

Patterns of Squatting and Determinants in Dagon Myothit (Seikkan) Township, Yangon City

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Abstract: Squatting is the practice of occupying land or property to which one has no legal title. This paper studies patterns of squatting in Dagon Myothit (Seikkan) Township in Yangon City. The study area is located in the eastern part of Yangon City. It is one of the new townships of Yangon City. It has an area of 85.391 sq. km. Its total population is 167488 according to 2014 Census in Myanmar. It has 53358 numbers of squatter populations. The paper examines the patterns of squatter settlements and determinants. Objective of the paper is to study of squatters as social context. Secondary data is recorded from General Administrative Office of Dagon Myothit (Seikkan) Township. Primary data is collected by structured questionnaire and interview methods. Settlement of squatters is studied by dividing into 2 parts such as native people and migrated on the basis of 3 periods; before 1990, between 1990 and 2010, and after 2010. Research shows that before 1990 to the present, 2018 squatter settlement in Dagon Myothit (Seikkan) Township mainly based on the socio-economic factors such as commuting patterns, access to the local public goods, and suffering from natural disaster such as Nargic Cyclone struck in 2008. Determinants in informal settlement are poor urban governance, high living cost and high transport cost When people migrates from poor rural settlement area to urban area and/or urban to urban area.

Key words: Dagon Myothit (Seikkan), determinant, migration, squatting

1. Introduction

Yangon, its former capital, is undergoing fast processes of change. In line with global trends, Myanmar's urban population as a whole recently started to rise rapidly. From 2000 to 2014, Yangon experienced a 22.9% population growth [1]. Although the country is one of the least urbanized in mainland Southeast Asia, 5.2 million people live in Yangon [2]. Yangon remains the largest city, which hosts 10% of the country's total population, and 35% of its urban one (Mandalay, the country's second largest city, has about 1.3 million inhabitants). The risks of uncontrolled urban growth are large and in many cases are already being felt in Yangon. The urban poverty rate is estimated at 34.6%, reflecting high living costs and the challenges in obtaining stable and decent jobs [3]. The

process of downtown gentrification is not specific to Myanmar. In almost every big city around the world, poor people are evicted from the city centers [4]. Urban expansion has so far been limited and the city remains dense. Affordable housing is scarce and recent expansions in slum areas have been notable; the two are probably linked. A jump in foreign car imports in recent years has greatly increased the overall stock of cars, making congestion a headache felt daily in Yangon [5]. These are all examples of the "demons of density", or dangers of uncontrolled urbanization. Good data on slum populations is hard to find, but some estimates suggest that slums are home to 10-15% of Yangon's total population [6]. Yangon's built up area has not grown as quickly as its population. Yangon has a population similar to Bangkok, but the physical size of the city is much smaller. Between 2000 and 2010, Yangon's spatial area grew at an average rate of 0.5% per year, one of the lowest in the region [7]. The purpose of the paper is that in Yangon City, the

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numbers of population is increasing yearly and squatter settlement is found in every township of the city, especially in new townships. The researchers are interested in why informal settlement has been in the city and therefore, study Dagon Myothit (Seikkan) Township, a new township of Yangon City.

Their socio-economic conditions will answer the basic reasons of their squatting. On the basis of these facts, officials might control the informal settlement and support the needs of the squatters and improve their working skills.

This paper is studied by interviewing the squatter populations in Dagon Myothit (Seikkan) Township. It was established in 1994 and has 35 wards and 4 village tracts. It is one of the new satellite towns. It is still largely undeveloped and lack of basic municipal services. The Bago River flows on the east of Dagon Myothit Seikkan Township. Several bus lines connect Dagon Myothit Seikkan to downtown area and other parts of the city. These facts support to increase informal settlement area.

2. Material and Methods

The present study mainly focuses on three aspects of squatter settlement in Dagon Seikkan; socio-economic conditions of squatter population, urbanization and determinants in informal settlement in urban areas.

For these aspects of secondary data are recorded from General Administrative Office of Dagon Myothit (Seikkan) Township and primary data are collected by semi-structured questionnaire and interview methods. The database is constructed and analyzed in MS Access. Map is drawn in Arcs GIS to be clear presentation.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1 Socio-Economic Factors Commuting Patterns

Commuting patterns are divided into two categories, which are direction of commuting to their works, and commuting modes.

Direction of commuting of the squatters, who are working age persons, takes place within inner and outer

Dagon Myothit Seikkan. 25% of the workers are commuting within inner Dagon Myothit Seikkan. 75% in inner and outer area of the township according the nature of the work such as workers in construction sites as bricklayers and carpenters, motorcycle carrier and driver.

Those who work in this township are trishaw driver, small shopkeeper and seller in the market. Those who work in outside this township are workers in construction sites such as brick layering, metal joinery, bricklayers and carpenters in construction sites. Workers normally have a low skill and earn less, then they are more likely to commute shorter than the skill workers because they could not afford the transportation cost and they tend to work near their residential areas.

3.2 Access to the Local Public Goods and Living in Substandard Housing

Squatters are usually settled the places where have the access to basic infrastructures and get many job opportunities. In order to save transport cost and to access schools, markets, hospitals and police stations they have to stay substandard housing located in narrow, unpaved streets and polluted area. Three to eight family members have to stay in houses that have an area of about 100 square feet (Figs. 1 and 2).



Fig. 1 Housing Type of Squatters in Dagon Myothit Seikkan Township (Source: Field survey in 2018).



Fig. 2 Settlement Pattern of Squatters in Dagon Myothit Seikkan Township (Source: Field survey in 2018).

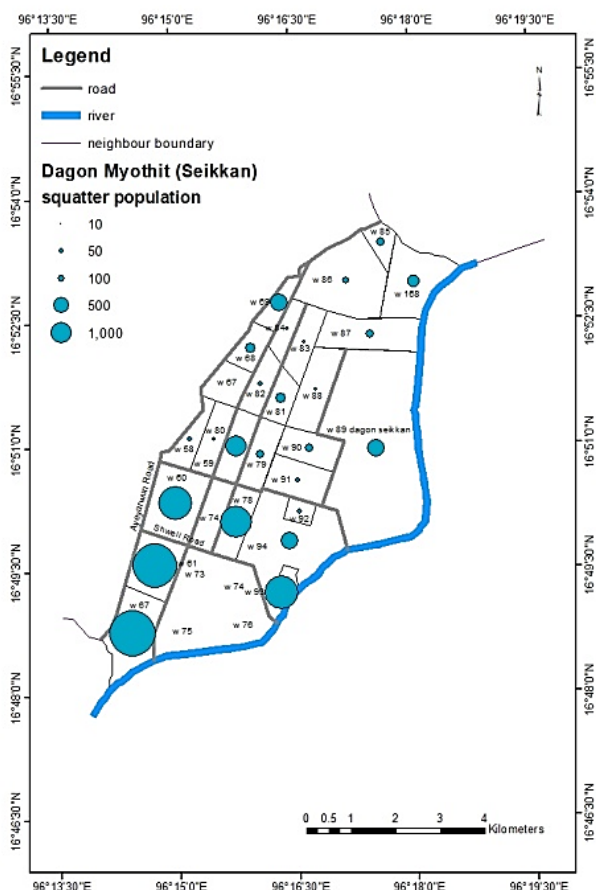


Fig. 3 The Distribution pattern of squatter settlements in Dagon Myothit Seikkan Township (Source: Field Survey in 2018).

There are 11 basic primary schools, 4 basic middle schools, 3 basic high schools, 8 monastery schools and one Degree College. It also has one hospital, 34 clinics markets and police stations, squatters migrate here for

it is easy to get jobs, to access to school for their children's education, to buy basic grocery items cheaply and easily and to access health care and to be safe. In Dagon Myothit (Seikkan) Township informal settlements are usually found along the main roads and near industrial zones (Fig. 3). Another interesting thing is that some streets are paved with concrete (Fig. 4) although they are informal settlers. How will the government solve these settled conditions?



Fig. 4 Squatter settlements on the either sides of the concrete streets in ward no. 67.

3.3 Urbanization

Fig. 5 shows the density of Dagon Myothit (Seikkan) Township.

According to 2014 census, the urban population was 150076 and rural population was 17372 person. This data shows that the majority of the people (89.6%) in the Township live in urban areas (Fig. 6).

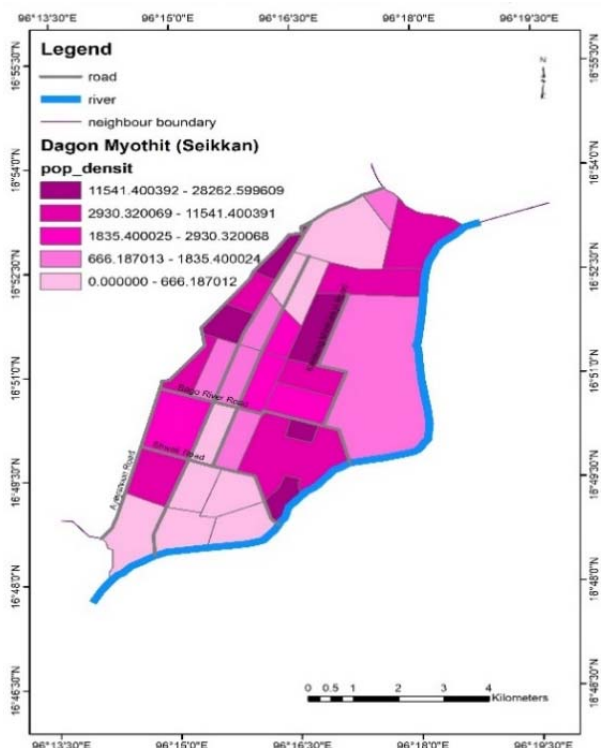


Fig. 5 Population density.

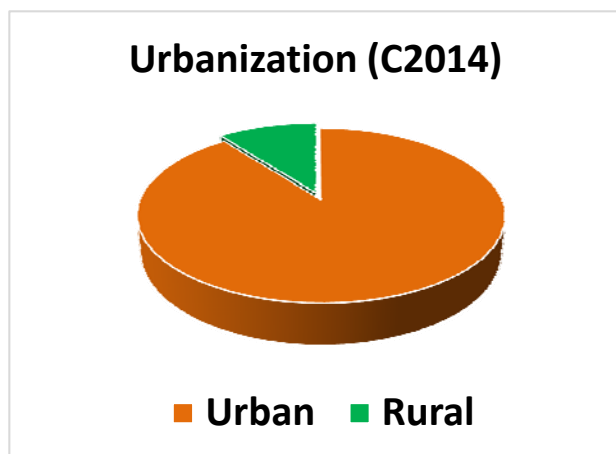


Fig. 6 Population structure of Dagon Myothit (Seikkan) Township (Source: The 2014 Myanmar Population and Housing Census - The Union Report, May 2015 (web)).

3.4 Natural Increase and Migration in Urban Areas

In the study area, both natural increase and in-migration can be found. Population size changed in natural increase by births and deaths.

Its population increased because of more births than deaths. Rate of natural increase is 2.9. 308 people migrated as formal settlement (Table 1 and Fig. 2). On

the other hand, informal settlement also increases the population in urban area. It can be clearly seen that urbanization in Dagon Myothit (Seikkan) Township between 2005 and 2019 (Figs. 7 and 8). Settlements and Commercial land use greatly changed on the western part of Bago River.

Yuzana Housing project, apartments in a major low-cost housing development in Yangon's Dagon Seikkan township, is being developed by the Department of Urban and Housing Development

Table 1 Population statistics in Dagon Myothit (Seikkan) Township.

2014 Total number of population	2017 Total number of population	Birth (number)	Death (number)	Migration	2018 Total number of population
167488	171965	163	57	308	172379

Source: The Report of Dagon Myothit (Seikkan) Township, 2017.

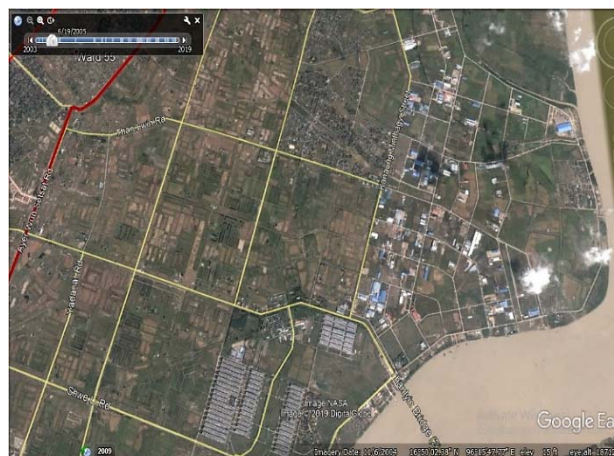


Fig. 7 Settlement Pattern in the Eastern Part of the Township near Bago River in 2005.

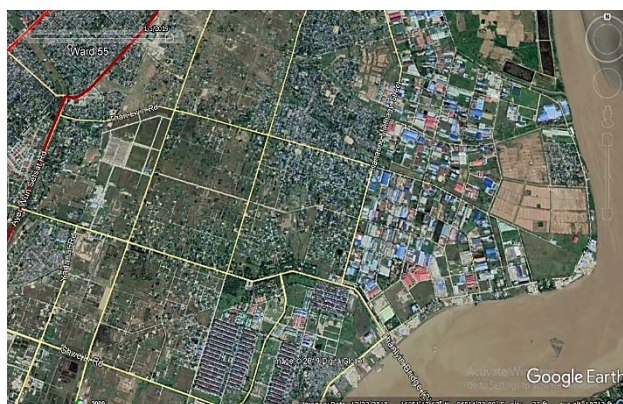


Fig. 8 Settlement Pattern in the Eastern Part of the Township near Bago River in 2019.

(DUHD) near to an existing project called Yuzana Garden City (which was completed in the year 2000 and comprises more than 13,800 apartments, most owners bought units in order to rent them out), Fig. 9. The project is located on the land between Yuzana Apartments and Bago River Road inside the Yuzana Garden City compound to the west of Sittaung Housing Estate. This is the affordable housing project. However, residents say that sales of low-cost apartments in the area have dried up, as buyers are unable to afford the K20 million price tag. Many Companies, steel factories, coffeemix factories, manufacturing industries such as garment factories and warehouses have occupied and increased in the eastern part of the Township (Figs. 7 and 8)

3.5 Determinants Poor Urban Governance

Myanmar's 2014 Population and Housing Census indicate that approximately 15 million people reside in cities. The Ministry of Construction's Department of Urban and Housing Development foresees increasing urbanization in the coming decades. It is projecting that by 2040 half of Myanmar's 35.5 million people will be living in urban areas. Yangon's populations will more than double to over 10 million. It is estimated that over 150,000 housing units will be required each year to accommodate this growing urban population. However, speculators and some capitalists have bought the flats



Fig. 9 Low-cost apartments in Yangon's Yuzana Housing (Source: Myanmar housing.com, 2012).

and estate in Yangon Region. Therefore, townships in Yangon the house rent are very high. Moreover, they are not end users. Their lands become uninhabited land and give a chance to become informal settlement areas. Another important thing is that to extend the city, government established new wards, which were farm lands. As a consequence, farm owners become landless people as they resettle the new wards, which were their farm lands and are uninhabited land yet.

Due to the expanding gap between housing prices and wages in urban centers, the informal housing sector is likely to meet the major part of this rising housing demand. These areas are often subserviced, with limited road access, poor drainage, shared and illegal electricity connections, poor sanitation and water supply, and often lacking even rudimentary medical facilities. These areas need to increase road width to facilitate the access of emergency vehicles (e.g., fire trucks) and the provision of health care.

3.6 High Incidence of Primary Education

All of the family members including the head of the family studied basic education of primary, middle and high school. Nobody graduated from university. People with only primary level of education are 50 %, middle level is 20 %, high school is 12 % and illiteracy is 8%. They have no opportunity to get good job because of their education and the lack of capital to invest. People who studied basic high school work in factories and industries. Their income is between about 100 thousands MMK Lakh or up to 30 thousands MMK per month. People who know basic primary education work in construction sites such as bricklayers and brick carriers, some are motorcycle carriers and some tri-haw drivers. Their income is about 80 thousands MMK or up to 250 thousands MMK per month. The vast majority of labors have to engage in informal sectors.

3.7 High Living Cost and Lack Basic Service

Squatter area has no basic needs for settlement such as water and electricity. To use water, they have to buy 400 MMK for 1 barrel of water and 500 MMK for 1 plastic bottle of drinking water. There is no lighting in the house and on the street. They have to spend 350 MMK for one bulb lighting and to watch TV between 6:30 pm to 10 pm.

3.8 High Transport Cost

For their housing squatters are located in the end of the wards or outer most part of the wards, they have to spend time or expenses to arrive bus stand. This is the daily problem to arrive to the work and other desired places such as market, school and health care centre.

4. Conclusion

Dagon Myothit Seikkan Township has many squatters, 15323 squatter houses and 15429 squatter households, as it is a new town, new industrial zone and has many uninhabited land and unused lands. The main reasons for urbanization are:

(1) When the Nargis Cyclone struck in Ayeyarwady Delta Region on 2nd May 2008, many households from Ayeyarwady Region come and find the jobs in Yangon City, and also come from Bago Region, but they cannot afford the high rent in the city. Therefore, they construct the huts in the unused lands of the new township.

(2) This new town has many job opportunities for low wage labours in the construction of factories and implementation of the departmental projects such as affordable housing projects. Low wage workers in these construction sites such as bricklayers and carpenters do not resettle to their former place and continue to stay in these temporary huts although the projects have been done.

(3) People living in other townships of Yangon City such as Hlaingtharyar, Thaketa, Dagon Myothit (South) and Dawbon townships sold their houses and then

come and settle as squatters near habitat and inhabitant lands because of the bad economy.

(5) Squatters have to stay in unfit housing units, unhealthy environments, and improper sanitation. They have to work in hard job and low wage job. One of the most important things is that they have no National Registration Card. They therefore have difficulties to travel and to join good jobs.

The above-mentioned facts are common reasons why people migrate to new urban area and how they encounter the constraints to improve their lives.

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