Local Responses to Slum Resettlement:

The Case of Tamesna, Morocco

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Introduction

Since 2004, Moroccan authorities have promoted the development of new cities as a means to provide affordable housing to low-income residents. One of the major objectives of this policy is to provide a site for the resettlement of slum residents. While policymakers advance this agenda with the justification of alleviating poverty and promoting social inclusion, resettlement programs have faced substantial resistance from residents facing displacement. The second new city established under this policy, Tamesna, was established in part to provide a resettlement site for the approximately three thousand households living in informal settlements in the surrounding rural commune of Sidi Yahya Zaer. So far, only two-thirds of the households have resettled, and the refusal of some residents to participate continues to delay the resettlement process. This paper addresses the question of why so many households refuse to participate in a resettlement process that was ostensibly designed to meet their housing needs. Using an ethnographic approach to examine case studies of different households, this paper investigates the ways different circumstances shape residents’ reactions to the resettlement process.

Theorizing Local Responses to Displacement through Slum Improvement

Throughout the Global South, “slums” are the target of interventions, led by the state with the support of international development institutions (Gilbert, 2007). These development institutions generally define slums as illegal settlements with low living standards, although attempts to conclusively define “slum” remain problematic (ibid; Arabindoo, 2011). Programs designed to remove slums are not new. From at least the mid-twentieth century, development agencies have advocated a range of policies to remove low-quality housing from urban areas and provide slum residents with improved living standards (Van Ballegooijen and Rocco, 2013). These policies are based on different “planning discourses,” which have evolved over time from a state-centric approach to development, to self-help approach, to a market-led approach (ibid). All these discourses designate slums as a problem responsible for the poverty and social exclusion of their residents (Arabindoo, 2011). Proponents of these planning discourses operate under the assumption that slum residents are eager to leave the slums and will readily accept alternative housing options (ibid). Arabindoo (2011) explains that the reality of slum improvement programs is much more complicated and highly context-specific. Informal communities react to the displacement caused by slum improvement programs in highly diverse ways, depending upon local dynamics (ibid). Slum residents who are displaced often suffer acute losses that are invisible to planners, such as loss of community ties or access to urban resources (ibid). This is why Arabindoo calls for ethnographic research on specific urban contexts to understand local residents’ reactions to slum improvement. Arabindoo argues that this kind of research provides insight into the dynamics of urban poverty and the ways planning policies impact the experiences of the urban poor.

A large body of the type of ethnographic research called for by Arabindoo sheds light on the local dynamics of slum improvement program. These ethnographic studies reveal the diversity of experiences in slum improvement and the challenges residents face that are often invisible to planners. For example, in her 1979 study of favela residents in Rio de Janeiro, Perlman uncovered...
a complicated reality behind a favela improvement program. The favelas were not the places of misery and despair envisioned by planners. Instead, the favelas provided strong social capital, affordable housing, and advantageous locations within the city (Perlman, 1979). The favelas were not marginal; state policy marginalized them by designating them as illegitimate settlements to be targeted for demolitions (ibid). Residents’ resettlement to public housing disrupted social ties and access to employment, leaving many residents more isolated and economically disadvantaged than before (ibid). Perlman’s original study pointed out that Brazil’s strategy of removing favelas was not an effective means to eliminate poverty and social exclusion, but may in fact worsen these challenges. Perlman’s follow-up study, conducted thirty years later, further complicated the issue: in the long term, the favela residents who relocated to public housing had higher social mobility and more opportunities, while residents who remained in the favelas continued living in similar or worse circumstances (Perlman, 2010). These studies reveal the complexity surrounding favela upgrading, which impacts different groups of residents in unique ways that evolve over time.

Kapp and Baltazar (2012) examine another case of favela upgrading in Belo Horizonte, Brazil. In this case, planners used a discourse of local participation in program planning, but in practice they ignored the desires of local residents. Many residents found that the new housing lacked essential qualities such as adequate space, affordability, and adequate maintenance. As a result, authorities faced substantial community resistance to the program (Kapp and Baltazar, 2012). This case shows that favela residents are not willing to accept any housing alternative to the favelas; in fact, they actively oppose formal housing that is not suited to their social and economic needs.

Another case study that reveals unintended consequences of slum improvement is Gulyani and Talukdar’s (2008) study of the slum real estate market in Nairobi, Kenya. The authors examined the impact of state-led program to provide infrastructure to slum communities. Their in-depth analysis of the case reveals that a number of planners’ assumptions about the slum communities were incorrect. Planners assumed that low-income city residents resorted to living in the slums because they could not afford housing in the formal housing market and the slums provided low-cost solutions. Gulyani and Talukdar found that contrary to this belief, real estate costs in the slums were so high that “slum landlords” made lucrative profits from rent (Gulyani and Talukdar, 2008). Many households living in the slums could barely afford rent. State-led interventions to provide infrastructure only increased real estate value, enriching non-resident landlords and pushing out low-income renters (ibid). Planners envisioned slum improvement through on-site upgrading and infrastructure provision as the least disruptive form of slum improvement for residents, but in reality their interventions served non-resident landlords while displacing low-income residents (ibid). This case study highlights the importance of local power structures and rental market to anticipate the impact of interventions.

Each of these case studies of slum improvement programs challenge established theoretical perspectives surrounding slum improvement. They demonstrate that broad theories that attempt to capture the needs of all slum residents throughout the world are bound to run up against local obstacles. A wide variety of local factors, including power structures, economic features, social

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1 In Brazil, “favela” is the locally used word that serves as an equivalent to the usage of “slum” in other contexts. This term is just as difficult as “slum” to define concretely, but a favela generally is an illegal settlement with poor living conditions (Perlman, 2010).
networks, and income levels, impact the ways residents react to slum improvement programs. These case studies validate Arabindoo’s call for researchers to move away from broad theories of “slum” and focus on the ways specific local dynamics shape the experiences of slum residents. They provide important lessons for planners working in other contexts who seek to anticipate challenges in housing programs. In this vein, this paper now turns to the case of slum resettlement in Tamesna, Morocco.

**Slum Resettlement in Tamesna**

In 2010, Moroccan authorities implemented a plan to resettle over 3,000 households from the rural commune of Sidi Yahya Zaer (SYZ) to the new city of Tamesna (ADS, 2015). The residents of SYZ who were targeted for resettlement inhabit informal settlements designated by state authorities as *bidonvilles*, a French term equivalent to the English term “slum” (AREA, 2005). Authorities initially planned to complete the resettlement process by the end of 2010, but in 2017, the process remains ongoing (M. El Aamrani, field interview, March 12, 2017).

Rural migrants first began to build informal settlements during the mid-twentieth century, but their population rose dramatically in the 1980s. During this time, economic restructuring coupled with drought pushed many migrants from remote rural areas toward urban centers (Davis, 2006). SYZ, while primarily rural, attracted migrants because of its location on the periphery of Rabat, the capital city, and its relatively low-cost housing (M. El Aamrani, field interview, March 12, 2017). By the 1990s, officials began to discuss plans to remove the informal settlements and provide formal housing to their residents (CERAU, 2009). Planners presented the first proposal for the redevelopment of SYZ in 2003, although state officials did not formally approve a redevelopment plan until 2005 (ibid). The first approved plan for a new city in Sidi Yahya Zaer was announced on July 22, 2004 (Lahlaou, 2016: p. 39). This plan called for the establishment of a new city, to be named Noor Zaer, in the the region of Sidi Yahya Zaer (Kingdom of Morocco, 2004). Noor Zaer would serve as a site for the resettlement of approximately 1,500 households from informal settlements in SYZ (ibid). They would receive plots of land in SYZ on which they would built new homes. The new town of Noor Zaer would provide improved housing for the residents of SYZ without greatly altering established living patterns.

The plan for the new city in the region of SYZ was abruptly changed in 2005 (Lahlaou, 2016: p. 40). The new plan that was introduced was much more ambitious than the initial plan put forth in 2004. It called for the establishment of the new city of Tamesna in SYZ, which planners saw as a strategy to decrease the population density of Rabat, construct large numbers of social housing, and provide a site to resettle slum residents (A. Lamine, field interview, May 24, 2017). Tamesna was designed to house 250,000 inhabitants, including resettled residents of the informal settlements in SYZ. This plan called for each household to be resettled into an apartment instead of receiving a land plot (ADS, 2015).

The resettlement process is managed by Al Omrane, the public real estate company that also manages the new city’s development as a whole (Lahlaou, 2016: p. 41). Al Omrane is responsible for providing social housing through partnership with the private sector. Social housing apartments are between forty-five and forty-six square meters and include a living room, two bedrooms, a bathroom, and a kitchen (ADS, 2015). Social housing developments are to be incorporated into
housing developments that also include market-rate housing. Some of these housing developments are developed and managed directly by Al Omrane. Others are run by private developers, who are required to build social housing in exchange for development rights in Tamesna (A. Lamine, field interview, May 24, 2017).

Other stakeholders also play key roles in the resettlement process. The Urban Agency of Rabat and province officials provide oversight and technical support for the program (ADS, 2015). The local government of SYZ is responsible for maintaining records of households living in the slums and overseeing the demolition process (M. Lfayaz, field interview, April 12, 2017). A team of social workers from L’Agence de Développement Social (ADS), is the social operator responsible for guiding SYZ residents through the resettlement process. ADS is a public agency, which was established by the state, operates mainly on state funding, and works closely with state-funded projects, but its administration formally operates independently from the state (ADS et al, 2007). Their work in Sidi Yahya Zaer began in January 2014. The team of workers from ADS assists SYZ residents through the administrative process of resettlement, assists households in filing complaints when necessary, monitors the demolition process, and inspects the social housing units for quality. Finally, a Regional Committee, composed of representatives of each major stakeholder, is responsible for monitoring the resettlement project. Regional Committee members collaborate to monitor the progress of the slum resettlement program and approve any proposed changes to the program (ADS, 2015).

The resettlement process relies on a semi-voluntary structure in which SYZ residents are responsible for participating in a drawing to select their future social housing unit, gathering the necessary paperwork to prove their eligibility for social housing, making the preparations to finance their new homes, and scheduling a time to have their individual homes in the douars demolished (ADS, 2015). ADS set up an office in Tamesna where residents can meet with social workers who guide them through these steps (ibid). In most cases, a resident who resettles meets with ADS social workers once they have decided they are ready to move into new housing (M. El Aamrani, field interview, March 12, 2017).

Once a resident submits all of the required personal documents to begin the resettlement process, he or she must work with ADS to identify a means through which they will finance their new home. Many residents cannot afford to pay the cost of their new homes up front, but they may apply for bank loans under a state guarantee called FOGARIM, which is designed to make home finance available to low-income residents (ADS, 2015). When residents take out loans, they are required to make a twenty-five percent down payment (ibid).

After the plan for resettlement was passed in 2005, the qiyada commissioned a census to determine the total number of douar residents in SYZ who would be targeted for resettlement. This initial census counted a total of 1347 households living in the douars (AREA, 2005). After numerous complaints of undercounting from residents, a new census was conducted in 2008, which found the total number of douar households in SYZ to be 2,772 (Panex, 2008). This number was eventually updated to 3,027 after residents submitted additional complaints (ADS, 2015). As of January 2016, 2,009 out of these 3,027 households had resettled to apartments in Tamesna (ADS, 2016). This paper examines the reasons so many households continue to refuse resettlement.
Research Question and Methods

In the slum resettlement program in Tamesna, authorities promote the program as a measure for poverty alleviation that will allow SYZ residents to enjoy full inclusion into urban life. The new city project emerged out of an extensive debate over how best to address the emergence of informal settlements in SYZ. While the new city project ostensibly emerged from a desire to meet these communities’ housing needs, it has been met with substantial resistance on the part of SYZ residents. In this paper, I explore the experiences of SYZ residents in the slum resettlement program in order to understand why some SYZ residents resist the resettlement program that planners claim will improve their living conditions.

I use an ethnographic approach to explain this phenomenon. My primary source of data is the in-depth interviews I conducted with local residents, and I supplement this material with observational data, planning documents, and interviews with local government officials and housing developers. I spent three months conducting field research in Morocco, visiting the informal settlements and the housing developments where SYZ residents were resettled. During my visits to these sites, I conducted semi-structured interviews with residents. I asked them to discuss the advantages and disadvantages of the informal settlements versus subsidized apartments, and I asked them to explain their choices to either move into the apartments or remain in social housing. I conducted all of my interviews in Darija, the Moroccan dialect of Arabic. My interview procedure was approved by Institutional Review Board at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign.

I chose to use a multiple case study design (Creswell, 2009) because I wanted to understand how the unique circumstances of different households shaped their experiences within the resettlement program. I “sampled for range” (Small, 2009: p. 13) by interviewing residents living in diverse settlements or apartment complexes in order to capture a diverse range of resident experiences. I interviewed over fifty residents between March and May 2017 while living in Tamesna. These interviews illuminate many of the diverse circumstances that shape the resettlement process. From these interviews, I selected cases that highlight the range of circumstances that influence residents’ reactions to the resettlement process. My sample is clearly not randomized or statistically significant, but my intent is not to make generalizable claims about the entire SYZ population. Instead, I use non-random, carefully selected case studies to understand how different circumstances cause cause individuals to develop different “definitions of the situation” (Feagin et al, 1991: p. 13), or what causes some individuals to interpret the resettlement process as a harmful act of displacement and others to view the same process as a path to greater opportunity.

The Cases

In this section, I analyze five different cases to identify key factors that influence residents’ reactions to the resettlement process. Of course, these cases cannot capture all the diversity of resident experience, but they clearly point out some of the most important reasons individuals react to the resettlement process in totally different ways.
Residents Forced to Move Early

As explained earlier, the semi-voluntary structure of resettlement program means SYZ households resettle once they decide to initiate the resettlement process. While most households who resettled into apartments chose to resettle, a few hundred households were required to resettle once the process began in 2010. These households inhabited a settlement located on land Al Omrane planned to develop for an apartment complex, so the residents had to be resettled regardless of whether they were willing and able to do so (M. Lfayaz, field interview, April 12, 2017). Many of the households from this settlement did not possess the financial resources to make the down payment on their apartments, so authorities allowed them to take out loans for the full cost of their apartment. Now, as a bank official explains, many of these households refuse to make their required monthly payments (M. Y. El Alaoui, field interview, May 24, 2017).

Fatima\(^2\) is one of the residents who resettled under these circumstances. Now she has been living in a subsidized apartment with her husband and two children, who are now teenagers, since 2010. While she was unhappy with the cramped quarters in her new home and the lack of work opportunities in Tamesna, she acknowledged that she enjoyed much better living conditions in Tamesna compared to the informal settlement. She especially enjoyed the cleanliness, the quiet, and the security she found in the new city. She explained that after experiencing improved living conditions, she would never choose to return to an informal settlement. However, Fatima struggled with costly monthly payments she was required to pay for her mortgage. Since her husband developed health problems two years ago, Fatima has become the primary earner in her family. Each day she sells bowls of *sekouk*, couscous mixed with buttermilk, on the pavement outside her home. She explained that from the time her husband became sick, her household stopped making the mortgage payments for their home because they simply could not afford them. She says the bank continues to call and threaten to evict her household from their home. Fatima, however, remained confident that authorities would never evict a beneficiary of the resettlement program. “We are beneficiaries!” she exclaimed, “We are not like the [market-rate] homeowners. We should not be required to pay.”

Residents like Fatima were forced to leave their homes in the informal settlements long before they were ready and before they could make arrangements to finance their new homes. One social worker in ADS acknowledged that their rapid resettlement changed these residents’ relationship to the resettlement program (M. El Aamrani, field interview, March 12, 2017). Because their resettlement was not voluntary, they are less likely to feel personally responsible for its financial costs. Residents like Fatima oppose a resettlement process that causes residents financial hardship. They move to new housing but then refuse to participate in the financial arrangements of the program.

Residents of Large Households

According to the official program census, over one thousand households continue to live in the informal settlements because they refuse to participate in the resettlement process. A local government official responsible for overseeing the resettlement process explained that the most

\(^2\) All names of residents have been changed, unless they are established community leaders.
common reason residents refuse to move is that they want more members of their households to benefit from their own subsidized apartment (M. Lfayaz, field interview, April 12, 2017). When local authorities commissioned a census in 2008 to count the number of households living in the informal settlements, they determined who was eligible to benefit from subsidized apartments. However, many households contest this census, arguing that some of their relatives should have been counted as separate households. This an important issue to many households because of the small size of the apartments. They argue that the apartments are simply too small to accommodate larger, multigenerational households. In these cases, some or all of the individuals in a household refuse to resettle until authorities agree to provide more apartments.

Lamia is one of the residents who refuses to resettle until authorities agree to provide more apartments for her family members. She lives in an informal settlement with her husband and three adult children, two sons and one daughter, who are in their twenties. All of her children are currently unmarried, but she worries about how her household would be able to accommodate a growing family in the future. She submitted complaints to the local government requesting that her two sons receive their own apartments, but so far they have received no response.

Lamia clearly feels her sons are being denied something to which they are rightfully owed. She is eager to leave the informal settlement for an apartment in Tamesna, which she describes as clean and well-equipped. Her genuine desire to resettle is evident in the fact that she already paid the down payment for her apartment and continues to make the monthly mortgage payments, even though she refuses to move into the apartment. She feels that her continued refusal to move will eventually pressure authorities into providing apartments for her sons. So far authorities have been unresponsive.

Leila has also been unable to move into an apartment, in part because of the way her family was counted in the douar. Leila is divorced and has sole custody of her teenage daughter. At the time of the 2008 census, they lived in a shack with Leila’s brother and mother. After the census occurred, Leila’s brother married, and his wife and Leila were constantly fighting. Her brother and his wife eventually moved into an apartment, but Leila and her daughter were not welcome to move with them. Leila rebuilt the demolished shack, where she lives with her daughter and her mother. As a result, she faces harassment from local authorities, who are responsible for ensuring that demolished shacks are not rebuilt. However, she has nowhere else to go. She petitioned authorities to provide her with her own apartment, but they have not yet responded. Even if they did, she earns a meager income cleaning homes and lacks the financial resources to pay for the apartment. She hopes authorities will eventually help her find some solution to her housing crisis because she is desperate to provide a better life for her daughter in the new city.

Finally, Ahmed is another resident who filed a complaint to increase the number of apartments offered to his family. Ahmed is also a community activist who attempted, with little success, to organize his community to advocate for land plots instead of apartments. When I asked Ahmed why he had not resettled, at first he told me it was because of the complaint he filed. When I asked if he would be willing to move if that issue was resolved, he explained that he still would not have the financial resources to afford an apartment. When I asked if he would move if he could afford it, he began to describe all of the disadvantages of living in Tamesna. The apartments are too small, residents live stacked on top of one another as if in a prison, and Tamesna lacks job opportunities.
In the end, he does not really want to move to Tamesna. Ahmed’s answer reveals that for some households, complaints about the number of apartments offered are only part of the story. Ahmed’s official complaint provides him with a ready explanation for authorities about why he has not moved, when in fact he finds subsidized apartments in Tamesna incompatible with his idea of decent living conditions.

**Case Three: Residents Who Claim Ownership of Their Land**

SYZ residents with some of the longest family histories in the settlements refuse to resettle because of their historical ties to the land and preference for spacious living arrangements. Mohammed and his wife, Zakia, live with their three daughters in a spacious, well-equipped home. Zakia inherited the home from her father, who she claims legally purchased the land before she was born. She describes SYZ as her *bilad*, or place of origin. In her mind, this distinguishes her from other residents of the informal settlements, who came *min bura*, or from outside. From her perspective, this difference means she is entitled to a different set of rights than those who moved to SYZ more recently. She explained: “When my father came to this place, it was totally empty. He bought this land and built this home. The others came later and built their shacks. We aren’t like them. How can [authorities] treat us the same?”

Zakia and Mohammed view their living situation as entirely separate from other residents informal housing. They see their property rights as legitimate, and they expect authorities to respect those rights. They have also invested much more in their homes than most other SYZ residents, including more permanent building materials and more appliances. Their home is also much more spacious. More than once, Mohammed pointed to the land surrounding his home or pointed out the large size of his living room and asked me who would give up this space for a tiny apartment.

I returned to their home several weeks after I conducted the initial interview because they invited me to come for lunch. When I arrived, I found two young men hard at work painting the walls of their home. Mohammed explained he hired them to help with some maintenance tasks. Clearly, this household remained confident in their right to remain in their home. Instead of preparing to move, Mohammed continued to invest in his home. He and Zakia rejected resettlement as an illegitimate dispossession that would only worsen their living conditions.

**Case Four: Douar Sodea**

Douar Sodea is the name of oldest informal settlement in SYZ, and this settlement constitutes a unique case. As of August 2017, not a single household has resettled from Douar Sodea to Tamesna. The residents have staged a collective resistance to the resettlement process, creating significant pressure for authorities to meet their demands for a different form of resettlement.

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3 A local official later explained that her father likely purchased illegally subdivided land and then paid a bribe to have his property title notarized by local authorities. She may not realize the illegitimacy of her father’s property title, but it would not be recognized by the Interior Ministry (M. Lfayaz, field interview, April 12, 2017).
Residents of Douar Sodea leverage the historical narrative surrounding the douar to assert special rights. One resident of Douar Sodea explained: “This is the land of the fathers of our fathers, it’s the land of our birth [hadi al ard dyal jadod jadodna, dyal ziyada wa khalooq].” Another argued, “The others are not part of the history of Sidi Yahya. [To treat] us like the others, it’s not possible! [hadook madakhalinsh fi tarikh dyal sidi yahya. Bahalna bahal nas akhrin, mayomkinsh!]”

First inhabited in 1920, Douar Sodea is the oldest douar in SYZ, and according to one community leader, it is the oldest settlement in the entire prefecture of Skhirat-Temara (K. Tourrabi, field interview, April 27, 2017). The settlement emerged under unique circumstances. When the French Protectorate came to power in Morocco, French authorities decided to use the land in SYZ for agriculture, and the protectorate employed the local population to labor in the fields. One community leader, Kaddour Tourrabi, describes their labor as forced labor (ibid). The work was difficult: laborers had to clear stones to prepare the fields for planting for extremely low pay. According to Tourrabi, these forced laborers participated in the resistance against the French colonizers. He describes these laborers as true patriots who were loyal to Morocco and argues the state owes a huge debt to Douar Sodea.

After Morocco gained its independence in 1956, the laborers who worked for the French protectorate continued to live off the land. In the 1970s, the Moroccan state established an agricultural company called SODEA (Société de Developpement Agricole). This state-run company continued to employ the same laborers who worked under the protectorate government and also employed new laborers who migrated from other regions in Morocco. This time, laborers were employed under a contract. They continued to work for SODEA until the company was eventually disbanded in 2003 (K. Tourrabi, field interview, April 27, 2017; M. Zoheir, field interview, March 22, 2017).

All the residents of Douar Sodea are former employees of SODEA and their families. This fact provides the settlement with a stronger sense of community compared to the other douars in SYZ. All the employees of SODEA participated in a labor union, which has now been transformed into a residents’ association. Mohammed Zoheir, who leads this association, was also the president of the labor union (K. Tourrabi, field interview, April 27, 2017; M. Zoheir, field interview, March 22, 2017). Residents of the settlement have a long history of collective organizing for their rights in the labor union, which provides them with an advantage to organize for their housing rights.

As residents of the settlement and its community leaders describe, all residents of the douar are united in their opposition to resettlement in Tamesna. They have two main demands. First, they are staunchly opposed to resettlement to apartments. They demand to be resettled to plots of land. Second, they demand monetary compensation for the removal from their homes. They see the right to land and the right to monetary compensation as their inherited right as the region’s original population and as former employees who served the state (M. Zoheir, field interview, March 22, 2017). They also see Al Omrané’s acquisition of the land as corrupt. Both Zoheir and Tourrabi described the price Al Omrané paid for the land as “a symbolic price” (K. Tourrabi, field interview, April 27, 2017; M. Zoheir, field interview, March 22, 2017). They understand that Al Omrané

4 Tourrabi is an elected representative for Douar Sodea.
intends to sell this land to a private development company for a much higher price, and they argue the residents are the ones who should benefit from this land sale, not Al Omrane.

Residents’ refusal to leave the settlement should not be confused with satisfaction with its living conditions. Like most of the other residents of SYZ, all the residents I interviewed in Douar Sodea are highly dissatisfied with their living conditions. They suffer from exposure to the elements, irregular access to water and electricity, and isolation from transportation and other resources. Still, they are not willing to leave their settlement for any type of social housing. They demand social housing that suits their way of life and the financial compensation to make that housing affordable. In our interview, Tourrabi outlined multiple reasons residents do not want to resettle into apartments. They do not want to have to climb stairs to access their homes, they do not want to have to share living space with their neighbors, and they want housing that can accommodate multigenerational households (K. Tourrabi, field interview, April 27, 2017). Residents of the settlement want to resettle into higher-quality housing, but they also want recognition of the historical legacy of the settlement and housing that matches their living preferences.

Zoheir explained that the community felt betrayed when the resettlement plan was abruptly changed in 2005. Both Zoheir and Tourrabi reported that no authorities made any attempts to open up a dialogue with the community about the resettlement plan (K. Tourrabi, field interview, April 27, 2017; M. Zoheir, field interview, March 22, 2017). Zoheir and Tourrabi worked together to negotiate with Al Omrane to gain the rights to land plots and monetary compensation. Zoheir reported that the two set up over twenty meetings with officials in Al Omrane, the most recent of which was in February 2017. Zoheir says that in these meetings, Al Omrane officials refused to take their demands seriously. Instead, they insisted residents needed to go along with the resettlement process established by the state. The director of ADS, the actor that is supposed to help beneficiaries communicate with authorities, was present at the meetings but did not participate in the discussion. Officials did not record the proceedings of the meetings, which Zoheir sees as evidence that they know what they are doing is corrupt and the way they interacted with the residents was not in the spirit of real negotiation.

Residents of Douar Sodea also contest the number of households counted in the 2008 census. The research bureau that conducted the census determined the number of households in the douar to be 256 (Panex, 2008). Al Omrane was unwilling to provide anyone in the community a complete list of the households counted in the census, but residents argue it is far too low. The official census only counted households with dependent children. The residents argue every married couple or single person over the age of eighteen should be counted as a beneficiary. In 2010, Zoheir undertook his own detailed census of the douar. He listed the members of each household and the length of each family’s residence in the douar. His census found the total number of beneficiaries to be approximately 400. The residents use Zoheir’s census to argue for an increase in the number of social housing units. Predictably, Al Omrane refuses to recognize the legitimacy of Zoheir’s census (ibid).

As long as authorities refuse to recognize their demands, the residents of Douar Sodea remain steadfast in their refusal to leave the settlement. Unlike in other settlements, where many households are eager to leave once their individual circumstances allow them to do so, the residents
of Douar Sodea make decisions about resettlement collectively. This allows them to form an effective opposition to the resettlement process.

**Case Five: Those Who Truly Benefit**

The previous four cases discussed households who refused to participate in the resettlement process for a variety of reasons. However, some households willingly resettle and express high levels of satisfaction with their new housing. Not all households struggle with the burden of high payments or cramped quarters.

Mehdi is one of the interviewees who was most satisfied with the resettlement process. Mehdi lived with his parents in a suburb of Rabat until 1997, when he decided to move into an informal settlement in SYZ. He explained that he knew authorities were discussing plans to resettle SYZ residents into subsidized housing, so he decided to seek out housing in an informal settlement in order to benefit from the subsidy. When the resettlement process began, he did not struggle to pay for a subsidized apartment. He paid for the apartment in cash. Shortly afterward, he married and had a son.

Mehdi clearly benefited from the resettlement program. He explained that without it, he never would have been able to afford a market-rate apartment. However, Mehdi also is not the low-income, socially marginalized resident authorities describe when talking about beneficiaries of the resettlement program. His experience within the program indicates that the individuals best positioned to benefit from the program are those with small households and available financial resources. Meanwhile, low-income residents like Leila are left with no option but to try to rebuild their lives in the rubble of the slums.

**Discussion**

Residents’ experiences of slum resettlement in Tamesna reveal that the resettlement program falls short of its goal of improving the lives of socially excluded residents of SYZ. Many residents of SYZ are unwilling to leave their homes because they prefer their homes in the informal settlements over subsidized apartments. Others are unwilling to bear the financial cost of apartments. Others in Douar Sodea refuse to resettle unless authorities recognize their history of service and provide proper compensation. The residents who most likely to benefit from the resettlement program are those with the least financial need; while those with the most financial need are more likely to fall through the cracks, waiting endlessly for housing assistance.

The narrative of SYZ residents is not an easy narrative to tell. It is a collection of diverse and often contradictory narratives. Many of the residents who received subsidized apartments are satisfied with their improved living conditions, but others face barriers in accessing the benefits of resettlement. This case illustrates the need for case study-based research on slum improvement programs (Arabindoo, 2011). No broad theory could capture the diverse reactions of different groups of residents to the slum resettlement program. The challenges faced by different groups of residents can only be understood when all of the unique local dynamics are analyzed.
The resettlement program in Tamesna remains an ongoing process. Longer-term research on this program could provide greater insight into SYZ residents’ experiences. Further research could examine whether some residents’ refusal to participate will ultimately pressure authorities to make concessions to residents. Other researchers could also examine the long-term differences between residents who resettle and residents who remain in the informal settlements to determine whether resettlement provides better opportunities for long-term social mobility.

**Conclusion**

This ethnographic study provides insight into the challenges faced by different groups of SYZ residents in the slum resettlement process. This study indicates that residents are not willing to leave low-quality housing at any cost. Different groups of residents face different barriers to resettlement; some value their historical ties to the land while others simply value the affordability of the informal settlements. The case studies included in this paper offer important lessons for planners working on slum improvement programs in other contexts. The case of Tamesna demonstrates why planners cannot expect to implement the same solution for different groups of residents and expect positive results. Housing solutions must be tailored to the unique communities they are intended to serve.
Bibliography


