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# Mapping subjectivities through interviews:

A design workshop in a Japanese provincial town

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## Resumen

Los talleres de arquitectura se han convertido en una práctica muy extendida en el mundo académico y en el desarrollo participativo de comunidades locales. En estos talleres, la fase de entrevistas a los residentes del área de intervención es uno de los pasos fundamentales. Este estudio desarrolla un método de cartografiado o *mapeado* para visualizar los resultados de una serie de *entrevistas estructuradas* individuales, realizadas durante un taller de arquitectura para revitalizar el núcleo urbano de la población japonesa de Ichikawamisato.

El presente estudio realiza una descripción detallada del método de visualización e incluye una discusión sobre la posibilidad de generalizar este tipo de investigación cualitativa a través de los conceptos de la *generalización analítica* y la *transferibilidad de conocimiento caso a caso*.

**Palabras clave:** Taller de arquitectura, mapeado, subjetividad, entrevistas

## Abstract (295 words)

Workshops have become a common practice in the academic world of architecture and in participatory community building. During the workshop implementation, interviews to local residents is one of the fundamental phases. This paper develops a mapping technique to visualize the results of a series of individual *structured interviews*, taking as study case a workshop realized in a Japanese provincial town (Ichikawamisato) with the aim of revitalizing its urban core.

The paper makes a detailed description of the research method and the visualization technique. It also includes a discussion about the generalization of the kind of qualitative research conducted in this study through the concepts of *analytic generalization* and *case-to-case transferability of knowledge*.

**Key words:** Architecture workshop, mapping, subjectivity, interviews

## 1. Introduction

### 1.1. Background

The design workshop has become a common educational practice in schools of architecture and urbanism, and also a tool to achieve consensus in community planning, as in the so-called *charrette workshops* developed in USA, UK and Australia (Smith 2012:2). During these design workshops, participants – either architecture students led by their instructors, or professionals – develop proposals on a particular site in a short period of time of usually one week or less.

Typically, design workshops include a period for survey or fact finding, often based on fieldwork, in order to clarify the physical characteristics of the site. Increasingly too, these surveys address social or behavioral aspects related to the inhabitants or users of the site. This attention to the social dimension of space, which might seem essential to the lay person, was nevertheless largely neglected until the early 1960s, when a systematic body of research emerges as a critique of the predominant visual approach to urban design in Modernism, and its perceived failure to support the social dimension of the built environment.

This new body of research, called “the social use” tradition (Jarvis 1980), or “urban life studies” (Gehl and Svarre 2013) has its pioneers in Lynch (1960), who turns to examining the mental image of the city; Jacobs (1961), who made detailed observations of everyday use of public space to build her critique of modern planning; Alexander’s *Pattern Language* (1977), where he describes the relation between specific spatial designs and its positive effect for the social interaction and well-being of its users; Gehl himself (1987) in Scandinavia, and Whyte (1980) in New York.

Most of the methods employed in the *urban life studies* have been adopted from the behavioral sciences, which divide methods into *quantitative* and *qualitative* (Mertens 1997). Compared to quantitative research, qualitative research has three characteristics (Merriam 1998:6): firstly, quantitative research takes apart a phenomenon to examine component parts, while qualitative research can reveal how all the parts work together to form a whole; secondly, in qualitative research the researcher is the primary instrument for data collection and analysis; thirdly, qualitative research usually involves fieldwork. Due to the short and intense character of the design workshop, it is often difficult to use quantitative methods, which require a large sampling and statistical processing, and qualitative methods are often more suited.

Within qualitative research, the methods can be divided into *observation*, *interviews* and *document reviews* (Mertens 1997). Gehl and Svarre’s research (2013), for example, is based on direct observation through several techniques of counting, mapping and tracking. These techniques require extensive observations, in different periods (weekdays and weekends), seasons, and weather conditions, to find reliable patterns. Document reviews are another information source, but typically the available documentation is prepared by the workshop organizers, and in many cases the questions to be identified during the workshop have not been explored yet and there are not enough documents published on the particular topic of the workshop.

The *interview method* offers comparatively at least two advantages. On the one hand, it is a feasible way to achieve plenty of information in a short time. On the other, it offers the opportunity for the workshop participants to get in contact with the locals and understand directly the situation for which they will have to offer design proposals. Interviewing has indeed become a common tool in workshop methodologies (Murata 2001, Kobayashi 2002, Brandt 2006). Kobayashi (2013:15-16) describes *charrette workshops* as consisting of six phases:

- 1) Sharing basic information (understanding the goal and process)
- 2) Site survey (understanding the area through a site visit)
- 3) Collecting local opinions (interviewing residents)
- 4) Analysis of the site (extracting “problems” and “potentials”)
- 5) Specific design for an effective site
- 6) Presentation to the public, recording and dissemination.

In this paper we will focus on a method to interview residents to collect local opinions, and how to visualize them in order to share the results among the workshop participants and the public.

### 1.2. Research goal

Our first goal is to develop, put into practice, and test a method to realize *structured individual interviews* and visualize the results graphically, as part of a design workshop realized in the town of Ichikawamisato (Japan). Sec-

only, to examine the validity of these results beyond the specific site (Ichikawamisato), and by doing so, to explore the possibility of building a *design workshop theory*, which can grow as a field of research and production of knowledge by the accumulation of different cases of workshops.

### 1.3. Previous research

This study is based on several bodies of research. Firstly, it acknowledges and aims to incorporate the “social use” tradition (Jarvis 1980), also known as “public life studies” (Gehl and Svarre 2013) into the practice and theory of the design workshop.

Also, it recognizes the theories of the *charrette workshop*, a practice that has also been introduced to Japan and has become a common tool in the so-called *machizukuri* (literally “town making”) movement. Especially relevant for this paper is Kobayashi’s (2013) long-term research and practice, who applies the charrette workshop practice in the provincial town of Takahashi in Japan.

In terms of methodology, the third body of research examined comprises mind mapping techniques. These can be considered to have started with the situationists’ *psycho-geographies* (Debord 1955), and Lynch’s (1960) cognitive maps. While the situationists addressed the individual impact of urban space, Lynch aimed to clarify shared patterns in the recognition and legibility of physical aspects of cities. Applied to cases in Japan, similar ways to map subjectivity have been developed by Yamamoto et al. (2005), and Oishi et al. (2006), in which participants freely chose urban spaces and their preferences and choices have been represented graphically. Sepe (2009) also performed similar subjectivity mapping fieldwork in Barcelona, and Almazán et al. (2012) for the city of Alicante.

Finally, this paper also employs the *affinity diagrams* method to synthesize qualitative data, also known as the KJ method, named after the initials of his inventor, Jiro Kawakita. Originally devised for cultural anthropological research, it is a bottom-up approach for understanding data (Kawakita 1996). As a research method, it has been recognized by the Architectural Institute of Japan (Ueno 2005). Affinity diagrams can be used in two ways: as a *consensus-making tool*, or as a *method to synthesize qualitative data*. In the former way, they are often used in management and planning processes to achieve inter-subjective consensus amongst the participants (Brassard 1989, Scupin 1997). Specifically for consensus making in an urban design workshop it has been employed by Almazán et al. (2013). The second way to use the method, as a way to synthesize qualitative data, is usually implemented by few researchers, as in Ushino (1995), who employs it to visualize and organize the opinions of residents in regional surveys, or Taniguchi et al. (1980) to summarize opinions of municipal staff in charge of urban planning. In this way it has been also used to organize architects’ statements to understand the historical flow of architectural thinking (Okuyama et al. 1994). In these three later cases, researchers (typically two or three) create the affinity diagrams by themselves and include the records of the raw data in the research publication to ensure the *confirmability* of their investigation. We used the method in this second acception, as a method to synthesize the qualitative data from the interviews.

### 1.4. Relevance of the research

As explained before, interviewing in design workshops is a common practice. This paper provides a step-by-step description of a method to visualize interviews, and discusses its validity, providing a possible framework to build a *design workshop theory*. We consider that the growing polarization of the architectural profession into *researchers* and *practitioners* needs to be revised, not by denying the importance of neither of those two activities, but by creating a bridging theory through which the practice of the design workshop can be linked to theory and systematic knowledge. We expect to contribute to this task through the particular case of interviewing and visualizing for design workshops.

## 2. Case study in ichikawa

### 2.1. Basic information

The authors conducted the interviews in the town of Ichikawamisato (Yamanashi Prefecture, Japan) as part of a broader design workshop to revitalize its urban core (Fig. 1 and Fig. 2). The authors have been engaged in the town revitalization since 2013, when they started having contact with local community groups. After several meetings with these groups (Fig. 3) we identified the necessity of a better understanding of the residents’ opinions about the urban core or central districts in order to identify problems and potentials.

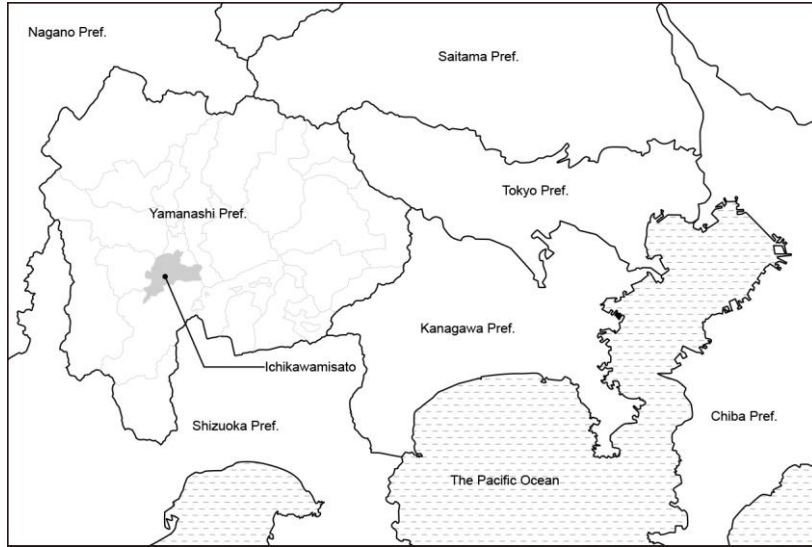


Fig. 1 Location of Ichikawamisato (elaborated by the authors)

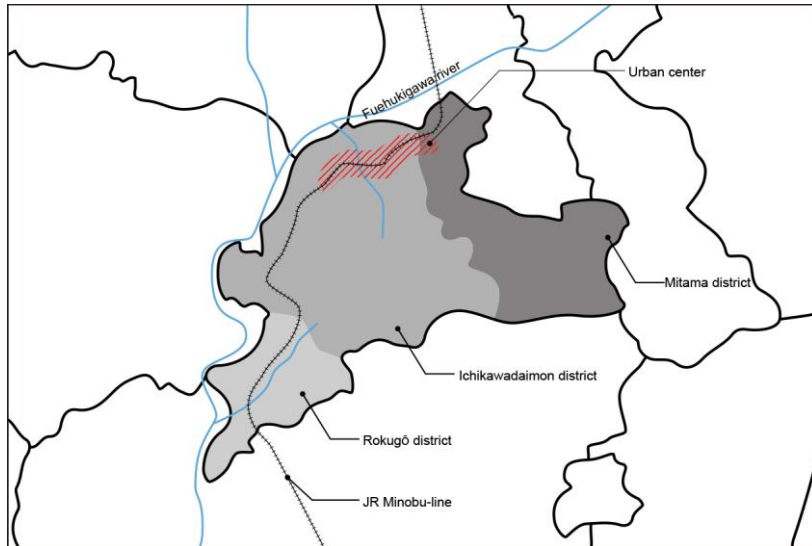


Fig. 2 Location of the urban core of Ichikawamisato (elaborated by the authors)



Fig. 3 Meeting with local community groups (taken by the authors)

Ichikawamisato suffers a situation similar to many others provincial towns in Japan. On the one hand, there is a continuous *hollowing of the urban cores*: the disappearance of a lively, compact center, in favor of a dispersed, car-dependent life style. Town centers have become gradually empty, small shops have disappeared, and *big-box stores* proliferate in the cheap land surrounding the city (Nakade 2003:10). On the other hand, the increasing *economic disparity* between big and small cities forces the young population to emigrate to larger urban areas in search of opportunities for education and employment, accelerating the *depopulation and aging* (Nakafuji 2008:30, Sagawa 2008:10).

We acknowledge the difficulties to address complex problems like depopulation shift or unemployment from the point of view of urban and architectural design. However, based on the *compact city theory* (Dantzig 1973, Rogers 1997) we argue that an enhancement of physical designable aspects, such as density, use diversity, or accessibility to public transport, can be decisive to mitigate or even reverse the consequences of urban sprawl and provide an all-age lively urban environment. Having this goal in view, and with the support of local community groups, we embarked on an exploration of the citizens' opinions about the existing urban core to identify places with problems and potentials.

**2.2. Methodological step 1: Interviews**

The interviews were conducted as *structured interviews* by six groups. The structure of the interviews was prepared and tested by the authors in advance, and each group was instructed how to fill and record the interviews. The six groups, formed by a mixture of university students and local high-school students, realized the interviews on-site on May 4 and 5, 2013 to the citizens of the urban core of Ichikawamisato (Fig. 2). Table 1 shows the details of the survey and group composition, and Table2 the details of the composition of the persons interviewed.

Composition of the interviewers team		Roles within each team	Question
Keio University students	7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Interviewing: person in charge of the conversation.</li> <li>• Recording: person in charge of video or sound recording.</li> <li>• Fill-in: person in charge of writing the interviews and marking the places on the map.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Age and gender</li> <li>• Good places in Ichikawa or around the town, and the reason (Min 3 places, Max 5 places)</li> <li>• Bad places in Ichikawa or around the town, and the reason (Min 3 places, Max 5 places)</li> </ul>
University of Yamanashi students	4		
Local junior high school students	10		

Table 1 Details about the interviews (realized on May 4 and 5, 2013) (elaborated by the authors)

	Ichikawadaimon district					Mitama district					Total				
	No.	Average age	No. of selected places			No.	Average age	No. of selected places			No.	Average age	No. of selected places		
			good	bad	total			good	bad	total			good	bad	total
Men	14	48	63	39	102	14	48	57	40	97	28	48	120	79	199
Women	27	50	121	65	186	9	59	37	28	65	36	54	158	93	251
Total	41	49	184	104	288	23	52	94	68	162	64	51	278	172	450

Table 2 Composition of the interviewees (elaborated by the authors)

With the collaboration of local community groups, letters were sent to the residents to announce the dates and contents of the survey, and to kindly ask for their cooperation. The multiple tasks of interviewing, video recording, mapping and filling the questionnaires were done by the university students. However, the collaboration with local high school students proved to be essential. In front of young members of their own community, the residents were more open to respond. The interviews were conducted in private houses and shops, and in the streets. All requirements to ensure the ethical treatment of data were guaranteed. In the interviews we asked the residents to choose 3 to 5 "good places" and 3 to 5 "bad places" in the above-mentioned urban core. We asked them to indicate the places in a map and we marked the location in front of the interviewees. Additionally, we asked them the reasons why they consider those places good or bad.

**2.3. Step 2: Affinity diagrams**

The results of the interviews were synthesized qualitatively through *affinity diagrams*, a method consisting of making groups of categories for verbal data. To guarantee the *confirmability* of the results the literal statements from the residents or *raw data* have been recorded in Table 3.

Place name	Reason category	Raw data
Mitama Hot Spring	Place with good atmosphere	This place has good scenery./ Good night view / Comfortable place
	Attachment place	I often go to this hot spring. / My wife works at this spring.
	Place to play and shopping	I go to this hot spring.
	Convenient place	It is easy to use for people of other district. / Close to my home.
	Lively place	I go to chat with other people.
	Place with a distinctive feature	I go to this place for sightseeing / I can see fireworks sometimes.
	Place with good atmosphere	This is calm place. This place is clean.
Ichikawamisato Townhall	Attachment place	I like previous town hall.
	Convenient place	I often use for business.
Ichikawa High School	Place with good atmosphere	There are beautiful Cherry blossoms.
	Attachment place	I used to this place. / Fun place / I like walls / I want that this high school remains.
	Lively place	Clubs are thriving / Sound of children's voice / My friend is in this high school.
Ichikawadaimon Townhall	Abandoned place	Old school building
	Attachment place	I like books / Clean library
	Place to play and shopping	For studying / For reading / For self-studying.
Town Library	Lively place	To meet people
	Place with bad atmosphere	Bad memory about the town hall
	Place to play and shopping	Using the library at holiday
Around Ashigawa Station	Lively place	Chatting space with friends
	Distinctive feature place	Library is old, and has uniqueness.
	Inconvenient place	Small stock
Town Hospital	Place with good atmosphere	It's good to live with natural / calm
	Convenient place	A junior high school is near from the station
	Inconvenient place	There are no shops within walkable area.
Children's House	Attachment place	I want that the hospital remains.
	Convenient place	It is near from my home.
Kaiueno Station	Abandoned place	The hospital should be rebuilt. / Dirty / Old
	Place to play and shopping	Children can play in the building / Ping pong can be played
	Place with good atmosphere	The cherry tree line is good
Ashigawa Station	Attachment place	I like trains.
	Lifless place	Anxious for safe.
	Place with bad atmosphere	There is people who I don't want to meet
Ichikawa Junior High School	Attachment place	I like trains.
	Place with good atmosphere	There is no people.
	Attachment place	Cherry blossom / Canola flower of spring.
Ueno Elementary School	Attachment place	I graduated from this school. / I used to go for practice
	Dangerous place	There are rumors that a ghost can be seen in this school. / Weird and horrible
	Attachment place	My child goes to this school.
Ichikawadaimon Station	Abandoned place	It is an old building.
	Attachment place	Building shape is unique.
	Place to play and shopping	The bath in this station building makes me relax.
Ichikawa Daimon Town Gym	Abandoned place	Dark
	Lifless place	There is no station staff
	Place with bad atmosphere	Bad facade / The station should be normal / The station is waste of money
Ichikawa Hommati Station	Attachment place	I like trains
	Abandoned place	There are few light.
	Lifless place	There is no station staffs
Shibire Lake	Inconvenient place	Few train
	Place with good atmosphere	Rich nature / Mysterious / The view is good / Clean water / Calm place / Relax place
	Attachment place	I used to play / I often go to the lake for myself.
Fuefukigawa River	Place to play and shopping	It's good for mountaineer. / We can ride boats and go fishing. / Local people often go for camping.
	Lively place	I often go with friends
	Abandoned place	There is no maintained space / There is garbage.
Ashigawa Valley	Place with good atmosphere	Good view
	Place with a distinctive feature	Fireworks can be seen
	Place with good atmosphere	Water is clear. / View is good through the four seasons. / The view of the valley is good. / Red leaves are good.
Bank of Ashigawa River	Attachment place	I used to play from junior high school. / Calm place
	Place to play and shopping	I go for BBQ. / I go for swimming. / I go for fishing.
	Dangerous place	You should beware of bears.
Sakura Ridge	Place with good atmosphere	The view is good.
	Place to play and shopping	Taking the dog for a walk.
Ashigawa River	Dangerous place	It is dangerous for children.
	Attachment place	Rich nature / Mt. Fuji can be seen
Ashigawa River	Place with good atmosphere	Rich nature / Gently flowing
	Attachment place	When I was a child, I used to go fishing.

Place name	Reason category	Raw data
Ashigawa River	Place with a distinctive feature	We can cross the river with portable shrines during festivals.
	Abandoned place	It is disordered. / Dirty / Lots of garbage
	Lifless place	There are no people
	Place with bad atmosphere	Lots of foreigners
Fujimi Park	Place with good atmosphere	Good view / Large park
	Place with a distinctive feature	Fireworks can be seen.
	Abandoned place	Disordered
Selva Super-market	Dangerous place	Beware of wild bear. / There are tombs. / Dangerous
	Lifless place	There are no people
	Attachment place	I used to go everyday
Kurumi-ya Sweets Shop	Place to play and shopping	Good for sport / Good for shopping
	Convenient place	Close to my home / I often go to buy daily things.
	Lively place	I go to this place to meeting friends.
Fujimi Park	Attachment place	I go to the shop after school.
	Place to play and shopping	Sweets are good.
	Lively place	Chatting place / Shop staffs are nice.
Selva Super-market	Place with good atmosphere	Good view / Large park
	Place with a distinctive feature	Fireworks can be seen.
	Abandoned place	Disordered
Kurumi-ya Sweets Shop	Dangerous place	Beware of wild bear. / There are tombs. / Dangerous
	Lifless place	There are no people
	Attachment place	I used to go everyday
Ota-ya Sweets Shop	Place to play and shopping	Good for sport / Good for shopping
	Convenient place	Close to my home / I often go to buy daily things.
	Lively place	I go to this place to meeting friends.
Yamato Supermarket	Attachment place	I go to the shop after school.
	Place to play and shopping	Sweets are good.
	Lively place	Chatting place / Shop staffs are nice.
Welcia Drug Store	Attachment place	The sweets are nice. / Japanese sweets are good.
	Place to play and shopping	I go to the shop to buy sweets.
	Lively place	My friend's shop
Ramen-senka Ramen Shop	Place to play and shopping	Good for shopping
	Convenient place	Close to my home
	Lively place	I go to the store with friends
J-mart DIY Store	Place to play and shopping	Good for shopping
	Convenient place	Close to my home / The shop have various kinds of goods. / I often go to buy daily things. / Sweets are cheap.
	Attachment place	I like miso ramen.
Kurogane-ya DIY Store	Convenient place	Close to my high school
	Place to play and shopping	I go to buy farm tools. / I go to buy gardening tools.
	Lively place	I go to meet someone. / Enjoyable place
Kinko-do Sweets Shop	Place to play and shopping	I go to buy DIY tools.
	Convenient place	Close to my house
	Attachment place	The castella is nice. / It is on the way to my office.
Takeda-ya Sweets Shop	Attachment place	I feel like I'm in home.
	Lively place	I often held parties in this shop.
	Convenient place	Easy to buy because there are a lot of shops.
Konjaku-dori Shopping Street	Attachment place	In the old days, there were a lot of old stores. / I used to walk around.
	Abandoned place	Few street lights / The street is narrow and ambulance can't enter the street. / When I walk with my child, I feel narrowness.
	Place with bad atmosphere	There is a no attraction.
Kabuki Park	Place with good atmosphere	Refresh space / Relax place / Calm / It has a unique character. / There are flowers. / There is a river. / There is fresh air. / There is grass. / Cherry blossom is beautiful. / There are seasonal changes. / View is beautiful.
	Attachment place	I often go to the park. / When I was child, I often went to the park. / I used to go to the park with my brother.
	Place to play and shopping	Good for health / I often go to the park with my grandson. / With my children, I often go to the park. / I participate in event in the park. / Children can play in this park. / I go to play with children. / We can play in this park. / My children often go to the park.
Kabuki Park	Place with a distinctive feature	This park is related to the Kabuki. / I went to the park to know about the Kabuki. / I often go to the park to visit exhibitions. / There is a peony garden. / There is a castle. / I go to the park to see theater.
	Abandoned place	There was no castle in this town, so the castle is meaningless and making an economic loss for the town.
	Dangerous place	The park's image is bad. / There are no specific things in this park. / There are rumors that a ghost can be seen in this park.

Place name	Reason category	Raw data
Haba Park	Place with good atmosphere	There are cherry blossoms. / We can get a whole view of Kofu basin
	Attachment place	When I was a child, I used to go with friends.
	Place with a distinctive feature	It is nice view place. / There are ancient ruins.
Town Ground	Not lively place	There are no people.
	Place with good atmosphere	There are poplar trees.
Around Town Ground	Convenient place	Close to my home
	Place with a distinctive feature	There is a monument of fireworks. / There is bell rings. A couple will be happy, when ringing the bell.
	Lifless place	There are no people. / There are people. Only when there is an event.
Seishu Park	Attachment place	When I was child, I used to play in the park.
	Place to play and shopping	Route for taking a walk
Ichikawa Park	Dangerous place	There is a dog I don't like.
	Place with good atmosphere	There is a good atmosphere.
	Lively place	I go to the park to meet my school friends.
Ichikawa Park	Abandoned place	There are no street lights.
	Dangerous place	It is dangerous. / There is a bear. / There are wild bears.
	Inconvenient place	It is far from city.
Hirin Park	Place with bad atmosphere	There are nothing special places in the park.
	Place with good atmosphere	Cherry blossom trees are beautiful. / A view of mountains is good. / Beautiful view / Relax space
	Attachment place	When I begin to work in this park, I like this park. / When I was junior high school student, I often went to the park.
Uwato Shrine	Place with a distinctive feature	This space for a calligraphy. / There are calligraphy exhibitions. / There is a strange building. / I'm interested in calligraphy. / I enjoy seeing ancient calligraphy from china. / I often go the park for taking photography. / There are monuments of calligraphy. / Because this town's people like calligraphy. / It's good place for people interested in calligraphy.
	Inconvenient place	There are few lights. / There is a large stone stair that I can't step up. / It's hard to move around, because of slopes. /
	Place with bad atmosphere	The access to this park is bad.
Hojuin Temple	Abandoned place	There are only Chinese things. / There are no relations to the history. / There are no special things. / Abandoned place / Waste of maintain fee / I don't want to go this park. / The entrance cost is expensive. / TV program was broadcast about this park as one of waste public facilities. / This park is not utilized. / This park is making an economic loss for the town.
	Attachment place	I often go to pray. / I often go to this shrine. / I often go to this shrine to clean up.
	Convenient place	Close to my home
Ichikawa Church	Place with a distinctive feature	This is a historical shrine.
	Abandoned place	It's dangerous not to clean up a dead tree.
	Lifless place	Recently, There are no people.
Kaonin Temple	Place with good atmosphere	There are cherry blossom trees. / There is a flower garden. / I can feel seasonal things. When I go to the temple. / The view from temple is beautiful.
	Attachment place	When I was a child, I often play in this temple. / There is my family's tomb. / I ring temple's bell to inform the time.
	Place with a distinctive feature	There is a garden that made by historical famous gardener. / Mother of Kukai (Buddhist priest) was dead in this place. / Historical temple
Kumano Shrine	Abandoned place	This temple needs PR to inform history.
	Attachment place	This place is impressive. / I often go to the church, when I take a walk.
	Place with a distinctive feature	Historical building
Gojinya Historical Gate	Place with a distinctive feature	Temple's area is clean. / The temple keeps ancient history.
	Place with a distinctive feature	Historical place / The birthplace of a famous family.
Nakakita Street	Place with a distinctive feature	Historical building / I feel historical things.
	Place with a distinctive feature	There are travelers' guardian deities.
Road in Takata District	Abandoned place	There are few street lights. / Abandoned place
	Abandoned place	It's a dark place.
Front of Police Station	Bad atmosphere place	There are police to check driving manner.
	Bad atmosphere place	There is a bad atmosphere.
Kita-sen Street	Place with a distinctive feature	Car speeds are high.
	Lifless place	Desolated space
Fujimi Complex	Place with bad atmosphere	It's hard to become friendly with foreign people. The way of life style is different.

Table 3 Affinity diagram of the interview results (elaborated by the authors)

We obtained several general categories to explain the preference for places considered as “good” or “bad”. In order to clearly show the results of the analysis henceforth we will show the resulting categories in pointing double angle quotation marks («»), and the raw data in quotations marks (“”). For example, we included positive descriptions of places considered as good under categories such as «attachment place» (represented in statements such as “I used to go this school”, “When I was child, I used to go to this park”) or «lively place» (“I go to the shop to meet my friends”, or “Sound of children’s voice make me happy”). As for bad places we used categories such as «abandoned place» (“The hospital should be rebuilt” or “There are few street lights”) or «lifeless place» (“There are no people” or “There is no station staff”).

**2.4. Step 3: Mapping**

The places considered as *good* and *bad* have been mapped with gradients of transparency to show the frequency of replies (Fig. 4). The following map (Fig. 5) represents the places selected by two or more people and the reasons obtained from the affinity diagrams as icons. This resulting map (Fig. 5) combines quantitative information (the number of people who selected one particular place), with qualitative data (the reasons for preference).

**3. Results**

The overall results have been summarized in Fig. 5. This map shows the rich information obtained through the interviews and represents a visualization of the multiple subjectivities of the residents. In this paper, we would like to make a more focused description of the results by focusing on the *top five most liked* and *top five most disliked places* (Table 4).

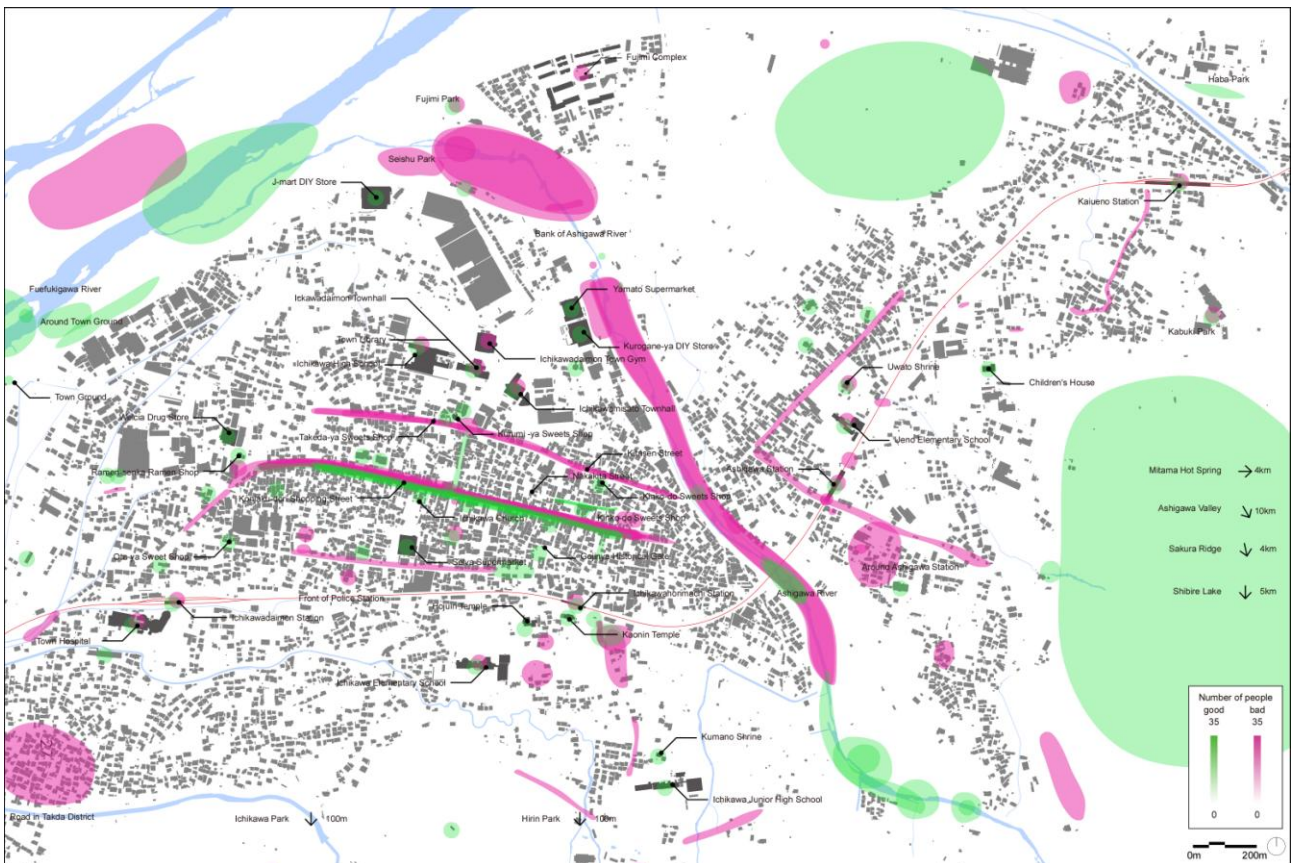


Fig. 4 Frequency of replies about good and bad places (elaborated by the authors)

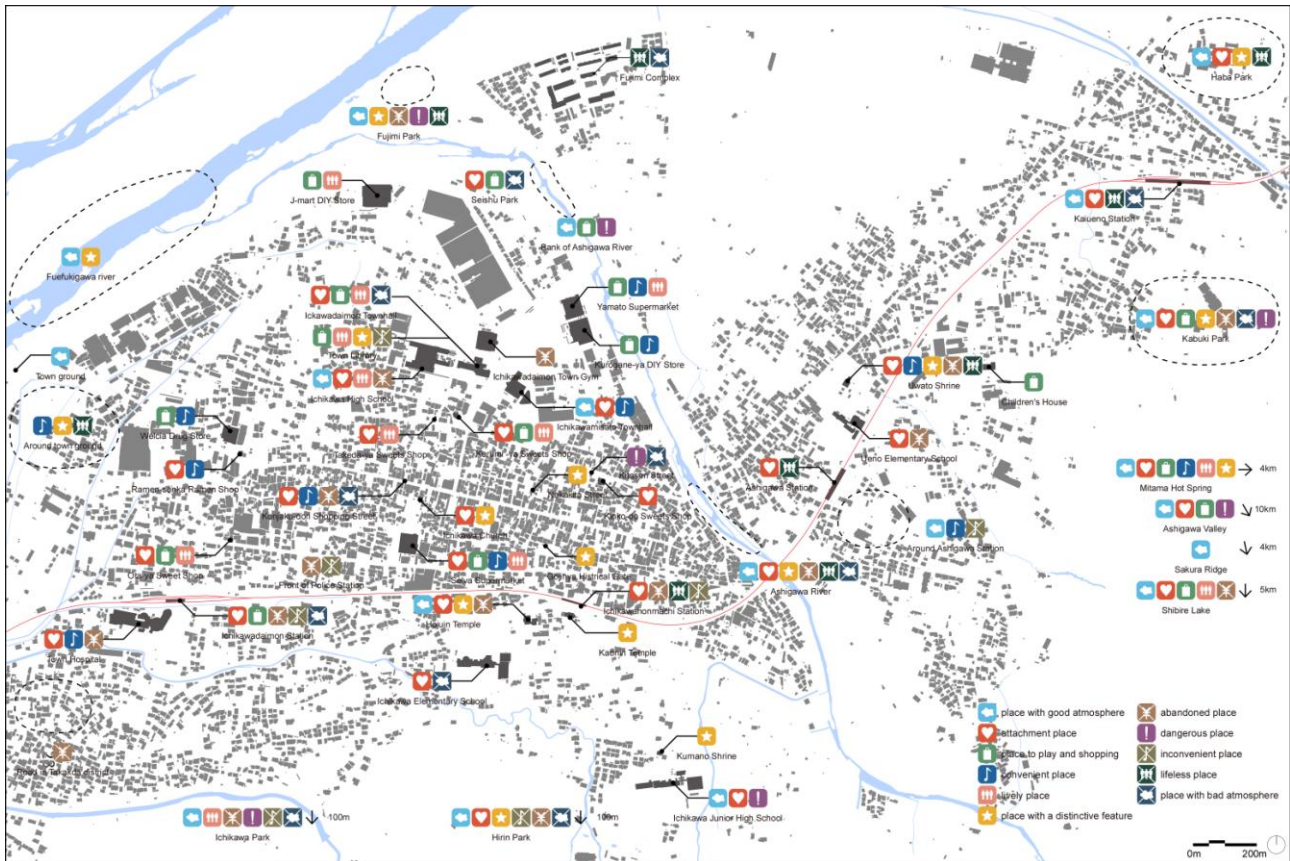


Fig. 5 Result map showing selected places and reasons for selection (elaborated by the authors)

### 3.1. Most disliked Places

We obtained the following top five most disliked places: Konjaku-dōri Shopping Street, Hirin Park, Ichikawa Park, Kabuki Park and Fujimi Park (Table 4). The four parks are located in the outskirts of the urban core, and the Konjaku-dōri Shopping Street is located in the center of the urban core.

The Konjaku-dōri Shopping Street received the higher number of selections with categories describing it as a bad place. This is a typical case of a shopping street in the urban core of a provincial town, which has lost its liveliness. Almost all shops along the street have closed and there are few people on this street. This street has been selected as bad place through the following categories: «abandoned place» (“Few street lights”, “The street is narrow and the ambulances can’t enter”, “When I walk with my child, I feel narrowness”), «place with bad atmosphere» (“There is no attraction”). However, this street is nevertheless considered as an «attachment place» (“In the old days, there were a lot of old stories”, “I used to walk around”), due to the memories of citizens as an old main street, and also as a «convenient place» (“Easy to buy because there are a lot of shops”).

As for the four parks, they share similar features. All of them are located at the periphery, and have been selected as bad places because they are «abandoned places» (“Disordered”, “This park is making an economic loss for the town”, “There are few street lights”). However, Hirin Park and Kabuki Park appear also in the top most liked places, under the positive categories of «attachment place» (“I go to the park often”, “When I was child, I went to the park”, “I started working in this park, so I like this park”) and «place with a distinctive feature» (“There is a flower garden”, “There is a castle”, “There are monuments of calligraphy”). This shows the existing controversy about these parks, and that a definite opinion does not emerge from the results.












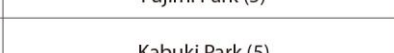

Rank	"Good" place	Rank	"Bad" place
	Place name (No. of selections)		Place name (No. of selections)
1	 Kabuki Park (32)	1	 Konjaku-dori Shopping Street (20)
2	 Mitama Hot Spring (26)	2	 Hirin Park (18)
3	 Hojuin Temple (14)	2	 Ichikawa Park (18)
4	 Selva Supermarket (12)	3	 Fujimi Park (5)
4	 Ichikawa High School (12)	3	 Kabuki Park (5)
4	 Hirin Park (12)		

Table 4 Top 5 most liked and disliked places (elaborated by the authors)

### 3.2. Most liked Places

As for the top most liked place, we obtained six places: Kabuki Park, Mitama Hot Spring, Hojuin Temple, Selva Supermarket, Ichikawa High School, and Hirin Park. From these six places, three are located at the periphery of the urban core: Kabuki Park and Hirin Park (explained above), and also the Mitama Hot Spring. This Hot Spring is one of the most popular spots but does not provide opportunities to revitalize the urban core in a walkable, compact city manner since it is far from the urban core and only accessible by car.

Three places are located in the urban core: Hojuin Temple, Selva Supermarket, and Ichikawa High School. The Selva Supermarket is typologically a *big-box store*. This building type – free-standing, single-floor structures sitting in the middle of a large parking lot – is often found in the periphery of Japanese provincial towns. Usually part of large chains, they offer relatively low prices that eliminate the competition of the small family-run shops in the

town. Selva Supermarket, nevertheless, is located inside an urban block of the city core, and along the shopping street. Highly accessible on foot for the community, its location inside a block keeps the continuity of the urban façades. It is a rare case of big-box store integrated in the fabric of the urban core (Fig. 6). Selva Supermarket was selected as a good place by the following categories: «attachment place» (“I used to go everyday”); «place to play and shopping» (“Good for sport”, “Good for shopping”); «convenient place» (“Close to my home”, “I often go to buy daily things”); and «lively place» (“I go to the shop to meet my friends”).



Fig. 6 Axonometric view of Selva Supermarket (elaborated by the authors)

Hojuin Temple was selected as a good place by the following categories: «place with good atmosphere» (“There is cherry blossom”, “The view from temple is beautiful”, “There is a peony garden”); «attachment place» (“When I was child, I often play in this temple”, “There is my family’s tomb”, “I ring the bell to inform the time”), and «place with a distinctive feature» (“There is a garden made by a historical famous gardener”, “This is historical temple”, “The mother of Kukai (Buddhist priest) was dead in this temple”).

Ichikawa High School was selected by the following categories: place with good atmosphere (“There are beautiful cherry blossoms”), «attachment place» (“I used to go to this school”, “I want to keep this high school”, “I like this high school’s wall”), and «lively place» (“This high school’s clubs are thriving”, “Sound of children’s voice make me happy”, “My friend goes to this high school”).

#### 4. Discussion on the results

As stated above, the research goal of this paper is double: first, to put in practice and test a method to map subjectivities; secondly, to examine if the knowledge produced can contribute to theory building. We have also exposed our concerns about the polarization between “professionals” and “researchers” in the field of architecture and urban design. This polarization is caused by the increase in the standards and complexity of disciplinary expertise, but also by the increasing demand from universities and funding agencies to produce “objective” knowledge in a clear, systematic and measurable way. We aim to contribute to the development of research protocols that reconcile the seemingly opposed traditions of “objectivist” science and “subjectivist” design.

The specific question that arises here is: How to achieve the two goals of this study (subjectivity mapping, and validity for theory building) by examining a single study case? The “subjectivist” disciplines of design are based on the study of highly regarded case studies or “masterpieces”. These cases conform a “canon” that all designers study, know and ultimately, try to overcome (Eisenman 2008). On the other hand, the “objectivists” natural and social sciences often consider case research as not appropriate to produce *generalizable knowledge*. Our position bridges this opposition: we argue that the design disciplines can produce new knowledge beyond the canon of masterpieces by trying to find ways for possible generalization of their practices, like the practice of the design workshop explained in this paper.

Following Firestone (1998) we will describe two approaches for the possible generalization of case studies and qualitative research. One is the analytic *generalization* where “the investigator is striving to generalize a particular sets of results to a broader theory.” (Yin 1989:44, cited in Firestone 1993). This *generalization to a theory* means “to provide evidence that supports (but does not definitively prove) that theory” (Firestone 1993:17).

Firestone describes another type of generalization: the case-to-case translation, which coincides with what Lincoln and Guba (1985) describe as transferability. Mertens (1997: 355) calls attention to the quality criteria for this type of research: “With this approach, the burden of proof for “generalizability” lies in the reader, and the researcher is responsible for providing the “thick description” that allows the reader to make a judgement about the applicability of the research to another setting.” In this paper, we have provided a detailed description of our method in order to guarantee this *transferability*, i.e. the transferring of knowledge on methods and conclusions to other cases by other researchers.

We will discuss now the results of this study from the above-mentioned two points of view: *analytic generalization and transferability*.

#### 4.1. Analytic generalization

First, from the point of view of the analytic generalization, the results of this investigation can be considered in the three groups below in relation to existing urban design theory.

- *Results that provide evidence to current urban theory.* The importance of the traditional *shōtengai* (the commercial street) has been widely recognized in urban studies (Sasaoka 2002, Kokubu 2007, Arata 2012). This paper provides further evidence of its importance. The *shōtengai* of Ichikawamisato was one of the most selected places, both for good or bad reasons, which shows the mixed perception on the street: on the one hand, the memories of its vital past are still fresh, on the other hand, its obvious decay has created a negative image.

- *Case-specific results.* Some results can only be understood from a local and place-specific point of view, and do not seem to provide relevant evidence for a broader design theory building. The strong dislike of the *Hirin Park*, for example, is partly due to the local perception that it was a bad investment from the beginning and the park is making a continuous economic loss for the town.

- *Results that suggest new evidence for theory building.* We can also identify results that are neither confirming established existing theory nor exclusively site-specific in character, i.e. results that can suggest ways for theory to be expanded. The case of the Selva Supermarket is the most clear. The common conflict in provincial towns like Ichikawamisato is the gradual hollowing of the *shōtengai* or shopping street in favor of big-box stores at the outskirts which can only be accessed by car. Selva Supermarket offers an in-between solution: It is a big-box store, but since it is located in a void space within a central urban block, it keeps the continuity of the street space, and it is accessible on foot for a majority of residents. The interviews reveal the role of the Selva Supermarket, not only as a shopping place, but also as a meeting place. This case can be generalized as a an example of “*cross-scale coupling*”: an imaginative way to combine two urban scales – the small, walkable urban core, and the large system of highways and big-box stores – in a new integrated typology. The Selva Supermarket in Ichikawa provides evidence for this possibility of *cross-scale coupling*.

#### 4.2. Transferability of the research

This paper provides a “thick description”, a detailed step-by-step explanation of all phases implemented in the research. In that sense, we aim to keep the *transferability* of the methods and conclusions contained in this paper. However, we believe that a critical reflection by the authors, as summarized below, can also help not only to transfer results to other studies but to improve them in future research.

- *On Mapping:* We found the mapping results (Fig. 5) as a useful way to summarize a multiplicity of data in one single image, both for the workshop participants and for the public. Maps, however, are best appreciated in large prints, and therefore mapping techniques have limitations when published in the small-sized media of journal papers. The incorporation of digital formats, with interactive figures to zoom-in and out, could be a promising development to integrate large and complex visualizations into the academic format of the journal papers.

- *Disappearance of critical cases.* The method of affinity diagrams needs to be applied consciously, without discarding discordant opinions, small but relevant nuances, and critical cases. These deviant views can have a great potential in urban design to discover neglected places with urban potential. During this research we found ourselves often reviewing the categories in order not to lose these deviant views, which can provide innovative points of view.
- *Empathic connection.* The interview method showed extremely positive to develop empathic connection with local residents. Workshop participants often showed an increased motivation and engagement after having direct contact with the locals. We consider this contact and engagement a key condition to develop the necessary sensibility to the residents' lifestyles and values, in order to develop design proposals.
- *Participatory method.* The short and intensive character of the workshop requires team work. We perceived that conducting the interviews in groups was also very helpful for the group cohesion, and for the quality of the interview itself.

## 5. Conclusion

This paper develops a method to visualize in a single map a multiplicity of opinions of a population (Ichikawamisato) gathered through *structured individual interviews*. In spite of the apparent specificity of the results, we argue that from our study we can contribute to a wider knowledge from two points of view: *analytic generalization* and *transferability*. The analytic generalization confirmed some known problems found in Japanese provincial towns, and suggested the principle of *cross-scale coupling* that could be applied in other towns. As for the *transferability of knowledge*, we gave a detailed description of the study and we added critical reflections on the method for future improvement of the method. Particularly, as suggested in the discussion section, we are concerned with the danger of *disappearance of critical cases* in the method. How to keep the criticality of design disciplines and the potential for disputing generally received opinion through polemical transformation is one of the pending challenges that need to be addressed in further studies.

With this paper we have attempted an approach to research in architecture and urban design that reconciles two traditions: On the one hand the "objectivist" tradition of natural and social science and its paradigm of clear, systematic process of inquiry. On the other hand, the "subjectivist" tradition of fine arts, humanities and design, based on learning from masterpieces or relevant study cases. Specifically, we hope that this study can encourage the research community to document, analyse, and discussing multiple and specific workshops in order to collectively develop a "design workshop theory".

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