

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

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We thank François Molle for reviewing our paper and for his valuable suggestions. Here we respond to all specific issues raised. In a separate response we try to give a more coherent response addressing the major comments of all referees, taking advantage of observations made by other contributors, and drawing some conclusions.

- We agree that we only address the “why” question superficially. This obviously requires an explanation. It would be quite presumptuous if we claimed to fully understand the scientific status quo, and the underlying dynamics that gave rise to it. But even if we would (claim to) have such knowledge, it is much more interesting and much more productive to challenge all water scientists to do some self-searching. This is now already creating an interesting discussion in HESSD, and is more likely to have some impact.

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This point we have also elaborated in our general response (see separate document).

- Sanitation: If it is mainly a financial issue, then we would have expected this topic to feature prominently among economists and political scientists. But we know there are also technical issues (e.g. how to design sewer systems in high density informal and unplanned slums; etc.), as well as strong cultural dimensions. So we would expect a significant research outputs across the disciplines. That sanitation now has become popular (or at least mentioning it) is mainly due to intense lobbying by a small number of highly influential people. Note that the word sanitation was only later added to Target 10 of the 7th MDG (which reads: “Halve, by 2015, the proportion of people without sustainable access to safe drinking water and sanitation”)!

- Irrigation: Here we disagree with the referee: our search term was not “irrigation” but “irrigated agriculture”, which is very specific, and in our view just as specific as “rainfed agriculture”. However, a similar search in the Scopus database gave a less dramatic difference (see Gupta and Van der Zaag, 2009)

- Climate change: The observation that developing countries may face more immediate concerns than climate change is well taken, and we will ensure that in the revised version this is noted. We agree with the observation that climate change may receive too much attention/funds. We also agree that there is a proliferation of (‘dry’) desktop studies rather than (‘wet’) on-the-ground research with respect to the impacts of climate change.

- The global biofuel issue is indeed a relatively recent phenomenon.

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