The system of tiered administrative boundaries in Myanmar is based in principle on a hierarchical structure of territorial units of different sizes. The 14 states and regions plus Nay Pyi Taw Union Territory are structured in 74 districts which in turn comprise 330 townships. Townships with a large surface area essentially have low population numbers and densities; in the cities, the surface areas of townships are small and their population numbers and densities are high. The townships with the largest surface areas are in the mountain and peripheral regions; those with the smallest areas are in the inner city of Yangon.

At country level the number of townships is very steady over longer periods. In contrast, the areas and boundaries of the towns and wards – in urban regions – and of village tracts and villages – in rural regions – are often adjusted to population numbers. This usually involves the partitioning of areas or the administrative conversion of rural areas into urban ones. The number of administrative territorial units below township level thus changes continuously. For instance, between 2015 and 2016 the number of towns rose within one year from 422 to 442, while over the same period the number of wards across Myanmar was reduced from 3,183 to 3,301 and that of villages from 63,860 to 63,798 (MNPED 2015: 10, MoPF 2016: 13). The boundaries of these territorial units are recorded descriptively by specialised administrative personnel and are registered precisely.

Frauke Kraas and Aye Aye Myint