

Interactive comment on “SiSeRHMap v1.0: a simulator for mapped seismic response using a hybrid model” by G. Grelle et al.

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Dear Referees,

We wish thank you for your encouragement and suggestions about the introduction of this new methodology (a new view and approach) for the spatial simplified assessment of site seismic response. Particularly, perceptibly moving by a depth knowledge of the seismic response field and related issues, you give a precious contribution for the improvement of the paper, thus of the methodology/code.

The following response to the relevant referees comments are reported. We think that such comments might correspond to questions (FAQ) of potential SiSeRHMap users, thus, we will try to provide a more complex and comprehensive argumentations than

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ones integrated into the paper, fully exploiting the animus of public discussion review adopted by GMD journal. At the same time, we will try not to excessively load the reader reporting a complete user guide as supplementary files.

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-referee #1 "The proposed model brings improved computational efficiency thanks to its metamodels. However, often the preparation of the model (i.e. characterization of wave velocities, thickness of lithological units, etc) requires much more time than the actual computation. This issue is essentially the same for the proposed model. If the characterization of geological units is complete, the reduced computation is obviously a clear advantage, but if it is not readily available, what are the clear advantages of the proposed method over the conventional methods?"

-referee #2 "The paper is well written and presents an interesting model. However, the entire model is postulated on a purely deterministic framework. This presents challenges to the stated applicability of the model. For example, the design spectra postulated by the model is based on a single realization of the 3D GCM. Given that there is always uncertainty on subsurface conditions, it is important (in fact, key) that engineers account for this uncertainty in selecting an eventual design spectra....." This reviewer recommends that these limitations should be discussed up-front. The proposed model does not replace a careful accounting of the uncertainties that are inevitably present in site response modeling. It simply provides a computational platform for conducting analyses that can inform the choice of design spectra or a microzonification study. 1) Comment related to uncertainty: a) Please discuss how uncertainty in lithological properties is accounted for, and, if applicable, whether this uncertainty propagates into the resulting spectra at the surface. b) The use of models on top of models (e.g., the adaptive simulation model on top of a 1D site response model) implies the presence of epistemic uncertainty in the predictions. Since the authors are not accounting for these uncertainties, they should clearly state the limitations of their model. 3) The use of the adaptive simulation model implies the use of a model to

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reproduce results of another model (equivalent linear 1D site response). How is this justified? The authors do not explain with sufficient clarity the justification for building the adaptive simulation model to reproduce 1D site response. Is it for computational efficiency? Or to obtain values that have a smoother spatial variation?

Reply to referees.

— The referees suggest to underline user advantages and potential applicability and development of this hybrid model. At the same time, they suggest to highlight the challenges generally encountered in seismic response modelling, and specific of SiSeRHMap application.

The reconstruction of the input model is the base of any numerical code/application. In SiSeRHMap, the Gis-model and the procedures facilitate this necessary process of the subsoil input model. Note that the development of a 3D coherent spatial geometrical model requires the understanding of punctual and/or linear data also supplied by different filed survey. In this context, GCM contained in SiSeRHMap provides a direct support in the geometric input model building, differently, same process is commonly also used in the pre-processing data in the spatial discretized platform (e.g. FEM) necessary in/for complex 3D convention numerical methods. In addition, the GIS is used by many spatial planning operators and the organization and storage of data in geo-datasets in increasing especially for urban areas where there is constantly updated historical documentation. For example, the Civil Protection Department of Italy has financed studies and survey for characterization of the seismic microzoning that involve the development of geo-datasets-areas that almost match to the concept of multi-layer zone defined in SiSeRHMap. In addition, the hybrid model at the base of SiSeRHMap allows to divide the underground model (geometric and parametrization) by seismic response analysis (metamodel trainer process) entailing a high computational time discount and quickly updating. Thus, except for substantial changing in the underground model, new updates seismic response maps can be generate without re-training the metamodel (e.g. running only mod.'s 5.x of code which are the output maps generator

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); as well as a new parametrization. This advantage increases when iterative entry of different input motions for probabilistic analysis are used (see comments by reviewer #2). It goes without saying that an updated model gradually decreases the epistemic "uncertainties that are inevitably present in site response modeling" (referee #2). In general the same nature of hybrid systems admits the intrinsic uncertainty in the prediction; in contrast these systems show high efficient in term of expected performance in relation to the user convenience (e.g. a hybrid system like a hybrid vehicle does not usually running in the race circuit, in off-road or in high mountain roads, however these vehicles are more and more used with different efficient performance in the common practice winning advantage in high saving and low emission).

This note is reported in the manuscript in P4489 from row 9 and P4490 rows 1-6:

changes/integrations in manuscript

— In addition to a need to have a sufficient amount of information suitable for seismic microzoning, computerized data management and spatial distribution in terms of input and output/outcomes, is also a requirement. Therefore, the Geographic Information Systems (GIS) contribute the most to maximizing the available data, in the assessment or estimation of ground-motion amplification (Kolat et al., 2006; Ganapathy, 2011; Hashemi and Alesheikh, 2012; Turk et al., 2012; Hassanzadeh et al., 2013) and seismic-induced effects (Grelle et al., 2011; Grelle and Guadagno, 2013). In this aforementioned context, SiSeRHMap provides synthetic multi-map data regarding a complex phenomenon, such as seismic site response, on the basis of a new hybrid methodology in which a metamodeling process is the core feature. In recent years, the use of the metamodels in many engineering and environmental science fields (Lampasi et al., 2006; Yazdi and Neyshabouri, 2014; Wang et al., 2014; Hong et al., 2014), together with GIS supported analysis (Reed et al., 2012; Fan et al., 2015; Soares et al., 2014), has produced good performances, providing fast versatility and rapid updating. The same nature of hybrid systems based on metamodel, as such as SiSeRHMap, admits the intrinsic uncertainty in the prediction; this one is due to

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the use of nonphysical adaptive models trained on simplified physical models. Conversely, these systems permit an efficient analysis in term of expected performance. Essentially, metamodel permits a quick replication of the solutions in a limited context of randomness. In this way the proposed model is very suitable for a continue easy modular update that decrease the epistemic uncertainty over time in assessing of the effects of natural complex phenomena, such as the seismic response, on a real natural system. Therefore, SiSeRHMap is formulated on the concept of "performance", regarding: i) prediction, ii) easy and low computational time, iii) upgrade, iv) output accessibility (GIS-georeferenced data), with respect to the real effect; for these reasons SiSeRHMap aims to give a substantial contribution in the common practice. Contextualized to the "applied" seismic response, limits of usual practice may be currently summarized in: i) partial contribute of the microzonation study in regard to give appropriate quantitative parameters for seismic engineering practice; ii) the inadequate use of few simplified amplified design spectra defined by means few large ranges of Vs refer to 30 m or to the bedrock deep; iii) unsuitable use of the point-data spatial interpolation for the mapped seismic response values. Considering the aforesaid critical issues, in areas with a not very high geological complexity, the proposed methodology can present a high computational efficiency in comparison to expensive rigorous physically based models; this efficiency multiplies when a probability multi-input motion analysis is performed. Therefore, the map-sets of seismic response provided by SiSeRHMap are the result of an advantageous compromise between the intrinsic and epistemic uncertainties and the accuracy and robustness indeed required.

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-referee #1

— In my opinion, the equivalent linear approach is no better than the linear elastic approach, unless it's very carefully performed. I think it's not suitable for being run automatically (as in this code). The iterations in the equivalent linear approach is not guaranteed to converge. It is only valid for a limited range of strain; for a very high level

C2004

of strain, it tends to underestimate the ground response (non-conservative). A simple non-linear dynamic analysis requires no more parameters than the equivalent linear approaches, and the computation time is not an issue either. A linear elastic approach would be at least conservative, although it still may not be accurate for large strains.

reply to referee

— The opinions on this issue are more and with different views, experiences and context dependent (e.g. Adampira et al., 2014; Kumar et al., 2014; Zidan 2015). SiSeRHMap is based on equivalent linear approach, but the operator may decide to use the visco-elastic linear analysis inserting zero in the iteration number calling. The non-linear analysis can be an option probably inserted in the new version of the code. However, we insert in the mod3 of the code, the production of a final report of the $G(\tilde{A}_{\tilde{g}})$ and $D(\tilde{A}_{\tilde{g}})$ reached for each iteration.

-Referee #1

— - In this study, it appears that the metamodel for the topographic amplification is calibrated using simplified numerical models, assuming homogeneous materials. However, previous studies suggested that often the topography effects are coupled with stratigraphy (see Asimaki and Jeong [2013] or Burjanek et al. [2014]), and not easily separable. I therefore think it would be useful if you discuss when your model assumption may and may not be valid.....

reply to referee

— This note is reported at the head of the paragraph 4.2 (P 4507):

changes/integrations in manuscript

— Based on pre-existing studies and simulations on the effects of topographic amplification on seismic motion (Geli et al., 1988; Ashford et al., 1997; Maufroy et al., 2012, 2015), a prediction model has been developed. This model trained, on 2D regular reliefs, aims at predicting the spatial amplification effect on the seismic response of reliefs considering them to be constituted by homogeneous material.

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and

reply to referee: _____
_____ in the Discussion paragraph (P 4512 from row 4) we reaffirm the validity contests where model can be applied.

changes/integrations in manuscript: _____
_____ Taking to account the initial assumptions and simplifications, the current version of SiSeRHMap is suitable for use in hilly and low-mountain zones which are mainly characterized by a non-complex stratification (in shape) of the cover lithodynamic units and with not-substantial spatial variation of the mechanic and dynamic propriety of the material constituting the frame of the reliefs.

-referee #1 _____
_____ I think Equation (1) deserves a justification. It's is customary to model the velocities of granular materials with a power law equation. Is there a specific reason for choosing a logarithmic function of depth? Similarly, why a linear function for Equation (2)?

reply to referee: _____
_____ This subject was integrate at the end of the paragraph 2.1 (P 4496, row 3):

changes/integrations in manuscript: _____
_____ The use the log-linear regression function (Eq. 1) permits, in simplified way, to assume also a uniform velocity (depth and, therefore, spatial independent) of the lithodynamic units; this one is possible by imposing $\dot{\epsilon}A_{q1} = 0$. The log-linear law preserves the same performance of the power law equation and better robustness in regression. The linear law used for bedrock (Eq. 2) meets the linear nature trend of the stiff soil in depth.

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-referee #1 _____

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- P 4499: Equation (10): It's customary to take the time-averaged shear wave velocity. Is there a specific reason why you chose to use the arithmetic mean of Vs(top) and Vs(bottom)?

reply to referee: _____
- Yes, in this way it is possible to reproduce values of Vs near to that detected (measured) in 1D profile points conferring a corresponding coherent spatial distribution at the remaining points; therefore the dataset of Vs-z (depth) of each generic lithodynamic units must be so defined: - the value of z must be assumed in the middle of layer when the Vs values are the result of interpretation (travel time or frequency dispersion) of seismic survey in which the Vs values are defined uniformly for single layer. - the specific and corresponding values of z are assumed for corresponding interlayer Vs (Vs interlayer down- hole, cross-hole and by N-SPT or CPT or any punctual test values).

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-referee #1 _____

_____ P 4508: How to you justify the model equations (17) and (18)? Can you please discuss why you chose these specific functional forms?

-referee #2 _____
_____ On the topographic model a) Equations 17 to 19 were developed by the team with the intent of reproducing topographic effects postulated by other authors (Geli et al. 1988, Ashford and Sitar 1987). The only validation presented in the paper for these equations is in Figure 10, where the fit of the proposed model to those of Geli et al. is very poor at some periods. A stronger justification for the choice of the model is needed.

reply to referees: _____
_____ This subject is report in the Discussion paragraph (P 4512 from row 6):

changes/integrations in manuscript _____

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———— The simplified frequency depending on the topographic amplification models reported in the equations 17 and 18 is mainly focused on the peak/ridge amplification effect (position 1 in the figure 10) that is the greatest in the regular or pseudo-regular relief. The prediction accuracy on the slopes is the result of the progressive spatial smoothing of the topographic amplification and the conservative approach, too. The latter does not admit deamplification and, diversely, it admits a suitable overmatch (overestimation) in almost all of the spectral window permitting so to preserve an adequate prediction trend for irregular reliefs yet. This aspect should be seen at the light of the values of the slope topographic amplifications that are generally lower than ones occurred to the peak zones.

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-referee #1 _____

———— P 4509: Line 3 5: The simplifying assumption is probably ok, but this statement is not necessarily true.

reply to referee: _____

———— "height less than 30 m", since using a spatial resolution of 30 meters are unnoticed or smoothed the topographic irregularities having a height of few meters only. Anyway, a high resolution map in elevation (5-10m) should be used; this recommendation is reported in the short guide.

changes/integrations in manuscript _____

—in addition, it is promoted by the fact that the amplification of low rigid ridges (height less than 30 m) occurs in frequencies that usually result of low interest for the buildings.

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Referee #1 _____

- P 4510: Line 6 9: Where is this shown?

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Referee #2 _____

— The authors also mention a validation through comparison with Maufroy et al. (2012 and 2015), but this comparison is not given in the paper.

reply to referees: _____

— we changed in the manuscript "show" with "suggest" and this statement (P 4510: Line 6 9) is now integrated in the discussions paragraph.

changes/integrations in manuscript: _____

———— The results of the topographic model (fig. 12) suggest a substantial agreement with other 3-D simplified numerical simulations performed and calibrated in zone with a similar topographic features (Maufroy et al., 2012, 2015). In addition, conversely from totally physical methods, nature of this model permits its general developing and local calibration. In presence of non homogeneous material constituting the relief, a local frequency calibration, using also seismic noise measures (in single or multi-station recording mode), can be performed assuming a regional shear wave velocity with value different from that used for rigid material (e.g. equivalent VSReg).

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Editorial comments

-referee #1 _____

— P 4502: Using the name "Spectra" for the metamodel of acceleration response spectra is actually quite confusing. Also the symbol S is usually reserved for the summation.

reply to referee: _____

— we changed in the manuscript "Spectra" with "Emuspectra" and its symbol is $\tilde{A}_{\tilde{E}}$.

-referee #1 _____

— P 4509: Line 9: (Fig. 11) ! (Fig. 10) P 4510: Line 20: (Fig.13) ! (Fig. 12) ? P4512: Line 14: (Fig.14) ! (Fig. 13)

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reply to referee: _____
_____ the reference to the Fig. 11 in the P 4509: Line 9 induces confusion because it jumps of one position the natural sequence in the text. Thus, the figure 11 reference was deleted.

-referee #1 _____
_____ P 4513: Line 25 28: This was not discussed in the body of the article, but only in the conclusion.

reply to referee: _____
_____ irrelevant final statement, we deleted from manuscript.

Please also note the supplement to this comment:
<http://www.geosci-model-dev-discuss.net/8/C2000/2015/gmdd-8-C2000-2015-supplement.pdf>

_____ Interactive comment on Geosci. Model Dev. Discuss., 8, 4487, 2015.