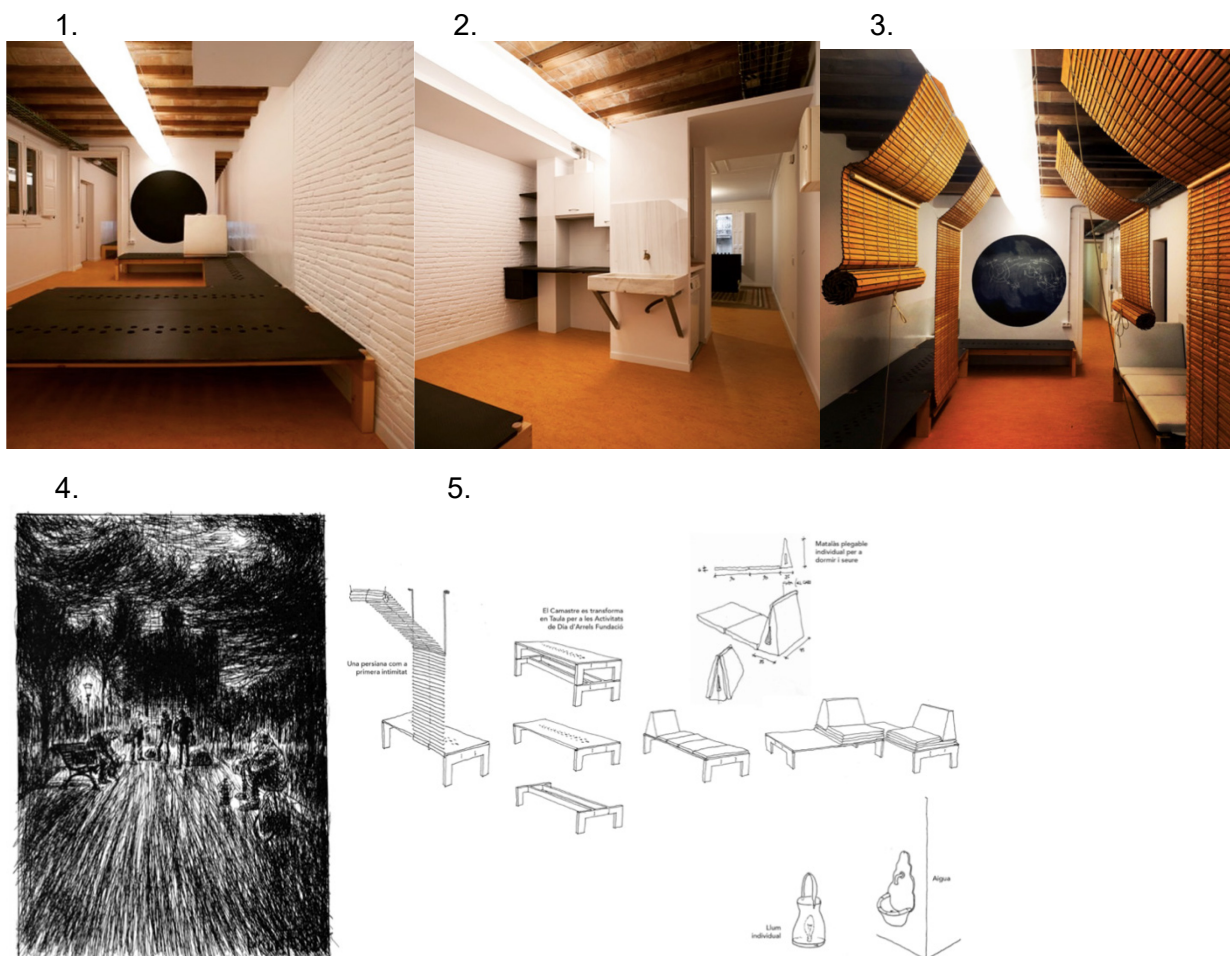


Institution: University of Southampton		
Unit of Assessment: 32 Art and Design: History, Practice and Theory		
Title of case study: 32-01 Zero Flat: Social design for chronically homeless people		
Period when the underpinning research was undertaken: September 2016 – September 2020		
Details of staff conducting the underpinning research from the submitting unit:		
Name(s): Daniel Cid Moragas	Role(s) (e.g. job title): Associate Professor of Design Studies	Period(s) employed by submitting HEI: September 2016 – present
Period when the claimed impact occurred: January 2017 – December 2020		
Is this case study continued from a case study submitted in 2014? N		
<p>1. Summary of the impact</p> <p>Zero Flat is a new type of, and approach to, accommodation for the chronically homeless, developed by Dr Daniel Cid Moragas (Cid) in collaboration with the homelessness organisation the Arrels Foundation. It has made a significant impact on the lives of people suffering chronic homelessness at its installation in Barcelona, Spain, and has emphasised the issue of homelessness in wider professional discussions in architecture, charities, and local government. Three-quarters of Zero Flat's long-term homeless residents subsequently left the streets. The project is an experimental model whose design process continues while the facility is in use, and advocates for collaborative and social design practices to help improve the lives of homeless people. In 2018 the project was awarded the Gold Culture International Prize from the Spanish Industrial Design Association. Arrels have integrated Cid's social design methods into other new facilities and services, their advocacy strategy with government and the public, and a new Zero Flat on the City of Barcelona's agenda.</p>		
<p>2. Underpinning research</p> <p>Underpinned by Cid's long-standing practice research in social design, Zero Flat is a new type of apartment for people suffering chronic homelessness, i.e. people who find it difficult or impossible to adapt to more conventional housing resources. The flat is supported by Barcelona City Council and located in the city centre [3.1]. Designed to accommodate around eight people and two volunteers at a time, it was developed from Cid's social design practice, in collaboration with the Arrels Foundation, a non-profit organisation tackling homelessness in the Catalan capital. The 2019 FEANTSA (European Federation of National Organisations Working with the Homeless) <i>Report</i> (pp. 31-35) found that housing assistance for homeless people failed to answer the needs of users severely affected by social exclusion, and called for a rethink of existing approaches. Zero Flat has stemmed from this conviction that it is necessary to rethink existing models.</p> <p>Studies show that a significant number of long-term homeless people living on the streets are unlikely to access services located in a shelter that stipulates sobriety or that lacks basic facilities for pets. As accounted in the research, they perceive night shelters as over-regulated, restrictive institutions that are lacking in intimacy [3.2]. Zero Flat is designed to look, feel and operate differently to conventional accommodation for the homeless, and to provide support in an environment that distances itself from the "homeless atmosphere" that characterises most places of support [3.3]. The flat imposes few rules on its occupants; drinking alcohol, smoking and pets are all allowed.</p> <p>The project was conceived as an experiment, with Arrels open to the possibility of it not achieving its desired results. As such the design research process has continued throughout the facility's use, feeding back to stakeholders and shaping new initiatives.</p> <p>The research process consisted of four main activities: The first was to work with Arrels to identify the main stumbling blocks to people accepting accommodation. The second was to challenge assumptions about street living and draw attention to the possibilities of domesticity, sociality and intimacy experienced by those living on the streets. The work of Barcelona artist Miquel Fuster inspired this approach: after living on the streets for fifteen years Fuster published</p>		

a comic book with drawings of nocturnal urban scenes showing groups of people in squares, together yet separate, seated on benches and sharing the night under the light of a lamp post by a fountain. Zero Flat drew inspiration from these memories in its combination of urban space with shelter and comfort. This stage was also underpinned by Cid's theoretical research on traces of habitation; the resulting book, *La casa dispersa* [3.4] reflects on the imaginary production of private space, where the immaterial order of things exists alongside their material order. The design of the flat aimed to bring this interplay of affective meaning and physical space in the sites and experiences of rough sleeping into a new, safer and more supportive space.

The third activity was to study innovations in the management of night shelters such as *Espais Vincles* (Barcelona), at the entrance to which homeless people are greeted by volunteers. Such visits revealed the importance of spaces of welcome, and hence of bonding and mutual respect between homeless people and volunteers.

Fourth, the project incorporated the emotional and cultural aspects of a home, with key aspects of street living revealed through research. The flat's welcoming entrance space is equipped with bench-like furniture and a washbasin that resembles a fountain. Benches were also placed in the bedroom and on the terrace. Tenants are given a foldable mattress as they arrive; once unfolded, it becomes a personal and intimate space. The flat's interior is equipped with a powerful smell-absorbing system that is also a lamp radiating warm light. As Maria, a volunteer put it, *'the beds themselves reveal that it is continuous with the street [...] in a cosy but different space'* [3.3]. Thanks to the financial and technical support of building companies and artisans, the flat is constructed from resistant materials but retains the warmth of handcrafted finishes. Located close to the Arrels offices, the flat doubles in the daytime as an educational space. The items of furniture can be converted into tables and chairs for dissemination sessions or workshops.



1 and 2 Welcoming space, 3 Bedroom, 4 Miquel Fuster Drawing, 5 Zero Flat elements (Barcelona blind, pallet/bench/table, folding mattress, portable lamp and drinking fountain)

Timeline:

- 2016 – 2017: Research, conceptualisation, private fundraising, design and production
- 2017: January Opening
- 2017 – 2021: Evaluation of the results, discussion and dissemination with design and architecture companies, development of new projects in the area of homelessness with Arrels.

Key researchers:

- Daniel Cid (Associate Professor at Winchester School of Art, University of Southampton)
- Francesc Pla (Architect, founder of Leve Projects – Barcelona architecture and cinema studio)
- Eva Serrats (Architect and filmmaker, founder of Leve Projects).

3. References to the research

3.1 A new type of apartment for chronically homeless persons made for non-profit organisations like the Arrels Foundation, realised in a municipally-owned dwelling situated on the second floor of a building on Barcelona's Carrer del Carme 84. (2017).

3.2 Daniel Cid, Francesc Pla, Eva Serrats. "Zero Flat: The Design of a New Type of Apartment for the Chronically Homeless People" *European Journal of Homelessness* 13(2) 2019, pp. 75-92 https://www.feantsaresearch.org/public/user/Observatory/2019/EJH/EJH_13_2/2019_Vol13_No2_ThinkPiece-1.pdf

3.3. Daniel Cid, Francesc Pla, Eva Serrats. *I didn't want to go to Zero Flat*. Documentary about Zero Flat and Topographies of Homelessness (September 2020). <https://vimeo.com/472633415>

3.4. Daniel Cid. *La casa dispersa: Historias marginales del habitar* [*The dispersed house: marginal stories of inhabiting*]. Madrid: Ediciones Asimétricas. 2020 (Spanish). Available on request.

Zero Flat was supported by private sponsorship from the construction industry (total cost of the project: £37,500): Isolana Fundación Privada, Lamp Lighting (Maurici Ginés, Amàlia Ventura), Gabarró (Ramon Gabarró), AiA Salazar-Navarro, Pcl SA (Alejandro Esteban), Decoinnova Pintores (Javier Ortiz), Bruc Jardí, LG, Acv Solar, Forbo Flooring systems (Ferran del Río), Orac Decor (Víctor Valentín), Schüco (Antoni Dalmases), Persiana Barcelona (Pau Sarquella), Sumace S.A. (Jordi Cervià)

4. Details of the impact

The most significant impact of Zero Flat has been on the lives of chronically homeless people in Barcelona. From its opening in January 2017 to January 2019, Zero Flat has welcomed 77 people (67 men and 10 women), four dogs and one cat. During this time, 57 people left the streets, of whom 39 moved into more stable accommodation (an individual flat, shared or assisted, a rented room or a home for the aged or people with fragile health); 13 continued sleeping at Zero Flat and stopped sleeping rough; two moved into a shelter and stopped sleeping on the streets; three moved back to live with family. Seven did not manage to persist with Zero Flat and returned to the streets. The remaining 13 people were not chronically homeless but Zero Flat helped them through temporary difficulties with accommodation. Thus, of the long-term homeless people who stayed at the Flat, people who had been rough sleeping for years, 89% left the streets [5.1]. Many tenants considered it a transitional place and a space to reconsider their personal situation. Davide (now living in an apartment) said that '*Zero Flat is the first step to get you off the street; it's like a passageway [...] You get used to it, and it's like adapting to a new life*' [3.3]

Ferran Busquets, the head of Arrels, asserts that Zero Flat '*has become a success case*' [5.2]. Ester Sánchez, head of the People's Support Team in Arrels and responsible for Zero Flat, declared '*We're very pleased with how the experiment is going [...] it's turned out to be a miracle, a respectable solution for those who have exhausted all other resources*' [5.3].

As social design research, Zero Flat's impact was effective throughout the design, testing and advocacy processes, sharing ideas with, and learning from staff, volunteers and homeless people. It had a particularly important impact on Arrels staff and volunteers. For one volunteer,

'Zero Flat has helped me broaden my gaze. It's a dignifying process for those we accompany and for those who accompany' [5.4]. She says that although it is a low-demand flat that has few rules, the hospitality of the space makes it easy for things to run smoothly. Every evening a small society was created with rules *'established by the inhabitants themselves to improve coexistence' [5.4].*

Recognising the success of Zero Flat and their collaboration with Cid, Arrels is spreading the model to other neighbourhoods [5.5, 5.8]. In 2018-19 there were active discussions with the former local council about opening new Zero Flats in Barcelona. The then Councillor for Housing was keen to bring the idea to life, and whilst his term of office has reached its end, the project's findings are still on the local government agenda and the intention now is to resume talks with the new local council. Arrels has also submitted a plan for the creation of a Zero Flat for women suffering homelessness to *Barcelona (We Decide)*, a participatory initiative by the city to decide parts of its budget by public vote. The Zero Flat has progressed to the second stage (technical evaluation of the proposal), but the process is on hold due to the pandemic.

For Arrels' Ester Sánchez, *'We innovate by adapting to those we address, not by trying to make people change so that they can remain with us.'* [5.6]. Arrels head Ferran Busquets has echoed this assessment in media interviews [5.5, 5.7]. For example, in a television appearance, Busquets said that due to the success of Zero Flat, *'We intend to repeat this model in other locations around the city'*. Highlighting their ongoing lobbying of local government to further support and develop the Zero Flat model, Busquets suggested that the city council *'should open similar spaces' [5.2].*

Shortly before the last local elections were held in Barcelona (May 2019), Arrels wrote an open letter to the candidates for mayor that included five proposals for the newly elected government, the second of which was *'Fewer shelters and more low-demand spaces. ... Shelters are usually far from city centres; Zero Flat is intended as a neighbourhood facility. Proximity. Shelters have restrictions. Flat Zero doesn't. A vacancy in a shelter home costs between €60 and €70 a night, whereas a night at Zero Flat costs €20. Our proposal to the council is that it open a Zero Flat in each district of Barcelona, in collaboration with the public administration, assigning premises and social organisations (managing the resources).'* [5.8].

Arrels has adopted Cid's social design methods and ethos as an approach to developing existing and new spaces and services, such as its drop-in centres, where established methods were unsatisfactory. Indeed, the Zero Flat experience has impressed on Arrels the value of *design* and *design thinking*, highlighting the need for well-designed spaces that improve both the functionalism and the perception of space. Consequently, Arrels is rethinking its spaces in collaboration with Leve Projects (Eva Serrats and Francesc Pla). So far, *La Troballa* (an occupational workshop) and the *Pere Barnés Home* (a home for people with reduced mobility) have been redesigned and are working at full capacity. *La Troballa* is part of a global strategic proposal to improve the conditions of the Arrels facilities. The new project has increased the spatial capabilities of the service, incorporating new workshops and improving the necessary visibility of what is done there. The *Pere Barnés Home* has been designed with interiors that evoke sensitivity, domesticity and warmth. On a functional level, the spaces in the new building are better rationalised and include five small individual apartments [5.9].

The future of *La Troballa* was also discussed with the previous council and an agreement was reached with Barcelona's Councillor for Culture, Knowledge and Innovation, to transform it into a municipal centre and manager of cultural resources under the wing of the Barcelona Institute of Culture (ICUB). The understanding was that the users of this service would conceive and develop some of the projects commissioned by ICUB such as small exhibition installations, based on collaborative workshops designed and set up by Cid and Leve. There are plans to resume talks with the new members of the council to kick-start the project [5.10].

Zero Flat has had an ongoing impact on the professional design world. It was displayed in *The Best Design of the Year* show held at Barcelona's Design Hub (DHUB) from 5 June to 22 October 2018, where it was visited by 20,346 people [5.11]. The project's creators won the biennial Gold Culture International Prize from the Spanish Industrial Design Association, ADI-FAD. The jury's verdict was *'The project addresses economic dispossession and social*

cornering by means of a non-negotiable standard: people are neither what they have nor what they do not have, they are what they choose or prefer. [5.11] Zero Flat was selected by the 48-hour Open House Barcelona Architecture Festival for its 2017, 2018 and 2019 events. This festival encourages locals to appreciate the value of good architecture and urbanism, opening over 200 significant buildings of different styles, forms and sizes to the public. In 2019, this event had in total more than 61,000 visitors. News reports on the award also highlighted the importance of promoting projects such as Zero Flat, helping the social development of design and its potential to address social segregation. [5.11]

Both the roll-out of new Zero Flats and other facilities, and Cid's planned seminars with architecture and design professionals and homelessness charities, have been slowed down by the effects of Covid-19 and lockdown in the UK and Spain. In July 2020 however, Cid held a series of online discussions with architecture and third sector professionals, including Holland Harvey architects, Commonweal Housing, Housing Justice, Leve Projects and the ProxyAddress project. These discussions shared cutting edge ideas and initiatives in design thinking for homelessness and have formed the foundation for new collaborations and projects [5.12].

5. Sources to corroborate the impact

5.1 Arrels evaluation report.

5.2 Interview with Ferran Busquets (Head of Arrels) at Barcelona Television (betevé). 'Bàsics' de betevé" 29/10/2017, 10.20 pm <https://betevé.cat/basics/sense-sostre-arrels-proposa-crear-pisos-tota-ciutat-acollir/> [accessed 12/08/2019]

5.3 Rosa Bosch "El refugio milagro del Raval" *La Vanguardia* 27/02/2017

5.4 "Flat Zero helped to open my eyes" Interview with Paula Huguet. Arrels Website 13/07/2017 <https://www.arrelsfundacio.org/en/volunteer-flat-zero/> [accessed 12/08/2019]

5.5 Ana Basanta "Ferran Busquets: El éxito de Arrels es que haya gente que no tenga que preocuparse de dónde dormirá mañana" *Catalunyapress* 22/01/2018 <https://www.catalunyapress.es/texto-diario/mostrar/991286/ferran-busquets-exito-raices-haya-gente-no-tena-preocuparse-donde-dormira-manana> [accessed 12/08/2019]

5.6 'PIS ZERO. Un pis fet a mida per a les persones que viuen al carrer' video made by Taula Tercer Sector 26/04/2017 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5Td9-OOrZLc> [accessed 12/08/2019]

5.7 Video about Zero Flat made by Play Ground – Experimental Magazine <https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=2097428546963677> [accessed 12/08/2019]

5.8 "Cinco propuestas políticas para las elecciones" Arrels Website 07/05/2019 <https://www.arrelsfundacio.org/es/municipales2019/> [accessed 12/08/2019]

5.9 Corroborating contact: Ferran Busquets, Head of Arrels Foundation.

5.10 Corroborating contact: Josep Maria Montaner, Former Councillor for Housing, Bureau of Housing, Barcelona City Council and Professor of School of Architecture of Barcelona, Polytechnic University of Catalonia.

5.11 ADI Culture Awards news, collated on Critical Practices website <https://go.soton.ac.uk/cwk>

5.12 "Design Against Homelessness", conversations with architects and experts in the third sector, July 2020. <https://go.soton.ac.uk/cwk>