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## Minimum Documentation Fiche 2003

International working party for  
**documentation and conservation**

of buildings, sites and neighbourhoods of the  
**modern movement**

composed by national/regional working party of:  
Docomomo Italia

### 0.1 Picture of building/site



depicted item: aerial view of the building

source: ATER – Azienda Territoriale per l'Edilizia Residenziale del Comune di Roma

date: 2008

### 1.

#### Identity of building/group of buildings/urban scheme/landscape/garden

1.1 current name of building	Corviale
1.2 variant or former name	Insediamiento IACP Nuovo Corviale
1.3 number & name of street	Via Poggio Verde
1.4 Town	Rome
1.5 Province/state	Rome/Latium
1.6 zip code	00148
1.7 Country	Italy
1.8 national grid reference	latitude 41.8484653, longitude 12.4146795
1.9 classification/typology	RES (Residential)
1.10 protection status & date	

## 2

### History of building

2.1 original brief/purpose	Apartments and services
2.2 dates: commission/completion	1972-1984
2.3 architectural and other designers	Mario Fiorentino, <i>general coordinator</i> ; F. Gorio, P.M. Lugli, G. Stermini, M. Valori; <i>Structural Engineering</i> : R. Morandi; <i>Mechanical and Electrical Engineering</i> : G. Parolini; <i>Signage</i> : S. Fiorentino
2.4 others associated with building	<i>Sculptors</i> : N. Carrino, C. Lorenzetti, T. Magnoni, C. Santoro, G. Uncini.
2.5 significant alterations with dates	Variations to the use of the service level
2.6 current use	Apartments and services
2.7 current condition	General state of decay resulting from the lack of a maintenance plan on the part of the institution responsible for its management (ATER). The reinforced concrete piers present important cracks and exposed reinforcing bars.

## 3

### Description

#### 3.1 General description

The *Nuovo Corviale* project was commissioned by the Istituto Autonomo Case Popolari, the Autonomous Institute for Social Housing. It was one of the planned interventions of the City of Rome's Piano di Edilizia Economica e Popolare, a Plan for Social and Assisted Housing, regulated by Law n. 167/72 (Zone Plan n. 61). The site is a 60.5 hectare parcel in the south-west quadrant of the city of Rome, along Via Portuense and adjacent to the Tenuta dei Massimi Natural Reserve and the Casali Valley.

In 1972 the Institute entrusted a group of 23 designers, coordinated by Mario Fiorentino, with the realisation of what would become one of the most controversial projects of recent years in Italy. The design proposed a unique building extending for almost one kilometre in length: a linear building-city for 8,500 people, incorporating basic services, shops, schools and commercial, civic and cultural facilities worthy of an urban development.

The designers' intentions were clear: emphasising the value of public projects as a tool for stimulating a realistic urban experiment, fully aware of the risks of such an innovative and experimental approach.

#### 3.2 Construction

The residential portion consists of 1,202 apartments and three fundamental elements: a main, nine-storey building almost one kilometre in length; a lower, 2 to 3-storey building, parallel to the main building, approximately the same length and set 30 meters from the west face of the main building; finally, a third construction whose height varies with the changing terrain, set at 45° with respect to the main building, projected toward the existing Casetta Mattei neighbourhood and designed to link the services and facilities in Corviale with its urban context. The project was to have been completed by a bar, restaurant, outdoor theatre, belvedere and landscaped areas to the west.

The apartments are divided into five "management units", each with its own public entry plaza marked by a monumental stair and area for meetings of residents and social activities.

Raised pedestrian walkways, situated in correspondence with the five entry plazas, connect the main residential block with the basic services, moving above the level of vehicular circulation.

The five entry plazas lead to an internal corridor connecting to 27 secondary stairwells. The apartments are sequential on the first four floors (approximately 4 units per floor) and served by internal balconies on the other four levels. The sequential apartments are accessible only from the 27 secondary stairs, while the other units can also be reached from the monumental stairs. Between these two blocks is a floor originally designed to host various services, the so-called “free level”, while the connection at grade resembles a “base” covered by an inclined plane concealing the ground floor, storage units and connections to the stairwells and a garage level.

The main building is served by a one-way street system, on the other side of which is the scholastic centre with elementary and high school facilities.

### 3.3 Context

The plateau-like site of Corviale is situated in the Roman countryside, along the margins of a Natural Reserve. Dominating the ridge of the plateau, the main building is visible from afar.

The contrasting and grandiose relationship with the landscape is juxtaposed against the mimetic approach adopted in other interventions in peripheral areas and the sprawling theories of the neo-realist garden city. Corviale was inspired by the history and images of Rome and its territory. The peremptory and solitary presentation of the building in this peripheral landscape at the edge of the countryside, standing above the Tiber Valley and its hills, intentionally recalls the aqueducts and colossal ruins dotting the Roman landscape, depicted in nineteenth century engravings of the Roman *campagna*. The oversized and monumental design opposes the logic of urban planning that grows the city through successive additions, in the absence of formal qualities, pursuing uniquely the indications of building regulations. The overbearing nature of the volumetric mass is juxtaposed by an articulated plan, the system of landscaping and pedestrian and vehicular paths. These latter are organised by a series of axes set orthogonal to the main building, embracing the surrounding area as alignments that organise and define the scale of the project.

## 4

### Evaluation

#### 4.1 Technical

Architecture, building technology, mechanical and electrical systems, the organisation of the construction site and new calculating techniques created a truly unique organic program for Corviale, reciprocally conditioning one another and producing an anything but casual result. The choice to simplify the form as much as possible is also the result of the adoption of prefabricated systems. The structure of the main building consists of prefabricated concrete piers, set at 6 meters on centre. An example of heavy industrialisation and prefabrication typical of the 1970s and 80s. The evident degradation of the reinforced concrete is in reality cosmetic, and the complex does not suffer from any structural problems whatsoever.

#### 4.2 Social

The Corviale project originally intended to contribute to the construction of a formally diverse city, opposing the subordinate role of the periphery with respect to the city centre and the functional separation between residential and service spaces, offering instead a new complex model of multifunctional organisation that designed the spaces of dwelling and services as an inseparable whole.

Considering these premises, it is evident that the success of a similar intervention is strongly conditioned by complex problems of organisation and management involving various actors: the managing body (ex IACP, currently ATER - Azienda Territoriale per l'Edilizia Residenziale del Comune di Roma) on the one hand, the City of Rome and its technical offices on the other, coupled with the active involvement of residents, determined the discrepancies between the

project and reality, clearly exposing the utopian qualities of the initial project. Due to the serious housing emergency that plagued Rome in the 1980s, the first residents arrived while the building was still being completed. The free level, originally slated to host a commercial galleria and social services, was illegally occupied before these programs could be realised. This first “unplanned event” was followed by a series of others, including the failure to complete the program of services linking up with the rest of the neighbourhood and the absence of any organic plans for the management and maintenance of the building. These factors contributed to the “isolation” of Corviale, abandoned to the self-organised initiatives of its inhabitants, insufficient for coordinating such a complex machine. Corviale soon earned a reputation as a highly degraded area, a social ghetto on the outskirts of the city, offering no control for the safety of its inhabitants, and where the very architectural design was considered responsible for such powerful social problems.

After approximately one decade of abandonment, a growing negative reputation drew the attention of architects, sociologists and politicians, triggering a process of investigation and research that was transformed into a new awareness, a sentiment of belonging to a unique utopia; a series of initiatives promoted by the world of culture (workshops with residents, conferences, artistic performances), by City Government (the completion of part of the program of municipal neighbourhood services) and by ATER (competitions for the renovation and rehabilitation of the structure) have progressively attempted to restore the image of the large and complex organism.

#### *4.3 Cultural & Aesthetic*

In the expectations of the client, Corviale was not to have shifted from practices common to the rest of Italy at the time, based on the realisation of entire urban quarters filled with tried and tested typologies (row housing, apartment blocks or towers). In this case a totally opposite decision was made, focusing on the principle of maximum concentration of buildings and elevated density of land use, proposing a complexity and a richness of internal relations within a unique building, more akin to the consolidated city. The occasion for such an inversion in common building practices was derived from the public nature of the client, who thus assumed an autonomous desire to experiment with new ideas for the construction of the modern city. In this case, the choice of a typology was elevated to the principle of the entire project: the repetition of an apartment type and the sequence of a few autonomous architectural episodes guided the search for a formal quality that, on par with the great monumental constructions of ancient Rome, is expressed as large masses containing a repetitive serial fabric: more intense formal episodes forcefully interrupted the facades, such as the entry portals, the plazas, the volumes of the common areas, within an intentional monotony of the overall composition, generating a highly compact final image. The volumetric characteristic of Corviale is aligned with the urban utopias of the 1960s, when the megastructure represented an attempt to control urban growth. Similar examples include the expansion of Venice and Mestre by Ludovico Quaroni (1959) and Kenzo Tange’s Plan for Tokyo Bay (1961) or the project by Candilis, Josic, Woods for the Le Mirail district in Toulouse (1961).

#### *4.4 Historical*

In 1972 the IACP awarded a group coordinated by Mario Fiorentino with the design of Corviale. The tender was awarded in 1975 after a lengthy period of design. Construction lasted for seven years, and the building was handed over incomplete in 1982. In 1983 the free level and stairs were fully and illegally occupied and transformed by residents into approximately 120 new apartments. Only in 1988 were all of the apartments assigned. In 1990 the residents created an illegal, self-managed health clinic in one of two spaces originally earmarked for the nursery, while the other was occupied and transformed into a boxing gym, a structure that continues to draw users to this day. In 1995 one of the common areas in the basement was

inaugurated as what remains one of the most important gathering spaces in all of Corviale: the centre for the elderly, also self-managed. The same year, City Government deliberated the start of works on the central spine, part of the original project, now home to the council chamber and municipal services and, on the other side of the street, a community centre and municipal library.

Facing the main building to the east is the Civic Centre, now home to various services including the municipal technical offices, registry and council chamber, the local police, a covered market, an outdoor theatre and a church. Almost all of the service spaces inside the main building of Corviale have undergone some form of change with respect to their planned original use. There is only a small supermarket in the space originally designed to be a restaurant-diner. The outdoor theatre in correspondence with the third phase is currently in a total state of abandonment.

At present various projects and interventions of requalification and regeneration are being promoted by city and regional government and ATER.

#### 4.5 *General assessment*

Corviale is perhaps the most important and symbolic public housing estate in all of Italy. It is undoubtedly the most famous, the most paradigmatic, the most studied and certainly the most discussed.

Corviale was and continues to be one of the most important experiences with dwelling: a work of “radical architecture”, a large, self-sufficient “machine” inhabited by wholly unaware pioneers of modernism; a project designed to develop internal social relations, to satisfy the needs of society and reinforce the sense of belonging to a community. In addition to being one of the largest examples of public housing, it is also a significant example of unauthorised construction and self-organisation. In recent years there has been a growing attention and interest in the potentialities expressed by the physical form of this megastructure and the simple fact of its inhabitation. The comprehension of how this building, despite its rigid architectural parti, was and continues to be “metabolised” by its inhabitants, indulging spontaneous transformations marked by fantasy and ingenuity, constitutes the essential premise for its participated requalification.

## 5

### Documentation

#### 5.1 *principal references*

- FIORENTINO Mario, *La Casa. Progetti 1946-1981*, Edizioni Kappa, Roma 1985
- BELLUZZI Amedeo, CONFORTI Claudia, *Architettura Italiana 1944 – 1994*, Editori Laterza, Bari 1994 ISBN 9788842044758
- CAMPANELLA Nicoletta, *Roma: Nuovo Corviale. Miti, utopie, valutazioni*, Bulzoni editore, Roma 1995, ISBN 13 9788871198712
- TAFURI Manfredo, *Insediamiento IACP al Corviale*, Roma 1973-1981 in *Domus* n. 617, 1981
- SANTORI GENNARI F., PIETROMARCHI B., *Osservatorio Nomade, Immaginare Corviale*, Bruno Mondadori Editore, 2006 ISBN 8842491799

#### 5.2 *visual material attached*

- Fig 1 Aerial view of the building (ATER – Azienda Territoriale per l’Edilizia Residenziale del Comune di Roma, 2008)
- Fig 2 Site Plan of the entire project scale 1:1000 (M. Fiorentino archive, MAXXI Architecture Collection, Fondazione MAXXI, Rome, 1975)
- Fig 3 Plan of the lower block of 4 levels, the free level and the upper block of 4 floors of balcony apartments (M. Fiorentino archive, MAXXI Architecture Collection, Fondazione MAXXI, Rome, 1975)

- Fig 4 Circulation diagram and typical section (M. Fiorentino archive, MAXXI Architecture Collection, Fondazione MAXXI, Rome, 1975)
- Fig 5 View from the west (M. Fiorentino archive, MAXXI Architecture Collection, Fondazione MAXXI, Rome, 1982)
- Fig 6 The outdoor theater (M. Fiorentino archive, MAXXI Architecture Collection, Fondazione MAXXI, Rome, 1982)
- Fig 7 The main building viewed from the secondary building (M. Fiorentino archive, MAXXI Architecture Collection, Fondazione MAXXI, Rome, 1982)
- Fig 8 One of the monumental stairs (M. Fiorentino archive, MAXXI Architecture Collection, Fondazione MAXXI, Rome, 1982)
- Fig 9 View from the east (M. Fiorentino archive, MAXXI Architecture Collection, Fondazione MAXXI, Rome, 1982)
- Fig 10 The pedestrian path leading toward one of the five entry plazas (M. Fiorentino archive, MAXXI Architecture Collection, Fondazione MAXXI, Rome, 1982)
- Fig. 11 The free level (M. Fiorentino archive, MAXXI Architecture Collection, Fondazione MAXXI, Rome, 1982)
- Fig. 12 The balcony corridor (ATER – Azienda Territoriale per l'Edilizia Residenziale del Comune di Roma, 2008)

### 5.3 *rapporteur/date*

Laura Felci / June 2015

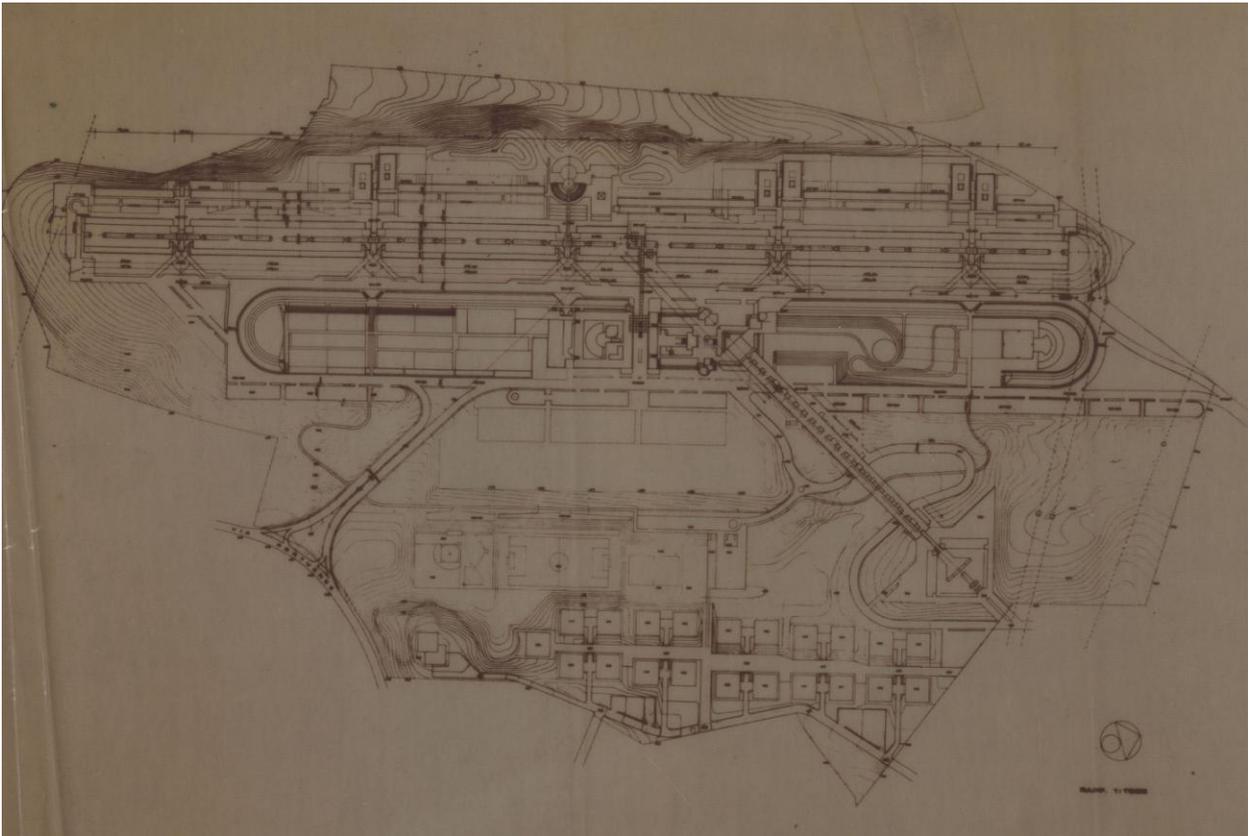


Fig 2 Site Plan of the entire project scale 1:1000

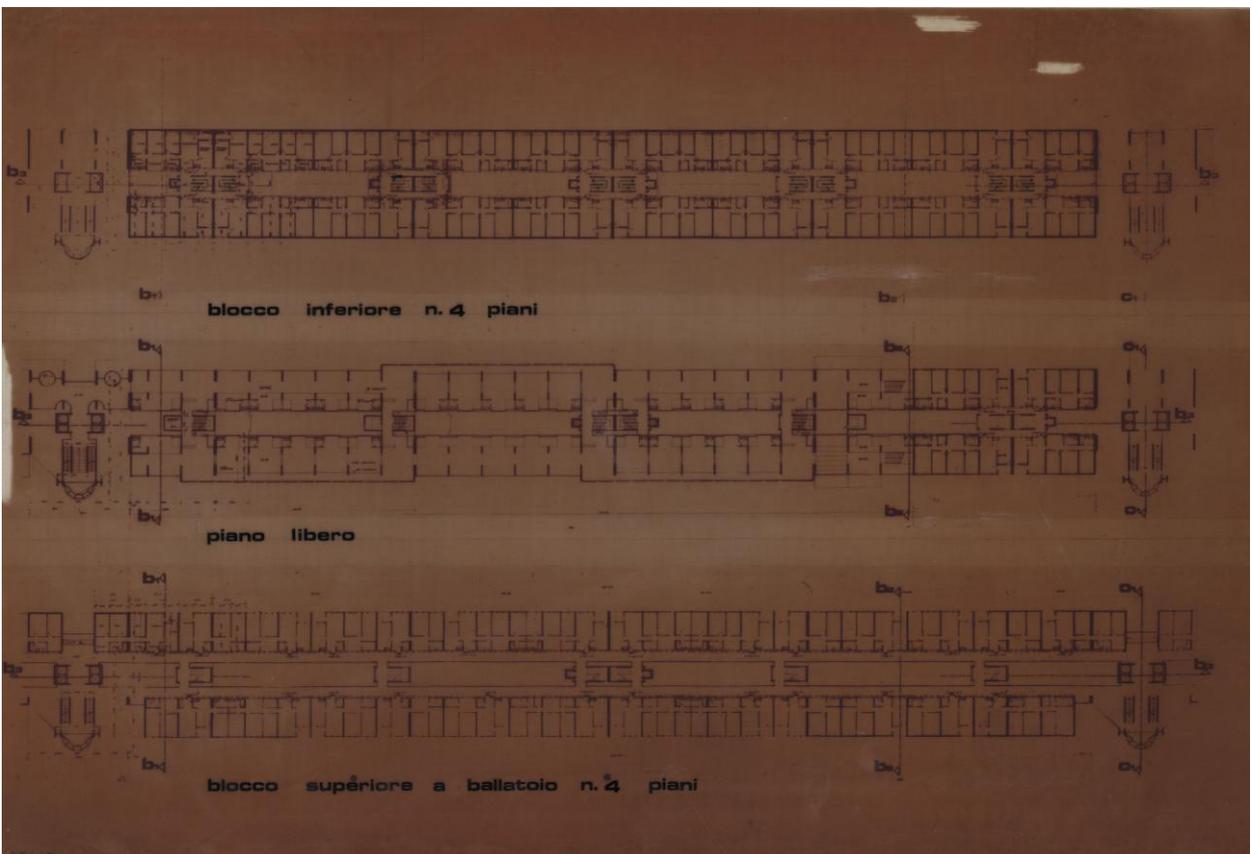


Fig 3 Plan of the lower block of 4 levels, the free level and the upper block of 4 floors of balcony apartments

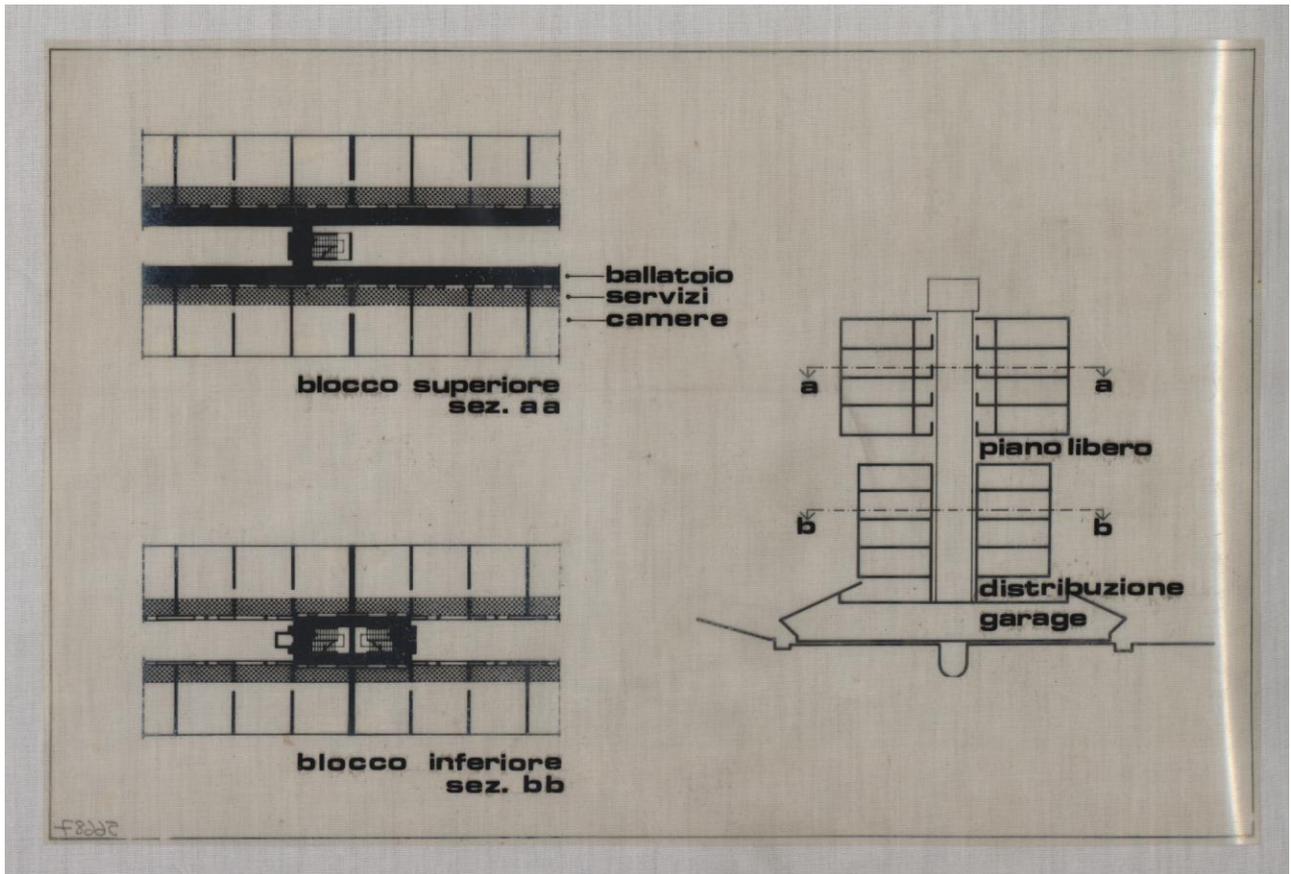


Fig. 4 Circulation diagram and typical section



Fig 5 View from the west

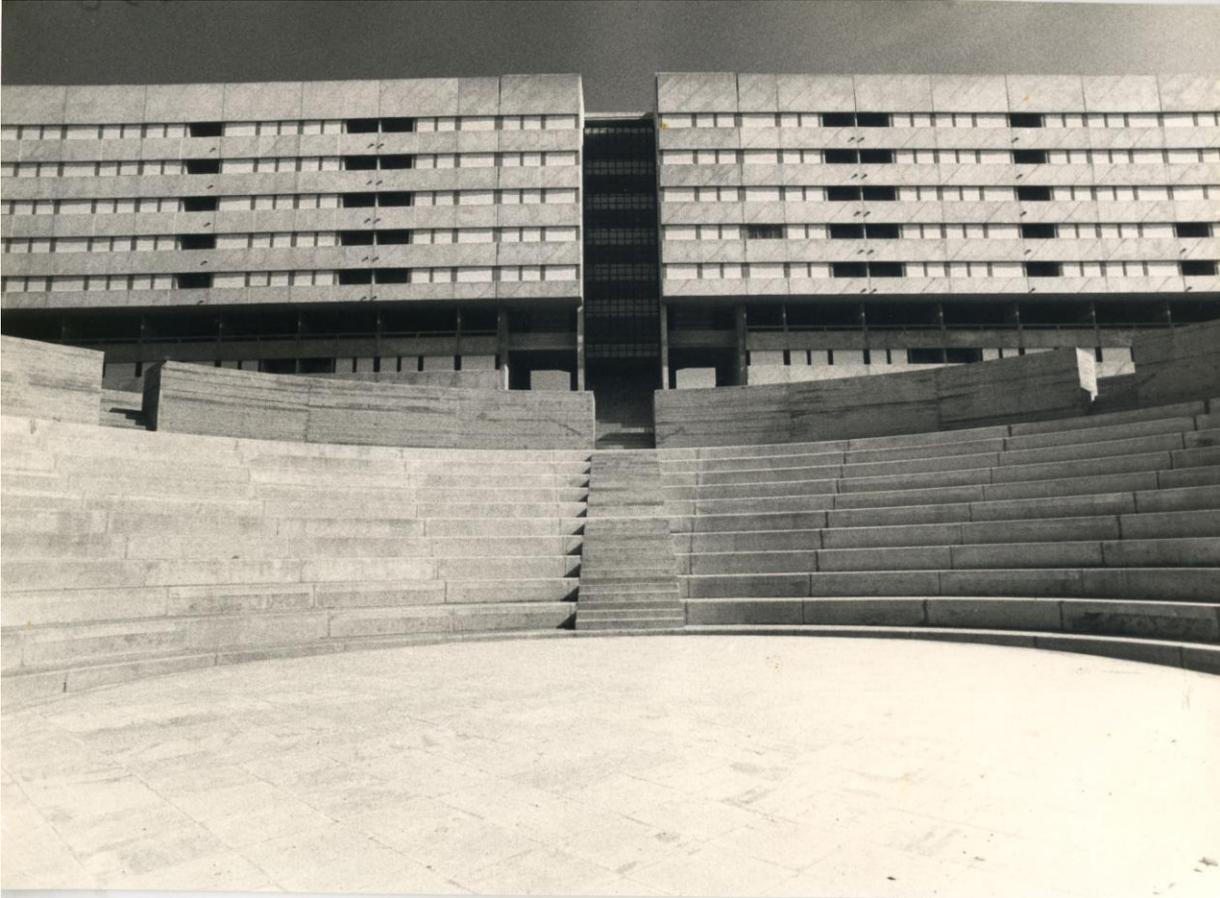


Fig. 6 The outdoor theater



Fig 7 The main building viewed from the secondary building



Fig 8 One of the monumental stairs



Fig 9 View from the east



Fig 10 The pedestrian path leading toward one of the five entry plazas



Fig. 11 The free level



Fig 12 The balcony corridor