

Santuario del Señor de Tula

Jojutla, Morelos

Santuario del Señor de Tula

One of the challenges facing architecture in these complex times is perhaps the same one facing contemporary society as a whole: the difficulty in finding spaces – and we are full of them – in which to discover reasons for how to make ourselves necessary as people and as social agents. And it will undoubtedly be mandatory to ask ourselves how much our lives are defined by excess, and how much by actual need.

Possibly this general issue is a call to deal with, and measure, our personal and collective limitations, a “suggestion” for the existence to lead us toward change. This situation forces us not only to relocate architecture and the role of the architect, but also to reimagine ourselves, to rethink our strategy on a new local and global plane. We must occupy the spaces with great generosity, working up from the very foundations of architecture and its practice, to meet challenges of still-unknown dimensions.

Exceptional situations have helped us feel genuinely useful and to find reasons that have a tangible social impact – surely history is based on exceptional events – and our profession and experience finds and acquires echoes of action. As a result we have been able to prioritize collaboration over competition, to make us necessary in the here and now. But this should be a permanent rather than an exceptional state of affairs. Every catastrophe or unusual situation that disrupts our daily lives, changing the course of our expectations, introducing uncertainties, is undoubtedly a wake-up call, a call to arms.

On September 19, 2017, exactly 32 years after the earthquake that devastated Mexico in 1985, the tragedy

was repeated, just a few hours after the drill that commemorated this anniversary, Mexico suffered another earthquake that destroyed or rendered uninhabitable public buildings and more than 100,000 homes. The mobilization and solidarity of civil society was immediate, and ranged from mounting vital rescue operations to supplying professional organizations in different areas that were trying to contribute manpower and know-how to deal with urgent needs and plan reconstruction efforts.

Architects in Mexico City focused on a joint initiative called Reconstruir México (Rebuild Mexico); hundreds of architects and urban planners came together and tackled the problems from various fronts. In this improvised structure, connections were made between groups and institutions, and these translated into actions that ended up having a positive impact. Nevertheless, there was also a palpable feeling of confusion and frustration in the absence of a vision and protocol to respond to a natural disaster of such magnitude.

Among the architects committed to this joint effort were Derek Dellekamp and his office, together with AGENdA agencia de arquitectura, led by Colombia's Camilo Restrepo Ochoa, who soon joined in through the Pienza Sostenible program, which focused on design and fundraising for rural housing affected by the earthquake. Opportunities arose that gave an outlet for the architects' interest in helping and working on social architecture projects (an area in which both studios and practices already had experience). This showed that in a crisis of this type, architecture has a wide range of opportunities to roll out any number of ideas on improving the local social conditions which usually do

Así quedó Jojutla, el municipio cercano al epicentro del sismo que sacudió a México y dejó más de 220 muertos

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TONY RIVERA

Escombros en una calle en Jojutla, después del sismo de 7,1 que sacudió el centro de México.

Muy cerca del epicentro del sismo que sacudió este martes a México y dejó más de 220 muertos se sitúa Jojutla, un municipio del estado de Morelos que resultó severamente afectado.

not take shape due to a lack of strategic vision. Facing this shared concern, and thanks to the leadership of Carlos Zedillo Velasco – director of the state housing institute’s research center for sustainable development (INFONAVIT-CIDS) at the time, and with the support of Fundación Hogares – it was possible to obtain funds, resources and support for the reconstruction of social infrastructure.

Taking relevant action certainly requires a confluence of actors and factors. The first is leadership, someone with a vision that is broad and amplifying, perhaps even romantic and utopian, of how to transform society, with a clear-eyed view of an opaque world. Cohesive teams are required, preferably with a strong bond of friendship and understanding, and of operational unity; they also need to be open to a certain amount of constructive criticism. But above all, it is necessary to fulfil the promise with an unusual response, and manage to accept the consequences. These perfect storms require, above all, the suitability, commitment and stature of their actors to overcome them – not merely in terms of results, but also in the creativity required by the emergency for new models of operation, management and administration of public and personal space.

The urgency to resolve immediate needs was fueled by the uncertainty of state aid. Reconstruction programs normally focus on providing housing materials, and the authorities lose sight of planning and public space under the premise of attending to what appears most urgent.

In the case of Jojutla, in the state of Morelos, housing programs were immediately launched. Therefore

Carlos Zedillo, with his comprehensive vision of urban planning and repairing both the social fabric and public space, decided to focus INFONAVIT’s efforts on drawing up a master plan for this city’s reconstruction. Working on a series of public buildings, this plan aimed to empower citizens to regain their sense of collective identity. More than 2,600 houses were destroyed in Jojutla, and almost all of its public infrastructures such as schools, plazas, and even its main church had fallen victim to the earthquake. The logistics of design, management and construction had to be carried out in record time of less than 18 months; more than 20 actors were involved in the decision-making (the national heritage institute, or INAH; the INFONAVIT; the municipal, state and federal governments; civil associations; neighborhood groups; diocese; and ecclesiastical authorities). They were confronted with a difficult reality: many people considered it unnecessary to rebuild public buildings, and sometimes even resorted to violence when demanding aid to rebuild only private dwellings.

Unusual situations, and those that are particularly unexpected, require an ingenious and bold response. Their outcome reveals human capacity, political traction and the performance of a group; they also show the common ground that glue societies together and renegotiate their social and environmental pacts. It would be fascinating and even satisfying to a certain extent to be able to claim that collaboration is a part of daily life, that we are surrounded by exceptional leaders, committed collaborators and partners. It would be ideal that fantastic results through simple processes were not the exception but the rule.



This is an interesting case of leadership and efficiency where, despite vicissitudes, the alignment of social leaders, responsible architects, visionary leaders and available technical conditions, a new hope could be built amidst chaos, underpinned by the transformative force of architecture. It not only locates architecture as a point of confluence for many forces and actors, but also that in its specificity and material condition, it makes it possible to articulate long-term responses, beyond urgent measures. In other words, it helps to form a shared social fabric.

The defined method of action challenged the usual priorities for such interventions, overturning the usual formula of focusing housing and hiring technical personnel to carry out evaluations rather than taking action. This move was undoubtedly took a risk by prioritizing the repairing of the social fabric over the rebuilding of private spaces, working with leading architects on specific projects.

Our team was in charge of the reconstruction of the Santuario del Señor de Tula (a place of worship with a listed status and more than five centuries of history) and Ranchería El Higuero (a community center consisting of a park-library with a program for cultural and administration workshops and community activities). These two projects, although different in their formal conception, respond to similar ideas, a result of conversations between the two studios in charge, and the exchanges of their respective ideas.

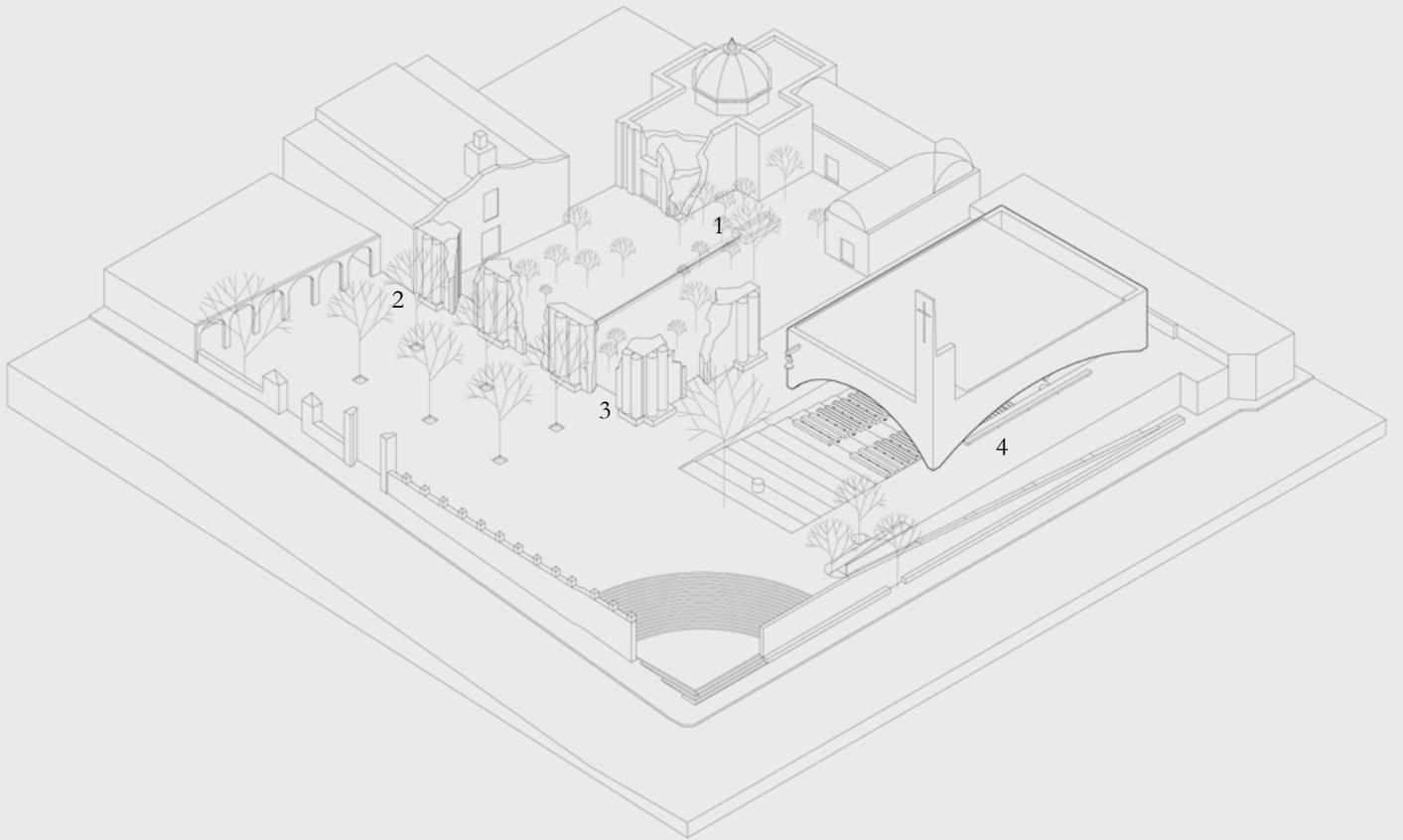
The urgency of the situation required the use of affordable and easily accessible materials and labor, hence the decision to use concrete for both projects. Also, under-

standing the social and climatic context led us to think about spatial typologies and models according to the place and its opportunities.

Ultimately both projects seek to build threshold spaces, of undefined limits, without clearly distinguishing between interior or exterior, and in this ambiguity they can be used in various ways, but above all they can become a home for everyone.

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1. Santuario del Señor de Tula
2. Zócalo y Jardín Ricardo Sánchez
3. Auditorio Municipal Juan Antonio Tlaxcoapa
4. Alameda
5. Espacios públicos de la Unidad Habitacional El Higuero
6. Escuela Emiliano Zapata
7. Centro Comunitario Higuero

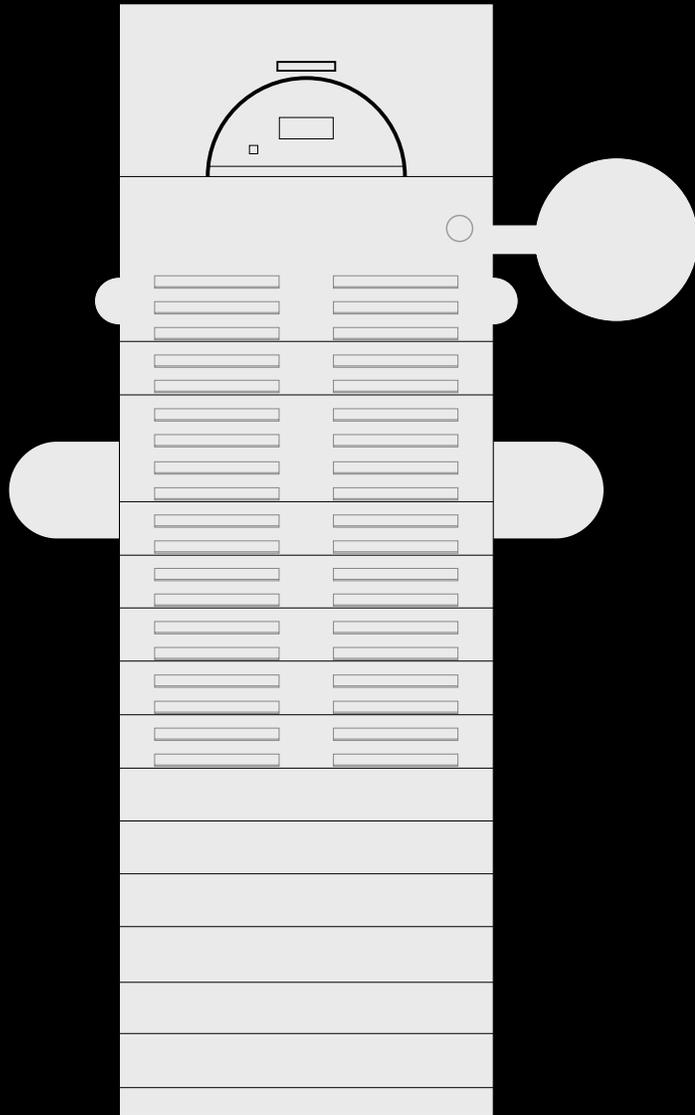


Axonometric view

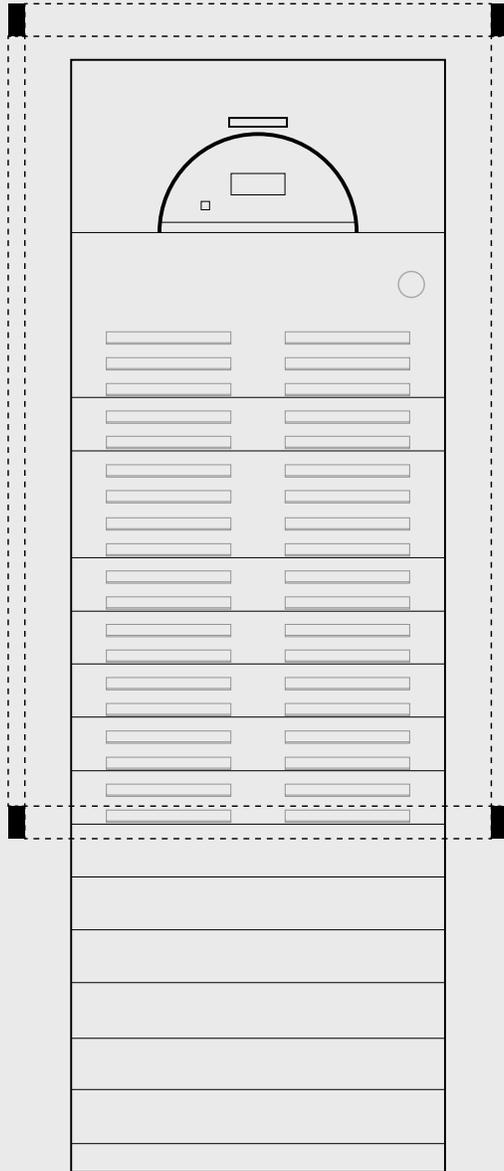
1. Capilla de Guadalupe. Siglo XVI | 2. Capilla de San Miguel. Siglo XVII | 3. Extensión Capilla de San Miguel (arcada). Siglo XIX (1890)
4. Santuario del Señor de Tula. Siglo XX (2020)

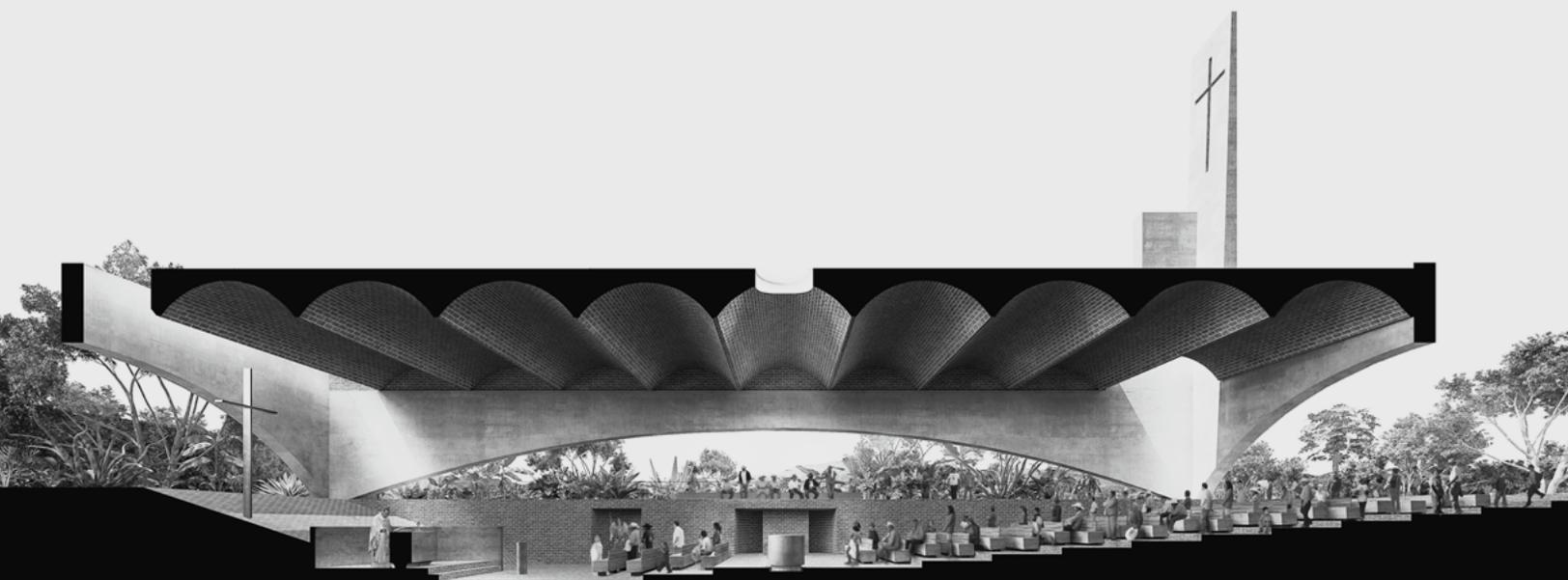


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Basement Plan





Longitudinal Section













