

Interactive comment on “Droughts in Bern and in Rouen from the 14th to the beginning of the 18th century derived from documentary evidence” by C. Camenisch and M. Salvisberg

Anonymous Referee #2

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The paper is well-written, logically built up. The general argumentation, introduction, data and methodology chapters are presented rather properly. I have a few comments to the Results and the Discussion parts of the paper. Major comments: 1) I miss the general analysis and direct comparison of the two series in the Results chapter. Here only the greatest extremes are addressed and – despite the fact that the authors have made significant efforts to build up large-scale comparative series from Western Europe – only the greatest large-scale extremes are addressed in brief. Here, I think, a proper comparative analysis should be added: how different the individual series are from the regional series, what could be the reasons (e.g. source availability? Scale of events? Differences in the intensities or impacts on societies? etc.) for these differ-

C1

ences (and the similarities). 2) The authors provide direct comparisons of the evidence derived from the two cities in the Discussion chapter. As the entire paper (so as the title) is mainly concentrated on this topic, in my opinion this part of the Discussion chapter should be moved to the Results chapter. 3) I think the Discussion chapter could be organised somewhat differently: here smaller but important specific topics could be discussed. I think the discussion of 1473 and 1540, and its different appearance in the two cities are a good idea for one topic (i.e. I would keep it there), but plenty of other important questions could be addressed here. For example, the authors refer to the tree-ring based OWDA as one of the applied databases in the paper: in the Discussion chapter the authors could e.g. systematically compare the OWDA with the documentary evidence and list similarities and potential differences. Other possibility could be, for example, the discussion of uncertainties.

Minor points: 1) It is rather remarkable that in Rouen only the droughts prior to summer could be detected. In the paper the authors explain this situation with source availability. I was just wondering: is it possible that for such a large town as Rouen no source exist at all that describe any other part of the year that contains any weather-related information? No any weather(-related) information at all in narratives, no other institutional documentation (e.g. municipal accounts)? It is rather unusual, especially with regards to the later part of the study period – and if this is the case, I think, should be more emphasised in the paper – already in the Source description part. The authors explain this phenomenon mainly with the difference in documentation practice. However, documentation practice is always related to 2) Is it really the case that in the documentation of the two cities only and exclusively the great and extreme dry conditions are mentioned, and never even moderate dry conditions? It is true that, usually, references on moderate dry conditions in European documentation are less pronounced. Still, they appear in documentation. Thus, it is a rather interesting and unique fact that, as the authors suggested, in neither of the two cities any “dry conditions” (i.e. without referring to any extreme) have been mentioned. Or, do you mean that all cases when “dry conditions” were mentioned had to be great (i.e. no. 2) or

C2

extreme (no. 3) droughts? It is really just a question out of curiosity. The question is also addressed to understand better the level of potential uncertainties of the index values. 3) The authors suggest that mainly spring and summer droughts could be detected. This is a typical characteristics in Western and Central Europe (actually, also in Eastern Europe). Does this mean that the authors found no autumn and winter drought mention at all? Or did you find some? Because if you did, it would be perhaps also interesting for a short discussion in the “Discussion” chapter. Maybe not – it is up to you (just for a further potential idea into the Discussion chapter).

Interactive comment on Clim. Past Discuss., <https://doi.org/10.5194/cp-2019-114>, 2019.