

Geosci. Commun. Discuss., author comment AC1
<https://doi.org/10.5194/gc-2021-39-AC1>, 2021
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Reply on CC1

Richard Westaway

Author comment on "GC Insights: Rainbow colour maps remain widely used in the geosciences" by Richard M. Westaway, Geosci. Commun. Discuss.,
<https://doi.org/10.5194/gc-2021-39-AC1>, 2021

I thank Dr Hut for his interest in the manuscript and for his comment about the role of editors and reviewers.

Putting aside the 'fairness' of the peer review system, I think where responsibility lies for identifying colour issues is an interesting question. Based on current review criteria, "presentation quality" (including "quality of figures") is one of the three principal evaluation criteria used by the editors of EGU journals for initial manuscript evaluation, implying it is currently (rightly or wrongly) part of these editors' roles to check for colour issues (though I appreciate this will vary from publisher to publisher). Whether this could be done in a more automated way - one that reduces the burden on editors - is another good question and yes, perhaps ideally, all colour issues would be identified and corrected before a paper gets sent out for peer review.

While I agree with your assertion that the scientific merit of the work should be reviewers' primary focus, I think it is widely accepted that reviewers are also ensuring that results are reported correctly and unambiguously. I know, for example, that the AGU specifically advise reviewers to ask: "Are all parts of the text, references, graphics and tables necessary for the new results and main points to be understood?". It implies, to me at least, that this should include checking that figures are not misleading due to the use of rainbow or red-green colour schemes.

Thus, on balance, I stand behind my (full) original statement that more publisher guidelines about colour issues "would appear to place increased responsibility with editors and reviewers to identify and correct colour issues as part of the review process". I should stress I am not saying that this is necessarily the best or most efficient way to eliminate colour issues, just my interpretation of the current situation.