

**February 6, 2021 .**

**Architects oppose the destruction of the Garden-city of La Butte Rouge, Châtenay Malabry (France).**

The Pritzker Prize and Grand Prix National de l'Architecture (the highest French prize for architecture) award-winners wrote the following letter to Roselyne Bachelot, the French Minister of Culture :

The Garden-city of la Butte Rouge has been recognized as one of the most exceptional social housing development of France and as a model city at international scale. We cannot possibly imagine it to disappear after having been destroyed by mechanical diggers to make way for property speculation, with complete disregard for its priceless value. Loss of its integrity or of its architectural coherence through the destruction of all the buildings or part of them or of its unique landscape would prove irreversible and a disgrace to France. For the last three years, the city of Châtenay-Malabry (Hauts de Seine) has communicated its intention to tear down the housing buildings of the Garden-city of la Butte Rouge, purporting that they do not meet the new housing building requirements. In the public enquiry that is being currently conducted, the amendment of the Plan Local d'Urbanisme (PLU) (the local urban development plan) of the city states that 85% of the buildings will be demolished, which indeed means that the whole development will be wiped out as well as its remarkable trees will be cut down. La Butte Rouge stands out as a model as far as garden-cities are concerned, the only one in France, possibly in Europe, to combine and display so cleverly urbanity, architecture, landscaping, social concerns and topography, while highlighting the hilly landscape of the southern part of the Seine department. This department was renamed Hauts-de-Seine in order to resonate with the vast neighbouring estates which offer the Garden-city its setting, either nearby or further away: le parc de Sceaux, la Vallée aux loups, la forêt de Verrières (Verrières forest and the former avenue de Versailles, now called avenue de la Division Leclerc.

The Garden-city – with a subtlety that has never been matched in France since – is composed of 4,000 apartments and several hundred trees on a 70 hectare- estate (172.9 acres) ; it was born from the action of several talented characters : the action of Henri Sellier, a highly-committed elected representative as well as a visionary politician; the action of a team of architects which devised and got through the eight construction and rehabilitation stages of the Garden-city over almost a century (1919-1994), Joseph Bassompierre, Paul de Rutté, André Arfvidson, and Paul Sirvin, then Pierre Sirvin and Louis Sirvin ; the action, quite an unusual one at that time, that is between the two World Wars, of landscape designer, André Rioussé associated with the team of the project management. It is to be noted, since it is exceptional, that the Sirvin family, a line of architects, has ensured the heritage and the coherence of the spatial and time continuum. Other European Garden-cities, on account of their exceptional value have been classified as the Unesco World heritage and have thereby become unquestionably attractive architectural sites, and a common heritage for humanity, for instance we may mention the Berlin Garden-city.

Instead of being torn down, the city needs to be preserved in its integrity, it also needs to be rehabilitated with care and methodically as our Swiss neighbours did in Geneva when they worked on the Lignon (a building of the sixties whose rehabilitation proved a far more daunting task than the buildings of La Butte Rouge, or closer to us, as the Suresnes or Stains Garden-cities which are the pride of the local territory and of their inhabitants.

La Butte Rouge of Châtenay-Malabry is a remarkable architectural, urban housing development within a carefully designed landscape, it is a unique site with no equivalent in the world and it must absolutely be classified as such and considered as a national heritage, a heritage for the coming generations. The population was mobilised to voice its disagreement over the project (85% expressed unfavourable opinions during the public enquiry), the main French media also support our cause (Le Monde, Libération, La Croix, Le Parisien, Le Figaro, Tribune de l'Art etc...), it seems to me that it would be very important for architects to express their opinion as well.

Louis SIRVIN Architecte

Marc **BARANI**, Grand Prix national de l'architecture 2013

Frédéric **BOREL**, Grand Prix national de l'architecture 2010

Paul **CHEMETOV**, Grand Prix national de l'architecture 1980

Pierre Louis **FALOCI**, Grand Prix national de l'architecture 2018

Jean-Marc **IBOS** et Myrte **VITART**, Grand Prix national de l'architecture 2010

Anne **LACATON** et JP **VASSAL**, Grand Prix national de l'architecture 2008, Prix Pritzker 2021

Jean **NOUVEL**, Prix Pritzker 2002 Grand Prix national de l'architecture 1987

Dominique **PERRAULT**, Grand Prix national de l'architecture 1993

Christian de **PORTZAMPARC**, Prix Pritzker 1994 Grand Prix national de l'architecture 1992

Francis **SOLER**, Grand Prix national de l'architecture 1990

Bernard **TSCHUMI**, Grand Prix national de l'architecture 199