

Figure 17.9
Schipol: a virtual city.



Developing quarters

Mixed-use developments have long been recognised as a sustainable way of planning cities. Planning mixed-use developments at the scale of a city quarter supports the clustering of sectors and like-minded individuals. Communities of common interest can share public space, and proximity to other organisations enables knowledge workers to interact and provides employers with access to a concentrated pool of talent.²

Walkable zones

A common feature of a good city quarter is that it is walkable. Mixed-use neighbourhood developments seem to be popular

locations and are less reliant on existing transport systems. Vibrant, local areas where people and visitors can work, sleep, eat and relax all within walking distance are highly prized.

Conclusion

The world of work is evolving into something different. Organisations and individuals have demands that can no longer be met within the confines of one organisation's resources. Boundaries of territory, ownership, public and private spaces are being redefined. The most sustainable way to plan for work environments in the future is to be flexible and adapt to such changes in workplaces and practices.

The city has responsibilities to meet these new demands. The city needs to respond in an holistic way with organisations, occupiers of space, developers and city councils. The provision of workspace is no longer the sole responsibility of the employer. Charles Handy predicts 'Portfolio working' (Handy, 1990) where people will increasingly work freelance for a variety of organisations. The design of work environments for portfolio workers is multi-dimensional and highly changeable. Mobile workers of all kinds are a population that cities will want to hold onto and provide appropriately for, because they will provide valuable income and diversity to cities. In return, these cities must provide a valuable base, accessible portals and a network of memorable places to sustain and enrich an increasingly transient and virtual people.

As people and organisations operate across physical and virtual environments, the relationship and interdependency between the two will need to be carefully understood. It will not be a question of virtual environments replacing physical environments – they should be seen as complementary. As virtual spaces are about convenience, physical space should become more meaningful. The city is central to both providing a rich physical environment as well as sustaining a gradually more virtual world.

Increasingly dispersed populations of people, connected together virtually, will have growing needs to come together face to face more easily. The city is central to providing a variety of meeting and gathering spaces and has a responsibility to act as a 'Pulse Point' in the New Economy.

The power of place ... will prevail. As traditional locational imperatives weaken, we will gravitate to settings that offer particular cultural, scenic and climatic attractions ... Sometimes we will network to avoid going places. But sometimes still, we will go places to network (Mitchell, 1999).

Notes

1. It should be noted here that there does not appear to be any technical reason for people on dealing floors to be co-located. Research done by DEG W (2001) indicates that the desire for physical co-location is behavioural.