



*“When I was a **kid**, we would have our vacations by the **ocean**. My mom put a little harness on me because I always wanted to **run to where the water was**,”* recalled [Henk Ovink](#) with a smile.

In 2015, he was appointed by the Dutch Cabinet as the **First Special Envoy for International Water Affairs for the Kingdom of the Netherlands**. He is responsible for raising awareness about looking after water around the world.

As “**Ambassador for Water**”, Henk Ovink spoke to the **Tec community** during *“**Impactful Dialogs: Reimagining the Future of Water in Nuevo León**”* about the importance of **leadership and commitment in young people** for tackling the **challenges of climate change**.



*“These types of **commitments** must come from **all over the world**. This is where we speak truth to power.*

*“It’s where we must **lead by example** and where we must show the world that we really care about the promises we’ve made to future generations,” he said.*

*“**What can we do that we know works? Then we scale it up, so that water becomes a reflection of the change.**” - Henk Ovink*

He stressed that it’s necessary to **come together** as a society in order to achieve significant change.

*“I think it’s important we come together as a **global society** to create impactful **commitments** and **actions**.*

*“We have to ask ourselves, **what is it that we can do that we know works? Then we scale it up, so that water becomes a reflection of the change we’re observing**” he said.*



Mario Adrián Flores, Vice President of the Monterrey Region and General Director of the Monterrey campus, introduced this conversation by saying that it's necessary to take action regarding climate change.

"Climate change is apparent across the globe, and we need to make urgent changes today. To do so, we need to reimagine the future of our cities," he said.

The interviewer was **José Antonio Torres**, Director of Urban Planning and Sustainability at the Tec.

Paving the way to solving water shortages

During his seven years as Ambassador for Water, Ovink has been responsible for **building institutional capacity** and **coalitions between governments** and multilateral

organizations and initiating innovative approaches to provide **solutions to water scarcity** around the world.

Furthermore, he is Sherpa to the **UN/World Bank High-Level Panel on Water**. He served on President Obama's Hurricane Sandy Rebuilding Task Force, where he led long-term reconstruction plans.

“You have to have the courage to take off your suit and shoes, roll up your sleeves, and get to work along with everyone else.” - Henk Ovink

He also developed the **“Rebuild by Design”** contest and initiated the National Disaster Resilience Competition in the United States.

2023: A decisive year for water

Henk Ovink will participate in the next [United Nations Water Conference](#) in March 2023 in New York.

*“It’s a **moment of truth**. If we don’t yield results, we’re showing that we can’t do what we set out to do. If that happens, no one will take action,”* he shared.

In the same way, he highlighted what future generations need in order to face these issues.

“Leadership across everyone in society, from a little Samaritan girl to the president.”

*“You have to have **the courage to take off your suit and shoes, roll up your sleeves, and get to work** along with everyone else. It’s a type of leadership that is sorely lacking,”* he shared.

He also said that nowadays, people are afraid of complex challenges, due to how overwhelming the consequences can be.

*“Providing opportunities with alternatives and an agenda for the future where **we look at possibilities** is something we can **connect** with to motivate ourselves and work efficiently,”* he said.

The three pillars of real change

Henk Ovink explained that, together with his team, he has developed a program with **three pillars** to **tackle the water crisis**:

1. Raise awareness of the true complexity of the water crisis.

“Make the world understand the negative impact that a lack of water would have, not only for personal use, but for the global structure,” he pointed out.

2. Bring about systemic change.

“Don’t just have a mindset of repairing damage when dealing with the issue, so that infrastructure and the quality of services accessible to all may prosper,” he said.

3. Manage water in a transparent, inclusive, and equitable way.

“So that this resource may be universally available to everyone without any obstacles and thus avoid barriers to progress,” he said.



Students spend time with Henk Ovink

Aldo Ramírez, a research professor at the School of Engineering and Sciences, ended the talk with a **reflection** on the topic of water.

*“Thank you, Henk, for sharing your **vision and experience** of the water crisis with us, letting us know that it goes beyond not having water for a day or two.*

*“It involves **organizations, governance, geopolitics, financial issues, and higher-level issues,**” he shared.*

The conversation was attended by students from different university courses and there were even **students from the Netherlands** on international Tec programs in the audience.



“It’s quite interesting to see and listen to (Henk), because he gave us a perspective that we didn’t know about either, and to see the differences between now and then. It was interesting” said Wensen, an Industrial Engineering student.

This dialog took place thanks to the collaboration of the [FEMSA Foundation](#), the **Monterrey Environmental Fund**, and guests from the Kingdom of the Netherlands.

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