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My research interests centre on the character and pacing of past climate change on a variety of temporal and spatial scales, but latterly concentrating on the Late Holocene (the last 5000 years or so). Elements of this work have included exploring the response and adaptation of human cultures to environmental shifts in the Andean highlands, driven in part by large-scale climatic forcing that includes both ENSO and, especially, the South American Summer Monsoon (SASM) system. The evidence for environmental histories and anthropogenic responses comes partly from palaeoenvironmental archives such as lake sediments and speleothems (stalagmites), but also from archival material generated by European invaders (and later, settlers).

Whilst this all sounds very far away from the Indian Ocean, teleconnections exist between monsoonal systems in the southern hemisphere with those in the north, including those operating over the Indian Ocean. I am looking to expand the spatial reach of my research to the northern hemisphere in order to help understand some of these teleconnections. My particular interest in the Indian Ocean region has been stimulated in part by many years of co-leading undergraduate field classes to both continental India and the oceanic islands (especially the Seychelles). I hope that the meeting will provide an opportunity to learn more of the resources and archives available that detail regional environmental change over the past few centuries and the influence that this may have had on human population movements and behaviour. Furthermore, NERC have just announced a forthcoming £3M thematic programme on the inter-annual variability of the South Asian Monsoon system which will dovetail with and invite collaborations with the similar (but larger, £46M) Monsoon Mission project funded by the Indian Ministry of Earth Sciences. Although these two initiatives will be almost exclusively 'hard' science-driven, there may be room for collaborative work 'around the edges' that capitalises on this research focus and could involve exploring the historical expression and societal impacts.