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## Garden cities, an ideal to be pursued





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## Garden cities to inspire the 21<sup>st</sup> century



Improving everyday life for the inhabitants of the Île-de-France is a major challenge for the Region and its partners. In our territory of 12 million inhabitants, where the city is dense, where life is fast and mobile, it is our responsibility to enable everyone to live in the best possible conditions.

Among the concerns of the residents in the Île-de-France, housing appears in first place. This is a quantitative challenge: we need to build 70 000 homes a year, but are managing to do only half that. However, it is also a qualitative challenge. We want to build better, to favour accessibility and social mixity; to build in more dense formats to bring people closer to their workplaces and to services, while avoiding urban sprawl. We want, in brief, to prioritise the development of new, sustainable neighbourhoods.

To better prepare for the future, for which we are using the regional master plan, we must use the achievements of the past, revisiting the values which forged the metropolis of the Île-de-France and which have attempted, from the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century onwards, to meet the expectations of those who lived there.

Henri Sellier, among others, contributed, to the design of a more well-balanced and more sustainable city. Humanist and visionary, he was the father of the garden cities which were built during the interwar years in the Île-de-France region. He knew how to reconcile the need to offer comfortable and modern housing, and the need to do this at an affordable price. He prioritised a better balance between built and green spaces in order to improve residents' everyday life.

Garden cities continue to be a source of inspiration. Their architecture, their urban quality, their capacity to connect the city with the districts are recognized by those who lived in them: all this deserves to be explored and developed further. Because they still contribute to the image that we make of the city on a daily basis.

This edition of the *Cahiers* series is an opportunity for us to re-claim the social and urbanistic ambition of the garden cities. I hope that it helps us to develop action plans adapted to the context of the Île-de-France in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, to build a friendly and generous metropolis.

**Jean-Paul Huchon**

Chairman of the Île-de-France Regional Council  
Chairman of the IAU Île-de-France



# Foreword

## The garden city, tomorrow's city



Born out of a world movement which started in England in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, garden cities were developed around Paris during the inter-war years. Modest in terms of their size, this development is important, above all, as an urban, architectural and social model in the history of our metropolis.

In many respects, we can learn a lot from the garden cities.

The urban forms which they implement, the landscapes which they organise, the social model to which they refer, are all facets which we should revisit because they respond to as many of the preoccupations in the current debate today on the metropolis of tomorrow. The values and the ways in which the city was imagined in 19<sup>th</sup> century in England by Ebenezer Howard and Raymond Unwin, and which were put into practice in the 1930s in the Paris region by Henri Sellier and Georges Benoît-Lévy, remain, in fact, astonishingly modern and constitute reference points which can always inspire the high quality development of our cities and neighbourhoods. Living well together, the relationship between city and nature, the desire to make something beautiful for people of modest means, these are the values which we have to take and use to confront the socio-economic and environmental challenges and the need for compactness and energy efficiency in today's city.

Edition 165 of the *Cahiers* series is dedicated to this task of revisiting the garden cities in order to confront today's challenges – at a time when agencies in the Île-de-France region, first among them the Regional Council with its 2030 Île-de-France project, are mobilising to build a robust and sustainable region while experimenting with the new urban neighbourhoods of tomorrow.

2013 is also an anniversary year – it is the centenary of the creation, in 1913 by Ebenezer Howard, of the International Association for Garden Cities and Town Planning and which then became the International Federation for Housing and Planning (IFHP).

IAU îdF has been a member of the French branch for many years.

The centenary will be celebrated in London but also with an event in the Île-de-France – this explains the bi-lingual edition of this *Cahiers* series, contribution, from the French side, to the international symposium organised by the IFHP.

**François Dugeny**

Director General of the IAU Île-de-France

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of a stylized 'F' and 'D'.



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## Garden cities, an ideal to be pursued

### Prologue

More than thirty years after the publication (in May 1978) of edition 51 of the *Cahiers* series which was dedicated to the garden cities of the Île-de-France region, the IAU îdF is repeating its analysis, this time with a different approach. The garden cities are no longer urban complexes which are studied in order to describe an urban form or a point in time in the history of urban planning but, rather, a model which is now recognised and whose values can be re-interpreted.

This edition number 165 of the *Cahiers* series, therefore, sets out to understand the origins of the movement which are linked to the urban crisis arising out of mass industrialisation at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, which plunges its roots into a form of utopian socialism. The garden city, a concept formulated by Ebenezer Howard, must enable the improvement of the 'workers' lot by offering decent housing conditions in a new type of countryside-town, combining mixity in urban functions with nature being omnipresent.

The beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century comes to witness the global adaptation of the concept of the garden city, and gives birth to different interpretations. Numerous developments took place in France, notably in the Nord-Pas-de-Calais and in the Paris region. Their importance – as much historic as symbolic – is fundamental in the Paris region since they constitute the first social housing constructions to be designed in a concerted and comprehensive manner.

Almost a century later, and considering the urbanisation which has occurred since their appearance in the Île-de-France, the garden cities remain rare housing developments of quality, offering remarkable architectural and landscape settings, and, in most cases, public amenities.

As touristic and cultural sites which contribute to an area's recognition, these urban developments have succeeded in combining comfort, functionality and quality of life but also coherence in their public spaces, harmony and diversity in their buildings. They have also created feelings of membership, the idea of a 'we', through the attachment in common values.

Without copying exactly these intelligently-designed urban complexes, the question today is how to think about the city of tomorrow, the sustainable, dense, sociable and energy-efficient city, through revisiting the important values of the garden cities. How do we reinterpret urban forms, the organisation of public spaces, the place of nature, our way of living, the life of the neighbourhood, social and functional mixity and even urban utopia? These are the questions to which this edition of the *Cahiers* series attempts to respond, in order to build a metropolis in the Île-de-France region which is yet more united and strong.

Émilie Jarousseau, Lucile Mettetal, Gwenaëlle Zunino  
IAU île-de-France





# Understanding

At the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century the concept of the garden city was widespread as a global model for town planning. However, the idea of Ebenezer Howard (1898) to create self-sufficient communities on the scale of large cities in rural settings, was to give birth to numerous interpretations around the world, all quite different from the original model of Letchworth, a garden city which was established in 1903 to the north of London. For example, in France, the first garden city, which was built in the Nord-Pas-de-Calais coal mining basin from 1904, offered up a new way of looking at housing for workers.

In the Paris region, the garden cities were seen as a way of re-organising and planning the suburbs. Howard's ideal, adapted to the Île-de-France context, allows for the development (between 1920 and 1939) of a model of peripheral housing, a particular type of neighbourhood development that was recommended to social housing developers. Quantitatively insignificant in comparison to the housing estates, the number of homes built in the 34 garden cities is reckoned to be 22,000 in the Greater Paris agglomeration area. The idea has been abandoned for some time. But, over the past 20 years, we have been contributing to the growing interest that surrounds them as neighbourhoods which are, at the same time, both attractive and working class, and which offer a mix of housing and facilities within a green setting.



# The “garden city”: birth of an urban ideal

Thierry Paquot<sup>(1)</sup>  
Philosopher

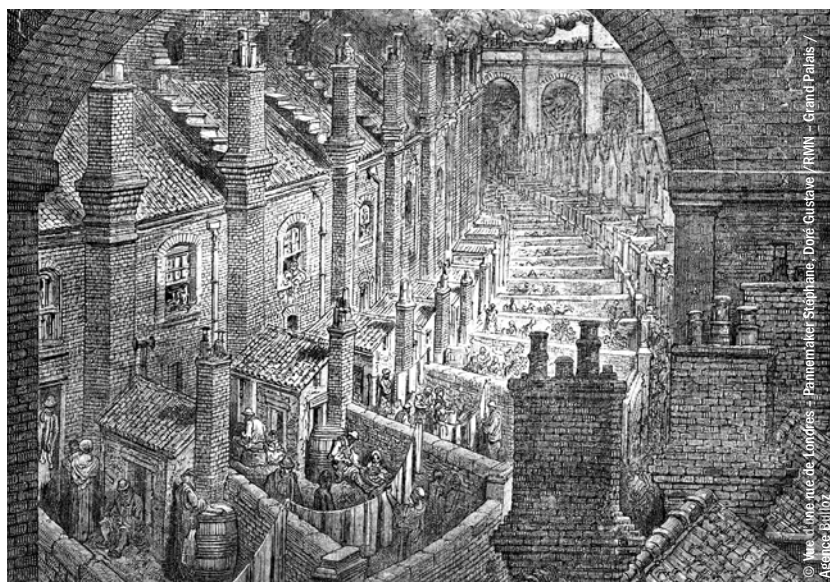


Illustration by Gustave Doré titled *Over London by Rail* which appeared in Louis Enault's *London*, published in 1876.

Two collections of poems by Emile Verhaeren (1855-1916), *The Moonstruck Countrysides* in 1893 and *The Tentacular Cities* in 1895, convey well what was taking place in Europe and which was to affect all industrialising nations. On the one hand village life was disrupted by the rural exodus which was occurring, while on the other hand council estates which were crying out for a workforce population kept extending their borders in parallel with the extension of the railway network and the proliferation of housing estates which were being built in haste and without any effective supplies of water, gas and electricity. No developing country is able to escape this kind of misfortune. Philanthropists and muckrakers, acting just like the first kind of social workers, began looking more closely into this transitory population of people who would show up in a city, accept the outrageous terms and conditions of unscrupulous landlords, take to prostitution and drinking, and barely manage to scrape by, all the while working like beasts of burden. Jacob A. Riis put on an exhibition in 1890 in New York called *How the Other Half Lives*. Charles Booth at the 1900 Paris 'Exposition Universelle' displayed his maps showing the poverty rates in London, making a strong impression on a certain visitor called Patrick Geddes. And at the same time Zola described the sunnier side of the industrial world in *Travail* (1901), a sort of anti-*Germinal*<sup>(2)</sup>. If the majority of observers and commentators were unified in their condemnation of this type of

This urban ideal, which came into being at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, combines the advantages of the countryside with those of the city to offer people a particularly pleasant living environment. It presents itself as an original alternative to the crowds of manual labourers piled up in slums, just as much as it does to the misery of deserted countryside villages. Industrialisation at this time gave rise both to a rural exodus and an accelerated pace of urbanisation. How, therefore, could both technophobia and urban-phobia be avoided?

shameful urbanisation and its links with heavy industrial labour (which the growing trade union press likened to penal colonies), then there were few who could come up with ideas for another way of working, for another type of town and for another way of living – that is, apart from those who were waiting for the dawn of a new revolutionary age.

## The ideological context

It is in 1875 that Dr Benjamin Ward Richardson (1828-1896) delivers his lecture entitled “Hygeia, a City of Health” at the Social Science Association's conference in Brighton. He describes a model city limited to 100,000 inhabitants who live in homes which are well ventilated, sensibly positioned, made of sound materials and which enjoy all modern comforts. In the same vein, their inhabitants do not drink alcohol and enjoy the benefits of preventative medicine. The American journalist and novelist Edward Bellamy (1850-1898) anticipates what such an egalitarian society would be like in his two-part uchronia<sup>(3)</sup>, *Looking Backward: from 2000 to 1887* (published in 1888, translated into French in 1891 under the title *Cent ans après ou l'an*

(1) PAQUOT Thierry is a philosopher and professor at the Institute of Urban Development in Paris.

(2) *Germinal* was published in 1885, a harsh and realistic story of a coalminers' strike.

(3) The author of a uchronia takes as their starting point an existing historical situation and then modifies it in order to come up with different possible consequences and ‘what if’ scenarios.



2000) and *Equality* (published in 1887)<sup>(4)</sup>. Ebenezer Howard admires in Bellamy's work the beneficial role that technology plays and the co-operative nature of the personal relationships that are depicted. He distributes 100 copies of the first work in Great Britain. The English artist and militant socialist William Morris (1834-1896) objects to this industrialist, statist vision and as a counter argument publishes in 1890 *News from Nowhere or an Epoch of Rest*<sup>(5)</sup>. In this work people combine the useful with the pleasant, beauty with the satisfaction of their needs and live in a pastoral idyll without state intervention. The Russian libertarian geographer Piotr Kropotkin (1842-1921) who was also a theoretician of mutual aid and co-operation, publishes in 1898 *Fields, Factories and Workshops*<sup>(6)</sup> which outlines his idea of a decentralised economy, spread out across small agro-industrial villages, each with their own open settlements and farms which would feed local inhabitants. The state in this scenario becomes redundant and solidarity between individuals, activities and territories facilitates the type of interactions that will assure a fair society which has been transformed into a direct democracy. In *Progress and Poverty* (1879) and *The Land Question* (1884) the American economist Henry George (1839-1897) addressing an audience drawn from wider circles than just economists, puts forward the abolition of all existing taxes and the creation of one single land tax. Faced with these propositions, which certain people would judge 'utopian', the collectivists remained convinced that the proletariat would not delay in overthrowing the bourgeoisie and that therefore nationalising the means of production would pave the way for socialism.

### The garden city

It is in this ideological, political context that Ebenezer Howard publishes in 1898 *To-morrow: A Peaceful Path of Real Reform*. The term "garden city" crops up in the main body of the text and pleased so many readers to such an extent that it formed part of the revised title of the work when it was reprinted in 1902 and subsequently called *Garden Cities of Tomorrow*. The author hesitated between choosing 'Unionville' and 'Rurisville'. The term Garden City derives from the name given to a collection of villas built on Long Island, near New York, in 1869. Howard ignores this, turns the term into a standard and a slogan, prioritising the elements concerned with urban development and letting the political elements fade into the background. In his book, Howard describes the broad concept of his 'three magnets' diagram, which went on to become extremely well



Letchworth Garden City: the first garden city designed by Raymond Unwin and Barry Parker at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, 60 km north of London.



At Welwyn Garden City the architects Louis de Soissons and A.W. Kenyon proposed designs in the neo-Georgian style.

known. Addressing the question "Where will people go?" he lists the choices:

- the town (for work, high wages, stress, foul air, social opportunities and access to culture);
- the country (for rest and contact with nature, healthy food, boredom, lack of society, deserted villages);
- the town-country (for the beauty of nature, low rents, employment opportunities, fresh air, bright homes and gardens, freedom, co-operation).

It is the characteristics of this last 'magnet' which he argues will attract people, these and the fact that the land is owned by the founding cooperative of the garden city which rules out any potential for speculation or neglect.

(4) In this work he comes up with a vision of Boston in the year 2000.

(5) This is translated into French in 1957 under the title *Nouvelles de nulle part*.

(6) A revised edition is translated into French under the title *Champs, usines et ateliers ou l'industrie combinée avec l'agriculture et le travail cérébral avec le travail manuel* and published in 1910.

**Ebenzer Howard, a simple and straightforward activist**



Courtesy of the Town and Country Planning Association (TCPA) [www.tcpa.org.uk](http://www.tcpa.org.uk)

**Who was Ebenezer Howard (1850-1928)?**

The son of a London shopkeeper, he took on a number of clerical jobs from the age of 15 before joining an uncle in America as an apprentice farmer. With two friends in Nebraska he failed to enjoy any success in farming. Less than a year later he moved to Chicago and worked as a reporter for the courts. By 1876 he was back in London, working for Gurney as a note-taker of British parliamentary sessions and at this point started to consider how to improve people's quality of life. At the same time he came up with ways to improve typewriters which were starting to become widely used in offices, following the successful marketing of the famous Remington machine. But Howard's inventions cost him more than he gained. He was a simple man, neither a sophisticated theoretician nor a charismatic public speaker. Nevertheless, he had a strong conviction that it was possible to improve the quality of life of the working classes by providing decent housing in a new type of city where people would work, live, relax, learn etc. all in the same place.

Self-contained cities with artisans and manufacturing, with businesses, services, agricultural land, cultural and sporting facilities, all surrounded by nature... Cities which would bathe in nature like islands in the middle of the ocean. City-countryside hybrids which would increase the qualities of the city through fostering active and engaging public life by virtue of being linked with other similar cities by electric trains. Which in fact means that the islands he talks about were absolutely not self-sufficient islands, living off their own means, turned in on themselves and cut off from the rest of the world!

In 1879 he married Elizabeth Ann Bills with whom he had four children. In 1905, a year after the death of his wife, he settled in the first city garden at Letchworth.

He remarried in 1907 and in 1921 moved to the second city garden at Welwyn, where he eventually died.

From 1899 an association<sup>(7)</sup> is created to help realise the garden cities movement. In 1902 the TCPA creates 'The Garden City Pioneer Company' and endows it with enough capital to enable it to purchase in 1903 1,900 hectares of land in Letchworth, Hertfordshire which lies 60 km north of London. Works commence shortly afterwards and are entrusted to two young architects Raymond Unwin (1863-1940) and Barry Parker (1867-1947). They are inspired by numerous sites including: Bournville near Birmingham which was financed by the chocolate maker Cadbury; Port Sunlight (south of Birkenhead) built by the manufacturer Lever; and above all by New Earswick (north of York) which they designed for the philanthropist Joseph Rowntree.

The people who ventured to Letchworth were militants which explains its slow development (its population went from 5,234 in 1911 to 14,454 in 1931) and Howard's impatience with it. This led him to develop, in 1919, a second garden city – Welwyn Garden City – by allowing a private company to market the properties and find industrial investors. The layout at Letchworth is simple and doesn't drastically change the usual shape of a concentrically formed town. Thoroughways are organised into a hierarchy (with 6 wide radial boulevards converging on the centre of town reserved for the Crystal Palace where shops and services are located), there is a density of 30 homes (or 120 inhabitants) to the hectare with public gardens and a green belt devoted to agriculture, not to mention a rail connection to London where Howard often went for meetings. The cottages were, of course, designed by Parker and Unwin, but also by Bennett, Bidwell, de Courtenay and Crickmer amongst others. Brodie, an engineer from Liverpool, had his pre-cast concrete slabs designed for pre-fab housing brought down by train and Cecil Hignett created the Spirella factory in Arts and Crafts style, a sure sign that within the overall unifying concept there was scope for architectural diversity. This is also the case at Welwyn where Louis de Soissons and A.W. Kenyon, who were the lead architects, had no hesitations about proposing designs in the neo-Georgian style.

**International spread**

The term 'garden city' quickly becomes popular in other languages: 'cité-jardin', 'Gardenstadt', 'Ciudad-Jardin', 'Turnstad', etc. In 1919 at a conference of the Garden Cities and Town Planning Association<sup>(8)</sup>, Ebenezer Howard, president, explained the concept of the garden city: "a town designed for healthy living and industry of a size that makes possible a full measure of

social life but not larger, surrounded by a rural belt; the whole of the land being in public ownership, or held in trust for the community". By this he meant neither the dormitory satellite towns of large cities nor garden suburbs, but planned and self-contained towns with an ideal population of between 30,000 to 35,000 inhabitants. This would be enough to ensure the viability of local services without subjecting people to overcrowding and invasions of privacy. Of course each garden city is unique, often reflecting the character of its founder, and it is subject to change over time too. In actual fact, Howard envisaged not just one garden city, but rather an entire network of them, clustered together in a new form of local governance. These garden cities would thwart urban sprawl and conurbations and set the standard for a true alternative. In comparing the different ways in which garden cities have been designed and realised we note that the infatuation with them has been truly international (with examples of them in France, Germany, Austria, Hungary, Belgium, the Netherlands, Spain, Italy, the United States, Canada, Australia, etc.).

In France it is at the initiative of the *Musée Social* (founded in 1894) that the young lawyer and journalist Georges Benoît-Levy (1880-1971) is sent to Great Britain in order to investigate garden cities. He writes a passionate account which is published in 1904 (*La Cité-Jardin*) with a preface by the economist and theoretician in co-operative economics, Charles Gide (1847-1932). Benoît-Levy describes Port Sunlight and Bournville before explaining Howard's theory and then exploring the different forms of garden cities in the United States, Australia, Russia, Germany, Belgium, Hungary etc. For his French readership he recalls such forerunners as Villeneuve (for which we have Colbert to thank), or Euville near Commercy, La Briche near Blois... He also announces the creation of the Association of Garden Cities with such prestigious members as Charles Gide, Jean Lahor, André Lichtenberger, Jules Siegfried and the architects Frantz Jourdain, Sarrazin, Henri Sauvage and Viet. Later he is to write three works: *Cités-Jardins d'Amérique*, *L'Enfant des cités-jardins* and *La Ville et son image* in which he summarises his observations and out of these draws and puts forward a more general philosophy. He notes that "the banality, the uniformity of modern towns has created a sort of internationalisation of ugliness", before asserting that,

(7) This is the Town and Country Planning Association (TCPA) which brings together politicians, manufacturers and professionals.

(8) This association was created in 1913 and is today an influential international organisation, known as the Town and Country Planning Association (TCPA).



“what our towns really need is personality”, leading him to conclude by promoting the concept of the garden city. As with other propagandists for garden cities, he accepts too the idea of a linear city which replaces the traditional idea of the city as a centre with a periphery. Inspired by Soria y Mata (1844-1920) the linear city gives us a succession of linear sections of infrastructure along an optimal line, such as a tramline, with areas reserved for agriculture to be found at the farthest end.

French garden cities do not correspond exactly with the model conceived by Howard. Here we find just as equally suburban housing estates created by social landlords, railway companies (the garden city of railway men), a renowned builder (Henri Sellier at Suresnes), a lessor (again Sellier as head of the Office for Social Housing for the Seine administrative region, Drancy, Stains, Gennevilliers, Arcueil, Châtenay-Malabry, Le Plessis-Robinson...). Garden cities morph into garden suburbs too, sometimes, with small housing estates (like those of the architect Dumaître at Pré Saint-Gervais) but always with an abundance of trees, hedges, lawns and large flower beds.

In Japan a group of civil servants authors in 1907 a work called *Den'en toshi* (“The Rustic Town”). Had they read Howard’s work? Certainly not. Rather they would have been inspired by A.R. Sennett’s *Garden Cities in Theory and Practice* (1905). For them, the garden city brings about the interpenetration of private and public green spaces and, above all, gives a sense of priority to the presence of farmers and agriculture. According to Augustin Berque, to be more precise, it is not so much the ‘city’ that concerns the authors so much as the way the local administration functions, along with the education of the inhabitants, both of which serve to promote a rustic – and very Japanese – way of life. They had absolutely no interest in imitating Europe. In the end, the Japanese garden city comes to resemble the garden suburb which was disparaged so strongly by Lewis Mumford. The political ideal of a whole self-contained town becomes blurred at the expense of beautified suburban areas.

A critical geo-historical analysis of garden cities remains to be written. This would combine theories of urban development with an environmental approach to the urbanisation of the

land and our social customs. Only through such an analysis can we find out if this kind of political and urban study reinvigorates these old ideals and gives them a chance of thriving long into the future.



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## >> Howard and the birth of the concept of garden cities

**1880-1890**

E. Howard aware of urban and social crisis

**1898**

Howard publishes "To-morrow: a Peaceful Path of Real Reform"

**1899**

TCPA created as an association to aid the implementation of garden cities

**1902**

Howard publishes *Garden cities of Tomorrow*

**1903**

Letchworth, first garden city in north of London

**1913**

Fihuat created as the International Federation of garden cities

**1919**

Welwyn, second garden city created in England

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# The garden city model across the world



The 'Jardin pour La Terre' at Arlanc, a huge planisphere of different species of plants.

The application of Howard's concept takes us on a journey across France, Germany, Poland, the United States, Australia, South Africa, South America and Japan.

## France: towards a more urban and social vision

The idea was a seductive one – a series of autonomous communities surrounded by open countryside, offering a solution to the overpopulation and insalubrity of the 19<sup>th</sup> century – and this quickly led Georges Benoit-Levy to publish his text *La Cité-Jardin* in 1904. This book inspired the construction of four garden cities at the Mining Company of Dourges<sup>(3)</sup> in the north east of France (1904-1914) and these served as examples to many other initiatives such as at the Railway Company of the North of France (la Compagnie du chemin de fer du Nord)<sup>(4)</sup> at Tergnier (1919-1923). But garden cities here were not managed collectively and they were designed to be lived in against an agricultural backdrop. They were, quite simply,

To better understand the dissemination of Howard's concept across the world, it is useful to remember that he was not a town planner, but rather a stenographer, and that he was an Englishman whereas "the English do not know how to build a town, or how to think of one. They are all suburban, pseudo-cottagey."<sup>(2)</sup> It was, therefore, inevitable that town planners and architects, influenced by his vision of a network of rustic, autonomous garden cities would adapt his ideas.

pleasant workers' towns, created by large companies or benefactors. The concept got lost in translation a few times, for example with Georges Charbonneaux<sup>(5)</sup> who, turning up in England in 1910 to study the idea of the garden city, visited Bournville, the result of an altogether different approach. However, the aesthetic principles of this model English village (which were also used at Letchworth) were taken up in an exemplary manner in the building of the 'Chemin vert' garden city at Reims (1923) – a mere 45 hectares compared with the 2,400 hectares of Howard's garden cities. Elsewhere in France his influence can be seen with the socialists who wanted to tackle the problem of housing linked to urban growth by integrating (in contrast to Howard) the ideal of the garden city into the administrative local government framework within which they operated. And so the Public Office for Social Housing of the Seine



The 'Chemin Vert' garden city, built by the Foyer Remois in the south east of Reims. 600 houses were built in a regional style, each with their own garden.

(1) DEVEREUX Mike, Department of Planning & Architecture, University of the West of England, Bristol.

(2) LAWRENCE D.H. left England in 1919 and went travelling. He is recognised as one of the country's great writers. In 1919 he wrote *Ugliness*, an essay which formed part of *Nottingham and the Mining Country*.

(3) In French, 'La Compagnie des mines de Dourges'. This was the first company to build garden cities in France (1904) at the time when Howard was also developing his ideas (building work at Letchworth started in 1903).

(4) DAUTRY Raoul, head engineer, constructed several garden cities to house part of his workforce near railway stations. The most famous is the one at Tergnier, with 1,400 housing units.

(5) Industrialist and philanthropist. In 1911 he founded the Remois Foyer with other industrialists who followed in the tradition of Catholic social teaching.



administrative region and its president, Henri Sellier, created about 15 new living areas in the suburbs of Paris. The garden city of Suresnes (1921-1939), one of the most well known, was established in the commune where Sellier served as mayor. Howard's project of low density, single housing units could not be adapted in this context. The idea had to be transformed in order to allow for the construction of a high density living area based on apartment blocks. Essentially it involved social housing units built on the solid principles of landscape architecture, with plenty of public amenities, as one might expect from a plan with a socialist inspiration behind it. Similar projects were developed in Lyon and Marseille<sup>(6)</sup>. They were not for profit and offered neither dividends nor jobs, nor even the capacity for the inhabitants to feed themselves off the land as Howard had intended. Set up by public bodies they depend on the 'mother city' to employ and feed their populations. That is not to say that the garden city movement in France was a failure – far from it. But Howard's vision was taken to its most practical dimension in order to respond primarily to the housing needs of the day.

### Germany and Poland: a strategic approach to town planning

Hellerau (1909-1913), near Dresden, was the first German garden city and the one which has gained most notoriety. Its founder, Karl Schmidt, was an industrialist who decided to relocate his business and to create an adjacent garden city. He negotiated the construction of a new tram-line and gave several renowned architects the opportunity to experiment<sup>(7)</sup> with the buildings. This garden city enjoys a number of facilities and is home to the Institut Jacques-Dalcroze (which comes from the name of the composer and creator of eurhythmics) which gave it its fame<sup>(8)</sup>. Hellerau was a small-scale operation because, at the same time, a strategic vision of urban planning was emerging right across Germany ('Raumordnung'). This implied strong control over how land was to be used and over the ownership rights which were required to bring any kind of plan to fruition, an essential criterion for a garden city. In 1928, Römerstadt became part of a series of satellite garden cities developed by Ernst May<sup>(9)</sup>, the modernist urban architect, to re-house the population of Frankfurt city centre. Designed by the Frankfurt Housing Association in a low density, green setting with gardens and public facilities, Römerstadt freed up people's imagination. The co-ordinated approach, the high quality housing and the circular layout reflect Howard's ideas. A similar strategic approach was developed in the occupied zone of Poland. The geographer Walter

Christaller who worked for Himmler's office for planning and development considered and constructed a series of towns in line with his theory of a central order with an agricultural base and strong self-sufficiency in terms of food production. Without any of Howard's social and community ideals these have, in no uncertain terms, failed, along with the ideology which supported their construction.



The garden city of Hellerau, built in East Germany just before the First World War.

### The United States: the development of planned new cities

In the USA, Howard's influence is given form during 1908 in Forest Hills, an area of New York where the architect Grosvenor Atterbury<sup>(10)</sup> built a small estate of 800 houses in a park. In reality, it is no more than a private suburb. The ideological breakthrough is to come later, in 1923, with the creation of the Regional Planning Association of America (RPAA) by Clarence Stein. It brought together the two conditions required for developing Howard's ideas: strategic vision of the region and a founder who was trained in the fine arts. The RPAA also considered questions of a broader scope than those just related to housing. One of the first things it did was to promote the creation of the Appalachian Trail (1923), a route of 3,500 kilometres from Maine to Georgia. This initiative led it to come up with ideas for regional cities situated within a network of large natural spaces. To test the different ways in which housing could be introduced on

(6) The region around Lyon saw the creation of several garden cities during its industrialisation. The garden city of Saint-Just at Marseille, built in the 1930s, also includes numerous businesses.

(7) Each architect was allocated a street which made Hellerau something of an urban laboratory with multi-family properties and buildings laid out according to requirements for sunlight or aesthetic design principles.

(8) In 1912 and 1913 his shows attracted the European cultural avant-garde. The arts flourished there and Paul Claudel described it in 1913 as "the laboratory of a new humanity".

(9) His studies took him to England where he studied under UNWIN R. and where he familiarized himself with the principles of the garden city. Through the use of compact and semi-independent housing units, simplified shapes and pre-fab elements he developed large-scale housing programmes, amounting to 15,000 buildings in 5 years.

(10) He used innovative methods in certain of his houses, for example, the off-site construction of pre-fab slabs of concrete.

such sites, a member of the RPAA, Alexander Bing (himself a prosperous developer) set up the New York City Housing Corporation to build, at Sunnyside Gardens (NY) in 1924, high-quality, low-cost housing. The RPAA saw that Howard's ideas had been imported without full consideration having been given to one crucial factor: the car. This is why in 1929, the garden city of Radburn in New Jersey launched itself as "the town for the motor age". It was designed by Clarence Stein, Henry Wright (who studied the concept in England in 1924) and the landscape architect Margaret Sewell Cautley. Radburn is an autonomous community managed by the Radburn Association and the agreements which are still active today ask the residents to pay a local tax towards it (a similar idea to Letchworth). Radburn never grew to reach the size of a city and it has been designed in such a way that pedestrians and cars are kept separate from each other<sup>(11)</sup>. Nevertheless, its concept has become a model for other similar developments around the world, including the extension of Letchworth Garden City in England. The Great Depression put a halt to further industrial and agricultural developments as well as the public amenities which had been designed for Radburn, but Stein and Wright continued to put their principles into practice, notably at Chatham Village (1929-1936) and Buckingham (1937-1953). In the same way they influenced Greenbelt, created in 1937, a green planned city managed on a co-operative basis and, much later in 1967, Columbia.

Contrary to the majority of European countries, the apparent unlimited availability of space in the United States has reduced the attraction of the garden city as a means of combatting urban sprawl. Whilst the rustic landscape aesthetic crops up again in the expensive garden

suburbs, periurbanisation becomes the solution of choice for urban growth (at least that which is propelled by the free market) in the hinterland of American cities after the Second World War.

### Australia: balancing urban design with aesthetic models

Unrestrained industrial growth in the 19<sup>th</sup> century and the English influence should have offered ideal conditions for a native garden city movement to prosper. Up until this point, the development of Australian cities could be seen in the grid shape formats of the streets. But when the ideas of Howard finally reach this continent, their social impact and dimension is toned down. The Australian working class already enjoyed decent living standards. In suburbs such as Haberfield in Sydney and Garden City in Melbourne, the landscape aesthetic tended to move away from the grid format. The garden cities which are the most faithful to Howard's principles are those of Perth, with the involvement of the town council, and Canberra, the new capital which was drawn up in 1908. The latter, designed by the American architect Walter Griffin who won the international competition in 1911, applied Howard's model on a much larger and well-established scale in order to cater for 358,000 inhabitants. Canberra remains a fascinating city because of its planned and ordered layout, with: a polycentric form designed around an artificial lake, avenues radiating out from this and all surrounded by hills and sites of outstanding natural beauty. It is not what Howard had imagined but the Australian government deliberately chose the formal and symbolic language in the plan to express the ideals of the nation.

Radburn Garden City where pedestrians and cars are separated from each other is to become a model for other similar developments around the world.



Laurence H. Koplik/The Radburn Citizens Association



Aerial view of the garden city in Melbourne, ranked as the top Australian city in terms of quality of life and atmosphere.

(11) This was a specially designed system to separate different modes of traffic from each other where pedestrian footpaths never crossed the main roads.



### South Africa and South America: controlled areas for the middle class

Near the Cape, Pinelands Garden City constitutes one of the only early examples of Howard's principles in Africa. The Garden City Trust was created in 1919 and the English town planner Albert Thompson who worked at Letchworth, came up with the idea of an area of high quality landscaped housing. Although the neighbourhood claims to follow Howard's model it is really only a collection of gated houses where the architecture and the environment have been tightly controlled.

The situation is similar in South America. In 1930, the population of Buenos Aires reached 2 million, and that of Mexico reached 1 million. The middle and upper classes started looking for new places to live away from the city. Howard's thinking is generally widespread across South America and inspired the planning of residential areas which were cleaned up, opened out and made pleasant, but they bear no resemblance to the garden cities which had been announced. The Association for Improvements and Freehold Properties in São Paulo commissioned Unwin and Parker to design a garden city ('cidade jardim'). One might have expected a better response from the two architects who were so closely associated with the garden city movement in England and who had planned Letchworth. For what transpired was a bourgeois suburb – 'um bairro-jardim' – which has maintained its status thanks to a law passed in 1929 prohibiting anything but residential developments. It is a far cry from Howard's recommendations concerning local services and amenities and this is equally the case in other garden city developments across the continent such as at Lomas del Palomar in Buenos Aires.



Near the Cape, Pinelands Garden City was the first garden city in South Africa. This photo shows the first road that was built and which, today, has protected status.

### Japan: an ideal difficult to put in practice

Howard's writings spread across Japan at the time when the government found itself confronted with the problem of urban expansion and the need to protect rural villages. After several official visits to England to study the innovative concept of the garden city, the Japanese thought they would adopt the principles in order to rebuild links between the town and the countryside. But something got lost in translation. The movement became a means of bringing the necessary infrastructure into rural zones in order to keep the population there and in this way helped to curb overpopulation in the towns. It was no longer a matter of creating new, autonomous towns. Although there was little philanthropic involvement, examples can be seen of businesses developing new, entirely functional towns such as at Denenchofou. Initially designed with low density and aimed at the more affluent classes, built around a grid format in a landscaped setting, they quickly turned into dormitory suburbs. In 1919 the government used the landscaping principles of the garden cities for the extension of urban areas and, later, the satellite towns such as Tama New Town (1965) but it rejected the concept of new, autonomous towns.

Howard was not a town planner and he came from a country which struggled to understand urban life. Given his idealist approach it is surprising that his integrated vision took off at all in England, let alone anywhere else. It took planning authorities, town planners and architects to adapt Howard's principles to the complexities of real urban life. If there is one lesson to be drawn out for the new developments in our cities today it would be that "one size does not fit all".



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Although the Japanese tried to adopt Howard's principles in order to rebuild links between the town and the countryside, the garden cities quickly turned into dormitory suburbs, such as Denenchofou.

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# The garden cities of Brazil

The impact of Ebenezer Howard's ideas, which were taken up in England at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, can be seen in the garden suburb initiatives and projects of Brazil's larger cities. Here they take on different forms depending on the investor, the location and the local people. The overall planning of several new towns also follows the fundamental organizing concepts and principles of the English movement.

## São Paulo, the pioneering city

The first experience of the garden city took place in São Paulo. In 1913, a private real estate company with mostly foreign capital set itself up to improve the city of São Paulo. The company became renowned and prospered, highly aware of the threat of urban explosion. It acquired the right to purchase an extension of 1,200 hectares, a plot of similar value to those at Letchworth (1,138 hectares) and Welwyn (525 hectares) in England<sup>(2)</sup>. The 'Jardim América of São Paulo' became the first garden quarter of the city. It covers an area of 109 hectares on grassy land, along the Pinheiros river. The initial research was completed in London by Barry Parker and Raymond Unwin, architects of Howard's first garden cities. In 1917 Parker himself came to Brasil for two years and took command of the development of the area in order to ensure its success.

The area takes the form of a green belt set out on a regular grid-shape form with two diagonal axes and various buildings making up its urban landscape, very much in the tradition of a design style which puts the houses at convergent relations with each other. However, the designs are essentially residential, on vast plots of land of around 1450 m<sup>2</sup> where the projection of the built up portion of the site (limited to a fifth of the land surface area), has a low population density and improved quality of life. The suggestion of adding a communal garden to each block of houses for the residents' exclusive use, did not gain the support of the owners who subsequently went on to subdivide it into private spaces. Public amenities managed by the social clubs (São Paulo, Harmonia or Nossa Senhora of Brasil) give structure to the area in the same way as the business activities set up on the periphery, on the outskirts of an already urbanized area. The winding roads and the gardens which feed the area with a continuous stretch of green land have not prevented the roads from eating into this, despite prodigious vegetation growing along the walls surrounding the private properties.

And so, although Hampstead Garden City (1907) served as its model, the Brazilian experience of the 'Jardim América' is a far cry from the garden city's ideal of self-sufficiency.

## Porto Alegre, staying true to the garden city model

Nevertheless, within the urban trends of the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, two significant experiences were developed for different population groups and which remained faithful to the principles of the garden city model.

The first example concerns the planning and development of the Chacara Assunção, erected in 1937, by a private initiative in response to upper middle class requests. The development spanned an area of 120 hectares, situated towards the Guaíba river, 10 km from the metropole, in a site of remarkable natural beauty.

The designer of this project, Ruy de Viveiros Leiria, reports that, even before any urban legislation had been passed, the way he divided up the land followed the rules laid down by the town planners who deemed it necessary to allocate between 25% and 45% of the total surface area to the public domain and between 55% and 75% to the private domain<sup>(3)</sup>.

All along its uneven terrain are dotted little public squares in irregular shapes and individual garden areas in the corners of housing blocks which offer each plot quiet, shaded resting places. There you can find play spaces and pedestrian walkways between the estates, used as shortcuts by pedestrians crossing the large blocks.

Concepts of an overall unity for the neighbourhood were developed once a site for the school had been fixed as it is the central element in terms of its function and reach, as well as the shopping centre situated on the central axis parallel with the ground.

The second example is the Vila do IAPI, a workers' housing estate constructed between 1940 and 1952 by Marcos Kruter (1944), on the extension of an industrial area, with 2,446 residential units, shopping centres, a civic and sports centre kitted out for social, sporting and religious uses. Winding roads bordered with plenty of trees follow closely the topography of the places and are punctuated by little green spaces integrated into the residential gardens. They give a particular feel to the overall place which could be qualified as being in harmony with nature.

Of essentially residential character, the typological diversity is worth highlighting. The winding, almost ribbon-like town, mixes detached and semi-detached housing, blocks of flats two stories high for families and also blocks of flats with shops on the ground floor. The medium and high density buildings, in simple geometric form, are situated in the middle of the plots. The configuration of the multi-occupancy family blocks is innovative through the use of open individual spaces.

The principles of urban design recommended by the garden city concept such as biological – ecological corridors, intense use of green spaces and the complete integration of buildings with outside spaces have been adopted by other cities in Brazil thanks to the interest of foreign investors operating in the country. But they distinguish themselves more often than not in the way they differ from Howard's designs – in the way the land is managed and in their social, economic and functional designs.



The 'Jardim América' is a real oasis within the urban areas of São Paulo.

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(2) HOWARD Ebenezer, *Les Cités-jardins de demain*. (The Garden Cities of Tomorrow), São Paulo, Nebraska Press, 1996.

(3) Description of the Ante-Projector de Urbanizing agricole held by the Imobiliária Villa Assumpção Ltda, 1937.



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# The garden cities of the coal mining basin in the Nord-Pas-de-Calais region



The garden city Foch  
at Hénin-Beaumont (1921-1922).

The mining basin of the Nord-Pas-de-Calais region offers a unique take on the history of coal production and, in particular, on the importance of certain individuals and their ideas in the development of a living environment which spanned 150 years, starting in the 1820s and going up to the Charter of Athens which came just after the Second World War. It thus presents a wide diversity in terms of urban planning, in the architecture of its buildings<sup>(2)</sup> and their outside spaces. Today, the site is made up of 70,000 houses spread over 563 estates in over 130 districts and serves around 200,000 inhabitants<sup>(3)</sup>.

Born of the association between industrial capitalism and social philanthropy, the site is witness to employers' desires to supervise every minute of the miners' lives, and those of their families, so to ensure the support of an effective and disciplined workforce. Many different types of housing were developed, from mining villages<sup>(4)</sup> to housing estates<sup>(5)</sup>, from garden cities to tenement buildings<sup>(6)</sup> – all as a result of this school of thought concerning housing for workers and the strong efforts that were made by the mining companies to differentiate themselves from each other.

The 'Expositions Universelles' (or the World Expos) of the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries turned out to be extraordinary places for sharing these different models of workers' housing. The World Expo of 1900 in Paris is when the concept of the garden city was presented. At the beginning of 1904 Georges Benoît-Levy created the asso-

As a key part of our technical and territorial heritage, the coal mining basin of the Nord-Pas-de-Calais region recently had the honour of being added to the list of UNESCO World Heritage Sites. Following on from other models of mining towns, the legacy of the garden cities here testifies to the evolution in types of housing for workers which occurred during the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. And this is a legacy which continues today.

ciation of garden cities of France and published *La cité-jardin*. It was precisely in 1904 when the mining company of Dourges started building the first garden city in the mining basin, the garden city of 'Bruno'.

The theories behind the garden city are interpreted in numerous ways and with international repercussions. But the mining area of the Nord-Pas-de-Calais only takes the theory so far. George Benoît-Levy put forward the construction of 'industrial' garden cities to the directors of the mining companies, staying true only to

(1) PATOU Marie, Project Officer and Raphael Alessandri, architect at DPLG, are both attached to the Mining Basin Mission in the Nord-Pas-de-Calais region, <http://www.missionbassinminier.org/>.

(2) Almost 800 different types of housing have been identified in the coal mining area.

(3) These 70,000 homes now belong to two social landlords, 'Maisons et Cités' and 'Société immobilière de l'Artois (SIA)'.

(4) The mining village was the first generation of workers' housing. With time, villages measuring some 20 or 30 metres in length were turned into "rungs" often stretching on for more than 100 metres (making up 25% of the mining park).

(5) Housing estates are based primarily on two principles of how space is divided up using either semi-detached homes or houses grouped into fours. Geometry, symmetry and rationality are the key words here. The width and the broad perspectives of the roads, the space between the properties and the space dedicated to gardens gives these estates a highly residential feel (making up 41% of the mining park).

(6) Tenement buildings: to make up for the lack of housing for retired people and widows small houses were built for them and these soon became the norm. In 1954 in order to accelerate construction, the coalmines adopted the 'Camus' process (pre-fab blocks of concrete). There are two types of this which can be seen: high-rise blocks (from 1954) and low-rise blocks (from 1959) (both making up 25% of the mining park).

### The mining basin as promoted by UNESCO

Remarkable as a landscape shaped by over three centuries of coal extraction from the 1700s to the 1900s, the park was listed by UNESCO as a World Heritage site in June 2012. Punctuating the landscape are mining pits, lift infrastructure and slag heaps, all important examples of coal mining, while the workers' estates open up an extraordinary view of the miners' living environment showing: mining villages, housing estates, garden cities, tenement buildings, accompanied by local facilities such as schools, religious buildings, health and community facilities. Today, some 353 features<sup>(1)</sup> and 4,000 hectares are recognized under the title 'cultural landscape'. From Valenciennes to Bruay-sur-Fourmies the mining park extends some 120 km through a succession of contrasting mining landscapes which add to its variety as a heritage site. UNESCO recognized the "remarkable cultural landscape of the mining basin in terms of its continuity and homogeneity... which also bears testimony to the evolution of the social and technical conditions of coal extraction". It "represents a major symbolic place of the workers' condition and their solidarity, from the 1850s to 1990."

(1) This includes, amongst others, in the area of world heritage: 17 important coal pits or the remains of them; 21 shaft head frames; 51 slag heaps; 54 km of 'cavaliers' (canals, railways, conveyors), 3 stations, 124 estates, 38 schools and academic establishments, 26 religious buildings, 22 health facilities, 7 community facilities (community halls, trade union meeting rooms, sporting facilities), 3 company head offices.

the concept of the city garden with regard to the low density of construction (15 to 20 houses per hectare), the shape of the roads and the landscaped appearance which he suggested. In reality, the garden cities of the mining basin which were built between 1904 and 1939 are, above all, something of a mixture between Howard's humanist vision and the paternalist and productivist agendas of the mining companies.

Two key factors explain the adoption of Howard's principles in the mining basin. First of all, by putting forward a form of urban development which was independent of the city, the garden cities were perfectly adapted to the policies of the mining companies: the creation of enclaves in the land kept miners close to the pits and far from the outside world. Moreover, the garden cities always tried to outdo each other and attract a workforce by offering ever more attractive accommodation. Equally, the First World War came to play a decisive role in the development of the garden cities. Just after the war, policies of reconstruction were divided between preserving an area's cultural identity and the opportunity which was presented for modernizing it. If a large number of the mining towns were rebuilt in exactly the same way, when it came to new builds, the companies engaged with the modernizers by favouring the development of the garden city.

The 'Société des mines de Dourges' was the first to take the lead developing four garden cities between 1904 and 1925: Bruno, Pomper, Darcy and Margodillot. It was followed quickly by the 'Compagnie des mines de Lens et d'Anzin'. For the first time, urban planning on the mining estate is taken in hand by architects and not by mining engineers; the planning and develop-

ment of the estates is, therefore, guided by architectural and urbanistic concerns. The garden cities break free of the harsh precision of the housing estates with their grid-like streets thanks to their curved roads which open up perspectives and highlight the green, environmental landscape. Roads are bordered by trees and public spaces are generously planted.

The houses are, most commonly, grouped in pairs, but also in threes and fours and are situated in the middle of double gardens, some of which could reach up to 1,300 m<sup>2</sup>. The vegetable plot is always to be found at the back of the house whilst a small front garden provides a break between the road and the front of the property. The gardens are separated by natural fences or concrete fences decorated with the motifs of the respective mining company. A new addition is the inclusion of a front porch, made out of concrete or brick and which helps bridge the transition between the public space of the outside street and the private life inside. The aspect of the houses is changed radically and the focus is now put on varying the types of houses (which differ from each other in their facades and roofs) and on creating space for originality and creativity. For example, large surfaces are broken up with different colours of bricks and borders, and hipped roofs jut out from attics and facades. The palette of materials is enhanced by the use of concrete, cement rendering, millstones or silicate paint. The picturesque style stands out with decorative elements pulled from imagery to be found outside the Nord-Pas-de-Calais region such as berry-shaped motifs and mock half-timbering. The First World War caused a slight shift in the make-up of the garden cities and had considerable impact on their size. The urgent need to



The mining village (1825-1890) is characterized by terraced housing. The photo shows the village of Bois-Brûlé at Somme (end of 19<sup>th</sup> century).



The housing estate (1890-1939) is designed according to an orthogonal plan which guides the location of the buildings. The photo depicts the Maistre estate in Mazingarbe (1927-1930).



rebuild and to welcome increasing numbers of miners led to a new understanding of what was 'normal' and this continued throughout the inter-war years. The average scale and size of the garden cities increased sharply from 400 to 1,000 homes. This type of mining town is widespread, characterized by a higher density, random layout of the road system and more densely packed buildings made up of alternating groups of different types of houses.

The fifty or so garden cities which line the Nord-Pas-de-Calais mining basin (and there are some exceptional examples) are not just social housing estates which have to develop in order to keep responding to building regulations and the changing nature of towns and the needs of their populations. Their preservation and development goes beyond protecting them as historical buildings. Their future forces us to ask ourselves the big human, socio-economic, cultural, urban and environmental questions – all of which require a cross-cutting and global vision. In this regard, they can be used as a means of developing the whole of the mining basin, and beyond. It would seem, then, that only a joined-up approach which takes into account all the social and urban challenges, technical and environmental constraints, the needs of the population and economic feasibility would allow us to come up with solutions in line with the protection of this exceptional heritage and the necessary adaptation of social housing which has to keep evolving if it is to continue to exist at all.

In order to demonstrate the compatibility and the close relationship between sustainable development and the preservation of our heritage, the Mining Basin Mission has set up a series of 'pilot sites', together with the social

landlords in the basin ('Maisons et Cités' and the 'SIA' group) and the communes which were affected. These efforts bring together, for practical purposes, experts in heritage, architecture, town planning, landscape gardening, sociology, energy and ICT in order to show that valuing and developing the heritage sites that are the mining towns is an asset and an opportunity with which to respond to the challenges presented by the changing region. These studies are the final outcomes of a long process of more than eight years (starting in 2004) during which the Mining Basin Mission kept up dialogue and partnership with the whole range of agencies involved in the development of this area. This dialogue focused on three key aspects:

- constructing a shared analysis;
- putting in place a partnership agreement or *modus operandi* for the implementation of a management plan and heritage charter;
- public education and outreach alongside cultural and touristic development.

These key aspects form the base of the management plan which was developed in order to preserve the "Outstanding Universal Value" (OUV) of the mining basin, now listed as a World Heritage Site. These 'pilot sites' have been the first items to come to fruition. Others will follow focusing, for example, on integrating the OUV status into the Louvre-Lens master plan developed by Michel Desvigne and Christian de Portzamparc, or on defining, with the Nord-Pas-de-Calais region, policies to encourage people to take up home gardening, a real symbol of the area's mining heritage.

### The mining basin as a source of inspiration in the 21<sup>st</sup> century

150 years of evolution have left behind a rich and varied environment with different urban types and models of an often surprising modernity, highly convergent with contemporary concepts relating to our homes today (density; the location of public spaces; scalability...).

The most eminent example of this is the 50 or so garden cities which make up almost 10% of miners' accommodation in the basin.

The aim of the management plan is to reinterpret the forms of the mining area and to put forward new models which are, at one and the same time, in line with the history of the area, and, appropriate to the aspirations of present and future inhabitants. More so than in any other area, this model of a dense living environment naturally finds its place as an alternative to urban sprawl. The first discussions which took place around the 'grand site de la mémoire' at Oignies or the 'parc des îles' in the local agglomeration<sup>(1)</sup> of Hénin-Carvin, are promising and show that the mining park can indeed be a source of inspiration for constructing a living environment for the 21<sup>st</sup> century which respects and conveys to future generations the "Outstanding Universal Value" of a decent home.

(1) 'Communauté d'agglomération'.

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The garden city (1904-1939) offers a new perspective on the workers' living environment. The garden city of Clochette at Douai (1925-1927).



The tenement buildings seep into the landscape (1946-1970) and ornamentation starts to disappear. The photo shows the city of Bois Duirez at Lallaing (1962).

# Development projects with social benefits in the Île-de-France region

Christine Moissinac<sup>(1)</sup>  
Historian



Promoting the Garden City of Blanc-Mesnil, 1922.

The suburb, hitherto an emblem for illegality, a place of refuge for the disadvantaged, becomes, under the influence of these social reformers, experimental ground, allowing them to offer suitable and comfortable housing to the working classes and thus to guarantee 'social stability'.

## The sudden appearance of the suburb

Until the 1920s the suburbs remained relatively unknown. They were generally considered as an incoherent hotchpotch of factories, housing developments and roads and were associated with the recurring threat of social disorder. This negative image of the suburbs has remained to this day. Jules Romains conjures up such an image when he writes in 1932 of the new 'working class areas' of pre-1914. He writes, "They rose up out of the truck farms and the open spaces of public tips. They filled in the free spaces left by the profusion of rough and ready factories, and by the crumbling of housing for the poor."<sup>(2)</sup>

In fact it is in the suburbs where population growth occurred: just under a million inhabitants in 1901 grew to almost 3 million in 1936 and this, when there were only 2.7 million people in Paris in the same year.

More serious still, the suburbs were poorly represented on a political level. The Seine 'department', or local administration, was dominated by members of the Town Hall of Paris who had statutory seats and who imposed on it their own capital-centric views. There were

Garden cities are, in many respects, quite extraordinary and undoubtedly represent the most visible measures put in place to promote social housing between 1920 and 1939. As the concrete expression of political will, based on the principles of quality and solidarity, they gave rise to much experimentation by men with a real sense of belief. They symbolise long-considered reflections on housing the working classes from 1830 through to their first incarnations in 1920 on the periphery of Paris.

twice as many of them as there were representatives of the suburban districts and the latter would, in addition, have never been able to reach the same levels of geographic coherence or political unity.

The response to this situation, initiated by urban 'hygienists', manifested itself in numerous studies, carried out in the spirit of political neutrality and technical rigour. At the beginning of the 20th century, social reformers, doctors, liberals, lawyers, economists and then architects all rallied round, and were often to be found grouped together at the heart of the 'Musée Social', founded in 1894 by the Count of Chambrun. Its Department for Urban and Rural Hygiene (DURH), created in 1907, brought together numerous elected representatives such as the socialist Henri Sellier and the radical Paul Strauss, as well organisations such as the Alliance for Social Hygiene, the Society for Popular Art and the French Association for Low Cost Housing.

The idea of offering sound and comfortable housing to the working classes in order to guarantee social stability gave rise to a wide consensus in favour of this form of public inter-

(1) MOISSINAC Christine, historian and town planner, was director of the school of architecture between 1990 and 2000 and created a department for urban engineering at the university of Marne-la-Vallée. She is now an associate of Alphaville, an evaluation agency working in the field of urban development and planning.

(2) ROMAINS Jules. *Les Hommes de bonne volonté*, Paris, Robert Laffont, collection Bouquins 2003; Prologue of "6th October 1908".



vention. The 'Strauss' law of 1906 encouraged local and regional councils to help areas lacking in social or low cost housing. This was taken a step further by the 'Bonnevay' law of 1912 which won unanimous backing and which established a proper public service for social housing. This law made it possible for local authorities to set up (and finance) social housing offices with official public status, therefore making them eligible to benefit from low cost loans. Their sole objective was set out as the "planning, construction and management of salubrious housing...as well as the refurbishment of existing properties and the creation of garden cities or allotments." This first mention of the concept of the garden city in a legislative text is the result of a growing curiosity in the subject, aroused by several publications including those of the concept's founder, Ebenezer Howard, in 1898<sup>(3)</sup>. The lawyer Georges Benoît-Lévy<sup>(4)</sup> took up the mantle, and was then, himself, followed by the French Association for Garden Cities which was created in 1904<sup>(5)</sup>. That very same year the first foundations of a city garden had been laid down at Letchworth in England, under the aegis of the designer Raymond Unwin.

But in order to build a city garden you have to have the land. The search for land therefore becomes a priority, and battle commenced quickly in relation to the city walls which gripped Paris – 800 hectares of land belonging to the army. In 1908 the DURH put forward a development plan for the land which envisaged housing and public parks, but this did not achieve any traction until 1919. And so the question remained, what to do beyond this physical and symbolic barrier? At the instigation of an architect of the city of Paris (Louis Bonnier) and the director (the archivist Marcel Poète) of the 'Bibliothèque Historique de la Ville de Paris', a commission is formed in 1911 to look at extending Paris; its wide-ranging programme recommends the creation of garden cities<sup>(6)</sup>. The Socialist Federation for the Seine region, under the influence of Albert Thomas had – already in 1908 – put forward this idea and Henri Sellier, who spearheaded this, proposed to the regional council (of which he was a member) the administrative reorganisation of the 'department' and the creation, in 1914, of a public office for social housing at this level<sup>(7)</sup>. He defended the principle of coordinating the council's responsibility for various different policy areas (such as housing, transport and health) by prioritising the necessary solidarity between Paris and its suburbs.

In 1919 the prefecture, the city hall and the regional council held a competition for the establishment of a development plan for the



Letterhead of the OPHBM at the Seine regional office; the main heading is significant in that it shows the priorities of the early 1920s, the garden cities of Greater Paris.

extension of the city of Paris in order to identify the issues for Paris and its suburbs and to propose solutions. People started to talk about the idea of a 'Greater Paris'<sup>(8)</sup> and an office for the project was created. The winner was Leon Jausse but his project never came to fruition. However, the idea had now been floated and influential elected representatives such as André Morizet took up the torch<sup>(9)</sup>.

It is therefore around the 1920s that the suburbs are finally considered as an area requiring coherent spacial organisation. Even if the the majority of the elected representatives were extremely demanding over the principle of autonomy for local councils, the 'Cornudet' law which was passed in 1919 and then further enhanced in 1924 asked each local council serving more than 10,000 residents to set up a "development, improvement and extension plan".

While investors and property speculators divided land along the railway lines into plots for sale by promising ownership of the highways and their equipment to those who we will call the 'poorly housed', the regional council focused its efforts on economic development, planning in 1924 the creation of two new but well-served towns<sup>(10)</sup>. These plans were quickly replaced by another administrative entity, created in 1928, the Senior Committee for Development and Planning in the Paris Region which

(3) HOWARD Ebenezer. *To-morrow: A Peaceful Path To Real Reform*, Cambridge, Cambridge Library Collection, 1898.

(4) BENOÎT-LÉVY Georges. *La Cité Jardin*, Paris, H Jouve, 1904; with a preface by GIDE Charles.

(5) This is to become in 1914 the International Federation for Garden Cities and Urban Development.

(6) *Considérations techniques préliminaires*. Paris : published by Chaix, 1913.

(7) Conseil général de la Seine, 2<sup>nd</sup> June 1914, published by the City Hall.

(8) See the article by SELLIER Henri in the review *La Vie Urbaine* of which he is Director in 1920: "The garden city of Greater Paris".

(9) MORIZET André. *Du Vieux Paris au Paris Moderne. Hausmann et ses prédécesseurs*. Paris : Hachette, 1932.

(10) The creation of La Courneuve (100,000 inhabitants) and Rungis (30,000 inhabitants) depended on a new regional express train line.

proposed, in 1934, a plan based on decongesting the capital by making use of areas which had already been urbanised. Again, this project was abandoned.

### **From a social project, havens where people can live well**

The garden cities which were created in order to combat the insalubrity and shortage of housing in fact put forward another model of social and urban life. They symbolised an alternative to the 'workers' barracks' offered by industrialists and yet they were a far cry from being a carbon copy of bourgeois apartments. They respected the intimacy of family life and supported integration with the city and with other citizens. The concept came to manifest itself in many different ways. It impacted on plans for urban development (organising the railway network into a hierarchy, varying the make-up of urban spaces), on the organisation of interior spaces (the independence of different rooms) and home comforts (in the 'hygienic' tradition allowing for the free circulation of fluids, water, air and refuse), on the size and quality of public and private spaces, the diversity of the offer of local services and amenities (schools, public bathhouses, meeting rooms and, occasionally, swimming pools and theatres). These new "complete social organisms" welcomed, in quite exceptional conditions for the period, people who were asked to live as 'responsible tenants'. The early beginnings were tentative. In 1911, the committee for social housing for the 'department' of the Seine organised a competition but things took a long time to come to fruition. Taking into account all the legal, technical and financial efforts required, a garden city, even a very modest one, could only ever come into being with the joint accord of the relevant local authority and the operator, which, in this case for the Paris region, is the office for social housing for the 'department'. The office had been created by decree in 1915 and became active the following year. Henri Sellier, who had recently been elected mayor of Suresnes took the president's role and had at his disposal a sufficient regulatory and financial framework to meet the office's needs: an allocation for running costs for the first 10 years (150,000 francs) and funds of 10 million francs with which to buy up land.

The choice of land is rightly crucial. A report addressed to the regional council in 1918 stated that any land should be "situated in different areas on the periphery" and that it should "be suitable for the creation of garden cities, prove that it can aid the extension and development of the 'department', meet requirements around population distribution and also unite all the

added value benefits of having a healthy and pleasant place in which to live<sup>(11)</sup>". So many demands which come up against the constraints of the real world!

The alternative option was to refuse to copy what was going on in neighbouring countries such as England and Germany. Henri Sellier advocated adapting to local circumstances, to the French way of doing things, to the reality of Paris and its suburbs and he dismissed the idea of building new towns. In a note to the regional council in 1919 he wrote, "It should not enter into the preoccupations of the office to devise plans for city gardens in the strictest sense of the concept. [...] the office has well defined and limited objectives which consist of creating developments of its own in order to bring about the decongestion of the city of Paris and its suburbs, to illustrate the examples of the people who have been dividing up Paris for sale and who for the last 30 years have literally been sabotaging the region, and to show how [...] it is possible to provide for a population of workers, whether manual or intellectual, housing which confers the maximum levels of material comfort, in clean and healthy natural surroundings (in order to eliminate the disadvantages of life in large cities) and using modes of aesthetic development which contrast radically with the hideousness of what has been practised previously".

In 1919 the office for social housing of the Seine 'department' had at its disposal around about 220 hectares of land. A promising beginning saw the realisation of small developments of between 200 and 300 properties, with a predominance of individual houses, often grouped together<sup>(12)</sup> and with private gardens, such as in Les Lilas, Nanterre, Dugny, Arcueil and Cachan. Other developments started which were larger and comprised for the most part collective housing such as in Suresnes (30 hectares) or in Stains (25 hectares). Those developments in Chatenay-Malabry (55 hectares) and Plessis Robinson (64 hectares) were prepared and ran on over time. Young architects like Bassompierre, de Rutte, Payret-Dortail and Maistrasse (amongst others), who had been called upon by Henri Sellier, showed a large capacity for inventiveness. From 1928 up until 1938, by means of the 'Loucheur' law, there followed an intense period of activity at the office for social housing in the 'department'. In a 1937 special edition of *L'architecture Aujourd'hui* (Architecture Today), Henri Sellier writes that the office



Garden city of Suresnes  
(1921-1939).

(11) Report on Construction Works by the Regional Administration, 6<sup>th</sup> July 1916 – 1<sup>st</sup> January 1918, 1919.

(12) Houses built side by side enable the careful handling of different aspects as well as how free space is used and reduce costs for construction, heating and access routes.



had created 15,704 rental properties, without distinguishing between garden cities and other developments. The Seine region's office for social housing was certainly one of the major offices with 15 garden cities under its belt, but we should not forget those of the office in the Seine-and-Oise region (albeit less ambitious) or those carried out by various foundations, railway companies or other local social housing organisations.

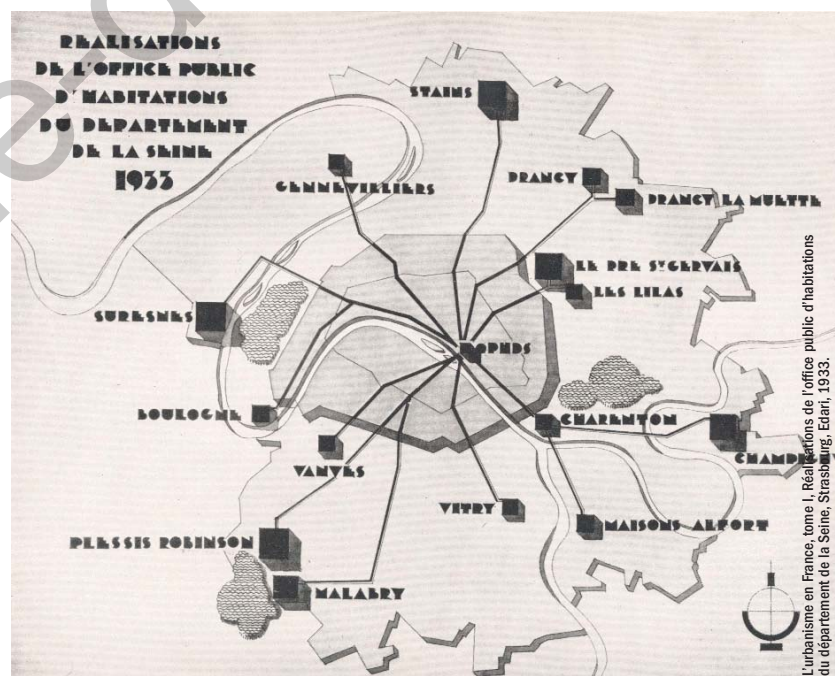
However, this great enthusiasm was to be confronted by two major difficulties – real estate and finances. It started getting complicated trying to find land at an acceptable price, which explains the location of certain developments and the choice of architecture. With land becoming evermore precious, even if aesthetic and formal considerations continue to be taken into account, increasing density becomes a necessity. For example one sees 90 houses to the hectare in Champigny and in Pré Saint-Gervais instead of 30 to the hectare in the earliest developments, or 70 to the hectare in Stains. Public spaces thus end up being squeezed and their status and usage is changed. Collective housing replaces individual homes and developments of 200 to 300 properties are built with one single courtyard garden. People came up with estates comprised exclusively of social housing like those of Muette in Drancy built between 1933 and 1935 (125 properties to the hectare and with tower blocks 15 floors high). Despite the genuine efforts of architects such as Beaudoin and Lods to keep construction costs to a minimum, this was to be the last garden city in the 'Île-de-France' region and heralded the great estates of the post-war years with their technical and urbanistic innovations. In return, however, these last developments did allow for substantial improvements in areas such as central heating, functional bathrooms and better use of space.

Being so far away from the capital and from places of work in a context where public transport is rare or not even available had other consequences: empty properties. This was a concern in certain developments such as those at Châtenay-Malabry and Plessis-Robinson. Voids put a strain on the office's finances and therefore weakened its capacity to fund further developments. In addition, the social controls exercised by the office and certain town coun-

cils resulted in regular visits to check on the upkeep of the properties and the health of the families and these in turn ended up putting certain people off. But in most cases the opposite was true and the majority of residents displayed great attachment to their homes.

The unquestionable success of garden cities is this: tenants who were sometimes forced to adapt to new living conditions, believed that having a home in such a place represented a considerable advantage, even if the levels of comfort, and especially the amount of space inside, might appear now to our eyes in the 21<sup>st</sup> century inferior to the current standards that are imposed<sup>(13)</sup>. In the daily lives of their inhabitants as well as in the history of the local authorities, these garden cities became and remained havens where people really were able to live very well. Renewed architectural and urbanistic solutions were put to work in the service of a humanistic vision for the working class. One of the merits of this has been to considerably enrich the concept of what home can be and how it should relate to the city, a question which remains just as relevant today.

(13) An 4-room apartment had a floor space of between 54 and 66 square metres.



Work carried out by the Office for Public Housing for the Seine Regional Administration, 1933.

## >> Regional Development and garden cities inhabitants of the Île-de-France region

**1904-1905**

G. Benoît-Levy publishes "La cité-jardin" and creates the Association of Garden Cities

**1907**

Musée Social creates the Urban and Rural Hygiene department

**1912**

'Bonnevay' law establishes creation of offices for social housing

**1916**

Establishment of the office for social housing in the Seine 'department' with H. Sellier as president

**1919**

'Cornudet' law imposes obligatory development plans for towns with more than 10,000 inhabitants

**1919**

Competition to open up Paris; the garden city for Greater Paris

**1920**

Office for social housing set up in the 'Seine-et-Oise' region

Émilie Jarousseau,  
Philippe Montillet  
IAU île-de-France

# Garden cities in the Île-de-France region, from yesterday to today



The garden city  
of Champigny-sur-Marne.

Conceived at the start as a component of regional development, the garden cities were built according to the availability of real estate opportunities. Created between 1920 and 1939, these urban sites have each been the work of a single construction client or initiator who made a call for an architect, or a team of architects, who then designed and led the project in its entirety. Construction was carried out in stages in order to reduce costs but the different ways in which they were all put together allowed for a certain degree of diversity and aestheticism and an appraisal of the situation and the creation of an inventory<sup>(1)</sup> allows us to understand the specifics in more detail. The aim was not to create an entire town, as Howard had imagined, but to construct groups of social housing (designed to be rented out and financed by loans and state subsidies) at the heart of a high quality, landscaped, urban environment. These neighbourhoods were often endowed with local facilities and are a far cry from the workers' housing developments and landscaped housing estates<sup>(2)</sup> which were being built at the same time on the boundary of Paris.

## A spatial approach, predominantly in the north east of Paris

In contrast to the English model, which was established in the middle of a rural space and then became inextricably intertwined with it, the garden cities in the Île-de-France region were mainly built close to Paris within a radius

There are about thirty garden cities today in the Île-de-France region. Constructed mainly in the interwar years within a low density urban fabric, they are now an integral part of the urban area of Paris. These sites, whilst all differing in their designs, respond to two concerns: firstly, the critical shortage of housing and secondly, the generally poor condition of workers' housing. They have stood the test of time and our interest in analysing them lies in understanding their evolution.

of about 15 kilometres. The garden city movement here cannot really be separated from the dominant policies of the Office for Social Housing in the Seine Administrative Region (OPHBM)<sup>(3)</sup> which was responsible for more than half of all the garden cities. But we should not forget the other construction clients too, whether public or private, so that we can compare their practices.

- The OPHBM was created in 1916 by Henri Sellier. The 17 garden cities were created in order to respond to the need to find more space for housing in the greater Paris area. Almost 80% of the new builds were constructed in the garden cities, giving a total of around 14,000 housing units. The first developments started in 1920-1921 and are essentially made up of individual homes such as the garden city of Grands-Champs (Bagnolet) or Joseph-d'Épinay (Les Lilas). Other cities would follow, of larger size and with greater concentration of housing thanks to the blocks of flats, built, in part to reduce construction costs. By virtue

(1) This analysis was completed by carrying out site visits, interviews and exploring various background reading materials. The study of the garden cities carried out by the IAU îdF in 1978 was particularly helpful and today remains a key reference work (see box p.28).

(2) These developments differ from the garden cities in that they lack of any kind of urban composition. Workers' housing developments use a grid-form for their streets and the landscaped housing estates were not developed by one overall construction client.

(3) Note that the first garden cities were created by the Seine administrative department and then handed over to the management of the OPHBM.



of their size and architectural quality they have become the most well-known – Stains, Suresnes, Le Plessis-Robinson, Champigny-sur-Marne, Châtenay-Malabry. The garden cities of the OPHBM are pretty much all located within 10 kilometres of Paris.

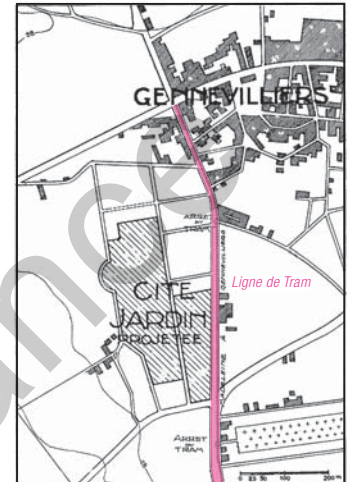
- The Office for Social Housing in Seine-et-Oise (established in 1920) developed eight garden cities (giving a total of 800 homes) which were built later on in the 1930s. Examples include Petits-Bois at Versailles (1925-1933) or Neuilly-sur-Marne (1934). They are often small in size with an average of around 100 homes, mostly detached, without local facilities and sometimes further out from the Capital (e.g. Trappes).
- Different construction clients also built a total of 2,200 homes within nine garden city developments. They included private social landlords with social housing agendas such as Le Nouveau Logis which built the Orly garden city in 1928, or the Fondation Blumenthal (1920-1927) which built the Épinay-sur-Seine garden city, or again the Paris regional association for garden cities which constructed Orge-mont garden city in Argenteuil (1930-1938). Some companies got involved in order to

provide housing for their workers, such as the 'Compagnie du chemin de fer du Nord' (northern railway company) with Mitry-Mory in 1925 or the 'Société des avions Breguet' with Velizy-Villacoublay. They got around issues relating to the land by building the garden city on their own sites, close to all their business activity.

Since the dissolution in 1968<sup>(4)</sup> of the Seine and Seine-et-Oise administrative regions (and their replacement by 3 'départements' in the inner suburbs of Paris and 4 'départements' in the outer suburbs) the map showing the garden cities in the region has changed and the new offices for social housing (now called OPHLM)<sup>(5)</sup> in these newly formed regions have taken up the role of the former OPHBMs. And so the relatively unified manner in which the sites were managed has now been replaced by various different organisations and structures, each with their own autonomy and accountability. Today we can count 14 garden cities in

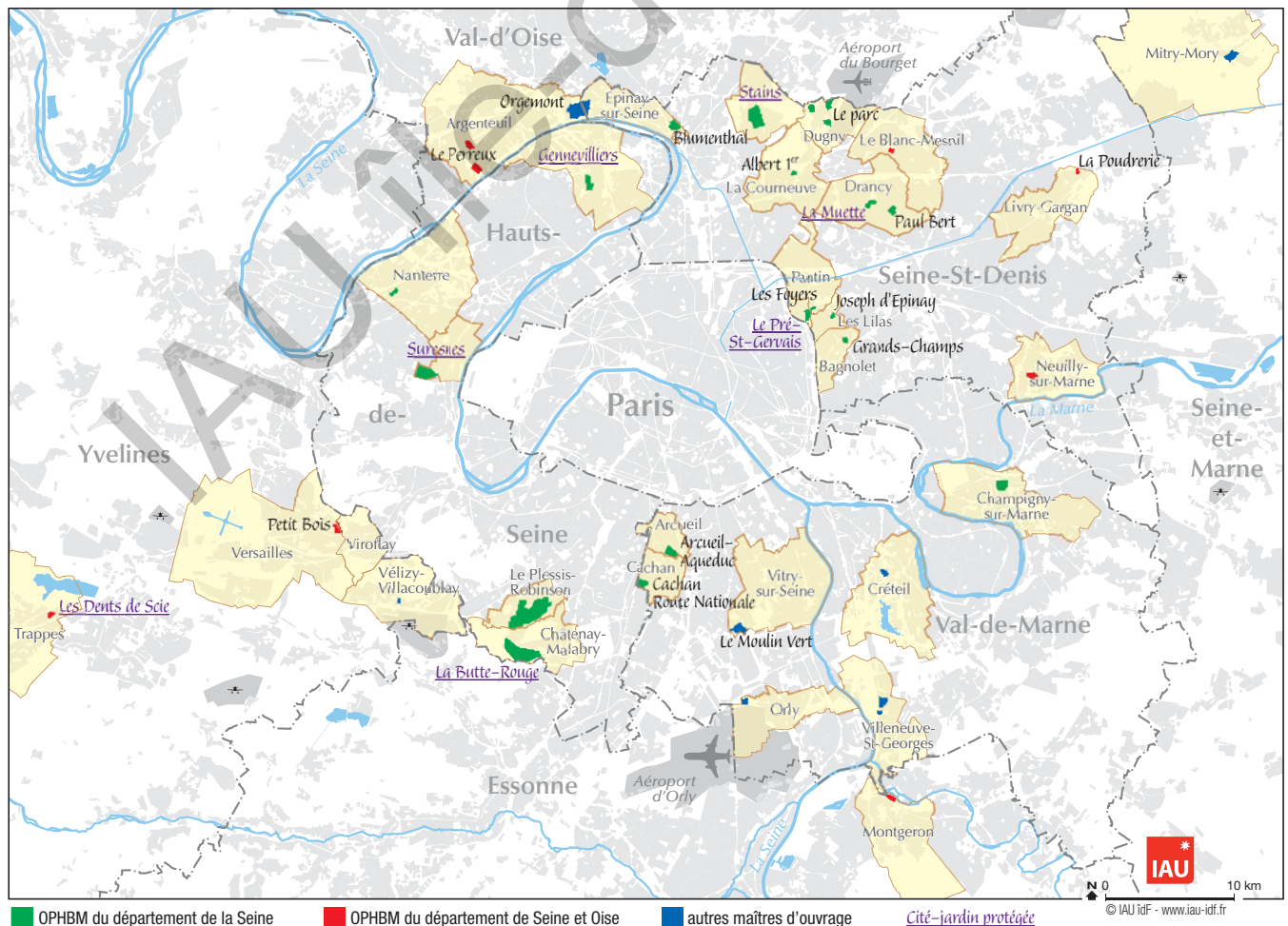
(4) Following a law passed in 1964 which re-organised the administration of the Paris region.

(5) In the departments of l'Essonne, Val-d'Oise and Yvelines the garden cities are managed by an interdepartmental public office, the 'Opievoy'.



The garden city of Gennevilliers was constructed near a village and close to public transport links.

## Map showing the garden cities in the Île-de-France region



Seine-Saint-Denis; 7 in Val-de-Marne; 5 in Hauts-de-Seine; 3 in Yvelines and Val-d'Oise; and 1 in Seine-et-Marne and l'Essonne. Within the Île-de-France region there is fairly unequal distribution of the garden cities even though the movement originally sought to have a positive impact on the whole of the greater Paris area. Faced with the increased number of different stakeholders, questions have to be asked about the evolution of the garden cities, and whether the harmonious and coherent management of this urban form should be provided at the metropolitan level.

### Much apartment buildings but few single-family houses

All of the garden cities were created, or at least their construction was started, between 1920 and 1939, though five extensions or reconstructions were carried out after the Second World War. The table here shows that a larger number of garden cities was built in the 1920s but that actually more homes were created in the

second half of the period. The first garden cities are relatively small in scale (with around 200 homes) and are made up, mostly, of individual homes. In the 1930s we see the construction of vast sites where apartment blocks tend to dominate. Out of a total of 17,000 homes which were constructed in the garden cities, only 4,800 of them were individual houses.

Construction times varied immensely as well. Although the majority were completed within a two-year period some took much longer, or were built in two phases, before and after the Second World War, such as the Butte-Rouge in Châtenay-Malabry (1931-1940 and 1949-1965). The large gap between the two dates (1920-1965) shows that the conception of the garden cities has changed over time. The first period placed most importance on individual homes and small-scale apartment blocks with local facilities. Following the Second World War the emphasis turned to large, high density apartment blocks with fewer local facilities<sup>(6)</sup>. These characteristics can also be seen by examining the different phases of their development. For example, the initial designs for Stains included a high number of local facilities, but only very few actually came to see the light of day. In Champigny-sur-Marne the church ended up being replaced by an apartment block.

### A multiplicity of different sites

Whilst Howard gave great importance to the siting of the garden cities and to their surface area (2,500 hectares), their emergence in the Île-de-France region came about more as real estate opportunities arose. This explains why they are all of different sizes – theoretically this was not possible under the English model. And this is why we can see such diversity in the choice of their location: placed close to an existing village or to public transport, some depended on the type of land that was available, whether it was affordable, or situated in a particularly nice spot. These new towns integrated themselves, then, in different ways with the surrounding environment and local infrastructure.

For example, at Stains<sup>(7)</sup> and Nanterre, the garden city was added on to the centre of an existing village, while others became extensions of housing estates dating from the same period, such as Villeneuve-Saint-Georges and Champigny-sur-Marne. Others, still, were constructed according to the quality of the site – in the

Summary table of the garden cities

Garden Cities	Cities	Dpt	Contracting authority	Creation date	Houses	Appart.	Total
Grands-Champs	Bagnolet	93	Dpt de la Seine	1920-21	101	0	101
Le parc de Dugny	Dugny	93	Dpt de la Seine	1921-1922	200	40	240
Aqueduc	Arcueil	94	Dpt de la Seine	1921-23	231	0	231
Nanterre	Nanterre	92	Dpt de la Seine et OPHBM	1921 + 1930	92	40	132
Paul Bert	Drancy	93	OPHBM Dpt Seine	1921-22 + 1929-30	173	39	212
Joseph d'Epinay	Les Lilas	93	OPHBM Dpt Seine	1921-23 + 1931	179	106	285
Route nationale	Cachan	94	Dpt de la Seine	1921-24 + 1928-30	274	54	328
Stains	Stains	93	OPHBM Dpt Seine	1921-1933	472	1 176	1 648
Suresnes	Suresnes	92	OPHBM Dpt Seine	1921-39 1947-49	173	2 327 500	2 500 500
Gennevilliers	Gennevilliers	92	OPHBM Dpt Seine	1923-1934	237	336	573
Le Plessis-Robinson	Plessis-Robinson	92	OPHBM Dpt Seine	1924-39 1952-60	200	2 008 2 500	2 208 2 500
Jardin de l'Eguiller	Dugny	93	OPHBM Dpt Seine	1932-33	28	159	187
Du Moulin	Dugny	93	OPHBM Dpt Seine	1930-33 + 47-50	0	390	390
Le Pré Saint-Gervais	Pré Saint-Gervais	93	OPHBM Dpt Seine	1930-34	50	1 000	1 050
Champigny	Champigny-sur-Marne	94	OPHBM Dpt Seine	1931-36 1948-49	142	1 054 50	1 196 50
La Butte-Rouge	Châtenay-Malabry	92	OPHBM Dpt Seine	1931-40 1949-65	32	1 541 2 200	1 573 2 200
La Muette-Drancy	Drancy	93	OPHBM Dpt Seine	1933-1935	0	950	950
OPHBM of Seine				Sub-total front 45 Total	2 584 2 584	11 220 16 470	13 804 19 054
Rue du Marais	Argenteuil	95	OPHBM Dpt Seine-et-Oise	1925	101	0	101
Petits Bois	Versailles	78	OPHBM Dpt Seine-et-Oise	1925-33	173	0	173
Les Dents-de-Scie	Trappes	78	OPHBM + Compagnie Ch de fer	1932	62	0	62
Blanc-Mesnil	Blanc-Mesnil	93	OPHBM Dpt Seine-et-Oise	1933	36	0	36
Poudrenie	Livry-Gargan	93	OPHBM Dpt Seine-et-Oise	1933	27	0	27
Le Perreux	Argenteuil		OPHBM Dpt Seine-et-Oise	1933	63	90	153
Montgeron	Montgeron	91	OPHBM + Compagnie Ch de fer	1933	66	72	138
Neuilly-sur-Marne	Neuilly-sur-Marne	93	OPHBM Dpt Seine-et-Oise	1934	48	88	136
OPHBM of Seine-et-Oise				Total	576	250	826
Albert 1 <sup>er</sup>	La Courneuve	93	HBM La Courneuve	1921-31	46	40	86
Mitry-Mory	Mitry-Mory	77	Compagnie chemin de fer Nord	1925	115	0	115
Vélizy-Villacoublay	Vélizy-Villacoublay	78	Société Bréguet	1925	18	0	18
Créteil	Créteil	94	Compagnie d'assurance gnie	1925	77	0	77
Le Moulin Vert	Vitry-sur-Seine	94	HBM du Moulin vert	1926-28 + 1932-33	254	20	274
Orly	Orly	94	HBM le nouveau Logis	1928	105	30	135
Blumenthal	Épinay-sur-Seine	93	Fondation Blumenthal	1928-30	316	40	356
Villeneuve-Saint-George	Villeneuve-Saint-George	94	Compagnie Chemin de Fer PLM	1930	120	60	180
Orgemont	Argenteuil	95	Société Cites-J. de la Région 2	1930-38	584	366	950
Diverse contracting authorities				Total	1 635	556	2 191
				Sub-total front 45 Total	4 772 4 772	12 043 17 293	16 815 22 065

Source: IAU idF.

(6) Drancy-La Muette was the last garden city. When it started in 1933-1935 the architects Beaudoin and Lods conceived of it solely in terms of collective housing (950 homes in total) in order to try and reduce costs.

(7) At Stains, the 28 hectares of ground corresponds to the perimeter of the old park belonging to the castle which was placed right next to the village.



middle of agricultural land or on the edge of a wood, or with stunning views such as those enjoyed by the garden city at Argenteuil-Orgemont with its views of the Seine. We should remember as well that some sites were built close to places of work, for example Villeneuve-Saint-Georges and Trappes (rail marshalling yards) or Livry-Gargan (Sevran national gunpowder factory).

Here, at the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, these developments have been shaken up by other developments in the region. Some garden cities have successfully managed to hold on to their particular natural environment such as Suresnes which is just on the border of the Saint Cloud racecourse, or Châtenay-Malabry on the edge of the Verrière wood. But faced with strong urban growth, the majority have been swallowed up into the wider Paris agglomeration. Sometimes they have been integrated following the urbanisation of the district they are in – in this case the garden city marries in with, and extends, the pre-existing plans. Such is the case, for example, at the Pré Saint-Gervais where the garden city prolongs the road network and connects into it. But a large number of the garden cities take a circular form and so are cut off from the rest of the road network. They give the impression of having thresholds that have to be crossed before you can enter them. Sometimes these are fairly obviously marked out, sometimes less so. Sometimes this is evident physically for example at Paul Bert (Drancy), and other times it is less obvious, though visible all the same, such as at Suresnes or Champigny. This has consequences, notably for how they interact with town centres. Thus at Champigny-sur-Marne, shops are placed just at the edges of the garden city, before its entry point. The reverse is true in the Pré Saint-Gervais where the Severine square itself forms a new centre which attracts the population even from beyond the perimeter of the garden city.

### Urban design; the different use of forms in order to reach the highest standards

The originality of the garden cities lies in their urban design and Henri Sellier stressed heavily their compatibility with the land, taking into account the geomorphology (slopes and differences in height). In Pré Saint-Gervais, the nature of the ground had to be taken into account when building the houses (on unstable, sloping ground) and apartment blocks (placed on better quality ground).

The infrastructure of the sites can be very rudimentary, consisting sometimes of just one single street. The overall site plan then boils down to one road onto which a 'close' could be attached<sup>(8)</sup>.

The more the garden city grows the more the road network starts to take on some kind of structure: looping secondary roads are added onto the main road as well as cul-de-sacs and pedestrian alleyways. And so the garden city becomes a more ambitious project, almost an entire new town like at Orgemont<sup>(9)</sup> with its large axes bordered by one or more

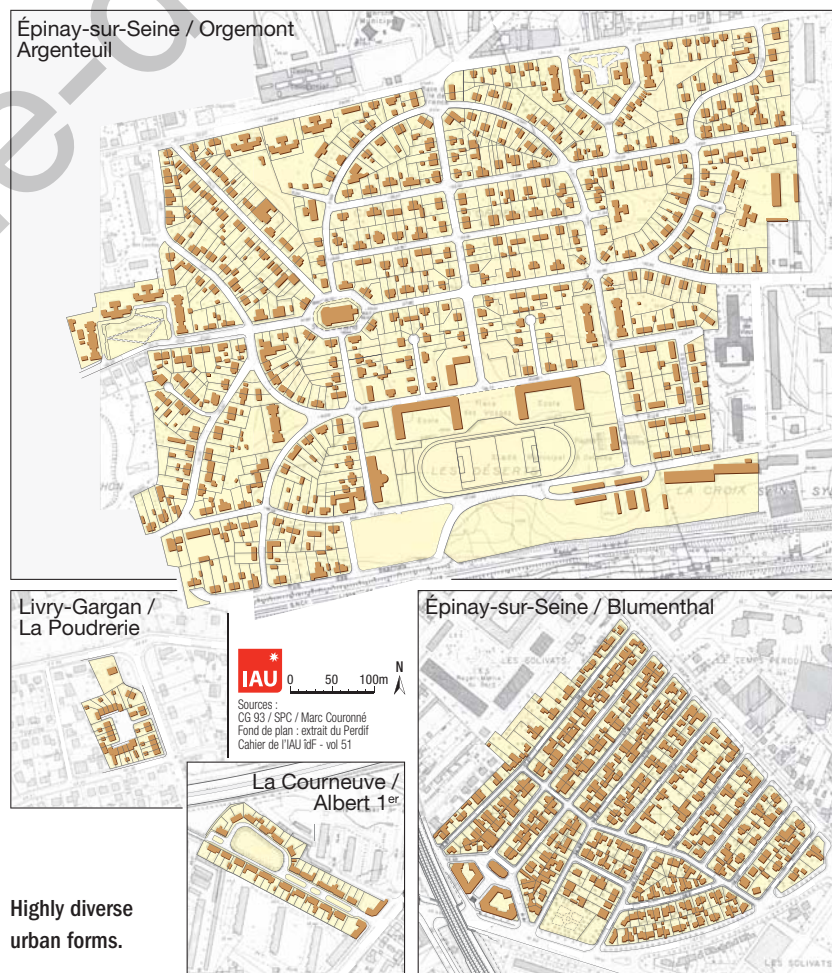
(8) This was like having a group of houses set around a semi-public cul-de-sac or small square surrounded by trees.

(9) See POUVREAU Benoît, COURONNÉ Marc, LABORDE Marie-Françoise, GAUDRY Guillaume. *Garden Cities in the North-East suburbs of Paris*, Le Moniteur, 2007.



The entrance to the Paul Bert garden city at Drancy is clearly marked by a porch.

### Layout plans of four Garden cities: Orgemont, Blumenthal, Albert 1<sup>er</sup>, La Poudrerie



Highly diverse urban forms.

public facilities. In this way, it starts to resemble more closely Howard's model in which the hierarchy of the roads was one of the fundamentals of the project. Edition 51 of the IAU idF *Cahiers* series analysed the various remarkable morphologies in relation to these axes and to what was qualified as a 'monumental system'. Half a century later the garden cities have not seen this morphology challenged, except in cases of partial destruction. But it is on the road network where conflicts in use have surfaced the most over the past thirty years or so. The motor car has ended up disrupting a network which had not been designed for it. So the garden city is penalised in this respect right from the start and leaves little space for parking areas. Recent renovation projects often provide the opportunity to consider these problems without always being able to solve them.

The urban morphology must also be analysed in connection with the typology of the buildings, facilitating both the promotion of the public spaces and the housing units. Buildings are organised according to the layout of the roads, with facilities placed in a central position and put in perspective; apartment blocks are generally placed perpendicular to the main roads; and the houses are placed on the, often curved, secondary roads. The housing units are also grouped together, often into twos or threes<sup>(10)</sup>. The various ways in which they have been put together, in rows, at angles to each other, with porches or covered walkways assures the visual continuity of the buildings and still offers today immense variety of effect. This diversity is equally linked to different ways of viewing architecture. The first garden cities, influenced by the English model, adopted a so-called picturesque, romantic and regional style of architecture with sloping roofs, decorative facades and details around the cornicing and balconies. Some years later, a more modern form of architecture contrasted with this: flat roofs, ribbon windows or window walls and the absence of any outlines on the cornices. This influence was to be highly significant for the

last of the garden cities. It corresponds as well to a desire for standardisation in construction which would result in decent standards of comfort at the lowest price. Since the 1930s, it has been a matter of producing mass housing at an affordable price, for example at Drancy-La Muette or Le Plessis-Robinson. The garden cities have been real grounds for experimentation, between urban and architectural innovations and between the horizontal or vertical city. Today, they are places where urban history can be seen and they must preserve their special identity, particularly during renovation projects.

### From recognising our cultural heritage to renovating it

Up until the end of the 1970s, left without any upkeep, the garden cities became dilapidated and more and more out of sync with new standards of comfort (notably bathroom fittings and heating). This long period of decline was experienced badly everywhere, devaluing the image of these neighbourhoods and their residents. The local authorities had differing attitudes. Policies were drawn up for their partial destruction<sup>(11)</sup> in Nanterre, Lilas, Argenteuil and for the total destruction of the garden city at Cachan. But policies were also drawn up for their refurbishment and renovation by some of the more enlightened local authorities at the end of the 1980-1990s, a time when the first protection measures were put in place.

At present, seven garden cities have protected status of varying degrees, a consequence of the difficulty in establishing a 'doctrine of overriding principles' when it comes to urban developments

(10) The architect at Suresnes, A. Maistrasse, proposed in 1926 to "prioritise semi-detached or terraced houses which would result in lower construction and heating costs and allow a general design to be conceived".

(11) Certain ones were destroyed because, at the time when they were built, it was more a matter of building an emergency 'town' of mediocre quality; others were pulled down because they were of too weak a density for the individual. As they no longer represented any economic value, people preferred to demolish them and replace them with apartment blocks. The war also led to their destruction, for example at Villeneuve-Saint-Georges.



At Gennevilliers, the picturesque effect is assured by the colour of the facades and the grouping of the detached houses into groups of two, four or five.



At Champigny-sur-Marne, the apartment blocks form a U-shape around a courtyard, now with restricted access.



which are all very different from each other.

- Four garden cities are designated as listed sites under the 1930 law; the first was Stains in 1976, then Gennevilliers in 1985, followed by Pré Saint-Gervais and Châtenay-Malabry in 1986.
- Two are classified as historical monuments under the 1913 law; Drancy was classified as such in 2000 for being a model example of one of the first constructions in mass industrial material, but also for its historic role in deportation; Trappes was classified in 1992 (for the facades, roofs and gardens of all the detached houses).
- One has ZPPAUP<sup>(12)</sup> status: Suresnes was classed as a Zone for the Protection of Architectural, Urban, and Landscape Heritage in 1996 under the law of 1993. This new measure allows for the inclusion of the wider borough into the protected area.

If protected status in the form of becoming a listed site was chosen in 1976 it is because, at that time, it was not current practice to give whole sites the status of a 'historical monument'<sup>(13)</sup>. This was really more appropriate for single, identifiable buildings. The limits of this protected status, managed by the ministry of the environment, were felt and it seems more appropriate for open natural spaces than for buildings. And so, as Bruno Mengoli<sup>(14)</sup> says, the ZPPAUP (since 2011 now known as the 'Avap' – 'aires de mise en valeur de l'architecture et du patrimoine') is today the best form of protection for the garden cities. It allows for the whole perimeter to be taken into account and above all, it involves the local authority and the state – a fair balance if one wants to achieve concrete results regarding the consideration of the protected status within an overall development policy.

If protected status staves off the spectre of the demolitions that were planned at one stage (resulting from the double challenge of having to increase density and adapt to new building regulations) the right methods still have to be found for preserving the garden cities. They have become areas to which their residents are deeply attached. And so, for this reason, building works have to balance respect for the existing

characteristics of the site (whether it benefits from protected status or not); the feelings of the residents; particular local or district constraints as well as financial ones, a large proportion of which falls back onto the managing agents. Questions are raised today about bringing the homes and communal areas back up to standard and redoing the facades. More and more, it seems, that heavy duty work has to be carried out: double glazing, fire proof doors on landings, smoke extractors, central heating installation and, in certain cases, complete re-designing of the interior space (by enlarging it or adding bathrooms). The construction clients have numerous problems to deal with, regardless of the garden city's protected status or whether it is within a 500m perimeter of a site listed as being a 'historical monument'<sup>(15)</sup>.

Beyond these approaches which are linked to both conservation and promotion of the garden cities, it should be noted that, today, they are recognised in two ways; as an urban model (and in this respect they should be compared to others which followed, notably the large housing estates) and as a social model which knew how to create a strong urban environment. During a transitional period when big questions are being asked of the future of the urban environment, especially with regard to its density, social housing and functional mixity, the garden cities offer a response which, compared with others, has the advantage of being able to draw on the experience of almost a century's worth of success.

(12) Zone de protection du patrimoine architectural, urbain et paysager (ZPPAUP).

(13) The two cases where this was applied are fairly particular. At Drancy, taking aside its historical role in deportation, just one surviving building remains which means we can return to a more classical interpretation of the term 'historical monument'. At Trappes, all which is concerned is a single road with a series of houses on it – again, it is not impossible to conceive of this in terms of the definition of a 'historical monument'.

(14) See the interview with MENGOLI Bruno on page 54 which covers the refurbishment of the Seine-Saint-Denis garden city.

(15) Such is the case for the garden city at Pré Saint-Gervais which is listed as a protected site but where the majority of its space is also included in the protection zone of four listed historical monuments.



Suresnes: in the middle of the apartment blocks a public space has been converted into family gardens.



Châtenay-Malabry: opposite the central square two apartment blocks bear witness to the modern architectural movement.

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## The garden cities of the Île-de-France region, Cahiers series, number 51, 1978

Interview with Thierry Roze, architect and author of this study

### What was the context for this edition of the Cahiers series?

Since 1970, we have taken a new look at the garden cities which are now the subject of much research. It was a matter of describing a new urban form and development at a time when the regional planning and development plan of 1976 started to be applied, bringing into question again the urban development of the Île-de-France region. The public authorities planned to develop a low-density living environment made up of a large proportion of individual houses, and they also hoped to develop old housing stock. The garden cities, therefore, represented a rich field for studying the problems of how to develop housing. At the same time at the IAU îdF we were carrying out studies on the extension of metropolitan areas (form and density), on combined operations and land use (mode d'occupation des sols, or MOS).

### Are you aware of the cultural value of the garden cities?

Yes, our concern was to conduct an assessment of the current situation taking into account its cultural value. But the garden city, with its exemplary architecture was, at that time, not really recognised or valued, particularly when you learn that a certain number of them had been destroyed (Cachan) and that others were on the point of being demolished like Drancy-La Muette in 1976 – one of the most innovative examples from an architectural and urban point of view. It was also the period when stock transfers were made to landlords in the 'départements' and so they had to be alerted to the value of this heritage. Numerous interesting documents were still available at the archive centre of the Seine administrative authority which I had to classify and analyse in order to carry out this piece of work. I think today the 1978 study needs to be updated, showing the architectural, urban and social evolution of this heritage, covering renovations (La Butte-Rouge), demolition-reconstructions (Plessis-Robinson), extensions, increases in density etc.

### Have you had difficulties in dealing with and defining the garden cities?

This study, or inventory, was never going to be exhaustive, except for the garden cities of the Office for Public Housing in the Seine administrative region. We wanted to show the unity and diversity of the different sites and the one thing these 31 sites have in common is their name 'Garden City', acknowledging the English garden city model. We had to make difficult choices, regarding Trappes, for example, which consisted of one single road. You have to realise that, in the 1920s and 1930s, construction clients all too easily called their projects 'garden cities' as soon as a few houses had been assembled at the centre of the operation. But the urban model and the architectural styles have changed as a consequence of economic constraints, as much as by the transformation of different ideas concerning urban development during this period. Under the same generic term there were, therefore, very different realities to be found. Housing developments with space for gardens ('lotissements-jardins') which allow people to build their houses on individual plots of land were excluded from the study.

### Is the garden city an urban model?

It is true that in mixing together individual and collective housing you end up with a model, in the same way you do if you differentiate public spaces. This finely tuned structure is, for me, what is special about the garden cities and one of their greatest qualities. But beyond the model of the garden cities it is better to speak about the values behind them because to reproduce them is, on the one hand, impossible and, on the other hand, extremely risky. We have to reinterpret them and above all return them to their context and understand the qualities which enable them to continue today. For example, it is astonishing that the garden city was considered a source of inspiration back in 1978 when the public authorities tended to favour low density, and, that the garden city still exists today when we tend to favour the opposite. The objectives have changed, but the concept remains a remarkable one.

## >> Garden cities in Île-de-France

### 1920-1939

Approx 30 garden cities built in the 'Île-de-France' region

### 1922

Law comes into force defining standards for social housing (surface area, amenities, price)

### 1928

'Loucheur' law – garden cities benefit from state financing to create 200,000 low cost homes

### 1947-1965

Extension and completion of the last garden cities

### 1976

First city garden granted protected status (Stains, S.I.)

### 1996

7<sup>th</sup> and last garden city granted protected status (Suresnes, ZPPAUP)

### 2013

Garden cities, a ideal to be pursued



**Bertrand Le Boudec**  
Architect - Landscape painter  
Master-assistant in ENSAP Lille  
Atelier traverses

## A poetic stroll around the Pré Saint-Gervais

Bertrand Le Boudec delivers us his impressions of garden city of Pré Saint-Gervais at the rate of his poetic wandering. The extreme realism of its sketches shows the patrimonial and architectural wealth of this place of life, consisted of 1,200 collective housing and 56 individual detached houses, realized by the architect Félix Dumail for the service of the department of the Seine over the period 1927-1952.



*Solo des cornettes,*

*Path of cornettes*

**T**here it is, at the gates of Paris.  
There, barely 400 metres from the périphérique  
near the Portes des Lilas on this hillside where Jaurès,  
almost a century ago, cried out, in vain, peace  
to a crowd of people in straw boaters.  
There it is, at the end of the tiny narrow paths  
decorated with wisteria and hollyhocks  
that one of the most exquisite  
garden cities in the Paris region is to be found.

Its first prominent feature, perhaps the first which testifies  
to its beauty, is the intelligence of its relief.  
Felix Dumail, the architect,  
paid particular attention to the site and chose to  
adapt to it without any preconceived plans.  
The ground was difficult, irregular and sloping.  
12 hectares riddled with old gypsum quarries.  
We knew that the gypsum had, for a long time,  
been one of the riches of this hill at Belleville,  
as much as on the Paris side of it,  
running from the Buttes Chaumont to Mouzaia, as on this  
side, which stretches down towards Romainville.  
Foundations are expensive on this ground,  
which has been weakened by extractions and water infiltra-  
tion.

Before drawing up his plans Felix Dumail took  
the greatest of care to carefully observe the landscape.

Its second prominent feature is the thought  
that went into its design.  
Cholera and tuberculosis were feared by people at that time.  
They mistrusted the mishmash of houses and fetid streets.  
People remembered that in the same period  
the neighbouring city of Paris was handing out criminal  
records to buildings for crimes against hygiene  
and tracking down insalubrious blocks.



*Cité jardin du pré Saint Gervais - 1932 -*

*Angle of streets Jean Jaurès and Edouard Vaillant*



*Cité jardin du pré Saint Gervais 1932 -*

The ideal was then, in order to construct these new homes which were sorely lacking in the Paris region, To "imagine a city with the lowest possible mortality rate," To borrow a phrase from the British doctor Benjamin W Richardson<sup>(1)</sup>.

The remedies for preventing these diseases were well known: fresh air, sunshine, daylight.  
In other words: sports grounds and gardens, designed as much for leisure purposes as for health.  
This concern with public health resulted in a simple and rational layout which expresses the idea of cohesive design on a community scale.

Felix Dumail combines these demands as he maps out his project.

To save money, he decided to use the existing road network and to build as much as possible alongside it where the ground is, in principle, most stable.  
He designs only three new roads in total.

In fact, the first phase which results in the construction of 1050 homes only needs 750m worth of roads.

The construction process is then split up into phases, each of which is organized around a large plot of empty land at the middle of each block. And so, in this way, Dumail designs a stadium, a square, a garden, a wood, an esplanade - various different ways of using public space for all age groups and purposes.

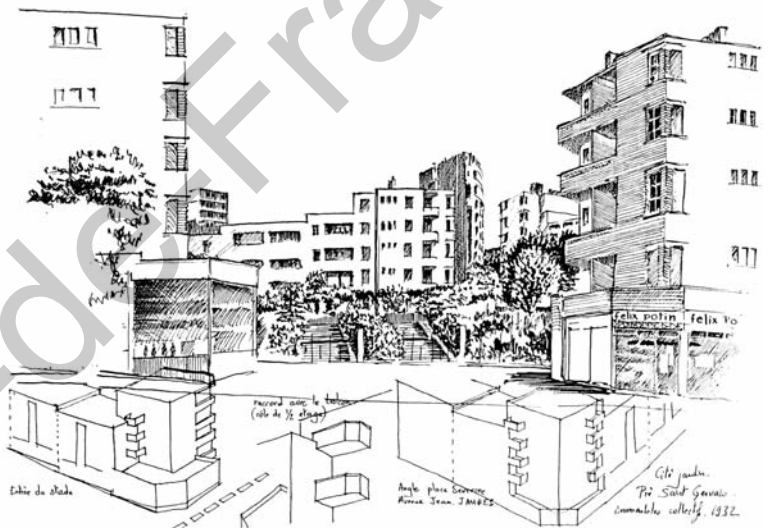
At the points where buildings meet each other he creates gaps by adding in tiny little neighbourhood centres.

'Place Séverine', the heart of the garden city, is given a promenade of magnolias around which he places corner shops, a crèche, a bus stop and a little square. In the same way he places the school, the college and the post office in the north-west corner in order to connect the neighbourhood with the rest of the city.

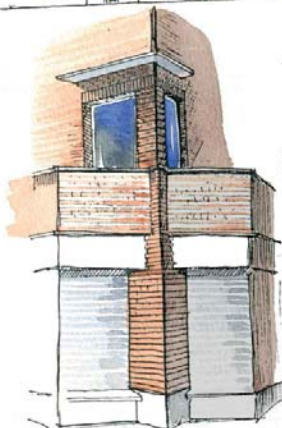
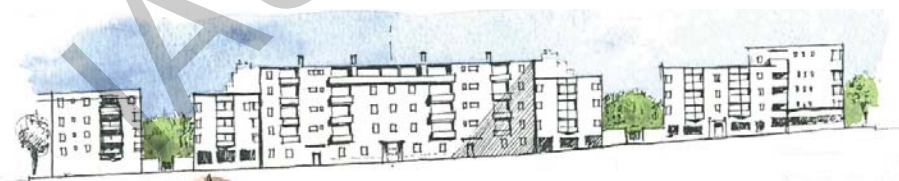


Place Séverine

(1) RICHARDSON Benjamin Ward. *Hygeia, a city of Health*. London: Mac Millan and Co, 1876.



Place Séverine





Dumail's approach dismisses the idea of working to a model.

There is no one typical city, but rather as many garden cities as there are individual examples. All credit is given in his approach to the need to listen and be flexible.

From his designs emerges an impression of clarity and fluidity. The whole is remarkably integrated with whatever existed beforehand.

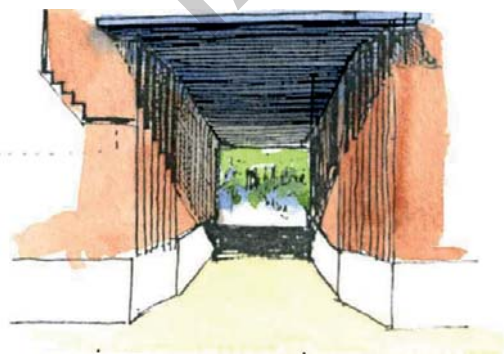
The third prominent feature of this garden city is, without a doubt, the sophistication of its architecture. Felix Dumail had a taste for new forms. He liked experimentation, clean lines and shared a certain modern aesthetic in a departure from the quaintness of the old town. Each of the different phases of the garden city gives him the chance to use a different type of architecture.

The first homes in the south are multiple dwelling units in red brick which surround the old 'borehole' on which, logically, the stadium was constructed. The whole site is made up of buildings each five levels high with access from the street through an entrance way with a rather nice feature: the stairwell is flooded with natural light. He sets out ten double aspect apartments, each one with a loggia or a balcony. The façade facing the road is urban and monumental and is contrasted with an interior façade which is communal and domestic.

There are variations on the theme. These accentuate the angles, differentiate the varying levels, improve the visibility of the passage ways, give an organising structure and value to different public spaces. To highlight the entrance into the courtyards, the apartment blocks of the 'Place Séverine' have terraces on the first floor and the buildings opposite respond with their bow windows and a small square, set off by a porch.



Maisons individuelles, à l'est et du square  
Cité Jardine du Pte St Genès - 1935



A ray of light  
lights up the end of this passage way.  
Let us go in.



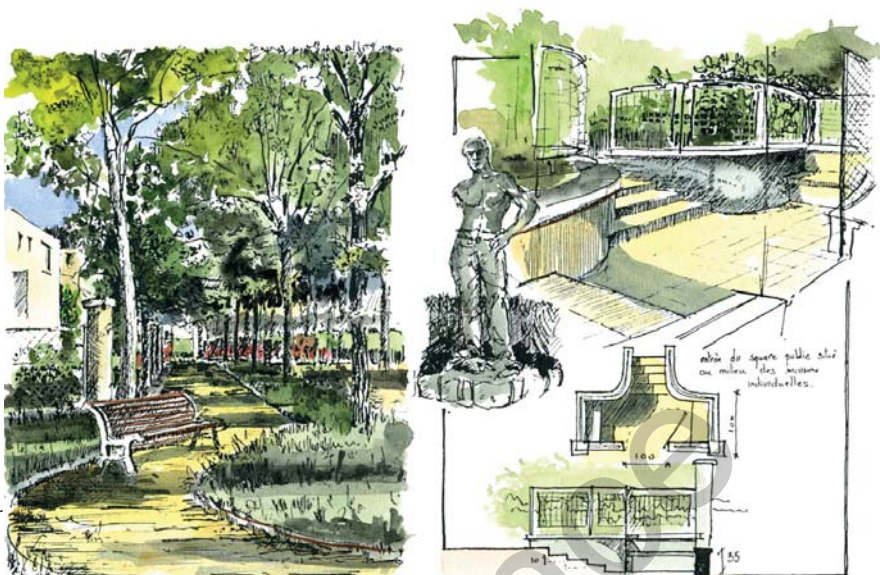
Cité Jardine du Pte St Genès - maisons individuelles, 1935.



Beyond the porch we can see, at the north end a second architectural ensemble, a collection of 50 houses with gardens laid out around a square. The houses are organized in a circle on two or three levels. The architectural design is modern but nearer to that of Tony Garnier and his Industrial City project (1917) than the white designs of Le Corbusier. And this is perhaps not a coincidence: Felix Dunail had studied Fine Arts under Scellier de Gisors who was also Tony Garnier's teacher. Indeed, there are no horizontal windows here nor open plan layouts, nor accessible roof terraces. It is all work which is based on standardised models for dividing up space. If we had to look for a clear stylistic relationship we would be better looking at the garden cities of Brussels such as those at Berchen Sainte-Agathe, designed by Victor Bourgeois or the Logis Floreal by Jean-Jules Eggericx.

It takes time to appreciate this place. Above all its silence. Close to one of the busiest roads in Europe are deep gardens where blackbirds hop about, discreet alleyways where cats laze around, cherry trees full of stories and lilac trees too, of course. The sheer variety of the place is astonishing. Work on the leveling assures easy transitions from the detached houses to the shared housing blocks. Each time, Dumail differentiates the spaces, separates the traffic, plays with differences in levels to define the alleyways, secondary roads and avenues. There is great mastery amidst such simplicity.

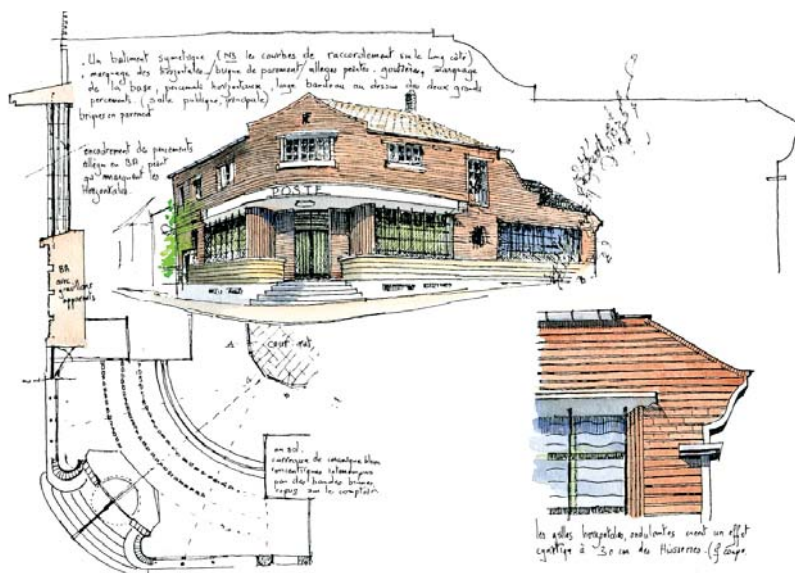
It is worth taking time too, to come back and enjoy the shade of the central square. Building works are taking place there this year. About thirty trees have been cut down leading to the disappearance of the birds and changing the way the sun shines on people living by the river. Let us hope that in this redevelopment the poetry of the place will be retained and that a small place will be found for the beautiful sculpture which decorated it (an old worker in the style of Jules Dalou).



Public garden Henri Sellier



- Cité jardin du pré Saint-Gervais, 1935



Post office

- bureau de poste du Pré Saint-Gervais -



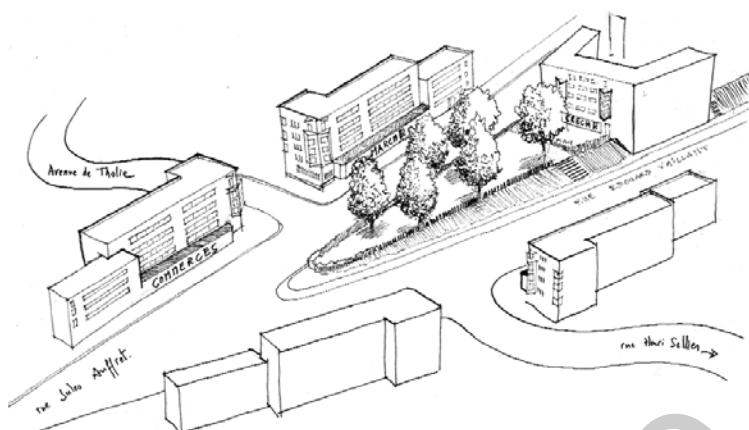
Following the Rue Henri Sellier the visitor comes out on to a crossroads which feeds five roads.

The place marks a local boundary with Pantin and Felix Dumail chose to treat it as something of an urban stage set, distinguishing it with five buildings in blond brick. At the southern end of the fork he placed an apartment block five stories high with a crèche on the ground floor which stretches onto a small square, surrounded by large trees.

On each side of the transversal streets he places four buildings set out symmetrically, two by two. Shops and a market open up out from their ground floors. To accentuate the angles of the two roads and the opening on to the groups of apartment blocks which are joined together he puts in double bow windows on the angles forming a sort of symbolic entrance way. Thus, with rare economy of means (playing with perspectives of depth, proportion, volume and tilt) the space is given coherent shape. It is structured and opened up on so many levels.

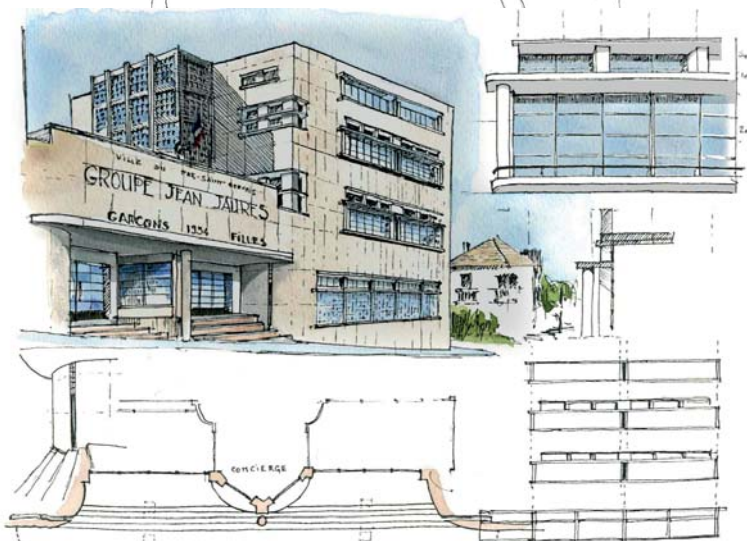
Heading north, the visitor discovers a whole avenue of apple trees which was realised between 1932 and 1934. Here again the intelligence of the design is clear to see. The ground is situated at the foot of a steep hill (with a gradient above 30%). To guarantee the stability of the slope and to protect the soil from being washed away by water runoff, Felix Dumail chose to construct a berm, in other words, to place a raised barrier in the middle of the embankment. On the base of this levelling he then places six modular buildings in comb-shaped form five floors high, along the road which extend back on themselves, covering the same length but this time only four floors high. Between each building is a forecourt which gives onto a narrow footpath winding down towards the berm, which is covered in green grass and which sprawls out on to the wooded hillside. It really is very beautiful.

The third and last tranche was created in the aftermath of the war, between 1947 and 1952. It is made up of small apartment blocks set out in parallel to each other. They follow the same design and are regularly spaced out on a hillside lawn. The site is essentially built on ground belonging to Pantin but it stretches by about 50 buildings or so into the Lilas area too.



Treatment of the limite between Pantin and Pré Saint-Gervais

- A small place in the continuation of a day-nursery at the ground floor.
- Four buildings symmetric with business at the ground floor.

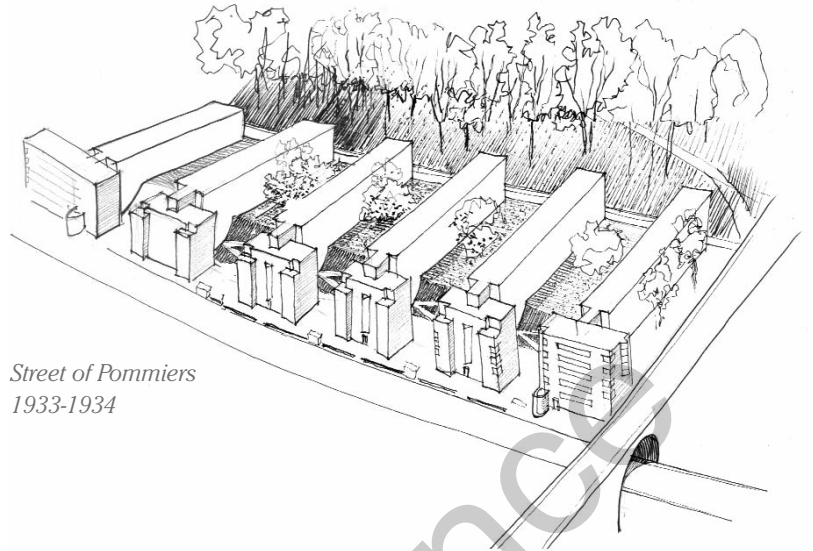


Félix Dumail middle school, architect, 1934

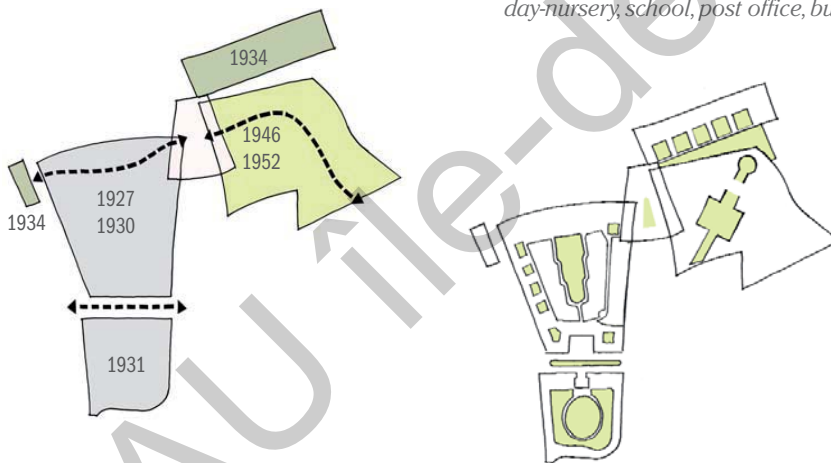
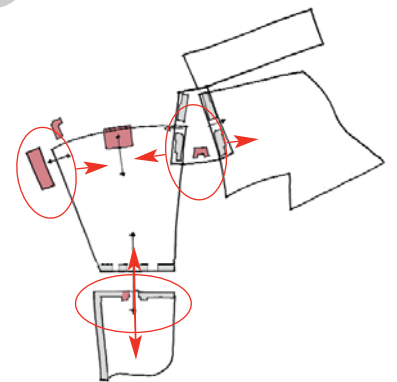
The era and the style have now changed.  
We have moved "from blocks to bars",  
from courtyard gardens to open green spaces, from  
brick to prefabricated slabs of concrete.  
The whole design has lost part of its cohesion,  
its clarity, perhaps even its identity.  
A closer look, however, will reveal that Dumail  
maintains even here his concern to work with the  
ground and to go easy on earthwork.  
At the centre of the design one can find  
a sort of 'organising' empty space, an esplanade  
bordered by large poplar trees.  
Closer inspection again will lead us to note the  
care given to the sutures, to the bordering edges,  
to the connections with what is there already.  
And it is this which is, without a doubt, the most  
convincing.

"If you respect the local features and context of the  
land then this helps guard against schematic des-  
igns," said Theodor Fischer, who taught Ernst May  
and Bruno Thaut.  
When, today, we visit beautiful garden cities such  
as those at Frankfurt, Berlin or the Pre  
Saint-Gervais we really couldn't put it any other  
way.

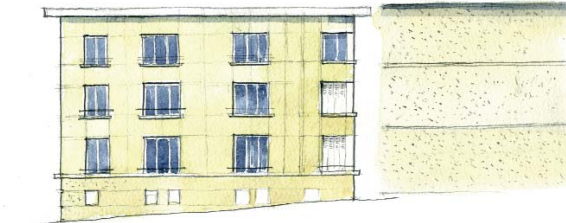
- An opération structured in three successive phases, from 1927 till 1952.
- Creation of three streets only.
- At the heart of every ilot, a stadium, a public garden, a wood or an esplanade.
- In the intersection point, a small center of quartier: small place, businesses, day-nursery, school, post office, bus stops.



Street of Pommiers  
1933-1934



City of the authors 1947-1952



Path Geneste



# Consigned to urban history books or models for the future?

Jean-Pierre Palisse<sup>(1)</sup>  
IAU île-de-France



The garden city of La Butte-Rouge at Châtenay-Malabry.

Garden cities had been designed to respond to a real need for affordable housing. This need still exists today and is top of the list of regional priorities. At the time, the Public Office for Social Housing for the Seine administrative region<sup>(2)</sup> was concerned with providing decent housing for people who had come from the French countryside to work in the factories on the outskirts of Paris. Today, within the framework of town planning in urban areas, we need to give a boost to the creation of an urban offer which is fit for the social and cultural diversity inherent in one of the world's major capital cities. Are the responses which the garden cities brought to this major challenge still relevant today in the Greater Paris of the 21<sup>st</sup> century?

## An extremely valuable urban legacy

Although they have a certain number of flaws (developments often located far from town centres; simple buildings made of simple materials; housing which is now a long way off reaching today's standards of sanitary comfort and ventilation), the garden cities have been recognised as a valuable part of our urban heritage. They seem to have aged better than the large post-war housing estates, and they remain highly desirable residential areas. This has happened not just by chance but because of several beneficial characteristics.

Garden cities offer, first of all, a quality of urban design which successfully marries an overall coherence and harmony with diversity in archi-

The garden cities of the 'Île-de-France' region were created in the inter-war years in a completely different demographic, social, economic and institutional context to that of the Greater Paris area today. However, taking an interest in the garden cities model does not serve solely to satisfy our historical curiosity or nostalgia. It can also help us to make the cities of today, and the future, more welcoming and sustainable.

tectural forms, and this, whether we look at its programming (individual or shared housing; the size of the properties) or its morphology and architecture. They benefit from having numerous local public facilities and well laid-out and cared for public spaces, with much greenery.

In the patchwork of infrastructure which makes up the Parisian suburbs, the garden cities offer a form of urban living which falls somewhere between the muddle of the suburbs and the boring uniformity of large shared housing schemes and private housing estates. They give a strong sense of identity to a local area and this fosters strong feelings of attachment and belonging amongst their inhabitants.

The way they were conceived and the principles behind their design, which took into account the topography of the site and existing roads and buildings, allowed the garden cities to fit into and around the existing urban infrastructure. This helped prevent them from becoming marginalized ghettos, as was the case for many large post-war estates.

Finally, designed as coherent developments of plots of land and benefiting enduringly from public management by the Office for Social Housing for the Seine administrative region, the garden cities and their buildings have been able to be adapted to new needs and demands as good practice and standards evolve in relation to public services and housing.

(1) PALISSE Jean-Pierre is former assistant director general at the 'Institut d'aménagement et urbanisme, île-de-France'

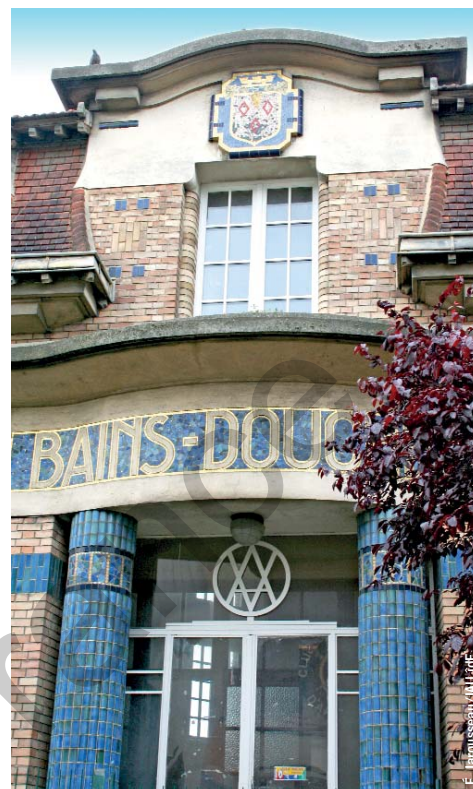
(2) In French, the OPHBM.

### Neighbourhoods which have to keep pace with changing demands

Garden cities are often to be found in attractive neighbourhoods. Nonetheless, the high proportion of social housing gives them more of a working class character and they must continue to evolve, adapt, innovate and modernize if they are not to fall into decline. The make-up of the population and the local households is changing and this requires adjustments in the configuration of the size of the housing units. Local people's needs in relation to schools, culture and health services are changing as the population becomes older and new inhabitants arrive and this requires adjustments to the types of services and facilities that are on offer. New construction techniques and new regulations are enforcing refurbishment and modernization works to bring public spaces and buildings up to standard. Garden cities are not heritage sites, they are real neighbourhoods where people live and so they have to find ways of adapting and renewing themselves without losing their special character, identity and qualities. There are three particular areas where modernisation is essential – as much for the place which these areas occupy at the heart of the values system of the garden cities model, as for the fact that they are the structural principles of any sustainable neighbourhood and so a fundamental requirement of any town planning strategy today.

The first area in which garden cities have to adapt to new needs and practices of the city is related to their public spaces and facilities. Garden cities had been established before the widespread use of the car and its dominance over our public space. Giving back space to pedestrians and bike users is, for the garden city, a bit like going back to its origins, but this demands the management of people living

The Jean-Vilar Theatre was built in 1938 at the heart of the garden city. It was restored in 1990 and hosts the 'Suresnes City Dance Festival' with a nationally renowned level of programming.



Among the numerous facilities of the garden city of Argenteuil, only public baths are closed, looking forward to another use.

alongside the constant, and highly frequent use, of motorised transport. In the beginning, and with inhabitants who often had their origins in the countryside, the shared or private gardens of the garden city were made available for use as orchards or vegetable patches. However, little by little these came to be considered as little more than decoration and it was left up to the public authorities to maintain the spaces when they were left unused. If gardening for leisure and the growing of one's own food were to become more highly valued, this could lead to a reassessment of these gardens and to new management practices. With regard to the public facilities which were designed in the interwar years, these retain their symbolic value by virtue of their remarkable architectural designs but they have sometimes lost their usefulness and relevance. Examples would include public baths or certain school buildings which are now no longer proportionate to needs. However, local authorities have, for the most part, maintained them, modernised them and kept them up to standard. This means high standards of facilities have been maintained and certain particularly renowned places have even been enhanced, such as the Jean-Vilar Theatre at Suresnes. The second area in which garden cities have to modernise is related to housing. The demands on housing have evolved considera-



bly since the post-war period. A first wave of modernization affecting sanitary equipment in housing brought with it the creation of toilets and bathrooms. The challenge today, in the face of the rising cost of energy, is to improve their thermal insulation and to bring the houses up to the most modern standards. They are a long way from reaching these at the moment, but doing so would assure a substantial reduction in their use of energy. Internal improvements are also required if they are to meet family lifestyles of today.

The third area in which garden cities have to modernise is in the sociology of their inhabitants and of the activities that are on offer. The tenants of social housing estates, which came after the original 'HBM'<sup>(3)</sup>, are not sufficiently representative of the diversity of today's society for garden cities to become spontaneous social melting pots. And is it pertinent that we now give social housing tenants the right to buy and sell their properties (according to their value in the residential property market) with the risk that these neighbourhoods will either become gentrified very quickly or will fall into disrepair like certain jointly-owned buildings or estates where the inhabitants run into financial difficulties? In the same way that council estates had been built at the edge of noisy and dirty factory sites, the garden cities had a function which was essentially residential, supporting only those businesses and services that were directly linked with them. Today, the different types of economic activity mean that they can coexist quite easily with their habitat and so can re-integrate themselves into largely residential areas, such as the garden cities. Economic activity close by to residential space adds to the diversity of the garden city and lends these areas a more intense and enduring sense of vitality.

### From the garden city to the green city

The success of the concept of the garden city is borne of the association and complementarity between built environment and green space. Today, we find the same duality in the idea of bringing green space into the city. This idea is extremely current in redevelopments taking place in the Greater Paris area and most notably in the recommendations being put forward by the Sechhi-Vigano design team.

This association of the two, whilst surprising, shows how the scale of the urban problematic has changed and opens up an environmental dimension which was much less present in the previous century. Much more than just a decorative element in the city, green space is becoming a link in the biological chain which gives structure to the city, breathes life into it

and which helps balance its ecosystem. From this point of view, the traditional version of the garden city and the way it uses open and agricultural spaces is not enough on its own to provide for the natural irrigation of the city. But, it can play a role if it is integrated with the green and blue belt advocated by the Grenelle Environment Forum. The gardens of the city gardens are no longer representations of the countryside in reduced, symbolic format, providing nearby space for leisure and relaxation, they are also called on now to contribute to the sustainability and the resilience of the urban ecosystem by feeding its biodiversity, providing renewable resources for the city and contributing to its climatic adaptation.

Providing that they link in with their urban environments, the garden city and its agricultural space can help showcase this marriage between city and nature, a key element in the sustainability and attractiveness of large metropolitan areas.

### Urban values which are still relevant today

The values and concepts of the cities which were imagined by Ebenezer Howard and Raymond Unwin, and then developed further by Georges Benoît-Levy and Henri Sellier, remain helpful reference points and can still inspire new improvements in cities today. They are, however, confronted by the socio-economic and environmental challenges of the contemporary metropolis and have to prove their compatibility with objectives for the economic use of space, urban compactness and intensity

(3) 'HBM' stands for 'Habitation à bon marché', a term used to describe social housing. It was the precursor to the HLM or the 'Habitation à loyer modéré'.

Family gardens in the garden city of Suresnes, used for food growing and leisure.



advocated by the 'Sdrif'<sup>(4)</sup> project which was agreed by the Île-de-France region in October 2012.

In an introductory article to number 149 of the Cahiers series (*entitled Envies de Villes*) I listed the seven quality standards to which any urban project should adhere:

- Making links between different levels of urban space and coherent use of public space
- Adapting the housing offer to meet need and to fulfill socio-economic objectives
- Making local facilities accessible by keeping them locally situated and easily reached by public transport
- Optimising the environment and ecosystem
- Making public spaces civilised and welcoming
- Quality in the urban form and landscape
- Providing a capacity for resilience and scalability in the medium and long term

The garden cities have responded well to this list of demands which makes them attractive places to live and has enabled them to age well. In order to do this they have mixed together fairly modest, simple and discrete urban and architectural elements which, nevertheless, have been well looked after, which were imaginative and sometimes innovative and which, in the long term, have proved their effectiveness. These values and elements have sometimes been forgotten in the urban developments of the post-war era for various reasons: the dominant influence of the doctrine or ideology which happened to be in vogue at the time, or more prosaically, the sheer urgency and scale of need. The designers of large social housing estates and new towns often preferred to ignore the experience of the garden cities, favouring a type of functional modernity and urban innovations which turned out to be illusory and hard to modify. Today's quest for a more sustainable form of city, therefore, leads us to reappraise the values of the garden city and to update their constituent elements in the urban project.

However, today's urban projects are being developed in a very different context to that of the garden cities between the two world wars. In the inner suburbs it is no longer a question of occupying pieces of land at the edges of the wider Paris agglomeration which have been left vacant by uncontrolled urban sprawl but, instead, of reconstructing the city within the city and recycling old urban development sites. In the outer suburbs it is no longer a question of creating new residential villages but, instead, of successfully grafting on new developments, enabling the requalification and improvement of peri-urban zones, preventing them from diluting, albeit at the expense of rural space.

## Garden cities as a challenge to urban compactness

The experience of the garden city gives interesting leads with which to elaborate and develop these projects on condition that we take into account two crucial questions concerning urban compactness and intensity, namely density and mixity.

The garden city imagined by Howard was not very dense, largely because the houses were individual buildings and there was abundant green space. But several French garden cities such as those of Suresnes and Châtenay-Malabry have shown that relatively high density could be compatible with the spirit of the garden city if a large part of housing (whether it is council housing or mid-range accommodation) has been integrated into the overall design. However, it is clear that very high density, such as we see in Paris, is not compatible with the traditional approach to the composition of garden cities. They cannot be developed in sites of extremely high property value or which demand works that are likely to cost a lot of money: profitability in these areas is always going to demand highly dense developments. We therefore have to look for other ways of integrating vegetation in our cities rather than just planting it in the ground.

Creating different categories of housing estates is a first step towards achieving some form of social diversity but this is dependent on the programme and the financial model of the planning operation, on the part that housing will play and especially the allocation between rental properties and owner-occupied accommodation. With regard to their functional mixity, this is achieved through introducing services and businesses, but also other different forms of economic activity which can coexist alongside each other without conflict. Its success will depend on the integration of the neighbourhood with the city, on its accessibility and its positioning in the urban framework.

The articles which follow will show you the way in which these old garden cities continue to thrive and develop as well as the leads they provide us with when it comes to planning the city of tomorrow. Paradoxically, it would seem their main drawback – with regard to the challenges of sustainable city living – is their historical value which confers on them their exceptional urbanist and architectural status, a status which could end up standing in the way of the evolutions and mutations which are always necessary in today's urban environments.

(4) Sdrif stands for 'Schéma régional d'aménagement et d'urbanisme de la région Île-de-France' (Master Plan of Urban Planning and Development for the Île-de-France region).





# Taking Action

Today, garden cities are considered as a holdings to be protected, but also to be rehabilitated, giving necessity, for the lessors, of composing between respect for the quality architectural and put in the standards of housing, at the risk of entrainer a denaturation of the built.

In front of this challenge, the sale of the park as is could be a temptation; however, garden cities are not at all a privileged ground of experiment of the sale council house. Envisaged in an objective of social mix, it is more often a matter of a political choice.

Beyond the built, the stake also is to manage to maintain the coherence and the quality of public places, sometimes threatened by certain functional necessity such as the car park. Indeed, the sophisticated declension of the weft viaire as the diversity and the vegetable wealth are strong elements of the identity of garden cities.

The inhabitants say to themselves attachés in their district, aware of this quality, worried of protecting it and of valuing it, minced meat pies of the united values inherent to the conception of garden cities.



Yazid Menour

## Interview

Christian Dupuy is Mayor of Suresnes since 1983 (32-year-old elected representative), deputy chairman of the General Council of the Hauts-de-Seine in charge of the culture, and former deputy.

Lawyer of profession, he was named a member of the Council of State in extraordinary service in 2009.

Particularly concerned the questions of housing, Christian Dupuy is a vice-president of the national Federation of the offices of the housing environment and represent the French Mayors' Association to the national council for the housing environment.

In 2011, he was elected a president of the departmental public office of the housing environment of the Hauts-de-Seine.

# Suresnes – from the gardens city to the garden city

**Les Cahiers – What does the gardens city represent for you?**

Christian Dupuy – The gardens city is a great example of all the architectural styles of an era, with different shapes and sizes of buildings – architecture which reminds us of the Bauhaus school, of other anglo-norman styles, without forgetting those built in the 1920s and which were influenced by the 19<sup>th</sup> century. In my role as Mayor I have always considered the gardens city as a strong element of Suresnes' identity and cultural heritage.

The initial desire to welcome different social classes and public facilities, shops... is inspiring. In this regard I would like to return to the history of the model. Howard's model was utopian. It was about creating cities in the countryside, of being able to benefit from the features of town centres but at a distance from them.

Henri Sellier revisited the idea in the context of a housing crisis and growing urbanization within the Paris agglomeration following the end of the First World War. At that time, Henri Sellier was at the head of the public office for social housing in the Seine administrative region and Chair of the General Council. The gardens city, as he had been conceived, covered the whole set of social strata: 'undesirables', disadvantaged people who came from shanty towns in the former city walls, manual labourers, employees, managers, the bourgeoisie – each had their place in the gardens city. This diversity translated itself into differences in the levels of comfort within the apartment blocks. A passageway and small bedrooms for the 'undesirables' with shared toilets; a shower in the toilets for the manual labourers and workers; and real bathrooms for managers who lived opposite the Longchamp racecourse. And, to compensate for these differences in comfort, there were sumptuous public bath-houses decorated with art deco mosaics in neo-Moorish style.

**L. C. – As Mayor, what has been your role in the history of the gardens city at Suresnes?**

C. D. – When I was elected in 1983 I got the gardens city of Suresnes added to the list of sites protected by the ministry of Culture because I knew that the public housing office was planning rehabilitation works and I feared that the

spirit of the city would be betrayed, both on an architectural level as well as a symbolic level. The protected status that we were given was that we were added to the list of 'scenic and historic sites'; this enabled us to carry out renovation works that were respectful of the whole site. They were started in 1985 and completed in 1996. At the time, the only funding available was through the PALULOS grants scheme, from which we obtained, in the first stages, fairly significant uplifts in the grants that were awarded. Regarding housing for the 'undesirables' for example, several housing units were reconfigured into a single unit in order to be able to offer larger spaces. But, paradoxically, this led to us maximising the upper limit of one single funding

stream and it promised social mixity which was a major part of Henri Sellier's project.

I tried to convince the office to launch a right to buy programme for tenants. At the time I failed because the office didn't want to manage mixed-ownership sites. I managed to get this passed only with regard to single homes – even if they weren't part of the renovation programme, they were covered by the funding programme. Today, in 2012, around 50% of the homes in the gardens city are owner-occupied. For the shared housing units we had to wait for Nicolas Sarkozy, Chair of the General Council of the Hauts-de-Seine region, to require the housing office to do this. A right to buy scheme was then launched for the shared housing blocks but sales were limited to around 2% of the total housing on offer, a level well below that for real social mixity in the neighbourhood, which is made up of more than 3,000 housing units.

**L. C. – Today you are also Chair of the public office for housing in the department of Hauts-de-Seine.**

**Is social mixity within the garden cities still an objective?**

C. D. – As Chair of the office, of course, I remain very engaged on this issue, particularly at Châtenay-Malabry, Suresnes and Plessis-Robinson where the garden cities offer real coherence in their planning and real quality in their architecture. Conserving our cultural heritage does not mean we are condemned to create social ghettos. We have to try and achieve social mixity as if we were part of an ANRU renovation programme, but without going



through the demolition and reconstruction stage. Since we can't operate outside this particular funding stream, we have to facilitate differentiated funding sources to obtain diversity of inhabitants from different social classes: from those in PLS housing, PLI housing and social housing ownership for tenants who wish it. Suresnes is an example of social mixity since the town is made up of 37% social housing in terms of French urban solidarity and renewal legislation, but in reality, more than half the households in the commune receive some sort of assistance if you count the PLI housing as well. Social mixity exists elsewhere in Suresnes and I want to bring it back to the garden city too. My objective is for 20% of the population to be outside the bracket for social housing.

**L. C. – What is the process for selling housing in the gardens city?**

C. D. – To start with, the office sold houses under the right to buy scheme that made up the social rented stock. It was the tenants who bought the property. In cases where a property became free, it was offered for sale to social tenants in the commune and in the absence of anyone coming forward, it was offered to tenants in the 'département'. More recently it has been decided that houses in the garden city would be sold without the status of social housing attached to them, in their current state, and so in need of much refurbishment work. The price of property sales through the housing office are very attractive, but when it comes to re-selling, the prices can reach up to €10,000 per square metre. When the right to buy scheme for the shared housing blocks was launched, the office opted for a maximum tax relief of 35% in relation to the valuation of the property. Moreover, it put in place two 'vendor loans' with a grace period, therefore making available two loans at zero interest – this one, agreed by the General Council, in addition to the zero interest loan offered by the state. This measure enables tenants to buy their property for around half the market price and with similar monthly payments, if not slightly less, to the rent that they used to pay. It nevertheless necessitates supporting the households in order to educate and accompany them through all the steps of what is involved, such as the need to pay additional bills and land tax which is levied on property owners. We want to avoid tenants being made more vulnerable by the purchase of their property and then having to manage properties which have fallen into disrepair. Right to buy only attracts very few people from outside – in more than 80% of cases it is the residents themselves of the garden city who take up the offer.

**L. C. – What are the links between the gardens city and the rest of the town?**

C. D. – My objective is to open up gardens city and to draw the attention of the residents to the quality of the neighbourhood in which they live. Educational visits on the architecture of the area and its design are organized in the form of extra-curricular activities. They are followed up by model-building workshops for children. Today, the gardens city can be visited and certain facilities bring in people from outside, such as the Jean Vilar theatre which has become very attractive. In my first term, I wanted to revive the activity of the theatre which had been turned into a space for functions and parties, having enjoyed its moment of glory back in the 1950s. At this time, the National Popular Theatre (théâtre national populaire), directed by Jean Vilar was just starting out. But the theatre was badly designed, suffered from faults, and was made worse by profligate repairs in the 1970s. Between 1988 and 1990 a significant renovation programme was carried out, costing 60 million francs. The inside of the theatre was completely redone and the outside façade was preserved. As a result of this, and thanks to Olivier Meyer, the director, the theatre has found again the reputation it enjoyed at the time of Jean Vilar, with an attendance rate of more than 90%. The creation of the "Suresnes City Dance Festival" 20 years ago contributed to this, being the first initiative in France to bring together big names in contemporary dance with the world of Hip Hop. Still with a view to opening up the theatre and making it more accessible, partnership work has been developed with other cultural facilities and schools in the town. And during the "Suresnes City Dance Festival", as with other shows, the rehearsals are open to the public. The city is out of the way but its access has been improved considerably. I managed to get the RATP to agree to change the bus routes – previously they passed right around the gardens city but, from now on, they go right inside it, up to the Stalingrad Square. So that Parisiens could come to the theatre, a shuttle bus service was put in place leaving from the Pont de l'Alma and Etoile. However, this impacts on only a very small part of the visiting public since 80% of the spectators come from Suresnes itself or its neighbouring towns.

Interview conducted  
by Lucile Mettetal

**The gardens city, which writing?**

In this interview we made the decision to respect Henri Sellier's spelling of the term gardens city (cité-jardins) with an 's'. The plural here is supposed to differentiate his model from that of Ebenezer Howard's idealistic, new towns by emphasizing their concrete, realistic aspect. In France today, a garden city is described, according to the Heritage Inventory Service, as a "development where the housing and the road networks are integrated with public and private green spaces, and which is made up of social housing in shared blocks or individual homes, surrounded by landscaping and gardens", but the symbolic spelling of the term has disappeared.

**What are the future challenges for the gardens city?**

"I would mention, just off the top of my head, environmental standards, maintaining local businesses and parking. Brickwork makes it difficult to carry out insulation works from the outside and insulation works from inside are complicated when you have people living there. We are confronted with the difficult balance between comfort and the preservation of our cultural heritage. The car wasn't an issue when the gardens city were built, but it has become one. We have to find solutions without challenging the coherence of the site and the quality of shared spaces. Certain spaces have a confirmed social purpose, such as family gardens, created six years ago, managed by a professional gardener who is responsible for the educational element. Other spaces are children's play areas or contribute to the overall landscaping of the area. Without questioning the purpose of these green lungs, the situation today remains tense since there is a lack of parking space. This is why the decision was made to create underground parking beneath the 'Place de la Paix' which will be developed by the housing office and the town hall. Finally, as part of the overall design right from the beginning, the shops on the ground floors of the buildings have always been there and are part of the quality of the whole make-up of the site. The public office is responsible for the management of the leases and remains aware of the need for commercial variety. As elsewhere, the local shops suffer from competition from large format stores. We remain vehemently opposed to turning the shops into housing, but, in order to avoid vacancies, some premises now accommodate organisations from the human services sector. More generally, the challenge remains one of social cohesion in the neighbourhood and the wellbeing of the residents. The gardens city has, for a long time, suffered from an outdated image with regard to its ambience and its appearance. Today, after years of hard work, it is finding again the image it deserves."



William Beaucardet

## Interview

Gérard Cosme was born on 31<sup>st</sup> March 1953 in Le Pré Saint-Gervais where he grew up and he still lives there to this day.

He took over the family chocolate business which currently employs around 10 people.

He joined the local administration under Marcel Debarge, at first as deputy to the Mayor.

In 1998 he became Mayor, following Claude Bartolone who joined Lionel Jospin's government.

In October 2012 he became president of the inter-municipal 'Communauté d'Agglomération Est Ensemble'.

A former vice-president, and the first, with responsibility for town planning, Gérard Cosme endeavours to respect the unique characteristics of each commune which makes up the inter-municipal structure.

He was made a 'Chevalier de la légion d'honneur' on 10<sup>th</sup> October 2002.

# The garden city of Le Pré Saint-Gervais symbolises values for the future

**Les Cahiers – In your role as Mayor, what is your assessment of the garden city at Le Pré Saint-Gervais?**

Gérard Cosme – The garden city symbolises the revival of part of our cultural heritage, and it is felt like that on a daily basis by the residents. Urban development goes through a cyclical process and the values brought by the garden cities in how land can be organised for multifunctional purposes are modern values, the very opposite of a form of urban organisation which segregates and zones things off. Permeating the values of our past heritage and of the future, the garden cities have managed to stand the test of time, such is the power of the living environment they create. And if you

were to ask me today about the political task of Le Pré Saint-Gervais, I would talk about these values here – of progress and solidarity, values which guided the birth of the garden cities during the age of 'municipal socialism' and which remain intact to this day. Jean-Baptiste Sémanaz, the first socialist Mayor of Le Pré Saint-Gervais (1904-1914) had both political and personal links to Henri Sellier. He played a major role in launching this project to combat the insalubrious housing of the time. Because the concept of the garden city was guided by a spirit of sharing, they are a particularly suitable response to community living, born out of the regard of those who work on urban development matters in order to serve humanity. The coherence of the overall site is the most seductive translation of this idea: the special feature of the place is the redbrick blocks of flats which surround the detached houses which, themselves, are spread out around a large green space which has been designed as a meeting space and for sport and leisure use.

**L. C. – How the garden city has managed to withstand the test of time?**

G. C. – We are fortunate in having one single landlord which invests in refurbishing its estate. In six years, the entire housing stock in the garden city will be refurbished. This is a complex project which requires respect for the historical and cultural value of the buildings while bringing them up to today's standards in terms of energy efficiency and accessibility. The pre-

sence and the support of the state (because we're talking here about a garden city which has protected status) guarantees a certain level of requirements when it comes to conservation. Works started five years ago with the refurbishment of all the detached houses. Refurbishment of the 'red bricks' involves around 500 homes in two blocks (the Henri Sellier estate and around the stadium Léo-Lagrange) and started in June 2012 with the expected date of completion set for September 2015. This will allow us to improve the thermal insulation and soundproofing, to re-model 17 apartments for disabled use and to offer an increased number of larger housing units (of four or five rooms)

by restructuring some of the space. Overcrowding is, unfortunately, one of the consequences of the housing crisis today.

Communal spaces are essentially managed by the town hall, but the

situation remains a hybrid one and means we have to work intelligently with our partners and particularly with the public office for social housing of Seine-Saint-Denis (OPH93). Renovation of the courtyards is in progress – we started along the edges of the Léo-Lagrange stadium and will then move on next to the Henri Sellier square in partnership with the 'l'Architecte des Bâtiments de France'. Situated right at the heart of the garden city, it has been subject to special treatment by means of a survey which was carried out with the residents so that we could better understand the needs of young and old alike, and by means of detailed work on the choice of materials and plant species to be used. The objective here is to revive the definitions of space which Felix Dumail<sup>(1)</sup> would have come up with during his time, and to give each square its own identity.

**L. C. – Are there plans to sell off parts of the garden city?**

G. C. – Selling parts of the garden city is not one of our objectives and I would oppose this strongly. We came close to disaster at the end

(1) Director and architect at the Office for Public Housing in the Seine administrative region (l'office public d'habitations à bon marché de la Seine, or OPHBMS in French); it was in this role that he built the garden city at Pré Saint-Gervais.



of the 1990s when the OIRP<sup>(2)</sup> decided to sell off part of its estate after experiencing financial difficulties. When the renovation work then started, the presence of more than one owner proved difficult to manage. In fact, the preservation of a certain level of architectural unity as well as a strong urban and cultural identity is easier to guarantee with one single owner, in this case the OPH93. For buyers, it was a bonanza because prices increased three times over a twelve-year period. But we have not been elected to leave the town in the hands of the property market. My political desire is to maintain a social balance in our housing by keeping at least a minimum of 45% social housing properties in the commune. By means of the PLU<sup>(3)</sup>, we can force developers to include at least 30% social housing in any new housing development. This balance is necessary given the significant demand for housing compared with the offer we are able to make – and all the more so given the fact that turnover is relatively weak in the garden city; housing generally only becomes available on the death of an existing resident.

#### **L. C. – Small businesses are disappearing, how can we keep this kind of activity going in the garden city?**

G. C. – A certain level of activity is necessary and I don't want the garden city to become just another dormitory suburb. Today, the businesses which are located in the garden cities can't escape the way the consumer market is heading – some disappear as a result of large format stores opening up, or are barely able to afford the rents imposed by the public office for social housing, which has to assure the profitability of its estate. For a time, small businesses took over vacant commercial spaces which they used for their registered offices; their windows were painted white, the places became inactive and they had no interactions with the residents. Even if several businesses remain and play an essential social role, an important part of traditional activity was not able to survive and this fact led us to do some thinking. For some time now, and notably since the creation of la Villette, artists and creative craftsmen have come to set themselves up in the area – this is both a reality and an image that we are trying to promote in our cultural policies, just like the 'Maison Revel' at Pantin. Once seduced by a place which they came to see on an Open House heritage day, certain people have come to settle in the garden city. One day, on the occasion of a public meeting and thanks to a comment made by a resident, I realised that the garden city could become for craftsmen or artists, and for culture in general, what it had been for

the workers of the postwar period. Since then, we have been working with the OPH93 to come up with public policy and financial measures to help fill empty commercial spaces and support the arrival of creative craftsmen. The OPH93 evaluates the minimum amount of finances needed to make a scheme work and the town hall guarantees the rent payable to it for a fixed period of three or four months, which covers any risks. We are also looking at a charter for identifying suitable premises and a charter for managing shopfronts and signs in order to give visibility to these artists. Thinking about how to make the Séverine square more dynamic, we are also welcoming a new type of public and giving new life to the square. This is a project which is gathering speed quickly and which gives meaning to life in the garden city. There is no doubt that the arrival of artists helps promote the garden city. Today, about 30% of the shop spaces are filled. The garden city accommodates a workshop specialising in creating plinths for sculptures, four visual artists workshops, an artist's collective, a designer of children's wear, several designers and a furniture tapestry artist who trained at the 'Maison Revel' in Pantin.

From their very beginning, artists and creative craftsmen have had a place in the garden cities: certain houses had been created to act as workshops and before the crisis of 1929, a 'theatre de verdure'<sup>(4)</sup> or open air theatre had been planned in place of the stadium. Finally, it is a matter, now, of going back to our roots, the very essence of the garden cities!

Everything, from sports facilities, public squares, to the availability of local public services and culture serves a particular urban policy which supports social cohesion, enabling the garden city to be opened up to people who don't live in it. Its geographical position and the routes and parks support this; wherever you are in Le Pré Saint-Gervais you are never further than five minutes by foot from the garden city.

Interview conducted by  
Sophie Mariotte and Lucile Mettetal

#### **Genesis of the garden city Henri Sellier**

A designated site for agricultural use, then taken over by rich Parisians in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, Le Pré Saint-Gervais changed considerably with industrialisation, becoming a neighbourhood for workers. The need to house a new population of workers and to provide services for them made it the ideal place to build one of the large-scale garden cities. Irregular in shape and very steep in places, the area can be divided up naturally into different parts. This is why the 1,008 flats and 243 houses drawn up by the architect, Felix Dumail, are spread out according to the lie of the land in order to minimise costly, but totally necessary, foundations. These constraints explain why it is the houses that are grouped together at the centre of the overall site.

The Henri Sellier garden city of Le Pré Saint-Gervais was constructed in two stages – first of all came, in 1928, the groups of houses surrounding the Sellier square and the blocks of flats along the Avenue Jean Jaurès and the Séverine square; then, in 1931, came the blocks of flats surrounding the Léo-Lagrange stadium. Plans were made between 1928-1929 for a health centre, social services, a maternity unit and an open air theatre. Only a children's centre was actually developed. The Jean Jaurès school was built between 1930 and 1934. The post office completed the set. This garden city was also made up of numerous shops and businesses with ground floor premises, as well as a co-operative shop (dear to Henri Sellier's heart and which eventually disappeared). Works ended with the Pommiers estate, situated in Pantin, and the Auteurs estate at Pantin and Lilas. If the initial plans favoured detached homes, as construction work proceeded and the demography changed, Sellier and his team of architects had to concede a much more important place to the blocks of flats. The Henri Sellier garden city, which was given listed status in 1986, has been regularly maintained since 1998. Owned by the public office for social housing of the 'département', it consists today of 1,200 apartments and 56 detached homes.



**The values of progress and solidarity are still well carried by the garden city.**

(2) Interdepartmental Office for the Paris Region (l'office interdépartemental de la région parisienne in French).

(3) 'Plan local d'urbanisme' or local town plan.

(4) A 'théâtre de verdure' is an open air theatre consisting of a grass amphitheatre, surrounded by high hedges and with seating stands facing the direction of a stage where the action takes place.

**Hélène Joinet**  
**Lucile Mettetal**  
IAU île-de-France

# Lessons: facing diverse challenges



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Project of heart of island which will consist of family gardens at Stains.

This article has been drafted from interviews with Yves Nedelec<sup>(1)</sup> and Marian Sypniewski of the Seine-Saint-Denis Office for Public Housing; Damien Vanoverschel and Frédéric Morlon of the Hauts-de-Seine Departmental Office for Public Housing; and Philippe Bardon and Frédéric Morlon of the Valophis Group.

## **The social survey: a preliminary step indispensable to housing rehabilitation**

The garden city of Suresnes, which was built from 1921 onwards on the initiative of Henri Sellier, lived through the war and post-war periods, as well as the construction of new buildings with surface areas in line with standards. For the oldest housing, i.e. two-thirds of the garden city, no renovation work had been conducted for 60 years. In 1982, the Hauts-de-Seine Departmental Office for Public Housing inherited an ageing property from the old inter-departmental office. A few months later, a complete study of the garden city of Suresnes had been carried out, and a structure put in place for its rehabilitation; this was "Suresnes Housing" which combined both social and technical project management. For the Office, it was the start of a massive nine-year project, involving 270 public meetings and 6,000 individual interviews. The political commitment was clear: no one would be forced out of the garden city. Renovation of some 2,200 dwelling units in the brick buildings could not be carried out in areas already occupied, so a vast and

As owners and managers, landlords play an engaged, active role in the life of garden cities. For them, respect for an asset and its history, its promotion, the daily lives of its inhabitants and what they hope for, as well as the sharing and coherence of public spaces, are all important factors that must be taken into account in their professional practices. What are they?

complex operation of temporary housing in series was undertaken; and to not put a spanner in the complicated works, since units had to be freed up each day, local authorities paying social housing contributions were requested to halt allocation of their reserved units. For nine years, the Office was open daily to receive tenants and adjust to their needs, for example in the case of a pregnancy. Mr Morlon, head of the Hauts-de-Seine Office Suresnes delegation, still remembers two elderly women who knitted together, each on her balcony; two adjoining units with balconies facing south needed to be found to not upset their usual day-to-day routine.

## **Turning housing block courtyards into areas of quality city life**

The garden city of Stains, built between 1931 and 1933, is characterised by housing block courtyards reached by small corridors. Originally, these areas were for use by the community: an area for playing boules, a roller skating track, then market gardening and pastureland after the Second World War. Over time, these areas were abandoned; unused and unclaimed,

(1) NEDELEC Yves is Managing Director and SYPNIEWSKI Marian heads the Seine-Saint-Denis Office for Public Housing Renovations Department. VANOVERSCHEL Damien is Managing Director and MORLON Frédéric is Director of the Hauts-de-Seine Office for Public Housing Suresnes delegation. BARDON Philippe is Director of Commercialisation and MARTIN François is Director of the Programme Department, at Expansiel Groupe Valophis.



Nature asserted her rights. A few vegetable gardens remained, but these were far from being for public benefit; rather, they had become private, either handed down from one family member to another, or simply appropriated because they were known to exist. Appropriation by the community had given way to appropriation by the individual – a concept far removed from the garden city's original idea. A terrain for small-scale agricultural production or gardening gone fallow, but a secret world as well, the housing block courtyards had become invisible to most inhabitants. Some houses blocked views of the greenery in the courtyards; others had appropriated for themselves the routes leading there. Where the original public access had been properly maintained, the problem was about differentiating community gates from private ones, raising issues about the status of access to these spaces. In the heart of the communities, vandalism reinforced the sense of insecurity, and the lawless forcing of locks had worsened the state of neglect.

Faced with this situation, in 2006 the consultancy of Techné [Cité] was entrusted with conducting a study to rehabilitate the Stains garden city housing block courtyards. The challenge was to come up with a project for using, sharing and connecting the public space. Assisted by the consulting firm, the various partners – the city of Stains, the Seine-Saint-Denis Office for Public Housing and the Plaine Commune urban area community council – organised a wide-ranging dialogue with the inhabitants, of all ages and from every geographic area. While, at first, residents had a few concerns about transformation of the housing block centres, over the course of the on-going dialogue the desire to build new and different social relations seemed to grow stronger within the garden city. The planned recovery of the housing block courtyards began to take shape. After a lengthy series of work sessions, a programme

was decided on that took into account residents' various uses of, and aspirations for, the space in question. Five housing block courtyards fell to the Seine-Saint-Denis Office for Public Housing, or OPH93, to develop into plots for family gardens or to be shared with local tenants. Plaine Commune was to manage two courtyards, to be used by the community: public gardens, youth recreation areas and areas to play pétanque. The initial goal of an open passage, a walkway linking the housing block centres, in the end came up against the constraints of management. Some self-managed centres, like those of the family gardens, were to be closed off by a gate.

### The temptation to close off

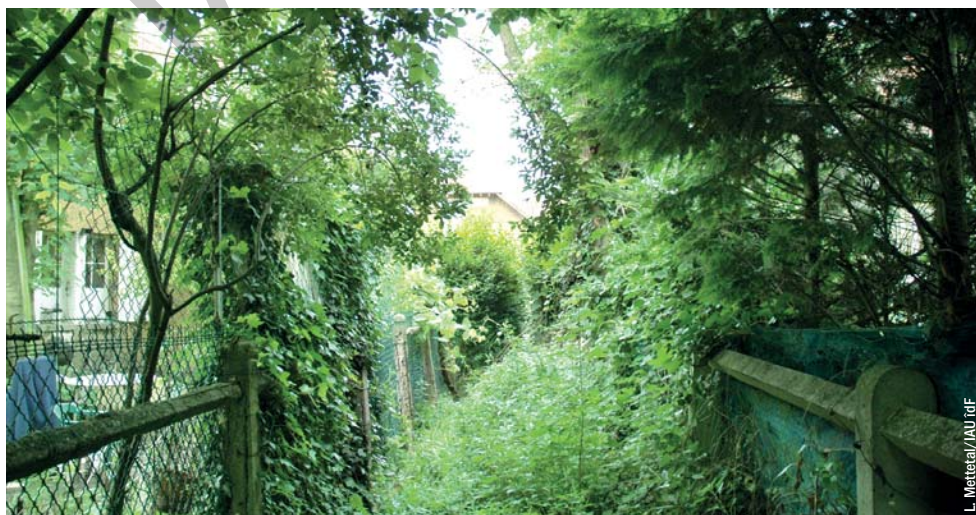
As elsewhere, it is not uncommon for garden city inhabitants to manifest the desire to close off an area: here a little open area, there a little service corridor, elsewhere a group of houses or community buildings. There are many reasons for this: to limit traffic and company that could be considered intrusive; to make immediate surroundings "private"; to reserve parking spaces on one's doorstep or across the street; to allow children to play safely. Yet the complex interlocking of roads, paths and open areas – a combination of public use and private enjoyment – is, in a way, the hallmark of garden cities; and with it, comes the issue of the fluidity of paths and roadways and the many possible circuits. Depending on the site, and its traffic and safety issues, landlords can respond in a variety of ways.

In Stains, housing blocks have been fenced in, especially on the street side, whereas at the rear the open areas back onto locked-off spaces – the 'l'Architecte des Bâtiments de France' had asked for this to be maintained.

In Champigny-sur-Marne, the community project put up for sale and turned into a co-ownership was subject to the specifically French

### The Complex Sale Process

Whether a sale to occupants or a transfer of vacant housing, in both cases, the process is carefully guided and involves relatively complex successive steps which include: prior feasibility studies, tenant surveys, meetings of the Board of Directors of the social housing body, targeted advertising (through the press, lobby posters in landlord buildings, in the community and then throughout the 'département'); the reorganisation, if necessary, of reservation rights, reduced price setting, guidance and assistance for the future buyer (financial structuring, information on the amount of charges, co-ownership rights and obligations, etc.), drafting of co-ownership rules and regulations and anti-speculative clauses, the property management company choice, etc. The 2006 French law marking a national commitment on housing, the "loi ENL", made it easier for the social housing body (acting as the vendor) to assume the property management company's role. Nevertheless, buildings sold in the Île-de-France region's garden cities are generally managed by property management companies independent of the original landlord.



At Stains, return the hearts of accessible islands.

concept of “résidentialisation”, i.e. giving a private nature to a building or complex; elsewhere, in the same garden city, residents' requests to install fences and gates are not necessarily granted, so that the fluidity of potential traffic can be maintained.

In Suresnes, disturbances and nuisances means there are regular requests to close off pedestrian routes. Indeed, some local residents have no hesitation about closing them off themselves, without permission from the landlord who is, nevertheless, responsible for these areas. The social housing office, of course, has the right to require the re-opening of corridors if they become unusable.

In some ways, the problem of “résidentialisation” goes to the heart of striking a balance between “city” and “garden”; of ensuring comfort for residents without adding to the shutting-in and shutting-out that is sometimes part of the reality of city living.

### **Parking: how to share the public space**

For the Île-de-France garden cities, parking is a thorny issue and sometimes a source of real conflict. Designed at a time predating the automobile era, their roadway network has had to adapt for better or for worse to residents' increasing use of motorised vehicles – especially since certain garden cities are still poorly served by public transport. Practically speaking, the solutions planned, or already implemented, vary depending on each location's layout, on how relations between major players play out, on how engaged the community is, on landlord choices and the means that are available, and on the community's socio-economic characteristics.

In Suresnes, a land reserve previously set aside for creating a car park finally ended up as an attractive family garden complex. However, an underground two-level car park will be created under the ‘Place de la Paix’ – one level for

hourly paid parking and one set aside for tenants – to relieve congestion and improve the safety of certain roadways.

In Stains, despite community pressure and following the regional environmental authority's initiatives, parking was banned in housing block courtyards. Underground parking cannot be considered at this time, given limited local household incomes; further, the Office has not created lock-up garage spaces. Nevertheless, parking problems have somewhat lessened since the Plaine urban area community council has redeveloped the public space.

In Champigny, three open spaces taken over by cars are to be returned to their status as amenity areas, which does not sit well with the inhabitants who have attached to this convenient parking solution. At the Square Léon Blum some sixty paid parking places will be made available for 18 € a month, whereas repeated night-time incidents at the Conservatory car park raise questions again about the need to close the area off.

### **Neighbourhoods to settle down in: garden city low-income housing sales**

Garden cities often combine the conditions needed to be able to consider the sale of low-income housing units. Such has been the case in the Île-de-France region, where several garden cities in the region have launched sales programmes, on a relatively ambitious scale, for the Hauts-de-Seine regional authority; these were implemented especially in Suresnes and Le Plessis-Robinson, and on a more occasional or targeted basis for the Valophis Group in Champigny-sur-Marne. Envisaged by the landlord to achieve social diversity, these sales are always undertaken after consultation with the community. The representative of the French State must be informed and agree, and the agency for State property management, Service France Domaine, must be brought in to determine pricing. Proceeds from the sales finance new building projects, renovation work or housing acquisitions.

For all this, garden cities are not at all intended to be a favoured ground for experimenting with low-income housing sales. The low incomes of the tenants often makes this solution completely inappropriate, and some low – income housing bodies, such as the Seine-Saint-Denis Public Housing Office, do not see sales to occupants as a direction their strategy aims for; which does not exclude, however, creating new housing for low-income households to own their own home.

How are these sales conducted successfully in garden cities? First of all, primarily buildings with land units held by a single owner are

At Stains, the reorganization of the public place allowed to limit the problems of car park.





targeted; overlapping property rights only complicate any later management and renovation works. This kind of complexity does not spare the individual inhabitant in the case of terrace houses with a common roof or when it comes to sharing costs for the refurbishment of the shared pipes and cabling underground. In addition, sales are proposed where there is a demand, whether the tenants have taken the initiative prior to offering to buy or whether they have responded favourably to the landlord's questionnaire.

In Champigny, the Valophis Group sold 162 empty units after intensive renovation of the finishing works. The type of housing units was reworked to make the housing more compact and in line with what purchasers could afford to pay; mainly couples in their thirties, their average monthly incomes ranged between € 2,200 and € 2,500. In accordance with the selection criteria defined by the City, the clear majority of purchasers were Champigny residents from low-income housing. For the first stage of the operation – the transfer of 58 housing units – no fewer than 550 households applied to buy! Prices were, indeed, 20-30% lower than those current on the Champigny real estate market. The lower price paid for social housing, the lack of underground parking and the age of the buildings all came into play in keeping the pricing down: € 1,975/m<sup>2</sup> for the housing put on the market in the programme's first phase in September 2006; € 2,500/m<sup>2</sup> for the second phase launched in September 2007; and € 2,301/m<sup>2</sup> for the third phase in September 2008 (the succeeding price increases for each phase resulted from changes in the cost of works).

In Suresnes and Le Plessis-Robinson, the housing went to occupying tenants, or to their spouses, descendants or ascendants. The average purchaser was about 50 years old and the units were sold "as is". Since 1976, sales in Suresnes have particularly concerned houses rather than flats, even at the start. Today, over 50% of them have been sold (around 90 out of a total of 170); but from 2007, in compliance with Regional Council strategy and government objectives, the policy on the transfers has broadened for the common good. The Hauts-de-Seine Office for Public Housing chose to offer a maximum reduction of 35% to facilitate sales<sup>(2)</sup> and implemented two "vendor financing" programmes financed from its equity. In 2005-2006, the prices were approximately € 1,500/m<sup>2</sup> in Suresnes and from € 1,700-1,800/m<sup>2</sup> in Le Plessis-Robinson, with an increase of approximately 15% for the phases which followed.

These attractive prices brought intense promo-

tion and commercialisation, which did not always end in a complete sale of all units. With one or more unsold units remaining in a building, the situation can prove difficult for the landlord; still a member of the co-ownership, it must continue to inform tenants (potential buyers) of price changes. If the process of putting the units on the market is intense at first, it often slows over time, with the most attractive products already sold and solvent tenants having already made their purchase.

These transfers of ownership mean diversification in who lives in the garden city, and is an important step for low-income housing tenants and their progress on the housing ladder. Sometimes, in the more or less long term, they lead to resales. Upon resale, Suresnes garden city apartments are sold on average for € 5,500/m<sup>2</sup>, with houses reaching even € 750,000 for 80m<sup>2</sup> – a clear sign that these little bits of garden cities have now been integrated into the local real-estate market.

(2) Article 29 of the "loi ENL" of 13 July 2006 authorises a margin of 35% in connection with property assessment.



## The residents – in their own words

**Lucile Mettetal**  
IAU île-de-France



Residents in a street in the garden city at Suresnes at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

The success of a territorial project or an urbanistic concept can be evaluated by the wellbeing of the people who live there, by the feeling they have of sharing values which characterize their neighborhood and by their long-term self-fulfillment within it.

### **Marcel, garden city of Orgemont. Memories of yesteryear**

"We came from Alsace and when we settled in the garden city in 1938, I was 13 years old. I lived in the square des Angevins on rue du Commandant Doué but that has been knocked down since then. An uncle of ours already lived in the city. We stayed at his for a month and then the garden cities Society found us a flat. At the time, the city ended in fields. They had just finished building the roads and they were knocking up 75 houses each month! But not all the projects came to fruition: there was to be a public square, a sports ground, but that never came off. In the square des Angevins we only had two rooms. So, with a brother and a sister this meant space was a bit tight, but we made do while we were waiting. We stayed there two years and in 1940 they found us a house in the city with a garden. For the period, it was really great! Downstairs there were two rooms and a kitchen, and two rooms upstairs. That meant we were a lot more comfortable. But there was no bathroom and no central heating, this was optional. We used a Godin heater. And then gradually, bit by bit, they added bathrooms. Still, the houses weren't particularly solid, they were

The residents of the garden cities often have longstanding and solid bonds with their neighbourhood. Deep affection for the place, a place where they have grown up and where they have brought up their own children. Here they share their stories with a touch of nostalgia, but also with much conviction – Marcel and his memories of a distant time, then three women: Chantal, Véronique and Paule, all three of them invested in making sure the spirit of the garden city lives on.

made out of clinker breeze blocks. When we arrived they had already been strengthened with S-shaped iron reinforcements. We also had problems with the water tightness of the flat roofs; they had to be sorted out!

People came from Paris and from outside. My uncle came from Grésillons in Gennevilliers. There were lots of people from Brittany and the Auvergne, and lots of children. That's why they built schools, so that we didn't have to travel to Argenteuil or Épinay. There were little shops which have disappeared now: a hairdresser in the square des Angevins, a grocery, a Hauser-Maggi dairy shop, a bakery and a butcher. That meant there was work for two or three young girls. The coal man brought us coal and wood. For the market we had to go to Argenteuil, taking the towpath alongside the Seine. We looked at the barges. All of these places were 'wild places'. We rarely used the road because there was no level crossing at this point in time. The bus at Épinay took us to Argenteuil station and another one took us from Cygne to Enghien. There was also the outer circle railway route. We had public bathhouses with a swimming pool, a paddling pool at last! The priests from the St Ferdinand church organized events in the parish meeting room on the rue des Provençaux – film screenings and theatre performances. We met up there as a family – it meant we didn't have to go to Enghien if we wanted to go to the cinema. There was also a committee for organizing parties and social events. At the Carrouges crossroads they set up platforms in



the middle of the street for boxing matches. At the side there was an arbour and a small café; we used to spend the afternoon there. My father looked after a field, where the cemetery is now, as well as a vegetable garden which he lost when all that was built. From the vegetable garden I went down to the quarry (which hadn't been mined for around 10 years) and we larked around like nobody's business. I went swimming in the Seine with Dédé, a friend of mine. In the fields there were really juicy, yellow pears. On the road from Argenteuil up until Cygne at Enghien there were greengrocers who sold leeks and cauliflowers. The market sellers still used horses and carts."

Interview conducted by  
Béatrice Capedoce,  
General Council of Yvelines. ARPE<sup>(1)</sup>

### **Chantal, Champigny-sur-Marne gardens city<sup>(2)</sup>.**

#### **A life's investment**

"I was born here, in a house, we were a family of 11 children and I have never left the gardens city at Champigny. When I married I lived for a while in a flat, but then I moved into a house again and I have been there for the past 40 years. At the time, they had problems letting out the flats. The gardens city was far from public transport and nobody wanted to come and live out in the suburbs, far away from everything and especially far away from Paris. They therefore encouraged the mounted guards to come and live in the houses, and then the republican guards lived in them too until the end of the 1990s. Each morning they did a tour of the gardens city and we watched them go by in uniform and on their beautiful horses.

Of course, the gardens city has changed. When I was little there were no cars and we rollerskated in the streets. We lived outside and I think that everyone felt safe. There were vegetable gardens at the bottom of each block of flats but most of them have been neglected.

Because I love the gardens city I got involved early on by becoming president of the tenants' association. I hold a surgery every Saturday and the residents come to me with their personal problems and expectations. I see them in a separate office for more privacy. You really have to believe in what you're doing to keep an organization going, people want to take without giving back and getting involved and I'm starting to get tired of this lack of engagement. Pensioners are the only ones who take part but the future is not ours, it belongs to young people. So we try to put on festive events where we can do some publicity in order to attract young people,



Children playing on a patch of land  
in the garden city at Suresnes.

ple, so that they can meet the other residents, people of all ages. We organize neighbourhood parties, we get together after Christmas to cut the 'galette des rois' (epiphany cake), we put on shared dinners with musicians, theatre activities, all to help people forget about their daily worries. We started a partnership with the conservatory and got free entry for residents of the gardens city. But even with this they don't go, we can't get them over the doorstep.

Between 1990 and 1997 the buildings were renovated. The houses were small and some didn't have any bathrooms. The 900 families who were affected by the first phase of building works were 'moved', some went to the gardens city in Plan, others to Prairial just next door and others still to Bouleaux. As an association, we worked on an agreement so that the residents could come back to the gardens city after the building work. They had two years to think about it but for elderly people, the idea of moving again was not an attractive one and they didn't want to move back in after the renovations. For the final phases, a whole decanting programme was involved, each person was entitled to 3 relocation options. This was the start of a long period of discussion and negotiation which took its toll on me as president

(1) As part of the Cultural Directorate of the General Council of Val-d'Oise the 'Atelier de restitution du patrimoine et de l'ethnologie' (ARPE) or 'Workshop for the restitution of heritage and ethnology', has, since 1993, carried out studies on the contemporary history of the area and its inhabitants, covering the 19<sup>th</sup> to 21<sup>st</sup> centuries. The team collects oral history accounts, photographs, films and family archives which it studies and interprets.

(2) Chantal and Paule specified us that they held the plural of gardens city: it is the city of gardens.

of the association, even if the work with the landlord took place in a positive manner. We had to support particularly old people who, in some cases, had been living in their home for 50 years. The works to the houses were carried out with people still living in them, as the residents refused to move, out of fear of not getting back their home after the renovation work. At the moment we are working on the follow-up of the works of the outer spaces, which will not totally be ended for the day by the holdings. It will be necessary to find additional means for the repair of low walls, and we hope that the lessor will hear the message of the association of the tenants."

Interview conducted by Lucile Mettetal



Chantal on her steps.

**Véronique, the garden city of Gennevilliers.**

**A garden for everyone**

"I was born in 1963 in Gennevilliers and I live opposite the park where I spent my childhood. My grandmother lived in the garden city, my grandfather worked in the factory like many of the residents of this city which was designed for the workers of Gennevilliers. I have always lived here, my father never wanted to leave the neighbourhood. Here, people have known each other for years; we went to nursery school together, the links are strong and the spirit of solidarity is precious. I would find it difficult to leave this place, I'm so attached to it, it's like a cocoon for me. Even if the rooms are small we're lucky to have a house and a little pocket of green space just two metro stations from Paris. I just wish the city had been better maintained over the past 40 years, it's been neglected for too long. There were some renovation projects during the 1970s, but they were carried out badly. We still see the telephone wires, it's always cold, it's badly insula-

ted and you can hear your neighbours. Recently, they've been thinking about changing the windows and refacing the period facades to liven it up a bit, but it will have taken us 20 years' fighting to get this. The housing office does more than before, but less than it does for the other garden cities. Certain towns are prioritized for political reasons. People have been able to buy their home for 15 years now but I think that they should have allowed sales well before this time. Some residents have lived here for more than 50 years as tenants, they have done work to their home as if it belonged to them. I was a tenant and I bought, with my husband, 10 years ago; since then my house has tripled or even quadrupled in value. Today, everyone can buy if they want to, the houses cost too much to renovate and the landlord wants to sell them in the state they are in. Over time, the houses will be sold and only the blocks of flats will remain rental properties. The town council, through deputy mayor Marc Hourson, does a lot for the neighbourhood. In the garden city, a piece of land had been left for more than 20 years. Houses had been built above old caves which belonged to Richelieu where he stored his supplies and his arms, and one day everything caved in. Afterwards, the land was used as a rubbish dump, you could find the old tiles there, a bit of everything and that gave a negative image of the whole place. For a while, the town planned to make a park there, then it had the idea of a flower, fruit and vegetable garden. The town hall turned the land back into something that could be used, built a little shed, bought a cultivator and an agreement was signed between the association, the commune and the 'département'. I'm the current president of the association, following in the steps of its late founder, Henri Arnaud. The garden has become a convivial spot, a place where people come after work and at the weekend to plant, do the weeding, keep things tidy, but it's not for them. Everything that we harvest goes to people in need. Volunteers also meet up themselves for picnics, small parties or concerts. Open Days are a chance to involve local musicians and to organize workshops where we can invite other environmental groups. It's also an educational project; children from the nursery school come to see the strawberries growing or learn how to grow carrots. Even if, sometimes, the residents of the city come to lend a hand, like when we had to make a sign for the entrance to the garden, we find it difficult to recruit enough volunteers to manage the upkeep of the garden."

Interview conducted by Lucile Mettetal





An urban garden today for everyone in the garden city of Gennevilliers.

### Paule, Suresnes gardens city. Meeting places

"I was born in lower Suresnes and I moved into the gardens city in 1978. My grandmother lived there and when I was a child I came almost every weekend to visit her. It was the Sunday outing. My grandparents were market gardeners and they sold their produce in the gardens city; the market was a real get together. At one time, there were a lot more traders here, they've been replaced by restaurants, especially around the place Stalingrad, next to the Jean Vilar theatre which brings in people from all over, because for the largest number of us, the price lists of the shows are too expensive.

Recently I had to move because of the Boutin law. I fought against this law, demanding the option to hold on to one's own home, with its history and its memories. Since leaving for a smaller house it has become more complicated to have children to stay when they come on Tuesdays evenings to stay there on Wednesdays or hanging a few days during the school holidays. It is always heart-breaking to have to leave one's home.

My children have a different view of the gardens city, they want me to leave but I'm happy here. I get on with all my neighbors. I say a small word when I go out, to the young people as to the least young. Now 25 years ago, I had had to make a little the law near me when the boys whistled for my daughter become adolescent, or when my son made stolen his bike. Today, certain young people speak loudly in the evening in front of buildings and hamper the neighbors; the rooms in which they could meet were closed a few years ago by the municipality.

What I particularly like is being surrounded by green space. The young moms stay outside in the courts with their children and they play with a ball while they speak with their neigh-

bours on a bench. I sometimes sit down with them. They are moments of pleasant exchanges. The common spaces of gardens city are also spaces of meeting as in the public garden Léon Bourgeois. Next to the place Jean Jaurès, there was a fountain with benches, it was the place which people liked particularly but the city hall decided to delete everything. As elected by opposition to the City Council of Suresnes, I voted against and argued to protect this place which benefited everybody but I was not heard.

The inhabitants ask for a long time that a parking lot or two are built in gardens city. Instead of it, they sacrificed surfaces of lawns to fit out parking spaces there, what did not solve totally the problem. The need for parking lots always exist, we ask for them free for the residents. Numerous trees were brought down for parking lots and even along pavements, what is it's a pity.

To conclude, gardens city has her schools, her Post office, its pharmacies, my neighbors whom I estimate. I want to continue to live there as long as possible to participate in the fact that she welcomes even better her inhabitants."

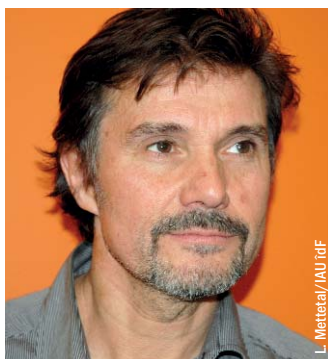
Interview conducted by  
Sophie Mariotte and Lucile Mettetal



Paule in her living room.



The intimacy of the vegetable gardens at Le Plessis-Robinson.



## Interview

Richard Wissler is an architect at the 'Conseil d'architecture, d'urbanisme et de l'environnement' (CAUE) in Val-de-Marne<sup>(1)</sup>.

Here he is in charge of the Val de Marne energy agency whose info-energy premises are integrated with the Ademe regional network.

He has been an architectural advisor to several towns in Val-de-Marne since 1992. From 1994 to 2004 he was also an architect with Pact 94 where he worked on the problems of rehabilitation within the remit of the OPAH project - 'l'opération programmée d'amélioration de l'habitat'<sup>(2)</sup>.

Before this he worked as an architect in a freelance capacity from 1982 to 1992.

(1) Val-de-Marne Council for Architecture, Planning and Environment.  
(2) Programmes for the Improvement of Habitat.

# Advise, promote and share

## Les Cahiers – What is the role of the CAUE with regard to the garden city at Champigny?

Richard Wissler – The role of the CAUE is to share our architectural heritage with students, teachers or with the wider public (for example on Open House heritage days). The urban quality of the garden cities lends itself particularly well to this type of educational mission and, at Champigny-sur-Marne, as with other garden cities, we organize guided tours with commentaries which help people to understand and value the site. For a while, these visits were led by architects, town planners or landscape architects with the aim of helping people to discover part of our built heritage and the landscape surrounding it. But these professionals were sometimes badly perceived by the inhabitants, who came to see them more as an intrusion. This encouraged us to include them in our work of discovery and appreciation and we did this by involving young people who lived or had lived in the garden city. Following a period of training in the basics of architecture, its jargon and history, the young people were taken on as guides and paid just like the professionals. The project, which was called "Young Town Tour Guides" gave these young people a fresh start, for some of them were a little neglected, often having had little success at school and they became representatives of the garden city, the real "insiders". Through their involvement, they discovered the special qualities of their area and shared these with visitors, all the while sharing their views on their environment and real life stories, often through anecdotes. An enriching, intergenerational experience like this has led other towns such as L'Haÿ-les-Roses or Fontenay-sous-Bois, working together with the CAUE, to replicate the project, particularly in areas which had been designed in the 1970s and which do not have any obvious architectural quality but nonetheless an important urban story to tell.

## L. C. – Is the CAUE involved in renovation projects for the garden city?

R. W. – It would be wise if the CAUE were to be involved right from the outset so that it could remind people of the need to respect the special qualities of our heritage. But no obligation is imposed on the town council or the landlord (in this case Valophis at Champigny-sur-Marne)

to consult the CAUE before any refurbishment works take place. And so without any authority or legal enforcement, it is up to the goodwill of the different parties involved to listen to us if they want to. It is difficult to carry out our advisory role these days because often we are not consulted, whether through negligence or a fear that the refurbishment project will start to get over-complicated. Of course, we share our thoughts with the town-planning department but the councillors have other things to deal with and see our contributions as being perhaps too full of anecdotal detail. But it is this detail which makes up the architectural richness of the garden cities and which these refurbishment projects must respect. A good project is not simply one that conforms to all the regulations.

## L. C. – Tell us which elements you deem to be particularly valuable...

R. W. – Certain elements are difficult to preserve because they are not necessarily relevant to everyone. For example, the old garden fences made out of reinforced concrete are elements that were catalogued in the 1925 exhibition of decorative arts. In Champigny they have remained because the whole site has not been well maintained, but, through the refurbishment

project they will be removed from certain places. They are a fairly modest feature but they are, nevertheless, elements which form part of our heritage. In other garden cities you can see the fences disappearing and this reflects people's ignorance of particular details which make up the urban landscape. The fences, just like the hedges, are important. The privet hedges of the garden city at Champigny contribute to the overall aesthetic and coherence of the whole. Each intervention must respect the original design. Of course it is during refurbishment works that we have to be most vigilant. One of the features of the apartment blocks in Champigny garden city is their rough rendering. This was a feature of the time and it lends a grainy effect to the facades. Where a mineral paint could have been chosen, the people in charge chose to apply acrylic paint which, on the one hand, doesn't let the substrata breathe, and, on the other hand, creates static which attracts dirty marks. If the choice seems misguided on a technical and aesthetic level it would seem that it

*"Each intervention in our heritage must respect the original design."*



was motivated by fear of anything contentious in the event of cracks appearing and water leakages into the apartments. When the facades were renovated, the quality, style and spirit of the era were not totally respected. Contrasts in warm and cold colours disappeared and the satin finish was replaced by a matt finish.

In the same way, the 'Pliolite' paint used for the window frames on the brick facades deteriorates when it becomes damp and then reconstitutes itself when the weather becomes drier. This paint has the tendency to 'dribble' onto the brick and is very difficult to clean off. The mineral aggregates penetrate into the substrata of the porous brick. A silicone-based paint would be better suited, and we have been saying this for years, but the social landlords, like the construction people, sometimes have fairly archaic practices.

And mistakes that were made in the past live on. At Champigny, the little yellow traces that you see pretty much all over the facades come from a product that was designed to repair the effects of a diluted acidic detergent and which spoiled the bricks.

One final example which shows the lack of attention given to these details, but which haven't been regarded as such, is this: the houses with roof terraces have eaves which are typical for the 1930s and, to prevent dripping, a metal band was placed over the eaves. This new addition runs contrary to any sort of respect for the preservation of the coherence of the site since, apart from black cast-ironware, metal has no place at all in the Champigny-sur-Marne garden city.

And, more generally, standardization unfortunately leads to the systematic use of PVC especially when it comes to replacing the windows as part of an upgrade programme. Let us hope that in 25 years time, when the PVC has come to the end of its life, the landlord will opt for wood the next time. Because, even if the environmental arguments seem to have been ignored, the purely financial ones tend to favour wood, since it lasts much longer than PVC.

#### **L. C. – How do you see the changing nature of the outside spaces?**

R. W. – The car wasn't around when the garden cities were constructed and the difficulties today are linked to the lack of parking places. Green spaces are potentially threatened by this necessity but, at Champigny-sur-Marne, the



Young Town Tour Guides share their knowledge and experience of the garden city with visitors.

social landlord, with the town hall, has put in place a project to preserve and maintain the public spaces. And so the "closes" have kept their function as public, or semi-public, squares, since they are essentially used by people living in the houses which border them. They are sheltered from the main road and this gives them a sort of hidden charm.

In 1919, the first site plan of Pelletier and Teisseire incorporated the course of the 'Lande' stream, which had subsequently got blocked up during the course of the works. You can see the course it takes on the cadastral plans, along the bottom of the plots of land. At a time when people are only too willing to talk about the importance of the blue belt, and at a time when the 'agenda 21' policy demands measures to control urban heat islands, I would like to imagine that, one day, town planning will allow us to rediscover this little stream. The CAUE also has the role of revealing these hidden treasures. In the Île-de-France region certain garden cities have been forgotten, certain have been spoilt. Those which are not recognised risk falling into disrepair and that means part of our heritage will disappear. Sharing the history of these places also helps people to appreciate their special value.

Interview conducted by  
Hélène Joinet and Lucile Mettetal





## Interview

Bruno Mengoli has been Head of the Architecture and Heritage Service in the state 'department' of Seine-Saint-Denis since 2003.

He is the curator of the Saint-Denis Basilica and an architect with 'Bâtiments de France'.

After completing a degree in architecture (dplg) and further specialising at the 'École de Chaillot', Bruno Mengoli joined the 'Architectes Urbanistes de l'État' in 1999 and his first post as an 'Architecte des Bâtiments de France' was in 2000 in the 'department' of Seine Maritime.

# Restoring garden cities with protected status

**Les Cahiers – Only 3 out of the 11 garden cities in Seine-Saint-Denis have protected status. Why is this?**

**Bruno Mengoli** – The first garden city to be given such a status was Stains in 1976, then Le Pré-Saint-Gervais in 1986 and finally La Muette at Drancy in 2000. The first two were accorded their protected status because, at that time, it was limited to historical monuments which required fairly substantial management (this is the case at La Muette) and to listed buildings (and their interiors), which was more appropriate for historic city centres. The advantage of having such a status is that you can protect the whole of the designated area, taking into account its position in the landscape. At Seine-Saint-Denis, achieving protected status was the right thing to do and offered a kind of 'special label' to the garden city. In 1993 the ZPPAUP<sup>(1)</sup> was created with more appropriate procedures which notably allow for the prior establishment of a regulatory body, developed jointly with the commune, as well as a grading system for its requirements. This was replaced in 2011 by the

AVAP<sup>(2)</sup> and it is this document which, today, contains all the current thinking related to sustainable development. You really have to be motivated at a local level to go through the process of obtaining protected status - which involves obtaining permission from an 'Architecte des Bâtiments de France' (ABF) and integrating their requirements into the local development plan (PLU<sup>(3)</sup>). We also have to recognise that we are dealing with heritage sites which combine the problematic of social housing and priority areas for development in urban areas which require intensive management. There are, however, some lovely examples which would benefit from being recognised as protected sites such as the garden cities of Auteurs (Pantin) or Orgemont (Epinay) where the idea had been floated of going for ZPPAUP status. While going through the application process some communes carry out qualitative assessments on their site and put the sites of historical interest (and which are difficult to plan around), at the heart of their local development plan or PLU (article L. 123-1-7-5 of the urban planning code).

*"At the time when we were carrying out the restoration work we didn't systematically want to re-do everything as it had been, but to take into account how its use had changed, whilst still maintaining the overall integrity of the site."*

**L. C. – What is the role of the 'Architecte des Bâtiments de France' in relation to the 'protected' garden cities?**

**B. M.** – As with any site included in the list of protected areas, the ABF can oppose any application for a demolition permit. In the case of building permits and advance declarations, the architect takes a view but the final decision of whether to go ahead or not is left up to the city mayor. With the garden cities, the challenge for the ABF is to achieve both preservation of the historical site and improved levels of comfort and compliance with regulations and standards, such as those related to insulation. Over and above the planning applications concerning the refurbishment of buildings, the ABF also has to take into account the wider public spaces when it comes to dealing with protected sites. The ABF will take a view on the maintenance and any

modifications of these spaces, on any railings or fences and planting. It is cars which often present the greatest challenge, as they didn't really exist at the time the garden cities were created. At Stains, parking became a major issue when it came to

reconfiguring public space. The town managed to achieve general consensus on limiting parking spaces so that the quality of the town and surrounding landscape could be maintained.

**L. C. – At what point does the ABF intervene in refurbishment projects?**

**B. M.** – When a site has protected status, the public office for social housing (OPH) in Seine-Saint-Denis, the town hall and the ABF work together to achieve a successful refurbishment programme. Even if it is not obliged to do so, the OPH very often involves the ABF in selecting architects and this approach to working in partnership at an early stage helps reduce the risk of any conflict arising later on down the line. Sometimes requests are highly complex, for example when it comes to choosing how a loggia should be used, whether it should be closed

(1) Zone de protection du patrimoine architectural urbain et paysager or Zone for the Protection of Architectural, Urban, and Landscape Heritage.

(2) Aire de mise en valeur de l'architecture et du patrimoine or Area for the protection and enhancement of heritage and the promotion of high-quality architecture.

(3) 'Plan local d'urbanisme' or local town plan.



off or opened up, or when it comes to elements which will have an important impact on the architectural style, such as the type of window. Take, as an example, the ladders in the Pré Saint-Gervais which no longer fulfilled the same function as they did in the 1930s but which were, nevertheless, historically important parts of our heritage. As they could not be seen from the public spaces, it was decided to get rid of them and to do so without causing any negative impact on the overall architectural feel. You could imagine 'show apartments', so that people could see all the changes that would be made. This would mean that a tenants' association would have to be willing to take on the management of this. We didn't systematically want to re-do everything as it had been, but to take into account how its use had changed, whilst still maintaining the overall integrity of the site. The ABF has to evaluate where the greatest challenges are, the needs of the local population and their impact. Once the partners are in agreement, the request to proceed with works is sent to the town hall and comes back to us so that we can offer an opinion and outline the conditions we would want to impose.

**L. C. – Do you think there have been any unfortunate developments in the garden cities?**

B. M. – Generally speaking, no I don't, because the garden city offers a lifestyle which is really appreciated by the people who live there. As the generations have gone on, the low rate of turnover, such as at Stains, reinforces people's attachment to their local area and it is certainly the most effective incentive. In the regulatory sense, having protected status confers a certain stature on an area which says to local people that they're not just living anywhere. Also, even the presence of a managing agent who takes responsibility for the overall consistency and synergy of the site is reassuring. The danger lies in dismantling the sites, in privatisation, or in certain irritating building regulations which are tied to energy efficiency or sound insulation, which can lead to buildings becoming distorted. Brick buildings, often very stylised and well looked after, represent the signature element of the garden cities. If you opt choose to insulate the building from the outside then the building is going to be distorted.

**L. C. – What are the main difficulties you come across in refurbishment projects?**

B. M. – The first difficulty is that of time. Ideally, refurbishment works have to be completed very quickly. At Pré-Saint-Gervais, it took almost 16 years to restore the houses, what with all the difficulties caused by changes in stakeholders over

this period. The materials used in the facades of the buildings play an important role. For brick buildings it is a question of carrying out repairs as necessary and a light clean. Houses are more complicated to refurbish when it comes to external tyrolean rendering or lime-cement plastering. To fill gaps in these surfaces you have to redo the whole of the facade, and so pretty much the whole house.

At Stains, the big question was whether to use PVC instead of wood, and there we managed to strike a compromise by using high quality PVC which had been lightly coloured. From an architectural point of view this, then, had very little impact on the unique characteristics of the area. On the other hand, all the original joinery and metal work was kept in the stairwells. Outside the buildings, tenants who carry out building work themselves can often cause complications in a refurbishment project. For example, certain loggias belonging to the houses had been annexed and closed off in a fairly anarchical manner. In order to bring back some kind of overall coherence the idea had been to remove them all and to replace them with glazed walls and very fine metalwork, ensuring energy efficiency. We could also take the example of the balconies in Stains which the inhabitants had painted in different colours as time had gone on. Since the renovation works, we have achieved a certain harmony again thanks to awareness raising and the significant presence of the OPH. The real challenges arise when multiple properties are involved with different owners and when very small projects are developed without architects – the ABF has to manage these on a case by case basis.

**L. C. – Do regulations regarding energy efficiency, which are becoming more and more onerous, harm architectural quality?**

B. M. – Today, the question of insulation is going to crop up for homes when it comes to heating costs that become hard to justify. Homes are too small to even imagine internal insulation and the levels of performance demanded by regulation require external insulation. When it comes to protected sites, as with any form of heritage management, not a single building regulation is going to be imposed just like that on the protected garden cities. Exemption from building regulations is one thing, and financing any works is another. In this situation, everything becomes very complicated indeed because there is no real exemption and the choices we have in how to carry out the work come down to what money is available.

Interview conducted by  
Emilie Jarousseau and Lucile Mettetal

**What is your view of garden cities as culture and tourism sites?**

You could almost describe them as 'heroic' heritage sites which go a long way in helping challenged regions gain some kind of recognition. They are examples of urban development from which lessons can be drawn with regard to town planning today which is based on the short term, less able to adapt to the changing size of an area and the way land is divided up to carry out operations. The garden city remains solid, enduring and should be a source of inspiration, combining, as it does, quality in public spaces, carefully considered levels of density and the inclusion of green space and nature into one whole site... an urban vision which should stimulate us all.



At the heart of the garden city, the challenge for the 'Architectes des Bâtiments de France' is to achieve both preservation of the historical site and improved levels of comfort.

# The garden city, a green city?

**Pierre-Marie Tricaud**  
IAU île-de-France



La Butte Rouge garden city  
in Châtenay-Malabry,  
an example of 'green urbanism'.

In the French garden cities that were developed between the two world wars, nature and plant life are given less space than in the original English concept developed at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. This is due not only to a culturally different relationship to nature but also to the conditions under which the French garden cities were created. In the concept that was developed by Howard and Unwin, the garden city is situated in the middle of a rural space which feeds it (400 built-up hectares 2,000 agricultural hectares according to Howard's model) and it is made up of mostly single-family homes or detached houses. Those developed in France, notably by the Office for Public Housing in the Seine administrative region (OPHBM) were sited on the edges of Paris and its suburbs. They were soon surrounded by other developments and comprise, for the most part, multiple family homes and blocks of flats.

## **A domesticated form of nature... but one which, now and again, reclaims its freedom**

Of course, the differences in how the French and English garden cities relate to nature lie in the different plants and trees that are used – trees used for lining the streets, which were relatively marginal over there, ended up, here, as a structural element of the urban landscape, like at Stains, Pré Saint-Gervais or Suresnes. In this last example we find the trees used in the most architectural of forms, in *espalier* style, *à la française*. The hedges as well are often pruned back

The garden cities have been studied comprehensively with regard to their social dimension, their urban composition and their architectural forms but, paradoxically, relatively little for their gardens and greenery. If the garden city *à la française* is first and foremost a city and then a garden, its open spaces and greenery remain more visible than in most other urban forms and they form part of what Caroline Mollie has called 'green urbanism'.

(used as fencing or for other specific purposes, such as linking car parking spaces in with the surrounding environment). A small number of classic species is used and they are planted frequently around the place – plane, linden or maple trees are used for lining the streets and privet is used for the hedging (it is a plant which grows in an almost systematic manner).



At Suresnes the trees used for lining the streets are used in the most architectural of forms, in *espalier* style, *à la française*.

But as time went on and their upkeep became more lax, nature recovered its rights and the open spaces become more natural in the truest sense of the term, growing freely without any outside interference. This is notably the case for the disused courtyards in the middle of the apartment blocks, areas of ground left to grow wild and offering a rich palette of greenery. Those at Stains were most emblematic of this. Nature's presence here certainly does not





In Stains, disused courtyards in the apartment blocks offer a rich palette of greenery, with sometimes-unexpected forms appearing.

correspond to the original design. But even in the areas that were maintained, aside from the espalier styling (which controlled the growth of the hedges or the street trees), the growth of different plants and trees normally introduces a diversity of forms and unexpected effects.

### **A façade in front and a façade at the back**

With the domestication of nature, another characteristic urban trait of the garden city is the distinction made between the sides of the buildings which face the road and those which face the garden at the back. Even with the strong intertwining of the city and nature, and even with buildings which are frequently not joined up together, the garden cities preserve this characteristic of the traditional town, above all when it comes to the design of their detached houses, but also their apartment blocks. Vegetation is present on both sides, but in different forms. In this way, not only the architecture of the façade, but also the different types of plants that are used, help us to identify the side it looks out onto: on the side facing the road, the façade is either contiguous to it (the classic form of the traditional town, but here, less common with the apartment blocks, and more exceptional still, with individual houses) or separated by a small garden which would only be crossed if one wanted to enter the property. The garden –

at least those belonging to the detached houses – is surrounded by privet hedges and planted with less variety than the back garden. However, this little garden often serves a decorative function and contributes to the general landscaping of the public space – poking up over its hedges are shrubs or creepers (ivy, wisteria, rosebushes) which are trailed in various shapes.

### **From the street to the pathway, from the square to the garden**

One characteristic of the garden city – and one of its qualities – is the balanced hierarchy of the space with a greater number of intermediary levels than in many other neighbourhoods, whether older ones or more recent ones. This hierarchy governs the road network just as much as it does the green spaces.

Roads which have been made suitable for cars are themselves hierarchized – and all the more so if the city is particularly large (with public squares, main roads, little streets) – and they are differentiated according to different rules for organising the space and distances between road, pavement and central or lateral speed-humps. But beyond the streets used by cars, inside the blocks is yet another system, a pedestrian walkway linking the space at the front with the space at the back. This second network joins the road in different ways – between gardens, between the houses, under porches set across

At Gennevilliers, a pathway connected to the road leads onto a narrow path between the back gardens.



At Champigny, nature regains its freedom with climbing plants decorating the front of the buildings that face onto public spaces.



the buildings – and it leads to, or crosses, the inner courtyards of the blocks. Sometimes (at Gennevilliers or Arcueil, for example), a whole system on different levels can be found inside the blocks themselves, with one pathway connected to the road which, in its turn, leads onto a narrow path between the back gardens. The gardens follow the same organising hierarchy of space – from space which is more public to space, nearer the inner courtyards of the blocks, which is more private. Of course, the classical form of the public park can be found taking up the whole of the courtyard – you could almost call it a 'garden square', especially if it concerns a central space, surrounded by public buildings or shops, like at Gennevilliers. And at the other extreme of this hierarchy of space, the private garden can be found, at the front or at the back (they are for private use, but are rarely private since even the detached homes are rented out, or, at least they were to begin with). There are also green spaces amongst the blocks of flats, with more inferior types of plants.

The middle of this range of garden space is taken up with places that have a sort of intermediary usage, something between the public and the private. We should note that these shared spaces which are semi-public, or sheltered are not to be found at a place between these two extremes. Rather you have to go and look for them beyond the private gardens, in the courtyards of the apartment blocks. In many cases the private back gardens or the outside spaces of the communal housing don't go right up to the centre of the blocks. At Suresnes, certain courtyards are filled with public gardens – these open up on to the public highways thanks to wide pedestrian walkways, and they are exten-

ded by the walkways between the buildings. At Stains, old vegetable gardens, which today have been left to go wild, can be reached by narrow pathways. Other spaces can be found too which, strictly speaking, are not proper courtyards, since they are designed to be used by cars or as entrance ways for the houses, but which have a secretive character, being sheltered from the main road and generally shaped more like a cul-de-sac. The small garden squares of Stains are a nice example of this with their trees and lawns, very much in the tradition of the English 'common' (a space which, over there, was not reserved solely for garden cities). We could equally cite the examples of the closes of the garden city at Champigny-sur-Marne. The *raison d'être* of these spaces is their common use for the families in the houses which border them; they act as intermediary spaces between the public and the private.

**Different approaches to management depend on the different stakeholders involved and even more so on the different environments that have to be managed**

Management of the green spaces is, in general, assured by the same organisations as elsewhere: town halls take responsibility for public, and sometimes common space; social housing offices look after the common space; house-owners look after their own private gardens. In general this approach is no more innovative in the garden cities than elsewhere.

Services provided by the local authority to look after the green spaces seem more advanced than those provided by the social housing offices. The latter practice a form of classical management aimed, above all, at looking after the properties; they concern themselves relatively little with planting and biodiversity. Conversely, the former have been increasingly converted to techniques which respect the environment and to more 'differentiated' management practices (diversity of species, less frequent pruning and mowing, freer forms, natural mulching). This does not rule out, however, the pitfalls of following trends by, for example, planting banks filled with wood-chippings and coloured flowers on the pavements, lending a meadow-like feel to the space. This is a design which would be better adapted to the inner courtyards of the apartment blocks (and these are spaces over which the local authorities often have very little control). What we see here is a reversal between the character we expect of the space (a more urban style for public space, something less structured for the interior space) and the way in which it is handled.

In the private gardens, diversification was intro-

Beyond the courtyards in the apartment blocks, intimate spaces designed for communal use, which act as intermediary spaces between the public and the private, brighten up the garden cities. The closes at Champigny are one such example.





duced by changing management styles – the hedges were initially maintained by the lessors and are today, as they have been for several decades, maintained by the tenants. Some introduced new and varied trees and forms giving a different ambiance (Pré Saint-Gervais) but the absence of any precise specifications (in contrast to the family gardens which are extremely well standardised) has led to a lack of harmony and the loss of certain characteristics which were there at the start (for example, the structuring given by privet hedges). Residentialisation of shared spaces has had the same effects like at Champigny-sur-Marne, after the sale of homes formerly belonging to the republican guard.

The growing demand for security has also changed the spaces. Pathways have been closed off, for example at Gennevilliers or Suresnes, by the local residents themselves. The slight gains in biodiversity and security achieved by this do little to compensate the user for the loss of shortcuts, the loss of a facility and a change in the generosity of spirit, which was there at the beginning. Conversely, the wild courtyards of Stains have remained accessible – their narrow pathways with a fairly low maintenance, are almost exempt from the antisocial behaviour that might be expected there (such as litter or drug dealing). In fact there is very little litter, there are very few complaints from neighbours and schools even come to visit to discover nature and practice land art. Within the framework of a renovation project it was agreed that different uses of the spaces would be respected. Certain courtyards are used as play areas for children or for bowling pitches and they remain open to everybody while others are reserved for gardening and are open only to their users.

Finally, among the various uses of the spaces and the different ways of managing them, we should highlight vegetable growing as an acti-

vity. Vegetable gardens are always full of social life and productive activity at the same time but with varying degrees of control exercised by the community or the residents. At Suresnes, a set of kitchen gardens was restored with high standards of planning and strict rules regarding their use. At Châtenay or Le Plessis, greater latitude is left to the garden users. At Stains, the vegetable gardens have been developed spontaneously by residents using pieces of ground that had been left to grow wild.

### Urban form, landscape and nature all in the one city

The originality of the garden city lies in the composition of its space and notably in the hierarchy and articulation of the public spaces, semi public spaces and private spaces, more so than in the plant forms that are used and the landscapes that are created. "It is interesting to note that archive material on the 'greening' of the garden cities is relatively difficult to find. Trees, for example, only figure symbolically in the plans." (Gaudry, 2007, p.44). The garden city is more an urban form than it is a landscape form to the extent that it is the buildings and the roads and networks of paths which structure the space; vegetation here is an added accessory – a very relevant one at that, but it is an accessory all the same – and the pre-existing site plays, in general, a minor role.

The garden cities can certainly constitute a model for new neighbourhoods, a model for organising urban space within a landscape. But they are not particularly models for 'green cities' in the modern day sense of the term, which needs to encompass biodiversity and sustainability. In some ways this is extremely fortunate in so far as the development of nature within the city can be achieved in a variety of urban forms, including examples from other neighbourhoods existing.

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The central square at Gennevilliers is used as a children's play space.

# Public spaces and roadways: from organisation to intimacy

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From organisation to intimacy,  
the garden city at Champigny-sur-  
Marne.

The increasing need to build housing, linked with the challenges of sustainable development, generates a number of eco-district projects along with thoughts on what a 'bearable' level of density might be<sup>(1)</sup>. These approaches accentuate mixity, the efficient use of energy in housing, and they give a greater role to public spaces in developing a quality living environment. This goes from including lots of greenery, to finding alternative ways for managing water, to the place given to cyclists and pedestrians and to adequate public transport links. This list represents many of the necessary ingredients, but simply adding them all together is not enough to create areas that are going to be nice places to live.

The example of garden cities is often mentioned as a reference point because they offer a perspective with the advantage of hindsight and a complete vision of a neighbourhood whose identity lies in the coherence of the architecture and the organisation of public spaces. The garden cities represent an extremely sophisticated use of the different ways of organising roads and outside spaces, emphasised by the well-structured and prioritised use of space. This spatial composition owes a lot to the mixture between detached houses and multiple dwelling units, which is carried out with much finesse, as well as to the positioning of the local facilities, always exemplary. But it goes further and often introduces a real richness in the quality of the space that we use for movement and in the creation of urban places.

Garden cities have managed to achieve a subtle mix between urban density and public spaces. Over time, their original spatial richness remains almost intact and the regeneration projects have let them evolve. Today they offer precious reference points and inspiration as well as reflections on the idea of the 'proximity city'.

- How do public and private spaces articulate to each other?
- Has this richness stood the test of time? Has it managed to adapt to the traffic pressure? To changes in management methods? To regeneration projects?
- What lessons can be learned by new projects: is this the 'proximity city'? What could the new eco-districts find here to inspire them?

## Organised and structured roadways

We returned to some of the most well-known garden cities: la Butte Rouge at Châtenay-Malabry, Le Pré Saint-Gervais, Stains, Champigny. From their initial conception, they all offer infinite richness in public space, with:

- strong links between roadways and housing types (detached homes, groups of detached homes, medium-sized or traditional blocks of flats);
- constant and generous amounts of greenery;
- the sophisticated use of local roads and streets
- from aesthetic and practical points of view (public, semi-public, semi-private and private).

Two aspects combine to achieve this: consideration of the area's characteristics and its geometric structure. In line with Henri Sellier's recommendations, the overall site plan is "domi-

(1) See the research carried out by the PUCA on the sustainable urban city, or an edition of *Les Carnets pratiques du Sdrif*: how to encourage urban intensification, how to develop high-density city extensions, IAU idF 2009-2010.



nated by nature and accidents in the ground"<sup>(2)</sup>. This influences the siting of central points, but also the orientation of the buildings and the layout of the roads, determined by a "concern to arrange the best perspectives". This very plan systematically encompasses roads, squares, perspectives, cul-de-sacs, small squares, closes... Inbetween the roads and inside the dwelling units, passage ways are treated in several ways, offering the residents various possibilities of getting around.

The composition of the garden cities has often been described as monumental<sup>(3)</sup>. The example of La Butte Rouge is perhaps the most paradoxical. The areal plan seems theoretical, but it matches up perfectly with the detail on the ground. Taking into account the relief contours (strong at Châtenay-Malabry, then lighter at the Pré Saint-Gervais) the way roadways have been planned has been achieved with subtlety and modesty. For example,

- at La Butte Rouge the main axis is completely unobtrusive, almost hidden;
- at the points where axis cross each other, roadways split off, creating places which have been treated with the utmost simplicity;
- where this happens, particular spaces can often be found: the ponds at La Butte Rouge, for example, or the avenue and square at Le Pré Saint-Gervais.

At the same time, the way the structure has been organized has been sufficiently strong to stand the test of time and its continual evolution – in the case of La Butte Rouge, this has been going on for more than 30 years. This holds true as well for the garden cities which were built on flat land, such as Suresnes or Stains. In Champigny, on the other hand, with a relief which is lighter, the layout seems less certain.

An analysis of La Butte Rouge reveals that, in the end, the roadways become secondary to the strength of the general structure. When the roadway is coherent with the general structure, the road is short and splits off in two, accommodating a square of land in the middle, which could end up being a small park or a pond. In this way a public-private ambience is established, which generates strong feelings of ownership. Everything is done so that the public space, even when it is monumental, maintains a certain level of intimacy. When they simply need to serve the buildings, the roadways fit as best they can to the natural curves of the land. It is this paradoxical marriage, between roman-



Atelier Sirvin et associés, architecte

La Butte Rouge at Châtenay-Malabry: well put together with a layout which organises its roadways according to the relief of the site and the future of the project.



A. Duguet/IAU idF



A. Duguet/IAU idF



A. Duguet/IAU idF



A. Duguet/IAU idF

La Butte-Rouge at Châtenay-Malabry: symmetrical designs, paths splitting off from each other, a succession of gaps between buildings combine together elements of monumentality and modesty in a unified fashion – all this provides for multiple permeability in spaces designed both for traffic and pedestrians.

(2) Quote by SELLIER Henri in *Cités-jardins*, Olivier Nicolaud, AMC, n° 34, 1987.

(3) See the various detailed analyses in *Les Cahiers de l'aurif*, n° 51, 1978.



Le Pré Saint-Gervais: internal pathways border the gardens, following the bends, offering precious, semi-private short-cuts.



The same pathways make up part of the general site layout and the park (in the middle of a regeneration project) is at the centre of the garden city.

tic picturesque and classical organization, based on several symmetrical designs, which produces incredibly rich variety in the quality of the outside spaces.

Complete accessibility is woven into this subtle game, organised by a network which is both complex and readily understandable, thanks to its structured character. Pedestrian pathways are numerous and varied, bordering or crossing buildings, occasionally opening out onto sub-spaces which could just as well be semi-public as semi-private. The architecture helps with this. Numerous porches give continuities, all the while maintaining the intimate character of the passageways. The way angles are handled (rounded by La Butte Rouge, on the bias at Stains) is a feature of the major public spaces and contributes to the general sense of permeability.

It is probable that the recognisable, strong identity of the garden cities is, to a large extent, due to the many qualities of their public spaces: their general lay-out, the pedestrian walkways, the greenery, the variety of ways in which spaces are divided up (by closes, hedging, trellis work). Taking these observations as the starting point, a number of questions need to be asked today. Will this richness last forever? Can it be reproduced? Is it capable of being re-interpreted and re-used?

### Rich variety of public space which still resists today

Over time, the management of the public spaces has generally been shared between the social housing offices and the local authority who together manage the roadways, the parks and the most significant squares. At Stains, for example, the social housing office handed over two courtyards on a long-term lease to the Plaine Commune 'communauté d'agglomération' in order to allow for renovation works. This should respond to security concerns, but could, despite all, end up disrupting the intimate character, almost semi-private nature. At Suresnes, the main gardens have equally been handed over to the local authority in order to guarantee their management. Family gardens were

recently developed in one of the courtyards. Widespread use of the car has of course created growing pressure on the quality of the public space. However, it doesn't seem to have had any major difficulties in adapting to this, and for several reasons. To avoid excesses of speed, 30 km/h zones were established fairly early on, well suited to the form and coherence of the garden city neighbourhoods, and this was achieved with few upgrading measures. At the most, some raised crossroads at strategic entry points, such as at the Pré Saint-Gervais. This is fairly exceptional because the tendency in France is more for occasional safety measures and for partially restricted speed zones (according to the street or parts of streets).

The pressure on parking space is generally the stumbling block when it comes to taking qualitative action to improve public space. The pressure varies according to the area: it is most significant at Suresnes, less so at Stains or Gennevilliers. At Champigny, where the roads have yet to be resurfaced, we can still find half-parking places on sidewalks, but the courtyards remain protected. Managing car parking space has generally been integrated into any redevelopments of public space: at Stains it is the Plaine Commune 'communauté d'agglomération' which has taken this in hand. At Suresnes, its listed status has allowed for landscaped parking bays (with green seats and trees sited between them). Nevertheless, the demand for parking space remains a recurring theme, as witnessed by the underground parking project under the church square at Suresnes.

Another danger which might have threatened the permeability and network of the public spaces: the tendency, as seen elsewhere, to "privatize public space"<sup>(4)</sup>, or the temptation to residentialise it (as seen in urban redevelopment projects). This happens rarely (one of the access points to the park at Suresnes was closed by the managing agent, two pathways giving access to the gardens at Gennevilliers were privatized). It seems that there is less need to close off areas when the public spaces intersect in a sophisticated manner with the private spaces and when the borders and transition points have been well thought out.

On the whole, thanks to their intrinsic spatial qualities and to different improvements, the roadways are fairly calm and, therefore, remain welcoming for bicycles. Nevertheless, places have to be found to park them in public spaces as well as when blocks of flats are being refurb-

(4) See in particular the article by LOUDIER-MALGOUYRES Céline, « La tentation soupçonnée du repli extrême ». Living in peri-urban districts, *Les Cahiers de l'IAU îdF* March 2012, n° 161, pp 35-36.





The garden city at Le Pré Saint-Gervais: a raised level at the main entry point to the garden city...



... accompanied by a chicane designed to slow down cars, all within a 30 km/h zone.



Suresnes: side lanes limited to speeds of 15 km/h and residential parking.



Stains: the main road has been refurbished, integrating parking spaces and a new and more up-to-date planting.

bished. Regarding access for people with reduced mobility, with the redevelopment of the roadways everything is brought in line with regulations. However, problems do remain when it comes to accessibility issues inside the buildings themselves because the installation of lifts is either impossible or ineffective.

Similar qualities have been observed elsewhere in Europe, and have been able to be reproduced, whether consciously or unconsciously. We know that the new towns in England have largely advocated the concept of neighbourhood units to define well-mixed and identifiable neighbourhoods, even if a certain level of banality has got the upper hand. One could well see that the action taken by countries in northern Europe since 1975 to moderate traffic has been a similar way of trying to rediscover the identity of neighbourhoods and the place of the pedestrian and bicycle user in public space.

### What lessons for the future?

The garden cities show that bringing together strong urban design with structured organisation and network of roadways helps to create tightly composed neighbourhoods which manage to adapt with changing times and preserve their unique identity. It seems that such richness in the networking of public space has rarely been found since. For example, the different access points and the sense of permeability given by porches has been reproduced in new architectural interpretations but do not integrate the soft traffic network. So this is a major challenge for all neighbourhoods, both

periurban areas (which are particularly lacking from this point of view) and also for those which are being renovated, where opening to the outside world is a constant principle.

### The short distance city, the 'proximity city'

The idea of holding on to, and promoting functional mixity and urban and demographic density in order to make car journeys as short as possible is gaining ground. The aspiration to develop 'proximity cities' is expressed at the local level through the re-development of neighbourhoods, but also in territorial planning documents. For example, the Urban Mobility Plan (*plan de déplacements urbains*) developed by Montpellier, the Reims agglomeration 2020 strategy, or the territorial development contract for the Bièvre science valley (*contrat de développement territorial*) which is in progress. At territorial level, several projects support this: structural public transport projects, a wider range of options for pedestrians and cyclists – including taking action on public space – educating the local residents in order to encourage changes in behaviour. From this point of view, the garden cities are not really a suitable reference point because they have remained poorly served by public transport links and other transport infrastructure. However, a number of current projects should change this: the tram on the RD986 (*route départementale 986*) at Châtenay-Malabry, the northern tangential at Stains, the tram on the RN214 (*route nationale 214*) at Épinay-sur-Seine. This should, in one fell swoop,



Stains: new housing on the edge of the refurbishment of the Saint-Lazare close; a reference to the porches of the garden cities?



Gennevilliers, a porch links up the small square and the back alleyway.

boost the attraction of the areas and lead to further new projects.

At a local level, it is more often a matter of improving bus routes and traffic moderation. Here as well, taking action to improve public space is essential (by creating 30 km/h zones or areas where people can meet each other and by changing the layout of the space). From this point of view, close attention is paid to renovation projects in the garden cities and this is made all the more easy by the high quality of their initial design. The richness and diversity of the interlinking structures, the shortcuts, squares, courtyards and gardens provide for ease of access and movement as well as social interaction. Ways in and out of the garden city are numerous and varied and are not the consequence of a traffic plan which has been dreamed up elsewhere but, rather, are an integral part of the whole spatial composition.

All these elements could, for example, usefully inspire the local urban development plans (*Plan Local d'Urbanisme, PLU*) today whose planning and programming goals (*Orientations d'Aménagement et de Programmation, OAP*) form tools which are still not used sufficiently when re-developing public space. Without going to the extent of actually drawing the roadways as in the German equivalent of the PLU (*the Bebauungspläne*), more regulation is certainly necessary in order to take into account the diversity of public spaces and their coherence with the overall accessibility system.

### Eco-districts

With growth in peri-urban areas, but also the desire to give more breathing space to built-up areas, the garden city has re-appeared in contemporary developments (le Petit-Bétheny at Reims, for example). Both the garden city and the sustainable development agenda share the same social, economic and environmental challenges.

Concerning public spaces, the permeability of soft traffic and the important place given to greenery echoes to the well-known eco-districts such as Vauban at Freiburg-in-Brisgau or Hammarby Sjöstad in Stockholm. Moreover, these neighbourhoods incorporate integrated public transport and motor-free travel into their founding principles, so they limit the presence of the car.

If the quality of public space in the French projects is overwhelmingly appreciated, questions remain as whether these spaces have really dealt with the issue of mobility, which needs to be considered at a wider, territorial level. Limiting the place of the car clearly remains a difficult issue today<sup>(5)</sup>. Furthermore, we can see a sort of multiplication of the stereotypes – we should pay attention to this with regard to the general coherence. For example, is the systematic recourse or reference to landscaped ditches, (with rain-water management as a bonus) compatible with a structured and organised roadway system? If we have too many systematic, technical solutions is there not a risk of de-densifying the public space generating, in the end, more and more distances to cover, therefore fewer 'short distances'? So many questions which remain to be answered in the future.

The garden cities show us that, if an area is given a strong spatial structure, the legibility of the roadways will be evident and produce infinitely different public, semi-public and private spaces. They show that the management of the internal roadways can remain light-touch and does not need to be overdeveloped if the way they intersect with each other, their different access points and their overall structure all coexist. Only the availability of parking spaces calls for firm regulations, and this as early as possible.

In future living areas or in regeneration areas, the more we think carefully about the roadways and public spaces, the better we can respond to questions of diversifying and increasing motor-free transport options within an overall coherent design, an idea which is an integral part of the spatial concept. Creating strong links with the overall system of accessibility is fundamental and contributes to the smooth functioning of the whole and to the well-being of the residents.

(5) See DIORÉ Valérie's interview on the ZAC of Bonne at Grenoble : « Retour sur le premier écoquartier de France », Urbanismes de projet, *Les Cahiers de l'IAU îdF*, n° 162, pp 44-45.



# Local facilities for everyone, a pre-requisite to social well-being

**Ginette Baty-Tornikian<sup>(1)</sup>**  
Sociologist



Institutional and cultural facilities are determinants in helping people live well together.

**T**he garden city is something of an experimental melting pot of modern urban civilisation. In this vein, it offers up a form of urban living based on the notion of satellites – that is to say, sets of towns which are linked up with each other and their respective facilities, thus allowing their inhabitants to develop highly elaborate social lives. Some thought had already been given to the types of activities which could be taken up by the inhabitants of European cities, and what it was possible to offer them. The different categories of activities which city residents take up in their free time become more regular and routine in the garden cities. They engage and include a whole spectrum of social lives in many different ways and, by virtue of their durability and regularity, create social connections and a sense of identity.

## Garden cities as the creative source of a socially innovative form of architectural, urban language

Even before the concept of the planned neighbourhood unit was theorized at Radburn, New Jersey (1928), Ebenezer Howard, from 1898, put forward the phased construction of garden cities, in sections, into which he introduced, systematically, all the necessary facilities to allow for the minimum of a social life. From natural open spaces with trees and lawns to the creation of a central park, shops, schools and cooperatives. Provision was made for sites such as museums, theatres, concert halls and libraries which were all placed around a central garden.

Garden cities had been conceived, right from the start, as projects that would help build community, not as complete alternatives to it, but as complementary to it in the sense that they could help create new social connections. The facilities enjoyed by the large residential areas surrounding Paris are a direct reflection of this. The objective of the garden cities is not to keep people who are badly housed locked in but, rather, to create a social model for living together. The possibilities of this have not yet all been exhausted.

And, of course, having a train station enabled everyone to be connected with everywhere else. Garden city activists such as Georges Benoît-Levy or Henri Sellier believed that decisive urban planning could act as both a driving force and as an exemplar. With the birth of urban social projects, their political currency brought together the philanthropic entrepreneurs of the 'Musée Social' with the socialist reformist and municipalist trends. They sought to curb the sense that people at the time were being hunted out and exploited by separating the way people managed their work time from the way they managed their leisure time. Thus, with this different form of awareness which would result in town planning, the political management of the city and of urban life emancipated itself from enterprise



The Wilson nursery school to Suresnes.

(1) BATY-TORNIKIAN Ginette is a researcher in social history and architectural and urbanistic heritage of the xx<sup>th</sup> century, member highly skilled in the laboratory IPRAUS/UMR/AUS-SER C.N.R.S./MCC n° 3329 (Parisian Institute of research structures, urbanistic, society). Graduate school of architecture of Paris-Belleville.

and business and freed itself from industrial production and trade.

Through their action and by providing affordable leisure time activities (which were already customary in large cities), they put in place all the institutional and cultural conditions necessary for the well being of their inhabitants.

The garden cities constitute a force for proposals which include pacifist social reforms within the lived environment. They create an architectural and urban language into which they introduce residential lifestyles for workers and, through the local facilities which they offer, they affirm their local autonomy.

Henri Sellier thought of them as urban 'ensembles' which would take shape within the greater Paris area. Further afield, beyond the Seine administrative département, as the idea of a greater Paris began to emerge this encouraged the widespread growth of the garden cities. They are satellites of the city centre, within easy reach of the attractions of Paris for work, health and culture, yet all the while affirm their political independence.

### Cultural facilities and the natural environment at the heart of the garden cities

The residential projects, the essence of the garden cities, are extremely sophisticated. Their planning takes shape as soon as architects start working on the first designs. They test out, on a large scale, the articulation and interpenetration of social housing, cultural facilities and the natural environment. The latter two are integrated according to the way in which they relate to the social housing. Anything to do with the natural environment would include the types of plants that are used, the alignment of trees, public parks and gardens. Anything to do with culture would include school buildings, sports facilities, community centres, cultural centres. Surprises are in store for visitors to these places – at Suresnes you can see Sevres vases scattered around the public gardens, and, hidden away in the courtyards of the apartment blocks in La Butte Rouge, are sandpits and boules pitches. In the Pré Saint-Gervais, La Butte Rouge and at Suresnes, squares and little parks fill up after school with parents and their children... Each of these facilities helps create a rhythm and routine in people's social lives. The mayors of each garden city took part in seasonal festivities, certain ones organised joint events with other garden cities such as the competition held each summer for private gardens, overseen by Henri Sellier. For a long time the mayor of Châtenay-Malabry, Jean Longuet (an iconic socialist figure) organised a cherry festival (a nostalgic nod back to the days of 'La Commune') which



Theater Jean Vilar at Suresnes.

brought together around the pond all the residents and their children. Recently, new generations of residents, assisted by the town halls, have revived the allotment gardens: these re-started 15 years ago in Châtenay-Malabry, 5 years ago in Suresnes and are about to start in Stains.

There is always something going on at the four community centres, or cultural centres, based in Champigny-sur-Marne, Gennevilliers, Stains and Suresnes. Their uses have changed over time: Champigny-sur-Marne has developed a music conservatory; Suresnes has developed a centre for world theatre and music; Gennevilliers has developed a cinema; and Stains has developed a venue for events and meeting space for local societies and organisations, including the residents' association. A large stadium still, to this day, magnifies the 'ring' of housing blocks in the Pré Saint-Gervais. All the schools are still in use, the nursery schools have slightly modified their inside play spaces and continue to enjoy their lovely outside playgrounds which are surrounded by trees. To this day, not a single public facility in the garden cities is unused.

### An environment which aims to encourage everyone to take responsibility

The density and the quality of the facilities which have been designed in the garden cities, their sense of order and the scales of their designs which go from the smallest neighbourhood unit, up to the neighbourhood level and then right up through to the larger scale of the town are still a model for today's urban residential developments.

This structuring of the different scales of the facilities, whether cultural or environmental, is such that it becomes part of the vocabulary of the garden city aesthetic. Every single artistic device, whether it is the way the garden has been designed, or the choice of tree, the alleyways, the detail of the footpaths, the pathways between the apartment blocks, the public architecture, their frescoes, their discreet monumental qualities are all there to serve a purpose, that



The nursery school of Orgemont.





The cinema Jean Vigo of Gennevilliers

of creating social connections. A top quality environment for everybody, regardless, is thought of as the best way of encouraging everyone to take responsibility.

By creating a sense of identity and belonging through the establishment of public facilities in a tightly structured and planned residential area, the creation of a social and family life as part of a neighbourhood unit, a local community, a town and a city both helps establish residential lifestyles as the norm right from the start and allows people the chance to understand and accept this norm.

The updating of facilities in the garden cities is, to a large extent, a technical exercise concerned with energy efficiency, the redevelopment of inner courtyard spaces and the reorganisation and modernisation of the shared gardens. It requires specialists who do not always master the overall objectives and ethics which were put in place by the designers at the start. Concerns with security which result in 'neo-hausmannien' blocks being closed off in certain neighbourhoods go against the concept of an open space which offers complete freedom to people as to where they walk and how they move from one block to the next.

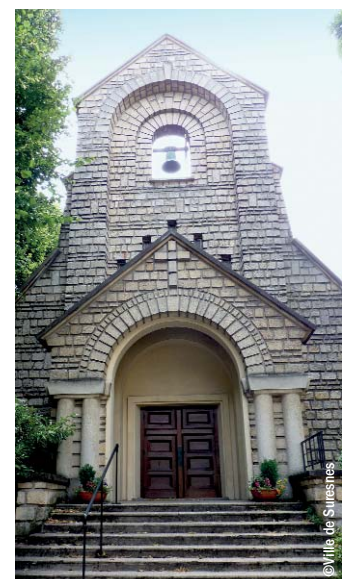
Some people want to close off the alleyways

leading directly into the courtyards because of fears that the world is becoming more and more criminal. They channel their efforts into trying to privatise the public space while others have, on the contrary, kept to the original spirit of the garden city. Suresnes is the best counter example. Here, the town took charge of its public spaces through a system of long-term leases lasting 40 years. The way it manages its public space acts as a deterrent and prevents any local groups from trying to appropriate it. The town has completely opened up access to all public space by getting rid of any barriers which might create boundaries and separate the spaces from each other. It has reinforced the value of public space by installing inviting benches in all public spaces (in shopping centres, church squares, gardens and parks, children's play areas, and in the shared public spaces surrounding the apartment blocks). And so, Suresnes garden city could, quite easily, be seen today by its residents as one big lived-in green space.

By attaching as much importance to the ways in which we walk about and enjoy public space as to the ways in which we spend our leisure time, the garden cities knew how to enhance well being in urban city environments.



The stadium of Pré Saint-Gervais.



The lutheran evangelical church of Suresnes.

# The development of tourism

**Maud Baccara<sup>(1)</sup>**  
Plaine Commune



Visitors at the garden city  
in Stains, Seine-Saint-Denis.

Yes of course, the garden city at Stains (and other garden cities too) deserve to be singled out for their interest – their architecture, their planning, their integration with the landscape but, also, for their residents who, themselves, have made the garden cities what they are. Because when we talk about developing tourism in this sort of a heritage site, a heritage site which, after all, is lived-in, we are also talking about the local residents.

## A space dedicated to the history of the garden city

In 1976 the entire site of the garden city at Stains was given listed status as a 'historical monument'. This awareness of the interest in the heritage of the garden cities is growing. For Stains, the opportunity to join the Plaine Commune agglomeration in 2003, with its expertise and experience in developing tourism, as well as a regeneration programme which started in 2005, were fundamental elements in helping to promote the garden city.

Since 2003, the tourism strategy for Plaine Commune has included the development of tourist attractions within its local boundaries, aside from its already well known large sites (the Saint Denis basilica and the 'Stade de France' stadium). A preparatory study, "How to develop tourism in Stains garden city?" was produced and, in 2006, a project manager was recruited to implement the programme.

A multi-stakeholder steering group was formed to lead the project. Members included: the

"Why do you encourage people to come and visit the garden city? A social housing estate? What is there to see? What can be that interesting about it? And do tourists really come? To Stains? You mean the place in Seine-Saint-Denis? Out in the suburbs? Is it easy to get to? Isn't it dangerous?" These were the questions Maud Baccara found herself being asked as the person in charge of developing tourism and heritage in the garden city at Stains. They show just how necessary it is to combat the preconceived ideas that abound of Seine-Saint-Denis as an architectural and cultural desert.

Plaine Commune tourist office, the local authority and its various departments, the Stains local archives and cultural service, the landlord (the Seine-Saint-Denis office for public housing, OPH 93), the heritage service at the 'department' of Seine-Saint-Denis, the tourist office for the 'department' of Seine-Saint-Denis (CDT 93), the council of architecture, planning and the environment for Seine-Saint-Denis (CAUE 93), the tourist office for Saint-Denis-Plaine Commune, the tourist office for the Île-de-France regional council, the regional committee for tourism (CRT) and the tenants' association for Stains garden city. This diversity of stakeholders, all with different objectives and expertise, makes the project as rich as it is complex. However, the desire to have the project really grounded locally is shared by all. This comes down to fully involving the local residents and allowing them the opportunity to 'own' their heritage and contribute to its promotion.

Actions have therefore been developed according to the development of the area. They follow the refurbishment programmes and the preoccupations of the local residents which are linked: the transformation of public spaces, the future of the courtyards in the blocks of flats, improvements in the living environment etc. They also respond to visitor expectations: the discovery of the architecture, the planning and the landscapes of this heritage site, themed

(1) BACCARA Maud is in charge of developing tourism and heritage at the garden city of Stains as part of the Plaine Commune Department for Economic Development.



visits and other ideas. A particular piece of work has been carried out with younger people to enable them to understand and engage with this heritage: treasure hunts, discovery trails, work on image and representation...

Right from the start a place was sought at the heart of the garden city where the work of the project could be showcased. An old hardware store with ground floor space on the main road was chosen, its old mosaic sign still visible.

This centre which tells the 'history of the garden city' was launched in September 2008. Dedicated to the promotion of the garden cities, and of Stains in particular, it puts on both temporary and permanent exhibitions. It is used locally as a meeting space and reception venue but also at the regional level it is seen as a reference point for the garden cities. Since its opening, more than 5,000 visitors have been recorded. This information space facilitates the development of initiatives, the aim of which is to reinvest in the outside spaces and to reveal the heritage by enabling the inhabitants to see their city in new ways.

### Artistic workshops and walks

Art workshops with a strong heritage base were offered to the residents. The results gave rise to art installations and walks across the garden city:

- On the occasion of 'rendez vous' events in the gardens we organised readings in the courtyards at the end of one visit. A photographer and a dancer led workshops for children, leading to 'Garden House', a choreographed walk which was performed during the Open House heritage days.
- A flower-growing project called 'Operation Prairie' gave residents the opportunity to work with a visual landscape artist and create a garden in one of the courtyards. Work was also carried out with primary and secondary school children to educate them about biodiversity by getting them to design signs for the garden spaces.



A choreographed walk, Open House heritage days.

- Scarecrows for the garden city were designed by an object theatre company with the participation of local residents. These creations were installed in the courtyard for the environmental festival which gave the residents the opportunity to tell stories recounting their experiences of the city.

- A hive was installed for a year in the garden city for a class of primary school children to help them study local biodiversity; the bee became a way of studying the urban environment.

- For an event called 'Garden Noises' a sociologist invited the residents to create a sonar walk by making the walls talk.

- A collective of graphic architects got the residents involved in imagining different versions of the courtyards which would be transformed during a refurbishment project.

- 'Fairy rubbish' was an opportunity for a group of visual artists to transform the rubbish into something that could be part of a poetic stroll.

- A photographic walk put on for the residents gave them the chance to share their views of the garden city.

- And walks which were put on to help people discover and re-discover the garden city created moments for sharing stories and experiences, mixing up the residents and outside visitors; there were 'soup walks', 'night-time walks' and 'aperitif walks'.

The visits that were organised evoke the history of the garden city at Stains and, more generally, the garden cities movement and the emergence of social housing. They present its architecture, its planning, the way in which it uses landscape and the changes that have occurred through renovation projects. But they also seek to value the experience of the residents by sharing their history. In order to do this, interviews were organised to record their stories and to collect personal archive documents. Displayed in the exhibition, recounted during the walks or simply shown as part of a film, the words of



A sonar walk where the walls talk.



Creation of a garden in a courtyard.

the residents play a part in telling the story of the garden city in all its constituent parts.

### Heritage souvenirs

On several occasions visitors asked us if we had souvenirs of the garden city for sale in the shop space adjacent to the history and visitor centre. The experience with the city and its residents made a strong impression on them and they wanted a memento. 'Franciade' is an organisation which has developed objects derived from the town of Saint-Denis and its archaeological history. We asked them to extend their work to Stains and to come up with objects which could be sold, with the proceeds going to the benefit of the garden city.

A range of stationery was created in the first instance: notebooks, postcards, bookmarks. The illustrations were designed by an artist from Saint-Denis who immersed themselves in the place through visits and meetings with residents and through having access to the archives which had been collected on the Stains garden city. Then we developed a range of textile products: bags, pencil cases, book covers... A local silk screen printer led workshops teaching the techniques to residents and as a result they were able to translate their own personal vision of the garden city into pictures. These pictures were re-worked by the professional, transposed onto material and this was then entrusted to a group of cloth workers in Stains who made the textile objects. In this way, visitors who buy the products leave with a little bit of history that they can share with others.



Scarecrows in the garden city.

### The garden city network

Although the garden cities in the Île-de-France region were all developed and spurred on by one and the same man, Henri Sellier, they are all different, in terms of their size, architecture, planning, the layout of their facilities, their accessibility, populations and re-development projects. With this in mind, we thought it would be interesting to develop a regional network for the garden cities so that they could share the diversity of this heritage.

The mayors of all the relevant town halls were asked to identify the best people within their departments to take part in this network. Different stakeholders then came forward according to each town hall: people working in the cultural service, town planning department, heritage offices and tourist offices. And so different professions are represented which illustrates the different ways in which the towns position themselves in relation to their garden city. All agreed on the important place occupied by the residents, whether when thinking about preservation or renovation, transformation or



Artistic Rubbish as inspiration for a poetic stroll.



Flowering prairies or development of signage for the gardens.

the development of heritage and tourism. In 2009, the towns of the Île-de-France region were invited to take part in the first meeting, organised at Stains. The first theme we covered was this: how to work together to develop and promote the garden cities and their residents? Given the wealth of interest in this first meeting, further exchanges have been organised annually in the Île-de-France: at Suresnes in 2010, at Champigny-sur-Marne in 2011 and Épinay-sur-Seine in 2012.

In the course of these meetings, presentations of initiatives which had been developed by one or the other have allowed for the sharing of experiences and the creation of a "shared understanding". A joint initiative was launched in 2012 to further develop tourism: 'springtime in the garden cities' of the Île-de-France. For this event, each garden city offered at least one guided tour of its site. They were all a success in terms of visitor numbers.

As with the project which was developed at Stains, the partners who were chosen by the town halls to take part in the network were extremely diverse: landlords; tourist offices; tourist advisory boards in 'departments'; tenant associations; the local representative from 'Architectes de Bâtiments de France'. This range both strengthens the project and makes it more complex. Each person has to follow the mission of the organisation or local authority that he or she represents and at the same time support a joint project, with the necessary involvement of the residents.

What are the consequences today of this project? What follow up actions do we need to take? At what level and with whom?

Design a 'heritage walk' across all the garden cities in the Île-de-France? Apply for listing as a UNESCO heritage site? Develop a French or even European network of garden cities?

This is what is being developed at the moment. Come to the next 'springtime in the garden cities' event to see all the progress that is constantly being made to turn these dreams into reality.





# Anticipating

More than just creating homes by reconciling city and nature, the garden cities responded to a social ideal, a utopia of community life in respect of one another. At a point in time where we are building eco-districts should we not use this model to create, in part, the city of tomorrow? In other words, how can we re-examine the principles and the values of the garden city today with regard to cities which are sustainable, sociable and energy efficient? Here are some examples:

- Design high quality coherence and harmony at the heart of the neighbourhood, as well as with the existing city.
- Organise and structure public spaces in order to provide multiple places which are both functional and convivial.
- Re-establish dialogue between city and nature for mutual enrichment.
- Develop the mode to live by watching a typological diversity, by creating places of meetings favoring the life of neighborhood and by respecting the intimacy of each.
- Involve residents in the life of their neighbourhood.
- Prioritise social and functional mixity.
- Devise land regulation policies.

These elements can be found in the works of students from all over the world, in visions of the third millennium, which support and develop the sociable city, representing values of wellbeing for everyone, of balance between functions and freedom. We must make sure that reinterpretations of the garden city do not inadvertently create an exclusive, ghettoised community.

# Garden cities – a model for tomorrow?

**Mireille Ferri<sup>(1)</sup>**  
Regional councillor  
of Île-de-France



The modern city of Berchem-Sainte-Agathe at Brussels which won first prize in the 1925 International Exposition of Modern Industrial and Decorative Arts. It remains an important architectural reference point for its simple volumes, incorporating right angles and flat roofs.

Developing a garden city does not just come down to bringing the town and countryside together and building new housing. This is worth reinforcing because, in misinterpreting this, some 'pleasant housing estates' have been passed off as garden cities. Far from constituting luxurious, gated communities for a privileged class of people, the garden cities embody, first and foremost, the values of social solidarity. The first aim of this analysis will be to re-examine the social housing movement of today, looking at some of the big ideas which were behind Ebenezer Howard's work.

## A social imperative first and foremost

A city is not created just by building housing. A living environment has to be constituted in which high quality public services can be found. To list them off does not suffice: in first priority are educational facilities (groups of schools, crèches, different colleges...), cultural facilities (libraries, theatres, rehearsal spaces, bandstands), health facilities (health centres, old people's homes), leisure facilities (from sports grounds to public baths). Add to these all the places that help facilitate people's active citizenship and social lives – community centres, social clubs and places of worship. But what is original in the garden city utopia is the way in which it is managed. It is the residents (sometimes operating as part of a co-operative) who manage all these places, in partnership with the local authority. And they are, at least in the founding principles, encouraged to share their views on any new esta-

The garden cities conjure up three images: a utopia, of people living happily side by side each other; the reconciliation of the city with nature; the potential to construct something beautiful, healthy and of better quality for people of modest means. This model is worth examining for the questions it asks and for the solutions it proposes. Garden cities still exist to this day, in our imagination and in the concrete reality of cities in today's world. They are everlasting!

blishment, especially if it concerns business or trading activity. If the garden city is directly and radically opposed to 'private communities', it is also a far cry from large estates which are devoted solely to housing. The garden city is made up of complex areas of urban spaces with mixed populations and uses.

We should not ignore the difficulties and constraints of these buildings which have to be sited in well-connected urban spaces and appeal to a range of tastes. A major preoccupation of Howard's (even at this time) was the fight against speculation and the creation of legal mechanisms for controlling land and property prices. The English legal system gives us solutions that cannot be transposed here, but it does raise the question of the necessarily public ownership of the land so that such initiatives can be developed.

This is one way of approaching the regeneration of city life and a real challenge not only for social housing organisations but also for national policies which cut across the financing of social housing and urban affairs. At the point where new priority-need areas attempt to better understand the challenges in deprived neighbourhoods and where the state seeks to re-define its approach towards tackling urban deprivation, it would perhaps be stimulating to re-read Howard's objectives.

(1) FERRI Mireille is also Vice-President of the IAU îdF, the Network of French Urban Planning Public Agencies (Fnau) and is Director of the 'Syndicat' of the Plaine de Montjean.



### Make a really good job of it

One of the characteristics of the garden cities is the way in which they have been able to draw on passionate architects who came up with new forms, worked the materials and designed the whole site. This rigour and search for high quality workmanship is very active today at the heart of the social housing movement.

It is also worth drawing on thinking from around the world on city planning. Victor Bourgeois, the scourge of 'novelty architecture', questioned the organic functioning of the city and in doing so built one of the most beautiful garden cities, Berchem-Saint-Agathe at Brussels.

"Numerous architects are caught up in their own little worlds, that is to say, they don't consider anything beyond their easel, ignoring the surrounding neighbourhood with its old and modern parts (...). New constructions owe their real meaning to that which justifies them and surrounds them," he wrote. This illustrates nicely a way of working which we know and understand only too well today. The eco-districts would do well to take inspiration from this!

If the aesthetic of certain cities enthuses us less today, the overall impression of coherence and harmony is still a sign of the quality of their design. Some particularly original designs continue to show the extreme care and consideration given to achieving quality and beauty at the time they were built – one example is the Saint Nicaise church at Reims which was decorated by the glassblower Lalique.

### Citizens want space

This quality of design crops up again in the attention given to the way in which public spaces are organised. There are two concerns to consider: firstly, creating places which can serve a variety of purposes – helping people get from A to B, whilst also providing opportunities for them to bump into each other and chat together; secondly, at the same time, organising safe, friendly and 'green' ways of travelling around.

These considerations also show how the garden city organises its boundaries, with the neighbouring town, between the different blocks and between different groups. They are designed to achieve ease of access between the garden city and the rest of the town and between the garden city and its connections to transport networks. The layout is only one way in which public space is organised, over and above the street which has been turned into a road in the modern city.

The main square is used in different ways: as a place for festivals or markets, sporting or cultural events, an open and empty space or a crowded and noisy space, a space which people will

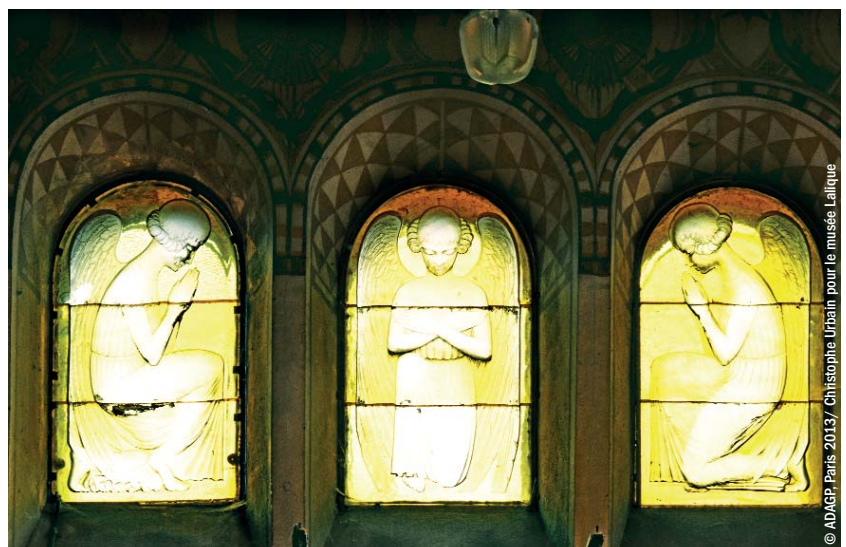
sometimes walk across and, at other times, avoid depending on the times, the weather or their mood. This flexibility is akin to a living and breathing form of urban life which is born out of the way in which citizens feel they own the space.

If, as we might hope to anticipate, sustainable neighbourhoods are the incarnation of the garden cities, they have everything to gain by finding again the overriding meaning of the public spaces which gave them life, linked them up with each other and gave them a sense of identity.

### Regenerate the city through nature

A stronger purpose could be given to nature in the city, over and above mere decoration. Whether it was an allotment or not, the garden was always, right up to the 19<sup>th</sup> century, more dedicated to food than it was to floral decoration. Today, new prerogatives of nature could be established along certain lines:

- Food growing, especially vegetables and herbs, remains central. Which is not to say that this can't be an enjoyable activity in itself.
- The conviviality of public or semi-public spaces where community spirit between people can thrive across the shared gardens, because they are working together in a common endeavour. Social mixity through action or through joint, shared management is the real means by which people can live together, respecting each other's difference.
- Reinforcing biodiversity with bees in the city, biological continuity, water infiltration.
- Climate regulation: tarmac in the courtyards instead of haystacks! The humidity provided by a pond, large stretches of grass, the shade provided by trees all help in the fight against



The church of Saint Nicaise at Reims, decorated by Lalique, the glassmaker, is an example of the great efforts that were made to achieve high standards of quality and beauty during the construction of the garden cities.

urban heat islands and soon could well show us that, in addition to looking attractive, they also provide precious protection.

The gardens of the city play so many essential roles – feeding, building community, creating a living ecosystem and biological continuity with open spaces surrounding the city. Of course, they were not thought out in exactly the same terms by their founders. But these different roles are emerging as real concerns for city dwellers today: bringing the countryside into the city so that we no longer see the city spoiling the countryside, creating new social bonds and examining the shared destiny (and unified governance?) of rural and urban spaces. Was the garden city in the vanguard of a new way of thinking about the city?



Longing for nature encourages us to invest, notably in neglected urban areas, to transform them into community gardens, meeting places where a community spirit can flourish. 20<sup>th</sup> arrondissement, Paris.

The rare availability of space and the fight against urban heat islands means we have to come up with a new type of garden city where the maisonettes are now stacked on top of each other, where the gardens spread out onto terraces and where food is grown on the roof tops. The necessity of regenerating urban space and of managing the infertility of the soil leads us to work with urban land using new methods; using strips of land and deserted areas; working with the gaps and cracks; making gardens from little spaces to let nature in. Adopting permaculture techniques and raised beds makes even the slightest corner fertile and productive. Urban intensity can also be seen in the increased density of garden spaces.

### Creating new city limits

Howard considered the garden city as an alternative to failing industrial towns. This vision matches our current convictions – we regenerate the urban environment by building new neighbourhoods which create social connections, are energy and resource efficient,

accessible and well networked and, above all, capable of re-energising city life through their services. This principle of working with already-existing areas, increased by acting within a multi-scale urban system is, without doubt, one of the main lines of thought for the sustainable city. This is a major step which would be worth developing further in the current debate on the creation of large cities.

If we add to this functional vision the hybrid city-countryside characteristic of the garden city we can see another dimension playing out in the debate on how we organise our lives: what form should these limits take? For obvious reasons, the large city agglomerations are situated at the heart of rich agricultural land. This must be preserved. The question of city limits as a permeable frontier, or better still as an interface has yet to find consensus in its adapted forms. The new garden city with its small groups of low level apartment blocks and green-fingered inhabitants could well come to be the strong and enduring example of a new urban facade whose necessity we understand, without really recognising the form it will take.

### A systemic vision of the city

Howard wanted to make the garden cities part of a network which went beyond national boundaries, creating, by their own dynamism, an alternative to the classic city with its predatory consumption of resources and energy and cut off from the natural environment.

Here again, the modernity of the proposal is staggering. At a time when Greater Paris is groping around with different theories and really lacks any objectives, the combined clarity and complexity of this dream could well remind us of the glaringly obvious.

We are faced with an urban system and so we need an original, inspiring idea, an organised city, based on a mobile system: the building of 'garden cities of the 21<sup>st</sup> century', 'metropolitan eco-districts', or 'new urban neighbourhoods'. In other words, we have to do new things with what exists already, we have to think about different things at the same time and in the same way at different levels, we have to link up spaces and organise people's movements, we have to study the widening differences as our final chance to create social wellbeing.

Faced with the challenges of unregulated globalisation and large urban areas which throw up totally new and, perhaps, even unanswerable questions concerning governance, an approach at neighbourhood level, as part of a complex system within a network, could well be one way of tackling regeneration. A return towards a form of urban utopia?



# Draw me a garden city

Projects by Pauline Szwed, Nicolas Ziesel and  
Adelaida Uribe Lemarie

Gwenaëlle Zunino  
IAU île-de-France



B. Basset / IAU îdF

What might a garden city look like tomorrow? The IAU îdF organised a one-day workshop and asked Pauline Szwed<sup>(1)</sup>, Nicolas Ziesel<sup>(2)</sup> and Adelaida Uribe Lemarie<sup>(3)</sup> to respond to this question. Three projects with different, yet complementary, visions give an insight into the possible evolution of the garden city model in today's world and in the future.



Pauline Szwed



Nicolas Ziesel



Adelaida Uribe Lemarie

The chapter entitled "Future Perspectives" in this edition of the Cahiers series was the opportunity to examine three interpretations of the concept of the garden city by looking at a practical case study.

## The challenge

Pauline Szwed (landscape artist) and Adelaida Uribe Lemarie and Nicolas Ziesel (both architects), volunteered themselves for a day of sketching to develop a garden city project. The site we took as a case study is at Maurepas, a peri-urban commune in the new town of Saint-Quentin-en-Yvelines. It is made up of two plots of land measuring 6.5 hectares in total, on both sides of the access road to the town centre, alongside the RD13. On this land are few activities, two farm buildings and a few cows which are kept in order to remind us of the area's rural history.

The request was to come up with a programme based on functional mixity, comprising housing, activities and a crèche. The aim is to reach a residential density level of 70 homes to the hectare. The project's ambition is to create a gateway to the town, to optimise the link with the adjacent shopping district and to give a sense of identity to the site.

## Re-examining the values of the garden city

The values we have inherited from the garden cities can be adapted today, including:

- the sense of identity for a neighbourhood,
- the concept of the short distance town,
- the social ambition of the neighbourhood,

- required levels of density,
- the balance between built-up spaces,
- the relationship with nature and the surrounding landscape, and with local agriculture,
- the relationship with public space and the way in which it is organised and structured,
- the concept of housing and the changing ways in which we live,
- the relationship with private spaces,
- shared, communal spaces,
- functional mixity and, particularly, where facilities and places of work are located, and
- architectural prescriptions which give a coherence to the whole site.

## The results: 3 projects, 3 visions

The first project endeavoured to reclaim the outside spaces, from individual gardens to the wider landscape, by creating a diversity and structured organisation of functions, uses and planning. The second project wanted to shake up our habits by placing agriculture at the heart of the project. The third proposes to place the garden city at the heart of a much wider eco-system. The projects emphasised the values of sharing, of the collective and exchange, all the while respecting each person's privacy. A landscape artist and architects have brought real solutions of functional mixity; they have created these in relation to the existing town and established a new relation to nature in these projects, each with its own strong identity.

(1) SZWED Pauline is a landscape artist with the agency 'Base'.

(2) ZIESEL Nicolas is an architect with the agency 'Koz'.

(3) URIBE LEMARIE Adelaida is an architect with the 'Atelier Seraji'.

## Webographie

[www.baseland.fr](http://www.baseland.fr)  
[www.koz.fr](http://www.koz.fr)  
[www.seraji.net](http://www.seraji.net)

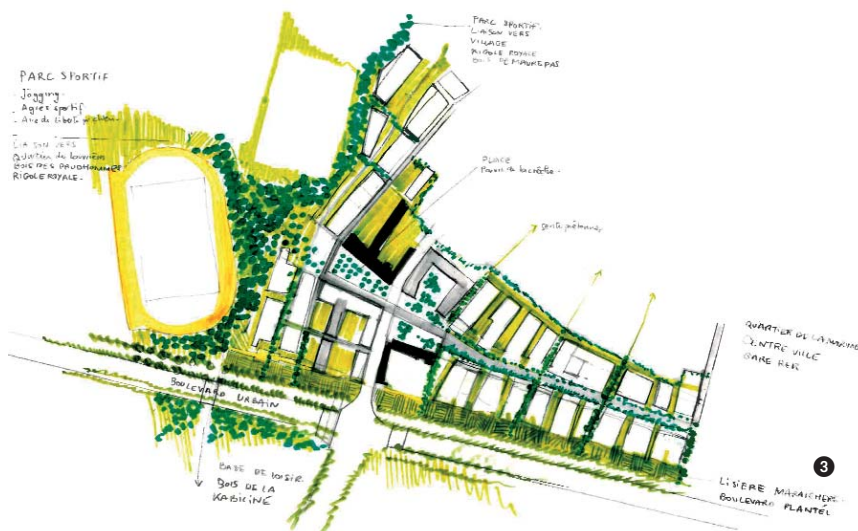
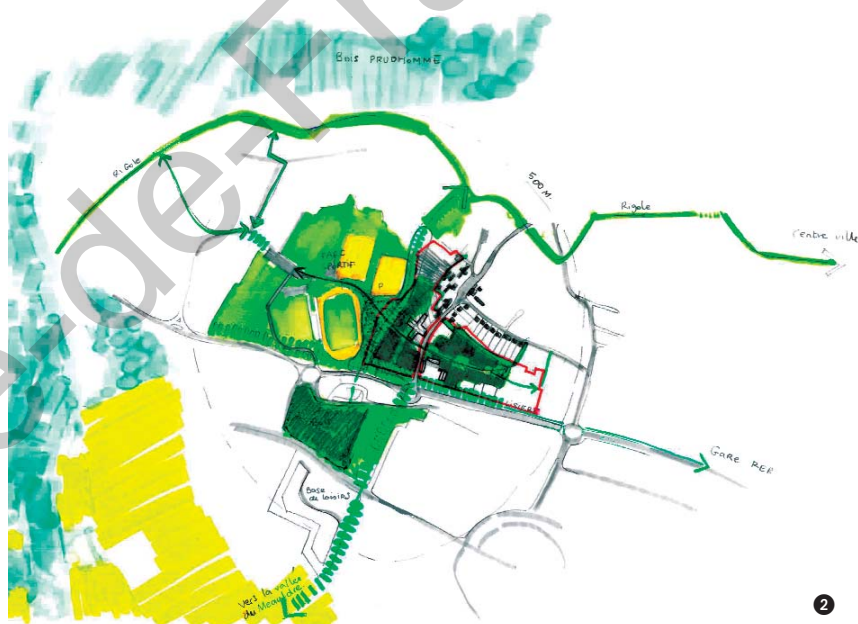
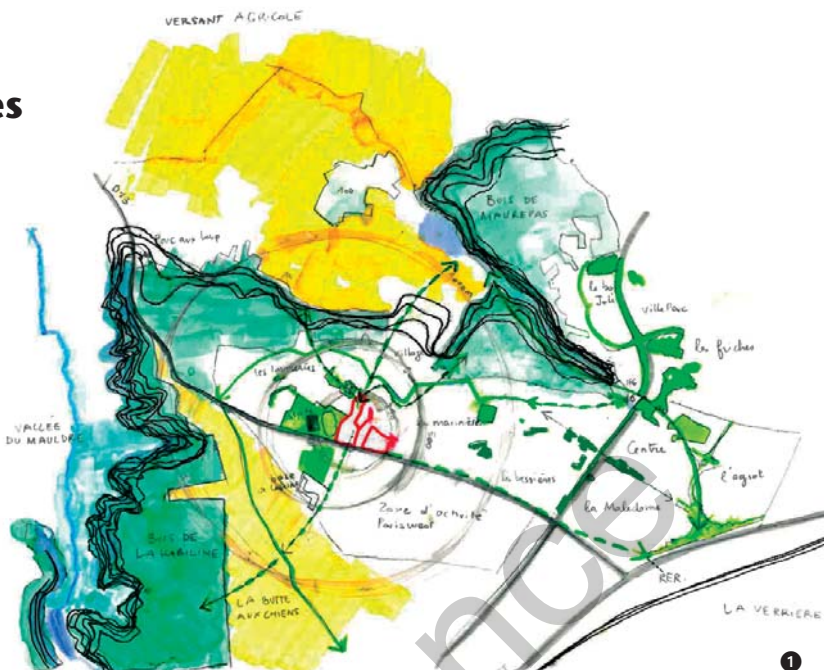
**Pauline Szwed**

Space has become a luxury, the city is getting more compact. The world of the home must look beyond its walls to find its missing features and make the most of the environment. This project for a garden city is organised into numerous different spaces – shared spaces and landscaped spaces – where, essentially, houses will come to be built. Public facilities and activities are offered in the renovated farm buildings.

The aim is to leave one's home in order to look for recreation space at the heart of shared, natural spaces. It is about bringing the garden city closer to elements in the landscape. In fact, sporting facilities are just next door, the leisure centre is less than 10 minutes away on foot and the parks, woods and the agricultural area is a quarter of an hour away. These natural entities are also breathing spaces.

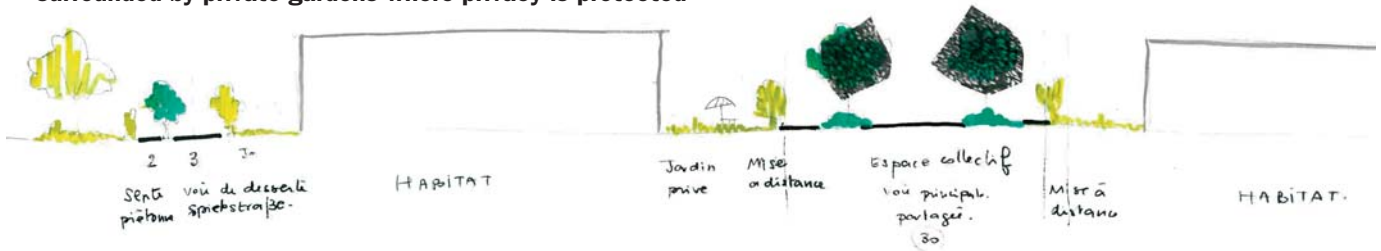
In working with the existing green belt, this garden city project aims to create a park which spreads out into the west of Maurepas. For this, it has to form part of a whole with the sports ground and to connect in with surrounding areas. The choice is, therefore, to design, in a cross-cutting manner, a public space which crosses the whole site as well as a green path linking the north and the south.

The creation of different types of bordering edges enables elements to be put at a distance and for an identity to be given to this neighbourhood. The border with the sports ground constitutes a transition point where each element, whether park or neighbourhood, sees its functions increased. In order to put the RD13 at some distance, community gardens and kitchen gardens form a wide border, experienced as a social space and a space for producing food. The RD13 is turned into an urban boulevard with side lanes (cyclists and pedestrians), assuring a double plant filter. The inside of the neighbourhood is a multifunctional, shared central space; with shops, facilities, walk ways, recreational uses but also space for traffic where the car is invited in, guaranteeing, in this way, local services. Around this space, planted borders have been arranged, preserving the intimacy of the private gardens. Public spaces have been organised to offer: a square in front of the creche, central public space and pedestrian pathways.

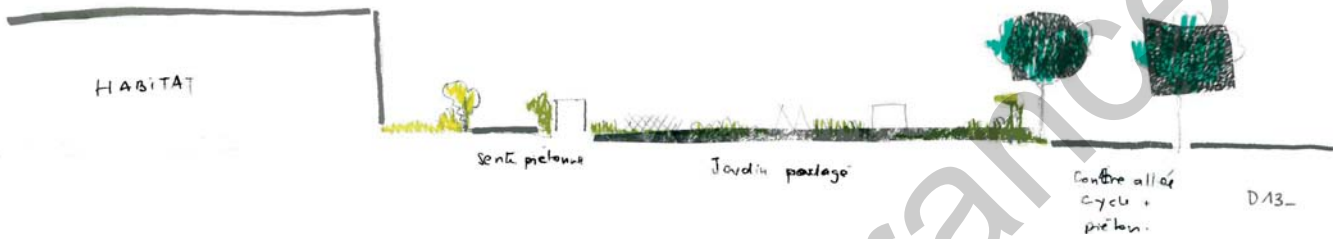




A shared central space, a place where people can meet,  
surrounded by private gardens where privacy is protected



Community gardens are used as a border along the main road



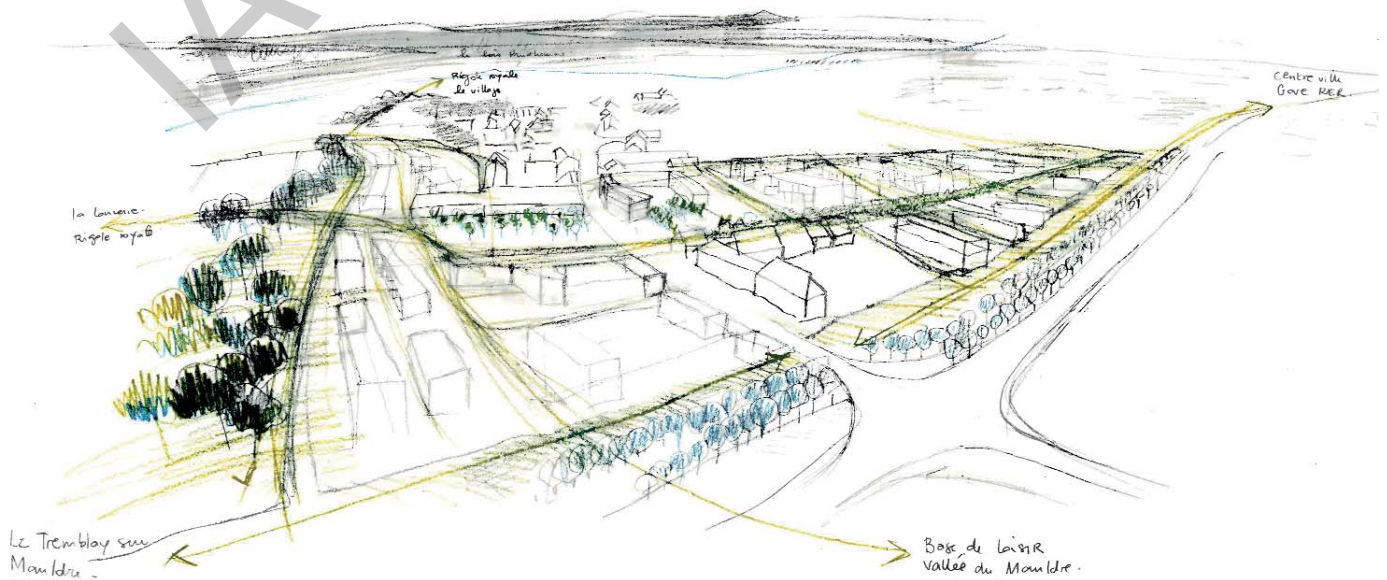
A planted border between buildings



A wide border between the neighbourhood and the sports ground gives each element its own space and value



A garden city connected to the city and to the wider landscape



Nicolas Ziesel

### ① From the car-city...

## ② ...to the vegetable city

### *Imagine an ideas farm*

This concept would be a place for exchange and sharing where the development of the design would be conducted by the residents and people who wanted to invent new skilled jobs. The ideas farm would be an agricultural incubator, with processing plants and communal work spaces.

### Mix up the uses

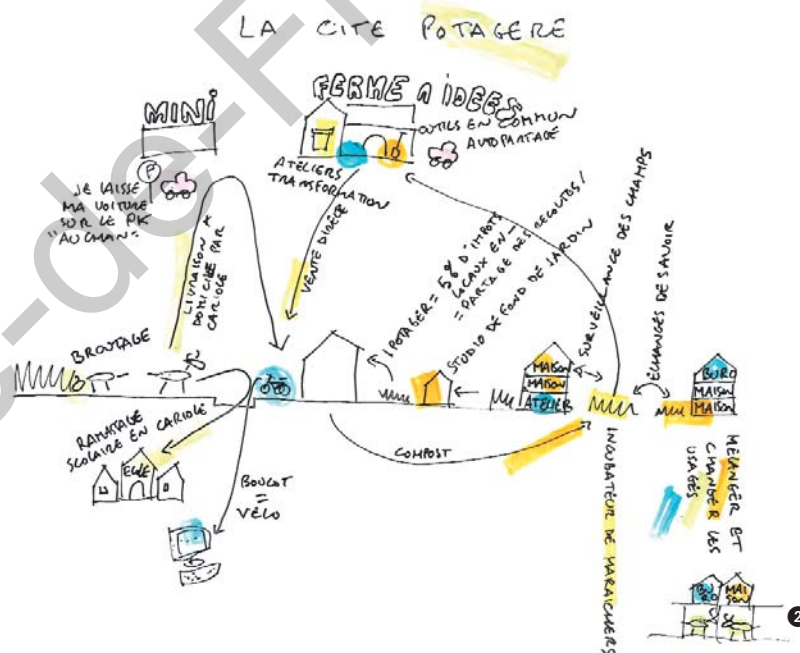
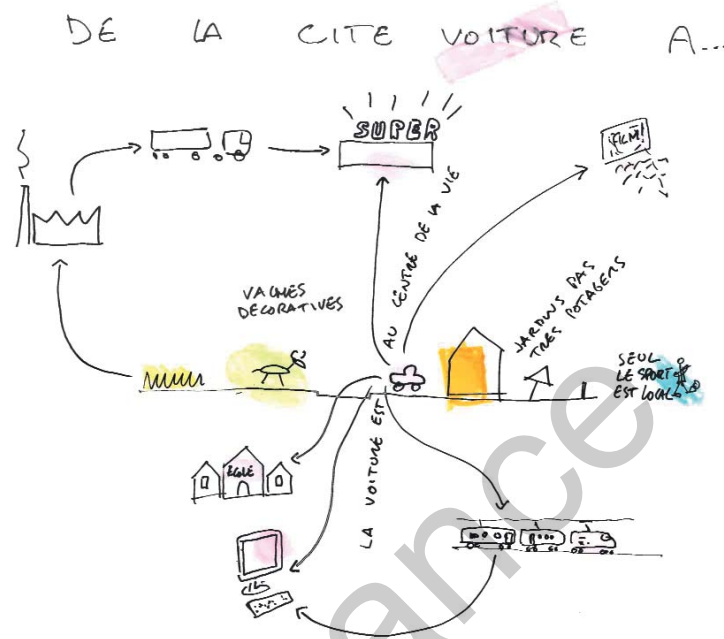
It is important to be able to mix and change the use of the buildings which will include office space, home and workshops.

### Create links with the shopping district

Mutualise the parking spaces of the new homes with those of the supermarket and its car park. Transform the supermarket into a minimarket. And so come up with a neighbourhood which is a hybrid space between a farm and a garden with a surprising vision and a different rhythm, that of the vegetable and animal world. Exchange and sharing become the key words in this new sociable world.

### ③ Animals in the city

The neighbourhood can be organised differently, starting from the ideas farm, by using, for example, animals and particularly horses for deliveries and for school pick ups, which would give us a different network in the town. The animals, and especially the cows, will be able to enjoy pasture land around the sports ground by reinvesting in abandoned spaces.



2 FERMES = DES ANIMAUX DANS LA VILLE







## The garden city: nature as landmark and ecosystem

Adelaida Uribe Lemarie

To think up a garden city today is to give nature back its important role and to stimulate an ecosystem at the town level. In this project, this translates into several principles:

- the creation of large parks,
- the generosity of outside spaces,
- relative density of buildings in order to free up the most natural space possible,
- bigger buildings towards the south of the plot in order to give more definition to what exists there already.



### 1 Link up spaces

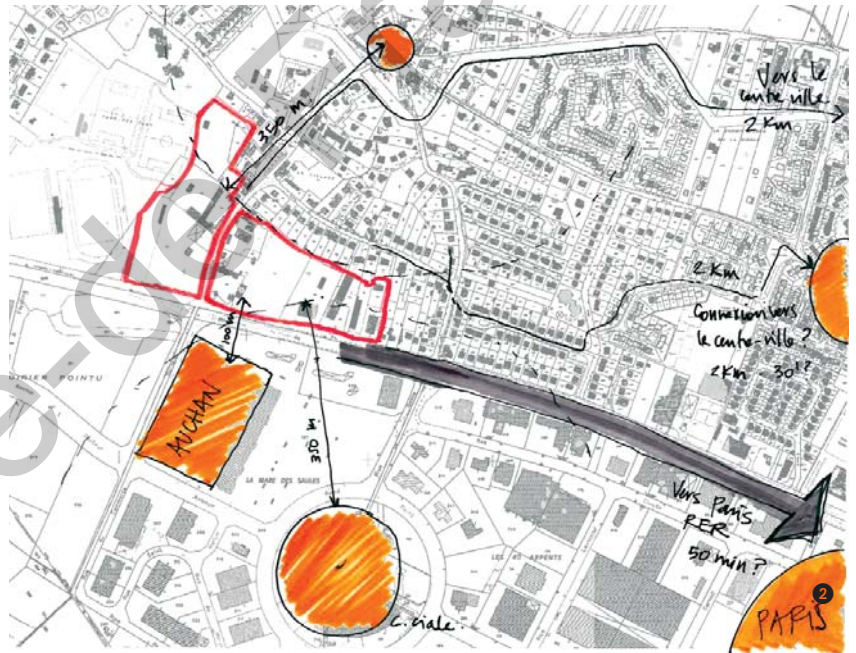
On the scale of the town, the ecosystem is created by the networking of the plot that makes up this project with the sports ground, the green spaces around it and the royal channels and the woods.

### 2 Reinforce the links

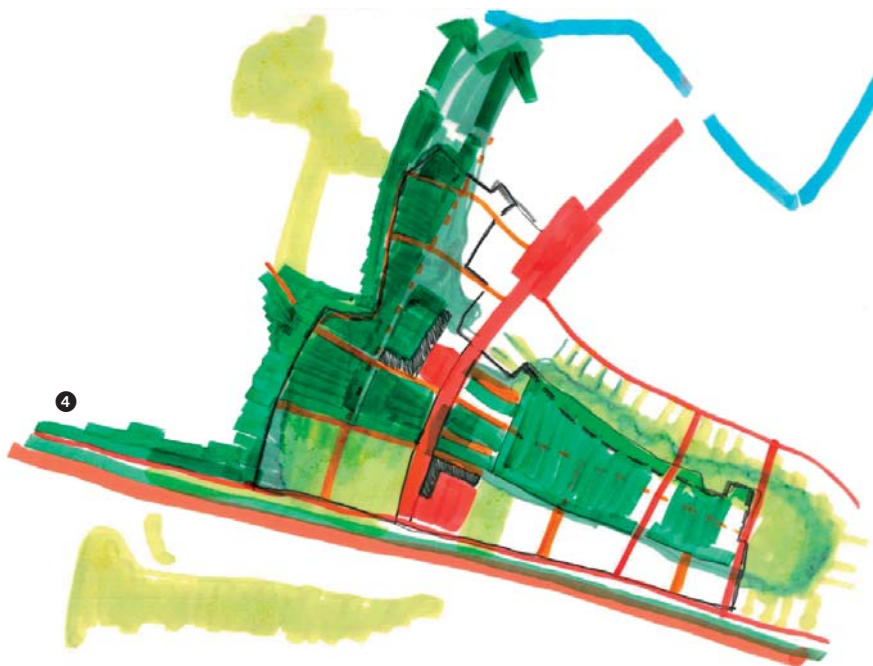
Using the ecosystem, the idea is to reinforce the garden city's links with different entities in Maurepas; the village centre, the town centre, shopping areas and the station.

### 3 Base the design on empty space

On the scale of the garden city, the project uses the existing land patterns and pathways to design the blocks of flats.







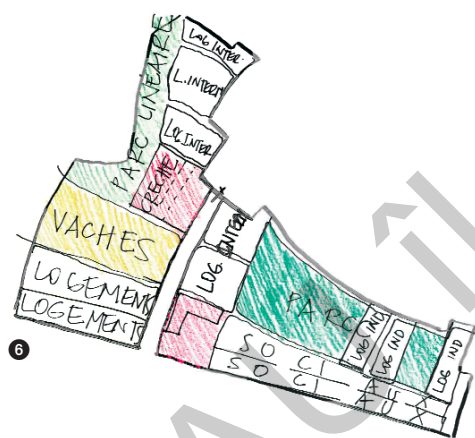
#### 4 Imagine a central park

To strengthen the eco system a central park is proposed at the heart of the project. It establishes links with the village and the royal channels. To put the RD13 into the background, a green band with lots of trees is created and designed with a cycle route. All the roadways serving the site open out onto the ecosystem.



#### 5 Create surprises

A strong desire of the project in terms of the identity of the space is to frame resting spaces, whether plant or mineral, where the perspective is thrown back onto the central ecosystem or the historical buildings. This is achieved by work on the rhythm between empty and full space.

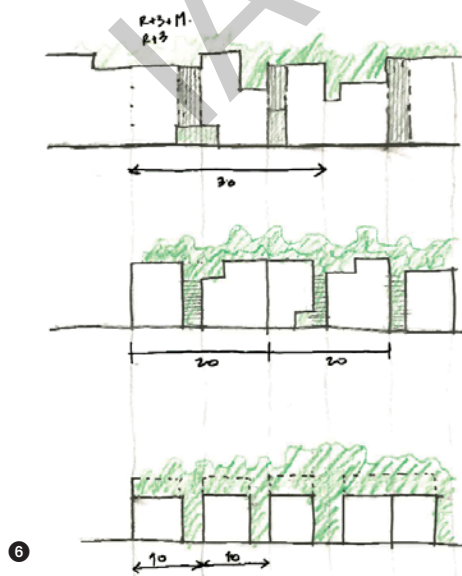


#### 6 Vary the programming

The ecosystem is made up of a large central park, a linear park joining the village centre and a prairie for the cows. The farm buildings have been preserved and become local facilities, for example a crèche. The courtyards have been transformed into squares. Diversity of housing is suggested in order to offer an accommodation pathway at the heart of the neighbourhood, along with social mixity:

- intermediate housing two floors high, benefiting most from the parks;
- social housing three floors high, laid out along the road;
- individual houses one floor high link up the adjacent housing estate.

The buildings will be designed with empty spaces which will be able to change by means of additional floors or extensions.



LOG. SOCIAUX - COLLECTIF  
ENV. 320 log.

LOG. INTERMÉDIAIRE  
ENV. 170 log.

LOG. INDIVIDUEL  
ENV. 20 log. 590 log.

# Reinventing the garden city: other urban forms

**Gwenaëlle Zunino**  
IAU île-de-France



Living in the sky at the water's edge.  
Île de Vitry-sur-Seine.  
Atelier Castro Denissof Casi.

Today there is undeniably a push for cities that are both “desirable” and “sustainable”. At a time when urban life, density and diversity are givens, towers have become commonplace urban forms. Today the goal is to break away from preconceived ideas to reinvent a new way of living and experiencing them.

In these examples selected from the creative work of Roland Castro, Édouard François, MVRDV and Vincent Callebaut, some are realistic and others more utopian. But they all align, more or less, with the garden city concept, with an updating of certain values, and in seeking to become a model that can be reproduced and adapted. Reconciling nature and the city is a recurrent theme. Some projects seek to do so by working with their already strongly natural settings. But even if they are designed differently, the fact remains that developing outdoor spaces, determining a hierarchy and defining uses is still about creating places for leisure, exchange or production. The other significant value is sociability, in other words, the real intention to create the conditions for community life, and a different means of experiencing it. Each project suggests a way of reconciling the inner intimacy of housing with the communal, shared experience of public encounter. Functional diversity is also centre stage, contributing to the concept of a city as a neighbourhood. Finally, all the projects are dense urban environment, even the Dragonfly project, a neo-agricultural utopia moored on a city's shores.

How can garden city values be reinterpreted with contemporary, future or even utopian urban forms? This article reviews a few, intentionally very different projects which take another look at the city and the values of sociability, diversity, neighbourhood and nature.

## Living in the sky: Atelier Castro Denissof Casi

Consulted for the Paris metropolitan area, the Roland Castro agency dreamed up a project combining the idea of a desirable city, a symbolic, dense and economic reality. Even if it looks like a tower, it is not; rather it is a vertical village: a series of five superimposed garden courtyards, each surrounded by some twenty housing units. Individual aspiration is thus rendered compatible with the greater whole of the community, and home ownership approaches that for individual houses. A type of duplex construction, with individual access through garden courtyards and wide loggias. A strong sense of belonging was developed to ensure the building's longevity and durability. Each glassed-in garden courtyard has different atmospheres and functions. Of course, they serve to give access to the housing, but they are also spaces to be lived in and experienced, as well as serving to regulate temperature. These hanging gardens are also an alternative address in the building. The building base's dimensions and future use is adapted according to how best to integrate it with the rest of the city; it can be home to shops, facilities or town-houses. The developer Nexity wants to create a first vertical village in Gennevilliers.



### Socialization by height:

#### Édouard François

For the Grenoble peninsula 'ZAC' or Development Zone, Édouard François designed a twin-tower project with 140 units in each building. To meet the combined challenges of height, energy efficiency and the goal of allowing everyone to enjoy an outdoor space, the "balcony" function was disassociated from the "housing" function. Balconies were therefore stacked on the roof. Each is actually a "room" of 35 m<sup>2</sup>, open to the sky, and will even have a summer kitchen. They will be sold separately as independent plots, as something like second homes. In addition, in this project, courtyards in the middle of the apartment blocks will be home to "follies", small chalets intended as shared space such as, for example, guest apartments. Delivery is scheduled for 2015.



### Gwanggyo Power Center:

#### MVRDV

MVRDV won the competition to design the Gwanggyo town centre; this new city is 35 km south of Seoul. In response to a strongly natural setting of a lake and forests, the project comprises a complex of buildings shaped to recall the surrounding hills. Combining values of high density and programme diversity, the design resembles stacked rings, with each level enjoying a richly green outdoor space. A system of a vertical park and wide atriums contributes to natural ventilation and reduced energy consumption, replacing the usual public park network. The atriums become office and housing lobbies, or open areas in front of museums, facilities or commercial areas. A new urban landscape is thus created, in response to the natural setting.



### Dragonfly: Vincent Callebaut

Dragonfly is a prototype urban farm bringing together housing, offices and agricultural areas at different levels, cultivated partially by the inhabitants. This project is intended to be autonomous and just about self-sustaining. It brings together the values of social diversity, ecological awareness and communal urban agriculture with the consumer as a major player in its function. Agricultural and leisure areas, from the most private to the most public, surround the concentrations of offices and housing: parks, vegetable gardens, orchards, meadows, rice fields, farms and hanging fields. Two twinned towers shape a rough triangle around a bioclimatic greenhouse. This utopia is offered in a very urban context: New York. It would be moored on the banks of the East River.



# How to re-interpret the garden city in the 21<sup>st</sup> century?

**Christian de Portzamparc**  
Architect and urban planner



In the gardens of la Lironde in Montpellier, the dialogue between the inhabited islands and the nature calls back the concepts of garden cities.

“**T**he city was founded in the face of nature, using its walls to protect itself from her uncontrolled vastness and the dangers of her brutality. But this idea of culture and nature in opposition is no longer at all one which belongs to the Neolithic age, nor even to the last century. Largely ‘anthropologised’ over the course of time, to the point where it was profoundly transformed by human presence, the planet is no longer a hostile and rich environment which has to be mastered according to the history of our technical progress, rather it is something which we now have to protect as much as we can.

In 1972, the ‘Chateau d’Eau’ project in Marne-la-Vallée questioned the relationship between nature and the city by transforming the purely technical construction of water storage into a green landscape feature. The project glorifies nature as a setting in itself and this seems all the more exalted still the closer we are to a new town.

When I completed a project at la Roquette two years later, I was looking to make a manifesto for space which has been lost as a result of new urban developments, which have no limits and no frame of reference. I wanted to find this space which “les modernes”, except Pouillon, refused and hated: that empty space which is surrounded by buildings.

Lionel Schein, writing in AMC about this project, said that he thought, once more, that emptiness could be a modern value. That was Doha. But, 10 years later, seeing what I had done at La Villette, I

“The garden city of the 21<sup>st</sup> century,” – this is how Christian de Portzamparc introduces the garden quarter of la Lironde in Montpellier. And it is the reason why we want to ask him some questions. What are the values of the garden cities he is referring to? How can we re-interpret these in today’s cities? Why?

was pleased when this indefatigable militant showered me with praise by telling me that he understood what I had wanted to show.

At la Roquette I wanted to show the extraordinary value, for me, of this type of emptiness in the urban continuum, of the beautiful sense of otherness it represents in our cities, the new reinterpretations which should be made of it and of the advantages for housing offered by its edges and borders. It was in this way that I made out of this emptiness in the landscape a possible small plot of the old Ile de France region which would have re-appeared. It is true I was familiar with the marvelous model of Frederick Law Olmsted in Central Park.

It was on the Atlanpole project in 1988 that I went to work on the notion of ‘built islands’ – neighbourhoods which break off abruptly along the edges of the large parks which I had placed initially in the most prosperous and least marshy of places in this large site of 4 km along the edge of the Erdre. This model (and its richness in creating a living environment) was always still in mind but this time fragmented, multiplied, and no longer continuous and unified. This project was particularly fruitful since it was here, in the midst of these island-neighbourhood projects that I defined the idea of the ‘open block’. This was to respond to the unknowns in the many housing programmes that were being advertised at the time. It was only two years later, in 1990, on a vast natural site alongside the constantly-growing city of Montpellier that I managed (after several weeks of trying!) to pick up the theme of the open block,



but this time it is freed from all links to the road network. These are no longer 'island neighbourhoods', but 'island blocks'.

I was also able to set up public-private developments, businesses and shops and above all work on the edges of the neighbourhoods which mix with the adjoining neighbourhoods in order to avoid the effect of the closed-in town. In fact, today, the model city, organized in a more or less community fashion, represents everything that we fear. The risk of privatizing the city is, in fact, too great and has occurred everywhere, in the two Americas and in Asia where more or less natural and inhabited spaces have appeared, and which we were able to visit. This isn't a dramatic process, it simply destroys, slowly but surely, everything which is key to the democracy of a city, the notion of shared public space accessible to everyone. With regard to the gardens of la Lironde, I used the descriptor "the garden city for our age" because presenting the idea to the press or to residents always necessitates that things are presented in a simplified manner. You have to use picture-words. But the idea of the garden city related, for me, to another point in history and to another era.

### **Three different ways of looking at the relationship between city and nature**

The primitive mode, represented by a dangerous perception of nature against which the city protects itself right from its founding, is no longer the same in the 19<sup>th</sup> century when the garden cities appeared. Since the 8<sup>th</sup> century, nature has no longer been hostile. Countries like France and England pacified and controlled what was 'outside the city walls' and, in the USA, Jefferson's Act was published, which established a network of grid roads making its way across the whole of the American countryside to bring the country under control. The relation of man towards the planet has evolved; the planet is now something for man to discover, conquer and populate.

In their origin, the garden cities, in Great Britain, were a positive reaction against the arrival of the factories and the overcrowding of cities and worker housing estates. You only have to look at Daumier's engravings (whose works depict the era rather like Paris Match does today) to see London's neighbourhoods for yourself. They were deemed a positive reaction because they fed more or less utopian community projects and took off in a way that Françoise Choay called 'culturalist', by teaching us to understand the full stages of absolutely dominant industrial progress. The garden cities correspond to an urban ideal, combining the advantages of the city and those of the countryside. They benefit from a culture where the relation with nature is becoming very important. They maintain a relationship of conve-

nience with nature which neither the classical city, nor the modern city propose and which corresponds to the marvelous urban parks of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. It is, moreover, shortly afterwards that the technical era takes off, almost as if it had been programmed since Greek antiquity up until, and during, the period of scientific adventure. The promethean enterprise of the West was accomplished by man's mastery of a universalised planet. We know how the modern urbanism of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, born after the First World War, was conceived against several opposing projects: the Viennese ring, the precepts of Camillo Sitte and his love for the classical city, and then the garden city. The concepts of this could only ignore the beauty of the modern world and the imperious necessity to find large scale rational treatment with regard to town planning, when industry had found it with regard to the production of goods and, later, distribution.

Le Corbusier, in 1925, in his model of the city for 1 million residents, takes exactly the opposite approach by installing a dominant, linear geometry which makes a metaphor of man's conquest over nature which comes to accompany the city, in second place to it. Geometry does not exist in nature, it is the visible trace of man's genius on the earth and in our modern cities. Constructive rationalization, but also a progressive, humanist credo, require nature be submitted to architecture when, on the contrary, the architects of the garden cities strove for rounded edges while promoting the garden.

This is the very image of productive civilization, or productivist civilization, which had to be celebrated in this perfect city. This progressive revolution had an impact that you could not imagine. By a curious mockery of history, when the team members of Ciam were gathered for a meeting at Athens, having planned a straight and inflexible model, when they wanted to rest, they went to spend some time at Hydra, a marvelous island off the coast of the Hellenic peninsula. Yet the outline of the port at Hydra follows a natural amphitheatre and is laid out with beautiful pathways for donkeys to walk along. This donkey pathway was then used as a negative term by Corbusier when he denounced roads with bends in them. Today we are in the third era of our relationship with nature. A return to 'culturalism' if not to the garden city. But progressivism had 'productive forces' with it.

Ford and Lenine have the same vision and, for Freud, civilization is anti-nature. This great and beautiful ideology is again in the majority and I only know for the moment the texts of Bruno Latour who seems to ask the recurring question in our way of thinking about any enterprise. He writes that the history which is ours is "completely contrary from that of the modern era which

increasingly freed itself from nature". "We experience a history of attachment every day which is becoming more and more intimate between humans and non-humans." This is what we have constantly felt. For us, nature is no longer there to be conquered, it is in us and is no longer simply a place in which to spend our leisure time; nature is ourselves. We have to protect it, as it is threatened. The great artifact, that artificial nature which the city represents, will have to integrate itself little by little with the genius of nature and, slowly, learn how to play differently with energy, climate and food. We are no longer in a situation like the garden cities with the city placed in the countryside, but now we have nature in the city, a lived-in form of nature. One could say that this is an inversion of the paradigm and this is what the old projects wanted to apply."

## The Projects presented by Gwenaëlle Zunino



La Roquette at Paris.

### The beginnings

#### La Roquette - Paris - 1975

Christian de Portzamparc's first manifesto on the concept of the inhabited void married high density with nature and is one possible adaptation of the garden city. The rectangular blocks are placed around a large public park. This empty space at the heart of the block is highlighted by the park and allows for the increased density of the buildings surrounding it. All the apartments have a view of the park.

### From the garden city to the inhabited block

#### The gardens of la Lironde - Montpellier - 2012

The urban context of the gardens of la Lironde is radically different to that of La Roquette in Paris. Even if they are sited fairly close to the city, they are still out in the countryside, with vineyards and farms and a marvelously calm landscape. The local mayor wanted to build a housing estate; Christian de Portzamparc wanted to create for the future residents, here, on the edge of Montpellier, a neighbourhood which would be at least as attractive and with as much value as the beautiful streets of the classical town centre. The idea was to preserve, as much as possible, the countryside, its few remaining farmhouse style cottages. It is why the project is based on the construction of blocks of four to six levels, high enough to provide some level of density and with plinth blocks accommodating car parks, freeing up ground floor space for a communal terrace with direct access to the buildings.

Its charm comes from the coexistence of close-up views of the garden and the courtyards and views in the distance of the surrounding countryside. Of course, there had been attempts to categorically refuse this imitation of the city centre and its roads which is what the housing estate

represented. The project was accepted by Raymond Dugrand in 1991 and well received by property developers when Christian de Portzamparc presented it to them. After the housing crisis of the 1990s which more or less put a stop to the project for almost a decade, the developers returned to Christian de Portzamparc in 2000, telling him that this was, now, the ideal product – housing, close to the city and with garden views. Today the project is almost finished.

The gardens of la Lironde are organised into 'built blocks' and surrounded by nature. Looking at how the space is organised, what is interesting is the dialogue between the courtyards and the blocks, facilitated by the 'windows' between the blocks, where nature can be seen from afar, along with the other blocks nearby and all the activity in the nearby streets. This ambiance resembles the concepts of the inhabited park or the garden city, even if the rhythms here are different. In the gardens of la Lironde, there is an alternating series of 'close-up' elements, such as the dense apartment blocks, and 'spaced out' elements such as the park and the countryside. What is more, just as we see with the garden cities, the ambition was to have a certain architectural harmony, no matter how difficult that might be with 16 different architects.

In addition, there is a very clearly organised system of roads running across the 'built blocks'. The objective here is also to limit the number of roads by using peripheral and crossing roads. The developers wanted to increase the amount of open air parking space. Christian de Portzamparc responded to this by integrating parking space into the plinth blocks of the buildings. From today's perspective this is a shame but, on the other hand, it does offer up very interesting potential for change in the future.

Around these islands, the initial idea was to have only one large public park. But the management of it would have been too complicated, its size being too large. It was therefore decided to create a public park around which various public facilities could be arranged (nursery school, sports ground, play areas etc), with private gardens around each block. The latter are maintained in accordance with precise specifications and are in direct relation with the public park. Everyone is able to profit from nature, but you cannot go everywhere. As in the garden cities, different types of open spaces exist in this project, at different levels – from the balcony to the surrounding countryside.

Today, nature must be guarded and protected, above all, on the edges of our cities in order to hold back urban spread. Consequently the park must be considered on a territorial level. The gardens of la Lironde constitute a green lung on a much bigger scale, one corresponding to

#### Key facts

ZAC development zone of 40 hectares;  
65% of which is free space  
Contains: 2,000 homes, 35,000 m<sup>2</sup> of  
office space and a school.



the large city. Today, other neighbourhoods have been developed next door to this project, but without the creation of any additional green spaces. They therefore benefit from the gardens of la Lironde which represent the natural 'spot' in the area.

### Les Tresums – Annecy – in development

Christian de Portzamparc reinterprets the idea of the 'built island' for the Tresums project which is in development at Annecy. The project is made up of private blocks of two or three buildings, organised around a communal garden. These islands are placed around a large public park which fits snugly with the steep slopes of the site.

### Some principles of the garden city which no longer correspond to some of their most recent developments

Christian de Portzamparc highlights the fact that the urban structure of the garden city has not helped it to evolve. Take the example of Sao Paulo: even if the garden cities had been developed in such a way that they could be respected as gardens, they have adapted to the density of the city today in very different ways. You can find garden cities organised around winding roads which have changed with the arrival of the skyscraper and which have become hemmed in, suffocating neighbourhoods. At Higienopolis, on the other hand, the green belt spread out over a regular grid of straight roads has allowed this area to increase its density whilst still remaining open and airy. The more the concentration of tall buildings is possible in a belt of rectilinear streets, the

more it becomes suffocating on a belt of curved roads.

Elsewhere in the urban idea and the city in general, functional mixity is essential. A neighbourhood must live just as well as it does during the day as it does in the evening. It must benefit from the proximity of housing, businesses, offices, services and public facilities. Functional mixity also determines the ease with which the city can transform itself which is primordial especially in the dense city. Having multiple and easy physical links with the immense value of all the services inherent in a city is something which is absent in the garden city, as it is in all its variations and uses around the world. If the garden city is sited in an out of the way place and nature is preserved, the city becomes exclusively residential, with the local corner shop the only hub of activity. Christian de Portzamparc adds a further thought: as these cities require shared management of the whole space, which is taken away from public administration, the tendency in the reinterpretation of the garden city today is to slide from an organised community towards an exclusive community. The negative consequence of today's tendency towards the privatised city is the creation of closed and controlled cities as in, for example, all the condominiums of North and South America. To avoid this pitfall, the carving up of the different levels of ownership, as with the carving up of what is public and what is private are extremely important and must be linked in with neighbouring areas and be based on the scale of a reasonably-sized block.



Les Tresums at Annecy.

- A1:** Architects: Gilles Cusy and Michel Maraval - Project ownership: Pragma
- A2:** Architects: Marc Rolinet – A+ - Project ownership: Bouygues
- A3:** Architect: A+ - Project ownership: ACM
- B1:** Architects: Christian de Portzamparc - Project ownership: Ubat et Marignan
- B2:** Architects: Emmanuel Nebout and Antoine Soler - Project ownership: Dominiun
- C1:** Architects: Patrice Genet - Project ownership: SFHE
- C2:** Architects: Wilfrid Bellecour and François Barberot - Project ownership: Ellul
- D1:** Architects: Agence Coste - Project ownership: ACM
- D2:** Architects: Agence Garcia Diaz - Project ownership: Sagec - GeorgeV/Nexity
- E1:** Architects: Agence Wilmotte - Project ownership: Belin Promotion
- E2:** Architects: Agence Cardin - Project ownership: ACM
- F1:** Architects: Agence Fontes - Project ownership: ACM
- F2:** Architects: Agence Rio-Chrétien - Project ownership: Bacotec
- F3:** Architects: Gabriel and Michèle De Marien - Project ownership: Monne Decroix
- Q:** Architects: Omar Migliore - Project ownership: ACM
- Z1:** Architects: Agence Rodrigues Rabineau - Project ownership: SHERC
- Z2:** Architects: Christian de Portzamparc - Project ownership: Bouygues Immobilier
- Z3:** Architects: N+B Architecte - Project ownership: FDI Promotion
- O1:** Architects: Francis Cardete - Project ownership: Lazard Immobilier
- O2:** Architects: Marie Elisabeth Nicoleau - Project ownership: Ubat
- P1:** Architects: A+ - Project ownership: Inforsud
- P2:** Architects: A+ - Project ownership: Inforsud
- P3:** Architects: Massimiliano Fuksas - Project ownership: Région Languedoc Roussillon
- R:** Architects: Rio Chrétien - Project ownership: ASSÉDIC



# Is there an alternative future for garden cities?

**Thierry Paquot<sup>(1)</sup>**  
Institute of Urban  
Development, Paris



Letchworth, first one garden city concretizing the concept of Howard. Which lessons to pull it for the city of tomorrow?

The sort of global urbanisation that has been at work for more than 50 years takes several forms (the development of shanty towns, megapoles, global cities, gated communities, scattered cities, small and medium sized dormitory towns...) all of which draw on the globalisation of our economies and our communications. In these conditions citizens demand more green space, consume arable ground for housing developments and motorways, in short nature too becomes built up through the prioritising of global models for architecture and urban development. Here and there, experiments which have been more or less thrown together attempt to thwart the effects of this urbanisation which, from an environmental point of view, is disastrous. With names like "transition towns", "slow cities", "resilient cities", "shrinking towns", "zero carbon towns" etc. they hold on to the ideal of the city whilst favouring a case by case approach. It is here where the idea of the garden city comes in. In fact, on re-reading Ebenezer Howard's text, several of the conditions which govern its constitution still have something to say to us today. Put another way, what can we borrow from this alternative hundred-year-old idea while adapting it for today's world? There are at least five elements: cooperative ownership of the soil; architectural diversity in housing developments; the inclusion of urban agricultural areas; the convictions of the local residents; and economies in transport (and therefore of energy). Private real estate engenders speculation and infringements to regulations (green belt land can become land to be built upon). Howard himself proposes

Do garden cities, which came into being more than a century ago, have the qualities which could serve to edify scenic towns and garden settlements, both places where livability is high? What can this model contribute to the development of sensory, participatory and "chronotopic"<sup>(2)</sup> city planning for specific areas which are mostly able to act autonomously, all the while being sufficiently linked in with their neighbours to benefit from sharing their assets?

to 'municipalise' the land, to turn it into a common good. Each person owns their house, but not the ground on which it sits – this belongs to the community. This is an idea for us to pick up again. Not a single house looks alike, in contrast to many housing developments and gated communities, this feature requires an architect's intervention, avoids uniformity and allows for experimentation. Out of a population of 32,000 to 35,000 inhabitants the garden city model would count several hundred farmers who grow food for the locals and who recycle a large part of the waste generated by the town (here we have something akin to a locally sustainable model). People benefit from organic food and have access to local facilities (health, culture, training, leisure). The first residents of Letchworth were the ones who believed in this, without having a strong desire to live differently, in a different kind of town. As you find practically all the services you need in a garden city, this, of itself, limits the amount of travelling that has to be done other than going by foot or bicycle. With information technology and telecommunications as they are, and will be, one could imagine shared means of transport, joined up deliveries, carefully chosen mobility. In this way an updated version of the garden city does indeed have a future alongside the megalopolis and the scattered town...

(1) PAQUOT Thierry is a philosopher and teaches at the Institute of Urban Development, Paris.

(2) Term conceived by PAQUOT Thierry for a type of urban planning which takes into account the different needs and rhythms of different inhabitants.



# A rural project to put green romanticism behind us

**Philippe Madec**

Architect and Urban Planner



Agriculture is maintained in the Beausoleil project districts in Pacé, thanks to the floodable Prairie de Mondonin.

Urban changes and certain popular beliefs raise the question of whether eco-districts might be tomorrow's garden cities; vegetation is so fully present, in the form of both vegetable gardens and landscaping. Semantically, the answer is in the affirmative; the terms "garden city" and "eco-district" cover so much, each a true portmanteau word as Roger-Henri Guerrand<sup>(1)</sup> said in speaking of the former. While economic, social and environmental ambition, with all the national variations, was guiding these concepts despite their secular differences, the same cynicism has overtaken them.

At the beginning of this century's second decade, we must clarify the meaning of the initiatives underway, return to the period when eco-responsibility was deployed; we must not give ourselves up to a certain "green romanticism" or a mode in which the useful greening of the city is an alibi. Certain hopes see virtuous social and ecological practices with the same benevolent eye; these projects are little more than a green whitewashing of the environmental penury. This is a disastrous side effect of the useful shared awareness of our planet's situation. We should reject the beguiling discourse from those planners who convert every aspect of their city to green – islands of greenery with inhabited woods, garden districts in towers or garden-buildings, false inhabited gardens, ultimately less green than the urban housing estates. Without worshipping all things green or coming up with misleading slogans, they do not

Faced with climate change and the energy crisis, the city of tomorrow must be fair, with segregation chased off by diversity, and it must provide facilitated access to resources, employment and services. Denser, making every square inch count, biodiversity and construction will be reconciled in it. And, because for now "planning and development" clearly means "planning the development" of the Earth and humanity, to protect our world as we know it, we can no longer deny the absolute interdependence between the urban and the rural.

accept the necessary density of the established city; yet it is time to stop considering the countryside as a reservoir of land for urban sprawl to spill into.

The substance of the matter remains: How is environmental responsibility – for the city, for the garden, or park – to be put together? How can the social, the cultural, the economy, the environment, fruits and vegetables all be fitted together? Under what historical conditions?

## The metamorphosis

We are living a history of which the future is known. To reduce greenhouse gas emissions responsible for climate change, all our local initiatives must be underpinned by a global consciousness. They will respond to the urgent national and European commitment to a "factor of 4", that is to say, according to a strictly energy-oriented contemporary concept, reducing greenhouse gas four times by 2050. As a member of the Club of Rome, I prefer the humanist version Club experts have fostered since 1990, geared in the direction of ecological efficiency and human progress: "twice as much well-being for half the resources," to produce as much wealth using a quarter of the raw material and energy<sup>(2)</sup>.

(1) GUERRAND Roger-Henri. "À l'origine des cités-jardins à la française" ("The Origin of French-Style Garden Cities"). *Revue Urbanisme*, 1995, n° 281.

(2) VON WEIZSÄCKER Ernst Ulrich, LOVINS Amory and LOVINS Hunter L. *Facteur 4. Deux fois plus de bien-être en consommant deux fois moins de ressources. Un rapport au Club de Rome* ("Factor of 4. Twice as much well-being while consuming half as much resources"). Paris: Terre vivante, 1997.

To achieve this, when it comes to planning and developing human settlement, we have three possible options: 1 / build new ecological, efficient urban and architectural projects in or around the city; 2 / rehabilitate the existing city and its buildings in an environmentally-responsible way; 3 / provide guidance and assistance in changing to an alternative lifestyle. Three tools reworked, or to be reworked with the powerful, positive energy of sustainable development, on the condition that we accept the pragmatism and revolution they bring or, for those that the term frightens, the ability to "bring a metamorphosis" stated by Edgar Morin as: the worst is probable, the metamorphosis is possible<sup>(3)</sup>.

In France, each year new construction represents only about 1% of existing buildings. Therefore it will not be with our new eco-districts, whether or not they are designed as garden cities or upscale neighbourhoods, whether they win ministerial awards or are self-promoted by developers, that we will achieve a "factor of 4". Far from it!

The big project is the existing city, one of the main sources of greenhouse gas emissions, and development of the local economy<sup>(4)</sup>. But we don't have the tools. Even if the energy-efficient renovation of the buildings was the subject of a Grenelle Environment consensus and lies at the heart of energy transition, it is faced with rules regarding co-ownership in a loosely-structured sector and, despite the recent proposals, only weak public motivation. The historical rules for co-ownership also do not encourage investing in significant insulation and heating works. Ill-informed businesses prefer building fifty new homes rather than renovating five times ten existing old homes, especially when they are occupied. The failure of the carbon tax has been a hindrance. As for green taxation: reduced VAT and the tax credit,

and current obligations to carry out studies (energy performance diagnostics, energy audit) but not works, despite the notion of the works being in the public's interest, have not brought about the overall initiative we have been hoping for. Given the context, renovation of the existing city will fail before the "factor of 4".

What remains is changing lifestyles, a powerful and more immediate drive. We cannot depend on one technique alone to reach the goal: since Europe's signing of the Kyoto Protocol, real progress has been made on every point except that of automobile travel, despite the technical development of less gluttonous and polluting vehicles – because vehicle use is increasing. Urban policies and projects should authorise and support citizen commitment to a different world *savoir-vivre*. The "sustainable neighbourhood contracts" model developed over the past ten years by the Brussels – Capital Region confronts civic participation with urban renewal, and can serve as an example<sup>(5)</sup>. As in Lisbon, where the municipality finances projects undertaken at the initiative of the inhabitants, these are in areas identified as priorities by the new municipal response plan<sup>(6)</sup>.

The ecological footprint measures the pressure man exerts on nature. It assesses the surface area required for a population to meet its needs in terms of resource consumption and waste elimination. In the ecological footprint of the French, food weighs in as 30% heavier than transport or housing. We must think of a food project when thinking of the city of tomorrow. Changing how we eat has proven more effective than choosing (commendably) to get a hybrid vehicle. This is especially because urban areas, especially cities, are among the most dependent environments when it comes to access to resources (water, energy, food, goods, labour, etc.).

### Environmental value

The presence of vegetation in the city is important for more than one reason: not only is it environmental, it is aesthetic, owing to its colour and how it marks the seasons, just as it has psychological value because of its soothing qualities. It is valuable for its impact in energy terms and as a temperature regulator, fighting against

In the proposed Les Noés eco-village in Val-de-Reuil, production areas are protected and managed by the cooperative Aurore (organic horticulture and social re-integration).



(3) MORIN Edgar. "Éloge de la métamorphose" ("In Praise of Metamorphosis"). *Le Monde*, Sunday, 10<sup>th</sup> January 2010.

(4) It is not question here of denigrating new construction, which has always been ground for discussion and experimentation found later in the realm of renovation.

(5) *Bruxelles change ...! 10 ans de politique de la ville en Région de Bruxelles-Capitale*. ("Brussels is changing...! 10 years of politics in the city in the Brussels-Capital Region"). 1995/2005. *Cahiers du SRDU* n° 4, November 2007.

(6) Lisbon BIP-ZOA Programme: <http://habitaao.cm-lisboa.pt/documentos/1297367449H9pYN4dv1Mg00UU8.pdf>.



the heat island effect with its refreshing shade. It also maintains beneficial moisture in hot periods and regions, moisture that is also crucial to our health in contributing to air quality by storing carbon dioxide and dust, while emitting oxygen. The tree is an outstanding example, a friend of the urban project<sup>(7)</sup>. Further, plant life maintains or restores the biodiversity of fauna and serves to prevent natural hazards such as runoff, etc. But, considered in this manner, vegetation is reduced to a technological cleaning tool: achieving phytoremediation, depollution, health. This attitude takes up a nineteenth century ideology mixing nature's restorative qualities with the dream of social harmony, while our relationship with nature has changed. On the other hand, while gardeners consume what their gardens produce on site and in season, and thus contribute to reducing their carbon footprint, only a part of the diet of these few people with time to garden is concerned.

### Cultural value

Culture is a "coherent historical figure"<sup>(8)</sup> of which gardening is an expression, differentiated from one country to another, as in every nation, by the diversity of lands, geography and vegetable garden tradition. While the communal garden, whether shared by workers or family members, recalls popular culture of the past two centuries as a coherent piece of history, it is not fixed in a rigid vision of heritage; rather, it evolves over time, as a history of specific situations. The evolution into the shared or rehabilitated garden is part of this history, which becomes dialectical.



In the agri-cultural project for Montreuil's old espalier walls, reintroducing agriculture is of historical value through preservation of these historic monuments, of cultural value through the initiative of local associations, and economic value through the agricultural activity to come.

### Social value

Beyond these values, the social contribution of the gardens is confirmed every day. A study conducted in 2010 by FranceAgriMer and the French National Federation of Family and Community Gardens (FNJFC)<sup>(9)</sup> stated that "what gardeners say motivates them, in order of importance, is: 1 / the pleasure of gardening and consuming one's own produce; 2 / discussions, encounters; 3 / the advantage of a healthy diet; 4 / the conviviality of a family experience, 5 / economic reasons"<sup>(10)</sup>. The reasons are therefore social and epicurean. Without a doubt, green spaces indeed encourage encounters and socialising. The denser the city, the more important open spaces are and the better they need to be, intended for common use. In this sense, the capacity of shared gardens to lay the foundation for trans-generational relationships flourishes; organic horticultural cooperatives permit social reintegration; public parks are maintained by associations of persons with disabilities, etc. Playing a role in creating a peaceful society is no small matter.

### Economic value

"Growing the City" in Montreal with Urbainculteurs<sup>(11)</sup>, UrbanFarmers<sup>(12)</sup> taking over rooftops in Zurich, Berlin and Basel, sharing community gardens in the desert of Detroit's food chain, developing "agripuncture" in Helsinki<sup>(13)</sup>, etc. Experiments are developing everywhere for the same reasons and in different regards. Including in China, where balconies and cellars grow crops (soy, mushrooms, etc.)<sup>(14)</sup>. What are the limits? What the Chinese are doing is extremely illuminating: China is buying land in Africa to feed its families. In France, artificial surfaces accounted for 8.3% of the territory in 2007; from 1982 to 2004, they increased by 43%. Meanwhile, the surface area devoted to agriculture and livestock accounted for 53% of the territory and has decreased steadily. Small areas of urban agriculture projects in eco-districts, often largely extended on agricultural land, will not offset the loss of agricultural land there. It is not by reducing agricultural production and replacing

(7) HALLÉ Francis. *Plaidoyer pour l'arbre* ("Pleadings on Behalf of the Tree"). Arles: Éditions Actes Sud, 2005.

(8) RICEUR Paul. *Histoire et Vérité* ("History and Truth"). Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1955, p. 296.

(9) See Évaluation de la production d'une parcelle de jardin familial ("Production Assessment for a Family Garden Plot"). Available at: <<http://www.franceagrimer.fr/content/download/9007/57492/file/Conf-FAM-jardins02122010.pdf>>

(10) Ibid., p. 4.

(11) <http://www.urbainculteurs.org/>

(12) <http://urbanfarmers.com/>

(13) <http://www.archdaily.com/244787/urban-agri-puncture-dylan-kwok/>

(14) [http://www.lemonde.fr/planete/article/2012/09/04/les-chinois-amangent-caves-et-balcons-en-potager\\_1755391\\_3244.html](http://www.lemonde.fr/planete/article/2012/09/04/les-chinois-amangent-caves-et-balcons-en-potager_1755391_3244.html)

it with even enlightened amateur farming that the short distribution channels will increase, since France's food dependency will increase. This is so, even if various developing initiatives are making changes to plant-based models, reactivating local distribution channels and initiating innovative partnerships, such as supplying school canteens.



In the eco-district of Fort d'Aubervilliers, historic family gardens are preserved and shared gardens proposed

What do we get from a family garden? A short and sweet lie: "A plot of 100 to 150 m<sup>2</sup> can save 1,000 euros per year, or 80 euros per month."<sup>(15)</sup> The results of the FranceAgriMer and FNJFC study indicate otherwise: "The average savings on a family garden plot is estimated at 544 euros"<sup>(16)</sup> for an average surface area of 172 m<sup>2</sup>. This practice only concerns about 150,000 households<sup>(17)</sup>, of which 54% are retired. In France, which in 2009 had 27.5 million households, one third of which is composed of one person, few people are concerned. Furthermore, these families are far from being self-sufficient as far as fruits and vegetables go<sup>(18)</sup>.

As for professional horticultural production in urban areas, a minimum surface area of 1.5 to 2 ha is needed for the market gardener to begin to make a living. It calls for significant personal engagement, as well as security for the produce in order to prevent theft. Horticultural terrains are not city parks with open rights of passage, but professional production areas fenced in, like community, family or shared gardens.

### Putting green romanticism behind us

At present, the plant world and its related activities win hands down, and would cure our ills. It was not so long ago that when nobody knew what to put in part of an urban project, something artistic was proposed. Now, depending on

the political mood, we propose market gardening, or family or shared gardens. And when we do not know how to design a facade, it is covered with vegetation; yet above-ground vertical vegetation is very expensive and not at all environmentally friendly. In France, in the realm of human settlement planning and development, the occurrence of biodiversity challenges, green and blue infrastructure programmes, supply and short distribution channels, was abrupt, without hierarchy. In Workshop 2 of the Urban Planning Operational Committee #9 on "Nature in the City", we were expected to say something on matters as far afield as "regarding biodiversity being taken into account, most especially by the SCot (French territorial cohesion plan) and the PLU (French local town plan), should certain provisions be strengthened, and if so, why?" Or "do we need to develop gardens (workers, shared, educational, etc.) and the resulting participation of the public?"<sup>(19)</sup> The French Grenelle I law took things into consideration and the family garden will not be a target. This moment reflects our time when, under the pressure of lobbies, major territorial issues for the nation and subjects concerning only a few people are equally important. And there is no nuancing of the difference in scales, because various aspects such as biodiversity, quality of social life or temperature regulation interact with each other.

Land in the city or in the urban fringe is too expensive to allow the middle class to have gardens. Giving each housing unit a garden in urban eco-districts will not make it possible to achieve autonomy or control over urban sprawl. In addition, ownership of a garden in the city has become a sign of a wealth which cannot be shared, and therefore an impossible urban model; this is so at a time when territorial equity is called for, unless the social divide, for

(15) Relayed here and there, as at [http://www.lemonde.fr/planete/article/2012/09/04/les-chinois-amenagent-caves-et-balconsen-potager\\_1755391\\_3244.html](http://www.lemonde.fr/planete/article/2012/09/04/les-chinois-amenagent-caves-et-balconsen-potager_1755391_3244.html)

(16) Ibid., p. 3.

(17) In the late 1940s over 700,000 family gardens were counted. From the 1950s this number dropped until 1970, when there were no more than 140,000, then 100,000 in the early 1980s. Modernism, the prosperity of the Trente Glorieuses post-war period and urbanisation bear the responsibility.

(18) Évaluation de la production d'une parcelle de jardin familial ("Production Assessment for a Family Garden Plot"), op. cit., p. 4: "Consumption – Purchases in shops. The average budget for purchases of fruit and vegetables from gardeners is about €20 per week./ Vegetables. In winter, 57% of gardeners buy between 60% and 100% of their vegetables from shops, while in summer they are only 8%. On the other hand, they are 42% not to purchase any vegetables from shops in the summer./ Fruits. In winter, 93% of gardeners buy more than 80% of their fruit from shops, while in summer they are more than 48%."

(19) See document O, "La Nature en ville" ("Nature in the City"), regarding Grenelle commitments n° 72 and 76, ComOp Urbanisme, thematic meeting n° 2.



environmental reasons, is not considered a problem: “eco-district = upscale neighbourhood”. What about growing on rooftops and in basements? It is certainly more relevant in terms of the ecological footprint than raising building-farms, or even tower-farms. Establishing gardens on rooftops already there to create an intergenerational link and places for sharing is socially positive, but will not generate a significant amount of production. Installing greenhouse horticultural production on rooftops, like in New York, incurs an additional production cost so high that only a few upscale restaurants and residents of the Upper East Side are customers. In defaulting cities like Detroit, the unemployed take over abandoned car parks to grow vegetables; who can condemn this means of survival? It is not wrong to grow and maintain one’s garden, as well as good relations with fellow gardeners. Quite the contrary! Provided that it is fostered by civic engagement, as the new gardeners’ charter proposes, and that gardens welcome organic cultivation and preserve biodiversity.

It is wrong to suggest that the deployment of non-professional gardens has a strong impact on supply to cities. No, it is renegotiation of the common agricultural policy which is the challenge and one of the most powerful vehicles for achieving a factor of 4. So the question is: what model of agriculture do we need for decades to come? The city’s future depends on it.

### The key: a rural project

Today, we have become lazy in our thinking about urban planning: everything will be urban or is in the process of becoming so. There is no salvation to be found outside towns, or even the major cities and great infrastructures linking them. The countryside will no longer exist, so we can just as well eliminate its schools, clinics, courts of justice, post offices, etc. And we speak of nothing else but urban agriculture. As if the city, in addition to being the city, could do the work of the countryside!

We need to deconstruct the all-or-nothing urban argumentation. It is said that in France 80% of the population lives in a city. Why? Because the threshold for defining a city is 2,000 inhabitants! Is this a statistical error or an ideological decision? It’s a lie, that much is sure! As if we went from sizeable village to city with the two-thousandth inhabitant. Which would confirm that municipalities of 2,000 inhabitants are not mainly rural. In certain French *départements*, the biggest municipality does not even have 18,000 inhabitants. These *départements* are rural; their economies, including the industrial, are agricultural.



Areas for farming are the agro-urban heart of the Montévrain eco-district in Marne-la-Vallée.

56.7% of the French population lives in towns of 10,000 inhabitants<sup>(20)</sup> or fewer, ranging from the small city down to the large village. These municipalities may be represented either by the Association of Small Towns of France (in 2006, they were 2,890 municipalities of 3,000 to 20,000 people, or about 20 million), or by the Association of Rural Mayors of France, councillors of municipalities with fewer than 3,500 inhabitants, which represents 34,000 of the 36,000 French communes. In addition, since 1999, the population of rural areas has been growing at the same pace as the French population, or 0.7% per year.

The answer lies in a project waiting to be initiated: the rural project.

Without denying the need for an eco-friendly urban project, the dominant urban discussion must be completed with a rural proposal which is just as carefully thought out. *A rural project must be added to the urban project.* It will give meaning to land use and planning, to redevelop the environment in which more than half of France’s population lives. Then, perhaps, we can stop thinking that, simultaneously, the city can take on the role of the country and the fate of humanity rests on the shoulders of gardeners!

(20) Certain sociologists do not consider this a city yet.

# Re-imagining garden city principles for the 21<sup>st</sup> century

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Katy Lock  
TCPA



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A little over 18 months ago, in a major step in its renewed campaign to promote the benefits of the Garden City approach to development, the Town and Country Planning Association (TCPA) published *Re-imagining Garden Cities for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century* – a report highlighting lessons for today from the Garden Cities and New Towns. Now, momentum has been gained both politically and across the built environment sector, and the TCPA is not alone in advocating the benefits of bringing forward new communities developed in line with Garden City principles.

The original Garden Cities of Letchworth and Welwyn were underpinned by a famously strong vision developed by the TCPA's founder, Ebenezer Howard, who in his seminal text on the Garden City idea, *Tomorrow: A Peaceful Path to Real Reform* (1898) described how *'the advantages of the most energetic and active town life, with all the beauty and delight of the country, may be secured in perfect combination'*.

Over the last century the Garden City ideals have proven to be outstandingly durable. Today, we still face the primary challenges confronted by the early Garden City pioneers: meeting a housing shortage, generating jobs, and creating healthy, beautiful and inclusive places. However, we also face the new challenges of globalised markets and the urgent need to adapt to, and mitigate the impacts of, climate change.

In response to the TCPA's report, writing for the *Guardian Housing Network* in September 2011, the (then) Housing Minister, Grant Shapps MP, stated that *'the scale of housing need that we now face means that we need imaginative proposals to come forward which get us back to Howard's original ideas'*. He also invited the TCPA to bring together experts and stakeholders from across the built environment sector to look at how the Garden City approach can be re-invented for the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The TCPA welcomed the challenge. In November 2011 the Government's *Housing Strategy for England*, *Laying the Foundations* cited 'locally planned large scale development' as an important way

of creating long-term stability and increasing the supply of housing. And in March 2012, in a speech on infrastructure, the Prime Minister confirmed the Government's commitment to examine the opportunities offered by large-scale new communities, announcing 'consultation later this year on how to apply the principles of garden cities to areas with high potential growth in places people want to live'. Clear recognition of the 'principles of Garden Cities' in the National Planning Policy Framework, published in March 2012, and further support in speeches from the Deputy Prime Minister and new Planning Minister later in 2012, provides a further foundation for examination of the application of Garden City principles. With such strong references emerging in the Government's policies, it is worth re-examining the original Garden City vision – combining the very best of town and country living to create well designed vibrant communities. Today, we can and must go further.

## Delivering multiple benefits through new communities

Creating new Garden Cities can provide the opportunity and the economies of scale necessary to truly fulfill the ambitions of sustainable

(1) HENDERSON Kate is Chief Executive and Katy Lock is Garden Cities and New Towns Advocate at the TCPA. A version of this article first appeared in a special 'garden cities for today' edition of the TCPA's journal 'Town & Country Planning' in September 2012. Find out more about the Garden Cities campaign and other work of the TCPA at [www.tcpa.org.uk](http://www.tcpa.org.uk).



development and healthy and vibrant communities by delivering multiple benefits including social housing, zero carbon design, low carbon energy networks, sustainable transport, local food sourcing and access to nature. New communities also offer a powerful prospect to put in place new governance structures that put people at the heart of development and owning community assets. Through learning from past successes and failures of planning new communities, the Garden City concept and vision can be brought up to date with technological innovation, design concepts and materials to create leading-edge sustainable developments. The Garden Cities were fired by a sense of idealism and enthusiasm, pioneering new ways of living. Although initially led by private enterprise, the early partners worked closely with the public and voluntary sector. It is this working in a spirit of cooperation and innovation that should be re-captured.

### The garden cities and suburbs expert group

As a direct response to the Housing Minister's challenge to bring the built environment sector together to examine how the Garden City approach can be re-invented for the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the TCPA convened a Garden City and Suburbs Expert Group, which subsequently published its first report, *Creating Garden Cities and Suburbs Today*, in May 2012. Drawing upon extensive feedback from two roundtable meetings of the Expert Group, the report sets out proposals for action by politicians, community and self-build groups, housing associations and housebuilders, investors and landowners, local authorities and planners, spurring them to work together towards creating highly sustainable new communities based on Garden City principles. While there is no 'silver bullet' solution to unlocking the potential benefits offered by new Garden Cities and Suburbs today, the Expert Group identified the need for urgent action in five principal areas, to address barriers to the development of a new generation of world-class communities; 'vision, leadership & governance', 'unlocking land', 'investing in infrastructure', 'planning & design', and 'skills, coordination and delivery'.

### Next steps

Recognising the powerful opportunities that large-scale new communities such as Garden Cities offer in helping to tackle the housing and employment crisis and in creating a better quality of life, the Government must take the next step and provide clear and consistent policy and fiscal support. Strong and enduring support from central government is essential to provide

confidence among local authorities, communities and private sector investors alike. Ultimately, however, in the context of localism it will be for local authorities, developers and communities to work together to decide on the most suitable location and the size of development needed to provide a sustainable community that creates jobs, meets local housing need, and finances and supports the necessary hard and soft infrastructure required to enable a community to thrive and make sustainable lifestyle choices. Like the Garden City pioneers, we must foster innovation in planning and design and make use of the rapidly advancing technologies available to us, applying the Garden City principles in new and exciting ways. Delivery and partnership are critical to the long-term success of new communities. The original garden cities were private sector led; the post-war new towns were built through state intervention – both approaches have merits and challenges, and we need to build on the best of both experiences.

### A call to action

As national and local government consider how to meet the growing housing and economic challenge – with the population growing at its fastest rate for 50 years and housebuilding at its lowest level since the 1920s – there is a unique opportunity to shape the future of the nation. There is no doubt that we will build new homes, but the challenge is whether we have the determination to leave future generations with a legacy of beauty and durability which truly meets the challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> century; ensuring we have the right range of skills and expertise over the long term will be pivotal to realising this ambition. *Creating Garden Cities and Suburbs Today*, in common with the TCPA's wider programme of work on creating large-scale new communities and promoting Garden City principles in the UK and worldwide, sets out a clear call for action to renew our commitment to building outstanding, inclusive and resilient places that merit the accolade of 'Garden Cities'.



### Garden City principles

At the heart of the Garden City ideals is the development of holistically planned new settlements which enhance the natural environment and provide high-quality affordable housing and locally accessible jobs in beautiful, healthy and sociable communities. The Garden Cities were among the first manifestations of attempts at sustainable development. Key Garden City principles include:

- land value capture for the benefit of the community;
- community ownership of land and long-term stewardship of assets;
- strong vision, leadership and community engagement;
- mixed-tenure homes that are affordable for ordinary people;
- a strong local jobs offer in the Garden City itself, with a variety of employment opportunities within easy commuting distance of homes;
- high-quality imaginative design (including homes with gardens), combining the very best of town and country living to create healthy homes in vibrant communities;
- generous green space linked to the wider natural environment, including a mix of public and private networks of well managed, high-quality gardens, tree-lined streets and open spaces;
- opportunities for residents to grow their own food, including generous allotments;
- access to strong, local cultural, recreational and shopping facilities in walkable neighbourhoods; and
- integrated and accessible transport systems – with a series of settlements linked by rapid transport providing a full range of employment opportunities (as set out in Ebenezer Howard's vision of the 'Social City').

Multifunctional benefits of GI network today assist with adaptation to climate change.



Sylvain Lelieur / Mairie de Vitry-sur-Seine

## Interview

Michel Leprêtre is Deputy Mayor of Vitry-sur-Seine, in charge of town planning and development. He is also Chair of Semise, a local semi-public company.

Why did Vitry-sur-Seine decide, today, to revisit the garden city model during the Coteau development project?

What were its motivations?

To which values, particularly to which social values, did it want to refer?

# The new garden city of Coteau at Vitry-sur-Seine

**Les Cahiers – What was the political desire behind the town's decision to start the Coteau development project?**

Michel Leprêtre – To start with, the town had acquired a certain number of property rights for a road project, which was later abandoned. But beyond the fact that we had land at our disposal, the local people started to ask about what this land was going to be used for. This is the reason why the town has, since the year 2000, wanted to involve residents in its thinking, and launched a public debate. The process that we went through in this neighbourhood is linked to a political desire for urban renewal at a local level, because we are engaged in a process of rebuilding homes, especially social housing, in the framework of an 'ANRU' procedure<sup>(1)</sup>. The housing offer in the Coteau area corresponds

to a desire for increased density and social mixity, which fits in with the local characteristics of the place, on both geographic and social levels. This basically involves low-density housing estates as part of a peri-urban infrastructure out on the edges of Villejuif, close to the metro on the RD7. Moreover, its peculiar topography of being on a raised plateau and the difficulties encountered at the beginning of the century in building on the hillside resulted in housing which became insalubrious as the years went on, and the town increasingly needed some kind of help. Just like the town that combines social mixity and community life, we looked to create a new type of housing in this suburban area. We wanted to create a different urban form in order to allow certain populations from difficult neighbourhoods to benefit from social housing in a more pleasant living environment. That is why, in this particular development, 138 out of a total of 210 housing units (or 60%) are social housing, financed in part by grant subsidies through the ANRU.

**L. C. – How did you go about developing the project?**

M. L. – Running parallel to the public consultation were two studies on the planning and development of these plots of land. The first one, led by the town hall, looked at the particularities of the topography and the system of pathways in this former agricultural area. In this part of Coteau, as with the whole of the town,

we took into account the reality of the area. Our first thoughts focused on the construction of a modern garden city, not so much on the conceptual aspect of the garden city, but on the steps we would have to take to respect what was there already. Out of concern for creating something that would have a positive impact, we developed the area's assets by working with visual openings and gaps, the system of pathways which links in to the rest of the roads and the pavements, and by leaving plenty of room for green space and, especially, small gardens. At the same time, a second study concerned itself more particularly with the urban evolution

of the neighbourhood. In 2006, the POS<sup>(2)</sup>, which was in the middle of becoming a PLU<sup>(3)</sup>, allowed for increased density in suburban areas and for higher ratios of ambitious green spaces. The Semise,

a local semi-public business in charge of maintaining consistency in all the projects, issued specifications including respect for the typology of the areas and an environmental approach to planning and development. The design study was handed over to a firm, Brès and Mariolle.

**L. C. – In what way does the project at Coteau refer to the garden city model?**

M. L. – Even if it is not of the same scale, the project at Coteau belongs to the group of garden cities in the Paris region by virtue of its suburban context and its density. With 210 homes on an area of 3 hectares, the density of Coteau is 66 homes to the hectare. To take an example, the density of the garden city at Stains is 58 homes to the hectare and at Suresnes it is 80. Moreover, it will eventually be served not only by metro services but also by the tram.

The urban form is inspired by the traditional garden city. The roadways are structured by means of a hierarchy of roads, streets and pathways. Public spaces are formed from small outside spaces, squares and family gardens. The architectural form translates into typological variety in the buildings, starting with the town halls.

(1) Agence Nationale pour la rénovation urbaine (National Agency for Urban Regeneration).

(2) Plan d'occupation des sols (Land use plan).

(3) Plan local d'urbanisme (Local town plan).



In the same way that we know the success of a sustainable neighbourhood rests, to a large extent, on a participatory process led by the elected members, the governance exercised over the Coteau neighbourhood development project is very similar to that of the political project of a traditional garden city. The consultation that was carried out with local residents from 2000 onwards was difficult. I won't hide from you that, at the start, there were contentious issues with people taking sides for reprehensible reasons in order to reject certain groups who have a right to access social housing. We spent a lot of time debating the issues, but that is my responsibility as a politician and the price we pay for democracy. Social mixity in our area is part of the richness of our town. After a while we then started to make choices – urban and architectural choices – advocating the principles of short distance neighbourhoods, roads and urban quality. This was a slow process but the support of future residents was essential. But, if the garden cities assumed a strong social care function and aimed to establish a neighbourhood community by prioritising plenty of public facilities, the Coteau area has turned out to be predominantly residential. The town carried out studies and asked the views of professionals in the commercial facilities sector. The advice was not to establish new small-scale food retailers because the population was judged to be too small and because the RD7 metro line is so close by. But with such a number of elderly people in one place, the town hall prioritised the relocation of a pharmacy; there are plans to support a doctor's surgery and a future care home for elderly people (EHPAD) is in the process of being financed.

Concerning our approach to the environment, the main areas we have focused on have been the organisation of the roadways, the handling

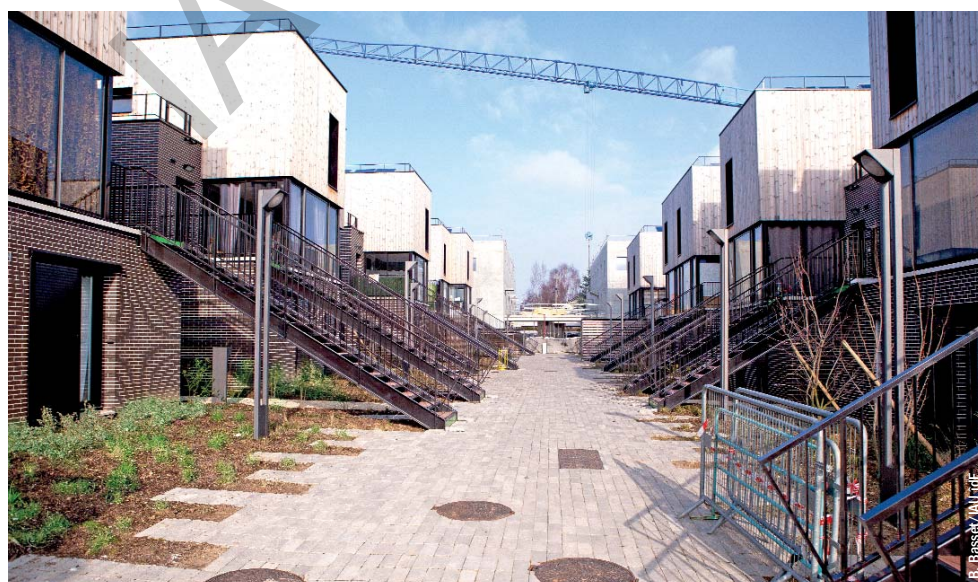
of the pathways and green spaces in the middle of the apartment blocks, family gardens, harvesting water from the sides of the hill and the energy efficient insulation of the homes. It is still too early to have any results on the impact of people's 'green' behaviour, for example in relation to recycling. If parking is still not satisfactory my priority is to ensure that mothers with children in prams can get around. I have the ambition to set up, very soon, the shared management of the family gardens and local nurseries with the support of local organisations.

**L. C. – If we agree on the fact that the garden cities are based on a values system, what could we say about the impact of the project at Coteau?**

M. L. – It's been an exemplary process, because whilst we were able to benefit from land rights, we gave ourselves the financial means and the time necessary to respond to social needs based on the values of community life within the specific context of our area.

Actually, creating a living environment for the greatest number of people, by encouraging their participation and prioritising the social connections made by sharing convivial spaces, heads right in the direction of those enduring values of solidarity and of finding a better way of living together. Consequently, whether through the type of governance that is exercised or the desired social dimension, the urban characteristics or the environmental quality of the living environment, this project is in line with the garden city model, while also covering, in a much broader sense, the characteristics of a sustainable neighbourhood.

Interview conducted by  
Hélène de Gassart, architect and town planner



The project at Coteau is similar in one garden city, in particular through its urban shape, the hierarchy of its ways and public places.

# The future of an illusion?

**Monique Eleb<sup>(1)</sup>**

Laboratoire Architecture,  
Culture et Société



“Les Aquarelles” in Petit-Bethany in Reims is close to the garden city model owing to its size, its social ideals and its environmental awareness.

The marvellous utopians who struggled to build the garden cities finally succeeded in “putting cities in the country” because they also offered an urban lifestyle, whether with an individual house or a multi-dwelling building. Beyond their idea of comfortable housing for all, they also offered a garden, whether private or shared with the community, housing sometimes more generous than that found in the city, which took other activities into account. Sociability was facilitated by the proximity and the sharing of certain activities: do-it-yourself work, gardening, enjoyment of nearby facilities, strolling in semi-private spaces sometimes sheltered from cars. “A place to raise the kids”, as one can read on entering certain American towns. All that many of our contemporaries dream of<sup>(2)</sup>.

## What do we mean by “changes in lifestyles”?

This idea goes back to the impact that work and its rhythms have on our daily lives and the use of our housing. These factors interconnect and interlink with our habitus, or how we do things in connection with our values, ethics and goals. We must not forget we are influenced in how we conceive modernity, through trends, through the need to own certain objects, especially those in the realm of new technologies.

What do the inhabitants tell us? The desirable modern house is one which allows us to

Garden cities have created a sense of belonging and a desire to share, giving rise to the idea of a “we”, which is not often the case in large housing complexes, estates or low-density housing areas. Today, under what conditions are these ideals found in housing? This question leads to reflection on the differences in design and values between the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries.

stage our lifestyles in a natural way. Technological advances and a new attentiveness to the environment will improve how we live in our housing. But is that enough? Organisation of the space we live in is supposed to provide a material basis for our daily habits in an evolving culture, and contribute to stabilising them. What remarkable changes have we seen recently? Of course, demographic changes condition our choices and desires, but housing has to conform to them by being flexible and adaptable. City life seems to weigh more and more on inhabitants; over 75% dream of owning a house. Today the word “Nature” has a very positive aura, as it did in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century, when there was an abundance of winter gardens, loggias, terraces and rooftop houses. This passion for an “interiorized exterior” shows the need to make up for a lack: that of having, at hand, places to breathe and walk in the city. If it is just in front of our house, we believe we have reached an ideal state of well-being. Garden cities offer this.

(1) ELEB Monique is a sociologist and researcher at the ‘Laboratoire Architecture, Culture et Société’. She is also a specialist in the living environment at the École Nationale Supérieure d’architecture Paris-Malaquais, UMR/AUSSER C.N.R.S./MCC n°. 3329.

(2) For a short history of the model’s ups and downs, read: “La disparition progressive d’un concept” (“The Progressive Disappearance of a Concept”). In: POUVREAU Benoît, COURONNÉ Marc, LABORDE Marie-Françoise. *Les cités-jardins de la banlieue du nord-est parisien* (“Garden Cities of the Parisian Northeast Suburb”). Paris: éditions Le Moniteur, 2007.



Going beyond the obligations a lifestyle requires of us, we dream of choosing a way to live life. Today, those who have something to say about where we live do so in speaking about specific ideals: the relationship to nature, protection of the environment, informing and consulting inhabitants, etc., without overlooking energy conservation. But do they represent the general public?

A way to enjoy life, a lifestyle – this is not the privilege of the fortunate alone. The desire for a garden, even a shared one, must be understood as distancing oneself from the structured relations of daily life organised around work. The relations have become complex: difficult for some, a need for others, a tiresome task or a form of self-expression, at an office or elsewhere, but also at home; as it has altered it has changed the relation to the spaces we live in, with the arrival of new technologies into the home. Throughout the 20th century they have been increasingly present, and we therefore speak of behaviours internalized in the domestic space. Increased time at home also increases the need to have a well-lit interior and healthy air, but also the need to be outside, in an “exteriorised interior”, to be no longer cut off from nature – all of which are values or ideals in the concept of the garden city. The eco-district, fashionable for the time being among an informed, cultivated public, expresses this; yet we must also learn to fight against that which separates us from others, even from the sectarian drifting apart that comes with a relation to guilt-inducing energy consumption.

### Why another look at these models?

At a time when we try to “repair” the harmful effects of a lengthy zoning policy which divided cities functionally, where the struggle against big-city loneliness and social segregation keeps the politicians and militants busy, the garden-city model is often evoked. We have observed that seemingly obsolete architectural models are sometimes reactivated by social and economic changes (relation to work, relation to home life, changes in what defines well-being, health, etc.). Genealogy shows us we can look again at the models because some seem adapted to today’s issues; abandoned experiments are seen differently.

The question of typological diversity is on the table. Everywhere, new developments throw together buildings of all sizes, including towers, intermediary housing, individual houses and multi-family structures. Garden cities have affirmed this typological and

sometimes functional diversity. Several comprise solely individual houses (such as in Gennevilliers); but for reasons of profitability, typological diversity is very quickly recommended. Small buildings (such as in Suresnes), and sometimes towers, complete the types of housing available, without speaking of the functional diversity neighbourhood facilities and shops provide. Has there been a break between what was built before and what will be built next? Yes and no, because some of these garden cities seem close to the working-class districts of Paris with their Communist orientation or low-income housing in general (as in Drancy), with Châtenay-Malabry being the most diverse. Of course, what makes them individual is how the landscaping is handled, the profuse vegetation and differentiated routes and facilities, all underpinned by a social project where health, hygiene and well-being are paramount. Today the question of sustainable development replaces or renews discussion on health and hygiene, and the management of the public space as proposed by the garden cities is seen in a different light. In addition, this diversity of models is also a construct to make suburbia denser, making houses taller where possible, building small buildings and providing neighbourhoods with meeting places of all kinds, allowing a form of enjoyable community life, as the inhabitants tell us, but without intrusions – together, as neighbours, but also separate.

We also know that the lack of public institutions in our neighbourhood makes us feel like second-class citizens. Attentiveness to a place’s beauty is also fundamental to ensure a feeling of gratitude on the part of citizens.



Today, more than a lifestyle, it is the lifestyle which is looked for in the new districts.

These cities have remained an unequalled model for city expansion. These projects were based on municipal socialism, which gave land and property back to the community. The new villages and estates created by property developers, which claim something of this, are actually far from the model. Deliberately refusing any contemporary architecture, they propose or impose prefabricated, neo-regional houses, believing that a single piece of ornamentation suffices to fit them into the region. The large garden is reduced to a small one and its amenities are forgotten. Suburban housing also lacks that which is essential in garden cities, because small houses, focusing on their independence, are necessarily not part of a system. We can imagine these house-lined streets coming back to life by dealing with the public space that joins them together, by public facilities and community gardens bringing together hitherto isolated neighbours, perhaps strengthening solidarity between generations, "like in a village". But we should not underestimate the difficulties in creating neighbourly friendliness. Space is not enough.

### **Programmatic and typological diversity and population diversity**

Sustainable development is usually studied from the technical angle, overlooking its social aspects. While garden cities developed around the idea of well-being and health for all, today the same sorts of aspirations are combined with the idea of mobility, and adaptability to life's various stages (single or in a couple, with or without children, middle-

aged or elderly, etc.). This leads us to wish that the surface area of our homes could alter as needed, without our ever having to leave our neighbourhood, the children's school, our neighbours and friends, our shopkeepers. Or that we could just move next door, which today is still possible in the garden cities, with the potential they offer of different types of housing, or even adapted residences, and thanks to nearby facilities.

To achieve the ideal private life without daily difficulties due to distance from facilities and to time spent travelling, we must bring back into balance the presence of models corresponding as well to lifestyles and stages of life. The types of intermediary housing which allow us to be close to others but autonomous in our homes, so desired by the middle class, must be developed. Urban sprawl can therefore be better controlled, but this solution must include steps to strengthen urban compactness and limits.

Changes in our relation to work necessitate thinking in terms of buildings with offices and shared services, but also special treatment of the neighbourhood. This thinking is also necessary for housing the elderly and student populations. Young couples with children should be able to take advantage of services adapted to their needs, in their building or close by. Therefore, a study of models and financings seems called for. It would be a matter of combining the community, the individual house and housing complexes, owned housing and subsidised rental housing. All the while keeping the issue of transport under control.



Nicolas Ruoppolo



Serge Drouilly

The Passage Chevalier project in Saint-Denis (Tectône architectural firm) offers a typological housing mix (multi-family housing, rooftop houses, terrace houses) favouring diversity.



### Nature: the appropriated exterior and the social link

Our relation to nature at home can be broken down in a variety of ways. While for some it is simply watching the seasons pass, for others it is a relationship with themselves, going as far as seeing gardening as a kind of therapy. It is also a pretext for meetings and exchange. In addition, during a period of economic crisis, a vegetable garden provides fresh vegetables. This relationship to the exterior is a construct according to a hierarchical model. As described by the authors of the article "Vegetable Architecture and Social Solidarity"<sup>(3)</sup>: "Let's talk about the avenue, the street, the alleyway, the square, the enclosed space, the open area, the playground, the sports field, the family garden, the front garden, the private garden, etc." And, as they emphasise, to which are added the characteristics of trees and vegetation which create a landscape and a unique atmosphere, "a city to which Nature has access"<sup>(4)</sup>. Is this not the dream of many city dwellers, especially in city centres where stone seems far too present?

What can we learn from the garden city? There are two essential lessons: the many scales on which housing types are offered ensure true social diversity, and the framework of public spaces and nearby facilities can be a guarantee of social solidarity. Sharing, or pooling, especially of certain facilities (or a room shared in a building) is making a comeback. Is this a utopia, a militant's wish or a strong trend?

But we must not forget another lesson: creation of a social space owes much to the ordering of the public in the private within the garden cities. "Garden cities form a network comprised of a double structure; its traffic pattern is hidden, private, secret, internal to the city and reserved for pedestrians; it is overlaid on the public traffic and communication structure. By marking out and reinforcing the private and public axes with elements of nature (enclosed spaces, small open areas, public gardens), the 'in-between' has been created, where the possible resides"<sup>(5)</sup>. It only remains to think in each case about how these areas are structured; so they are not only functional, but apt to move us and release us, in a dream-like state, from the reality of our day-to-day lives.

Are eco-districts assuming the garden city tradition? These districts do not have the



Diate spaces reappear in the projects. Here a residential common premises in Catherine Furet's operation. Paris XVII<sup>e</sup>.

ambitious social and political objective of transforming a very large territory. In addition, discussion on these contemporary creations focuses on thermal issues and energy conservation. The social ambition seeking to increase the well-being of residents is not so much a part of it. The garden city of Les Aquarelles at Petit-Bétheny in Reims (Le Foyer Rémois and six teams of architects) has come the closest to the model. Built from 1993 to 2007 on 6.3 hectares, it has the size and social ideals of its example, but adds the HEQ (high environmental quality) dimension. The 111 wood-frame houses are distributed over seven themed gardens and the 133 multi-family units are in a French style garden. Is this the beginning of a revitalisation? While some of the characteristics of garden cities correspond so well to a certain current ideal, why not develop them further and bring them more into thinking on the eco-district concept?

(3) WERQUIN Ann-Carol, DEMANGEON Alain. In: BATY-TORNIKIAN Ginette (ed.). *Cités-jardins. Genèse et actualité d'une utopie*. (Garden Cities, Genesis and Status of a Utopia). Paris : Les Cahiers de l'Ipraus, editor. Recherches, 2001, p. 151.

(4) Op. cit., p. 153.

(5) BATY-TORNIKIAN Ginette. "Les aléas d'un art de vivre. Les cités-jardins de la région parisienne" (The Ups and Down of an Art de Vivre. Garden Cities of the Paris and its Surrounding Area"). In: BATY-TORNIKIAN Ginette (editor). *Cités-jardins. Genèse et actualité d'une utopie*. (Garden Cities, Genesis and Status of a Utopia). Paris : Les Cahiers de l'Ipraus, editor. Recherches, 2001, p. 137.

# A different philosophy for building new homes

**Gwenaëlle Zunino**  
IAU île-de-France



The experiment of participatory housing environment to Tübingen allowed to realize an architectural, social and functional diversity.

Settlements, participatory housing, cooperative housing, self-promotion – a variety of terms is used to describe this kind of a project which is developed by a group of individuals and made up of homes organized around communal, jointly-managed spaces. In a world where social networks, joint occupancy, and community life are exploding, there is great sense in developing a project such as this, sharing not just services and facilities but also a whole philosophy of living together.

## What is meant by participatory housing?

On the fringes of private property development and the social housing sector, participatory housing does not correspond to a standardized product. A group of individuals meet in order to develop a communal housing project, without any middleman. The group leads the project and contributes to its conception, its management, to relationships with neighbours, and sometimes comes up with ways of building it and living in it. The objective is to create housing which preserves each person's intimacy, along with a set of shared spaces: multi-purpose space, utility rooms, workshops, guest rooms, a vegetable garden. To assure the success of the project, getting everyone to sign up to the principles of the project is essential as well as defining the management of it and how much of this is shared out. This type of initiative allows for costs to be controlled with savings in the region of 15%-20% because there is no middleman and no advertising. Furthermore, the sharing of spaces and services also contributes to savings in energy costs, building costs and running costs. Participatory housing

In the face of rising house prices and people's needs today, participatory social housing can be seen as yet another option when it comes to building new homes. Developed on the initiative of groups of individuals, these projects support environmental values, social mixity and neighbourhood democracy. They are a shared adventure worth promoting.

seems, therefore, to be an interesting solution because, as well as these various economic advantages, it prioritises social relations and mixity. The movement represents 15%-20% of the housing stock in Germany, Holland and Switzerland. Why does it remain so minor here in France?

## Times are changing

The main restraint is the absence of regulatory and legal recognition of the status of participatory housing. But public policies are changing in view of the richness and the potential created by this type of housing. The national 'local government network for participatory housing' was created in 2010. Its main objectives are to support local authorities in developing participatory housing and to promote this housing option in public policy. On the occasion of the most recent national meeting for participatory housing (November 2012)<sup>(1)</sup>, Cécile Duflot declared it to be housing's third way. According to the Minister for Housing, making participatory housing a public policy measure in itself, as well as a social means of climbing the property ladder, requires action to be taken to: make the process democratic, speed up the process of completing projects, come up with an adapted legal framework, secure financial arrangements. A consultation process has been launched with a view to making concrete proposals to feed into the housing bill which will be presented in the first term of 2013.

(1) Find the speech made by DUFLLOT Cécile at <http://www.habitatparticipatif.net>

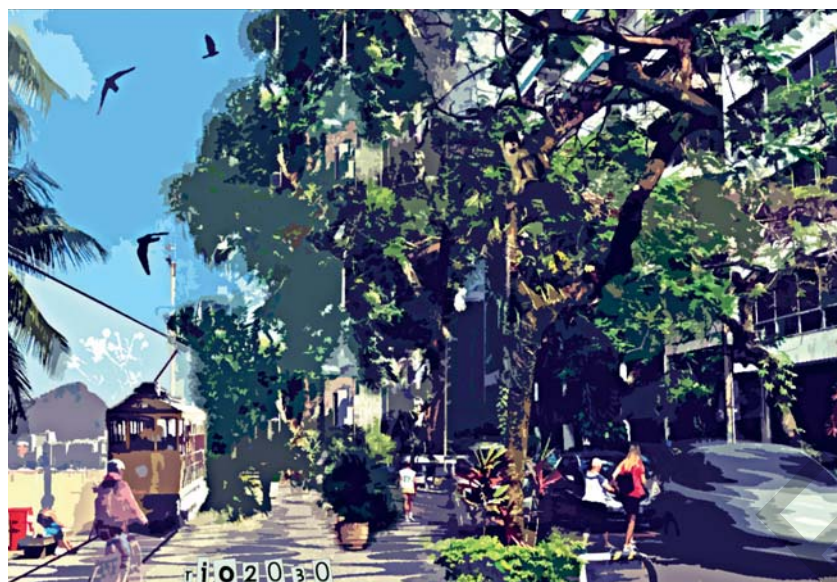
### Participatory housing on a neighbourhood level

To convert old French army camps, the town of Tübingen in Germany decided to promote participatory housing. As a result, 160 'Baugruppen' or groups of homes bring together 6,500 residents spread over an area of 85 hectares. The objective was to develop a lively, 'short distance' town. Small plots of land for mixed use were created, and ground floors level with the road were enforced on streets dedicated to shops and services. The plots were allocated according to certain conditions: requirements around the use of energy and functional and social mixity. Within the blocks, each plot has a private piece of land measuring between 5 and 8 metres wide from edge to edge. The courtyard is communal, shared and managed by all of its joint owners. Architectural diversity, social integration, functional mixity and lively town life make these neighbourhoods a real success story.



# Imaginary visions of city life from one century to the next

Pierre Lannoy<sup>(1)</sup>  
Marie Balteau  
Metices



The illustrations of this article resume the various proposals of the students.

«Green City 2» Rio de Janero  
– 37 – Utopian contribution.

*“Coming up with utopian visions and dreams of the city is not just an intellectual game for visionary town councilors and architects. Just like a research laboratory, it can be the driving force behind progress.”*

DE MONCAN Patrice. *Villes utopiques, villes rêvées. Paris : Les éditions du Mécène, 2003, p.9.*

The garden cities movement constituted one of the most important innovations in town planning at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, feeding visions of the ideal city which neatly combined advances in modern technology with the potential of a global greening of the city. It was, notably, questions of housing and hygiene which most occupied the town planners of that era. The garden city is a type of city which takes, as its starting point, domestic life and detached family homes. The ‘garden’ element enables this sort of private domestic life to blossom (with clean air, vegetable patches, playgrounds) but, also, to form links with other parts of society, which had been designed in the same fashion. In this visionary scenario of the city, nature therefore takes on a socializing role and assures social solidarity<sup>(3)</sup>. We were surprised to find similar imaginary visions in a series of works which were realized in 2010-2011 by students of architecture, town planning and transport from three continents (Europe, Latin America and Asia). These contributions had been requested as part of an initiative of the ‘Institut pour la Ville en Mouvement’ which was interested in finding out more about the urban visions of the future professionals who would be involved in our cities. We were all the more astonished to find what we did because the instructions which had been given to them asked them to portray their visions of the city in relation to mobility (and not housing). But here as well, as in the case of the garden cities, ‘nature’ is omnipresent and

When the ‘Institut pour la ville en mouvement’<sup>(2)</sup> (IVM) asked students from around the world to depict their visions of the city, it opened an urbanistic laboratory in which these fantasies were able to incubate and take shape – reminding us of certain traits of the ‘vision’ that was the garden city.

plays the role of social mediator, providing a space in which social connections can be established, nourished and developed, thus supporting the development of a better type of city and a better way of life. For sure, different forms of city emerge from these different utopian productions but they all include nature as a key element of urban and social integration.

## The ‘planned city’

One of the first types of city to emerge is the ‘planned city’. Here, the key principle of the city’s renewal is the way it is planned in a balanced and harmonious fashion. Today’s city has to be reorganized according to the principles of sustainable planning. In visions of this ‘planned city’ we find a series of diverse elements such as efficient transport systems, green

(1) LANNAY Pierre, is a sociologist, researcher and teacher at Metices (the Institute of Sociology at the Free University of Brussels). BALTEAU Marie has a master degree in sociology and was a research intern at the Institute.

(2) The Fabrication of Movement” was a piece of international research and conference piloted by the IVM with its chairpersons from China and Latin America and by the ‘Fabrique de la cité’ in partnership with the ‘université Paris-Est’ with the support of the ‘Institut d’aménagement et d’urbanisme d’Île-de-France’ and the ‘Caisse des dépôts’. The national federation for town planning agencies (‘la Fédération nationale des agences d’urbanisme’ (FNAU)) also participated and the project was financed by the Île-de-France region. See the special report called “La Fabrique du mouvement” in the *Revue Urbanisme*, n° 385, 2012. Further information is available on the website [www.movemaking.com](http://www.movemaking.com)

(3) For a summary see BATY-TORNIKIAN (ed.). *Cités-jardins. Genèse et actualité d’une utopie*. Paris : Les Cahiers de l’Ipraus, éd. Recherches, 2001.

spaces, functional mixity etc. But all of these elements have in common the fact that they have been planned. In other words, they have been thought out, structured and put together in order to form an overarching infrastructure in support of a new form of urban planning.



« Horizontal and vertical city »  
Daegu – 05 – Utopian Postcards.

In visions of the 'planned city', 'nature' or 'green space' appears as an element in practically all examples and is integrated according to a precise and planned logic: nature is controlled and limited to specific areas of allocated space (designated 'green spaces') in which the architecture, situation and function are not left to chance but are planned and integrated into the city just as much as any other vital component. These designated 'green spaces' are, in fact, a form of nature which has been tamed and given shape according to an overall master plan.



« Otegui »  
Santiago de Chili – 53 – Utopia.

On the other hand, the 'planned city' is a city which perfectly deploys a range of different modes of transport and makes them work together harmoniously at the heart of its overall infrastructure. It is the planning and organisation of this infrastructure which is supposed to transform the badly planned city of today into the city of the future which is integrated, balanced and sustainable.



« Selfsufficient and balanced city »  
Barcelona – 01 – Utopian contribution.

In other words, in visions of the 'planned city', the best ones will result from taking a global view of the whole space, from careful urban planning and logistics which will provide the city with all the carefully-planned components it needs to assure full and satisfying lives. This imaginary vision is the direct heir of classical and modern urban utopias. For, it is the reasoned planning of the city which appears here, just as it does it in the 18th, 19th and 20th centuries, as the driving force behind its positive transformation. In the 'planned city', 'nature' plays a socializing role, just as much on an aesthetic level (by making the city a more pleasant place to live in) as it does on a sociological level (by making links between different areas of urban space and facilitating the harmonious cohabitation of numerous users). If the 'planned city' is not, strictly speaking, a garden city, it is, nevertheless, a city made up of gardens and green space, synonymous with high quality public spaces with both scenic and functional purposes.

### The 'engaged city'

In the second type of these city visions, the driving force behind the city's renewal is no longer change at the material level but rather a change in attitudes. Numerous pieces of research support the theory that, fundamentally, the form of the city is played out primarily in the heads of its inhabitants and other users, in their habits, in their ways of thinking and behaving, in their practical daily lives. "Humanity is energy," it says on one of the collages depicting bare feet flying over a densely packed city. This movement comes from people and their values base. Our students at the beginning of the 21st century affirm what George Simmel said right at the beginning of the 20th century, that a close relationship exists between "metropolis and mentality"; constructing the metropolis of tomorrow means abandoning people's way of thinking today. More precisely, this change in attitudes is the only way, according to them, of being able to free ourselves from today's material culture in order to engage in a really viable form of city life. In fact, what is denounced or reversed is precisely the organization of today's city on a materialistic level – an organization that is perceived as destructive, sooner or later, of the city itself, whether in terms of its consumption of energy, damage to its environment or alienation of its people.

With regard to transport systems, the users of the 'engaged city' can be characterized by their attitudes and behaviours which are radically different from what is normal today; they denounce and abandon 'hard' modes of transport (those which can cause injury and those





« Humanity is energy » Daegu, no restrictions on moving ! – 01 – Utopian Postcards.

which wear people down) preferring 'soft' modes (those which gently caress the city and take the edge off everyday life). To look at the sky, to hover above the city, to put a stop to road traffic, to transform boulevards into fields, to transport people around in plastic bubbles – there are so many calls to change the usual view we have of urban life. This new way of thinking presents itself not as a step backwards for the way we move around the city but, on the contrary, as the only way we have of guaranteeing "accessibility over mobility" – this is established as a central value of the 'engaged city'. "No restrictions on moving," declares a poster showing the city of Daegu (South Korea) as it is circled by a troupe of dancers from ancient times.

Concerning the element of 'nature', in visions of the 'engaged city' it is no longer seen as a piece of green, cultivated land but, on the contrary, as an inhabitant of the city itself. These are cities which nature has won back. Nature appears more freely, it scatters itself over, and takes possession of, the space, it becomes wild again and sometimes takes over. It reacquires the 'freedom of the city', a right to occupy the city as it pleases, a right which today's cities have withdrawn. In this scenario, town planners don't see themselves so much as gardeners, rather more as servants of a nature which allows them to use it and see it proliferate and grow, but on its own terms. There is no longer a perceptible overall sense of order, just a patchwork or a view we might be able to catch which allows us to glimpse the city rather than to seize it.

Nature here is that element which forces us to think of the city in a different way and which demands a conscious and active engagement on the part of its users. 'Making the city' is no longer the business of experts, but, on the contrary, the multiplication of diverse, libertarian, 'living' practices produced by humans and other living beings as they demand a sort of radical freedom over the existing order.

## The 'human city'

In this vision of the city, the idea is to facilitate, as much as possible, the flexibility and fluidity of practices and habits. These ways in which we use the city are thought of as being open to change, not fixed, responsive, varied, flexible, and interactive – in the sense that they rest fundamentally on the human aspect of the city. The purpose of the ideal city here is to improve and humanise our habits, in the sense of strengthening them and at the same time making them more easy going.

A particular feature of this 'human city' is the way in which it supports, breathes life into and is based on the principle of 'mobility' – this is, at one and the same time, guarantor of the human city and also defined by it. Taking individuals as its starting point, their practices and habits and the social relations which motivate them, the 'human city' sets out to make them more easy, to create a way of living together which is better, less aggressive, less difficult. This project distinguishes itself from the 'planned city' to the extent that mobility is no longer considered as a demand of the urban environment to which a logistical and planned response is required, but as belonging to an urban lifestyle which the city itself, as the milieu, has to facilitate.

The 'human city' implies innovation, the creation of objects, of environments and of technologies which bring together social links, facilitating the complex social dynamics in which our daily lives are mixed up with the big societal challenges, to which we are sensitive. Modularity and connectivity are the key words here.



« Taquilles urbanes » Barcelona – 16 – Utopian contribution.

The 'human city' is one of mobile objects, conceived of as tools to aid our sociability (public transport, light vehicles, telephones and laptop computers etc.). One could describe them as objects which are 'sociobible', fostering sociability and mobility, highly adaptable and flexible. The 'human city' is one of mobile, sociable individuals, just like the objects they use.

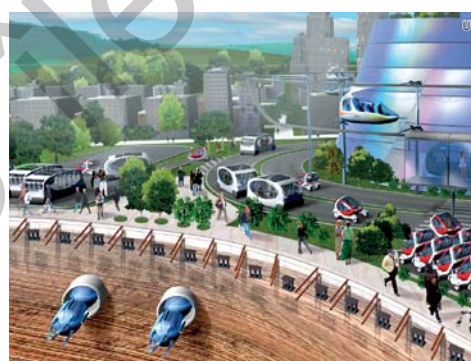
A further element is the elimination of the flaws we see in the cities of today. Students highlighted the fact that citizens are often confronted with tiresome difficulties on a daily basis, such

gaps in the urban environment as difficulties getting around, poor connections, unsafe areas and failing levels of comfort. The 'human city' substitutes these weaknesses for social improvements, that is to say objects, spaces and networks designed, not only for their efficiency, but also for their capacity to integrate many different uses and users, and to strengthen urban sociability. In real-life cities the roads of raised motorway systems leave derelict spaces in their trail. In the 'human city', these derelict spaces are given new life with the aim of developing new practices for social exchange.



« Marginalized due to the speed »  
Daegu - 03 - Utopian Postcards.

Finally, in the 'human city' it is no longer a question of nature in the city but more exactly of the city conceived as a natural environment. Urban harmony is like a balanced ecosystem which is cleverly maintained and in which human comfort supposes the symbiosis of technological and natural components in the environment.



« Personal automated transport »  
Barcelona - 14 - Utopian contribution.

*The illustrations of this article are on Move-making.com, platform as a result of "The Fabrication of Movement", a piece of international research and conference piloted by the IVM with its chairpersons from China and Latin America and by the 'Fabrique de la cité' in partnership with the 'université Paris-Est' with the support of the 'Institut d'aménagement et d'urbanisme d'île-de-France' and the 'Caisse des dépôts'. The national federation for town planning agencies also participated and the project was financed by the Île-de-France region.*

Called upon to dream up the city of the future, students from around the world produced an extremely rich and varied imaginary panorama. The three portraits that we have described are just sketches, giving you some ideas in a stylized fashion. We note that they all give value to the same general concept of the city, that of the 'mobile city' and of *homo mouvens*<sup>(4)</sup>.

An urban vision of strong neighborhoods

How do these different visions of the city echo the ideals of the garden cities movement? Although a century apart, these two versions of the city sketch out a place which has been rendered harmonious by the happy balancing

of modern technology with a beneficial natural environment. This subtle combination is supposed to assure social cohesion by producing conditions which will foster strong neighbourhoods. In the garden cities, the maisonnette (kitted out with all modern comforts) and its garden, the parks and the green lanes will support a form of community life which allows space for people's private lives as well. In the city visions dreamt up by the students of the third millennium, it is the hubs and areas people use to get around, (and which are easy to use, sociable and attractive), which will be able to assure the best way of living together for individuals who are otherwise autonomous in their choices and lifestyles. These two visions of the city give a central role to public space as a facilitator of community life, but in opposite ways. The garden city assures the quality of the domestic and neighbourhood spheres in the face of public space which was perceived, at the turn of the 20th century, as morally and socially deleterious. The mobile city reinvests in its public spaces to make them as comfortable and convivial as its private spaces. In the two cases it is a question of reforming public space to return it to its primary function: making the city a sociable place. Moreover, these visions of the city are motivated by largely convergent values: social cohesion, wellbeing for everyone, freedom, balanced functionality, a form of humanism which can be understood in how public space is designed and based on the needs of its inhabitants and users, and their daily lives.

One final point in common is the absence of any industrial production sites or other places of work. The garden city, like the 'mobile city', places sites of economic activity outside its framework, and these come to form an invisible backdrop to urban life<sup>(5)</sup>. Perhaps this joint omission comes from a more or less explicit criticism of the most negative aspects of the real-life cities in which both of these ideas have evolved. If the garden city is a proposition for reforming the industrial city, the 'mobile city' of the students of today puts itself forward as an alternative model to the "franchised city"<sup>(6)</sup> which, throughout the world, seems to announce the arrival of a form of segregation which is taken for granted and a stressful, uncomfortable atmosphere.

(4) See LLOP Carles quoted by TRAN Magali in "A quoi rêvent les étudiants?". *Traits Urbains*, n° 55, juin/juillet 2012, p.57.

(5) See J. Daumas, « La cité-jardin ou la confusion vertueuse » in GIRARD P. & FAYOLLE LUSSAC B. (eds). *Cités, cités-jardins : une histoire européenne*. Talence, MSHA, 1996.

(6) MANGIN David. *La ville franchisée. Formes et structures de la ville contemporaine*. Paris : Éditions de la Villette, 2004.





B. Bassez / IAU idF



L. Mettelet / IAU idF



E. Jarousseau / IAU idF

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# Resources



E. Jarousseau / IAU idF



D. Gantier Gossé / Mairie de Paris

Samuel Dhote pour la mission du bassin minier



L. Mettelet / IAU idF

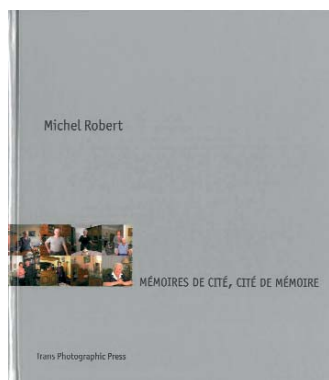


Laurence H. Koplik / The Radburn Citizens Association



# To read

The publications referred to in these notes are available from the IAU îdF media library



MICHEL ROBERT ;  
CÉCILE BOSSAVIE-GIRAUDET  
**History and memories of the city**  
Paris : TransPhotographic press, 2007  
IA 52044

The history of the garden city at Champigny is presented to us, little by little in small touches, through a series of 26 portraits of the residents, accompanied by stories in the first person. As well as opening the door to their home for us by posing inside for photographer Michel Robert, the tenants plunge us into the life of the garden city from its very beginnings, when the comfort of the apartments was valued despite the lack of heating during the war. While solidarity reigned between neighbours, different 'clans' formed according to the location within the city; the Place Louis Loucheur, the rue Charles Fourier, an apartment, a house or... the barracks! The presence of the republican guard, then the mounted guard right at the heart of the city is an original feature which is often conjured up. Many people have spent their lives in this place and can't imagine settling anywhere else, such as Dany and Félix Fontas, retired ironmongers. Known by almost all the residents, they were born here, grew up, lived and worked all their life in the garden city and are conscious of the social connection they have constructed together for the neighbourhood. Despite a certain nostalgia for times

gone by, when there were no cars and plenty of local shops, some residents are turning to the future, following the example of M. Mouneyrac: "it is with today's residents that we will write the future memory of this city".

Whereas the foreword focuses on renovation works to the city by trying to draw out a positive result from a difficult programme that was often badly experienced, Mme Bossavie-Giraudet, an architect with the Council of Architecture, Town Planning and the Environment 94 (CAUE 94), helps complete these slices of life by placing the example of Champigny within the history of the garden city movement. Initiated at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century by Ebenezer Howard, then brought to France by Georges Benoît-Levy and Henri Sellier, the garden cities of the Île-de-France were created between 1920 and 1939. Their design and implementation were paid for by one single client. In Champigny, the public office for social housing in the Seine administrative region called on Pelletier and Teisseire, architects, who, while following the change in direction of modern architecture in the 1930s, preserved the picturesque spirit of a village for the designing of the public spaces.



BENOÎT POUVREAU ; MARC COURONNE ;  
MARIE-FRANÇOISE LABORDE ;  
GUILLAUME GAUDRY  
**The Garden Cities of the north-eastern Paris suburbs**  
Paris : Editions Le Moniteur, 2007. 141 p.  
IA 48183

In the second half of the 19th century, the north-east of Paris which was subject to strong demographic pressure, was to become a testing ground, designed to provide decent housing for workers. At the beginning of the 20th century, the north-east of Paris was again the place to try out a new concept inspired by the English model of the garden city. This publication is supported by several chronological examples which characterize the architectural evolution of the garden cities: from 1904-1919 when the first examples appeared; between 1920-1939 when they reached their peak; and from 1939-1999 when the concept all but disappeared. The Bonnevey law of 23<sup>rd</sup> December 1912 was decisive for the garden cities, creating, as it did, the public offices for social housing in town and regional councils and so breaking with the non-interventionist approach in this respect. Regional and local authorities became clients, or purchasers, and public action was mobilized in favour of social housing. The urban forms respond to similar utopian, commercial or altruistic objectives or to those concerned with hygiene. They have

in common: enclosed space, a social form of regulating transition spaces, public facilities, gardens which were originally used for growing vegetables, and green space. The publication shows that the garden cities were an urban and architectural laboratory.

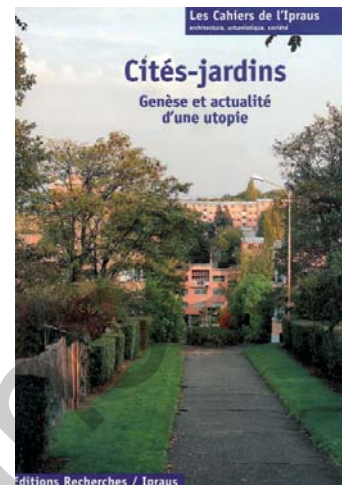
The materials which are used, along with the décor, have an important aesthetic vocation, showing the dignity of the workers' housing. Today, the concept of the garden city continues to stimulate the collective imagination, but real estate and energy constraints limit their development. The construction of the Petit-Béthény garden city at Reims revives this model.

The book, which is richly illustrated with numerous postcards, photographs, block plans, helps to take stock of the garden cities by listing the number of shared or individual homes, the dates of construction, the type of construction and the materials that were used.



**G**arden cities: the term refers to a vast number of concrete interpretations, scattered all over the place. All, however, claim a link with the project's founder, Ebenezer Howard. The contributions gathered together in this publication take an historical approach to the garden city concept, including, alongside it, the intellectual, socio-economic, ideological and human context which both produced it and helped it spread. This work helps us to better understand the way in which universal ideas, stemming from the British intellectual milieu, took shape, and how they were adapted in different cultures, in the United Kingdom, the United States or in France. For Howard, the large city symbolizes capitalism's frantic race towards its own destruction. He even goes to the point of considering it an obstacle to economic and organizational efficiency and accuses it of having cut man off from nature. His 'social city' plans nothing less than bringing man closer to his natural environment, to his freedom, by redesigning the large city into a network of smaller towns. Letchworth, to the north of London and which was designed by the architect and town planner Raymond Unwin, was the first garden

city to make Howard's concept a reality. The idea of garden-neighbourhoods on the edges of the city, and of new satellite towns around the city, was born. And at the same time so was the regulatory process on which hinged the urban planning of 20<sup>th</sup> century urban development. In France it was the Musée social, founded by French philanthropists, which championed the concept. Henri Sellier took over from them in his search for social housing solutions. He was to propose from 1913, the creation of the Public Office for Social Housing in the Seine administrative region, which enabled the development of around 20 garden cities in the Paris region after the First World War. And so social housing management at the level of the town was realized within the French town council system – this had the objective of relieving congestion in Paris and the suburbs and not of creating self-sufficient entities as Howard conceived. This does not prevent the residents becoming attached to their area, a feeling which has been passed down over generations; and nor does it prevent people having an awareness that they are privileged to live within the environment of an original part of our cultural heritage.



GINETTE BATY-TORKNIAN (DIR.) /  
AMINA SELLALI (DIR.)  
**Garden cities: the genesis and  
importance of a utopia**  
Paris : Ipraus, Éditions Recherches. 2001,  
157 p. : ill.; phot.  
IA 43096

**T**he IAU îdF website offers interactive maps which enable visitors to discover the Île-de-France region using the VISIAU cartographic tool; access is free or by paid subscription. Initially developed to meet the needs of the IAU îdF and the Île-de-France region, the Visiau resources today have been pulled together and made available for free. The 'Visiau Grand Public' resource offers about a hundred maps linked to important themes in urban planning within the Île-de-France region.

One of the interactive maps concerns the garden cities in the region and enables users to visualise the 34 garden cities which were built mainly between the two world wars. You can save, print or download the map as well as data on all of the garden cities. By clicking the question-mark button you can obtain a detailed information sheet on each one which appears in a new window of your browser. Different information can be found there: the location, a general description and typology of the homes and facilities, dates of construction, clients, architects and the history of the site (destruction, renovation, protection) etc. There is also a



comprehensive documentary section spanning old maps to recent photos. These sheets are not intended to be exhaustive but rather provide a concise summary. The bibliographic references and sources are there to help you to find out more information or to contact the relevant department.

VISIAU GARDEN CITIES RESOURCE  
[http://www.iau-idf.fr/cartes/  
cartes-et-fiches-interactives.html](http://www.iau-idf.fr/cartes/cartes-et-fiches-interactives.html)

20  
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# Paris Region

## Key Figures



 **ParisRegion**  
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**THURSDAY 25 APRIL 2013**

## Programme 1<sup>st</sup> DAY • STAINS

### **VISIT OF THE STAINS GARDEN CITY**

built between 1921 and 1933 by the architects Eugène Gonnot and Georges Albenque

**FRIDAY 26 APRIL 2013**

## Programme 2<sup>nd</sup> DAY • SURESNES

### **SYMPOSIUM AT THE THÉÂTRE JEAN VILAR SURESNES GARDEN CITY**

#### **ROUND TABLE 1 UNDERSTANDING: « FROM CONCEPT TO REALITY »**

Chair and Moderator **Jean-Pierre Palisse** - IAU idF

#### **ROUND TABLE 2 TAKING ACTION AND ANTICIPATING:**

« **REINVENTING GARDEN CITIES** » Chair and Moderator: **Derek Martin**, IFHP

**SATURDAY 27 APRIL 2013**

## Programme 3<sup>rd</sup> DAY • CHÂTENAY-MALABRY

### **GUIDED TOUR OF THE LA BUTTE ROUGE GARDEN CITY**

built between 1931 and 1960 by the architects Joseph Bassompierre, Paul de Rutte and André Arvidson, Paul Sirvin and the landscape architect André Rioussé.

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