Peasants to Paupers

On the northern periphery of Nairobi, in southern Kiambu County, the city's expansion into a landscape of poor smallholders is bringing new opportunities, dilemmas, and conflicts. Drawing on extensive ethnographic fieldwork, Peter Lockwood examines how Kiambu's 'workers with patches of land' struggle to sustain their households as the skyrocketing price of land ratchets up gendered and generational tensions within families. The sale of ancestral land by senior men turns their would-be inheritors, their young adult sons, into landless and land-poor paupers, heightening their exposure to economic precarity. *Peasants to Paupers* illuminates how these dynamics are lived at the site of kinship, and how moral principles of patrilineal obligation and land retention fail in the face of market opportunity. Caught between joblessness, land poverty, and the breakdown of kinship, the book shows how Kiambu's young men struggle to sustain hopes for middle-class lifestyles as the economic ground shifts beneath their feet. This title is available as open access on Cambridge Core.

Peter Lockwood is a Hallsworth research fellow in political economy at the University of Manchester. His current research studies land speculation, finance, and fraud on Nairobi's urban frontier. He is the co-curator of *Nairobi Becoming* (2024), a multi-authored ethnographic portrait of the city. He has been published in *Current Anthropology*, *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute*, and *Africa*.

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Peasants to Paupers

Land, Class, and Kinship in Central Kenya

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