Now that people are in more of a position to choose their location of work, how do organisations decide on the most effective work environments? Some activities are best accommodated through physical places while other activities are most efficiently accommodated through virtual places or through enabling tools. Differentiating between when to use physical or virtual space depends on the type of communication involved. For example, negotiations or initial meetings are often felt to be most effective face to face while more routine weekly team meetings or project updates can perhaps be more efficiently executed by phone.

The city is an important tool in connecting and maintaining relationships. They are major nodes for travellers and provide a rich variety of places to meet and connect with others. The choice of work environment in the city is far broader than simply a range of privately owned locations: public spaces such as hotels, airport lounges and coffee bars are often used as temporary work environments. It will be increasingly important for cities to respond to the nature of this demand in order to provide for it, and to compete effectively with other cities. To understand how the city can respond to these new demands, the two parallel profiles of work that these themes point to are explored.

Profiles of work

The two profiles, the *virtual network* and the *cluster of physical hubs*, are parallel and interdependent. It is unlikely that people would fall exclusively into one or the other but would more likely have one dominant profile with the other in support.

The virtual network

The main criteria determining organisations that would operate across a virtual network are as follows:

- **Workers are predominantly reliant on *virtual communication***
- **People tend to be *outwardly focused* and likely to be *service providers* not tied to physical production or products. The work environment is mobile and *non-location specific*, that is, workers operate across a variety of places they do not come into work in the same place every day. The mobile nature of this work pattern results in an increasingly intangible environment**

- **It predominantly concerns *knowledge workers*, as described by Drucker (1993) and Handy (1990)**

Significant examples of sectors that would fall into this profile are consultancy groups (management, financial, business), telecommunications organisations and marketing and sales groups. These are groups whose work environment is fluid, non-location specific and increasingly intangible.

The role of the physical place is more important than ever in the light of these challenges. Mobility means that virtual workers have to be close to, or often pass through, major transport hubs in cities. Cities provide the greatest opportunities and physical places to connect such mobile people, the virtual workers.

Cluster of physical hubs

The main criteria for organisations that operate across a cluster of physical hubs are as follows:

- **A dominant requirement for *face-to-face interaction***
- **Teams tend to be *inwardly focused*, on a project or within a discipline**
- **There will often be a *product focus***
- **The work environment is mobile but often across *specific locations***
- **The predominant concern relates to *knowledge workers who overlap into technical fields***

Examples of knowledge workers who overlap into technical fields include pharmaceutical and petrochemical organisations, and research and development groups. This profile also applies to knowledge workers who are reliant on being physically present with like-minded individuals, for example, within the financial service industry on dealing floors.[1] These are groups whose work environment is mobile but often across specific locations. These locations are typically either out-of-town campuses (e.g. in the case of pharmaceuticals and petrochemical organisations), or are major cities (e.g. as in the case of the financial services industry).

The SANE space environment model

The SANE project is an European Commission research project falling under its 5th framework. It was a 5 million euro project,