



Interactive comment on “Flood risk along the upper Rhine since AD 1480” by I. Himmelsbach et al.

M. Ertsen (Referee)

m.w.ertsen@tudelft.nl

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This paper provides an excellent analysis of river floods in a specific historical time period and location. There are obviously some questions on the analysis, as the first referee already pointed out so well. In this review, I would like to discuss another aspect of historical hydrology - the historical aspects. Basically, what I argue is that the paper should include more detail on the source material, including the type, certainty, and socio-political context.

The introduction stands rather brief as is, and suggests that "small" and "large" can be compared as "weak" and "strong". Even if this were to be correct for the cases to be discussed, it would still need to be shown. In addition, the introduction could be used

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to position this study within the larger scholarly context of historical hydrology.

The paragraphs 3 and 4 as they are now, are hardly informative and could apply to any study - even on those about very different topics. The interesting remark in 4 about the difference between France and Germany suggests that the database is shaped through differential data sets. This is obviously well-known in history: the surviving data are usually the data of the winners and at least of those who could write.

In order to be able to judge the validity of the hydrological argument, I would suggest that much more emphasis on the historical argument is needed. What do the different types of data mean? Why are certain data sources better represented or not? Similar debates have been held within studies on fisheries, with historians suggesting that treating historical material as neutral raw data is problematic, as these data (like the actual catch and processes on board of ships) were at least partially manipulated within the existing political economy. Especially the transboundary aspects of the case in the paper would allow for a critical analysis on the source material. This would improve the paper even further.

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