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11^e Séminaire Annuel "*L'allocation des ressources foncières dans les espaces méditerranéens : usages du droit et formes de régulation*", Meknès, Maroc, 8-10 Novembre 2018

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New Towns: The Solution or the Problem?

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Contextualization of the problem and main objectives of the communication

Informal settlements emerge as a result of several system dysfunctions including poor urban planning, high housing demand and low supply, a defective legal system and a lack in infrastructure and public service provision (Fernandes, 2011). In today's neoliberal climate, informal settlements can also be seen as a response to other land market deficiencies.

Morocco's informal settlements (or bidonvilles) first appeared in 1921 during the French Protectorate period as a result of European foreigners settling in new towns (or villes nouvelles) adjacent to the old medina, forcing Moroccan indigenes to settle in the outer rings of the European quarters (Abu-Lughod, 1980). Moroccans informally built homes out of corrugated metal and other available materials on land they were not entitled to. Since then, bidonvilles have continued to grow in size and number; for almost a century now Morocco has been dealing with the challenges of managing and curbing such informal settlements (Abu-Lughod, 1980; Avermaete, 2010). The most recent efforts include the establishment of two nationwide planning programs in 2004 by the Moroccan Government; namely, the *Villes Sans Bidonvilles Programme* (Cities without Slums Initiative) (VSBP) and the *Villes Nouvelles Programme* (New Towns Initiative) (VNP) (Bogaert, 2011, 2013). Both programs aim to provide housing for the urban poor – towards the larger goal of eradicating Morocco's growing slum settlements by the year 2020. Nevertheless, we are continuing to see informal settlements emerge surrounding newly built subsidized settlements (Behbehani et al., 2017). So while new settlements are seen as the solution to unplanned urbanization, they seem to also be sparking their growth.

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In this paper we explore broadly why informal settlements continue to emerge around one of Morocco's first contemporary new towns – Tamesna, Rabat. What legal and land management challenges have public agencies faced? how are such challenges being addressed? What do the public-decision making processes, private sector interventions, and civic sector involvements look like relative to the continuous growth of informal settlements surrounding new town Tamesna?

Methodology and sources used

This research is exploratory in nature. The primary methods to be used will be a combination of ethnographic participant observations and a series of semi-structured open-ended interviews with key participants in the initiation and implementation of new town Tamesna as well as with residents of the new town and community civic leaders. Data will be collected over a period of three months in the summer of 2018.

Conclusion

We commonly think of informal settlements as a result of state failure to plan or execute its spatial plans, but what happens if informal settlements become the result of national planning strategies that involve more than one stakeholder? How does each stakeholder play a role in managing and controlling what happens to the land adjacent to their planned community? Unlike previous state-wide spatial planning strategies under the welfare state system, in today's neoliberal climate Morocco's new towns are the work of a multiple actors. These include public authorities, private developers and land owners, international architects, government officials, policy makers, non-profit organizations, community leaders, and members of financial/lending organizations involved funding their development. Through spending time in the field conducting interviews with a wide range of actors involved in the planning and everyday life in new town Tamesna, this paper will present a preliminary exploration of the Moroccan Government's contemporary New Towns Initiative relative to housing provision, land management and the continuous growth of urban slums.

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