

The sight behind the office

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Abstract

This paper refers to the design field of office furniture. It deals with the correlation between design and the office organizational models-typical or alternative¹, which certain equipment is expected to support², from the point of view of visual experiences, that the users have provided by using it.

Design strategy is usually formed, based on principles, such as anthropometric data, ergonomic construction, aesthetic of the form, flexibility and mobility, which seem to conceive a stereotypical procedure. The present research looks at the possibility of enriching the targets of design choices within the field of office design, including qualitative aspects such as, perceptual optical experiences. Departing from the acceptance of the value of the human co-presence and interaction, within the workplace either as individual, or as a part of the whole organization, it focuses on the general vision of the place, the movements and the facts, a user obtains, seating behind his office, through his eyes, either as he uses his equipment, writes, or looks at a colleague or a customer. It is suggested that depending on the organizational working model distinctions and the hierarchical value of certain aspects (such as privacy, control, cooperation, etc), design choices related to visibility, are a vital component between the workplace and the work process.

Spacesyntax has been the central methodological basis to define and clarify the ways that design produces transparent or opaque visual fields. The analysis technique used is based on diagrammatic comparative study between famous office furniture, -such as "Action office" (1968) designed by Propst and produced by Herman Miller's Company, Frank Loyd's Wright office furniture for S.A. Johnson and Son Company at Wisconsin (1936-1939). It focuses on the ways that their users obtain the sight of their workplace, in all the possible positions, that the eye physiology allows them, within exemplified variations of spatial configuration. The possible wander of their eyes over the space, potentially formulates ordinary or exceptional visual paths, and reveals conceivable fields of human interaction, visual contact and control. Though their users derive limited or wide optical perception from their environment, and conceptualize their work place.

¹ F. Duffy, 1997, *The New Office*, Conran, Octopus, London. F. Duffy, E. & F. N. Spon, 1998, *New Environments for Working*, London. F. Duffy, 1992, *The Changing Workplace*, Phaidon, Hong Kong.

² Evaluation methodology for the certain expectation is known as "Workplace performance", which connects a worker's productivity with his chair's comfort and interior environment. It has been developed by Walsh Brothers and Readman. M. Zelinsky, 1998, *New Workplaces for New Workstyles*, McGraw Hill, N. York.