Eemian Greenland ice sheet simulated with a higher-order model shows strong sensitivity to SMB forcing

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Abstract. The Greenland ice sheet contributes increasingly to global sea level rise. Its history during past warm intervals is a valuable reference for future sea level projections. We present ice sheet simulations for the Eemian interglacial period (~130,000 to 115,000 years ago), a period with warmer-than-present summer climate over Greenland. The evolution of the Eemian Greenland ice sheet is simulated with a 3D higher-order ice sheet model, forced with surface mass balance derived from regional climate simulations. Sensitivity experiments with various surface mass balances, basal friction, and ice flow approximations are discussed. The surface mass balance forcing is identified as the controlling factor setting the minimum in Eemian ice volume, emphasizing the importance of a reliable surface mass balance model. Furthermore, the results suggest that the surface mass balance forcing is more important than the representation of ice flow for simulating the large-scale ice sheet evolution. This implies that the future contribution of the Greenland ice sheet to sea level rise highly depends on an accurate surface mass balance.

1 Introduction

The simulation of the Greenland ice sheet (GrIS) under past warmer climates is a viable way to test methods used for sea level rise projections which remain uncertain for a future warmer climate (Church et al., 2013). This study investigates ice sheet simulations for the Eemian interglacial period. The Eemian period (~130,000 to 115,000 years ago; hereafter 130 to 115 ka) is the most recent warmer-than-present period in Earth's history and thereby provides an analogue for future warmer climates (e.g., Clark and Huybers, 2009; Yin and Berger, 2015). The Eemian summer temperature is estimated to have been 4-5°C above present over most Arctic land areas (e.g., Capron et al., 2017) and ice core records from NEEM (the North Greenland Eemian Ice Drilling project in northwest Greenland, NEEM community members, 2013) indicate a local warming of 8.5±2.5°C (Landais et al., 2016) compared to pre-industrial levels. In spite of this strong warming, total gas content measurements from the Greenland ice cores at GISP2, GRIP, NGRIP, and NEEM indicate an Eemian surface elevation no more than a few hundred meters lower than present (at these locations). NEEM data indicates that the ice thickness in northwest Greenland decreased

by 400±250 m between 128 and 122 ka with a surface elevation of 130±300 m lower than the present at 122 ka, resulting in a modest sea level rise estimate of 2 m (NEEM community members, 2013, c.f., Fig. 5). Nevertheless, coral reef derived global mean sea level estimates show values of at least 4 m above the present level (Overpeck et al., 2006; Kopp et al., 2013; Dutton et al., 2015). While this could suggest a reduced Antarctic ice sheet, the contribution from the GrIS to the Eemian sea

5 level highstand remains unclear. Previous modeling studies (Letréguilly et al., 1991; Otto-Bliesner et al., 2006; Robinson et al., 2011; Born and Nisancioglu, 2012; Stone et al., 2013; Helsen et al., 2013) used very different setup and forcing, and show highly variable results.

Ice sheets loose mass either due to a reduced surface mass balance (SMB) or accelerated ice dynamical processes. Therefore ice dynamical processes may have contributed to the Eemian ice loss, e.g., through changes in basal conditions, similar to

10 what is seen today and what is discussed for the future of the ice sheet: Zwally et al. (2002) associate surface melt with an acceleration of GrIS flow and argue that surface melt-induced enhanced basal sliding provides a mechanism for rapid, large-scale, dynamic responses of ice sheets to climate warming. Several other studies have attributed the recent and future projected sea level rise from Greenland partly to dynamical responses: Price et al. (2011) use a 3D higher-order model to simulate sea level rise caused by the dynamical response of the GrIS, and they find an upper bound of 45 mm by 2100 (without assuming

15 any changes to basal sliding in the future). This dynamical contribution is of similar magnitude as previously published SMB-induced sea level rise by 2100 (40-50 mm; Fettweis et al., 2008). Pfeffer et al. (2008) provide a sea level rise estimate of 165 mm from the GrIS by 2100 based on a kinematic scenario with doubling ice transport through topography-constrained outlet glacier gates. Furthermore, Robel and Tziperman (2016) present synthetic ice sheet simulations and argue that the early part of the deglaciation of large ice sheets is strongly influenced by an acceleration of ice streams as a response to changes in

20 climate forcing.

In this study, we apply a computationally efficient 3D higher-order ice flow setup (alias Blatter-Pattyn; BP; Blatter, 1995; Pattyn, 2003) implemented in the Ice Sheet System Model (ISSM; Larour et al., 2012; Cuzzone et al., 2018). Including higher-order stress gradients provides a comprehensive ice flow representation to test the importance of the ice dynamics for modeling the Eemian GrIS. Furthermore, we avoid shortcomings in regions where simpler ice flow approximations, often used in paleo

25 applications, are inappropriate, i.e., fast flowing ice in the case of the Shallow Ice Approximation (SIA; Hutter, 1983; Greve and Blatter, 2009) and regions dominated by ice creep in the case of the Shallow Shelf Approximation (SSA; MacAyeal, 1989; Greve and Blatter, 2009). The higher-order approximation is equally well suited to simulate slow as well as fast ice flow.

Plach et al. (2018) show that the simulation of the Eemian SMB is strongly dependent on the SMB model choice. Here, we test SMB forcing derived from dynamically downscaled Eemian climate simulations and two SMB models (a full surface

30 energy balance model and an intermediate complexity SMB model) as described in Plach et al. (2018). Furthermore, we perform sensitivity experiments varying basal friction for the entire GrIS, as well as localized changes below the outlet glaciers.

The aim of this study is to compare the impact of SMB and basal sliding on the evolution of the Eemian GrIS. Furthermore, employing a 3D higher-order ice flow setup, instead of simpler ice dynamical approximations often used in millennial-scale ice sheet simulations, is a novelty of this study. It allows us to evaluate the importance of the ice flow approximation used for

35 Eemian studies.

2 Models and experimental setup

2.1 SMB methods

The SMB forcing is based on Eemian time slice simulations with a fast version of the Norwegian Earth System Model (NorESM1-F; Guo et al., 2019) representing the climate of 130, 125, 120, and 115 ka using respective greenhouse gas concen-
5   trations and orbital parameters (details in Plach et al., 2018). In the climate model simulations the present-day GrIS topography is used. These global simulations are dynamically downscaled over Greenland with the regional climate model Modèle Atmosphérique Régional (MAR; Gallée and Schayes, 1994; De Ridder and Gallée, 1998; Gallée et al., 2001; Fettweis et al., 2006). Subsequently, the SMB is calculated with (1) a full surface energy balance model as implemented within MAR (MAR-SEB) and (2) an intermediate complexity SMB model (MAR-BESSI; BErgen Snow SImulator; BESSI; Born et al., 2018). Both
10   models are physically based SMB models including a snowpack explicitly solving for the impact of solar shortwave radiation (this is essential for the Eemian period which has a significantly different solar insolation compared to today, e.g., Van de Berg et al., 2011; Robinson and Goelzer, 2014). MAR-SEB is bidirectionally coupled to the atmosphere of MAR (i.e., evolving SEB impacts atmospheric processes, for example: albedo changes impact surface temperature, cloud cover, humidity, etc.), while MAR-BESSI is uncoupled. These two models are selected as the most plausible Eemian SMBs from a wider range of simu-
15   lations discussed in Plach et al. (2018); they show a negative total SMB during the Eemian peak warming. While MAR-SEB is chosen as the control because it has been extensively validated against observations in previous studies (Fettweis, 2007; Fettweis et al., 2013, 2017), MAR-BESSI is used to test the sensitivity of the ice sheet simulations to the SMB forcing (c.f., discussion in Sec. 4). MAR-SEB and MAR-BESSI employ a different temporal model time step, while MAR-SEB uses steps of 180 seconds, MAR-BESSI calculates in daily time steps. The longer time steps used by MAR-BESSI imply that extreme
20   temperatures (e.g., lowest temperatures at night can lead to more refreezing) are damped and this is likely the cause for a lower amount of refreezing in MAR-BESSI compared to MAR-SEB. Furthermore, MAR-BESSI uses a simpler albedo representation than MAR-SEB: lower refreezing and simpler steps in albedo changing from fresh snow to glacier ice are identified as the main reasons for more negative SMB as calculated by MAR-BESSI. For a detailed discussion of the differences between the models the reader is referred to Plach et al. (2018). The two different SMB models are employed to test the sensitivity of the
25   ice sheet simulations to the prescribed SMB forcing.

All SMB time slice simulations are calculated offline using the modern ice surface elevation, given the lack of data constraining the configuration of the Eemian GrIS surface elevation. The evolution of the SMB with the changing ice surface elevation is simulated with local SMB-altitude gradients following Helsen et al. (2012, 2013). The SMB gradient method is used to calculate SMB-altitude gradients at each grid point from the surrounding grid points within a default radius of 150 km
30   (linear regression of SMB vs. altitude). Since the SMB-altitude gradients in the accumulation and the ablation zone are very different, they are calculated separately. If the algorithm is unable to find more than 100 grid points (of either accumulation or ablation) the radius is extended until a threshold of 100 data points for the regression is reached. For simplicity, the local gradients are calculated from the respective pre-industrial SMB simulations. Further details on the SMB gradient method are discussed in Helsen et al. (2012).

Between the SMBs calculated for 130, 125, 120, and 115 ka a linear interpolation is applied, giving a transient SMB forcing over 15,000 years. A more complicated interpolation approach is unnecessary given the smooth climate forcing and the uncertainties related to the Eemian climate and SMB simulations. Plach et al. (2018) give a detailed discussion of the simulated climate evolution and show, for example, a Eemian peak warming of 4-5°C over Greenland, which is in agreement with proxy reconstructions (NEEM community members, 2013; Landais et al., 2016). The SMBs in the present study (after being corrected for topography) are shown and discussed in Sec. 3.

2.2 The Ice Sheet System Model (ISSM)

The ISSM is a finite-element, thermo-mechanical ice flow model based on the conservation laws of momentum, mass, and energy (Larour et al., 2012) — here model version 4.13 is used (Cuzzone et al., 2018). ISSM employs an anisotropic mesh, which is typically refined by observed surface ice velocities, allowing fast flowing ice (i.e., outlet glaciers) to be modeled at higher resolution than slow flowing ice (i.e., interior of an ice sheet). Furthermore, ISSM offers inversion methods to ensure that an initialized model ice sheet matches the observed (modern) ice sheet configuration (i.e., observed ice surface velocities are inverted for basal friction or ice rheology; Morlighem et al., 2010; Larour et al., 2012). While ISSM offers a large range of ice flow representations, in this study the computationally efficient 3D higher-order configuration (Cuzzone et al., 2018) is used. This setup uses an interpolation based on higher-order polynomials between the vertical layers, instead of the default linear interpolation which requires a much higher number of vertical layers to capture the sharp temperature gradient at the base of an ice sheet. By using a quadratic interpolation, 5 vertical layers are sufficient to capture the thermal structure accurately, while a linear vertical interpolation requires 25 layers to achieve a similar result. This lower number of vertical layers reduces the computational demand for the thermal model and the stress balance calculations, and makes it possible to run 3D higher-order simulations for thousands of years. The simulations over 12,000 years in this study run between 3-4 weeks on a single node with 16 cores.

2.3 Experimental setup

All simulations (forced with MAR-SEB and MAR-BESSI) run from 127 to 115 ka following the Paleoclimate Modeling Intercomparison Project (PMIP4) (Otto-Bliesner et al., 2017) experimental design and initiating the Eemian simulations at 127 ka with a modern GrIS. The thermal structure is derived using a thermal steady-state simulation with prescribed preindustrial temperature at the ice surface (from the regional climate simulations) and an enthalpy formulation (Aschwanden et al., 2012) at the base to determine the basal conditions (cold or temperature ice). At the base of the ice sheet a prescribed geothermal heat flux (Shapiro and Ritzwoller, 2004) as provided by the SeaRISE dataset (Bindschadler et al., 2013) is imposed. The basal friction coefficients are kept constant over time and are derived from an inversion of spatially varying, observed surface velocities, i.e., an algorithm chooses the basal friction coefficients in a way that the modeled velocities match the observed velocities. In a first inversion, an initial ice viscosity is prescribed. After the thermal steady-state simulation, the ice viscosity is updated as a function of the new thermal profile (Cuffey and Paterson, 2010). In a second inversion, the basal friction coefficients are iterated to minimize three cost functions (Table 1). The inversion depends on the chosen ice flow

approximation due to the different representation of the stress balance, i.e., simulations with the 2D SSA and the 3D higher-order approximations use different inversions.

We use the ISSM default friction law (Larour et al., 2012; Schlegel et al., 2013) based on the empirically derived friction law by Paterson (1994, p. 151):

5 $$\boldsymbol{\tau_b} = -\alpha^2\, N_{\text{eff}}\, \boldsymbol{v_b} \tag{1}$$

where $\boldsymbol{\tau_b}$ is the basal shear stress (vector), α the basal friction coefficient (derived by inversion from surface velocities), N_{eff} the effective pressure of the water at the glacier base (i.e., the difference between the overburden ice stress and the water pressure), and $\boldsymbol{v_b}$ the horizontal basal velocity (vector). The effective pressure is simulated with a first order approximation (Paterson, 1994):

10 $$N_{\text{eff}} = g\, \rho_{\text{ice}}\, H + \rho_{\text{water}}\, z_{\text{b}} \tag{2}$$

where ρ_{ice} and ρ_{water} are the densities of ice and water respectively, H the ice thickness, and z_{b} the bedrock elevation. From these equations it follows that the initial (modern) basal friction coefficients stay constant, while the basal sheer stress evolves over time with the ice thickness and the effective pressure.

Basal sensitivity experiments with changed basal friction are performed to investigate the importance of uncertainties related to basal friction. In order to minimize the number of 3D higher-order experiments, a number of test experiments are performed with the simpler 2D SSA configuration of ISSM to identify the range of basal friction coefficients which yield plausible results. For example, if the basal friction coefficients for the entire ice sheet are reduced by a factor of 0.8 and 0.5 (in the 2D SSA test experiments; not shown), the ice surface elevation at the NEEM location shows a late-Eemian lowering of 300 and 800 m, respectively. Proxy data indicates a surface lowering of no more than 300 m (NEEM community members, 2013) at time.
20 Constrained by the proxy reconstructions the friction for the entire ice sheet is reduced by a factor of 0.9 in the 3D higher-order ice flow experiments. Two 2D SSA experiments (forced with MAR-SEB and MAR-BESSI, respectively) are discussed in detail here to illustrate the difference of the two ice flow approximations (Table 2).

Due to the high computational demand of the 3D higher-order setup, compromises are necessary. The simulations are initiated with the modern GrIS topography and the bedrock remains fixed at modern values (Glacial Isostatic Adjustment; GIA
25 is not yet implemented for transient simulations with ISSM). The ice sheet is initialized with observed ice surface velocities from Rignot and Mouginot (v4Aug2014; 2012). The anisotropic ice sheet mesh is refined with these velocities with a minimum resolution of 40 km in the slow interior and a maximum resolution of 0.5 km at the fast outlet glaciers. Since the mesh is based on observed velocities, the resolution of the mesh remains unchanged over time, and the ice sheet domain is fixed to the present-day ice sheet extent. The ice sheet can freely evolve within this domain, but is unable to grow outside the present-day
30 limits.

Ice formed during the 12,000 simulation years will only reach several hundred meters deep (far away from the bottom layers which experience most deformation) and surface air temperature is not influencing the SMB (as it would in a degree day model;

Table 1. ISSM model parameters

ISSM model parameters	
minimum mesh resolution (adaptive)	40 km
maximum mesh resolution (adaptive)	0.5 km
number of horizontal mesh vertices	7383
number of vertical layers	5
ice flow approximation	3D higher-order (Blatter, 1995; Pattyn, 2003)
degree of finite elements (stress balance)	P1 x P1
degree of finite elements (thermal)	P1 x P2
minimum time step (adaptive)	0.05 years
maximum time step (adaptive)	0.2 years
basal friction law	Paterson (1994, p. 151); Eq. 1 and 2
basal friction coefficient inversion cost functions	101, 103, 501
ice rheology	Cuffey and Paterson (2010, p. 75)

degree of finite elements: P1 - linear finite elements, P2 - quadratic finite elements, horizontal x vertical; inversion cost functions: 101 - absolute misfit of surface velocities, 103 - logarithmic misfit of surface velocities, 501 - absolute gradient of the basal drag coefficients

Reeh, 1989) because SMB is computed by either MAR-SEB or MAR-BESSI, models that account for temperature changes over the Eemian (as simulated by NorESM). Therefore the surface air temperature prescribed at the ice surface remains fixed at pre-industrial levels.

The simplified transient ISSM model setup does not explicitly resolve processes related to basal hydrology, ocean forcing,
5 and calving. The ice rheology is calculated as a function of temperature following Cuffey and Paterson (2010, p. 75). Initial (modern) ice sheet surface, ice thickness, and bed topography are derived from BedMachine v3 (v2017-09-20; Morlighem et al., 2017). The most important parameters of the ice sheet model are summarized in Table 1. Finally, the shortcomings of this simplified setup are discussed in Sec. 4.

2.4 Control and sensitivity experiments

10 The experiments performed are described below and summarized in Table 2. As discussed in Sec. 2.1-2.3, the experiments test the sensitivity to two different SMB models as well as different representations of the basal friction: The *control* experiment applies SMB from MAR-SEB and unchanged (modern) basal friction; the *SMB* experiment tests the simplified, but efficient SMB model, MAR-BESSI; the *basal* experiments test spatially uniform changes to the basal friction for the entire ice sheet; the *outlets* experiments test the sensitivity to changes of basal friction locally at the outlet glaciers (slow down/speed up of
15 outlet glaciers; high velocity regions with >500 m/yr). For the *basal* and *outlets* experiments the basal friction coefficient is multiplied by factors 0.9 and 1.1. Furthermore, the *outlets* experiments are repeated with more extreme factors of 0.5 and 2.0.

Table 2. Overview of the experiments

type of experiment	SMB method	basal friction	ice flow approx.
control	MAR-SEB	modern	3D higher-order
SMB	MAR-BESSI	modern	3D higher-order
basal (reduced)	MAR-SEB	0.9 * modern (entire ice sheet)	3D higher-order
basal (reduced)	MAR-BESSI	0.9 * modern (entire ice sheet)	3D higher-order
basal (enhanced)	MAR-SEB	1.1 * modern (entire ice sheet)	3D higher-order
basal (enhanced)	MAR-BESSI	1.1 * modern (entire ice sheet)	3D higher-order
outlets (reduced)	MAR-SEB	0.5 * modern (outlet glaciers)	3D higher-order
outlets (reduced)	MAR-BESSI	0.5 * modern (outlet glaciers)	3D higher-order
outlets (reduced)	MAR-SEB	0.9 * modern (outlet glaciers)	3D higher-order
outlets (reduced)	MAR-BESSI	0.9 * modern (outlet glaciers)	3D higher-order
outlets (enhanced)	MAR-SEB	1.1 * modern (outlet glaciers)	3D higher-order
outlets (enhanced)	MAR-BESSI	1.1 * modern (outlet glaciers)	3D higher-order
outlets (enhanced)	MAR-SEB	2.0 * modern (outlet glaciers)	3D higher-order
outlets (enhanced)	MAR-BESSI	2.0 * modern (outlet glaciers)	3D higher-order
altitude	MAR-SEB	modern	3D higher-order
altitude	MAR-BESSI	modern	3D higher-order
relaxed	MAR-SEB	modern	3D higher-order
ice flow	MAR-SEB	modern	2D SSA
ice flow	MAR-BESSI	modern	2D SSA

In additional experiments, with the more efficient SSA version of the model, a larger range of basal friction for the entire ice sheet is explored (doubling/halving of basal friction similar to Helsen et al., 2013). However, applying factors of 0.5 and 2.0 for the entire ice sheet results in unrealistic surface height changes at the deep ice core locations (not shown). Therefore, these extreme changes of basal friction are only applied to the outlet glaciers in our 3D higher-order experiments.

5   The *altitude* experiments test the sensitivity to the SMB-altitude feedback by neglecting this feedback; which means that the transient SMB forcing is prescribed without altitude changes affecting the SMB. Finally, we perform a *relaxed* experiment testing the sensitivity to a larger, relaxed initial ice sheet (with the same SMB and ice dynamics as the *control* experiment). This *relaxed* experiment starts with a larger ice sheet which is spun-up for 10,000 years under constant pre-industrial SMB from MAR-SEB. The difference arising from the different ice flow approximation are illustrated in the *ice flow* experiments.

3 Results

The importance of the SMB forcing is illustrated in Fig. 1 showing the evolution of the Greenland ice volume in the *control* experiment (MAR-SEB; bold orange line) and the *SMB* sensitivity experiment (MAR-BESSI; bold purple line). The corresponding sub-sets of experiments testing the basal friction (*basal*, *outlets*) are indicated in lighter colors. There is a distinct

5 difference between the model experiments forced with the two SMBs: forcing the ice sheet with MAR-SEB SMB (bold orange line) gives a minimum ice volume of 2.73 x 10^{15} m^3 at 124.7 ka corresponding to a sea level rise of 0.5 m — the basal sensitivity experiments give a range of 0.3 to 0.7 m (thin orange lines). On the other hand, the experiments forced with MAR-BESSI (bold purple line) give a minimum of 1.77 x 10^{15} m^3 at 123.8 ka (2.9 m sea level rise) with a range from 2.7 to 3.1 m (thin purple lines). The minimum ice volume and the corresponding sea level rise from all experiments are summarized in Table 3.

10 The *basal* experiments (thin solid lines; Fig. 1; friction *0.9/*1.1 for the entire ice sheet) show the strongest influence on the ice volume compared to the *outlets* experiments: changing the basal friction locally at the outlet glaciers (*outlets*) by factors of 0.9 and 1.1 has very little effect on the integrated ice volume (not shown). However, a halving/doubling of the friction at the outlet glaciers also shows a notable effect on the ice volume (0.05 to 0.15 m at the ice minimum; thin dashed lines; Fig. 1).

The importance of the SMB-altitude feedback is illustrated in Fig. 2 which shows the evolution of the ice volume with the

15 two SMB forcings (*control*, bold orange; *SMB*, bold purple) and without applying the SMB gradient method (*altitude*, thin orange/purple). Neglecting the evolution of the SMB with the changing ice surface elevation, i.e., using the offline calculated SMBs directly, results in significantly less melt. This is particularly pronounced in experiments forced with MAR-BESSI, because the ablation area in this SMB forcing is larger and therefore larger regions are affected by melt-induced surface lowering. The differences between 3D higher-order and 2D SSA are surprisingly small, particularly at the beginning of the

20 simulations while the ice volume is decreasing (*ice flow*, black and gray). The differences between the ice flow approximations become larger as the ice sheet enters into a colder state, at the end of the simulations. Finally, in the *relaxed* experiment (dark green) the volume decrease is more pronounced because the relaxed ice sheet is larger and the SMB forcing is negative enough to melt the additional ice at the margins. However, at the end of the simulations the *control* and the *relaxed* experiments become indistinguishable.

25 Comparing the SMB forcing for the *control* experiment (MAR-SEB; Fig. 3a-d) and the *SMB* experiment (MAR-BESSI; Fig. 3e-h) emphasizes the importance of the SMB-altitude feedback. While the offline calculated SMBs (i.e., modern and initial surface) are similar, the surface lowering in combination with the SMB gradient method cause the resulting SMB to become very negative in the southwest (for both MAR-SEB and MAR-BESSI) and in the northeast (particularly for MAR-BESSI). Regions with extremely low SMB at 125 ka are ice-free at the time of the simulation (ice margins are indicated with

30 a black solid line).

The simulated ice sheet thickness in the *control* experiment (Fig. 4a-d; MAR-SEB) shows only moderate changes. However, there is significant melt in the southwest at 125 ka (Fig. 4b). The *SMB* sensitivity experiment (Fig. 4e-h; MAR-BESSI) on the other hand gives a very different evolution of the ice thickness: At 125 ka the *SMB* experiment (Fig. 4f) shows an enhanced
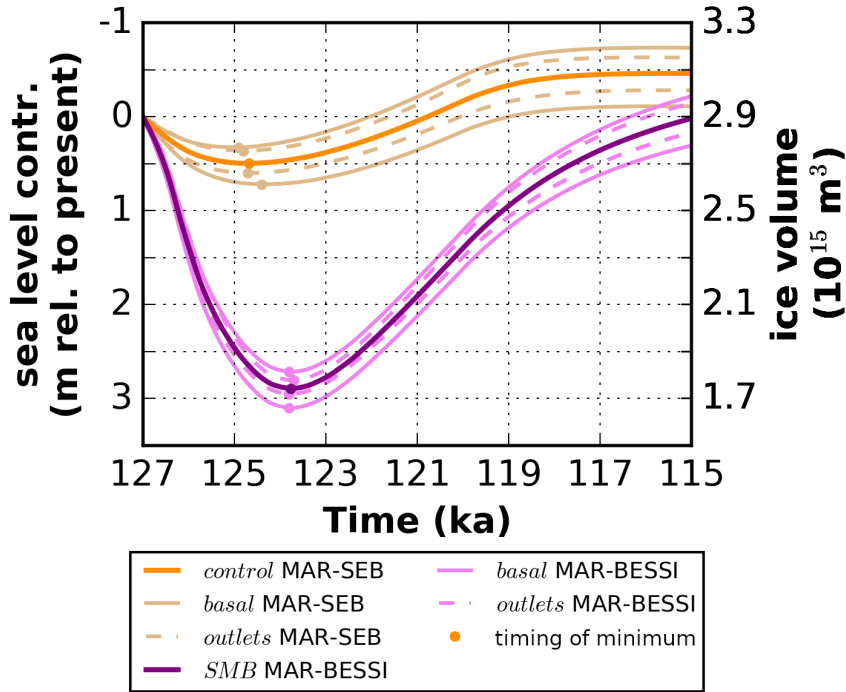
Figure 1. Evolution of the ice volume for the *control* (MAR-SEB, orange, bold) and the *SMB* (MAR-BESSI, purple, bold) experiments in comparison with the *basal/outlets* sensitivity experiments. The *basal* (friction *0.9/*1.1 for the entire ice sheet) and *outlets* sensitivity experiments (friction *0.5/*2.0 at the outlet glaciers) are indicated with thin solid and thin dashed lines, respectively. Note that the lower friction experiments give lower volumes. The minimum of the respective experiments is indicated with circles. See Table 3 for the exact values.

retreat in the southwest, but particularly strong in the northeast. Furthermore, the ice sheet takes longer to recover in the *SMB* experiment, giving a smaller ice sheet at 120 ka (Fig. 4g), mainly due to the large ice loss in the northeast.

The MAR-SEB forced experiments give only small changes (±200 m) in ice surface elevation at the deep ice core locations — Camp Century, NEEM, NGRIP, GRIP, Dye-3, EGRIP (Fig. 5). At most locations the surface elevation increases due to
5   a positive SMB, which is not in equilibrium with the initial ice sheet. The *relaxed* experiment (dark green), which is in equilibrium with the initial climate, shows damped elevation changes. Notably, Dye-3 (Fig. 5c) shows the strongest initial lowering due to its southern location affected by the early Eemian warming. The MAR-BESSI-forced experiments show much larger changes in surface elevation, particularly at Dye-3 (Fig. 5c) and NGRIP (Fig. 5b) with a maximum lowering of around 600 m, and at EGRIP (Fig. 5f), where the the largest lowering is around 1500 m. In contrast to the ice volume evolution,
10   where differences between the *control* and the *ice flow* experiment are small (Fig. 2), there is a larger difference in ice surface elevation changes between the ice flow approximations. The 2D SSA experiments (Fig. 5, black and grey) show ice surface changes up to 200 m different from the 3D higher-order experiments (Fig. 5, bold orange and purple).
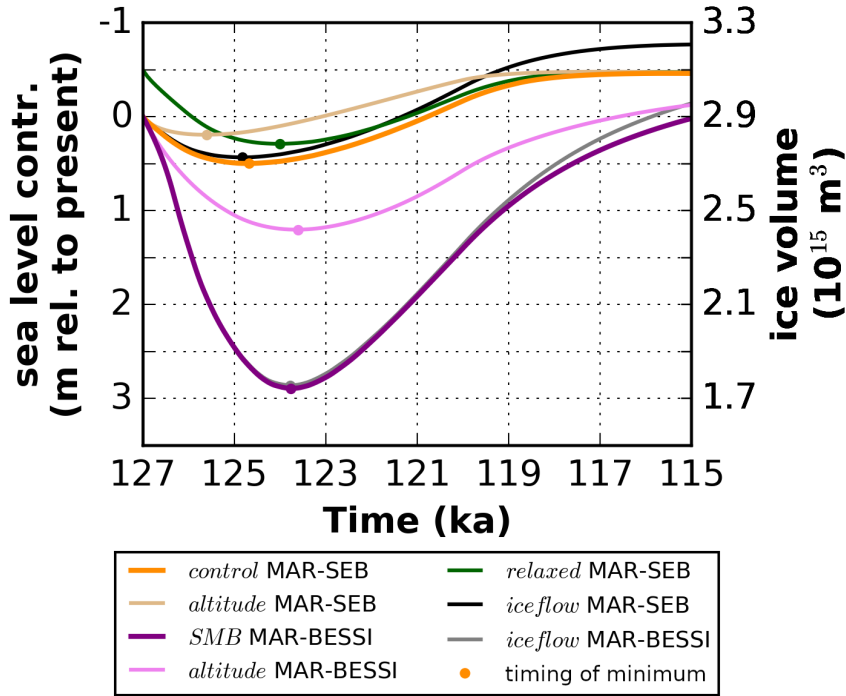
Figure 2. Evolution of the ice volume for the *control* (MAR-SEB, orange, bold) and the *SMB* experiments (MAR-BESSI, purple, bold) in comparison with the *altitude*, *relaxed*, and *iceflow* sensitivity experiments. The corresponding *altitude* (no SMB-altitude feedback) and *iceflow* (2D SSA) sensitivity experiments are shown in lighter colors and black/gray, respectively. The *relaxed* sensitivity experiment (relaxed larger initial ice sheet, but otherwise *control* forcing) is shown in dark green.

The impact of all sensitivity experiments on the ice volume minimum is summarized in Fig. 6. The choice of SMB model (*SMB*, black) shows the strongest influence with a difference in sea level rise of ~2.5 m between the *control* experiment (with MAR-SEB) and the *SMB* experiment (with MAR-BESSI). Furthermore, the SMB-altitude feedback is particularly important for the MAR-BESSI forced *altitude* experiment, due to the large regions affected by melt-induced surface lowering. The *basal*

5 and *outlets* sensitivity experiments show a limited effect on the simulated ice volume minimum. Finally, using a larger, relaxed initial ice sheet (*relaxed*) results in a ~0.3 m larger sea level rise. A complete summary of the respective ice volume minima is given in Table 3.

There are surprisingly small differences between the simulated ice thickness minimum of the *control* experiment (Fig. 7a; MAR-SEB and 3D higher-order) and the corresponding *ice flow* experiment (Fig. 7b; MAR-SEB and 2D SSA). Only minor

10 differences are visible on the east coast, where the 2D SSA experiment shows a stronger thickening than the 3D higher-order experiment. The complex topography in this region might explain the problem in the 2D experiment. These small differences between the ice flow approximations emphasize the controlling role of the SMB forcing and the SMB-altitude feedback. However, ice flow induced thinning (e.g., due to increased basal sliding) could initiate or enhance the SMB-altitude feedback.
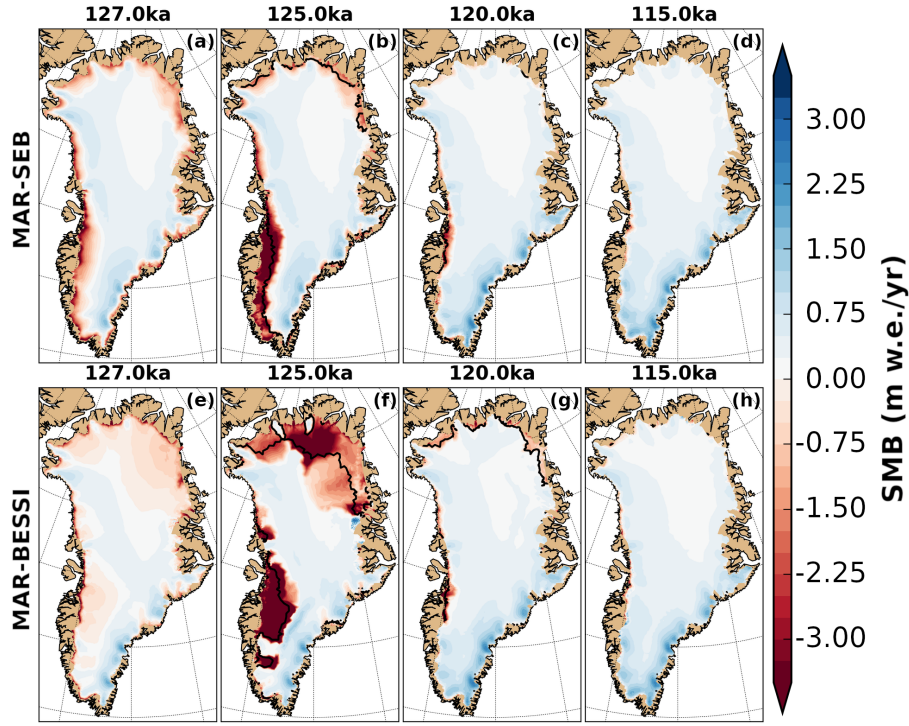
Figure 3. SMB forcing corrected for surface elevation changes at 127, 125, 120, 115 ka for the *control* (a-d, MAR-SEB) and the *SMB* (e-h, MAR-BESSI) experiments. The ice margin is indicated with a solid black line (10 m ice thickness remaining). A nonvisible ice margin is identical with the domain margin. For a consistent comparison, the ice thickness is shown at 125 ka instead of the individual minimum (*control* at 124.7 ka and *SMB* at 123.8 ka).

Reducing the friction at the base of the entire ice sheet by a factor of 0.9 (*basal**0.9, Fig. 8b) results in a thinning on the order of 100 m in large parts of the ice sheet relative to the ice sheet minimum in the *control* experiment (Fig. 8a). The faster flowing ice sheet leads to a build up of ice at the margins and the topographically constrained outlet glaciers, particularly visible in the northeast. Furthermore, reducing the basal friction only at the outlet glaciers by a factor of 0.5 (*outlets**0.5 Fig. 8c), leads to a local thinning around the outlet glaciers of several hundred meters. Note that the thinning also affects ice thickness upstream from the outlet region.

The ice velocities in the $basal$*0.9 experiments indicate that a Greenland-wide reduction of basal friction by a factor of 0.9 leads to a speed up of the outlet glaciers by up to several 100 m/year (Fig. 9b) relative to the *control* experiment. Furthermore, reducing the friction at the outlet glaciers by a factor of 0.5 (*outlets**0.5) results in a local speed-up of several 100 m/yr (Fig. 9c). Although the $outlets$*0.5 experiment also shows a speed-up further upstream (in the order of several m/yr), in combination with the local ice thinning (Fig. 8c), the effects of halving the friction at the outlet glaciers shows a minimal effect on the total ice volume (see also in Fig. 1).
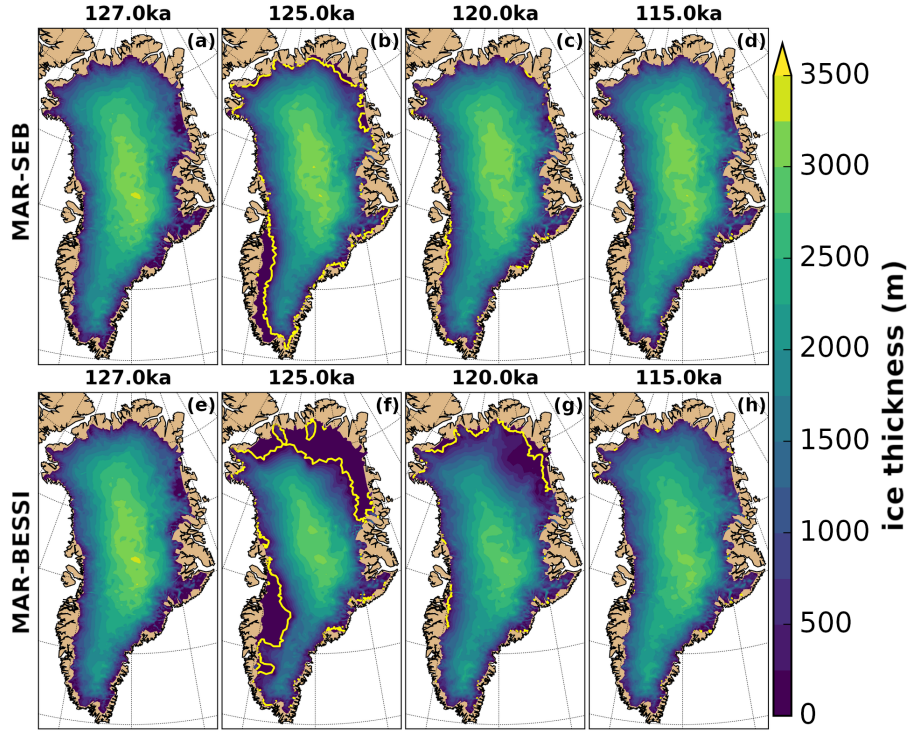
Figure 4. Ice thickness at 127, 125, 120, 115 ka for the *control* (a-d, MAR-SEB) and the *SMB* (e-h, MAR-BESSI) experiments. The ice margin is indicated with a solid yellow line (10 m ice thickness remaining). A nonvisible ice margin is identical with the domain margin. For a consistent comparison, the ice thickness is shown at 125 ka instead of the individual minimum (*control* at 124.7 ka and *SMB* at 123.8 ka).

4 Discussion

Changing the SMB forcing — between a full surface energy balance model (MAR-SEB) and an intermediate complexity SMB model (MAR-BESSI) — gives the largest difference in our simplified simulations of the Eemian ice sheet evolution (Fig. 6). Compromises such as the lack of ocean forcing and GIA, and limited changes of basal friction are necessary to keep

5 3D higher-order simulations feasible on a millennial-scale and are discussed in this section.

MAR-SEB and MAR-BESSI are two estimates of Eemian SMBs selected from a wider range of simulations analyzed in Plach et al. (2018). The same Eemian global climate simulations from the NorESM, downscaled over Greenland with the regional climate model MAR, are used as forcing for the SMB models. Since only one global climate model is used in this study, uncertainties relating to the Eemian climate cannot be evaluated here. Testing the impact of different global climate

10 simulations is beyond the scope of this study. Instead the reader is referred to the discussion in Plach et al. (2018).

Our *control* experiment with the 3D higher-order ice flow model with modern, unchanged basal friction coefficients, and forced with MAR-SEB SMB shows minor melting (equivalent to 0.5 m sea level rise), while the *SMB* sensitivity experiment with MAR-BESSI SMB causes a much larger ice sheet retreat (2.9 m sea level rise). The basal sensitivity experiments
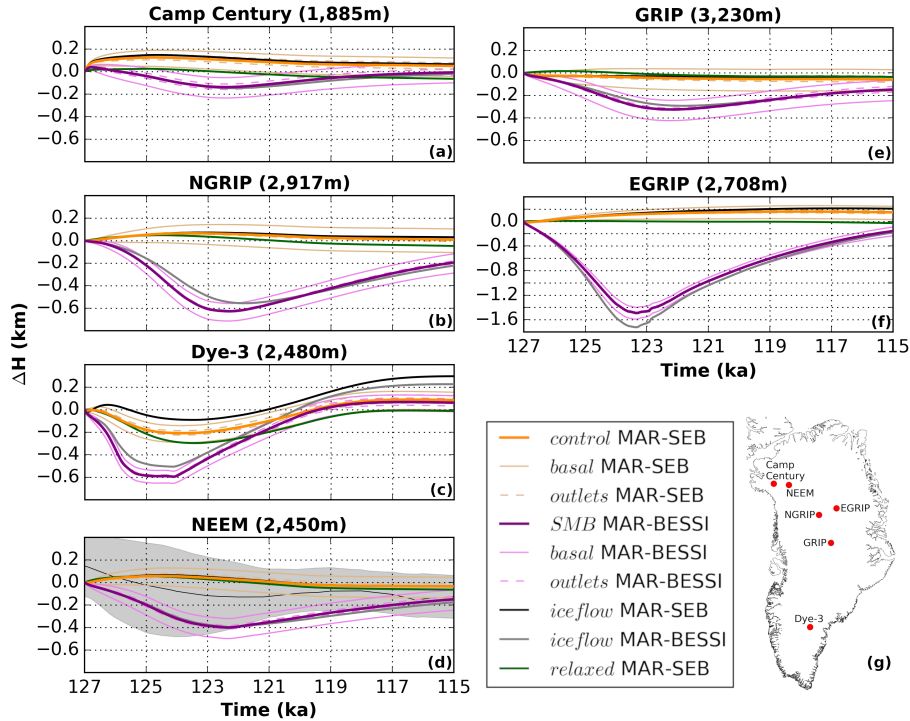
Figure 5. Ice surface evolution at Greenland ice core locations for the *control*, *SMB*, *basal*, *outlets*, *ice flow*, and *relaxed* experiments — Camp Century, NEEM, NGRIP, GRIP, and Dye-3 are shown on the same scale; EGRIP is shown on a different scale. Same color-coding as in Fig. 1 and 2. Surface elevation reconstructions from total gas content at NEEM are indicated with gray shading. Note that the 2D experiments are plotted in the background and therefore hardly visible in some cases, particularly at NEEM.

(*basal/outlets*) give a range of approx. equivalent ±0.2 m sea level rise for both SMB models; with the Greenland-wide friction change (*basal*) showing the largest influence on the minimum ice volume. Reducing/enhancing the friction at the outlet glaciers (*outlets*) by a factor of 0.9/1.1 shows mainly local thinning/thickening at the outlets (Fig. 8c) with limited effect on the total ice volume (Fig. 1, Table 3). However, doubling the friction at the outlet glaciers reduces the sea level rise contribution by 0.15

5   and 0.10 m for MAR-SEB and MAR-BESSI SMB forcing respectively (relative to the *control* experiment; Table 3).

The basal friction sensitivity experiments (*basal/outlets*) are non-exhaustive and further experiments could be envisioned: including a lower velocity threshold to define the outlet glaciers, continuous identification of outlet regions, combining *basal**0.9 and *outlets**0.5 experiments, to name a few. In such experiments the impact on the ice sheet evolution might be larger than in the experiments discussed. Regardless of the specific formulation of the anomalous basal friction, the sensitivity experiments

10   shown here represent a substantial change in basal properties and there illustrate the magnitude of the uncertainties related to the basal conditions implying that caution is required when deriving the basal friction. Finding appropriate basal conditions of past ice sheets in challenging. We show that after applying a large range of friction it is unlikely that friction at the base has a stronger influence than changing the SMB forcing unless explicit dynamic sub-glacial hydrology linked to SMB is included.

Table 3. Summary of the simulated ice sheet minima for all experiments

experimental setup	SLR [m] rel. to initial	ΔSLR [m] at resp. minimum	Minimum GrIS volume (10^{15}m^3)
control **MAR-SEB**	**0.51**	**0.00**	**2.73**
basal*0.9 MAR-SEB	0.73	+0.22	2.64
basal*1.1 MAR-SEB	0.33	-0.17	2.80
outlets*0.5 MAR-SEB	0.61	+0.10	2.69
outlets*0.9 MAR-SEB	0.53	+0.02	2.72
outlets*1.1 MAR-SEB	0.48	-0.02	2.74
outlets*2.0 MAR-SEB	0.36	-0.15	2.79
altitude MAR-SEB	0.18	-0.32	2.86
relaxed MAR-SEB	0.79	+0.28	2.82
ice flow (2D) MAR-SEB	0.43	-0.07	2.76
SMB MAR-BESSI	2.90	0.00	1.77
basal*0.9 MAR-BESSI	3.10	+0.20	1.69
basal*1.1 MAR-BESSI	2.72	-0.18	1.84
outlets*0.5 MAR-BESSI	2.95	+0.05	1.75
outlets*0.9 MAR-BESSI	2.90	+0.00	1.77
outlets*1.1 MAR-BESSI	2.87	-0.03	1.78
outlets*2.0 MAR-BESSI	2.80	-0.10	1.81
altitude MAR-BESSI	1.20	-1.70	2.45
ice flow (2D) MAR-BESSI	2.85	-0.05	1.79

For the *outlets* sensitivity experiments, the basal friction in regions with > 500 m/yr is changed. Sea level rise (SLR) values are relative to the initial ice sheet at 127 ka, i.e., the modern ice sheet for all experiments except the relaxed initial ice sheet experiment. The lost ice volume is equally spread over the modern ocean area. ΔSLR refers to anomalies relative to the respective SMB forcing experiments with unchanged friction.

The importance of coupling the climate (SMB) and the ice sheet has been demonstrated in previous studies, e.g., recently for regional climate models in a projected future climate assessment by Le clec'h et al. (2019). However, running a high resolution regional climate model over several thousand years is presently unfeasible due to the exceedingly high computational cost. This is even more true when the goal is to run an ensemble of long sensitivity simulations as presented here. Although the presented simulations are lacking the ice-climate coupling, the SMB-altitude feedback is accounted for by applying the SMB
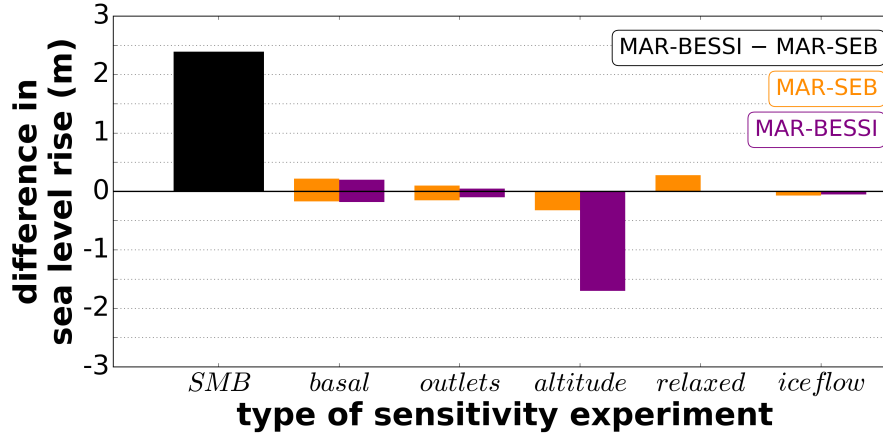
Figure 6. Differences between the minimum Eemian ice sheet simulated by the respective sensitivity experiments: *SMB* (black): difference between the *control* and the *SMB* experiment (MAR-SEB and MAR-BESSI, respectively). *basal*: experiments with changed friction for the entire ice sheet. *outlets*: experiments with changed friction at the outlet glaciers. *altitude*: experiments without the SMB-altitude feedback. *relaxed*: experiment with a larger, relaxed initial ice sheet. *ice flow*: experiments with 2D SSA instead of the default 3D higher-order ice flow approximation. The different SMB forcing is shown in orange (MAR-SEB) and purple (MAR-BESSI). *basal/outlets* experiments show positive and negative values because they are performed with enhanced and reduced friction. The exact values are given in Table 3.

gradient method. The SMB is significantly lowered as the ice surface is lowered: neglecting the SMB-altitude feedback gives less than half the volume reduction (MAR-SEB: 0.2 vs. 0.5 m; MAR-BESSI: 1.2 vs. 2.9 m; Fig. 2 and 6).

Towards the end of the simulations, all model experiments develop a new ice sheet state which is larger than the initial state (Fig. 1 and 2). This development towards a larger ice sheet is likely related to a relaxation of the initial pre-industrial
5   ice sheet configuration not being in equilibrium with the initial SMB forcing. A simulation over 10,000 years with constant pre-industrial SMB gives an ~10 % larger relaxed modern ice sheet. The *relaxed* sensitivity experiments with this relaxed initial ice sheet (~0.5 m larger initial state) result in a ~0.3 m larger sea level rise (at the minimum) compared to the *control* experiment. Although the 127 ka GrIS is not expected to be in equilibrium with pre-industrial forcing, the *relaxed* experiment demonstrates the impact of a larger initial ice sheet on our estimates of the contribution of Greenland to the Eemian sea level
10 high-stand. Furthermore, the *relaxed* experiment illustrates the strong, but slow impact of the SMB forcing, even when starting with a different initial ice sheet, the final size is similar to the *control* experiment, because late-Eemian SMB results in a strong steady-state of the ice sheet.

Furthermore, the simplified initialization implies that the thermal structure of the simulated ice sheet is lacking the history of a full glacial-interglacial cycle, i.e., the ice rheology of our ice sheet is different to an ice sheet which is spun-up through
15 a glacial cycle. Helsen et al. (2013) demonstrate the importance of the ice rheology for the pre-Eemian ice sheet size. They find differences of up to 20% in initial ice volume after a spin-up forced with different glacial temperatures (in simulations with basal conditions not based on assimilation of surface velocities as it is the case here). In our approach a biased thermal
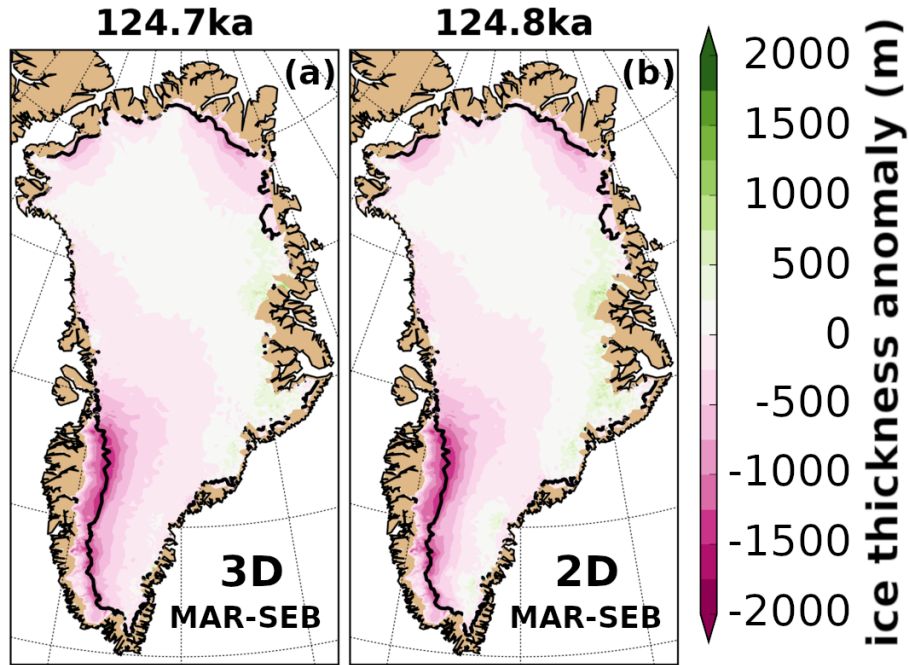
Figure 7. Ice thickness anomalies simulated with the *control* (a; 3D higher-order) and the *ice flow* (b; 2D SSA) experiments at the respective ice minimum. Anomalies are relative to the initial, modern ice sheet. The respective minimum time is indicated on the top of each panel. The ice margin is indicated with a solid black line (10 m ice thickness remaining). If the ice margin is not visible it is identical with the domain margin.

structure is partly compensated by basal friction optimized so that the simulated surface velocities represent the observed, modern velocities. A viable way to test the influence of the thermal structure on the ice rheology would be to perform additional sensitivity experiments. However, such rheology experiments can only be performed in the 3D higher-order setup (the 2D SSA setup neglects vertical shear) and the computational resources to run additional 3D experiments are limited.

5   Starting the simulations with a smaller ice sheet would influence the simulated maximum sea level contribution. A smaller ice sheet, in combination with the SMB-altitude feedback, would result in a more negative SMB at the lower surface regions. This could potentially lead to smaller differences between the MAR-SEB and MAR-BESSI results because large regions in the MAR-BESSI forced simulations melt away completely, and a more negative SMB would show limited effect in such regions. However, the MAR-SEB forced simulations are more likely to be affected by the lower initial ice elevation. Note that,
10   neglecting GIA could counteract the effect of a lower initial ice sheet as well as a negative SMB, as the isostatic rebound of the regions effected by melt would partly compensate for the height loss.

The *ice flow* experiments (2D SSA) show very similar results to the corresponding experiments with 3D higher-order (*control* and *SMB* experiments), in particular for the simulated minimum ice volume. However, the differences in ice volume become larger towards the end of the simulations under colder climate conditions (less negative SMB). Furthermore, the ice surface
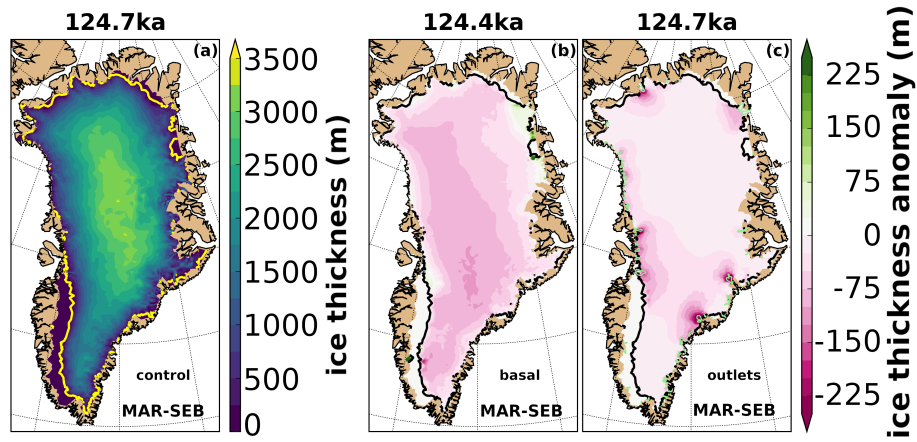
Figure 8. Minimum ice thickness of the *control* experiment (a), the *basal**0.9 (b; reduced friction of the entire ice sheet), and the *outlets**0.5 (c; reduced friction at outlet glaciers) experiments at their respective ice sheet minimum (time indicated on top of panels). Anomalies are relative to the *control* experiment. The ice margin is indicated with a solid yellow/black line (10 m ice thickness remaining). If the ice margin is not visible it is identical with the domain margin. The outlet regions are indicated with bright green contours (c).
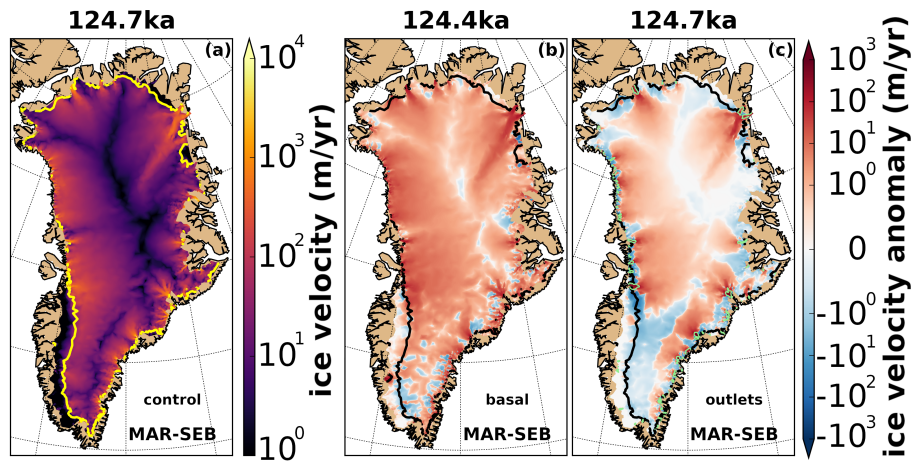
Figure 9. Ice velocity of the minimum ice sheet in the *control* experiment (a) and the *basal**0.9 (b; reduced friction of the entire ice sheet), and the *outlets**0.5 (c; reduced friction at outlet glaciers) experiments at their respective ice sheet minimum (time indicated on top of panels). Anomalies are relative to the *control* experiment. The ice margin is indicated with a solid yellow/black line (10 m ice thickness remaining). If the ice margin is not visible it is identical with the domain margin. The outlet regions are indicated with bright green contours (c).

evolution at the deep ice core locations show a similar behavior with both ice flow approximations: differences are less than ~150 m (at most locations). The strong similarities between 3D higher-order and 2D SSA — also noted by Larour et al. (2012) using ISSM for centennial simulations — are likely related to the inversion of the friction coefficients from observed velocities. The dynamical deficiencies of the 2D SSA ice flow are partly compensated by the inversion algorithm: this algorithm chooses

basal conditions such that the model simulates surface velocities as close to the observations as possible. The relatively small difference between the 3D higher-order and 2D SSA experiments indicates that the SMB forcing is more important in our simulations than the ice dynamics.

Basal hydrology is neglected in the simulations because it is not well understood and therefore difficult to implement in a robust way. Furthermore, an implementation of a basal hydrology model would increase the computational demand of the simulations and make them unfeasible on the millennial time scales we are investigating. However, it is recognized that basal hydrology might have been important for the recent observed acceleration of Greenland outlet glaciers (e.g., Aschwanden et al., 2016). Therefore, the impact of changing basal conditions is tested by varying the friction at the bed of the outlet glaciers. Although basal hydrology is not explicitly simulated, its possible consequences in form of a slow down, or speed up of the outlet glaciers can be assessed (see Sec. 3).

Furthermore, the simplified setup chosen to neglect ocean forcing and processes such as grounding line migration due to their complexity. The focus of this study is on the minimum Eemian ice sheet which has likely been land based. However, these processes are thought to be important for the recent observed changes at Greenland's outlet glaciers (Straneo and Heimbach, 2013). In a recent study, Tabone et al. (2018) investigate the influence of ocean forcing on the Eemian GrIS. Their sensitivity experiments indicate that the Eemian minimum is governed by the atmospheric forcing, due to a lack of ice-ocean contact. However, the resulting estimate of the Eemian GrIS sea-level contribution is dependent on the ocean forcing, as it influences the pre-Eemian ice sheet size.

The simulations are initiated at 127 ka with the observed modern geometry of the Greenland ice sheet (following the PMIP4 protocol; Otto-Bliesner et al., 2017). This choice is based on the fact that the present-day ice sheet is relatively well known whereas the pre-Eemian ice sheet size is highly uncertain. Since the global sea level went from a glacial low stand to an interglacial high stand, during the course of the Eemian interglacial period, it is a fair assumption that the Eemian GrIS, at some point during this period, resembled the present-day ice sheet. In this study, this point is chosen to be at 127 ka. One advantage of this procedure, is that it allows for a basal friction configuration based on inverted observed modern surface velocities. A spin-up over a glacial cycle without adapting basal friction would be unrealistic. Furthermore, a spin-up would require ice sheet boundary migration, i.e., implementation of calving, grounding line migration, and a larger ice domain. This would be challenging as the mesh resolution is based on observed surface velocities and the domain therefore limited to the present-day ice extent. Additionally, a time-adaptive mesh, to allow for the migration of the high resolution mesh with the evolving ice streams, would be necessary. Unfortunately, a realistic spin-up with all these additions is presently unfeasible due to the high computational cost of the model. Moreover, the lack of a robust estimate of the pre-Eemian GrIS size and the climate uncertainties over the last glacial cycle would introduce many more uncertainties to the initial ice sheet.

The Eemian GrIS sea level contribution of ~0.5 m in the *control* experiment is low compared to previous Eemian model studies (Fig. 10). Proxy studies based on marine sediment cores (Colville et al., 2011) and ice cores (NEEM community members, 2013), respectively, provide an sea level rise estimate of 2 m from the Eemian Greenland ice sheet, while assuming no contribution from the Northern part of the ice sheet, where no proxy constraints are available. However, scenarios with larger contributions from the North could be possible as in the MAR-BESSI forced experiments. Although the *SMB* sensitivity
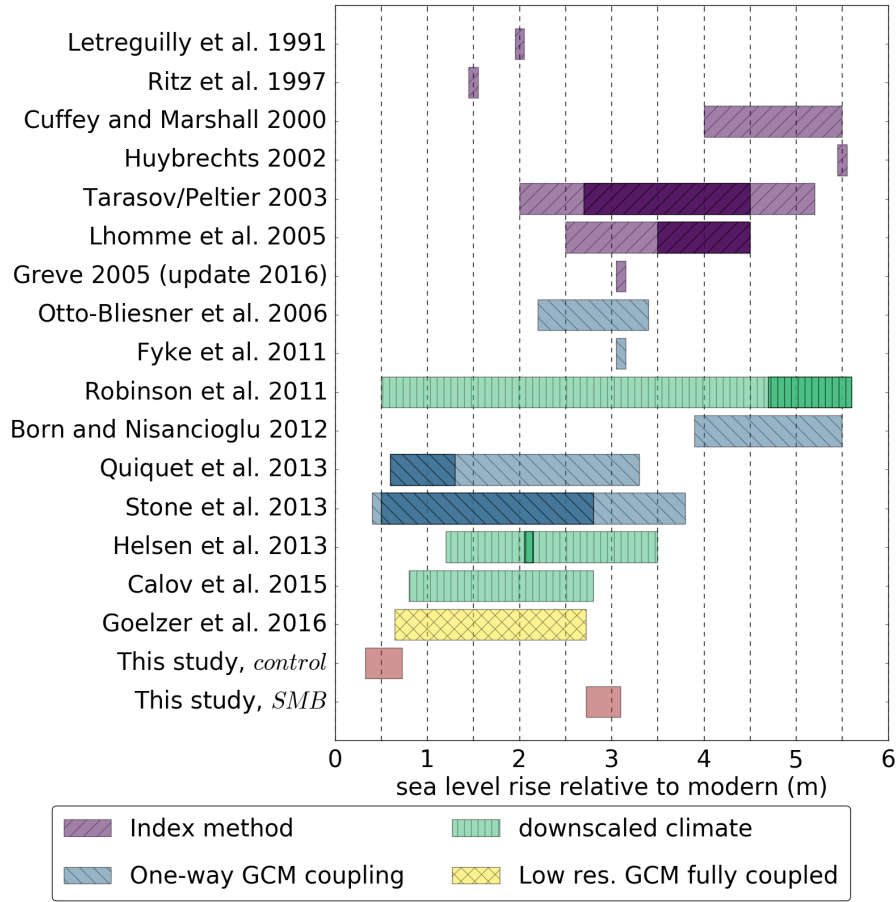
Figure 10. Simulated sea level rise contributions from this study and previous Eemian studies. For this study the results of the *control* (MAR-SEB; lower bound) and the *SMB* experiments (MAR-BESSI; upper bound) are shown (the ranges show the results of the respective basal/outlets fraction sensitivity experiments). Previous studies are color-coded according to the type of climate forcing used. More likely estimates are indicated with darker colors if provided in the respective studies. A common sea level rise conversion (distributing the meltwater volume equally on Earth's ocean area) is applied to Greve (2005), Robinson et al. (2011), Born and Nisancioglu (2012), Quiquet et al. (2013), Helsen et al. (2013), and Calov et al. (2015).

experiment forced with SMB from MAR-BESSI shows a larger contribution of ~3.0 m which is closer to previous model estimates, this does not necessarily mean that the MAR-BESSI SMB is more realistic. These results could indicate systematic biases in the experimental setup, causing a general underestimation of the Eemian sea level contribution.

Both SMB models are forced with a regionally downscaled climate based on simulations with the global climate model NorESM. NorESM, as other climate models, has biases, which end up in the MAR-derived SMBs. This present study can be seen as a sensitivity study to SMB forcing for millennial-scale ice sheet simulations. While the simplified setup has its limits, the study emphasizes the importance of the accurate SMB forcing in general, independent on how well the presented SMBs

describe the Eemian SMB. Furthermore, it is important to keep in mind that an accurate SMB forcing not only depends on the choice of SMB model, but also the climate simulations used as input.

5 Conclusions

This study emphasizes the higher importance of an accurate surface mass balance (SMB) forcing over a more complex ice flow approximation for the simulation of the Eemian Greenland ice sheet. Experiments with two SMBs — a full surface energy balance model and an intermediate complexity SMB model — result in different Eemian sea level contributions (~0.5 to 3.0 m) when forced with the same detailed regional climate over Greenland. However, the comparison of experiments with 3D higher-order and 2D SSA ice flow, give only small changes in ice volume (<0.2 m). Furthermore, the importance of the SMB-altitude feedback is shown; neglecting this feedback reduces the simulated sea level contribution by more than 50%. A non-exhaustive set of basal friction sensitivity experiments, affecting the entire ice sheet and outlet glacier regions respectively, indicate a limited influence on the total ice volume (maximum difference of ~0.2 m compared to experiments without changes to friction). While basal sensitivity experiments with larger impacts could be envisioned, it is unlikely that such experiments would exceed the magnitude of uncertainty related to SMB (at least not in this simplified setup). While it is challenging and arguably unfeasible at present to perform an exhaustive set of sensitivity experiments with 3D higher-order ice flow models, cost-efficient hybrid models (SIA + SSA) could be an option to further investigate the ice dynamical processes (such as ocean forcing or basal hydrology) neglected here.

In conclusion, simulations of the long-term response of the Greenland ice sheet to warmer climates, such as the Eemian interglacial period, should focus on an accurate SMB estimate. Moreover, it is important to note that uncertainties in SMB are not only a result of the choice of SMB model, but also the climate simulations used as input. The climate simulation uncertainties are neglected in this study. However, they should be included in future Eemian ice sheet model studies in an effort to provide reliable estimates of the Eemian sea level contribution from the Greenland ice sheet.

6 Code availability

The ISSM code can be freely downloaded from http://issm.jpl.nasa.gov (last accessed: 18.10.2018). Model scripts and other datasets can be obtained upon request from the corresponding author. The NorESM model code can be obtained upon request. Instructions on how to obtain a copy are given at: https://wiki.met.no/noresm/gitbestpractice (last accessed: 18.10.2018). BESSI is under active development. For more information contact Andreas Born (andreas.born@uib.no). The MAR code is available at: http://mar.cnrs.fr (last accessed: 18.10.2018).

7 Data availability

The ISSM simulations and the MAR-SEB and MAR-BESSI SMBs are available upon request from the corresponding author. The SeaRISE dataset used is freely available at: http://websrv.cs.umt.edu/isis/images/e/e9/Greenland_5km_dev1.2.nc. (last accessed: 18.10.2018)

Author contributions. AP and KHN designed the study with contributions from PML and AB. SLC performed the MAR simulations. AP performed the ISSM simulations, made the figures and wrote the text with input from KHN, PML, AB, SLC.

Competing interests. The authors declare that they have no conflict of interest.

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