fig 8. VISION - operationalising mutually beneficial partnerships to actualise transformation
fig 9. the evolution of the conceptual framework
fig 10. concept and method leading to strategic trajectories that influence trajectories of transformation
fig 11. interlinked methods of engagement
fig 12. site interview
fig 13. material and discursive practices at 555 level
fig 14. tracing homes in 555 neighbourhood
fig 15. material and discursive practices at Hlaing Tharyar
fig 16. participatory mapping
fig 17. material and discursive practices in Yangon
fig 18. child 01 depiction of home
fig 19. mapping everyday movements
fig 20. snapshots of strategies
fig 21. reworked on the basis of Group 02 Presentation at DPU, London on 24.05.2017
fig 22. individual home building in 555 neighbourhood
fig 23. people versus cost
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fig 24. rent per month for housing in Hlaing Tharyar
fig 25. spatial manifestation of builders’ network in the 555 neighbourhood
fig 26. spatial manifestation of builders’ network in the city
fig 27. the drinking water industry
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fig 29. the bamboo industry
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fig 32. spatial manifestation of business network in the city
fig 33. infrastructure costs in the formal and informal sector
    reworked on the basis of Group 02 Presentation at DPU, London on 24.05.2017
fig 34. informal road upgrading
fig 35. reworked on the basis of Group 02 Presentation at DPU, London on 24.05.2017
fig 36. informal electrical infrastructure
fig 37. using refrigerator boxes as individual flood management devices
fig 38. collective infrastructure
fig 39. spatial manifestation of collective infrastructure in the 555 neighbourhood
fig 40. spatial manifestation of collective infrastructure in the city
fig 41. linking trajectories from three strategies
fig 42. sunset over Yangon
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Through this experience, we have been honoured to meet numerous wonderful, knowledgeable people from whom we learned. Beginning in Yangon, our first day at Yangon Heritage Trust gave us a fantastic introduction to the city, allowing us to explore and experience a Yangon we would enjoy for weeks to come. Thank you to those at YHT for this introduction. Our following days would take us to Yangon Technical University where we had the pleasure of learning from numerous speakers whose words would follow us through this experience. A special shout out to Somsook Boonyabancha who we have admired from afar for years and Nad who brought us down to earth and showed us that sometimes the simplest ways are best.

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Our time in Yangon would not have been the same without our partnership with Yangon Technical University. They introduced us to three amazing new friends and partners on this journey, our collaboration with them is how we’ve achieved so much in such little time. Su, Myo and Theingi, our time with you, has been an incredible experience. Thank you all for your knowledge, time, and good spirits, we look forward to seeing you in the future.

The people from the 555 community, we will be ever grateful for you allowing us into your community, homes and answering our numerous questions. Your grace and warmth have moved us, we wish you the best of luck in the future and look forward to learning of your progress.

We would also like to thank AMA for letting us take over their office, supplying us with the necessary tools to work, and for the encouragement. As well as YCDC, for the knowledge and experience you shared throughout our work in Yangon.

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Drinks next week?
Although Myanmar is an Asian country, it is very different from my home in China. Before this field trip, I had never been to an informal settlement. The first-hand experience in the community was more meaningful than our previous online and academic research. We interacted with residents and saving groups by interviewing and mapping, which was exciting, memorable and challenging. The language was the primary barrier, and the appropriate entry point for discussions was necessary for making the locals willing to communicate with us. The group is wonderful; I enjoyed all the work and leisure time we spent together. I grew a lot through this experience, and it will stay in my memory forever. - Zhiyao

It’s been almost two weeks since we’ve come back to London from Myanmar. To this day my mind is still lost in time forever reminiscing on our experience, I’ll admit it’s partially caused by writing this report. Yangon was the first time I had been to Asia, although not the first time I had worked in informal settlements. It was still an eye opening experience, and I’ve realized that you cannot expect similar things from similar experiences. Working in 555 and Hlaing Tharyar was mesmerizing, the people generous and kind, more so than you would ever find in my home country. It gives me hope for all people, including myself, to be the best that one can be. - Julia

- Ramya
Thinking about Yangon from London feels like a......
- Nandita

- Shoko
This is a compilation of on-site mapping data including maps and sketches made on-site, an activity with the primary school students drawing their ideal home and tracing daily activities of residents in 555 neighbourhood.

01 PAGES FROM SKETCHBOOKS
configurations and use of home and streets
555 neighbourhood street mapping

See Sein Shin housing project
mapping children’s locations from school

child 01
14 year old
10 min walk

child 02
10 year old
15 min walk

child 03
14 year old
20 min walk

child 04
12 year old
10 min walk

child 05
13 year old
20 min walk
This is a compilation of our interviews with the people of the 55 neighbourhood at Hlaing Tharyar township.

01 | Person at the shop (on main road)

There is a lot of flooding in the area.

02 | Person at the Ward office (Yat Mi Yat Pha... someone people respect)

Observed: large poster for the president
The neighbourhood floods all the time - there is flooding 10 months a year, it is the worst in June and July
There are not enough roads here, and the ones that are in place, are in bad condition
When there are fires, neighbourhood feels completely disconnected - there is no bridge, no escape, so they feel trapped.

03 | Shop at main road

2 Members no children they’ve been on site for 5 years when there were only 5-10 houses built
Happy to survive, they sell only rice and snacks, this is their only job
Get electricity between 6-10pm through an extra motor that is shared with the whole ward
Pay 1000 kyats a day for a large bottle of drinking water
River is used to dispose of sewage
No relatives in the area, friend suggested land because it was free, they come from Taichi 4hrs away, they have ID cards from there but not to stay here
They visit family every 2 months take bus w/ 3 transfers to get there
No rent to pay and built house in 1 week using the local material shop in the village
Stay when flooding happens. Built a wooden layered floor to deal with flooding.

04 | Clinic

Open 3 days a week, had to move from previous location because it flooded too often and dangerous
Moved to 555 village 3 months ago
Owned by the big house and rent the building they use
Using the extension of house as a clinic, expanding with brick material now
Doctor from Insein area commutes in, pay is by donation doesn’t request much?
Send larger cases into free clinics and hospitals in the city
People pay respect by giving money

05 | Warden (Warden’s House - Large Group)

Hook outside of house is meant to pull roof down in case of fire
He looks over 4000-5000 households
Sent letter to president to help obtain land rights for the community
Holdings themselves - government associations come to investigate if they live there, their occupation, etc.
Ask future/occupation/problems
3 years and if no problems they can stay
Don’t need to pay
Slum upgrading association in the village
After interview you get a smart card to show ID
6 water tanks by Koreans cost 120,000 kyats to build
Need tokens to use water
All can use for washing water but buy drinking water
Small bottle 200 kyats large bottle 500 kyats... (different # than couple!!!)
guy brings it around to houses
Wants to build a house with brick
Can only get together for religious ceremonies by Monastery... no other ceremonies
People have been gathering here since Nargis 6yrs
Some were pushed off roads and moved here
People were disorganized so he brought them together... they requested him to be warden... he is looking into land rights and helping people and helps others get jobs
Doesn’t deal with daily issues/conflicts
Says no one new is allowed to come in
Some people leave because of flooding then come back
Trying to build a school
Monastery donates to school

06 | The Rakhine Migrant

Have been living here for 3 years, but don’t feel accepted and recognized
Works as a mechanic in a temporary garage near the settlement
Bought the house for 16,50,000 Ks from previous owner
Identity cards - voting card provided by 88 student party, transport card provided by local ward officer; They were not given a permit card for living here since they had rented out a room to a friend and that was not allowed
They have 3 children, two of them go to school run by the monastery; the priests take care of the children
Travel by tuk tuk or bicycle locally and take the bus to the city
They have family living in the city whom they visit on certain occasions
Nobody helps them in the neighbourhood; have to fend for themselves

07 | Traditional Doctor

Husband (doctor) and wife volunteered to live here and set up a medical store in the settlement
Their children live in another township
Medicines are imported from India and from the city

08 | Savings Group Women from other villages

People here don’t know savings ways that’s why WFW are coming into the area
It cost 200 kyats each week, everyone can spend money
Started in 2009 in North Okkalapa
There are no special plans to build new houses, they just want to make upgrades, only need 6 members

09 | Interview with 4 People (including Yat Mi Yat Pha)

6 wards collaborate using their wardens to talk to each other
It was started by friends relationship
6 wards leader get together for the meeting once or twice a month
Wards leader meeting are held by only ward leaders, no participation of other residents
There are three big topics; Land rights, business and infrastructure (road to commute).
They are looking for a place to have death ceremonies
Go to shwedagon to pray otherwise don’t leave the area
Staying here to because legal land rights are coming... not because of the factories
Sleep on refrigerator box when it’s going to flood so that they can float in the house, there are not so much trouble
There is no draining system here at the moment
2 years ago the government made a bund out of soil and aggregate that had a 30’ opening to let water back out and was supposed to stop water from coming in..... The opening is now 150’ wide and doesn’t do anything. It is eroding pretty badly. There are government plans for a concrete one but it has not occurred.
People make 6000 kyats in one day at the factories which is enough to live by.
People do not worry much about work as there are many opportunities especially factories.
When the land rights are given if someone owns a more than one house and only lives in one the rental will go to the person renting the house.
Owning system of housings are a bit complicated to make equal situation. If the owner owns more than one house, the only one house can be rented no matter how many houses he/she owns.
Would be interesting in savings groups if explained well!
Everyone gives money to make roads
Big hole in the factory wall occurred Yuma yupa paid the 4000000 kyats to have it repaired and have the water sent to the canals
People would like to take down wall around factory named Shwe Than Lyin Company
Kids go to elementary school here but secondary school in the village where they usually board

10 | Monk at the school

This used to be forested area, there were only about 10-15 houses in the 90s
Currently, school has about 400 students- books and stationery is provided
Just built a new bridge one month ago, which was funded by Korean organization
Are building a new section for the school in brick, partly funded by
monastery, other funding unsure
During flooding, students have to take refrigerator boxes from the road to
the school (5 students at a time)
School has about 10-15 boxes that they use when this happens, have to
buy new boxes every season
Buy the boxes from nearby factory - 3000 kyats per box

11 | Family opposite school

Located farther back from road because they wanted to keep a pig
5 people living in house, husband is general labourer, finds it hard to get a
job, has to go downtown which takes about an hour and a half
Solar panel in front of house provides electricity
Just about survive when it floods - have to move clothes to a higher level so
nothing gets wet
Imagines a future when her family lives in a better home made of better
materials and her children have good and regular jobs

12 | Drinks Restaurant

She opened the restaurant 4 months ago, provides TV, seating, and drinks-
since then, it has only flooded once
Restaurant has been pretty successful, the TV helps- a lot of people stop by
on their way home from work
Gets her supplies from the market every morning, goes on her bike
She has a generator, so she supplies electricity to some of her neighbours -
profit is around 30,000 - 40,000 kyats a month
Usually buys water, but at the moment, getting washing water from the well
Doesn’t get to go to the city very often because of the shop
In 5 years, she would like to solve the flooding problem

13 | Grandma with small shop in the house

Family of 4 - Husband works at the harbour, paints ships, son is a primary
school student, wife is a homemaker, grandma stays with them, her other
granddaughter, who works in a nearby factory stays with them
They live here in summer and move to a rented house in the city during the
monsoons since this area gets flooded
They don’t want to live here since there is no drinking water and electricity
provision
Friends (women) visit each other’s house and go to the bazaar together and
celebrate the annual water festival together
She cooks, washes clothes and sends her son to a tuition class near her
rented house outside the settlement. She wants her son to be educated so
rented the house.
Around 60 women from the area volunteered with the monastery to
renovate the school - helped carry sand and build the floor
Previously, they used to commute through trees since there were no roads;
Now there are roads but the level needs to be increased to prevent water
from entering the house
Although they can walk around freely, they make sure the granddaughter
is picked up from the end of the street when she returns from work, as a
precaution
Hairdresser and her friend

Came here when she married 3 years ago from Bahan
Didn’t know lots of woman then to have lots of friends
Now has a few women friends they get together to talk about debt and love
Will not walk outside at night
Flooding doesn’t effect her house because its high enough out of the water
She’s more interested in getting better infrastructure and electricity
She does makeup/hair cleaning/foot care
Husband works at factory
Doesn’t have much work in rainy season so they have only her husband’s salary to live off of
They talk to ward leader to get things done

A volunteer at Korean Missionary funded kindergarten

The school was opened 2 years ago
Students are from this community, doesn’t have to practice Korean Missionary
There are three teachers, children are from 10-15 households
Has concerns about serious flooding conditions
Chose this area because many children not educated
The founder graduated Thai University. Thai University funds it
Getting permission of building school was difficult
1000 per month cost per child (tuition)
Hair salon woman visits her children there
Teacher currently doesn’t have certificate but they are looking for one that does
Using solar panel for electricity, 12 hours last at night
Planning to buy new land to expand school

8 unit housing - group of women

Cook together eat separately
They use electricity for movies or charge phone
Charcoal stove buy from village or here
Floods badly
Pay 15000 kyats a month
Can’t say anything because they are renters
No money so they don’t worry about thieves

Woman on side of street (under tree)

Has 4 children in nursery
Currently needs shade so sitting under tree
Daughter failed school so she now works in gold shop
Husband is a mason
Doesn’t leave but would like less density
Not worried about her house when it floods
Use electricity 1hr per night… 3 people sell it to them they use it to watch tv together
Husband is tired from work goes from 6am-9pm usually sleeps once home
Roads and electricity are paid to the warden or senior person of area

18 | Bamboo shop

Husband owns a bamboo shop and workshop, his parents work on a farm 3 hours away from the settlement- they visit it once a week on a motorcycle. The bamboo is brought into the settlement on boats when the settlement is flooded. From here, it is transported manually (3-4 bamboos at a time) to sites of construction in the settlement. The bamboo is transported outside the settlement in small vans/trucks.

19 | Woman with ice-cream

Father is a security guard in a nearby factory. Daughter is 31 years old; she works in the factory from 3 pm to 10 pm; In the morning, she sells home made ice cream in the settlement - she carries it in a bucket and walks around the settlement. After 10 pm, she prepares the ice cream for the next day. She comes back home with friends from the garment factory. Her son studies in a school outside the settlement.

20 | Woman lived in the community for 9 months (on bad side)

4 kids, 3 girls, 1 boy. Came for factory work. Close to the area. 30 min walk to work sometimes bike taxi. Has experienced flooding before. Electricity 6 pm - 11 pm. No water collected from well. Buys spring drinking water from man selling water from cart. Rent 20000 kyats a month. Plans to be here for 1-2 years maximum would rather no flooding area.

21 | School Children

Student 1 - included a bathing area, favourite part of the house was his family’s garden. Student 2 - drew a shrine as important part of house, his favourite part of the house is his toy car - drew a corrugated roof. Student 3 - saw kitchen as important part of house, drew a bicycle because he wants one, house has a traditional roof. Student 4 - Drew an entrance to the house, and right above is the water bottle, as an important aspect of the home, home has a shop front, selling lunch.

22 | School Teacher

Been working at the school since 2013 - works every day of the week, no holiday. Lives on main road, moved here three years ago from Bago region. 3 members in household - her, her husband, and her daughter. Daughter is 7 years old (Grade 1) school in Nawaday Estate, which is about 30 minutes by foot, usually gets dropped by her husband.
Husband is moto-taxi driver, bought motorcycle before daughter was born
On days when it floods, she walks to school but has to bring extra clothes
Gets food from the market everyday - walks to market after school, around 4:30-5
Water comes from the lake in Mhwabi Township, it is pipelined to the main monastery, from the distributor collects it and delivers to homes everyday
Electricity is distributed from the village
School and market are both flood-prone areas

23 | House Opposite school towards the river
Moved to this spot close to the river in 2012 because its quieter, used to live near the main road
Bought the plot from the ward officer (Yat Mi Yat Pha) for 100,000 kyats, built a new house
Flooding and fire are both high risks in the area, have to repair once a year
She makes and sells snacks on the main road
Have taken to repairing the street themselves
Want to come together, they’ve already done it - they donated for the road in front of the school

24 | Woman (1 month)
Pays 20000 kyats a month
Sister told her to move here

25 | Man (3 years)
Owned house 3 years right by a factory wall with industrial waste coming out
Drinks factory sanitation water when flooding

26 | Woman (3 years)
One friend in the area
Works in store in another village pork shop
Takes motorcycle taxi to work
50 mins to 20 mins depending on walking or taxi
Would like infrastructure
Has 2 kids in school

27 | Movie Woman
1 year here between both sites
Communicates for infrastructure and to make their community better
Owns house
Owns movie borrowing shop
Most people have TV

28 | Family on parallel street to Yat Mi Yat Pha
Moved here two years ago, bought plot from Yat Mi Yat Pha and built the
house
Came from the Irrawady region
Two of them live in the house (husband and wife) brother and his wife were visiting at the time - growing vegetables just outside the house
They have four children - youngest son passed away a few years ago, two daughters work in a factory downtown and live in the provided hostel, older son is a driver for a family in North Dagon, so he lives at the owner’s house, he is also a student
Husband works as a carpenter sometime, mostly can only find work downtown, which can take up to two and a half hours-has to change buses three times
Go to the market early in the morning (around 7 am) by foot, which takes about 40 minutes, return on a bicycle
There is a clinic close by, with volunteer doctors - both husband and wife have health issues
They use alum crystals to purify the water themselves for bathing
Last year, around this time, all the families on the street came together, evenly split the cost, and built a road together - it was initiated and mostly organized by an elder who lives down the road
There wasn’t much conflict during the building
The plot they have was cheap, it was all they could afford. It floods twice a month and during the rainy season, there is about a 5ft flood, road floods every time
If it gets really bad, they have to pack to leave- they go stay with their children
In the future, they want stability, want this place to be legal - would like to dig a well and distribute water

29 | Family who sells Mohinga

Family of seven- husband and wife sell mohinga in front of the house, husband also works at the market (carries loads), two children go to school, eldest daughter works in the factory and also as a freelance tailor at home- she dropped out of school after 8th grade, her mother helps her with her freelance business
Women of the house took part in renovating the school - “We ‘must’ build the school if we want our kids to be educated.”
They want to upgrade the road- the women carried concrete blocks from the main road; “If road is good, business will be good and other villagers will be happy. Transportation is a big problem”
Each family, however, worked on the road in front of their house
They don’t go out much- meet up for donations and ceremonies at the monastery

30 | Couple at end of the Street (new house... old house fall)

Live very close to river, just built a new house since their old house got washed away when the river flooded
The bund preventing this flood is broken and so the water comes into the settlement- it is the government’s responsibility to mend it, however, they are willing to help build it back
Correlations:

Establishment of industrial zones as a representation of the state’s aspiration for economic growth; industrial zone building intensification - turn to manufacturing economy - created job opportunities - pull factor

Planned residential townships to accomodate growing population; establishment of YCDC - centralized control of planning - idea of ordered growth

Targeted relocation of people (for example, evictions of middle class people who harboured student leaders) - idea of cleansing the city

Rural to urban migration in search of opportunity - the city as a space of opportunity

Centre to periphery migration/ displacement due to lower land value in periphery and existence of infrastructure due to planned residential development

2011 - intensification of development - real estate boom, sanctions were dropped, economic liberalization, wide-spread emergence of non-state
This is a compilation from various stages of work (images, Drawings, Maps) we have done on Yangon during the past three months.
LAND OWNERSHIP

How much land do religious institutions control? How is it distributed?
Who owns and how much land is allocated to social infrastructure?
Has your land faced any risk of flooding?

Who owns what land?

How much land is commercial?
Do the factory owners have any stake in the housing?
How much land is owned by the government?

MATERIAL PRACTICES

Where do religious institutions get funding from? How and to whom are these funds distributed?

Who finances the social housing projects and how affordable are they?

Is the social infrastructure affordable?

How much private/foreign investment is present in the area.

How much money is allocated to local governance?

CITIZENSHIP

Which faith do you ascribe to?
What do you rely on the religious institution for?
Who does the social infrastructure cater to?
Does it perpetuate social segregation?
How is the social infrastructure an instrument of control?
Do you have access to the River?
What do you use it for?
What was the process?
Who were involved in building the social housing?
Did some get priority over others?
Have you been evicted before?

How many people are employed? In what kind of jobs?
Does the salary match the cost of living?
How much power do local authorities have? What do they enforce?

Do RI’s get funded to maintain their grounds?
How important is the Monastery as a symbol of the Village?

How does its Location, Scale, Presence determine influence?

How important is the River in the village/in the City?

Where did you live before?
How long have you lived here?
Why did you move?

Is heritage a part of the taught/university curriculum? If so, whose heritage?

What are the physical and social remnants of the Agricultural history of the area?

What counts as heritage? How are they managed?

FINANCE

HERITAGE
Example of Connection

- Knowledge/Data/Skill
- Lower Construction Cost
- People Powered Infrastructure

Potential Connections:
1. CITY DEV FUND
2. YCDC
3. AMA
4. YTU
5. WFW
6. ACHR
7. PRIVATE CONSTRUCTION COMPANY

Housing by the People
axonometric to simulate 555 neighbourhood
This is the flood management booklet we created as a sample for the WFW during our community presentation. The booklet can act as a starting point for various disaster management and risk reduction strategies.

Other ways people have survived Floods (example booklet)

Table of Contents:

1. Survival Kit
2. Items to Bring
3. Refrigerator Box
4. Building techniques
5. Evacuation Route
6. Phone Tree Example
Survival Kit

- Place smaller items in Backpack

Items to bring

** Don't forget to take these items.**
Refrigerator Box

- Place packed flood kit in Refrigerator box.
- Put in place easily taken outside.

Building Techniques

1. Raised floor with Steps
2. Building a Loft - Keep supplies up high or easily accessible.
3. Put door in Roof with ladder for easy exit
** Techniques already exist and are practiced but can be shared widely.
Evacuation Route

1. Get survival pack and refrigerator box outside.
2. Use oar to get to high ground.
3. Find somewhere safe to wait out the rest of the flood.

Phone Tree

** A way to make sure everyone knows there is a flood coming and have time to get to safety.
This is a collection of photographs from our time in Yangon showing the various places we went to, and the various faces of the city we experienced.
“Yangon, transformation in a time of transition: City wide strategies for upgrading Forum”
11 May 2017, Secretariat House, Yangon.