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Revitalizing Nigeria's built heritage using Facility Management service delivery: The Lagos National Arts Theatre Complex

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Abstract

The bureaucratic approach to the management of the National Arts Theatre Complex (NATC) since inception has proved to be unsuitable and ineffective as indicated by its present maintenance status and public commentary over the years. Relying on observations made from a physical inspection of the NATC structure and its facilities, documented public commentary and information derived from questionnaire surveys, the moribund state of the complex is confirmed. Arguing that the complex is an investment in real estate and as well as a business property, this paper considers how it can be revitalized through the deployment of Facility Management (FM) service delivery which is a management concept suited to large facilities and multiple systems like the NATC. The findings are that the facility is in a moribund state as a result of which it has been unable for years now to serve the purpose for which it was established, that the mission-focused nature of FM service delivery has the potential to enhance its functionality as a centre for events and expositions as well as optimize its value as an investment property thereby serving to sustain this important component of Nigeria's built heritage.

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1. Introduction

The buildings and structures which constitute our environment will always be an index of our kind of society, our lifestyle and the choices which we make, as we continue to occupy and develop the earth and manage its resources. As mankind continues to stride ahead in all fields of endeavour, it accumulates and leaves behind as legacy, the physical evidence of its choices and their consequences. It is

evidence of these which exist as various structures which form our built environment and which we classify as built heritage.

Built heritage is innate to our environment. It is integral to, and therefore, an inherent part of the man-made, physical and tangible evidence of evolution. The significant structures, sites and places created in our March towards greater things constitute built heritage and it is those things which we must leave behind for future generations, but not without adequate provision for their sustainability. It is, therefore, apposite to say that built heritage are the landmarks of our existence. Collectively, they consist of those physical structures which we must preserve, protect and project, even if they are no longer fashionable, for their value in giving meaning and colour to our narrative.

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Nigeria's built heritage is varied and stretches across all categories of the built environment, from the historical relics of ancient times to the structures of the colonial era and those of the post-independence era. For instance, in Lagos, are examples of foreign architecture of Brazilian and British Victorian origin, the former being the work of returnee skilled masons from Cuba and Brazil, whilst the latter was introduced by the colonialists. Prominent built heritage structures of the post-independence era appropriately include the National Arts Theatre Complex (NATC), the Tafawa Balewa Square, the 23-storey Independence Building, the first high-rise building constructed in Nigeria, and the 32-storey NET (NECOM) building, once the tallest in West Africa. Also included as built heritage are the palaces and associated structures of the ancient kingdoms of Nigeria such as Benin, Ife and many others. This heritage derives its importance from historical, architectural and cultural reasons.

Facility Management (FM) service delivery aims at delivering least-cost services for the effective utilization of assets and their long-term durability for the benefit of the property owner. It is also an important function of FM to look beyond the physical structure to create within it a work environment which will boost productivity.

Consequent upon the public commentary (Nwakunnor et al., 2014; Fagbenle, 2015; Nigerianfilms.com, 2009; Uhakheme, 2013; Momoh, 2015) that the NATC, an important component of Nigeria's built heritage, is ill-managed, neglected and decaying, this study aims at investigating the status of the facility with a view to presenting solving measures. To achieve the aim, the objectives are to: investigate the current physical condition of the NATC; evaluate whether the current physical condition of the NATC constitutes a hindrance to its effectively serving not only the *de jure* purposes for its establishment, but also, its *de facto* role as a real estate investment and business property; and to ascertain if the NATC facility could be made more effective through the deployment of FM service delivery.

2. Origins and concept of FM

Gunner (2010) defines FM as: "an interdisciplinary field primarily devoted to the maintenance and care of large commercial and institutional buildings such as hotels, resorts, schools, office complexes, sports arenas and convention centres. Duties may include the care of air conditioning, electric power, plumbing and lighting systems, cleaning, decoration, grounds keeping and security". There are other definitions of FM from individual practitioners as well as from the various professional institutes, but that of Gunner is an exact fit of the NATC situation, where the systems may be either below acceptable levels of functionality or are not functioning at all. FM recognizes that it is when these systems are

functional that the building can serve and enhance the business of the organization by enhancing productivity and minimizing costs, amongst other benefits. The goal of FM is to seek "a cost-effective way of maintaining multiple systems and technologies for the benefit of the owner" (Gunner, 2010).

From the websites of various bodies concerned with FM, definitions of the term have been given as:

"the integration of multi-disciplinary activities within the built environment and the management of their impact upon people and the workplace"

[British Institute of Facilities Management, 2015].

"the integration of processes within an organization to maintain and develop the agreed services which support and improve the effectiveness of its primary activities"

[The European Committee on Standardization, 2015].

"a profession that encompasses multi-disciplines to ensure functionality of the built environment by integrating people, place, process and technology"

[International Facility Management Association, 2015].

"the practice of coordinating the physical workplace with the people and work of the organization; it integrates the principles of business administration, architecture, and the behavioural and engineering sciences"

[United States Library of Congress in Chanter and Swallow, 2007].

From these foregoing definitions the common discernible features of FM are that: it addresses the needs of two classes of customer: viz: an internal customer (the employees or users of the facility) and the needs of the physical facility (the owner). It involves co-ordination and team work, it is integrative, long-term in outlook, support-giving, maintenance-centric, business-oriented, measurable in impact, seeks value, adds value and sustains value. According to Gunner (2010) the mission of FM is the "cost-effective long-term utilization and value preservation of owned assets".

The challenge of financial and human resource scarcity in relation to organizational or corporate goals, objectives and requirements gave birth to Facility Management in North America in the 1980s, evolving in essence, from the reactions of large asset owners and their managers to the resource gap as it were. These responses coalesced into certain management practices and procedures found to be efficacious in achieving greater efficiency in resource management, and thereby, in profitability.

3. Built heritage and FM services

A fundamental but important characteristic of the NATC and other built heritage is that they are constructed with materials prone to deterioration as a result of age and the impact of the elements. This naturally makes necessary a maintenance regime for the purpose of keeping such facilities in a condition to deliver value and elongate service life. Maintenance comes in many shapes: routine, recurrent, corrective and improvement and the most appropriate is applied in accordance with need and policy, but with the common aim of preserving asset value.

Another important characteristic of this particular built heritage structure, just like the other built environment structures, is the provision of service for a purpose or some purposes. FM service delivery is a management concept aimed at getting a building, structure or facility to serve effectively the purpose for which it is intended. Purpose is defined both in terms of the physical and the human, both of which must combine to deliver “purpose”, because in the FM concept, an important tenet is that the physical structure can be made to support the purpose of a business entity through the human element of that very entity.

FM services are designed to serve buildings, whilst buildings are designed to serve purposes. With FM working effectively for buildings, the buildings effectively serve their purpose(s). FM can do for built heritage what FM is able to do for buildings. That is the nexus between built heritage and FM.

4. Perspectives on the NATC

The facility can be looked at from many perspectives. First, and foremost, it is an investment in real estate. Second, it has an income-producing potential. Third, it is potentially durable. Fourth, it is prone to depreciation. Fifth, it was designed for multi-purpose use of a potentially commercial nature, but this was not expressly spelt out or planned for at inception. Sixth, it has a certain locational advantage which stands it in good stead to compete favourably with other multi-purpose properties. Seventh, there has never been any purposive effort to exploit the potential in the complex because it has always been bureaucratically managed. Eighth, it is a national monument worthy of preservation for future generations through sustainable management policies. Ninth, the complex cannot have been effective in serving its purpose of “*the preservation, propagation and the promotion of the arts and culture*” of Nigeria because since about the late 1980s it has been in decline. If the potential in the complex is to be fully exploited, then there must be a clear definition of purpose and the provision of policies and plans to drive that purpose. In defining that purpose, it must be acknowledged that the NATC, though set up for cultural purposes, is essentially a real estate investment with a good income-producing potential.

A definition of that purpose is best offered by FM which is why [Gotts \(1999, pp. 9\)](#) asserts that FM “is a business

function and the FM manager is a business manager”; adding also that FM “is a quintessential business function affecting not only revenue and costs, but production, quality of life for employees, health and safety, the work environment and, increasingly, areas such as the ability to recruit and hold employees” ([Gotts \(1999, pp. 12\)](#)). Emphasizing the support-giving role of FM, [Rondeau et al. \(2006, pp 4\)](#) assert that “the facility professional does not usually manage corporate facilities for a profit; the mission of this person and staff is to provide high quality, cost-effective service to in-house customers in support of the corporate business plan—that is, people and process issues rather than just place issues”. However, the real estate function being one of the core competencies in FM, the FM manager in discharging this function in accordance with, and in pursuit of, the corporate plan into which his function has to key into, must manage the corporate real estate for profit. Therefore, in looking at the deployment of FM to the NATC, one should also be looking at managing for profit in accordance with the purposes earlier identified.

5. Research methods

Lagos, in which the NATC is located, is the foremost business and industrial centre of the country. According to the [Lagos State Bureau of Statistics \(2015\)](#), the 2006 State census put its population at 17.5 million which, at the projected growth rate of 3.2% p.a. gives a current population size of 21 million, making it indisputably the most populated city in the country. The historical status of Lagos as a port city, a trading outpost, one of the colonial capitals of Nigeria and also the capital city at independence in 1960, and for many years thereafter, gives it the advantage of having many structures and sites which qualify as built heritage.

For many reasons, including what the NATC was set up to be, the prominent role it has played in the cultural history of Nigeria and the Black World, its recognition as a major landmark of Lagos, the national role assigned to it over the years, and for what it represents in the consciousness of Nigerians, eminently qualifies it to be described as a major component of the built heritage of Nigeria. The facility has been variously described as a cultural landmark, a national monument, an architectural masterpiece and a national treasure. The NATC was built 38 years ago for the dual purposes of first, “the preservation, presentation and promotion of the arts and culture” of Nigeria and, second, for the hosting of national and international events. It is a prominent structure which in its heyday defined the cultural character of Nigeria and still remains the country’s only national arts and culture centre and home to associated cultural organs such as the National Council for Arts and Culture, the National Gallery of Art and the National Troupe. The iconic status of the NATC is further exemplified by its being included in the list of over 200 world landmarks selected by the UN

to be lit up in blue simultaneously on the 24th of October, 2015 in commemoration of its 70th anniversary.

The NATC was first used for the 2nd World Black and African Festival of Arts and Culture in 1977. Thereafter, it went into use for the other purposes for which it was built. Official information from the [NATC \(2015\)](#) shows that the facility has an elevation of 31 metres with building space of 23,000 square metres, and height which is equivalent to a 7-storey building. It is set in a central area of the metropolis of Lagos for easy accessibility. The structure has facility provision for multi-purpose use which comprises: a main hall with a seating capacity for 1500 persons, a conference/banquet hall with a capacity for 1500 persons, exhibition halls, two cinema halls each with a capacity for 700 persons, a VIP lounge and a roof garden. The main hall, conference hall and cinema halls are specially equipped with modern facilities and technical equipment such as lighting, sound, collapsible stage and for the simultaneous interpretation of language.

The methods employed for the study consist of a physical inspection of the NATC, a review of public opinion and commentary on the declining fortunes of the complex and the random administration of structured questionnaires on end-users of the facility. The questionnaire was designed to address questions such as the familiarity of the end users with the NATC; assessment of the present condition of the NATC and the challenges of the NATC. The target populations for the study are the end users of the facility. The purposive sampling technique was employed to randomly select forty (40) frequent end-users of the facility. The frequent end-users were obtained from the records at the NATC registry. The sample of forty (40) respondents was so chosen in order to provide a basis for the justification or otherwise of the findings extracted from the review of public commentary. Hence, the research was basically a review of perceptions arising from public complaints about the NATC facility and not solely questionnaire based. The research is survey in nature as the researchers reviewed the subject matter based on public opinion and had the findings supported by data from questionnaires administered on the respondents.

6. Discussion of findings

The findings from the questionnaires were discussed and are presented in [Tables 1–3](#). The respondents' opinions were sought on their knowledge about the facility and the perception of the end users on the conditions of the structure.

[Table 1](#) shows respondents' opinion regarding knowledge of the NATC and the period of their visiting it. 100% of the respondents admit to having knowledge of the complex, 32.5% of the respondents first visited the complex in its heyday between the years 1977–1990 and 1991–2000 when its fortunes started to go down, while 35% of the respondents first visited between 2001 and 2015 when decay had set in as revealed by ([Nwakunnor et al., 2014](#)

Table 1
Knowledge of the NATC.

	Knowledge	Response	Frequency	Percentage
A	Do you know the NATC?	Yes	40	100.00
		No	0	0.00
	Total		40	100.00
B	When was your first visit?	1977–1980	6	15.00
		1981–1990	7	17.50
		1991–2000	13	32.50
		2001–2010	5	12.50
		2011–2015	9	22.50
	Total		40	100.00
C	When was your last visit?	1977–1980	0	0.00
		1981–1990	0	0.00
		1991–2000	6	15.00
		2001–2010	15	37.50
		2011–2015	19	47.50
	Total		40	100.00

Table 2
Condition of the NATC Complex.

Satisfaction with its present state	Response	Percentage
Yes	6	15.00
No	34	85.00
Total	40	100.00
Condition	First visit	Current state
Excellent	10 (25.0%)	0 (0.0%)
Good	13 (32.5%)	2 (5.0%)
Not Good	5 (12.5%)	5 (12.5%)
Fair	4 (10.0%)	19 (47.5%)
Poor	8 (20.0%)	14 (35.0%)
Total	40 (100.0%)	40 (100.0%)

and [Nigerianfilms.com, 2009](#)). These figures show that there is an almost even distribution of the participants into the categories of those who first visited the complex when it was at its best, those who visited it when things started to go wrong, and finally, those who first visited in its present condition.

In [Table 2](#), respondents' views regarding the maintenance condition of the complex and its facilities are investigated. The responses cover their impressions about the NATC complex on their first visit (in the period shown in [Table 1](#) and their last visit before the survey). An overwhelming 82.5% rate the complex as either fair or poor in its current state while 5% rate it as good. When the participants' rating of impressions on their first visit is compared to their ratings at the present time, it is clear that there has been a shift which can only be attributable to the deteriorated condition which now obtains.

[Table 3](#) contains data on the participant's perceptions as to the causes of the challenges being faced by the complex.

Table 3
Challenges of the Complex.

Issue	Strongly Agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Mean Score	Ranking
Bad management	24	11	2	3	–	4.325	1st
Lack of funding	3	5	14	10	8	2.375	4th
Government neglect	21	9	4	2	4	4.025	3rd
Poor maintenance	20	10	5	2	3	4.050	2nd
Inadequate staffing	4	2	10	13	11	2.375	4th

The respondents were asked to choose from a list of variables featuring some of the complaints raised in the public outcry against the decline of the complex. After the responses were received, the variables were coded and their mean scores calculated, compiled and ranked. The purpose was to show in their order of importance the variables which the participants saw as constituting the problem of the NATC. The results show that bad management ranked first, followed by poor maintenance, government neglect as 3rd, whilst inadequate staffing and lack of funding are jointly ranked 4th.

From the surveys, the following conclusions can be drawn. First, the participants agree that the NATC was in a better condition in the 1980s and 1990s, that its condition has changed for the worse over the years, that its present condition is poor and that they mostly see the problem as bad management and government neglect of the property. The variables which constitute the issues and challenges facing the complex emanated from the findings extracted from the public complaints.

Findings from literature and public opinion show the following:

(1) Current management practices and effectiveness of the NATC

The current manner of administration of the complex is by a General Manager appointed by the minister in the supervising Ministry of Culture and Tourism. This is a civil service appointment and the appointee may have no training in management or any previous experience in the management of real estate which the complex actually is. The other staff members are civil service employees who may not be equipped for any of the critical management functions needed in the complex.

The management makes do with a housekeeping department to deal with issues which should be better handled by a full-fledged, well-trained and well-equipped maintenance unit. This is not intended to deny that there are functions taking place therein which may be identical to those of FM. However, as explained by Spedding (1999) the functions of FM have always existed, but the difference brought about by FM is the innovation of managing a building to give an impetus to an organization's purpose and support its mission and goals.

The NATC budget is set by the parent ministry and it is never adequate, but its management has embarked on a commercialization of the facilities so as to earn more income. However, there is a limit to the size and regularity of income possible from a badly managed, poorly maintained and neglected property located in unattractive and unsecure surroundings and unable to compete effectively for public patronage with better managed venues in other parts of the city. All in all, it is evident that the NATC is severely handicapped in its present condition which is a hindrance to the effective pursuit of its given mission: “the preservation, the propagation and the promotion of the arts and culture” of Nigeria. In the present condition also, the complex is not able to command significant earnings from the hiring out of its facilities.

(2) Public opinion and site investigation of the NATC

The view has been long held and expressed by the general public as well as by informed stakeholders in theatre and the media that the NATC has, since the end of the 1980s, fallen into a state of neglect for a myriad of reasons. Fagbenle (2015) and Uhakheme (2013) share the view that bureaucratic management and indifference to maintenance have contributed in reducing the complex to a symbol of ruin and decadence and something far less than its original purpose. Officialdom, through the Minister under whose portfolio the NATC falls, admits that the purpose of the facility is not being served as the vicinity of the complex has “become a den for all kinds of unholy activities, the environment completely compromised and... become habitat for hoodlums and undesirable elements” (Africa as a Country, 2013).

Descriptions of the maintenance condition of the structure and its facilities variously refer to dilapidated sections, filthy halls, leaking roofs, non-functioning lighting and air conditioning systems (Fagbenle, 2015). Likewise, there are poor toilets, old and unsteady seats and power supply is unsteady (Uhakheme, 2013). The NATC has become a symbol of infrastructural decay as reported by Nigerianfilms.com (2009). The National Mirror (2014) in its editorial opinion of December 16th, 2014 holds officialdom culpable by locating the

problem in “. . . laziness, inefficiency and corrupt tendencies in managing public assets” and for failure to add value or make any positive changes to this public monument in nearly four decades.

The inspection tours of the complex undertaken on the 7th, 8th and 11th of July, 2015 led to the following revelations. The surrounding environment and the grounds generally are very poorly lit at night, the external façade is weather-bitten and in need of sprucing up, the sheen is gone from the Nigerian national coat of arms mounted on the fascia of the structure on the approach from entrance A, the central air-conditioning system is broken-down with the disused vents constituting an ugly sight all over the place, storage unit air-conditioning is in use in some exhibition halls whilst other hallways have no air conditioning, some areas are not available for use e.g. Cinema Hall 1 (7000-person capacity) was inaccessible being locked up supposedly for repairs, Cinema Hall 2 (700-person capacity) is poorly lit by old fashioned fluorescent lighting, the carpeting is old and worn out, the furniture is outdated and ceiling old-fashioned; the main hall (5000-person capacity) is dusty and dark and has not been in use for a long time; the roof garden overlooking the main entrance A which ought to offer a scenic view is blighted by the untidily applied waterproofing material installed to check the roof leak on the lower floor. The driveway leading to Entrance A, which is the main entrance is not in a good physical condition and this has led to a preference for the use of Entrance D by visitors. There are unrepaired cracks in the concreted driveway which circles the complex. All in all, the physical condition of the environment and facilities indicate decline.

7. Sustainable management of the NATC

The foundation for the sustainable management of the NATC lies in conceptualizing it as a business property which exists to support a particular mission and identifiable goals to be pursued through the instrumentality of professional FM service delivery.

Sustainable management is actually the logical aim of good property management practice, for if it is acknowledged that property is a long-term investment, the full benefits can be reaped if, and only if, provisions are made for the long-term through proper planning, cost control and effective maintenance for the continuous realization of value. These are also the concerns of FM, but in regard to the functions of “principally acquisition, design, construction, maintenance, operation and support services for in-house customers and physical facilities” (Rondeau et al., 2006).

For the NATC to be run in a sustainable manner, best practice in property management (a component of FM service delivery aimed at realizing profit), has to be merged

with best practice in FM which aims at systems, processes and people. Sustainable management would see the NATC operating once again as a choice venue for expositions and exhibitions, earning significant revenue from its revitalized facilities, its systems and technologies revamped and re-engineered and having as workers, empowered people ensconced in an enabling environment which makes possible the focused pursuit of the organizational mission and goals.

8. Recommendations

The common goal in creating public assets is to have them serve effectively and for as long as is physically possible. This requires that they be prevented from falling into decay and disrepair through appropriate management strategies. Where, as in the case of the NATC, the management style has failed to meet expectations, the adoption of new options should be in order.

FM is recommended for the management of the NATC for two reasons. First, the shortcomings identified in the management of the NATC can be overcome by the application of the principles of FM. Second, FM has the potential of giving value in the long term and in a sustainable way. The introduction of FM to the NATC should come in these stages and with these provisions:

- (i) Identification of a mission (ideally “the preservation, presentation and promotion of the arts and culture” of Nigeria whilst profitably operating the facility as an investment).
- (ii) Creation of an organizational structure (to fit the purpose and avoid bottlenecks).
- (iii) Preparation of organizational policies (this would be in support of the corporate business plan).
- (iv) Setting of goals (in accordance with its business plan and organizational policies).
- (v) Setting up the Facility Management team (which shall be multi-disciplinary).

Under FM philosophy, the complex is a business property built for the business of the promotion of arts and culture. It is also an investment in property which should be managed sustainably for value and income realization now and in the long term. The goals must reflect these purposes or mission which the NATC structure and its facilities would be directed to support and produce desired results.

9. Conclusion

This study investigated the physical condition of the NATC in order to ascertain whether this is a hindrance to pursuing its *de jure* purposes as well as its *de facto* purposes as a real estate investment, and how the facility could be managed better to achieve these purposes using FM service delivery.

The study reveals that indeed the NATC is in a moribund state following many years of neglect and bureaucratic management. This fact was confirmed by physical inspection, a questionnaire survey and published public commentary. In its present state, the facility is not favoured as a choice venue for events and this fact makes it difficult not only for it to serve its official purposes, but also, to operate as a business property or yield the benefits expected from a prime investment in real estate.

The conclusion reached is that the NATC, as a prominent built heritage of Nigeria, needs to be revitalized and it is possible to do this in a sustainable way through the better management practices offered by FM service delivery.

9.1. Implications of the study

Government has for many years poorly managed the NATC and therefore prevented it from effectively being

9.2. Limitations

It is a limitation of this study that in its preparation information relating to the operations of the NATC such as the annual budget, annual maintenance budget, capital budget, the annual income from the hiring out of its facilities, staff strength, the maintenance policies and the size and composition of the maintenance unit could not be obtained. These would have given an insight into management issues and challenges. Therefore, other means of gathering useful information had to be employed.

Appendix A

The decline in the physical condition of the NATC is partly revealed by comparing the photographs of its façade taken in 2015 to those taken in its heyday in the 1970s.



The National Arts Theatre Complex in the 1970s



The National Arts Theatre Complex in 2015

used for the purposes for which it was set up. This is tantamount to a misallocation of resources in that the investment in the structure has failed to yield returns both in intangible (cultural) terms and in tangible (money) terms. The way forward is the revitalization of the complex to serve all the possible purposes which it can serve.

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