

*The dangerous limits of
dangerous limits; quantifying the
climate change risk*

Chris Shaw

PhD student, University of Sussex

c.j.shaw@sussex.ac.uk

Benefits of the 2 degree dangerous limit construction

- Helps get the message heard and accepted by policy makers and other significant actors
- “Buys time” for ongoing research to address existing uncertainties
- Provides an ‘anchoring device’ and ‘boundary object’ (van der Sluijs et. al. 1998) to enable discussion across a broad epistemological, cultural and temporal terrain.

Limits of the 2 degree dangerous limit construction

- a. 2 degrees centigrade as a global dangerous limit, too simplistic, too convenient
- b. More values than science. Whose values? Who gets to decide?
- c. Is it “good science”? EU’s decision to base policy on 2 degrees as informed by ‘inadequate’ and ‘sloppy’ reasoning (Tol, 2007). Hansen and others saying already beyond the dangerous limit
- d. Not a powerful spur to action. Few now think we will stay below 2 degrees of warming
- e. It legitimates all sub 2 degree warming. 1.85 degrees is fine, a price worth paying

Acceptable limits/ rates of change

‘Ethical and cultural considerations have been nearly absent....this neglect must surely be remedied in order for an adequate definition of danger to emerge’.

Oppenheimer, M and Peterson, A. *Article 2 of the UNFCCC: Historical origins, Recent Interpretations* Climatic Change (2005) 73: 195–226 :213