

1 **Where should hydrology go? An early-career perspective on the next**
2 **IAHS Scientific Decade: 2023-2032**

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46 **Where should hydrology go? An early-career perspective on the next**
47 **IAHS Scientific Decade: 2023-2032**

48 This paper shares an early-career perspective on potential themes for the
49 upcoming International Association of Hydrological Sciences (IAHS) scientific
50 decade (SD). This opinion paper synthesizes six discussion sessions in western
51 Europe identifying three themes that all offer a different perspective on the
52 hydrological threats the world faces and could serve to direct the broader
53 hydrological community: “Tipping points and thresholds in hydrology”,
54 “Intensification of the water cycle”, and “Water services under pressure”.
55 Additionally, four trends were distinguished concerning the way in which
56 hydrological research is conducted: big data, bridging science and practice, open
57 science, and inter- and multidisciplinary. These themes and trends will provide
58 valuable input for future discussions on the theme for the next IAHS SD. We
59 encourage other Early-Career Scientists to voice their opinion by organizing their
60 own discussions sessions and commenting on this paper to make this initiative
61 grow from a regional initiative to a global movement.

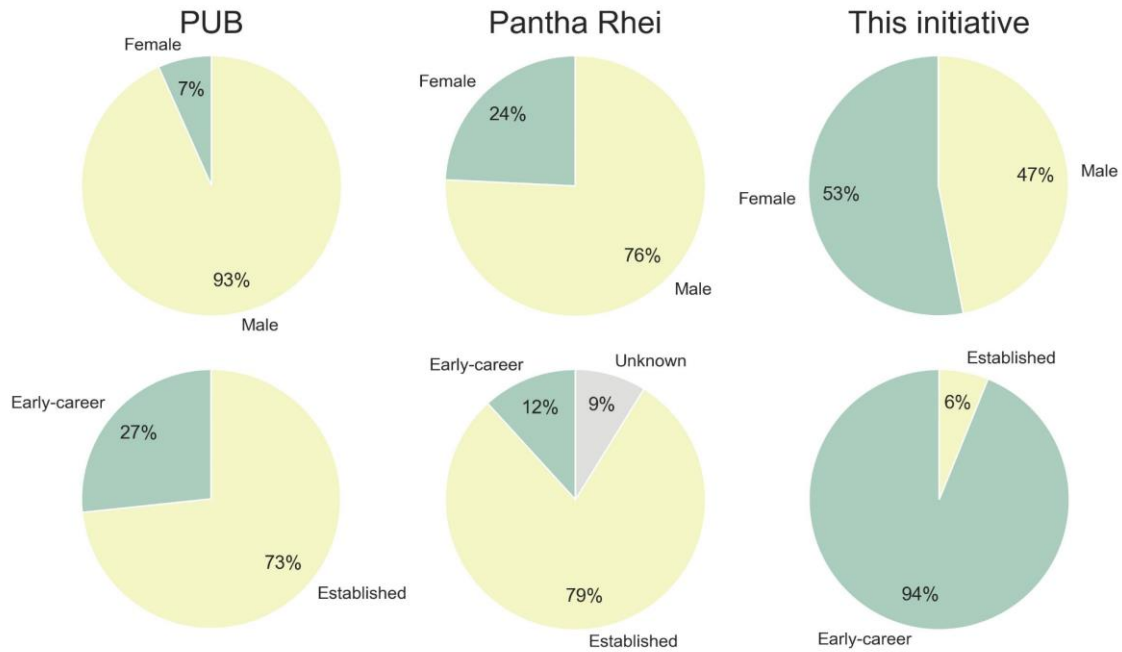
62 Keywords: IAHS scientific decade; early-career scientists; tipping points; water
63 cycle intensification; water services

64 **Introduction**

65 The International Association of Hydrological Sciences (IAHS) Scientific Decades
66 (SDs) aim to formulate science programmes and engage the scientific community to
67 advance the hydrological sciences. The first International Hydrological Decade was
68 formulated in 1965 by UNESCO (Nace, 1965) to highlight the field of hydrology as an
69 independent scientific discipline, but SDs have since grown to boost thematic advances
70 in the field of hydrology. It is now a global movement initiated and coordinated by the
71 IAHS. The past SDs have provided the foundation for scientific collaborations and have
72 been vital in shaping hydrological research around specific themes. Especially the last
73 two SDs have shown that well-organized community efforts can shape the field of

74 hydrology (Hrachowitz et al., 2013; Kreibich et al., 2017; McMillan et al., 2016) . The
75 two most recent decades focused on prediction in ungauged basins (PUB, 2002-2012,
76 Sivapalan et al., 2003) and on change in hydrology and society (*Panta Rhei*, 2012-2022
77 Montanari et al., 2013). The results from the PUB decade have been summarized by
78 Hrachowitz et al. (2013), and several community papers on *Panta Rhei* research results
79 have already been published (e.g. Kreibich et al., 2017; McMillan et al., 2016) .

80 Because of increased cooperation between hydrologists, a next SD is likely to
81 have an even bigger impact than the last one. Therefore, it is important to start the
82 discussions on a theme for the next SD. The themes of the past two decades were
83 developed through discussions during symposia, in online blogs, and at specific
84 sessions at IAHS conferences (Montanari et al., 2013; Sivapalan et al., 2003) . The
85 discussions were open to all hydrologists. Due to the international orientation of the
86 IAHS, people from all over the world were involved. However, the author list of the
87 opinion papers predominantly involved well-established researchers. While established
88 researchers are key in shaping research, Early Career Scientists (ECS) are important
89 drivers of many research projects. Although they were invited and encouraged to
90 participate in the discussion sessions, ECS were rarely part of the author list of the
91 resulting opinion papers (Figure 1). Since the gender balance in hydrology differs
92 between established researchers and ECS (Popp et al., 2019), the diversity of the
93 authors was also skewed (Figure 1). We perceive the lower diversity as a major
94 disadvantage of the adopted approach, because the outcomes of the discussions may not
95 have reflected the perspectives of the full spectrum of hydrologists.



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97 *Figure 1: Gender (top) and career-stage (bottom) diversity in co-authors of initial publications of PUB (Sivapalan et*
 98 *al., 2003), Pantha Rhei (Montanari et al., 2013), and this initiative. For the publications of Sivapalan et al. (2003) and*
 99 *Montanari et al. (2013), the numbers are based on publicly available, online information. Early career scientists in*
 100 *these charts are defined as having received their latest degree (BSc, MSc, PhD) less than five years before*
 101 *publication of the paper. This definition was chosen to enable an unambiguous classification.*

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We believe that actively involving a more complete representation of hydrological researchers early on in the discussion could lead to an SD theme that is supported by a larger part of the hydrological community. This broad backing of the theme will further increase the impact of the upcoming SD. To boost ECS involvement in SD discussions, we organized discussion sessions in western Europe targeting ECS. This resulted in a gender-balanced group of co-authors consisting of mostly ECS (Figure 1). Due to the regional character of this initiative, a spatial bias is inherently present in the presented work. We therefore urge other groups of ECS to actively share their own opinions, for example as comments on this paper or in future IAHS discussion sessions.

We present three potential themes for the upcoming SD that all offer a different perspective on the hydrological threats the world faces: “Tipping points and thresholds in hydrology”, “Intensification of the water cycle”, and “Water services under

115 pressure". We acknowledge that, even though the *Panta Rhei* decade comes to an end,
116 change in hydrology and society is as important as it was ten years ago (Blöschl et al.,
117 2019). However, a new theme will boost hydrology and give the opportunity to
118 incorporate the knowledge gained in the last decade within a new focus. In addition,
119 four key trends are presented: big data, bridging science and practice, open science, and
120 inter- and multidisciplinary. The trends are beyond the scope of a possible theme, as
121 they concern the fashion in which hydrological research is or is expected to be
122 conducted. These themes and trends can provide valuable input for future discussions
123 on a theme for the next IAHS SD.

124 **Methods**

125 We aimed to involve a more diverse group of the hydrological scientific
126 community, in particular ECS, in the discussion on the new SD theme, for which we
127 adopted a different approach than was applied for previous SDs. For this initiative, ECS
128 were not strictly defined by years since their last graduation, but we welcomed anyone
129 identifying as ECS to create an inclusive atmosphere. We organized ECS discussion
130 sessions to identify potential themes for the upcoming SD in a joint effort led by early-
131 career hydrologists from Wageningen University and Research (WUR). In the spring of
132 2022, discussion sessions took place at WUR and five other institutes in four countries:
133 the Karlsruhe Institute of Technology (KIT), the Luxembourg Institute of Science and
134 Technology (LIST), the Delft University of Technology (TUD), the University of
135 Freiburg (UoF), and the University of Zürich (UZH). Additionally, researchers from the
136 Swiss Federal Institute of Technology in Zürich (ETH), and the Dutch branch of the
137 Young Hydrologic Society (YHS-NL) were invited to join. PhD candidates made up the
138 majority of the participants complemented by postdoctoral researchers and assistant
139 professors. No master's students joined the discussions. While these sessions have

140 greatly improved the influence of ECS in such discussions (Figure 1), the session's
141 geographic locations have inevitably led to a spatial bias towards high-income
142 countries. Although the participants' countries of origin were more diverse than the
143 affiliated institutes, future efforts should aim to further broaden the diversity by
144 including a larger geographical region.

145 All discussion sessions followed a similar format, but the content evolved during
146 the series of discussions. Each session started with a short presentation of the history of
147 the SDs and the aim of our initiative. Subsequently, the participants were split into
148 groups of 4-6 people to broaden the discussion and involve all opinions. The division
149 was targeted to create diverse groups mixing institutes and subdisciplines of hydrology.
150 These group conversations were guided by a set of questions that were prepared in
151 advance. The questions developed over the sessions starting from a brainstorming level
152 (i.e., "What do you expect to be key words for hydrology in the near future?") towards
153 more detailed questions at the later sessions (i.e., "What would be the research
154 questions tackled in the proposed themes?"). All questions can be found in the
155 supporting information. Finally, each group summarized their answers to the questions
156 at the plenary discussion that followed. ECS were encouraged to voice their opinion on
157 the theme of the next SD by being in small groups of peers without their voices being
158 unintentionally overshadowed by the presence of senior scientists.

159 **Potential themes for the next IAHS scientific decade**

160 Hydrological threats arise from pressures of the environment (e.g. climate change,
161 ecosystem degradation, and biodiversity loss) and society (e.g. population, industrial,
162 and economic growth). We see these threats as the central problem for hydrology in the
163 coming decade. Hydrological threats thus should be studied, but this can be done

164 starting from different perspectives. Three themes emerged from the discussion sessions
165 that all postulate a perspective on how hydrology could tackle the hydrological threats
166 faced by the environment and society. For the next IAHS Scientific Decade, we suggest
167 that hydrological research could focus on one of the themes below:

- 168 • Tipping points and thresholds in hydrology
- 169 • Intensification of the hydrological cycle
- 170 • Water services under pressure

171 *Tipping points and thresholds in hydrology*

172 Tipping points are critical thresholds in complex systems such as the hydrological
173 system. Once critical thresholds are exceeded, the system's state heavily changes,
174 referred to as a regime shift. These regime shifts can be either reversible or irreversible.
175 A reversible tipping point indicates that the system can restore under the same
176 environmental circumstances, whereas an irreversible tipping point indicates that the
177 system can only restore after circumstances have been reversed beyond the original
178 point, known as hysteresis (Scheffer et al., 2009). Both reversible and irreversible
179 tipping points occur in hydrology. Examples of reversible tipping points are the Horton
180 and Dunne principles of overland flow generation (Dunne and Black, 1970a, 1970b;
181 Horton, 1945), and an example of an irreversible tipping point is a landslide due to
182 heavy rainfall (Keefer et al., 1987).

183 As mentioned before, the hydrological cycle is affected by climate change and
184 human interventions. Therefore, hydrology needs to advance the understanding and
185 prediction of systems under change (Ehret et al., 2014) with particular attention to
186 tipping points and their critical thresholds (Blöschl et al., 2019). The concept of tipping
187 points gained momentum over the past decades, because hydrological threats have

188 resulted in water systems being pushed beyond their sustainable level. For instance,
189 deforestation has led to soil erosion and karstification (Gams and Gabrovec, 1999).
190 Recently, warnings have repeatedly been issued that deforestation in the Amazon is
191 likely to hit a tipping point greatly reducing precipitation (e.g. Amigo, 2020; Lovejoy
192 and Nobre, 2018). Another example is groundwater abstraction that jeopardizes
193 groundwater-dependent vegetation (Barron et al., 2013).

194 These examples show that tipping points link the hydrological system with
195 landscapes as well as ecosystems. In related scientific fields, tipping points are already a
196 well-established concept. They are fundamental to the Intergovernmental Panel on
197 Climate Change (IPCC) reports and the Planetary Boundaries framework (IPCC, 2021;
198 Rockström et al., 2009; Steffen et al., 2015). Based on the IPCC report, the Planetary
199 Boundaries framework and tipping point research, warnings are frequently issued
200 stating that passing these tipping points poses risks and will have severe impacts
201 (Lenton et al., 2019; Otto et al., 2020; Steffen et al., 2018). Given the complexity and
202 connectivity of the entire Earth system, tipping points in other scientific areas will affect
203 hydrology and vice versa.

204 Next to external tipping points affecting the hydrological cycle, tipping points
205 have also been observed in different parts of the hydrological cycle itself. Hydrological
206 disciplines in which tipping points have been identified include surface runoff (Dijkstra
207 et al., 2019; Dunne and Black, 1970a; Horton, 1945), groundwater (Bailey, 2011;
208 Figura et al., 2011), hydrometeorology (Buitink et al., 2020; Denissen et al., 2020;
209 Krishnamurthy R et al., 2020), ecohydrology (Hirota et al., 2011; Mayor et al., 2019),
210 and water quality (Dakos et al., 2019; Dijkstra et al., 2019). Moreover, these tipping
211 points manifest themselves in all places: from arctic (Devoie et al., 2019; Rosier et al.,
212 2021) to temperate climates (Kupec et al., 2021; van der Velde et al., 2021), from wet

213 (Loverde-Oliveira et al., 2009; Verbesselt et al., 2016) to arid regions (Bailey, 2011;
214 Bernardino et al., 2020), and from hydrological source (Marty, 2008) to sink (Kirwan
215 and Megonigal, 2013).

216 While tipping points have been found, they remain difficult to identify and are
217 often not well represented in models. Predicting and identifying hydrological tipping
218 points is particularly challenging since the positive feedbacks that induce regime shifts
219 originate from complex interactions and occur in heterogeneous landscapes with high
220 connectivity (Nijp et al., 2019; Scheffer et al., 2012). In addition, modelled tipping
221 points can only be verified after they occur (Denissen et al., 2020; Krishnamurthy R et
222 al., 2020). The impossibility of verifying unobserved tipping points is problematic since
223 their occurrence comes with the drastic consequences of irreversible tipping behaviour
224 on hydrological systems (e.g. Dakos et al., 2019; Drixfhout et al., 2015). Unravelling
225 how known tipping points cause hydrological regime shifts requires the integration of
226 different research approaches. Experiments in a controlled setting can help to identify
227 the underlying feedback mechanisms (van de Vijssel et al., 2021; Webster et al., 2016).
228 With conceptual models capturing the key processes, it is possible to test whether this
229 feedback mechanism indeed causes the observed regime shift (Bailey, 2011; Dijkstra et
230 al., 2019). At the same time, high-complexity models capturing the processes as
231 completely as possible can be used to reproduce the conceptual simulations in settings
232 closer to physical reality (Drixfhout et al., 2015). These high-complexity simulations
233 assist with interpreting field observations and extrapolating results to future climate
234 scenarios. In practice, integrating these scientific approaches is not straightforward.
235 Identifying tipping points in increasingly large amounts of data is tedious and
236 “scanning” for tipping points with models is computationally expensive. Efficiently
237 integrating these approaches may greatly advance our scientific understanding of

238 hydrological regime shifts and can help us to not only identify, but also successfully
239 predict tipping points.

240 Given the potentially catastrophic consequences of hydrological tipping points,
241 improving our process understanding and predictive capacity should be a focal point of
242 future hydrological research. This is summarized in the following research questions
243 that the theme “Tipping points and thresholds in hydrology” would address:

- 244 • How can hydrological tipping points and thresholds be identified?
- 245 • At what scales are the identified tipping points and thresholds relevant and how
246 do these scales interact?
- 247 • Which non-hydrological tipping points affect hydrological systems?
- 248 • What needs to be included in hydrological models to simulate and predict
249 tipping points and thresholds? How reliable are modelled tipping points and
250 thresholds?
- 251 • How can we use our knowledge of tipping points and complex systems to
252 mitigate the impacts of environmental and climate change?

253 *Intensification of the water cycle*

254 As global warming directly influences water fluxes, the hydrological cycle is strongly
255 affected by climate change (e.g. Koutsoyiannis, 2020; Kundzewicz, 2008;
256 Madakumbura et al., 2019; Peleg et al., 2018). Climate change intensifies the
257 hydrological cycle increasing for instance the frequency and intensity of droughts and
258 floods (Bertola et al., 2020; Gloor et al., 2013; Wasko et al., 2021). More hydrological
259 extremes make securing fresh water by, for example, reservoir management
260 increasingly difficult (Carvalho-Santos et al., 2017). Combined with decreasing
261 freshwater storage due to shrinking glaciers (Beniston and Stoffel, 2014) and the

262 depletion of high quality groundwater aquifers (Rotzoll and Fletcher, 2013), the
263 intensification of the water cycle threatens water security.

264 Until now, studies have mainly focused on identifying drivers of the
265 intensification (Huntington, 2006; Ziegler et al., 2003). However, less is known about
266 the mitigation of the risks that the hydrological intensification poses for agricultural
267 productivity, water availability, and water quality (Abram et al., 2021; Paprotny et al.,
268 2018). We urgently need to explore this impact and potential mitigation strategies. In
269 particular, we need to identify spatial and temporal trends of dry and wet extremes to
270 enable adaptations that store water for drier periods and redistribute it to drier areas (e.g.
271 Dai et al., 2018). We need interdisciplinary adaptations such as hydraulic structures that
272 can prevent flash floods and a guaranteed minimum flow discharge to protect river
273 ecosystems.

274 In the past, the intensification of the hydrological cycle was often described
275 according to the “dry gets dryer, wet gets wetter” paradigm (Held and Soden, 2006;
276 Kitoh et al., 2013). However, recent studies showed that this paradigm is too simple and
277 not universally true (Allan, 2014; Christidis and Stott, 2021; Greve et al., 2014; Kumar
278 et al., 2015). Hence, we need to understand local mechanisms and drivers to help
279 mitigate the consequences of extreme events, thereby ensuring fresh water availability.
280 This is especially important in the global south, where water insecurity is a substantial
281 issue (Vörösmarty et al., 2010).

282 Increased drought occurrence and severity is a key component of the
283 intensification of the hydrological cycle. Droughts are driven by a series of complex
284 feedback mechanisms between, amongst others, precipitation, soil moisture and
285 evaporation. Drought events manifest themselves in the environment (i.e. low
286 discharge), but their impacts include immense social, environmental, and economic

287 ramifications (e.g. Nilson, 2014). Monitoring drought events is complicated as they
288 present themselves in different parts of the water cycle (i.e. soil moisture, groundwater,
289 surface water) in different phases of the event (Buitink et al., 2021; van Loon, 2015).
290 Remote sensing data with increasing accuracy and spatiotemporal resolution provide
291 opportunities to monitor different parts of the hydrological cycle simultaneously (West
292 et al., 2019). Regardless, challenges remain in accurately predicting droughts (Sutanto
293 et al., 2020), as well as predicting the impact of climate change on drought occurrence
294 and intensity (Vicente-Serrano et al., 2020). We must resolve these challenges and find
295 solutions to prevent large scale drought impacts.

296 In addition to increasing the occurrence of dry extremes, the intensified water
297 cycle increases the occurrence of wet extremes (Addo and Adeyemi, 2013; Ansah et al.,
298 2020; De Luca et al., 2020; Pendergrass et al., 2017). In the last ten years, numerous
299 extreme precipitation events have occurred with extensive impacts around the globe
300 (e.g. Abram et al., 2021; Duan et al., 2014; Otto et al., 2018; Wasko et al., 2021). A
301 recent example is the 2021 summer flood event that impacted a large part of north
302 western Europe. Here, the connection with other disciplines was clearly visible as the
303 impacts extended beyond hydrology: increased erosion led to large scour holes in the
304 Meuse (Barneveld et al., 2022; Task Force Fact-finding hoogwater 2021, 2021). This
305 extreme summer flood resulted from weather circumstances with a reoccurrence time of
306 400 years illustrating the extreme nature of the event (Kreienkamp et al., 2021). Yet,
307 this was not an isolated event: the number of extreme rainfall events is increasing due to
308 shifting global weather patterns and rising temperatures that enhance the atmospheric
309 moisture-holding capacity (Held and Soden, 2006; Kennedy et al., 2016; Lenderink et
310 al., 2017; Lenderink and van Meijgaard, 2008). More extreme rainfall events can result
311 in floods with high socio-economic impacts, as well as increase the risk of flash floods

312 (Alfieri et al., 2015; Meyer et al., 2021; Piper et al., 2016). The risk of flash floods in
313 urban areas is even higher due to their increasingly impervious surface (Cutter et al.,
314 2018).

315 All in all, extreme events, both dry and wet, are expected to occur more
316 frequently in the future (Wahl et al., 2015; Ward et al., 2018; Zscheischler et al., 2018).
317 The same goes for compound events, where two extremes co-occur, such as a
318 compound drought in which a precipitation deficit coincides with a heatwave (Buras et
319 al., 2020; Seneviratne et al., 2010) and a compound flood in which precipitation excess
320 coincides with a storm surge (Wahl et al., 2015). This requires improved early warning
321 systems to limit the negative impacts of extreme events and long-term strategies to
322 mitigate and cope with any remaining detrimental effects (Abram et al., 2021;
323 Couasnon et al., 2020; Pappenberger et al., 2015; Ward et al., 2018; Wasko et al.,
324 2021). However, assumptions of climate stationarity on which many of the statistical
325 approaches are based are no longer valid (Milly et al., 2008). Predicting the risks of
326 these types of events has therefore become more difficult. Improving hydrological
327 forecasts thus requires improving the entire forecasting chain. The chain starts with
328 weather forecasts that are the input for hydrological simulations (Emerton et al., 2016).
329 These hydrological simulations provide the basis for impact forecasts (e.g. Sutanto et
330 al., 2019). Finally, the risks are disseminated (Sorensen, 2000) together with suggested
331 mitigation strategies.

332 To summarize, we propose that the focus of hydrological research should shift
333 from identifying intensification to providing knowledge on how to mitigate its effects
334 from local to global scales. Research questions that need answering are the following:

- 335 • What is the impact of an intensified hydrological cycle on the environment,
336 ecosystem services and society?

- 337 • What areas are most at risk of the intensification of the hydrological cycle?
- 338 • How reliable are extreme event predictions that are based on extrapolating
- 339 relatively short data series and how can this reliability be improved?
- 340 • How can early-warning systems be improved so that extreme events can be
- 341 accurately predicted?
- 342 • Which mitigation strategies are suitable in the context of ongoing intensification
- 343 of the hydrological cycle?

344 ***Water services under pressure***

345 To raise awareness of the crucial role of water for nature and society, we
346 advocate for a broader use of the “ecosystem services” framework in hydrology. More
347 specifically, the water cycle could be seen as the ecosystem under study: “water
348 services” (e.g. Lele, 2009; Ojea et al., 2012; Prasad, 2006). Following Daily's (1997)
349 definition of ecosystem services, water services describe the conditions and processes
350 through which the water cycle sustains and fulfils human life. We propose to extend this
351 definition to include the vital role of water in the environment. By widely
352 acknowledging and adopting water services as a concept in hydrology, scientific
353 advances can help secure currently vulnerable water services in a dynamic natural and
354 social environment.

355 Whereas water services indicate the services that water has for the environment
356 and society, society also greatly influences the water system (Linton and Budds, 2014;
357 Liu et al., 2014). This influence has been studied extensively during the *Panta Rhei*
358 decade, leading to a push in the field of socio-hydrology (e.g. Di Baldassarre et al., 2018;
359 McMillan et al., 2016; Pijl et al., 2018; Scott et al., 2014). Essential eco- and social systems
360 heavily depend on limited water resources for services such as drinking water, irrigation
361 water and hydropower. This dependence explains why the substantial population and

362 economic growth over the last century caused a sharp increase in global domestic,
363 industrial, and agricultural water demand (Oberle et al., 2019; Vörösmarty and
364 Sahagian, 2000). The growing water demand threatens the sustainability of water
365 systems and increases their vulnerability (Krol et al., 2003; McCluney et al., 2012). This
366 vulnerability is exacerbated by unpredictable changes in the water cycle (e.g.
367 hydrological intensification, salt intrusion) due to climate change (Oki and Kanae,
368 2006).

369 While society depends on water resources, anthropogenic activities have
370 compromised the quality of these resources and related environmental systems. For
371 instance, sea-level rise is threatening groundwater reservoirs (Rotzoll and Fletcher,
372 2013), and all parts of the water cycle are contaminated by pollutants such as plastic
373 (Liu et al., 2020; van Emmerik and Schwarz, 2020), bilge water (Tiselius and
374 Magnusson, 2017), nutrients (Lintern et al., 2020), pesticides (Payraudeau and
375 Gregoire, 2012), road salt (Szklaek et al., 2022), and oil (Lucas and MacGregor, 2006).
376 Next to affecting water quality, anthropogenic activities such as canalization also
377 interrupt natural hydrological processes affecting water quantity (e.g. Owens et al.,
378 2005). For example, ecosystem services such as flood protection and biodiversity are
379 more likely to be lost from river deltas as a result of human activities upstream that
380 interrupt natural sediment transport (Hoitink et al., 2020). Similarly, large-scaled
381 drainage associated with land reclamation projects reduce the buffer function of
382 wetlands and swamps (Nobis et al., 2020). Therefore, recent research has called to
383 account for the dynamic impacts of anthropogenic activities in river transformation
384 (Russell et al., 2021).

385 In the sustainable development goals, the United Nations (2015) recognize that
386 sustainable water resource management is essential to ensure a sustainable future. Still,

387 estimates suggest that water insecurity is threatening about 80% of the world's
388 population (Vörösmarty et al., 2010). Many of these people live in ecologically fragile,
389 conflict-ridden, and violence-affected countries that suffer the most from poorly
390 managed water resources (Anderson et al., 2021; World bank group, 2021). The water-
391 peace-security nexus is further impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic (Mukhtarov et al.,
392 2022) and recent intensifications of geopolitical rivalry (De Falco and Fiorentino,
393 2022). We believe scientific advances in hydrology could facilitate sustainable water
394 resource management, especially for less resilient societies that are most threatened by
395 water insecurity.

396 Hydrology has supported water resource management by generating and
397 conveying understanding of water resources and hydrological extremes (Savenije and
398 Van der Zaag, 2008). This traditional hydrological support should be broadened to
399 incorporate human-water interactions, to include the spatiotemporal scales of water, and
400 to tackle managerial challenges for transboundary water systems (Blöschl et al., 2019).
401 This involves a holistic management approach, where the entire water cycle is seen as
402 one system (Bakker, 2012; Cao and Warford, 2006; Giupponi and Gain, 2017).
403 Implementation of this holistic approach can be supported by widely adopting the use of
404 “water services” as a concept in hydrology. We suggest four key research questions for
405 the theme “Water services under pressure” to advance the field of hydrology:

- 406 • How can we assess quantitative and qualitative water availability for sustainable
407 water services?
- 408 • What hydrological knowledge is missing to provide solutions to support water
409 services?
- 410 • How can the development of pressures on water services be identified,
411 monitored and predicted?

- 412 • What are the scales and spatiotemporal distributions of pressures on water
413 services?

414 **Current trends in hydrology**

415 Next to the themes, we identified four important trends in hydrology. These trends are
416 not included as a theme, since they concern the way of conducting research. We note
417 that these trends have gained traction over the past years, and think that fully
418 incorporating them in the hydrological sciences can help make research more efficient,
419 more reproducible, and easier to apply in practice. That is why we think these trends
420 should be incorporated in the design of the upcoming SD. The following four trends are
421 discussed here:

- 422 • Big data
423 • Inter-and multidisciplinary
424 • Bridging science and practice
425 • Open science

426 ***Big data***

427 In the early days of hydrology, hydrological data were limited to those collected in the
428 field. Automized sensors greatly improved the availability of in situ data, but they are
429 still characterized by high costs and limited spatial coverage. New technologies such as
430 remote sensing have provided us with better spatiotemporal data coverage, as well as
431 measurements covering a larger part of the hydrological cycle, including for instance
432 precipitation, evapotranspiration, snow, soil moisture, and water storage (Addor et al.,
433 2017; Almagro et al., 2021; Arsenault et al., 2016; Cui et al., 2018; Klingler et al.,
434 2021). Due to the size of these datasets, big data is a big topic in the environmental
435 sciences including hydrology (Chen and Wang, 2018, Gaffoor, et al. 2020). We

436 recognize the value of big data in improving data-driven science on water resources.
437 With higher data availability, questions arise on how to use this data efficiently and how
438 to extract knowledge from different data sources simultaneously.

439 Big data in hydrology does not only present new opportunities, but also
440 challenges. First of all, data quality and uncertainty are pressing issues, as poor or
441 inconsistent data quality can lead to inaccurate interpretations and unreliable
442 conclusions (Lawton, 2021; McMillan et al., 2018). To create robust big data, they need
443 to be validated against in situ data. Thus, in-situ data collection needs to be incentivized
444 to sustain in-situ validation efforts (Allen and Berghuijs, 2020), while research should
445 also focus on minimizing the spatial mismatch between the scales of in-situ and big data
446 (Loew et al., 2017). Another challenge is that big data analyses, such as machine
447 learning, are often complex. This complexity makes results difficult to interpret,
448 validate and reproduce.

449 Secondly, despite the development of big data, data-sparse regions still exist
450 (Wilby, 2019) and hydrology is often still considered a data-limited science. Data
451 availability is not evenly distributed over the globe and over the layers of the
452 hydrological systems. In particular, data are missing on subsurface variables. We should
453 therefore continue to develop affordable data collection, which can help the growth of
454 citizen-science products that have the potential to increase observations in data-sparse
455 regions (Buytaert et al., 2014). We should also continue performing reanalyses to fill
456 temporal gaps in historical data.

457 Lastly, storing large datasets is challenging due to limited and/or expensive
458 storage. Historical data is already being rapidly lost (Benito et al., 2015; Talke and Jay,
459 2013), so besides ensuring that data we collect now will remain available for future

460 generations, we should also focus on conserving the work of previous generations that
461 have not (yet) been digitized.

462 While big data has the potential to advance our understanding of hydrology,
463 there is a strong need to develop universal data collection protocols to improve the
464 foundations of reproducible data analysis and predictions. We should aim to use the full
465 potential of all available data together, without subjectively selecting and rejecting data
466 sources. We suggest to increase the cooperation between hydrologists and data
467 scientists to jointly tackle the raised challenges defined here.

468 ***Inter- and multidisciplinary***

469 Seventeen sustainable development goals were posed by the United Nations that all
470 ascend beyond boundaries of separate scientific disciplines (United Nations, 2015).
471 Thus, to attain the SDGs, scientists need to adopt a more inter- and multidisciplinary
472 approach. They can focus on their own discipline and share knowledge
473 (multidisciplinary) or combine the disciplines into a coherent whole
474 (interdisciplinarity, Annan-Diab and Molinari, 2017). Hydrology can be more
475 intertwined with closely related fields of research, such as meteorology (Sene, 2010),
476 sedimentology (Waldschläger et al., 2022), and plant sciences (Konkol et al., 2022).

477 The complex themes of past and future SDs require efforts to bridge the divide
478 between the environmental and social sciences (transdisciplinarity). In line with
479 hydrology's collaborative history, the non-solitary research style was also recognized as
480 a key pillar to the success of the *Panta Rhei* decade (Montanari et al., 2013) and is
481 gaining traction in other scientific disciplines as well (Van Noorden, 2015). Thus, we
482 should critically evaluate what and how scientific expertise outside of hydrology could
483 be integrated in hydrology (Seidl and Barthel, 2017). However, practical difficulties
484 arise when conducting multi-, inter-, or transdisciplinary research (e.g. Brown et al.,

485 2015; Lang et al., 2012; L  l   and Norgaard, 2005; Strober, 2006). Such collaborations
486 are often characterized by considerable differences in scientific culture, potentially
487 impeding their success. For example, environmental researchers may experience social
488 sciences as subjective, while it may frustrate social scientists if environmental
489 researchers do not recognize social implications (Brown et al., 2015). Familiarizing
490 oneself with such cultural differences facilitates effective multi-, inter-, and
491 transdisciplinary research.

492 We argue that education on these collaborative approaches as well as on related
493 disciplines will pave the way for more successful collaborations. Funding agencies,
494 educators, institutions, publishers and researchers should continue to promote
495 collaborations between disciplines to incentivize, streamline and disseminate multi-,
496 inter-, and transdisciplinary research to drive global sustainable development.

497 ***Bridging science and practice***

498 One of the research questions posed in *Panta Rhei* was: “How can we support
499 societies to adapt to changing conditions by considering the uncertainties and feedbacks
500 between natural and human-induced hydrological changes?” (Montanari et al., 2013).
501 This question is part of the attention that has been given to close the gap between
502 science and practice. We distinguish the gap between hydrology and water management
503 and between science and the general public and will start to discuss the first.
504 Stakeholders are increasingly incorporated in research through collaborations between
505 scientists, companies and governments, often stimulated by funding agencies. For
506 example, Cortes Arevalo et al. (2020) use visual storytelling to strengthen the science-
507 practice interface. Additionally, working groups that stimulate the bridge between
508 science and practice have also been set up, such as the IAHS CANDHY working group.
509 They aim to “*stimulate discussion, sharing of knowledge, information, data, ideas*

510 *fostering scientific and professional exchange of academic, institutional and citizen*
511 *communities interested in the “Citizen AND Hydrology” topic”. We endorse these*
512 *efforts and see them as the first part of the bridge, but we argue both gaps should be*
513 *reduced even further.*

514 In order to decrease the gap, we should overcome the difficulties that are
515 encountered when aiming to bridge science and practice. For one, clear communication
516 is impeded by different interpretation of water-related words such as river and dike
517 (Venhuizen et al., 2019). On top of that, stakeholders may hesitate to implement
518 scientific knowledge due to a lack of trust, contradictory findings, or high costs (Raška
519 et al., 2022). Overcoming these challenges would enable the use of state-of-the-art
520 knowledge in decision-making (McMillan et al., 2016) and requires clear and open
521 communication between scientists, stakeholders and policy makers, as well as a
522 reflection on governance strategies based on scientific output. We acknowledge the
523 debate of the role of science in society (Higgins et al., 2006), but we believe science
524 should benefit society. Therefore, stakeholders and policy makers need to address what
525 knowledge is needed in practice, and scientists need to clearly address the limitations of
526 their research.

527 Science and the general public are brought closer by science communication.
528 Scientists communicate their findings, because they want to be transparent to the
529 general public (Kirchner, 2017), to reduce scepticism (Hamilton et al., 2015), and to
530 inform and educate (Dudo and Besley, 2016). However, science communication is not
531 easy. Scientists sharing their results have to translate their research into intriguing
532 stories with a clear narrative about potentially controversial topics. In doing so, they
533 may run into miscommunication, misinterpretation, and exaggeration (Lutz et al., 2018).

534 We propose to empower the future generation of scientists by incorporating science
535 communication in their curricula.

536 *Open science*

537 Publishing scientific work open access (OA) has become increasingly common, with
538 many funding agencies requiring research to be published OA. However, open science
539 (OS) does not end at publishing OA. OS includes opening all parts of the research
540 process: ideation, data collection and analysis, and dissemination of the results to peers
541 as well as the public. Science can be made more open and reproducible by sharing data
542 on public repositories, using open software, by sharing preprints and negative results,
543 and by having an open-peer review process. OS increases accessibility to fellow
544 scientists and the public, improves reproducibility, transparency, and collaboration, and
545 credits original ideas and work properly (Gil et al., 2016; Hall et al., 2022; van Emmerik
546 et al., 2018). Moreover, OS can bridge the global North-South research divide leading
547 to increased inclusivity in science practices (Adcock and Fottrell, 2008; Tennant et al.,
548 2016).

549 Publishers and scientists already widely acknowledge the importance of OS.
550 Some journals require both data and code to be Findable, Accessible, Interoperable, and
551 Reusable (FAIR standards, (Stall et al., 2017; Wilkinson et al., 2016)). In turn,
552 hydrological researchers are raising awareness by sharing guidelines like the “Open
553 Hydrology Practical Guide” (Hall et al., 2022).

554 While science as a whole is becoming increasingly open, some challenges still
555 need to be tackled. First, OS is financially and timewise more expensive for the
556 researchers. Financially, OA involves fees, and storing research data is expensive.
557 Timewise, publishing reproducible code and data is more labour-intensive than storing
558 code and data for personal use (Hall et al., 2022). Moreover, not all observations are

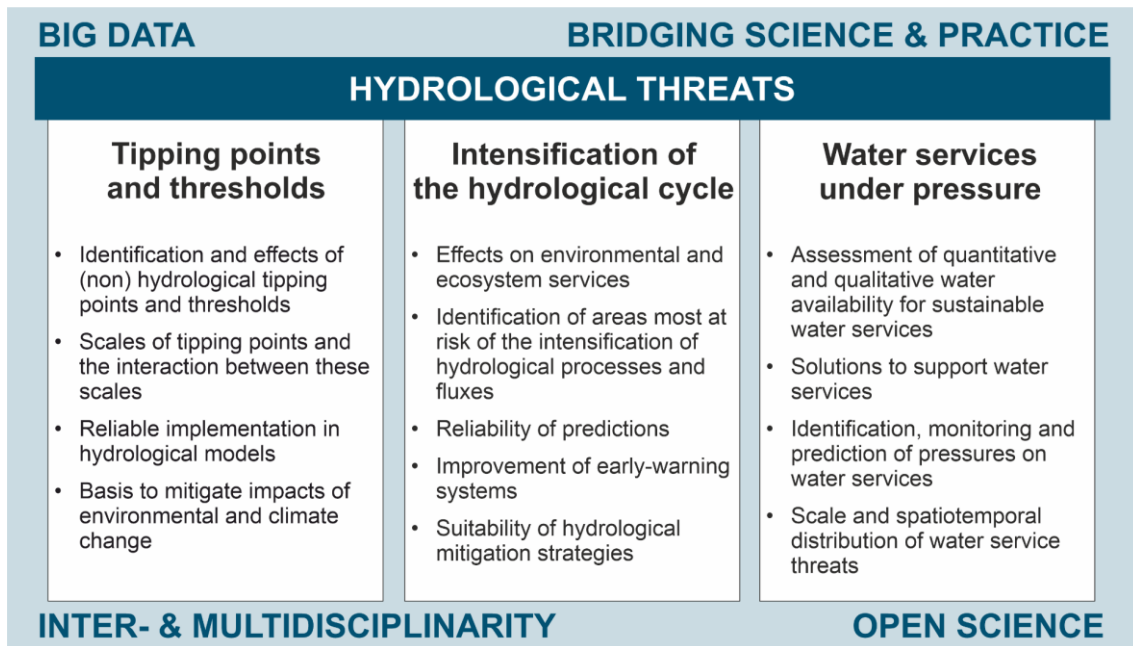
559 quantifiable and transferable (Blume et al., 2018). Publishing code and data requires
560 experience with for example version control, which is often lacking (Hall et al., 2022).
561 A second challenge is that publishing data is sometimes prevented due to privacy,
562 commercial, political, and economic concerns (Zipper et al., 2020). Third, preprints are
563 often criticized for their poor scientific quality due to lacking prior peer review.

564 A fully open and transparent way of doing science can lead to faster advances in
565 hydrology and is therefore, in our opinion, the only way forward. We do believe that the
566 discussed three challenges can and should be tackled to promote OS in hydrological
567 research. On top of that, OS should be included in education and additional efforts to
568 practice OS should be better rewarded in the academic system. Since these efforts
569 cannot stand on their own, it is important that funding agencies also see the value of OS.
570 Additional funding is required to fully incorporate OS in education and to support any
571 additional efforts scientists make to publish their research OS.

572 **Synthesis and outlook**

573 Climate change and population growth give rise to hydrological threats. We see these
574 threats as the central problem for hydrology in the coming decade. Hydrological
575 research should thus be focused on alleviating these threats. This can be done from
576 different perspectives. Therefore, we are convinced that the theme of the upcoming
577 decade should offer a perspective to tackle hydrological threats. We identified three
578 perspectives that could be the theme for the upcoming IAHS SD: “Tipping points and
579 thresholds in hydrology”, “Intensification of the water cycle”, and “Water services
580 under pressure” (Figure 2). We also identified four trends that concern the way in which
581 hydrological research is conducted: big data, bridging science and practice, open
582 science, and inter- and multidisciplinary. If future research is executed according to
583 these guidelines, it could more efficiently benefit the entire hydrological community

584 and more effectively alleviate the hydrological threats.



585

586 *Figure 2: Overview of the themes and trends presented in this paper.*

587 The three themes and four trends are presented separately in this paper, but it
588 should be noted that they are highly connected. The themes outline possible pathways
589 of future hydrological research and the trends have the potential to improve the speed,
590 applicability and reproducibility of hydrological research. The connectivity between
591 themes is seen by for instance the co-occurrence of tipping points with the
592 intensification of the hydrological cycle. Impact identification, mitigation strategies and
593 reliable implementation in hydrological models are overlapping focal points in the
594 themes. Connectivity between trends is visible in for instance using big data in
595 combination with open science could lead to quicker advances in the field, as well as a
596 more inclusive research community. If this is further combined with effective science
597 communication, the knowledge can be directly applied by policy makers and the public
598 to alleviate some of the threats we are currently facing as a society.

599 We offered an ECS perspective in the discussion on the theme of the new IAHS
600 scientific decade. We synthesized the outcome of six discussion sessions in western

601 Europe in the spring of 2022. Along with the themes, we highlighted a number of
602 research questions that, in our view, should be addressed in the next scientific decade.
603 We acknowledge that the logistical limitations of our initiative have led to a spatial bias.
604 To overcome the limitations posed by this bias, we encourage ECS across the world to
605 share their opinion, get involved in the IAHS SD discussions, and organize their own
606 ECS discussion sessions. These sessions could be organized according to the guidelines
607 provided in the supporting information, which are also available online with the
608 possibility to post comments (<https://github.com/tvhat/ECSdiscussion-IAHSSD>). By
609 targeting currently underrepresented groups with this type of sessions, inclusivity is
610 actively pursued, which we deem necessary as a passive open invitation will not
611 automatically lead to diversity. We hope to see a lively discussion as a result of this
612 opinion paper and are confident that the presented themes, research questions, and
613 trends will feed into the larger debate on the next IAHS SD.

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1304 **Supporting information**

1305 We invite other ECS to continue the discussion on the IAHS SD. Here we provide a
1306 guideline based on the discussion sessions for this initiative. Depending on the session,
1307 we deviated slightly from the schedule below responding to the course of the
1308 discussion. The schedule describes a one-hour session with 20-40 people, which could
1309 be extended to accommodate for more interaction. After the schedule, we list the
1310 questions that served as input for the discussion. The questions evolved over the course
1311 of the six discussion sessions. To provide insight in this evolution, the questions are
1312 presented below per session. These questions were discussed in small groups, after
1313 which answers were shared in a plenary round and discussed together.

1314 *Session schedule*

1315 Introduction (5 min)

- 1316 • History of the decades
- 1317 • Aim of the initiative
- 1318 • Planning of the session
- 1319 • Questions

1320 Break-out groups (25 min)

- 1321 • Discussing the questions
- 1322 • 4-5 people
- 1323 • As diverse as possible (institute, sub-discipline)

1324 Plenary explanation (10 min)

- 1325 • Summarizing outcome of break-out groups

1326 • 1-2 min per group

1327

1328 Plenary discussion (20 min)

1329 • Reacting to other groups

1330 • Answering the prepared questions

1331 *Questions per session*

1332 *Session 1 to 3 (Wageningen University and Research, Technische Universiteit*

1333 *Delft, Luxembourg Institute of Science and Technology)*

1334 • What is a paper all members of your group could collaborate on?

1335 • What is the bigger theme around this paper? Is this suitable as a theme for a

1336 hydrological decade?

1337 • What do you expect to be key words for hydrology in the near future?

1338 • What should be the focus of the next hydrological decade?

1339 *Session 4 (Karlsruhe Institute of Technology)*

1340 • What do you expect to be key words for hydrology in the near future?

1341 • What should be the focus of the next hydrological decade?

1342 • Which of these themes do you think are relevant for the next decade?

1343 1. Modelling for food security

1344 2. Adaptation to the intensification of the hydrological cycle

1345 3. Tipping points in hydrology

1346 4. Integration of diverse data into models

1347 5. Interdisciplinary solutions for deltas under stress

1348 6. Multi/transdisciplinarity in hydrology: Enhancing the connection
1349 between science and engineering

1350 • What do you think is missing from this list?

1351 *Session 5 (University of Zürich)*

1352 • Which themes could you form within these categories?

1353 1. Climate change – Extremes – Droughts – Floods – Intensified water
1354 cycle – Tipping points

1355 2. Machine learning – AI – Big data – Citizen science – Open science –
1356 Remote sensing

1357 3. Inter/multidisciplinarity – Science+engineering

1358 4. Impacts – Water-Food-Energy – Nature-based solutions

1359 5. Vulnerable areas – Scaling – Human impact

1360 • Feel free to add or mix & match!

1361 *Session 6 (University of Freiburg)*

1362 • Themes

1363 1. Tipping points and thresholds in hydrology

1364 2. Intensification of the hydrological cycle

1365 3. Water, food, and energy security

1366 • Trends

1367 1. Big data

1368 2. Bridging science and practice

1369 3. Open science

1370 4. Inter- and multidisciplinary

1371 • Do you agree with the themes and trends?

1372

- What would be the research questions tackled in the proposed themes?