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**Renting and Sharing in Low Income Informal Settlements:  
Lacunae in Research and Policy Challenges**

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**ABSTRACT**

This paper describes the nature of low-income housing markets for renting and sharing in Latin American and the Caribbean. It reviews the importance of non-owner housing markets associated with early urbanization from the late nineteenth century to the mid-1940s when rental tenements of different types – often slums – predominated as migrant and worker housing. The rapid rise of informal settlements and self-building from the 1950s onwards inverted the tenurial status of low-income housing markets: “ownership” eclipsed renting, and whether informal or formal, became the primary mode of state supported housing production. However, as informal access to land slowed in the 1980s and 1990s, so renting and sharing began to emerge as subsidiary and increasingly important housing market alternatives, such that many cities are now showing a relative and significant decline in home ownership levels. Much of this rise in renting and sharing has occurred as a result of densification in the older, now consolidated, barrios that formed in the 1970s-90s. Despite this turnaround in low-income housing production and opportunities, public policy for non-ownership remains almost non-existent. Drawing upon detailed case studies, this article reviews the contemporary nature and dynamics of rental and shared housing across the region, and offers a series of policy approaches and instruments to promote both the supply and demand for non-ownership housing, primarily targeting the poor in the coming two decades.

**KEY WORDS**

Informal Housing, Renting, Shared Accommodation, Latin America, Public Policy, Densification, Self-help