

Analysis of cultural project

Homesession: artspace & artists in residency

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homesession.org

By Lorenzo Yeh (Junzuan Ye)

Master Program of Cultural Management

University of Barcelona

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I. Introduction: an idea for home-based creation



"Homesession". Source: photo by the author

Homesession, an independent art space located in Poblet, is a project initiated by Olivier Collet and Jérôme Lefaure, two French creative professionals based in Barcelona. Founded in 2007, The project originated from the idea of a home-based creation: in the very beginning, Olivier and Jérôme started by inviting different international artists home to stay for a period of time, during which the artist could conceive and materialize their creative ideas. It took the form of domestic artist residency, so the participating artists could feel like home while completing their creation. In order to continue their future projects, the founders created a not-for-profit cultural association in 2008.

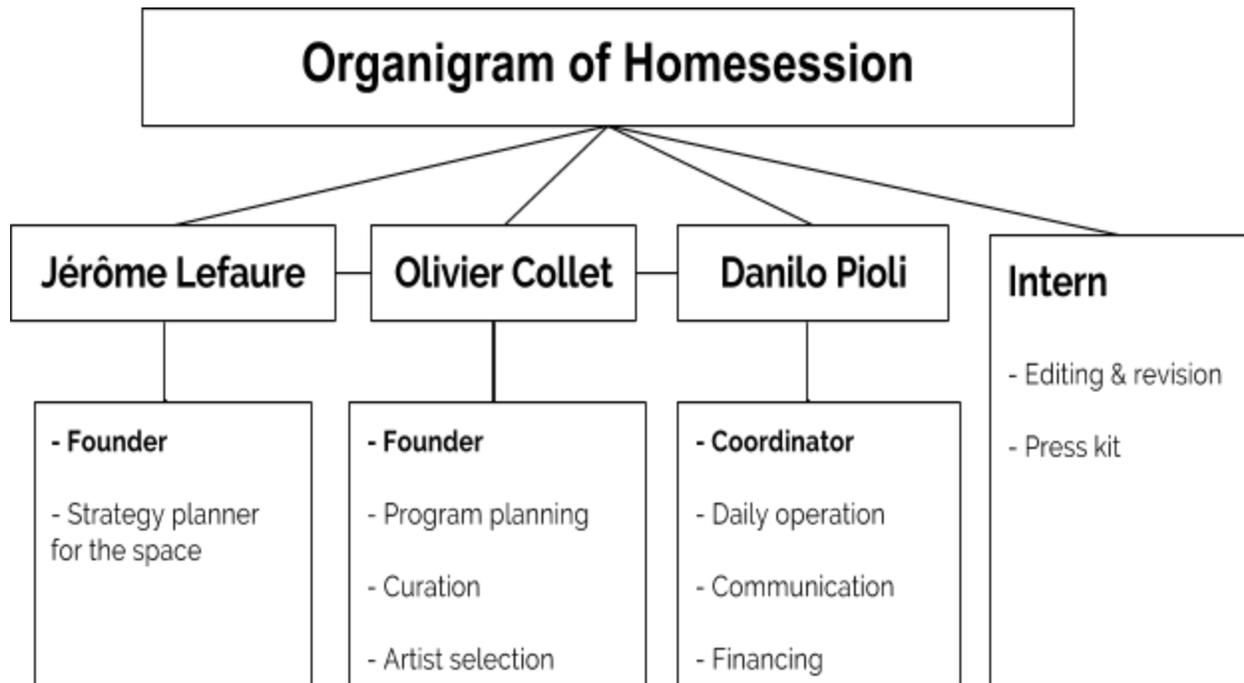


Olivier and Jérôme's home. Source: Homesession

The initial motivation of Homesession was to dynamize and open up Barcelona's local contemporary art scene by inviting and hosting International artists, which they still maintain with the continuation of their international artist-in-residency program. So far, the project has been diversified and enriched thanks to several distinct programme lines, not only focusing on international artists, but also placing emphasis on local Catalan and Spanish artists, local universities and a growing network of collaborators at a national and international level, to fulfill their present objective: an independent art space to "complement the work of the institutions in Barcelona's art scene" by providing a home "for proposals that are daring and innovative in their contents as much as in their format and aesthetics, making room for the unexpected".

From 2012 onwards, artists have been hosted in a residency space located in Poblesec instead of staying at Olivier and Jérôme's home. The space is well equipped with projectors, sound equipment and other material resources in support of a variety of activities. Since then, this space has been used for international artist-in-residency programme, exhibitions and other related activities.

II. Organizational structure and human resources



Source: prepared by the author

Labor relations in Homesession are displayed above, taking a horizontal form. There is no evident hierarchical differences among the responsables, but they assume different responsibilities.

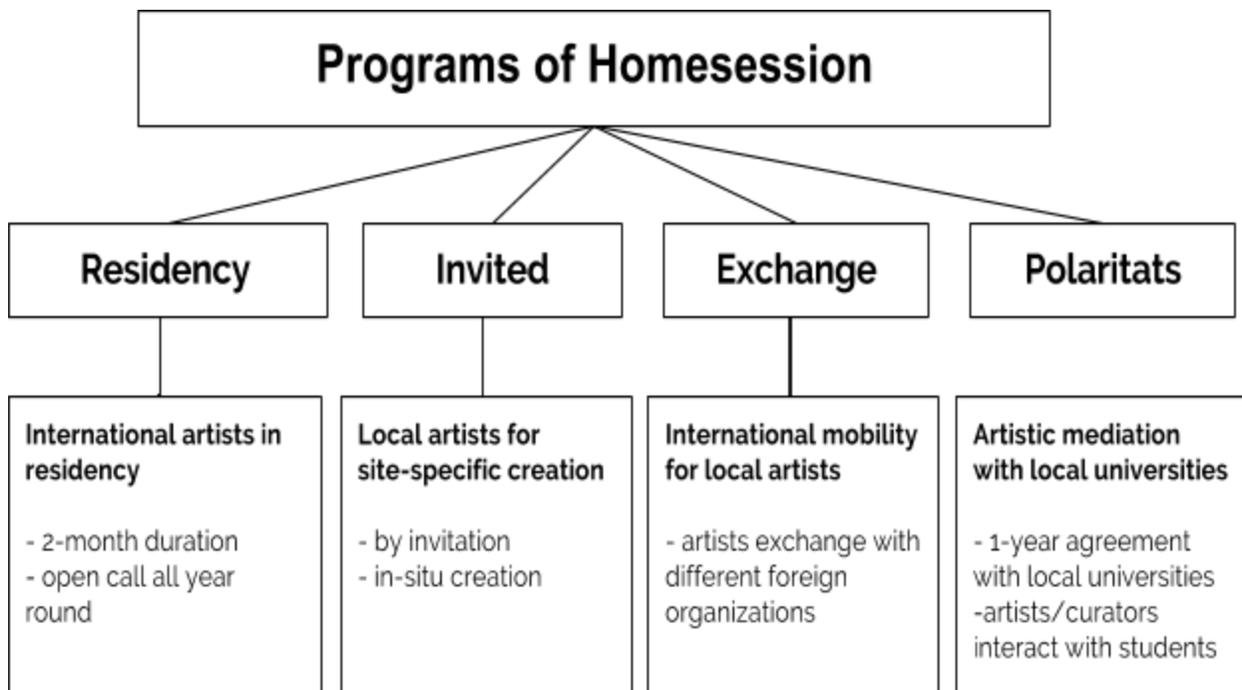
Jérôme Lefaure, as co-founder of Homesession, is in charge of the general strategies and long-term planning for the space. He usually participates in event of important organizational issues and certain activities. Olivier Collet takes more responsibilities in the program of Homesession and curation, as well as the final decision of artist selection. Both of them are freelancers, who are meanwhile working for other projects or organizations.

Danilo Pioli is coordinator of Homesession, who takes care of day-to-day operation of the space and other related issues: communication, financing and artist relation maintenance. In terms of international artist selection for residency programs, he also participates in the decision-making

process by choosing interesting profiles for the space, even though the final decisions are usually made by Olivier.

In terms of interns and volunteers, Homesession usually doesn't incorporate volunteers but maintain internship agreement with several local universities. Internships in Homesession are remunerate, as compensation for the intern's labor and time. The organization also provides the intern with first-hand experience and insight of the sector. Currently, an intern is assisting Homesession in text revision and press kit.

III. Programs: Residency, Invited, Exchange and Polaritats



Source: prepared by the author

To facilitate the artistic production and mobility of international and local artists, and their involvement in the local community, Homesession proposes 4 major programs lines as

displayed above. Since 2007, the space has witnessed the participation of 200 national and international artists with 150 public events and 86 exhibitions promoted.

Homesession Residency Program and Invited Program

Homesession Residency program started in 2007, and has been its long-lasting program during the past 10 years. So far, more than 50 artists from more than 24 different countries have participated in the program, enriching the space with diverse creative forms and contents. Aspiring artists can apply for the residency program all year around. Once selected, they will be granted the space for a 2-month residency, and conceive and materialize their creation with complete freedom. Every year, Homesession receives a number of applications from all around the world, among which only about 6 artists are selected, not excluding the artists coming from collaborating institutes. Therefore, the competition sometimes can be fierce.



Virginie Laganière & Jean-Maxime Dufresne, LA RÉSERVE, exhibition view. Source: Homesession

Invited program works in a different way compared to Residency program. Initiated in 2010, the program is instead targeted for local artists with certain visibility and prestige. In this case,

Homesession is inviting the artists to create an in-situ project, and even sometimes a project together with the international artists if their project timing coincides.

In general, Homesession as an independent art space is quite experimental and interdisciplinary, and provides sufficient freedom and flexibility for the artists: 1) the profiles of artists vary from traditional artistic disciplines to scientific disciplines. 2) Different from conventional exhibition programs, Most events in the space including the presentations and exhibitions last only one day except events in collaboration with other projects; 3) the space doesn't limit the artist's creation so that any creative form and content can be encouraged, such as a research in progress.

Homesession Exchange Program

The program started in 2014, by establishing collaboration with art 3 (Valence, France) and Sala d'Art Jove (Barcelona). The network has been expanded including collaborating spaces in UK, Taiwan, Belgium and Serbia. Center424 in Belgrade is one of the recent collaborators of Homesession, and their first exchange program is expected to take place in 2018.

Homesession offers around 12 scholarships every year, and by 2016 has provided 30 artists with grants for their creation. Artists who are selected for international mobility also have the chance to benefit from possible financial support. The aim is to facilitate international mobility for local artists as well as foreign artists, and thus artist from home and abroad both can produce, create and complete their projects in a specific cultural context. As a matter of fact, it also helps the organization to expand its collaboration networks, and in turn build up its international reputation.

Polaritats: Artistic Mediation Program

Polaritats was launched in 2015 in collaboration with School of Fine Arts of University of Barcelona, and operated through an educational group "Art. Professió i Docència". It is an artistic mediation program supported by the Edmond de Rothschild Foundations, with the aim to connect Homesession with local universities and in turn foster the communication and mutual understanding between artistic professionals and academics.



Pedro Moraes at Artist talk. Source: Homesession

The program works based on one-year collaboration agreements. As agreed, Homesession invites international and Spanish artists who participate in Residency Program or Invited Program to collaborating universities where the artists or curators interact with the professors and students, develop activities and projects together (10 activities per academic year). Artist talks and workshops are two major forms of activities, and other creative forms are encouraged as well.

Homesession is also the only art space in Barcelona, which establishes a continuous artistic mediation program with universities throughout the whole year. School of Fine Arts of University of Barcelona was the first collaborating higher educational institution, which still forms a major institutional collaborator of Polaritats. The network has been so far broadened with Escola Massana, University of Lleida and University of Girona included.

Publications



<5 year of art projects at Homesession, Barcelona> and <Polaritats 2015-2016>. Source: Homesession

Publications serve as summaries and reflections of Homesession's finished or ongoing programs, as well as a source of income. They make publications for different lines of their activities, such as Polaritats, which is going to be their next publication. The photo shows a copy of their first 5-year publication, which encompasses all the artistic projects (Residency and Invited) they have completed during the first 5 years. In addition, Homesession also publishes specific artistic texts, critics and sometimes collaborates in other artists' publications.

IV. Communication, community and collaboration

Channels

Homesession has a variety of communicational channels to promote the events and activities and communicate with the public. The major online channels are websites, newsletters and different social media.

The organizational website is presented in 3 different languages (Catalan, Spanish and English), which shows their effort to reach their national and international audience. It adopts a very simplistic style with the classification of different blocs of programs and updated information related to the activities. The users have the option to be inscribed to the newsletter just by clicking on the obvious instruction “Newsletter” on the top right side of the web page. Newsletters are sent to users periodically in Catalan and Spanish.

Homesession is also present on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and one YouTube channel.

	Facebook	Twitter	Instagram
Followers (till 11/23/2017)	3,215	978	819
Average Post Frequency (last 6 months)	1-3/week	2-5/week	1-2/week

Source: prepared by the author

Above are some basic data obtained from 3 major social media platforms of Homesession, which briefly indicates the popularity and post frequency of these channels. It is evident to find that they have most followers and post more frequently on Twitter. Also, post frequency is closely related to event frequency, which explains why sometimes there were fewer posts in several weeks/months.

Besides, Homesession also uses blogs, some specialized artsy websites, and local or international magazines for event promotion. For example, they publish residency advertisement in some International magazines.

In terms of press kit, usually they try to make press kit for specific programs and some events have visibility in local magazines like Time Out or El Periódico. It is important for them to customize and prioritize different events, which is hard to control and has to be aligned with program timing: more time in advance means more time for preparation. Invited program sometimes have more preparation time than Residency. In this case, Homesession can search for resources, implement strategies and even make teasers or interviews.

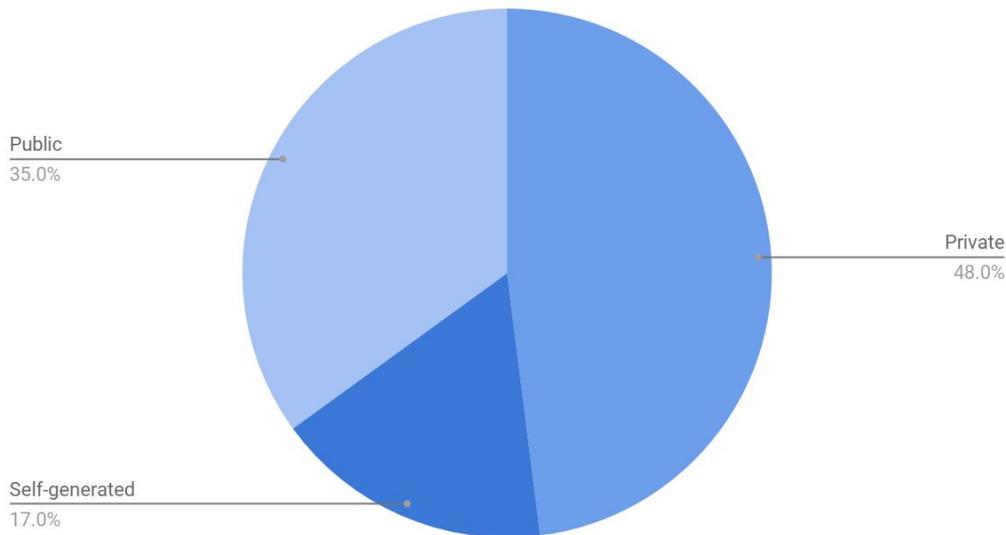
The public and collaborators

After 10 years of operation, Homesession has gathered a crowd of loyal fans: students, artists, curators, journalists and people who are generally interested. They form the first category of the public, who actually are present in the different events. Another type of the public is at distance and international. They can be previous residency participants or other collaborating entities of Homesession, who are not currently in Barcelona but keep up with the updates of Homesession.

With regard to collaborators, as mentioned above, international art spaces which take part in Homesession Exchange Program form part of the collaborating network. Apart from that, other institutional collaborators can be found among Generalitat de MACBA, Hangar, Fundació Tàpies, Institut Français Barcelone and Barcelona Gallery Weekend, etc.

V. Financing and budget balance

Financing Structure of Homesession 2017



Source: prepared by the author

In 2017, the organization achieved the total budget of approximately 80,000 euros. The chart above indicates the proportions of public money (35%), private money (48%) and self-generated income (18%) in the financing structure of Homesession.

Public financial support consists of subsidies from Barcelona City Council and Generalitat de Catalunya (since 2011), Ministry of Culture of Spain (since 2015) and Institut Ramon Llull (part of the expenses of program Polaritats). Besides, in 2015, Ministry of Culture of Taiwan started to support Residency program by covering residency fee of 1 Taiwanese artist per year. The collaborating universities also help to cover some direct and indirect costs of Polaritats program (activities, translation of publications, workshop costs, etc.).

Private money mainly comes from the support of private foundations such as the Edmond de Rothschild Foundations in France, which helps to cover the majority of the costs generated from the program Polaritats (payment for artists, materials, web maintenance, coordination, etc.).

Meanwhile, they try to make self-generated income mainly by selling publications and charging residency fee (500 euros for 2 months) for artists whose residency fee are not covered by collaborators.

Institutional costs primarily come from utilities and space maintenance, staff salary and payment for artists. Space rent is exempt as it is counted as part of the founders' contribution to the association.

Payment are made for artists in order to cover their production and material costs during their residency, the amount of which varies between 300 euros and 500 euros in accordance with each project. Local artists who participate in Exchange program are also granted budget to spend abroad. In case of Invited program, each artist is assigned enough budget for them to manage. For Polaritats program, artist talks and workshops are also remunerate.

VI. Conclusions: SWOT analysis and suggestions

SWOT Analysis

A brief analytical SWOT chart is used to pinpoint the internal and external factors that Homesession is confronting.

Strengths	Weaknesses
<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. 10-year project running experience2. Culturally competent programs3. Exempt space rent4. Good conditions for artists	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. General time management2. Residency space limit (resources)3. Precarious annual budget (activities)4. Lack of self-generated income
Opportunities	Threats
<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Growing network of collaborators2. Support of private and public funding3. Loyal public and international followers	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Time lag and cutdown of public funding2. Similar projects with larger space and better resources

- **Strengths and weaknesses**

Homesession is an independent art space with 10 years of experience in Barcelona, and also the first artist residency space for international artists in town. International reputation, network and project managing experience are competent intangible resources for the organization. 4 major programs in Homesession are also culturally competent and coherent, representing specialized value propositions for international artists, local artists, collaborating institutions and local educational institutions. Moreover, Homesession tries to compensate every artist for their work, which is highly valued in a professional context and also serves as economic incentives for the artists. Certainly, the founders' contribution to the association makes the organization exempt from space rent, cutting down the fixed costs.

The first problem appeared is related to general time management, knowing when and how to prioritize different projects, timings for communication and press kit. Space limit makes for another weakness of Homesession, which puts limit to the number of artists they can host for every residency program as well as the number of audience they can host for every event. When it comes to financing, the organization is not exempt from the common situation faced by a lot of counterparts. Precarious annual budget is associated with time lag and instability of their private and public funding, which makes difficult for them to specify their annual budget and directly affects their annual programs. Besides, their self-generated income is yet to be improved.

- **Opportunities and threats**

The opportunities of Homesession can be found in their growing network of collaborators and a solid base of loyal fans. The organization has been potentializing their collaboration with different national and international art spaces, foundations and local universities, and meanwhile try to keep up with their previous participating artists. Strong social network can be transformed into social capital in event of future projects and institutional collaborations. Also, the support of current public and private funding will also help the organization and programs grow.

Time lag in applying for and receiving public funding is a major threat to Homesession. For example, the organization applies to Generalitat of Catalunya for project funding in March, and receives their confirmation in July; 80% of the subsidy arrives after confirmation, while the rest

comes next year. Meanwhile, the coexistence of similar projects in Barcelona also poses a challenge to Homesession. They are sometimes have larger spaces or better equipment, and even more budget.

Strategies and suggestions

As explained by the coordinator, Homesession in the future hopes to continue supporting international mobility of Spanish and Catalan artists and keep improving Polaritats program with current universities and even with other non-artistic educational institutions. After summing up all the internal and external factors, the author would classify the proposed strategies below.

First, strengthen current major programs: Residency, Invited, Exchange and Polaritats. These are the core contents and value propositions of Homesession, and it is advisable to focus on the quality of each program by placing more emphasis on the profile of artists and curators, activity/event timing as well as related communication strategies.

Second, apply more community management tools and if necessary start with some analyses of the community. It is important for Homesession to be always aware of the community that are involved in their activities and profile them quantitatively and qualitatively. Precariousness always exists in the arts, but measures can be taken to reduce it.

Third, diversify financing channels by reaching for more private sponsors and increase self-generated income by some means. Homesession is an independent art space, but it depends on public and private funding, which is a surviving situation of a lot of independent art spaces, reasonable and paradoxical. It is a challenge but any creative and feasible solution is worth trying.

Last but not least, enhance the organizational social capital by expanding the current networks of collaborators. For one thing, the collaborators help to share resources (financial, material or relational) that Homesession doesn't possess (i.e., space limit and lack of equipment); for another, the process of networking also turns potential competitors to institutional partners, transforming threats to opportunities.

Annex 1. Interview with Danilo Pioli - questions

1. What is the story behind the project Homesession and what is the founder's initial motivation?
2. Who are working for Homesession? What responsibilities do they respectively perform?
3. How about the labor relations and the organizational structure?
4. Do you look for volunteers?
5. Who is in charge of the programming/activities?
6. Are there any coordination problems within the organization? If any, what are the main problems?
7. What are the major activities that Homesession is offering?
8. How do the artist residency programs work?
9. What types of artists/professionals participate in the programs? Where do they come from?
10. What is the duration of each residency program?
11. Are there any collaborating spaces/projects?
12. Do you also have any publications?
13. Are you considering any new project lines for the future?
14. How many physical spaces are owned by Homesession?
15. What other material resources do you possess?
16. How are the events promoted and how do you communicate with the public?
17. In which languages do you communicate with the public?
18. Do you have any media partners?
19. Have you done any studies about the public/clients? Are they local residents or international people?
20. Are there similar spaces/projects compared with Homesession? What makes Homesession different?
21. How is Homesession operated financially? What are the income structure and cost structure?

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22. Are you receiving any governmental or private funding? Is it difficult to obtain public funding?
23. Do the artists have to pay for space use/rental?
24. Are you thinking about broadening your income structure by any possible means?
25. What are the difficulties and challenges of running an independent project like Homesession?
26. Do you have any plans or perspectives for the future?