

***Interactive comment on* “Connected flow paths as first order control on critical zone water flows: coincidence or self-organized optimality?” by E. Zehe et al.**

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The paper has received two review comments - not enough according to my normal requirements - however, in this case I am making my editor comment on the basis of these two comments. Reviewer 1 (Mike Roderick) raised fundamental concerns, which the authors have attempted to refute and defend. I look forward to this, but in any case this is going to make the paper longer than it is, and pushing it beyond the reach of the average hydrologist, who may not be well versed with the basics of thermodynamics. In fact, this was the main concern of Reviewer 2 who wanted the paper to be made

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lighter and easier to follow. Therefore in the revisions, I would ask the authors to pay attention to these two (almost contradictory) aspects and strategically design their revision accordingly. In view of the illness of Roderick I cannot ask him to review the paper again, and therefore I intend to seek the advice of a thermodynamics expert for the first part, and seek the help of Reviewer #2 for the second part, and I am going to review the paper myself to see the revised paper can convince me quickly that it is worthy of publication (especially on the communication of the storyline). Clearly, this revision will be considered major, and I hope to process it expeditiously in the second round.

Interactive comment on Hydrol. Earth Syst. Sci. Discuss., 9, 10595, 2012.

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