

OSKAR VON MILLER FORUM

PRESS RELEASE

Water as Leverage – design driven catalyst for climate action

Lecture by Henk Ovink, Special Envoy for International Water Affairs, The Netherlands at November 25, 2021 at 6:30 pm

The climate crisis is a water crisis. Nine out of 10 natural disasters are water related. Between 2001 and 2018, droughts, floods, landslides and storms caused over US\$1.700 billion in damage worldwide, according to the UN, impacting over 3.4 billion people, the majority in Asia. Without water, there is no energy and no food. But too much water and ever-increasing 'extremes' also go hand in hand with far too *little* water – periods of drought align with the flow of refugees and increased conflicts. We are depleting our natural water supplies at a ruinous rate, and sea level rise is jeopardizing our cities and deltas.

The choice between prevention and repair is false. Both are essential. We need to start at the source: reduce greenhouse gasses and make efficient and careful use of our planet and all of its resources. Yet at the same time, we need to prepare boldly, comprehensively and inclusively for tomorrow's extremes. Our human-made systems are simply not fit for that future.

We need a new approach, one that is rigorously inclusive, innovative and comprehensive, with everything and everyone working together from beginning to end. A mechanism through which future understanding becomes an inspiration and drives innovation forward, and which includes everyone in the process. With a better collective understanding of the future, we can gain a better idea of how to fund innovations arising from that understanding. These are the millions we need to invest to secure the billions for the projects that will really make a difference and prepare our society and planet for our challenging future.

"Water as Leverage" is the program Henk Ovink initiated to spur this collaborative action, to identify needs and opportunities while building partnerships across all layers of society, across all institutions and their silos, across everything and everyone. Water as Leverage is living proof of both the need for action and the opportunities we can implement, if only we drive our actions inclusively, holistically and sustainably.

About

Henk Ovink was appointed in 2015 by the Dutch Cabinet as the first Special Envoy for International Water Affairs. As the Ambassador for Water, he is responsible for advocating water awareness around the world, building institutional capacity and coalitions amongst governments, multilateral organizations, private sector and NGO's, and initiating innovative approaches to address the world's stressing needs on water.

"Worldwide, water is the number one global risk, the connecting challenge across the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and our best opportunity for inclusive and comprehensive action!"
Henk Ovink

Ovink is also Sherpa to the UN / World Bank High Level Panel on Water.

Henk Ovink served on President Obama's Hurricane Sandy Rebuilding Task Force where he led the long term innovation, resilience and rebuilding efforts. He developed and led the 'Rebuild by Design' competition and initiated the National Disaster Resilience Competition. Before joining the Task Force Ovink was both Acting Director General of Spatial Planning and Water Affairs and Director National Spatial Planning for the Netherlands.

Henk teaches at Harvard GSD, the London School of Economics and the University of Groningen. His book - written together with Jelte Boeijenga - "Too Big. Rebuild by Design: A Transformative Approach to Climate Change" explores his climate and water work for the Obama Administration. In January 2018 Henk Ovink was awarded for his 'transformative global water work' an honorary membership from the Royal Institute of Engineers of the Netherland.

The 2G rule applies in the Oskar von Miller Forum.

In addition there is a livestream of the lecture on www.ovmf.de.