

# THE STRUGGLES

In the 1970s, thousands of communities around the world realized that neither the state nor the market could—or wanted to—meet their growing housing needs. Disappointed by the lack of official response, homeless and marginalized population groups took matters into their own hands and exercised their right to housing, land, and essential services through direct action, self-help, and mutual aid. In 1976, during a side event to Habitat I known as the Habitat Forum, non-governmental organizations, academics, and activists from all over the planet reminded world leaders gathered in Vancouver that, echoing the ideas of Friedrich Engels expressed a century earlier in *The Housing Question*, the global crises in human settlements “are not the result of a random process, but rather the logical products of the prevailing social system which, in a large number of countries, benefits small minorities to the detriment of the majority of the population.” In Mexico, grassroots groups such as Movimiento Urbano Popular, non-governmental organizations such as Centro Operacional de la Vivienda y Poblamiento (Copevi), and academic initiatives such as Escuela Nacional de Arquitectura-Autogobierno sought to implement innovative mechanisms for access to land and housing through new spaces of political resistance.