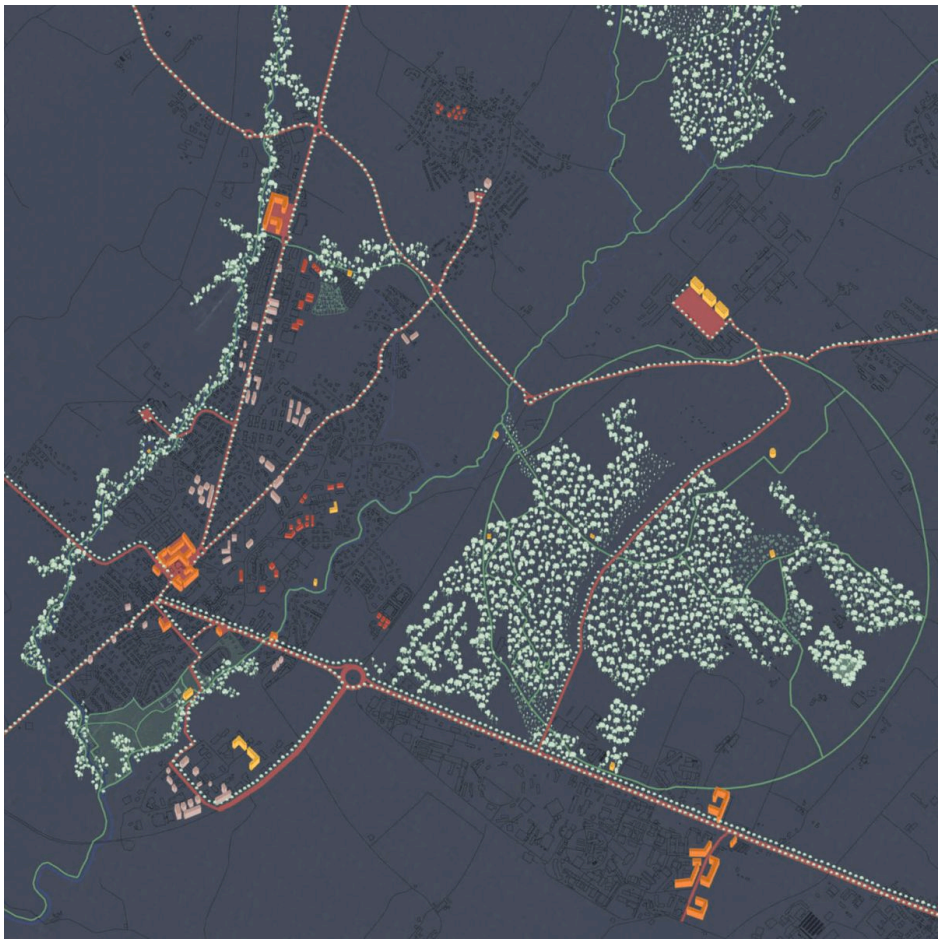
ETH Zurich Department of Architecture
ARCHITECTURE OF TERRITORY
Chair of Architecture
and Territorial Planning
Professor Milica Topalović

Communes
Spring 2017

Commune Saint-Genis-Pouilly

Cern and *L'Autre Genève*

Rebekka Neff and Sarah Weber



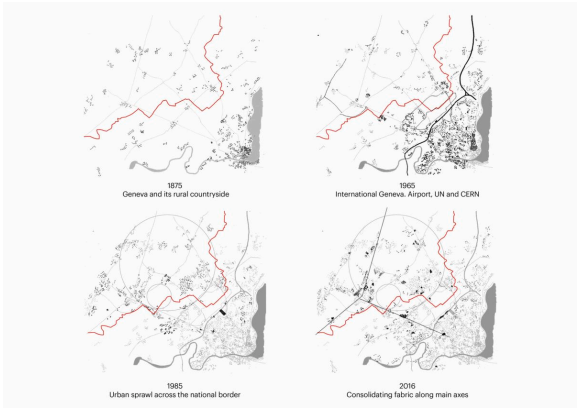
Bordering Switzerland, the commune of Saint-Genis-Pouilly has become one of the most important towns on the outskirts of Geneva that absorbs the demographic pressure in the region. Since real estate prices and rents are still considerably more affordable than the average in Switzerland, the commune attracts international clientele who works in Geneva. The high growth rate has driven a scattered settlement, dissolving the historic market villages and giving way to “copy-paste” housing projects and other developments spread across the landscape. These are dormitory clusters and industrial quarters (techno parks), whose connection to Geneva still relies heavily upon individual transport, with a tram connection arriving only in 2020.

The Commune of Saint-Genis-Pouilly on the Franco-Swiss border.

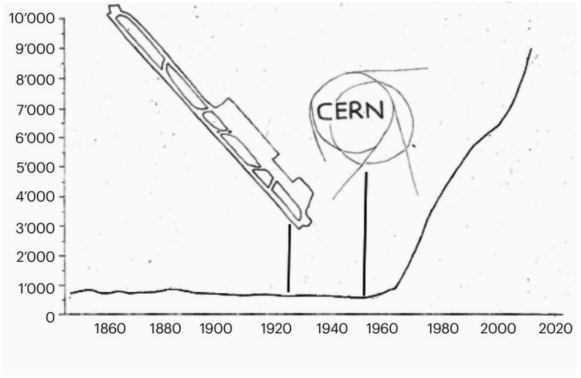
Absorbing Geneva's housing pressure.

A landscape of large infrastructures.

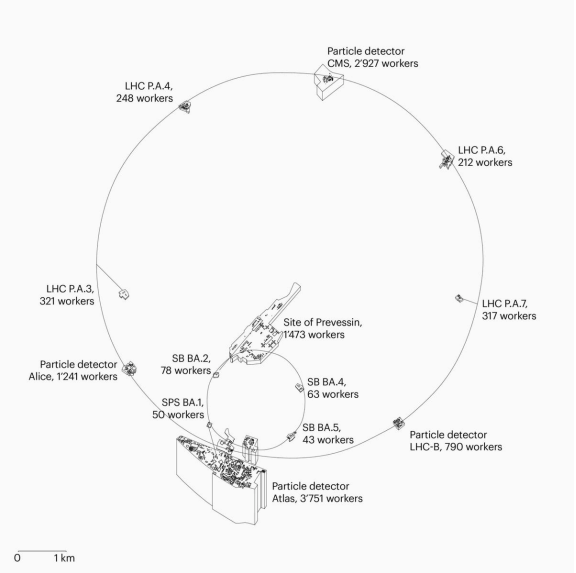
CERN cryogenic test facility in the countryside.



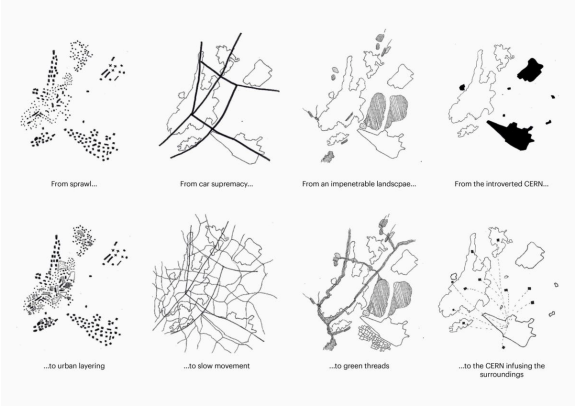
Historic development of the urban fabric.



Population growth of Saint-Genis-Pouilly.



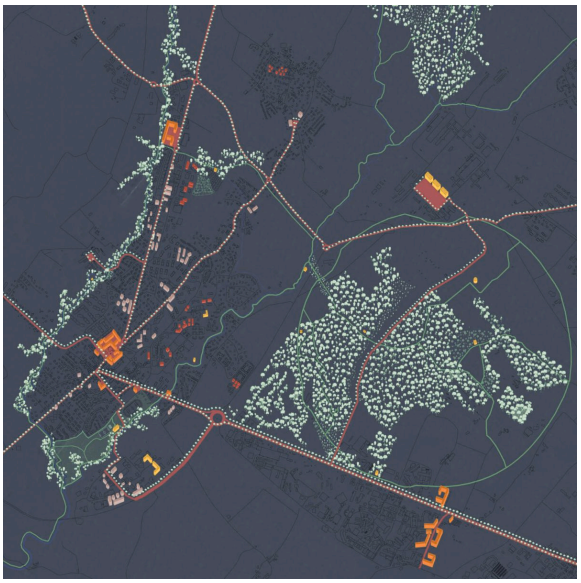
Workers in CERN's facilities distributed across territory.



Elements of the territory.

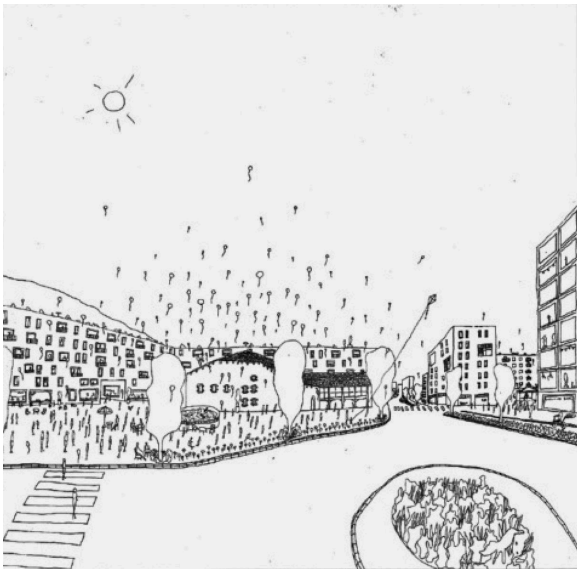
Saint-Genis-Pouilly is located within the area used by CERN, the European Organisation for Nuclear Research. The main entrance to the primary CERN campus (Meyrin) and the ATLAS experiment are located only 3 km from the center of Saint-Genis-Pouilly. The presence of this research laboratory has largely been responsible for the development of the community since the middle of the 1960s. As a pan-European project and international institution, CERN's foundation was a collaborative effort to form a common base of knowledge at the cutting edge of particle physics. It embodies a wish for peace after two world wars and fittingly, it's laboratories even span across two nation states.

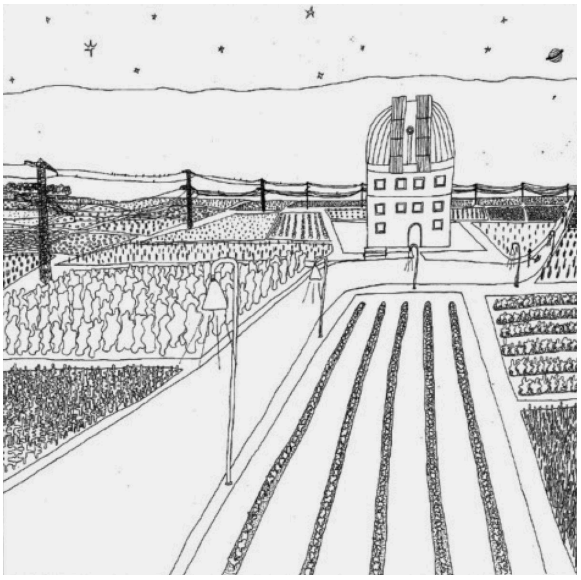
The development of this cosmopolitan suburb in the orbit of a Geneva, raises the question of the meaning of the commons. What are the possible meanings and articulations of the communal and the common in this context? How can a recent development of common knowledge production such as CERN be reflected back in the territory?



CERN as public campus.

Network of slow movement.





This work by Rebekka Neff and Sarah Weber was created as part of the design studio Communes at ETH Zurich in Spring 2017. The PDF is intended for educational purposes only. Its commercial distribution is strictly forbidden.

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