



Do Structural Codes Stifle Creativity?

David Nethercot

Imperial College, London, UK

Contact: d.nethercot@imperial.ac.uk

Abstract

It is an often heard contention: 'Structural Codes stifle creativity, they have become too prescriptive, we don't need them etc'. Is this true? Where is the evidence? Do these views have an objective and authoritative basis? Or are they part of the folk law, gaining a degree of credibility simply through repeated stating? What is the alternative?

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1 Panel Members

Oliver Broadbent, thinkup

Peter Curran, Ramboll

Steve McKechnie, Arup

David Nethercot, Imperial College London (chair)

Jon Shanks, Buro Happold

2 Seminar Proposition

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Structural Codes of Practice influence the professional activities of all Structural Engineers. Whilst relatively few will be involved with their creation, adaptation and updating, the great majority will utilise their contents - some imaginatively and as an aid, some in a prescribed and unthinking fashion, a few in a defensive and negative way. Attitudes amongst users vary across

supportive, puzzled, irritated, grateful etc. To the same individual they may well, at different times, be helpful, informative, restrictive or troublesome. Much has been written to explain the technical basis and development of new Codes as part of the support for their introduction; some authors have made suggestions for improved formats, new styles of presentation, different approaches in terms of breadth and depth of coverage. The legal status of Codes varies in different parts of the world, being enshrined in law in some countries yet merely advisory and optional in others. The perception of their legal standing is even more wide-ranging (and often misunderstood), with Structural Engineers often believing Codes to be more influential than is actually the case. And, of course, their quality varies from lucid, polished and highly relevant and valuable documents to unclear, ambiguous and misleading offerings.

Structural Codes typically contain a mix of information, including factual data, design rules, advice on good practice and specific references elsewhere. Although their precise status varies in different parts of the world, it is generally accepted that the easiest way to demonstrate structural adequacy (and thus to gain an approval)