

Virtual Adjacency® not Telecommuting

Virtual Consolidation rather than Physical Consolidation:
Improve Efficiency and the Quality of Life

The evolution of technology has changed the nature of work, the physical character of buildings and patterns of land-use. It has also allowed population to increase to unprecedented numbers. Suburban sprawl and traffic congestion are increasingly common consequences. The economic viability of urban centers has suffered too. But, as work has become predominantly processing and communicating information it raises the question: Do we have a *transportation* problem or do we have a *communication* problem. It is in this context that the notion of Virtual Adjacency was derived.

What is Virtual Adjacency? How do we achieve it? What does it do for us?

It is the ability to perform a task as though you are there without being physically present. To achieve it requires enlightened use of computer and communication technologies, in concert with reengineering our organizations and our use of buildings and transportation tools. It enables us to redistribute what we do, where we do it, and when we do it.

The real world is one complex, non-linear, dynamic feedback system. Everything is interrelated.

Many have focused attention on the rapid evolution of computer and communication technology, but few have analyzed it in appropriate context. The focus is human beings. The activities are *living, working, playing*. The goal is quality of life.

What should we build? Where? Why?

What is office work? What is an office building? Why is it configured the way it is? Why is it located where it is? What role has technology played in this determination? Where are we going? What role can technology play here?

What is the purpose of the face-to-face meeting in the reality of Virtual Adjacency?

It is to build a foundation — a structure to support risk taking, a relationship of trust between human beings. This is very different than the clinical transfer of information that dominates our traditional in-person office experiences.

Why is transportation our biggest infrastructure problem?

Too many people try to move in the same direction at the same time. It is a highly non-linear loading. It is direction sensitive and time sensitive. It is an economically inefficient utilization of an expensive capital investment.

What we think of as the “modern office building” is “physical consolidation” — everybody and everything in one building. It is an information processing factory. This is outdated and counterproductive. It is the paradigm of the paper-based manual labor workplace of the pre-NII world. It is no longer a solution. It is the problem.

Towards a solution: Virtual Consolidation via Virtual Adjacency.

Being “in the office” is no longer exclusively a space domain notion. Taking advantage of virtual adjacency allows it to become being “in the network”. High bandwidth, secure, reliable and affordable communication links are essential elements to the implementation of virtual consolidation. Organizations would be able to locate workplaces more proximate to where their workers live thereby dramatically altering the commuting pattern utilization of transportation infrastructure.

The future of the city — it is and should be special.

But this would not be done at the expense of the city. In fact, the city becomes the strategic centerpiece of the newly re-engineered organization, attractive, environmentally sustainable and people friendly. Its primary purpose is to maximize the diversity and quality of face-to-face interactions. Places, buildings, services must synergistically reinforce each other to create a magnetic attraction. People will be where they *want* to be, because virtual adjacency will allow them to do much of what they *have* to do from many places. For cities to survive, better yet thrive, they must reinvent themselves in a marketing mode. Ironically, the human scale, the architectural quality, and the charm of older European cities, places such as Brussels' Grand Place, are once again desirable and newly efficient.