ETH Zurich Department of Architecture
ARCHITECTURE OF TERRITORY
Chair of Architecture
and Territorial Planning
Professor Milica Topalović

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La Côte: Tax Haven Countryside

Alessandro Accardo and Martin Ineichen



With a total expanse of 1.900 ha, la Côte stretches along Lac Léman's north shore from Nyon to Lausanne. The region south of Jura is typically referred to as l'arc and branded as the local 'gold coast'. Located around 100 m above the lake water level, the landscape faces Mount Blanc and the Alpine panorama. Set half way between Geneva and Lausanne, the sloping area is inevitably influenced by the main poles of the Léman City.

Until the 20th century, la Côte mainly consisted of farming villages. Vineyards along the coastal slopes and large-scale wheat fields in the plateaus characterized the area.
In recent decades, an increasingly international society inhabits the former rural structures often trying to sustain the 'originality' of the apparent bucolic set up. The illusion of an intact cultivated landscape emerges. The former family-based agricultural land has become an urban live-and-work zone set amidst the vineyards, apple and cherry orchards, and decorative flower fields. It is maintained by international migrant workforce, often arriving during the harvest season from southern parts of the EU. The vineyards along 'La Rue Vinoble', a 50 km long path, passing the villages of Vinzel, Féchy and Bursins, play an especially important role for the identity and marketing of the region: This prestigious, low-density area includes a broad urban mix of residential developments, international organisations and schools, business and corporate headquarters, luxurious estates and leisure facilities. Programs, previously assigned to the city, are now spread in the territory in a collage with rural relicts.

The exceptional quality of life, the multitude of work opportunities and low taxes attract a high proportion of wealthy residents and international professionals. Since the early 2000's the Canton of Vaud has actively pursued policies that cater to international investment. Among them are the introductions of 'strategic priority development sites and tax benefits for companies with profits primarily generated abroad' ("special-status companies"). Many companies have since relocated to the region and tax revenues on profits have gone up. In 2014, approximately one-third of the 100 best start-ups in Switzerland were located in Vaud.

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Architecture of Territory
Professor Milica Topalović

TEACHING TEAM
Thais De Roquemaurel
Hans Hortig
Karoline Kostka
Metaxia Markaki
Ferdinand Rabe von Pappenheim
Milica Topalović

Prof. Milica Topalović
ETH Zurich
ONA G41
Neunbrunnenstrasse 50
8093 Zurich
Switzerland
+41 (0)44 633 86 88
www.topalovic.arch.ethz.ch