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1 **Sensitivity of the tropical dust cycle to glacial abrupt**
2 **climate changes**

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12 **Key Points:**

- 13 • Freshwater hosing forcing increases tropical dust loading in Earth System model
14 simulations of the LGM
- 15 • Simulated response is non-linear with forcing in some regions particularly North
16 Africa
- 17 • Weaker events improve agreement with data and emitted dust produces a self-amplifying
18 feedback

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19 **Abstract**

20 During abrupt climate changes of the last glacial period records show large amplitude
 21 changes in the dust cycle. We use Earth System model simulations to evaluate dust pro-
 22 cesses operating across these events. Idealised Heinrich Stadial-like simulations show a
 23 southwards migration of tropical rainfall that dries the Sahel and reduces wet deposi-
 24 tion causing a widespread enhancement of tropical dust loading. However, several dis-
 25 crepancies with marine core dust deposition reconstructions are evident. Simulations with
 26 a more limited freshwater forcing (0.4 Sv) and hence weaker cooling over North Atlantic
 27 (less than around 3°C) show a switch in sign of the stadial dust deposition anomaly in
 28 several key regions, improving agreement with paleorecords. The simulated dust cycle
 29 therefore displays in places a non-linear response to abrupt climate change. The global-
 30 mean stadial dust radiative forcing in the more realistic simulations is around -0.2 to -
 31 0.6 Wm⁻² and so could represent an important amplifying feedback during these events.

32 **Plain Language Summary**

33 Mineral dust in the atmosphere is mostly sourced from arid regions like the Sahara
 34 desert. The amount and geographical spread of this dust in the atmosphere is sensitive
 35 to environmental conditions such as drought. Paleoclimate records show that rapid cool-
 36 ing events centred on the North Atlantic during the last ice-age also saw large increases
 37 in the rate of dust deposited over the ocean. Earth System models are a computational
 38 tool that can be used to understand the links between climate and the dust cycle. Us-
 39 ing a series of such simulations we found that abrupt cooling events in the North Atlantic
 40 can lead to a massive increase in dust over the equatorial (tropical) regions. However,
 41 the model's response is in many places non-linear, meaning that the change in dust is
 42 very sensitive to the magnitude of the climate changes occurring. This non-linearity is
 43 mostly due to interactions between changes in the water cycle and the dust. We show
 44 that a less severe cooling produces a more realistic dust response when evaluated against
 45 paleo-dust records. Since dust scatters incoming sunlight, increased atmospheric dust
 46 during these events may have amplified and even extended the cold phases.

47 **1 Introduction**

48 Abrupt climate change events of the glacial period are among the most striking cli-
 49 mate events in the geological record. Much focus has been on the abrupt changes in Green-
 50 land (Dansgaard et al., 1993), where recurrent warming events called Dansgaard-Oeschger
 51 (DO) events of around 5 to 16.5°C occurred in a few decades or less (Kindler et al., 2014)
 52 and all major chemical records including dust show approximately synchronous abrupt
 53 changes (Wolff et al., 2010). Paleoclimate records from across the northern hemisphere
 54 show coincident abrupt events (Peterson et al., 2000; Y. Wang et al., 2001; Deplazes et
 55 al., 2013; Gibson & Peterson, 2014; X. Wang et al., 2017). The abrupt DO warming phases
 56 are followed by a gradual cooling with a return to stadial conditions. Some of the sta-
 57 dials are characterized by the occurrence of massive ice-raftered debris layers in high- to
 58 mid-latitude Atlantic sediment. These are called Heinrich stadials (HS). Particularly large
 59 re-organisations of the hydrological cycle are associated with HS phases (Stager et al.,
 60 2011) including southward shifts in the tropical rainbelts (e.g. Y. Wang et al., 2001; De-
 61 plazes et al., 2013; X. Wang et al., 2017; Peck et al., 2004; Tierney & deMenocal, 2013;
 62 Shanahan et al., 2015; Schulz et al., 1998).

63 The iconic record of rapid dust fluctuations over Greenland shows variations of sev-
 64 eral orders of magnitude during D-O events (Fischer et al., 2007) but not during Hein-
 65 rich stadials. In the tropics dust deposited during the late-glacial also varied abruptly
 66 as recorded in marine sediment cores (e.g. McGee et al., 2013; J. Collins et al., 2013; Kien-
 67 ast et al., 2013; Loveley et al., 2017; Middleton et al., 2018; Safaierad et al., 2020; Mar-
 68 cantonio et al., 2020; Kinsley et al., 2022) - presumably in response to these rapid cli-

69 mate fluctuations. Although it is difficult to reconstruct dust fluxes this far back in time
 70 at sufficient temporal resolution to analyse abrupt changes, marine sediment records do
 71 show a relatively coherent signal of a dustier tropical Atlantic (McGee et al., 2013; Mid-
 72 dleton et al., 2018; Kinsley et al., 2022), with up to doubling of dust deposition rates dur-
 73 ing Heinrich stadial 1 but with much smaller signals during D-O warming events (McGee
 74 et al., 2013; Kinsley et al., 2022). Elsewhere there are abrupt changes in the Eastern Pa-
 75 cific (Loveley et al., 2017; Marcantonio et al., 2020), the middle-East (Safaierad et al.,
 76 2020) and the Arabian Sea (Pourmand et al., 2007).

77 While some previous model simulations have focussed on understanding the abrupt
 78 dust variations over Greenland (Tegen & Rind, 2000) or Europe (Sima et al., 2009, 2013),
 79 few modelling studies have examined the dust response to these events over the trop-
 80 ics (Murphy et al., 2014). Here we investigate the role of mineral dust aerosols in Hein-
 81 rich stadial climate phases using a suite of Earth System model simulations. We focus
 82 on the tropics and North Africa because the Sahara is today the largest single source of
 83 atmospheric aerosols (e.g. Knippertz & Todd, 2012) and because it is known that the
 84 desert expanded significantly during glacial times and stadials (J. Collins et al., 2013).
 85 The Sahara is also adjacent to the Atlantic Ocean which is a critical region for under-
 86 standing abrupt climate change (Clement & Peterson, 2008; Roberts & Hopcroft, 2020).
 87 We evaluate whether the model can reconstruct the processes that caused these rapid
 88 changes with a new compilation of HS 1 dust deposition records. We also quantify dust
 89 radiative forcing and hence the potential for dust to act as a feedback.

90 2 Methods

91 2.1 Earth System Model simulations

92 To simulate the global dust cycle we use the HadGEM2 Earth System (-ES) model
 93 (W. Collins et al., 2011; HadGEM2 Development Team, 2011) in an atmosphere-only
 94 formulation. The atmosphere/land component of HadGEM2-ES has a resolution of $1.875 \times 1.25^\circ$
 95 (longitude-latitude) with 38 unequally spaced levels vertically in the atmosphere (HadGEM2
 96 Development Team, 2011). HadGEM2-ES has been widely used for simulating past (Hopcroft
 97 & Valdes, 2019; Tindall & Haywood, 2020), historical (Booth et al., 2012) and future cli-
 98 mate (Caesar et al., 2013). In HadGEM2-ES the mineral dust cycle is fully coupled with
 99 the atmosphere and interactive vegetation (Bellouin et al., 2011; Woodward, 2011). Emis-
 100 sions are calculated at every model time-step and are a function of dynamically deter-
 101 mined bare soil area, soil moisture and wind speed. Emissions and atmospheric trans-
 102 port are calculated for 6 size bins which have radii of 0.0316 to $31.6 \mu\text{m}$, with bin bound-
 103 aries at 0.1, 0.316, 1.0, 3.16 and $10.0 \mu\text{m}$. Dry and wet deposition are considered sep-
 104 arately but direct dust-cloud interactions are not represented.

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366 HadGEM2-ES is part of the Met Office Unified Model and is subject to Crown Copy-
 367 right but is available for use under licence: <http://www.metoffice.gov.uk/research/collaboration>.

370 **Open Research**

371 All HadGEM2-ES model output is available for further analysis from <https://www.paleo.bristol.ac.uk/ummodel/scripts/papers>.

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