

## ***Interactive comment on “Measuring perspectives on future flood management on the Rhine: application and discussion of Q methodology” by G. T. Raadgever et al.***

**G. T. Raadgever et al.**

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The authors of this paper would like to thank M. Visser for the many constructive comments. Below we describe how we handled the referee’s specific comments. We also submitted an author comment, in a new discussion thread, in which we explain the general changes that we will make to the aim and the structure of the manuscript.

1 and 2. A fixed distribution is indeed no obligation, but the fixed distribution forces the respondent to compare their agreement with each statement, in relation to the other statements, over and over again. This decreases the risk of arbitrary or biased sorting, for example under influence of the respondent’s mood at the time of sorting, and to increase the repeatability of the sort. However, from the application it

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occurred that some respondents were dissatisfied about the time and effort required to iteratively put a fixed number of statements in each score category, and about the fact that their perspective could not be expressed using such a fixed distribution (cf. Rugg and McGeorge, 1997, who see this as a major disadvantage of Q sorting). This could be solved by allowing respondents to distribute statements over categories as they want, without prescribing the shape of the distribution (e.g. Steelman and Maguire, 1999). When the respondents are not at all stimulated to evaluate their agreement with one statement relatively to their agreement with another, however, accuracy of the elicited perspectives will be low. Furthermore, the web-based tool we used did not allow any deviation from the predetermined distribution. In the web-based tool, we could ask the participants why they gave certain statements a +3 score and others a -3 score, but we could not check the logic of the sorting, during the sort.

3. As far as we know, it is not a problem in Q methodology to have more respondents than statements.

4. We will put more emphasis on the fact that Q methodology decreases the influence of the researcher's values and interpretation on the results. In order to minimize the researcher's bias, we used as much as possible the statements as uttered during the interviews. We did obtain Q sorts of interviewees, and compared them to see if the results were consistent. This was largely the case.

5. We discussed preliminary Q sets with several colleagues of the author. Furthermore, we asked respondents to report on 1) technical problems, 2) problems with understanding the statements, or 3) missing statements. The resulting information was used to check the suitability of the online tool and of the Q set. Comments on the meaning of particular statements by German respondents resulted in a few minor reformulations.

6. As the Q set concerned a practical water management issue, it was not considered useful to set it up according to a strict theoretical framework (cf. Dryzek, 1993), but instead the Q set was developed in a more bottom way; as many aspects - covered in

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the concourse - as possible were included. In particular, statements on which opinions were expected to diverge were included. The statements concerned four issues that are relevant in a scenario study: 1) the current or general situation, 2) autonomous developments, 3) management strategies, and 4) the desired future situation. We did not determine in advance how many statements would concern each theme: we just tried to cover the aspects discussed in the interviews as comprehensively as possible.

7. We will delete the trivial remark about the loss of richness when aggregating individual perspectives. See further general authors' response.

8. The content of the text and Figures 1-4 is almost the same. We think the figures are a good way to display the essence of the policy argumentation structures within factors. We explain the argumentation structures already earlier in the manuscript. However, we will try to make the link between the text and the figures more clear. The only bias that may be introduced here is that the researcher assigns a statement to another place in the policy argumentation structure than somebody else would do, but this would not really influence the results.

9. See general authors' response.

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Interactive comment on Hydrol. Earth Syst. Sci. Discuss., 5, 437, 2008.

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