

Exploring the Benefits of Decentralised Spatial Configuration in Centers for Arts and Culture in Southern Nigeria

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DOI: 10.56201/ijemt.vol.12.no7.2026.pg487.502

Abstract

Arts and cultural institutions shape identity, memory, and social interaction through the configuration of their space, and contemporary scholarship increasingly positions them as active social environments rather than passive containers of artefacts, reflecting a broader shift from collection-centred to visitor-centred models of engagement. In Southern Nigeria, however, these institutions were historically built as centralised, monolithic structures that organised programmes around a single dominant core and treated movement as mere connective infrastructure, subordinating cultural engagement to functional efficiency. This study explored the benefits of decentralised spatial configuration in centres for arts and culture in Southern Nigeria, focusing on how distributing programmes across multiple connected nodes influenced spatial organisation, circulation, orientation, and cultural participation. The study responded to a contemporary demand for institutions that support explorative movement, communal gathering, and outdoor-oriented cultural life, a demand that the region's monolithic institutional tradition has struggled to meet. A predominantly qualitative approach was adopted, combining a systematic literature review with comparative case study analysis of four cultural institutions across local and international contexts, complemented by published post-occupancy evidence of user behaviour. The analysis was informed by the theories of architectural promenade, place theory, and the image of the city. Findings established that decentralised configuration produced multiple simultaneous activity points, networked and explorative circulation, stronger orientation through distributed spatial character, and richer cultural engagement integrated with transitional outdoor space suited to the region's tropical climate. The study concludes that decentralised spatial configuration offers a culturally responsive framework for centres for arts and culture in Southern Nigeria, contributing transferable design principles for institutional design in the region.

Keywords: Decentralised Spatial Configuration, Spatial Organisation, Circulation, Orientation, Cultural Engagement, Southern Nigeria.

1.0 Introduction

1.1 Background of the Study

Arts and cultural institutions house identity, memory, and interactions that take place on a specific territory through a particular arrangement of space (Lee & Kim, 2022). Contemporary research emphasises the importance of cultural institutions as active social environments that prioritise visitor experience both conceptually and spatially (Choi et al., 2020). In addition to exhibiting artefacts and theatrical performances, such organizations generate spatial programs, which, in turn, structure movements and social interactions of people within their premises (Psarra, 2020).

The spatial configuration of a cultural institution, specifically whether programme elements are centralised around a dominant core or distributed across multiple interconnected nodes, directly shapes circulation patterns, sense of place, and opportunities for cultural engagement (Peponis, 2024; Lynch, 1960). Centralised configurations support spatial legibility and ease of navigation through their hierarchical nature, concentrating movement around a single focal point (Psarra, 2020). Decentralised configurations allow for a more exploratory experience, prioritising discovery and engagement across the broader spatial and programmatic field of the institution (Medakovic et al., 2024).

Cultural life in Southern Nigeria is inherently communal and participatory, enacted predominantly in outdoor and transitional spatial settings rather than enclosed institutional environments (Nwafor et al., 2018; Brisibe, 2014). Local settlement patterns reflect a similar spatial logic, organising communal life around distributed nodes, courtyards, and outdoor gathering spaces rather than a single dominant core (Nwafor et al., 2018; Mfon, 2023). Cultural institutions introduced through colonial rule and reinforced during post-independence development, however, adopted centralised configurations inherited from European institutional conventions, producing a persistent spatial mismatch with both the cultural traditions and tropical climatic conditions of the region (Demissie, 2018).

This study demonstrates how decentralised spatial configuration better serves centres for arts and culture in Southern Nigeria, drawing on the theoretical frameworks of architectural promenade, place theory, and the image of the city to examine how spatial organisation shapes movement, cultural identity, and orientation within the built environment. Through systematic literature review and comparative case study analysis, the study identifies recurring spatial patterns and translates them into design recommendations applicable to the Southern Nigerian institutional context.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Cultural life in Southern Nigeria is communal and processional in character, predominantly enacted in outdoor and transitional spatial settings, and indigenous compound and courtyard settlements already organise communal life around distributed nodes and open gathering spaces (Nwafor et al., 2018; Brisibe, 2014). Since colonial times, however, the region's cultural institutions have been organised on the reverse principle, as centralised, monolithic structures that concentrate programmes around a single dominant core (Demissie, 2018; Omale & Ola-Ajayi, 2024). This model offers programmatic clarity but fails to integrate the transitional outdoor spaces that both the tropical climate and the region's communal cultural traditions demand, and struggles to sustain consistent public engagement beyond scheduled event periods (Kalu et al., 2025; Egidario & Olu-oseh, 2026). Decentralised configuration offers a spatial logic more aligned with the region's own traditions and capable of supporting exploratory, participatory cultural engagement, yet its implications for centres for arts and culture in Southern Nigeria remain insufficiently examined. This study addresses that gap.

1.3 Aim of the Study

This study aims to explore the benefits of decentralised spatial configuration in the design of centres for arts and culture in Southern Nigeria, in order to establish how the distribution of programmes across multiple connected nodes enhances movement, orientation, and cultural engagement within the institution.

1.4 Objectives of the Study

The following objectives guide this study to:

1. Examine how decentralised spatial configuration influences circulation, orientation, and

cultural engagement in arts and cultural institutions, in contrast to the centralised, monolithic tradition prevalent in Southern Nigeria.

2. Establish transferable design principles through which decentralised spatial configuration can produce culturally responsive and environmentally appropriate cultural institutions suited to the Southern Nigerian context.

1.5 Research Questions

The following research questions guide this study:

1. In what ways does decentralise spatial configuration influence circulation, orientation, and cultural engagement in arts and cultural institutions?
2. How can decentralised spatial configuration be translated into transferable design principles for culturally responsive and environmentally appropriate cultural institutions in Southern Nigeria?

2.0 Literature Review

2.1 What Spatial Configuration Influences in Cultural Institutions

The spatial configuration of a cultural institution, specifically how its programmes are arranged and related to one another, is the foundational design decision from which most of its experiential qualities follow. This configuration can range from centralised, organised around a dominant core, to decentralised, distributed across a network of interconnected nodes (Psarra, 2020; Ching, 2023). Such organisational logic shapes three critical dimensions of institutional performance: patterns of movement, spatial legibility, and depth of cultural participation.

Centralised organisation produces directed movement flows and a readable spatial hierarchy, but generates a singular institutional character and concentrates activity around a single focal point (Psarra, 2020; Medakovic et al., 2024). Decentralised organisation distributes activity across the institutional field, generating multiple circulation routes, distinct spatial nodes with individual character, and conditions for communal gathering (Peponis, 2024). It also creates opportunities for the integration of transitional outdoor spaces, courtyards, and landscape elements throughout the site (Mfon, 2023; Gehl, 2011). The organisational logic of a cultural institution therefore shapes both the visitor's spatial trajectory and their degree of cultural involvement, with direct consequences for dwell time and programmatic activation (Lee & Kim, 2022).

2.2 Cultural Institutions in Southern Nigeria: Context and Spatial Traditions

Nigeria is one of the most culturally diverse nations in the world, comprising over 250 ethnic groups and more than 500 languages, generating a broad and complex spectrum of institutional demands on cultural infrastructure (Omale & Ola-Ajayi, 2024). Southern Nigeria, encompassing the South-South, South-East, and South-West geopolitical zones, is among the most urbanised and culturally active sub-regions in West Africa, with cities such as Port Harcourt, Benin City, and Calabar characterised by social and cultural life that is predominantly communal, participatory, and outdoor-oriented in character (Adebara, 2024; Awoyemi et al., 2024). It is within these urban contexts that arts and cultural institutions carry the greatest civic relevance, serving diverse city populations whose cultural engagement is rooted in shared communal experience rather than individual or passive consumption.



Figure 1 Map of Nigeria showing various ethnic groups

Source: <https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Kehinde-Oluseyi-Olagunju/publication/306931630/figure/fig2/AS:667603118854158@1536180395730/Map-of-Nigeria-showing-various-ethnic-group.jpg>

Map-of-Nigeria-showing-various-ethnic-group.jpg

Spatial traditions. Across Southern Nigeria, indigenous building traditions offer a directly relevant spatial precedent. Communal spatial organisation throughout the region, and particularly within the Niger Delta, characteristically takes the form of distributed nodes — compound arrangements, clustered settlements, and courtyard structures with veranda-mediated transitions between interior and exterior environments (Mfon, 2023; Brisibe, 2014). In Ijo riverine settlements specifically, communal spaces are positioned at the heart of residential clusters, with circulation organised to orient movement toward shared gathering areas and facilitate social interaction (Brisibe, 2014). This distributed spatial logic, in which activity is spread across multiple nodes connected through transitional and outdoor spaces rather than concentrated around a single dominant core, reflects a deeply embedded spatial sensibility that resonates directly with the principles of decentralised spatial organisation.

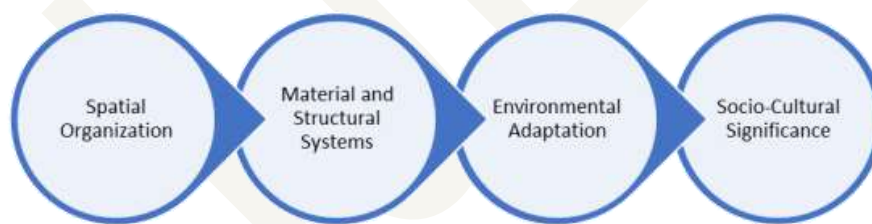


Figure 2. Conceptual model of traditional architectural morphologies in Nigerian settlements, illustrating the interrelationship between spatial organisation, material and structural systems, environmental adaptation, and socio-cultural significance as the four defining dimensions of vernacular architectural form

Source: Nwafor et al. (2018)

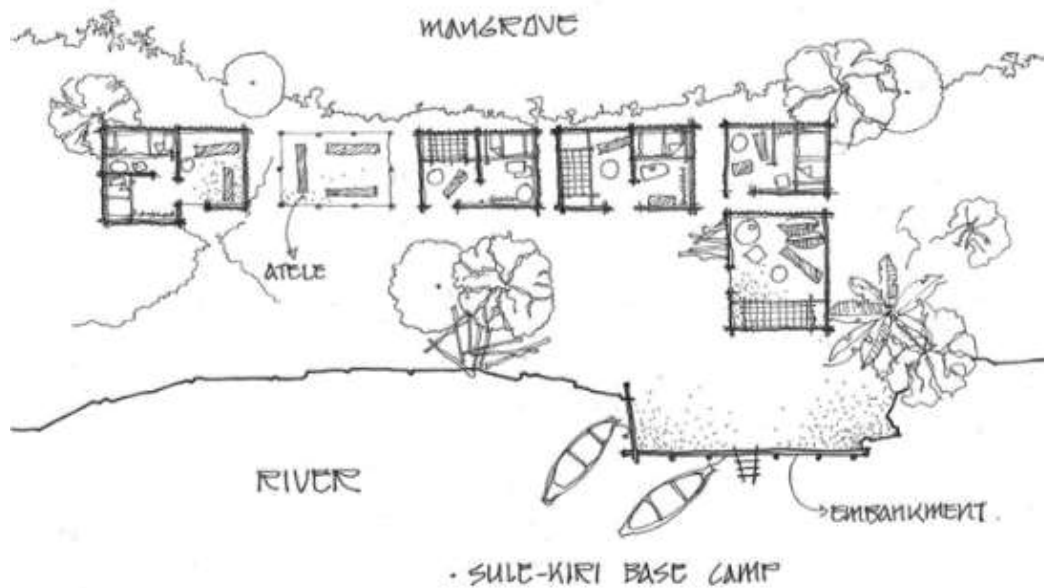


Figure 3. Sketch showing the clustered spatial organisation of an Ijo riverine fishing camp, Niger Delta.
Source: Brisibe, 2014, p. 46

Cultural performance and climate. Cultural performance across the region further reinforces this spatial orientation. Traditional performances such as the Kalabari Ekine Sekiapu and Ikwerre Nwaotam masquerades are processional and community-wide in character, activating streets, squares, and waterfront edges as integrated cultural environments rather than confined interior stages (Alagoa, 2003). The region's hot-humid tropical climate equally shapes spatial expectations, making shaded transitional spaces, open courtyards, and permeable building edges not merely desirable but environmentally necessary (Kalu et al., 2025). Together, these cultural and climatic conditions establish the integration of interior and exterior space as a defining requirement for culturally responsive institutional design in Southern Nigeria.

2.3 Theoretical Framework

This study draws on three theoretical frameworks, each addressing a distinct dimension of spatial configuration in cultural institutions. Architectural promenade examines movement through a building as a sequential spatial and cultural experience. The Image of the City provides a framework for spatial legibility and orientation through five formal elements applied at the scale of the individual institution. Place theory examines how spatial organisation produces cultural identity, belonging, and social meaning within the built environment. Together these frameworks provide the interpretive basis through which the outcomes of decentralised spatial configuration in centres for arts and culture are examined.

2.3.1 Architectural Promenade (Le Corbusier, 1923)

Le Corbusier's architectural promenade proposes that movement through a building is not merely functional but a deliberately choreographed spatial experience, in which the sequence of spaces, transitions, and views encountered during movement collectively constitute the architectural experience itself (Le Corbusier, 1923). Applied to a cultural institution, this positions circulation as a primary design instrument through which visitors encounter spatial and cultural content. In a decentralised arrangement, the distribution of programmes across multiple nodes generates a multiplicity of routes, each offering distinct spatial and cultural encounters that unfold differently for each visitor. This framework therefore provides a lens for evaluating how spatial configuration shapes the quality and variety of the visitor's journey through a centre for arts and culture.

2.3.2 The Image of the City (Lynch, 1960)

Lynch argues that users navigate built environments through a mental image formed from legible spatial elements, specifically paths, nodes, landmarks, edges, and districts (Lynch, 1960). Spatial legibility, the clarity and coherence of this image, directly determines the ease with which users orient themselves and move confidently through an environment. Applied at the scale of a cultural institution, this framework provides a basis for evaluating how spatial configuration supports or undermines visitor orientation and wayfinding. Where programme nodes are distributed across a spatial field and each is differentiated by a distinct character, they function as landmarks that anchor the visitor's mental map and support intuitive navigation. This framework is used to assess how decentralised spatial configuration contributes to orientation and wayfinding within centres for arts and culture.

2.3.3 Place Theory (Norberg-Schulz, 1980)

Place theory proposes that meaningful architecture creates places with distinct identity and cultural resonance rather than neutral spaces defined purely by function (Norberg-Schulz, 1980). A place carries social meaning, cultural memory, and a sense of belonging that make it genuinely inhabited and valued beyond its programmatic purpose (Norberg-Schulz, 1980). In a decentralised spatial arrangement, the distribution of programmes across multiple nodes allows each to develop a distinct spatial identity, enabling multiple culturally meaningful environments to coexist within a single institution. In Southern Nigeria, where cultural identity is deeply embedded in communal gathering and outdoor spatial traditions, this framework provides a particularly resonant lens for evaluating whether spatial configuration produces environments that are authentically inhabited and socially meaningful for the communities they serve.

3.0 Methodology

3.1 Research Method

This study adopted a predominantly qualitative research approach, complemented by documented quantitative evidence where available. This approach was appropriate for examining the experiential and organisational outcomes of spatial configuration within cultural institutions. The qualitative component supported the interpretive analysis of spatial configuration, circulation, orientation, and cultural character, while the quantitative component drew on published post-occupancy survey data to complement and contextualise these observations through recorded user responses. Since such evidence was available for only one case study, its application was limited accordingly. The investigation comprised two main components: a systematic literature review, which established the theoretical and contextual foundation of the study through an examination of spatial configuration, circulation and orientation theories, and the Southern Nigerian institutional context; and a comparative case study analysis, which evaluated selected local and international cultural institutions against a consistent set of spatial and experiential criteria derived from the study's theoretical frameworks.

3.2 Comparative Case Study Analysis

Four cultural institutions were selected for comparative analysis across local, African, and international contexts. The Oba Akenzua Cultural Centre and the Calabar Cultural Centre represent local precedents reflecting the prevailing centralised monolithic institutional model in Southern Nigeria. The Cultural Heritage Centre in Arusha, Tanzania represents an African precedent offering an alternative organisational approach within a comparable climatic and cultural context, while the Fuzhou Strait Culture and Art Centre represent an international precedent exemplifying decentralised spatial configuration at a contemporary institutional

scale. Selection was based on explicit cultural programme, variation in spatial organisational approach, and the availability of sufficient architectural documentation for analysis. All four were evaluated against the same theoretical frameworks, drawing on architectural drawings, floor plans, and photographs, complemented by published post-occupancy data where available, to extract transferable design principles for centres for arts and culture in Southern Nigeria.

4.0 Case Studies

4.1 Case Study 1 (Local): Oba Akenzua Cultural Centre, Benin City



Figure 4. Approach view of Oba Akenzua Cultural Centre

Source: <https://c7.alamy.com/comp/2F61G75/oba-akenzua-cultural-centre-benin-city-edo-state-nigeria-2F61G75.jpg>

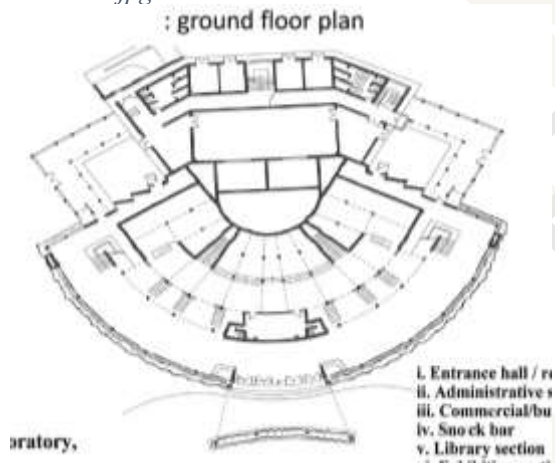


Figure 5. Ground floor plan, Oba Akenzua Cultural Centre

Source: Harry, B. T. (2025)

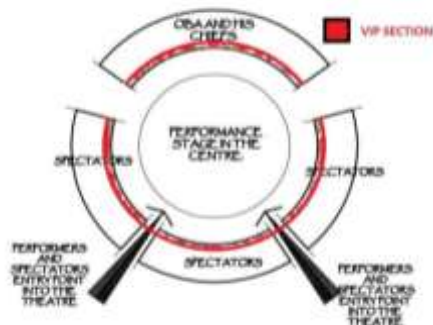


Figure 6. Spatial arrangement of Benin people during performances in traditional theatre (VIP section coloured in red) Source: Gyang, G. H. (2018).



Figure 7 Reflection of hierarchy in Oba Akenzua cultural centre performance stage
Source: Gyang, G. H. (2018).

4.1.1 Introduction

Designed by Demas Nwoko and completed in 1993, the Oba Akenzua Cultural Centre is widely regarded as a culturally responsive institution, its semicircular auditorium encoding indigenous Benin social order while laterite and passive strategies root it in the tropical context. It represents the centralised model executed with strong cultural intent.

4.1.2 Deductions

- Cultural identity is embedded in the auditorium's spatial organisation, most clearly in the seating hierarchy: the VIP seats, though identical to others in size and colour, sit in front of the raked seating and are marked by red carpeting no other seats carry, mirroring the traditional Benin order in which elders sit in front and the young behind (see Figure 7).
- This symbolic encoding of the courtyard is not matched by genuinely communal space: the perimeter walkway around the auditorium functions purely as circulation, linking stage to backstage without interrupting the seating, rather than serving as the communal gathering courtyard of indigenous Benin settings.
- The auditorium and administrative block are entirely detached, and as a centralised monolith the building concentrates activity in one dominant volume, limiting simultaneous programme use and offering little communal indoor-outdoor transition.
- Locally derived materials and passive strategies (laterite thermal mass, self-shading form, deep overhangs) demonstrate climatically appropriate design for the tropical South.
- For Southern Nigeria, it shows that centralised organisation can reference communal culture symbolically yet fails to provide the distributed communal spaces that a decentralised configuration would realise.

4.2 Case Study 2 (Local): Calabar Cultural Centre, Calabar



Figure 8. Approach view of Calabar cultural centre.
Source: Okoye, C. K. (2017)

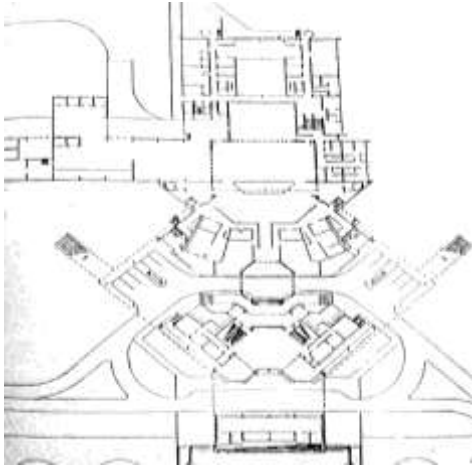


Figure 9a Ground floor plan
Source: Okoye, C. K. (2017)

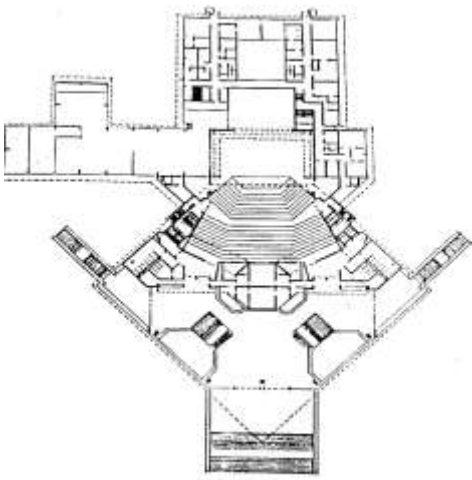


Figure 9b. First Floor Plan'
Source: Okoye, C. K. (2017)

4.2.1 Introduction

A government-managed institution established under a military administration in the early 1970s, the Calabar Cultural Centre organises its theatre and administrative block as the dominant mass. Associated with the annual Calabar Carnival, its spatial performance has been documented in post-occupancy research.

4.2.2 Deductions

- A centralised arrangement around a dominant core provides functional order and civic legibility, but concentrates activity and makes little use of indoor-outdoor transition.
- Post-occupancy survey evidence records that most users found the centre did not meet their expectations and rated their experience unfavourably, with low revisit and recommendation intentions (Ediae et al., 2022).
- Circulation performs well for vehicular movement but weakly for pedestrian movement, transition spaces, and experiential quality (Ediae et al., 2022).
- For Southern Nigeria, it offers documented evidence that a centralised configuration struggles to sustain the daily communal engagement the region's cultural life expects.

4.3 Case Study 3 (Regional): Cultural Heritage Centre, Arusha, Tanzania



Figure 10. Approach view of the Cultural Heritage Centre, Arusha

Source: https://www.tripadvisor.com/Attraction_Review-g297913-d2305304-Reviews-Cultural_Heritage_Centre-Arusha_Arusha_Region.html



Figure 11. Satellite Image of the Building and Site, Arusha cultural heritage centre

Source: Google Earth (modified by author)

4.3.1 Introduction

Established in 1994, the Cultural Heritage Centre is organised not as a single mass but as a compound of distinct pavilions distributed across a landscaped site, offering a regional African precedent for decentralised spatial configuration.

4.3.2 Deductions

- Discrete pavilions distributed across a landscaped site allow several activities at once and give each function its own identity, echoing traditional African compound settlements.
- Movement is layered through outdoor thresholds and sculpture-lined approaches, while the main gallery sustains a continuous internal promenade spiralling through several half-levels.
- Distributing programmes supports communal, outdoor-oriented use and lets individual pavilions carry distinct cultural meaning, so multiple places of identity coexist.
- Two demands of dispersed layouts emerge: commercial functions can overshadow cultural ones, and without a central anchor space orientation can weaken.
- For Southern Nigeria, it confirms that a distributed, compound-like configuration is culturally natural to the African cultural centre, provided the cultural programme is protected and a clear central space binds the parts.

4.4 Case Study 4 (International): Fuzhou Strait Culture and Art Centre, Fuzhou, China



Figure 12. Aerial view of the Fuzhou Strait Culture and Art Centre
Source: <https://www.pesark.com>

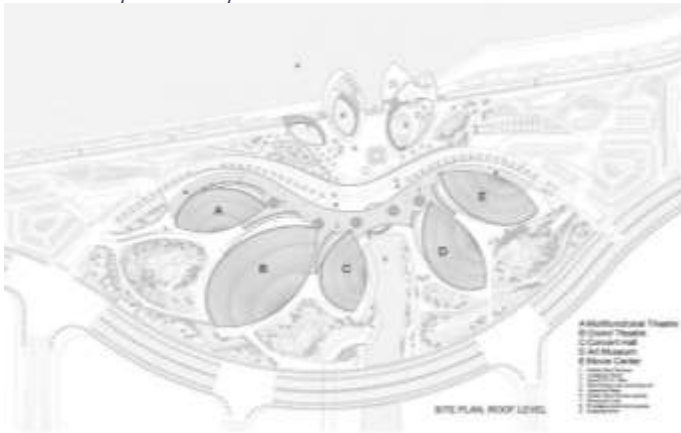


Figure 13. Site layout
Source: <https://www.pesark.com>

4.4.1 Introduction

Completed in 2018 by PES-Architects, the Fuzhou Strait Culture and Art Centre distributed its programme as five curved, jasmine-petal venues around a central plaza, linked by a shared concourse and roof terrace. It is the clearest built demonstration of decentralised configuration.

4.4.2 Deductions

- Five distinct volumes linked by concourse, roof terrace, and garden ramps generate non-hierarchical, multidirectional movement in which the journey is as meaningful as the destinations.
- Dividing the complex into petal-volumes eases navigation, and each volume reads as a distinct landmark that keeps the distributed field legible.
- Glazed terracotta louvres deliver climatic control and cultural reference in a single system, while riverfront gardens and terraces dissolve the boundary between institution and landscape.
- For Southern Nigeria, particularly riverine sites, it offers a strong model for explorative movement, legible nodes, and a climate-responsive envelope integrated with landscape.

5.0 Findings

The comparative analysis established a consistent relationship between spatial configuration and the quality of movement, orientation, and cultural engagement across the four cases. The findings are organised by the three frameworks, each reporting what decentralised configuration achieved that the centralised model did not.

5.1 Movement (Architectural Promenade)

- Decentralised configuration generated networked, exploratory, and democratic circulation in which users moved by individual interest and the journey between programmes became a cultural experience in itself, evidenced at Arusha and most fully at Fuzhou.
- Distributing programmes across connected nodes produced multiple simultaneous activity points and varied routes of discovery, rather than the single prescribed path of the centralised local cases.
- Explorative movement was sustained at both site and building scale, shown by Arusha's compound of pavilions and its spiralling internal gallery promenade.
- The centralised cases concentrated movement on a dominant core, with documented weakness in pedestrian and experiential circulation at Calabar (Ediae et al., 2022).

5.2 Orientation (Image of the City)

- Distinct, distributed nodes functioned as landmarks that kept the decentralised field legible, seen in Fuzhou's five identifiable petal-volumes and Arusha's sculptural gallery.
- Dividing large complexes into smaller, human-scaled units aided intuitive navigation indoors and out, reducing reliance on supplementary signage.
- The findings confirmed the central orientation demand of decentralisation: without a strong central anchor space, coherence across a dispersed built environment can be weakened (Arusha), and arrival can be under-defined.
- Centralised layouts were legible by default but offered little varied spatial character to support memorable, self-directed wayfinding.

5.3 Meaning (Place Theory)

- Decentralised configuration allowed multiple nodes to each carry distinct cultural identity, so, several places of meaning coexisted within one institution.
- Cultural identity was embedded in the spatial and material organisation itself, evidenced by Fuzhou's jasmine concept and ceramic materiality and by the culturally symbolic pavilions at Arusha.
- The communal, socially activating quality central to Southern Nigerian cultural life was better supported by distributed, outdoor-integrated configurations than by the enclosed centralised model, which persists as an inherited colonial planning logic rather than a culturally grounded one (Demissie, 2018), and in which engagement fell away between events (Ediae et al., 2022).

5.4 Summary of Findings

Across all three dimensions, decentralised spatial configuration produced richer movement, more distinctive orientation, and stronger cultural meaning than the centralised model, while integrating the transitional outdoor space that the region's tropical climate and communal traditions require. Centralised organisation retained value in legibility and institutional clarity, but consistently underperformed against the experiential and communal demands of the contemporary cultural institution in Southern Nigeria.

6.0 Recommendations: Towards a Decentralised Design Framework for Cultural Institutions in Southern Nigeria.

The findings are consolidated here into a design framework for arts and cultural institutions in Southern Nigeria. Each principle governs one distinct dimension of what spatial configuration influences, and together they translate the study's evidence into transferable design guidance.

6.1 Distribute Programmes Across Connected Nodes

The configuration decision. Institutions should distribute their programmes across multiple connected nodes rather than concentrating them in a single monolithic core. This is the foundational move from which the other benefits follow: it enables several programmes to operate simultaneously, produces a variety of spatial experience, and makes the spaces between buildings active parts of the institution.

6.2 Design Circulation as Exploratory Cultural Experience.

Movement. Routes between distributed nodes should be designed as exploratory, democratic circulation rather than mere connective infrastructure. Networked, multidirectional movement linked by concourses, terraces, and landscaped paths enables users to navigate by individual interest, distributing access equally across the institution and making the journey between programmes a form of cultural discovery in its own right. This aligns naturally with the participatory character of Southern Nigerian cultural life.

6.3 Keep the Distributed Field Legible

Orientation. Because distribution risks fragmentation, each node should carry a relatively distinct spatial character that reads as a landmark, and the composition should be anchored by a clear central gathering space. This resolves the orientation risk that distribution introduces and the tendency for arrival points to become under-defined, keeping a dispersed institution navigable.

6.4 Root Cultural Identity in Indigenous Spatial Tradition

Meaning. Cultural identity should be embedded in the spatial organisation itself by drawing on the region's own nodal traditions, the compound, clustered settlement, and courtyard, as generative frameworks. This allows multiple nodes to each hold distinct meaning, grounding the institution authentically in local culture rather than in the inherited colonial model.

6.5 Integrate Transitional Outdoor Space

Climate and community. Layouts should incorporate courtyards, shaded circulation, verandas, and landscape connections into the institutional field. This answers the tropical climate's demand for permeable, naturally ventilated space while activating the outdoor, communal patterns central to Southern Nigerian cultural life.

7.0. Conclusion

This study examined how decentralised spatial configuration in centres for arts and culture in Southern Nigeria influences movement, orientation, and cultural engagement. Through comparative analysis of four cultural institutions, framed by the theories of architectural promenade, the image of the city, and place theory, the study established that decentralised configuration generates explorative movement, strengthens spatial legibility, and produces culturally resonant environments responsive to the communal and outdoor-oriented traditions of the region.

The findings show that distributing programmes across connected nodes generates explorative, democratic circulation in which movement becomes a form of cultural discovery. It sustains orientation through distinct and legible nodes connected by shared gathering spaces, and enables multiple places of cultural identity to coexist within a single institution. It also integrates the transitional outdoor spaces that the region's tropical climate and communal traditions require. The centralised monolithic model retains value in legibility and institutional clarity. However, as an inherited colonial planning convention, it remains culturally misaligned with a region whose cultural life is communal, participatory, and outdoor-oriented, and whose indigenous spatial traditions are already nodal in character.

Decentralised spatial configuration is therefore offered not as a replacement for centralised organisation but as a culturally responsive and environmentally appropriate framework for centres for arts and culture in Southern Nigeria, one that resonates with an indigenous spatial sensibility and closes the gap between prevailing institutional models and the experiential expectations of the communities these institutions serve.

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