RESPONSE TO THE REVIEWS

We would like to thank both Reviewers for their careful and constructive reviews of our paper. In response to their suggestions, we did the following main changes to the manuscript:

- we revised the manuscript focusing on the main objective that is the application of the SfM-MVS method for monitoring glacial and periglacial processes. Therefore we changed the title, we modified the abstract accordingly, providing quantitative information about the obtained results and we reduced the introduction.
- we modified the structure as suggested by the Reviewer 2, moving the paragraphs about the formula of photogrammetric depth accuracy and the mass balance calculation method in section 3.3.
- we made the figures and legends uniform using two decimal places and we changed the intervals of the maps of the elevation difference.
- as suggested by the Reviewer 1 we analyzed the relationship between the viewshed analysis and the elevation accuracy considering all camera positions. Furthermore we included in the plot the mean of the absolute values of the Z differences.
- we implemented the suggested changes and answered to the specific comments made by the reviewers, as detailed in the following of this document.

REVIEWER 1

General Comments:

NOTES	CORRECTIONS
This paper presents an application of the automatic photogrammetry technique known as Structure-from-Motion to investigate glacial and periglacial processes in the Italian Alps. Authors assess the accuracy of datasets acquired during field surveys using ALS datasets as benchmark. These techniques are of growing interest for Geoscientists and, in my opinion, the paper deserves for the definitive publication in Earth Surface Dynamics. The structure is correct, the methods are properly executed and described and results are, in my opinion, interesting for the scientific community. I include below some minor suggestions or comments that could be of interest for the authors to be incorporated in the final version of the manuscript.	The manuscript has been edited following the reviewer's comments and suggestions.

Specific Comments:

NOTES	CORRECTIONS
1) THE TITLE: In my opinion, the title does not describe exactly the content of the paper	We agree with the reviewer on the relative importance of the contributions. According to the

because currently the title “Analysis of glacial and periglacial processes using SfM” focus on the processes. The processes are addressed in the paper, but the focus is set on the factors influencing the accuracy of the SfM models. The time devoted to understand the global and spatial distribution of the accuracies is longer than the time used to explain the glacial and periglacial processes. I suggest that this aspect should be included in a new title for the paper. Something like “Analyzing the suitability-accuracy of SfM to monitor glacial and periglacial processes…” would be more adequate in my opinion.	suggestion, we changed the title in: “Suitability of ground-based SfM-MVS for monitoring glacial and periglacial processes”
2) REAL LEVEL OF GEOMORPHIC CHANGE AND LEGEND INTERVALS: In some figures (for example figure 6 or 19) present a different number of decimal places in the legend, I recommend you to be consistent and the use of the same number of decimal places for the intervals. On the other hand, the use of intervals or classes smaller than 1 m in the legend, in my opinion, is not supported by your results. I mean, if you are getting accuracies of around 1 m, using intervals from -0.05 to 0.05 (i.e. 10 cm) is below your real level of detection. I recommend fitting the legend of these figures to the real accuracy of you datasets.	We made the figures and legends uniform using two decimal places, as suggested. Regarding the choice of the interval of the elevation differences between the SfM-MVS DEMs and the ALS DEM, we tried to find a good compromise between the obtained accuracy and the need for an efficient visualization of the analyzed glacial and periglacial processes. Therefore, we decided to distinguish the positive and negative values using intervals lower than 1 m for both case studies. Different intervals for the two surveyed areas were chosen according to the different resolution and accuracy of the SfM-MVS DEMs. For the glacier we extended the interval around zero to +/- 0.25 m; for the rock glacier we changed the interval to +/- 0.10 m. While the overall accuracy is limited, as correctly noted, rather in the meter (or a bit better) domain, there are still large areas, where conditions are better, and the accuracy is higher. Thus, also large areas with differences below +/- 10cm are given. With the legend we do not want to claim, that we can detect 10cm differences everywhere.
3) 3D SURFACE CHANGES: The estimated changes among the different DTMs are assumed to happen in a predominant way in the vertical direction, i.e. the vector of change is normal to the horizontal plane, which is not very often the case in mountainous and glacier landscapes. It is well known that DTMs are not real 3D records of the landscape. In my opinion, the use of an	In this paper we analyzed i) elevation changes and ii) surface displacement rates. The first is computed along the vertical direction, by definition. The second is calculated in the horizontal plane, and are not the result of DoD. 3D displacements in rock glaciers are the result of vertical and horizontal components, but in our case only horizontal components were of interest. Sentence

analysis based on 2.5D datasets (DTMs) instead of 3D actual approaches should be justified and discussed on the manuscript. In your case it is quite a simple issue because the most interesting area for you is the glacier that presents low slopes and changes tend to happened in the vertical direction (which is the one that you assume when you use a DoD approach).	and reference added in Section 3.3.
4) LINE OF SIGHT ANALYSIS: The analysis of the relationship between the line of sight and the elevation difference is limited to the line of sight for a specific camera (five camera locations); however, I guess that from a methodological viewpoint it would be logical to investigate the average incidence angle for a cell (estimating the average angle using every camera) and the Z difference. Additionally, the number of times every pixel is visible from a camera can explain a part of the variance in Z differences. This analysis would be interesting, otherwise you could justify that the selected camera is representative of a number of camera poses.	As suggested, we calculated the mean of the incidence angle considering 5 representative camera positions. We analyzed the relationship between the viewshed analysis and the elevation accuracy considering all camera positions.
5) DTM, DEM and DSM: Along the paper, the DTM term is used to describe the gridded model resulting from the processing of the point clouds. The term DTM is widely used to describe models representing different topographic attributes (i.e. elevation, slope gradient, curvature, etc.). In this line, the term DEM is specifically used to describe the DTM that represents the altitude and the term DSM is specifically used to describe the Digital Surface Model. I recommend to use the specific acronyms in the text to avoid misunderstandings.	We used the suggested terminology changing the acronyms from DTM to DEM.

Technical corrections:

NOTES	CORRECTIONS
L5-P4, L10-P4, I suggest the use of uppercases for “lidar”, please extend this to rest of the manuscript.	Ok, modified accordingly with LiDAR

L9-P4, I suggest the use of consumer-grade or conventional instead “common”.	Ok, edited.
L22-L26-P4, In general and along the manuscript, I suggest the use of the passive voice instead of the first person style. For example, L6-P13 (1357) “the accuracy of the photogrammetric reconstruction for the different substrata was investigated” instead of “WE : : :”.	Ok, modified accordingly.
L23- P5, I suggest the use of “repeated” instead of “repeat”	Ok, edited.
L17-P7, You refer to Figure 4, however, in the list of figures, this figure presents the workflow instead the location of the camera, and I guess you refer to figure 5, please check.	Ok, modified accordingly.
L29- P11, I suggest leaving out the last sentence about the unfavorable line of sight because later, you will state that there is not significant relationship between the incidence angle (line of sight to normal vector) and Z differences.	Actually we found a significant correlation between the mean of the incidence angles and the elevation differences, so we kept this sentence.
L29- P11, I suggest trying to explain this 0.41 m mean value for 0-10 degrees of slope areas using the visual and physical properties of the materials. Probably differences in texture or any other aspect are causing this value to be higher than expected.	The role of the surface texture and unfavorable line of sight is already mentioned in the text. We edited the text to improve clarity.
L15- P17, longer than what? I suggest the use of “long”.	Ok, edited accordingly.
TABLE 5: please check caption: “: : : stable are off: : :” .	Ok, fixed.
FIGURE 1: I recommend a thicker line to delineate the glaciers.	In our opinion the line is thick enough, but we will consider thickening it when we have the final layout of the figure.
FIGURE 5: I understand that you are using the same north arrow and scale bar for the a) and b) maps and I recommend you to include these between the two maps and not inside b).	Ok, modified accordingly.
FIGURE 6: please use the same number of significant decimal places in the legend. On the other hand, and according to your methods.	Ok, we changed the decimal using two decimal places. Regarding the choice of intervals, please see the comments above in "Specific comments

I think is not justified the use of intervals in the legend smaller than 1 m, you are using a DTM of 1 m pixel size and your estimations of the vertical accuracy of the SFM-DTMs clearly point out to a level of detection of geomorphic change > 1 m.	(2)".
FIGURE 7: For me it is very difficult to understand figure 7 in its present form. The lines of the profile are superimposed and even in the zoom window, it is difficult. I do not understand how you include camera locations in a 2 dimensional plot.	We fully agree that the lines of the profiles are superimposed, because there is no exaggeration of the elevation values but we maintained the same scale for both axis. However, the plot on the bottom show the differences between the elevation profiles with large scale (+-3m). Both profiles and the camera positions were projected onto the xz-plan. We removed the inset and we added an explanation in the figure caption.
FIGURE 8: the legend of figure 8b could be located on the bottom-right part of the graph for a better visibility of the columns. The mean and the standard deviation are good parameters but I miss in your manuscript the use of an absolute value of the differences that probably would correlate with slope. The mean value is not very rich unless you have systematics errors in your data. This is the case of high slopes in bare ground, any explanation?	As suggested we included in the plot the mean of the absolute values of the Z differences. We improved the location of the legends in the figure. Errors for high-slope areas in bare ground are likely due to residual inaccuracies deriving from the use of natural features as GCPs. Sentence added in the text.
FIGURE 9: an interesting approach here would be the analysis of the relationship between the number of times an object is visible from a different camera and the Z differences.	We changed the figure according to the suggested analyses. The results were added in the text (Section 4.1)
FIGURE 19: please use the same number of significant decimal places in the legend. On the other hand, and according to your methods I think is not justified the use of intervals in the legend smaller than 1 m, you are using a DTM of 1 m pixel size and your estimations of the vertical accuracy of the SFM-DTMs clearly point out to a level of detection of geomorphic change > 1 m.	Ok, we changed the decimal using two decimal places for each interval. See the reply to the Specific Comment (2) for the choice of intervals.

30 **REVIEWER 2 – C508**

31 **General Comments**:

NOTES	CORRECTIONS
The manuscript by Piermattei et al. compares the outcome the use of terrestrial photogrammetry using normal digital images and subsequent Structure from motion (SfM) analysis with laser scans as a benchmark. For geomorphologists working with surface changes and movements SfM combined with careful measurements of GCPs is a highly valuable tool to address surface dynamics easily and with a high accuracy. The manuscript does not give scientifically completely new information or techniques, but reproduces findings by other colleagues, and comes up with useful recommendations. These are certainly helpful for other colleagues, especially when working in high-alpine or arctic environments. Within this respect the manuscript is a valuable contribution for the geomorph community and deserved attention. The manuscript has some issues which should be addressed before publications. I here only focus on general issues, smaller details are already addressed by the other reviewer and needs not to be duplicated.	The manuscript has been edited following the reviewer's comments and suggestions.

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33 **Specific Comments:**

NOTES	CORRECTIONS
1. Title: As review 1, change the title, I strongly support this	The title was change in: "Suitability of ground-based SfM-MVS for monitoring glacial and periglacial processes"
2. Abstract: The abstract is lengthy and very general, you should give some major results and key numbers there (e.g. some obtained accuracies and major finding etc).	We modified the abstract accordingly, providing quantitative information about the obtained results for both case studies.
3. Focus: The focus is on the techniques, not necessarily on the interpretation of glacial/periglacial processes. It is enough to write that the measured changes are in line with field-based mass balance measurements, or the velocities obtained on	According to the suggestion of the Reviewer we moved this paragraph in section 3.3 and significantly reduced it

the rock glacier seems ok. P. 1359, the whole paragraph is a method, and should be moved there, but I would simply suggest strongly reducing this part (along with changing the title). If you want to keep it as is, you should also really discuss the geomorphology/glaciology, but this would change focus of the paper.	
4. Introduction: Lengthy, lots of citations, and is almost a small review. Maybe there should be a review about SfM applications and limitations in geomorphology, but this is not the focus of your paper. So I would reduce the intro, and really focus on what you want to tell the reader. Your main message is that SfM is "easy" and especially "cost-effective" monitoring for many researchers, even in difficult places. I agree, so emphasize on that, and emphasize to come up with clear recommendations, other colleagues can find useful.	We reduced the introduction as suggested, focusing on the SfM technique and emphasizing the advantages of this survey technique.
5. Case study: p. 1349, maybe "Setting" is better as heading	We modified the heading as follows: "Geographical setting and case studies"
6. Method: p 1350, l 5: This introduction is not necessary, takes only space.	Ok, we removed this paragraph.
7. Results: There are several places, you introduce new methods in the result chapter, and this is a bit confusing, like on p. 1356 and 1359. Consider to revise.	We moved the methodological parts in Section 3.3, as suggested.
For the maps of elevations changes, also consider to enlarge a bit the areas without significant changes, or give a reason of choice or the classification in the figure (Fig. 6 etc). As you of course are aware of, considering general error propagation laws, the mean error adds up, and this gives large relative errors when subtract things. Like Fig. 14, the colorless class is +- 5 cm, is this justified or should then class be bigger?	We slightly modified the figures, increasing the interval in grey color, i.e. with no significant changes. Please, see the reply to the Specific Comment (2) by Reviewer 1.
And: Be careful with the term "geodetic mass balance" for a one year period, as ice fluxes and varying snow density or re-freezing of melt water is not taken into account. The	In the paper we estimated the geodetic mass balance from surface elevation changes, without considering other processes. In our opinion, given the specific case study, this is a reasonable

latter is certainly important on small glaciers in a permafrost environments, however, small glaciers have normally little ice fluxes, probably compensating other factors.	simplification. Clarified in the text (Section 3.3).
8. Discussion: Could be structured with two headings: Maybe: “Data processing and assessment” and “Recommendations” or so.	We divided the Discussion according to the suggestion of the Reviewer.
9. Figures: These are certainly nice, but unfortunately totally unreadable because of small size. I had to use the original pdf and zoom 589% to read the smallest numbers :-) The only figure which is readable is Fig. 14. Therefore it is also the only on I have commented above. Only printing this is totally useless.	We agree some figure are small, in particular the legend. However, we will check appropriate figure sizes when we have the layout.
Maybe the numbers of Figures (#20!) is a bit too much, so check if some of the figures you want to give can be coupled somehow, or if all are really necessary.	We preferred to keep all figures because we consider them important for a better understanding of the results.

Suitability of ground-based SfM-MVS for monitoring glacial and periglacial processes

~~Analysis of glacial and periglacial processes using structure from motion~~

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Abstract

P~~Close-range p~~hoto-based surface reconstruction from the ground is rapidly emerging as an alternative survey technique to LiDAR (light detection and ranging), ~~which today represents the main survey technique~~ in many fields of geoscience, fostered by the recent ~~. The recent evolution of photogrammetry, incorporating~~development of computer vision algorithms such as Structure from Motion (SfM) and dense image matching such as Multi-View Stereo (MVS)., ~~allows the reconstruction of dense 3-D point clouds for the photographed object from a sequence of overlapping images taken with a digital consumer camera.~~ The objective of ~~our~~ this work was to test the ~~accuracy of~~suitability of ~~-~~the ground-based SfM-MVS approach in calculating the geodetic mass balance of a 2.1 km^2 glacier and for the detection of the surface displacement rate of a neighbouring active rock glacier located ~~in the Ortles-Cevedale Group,~~ in the Eastern Italian Alps. ~~In addition, we investigated the feasibility of using the image-based approach for the detection of the surface displacement rate of a neighbouring active rock glacier.~~ The ~~terrestrial surveys were~~ photos were acquired in 2013 and 2014 using a digital consumer-grade camera, organizing single-day field surveys.~~planned to be quick with a low budget and conducted in a safe and easy way in a single day.~~ Airborne laser scanning (ALS) data were used as benchmarks to estimate the accuracy of the photogrammetric digital elevation models (DEMs) and the reliability of the method. ~~in this specific applications.~~ The ~~results were encouraging because the~~ SfM-MVS approach enable~~s~~d the reconstruction of high-quality DEMs, which provided estimates of glacial

and periglacial processes similar to those achievable by ALS. ~~The glacial and periglacial analyses were performed using both range and image-based surveying techniques, and the results were then compared.~~ In stable bedrock areas outside the glacier, the ~~The accuracy of the photogrammetric DEMs, evaluated as the~~ mean and the standard deviation of the elevation difference ~~in a stable area~~ between the SfM-MVS DEM and the ~~reference~~ ALS DEM~~,~~ was -0.42 m ± 1.72 m and 0.03 m ± 0.74 m ~~for the~~in 2013 and 2014 ~~surveys~~, respectively. In the rock glacier area, the elevation difference was~~The SfM-MVS DEM accuracy of the reconstructed rock glacier surface acquired in 2014 was estimated to be~~ 0.02 m ± 0.17 m. The use of natural targets as ground control points, the occurrence of shadowed and low-contrast areas, and in particular the sub-optimal camera network geometry imposed by the morphology of the study area were the main factors affecting the accuracy of photogrammetric DEMs.

~~Different resolutions and accuracies were obtained for the glacier and the rock glacier, given the different survey geometries, surface characteristics and areal extents. The analysis of the SfM-MVS DEM quality allowed us to highlight the limitations of the adopted expeditious method in the studied alpine terrain and the potential of this method in the multitemporal study of glacial and periglacial areas.~~

1. Introduction

Knowledge of changes in the extent, mass and surface velocity of glaciers and rock glaciers contributes to better understanding the dynamic processes occurring in cold high-mountain environments and serves as an important contribution to climate monitoring (Kääb et al., 2003).

Numerous techniques exist for monitoring and quantifying these changes and include both field and remote sensing methods (Immerzeel et al., 2014). Fieldwork generally yields high-quality data but with a small spatial extent, given the remoteness and low accessibility of mountain areas at high elevations (Roer et al., 2007). Therefore, using remotely sensed datasets for at least two different points in time has become an important tool for monitoring high-mountain terrain dynamics (Kääb, 2002). Multitemporal Digital ~~Terrain~~ Elevation Models (DEMs) based on remote sensing data are the most commonly used products for such investigations (Kääb, 2005; Tseng et al., 2015).

~~Among the many remote sensing techniques, aerial photogrammetry is the oldest method, and it has a long history of application in the study of glaciers (Welch and Howarth, 1968; Kääb and Funk, 1999; Schenk, 1999; Baltsavias et al., 2001; Kääb 2005; Haug et al., 2009; Bühler et al., 2014; Müller et al., 2014) and the monitoring of rock glaciers via repeated stereo images (Kääb et al., 1997; Kaufmann, 1998; Kääb, 2003; Fischer, 2011). Terrestrial (ground-based or close-range) photogrammetry was one of the first measurement techniques used to map high mountain terrain and for reliably measuring the flow velocity of a rock glacier (Kaufmann and Ladstädter 2007; Kaufmann, 2012) until it was replaced by aerial and spaceborne platforms (Pellikka and Rees, 2009).~~

~~Over the last decade, the photogrammetric technique has widely been replaced by LiDAR (light detection and ranging) technology, which has progressively become the primary survey technique in geomorphology (Tarolli, 2014). Aerial laser scanning (ALS) is reported to be a very accurate method for DEMs generation in alpine terrain (Bülher and Graf, 2013, Aguilar and Mills, 2008; Höfle and Rutzinger, 2011), snow covered areas (Höfle et al., 2007; Deems et al., 2013) and glacial environments (Geist Stotter, 2007; Kodde et al., 2007; Abermann et al., 2010; Knoll and Kerschner, 2010; Carturan et al., 2013; Colucci et al., 2014; Joerg and Zemp, 2014). However, aerial LiDAR surveys are still expensive and terrestrial LiDAR surveys involve expensive and logistically demanding equipment.~~

Among the available remote sensing techniques, the~~The~~ close-range photogrammetry saw a rapid development thanks to the recent evolution of digital photogrammetry, based on computer vision algorithms. This technique is~~, has led to a rapid revival of close-range photogrammetry~~ becoming ~~as~~ the major alternative to traditional surveying techniques and LiDAR (light detection and ranging) technology~~y~~ies, due to its lower cost, high portability, and easy and rapid surveying in the field.

The photogrammetric approach known as Structure from Motion (SfM) allows ~~to~~ ~~obtains~~obtaining 3D information ~~on~~ of the photographed object from a sequence of overlapping images taken with a ~~consumer-grade~~ digital camera. ~~The ability to obtain 3D models with accuracies and resolutions comparable to those of LiDAR has created new opportunities, especially in geoscience applications in remote areas (James and Robson, 2012; Bemis et al., 2014; Micheletti et al., 2014; Prosdocimi et~~

~~al., 2015; Stumpf et al., 2015). An overview of the SfM applications and accuracy assessments is given by Clapuyt et al. (2015).~~

A limited number of ~~studies~~ applications of ~~close-range~~SfM ~~-~~photogrammetry in glacial and periglacial environments exists, and they principally involve the use of Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UAVs) for image acquisition (Solbø S. and Storvold R. 2013; Whitehead et al., 2013; Immerzeel et al., 2014, Tonkin et al., 2014; Gauthier et al., 2014; Bühler et al., 2014; Dall'Asta et al., 2015~~a~~; Ryan et al., 2015) rather than ground-based surveys (Gómez-Gutiérrez et al., 2014; 2015; Kääb et al., 2014; Piermattei et al., 2015). ~~Kääb et al. (2014) tested the time-lapse SfM approach in the measurement of vertical and horizontal changes in periglacial patterned grounds.~~

The objective of our work was to assess the ~~potential and the limits~~suitability of the ground-based SfM approach ~~in~~ ifor monitoring glacial and periglacial processes in a high-altitude area of the Ortles-Cevedale Group (Eastern Italian Alps). In particular, ~~we used the~~ this approach was used to calculate the geodetic annual mass balance of a 2.1 ~~-~~km^2 glacier and to detect the surface displacement of a neighbouring 0.06 ~~-~~ km^2 rock glacier. The photogrammetric surveys were intentionally planned to be as quick and cost-effective as possible, and easily replicable in the future. Therefore, a consumer-grade camera was adopted to find an appropriate balance between the affordability and accessibility of the system (i.e. cost and ease of use) and the quality of the resulting topographic data (accuracy and density). The accuracy of the photogrammetric DEMs was estimated using ALS-based DEMs acquired during the same periods. The main factors affecting the accuracy of the photogrammetric DEMs were investigated, and the significance of the biases in the quantification of glacial and periglacial processes was discussed.

2. Geographical setting and ~~C~~case studies

The La Mare Glacier and the neighbouring AVDM3 Rock Glacier are located in the south-eastern part of the Ortles-Cevedale massif (Eastern Italian Alps), the largest glaciated mountain group of the Italian Alps (Fig. 1).

The La Mare Glacier (World Glacier Inventory code I4L00102517; WGMS 1989) is a 3.55 km^2 valley glacier currently composed of two ice bodies, which have different morphologies and tend to separate (Carturan et al., 2014). In this work, ~~we focused~~

the focus was on the southern ice body, which feeds the main tongue. This 2.1 km^2 ice body primarily faces north-east, and its surface is rather flat, with the exception of the small remnant of its valley tongue. The elevation ranges from 2660 to 3590 m a.s.l. Mass balance investigations using the direct glaciological method were started on La Mare Glacier in 2003 and detected an average annual mass balance of -0.76 m w.e. y^{-1} during the period from 2003 to 2014 (Carturan, ~~2015~~2016). The mass balance was close to zero in 2013 (-0.06 m w.e.) and was positive for the first time since the beginning of measurements in 2014 (+0.83 m w.e.).

The AVDM3 Rock Glacier (Carturan et al., 2015) is an intact, tongue-shaped rock glacier characterized by the presence of two lobes. The 0.058 km^2 wide Rock Glacier (maximum length of 390 m; maximum width of 240 m) faces south-east and is located at elevations of between 2943 and 3085 m a.s.l. The average slope of the Rock Glacier is 26°, and the slope of the advancing front is 36°. The activity status of the AVDM3 Rock Glacier was assessed via repeated geomorphological field surveys between 2007 and 2014. These surveys revealed the advance of the front of the southern lobe (Carturan, 2010). The general morphology and the elevation of the front also suggest that this rock glacier is active (Seppi et al., 2012), and its permafrost content is further corroborated by spring temperature measurements (Carturan et al., 2015). Moreover, Bertone (2014) provided the first quantification of the surface displacement rates of this rock glacier for 2003 to 2013 using ALS data.

3. Methods

~~In this section, we briefly describe the ALS data that were used to i) select the ground control points (GCPs) required to scale and georeference the SfM 3D models, ii) co-register the point clouds before producing the DEMs, and iii) validate the photogrammetric results. Then, we describe how the photogrammetric surveys were performed and processed to produce the dense point clouds and DEMs of the La Mare Glacier and AVDM3 Rock Glacier~~

3.1 The ALS data

ALS flights of the study area were available for 17 September 2003, 22 September 2013, and 24 September 2014. The technical specifications of the three ALS surveys are reported in Table 1. To avoid errors due to global shifts or rotations between the individual DEMs, ~~we automatically co-registered~~ the ALS point clouds were automatically co-registered using a version of the ICP algorithm (Chen and Medioni, 1991; Besl and McKay, 1992) tailored to topographic point clouds (Glira et al., 2015). The LiDAR point cloud acquired in 2013 was treated as a reference only for stable areas outside the glaciers, rock glaciers, snow patches, and geomorphologically active areas (e.g., landslides, river beds, and debris flows). The 2003 and 2014 LiDAR point clouds were iteratively fitted to the reference point cloud by applying an affine transformation. The ICP registration of the point clouds produced z-direction residual values of 0.08 m and 0.11 m for the 2014 and 2003 LiDAR point clouds, respectively. These accuracies can be assumed to be sufficient for calculating the annual elevation changes of the glacier and the decadal displacement rate on the rock glacier.

The co-registered point clouds were then converted to DEMs using Natural Neighbours interpolations. A pixel size of 1 x 1 m was produced for the La Mare Glacier, whereas a pixel size of 0.5 x 0.5 m was used for the rock glacier, based on the LiDAR point cloud density (Fig. 2). To evaluate the relative ALS DEM accuracies after the co-registration, the elevation difference errors of the DEMs were calculated for the stable areas. The standard deviation from the 2013 ALS DEM was 0.19 m and 0.21 m for the 2014 and 2003 DEM comparisons, respectively.

3.2 The photogrammetric workflow

3.2.1 Field surveys

The terrestrial photogrammetric surveys of the La Mare Glacier were conducted on 4 September 2013 and 27 September 2014, that is, close to the end of the mass balance year and of ALS flights. The timing of the surveys enabled the calculation of the annual mass balance of the glacier and ~~the ability~~ to compare the results with the ALS-based results. On both days, the sky was clear, with almost no cloud cover.

To guarantee a safe and easily repeatable survey of the glacier, ~~we avoided directly accessing its surface, instead performing~~ the direct access to its surface was avoided and ~~by performing~~ the survey was performed from a rocky ridge on the north side of the glacier (Fig. ~~4~~5). The elevation of the survey ranged from 3100 to 3300 m in 2013 and from 2600 to 3300 m in 2014. The distance from the glacier surface to the camera positions dictated by the topography ranged between 300 and 2900 m. To cover the entire glacier surface from these positions, the acquired images were panoramic, which involved taking a series of photographs rotating the camera from each individual camera position. In 2013, seven camera positions were used, and 37 photographs were taken with the camera attached to a small tripod to avoid camera shake. In 2014, the number of camera positions was increased to 21, and 177 photos were taken freehand (Fig. 3).

Both surveys were performed using a SLR Canon EOS 600D. The camera was equipped with a 25-70 mm zoom lens, which was set to a focal length of 25 mm in 2013 and 35 mm in 2014.

The terrestrial photogrammetric survey of the AVDM3 Rock Glacier was performed on 27 September 2014. In this survey, 198 images were acquired freehand while walking around and on top of the rock glacier. The survey camera was a CANON EOS 5D full frame SLR camera equipped with a fixed-focal lens of 28 mm. The photographs were acquired and saved in RAW format in both surveys.

3.2.2 Data processing

The ~~latest evolution of photogrammetry is characterized by the combination of the principles of photogrammetry, such as bundle adjustment, and automatic computer vision algorithms, such as feature extraction and feature matching. This~~ photogrammetric approach, ~~called~~ based on ~~Structure from Motion (~~SfM algorithms~~),~~ can automatically derive the 3D position of an object in images taken in sequence calculating the camera parameters (intrinsic and extrinsic) (Hartley and Zissermann, 2004). Dense image matching algorithms are then used to reconstruct the 3D model of the object as a dense point cloud. Multiple photogrammetric packages implementing SfM and Multi-View Stereo (MVS) algorithms for dense image matching exist, and in this work, ~~we used~~ the software PhotoScan Pro (AgiSoft LLC.

2010a) was used. Henceforth, ~~we refer to~~ the photogrammetric surveys and results are referred to using the acronym SfM-MVS.

The photo-based reconstruction workflow is summarized in Fig. 4. The key components of the workflow are 1) acquisition and photograph editing, 2) GCPs identification, image feature detection, matching and 3D scene reproduction (the SfM-MVS steps), 3) point cloud processing, (filtering, subsampling and ICP) and 4) DEM reconstruction.

To overcome the significant variability in brightness during the surveys, the RAW images have been edited to adjust the exposure and contrast in order to retrieve information from the overexposed (e.g., snow-covered) areas and underexposed (e.g., shadowed) areas. These editing steps had a positive impact on the number of image features extracted. The edited images were saved in TIFF format and loaded in PhotoScan where non-stationary objects (i.e., clouds and shadows), the sky, and features lying in the distant background have been masked.

The camera calibration parameters were calculated using artificial targets prior to the processing of the photogrammetric surveys (pre-calibrated camera). The intrinsic parameters were kept constant during the entire SfM processing given the limits of the camera network geometry and the homogeneous texture of the surveyed terrain. As additional constraint, the GCPs were included into the SfM process to avoid instability in the bundle adjustment solution (Verhoeven et al., 2015). The GCPs were selected as natural features in stable area outside the glacier and rock glacier, and their coordinates were extracted from the 2013 ALS hillshaded DEM. After the SfM step, the geo-referenced dense point cloud was reconstructed by the MVS algorithm, using the 'mild' smoothing filter to preserve as much spatial information as possible (AgiSoft LLC., 2010b).

To reduce the noise and outliers generated during the dense matching reconstruction (Bradley et al., 2008; Nilosek et al., 2012), an initial filtering was performed in PhotoScan to manually remove the outliers. Further denoising was applied to the dense point clouds exported from PhotoScan, using a specific tool to treat the point clouds. To obtain a uniform spatial distribution of the points, the photogrammetric point clouds (much denser than the ALS point clouds), were down-sampled to 20 cm for the glacier and 10 cm for the rock glacier. Following the same procedure used for the ALS data, the ICP algorithm (OpalsICP, TU ~~Vienna~~Wien) was applied to co-register the point clouds in the stable area outside the glacier and rock glacier, using

the 2013 ALS point cloud as a reference. The co-registered point clouds were then converted to DEMs, using the Natural Neighbours interpolation and the pixel sizes of the ALS DEMs (i.e., 1 x 1 m for the glacier and 0.5 x 0.5 m for the rock glacier). The data acquisition settings and processing results of the photogrammetric surveys are summarized in Table 2.

3.3 Analyses

The accuracy of the photogrammetric DEMs was assessed ~~to calculate~~calculating the mean, the mean of the absolute values and the standard deviation (σ) of the elevation differences (DEM of Difference, DoD) between SfM-MVS DEMs and ALS DEMs, using the latter as a reference dataset. For both surveyed areas, the primary factors controlling the quality of the photogrammetric results~~DEMs~~ (i.e., camera–object distance, slope and angle of incidence, camera network geometry, surface texture and shadows) were evaluated in terms of DEM accuracy and spatial resolution. The obtained results were compared to ~~analysis of~~ the theoretical ~~error propagation~~behaviour of the error as a function of the depth (σ_d) ~~direction (camera-object distance), was~~ calculated using the following formulation:

$$\sigma_d = m_B \cdot \frac{D}{B} \cdot \sigma_i, \quad (1)$$

where m_B represents the image scale (*D / focal length*); *D* is the depth (camera-object distance); B is the baseline and σ_i is the measured accuracy in the image space.

After the accuracy assessments, we investigated the suitability of using the terrestrial photogrammetric surveys to calculate the annual mass balance of the glacier and the elevation change and ~~the~~ surface displacement rates of the rock glacier, comparing the results with those obtained from ALS surveys. The mass balance and elevation changes were calculated differencing multitemporal DEMs.

The geodetic mass balance was calculated from the total volume change ΔV (m^3) between two survey dates~~: using the following relation~~

$$V = \overline{\Delta z} \cdot A \quad (2)$$

where $\overline{\Delta z}$ is the average elevation change between two DEMs over the area *A* of the glacier. The area-averaged net geodetic mass balance in metres of water equivalent per year (m w.e. y^{-1}) was calculated as:

$$\dot{M} = \frac{\Delta V \cdot \rho}{A} \quad (3)$$

where ρ is the mean density. The area A of the glacier between the two surveys did not change. The mean density was obtained by a fractional area-weighted mean, assigning 900 kg/m^3 for the ablation area (Huss, 2013) and 530 kg/m^3 for the accumulation area, as directly measured in a snowpit. The resulting weighted mean density was 600 kg/m^3. In the mass balance calculations, both raw $\overline{\Delta z}$ values and corrected $\overline{\Delta z}$ values were used to account for the mean errors in the stable areas outside the glacier, as reported in Table 3. Other processes ~~–~~like ice fluxes~~, and~~ varying snow density ~~or~~and re-freezing of melt water were assumed to be negligible for the ~~not taken into account to estimate~~calculation of the annual geodetic mass balance.

The horizontal surface displacements rates of the AVDM3 rock glacier were estimated by ~~means of manual detection of features on the hillshaded DEMs.~~a manual measurement of the displacement of single boulders identified in the hillshaded DEMs. Several points were also located outside the rock glacier to assess the accuracy of the surface velocity determinations. Displacements in the horizontal plane were analysed instead of 3D displacements, which are affected by surface elevation changes (Isaksen et al., 2000).

~~:~~

4. Results

4.1 Accuracy assessment on the area of La Mare Glacier

The mean elevation difference between the SfM-MVS DEM from 4 September 2013 (Fig. 5a) and the ALS DEM from 22 September 2013 (Fig. 2b), evaluated in the common stable area outside the glacier, was -0.42 m (σ = 1.72 m). The same calculation between the SfM-MVS DEM from 27 September 2014 (Fig. 5b) and the ALS DEM from 24 September 2014 (Fig. 2a) yielded a mean value of 0.03 m (σ = 0.74 m). In this area, the mean difference between the 2014 and 2013 SfM-MVS DEMs is 0.38 m (σ = 1.73 m), and the mean difference between the respective ALS DEMs is -0.09 m (σ = 0.29 m, Table 3).

These results show that the photogrammetric survey conducted in 2014, using a higher number of camera positions and photographs and a slightly longer focal length, provided a significant improvement compared to the survey of 2013. In addition to the higher σ, the 2013 SfM-MVS DEM has a residual average bias of -0.42 m, which must be taken into account in the glacier mass balance calculations.

Table 3 ~~also~~ presents the same statistics for the area of the glacier. However, given that in 2013 the ablation was not negligible between the photogrammetric survey of 4 September and the ALS survey of 22 September, the comparison between SfM-MVS and ALS of the same year is meaningful only in 2014, with a mean difference of 0.23 m (σ = 0.65 m). The comparison of the two ALS DEMs of 2014 and 2013 yields a mean difference of 1.30 m for the glacier, attributable to the positive mass balance experienced by the glacier in that time period (+0.83 m w.e., Carturan, ~~2015~~2016).

The spatial distribution of the elevation difference between the SfM-MVS and ALS DEMs surveyed at the same times (Fig. 6 and 7) suggests that the most problematic areas for photogrammetric reconstructions are those that are far from the camera positions, steep, and covered by fresh snow. Certain outliers can be observed in steep areas outside the glaciers, even after filtering, but they likely have no influence on the glacier, where the slope is much lower.

The factors controlling the quality of the photogrammetric DEMs were investigated in detail u~~U~~sing the SfM-MVS DEM from 27 September 2014, which has a higher spatial coverage than that of 2013 and is almost contemporaneous with the ALS DEM from 24 September 2014 (which means negligible ablation and accumulation on the glacier).~~, we investigated in detail the factors controlling the quality of the photogrammetric DEMs.~~

As expected, the standard deviation of elevation differences between the 2014 SfM-MVS and ALS DEMs is proportional to slope but remains lower than 1 m up to 40° on the glacier and up to 60° in the area outside it (Fig. 8). Grouping the data for slope classes of 10 degrees and excluding classes with less than 1000 grid cells, it was possible to calculate a strong correlation between the absolute value of the elevation difference and the slope (R = 0.86 both inside and outside the glacier, significant at the 0.05 level). A rapid increase in the error is observed for the highest slope classes, which represent a very small part of the investigated area. For the glacier, only 1% of the area has a slope higher than 40°. The mean elevation difference is around zero for most of the low- and middle-slope classes, with the exception of the 0-10° class

inside the glacier, where a mean value of 0.41 m (σ = 0.44 m) was calculated. Interestingly, ~~T~~the majority of this slope class lies in a flat area of the glacier at 3200-3300 m a.s.l. and is covered by fresh snow, which has poor texture. In addition, this zone has an unfavourable line of sight from the camera positions.

~~We therefore investigated~~ ~~T~~the role of the incidence angle between the line of sight of the camera and the photographed object (vector normal to the surface), was investigated by analysing the mean angles calculated from five representative camera locations at different elevations. The analysis was performed for the glacier area, where most of the mean incidence angles ranges between 70° and 90° (75%, Figure 9a).~~As Figure 9a shows, more than 80%of the incidence angles in single pixels range between 70° and 90°.~~ The scatterplot ~~Figure~~ (Fig 9c) of elevation differences between the 2014 SfM-MVS and ALS DEMs ~~and~~versus the mean incidence angles calculated for ~~each~~every pixel shows no statistically significant relationship (R^2 = 0.~~045~~21). ~~between incidence angle and elevation difference~~However, by analysing this relationship for ~~intervals~~classes of incidence angle, and considering the mean of the ~~absolute value of~~ elevation differences in absolute value and the classes with more than 1000 pixels, yields a correlation coefficient R = 0.95 (significant at the 0.05 level).~~.conf~~.~~irming the conclusions reached by Piermattei et al. (2015). Contrary to what was speculated, high mean and standard deviation values were obtained for low (i.e., theoretically favourable) incidence angles, which correspond to areas with high slope. Instead, low and approximately constant low standard deviation values were obtained for high incidence angles. These results suggest~~ that, in our case study, the accuracy of the SfM-MVS DEMs is influenced more by the slope than by the incidence angle.

Because ~~T~~the redundancy of the observations, that is ~~that means~~ the number of ~~camera that view~~cameras that views the same points on the glacier, ~~is a factor that~~ influences the quality of the photogrammetric results, a viewshed analysis was carried out (Fig. 9d).The results show~~ed~~ anti-correlation between the absolute value of elevation difference and the number of cameras viewing reconstructed pixels (Fig. 9e), yielding a coefficient of correlation of -0.63, which is significant at the 0.05 level.

The effect of the ~~Because the~~ camera-object distance (i.e., depth, ~~) strongly influences the photogrammetric accuracy (~~Gómez-Gutiérrez et al., 2014), ~~we evaluated its effect~~ was evaluated by calculating the mean and standard deviation of the elevation difference between the 2014 SfM-MVS and ALS DEMs, clustering the

pixels in 200 m distance classes from a camera position at the centre of the array displayed in Figure 4b. The relationship between error and depth is clearer for the glacier area (Fig. 10a), whereas in the surrounding area, the error appears to be more influenced by the variability of the slope angle (Fig. 10b).

~~The obtained results were compared to the theoretical behaviour of the error according to the Eq. 1. as a function of the depth (σ_d), as calculated using the following formulation:~~

$$\sigma_d = m_B \cdot \frac{D}{B} \cdot \sigma_i, \quad (1)$$

~~where m_B represents the image scale (*D / focal length*); *D* is the depth (camera-object distance); B is the baseline and σ_i is the measured accuracy in the image space.~~

The theoretical σ_d was calculated using Eq. 1 for each class of distance, considering a mean baseline of 400 m and an accuracy in the image space of 0.40 pixel, which is the reprojection error after bundle adjustment computations. Another quantification of the error as a function of the depth was obtained, for comparison purposes, by multiplying the Ground Sample Distance (GSD) (which increases with depth) by the reprojection error provided by PhotoScan for the Ground Control Points. Figure 10c shows that, on the glacier, the accuracy calculated from the DoD matches quite well the 'theoretical' calculations up to a depth of 1900 m. Beyond this distance, the detected error increases faster than in theory, likely due to the increasing coverage of fresh snow, which affects the image texture and decreases the accuracy.

~~We T~~The accuracy of photogrammetric reconstructions for the different substrata was then evaluated.~~,~~ The ~~whose~~ spatial distribution of each ~~substrata~~substratum was outlined on the orthophoto exported from PhotoScan. Debris, ice and firn display similar accuracy, with median values of elevation difference between the 2014 SfM-MVS and ALS-based DEMs close to zero and interquartile ranges of the same magnitude. Conversely, the area covered by fresh snow, which is also the area with greater depth, shows prevailing positive differences, a median value of 0.48 m and a much higher standard deviation (σ = 0.82 m).

The texture of the surface also influences the point density distribution and the spatial coverage of the reconstructed area. A lower value of the point density was obtained

for fresh snow (4 pts m^{-2}). Increasing point densities were obtained for firn, ice and debris (10, 13 and 15 pts m^{-2}, respectively).

The spatial coverage in the fresh snow area was 75%, whereas it was 93% in the rest of the glacier. Excluding the areas not visible from the camera position and occlusions imposed by the topography, the spatial coverage in the fresh snow area was 82% and 98% in the remaining part.

The point density is also affected by the depth, elevation and slope (Fig. 12). Due to the GSD, the average point density decreases with depth, which in our case is also proportional to the elevation. On the glacier, the point density decreases more rapidly than in the surrounding area for elevations between 3100 and 3300 m a.s.l ., due to the poor texture in this snow-covered flat area. Increasing densities with slope, up to 70-80°, are observed and likely result from more favourable incidence angles, which do not however guarantee high accuracy, as noted earlier (Fig. 9). Considering the entire reconstructed surface, the point density was higher in the area surrounding the glacier than on it (12 pts m^{-2} vs. 8 pts m^{-2}, respectively).

4.2 Accuracy assessment in the area of the AVDM3 Rock Glacier

The 2014 terrestrial photogrammetric survey of the AVDM3 Rock Glacier provided a good spatial coverage (83%) of high-resolution terrain data (Fig. 13). The spatial distribution of the elevation difference between the contemporaneous SfM-MVS and ALS DEMs shows the existence of areas with both positive and negative values (Fig. 14). The average elevation difference is 0.02 m on the rock glacier (σ = 0.17) and 0.05 in the surrounding areas (σ = 0.31 m, Tab. 5).

Similar to the La Mare Glacier area, the accuracy decreases with increasing slope in the rock glacier area. The standard deviation of the average elevation difference between the SfM-MVS and ALS DEMs is less than 0.20 m up to 40°. In the area surrounding the rock glacier, the error increases faster with slope because steep areas coincide with shaded areas and (because the images were acquired in the afternoon) high solar zenith angles. As suggested by Gómez-Gutiérrez et al., (2014), ~~we calculated~~ the relationship between the quality of the photogrammetric DEM and the amount of shadowed-lighted areas in the photographs was calculated~~,~~ using a hillshaded model that was calculated by simulating the position of the sun in the sky (azimuth and zenith angles) during the survey. As shown in Figure 16, larger errors

occur in shadowed areas and smaller errors in well-lit areas, even if the largest differences in accuracy can be observed outside rather than on the rock glacier.

4.3 Glacial and periglacial processes

4.3.1 Mass balance ~~calculations~~ of~~on~~ La Mare Glacier

Due to abundant solid precipitation during the accumulation season and low ablation rates during the summer (the glacier was snow-covered above ~3000-3100 m a.s.l.), the mass balance of the La Mare Glacier was positive in the 2013-14 hydrological year for the first time since the beginning of measurements in 2003. ~~At the end of the ablation season, the Equilibrium Line Altitude (ELA) was at 3012 m a.s.l., and the Accumulation Area Ratio (i.e., the ratio between the accumulation area and the total area, AAR) was 0.86.~~ According to the direct glaciological method, the annual mass balance was +0.83 m w.e. (Carturan, ~~2015~~2016).

~~We compared mass balance estimates obtained was calculated according to the Eq. 3 with the geodetic method based onfor the SfM-MVS and ALS DEMs acquired in 2013 and 2014 and the results was compared. The geodetic mass balance was calculated from the total volume change ΔV (m^3) between the two survey dates:~~

~~$V = \overline{\Delta z} \cdot A$ (2)~~

~~where $\overline{\Delta z}$ is the average elevation change between two DEMs over the area A of the glacier. The area-averaged net geodetic mass balance in metres of water equivalent per year (m w.e. y^{-1}) was calculated as~~

~~$\dot{M} = \frac{\Delta V \cdot \rho}{A}$ (3)~~

~~where ρ is the mean density. The area A of the glacier between the two surveys did not change. The mean density was obtained by a fractional area-weighted mean, assigning 900 kg/m^3 for the ablation area (Huss, 2013) and 530 kg/m^3 for the accumulation area, as directly measured in a snowpit. The resulting weighted mean density was 600 kg/m^3. In the mass balance calculations, we used both raw $\overline{\Delta z}$ values and corrected $\overline{\Delta z}$ valuesto account for the mean errors in the stable areas outside the glacier, as reported in Table 3.~~

As shown in Table 4, the geodetic mass balance estimates using only ALS data do not differ significantly for either the entire glacier or the sub-areas covered by the photogrammetric surveys of 2013 and 2014 (88% and 93%, respectively). The

estimates range between 0.85 and 0.88 m w.e for the raw data and between 0.90 and 0.94 m w.e. for the corrected data. The geodetic mass balance calculations using only photogrammetric data yield a raw value of 1.09 m w.e. and a corrected value of 0.87 m w.e. Using the 2014 SfM-MVS, which has a higher quality than the 2013 ALS DEM, yields a raw value of 0.98 m w.e. and a corrected value of 1.02 m w.e. Area-averaged estimates of the geodetic mass balance from photogrammetric data are very close to the estimates from ALS data and from the direct method and are closer still if the mean DEM error in the stable areas outside the glacier is subtracted from the raw average elevation differences. The spatial distribution and magnitude of elevation change is also well captured by the terrestrial photogrammetry (Fig. 17 and 18), even if, as already noted in the previous section, problematic areas are present in the upper part of the glacier, which was covered by fresh snow, especially in the 2013 SfM-MVS survey.

4.3.2 Surface changes and velocities of the AVDM3 Rock Glacier

The spatial distribution and the mean value of elevation change on the surface of the AVDM3 Rock Glacier were calculated differencing the available SfM-MVS and ALS DEMs. Table 5 shows that, according to the ALS data, there was a prevailing lowering of the surface in the period from 2003 to 2014. Taking into account the average residual bias in the stable area outside the rock glacier, the average lowering rates of the rock glacier surface were 1.5 cm y^{-1} in the period from 2003 to 2013, and 2 cm in the year 2013-14. Comparing the SfM-MVS DEM of 2014 with the ALS DEMs of 2013 and 2003 and accounting for the mean bias outside the rock glacier, we obtained slightly higher lowering rates of 2.2 cm y^{-1} from 2003 to 2013 and 5 cm from 2013 to 2014. As expected on the basis of the accuracy assessment (Section 4.2), the decadal lowering rates calculated from the SfM-MVS DEM are in closer agreement with those calculated from ALS data than the single-year calculations. The same can be observed for the spatial distribution of the elevation changes (Fig. 19), which shows a prevailing thinning in the upper and middle part of the rock glacier and a thickening of the two advancing lobes.

~~Based on these results, we compared the surface displacement rates (based on photogrammetric and ALS data) for the period from 2003 to 2014. We usedby a manual measurements of the displacement of single boulders identified in the~~

~~hillshaded DEMs. Several points were also located outside the rock glacier to assess the accuracy of the surface velocity determinations.~~

Figure 20 shows that the fastest moving areas in the period from 2003 to 2014 ~~are~~ were the two frontal lobes, which also featured the greatest elevation changes. Table 6 shows that the SfM-MVS and ALS data produced very similar surface velocities for the three sub-areas (each with homogeneous displacement) into which the rock glacier can be divided. Outside the rock glacier, the photogrammetric method exhibited a slightly lower accuracy compared to the ALS, but no systematic shift of the different DEMs was found.

5. Discussion

5.1 Data processing and accuracy assessments

The results of our terrestrial photogrammetry applications on the La Mare Glacier and on the AVDM3 Rock Glacier demonstrate that it is possible to reliably quantify the investigated glacial and periglacial processes by means of a quick and safe survey that was conducted on a single day using cheap, light and easy-to-use hardware. Moreover, time-consuming and unsafe direct access to the glacier surface was not required.

T~~However, t~~he data processing times were significantly long~~er~~. For a single operator, the processing time is approximately 10 days. The most labour-intensive and time-consuming tasks were the pre-processing steps i.e., masking of the photos, identification of reference points from the LiDAR DEM and then in the images, and processing of the images (the MVS step is particularly computationally intensive), which is directly related to the resolution and the number of photographs uploaded and the computer performance. Several steps required a certain degree of subjectivity, e.g., the identification of the GCPs. However, due to the high automatism of the image processing, the level of expertise is considerably lower than for LiDAR and traditional photogrammetry.

On the La Mare Glacier, the area-averaged estimates of the 2013-14 geodetic mass balance from ALS and photogrammetric data were almost identical (0.91 and 0.87 m w.e., respectively) and close to the mass balance calculated from the direct

glaciological method (0.83 m w.e.). The differences are well within the uncertainty of the direct mass balance estimates, which was quantified in 0.26~~has been quantified as approximately ±0.2~~ m w.e. y^{-1} by ~~previous studies (Cogley and Adams, 1998; Cogley, 2009)~~Carturan (2016). These results confirm that the good results obtained by Piermattei et al., (2015) on the small Montasio Glacier, in the Julian Alps, can also be replicated on larger glaciers with different morphologies and characteristics.

Because the AVDM3 Rock Glacier exhibited quite slow annual deformation and creep, we were able to calculate reliable displacement rates and area-averaged surface elevation changes only on a multi-year (in our case, decadal) time scale. This result confirms the findings of Gómez-Gutiérrez et al. (2014), who applied a similar method to the Corral del Veleta Rock Glacier in the Sierra Nevada (Spain).

Our results are promising, despite the limitations of the adopted method, which include i) the location of GCPs on natural targets outside the investigated glacier/rock glacier, ii) the presence of areas with deep shadows and changes in the light during the survey, iii) the presence of fresh snow in the upper and middle part of the glacier, and iv) the high camera-object distance in the glacier application.

In general terms, the photo-based accuracy is related to the image feature extraction, feature matching (in both the SfM and MVS steps), and scale definition (Bemis et al., 2014). A low accuracy in these steps, caused for example by poor camera network geometry, can generate model distortion and reduce the ability to identify unique corresponding features in overlapping images (Wackrow and Chandler, 2011; Dall`Asta et al., 2015~~b~~, Favalli et al., 2012; James and Robson, 2012; 2014; Hosseininaveh et al, 2014; Micheletti et al., 2014; Nocerino et al., 2014). In our case studies, among the various aspects analysed, the spatial variability of the accuracy of the photogrammetric DEMs is related to the camera-object distance, the presence of fresh snow with low contrast, the changing illumination during the survey and the occurrence of shadows. The increasing error with increasing terrain slope suggests the persistence of a small shift in the reconstructed DEMs. This shift, however does not affect the areal estimates of mass balance and elevation change, given that the vast majority of the glacier and rock glacier areas feature small or moderate slope angles. For both the glacier and the rock glacier, the spatial coverage of the reconstructed areas was not complete.~~, we have not obtained complete spatial coverage was obtained.~~ In the glacier surveys, the problematic areas were those not visible from the camera positions and those covered by fresh snow and far from the

viewpoints. In the rock glacier, certain areas were not reconstructed due to the rock glacier's complex morphology and in particular to the presence of ridges, furrows and counterslopes.

5.2 ~~Recommendations~~Possible improvements of the SfM-MVS approach

~~Our~~ The accuracy assessments confirm that the ALS data still provide results with somewhat higher accuracies (Tabs. 3 and 5, Figs. 6 and 14) but with much higher costs and demanding logistics than the SfM-MVS approach. However, the SfM-MVS method has the potential to provide a significantly higher spatial resolution (Debella-Gilo and Kaab, 2011; Piermattei et al., 2015) and temporal resolution due to its significantly lower costs. Moreover, the photogrammetric reconstructions still have room for improvement, as demonstrated by the better results achieved from the 2014 survey of the glacier area compared to those from 2013. This improvement resulted from a higher number of photographs and improved camera network geometry.

Many of the limitations described above can be overcome by introducing modifications to the terrestrial photogrammetric survey strategy. For the rock glacier survey, shorter baselines are recommended to ensure greater spatial coverage, high image similarity and good matching performance (Wenzel et al., 2013). GCPs, for example, could be placed on the surface of the glaciers and rock glaciers to reduce the model distortions (Bemis et al., 2014) and generate surveys with much higher accuracies via, for example, the use of dGPS (Dall'Asta et al., 2015~~a~~).

The use of ~~Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (~~UAVs~~)~~ could solve the problem of excessive camera-object distances and the issue of missing areas due to inaccessibility. However, these alternatives imply increased costs, more troublesome logistics, greater expertise, and ultimately longer survey times. In addition, they also require directly accessing unsafe or difficult to reach areas, both to place targets and to move UAVs among study areas that exceed their operational range (Bühler et al., 2014). Therefore, the best balance must be found between simplicity, safety, costs and accuracy for each photogrammetric application based on the final objectives and on the available human and economic resources.

6. Conclusions

In this paper, we investigated the applicability of the SfM-MVS approach for monitoring glacial and periglacial processes in a catchment of the Ortles-Cevedale Group (Eastern Italian Alps), validating our results using ALS DEMs as benchmarks. The ground surveys were conducted on foot and were intentionally planned to be as quick and easy as possible. ~~We surveyed~~ Tthe 2.1 ~~-~~km^2 La Mare Glacier and the neighbouring AVDM3 Rock Glacier were surveyed in one day using only a consumer-grade SLR camera without the setup of artificial targets.

The accuracy of the photogrammetric DEMs, evaluated as the mean and standard deviation of the elevation difference in a stable area between the SfM-MVS DEM and the reference ALS DEM, was -0.42 m ± 1.72 m and 0.03 m ± 0.74 m for the 2013 and 2014 surveys, respectively. The SfM-MVS DEM accuracy of the reconstructed rock glacier surface acquired in 2014 was estimated to be 0.02 m ± 0.17 m.

The SfM-MVS geodetic mass balance estimates for the La Mare Glacier were in good agreement with the calculations from the contemporary ALS data and with the results of the direct glaciological method, confirming a positive mass balance of approximately 0.9 m w.e. in the 2013-14 hydrological year. In the rock glacier, the ~~expeditious~~ survey produced a good spatial coverage of the photogrammetric DEM and a reliable calculation of the multi-year surface changes and displacement rates. For rock glacier applications, particularly for slow-mowing ones such as AVDM3, single-year assessments of elevation change and surface velocities require the setup of artificial targets and GCPs to obtain the accuracy required to detect such slow processes.

The simplicity of the ground surveys and the physical characteristics of the analysed alpine terrain were the main factors influencing the tested approach. In particular, we refer to the use of natural targets as GCPs, the occurrence of shadowed areas and lighting changes during the surveys, the presence of fresh snow in the upper part of the glacier (which reduced the contrast), and the sub-optimal camera network geometry and long camera-object distances imposed by the morphology and accessibility of the study area.

In consideration of the factors that spatially control the accuracy of the SfM-MVS DEMs, there remains room for significant improvements, e.g., using ~~UAVs~~ aerial platform and/or placing artificial targets surveyed by dGPS. Further research is therefore needed to i) find technical solutions to overcome the major limitations of the SfM-MVS approach in such remote areas and ii) achieve the optimal balance

between the simplicity and low cost of this approach and the accuracy required for each specific application.

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975 **Table 1**. Date and main parameters of available LiDAR data.

Date	Aircraft	Laser scanner model	Laser scanner rate	Max. scan angle	Scan frequency	Point density [pts·m^{-2}]
24 Sept. 2014	Elicopter AS350 B3	Optech ALTM GEMINI (04SEN164)	100 kHz	46°	34 Hz	5.1
22 Sept. 2013	Cessna 404 D-IDOS	ALTM 3100	70,000 Hz	±25°	32 Hz	0.9
17 Sept. 2003	—	—	—	—	—	0.5

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977 **Table 2**. Data acquisition settings and processing results of the photogrammetric
978 surveys for both case studies. The GCPs error is the average transformation
979 residuals error [m] and root mean square reprojection error for the GCPs [pix] during
980 the bundle adjustment computation. The image quality represents the downsized of
981 the images resolution during the dense matching computation. “Ultra high” means full
982 resolution, “High” a downsized of 50% before the image matching processing. The
983 ground sample distance (GSD) is the average pixel size on the ground. The standard
984 deviation of ICP registration is reported in the table.

	La Mare glacier		**Rock glacier**
	4 September 2013	27 September 2014	27 September 2014
Input data			
Camera type	Nikon 600D	Nikon 600D	Canon 5D Mark III
Focal Length	25 mm	35 mm	28 mm
Image size	5184 x 3456 pix	5184 x 3456 pix	5760 x 3840 pix
N° Images	37	177	198
Processing data			
Reprojection error	0.43 pix (1.76 max)	0.40 pix (3.75 max)	0.38 pix (1.20 max)
GCPs error	1.52 m 1.48 pix	1.14 m 1.96 pix	0.62 m 1.86 pix
Image quality	Ultra high	High	High
Mean GSD	0.16 m/pix	0.22 m/pix	0.064 m/pix
Dense point cloud	49,844,094 pts	55,114,074 pts	56,171,705 pts
Point density	37 pts m^{-2}	20 pts m^{-2}	244 pts m^{-2}
Post-processing data			
Filtered point cloud /subsampled	15,617,342 pts (sampled 0.20 m)	24,226,221 pts (sampled 0.20 m)	4,517,143 pts (sampled 0.10 m)
Point density	8 pts m^{-2}	9 pts m^{-2}	21 pts m^{-2}
ICP transformation	0.14 m	0.15 m	0.10 m

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Table 3. Results of comparisons between SfM-MVS-based DEMs vs. ALS-based DEMs in the common area and for the bare-ground stable area and glacier.

DEMs	Elevation differences [m] cell size 1 m x 1m							
	Common SfM-MVS bare-ground area				Common SfM-MVS glacier area			
	Min	*Max*	*Mean*	*σ*	*Min*	*Max*	*Mean*	*σ*
SfM-MVS 2013 - ALS 2013	-19.59	33.61	-0.42	1.72	-9.91	12.04	-0.13	0.78
SfM-MVS 2014 - ALS 2014	-18.48	22.42	0.03	0.74	-18.17	11.41	0.23	0.65
SfM-MVS 2014 - SfM-MVS 2013	-33.12	14.19	0.38	1.73	-12.44	12.33	1.58	1.42
ALS 2014 - ALS 2013	-15.38	10.81	-0.09	0.29	-14.61	7.37	1.30	0.97

Table 4. Mass balance calculations on La Mare Glaciers using different combinations of SfM-MVS and ALS DEMs.

DEMs cell size 10 m	Mass balance estimation						
	Spatial coverage [m^2]	Average elevation changes [m]		Volume change [m^3]		Mass balance [m w.e]	
		Raw	*Corrected*	*Raw*	*Corrected*	*Raw*	*Corrected*
SfM-MVS 2014 - SfM-MVS 2013	1,834,800 (~88%)	1.81	1.45	3,320,988	2,660,460	1.09	0.87
ALS 2014 - ALS 2013		1.47	1.56	2,697,156	2,862,288	0.88	0.94
SfM-MVS 2014 - ALS 2013	1,938,700 (~93%)	1.64	1.70	3,179,468	3,295,790	0.98	1.02
ALS 2014 - ALS 2013		1.41	1.50	2,733,567	2,908,050	0.85	0.90
ALS 2014 - ALS 2013	2,072,700 (entire glacier)	1.43	1.52	2,963,961	3,150,504	0.86	0.91

Table 5. Statistics of elevation changes in the rock glacier and in ~~bed~~ bare ground stable area off rock glacier from September 2014 to September 2013 and September 2003 in the ALS reconstructed area and in the common ALS and SfM-MVS coverage area.

Elevation changes [m]										
Data			ALS Reconstructed area				SfM-MVS Reconstructed area			
			Stable area		Rock glacier		Stable area		Rock glacier	
			Mean	*σ*	*Mean*	*σ*	*Mean*	*σ*	*Mean*	*σ*
SfM-MVS 2014	-	ALS 2014	—	—	—	—	0.05	0.31	0.02	0.17
SfM-MVS 2014	-	ALS 2013	—	—	—	—	0.01	0.33	-0.04	0.18
ALS 2014	-	ALS 2013	-0.05	0.19	-0.07	0.12	-0.05	0.20	-0.07	0.12
SfM-MVS 2014	-	ALS 2003	—	—	—	—	0.06	0.33	-0.16	0.49
ALS 2014	-	ALS 2003	-0.01	0.22	-0.18	0.46	-0.00	0.21	-0.18	0.47
ALS 2013	-	ALS 2003	0.04	0.21	-0.11	0.41	—	—	—	—

Table 6. Velocity statistics in three distinct areas of the rock glacier and in stable area outside the rock glacier evaluated comparing the 2003 and 2014 ALS DEMs and the photogrammetric DEM for the 2014 survey epoch.

Horizontal movements between 2003 and 2014 [cm yr $^{-1}$]										
	ALS 2003 - ALS 2014					ALS 2003 - SfM-MVS 2014				
	No. points	*Min*	*Max*	*Mean*	*σ*	*No. points*	*Min*	*Max*	*Mean*	*σ*
Area 1	41	7.3	43.3	26.8	8.9	36	6.8	47.5	26.3	10.3
Area 2	13	4.4	27.4	18.9	7.0	11	9.0	27.9	18.1	6.4
Area 3	26	4.5	16.5	9.4	4.0	24	4.5	18.2	9.0	4.1
Off rock glacier	65	0.0	10.7	3.6	3.1	23	0.0	13.6	5.3	4.2

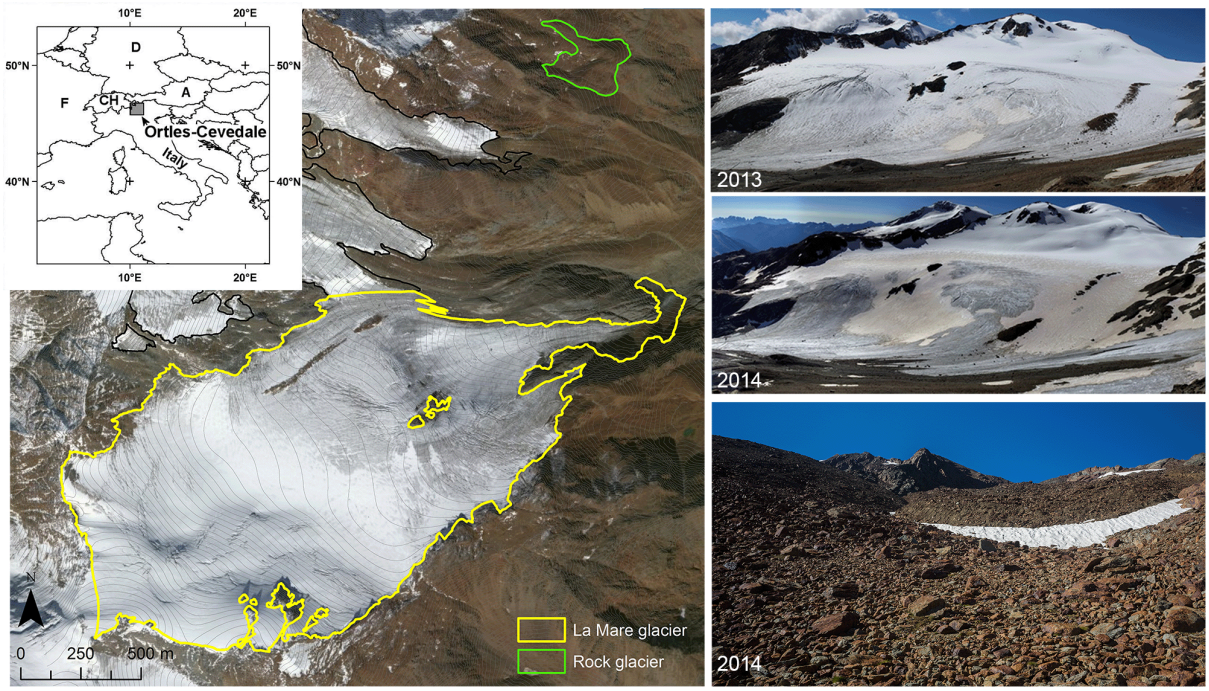


Figure 1. Geographic setting of study areas. Panorama view of the La Mare Glacier from the same camera position on 4 September 2013 and 27 September 2014. The lower right photograph shows the front of the meridional lobe of the AVDM3 Rock Glacier, which was surveyed on 27 September 2014.

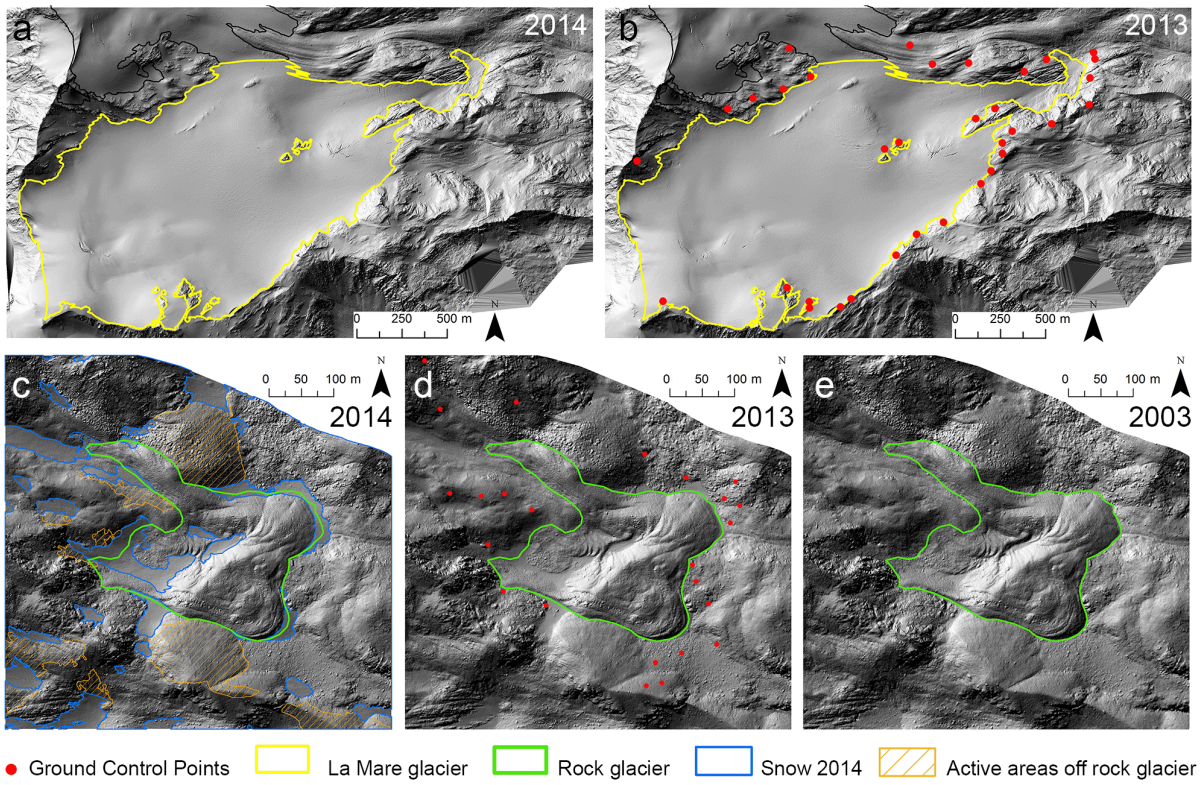


Figure 2. ALS shade DEMs of la Mare glacier acquired on **(a)** September 24, 2014 and **(b)** September 21, 2013. The ALS DEMs of rock glacier acquired on **(c)** 2014, **(d)** 2013 and **(e)** 2003.The red dots represent the selected GCPs in 2013 DEM used in the photogrammetric approach. The snow accumulation areas and geomorphologically-active areas outside the rock glacier were excluded during the ICP computation between 2013 and 2003, 2014 ALS point cloud.

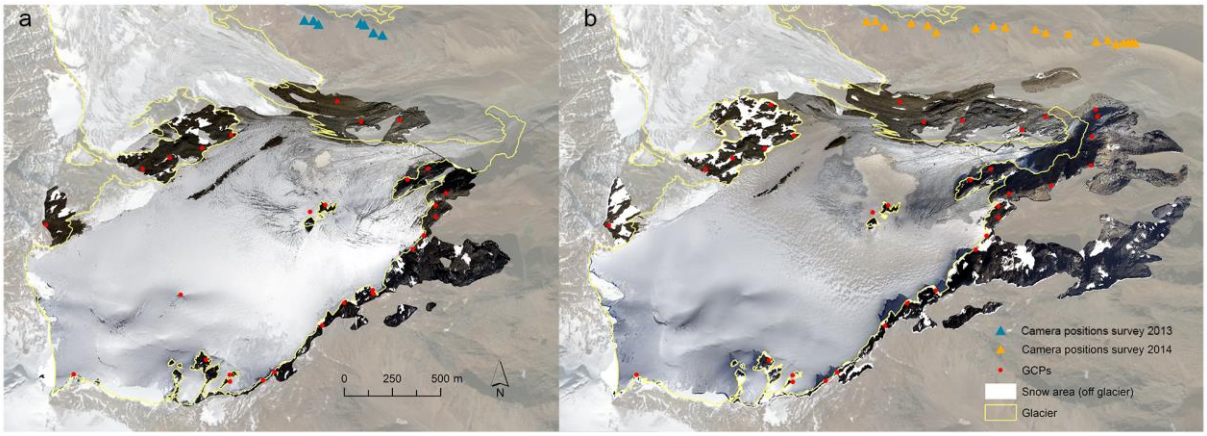


Figure 3. Orthophoto-images of SfM-MVS 3D model of La Mare glacier surveyed on **(a)** 4 September 2013 and **(b)** 27 September 2014. The white areas in the ortho-images represent the snow-covered area in the rock stable area. The red dots outside the glacier area are the GCPs and the triangles identified the camera locations.

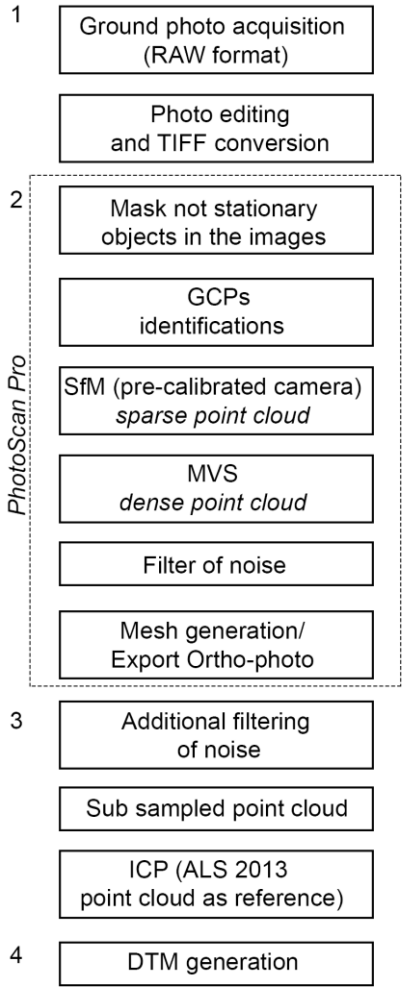


Figure 4. Workflow illustrating the photo-based 3D reconstruction process used in this work for both case studies, starting from images collection to DEM generation.

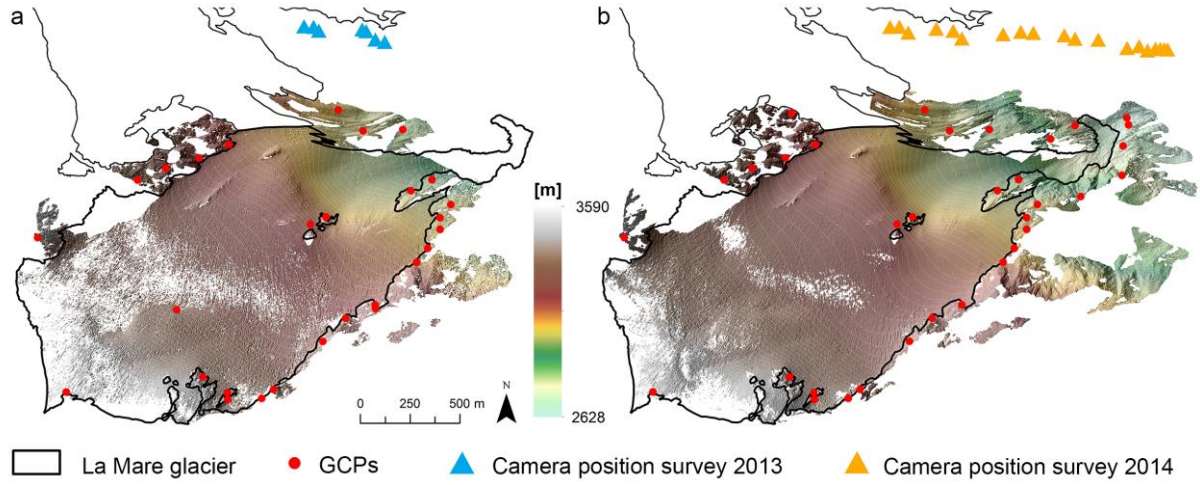


Figure 5. Hillshaded DEMs of La Mare glacier derived from photogrammetric measurements on **(a)** 4 September 2013 and **(b)** 27 September 2014.

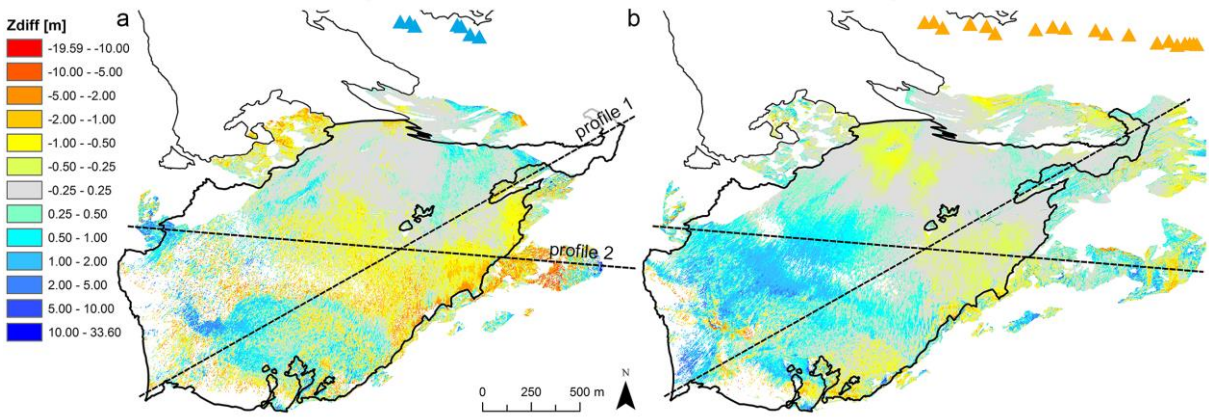


Figure 6. Spatial distribution of elevation differences between photogrammetric and ALS-based DEMs on **(a)** 2013 and **(b)** 2014.

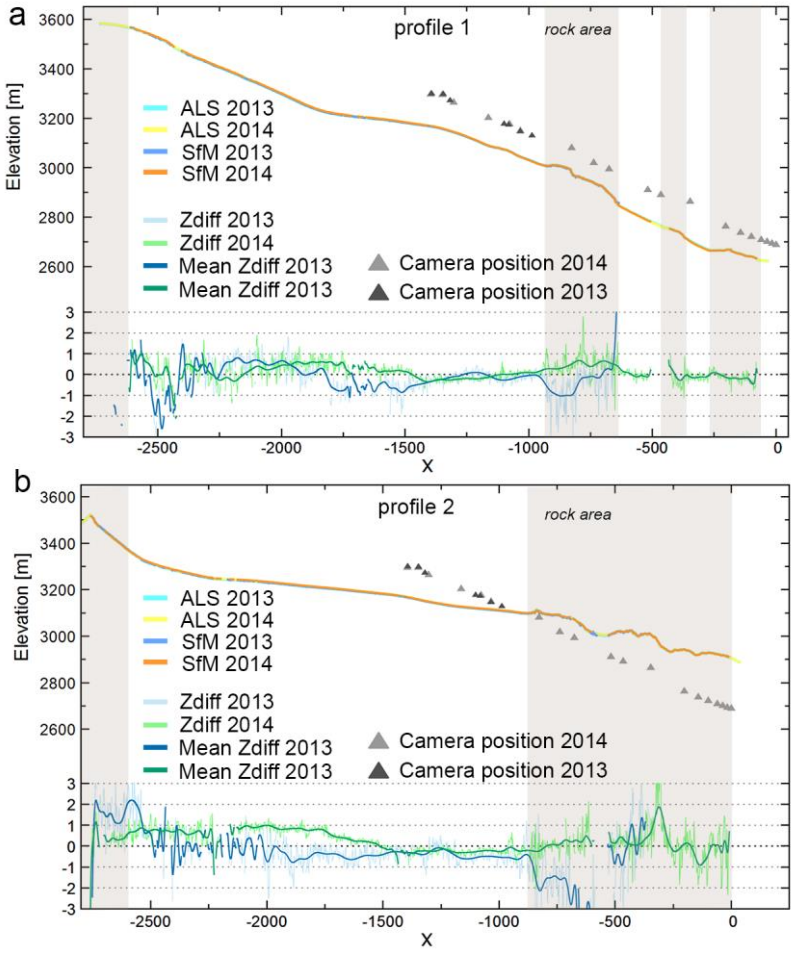


Figure 7. Cross sections through the La Mare glacier DEMs show the glacier elevation change and the difference between 2013 and 2014 in SfM-MVS and ALS-based DEMs. The location of **(a)** the profile 1 and **(b)** profile 2 is indicated in Fig. 6. The x-axis zero has been fixed at the first camera position of the 2014 survey and the minimum and maximum values of the z-difference set to ± 3 m.

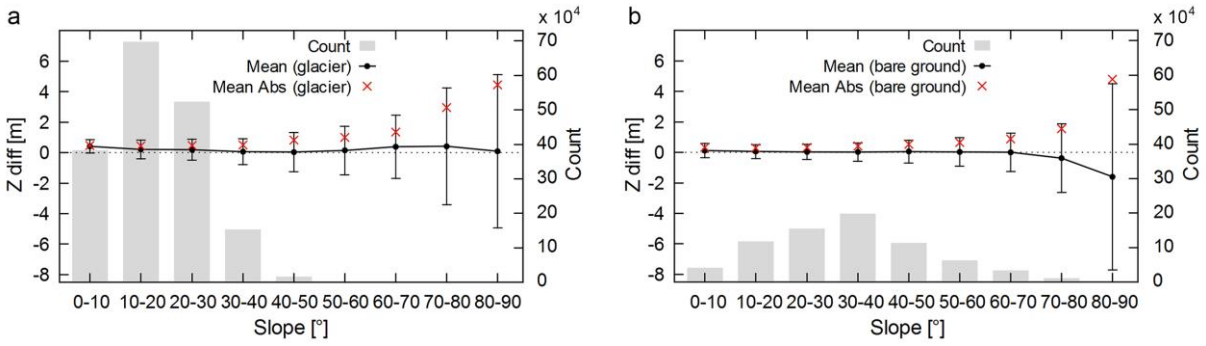


Figure 8. Mean, mean of the absolute values and standard deviation of the 2014 DoD between SfM-MVS and ALS-based DEM depending on slope calculated **(a)** in

the glacier area and **(b)** in the bare ground outside glacier covered by rock. The grey bars show the count of cells at any given slope (y-axis on the right).

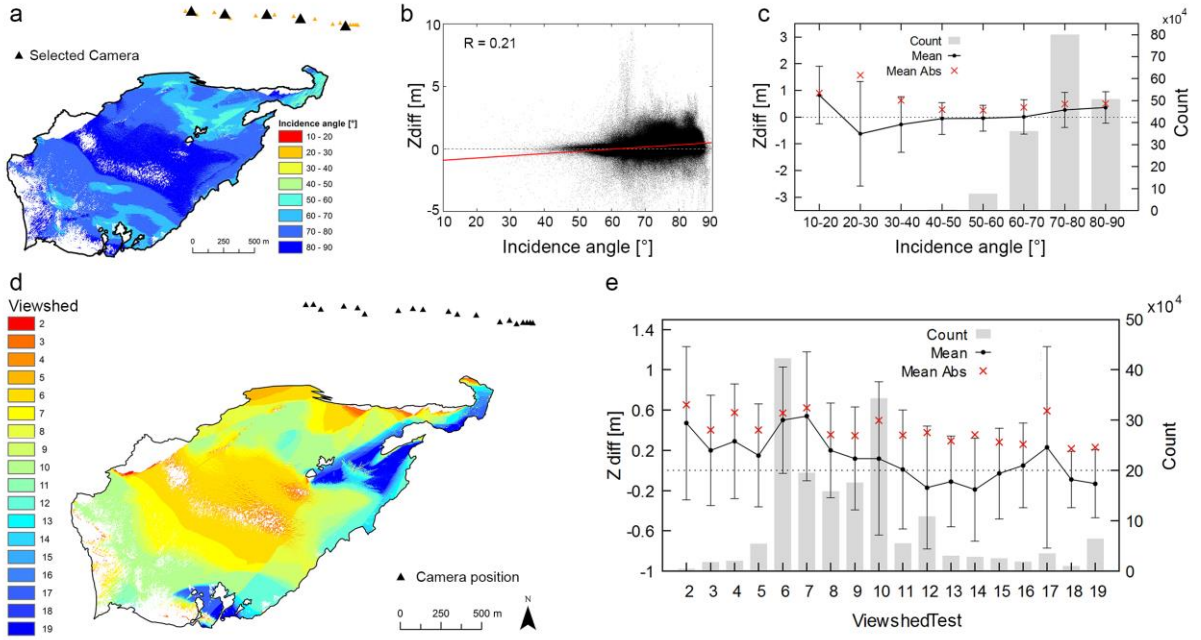


Figure 9. Mean incidence angles between five cameras positions and vectors normal to the surface and viewshed analysis. **(a)** Map of the mean incidence angle calculated for five representative camera positions; **(b)** the scatterplot of the elevation difference and the mean incidence angle for the five camera positions; **(c)** mean with one standard deviation y bars and mean of the absolute value of elevation differences for the mean incidence angle intervals calculated for 5 selected camera; **(d)** map of the viewshed reconstructed area visible from all camera; **(e)** mean with one standard deviation y bars and mean of the absolute value of elevation differences for the viewshed reconstructed area.~~Mean iIncidence angles between five cameras positions and vectors normal to the surface. **(a)** Map of the mean incidence angle calculated for five representative camera positions; **(b)** the scatterplot of the elevation difference and the mean incidence angle for the five camera positions; **(c)** mean with one standard deviation y bars and mean of the absolute value of elevation differences for the mean incidence angle intervals calculated for 5 selected camera; **(d)** map of the viewshed reconstructed area visible from all camera; **(e)** mean with one standard deviation y bars and mean of the absolute value of elevation differences for the viewshed reconstructed area.~~

~~Frequency distribution histograms of incidence angles calculated for the corresponding surface and **(b)** the scatterplot of the elevation difference and incidence angle for the five camera positions; **(c)** mean of elevation differences with one standard deviation y bars calculated for each camera and for incidence angle intervals; **(d)** map of the locations of the selected cameras with the viewshed reconstructed area visible from each camera point.~~

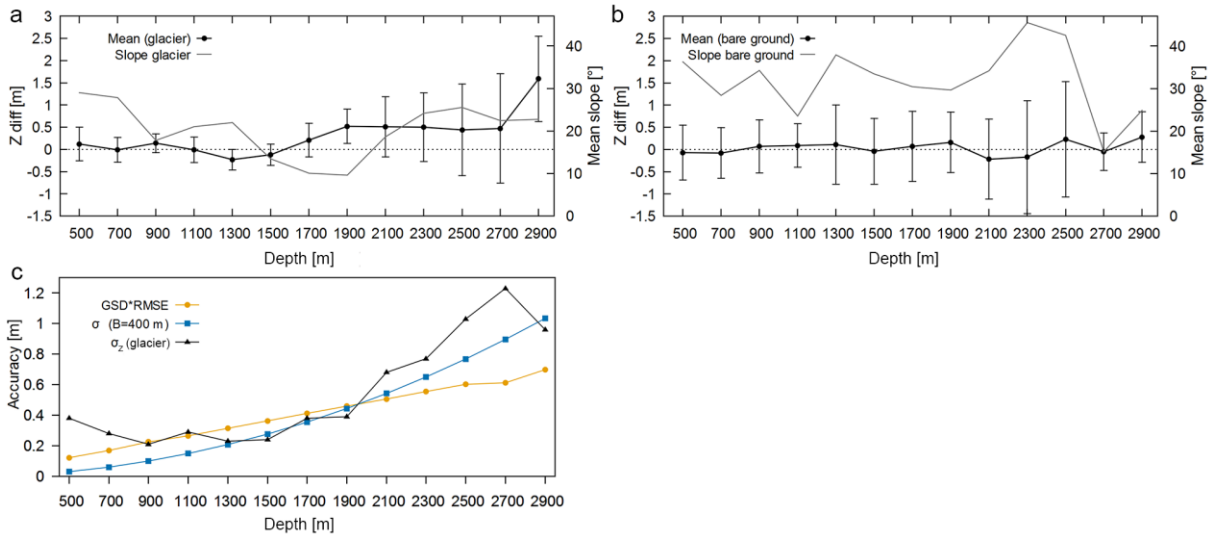
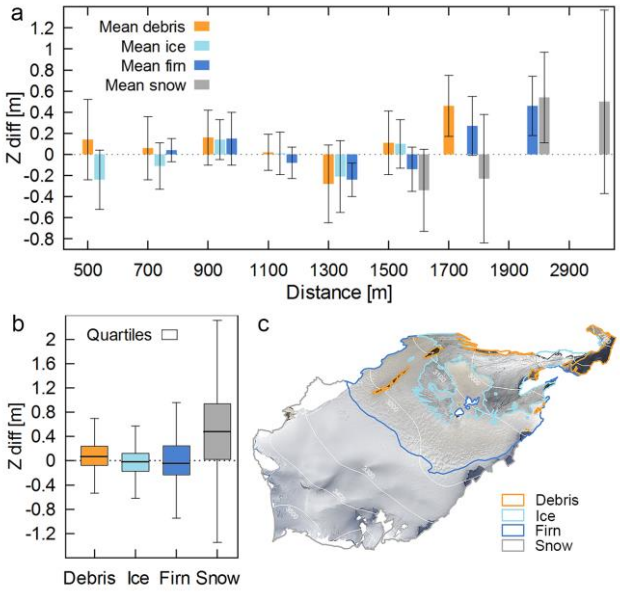


Figure 10. Mean and standard deviation of the 2014 DoD between SfM-MVS and ALS-based DEM depending on depth calculated **(a)** in the glacier area and **(b)** in the bare ground outside glacier covered by rock. The trend of the average slope angle for depth intervals is shown on the right y-axis. **(c)** Comparison of σ_z measured in the glacier reconstructed area, the theoretical depth accuracy estimated according to the Eq. (1) and the GSD multiplied for the GCPs RMSE for the depth intervals.



1100

1101 **Figure 11**. Elevation difference between the 2014 SfM-MVS and ALS-based DEMs
1102 calculated for different substrata. The figure shows **(a)** the mean and standard
1103 deviation of z-difference for four substrata (debris, ice, firn, and snow) grouped by
1104 distance from camera position; **(b)** the box plot of the z-difference for four substrata.
1105 In the box-whisker plot, values which exceed 1.5 * IQR were considered outliers. In
1106 panel **(c)** the orthophoto of the glacier on 27 September 2014 and map of substrata.

1107

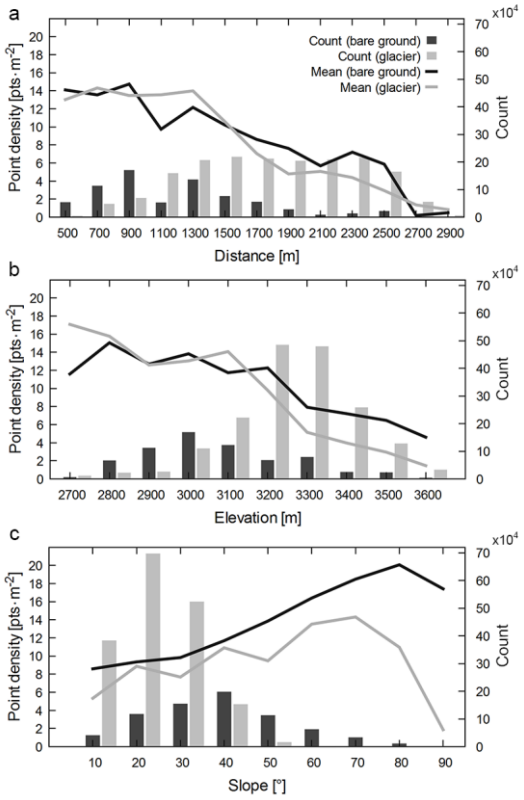


Figure 12. Relationships between point density of the 2014 photogrammetric 3D model and **(a)** camera-object distance, **(b)** elevation and **(c)** slope calculated for the glacier and rock stable area outside glacier. The point density was estimated using the filtered and subsampled point cloud.

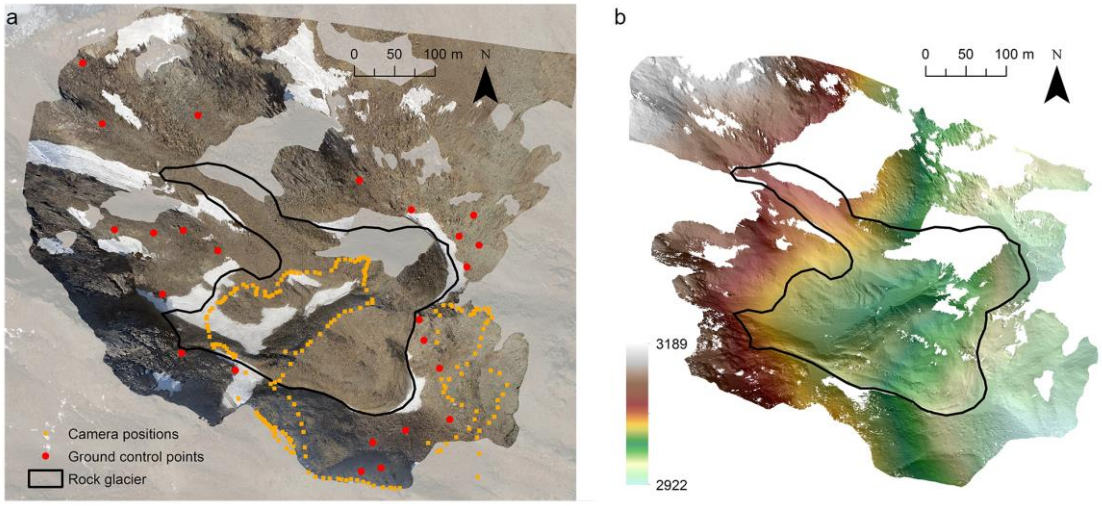


Figure 13. Correspondence between **(a)** the orthophoto of SfM-MVS 3D model of rock glacier surveyed on 27 September 2014 and **(b)** the hillshade model of rock

glacier model calculated at the same data and hour of the images acquisition. The holes in the DEM represent not reconstructed area.

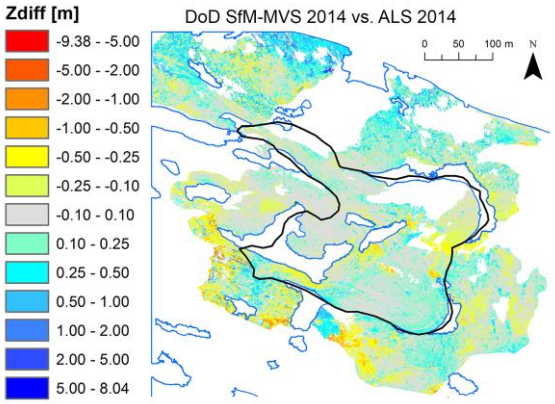


Figure 14. Spatial distribution of elevation differences between photogrammetric and ALS-based DEM acquired on 27 September 2014 and 24 September 2014, respectively. The blue shape is the snow accumulation areas excluded during the DEMs comparison.

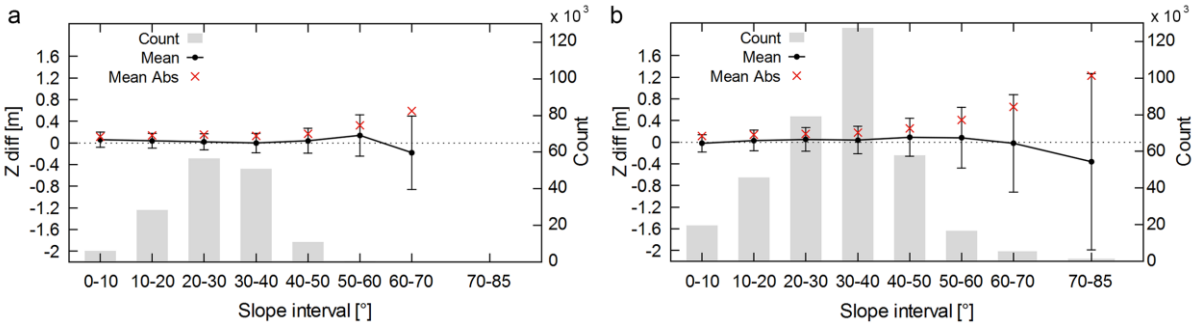
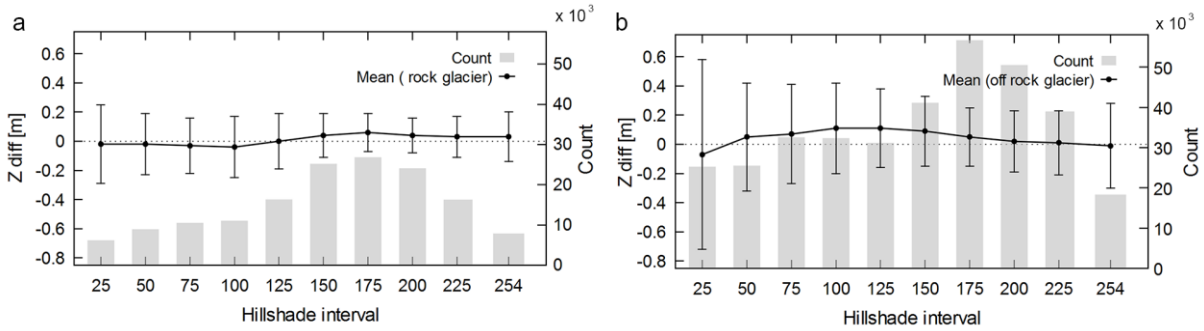


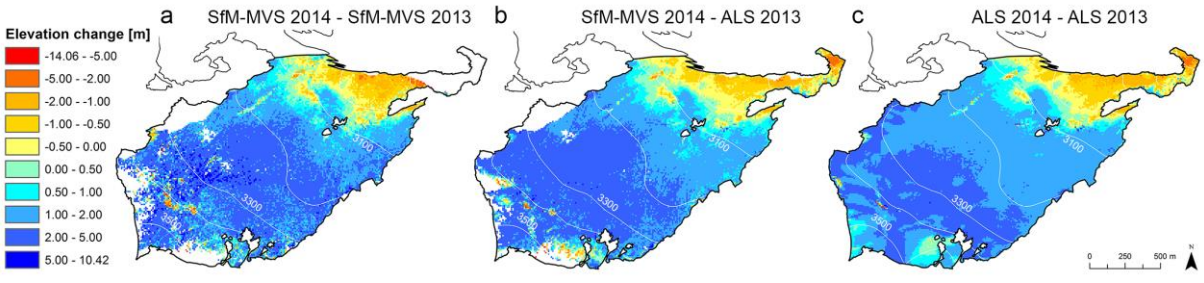
Figure 15. Mean, mean of the absolute values and standard deviation of elevation differences between 2014 SfM-MVS and ALS-based DEMs calculated for the slope interval **(a)** in the rock glacier reconstructed area and **(b)** in the bare ground outside the rock glacier.



1132

1133 **Figure 16**. Elevation differences between 2014 SfM-MVS and ALS-based DEMs
1134 calculated for the hillshade interval **(a)** in the rock glacier reconstructed area and **(b)**
1135 in the bare ground outside the rock glacier. Lowest values represent shadowed area
1136 whilst lighted areas present the highest values.

1137



1138

1139 **Figure 17**. Spatial distribution of elevation changes between **(a)** SfM-MVS 2014 and
1140 SfM-MVS 2013 DEMs **(b)** SfM-MVS 2014 and ALS 2013 over the area of the glacier
1141 with common coverage and **(c)** ALS 2014 and ALS 2013 over the entire glacier.

1142

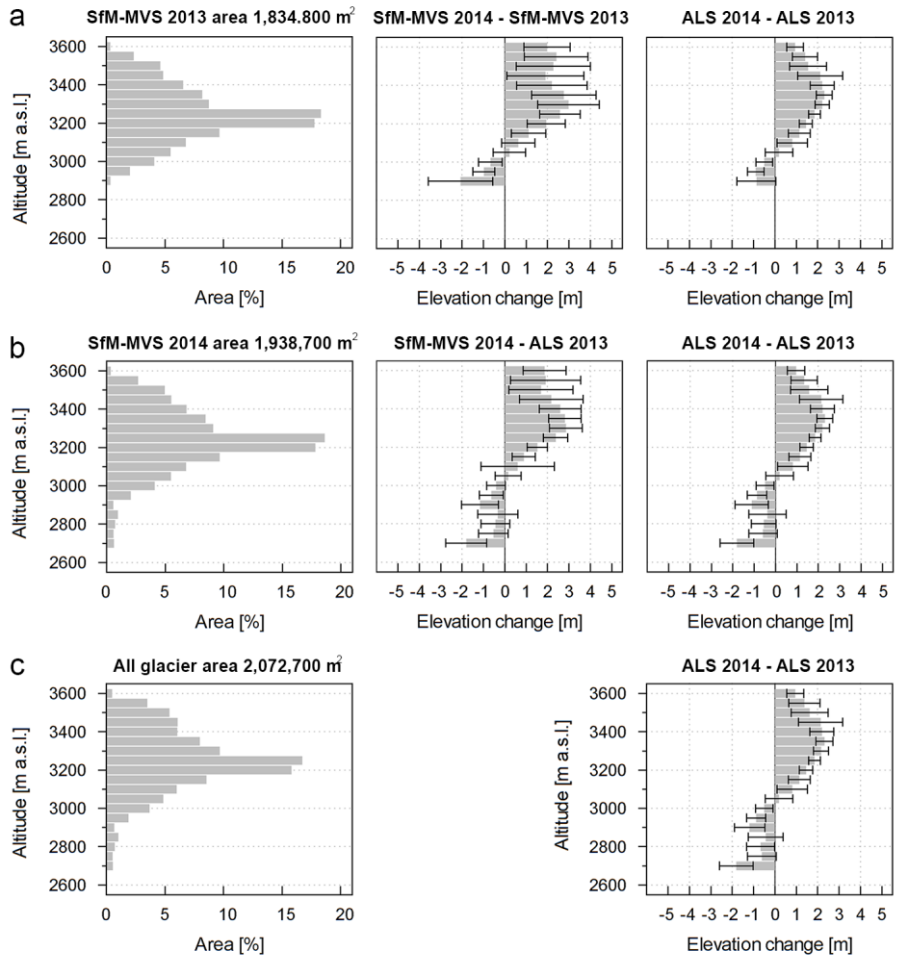
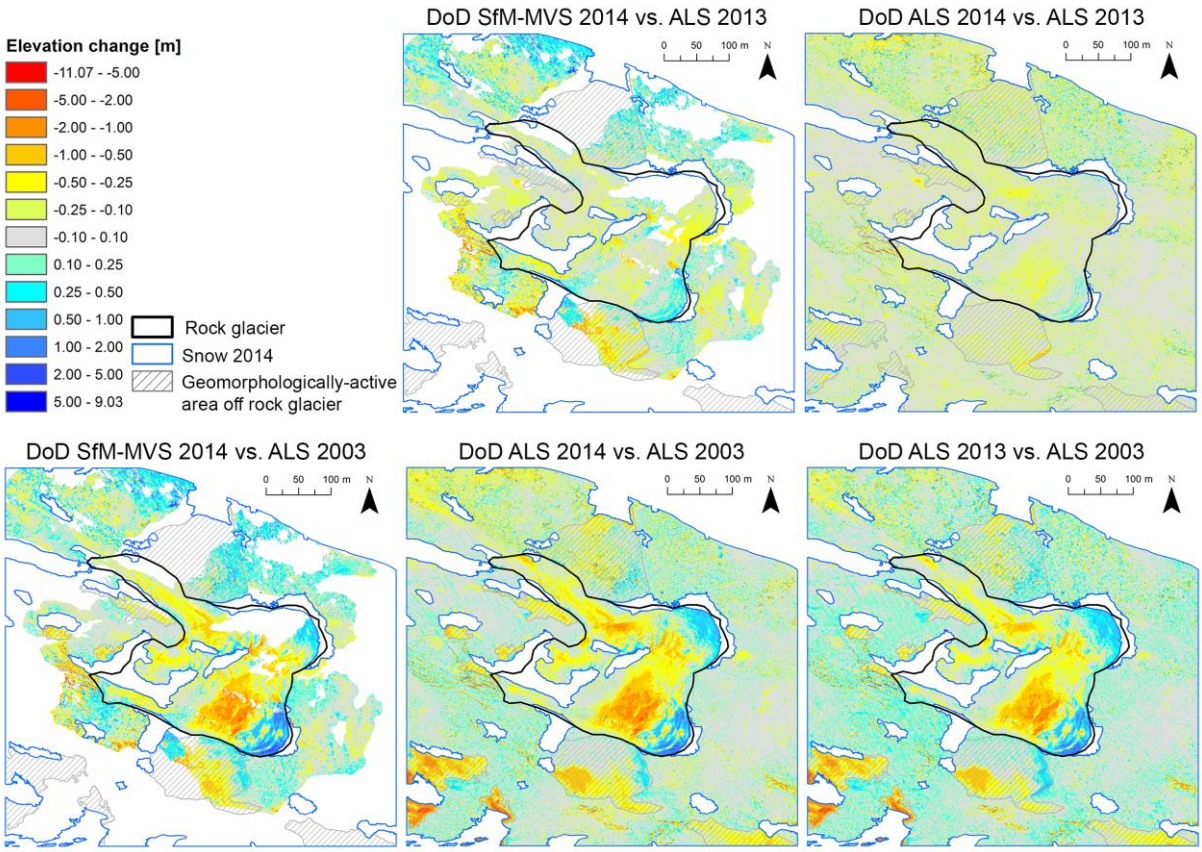


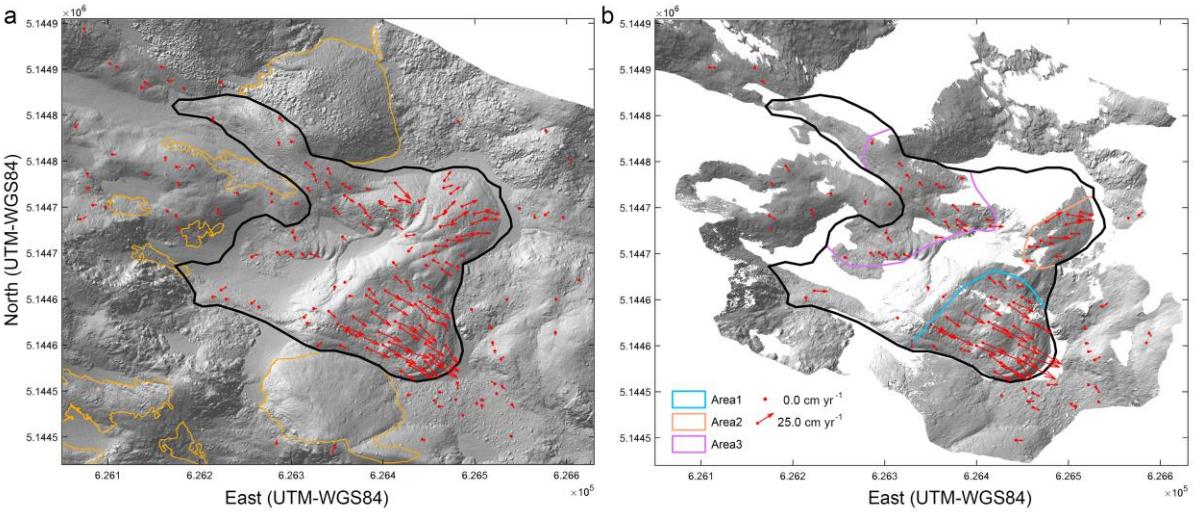
Figure 18. Area-altitude distribution and surface elevation change with standard deviation for the glaciological year 2014/2013 displayed for altitudinal bands with 50 m interval. The elevation change were calculated between **(a)** SfM-MVS DEMs of 2013 and 2014 in the 2013 photogrammetric reconstructed area; **(b)** SfM-MVS DEMs of2014 and ALS DEM of 2014 in the 2014 photogrammetric reconstructed area; **(c)** ALS DEMs of 2013 and 2014 of the entire glacier. The photogrammetric results were compared with the corresponding ALS result calculated in the same area.



1152

1153 **Figure 19**. Spatial distribution of elevation changes from September 2014 to
1154 September 2013 and September 2003 between the DEMs derived from SfM-MVS
1155 and ALS.

1156



1157

1158 **Figure 20**. Displacement vectors of the rock glacier between 2003 and 2014
1159 computed by a manual identification of natural features visible in the shaded DEMs

generated by **(a)** ALS for both survey epochs and by **(b)** ALS and photogrammetry for 2003 and 2014 survey, respectively.