

The Role of Institutions in Place-making and Securing Livelihoods for Urban Residents in Samoa: Exploring Resettlement Programmes at Sogi and Taufusi

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Abstract

Since the start of the twentieth century, people have shifted onto lands owned either by the state or the church in the Apia Urban Area. Over time, it has become evident that this has not been entirely to the benefit of the landowners. Some families were not paying for their leases and their houses were generally in poor repair, with inadequate drainage, poor access roads and little or no sewerage service. Early in the twenty-first century, the Sāmoan government and the Catholic Church decided to resettle households that had been living on church or state land next to the Central Business District to designated areas on the edge of the Apia Urban Area. This paper examines these resettlements, and especially the role of institutions such as the government and the church in terms of their policies and the processes undertaken. It also highlights lessons that could be learnt from these experiences, by treating them as constructive insights for strengthening future work relating to the management of urban areas. The findings and ideas discussed in this article would be further explored in a continuing program of research.

Keywords: Samoa, informal settlements, resettlements, urban development, urban management, development.

Introduction

Urbanisation is contributing to the growth in numbers of landless families and related poverty in Pacific countries where people are pulled towards urban areas by the promises of cash employment and basic services. Their inability to secure higher paid employment and land has forced many to live in substandard conditions (Bryant-Tokalau 1995; Connell and Lea 2002; Storey 1998). This is most evident in Melanesia and Micronesia where there has been an exponential growth of informal settlements in cities like Suva, Honiara and Port Moresby (Asian Development Bank 2012; Connell 2011) and in South Tarawa (Asian Development Bank 2012; Haberkorn 2008; Kiddle 2011). In 2006, 17,000 out of the 50,000 people residing in Honiara were informal settlers. The estimated total for Suva was 90,000 (URS Australia 2006 cited in Chand and Yala 2008). According to Haberkorn (2008), the population density of Betio in South Tarawa is 10,400 persons per square kilometre, far greater than that of Hong Kong or Singapore. Figures such as these have led many to conclude that numbers of informal households will continue to grow and be a permanent feature of most cities in the Pacific (Jones 2012; Jones and Cocks 2003).

The recent census of Samoa showed that the population of Apia has decreased in the past five years (Samoa Bureau of Statistics 2011). Contrary to this, studies on urbanisation in Samoa state that there has been a growing number of low income households (Connell and Lea cited in Storey 1998; Devas and Rakodi 1996 cited in Storey 1998), characterised by poor quality housing, inadequate waste discharge systems (Asian Development Bank 2011; Jones and Cocks 2003), financial hardship and landlessness (Wood 2006; Thornton et al. 2010, 2013). Studies by the Asian Development Bank (ADB) (2008, 2011) found that one fifth of households in and around the Apia Urban Area were earning a weekly income below the poverty line (SAT\$37.49 equivalent to US\$10). According to Thornton et al. (2013: 359), “[a]lthough squatter settlements at levels experienced in the Melanesian context do not yet exist in Samoa, an urbanizing trend does indeed exist and related urban poverty is increasing.”

Urban Poverty and the Role of Institutions

Managing urban growth is therefore critical in the Pacific. However, many (Bryant-Tokalau 2012; Bedford and Hugo 2008; McKinnon et al. 2007; Mohanty 2006; Storey 2005) agree that Pacific islands' planning departments and local governments face not only resource constraints, but also a lack of capacity to effectively plan and monitor strategies and policies. On the positive side, studies in Fiji concerned with formal and informal institutions show that they have helped improve the lives of urban residents (Chung and ECREA 2007; Kiddle 2010, 2011; Koto 2010; Mohanty 2006, 2011). Koto (2010) discusses how the government, the Methodist Church of Fiji and local community groups have contributed to the upgrading of Namadai from a squatter settlement to a formal residential subdivision. The residents of that settlement were given the opportunity to secure land tenure and proper housing. Chung and ECREA (2007) and Kiddle (2010) mention numerous organisations and community groups that are helping to upgrade and build homes for the urban poor in Fiji: for example, Housing and Relief Trust (HART), Rotahomes, Habitat for Humanity, Save the Children, the Ecumenical Centre for Research, Education and Advocacy (ECEA) and NZAID. Other studies have demonstrated the resilience of urban residents where "... even in the midst of hardship they find ways to earn cash, build houses and send their children to school" (Bryant-Tokalau 2012: 212). Mohanty (2006, 2011) discusses the role of the informal sector in providing livelihood support for squatter settlements in Fiji.

Overview of Urban Development and Management in Apia

The Apia Urban Area comprises a mixture of traditional villages, suburban and commercial areas in which land may be government-owned, freehold or under customary tenure. Significant areas of Apia remain under customary authority, such as Moata'a, Vaiala and Apia village (Meleisea 1987; Ward and Ashcroft 1998), but historical trends since the 1900s have led to households on freehold land being owned by the government and the Catholic Church in parts of Apia. At independence, some land close to town owned by the government and the churches was subdivided and sold as freehold to Sāmoan citizens. According to Meleisea (1987), the opportunity to buy land allowed Sāmoans to move outside the confines of traditional village authority for the first time. Areas such as Vaivase, Tulaele and Tiavi were allocated to government employees and individuals in the business sector. Other people were able to obtain land rights by lease arrangement. Unauthorised leasing was also commonly practiced, though people were well aware of the insecure, unsatisfactory and non-legal nature of this form of lease. Those who chose this alternative did so because they wanted to avoid higher rents and solicitors' fees. Churches in Apia took the lead by making lease arrangements for church land and collecting nominal rents on plots (Galuvao 1987). The government and some customary landowners followed suit in formulating lease arrangements for land located at Sogi, Taufusi and villages in the Apia Urban Area.

Freehold land in the urban area is managed by the central government, which covers costs for services such as waste collection and disposal, drainage and road maintenance from the national budget. Settlement areas, such as suburbs arising from subdivision, housing around the Central Business District, commercial enclaves, the prison, and major church compounds are treated administratively as though they were villages. There are more than 300 villages (*nu'u*) most of which are governed by traditionally appointed village councils of

chiefs (*matai*) following customary norms. The government pays allowances to government representatives who provide liaison services between the communities and the state. The male government representative, who is also a chief and a member of the village council, is known as the *sui o le nu'u* and the female representative, who is a member of the women's committee, is known as the *sui o le malo*. Any project that might affect the village, whether proposed by the government or by an external agency, would go through these representatives. New settlements, including those in the urban area, have representatives who are mostly selected by the government. All government representatives report to the Division of Internal Affairs in the Ministry of Women, Social and Community Development (MWSCD).

The current approach to urban management is legislated by the *Planning and Urban Management Act* (PUMAct 2004) which led to the establishment of the Planning and Urban Management Authority (PUMA) under the Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources (MNRE) to oversee development activities in Apia. This legislation also formalised the place of Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) in development activities throughout the country (MNRE 2006). PUMA developed guidelines for the management of housing in 2006 and recently completed a town plan for submission to Cabinet (PUMA 2006). State-owned agencies with roles in urban development include the Samoa Housing Corporation (SHC), the Samoa Land Corporation (SLC) and the Samoa National Provident Fund (SNPF). No rates are levied on urban businesses or residents, although a fee is charged for power and water, and for wastewater disposal in some areas. Efforts to improve the quality of housing and address health and environmental issues include the ADB-funded Sanitation and Drainage Project 2003–2009 implemented by the Samoa Water Authority (2006). The latter resulted in septic tanks being installed for 100 households, as well as removal of rubbish from mangroves and silt from saltwater drains. It also funded new drainage channels (Asian Development Bank 2008). As part of the overall plan for urban development, there have been drives to relocate households from particular church and government land to areas outside the Apia urban area. The remainder of this paper will discuss these resettlement programs.

Financial Hardship, Landlessness and the Role of Institutions in the Apia Urban Area

In comparison to the literature for the wider Pacific region, little has been written about people who are facing financial hardship and landlessness in the Apia Urban Area. A study by Meleisea (1980) reported the presence of Melanesians on government land in Sogi and how attempts to secure land for these people were resisted by the government at that time. Since then there has been little mention of these people in the literature. Thornton et al. (2010, 2013: 357) recently argued that the “[l]andless are urban-based Sāmoans who have opted out of reciprocal kinship and redistribution systems, and now depend on informal land tenure arrangements through urban-based church membership.”

The literature on urbanisation in Samoa focuses on the role of the government and neglects interventions by institutions operating at the community level. The challenges relating to urban management in Samoa include citizens questioning the authority of government over development on customary land, and the denial by government and some members of the public that poverty exists (Amosa 2006; Connell and Lea 1995 cited in Storey 1998; Devas and Rakodi 1996 cited in Storey 1998). More studies are needed, not only to

provide updated information on the status of people facing hardship and landlessness in Apia, but also to demonstrate what has been done to address these issues in Samoa.

This paper seeks to address these gaps by examining the role of institutions in urban management, using information obtained from a study of two villages facing resettlement in the Apia Urban Area. It seeks to contribute to discussions and debate on the needs of urban residents, and to show how state and private institutions can provide related services. The study uses notions of place attachment and place-based identity to provide insight into how urban residents respond to resettlements in their villages. Studies in these areas show that places are imbued with meaning (Harvey 1996; Hess et al. 2008; Low and Altman 1992) and can contribute to the development of self-identity (Proshansky et al. 1983). Prolonging one's stay in a place strengthens one's emotional bond to that place, which subsequently leads to that place becoming part of one's conceptual and extended self (Neisser 1988). These socially constructed meanings of places can be very powerful and have varying consequences. For instance, the failure of planning and management processes to recognise and address the range of meaning of places can create conflict (Adger et al. 2011; Harvey 1996; Hess et al. 2008).

Methodology

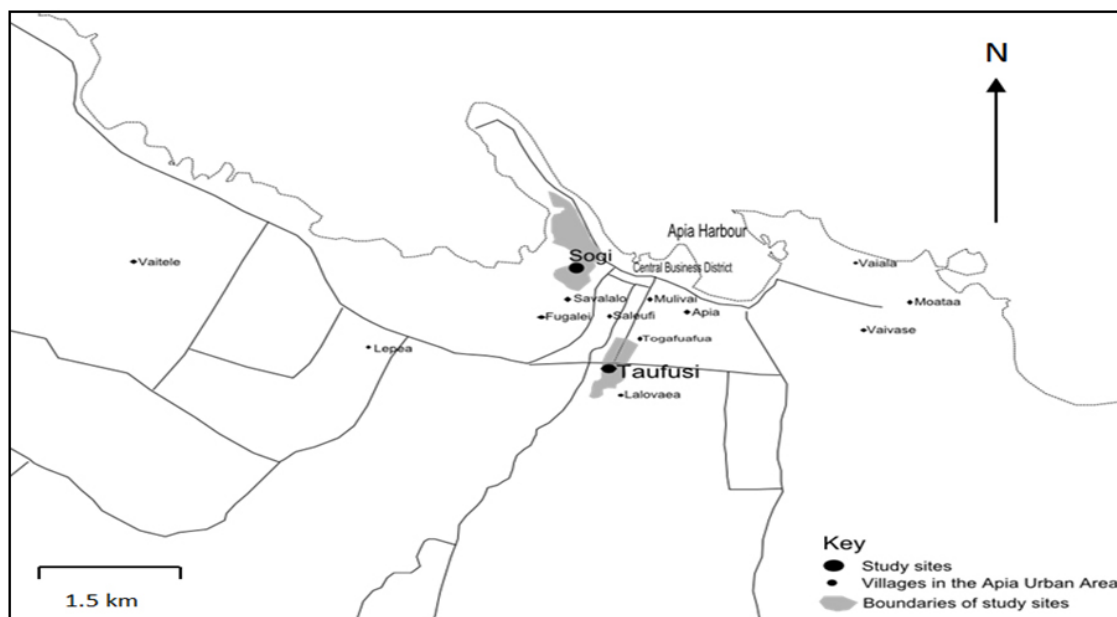
This section discusses the findings of a qualitative study that sought to develop a bottom-up understanding of resettlement programs in the Apia Urban Area. Semi-structured interviews were conducted in the Sāmoan language with members of 30 households from the villages of Sogi and Taufusi. Any citations of the respondents' words are later translations into English by the author. The head of each household was the key informant. For extended families, the oldest person became the key informant, although in most cases both parents were present during the interviews. Informants ranged from 28 to 75 years of age.

The flexibility of semi-structured interviews made them the ideal method of data collection for this research. This technique uses an interview schedule comprising fully worded questions prepared in advance, but the interviewer was not restricted to asking only these (Bogdan and Biklen 1998; Opie 1999). An interview schedule was drafted in the Sāmoan language, and then used as a guide during the interviews. This proved useful because it gave me the opportunity to ask follow-up and more probing questions during the interview. Moreover, the participants were encouraged to talk about issues that they felt were important but which were not wholly within the scope of the interview schedule.

Being Sāmoan assisted me in identifying and approaching households to request their participation and conduct the interviews. I spoke the language and followed cultural protocols relevant to entering and conducting studies in urban Sāmoan communities. I employed guides who lived in these villages and they accompanied me during my visits. In each of the villages, the first family I visited was that of the village government representative, *pulenu'u*. After consultation with the village *pulenu'u* and my local guide, I then planned out the rest of my visits. In each visit the guide introduced me to the families, and I then clarified the objectives of my study and formally requested their participation. These steps were helpful in gaining the trust of the families that I visited and enabling me to carry out my study.

Study Sites

Map 1: The Apia Urban Area and the Study Sites.



(Source: Adapted from Google Maps 2015)

The two villages selected for this study are Sogi and Taufusi. Both are within the central part of the Apia Urban Area, with Sogi located next to the Central Business District. They are also small compared to most villages in the country, but the population of Taufusi (469) is significantly larger than that of Sogi (294) (Samoa Bureau of Statistics 2011). Sections of both villages are often affected by flooding at times of heavy rain.

Sogi lies on the Mulinuu Peninsula, north-west of the Apia Urban Area. Most of the north-eastern end of the village is occupied by government buildings, hotels, the main road and a sea wall. A small part of Sogi comprises residential land on which a few families occupy freehold sections that they purchased from the government in the 1960s. A large area of mangrove lies on the western side of the village. A study by Meleisea (1980) discussed the presence of Melanesians on government land in this village. Between 1880 and 1914, the German plantation company *Deutsche Handels und Plantagen Gesellschaft* (DHPG) operated a store at Sogi, as well as its central administrative offices and a depot for their estates in A'ana and Savai'i. The DHPG recruited indentured labourers from Malaita in the Solomon Islands, Bougainville and the Bismarck Archipelago to work in Sāmoa. Later referred to by indigenous Sāmoans as the black boys (*tamauli*), a number of these workers lived at Sogi. Most were repatriated at the end of German rule in 1914, but some men, particularly those with Sāmoan wives and children, remained. Ownership of German land at Sogi was passed to the New Zealand colonial administration, which continued to operate the plantations as a government enterprise. When Sāmoa became independent in 1962, the land was transferred to the government of Sāmoa as part of the Western Sāmoa Trust Estates Corporation (WSTEC). The Melanesian settlers at Sogi and their descendants continued to work on the plantations during this period. Although attempts were made to secure land rights for Melanesian settlers at Sogi, as well as on the plantations, these efforts were unsuccessful (Meleisea 1980). Recent media releases (*Samoa Observer* 2013a) have reported that some descendants of the Melanesian labourers still occupy the area.

Taufusi is on a floodplain at the foot of Mt Vaea. The term *taufusi* means swamp because most of this area was originally swampland. The area was largely customary land belonging to Vaimoso families before parts of it were gifted to the Catholic Church. Today, there are still families living on customary land belonging to Vaimoso people. However, most of the southern end of the village comprises residential land on which several extended families occupy freehold sections that they purchased from the Catholic Church in the 1950s and 1960s. Other families were able to pay for their land under the Church's 'lease-to-own scheme'. Their payments were completed in the 1980s and 1990s. Much of the northern end of the village has been reclaimed for infrastructure, houses and businesses where there are people living on land leased by the Catholic Church. With the exception of a few media reports (Tavita 2011), there has been little reference to the status of these people in the literature.

Findings

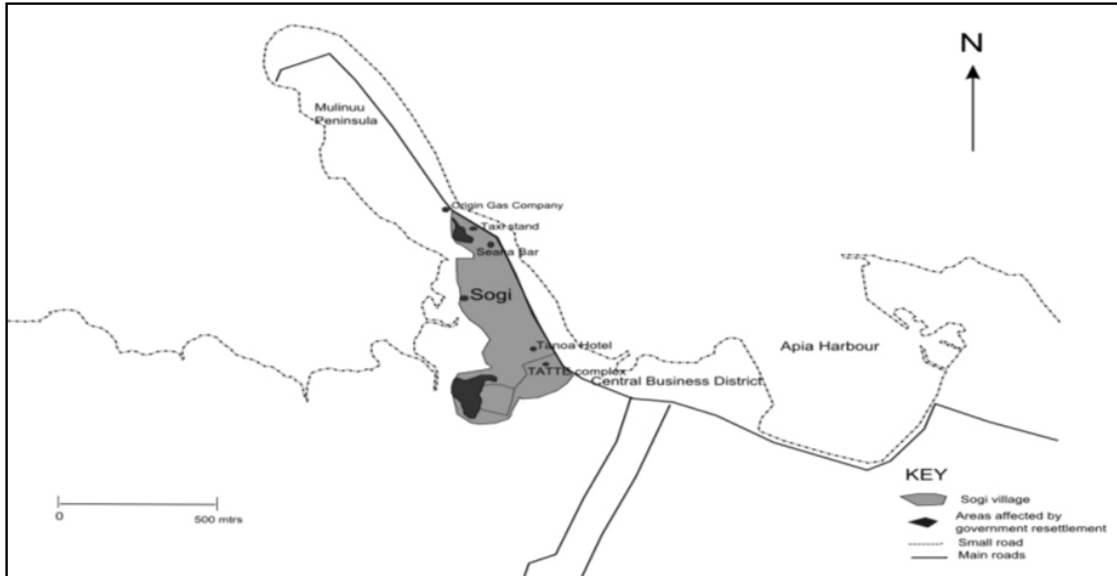
Background to the Resettlements: Government Resettlement at Sogi

The government initiated resettlement of families living on state-owned land at Sogi in 2008, and many are still living on the edge of the mangrove swamp that covers much of the western side of the peninsula. Most occupy the area behind the Tanoa Hotel and the Tui Atua Tupua Tamasese Tupua Tamasese Efi (TATTE) government complex. Another cluster of families lives between the Seana Bar and the Origin Gas Company (refer to Map 2).

Land at Sogi is valuable because of its proximity to hotels and public buildings, so the government believed that relocation was the best option for these households, given the site's overcrowded and unhealthy environment. It is mostly covered by water at high tide, which poses a threat to the health and safety of residents. In addition, the adjacent area of mangrove is a breeding place for fish and shellfish, and needs protection from human activities and related impacts. In 2013, the Prime Minister said, "[t]here is not enough land to grow crops for families to rely on...the area is unhealthy for the residents. Waste water directed out to sea under an Asian Development Bank project of over \$300 million is being channelled through Sogi" (*Samoa Observer* 2013a).

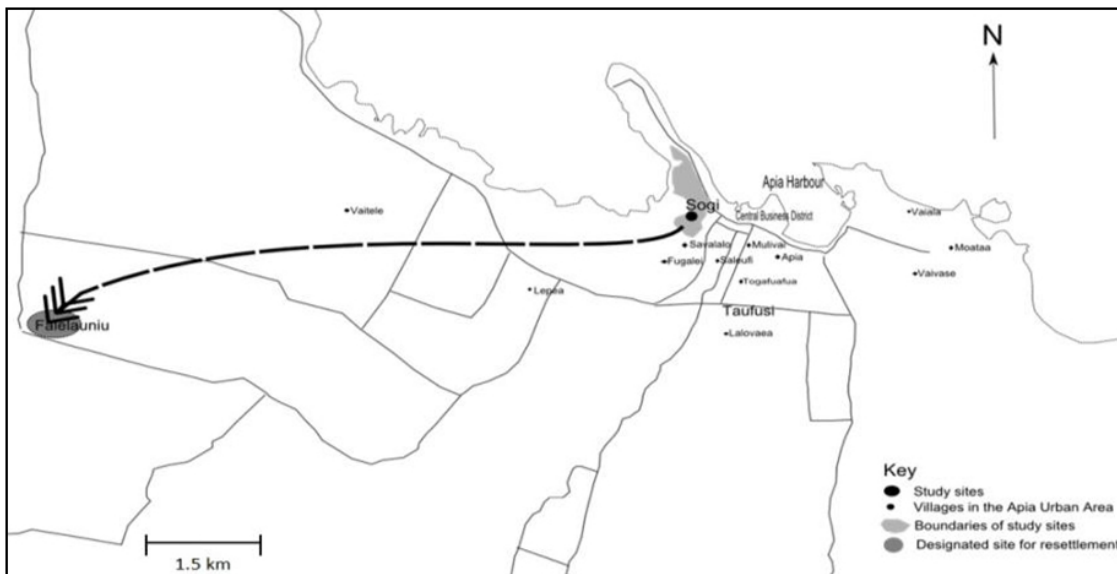
The residents of Sogi were informed that government had assigned land to them at Falelauniu, approximately 7km from the town centre (refer to Map 3). Falelauniu is next to the village of Tafaigata where a private school is located. The country's prison and waste landfill are also located nearby. Each family was allocated one quarter of an acre, valued at SAT\$30,000, which they were expected to repay. The number of years taken to repay the land was not specified. In addition, households were offered SAT\$3000 to cover relocation costs, available when the family signed a document confirming its willingness to move to the new settlement. As the Prime Minister has stated, the designated area for resettlement is not only inland but higher, which means that residents will be protected from rising seas. Land would also be available for families to grow food crops (*Samoa Observer* 2013a).

Map 2: Areas at Sogi Affected by the Government Resettlement Program.



(Source: Adapted from Google Maps 2015)

Map 3: Sogi and the Designated Area for Resettlement, Falelauniu.

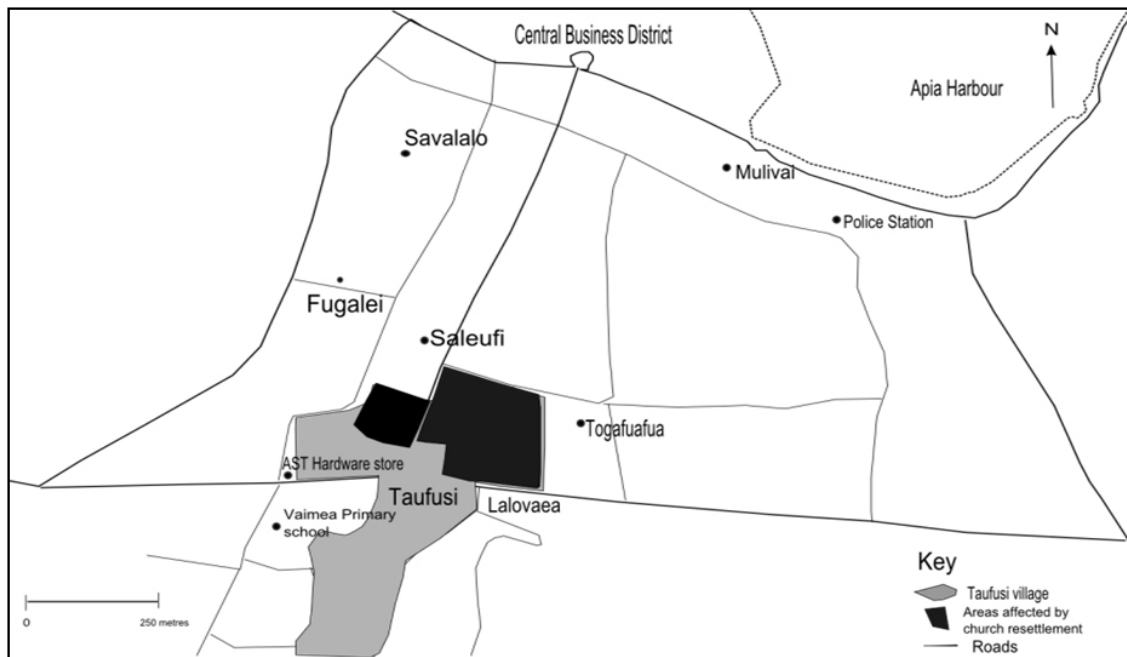


(Source: Adapted from Google Maps 2015)

Background to the Resettlements: Church Resettlement at Taufusi

The second resettlement program was managed by the Catholic Church, and it targeted households living on Catholic land at Taufusi. In 2011, the Catholic Church informed tenants who leased their sections from the Church at Taufusi to move off their land. These families lived between shops and businesses on the north-eastern side of the village (refer to Map 4).

Map 4: Areas at Taufusi that were Affected by the Church Resettlement.



(Source: Adapted from Google Maps 2015)

The main reason for resettling these households was so that the Catholic Church could earn money to pay for its development projects: for example, the newly built Mulivai Cathedral. Until 2008, the Church was receiving little to no income from those leasing its lands in the Apia Urban Area. Most households had not made regular payments, so the decision was made to resettle these residents and lease lands out to businesses. One of the Church leaders said, "... the church wants to pool its vast tracts of land in the town area and lease them to businesses at a higher rate. We have very few sources of income but have a lot of assets. The church is undergoing several expensive development projects that require lots of money" (Tavita 2011).

Initially Church members were given six months to buy the land they were living on, but as none were able to do so, they were offered a free quarter of an acre on Catholic land at Moamoa (refer to Map 5) (Tavita 2011). The families were also given SAT\$30,000 by the Church to move from Taufusi. Former residents and church leaders thought that this was a very good deal.

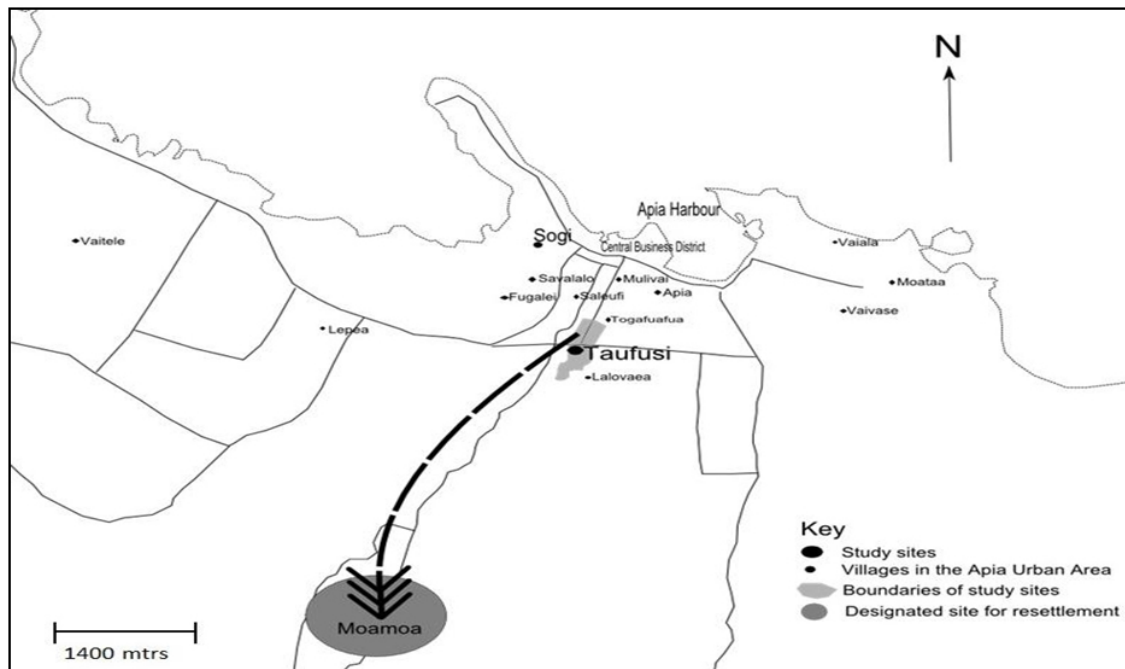
Characteristics of families affected by the resettlement schemes

Descendants of Melanesian workers

Three of the families surveyed at Sogi were part-Sāmoan descendants and relatives of the Melanesian laborers that Meleisea (1980) reported in his study. These families live beside the mangrove area to the south of the Tanoa Hotel and the TATTE government building (refer to Map 2). They have been living there for more than a century, but do not own their sections. Two residents now aged in their 70s were born here in the late 1930s. One elder said,

I am 74 years old. I was born here in 1938. The reason why we are living here is because our ancestors the tamauli came and worked here for the government. Our tamauli ancestors have passed on but we continue to live here. (Respondent 6)

Map 5: Land at Moamoa has been allocated for the resettled Taufusi residents



(Source: Adapted from Google Maps 2015)

A widow in her early 60s lives there with her children and grandchildren. She had married the son of a *tamauli* and said,

I married a Sogi man. He was born here. His father wanted us to come and live here with him. I came here when I was 26 years old. My husband built this house on his own. It was from his own design and also the design may have been influenced by the materials that we can afford and the design he and his friends knew. We had some money from selling crabs and we bought the wood, the roofing iron. (Respondent 5)

Relatives of Melanesian labourers and owners of freehold land/ private landowners

Between the 1970s and the 1990s the Sāmoan relatives of *tamauli* came to Sogi either to take care of their elderly relatives or to stay there while looking for employment in Apia. Most initially lived in the houses of their Sogi relatives, but over the years several requested permission from their relatives to build houses of their own on the edge of the mangrove. A 40 year-old male who was interviewed said that he was born in Savai'i but shortly afterwards moved to Sogi because this is his mother's village. He has lived there for more than 30 years. Two families claimed that they regularly paid rates for their leases until the late 1990s, but since then they have not done so. One woman stated,

We moved back here and built a small open fale in 1986. It was on stilts. This is where we started our family with two children. We made arrangements for the lease of this piece of land. We went to WSTEC to request a lease and they came to measure the piece for our lease. Although they said that our lease was approved, there was no limit in terms of how long the lease would last. We started paying SAT\$40 a year for the lease, but this time we are not paying anything. (Respondent 3)

Most families located between the Seana Bar and the Origin Gas Company are relatives of private landowners on the northern end of the village. Like the relatives of *tamauli*, these people initially came to live with their relatives, but later built houses of their own on the edge of the mangrove. A father said,

The reason why we first came here is because we are related (through my father) to the family who owns that land over there. We initially lived closer to their house, but we shifted and built our house here because it was getting crowded over there where the main house is. (Respondent 1)

Families leasing Church lands

The residents affected by the scheme at Taufusi are mostly families belonging to the Catholic faith that moved to find employment in Apia in the 1970s and 1980s. In contrast to other Taufusi residents, these families were paying rates to the Church. A leader of the Church said, “[m]any of the tenants have been in arrears to the church for many years. Though the lease is only SAT\$15 per month, many have never bothered to make any payments” (Tavita 2011). According to the families interviewed, they were initially able to pay their leases, but were later unable to do so because of insufficient income. For some households, the parents who signed and paid the rates for the leases have passed on and their children, who have since grown up, did not make regular lease payments. A woman in her late 40s said,

My parents moved here when I was young. My parents have passed on but I have lived here all my life, went to school and got married and raised my family here. It’s not easy trying to meet our expenses as things are expensive, but my job does not pay much money. (Respondent 2)

Most of these households have paid employment at nearby shops and companies. The average annual income for such work is SAT\$10,000 (equivalent to US\$4250). They also rely on income from informal economic activities, mainly as street vendors. The annual average income received from these activities ranges between SAT\$8000 to SAT\$10,000 (equivalent to US\$3400 to US\$4250). For most of these households, their regular income is barely sufficient to cover daily expenses such as food and electricity. According to one resident,

We struggle to feed our children and the whole family so that most times we do not worry about the lease at all. Sometimes money is also needed to fix the house. For instance, when the roof of the house leaks or the wooden floor and stilts [on which the house sits] rot. Most times these things come first. (Respondent 4)

Successes of the Resettlement Programs

The Church’s offer of free land and SAT\$30,000 allowed households living at Taufusi to shift to Moamoa. Most, if not all of the informal households surveyed were in the process of relocating at the time of the study. This will make way for new businesses that will be built where respondents’ houses once stood. Most residents understood and accepted the Church’s decision, recognizing that the land was not theirs. Those who were interviewed expressed gratitude to the Church, and excitement at the chance of owning their own land. Land means they now have a property to own and use as collateral for loans needed to rebuild their homes at Moamoa. They also have space to grow food gardens to sustain the family.

In addition, the money given to them to cover relocation costs was helping them relocate their properties and begin building their houses. One respondent said,

What the Church has done for us is really good. I think things would be very difficult for us if we did not get an offer of land and money. We are very thankful and we thank God for his blessings. (Respondent 12)

While some elderly residents were particularly concerned about leaving their Church at Mulivai, the option of attending the Moamoa Church saw their concerns resolved.

In 2013, soon after the survey, I found that most households with insecure tenure had relocated away from Taufusi. New businesses, such as Neti's Supermarket and Laundromat, the Samoa Stationery Bookshop, Special Occasion Supplies (SOS) and a car dealer now occupy the land where the houses once stood (refer to Photographs A and B).

Photographs A and B: New businesses replace old homes being demolished at Taufusi



(Source: Author 2013)

A number of families have relocated from government land at Sogi. Recent media reports have been about Sogi families now living at Falelani. For instance, one elderly lady remarked favourably that her family is now able to cultivate food gardens to feed the family. She said, “[w]e don’t need any money to buy food like taro and ta’amu. Unlike in Sogi you can hardly grow anything there because there is not enough land” (Samoa Observer 2013b).

Challenges of the Resettlement Programs

Most of the challenges were evident at Sogi, where the pace of resettlement has been slow. While some Sogi families resettled at Falelauniu, all the households interviewed were planning to move. Older residents in their 60s and 70s refused to leave Sogi because of their ancestral ties to the land. The claim that people perceive and attach different meanings to spaces is evident (Low and Altman 1992; Harvey 1996; Hess et al. 2008). The government sees Sogi as a biophysical area that is unsafe for residents and, according to Liki (2008), a space the government believes is better suited to business development, new hotels and government offices where profits can be made. However, interviews with Sogi residents revealed ‘affective relationships’ (Hess et al. 2008) with the spaces they occupy. The interviews also showed that since the elderly residents had stayed there for a long time, their emotional bonds with the place had intensified. The passion and sense of desperation in the voices of elders during the interviews revealed their intense emotional connection to Sogi as home. The elderly residents talked about Sogi as their place of birth. They had lived there all their lives and they had raised their children and grandchildren there. As one elder said,

This part of the land was reclaimed and settled by our ancestors. They have passed on but we have continued to live here, our children and grandchildren were born here. Our

ancestors made an important contribution to the development of our country. The government should consider that and not force us to move. (Respondent 6)

In addition, these people believed that over the years they had invested a lot in this place, and consequently enjoyed improved socio-economic conditions. Most households occupy brick houses that are difficult to leave behind and expensive to move. The money offered by the government to cover relocation costs does not compensate them for what they have paid over the years to develop the sections they occupy. One elderly resident described how hard it was to make ends meet. However, his children and other family members have helped improve the whole family's living conditions. His children had gained educational qualifications and are employed as government officers and teachers, making them the household's main income earners. He said,

When I got married we moved here [at the back of his parents' house at the time] to develop our family and raise our children. This whole area was just mud and dirt. We laid logs on the ground to walk on ... from my parents' house to our house and to our kitchen ... we also used sand to try and cover and bury the mud. Later on we were able to pay for truckloads of gravel and sand to help raise this land. Now the land is dry and solid. Most of the work we did was carrying and transporting sand to here ... it was not an easy task ... This house we are now living in was built in 2001 with money from our children. Our family members came to support us in the building of the house. (Respondent 4)

In another household, the children had left to work overseas, but sent money to help the family. A resident earning income from selling crabs and fish described her attempts to reclaim eroded land and improve their living conditions over the years:

The water covers this whole area at high tide so when I have money I go to the truck drivers that work at the hardware shops and pay them twenty tala or thirty tala for a truckload of sand or crushed coral to raise our land. Before, when my husband was alive, he always used the wheelbarrow to dig the sand from the mangrove to reclaim the eroded parts of the land, but he is not here to do that anymore. (Respondent 5)

Another challenge mentioned during the interviews was the difficulty people experienced in leaving their church behind. Most of the elderly residents interviewed were founding members of the Sogi Congregational Christian Church of Samoa. Shifting out of this area would mean they would have to join another parish in a village close to Falelauniu. This is because they had heard there are no churches at Falelauniu. The other option would be to commute to the church at Sogi on Sunday.

Younger residents in their 40s, who may be earning income for food at nearby businesses and in the mangrove area, refused to move because they feared losing their livelihoods; yet the government has not offered long-term assistance to struggling households like theirs. Some said they would lose their sole source of income, and there were no options in the new settlement for them to earn income at Falelauniu. The study found that most of these households earned an annual average of SAT\$10,000 (equivalent to US\$4250) from either paid work or informal activities. Some of the females who were interviewed worked as receptionists and cleaners at nearby hotels or as assistants in shops. The males worked as construction workers, machine operators, builders or taxi drivers. In addition, some households depended on income from informal economic activities, such as selling food in the streets of Apia or providing traditional healing services. One household earned income from selling fish and crabs caught in the mangrove area. The annual average income for households

that depend mainly on informal activities ranges between SAT\$8000 and SAT\$10,000 (equivalent to US\$3400 to US\$4250).

Some residents expressed fear of moving out of Sogi because they had insufficient money to pay for the relocation of their properties, lease of the land, and materials and labour to build another house. Relocation would impose an additional burden on already tight household budgets, which are mostly for food, water, electricity, school and church related expenses. The SAT\$3000 offered by the government was not enough for them.

Travel from a distant location to their current jobs, schools, shops and the hospital would impose new costs. Falelauniu is far from town and most of these people are employed in hotels and construction companies close to Sogi. To travel by bus from Falelauniu to Apia costs SAT\$20 a week for one person. One household that I visited had seven people, so for the parents and the five children to get to work and school they would need to set aside SAT\$140 for transport, money that they did not have. Here at Sogi, however, they do not have worry about such costs. One resident said,

Most of the services here are within walking distance. People are free to walk to and from work and schools without paying for transportation. We hear that people that have moved [reference to those that have relocated] are struggling with the cost and time taken to get to work and schools ... Issues like the unpredictability of buses and were never part of their lives while they lived here. (Respondent 3)

The tension between government and residents has led to worsening conditions in parts of Sogi, where people lack secure tenure. Inadequate sewerage disposal is a threat to the health of residents who depend on septic tanks in an area liable to flood at high tide. Some residents were reluctant to improve their houses out of fear of possible eviction, even though the government did not connect these households to the new sewerage disposal system recently built at Sogi. A few households are trying to improve their living conditions, but feel that their efforts are in vain. One resident had just finished building a new bathroom and toilet. He stated that these improvements made him happy. However, he also indicated that these improvements do not improve the whole situation at Sogi as neighbouring families do not have proper waste disposal for their toilets:

There is a bad stench coming from where my neighbours live and we have to live with it everyday. This is a big problem and I have gone over several times and discussed the matter with them but it seems like nothing is being done as the stench is still strong ... It has made life very difficult. (Respondent 13)

During one interview a resident said that at high tide water floods her house and her neighbours' houses. These people live in mostly wooden, open-sided structures built on stilts. The latter are important because of the area's poor drainage. She said,

Soon you will see the water coming in because the tide is now high. See there's the water, the tide is high so the water is coming. My son has to drive the taxi that he drives over to our neighbour's place when the water comes up. (Respondent 14)

Her situation is illustrated in the following photographs, which show the combined effects of poor drainage, adjacent swampland and heavy rain.

Photographs C and D: Houses at Sogi during a period of heavy rain



(Source: Author 2013)

Discussing the role of institutions

The decisions to undertake resettlement programs showed good intentions by the landowners. Both were willing to exempt their tenants from paying overdue leases, and offered opportunities for them to start afresh; for instance, the chance to own land and rebuild in areas that are not flood-prone or near the sea. The study found that effective communications, adequate financial compensation, and institutional connections at the designated sites for resettlements were crucial factors to the overall success of the programs. This is because the affected residents were being removed from the places where they traded formally and informally to raise money needed to feed their families, and where they could easily access (low cost) nearby health and educational facilities and attend church.

The landowners' approaches towards the planning and implementation of their resettlements were different, and consequently produced contrasting experiences for the affected residents. The program undertaken by the Catholic Church was more successful than the government scheme for several reasons. Firstly, the Church was more informative and clearly stated to its members why they were being resettled. In addition, the Church did not simply dispossess a household, but offered it an attractive financial package for resettlement. The assistance took into account the cost of relocation as well as the socio-economic situation of affected residents. The land designated for resettlement also had a Church, shops and schools which would service the needs of the resettled residents.

On the other hand, the study findings revealed that the government's indifferent attitude to the different ethnic and socio-economic backgrounds and ages that existed at Sogi challenged its resettlement program. Adger et al. (2011: 3) suggest that "... actual changes to the physical environment may contribute to the renegotiation of meanings" but conflict emerges when meanings are undervalued or ignored. The government's silence on the *tamauli* land issue, from when it was first raised in the 1980s (Meleisea 1980) until now, has been interpreted as a refusal to consider the historical connections these people have with their land. To those elderly residents who were interviewed, this treatment is unfair and insulting, and they intend to remain at Sogi. The government's silence on the requests by residents for additional financial assistance and infrastructural support at Falelauniu has also been viewed in a similar way.

The study also showed that a shared burden of disadvantage for Taufusi and Sogi residents relates to financial compensation. The three factors that should have been taken into account were the cost of resettling a property, reimbursement of capital improvements on the land originally occupied, and the cost of rebuilding at the new site. For the Taufusi residents, the SAT\$30,000 may be enough to build a simple brick house. The government scheme for relocation was considerably less generous than the Catholic Church resettlement program. The financial offer of relocation to Sogi residents was one tenth of what the Catholic Church offered Taufusi residents. This is not enough to take down and relocate a building or erect a new house at Falelauniu. According to Downs (2004), a household can afford a decent quality house if the cost does not account for more than 30 percent of household income. In the case of the families in my survey, their weekly expenses exceeded their income and at most times there was no money left for anything else unless they borrowed from co-workers, relatives or neighbours (which was quite common). These issues further restricted them from qualifying for the formal housing assistance currently available in Samoa. The Samoa Housing Corporation, the National Provident Fund and the Development Bank charge service fees of SAT\$100 or more to loan applicants. In addition, applicants are required to commit a certain percentage of their regular income to weekly loan repayments. Some residents said that they had applied for housing loans from these organizations, but were declined because the calculations showed that they could not afford the required repayments. Some said they had not applied out of fear of being embarrassed if their applications were rejected. In 2008, the pastor and the Sogi Congregational Christian Church petitioned the government to revise the terms of the relocation scheme and increase the amount of time and financial assistance available to families to move. At the time of this study, they had not received a response from the government.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The resettlement programs at Sogi and Taufusi provide useful lessons for urban planning and management. Firstly, dialogue with communities is essential to avoid misunderstanding and resistance. Sogi residents were not aware of government intentions to resettle them until they were evicted, and the silence of the government in regards to the plight of Melanesian people and struggling households continues to challenge the resettlement program. The passing of the PUMAct in 2004 recognised the government as the sole authority for land development. At the same time, the Act established the EIA process that allows the concerns of residents to be voiced and considered. The government, as the main developer in this context, has a responsibility to inform affected communities before introducing and implementing any major projects that will affect them. Moreover, it must consider issues that are being raised by those affected, and allow adequate time and suitable spaces for consultation with those affected.

Age should be an important factor when considering the planning and implementation of a resettlement program. Elderly people must be treated with care and respect, and efforts should be made by government to include them in future community consultations. This study found elderly residents were especially affected by the resettlement programs, and most expressed fear at losing their homes and membership to their churches. Provision of effective

and efficient subsidised public transport and health care services would make it easier for a 70 or 80 year-old person to move.

The findings reveal that adequate financial assistance given by the Church to residents at Taufusi enabled households to move, while many Sogi residents were forced to remain because they could not afford the move. Government, church and relevant civil society organizations should provide financial and other relevant assistance to families at Sogi to enable them to resettle. As Payne and Majale (2004) have pointed out, any policy package aimed at increasing security of tenure for informal settlers should be combined with initiatives to improve livelihoods, provide services, and ensure more affordable housing for low-income earners. Some options are as follows:

- i) The government to plan and implement community workshops based on the processes relating to applying for housing loans from government institutions such as the National Provident Fund, Samoa Housing Cooperation and the Development Bank.
- ii) Assurance from government that infrastructural support, such as water and effective public transportation, would be available so they can continue to work and provide food to survive.
- iii) Community livelihood programs provided by the Ministry of Women, Community and Social Development (MWSCD) and Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries (MAFF) should include the households in the process of resettlement. Current programs mainly target rural villages.
- iv) The government should reconsider criteria for the selection of government representatives in non-traditional villages and new settlements in the urban area. Village households should be involved in the selection of eligible persons to represent their community.
- v) Both churches and civil society organizations could usefully provide financial assistance or housing materials to assist these families. The study showed that most residents at Sogi were founding members of the Congregational Christian Church of Samoa. A few were members of the Latter Day Saints Church.

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