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► **To cite this version:**

Marion Sabrié. Yangon "Emerging Metropolis" Challenges for the Authorities and Resilience of the Yangonites. *Moussons : recherches en sciences humaines sur l'Asie du Sud-Est*, 2019, Recherche en sciences humaines sur l'Asie du Sud-Est, 33, pp.33-64. 10.4000/moussons.4892 . hal-02148987

HAL Id: hal-02148987

<https://hal.science/hal-02148987v1>

Submitted on 6 Jun 2019

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Yangon “Emerging Metropolis” Challenges for the Authorities and Resilience of the Yangonites

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Myanmar¹ is undergoing rapid transformations, which are particularly visible in the Yangon landscape and, resilient, its inhabitants are facing the metropolization of the city. The former political capital from 1852 to 2005 remains the economic capital and the most populated city of the country with 5.2 million of inhabitants in 2014, which represents 35% of the urban population of Myanmar. Yangon, including its wider region, is often overlooked by geographical and urban studies. Yet it ranks 54th among the world’s major cities in terms of population (City Mayors 2018), thus defying the image usually attributed to Myanmar, one of the least urbanized countries in Southeast Asia with only 30% of its 51.5 million who are urban (The Republic of the Union of Myanmar 2015).

The changes in the urban landscape, especially in Yangon, seem to have accelerated since 2010 (Sabrié 2014; Matelski & Sabrié 2019, this issue). However, the Yangon Region, where 7.4 million inhabitants (7% of the national population) live, was already highly urbanized during the 20th century (The Union of the Republic

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of Myanmar 2015). Between 2000 and 2010, its geographic expansion was 0.5% per year, meaning that its area has grown from 370 to 390 km² (World Bank 2015). The urbanscape changes are the most impressive in Yangon, where a progressive metropolization of the city is underway.

Since the early 1990s, an international embargo has been imposed in Myanmar by Western powers against the military power, established in the country since the first coup in 1962. In parallel, the government, initially socialist, decided to open its territory modestly to the market economy: its partnerships, mainly Asian (Singapore, China and Thailand), remained limited until the democratic transition initiated by the military regime in 2010. Between the elections of 2010 and 2015, U Thein Sein, former general of the junta, was the head of the new government. This period was transitory: it started a certain democratization of power and a liberalization and internationalization of the country's economy. Today, Myanmar, stuck between the two Indian and Chinese giants, is one of the last countries to open its economy to liberalism. Its economic growth has gone up to 6.9% in 2017-2018 (IMF 2018).

This article aims to rethink the urban fabric by focusing on its main actors: national, regional and municipal authorities, international official development assistance, private investors and—last but not least—inhabitants. Although Yangon city may benefit from the economic openness and from its attractiveness, how do the Yangonites cope with the accelerated changes and the desorganized urban planning? Even though the city has never been so internationalized in terms of investments and urban and commercial projects, how do the inhabitants find their way in the urban fabric and manage to be resilient?

The concept of resilience questions the way of thinking about the urban system and its perturbations or dysfunctions. Most of the geographical studies understand the perturbation as a natural or technological disaster or as the consequences of climate change. But for the Yangon case, the major perturbations are the urban accelerated development, the internationalization of the city, the important arrival of immigrants from other regions and the strong city sprawl with the concomitant development of informal settlements. Applied to any city, resilience was often defined by the geographers as “the capacity of an urban system to absorb a disturbance and to keep back its functions afterwards” (Lhomme et al. 2010) or as the adaptation of “the functioning of the urban system after a perturbation by integrating the complexity of the city itself” (Toubin et al. 2012). The purpose of my research is to understand how the Yangonites cope with the accelerated changes they are facing because of Yangon's metropolization and of the economic liberalization. The consequences of the economic development, even though part of them can be positive, are a risk for the population, in particular the poorer classes who risk marginalization and impoverishment.

How did the Yangonites, especially the more invisible to the eyes of the authorities and of the urban planners, managed to stay and live beyond the crisis of urban governance and of mobilities? By studying citizens' resilience, I mean to analyze the capacity of adaptation and the flexibility (Djament-Tran et al. 2011) of one

of the major actors of the urban fabric: the Yangonites. Sen develops the idea of being resilient as having an inherent “ability, capacity or capability” (1999), but it is also the ability to recover (Klein et al. 2003).

Analyzing resilience is also to take into account the short and the medium term of the inhabitants’ reaction. Concerning the Yangonites, short-term policy making is better for their protection. However, at the scale of the city, resilience also means to maintain its major functions such as its economic development and attractivity (Toubin et al. 2012).

Based on data collected by the Myanmar government in the 2014 Census, and on years of interviews by the author with local and international actors living in Yangon (2010-2016), the research work that I am presenting now is the continuity of a work dedicated to Yangon urban growth started in 2016 as a postdoctoral researcher in the London School of Economics (Cities Laboratory) that led us to publish a report² on Yangon in 2017 (Heeckt et al. 2017). In this report we describe how the spatialization of the urban fabric and population has been shaped politically and institutionally over the past several decades. The current article is based on analysis of official and unofficial documents linked to urban planning and projects in Yangon which I have been collecting since 2010.³ Rather than studying all the recent urban projects in detail, the perspective I adopt in this article focuses on the perceptions of the metamorphoses of the metropolization by the Yangonites, and their urban resilience in the economic transition and the city internationalization. After explaining the concept of resilience and analyzing how it questions the way of thinking the urban system and its perturbations, I will focus on the resilience of Yangon inhabitants and not on the city’s one.

In order to remedy the rudimentary and political methodology used by the Myanmar official statistics, as well as the still existing difficulty of obtaining figures because of the lack of transparency (Selth 2017: 25) and persistent corruption,⁴ the article is primarily based on qualitative data. As most of today’s geographers agree, these data are “necessary” in the geographical area and useful complementary source to quantitative data (Bertrand et al. 2007: 320; Marois 2010). I will first analyze the acceleration of Yangon’s urban development. Then I will study the challenges faced by the authorities, analyze the urban projects, and identify the urban actors and their specificities in their domain of intervention. Finally, after explaining the concept of resilience, I will study how the Yangonites reacted to the adopted solutions.

THE ACCELERATED URBAN DEVELOPMENT AND THE EMERGING AND DISORGANIZED METROPOLIS AS PERCEIVED BY THE YANGONITES

Until the last decades, Myanmar, like most Southeast Asian countries (but probably more than others), had escaped the global phenomenon of accelerated urbanization. I will first see how my research integrates Yangon, its economic

and demographic capital, in the global and regional literature on urban studies. I will question the insalubrity that reigned in Yangon before 2010 and analyze the limits of urban policy of that time. Finally, I will explain the factors of the disorganization of urban development, as well as the city's rapid transformations and the challenges that the Yangonites are facing.

The Lack in Myanmar and Yangon Urban Studies

Yangon is not the only big city in Southeast Asia to have been little studied: this is also the case for emerging metropolises in the region until the last 10 years (Fauveaud 2017; Franck & Sanjuan 2016; Franck et al. 2012). For a long time Singapore has been the focus of much attention (De Koninck et al. 2008; De Koninck 2017; Goldblum 2010), like Bangkok (Goldblum 2000), but it is only recently that Hanoi (Gibert & Segard 2015; Labbé et al. 2010), Phnom Penh (Blot 2014; Fauveaud 2014) and Vientiane (Peyronnie, Taillard & Sisoulath 2017) have become "emerging metropolises" or that their "metropolisation in minor mode" (Franck & Goldblum 2012) is attested, more than half a century after the discovery of such processes were observed in Western metropolises (McKelvey 1961). Is this Western and exogenous term, "emerging metropolises", legitimately applied to these cities? And how can it be applied in Yangon?

The metropolitan themes discussed in these studies mainly concern socio-spatial inequalities (such as the work of Springer [2010] on Phnom Penh), the gentrification of city centers, the "right to the city" and the evictions, the transportation networks and the urban sprawl, or even natural and industrial risks.

The scientific literature on Myanmar was very limited up to the last few years. It has been little updated since the end of British colonization in 1948, although increasing since 2011. However, the geographical studies concerning Yangon remain small in amount (Heeckt et al. 2017; Michalon 2014; Sabrié 2015). The ones specifically dedicated to Yangon Metropolitan process are also very few (Estorque 2017; Forbes 2016; Kraase, Gaese & Mi Mi Kyi 2006; Morley 2013; Sabrié 2014; Simone 2018; Than Than Nwe 1998). In fact, most of the recent geographical studies of Myanmar have focused on rural areas (e.g. Boutry et al. 2017; Michalon 2014; Mya Than 1987; Sabrié 2015; Thawngmung 2004; Wang & Soe Win Myint 2016; Woods 2015).

In Myanmar, there is no official definition of rural and urban areas and no demographic index based on any population density threshold. A township can be either urban, i.e. *yat kwet* in Burmese ("ward" in English), or rural, *kyay ywar oaksu* in Burmese ("village tract" in English). However, this administrative term does not always mean that the *kyay ywar oaksu* is still rural today: some have been well integrated into the urban fabric and can be very populated, while other townships described as urban are more similar to villages. The word "city" (*myo*) is not used in the 2014 Census (the scale of the census is the administrative Region). Only the municipalities of Yangon, Mandalay and Nay Pyi Taw⁵ are called "cities" by the General Administrative Department, the government agency, and *myo gyi*

by the inhabitants (“big city” in English). Yangon and Mandalay have their own development committees but “are not fully autonomous because they are delegated authority from the Yangon Region and Mandalay Region governments” (Roberts 2017: 92), a topic that I will develop later in this article. According to Hlaing Maw Oo (2015), Yangon, as Mandalay, is considered as a “national economic growth centre”, while other cities such as Lashio and Patheingyi are considered as “secondary regional growth centres” and Myittha as other towns with “different growth potentials”. Yangon and Mandalay represent such “contrasting images of Myanmar urbanism” (ibid.), which does not help to define what a Myanmar city is. “According to the Myanmar-English Dictionary, ‘*myo*’ is: ‘a wall surrounding an area; stockade; a walled town with a market-place; and a town, city’” (Roberts 2017: 90). But even this definition does not give any demographic, political and economic point of view on what a Myanmar city is. This epistemological silence reveals a lack of interest in urban policies, which have not been mentioned before in the literature, and which were only defined by the military junta during its reign (1962-2010).

Yangon Before 2010: Insalubrity and Limited Urban Policy

While, for more than four decades, Yangon has certainly experienced an “urban decline” (Tainturier 2010)—“that is to say tended toward an inferior state or weaker condition” (Merriam-Webster 2018) or a dilapidated state—, its reality is actually more complex. The inertia of the urban policy has, for example, allowed the preservation of heritage and the historical landscape (Günther 2013), although today many buildings are in very bad condition and suffer from the competition against a lot of new constructions. However, its dilapidated state gives an identity and some charm to Yangon, according to Western tourists (Günther 2013: 28-29; interview with tourists conducted by the author in Yangon in 2010 and 2014). The inaction of the authorities also led to a major lack of infrastructure: inexistent structures such as fly-overs (although few were built in the last decade) to reduce the flow of traffic, a narrow and undeveloped road network, and a limited supply of electricity. This has long discouraged the establishment of international companies (Aung Shin 2014; BBC News 2013) and limited the construction of buildings to accommodate them.

During these four decades of urban immobility, three moments of urban development are interesting, namely the construction of new townships⁶ in the 1960s (Thaketa, Thingangyun), around 1974 (Insein, Mingaladone and North and South Okkalapa), and late 1995 (Hlaingthayar, Shwepyitha, East, North Dagon and Dagon Seikkan) (see Fig. 1). Under the guise of a formal desire to modernize and offer a more pleasant living environment to the inhabitants, in particular by allowing them access to property⁷ (Lubeigt 1994), the authoritarian urban policy of the military junta emptied the densely populated⁸ city center in order to secure the governmental authorities of any attack from the inhabitants, and to better control the urban population that was forcibly displaced to the periphery. The

new “townships”,⁹ called *yat kwek* in Burmese (translated as “satellite-towns” in English), were intentionally built on the outskirts of the city-center and connections were very limited: the government sought to keep under control a population that could be an obstacle to achieving its objectives.¹⁰ In particular, it aimed to avoid new student and popular protests that were very numerous in the second half of the 20th century and culminated in the nationwide demonstrations of 1990s (Egreteau 2009; Sabrié 2018: 11-12). When the inhabitants of the city center were evicted, nothing was planned in the periphery: they had to build their own houses. “Access to property” is a pretty strong expression to justify the population’s displacements by the authorities. Building the new satellite towns far from the city center and disconnected in terms of transportation (Forbes 2019, this volume) still has an impact today in the daily life of their inhabitants, an argument I will mainly develop in the third part of this paper.

In Yangon, this control-driven extension of the urban fabric is therefore an exception in terms of urban policy and attests to the spontaneity of urban development. The spontaneous development appears in response to the lack of urban governance or the installation of equipment by local authorities. The same type of urban development is not typical to Myanmar. Gerbeaud (2011) has worked on this theme in Bangkok, and McGee and Robinson (2011) have applied it to the “mega-urban regions of South-East Asia” (also studied by Jones [2002]) as Jabodetabek—centered on Jakarta—or Manila, Singapore or Kuala Lumpur.

The Factors of Yangon Disorganized Urban Development

If urban development seems disorganized today, it is not only due to the contemporary urban policy, but also to the long absence of urbanistic choices and the lack of interest of the military government for Yangon. And the country leaders moved focus from the inherited colonial city, as Yangon as always been considered, to Nay Pyi Taw,¹¹ the new capital city built in 2005 (Preecharushh 2009; Lubeigt 2012; Sabrié 2014). One major cause is the privatization and the internationalization of the urban production which has accelerated since 2010, but also the absence of strong legislation. However, this legislation is progressively building up, albeit very slowly: some regulations are implemented by the Department of Urban Planning of the Yangon City Development Committy, as the limitations of the height of the buildings in some areas or parkings and pavement regulations.

The second major cause of the disorganization of the urban development is the enthusiasm aroused by economic openness, as many investors arrive in the country and can finally take advantage of the offered economic opportunities. As mentioned, this was not the case previously when the economic partners of Myanmar were limited. The western embargo stopped in the course of the democratization transition, around 2012-2013. This re-engagement was a way for the western countries to acknowledge the democratic efforts made by the new government, as well as an opportunity to take part in the investments in the country.

The third major cause is the failure to take into account the Burmese and Yangon specificities of the urban landscape, where religious buildings are really central and highly respected, or the non-integration of the road network into the urban plan.

Finally, the fourth major cause is the fact that the geographical and administrative limits of the metropolis are not formalized. Unlike a large part of the world’s metropolises, there is still no official Greater Yangon. Therefore, it makes it more complicated to tackle its challenges effectively and to work on a scale smaller than the whole city.

However, in its joint development plan for the metropolitan area, the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) and the municipality unofficially define “Greater Yangon” as the present city, plus the following six peripheral townships: Hlegu, Thanlyin, Kyauktan, Twantay, Htantabin and Mawbin (JICA & YCDC 2013) (see Fig. 1).

The Challenges of the Rapid Urban Transformations and of the Internationalization of the City

As a consequence of the causes listed above, the disorganization of Yangon’s urban development involves a variety of dynamics that create many challenges for urban governance. I will focus on the main ones, namely the insufficient housing supply linked to the urban growth and the accelerated development of informal settlements, the increase in land rent, the gentrification of the city center and the city core, and the increase of road traffic, linked to all the previously listed challenges.

The Development of Informal Quarters in Response to Insufficient Housing Supply

While in their official speeches local authorities have recently recognized the need to anticipate Yangon urban growth and its repercussions (Dobermann 2016; Myat Nein Aye 2017a), these have been little documented. With the spontaneous urban development, especially in the second half of the 20th century and at the beginning of the 21st century, the local authorities now understand the need to build a sufficient housing supply, proportional to Yangon’s population growth (interview of the author of U Toe Aung, the Deputy Head of Department Urban Planning, 2014). If the urban growth of Yangon, 2.6% in 2018, continues at the same rate until 2040, the population of the metropolis will be 11 million: this represents 5.2 million new people (from immigration and from urban birthrate) to house in the next 20 years. To meet the demand, an average of 50,000 houses annually should be built (May Sit Paing 2013).

This new position of the authorities, that is to say agreeing with the need to anticipate Yangon urban growth and its repercussions, reflects the “official” recognition of an important immigration toward the economic capital, a phenomenon which started after the passage of Cyclone Nargis in 2008 and was accentuated

with the premises of the economic openness in 2010 as a consequence of democratization. This immigration, in particular the most numerous informal component, has been little studied by academic researchers (exceptions include Forbes 2014, 2016; Kyed 2019, this volume; Than Pale 2018) and by the authorities. It appears only between the lines in the 2014 census (The Republic of the Union of Myanmar 2015). However, a specific census was conducted by the regional government in 19 townships of Yangon in 2016. Although its results have not been officially made public, the authorities reportedly counted 400,000 people living in informal settlements (Moe Myint 2017) (see Fig. 1). This number is obviously underestimated for at least two reasons: first, as there are not 19 townships, but 33, and second, one can doubt the counting methodology, especially for such a political subject as informal settlers, some of whom might have tried to avoid being counted by the authorities. While informal settlements are also visible in other major economic cities such as Mandalay, the study of this phenomenon has so far been limited to Yangon. I will detail later in the article the solutions and methods chosen by the authorities to implement the first answers to this considerable challenge.

The Forced Displacement of the Poorer Classes to Suburban Districts

Gentrification means the migration of the middle class toward dilapidated central districts, which were inhabited by poorer inhabitants. This process results actually in displacement of the poorer classes to more suburban districts. It is usually exacerbated by huge operations of urban renovation. In the case of Yangon, there are two concomitant processes to consider and to explore: since 2011, the reconquest of the city core by the upper class, composed by locals and by international businessmen, and, last but not least, the internationalization and metropolization of Yangon. The consequences of the second process are the rising land and rent prices attributed to the economic openness of the country. The very significant increase in the prices of the hard-wall accommodations involves filtering of the inhabitants according to their incomes.

To welcome the poorer inhabitants in the suburban townships, many housing projects are in progress, but the supply is still insufficient. As the urban growth is rising, the informal settlements carry on growing and the city continues to sprawl, confirming that there is a need to rehabilitate the inhabitants as some of the main actors in the urban fabric and the metropolitan process.

Therefore, the Central Business District, which has remained popular despite several waves of evictions in the second half of the 20th century, is experiencing a process of gentrification (Lin Zaw et al. 2014). This is partly due to the large influx of investors, foreign and from other regions in Myanmar, settling there to develop their business beyond the old city center into most of the townships of the core city (the number of foreigners living in Yangon is unfortunately not available in the 2014 census). In recent decades, rents rose several times: some abuses were reported after the installation of new foreign non-governmental organizations after Cyclone Nargis (Kyaw Hsu Mon 2014). The increase in rent is not the only

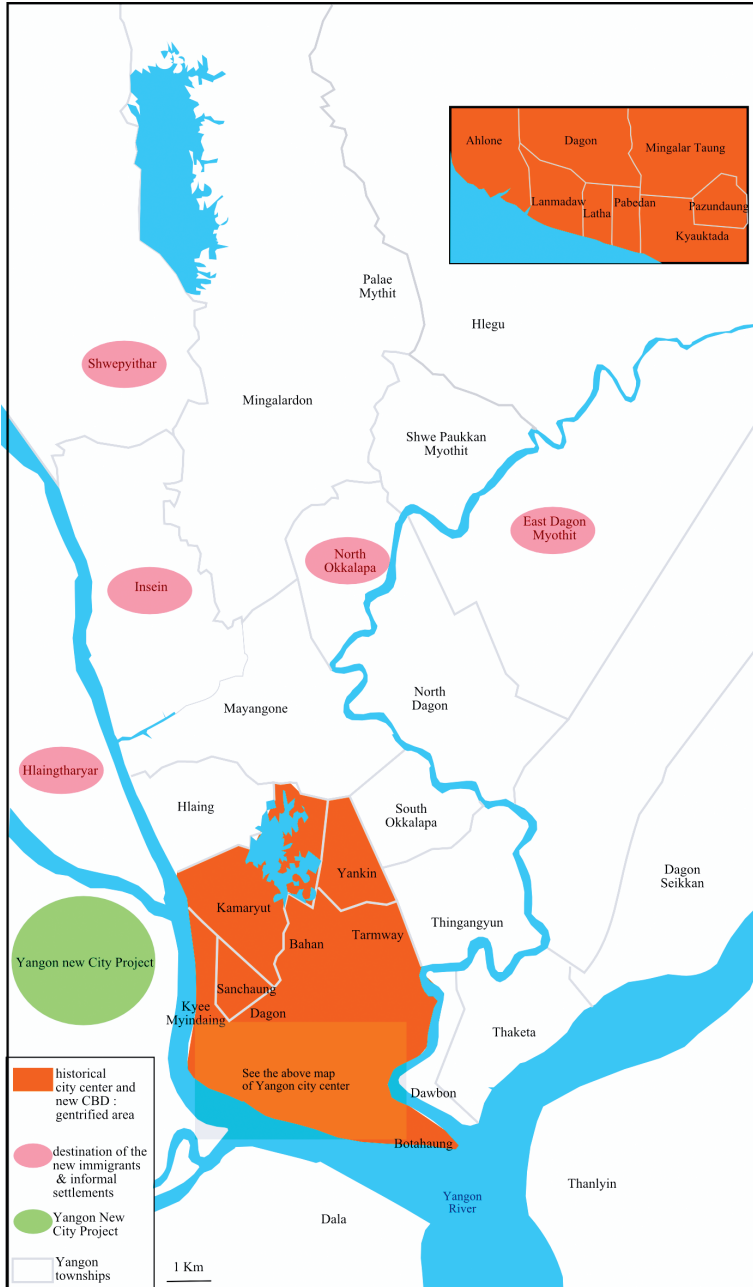


Fig. 1. Old and rich townships versus areas of new informal settlements in Yangon: the dichotomy between a gentrified and internationalized city center and poorer suburban townships?

Map: Marion Sabrié, August 2018.

cause for the departure of a poor range of the population to the peripheries, which is also due to new practices such as the increasing demand of an advance of 6 to 12 month-rent to get the lease accepted (Myat Nyein Aye 2017b; interviews of the author 2014).

Some families are forced to share an apartment in order to divide the cost (interview of the author 2014). The practice of asking for an advance, which is illegal under the Urban Rent Control Act of 1960, also concerns leases for businesses, which include freelance workers, small businesses but also large companies, especially multinationals which can manage to pay such a sum. The proponents of a new legislation for the control of the real estate market are many and a special commission, the Commission for the Assessment of Legal Affairs and Special Issues, has been formed under the leadership of Thura U Shwe Mann (who was the first Speaker of the House of Representatives from 2010 to 2016 and the second Speaker of the Assembly of the Union from 2013 to 2016). To this day, however, no law has yet emerged, there is little or no legal remedy, and illegal practices carry on in the economic capital. Some observers call this phenomenon “the Yangon real estate bubble”: in 2015 the average price of rent per square meter exceeded that of Bangkok (\$ 25) and Singapore (\$ 75) (*Myanmar Insider* 2015). The rental prices may not remain so high in the coming years, as they are also indexed to the number of investors settling in the country, which depends on the political situation that has not been stabilized (due to the “Rohingya crisis” and other wars led by the central army against ethnic minorities such as the Kachin). Although it is not confirmed yet, some real estate specialists are already talking about “the end of the Burmese Gold Rush” (MacGregor 2017). This may be confirmed in the coming decade.

If this gentrification is mainly driven by the increase in rental prices, the internationalization of the city is also accompanied by population displacements: forced, as in the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s, when people were relocated in new peripheral townships, and more gradual “spontaneous” ones. Indeed, due to the increase in rental prices, some economically constrained people are relegated to the peripheries. In the absence of an effective public housing policy, they invest in the urban gaps in the periphery (especially in the north-east and north-west of the city) and settle in very precarious, mostly self-built settlements. Simone (2018: 2) speaks of a “conventional factory” of the urban fabric of the globalized metropolis in which “land rent is maximized and the poor and the working class are relegated to the periphery”.

The word “slum” has existed in the Burmese language (*kyu kyaw*) since the early 1980s. It is still absent from official speech, although it is a reality that is increasingly visible in Yangon: “informal housing” refers to the settlement of persons who have been living for a short or longer time on a piece of land without being registered to the local authorities and/or without having any ownership or rental lease. An ID card of “informal housing resident” has appeared since 2016, but its status and the way of getting it still remain unsystematic and uncertain (interviews by the author 2016). The unofficial disposal of the land creates a situation of potential eviction by the authorities, which is reinforced in the context of the

current multiplication of urban and housing projects but also of the transportation network. Moreover, despite the democratization of the regime, the rule of law is not always respected (Cheesman 2015: 7) and the possession of an informal residence permit does not really guarantee any rights.

An Exponentially Congested Traffic and the Crisis of Mobilities

The urban growth, including the spontaneous informal urban settlements in the periphery and the forced evictions previously orchestrated by the authorities and nowadays economically constrained by the rent prices, is reinforcing one of Yangon’s major problems: traffic congestion (see Fig. 2). The congestion has accelerated since 2010 due to several factors: first, the drastic drop in import taxes on cars—maintained for several decades at a prohibitive rate by the military junta (Sabrié 2014) and its corollary, the exponential increase in the number of vehicles¹² in the country, particularly in Yangon, whose two ports, the old one in the center and the deep-water port of Thilawa, are the main import entry points. Given that the public transport offer does not meet the rising demand “passers” have emerged in the second half of the 20th century (Tarrus 1985: 50). These are private drivers who come to remedy the lack of public transport: simple owners of a private vehicle without an official operating license, employed by a transport company or even at the head of a large company in the sector (interviews by the author 2014; Sabrié 2019). Their existence shows the current limits of the centralized transport policy, in a similar way to that which takes place in Jakarta (Desmoulière 2017; Lee 2015), even if the traffic is not comparable in terms of size.

As said above, the urban sprawl is also increasing the traffic congestion (see Fig. 3). With the creation of informal settlements and the construction of suburban housing, especially near the industrial areas, to accommodate newly immigrated workforce, the periphery of Yangon is expanding. Some allotment sites allow workers to live close to their jobs. New industrial zones, such as the one in Thilawa deep sea port, are built in parallel with workers’ housing next door (see Fig. 4). However, the most attractive areas for employment are the Central Business District and its neighborhoods, located in the southern part of the city. Therefore, the commuting time, already long for many employees, is lengthened by the traffic congestion. However, not all new migrants are systematically employed in the city center or in the city core: some of them also work in the informal settlement areas (see Forbes 2019, Kyed 2019, this volume). Yet these jobs, which belong to the informal economy, are up to now poorly documented.

One of the major reasons for the growth in urban traffic is also that the road network, which was adapted to traffic before the economic openness, is obsolete and congested since 2010. The resulting economic loss for companies in Yangon has not yet been measured. Some companies, especially multinationals, are reluctant to settle in the emerging metropolis for this reason. The municipal government seems unprepared for all the tasks to be accomplished, including the regulation of traffic by building a road network adapted to its exponential growth.

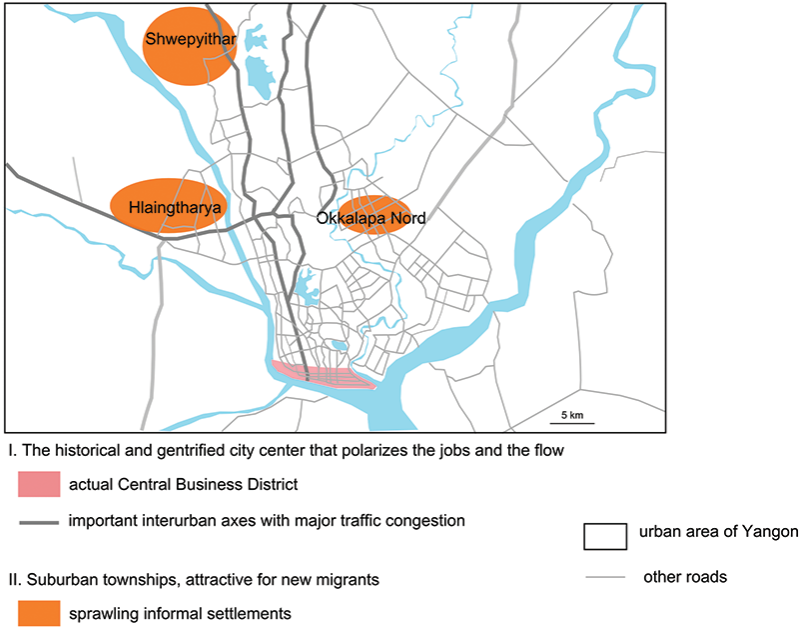


Fig. 2. Traffic congestion between the CBD and the suburban townships
Map: Marion Sabrié, August 2018.



Fig. 3. Traffic congestion in Yangon city core, close to Bogyoke Aung San Market
Photo: Marion Sabrié, 13/08/2014.



Fig. 4. Housing for workers in the vicinity of Yangon Thilawa Deep Sea Port

Photo: Marion Sabrić, 29/01/2013.

THE UNPREPARED URBAN PLANNING AUTHORITIES AND THE LACK OF SOLUTIONS TO THE URBAN CRISIS

Since the beginning of the economic opening in 2010 and the election of a new government in 2015, the solutions to the challenges developed above are not revolutionary, even if they contrast with the inertia of the urban policy during the dictatorship. These solutions suffer from several problems: the very numerous urban actors and planners, the lack of transparency in the decision-making processes, the very strong foreign interference in the real estate projects and the absence of funding, in particular for the projects aimed at reducing the socio-spatial inequalities.

A Multitude of Urban Actors and of Interferences

In Yangon, the urban development is the work of a multitude of public actors—municipal, regional and national—, international development partners and private companies. I will study these different actors and the coordination and the links between them, identifying their respective specialities in their fields. Then, I will detail and analyze various projects carried out by them and the forms of transfer associated to these projects.

Untrained and Uncoordinated Public Actors

Public actors in charge of the urban planning have a very recent expertise. The Yangon City Development Committee, the Yangon Municipality in its modern form, was created in 1990. It is only 15 years later that a department of urban planning was founded. This department had a small team, which initially had no training in urban studies¹³ and lacked funding (interviews of the author 2014). The municipality is only one of three public bodies in charge of the management of urban policy with the central government, through the Ministry of National Planning and Economic Development and the Ministry of Construction, and the Government of the Region of Yangon. There is no legislation detailing how each authority should take part in urban planning. In total, there are 12 central government ministries, 10 regional government and 22 municipal departments that have urban prerogatives (Nixon et al. 2015; Interviews conducted by the author in 2010 & 2014). Thant Myint-U (2013) explains that this overlapping of actors in charge of urban planning is complicated by the properties and lands owned by the leaders of different authorities, each one wanting his “share of the pie”. Indeed, despite the democratization of the regime, many elites, including the cronies of the late 20th century, remained in place in the country’s economy, still holding on to some key activities and/or a significant land heritage.

Regarding the public urban policy, Günther (2013) highlights the plurality of decision-making processes and on the “effects of conflicting jurisdictions and competing responsibilities between institutions”. However, he believes that these numerous decision-making processes can also be considered an opportunity for civil society actors and that it could benefit them, for example when it comes to stopping some projects. I have not found any illustrative example, but, even though the freedom of speech is stronger than it was during the military era, I doubt that civil society is well informed about the decision-making process: either it is still hidden from them or they do not have access to these kinds of information, because of the lack of education.

The way the administrative jurisdictions have been designed since their creation has led to overlapping powers, due to the way they are organized. Most of the urban public authorities have been created during the military junta time and, for sure, giving them competing functions led to less power. As the transport network is also part of the urban fabric, intersectoral coordination is also needed, although it is not yet a reality in Yangon nor in any other city in Myanmar. The overlapping of the different authorities in urban planning can be highlighted by the example of the solutions provided by the municipal, regional and national authorities to remedy the insufficient housing supply. The various authorities in charge of this sector do not cooperate with each other and have chosen very different solutions, which would go in contradictory ways. There is a huge lack of communication between them and no committee where they could share their views on urban issues. National authorities, through the Urban & Housing Department of the Ministry of Construction and helped by the Construction and Housing Deve-

lopment Bank, want to set up a low-cost home ownership project to regularize informal settlements. Since February 2017, the regional government, through its Department of Social Affairs helped by the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the International Finance Corporation, decided to build a new industrial city of 80 km², at the southwest of Yangon’s current borders, to prepare for a significant urban growth (Ye Mon & Aye Nyein Win 2017; Kyaw Ye Linn 2018), although a previous project had been aborted in Dalat, in the south of Yangon because of the lack of political and economic transparency. By May 2018, the regional parliament had not yet approved this project.¹⁴ Meanwhile, the municipal government, through its City Planning & Land Department, with the help of the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) and the Japan Overseas Infrastructure Investment Corporation for Transport and Urban Development (JOIN), wants to implement its “2040 Greater Yangon” project, which focuses on the renovation of the current metropolis. This project, initially presented in 2012, was updated in 2016 with some 40 priority projects to be started before 2020. These three examples of urban policy are not coordinated with each other and are even disconnected, showing once again the disorganization of the authorities in charge of urban planning, their different orientations and the lack of information about each other, as none of the authorities coordinate mutual brainstorming.

The Top-Down and Non-Transparent Urban Governance

Citizens do not take part in planning policy decisions. “The ‘right to the city’ is far more than the individual liberty to access urban resources; it is the power to participate directly in the decisions that produce urban space” (Harvey 2008: 1 quoted by Roberts 2017). According to that definition, Myanmar citizens do not have any “right to their cities”, understanding the “right to the city” as an analytical concept to think the process of exclusion from the city, especially of the poorer classes (Matelski & Sabrié 2019, this volume). Today, it is not yet a political motto in Myanmar.

Exogenous interference is found in the international expertise provided to the Myanmar authorities by foreign governments and by international assistance, but also in the construction sector mostly lead by international companies. Even though the project management is national, its governance is managed by elites who have mainly been trained abroad, especially in the universities of Great Britain.¹⁵ It seems that nowadays these authorities are not playing a central urban planning role anymore.

The Central Role of Japanese Expertise and Capital in the Urban Planning

For the past ten years or so, the main support of the municipal authorities for urban development has been the Japanese,¹⁶ in particular through the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA). The agency has been reinforced since 2014 by an investment fund for projects abroad, the Japan Overseas Infrastructure Investment Corporation for Transport and Urban Development (JOIN). The latter

“funds, but also brings Japanese expertise and technology solutions to infrastructure projects around the world” (JOIN 2018). Beyond the lucrative aspect of its participation, what interests me is also the application of the Japanese urban model of development to Yangon, in particular on the transport network—such as, among others, the Bus Rapid Transit System or the Yangon electric Tram, built in 2016. It is not only funding transfers that the Japanese are planning in Yangon, but also a cultural role one, as the Japanese want to export to Yangon their urban and transport models. This model transfer also questions its adaptability to another urban morphology. Although this question still remains relevant today, the Japanese have increased contacts, for more than a decade, with the Municipality. They managed to get an office inside the Municipality in order support their projects that I will analyze.

The Short and Medium-Term Solutions Adopted by the Authorities with the Help of International Partners

Urban projects in Myanmar are as numerous as there are actors. But all of them are probably necessary given the scale of the task (Than Myint-U 2013). A report estimates that it will take \$ 150 billion to modernize the existing urban structure. In the next 12 years, “Myanmar big cities will require 10,000 kilometers of new roads, 11 square kilometers of housing, 2.5 square kilometers of commercial space and 140 hospitals” (Chhor et al. 2013: 92). The country authorities do not have these \$ 150 billion, and even if they would have this sum, they would not be willing to spend it on modernizing the urban structure. The public money is mostly used to develop the country economically with short-term rather than long-term investments.

The Updated and Reviewed Projects of Greater Yangon

In 2013, the Municipality, JICA and the Yangon Transport Authority (YRTA) jointly conceived the Yangon Urban Development Plan and the Urban Transport Master Plan, which, in the next 30 years, aims to “solve the current urban problems & anticipate longer-term challenges” (JICA & YCDC 2013). It is essentially financed by JICA with a budget of \$ 192 million for the first 5 years. There are four following priority sectors: improvement of the intra-urban rail network, renovation and extension of the intra-urban road network, upgrading and development of electricity distribution, and the development of a sanitation system (ibid.). In addition to the forty or so projects, which are scheduled to be revised every five years, four other projects are simultaneously planned: to upgrade Yangon to a city with international standards, to create an urban park in the historical district around the Sule Pagoda, and an attractive river front (which also belongs to the projects of the Yangon Heritage Strategy), to renovate the circular line (Transit Oriented Development of the Yangon Circular Line) and the station area and finally, to improve rainwater management in the Central Business District.

The direction taken by these projects indicates well the priority interests of the municipal authorities. Only one of the projects concerns transport, although it is one of the major issues of the Yangon metropolitan area where congestion literally blocks urban life.

The Japanese are not the only official urban planning actors: the Yangon Heritage Trust and the Construction and Housing Development Bank participate too in the urban management. Some projects were qualified as “priority”, that is to say to be finished before 2020: the requalification of government buildings abandoned since 2006 by the departments moved to Naypyitaw (Governmental Lands Redevelopment Project), the establishment of a Bank to support the heritage conservation projects (Yangon Heritage Strategy Implementation Bank), a zone¹⁷ with restrictions on the authorized height of buildings (Yangon Land Use and Building Height Zone Plan), and last but not least and especially linked to our main interest in this article, the impetus for a low-cost housing construction program with low-interest long-term loans, jointly conducted with the Housing Development Bank.

Projects only Focused on Improving Urban Networks and Transportation?

To the challenges linked to the generalization of personal motorization and the increasing congestion of road traffic (previously developed), what are the solutions provided, or at least proposed by the authorities, except the renovation of the circular line?¹⁸ The construction of a new city in the South-West of Yangon at Kye Myin Dain (between the Townships of Hlaing Thar Yar, Twante and Seikkyi Kanaungto, at the west of the Yangon River), the Yangon New City Project (presented above, see Fig. 1), would contribute to a decentralization of traffic flows, mainly north-south oriented between the northern outskirts and the old city center, the actual CBD. The first southern extension project on the Dalat territory, situated in the south of Yangon, was abandoned, mainly because of the lack of transparency, the lack of water there and also the high cost of building a bridge over the Yangon River. In addition, it is expected that this new city will host both industrial and housing areas, ideally up to 1 to 2 million people on around 400 km². The project development company, the New Yangon Development Company Limited, was launched in June 2017 (Kyaw Ye Linn 2018). The project is ambitious, as its planned area is twice the size of Singapore (Myo Pa Pa San 2018). In addition to the deconcentration of the traffic flows, one of the goals of the project is to reduce socio-spatial injustices by providing employment for those living in these outlying areas of Yangon. On the other hand, in order to be able to implement this solution, evictions are carried out, in exchange for a financial or land (of smaller area) compensation. This project also means a choice not to renovate the existing structures, but to create new ones from scratch.

A second solution exists: the creation of a multipole city in order to avoid uni-directional traffic flows. Five existing neighborhoods—Mindama, Thilawa, Yankin, Myothit and Seikkan townships—, situated around 10 kilometers from the CBD,

would be developed into new centers with one or few specialisation sectors. For example, Thilawa, in addition to the currently developed logistic activities, would be specializing in Research & Development and Information Technology (Khaing Moe Nyunt 2018). As in the first solution, there could be a risk of economic weakening of the Central Business District.

A third solution would be a specialization of all the townships in which the Central Business District would be only dedicated to commercial and financial activities. The employees working there could ideally live in the surrounding neighborhoods to avoid a long commuting time. In parallel, the satellite towns in the metropolitan area would be expanded and jobs created there.

Other solutions to the numerous challenges faced by Yangon, such as traffic jams, have been given in the 2040 Greater Yangon Plan: the modernization of the bus system network and the equipment of a Rapid Transit Bus, more traffic control and better security, strategic thinking on missing network axes, the development of an intra-urban rail network and of a river passenger transport (in order to take advantage of the confluence site of the city to multiply the ferries' connections, which already exist, but are not adapted to the future transport needs of the Yangonites) and the promotion of Traffic Oriented Development, in order to adjust public transport services to the growth of urbanization (JICA & YCDC 2013). Private transport accounts for about 6 to 7% of the mobility of the Yangonites compared to around 40% walking and 30% riding buses (Heeckt et al. 2017). While maintaining a low rate of motorization, adapting the transportation offer and especially the road network to the growing demand would be one of the ideal strategies to be put in place by the authorities in a coordinated way.

A Criticized and Competing Urban Program

The various projects of the program, nowadays implemented by the Municipality which I have just detailed, are already questionable on many points. The first reason to criticize it is that it seems primarily oriented according to the lucrative will of the Japanese. The second one is that their support and their projects were chosen arbitrarily without any real competition. Although there are other numerous actors involved in urban policy, they do not intervene on a scale as large as the Japanese. Thirdly, the joint project carried out by the Municipality and the Japanese does not include the private urban projects that develop in parallel, although they have been approved by the Municipality through other decision-making channels. Despite the revision of the 2040 Greater Yangon Plan in 2016, the joint urban policy of the municipality and JICA is far from constituting a global vision of urban planning: on the contrary, the project gives the impression of a fragmented vision in addition to the unilateral projects of the national government, the ones of the regional government and those of the private promoters. Fourthly, despite the large number of investors, there is still a lack of funding: the multiplication of projects undermines their implementation, or at least delays it.

One can also point out that except for the Central Business District, no project is carried out at the scale of the township.

Sixth, it can also be argued that the JICA and YCDC project underestimates the urban growth, in particular the very important increase in immigration to some townships of Yangon, especially as nowadays, this immigration is becoming more family-focused (Boutry 2014). The official projects do not focus on the townships that host these new immigrants. The policy is far from social, but it is more focused on strengthening the attractiveness and economic development of Yangon, that is to say that public policies work for Yangon metropolization in order give the city a more important regional role to play. For example, there is no question of supporting the peripheral and urban sprawl by public facilities programs. Roberts (2017: 89) argues that “in this drive to catch up with its neighbours and reconnect with the global economy, Myanmar’s cities are seen as the engines for economic development”.

Seventh, the last critique that is often made about current urban projects is the lack of historical vision based on the imagination of citizens rather than elites for the protection of urban heritage (Huynt 2017). Indeed, there is no public or official brainstorming or position up to now on the vision adopted for the protection of the urban heritage. Yet Yangon is the city of Southeast Asia in which the vestiges of British colonization are the most numerous (Sugarman 2016; Association of Myanmar Architects 2012), although some have already been destroyed and others are under increasing pressure since the opening up of the economy. The exogenous urban Japanese model is put over Yangon realities without considering all these country-specific factors.

And finally, some issues are not taken into account by the development projects: for example, that the sprawl of peripheral areas can affect the production of the agricultural market. This impact is not mentioned at all in the projects, while feeding a growing urban population is an issue to consider. The challenges remain important in all cases for the Yangonites, especially new immigrants, but also poor populations relegated to the periphery and subject to public and private development plans of the urban territory.

THE RESILIENCE OF THE YANGONITES

The first and the second parts of this article allowed me to identify the urban system that endures the crisis and to analyze the factors and the consequences of the crisis. It was necessary to understand the urban crisis and the answers given by the authorities before analyzing how the inhabitants live these and react to them. Thinking of Yangon as an urban system enables one to rethink the urban fabric and its various actors, especially the inhabitants, including the poorer ones, facing urban morphological and mobility upheavals. The main goal is also to understand why the Yangonites are resilient to the accelerated changes of the metropolitan process.

The Resilience of Yangonites Facing Gentrification and Competition for Land

The first two parts of the article help to take notice of the numerous processes that lead to the resilient state of the Yangonites, although it does not imply the disappearance of the previous urban system of their city. It is important to note that the Yangonites do not verbalise their resilient actions and although I did many interviews, most of them were not self-aware of their resilience. In Myanmar, the concept has not been very spread out yet, and even the conceptualization of the crisis endured by the Yangonites is only done by the elites. Even though for the time being it is only a discourse, it can help to open new prospects on other possible solutions, in order to overcome a deadlocked situation. In Yangon, to talk about resilience of the inhabitants makes sense because of the lack of very precise and effective responses from the authorities.

I have previously analyzed the multiplication of informal housing in response to an insufficient and inadequate housing supply, due to the internationalization of the city-center and its rents, too high for a large part of the population. Even in the periphery, this poor fringe of the population is not safe from eviction. Also called “fleeings” (Blot & Spire 2014), these forced displacements (which I differentiate from the ones that are motivated by economic constraints), from the core city to the periphery, are more and more numerous in Yangon, as in other cities of the country and in the world. During the decades of dictatorship, the government regularly used force to empty territories in order to sell or rent them to companies. Most of the time, there was no compensation for the evicted inhabitants. One of the examples today is the case of the people of Michaungkan village, in the Yangon region, where people have been displaced for the implementation of agro-food activities by the authorities. Since the country is not run by a military junta anymore, the displaced people of Michaungkan claim compensation. In 2014, they demonstrated and about 15 of them were arrested for illegal assembly and illegal occupation of the public highway (Yen Saning 2014). This shows that the path of recognition of the rights of Myanmar citizens is long. These demonstrations did not take place before the political transition because of the fear of repression in a bloodbath by the old military regime.

Today, the reasons for the evictions are the same. I will detail two case studies: those of the residents of the FMI City slum in Hlaing Thayar township and the “squatters” of Hlegu.¹⁹ The informal settlement or the “typical Yangon slum”, or even “typical Myanmar one”, if it meets similar criteria to other slums (Davis 2006), may not exactly correspond to the standard view. These are often spaced wooden houses, sometimes on stilts as the wetlands areas around Yangon and become even swampier during the monsoon months (Forbes 2019, this volume). FMI City, the first gated-community inaugurated in Yangon in 2005, is exactly the contrary. In order to extend the housing estate, the promoters decided to call on the police to evict the 2,000 people who lived nearby and who worked there as day laborers or permanent ones for some of them (Noe Noe Aung 2012). In

September 2012, these residents protested in order not to leave the premises, which belong to the company that built and manages the gated-community. But they did not succeed: they were displaced further, without any compensation, although some have been living on these lands for more than a decade. This is not an isolated case either in Yangon (*Eleven Media* 2014) or more generally in Myanmar because the authorities support real estate development projects and small and large scale industrial projects.

In the township of Hlegu, 45 kilometers northeast of downtown Yangon, the inhabitants of a shanty town with about 4,000 houses were displaced and several people arrested for opposing this eviction (*Agence France Presse* 2017). This is the second time in the same slum: a first eviction operation was carried out in 2015. The land on which the shanty town is spreading belongs to the government. Located along the highway road between Yangon and Mandalay, the second largest economic city in the country, its location is strategic. Because of Yangon’s economic development and its real estate are booming in the city core and in the close suburbs, the inhabitants of the informal settlements face more challenges. Their resilience, even some resistance acts, are slowly taking place, despite the lack of knowledge on their rights. The reactions of the evicted persons, according to the theorization of the concept of resilience that I analyzed above, should be more akin to resilience than resistance. These two concepts are different, but resilience can also be understood as the capacity to resist or to withstand.

This definition is directly linked to the idea of loss or damage, which refers to the works made on the physical vulnerability [...] in physical sciences” [...] “The resilience draws on the capacity of adaptation and implies flexibility and plasticity, while the resistance implies opposition and rigidity.”²⁰ (Djament-Tran et al. 2011: 7-8.)

In the case of the Yangonites, the opposition is at its early stages and not well organized yet, as there is only a beginning of rule of law in Myanmar. However, the behaviour of the inhabitants can be qualified as resilient toward the economic development, the metropolization and the internationalization of the city.

The Resilience of the Yangonites to Metropolization and the Urban Policy

At the end of the year 2017, the Municipality implemented a low-cost housing construction program and built 300 homes in the Shwe Lin Ban Industrial Zone in the Hlaing Tharyar Township, in the north of Yangon. As this township is considered the largest informal housing settlements of the city (see Kyed 2019, this volume), there is a real need for more formal housing and better living conditions than the ones offered in Hlaing Tharyar slum. Due to this project, the YCDC earns between 5 and 10% profit from the sale of these apartments to finance similar future operations. The buyers pay the apartment at 30% of the real price,²¹ starting from \$ 21,500 (Zaw Zaw Htwe 2017). Loans are granted to people with salaries between \$ 250 and \$ 357 per month. With this example, we understand that this

new program, which answers to a real need, is going to have two consequences: first, although the monthly minimum wage in Myanmar was raised in March 2018 (Nyan Linn Aung & Pyae Thet Phyo 2018), it is still around \$ 80. The project of the Municipality is a low-cost housing program, but because of the flat prices, the population that can afford to buy them is not the informal housing settlers, but other employees. Second, the current inhabitants will be the ones not earning enough to buy the flats and will be evicted in a short-term, in order to start these projects. Some Yangonites will benefit from few public projects, but are they the neediest ones?

It is not easy to study the resilience of individual Yangonites, as from my interviews I found that they are mostly unorganized as groups defending themselves against the metropolization of their city. Most of them are fighting to survive by having a job, food and a shelter. The most resilient ones are from the poorer classes as they are more affected by the changes: in terms of way of living, time in transportation but also economically. Because of the urban sprawl, they are the ones spending more time in the transportation network by living further than before or far from their workplace. The metropolization also increases the socio-spatial inequalities between the richest and the poorest Yangonites and creates more segregation. The poorest inhabitants, although they mostly do not fight against it, are well aware of the difficulties that they are facing and how these are linked to the consequences of the economic opening of the country and its consequences on Yangon.

Although the authorities are offering different solutions to the urban problems, one of the latent questions is if they will involve more upstream the Yangonites in the urban governance.

I analyzed the resilience of the Yangonites facing the metropolization of their city, but I should also note that the other Myanmar people are also resilient facing the metropolization of Yangon and in a less important degree, of Mandalay. Therefore, the metropolization of the first and second economic capital cities widens the gap between the urban inhabitants and the other.

CONCLUSION

Urban production, as elsewhere in the world and even more in the cities of the Global South, is made on unequal power relations. Economic development drives these relations and seems to “force” slum clearance (see Forbes 2019, Kyed 2019, this volume). While the new Myanmar regime presents itself as a democracy, evictions are growing in number. They are made under the guise of offering better living conditions for the local population by modernizing informal settlements. But they result from the development of two important actors in urban production: public authorities (which were mostly absent during four decades until 2010) and real estate developers. The public authorities are difficult to understand today because their policies are various, multifaceted and very close to the spheres of private real estate decision-makers. When the same people are included and there

are some latent conflicts of interests, this concordance between administrative and economic elites then skews the choices made in urban development. Although important, the numerous public authorities in charge of urban development are impeded to work because of the lack of coordination between them and an absence of precise definitions of their urban prerogatives.

The challenges of Yangon emerging metropolis seem finally as great for the authorities as for the population; only their repercussions differ a lot on a daily basis, some living in slums and some others deciding behind a desk. Despite the lack of quantified data both on the acceleration of the flow of working immigrants to Yangon and on the number of inhabitants of the informal settlements, the authorities are taking better account of these recent issues. The project is even bigger than that: it concerns all aspects of urban life, starting with a desirable overhaul of urban governance to simplify a single urban policy and not various projects all over the place.

If the intra-urban forced mobilities are more and more numerous, some voices are slowly starting to rise. If the “right to the city” is not yet an idea conveyed within the inhabitants, the habit of demonstrating to ask for compensation has been taken up slowly in the past few years. This does not mean that the demands of these people are successful, but they try, considering that the one who lives on the land, sometimes even for more than a decade, owns it. As for the more voluntary mobilities, they are also increasing: some are partly economically constrained by the gentrification of the center and others are programmed by the authorities towards the periphery, thanks to officially implemented urban projects. The actual urban policy could, in some cases, be a help to their resilience, displacing the competition for the sake of the poor.

This voluntary relocation of a segment of the less poor population to housing estates where they can have access to property is a recent phenomenon. Although this policy is not centralized by a single authority that could meet the needs of the entire city, municipal and government projects seem to be moving in the same direction. Another type of displacement also appears today, towards the gated communities which are multiplying outside the central Yangon townships: the richest classes wish to have access to better living conditions, without being too far from the CBD. One example of this is Star City, which is accessible by ferry about 20 minutes from the city center and offers a more natural environment (Sabrié 2014). This example among others shows that, despite the growing negative externalities of the metropolization, the environmental theme slowly becomes, for some, a new priority for the coming decades. This example is also interesting as it shows another aspect of the resilience that I did not develop in the article: as “a state and a process”²² leading to sustainability (Djament-Tran et al. 2011: 6). To conclude, the resilience is not only the reaction of poorer Yangonites. The sustainability, one of the operational translations of the concept of resilience in terms of urban services, is also about the richer classes who want to find in Yangon better living conditions. It is why the sustainability becomes one of the contemporary urban objectives to achieve in Yangon “emerging metropolis”.

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Notes

1. Since 1989, the official name of Burma is Myanmar. In the same way, Rangoon became Yangon in order to erase the colonial names given by the British.
2. The topic of the current article is totally different from the report that I wrote with the LSE centre that almost did not raise the question of informal settlements and the resilience of the Yangonites.
3. My doctoral research focused partly on the role played by the Ayeyarwady River in Yangon city.
4. Difficulties in obtaining quality quantitative data are still present, though less than before 2014. Access to data has improved in recent years.
5. Nay Pyi Taw has a special status, according to the 2008 Constitution, as it is an Union territory.
6. These new townships are called “*myo thit*”, which means “new city” in Burmese language. Formerly built on the outskirts of Yangon, they are now well integrated into its urban fabric.
7. In 1953, the socialist regime had nationalized all the lands (Fenichel & Khan 1981).
8. It is difficult to have exact figures on emptied neighborhoods. On the other hand, the area of the Yangon Municipality increased from 207.2 km² in 1974 to 346.12 in 1985 and 578.13 in 1991 (Lubeigt 1994), attesting to the addition of satellite towns.
9. The word “township” is the Burmese administrative vocabulary. It is to be understood in a very different context than the South African apartheid one.
10. It is also in a similar aim that the new capital, Nay Pyi Taw, was built.
11. The Burmese royal cities were traditionally built in Upper Burma (such as Amara-pura, Ava or Mandalay).
12. Between 2011 and 2016, 670,000 cars were imported into Myanmar, according to the Myanmar Port Authority. Figures for vehicles registered in Yangon are not available.

13. This lack of training in development is insightful of the decline of the national education during the five decades of the military junta, while it was one of the best of Southeast Asia during colonial times. Employees in the urban planning department are also poorly paid (Günther 2013), which is not a very motivating factor.
14. The current inhabitants of the area must agree to be relocated for compensation or a smaller land than the one they owned.
15. This link with the universities of Great Britain can be explained by almost two centuries of British colonization. Some Myanmar people have also attended Singaporean or American universities.
16. Since the mid-1970s, the Japanese policy of cooperation, in particular with the countries of South-East Asia, has served to give a new image of its people and the country—the elderly Myanmar people are still traumatized by years of the Japanese yoke on the country (between 1942 and 1944). This strategy to maintain privileged relations with its neighbors and economic partners is especially important today to maintain a sustainable growth for Japan.
17. This zoning of the old city center aims to take into account the historical and architectural specificities of the Yangon urbanscape and to preserve its religious perspectives, especially those drawn by the stupas of the pagodas. As 80% of the Myanmar people are Buddhist, these pagodas are cultural key elements of each city of the country and Yangon concentrates few main ones, as the Shwedagon.
18. The Circular line is the equivalent of the regional express network of Parisian Region, called “RER”.
19. It should be noted that people living in informal settlements are called “squatters” and are highly depreciated by other inhabitants (interviews made by the author in 2014; see Kyed 2019, this volume).
20. The author’s translation. “Cette définition est directement liée à l’idée de perte et d’endommagement, qui renvoie elle-même aux travaux sur la vulnérabilité physique [...] dans les sciences physiques” [...] “La résilience s’appuie sur la capacité d’adaptation et suppose donc la souplesse et la plasticité, alors que la résistance implique l’opposition et la rigidité.”
21. The price of land would not be included in the purchase price of the flats.
22. The author’s translation. “La résilience est à la fois un processus et un état.”

Abstract: Since the elections of 2010 and the accelerated economic openness of Myanmar (formerly Burma), changes are taking place in the country. Those metamorphoses are particularly visible in Yangon’s landscape, which remains the economic capital and the national entry door, and major for its inhabitants. Yangon’s population is growing, its suburban areas are expanding, and the limits of its metropolitan area are not well defined yet. As a result of the urban pressure and of the increased influx of people from other regions, as well as foreign investors, the metropolization is disorganized: scattered construction of new skyscrapers, larger malls, destruction of green spaces, gentrification of the Central Business District, etc. Because of the new economic legislation, which has allowed a massive importation of cars, Yangon is also facing many other issues: inadequate road infrastructures, severe traffic congestion, lack of parking spaces, noise and air pollution. Yangon Municipality—the Yangon City Development Committee—assisted by the Japanese International Cooperation Agency,

prepared an urban transport plan of Greater Yangon. Since environmental, cultural and social costs seem to be high, to what extent do the Yangonites benefit from the economic openness? Based on data collected by the Myanmar government in the 2014 Census, and years of interviews by the author of local and international actors living in Yangon, this paper analyzes the challenges of the authorities and the resilience of the Yangonites facing the metropolization of Yangon.

***La “métropole émergente” de Yangon:
défis des autorités et résilience des Yangonais***

Résumé: Depuis 2010 et l'accélération de l'ouverture économique du Myanmar (ex-Birmanie), de nombreux changements prennent place dans le pays. Ces métamorphoses sont particulièrement visibles dans le paysage de Yangon qui demeure la capitale économique et la porte d'entrée du pays, et importantes pour ses habitants. Sa population augmente et ses quartiers périphériques s'étendent. En réponse à la pression urbaine et à un flot croissant d'immigrants et d'investisseurs nationaux et internationaux, la métropolisation est désorganisée : constructions éparpillées de gratte-ciels et de malls, destruction d'espaces verts, gentrification du Central Business District, etc. Yangon doit également faire face à de nombreux défis, résultant notamment d'une nouvelle législation, ayant permis une importation massive de voitures : infrastructures routières inadaptées à la circulation, embouteillages importants, pollution de l'air, bruit, etc. La municipalité de Yangon – le Yangon City Development Committee – aidée par la Japanese International Cooperation Agency, a préparé un plan de transport urbain à mettre en place dans le Grand Yangon. Alors que les coûts environnementaux, culturels et sociaux semblent élevés, dans quelle mesure les Yangonais bénéficient-ils de l'ouverture économique ? Basé sur des données collectées par le recensement de 2014 et des années d'entretiens avec des acteurs locaux et internationaux vivant à Yangon, l'article analyse les défis urbains auxquels font face les autorités et la résilience des Yangonais face à la métropolisation de leur ville.

Keywords: emerging metropolis, Myanmar, Burma, Yangon, Rangoon, urban policy, urbanism, resilience.

Mots-clés: métropole émergente, Myanmar, Birmanie, Yangon, Rangoun, politique urbaine, urbanisme, résilience.