

**Wrap-up Event “European Rivers Embraced?”, Nijmegen, 30th January 2015
by Prof. Dr. Ir. Huib de Vriend**



Program

- **Mile Lukič** singer/ musician, Mook & Sarajewo opens the conference.
- **Hubert Bruls**, Major of the municipality of Nijmegen: Welcome and some words about the ongoing project “Nijmegen embraces the river Waal”.
- Presentation first copies of report “Inspiration document Climate Change Adaptation along the Dutch rivers” by **Marnix de Vriend** to **Hubert Bruls**, and **Jos van Alphen**, staff member Delta Commissioner, The Hague.
- **Marnix de Vriend** on “European Rivers Embraced: based on the <<Inspiration document Climate Change Adaptation along the Dutch rivers>> About wise use of flood plains and governance challenges.”
- **Thomas Kahlix**, Board member (Verwaltungsrat) at StEB Stadtentwässerungsbetriebe Köln & Bürgerinitiative Rodenkirchen on “The role of citizens in stimulating German capabilities in diminishing flood risks along the river Rhine and their potential downstream significance”.
- Discussion with speakers and audience presided by **Huib de Vriend**, preceded by two 2-minute statements from: **Adam Guy**, Programme Manager, Thames Estuary Partnership, London, UK; **Henk de Hartog**, Secretary Stuurgroep Deltarijn, Progr. WaalWeelde, Province of Gelderland, Arnhem.
- **Huib de Vriend**, professor Delft University of Technology and owner of “With Nature” consultancy, Oegstgeest on “Long-term morphological effects of interventions in the Dutch Rhine branches”.
- **Barry James**, Strategic Commissioning Manager - Community Infrastructure, Somerset County Council on “What happened in Somerset last Winter/ Spring and how to prevent that by building up the 20 years Action Plan with the communities”.
- **Joop de Bijl**, Senior policy advisor water safety, Water Authority Aa and Maas, Den Bosch on Dutch water governance in general illustrated through two Maas projects combining too much and too little.
- **Caspar Pompe**, consultant water- and energy management will elaborate on “The broad and promising potentials of Rhine Meuse connections”.
- **Ad Jeuken** of Deltares (Coordinator Fresh Water for Knowledge for Climate) on fresh water demands and the strategy the Delta program envisages for The Netherlands + some co notations on UK and Germany.
- Two parallel workshops on making effective use of floodplains and climate change: Workshop A on “Too much Water” by **Dennis Martens** owner of LiNO Arnhem and Workshop B on “Too little water” by **Rebecca Planteijdt** owner of Rethink Landscape.
- **Peter Philipssen** (of “Working With Nature”, London & Wageningen in cooperation with **Björn Prudon** of Waterboard Rivierenland, Tiel, both active in Deelstroomgebied Rijn-West) with a movie and a talk on “Fish Migration in the Dutch Delta” and the Water Framework Directive.
- Wrapping up and goodbye by **Marnix de Vriend** and **Huib de Vriend**.



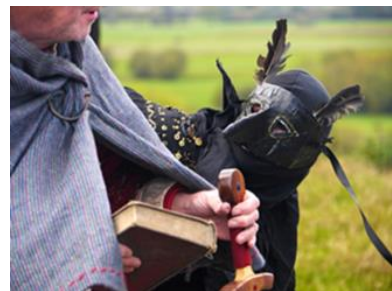


Painting “Trophic Levels” by Jethro Brice of the FutureMuseum in Bristol. Pictures from left to right: Marnix de Vriend presenting the first copies of the (summary of) the “Inspiration document on Climate Change Adaptation along Dutch Rivers” to Hubert Bruls (Major Nijmegen) and Jos van Alphen (Staff Delta commissioner, The Hague) (Picture by Geert Elemans); Piet Thijssen (Beuningen), Adam Guy (London) and Barry James (Somerset); Drinks with Mark de Bel (Deltares, Utrecht), Jeanne Mertens (Nijmegen), Geert Elemans (Groene Steden, Nijmegen), Rebecca Planteijdt (ReThink Landscape, Bemmelen), Marnix de Vriend (Aqua-δ Consult BV, Nijmegen), Dennis Martens (LiNO, Arnhem) and Juan Carlos Lara (Hollywood & Borculo). Two pictures on the right by Thomas Kahlx, Köln.

1. Once one starts interfering with a complex dynamic system like a lowland river or a deltaic area like the Netherlands, one cannot stop doing so, since the system responds to those interferences (polder subsidence by lack of sediment deposition, salt intrusion, environmental degradation, morphological responses, etc.);
2. Learn from experiences in countries where floodings are more frequent; if we aspire to a three-tier flood safety approach (prevention, preparation, disaster management), we have to build up experience with the latter;
3. Mobilize the power present in society; citizens are usually faster to respond than agencies, make use of their initiative and momentum;
4. Many rivers have been confined and deprived from large parts of their floodplains. This generally leads to an unnatural behaviour of floods (higher peaks, faster propagation). Floodplain reconnection and restoration/enhancement of the river's storage capacity helps renormalizing this behaviour;
5. Does the observation that the political focus shifts more and more towards the economic functions (especially transport) of the Rhine branches, so away from flood conveyance, water supply and the nature function, indicate that flood awareness is waning again?
6. The feasibility of PPP for infrastructural works with as long a long preparation time as river training or restoration works is a point of attention, since private parties have not much time to wait for the return on their investment. The government is suggested to develop a master plan first and then to split this into action plans that are economically feasible to private investors;
7. Upstream-downstream 'equity', i.e. a fair distribution of costs and benefits, requires other mechanisms than morality and solidarity. Whether economic mechanisms are effective remains to be seen, as these can turn into perverse stimuli (people chasing the money, instead of striving for fairness);
8. People respond to values, of which money is only one form. Therefore, make sure that plans appeal to their value system in order to gain public support;
9. Think strategically, don't let your thinking and actions be event-driven. River infrastructures for flood protection take a long time to be developed, so if you wait till the next flood you will be too late;
10. Make sure you keep momentum while political priorities, socio-economic conditions or public awareness, change;
11. Nice sound bite: “is Somerset a farmed wetland, or a wet farmland”?
12. In a river with tributaries, mind the chronology of floods: if flood peaks in the main stem and the tributaries are synchronous, consider the possibility to delay one or the other, such that the flood wave is spread better over time. This was mentioned for the Dommel/ Aa/ Dieze system and for the Maas, but it also applies to the Rhine, among others;

13. Connecting Rhine and Meuse might seem to be not very effective from a flood management point of view (floods in these rivers often occur at the same time), but it may well be so from other perspectives, such as regional development;
14. Upstream-downstream equity is an issue in drought management as well as in flood management;
15. In the workshops the influence relationship between government, stakeholders and community was emphasized. Apart from that, there is also the relationship between influence, decision power and responsibility, part of which is also reflected in the 'interest/funding/decision' (belang/betaling/zeggenschap) triad advocated by the water boards;
16. Other observations from the workshops:
 - It takes political courage to deviate from existing practices and involve stakeholders and the community in decision making;
 - Cross-border collaboration, and hence also upstream-downstream equity of border-crossing rivers, is difficult if the level of organization at either side of the border is very different;
 - Floods and droughts constitute different types of problems (acute and localized versus slowly developing and diffuse) which require different types of measures;
 - A river involves groundwater flows as well as surface water flow. They both convey large amounts of water, but they proceed at different timescales. Yet, groundwater flow should not be ignored (note that there can even be groundwater-induced floods, like a few years ago in the Somme).
 - Water is increasingly recycled, every drop is used several times on its way through a river system. By bringing used water back into the river (after treatment if necessary), it can contribute to drought prevention.

After the conference Peter Philipson (Nature at Work, London/ Wageningen), Reinier Bos (Hezelburcht, Nijmegen), Rebecca Planteijdt (ReThink Landscape, Bemmel), Thomas Kahlix (StEB Köln and Bürgerinitiative Hochwasser Rodenkirchen), Barry James (Somerset County Council), Dennis Martens (LiNO, Arnhem), Ton Verhoeven (Municipality Nijmegen), Adam Guy (Thames Estuary Partnership, London) and Marnix de Vriend (Aqua-δ Consult BV) in the absence of Huib de Vriend (With Nature, Oegstgeest) and Eric Huyskes (Deltares, Delft) talked for a long hour on their perspectives to bring ideas to businesses with mutual benefits. Several possibilities within the EU Interreg programs (2Seas, NEW and Northsea) were discussed and identified.



Networking game on 30th January 2015 with Ton Verhoeven (Municipality of Nijmegen), Ad Jeuken (Deltares, Delft), Huib de Vriend (With Nature, Oegstgeest), Maarten Smals, Director Koninklijke Smals, Cuijk), Dennis Martens (LiNO, Arnhem), Barry James (Somerset County Council, Taunton), Rob Roggema (Ass. Professor University of applied Sciences Larenstein, Velp and University of Queensland, Australia), Marjolein Sterk (Stichting ARK), Boo Schijven (Student European Studies, Maastricht), Jos van Alphen (Staff Delta Commissioner, The Hague), Caspar Pompe (Pompe Advies, Aansluitdijk BV, Nijmegen) and Maarten van Ginkel (Municipality Nijmegen) (Picture by Geert Elemans). The Netherlands 1995 (Picture by Rijkswaterstaat) and King Alfred on Burrow Mump, 7th October 2014 (picture by Antony Lyons, Exeter).