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Rural Science-Society-Policy Interfaces

MAP Position Paper

LAND USE & CLIMATE CHANGE

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Authors

WUR | Marianne Groot, Seerp Wigboldus

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Summary and key messages

A rather comprehensive plan for the Multi-Actor Platform (MAP) had been developed towards the end of 2021. It included a number of activities to be followed up in 2022. However, this follow-up was overruled by a report on the identification of potential drinking water extraction areas that was released by the Province. The report caused some turmoil in Rivierenland, for which reason many things had to wait, including the follow-up plans of the MAP. Interestingly, the turmoil had everything to do with the focus of the MAP, which is climate adaptation and water. Nevertheless, the connection to the topic was quite different as it came as a surprise to many in the fruit sector and part of the nursery sector. It caused some shockwaves in these sectors and in a short time a lot of letters were send to the Province. While a reply by the Province was extended, a campaign to protest against feared implications of the identification was launched. It was quite successful because a friendly approach was chosen. Though the identification as such did not change, the plans for further specification of where exactly water will be extracted and where not, changed: decisions will be made in a much shorter time span. A bit less than a year down the road, this has left the MAP in a new situation. It became very clear that the topic chosen as focus for the MAP for last year and this year is very relevant. However, new institutional developments around the newly formed (or in formation) Betuwse Water Table (BWT), have left the MAP wondering whether its intended activity areas will now be addressed by BWT, possibly with a stronger mandate, or whether BWT will only address part of those. It is still too early to tell.

Key messages:

- In multi-stakeholder processes it is important to check carefully whether all relevant stakeholders are connected. Sometimes a particular group (in this case a general farmer representative organisation) can be thought to represent any group from agriculture and horticulture, but this is not necessarily the case.
- What may seem to be a hiccup in the process of a MAP, may turn out to create new opportunities at a different level, something which point to the fact that a MAP will always be part of a wider dynamic that may (at least temporarily) take of the agenda. It may feel like being side-tracked, but it may also lead to deeper institutionalisation of efforts that the MAP intended to work on.
- A relationship between stakeholders, in which they trust each other is very worthwhile. Ç

1. Introduction

The position paper of 2021 concluded with the following recommendations and conclusions:

The fruit sector in Greenport Gelderland is confronted with the impacts of climate change. This relates to both having too much precipitation as shortage, as well as extreme weather events such as hail and high winds. The variety of implications makes it more difficult to adapt because needs will be different for one year/season to the other. It requires agility and timely anticipation. The MAP decided to focus (initially) on climate adaptation primarily.

There is already a lot happening in terms of policy development and development of implementation programs related to this. Major institutions such as the Water Board, the Province, and the national Rijkswaterstaat are involved in this, and municipalities are in the process of activating this locally. However, there are many interests involved, both locally, regionally, and nationally. As fruit sector in this region, one would ideally like to develop plans that are particularly attractive to the sector. However, cooperation is essential and the sector needs to not only accept this reality, but also start playing a more active role in related consultations, which also means listening to and appreciating other stakeholder interests and perspectives.

In early November 2021, the Fruitpact decided to take the following steps:

1. Sort out a couple of more things in terms of information and data needed to inform the action plan. The background document developed by WUR already provides a lot of this, but there are a number of remaining gaps to be addressed (see above).
2. Translate the existing background document into something that can serve as a vision for Fruitpact as well and as such become a reference document.
3. Establish support inside and outside the sector (notably water board, province, municipalities) for Fruitpact approach to addressing water and climate adaptation.
4. Develop capacity to be able to appropriately engage with wider processes related to climate adaptation and spatial design in Rivierenland.
5. Make annual plan(s) that are in line with the approach.
6. And, above all, get started with concrete possibilities for action (low-hanging fruit and no-regret options).

However, a few weeks later, everything changed as it became clear that large parts of Rivierenland were identified as potential areas for future winning of drinking water, and after a new message was sent out by the Province. This could potentially affect a variety of activities in those areas, including fruit cultivation and tree nurseries. The news sent a bit of a shockwave through the fruit and nursery sectors which are big in the region. Suddenly, all attention focused on somehow trying to influence these plans. For this reason, the intended follow-up on the steps to take identified in November 2021, were parked. Things were too tense to continue as planned. The situation was paradoxical: it was all about water and its future availability (and so very relevant to the MAP); at the same time it was so political and sensitive, that we were advised to avoid to combine these two dynamics. Now that the dust has settled a bit, it appears like the turmoil may have given rise to more opportunities for collaborative processes in relation to water in Rivierenland and that the SHERPA MAP have become, without us planning to do so, part of a wider stakeholder process in the region. In the following, we will further describe what happened and distil some insights from these processes.

2. Current situation based on background research and evidence

In essence, the situation in Rivierenland as described in the position paper of 2021 has not changed in terms of needs to anticipate and prepare for the impact of climate change on water availability and adapt accordingly. However, because of the identification of three large areas in the region as potential drinking water strategic reserves, the action plan regarding where to go as MAP was halted. What first seemed to be a short intermezzo after which the MAP would be able to continue, turned out to create quite a different 'landscape' of institutional dynamics. These dynamics may, on the one hand, have side-tracked the efforts of the MAP, but on the other hand may have created new opportunities to address climate adaptation in relation to water in a more regional collaborative effort (less focused on one specific sector).

In the following pages, we summarise what actually happened.

Short history of the campaign:

1. The announcement of the identification of potential water catchment areas (in relation to complementary strategic stocks) was made by the Province (Gelderland) in autumn 2021. Three areas, two of which are really large, are located in Rivierenland. It came as a surprise to most MAP members (later we learnt that at least one of them did know about this and must have assumed the others knew as well). There was an opportunity available to share perspectives ("zienswijzen"), but on short notice as there were only a few weeks left in the formal process.

Figure 1: The cover of the infamous announcement

2. Quickly, representatives of the fruit sector raise awareness among members that this was something big. "Many fruit growers did not right away realise that this was bad news". "It would make the future less predictable". It included a call to action to the sector to send perspectives ("zienswijzen") to the Province. There was a massive response and the Province received many of such perspectives.

3. Then, there was silence from the Province, because they were busy working through the many submitted perspectives, not only from the fruit and nursery sectors. However, the sector representatives had no idea what was happening and were getting concerned that their action did not have any effect. Thus, they decided to start a campaign. This included starting up a website, www.laatdeteeltnietopdrogen.nl (don't let cultivation run dry) and all kinds of activities to draw the attention of decision makers to the potential negative impact that the tentative plans regarding drinking water areas would have. Mainly how it would allegedly/possibly not allow fruit farmers (and tree nurseries) to pump up water when they would need it to protect trees against late frosts spring and heat in summer.

Figure 2: From the home page of the campaign website

4. Deliberately, the choice was made to respond in a creative and friendly way. This turned out to be a good choice and created more goodwill.

5. A period of gathering support from both within the sector and from e.g. municipalities followed. It was quite special that some municipalities chose to support the campaign. It included influencing the provincial political representatives (statenleden and gedeputeerden). Banners appeared in the

open landscape, about 2,000 signatures were collected as well as a public friendly manifestation, with apples for free, was organised at the beginning of the political discussion at the Provincial Counsel.

6. The response from the area (particularly fruit and nursery sectors) came as a bit of a shock at the Province. So the first rounds of talks were held. A number of results were achieved for the sectors/the area. The identified area for potential drinking water catchment, would at some point need to be specified much more and eventually, a much smaller area would be selected for actual extraction of water. But it could be 20 years before that more specific selection would be made. Because of the pressure, this was reduced to a maximum of 3 years, after which probably only a third of the area would be used for actual water extraction. Though the plans in general will continue, such much more specific plans would provide better insights into who/what would be affected by the plans and where exactly.

7. Another decision was to form a so-called Betuwse Water Table: a consultative platform in which representatives from NFO (Dutch fruit growers organisation), TCO (local nursery sector), LTO (general agriculture sector) and another fruit sector representative, will sit down with representatives from the provincial government, the water board, the drinking water company (Vitens) and the institute that is responsible for the national water infrastructure (Rijkswaterstaat).

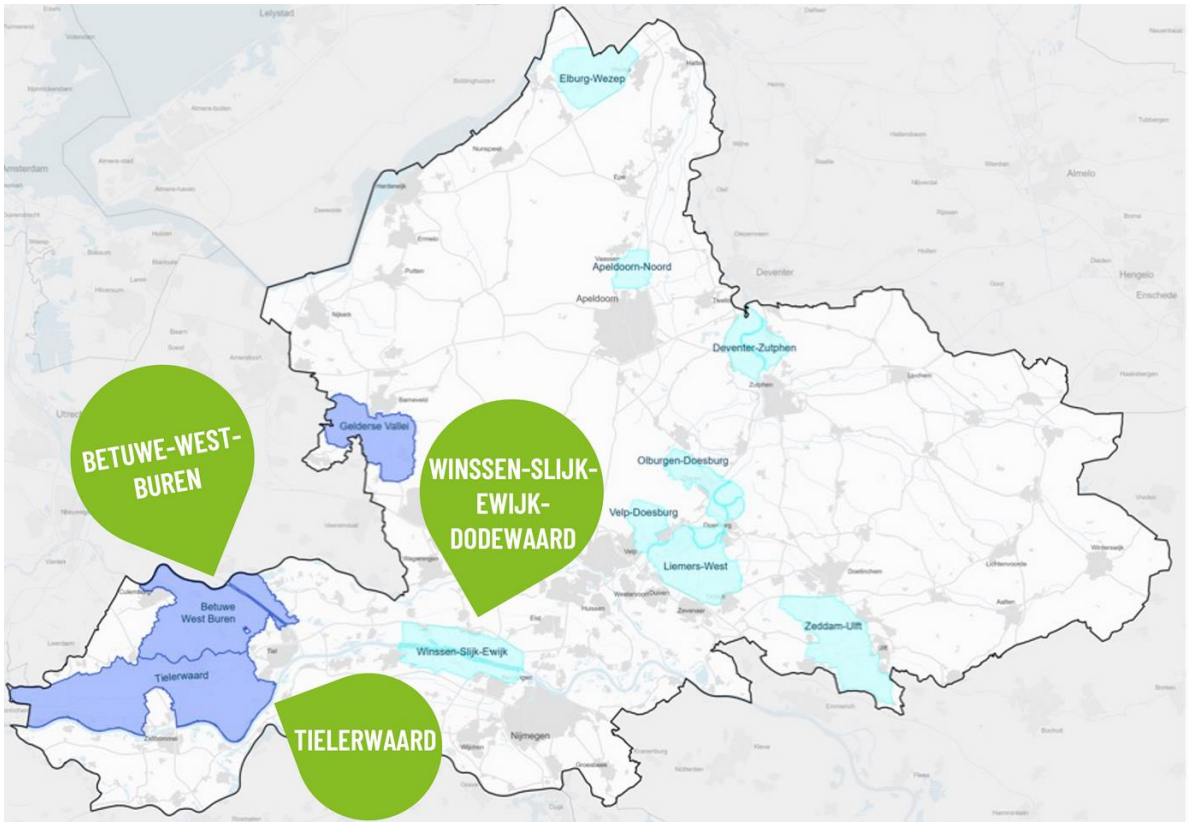


Figure 3: The potential drinking water extraction areas in Gelderland province – the green bubbles point to the areas in Rivierenland

The Betuwse Water Table is still in the process of being shaped and formed into the desired setup with desired functions. This "water table" is a multi-stakeholder group to discuss the water issues and to inform each other, in order to give advice about water issues. Box 1 summarises key features of this institution.

BOX 1: Betuwse Water Table

It is not meant to be a decision table (that is up to politics) but an advisory table.

It will first work on making an inventory of perspectives, questions, etc., discuss this, and then decide on what the Water Table will do exactly, what it will focus on, and what this means for mode of operation.

It will receive support from a facilitator to help the various stakeholders to be able to make progress together. That person is meant to be someone who is also acquainted with hydrological issues.

Fruitpact (prominently part of the MAP) will not be officially be represented in it, but indirectly will have connections at a personal level.

There will be two levels at which the Betuwse Water Table will operate: an officials' water table (civil servants), and an administrators' level.

Not everything is clear yet as to how this Betuwse Water Table will function and some representatives from the fruit sector are not so sure about its efficacy at the moment.

3. Position of the Multi-Actor Platform

So where does this leave the Multi-actor Platform? This became a key question as the situation around the identification of potential drinking water extraction areas evolved between December 2021 and July 2022. In this chapter, we discuss implications of recent developments.

3.1. Identified needs

The needs as described in the position paper of 2021 are still as relevant in 2022 as it was then:

The fruit sector in Greenport Gelderland is confronted with the impacts of climate change. This relates to both having too much precipitation as shortage, as well as extreme weather events such as hail and high winds. The variety of implications makes it more difficult to adapt because needs will be different for one year/season to the other. It requires agility and timely anticipation. The MAP decided to focus (initially) on climate adaptation primarily.

Already a lot is happening in terms of policy development and development of implementation programs related to this. Major institutions such as the Water Board, the Province, and the national Rijkswaterstaat are involved in this, and municipalities are in the process of activating this locally. However, there are many interests involved, both locally, regionally, and nationally. As fruit sector in this region, one would ideally like to develop plans which are particularly attractive to the sector. However, cooperation is essential and the sector needs to not only accept this reality, but also start playing a more active role in related consultations, which also means listening to and appreciating other stakeholder interests and perspectives.

Different stakeholders have different adaptation needs and interests. They are often confronted with different types of consequences of climate change itself and consequences of adaptation policies and programs that are being developed. This creates a complicated situation in which government and EU subsidy programs may help to make more possible in terms of finding ways forward in view of those different needs.

Research needs and gaps include mapping institutional lock-ins that limit options and opportunities for climate change adaptation. For example, the region of this MAP has rivers flowing through the area which in principle should create ample opportunities for addressing situations of drought. However, because of national policies on water management, the water flowing through their area may not be allowed to be tapped of during times of drought because of priorities for water availability further downstream. Similar limitations are caused by treaties such as the Mannheim Convention on free traffic on the river Rhine which does not allow for infrastructure to be put in the river to enable water inlets during severe droughts.

3.2. Existing interventions and actions

In this section, we further expand on the possible/feared implications of the identification of potential water extraction areas.

The Province which is the government responsible for the process of the identification of new water catchment areas in Rivierenland, was a bit surprised by all the protest coming from, in particular, the fruit and nursery sectors. After all, the process of this identification had already started some five years ago. It is related to the strategic water resources imposed by the national government and includes involvement of stakeholders. So the announcement about the identified water catchment areas could not have come as a surprise to them, they could have seen this coming.

Yet, these sectors did feel surprised and were wondering whether they had missed something, not paid attention to something, or "what happened?" they asked themselves. From both sides there was a genuine feeling puzzled by this situation. The question seemed to be: "who exactly had been part of the multi-stakeholder processes over the past five years?". To cut a long story short: it turned out to be one major farmer representative organisation (LTO), which does represent livestock, arable, and greenhouse farming, but not the fruit sector and not all tree nurseries. This appears to have been where things went wrong and two major sectors for Rivierenland, fruit farms and tree nurseries, were left unaware of what was coming. It has been taken up by representatives of the fruit sector as a reminder that they need to be better connected across different sectors. The need to stay connected and to exchange information (and when needed, campaign together and not alone) has become apparent and it has been one of the positive outcomes of all the turmoil, that.

Anyway, the fruit sector and tree nurseries were quick to launch a major campaign to draw attention to the feared negative consequences of the water catchment area identification. And as they opted for a relatively friendly campaign, it was received well, generally speaking, also by the Province. Drinking water came to be seen as a competitor of water used for the sector. There are similar dilemmas at play as in the Nitrogen-emission discussions in the Netherlands. The country is getting more crowded and 'not everything can be done everywhere'. Future-proofing sector interests and future-proofing drinking water for a growing population became competitors.

So what is the problem of the identification of the potential new water catchment areas?

In terms of quantity, it seems not to be immediately a problem, unless a farm is located right next to where the water will be pumped up. They can still pump up water from more shallow places than from where drinking water will be pumped up.

However, in terms of quality, there is an issue. Water from where it is still legal to pump up to water trees, contains a lot of iron and needs to be treated in most cases before it can be used for irrigation/frost protection (Figure 4).

Surface water, as an alternative, is not available in sufficient measure, particularly not in the western part of Rivierenland.

Due to the winning of water, the ground water level in these specific places will decrease, this has consequences for the cultivation.

Another issue is the uncertainty about where exactly water will be extracted in the future. In these areas restrictions will be made for the crop protection, as specific chemicals will no longer be allowed to use.

In the perspective of the sector, the campaign was reasonably effective in the sense that they were listened to and led to the start of a platform called the Betuwse Water Table (still in the start-up process, so not yet an accomplished fact). However, the campaign has not led to a change in the identification as such, but rather led to the promise that the process to decrease the possible water catchment areas to the final ones, where exactly water would be pumped up (close to these places, regulations will be more strict), will be accelerated. See Figure 5 for a clarification of the difference between the entire identified area for potential drinking water extraction, and the anticipated choice of specific locations where water extraction will actually take place in the future.

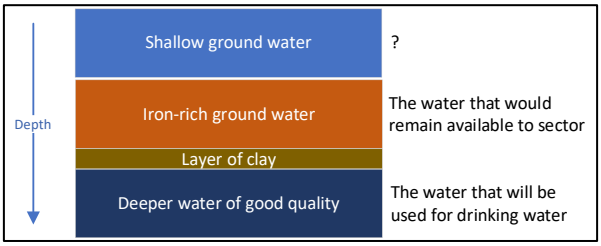


Figure 4: Tentative understanding about the various levels at which water may be one. Due to different soil compositions, this picture will not apply everywhere in Rivierenland.

The two sectors had achieved about as much as was possible at this stage.

The focus now tends to be on the (potential) special drinking water catchment areas, but it is important to look more broadly at the quality of soil-water systems. That requires a broader approach than just water quantity, which appears to be the focus of the Betuwse Water Table. Perhaps, it will become part of its focus later on as well.

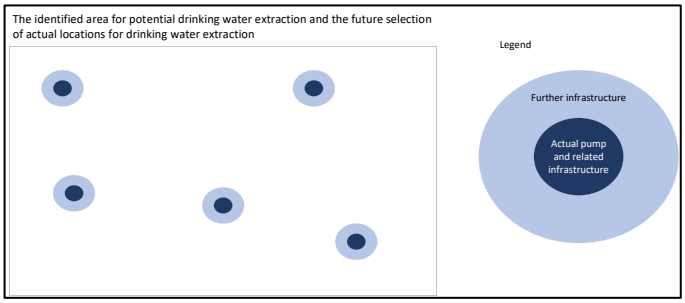


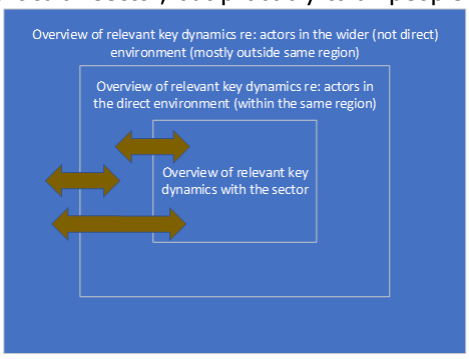
Figure 5: In a water catchment area, only in some places water will be pumped up and in those locations, restrictions to sector activities will be complete

In general, over the last decade trust in the government has decreased due to some negative examples. It is therefore very important to stay connected and to build on a good relationship in which you keep each other informed about uncertainties or new developments. An integrated and broad approach in which hydrology is one of the factors and not the only one, is also important. The economic impact, important for the sector, was not (or seemed not to be) included in the process. The Betuwse Water Table, as multi stakeholder platform can be a good medium for this.

3.3. Recommendations from the MAP

3.3.1. Recommendations for future rural policies

A key point brought forward by MAP member is the need for having an overview of various dynamics and developments that need to considered making the tree/fruit sector prepared for the future, including in relation to climate change and water. This not only applies to a particular sector, but probably to all people and stakeholders in a region. It is difficult to navigate and position oneself if it is not clear in relation to what such navigating and positioning needs to be done.



It may be good to further explore what would be possible in terms of first creating more of such overview, and then to keep it up to date to inform decision making. Such function cannot be comprehensive since people would be overwhelmed by it. Hence, it would need to be presented through user friendly interfaces, perhaps along the lines of a number of key categories.

This also relates to the Dutch saying that "onbekend maakt onbemind" (unknown makes unloved). If stakeholders do not know each other well enough, and do not know why they approach matters the way they do, and they do not know what they are planning for, this creates an apprehensive attitude. One of the good outcomes of all the turmoil in relation to the identification of the potential drinking water extraction areas, was that some stakeholders started communicating more and better understanding where the other was coming from. In a way, through the crisis some stakeholders who had not been in contact much, were obliged to connect. One might say that sometimes a good crisis helps. This means that proactively sharing more information in terms of creating such overview of key dynamics, perspectives, plans, etc. from a range of stakeholders, can help prevent that a crisis is needed before stakeholders start to become really interested in each other's views, positions, and plans.

The Betuwse Water Table may in the future include such functions, but perhaps it will be more something to be taken up by e.g. the Fruitpact itself.

Another issue is the consideration that rural policies are needed in relation to content matter, such as water management. But, it seems just as important to have good policies in places to guide stakeholder processes in ways that create **transparency** as well as clarity about future implications, because that will help in building trust.

Finally, and related, the issue **reliability** and of an alleged 'unreliable government' came to the table. The fear that the government at this point in time says that the fruit sector does not need to be concerned, but that after a couple of years it will turn out that restrictions will be put in place after all. This is a bit of a catch 22 situation. The government will find it difficult to guarantee that no further restrictions will be applied, or it is even impossible to do that because conditions may change. At the same time, fruit growers, have to make decisions for their farms and need a certain framework in which to act. This situation may not be resolved. The only thing that can help is to have meaningful and continuous interactions between government and other stakeholders. This means to create transparency about intentions and (upcoming) plans, and keep it very clear that all stakeholders are in it together and are committed to finding ways forward as best as they can, acknowledging and accepting that you cannot always have things your own way. This is about trust building and cannot only be done in times of crisis. "Vertrouwen komt te voet en gaat te paard" (trust comes on foot, and leaves on horseback), which means that trust is something to be nurtured. In Rivierenland, some positive things happened in relation to this. The protest campaign decided to do so in a **friendly** (though insistent) manner and, at the same time, the Province showed its **willingness** to look for ways in which to make things more bearable for the sectors. In the midst of this all, it became clear that the fruit and nursery sector have established a very good relationship with the water board. The water board has done its best over the years to support the sectors and this had not gone unnoticed. Because of that, stakeholders are willing to accept some negative implications a bit better if there is such basis.

3.3.2. Recommendations for future research agendas

Research may focus on investigating topics to get better facts to base decision making on. That is a key role to support multi-stakeholder processes. At the same time, in line with the thoughts shared in 4.3.1, the role of research may also be to better organise and make more accessible already available information and insights. In what happened in Rivierenland, we can see how both are needed at the same time. The exact potential impact of the identification of the potential drinking water extraction areas was not clear to many protesters who were more concerned about possible implications than knowing exactly what could happen. Making that clear helps in knowing what the issue is about and what not during stakeholder discussions. However, actually quite some information was already known, for instance by hydrologists at the Provincial office. Thus, there is more a need to unlock and present available information from different sources and bring it together in an accessible format, than bringing new information to the table. In other words, first make sure that already available information and insights are put together before embarking on getting yet more data and information.

Conclusions

Unexpectedly, the MAP on climate adaptation and water in Rivierenland was temporarily side-tracked because of a campaign in protest to the identification of potential water extraction areas in Rivierenland. It first seemed to complicate stakeholder processes, but it recently appeared that a new positive dynamic has evolved in which there will be an institutionalised process to advise on water management challenges in Rivierenland across sectors (the Betuwse Water Table, BWT). However, the BWT is still in the middle of its starting up, so it is too soon to say how this will work out exactly. Some members of the MAP consider the BWT to have taken over the role of the MAP for now. At the same time, some other members of the MAP are not so sure whether the BWT will be capable of covering the broad range of water related issues in the context of climate adaptation sufficiently, and that there is still room for the MAP to address complementary issues. At this point in time, the outcome regarding the future of the MAP is not yet clear. It may renew and adapt its focus for next year, but that is something that will become clearer towards the end of 2022.

Acknowledgements

n/a

Annex 1 Methodology used by the MAP

The MAP has not really functioned this year in the intended way, as external processes made it impossible to continue with the plans the MAP had for this year (see the story above). For this reason, there have not been formal workshops, but formal meetings of Fruitpact were continued. In informal ways, contact with some of the members of the MAP was maintained. Recently, some interviews with MAP members were held in which they reflected on what happened after the identification of the potential drinking water extraction areas was published, on how these developments related to the mission of the MAP, and what developments meant for the future of the MAP. About this latter point, the key question is "has the MAP's function (partly) been taken over by the Betuwse Water Table, or is it time to pick up as MAP where things were left at the end of 2021?". At this point in time, it is not clear whether it is appropriate to still have a meeting as MAP at the very end of 2022, and if so, what its focus should be.

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