

Changes to the Consumption Space of Small Theater Performances in Tokyo

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Changes to the Consumption Space of Small Theater Performances in Tokyo

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Abstract A certain type of cultural industry agglomerates in metropolises. Not only do the characteristics of the production structure influence this phenomenon, but so does the consumption structure of cultural product markets. This article contributes to an understanding of the agglomeration of a cultural industry by describing a segment of the spatial structure of the small theater performance market in Tokyo.

In this study, we show the change in the spatial structure of Small Theater Performances from 1980 to 2010 by using the GIS technique, and we also explore the structure of this consumption space based on the results of a questionnaire survey given to audience members of theater performances as cultural consumers in Tokyo.

Key words : spatial structure, cultural industry, audience, theater performance art, Tokyo

1. Introduction

1.1 Context

Previous studies of cultural industries mainly focus on performance groups, the creators of cultural activities, from sociological or theater criticism perspectives (Senda 1995 ; Sato 1999 ; Itoda 2008 ; Nishido 2009 *etc*). The creation of these cultural activities is affected by the regional characteristics of consumption activities, which are also under the influence of regional or spatial attributes. For this reason, it is important to analyze the characteristics of cultural industries not only from the perspective of their origin or the creative activities of which they are composed, but also from the viewpoint of those who consume them and where this consumption takes place.

Sakaguchi et al. (2002) and Naruse (2012) developed the methods for analyzing site selection in the stage performance industry. Sakaguchi et al. (2002) employed case studies to discuss the contribution of the regional facilities of theater performances to local residents. These studies are interesting for their new perspective and time-geographical method that analyzes the process by which audiences visit the theater. Naruse (2012) argues that the audience is one of the actors and consists of “l’usager de la métropole”¹⁾ based on his records of live music concerts he had visited. Both studies are significant for their analyses of the consump-

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tion space of cultural industry because such analyses are very recent and so their long-term and valuable data acquisitions and suggestive analytical methods will lead to academic accumulation.

Influenced by such observations, Yamamoto and Kukimoto (2011) discuss the development of and changes in the structure of urban spaces and consumption spaces in Metropolitan Tokyo from 1980 to 2000 as they relate to magazine materials and urban planning. Their focus is on small theater and commercial performances, but they could only assemble dates for two months from each decade. So some issues remain unresolved, such as the fact that the dates might not be representative of the overall performance of the industry and the audience's attributes are not backed up by empirical data.

The necessity of such an interdisciplinary study provides the goal of this study, which is to reveal the spatial characteristics of consumption at small theaters in Tokyo. As a consequence, this study is significant to the study of space and its relation to consuming activities because small theaters are a singular and limited space for consumption and are influenced by regional characteristics.

The study is configured as follows. First, it reviews Japanese theater performances after the 1960s. Next, the change in the location of theater performances held from 1980 to 2000 is reviewed by the method proposed by Yamamoto and Kukimoto (2011), and the spatial contribution in 2010 will be expressed. Lastly, certain aspects of the consumption space in the theater performance industry formed within the metropolis will be discussed by defining the attributes and activities of the audience based on the questionnaire survey they completed.

1.2 Background of Japanese theater performances after the 1960s

According to Sato (1999), Japanese contemporary performances can be classified into three genres: Shingeki (New Drama), Commercial Performances, and, lastly, Small Theater Performances, which are the focus of this article. Small Theater Performances are defined as avant-garde plays that were mainly performed by younger actors, called "the first generation", in mid-1960s Tokyo. Followers of the genre still perform the plays according to the same method developed then. In the mid-1960s, leftist movements were active, especially amongst students, and many of the audiences of the first generation were comprised of young men who sympathized with these movements. The number of audience members for Small Theater Performances had increased by the 1980s. During that decade, "the third generation" led the Small Theater Performance genre. In contrast to their predecessors' roots in student groups and political movements, this new generation's activities were sponsored by industries that invested in subcenter areas (especially Shibuya) and their plays were consumed by women in their teens or early twenties. This change in the composition of their audience implies that the general appeal of commercialism transformed Small Theater Performances from an underground culture into a stylish, pop culture phenomenon.

The number of audience members for Small Theater Performances increased, especially in

the 1980s. Increases in the size of audiences allowed performers to act at larger and more famous theaters and this is proof of the success of the performers. Such progress is similar to making a move in a board game, and so is called “Sho-gekijo sugoroku (small theater sugoroku)”. The success of the performers and the placement of the theater are correlated to each other and can be appropriate objects for this article, which analyzes the metropolitan consumption spaces of culture.

As they were affected by such changes to their groups of creators or consumers, the locations of the performances from the 1960s to the 80s shifted from the campus and the studios on the Yamanote Line and Shinjuku area, one of the major sites for political activities, to subcenter areas west of the Yamanote Line, such as Shinjuku, Shibuya, and Ikebukuro, which had been redeveloped to clean up the cities, and finally to the western area of Tokyo along the Chuo Line. The popularity of the small theaters subsided right after the collapse of the bubble economy in 1992.

1.3 Methodology

Yamamoto and Kukimoto (2011) employed the GIS technique as one of the main analytical methods. And the basic data for the analysis was gained from issues of “Pia”, a Japanese theater magazine, from 1980, 1990, and 2000. The magazine was a monthly periodical when first published in 1972. It has experienced changes to its format a couple of times and finally became a biweekly publication. However, it has discontinued printing as of July 21st 2011. The magazine provides the names of performers and performances, and the running period of different performances. The magazine is the only reference covering data concerning stage performances and stage arts in Japan, and is separated into several categories, such as “Performances”, “Musicales”, “Dance and Ballet”, “Rakugo (comic monologue) and Yose (comic chat)”, and so on. This article analyzes the changes in the number of performances held and the different sites used for pieces of stage theater in the “Performances” category.

It is necessary to mention that the data from “Pia” does not cover all sites located in Tokyo and so the scope of the analysis might be limited to particular sites. For example, it is hard to account for the capacity of all theaters and the attendance of some sites because some theaters have been closed for some time. The theaters not holding performances during the analytical period are not covered by “Pia”, and multiple performances within a day are counted as one performance.

In addition, the articles about the performances were published as a paid service starting in 2001 and so the information in the magazine is limited and could be considered an unreliable source. The spatial distribution of 2010 is based on “Engeki life”, the portal site for the performances. It is necessary to note that the precision and the classification of the performance are not the same in 2000 and 2010.

The study covers the previous studies by Abe (1992), who expresses the geographical viewpoint about the hierarchy of cities based on a measurable analysis of magazine articles, and

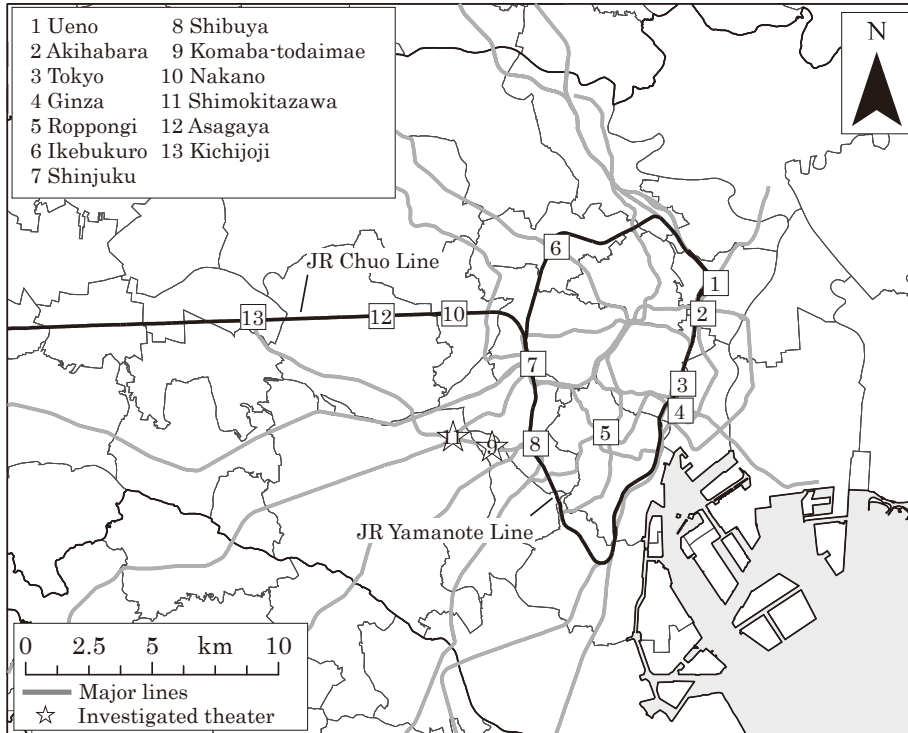


Figure 1 Map of Tokyo and the location of investigated theaters

Hattori and Ono (1987), who describe the regional image of internal metropolises that is represented in these magazines. Although these studies focus on the structure between or within the cities, our work employs the timeline from 1980 to 2010 and so could refer to the dynamical changes in the internal structure of the metropolises.

The questionnaire investigation of the audience was conducted to analyze the characteristics of the consuming space in the performance theater industry from October 2011 to February 2012. Audiences attending predetermined performances in three groups at two different theaters are the objects of the investigation. These audience members were given 5,100 copies of the questionnaire, of which 424 (8.3%) provided valid responses.

2. Survey and analysis

2.1 The spatial characteristics of Small Theater Performances

The number of performance days was 6,463 in 1980, 12,678 in 1990, 12,120 in 2000, and 10,314 in 2010 and the number of groups was 1,307 in 1980, 2,583 in 1990, and 2,446 in 2000, and 1,556 in 2010²⁾.

Figure 2 shows the distribution of performances in four different years (1980, 1990, 2000, and 2010). In 1980, the performances were not held as often as in other investigated years but there were a higher number of days on which performances were held. It is noteworthy that the spatial distribution of the small theaters is centered around Ikebukuro, Shinjuku, and Shibuya and the inner Yamanote Line (Tokyo Loop Line). In subcenter districts, such as Ikebukuro, Shinjuku, and Shibuya, the number of groups and the number of days holding performances are both high. By contrast, some theaters in Tokyo's urban core, which includes Tokyo Station and the Ginza area, have a high number of days holding performances, but fewer performance groups per theater, compared to those theaters in the subcenter.

Campuses and studios located within the Yamanote Line had fewer days holding performances and actual performances. The theater lease rates for these campuses and studios are lower than that of other small theaters located in the urban core or subcenter area because these theaters are owned by the performance groups and are usually opened for the university performance clubs. This fact indicates that these campuses and studios acted not only as the site for popular style performances, but also the site for experimental performances with unre-

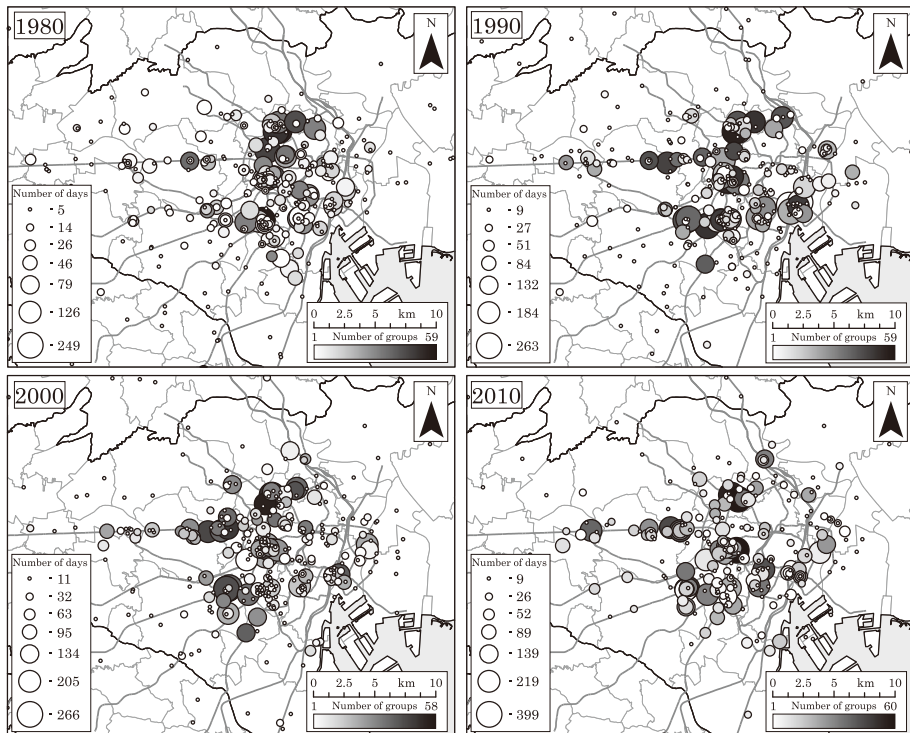


Figure 2 Distribution of performance places in 1980, 1990, 2000 and 2010

Source : 1980, 1990 and 2000 are from "Pia" and 2010 is from "Engeki life (<http://engekilife.com/>)"

dictable audience sizes.

The right upper corner of Figure 2 also shows the distribution of performances in the 1990s with more performances concentrated in the subcenter areas, such as Ikebukuro, Shibuya, and Shinjuku. Moreover, the number of performances and days offering performances in the Shimokitazawa area increased and Honda Gekijo led the growth in the 1990s. Honda Gekijo was one of the small theaters developed by Honda Kazuo, who is a businessman and an actor, in the 1980s. His business activities led not only to the growth in performance arts, but also to the rapid development of Shimokitazawa as a play spot for young people and students in the 1990s.

In contrast, the number of performances on campuses and studios located in the inner Yamanote Line as the site for experimental performances in the 1980s was reduced. This tendency indicates that the western part of the Yamanote Line, especially Ikebukuro, Shinjuku, Shibuya, and Shimokitazawa, acted as the field where small theater *sugoroku* had taken place under the small theater boom in the 1980s. And it is also noteworthy that commercial theaters located in the urban core of Tokyo experienced more performance days and groups than in other time periods. The reasons for this phenomenon were that the Japanese bubble economy and small theater boom in the 1980s allowed for steady audience numbers throughout this period, so it was affordable for performers to rent expensive theaters. And the increase in the number of performance days and groups was observed along the Chuo Line from Shinjuku to the west.

In 2000 (Left lower corner of Figure 2), the number of performance days and groups per theater showed marginal changes from the 1990s, and the concentration of the theater performances moved along the western part of the Yamanote Line and the Chuo Line from Shinjuku to the west. The important shift is that the number of performances around the Ginza area, which had a large number of performance days and groups in 1990, decreased significantly. This shift might be connected with the development of the Tokyo waterfront area, which included commercial theaters built by major companies, and, as a result, some commercial performance groups changed their venues from local theaters to metropolitan theaters because the end of the bubble economy decreased the buying power over local cities. On the other hand, the continuous development in the number of performance days and groups is observed along the Chuo Line. This development might be caused by the decrease in the number of performance venues at campuses and studios, where experimental performances were held, and theaters along the Chuo Line took the same roles.

The decrease in the number of performances held at the area within the Yamanote Line still continues in the 2010s (Right lower corner of Figure 2)³⁾. Compared to 2000, the performances held in the eastern area of the Yamanote Line have decreased and, on the other hand, some performances have been held within the Bay Area. In the western area of the Yamanote Line or within the Line, the performances have been concentrated in this narrow area.

2.2 The behavior characteristics of audiences

Figure 3 shows that the main audience is comprised of women in their thirties to forties, who were also the main audience of the “small theater performances boom” of the 1980s when they were in their late teens or twenties. 60% of the audience is highly educated (Masters,

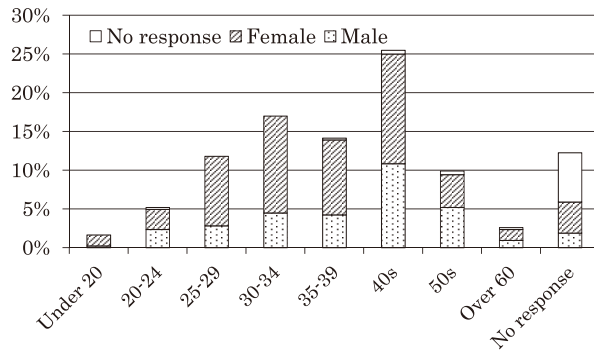


Figure 3 Age-gender distribution of audience

Note : Due to the difference in the format of the questionnaires, it is necessary to change the unit of the age in the graph over or less than 40 to ensure the consistency of the questionnaire.

Source : Questionnaire survey

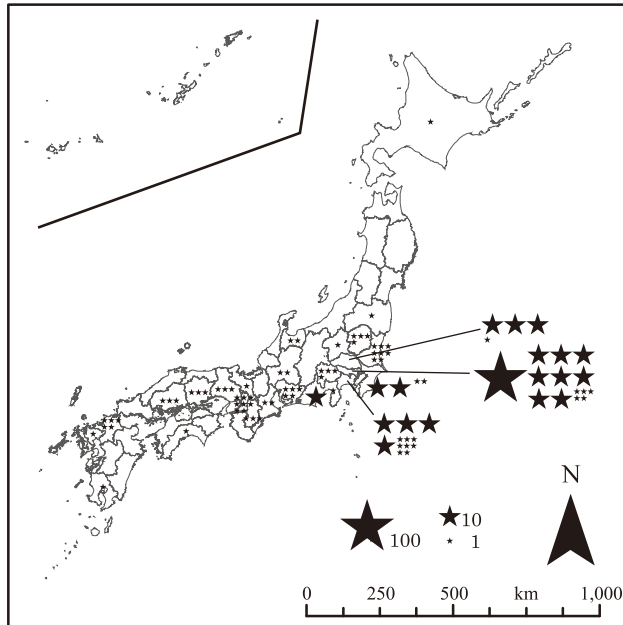


Figure 4 Distribution of audiences' residences in Japan

Source : Questionnaire survey

Bachelors, Vocational School, or two years of college). This trend is especially true for the figure from the premium market segment, which is over 65% and represents the audience members in their thirties or forties. The audience is mainly white collar workers, as 26.1% have desk jobs and 21.4% are technical experts. When compared to the occupational distribution for artists (0.94%) and researchers (0.25%) found in the National Population Census 2000, it is notable that the artists and researchers mark fairly high as percentages of the audience ; 4.7% and 4.2% respectively.

67% of the audience lives in the Tokyo region⁴⁾, and 17% of them come from other regions all over Japan, especially neighboring prefectures. Even though the distribution of the audiences' residences shows a slight concentration along the Chuo Line or Odakyu Line, overall distribution is widely spread.

2.3 The residence locations and information sources for the audience

Figure 5 shows the information sources for the audience, and flyers are the largest source (Tokyo region : 37.4% and other regions : 39.4%). The different flyers were tied and distributed at the theaters. They provide a wide variety of information to the audience and the audience could find information on other performances that matched their personal tastes.

The Direct Mail (Tokyo region : 15.4% and other regions : 9.9%)⁵⁾ and "Others" (Tokyo region : 11.9% and other regions : 15.5%) categories show the different proportions between

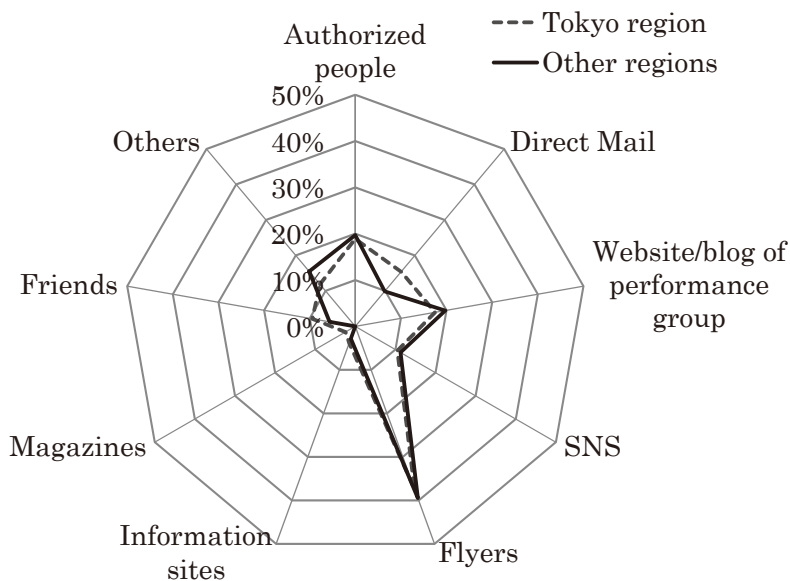


Figure 5 Information source for the audience

Note : Multiple answers

Source : Questionnaire survey

the audience from the Tokyo region and other regions. The audiences living in other regions do not seem to gain information from Direct Mail and they list Actors fan club as Others.

Some people who live in the Tokyo region could visit the theaters on the way home from the office following an invitation from their friends or co-workers ; however, it is not common for those who live in other regions to spontaneously visit the theaters located in the Tokyo region. They also mention their use of paid absences from their job to visit Tokyo and the difficulty of attending the performances on weekdays, and so they also demand that performances be held in regions other than Tokyo. Judging from such situations and the high response ratio of “Others”, it is suggested that the audience members living in other regions try to overcome the disparity in attendance opportunities between Tokyo and other regions.

2.4 The “hopping” activity of the audience

The “hopping” activities of the audience on the day they watched a performance can be observed regardless of whether they live within or outside of Tokyo. They also spend some time on cultural activities, such as visiting the museum around the theater or attending live concerts (Figure 6). These activities are closely related to the site location of the theaters,

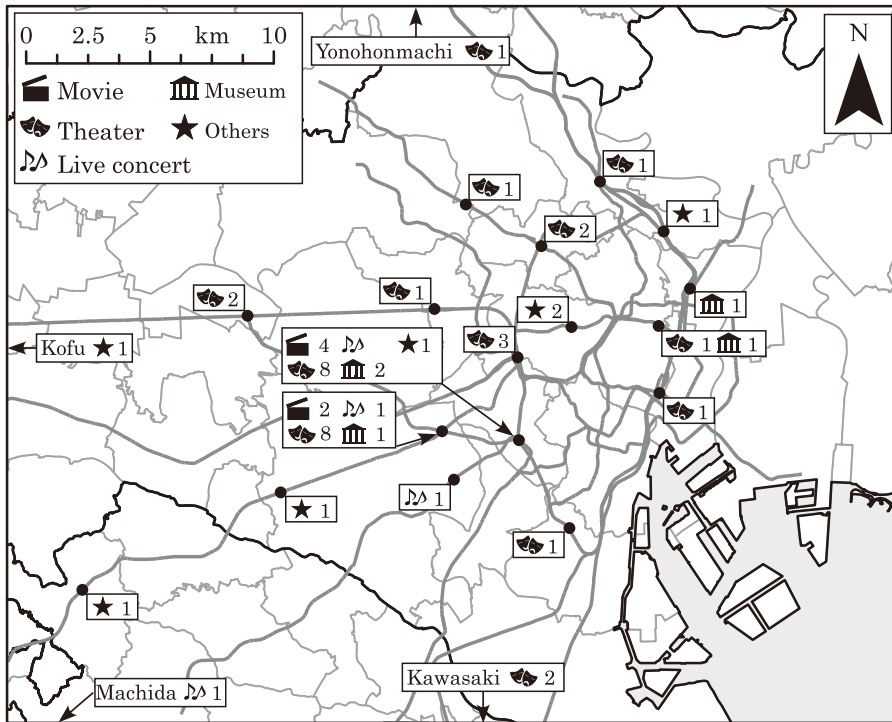


Figure 6 Destinations of “hopping” activities
Source : Questionnaire survey

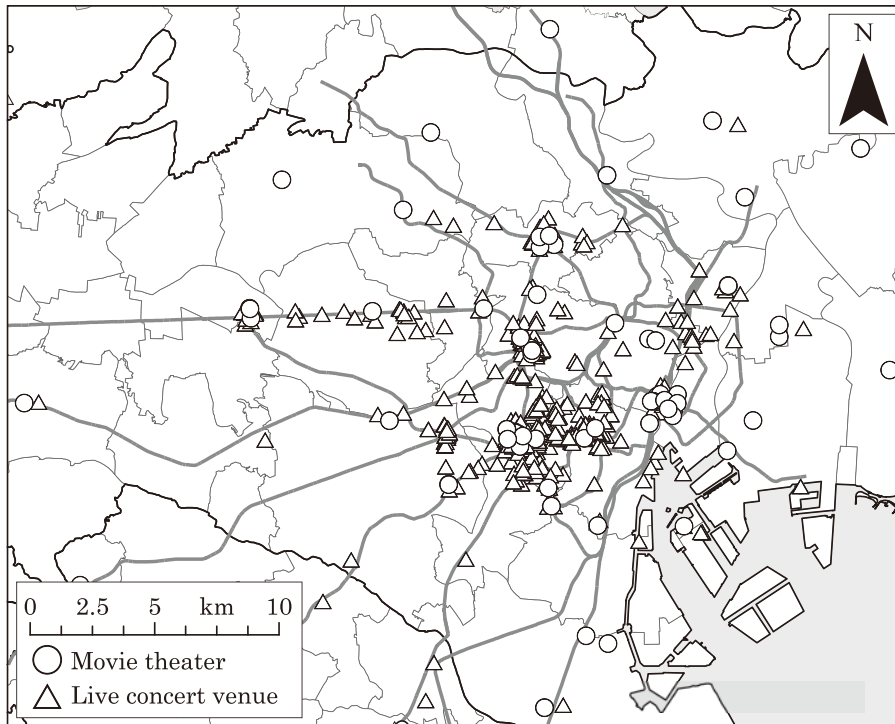


Figure 7 Distribution of Movie theaters and live concert venues in Tokyo in 2012

Source : “iFLYER.tv (<http://iflyer.tv/>)” (retrieved May 23th, 2012) and “MovieWalker (<http://movie.walkerplus.com/>)” (retrieved May 23th, 2012)

and their activities are distributed around Shibuya (17), Shimokitazawa (12), and Shinjuku (3) ; where the analyzed performances are held.

Figure 7 shows the location of live concert venues and movie theaters in Tokyo. In the Tokyo region, there are 751 live venues and 78.3% (588) are located in Tokyo. 93 (56.0%) of the 166 movie theaters are also located in Tokyo. These facilities are concentrated around specific areas, such as Shinjuku, Roppongi, Ikebukuro, Shimokitazawa, Kichijoji, and especially Shibuya, as well as Ginza.

3. Conclusion

This study focuses on the audience, the consumer of the culture. First, the dates from magazines are analyzed using the GIS technique and the development in the spatial distribution of theater performances from the 1980s to 2010 is shown. This article reviews the spatial characteristics of Small Theater Performances from 1980 to 2000 as studied by Yamamoto and Kukimoto (2011) and shows the spatial characteristics in 2010. Small Theater Performances

are patronized mainly along the western part of the Yamanote Line (Tokyo Loop Line) to the Chuo Line, and are continuously held in these areas, which is not predicted or suggested by the small theater sugoroku model. The movements observed between 1990 to 2000, such as the decrease in the number of performances held within the Yamanote Line and the simultaneous increase along the Chuo Line, were also recognized in 2010.

Second, the characteristics of the consumers and some parts of the spaces where cultural artifacts are consumed in the Metropolis are examined through an analysis of the Small Theater Performances' audience questionnaires. As a result, the characteristic behaviors of the audiences were found. The most notable behavior is the "hopping" activities, wherein audience members visit cultural facilities other than the theater. These signature activities are sustained by the proximity between the cultural facilities and the theaters, and most activities were observed in Shibuya and Shimokitazawa.

The number of audience members who have experienced artistic education or belong to the art industry is large and cannot be ignored. They have an appreciation for theater performances and influence the evaluation of the performance as much as do the fans. Such discriminating audiences are an important factor for designing successful creations, and their concentration in the metropolises is one of the reasons why Small Theater Performances have been developed in the Tokyo region.

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Notes

- 1) "l'usager de la metropole" is based on R. Barthes' (1971) "l'usager de la ville". Naruse (2012) quotes the Japanese translation (1975) of Barthes (1971).
- 2) It is difficult to quantify and describe all of the performance groups because of changes in the names of the groups and the fact that break ups and mergers between the groups are very frequent. The number of performance groups is counted as the total number.
- 3) As stated in the Methodology section, the sources of data are different between 2010 and earlier, and we should compare them with careful consideration. However, a severe difference between data from 2010 and earlier is not expected because the spatial distribution of the theater performances is defined by the site location of the theaters.
- 4) This region consists of Tokyo, Saitama, Chiba, and Kanagawa
- 5) The performance groups often deliver Direct Mail to the audience to provide theater information.

Although it is dependent on the performances or the formation of the groups, most of the performances are held at the theaters to which scriptwriters and stage directors belong, and so DMs cover the promotion of their new creations or the announcements of the restaging works.

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