

**Cluster of physical hubs:** The main criterion that organisations operating across a cluster of physical hubs must fulfil is to provide inwardly focused *face-to-face interaction* within a group, that is, towards a project or within a discipline, which will often have a *product focus*. This profile concerns knowledge workers who overlap into technical fields such as research and development. These are groups whose work environment may be mobile but is often across *specific locations*. The range of environments and tools that together make a network of physical places for these individuals and organisations will be examined (as before) using the SANE space environment model. Challenges facing these groups are: *understanding the relationship between physical and virtual space, connecting communities of people, relationship building, the ‘office as the city’ (Harrison, 2001), and environments that traverse local and global contexts*

Containing a world of virtual work will impact city design pervasively. There are many established design solutions such as mixed-use ‘24-hour electronic neighbourhoods’ (Mitchell, 1999), Airport Cities (Briggs and Worthington, 2000) and anonymous space for hire that is temporarily branded in order to give it the identity of the user. This temporary and sporadic use of place raises questions related to ownership, management and methods of charging. Virtual settings can be anywhere and do not usually have high demand for space, in terms of quality or quantity. Containing a world of physical hubs will create a demand for larger buildings. These buildings may need to be clustered together and be associated with a particular location. The quality and quantity demands of the space will be higher. In conclusion, this chapter will illustrate a potential future for work environments as might be played out in the modern city and the design elements that have been developed as a response to the changing demands in the city.

## The ‘New Economy’ context

The context within which these profiles are explored is the ‘New Economy’. The underlying forces that characterise or define the New Economy used here (see also Gillen and Wheeler, 2001) are summarised as follows:

1. **Classical economics focuses on supply, demand and ‘the assumption of scarcity’.** Resources are assumed to be tangible. With the shift from tangible to intangible factors of production, the underlying premise of economics is increasingly relying on plenitude
2. **Rather than viewing physical property simply as a liability, the challenge of the New Economy may be to change how, and to understand where, it adds value for organisations**

3. **Technology is becoming the cheapest component of work and people the most expensive**
4. **Organisations will have to create a balance between its own space and the individual's space**
5. **Managing the work–life balance is one of the central challenges of the New Economy**
6. **Globalisation is challenging perceptions of identity. Individuals are increasingly concerned with what distinguishes and connects them to other people**
7. **The emergence of networks is more about linking people to people rather than people to things**
8. **In New Economy markets (that are not characterised by scarcity), power will be in the hands of consumers**
9. **The only scarcity is human attention. It is at the level of experience that companies can have the best opportunity to market products, to make them memorable**

## **Emerging work patterns and context**

Geographically dispersed teams and work environments are a reality for many global organisations. Workers can find their physical work environment increasingly disconnected from their project team. The connections between these workers are predominantly virtual, with team meetings and interactions through e-mail, telephone and online software such as NetMeeting. A challenge to such geographically dispersed and managed teams is maintaining an effective work environment. The role for managers of these teams is changing to that of a communicator, and the role of the work environment is evolving to have new meanings.

Part of maintaining effective work environments is keeping people connected. Increased access to, and increased quantity of, information makes effective knowledge exchange critical. Workers can no longer work on projects from beginning to end as independent specialists: they must rely on other specialists to handle parts of the process and so are forced to work in teams. Trust and maintaining a sense of belonging in an environment where people need to rely on team members they may not have met, highlights the new role of place in connecting people. Indeed, increased competition has resulted in a renewed emphasis on the role of innovation and creativity in organisations. Many companies are looking to physical places to provide enriched meaning and locations for memorable events, believing that this will help catalyse innovation.