

## Final Response to Reviews

*Seismic detection of rockslides at regional scale: Examples from the Eastern Alps and feasibility of kurtosis-based event location*

by F. Fuchs et al.

We thank Naomi Vouillamoz and the anonymous reviewer for their constructive comments. In the following we respond individually to all points raised by both reviewers. A revised version of the manuscript will be uploaded.

We carefully revised the manuscript and hope that it is now in good shape to be accepted for publication in Earth Surface Dynamics.

With kind regards,  
Florian Fuchs and co authors

Our replies are structured and color-coded as follows:

### Comments from Referees

- Authors response
- ➔ *Modified passages in the manuscript*

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Reviewer 1, Anonymous

**1. The authors mentioned that the purpose of research focuses on automatic location and automatically distinguish earthquake events. But the research uses the known database and construct the algorithms. I would suggest the authors revise the purpose of this research.**

- We use known events to tune and test our algorithms, which then can potentially be applied to find unknown events both in the past and the future. This is future work, however. Here we only suggest several algorithms that could be used. We added this sentence to the introduction to point this out in the very beginning:
- ➔ *“Here we present a study of 21 rockfalls and rockslides that occurred in or near Austria in the years 2007 to 2017 and were well-recorded by permanent national seismic networks in the Alps during routine earthquake monitoring. We use this dataset of confirmed events to develop and test automatic detection and locating algorithms that could be used to systematically search for additional events in existing and future data. Exploring the feasibility of a country-wide real-time detection scheme for rockfalls, we focus on developing simple automatic location routines and to automatically distinguish such events from regional earthquakes.”*

**2. From the reference photo, some rock disaster seems like a free fall event. It has better to define rockslide in the introduction part.**

- We repeatedly state that our events are either rockslides or rockfalls, with the majority being rockslides. The entire documentation about our events is in German language, which doesn't clearly distinguish between rockfalls and rockslides. From just the pictures it is hard to distinguish for some cases. We agree, that e.g. events [2] and [10] look more like rockfalls. However, we are lacking solid proof. Thus we would like to keep our formulations as they are. Anyways, we added a sentence in the discussion section that addresses this issue:
- *“For the 21 events in this study we can only estimate the drop mechanism from photographs, which is not always conclusive. While the majority of events would classify as rockslides, some may include a free-fall phase and could rather be regarded as rockfalls (see Table 1).”*
- We also updated Table 1, indicating which events might classify as rockfalls rather than rockslides.

**3. In page 5, The STA/LTA method common uses in signal analysis. I think the authors should add some references in this part. Further, why the authors set the different thresholds of trigger-on and trigger-off ratio?**

- The trigger-off ratio needs to be lower than the trigger-on ratio in order to have a well-defined end of the event. Otherwise event start time (trigger-on) and event end time (trigger-off) would be identical, or the trigger-off threshold would never be reached after the trigger-on activated. The trigger-off ratio should mark the point where signal amplitudes roughly decayed back to pre-event levels. We believe most readers from seismology will be familiar with this concept and do not further explain it in the manuscript. Anyways, we added a reference which very well describes the principles of an STA/LTA trigger.
- *“We added this reference: Trnkoczy, A. Bormann, P. (Ed.) Understanding and parameter setting of STA/LTA trigger algorithm, New Manual of Seismological Observatory Practice 2 (NMSOP2), Deutsches GeoForschungsZentrum GFZ, Potsdam, 2012, 1-20.”*

**4. In page 6, Many research support that the P and S wave can't be classified in rockslide/landslide events. From the right part of the Fig.3, the event also looks like containing two parts. The minor event happened first and a major event occurred following. It's a common situation in rockslide event. I suggest the authors carefully check the data again. If this is P and S wave, I think the authors should describe it in detail.**

- We carefully checked those events. Usually, on the closest station, no separate phases or stages can be identified. If the two arrivals were due to two events, we would expect to see them as well at the closest station. More importantly, the two arrivals clearly separate with distance and travel at different velocities. Thus, we are quite certain that this is due to P and S wave propagation, not two separate events. We added a sentence to point this out:
- *“We exclude that the two distinct arrivals reflect two separate events, since with increasing distance we observe increasing separation time. In addition, no such separation is visible on the records of the stations closest to the rockslide.”*

**5. From the automatic detection, I think it may detect some unknown rockslides, but from authors' data, all rockslides are known events. In advance, I would suggest the authors use different values (like different frequency range) to run the automatic detection. And some deviations of location are quite large. It's a little bit impractical for further application.**

- We believe the manuscript is quite clear about the fact that we try to develop methods based on known events. Here we report on the performance of some simple methods, that might eventually be used for automatic detection in the future. We are not there, yet. In the discussion section we address certain improvements to our methods, including different frequency ranges (and we explain why we couldn't for this study). Concerning the locations: Some are not satisfactory and need further attention. Other, however, are already quite precise and good enough for applications. We do not claim that everything is working optimally, yet, but we want to show up some methods which could be systematically and automatically applied in the future. We think the manuscript is clear about this.

**6. The authors construct eq.(4) to distinguish the earthquakes and rockslides. I would suggest the authors validate the equation with rockslides after February 2017.**

- This is certainly a good suggestions. However, after February 2017 new events have been sparse and we are still collecting events. This is a task for future work.

**7. From the fig 6, two events' local magnitude is zero. If the authors remove these two points, the R2 should be higher. From the Table1, the two are with the volume of 150,000 m<sup>3</sup> and 500 m<sup>3</sup>, respectively. From the event with 500 m<sup>3</sup>, there are no stations which record the signal. I suggest the authors can remove this case. From the other case, it's a little strange that the case is with the high volume, but the local magnitude is zero. I think the authors should check the data again or describe the mechanism detail. Final, I also suggest the authors can use different parameters like PGV or envelope area to address this issue.**

- Following the suggestions from Reviewer 2 we added explanations how the magnitudes were obtained at several places in the manuscript. The Magnitudes are listed like this in the database at ZAMG (Austrian earthquake service). Note, that for small magnitudes such as 0.0 probably only few stations were read for amplitudes (this is also mentioned in the text now). Both 0.0 events do indeed show very low amplitudes, so probably the Magnitudes are correct. For the event in Schwaz, no station activated the STA/LTA detector (thus no entry in Table 1), but the event is visible in the seismic data (very weakly). However, the volume estimate based on reference [9] is probably wrong. Thus, we adjusted Figure 6 and equation 5+6 to show how the result would look like without the 0.0 / 150.000m<sup>3</sup> pair.

→ *Updated Figure 6 + Caption*

→ *Updated Equations (5) and (6)*

→ *“Note, that we exclude the data pair ( $M_l=0.0$ ,  $V=150.000$ ; Schwaz event) since the volume estimate is likely wrong.”*

We discuss in section 4 that other authors performed similar studies based on PGV (e.g. Dammeier et al. 2011). Envelope area is an interesting concept (since it includes information about the event duration) and we thank you for pointing this out. We will test this in the future.

Reviewer 2, Naomi Vouillamoz

**Should the title of the paper be refined? You propose a simple (and elegant) automatic detection, discrimination and location scheme for rockslide events at regional scale, using low sample-rate broadband data of national seismic networks. It seems the methods could be easily implemented for real-time applications. I have the feeling there might maybe be something even more appealing than the current title, but it's just a feeling.**

- Fair point, but we didn't really come up with a better title ...

**I don't see the point including the AlpArray Working Group in the author list! Or is this mandatory because you use AlpArray data? This is a small research paper. An acknowledgment and reference as it is already done at the end of the paper is in my opinion enough in that context...**

- Including the AlpArray Working Group in the author list as well as listing all names in the acknowledgment section is a requirement for all AlpArray-based publications that the AlpArray group agreed on. Thus, even though we use little data from the AlpArray network, we have to leave it as it is.

**How was the rockslide dataset established? The authors mention in the last paragraph of the discussion section (P12 L9-12) that much knowledge could be gained by merging or cross-checking national event databases over the borders. However, events published for instance by Dammeier et al. (2016) (see Figure 4 of that paper) or the 'famous' August 2017 event of Piz Cengalo (Bondo) which are located in the study area do not figure in the studied dataset. Why?**

- The dataset was compiled over the years at ZAMG, Austria, and comprises strong events that were recognized during routine earthquake monitoring, or were found after ZAMG was alerted of a strong event by the geological Service of Austria (GBA). Thus the dataset naturally contains events only from Austria and South-Tyrol, with two exceptions from Switzerland (these are also referenced in Dammeier et al. 2016). Very recent events from 2017 and 2018 are not included as we stopped the work at this point and started writing it up. We currently work on the August 2017 Piz Cengalo slide which will be subject of another publication. We added the following sentences to Section 2, to clarify how the dataset was compiled:
  - ➔ *“The event database was compiled by the Austrian earthquake service and focuses on rockslides and rockfalls from Austria and South-Tyrol (Italy). These events were manually detected and classified during routine earthquake monitoring by the Austrian earthquake service (Central Institute for Meteorology and Geodynamics, ZAMG), and verified in cooperation with the Austrian Geological Service (GBA). We additionally include two large-scale rockslides that occurred in Switzerland, but were also detected by the Austrian colleagues and assigned a magnitude.”*

**The discussion part needs to be reworked. The Event Detection section should be discussed in more details with more specific examples on more sensitive algorithms and how one could optimize computational requirements with false alarm rates. The section Kurtosis picker performance and location accuracy could be better structured. I provide more specific comments about that section below. Event discrimination and volume estimation should be split in two individual sections.**

- We reworked parts of the discussion section following this suggestion. Even detection now includes more explanation on STA/LTA false alarms and other more sensitive algorithms. We added several more examples on alternative detectors and included references. We reworked the Kurtosis picker section according to the comments below (see below). We split event discrimination and volume estimation in two separate sections.
- *“However, the STA/LTA triggering threshold level of 4.0 used in this study is commonly used for averagely quiet sites (Trnkoczy 2012). Increasing the number of stations needed for a positive result can in case be used to lower the false alarm rate.”*
- *“Manconi et al. 2016 report that the predictive multi-band detector FilterPicker (Lomax et al 2012) is suitable to detect and phase-pick emergent seismic signals of rockslides. Lassie is a stack-and-delay based coherence detector to find and locate events at the same time (Lopez et al 2017, Heimann et al. 2018) and may also be applicable to rockslide signals. Soubestre et al. 2018 demonstrate how coherent volcanic tremor signals can be detected and classified on a regional seismic network based on network covariance matrices. Since rockslide signals in several aspects resemble tremor signals (emergent onset, long duration, frequency content) this concept might as well be applicable to rockslide detection. Template matching and subspace detectors (Maceira et al 2010) are commonly used for earthquake and tremor detection, but we speculate that such methods may not be suitable for rockslide detection, as for every event waveforms are highly individual because of the complexity and variability in source mechanisms.”*
- *We split Section “Event discrimination & volume estimation” into two separate ones.*

**P3 L1-2. Please specify better how the dataset was established and the events selected, since between 2007-2017 other events are known (see the above general comment)**

- Done, please see comment above

**P3 L2-3. Out of these 21 events, 17 rockslides have been independently ...; I see 18 events in the Table (only 3 [b]).**

- We agree that listing Mellental 3x was confusing. We now summarize all three Mellental events into a single one and adjusted the caption accordingly. Still, we are left with 19 events.
- *Table 1 Caption addition: “The Mellental event occurred in three stages. The magnitude refers to the first event in the sequence. The volume estimates the total mass loss over all stages.”*

*Accordingly, we corrected the number of events from 21 to 19 throughout the manuscript.*

**P3 L6. “carried out at the Austrian Central Institute...”**

- This paragraph changed, the sentence no longer exists. See comments above.

**P3 L9-10: Please provide a reference for the distance attenuation function used at ZAMG. Specify in the text that ML was calculated by ZAMG (instead of only in the Table 1 caption)**

- We added passages pointing out that Ml was calculated by ZAMG. Unfortunately no reference exists that explains the distance attenuation used at ZAMG.

**P3 Section 2, Dataset: please describe here the 32-earthquake dataset used for event discrimination including a list (and a Table), preferentially providing the same information as for the rockslides.**

- Done. However, instead of expanding Section 2 we added Supplemental Online Material to the manuscript that describes how the earthquake dataset was obtained. There we also show a map of the earthquake dataset (Fig. S1, similar for Figure 1) and a table listing the same information as for the rockslides (Table S1, similar to Table 1). We also added additional text to 3 to refer to the new Supplemental Material.

- ➔ *New supplemental online material that describes how the earthquake dataset was obtained.*
- ➔ *Added in Section 3 (Discrimination): “(see Fig. S1 and Table S1 and the Supplemental Online Material for details)”*

**P4 Table 1. Please provide an event ID reusable in Table 2. Please add a field with the minimal and maximal epicentral distance. Since you use ML to derive a Volume-Amplitude scaling relation, an information about the number of amplitude reading used in ML estimation would be interesting, especially if different from the number of stations with positive STA/LTA.**

- We believe that the event name serves well to find any event in Table 2. Since Table 2 is sorted by location deviation, any numbering scheme would be anyways mixed between Table 1 and Table 2. Unfortunately the number of amplitude readings for the determination of Ml is not available to us. We added the min and max epicentral distance to the table.

- ➔ *Added new column (Distance / km) to Table 1. Added to caption: “The distance column indicates the minimum and maximum distance from the events for these stations.”*

**P6 L11. For some events a distinct second arrival is visible: How many events exactly? List the events based on event IDs so the reader can go and have a look on the waveform if interested.**

- Done, we added the number and listed the events.
- ➔ *“For eight events (Einserkofel, Hochwand, Gamsgrube, Trins, Stubaital, Dobratsch, Mellental, Zwölferkofel) a distinct second ...”*

**P6 L 16. Time is scanned in steps of 2 s (space is missing).**

- Fixed

**P7 L6-7. For clarity purposes: (1) the Kurtosis...; (2) the ratio between maximum amplitude...; (3) the ratio of the duration...**

- Done

**P8 L1: For clarity purposes: We extract the same three parameters for the earthquake records in order to ...**

- Done

**P8 L22. A local magnitude defined by 4 stations' amplitude reading as it is (?) the case for a couple of rockslide events is not exactly well defined. Moreover, ML below 2 is always a bit tricky... What makes you think you are less loosely constrained than other references ?Please rephrase accordingly.**

- In fact, we don't know quality of the Magnitude estimates by ZAMG. We removed "well defined" and instead point out, that Magnitudes were assigned by ZAMG during monitoring. To make readers aware of potentially uncertain Magnitudes we added the following sentence to the discussion section. However, we cannot give any bounds on this uncertainty.

→ *"Note, however, that apart from the volume estimate also the local Magnitude may not be very well-defined, especially for low-magnitude ( $M_l < 2$ ) events with only few amplitude readings available."*

**P9 L22. ... we did not check how many false alarms would be introduced. What a pity! A few tests would have provided very interesting information/benchmark in terms of false alarm rates/data process speed, which is key for real-time implementation.**

- Yes, we agree that this would be crucial for real-time applications. However, this was out of the scope of the current study. We suspect that because of the relatively high detector activation threshold and the requirement of minimum four activated stations, the false alarm rate would be acceptable. We refrain from speculating in the manuscript though and would leave the statement as it is. We will address this issue in a planned publication that is based on the same procedure.

**P10 L2. ... by gravitational mass movements at regional distances.**

- Done

**P10 L2-3. I would rephrase. Eleven of the 14 locatable events in this study could be located within less than 10 km deviation from the true deviation (see Table 2).**

- We would prefer to keep it as it is.

**P10 L12-14. These two sentences are not very clear. Do you mention the sampling rate and record bandpass as a potential reason for 'bad' locations? You expect better picking accuracy with higher sampling rate records? Please rephrase.**

- We reformulated these sentences and hope they are more clear now.



- *“Future work should include all three components of the seismic record and use different narrow frequency bands for comparison, as suggested by (...). We expect that evaluating the kurtosis pick among different frequency bands would suppress outliers (due to noise) and thus make the onset determination more robust and precise. Yet, in this study - due to low sampling rate for older records - we could not extend the processing to higher frequencies. Lower frequencies are very weak in amplitude or absent for almost all rockslides in this study. This is in line with observations from several} other studies that report the 1--5 Hz frequency range as the dominant one for regional seismic records of rockslides (...).”*

**More generally, I would better structure the first paragraph of that section. Provide the reader with ratings. Which parameters are the most influencing?) How much variation did you observed when playing with the kurtosis-based picker? I expect the outliers to have way much influence on a bad location than the optimization of the kurtosis-based piker (see for example Joswig (2008), p 121, box “Jackknifing explained” or Vouillamoz et al. (2016), Figure 6).**

- We do mention the possible variation of location results (“few kilometers”) and reasons (“moving window length”) in the text. We added the corner frequencies of the bandpass filter as one of the influencing parameters. We agree that outliers have a huge impact for some events and added sentences pointing this out. We do acknowledge that a systematic search for variability is a convenient way to explore uncertainties and parameter sensitivity. However, we feel that our limited dataset and the currently simple processing are not worth the effort. We agree that this should be done ones the processing scheme will be applied on larger scale to find new events.
- *“We do in fact observe that the location results currently lack robustness and may change by few kilometers when certain parameters of the kurtosis picker (e.g. the length of the moving window; bandpass filter corner frequencies) are adjusted.”*
- *“Additionally, we did not implement automatic outlier handling at this stage. Several of the bad locations listed in Table 2 can be explained by strong outliers in the kurtosis picks due to noise. We expect that picking accuracy can be greatly improved if measures are taken to make the kurtosis picker more robust and to exclude outliers.”*

**P10 L24. For those events presenting a very distinct second arrival...**

- We kept the sentence as it is, but listed again the events in question.

**P10 L27. Most of (?) the other events show no clear second onset...**

- Changed to:
- *“The majority of events ...*

**P11 L4. I find ‘we demonstrate’ a bit ambitious regarding the low statistical significance of the used dataset. We show that rockslides and earthquakes...**

- Agreed and changed



**P11 L11-14. To my knowledge, machine learning is usually trained on lots of known events, not a few selected known events. Hammer et al. (2013) developed a classifier based on 1 single known events using Hidden Markov Models, however the random forest algorithm of Provost et al. (2016) is trained on hundreds of events. Please rephrase for clarity.**

- We expanded this paragraph as suggested and give more information about the number of training events needed. It now reads:
  - ➔ *“Dammeier et al. 2016 demonstrate how a single training event can be used to scan continuous data for rockslides based on Hiden Markov Models”*
  - ➔ *“Random forest classifiers work more reliable the more training events are available. Recent studies demonstrate that sensitivities higher than 85% can be achieved if just 10% of the events inside a dataset are used to train the algorithm (Provost et al. 2017, Hibert et al. 2018). In the work of Provost et al. 2017 this corresponds to 20-40 training events per event category, which is in the same order of magnitude as the number of events in this study, suggesting that these could be sufficient to screen larger datasets.”*

**P12 L6. A general drawback of many studies.... this includes also your study. Even if you present more events than other studies, 21 events is still a limited number of events... Please rephrase...**

- We now mention that this explicitly includes our own study.
  - ➔ *“A general drawback of many studies {(including this one)} that aim to ...”*

**P12 L 18. Again, I find demonstrate a bit too high... We propose a simple approach to search for seismic signatures of rockslides ...**

- We changed this, it now reads:
  - ➔ *“We have outlined simple methods how to search for ...”*

**P12 L 20. ... can potentially be reduced. I think greatly is too optimistic and actually, 10 km is not bad at all, given the quality of the onsets and the frequently high gap...**

- We would like to stay a bit optimistic here. Some examples from our study show that if there are no outliers the location accuracy can be brought down to few (1-3) km which is of similar quality as for earthquakes. Anyways, we changed “*greatly*” to “*further*”

**P12 L31. you forgot the final point...**

- Well spotted, shame on us! :) Fixed of course ...

**P13 L29. Team list. Again, I think referring to the AlpArray work group in acknowledgement and in the reference is enough.**

- See first comment. AlpArray rules require us to do this.

**Figure 1. Please enhance the contrast between the colors of the permanent and the AlpArray stations. Use ML scaling in the symbology (0-1, 1-2, >2) so the reader can easily recognize the bigger events. Provide lat-lon information or if you don't want to work in a GIS, maybe you could add IDs as label. Please add a Figure 1b, same area and scale, but displaying the earthquakes (also with ML scaling) so the reader can visually compare the two datasets**

- Temporary stations are now filled markers and colored black. This should do the job. We added Lat/Lon markers. We tested maps with marker sizes scaler with magnitude, but it did not increase the readability. Thus, we would like to keep it as it is. We added a map for the earthquakes as Supplemental Material.

→ *Figure 1 updated*

**Figure 4. Caption: Use same date format as in the other figures and tables (YYYY-MM-DD).**

- Done

**Figure 5. Caption: Distribution of the three discrimination parameters...**

- Done

**Figure 6. It would be nice to have a word about the outlier at  $10^5$  m3 and ML 0.**

- See response to reviewer #1. We updated Figure 6 and added passages to the text.

#### **Additional changes:**

- *Corrected number of events (landslides 21 → 19; earthquakes 32 → 31) throughout the manuscript.*
- *Updated event reference [15]: Link was deprecated. Was uploaded the original report to our server.*
- *Updated event reference [17]: Link was outdated and no longer working. We added a new one*
- *Added references:*

*Trnkoczy, A. Bormann, P. (Ed.) Understanding and parameter setting of STA/LTA trigger algorithm New Manual of Seismological Observatory Practice 2 (NMSOP2), Deutsches GeoForschungsZentrum GFZ, Potsdam, 2012, 1-20*

*Fuchs, F.; Kolínský, P.; Gröschl, G.; Apoloner, M.-T.; Qorbani, E.; Schneider, F. & Bokelmann, G. Site selection for a countrywide temporary network in Austria: noise analysis and preliminary performance Advances In Geosciences, 2015, 41, 25-33*

*Heimann, S., Matos, C., Cesca, S., Rio, I., and Custodia, S.: Lassie: A versatile tool to detect and locate seismic activity, in preparation; Note: interested users to preview Lassie can write to: sebastian.heimann@gfz-potsdam.de, 2018*

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*Lopez Comino, J. A., Heimann, S., Cesca, S., Milkereit, C., Dahm, T., and Zang, A.: Automated Full Waveform Detection and Location Algorithm of Acoustic Emissions from Hydraulic Fracturing Experiment, Procedia Engineering, 191, 697–702*

*Maceira, M., Rowe, C. A., Beroza, G., and Anderson, D.: Identification of low-frequency earthquakes in non-volcanic tremor using the subspace detector method, Geophysical Research Letters, 37, L06 303*

*Soubestre, J., Shapiro, N. M., Seydoux, L., de Rosny, J., Droznin, D. V., Droznina, S. Y., Senyukov, S. L., and Gordeev, E. I.: Network-Based Detection and Classification of Seismovolcanic Tremors: Example From the Klyuchevskoy Volcanic Group in Kamchatka, Journal of Geophysical Research: Solid Earth, 123, 564–582*

# Seismic detection of rockslides at regional scale: Examples from the Eastern Alps and feasibility of kurtosis-based event location

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**Abstract.** Seismic records can provide detailed insight into the mechanisms of gravitational mass movements. Catastrophic events that generate long-period seismic radiation have been studied in detail, and monitoring systems have been developed for applications on very local scale. Here we demonstrate that similar techniques can also be applied to regional seismic networks which show great potential for real-time and large-scale monitoring and analysis of rockslide activity. This manuscript studies 5 19 moderate-size to large rockslides in the Eastern Alps that were recorded by regional seismic networks within distances of few tens of kilometers to more than 200 km. We develop a simple and fully automatic processing chain that detects, locates, and classifies rockslides based on vertical-component seismic records. We show that a kurtosis-based onset picker is suitable to detect the very emergent onsets of rockslide signals, and to locate the rockslides within a few kilometers from the true origin, using a grid search and a 1D seismic velocity model. Automatic discrimination between rockslides and local earthquakes is 10 possible by a combination of characteristic parameters extracted from the seismic records, such as kurtosis or maximum-to-mean amplitude ratios. We attempt to relate the amplitude of the seismic records with the documented rockslide volume and reveal a potential power-law in agreement with earlier studies. Since our approach is based on simplified methods we suggest and discuss how each step of the automatic processing could be expanded and improved to achieve more detailed results in the future.

## 15 1 Introduction

Gravitational mass movements shape the surface of our planet and pose sincere hazards to human population, in particular in densely populated mountain regions, such as the European Alps. Understanding the triggers of slope failures allows to better evaluate their impact on the evolution of geomorphology and to design mitigation measures or early warning systems. However, such events may occur spontaneously and in remote areas and thus remain undetected in many cases. This can 20 introduce significant uncertainty to e.g. event inventories and triggering studies. Yet, comprehensive knowledge and reliable event data are of particular importance for the assessment of hazards imposed by rapid gravitational mass movements (Petschko et al., 2014; Lima et al., 2017). This renders remote and preferably real-time detection methods for rapid gravitational mass movements highly desirable. Classical approaches such as remote sensing via satellite imagery or stationary slope monitoring systems are usually limited in either temporal or spatial resolution and cannot cover vast areas in real-time.

In recent years seismology has gained attention for being able to provide both temporal and spatial resolution for the detection and characterization or even forecasting of various kinds of mass movements. This includes landslides (Helmstetter and Garambois, 2010; Feng, 2011; Moore et al., 2017), rockfalls (Hibert et al., 2011; Dammeier et al., 2016; Manconi et al., 2016; Gualtieri and Ekström, 2017), avalanches (Lacroix et al., 2012; van Herwijnen et al., 2016; Hammer et al., 2017), debris flows (Walter et al., 2017) or bed load transport (Schmandt et al., 2013; Burtin et al., 2016; Roth et al., 2017). Most of the studies which demonstrate the large potential of seismology for event characterization of mass movements utilize long-period seismic radiation created by catastrophic landslides (Allstadt, 2013; Ekström and Stark, 2013; Hibert et al., 2014b). Seismic broadband observations of such events allow to invert for the 3D landslide force history and time-dependent center of mass position and - in combination with topography data - enable seismologists to fully describe a mass wasting event from remote (hundreds to thousands of kilometers distance) observations. Such observations have revealed scaling laws that link seismic observables to the mass and momentum of massive landslides (Ekström and Stark, 2013), help to constrain numerical models of landslides (Moretti et al., 2012, 2015), and support observations of frictional weakening during sliding events (Lucas et al., 2014; Levy et al., 2015; Delannay et al., 2017).

Short-period seismic radiation generated by mass movements is more complex and challenging to interpret, due to complex source mechanisms, influence of topography, directional effects, and strong near-surface scattering and attenuation. Hibert et al. (2017b) report relations between the bulk momentum of catastrophic landslides and the 3–10 Hz bandpass-filtered envelopes of the respective seismic signals. At smaller scale, controlled experiments study the generation of high-frequency seismic waves by mass impact under field (Hibert et al., 2017a) or laboratory conditions (Farin et al., 2016). Only few studies try to utilize high-frequency seismic waves to detect and characterize mass movements at local or regional scales. The majority of such studies relies on seismic data acquired in close proximity to the events, e.g. for monitoring of unstable slopes (Walter et al., 2012) or avalanches (van Herwijnen and Schweizer, 2011). Thus, although such approaches are powerful at small scale they are limited in spatial coverage (Burtin et al., 2013). Hibert et al. (2014b) demonstrate a robust automatic detection and location scheme for rockfalls inside a volcanic crater on La Réunion island. Deparis et al. (2008) first documented a set of rockfalls recorded by a regional seismic network in the western Alps and Dammeier et al. (2011) document statistical relations between rockfall characteristics and seismic recordings obtained from the Swiss permanent seismic network. Recently, there have been efforts to utilize existing regional seismic networks for the detection and characterization of mass movements (Dammeier et al., 2016; Manconi et al., 2016). Such networks - which were designed for earthquake monitoring purposes - usually consist of well-installed and sensitive seismic stations, providing high-quality seismic data in real-time and thus offer promising datasets, especially for the study of rockfalls and rockslides.

Here we present a study of 19 rockfalls and rockslides that occurred in or near Austria in the years 2007 to 2017 and were well-recorded by permanent national seismic networks in the Alps during routine earthquake monitoring. We use this dataset of confirmed events to develop and test automatic detection and locating algorithms that could be used to systematically search for additional events in existing and future data. Exploring the feasibility of a country-wide real-time detection scheme for rockfalls, we focus on developing simple automatic location routines and to automatically distinguish such events from regional earthquakes.

## 2 Dataset

This work is based on seismic recordings of 19 rockfall and rockslide events which occurred in Austria and the neighboring countries Switzerland and Italy during the years 2007 – 2017 (see Figure 1 and Table 1). **The event database was compiled by the Austrian earthquake service and focuses on rockslides and rockfalls from Austria and South-Tyrol (Italy). These events were manually detected and classified during routine earthquake monitoring by the Austrian earthquake service (Central Institute for Meteorology and Geodynamics, ZAMG), and verified in cooperation with the Austrian Geological Service (GBA). We additionally include two large-scale rockslides that occurred in Switzerland, but were also detected by the Austrian colleagues and assigned a magnitude.** Out of these 19 events, 16 rockslides have been independently studied by field observations. All verified events were either first recognized by an analyst during the routine national earthquake monitoring and later confirmed by field observations or were first recognized in the field and later clearly associated with seismic waveforms by analysts at ZAMG. For photographs of the individual events please follow the references listed at the end of the manuscript.

During routine processing of the seismic events a local magnitude  $M_l$  was assigned by ZAMG to all rockfalls and rockslides, based on distance and maximum amplitude as read from the seismic records, just as if the events were earthquakes. The measured local magnitude ranges between 0.0 and 2.7. For all events ground truth reference coordinates are available from field observations. However, other than date and coordinates little reliable event parameters are available, since most of the events were not studied or mapped in detail on-site, or because proper documentation could not be found.

We performed internet searches for all events listed in Table 1 to obtain on-site photographs and to find information on the volume of rock which was displaced. For almost all events we were able to retrieve the volume which was usually reported in local newspapers, based on on-site estimates by local geological surveys. Note that these values might be subject to large uncertainties and should rather be considered as an order-of-magnitude estimation.

We obtained continuous waveform data for all 19 events from the European Integrated Data Archive (EIDA), which hosts data from the permanent broadband seismic stations in the Alps. For each rockfall we identified stations within a 300 km radius around the event and downloaded all available data for all three components (Z,N,E) and at the highest sampling rate available (see Fig. 1 for network geometry). All data since 2016 is provided at 100 sps sampling rate, while earlier data is partially only available at 25 sps. For events after January 1st 2016 we also used data from the temporary AlpArray broadband stations (100 sps) which covered the entire alpine region and densify the seismic network in particular in Austria (Fuchs et al., 2015, 2016; Hetenyi et al., 2018).

We use this dataset of confirmed rockslides and earthquakes to develop and test automatic detection and locating algorithms, which we describe in the following.

## 3 Automatic processing

The first step within the automatic processing chain is the identification of a rockfall event within the continuous background signal. We cut the seismic traces to eight-minutes segments around the known origin time (180 s prior to and 300 s after origin time) to simplify the processing and to avoid potential false alarms at this stage of development. We also restrict our

**Table 1. TABLE UPDATED!** List of rockslides studied in this manuscript. Origin times are calculated from the seismic records. The coordinates denote the true location of the events obtained from field observations. The stations column denotes the number of stations that show a positive STA/LTA trigger. **The distance column indicates the minimum and maximum distance from the events for these stations.** Slide volumes were obtained from a web search and are usually based on local newspaper reports – please refer to the acknowledgements section for source references. **Events that are rockfalls rather than rockslides are marked with an asterisk (\*).** Local magnitude  $M_l$  as estimated by the Austrian seismological service (ZAMG). [a] for STA/LTA threshold of 4.0 (see Section 3); [b] Not independently verified, no reference coordinates available; [c] **The Mellental event occurred in three stages. The magnitude refers to the first event in the sequence. The volume estimates the total mass loss over all stages.**

Date	Time (UTC)	Name/Town, Country	Latitude	Longitude	Stations <sup>[a]</sup>	Dist. / km	Volume / m <sup>3</sup>	$M_l$
2007-10-12	07:39:24	Einserkofel, IT	46.6390	12.3483	9	80–196	60,000 <sup>[1]</sup>	2.0
2011-05-06	05:22:10	Kalkkögel, AT *	47.1494	11.2736	5	30–106	1,000 <sup>[2]</sup>	0.9
2011-10-23	14:44:34	Tscheppaschlucht, AT	46.4995	14.2769	12	20–72	30,000 <sup>[3]</sup>	0.7
2011-12-27	17:25:43	Piz Cengalo, CH	46.2950	9.6020	74	23–320	1–2 × 10 <sup>6</sup> <sup>[4,5]</sup>	2.7
2012-03-22	22:53:24	Hochwand, AT	47.3535	11.0041	24	23–207	150,000 <sup>[6]</sup>	1.4
2012-05-01	18:26:46	Gamsgrube, AT	47.1179	11.7992	15	20–150	1–10 × 10 <sup>3</sup> <sup>[7]</sup>	1.4
2012-05-15	02:45:38	Preonzo, CH	46.2516	8.9846	56	33–235	210,000 <sup>[8]</sup>	2.2
2012-05-29	06:00:30	Taschachtal, AT	46.9186	10.8198	4	13–63	150,000 <sup>[9]</sup>	0.0
2012-11-25	11:29:04	Regitzer Spitz, CH *	47.0405	9.5012	6	8–42	180 <sup>[10]</sup>	1.0
2014-07-13	09:34:21	Lienzer Dolomiten, AT	<sup>[b]</sup>	-	6	-	-	0.4
2014-11-24	16:27:20	Trins, AT	<sup>[b]</sup>	-	18	-	-	1.5
2014-11-25	02:48:39	Stubaital, AT	<sup>[b]</sup>	-	4	-	-	0.7
2015-01-16	19:22:50	Dobratsch, AT	46.5914	13.7326	6	21–77	6,000 <sup>[11]</sup>	1.0
2015-09-30	20:38:18	Schwaz, AT	47.3485	1.7427	-	-	500 <sup>[12]</sup>	0.0
2015-10-02	15:58:56	Sölden, AT	47.0051	10.9728	5	17–121	1–2 × 10 <sup>5</sup> <sup>[13]</sup>	1.2
2016-03-25	17:14:03	Mellental, AT	47.3480	9.8400	45	7–176	> 250,000 <sup>[c]</sup> <sup>[14]</sup>	1.9
2016-05-25	12:51:15	Gesäuse, AT	47.5671	14.6203	6	17–70	18,000 <sup>[15]</sup>	1.1
2016-08-19	21:57:04	Kleine Gaisl, IT	46.6425	12.1388	46	20–168	6–7 × 10 <sup>5</sup> <sup>[17]</sup>	1.8
2017-02-21	09:36:35	Zwölferkofel, IT	46.6149	12.3749	40	-	-	-

processing to the vertical component only. Prior to any further processing, we remove the instrument response, apply a 1–5 Hz bandpass filter, and taper and detrend the sliced data. Note that bandpass filtering is required to enhance the signal-to-noise ratio, especially to suppress microseism and long-period noise. Indeed, several earlier studies report this frequency band as dominant for regional seismic records of gravitational mass movements (Deparis et al., 2008; Dammeier et al., 2011; Manconi et al., 2016). Since many of the older waveform data are only available at 25 sps sampling rate, we cannot reasonably extend the bandpass window to higher frequencies. For consistency we use the same settings even for 100 sps data.



## Event detection

For simplicity we first implemented a recursive STA/LTA coincidence trigger to detect the rockfall signals (Trnkoczy, 2012). We used the following parameters for event detection: STA window = 5 s, LTA window = 120 s, trigger-on threshold ratio = 4.0, trigger-off ratio = 1.5, minimum number of stations = 4. All events in our dataset created seismic waves strong enough to be in principle detected with the values stated above. Table 1 lists the number of stations with positive STA/LTA trigger for each rockfall. The number of stations used for single event analysis in this study ranges from the minimum of four stations to more than 70 stations. The activation time of the STA/LTA trigger also serves as initial signal onset time for further processing.

## Kurtosis onset picker

Once our algorithm identified stations with detectable seismic rockfall signal via the STA/LTA coincidence trigger it automatically determines the signal onset on each station. Unlike earthquakes, rockfalls and rockslides commonly show rather emergent signal onsets and hence we cannot use the STA/LTA trigger times as event starting times, because the trigger-on threshold is always reached after the signal onset. Since Hibert et al. (2014a) successfully demonstrated the applicability to rockfall signals, we implemented a kurtosis-based phase picker to determine the onset of the emergent rockfall signals. The kurtosis is a statistical value, in this case characterizing the shape of a given amplitude distribution. It is a positive scalar defined as the standardized fourth moment about the mean. In discrete form it is written as

$$\beta = \frac{\frac{1}{n} \sum_{i=1}^{n+1} (x_i - \bar{x})^4}{\left( \frac{1}{n} \sum_{i=1}^{n+1} (x_i - \bar{x})^2 \right)^2} \quad (1)$$

where  $n$  is the total number of samples,  $x_i$  the value of the  $i$ -th sample, and  $\bar{x}$  the mean over  $n$  samples. The kurtosis of a normal distribution is  $\beta = 3$  and any deviations from this value (i.e. excess kurtosis) can be used for the detection of potential seismic signals on top of regular background noise.

Similar to the processing described in Baillard et al. (2014) and Hibert et al. (2014a), we calculate a characteristic function  $CF(t)$  of the seismic signal  $s(t)$  within a sliding window of size  $\Delta T$ :

$$CF(t) = \beta [s(t - \Delta T), \dots, s(t)] \quad (2)$$

The time window is set to  $\Delta T = 5$  s and  $t$  is sliding between 10 s before and 1 s after the preliminary onset time determined by the STA/LTA trigger.  $CF(t)$  has a maximum near the true signal onset, when the kurtosis  $\beta$  of the seismic amplitude distribution within the sliding window  $\Delta T$  is maximized; that is when the entire time window is dominated by seismic signals from the event (see Fig. 2). However, for location purposes we are interested in the very first onset of the seismic signal, which

is the first time  $t$  at which the characteristic function  $CF(t)$  starts to deviate from the background level. Thus, we adopt the procedure of Hibert et al. (2014a) and modify  $CF(t)$  as follows:

$$cCF(k) = \sum_{i=1}^k \alpha_i \text{ with } \begin{cases} \alpha_i = CF_{i+1} - CF_i & \text{if } (CF_{i+1} - CF_i) \geq 0 \\ \alpha_i = 0 & \text{otherwise} \end{cases} \quad (3)$$

The function  $cCF$  can be read as the cumulative sum of the slope of  $CF$ , and its value increases most drastically at the time of the signal onset. Thus, we define the time  $t$  at which the time derivative  $d(cCF)/dt$  is maximized as the final signal onset time. If several maxima of  $d(cCF)/dt$  lie close to each other we define the first one as the signal onset time (see Fig. 2).

### Origin time & event location

Figure 3 shows seismic record sections for two large-scale rockslides in different areas of the eastern Alps, that show patterns of distinct seismic phase arrivals, which are common for most of the rockslides in this study. Despite the emergent character of the rockslide signals we can identify a first arrival that travels with an apparent velocity of approximately 5.0 km/s. We thus assume that this arrival is a P wave. For **eight** events (*Einserkofel, Hochwand, Gamsgrube, Trins, Stubaital, Dobratsch, Mellental, Zwölferkofel*) a distinct second arrival is visible, which is usually stronger than the first arrival and sometimes (in case of low signal-to-noise ratio) is the only visible signal. This arrival travels with an apparent velocity of approximately 3.0 km/s and we suggest that it is due to S waves or surface waves (see Discussion section). **We exclude that the two distinct arrivals reflect two separate events, since with increasing distance we observe increasing separation time. In addition, no such separation is visible on the records of the stations closest to the rockslide.**

We run a grid search to estimate the origin time and location of the rockslides based on the onset times determined by the kurtosis picker. The search area is a rectangle with 5 km grid spacing spanned by all seismic stations with positive STA/LTA detection. Time is scanned in steps of 2 s between the earliest measured onset time (= latest possible origin time) and an estimated earliest possible origin time which is set as the first onset pick minus the maximum travel time along the grid diagonal. For each grid point and each time step we calculate the theoretical arrival time (fixed velocity of 5.0 km/s, no topography) for all stations and its difference (= residual) to the measured onset time. The grid point and time where the root-mean-square (RMS) value of the set of station residuals is minimized is set as preliminary origin time and event location (see Fig. 4). For one third of the rockslides analyzed within this study the simple grid search location is already quite satisfactory, with results that are significantly less than 10 km from the true rockslide location.

To overcome the simplifications of the grid search we subsequently perform an iterative location routine as is done for earthquakes, using the HYPOCENTER code (Havskov and Ottemoller, 1999) and a simple 1D velocity model suitable for the eastern Alps (Hausmann et al., 2010). The kurtosis-based onset picks are treated as crustal Pg waves. The results are summarized in Table 2 and demonstrate the location accuracy which can be achieved even for emergent rockslide signals with regional seismic records. 8 of 18 tested events were located less than 6 km from the true location. 4 events could not be located

due to very low signal-to-noise ratio or insufficient number of stations. We discuss possible limitations and reasons for outliers as well as the robustness of the results in the discussion section below.

**Table 2.** Location quality based on kurtosis picks. The deviation indicates the discrepancy between the final location result and the true location of the event. Four events could not be located due to insufficient number of picks. [a] Number of stations (= number of picks) used for location routine; this number may deviate from the number of stations that passed the STA/LTA trigger (see Table 1) because the kurtosis algorithm may not have found viable onset picks. [b] Only the strongest event from the sequence is listed.

Date	Time (UTC)	Name/Town, Country	Stations <sup>[a]</sup>	Azimuthal Gap / °	Deviation / km
2012-05-15	02:45:38	Preonzo, CH	56	54	0.7
2015-01-16	19:22:50	Dobratsch, AT	5	273	3.7
2015-10-02	15:58:56	Sölden, AT	5	183	4.3
2016-08-19	21:57:04	Kleine Gaisl, IT	44	41	4.3
2012-05-01	18:26:46	Gamsgrube, AT	12	147	4.8
2016-03-25	17:14:03	Mellental, AT <sup>[b]</sup>	40	64	5.0
2011-10-23	14:44:34	Tscheppaschlucht, AT	9	153	5.6
2012-11-25	11:29:04	Regitzer Spitz, CH	4	141	5.8
2011-12-27	17:25:43	Piz Cengalo, CH	73	87	8.3
2012-03-22	22:53:24	Hochwand, AT	27	175	8.3
2007-10-12	07:39:24	Einserkofel, IT	9	145	8.8
2011-05-06	05:22:10	Kalkkögel, AT	4	187	11
2016-05-25	12:51:15	Gesäuse, AT	5	206	16
2014-11-24	16:27:20	Trins, AT	18	134	26
2012-05-29	06:00:30	Taschachtal, AT	-	-	-
2014-07-13	09:34:21	Lienzer Dolomiten, AT	-	-	-
2014-11-25	02:48:39	Stubaital, AT	-	-	-
2015-09-30	20:38:18	Schwaz, AT	-	-	-

### Discrimination from regional earthquakes

A key aspect for automatic processing of seismic rockslide data is to distinguish such events from earthquakes and other potential sources of seismicity. Hibert et al. (2014a) suggest a set of parameters that are extracted from the seismic signal and are systematically different for earthquakes and rockslides. Here we explore if this simple concept that was successfully applied on local scale can be extended to regional scale.

For each rockslide signal on each available station we extract the following three parameters (see Fig. 5): 1) the Kurtosis of the envelope of the entire signal (*EnvKurto*); 2) the ratio between maximum amplitude and mean amplitude (*Max/Mean*); 3) the ratio of the duration (*Inc/Dec*) of the increasing signal flank (signal start to maximum amplitude) compared to the duration of the decreasing signal flank (maximum amplitude to signal end). The end time of the event is defined as the time where the

2s moving average of the signal envelope decayed to  $1.1 \times$  the pre-event levels. The pre-event amplitude is estimated as the mean amplitude within a 60s window 5s prior to the first signal onset.

We extract the same **three** parameters from a set of regional earthquake records in order to identify potential differences between rockslides and earthquakes. We downloaded data for 31 earthquakes ( $M_l < 3.5$ ) within 08/2015 and 01/2016 that occurred in or near western Austria. Thus, the earthquakes occurred in the same area as the rockslides and induced similar levels of shaking (see Fig. S1 and Table S1 and the Supplemental Online Material for details). The processing of the earthquake data was the same as for the rockslide data and we read the parameters described above for each earthquake on each available station.

Figure 5 shows the distribution of potential discrimination parameters extracted from rockslides and earthquakes. For all parameters both distributions overlap but they peak at different values. Notably, for rockslides all values measured for the kurtosis of the envelope (*EnvKurto*) and the ratio of maximum-to-mean amplitude (*Max/Mean*) stay below a certain threshold, as compared to earthquakes. We make use of this observation and define a simple decision criterion whether an event should be declared as rockslide or earthquake. An event is considered as a rockslide if the mean value measured over all stations satisfies the following condition:

$$\log(\text{EnvKurto}) < 1.2 \quad \text{AND} \quad \log(\text{Max/Mean}) < 1.2 \quad \text{AND} \quad \log(\text{Inc/Dec}) > -1.1 \quad (4)$$

This way all 19 rockslides and all 31 regional earthquakes are correctly identified and we demonstrate that even on regional scale it might be possible to distinguish rockslides from earthquakes based on a few simple criteria. We introduce potential extensions of this scheme in the discussion section.

### Volume-Magnitude relation

Beside the event location the event volume is a crucial parameter for an assessment of a rockslide. Thus we attempt to relate the slide volume to the local magnitude  $M_l$ , a parameter that is routinely determined for seismic events by any seismological service. Several studies (Deparis et al., 2008; Dammeier et al., 2011; Ekström and Stark, 2013; Hibert et al., 2014a) attempt to relate the volume of mass movements to the measured seismic energy or amplitude. However, derived scaling relations are often only loosely constrained due to e.g. limited number of events, generally large scatter or insufficient information about the event. From the 19 events studied here, 15 rockslides have magnitude assigned by ZAMG and a volume estimate available (see Table 1). Figure 6 shows the local Magnitude as a function of the event volume. **Note, that we exclude the data pair ( $M_l=0.0$ ,  $V=150.000$ ; Schwaz event) since the volume estimate is likely wrong.** Although the proposed fit is not well constrained ( $R^2 = 0.60$ ) due to large scatter and limited data points, the distribution suggests a linear relation between the local magnitude  $M_l$  and the logarithmic volume  $V$ :

$$M_l = -0.60 + 0.44 \log V \quad (5)$$

Since the local magnitude  $M_l = \log(A/A_0)$  is a logarithmic measure of the seismic amplitude  $A$  this translates into a power law relation between the seismic amplitude  $A$  and the rockslide volume  $V$ , including a regional correction term  $A_0$  which depends on the epicentral distance corrections applied during the calculation of  $M_l$ :

$$5 \quad A = A_0 (0.25 + V^{0.44}) \quad (6)$$

## 4 Discussion

Here we demonstrated that regional seismic networks can be used to reliably detect moderate to large-size rockslides to distances up to more than 200 kilometers. Such seismic networks cover vast areas and record data continuously, and many  
10 networks provide data in real-time. Thus, they allow for regional monitoring of potentially catastrophic mass movements, and they additionally provide a temporal resolution which is unmatched by classical methods such as remote sensing. Here we suggest several processing steps to analyze the seismic signal generated by rockslides and show that simple concepts and easy-to-integrate tools already provide reasonable insight into the events. This demonstrates that even large datasets may be screened for rockslide data automatically. While this shows the potential of regional seismic records to study gravitational mass  
15 movements, there is much room for improvements which may strongly increase the quality of the extractable information. All processing steps including the event location and characterization were performed completely automatically without intervention of a human analyst. In particular no attempt was made to remove outliers or e.g. wrong onset picks, which in some cases greatly reduces the quality of the location result. Still, our simplistic approach may be complemented in most of the processing steps to increase the robustness of the results.

### 20 Event detection

We have shown that all moderate to large-size rockslides in this study could in principle be detected with a STA/LTA coincidence detector which is widely used by e.g. seismological observatories and generally serves as a fast algorithm to screen datasets for events. However, STA/LTA detectors need to be balanced between sensitivity and rate of false alarms. While the STA/LTA settings reported above do safely detect all of our events we did not check how many false alarms would be intro-  
25 duced if a continuous data stream was analyzed (we cut the data to eight minutes around the events). **However, the STA/LTA triggering threshold level of 4.0 used in this study is commonly used for averagely quiet sites (Trnkoczy, 2012). Increasing the number of stations needed for a positive result can in case be used to lower the false alarm rate.** Generally, there are more sensitive yet sometimes more computationally intensive algorithms to detect events in continuous seismic data. Dammeier et al. (2016) demonstrate how alpine rockslides can be automatically detected on regional networks using Hidden Markov  
30 Models, which allows to simultaneously detect and classify mass movements within seismic records. **Manconi et al. (2016) report that the predictive multi-band detector *FilterPicker* (Lomax et al., 2012) is suitable to detect and phase-pick emergent**

seismic signals of rockslides. *Lassie* is a stack-and-delay based coherence detector to find and locate events at the same time (Lopez Comino et al., 2017; Heimann et al., 2018) and may also be applicable to rockslide signals. Soubestre et al. (2018) demonstrate how coherent volcanic tremor signals can be detected and classified on a regional seismic network based on network covariance matrices. Since rockslide signals in several aspects resemble tremor signals (emergent onset, long duration, frequency content) this concept might as well be applicable to rockslide detection. Template matching and subspace detectors (Maceira et al., 2010) are commonly used for earthquake and tremor detection, but we speculate that such methods may not be suitable for rockslide detection, as for every event waveforms are highly individual because of the complexity and variability in source mechanisms.

### **Kurtosis picker performance & location accuracy**

Hibert et al. (2014a) designed a robust onset picker for rockslide signals based on a transition in the kurtosis. However, the method was only applied at very local scale (network extension of few kilometers) around a volcano. Baillard et al. (2014) also document the performance of a kurtosis picker for earthquake localization on regional seismic networks. Here we show that this concept could also be applied to the rather emergent signals induced by gravitational mass movements at regional distances. Eight of 14 locatable events in this study could be located within few kilometers deviation from the true location (see Table 1), which shows that based on onset picks a similar precision as for earthquakes is possible. However, some of the locations should be considered *lucky hits*, as e.g. the number of stations is low and the azimuthal gap is large, strikingly for some of the most well-located events. We do in fact observe that the location results currently lack robustness and may change by few kilometers when certain parameters of the kurtosis picker (e.g. the length of the moving window; bandpass filter corner frequencies) are adjusted. This is most likely due to both unfavorable noise conditions and to the simplistic processing which we used for demonstration purposes. Additionally, we did not implement automatic outlier handling at this stage. Several of the bad locations listed in Table 2 can be explained by strong outliers in the kurtosis picks due to noise. We expect that picking accuracy can be greatly improved if measures are taken to make the kurtosis picker more robust and to exclude outliers. Future work should include all three components of the seismic record and use different narrow frequency bands for comparison, as suggested by Hibert et al. (2014a). We expect that evaluating the kurtosis pick among different frequency bands would suppress outliers (due to noise) and thus make the onset determination more robust and precise. Yet, in this study - due to low sampling rate for older records - we could not extend the processing to higher frequencies. Lower frequencies are very weak in amplitude or absent for almost all rockslides in this study. This is in line with observations from several other studies that report the 1–5 Hz frequency range as the dominant one for regional seismic records of rockslides (Deparis et al., 2008; Dammeier et al., 2011; Manconi et al., 2016).

Besides kurtosis methods, pickers based on e.g. autoregressive prediction (Küperkoch et al., 2012) might be very suitable for emergent onset picks, as they include frequency and phase information in addition to the amplitude (kurtosis pickers are only based on amplitudes). Since determining the onset of an emergent signal is anyways challenging, pickless location routines such as waveform correlation (Arrowsmith et al., 2016) should also be explored for mass movements. Manconi et al. (2016)

suggest to combine location probabilities obtained from seismic waves with location probabilities based on terrain slopes to narrow down the potential source areas.

For location purposes we assumed the first onset of the rockslide signals to be a direct i.e. crustal P-wave. The observed average phase velocity of the first arrival is approximately 5.0 km/s (see Fig. 3), which is similar to the observations by Dammeier et al. (2011) and represents a typical value for P-wave velocities in the upper crust of the Eastern Alps (Ye et al., 1995; Husen et al., 2003; Hausmann et al., 2010). For some events (*Einserkofel, Hochwand, Gamsgrube, Trins, Stubaital, Dobratsch, Mellental, Zwölferkofel*) a very distinct second arrival is visible (see Fig. 3b) that travels at lower velocities of approximately 3.0 km/s. In this velocity range we potentially expect both crustal S-waves or surface waves. If the type of wave was clearly identifiable a second phase pick would be available which could drastically increase the location accuracy. The majority of events (Fig. 3a) show no clear second onset and amplitudes gradually increase towards the maximum after the first onset. This *cigar-type* shape is more commonly found in other seismic studies of landslides and rockslides (Deparis et al., 2008; Dammeier et al., 2011; Hibert et al., 2014a). For such events we observe that the signal group around the maximum amplitude travels slower than the first onset, which suggests that P-waves and other type of waves mix within the signal and complicate any in-detail analysis of the seismic phases or polarization. The mechanism of each individual rockslide event likely influences the relative strength at which certain wave types are generated. We also suggest that depending on the slide mechanism e.g. P-waves and S-waves must not necessarily be excited at the same time during the event. Additionally, a rockslide potentially is a very directional source of seismic energy which may introduce anisotropic radiation patterns for the seismic energy. Wang et al. (2016) point out the influence of scattering at surface topography for location purposes and we should note that gravitational mass movements might be particularly affected by such effects since they occur in areas of pronounced topography and at the earth surface.

### Event discrimination

We show that rockslides and earthquakes from the same source region can be discriminated by few simple parameters such as the ratio between maximum and mean amplitude of the seismic signal or the amplitude distribution. Manconi et al. (2016) present a robust decision criterion only based on the ratio  $M_l/M_d$  of the local magnitude  $M_l$  and the duration magnitude  $M_d$ . Hibert et al. (2014a) proposed to combine several criteria within a simple fuzzy-logic decision algorithm and we suggest that similar approaches can safely distinguish rockslides from earthquakes also on regional scale. Note however, that each region where such methods are applied might require individual modification of the decision thresholds for each parameter. Recently, more sophisticated decision algorithms based on machine learning have been developed that allow to classify any kind of seismic event within a huge event database with great precision, after being trained by selected known events. Dammeier et al. (2016) demonstrate how a single training event can be used to scan continuous data for rockslides based on Hidden Markov Models. Classifiers based on random forest algorithms were successfully applied to classify gravitational mass movements and other events in several different settings, such as volcanoes (Maggi et al., 2017) or slow-moving landslides (Provost et al., 2017) and show great potential for the application on regional seismic networks (Hibert et al., 2018). Random forest classifiers work more reliable the more training events are available. Recent studies demonstrate that sensitivities higher than 85% can be



achieved if just 10% of the events inside a dataset are used to train the algorithm (Provost et al., 2017; Hibert et al., 2018). In the work of Provost et al. (2017) this corresponds to 20–40 training events per event category, which is in the same order of magnitude as the number of events in this study, suggesting that these could be sufficient to screen larger datasets.

## Volume estimation

5 Extracting reliable volume or mass information from the seismic records of mass movement remains challenging and requires more research on the factors influencing the efficiency of seismic wave generation. Among these factors are e.g. the bulk mass, the drop mechanisms (free fall and impact versus sliding), the slope and the runout distance. For the 19 events in this study we can only estimate the drop mechanism from photographs, which is not always conclusive. While the majority of events would classify as rockslides, some may include a free-fall phase and could rather be regarded as rockfalls (see Table 1). For catastrophic events that generate strong long-period signals, such properties can be inverted for from the seismic data (Allstadt, 2013; Ekström and Stark, 2013; Hibert et al., 2014b). Short-period radiation is more complex to interpret though. Hibert et al. (2017b) report simple scaling relations between the bulk mass momentum and short-period seismic amplitudes for catastrophic landslides from within the same source area, if source mechanisms are comparable among different events. They report similar observations also for controlled single-block fall experiments (Hibert et al., 2017a). At local scale, knowledge of the topography and a large number of events helps to constrain parameter estimates based on the seismic signals (Hibert et al., 2014a). At regional scale however, unknown scattering, attenuation, and propagation of the short period seismic waves may obscure any potential scaling relations.

Deparis et al. (2008) point out that regional attenuation relations extracted from earthquakes may not be applicable to rockfall records and thus local magnitudes may not properly reflect the amount of seismic energy released by the source. They suggest that peak ground velocity is not a good measure to characterize rockfall signals. In contrast, Dammeier et al. (2011) deduct reasonably well-constrained relationships between rockslide parameters and the seismic peak ground velocity. This is in agreement with our findings that show an acceptable power-law relation between the averaged maximum seismic amplitude and the slide volume. Note, however, that apart from the volume estimate also the local Magnitude may not be very well-defined, especially for low-magnitude ( $M_l < 2$ ) events with only few amplitude readings available. Dammeier et al. (2011) suggest that regional propagation and attenuation of rockslide signals is strongly influenced by topography. In addition, several studies observe that the seismic efficiency - the ratio of available potential energy over the released seismic energy - is usually low for gravitational mass movements (Deparis et al., 2008; Ekström and Stark, 2013; Hibert et al., 2014a). This may in part explain the poor correlations between seismic amplitudes and the rockslide volumes for several studies (including this one), since it suggests that a large part of the potential energy is released through other processes (e.g. friction, cracking, plastic deformation) and not transmitted seismically (Deparis et al., 2008). Manconi et al. (2016) attempt to derive a scaling law for the rockslide volume not based on seismic amplitudes but on the duration magnitude  $M_d$  and they show a reasonable empirical correlation even for events of very different mechanisms and origin areas.

A general drawback of many studies (including this one) that aim to identify scaling relations for seismic energy created by gravitational mass movements at regional scale is the limited number of events (Deparis et al., 2008; Dammeier et al., 2011;

Manconi et al., 2016). This is partly due to the limited availability of high-quality seismic data (network density, sampling rate), geographical restrictions (e.g. country borders) or lack of reliable event information (e.g. volume). Advancing our knowledge about short-period seismic radiation created by gravitational mass movements now calls for several actions: Merging or cross-checking of national event databases - which unfortunately often end at country borders - should greatly improve the number of events available for analysis and the robustness of the event parameters. Multidisciplinary approaches should be explored to constrain event parameters routinely also via e.g. remote sensing. Finally, efficient data screening algorithms will allow to detect and classify gravitational mass movements inside huge datasets, such as the AlpArray seismic network (Hetenyi et al., 2018). This will drastically increase the number of events to study and thus opens new possibilities to investigate the triggers of and mechanisms during gravitational mass movements.

## 10 **5 Conclusion**

We have outlined simple methods how to search for seismic signatures of rockslides in the data of regional seismic networks up to more than 200 km from the origin. Kurtosis-based phase pickers allow to reliably detect the onset of rockslide signals despite their emergent character. Resulting location accuracies are in the range of a few kilometers and can potentially be further reduced by incorporating proper handling of outliers and if secondary phases can be clearly associated. Automatic discrimination from earthquakes and other local or regional sources is possible by a simple combination of three decision parameters, such as maximum-to-mean amplitude ratio. Based on a larger set of similar parameters, future application of machine learning techniques to the data of regional seismic networks promises automatic event classification with great accuracy. This will likely increase the number of seismically detected rockslide events at regional scale. Larger and better parameterized data sets of rockslides will clarify scaling relations between event parameters and seismic observables, and will help to better understand the seismic waves created by gravitational mass movements. Regional seismic networks can cover vast areas and at the same time provide continuous data for very long time series. This combination of spatial coverage and temporal resolution is currently unmatched by other geophysical methods. Thus, seismic networks are ideally suited to remotely study time-dependent rockslide activity. This may include e.g. long-term variations in rockslide activity potentially linked to climate change, fore- and afterslides of a main event, and a more detailed insight into rockslide triggering factors.

## 25 **Data availability and methods**

The majority of seismic waveform data used in this study is openly available for download at the European Integrated Data Archive (EIDA, <http://www.orfeus-eu.org/data/eida/index.html>, last accessed June 2018). Waveform data with network code Z3 was acquired from the temporary AlpArray Seismic Network (2015), which at the time of publication was not openly available by decision of the AlpArray Working Group. Please visit [www.alparray.ethz.ch](http://www.alparray.ethz.ch) (last accessed June 2018) for a complete description of data access.

All processing required for this manuscript was done using the ObsPy toolbox (Krischer et al., 2015; The ObsPy Development Team, 2017). For location purposes we made use of certain modules of the Seisan analysis software package (Havskov

and Ottemoller, 1999).

Rockslide photographs and references for volume estimations in Table 1:

- [1] <http://tirv1.orf.at/stories/228199>
- 5 [2] <http://tirv1.orf.at/stories/514304>
- [3] <http://kaernten.orf.at/news/stories/2506673>
- [4] [www.srf.ch/play/tv/news-clip/video/fast-unbemerkt-riesen-bergsturz-im-bergell?id=6f9ce66d-6c9b-47c3-9842-5ee19531af57](http://www.srf.ch/play/tv/news-clip/video/fast-unbemerkt-riesen-bergsturz-im-bergell?id=6f9ce66d-6c9b-47c3-9842-5ee19531af57)
- [5] <http://www.zeit.de/2014/36/bergell-bergsturz-schweiz>
- [6] Geoforum Tirol, Tagungsband, 14. Geoforum Umhausen, 2012
- 10 [7] <https://www.meinbezirk.at/telfs/lokales/heuer-bereits-vier-mal-soviele-einsaetze-wie-im-vergleich-zum-vorjahr-d212155.html>
- [8] Loew et al. (2017) (see below)
- [9] <http://tirol.orf.at/news/stories/2535035>
- [10] [http://www.vilan24.ch/Flaesch.114.0.html?&cHash=0a607912512d9efae1fe768fb2a36494&tx\\_ttnews%5Btt\\_news%5D=7719](http://www.vilan24.ch/Flaesch.114.0.html?&cHash=0a607912512d9efae1fe768fb2a36494&tx_ttnews%5Btt_news%5D=7719)
- [11] <https://www.zamg.ac.at/cms/de/geophysik/news/massiver-felssturz-am-dobratsch-bei-villach>
- 15 [12] <https://www.tirol.gv.at/meldungen/meldung/artikel/ersteinschaetzung-der-landesgeologie-keine-gefahr-fuer-siedlungsraum>
- [13] <http://www.tt.com/panorama/natur/10657382-91/%C3%B6tztaler-felssturz-kam-einem-erdbeben-gleich.csp>
- [14] E. Vigl, Aktenvermerk VIIa-68.010.58-1//222, Amt der Vorarlberger Landesregierung, Bregenz, 18/04/2016
- [15] J. Reinmüller, [https://backend.univie.ac.at/fileadmin/user\\_upload/i\\_img/Geophysik/Dachl-Felssturz.pdf](https://backend.univie.ac.at/fileadmin/user_upload/i_img/Geophysik/Dachl-Felssturz.pdf)
- [16] <http://www.tt.com/panorama/natur/11727492-91/nach-felssturz-in-hopfgarten-land-baut-sicherheitsdamm.csp>
- 20 [17] <https://www.unsertirol24.com/2016/08/20/berg-stuerzt-in-prags-beeindruckende-bilder/>

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*Acknowledgements.* This work was funded by the Austrian Science Fund FWF project number P26391. This work did benefit from fruitful  
30 discussions at the EGU Galileo conference on Environmental Seismology 2017, Ohlstadt, Germany.

We thank Helmut Hausmann (ZAMG) for his help to compile the event parameters and independent information. Nils Tilch and Alexandra Haberler of the Geological Survey of Austria (GBA) are thanked for the cooperation and help in compiling the event database, verification of seismic data and alerting us of new rockslides.

We acknowledge the use of data from the AlpArray network (code Z3; AlpArray Seismic Network (2015)) - please visit the project homepage [www.alparray.ethz.ch](http://www.alparray.ethz.ch) for a full list of people contributing to the AlpArray seismic network.

For this study we used seismic data from several permanent seismic networks and we appreciate the continuous operation of these seismic networks by the responsible institutions: BW net (Department of Earth and Environmental Sciences, Geophysical Observatory, University of Munchen, 2001), CH net (Swiss Seismological Service (SED) at ETH Zurich, 1983), CR net, FR net (RESIF, 1995), GN net (Institut de Physique du Globe de Paris (IPGP) & Ecole et Observatoire des Sciences de la Terre de Strasbourg (EOST), 1982), GU net (University of Genova, 1967), GR net, IV net (INGV Seismological Data Centre, 1997), MN net (MedNet project partner institutions, 1988), NI net (OGS (Istituto Nazionale di Oceanografia e di Geofisica Sperimentale) and University of Trieste, 2002), OE net, OX net (OGS (Istituto Nazionale di Oceanografia e di Geofisica Sperimentale), 2016), SI net, SL net (Slovenian Environment Agency, 2001), and ST net (Geological Survey-Provincia Autonoma di Trento, 1981). We acknowledge ORFEUS and EIDA for providing the tools to access the seismic data.

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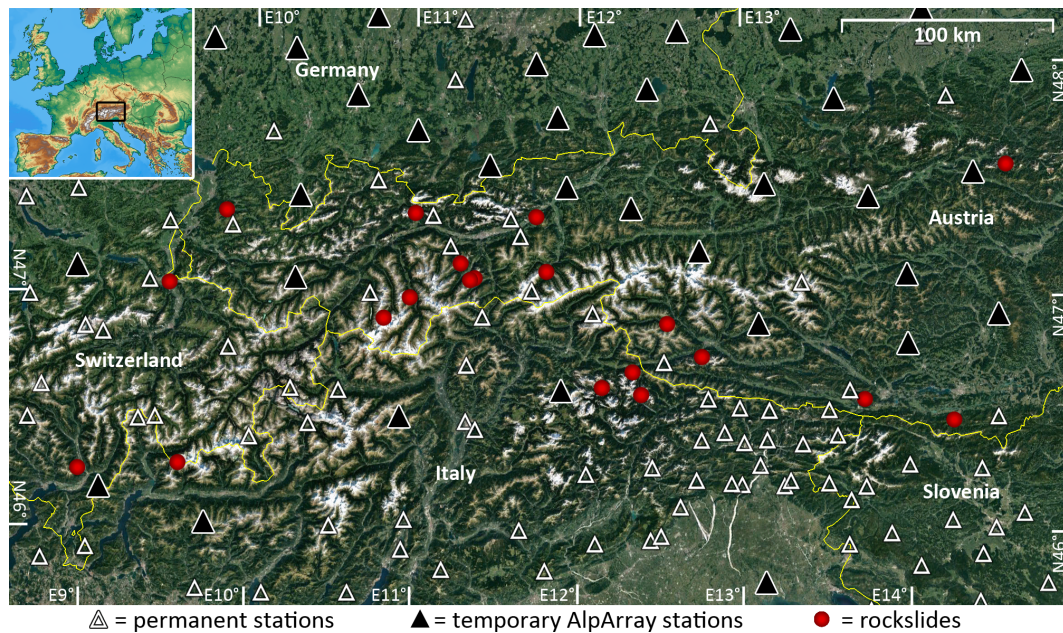
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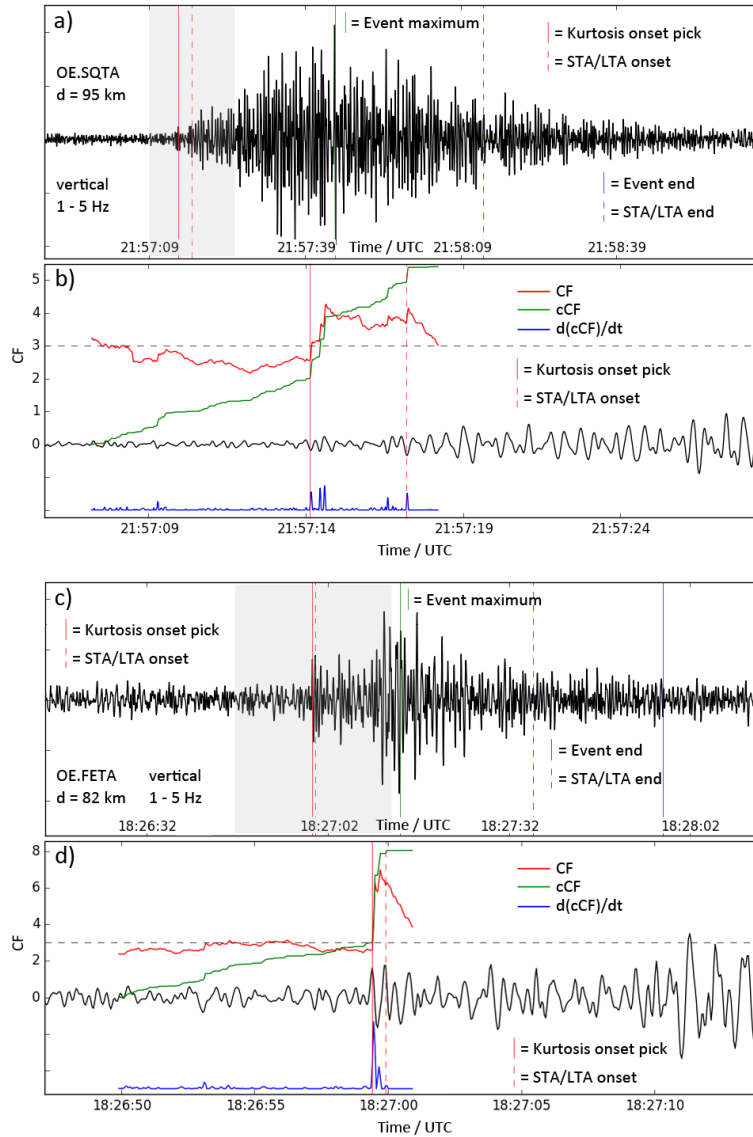
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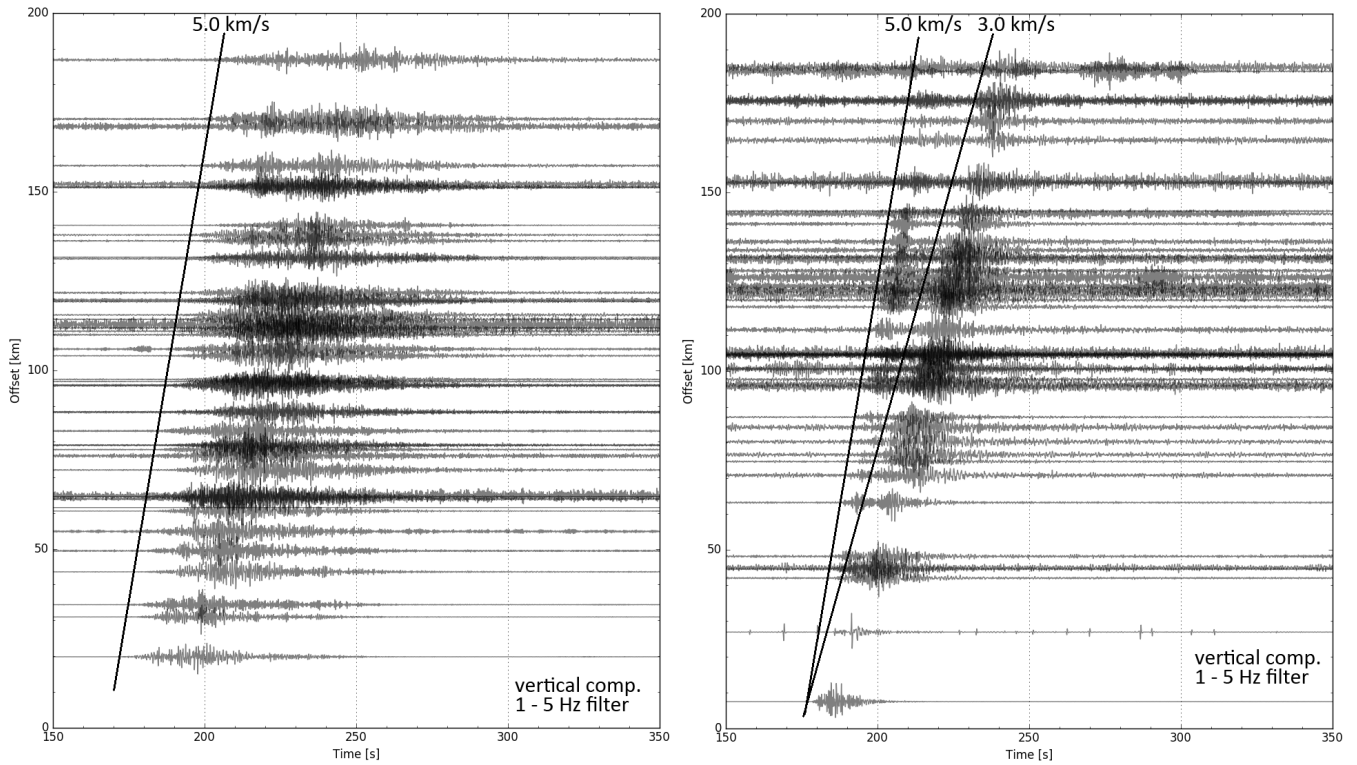
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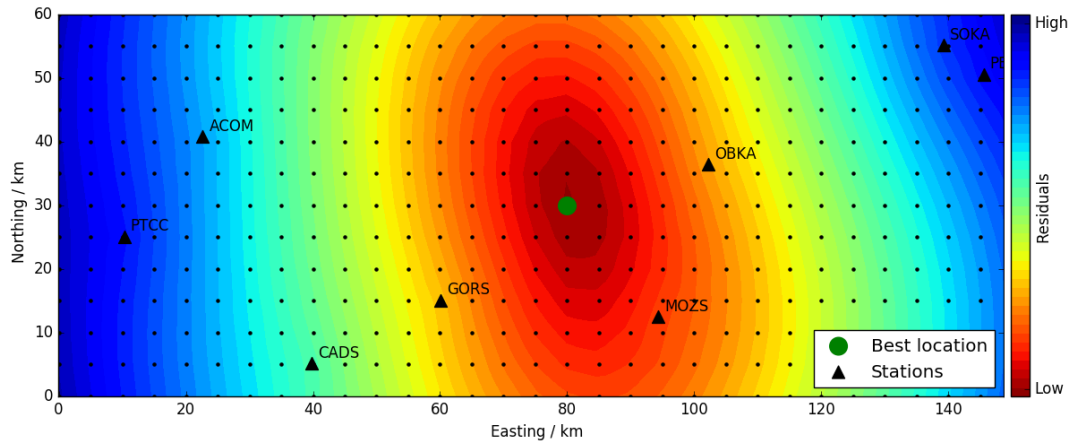
**Figure 1. FIGURE UPDATED!** Map of the study area in eastern Austria and neighboring countries. Rockslides are marked by red circles. Bright and dark triangles denote permanent and temporary seismic stations, respectively. The yellow lines mark country borders. The inset marks the location of the study area in Europe.



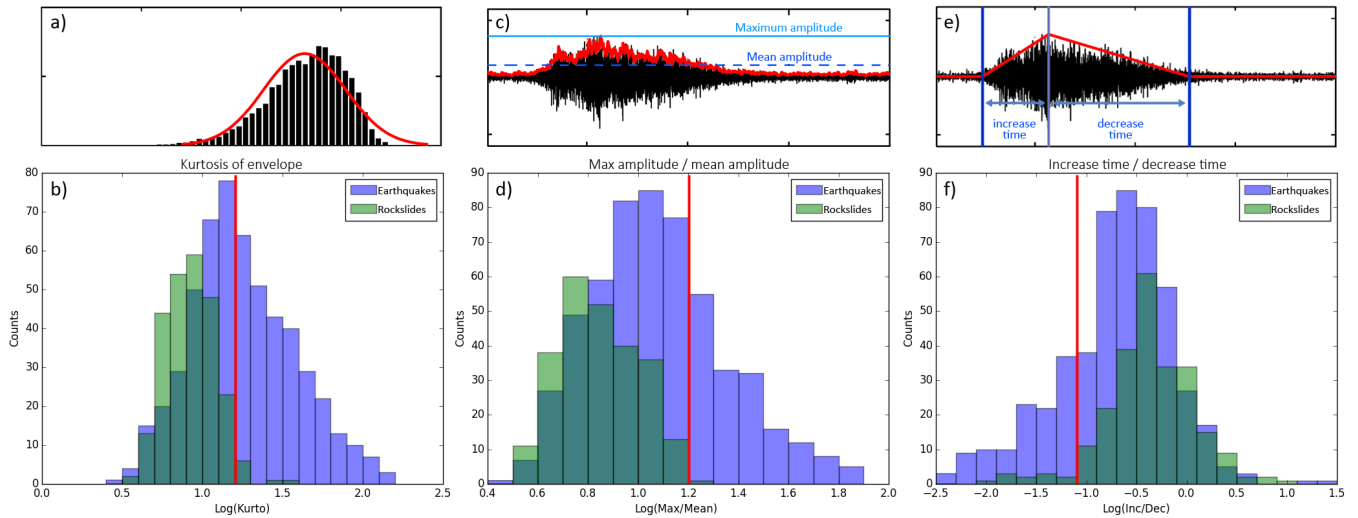
**Figure 2.** Examples for performance of the kurtosis picker. All waveforms are from 1-5 Hz bandpass-filtered vertical components. The upper panels (a,b) show an example of the 2016-08-19, Kleine Gaisl, Italy rockslide from station OE.SQTA at 95 km distance. The bottom panels (c,d) show an example of the 2012-05-01, Gamsgrube, Austria rockslide from station OE.FETA at 82 km distance. Panels b) and d) show close-ups of the grey-shaded parts of the waveforms in panels a) and c), respectively. The vertical axes in panels b) and d) indicate the values of  $CF$ . For perfectly-gaussian noise we expect a value  $CF = 3.0$ , which is marked by the dashed horizontal lines. Vertical lines denote picks for the event onset and end. Solid red line: onset pick based on maximum  $d(cCF)/dt$ . Dashed red line: onset time of STA/LTA trigger. Solid blue line: Event end time as given by the  $1.1 \times$  pre-event noise condition (see Section 3). Dashed blue line: End time of STA/LTA trigger (for comparison; not used for any processing).



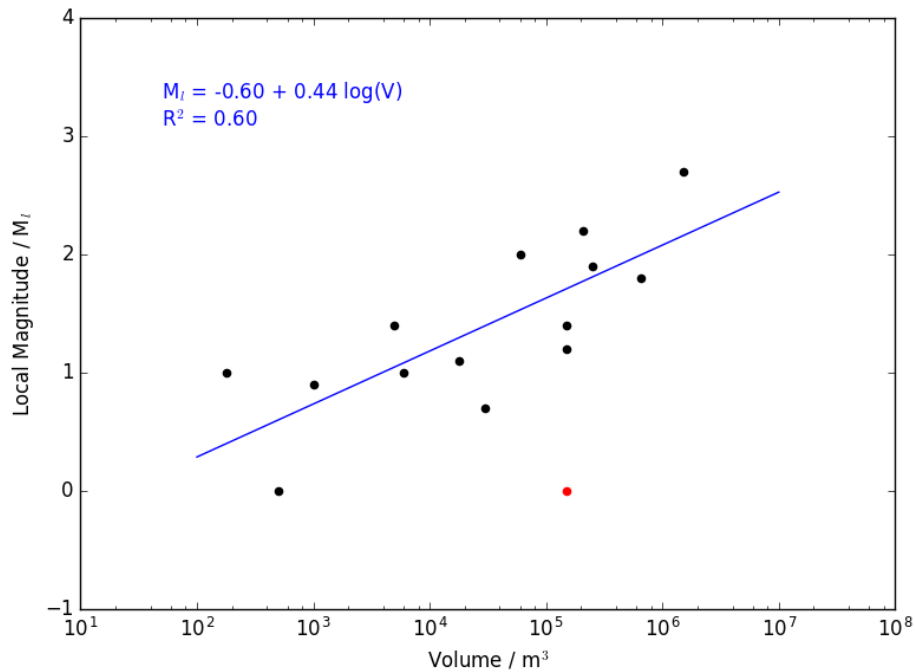
**Figure 3.** Record sections (signal vs. distance) of the vertical component for two large rockslides. All data are bandpass-filtered between 1 and 5 Hz. Left: Kleine Gaisl, Italy, 2016-08-19, as an event example that does not show a clear second arrival. Right: Mellental, Austria, 2016-03-25, which does show a distinct second arrival for stations farther than 50 km from the origin. Black lines mark expected arrival times for a constant travel-time of 5.0 km/s and 3.0 km/s, respectively.



**Figure 4.** Example for a grid-search result (rockfall in Tschepaschlucht, Austria, 2011-10-23). Black triangles mark the stations used for the grid search. Colors indicate the root-mean-square travel time residuals among all stations (for the best fitting origin time and for a fixed velocity of 5.0 km/s). Note that colors are smoothed between grid points (small black dots). The green dot represents the grid point that minimizes the set of travel time residuals and thus marks the preliminary location of the rockslide.



**Figure 5.** Distributions of the three different discrimination parameters for rockslides and earthquakes. Upper panels (a,c,e) show the definition of the respective parameters. Lower panels (b,d,f) show the frequentness of the respective parameters in logarithmic scale. Note that the total number of parameter reads is slightly higher for earthquakes than for rockslides and the distributions are not normalized. Green colors marks the values read from rockslide records, blue colors mark the values read from earthquake records. The red lines in panels b,d,f mark the respective thresholds for the decision criterion (see Eq. 4).



**Figure 6. FIGURE UPDATED!** Local magnitude of all rockslides versus their volume (black dots). The distribution indicates a linear relation (blue line) between magnitude and logarithmic volume. The equation with the best-fitting parameters and the coefficient of determination  $R^2$  are indicated above the graph. The data pair ( $M_l=0.0$ ,  $V=150.000 m^3$ ; marked red) is likely an outlier due to wrong volume estimate. We thus excluded this point from the linear fit.