# Cover Letter

# Dear Dr. Delhez,

we have revised the manuscript "Medium-term dynamics of a Middle Adriatic barred beach" by Postacchini et al., which is under consideration for publication in *Ocean Science*.

The revised manuscript addresses all of the comments and suggestions from the three Reviewers, as reported in the following. The highlights of the revisions include: the addition of a new figure, where the volume change between consecutive surveys is illustrated (Fig.6), and a better description of the sediment transport and morphodynamics, as required by Reviewer #1; a better description of the medium-term approach, an example of the examined time series (new panel of Fig.3), the illustration of the shape parameter A (Fig.5b) and the estimate of the bar-geometry change (Tab.3), as required by Reviewer #2; additional references suggested by Reviewer #3.

Further, we took advantage of this revision to amend some typos and significantly improve the clarity and quality of the manuscript.

We hope you will find the revised manuscript suitable for publication. We look forward to your response.

Yours sincerely, Matteo Postacchini

# **Response to Reviewers**

# Reviewer #1

We thank Reviewer #1 for their useful comments and suggestions which will help to improve our manuscript. The comments from the Reviewer below are in italic font and our point-by-point responses are in bold.

### General comments

The paper focuses on the morphodynamic analysis of a natural sandy littoral stretch located along the highly urbanized coastal sector of the Western Adriatic Sea. Morphologic variability of submerged sandbars is quantitatively analysed and compared with in situ wave data to evaluate the near-shore mediumterm dynamics. The study domain is located in a semi-enclosed and elongated basin whose coastal dynamics are deeply influenced by the physiographical setting. The paper furnishes new insight on local (Central Adriatic) and general (semi-enclosed basin) bars behaviour in medium-term. For this reason, and with the aim to extend the local findings to more general ones, the authors use proper conceptual and analytical methods to describe data and results. However, in order to fully constrain the reached conclusions, a better description of some evidences on the sandbars morphologic variability is needed.

We thank the Reviewer for their appreciation of our analysis. As suggested below, the new version of the manuscript does better describe the evidences of sandbar migration and morphological variability of the beach.

Specific comments

### "Sandbar cross-shore migration evidences"

In the section 4.2 "bathymetric surveys", the proposed seaward/shoreward sandbars migration patterns between consecutive surveys (2006, 2010, 2011, 2012, 2013) are not clearly detectable. Considering the importance of this phenomenon in relation to the paper objective, a better description and presentation are required. Referring to Figure 5, some considerations are reported below. The 2006-2010 shoreward migration is highly localized around the "rotonda sections", the southernmost transects on the contrary seem not to highlight any kind of real net cross-shore displacement. The 2010-2011 evolution is represented by a detectable sandbars cross-shore displacement but not uniform alongshore. The Authors propose a shoreward migration, thus assuming that the sand volume stored in 2010 on the middle-bar had contributed to the upper profile evolution and the large sand volume stored in 2011 on the outer-bar would be alongshore derived (see for example Figure 2). On the contrary, a seaward displacement would imply that the sand volume stored in 2010 on the middle-bar had contributed to the lower profile evolution and the net alongshore sand movement would be located in shallower depth. Even if this is a very limited example, qualitatively detected by a single transect, a volumetric approach could be fundamental to evaluate the

# "cross-transect and along-transect" sedimentary mobility, thus improving the alongshore consistency of interpreted cross-shore sandbars displacement.

We thank the Reviewer for their suggestions, which helped us to better highlight the objective of our paper and also to find some errors in the original version of the paper. In particular, the bar data of Fig.5 have been updated and are now consistent with Fig.4 (in the original version, preliminary data were used). Further, Fig.4 has been changed to make it clearer, while the description of the sandbar migration has been improved (see Sect. 4.2). In addition, a new figure (Fig.6 of the present manuscript) has been added, to clearly show the differences in the beach evolution between 2010 and 2011: representative cross-shore profiles have been illustrated (near and far from the rigid structures), together with the volume-change evolution. Far from the structures, where it seems that all bars migrate shoreward with the inner bar feeding the upper beach, the alongshore sediment transport seems to be negligible, while it is important nearby the "Rotonda". A detailed description has been included at the end of Sect. 4.2.

#### "Sandbar alongshore variability"

As stated by the Authors, since the area is located close to the jetty and characterized by complex hydrodynamics, it could be likely to develop complex sandbar morphologies. Moreover during particular storm events, the coupling of complex hydrodynamics and morphologies could induce cross-shore beach profile response, not necessary in phase with areas farther away from "jetty-rotonda" (see for example Shand et alii, 2001), thus the generalization on the bars behaviour along the whole area could be more complex to define. In this framework, as noted by the Authors, the stabilization of the "bar features" along the southernmost transects could testify the boundary between the near-shore area influenced and "not directly influenced" by the jetty and the "rotonda" structures. The same applies to the cross-shore limits of "rotonda" influence on sandbar characteristics, as well evidenced and described in Figure 5b.

The three-dimensional bar behavior has been better explained, also with reference to the influence of the rigid structures. In addition, cross-shore profiles and volume change helped in the overall interpretation of the alongshore sediment transport. A detailed description has been included at the end of Sect. 4.2.

# Reviewer #2

We appreciate Reviewer #2' comments, which have been taken into due account to improve the clarity and quality of the manuscript. The comments from the Reviewer below are in italic font and our point-by-point responses are in bold.

### General Comments

Summary: This submission investigates medium-term morphodynamics of a barred beach along the Middle Adriatic coast of Italy using annual bathymetric surveys and offshore wave buoy data. Previous studies of similar beaches have focused on short and long-term dynamics, leaving medium-term behavior relatively unstudied. A better understanding of the connections between wave climate and changes in nearshore morphology is needed to improve models that predict storm effects (flooding), beach erosion, or how shoreline protection structures will affect a beach. The authors utilize well-tested data sources (bathymetric surveys and wave buoy from Italian wave measurement network) to examine dynamics on a neglected timescale, medium-term. However, the bathymetric data was collected only once per experimental year, and in my opinion, this limited data set imposes restrictions on the authors' interpretation of the results. Namely, there is insufficient data to separate the possible effects of short term changes due to winter storms from medium-term changes due to medium-term wave climate. See Specific Comments section for further comment.

We agree with the Reviewer that only some surveys are available in the period of operation of the wave buoy. However, it should be noticed that the medium-term climate is the sum of storms and calm states occurring during a specific time period. Each state provides a specific contribution to the overall morphological variation observed in such a period. Hence, the short-term events cannot be separated from the medium-term climate, rather we want to discuss the cumulative effects of all events occurring in a specific time range. Such an analysis is also useful to demonstrate that the beach evolution can be fairly well predicted when a limited number of surveys is available, which is typical for coastal municipalities.

Further, it is worth noting that the choice to analyze the mediumterm response depends on a number of reasons, mainly: i) when analyzing two consecutive surveys, the distinction between the morphological effects induced by a storm and those induced by calm states is difficult, ii) the Adriatic Sea is a long and semi-enclosed basin, which is characterized by an extremely variable climate, with significantly large deviations of the wave characteristics from the mean values, even during a single storm.

All of the above suggest to account for a relatively long time period for a proper estimate of the bar dynamics in the western Adriatic. These points are now clarified in the text and further details are provided in the following responses. Abstract and Title: Abstract explains context and main findings clearly and concisely. The title is appropriate, although upon first reading, the phrase "medium-term dynamics" was unfamiliar. After reading the abstract, I learned that medium-term is a timescale that is longer than short-term (days) and shorter than long-term (years/decades), on the order of seasons or annual. If there is a way to be more clear in the title that medium-term is a timescale, that would be encouraged, but this change is not essential.

We prefer to keep the title as it is, as many literature works include the words "medium term" in their titles (e.g., De Vriend et al.,  $1993^{1}$ ; Kuriyama  $2002^{2}$ ).

Organization: This paper is generally well organized. One recommendation-Explain Dean-type beach stability analysis earlier. It is not addressed until the discussion, but it is first mentioned in the "Description of the Site" and then used to explain longshore variability in the "Results". It would be helpful to present the equation with its explanation earlier, so the reader knows where this stable beach shape characterization comes from and why it is relevant for understanding other changes to the beach morphology.

We agree with the Reviewer on this point. Hence, we have introduced the discussion on the equilibrium beach profile and the related equation in Sect. 2 ("Description of the Site").

### Specific Scientific Comments

Assessment of Medium-term dynamics: Wave climate and nearshore morphology are strongly linked and it is valuable to reveal this relationship over various time scales and environments. The authors focus on a sandy barred beach, chosen for its similarity to many other beaches worldwide, over medium-term time scales. The wave data presented here is sufficient for medium-term analysis. However, a description of the original form of the wave buoy data (time series, hourly product, wave spectra?) and the methods used to further process this data should be specified for the sake of reproducibility.

For the sake of clarity, an example of the significant height obtained from the waverider is illustrated in Fig.3e and discussed in Sect. 4.1. The used approach has been better described in the same section.

The authors acknowledge that beach morphology is "dynamic throughout the year, especially during sea storms driven by NNE winds" (p. 3, line 30). Given this variability, it is necessary to be able to distinguish short-term variability from medium-term variability in order to assess the connection between medium-term wave climate and beach morphology. The bathymetric surveys were collected in different months/seasons each year: June/Summer 2006, February/

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup>De Vriend, H. J., Zyserman, J., Nicholson, J., Roelvink, J. A., Pechon, P., & Southgate, H.

N. (1993). Medium-term 2DH coastal area modelling. Coastal Engineering, 21(1-3), 193-224. <sup>2</sup>Kuriyama, Y. (2002). Medium-term bar behavior and associated sediment transport at Hasaki, Japan. Journal of Geophysical Research: Oceans, 107(C9).

Winter 2010, February/Winter 2011, April/Spring 2012, March/Spring 2013. The authors explain that the two types of winds (ESE and NNE) can happen during the same season, and that in the study region, winters are stormy and summers are calm. The winter surveys would therefore be more susceptible to short-term variability due to storms, which is not distinguishable given the limited bathymetric data set. The summer bathymetric surveys are perhaps more representative of medium-term dynamics, because the beach is not subjected to the magnitude or frequency of short-term, high impact events during that season. Since the literature shows and the authors admit that significant bathymetric changes can occur over the course of a single storm, and there is no information given to put each survey in this short-term context, it is not correct to assume that the "snapshot" of bathymetry seen in the data is representative of the medium-term dynamics. The authors should pursue supplementary data (perhaps short-term wave data analysis) to provide context for the bathymetry surveys used in this study.

We partially agree with the Reviewer on this point and what follows has been clarified in Sect. 3. The bar dynamics strictly depend on short-term events, as already observed worldwide<sup>3</sup>, but also on longlasting calm states occurring in both summer and winter<sup>4</sup>. Hence, we here describe the cumulative effects of a series of events, i.e. both energetic and calm states occurring during a significantly long period (about one year), with the aim to illustrate a more comprehensive bar dynamics. Further, it is worth noting that the surveys collected in February 2011 and May 2013 are similar, while surveys collected in February 2011 and February 2010 are significantly different (e.g., see Fig.2), this demonstrating the independence of the bathymetry on a specific month/season, and confirming its dependence on the cumulative effects of the wave climate between two consecutive surveys.

Finally, preliminary results on the morphological response of the beach of Senigallia subject to a winter storm have already been presented<sup>4,5,6</sup> and a more detailed analysis will be illustrated in a dedicated work in the near future.

The authors present current theory, based on peer-reviewed and published

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup>Ruessink, B.G., Houwman, K.T., & Hoekstra, P. (1998). The systematic contribution of transporting mechanisms to the cross-shore sediment transport in water depths of 3 to 9 m. Marine Geology, 152(4), 295-324.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>4</sup>Brocchini M., Calantoni J., Postacchini M., Sheremet A., Staples T., Smith J., Reed A.H., Braithwaite III E.F., Lorenzoni C., Russo A., Corvaro S., Mancinelli A., & Soldini L. (2017). Comparison between the wintertime and summertime dynamics of the Misa River estuary, Marine Geology, 385, 27-40.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>5</sup>Calantoni J., Sheremet A., Brocchini M., Postacchini M. (2016). EsCoSed: observations of morphodynamics during Bora at the mouth of the Misa River, 9th International Conference on Multiphase Flow (ICMF). http://www.aidic.it/icmf2016/webpapers/

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>6</sup>Palmsten M.L., Calantoni, J., Brocchini M., Soldini L. & Postacchini M. (2016). Sand bar behavior in a mixed sediment environment, Ocean Sciences Meeting. https://agu.confex.com/agu/os16/meetingapp.cgi/Paper/89790

field and laboratory measurements, for predicting bar migration based on wave conditions. This theory states that steeper, larger waves promote a seaward shift of the bar and less steep, smaller waves promote a shoreward shift of the bar. The bar migration pattern results presented in this study agree with previous findings. However, agreement with the theory is limited due to insufficient bathymetric data to definitively ascribe morphological changes over a particular year to medium-term wave climate alone (i.e., lacking evidence that short-term wave climate is not contaminating the bathymetric surveys).

We partially agree with the Reviewer. We know that only few surveys are available, but the medium-term bathymetric changes are ascribed to the medium-term climate, which includes both shortterm events (like storms) and longer states (like calm conditions). Hence, the medium-term changes derive from the cumulative effects of both severe and calm states occurring during the considered temporal range. These considerations have been implemented in Sect. 3.

Tables: Table 1 & 2: The authors claim it is best to use wave statistics based on the maximum percentage of energy flux over the time interval of interest. This is a fair decision. However, based on the Figure 3 wave roses and Table 1 statistics, there is not always a single band where the energy flux is concentrated. For 2010-2011 especially, the energy flux seems evenly split between  $H_{m0} = 1.5 -$ 2.0m (energy flux distribution % of 16.56) and  $H_{m0} = 3.0 - 3.5m$  (energy flux distribution % of 16.02). The authors decide that the dominant waves were about  $H_{m0} = 1.75m$ . Looking at the wave rose for 2010-2011 there are strong peaks in both the ESE (25%) and NNE (20%) directions. Yet, when summarizing the 2010-2011 period, the authors choose ESE for this time interval. The 2011-2012 and 2012-2013 conditions were truly dominated by one type of wind event over the other, so the assumptions made by the authors for those time intervals are justified. Perhaps a more nuanced bimodal analysis of 2010- 2011 is warranted, especially if these bulk wave climate characteristics are used to explain changes in beach morphology.

We thank the Reviewer for this comment, which suggests us to clarify the procedure used for the statistic analysis, now better described in Sect. 4.1. The choice of the ESE forcing is justified by its predominance on the other wave directions, though ESE only slightly dominates on NNE forcing. A brief analysis of the NNE direction is also undertaken for 2010-2011, this confirming that the NNE sector generally provides steeper waves if compared to those characterizing the ESE sector, whether or not this represents the most energetic sector. In addition, the splitting of the energy flux is now better discussed in Sect.4.1 (please note that Tab.1 and Tab. 2 refer to to 2012-2013, and not to 2010-2011, as incorrectly stated in the original version). In particular, the choice of the lower wave-height range is motivated by a larger wave frequency characterizing that class. Figures: Figure 6a shows normalized bar height versus normalized bar width with fits for outer and inner bar (essentially steepness curves  $(H_{bar}/W_{bar})$  showing how bar geometry changes from outer to intermediate bars). The fits are presented for 2010 and 2013, but not for the other three years of data, leaving the reader questioning whether these trends are consistent.

The fitting lines have only been plotted for two years as the other data provide weak best-fit curves. This point is discussed in the new version of the paper.

Furthermore, if the goal is to show that medium-term bar dynamics are strongly linked to medium-term wave climate, it is important to present plots that relate bar features (or changes in bar features) to wave climate metrics (like Table 3, but is visual plot form).

We thank the Reviewer for their comment. We have preferred to include the outer bar changes in Tab.3, where they are easily comparable with the wave climate (notice that the wave propagation was performed from the offshore to the outer bar depth). Brief discussions have been included at the end of Sect.4.4 and 5.

Figure 6b shows that the cross-shore area of the bar increases southward. A shift in the grain size distribution is the explanation given for the alongshore trend in the equilibrium beach profile. Since grain size distribution is a consideration throughout the authors' analysis of the results, plotting cross-shore bar area versus some grain size distribution metric would be more useful.

As also stated in the manuscript, direct measures of sediment size are very few and older if compared to the available surveys. Further, we have tried to plot the cross-shore bar area against the A parameter, which is an indirect measure of the sediment size, but this gives a weak correlation. However, the alongshore evolution of A has been included in Fig.7b, using a secondary axis. This is properly discussed in Sect. 4.3 and 5.

#### Technical Comments

Fluency: Although it is apparent that English is the second language of the authors, this does not inhibit the reader's ability to understand this research and its conclusions. There are only a few places where grammar issues impede the authors' message. Listed below are the sentences where a second pass at phrasing would be beneficial. p. 7, line 10 - p. 8, line 3 p. 16, lines 1-7 p. 18, lines 15-20

These points have been amended.

Equations: Mathematical formulae, symbols, abbreviations, and units are correctly defined and used. References: The number and quality of references is appropriate.

We thank the Reviewer for their approval.

# Reviewer #3

We thank Reviewer #3 for their precious suggestions, which will be implemented to improve the quality of our manuscript. The comments from the Reviewer below are in italic font and our point-bypoint responses are in bold.

I have read with interest the paper "Medium-term dynamics of a middle Adriatic barred beach" by Postacchini et al. The MS paper deals with the morphodynamic analysis of a natural sandy littoral stretch located along a highly urbanized coastal sector on the west Adriatic Sea. The morphologic variability of submerged sandbars is analysed and compared with in situ wave data, on order to evaluate medium-term dynamics. Generally speaking, I find the paper interesting, tackling an important aspect in a convincing way (although of course dealing with the usual problems of having "not enough" data) and well organized. The English is also rather fluent.

We thank again the Reviewer for their appreciation of our work.

However, the MS may benefit from some minor improvements that could be easily implemented by the authors.

- I feel the need of more specific links to some of the several existing waveclimate studies on the Adriatic basin. - The paper tackles a subject relatively unexplored, i.e. the medium-term behavior, that is a timescale that between short term (days) and long term (years/decades), on the order of seasons or years, using annual bathymetric surveys and offshore wave buoy data. There is no doubts that improving the knowledge on the relations between wave climate and changes in nearshore morphology is a necessary step, in order to improve numerical models capable of predicting storm effects, beach erosion, and more generally the efficiency of shoreline protection measures. This is even more valid in a context of climate change, that should be also mentioned in the paper more clearly. Benetazzo et al. 2012, DOI:10.5194/nhess-12-1-2012, and references therein inlcluded may give some useful hints on this.

We agree with the Reviewer. What suggested has been included in the first paragraph of Sect.1.

- at the same time, some lines addressing the realtionship between the local scale dynamics with a more regional scenario of sediment dynamics and transport should possibly be introduced by the authors. Sherwood et al., 2004, Oceanography; or Harris et al., DOI: 10.1029/2006JC003868. Even though not strictly pertinent to the study, it should be indeed mentioned that the longshore and cross-shore budget of the local beach is however to be framed within a more regional dynamics.

To better contextualize the observed morphological changes in the Adriatic framework, we have introduced the suggested regional aspects at the end of Section 2. - other existing approaches could be mentioned in order to provide a more complete series of wave data nearshore, including the transfer of offshore wave data to the coast by means of wave models, e.g. SWAN, in order to reconstruct a more detailed and spatially meaningful wave climate (Carniel et al., 2011, DOI: 10.2478/s13545-011-0036-1)

This point has been amended as suggested.

- Some more caveats should be discussed, since the bathymetric data was collected once per year and are therefeore somehow limited. Possible workarounds could be put more in evidence, as the use of video images to reconstruct the coastline (see Archetti et al., 2016, . doi:10.5194/nhess-16-1107-2016, and references therein included.

The suggested references have been included in the Conclusions, where the coastal video monitoring is discussed as a possible improvement of the present analysis.

- Since it is somehow difficult to be sure about the separation of shortterm changes due to winter storms with respect to medium-term changes due to medium-term wave climate, in this filed even a relatively quick reference/analysis of wind and wave data resulting from climate models or satellite-verified database may be of direct help. Although the wave data presented here seems to be sufficient for the proposed medium-term analysis, and a more careful analysis of available wave-data also from global reanalysis or modeling efforts would improve the soundness of analysis but being too heavy, the authors may refer to existing efforts that are represented by available regional cliamte models, originated possibly from efforts such as the MEDATLAS project.

We thank the Reviewer for their suggestion, which has been included in the Conclusions.

# **Relevant changes**

- New figure for the comparison of the cross-shore profiles and the estimate of the volume change through a beach profile.
- Inclusion of a wave-height time series recorded by the waverider.
- Illustration of the shape parameter evolution.
- Estimate of bar alongshore-averaged geometry changes.
- Better description of the beach morphodynamics and medium term approach.

# Medium-term dynamics of a Middle Adriatic barred beach

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Abstract. In the recent years, attention has been paid to beach protection by means of soft and hard defenses. Along the Italian coasts of the Adriatic Sea, sandy beaches are the most common landscapes and around 70 % of the Marche-Region coasts (central Adriatic), is protected by defense structures. The longest free-from-obstacle nearshore area in the region Region includes the beach of Senigallia, characterized by a multiple barred beach, frequently monitored during frequently monitored in the last

- 5 decades and characterized by a multiple bar system, which represents a natural beach defense. The bathymetries surveyed in 2006, 2010, 2011, 2012 and 2013 show long-term stability, confirmed by a good adaptation of an analyzed stretch of the beach to the Dean-type equilibrium profile, though a strong short-/medium-term variability of the wave climate has been observed during the monitored periods. This suggests a slight influence of wave forcing on the long-term profiles, which seems to only depend on the sediment size. Further, the The medium-term dynamics of the submerged bars and their geometric features have
- 10 been related to the wave climate collected, during the analyzed temporal windows, by a wave buoy located 40 km off Senigallia. An overall interpretation of the complete dynamics, i.e. hydrodynamics(buoy data)hydrodynamics, sediment characteristics (equilibrium-profile *A* parameter) and morphodynamics (bathymetric surveys), and seabed morphology suggests that the wave climate is fundamental for the morphodynamic changes of the beach in the medium term: waves coming time ranges during which waves mainly come from NNE/ESE, are characterized by a larger/smaller steepness and by a larger/smaller relative
- 15 wave height, <u>and seem to</u> induce seaward/shoreward bar migration, as well as bar smoothing/steepening. Moving southeastward, the bar dimension increases, while the equilibrium profile shape suggests the adaptation to a decreasing sediment size in the submerged beach. This is probably due to the presence of both the harbor jetty and river mouth North of the investigated area.

## 1 Introduction

- 20 Our communities are experiencing a series of problems and difficulties related to the inundation risk in the coastal areas, the protection of nearshore regions, the use of beaches for tourist and recreational activities. In the last decades, an increasing attention has been paid to short- and long-term predictions associated with the climate change , which is effects, which are strictly related to the above-mentioned aspects (e.g., see Houghton et al., 2010; Ranasinghe et al., 2013). In fact, such predictions are associated with both the mean sea-level rise and the more frequent sea storms, also occurring during the summertime.
- 25 The understanding of the main physical processes driven by such changes is fundamental for (i) the modeling of the nearshore dynamics, also in terms of rapid morphological changes of the beach (e.g., Postacchini et al., 2016b), (ii) the correct prediction

of coastal flooding (e.g., Villatoro et al., 2014), and (iii) the proper design of protection solutions (e.g., Lorenzoni et al., 2016) and (iv) the correct analysis of future scenarios in the coastal area (e.g., see Benetazzo et al., 2012; Lionello et al., 2012).

Several studies (e.g., Benavente et al., 2006; Walton and Dean, 2007) showed that a proper representation of the local

- 5 bathymetry is fundamental both to correctly predict the seabed changes induced by wave/current forcing and to design efficient solutions for the coastal protection. Hence, typical bedforms of unprotected sandy beaches should be taken into due account. In particular, submerged subtidal bars usually form on bottom slopes within 0.005–0.03 and their height ranges between some centimeters to meters (Leont'ev, 2011). In semi-protected and open coasts, two-dimensional longshore bars are quite common and have been extensively studied, though the complex mechanisms of generation and migration are not yet completely un-
- 10 derstood. Generation of submerged bars can be ascribed to three different mechanisms, i.e. wave breaking, infragravity waves and self arrangement (Wijnberg and Kroon, 2002), while the bar migration depends on several coastal processes and has been investigated both in the field (e.g., Ruessink et al., 1998), numerically (e.g., Dubarbier et al., 2015) and through laboratory experiments (e.g., Alsina et al., 2016). It has been observed that swash-zone slope, grain size and wave characteristics play an important role. The influence of the former on the bar dynamics has only been observed during laboratory experiences, after an
- 15 ad hoc ad hoc manual reshaping of the swash zone (Baldock et al., 2007; Alsina et al., 2012). On the other hand, field observations confirmed that the grain size could be important in the bar migration rates, due to the larger sediment transport induced by finer sands (Goulart and Calliari, 2013), while the wave characteristics are fundamental for the bar migration direction. In particular, the wave breaking over the bars leads to the generation of a deep return flux, known as undertow, which promotes a seaward motion. As an example, Gallagher et al. (1998) observed, near Duck (North Carolina), an intensified wave breaking
- 20 occurring over the bar during storms, this inducing a large undertow inshore of the bar that pushed it seaward. Conversely, a shoreward bar migration was also observed under small waves, during less energetic states (see also Goulart and Calliari, 2013).

While numerical simulations well reproduced the offshore migration during severe conditions, some difficulties arose when reproducing the onshore bar motion during mild wave conditions (Gallagher et al., 1998; Plant et al., 2004), this suggesting

- 25 that not all the processes involved in the bar migration were clearly understood and correctly simulated, e.g., lower-frequency waves. Further, Ruessink et al. (1998), who analyzed the cross-shore sediment transport and morphological changes occurring in the nearshore area of Terschelling (Netherlands), stated that the role of the infragravity waves have not been completely understood. In particular, it was fairly clear that during energetic conditions, the suspended load dominated over the bedload and the morphodynamics were controlled by undertow , and, probably, infragravity waves: the latter, more important during
- 30 breaking than during calm conditions, mobilize large amounts of sediments, which are then advected offshore by the undertow. The importance of infragravity waves is confirmed by other authors, and a detailed study about their influence on the bar

dynamics was undertaken by Aagaard et al. (1994) using field data collected at Stanhope Lane Beach (Canada). They stated that the sediment transport induced by infragravity waves may be either shoreward or seaward, and suspended sediments are mainly transported towards antinodes in the water surface elevation. However, the contribution of infragravity waves on both sediment transport and sandbar motion can be neglected on time scales of years, i.e. when dealing with medium-term morphodynamics (Ruessink and Terwindt, 2000).

With the purpose to characterize the sandbar migration, an important parameter has been recently introduced. This is the local relative wave height, i.e. the ratio between local wave height H and water depth over the bar crest  $h_{cr}$ . Values smaller than

- 5 ~ 0.3 promote landward migration, while values larger than 0.6 promote seaward migration (Houser and Greenwood, 2005). In particular, along the Dutch coast (Ruessink et al., 1998; Ruessink and Terwindt, 2000), a relative wave height  $H_s/h_{cr} = 0.33$  represented the onset of breaking, with  $H_s$  being the local significant height. Hence,  $H_s/h_{cr} > 0.33$  referred to breaking intensification and undertow increase, leading to seaward bar migration. While  $H_s/h_{cr} < 0.33$  indicated dominance of short waves and wave skewness, leading to shoreward bar migration. The analysis of the velocity moments and sediment transport
- 10 confirmed the correlation between medium-term wave conditions and short-term sediment transport measurements (Ruessink and Terwindt, 2000).

From a physical point of view, the increase of both  $H_s/h_{cr}$  and breaking intensification produces an increase of the breaking wave celerity (e.g., see Postacchini and Brocchini, 2014), this leading to an intensification of the shoreward volume flux, hence to a wave setup (e.g., see Soldini et al., 2009) and to the following increase of the undertow velocity (e.g., see Kuriyama and Nakatsukasa, 2000).

Only few literature studies have been carried out to investigate the seasonal and annual scale of the beach dynamics (e.g., Ruggiero et al., 2009). Some field observations confirmed a cyclic behavior of multiple bars (Ruessink and Terwindt, 2000; Goulart and Calliari, 2013), mainly characterized by three stages, i.e. initial generation, seaward migration and final degradation. Conversely, other authors observed a continuous landward motion, until bar-shore welding, even during storm events

20 (Aagaard et al., 2004). While the offshore migration is promoted by the undertow dominance in the net transport balance, as already stated, the onshore migration is probably enhanced by storm surge. In fact, the surge (i): this increases both skewness and phase coupling , and (ii) and reduces the undertow contribution.

The present study describes the seabed evolution of a natural unprotected beach stretch of Senigallia (Marche Region, Italy), a touristic town of the Italian Middle Adriatic. The available bathymetries, covering the last decade, and the wave climate,

enable us to analyze the medium-term morphological evolution of the beach, including the geometry and migration of the submerged bars, as a function of the wave forcing. To the authors' knowledge, this is the first study on the medium-term beach evolution and bar migration occurring in a sandy beach of the Adriatic Sea, a semi-enclosed basin characterized by small tidal excursions (<u>40em~40cm</u>) and reduced wave heights, if compared to<u>the above-mentioned</u>, e.g. the Dutch coastal areas.

The manuscript is divided as follows. Sect. 2 and Sect. 3 illustrate, respectively, the investigated site and the available data. 30 Results are presented in Sect. 4 and discussed in Sect. 5. Some conclusions close the paper.

### 2 Description of the site

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The analyzed coast is part of the longest unprotected beach of the Marche Region, which extends from the estuary of the Misa River, whose final reach is highly engineered and adjacent to the Senigallia harbor, to  $\sim 3.5 \,\mathrm{km}$  North of the Esino River estuary, hence for a total length of  $\sim 12 \,\mathrm{km}$  (Fig. 1). As observed during recent field experiments, the coastal region around the Misa River estuary is dynamic throughout the year, especially during sea storms driven by NNE winds, which mobilize a large



**Figure 1.** Natural beach of Senigallia: (a) bathymetry with isobaths and position of cross-shore profiles referring to June 2006 (the white spot between profiles  $\frac{11}{10}$  and  $\frac{12}{11}$  is the "Rotonda") and (b) satellite view of  $\sim 10$  km beach South of the harbor/Misa River estuary.



**Figure 2.** Example of cross-shore profile evolution during the investigated years. Bar characteristics referring to the 2010 profile are also reported.

amount of sediment and generate significant erosion/deposition patterns nearby the rigid structures (Brocchini et al., 2015; ?) (Brocchini et

5 depth h = 0-3 m, and a mild slope of about 1 : 200 for h > 3 m (example of cross-shore profiles are illustrated in Fig. 2). The emerged beach is characterized by fine ( $d_{50} = 0.125-0.25$  mm) and medium ( $d_{50} = 0.25-0.5$  mm) sands, while fine sand was found with fine sand in the submerged part.

The wave climate in the investigated area was obtained from a waverider of the Italian wave measurement network (RON), located  $\sim 23 \,\mathrm{nm}$  East-North-East of Senigallia. It worked between March 1999 and March 2006 and between December 2009

10 and November 2013, the data between 2006 and 2010 surveys thus missing. During the 11 years recordings, the waves mainly came from ESEand NNE, NNE and NW (Fig. 3a), the main events hence being induced by Bora (coming from NNE) and Levante-Scirocco (from ESE) winds. The wave frequency (blue outline) is better distributed throughout the directions, while the wave energy (orange area) is characterized by sharper peaks corresponding to ESE and NNE.

The analysis of the beach morphology, using the concept of the equilibrium beach profile , (Dean, 1991), describes the long-term beach equilibrium of a natural beach, i.e. the balance between erosive and accretive forcing, through

5  $h = Ax^{2/3}$ ,

(1)

where *h* is the water depth and *x* the distance to shoreline. *A* is a dimensional shape parameter, directly related to the median grain diameter  $d_{50}$  (Hanson and Kraus, 1989). Notice that Eq. 7 also leads to the estimate of both the so-called "fitting depth" and the shape parameter *A*, which strictly depends on  $d_{50}$ , for each single cross-shore profile (e.g., Walton and Dean, 2007). See also the discussion in Sect. 5.

- The , i.e. the water depth at which the measured profile collapse over the equilibrium profile. Though recent models account for further parameters, like seasonal changes (Inman et al., 1993) or the generation of submerged bars (Holman et al., 2014), their application is fairly difficult and it has been demonstrated that Eq. 7 properly represents the long-term natural profile, to be used for coastal engineering purposes (e.g., Walton and Dean, 2007; Soldini et al., 2013). With the purpose to estimate a proper fitting depth, the submerged beach, surveyed in 2006, 2010, 2011, 2012 and 2013 up to a depth of  $\cong 6m \sim 6m$
- 15 (see also Sect.3), has been extended up to 10m assuming as constant the mild slope characterizing the deeper beach stretch, i.e. 1:200, in order to estimate a proper fitting depth. Using either the least-square approach or the continuity of volume, i.e. integration of Eq. (??7), the results are similar. From the DTM of Fig. 1a, referring to the 2006 survey, 66 profiles have been extracted. It is important to notice that A, and similarly  $d_{50}$ , decreases moving southward. The largest values occur close to the Senigallia harbor (profile 1 of Fig. 1a), i.e.  $A \approx 0.069$  where  $A \sim 0.069$  and, following Hanson and Kraus (1989),
- 20  $d_{50} \cong 0.15 \text{ mm} d_{50} \sim 0.15 \text{ mm}}$ , while the smallest occur  $\sim 3.9 \text{ km}$  South of the harbor (profile 66), where  $A \cong 0.060$  and  $d_{50} \simeq 0.13 \text{ mm} A \sim 0.060$  and  $d_{50} \sim 0.13 \text{ mm}}$ . Such values are in agreement with the fine sand characterizing the submerged beach (Lorenzoni et al., 1998a). It has been observed that, throughout the coast surveyed in 2006, the natural beach well adapts to the Dean-type equilibrium profile. This is confirmed by the following campaigns (2010–2013), when a good adaptation still exists, the values of A remain almost constant in time and decrease moving southward. Further, the fitting depth increases from
- the harbor to the "Rotonda", i.e. the pile-mounted permeable structure within profiles 11 and 1210 and 11, and decreases South of the "Rotonda". This suggests a sediment motion occurring at larger depths in correspondence of the structure, that partially (and locally) influences the beach evolution and bar migration.

Although the present study aims at investigating the nearshore area, where both cross-shore and alongshore sediment transport contributions determine the short- to long-term equilibrium of the shallow beach, a regional framework may also

- 30 be taken into account. In general, the sediment transport throughout the Adriatic Sea is influenced by a number of factors. Specifically, the western Adriatic coast is characterized by large depositions nearby the rivers (e.g., at the Misa River estuary, as described be especially close to the Po Delta. Further depositions occur north of the Gargano Peninsula, due to the Western Adriatic Coastal Current (WACC, e.g., see Harris et al., 1998; Sherwood et al, 2004), which is responsible of the suspended sediment transport. In the same regional framework and for depths greater than 10*m*, while Bora-induced waves provide large sediment fluxes, Scirocco-induced waves lead to sediment flux reduction, though sediment suspension increases due to significantly energetic
- 5 conditions.

### 3 Experimental data

The natural beach of Senigallia was characterized by a number of bathymetric surveys since the 80s. More recently, due to a specific requirement of the Marche Region, a detailed survey of the nearshore region of Senigallia was undertaken in June 2006, both North and South of the harbor, such areas being respectively characterized by a protected and an unprotected beach.

10 The surveys cover the nearshore region up to a depth of 6 m and a total length of 4.3 km, most of which (~ 3.9 km) South of the harbor (Fig. 1a).

Between 2010 and 2013, after the modification of the harbor entrance, annual bathymetric surveys up to a depth of 6 m were carried out by the municipality of Senigallia on a 2.5 km-long area covering part of the protected and part of the unprotected beaches.

- 15 The analysis of the available available bathymetric surveys enabled us to extract 18 cross-shore profiles which characterize the unprotected beach for about 1 km. This is-The bathymetries have been used for the analysis of the morphological changes induced by the wave climate throughout years, wave-climate-induced morphological changes, i.e. bed variations between two consecutive surveys, in terms of bar migration and geometry. It is worth noting that bathymetries could have been surveyed just after an intense storm, which promotes significant morphological changes. However, the medium-term climate is the sum
- 20 of a number of energetic and calm states occurring between two consecutive surveys. Hence, a bathymetry does not depend on any specific event, nor on a specific season/month (e.g., see the significantly different beach profiles surveyed in February 2010 and February 2011, illustrated in Fig. 2), but on the sum of the contributions of all such events to the overall morphological change observed in the chosen time range. Further, the separation between the morphological effects induced by long-term and short-term events is difficult, especially in semi-enclosed basins like the Adriatic Sea, which is characterized by an extremely
- 25 variable climate, with significantly large deviations of the wave characteristics from the mean values, even during a storm. Hence, the aim of the present work is that of analyzing the morphological changes and discussing the cumulative effect of all events occurring between consecutive surveys. Such an analysis is also useful to demonstrate that the beach evolution can be predicted when a limited number of surveys is available, a typical condition for coastal municipalities.

From the analysis of both surveys and satellite data, the submerged bars remain for a stretch of ~ 12km. Further, moving
southeastward, the sediment size changes, with a transition from sand to gravel occurring ~ 6km South of the harbor (Lorenzoni et al., 1998b). Hence, the initially two-dimensional longshore bars of the investigated area get closer to the shoreline, thus switching to three-dimensional (see Fig. 1b, where the location of the bars is highlighted by both foam and suspended sediment induced by the waves breaking over them). However, the ~ 1km-long area South of the harbor can be taken as representative of the sandy beaches characterizing the Middle Adriatic Sea and will be analyzed in the next sections.

# 4 Results

The following sections illustrate the results obtained from the analysis of the seabed variation using the available bathymetric surveys, which refer to June 2006, February 2010, February 2011, April 2012 and May 2013, and the related wave climate.

5 Both migration and geometry of the submerged bars are also discussed.



Figure 3. Wind roses of wave energy (red line) and frequency (blue line) referring to time periods: (a) 1999–2006 and 2009–2013, (b) 2010–2011, (c) 2011–2012 and (d) 2012–2013. (e) Time series of the significant height measured between March 2010 and January 2011, with indications of the largest wave  $(H_{m0} > 3m)$  direction.

### 4.1 Wave climate

Except for the period 2006–2010, during which the waverider did not work, the wave climate referring to the considered time periods is illustrated in Fig. 3: both the overall climate (Fig. 3a) and the single-period climates (2010–2011 in Fig. 3b; 2011–2012 in Fig. 3c; 2012–2013 in Fig. 3d) are shown. The most frequent and the most energetic waves are, in both cases, those

- 10 coming from either ESE, i.e. forced by Levante-Scirocco winds, or NNE, i.e. forced by Bora winds, which thus correspond to the predominant waves of such a coastal area. <u>Waves from NW are also frequent, but less energetic</u>. While the wave frequency (blue lines) , though the NNE and ESE peaks, results is fairly well distributed and homogeneousif the different roses are compared, the wave energy (red lines) is characterized by sharper peaks in correspondence of these-the dominant directions and by a reduced distribution elsewhere. It is worth noting that directions of yearly dominant waves result variable.
- 15 It is well known that the wave climate for the extra-tropical regions at intermediate latitudes, like that of the Adriatic Sea, is characterized by the presence, at the soil level, of closed dynamical systems, as cyclones and anticyclones. Usually, soil weather systems are connected to a movement with an upper-level wavy structure, that slowly migrates eastward. So, the presence of migrating temporal troughs and ridges alternates during the year. Troughs are linked to low atmospheric pressure areas, with colder air and a sequence, usually, of cyclones. Ridges are linked to high pressure areas, with warmer air and anticyclonic,
- 20 more stable, weather. Specifically, the Bora is a cold and dry wind usually linked to a well-developed anticyclone on the central or northern Europe and a relative low pressure on the Mediterranean Sea. It is more frequent and very intense during the winter. Conversely, the Scirocco is a southern warm wind, which is dry in Africa, then becomes wet passing on the Mediterranean Sea, and finally generates big sea storms with important surges and persistent swell. Scirocco intensities are less than the Bora, but generate longer and more enduring wayes.
- 25 HenceIn the studied site, the weather is not characterized by two distinct (seasonal) behaviors, rather by a pronounced temporal variability of the wave climate during the year: the two peaks illustrated in the single panels of Fig. 3a-d do not refer to the prevalent conditions occurring, respectively, e.g., in summer and winter, but mainly refer to the most severe winter storms (Fig. 3e), the summertime being characterized by milder wave conditions, due to less strong winds and slowly changing wind directions during storms (see also Brocchini et al., 2015). The alternation in the winter-storm direction, which remains
- 30 almost constant during the storm growth, is confirmed by ?, who observed two consecutive storms, the first due to Bora wind and the second, after three days, due to winds coming from WNW and N. The dominance of one peak on the other underlines the pronounced temporal variability of the wave climate during the year (especially in winter), with some years (or winters) characterized by a larger number of Scirocco than Bora storms, and vice-versa. The Further, the fairly well distributed frequency, with respect to the more peaked energy flux(Fig. 3), indicates that the annual variability of storms is not bound to the seasonal variability of wave climate.

Further, This can be observed in Fig. 3e, where the time series of the significant wave height recorded by the waverider in 2010-2011 is illustrated. The incoming direction of the storms characterized by  $H_{m0} > 3m$  is also reported. Notice that three out of five large storms occurred in winter, coming respectively from ENE (10/03/2010), ESE (23/12/2010) and NNE

5 (22/01/2011). The alternation in the winter-storm direction is confirmed by Brocchini et al. (2017), who observed two consecutive

storms in January 2014, the Bora is a cold and dry wind usually linked to a well-developed anticyclone on the central or northern Europe and a relative low pressure on the Mediterranean Sea. It is more frequent and very intense during the winter. Conversely, first due to Bora winds and the Seiroeco is a southern warm wind, which is dry in Africa, then becomes wet passing on the Mediterranean Sea, and finally generates big sea storms with important surges and persistent swell. Seiroeco intensities are less

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than the Bora, but generate longer and more enduring wavessecond, after three days, due to winds coming from WNW and N.

With reference to both frequency and energy flux, a statistic analysis of the main sectors has been undertaken for each selected time period, as in the following steps:

- the wave climate during the whole time range is analyzed to obtain the energy distribution illustrated in Fig. 3b-d,
- the most energetic direction is chosen and associated to a specific sector, i.e. ESE sector (105-135)° ) for for ESE or

15

5

 $(15-45)^{\circ}$  for NNE,

- the waves falling in the chosen sector are analyzed to get the most energetic wave-height ranges,
- the most frequent wave-period ranges associated to such heights are chosen.

In detail, since Fig. 3b and Fig. 3d show that the ESE forcing dominates in 2010–2011 and 2012–2013, and NNE sector only the (105–135)° sector has been analyzed. Conversely, the NNE forcing dominates in 2011–2012, hence this has been

- 20 associated to (15–45)°) for 2011–2012. During the former time periods. In the former case, the largest energetic contribution is contributions (more than 60% of the total) are ascribed to significant wave heights in the range  $H_{\rm m0} = (1-3)$  m (2010–2011) and  $H_{\rm m0} = (1.5-3.5)$  m (2012–2013). The most frequent waves falling in such ranges are characterized by mean periods  $T_{\rm m} = (4.5T_{\rm m}) = (4-6)$  s 5.5) s (2010–2011) and  $T_{\rm m} = (5T_{\rm m}) = (4.5-6.5)$  s (2012–2013). In the same years, peak periods are respectively  $T_{\rm p} = (6.5$  Peak periods are, respectively,  $T_{\rm p} = (6-8.5)$  s 7.5) s and  $T_{\rm p} = (7-8.5)$  s. In the period dominated by
- 25 <u>NNE waves2011–2012</u>, the largest energetic contribution ( $\geq 60\%$ ) belongs to a narrower wave-height range, i.e.  $H_{m0} = (1.5H_{m0} = (1-2.5)m$ , which corresponds to most frequent waves falling within the ranges  $T_m = (4.5in \text{ wider ranges } T_m = (3.5-5.5)s$  and  $T_p = (6T_p = (5-7)s$ . The above-described procedure can be better understood observing-

With the purpose of characterizing each time interval with specific wave features, the most energetic direction (ESE or NNE) associated with the most probable wave-height class gives the most probable wave-period class. As an example, Tab. 1, which

30 illustrates the energy flux distribution within sector 105–135 for the time period 2010–2011, and shows that in 2012-2013 the largest energy-flux distributions characterize the ranges  $H_{m0} = 1.5-2m$  (16.56%) and  $H_{m0} = 3-3.5m$  (16.02%). However, we believe that the former is more representative, as more probable height-period classes exist (see Tab. 2, which refers to the corresponding frequency distributions for fixed ranges of  $H_{m0}$  and  $T_m$ ). In particular, 10.51% of all waves are characterized by  $H_{m0} = 1.5-2m$  and  $T_m = 5.0-5.5s$ , while waves with  $H_{m0} = 3-3.5m$  are not so frequent.

With the purpose of characterizing each time period with specific wave features, the most energetic direction (ESE/NNE), associated with the most probable wave-height range (e.g.,  $H_{m0} = 1.5-2.0$  in the example of Tab. 1), gives the most probable wave-period range (e.g.,  $T_m = 5.0-5.5$  in Tab. 2). This results in the The described procedure leads to the following mean

**Table 1.** Energy-flux distribution (%) in 2010–2011 2012–2013 (only referring to sector 105–135°). The most probable class is reported in bold.

					$H_{\rm m0}$ [m]					
0.0–0.5	0.5-1.0	1.0-1.5	1.5-2.0	2.0-2.5	2.5-3.0	3.0-3.5	3.5-4.0	4.0-4.5	4.5-5.0	>5.0
0.00	0.00	10.41	16.56	12.37	15.03	16.02	10.87	5.43	9.85	3.45

**Table 2.** Frequency (%) for classes of  $H_{m0}$  and  $T_m$  in 2010–2011 2012–2013 (only referring to sector 105–135°). The most probable classes are reported in bold.

	H <sub>m0</sub> [m]										
<i>T</i> <sub>m</sub> [s]	0.0–0.5	0.5-1.0	1.0-1.5	1.5-2.0	2.0-2.5	2.5-3.0	3.0-3.5	3.5-4.0	4.0-4.5	4.5-5.0	>5.0
<2.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
2.0-2.5	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
2.5-3.0	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
3.0-3.5	0.00	0.00	0.56	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
3.5-4.0	0.00	0.00	7.61	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
4.0-4.5	0.00	0.00	11.86	1.90	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
4.5-5.0	0.00	0.00	9.40	7.72	0.56	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
5.0-5.5	0.00	0.00	8.39	10.51	3.47	0.78	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
5.5-6.0	0.00	0.00	2.13	6.82	4.59	2.80	0.45	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
6.0-6.5	0.00	0.00	0.00	1.01	2.80	3.02	2.68	1.12	0.00	0.00	0.00
6.5–7.0	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	1.79	2.01	0.78	0.45	0.11	0.00
7.0–7.5	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	1.01	1.12	0.22	0.89	0.22
7.5-8.0	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.45	0.56	0.22
8.0-8.5	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
8.5–9.0	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
9.0–9.5	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
9.5–10.0	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
>10.0	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00

values, which represent the most probable combinations  $(H_{m0}, T_m)$  and  $(H_{m0}, T_p)$ , related to the most energetic waves (ESE or NNE).

- 2010–2011: ESE,  $H_{\rm m0} = 1.75 \,\mathrm{m}$ ,  $T_{\rm m} = 5.25 \,\mathrm{s}$ ,  $T_{\rm p} = 7.25 \,\mathrm{s}$ ;
- 2011–2012: NNE,  $H_{\rm m0} = 2.25 \,\mathrm{m}$ ,  $T_{\rm m} = 5.25 \,\mathrm{s}$ ,  $T_{\rm p} = 6.75 \,\mathrm{s}$ ;
- 2012–2013: ESE,  $H_{\rm m0} = 1.75 \,\mathrm{m}$ ,  $T_{\rm m} = 5.25 \,\mathrm{s}$ ,  $T_{\rm p} = 7.25 \,\mathrm{s}$ .

5

As expected, due to the available fetch length (see also Fig. 1a), a larger wave steepness  $(H_{m0}/L_{p0})$ , where  $L_{p0}$  is the deep-water peak wavelength) occurs during the NNE-dominated than during the ESE-dominated periods.

It is worth noting that in 2010-2011, though ESE is the most energetic direction ( $\sim 26\%$ ), the NNE contribution ( $\sim 21\%$ ) is also important (Fig. 3b). The analysis of the NNE direction suggests that the most energetic waves are characterized by a

- 10 reduced height range, i.e.  $H_{m0} = (1.5-2.5)$  m, associated to periods  $T_m = 3.5-5.5s$  and  $T_m = 5.5-7s$ . If we look at the mean values of the most energetic and frequent classes, we get
  - 2010–2011: NNE,  $H_{m0} = 2.25 \text{ m}$ ,  $T_m = 5.25 \text{ s}$ ,  $T_p = 6.75 \text{ s}$ .

Such a result demonstrates that the NNE sector provides waves steeper if compared to the ESE sector, whether or not it represents the most energetic sector.

# 15 4.2 Bathymetric surveys

The available bathymetries have been overlapped using ArcGIS software and the difference in the bed depth has been estimated between each pair of consecutive surveys. Hence, Fig. 4 illustrates the difference between the bed depth measured in 2010 and that measured in 2006 (a), 2011 and 2010 (b), 2012 and 2011 (c), 2013 and 2012 (d). Each case shows seabed patterns which are mostly parallel to the coast. Such parallel patterns illustrate the different location of the submerged bars and their migration

- 20 through yearseach time interval. In each panel, positive/negative values mean that a seabed accretion/erosion occurred during the considered time period. Large positive values (red patterns) indicate either the filling of the bar trough or the location of the bar crest at the end of the time period (e.g., see the longshore distribution of positive values in Fig. 4a, b, and d, these representing the crest location in 2010, 2011, 2013, respectively). Further, large negative values (green patterns) may also indicate a bar-crest smoothing and a general beach flattening, as shown in Fig. 4c. Notice that the largest variations occur in
- 25 the nearshore area, i.e. for bed depths smaller than 3m.

The shoreline is fairly stable and, in the medium-term, oscillates in the cross-shore direction less than 20 m (Fig. 5a), with the largest motions occurring in 2006–2010 (advance) and 2011–2012 (retreat). To properly reconstruct the bar migration, the crest locations are overlapped to the color maps of Fig. 4.

Further, each of the 18 cross-shore profiles have been characterized by means of (also refer to Fig. 2): (i) the shoreline 30 position from a fixed point  $(s_{sh})$ , (ii) the distance of each bar crest from both fixed point  $(s_{cr})$  and shoreline  $(x_{cr} = s_{cr} - s_{sh})$ , and (iii) the bar geometry, i.e. crest  $(h_{cr})$  and trough  $(h_{tr})$  depths. The location of both bar crest  $s_{cr}$  (and shoreline  $s_{sh}$  are illustrated in Fig. 5a. Since it is evident (Fig. 4) that a well-defined inner bar only characterizes the 2011 survey, in Fig. 5a we prefer to only analyze the migration of intermediate ( $\Box$  for the middle bar, ) and outer (ofor) bars. In detail, the intermediate bar seems to move slightly shoreward between 2006 (red lines) and 2010 (blue lines), while the outer bar ) is not evident in 2006. While in 2006 the bar develops between profiles 9 and shoreline  $s_{sh}$  ( $\diamond$ )are illustrated in 18 (see also the yellow pattern in the map of Fig. 4a, indicating a bed erosion occurring between 2006 and 2010), in 2010 the bar develops throughout the analyzed domain, this being highlighted by the reddish pattern in the map, indicating a bed accretion. In the following period (2010-2011), the shoreward migration of the long intermediate bar (blue lines for 2010, green lines for 2011) is confirmed



Figure 4. Sea bottom variation within time periods: (a) 2006–2010, (b) 2010–2011, (c) 2011–2012 and (d) 2012–2013. Colored lines show the bar-crest locations extracted from the cross-shore profiles.



Figure 5. Longshore evolution of bar features: (a) shoreline, middle and offshore bars, (b) ratio between trough and crest depth. The vertical black lines represent the "Rotonda" location.

by the yellow and reddish patterns underneath the 2011 bar-crest alignment (Fig. 4b). Large bar accretions (i.e. variations > 1m), which suggest a local bar steepening, do occur nearby the structures, this confirming the important role played by both

5 jetty and "Rotonda" in the bar characterization. Discontinuities may be observed on the outer bars of 2010, 2012 and 2013

(Fig. 5a. A shoreward ), probably induced by a series of factors, like river overflow, rigid structures, wave forcing. In 2012, both inner and outer bars are partially destroyed. The seaward migration of the intermediate bar (green lines for 2011, purple lines for 2012) is highlighted by a bed variation < -1m under the 2011 bar (green pattern in the map of Fig. 4c) and slight accretions (0 – 0.5m) under the 2012 bar (orange pattern). Larger accretions located South of the "Rotonda" (reddish patterns)

- 10 mean that the 2011 bar troughs have been filled in the 2011-2012 period, the resulting beach being flatter than that observed from the other surveys. The final time range shows that the inner and outer bars regenerate in 2013 (yellow lines, Fig. 4d). The intermediate bar seems to move shoreward, this mainly meaning a positive bed variation (reddish pattern) observed in the map under the 2013 bar. Hence, a shoreward migration of the bars occurred in 2006–2010, 2010–2011 and 2012–2013, while a seaward motion only occurred between 2011 and 2012, when the bars were partially destroyed. After 2012, a partial bar
- 15 regeneration occurred. The "Rotonda" (profiles 11–12) also affects structures also affect the bar generation/existence, e.g. in 2010 the outer bar exists only South of the structure, in 2011 only North.

The influence of the permeable structure is also "Rotonda" is evident from the inspection of the ratio between trough and crest depths  $h_{tr}/h_{cr}$  (Fig. 5b), though this oscillates in the range 1-1.8. The middle bars ( $\Box$ ) show almost regular, slightly varying, trends between profiles 3 and 9, i.e. where they are sufficiently far from both jetty and "Rotonda" structures, with

- 20 the bar trough being  $\frac{25-40\%-25--40\%}{25-40\%-25--40\%}$  deeper than the crest. This occurs for all years, except for 2012, when crest and trough depths were very similar ( $h_{tr}/h_{cr} \approx 1 h_{tr}/h_{cr} \sim 1$ ) as the bar was almost completely destroyed. South of the permeable structure,  $h_{tr}/h_{cr}$  varies in different ways during the analyzed periods, i.e. it rapidly grows in 2006 and 2013, or remains almost constant in 2010 and 2011. However, it tends to stabilize around 1.4–1.5 at profiles 17–18. Further, the outer bars ( $\circ$ ) do not seem to be strongly influenced by the "Rotonda", as small local changes occur in the crest location between profiles 10 and 12
- 25 (Fig. 5a), while the depth ratio slightly increases moving South (Fig. 5b). It is worth noting that Fig. 5, i.e. both bar alignment and geometry, invokes the existence of two regions where bars behave differently, one North (between profiles 4 and 9) and one South (profiles 14-18) of the "Rotonda". This also means that the complex hydrodynamics and beach morphology induced by the structures lead to discontinuities, like those observed for the outer bar in 2010 and 2012, and different beach responses in the two regions (e.g., see Shand et al, 2001). Transition regions also exist, one due to the jetty (profiles 1-4), the other due to
- 30 the "Rotonda" (profiles 10-13).

While the depth variation of Fig. 4 is representative of the volume changes occurred at each point of the domain, the cross-shore profiles at different alongshore locations more clearly illustrate the volume changes occurred between two consecutive surveys. In particular, since the ESE forcing slightly dominates in 2010-2011 and Fig. 3b suggests a bimodal behavior of the wave climate, three profiles collected in 2010 (blue line) and 2011 (green line) are analyzed. They represent the region located between the jetty and the "Rotonda" (Fig. 6a, profile 6), that around the "Rotonda" (Fig. 6b, profile 10) and that far from the "Rotonda" (Fig. 6c, profile 18). In addition, the cumulative volume change is illustrated (red dashed line), with the aim to explain how the sediment is transported through the cross-shore profile, but notice that the alongshore sediment losses are not accounted for in such an approach. The volume change (VC) at the *j*-th cross-shore location (j = 1...n, with *n* the number of

5 points along the x axis), referring to two profiles surveyed at times  $k_f$  and  $k_i$ , may be expressed as

$$VC_{j-1}^{(k_f-k_i)} = VC_{j-1}^{(k_f-k_i)} + \Delta V_j^{(k_f-k_i)},$$
(2)

where the volume variation at the *j*-th location between  $k_i$  and  $k_f$  is

$$\Delta V_{j}^{(k_{f}-k_{i})} = V_{j}^{k_{f}} - V_{j}^{k_{i}}, \tag{3}$$

with the volume (per unit length) at the j-th location V<sub>j</sub> being calculated as the product between the profile discretization
in the cross-shore direction (Δx) and the profile elevation with respect to a horizontal reference system (z<sub>b,j</sub>): V<sub>j</sub> = z<sub>b,j</sub>Δx. In the example of Fig. 6, time indexes are k<sub>f</sub> = 2011 and k<sub>j</sub> = 2010. Notice that at j = 1, i.e. x = 0, the volume change is VC<sup>(k<sub>f</sub>-k<sub>i</sub>)</sup><sub>i</sub> = 0.

Along the undisturbed profile (Fig. 6c), the volume change is positive between x = 0 and  $x \sim 120m$ , i.e. up to the 2010 inner bar, this suggesting an increase of the upper beach and nearshore area due to that bar and an overall sediment balance in the

- 15 range x = 0 120m, as VC|<sub>x~120m</sub> = 0. Further, the volume change is also positive between x ~ 150 and x ~ 210m, i.e. up to the 2010 intermediate bar, and between x ~ 210 and x = 800m. Such an analysis suggests that three distinct regions exist. The first region is characterized by both the migration of the inner bar and the increase of the upper beach and nearshore area. The migration of the intermediate bar occurs in the second region. The third region deals with a significant beach reshaping involving the outer bar. Similar results have been found for the profile surveyed between the rigid structures (Fig. 6a), where
- 20 both inner and intermediate bars contribute to the nearshore/upper beach change. Finally, the "Rotonda" significantly affects the sediment balance throughout the analyzed profile (Fig. 6b), as the volume change never goes to zero. In particular, the upper beach change mainly depends on the inner bar, as the volume accretion (i.e. VC increase) occurring at x = 0 - 90m partially derives (~ 39%) from the volume erosion (i.e. VC decrease) occurring at x = 90 - 115m. Hence, the structure significantly affects the observed sediment transport, which is characterized by both cross-shore and alongshore contributions, and promote
- 25 an increase of the closure depth, in agreement with the fitting depth increase nearby the structure (see Sect. 2).

The inspection of the cross-shore profiles and volume changes referring to the other time intervals confirms the existence of the three above-mentioned regions and, far from the "Rotonda", the inner and intermediate bars mainly contribute to the volume change in the upper beach and nearshore area. Further, the permeable structure significantly influences the volume change in 2011-2012 and less in 2012-2013 (e.g., see the regularity of both intermediate bar crest alignment and relative seabed variation

in Fig. 4d, which seem not to be affected by the "Rotonda"). Finally, while in 2010-2011 the balance throughout the profile, i.e. VC|<sub>x=800m</sub>, is small far from the structures (Fig. 6a, c) and large close to the "Rotonda" (Fig. 6b), this suggesting an important alongshore sediment transport localized nearby the structure, in 2011-2012 the farthest profiles (e.g., profile 18) are almost in equilibrium (VC|<sub>x=800m</sub> ~ 0), while the alongshore contribution is important between jetty and "Rotonda", this promoting an overall beach erosion (VC|<sub>x=800m</sub> ≪ 0). The VC observed in 2012-2013 suggests a slight alongshore contribution throughout the domain.

# 4.3 Bar characterization

The previous data have been used to introduce a detailed analysis of the nearshore morphodynamics, especially the bar geometry and migration. Dimensionless parameters are introduced to analyze the bar geometry (e.g., see Grunnet and Ruessink, 2005). In Fig. ???a, the dimensionless bar height  $H_{\text{bar}}/h_{\text{cr}}$  is plotted against the dimensionless bar width  $W_{\text{bar}}/s_{\text{cr}}$ , where the



Figure 6. Cross-shore profiles collected in 2010 (solid blue lines) and 2011 (solid green lines), and cumulative volume variations in 2010-2011 (dashed red lines). The represented sections refer to (a) the Northern region, i.e. between the jetty and the "Rotonda", (b) the middle region, i.e. close to the "Rotonda", and (c) the Southern region.

5 bar dimensions are defined as:

$$H_{\rm bar} = h_{\rm tr} - h_{\rm cr},\tag{4}$$

$$W_{\rm bar} = 2(s_{\rm cr} - s_{\rm tr}). \tag{5}$$

- In general, the bar height seems to increase with the bar width, this occurring for both inner (+), middle (□) and outer (○)
  bars. Accounting for the surveys referring to 2010, 2011 and 2013, the outer bars are characterized by similar dimensionless heights (H<sub>bar</sub>/h<sub>cr</sub> ranging between 0 and 0.26), but fairly different widths, the mean W<sub>bar</sub>/x<sub>cr</sub> being of about 0.17 in 2010, 0.48 in 2011, 0.35 in 2013. The intermediate bars show similar trends, with H<sub>bar</sub>/h<sub>cr</sub> = 0.35 0.4 in 2010, 2011 and 2013, and W<sub>bar</sub>/x<sub>cr</sub> significantly increasing in 2011 (0.54) and 2013 (0.54), with respect to 2010 (0.37). The 2006 middle bar behaves similarly to the 2013 middle bar, while the 2012 bars are always smaller in both height and width, as a consequence of the
  depth variations occurred in the preceding period. Hence, few and significantly small values referring to 2012 confirm the
- beach flattening occurred during the 2011–2012 period, dominated by Bora winds, which led to a general beach flattening, as already observed in FigsFig. 2 and Fig. 4c. No significant trends can be obtained from the inner bar data.

The analysis of the longshore distribution of the bar geometry can be undertaken accounting for the bar cross-shore area

$$\Omega = \frac{H_{\text{bar}}W_{\text{bar}}}{2},\tag{6}$$

20 which is made dimensionless using both depth and distance to shore of the bar crest.

Figure ???7b illustrates that, in general, all bars increase in dimension quite regularly moving southward. Focusing on years 2010, 2011 and 2013, the middle bars increase regularly between profiles 1 and 10, while South of the "Rotonda" (profiles 11–1210–11), the trend is not clear. The outer bars seem not to be affected by the permeable structure and keep increasing moving southward. In 2006 the middle bar generates and starts increasing from profile 10, while in 2012 the trend is unclear,

25 due to the reduced number of sections at which bars occur. In addition, it can be noticed that the shape parameter A of Eq. 7 (solid thin lines and triangles), always decreases from left to right, suggesting a sediment-size reduction moving southward. Hence, though Figure ???7a illustrates a natural data scattering due to the beach variation both in time and space (e.g., see Grunnet and Ruessink, 2005), a best-fit polynomial curve well represents the geometrical characterization of outer and

middle bars of 2010 (blue dashed linelines) and 2013 (orange dashed line), in both cases giving determination coefficients

30  $R^2 > 0.5$  lines). Further, Figure ??7b shows that best-fit curves well reproduce the increasing trend of the outer bars moving southward ( $R^2 > 0.75$   $R^2 > 0.8$  for 2010 and 2013, dashed lines), more than that of the middle bars ( $R^2 \sim 0.5R^2 > 0.3$ , solid lines). The geometrical features of the inshore bars do not offer significant trends. In 2006, 2011 and 2012, weaker trends of the data represented in both panels are found for intermediate and outer bars, hence they have not been represented. This probably means that the inner bars are significantly influenced by the rigid structures and are not characterized by homogeneous alongshore distributions, while middle and outer bars are locally influenced by the structures, but only during specific time periods (e.g., see the influence of the jetty on the first two points of the 2011 intermediate bar, Figure 7b).



**Figure 7.** Dimensionless bar features: (a) bar height against bar width, (b) longshore distribution of bar cross-shore area <u>- Dashed (dashed</u> and solid thick lines represent best-fit curves) and <u>A</u> parameter (solid thin lines and triangles). The vertical black dashed line represents the "Rotonda" location.

### 4.4 Bar dynamics

5 As suggested by several studies, the generation of subtidal bars may depend on three different mechanisms, i.e. i) breakpoint-related, ii) infragravity-waves-related, and iii) self-organisational mechanisms (e.g., see Wijnberg and Kroon, 2002; Leont'ev, 2011). From the results presented in Sect. 4.1 and 4.3, the bar dynamics in this area might be influenced by either the first or the second mechanism, while the self-organisation seems negligible. In fact, in agreement with Wijnberg and Kroon (2002), such a mechanism cannot explain the bar re-generation between 2012 and 2013 (Fig. 4d), after a general beach smoothing and the self-organisation area with the self-organisation area with the self-organisation seems negligible.

10 the partial bar destruction occurred in 2011–2012 (FigsFig. 2 and Fig. 4c).

The destructive nature of the NNE storms significantly affects the bar geometry (beach smoothing), as well as the migration (seaward rather than shoreward), this being strongly influenced by the different wave features (waves coming from NNE were higher and steeper than those coming from ESE), which force the breaking to occur at different locations. Hence, the difference in terms of characteristics of the incoming sea-storm waves directly reflects on the beach morphology, this underlining that the

15 medium-term bar dynamics in the Adriatic sandy beaches are mainly governed by wind waves and breakpoint mechanisms.

Furthermore, steep NNE waves are associated with not excessive storm surges, while less steep ESE waves are associated with larger surges, due to the larger fetch generating which characterizes this wave direction in the Adriatic Sea. As an example, two consecutive intense storms occurred in December 2010, the former coming from ESE, the latter from NNE, were characterized by maximum surges of, respectively, 80 and 43 cm, measured within the protected basin of the Ancona harbor

- 20 (data from Rete Mareografica Nazionale, ISPRA, http://www.mareografico.it). This leads to larger water depths over the crest  $(h_{cr})$  and smaller relative wave heights  $(H/h_{cr})$  during ESE than during NNE waves. In fact, wave propagation from the offshore to the outer bar depth (e.g., using Goda, 2000, who accounts for wave refraction and shoaling) enables one to estimate the local wave inclination  $(\alpha_l)$ , and also the local wave height  $H_{m0,l}$ . This may be done using either simple analytical models, which accounts for wave refraction and shoaling (e.g., Goda, 2000), or detailed numerical approaches, which provide a more
- 25 complete wave characterization in the nearshore (e.g., Carniel et al., 2011). Then, the actual water depth over the crest during surge may be estimated as  $h_{cr,s} = \overline{h_{cr}} + \eta_s$ , where  $\overline{h_{cr}}$  is the alongshore-averaged still water depth over the crest and  $\eta_s$  the surge contribution, which is different depending on the dominating wave direction, but in agreement with both the data collected at the Ancona harbor (Rete Mareografica Nazionale, ISPRA) and previous literature studies (Orlić et al., 1994; Villatoro et al., 2014).
- The above-introduced terms and the relative wave height estimated using the local root-mean-square wave height  $H_{\rm rms,l}$  (US Army, 1977), are summarized in Tab. 3. The relative wave height, especially  $H_{\rm rms,l}/h_{\rm cr,s}$ , which is larger in 2010–2011 and 2012–2013 and smaller in 2011–2012, suggests, respectively, a landward and seaward bar migration, which has been actually observed (e.g., see Fig. 4). The estimated local wave angles suggest an almost orthogonal-to-shore direction during the NNE-wave-dominated period. Our observations are supported by the numerical results of Dubarbier et al. (2015), who found that the variability in sandbar migration is sensitive to water level over bar crest, this being consistent with storm-surge variations occurring in our site. On the other hand, wave obliquity mainly affects the rates of bar growth and migration, but not their migration direction. This suggests that the difference between Bora and Scirocco waves, in terms of wave incidence,

does not influence the bar direction, but eventually their propagation speed. The outer bar variation, i.e. the change of the

- 5 alongshore-averaged outer bar height ( $\Delta \overline{H}_{\text{bar}}/h_{\text{crs}}$ ) and cross-shore area ( $\Delta \overline{\Omega}/(\overline{x_{\text{cr}}}h_{\text{crs}})$ ), has also been analyzed. As illustrated in Tab. 3, in 2010-2011 the outer bar, which globally moves shoreward, slightly reduces in height and increases in area. In 2011-2012 the bar, which moves seward, significantly reduces in height and area. Conversely, in 2012-2013 the bar largely increases in height and area, regenerates and moves shoreward. It is worth noting that the smallest changes occur in 2010-2011, when a double peak characterizes the wave climate (Fig. 3b), while significant changes occur during the following intervals,
- 10 when the climate is clearly dominated by NNE (2011-2012, bar decrease) rather than by ESE (2012-2013, bar increase) forcing.

Table 3. Estimate of relative wave heightand, wave incidence and outer bar-geometry change for the examined time periods.

Time range	$H_{\rm m0}$	$H_{\mathrm{m0},l}$	$H_{\mathrm{rms},l}$	$\overline{h_{\rm cr}}$	$\eta_s$	$h_{ m cr,s}$	$H_{{ m m0},l}/h_{ m cr,s}$	$H_{\mathrm{rms},l}/h_{\mathrm{cr,s}}$	$\alpha_l$	$\Delta \overline{H_{\mathrm{bar}}}/h_{\mathrm{cr.s.}}$	$\Delta\overline{\Omega}/(\overline{x_{ ext{cr}}}h_{ ext{cr,s}})$
[years]	[m]	[m]	[m]	[m]	[m]	[m]	[-]	[-]	[°]	[-]	[-]
2010-2011	1.75	1.51	1.07	2.33	0.60	2.93	0.52	0.36	22	-0.016	0.787
2011-2012	2.25	2.48	1.75	1.81	0.35	2.16	1.15	0.81	5	-0.050	- <u>1.335</u>
2012-2013	1.75	1.39	0.98	2.75	0.60	3.35	0.41	0.29	24	0.063	1.796

### 5 Discussion

Recent studies on the dynamics of barred beaches suggested us to search for a correlation between <u>correlate</u> wave-climate data, collected by an offshore buoy, and the available and bathymetric surveys of an unprotected beach of the Adriatic Sea.

15 Though In fact, though some results on sandbar migration along the Tyrrhenian Sea were recently illustrated (e.g., Parlagreco et al., 2011), the bar dynamics of the typical Adriatic sandy beaches have not been already investigated. HoweverFurther, the correct understanding of the bar migration has a fundamental role in the beach management, also because is important when dealing with beach management and tourism. To this aim, the coast of Senigallia has been here investigated since, similarly to many Adriatic sandy beaches, like that of Senigallia this is characterized by a

20 significant flow of tourism, especially in the summertime (see Sect. 2), are characterized by a significant flow of tourism.

Hence, the bathymetric surveys of the area South of the harbor, which has been seen to be stable in the long term, enabled us to analyze a multiple-bar array typical of the sandy beaches of the Middle Adriatic. Such a part of the basin is subject to sea storms mainly due to NNE (Bora) and ESE (Levante-Scirocco) winds, which are characterized by significantly different surges.

The seabed-depth variation and the wave climate between consecutive surveys, as well as the bar features (height, width, location) analyzed for each survey, enabled us to couple the beach/bar dynamics with the wave forcing.

In the studied area the tidal excursion ( $\sim 40 \text{ cm}$ ) is small and only subtidal bars exist. Since the analyzed beach slope ranges between  $1:35 \sim 0.03$  (swash zone) and  $1:200 \sim 0.005$  (offshore area), such bars fall into the group of two-dimensional longshore bars (Wijnberg and Kroon, 2002). Further, the wave energy in such a microtidal environment is quite high.

In the analyzed region and during the investigated time periods, the beach experienced many sea storms that enabled us

- 5 to give an overall interpretation to the bar migration process as a function of the wave climate. Coupling wave steepness and the Dean number (i.e. the ratio of wave height to sand fall velocity and wave period), both ESE and NNE are associated with erosive wave conditions (e.g., see Dean and Dalrymple, 2004). However, during the time periods dominated by ESE forcing, waves are characterized by a reduced steepness  $H_{\rm m0}/L_{\rm p0} = 0.213$  (exactly the same in 2010–2011 and 2012–2013), while this is about 1/3 larger during the NNE-forcing-dominated period ( $H_{\rm m0}/L_{\rm p0} = 0.316$ ). Such a behavior is also confirmed if
- 10 we do not account for the most energetic waves (see Sect. 4.1), but directly estimate the most frequent combination  $(H_{m0}, T_p)$ . Further, an increase of the bar steepness  $H_{bar}/W_{bar}$  is associated to a decrease of  $H_{m0}/L_{p0}$  (e.g., compare the bar geometry in Fig. 2 with the associated wave steepness).

As already stated, steep NNE waves, associated to reduced storm surges, lead to larger relative wave heights  $H/h_{cr,s}$ , while less steep ESE waves lead to smaller values. As observed by Houser and Greenwood (2005), relative rms heights  $H_{\text{rms},l}/h_{cr,s} = 0.3 - 0.4$  lead to a landward bar migration, associated with bar height increase. This occurs for the outer bar

between 2010–2011 ( $H_{\text{rms},l}/h_{cr,s} = 0.36$ ), with a height increase of about 50%, and between in 2012–2013 ( $H_{\text{rms},l}/h_{cr,s} = 0.29$ ), when the bar is almost completely regenerated (see also Fig. 2)-, but not between 2010–2011 ( $H_{\text{rms},l}/h_{cr,s} = 0.36$ ), when the bar height slightly decreases (see Tab. 3). Conversely, values of  $H_{\text{s},l}/h_{cr,s} > 0.6$  lead to a seaward bar migration, as observed in 2011–2012 ( $H_{\text{rms},l}/h_{cr,s} = 0.81$ ), when the outer bar is partially destroyed and its height significantly decreases.

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20 Further, waves coming from ESE are characterized by a significant longshore component, due to the large angle between the approaching wave fronts and the coast (see Tab. 3). Differently, waves coming from NNE reach the shore with an almost perpendicular incidence, this improving the intense smoothing of the bars.

Hence, it has been seen that the relative wave height can be properly applied for the prediction of bar migration in an environment different from those already proposed in the literature (e.g., Ruessink and Terwindt, 2000; Houser and Greenwood, 2005),

- i.e. a nearshore area characterized by a reduced tidal excursion, and partially influenced by the presence of rigid structures. This allows the application of such a predictive parameter for similar nearshore environments, and also for a medium-term prediction. Hence, such a parameter is valid for different environments, characterized by tidal excursions of some centimeters (e.g., Lake Huron, Houser and Greenwood, 2005) to decimeters (Adriatic Sea, present study) to meters (e.g., North Sea, Ruessink and Terwindt, 2000). Assuming that the bar migration mainly occurs during sea storms, the involved sediment transport mainly
  depends on the incoming short waves (especially when the bars move landward, i.e. ESE waves dominating) and the undertow
- (especially for seaward motion, associated with NNE waves), with the infragravity waves probably being of some importance in such a dissipative beach (e.g., see Wright and Short, 1984; Ruessink et al., 1998).

While the correlation between bar width and bar height is clear only for some cases, the former increasing with the latter, an overview of the available data enable further conclusions. Between 2010 and 2011, the largest waves, mainly propagating from ESE, provided a height increase of the outer bar (in agreement with Houser and Greenwood, 2005) only North of the "Rotonda", and, at the same time, a width increase and a steepness reduction of both outer and intermediate bars (blue and green symbols in Fig. 227a). While between 2011 and 2012 the bars are largely smoothed due to the NNE dominating waves

(purple symbols), the ESE stormy conditions occurred between 2012 and 2013 gave rise to geometric features of the bars

5 similar to those observed in 2011 (orange symbols).

The cross-shore bar area increases moving southward, especially from the Senigallia harbor to the "Rotonda", which partially disturbs the growth of the middle bar. This could also be analyzed in view of the equilibrium-profile theory(Dean, 1991), which describes the long-term beach equilibrium of a natural beach, i.e. the balance between erosive and accretive forcing, through:

 $\underline{h} = Ax^{2/3},$ 

- 10 where *h* is the water depth and *x* the distance to shoreline., described by Eq. 7. The analysis of the shape parameter *A* is a dimensional shape parameter, directly related to the median grain diameter (see Fig. 7b) suggests that  $d_{50}$  (Hanson and Kraus, 1989). Though recent models account for further parameters, like seasonal changes (Inman et al., 1993) or the generation of submerged bars (Holman et al., 2014), their application is fairly difficult and it has been demonstrated that Eq. **??** properly represents the long-term natural profile, to be used for coastal engineering purposes (e.g., Walton and Dean, 2007; Soldini et al., 2013). From
- the analysis of such equilibrium profiles, it can be observed that d<sub>50</sub> slightly decreases moving southward, slightly decreases moving southward. Some important oscillations of A characterize the region between profiles 1 and 11, this underlining the influence of the rigid structures, while a generally decreasing trend can be observed South of the "Rotonda" (notice that the larger values referring to 2006 may be due to the lower resolution of the surveyed bathymetry in the nearshore, i.e. up to a depth of 1.5 2m, with respect to the following surveys). Such a decrease is in agreement with the sediment-size distribution
  distributions observed in 1989 and 1990 by Lorenzoni et al. (1998a).

This is probably due to: i) the river jetty (Fig. 1a), which induces a complex flow field, i.e. a mix of refraction, diffraction and reflection, that generates wave-wave interactions, crossing waves and intense vorticity, especially when sea storms come from ESE (e.g., see Postacchini et al., 2014); ii) the river discharge, especially during severe weather conditions, which gives rise to an intense plume that both propagates southeastward and promotes sediment deposition along its path

25 (e.g., see ?)(e.g., see Brocchini et al., 2017). Hence, the dynamics induced by such phenomena suggest both a deposition of larger sediments immediately south of the jetty, where a more turbulent flow field exists, and a mobilization of finer sands coupled with their transport far from the jetty.

The similar geometry of the bars (width, height, steepness, cross-shore area) in 2011 and 2013, hence suggests that similar medium-term wave features (direction, height, period in 2010-2011 and 2012-2013, respectively) provide similar beach

- 30 responses, while the initial morphological conditions, respectively represented by the 2010 and 2012 surveys, though significantly different, slightly affect the beach evolution. Further, permeable and impermeable structures locally affect the dynamics of the submerged bars, but do not change their migration direction and their macroscopic features, which are thus dominated by the dominant wave forcing. In addition, the outer bar significantly changes when the climate is clearly dominated by either NNE (2011-2012) or ESE (2012-2013) waves, increasing in the former case and decreasing in the latter. Conversely, small changes (cross-shore area increase and height reduction) occur in 2010-2011, when the wave climate is not clearly dominated
- 5 by NNE or ESE waves.

# 6 Conclusions

The nearshore dynamics is characterized by different levels of analysis: long-period (i.e. order of decades) beach stability, i) the long-period beach stability is of the order of decades, ii) the medium-term (i.e. order of years or seasons) evolution of the main-beach forms (e.g., submerged bars, artificial nourishments) and is of the order of years or seasons, and iii) the short-term

- 10 (i.e. order of days or hours) erosion of the beach profile . While long- and short-term dynamics is of the order of days or hours. While i) and iii) have been widely investigated, this is not the case for the the medium-term beach variability . However, the recent findings on the main processes occurring in the nearshore region has not been sufficiently analyzed. Hence, recent findings suggested us to investigate the medium-term morphodynamics of a the sandy barred beach , i.e. that of Senigallia, located in the Middle Adriatic Sea.
- 15 The present work both illustrates how a proper buoy-data handling leads to the prediction of the morphological changes of a barred beach and offers a useful tool, for coastal engineers and managers, to: i) properly predict the emerged beach stability (e.g., shoreline retreat, erosion), ii) accurately design nourishments for submerged beach recovery, iii) estimate the sediment transport flux through the entrance of nearby harbors, iv) choose the best place to drop the dredged sediment coming from nearby harbors, eventually with nourishment purposes.
- A more detailed analysis could be achieved through use of either data collected by another waverider (e.g., that of Cesenatico, FC, which is ~ 80 km North of Senigallia) or a reconstructed climate (e.g., Mentaschi et al., 2015), with the aim to characterize the wave forcing in the period 2006–2010. Although global reanalysis or numerical modeling may provide a more detailed wave characterization, use of available regional climate models (e.g., The Medatlas Group, 2004) is easier and may represent a valid alternative. Further, the dynamics of the nearshore area before, during and after storm events could also be inspected by means of novel devices like: i) Lagrangian drifters, able at measuring both three-dimensional hydrodynamics and seabed depth (e.g., Postacchini et al., 2016a), ii) video-monitoring systems, like that available at the Senigallia harbor since 2015, to reconstruct the coastline (e.g., Archetti, 2009; Vousdoukas et al., 2011; Archetti et al., 2016), as well as wave field and bed morphology (e.g., Palmsten et al., 2015), available at the Senigallia harbor since July–August 2015, iii) radar images, like those used for the
- 5 reconstruction of both wave field and bathymetry, through the depth inversion technique (e.g., Ludeno et al., 2015).

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