The form of the new city: how does it compare to traditional urbanisation?
The case of Nice Meridia.

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Planning New Downtowns in the XXIst Century

New Downtowns: a classic option to foster polycentric metropolitan development.

The radiant city paradigm: La Défense (Paris), The Docklands (London), North York (Toronto)

The suburban paradigm: Sylicon Valley (San Francisco), Missisauga (Toronto).

Dividing lines: Greenfield vs Brownfield, Compact vs Dispersed

Smart City: the latest paradigm for planning new metropolitan downtowns.

Common traits: smart infrastructure on the foreground … as for the physical city: vague support of traditional compact forms, quest for urbanity & greening of cityscape.

Do they deliver on these pledges?

Enriching land use analysis with a morphological viewpoint.
Case Study: Nice Méridia

A smart city in Nice, part of a new downtown Masterplan by Ch. Devillers (2013 - ). Pledge to renew with traditional forms of Nice central area (a “niçois” project).

“Antagonistic” of Sophia-Antipolis techno-park.
A Comparative Analysis

Sophia-Antipolis  Nice-Meridia  Hotel des Postes

Modernist dispersed planning  Smart City planning  Traditional planning after the Turin model (Consiglio d’Ornato)

Each of them, at its time, heralding a new way of conceiving the city
Analysis based on Urban Morphometrics

- Configuration of the street network
  - Analysis of betweenness centrality and closeness centrality (Porta et al. 2006)
- Morphological aspects (Berghauser-Pont and Haupt 2010)
  - Parcel size;
  - Block size;
  - FAR (Floor Area Ratio);
  - PSI (Public Space Index);
  - PPB (% Perimeter Built);
  - ...
- Commerce and services
  - Density of commerce and services at the street level.
- Greenery
  - Density of trees at the street level.
Closeness at 1600m

Loosely connected, poor accessibility

Well connected on a wide area

Well connected on a small area, poorly connected outside of it
Betweenness at 3200m: do the new “central” neighborhoods benefit from pedestrian through-movement?
Parcel size

Sophia-Antipolis
Nice-Meridia
Hotel des Postes

Top-down planning vs self-organised urban growth
Block coverage

Floor Area Ratio (FAR)

Public Space Index (PSI)

Percentage Built Perimeter (PBP)
Space Matrix: Méridia has a clearly distinguishable urban form

Statistics on the urban blocks
Urbanity & Greening of Cityscapes

Density of street trees

Density of urban amenities (retail, services)
Betweenness on public space and urban amenities

Old downtown: higher values and more evenly distributed across space.
Good correspondence with distribution of urban amenities (except for J.M. Avenue).
Méridia: non-correspondence between higher values and (planned) amenities.
Spatial distribution of public space

- Méridia: Neighbourhood Unit Model (C. Perry) – public space in the inner core
- Hotel-des-Postes: the Turin Model (Graff) – 2 hierarchical levels of public space (connective + internal)
Conclusions

- Smart City Paradigm: scratch the Smart and below you’ll find a City... Beware of marketing strategies.
- Compared to tecno-parks: Smart City Méridia: a welcome shift to more urban forms.
- Still: important morphological differences with traditional downtown.
- Main difference in morphological infrastructure (plots, plating, connection with surrounding neighbourhoods).
- Built-up forms fill and follow this infrastructure.
- Méridia’s urban form in-between the traditional/compact and the modernist/sprawling examples.
- Presence of greenery (overstated in marketing), a sign of a standardized global model... from the city-in-the-park to greenery-in-the-city paradigm.
- Cityscapes ...
Thanks for your attention

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