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Trajectories of spatial violence
in Southeast Asian cities

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Abstract

This paper aims to reveal how urban ‘development-induced displacement’ (Koenig, 2015; Neef and Singer, 2015) shapes and perpetuates modalities of spatial violence in the context of rapidly urbanising Southeast Asia. While Southeast Asian postcolonial scholars have explored some manifestations of spatial violence such as displacement, a comprehensive regional analysis is still lacking, especially in relation to urbanisation impacts and planning. Through a comparative lens, this study looks at the urban development contexts and histories of displacement in six cities; Ho Chi Minh, Bangkok, Manila, Jakarta, Phnom Penh, and Kuala Lumpur. We aim to trace patterns of resemblance and specificities in the trajectories of spatial violence using four analytical lenses: political regimes of urbanisation, exclusionary invisibility and disenfranchisement, housing provision policies, and the regulatory repertoires of displacement. Across the studied cities, pressure for economic development and the non-recognition of informal settlements, socially, politically and spatially, has facilitated their progressive erasure from the urban fabric. Spatial violence has often been an institutionalised practice, inscribed in policies and masterplans—seen particularly in authoritarian regimes and in the context of neoliberalisation of urban governance. While condemning ‘informality’ on the surface, authorities have often used illegal/informal practices to evict communities, violating domestic and international laws. We argue that spatial violence has been repeatedly justified with arguments invoking the interest of the public, like the vision of a beautiful city, climate adaptation, and infrastructure development; while, in the absence of adequate frameworks and provisions of housing, informality is both ‘treated’ with and produced by displacement.

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We argue that spatial violence has been repeatedly justified with arguments invoking the interest of the public, like the vision of a beautiful city, climate adaptation, and infrastructure development.

01. Introduction

1.1 The violent making of space in Southeast Asia

This Working Paper aims to gain a more structural understanding of how urban development-induced displacement shapes and perpetuates modalities of spatial violence across cities in six Southeast Asian countries. While there is abundant literature on displacement and gentrification in Latin and North America, and Europe, there has been little comprehensive regional analysis of southern eastern countries. Current research on urban displacement in the region is fragmented and without a systematic account of spatial and historical processes and their relational nature. To fill such a gap, this study undertakes a comparative analysis of the urban development contexts and histories of displacement in six Southeast Asian cities, Ho Chi Minh City, Bangkok, Manila, Jakarta, Phnom Penh, and Kuala Lumpur. The study follows several intersecting and overlapping displacement trajectories generated by the pressure and expectation of economic and urban development, without the urgency to identify commonalities nor differences.

In tracing cases of urban displacement across the six cities, our study focuses on the ways in which spatial violence is operationalised in Southeast Asia to both create conditions of displaceability (Yiftachel, 2020) and to actively displace residents. The concept of spatial violence has arisen recently to describe those forms of structural and sustained violence perpetrated against specific groups of dwellers through spatial destitution, habitat destruction, and exclusion from housing rights. This form of violence is driven by multiple forces, including state desire for economic growth and urban expansion, population control, privatisation and beautification. Regulations governing land use and housing policy constitute the legal and discursive repertoires that justify and legitimise dispossession. Violence is enacted through invisibilisation of informal and unregistered residents; dispossession of land, property and claims to urban space; forced or restricted movement of dwellers; and brutal evictions.

The notion of spatial violence is grounded on the idea that violence goes well beyond physical harm, war and warfare; and that violence is sustained and generative (Blomley, 2003; Rae and Ingala, 2019, amongst others). Since Galtung's theories on structural violence (1991), much has been written on how violence can become sustained over time especially in countries in political transition (Winton, 2004) through the normalisation of violence and its co-existence with democracy.

In tracing cases of urban displacement across the six cities, our study focuses on the ways in which spatial violence is operationalised in Southeast Asia to both create conditions of displaceability and to actively displace residents.

Recently, more attention has been given to spatial practices as elements of violence (Herscher and Siddiqi, 2014) and the effect they have on rights and recognition (Lund, 2016; Rasmussen and Lund, 2017). Herscher and Siddiqi (2014) understand spatial violence as a form of social, political and economic order, that is not an interruption but rather a continuous process, traversing the political history of a place. Within this perspective, space emerges as a central agent in reproducing trauma, rather than an empty field for other processes to take place. Similarly, ‘trauma’ is not an exclusive term, but rather a dimension that includes multiple personal reactions to violence. Describing Phnom Penh’s violent expulsions, Springer (2015) argues that displacement has roots in colonial times and that subsequent regimes adopted forced resettlements to emulate colonial practices, making violence a sustained practice. During recent economic openings, more democratic governments have done very little to stop evictions, in fact they supported them in most cases.

In order to understand spatial violence, it is useful to recall Rae and Ingala’s (2019) arguments around violence and particularly that “violence does not just operate through, but is constitutive of, intersubjective relations, institutions, language, logic, and subjectivity”. This explains why the process of violence is considered ‘generative’ and simultaneously constituted by construction and destruction. With regards to the latter, Gordillo (2014) discusses the affective violence of destruction in relation to urban dispossession and displacement, arguing that destruction is constitutive of the production of space. Grounding his argument in a Marxist critique of capitalist production of the urban, Gordillo’s (2014) view is purely negative: violence cannot but be damaging and destructive, even more so when it is embodied in the collapse of the built environment. Yet violent destruction can also be the moment prior to a new set of orders; it destroys and brings on transformation in its wake. Such destructive character, such violent production, can bring about multiple transformations.

In a recent paper, Boehmer and Davies (2018) employ the notion of planned violence. Linking Fanon’s accounts of colonial violence to the practice of urban planning, they define the latter as the “violent materialisation of colonialism’s exploitative project” (p. 3). They argue that the lived experience of violence during colonisation is internalised in planning practice and remerges later in the ensemble of postcolonial plans, regulations and policies. Through a closer examination of such postcolonial planning practices, Rasmussen and Lund (2017) identify a trope that captures the continuum of planned violence and its dynamics: territorialisation. This is described as the ensemble of tactics and strategies (including displacement and resettlement) undertaken to control space and consolidate political authority. Here violence is instrumental to the destruction of an established order, but also to the creation of a new one linking back to the idea of violence as generative and opening up to a condition of possibility. Furthermore, while states are the privileged territorialising agents, they are not the only one, as there exist multiple forms of territorialisation.

Forced evictions and resettlement work with logics of territorialisation, by dislocating people to expand the territory of the city. They operate through overlapping and sustained processes of expulsion and spatial confinement in peripheries, satellite towns, and relocation sites, as the cases discussed in this report show. According to Blomley (2019) evictions can be seen as the “naked form of territorialised legal power, premised on a precarious property relation. The most effective way to enact the ownership of land” (p. 46). But also, Blomley writes:

“property space and associated territorialisation are not a given, but a product of social struggle. It emerges with and through histories of colonialism, racialisation, and capitalism. It is grounded in and productive of ongoing, violent forms of relationality, notably through the devaluing of oppressed subjects, who are granted fewer relational powers, at an extreme, becoming objects of property themselves” (p. 49).

During recent economic openings, more democratic governments have done very little to stop evictions, in fact they supported them in most cases.

Astolfo and Boano (2020) have argued that this process of territorial production that they call the ‘unintended city’ makes visible the outcome of such violent territorial relationality, or “the accumulation of capital and the reproduction of the interests of dominant powers overseeing the needs of the vast urban majority” (p. 8).

Yet, some forms of spatial violence may be less visible or overt, operating through everyday forms of dispossession and exclusion which may or may not entail evictions (Harms, 2016; Rhoads, 2020). Harms (2016) for instance argues that the growth of the majority of Asian cities and their incorporation in global networks produces several local and interrelated forms of exclusion operating through paperwork, money, violence, the environment, space, and civility. Paperwork involves urban plans, eviction notices and title deeds which can be used to claim rights, bury them in bureaucracy, erase histories of communities and land use, and demarcate exclusion. Violence is related to law enforcement and forcible exclusion, another possible feature of evictions (Hall, Hirsch and Li, 2011; Harms, 2016). Environment can also lead to eviction in the attempt to create a ‘clean and green’ city. In addition to paperwork and violence, exclusions can also be found in market mechanisms, class and labor relations which impact on access to and exclusion from urban space, and self-regulation through notions of culture and civility (Harms, 2016). Each of Harms’ modes of exclusion can simultaneously empower or disempower.

Many of Harms’ forms of exclusion in urban Asia are procedural and mundane such that they may seem to be naturally occurring processes. Rhoads (2020) has recently written on the production of ‘invisible dispossession’ in Yangon, where Muslim landowners and others without definitive proof of citizenship were dispossessed in an administrative process that severed formal ties to property and ownership claims but did not result in visible evictions. These mundane and procedural acts are also forms of spatial violence and displaceability.

Dislocating the ‘expendable’ in and around the urban territory has been said not only to be a sustained process, but also to have become the most defining characteristic of our time. In a recent paper, Oren Yiftachel (2020) coined the term ‘displaceability’ referring to urban displacement as a recursive measure implemented with “destruction, expulsions, but also the more subtle tools

such as cultural erasure, and privatisation of occupied state land [...] that have almost routinely accompanied the relentless process of urbanisation worldwide, and most notably what is known as the ‘global southeast’” (p. 154).

Displaceability is a condition that is perceived differently according to religion, class, ethnicity, and other forms of identity. The urban vulnerable are not a homogeneous group, and differentiated subjectivities play an enormous role in the process (Doshi, 2013). Much recent urban scholarship has framed forced evictions through a political economy approach stemming from Harvey’s accumulation by dispossession theories according to which the state privileges private and foreign development over the common good. This approach however, underplays the role and agency of the displaced and displaceable. Doshi advances the notion of eviction as a process of “accumulation by differentiated displacement”. The idea is that forced evictions are complex urban processes where the state and private sector are not the only agents. Indeed, Doshi argues that “redevelopment rarely unfolds in a simple top-down fashion” (p. 845).

The literature that examines political agencies of the subaltern within urban displacement processes is vast and exceeds the scope of this paper. It is worth however to recall that displacement literature is often differentiated in two main groups concerned with either geography or terminology (Hirsch, Eizenberg and Jabareen, 2020). In Latin America displacement is often discussed through the frame of gentrification (Everett, 2001; Lees, 2012; Lees, Shin, and López-Morales, 2016; Montenegro-Miranda, 2018). Similar processes have been observed in cities such as Singapore (Goldblum, 1998), Bangkok (Herzfeld, 2016), Hanoi (Gibert and Segard, 2015) and Phnom Penh (Blot, 2014; Formoso and Stock, 2016).

Along with shared characteristics, urban centres in Asia are also uniquely produced by the local economic, social and political context. Place does still matter as a physical and palpable reality in cities like Phnom Penh, Bangkok, or Yangon. Perhaps, striking a balance between the dynamic flows of capital, information, people and the contextual, localised, historical characteristics is one way to comprehend the complexity of South Asian cities (Ren and Zhou, 2014), and a way to bridge the universal and the particular in a meaningful way. It could also prevent from the risk of isolating South Asian cities into their own canon of parochial research or to focus only on Indian and Chinese mega-cities overlooking smaller more peripheral realities.

While displacement is clearly not a new line of enquiry for Southeast Asian postcolonial scholars, in contrast to work on exclusion in Southeast Asia (e.g. Hall, Hirsch and Li, 2011; Harms 2016) displacement still lacks a comprehensive regional analysis, especially in relation to urban expansion and planning. Following Simone (2020), the main reason could be that “contemporary urbanisation processes [...] necessitates heterogeneous articulations across territories that open up spaces for the reiteration of many Souths” (p. 603). While Southern epistemologies are (re)populating urban scholarship, scholars (Schindler, 2017; Ren, 2014; Bahn, 2018) have not yet reached a consensus around how to design and realise comparative studies around the many ways to understand southeastern urbanism, nor whether there is a shared empirical context amongst southern cities from where to start understanding difference.

As highlighted by Bahn (2019), significant aspects of Asian urbanity—especially smaller more peripheral realities—still escape the analysis amidst an overall disconnection between theory and practice. He advocates for a novel framework that starts from a pan-Asian ‘vocabulary of practice’ incrementally created from multiple locations so “that they may speak to each other to see if shared theoretical frameworks can emerge across these locations” (p. 641). This does not imply that all Asian cities are the same. On the contrary, it is the specific nature of their urbanism that provokes specific lines of enquiry which can be seen only by those who are looking from those cities. For Bahn, a generalised theory around Asian urbanism must start precisely from localised practices.

To respond to Bahn's call, this report wishes to examine elements that characterise Southeast Asian cities more broadly – and in particular the complex entanglements of so called transition (including criticising instances of isolation and democratisation), violent urban development and expansion (highlighting how they were and still are sustained by recurrent cycles of evictions and resettlements that we subsume under the notion of spatial violence), and overlapping ambiguous legal frameworks (pointing to the construction of land issues which ultimately legitimise more evictions and resettlements).

To consider cities today, and especially Southeast Asian cities, we must consider how violence has influenced the planning and occupation of cities, past and present, and how both wealth and scarcity are constituent material of the urban, generating intensities and voids, processes of eviction and segregation, dispossession and growth, erasure and territorialisation.

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Notes on methodology

The objective of this report is not to provide a detailed account of incidents of eviction across Southeast Asia, but rather to contextualise and reflect upon the interrelated practices of urbanisation, housing provision, and displacement, and increase understanding of the different cities' processes through comparison. This paper is a product of a broader research project where we focus our attention on the city of Yangon (Myanmar) and this regional exploration is a building block to understand the trajectories of spatial violence singularities in the regional context. That is the reason why we introduced information from Yangon in many of the synthesis tables but we do not provide further information on the city in the analysis. A comparative case study approach is used to highlight both regional similarities and contextual specificities in trajectories of spatial violence.

Intending to explore displacement as a form of spatial violence, this research utilises secondary data to extract and analyse patterns across the region of Southeast Asia. Realising that individual cases of displacement have rarely been isolated from the processes and dynamics at the city scale, the study sets out to investigate and contextualise incidents of eviction in the broader course of the cities' urban development. Displacement is therefore looked at through the lens of trajectories of urbanisation driven by different actors in different times and settings. This paper does not go in-depth into the 'technical' dimensions of displaceability, like legal definitions and frameworks, or housing finance mechanisms, however, it acknowledges that these are important lenses in the study of displacement.

Cities of different scales, sizes, and social-political backgrounds have been selected for this research, to cover a spectrum of displacement pathways and responses. The cities have varied political histories, including Dutch, British, American, and French colonial regimes with significant impacts on their legal systems, and the outlier, Bangkok, which, although greatly impacted by the

TABLE 1

Overview of selected cities. (G-KL: Greater Kuala Lumpur).
 Sources: Bangkok (NSO, 2010; Bangkok, 2020); Ho Chi Minh City (GSO, 2019; Ho Chi Minh City, 2020); Jakarta (BPS, 2010; Jakarta 2020); Kuala Lumpur (DBKL, 2020; Department of Statistics Malaysia, 2018); Metro Manila ([Philippines Statistics Authority](#), 2015); Phnom Penh (National Institute of Statistics of the Ministry of Planning, Republic of Cambodia, 2019); for the countries' urban population ([Statista](#), 2020).

	Population (persons)¹	Area size (km²)	Density (persons/km²)	Country's urban population	Capital city	Colonisation history (country/year)
Bangkok	8,305,218 Metro: 14,626,225	1,568.7 Metro: 7,762	5,300 Metro: 1,900	50.50%	Capital	No colonisation
Ho Chi Minh City	8,993,082 Metro: 21,281,639	2,061 Metro: 10,619	4,400 Metro: 2,000	35.90%	Former capital	French (1887-1954) Japanese (1940-45)
Jakarta	9,607,787 Metro: 31,652,751	661.5 Metro: 6,343	14,469 Metro: 4,990	55.99%	Capital	Dutch (1800-1949) French (1806-11) British (1811-15) Japanese (1942-45)
Kuala Lumpur	1,790,000 G-KL: 7,200,000	243 G-KL: 2,793	6,891 G-KL: 2,577	76.60%	Former capital	Portuguese (1511- 1640) Dutch (1641-1825) British (1826-1957) Japanese (1942-45)
Manila	1,780,148 Metro: 13,984,656	42.88 Metro: 619.57	41,515 Metro: 21,000	47.10%	Capital	Spanish (1571-1898) US (1898-1941) Japanese (1941-45)
Phnom Penh	2,129,371	679	5,800	23.10%	Capital	French (1863-1940) Japanese (1941-45) Vietnam War (1979-89)
Yangon	5,160,512 Region: 7,360,000	598.75 Region: 10,170	8,600 Region: 586	30.85%	Former capital	British (1852-1948) ² Japanese (1942-45)

NOTE 01

According to latest census.

colonial power dynamics in Southeast Asia which impacted its urban form (Soprizzetti, 2017), did not experience colonialism directly. The selected cities also experienced different types of urbanisation. The cases also include cities that were both latecomers to rapid urbanisation and urban development and integration into the global economic system so we can see how change in regulatory environments, economic growth, and economic systems impacted urbanisation trends, urban development, and development-induced displacement. The selection of primary cities is further justified by the observation that these are the sites where the phenomena of urbanisation and displacement are experienced with the highest intensity. Accessibility and availability of data were also integral criteria for the selection. The selection of a small number of cities unavoidably leaves out stories of displacement that might present other, unique characteristics. However, by identifying cities that experienced different political transformations, we hope to have compensated that limitation to some extent.

NOTE 02

Arakan and Tanintharyi was colonized in 1824.

In the 1930s, none of the cities in Southeast Asia had a population larger than 600,000. In the aftermath of the Japanese occupation, the breakdown of colonial control and insecurity in rural areas led to migration which started urbanisation processes.

02. Political regimes of urbanisation

NOTE 03

At that time, the term Southeast Asia was not yet coined and the region was referred to as the tropical zone south of China.

The notion of Southeast Asia started to gain recognition as a geographic space in the 1960s (Rimmel and Dick, 2018).

In the 1930s, none of the cities in Southeast Asia³ had a population larger than 600,000. In the aftermath of the Japanese occupation, the breakdown of colonial control and insecurity in rural areas led to migration which started urbanisation processes. As emerging centres of economic activity, the cities in this region continued to be “magnets of capital investment and people” (Padawangi, 2018, p. 2). The population growth and expansion of urban areas was often not matched by infrastructure development and the provision of affordable housing (e.g. McCarthy, 2003; Seo and Kwon, 2017; Shatkin, 2008; Yap and De Wandeler, 2010), which in turn resulted in uneven development in pursuit of economic growth (Harvey, 2012).

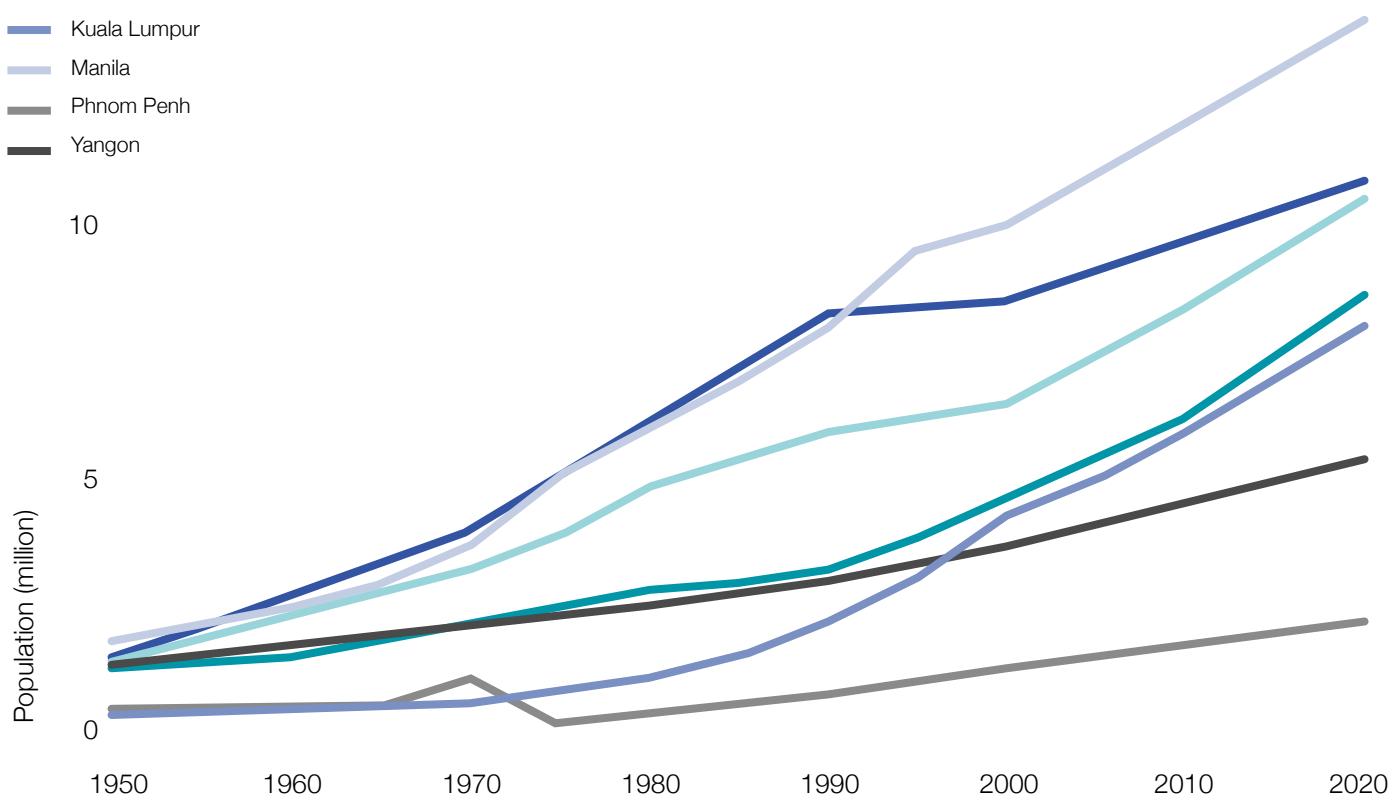
These processes were vastly shaped by the opening of land and property markets, emerging opportunities for investors in manufacturing and natural resource extraction, and the prioritisation of large-infrastructure development. Economic growth has meant at the same time that there is a rising middle and upper class which increasingly became the target groups of developers, planners, and the state (e.g. Firman, 1998; Leitner and Sheppard, 2018; Ooi, 2005; Pinches, 1994; Seo and Kwon, 2017; Shatkin 2004). All this has been taking place against the backdrop of political and social shifts in different directions, including independence from colonisation, socialist regimes, military dictatorships, periods of economic isolation, and struggles for democratisation.

FIGURE 2.1

Population growth by city since 1950.

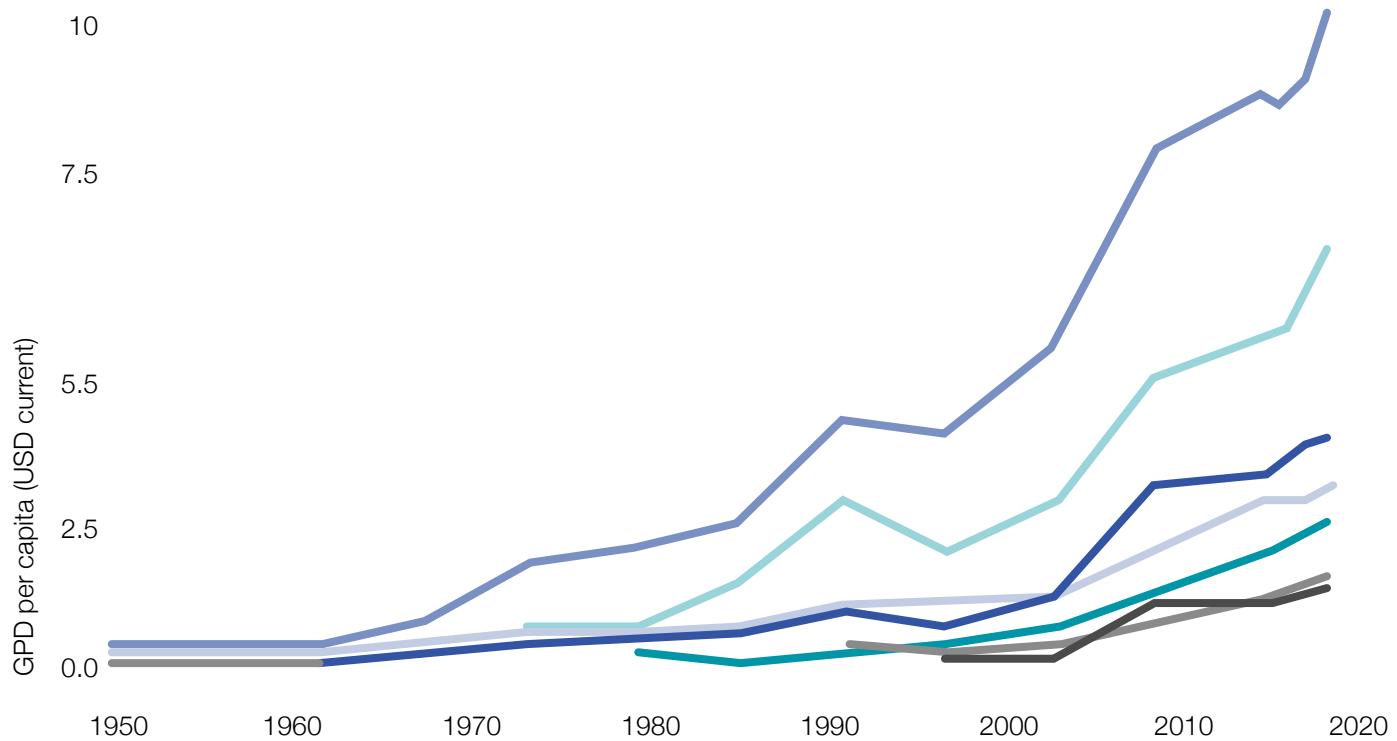
Source: [World Population Review](#), 2020.

- Bangkok
- Ho Chi Minh City
- Jakarta
- Kuala Lumpur
- Manila
- Phnom Penh
- Yangon

**FIGURE 2.2**

Growth of GDP per capita by city.

Source: [World Development Indicators](#), 2020.



NOTE 04

The experiences of economic and population growth are notably diverse across the case studies, according to their specific social, political and economic contexts. In Manila and Jakarta, for example, the population increased significantly before economic growth took place, unlike Malaysia where population growth was more clearly preceded by an economic boom in the 1970s. Another example is the different influence the Asian Financial Crisis in 1997 had on the different countries, with Thailand, Indonesia and Malaysia experiencing significant impacts, while other countries were relatively unaffected.

With economic growth and population increase going hand in hand, the demand for residential, commercial, and industrial development was high⁴. The epicentre of development activities shifted to the urban fringes, with large-scale housing projects, the establishment of new towns, and the expansion of industrial zones, which kept attracting migrant populations in search of employment (e.g. Firmian, 1998; Prasetyoadi and Danisworo, 2015; Shatkin, 2008). Despite successive expansions of the administrative boundaries of cities like Bangkok, Manila, and Ho Chi Minh City to incorporate new towns, settlements, and industrial zones, urban sprawl continued to take place beyond the new boundaries (e.g. Ooi, 2005; Seo and Kwon, 2017; Singh and Gadgil, 2017).

Urban development started being oriented towards the supply of high-end amenities, facilitated by global investments and accommodating policies (Garrido, 2019; Irawaty, 2018; Leitner and Sheppard, 2018). Driven by profit-seeking developers (either public or private), urban ‘renewal’ projects involve the construction of high-end condominiums, office buildings, hotels, shopping malls, transit infrastructure, highways, golf clubs, leisure spaces, parks, etc. For these developments to happen, the need for land in preferably strategic locations led to significant land transformations, both in the form of land-use change in the inner city, and the conversion of agricultural land to urban land in the peripheries.

In the course of these transformations, ‘informal’ settlements have experienced change as well—densification, the emergence of new settlements due to lack of adequate affordable housing, and enclosure by urban expansion.

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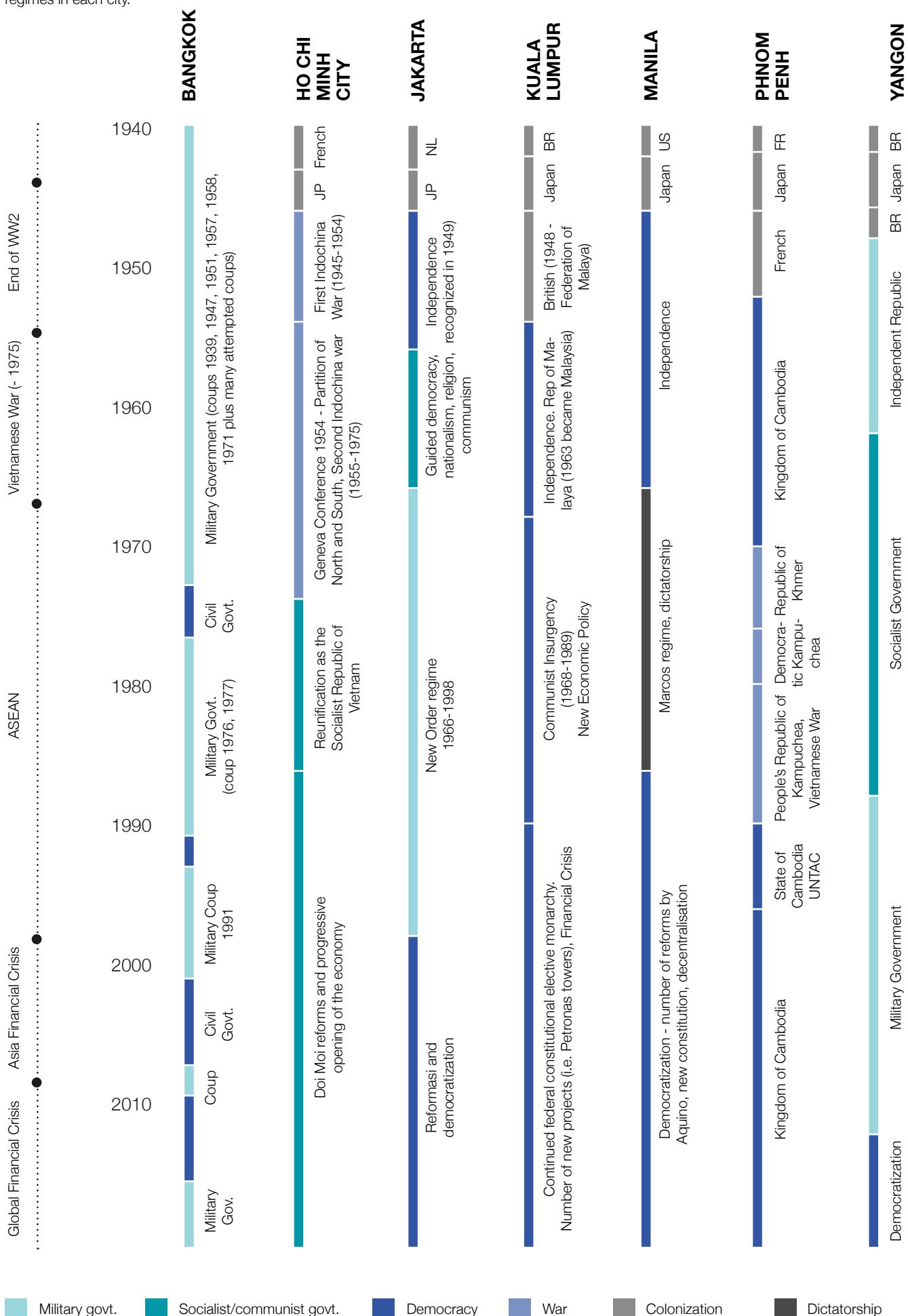
2.1 Urbanisation timelines

Our city case studies can be split into three groups—Kuala Lumpur, that underwent significant urban growth beginning in the 1950s; Jakarta, Manila and Bangkok that followed in the 1960s and 1970s, and Phnom Penh and Ho Chi Minh City that were relative latecomers to rapid urbanisation.

Malaysia became the most urbanised country in the region in the 1950s and still has the highest urban population rate at 71% among the selected countries. Kuala Lumpur experienced rapid urbanisation soon after independence. Along with Georgetown and Johor Bahru, Kuala Lumpur became the destination of migrants who found opportunities which had been left by the British and

Timeline 2.1

The evolution of political regimes in each city.



emerging new jobs (LESTARI, 1997a), however, its population was under one million in 1980. Since then, industrialisation and economic growth have encouraged a rapid population increase to 7.9 million in 2020, 83% of which took place in the suburban area of the city's federal territory (Cox, 2013). In 1999, the political capital was moved to Putrajaya, 20 km south of Kuala Lumpur, as a measure to control the growth and density. At the country level, there are 19 urban areas with a population of more than 100,000 people and seven other cities with a population of over one million, some of which used to be important port towns. This national decentralisation effort is one of the reasons why Kuala Lumpur has a comparatively smaller population and density than other Southeast Asian cities (Deuskar, Baker and Mason, 2015).

Since independence, Jakarta has been shaped by visions for a modern global city—something that has been interpreted not all too differently by its different political regimes. Under the Guided Democracy of Sukarno (1945–1966), urban development was carried out through presidential decrees rather than planning and was focused on the construction of monumental modernist buildings and the shift to car-oriented development—both of which were seen as ‘the way of the future’ (Prasetyoadi and Danisworo, 2015). The arrival of the authoritarian New Order regime with the mandate of political order and economic growth in 1966—following mass murder and the dissolution of the Indonesian Communist Party—created favourable conditions for an open market economy and foreign investment, which led to an unprecedented boom in urban development projects since the 1970s. Aggressive conversion of agricultural land to other uses started taking place in the 1980s (Firman, 1998), with estimates that one-fourth of Jakarta’s non-urban land turned urban between 1980 and 2002 (Van Voorst and Hellman, 2015). Next to the vision of the exemplary city (or perhaps as part of it), urban development has been increasingly shaped by arguments about the mitigation of Jakarta’s significant flooding problems, with a particular focus on rivers, canals, and drainage, bringing further attention to informal settlements in these areas (Dovey, Cook and Achmadi, 2019).

Along similar lines, Bangkok, which experienced an economic boom since the late 1970s, underwent rapid urbanisation, which quickly spilled over the city’s administrative boundaries and into surrounding provinces. In the absence of urban planning policies—at least until the 1990s—much of the city’s expansion took the form of urban sprawl (Ooi, 2005). This involved the ‘invasion’ and ‘erasure’ of hitherto agricultural areas and activities and the conversion of land into urban uses, notably for residential and industrial development (Sintusingha, 2006). The construction of high-end facilities and infrastructure projects have been the main drivers of Bangkok’s urban development, under the positive connotations of ‘beautification’ and ‘renewal’. The growing demand for profit-oriented development has led to speculation and increasing land prices (Astolfo, 2016; Ockey, 1997).

In the case of Manila, the city implemented several urban renewal projects to become a globally competitive city and regional hub after independence. Particularly during the Marcos regime⁵, the population doubled from 0.7 million to 1.46 million with the growth of export-oriented garment manufacturing in the 1970s which shifted to electronics in the 1980s. In the 1990s, the Philippine government announced ‘global city-region’ development as part of its economic development strategy. This increased national investment in 11 major transport projects in certain regions, including Metro Manila. As a result, urban development accelerated beyond the boundaries of Manila, and many rural areas were converted into urban uses (Shatkin, 2004). The lack of comprehensive Metro-level planning hindered the formation of coherent policies to address a number of challenges including housing and environmental management (Shatkin, 2007). After the People Power Revolution in 1986, the country promoted a free market economy and shifted to a service-based industry. However, many who did not have the necessary skills to become absorbed in the service sector, either remained in the city and shifted to the informal sector or were pushed to peri-urban areas (*ibid.*).

NOTE 05

In 1976, Marcos’ family completed a master plan which called for the nationalisation of land use, expansion of infrastructure, and development of new industrial areas and new towns to expand the development to the periphery. Some large scale infrastructure projects were initiated ahead of this plan in the early 1970s (Shatkin, 2004).

Against the backdrop of conflict, political instability, and humanitarian crisis, the urban built-up area of Ho Chi Minh City had not increased much before the late 1980s despite the growing population, leading to overcrowding. Political and economic reforms in 1986, known as Doi Moi, marked the country's transition to a "socialist-oriented market economy" (Seo and Kwon, 2017, p. 1) and decentralisation (Coit, 1998). The reforms also paved the way for foreign direct investment into the country, contributing to unprecedented economic growth, and permitted the inflow of migrants to the city (Boothroyd and Nam, 2000), leading to annual population growth of around 3.5% since the 1990s. Land reforms that allowed for the possession and transfer of land use rights in 1991 fuelled speculation and the acceleration of residential and industrial development—even without cohesive plans in place (Boothroyd and Nam, 2000; Waibel et al., 2007). By the early 2000s new urban and suburban districts had been incorporated into the city's administrative boundaries, primarily to enclose newly established industrial zones in hitherto peripheral areas of Ho Chi Minh City (Waibel et al., 2007).

Phnom Penh's urbanisation and entrance into the global land market happened even later, not until the 1990s. From 1979 to 1989, during the socialist period of Vietnamese occupation, people started to return to the city from the countryside and settle into the houses that had been evacuated from their residents under the Khmer Rouge. There were more than 750,000 migrant workers, refugees, and retired soldiers who settled in Phnom Penh (Fallavier, 2002). Following 1989, the Cambodian government tried to transform its policies towards a market economy, including by gradually opening land to the market (Collins 2016). The 1993 Constitution reintroduced private land ownership. Simultaneously, the government redistributed collective farmland to private bidders (Shatkin, 1998). This accelerated both land transactions and migration back to Phnom Penh due to increased opportunities to sell newly obtained land titles. Particularly, this practice was popular among female-headed households, the elderly, and the poor in general who were looking for better economic opportunities (*ibid*).

In the early stages of the urbanisation, development had been mostly dictated through the state rather than planning professionals [...]. In most cases, urban planning was shaped by visions of a beautiful, clean, and modern city. Some followed 'role model' cities like Singapore, Shanghai, and Hong Kong.

2.2 Capturing of elite interests in urban development

In the early stages of the urbanisation, development had been mostly dictated through the state rather than planning professionals—whether it was about the implementation of prestigious projects, like in Jakarta and Manila (Ortega, 2016; Prasetyoadi and Danisworo, 2015), or as part of population control measures, like in Kuala Lumpur (Prasad, Abood and Vidal, 2017). Some cities did not have comprehensive urban planning tools or master plans for a long time (e.g. Astolfo, 2016; Calderson et al., 2019), and even where plans were in place, they would either not be followed, or they would adhere to narrow understandings of 'urban planning'. In most cases, urban planning was shaped by visions of a beautiful, clean, and modern city. Some followed 'role model' cities like Singapore, Shanghai, and Hong Kong (Harms, 2013; Grant, 2014; Padawangi, 2019; Shatkin, 2008). These visions and plans have been often led by the private sector particularly where the state has weak capacity and interest in planning.

In the case of Metro Manila, the commodification of land and elite-led planning and development had already started during the Spanish rule, and it had contributed to creating economically poor and wealthy classes. Such practices have been used by political leaders to legitimise their rule by asserting their urban visions at each historical juncture (Calderson et al, 2019; Porio, 2009). After the 1990s, the decentralised structure of its governance has enabled private developers and Manila elite to promote their own brands as ‘globally competitive investment’ under the lack of central planning by the authorities (Calderson et al., 2019; Ortega 2016).

In the 1990s, the major urban development projects in Phnom Penh were implemented by international aid programs to recover from the 20 years of conflict. However, as Cambodia slowly gained political stability, a steep rise in private investments in properties without infrastructure could be observed. Dozens of real estate projects and satellite town developments were created for the increasing housing demands of expatriates and Cambodian elites. The government was in a rush to catch up with the neoliberal economy. Despite the release of master plans such as the Land Use Master Plan of Phnom Penh City 2035 (Halim, 2016), the trajectories of the urbanscape have been largely dominated by the powerful private sectors and Cambodian political tycoons(Shatkin, 2008). Their plan, including imaginative proposals by the developers, often followed the (at times already outdated) trajectories of neighbouring cities such as Bangkok, Hanoi, or Seoul (*ibid*).

In post-Suharto Indonesia, “continuity in [the country’s] political and business leadership” had a big influence on the direction of reforms (Bunnell and Miller, 2011, p. 40). As Leitner and Sheppard (2018) point out, spatial planning became “increasingly ambiguous and manipulable”, especially by large development conglomerates. In Jakarta, some 120,000 hectares of land in the periphery of the city had been issued to private developers already by 1997—vastly shaping the trajectory of the city with the creation of new towns, large-scale housing projects for middle and upper classes, and the ‘mandatory’ golf courses to complement the image of the metropolis (Firman, 1998). Around the same time, the increase in land prices made coastal land reclamation projects attractive to developers and local government officials, despite vocalised concerns over the environmental impact of such an intervention and its contribution to increased flood risk (*ibid*).

The same goes for Ho Chi Minh City, where, in the words of Harms (2019, p. 53), the city’s development is “plagued by [...] agendas that facilitate the capture of urban development by a series of well-connected elites driven by rampant real-estate speculation.” The political and economic reforms allowed the introduction of local private companies and, increasingly, transnational corporations into the domain of urban development (Waibel et al., 2007). Notwithstanding the benefits of the economic growth for many citizens, the increasingly profit-driven development of the city and its peripheries is creating spatial fragmentation and widens social inequalities (*ibid*).

Table 2.1

Landscapes of urban development and planning across the studied cities.

Sources: Bangkok (Astolfo, 2016; Boonyabancha, 1983; [City Planning Department](#), n.d.; Moore, 2018); Ho Chi Minh City (Boothroyd and Nam, 2000; Coit, 1998; Harms, 2012; Harms, 2013; Huynh and Nguyen, 2019; Waibel et al, 2007); Jakarta (Firman and Fahmi, 2017; Herlambang et al., 2019; [JICA](#), 2012; Leitner and Sheppard, 2018; Rukmana, 2018; Rustiadi et al., 2015); Kuala Lumpur ([LESTARI](#), 1997a; Sufian and Mohamad, 2009); Manila (Shatkin 2004; 2007; 2008); Phnom Penh ([ACHR](#), 2014; Mgbako, 2010; Shatkin, 2008); Yangon (DUHD, 2019; Eleven Myanmar, 2020; JICA, 2018; World Bank, 2019).

	Drivers of urbanization	Master plans	Private sector involvement
Bangkok	Rural-urban migration driven by economic growth in BKK; moments of political stability	The Bangkok Comprehensive Plan (1992, 1999, 2006, 2013) Bangkok; other thematic master plans e.g. on climate change and mass rapid transit	Private developers have been increasingly ‘encouraged’ to take on (re)development projects; leisure facilities, housing, mixed-use developments on public land (such as Klong Toey), riverside ‘rehabilitation’, transport networks, ports etc.
Ho Chi Minh City	Fleeing conflict; unrestricted migration; structural reforms; economic growth; FDI	Several master plans since French colonisation period; MP for 2025 by Prime Minister, amended and approved by People’s Committee and extended vision to 2045	Entry of the private sector in the supply of affordable housing since Doi Moi reforms. At the same time, ‘urban renewal’ projects, for example, Thu Thiem New Urban Zone, developed by large national and international companies and planned by US companies.
Jakarta	Rural-urban migration; economic growth; open market economy and FDI under New Order	Several master plans since the 1950s (often with involvement of Dutch consultants); Jabodetabek MPA Strategic Plan 2030 (JICA)	Since decentralisation, spatial planning has been ‘manipulated’ by large conglomerates that are affiliated with authorities; Ring of production sites in core and peri-urban areas, facilitated by FDI/domestic investment (superblocks, industrial zones, etc).
Kuala Lumpur	Industrialisation; economic growth; control of migrants for particular area/industry development	KL structural plan by DBKL (1984, 2001, 2020, 2040) and other thematic master plans such as transport, greens.	Area development, transport, infrastructure; Some private sectors are largely related to the government such as the KLCC project. New projects in suburban areas were largely led by private sectors such as KILA airport, new capital.
Manila	Industrialisation; economic migrants; urban sprawl; return of overseas Filipino workers	No comprehensive master plan for a while. JICA developed the Metro Manila Dream Plan with the National Economic and Development Authority in 2014, focusing on transport. Others by private sectors.	The decentralised structure has enabled private developers to promote their own brands. The city’s vision has been created and led by the private sector. It has induced displacement, gentrification e.g. Quezon City Business district.
Phnom Penh	Return of evacuated population and migrants after Khmer Rouge; open market economy	No comprehensive master plan. There is a Master Plan on Land Use 2035, National Urban Development Strategy Framework developed by the government in 2015.	The master plans or other planning instruments by the authority have often been ignored; instead, the urban landscape is largely dominated by the powerful private sectors and Cambodian political elite e.g. Borei Keila.
Yangon	Rural-urban migrants due to economic, environmental, political situations; open market economy	Several master plans since the colonial period; in 2012, JICA started to support YRG and YCDC in developing masterplan -not clear how much power it has (2012 -2018)	DUHD plans to provide 80% of their public housing by PPP or private sector. Some large-scale development projects are planned, for which land is reserved (e.g. Amata in Dagon Seikkan and South Dagon, New Yangon City).

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migrant populations,
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03. Exclusionary invisibility and disenfranchi- sement

Roy (2013) describes the process of integration of the urban poor into the city as “differentiated inclusion” (p. 495). More often than not, migrant populations, urban poor, non-citizens, etc. are not accounted for in urban development plans. Often they are not even fully recognised as citizens in the first place (due to lack of civil documentation or formal address), and their residence, while visible, is often not recorded, meaning their settlements are perceived more or less as ‘blank’ areas by planners, developers and authorities (e.g. Harjoko, 2004; Rhoads 2020).

In his review of urban space and exclusion in Asia, Harms (2016a) focuses on six modes of exclusion: paperwork, money, violence, environment, space, and civility. In this section, we explore the intersecting exclusionary invisibility of the urban poor in Southeast Asia based on one of Harms’ (2016a) modes, paperwork, or documents. Informal settlements, while known and visible to urban residents and policymakers, remain undocumented on government maps and in land records, producing two forms of exclusion. The first being that their presence and claims are not recorded, rendering them invisible as stakeholders when it comes to discussions over the development of their settlements. Secondly, due to such non-recording (cf. Kalir and van Schendel, 2017), they do not have a legal residence or address, rendering them ineligible for registration and invisible in the eyes of government programs. The lack of civil documentation afforded to urban poor residents in informal settlements is a form of political marginalisation produced through their states’ intentional desire not to recognise these populations by acts of non-recording (Kalir and van Schendel, 2017). They are doubly invisible through both spatial and civil non-recording, and thus, doubly marginalised.

Table 3.1

Estimated population of informal settlements by city according to the most recent records.⁶

Sources: Bangkok ([Strategy and Evaluation Department, BMA, 2015](#)); Ho Chi Minh City ([Tran D, 2018](#)); Jakarta (UPC estimation in McCarthy, 2003); Kuala Lumpur ([DBKL, 2020](#)); Manila ([Calderson et al., 2019](#)); Phnom Penh ([MPP, 2012](#)); Yangon ([UN-Habitat, 2017](#)).

	Estimated IFS population	Official data availability	Other data availability
Bangkok	2.1 million (36.8%) 2015 (City)	NHA Survey 1981, 2000; Community Development Division, Social Development Dept.	Some CBO records, academic articles, news articles (no comprehensive records)
Ho Chi Minh City	20,000+ (<1%) (2018)	Unknown (Department of Construction?)	Sporadic references in academic articles, news articles (no comprehensive records)
Jakarta	20-25% kampung dwellers and 4-5% riverbank squatters (2003)	Unknown (National Land Agency?)	Urban Poor Consortium (UPC), Legal Aid Institute (LBH), other CBOs, academic articles
Kuala Lumpur	129,130 (3.5%) Federal territory of KL (1998)	DBKL 1980, 1992, 1998	CBOs archives (no comprehensive records)
Manila	4.7 million (37.0%), Metro Manila (2018)	HUDCC 2014	NGOs and CBOs records, news articles (no comprehensive records)
Phnom Penh	250,000 (15-20%) (2012)	MPP 2012 with the support of UN agency	Local NGO (STT) has rich data
Yangon	475,000 (15%) Yangon City, 2017	YRG and YCDC use the data from UN-Habitat. Some counting by GAD and Housing Dept. in the past.	Some academic articles, but not comprehensive record

NOTE 06

The table is based on available data and literature. The table shows data availability and the population size of informal settlements although the number can vary from different sources due to the difficulty to capture and lack of recognition.

NOTE 07

By 2005, 1.9 million of HCMC's population were migrants from rural areas, who generally had very low house ownership rates (under 9%) and lived mostly in rented houses and informal settlements along the canals or on farmland (Seo and Kwon, 2017). In Jakarta, there were 1.4 million migrants by 2010, while the surrounding areas (Bodetabek) had an additional 2.6 million migrants (Rustiadi et al., 2015).

3.1 (Re)production of informal settlements

Urban development in our case study cities has proceeded in lock-step with the production, maintenance, and expansion of informal settlements. In Kuala Lumpur, migrants were deliberately brought to the city by the government as labour for urban and industrial development since the colonial period. In Bangkok, Jakarta, Ho Chi Minh City, and Manila, rural-urban migrants arrived in search of employment and opportunities.⁷ In Phnom Penh, when refugees and migrants returned to the city after the Khmer Rouge regime, most did not have access to formal housing and ended up squatting in underdeveloped areas without proper infrastructure, or occupying vacant buildings (Clerc, 2016; Fallavier, 2002). In many cities, the increasing land value and urban transformations have led not only newly arrived low-income migrants but also long-term residents from diverse social and educational backgrounds to settle in informal settlements (e.g. Gerbeaud, 2018).

In Jakarta, long before the state started implementing any affordable housing programs, self-built settlements covered the need for shelter of low-income populations. The so-called kampungs are unplanned settlements with diversity in the conditions of their built environment and their time of origin (Kusno, 2013; Leitner and Sheppard, 2018). Kampungs—the Indonesian term for settlement, often used synonymously with the term for ‘village’—frequently date back to the colonial era, before the urbanisation of Jakarta had picked up, and were progressively enclosed in the city as urban development expanded (Harjoko, 2004).



Figure 3.1

Kampung settlements have been increasingly squeezed by high-rise developments.

Source: Aprillio Akbar Photojournalist
www.antarafoto.com
www.aprillioakbarwork.wordpress.com

As the demand for affordable housing increased, existing kampungs became denser, and new kampungs emerged on private or public lands (Dovey, Cook and Achmadi, 2019).

In Ho Chi Minh City, slums started forming during the 1960s and 1970s to fill the gaps in the housing supply, especially along the city's rivers (Nguyen et al., 2016). By 1998, there were estimates of 67,000 slum dwellings in Ho Chi Minh City (Coit, 1998), while more recent data place that number at 24,000 river-side households, and likely many more inner-city settlements (Ahmed, Sager and Cuong, 2010). The state's attitude towards informal settlements had been initially relatively relaxed, but since the economic restructuring in the late 1980s, operations started taking place to evict them (Boothroyd and Nam, 2000), following aspirations for a "vibrant economic metropolis" (Harms, 2019, p. 53) and "synchronisation" (Tran, 2019, p. 252).

In Bangkok, informal settlements started clustering around areas of employment, and along waterways and railway tracks, and developed on both private and public lands—usually with some verbal agreement and/or payment of rent/bribe to the landlord (Sheng and Leeruttanawisut, 2016; Yap and De Wandeler, 2010). However, such arrangements became more precarious as the scarcity of urban land increased its value, and both public and private landlords were tempted to make profits off of their holdings (*ibid*). The number of informal settlements continued to increase, both in the city and the surrounding provinces in the 1990s, although progressively slums in inner-city areas started being replaced by other urban functions, only to reappear in larger numbers in Bangkok's peripheries (Sheng and Leeruttanawisut, 2016; Viratkapan and Perera, 2006).

In Metro Manila, slum populations had been referred to as 'squatters' since the Spanish colonial period. Before the 1960s, the largest concentration of informal settlements was in the Tondo Foreshore area, in the centre of the Metro Manila region. By the mid-1960s, there was a growing squatter presence in the suburbs, as vacant land in the inner city became less, although they continued to exist interspersed in the city (Garrido, 2019). After democratisation, the economic opportunities attracted further migrants from the rural areas. The ratio of the informal population has been increasing from 25% in 1984 (Ramos-Jimenez, Chiong-Javier, and Sevilla, 1986) to 37% in 2018 (Calderson et al., 2019)⁸.

NOTE 08

It is noted that the data sources are different and the enumeration methodologies might not be the same between these two studies.

In Kuala Lumpur, the origin of squatters can be traced back to land policy. Before British colonisation, the cultivation of vacant land was not illegal. This originated from Islamic customary law (Kader, 2011; Sufian and Mohamad,

NOTE 09

Torrens system is a land registration and land transfer system. It was aimed to increase certainty of land title and simplify the process involving land. The system originated in Australia and was introduced in many British colonies.

2009). After the Torrens System⁹—a land registration and transfer system—was introduced in the 1870s, such practice became technically illegal although rarely prosecuted (LESTARI, 1997b). Later, this legal condition was used to target certain populations, particularly of Chinese origin, to combat the communist insurgency in the 1950s-1960s. Next to this deliberate ‘production’ of squatters, the arrival of migrants from rural areas led to the expansion and population increase of kampungs due to the shortage of housing options.

NOTE 10

The priorities were supposed to be given to: widows with children, families, single women, older followed by younger couples, bachelors (Kolnberger, 2015).

In Phnom Penh, squatters emerged in the 1980s as refugees who were repatriated from the Khmer Rouge camps, migrant workers, and retired soldiers from rural areas. Although a quarter of the buildings were destroyed after the civil war, there were accommodations for these people. The redistribution of the housing stock followed a specific social pattern. As a policy, there were two principles for prioritisation. One was in chronological order (first in, first served) and another was by ranking social needs¹⁰. However, in reality, these were not strictly followed. Rather, it had been influenced by political and economic power, with ‘flexible’ interpretations, manipulations, and bribes from both sides. Spatially, the resettlement served to separate the common people from the political elites by ranks, leading to segregation (Kolnberger, 2015). Many of the repatriates could not access housing through formal channels, and they ended up squatting in underdeveloped areas without proper infrastructure or occupying vacant buildings and spaces including cemeteries and cinema halls (Clerc, 2019). As the city kept growing in the 1990s, there were more migrants from rural areas looking for employment, and/or utilising the opportunities to sell the land in their original area (*ibid*). According to a survey by the Municipality of Phnom Penh, there are around 250,000 informal settlers—equivalent to approximately 15% of the overall urban population (MPP, 2012), or 20% according to Sahmakum Teang Tnaut (STT), a local NGO in Cambodia (2016a).

3.2 Overlapping invisibilities

Spatial exclusion of informal settlements

Informal dwellers are faced with a series of systemic obstacles that contribute to their non-recognition based on their spatial exclusion. The clash between customary and certified rights, the unclear, lengthy, and expensive bureaucratic procedures for formalisation, the unsystematic registration and overlapping claims over land create a complex landscape where the acquisition of land use rights becomes an effectively inaccessible process for the urban poor (e.g. Hellman, 2018, HRW, 2006). Where dwellers do not have corresponding paperwork in the form of licenses, titles, deeds, or leases, they may find their land tendered to a private company. It shall be noted, however, that this depends on whether residents hold other forms of recognition and cannot be determined based on tenure status alone (Lund, 2011; Sikor and Lund, 2009).

Nonetheless, this non-recognition frequently constitutes an intentional exclusion that is subtly or directly operationalised to reinforce the status quo. Thus, maintaining informal settlements through what Yiftachel (2009, p. 92) calls a “politics of un-recognition” accompanied by marginalising indifference.” This is coupled with the longstanding stigmatisation of informal settlements and the rejection of organic forms of development as “backward” (Harms, 2019) and hubs of “social evils” (Harms, 2012, p. 735), rendering their displacement from the city as unavoidable, or even necessary. In Jakarta, for example, the conditions of tenure in kampungs are diverse, ranging from the possession of varying land rights to squatting (Leitner and Sheppard, 2018). However, a regulation from 1991, that imposed a certain setback from the river, reinforced the perception of those residing on the riverbanks as squatters, even if the regulation did not apply to already existing buildings (Hellman, 2018; Van Voorst and Hellman, 2015).

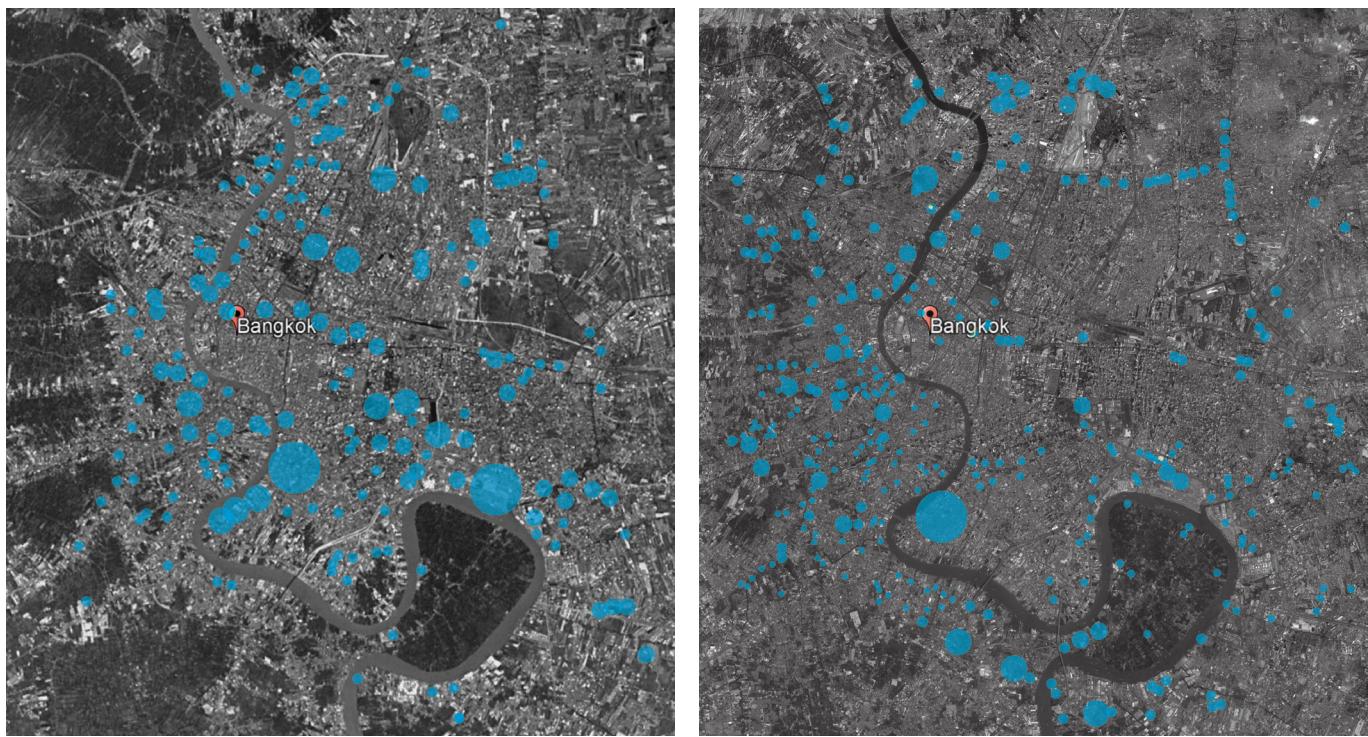


Figure 3.2

(Left) Map of slum settlements in the early 1980s. Produced by author.

Source: Boonyabancha, 1983; Google Earth © 2020 Maxar Technologies

Figure 3.3

(Right) Locations of informal settlements in 2016. Produced by author.

Source: Kamalipour, 2016; Google Earth © 2020 Maxar Technologies.

These attitudes produce a vicious circle as inaccessibility of secure housing pushes people to dwell where they can, while the denial of pathways to tenure and residency leaves residents no incentive for in-situ upgrading of their neighbourhoods, meaning their conditions will remain poor. At the same time, these very living conditions of informal settlements are used by policymakers as a stick to beat the dwellers with and refuse access to urban services and household registration (e.g. Sheng and Leeruttanawisut, 2016).

In some cases, like Bangkok and Ho Chi Minh City, this nonrecognition has facilitated the peripheralisation of informal settlements, as the scarcity of land and affordable housing led the urban poor to less-developed outer-city areas. For example, in Ho Chi Minh City, a ‘decompression’ of inner-city districts took place during the 1990s, as residential areas (primarily of low-income people) were gradually replaced with business towers and commercial uses (Waibel et al., 2007). The same is observed in Jakarta, where in the period 1984–1994 the population of Central Jakarta decreased by 15% as elite development accelerated (Rustiadi et al., 2015). Similarly, the Slum Eviction Survey conducted by the Thai National Housing Authority (NHA) in the early 1980s identified that slums were mostly located in central areas of the city and formed larger clusters (Boonyabancha, 1983), while more recent spatial analysis reveals a ‘restructuring’ of informal settlements, involving their erasure from inner-city areas and their emergence alongside major infrastructures in the urban fringe, following the concentric expansion of the city (Kamalipour, 2016). Klong Toey is the only large settlement that has not been erased, although it has been earmarked for development for decades and its relocation is set for 2020.¹¹

NOTE 11

At the time of writing, the eviction has not taken place yet.

While there is growing marginalisation of slum dwellers to the peripheries, either produced by resettlement or migration, urban poor populations are still strongly observed in the central part of Metro Manila, where many of them are working in precarious informal work. Garrido (2019) describes the city’s interspersed condition as a ‘patchwork city’ through his ethnographic study. This spatial pattern is the result of the interdependence of economic relationships between different classes. It further intensifies the economic identity by each class, proximity, and everyday discrimination towards squatter populations (*ibid*).

The spatial exclusion of informal settlements is also compounded by the environmental risks that the urban poor are exposed to due to the often precarious locations of their settlements. Phnom Penh, for example, was originally surrounded by wetlands, most of which were destroyed to develop properties or for residential use. As a result, the low land increased flooding risk which can directly cause massive damage to the poor (Flower, Fortnam and Kol, 2018). There is scarce support and infrastructural development towards this issue. At the same time, disaster risk is also used as a justification for forced relocation, as is evidenced in the case of Jakarta, where, over the last decade, flood mitigation policies and programs have facilitated the active clearance of riverbanks from settlements, and the widening and dredging of parts of the canal (Van Voorst and Hellman, 2015).

Urban citizenship and the unrecorded

In addition to their spatial exclusion which leads to official invisibility, informal settlers experience exclusion from civic, political, and social life in multiple ways. This includes marginalisation and segregation by class and profession; lack of civil documentation due to their status as migrants or lack of registered address; and a general lack of recognition by state actors. In the context of Jakarta, for example, the acquisition of land use rights is not only a matter of ‘legal vs illegal’ tenure status but extends to the recognition of kampung dwellers as citizens with legal rights through recognition of residency (Hellman, 2018). In Ho Chi Minh City, the residence registration with local authorities determines whether or not people are eligible for urban services, can possess land use rights, access social assistance and formal banking systems—something that largely impacts rural migrants, and to a lesser extent intra-city migrants, who are often unable to provide the necessary registration documentation timely (Castiglioni, Dewaele and Vinh, 2010).

The social and political marginalisation of informal dwellers has taken different forms across cities and over time. In some cases, they were assigned specific jobs such as garbage collection, drainage cleaning, construction in the case of Manila, and work in plantations¹² and the railway construction in Kuala Lumpur. Such rigid socio-economic structures that bind informal dwellers to particular (low-paying and exploitative) industries and forms of employment facilitated further stigmatisation and class structure (Garrido, 2019). There were some instances in which discourses of ‘race’ and ‘ethnicity’ have determined informal dwellers’ citizenship. In the case of Borei Keila in Phnom Penh, Boeung Kak residents emphasised the fact that they are Khmer and thus they have the right to settle properly. In Kuala Lumpur, the policy in the 1960s-70s strategically prevented residents of Chinese origin from possessing land rights.

Likewise, squatters were not recognised as citizens in Phnom Penh until 1999, when the Municipality of Phnom Penh (MPP), UN-Habitat, and the Asian Coalition for Housing Rights (ACHR) developed the Urban Poverty Reduction Strategy, aiming to increase access to social and physical infrastructure and political participation among the urban poor. Notably, the strategy was a requirement of the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund to qualify for debt relief (Amnesty International, 2008). However, it was only known by the municipal government and not by the majority of civil servants. In addition, the strategy remained just as a document and not reflected in the practice (Fallavier, 2002).

In the aggregate, we see yet another vicious circle in which the lack of civil documentation (based on ethnicity, migration status, etc.) prevents access to any form of housing through formal channels, while on the other hand, the lack of a formal address or tenure prevents people from claiming their civil rights. Having said that, it is important to acknowledge that there are many more interlinked nuances to this invisibility, and sporadic cases of clientelism (Mitlin, 2014) between dwellers and authorities were observed as well.

NOTE 12
The colonial government brought and allocated certain non-Malay races to their familiar industry (i.e. tin industry for Chinese, rubber plantation for Tamil), this legacy continued (LESTARI, 1997a).

Clientelism and selective inclusion

Patron-client relationships have been seen either in more individualised forms, such as personal ties to certain political figures and local leaders and/or, increasingly, in the context of democratisation and the progressive recognition of the urban poor as an important voting bloc.

In Manila, the 1991 Local Governance Code of the Philippines, a framework of a highly decentralised system, facilitated client relationships between informal dwellers and local authorities. Particularly, it was used during the election period. The local authorities often supported the urban poor communities by saying that they would prevent eviction. However, such statements were not realised since authorities often changed their attitude after the election. Meanwhile, at the state level, extra-parliament oppositional bodies were invited to the discussion tables, but these were only represented as contestation (Hutchison, 2007).

The democratisation of Indonesia has seen an important shift in the ‘bargaining power’ of the urban poor. The fall of the New Order regime and the transition to more liberal reforms brought changes also in the treatment of kampungs and occasionally prompted local government authorities to enter into negotiations with them, and commit to certain political decisions—leading to a decline in the number and frequency of evictions, at least during the early 2000s (Padawangi, 2019; Wilson, 2019). Arguably, this can be attributed to their recognition as an important voting bloc under the democratic system (Dovey, Cook and Achmadi, 2019). However, this must be viewed also against the neoliberalization of urban governance, in which such negotiations with the urban poor often merely serve “to reframe their participation and agency in ways that do not disrupt broader power relations” (Wilson, 2019, p. 99). In other words, such clientelistic relationships have occasionally prevented the urban poor from taking oppositional actions against the local authorities, in the hopes that the promises made to them would be kept.

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Until the 1970s, the primary mode of state housing provision in the majority of the cities, particularly those with socialist or left-leaning governments, was public housing for civil servants.

04. Housing provision policies

4.1 Public housing

Until the 1970s, the primary mode of state housing provision in the majority of the cities, particularly those with socialist or left-leaning governments, was public housing for civil servants (Coit, 1998; Sufian and Mohamad, 2009). This is particularly visible in Ho Chi Minh City prior to the 1990s, Jakarta prior to the 1970s, and Kuala Lumpur prior to the 1960s. The 1970s saw the establishment of Housing Agencies and the first more comprehensive programs (e.g. Chiu, 1984; Salim, 2014; Hutchison, 2007), but by the mid-1980s/1990s we begin to see the withdrawal of the state and deregulation of the housing sector, for a variety of reasons, including the expense of heavy subsidies, the growing urban poor population, the lack of political will, and the move to profit-oriented urban development (e.g. Irawaty, 2018; Shatkin, 2008; Sheng and Leeruttanawisut, 2016; Yap and De Wandeler, 2010).

In Bangkok, the proliferation of slums during the 1960s and the recognition of housing as an urgent priority led to the establishment of the NHA in 1973 (Chiu, 1984). The NHA was conceived as the main provider of public housing, initially aiming to subsidise the construction of rental apartments, which, however, soon proved unaffordable to the government against the increasing population of the urban poor (Chiu, 1984; Sheng and Leeruttanawisut, 2016; Yap and De Wandeler, 2010). Under pressure from international donors, the NHA implemented to a smaller extent some arguably short-lived sites-and-services and upgrading programs (*ibid*).

In Jakarta in the 1950s and 1960s, the main mode of housing production for the poor was the construction of rusunawa (social housing complexes) (Irawaty, 2018). The establishment of the NHA and the National Corporation for the Development of Housing (Perumnas) in 1974 facilitated the construction of public housing through private developers on public lands and the distribution of housing loans (Rukmana, 2018). Yet the supply of low-cost housing was nowhere near the numerical demand and decreased rapidly since the financial crisis (HRW, 2006; Irawaty, 2018).



Figure 4.1

Informal housing slated to be replaced with a ring dike in District Four of Ho Chi Minh City, with new construction in the background.

Source: Lizzie Yarina, originally published in *Places Journal*, 2018.

NOTE 13

For example, Sites and Services Scheme in 1970s, regularisation of land tenure in settlement in 1980s, establishment of Squatter Control and Resettlement Unit.

NOTE 14

According to the Department of Statistics Malaysia (2019), the median monthly household income of B40 is below RM 4,849. Within B40, the lowest group's (B1) income is estimated as less than RM 2,500. Assuming that 30% of the monthly income can be spent for housing, B40 class will need to spend at least 17 years to pay back whereas B1 class will take at least 33 years to buy an affordable home which costs RM 300,000. Although the price became much lower than before and other properties in KL, it is still challenging to invest this large amount for a long time for the low income groups.

In Ho Chi Minh City, the provision of affordable housing became one of the main challenges for the city. Post-war, the government's approach to housing followed the Soviet model, with the state-produced supply targeting civil servants and workers, mostly through the construction of high-rise buildings and rowhouses (Coit, 1998). Commercial development of housing was in fact not stipulated under Vietnamese law (Seo and Kwon, 2017). This heavily subsidised system, in which rents were extremely low, proved eventually unsustainable, and the buildings were poorly maintained (Ahmed, Sager and Cuong, 2010; Coit, 1998).

In Kuala Lumpur, housing provision has been operated by the government since the colonial period as a way to clear squatter settlements and control the population of migrant workers. Various programs and institutions were established with time, the majority of which involved forced relocations. From the 1970s, the City Hall introduced various programs¹³ related to housing. However, the city found these were unsustainable from an economic perspective. In the 1980s, the government further promoted the privatisation of squatter redevelopment schemes. This was not sustainable since many urban poor could not afford bank loans offered by the private sector. In the 2000s, the government became a key player in the low-cost housing provision, leaving medium to high-cost housing to the private sector (Sufian and Mohamed, 2009). The updated National Housing Policy 2018-2025 strictly affirmed the focus on the bottom 40% (B40) group, such as rent-to-own schemes, and price regulation of affordable homes up to RM 300,000 which equals to approx. USD 68,700¹⁴ (Thiagarajan, 2019).

NOTE 15

The new constitution explicitly stipulated issues related to urban and rural poverty alleviation, participation, the role of people's participation, conditions of eviction, the roles of public, private and civil-society sectors in housing and infrastructure delivery (Hutchison, 2007; Shatkin 1997).

The housing policy climate in the Philippines has gradually shifted from pro-eviction to affordable housing provision with increased privatisation. Although there are series of pro-poor, pro-community policies after the late 1980s, such as the new constitution in 1987¹⁵, the Community Mortgage Program in 1990, the Comprehensive and Integrated Shelter Financing Act in 1992, and the Urban Development Housing Act in 1995, the reality is largely influenced by capital-oriented ideas by powerful private developers with incentives for local authorities (Shatkin, 2007). This was also facilitated by neoliberal restructuring under President Aquino. The Housing and Urban Development Coordinating Council (HUDCC) operated to coordinate between state and private sectors. Overall, the government defined itself as an 'enabler' or 'facilitator' for housing, which marked the neoliberal turn in Philippines' housing policy (Ortega, 2016). The government started to involve NGOs and CBOs in the process of housing provision after the new constitution, marking a small achievement towards a more inclusive approach, however, without changing the broader power dynamics (Hutchison, 2007).

In Phnom Penh, the housing market is largely led by the private sector. This is rooted in the sudden demands to provide for the United Nations Transitional Authority in Cambodia (UNTAC) and other expat officers in the early 1990s when the country's governance system was still in the restructuring process. The injection of cash into the economy worked to commodify urban land (Shatkin 1998, 384; Collins 2016). This legacy continued and became more consolidated with the increased demands of Cambodian elites (both as consumers and investors) and opportunities for FDI (Nam, 2017; Shatkin 1998). The government started to introduce policies and programs seemingly promoting housing rights for the urban poor, such as the 'Circular of Resolution of Temporary Settlement on Land Which Has Been Illegally Occupied in the Capital, Municipal, and Urban Areas' (C03) in 2010 and the National Housing Policy in 2014. However, these are not followed in reality under the co-opted climate among Cambodian elites, private companies, and the public sector (Lindstrom, 2013; Talocci and Boano, 2016; Yamada, 2018).

Some cities started shifting their attention towards informal dwellers as an issue to solve through housing provision, rather than dwelling destruction.

4.2 Upgrading programmes

Partly because of the rising pressure from the international community around human rights/adequate housing, some cities started shifting their attention towards informal dwellers as an issue to solve through housing provision, rather than dwelling destruction. This did not mean they implemented an inclusive strategy. In the case of Jakarta, such action started at an early stage in the Kampung Improvement Program (KIP). KIP started very early compared to other cities, and it did not necessarily stem from communities' negotiations with authorities. Bangkok saw as well a revival of the statist role in housing for the urban poor since the early 2000s which consisted in the construction of apartment units (Baan Eua Arthon), community upgrading and securing tenure (Baan Mankong), and housing finance (Sheng and Leeruttanawisut, 2016). In

Manila, the first institutionalised on-site upgrading was introduced in the 1970s, during the Tondo Foreshoreland upgradation, which was supported by the World Bank which started introducing the idea of self-built housing as a solution to slums (Alampay, 2002). Following this initiative, Marcos also introduced urban land reform measures which determined the way to allocate land rights to squatter households. However, during this period, only a few neighborhoods were able to obtain legal tenure. In the 1990s, on-site upgrading was promoted with the involvement of NGOs and CBOs (Hutchison, 2007). Since the mid-1990s, some upgrading projects were implemented also in Ho Chi Minh City with the support of international aid organisations (such as the World Bank, Belgian Aid, and Cities Alliance), which paved the way for the adoption of the National Urban Upgrading Programme 2009-2020 (UN-Habitat, 2014). However, without clear funding mechanisms and with a still not fully convinced state, the practice has usually differed from policies and programs. The turn to integrating a community-based approach to the housing provision, like the implementation of upgrading schemes, land-sharing, and reblocking were not observed in Kuala Lumpur and Phnom Penh, and even where this took place, the private sector continued to dominate the affordable housing sector.

Housing policy has been influenced by economic development policy, illustrated in the progressive withdrawal of subsidies and entry of the private sector in the production of ‘affordable’ housing. However, most of the privatised affordable housing models did not meet the real demands, and self-construction continued.

4.3 Private sector housing development

Across the case studies, housing policy has been influenced by economic development policy (e.g. Coit, 1998), illustrated in the progressive withdrawal of subsidies and entry of the private sector in the production of ‘affordable’ housing. However, most of the privatised affordable housing models did not meet the real demands, and self-construction continued.

Since Doi Moi in Vietnam, the state began a gradual withdrawal from the provision of housing. Led instead by private developers, the housing sector grew substantially since the 1990s, however, it increasingly targeted the emerging middle and upper classes, leaving little choice to low-income residents (Seo and Kwon, 2017). The shifting approach of the state was underlined by its re-orientation towards industrial and economic development (*ibid*). The shortage of affordable housing was becoming more critical, as the population continued to grow.

In response, policies facilitating the self-construction of housing were implemented. The 1991 Housing Ordinance made the abandonment of housing subsidies official and introduced a new (market-oriented) system (Boothroyd and Nam, 2000), in which citizens were encouraged to self-construct their houses “according to their capacity and needs” (Coit, 1998, p. 277). Arguably,

this enabling approach triggered a housing boom and allowed for many people to improve their living conditions, however, soon after, it was already becoming clear that for some 50% of the population the policy was of little benefit, as they were too poor to undertake housing improvement works (Coit, 1998; Waibel et al., 2007). Notably, most of the construction at that time occurred without building permits (Waibel et al., 2007) and largely led to urban sprawl, spilling over to suburban districts (Seo and Kwon, 2017).

Following the same trend, the NHA in Thailand became the facilitator of housing supply, with the introduction of private development companies in the role of the main provider, operating mostly in suburban areas due to the rising land prices (Chiu, 1984; Marohabutr, 2019). In parallel, the NHA shifted to housing construction for the middle and upper-income households in an attempt to raise funds for their low-income housing programs—largely to no avail, as it could not successfully compete with the private sector, and faced criticism over their shifted focus (Ooi, 2005).

In parallel, many governments started creating incentives for the private sector to take on the production of affordable housing. In the Philippines, the government enacted the Urban Development Housing Act (UDHA) in 1995. One of the requirements of this act was for the developers to keep 20% of the project cost for low-income housing development. The series of other finance programs introduced in the 1990s were also supposed to help the urban poor to access land and house ownership from the market. However, these did not change the situation, largely due to the weak enforcement by the local authorities, which are often dominated by the private sector and neglect such policies (Hutchison, 2007).

Similarly, in 1992, the Government of Indonesia adopted a policy that is commonly known as the 1:3:6 policy, inscribing that private developers of high-end housing should deliver three medium-cost and six low-cost housing units for every luxury unit they construct. However, the enforcement of that policy was poor, and even its conversion to a ratio of 1:2:3 in 2012 did not deliver significant results (Rukmana, 2018). In some cases, developers negotiated with local governments to develop public infrastructure projects in exchange for being exempt from the provision of low-cost housing units (*ibid*).

Overall, there were no observed cases of successful privatisation, or public-private partnership (PPP) schemes in the study, despite efforts to introduce policies for the regulation of the affordable housing sector, and the significant incentives that were given to developers (Whitehead and Tang, 2019). There are several reasons for this; the unprofitability of affordable housing for the private developer, the mismatch of demands between the developer and end-users, the inflexible/restricted regulatory scheme by the government, and corruption (e.g. Rukmana, 2018; Mialhe, Gunnell and Navratil, 2019). Existing and past programs, bodies, and policies have not been enough to produce adequate and affordable housing for the poor.

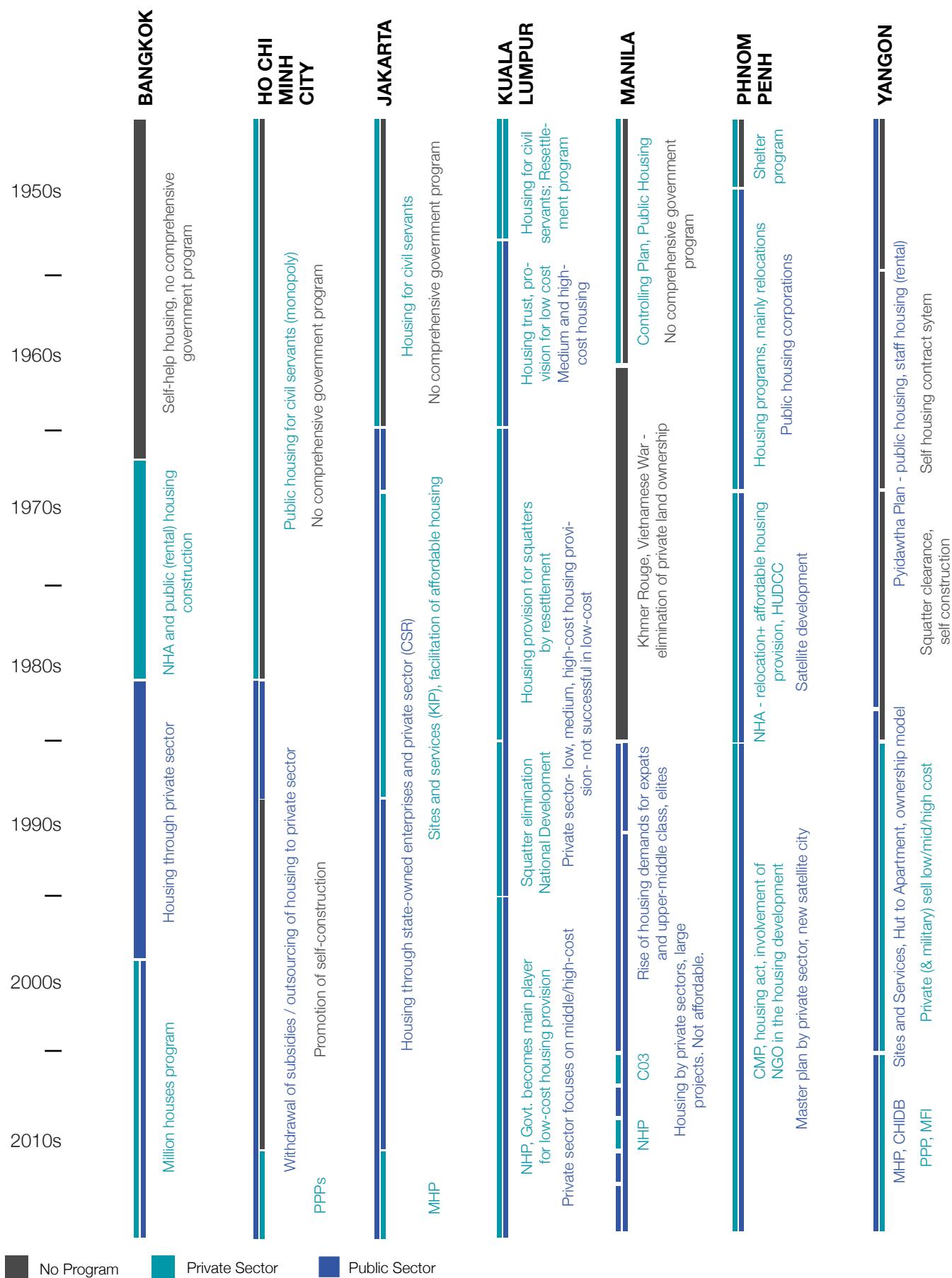
Timeline 4.1

Longitudinal comparison of the housing supply in the studied cities.¹⁶

Sources: Bangkok (Chiu, 1984; Marohabut, 2019), Ho Chi Minh City (Coit, 1998; Seo and Kwon, 2017; Waibel et al., 2017), Jakarta (Rukmana, 2018; Salim, 2014), Kuala Lumpur (Prasad, Abood and Vidal, 2017; Sufian and Mohamad, 2009), Manila (Hutchison, 2016: 2007), Phnom Penh (Talocci and Boano, 2018; ACHR, 2014; Lindstrom, 2013), Yangon (ADB, 2019; DUHD, 2019; Naing and Nitivattananon, 2020; Rhoads and Wai, 2020)

NOTE 16

The table provides an overview of the key players and approaches in the housing provision in each city, however, it is by no means exhaustive. It should be noted that next to the mentioned programs and provisions, there were always self-construction practices.



Evictions have taken place in pretty much every type of political regime and form of social system across the six cities. [...] It can last days, or in many cases, it is a struggle over decades.

05. Regulatory repertoires of displacement

Evictions have taken place in pretty much every type of political regime and form of social system across the six cities. The patterns of displacement follow along similar lines to that of development trajectories. For example, in Bangkok, Kuala Lumpur, and Phnom Penh, evictions moved from inner-city areas, progressively to suburban areas. In Jakarta, land reclamation projects displaced coastal settlements. In Ho Chi Minh City, the New Urban Zone is planned across the river from the city centre. In Manila, evictions have been related to suburban mixed-use development, new satellite city development, and disaster risk reduction related clearance after the 2000s.

Different external conditions make for different levels of ‘displaceability’ (Yiftachel, 2020): the location, centrality, accessibility, the ownership status of a plot (public, private), and even its size and shape that in some cases determine its suitability for development (Boonyabancha, 1983; Yap and De Wandeler, 2010). While displacement can take the form of evictions with due process and compensation, or evictions through the means of force, many involve multiple types of coercion and opacity, falling on a spectrum between due process and forced evictions. Rationales may also vary widely from city to city and over time.

NOTE 17

Some kampung dwellers residing along the riverbanks of Jakarta have been evicted as many as eight times (Yarina, 2018).

Eviction is not a singular event. Starting from rumours about displacement, to the issuance of eviction notices, it can last days, or in many cases, it is a struggle over decades (Yap and De Wandeler, 2010). In some cases this is due to people’s organised resistance, in others because development is slow-paced e.g. because of the lack of funds for resettlement; or it might involve the progressive demolition of a settlement; people returning to the same site; court cases; negotiating strategies, etc. Eviction can also be experienced multiple times, as in many cases people move elsewhere to squat/rent or return to the very same places they were evicted from with no more security of tenure than before¹⁷ (e.g. Boonyabancha, 1983; Castiglioni, Dewaele and Vinh, 2010; Coit, 1998; Collins 2016; HRW, 2006; Yarina, 2018). Also, an eviction might not happen at all in some cases, but the threat is present as a hanging, lingering feeling (Harms, 2013).



Figure 5.1

River “normalisation”: concrete barriers are installed along a demolished kampong in Jakarta.

Source: Lizzie Yarina, originally published in *Places Journal*, 2018.

5.1 Expropriation in the ‘public interest’

Like jurisdictions around the world, the countries in our study implemented laws that allowed for expropriation, eminent domain, or land acquisition by the state in the ‘public interest.’ Some of this legislation was enacted during the colonial period, while other laws and regulations were revisited or redrafted following liberalisation of socialist economies in the 1980s and 1990s. Many are even more recent and explicitly tied to urban development, like the regulations implemented in Cambodia and Indonesia in the early 2000s. As existing public land available for urban development became scarcer and private land grew in value, cities increased their expropriation powers and the use of law to dispossess urban residents in the name of urban development.

In 2001, the Cambodian government implemented the 1992 Land Law which technically gave the right to all citizens to own land, stipulating that they may only be deprived of ownership for the public interest and with appropriate compensation (Yamada, 2018). The vaguely defined term ‘public interest’ was later used in such a way to benefit primarily the government and developers. The law has been further recognised as encouraging the trade of public land by powerful Cambodian elites (Talocci and Boano, 2016).

The adoption of a controversial Indonesian presidential regulation in 2005, stipulated the acquisition of land for development projects ‘in the public interest’ (HRW, 2006). Here as well, ‘public interest’ is faintly defined as ‘the interest of most people’ although a previous decree from 1973 provides examples of public works, religion, public services, sports, health, public safety, and the protection from natural disasters as legitimate reasons for expropriation (Suhadi and Muhtada, 2019). The presidential regulation is widely seen as institutionalising the practice of evictions by labeling profit-driven projects as essential for the common good (HRW, 2006).

In the case of the Philippines, land grabbing and evictions were justified as inevitable options due to disaster risk reduction, the need for ‘better’ housing, and infrastructure development. Technically, the 1987 constitution allows eviction only under exceptional circumstances such as disaster risk, or the occupation of spaces that are clearly defined as publicly owned spaces but not explicitly for the purpose of public interest (Garrido, 2019; Shatkin, 2007).

5.2 An overview of eviction trajectories

The scale of evictions varied over time across our cities. From our study, the eviction cases which involve more than 3,000 people were observed in large-scale infrastructure or development projects. These are still frequently observed in Manila particularly for disaster risk reduction, in Kuala Lumpur for new city development, and Phnom Penh for mixed development in/out of the city.

Although it is difficult to extract definite relations between the political regime and the scale of evictions from our study, there are indications that large-scale evictions have occurred frequently under authoritarian governments. In Kuala Lumpur, the beginning of the communist insurgency displaced 573,000 people in only one decade. The city also used forced relocations to allocate construction labour for the development of new areas (Prasad, Abood and Vidal, 2017). A pattern emerges also by observing the neoliberalisation of urban planning in light of the competitive globalised market, with the encouragement of large infrastructural, commercial, and residential projects by the private sector (domestic and international) that facilitated extensive evictions in many cities in the last three decades. The scale and frequency of displacement induced by private-led development projects are decreasing in Manila, Phnom Penh, and Kuala Lumpur, which might be related to the shrinking availability of land in the city.

In Jakarta, the first documented large-scale evictions took place in light of the 1962 Asian Games, affecting tens of thousands of dwellers (Irawaty, 2018). With the establishment of Indonesia's New Order regime in 1966, and in parallel to the sporadic upgrading of kampungs through the state's KIP program, demolitions of other 'informal' settlements continued. We observe an intensification of evictions in the interval between Indonesia's economic boom, until its transition to more liberal reforms following the fall of Suharto in 1998. Between 1990 and 1997 alone, some 200,000 people were displaced as economic growth and urban development projects were booming (Winayanti and Lang, 2004). With Jakarta maintaining the lion's share of the country's economic activity, the prospect of eviction to make way for corporate-driven projects is much more present in the capital (Padawangi, 2019).

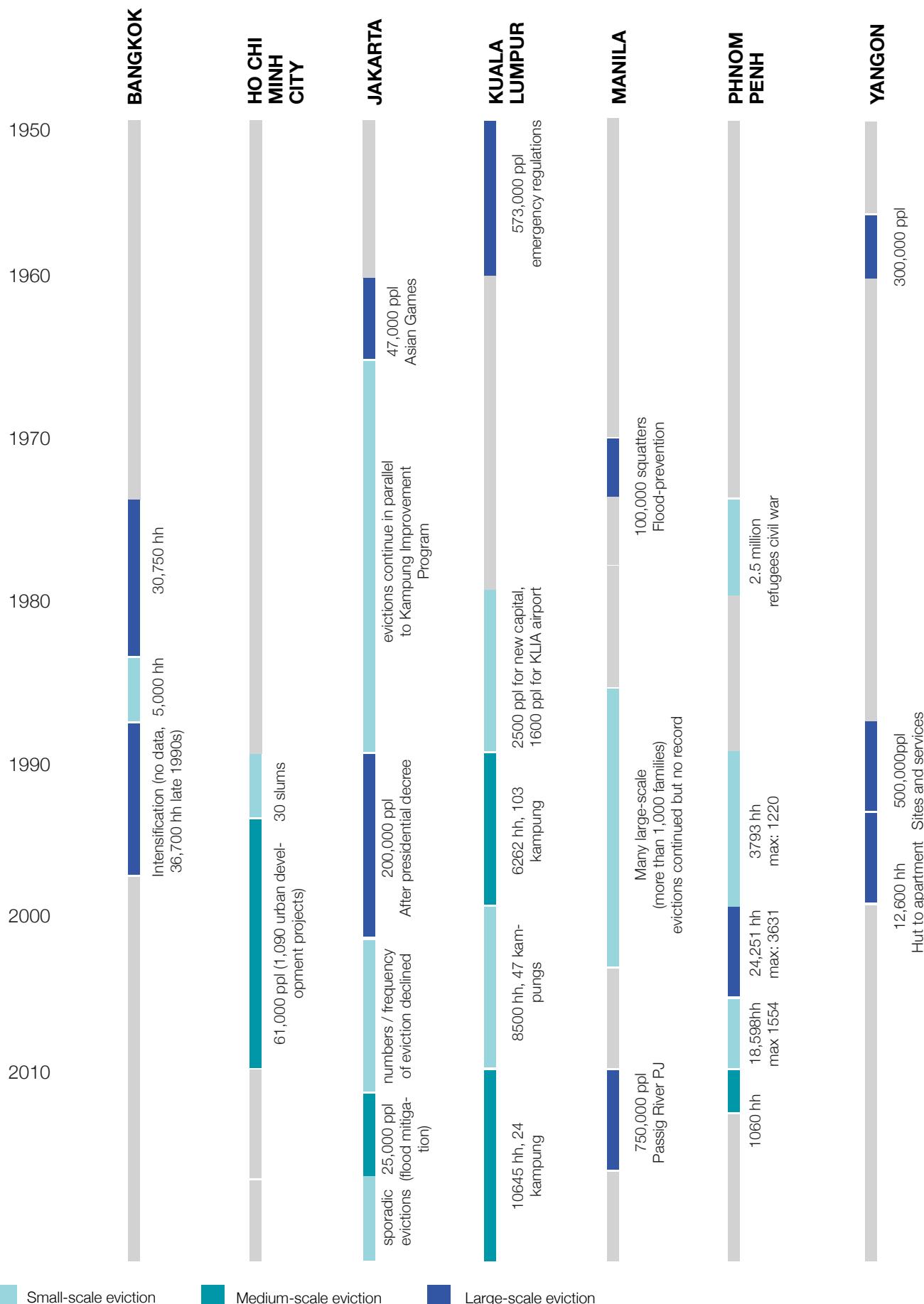
In the case of Bangkok, we can also draw connections between the economic boom since the 1980s and the occurrence of evictions. Based on data from the Slum Eviction Survey conducted by the NHA in Bangkok, 38% of the approximately 420 slum settlements had either already been, or were in the process of being evicted only in the period 1979-1982 (Boonyabancha, 1983). The NHA further estimated through aerial photo comparison that between 1974 and 1984, that some 150 slum settlements had disappeared from inner-city areas and changed to other uses, while in the next few years, until 1988, another 107 settlements had the same fate (Viratkapan and Perera, 2006). With most slum settlements already cleared from the inner-city, the pressure on Klong Toey, a mega-settlement with estimated 100,000 residents, has been increasing and would mark an unprecedented case of displacement in the city's context (Kamolavattanavith, 2019).

On the other hand, in Ho Chi Minh City, the state had maintained a more relaxed attitude towards informal settlements up until the 1990s, when the pressure for economic development increased dramatically. With visions that allude to a 'Mega City Mania' (Harms, 2019) and profit-oriented development on the rise, the city adopted programs like the "Clearance of Canal Areas" and the "Replacement of Slum Houses" (Ministry of Construction, 2016), resulting to the displacement of thousands of dwellers. More recently, the city authorities announced their plan to evict (the remaining) 20,000 informal households from the riverbanks between 2015-2020, although the lack of funding for resettlement has caused delays in the operation (Tran, D., 2018).

Timeline 5.1

Evictions from studied records (ppl: people, hh: households; ud: urban development).

Sources: Bangkok (Viratkapan and Perera, 2006), Ho Chi Minh City (Boothroyd and Nam, 2000; Harms, 2012; Tran D., 2018), Jakarta (Andapita, 2019; Harjoko, 2004; Irawaty, 2018); Kuala Lumpur (Prasad, Abood and Vidal, 2017); Manila (Calderson et al.; 2019; Garrido; 2019; Shatkin 2008); Phnom Penh (STT, 2016a; Shatkin, 2018), Yangon (Naing and Nitivattananon; 2020; Rhoads, 2018).



In Manila, forced relocation increased significantly after the mid-1960s due to industrial and commercial expansion. These did not happen systematically, rather on an ad hoc basis depending on various elements such as the political power, particular interests, and landowners. In the 1970s, with Marcos's increased and personalised control over Manila's development, thousands of squatters were evicted to 'showcase' the modernised city (Pinches, 1994). In 1973, Marcos's Presidential Decree 772 made illegal occupants in public and private land punishable by imprisonment. This order accelerated the pace of evictions. In all, an estimated 400,000 people were evicted between 1973 and 1980 (*ibid*). After democratisation, increased investment opportunities encouraged large-scale private development projects which involved relocations (Hutchison, 2007). At present, evictions are justified by both public and private sectors, often framed as inevitable processes for better housing, disaster risk reduction or infrastructure development (Calderson et al., 2019).

In Kuala Lumpur, forced evictions have been justified by a series of regulations. In 1948, the Squatter Committee was set up by the British Government. This was followed by a series of 'emergency regulations', which led to the arrest of some 40,000 squatters. From 1950 to 1960, approximately 573,000 people were relocated to the new settlement sites (Prasad, Abood and Vidal, 2017). In the 1960s, a series of policy and regulations accelerated further eviction (some allowed relying on violent means) such as the National Land Code in 1965 and the Emergency Clearance of Squatters Regulations in 1969¹⁸ (Ibrahim et al., 2012; Sufian and Mohamad, 2009).

NOTE 18

The National Land Code in 1965 stipulated that there is no right to state-owned land to be acquired by occupation and/or cultivation, and the state authority has all powers and rights to dispose of such property (Ibrahim et al., 2012). The Emergency Clearance of Squatters

Regulations (ECSR) in 1969 further allowed the local authority to demolish squatter huts in any state-owned or reserved land, enter such land anytime to demolish, remove any person or movable property in any squatter hut, regardless of the public interest.

In the 1980s-1990s, as the demands for large-scale infrastructures in the suburban areas emerged among private developers, the relocation measures continued affecting indigenous people, plantation workers, or those who were brought by the government as labour for these development projects. The scale of each kampung which experienced the threat of eviction increased from the 1990s to 2010s in Greater KL. The threatened sites were found mostly in suburban areas (Prasad, Abood and Vidal, 2017).

Evictions in Phnom Penh started taking place in the 1990s following a land reform enacted in 1989 (Collins 2016). Most evictions occurred to clear land for either private sector developments or infrastructure development. According to STT (2016b), over 29,700 households had been evicted between 1990 and 2014. Especially in the period from 2000 to 2005, over 24,000 households were evicted, accounting for 81.5% of the total evictees of the last 25 years. In the period from 2011 to 2014, although sporadic evictions continued, their scale had significantly decreased, with each eviction process affecting between 3 and 80 families. This could be due to the reduced 'volume' of projects, related to the decreasing available land and/or scale of the projects. In addition, some cases are still ongoing processes, and the actual number of people who are threatened by eviction, or will be evicted, can be more as the projects proceed.

5.3 Eviction processes

The rejection of informal settlements through the practice of displacement has been in many cases institutionalised, with the adoption of new policies or tools that rendered existing settlements as illegal. In Jakarta, a regulation from 1988 declared that kampungs in certain locations are 'illegal' (e.g. along railway tracks, in parks, within 10 m from water bodies, etc.), providing a new argument for evictions in the name of law enforcement (Leitner and Sheppard, 2018). In Bangkok, it was the progressive adaptation of building regulations that inscribed the use of fire-resistant materials for urban buildings that cast the mostly wooden structures of the urban poor as informal settlements 'not suitable' for a capital city (Sheng and Leeruttanawisut, 2016).

In the majority of cases studied across the six cities, the evictees were usually presented with three options: resettlement to public housing (either for rent, or

Figure 5.2

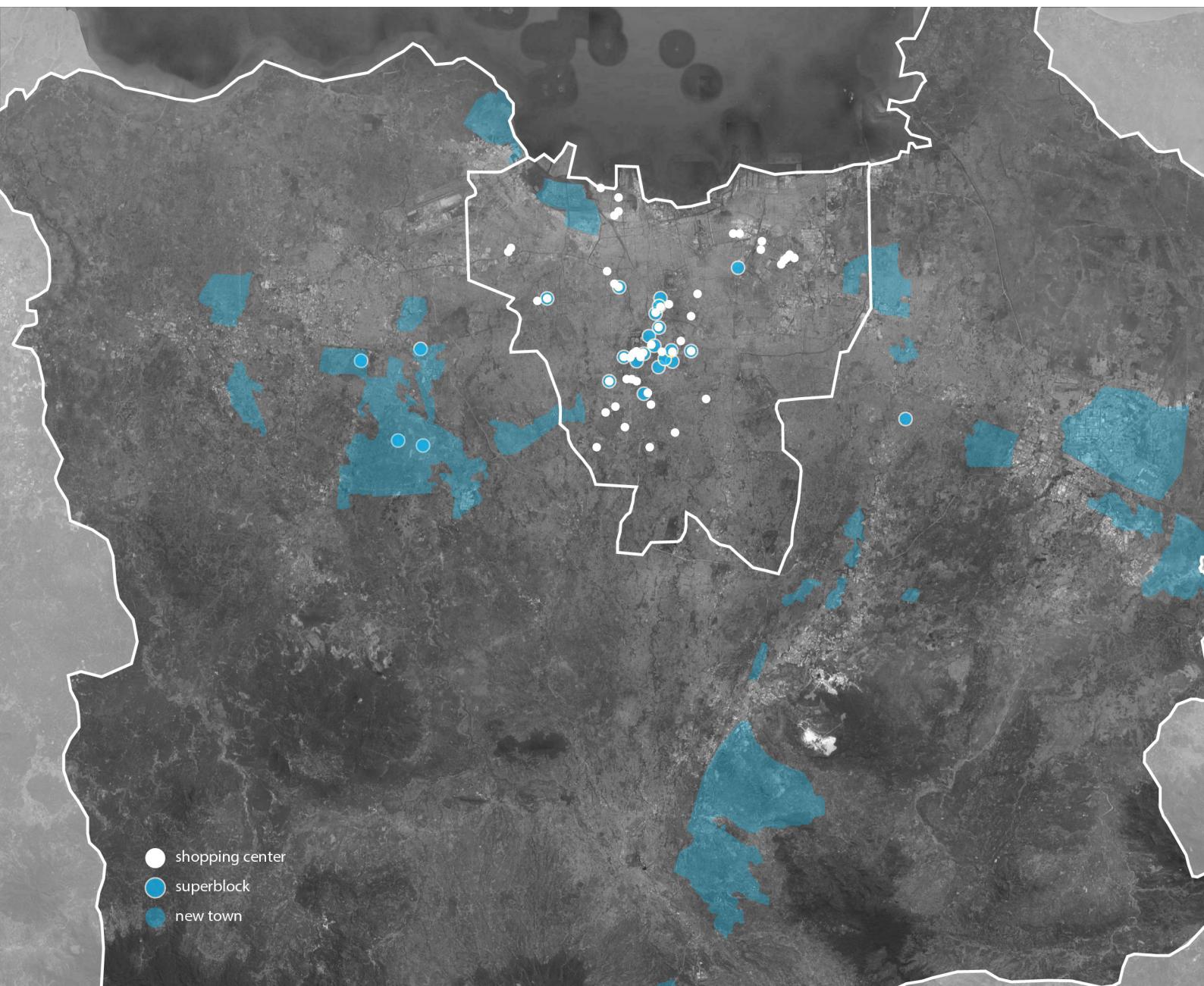
Middle-class and elite real estate projects in Jakarta during 1987-2016.
Produced by author.

Source: Herlambang et al., 2019;
Google Earth © 2020
Maxar Technologies

for purchase with compensation); or monetary compensation (with which to access public schemes—walk-up flats or sites and services—or find alternatives) or a combination of both. Yet, access to these options is usually based on certain criteria, like documentation of land ownership or land use rights; possession of ID, and/or bank account etc. Undocumented people or people that do not meet the criteria set by the government or private entity handling compensation can be excluded from compensation schemes altogether or at best receive a small sum of money as a token gesture of ‘goodwill’ (Castiglioni, Dewaele and Vinh, 2010; Grant, 2014). In most of the case studies, we witnessed the increased involvement of the private sector in handling compensation schemes (e.g. Kim, 2011; Leitner and Sheppard, 2018).

Concessions and privatisation

In Cambodia, evictions typically occur when the government gives land concessions to third parties by swapping plots which had increased in value (Amnesty International, 2008). Such concession processes are often explained as necessary steps in the interest of the public and towards the city’s modernisation, but in most cases, the large profit from development goes to the private companies. Urban poor communities are generally unaware of the developer, scheme, and timeframe (Mgbako, Gao and Joynes, 2010).



Similarly, Jakarta's urban core and its suburban areas have been largely in the hands of private developers. Since the late 1980s, real estate and commercial development projects and the expansion of industrial zones by investors were supported by policies across government levels, or by 'accommodating' adaptations of spatial plans (Firman and Fahmi, 2017). By obtaining licenses from the local or national authorities, companies would have "the exclusive right to develop and manage" their allocated areas (*ibid*, p. 74). In many cases, large tracts of land were not developed at all, awaiting the land value to increase (Herlambang et al., 2019). Immediately after the financial crisis, the focus of private developers shifted to the development of shopping malls, with an oversupply of building permits by the government (*ibid*). Indeed, 12 new malls emerged in Jakarta in 2004 alone, while, in comparison, Perumnas completed 10 housing units in the same year (HRW, 2006). Since the late 2010s, and after recovering from the financial crisis, large conglomerates resumed with the purchase of land for large mixed-use development projects in Jakarta and surrounding new towns (Herlambang et al., 2019).

In Ho Chi Minh City, the authorities started taking actions to clear slums from the riverbanks and inner-city areas in the early 1990s, to release space for more 'productive' functions (Ahmed, Sager and Cuong, 2010; Coit, 1998; Grant, 2014; Harms, 2012; Harms, 2013; Waibel et al., 2007). The double standards of land accessibility are manifested in the words of the Director of the Construction Department: "Investors will be permitted to use either the [cleared] land along the canals or other ideal locations around the city for their businesses" (as cited in Tran D., 2018). The appropriation of land by the state to facilitate more than 1,090 'urban development projects' only between 1995 and 2009 (Harms, 2012) has resulted in the displacement of some 61,000 people from their places of residence, often irrespective of their land tenure; the possession of land use rights and evidence of long-term residence have not always been successful in protecting the people from eviction (*ibid*).

The pressure for profit-oriented development led to increasingly aggressive strategies to evict urban poor settlements.

Forced evictions and coercive measures

The pressure for profit-oriented development led to increasingly aggressive strategies to evict urban poor settlements. In Bangkok, for example, eviction from private land would often occur in a spirit of 'social harmony', based on a mutual understanding between the landowner and the squatters in the past (Yap and De Wandeler, 2010). However, the dynamics started changing as landowners realised the potential gains from releasing their land for development. Even when the dwellers were in possession of land use certificates or other forms of documentation, against changing and complex legislation, frequent disregard for customary rights, and corruption, these were often of little use to prevent eviction.

Across the studied cities, many violations occur in the process of eviction, from the lack of consultation, to inadequate notice, low or zero compensation, corruption in the process of compensation, excessive use of force against residents and activists, destruction of property, intimidation tactics, and inappropriate alternatives for housing (e.g. HRW, 2006). In Cambodia, the government was actively involved in forced evictions, often using threats and intimidation, violent force with the involvement of the military, police detention, and the harassment of residents, NGOs and journalists (Amnesty International, 2008). In Bangkok, Jakarta and Manila, the practice of eviction by arson was observed, taking advantage of regulations that prohibit post-fire reconstruction for some time for

safety reasons (Calderson et al., 2019; Ockey, 1997; Tadié, 2006). Furthermore, to discourage and prevent community resistance to evictions, governments have in some cases intentionally spread misinformation (Mgbako et al., 2020).

A report by Human Rights Watch (2006) gives a detailed account of the violations of domestic and international laws in the process of evictions in Jakarta, including the use of force by government security bodies, insufficient notice before eviction, and little time for dwellers to collect their belongings, intimidation of activists supporting evictees, and the use of urban gangs to enforce evictions, to name a few. The excessive use of force in eviction processes has the—presumably very much intended—effect of ‘disciplining’ other kampung dwellers that might intend to put up resistance. For example, the eviction of Kampung Pulo in 2015 put a curb on the willingness of some dwellers from the neighbouring community of Kampung Bukit Duri to challenge the authorities’ plans (The Jakarta Post, 2015a). There is also little or no consultation with residents, neither in the implementation nor in the planning for resettlement (HRW, 2006). Against the odds, there has been a growing movement of resistance to such practices, emerging from grassroots and supported by civil society organisations and other allies.

Compensation

Across our case studies, where compensation schemes were used in conjunction with evictions or resettlement, the amount is commonly way below the market value. Additionally, it was found that the urban poor may have little knowledge of the real property value to negotiate better compensation (in some cases they did, such as Jakarta and Ho Chi Minh City; see Harms, 2012; Kim, 2011; Leitner and Sheppard, 2018). The compensation amount is either set almost arbitrarily or calculated based on the land plot and previous housing unit—however, it often fails even to cover substitute housing, let alone address long-term losses associated with resettlement (e.g. Harms, 2012, p. 741; Leitner and Sheppard, 2018). Evidence suggests that compensation rates are rather negotiable compared to relocation terms. In Kuala Lumpur and Phnom Penh, there were some cases where residents continuously protested the eviction orders resulting in increased compensation amounts, even though their ultimate claim to stay in the original site was not answered (A Cambodian Spring, 2017; Meta and Baliga, 2017; Prasad 2017).

NOTE 19

In the case of evictees from Diamond Island, the compensation was around USD 1,500 per family (Yamada, 2018), USD 1,500 to 8,500 per household in the Boeung Kak case (Fitzpatrick, 2010), and USD 1,400 per sqm for White Building evictees (Radio Free Asia, 2017). According to ADB, 72% of citizens in Phnom Penh lived on less than USD \$3 a day in 2011 (2014). Still, considering the skyrocketing land price, job-loss, place loss – this rate was not that adequate. It is not clear if the provision of compensation is based on the legal status. Technically, under the Land Law, any person who stays peacefully without any uncontested activities for at least five years has a right to declare their ownership. However, due to the lack of rights education, many dwellers are not aware of these legal rights (Mgbako, Gao and Joynes, 2010). In addition, many regulatory requirements are not followed under the co-opted climate among Cambodian elites, private companies, and the public sector (Lindstrom, 2013; Talocci and Boano, 2016; Yamada, 2018).

In Cambodia, when compensation is provided, it is by private companies in the majority of the cases. Although provision of ‘fair and just compensation’ is required under the Cambodian Constitution and 2001 Land Law, in practice, violent eviction without proper compensation became normal in Cambodia. According to a survey by STT, only 15% of the evicted households had received some kind of compensation (2016a). The compensation rate was far below the market price and not adequate for substitute housing (Mgbako, Gao and Joynes, 2010; Yamada, 2018)¹⁹.

With authorities’ persistence in distinguishing between ‘legal’ and ‘illegal’ dwellers, squatters are often excluded from any compensation schemes, with occasional exceptions of small ‘charity gestures’ by developers or government officials (HRW, 2006). In some cases, however, as seen in Jakarta and Ho Chi Minh City, the possession of documents, like land use rights, land purchase certificates or utility bills is crucial to ensure compensation (Castiglioni, Dewaele and Vinh, 2010; Dovey, Cook and Achmadi, 2019; Koesoemawiria, 2017). Specifically, in Ho Chi Minh City, the eligibility for compensation is based on the household registration status and possession of land use rights, which often means that unregistered migrants, tenants, and very poor households are likely to be excluded from the scheme. At best, they receive a small amount—supposedly the value of the house, but in reality rather as a symbolic action (Ahmed, Sager and Cuong, 2010; Castiglioni, Dewaele and Vinh, 2010; Grant, 2014).



Figure 5.3

Map of the locations of resettlement projects between 1984-1995. Produced by author.

Source: Viratkapan and Perera, 2006;
Google Earth © 2020 Maxar Technologies

Resettlement

Resettlement schemes included apartments and more rarely sites-and-services schemes. In the majority of cases, there is little to no consultation with dwellers about resettlement. Moreover, there were often not enough units provided to accommodate the displaced households, and monthly costs (rent, bills) were higher than in their original location. In the case of Manila, for example, 105 demolitions affected 20,116 families between 1992 and 1995, and relocation was provided to only 43% of these cases (Shatkin, 2007). Additionally, units were viewed as too small and unable to accommodate large families and locations have been mostly remote, in under/undeveloped areas far away from services and jobs (e.g. Boonyabancha, 1983; Castiglioni, Dewaele and Vinh, 2010; Leiner and Sheppard, 2018; Viratkapan and Perera, 2006).

In Phnom Penh, evictees are relocated in most cases to suburban areas. According to STT, the average distance from the original site to their relocation site has increased (2012). It used to be around 10-20 km in the early 2000s, but became over 40km in 2009 due to the increase of land price and demands

for speculative development in the city. The peripheral areas they are relocated to have much heavier flooding and are generally lacking urban infrastructures (Clerc, 2019; STT, 2016b). Resettled households experience longer commutes, loss of employment, disruption of social networks, and difficulty integrating into new communities and new markets. Many evicted residents often come back to original sites to seek livelihood opportunities.

In 2003, the Prime Minister announced the ‘One Hundred Slum Policy’, a plan to upgrade at least 100 squatter settlements (ACHR, 2003). However, this had little impact on the private sector oriented housing market and the practice of forced relocations. This was further accelerated by the continuous rise of land price and the middle class (STT, 2016). Although the Cambodian Constitution incorporates international law standards, which require the government to provide adequate alternative housing and compensation to those affected by relocations, the actual resettlement practices are not following these requirements (Mgbako, Gao and Joynes, 2010).

A frequently encountered coping mechanism in response to the inadequacy of resettlement schemes is the resale or subletting of the allocated public housing unit or land plot, as seen in the cases of Bangkok, Jakarta and Ho Chi Minh City²⁰ (Boonyabancha, 2003; Dovey, Cook and Achmadi, 2019; Waibel et al., 2007). With the profits made from the sale or rent, many people have opted for land rental and self-construction in peripheral areas, squatting or moving to existing slums (Boonyabancha, 1983; Waibel et al., 2007). Despite the widely discussed controversies about the suitability of resettlement schemes, they did give secure tenure to the urban poor (Viratkapan and Perera, 2006)—at the very least, to those who agreed to stay in these projects.

NOTE 20

In Ho Chi Minh City, it is estimated that there is a resale rate of 70%-100% within the first three years from resettlement in new housing units (Waibel et al., 2007).

5.4 Rationales for eviction

One can see, overall, incredible resourcefulness and significant similarities in the narratives that legitimise eviction, including the “common good” (HRW, 2006), the promotion of growth (Harjoko, 2004), climate adaptation and flood mitigation (Van Voorst and Hellman, 2015), the enforcement of law and public order (HRW, 2006), the pursuit of the “global city” (Bunnell and Miller, 2011) and the “exemplary centre” (Padawangi, 2019), as well as the presumption that “the [...] government is best placed to deliver the ‘exemplary centre’” (*ibid*, p. 67). In some cases, these narratives go as far as to claim that evictions are for the dwellers’ own good as they would be relocated into apartments (Calderson et al., 2019; Padawangi, 2019). These discourses serve to render evictions as inevitable, even if the ‘options’ given to the displaced are poorly designed.

In some cases, the narratives that legitimise eviction go as far as to claim that evictions are for the dwellers’ own good as they would be relocated into apartments.

Table 5.1

Rationales for eviction.

Sources: Bangkok (Boonyabancha, 1983; *Di Tomas*, 1998; Herzfeld, 2017; Moore, 2018); Ho Chi Minh City (Harms, 2012; Harms, 2013, Tran, 2019; *Tran D.*, 2018); Jakarta (Bunnell and Miller, 2011; Dovey, Cook and Achmadi, 2019; HRW, 2006; Irawaty, 2018; Padawangi, 2019; Van Voorst and Hellman, 2015); Kuala Lumpur (Prasad, Abood and Vidal, 2017; Ibrahim et al., 2012; Kader, 2011); Manila (Calderson et al., 2019; Garrido, 2019; Hutchison, 2014; 2019; Shatkin, 2004; 2007); Phnom Penh (Clerc, 2019; STT, 2016a; 2016b; Mgbako, Gao and Joynes, 2010), Yangon (ADB, 2019; DUHD, 2019; Naing and Nitivattananon, 2020; Rhoads and Wai, 2020).

	BANGKOK	HO CHI MINH CITY	JAKARTA	KUALA LUMPUR	MANILA	PHNOM PENH	YANGON
Disaster risk reduction	Some	Yes	Yes	Some	Yes	Yes	Unknown
Private development projects	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Unknown
City expansion (urban planning)	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Infrastructure development	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Beautification	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Some	Yes
Elimination of 'illegal' occupants	Yes ²¹	No	Yes	Yes	Some	Some	Yes
Bringing labour to certain project sites	Unknown	Unknown	Yes	Yes	Unknown	Unknown	Yes

Infrastructure development

NOTE 21

Observed during the 1950s and 1960s (*Di Tomas*, 1998).

Infrastructure development often relates to the expansion of the urban built area. In Kuala Lumpur, as the demands for large-scale infrastructural development in the suburban areas emerged among private developers in the 1980s-1990s, the original residents—such as indigenous people, Tamil plantation workers, or those who were brought by the government as construction labour for new development projects—were ordered to move. This included the relocation of 2,500 people from four plantation sites to create the state's new capital city, and the relocation of 1,600 people for the development of KLIA airport (Prasad, Abood and Vidal, 2017).

In Jakarta, 47,000 kampung dwellers were evicted from their homes to build facilities for the 1962 Asian Games, under President Sukarno (Irawaty, 2018). Tadié (2006) observes that fires in kampungs during the 1980s and 1990s—although unclear whether set deliberately or by accident—presented an opportunity for infrastructure development, like the expansion of motorway routes, port infrastructures, and truck terminals. The lack of coordination in planning for the new towns around Jakarta also created an urgent need to connect the different parts of the metropolis (Herlambang et al., 2019). With infrastructure development being a major target for foreign investment, land acquisition for various large-scale developments has been on the rise, including the construction and widening of traffic lanes, underpasses and overpasses, the expansion of the port, and railway tracks (HRW, 2006).

In Bangkok, the NHA's Slum Eviction Survey recorded that the construction of roads was the reason for 22.4% of the total households evicted or under the threat of eviction captured in the survey (Boonyabancha, 1983). The construction of public buildings, like government offices, schools, etc accounted for another 12.7% of the evictions. By comparison, new residential development was only at 10.1%. Boonyabancha (*ibid*, p. 14) highlights that the erasure of housing and its replacement by predominantly non-residential uses led to an "absolute reduction of the city's housing stock."

In Phnom Penh, many infrastructure developments ranging from road, drainage, and public transport displaced people particularly in the 1990s when the city was under reconstruction (STT, 2016b). These were mostly operated by the city government.

Illegality

Before development pressure had risen so much, evictions would still happen, mostly grounded on the enforcement of the law ('illegal' squatters). In Bangkok, for example, it has been argued that the underlying reason for the removal of slum settlements during the 1950s and 1960s was the illegality of tenure and their negative perceptions (DiTomas, 1998). In Jakarta from the 1980s onwards, destruction and eviction of 'legal' and 'illegal' kampungs picked up—either in a formal way (i.e. with negotiation and compensation) or 'forced' (i.e. no compensation, especially for squatters) (Harjoko, 2004).

We can see that the argument of illegality seemingly does not apply to all, as in many cases rules and regulations are circumvented when it comes to powerful private or public developers or other elites.

However, we can see that the argument of illegality seemingly does not apply to all, as in many cases rules and regulations are circumvented when it comes to powerful private or public developers or other elites. In Bangkok, violations of building codes are not uncommon among hotels condominium or office buildings (Sheng and Leeruttanawisung, 2016); in Ho Chi Minh City, defying building regulations seems possible when it comes to waterfront luxury developments (Nguyen et al., 2016); in Jakarta, it is estimated that more than half of the land parcels in the city have not been registered (Alzamil, 2018). In Phnom Penh, in addition to intransparent process by the government and/or private developers, people's lack of knowledge about the legal system and their rights prevented them from taking action even if they own certain legitimacy, particularly for the urban poor groups who live in the areas which are subject to concession (Mgbako, Gao and Joynes, 2010).



Figure 5.4

River “normalisation”: concrete barriers are installed along a demolished kampung in Jakarta.

Source: Lizzie Yarina, originally published in *Places Journal*, 2018.

Flood mitigation

Riverbanks and drainage canals, often areas which are government-owned easements or access points, making them ineligible for land titles, have been targeted for clearance due to concerns over flooding and beautification. In Phnom Penh, almost half of the informal settlements are located on or near the river and canals which are considered public land (Collins 2016). For many of these dwellers, eviction is a constant fear. In Jakarta, large-scale evictions were carried out in 2015–2016, under Governor Purnama ‘Ahok’, as part of a flood mitigation program, with the Legal Aid Institute (LBH) estimating that over 25,000 people were evicted (Andapita, 2019).

The discourse of flood mitigation is closely linked to that of beautification, illegality, and the global city. Although evidence suggests that the flood problem is the resultant of many conditions—from the location of Jakarta on a flood plain, the over-extraction of groundwater, the ‘concretisation’ of the city, the accumulation of sediment in the rivers, to deforestation and climate change (Dovey, Cook and Achmadi, 2019)—the dominant narrative maintains that kampung dwellers are responsible for the contamination and blocking of the canals (Dovey, Cook and Achmadi, 2019; Van Voort and Hellman, 2015).

Figure 5.5

Kampung Pulo and Bukit Duri in 2014
(top) and after the clearance and 'flood
normalisation' project.

Source: Google Earth © 2020 Maxar
Technologies



The flood mitigation eviction rationale is exemplified in the case of Kampung Pulo in Jakarta. Kampung Pulo is one of the oldest kampungs, dating back to the 1930s (The Jakarta Post, 2015b), and is a community of fishermen, small traders, and informal workers (Michael and Aziz, 2016). Since 2013 and the beginnings of the city's 'river normalisation' plans to mitigate flooding, parts of Kampung Pulo were threatened with eviction with the justification of illegal construction on state-owned land along the river. During his gubernatorial campaign, Joko Widodo/'Jokowi' visited the area, making the plausible commitment of compensation to all dwellers and receiving positively the residents' proposal for a kampung susun ('stacked kampung'), a scheme for on-site relocation and upgrading (Van Voorst and Padawangi, 2015). Yet the eviction was merely postponed until his successor, Governor Ahok, was in charge. Although he initially dismissed the susun proposal, he later made assurances about compensation (*ibid*). Days later, Ahok had changed his mind again, and with the argument that the houses have no legal titles on the land, he instructed their demolition (*ibid*).

"The governor had stated that everything would be compensated with money. After that promise, none of the residents were concerned about the displacement, even when the surveyor came to measure our buildings. [Later] the provincial government announced they would not pay anything to the citizens unless they have certificates." (in Michael and Aziz, 2016)

The eviction resulted in violent clashes, some protesters were injured and arrests were made by the police (Van Voorst and Padawangi, 2015). Eventually, the administration relocated eligible families to a rusunawa nearby and the rest was left to their devices.

Global city

In the 1970s, after establishing the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and gaining substance as a geographic region, the process of globalisation accelerated in some cities such as Singapore, Kuala Lumpur, Bangkok, Metro Manila, and Jakarta. In the 1980s, the vision of global cities associated with increasing trades, investments, and technological transfers became a popular benchmark and accelerated "worlding practices" to catch up or compete with global standards (Rimmer and Dick., 2018; Roy and Ong., 2011;). The visions of the 'global city' are invoked through propaganda-resembling means, posters, promotional videos, and carefully chosen vocabulary.

In Jakarta, the transition period following the fall of Suharto saw a shift also in the discourses of kampung evictions from illegality-centred arguments towards the aspiration for Jakarta to be a 'global city' (Bunnell and Miller, 2011; Firman, 1998). The 'global city' is envisioned as "modern, green and clean" (Dovey, Cook and Achmadi, 2019, p. 276), and by contrast, kampungs have been long-stigmatised as unhygienic (Irawaty, 2018), 'backward', the "antithesis of progress" (Dovey, Cook and Achmadi, 2019, p. 266). The media occasionally contribute to the portrayal of kampung dwellers as "anarchic" and "ungrateful citizens who [keep] defying the government's effort to provide them 'luxurious apartments'"(Van Voorst and Padawangi, 2015).

Similarly, the displacement of some 15,000 dwellers for the New Urban Zone in Ho Chi Minh City is underpinned by narratives of a city that is modern, orderly, breathable (Harms, 2012) and integrated with the global economy (Tran, 2019). The concept of 'beauty' is invoked through various means, from campaigns, glossy visualisations of urban renewal projects, and 'before-after' comparisons, to the very language of authorities, planners, and media (Harms, 2012; Tran, 2019) that portray poor settlements as in need of 'refashioning' (Xuan, 2018). Herzfeld (2017) frames Bangkok's middle-class aspirations that lead to the destruction of older vernacular-built homes and eviction of residents in

Figure 5.6

Thu Thiem before the commencement of the mega-project, in 2003 (top). The New Urban Zone has started taking shape by 2020 (bottom).

Source: Google Earth © 2020 Maxar Technologies



working-class communities as the ‘brutality of beauty’. More recently, plans to develop Ho Chi Minh City into a ‘smart city’ by 2025 have raised further scepticism among citizens (Tran D, 2018). Paraphrasing the words of Grant (2014, p. 43), “[t]he displacement-resettlement process in [Ho Chi Minh City] is not just an eviction of thousands of households, it is an eviction of the past.”

Population control

Apart from these development-induced displacements, there were also some mass evictions for population control. In the case of Kuala Lumpur, evictions were used to combat a communist insurgency and control a certain population in the 1950s-60s. From 1975-1979, during Pol Pot’s proto-communist regime in Cambodia, the Khmer Rouge evacuated around 2.5 million residents from Phnom Penh. This included civil servants, teachers, doctors, and other professionals who were likely to protest against the regime.²² They were forced to work as farmers in the areas they were sent (Yamada, 2018). During this regime, the Khmer Rouge tried extensively to confiscate large areas of land, and most public documents including property deeds and titles were destroyed. Although there is no official record, approximately 1.5-2 million people died of starvation, execution, disease, or overwork.

NOTE 22

Intellectuals were also targetted for the genocide as they were seen as opponents to the authority. They were identified by their glasses and soft hands compared to other labors and soldiers (Pran, 1997).

The displacement-resettlement process in Ho Chi Minh City is not just an eviction of thousands of households, it is an eviction of the past.

We have proposed to understand spatial violence as an entanglement of long term trajectories of political regimes of urbanisation, exclusionary invisibility and disenfranchisement, housing provision policies and regulatory repertoires for displacement and dispossession.

06. Conclusion

6.1 Regional continuities of spatial violence

In this Working Paper we have demonstrated that variegated mechanisms of spatial violence have shaped Southeast Asian cities. We have proposed to understand spatial violence as an entanglement of long term trajectories of political regimes of urbanisation, exclusionary invisibility and disenfranchisement, housing provision policies and regulatory repertoires for displacement and dispossession. Spatial violence is repeatedly justified with arguments invoking the public interest, like the beautification of the city, the vision of becoming a global class city, climate adaptation, and infrastructure development; while, in the absence of adequate housing frameworks and provisions, ‘informality’ is both treated with and produced by spatial violence.

We found that irrespective of the political regime, pressure for economic development started rising in the globalised market system, leading to an increase in the frequency and scale of evictions to open up land for investment. In authoritarian regimes, displacement has not only been a common practice used against informal settlements but an institutionalised one, inscribed in policies and master plans. In some countries, democratisation led the cities to open up their economy to investors with the acceleration of the free market system. With the pressure and expectations for economic development, the large-sized urban development projects brought continuous evictions.

Approximately since the 1950s, increased urbanisation has been both a driver and a by-product of economic growth, with demographic changes causing the expansion of urban areas, sprawl and suburbanisation. These processes were vastly shaped by the opening of the market, emerging opportunities for inves-

tors, and the prioritization of large-infrastructure development. All this, against the backdrop of political and social shifts in different directions. In the early stages of urbanisation, development was mostly dictated through state officials (e.g. prestige projects in Jakarta and Bangkok; population control in Kuala Lumpur, focus on economic development), rather than trained planning professionals. Some cities did not have a comprehensive master plan for a long time (e.g. Kuala Lumpur, Manila, Bangkok). Even where plans were in place, they would either not be followed, or they would adhere to similarly narrow understandings of ‘urban planning’ (e.g. Phnom Penh, Jakarta).

We found that irrespective of the political regime, pressure for economic development started rising in the globalised market system, leading to an increase in the frequency and scale of evictions to open up land for investment.

In most cases, urban planning was shaped by visions of a beautiful, clean and modern city. Some followed “model” cities like Singapore, Shanghai and Hong Kong (e.g. Phnom Penh, Manila, Ho Chi Minh, Jakarta). In the cities where or when the state has weak capacity and/or large interests by the private developers for investment, such as Manila and Phnom Penh, these urban planning directions were encouraged by profit-seeking developers who developed visions of particular areas, new satellite cities, infrastructures, and other components by hiring planners mostly experienced on the latest large scale projects in neighbouring countries.

Economic growth has meant at the same time that there is an emerging middle class and upper class which increasingly becomes the target group of developers, planners and the state. Driven by profit-seeking developers (either public or private), urban ‘renewal’ projects involve the construction of high-end condominiums, office buildings, hotels, shopping malls, transit infrastructure, highways, golf clubs, leisure spaces, parks etc. For these developments to happen, unlocking land in strategic locations was needed (i.e. land use change in the inner city, conversion of agricultural land to urban land in peripheries). As a result, ‘informal’ settlements have been enclosed by the urban expansion (e.g. kampung in Jakarta), densified and new ones emerged because of the lack of options for affordable locations.

Housing policy has been influenced by economic development policy (e.g. Coit, 1998), illustrated in the progressive withdrawal of subsidies and entry of the private sector in the production of ‘affordable’ housing. However, most of the privatized affordable housing models did not meet the real demands. No observed cases of successful privatization, or PPP schemes were found. There are several reasons for this, such as, unprofitability of affordable housing for the private developer, mismatch of demands between the developer and end users, inflexible/restricted regulatory scheme by the government (i.e. Phnom Penh), and corruption (i.e. Manila, Phnom Penh).

As centres of economic activity, Southeast Asian cities have been attracting rural migrants, leading to a population growth that was not matched with the development of infrastructure and the provision of affordable housing.

As centres of economic activity, Southeast Asian cities have been attracting rural migrants, leading to a population growth that was not matched with the development of infrastructure and the provision of affordable housing. In most cities there have been—arguably inadequate—strategies for housing provision, usually in the form of alternative housing and/or monetary compensation, but depending on the possession of documentation, tenure status, and level of poverty, many dwellers were excluded from these options. More often than not, migrant populations, urban poor, etc., are not accounted for in the urban development plans; they are often not fully recognized citizens in the first place (eg. no ID cards) and their settlements are perceived more or less as ‘blank’ areas by planners, developers and authorities (eg. Harjoko, 2004; Rhoads 2020). On the other hand, in some cases, migrant workers or low-income dwellers were strategically ordered to settle in certain areas, particularly for new infrastructural development (e.g. Kuala Lumpur, Yangon).

In some cases, new policies rendered existing settlements illegal (e.g. because of violation of setback regulations, materiality, etc.) – despite the proliferation of informality from 1950s/1960s onwards. Some cities established systems or implemented policies which integrated a community-based approach to housing provision like upgrading, landsharing, and reblocking in Jakarta, Bangkok, and Manila. Sites and services programs —such as KIP in Jakarta— started very early compared to other cities and did not necessarily stem from community negotiations. But such integrated approaches were not observed in Kuala Lumpur, Ho Chi Minh City, nor Phnom Penh.

‘Informality’ emerges once again as a very opaque term. In the case of Kuala Lumpur, ‘squatter’ was used as a political term to eliminate a certain population, rather than refer to any legal status. The absence of definition for the people who started to settle in No Man’s Land made it possible to make these people seemingly illegal. Even when the dwellers were in possession of land use rights, land purchase certificates or utility bills, that they often used as proof of residence for their and eligibility in some cases - yet against changing and complex legislation, frequent disregard for customary rights, and corruption, these were often of little use to prevent eviction. In some cases, however, these documents were crucial to ensure compensation like in Jakarta and Ho Chi Minh City, or delay the eviction process like in Phnom Penh. Relations of power and resistance were also not uniform across cities. In some cities, informal settlers are important for the local authority because they can get votes. This facilitates a patron-client relationship between local authority and residents. Perhaps these factors could be one of the reasons the people cannot/do not take strong actions of resistance against forms of spatial violence.

Evictions epitomise spatial violence. Among the many human right violations that occur in the process of eviction we can trace lack of consultation, inadequate notice, low or zero compensation, corruption in the process of compensation, excessive use of force against residents and activists, destruction of property, intimidation tactics, inappropriate alternatives for housing (HRW, 2006). There is a strong link between economic development, urban development, and displacement in Southeast Asian cities. The main spatial patterns of displacement follows along similar lines to that of development, in Bangkok from evictions moved from inner-city areas, progressively also to evictions in suburban areas; in Jakarta land reclamation projects led to displacement from coastal settlements; in Ho Chi Minh City to New Urban Zones across the river from the city centre; and, in Manila, towards suburban mixed use, new satellite city development.

**Relations of power and resistance were also not uniform across cities.
In some cities, informal settlers are important for the local authority because they can get votes. This facilitates a patron-client relationship between local authority and residents.**

Tracing evictions is complex and the availability of data uneven and scattered. For instance, in Bangkok we found an eviction survey while in Ho Chi Minh City we hardly reached any detailed account of evictions. In the regional overview, we encountered different conditions that make for different levels of 'displaceability' that includes level of centrality, accessibility to infrastructure, land ownership, plots' size and shape and suitability for developers. Moreover, the ambiguous land tenure conditions (customary rights vs certified rights; unclear, lengthy and expensive bureaucratic procedures for formalization, unsystematic registration, overlapping claims over land) render informal dwellers vulnerable to displacement. This is coupled by the longstanding stigmatization of informal settlements as hubs of crime and disorder, unhygienic, backwards, not worth preserving, etc., amplifying the vicious circle of tenure insecurity (and inaccessibility of 'secure' options). This leaves no incentive for upgrading and the continuation of poor conditions and stigmatization, in other words, poor conditions become yet another stick to beat the dwellers with.

While spatial violence in urban Southeast Asia takes multiple forms, including invisibility, lack of housing policies, and prioritization of urban development as economic development, the most frequent form of spatial violence we encountered were evictions, dispossession, and displacement. The study further reveals that displaceability (Yiftachel 2020) as a condition is not experienced in a single moment in time. The exposure to the threat of eviction may last for months, years, or even decades, and the inadequacy of resettlement options may leave dwellers just as vulnerable to future displacement, as many continue living in squalor. The very practice of displacement in one place can often cause the emergence of informal settlements in another place, perpetuating the

issue in absence of adequate housing mechanisms (e.g. squatter settlements shifting to more peripheral areas in Bangkok; case of Sitio San Roque in Metro Manila). This may be due to the lack of funds for resettlement or might involve the progressive demolition of a settlement, people returning to the same site, negotiating terms for resettlement, etc. Displacement can also be experienced multiple times, as in many cases people move elsewhere to squat/rent with no more security of tenure than before. Also, eviction might not happen at all in some cases but the threat is present as a hanging, lingering feeling (Harms, 2013). Overall, through a regional and longitudinal understanding of spatial violence in SouthEast Asian cities we traced the continuity and opaqueness of violent city-making practices embedded in the urbanisation process. By linking the rationale, mechanisms and impacts across cases we offered a nuanced picture of the regions while highlighting patterns of resemblance also harnessing the singularity of the cases. We hope the factors presented in chapter 2 to 5 contribute to expanding the analytical repertoires of scholarship on spatial violence and southern urbanism more broadly.

While spatial violence in urban Southeast Asia takes multiple forms, including invisibility, lack of housing policies, and prioritization of urban development as economic development, the most frequent form of spatial violence we encountered were evictions, dispossession, and displacement.

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