

**ABSTRACT**A COGNITIVE VIEW OVER THE WORKING PLACE:  
PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENT IN OFFICE ENVIRONMENT - CASE-STUDY IN A LAW  
COMPANY

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Resumé of the Dissertation submitted as partial requirement for the obtainance of the degree in Master of Architecture in the Architecture Post-graduation Program - PROARQ, Field: Theory & Design of Architecture, at the Federal University of Rio de Janeiro.

This dissertation searches to improve the acquaintance between man and environment so as to stimulate the production of spaces which fulfill their users with welfare and quality of life through better work environment. The argument that leads our investigation is: what is the relation between a group of environmental attributes and human behaviour so that it could be translated into users' welfare and office environment quality? Aiming at it, this work tries to connect *cognition* and *performance assessment of office environment* through the perception of their qualities – with the careful view of the researcher (observer) and through the users' perspective – considering a group of environmental attributes based on experience and life knowledge so as to analyse it. The environment performance of a law office company located in the city of Rio de Janeiro was then observed, as a case-study. This work has some objectives: to identify the cognitive factors which are responsible for the office environment welfare and the furnishing of quality; to try out the workability of cognitive analysis tools in the performance assessment of built environment; to incorporate the cognitive approach in the performance assessment of office environment, also taking into consideration human experience in the work place. The cognitive approach helped us to comprehend the influence of built environment on the definition of the social functions and relations thereby put in practice, as well as on individuals' actions, attitudes, behaviours and values. The results make evident that office environment welfare comes from the organizational atmosphere and the inter-personal relationship which make and improve office environment quality, rather than the physical and environmental conditions of place. Besides that, this study showed clearly the good adaptation of the cognitive approach methods and analysis instruments for the performance assessment of built environment.

**Keywords:** cognition; performance assessment; offices.