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# 1 Mass-Movements in Cold and Polar Climates

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# 14 Abstract

15 Mass-movements in cold and Polar climates often involve permafrost and ice and 16 hence these two phenomena are recurring themes throughout this chapter. We 17 consider specifically mass movements in glacial, periglacial and paraglacial settings. 18 For each environmental setting we describe the types of mass movement that have 19 been documented in the literature, describing the current research foci and remaining 20 challenges. We specifically highlight that mass-movements in cold and Polar climates 21 are particularly sensitive to climate change, because of the involvement of permafrost 22 and ice in their triggering and dynamics and therefore we may anticipate an increasing 23 frequency and increased hazard from these phenomena in the future in response to 24 unprecedented rates of environmental change.

25

Keywords: Rapid mass movements, active-layer-detachment slides, retrogressivethaw slumps, debris flows, rock/debris falls, rock/debris slides, rock/debris avalanches,
deep seated gravitational slope deformation (DSGDS), slush flows, ice-flows, snowavalanches, permafrost, glacial environments, periglacial environments, paraglacial
environments,

# 31 **1. Introduction**

32 Mass movement refers to the processes of downslope movement of rock, debris 33 and soil under the influence of gravity (Crozier, 2002; Hutchinson, 1968). Mass 34 wasting, mass movement, slope movement or slope failure are commonly used as 35 synonyms. Another commonly used term for discrete slope movements is "landslides" 36 (Crozier, 1989), and these movements are set apart from processes of subsidence 37 and creep that usually lack discrete failure boundaries. Mass movements are generally 38 divided into slow and rapid mass movements. Slow mass movements evolve over 39 extended periods of time from months to decades or longer, such as deep-seated 40 gravitational slope deformations (e.g., Dramis and Sorriso-Valvo, 1995). They also 41 include phenomena like solifluction, a process that originates from the action of freeze-42 thaw cycles that induce downslope displacement in general at a rate of at most 43 1 m/year of soils in cold environments, where vegetation is lacking or sparse (e.g., 44 Andersson, 1906; Ballantyne and Harris, 1994; Washburn, 1980). In contrast, rapid 45 mass movements usually refer to high-magnitude, low-frequency processes that can 46 be extremely fast moving (up to the scale of 5 m/s; Hungr, 2007).

47 Mass movements are classified in a number of ways, for example, according to the 48 type of material, the type of movement, the volume of displaced material, and the 49 extent of the material's spreading area (Cruden and Varnes, 1996; Hungr et al., 2014; 50 Varnes, 1978). Varnes (1978) developed a classification system for slope movements. 51 based on five possible types of movement (fall, topple, slide, spread and flow) and on 52 the type of material (rock, debris and earth). In Varnes' (1978) classification, slow 53 processes such as subsidence, creeping and solifluction are not accounted for, and 54 are considered by other authors (Sidle and Ochiai, 2006). Here, we adopt the updated 55 Varnes landslide classification from Hungr et al. (2014), where the most significant 56 changes from the initial Varnes' version are: i) the use of textural classes to replace 57 the term "earth", which has no standard definition in either geological or geotechnical 58 material description schemes; ii) the reintroduction of "ice" as type of material, because 59 many destructive mass movements on mountain slopes contain varying proportions of 60 ice; iii) the introduction of slow mass movements under the movement type of "slope 61 deformation".

This chapter will specifically describe and discuss mass movements in cold and polar environments. We divide this chapter into three sections which consider the following geomorphological and environmental settings: glacial, periglacial and paraglacial. Glacial environments are those where the accumulation of ice and snow is favoured to such an extent that bodies of ice accumulate on hillslopes or even flat ground and then flow *en masse* (glaciers or ice caps).

Periglacial environments are those where 1) the process of ground-freezing and thawing is dominant (Tricart, 1956); 2) permafrost - defined as soil or rock with a temperature below 0°C continuously for >1 year (Dobinski, 2011; French, 2007; Muller,

71 1945; Péwé and Brown, 1973; Subcommittee, 1988; Washburn, 1980) - is present.

Paraglacial environments are non-glacial and landforms in this type of environments
are formed during and after the deglaciation (Slaymaker, 2004; Church and Ryder,
1972). The paraglacial processes in non-glacial environments are though directly
influenced by glaciation (Church and Ryder 1972).

76 In each section we will describe the types of mass movement that have been 77 documented in each environment, describing their general geomorphic 78 characteristics, behaviour/dynamics, and triggering factors. We will highlight 79 remaining open research questions, or key areas of active research. Finally we discuss 80 the role of climate change in modulating the hazard posed by the mass movements in 81 these three environments.

# 82 2. Rapid Mass Movements in glacial environments

Mountainous cold and polar environments form steep-slope environments conducive to mass failures and to the presence of glaciers, hence it is not surprising that the two phenomena interact. There are four broad configurations of this interaction:

- Landslides can fall on top of glaciers without entraining a significant portion
  of the glacier itself so called "supra-glacial landslides".
- Landslides can fall on top of glaciers and in so doing entrain a significant
   portion of the glacier ice, resulting in rock-ice avalanches.
- Glaciers themselves can fail catastrophically resulting in ice avalanches.
   Such ice avalanches can themselves entrain debris resulting in rock-ice avalanches.
- Glaciers can advance over and remobilise landside deposits (e.g., Burki et al., 2009; Cook et al., 2013). Although glaciers could be considered as a type of mass movement, they are specifically discussed in the "Cryospheric Geomorphology" volume of this encyclopedia, and hence this remobilisation will not be detailed further in this chapter. However, this type of reworking is important in the context of supraglacial landslide deposits and will be briefly mentioned in that context.
- 101 In the following sections we will discuss first supra-glacial landslides, then ice and102 rock-ice avalanches.
- 103

# 104 2.1 Supra-glacial landslides

Spectacular examples of large-scale rock avalanches falling onto glaciers are
documented in the literature, mainly from the United States (Post 1965, Shreve 1966,

107 Dufresne et al. 2019, Crandell & Fahnestock 1965), the Himalayas (Hewitt 1988, 108 2009a) and the New Zealand (Chinn et al. 1992). The main characteristic of such rock 109 avalanches is the exceptionally long distances reached by the deposits over the ice 110 surface. Several large-scale mass movements which have fallen onto glaciers during 111 recent decades have been described and an international dataset with fall height, 112 runout and volume has been developed (e.g. Schneider et al. 2011, Deline et al. 113 2015a).

114 Landslides falling onto glaciers have deposits that differ from their counterparts that 115 fall onto other terrain types due to the interaction with the ice. Most notably, their runout 116 can be a lot greater than other landslides (e.g., Evans and Clague, 1994; Pirulli, 2009; 117 Sosio et al., 2012). They tend to spread out, forming sheets of debris, which cover 118 large areas (Figure 1; e.g., Delaney and Evans, 2014). Tongue-shaped, multi-lobed 119 margins (Dufresne et al., 2019; Shreve, 1966; Shugar and Clague, 2011) and 120 longitudinal furrows/ridges/bands (e.g., Dufresne and Davies, 2009) are other 121 characteristics associated with these landslide deposits (Figure 1). A greater 122 fragmentation of the rockmass is observed compared to non-glacial slides (Delaney 123 and Evans, 2014). These observations are linked to the fact that the falling debris 124 moves over a low-friction surface. Details on how the ice and snow incorporated in the 125 landslide affect the physical processes which determine the landslide's motion are 126 complex and debated (Pudasaini and Krautblatter, 2014; Schneider et al., 2011; Sosio 127 et al., 2012). It should also be noted that not all mass wasting onto glaciers causes 128 excessive runouts or distinctive deposits (e.g., Deline, 2009).

Similar to landslides in general, the triggers for such landslides are linked to a wide variety of factors, including seismic events (Shreve, 1966) and rockwall permafrost degradation (Coe et al., 2018), but of particular interest is the potential link with glacial retreat (see below).





Figure 1: Examples of supraglacial rock avalanches. (a) On February 16, 2014 a rock avalanche detached from Mount La Perouse in Glacier Bay National Park, Alaska, USA. Relief from head scarp to toe is about 1770 m. Photo taken on March 6, 2014 by Marten Geertsema. (b) The Morsárjökull rock avalanche in Iceland, which occurred on 20<sup>th</sup> March 2007. Width of the deposit is ~350 m and the relief from head scarp to toe is ~640 m. Photo taken in July 2007 by Matthew Roberts.

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142 Snowmelt is often one of the triggers of the ground-saturation that leads to 143 landslides (e.g., Moreiras et al., 2012), but the influence of the incorporation of snow 144 itself into the body of landslides is less-well studied. Yamasaki et al. (2014) found that 145 the incorporation and propagation over deep snow alone can increase the mobility of 146 a landslide. Dufresne et al. (2019) reported that that passive sliding on snow atop of a 147 glacier caused the Lamplugh rock avalanche to slide "silently", or aseismically. This 148 mechanism has been inferred to be the origin of many "silent" supraglacial landslides not detected by seismometers but instead in optical remote sensing (Smith et al.,2020).

151 The attempt to understand the dynamics of these landslides is partly driven by a 152 need to understand the long runout of these landslides, as this can pose hazard to 153 downslope communities and infrastructure, particularly if the landslide debris falls into 154 the sea or terminal lake (e.g., Dufresne et al., 2018 a,b; Hubbard et al., 2005).

155 Understanding the magnitude-frequency of this type of landslide is important for 156 understanding their role in landscape evolution at geological timescales, yet this is 157 remarkably hard to quantify as deposits are usually unrecognisable in the landscape 158 due to glacial reworking (e.g., Schleier et al., 2015). Debris that falls in the 159 accumulation zone can be hidden by snowfall then rapidly sequestered into glaciers 160 on the order of months (e.g., Dunning et al., 2015; Smith et al., 2020). Hence, deposits 161 that fall on the ablation zone are transported down-glacier and contribute to the glacial 162 deposits which are reworked beyond recognition at geological timescales. Some 163 success has been obtained by monitoring seismic signals (e.g., Ekstrom and Stark, 164 2013), but this only gives a snapshot of the situation at the present day. These 165 landslides are on the continuum in our understanding of the role of mass movements 166 in landscape evolution during glacial retreat (see Section 4 on mass movements in 167 Paraglacial environments) and it is still an open question as to whether paraglacial or 168 supraglacial mass movements play a greater role in shaping what we recognise today 169 as the typical post-glacial landscape.

These landslides also play a role in conditioning the behaviour of glaciers and have therefore been studied by glaciologists in order to understand glacial response to changing climate and the sedimentary deposits (e.g., Reznichenko et al., 2011). Debris in the ablation zone can alter glacial dynamics by shutting off ablation (e.g., D'Agata and Zanutta, 2007), or accelerating it. Debris can accelerate the glacier 175 motion (e.g., Shulmeister et al., 2009) and provoke surging behaviour (e.g., Hewitt, 176 2009a). Equally, thick isolating debris can decelerate, or stall glacial movement. 177 Supraglacial debris inputs by landslides can confound attempts to use moraines as 178 markers of glacial advances/retreats and therefore limit their use as climate markers. 179 This is because they confuse the sedimentary record via the introduction of significant 180 lags between temperature changes and recorded "events". The dynamic interplay 181 between debris and ice within the glacial system is an active area of research and the 182 role of mass movements in this interplay is yet another piece to add to the puzzle. The 183 key drivers motivating research in this field are: understanding glacial meltwater 184 generation for its contribution to sea level change, hydroelectricity generation and as 185 a resource for potable water. Generation of glacial meltwater and sediment can also 186 generate hazardous process-linkages and pose significant risk to infrastructure and 187 habitation.

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# 189 2.2 Ice, Rock-ice and ice-rock avalanches

#### 190 *2.2.1 Snow, ice avalanches and slushflows*

191 Snow and ice avalanches are a common type of rapid mass movement in cold and 192 polar environments and are a critical driver of alpine glacial accumulation (e.g., Price 193 et al., 2019). They take many forms because they can incorporate materials with a 194 wide range of material properties (powder snow, sintered snow, ice, liquid water, rocks, 195 debris, mud...) in varying proportions and can include phase changes e.g. from ice to 196 water. From a geomorphology point of view many of these mass movements are 197 transient as they do not supply significant sediment volume. Avalanche debris cones 198 and strewn boulders are landscape elements that indicate the dominance of 199 avalanches in downslope sediment transport (Figure 2b,c; e.g., Decaulne and

Sæmundsson, 2010; Jomelli and Francou, 2000; Luckman, 1992). Research into snow
avalanches is mainly driven by a desire to understand the risk and design engineering
solutions to mitigate it.



Figure 2: Examples of slush flow and avalanche deposits. (a) Freshly deposited slushflow from the Mt. Bleikkollubólstindur above the farm Hof in SE, Iceland. Photo taken by Brynja Kristjánsdóttir 2021. (b) Aerial view of two chutes in the Hólsádalur

valley, northern Iceland, which host frequent snow avalanches whose deposits are
found on the opposite side of the stream in the valley. The viewpoint of panel c is noted
on the figure. Credit Loftmyndir ehf. (c) Field view of avalanche deposits within which
pebbles from the stream below are found. A person is standing atop the deposits for
scale. Photo taken by Þorsteinn Sæmundsson 2016.

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213 Slush flows are mass movements that behave like debris flows (described fully in 214 Section 3), but contain a significant amount of snow or ice (e.g., André, 1990; Decaulne 215 and Sæmundsson, 2006; Elder and Kattelmann, 1993; Gude and Scherer, 1995; Hétu 216 et al., 2017; Larocque et al., 2001; Nyberg, 1989; Pérez-Guillén et al., 2019). They are 217 characterised by levees and lobate tongues (Figure 2a) and have a longer runout than 218 dry avalanches. They are capable of transporting clasts up to metres in size, although 219 some slush flows contain only snow and are usually called "slush avalanches" or "wet 220 avalanches" (Figure 2a; e.g., Bartelt et al., 2012; Eckerstorfer and Christiansen, 2012). 221 Slush flows are triggered in a similar way to debris flows, by saturation of the sliding 222 mass by snowmelt or precipitation. There has not yet been any research that permits 223 the distinction of slush flow and debris flow deposits in the sedimentary record 224 meaning their impact on the landscape at geologic timescales is broadly unknown. 225 Slush flows are generally studied alongside snow avalanches or debris flows and form 226 part of a spectrum of processes that can pose hazard to populations and infrastructure 227 in steep mountainous environments.

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#### 229 2.2.3 Ice, ice-rock and rock-ice avalanches

230 Mass movements in glacial areas can originate from the glaciers themselves, the 231 hillslopes, or both. Once initiated these mass movements can further interact with downslope debris, snow, ice or rock causing complex events that can be hard toclassify uniquely (e.g., Petrakov et al., 2008).

234 There have been three recent well-reported cases where large portions of glaciers 235 detached to form rapid mass movements (Evans et al., 2009a; Falaschi et al., 2019; 236 Gilbert et al., 2018; Kääb et al., 2018; Tian et al., 2017). For example, the collapse of 237 two nearby glaciers in the Aru range in Tibet was widely reported in the media because 238 of the remarkable visibility in satellite images (Figure 3a). However, these mass 239 movements leave very little geomorphological evidence in the landscape, because 240 their main constituent is ice which is rapidly ablated in the relatively warm locations 241 where the deposits are laid down. Hence, the frequency of such failures in the geologic 242 record is unknown. The limitation to a handful of present-day cases means that, 243 although these types of failure pose considerable risk, there are many open questions 244 as to how they are triggered.



Figure 3: (a) Pléiades 3D rendering of the two glacier collapses in the Aru Mountains, Tibet with kind permission of Etienne Berthier at the CNRS. The fan in the foreground is ~2 km across. Image credit CNES Pléiades, Airbus Defence and Space. (b, c and d) Mt. Kazbek in Southern Russia before and after a hanging glacier collapsed from the slope of Mt. Dzhimarai-Khokh onto the Kolka Glacier which triggered an avalanche of ice and debris that went over the Maili Glacier terminus then slid more than 24 km burying villages in North Ossetia on 20<sup>th</sup> September 2002. (b, c) False-colour images from the Advanced Spaceborne Thermal Emission and Reflection Radiometer (ASTER) aboard NASA's Terra satellite. The deep reds show vegetated land surfaces, grey areas are bare rock, and white shows ice-cover. (d) True colour image from the Advanced Land Imager instrument on the EO-1 spacecraft. Images available from https://earthobservatory.nasa.gov

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259 Landscape change does occur where glaciers and rock detach together, or rock 260 avalanches impact and incorporate glaciers or rock glaciers (Evans et al., 2009b; 261 Haeberli et al., 2004; Schneider et al., 2011). Triggering of these large, complex events 262 has been attributed to thermal perturbations from both climate and geothermal origins 263 (Huggel, 2009; Huggel et al., 2012). These events occur on the flanks of volcanoes as 264 well as in in uplifted mountain areas. They have no specific geomorphic signature and 265 can display the attributes generally associated with rock avalanches (Figure 3b-d), 266 debris avalanches, debris flows and supraglacial landslides, with their defining 267 characteristic being their large mobility. The large-scale of these events and their 268 mobility means they are both rare, but can be extremely hazardous (Evans et al., 269 2009b; Iribarren Anacona et al., 2015). The deposits of ancient rock-ice avalanches 270 are reported in the literature, but only when the role of the ice is thought to have played 271 a minimal effect on the resulting geomorphology (Robinson et al., 2014). It is unclear 272 how important such large mass movements are in long-term landscape evolution, 273 because their sedimentary signal is hard to detangle from other mass movements with 274 which they share morphologic properties. The main research challenge lies in 275 dissecting the dominant processes within the evolution of the mass movement to 276 understand the mobility and potential hazard of such flows. Predicting where and when such huge movements might occur remains the major challenge, as it does for rockavalanches in general.

279

# 280 **3. Mass Movements in periglacial environments**

281 Periglacial environments are sensitive to rapid changes in local climate, snow cover, 282 topography, incoming radiation, ground and soil characteristics, which influence the 283 variability of ground thermal regimes at local scale (e.g., Harris and Pedersen, 1998; 284 Harris et al., 2009; Thomas et al., 2009; Hasler et al., 2015). As average temperatures 285 continue to rise, permafrost and permafrost ice are expected to degrade (Biskaborn et 286 al., 2019; Blunden and Arndt, 2020; Christiansen et al., 2010; Gisnås et al., 2017; 287 Harris et al., 2009; Romanovsky et al., 2010; Slater and Lawrence, 2013), particularly 288 at high latitudes, where average yearly temperatures are increasing at faster rates than 289 global averages (Alexeev and Jackson, 2013; Blunden and Arndt, 2020; Masson-290 Delmotte et al., 2006; Screen et al., 2012).

291 In the last decades, mass movements have been studied in relation to degrading 292 permafrost conditions (Ashastina et al., 2017; Blais-Stevens et al., 2015; Fischer et al., 293 2006; Gruber and Haeberli, 2007; Haeberli et al., 2017a; Huscroft et al., 2003; Patton 294 et al., 2019a; Ravanel et al., 2017). Mass movements are particularly common under 295 periglacial conditions, as freeze-thaw weathering causes deterioration of rock, 296 sediments and soils (e.g., Dobinski, 2011; Harris et al., 2001). Frost action promotes 297 mechanical fragmentation of rocks (Matsuoka and Murton, 2008; Prick, 2003), with 298 resulting loose material available for transport (Van Vliet-Lanoë and Fox, 2018). 299 Degrading-permafrost conditions reduce slope stability, as reaching -1.5°C - 0 °C or 300 melting temperatures causes reduction in ground shear strength, loss of ice/rock 301 interlocking, increase in the hydraulic permeability, and ice segregation (Davies et al.,

2001; Draebing et al., 2017; Draebing and Krautblatter, 2019; Gruber and Haeberli,

303 2007; Krautblatter et al., 2013a; Matsuoka and Murton, 2008; Murton et al., 2006).

304 Different types of mass movements can occur in terrains affected by permafrost, 305 which in high-latitude lowland permafrost regions is classified into zones based on its 306 geographic extent and continuity. Permafrost is defined continuous where frozen 307 ground is present at 90-100% localities, while it is defined discontinuous where units 308 of frozen ground (50-90%) are separated by unfrozen areas. Sporadic and isolated 309 permafrost is restricted to limited areas, covering respectively 10-50% and 0-10% of 310 the terrain considered as permafrost (e.g., Black, 1954; French, 2007; Péwé, 1983). 311 Permafrost is also present at lower latitudes at high elevation, it is called mountain 312 permafrost, and it is characterised by an extreme spatial variability (Gruber and 313 Haeberli, 2007; Haeberli et al., 2011; Péwé, 1983; Stearns, 1966). Mass movements 314 in periglacial environments can be distinctive of a particular class of permafrost or 315 ubiquitous in various permafrost terrains, and we will specifically discuss: active-layer-316 detachment slides, retrogressive-thaw slumps, debris flows, rock/debris falls, 317 rock/debris slides, rock/debris avalanches.

318

319 **3.1 Active-layer-detachment slides** 

Active-layer-detachment slides are localised slope failures (Figure 4) that are confined to the permafrost active layer in continuous and discontinuous ice-rich permafrost terrains (Leibman, 1995; Lewkowicz, 1990; Lewkowicz et al., 1992; Lewkowicz and Harris, 2005a,b). They fall in the suite of landforms resulting from the process of thawing of ice-rich permafrost or melting of massive ground ice called thermokarst (French, 2007; Kokelj and Jorgenson, 2013). They occur due to a reduction in shear strength resulting from high porewater pressures and low effective 327 strengths, due to rapid thawing of ice lenses at the base of the active layer or in the 328 upper part of permafrost in fine-grained soils with low hydraulic conductivity (French, 329 2007; Lamoureux and Lafrenière, 2009; Lewkowicz, 2007). The movements generally 330 involve shallow (~1 m deep) failures over a thin shear zone or shear plane on very low-331 angled slopes (Kokelj and Jorgenson, 2013; Lewkowicz and Harris, 2005a). Few direct 332 observations exist of in-action active-layer-detachment slides, and they develop over 333 a period of minutes to several days by a single almost instantaneous sliding movement 334 or by progressive movements of a few metres per hour, reaching runout distances of 335 up to several hundred metres (Lewkowicz, 2007; Lewkowicz and Harris, 2005a). 336 Active-layer-detachment slides usually occur in clusters (Balser et al., 2009; Couture 337 and Riopel, 2008; Lamoureux and Lafrenière, 2009), generally after warm summers, 338 rapid spring thaw, high snowmelt, prolonged summer precipitation, or forest or tundra 339 fires (Gooseff et al., 2009; Lamoureux and Lafrenière, 2009). Active-layer-detachment 340 slides can enhance slope sediment and solute yields in stream systems (Lamoureux 341 and Lafrenière, 2009; Lewkowicz, 2007; Lewkowicz and Kokelj, 2002), impact the 342 patterns of tundra vegetation communities (e.g., Cannone et al., 2010; Frost et al., 343 2018; Verdonen et al., 2020) and mobilise carbon sequestered in shallow permafrost 344 (e.g., Abbott et al., 2015; Beamish et al., 2014; Turetsky et al., 2019; Woods et al., 345 2011). An increase in active-layer-detachment slides has been observed also in the 346 western Antarctic Peninsula region, where permafrost has reached degrading 347 temperatures (- 0.4 to - 3.1 °C; because the area has been affected by the greatest 348 degree of warming in the past 50 years (Bockheim et al., 2013; Guglielmin, 2012; 349 Vieira et al., 2008). Research is particularly focussed on the role these mass 350 movements have in releasing carbon contributing to the positive feedback mechanism 351 of the warming climate releasing carbon trapped in continuous permafrost, which goes 352 on to exacerbate future warming and so on. Although areas with continuous permafrost 353 are sparsely inhabited, these mass movements can pose risk to infrastructure (e.g.

Behnia and Blias-Stevens 2018), but also to archaeological investigations (Walls et al.

355 2020).



Figure 4 - Active-layer detachment slide (perimeter marked with white dashed line),
Fosheim Peninsula, Ellesmere Island, Nunavut, Canada. Modified after Lewkowicz,
2007.

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### 361 **3.2 Retrogressive-thaw slumps**

362 Retrogressive-thaw slumps are semi-circular depressions resulting from thawing of 363 ice-rich permafrost terrains (Burn and Friele, 1989; French, 2007; Lantuit and Pollard, 364 2008). They occur where ice-rich permafrost is exposed to thaw, and are generally 365 triggered by wave action along coasts, undercutting erosion of banks along streams 366 or lakes, or active-layer-detachment slides (Lantuit and Pollard, 2008; Patton et al., 367 2019b). Thaw slumps cannot be classified as "rapid movements" — they can develop 368 over decades (Lacelle et al., 2010) – but phenomena like falls or flows can transport 369 thawed material from the slump headwall as secondary movements (Lantuit et al., 370 2012; Murton, 2001). They can cover vast areas, from 0.05 up to 0.8 km<sup>2</sup>, as in the 371 case of the Batagaika mega-thaw-slump (Figure 5), which in the last thirty years has 372 increased its size by three times, reaching an area of 0.78 km<sup>2</sup> in 2018 (Vadakkedath 373 et al., 2020). Thaw slumps expose ground ice to thaw, modify the landscape, and can 374 erode and transport thawed material to lakes, valley-bottoms or coastal zones (Kokelj 375 et al., 2015; Lafrenière and Lamoureux, 2019; Lantuit et al., 2012; Murton et al., 2017).

376 Retrogressive thaw slumps are showing an accelerated activity due to global warming 377 in continuous and discontinuous permafrost terrains, from western Canadian Arctic to 378 Siberia (e.g., Ashastina et al., 2017; Jones et al., 2019; Segal et al., 2016). Thousands 379 of retrogressive thaw slumps have formed in the last 30 years due to extreme 380 temperatures in High Arctic (Banks, Island, Canada), and are modelled to rise to over 381 10,000 per decade by 2075 (Lewkowicz and Way, 2019). Hence, similarly to active-382 layer detachment slides current research focuses on the impact climate change is 383 having on these mass movements.



384

385 Figure 5 - The Batagaika mega-thaw slump in the Chersky Range area, Sakha

386 *Republic, Russia. CNES/Airbus Image from Google Earth, 6th October 2019.* 

387

388 3.3 Debris Flows

389 Debris flows are rapid, downslope flows of poorly sorted debris mixed with water 390 (e.g., Iverson, 1997), and are common on the slopes of periglacial environments, 391 including in the European Alps to Iceland (Figure 6), from the Tibetan Plateau to 392 Antarctica (Decaulne and Sæmundsson, 2006b; Morino et al. 2019; Cannone et al., 393 2006; Oliva and Ruiz-Fernández, 2015; Sattler et al., 2011; Yu et al., 2020). Debris 394 flows can travel over long distances and transport large amounts of material at great 395 speed (Zimmermann and Haeberli, 1992). They are characterised by a central 396 channel, the construction of levees on one or both sides of channel, and a terminal 397 depositional lobe or lobes (e.g., Costa, 1984). Steep slopes, loose materials and wet 398 conditions are favourable for the occurrence of debris flows (Lewin and Warburton, 399 1994). This combination of factors is extremely common in periglacial mountain 400 environments, where climatic warming during the 19th and 20th centuries has 401 indirectly increased the frequency of debris flows (Decaulne and Sæmundsson, 402 2006b; Haeberli et al., 1990; Rebetez et al., 1997; Zimmermann, 1990; Zimmermann 403 and Haeberli, 1992). This increased frequency is not directly linked to the thaw of 404 perennially frozen debris in the source areas (i.e., meltwater producing a source of 405 fluid), but it has been shown that there is a link between the initiation zones and the 406 thickening of the active layer as a reaction to the increase in atmospheric temperatures 407 (Sattler et al., 2011). This has also been observed where the interface between frozen 408 and unfrozen ground seems to control the depth of movement in debris flows (Huscroft 409 et al., 2003). Active-layer failures may result from increased concentration of water 410 above the permafrost table, generating debris flows and mass failures (Kummert et al., 411 2018; Lugon and Stoffel, 2010; Marcer et al., 2020), particularly in formerly frozen 412 sediment mantled slopes (Davies et al., 2001; Fischer et al., 2013; Haeberli, 2013). Recently deglaciated terrains have an abundance of debris often perched in unstable 413

414 positions that are particularly susceptible to remobilisation by debris flows (Ballantyne415 2002).

Debris flows often pose hazard to human habitation and infrastructure and the main challenge lies in developing tools to effectively predict where and when they will be triggered in addition to understanding their runout. On one hand this requires, a deeper understanding of the physical mechanisms where significant effort is being put into focussed monitoring and developing sophisticated physics-based models. And on the other hand it also requires the development simple yet effective tools to enable public authorities and other stakeholders to mitigate the hazard posed by debris flows.

423



Figure 6 - The debris flows above in the Gleiðarhjalli slope above the town of *Ísafjörður, Westfjords, Iceland (Decaulne and Sæmundsson, 2006b; Morino et al.*2019).

### 429 3.4 Rock/debris falls

430 Rock/debris falls are mass movements on steep slopes (Fig. 7a), rock/debris slides 431 (Fig. 7b) are mass movements that occur along discrete surfaces, and rock/debris 432 avalanches are large-volume (>1M m<sup>3</sup>) mass movements that cause fragmentation 433 during rapid transport (Fig. 7c) (Cruden and Varnes, 1996; Hungr et al., 2014). These 434 phenomena are frequent in mountain glacial and periglacial environments, usually in 435 paraglacial settings where glacial over-deepening, stress-release fracturing after 436 removal of glacial ice (Ballantyne, 2002; McColl and Davies, 2013), glacial 437 debuttressing (Blikra et al., 2006; Cossart et al., 2014), degrading permafrost (Clague 438 et al., 2012a; Deline et al., 2015a; Fischer et al., 2006; Gruber and Haeberli, 2007; 439 Krautblatter et al., 2013b; Magnin et al., 2020; Morino et al., 2019; Sæmundsson et 440 al., 2018), and cooling-warming cycles (Draebing, 2020) can all act to destabilise rock 441 walls and debris source areas. These factors can induce changes in the stress field 442 and expose previously insulated surfaces to altered mechanical and thermal erosion 443 (Draebing et al., 2017; Haeberli, 1997; Jia et al., 2015; Krautblatter et al., 2013b; 444 Wegmann et al., 1998), which can consequently favour mass wasting processes. The 445 increase in temperatures in the last decades due to climate change has resulted in 446 increased activity of such rock/debris falls, slides and avalanches; a correlation 447 between exceptional heatwaves and rockfalls (Fig. 7a) has been established (Huggel 448 et al., 2012; Ravanel et al., 2017; Ravanel and Deline, 2008). When permafrost 449 degrades, physical changes also occur in the rock mass and in loose deposits (Allen 450 and Huggel, 2013; Draebing et al., 2017; Gruber and Haeberli, 2007; Harris et al., 451 2009; Ravanel et al., 2017). After permafrost thaw, the shear strength of rock/debris 452 significantly reduces with warming (minimum factor of safety is between -1.5°C and

0°C) (Davies et al., 2001). Ice segregation and volume expansion subsequent to 453 454 increased temperatures can lead to failures (Gruber and Haeberli, 2007). Elevated 455 water pressure and reduced frictional strength can result from meltwater or ground-456 water flow in previously frozen masses (Harris, 2005). Ice-rich permafrost occurs in 457 loose-deposits landforms such as rock glaciers, ice-cored moraines and talus slopes 458 (Dramis et al., 1995; Isaksen et al., 2000; Kenner et al., 2017; Lukas et al., 2005; Monnier and Kinnard, 2015), and its degradation can cause a reduction in 459 460 cementation, which can lead to the occurrence of falls, slides (Fig. 7b) or avalanches (Fig. 7c; Dramis et al., 1995). Rock and debris falls, slides and avalanches directly 461 462 attributed to this mechanism have been reported from numerous locations in cold 463 climates around the globe, including Alaska, Canada, European Alps, Greenland. 464 Himalava, New Zealand, Norway, Russia (Deline, 2009; Evans et al., 2009a,b,c; 465 Fischer and Huggel, 2008; Frauenfelder et al., 2018; Gruber et al., 2017; Huggel et al., 466 2012, 2005; Magnin et al., 2019; Patton et al., 2019a; Sosio et al., 2008; Svennevig et 467 al., 2019). Much current research is focussed on mitigating the risk from such events 468 and is reliant on understanding and modelling the influence of increasing temperature 469 on the state of the permafrost, the influence of the associated hydrology which finally 470 leads to the destabilisation of rock mass.



472

473 Figure 7 - Rapid mass movements caused by permafrost degradation. a. The Tour
474 Ronde rock fall of 27<sup>th</sup> August 2015, Mont Blanc Massif, France (modified after
475 Ravanel et al., 2017); b. The Móafellshyrna debris slide of 20<sup>th</sup> September 2012,
476 Tröllaskagi peninsula, Iceland (Sæmundsson et al. 2018, Morino et al. 2019); c. The
477 Val Pola rock avalanche of 28<sup>th</sup> July 1987, Central Alps, Italy (modified after Crosta et
478 al., 2004).

# 480 **4. Rapid Mass Movements in Paraglacial Environments**

Paraglacial environments represent the relatively rapid adjustment from deglaciated landscape to non-glacial conditions (Ballantyne 2002). A wide range of subaerial processes are active in these environments which can be active over different timescales and lead to different rates of landscape change (evolution). Many of these 485 processes are intimately associated with periglacial environments, already described 486 in Section 3. Periglacial conditions usually only persist for a relatively short period after 487 deglaciation, and here we focus on (large scale) Mass Movements that are not 488 necessarily related to periglacial environmental conditions, yet occur in a paraglacial 489 setting.

490 Massive rock slope failures are as frequent or more frequent in glaciated basins 491 than in equivalent ice-free mountainous terrain (McSaveney 2002, Geertsema et al. 492 2006, Hewitt 2009a Deline et al. 2015a). Complex interactions between several factors 493 can affect the occurrence of mass movements according to Pacione (1999); inherent 494 factors (e.g. lithology, rock structure, slope form, topographic relief), preparatory 495 factors (e.g. weathering, de-buttressing, climate change), triggering factors (e.g. 496 earthquake, rainstorm) and factors that may affect mobility (e.g. glacial surface) 497 (Agliardi et al. 2012, Deline et al. 2015b). According to Ballantyne (2002) the response 498 of a rock slope to glacier down wasting has been reported to result in large rock 499 avalanches, large-scale, progressive and slow rock mass deformation, and frequent 500 rock fall events. Slope steepening caused by glacial erosion and unloading or de-501 buttressing due to glacial retreat often leads to rock slope failures (Agliardi et al. 2012, 502 Holm et al. 2004, Lane et al., 2017, Stoffel & Huggel 2012). Thermal and mechanical 503 alteration can result from cycles of ice loading and unloading and exposition of rock to 504 new thermal regimes due to the glacier retreat (Cody et al., 2020; Coquin et al., 2015; 505 Evans and Clague, 1994; Grämiger et al., 2017; McColl, 2012; McColl and Draebing, 506 2019; Mercier et al., 2017; Wegmann et al., 1998). Finally, permafrost fluctuations 507 throughout the Holocene is likely a first order control on past and modern rock slope 508 failures (Hilger et al., 2021).



Figure 8 A Deep seated gravitational slope deformation at Forkastningsfjellet in Spitsbergen documented by Kuhn et al. (2019, 2021). (a) Unannotated view towards the blocks that are sliding downslope. (b) Annotated view showing the location of the main sliding surfaces that define the different blocks with white arrows indicating displacement directions. (c) Side-on view of the same slope showing the rotation of the block nearest the coast. Images kindly provided by Reginald Hermanns.

517 Deep seated gravitational slope deformation (DSGSD, also called "sagging" or 518 "sackung", Figure 8) are one of the adjustment processes which can be detected in 519 paraglacial setting and can be categorized as mountain slope deformation of steep, 520 high mountain slopes, manifested by scarps and cracks, but lacking a defined rupture 521 surface and slow movement rates (Hungr et al., 2014). DSGSD are large mass 522 movements with long duration slow motion processes that can experience irregular 523 rates of activity characterized by periods of rapid reactivating (Pánek et al. 2013) which 524 often result in high volume and long-runout events (Hewitt et al., 2008; Hewitt, 525 2009a,b,c; Mege and Bourgeois, 2011; Pánek & Klimeš, 2016; Pedrazzini et al., 2013). 526 The firsts observations of the geomorphic role and impact of DSGSD dates back to the 527 1940s, but recent developments in remote sensing, e.g. Insar have made it easier to 528 detect these slow movements which has led to increasing understanding and 529 recognition of DSGSD (e.g. Ambrosi and Crosta, 2006; Colesanti and Wasowski, 530 2006; Hilley et al., 2004; Saroli et al., 2005; Teshebaeva et al. 2019).

531 DSGSD have been observed in various rock types and are generally characterized 532 by discontinuous or poorly defined lateral boundaries (Ambrosi and Crosta, 2006; 533 Varnes et al., 1990). According to Agliardi et al. (2001) diagnostic features of DSGSD 534 ca include: "morpho-structures (doubled ridges, scarps, counterscarps, etc.) similar to 535 those observable, at a smaller scale, in cohesive soils landslides; size of the 536 phenomenon comparable to the slope; present day low rate of displacement (mm/y, in 537 alpine and prealpine areas); presence of minor landslides inside the deformed mass 538 and ancient collapses of the lower part of the slope".

539 DSGSD are not considered as imminent hazardous phenomena because of their 540 slow movement rate, but a part of the creeping mass can evolve into multiple 541 sequential failures or into fast large catastrophic slope failures such as rockslides and 542 rock avalanche (Agliardi et al. 2012). These large-scale events, even though they are 543 infrequent, can cause hazardous conditions e.g. on glaciers and surrounding areas 544 (e.g. Deline et al. 2015b; Dufresne et al. 2019; Hewitt et al. 2011), in fjord environments were rock-slope failures can generate tsunamis (Böhme et al. 2011; Kuhn et al. 2019)
and in valley systems were large rock-slope failures can dam rivers (Oppikofer et al.,
2020; Strom and Korup, 2006).

548 Many case studies of DSGSD have been described in various settings around the 549 world, but it is difficult to understand their controlling factors due to the variety of 550 geologic and environmental settings which they occur in (Agilardi et al. 2012). They 551 are widespread in orogenic mountain ranges (Ambrosi and Crosta, 2006; Agliardi et 552 al. 2009; 2012; Korup, 2006;), and have been described from the Central-Eastern Alps. 553 (Forcella, 1984; Forcella and Orombelli, 1984; Zischinsky, 1966), Norway (Böhme et 554 al. 2013; Oppikofer et al. 2017; Schleier et al. 2016), Spitsbergen (Figure 8) (Kuhn et 555 al. 2019; 2021), Iceland (Coguin et al. 2015; 2019) and other places.

Research challenges, on mass movements in Paraglacial environments and in some extend in Periglacial environments, have during the last decades focused more and more on the hidden hazard which DSGSD can cause to human habitation in these environments. Recent and future developments in remote sensing will without doubt deepen our understanding on the physical mechanisms and triggering factors for DSGSD. These developments will improve our monitoring and hazard analyses.

562

### 563 **5.** Climate change and hazard of mass movements in cold and

### 564 polar climates

According to the definition of (Varnes, 1984), landslide hazard is defined as the probability that a landslide event of a certain magnitude occurs within a period of time in a given area. Landslide risk - as any other risk - refers to the expected degree of loss due to a landslide event, and it is the result of the product of the landslide hazard and the vulnerability, with the latter being the degree to which a community, a structure, a service or an area is likely to be damaged by a hazardous phenomenon (UNDHA,
1992). Mass movements can be extremely dangerous, as they are processes that can
severely threaten human life and affect infrastructures (Crozier and Glade, 2005;
Geertsema et al., 2009; Haque et al., 2016; Kjekstad and Highland, 2009; Petley,
2012). Slope failures can involve different types of materials and can have a great
diversity of velocities and fluid contents, making them hard to understand and produce
the appropriate countermeasures.

577 Even if high level of uncertainty of global-climate predictions and the lack of spatial 578 resolution of the available downscaled projections, there is a strong theoretical basis 579 for increased landslide activity as a result of climate change (Borgatti and Soldati, 580 2010; Crozier, 2010; Gariano and Guzzetti, 2016; Hague et al., 2019; Wood et al., 581 2020). There are few studies (Coe, 2020; Coe et al., 2018; Schlögel et al., 2011; 582 Uhlmann et al., 2013) that systematically evaluate and compare the magnitude, 583 frequency, and extent of landslide events in glacial and periglacial environments on 584 the long term (Allen et al., 2011; Bessette-Kirton and Coe, 2020; Hock et al., 2019). 585 Cold environments are particularly sensitive to variations in atmospheric temperatures 586 (Clague et al., 2012b; Huggel et al., 2012) that lead to an enhanced reaction of slopes 587 to glacial retreat and permafrost degradation (e.g., Gruber et al., 2017; Gruber and 588 Haeberli, 2007; Harris et al., 2009; Hock et al., 2019; Kos et al., 2016; Patton et al., 589 2019a; Schoeneich et al., 2011). As result of climate change, mass movements in 590 cryospheric regions can be triggered by warming periods, freeze-thaw, rapid 591 snowmelt, intense and/or prolonged precipitation (Huggel et al., 2012, 2010; Stoffel 592 and Huggel, 2012). From a hazard perspective, understanding how these factors will 593 impact failures' frequency and magnitude is becoming increasingly important.

594 In glacial environments, retreat and thinning of glacial ice reduces lateral support of 595 steep rock walls (Ballantyne, 2002). This can generate a reduction in slope stability by 596 debutressing steep valley walls (Lane et al., 2017), that are impacted by modifications 597 in the stress field and subject to mechanical and thermal alteration, and consequently 598 slope instabilities (Cody et al., 2020; Coquin et al., 2015; Evans and Clague, 1994; 599 Grämiger et al., 2017; McColl, 2012; McColl and Draebing, 2019; Mercier et al., 2017; 600 Wegmann et al., 1998). Failures linked to glacial retreat can range from small-scale 601 rock fall to catastrophic rock/debris avalanches. As glacial environments are highly 602 dynamic because of increasing atmospheric temperatures, the landslide hazard in 603 these regions is more difficult to assess because of the changing zones of instability 604 and initiation (e.g., Evans and Clague, 1988; Geertsema et al., 2006a,b; Kääb et al., 605 2005). The consequences of landslides in glacial environments can be more 606 unexpected and severe than the events themselves, generating hazardous 607 consequences because of dam-creation (Fan et al., 2020; Oppikofer et al., 2020; 608 Strom and Korup, 2006), or tsunami if they reach the water (Dahl-Jensen et al., 2004; 609 Dai et al., 2020; Dufresne et al., 2018a). A better understanding of changes in slope 610 stability caused by the loss of glacier ice could improve the definition of landslide 611 hazard zones, aiding to protect areas and populations exposed to these hazards 612 (Haeberli et al., 2017b; Hock et al., 2019).

613 Climate change is causing permafrost degradation at high latitudes and in mountain 614 regions (e.g., Blunden and Arndt, 2020; Slater and Lawrence, 2013), and this is 615 confirmed by local monitoring permafrost studies in the European Alps, Alaska, 616 Canada, Siberia, Iceland, Greenland, northern Europe, the Tibetan Plateau, the Andes 617 and the Antarctic Peninsula (Christiansen et al., 2010; Czekirda et al., 2019; Gisnås et 618 al., 2017; Harris et al., 2009; Panda et al., 2014; Pastick et al., 2015; Romanovsky et 619 al., 2010; Westermann et al., 2017; Zou et al., 2017). Among the consequences of 620 permafrost degradation, the most hazardous are mass movements like rock falls, 621 debris flows, rock/debris avalanches (Darrow et al., 2017; Deline et al., 2015a; 622 Huscroft et al., 2004; Patton et al., 2019a; Schoeneich et al., 2011). Mountains host 623 12% of the global population (Schild, 2008), and about a guarter of the permafrost on 624 Earth is hosted in mountainous terrains (Gruber, 2012). Therefore, mass movements 625 in periglacial mountain environments pose at direct risk the local population and 626 infrastructure (e.g., Haeberli, 2013; Schoeneich et al., 2011), and can impact local 627 economies and tourism, communication and transport systems and power generation 628 industries (e.g., Arenson and Jakob, 2017; Duvillard et al., 2019; Mourey et al., 2019; 629 Pröbstl-Haider et al., 2016). The unpredictability of the extension and speed of 630 permafrost degradation makes the understanding of landslide processes in mountain 631 periglacial environments even more urgent, in order to predict and mitigate their 632 hazardous consequences.

633 Due to their magnitude and mobility, rock/ices avalanches are also particularly 634 hazardous in both glacial and periglacial environments (Davies and McSaveney, 2012; 635 Evans and Clague, 1988; Geertsema et al., 2006a, 2006b; Hungr and Evans, 2004). 636 Several examples with volumes ranging up to millions of cubic metres include the 637 rock/ice avalanche from Monte Rosa in the western Italia Alps in 2007 (Fischer et al., 638 2011), the rock/ice avalanches at Mount Munday in 1997 and at Kendall Glacier in 639 1999 in British Columbia (Delaney and Evans, 2014; Geertsema et al., 2006a), the 640 2005 Mt. Steller rock/ice avalanche in Alaska (Huggel et al., 2008), the 2002 rock/ice 641 avalanche at Kolka/Karmadon, Russian Caucasus, with the latter one causing the 642 death of ~140 people (Evans et al., 2009c; Haeberli et al., 2004; Huggel et al., 2005). 643 Hazard related to mass movements in both glacial and periglacial environments 644 include also catastrophic phenomena such as glacial lake outburst floods (GLOFs). 645 GLOFs are floods that originate from lakes formed behind a landslide dam (Fan et al., 646 2020; Oppikofer et al., 2020; Strom and Korup, 2006) or dammed by a frontal moraine 647 or glacial ice (Carey et al., 2012; Clague and Evans, 2000; Cook et al., 2016; Haeberli 648 et al., 2016; Harrison et al., 2018; Hubbard et al., 2005; Richardson and Reynolds, 649 2000; Veh et al., 2019; Westoby et al., 2014). The lakes can drain catastrophically for 650 several reasons, including mass movements into the lake (Figure 9) (Costa and 651 Schuster, 1988; Korup and Tweed, 2007). Their influence on settlements and infra-652 structure can be devastating (e.g. Kjartansson 1967; Dahl-Jensen et al., 2004; Stoffel 653 & Huggel, 2012; Dai et al., 2020; Deline et al., 2015b; Dufresne et al., 2018a, b). In 654 regions like the Himalaya, GLOFs have been recognised as the dominant long-term 655 drivers of fluvial erosion and valley evolution (Cook et al., 2018). They are extremely 656 destructive due to their magnitude and unpredictability (Khanal et al., 2015; Mool et 657 al., 2011; Schwanghart et al., 2016; Shrestha et al., 2010). GLOFs' frequency and 658 magnitude are thought to be increasing in response to climate change (Bajracharya 659 and Mool, 2009; Bolch et al., 2011; Dussaillant et al., 2010; Harrison et al., 2018; Lutz 660 et al., 2016). This is due to the fact that outlet glaciers have thinned and retreated from 661 their basins, resulting often in unstable slopes combined with accelerated formation 662 and rapid growth of proglacial lakes (e.g. Guðmundsson et al. 2019; IPCC, 2012).



665 Figure 9. The Steinsholtsjökull rockslide and the GLOF in the Steinsholtsdalur valley 666 in 1967. The extent of panels d and e are shown as black boxes on panels a-c. (a) 667 Aerial photograph taken in August 1960 (b) Aerial photograph taken in September 668 1967, eight months after the rock slide. (c) Modern image showing clearly that the 669 headwall of the slide was about 900 m long. (d) Detailed view showing a 100 m long 670 fracture in the Innstihaus above the Steinsholtsjökull outlet glacier. (e) Same view as 671 in panel d, but using the modern image shown in panel c to illustrate the amount of 672 material mobilised. Aerial images are from the National Land Survey of Iceland.

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Landslides and mass movements such as active-layer-detachment slides and thawslumps in degrading-permafrost terrains can impact on the environments in which they

676 occur. The physical and ecological structure of hillslopes and fluvial networks can be 677 affected by an increased sediment, nutrients, and soil displacement of mass movements (Abbott and Jones, 2015b; Bowden et al., 2008; Gooseff et al., 2009; 678 679 Osterkamp et al., 2009; Turetsky et al., 2019; Zongxing et al., 2016). These 680 phenomena can generate disturbance to terrestrial and aquatic ecosystems (Bowden 681 et al., 2008; Callaghan et al., 2011; Cannone et al., 2010; Osterkamp et al., 2009; 682 Racine et al., 2004). An increase in mass movements occurrence in cold and polar 683 terrains due to permafrost thaw because of the warming climate may also accelerate 684 the release to the atmosphere of Pleistocene sequestered carbon (Belshe et al., 2013; 685 Grosse et al., 2011; Masyagina et al., 2019; Pautler et al., 2010; Schuur et al., 2009, 686 2008; Tarnocai et al., 2009). Thaw-slumps and active-layer-detachment-slides activity 687 in the Arctic has enhanced in the last decades (Jorgenson and Osterkamp, 2005; Luo 688 et al., 2019), generating alterations in the water quality of nearby lakes and streams 689 (Kokelj et al., 2013; Lafrenière and Lamoureux, 2019; Segal et al., 2016), vegetation 690 and soils (Khomutov and Leibman, 2014; Lantuit et al., 2012), and trace gases (Abbott 691 and Jones, 2015).

692

## 693 6. Conclusions

In this chapter, we emphasized the major types of rapid mass movements that reflect the most characteristic expression of rapid down-slope sediment transport in cold and polar environments under glacial, periglacial and paraglacial conditions. Many of these rapid mass wasting processes are not exclusive to the glacial, periglacial and paraglacial domains, but we highlighted that permafrost and ice are the critical agent in their development. We focussed on the specific attributes that distinguish these mass movements from ones in other environments and the

- 701 associated specific research challenges. Cryospheric terrains in mountainous and
- 702 high-latitude environments are the most susceptible to slope stability problems, as

703 warming temperature cause permafrost and ice to degrade. These changes if

704 maintained or worsen can have significant implications for hazard analyses and

- 705 adaptation strategies in these environmentally sensitive areas of the world.
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