

# Minimum Documentation Fiche

composed by national/regional working party of :  
Docomomo Italia

## 01. Picture of building



Depicted item: Enel Offices Palermo  
source: photo by Giuseppe Iannello  
date: 2012

## 1. Identity of building

1.1 current name of building	Enel headquarters
1.2 variant or former name	Sges headquarters
1.3 number & name of street	121, Via Marchese di Villabianca
1.4 town	Palermo
1.5 province/state	Palermo/Sicilia
1.6 zip code	90143
1.7 country	Italy
1.8 national grid reference	latitude 38.139253; longitude 13.349473
1.9 classification/typology	Offices
1.10 protection status & date	None

## 2 History of building

2.1 original brief/purpose Sges headquarters, from 1961 Enel headquarters

2.2 dates: commission/completion	1959/1964 (beginning/end of work)
2.3 architectural and other designers	Giuseppe Samonà, Alberto Samonà, Giuseppina Marcialis
2.4 others associated with building	
2.5 significant alterations with dates	Many modifications to the interiors on different floors around 1980
2.6 current use	Offices; the building has retained the original destination until now
2.7 current condition	Good. The facades have been recently restored

### 3. Description

#### 3.1 *General description*

The new headquarters of the Società Generale Elettrica Siciliana (today Enel) in Palermo was designed by Giuseppe Samonà, his son Alberto and Giuseppina Marcialis. A first project was developed in 1953; the final one was built between 1961 and 1964. The building was part of a large territorial plan of constructions in Sicily: headquarters, offices and electric power stations all designed in the same years by Giuseppe Samonà (Thermoelectric power station in Augusta, 1955-56, in Termini Imerese 1961, in Trapani 1962-63; headquarters in Siracusa 1961-63 and in Patti, 1961). In Palermo, rather than on a single edifice Samonà works on a deep-rooted urban project able to modify the space, establishing a system of wide scale relationships.

#### 3.2 *Construction*

The complex is composed by three distinct volumes, different in shape and function: a six-storey office building with a reinforced concrete structure, raised on massive pillars; a three-storey office building characterized by a slim grid of columns and beams; a two-storey building for the reception office with a steel structure. All the different buildings, closely connected to each other, are organized around an interior garden; the terraced roof of the higher building is conceived as a long promenade.

#### 3.3 *Context*

It is located in a new part of the city, built after the Second World War, between 1950 and 1970. Near via Libertà, one of the most important streets of Palermo, the headquarters rise up on a rectangular lot in a new urban context, defined by a regular layout of streets. The building, with its formal qualities, gives character to the district.

### 4. Evaluation

#### 4.1 *Technical*

In this building Samonà uses different structures and technics to lend specific identity to the different volumes. All the structures are visible on the facades and condition directly the language of architecture. The reinforced concrete structure is used in two different ways: in the main building the massive pillars with a "X" shape and the elliptical stairs are treated like a sculpture, in the other parts the concrete is just a basic, thin grid of columns and beams. In the lower building the steel structure is organized like a classical order with its pedestal, column and entablature.

#### 4.2 *Social*

The Enel headquarters is one result of Samonà's architectural research on monumentality and modernity. The arrangement of the accesses and paths combine a private use with a public one. The building aims to present itself as a civic centre for the community, in a new district mainly characterized by private edifices.

#### 4.3 Cultural & aesthetic

This building displays the key features of Samonà's style and his marked capacity for combining different languages all belonging to the architectural tradition of Modern Movement, from Le Corbusier and Mies van der Rohe to Giuseppe Terragni.

#### 4.4 Historical

It was a part of a large plan of buildings, offices and electric power stations, in Sicily; most of them were designed by Giuseppe Samonà between 1953 and 1964. The relationship between the architect and his client is important to understand every single building.

#### 4.5 General assessment

This project represents one of the most significant works realized by Samonà, in collaboration with his son Alberto and with Giuseppina Marcialis. On one side, as we said, its relevance is connected to the large territorial plan of industrial and offices buildings for the Sges, on the other side the value is related to the period of its construction. In fact Samonà comes back to Sicily, where he was born and he had studied, with this projects for Sges, after a long experience in the school of Venice: the Sges headquarters allows to read the entire evolution of Giuseppe Samonà's research.

### 5. Documentation

#### 5.1 Principal references

CABIANCA V., *I premi regionali IN-Arch Sicilia. Palazzo per uffici Enel a Palermo*, in "L'architettura. Cronache e Storia", n. 127, 1966, pp. 52-53.

PIRRONE G., *Architettura del XX secolo in Italia. Palermo*, Genova; Vitali e Ghianda; 1971, pp. 155-156.

AYMONINO C., CIUCCI G., DAL CO F., TAFURI M. (edited by), *Giuseppè Samonà 1923-1975. Cinquant'anni di architetture*, Roma; Officina edizioni; 1975

SCIASCIA A., *Architettura contemporanea a Palermo*, Palermo; L'Epos, 1998, pp. 64-70

CORTESE G., CORVINO T., KIM I. (editd by), *Giuseppe e Alberto Samonà 1923-1993. Inventario analitico dei fondi documentari conservati presso l'Archivio Progetti*, Padova; Il Poligrafo; 2003

MARRAS G., POGAČNIK M. (edited by), *Giuseppe Samonà e la scuola di architettura a Venezia*, Padova; Il Poligrafo; 2006.

IANNELLO M., SCOLARO G., *Palermo. Guida all'architettura del '900*, Palermo; Edizioni Salvare Palermo; 2009

AJROLDI C., *La Sicilia i sogni le città. Giuseppe Samonà e la ricerca di architettura*, Padova; Il Poligrafo; 2014

#### 5.2 Visual material attached

Fig. 1 General view of the building (photo Giuseppe Iannello, 2012)

Fig. 2 View of the model ( "Sicilia elettrica", n. 16, January-February 1960)

Fig. 3 General view of the building, around 1964 (Aymonino, 1975)

Fig. 4 Plan of the ground floor (Archivio Progetti IUAV)

Fig. 5 Plan of the fourth floor (Archivio Progetti IUAV)

Fig. 6-7-8- 9 Current view of the building (2014)

Paola Barbera, February 2015

### 6. Fiche report examination by ISC/R

name of examining ISC member: date of examination:

approval:

working party/ref. n°: NAI ref. n°:

comments:



Fig. 2 View of the model



Fig. 3 General view of the building, about 1964

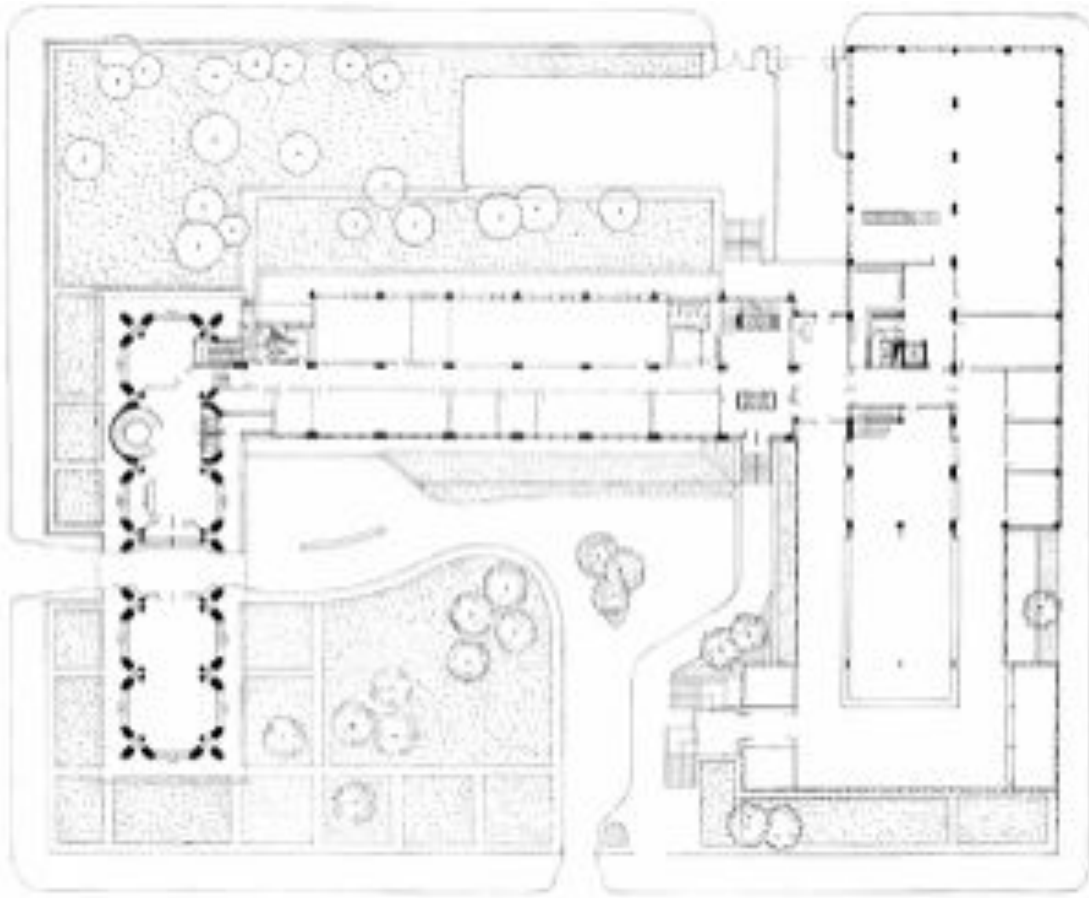


Fig. 4 Plan of the ground floor (Archivio Progetti IUAV)

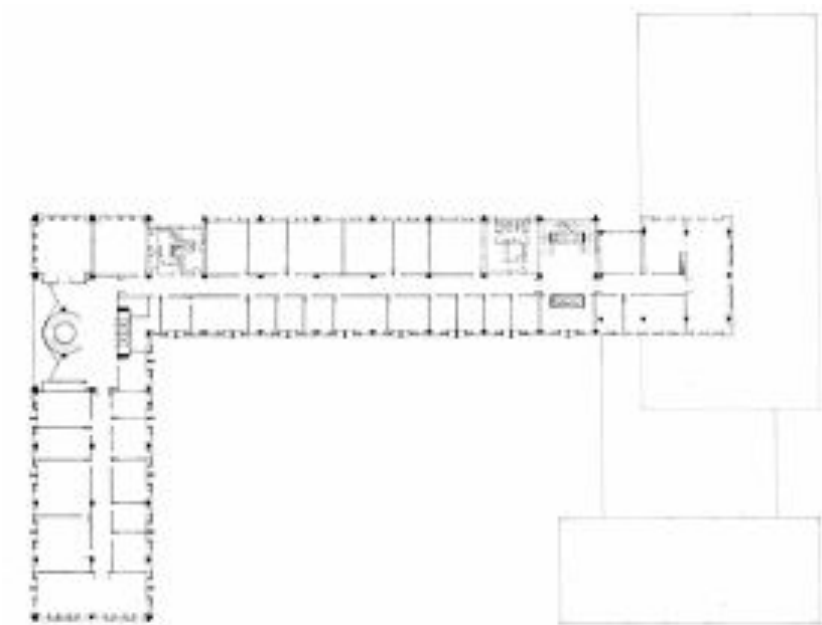


Fig. 5 Plan of the fourth floor (Archivio Progetti IUAV)



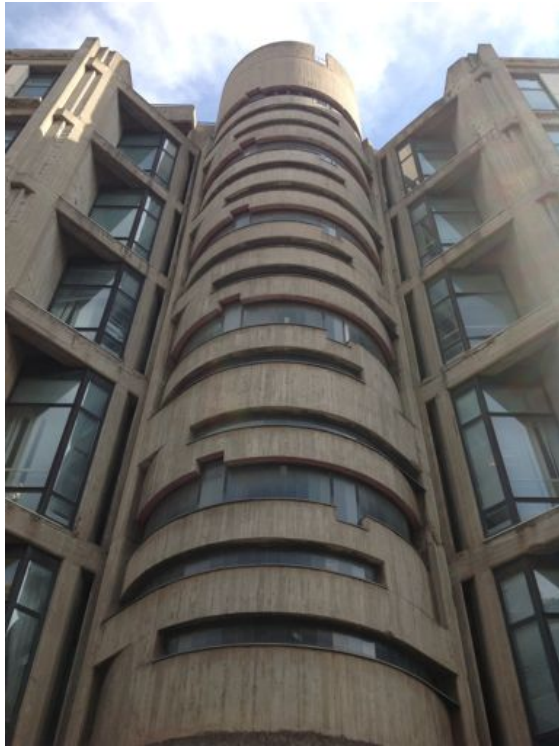


Fig. 6-7-8-9 Current view of the building