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Opportunity for Change: Design in the New Economy

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Throughout history, every time a person walked into a newly built environment, he or she walked into a space museum; a museum of inner space, not outer space. Groundbreaking ceremonies and ribbon cutting rituals in praise of new constructions are a testimony to the importance of place, that is, how we live and work in space. This chapter provides a view into the client or sponsor's expanding expectation of the designer's contribution and the profound potential this evolution has to increase the value of design and of the design profession.

A TRANSITION FROM AN OLD TO NEW ECONOMY

Fifteen years ago the intellectual, Michel Foucault, predicted a shift in how people perceive and value place. His philosophical body of work traces this transformation of attitudes from the concept of simple *location* in seventeenth-century physics, to a *fixed location* of a disciplined individual in the eighteenth century, and finally to the *regulated workplace* of the nineteenth century. As any good archaeologist does, Foucault went into the field and pieced together a "site analysis" that included an architectural examination of prisons, factories, asylums, hospitals, and schools.

Each of the institutions Foucault investigated possessed a built reality whereby people were placed in a line of cells or cubicles, side by side, like a suburb. The result was that each individual became fixed in his place, constantly located. We can observe this phenomenon today by simply walking into any corporation or university. Then as now, hidden away from view behind the walled, partitioned offices of what was labeled "universal planning" are the docile Stepford drones disciplined to serve.

Sadly, the recent stakeholders responsible for shaping the built environment have progressed no further than their predecessors have. Unwittingly, we have caged and enraged ourselves with artifacts from this industrial era. Hierarchical planning in the workplace, those Dilbertian cubicles in which we make our nests, results from reducing space to its barest economical essentials