

***Interactive comment on “HESS Opinions
“Urgent water challenges are not sufficiently
researched”” by P. van der Zaag et al.***

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This is a useful ‘opinion paper’ that will no doubt form the centre piece of numerous coffee table debates among members of the water research community. Why are we writing and publishing more about water supply and not so much about sanitation? Why are we obsessed with irrigation and ignore the potential in rainfed innovation? Who are ‘we’ anyway? And from what ‘institutional perch’ do we make our proclamations about the so-called ‘developing’ world? With regard to content, I have no problems. The paper can be published with minor changes. The minor changes I suggest concern the abstract, the methodology, and the authors’ claim to ‘prove’ that water researchers are biased in their choice of topics. The abstract is purely descriptive. It must be revised to give the reader some indication of the findings of the paper. The methodology must be

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spelled out more clearly. Why did the authors choose ‘isiknowledge.com’ as opposed to other databases? Might the choice of database have influenced the findings? Perhaps the bulk of meaningful study on sanitation is being conducted by governments and private consultants and therefore does not involve scientists? This might suggest that there is a great deal of knowledge about sanitation but less to say about it in a public forum. Also, is it not possible that there could be fewer publications about certain topics because change in these areas happens more slowly? I am not saying that this is so. But the authors should consider these questions and then perhaps restate their bold claims of ‘proof’. Regarding ‘proof’: it seems to me the paper would benefit from a more modest claim. To say that they ‘prove’ something from this simple (but interesting) little study is simply incorrect.

Interactive comment on Hydrol. Earth Syst. Sci. Discuss., 6, 1411, 2009.

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