The UCL Press FRINGE series presents work related to the themes of the UCL FRINGE Centre for the Study of Social and Cultural Complexity.

The FRINGE series is a platform for cross-disciplinary analysis and the development of ‘area studies without borders’. ‘FRINGE’ is an acronym standing for Fluidity, Resistance, Invisibility, Neutrality, Grey zones and Elusiveness – categories fundamental to the themes that the Centre supports. The oxymoron in the notion of a ‘FRINGE CENTRE’ expresses our interest in (1) the tensions between ‘area studies’ and more traditional academic disciplines; and (2) social, political and cultural trajectories from ‘centres to fringes’ and inversely from ‘fringes to centres’.

The series pursues an innovative understanding of the significance of fringes: rather than taking ‘fringe areas’ to designate the world’s peripheries or non-mainstream subject matters (as in ‘fringe politics’ or ‘fringe theatre’), we are committed to exploring the patterns of social and cultural complexity characteristic of fringes and emerging from the areas we research. We aim to develop forms of analysis of those elements of complexity that are resistant to articulation, visualisation or measurement.

The present volume is the first to tackle the challenge of comparing practices of informal housing across the globe. Highlighting the differences of informal settlement practices in varying political, economic and social contexts, however, may conceal important similarities and vice versa. Here, an international team of historians, anthropologists, urban planners, sociologists and political scientists takes readers on a tour through the novel aspects of informal housing from a global perspective, while also showing the social and cultural sensitivity to local contexts. The volume brings together case studies from five continents (including countries such as Australia, Brazil, France, Germany, Hong Kong, Israel, Kazakhstan, Kenya, Kyrgyzstan, the Netherlands, Portugal, Spain and the United Kingdom) and establishes fundamental patterns, cleavages and ambiguities of informal housing.

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