

THE ALTERNATIVES

In the wake of the protests and upheaval of the late 1960s, architecture and urban planning embarked on a series of experimental projects that fostered a radical and imaginative mindset—playful workshops, ecological homes, avant-garde publications, urban utopias, and other collaborative efforts that, in general, sought ways to anticipate what Alvin Toffler called the “shock of the future.” These alternatives reflected the psychology underlying the social imagination and aspirations of the time—interpolated between the Cold War and *new age* practices that promoted notions of survival and shelter, or the search for autonomous, rural, or suburban lifestyles. At the same time, futuristic visions that proposed a tabula rasa through utopian megastructures or space colonies contrasted with the precariousness at street level of marginalized communities, where new forms of organization and struggle emerged to confront growing political, economic, and social control. The proliferation of and access to new technological tools were fundamental in democratizing information and promoting DIY practices, which, like the Mexicali Experimental Project, sought to offer the population the opportunity to design and build their own environment.