

Minimum Documentation Fiche 2015

composed by national/regional working party of:
Docomomo Italia

01. Picture of building



Depicted item: Fig.1 General view of "IX May" Mountain Camp
source: photo by COSTRUZIONI CASABELLA n°168/1941
date: 1941

1. Identity of building

1.1 current name of building	Headquarters of Engineering Departments
1.2 variant or former name	"IX May" Mountain Camp
1.3 number & name of street	Piazzale E. Pontieri
1.4 town	Montelucio di Roio, L'Aquila
1.5 province/state	Abruzzo
1.6 zip code	67100
1.7 country	Italy
1.8 national grid reference	42°20'16 N 13°22'41 E
1.9 classification/typology	Health and Education centre (1937-1943) Army base and refugee shelter (1943-1970) University offices and classrooms (1970-2009)
1.10 protection status & date	The whole Roio hill is protected by a landscape guardianship, but its perimeter doesn't include the Mountain Camp and the latest University buildings. The "IX May" Mountain Camp is only protected by a regular guardianship which involve public building that are older than seventy years. (Art.10, comma 1, D.Lgs.42/2004, BBCC Code)

2 History of building

2.1 original brief/purpose

The Mountain Camp building "IX May" was built in 1937 in Roio di Poggio (L'Aquila), about a thousand meters above sea level. In accordance with health care policy of Fascist Regime, it was commissioned by "the Institute of Assistance to the sea's people" in order to provide for the care and the rejuvenation of the children. Furthermore it was pushed locally by the fascist "podestà" Adelchi Serena inside the project of "Grande Aquila" plan, a program of new public buildings as a reward for a less territorial domain at the expense of the city. The building was designed by Ettore Rossi, a roman architect who knew significant personalities of Modern Movement in Italy.

2.2 dates: commission/completion

Commission 1934

Completion 1937

2.3 architectural and other designers

Ettore Rossi

2.4 others associated with building

None

2.5 significant alterations with dates

The building was used as an army base during the Second World War (1943-1945) and later as a refugee shelter. In the late 1960s and early 1970s, there were several interventions designed by Leonardo Del Bufalo to convert the colony into a university building with offices and classrooms. After 1990, the context deeply changed with the creation of new University buildings and a new outdoor arrangement designed by Giulio Fioravanti. The building was used as headquarters for Engineering Departments until the earthquake of 2009.

2.6 current use

The building is currently unusable because of the earthquake in April 2009.

2.7 current condition

The building presents a moderate-severe damage situation. It has localized damages in some structural components and façade elements. In addition to earthquake consequences, fouling and corrosion phenomena are further signs of the building degradation.

3. Description

3.1 general description

The complex consists of one detached volume. It is composed by a central body shaped by a smooth curve and two side wings which are softly and symmetrically rotated. The basement with its projecting roof and the covered terrace on the fifth floor enhance a three levels block, well pierced by a serial repetition of windows. According to the original design, the basement contained technical locals, the ground floor with two head loggias contained common services (common rooms, kitchen, dining halls and gymnasiums), the block included dorms and private services, the fifth floor had a great terrace and medical offices. Each wing of the block was used as dorm for a male and a female section and the building could support a capacity of 250 children. The rotation of wings was designed to provide a better sun exposure. The building had three stairwells: the rectangular one was located in the centre and the other two elliptical staircases in the corners of dorms. In the late Sixties in order to provide offices and classrooms for the University, several transformations were done. Nowadays the two lateral loggias on the ground floor, the terraces and the open area of fifth floor are closed, staircases holes are filled with lift structures and on the north side of the building there are two double cylindrical volumes. A thick moulding in corten steel on the projecting roof and on the ceiling, underlines these important transformations.

3.2 construction

The building is sustained by a reinforced concrete frame. It is composed by three bodies and two joints which are located symmetrically where two elliptic staircases are arranged. The structural bodies are characterised by 9 longitudinal and 28 transversal frames. The frames have regular measures, they are 5 m long in the longitudinal way and 5 or 5,5 m long in the transversal way. Also the pillars of the structure are regularly sized. They are shaped with a rectangular section of 50x50 cm or a circular section with a diameter of 50 cm and their different form depend on building spaces. Beams are generally 50 cm high and in some areas secondary beams 30 cm high are arranged in order provide a better support. Hollow block floors are woven in the longitudinal direction, except the roof slab which is made in reinforced concrete. The structure design, the use of reinforced concrete and the accordance with technical regulations of the age for seismic categories, classified the building as an “anti-seismic” construction. The exterior walls follow the concrete frame perimeter and they are made of stones and bricks layers. These materials clad the reinforced concrete pillars and they are overlapped following the rules of the Royal Decree Law of March 25th 1935. A pink or orange plaster is the external finish of the building. This kind of plaster is called “Terranova” and it is 1 cm thick.

3.3 context

The building is located on Roio Hill, at 970 m above sea level. This hill is next to the city of L'Aquila on the south-west direction and it is partially covered by a pine forest, designed in the late 19th century as a park for L'Aquila people. Historical and religious paths climb the hill and from the top it is possible to look at an outstanding view of the whole city. Originally the Mountain Camp was the only building on the top of the hill, only combined with two little entry volumes which enhanced the symmetry of the whole design. After 1990 it was surrounded by a complex of new University buildings designed by Giulio Fioravanti. They consists in a long body with classrooms and offices, a circular library and a squared volume for the canteen, furthermore some detached laboratories were created. The new buildings with the former Mountain Camp arrange a perimeter around a big open area as in a campus typology. The open area is marked by a cross path, following the longitudinal symmetrical axis of the Mountain Camp building and a new transversal direction that bring to the entrance of the new classrooms. The original entrance volumes of the camp building are now located in the middle of the open area and next to them there is a new outdoor arrangement with high trees. This environmental settlement has radically changed the entrance point of view, originally designed to enhance the symmetry and the size of the Mountain Camp building.

4. Evaluation

4.1 technical

The building represents one of the first examples for the use of reinforced concrete in the area of L'Aquila. Its regular frame and the homogeneity of pillars and beams from the basement to the top of the building, are a statement of the opening knowledge in technical calculation for reinforced concrete structures at that time. Effectively reinforced concrete was used more for its strength and stiffness than its structural behaviour and the construction was promoted as suitable for anti-seismic areas because of the “rigidity” of its frame. The Fascist regime pushed the use of reinforced concrete for its resistance and suitability for Italian historical and contemporary architecture, at the same time this material allowed the realization of Fascist commercial thinking in the field of construction. Another valuable and interesting technical detail of the building construction is the cladding system with the mixed use of overlapped layer of bricks and stones in order to provide a better anti-seismic collaboration with reinforced concrete.

Not only structure is important for the building technology, also technical systems were interesting for that age. For example, an efficient central heating with technical rooms located in the basement, made the building suitable for the frigid temperatures of winter typical of that area.

4.2 social

The building is a clear example of Fascist care for the education of young people. Its architecture was an historical vehicle for ideals of fortitude, order and physical wellness that had to be spread by the Regime from the young age as in a military academy. The pedagogical model was based on respect for hierarchy and on repetition of Regime rituals and principles with a strong limitation of individual freedom. The Mountain Camp is a practical statement of ONB (Opera Nazionale Balilla) program, that was the responsible Institution for children education.

Apart from this national social value, the Mountain Camp architecture represents locally one of the first public building attracting people outside the city edges. It is important for L'Aquila history and it remembers the realisations of "Grande L'Aquila" plan, in which the policy of city improvement was also pushed with city physical and social enlargement outside the historical borders.

4.3 cultural & aesthetic

The building is characterized by a severe formal impact. Evident is the architectural will to enhance the three level block as a monolithic mass detached from the floor and linked gently to the air with a thin cover slab. Some of these features, like purity and prominence of the volumes, rigour and great formal impact complies with many stylistic principles of Italian rationalism. The Mountain Camp building represents not only an important statement of this kind of Italian architecture, but also the cultural link, expressed through the design of Ettore Rossi, with roman architectural thinking of that age. For example, some of its features, like the soft curve of the main body and the slenderness of the cover slab, are composition themes that can be viewed in the rationalist masterpiece of Ridolfi's postal building in Rome.

4.4 historical

The "IX May" Mountain Camp is the only realisation of this kind of architectural typology in the south of Italy at the age of Fascist regime. Indeed during that time the political national will and the "Grande L'Aquila" plan attempted several realisations outside the city borders in the spirit of enlargement, colonisation and territorial conquest and some of those realisations, like the complex built on the "Gran Sasso" mountain in the area of Campo Imperatore, can put in relation with the camp building in Roio. However the "IX May" Mountain Camp fulfilled an important educational and pedagogical role, like a satellite school for children where the regime could consecrate itself for the spreading of Fascist values far from the cultural disturbance of the city.

Furthermore the building is an important historical statement to study the technical knowledge of that time. Despite the Fascists values and ideals, several camp building expressed good technic and construction qualities, like the use of reinforced concrete and anti-seismic devices in the "IX May" Mountain Camp building.

Lastly, the building is important for the architectural history of L'Aquila, it has ever preserved a functional role for the city through the years and it was the iconic symbol of the local University of Engineering.

4.5 general assessment

The "IX May" Mountain Camp building has a great historical, technical and social importance. Despite its controversial transformations, it fulfils especially a local relevance for its cultural and functional role. Originally designed as a Fascist camp for children, it has been used for University teaching and as Headquarters of Engineering Departments for more than 50 years.

Nowadays it is unusable because of the earthquake of April 2009. The building presents a moderate-severe damage situation. Localised damages are present on structural components and the cladding is interested by a crack framework with a localised detachment from the structural devices. Facades plasters are totally compromised and signs of

Since 2009, the building is interested by a local debate about its refurbishment. Because of the importance for its historical and cultural relevance, it needs an architectural intervention in order to provide it a new functional and cultural life. It is necessary also that the refurbishment starts rapidly to contrast the progressive effects of building degradation due to its abandonment. Indeed fouling phenomena, corrosion of steel exposed reinforcement, biological colonization and pulverization are evident and they worsen progressively the serious damages involved by the earthquake of 2009.

5. Documentation

5.1 principal references

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<http://www.archivioluce.com/archivio/>

5.2 visual material attached

Fig.1 General view of "IX May" Mountain Camp (COSTRUZIONI CASABELLA n°168/1941)

Fig.2 General view of the top of the hill with the latest University buildings (Aldo Benedetti 2007)

Fig.3 Main plans of the building (COSTRUZIONI CASABELLA n°168/1941)

Fig.4 Front view from one of the entrance volume (COSTRUZIONI CASABELLA n°168/1941)

Fig.5 The entrance volume with the name of the camp (COSTRUZIONI CASABELLA n°168/1941)

Fig.6 A postcard with a front view of the building

Fig.7 A view from the covered terrace on the fifth floor (COSTRUZIONI CASABELLA n°168/1941)

Fig.8 Western view of the building in 1941 (COSTRUZIONI CASABELLA n°168/1941)

Fig.9 Western view of the building before the earthquake of April 2009 (Aldo Benedetti 2007)

Fig.10 Western view of the building after the earthquake of April 2009 (Renato Morganti, Alessandra Tosone 2011)

Fig.11 Front view of the building with earthquake damages (Renato Morganti, Alessandra Tosone 2011)

Fig.12 Back view of the building with earthquake damages (Renato Morganti, Alessandra Tosone 2011)

5.3 rapporteur/date

Matteo Abita / February 2015

6. Fiche report examination by ISC/R

name of examining ISC member: date of examination:

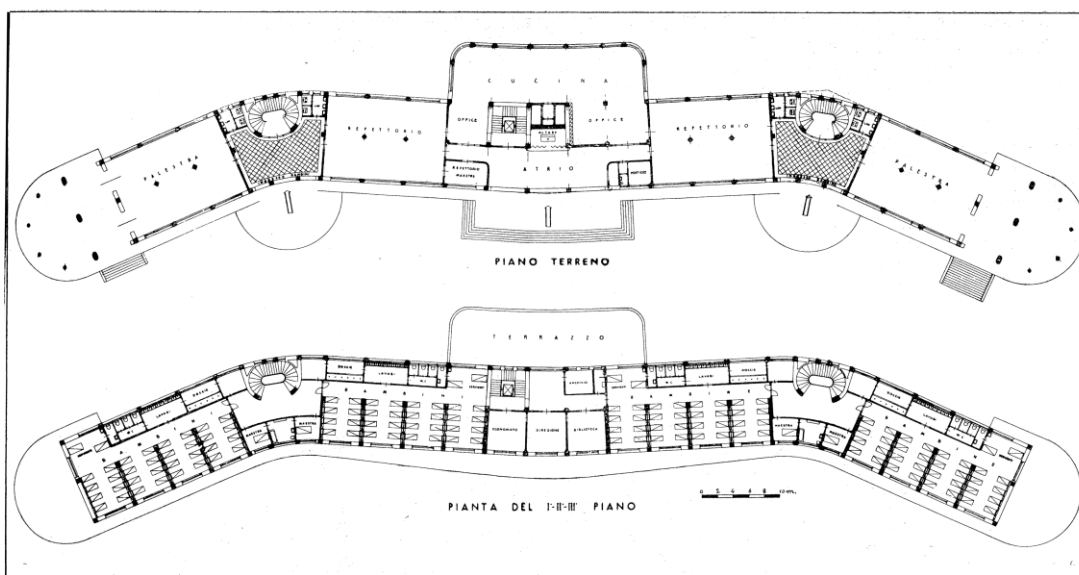
approval:

working party/ref. n°: NAI ref. n°:

comments:



Fig.2 General view of the top of the hill with the latest University buildings



ARCH. E. ROSSI - PIANTE DELLA COLONIA A POGGIO DI ROJO

Fig.3 Main plans of the building



Fig.4 Front view from one of the entrance volume



Fig.5 The entrance volume with the name of the camp



Fig.6 A postcard with a front view of the building



Fig.7 A view from the covered terrace on the fifth floor



Fig.8 Western view of the building in 1941



Fig.9 Western view of the building before the earthquake of April 2009



Fig.10 Western view of the building after the earthquake of April 2009



Fig.11 Front view of the building with earthquake damages



Fig.12 Back view of the building with earthquake damages