

# Facility management Research in the Netherlands

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**This article provides a brief overview of the history and development of facility management research in the Netherlands and indicates future directions. Facility management as a profession has developed from single service to multi-services and integral services over the past 15 years. Furthermore, the traditional one-sided focus on efficiency and costs has shifted to a more balanced approach that also takes into account effectiveness, quality and added value. Nowadays, facility management increasingly enables the strategic development of businesses and organizations at the intersection between real estate, provision of workspace and management of value adding services. In the Dutch FM market of almost 63 billion euro, with over 310.000 employees, outsourcing as a percentage of total sales has increased from 57% (2000) to 63 % (2009). The professional association Facility Management Netherlands (FMN, [www.fmn.nl](http://www.fmn.nl)) with over 2500 members, signals the following trends in facility management (2010):**

- Sustainability is becoming mainstream practice.
- New Worlds of Work, where people are the critical factor and employees decide how, where, when, and with whom they work, often in temporary network groups, to obtain tangible results, are key in workplace change programs.
- Development towards a demand-driven organization, with an increased level of outsourcing of operational tasks while the overall management remains with the client. The future direction is towards outsourced integrated facility management.
- Introduction of facility service concepts such as hospitality concepts in healthcare are reaching the corporate world and aim to improve the success of the customer (internal and external).
- Transparent business operations, particularly in times of crisis, to show that objectives are met. Examples are: standardization of services, supplier management, and reduction of office space.

Fifteen years ago, FMN founded the Center for Facility Management (CFM) in order to conduct FM research and to support a chair in facility management at the Eindhoven University of Technology, with strong ties to major players in industry. Later on, this chair moved to Wageningen University. It was held by Dries van Wagenberg for more than ten years (for an overview see Van Wagenberg 2010). Applied research became a core task of Higher Education in 2008 to link professional development and education. Professorships in Facility Management at (what are now called) Universities of Applied Sciences made applied research at Bachelor level a fact. A special FMN Education and Research committee was formed in 2009, which published the first FMN research agenda in March 2010, with four central research subjects (Van Heerde et al., 2010):

1. The connection between real estate, use of space and facility services
2. Issues of experience, hospitality, demand management and chain reversal



3. Sustainability

4. Strategy and added value

For the third year now, FMN has invited researchers to contribute to the above agenda. Results are published in Facility Management Information and Facility Management Magazine (Both Dutch magazines) on a regular basis and also disseminated at EFMC conferences and shared by publishing journal papers.

Various Universities of Applied Sciences co-operate with other universities to offer education at MSc level as well. An example is the collaboration between Greenwich University and Hogeschool Utrecht, Hogeschool Zuyd and Saxion. In the Netherlands, the collaboration between Universities of Applied Sciences with Wageningen University, Groningen University and Delft University of Technology is leading to joint research projects. Particular FM-related research is conducted at the Faculty of Architecture of Delft University of Technology. At the Department of Real Estate and Housing ([www.reh.tudelft.nl](http://www.reh.tudelft.nl)), Prof. Hans de Jonge holds a chair in real estate management and development. Part of his staff members conduct research in public and corporate real estate management, in search of data, theories, tools and best practices for successful and sustainable real estate strategies, performance measurement, and benchmarking. Research topics include managing the university campus in the context of knowledge economy, adding value through real estate (municipal, health care, offices and education), how to connect

urban policies and corporate real estate strategies, how to cope with vacancies, and willingness to pay.

We should also make mention of the Center for People and Buildings (CfPB) in Delft should ([www.cfpb.nl](http://www.cfpb.nl)). This knowledge center specializes in connections between people, work processes and the work environment. The research program includes four main themes: trend analyses, decision-making processes, best possible ways of accommodating (working) people and work processes, as well as databases and tools. Examples of tools are for instance the WODI® Toolkit (data collection methods to measure employee satisfaction, perceived productivity and prioritized aspects), the workplace guide ('Planning Office Spaces'), the PACT calculation model (Places and ACTivities) to calculate the required number of workplaces for specific types of workplace, the Workplace Game (to be played by managers and/or end users e.g. to raise awareness of the impact of different office concepts or to explore behavioral rules), and the Accommodation Choice Model: a step-by-step model to guide all actors involved through a (re-) accommodation process.

#### European collaboration on Sustainable Facility Management

On a European scale, Saxion University of Applied Sciences, together with the Norwegian University of Technology (Thijssen, Junghans et al., 2012) is leading the startup of a joint research into the topics of corporate social responsibility, built environments

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and sustainable Facility Management. This project started with a series of case studies on these topics, based on a case study protocol (Alexander, 2011) from the Centre of Facility Management in the UK. The additional participating partners in this research project are the Technical University of Denmark, Aalto University, Finland, Chalmers University of Technology, Sweden, Zurich University of Applied Sciences, Switzerland, and the University of Greenwich, United Kingdom. The initial results of a case study were presented by the Technical University of Denmark in the 2012 EFMC. The direction of this research project will be agreed upon in Trondheim. The initiative is open to all interested Universities wishing to join.

### Is research in the Netherlands beyond the stage of pioneering?

The question can be raised if FM research in the Netherlands has developed beyond the pioneering stage with pockets of excellence in Universities like Wageningen, Delft and Groningen, and pockets of excellence in 9 Universities of Applied Sciences offering Facility Management bachelor courses. The answer is that there has been a move towards increased professionalism and defragmentation since early 2012. On the 25th of January 2012, the FM Research Network Netherlands was formed at Stenden University, linking 12 universities in the Netherlands with the aim to provide an overview of fragmented initiatives, share research



findings, increase joint research and the number of PhD students as well as that of participating researchers. The final aim is to improve both FM education and professional development on a corporate level.

An overview of research topics from 12 universities of applied sciences indicates that there is a need for more focus in research in the Netherlands as the topics vary to a large extent.

The members of the FM Research Network Netherlands will meet for the second time in June 2012. The aim is to exchange current findings and arrive at a focus of 4-5 research topics that are truly examples of Dutch FM Research. In addition, the connection to the national FMN research agenda, IFMA and EuroFM will be discussed. Plans for the near future will be made and joint research expanded.

The conclusion is that in the last 15 years, FM research in the Netherlands has developed in a promising direction and is just moving from the pioneering stage to the next phase of professional development. However, a lot has still to be done to become world class in FM research. This aim will be addressed and if possible realized over the next five years.

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Topic	Link to national FMN agenda	Universities
Hospitality	Yes	NHTV, InHolland, Saxion, HAN and Hotelschool The Hague
Media	No	HAN and Saxion
Supply chain procurement	Yes	Groningen and NHTV
HRM	No	InHolland, Saxion, Hotelschool The Hague
Food and beverage and sustainability	Yes	Stenden
Law	No	Stenden
Corporate Social Responsibility	Yes	Groningen and Saxion
Workspace	Yes	HAN, NHTV, Groningen, InHolland, Wageningen University, Centre for People and Buildings, TU Delft
Regional development and sustainability	Yes	Zuyd, Stenden, Groningen, Saxion
Lifelong Learning	No	Groningen and HAN
Added Value	Yes	Wageningen University, HAN, Saxion, TU Delft
Sustainability	Yes	NHTV, Hotelschool The Hague, Inholland, Stenden, Saxion, TU Delft
Revenue management	No	Hotelschool The Hague
Corporate and Public Real Estate Management	Yes	TU Delft