

Reviewer Comments (in black), our response (in blue) and revised manuscript passages (in dark orange)

Reviewer 1:

The authors present an analysis of two primary controls on slope stability in Northern Bavaria, Germany: geology and vegetation. The topic is important to protect life, property and infrastructure locally. The results also present possible contributions to our understanding of slope stability that would be applicable elsewhere.

I have two major comments that I believe will help to improve the paper.

Motivation/what's new? It is known that slope stability is influenced by both geologic and vegetation controls, the authors could better identify the knowledge gap and clearly illustrate how their study fills this knowledge gap. Specifically, the abstract jumps straight to the actions performed without motivating/asking a clear research question. The introduction only reaches a clear motivation towards the end – focusing on the vegetative controls of landsliding in shallow and low angled hillslopes. Is this the key knowledge gap (what controls shallow and deep landsliding on low angle slopes?) This should be made clearer in the abstract/intro to justify the study and used to better explain results in the discussion section.

Clearly define the two types of landslides and proposed controls. As written, the two types of landslides (deep and shallow) and the specific controls the authors investigate (geologic properties, vegetative root strength, respectively) are not clearly presented. Whereas some general background is appropriate in the introduction, there should be a sharpening of focus that clearly defines landslides of different depth, and the respective controls investigated in this study. It is initially unclear why the authors investigated tree root strength when the majority of landslides were all deeper than 2 m where no roots were found. The discussion of the tree root data similarly lacks focus and a take-home point because it is not clear why these data are included in the study.

Thank you for these valuable comments. We followed the reviewer's comments and differentiated deep-seated and shallow landslides from the beginning of the manuscript. We reworked the abstract, the introduction and the discussion to clarify the knowledge gaps and how we address these gaps. Following Reviewer 2, we also focused stronger on timescales that clarify how scarpland formation and associated geology affects even shallow landslides. On geological scale, scarpland geology preconditioned and prepared deep-seated landslides that are important processes shaping scarplands. As most slopes in our research area are affected by deep-seated landslides, these landslides can be reactivated and produce hazards or they precondition and prepare shallow landslides by setting the framework for these landslides (e.g. hillslope angle, sheared material). The geology influences the deep-seated landslides but also affected the rooting depth of trees by unweathered sandstone underlying permeable sand or saturated clayey soils above impermeable clays. Therefore, geologic conditions limited the effect of trees on shallow landsliding and enabled shallow landsliding on even low-inclined hillslopes. We reworked the abstract and stronger focused on the landslide types and their connection to geology and vegetation: "Landslides are important agents of sediment transport, cause hazards and are key agents for the evolution of scarplands. Scarplands are characterized by high-strength layers overlying low-inclined landslide-susceptible layers that precondition and prepare landsliding on geological time scales. These landslides can be reactivated and their role in past hillslope evolution affected geomorphometry and material properties that set the framework for present-day shallow landslide activity. To manage present-day landslide hazards in scarplands, a combined assessment of deep-seated and shallow landsliding is required to quantify the interaction between

geological conditions and vegetation that control landslide activity. For this purpose, we investigated three hillslopes affected by landsliding in the Franconian scarplands. We used geomorphic mapping to identify landforms indicating landslide activity, electrical resistivity to identify shear plane location and a mechanical stability model to assess the stability of deep-seated landslides. Furthermore, we mapped tree distribution, quantified root area ratio and root tensile strength to assess the influence of vegetation on shallow landsliding. Our results show that deep-seated landslides incorporate rotational and translational movement and suggest that sliding occurs along a geologic boundary between permeable Rhätolias sandstone and impermeable Feuerletten clays. Despite low hillslope angles, landslides could be reactivated when high pore pressures could develop along low-permeable layers. In contrast, shallow landsliding is controlled by vegetation. Our results show that rooted area is more important than species dependent root tensile strength and basal root cohesion is limited to the upper 0.5 m of the surface due to geologically controlled unfavourable soil conditions. Due to low slope inclination, root cohesion can stabilize landslide toes or slopes undercut by forest roads, independent of potential soil cohesion, when tree density is sufficient dense to provide lateral root cohesion. In summary, geology preconditions and prepares deep-seated landslides in scarplands, which set the framework of vegetation-controlled shallow landslide activity.”

We rewrote the introduction to clarify knowledge gaps and our motivation: “Landslides are important agents of sediment transport, cause hazards and are key agents for the evolution of scarplands. On geological scale, sedimentary deposition in terrestrial or marine environments resulted in alternating layers of different rock strength with varying inclination (Duszyński et al., 2019), which precondition slope stability (McColl, 2022). Horizontal layering promotes the formation of plateaus, while tilted layers create cuestas (Young et al., 2000; Duszyński et al., 2019). Due to the differences in rock strength and resulting different efficacy of erosive processes, scarplands are characterized by high-strength layers overlying weaker sedimentary layers (Duszyński et al., 2019). Tectonic processes can increase slope height or slope steepness and erosion (e.g. by rivers) can undercut hillslopes and expose weaker sedimentary layers, which act as potential failure surfaces, and, thereby prepare landslide processes (McColl, 2022). Landslides can be caused by a wide range of triggers including e.g. rapid increase in pore water pressure by rainfall and/or snowmelt, loading of slope by precipitation or vegetation (McColl, 2022). The tilting of sedimentary layers controls the landslide type in scarplands. On frontscarps, sediment layers dip into the slope (Duszyński et al., 2019) and landslides in form of rockfall (e.g. Glade et al., 2017) or deep-seated landslides (e.g. Jäger et al., 2013) are abundant. In contrast, sedimentary layers dipping out of the slope characterize backscarps (Schmidt and Beyer, 2003; Duszyński et al., 2019), where landsliding processes comprise cambering (Hutchinson, 1991), block gliding (Young, 1983), lateral spreading (Spreafico et al., 2017) or deep-seated sliding processes (Pain, 1986; Schmidt and Beyer, 2003). Geologic conditions precondition landsliding and the formation of scarplands on geological scale. On present-day, reactivation of deep-seated landslides by geomorphic and anthropogenic processes (McColl, 2022) cause hazards to communities living in scarplands (Thiebes et al., 2014; Wilfing et al., 2018), therefore, an understanding of geologic controls on landsliding is required to analyse slope stability for hazard management.

As deep-seated landslides were important in shaping scarplands, they changed the geomorphometry of hillslopes (e.g. inclination) and sheared material and, therefore, precondition and prepare present-day shallow landslides. Shallow landslides are characterized by soil material <2 m deep moving downslope in a flowing, sliding or complex type of movement (Sidle and Bogaard, 2016; Vergani et al., 2017). Forests can affect shallow landsliding mechanically and hydrologically (Vergani et al., 2017). They can reduce soil moisture by interception and evaporation, suction and transpiration as well as infiltration and subsurface flow (Sidle and Bogaard, 2016; Vergani et al., 2017). Mechanically, forests can reinforce soil by roots (Wu, 1984; Phillips et al., 2021), roots and stems can induce buttressing

(Vergani et al., 2017) and anchoring and trees can increase normal force on slopes (Ziemer, 1981; Terwilliger and Waldron, 1991; Selby, 1993; Schmidt et al., 2001; Roering et al., 2003). In forest management, the protective function of forests has been considered for a long time in high mountain regions (Dorren et al., 2005; Bischetti et al., 2009). However, forestry is not only affected by landslide activity, which causes damage to roads and loss of timber (Sidle and Ochiai, 2006), but also has a considerable impact on slope stability through changing the characteristics of forests in sliding-prone areas (Phillips et al., 2021). Root reinforcement of slope stability declines after logging operations (Ziemer, 1981; Schmidt et al., 2001; Vergani et al., 2017) and forestry roads enhance landsliding through undercutting slopes (Borga et al., 2005; van Beek et al., 2008). Changes in tree species composition and tree density have also an impact on the root reinforcement in forests (Roering et al., 2003; Genet et al., 2008). The influence of vegetation on landslides has been intensely studied on steep slopes in the European Alps (Bischetti et al., 2009; Vergani et al., 2014), the Oregon Coast Range (Schmidt et al., 2001; Roering et al., 2003), Southern California (Terwilliger and Waldron, 1991), Northern Italy (Borga et al., 2005; Schwarz et al., 2010b), New Zealand (Giadrossich et al., 2020) or China (Genet et al., 2008), however, little effort was conducted to understand the influence of vegetation on landsliding on lower-inclined hillslopes such as scarplands in Southern Germany (e.g. Thiebes et al., 2014) or in the Flemish Ardennes (e.g. Van Den Eeckhaut et al., 2009), where geologic conditions such as clay layers enable landsliding (Skempton, 1964; Chandler, 2000; Bromhead, 2013).

As geological conditions control deep-seated landslide activity on geological scale that set the framework for shallow landslides in scarplands on present-day scale, there is a need to understand how landslide historicity affects current deep-seated and shallow landslide activity. As climate change affects forests (e.g. Seidl et al., 2017) and alters landslide activity (e.g. Crozier, 2010), combined forestry management and hazards approaches on shallow landslides (Phillips et al., 2021) should be extended by incorporating geological controls in scarplands. In this study, we aim to (1) quantify the relation between deep-seated landslides and geology in the Franconian Alb and estimate if landslides can be reactivated by hydrologic conditions. For this purpose, we extended a landslide inventory and compared landslide occurrence to geology. On three landslides, we applied electrical resistivity tomography (ERT) to identify shear plane depth and modelled hillslope stability with different water level scenarios. Furthermore, we (2) test if vegetation-induced root cohesion can stabilize shallow landslides occurring on deep-seated landslides. For this reason, we mapped tree distribution, quantified root cohesion and applied a slope stability model. Our results aim to improve forest management practices to reduce landslide occurrence in the Franconian Alb.”

We rewrote the discussion section on tree root data included a topic sentence and clearer highlighted the take home message. “Root area ratio plays a more important role in stabilisation of shallow landslides than tensile strength. Based on 27 tests, we developed a tensile strength root diameter relationship for Scots pines, which is characterized by an exponential decrease of tensile strength with increasing root diameter ($r^2=0.55$; Fig. 6). Therefore, relative tensile strength increases with decreasing root diameters (Stokes et al., 2009) as thinner roots possess a higher cellulose content that provides additional strength (Genet et al., 2005). The power law and the statistical degree is in the range of previous measurements on European beeches and Norway spruces (Fig. 6; Genet et al., 2005; Bischetti et al., 2009) and show only little difference between species (Genet et al., 2005; Hales, 2018). Our RAR measurements revealed two times higher RAR values for European beeches than Scots pines or Norway spruces (Fig. 8a-c). Consequently, root cohesion is much higher for European beech than Scots pine and Norway spruce (Fig. 8d-f). A decrease in tree species number of Scots pine and Norway spruce with an increase of European beech as planned by the forest management (personal communication by F. Maier) would increase the root cohesion and therefore slope stability.

Local soil conditions are controlled by geology and geologically affected soil conditions at hillslope scale reduce rooting depth (Fig. 1). Our RAR measurements showed that roots were restricted to the upper 0.5 m for Scot pines and Norway spruces and to 0.4 m for European beeches (Fig. 8a-c). Within a species, RAR revealed no differences between topographic locations at the slope or between Rhätolias or Feuerletten. The rooting depth was very low compared to pines and beeches occurring in the nearby Frankenwald that showed rooting depth up to 1.2 m (Nordmann et al., 2009), however, lithology and soil conditions are different, which seem to influence root properties more than species identity (Lwila et al., 2021). At upper slope location, Rhätolias is abundant and characterized by high permeable sandy soil (Fig. 1b). In dry soils, trees usually develop deeper roots to reach groundwater (Hoffmann and Usoltsev, 2001), however, the hard sandstone layers within the Rhätolias prevent deeper rooting (Fig. 1b). In addition, sandy soils are less deeply warmed than fine-grained soils which results in shallower root growth (Kutschera and Lichtenegger, 2002). At lower slope locations, clayey Feuerletten are abundant (Fig. 1c) which resulted in combination with slope-induced water flow in moist conditions. Moist aerated soils are characterized by extreme flat rooting (Stone and Kalisz, 1991; Kutschera and Lichtenegger, 2002). Therefore, lithology and associated soil conditions in combination with topography-controlled water flow resulted in low rooting depth. Consequently, basal root cohesion can only effect shallow landslides with a shear plane below 0.4 or 0.5 m depth, respectively.

Tree density plays an important role in shallow landslide stabilisation by controlling lateral root cohesion. Tensed roots at Putzenstein (Fig. 4a-c) and bent or tilted trees at Weinreichsgrab (Fig. 4f) indicate soil creep or shallow landsliding in the upper 1 to 1.5 m of Feuerletten clay (Fig. 3a-b). To quantify the minimum root cohesion necessary to stabilise low-inclined slopes, we tested shallow landsliding with shear planes up to 1.5 m depth for slopes affected by forest road cuts and at landslide toes with clay material near the surface enabling high saturation ($m=1$). Slopes above forest road cuts were characterized by low inclination between 11 and 12°, while landslide toes revealed even lower slope angles in the range of 6 to 9°. Assuming a shear plane depth of 0.3 m, slopes above road cuts and landslide toes would require a cohesion between 0.2 and 0.8 kPa (Fig. 10) to stabilize the slope. As root cohesion of Norway spruce, Scots pine and European beech between 0.3 and 0.4 m depth is above 1 kPa (Fig. 8d-f), root cohesion would be sufficient to stabilize the slope. However, species distribution, number and position have an influence on the occurrence of landslides (Roering et al., 2003), as the vegetation patterns always leave gaps with lower root cohesion. Our investigated slopes above road cuts were characterized by a combination of European beech and Norway spruce at Putzenstein and Weinreichsgrab landslides (Fig. 6a-b), which grew dense enough to provide sufficient root cohesion to stabilize the slopes. Dense thickets of Norway spruce occurred on Fürstenanger slopes above road cuts and on all landslide toes (Fig. 6c) and provide high root density that would enable sufficient stabilization. When shear planes exceed rooting depth, lateral root cohesion can have a stabilizing effect (Schwarz et al., 2010b) by affecting the onset and size of shallow landsliding (Schmidt et al., 2001; Roering et al., 2003) as indicated by tensed roots observed at Putzenstein (Fig. 4b). To stabilize shallow landslides with shear planes up to 1.5 m, our calculations showed that a cohesion between 1 and 4.5 kPa would be required (Fig. 10). As lateral root cohesion is the sum of root cohesion of rooted depth, all three investigated species would provide sufficient lateral root cohesion to stabilize the slope (Fig. 8d-f) independent of potential soil cohesion, when spacing of trees enable an entire cover of the slope. Sufficient tree cover is provided at landslide toes and at the slope above the road cut at Fürstenanger (Fig. 6c), where thickets of Scots pine are abundant. Above road cuts at Putzenstein and Weinreichsgrab, European beeches occur that provide the highest calculated root cohesion (Fig. 8f). Our analysis excluded dead or harvested trees that can provide additional root cohesion until they rot away (e.g. Ammann et al., 2009; Vergani et al., 2017), therefore, we eventually underestimate both basal and lateral root cohesion. Despite the calculations suggest that lateral root cohesion should prevent shallow landsliding, tilted and bent trees especially at Weinreichsgrab (Fig. 4f) indicate the

occurrence of soil creep and potential slow shallow landslide movement (Van Den Eeckhaut et al., 2009; Pawlik and Šamonil, 2018).“

Additionally, there are useful tree data (DBH, age, stand density) that would add to the study.

We are not sure what the reviewer means. Is the reviewer referring to literature or our results. We did not measure DHB of all trees and only used DHB to select the trees where we sampled the roots. Furthermore, we assessed age qualitatively and discussed stand density for lateral root cohesion.

Specific comments:

Abstract opening sentence is true, but what is knowledge gap paper attempts to fill? Clearly identify two types of landslides (shallow and deep) and the knowledge gaps on what controls these types of landslide on shallow slopes.

We sharpened the introduction and differentiate from the beginning deep-seated and shallow landsliding. We changed the abstract to: “Landslides are important agents of sediment transport, cause hazards and are key agents for the evolution of scarplands. Scarplands are characterized by high-strength layers overlying low-inclined landslide-susceptible layers that precondition and prepare landsliding on geological time scales. These landslides can be reactivated and their role in past hillslope evolution affected geomorphometry and material properties that set the framework for present-day shallow landslide activity. To manage present-day landslide hazards in scarplands, a combined assessment of deep-seated and shallow landsliding is required to quantify the interaction between geological conditions and vegetation that control landslide activity. For this purpose, we investigated three hillslopes affected by landsliding in the Franconian scarplands. We used geomorphic mapping to identify landforms indicating landslide activity, electrical resistivity to identify shear plane location and a mechanical stability model to assess the stability of deep-seated landslides. Furthermore, we mapped tree distribution, quantified root area ratio and root tensile strength to assess the influence of vegetation on shallow landsliding. Our results show that deep-seated landslides incorporate rotational and translational movement and suggest that sliding occurs along a geologic boundary between permeable Rhätolias sandstone and impermeable Feuerletten clays. Despite low hillslope angles, landslides could be reactivated when high pore pressures could develop along low-permeable layers. In contrast, shallow landsliding is controlled by vegetation. Our results show that rooted area is more important than species dependent root tensile strength and basal root cohesion is limited to the upper 0.5 m of the surface due to geologically controlled unfavourable soil conditions. Due to low slope inclination, root cohesion can stabilize landslide toes or slopes undercut by forest roads, independent of potential soil cohesion, when tree density is sufficient dense to provide lateral root cohesion. In summary, geology preconditions and prepares deep-seated landslides in scarplands, which set the framework of vegetation-controlled shallow landslide activity.

10 ‘rooted area’ is supposed to be root area ratio?

Yes. We changed the sentence to: “Furthermore, we mapped tree distribution, quantified rooted area ratio and root tensile strength to assess the influence of vegetation on shallow landsliding. “

14 how do high pore pressures develop due to geologic conditions? Do you mean due to hydrologic conditions? Or increased pore pressure along low permeability boundary?

High pore pressure develops at the impermeable Feuerletten clays along low permeability boundaries. To clarify this, we changed the text to: “Our results show that deep-seated landslides incorporate rotational and translational movement and suggest that sliding occurs along a geologic boundary between permeable Rhätolias sandstone and impermeable Feuerletten clays. Despite low hillslope angles, landslides could be reactivated when high pore pressures could develop along low-permeable layers.”

20 final 1-2 sentences of abstract would be stronger if they followed the ‘two types of landslides’ outlined above and distinguished how the mechanisms controlling slope stability are different in each (geology – forests)

We changed the abstract (as shown above) and differentiated stronger deep-seated and shallow landslides and their link to geology and vegetation.

Intro why does the introduction start with a summary of sedimentary rocks? The paper is focused on geologic/vegetation controls on slope stability and as a reader I expect the principal topic to be one of those listed in the title.

We adapted the introduction and start now with scarplands and how they influence deep-seated landslides on geological time scales. This introduction is necessary as geology preconditions landslide movement. Afterwards, we explain why the deep-seated landslides can be reactivated and why deep-seated landslides set the framework for shallow landslides effected by vegetation. Shallow landsliding is affected by the geology as soil conditions influence the rooting depth of trees and, therefore, influences root cohesion.

43 Also Schmidt, Roering, Ziemer, Terwilliger & Waldron.

Added.

55 also Ziemer (<https://www.fs.usda.gov/treesearch/pubs/8693>)

Added.

61-62 Ziemer and Terwilliger and Waldron (<https://pubs.geoscienceworld.org/gsa/gsabulletin/article-abstract/103/6/775/182576/Effects-of-root-reinforcement-on-soil-slip>)

Added.

40-62 tighten language as there is some repetition

We rewrote this section completely: “As deep-seated landslides were important in shaping scarplands, they changed the geomorphometry of hillslopes (e.g. inclination) and sheared material and, therefore,

precondition and prepare present-day shallow landslides. Shallow landslides are characterized by soil material <2 m deep moving downslope in a flowing, sliding or complex type of movement (Sidle and Bogaard, 2016; Vergani et al., 2017). Forests can affect shallow landsliding mechanically and hydrologically (Vergani et al., 2017). They can reduce soil moisture by interception and evaporation, suction and transpiration as well as infiltration and subsurface flow (Sidle and Bogaard, 2016; Vergani et al., 2017). Mechanically, forests can reinforce soil by roots (Wu, 1984; Phillips et al., 2021), roots and stems can induce buttressing (Vergani et al., 2017) and anchoring and trees can increase normal force on slopes (Ziemer, 1981; Terwilliger and Waldron, 1991; Selby, 1993; Schmidt et al., 2001; Roering et al., 2003). In forest management, the protective function of forests has been considered for a long time in high mountain regions (Dorren et al., 2005; Bischetti et al., 2009). However, forestry is not only affected by landslide activity, which causes damage to roads and loss of timber (Sidle and Ochiai, 2006), but also has a considerable impact on slope stability through changing the characteristics of forests in sliding-prone areas (Phillips et al., 2021). Root reinforcement of slope stability declines after logging operations (Ziemer, 1981; Schmidt et al., 2001; Vergani et al., 2017) and forestry roads enhance landsliding through undercutting slopes (Borga et al., 2005; van Beek et al., 2008). Changes in tree species composition and tree density have also an impact on the root reinforcement in forests (Roering et al., 2003; Genet et al., 2008).”

62-67 Good motivation for study – but should also clearly distinguish between shallow and deep and the controls of geology and vegetation. This reasoning should be in abstract

We followed the comment of the reviewer and added the motivation to the abstract: “Scarplands are characterized by high-strength layers overlying low-inclined landslide-susceptible layers that precondition and prepare landsliding on geological time scales. These landslides can be reactivated and their role in past hillslope evolution affected geomorphometry and material properties that set the framework for present-day shallow landslide activity. To manage present-day landslide hazards in scarplands, a combined assessment of deep-seated and shallow landsliding is required to quantify the interaction between geological conditions and vegetation that control landslide activity.”

117 cite RMS from previous investigations and briefly summarize what was found

We used the study by Lapenna et al. (2005), which was cited in the review paper by Perrone et al. (2014) and adjusted the sentence: “Model results showed a low root mean square (RMS) error between 5.3 and 5.4% for Putzenstein and Weinreichsgrab and an increased RMS error of 12.1% at Fürstenanger. RMS values are comparable to previous investigations identifying shear planes at clayey sand layers in the Flemish Ardennes (Van Den Eeckhaut et al., 2007; RMS 4.1 - 14.5 %) or clay layers in the Apennine (Lapenna et al., 2005; RMS 2.3 - 15.1 %).”

127 dead/cut trees were excluded, but dead/cut trees continue to provide strength until they rot away. See Ziemer:

We changed the text to: “Dead and cut trees were excluded as the influence of roots on cohesion decreases with ongoing decomposition (Vergani et al., 2014; Zhu et al., 2020) until trees rot away (Ziemer, 1981; Ammann et al., 2009).” We added also information to the discussion section: “Our analysis excluded dead or harvested trees that can provide additional root cohesion until they rot away (e.g. Ammann et al., 2009; Vergani et al., 2017), therefore, we eventually underestimate both basal and lateral root cohesion.”

140 only 1 species (Scots Pine) was measured in this study and roots .

We clarified this point and changed the text to: “To measure root tensile strength of Scots pine, root samples with different diameters and a minimum length of 10 cm were extracted. [...] A power-law between root tensile strength and root diameter d can be established for Scots pine:

$$T_r(d) = \alpha d^{-\beta} \quad (5)$$

with α and β are empirical constants depending on species. In addition, power laws for Norway Spruce ($18.10 d^{-0.72}$, $r^2 = 0.52$) and European Beech ($41.57 d^{-0.98}$, $r^2 = 0.65$) established by Bischetti et al. (2009) were used in our analysis.”

195 should γ_s represent the saturated bulk density of the soil?

We found a measured value of specific weight for Feuerletten and Rhätolias and changed the sentence to: “..with γ_s is the specific weight of Feuerletten or Rhätolias in the order of 21 kN m^{-3} (Boley Geotechnik, 2018) and B_i is the width of each slice.” We adapted all landslide stability models, however, modelled factor of safety only changes slightly and the observed pattern not at all.

215 goal to ‘test if root cohesion would be sufficient to stabilize the soil’ of shallow landslides should be mentioned in the introduction.

We added this information to the introduction: “Furthermore, we (2) test if vegetation-induced root cohesion can stabilize shallow landslides occurring on deep-seated landslides. For this reason, we mapped tree distribution, quantified root cohesion and applied a slope stability model.”

Fig 2 legend ‘transekt’ should be ‘transect’, since Rhätolias-Feuerletten boundary is so important, consider changing color to make it stand out.

Thanks for the comment. We changed the spelling error and highlighted the Rhätolias-Feuerletten boundary in red with an increased line width.

Figure 4 explain in legend the criteria used to identify failure plane boundary – I had to go back and search to find line 122 about Figure S3 and the identified shear plane depth

Thanks for the comment. We find it difficult to add this information to the figure and we added the information to the figure caption: “Goelectric models and landslide forms at (a) Putzenstein, (b) Weinreichsgrab and (c) Fürstenanger. Failure plane depth was derived from vertical resistivity decrease in order of one to two magnitudes. For detailed derivation see Figure S3 in the Supplementary Information. F highlights location of forest roads.”

Figure 5 legend should include scarps, caption should tell reader locations of panels a, b, c, referring to the maps in figure 2. Fürstenanger is the only location with a spatial pattern in species – with Scots Pine concentrated near headscarp. Is this important?

We added more information to the legend (see below) and added more information to the figure caption on the location of the ERT transects in Figure 2, which is Figure 3 in the revised version. Figure caption changed to: “Figure 6: Mapped trees with height above 4 m in up to 5 m distance to the ERT transects (Fig. 5) at (a) Putzenstein, (b) Weinreichsgrab and (c) Fürstenanger. The locations of ERT transects are shown in Fig. 3.”

Landslide landforms	Mapped species	RAR tree species	Geophysical transect
▲▲ Main scarp	○ Birch	★ European beech	— Forest road
▲▲ Secondary scarp	● European beech	★ Scots pine	— Countour line 10 m
- - - Fissure	● European larch	★ Norway spruce	— Tree mapping
+++ Slope depression	● Norway spruce		- - - Rhätolias-Feuerletten boundary
Front	● Scots pine		
▲▲ Main scarp, recent	● Willow		
▲▲ Secondary scarp, recent			
- - - Fissure, recent			
■ Landslide deposit			

The reviewer is right, the headscarp of the Fürstenanger landslide shows a concentration of Scots Pine. The steep parts of slopes are protected forest to reduce erosion. As the roots only reach half a meter deep, the trees will have no effect on the movement of the deep-seated landslide. In addition, the headscarp is not well accessible with forest machines and forestry activities are reduced in this area. In summary, the concentration is more a result of forest management that has not changed the tree composition yet but has no influence on landslide activity.

293 This sentence is not clear. What does 0.19 refer to?

The value refers to RAR. We changed the text to: “For Norway spruce, mean root area ratio decreased from the surface to 0.5 m with values between 0.19 and 0.2 % at 0 to 0.2 m depth, 0.04 % at 0.2 to 0.4 m depth and 0.005 % between 0.4 and 0.5 m depth (Fig. 8a).”

Figure 6 why do the authors plot root diameter against tensile strength in MPa instead of against tensile force at failure? I recommend including the previously published data to show the stated similarities with other species

In our literature review, we found authors doing both, plotting root diameter against tensile force at failure or root diameter against tensile strength. We follow the approach by Bischetti et al. (2009) and plotted the data in the same way. Also Genet et al. (2005), Ji et al. (2012) and others preferred root diameter versus tensile strength. As we used the power law between root diameter and tensile strength to derive root cohesion, we thought it is logical to present the relationship in that way in our figure. The reviewer is right that plotting similarities to other species especially Norway spruce and European beech improves the figure and enables a visual comparison between species. We used the power laws by Bischetti et al. (2009), however, data of this study is unfortunately not open accessible. Instead of plotting the data, we plotted the derived power law as previously done by several papers.

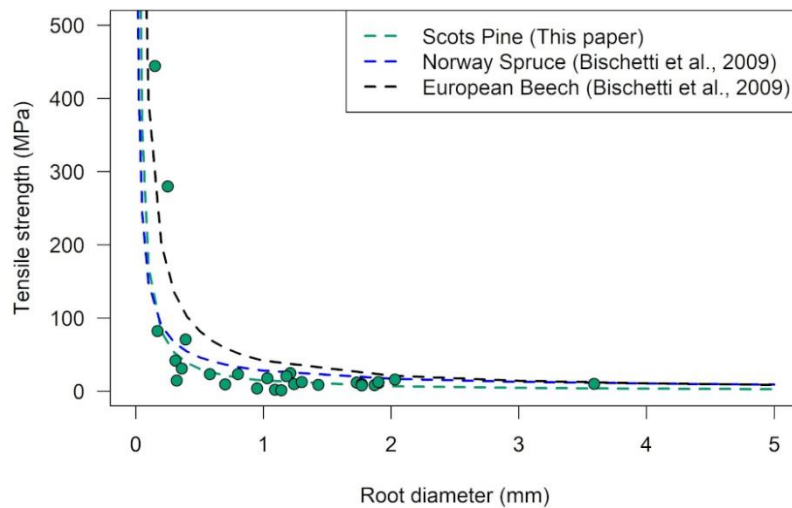


Figure 7: Tensile strength plotted versus root diameter for Scots pine compared to power laws derived for European Beech and Norway Spruce.

317 unclear sentence, instead of stating ‘get’ unstable, I suggest ‘become’ unstable or fall below FoS of 1.

We changed the sentence to: “The Weinreichsgrab landslide became instable when saturation increases above 0.8 in the upper slice height scenario (Fig. 9b).”

Figure 7 why are there no data for 0.5 cm depth in the European Beech? And, are the authors sure there are no roots deeper than 0.5 m that would add tensile strength to the soil?

For European beech, our data showed no roots between 0.4 and 0.5 m. We understand that not displaying the data points as 0 could also implicate that no data was available to other reasons (e.g. technical reasons). We changed this and plotted 0 % RAR in Fig. 7c (Figure 8c in the revised version) and 0 kPa root cohesion in Fig. 7f (Figure 8f in the revised version). Field measurements showed that there were no roots deeper than 0.5 m for all three species, which we have not expected before. We suggest that the surprisingly low rooting depth is a result of the geologic conditions. Rhätolias sandstone is partly not weathered and when weathered the water holding capacity is very low resulting in high resistivities in the ERT. Due to this unfavourable combination, the rooting depth is reduced in the upper slope parts. In the lower parts affected by Feuerletten, the impermeable clay layers result in very wet conditions expressed as low resistivities in the ERT. Consequently, roots add no tensile strength to the soil below 0.5 m. We added a new Figure 1 as suggested by Reviewer 2 including a schematic representation of the geology and soil pits showing soil conditions and roots in Rhätolias sandstone and Feuerletten clay.

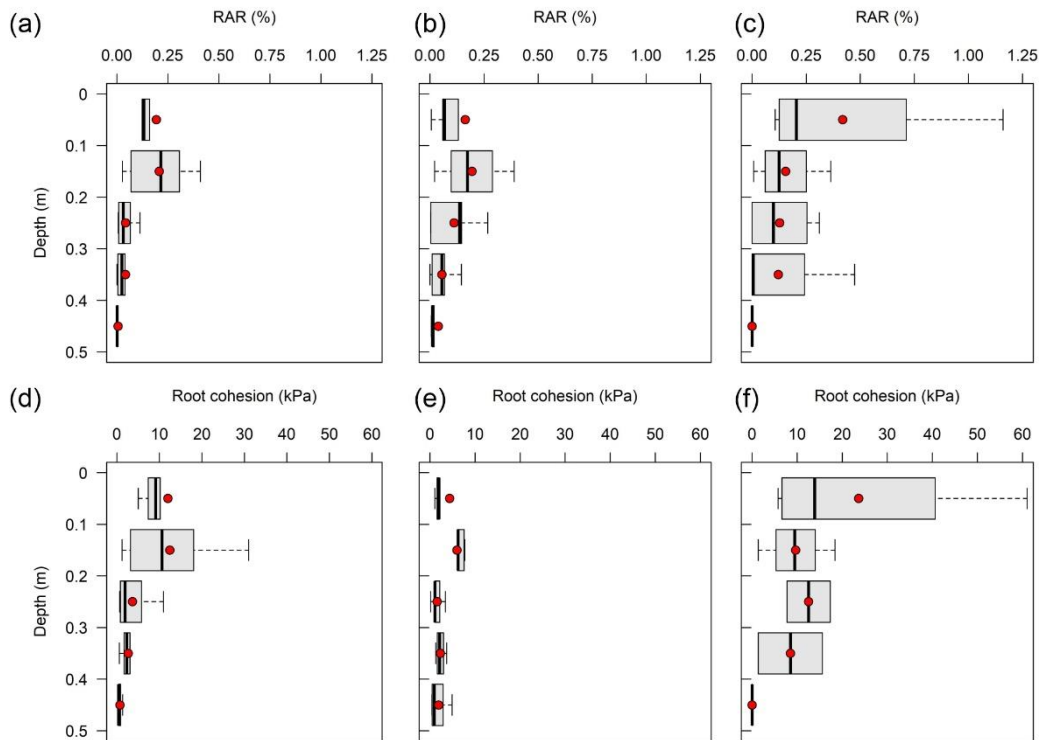


Figure 8: Root area ratio plotted against depth for (a) Norway spruce, (b) Scots pine and (c) European beech. Root cohesion plotted against depth for (d) Norway spruce, (e) Scots pine and (f) European beech. Red dots highlight mean RAR or root cohesion.

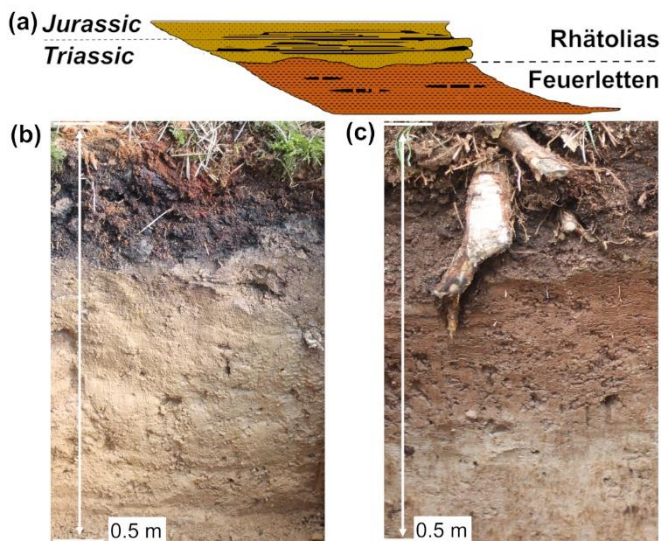


Figure 1: (a) Geological profile of investigated slopes in the Franconian Alb. Soil pits showing the upper 0.5 m of soil developed in (b) Rhätolias sandstone and (c) Feuerletten clay.

Fig 8 caption 'We assume an angle of internal friction of 8.4°. We vary cohesion between...

Text changed to: "Factor of safety models for the reactivation of the landslides at (a) Putzenstein, (b) Weinreichsgrab, and (c) Fürstenanger. We assume an angle of internal friction of 8.4°. We vary cohesion between 28.6 kPa (blue scenario), 8.5 kPa (yellow) and 0 kPa (green)."

334 'All these locations are underlain by...'

Changed.

Figure 9 I like the figure, the different colors are hard to see.

Thanks. We increased the line width to improve visibility.

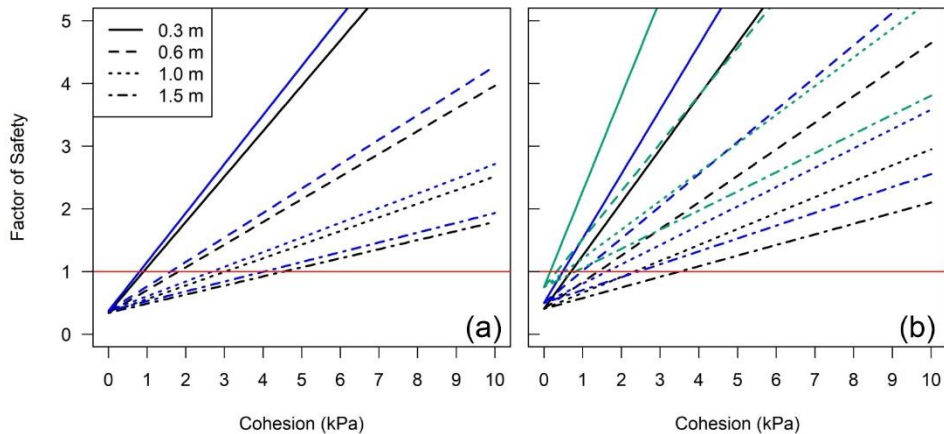


Figure 10: Factor of safety for full-saturated conditions with a residual angle of friction of 8.4° plotted against cohesion scenarios ranging from no cohesion to 10 kPa for (a) translational landslides at road cuts and (b) landslide toes. Line style highlight the depth of shear plane ranging between 0.3 m and 1.5 m. Line colour in (a) refer to Putzenstein (black) with a slope angle of 13° , Weinreichsgrab and Fürstenanger (both blue) with slope angles of 12° . Line colour in (b) refer to Putzenstein (black) with a slope angle of 11° , Weinreichsgrab (blue) with a slope angle of 9° and Fürstenanger (green) with a slope angle of 6° .

349 sentence structure 'Of the 125 observed landslides, 95% occurred at the R-F boundary...'

Changed.

360 'In between the lower high-resistivity cells...'

We changed high resistant or high-resistant to high resistivity or high-resistivity in this manuscript.

362 'The lower part of the landslide was characterized by flat topography, low-resistivity areas...'

Changed.

392 unclear what this sentence is trying to communicate 'Water can move laterally...'

Rhätolias and Feuerletten are both inhomogeneous and contain clay layers. Due to tectonic activity, fractures were observed within Rhätolias that can enable infiltration through clay layers according to Wilfing et al. (2018). When the water moves laterally slope downward, the water can be trapped between impermeable clay of the Feuerletten and a clayey layer in the overlying Rhätolias. This situation can increase the pore pressure as observed by several studies. We change the sentence to clarify this mechanism: "However, Rhätolias has impermeable clay layers (Boley Geotechnik, 2018) and

tectonic-induced fractures can increase water infiltration through these clay layers (Wilfing et al., 2018). Therefore, water can be trapped between clay layers in Rhätolias and clay layers in underlying Feuerletten, which can cause hydrostatic pressures equal to high saturation levels (Rogers and Selby, 1980; Selby, 1993).”

444 what effect might lateral root cohesion have on such a broad landslide?

Lateral root cohesion can prevent the initiation of shallow landslides or limit the size. We changed the sentence to: “When shear planes exceed rooting depth, lateral root cohesion can have a stabilizing effect (Schwarz et al., 2010b) by affecting the onset and size of shallow landsliding (Schmidt et al., 2001; Roering et al., 2003) as indicated by tensed roots observed at Putzenstein (Fig. 4b).”