Flexible working, irregular hours, less regimented management systems mean that reporting systems are not as linear as they were, and that workers increasingly report into multiple organisations and people rather than a single point of contact.

Studying these evolving work patterns and physical conditions has led to the following design elements being developed as potential solutions for how the city can respond to such demands. These changes should be seen as both a great opportunity and responsibility for the modern city.

Design elements for the city

Breaking down public and private boundaries

Breaking down public and private boundaries concerns accessibility and ownership of spaces. The modern inhabitants of the city no longer fall into neat boxes of separate uses. The city must accommodate a freer flow of people through spaces. Examples of this can be seen in the design of modern office buildings where the ground floor has been allocated to greater public access, with shops and cafés for example. These office buildings may not necessarily be owned by organisations but may be used on a 'pay-as-you-go' basis and managed by private organisations, developers or even the city itself. Just as the city currently provides car parks, libraries and sports facilities, it may in the future provide workspace (e.g. Bryant Park, see Figure 17.7).

Virtual accessibility

Enabling virtual accessibility is about providing high-speed access points. While space owned by organisations or individuals will provide their own networks and access points, the city now has an increasing responsibility to do the same. Priority locations for such access points are places where people pause, gather and have time to connect. These are places such as train stations, airports, hairdressers and coffee shops. Transport hubs currently provide privileged access in the form of business lounges, and it is likely that other public spaces will have to follow suit and provide Internet access points in the same way that cities currently provide park benches and pedestrian crossings.

Physical accessibility

As populations spend more time travelling between home and work or between work locations, it will be necessary to make travel time as efficient as possible. Minimising journey times to destinations through high-speed transport connections from airports to business districts will be a critical determining factor of where large organisations locate. In larger cities like London, where transport systems are already under extreme pressure, and it may be a better solution to look at creating alternative 'destinations'. Locating conference centres near major transport hubs or indeed as part of an airport would make for easier accessibility. Schipol, or 'The Airport City' (Briggs and Worthington, 2000), outside Amsterdam is already accommodating such needs. Schipol and London's Heathrow airport are of a comparable size and have a steady flow of short-term visitors, for whom speed and efficiency are a priority. Schipol Airport now markets itself as a city destination in itself, with a wide variety of shops and restaurants and is also growing as a conference venue (Figure 17.9).

Memorable events and places

In an increasingly dispersed and virtual world, managing relationships and exchanging ideas with others are more important than ever. The majority of people travel in order to meet other people. Spaces for gathering and meeting are increasingly in demand. This is linked with the growing need to create places for special events. Physical space can play an important role in creating memorable events. When organisations or individuals come together, it is often to start or maintain relationships and knowledge exchange. As discussed earlier, there has been a growth in popularity of conference venues as diverse as isolated castles and major global cities. Organisations may follow a circuit of conference venues mirroring where their populations are based. Many organisations may own country houses as part of their real estate portfolio to meet this demand for high quality and memorable places. Cities themselves can also become a physical stage for broadcasting to a virtual audience at meaningful times, global summits or New Year's Eve in Times Square (Mitchell, 1999). There will be increased demand for places with special features that a group of people can take over for short periods of time and use as the setting for an important event.