

Morocco's Fragmented Land Regime: An Analysis of Negotiating and Implementing Land Tenure Policies

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Abstract

Morocco has a complex land tenure regime that is characterized by legal and administrative plurality. Legally, this is seen in a syncretic system that incorporates French, Islamic, and customary laws. In terms of administration, there are five separate categories of land that are administered in completely different ways: privatized, titled land (*melk*), religious land endowments (*habous*), military land grants (*guiche*), collective land (*soulaliya*) and state land. The asymmetric nature of land tenure systems in Morocco has been a significant impediment to development, as well as a major source of social strife. This seven-week ethnographic project conducted over the summer of 2015 sought to gain a greater understanding of the contemporary system(s) of land ownership in Morocco, the major issues that landowners face today, and to investigate the extent to which there is a gap between official land tenure policy and the actual practice of owning land in Morocco. Through semi-structured interviews with a variety of stakeholders on the issue of land tenure, this project found that there is significant and widespread discontent with the current tenure regime, and a consensus that Morocco should move forward with titling programs and systems of privatization. However, different stakeholders highlighted potential issues that will arise as a result of titling processes, concomitant with their values and aspects of land ownership that most concern them. Through a series of anecdotes, this report seeks to outline several contemporary issues that landowners face in Morocco, including issues of power and distribution such as concentration of landholding and land grabs, titling and registration programs and related economic issues such as the (dys)functionality of land markets, current inheritance laws, and development rhetorics utilized to promote state power and control over land.

Introduction

This project emerged out of two separate interests that have increasingly consumed my academic and personal life over the past few years; land ownership and the region of North Africa. My focus on land tenure developed out of my study of food, sparked by taking the course “The International Political Economy of Food and Hunger” during my sophomore year. While learning about food and hunger through different disciplinary and theoretical frames of analysis, I came to realize the profound impact that structures of ownership has upon the distribution of resources, which was compounded by my study of economics and economic theories such as Liberalism, Marxism, Structuralism, and Mercantilism, all focused within the discipline of IPE. Upon greater reflection and research into differing theories on the distribution of capital, and land in particular, I became increasingly interested in how differences in the structure of land tenure policies impacted many different aspects of society from the relationship between neighbors to perceptions of prestige to the goals and actions of political and economic elites.

My interest in North Africa is more recent, and in some ways was more accidental than my growing fascination with land ownership and tenure regimes. I decided to study abroad with an SIT program focusing on transnational identity and migration in Morocco, largely out of convenience and my lack of interest in other programs. I had little desire to study in Australia, Europe, or South America, and I had already been accepted into programs traveling to Indonesia and Uganda and Rwanda. While not a primary academic focus, I was interested in migration and identity issues, but I had little investment or comprehensive knowledge of North Africa prior to studying in Morocco. However, upon my arrival, I quickly became enthralled by the complex and syncretic history and society of Morocco. African, Arab, and Amazigh influences, as well as Morocco’s geographic location as a liminal zone between Africa, Arabia, and Europe has worked to shape a unique and vibrant society. This adaptive and multi-faceted history has also worked to shape the complex contemporary system of land tenure that exists in Morocco today.

Land and ownership rights are a major issue in Morocco today, recognized by a multitude of stakeholders including landowners, activists, government officials, international development organizations, and international financial institutions. Disputes over land are the most common court case in Morocco today, and it is widely seen throughout society as a pre-eminent social, economic, and political issue. The dominant narrative that I experienced from the Moroccans I spoke to is that this issue needs to be comprehensively addressed by King Mohammed VI in a new royal decree that will counteract the patchwork arrangement of laws and decrees that structure the current land regime in Morocco. This project seeks to elucidate the contemporary system of tenure practiced in Morocco and the most prevalent issues related to land, with the aim of making these tenure systems more transparent in order to facilitate future policy changes that take into account the needs and desires of different stakeholders.

Background

Before delving into the findings of this project, it is vital to elucidate the contemporary situation of land tenure in Morocco today. There are five distinct categories of land that have widely differing characteristics and exhibit administrative asymmetry. These five types are privatized, titled land (*melk*), religious land endowments which can be leased but not sold (*habous*), land granted to members of the military by the monarchy (*guiche*), collective tribal land held in trust by the state (*soulaliya* or *jema’a*), and state-owned land.

Melk is characterized as privately held, titled land. According to USAID, 28% of Morocco's land, and 76% of agricultural land is classified as *melk*, although officials at the Moroccan Ministry of Agriculture put a higher figure of 1/3 of all land in Morocco as formally titled, privatized land (USAID 2011). *Melk* properties are most heavily concentrated in modern urban areas and large-scale agricultural operations. The official policy of the Moroccan government is to pursue a process of titling and privatization, where all land will eventually be registered with the Agence Nationale de la Conservation Foncière du Cadastre et de la Cartographie (ANCFCC), a public institution funded by the government through the the Ministry of Finance and the Ministry of Agriculture. However, the other four types of land cannot be registered as *melk* as a result of legal codes and historical *dahir* (royal decrees), which is a major stumbling block in the government's plan. *Melk* land is the only land to be comprehensively taxed by the government, which could partially explain the government's devotion to titling and registering land throughout Morocco as a way to increase its tax base. All landowners that I spoke to in both urban and rural areas emphasized that *melk* was the preferred mode of ownership, since it allowed them the greatest control over their land - outside of modest zoning laws, they could use it as they saw fit, could sell or rent it, and could pass it on to their children without interference.

Habous, known as *waqf* in the rest of the Islamic world, are religious endowments granted to an Islamic institution in order to fund public service projects. *Habous* land cannot be sold and is owned in perpetuity by the institution it was granted to, and is leased out at an ostensibly modest price with the dual goals of raising funds for the religious institution and increasing access to land. Historically, *habous* has been much more complicated in practice, though a discussion of that is beyond the scope of this project. However, there are two relevant contemporary issues that should be highlighted. First, *habous* has been for the most part co-opted by the Moroccan government and has been situated underneath the Ministry of Habous and Islamic Affairs (MHIA), which administers the majority of *habous* land in Morocco, although informants pointed out that some prominent *zawiya* (Sufi brotherhoods) continue to control their own *habous* due to political exigencies and their close ties to the monarchy (Bouderbala 1999). This process of co-optation has been a common tool of state-building throughout the Islamic world in the post-independence era, and Morocco is no exception. Secondly, this control by the government has allowed for corruption in the absence of a climate of oversight by religious institutions or civil society. Discussions with research participants in the Rabat Medina (old city) who rented *habous* land for their shops found that there is a widespread perception that the MHIA is highly corrupt, and that the Minister personally profits off of *habous* rents. Furthermore, they leveled accusations that MHIA officials were willing to accept bribes in order to reclassify *habous* land as *melk*, to the benefit of wealthy developers. According to these informants, *habous* are concentrated in the *medinas* and the countryside. *Habous* does not make up a significant amount of land area - while the MHIA does not publish official figures on the amount of *habous* land, it is estimated at about 100,000 hectares (Bouderbala 1999). The third category of land in Morocco is *guiche*, which is land granted historically to military supporters of pre-independence Alaouite sultans. *Guiche* land is still under the purview of the state, with residents enjoying usage rights as a result of their ancestors' military service. *Guiche* land cannot be sold or officially rented, but can the usage-rights are inheritable. While USAID estimates that *guiche* takes up about 210,000 hectares today, although at the beginning of the Protectorate period it included 768,000 hectares (USAID 2011, Bouderbala 1999). This shrinkage is partially explained by rounds of privatization that occurred during the Protectorate period, but also by the government's expulsion of rights-users to facilitate urban and peri-urban

expansion (Bouderbala 1999). Some scholars have connected the disbursement of government land rentals in the contemporary era to politically connected elites and state-sponsored land grabs to the traditional system of *guiche* (Mahdi 2014; Leveau 1985). In discussions with government officials, I found that they played down the significance of *guiche*, and alluded that it would not exist in the future as part of a comprehensive titling program which has yet to fully materialize outside of *melk*.

State-owned land makes up about 30% of land in Morocco, and includes parks, forests, rangelands, government installations, and agricultural land seized by the state in the post-independence era, mostly from French *colons* (Berkat and Tazi 2004). However, one informant told me that her grandfather's land was seized after he was accused of collaborating with the French. She contested the issue in court, but had to desist after mounting legal fees made the process prohibitive. The primary contemporary academic interest in this land category relates to environmental issues, deforestation and processes of desertification. USAID reports that this state land includes about 400,000 hectares of agricultural land, but this is outdated, as the vast majority of this land has been leased out to private developers as part of the Plan Maroc Vert (USAID 2011; PMV). Land activists and government officials both contradicted the USAID numbers as well - both sets of stakeholders claimed that the government held about 260,000 hectares of agricultural land, all of which has been rented out as part of the PMV. However, this contradiction could be partially explained by the lack of separation between the King's private ownership of land and state assets - his holding company, ONA, holds significant investments in land throughout the country, although the assets it controls are not publicly available.

The final category of land, and certainly the most complex is collective tribal land, alternatively referred to as *jema'a*, *soulaliyate*, and a plethora of other terms depending on the region. Collective land is held in trust for the tribe by the Ministry of the Interior (MoI), and is characterized by highly asymmetric forms of administration that can vary from one village to the next. USAID estimates that 42% of Moroccan land is categorized as collective land, but interviews with MoI officials found that they identify 15,400,000 hectares of land, or 34.5%, as collectively managed, with another 300,000 hectares of irrigated land that has since been privatized (USAID 2011, MoI). According to MoI officials, there are 4,600 recognized tribal confederacies in Morocco, each of which has usage rights to their traditional land-holdings, which is managed by the Directorate of Rural Affairs (DAR). Each tribal collective elects a *naib* (pl: *nouab*), or tribal representative that is responsible for managing the tribe's land affairs and maintaining contact with the DAR (M'Hassni et al 2003). Interviews with *soulaliyates* (tribal landowners) found that this 'election' is actually a selection by the tribal council, made up almost exclusively by males that are heads of households, or smaller clans within the tribe, which has prevented women and youths from accessing decision-making power. While there are institutional channels in place for tribal landowners to complain about and potentially replace their *naib*, who are primarily tribal notables, social considerations and power dynamics often inhibit these channels from being utilized (M'Hassni et al 2003).

Discussions with *soulaliyates* in the Middle Atlas region found that there were three primary forms of managing collective land. Traditionally, land was allocated to families by the tribe based upon the number of members in a household and the amount of land they could reasonably use. As family sizes changed over time, land was redistributed on an on-going basis. This system was seen as anachronistic and unfeasible by informants, and was not practiced in the region

where fieldwork was carried out. The first of the two contemporary systems of land disbursement practiced in rural areas in the Meknes-Tafilalet region are formal divisions of land between families based on their historical usage, and enshrined in partially recognized documents prepared by Islamic scholars in conjunction with the tribe's *naib*. This system makes collective land individualized and inheritable, although it can still only be sold to other members of the tribe. The other system practiced today is to keep the tribe's land undifferentiated, but to rent it out in its entirety, and to divide the rent between members of the tribe. Renting tribal land is encouraged by the MoI, and is subject to the approval of the *naib* and MoI officials. The funds from these projects go into a fund administered by the MoI, to be used either in individual disbursements to tribal members or to fund a development project for the benefit of all *soulaliyates*. This combination of central control combined with local administration results in a highly complex and opaque system of tenure practice, which is often unintelligible to outsiders (Scott 1998).

This project primarily focused on looking at *melk*, *habous*, and *soulaliya* land. *Melk* was looked at in the context of titling and registration programs, which are framed as a modernizing program of development by the Moroccan government. *Habous* land was addressed in urban *medinas*, as a unique area of Islamic economics, and within the framework of state-building efforts that have resulted in lack of oversight and concomitant processes of corruption rising to the fore. *Soulaliya* land was of primary interest in this project in an attempt to comprehensively address the complexities inherent in this land tenure system, which have resulted in widespread discontent, tenure insecurity, lack of functioning land markets, and opaque systems of administration allowing for corruption, land grabs, and concentration of land.

Methods and Methodology

This research project focused on collecting qualitative data through semi-structured interviews with a variety of stakeholders involved in land tenure issues. These stakeholders included landowners, government officials from the Ministry of the Interior and the ANCFCC, *nouab* (local land officials), lawyers and other members of civil society, and representatives of both local and international development organizations. As this project looked at the how land ownership policies are contested and negotiated on the ground and the contemporary issues that Moroccan landowners face, qualitative data was deemed to be more useful in order to gain a greater and more nuanced understanding of the motivations and rhetoric of various actors and stakeholders involved in negotiating land tenure issues.

While the initial goal was to travel to three different regions of Morocco to do a cross-comparative regional analysis of different land tenure systems, it quickly became clear that this was unfeasible due to time and access constraints. Instead, I focused on a two-part process of interviewing government officials, academics, and members of civil society based in Rabat, followed by a series of interviews with landowners, local officials, and activists in the Meknes-Tafilalet region in the Middle Atlas. The process of comparing the different responses of groups of stakeholders was a key aspect of this study. This comparative approach allowed for a greater understanding of the different frameworks that varying groups of stakeholders used in conceptualizing land ownership and tenure regimes.

Initial contacts were utilized from prior informant networks cultivated during research conducted in Fall 2014, and a snowball sampling method was used to gain access to further informants.

While this approach resulted in a certain amount of sample bias due to the insular nature of social networks, the study was able to access and interviews individuals from a range of ethnic, professional, and socio-economic backgrounds. Leaving aside the professional and socio-economic backgrounds of research participants which were quite diverse, the primary axes upon which interviewees were split was based upon the Arab-Amazigh and urban-rural divides, which are largely independent of one another.

Preliminary Findings

As reiterated throughout this work, the nature and administration of land tenure throughout Morocco is highly asymmetric, which makes generalizing and identifying trends difficult (Rignall 2012). This was emblemized by the most common response that I encountered when I explained my research project to Moroccans. They would invariably respond, “Why are you doing this? There are many big problems with land, but it is so hard [to understand]!” That being said, specific examples and commonality of responses from groups of stakeholders on particular issues in combination with contributions from other academic work on tenure issues serve to highlight some of the most relevant and significant contemporary land issues in Morocco. Broadly, these can be encapsulated into issues of control and power over land, a discussion of current and future land titling and registration programs, related economic issues such as (dys)functionality of land markets, inheritance laws, and development rhetorics.

The centralized Moroccan state was largely constructed under the colonial Protectorate period (1912-1956), and the post-independence state has continued many of these processes of state-building which have heavily impacted the construction of land tenure regimes (Najem 2001; Bidwell 1973; Cammett et al 2015). This can be seen in several areas. On a basic level, the government directly controls nearly a third of all land in Morocco, as discussed above in the section on state-owned land. The aforementioned creation of the MHIA to regulate rental and use of *habous* also constitutes a significant area of government control over land in Morocco. Although *habous* do not constitute a large area of land, much of it is economically valuable, and the government has exhibited clear rent-seeking behavior through their control of *habous* land (Bouderbala 1999). Informants in the Rabat Medina shared anecdotes of particularly valuable *habous* properties being rented to elites with political connections without letting the public know that those properties were available for rent. The administration of collective tribal land by the MoI also demonstrates the government’s desire to control the construction of tenure regimes - although there are differing levels of local autonomy in *soulaliya* areas, they are required to abide by policies created by the MoI (Jkaoua 2011). One example of this was in 2010, when the MoI issued a circular to all *nouab* stating that women were entitled to profits off sales and rentals of communal land that they were rights-holders to. On discussions with male and female *soulaliyates*, I found that this has largely been ignored, and that with respect to this issue women remain economically disenfranchised. Through this, we can see that although the MoI ostensibly has administrative power over collective land, their authority is still contested when it comes into conflict with customary law that has traditionally enshrined patriarchal power hierarchies (Rignall 2012).

Another issue that was emphasized by politically active landowners and land activists was land grabs. As part of the PMV, the Moroccan government’s current agricultural development policy, 700,000 hectares are slated to be rented to agricultural corporations, with the stated goal of modernizing the agricultural sector by encouraging monocropping and intensive agriculture

(Mahdi 2014, PMV). However, activists noted that the government only held 260,000 hectares of agricultural land, all of which has already been leased out. The rhetorical question they consistently asked then was “Well, where does the rest of that land come from?” Their answer was from collective tribal land taken under eminent domain laws. Government officials that were interviewed placed these investment projects under a development framework that they claimed would benefit all sectors of society, from private developers to rural landowners to local agricultural laborers through payments to landowners and increased employment opportunities for laborers. It appears that the government has primarily been using eminent domain in areas that are either categorized as marginal farmland or in land that is not permanently occupied, such as seasonal pastureland (Mahdi 2014). While the government does pay landowners for their property taken under eminent domain, landowners that I spoke with in the Middle Atlas estimated that they would be paid approximately $\frac{1}{8}$ of the value of their land, though this was impossible to independently verify.

With regard to the seizing of pastureland, a look at pre-Protectorate Moroccan history is useful. Prior to the French colonial project, Morocco was divided between the *bled al-makhzen* (lands of government) and the *bled as-siba* (lands of dissidence) in rural tribal areas (Hammoudi 1997; Bidwell 1973). As part of its state-building process in the post-independence era, Morocco has increasingly advocated for sedentarization, and has used narratives of environmental degradation to de-legitimize pastoral lifestyles which were prevalent in the historical *bled as-siba* (Davis 2006). By using eminent domain to take control over so-called ‘unused’ land, the government is creating a system that increasingly marginalizes traditional pastoral lifestyles, while concomitantly increasing government control over previously fractious regions (Davis 2006; Kreuer 2011). While this project did not specifically look at pastoralists in Morocco, the pro-sedentarization policies of the government are a significant contemporary issue in regions that have historically been pastoralist.

A large part of this study focused on current titling and registration programs in Morocco, which are highly encouraged by the government. In fact, every night during Ramadan when I sat down to break the fast with my host family, an advertisement for the land registration program run by the ANCFCC came on the television - an advertising time comparable to the Super Bowl in America as virtually the entire country was sitting in front of a television at that time. Before addressing the problematic process of registration, it is important to first discuss inheritance law in Morocco. Inheritance is one of the few areas of Moroccan law still based on *shari'a*, or Islamic law, and is based on specific passages from the Qur'an (Bouderbala 1999). Looking specifically at *melk* and *soulaliya* land, when a head of household dies, their property is divided among their children, as well as their spouse if they are still alive. The spouse, if living, inherits $\frac{1}{8}$ of the property, while the remainder is split up into shares, with male children receiving two shares for every one that female children get. However, when those children die, their children then inherit proportional amounts of their father's share of a property. In this way, informants told me that it is not uncommon for one piece of property to have dozens, or even over a hundred rights-holders as subsequent generations are born.

This complex system of inter-generational inheritance complicates the process of registration, because every rights-holder has to be involved, and if just one member is not included in the process of registration, they have an opportunity to invalidate the entire process. The process of registration as explained in ANCFCC literature and confirmed through conversations with

ANCFCC officials goes as follows. First, a complete group of rights-holders has to prove ownership over a piece of property, which can be done through prior legal documentation or twelve witness statements from members of the community where the property exists. Next, the Office of Cadastre sends a topographical engineer out to create a map of the property for the ANCFCC's records in conjunction with an land registry official. If there is any opposition to the registration, the land registry official marks it down at this time. Following this, newspapers run a list of current processes of registration to allow for any further opposition to be levied. If there is no opposition at any point, then the property is registered to the rights-holders and they receive a title after two months. However, if there is opposition or contention among the rights-holders, then it goes to courts. Land disputes are the most common type of case in Moroccan courts today, and according to a lawyer and member of the Constitutional Council, it can take over a decade for cases to be resolved, if they ever are. According to ANCFCC officials, most land being registered in Morocco today is classified as *melk*, but the rights-holders do not have an up-to-date title. It is important to note that each separate step in the registration process costs a fee - the cost of registration was often cited to be a significant barrier to registration by informants, particularly those in rural area. It remains impossible to register *habous*, *soulaliya*, or *guiche* land, although the government has implemented provisional titling systems in *soulaliya* areas in order to allow landowners to use that document as collateral for a loan. However, according to landowners that I spoke to who have received such documents, while it does increase tenure security, it has not helped them secure loans because financial institutions are not legally allowed to own, purchase, or sell *soulaliya* land.

Most privately titled land, approximately 71%, is held jointly by multiple family members, and all rights-holders must agree to a contract of sale or rental of a piece of property (USAID 2011; World Bank 2008). By way of example, my host family had to deal with over forty rights-holders to the house that they purchased in the Rabat Medina, and had to negotiate a contract of sale that satisfied all of them. Through this, we can see that inheritance law poses a significant obstacle to the functionality of land markets, as it creates complications that slow the purchasing or rental process as buyers and sellers work to verify that all the necessary rights-holders are involved. I heard numerous stories of properties being sold where at a later point a rights-holder came and contested the sale after the fact, which makes buyers, particularly foreigners, extremely leery of investing in Moroccan real estate. Another barrier to the functionality of land markets is *habous*, which can constitute a single room in a house. I have heard anecdotal evidence of people purchasing property remotely, only to later find out that one room in that house was *habous*, which they did not own and drastically reduced the value of the property they purchased.

The Moroccan government is actively promoting a national land registry and titling program, with the stated goal to modernize, increase economic investments in real estate, and to help mitigate barriers to functioning land markets (World Bank 2008). It is important to reflect upon how these narratives of development fit into particular views of modernity, and more particularly neo-liberal ideology, which the Moroccan government has embraced (Davis 2006; Najem 2001). As aforementioned, only *melk* land is taxed, although the government does make money off of leasing its own land as well as *habous* land administered by the MHIA. However, upon speaking with a landowning lawyer who works on land rights advocacy, I found out that only parcels of agricultural land 100 hectares or larger are taxed. This clearly incentivizes the government to consolidate land in order to increase its tax base, which at the same time fits into the narratives of productivity attached to neoliberal agricultural restructuring.

While these points do not cover all of the contemporary issues related to land in Morocco, they provide an overview of some of the most salient points that I discovered and that were related to me by informants throughout my fieldwork process. The complexity of land tenure regimes and ownership structures in Morocco makes it difficult to conduct a comprehensive overview that addresses the asymmetrical nature of systems of authority, control, and administration that exist in relation to Moroccan tenure systems. In reflecting upon the process of conducting this research study, I seek to elucidate some of the barriers, opportunities for growth, and areas for further inquiry that I have discovered as a result of carrying out this project.

Reflections

In looking back on this research project and the process of conducting fieldwork, there are numerous lessons that I learned and challenges that I faced, which contributed to shaping the nature of my methods and my end results. The three most significant barriers that I encountered were with language barriers, gaining access to landowners, and highly asymmetric responses from research participants, which made analysis of trends extremely difficult. In addition, the majority of my time spent in-country doing research overlapped with Ramadan. This made it extremely difficult to access landowners to interview, as many of them traveled for much of Ramadan to visit family, making their schedules unreliable. Furthermore, people change their schedules drastically during Ramadan to adjust to fasting during the daylight hours, and many did not go to work, which further contributed to increasing the difficulty of scheduling interviews. However, at times this worked to my benefit - in one instance, I was invited to a *four* (break fast) with a prominent land rights activist, which served as a council meeting for Amazigh and land-rights activists in the Meknes-Tafilalet region where I was able to make a number of contacts that I followed up on after the end of Ramadan. In the face of my initial inability to access rural landowners, which was the stated primary goal of this project, I turned to meeting with government and public officials in Rabat, whose offices stayed open throughout Ramadan. As I made more contacts throughout my time in Morocco, I was able to slowly gain access to more landowners after Ramadan had ended, although I wish that I had had more time to follow up with them.

Another significant difficulty that I encountered was the language barrier - while I have studied Arabic for about a year, I am nowhere near conversational, and do not speak French or Amazigh at all, the three most common languages spoken in Morocco. I had planned to compensate for this before I left by contacting two individuals in Morocco who had translated for me in my past research there, and they had agreed to do so. However, upon my arrival, one of them was studying in Nigeria, which he had not told me about, and the other was working full-time with another student researcher, and had little time to assist me. This further turned me towards conducting interviews with government officials - a standard strategy that I used was to show up at a government office and ask around until I found someone who spoke English, who were always happy to assist me. This often allowed me to set up a future interview with the relevant individual at the office, but it was also problematic because I wasn't able to provide a neutral translator. Another strategy I used was to spread a wide net to all the English-speakers that I knew in Morocco, and several times I was able to get contacts to accompany me to interviews and assist me with translation. However, none of them were able to assist me full-time and I was dependent on their schedules, which slowed the pace of my fieldwork.

The nature of this study in its comprehensive approach to land tenure systems in Morocco made both identifying trends and generalizing them for readers' consumption extremely difficult. Partially as a result of my difficulty in accessing landowners to interview, I broadened the scope of my research process, which also widened the purview of my results. This meant that while I recognized the complexity of tenure systems and contemporary land issues in Morocco, I was unable to make a traditional thesis in favor of highlighting some of the most poignant issues related to land today in Morocco today.

I learned a great deal about the difficulties inherent in research abroad, building upon lessons that I had garnered from past field-based research. This project emphasized to me the difficulty in carrying out an interview-based research project in a country that you are not fluent in the languages spoken, and the resulting reliance placed upon translators, who may be unreliable either logistically or in terms of objectivity. However, in my personal conceptualization of this study, I really framed it in terms of future research - this was an opportunity for me to get my feet wet, so to speak, and to do a survey of contemporary land issues so that I can return in the future and do more in-depth, ethnographic research.

A key lesson that has been pointed out to me in the past, and was reified by this research process is the importance of specificity in carrying out a research study. As aforementioned, I broadened the scope of this project largely due to access issues, but the point remains valid. While I focused my fieldwork in Meknes-Tafilalet and I was able to gain some knowledge of the structure of tenure practices in that region, many of the nuances present there escaped me as a result of the time constraints of this study. I was also never able to embed myself within a local community in order to get depth of analysis specific to that locale - many of my research participants were disjointed, coming from different areas and backgrounds. The benefit of this was that the breadth of this study was enhanced, but at the cost of delving into the issues particular to any given village, tribe, or region.

In carrying out future research, I hope to draw upon my contacts in the Meknes-Tafilalet region to do a long-term ethnographic study of specific practices of collective land tenure there in order to look at issues of ownership, power dynamics, conceptualization of land, and how the people of the Middle Atlas are negotiating, creating, and adapting to new tenure systems through a dynamic social process. I hope that this will allow for a historical look at changes in tenure practices in the post-independence era, and the resulting changes in distributions of capital and power - that is, looking at who has benefited from these changes, and why these changes occurred. While it quickly became clear to me that this type of deep ethnographic work is necessary in order to build a comprehensive understanding of a local area's tenure system, this type of project was unfeasible for me to do due to time constraints and my initial lack of contacts in rural areas. Moving forward, I hope to continue this line of research in Morocco with a local focus, specifically on the area surrounding Meknes.

Beyond reflecting on my own research, I also would like to discuss the future of land in Morocco. During every interview that I conducted, the research participant either directly said or indirectly alluded to their dissatisfaction with the current tenure regime, and that they hoped that in the future Morocco would complete a comprehensive registration and titling system to make *melk* land ubiquitous. However, many stakeholders raised concerns with the current registration system, whether it was the costs associated with it, its lack of universality due to different regime

systems present in Morocco, or a concern with concentration of land and the disenfranchisement of rural landowners, particularly those of Amazigh descent. The common thread in all of these statements, however, was that it was an issue for King Mohammed VI to address. Only with a new royal decree could previous laws be rolled back, and an inclusive path forward charted. The issue with this is that changes in tenure regimes and the potential for land redistributions are a politically fraught project, that results in winners and losers. My analysis of this is two-fold; first, the Arab Spring protests that destabilized the region have made policy-makers in Morocco both nervous and more conservative - they will not make sweeping changes unless they are assured of the continuation of the political regime's stability. Secondly, political and economic elites, including the King have experienced numerous benefits from the current land regime. Unless widespread public demonstrations push this issue to the fore, I think that it is unlikely that any sort of comprehensive change to the current tenure regime will occur.

Budget

With a modicum of planning, the \$4,200 grant was sufficient to cover all of my expenses, including international travel, room and board, and general research materials. The two most significant expenses I accrued were my international flights and room and board in-country. My total traveling costs to Morocco added up to \$1347, and my return flight cost \$872 for a total of \$2219 of international travel. Room and board was my next most significant expense - I used Rabat as my base of operations due to my familiarity with the city and its significance as the seat of government. Since all the ministries and most public organizations have their main office in Rabat, it was the best place to be located to speak with officials. I primarily stayed with my home-stay family from a previous School of International Training program I attended in Fall 2014, and I paid them approximately \$125 (1250 dirhams at 9.8 dirhams to the dollar) a week for seven weeks, although I traveled extensively during that time as well. This added up to \$875, but it included all amenities including four meals a day (qasqrot, the late-afternoon snack, is substantial enough to count as meal) except during Ramadan, where three meals throughout the night is the norm. In addition to staying with my home-stay family, I also stayed in several Airbnbs in Tangier, Fez, and Meknes when conducting research out in the field and to visit other organizations located outside of Rabat. This added up to \$262, though several times people invited me to stay with them for the night free of charge, which reduced costs, although I did sometimes have to purchase food. While I did not specifically track my food costs since it was provided as part of my housing costs for the most part, I would estimate that I spent about \$250 total. However, a significant portion of this was on coffee - the most common place to meet in Morocco is at a cafe, which is where I conducted the vast majority of interviews outside of government offices. While traveling in-country, I traveled in taxis within cities, and took trains between cities. I spent \$215 on trains, and approximately \$250 on taxis while traveling to meetings and interviews in Rabat and Meknes. The final area of expenses that I had was for research materials - I purchased several scholarly books both before arriving in Morocco and in-country, in addition to some Arabic language instructional materials. In total, these materials added up to \$119. Total, the cost associated with carrying out his project was \$4,190, which fit almost exactly within the size of the grant. The relatively cheap costs of transportation and food in-country played a significant role in keeping me on-budget despite traveling widely through the country, but I did not feel pressured to reduce my costs at any point during this project. While I planned out my budget before arriving based on my prior experience living in Morocco, it was not difficult to adhere to and I did not feel constrained by staying within the allotted budget.

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