

with the objective of convincing all the leaders in Kathmandu to work together to mitigate the huge seismic risk their capital city faces. The other project leader, architect Yogeshwar Parajuli, has recently become the head of the Kathmandu Valley Development Authority (www.kvda.gov.np), and is working hard to introduce land planning into the valley that addresses the seismic hazard of different parts of it.

Immediately after the April 2015 earthquake, NSET undertook training in rapid assessment of hundreds of local engineers. Under memoranda of understanding with government departments, it has assisted them in a number of ways.

As the photographs in the authors' paper demonstrate, Nepal has a long way to go to lift the resilience of their buildings and infrastructure. A year on, there are moves to revise the building code – perhaps to “international” levels seismically. A number of those who have called for such a lift appear to be ignorant of the rationale and careful consideration/consultation undertaken in the drafting of the Code. The level of design

loads is, obviously, almost irrelevant if there is little compliance with the Code.

Finally, the New Zealand Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade's (MFAT) volunteer team that went to Kathmandu soon after the first earthquake (and experienced the second one) was not sent there for Learning from Earthquakes (reconnaissance) purposes. It was in response to an urgent request from the Nepal Government's Department of Urban Development and Building Construction to assist them in the rapid assessment of government and some private buildings. MFAT has recognised the value that we earthquake engineers in New Zealand can bring to such international crises.

Yours sincerely,

Richard Sharpe

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AUTHORS' RESPONSE

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The authors are thankful to Dr Richard Sharpe for his insightful and informative comments on several aspects of earthquake engineering practices in Nepal. Dr Sharpe is correct: the paper does not try to correlate observations back to the Nepal Building Code; neither does it present the status of earthquake preparedness in Nepal, nor does it elaborate on the roles played by different institutions before and after the earthquakes. These aspects were intentionally not addressed as these topics were not the focus of the paper. As is evident from the title, the purpose of the paper was almost exclusively to report observations and in particular the failure modes most commonly-observed following the Nepal earthquakes. It was also never our intention to make any comment on fragilities, probabilities, or proportions of failed versus non-failed buildings, hence we have not reported in detail on buildings that exhibited low (or no) damage.

The authors are well aware of the National Society for Earthquake Technology (NSET), a non-governmental organisation, and the contribution that NSET has made towards earthquake risk awareness and preparedness in Nepal. The authors are also aware of many other governmental and non-governmental institutions in Nepal - both national and international, who have made significant contributions towards earthquake disaster risk reduction (both in pre and post-earthquake scenarios) in Nepal. Hence, the authors felt it would be unjust to these institutions if particular focus was directed towards NSET only. Also, as mentioned earlier it was beyond the scope of the paper to record the contributions of these organisations.

The comparison of the observed ground motions with the Indian Standard Design demand was merely for a context without any further follow up in the paper. The Indian Standard was chosen as to the authors' surprise, it was observed that more structural designers in Nepal follow the Indian Standard than the Nepal Building Code, notwithstanding the fact that only a small proportion of buildings are designed by properly following a seismic design code. In the authors' opinion, there are two reasons for the

Indian Standard's extensive use. The first is due to a historical reason (as Dr Sharpe has rightly alluded to), and the second is because Nepal does not have its own full set of material design standards, and designers then have to defer to the information that is available in the Indian Standards.

The authors had access to the building Standards developed by Dr Sharpe and his team and we found these to be a pragmatic set of documents considering capability and logistics available in Nepal at that time. In particular the Building Code NBC105 [1] appears to have been ahead of its time in the Nepal context. The authors also agree with Dr Sharpe that the level of design loads is almost irrelevant if there is little compliance with the Code, so efforts to strictly implement the Building Codes should take priority. The authors are aware that the Government of Nepal has recently made some legislative changes around the requirement of building design and has already started a process to revise NBC105 and other building standards through the Department of Urban Development and Building Construction (DUDBC).

In hindsight, the authors realize that not comparing the Nepal seismic design spectra with the observed spectra in Kathmandu Valley or omission of reference to the Nepal Building Code in the paper was an oversight. The third author Mr Bothara, who was part of the Nepal Building Code Development Project under Dr Sharpe's leadership, is particularly apologetic to Dr Sharpe for this oversight. For readers' information, in Figure 1 below we include a comparison of the response spectra of the ground motions recorded at one of the stations in Kathmandu Valley during the 25 April 2015 main earthquake with the Nepal Building Code NBC105 [1] design spectrum. Note that NBC105 [1] provides a reduced spectrum for a fully ductile structure, and the spectrum plotted below is an adjusted spectrum for a non-ductile (i.e. unreinforced masonry) structure on soft soil. Note that the plotted spectrum gives the demand for the Working Stress Method of design, and needs to be multiplied by a load factor of 1.25 to arrive at a demand for the Limit State Method of design [2].

REFERENCES

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2. NBCDP, (1994). "Seismic Hazard Mapping and Risk Assessment for Nepal". Nepal Building Code Development Project, His Majesty's Government of Nepal, Ministry of Housing and Physical Planning, UNCHS (UNDP Pro# Nep.88.054-21.03), Kathmandu, Nepal.

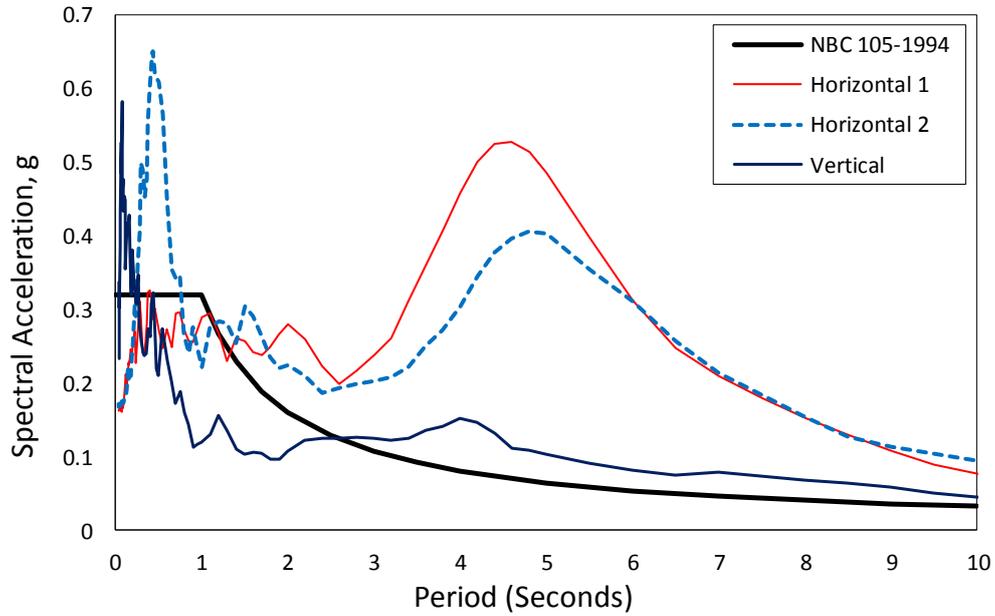


Figure 1: Ground motions recorded at Kanti Path Station during the 25 April 2015 main shock in comparison with the NBC105 [1] elastic design spectrum on soft soil.