

**Minimum Documentation Fiche**  
composed by national working party of SECTION BASILICATA-PUGLIA

**01. Picture of building**



Depicted item: S.G.P.E. Building  
source: Adriana Maranghino  
date: 2019

**1. Identity of building**

**1.1 current name of building**

S.G.P.E. Building

**1.2 variant or former name**

Enel Building

**1.3 number & name of street**

Via Crisanzio, 42

**1.4 town**

Bari

**1.5 province/state**

Bari/Puglia

**1.6 zip code**

70122

**1.7 country**

Italy

### **1.8 national grid reference**

41°07'11.22" N 16°52'08.47" E

### **1.9 classification/typology**

Architecture for the community

### **1.10 protection status & date**

Adaptation of the PRG (Piano Regolatore Generale) to the Putt/p (Piano Urbanistico Territoriale Tematico "Paesaggio"), Marzo 2014

## **2. History of building**

### **2.1 original brief/purpose**

Building for offices

### **2.2 dates: commission/completion**

1956/1958

### **2.3 architectural and other designers**

Studio Chiaia & Napolitano

### **2.4 others associated with building**

Impresa Defeo (construction) e Impresa Garibaldi Fragasso (renovation)

### **2.5 significant alterations with dates**

2012-14: general renovation and redefinition of the interior spaces

### **2.6 current use**

Department of Educational Science

### **2.7 current condition**

Good

## **3. Description**

### **3.1 General description**

The building, designed by the architects Chiaia and Napolitano on the demolition of the existing headquarters of the S.G.P.E., right when it was built immediately proposed itself as a revolutionary event in the Bari architectural panorama.

"It was a matter of applying a technique, that of the curtain walls, so widespread for American skyscrapers, to an organism with a mainly horizontal development and a low number of floors, the result was quite positive [...]" words of Vittorio Chiaia, from Scionti Mauro, Lo studio Chiaia & Napolitano a Bari, Adda editore, Bari, 2018. (original translation of Francesco Paolo Protomastro)

Vittorio Fiore recalls the southern magazines such as "La Città" and "Civiltà degli Scambi", which also address the issues of the role of architects in the southern community life and their contribution for the modern architecture, and finds the opportunity to distinguish between architects and engineers related to phenomena of speculation, which leave little margin for the application of new techniques and create anonymous or unnecessarily monumental works.

### **3.2 Construction**

The plan has a "T" configuration and the elevation has a base covered with stone and brick, which detaches from the upper levels through a ribbon window that runs along the entire building, set back from the external edge of the same elevation. The upper levels are characterized by a curtain

wall facade, composed of profiled elements in anticorodal, anodized aluminum on the heads, red porcelain plate and transparent elements in thermopan crystal. The crowning level of the building coincides with a cantilevered canopy in reinforced concrete.

The load-bearing structure of the building consists of a reinforced concrete frame.

The interiors have been designed down to the smallest detail, from the desks to the phone shelves. For the fixtures, given the size of the supply, the architects designed original profiles, without the need for expense; the same for lighting fixtures, material desks, telephone holders and office bookcases. A Bauhaus methodology is therefore brought to the extreme, which entirely involves the cycles of design, furnishing and territorial planning.

The partitions, both fixed and mobile, are in aluminum and crystal, while the floors in marble and rubber. The copper decorations are a work by Paolo Ricci, Gennaro Picinni and the brothers Francesco and Raffaele Spizzico, who also made the ceramic finishes. The decoration of the back panel of the hall is by Mimmo Castellano and the internal fixed furnishing by the Sama Bar company. The quality of the final product is thus the result of a complex team work that specializes and is refined in the executive.

The armchairs designed for the building will be mass-produced; the S.G.P.E. Palace thus helped to develop models for the industry.

### **3.3 Context**

The building occupies the north-eastern corner of a block of Murattiano, a nineteenth-century neighborhood of the city of Bari. The six-level main façade overlooks the axis of via Crisanzio directly. The side elevation overlooks via Suppa. In its curtain wall of the main façade on via Crisanzio, the neoclassical façade of the Justice Palace is reflected, which will be demolished in 1966 and replaced with the Faculty of Law of the State University of Bari, designed by Pasquale Carbonara.

## **4. Evaluation**

### **4.1 Technical**

The choice of the curtain wall system allowed the reduction of the thickness of the walls and increases the useful surfaces: it led to an increase of 200 square meters on a total surface of 2,400 square meters.

Any reference to the structure is cleverly masked by working on the cladding grids, as it was originally thought to be designed in metal, while it was actually designed, as mentioned before, with a reinforced concrete frame.

### **4.2 Social**

Bruno Zevi, understanding the effects of an anthropological mutation guided by this specific architecture, comments: "We are witnessing the amazing show offered by model employees: casual and brisk look, sportswear, walk the corridors with the elastic step of the managers who are seen in American films ; they feel privileged, especially when the coaches of the tourist companies have included the building in the itinerary for foreign visitors. Leaving the old headquarters in via Crisanzio, overnight, the indolence has disappeared to give rise to an activist and concrete spirit". From Zevi Bruno, Bari americaneggiante. Anticorodal contro goffaggine colonialista, in Id., Cronache di architettura, vol. 4, Dai laboratori medici di Kahn al piano di Taige per Tokyo, Laterza, Bari, 1971. (original translation of Francesco Paolo Protomastro)

### **4.3 Cultural & aesthetic**

The preliminary planning document to the new Urban Plan indicates as a structural component of the cultural heritage the prospect of the facing Faculty of Law, the work of Pasquale Carbonara, built in 1970, but ignores the S.G.P.E. Palace, whose construction had a primary role in metamorphosis of the Murattiano neighborhood and in the formation of the technical culture of the second half of the twentieth century in Bari. Time has eroded, especially in the furnishings, the interiors of a building that was designed down to the smallest detail. Due to the exceptional concentration of strictly architectural reasons and historical and cultural values, it would have

deserved to be treated with a high degree of respect. The adaptation to new functions could have been the occasion, unfulfilled, for a critical restoration of the contemporary architecture.

#### **4.4 Historical**

By developing an American formation involving figures such as Wright, Neutra and Wachsmann, an absolutely revolutionary architectural language is introduced. The curtain wall, the continuous glass facade and red panels in ceramic plate, as well as advanced technologies and new materials, such as anticorodal, thermopane, playtipor and novopan, conquered the urban scene of Bari for the first time.

#### **4.5 General assessment**

The construction of this building is an exceptional fact. The typical southernerist considers it the best expression of a renewal of Bari architecture, the advanced tip of an activity that stands out from private speculative construction.

### **5. Documentation**

#### **5.1 Principal references**

CHIAIA, Vittorio, NAPOLITANO, Massimo, Opere 1958 - 1968, O.I.R.E. editrice, Napoli, 1968

CALDERAZZI, Antonella (a cura di), Costruire il moderno. L'architettura di Vittorio Chiaia e Massimo Napolitano, Italgrafica Sud, Bari, 2010

SCIONTI, Mauro, Lo studio Chiaia & Napolitano a Bari, Adda editore, Bari, 2018

SIGNORILE, Nicola, Goodbye Murat. La tradizione del Moderno nella Bari di Giuseppe Gimma, Edizioni di Pagina, Bari, 2018

#### **5.2 Visual material attached**

Fig.01 – Historical picture

Fig.02 – Picture of the curtain wall (Adriana Maranghino 2019)

Fig.03 – Actual facade on via Crisanzio (Valentina Castagnolo 2020)

Fig.04 – Actual facade on via Suppa (Valentina Castagnolo 2020)

#### **5.3 rapporteur/date**

Francesco Paolo Protomastro, April 2020

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

name of examining ISC member:

date of examination:

approval:

working party/ref.



Fig.01 – Historical picture



Fig.02 – Picture of the curtain wall (Adriana Maranghino 2019)

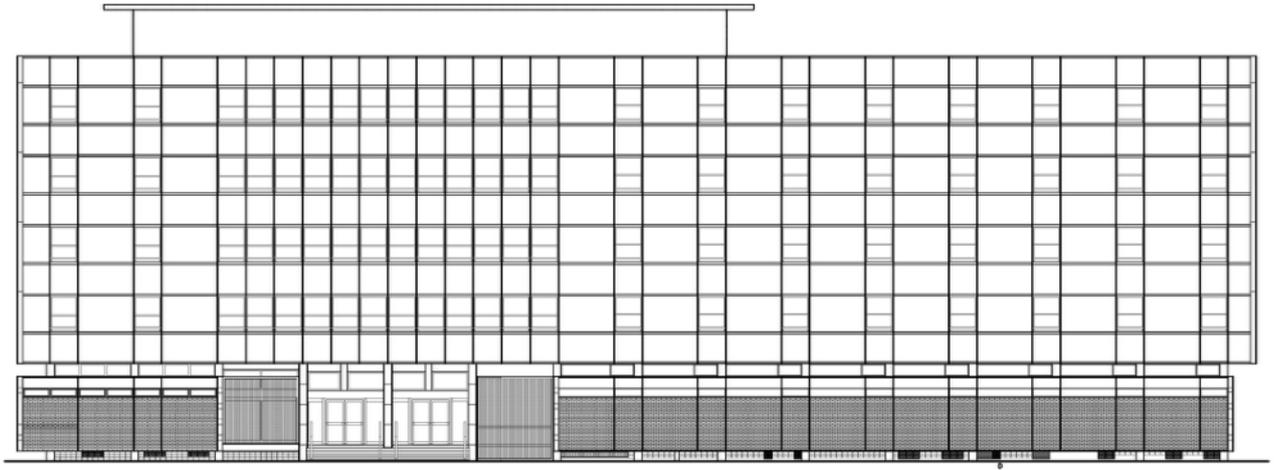


Fig.03 – Actual facade on via Crisanzio (Valentina Castagnolo 2020)

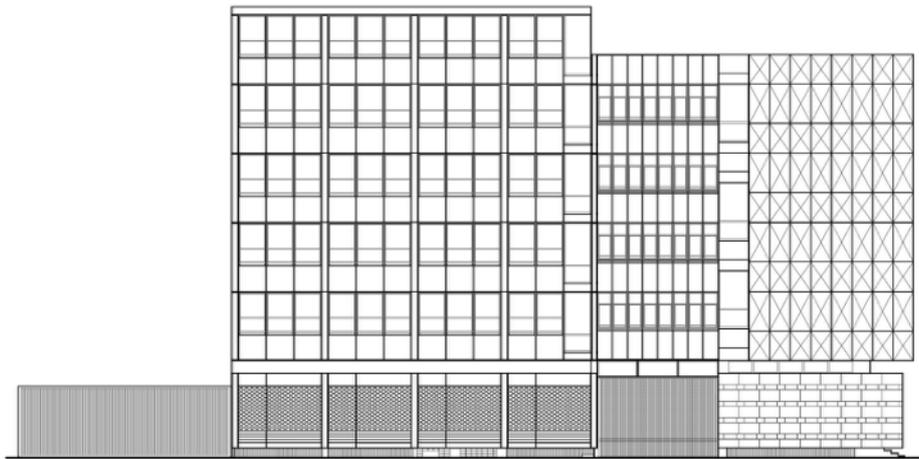


Fig.04 – Actual facade on via Suppa (Valentina Castagnolo 2020)