

INSTITUTE FOR HOUSING AND URBAN DEVELOPMENT STUDIES



HISTORY

MORE THAN 45 YEARS INVESTING IN PEOPLE WHO MAKE CITIES WORK

As part of the post-world war II reconstruction of The Netherlands a building centre of excellence called Bouwcentrum was founded in Rotterdam. In 1948 the so-called 'round building' was officially open. The mission of the Bouwcentrum was among other things to develop methodologies and technologies to foster fast production of affordable and adequate housing and to think about innovative approaches to give responses to severe housing shortage experienced by The Netherlands.

The birth of IHS is associated with the founding of the Bouwcentrum and the process of rebuilding Rotterdam, a city that was severely damaged by a bombardment during WWII. In response to an increasing international demand for the experiences of the Bouwcentrum, an international training wing was established in 1958 to provide international education and transfer knowledge and expertise to professionals from developing countries in search for solutions in the housing and construction sectors. Professionals from other European countries facing similar situation as post-war Netherlands were also interested in this training. This was called the Bouwcentrum International Education-BIE.

In the seventies, BIE became gradually independent from the Bouwcentrum. In 1982 an independent institute was formed under the name Institute for Housing Studies-IHS and headquartered in the famous Round Building where thousands of participants from more than 80 different countries have studied. From the seventies onwards, IHS got increasingly involved in low-income housing projects and in technical assistance in developing countries. In particular it is in this period when IHS started getting involved in long-term institutional development projects sponsored by the Dutch Government

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aiming at the establishment of local training and capacity building institutions that could address the training needs and educational gaps to address critical housing and urban development problems in different countries. This was associated with the notion of the development cooperation policies of The Netherlands at that time that advocated the need to establish local institutions that could provide training and education to their nationals and develop indigenous methods, techniques and approaches that would most suit their social, economic and technological realities. This was opposed to the idea of providing types of post graduation education where participant obtained knowledge abroad that was not immediately suitable to his/her own conditions at home. Centres in Tanzania, Colombia, Sri Lanka, Thailand and India are some of the examples of this assistance.

The involvement of IHS staff in various overseas activities coined the principal characteristics of the training and post graduate courses offered by IHS and which represent today's comparative advantage of IHS courses: pragmatism, problem-solving orientation and international curriculum. Since then IHS staff is permanently involved in on-going programmes and activities (advisory services, training and research) in various countries that help to keep a continuous cross-fertilization of the courses thus maintaining an up-to-date curriculum and case studies. Participants of the IHS courses actually work on their home country problems or in cities in other countries facing similar problems through guided case study-based exercises.

In the very beginning of the 1990's, recognizing the complexity and integrated character of problems faced by cities, IHS redesigned its programmes and changed its name to Institute for Housing and Urban Development Studies but keeping intact its acronym IHS. Concurrently IHS also started linking short courses with the development of professional master programmes and pioneering the design of two major courses on urban management and urban environmental management.

During the international year of the homeless as well as in other international campaigns around the Habitat question, IHS played an active role in The Netherlands and abroad, assisting and participating in The Netherlands delegations to international forums like the second United Nations Conference for Human Settlements (Habitat II, 1996) as well as Habitat II+5 (2001). In these events, IHS played a crucial role with its partners in The Netherlands and abroad in outlining a capacity building agenda. It is also worth mentioning that IHS' best practice global research in the urban environment sponsored by The Netherlands government in the beginning of the 1990's was a turning point to bring international attention to the urban environmental issues. This was one of the embryos of the best practice awards that emerged thereafter. IHS has been working in close cooperation with the UN-Habitat Agency and its various programmes, particularly in the capacity building activities and the Sustainable Cities Programme.

During most of the 1990's IHS intensified its overseas activities significantly enlarging its portfolio of long-term institution development programmes but also being assigned to important sector studies, housing reform and municipal development projects. There was also a significant increase in work in cooperation or on contract basis with multilateral and bilateral organisations like UN-HABITAT, World Bank, UNDP, Asian Development Bank, Inter-American Development Bank, GTZ, DGIS. IHS is responsible for the establishment and/or strengthening of more than a dozen training, research and capacity building institutions in the fields of housing, urban management, urban environmental management, housing finance, slum upgrading, infrastructure development, public management, participatory planning and urban governance. Furthermore, more than 6,000 professionals have been trained in Rotterdam throughout its 45 years of existence in addition to hundreds of professionals who attended tailor-made programmes carried out in their countries of origin.



In January 2000, IHS moved into a new building situated in the campus of the Erasmus University Rotterdam. This was in line with the policy of The Netherlands government stimulating the international education institutes like IHS to become closely associated to the Dutch universities. On that year, IHS started a comprehensive re-organisation that resulted in a substantial organisational reform and institutional adjustment in its modus operandi and course programmes. Fundamentally a statutory change also took place. From an independent foundation IHS becomes an independent company associated to the Holding Erasmus University.

In practical terms both the Municipality of Rotterdam through the Rotterdam Development Corporation – OBR and the Erasmus University Rotterdam became stakeholders of IHS and from February 2004 onwards IHS became one of the associated institutes of the Holding Erasmus University. This also resulted in the appointment of a new director and new supervisory board by both stakeholders; a resize of its personnel, increasing flexibility in the recruiting of staff and more work in partnership with different organisations. There is also more experience drawn from the various departments of the Erasmus University and an increasing use of associate fellows in a variety of assignments in The Netherlands and abroad.

Last but not least, a global survey carried out amongst the IHS alumni, clients and partner organisations helped to redesign its master program that resulted in a new one-year unified master programme in urban development management starting in October 2004 containing 6 different specialisations: Urban Management and City Development Strategies, Financing Cities in a Global economy, Public Management and Good Governance, Environmental Planning and Management (EPM): Practical Implementation at City Level, Urban Social Development and Policies for Poverty Reduction, Housing and Inner City Regeneration.

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