

Geodynamics 101 Revision - Review Laurent Montesi

This is the authors' response to the review of Laurent Montesi. Our responses are indicated in green, with the original review presented in black.

This manuscript serves as a well-designed guide for modeling mantle and crustal-scale processes. As is necessarily the case with an exercise of the sort, it does in place reflect the personal experience and opinions of the authors, but it overall does a very nice job of remaining neutral, and even the more engaged sections are full of important information that will be useful for moving the field forward. I particularly appreciated the discussions of figure accessibility and Section 9 “Software, data, and resource management”. There are also some very important discussions of the objectives of modeling, in particular the difference between “specific” and “generic” modeling. Both are presented as equally valuable, which is an important message to pass to both modeling and non-modeling communities.

Although the paper is already well organized and well written, I do have a few suggestions that could lead to significant rewriting, as detailed in the attached PDF. These include 1) make clearer that the focus of the paper is on geodynamic modeling of the mantle and the crust. 2) emphasize the importance of hypotheses in the model design process. 5) emphasize the role of constitutive relations 6) explain how brittle failure can be implemented. 7) better contrast FEM and FDM. 10) clarify what an “unphysical behavior” is. My biggest concern, though is with section 8.1 “Structure of a geodynamic modelling manuscript” that I find overly prescriptive. Other comments can be seen as minor.

Please note that most of my suggestions can be seen as a matter of personal preference and should not stand in the way of the publication of the paper (even 8.1!). The authors have produced an important manuscript that will many gain a better understanding of geodynamic modeling. That said, there is room in our discipline for personal preferences, and I welcome continued discussion of the topic. More of us should take an occasional pause from the pace of research to reflect on the higher objectives of our work, in this case geodynamic modeling. This paper is a great way to get the conversation started. Thank you for putting it together.

101 Geodynamic Modelling: How to design, carry out, and interpret numerical studies
Review by Laurent Montesi, University of Maryland.

This manuscript serves as a well-designed guide for modeling mantle and crustal-scale processes. As is necessarily the case with an exercise of the sort, it does in place reflect the personal experience and opinions of the authors, but it overall does a very nice job of remaining neutral, and even the more engaged sections are full of important information that will be useful for moving the field forward. I particularly appreciated the discussions of figure accessibility and Section 9. There are also some very important discussions of the objectives of modeling, in particular the difference between “specific” and “generic” modeling. Both are presented as equally valuable, which is an important message to pass to both modeling and non-modeling Communities.

Although the paper is currently well organized and well written, I do have a few suggestions that could lead to significant rewriting. They are organized here as topics and followed by several more isolated comments. Most suggestions can be seen as a matter of personal preference and should not stand in the way of the publication of the paper. Maybe they are best seen as a discussion of the material presented. I apologize that as my review is already much overdue, I did not study the appendix or glossary in detail.

1. Although the title sets the scene for “Geodynamic modelling” in general, the authors focus on the dynamics of the mantle and the crust. In place, they contrast their discussion with the core, especially in their neglect of inertia and Coriolis forces. There are other geodynamical settings where these are also neglected: the hydrosphere (especially the oceans) and the atmosphere, to say nothing of giant planets. The effects of fluids (including but not restricted to magma) are noted in passing, even though they are a growing segment of geodynamical studies. I do not think that presenting specific equations would be necessary to discuss modeling strategies and philosophies but as the authors have chosen to focus on a specific system, I believe that the title must reflect that choice. Maybe specify “Geodynamic Modelling of the Mantle and Crust” (lithosphere instead of crust would be OK too) and make this focus (including the neglect of two-phase flow) clear at the outset. The occasional mention of core studies can be seen as choosing a related science but neglecting other applications.

We agree that the paper focuses on the dynamics of the mantle and crust, although the same equations described here can be applied to the solid inner core of the Earth. To emphasise this focus, we immediately mention that we focus on the solid Earth in line 5 of the abstract and we mention that we use examples from mantle and lithosphere dynamics. To drive this point further home, we adjusted a sentence in the abstract:

“We provide ample examples, from lithosphere and mantle dynamics SPECIFICALLY, and point out synergies with related fields such as seismology, tectonophysics, geology, mineral physics, planetary science and geodesy.”

Similarly, we highlight in the introduction that this paper focuses on mantle and lithosphere dynamics (l 67-69). Hence, we think we have made it clear to our readers that this paper relates mostly to the part of the Earth between the atmosphere and the core. Moreover, we see our paper first and foremost as a guide to numerical models in general that heavily leans on specific examples that mainly involve modelling crust or mantle aspects. Extending the title as suggested appears therefore to make it too specific and might, for example, unnecessarily prevent non-modelling co-authors of core studies from reading and understanding the basics behind the general - indeed also to them very relevant - aspects of modelling. Therefore, we have not changed the title in this respect, although we have changed the title to better reflect the content of the paper by including ‘communication’ as a key word. We think this title emphasises the focus on numerical modelling (studies) in general and highlights the relevance of the paper for anyone interested in numerical modelling studies regardless of the specific application.

To highlight that other (geodynamic) disciplines use similar equations and assumptions, we added a line in the introduction citing atmospheric dynamics and hydrology as examples:

“Other disciplines, such as atmospheric dynamics and hydrology, use similar equations and assumptions, but are not discussed in detail here.”

Minor points related to this topic:

- Line 20: The mention of “spherical shells” implies a global focus. Local and even regional studies do not need to consider shells.

We were not clear enough, which led to misunderstanding about the spherical shells (i.e., spheres, as in Atmosphere, Lithosphere, Asthenosphere). Every geodynamic subdiscipline is part of a sphere (or spherical shell), whether its focus is global or local only. We clarified the sentence to: “The broad definition of geodynamics typically results in a subdivision of disciplines relating to one of the Earth’s spherical shells and specific spatial and temporal scales.”

- Line 37: “magma dynamics and grain dynamics” The citation to Solomatov and Reese shows that you have global mantle convection in mind. This is a good paper but please also mention studies about magma dynamics, and also other fluids (CO₂, water) that have been shown to matter in volcanic and seismogenic systems, and maybe also serpentinization (important in mid-ocean ridges).

We have added Keller et al 2013 in response to comments from Reviewer 1. To include studies about fluids and volatiles as well as serpentinization, we also included:

- McKenzie, D., 1984. The generation and compaction of partially molten rock, *J. Petrol.*, 25, 713–765
- Rüpke, L., Phipps Morgan, J., *et al.* (2004) ‘Serpentine and the subduction zone water cycle’, *Earth and Planetary Science Letters*, 223(1–2), pp. 17–34. doi: 10.1016/j.epsl.2004.04.018.
- Bercovici, David and Ricard, Yanick (2012), Mechanisms for the generation of plate tectonics by two-phase grain-damage and pinning. *Physics of the Earth and Planetary Interiors*, 202, 27–55.
- Katz, Richard F (2008), Magma dynamics with the enthalpy method: Benchmark solutions and magmatic focusing at mid-ocean ridges. *Journal of Petrology*, 12, 49, 2099-2121.
- Montesi, Laurent GJ and Behn, Mark D (2007), Mantle flow and melting underneath oblique and ultraslow mid-ocean ridges. *Geophysical Research Letters*, 24, 34.

- Line 80: I don’t have the statistics to evaluate if applications to Earth’s crust and mantle are indeed “the most common applications”. I expect that people studying climate and atmosphere may have something to say about that. The concepts presented (except for the specific equations) are also applicable to their disciplines. It may be better to just say that these are the disciplines you worked on and therefore are most familiar with.

Fair point. We rewrote to:

“We will focus on the Earth's crust and mantle, although the methods outlined here are similarly valid for other solid planetary bodies such as terrestrial planets and icy satellites, and the Earth's solid inner core.”

- I hate making titles longer (believe it or not) but it strikes me that the important communication steps that are in the paper are not included in the title.

A useful suggestion; we adjusted the title to: “101 Geodynamic modelling: How to design, interpret, and communicate numerical studies”.

2. Figure 2 is key to the entire paper.

It is well-thought-out and I am sure the authors have spent much time discussing it. I do have several issues with it as it stands.

- It is easy to assume, based on Figure 2, that geodynamic modeling is a linear process. I believe this is an oversimplification. This paper would be a great place to emphasize instead the need to constantly reevaluate foundational hypotheses. Results and analysis, especially following evaluation against observations (necessary whether the model is “specific” or “generic”) can lead to updates in any of the previous steps. “Nature” should feed directly into the validation (maybe) and analysis (certainly) steps.

The figure was designed so that “Nature” indeed appears to feed directly into all individual steps. We now better highlighted this aspect with more transparency of the individual panels. We also agree that Geodynamics should constantly reevaluate foundational hypotheses. While a graphical representation might be too complicated and counterproductive, we have made it clear now through the figure caption, with:

“Note that constant (re-)evaluation and potential subsequent adjustments of previous steps are key, and indeed necessary, throughout this process.”

We also adjusted the text with:

“It is important to note that geodynamic modelling is not a linear process as depicted in Figure 2. For example, modelling does not necessarily start with the formulation of a hypothesis, as this can also arise from the encounter of interesting, unexpected modelling results, resulting in the formulation of a hypothesis later on in the process. Similarly, observations from nature feed directly into all of the above-mentioned steps as illustrated by the dark grey arrow through all modelling steps (Figure 2). Indeed, it is important to evaluate and adjust the numerical modelling study throughout the entire process”

- What is missing in Figure 2 and section 1.2 is the mention of a hypothesis. I strongly believe

that the most important models are those that were designed at the outset to answer a specific scientific hypothesis. As the paper is currently organized, it would be possible to write a code and verifying it before a hypothesis is identified (see line 127). To me, this is backward: we should design codes that enable us to answer a question, therefore the question needs to come first, not in the “setup” stage.

Good point! We added an additional panel to account for the hypothesis, which is indeed an important first step of geodynamic modelling.

We do, however, disagree to some extent with the comment about the most important models being based on a linear process from hypothesis to model design for the exact same reason as brought forward by the reviewer himself in just the previous comment. In fact, our schematic figure depicting numerical modelling study as a strictly linear process is inherently flawed as numerical studies are rarely linear and the hypothesis and ideas are adjusted and gained throughout the process. We added clarifying sentences on this in the figure caption and text (see comment above).

- This may be a matter of semantic, but it bothers me that “physical models” are described only using equations (also Line 87). I believe that physical models can be discussed in terms of concepts (e.g. buoyancy, inertia, diffusion, or the rheologies that are illustrated without equations in Figure 3) and that by the time you have introduced an equation, you have already moved on to the next level of abstraction: a mathematical model. That model can be solved analytically or numerically. Therefore I believe that an intermediate step (“mathematical model”?) is missing in Figure 2.

Yes, we had a long discussion on whether to use ‘physical’ or ‘mathematical’ model. In the end we agreed that all mathematical equations we use have a physical meaning. Besides that, the discretisation step of the equations can be considered a mathematical step as well (i.e., converting the physical model into a mathematical / numerical model), So, in order to avoid making things more confusing, we use ‘physical’ model consistently throughout to refer to the equations and ‘numerical’ model to refer to the discretised, numerical formulation of the equations.

- Somewhat related to the previous, don’t forget that chemical processes and increasingly considered in geodynamics models. You might argue that they are included in “physical processes” as thermodynamics can be seen as either, but issues of trace element partitioning (important for evaluating the origin of magma or fluid interaction) are typically discussed only in geochemistry. Like physical models, chemical models need a mathematical description to be included in the later numerical modeling efforts.

We added ‘[... physical] or chemical process’.

- This is not an issue, but maybe consider distributing your figure as an open workflow (e.g. on <https://workflowhub.eu/>)

Thank you for bringing this website to our attention; we didn't know about it, but it is a helpful tool. Since it is specifically designed for storing specific, actual workflows, we unfortunately cannot register our schematic workflow figure here. However, we do refer to this website now in the paper to bring it to the attention of others (I 1593).

3. Model simplification

- You often use “simplified” to describe your model. This is perhaps a matter of preference but I favor “idealized”. Complexity is not necessarily your enemy (and you do a good job discussing the pitfalls over oversimplification) but whenever you settle on mathematical relations, especially in the constitutive equations that are needed to close your balance equations, you are looking at an idealized but not necessarily simpler view of reality.

We agree that ‘idealised’ is also a good description of models in general, but we keep the terminology ‘simplified’ to indicate that all models are ultimately simplified (/idealised) versions of reality. Using this terminology then allows it to be used together with the terminology ‘complex’, highlighting that all models are simplified, but can have various levels of complexity, while never attaining reality. Related to that, we hope that we imply that we are solving a set of idealised equations (governing and constitutive; we indeed mention the term ‘idealised’ in this sense in the manuscript).

- Line 789: the concept of over-simplification is not shown in Figure. Another issue is that what is “too much” simplification depends really on the hypothesis to be tested (that’s a reason why the hypothesis needs to be identified first). The “simple” convection model in Fig.7 is also quite complex to me. The triangle heart may be sufficiently realistic for some purpose. The link between oversimplification and hypothesis (line 791) should be a major motivation for motivating the identification of the hypothesis before designing the model (see my comments about Figure 2) Here again, I would favor idealized over simple, and maybe realistic over complex.

We believe it depends on the problem at hand whether a model is oversimplified or not. For most people, triangles bear no direct relation to a heart (or love, for that matter) and hence are over-simplified in that the original goal is no longer reached. We did not find a way to improve on the figure regarding this aspect. We also think that the figure caption of figure 7 is already clear enough regarding the subjective meaning of “oversimplification” and we did not take any measures here.

Additionally, we find the current mentions of the link between simplification and hypothesis in the text already clear enough, which is why we did not take any measures here.

Given that the term “realistic” is harder to quantify and has an intrinsic positive meaning regarding modelling and could perhaps hint at ‘the one true solution’ (as it is realistic after all), we chose to stick with “complex” instead. Similarly, we keep “simplified” instead of “idealised” (also see our response to the comment above) and indeed regard these differences in formulation as a matter of personal preferences to a degree.

- Figure 8 could mention constitutive equations that coupled vary from non-linear to linear to

fixed parameters. The degree of coupling in Multiphysics problems could also be mentioned.

We agree with this addition and have added the following rows to the figure:

Constitutive equations	non-linear	linearised	constant
Multiphysics1	coupling	one-way coupling	none

In caption: 1. Note that we mean ‘multiphysics’ beyond the already coupled system described in Section 2 (see Section 3.8).

4. Line 247 etc.

High thermal conductivity does not mean that the curvature $\nabla \cdot \nabla T$ is steep. Just consider a simple steady-state solution with fixed temperatures at both ends of a 1D solid. You know the temperature varies linearly between the two ends. Curvature is 0, regardless of the conductivity. What the high conductivity does is allow for large heat flow through that material. It also makes it faster (everything else being the same) to obtain this solution, so that in general, the curvature of the temperature field is less in the case with high k , at least in this specific example.

This is of course correct, thank you for pointing that out. What we meant was

“When the thermal conductivity k is larger, OR the temperature variation as expressed by the gradient ∇T becomes steeper, more heat is diffused.”

We changed the manuscript accordingly.

5. The description of physical concepts emphasizes the momentum equations.

While I can appreciate their importance, most models also need to include constitutive equations. These appear in section 2.2 but should be at least mentioned earlier, as part of the model design. The fact that these evolutions, including their parameters, can change over time should also be described in general with an evolution equation, and that aspect is buried in “more complex processes” (section 2.3). It goes beyond the idea of fault gouge development (line 422). I don’t think this is any more complex than the other kinds of equations described. Many constitutive parameters evolve following an ODE, so in a way, this is simpler.

We now mention that constitutive relations can be time-dependent in the section about constitutive relations (2.2), just before the start of the subsection about rheology (l 371-373). We also point out that this would require solving additional equations and refer to Section 2.3. In addition, we made the statement about fault gouges in line 507-508 more general.

We now also mention the constitutive equations already in the introduction of Section 2, just before the section on the mass conservation equation.

- Figure 3: As much as I like the emphasis on rheology, it strikes me that it is only one of the

many constitutive equations that can enter the model. Perhaps it is more fundamental because, without it, there would be no way to link stress and velocity. In that case, it has to make the distinction clear but highlight in the caption that other constitutive and evolution equations can (should?) be considered. Minor point: the diagram for “plastic” is brittle.

We now note in the figure caption that many geodynamic models include additional constitutive and evolution equations. We also point out in the figure caption that the plastic rheology depicted in the figure is the geodynamic approximation of brittle failure.

- Line 224: Stokes equations need not only eq. 2 and 5 but also viscous rheology. If you use elasticity you end up with a different set of equations.

We have added the line “Under the assumption that deformation is dominantly viscous, ...”

- Line 229-231: Seismic waves do need inertia but they do not follow the viscous relations (Stokes or Navier-Stokes equations) that you describe here.

We have changed the sentence accordingly.

- In detail, Equation (10) doesn't work as it takes a tensor to a power that is not necessarily an integer. This equation should be written with a scalar measure of the strain rate and the stress tensor. We often use it in models with an effective viscosity approach. I think it would be important to explain this in the text. By the way, H₂O should be styled as subscript (and not italicized) in $f!$.

Indeed. We have changed the equation to use scalar measures and added this sentence after the equation:

"where $\dot{\epsilon}$ and τ are a scalar strain rate and shear stress respectively. In geodynamic modelling they are usually the square root of the second invariants of the respective tensors."

We have made H₂O a subscript.

- Line 374: In fact, grain size dependence is fairly well constrained. Grain size evolution is not (but you do not consider evolution at this stage). Also, dependence on porosity (ϕ) is less well constrained.

This is a good point. We rephrased the sentence, which now says that grain size is not well-constrained in the mantle. We have also added a sentence about melt.

- I find the discussion of elastic deformation to be a distraction: it cannot be included as is with the other relations and the framework of Stokes flow. We can see that in line 471, it is written that “velocity ... enter the stress tensor”. That is incompatible with elasticity. I recommended either skipping section 2.2.3 or describing implementations of viscoelastic materials.

We now briefly describe how elasticity is included in codes that solve for Stokes flow:

“Elastic deformation is often included in geodynamic codes that solve for Stokes equations by taking the time derivative of Eq. [...], which introduces the velocity and strain-rate. The term σ is then approximated by a first order Taylor expansion (see Appendix A) which ultimately amounts to adding terms to the right hand side of the momentum equation (Eq. [...]; see for example [...]).”

- Line 480: Why the specific focus on diffusive quantities? You can have ODEs, e.g. grain size evolution.

We did list in the following paragraph more parameters that require more pdes/odes/evolution like grain size. We do not go into further details what kind of equations these processes are. In addition, the transport equation (15) can be used for grain size evolution, as long as additional terms for grain growth and reduction are added, as pointed out at the end of the paragraph.

- Line 505: the addition of Eq. 15 is inconsistent with the statement of introducing “the general concepts of geodynamics”. I would argue that constitutive relations are more fundamental and General.

In our opinion, the advection equation 15 is the most common additional equation in geodynamic models. It is sometimes solved using particle methods instead of field methods, but being able to track the rock type or chemical composition is fundamental to many geodynamic applications. Sometimes it also includes additional terms (for reactions, or grain size evolution or other processes), and this is also something we point out in the text. But we agree that constitutive equations are important too, and have changed the text to “the partial differential equations (2), (5), (6), and potentially (15), as well as the constitutive equations”

6. Section 2.2.4 needs more discussion of the way brittle failure can be implemented.

- Line 392: brittle deformation takes place when rocks break, but this is not necessarily (in fact rarely) a rupture of the crystal lattice.

We removed “the crystal lattice breaks, and”

- Line 394: Actually, it is possible to represent discrete faults using split nodes (Melosh and Raefsky, 1981, A simple and efficient method for introducing faults into finite element computations, Bulletin of the Seismological Society of America 71 (5): 1391–1400), slippery nodes (Melosh and Williams, 1989, DOI 10.1029/JB094iB10p13961) and augmented FEM or X-FEM approaches (Ortiz et al., 1987, DOI 10.1016/0045-7825(87)90004-1; Dolbow et al., 2001, DOI 10.1016/S0045-7825(01)00260-2)

Since we do not want to introduce numerical terminology at this point of the manuscript, we have instead nuanced the formulation here to:

“However, in a continuum formulation, discontinuous faults cannot be represented and hence the deformation in geodynamics models typically localises in so-called shear bands of finite width, which can be interpreted as faults on crustal and lithospheric scales [...].”

The short description of FEM in the paper unfortunately does not allow us to add the proposed references, as we think that explaining split nodes would be beyond the scope of this paper.

- Line 398: there is a difficulty, here again, of comparing a tensor (stress) and a scalar (yield stress). This difficulty should be mentioned. It is particularly important as the difference between criteria that are later mentioned (e.g. Tresca vs. Von Mises) stands in the way that this comparison is made (stress invariant for Tresca and Drucker-Prager, which leads to a smooth yield envelope, vs. resolved shear stress for Tresca and Mohr-Coulomb, which leads to a segmented yield envelope).

We have added a sentence that conveys the point of the reviewer:

“Note that it is difficult to compare a tensor (the stress) and a scalar (the yield stress). This is particularly important as the difference between the standard yield criteria is partly based on the way that this comparison is made, i.e., the stress invariant for von Mises and Drucker-Prager, which leads to a smooth yield envelope, versus resolved shear stress for Tresca and Mohr-Coulomb, which leads to a segmented yield envelope”

- Line 410: Byerlee’s law has two branches. You describe here the friction coefficient of the high-pressure branch but that branch also has a cohesion term. The intermediate branch (important in the crust) does not have cohesion but its friction coefficient is 0.85.

We now explain Byerlee’s law in more detail and describe both components (l 489-491).

- Line 415: Drucker-Prager and Mohr-Coulomb cannot be equivalent. One is smooth and depends only on the first and second stress invariants, the second is segmented. For an elasticplastic deformation, localization arises spontaneously at the corners of the yield envelope, so the difference is significant.

In general the two are not equivalent. However, for the specific case outlined in the manuscript (i.e. incompressible, 2D, plane strain) they are the same. We think we have described this with sufficient nuance.

7. Section 3 misses some of the fundamental differences between FEM and FDM.

As the authors are well aware, FEM uses the original equations (in their weak form) while FDM modifies these equations. Conversely, FEM restricts the solution to a predefined space. Therefore, the statement in line 510 that we are considering approximate solutions to Eq. 2, 5, and 6 is only strictly valid for FEM (FDM approximates the equations, not necessarily the solution).

We modified the comparison between FEM/FDM also in response to reviewer #2 comments:

“This also controls how the partial differential equations are solved on the grid, with finite difference methods solving the equations pointwise and finite element methods averaging the equations per element.”

- Line 520: there are even approaches where one equation (energy?) is solved with FDM and the others by FEM.

Yes, we hope we explain that different methods can be used in different places and different combinations:

“Often combinations of these methods are used to deal with time and space discretisation separately. [...] None is intrinsically better than the other, although there are differences that make a certain method more suitable for certain types of science questions.”

- Line 560 etc. The notation of $Q_1 \times P_0$ etc. the concept of “bi/trilinear velocity” must all be described here or in a glossary. I don’t think it’s reasonable for non-initiated readers to know what this means.

We have added a clearer definition of what these spaces mean:

“For quadrilaterals/hexahedra, the designation $Q_m \times Q_n$ means that each component of the velocity is approximated by a continuous piecewise polynomial of degree m in each direction on the element and likewise for pressure, except that the polynomial is of degree n . Again for the same families, $Q_m \times P_n$ indicates the same velocity approximation with a pressure approximation that is a discontinuous complete piecewise polynomial of degree n (not of degree n in each direction) [...]. Stable elements are typically characterised by $m > n$.”

- Line 576: ALE is only one of several semi-Lagrangian methods.

We reformulated to:

“Finally, as its name implies, the Arbitrary Lagrangian-Eulerian (ALE), part of the semi-Lagrangian class of methods, is a kinematical description that combines features of both the Lagrangian and Eulerian formulations.”

8. Modeling philosophy

- The analogy between car/model vs. engine/code did not work for me. To me, the code is more general than the model. The model takes the code and restricts it if using the setup. The code may have additional capabilities that are not used in a particular model. The car also uses many other components that are not the engine (steering wheel, headlamp, seats, doors). I am sure that every modeler can come up with their preferred analogy (and you may argue that your

analogy best fits your vision) but I might suggest that the code is like a road network and the model is like an itinerary that uses these roads to reach a destination.

We agree that the car analogy was not fully waterproof and thank the reviewer for his constructive suggestion. We replaced the relevant paragraph with an analogy-free alternative that, we think, follows on the reviewer's suggestion.

- It would be useful in Section 5.2 to emphasize the importance of “failed” models. It is often impossible to conclude that a certain phenomenon is responsible for observations but it can be shown which situation does not explain observations (this is valid for both specific and generic models). Similarly, these failed models would not verify the criterion in Line 1085 of being “consistent with our understanding of geodynamic processes” but are important to probe the limits of our understanding (this may not be relevant for Phanerozoic Earth, but what about other circumstances?)

We agree that so-called “failed” models that do not fulfil a hypothesis are valuable too and have added a paragraph emphasizing this aspect to Section 5.2 as suggested:

“Both overarching modelling philosophies can either fulfil or reject a hypothesis. Most results published to date fulfil a hypothesis, even though positive modelling results only hint at a certain phenomenon being responsible for an observation. Modelling results that reject a hypothesis (often called ‘failed models’) are of course more abundant, but, also, much clearer as they indeed serve as proof that a certain situation does not lead to a specific observation.”

- Line 847: add “the PROPOSED control mechanism(s)”. I am not convinced that assumptions and simplification are necessary for ALL control mechanisms. Some models may even be designed to find the necessary level of simplification.

We have added the word ‘proposed’.

- Line 851: Other examples of regime diagrams can be found in Citron et al. (2020, DOI 10.1029/2019GC008895) and Gülcher et al. (2020, DOI <https://doi.org/10.1038/s41561-020-0606-1>)

We have added both suggestions as well as two other recent papers on more lithosphere/upper mantle scale.

- Line 856. Spiegelman focuses more on magma transport than on magma dynamics (often linked to eruptions). It would be good to also cite the newer work by Sim et al. (2020, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.pepi.2020.106486>).

We added McKenzie 1984 and Sim et al. 2020. Additionally, we think the work in Spiegelman 1993 does add further understanding into magma dynamics.

9. Boundary and Initial conditions

- Line 898: prescribed stress can also be used to mimic topographic loads.

We added this.

- Line 910, 924: periodic BC are also commonplace in mantle convection dynamics, not just lithosphere dynamics (for example Gurnis, 1988; [10.1038/332695a0](https://doi.org/10.1038/332695a0); Lowman et al., 2001 [10.1046/j.1365-246X.2001.00471.x](https://doi.org/10.1046/j.1365-246X.2001.00471.x)).

This was also pointed out by other reviewers. We added this fact and the references above.

- Line 925: why restricting the criticism to specific model setups? Generic models of long-term mantle convection are more realistic if the core temperature is allowed to vary according to its thermal balance.

We did not mean to restrict this comment to specific model setups and have rephrased the sentence as follows:

“However, this might not always be applicable.”

- Line 926: I think you need a citation to support your statement that models of the outer core are better off prescribing heat flux boundary conditions.

We added a reference to the review paper of Wicht & Sanchez (2019) and changed the wording to “more appropriate”.

- Line 955: Maybe highlight the issue of initial strain rate for models with non-linear viscosity (there is no solution if velocity is 0 everywhere).

We have added “, and is critical in cases where all deformation mechanisms included in a model are strain-rate-dependent (such as pure dislocation creep).”

- Line 965-6: Why specify the mantle when mentioning chemical heterogeneities. The crust is also highly heterogeneous.

We added the crust.

- Line 979 paragraph. Note that weak seeds can also be implemented as a random field of initial values, which is less constraining than a single seed (e.g. Jammes and Lavier, 2016, [10.1002/2016GC006399](https://doi.org/10.1002/2016GC006399)).

We have added this reference and the random field approach in the paragraph.

10. Unphysical behavior vs. numerical problems (e.g. Line 1005 paragraph).

- I am not certain what “nonphysical artefacts” you have in mind. An incorrect IC or BC is not sufficient to have nonphysical behavior but the resulting result could be irrelevant for the geological problem at hand (still being physical). Maybe you mean that the IC or BC is incorrectly implemented (the verification step should have taken care of that). In some cases, there could be issues of convergence, but not necessarily. I would imagine that the issues you identify (resolution, drunken sailor effect) would be identified at the verification stage (are you solving the problem correctly) not at the validation stage (are you solving the problem you think you are solving)

We see the code verification and model validation steps as follows: During code verification, correct implementation of IC and BC is checked (code development stage). During the first step of model validation, we check whether the particular chosen combination of IC and BC (i.e. the model setup) is solved correctly. For example, the way prescribed velocity boundaries are implemented by the developer can be correct, but if the net sum of the prescribed velocities over the boundaries as set by the user is non-zero for an incompressible model without a free surface, this will still lead to solver issues and model failure. The second component of model validation concerns the internal consistency of the chosen setup. In the last step of model validation, we check whether the particular model setup is representative of and relevant for the problem/hypothesis under investigation.

We have rephrased the first sentences of section 6.1 Common numerical problems without 'nonphysical artefacts':

"The construction of a specific model setup to investigate a particular problem or hypothesis can give rise to numerical issues, despite successful code verification. During the model validation process, these issues are identified and addressed."

- Lines 1035-1038. Stabilization by diffusion is helpful, but one should also remember that it potentially changes the set of physics included in the model (you are changing the equations). Same thing for mass scaling in FLAC codes.

We have added the sentence: "However, adding diffusion could possibly change the physics included in the model."

- Lines 1045: smoothing is indeed important for $Q1xP0$ elements but I think the recommended solution should be to use stable elements instead. I always refer to the list in the Bathe (2014). Finite Element Procedures textbook (Table 4.8 in the second edition). Certainly, there are other references)

Agreed. Also in light of the comments of the other reviewers, we have added:

"Stable elements, which fulfil the Ladyzhenskaya-Babuska-Brezzi compatibility condition (LBB or inf-sup condition), do not exhibit pressure artefacts (Donea and Huerta, 2003) and are preferable (see Bathe (2014) for examples of such elements). Moreover, the required number of

outer iterations does not increase significantly with mesh resolution compared to the Q1×P0 element (Thieulot and Bangerth, 2021)."

11. Modelling manuscript.

I found section 8.1 to be overly prescriptive. It presents one possible manuscript organization, which is indeed very common and effective. However, this is far from the only solution (this manuscript does not follow the prescribed structure, for example). I also notice that the general papers about manuscript structure and methods come from the clinical literature, which could have different conventions than geodynamics. At a minimum, the wording must be toned down (should or may instead of must). I would go so far as recommending you delete Figure 11 and much of section 8.1. I always prefer flexibility over rigidity when planning a publication. Scientific manuscripts DO NOT have a rigidly defined structure (Line 1316) although I can recognize that a structure can be useful especially for the first papers one might write. More specific comments follow.

We agree that there are different ways to report scientific results, but the section and the IMRAD structure of a manuscript are intended to be a starting point for students and scientists new to geodynamics. In our experience, having a structure is very helpful when writing the first papers. Equally, for non-geodynamicists, it is important to highlight the importance of the methods section, which determines whether the results are relevant for the investigation. Moreover, writing clear and comprehensive manuscripts is a critical skill in a scientist's training, which usually is not formally taught. We hope to provide some help here.

We do not think we are overly prescriptive, and repeatedly mention that journal guidelines may specify differently. We also found 3 instances of 'must' in the section, which we now changed to 'should'.

- Modern publications tend to deemphasize the method (especially in general journals) and emphasize results and insight instead. In my opinion, it is a good thing and helps broaden the reach of our papers. The IMRAD structure that you describe is appropriate for highly specialized publications but not for generic ones. Non-specialist will gloss over the technical aspects and focus on the take-home message of the paper. I would certainly emphasize more the message (you have just one sentence on telling a story in line 1317, yet that is what controls the impact of the paper).

We are not aware of journals that do not require a methods section, even if it is added as a supplementary section or material. We consider the methods section an important part of a manuscript, which allows verification and validation of the experimental setup and results. In numerical geodynamics, the "recipe" dictates the results.

We have added a sentence that advises to focus on a key message for both specialist and non-specialist readership. We now also mention that different journals place different emphasis on the IMRAD components:

"In geodynamics, the general structure of a manuscript follows the IMRAD structure (Figure 11), although journals can place different emphasis on the individual components through reordering and formatting."

- As the editor of a journal, I strongly disagree that "it is always good practice to write a complete methods section for every manuscript" (line 1271). If the focus of the paper is on the method, that's true. Otherwise, it is better to refer to other papers that have developed the method and maybe summarize that method in supporting information documents. This separation can strengthen the take-home message of the paper (and remember we study geodynamics to gain new insight). Also, it avoids having identical (or nearly-identical) method sections in different papers, which violates dual-publication policies. Finally, modern open science strategies require sharing codes in FAIR-enabling platforms (as you describe very well), in which case it should be possible to include a citation to the code and its version. It is to be expected that code publications will have documented verification and maybe validation steps. The paper can then focus on the hypothesis, setup, and results.

As reviewers of papers and scientists trying to replicate published results, we disagree with this comment, because we have encountered papers where the authors did not fully describe the methods section, the model was irreproducible, and it turned out the authors didn't understand the implementation of different features, which invalidated the whole experimental setup and results.

Even if, for example, a scientist uses a community code/method already developed, they might want to vary the parameter space or use some processes in combination with others that produce irrelevant results. A clear methods section describing the specific model is therefore still important (even if it is just included as supplementary material).

To nuance our formulation, we have removed the word 'always'.

- On a related topic, line 1231 "The methods section is considered one of the most important parts of any scientific manuscript" is more true of social and clinical sciences (the Kallet reference you include), which struggle with reproducibility due to reliance on human subjects and survey methods, than it is in geodynamics modeling. Note also that "who performed the experiment" (line 1241) should be irrelevant: the models should be reproducible by anyone. I think again that the context of the cited paper (here Annesley, 2010) makes it irrelevant for our discipline.

We note the lack of publications on this topic in geodynamics, so we had to borrow from other, larger fields (i.e. medical sciences), and adapt to our field from our experience (and we do mention in the text that imrad and content may vary from field to field). We hope that with this manuscript we can provide some best practices for our field.

We agree the explanation on the different questions relating to the methods was unclear. We have now reformulated it, such that each question has a clear geodynamic example. For

example, for geodynamic modeling 'who performed the experiment' translates to on what cluster and with what hardware the simulation was performed. When the same model setup is run on a different system with a different installation, dependencies and number of cores, the results of the (same) model could be different. We added geodynamic-specific explanations for the relevant questions in lines 1394-1400.

- My other problem with IMRAD as described is that it links discussion and conclusions. In our disciplines, these sections have different purposes: one puts the results in a broader perspective, and may even speculate on future hypotheses, while the other summarizes the paper.

We agree that the discussion and conclusions serve different purposes (although some journals nowadays merge the discussion and conclusion) and we discuss them as such in the current document.

- Line 1239-1240 I don't know what journal specifies "how many words can be used" to describe methods, but certainly not the one I edit.

There are a few instances where the number of words for the methods is specified. For example, Nature Communications write in their guidelines: "Methods should be written as concisely as possible and typically do not exceed 3,000 words but may be longer if necessary." However, it is more common that there is a general word limit, which then implicitly limits the amount of words available for the methods. For example, from Geology: "Geology manuscripts must fit the following size constraints: (1) A character count with spaces (in Microsoft Word) of no more than 18,500 characters for the title, author names, affiliations, abstract, main text, Acknowledgments, and figure captions (the References Cited list does not need to be counted)." We do agree with the reviewer that the word limit specification for methods is not common, so we removed this.

- Line 1288: The results section should describe the model results. Answering the central question or hypothesis of the paper should only happen after these results are analyzed and evaluated, which is best done as a discussion. This is in fact what you prescribe in Line 1297.

We changed the sentence to: The main goal of the results section is to present quantitative arguments to the initial hypothesis.

- A couple of pitfalls should be mentioned in the Line 1306 paragraph: the abstract should give a preview of the results as well as the work. Too often I see abstracts that say what is done without saying what is learned (which is what will inspire a broader audience to read the paper). Second: the best titles remain succinct (I was told to limit titles to ten major words). I know I suggested additions to your title but in my opinion, the title should also stop at the column. Two-part titles are often cumbersome. You may also want to mention the use of Plain Language Summary and Graphical Abstracts, for publishers that allow them, as alternative ways to

engage a broad readership (note that the purpose and mechanics of Plain Language Summaries are not the same as those of abstracts).

We have added these suggestions.

12. Not surprisingly considering who the authors are, the section on visualization is very strong.

I have a couple of points to make, though

- Line 1323: Bar plot should have a well-justified baseline, but it does not have to be 0. Imagine that the quantity reported varied over several orders of magnitude. I may best to use a log scale, and 0 may not be the best reference (e.g. grain size varying from micron to millimeters).

A logarithmic bar plot is indeed a rare case, where the base level must not be 0 (but 1). We added the statement: “(or in the logarithmic case, have a baseline at one)”, to clarify this.

- Line 1341: there are circumstances when it is necessary to change the range of a color scale. I agree it typically should be avoided and if the range changes, that needs to be emphasized in the caption. However, saying the range should “always” be the same is overly prescriptive.

This is a good point and we agree. We rewrote accordingly.

- Perceptually uniform color maps are certainly to be preferred for an unbiased reporting of results. However, figures should also inform the readership, and it may be useful to take advantage of non-uniformity to highlight a result (10.1109/TVCG.2018.2855742). This is in a sense what is done with a multi-sequential color map (oloron, highlighting the sea level) and there are also tools for interactively creating colormaps (<https://sciviscolor.org/colormoves/overview/>)

We disagree with this statement and the effort represented by the people behind *sciviscolor.org* (see also the related discussion in Crameri et al., 2020, *The misuse of colour in science communication*).

Axes (colorbars included) are not a tool to highlight or interpret data. Likewise, it is ill-practice to suggest squeezing any y-axes between certain tick values to highlight some parts of the data to inform the readership, while it is factually a distortion and misleading the readers. Instead, axes (colorbars included) are a tool to represent data, so that others (not only during peer-review) can actually judge the interpretation(s) made by the authors. Community feedback and checks are fundamental pillars of science. If others cannot judge the interpretation of a study, then the study presented becomes just a fact-less opinion piece by the authors. With distorted figure axes, there is no way to judge the interpretation made based on the underlying data without the redoing of the entire study - because it can't be seen. To highlight data, an entire variety of alternative options exist, like superposed contour lines or graphical indicators like arrows. Perceptual uniformity, however, is a must for scientists; no way around it – and really no need for a way around it either.

We clarified that further in the manuscript.

Multi-sequential, perceptually uniform colour maps like oleron do not distort the data, because they basically represent two datasets (for surface elevation this would be ocean bathymetry and land topography), just using one single colour axis. The same also applies to diverging colour maps.

We do not mention tools for interactively creating colour maps, since hardly any scientist today is equipped to personally create a colour map that fulfills critical aspects like perceptual uniformity or colour-vision deficiency friendliness.

13. Section 9 is also very strong and useful. It contains many important resources.

• I wonder if the underlined words should be links, though. In that case, they would best included as URL citations (or better permanent citations if a DOI is available).

Indeed the underlined words are links. As Solid Earth informed us, in the Discussion stage links are unfortunately disabled, but not in the final publication. Nevertheless, we have reviewed all link occurrences, and where applicable replaced them with a permanent citation.

• You may also want to point to CIG's best practice documents at <https://geodynamics.org/cig/dev/best-practices/>.

We have included the CIG's guidelines as follows, with a link to the given webpage:

"Certain organisations that provide a platform for software packages state their own guidelines and requirements, for example those of the Computational Infrastructure for Geodynamics (CIG)."

• Line 1418. Another argument for storing and sharing numerical data is to enable the R of FAIR (Reusability). Other scientists may be interested in new analyses of the model runs for different purposes or quantitative comparison with other studies. Sharing results saves on the time and computational cost needed to reproduce the results.

Agreed. We think the sentence "However, accessible model results can save the computational resources needed to recreate the model results, " (l 1590-1592) already covers this aspect of FAIR.

• Line 1430: Mention the Planetary Data System?

We have added PDS, thank you for the suggestion.

• Line 1442: Mention Earth and Space Science journal (<https://agupubs.onlinelibrary.wiley.com/journal/23335084>)?

We have added the journal.

- Line 1443: here I think you are not strong enough: research not only can but must create and use persistent identifiers whenever possible (and you do include great pointers on how to do this).

We have made the statement stronger by writing "Not only data can (and should) have a persistent identifier".

- Line 1446: note that ORCID iD is required by some journals.

Indeed. We have updated the sentence to "The article processing portals of many journals already allow or require researchers to link their ORCID iD to their profile, ...".

14. Isolated points

- Line 24: replace hundreds by thousands of km (the scale of the largest plates, or the "penetration" of plate boundary deformation in Asia or North America).

We modified this.

- Line 35: "THEY take place"? (subject surface processes)

Fixed

- Figure 1: 1)make the axes labels darker? 2) what about aseismic transients and creep Processes?

We have made the numeric tick labels a shade darker and improved the overall readability of the figure. In order to avoid cluttering the figure, we chose to stay with the overarching processes already shown. Aseismic transients and creep processes are rather complex terms that need not appear on such an early figure in the manuscript and would require additional substantial explanation we do not want to focus on.

- Line 55: While I am proud that you included my paper here, I would recommending mentioning the seminal papers of Hager and O'Connell (1981, <https://doi.org/10.1029/JB086iB06p04843>), McKenzie (1969 <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1365-246X.1969.tb00259.x>). There has been action between 1879 and 2006...

We have added both references.

- Line 63: What do you mean by "the physical properties of the variables" (variables can have value and they can represent physical properties, but they don't have physical properties).

We clarified the sentence and we now write:

“This is due to the fact that numerical models are increasingly more difficult to solve computationally when large contrasts are present in the physical properties (e.g., in space or time)”

- Line 97: I would regard boundary conditions as a part of the model setup, not simulations.

We agree with this and have changed the sentence to reflect this:

“Each numerical model can have a different model setup with different dimensions, geometries, and initial and boundary conditions. For a specific model setup, the numerical model can then be executed multiple times by varying different aspects of the model setup to constitute multiple model simulations (also often called model runs).”

- Line 112 etc. It would be good to mention data assimilation.

This was included in the sentence already.

- Line 130: I would think that it's the model results, not the setup, that need to be compared to observations.

We agree and changed the sentence to clarify:

“After the model has successfully run, the model results should be validated in terms of robustness and against observations (Section 6). Once the model has been validated, the results of the simulation need to be interpreted, visualised, and diagnosed while taking into account the assumptions and limitations that entered the modelling study in previous steps.”

- Line 133: add “openly” to “clearly and reproducibly” (BTW: reproducibly, not reproducible)

We changed this.

- Line 136: elasticity can be important at long time scales too. See plate bending. Its role in longterm tectonics is still debated.

We adjusted the sentence to make it sound less like there is just one single deformation mechanism at play for a given condition. In addition, we added a more in-depth discussion about how well geodynamic models approximate the real rheology in Section 2.2.1.

- Line 141: 450 years assumes a certain viscosity. I am quite certain it is longer when you enter the lithosphere (still in the mantle). Do you assume the asthenospheric mantle?

We took this value from the reference we give (Schubert, Turcotte and Olson; Mantle Convection in the Earth and Planets) which assume a viscosity of 10^{21} . But this of course excludes the lithosphere, so we changed our wording to “sublithospheric mantle”. The viscosity

is of course still a bit low for the lower mantle, but on the other hand the viscosity may go down to even smaller values in the asthenosphere, so we take this value as a compromise (and after all, we point out that this is just an order-of-magnitude estimate).

- Line 162: I would focus on the physical processes that are of interest (not just relevant).

We changed this to:

“Depending on which physical processes are relevant and/or of interest,”

- Line 169 misses a space in “viscousFluid”.

We corrected this.

- Line 255: Definitions may be different for different people, but I believe that shear heating is the more general term (it does not imply a shear mechanism) and that it can be divided into frictional and viscous dissipation. This is opposite to the relation you include here.

We follow Ismael-Zadeh and Tackley (2010, section 10.3.4), and call the term viscous dissipation, which is sometimes also referred to as shear heating. We changed the sentence to:

“Viscous dissipation, also called shear heating, describes the amount of energy that is released as heat when material is deformed viscously and/or plastically.”

- Line 270: Melting is much more complex than shown here, as the heat can be transported by melt flow. You also have the issue that the fraction that has melted (X) may be different for the (retained) melt fraction.

We agree that including melt generation and transport in a model is more complex than just including the latent heat term for melting, and we hope that this becomes clear in other parts of the manuscript (for example, in the section on more complex processes and in the rheology section where we discuss the dependence of viscosity on melt fraction). In line 270 we only discuss the latent heat terms (which is also all that is needed if one wants to include **melting**), and therefore we think it is not necessary to include additional details on what other terms would be needed to model **melt transport**.

- Line 283: density OF the ...profile.

We fixed this.

- Line 297-309: It may be worth mentioning that many studies have used the EBA but called it Boussinesq.

To avoid confusion, we have refrained from adding this point.

- Line 458: why do you assume the relation between density and temperature is linear?

The sentence is actually more nuanced than that as we specifically start it with “In the simplest case” and mention that one of the options then *may be* a linear relationship.

- Line 584: typo: 10&'.

We fixed this.

I think the shear forces should be negligible, but it's not true that there are no shear forces.

We have changed the text to say the forces are negligible.

- Figure 4 gives the impression that triangular meshes are necessary for conforming to an interface. You can have quad meshes that do the same. Maybe include one on the bottom right panel? Anyway, as currently designed, the panel with the two fluids appears in the “mesh” row, so that's a little confusing. Define the fluids in the Field Method panel. I also find the grey fonts too light (I honestly didn't see the words “mesh” and “method” when I first looked at the figure).

We added in the caption that quadrilateral meshes can also conform to interfaces. We did not see a way to add it to the figure itself without introducing more complexity. Also, triangles are more commonly used to conform to interfaces than quads.

We moved the definition of the fluids (now called Materials) to the Field Method panel, and made the gray words a shade darker.

- Line 640: the viscosity “MAY DEPEND” on the velocity... (it's not a requirement)

We changed this.

- Line 719: Explain what you mean by an “as simple hello world” test.

This is explained in the glossary as we didn't want to clutter the text.

- Line 725: I know it's impossible to be exhaustive here, but I would like to see mentioned example of corner flow, viscous folding, and half-space cooling. The latter is particularly important as otherwise there would be no example using the energy equation. Folding also presents interesting numerical effects (see Schmalholz and Podlachikov, 1999, DOI 10.1029/1999GL900412)

We have added the corner flow, viscous folding, and half-space cooling to the list of examples, as well as the proposed reference.

- Line 744: missing words “It is important...”

We changed this.

- Line 759: Laboratory experiments do not have “infinite resolution” especially in tectonic applications with granular media. Also, even if all possible physics is indeed included, the constitutive relations are not always fully understood (Katz et al., 2005 Tectonic microplates in a wax model of sea-floor spreading, *New J. Phys.* 7 37, Di Giuseppe et al., 2012. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s00397-011-0611-9>). These limitations are important to mention as it highlights the complementarity between numerical and analog models (in numerical studies, only selected sets of physics are included, but that means they are well controlled).

We agree and we have removed this part of the sentence. Differences between numerical and analogue models are briefly discussed in the introduction (also elaborated upon with respect to the previous version of the manuscript in response to the comment of Paul Pukite in the open discussion).

- I would have preferred to see the non-dimensional numbers of lines 1130-1 introduced with the concept of the regime diagram (Line 851).

We added a sentence on this:

“Non-dimensional numbers often make up axes and boundaries in regime diagrams, although other diagnostic quantities can also be used (Section 7.2).”