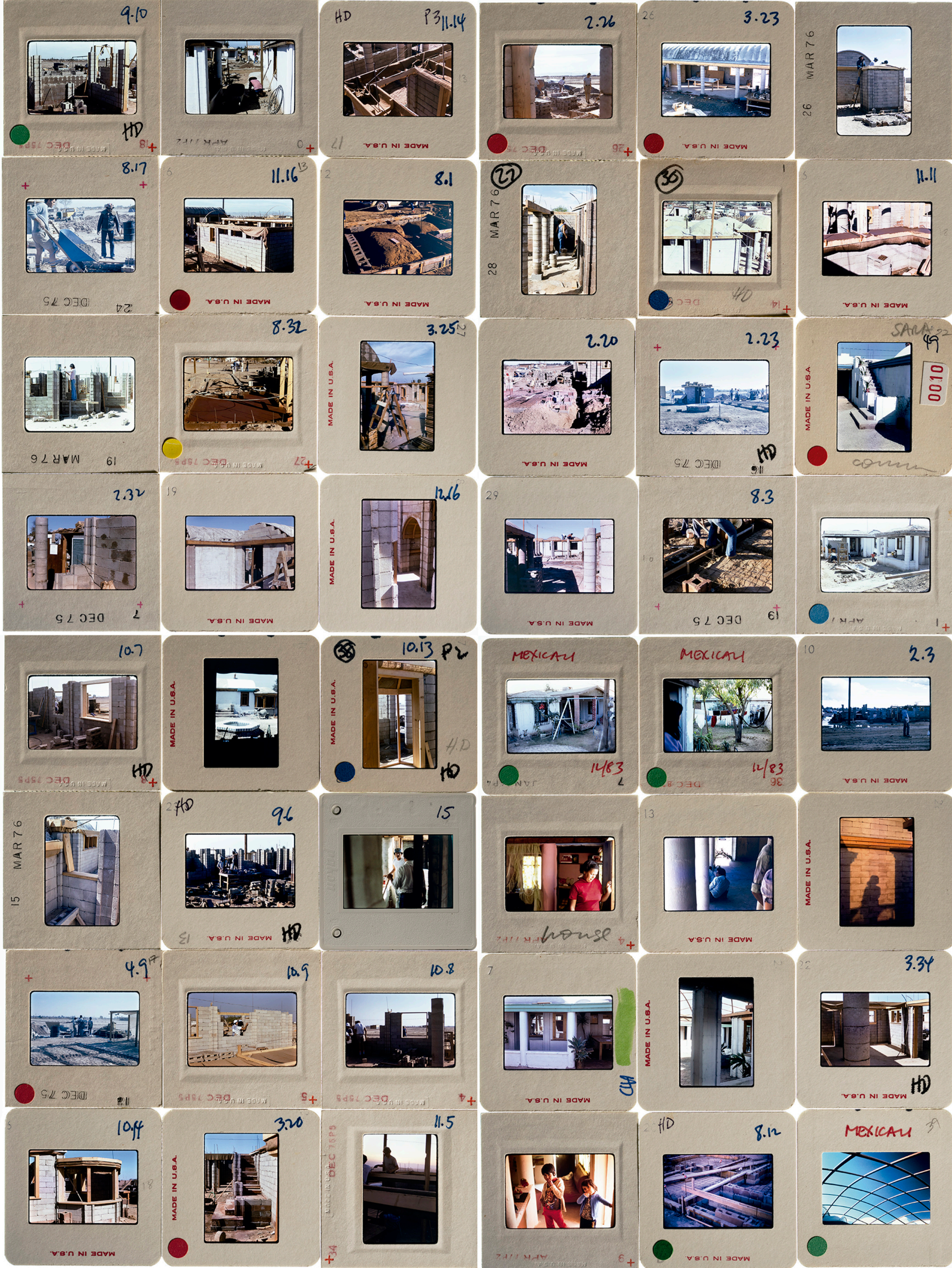




THE MEXICALI EXPERIMENTAL PROJECT

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EL PROYECTO EXPERIMENTAL MEXICALI THE MEXICALI EXPERIMENTAL PROJECT

[Es] En 1975, el arquitecto Christopher Alexander recibió una invitación de la Universidad Pública de Baja California (UPBC), para dar una conferencia en la ciudad fronteriza de Mexicali. Coincidiendo con el desarrollo del lenguaje de patrones, su aclamada teoría, Alexander propuso en su lugar llevar a cabo un experimento de vivienda social con familias de clase trabajadora dispuestas a construir sus propias casas. Con el apoyo de un grupo de estudiantes y profesores de la UPBC, del Centro de Estructura Medioambiental de Berkeley y funcionarios del gobierno local, el Proyecto Experimental Mexicali se construyó en 1976 en las afueras de la ciudad, en el Conjunto Urbano Orizaba.



[En] En la década de 1970, el mundo estaba experimentando la migración más rápida de personas a ciudades y urbanizaciones de la historia... y los gobiernos empezaron a reconocer la necesidad de una vivienda adecuada con un derecho humano básico, según la primera Conferencia de las Naciones Unidas sobre asentamientos humanos. Habitat 1, celebrada en Vancouver en 1976. Esta conferencia se menciona en la introducción de The Production of Houses (1985), el libro de Christopher Alexander sobre el Proyecto Experimental de Mexicali. En 1973, el representante Richard Nixon declaró una moratoria sobre la vivienda pública, deteniendo la construcción y subvención de viviendas de bajo costo en Estados Unidos. Esta acción vivió el debate sobre el colapso de muchos proyectos de vivienda social en el país, que se había intensificado por la demolición televisada del complejo Pruitt-Igoe en San Luis en 1972. Ese mismo año se creó en México el INFONAVIT, una institución primordial para la vivienda obrera que se asoció como la solución a los asentamientos informales en expansión del país.

En muchos sentidos, el experimento de Mexicali formó parte de la vitalidad arquitectónica desde finales de los sesenta a principios de los setenta, cuando se produjo una explosión de vivienda pública y asentamientos informales en plena crisis mundial de la vivienda de la época. Durante estos años, los movimientos comunitarios de base introdujeron herramientas y sistemas de construcción de autoayuda, mientras que los avances tecnológicos llevaron a arquitectos más teóricos a imaginar ciudades utópicas y futuristas. El método de Alexander pretendía cambiar el paradigma de la vivienda «alienada» producida por el mercado inmobiliario y por el Estado en favor de comunidades «construidas por la gente, según sus necesidades sociales, económicas y espirituales». Sus teorías se basaban en la idea de que los edificios también debían ser humanos y «lugares bellos», o como él los llamaba, «complejos y atemporales».

Debido a contratiempos económicos, políticos e institucionales, sólo se terminaron cinco de las treinta casas previstas originalmente en el proyecto de Mexicali. Junto con un sitio de construcción, donde se probaron soluciones de diseño y construcción en un prototipo a escala real. Desde su finalización, el experimento se ha enfrentado a numerosos retos como desacuerdos entre los residentes, su incompatibilidad con los sistemas de construcción locales y hasta feroces comentarios de críticos y académicos.

Medio siglo después, a medida que la crisis de la vivienda se agrava en todo el mundo, este experimento sigue ofreciendo muchas lecciones para tener en cuenta. Este experimento explora la historia y el contexto sociopolítico del Proyecto Experimental Mexicali, las teorías que lo sustentan y su radical transformación a lo largo del tiempo. Se nutre de un amplio catálogo de recursos y colaboraciones, como material de archivo, fotografías, películas, ensayos y nuevas comisiones a arquitectos y artistas.

[En] En 1975, architect Christopher Alexander received an invitation to lecture at the public University of Baja California (UPBC) in the border city of Mexicali. Coinciding with the development of his acclaimed theory, 'pattern language', Alexander proposed instead to conduct a social housing experiment with working-class families willing to build their own homes. With the support of a group of students and faculty from UPBC and Berkeley's Center for Environmental Structure, as well as local government officials, The Mexicali Experimental Project was built in 1976 on the city's outskirts at the Conjunto Urbano Orizaba.

[Es] Tres las revoluciones y la agitación de finales de los sesenta, la arquitectura se embarcó en proyectos experimentales que fomentaban una igualdad política e imaginativa. Talleres lúdicos, movimientos ambientalistas, diseños utópicos: la mayoría de estas iniciativas colaborativas se centraban en encontrar formas de anticiparse al shock del futuro. En los años setenta, estas alternativas rediseñaban la psicología subyacente a la imaginación social y las exploraciones de la época un período interpolado entre la Guerra Fría y las crisis de la Nueva Era que promovían nociones de supervivencia y ecología, de la búsqueda de una vida autónoma, rural y suburbana. La proliferación y el «acceso a las herramientas» de la época fueron fundamentales para la transformación de la información y para las prácticas del hábito: así mismo que, como el Proyecto Mexicali, pretendían dar a todo el mundo «acceso a las herramientas» para construir su propio entorno.

[En] In the 1970s, the world was experiencing the fastest migration of people to cities and towns in history... and governments began to recognize the need for adequate housing as a basic human right, according to the first United Nations conference on human settlements, Habitat 1, held in Vancouver in 1976. This conference is referenced in Christopher Alexander's introduction to The Production of Houses (1985), his book on The Mexicali Experimental Project. In 1973, former President Richard Nixon declared a moratorium on public housing, halting the construction and subsidization of low-cost projects in the country, intensified by the televised demolition of the Pruitt-Igoe complex in St. Louis in 1972. That same year, INFONAVIT was created in Mexico, a landmark institution for workers' housing that was assumed to be the solution to the sprawling informal settlements in the country, such as «cartolandia», a cardboard shantytown built in Tijuana near the border with the United States. The housing shortage problem became important to the end of the era of the industrial age, when, in St. Louis in 1972. That same year, INFONAVIT was created in Mexico, a landmark institution for workers' housing that was assumed to be the solution to the sprawling informal settlements in the country, such as «cartolandia», a cardboard shantytown built in Tijuana near the border with the United States. The housing shortage problem became important to the end of the era of the industrial age, when, in St. Louis in 1972. That same year, INFONAVIT was created in Mexico, a landmark institution for workers' housing that was assumed to be the solution to the sprawling informal settlements in the country, such as «cartolandia», a cardboard shantytown built in Tijuana near the border with the United States.

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spiritual needs. His theories were based on the idea that buildings should also be human and «beautiful places», or as he called them, «whole and timeless.»

Due to economic, political, and institutional setbacks, only five of the originally planned thirty houses in the Mexicali project were completed, together with a builder's yard, where designers build solutions tested on a full-scale prototype. Since its completion, the experiment has faced numerous challenges, from disagreements among residents, to its incompatibility with local building systems, to fierce commentary from critics and academics alike.

Half a century later, as housing crises deepen worldwide, this experiment still offers many lessons to be considered. In this sense, the exhibition explores the history and sociopolitical context of the Mexicali Experimental Project, the theories behind it, and its radical transformation over time. It draws on a wide range of resources and collaborations—including archival material, photographs, film, essays, and new commissions with architects and artists.

[Es] En la década de 1970, millones de personas de todo el mundo se dieron cuenta de que el mundo necesitaba un mercado poético o «quien» hacer frente a sus necesidades de vivienda, cada vez más urgentes. Apagados por la falta de respuesta oficial, los sin techo del mundo empezaron a escribir cartas en el asunto ejerciendo su derecho a la vivienda, a la tierra y a los servicios esenciales a través de diversos procesos de acción directa, autoayuda y ayuda mutua. En 1976, durante un evento paralelo a Habitat 1, conocido como Foro Habitat, ONG, académicos y activistas de todo el mundo recordaron a los líderes mundiales reunidos en Vancouver que «los productos lógicos del sistema social imperante, que en un gran número de países beneficia a pequeñas minorías en detrimento de la mayoría de la población, son la explotación y la opresión de la clase trabajadora por parte de la clase dominante». En México, el Movimiento Urbano Popular (MUP) se dedicó a buscar, restaurar y construir viviendas asequibles para la población de las ciudades, alineado con una lucha obrera que se extendió por todo el país.

[En] For countless communities around the world, it became clear in the 1970s that neither the state nor the market could adequately address their increasingly urgent housing needs. Exhausted by the lack of official response, the world's unhoused began to take matters into their own hands by exercising their right to housing, land, and essential services through various processes of direct action, self-help, and mutual aid. In 1976, during a parallel event to Habitat 1, known as the Habitat Forum, NGOs, scholars, and activists from around the world reminded world leaders gathered in Vancouver that «the logical products of the prevailing social system, which in a large number of countries benefit small minorities to the detriment of the majority of the population, are the exploitation and oppression of the working class by the ruling class.» In Mexico, the Movimiento Urbano Popular (MUP) dedicated itself to finding, restoring, and building affordable housing for people in the cities, aligned with a workers' struggle that spread throughout the country.

[En] Mexicali se fundó en 1903 como ciudad hermana de Calexico (California), en un esfuerzo por unir la naturaleza y las infraestructuras de ambas regiones. En la década de 1970, la capital de Baja California experimentó una de sus transformaciones más importantes tras el fin de la era de la industria algodonera, el auge de la agricultura de exportación y la economía en la década anterior. A mediados de los años 60, una serie de incentivos estatales a las empresas estadounidenses a instalarse en Mexicali sin una normativa estricta. Se construyeron plantas manufactureras, conocidas como maquiladoras, en las afueras de la ciudad, mientras el centro experimentaba una renovación urbanística y arquitectónica, en muchos casos siguiendo los trazados de los centros urbanos estadounidenses. En 1979, año del experimento Mexicali, el INFONAVIT comenzó a construir una de las primeras iniciativas de vivienda social en la región fronteriza.

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[En] Mexicali was founded in 1903 as a sister city to Calexico, California, in an effort to link the natural resources and infrastructure of both regions. In the 1970s, the capital of Baja California underwent one of its most important transformations following the end of the era of the cotton industry, the «white gold» that had driven the economy in the previous decade. In the mid-1960s, a series of incentives encouraged the companies to set up operations in Mexicali without strict regulations. Manufacturing plants, known as maquiladoras, were built on the outskirts of the city, while the downtown area underwent an urban and architectural renovation, in many cases following the layouts of North American city centers. In 1979, the year of The Mexicali Experimental Project, INFONAVIT began to build one of the first social housing initiatives in the border region.

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these collaborative initiatives focused on finding ways to anticipate the shock of the future. In the 1970s, these alternatives reduced the psychological distance between imagination and aspirations of the time: a period interpolated between the Cold War and New Age practices that promoted notions of survival and shelter, or the search for autonomous, rural, and suburban life. The proliferation and «access to tools» of the era was central to the democratization of information and the do-it-yourself practices that, like The Mexicali Experimental Project, aimed to give everyone «access to tools» to build their own environment.

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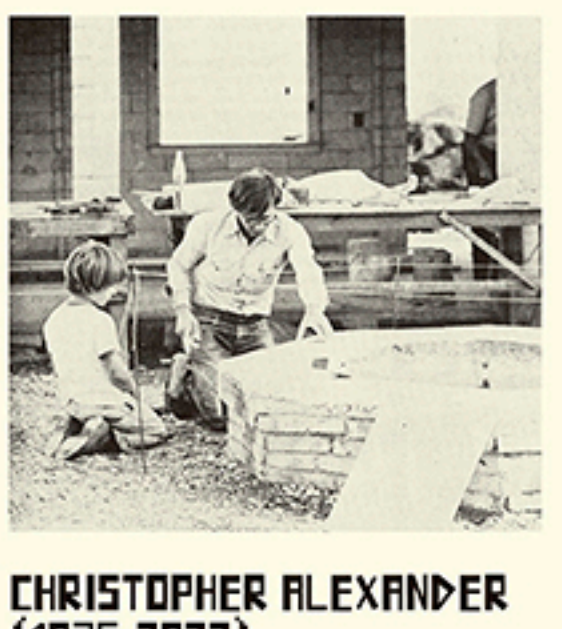
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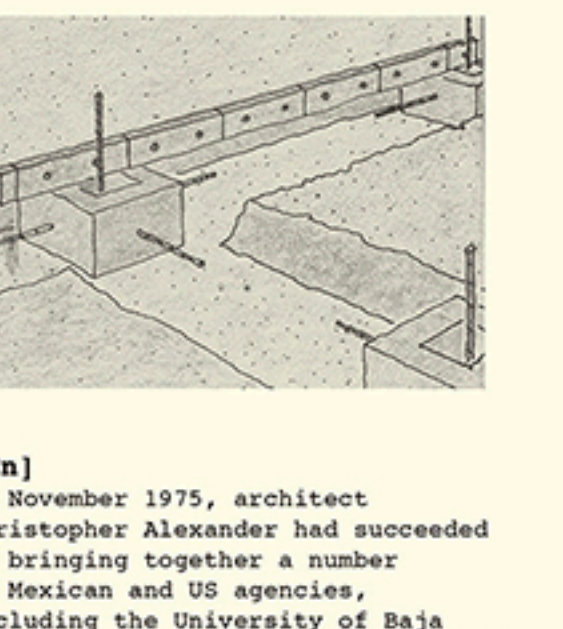
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[Es] Christopher Alexander nació en Viena en 1936 y creció en Oxford. Estudió Matemáticas y Química en Cambridge, donde también completó el programa de arquitectura «pero pronto se dio cuenta de que el punto quería aprender a hacer un edificio humano». Alexander se doctoró en arquitectura en Harvard y, en 1964, aceptó un puesto de profesor en la Universidad de California en Berkeley. En 1967, fundó con varios colegas el Centro de Estructura Medioambiental. Sus primeros teorías, que combinaban sistemas informáticos con métodos arquitectónicos fragmentarios, le ganaron una reputación entre los teóricos del diseño y los arquitectos antidominantes, pero su libro Un lenguaje de patrones (1977), utilizando el El Experimento Mexicali, ha sido considerado uno de los libros más importantes de arquitectura y planificación durante muchas décadas, a la vez que uno de los más controvertidos en este campo.

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THE MEXICALI EXPERIMENTAL PROJECT

[En] In November 1975, architect Christopher Alexander had succeeded in bringing together a number of Mexican and US agencies, including the University of Baja California (UABC) and the Center for Environmental Structure (CES), to conduct an experiment in low-cost housing in an informal settlement on the outskirts of Mexicali owned by the state. The five participating families received loans to build their own homes. Alexander and his collaborators assumed the role of the architect-builder taking on the tasks normally assigned to various specialists (designers, engineers, administrators, builders, masons, etc.), to manage every aspect of construction. Since the experiment was to follow Alexander's theory of the «pattern language», the families adapted the design solutions to their own needs. The houses and a construction yard across the street featured vaulted ceilings of lightweight concrete woven with lattice, and cement and adobe blocks made on site with a Rosacemata press imported from Italy. The remaining twenty-five houses in the project were never built due to government setbacks. The houses were considered too rudimentary, and the construction process too slow compared to tract housing.

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