



DELTAS IN TIMES OF CLIMATE CHANGE II

INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE

OPPORTUNITIES FOR PEOPLE, SCIENCE, CITIES AND BUSINESS
ROTTERDAM THE NETHERLANDS, 24-26 SEPTEMBER 2014

Plenary closure “Transformative change in the making”

“Change is in the air. Today’s Climate Summit has shown an entirely new, cooperative global approach to climate change....Today shows that the world is finally waking up to the economic and social opportunities of taking action on climate change.”

That was United Nations Secretary-General Ban-Ki Moon reflecting on the outcomes of the UN Climate Summit that took place in New York on 23 September—and his positive message can only have served to encourage participants in the Deltas in Times of Climate Change II Conference, as they came to the Rotterdam’s World Trade Centre the next morning to kick off the third and final day of workshops and sessions.

Henk Ovink, Hurricane Sandy Rebuilding Task Force / US Department of Housing and Urban Development, USA: The transformative capacity of adaptation

The first speaker to address the closing plenary session was Henk Ovink, Senior Advisor to the Hurricane Sandy Rebuilding Taskforce. Picking up on a theme from the Conference’s [second plenary](#), Ovink stressed that adaptation opens up a whole range of possibilities for improving the quality of the spaces we live in while reducing their vulnerability. He gave two examples of this potential for transformation, both from right here in the Netherlands: the Room for the River Programme, which is increasing the discharge capacity of the Rhine while improving the overall environmental quality of the region; and the Delta Programme, which is ensuring both that the Netherlands remains safe and attractive, and that it will have enough freshwater in the years to come.

Ovink also had a few pointers based on his experience with the Rebuilding Taskforce, noting in particular that “resiliency should not just be about bouncing back, but about bouncing back differently, better, instead of a copy-paste of what was there before.”

Prof.dr. Frans Berkhout (Chair Scientific Committee), King’s College, United Kingdom / Future Earth Programme, France: Award ceremony Best Young Delta Scientist (presentation and poster)

The next speaker to take the podium was Frans Berkhout, Professor of Environment, Society and Climate at Kings College London. Berkhout was on hand to announce the winners of the Young Scientist Awards in two categories: best presentation and best poster. The winner of the first award was Brenda Walles for her presentation “The Role of Biogenic Reefs for Coastal Adaptation and Conservation”, which research she did together with Aad Smaal, Bram van Prooijen and Tom Ysebaert of Wageningen UR the Netherlands. The price for the best poster was awarded to Ana Genua-Olmedo for her poster “Modelling the Impacts of Relative Sea-Level Rise on Deltaic Rice Fields”. This research was carried out by her, Carles Alcaraz, Carles Ibáñez, and Nuno Caiola of the Institute of Agro-Food Research and Technology, Spain. Each award carries a prize of EUR 1,000.

Paula Verhoeven, City of Rotterdam

It then fell to Paula Verhoeven, Session Chair and Director, Sustainability and Climate Change with the City of Rotterdam as well as Chair of the Rotterdam Climate Proof Recommendations





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Committee, to thank the Organising Committee for what she rightly called an “amazing and inspiring conference.”

Prof. Pier Vellinga, Knowledge for Climate, Chair of the Conference: Closure of the conference

Next up was Professor Pier Vellinga, Director of the Knowledge for Climate Programme and Chair of the Conference, who highlighted some of its outcomes. In remarks that resonated with a point Stéphane Hallegatte made at the [second day's plenary](#) —“We need an entirely new narrative, a new way of conceiving of adaptation” —Vellinga highlighted a number of such shifts: away from a focus on statistics and towards new narratives and an openness to learning from best practices, from damage control to value creation, from climate-proofing to future-proofing and from awareness-raising to pilot projects. At the same time, Vellinga drew attention to some sobering statistics: of the larger European cities, 8% have no adaptation plans or strategies at all, 68% are planning on having plans at some point but have nothing in place at the moment, and 16% are actively working on a plan. That leaves a mere 8% with plans in place. Vellinga expressed the hope that these numbers will have changed markedly by the time the [PROVIA International Adaptation Future Conference](#) takes place in Rotterdam in 2016.

In closing the session and the Conference as a whole, Vellinga had the following words to the wise for participants to take home with them: “It’s not that technology’s some bottleneck that’s stifling adaptation”, he said. “What we need, rather, is the courage to work together to test new solutions and strike out in new directions.”

