

Interactive comment on ““Water flow” and “preferential flow”: A State-of-the-Art throughout the literature” by Yinghu Zhang et al.

Anonymous Referee #1

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This paper is extremely confused. It purports to review preferential flow, but missed most of the literature in that field, including at least three previous review papers. In some sections of the paper it reads like a bibliometric study, mentioning the number of papers published over the years on a rather arbitrary collection of subjects (including the very vague topic 'water flow'). There is some sort of geographical breakdown showing that most publications stem from countries with large populations and at least a few good universities. There is also a focus on China that is left unexplained in the title, abstract, and Introduction.

In some sections the paper brings up virtual water flows, without attempting to connect these to preferential flow, leading to an incredibly incoherent text. I came to nearly halfway before I gave up - I cannot make sense of the paper at all. The figures do not offer any support in getting a handle on the material. One of them represents a tree

diagram in which things that should be joint are on separate branches, the hierarchy of research fields is not properly represented, etc. Another displays water fluxes in various vast regions of China. Yet another draws colorful lines between countries without explaining what these lines stand for.

Many paragraphs ramble around a large number of terms that are often poorly defined and possibly poorly understood by the authors, without any connection between them. I often felt completely lost in the text, wondering what the message was that the authors intended to convey

The English is such that I cannot comprehend the meaning of some sentences, making it very difficult to provide meaningful comments.

In short, the paper is very poorly organized, does not have a clear focus or message, does not present a meaningful analysis of the literature even though it claims to be a review paper, and its bibliometric component really is not suited for this journal.

Please also note the supplement to this comment:

<http://www.hydrol-earth-syst-sci-discuss.net/hess-2017-210/hess-2017-210-RC1-supplement.pdf>

Interactive comment on *Hydrol. Earth Syst. Sci. Discuss.*, doi:10.5194/hess-2017-210, 2017.

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