

delivery, which, of course, is only a small part of the users' problem. Knowledge-based clients, equipped with the most powerful information technology, no longer want to be limited by routine ways of doing things, however efficient. To be more effective they need to reinvent themselves continually. The people who work for them are already highly mobile. They are more and more willing to choose when and where to work.

The choice for design firms is not simply between working abroad and staying at home in the comfort zone of the familiar, American market for office design. The choice is more and more between two sharply contrasted models of design practice, which have big international—and North American—implications. The first is what might be called the imperialist model—even though it has long been familiar even within the democratic United States: a few very large firms rolling out low-cost, standard solutions, offering minimum content and expecting even less feedback, with zero responsiveness to local conditions. The second is the developmental model: many smaller but more intellectually acute, more mobile practices offering open-ended, thoughtful, imaginative responses both to particular and to changing conditions; capable of learning from different physical and commercial environments; enjoying maximum invention through maximum feedback. The first model was the only way in which the earlier part of the twentieth century, with all its intellectual and logistical limitations, could attempt to solve its clients' global office design problems. The second model was made possible by new technology and is obviously better suited to the far more challenging, but much better networked, conditions of the new century.

CONCLUSIONS

International design practice is demanding. However, this is the moment to try it out, because it is the new frontier where innovation is most likely to occur. The users need us. The old corporate real estate structures have become overstretched and dysfunctional. In the globalizing world of commerce, there is everything for designers and architects to play for. It is a world where small practices, well networked, can operate more nimbly than the dinosaur imperialist design practices of the past. New alliances with sup-

pliers—developers, real estate brokers, contractors, furniture manufacturers, information technology suppliers—will be possible because none of the old logistical procedures is working properly any more. But what will keep these new alliances straight, unlike the old ones, is the ethical pressure of designers constantly having to fight for and articulate emerging client and end-user interests. It is this innovating attitude that will give designers and architects the power to change the world.

This is the most challenging field of design practice and the one in which the new rules for user-based design will be invented—rules which eventually may even find their way home.

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