

Fernand Pouillon, Paris

IV Grands ensembles in Paris

Local Heroes #2
Fernand Pouillon,
1912-1986

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Photos
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Residence Victor Hugo,
1955-1957

My first encounter with Fernand Pouillon's work was when I stumbled upon a few photographs of Residence Victor-Hugo (1955-1957), one of his projects which was presented in a publication I was reading. I remember thinking that it was just another example of a large-scale classical 20th century development, and the typical architecture that students were advised to avoid. It wasn't until later when I learned that in order to appreciate Pouillon's architectural legacy, I had to look at it from afar and try to understand what he called 'the finished composition'. Those who are familiar with Pouillon's work know that he was an architect who meticulously combined urban and architectural agendas, and had a remarkable ability to develop large-scale residential projects that were characterized by their individuality and integrity. If you are not familiar with his work, it would appear on the surface that Pouillon's projects are just like any other classical post war development; the type of development that is widely-criticized today, or even demolished.

Pouillon studied at the Ecole des Beaux-Arts in Paris (1934). He started his career in Aix-en-Provence and Marseille, and had collaborated with Auguste Perret on the reconstruction of the Vieux Port district. Unlike the open-plan designs of post-war, large-scale construction projects, Pouillon preferred forms that resembled squares and courtyards. "When planning a town, it is not a question of simply drawing up a plan: one must imagine each architectural structure in minute detail. [...] The shape and appearance of the buildings should dictate the layout of the town." Pouillon's firm, Comptoir National du Logement, was involved in the development, construction and architecture of his projects. This probably allowed him to achieve his ambition of creating 'the finished composition' and to "imagine each architectural structure in minute detail."



Pouillon focused on the power of evocation, resulting in the constructions of coherent and consistent buildings. He had a remarkable ability to combine urbanism and architecture, and to view construction, architecture and the urban form as a whole, resulting in buildings with their own autonomy. Although Pouillon's architecture is in some way influenced by familiar classical proportions, he avoided neo-classicism, which endowed his work with a timeless quality. His ability to combine diversity and repetition in his architecture is remarkable. In his work, the bay - a unit of form - provides repetition and tempo, which defines and punctuates the overall appearance of the building.

In Residence Buffalo (1955-1958) Pouillon was able to develop a social residential cluster, which is comprised of royal-like proportions and materials. The project's proportions, its inner courtyards and the usage of one single material - natural stone - feels like an homage to the ambience that one experiences when encountering Palais Royal or Place de Vogue in Paris. The subtle changes between the different bays and the proportions of the openings, give this project its robust and rich character. Till today the quality and maintenance of the project's public spaces, are remarkable. By creating such a 'royal' environment, the inhabitants are able to appreciate the place they live in.

Residence du Point du Jour (1957 -1963) is a plan with 2,260 dwellings that uncannily achieves a pleasant urban environment. In this specific project Pouillon exemplifies his ability to address urban and architectural agendas. Once again, the buildings' composition in the ensemble and the transition from one façade bay to the next expresses Pouillon's ability to create a rich and diverse architectural and social environment. The public gardens, fountains, colonnade and transparent entrances on the ground level all take a part in this unique "finished composition," which defines the project as a place that reflects the city in itself.



Residence Buffalo,
1955-1958



Residence du Point du Jour
1955-1958



Residence le Parc,
1955-1958



On one of my visits to Residence du Point du Jour, I had the chance to meet an old man that had been living there for over thirty years. He described how nice it was to live there and the fact that almost nothing had changed. He then invited me to his apartment on the 11th floor. As I was entering the apartment I was immediately exposed to the quality of the plan. His first question to me was, “Did you know that he was in prison?” The 1961 bankruptcy and subsequent collapse of Pouillon’s architectural and engineering firm, Comptoir National du Logement, has been sensationalized in France, overshadowing his his work. Pouillon’s career in France stopped the moment he was arrested and after serving time in prison, he migrated to Algeria in 1965. He then continued to develop projects in Algeria, Iran and Morocco until he returned to France in 1983 at the age of 73. He had several projects under development when he passed away in 1986.

All IV Grand Ensembles in Paris can be visited in one ambitious day. From my experience, to understand the work of Pouillon, and to appreciate his ability to create an architectural whole that is visually striking and exceptionally robust, one must visit these projects in person.



Books (selection):

Fernand Pouillon, Architecte
Pantin, Montrouge, Boulogne-Billancourt, Meudon-La-
Foret (French)
Jacques Lucan
Editions Picard ISBN 9782708406919
(The best book for a Pouillon trip to Paris)

Fernand Pouillon, Architetto delle 200 colonne (Ita-
lian/French)
Bernard Felix Dubor
Electa ISBN 978-2866530396 (French edition)
Elacta ISBN 88-435-2308-2 (italian edition)

Fernand Pouillon, architecte méditerranéen (French)
Jean-Lucien Bonillo
Editions Imbernon ISBN : 2-9516396-0-0.

Fernand Pouillon
New Foudation of the city, New foundation of a disci-
pline. (English)
Alberto Ferlenga (in the book Modern Cities by Jean-
Francois Lejeune)
Princeton Architectural Press ISBN 1-56898-058-2
Also in 'Google books' <embed>

Rationalistischer Klassizismus in Frankreich
Auguste Perrret und Fernand Pouillon als Stadtebauer
(German)
Vittorio Magnago Lampugnani (in his book Die Stadt
im 20. Jahrhundert, page 637)
Verlag Wachenbach ISBN 978-3-8031-3633-6

Fernand Pouillon in Algier (German)
Jean-Lucien Bonillo
Bauwelt 36-2003, page 50 (Themanummer StadtBauwelt
Algier)

Fernand Pouillon, Le Corbusier und andere (German)
Jean-Lucien Bonillo
Bauwelt 4-1998, page 1392 (Themanummer StadtBauwelt
Marseille)

Stones Of The Abbey / Les Pierres Sauvages (Roman in
English/French)
Fernand Pouillon
Harcourt ISBN: 0156851008 (English edition)
Editions du Seuil ISBN: 9782020010238 (French edition)

Mémoires d'un architecte (French)
Fernand Pouillon
Editions du Seuil ISBN: 978-2020011143

Internet:

<http://fernandpouillon.com/>



Grand Ensembles in Paris

(1) 282 apartments and commercial
Pantin, Résidence Victor-Hugo, 1955-1957
101 Avenue Jean Lolive, 93500 Pantin, France
5 minutes walk from Metro 5 - Église de Pantin to Avenue Jean Lolive

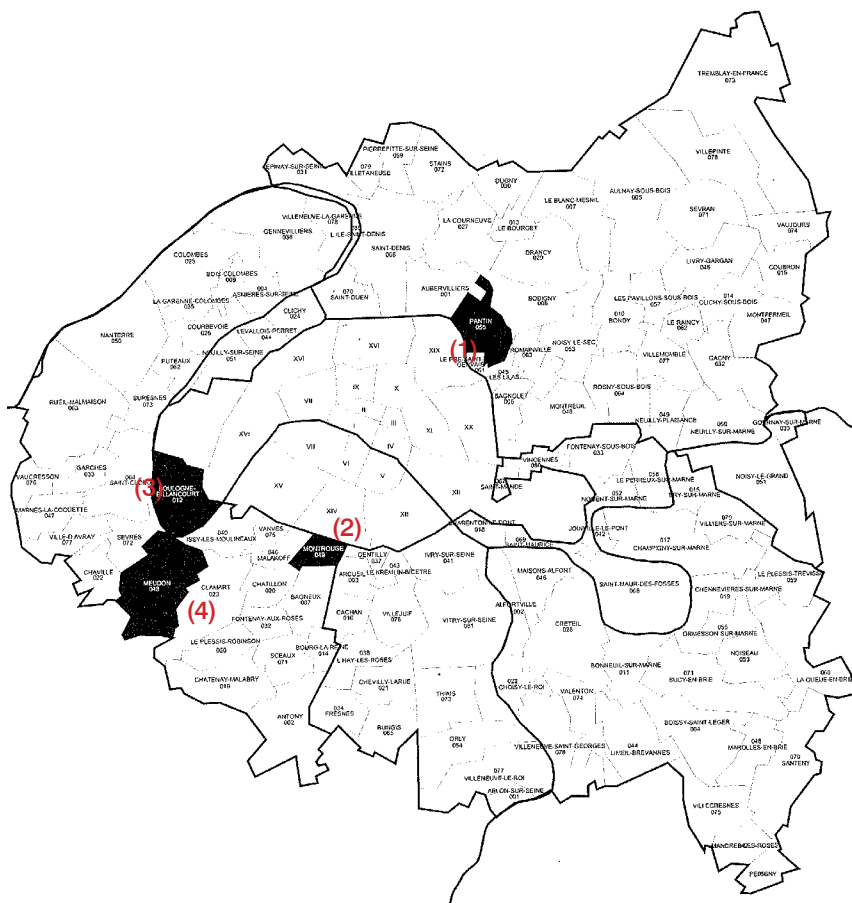
(2) 466 apartments and commercial
Montrouge, Résidence Buffalo, 1955-1958
Avenue Fort, 92120 Montrouge, France
15 minutes walk from RER B - Laplace to Avenue Fort

(3) 2 260 apartments and commercial
Boulogne-Billancourt, Résidence du Point-du-Jour, 1957-1963
Rue Neuve Saint-Germain, 92100 Boulogne-Billancourt, France
10 minutes walk from Metro 9 - Marcel Sembat to Rue Neuve Saint-Germain

(4) 2 635 apartments and commercial
Meudon la Forêt, Résidence Le Parc, 1957-1962
Avenue du Général de Gaulle, Meudon, France
RER C - Meudon Val Fleury from the station bus no. 289 to Eglise de Meudon-la-forêt

Google Map:

https://drive.google.com/open?id=1lceYkrCPup7bLxm6_yDR-5ZdHaA9AQc0&usp=sharing



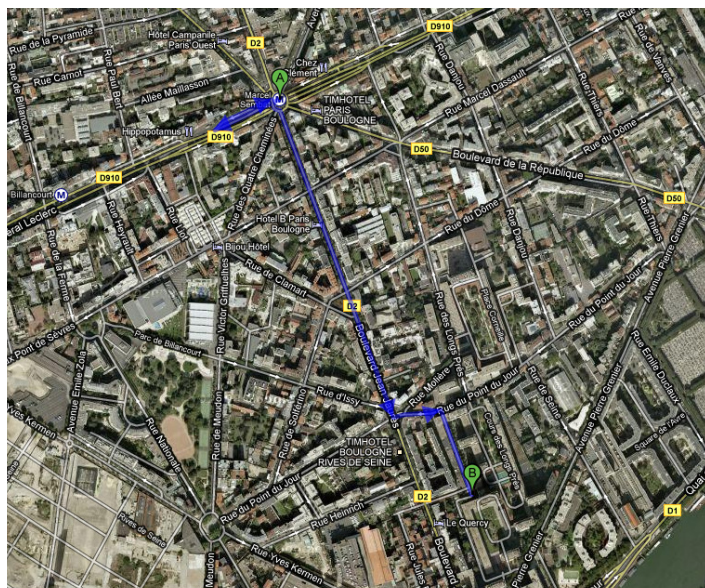
Pantin, Résidence Victor-Hugo, 1955-1957 (1)
 282 apartments and commercial
 101 Avenue Jean Lolive, 93500 Pantin, France
 5 minutes walk from Metro 5 - Église de Pantin to Avenue Jean Lolive



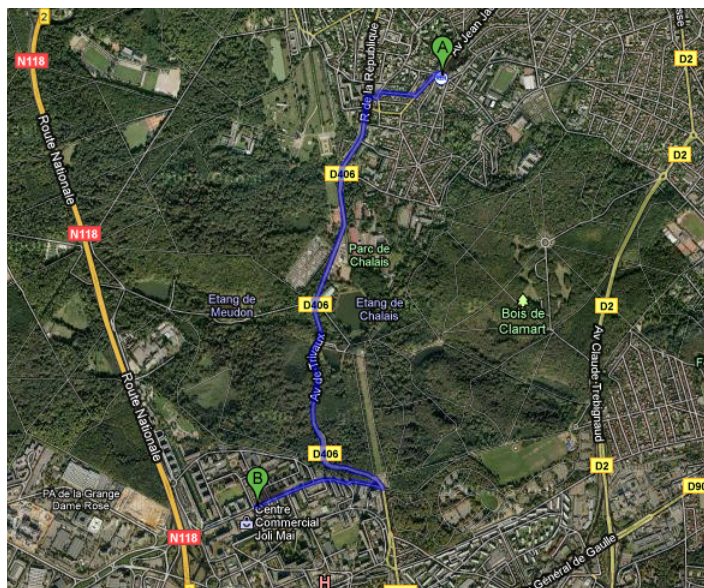
Montrouge, Résidence Buffalo, 1955-1958 (2)
 466 apartments and commercial
 Avenue Fort, 92120 Montrouge, France
 15 minutes walk from RER B - Laplace to Avenue Fort



Boulogne-Billancourt, Résidence du Point-du-Jour, 1957-1963 (3)
 2.260 apartments and commercial
 Rue Neuve Saint-Germain, 92100 Boulogne-Billancourt, France
 10 minutes walk from Metro 9 - Marcel Sembat to Rue Neuve Saint-Germain



Meudon la Forêt, Résidence Le Parc, 1957-1962 (4)
 2.635 apartments and commercial
 Avenue du Général de Gaulle, Meudon, France
 RER C - Meudon Val Fleury (see point A)
 From the station bus no. 289 to Eglise de Meudon-la-forêt (point B)

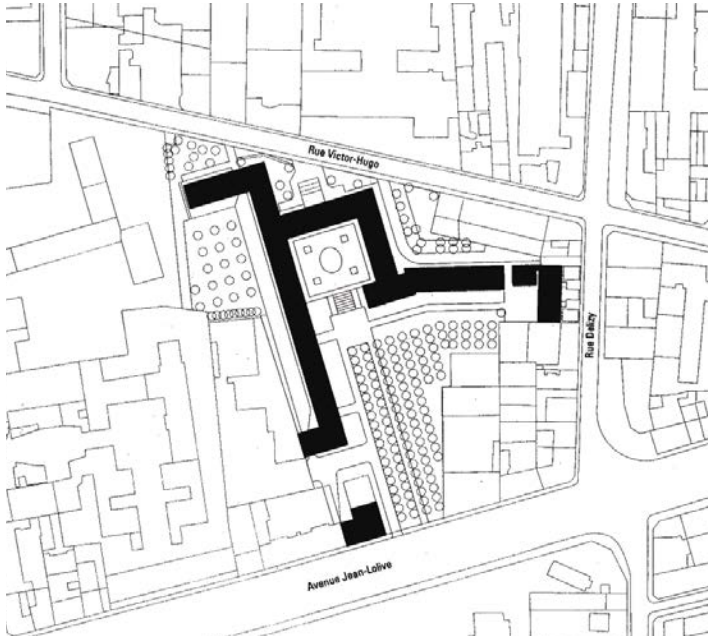


Pantin, Résidence Victor-Hugo, 1955-1957 (1)

282 apartments and commercial

101 Avenue Jean Lolive, 93500 Pantin, France

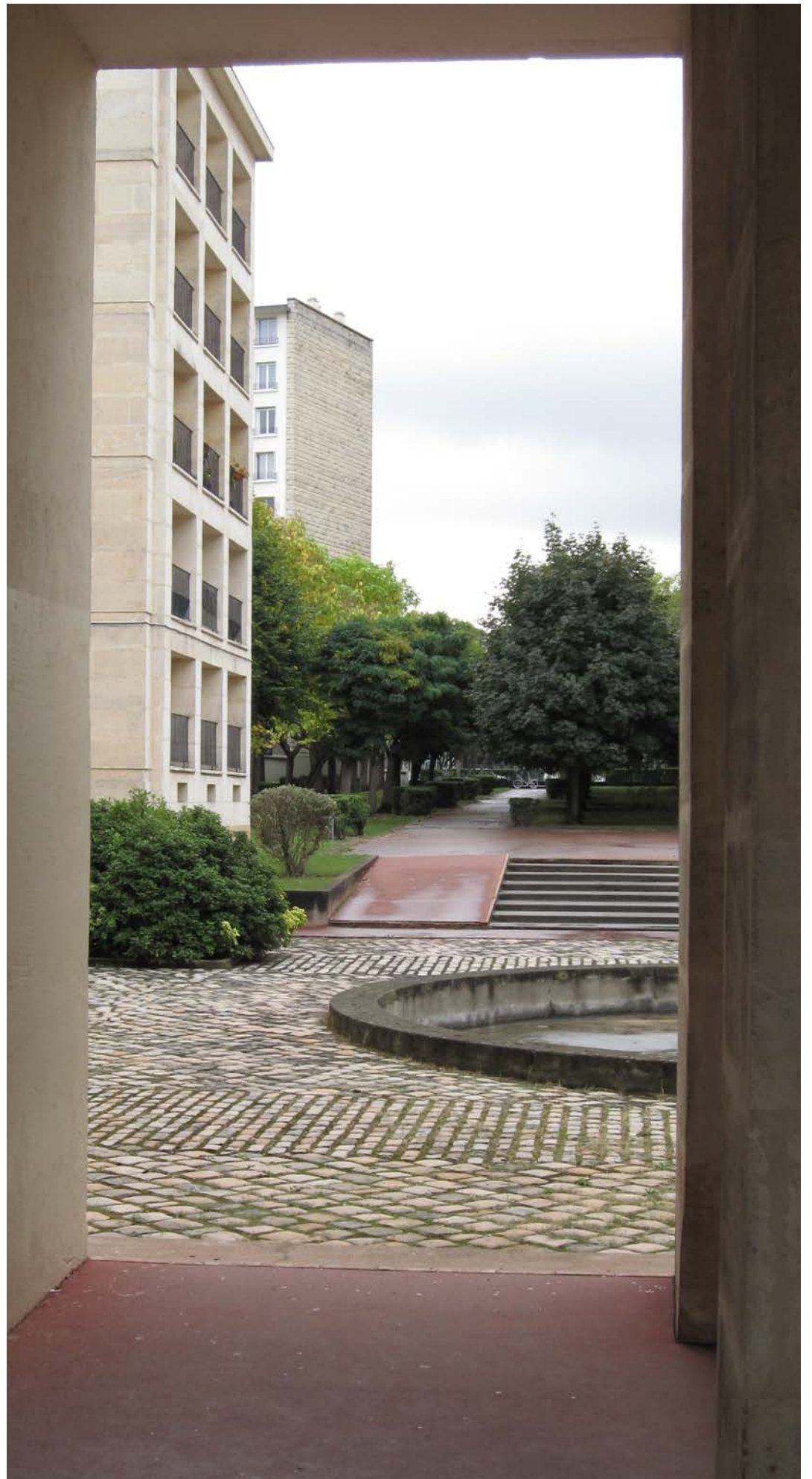
5 minutes walk from Metro 5 - Église de Pantin to
Avenue Jean Lolive



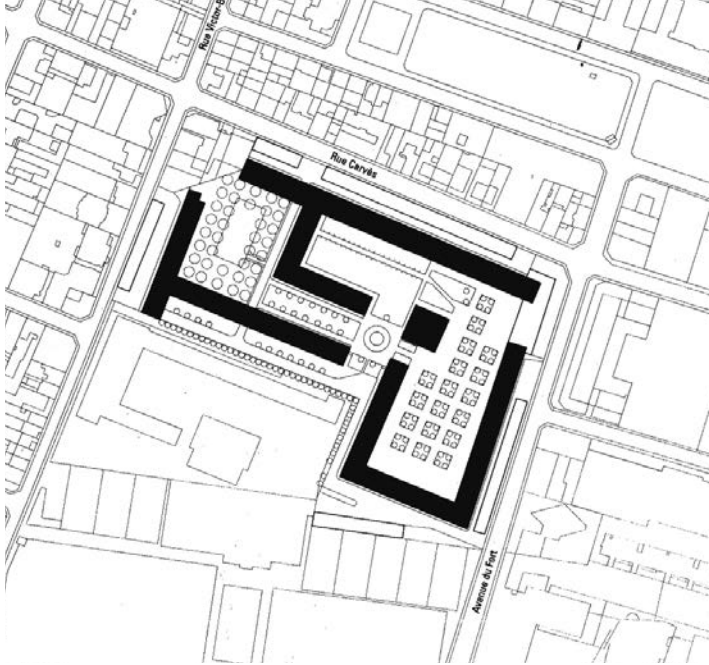


Residence Victor Hugo,
1955-1957





Montrouge, Résidence Buffalo, 1955-1958 (2)
466 apartments and commercial
Avenue Fort, 92120 Montrouge, France
15 minutes walk from RER B - Laplace to Avenue Fort





Residence Buffalo,
1955-1958



Local Heroes #2

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Residence Buffalo,
1955-1958

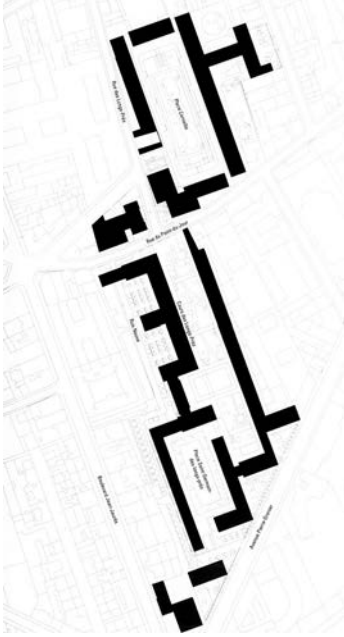




Residence Buffalo,
1955-1958



Boulogne-Billancourt, Résidence du Point-du-Jour,
1957-1963 (3)
2.260 apartments and commercial
Rue Neuve Saint-Germain, 92100 Boulogne-Billancourt,
France
10 minutes walk from Metro 9 - Marcel Sembat to Rue
Neuve Saint-Germain





Residence du Point du Jour
1955-1958





Residence du Point du Jour
1955-1958





Residence du Point du Jour
1955-1958

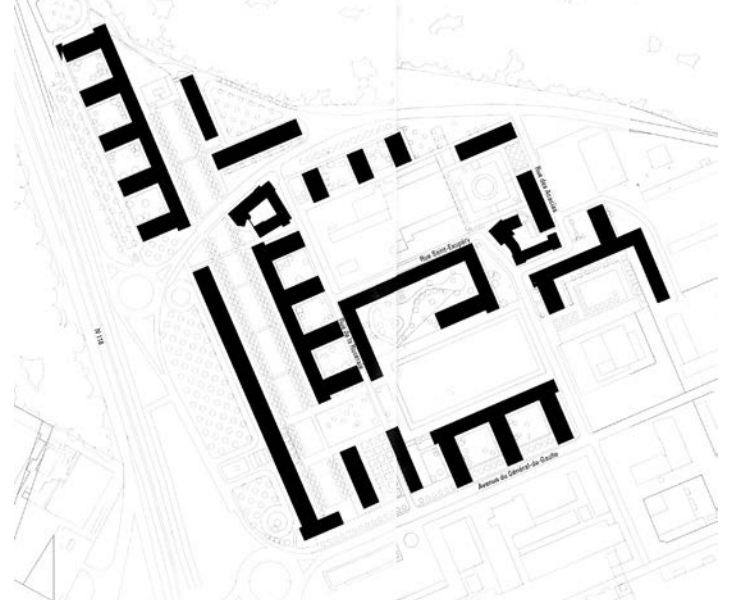


Local Heroes #2

Fernand Pouillon



Meudon la Foret, Résidence Le Parc, 1957-1962 (4)
2.635 apartments and commercial
Avenue du Général de Gaulle, Meudon, France
RER C - Meudon Val Fleury (see point A)
From the station bus no. 289 to Eglise de Meudon-la-
forêt (point B)





Residence le Parc,
1955-1958



