

LIVING WITH WATER: THE DUTCH EVOLUTION FROM ENGINEERING FLOOD DEFENCES TO TRANSFORMATIVE DELTA MANAGEMENT

Speaker

Prof. Chris Zevenbergen

Chair Professor
Delft University of Technology (TUD)

Abstract

This presentation explores how the Netherlands has evolved from relying primarily on engineering structures to protect against floods toward a more integrated and adaptive approach to water management. It highlights the shift from fighting water to living with it, combining spatial planning, ecological restoration, innovation, and climate adaptation to build a safer and more resilient delta for the future.

Biography

Chris Zevenbergen is Distinguished Professor at Chulalongkorn University, Emeritus Professor at TU Delft and IHE Delft (from July 2025), and Visiting Professor at Southeast University (SEU), China (since 2016). He is an internationally recognized expert in climate resilience, urban flood risk management, and water-sensitive urban development. Over a career spanning more than four decades, he has advanced innovative approaches to building resilient deltas, cities, and communities facing climate change, flooding, and environmental pressures. His work spans both Europe and the Global South, with a strong focus on translating resilience science into practical solutions across diverse socio-economic and environmental contexts. His research focuses on integrated flood resilience strategies, flood-proof building designs and technologies, adaptive urban planning, and decision-support tools for resilient infrastructure development. Combining engineering and design expertise with ecological, socio-economic, and institutional perspectives, he promotes holistic solutions that strengthen the capacity of urban and delta systems to anticipate, withstand, and recover from climate-related risks. He has published more than 200 scientific publications.



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