

Interactive comment on “Analysing inter-relationships among water, governance, human development variables in developing countries: WatSan4Dev database coherency analysis” by C. Dondeynaz et al.

F. Laio (Editor)

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The two reviewers provided a rather critical assessment of the manuscript, with a recommendation to reject the paper (reviewer #1) or to return it to the Authors for major revisions (reviewer #2). Both reviewers raised several technical issues about the manuscript (e.g., regarding the temporal coverage and associated uncertainty of the collected data, or the use of the principal component analysis); the Authors provided timely responses, but these responses seem to be aimed at defending the content of

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the current manuscript, rather than demonstrating an aptitude to thoroughly revise the manuscript.

More importantly, both reviewers are concerned with the scientific significance of the manuscript (which is ranked as “poor” by both referees), and comment that the manuscript appears as an introduction to forthcoming research rather than a standalone research paper. A similar comment was raised by myself in the review phase preliminary to publication in HESSD ; the response by the Authors is that database building (which is described in this paper) was a critical part of research, and that it deserves publication also without further efforts aimed at analyzing the variables included in the database. Also based on the reviewers support, I cannot agree with the Authors about this point: HESS is a top-level, research-oriented, international journal, and presentation of “preliminary results” is not enough to have a manuscript published in HESS.

I therefore invite the Authors to thoroughly revise their manuscript, in particular by including more material about the applications and implications of the database which is described in the current version of the manuscript: simply confirming what is already known about the relationships among variables and indicators of development is not enough for a research paper in HESS. The manuscript in the current version is rather far below the acceptance threshold, and I would have recommended rejection if the topic (inter-relationships among water, governance, human development) were not extremely appealing for HESS; however, a profound rethinking of the manuscript is needed to increase the publication chances of the manuscript. My overall recommendation is therefore to provide the Authors with a further chance to improve the manuscript through a complete revision of it.

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