Re-Centring the City

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Preface

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 for Fluidity, Resistance, Invisibility, Neutrality, Grey zones and Elusiveness – categories fundamental to the themes that the Centre support. 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 re-examines architectural and urban modernity by projecting the topic through the prism of what was once called the ‘second world’. In Cold War terminology, the ‘second world’ bore distinct connotations of second-class, and thus in some sense of peripherality. But this volume understands ‘second world’ as a central pivot between what that older schema called the ‘first’ and ‘third’ worlds. By replacing the obsolete term ‘second world’ with the conception of a ‘Global East’, this volume de-anchors the East from any specifiable geographical space, produces a novel genealogy of its architecture, and reveals its pattern: re-centring the city.

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