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According to a wide-reaching report produced for the UN-Habitat most national governments across the globe (in the preceding 30 years at least) have encouraged private property ownership at the expense of rental tenure (UN-Habitat 2003). The result is that most national government housing policies simply do not mention or neglect rental accommodation as a viable housing option when it is, in fact, a lived reality for many people across the planet. They also quote themselves to suggest that 'almost nothing is known about those who provide rental accommodation' (2003, p. 1).

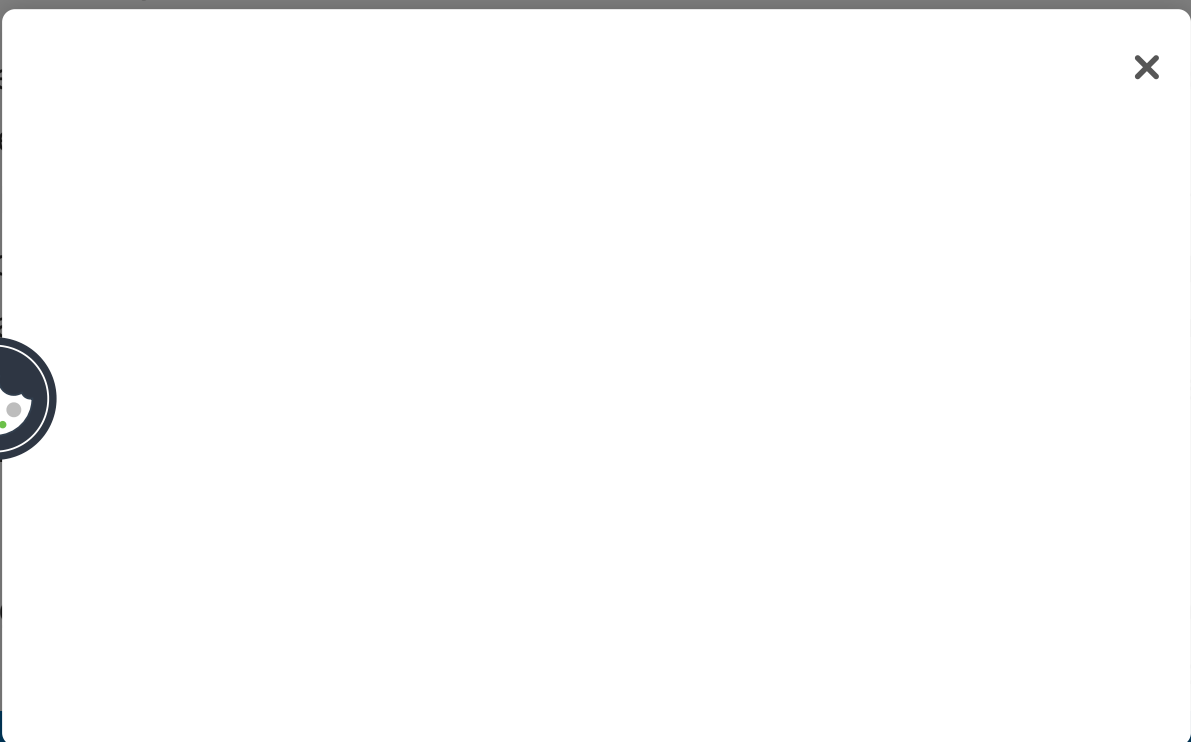
Disclosure statement

This article aims to contribute towards this gap in knowledge by reasserting the importance of landlordism in the low-income settlements of Kenya's smaller towns and cities.

Additional information

There is a growing body of research concerned with rental tenure in Nairobi's low-income settlements (Amis 1984; Otiso 2003; Gulyani & Talukdar 2008; Hendriks 2008; Huchzermeyer 2008; Rigon 2014), however, comparative research in other Kenyan cities is lacking. Research in Nairobi has documented the different categorical forms of landlordism such as 'absentee landlords' (Gulyani & Talukdar 2008) and that renting remains profitable despite the absence of widespread housing improvements (Amis 1984; Gulyani & Talukdar 2008).

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first results section contends that production of landlordism is not only determined by the motivations of landiords but also reilies on the composition of landiord families and ways in which property is acquired. This is highlighted through the examination of the different forms that landlordism takes revealing a much expanded concept of 'absentee landlordism'. This arises from an analysis of gender dynamics within landlord families. Life-quality comparisons between tenants and landlords are then presented to examine social differentiations between landlords and tenants and how such differentiations influence landlord-tenant relations. The final section discusses the effects of such differentiations upon the lived reality of tenure security. The article concludes by discussing the policy implications of these findings.

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Kisumu is the 3rd largest city in Kenya with a population of 409,928, while Kitale is the 18th largest town with a population of 106,187 (ROK [2010](#)). UN-Habitat has previously

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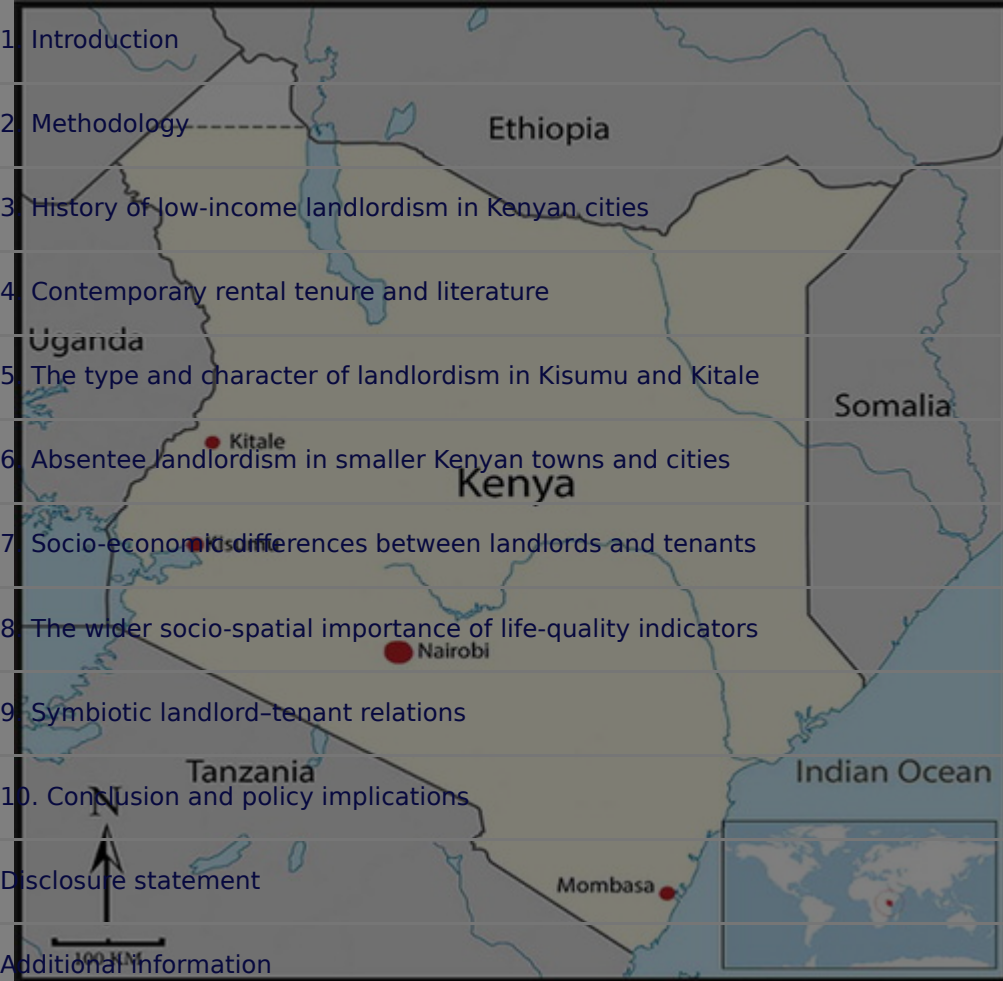
identified six major low-income settlements across the city of Kisumu (UN-Habitat

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[2005](#)), while approximately 65% of the population of Kitale lack access to decent shelter and safe water (Chege & Majale [2005](#)). The dominant land use pattern in Kisumu's low-income settlements is private residential tenure (predominantly rental) although the rate of officially documented land ownership ranges from 42% to 92.6% across different areas (Karanja [2010](#)) Figure 1.

Figure 1. Map of Kenya showing the location of Kisumu and Kitale in relation to Nairobi, the capital.





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The general theme of this research was the relationship between land tenure and service delivery within the low-income settlements of Kenya's smaller towns and cities. A key aim was to critically examine the nature of landlordism and landlord-tenant relations and the findings presented here refer predominantly to this subject. A questionnaire survey of 104 respondents was conducted in 2013 across five sample

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a broad cross-profile of both landlords and tenants were interviewed, however, decisions were also made to target large/small landlords at certain points when it became clear that more respondents in either categories had been interviewed.

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As such, the findings presented may not be fully representative of the sample locations

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as the sampling strategy was non-random and, at times, targeted. The gender balance of respondents is also not fully representative partly because most interviews were conducted during the day (due to practical and logistical reasons) when more women were available for interview.

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The following section gives a brief historical overview of low-income landlordism in Kenya and its relation to wider urban development. Low-income landlordism had developed in Kenyan cities as early as 1913 (van Zwaneberg [1972](#)). This history is a shared history with Kenyan urbanisation more generally. The colonial system created increased labour demands while simultaneously failed to provide widespread public housing. This was expressed in a constant tension between employers and colonial authorities over housing the African population (Hay & Harris [2007](#)) and also saw the emergence of landlordism both within the European 'excluded' zones (in various quasi-public and private guises) and the surrounding areas in which Africans were permitted (or in many cases reluctantly accepted) to live.



×



The emergence of landlordism fed into the racist colonial system which meant that 'from the beginning the so-called races - "Europeans", "Asians", and "Africans" - lived separate lives from each other' (van Zwanenberg [1972](#), p. 17). As van Zwanenberg also asserts 'within each racial division, however the market was free to segregate rich and poor as in Western cities' (pp. 17). This separation was achieved through exclusionary colonial laws and policies (such as prohibition on the ownership of land (Hay & Harris [2007](#))) and in many cases through brute force such as police night-raids. Crucially, wages among African labourers were typically too small to permit them to rent the little formal housing that did exist.

Ethnic distinctions have played an important role in the development of landlordism.

For example, what is now known as Kibera was originally settled by Nubians of Sudanese origin who were permitted to live in the area by colonial authorities. As Amis details 'the Nubians were able to profit from their privileged position within the colonial administration by beginning to construct additional rooms explicitly for rental purposes' (Amis [1984](#), p. 89). This remains a prevailing characteristic of landlordism in Kenya today. Namely, many landlords are afforded the opportunity to buy or construct rental housing through their links with the ruling elite or employment within government institutions (Syagga et al. [2002](#)).

The link between ethnicity and land possession in Kenya, however, is long and complex (Anderson [2005](#)). What can be said in a cautionary sense is that the dictates of political patronage have produced a constantly shifting landscape of land dispossession and reallocation between different ethnic groups. Klopp ([2008](#)) interprets this history

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The development of landlordism in low-income settlements was fuelled by an increasing deficit in the provision of public housing. As Mwangi highlights 'according to the 1976-1982 urban housing survey, average annual housing production was only 6,400 units per year' (1997, p. 143). He continues to mention that 'by 1989, demand had risen to 65,800 units... in the nine years from 1986-1994, only 5,568 units were built' (pp. 143). Low-income landlordism emerged to address this deficit while successive Kenyan administrations neglected rental tenure in policy and legislative terms (ibid.).

It would be wrong, however, to think that all low-income landlordism in Kenya was fuelled by rapid urban growth of predominantly squatters migrating to labour centres. Although this is a strong feature of the Nairobi case study (Amis 1984; Lee-Smith 1990), the picture in other Kenyan cities is more diverse. In Kisumu and Kitale the progressive outward expansion of the towns (Otiso & Owusu 2008) was met by a predominantly rural population of landholders (UN-Habitat 2005; Huchzermeyer 2009). Many of these landholders became landlords in what are now low-income areas. This process was not linear or consistent, however, in that some rural land parcels had already become subdivided through inheritance whereas others still maintained agricultural practices (Huchzermeyer 2009).

Nevertheless, by the 1980s fully commercial rental markets had developed in Nairobi's low-income settlements (Amis 1984). Landlords and tenants in such markets came from diverse backgrounds and lived in divergent living conditions. As such, rental markets have produced a great deal of inequality among residents of so-called low-income

settlements. This is particularly evident in Nairobi's commercial rental markets, where the diversity of landlords and tenants is high (Otiso & Owusu 2008). In Nairobi's low-income commercial rental markets, landlords and tenants are diverse and 'absentee landlordism' is common, with tenants often being migrants from other parts of Kenya.

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Landlordism in low-income settlements in Nairobi has developed in a 2004 World Bank report (World Bank 2004). In a 2004 report on Nairobi, it was noted that the development of landlordism in low-income settlements was fuelled by an increasing deficit in the provision of public housing.

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enumeration exercise carried out in one low-income settlement in Nairobi found the proportion of tenants to be 81% (Rigon [2014](#)). Large-scale survey research in Kisumu has estimated the percentage of tenants across the city to be 69% (Karanja [2010](#)) and estimates for similar sized cities such as Nakuru suggest a tenancy figure of 87% (Mwangi [1997](#)).

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5. The importance and implications of such findings have remained under-examined, however, due to a wider focus in some literature on the informal-formal binary, the fear of explosive urban growth (Hall & Pfeiffer [2000](#)), and the valorisation of slum-dwellers/informal traders as self-realising entrepreneurs (de Soto 2000). As Lee-Smith has stipulated in relation to the Korocho slum of Nairobi, 'the image of the squatter as independent self-builder has tended to obscure the fact that this type of settlement usually has more tenants than owners' ('Lee-Smith [1990](#), p. 176).

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While such an obscuration has emerged as a by-product of academic research on 'informality', it must also be acknowledged that such views developed because of neo-liberal policy and discourse in the 1970s which ascribed 'agency' to slum-dwellers as a pretext for non-action or creating a favourable macroeconomic environment for the poor to realise this agency (Turner [1972](#); Hart [1973](#); de Soto [1989](#)). Tenure relations such as landlordism did not necessarily feature heavily in such approaches - neither have they featured strongly in debates surrounding land tenure security and land titling (Payne et al. [2009](#)).

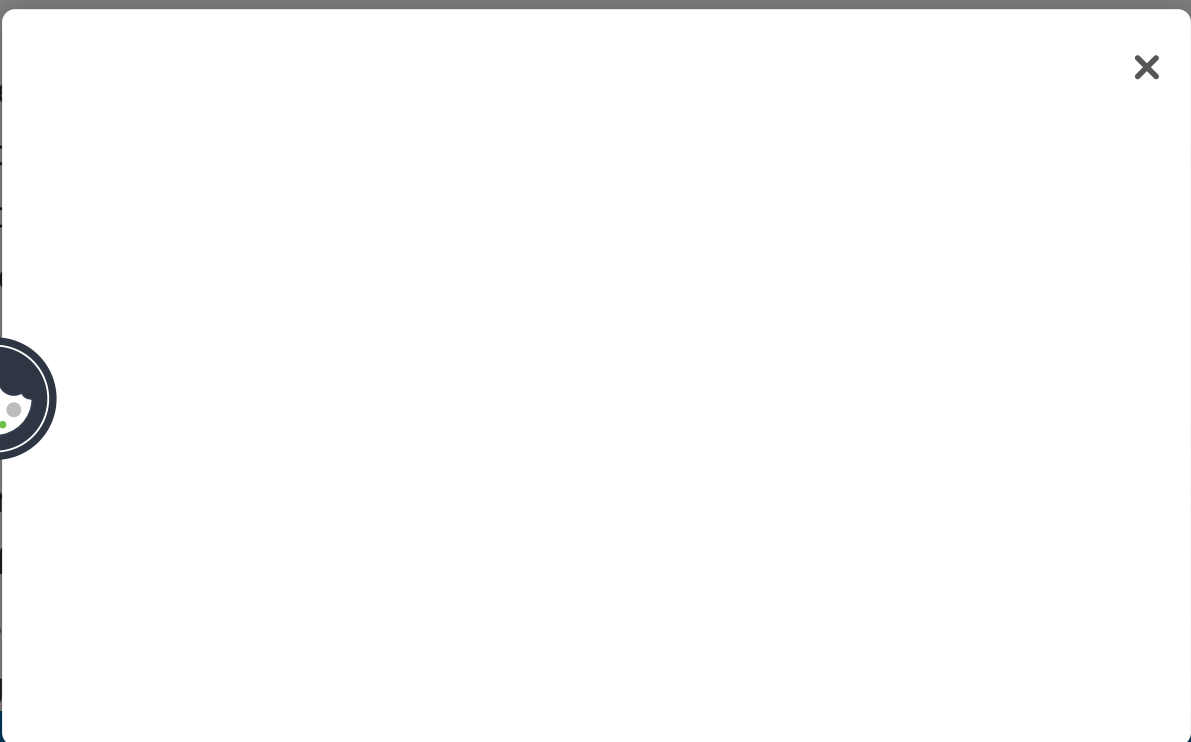
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The political imperative for shifting the focus to private rental tenure is emphasised by Davis who claims that 'despite the enduring mythology of heroic squatters and free land, the... [2007](#), p. 82). By reass... into the arena of... or excess of the ci... ational governm... He argues that... [2008](#), p. ii). The d... emerge as... n as... adstedt [2006](#), p.



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Various processes have been used to explain the emergence of landlordism in low-income areas including commercialisation of land previously held illegally or squatted upon (Aina [1990](#); Doshi [2013](#)), site and service (or latterly slum-upgrading) schemes where housing is 'poached' for rent (Werlin [1999](#); Jones [2012](#); Rigon [2014](#)) or population increases which produce a 'race to the bottom' to sell tiny spaces for relatively high amounts of rent (Archer [1992](#)). As the previous section detailed, however, low-income landlordism has a much longer (and complex) history in Kenya and more commonplace is landlords who are long-term inhabitants of an area who have gradually come to rent out accommodation over an extended period (Aina [1990](#); Lee-Smith [1990](#); Cadstedt [2010](#)).

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Literature suggests that landlordism varies considerably across the globe (Gilbert [2003](#); Kumar [2011](#)). Despite some accounts of exploitative 'slumlords' (Davies [2007](#)) it appears that landlords in both rich and poor countries generally own few properties (Rakodi [1995](#)) and may not necessarily be exploitative of tenants (UN-Habitat [2003](#)). Research in Ghana has found that practices of advanced rent payment have emerged as a response to wider housing shortages – practices which simultaneously create tensions between landlords and tenants (Arku et al. [2012](#)). In Tanzania, Cadstedt ([2010](#)) has similarly found a lack of political imperative concerning rental tenure but landlord-tenant relations in Mwanza City are shaped by the mutual experience of poverty.

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Some have contended that public discourses have led to the propagation of stereotypes which disregard the multiplicity of different landlord and tenant identities (Bierre et al. [2010](#)). Categorising landlordism is therefore problematic but attempts do



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between each category as different landlords use capital extracted from rent for different purposes.

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An interesting aspect of Kumar's framework is that he considers the role landlordism plays as one of the means of production and as a determinant of the labour process.

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However, Kumar approaches this subject by focussing on the production of landlordism

5. The type and motivation of landlordism in a low-income area
(i.e. its motivation and form) and not necessarily by analysing the latent effects of the

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diversity of different forms of landlordism. Here, there also seems an opportunity to

analyse how familial, gender, and inheritance relations interact to produce variable

7. Socio-economic differences between landlords and tenants
landlord-tenant relations and subsequently shape more general labour processes. For

8. The wider socio-spatial importance of the quality indicators
example, the nature of landlordism often affects the way in which small-scale

businesses operate – and whose labour is invested in such activities. A further

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important example discussed is access to, and the use of, services.

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As such, there may be a crucial interaction between landlord-tenant relations and

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labour that needs to be understood in greater depth. This paper attempts to analyse

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this relationship by examining the ways in which different forms of landlordism shape

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the capabilities of tenants and landlords alike and how the nature of landlord-tenant

relations adapts due to the diverse production of landlordism. Secondly, the paper will

also consider how the character of landlordism in low-income areas is 'symbiotically'

produced between landlords and tenants, particularly in the context of the tensions

surrounding rent extraction.

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Table 1. Average number of houses and plots owned by landlords across all sample sites.



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That most landlords surveyed own one plot of land, often means that many such

landlords live on the same plot of land as their tenants. Where this is the case, a set of

relations develop which perhaps undermine some common conceptions surrounding

landlordism. Firstly, some surveyed landlords did not necessarily perceive renting as a

profit-seeking strategy. This was the case with one landlord interviewed, PAO a 50-year-

old female who lives in Manyatta B, who at the time of interview stated that she rented

six houses charging 600 KSh (\$7.14) per month for each house. This is a particularly

low rent amount compared to other rental houses in the same area and when asked

about collecting deposits she replied that 'I initially charged people a deposit - but if

you tell people you are charging a deposit, you scare them away'. In similar cases, it is

generally evident that bureaucratic rules surrounding rent (such as contractual

agreements and deposits) are lacking in such locales. The majority of both tenants

(68%) and landlords (55%) interviewed gave indication that no (written) contract was

present.

Many such 'landlords' should more correctly be categorised as 'landlord families' as

many viewed rental tenure as an inherently familial activity. SA, for example, a landlord

in Manyatta B, inherited his one plot of land from his parents, which he now collectively

owns with his wife. SA explained that when he was young he progressively

built houses on the plot 'one by one until I had a head'. SA was

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5. The type of investment often mirrors the most common spatial form of landlordism, namely, an original house around which rental houses are built over a prolonged period.
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since 2008, he now earns 30,000 KSh (\$357) per month from the rental business, which is a relatively higher income than most tenants and landlords alike.

It would be easy to label such landlords as 'outsiders' (or as 'expansionist') as many were not born in the areas in which they rent houses. Yet, the periods in which such landlords bought land were (often) found to be many decades in the past. Moreover, their investment often mirrors the most common spatial form of landlordism, namely, an original house around which rental houses are built over a prolonged period. Through life-history interviews it was found that the label 'outsiders' mostly emerges through the nature of their employment, in which they travel around the country (predominantly to other large cities such as Nairobi and Mombasa). Many such landlords view their investment as a concurrent base for their (future) family and as an income source during their retirement.

Furthermore, the family dynamic must be understood as key when characterising landlordism at the sample sites. As in the case of SA, the landlord quoted above, many landlords were found to have inherited their plot(s) and rental businesses from their parents or deceased spouses. This included a particularly high number of widows. The high proportion of female and widowed landlords in low-income areas has been noted by previous empirical research in Latin America and Africa (Datta [1996](#); Crankshaw et al. [2000](#); Gilbert [2008](#)). The results of this research also support the general conclusion that rental accommodation is an important livelihood for many single and widowed women.

Therefore, the characteristics of landlord households (gender, family size, etc.) and the social relations of landlords are important in understanding the dynamics of landlordism. The results of this research also support the general conclusion that rental accommodation is an important livelihood for many single and widowed women. Therefore, the characteristics of landlord households (gender, family size, etc.) and the social relations of landlords are important in understanding the dynamics of landlordism. The results of this research also support the general conclusion that rental accommodation is an important livelihood for many single and widowed women.



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 9. Females in both the 'landlords' and 'tenants' categories were interviewed for the questionnaire survey. This does not necessarily mean that females comprise most residents or, indeed, landlords. On the contrary, due to reasons of practicality, most interviews were conducted between 9am and 5pm on weekdays; meaning the results are perhaps more representative of this time of day and week – a time at which more women were available for interview.
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Table 2. Gender composition and average age of respondents across all samples sites.

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two of these plots are in Kisumu and at the time of interview he resided on one of those plots which he considered to be his family home. He also owns a shop and butchers in Kakamega, a smaller town 50 km north of Kisumu, at which he resides for most of the week to supervise and work on his businesses.

The high percentage of female respondents (Table 2) and time of interview also presents a methodological dynamic to this issue. This is because the literature often considers absenteeism to be permanent and embodied in a particular person (Gulyani & Talukdar 2008). Yet, whether absenteeism is permanent (or categorically final) may hinge on such methodological considerations. Many male landlords may indeed be 'absent' from the daily life of 'the slum' but present at certain other times to collect rent, engage in businesses, or to meet their wife (or wives in polygamous marriages). Secondly, the majority of those women present (i.e. engaged in labour in or around the homestead) were found to be wives or partners of those landlords who were temporarily/permanently residing on other land plots but who nevertheless controlled rent money. In such situations absenteeism is much more fluid and contingent than a simple binary between 'absent' and 'in situ'.

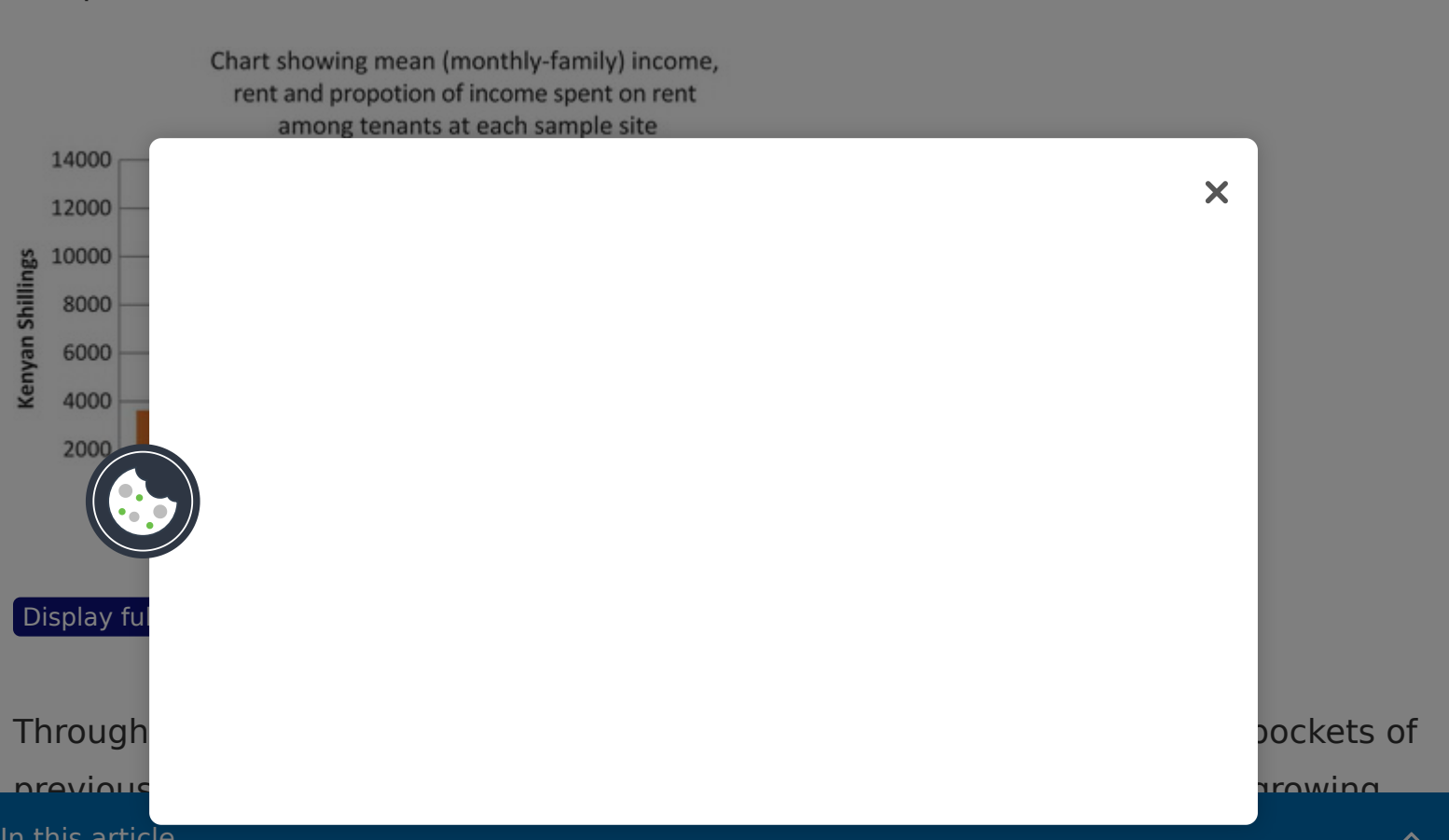
Intuitively, although the proportion of female landlords in the sample is indeed relatively high (due partly to inheritance outlined previously), it is perhaps surprising to find that women comprise the majority of landlords in the sample (16 out of 27 or 59% according to Table 2). In one sense, this may not be peculiar given that previous studies in African cities have found a higher proportion of female landlords (Datta 1995). One finding from the survey is that many wives of husbands who own land claim they are the land measure by name. However, living on the Rega major they nei associat p. 1931) family a which). If judged are men. such as more equal. that the means that prestige 'me' (2008, ered by vident.



the high proportion of widowed landlords surveyed, and by the high number of landlords surveyed who were previously rural landowners whose plots have gradually been incorporated into the urban area. Such landlords typically have lower incomes than other classes of landlords. Although the sample size is small, when service delivery is disaggregated by income, the results also reveal that the mean income of landlords providing services is approximately twice as high of those not (21,213 KSh compared with 9,133 KSh in the case of electricity and 20,467 KSh with 11,000 in the case of sanitation).

As such, there is a dynamic between minimum housing conditions, rent levels and the capabilities of particular landlords. The survey suggests that because low-income landlords provide housing among a general absence of public housing provision, and that such landlords rely heavily on that income, rents are not always commensurable with the (minimum) quality of housing. While this stagnation has differentiated landlordism and the quality of housing, there is also much more general social differentiation evident across all sample sites. As Figure 2 shows, there are substantial differences in income levels between different sample sites in Kisumu with residents in Nyalenda, for example, having mean monthly family incomes of 6,405 KSh (\$76.22) which is almost half that of residents living in Manyatta A (at 11,831 KSh (\$140.79)).

Figure 2. Income of tenants and percentage of income spent on rent across different sample locations.



private basis. Evidence from the survey revealed it costs as little as 2,000 KSh (\$23.80) to install an individual water connection, 200 KSh (\$2.38) for monthly waste collection and as little as 500 KSh (\$5.95) per month to receive a rudimentary connection to electricity. This means housing within certain low-income areas is increasingly in demand from certain middle-income tenants – particularly in areas adjacent to main roads or town centres. As an example, a small proportion of tenants were found to pay between 6,500 and 8,500 KSh (\$77.35 to \$101.15) in monthly rent payments.

There are also key differences between Kitale and the sample sites in Kisumu, suggesting much wider differences in material wealth and housing conditions exists in and between Kenya's 'secondary' cities themselves. The complexity of landlords and tenants living in such divergent circumstances means objectifying 'slums' as homogenous becomes extremely problematic. Wider research has indeed acknowledged the rupturing of wealth levels within low-income settlements themselves (Roy 2005; McFarlane 2008, 2012; Doshi 2013).

It is also apparent that different forms of landlordism have emerged in response to the variable demand for housing. In some cases, certain landlords have constructed housing solely aimed at specific sections of the market. What is also evident is that many individual land plots contain houses which range substantially in terms of build conditions and rent levels. For example, it is increasingly common that self-contained apartment blocks (i.e. services within the house) are built alongside mud-brick houses (typically sharing services) on the same plot. Such differentiations have arisen due to the minutiae of how landlords have developed particular plots of land but are also a response

An example of this is the case of Yatta A who rents houses to middle-income tenants. They rent 12 square metres for 12,000 KSh per month (as does the building next door) but also provide services such as electricity, water and other domestic services. This is different from the other sites where tenants have to provide their own services. This often means that tenants have to pay for services such as electricity and water. This often means that tenants have to pay for services such as electricity and water. This often means that tenants have to pay for services such as electricity and water.

8. The wider socio-spatial importance of life-quality indicators

It is interesting to compare differences in life quality which have emerged between

tenants and landlords. This section analyses the wider socio-spatial significance of such

life-quality indicators and their effects on the wider production of landlordism. The

results in Table 3 show that landlords surveyed have a better quality of life in

comparison to tenants in most measures including income, house size, and length of

stay. Landlords have a mean monthly household income which is over twice as high as

the mean household income of tenants (17,792 KSh (\$212) compared with 8,056 KSh

(\$95.87)).

Table 3. Differences in life-quality indicators between tenants and landlords at all four sample sites.

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Another measure of life quality is the 'length of stay' or how long the current occupant has lived in that dwelling. Table 3 reveals a large discrepancy between landlords who were found to have lived 23 years on average (mean) in their current dwelling and tenants who were found to have lived 4.4 years on average in their current dwelling. Such divergent tenure patterns have previously been explained because of the age gap

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figure downwards, the results show one striking conclusion. Although landlord families generally have larger incomes than tenants (although, such differences become lower when considered per person in the family), the results reveal that the PPR figure is slightly higher for landlords (2.08) than it is for tenants (2.04). This suggests landlords are living in slightly more crowded conditions than tenants.

Separate research in Nairobi and Dakar has revealed overall PPR figures of 2.6 and 2.8, respectively, for low-income areas in the two cities (Gulyani et al. [2012](#)). The average for Kenya is estimated to be 1.55, which is much lower than the findings of this research due to the incorporation of rural areas (Gulyani & Talukdar [2008](#)). The figures for Nairobi and Dakar are much higher than the figures collected during this research which seems to suggest that residents of Kisumu's (and perhaps Kitale's) poorer settlements are living in better living conditions in comparison to those of Nairobi.

What is arguably more interesting about similar crowding levels for both tenants and landlords, however, is that such figures have been formulated from a decidedly different grounding. As shown in [Table 3](#), landlords in the sample generally live with bigger families in bigger houses, whereas tenants live with smaller families in smaller houses. The PPR figure in many ways hides this differentiation. Landlords who reside in slightly worse living conditions to maximise income from better constructed rental housing is not conceptually new to the literature (Kumar [1996](#)). Whereas Kumar uses this point to categorise the production of landlordism, it also raises critical questions regarding the spatial forms of advantage and social effects that bigger landlord families have upon wider urban development.



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The reality of larger landlord families holding to a particular familial-spatial structure, increasingly interspersed with rental houses, has had a systematic influence on the formation of low-income settlements in Kenya's smaller urban centres. For example, many services, such as electricity and sanitation have essentially followed this 'communal' pattern of land management and control. A subsequent set of relations has therefore emerged regarding the communal installation, appropriation, and management of services at the level of the plot.

The social significance of larger landlord families is firstly that landlords can, and the results reveal frequently do, take on 'dependents' to live on the same plot as tenants. Previous research has preferred to describe such people as 'sharers' and has noted the difficulty of distinguishing such people from tenants (UN-Habitat [2003](#)). The term dependent is used by this research as it implies a relation most commonly based on the concession of rent (i.e. dependents are charged no or a reduced rate of rent) and in some cases on the provision of labour in return for shelter.

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Dependents were typically found to be relations of landlords, however, are sometimes people who come to adopt roles in the community such as 'caretakers', 'rent-collectors', and/or managers of businesses based from the homestead (such as those based on the use of electrical appliances such as fridges). The ability to grant concessions to dependents and therefore land use patterns can be interpreted as a form of spatial power. Moreover, as determinants and holders of control over the communal delivery of services, landlords have substantial control over how businesses are run from the homestead. The results reveal a general trend in this regard for

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While landlord families were found to have disproportionate control over small-scale businesses, larger landlord families were also found to be used as an apparatus of power in other circumstances. This is particularly evident where landlords live close to their tenants. For example, when asked about her relationship with the landlord, JO a tenant replied 'at times we get problems from the landlord - if we ask for renovation from the landlord, the landlord and daughters come and abuse use'. The results also show that this phenomenon can be extended to family members of the landlord who put informal pressure (often to the extent of verbal abuse) on tenants to pay for rent and/or services when they are otherwise unable.

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In a small proportion of cases, then, the landlord's (larger) family acts as a form of both social advantage and social control. The landlord also begins to exert increasing control over the tenants 'personal' and 'financial' situations as both a spatial form of advantage and as a means to extract rent reliably. As an example, MOO, a landlord in Manyatta B, claimed that 'domestic problems are why I am here - I have to deal with them a lot'. A second example is that of PAO a 50-year-old female landlord (of 8 houses) in Manyatta B who when asked about domestic disputes replied that 'Yes, I get involved in domestic disputes. When I am called to respond, I go and make a fair judgment for both parties - those in the wrong are made to move'.

In such a way, landlords in Kisumu and Kitale's low-income settlements have developed a much more expanded (social) role than that solely defined by the extraction of rent. This expanded role, however, shares a key relationship (and tension) with the economic function of landlordism. The final sections of this article will analyse this tension closer.

It will be seen that the landlord's family acts as a means to extract rent (but often in a contradictory way).

9. Symbiotic landlord-tenant relations

For many landlords, the extraction of rent from tenants is a primary means of income (Kumar 2010). This fact is particularly evident in the case of MOO (particular example) who has been able to extract rent reliably. This fact is also evident in the case of PAO and MOO who have been able to extract rent and services from tenants.



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'personal' (and financial) lives of tenants and have initiated various 'tactics' to extract rent reliably. One such tactic is to maintain generally good relations with tenants - even though the need to extract rent produces periodic (and suppressed) conflicts.

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landlords claim that 79% of landlords claim that their current tenants are not paying rent on time. The four landlords who indicated that their tenants 'always paid on time' typically rented only a small number of houses in which they had maintained close control over who those tenants were. When asked about late rent payment, a landlord called PA said 'that's normal - they do it frequently. Some owe 2 months' rent'. This suggests that not only are many tenants failing to pay rent reliably but also that landlords seem to accept late rent payment as a normal occurrence.

tenants (Table 4) were also particularly open about not paying rent on time with 77% claiming that they had made late rent payments in the recent past or were currently behind in rent payments. Moreover, 19% of tenants said they were paying rent late on a 'frequent' basis. Many tenants stated the reasons were to do with a lack of (or intermittent) employment paid on a non-salaried basis. A small number of both tenants and landlords quoted 'familial problems', 'illnesses', or 'death in the family' as reasons why rent was not paid on time.

Table 4. Percentage of tenants making late rent payments.

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As an example, PA is a 58-year-old female landlord who inherited her one plot of land from her father, who is now deceased. The title deed for the land is still registered in the name of the father. At the time of interview, she rented six houses which varied in rent levels ranging from 600 KSh (\$7.14) to 3,500 KSh (\$41.65) per month. When asked about late rent payments she stated that 'the payment is very poor. Some owe three months, some owe two. I usually talk with them. This is happening because I have a disability'.

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When DO, a 31-year-old male landlord in Manyatta B, was asked about late rent payments, he replied with the following comments:

I have never had to evict anyone. Because those problems are so frequent it is just normal ... Delay in rent payment is there, even defaulting. When a relative in a house dies or when there is a job shortage. Sometimes violence between husband and wife means the husband does not pay rent. The majority of tenants do not pay rent regularly - only 2 are reliable. We have

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rent is not, in fact, being extracted reliably. Such a relationship is supplemented by the mutual experience of poverty and the close spatial proximity of many tenants and landlords. In other senses, however, such seemingly 'good' relations are constantly in tension with the need to extract rent reliably, particularly as rent is the primary source of income for many landlords.

It is the contention of this article that the accepted norm of a 3-month buffer period is the outcome of a 'good' relationship which is mutually advantageous for both tenants and landlords to create. In the case of tenants such concessions are advantageous given the uncertain socio-economic circumstances in which many live. Yet, given such poorer conditions (which many landlords also share), it is also advantageous for landlords to provide such concessions. Such a development is reflected in the ways in which both tenants and landlords describe (i.e. verbally propagate) late rent payment as a lived, everyday reality.

As a further example, when JO, a tenant living in Manyatta B, was asked whether she made late rent payments she commented that 'yes, quite frequently. I just have a peaceful dialogue with the landlord. After, I agree to pay in instalments. After every two weeks I pay'. When JO, a landlord living in Nyalenda, was asked what happened when his tenants made late rent payments he replied that 'we just sit and talk - maybe there is a late salary or an urgent need'.

Both tenants and landlords, such as those quoted above, conceive of the buffer period as a 'talking' or 'dialogue' period. Such a 'talking' period is mutually created by landlords and tenants as peaceful because it can be used as a means by both parties to

pay/not pay/ negotiate. This period points to the fragility of the relationship, which is not made to deny the tensions. Rather 'talking' is a way of managing tensions.

Rent at the family level is negotiated from the landlord's perspective. The systems which are particularly long and complex are those involving landlord and tenant interviews and negotiations. The landlord and tenant interviewed in the study.

1. Introduction
Therefore, the landlord-tenant relationship in Kisumu and Kitale's low-income settlements is not solely defined by the extraction of rent. At the lower end of the rental market (in particular) the role of the landlord surpasses the collection of money and becomes extra-economic. In many ways, this appears to be common sense. However, the argument this section has forwarded is that this extra economic relationship incorporates several economic tensions. Put differently, the relationship between landlords and tenants is predicated on being peaceful as an instrumental norm to extract rent in a context of socio-economic instability.

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9. Symbiotic landlord-tenant relations

Landlordism among the sample in Kisumu and Kitale is diverse, and in certain ways subtly different to that of low income settlements in Nairobi. The survey found most landlords were small-scale while a minority owned multiple plots and multiple houses.

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One key differentiation is that larger-scale landlords are typically more mobile in terms of their landholding, employment, and business activities. A feature of smaller scale landlords is the lack of a profit-seeking motive, with renting commonly viewed as a demanding and an unreliable income source. While this is true, there is a class of landlords, including a high number of widows, who are simply unable to expand or improve their housing stock.

Such differentiations are cross-cut by the familial nature of landlordism. For example, many landlords who own multiple plots have family members and/or dependents

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which are a form of tenure security of last resort as they simultaneously point to the fragility of economic relations.

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These at once economic tensions produce outcomes which widen the function of landlordism into other aspects of everyday life - domestic, financial and, above all else,

4. Contemporary rental tenure and literature

spatial. Landlord-tenant relations can therefore rightly be described as 'symbiotic' but also multidimensional. Crucially, that landlord-tenant relations are mutually produced

5. The typological dimensions of landlordism in Kisumu and Kitale

has not precluded the emergence of certain forms of social (dis)advantage. Landlord families typically live much longer in the same place and are generally larger in

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comparison to tenanted households. This differentiation is particularly advantageous to landlord families in terms of social control over rent extraction, small-scale business

opportunities, and control over plot-level services.

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10. Conclusion and policy implications
The diversity of landlordism evident, distortions at the bottom of the rental market, and the symbiotic relation between tenants and landlords mean that policy interventions

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will impact landlords and tenants differently. The recently implemented tax policy

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(January 2016) to charge landlords (below a certain income) a flat rate 10% residential tax is a case in point. While some landlords in Kisumu and Kitale's low-income

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settlements can afford this amount, others cannot. The likely outcome at the lower end of the rental market will be an increase in rents for substandard housing and an increase in tensions among landlords and tenants.

In the context of severe shortages of affordable public housing and insufficient controls on private housing standards, there has developed in Kenya a class of poor landlords unable to service or improve their rental houses. Rather than punish such landlords

through subsidised public housing, the government should focus on housing upgrade programmes for landlords and tenants. This will address the shortage of adequate rental housing and reduce the tensions on the rental market.



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5. The type and character of landlordism in Kisumu and Kitale

Notes on contributors

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Shaun Smith

7. Socio-economic differences between landlords and tenants

Shaun Smith recently completed his PhD in geography at Royal Holloway, University of London. His research focuses on service delivery and land

tenure issues in low-income settlements of developing countries. He is currently visiting lecturer in geography at Royal Holloway.

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