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Interactive comment on “Horses for courses: analytical tools to explore planetary boundaries” by D. P. van Vuuren et al.

Anonymous Referee #2

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The paper is rather different from the majority of the climatological papers I have reviewed, as it takes a high-level view on modelling and climatology. I appreciate that such philosophical attempts are necessary, although the first take on reading the abstract caused me to ask myself very many questions. I presume I could be considered as a guinea pig of general readership, especially of those who are not familiar with planetary boundaries (which may be the case of many researchers).

In my opinion, the abstract should be re-written to avoid constructions like "research on developing a set of sustainable development objectives", or expressions like "different exposure levels" (to what?), "key indicators" (of what?), "available options to implement changes" (to what?), "different response strategies" (of what?), "four categories of questions" (without explanation) etc. The abstract is difficult to read, indeed.

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It sounds like slang policymaking in a specialised area of climate change.

The caption of table 1 sounds similarly vague. “Summary of key questions and indications of relevant characteristics of analytical tools” – can’t it be formulated more specific? The structure of the table looks unusual, too: I would rather expect its rows to be column and vice versa.

In page 1716, the authors discuss tipping points under the division of Type 1 questions (biophysical system dynamics) – in my opinion, this is a more general topic, which can be placed in the Introduction.

In page 1727, item 3, when talking about “full detail” of modelling, it is better to say “full possible detail”, as truly full detail is rather impossible.

In general, the paper is an interesting read, although for me it is difficult to estimate its novelty.

Interactive comment on Earth Syst. Dynam. Discuss., 6, 1711, 2015.

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