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### Article

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**Tucker, MP and Cannon, T (2017) Implications for the Standardisation of Facilities Management. eFMinsight, 43. pp. 30-35. ISSN 1993-1980**

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# IMPLICATIONS FOR THE STANDARDISATION OF FACILITIES MANAGEMENT

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This article provides a conceptual viewpoint of the implications for the standardisation of facilities management (FM). It provides an overview of a qualitative study looking at literature on FM markets across global regions, coupled with primary data collection from a small cluster of interviews with informed participants in global regions. The article concludes by proposing an FM maturity map, contending the challenges of implementing standards across a diverse but ever globalising FM market. International Standards are a tool to produce best practice guidelines

for an industry, which allows for successful globalisation. International standards involve cross-border collaboration and are born through well developed markets which seek to standardise processes to increase performance and efficiency. According to Whittaker (2016), one of today's most vital global FM trends is around ISO standards, to 'ensure that products and services are safe, reliable and of good quality'. Whittaker (2016) emphasises the importance to business strategy, saying that ISO standards 'are strategic tools that reduce costs by minimising waste and

errors and increasing productivity. They help companies to access new markets, level the playing field for developing countries and facilitate free and fair global trade'.

The growth of the FM market is coupled with trends in globalisation, where the international transfer of commercial goods and services becomes increasingly opened. One would argue that standardisation endorses globalisation, allowing access to larger markets providing cheaper resources, more technology and greater expertise for those operating within the space.



As highlighted by Shah (2007) the drive for understanding the development and maturity of FM globally is a recent trend. Shah (2007) highlighted the development of the FM market maturity across the USA, some countries in Western Europe as well as South East Asia and Australasia, clearly showing differences in maturity across the globe, with USA and Western Europe providing the most mature markets.

Moreover, the growth of the FM market places prominence on the importance of understanding the

FM discipline on a global platform. Various market reports evidence that there are market increases in FM across all regions of the globe (e.g. Hodge et al (2014); Global FM (2016); growth over the past decade has been exponential and set to increase further. Alongside this growth has been the emergence of the European standards and the currently developing ISO 41000 family.

The development of international standards in FM is outlined in figure 1, with the first global standards in FM being published 2017 with

the ISO 41001 suite, whilst the first cross-border standards were created a decade ago. International standardisation of industries improves continuity, professionalism, ethical commitments and good practice guidelines. It is not new news that standardisation of the FM industry is required for a holistic international improvement of the industry.

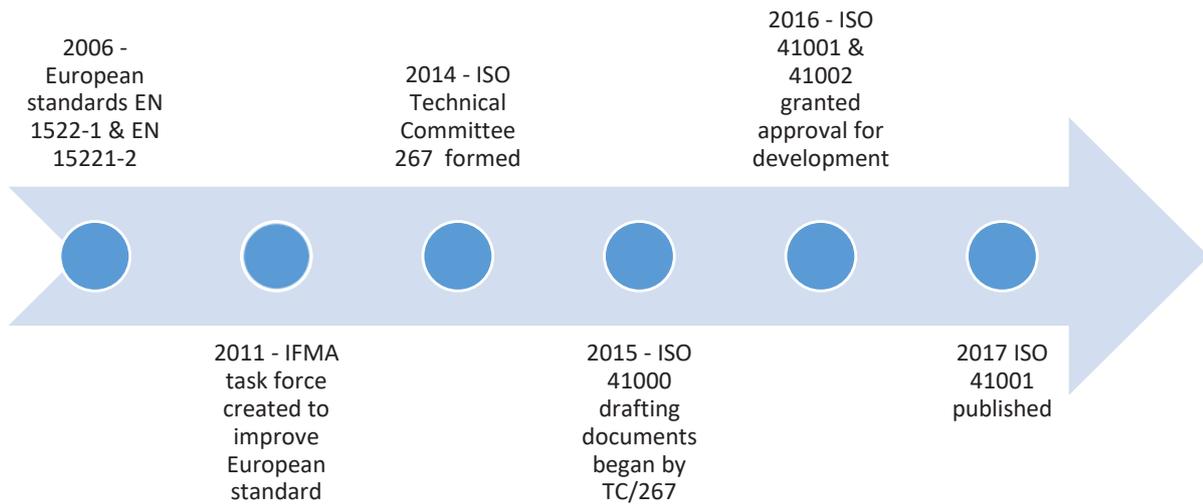


Figure 1: Development of international standards within FM

Source: self-study adapted from (The European Committee for Standardization, 2006); (BIFM, 2015); (Whittaker, 2016).

Despite this, it could be argued that there is disparity in educational pathways, practical application and the development of practice across continents and industry bodies (Tucker & Roper, 2015). For example, a variety of FM associations and competency frameworks exist across the globe, which gives rise for potential disparity and a possible challenge to standardisation. Tucker and Roper (2015) discovered disparity in the professional pathways produced by RICS, IFMA & BIFM. Although many of the competencies were similar in some aspects the weighting and frequency altered greatly at times. Moreover, Figure 2 provides a snapshot of the FM associations prevalent in Europe, showing that there are many diverse associations all attempting to provide good practice and standards to their FM communities. On a European scale, organisations like EuroFM have a crucial job of enabling these associations to network and collaborate to ensure that standards can be communicated consistently. This emphasises the challenges of standardising FM competences in a growing, yet diverse market.



Figure 2: Map of FM Associations in Europe

Source: self-study

## Research methodology

This study utilised a qualitative research design in order to collect subjective data. Table 1 highlights the suitability of such a design for this study:

| Criteria              | Qualitative options   | Suitability for study  |
|-----------------------|---|--|
| Strategies of enquiry | Phenomenology, grounded theory; ethnography and constructivist  | Ethnography allows for the studying of cultures and world views. This would allow for exploration into differences in cultural perceptions   |
| Data                  | Subjective data with emphasis on meanings, experiences & description. Literature from journals, reports, professional bodies and open-ended primary questioning | Current lack of literature around what standardisation means to FM professionals, making subjective data desirable for new analysis. The lack of existing theory requires open questions |
| Results               | Common themes in relation to specific topics, available for subjective analysis   | Utilising geographical and professional sets differences in regions and FM professionals can be examined. This provides greater depth analysis   |

Table 1: Qualitative design rationale  
Source: adapted from (Greetham, 2014);(Coolican, 1993); (Cresswell, 2009); (Naoum, 2013)

A total of nine (9) semi-structured interviews were used to generate a theory via open-ended questioning. For this study Skype interviews were used where possible as a medium between face-to-face and telephone interviews; as they allowed a more personal relationship, whilst being able to exploit international boundaries. However 3 out of the 9 respondent's interviews were conducted via phone or without a video link due to technological and logistical reasons.

Determining which cultures exist within FM is complex, due to the diversity in scope and geography of the discipline. Regional districts can be considered separate cultures, however so can professionals which operate and practice in specific roles. The complexity of the cultural landscape of FM is highlighted in figure 3, which shows the classification participants can fall under. What is prevalent is that no participants fell under just one classification.

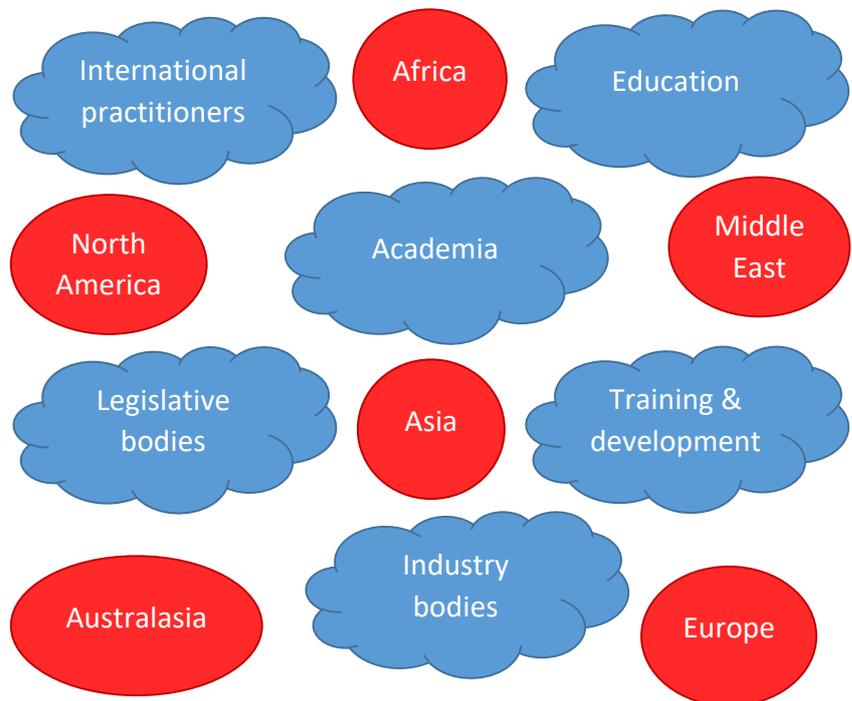


Figure 3: Complexity of cultures  
Source: self-study

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International Standards are a tool to produce best practice guidelines for an industry, which allows for successful globalisation. International standards involve cross-border collaboration and are born through well developed markets which seek to standardise processes to increase performance and efficiency. According to Whittaker (2016), one of today’s most vital global FM trends is around ISO standards, to ‘ensure that products and services are safe, reliable and of good quality’. Whittaker (2016) emphasises the importance to business strategy, saying

that ISO standards ‘are strategic tools that reduce costs by minimising waste and errors and increasing productivity. They help companies to access new markets, level the playing field for developing countries and facilitate free and fair global trade.’

The growth of the FM market is coupled with trends in globalisation, where the international transfer of commercial goods and services becomes increasingly opened. One would argue that standardisation endorses globalisation, allowing access to larger markets providing cheaper resources, more technology and greater expertise for those operating within the space.

As highlighted by Shah (2007) the drive for understanding the development and maturity of FM globally is a recent trend. Shah (2007) highlighted the development of the FM market maturity across the USA, some countries in Western Europe as well as South East Asia and Australasia, clearly showing differences in maturity across the globe, with USA and Western Europe providing the most

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Moreover, the growth of the FM market places prominence on the importance of understanding the FM discipline on a global platform. Various market reports evidence that there are market increases in FM across all regions of the globe (e.g. Hodge et al (2014); Global FM (2016); growth over the past decade has been exponential and set to increase further. Alongside this growth has been the emergence of the European standards and the currently developing ISO 41000 family.

The development of international standards in FM is outlined in figure 1, with the first global standards in FM being published 2017 with the ISO 41001 suite, whilst the first cross-border standards were created a decade ago. International standardisation of industries improves continuity, professionalism, ethical commitments and good practice guidelines. It is not new news that standardisation of the FM industry is required for a holistic international improvement of the industry.

| Level of maturity  | Criteria   |
|--------------------|--|
| <b>High</b>        | Global consensus market is mature. Operators and industry body seeking international standards and standardisation. Industry willing to adapt with a firm international agenda.  |
| <b>Medium/High</b> | A mature market with a national body or IFMA chapter, developed criteria around training and education with well-established practices and understanding of FM.                  |
| <b>Medium</b>      | FM is understood at technical level, these countries have a national body or IFMA chapter and are seeking improvements however their understanding of FM remains basic.          |
| <b>Low/Medium</b>  | There is an understanding of a role of a FM within a built environment or portfolio, however their practices are very basic with no real understanding of concepts such as KPIs. |
| <b>Low</b>         | FM exists in its simplest form, there are facilities and a built environment therefore FM is present.  |

Table 2: FM maturity level criteria

Source: self-study

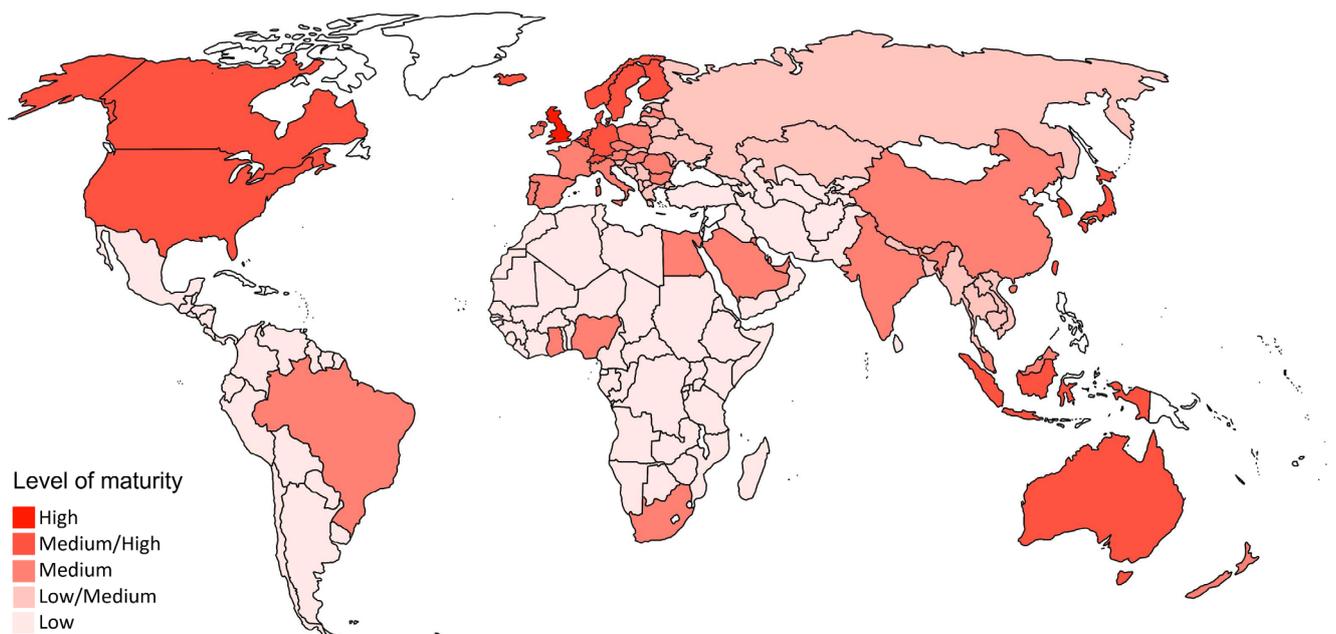


Figure 4: Global FM maturity levels

Source: self-study content analysis of literature review and interview transcripts

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