…wealth at Eden-Olympia displayed the old-money discretion that the mercantile rich of the information age had decided to observe at the start of a new millennium. The glass and gun-metal office blocks were set well apart from each other, separated by artificial lakes and forested traffic islands where a latter-day Crusoe could have found comfortable refuge.

With this description, British author J.G. Ballard sets the stage for his novel *Super-Cannes* which unfolds in the advanced science park Eden-Olympia. Located on the French Riviera in proximity of Cannes, the luxury enclave boasts large, self-contained office buildings in metal and glass surrounded by zones of single-family residential units. Uses are connected by wide roadways that offer glimpses of ocean from rolling hills. These elements present an environment where clean technology drives financial gain with little respect for evolving living and working patterns.

As we speak/you read, Ballard’s vision for the future is being constructed in science parks, technopoles, technology clusters and other specialized research zones throughout the world. Will our 21st century urban landscape continue to sprawl in this way? Economists, sociologists, and urban planners study how high-tech clusters become vibrant centers of economic growth under certain beneficial conditions (Hall, Castells, Cabrol). However, the urban manifestation/design of these zones usually belies how employees work in high-tech environments. Shouldn’t technopoles demonstrate how technology can improve urban development?

As if in response to Ballard’s dystopian vision, the city of Cannes has partnered with the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) to investigate alternatives for a proposed technopole. Cannes today functions mostly as a tourist, festival, and retirement destination. But the city has the potential to play a new, far more dynamic role. Its climate and lifestyle attractions, its connections to the film and media world, and its proximity to the Sophia Antipolis technopole, position Cannes to become a leading incubator of the creative industries. An interdisciplinary team of students and researchers is developing a vision that integrates architecture, urbanism and technology to initiate beneficial urban change on a 30-ha site located between major roadways, an airport, beach front, and railway lines.

Emerging technologies have increased mobility in a way that begs a response in the built environment. In our world at MIT, Wi-Fi connectivity, laptop programs, electronic resources and databases, e-learning, open courseware (OCW) and digital displays of work have transformed student life. The prevailing condition leads us to several hypotheses that are informing the Cannes project.

New living and working patterns can be reflected in the urban landscape at various scales from the urban plaza to street furniture. Wireless capabilities allow people to inhabit more

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of the landscape and spend additional time outdoors especially in warm climates. Public places become appropriated for a wider variety of activities.

Mobility thus promotes informal interaction among community members and potentially facilitates the cross fertilization needed for technological innovation. Embedded technologies begin to transmit local information driving a collective sense of place. More flexible living and working zones accommodate a mobile and changing group of workers who demand less personalized and single-use space. Reduced transportation needs result from more compact office environments. Ultimately, these areas become denser and more sustainable urban neighborhoods that truly capitalize on emerging technology.

What will these places look like? Should you expect science-fiction blobs or steel and glass façades? These questions pose an on-going challenge for our workshop as we attempt to develop a vision of an ideal living and working environment for a diverse group of residents and visitors.

Susanne Seitinger is assisting with the Cannes project at MIT. She is working toward her Masters of City Planning degree in the Department of Urban Studies and Planning.

Carlo Ratti teaches at MIT, where he directs the SENSEable City Laboratory, a new research initiative between the Department of Urban Studies and Planning and the Media Lab.
[TEXT BOX ON CANNES PROJECT:]  
Cannes recently partnered with MIT to develop a cutting-edge approach for a high-technology neighborhood on one of the last available waterfront sites (more than 30 ha) in the city. Since September 2003, an interdisciplinary team of students from the School of Architecture and Planning at MIT has been working towards several concepts and visions that address various scales from the electronic device to inter-regional connections. The team will present preliminary work to the city in January.

For more information on the City of Cannes please visit www.cannes.fr.

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[CAPTIONS FOR IMAGES:]  

(1) Photograph of the bay of Cannes (cannes.jpg)  
Stars and visitors mingle on the “Croisette” during the annual Film Festival. The view shows the main bay of Cannes looking west towards the old town.

(2) Diagram showing the cycles of the city over time (trash_events.jpg)  
Cannes today functions mostly as a tourist, festival, and retirement destination. The city’s population triples during the summer months and certain conventions like the Film Festival. By using data points such as trash collection, students have developed infoscapes that show how city cycles peak at various moments of the year causing a suboptimal use of resources and straining city infrastructure.

(3) Site plan (site.jpg)  
The red outline shows the study area for the workshop.