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Landslides Induced by Historical and Recent Earthquakes in Central-Southern Apennines (Italy): A Tool for Intensity Assessment and Seismic Hazard

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Abstract

Analysis of distribution of landslides (rock falls and coherent slides), induced by 12 moderate to strong earthquakes occurred in the last three centuries in Central–Southern Apennines, has permitted to investigate the relationship of their maximum distance versus magnitude and ESI epicentral intensity.

For coherent slides, the correlation of magnitude or ESI intensity versus distance is fairly good and consistent with global datasets. Instead, rock falls show a less evident correlation with distance. We stress here the usefulness of such relationships to define the expected scenario of earthquake-induced landslides. However, the data base needs to be improved and enlarged to allow more robust estimates.

Keywords

Earthquake-induced landslides • Intensity scales • Central-Southern apennines

Introduction

The inner sector of Central–Southern Apennines is the most seismic sector of the Italian territory (Fig. 1), characterized in historical times by a number of earthquakes with magnitude around 7 and frequent moderate earthquakes (magnitude around 6).

Events of $M \geq 6$ typically cause environmental effects (surface faulting, landslides, liquefactions, ground cracks, hydrological anomalies, etc.) that are a significant

independent source of seismic hazard in addition to damages due to ground acceleration.

Many historical documents detail the effects of earthquakes in the Apennines, especially the strong events occurred in the last three centuries, reporting lots of data also on the characteristics of the effects on the natural environment. This extraordinary wealth of information has allowed (1) to identify the most vulnerable regions, i.e., the most prone to hazardous Environmental Effects of Earthquakes (i.e. the effects produced by an earthquake on the natural environment or EEEs) and (2) to evaluate the earthquake intensity (epicentral and local) by means of the ESI intensity scale (Michetti et al. 2007), a recently developed intensity scale only based on EEEs.

This study aims at relating the spatial distribution of seismically-induced landslides with magnitude and with the intensity of the event resulting from the application of the ESI scale.

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Fig. 1 Historical seismicity of Central–Southern Apennines (CPTI 2004). Labels locate the epicentres of the seismic events considered in this study

Background

Seismotectonic Framework of the Apennines

The present tectonic structure of the Apennines is the result of Upper Miocene–Lower Pliocene northeast-verging thrust tectonics (Patacca et al. 1990) overprinted by Late Pliocene to Quaternary northeast–southwest crustal extension, migrating in time and space from west to east; the latter is still active now, as demonstrated by seismic (including palaeoseismic) and morphotectonic evidence (Demangeot 1965; Blumetti et al. 1993; Roberts and Michetti 2004). Geodetic data provide velocities (with respect to stable Eurasia) that imply extension rates of 4–5 mm/year across the Apennines (D’Agostino et al. 2008; Devoti et al. 2008).

Historical catalogues (CPTI 2004; Guidoboni et al. 2007) summarize all available information for several moderate to strong earthquakes affecting Central–Southern Apennines in a time window larger than two millennia, but with good completeness only for the last 500 years.

Seismic hazard maps based on historical seismicity and integrated with paleoseismic evidence locate the areas with highest expected magnitudes (even more than 7) in the inner sector of the Central–Southern Apennines.

Magnitude Versus Landslide Distance: State of the Art

Empirical relationships between earthquake-triggered landslide distribution and magnitude based on a global database (about 40 events in the period 1811–1980) have been proposed by Keefer (1984). These relations were refined by Rodriguez et al. (1999) and Bommer and Rodriguez (2002) using a similar approach based on a larger dataset (almost 80 earthquakes). The last papers also discuss the potential relation between landslides distribution and MM intensity degrees. The best fit of data is given by polynomial curves of second degree.

Other relationships between magnitude and landslide distance were published for regional areas (e.g. Papadopoulos and Plessa 2000, for Greece).

In Italy, Prestininzi and Romeo (2000) related the maximum distance of ground failures collected in the CEDIT database (that includes landslides, fractures, liquefaction, topographic changes) with MCS epicentral intensities. Other empirical relationships were pointed out in previous papers of the Authors of this note (e.g. Porfido et al. 2002, 2007), where the distribution of the number of landslides with distance appears to follow a negative exponential trend (e.g. 1805 and 1980 earthquakes). A similar trend has been highlighted for the 2009 earthquake (Guzzetti et al. 2009; Vittori et al. in prep.).

ESI 2007 Intensity Scale

The ESI 2007 intensity scale (Michetti et al. 2007) classifies earthquake intensity based only on Earthquake Environmental Effects (EEE), either directly linked to the earthquake source or triggered by the ground shaking. EEEs include surface faulting, regional uplift and subsidence, tsunamis, liquefaction, ground resonance, landslides, rock falls and ground cracks.

The definition of the ESI intensity degrees has been the result of a revision conducted by an International Working Group made of geologists, seismologists and engineers. It has been ratified by INQUA (International Union for Quaternary Research) in 2007.

The use of the ESI 2007 intensity scale, alone or integrated with the other traditional scales affords a better picture of the earthquake scenario, because only environmental effects allow suitable comparison of the earthquake intensity both:

- In time: effects on the natural environment are comparable for a time-window (recent, historic and palaeo seismic events) much larger than the period of instrumental record (last century), and
- In different geographic areas: environmental effects do not depend on peculiar socio-economic conditions or different building practices.

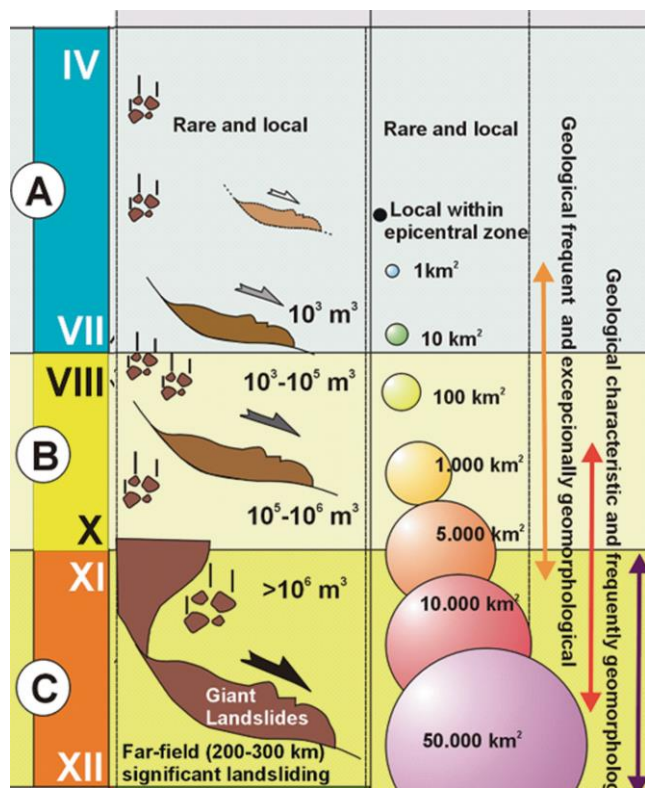


Fig. 2 Schematic picture of the typical landslide size and spatial distribution for ESI intensity degrees ranging from IV to XII (Michetti et al. (2007); Silva et al. (2008))

120 Thus, the new scale aims at integrating traditional seismic scales:
121

- 122 • For earthquake intensity degree larger or equal to X,
123 when damage-based assessments are extremely difficult
124 (because of tendency to saturation), while environmental
125 effects are still diagnostic;
- 126 • In sparsely populated areas, where the effects on man-
127 made structures are lacking and therefore intensity
128 assessments have to be based on the environmental
129 effects, which are the only available diagnostic elements.

130 The occurrence of landslides is expected from intensity IV
131 ESI. The spatial distribution area of secondary effects (includ-
132 ing landslides) allow to estimate the ESI epicentral intensity up
133 to XII (Fig. 2). Furthermore, the growing size (volume, area)
134 of slope movements are considered diagnostic elements for the
135 assessment of the ESI local intensity in the range IV to X.

136 Landslides Versus Intensity in the Apennines

137 Landslides Triggered by Selected Earthquakes

138 We have taken into account 12 earthquakes occurred in the
139 last three centuries, many of which studied in detail by the
140 Authors for macroseismic purposes, with specific focus on

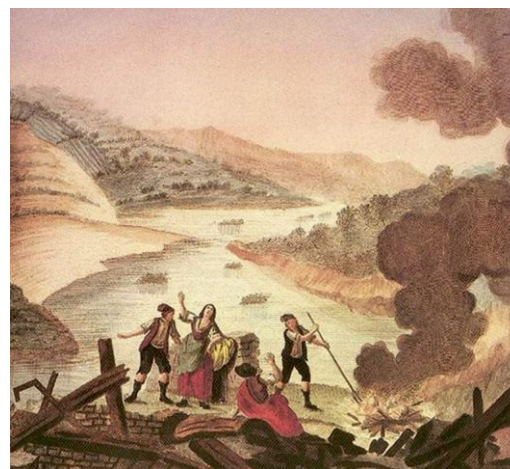


Fig. 3 A landslide triggered by the 1783 Calabrian seismic sequence dammed the S. Cristina narrow valley and formed a temporary lake (Sarconi 1784)

141 the characterization of Earthquake Environmental Effects
142 (Comerci et al. 2009; Esposito et al. 1998, 2000, 2009;
143 Esposito and Porfido 2010; Guerrieri et al. 2007, 2009;
144 Porfido et al. 2002, 2007, 2011; Serva et al. 2007; Vittori
145 et al. 2000, 2011) (Fig. 3).

146 The 1783 Calabrian seismic sequence ($M_s \frac{1}{4} 6.9$; $I_0 \frac{1}{4}$
147 XI MCS; $I_0 \frac{1}{4}$ X-XI ESI) was characterized by a 3 years long
148 sequence and five main shocks generated by individual fault
149 segments of regional WNW-ESE trends. The 1783 multiple
150 event started at the beginning of February and went on until
151 the end of March, reaching a release of energy on March 28
152 with assessed macroseismic magnitude $M \frac{1}{4} 6.9$. More than
153 30,000 lives were lost and 200 localities were completely
154 destroyed by the February 5 main shock. The epicentral area
155 was located on the Gioia Tauro plain, at the western foot of
156 the northern Aspromonte mountain.

157 The shock produced spectacular ground effects, both pri-
158 mary and secondary, such as tectonic deformations, ground
159 fractures, liquefactions phenomena, tsunamis, hydrological
160 changes and diffuse landslides of large size, which in most
161 cases dammed the rivers creating more than 200 new tempo-
162 rary lakes (Porfido et al. 2011). A great density of mass
163 movements occurred in the area bounded by Santa Cristina
164 d'Aspromonte, Molochio-Cittanova and Palmi (Cotecchia
165 et al. 1986). The most common landslides were earth-block
166 type, translational and rotational movement affecting the Plio-
167 Pleistocene deposits of Gioia Tauro Plain (Cotecchia et al.
168 1986). Nevertheless, a reliable dataset of rock fall distribution
169 is not available.

170 The 1805 July 26 Molise earthquake ($M_s \frac{1}{4} 6.6$; $I_0 \frac{1}{4}$ X
171 MCS; $I_0 \frac{1}{4}$ X ESI) affected mostly the Molise region, where
172 at least 30 municipalities, located in the Bojano plain and the
173 eastern foot of the Matese massif, were nearly totally
174 destroyed (Esposito et al. 1987).

175 About one hundred seismically induced environmental
176 effects are known for the 1805 earthquake mostly in the
177 near-field area although some were reported as far as
178 70 km from the epicentre (Esposito et al. 1987; Porfido
179 et al. 2002, 2007; Serva et al. 2007).

180 The earthquake triggered at least 26 slides: mainly rock
181 falls, topples, slumps, earth flows and slump-earth flows.
182 Among the largest of them were the earth flow of San Giorgio
183 la Molara (Benevento), which affected the course of the
184 Tammaro River, the earth flow of Acquaviva di Isernia, the
185 rotational slide at San Bartolomeo in Galdo (Benevento), and a
186 rotational slide-flow at Calitri (Avellino) (Esposito et al. 1987,
187 1998).

188 The 1857 December 16 Basilicata earthquake (M_s $\frac{1}{4}$ 7.0;
189 I_0 $\frac{1}{4}$ X-XI MCS scale; I_0 $\frac{1}{4}$ X-XI ESI) caused extensive
190 damage over an exceptional large area; high values of
191 intensities, X and XI MCS, were observed over an area of
192 900 km², killing about 13,000 people and causing severe
193 damages to man-made works and to the environment.

194 This event was characterized by multiple main shocks;
195 the second shock, felt two minutes after the first one, with
196 higher energy (Branno et al. 1985). Earthquake-induced
197 environmental effects were recorded over a large area
198 extending from the Vallo di Diano (Campania) to the
199 Val d'Agri (Basilicata).

200 Primary and secondary geological effects were recognized
201 both in the near and far field. Forty-three landslides phenom-
202 ena have been localized and classified. The most common
203 slides were rock fall (Atena Lucana, Teggiano, Montesano
204 sulla Marcellana, Grumento Nova, Marsico Vetere) and top-
205 less and subordinately rotational slides (Viggiano, Polla), earth
206 flows (Pignola), and slump earth flows (Bella, Muro Lucano),
207 Mallet (1861), Esposito et al. (1998), Porfido et al. (2002).

208 On 1905 September 8, a large earthquake (M_s $\frac{1}{4}$ 7.1;
209 I_0 $\frac{1}{4}$ XI MCS; I_0 $\frac{1}{4}$ X-XI ESI) occurred in the Southern part
210 of the Calabria region. It extensively ruined several villages
211 located in the northern part of the Capo Vaticano peninsula
212 within an area that suffered a MCS intensity greater than IX,
213 causing the death of 557 people. The earthquake was
214 characterized by different epicenters both inland, near to
215 Vibo Valentia, and offshore not far from the coastline,
216 suggesting as capable faults the Vibo and Capo Vaticano
217 normal fault segments (Catalano et al. 2008).

218 The event induced a great number of effects on the envi-
219 ronment in a wide area: large landslides, accompanied by
220 several cracks and fractures and liquefaction features
221 occurred in several places within the epicentral area, hydro-
222 logical variation (changes in flow and in the temperature of
223 springs and rivers) were also observed over the entire Calabria
224 region both in the near and far field. This event also generated
225 a tsunami that inundated the whole northern coast of the
226 peninsula from Vibo to Tropea with an estimated height of
227 waves of about 1–2 m.

The earthquake triggered at least 40 slides: mainly slump
228 earth flows (Belmonte Calabro, Caraffa di Catanzaro,
229 Cessaniti, Gizzeria, Martirano, Piscopio, Mileto ecc.) and
230 subordinately rock falls (Aiello Calabro, Caulonia, Conidoni,
231 San Leo, Tiriolo, Zungri) (Chiodo and Sorriso-Valvo 2006;
232 Tertulliani and Cucci 2008; Porfido et al. 2011).

233 The 1908 December 28 Southern Calabria-Messina
234 earthquake (M_s $\frac{1}{4}$ 7.2; I_0 $\frac{1}{4}$ XI MCS; I_0 $\frac{1}{4}$ X-XI ESI) is
235 one of the strongest seismic events that struck Italy during
236 the XXth century and the most ruinous in terms of casualties
237 (at least 80,000). The epicenter was located at sea in the
238 Messina Straits. The location of seismogenic fault is still an
239 open issue (Valensise et al. 2008; Aloisi et al. 2009) and
240 therefore the corresponding distance was not evaluated.

241 The impact of the earthquake was particularly catastrophic
242 in Reggio Calabria and Messina cities, damages have been
243 more intense and widespread along the Calabrian coast,
244 between south of Reggio Calabria and south-west of Scilla
245 (Comerci et al. 2009; Porfido et al. 2011). In Sicily the most
246 damaged area was the coast from its easternmost tip to south
247 of Messina. Some minutes after the earthquake, a destructive
248 tsunami inundated both sides of the Strait, with a run up that
249 rose above 10–13 m.

250 More than 400 environmental effects were catalogued
251 (Caciagli 2008; Comerci et al. 2009). Among them, particu-
252 larly relevant were the changes in elevation along both sides
253 of the Strait, partly due to the settlement of loose sediments
254 and artificial filling (e.g., Messina and Reggio Calabria har-
255 bor areas), and partly ascribed to landslides and tectonic slip.
256 Portions of the coast were lost, especially on the Calabrian
257 side, most of them eroded by the tsunamis. Landslides and
258 rockfalls occurred in many Sicilian and Calabrian localities
259 (especially between Reggio C. and Bagnara C.). A subma-
260 rine telephone cable between Gallico (Calabria) and Gazzi
261 (Sicily) was cut likely by a slide.

262 The 1930 July 23 Irpinia earthquake (M_s $\frac{1}{4}$ 6.7; I_0 $\frac{1}{4}$ X
263 MCS; I_0 $\frac{1}{4}$ IX-X ESI) occurred in the most seismic part of the
264 Southern Apennines. The earthquake affected a wide area of
265 36,000 km², comprising the regions of Campania, Puglia and
266 Basilicata. The studies of seismically-induced ground effects
267 benefited from numerous historical and scientific sources, and
268 allowed recognition of primary effects (surface faulting),
269 secondary effects (fractures, landslides, settlements, hydro-
270 logical changes, variations in the chemical and physical activ-
271 ity related to the volcanic and/or thermal zones).

272 The earthquake caused many sliding phenomena, which
273 mainly affected the rural area and, to a lesser extent, the towns
274 around the epicentral area. At least, 26 landslides were trig-
275 gered by the earthquake. Large landslides struck Aquilonia
276 (Avellino) and San Giorgio la Molara (Benevento). The for-
277 mer was a reactivation of a slump-earth flow, along the north
278 side of the Rione San Pietro, that forced the abandonment of
279 the entire village (Esposito et al. 2000a). The latter was a 1 km
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wide and 3 km slump within the Argille Varicolori formation, on the left bank of the Tamaro River, that dammed a short section of the river. Other noteworthy landslides occurred at Ariano Irpino, Vallata, Montecalvo Irpino, Lacedonia, Rocchetta S. Antonio and Acerenza (Esposito et al. 1998; Porfido et al. 2002).

The 1980 November 23 Campania–Basilicata earthquake ($M_s \frac{1}{4} 6.9$; $I_0 \frac{1}{4} X$ MCS; $I_0 \frac{1}{4} X$ ESI) affected 800 localities over a large area of the Southern Apennines, killing 3,000 people. This event was felt nearly everywhere in the Italian peninsula, from Sicily to Emilia Romagna and Liguria (Postpischl et al. 1985).

The review of more than 100 technical and scientific publications has allowed to locate and classify 200 landslides over a total area of 22,000 km². About 47 % of the landslides were rock falls/toppling, 20 % rotational slides, 20 % slump-earthflows, 3 % rapid earth flows, 9 % left undefined (Cotecchia 1986; Esposito et al. 1998; Porfido et al. 2002, 2007). The largest rock falls occurred mostly in the epicentral area, with volumes ranged from 1,000 to 10,000 m³ as well as slump-earth flow that affected some historical centre in the Apennines. The largest one (23 million m³) affected Calitri (Avellino) and its recent urban expansion. Even larger were the mudflows at Buoninventre (30 million m³), near Caposele and Serra d'Acquara, Senerchia (28 million m³).

The September–October 1997 Colfiorito seismic sequence ($M_w \frac{1}{4} 6.0$; $I_0 \frac{1}{4} VIII$ -IX MCS; $I_0 \frac{1}{4} VIII$ -IX ESI) struck the Umbria and Marche regions (Central Italy). Three main events occurred on 26 September at 00:33 and 09:40 GMT, and 14 October with magnitude M_w equal to 5.8, 6.0 and 5.4, respectively; furthermore hundreds of minor but significant events were also recorded. Primary and secondary effects were observed, including surface faulting phenomena, landslides, ground fractures, compaction and various hydrological phenomena.

Landslides, which were the most recurrent among the phenomena induced, consisted mainly of rock falls (Stravignano Bagni, Sorifa, Val Nerina), and subordinately of rotational (Afrile, Foligno, Acciano, Monte d'Annifo), which were generally mobilised by the inertia forces during the seismic motion (Esposito et al. 2000; Guerrieri et al. 2009; Guzzetti et al. 2009).

On 1998 September 9, a moderate earthquake ($M_w \frac{1}{4} 5.7$; $I_0 \frac{1}{4} VII$ MCS; $I_0 \frac{1}{4} VIII$ ESI) hit the Southern Apennines at the NW margin of the Pollino Massif, between Basilicata and Calabria regions. Historical towns, such as Lagonegro, Lauria and Castelluccio suffered significant damage ($I \frac{1}{4} VIII$ MCS). Several ground effects followed the shock, and a rock fall, far from the epicenter, on the road between Cersuta and Acquafredda claimed one life.

Landslide phenomena consisting in rock fall, toppling, rotational slides and earth slumps were observed in Castelluccio Inferiore and Superiore, Fardella, Lauria,

Maratea, Monte Alpi, Nemoli, Noepoli, Rivello, Rotonda, Tortora. Trecchina and Viggianello territories (Michetti et al. 2000).

The 2002 October 31, San Giuliano di Puglia, earthquake ($M_w \frac{1}{4} 5.8$; $I_0 \frac{1}{4} VII$ -VIII MCS; $I_0 \frac{1}{4} VIII$ ESI) caused relevant damages to some villages in Southern Molise (San Giuliano di Puglia, Bonefro, Colletorto), including the tragic collapse of a school at San Giuliano that killed 27 children.

Environmental effects (Vittori et al. 2003) included mainly ground cracks, but also slope movements and hydrological anomalies. Seismically induced landslides consisted mainly in rotational slides (e.g. Castellino sul Biferno) but also translational slides even at significant distance from the epicenter (e.g., Salcito). Rock falls were not surveyed in a systematic way.

The 2009 April 6 L'Aquila earthquake ($M_w \frac{1}{4} 6.3$; MCS $I_0 \frac{1}{4} IX$; ESI $I_0 \frac{1}{4} IX$), which rocked the Abruzzo region, in Central Apennines is part of a seismic sequence active from December 2008 to October 2009. The epicenter for the main shock was located near L'Aquila. Two $M > 5$ aftershocks followed on 7 April (ML 5.3, M_w 5.6, epicenter about 10 km southeast of L'Aquila) and on 9 April (ML 5.1, M_w 5.4, epicenter near Lake Campotosto).

Damages were concentrated on the historical town of L'Aquila which, together with many villages in the surrounding area. The death toll reached 308.

The earthquake produced a widespread set of geological effects on the natural environment. Clear evidence of surface faulting was found along the Paganica fault (Guerrieri et al. 2010; Vittori et al. 2011), and secondary effects have been mapped over an area of about 1000 km², mostly gravitational movements and ground fissures, and secondarily liquefactions and hydrological anomalies (Blumetti et al. 2009).

Regarding slope movements, rock falls in calcareous slopes (Fig. 4) and artificial cuts have been the most common type of effect. Sliding phenomena have also occurred, threatening in some cases the viability of important roads. The scenario includes also some local peculiar effects, like the ground failures along the shores of the Lake Sinizzo.

Empirical Relationships

Similarly to Keefer (1984), we have measured for each earthquake the maximum distance of coseismic slides and rock falls from either the causative fault and the epicentre (Table 1).

Then, such distances have been plotted versus magnitude and versus ESI epicentral intensity (Figs. 5 and 6) with the aim to find a potential correlation.

Fig. 4 Two rock falls triggered by the 2009 L'Aquila earthquake at San Demetrio ne' Vestini (above) and Fossa (below)

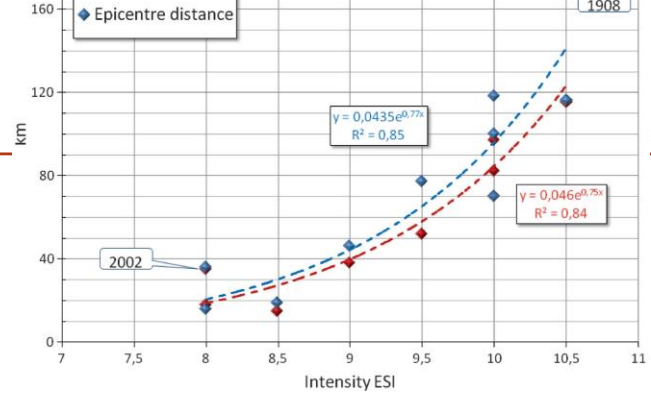


Fig. 5 Relationships between maximum fault distance (in red) and epicentral distance (in blue) of coseismic coherent slides versus magnitude (above) and ESI epicentral intensity (below). Black bold dashed line in the upper graph is the envelope curve of Keefer (1984)

Instead, rock fall data only show a weak trend (Fig. 6). In our opinion, this is due to the very diverse susceptibility to coseismic rock fall/collapse, which is controlled by precise lithological and morphological factors. Moreover, maximum distances for rock falls are always lower than those typically expected for similar magnitudes (see envelope line of Keefer 1984 in Fig. 6 above). Such evidence points out the incompleteness of collected data, especially for historical earthquakes.

Conclusions

Analysis of distribution of landslides (rock falls and coherent slides), induced by 12 moderate to strong earthquakes occurred in the last three centuries in Central–Southern Apennines, has permitted to investigate the relationship of their maximum distance versus magnitude and ESI epicentral intensity.

Table 1 Maximum distances of coseismic rock falls and slides from epicentre and from the fault plane for the 12 earthquakes considered in this study. M_{aw} are from CPTI04

Earthquake	M_{aw}	ESI I_o	Rock falls		Slides	
			Epic	Fault	Epic	Fault
1783.02.05	6,9	X–XI	–	–	13	16
1783.03.28	6,6	X	–	–	70	70
1805.07.26	6,6	X	80	60	100	82
1857.12.16	7	X–XI	86	48	66	30
1905.09.08	7,1	X–XI	49	51	116	115
1908.12.28	7,2	X–XI	36	–	180	–
1930.07.23	6,7	IX–X	15	23	77	52
1980.11.23	6,9	X	50	43	118	97
1997.09.26	6	VIII–IX	25	20	19	15
1998.09.09	5,7	VIII	23	26	16	18
2002.10.31	5,8	VIII	–	–	36	35
2009.04.06	6,3	IX	45	37	46	38

Concerning coherent slides (Fig. 5), a quite good correlation is evident with either magnitude and ESI intensity ($R^2 > 0.8$). In general, these data are quite consistent with the Keefer's envelope (black dashed line in Fig. 5 above), which is based on a global data base. However, substantial deviations (above Keefer's envelope) do exist for some earthquakes (e.g., 1805, 1908, 2002 events).

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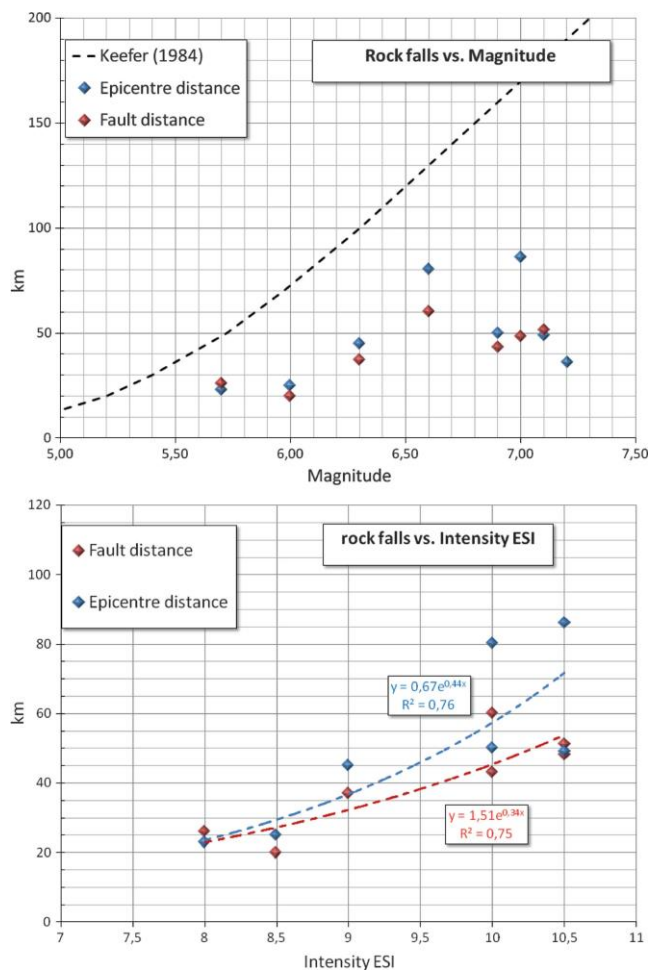


Fig. 6 Maximum fault distance (in red) and epicentral distance (in blue) of rock falls versus magnitude (above) and versus ESI epicentral intensity (below). Bold dashed line in the upper graph is the envelope curve of Keefer (1984). The point distribution is too scattered here to assess reliable trend lines

For coherent slides, the correlation of magnitude versus distance is fairly good and consistent with global datasets (e.g. Keefer 1984; Rodriguez et al. 1999).

For rock falls, maximum distances increase with magnitude, as expected and commonly observed in earthquakes. However, the correlation is much less evident, most likely influenced by local lithological and morphological factors as well as by the incompleteness of data base.

Moreover, although ESI intensity values are actually discrete categories (not numbers), based on the correlation already established between intensities and magnitudes (e.g., CPTI 2004), we have explored their correlation with maximum distance of rock falls and coherent slides. Resulting correlations seem to be reasonably good, for either coherent slides and rock falls.

Being based only on the effects of earthquakes on the natural environment and independent from seismological

parameters or damage-based intensity assessments, we stress here the usefulness of such a tool to define the expected scenario of earthquake-induced landslides, especially in sparsely populated areas or where seismic hazard assessment is based only on pre-instrumental seismicity. However, the data base needs to be improved and enlarged to allow more robust estimates.

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