Book of Full Papers

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Implementing Sustainability – Barriers and Chances

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Implementing Sustainability – Barriers and Chances

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CompactHabit: Sustainable mass modular building construction



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Summary

CompactHabit has introduced the eMii system (the Spanish acronym for "integral industrialized modular building") to enable the large-scale production of finished modules. The system entails the manufacture of three-dimensional monolithic modules of reinforced concrete. They are routed through an assembly process of the various components, building services and materials until they leave the production facility fully equipped and with the interior finished to customer specifications.

The production solution adopted for the CompactHabit module involves the manufacture of a single piece of concrete in two braced stages. To achieve this, a mould was developed, as well as proprietary formwork that enables horizontal concreting phases, thereby solving the problem of mix placement from above. The mechanical formwork can be adapted to different lengths and widths.

The module's structural element is a ribbed concrete prism that varies in size depending on the project. This structural element serves as the frame for the rest of the features: façades, installations, flooring, interior cladding, kitchen, baths, appliances and so on. The module is transported by semi trailer to the new location of the building. The semi trailer takes the dwelling unit to the building site, where a heavy load crane sets it in place.

Once the modules are in place, they are connected to each other and the vertical utilities services are installed on the outside with no need to access the interior. Using this procedure, we can compose buildings of up to eight stories without any additional structures. In addition to the speed involved in assembly, this structural system also represents a considerable improvement in the building's response to seismic movement. As independent structural elements, a certain amount of movement can occur without creating structural cracks or breakage. The modules fit together with elastic joints and are subsequently screwed together at the joints to facilitate dismantling the modules if necessary. At CompactHabit, we can dismantle a building and move it somewhere else in exactly the same manner as we built it. We can take it back to the factory to replace worn elements, change finishes, repair flaws and put the building back into use. It would even be possible to temporarily place buildings on sites destined for another use in the long term. The concept of a "no-madic", demountable building opens up new opportunities in land management.

Keywords: Sustainable; modular; building; industrialization

1. Product and Process innovations

The eMii modular building system allows rationalize and standardize process, materials and constructive solutions, and it is based on:

1.1 eMii structural system

It is based on a reinforced concrete self-supporting chassis, involving the development of joints between modules which makes the building structure as floating. This chassis behaves as containing the constructive components implanted within an assembly chain. This structural system is exclusively owned by CompactHabit, and no competitor offers similar solutions in terms of structural system and module size (max $15 \times 5 \times 3,5 \text{ m}$). Similar solutions offered only reach basic three-dimensional systems, with limited size ($6 \times 3 \times 2,8 \text{ m}$) and without floating joints available. The structural system is protected by international PCT.

1.2 eMii industrialized system

The manufacture process is composed by two main procedures, (1) the chassis construction and subsequently (2) the chassis displacement to the work stations distributed along the assembly chain. This path is aimed at standardizing the module to as much components of the building as possible within the same area, allowing thus a reduction of the interventions at the building site. Along the path the system provides such flexibility that allows the introduction of any further technology planned. Although the modular industry include further manufacturers specialized in industrialized edification, nevertheless the assembly chain is not used, while a building assembly method similar to the traditional construction is used, but located within an industrialization degree, connecting the production needs with large series. On the contrary the eMii system uses an assembly chain process similar to the cars production but limited by the reduction of the series of production, reaching in this way the maximum optimization of processes.

1.3 eMii assembly system:

The assembly system, based on large industrialized components, is not integrated in any other company within the industrialized edification sector, being used smaller components. The eMii solution allows assembling with high speed and precision any building within its production. The increase of the modules size directly influence the joints reduction, reaching a higher degree of the interior and external finish still in the factory, meaning greater speed and minimum intervention at the building site.



Fig. 1: Large-scale production of CH modular units



Fig. 2: The dwelling elements



Fig. 3: CH modular unit



Fig. 4: Student dormitory built with CH modular units in Girona, Spain

2. Description of eMii advantages

The eMii advantages can be broken down into several categories:

2.1 Reinforced structure

The use of the reinforced concrete structure produces a monolithic building, meaning important added values for it such as sound insulation, thermal inertia, fire resistance, earthquake resistance, and durability. Among the industrial systems commonly used, the lightweight construction is outstanding but not able to provide the same performance as the eMii system, characterized by high robustness of the structure together with the industrialization of large modules built as finished parts constituting the building. While other manufacturers often work with 2.5 m widths, the developed system can reach 5 m width, thus reducing the assembly time and finish work.

2.2 Structural system self-supporting floating modules, with anti-seismic capacity.

The developed structural system is unique in the world. It proposes a modules stacking system using union system and floating supports. This feature allows each building unit to be independent of its adjacent (elastic unions) involving a great improvement in acoustics, seismic resistance and adaptability of the structure to the movements of the building. This flexibility allows a better absorption of the deformations produced by an earthquake and prevents breakage of the structure. The system joints and elastic elements cause a break in the continuity of structure preventing the structure breaking: that structure is 'previously fractured in a controlled way', meaning a strong difference with other industrialized systems, which are mainly based on rigid joints.

2.3 Elastic seismic structural system resistant to fire.

The use of elastic elements of steel within developed system ensures the system durability and resilience to fire situations. Commonly used resilient systems are based on neoprene, meaning a great risk in case of fire, because these systems can merge and lose effectiveness to seism after a fire. Furthermore, neoprene manufacturers provide no guarantees in years of durability but only data on resistance to ozone, not allowing a conversion to years of durability. On the contrary, eMii includes joints and system structure able to double the structural life of the building, according to the current regulation, contributing thus to the building life cycle improvement.

2.4 Industrialized modules dry assembly

The building joints and assembly elements are mechanical, neither mortars nor concrete are thus needed. The system presents a relevant speed, due to the large size and easy assembling. Unions are simply gravity connection between modules with hardware and elastic joints. The building as it grows it becomes structurally finished. Structural additions are not required. The structure is self-supporting up to 8 floors. The crane assembly capacity in site will be of 500 m² to 1.000 m² per day (1 shift), depending on the project.

2.5 Flexibility: building relocatability and reuse.

The resolution of dry joints allows the dismantling of the building at any time since the modules can be recovered without any alteration or damage in the action. The recovered module can be used in another building without modifying or rehabilitating it if needed: a concrete-framed building, removable and transportable generates a new concept of building.

2.6 Industrial quality.

The industrialized building process allows continuous monitoring of quality, very different to those used in traditional construction. Industrialization will ensure the product traceability, impossible to implement in other building systems. The building process and the subsequent quality control allow higher legal requirements for quality, meaning a general improvement in standards without increasing costs.

2.7 Standardization

The industrialized production enables the standardization of materials, components and construction solutions, simplifying the supply chain by encouraging stable relationships with suppliers and approaching economies of scale scheme.

2.8 Procurement.

Increases the ability for collaboration and single point of responsibility.

2.9 Design process.

Wide-ranging benefits of increased collaboration and flexibility.

2.10 Financial - cost control.

Lowers hard costs, soft costs, financing costs, out-of-service costs, and provides a faster return on investment.

2.11 Construction schedule.

This construction system also reduces considerably the time of the construction process, achieving execution times ranging between 25% and 30% of one built with traditional systems.

2.12 Security at work.

The application of industrial processes in the construction of a building means a significant reduction in accident rates and improved conditions at work.

2.13 Comfort - Insulation and acoustics.

The floating structural system and the double walls and floors allow an outstanding insulation, well

above the legal requirements: increasing the insulation requirements means a technological innovation directly associated with economic viability. In fact, an improvement in the acoustic performance within the whole economy of the building means an innovation in the construction process. The interior acoustic treatment is realized under the same criteria. Both concepts, insulation and acoustics, are critical for comfort and wellbeing.

2.14 Environmental impact reduction.

The eMii building process is designed under criteria of deconstruction, control and waste reduction: for every 100 kg of waste generated in traditional construction, with the eMii system will be less than 28 kg for the completed building; the thermal and acoustic insulation of each module maximizes further the energy efficiency in use, significant savings in consumption, allowing the "A" energy certification for buildings; in the whole life-cycle of the building it is expected in terms of energy savings and CO2 reduction up 35% up to 60%.



In Cooperation wilth: DBU 24 - 26 April 2013 Implementing Sustainability – Barriers and Chances Prof. Dr. Gerd Hauser Technische Universität München, Fraunhofer IBP For a very significant contribution in the field of Building sustainability entitiled: and Urban Development Aunici ",Compact Habit: Sustainable mass modular building construction" and published in the proceedings of sb13 munich conference 00 Best Poster Award Munich 26 of April 2013 Prof. Dr. habil. Thomas Lützkendorf Karlsruhe Institute of Technology KIT Paco Conde · divinte 6 Prof. Dr./Natalie Essig U / Munich University of Applied Sciences, Fraunhdfer IBP