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The Earthquake Engineering Research Institute and the International Association of Earthquake Engineering have developed an encyclopaedia of housing construction types around the world, as a database of information shared on the internet. The book reviewed here is the first hard-copy publication, providing an overview of the project and, at the same time, apart of new information, a backup of the information available on the website as of July 1, 2004. Over 180 scientists from 47 countries contributed to the volume with peer-reviewed overview summaries and/or peer-reviewed reports on housing construction in countries in the six regions of the world (Asia, Africa, Europe, North and South America and Australia/Oceania). The editing responsibles have then created one-page excerpts from each of the reports.

The book is organised in 13 chapters: an introduction, an example of a complete report, and several chapters containing each an overview and summaries of reports grouped according to the type of construction. Provided are the summaries of 9 reports on adobe construction, 9 on stone masonry construction, 14 reports on brick masonry construction, 10 reports on confined masonry construction, 4 reports on so-called vernacular construction, 7 reports on concrete shear wall construction, 19 reports on reinforced concrete frame construction, 9 reports on pre-cast concrete construction, 6 reports on timber construction, 3 reports on advanced technologies, and 6 so-called unique housing reports. Each report summary contains an abstract and four characteristic images for the respective construction type in black and white. The accompanying CD ROM contains all the information in the book and the complete reports with full colour images, as well as an example of a tutorial from a series to be provided.
in frame of the project. On the CD also the geographical distribution of the reported housing construction types can be tracked for, which is, however, less balanced than the distribution adopted for the classification in the book (on building materials mainly). Almost half of the completed forms report on housing construction from Asia, nearly a third from Europe and most of the rest from Latin America. African housing typologies are also included. There are 67 reports describing the engineered construction while the remaining 33 reports are describing non-engineered housing construction practice. A report consists of answers to over 60 questions, covering relevant information categories on housing construction. The ‘General Information’ section includes a summary of the housing construction and information on the typical period of practice and regions of the country where such construction has been practiced. Some ‘Architectural Features’ relate to the number, size and distribution of openings or to the overall building configuration. The heart of each report is the one on ‘Structural Features’. The information on the structural system can be summarised by inclusion of information on the material, the load bearing structure (type and subtype), the foundation type and description, the floor and roof system, the typical number of stories and the typical wall density. The prevalent building materials include concrete (9 systems), steel (5 systems), masonry (13 systems), and timber (6 systems). This book on the World Housing Encyclopedia (WHE) contains 25 reports on moment resisting concrete frames, out of which 19 describe concrete frames with masonry infill. The report printed fully in the book is exactly that on the Turkish housing construction, affected by the 1999 Izmit (Turkey) earthquake. ‘Problems’, in form of ‘seismic deficiencies’, and ‘opportunities’, in form of ‘earthquake resilient features’, are illustrated in tabular form in the section ‘Evaluation of Seismic Performance and Seismic Vulnerability’. This section includes the estimate of the seismic vulnerability rating for the housing construction under discussion. Most of the reports (39 in total) describe highly vulnerable constructions (EMS, 1998, vulnerability Classes A and B) that has performed poorly in earthquakes, such as unreinforced masonry construction and non-ductile concrete construction, however there are 19 reports on ‘success stories’, describing earthquake-resistant construction (Classes E and F per EMS, 1998, scale). For each past earthquake affecting the building type, a table lists year, epicentre, Richter magnitude, and maximum intensity (noting scales used) in the section ‘Earthquake Damage Patterns’. The damage patterns are linked over the ‘element’ key to the previous section and illustrated with pictures. Reports on housing construction affected from the 1999 Athens earthquake to the 2003 Boumerdes (Algeria) and 2003 Bam (Iran) earthquakes are included. Linked again over the ‘element’ key, the section ‘Building Materials and Construction Process’ includes ‘urban mineralogy’ details: a description of the