Otaku Pedestrians in Tokyo: Fan Consumption and Urban Politics of "Visuality"

Ernest Dit Alban Edmond, Concordia University, Canada &
Paris Saint-Denis University, France

Abstract
This paper investigates the circulation of otaku media commodities in East Ikebukuro's Otome-Road (Tokyo) in order to question both the definition of media mobility and the subcultural representation of fan communities established in Cultural Media Studies during the past decades. Mapping methods inspired from Infrastructural Studies of the city are used to address the various issues surrounding the pedestrian aspect of otaku culture and therefore unravel the stakes of its visible transparency in the urban and cultural landscape of contemporaneous Japan. In other words, it is the visibility created by our methods of inquiry, crystallizing specific representations of media mobility and social agency, that are discussed under the question of how we can frame the ambivalent and mobile aspects of fan pedestrians.

Keywords: Otaku, Infrastructures, Media Mobility, Visibility, Agency

Introduction: Rethinking media mobility when observing otaku culture

This paper explores the notion of media mobility through the material circulation of otaku media commodities in Ikebukuro (Tokyo, Japan). The principal motivation is to unravel traces of media mobility revealing an intimate relationship between local urban infrastructures and pedestrian mobility in otaku culture. If otaku tourism has recently become a theme in academic studies (Okamoto 2013), urban space as such still does not represent a current notion in studying otaku culture: both Northern American and Japanese scholars agree on the predominance of moving images as the organizational logic of commodity production and reception practices. The otaku phenomenon is therefore frequently studied as the reception of anime as an industrial cultural production. As such, and since its development from the mid 1970's, otaku culture has been articulated as various aspects of the reception of anime series: *dôjinshi* (fanzine) has been conceptually framed as a secondary simulacrum fan production repeating anime (Azuma, 2003, p.41), while otaku fans build their identities as cultural subjects through the mediation of anime or manga and their paraphernalia (Miyadai, 2007, p.25). In that regard, media mobility in otaku culture is consequently conceptualized as a medium specificity emerging from techniques of animation.

In recent years Marc Steinberg (2012), inspired by the example of the collectible chocolates Bikkuriman (Otsuka, 2004, p.235), gave a definition of anime's media mix as the emergence of an inter-commodity relationship through image mobility (p.29). Other fundamental texts on otaku culture such as Thomas Lamarre's "*The Anime Machine*" (2009) or Ian Condry's "*The Soul of Anime*" (2013) also tend to describe Japanese limited animation series as an industrial production and a visual apparatus to build representations of otaku publics. In my opinion, the focus on images and text mobility often exacerbates a certain vertical logic of industrial and auctorial institutions, limiting the notion of media mobility to image circulation and transmedia text production. The conceptualization of the everyday uses of otaku media is therefore always described vertically as "secondary uses" subjugated to "official" media production. However, in the latest translation of his book, Marc Steinberg (2015) notices how speaking of otaku culture has become a pedestrian outcome because of its obvious material presence in the everyday life, stressing the importance of the cultural daily practices surrounding the circulation of otaku commodities becomes a crucial issue in theorizing media mobility (p.7). As such, otaku culture reassembles the two meanings of pedestrian: it is both present when walking in different parts of cities and it is almost too utterly ordinary to be noticeable.

The physical circulation of the media commodities sustaining the development of specific territories of otaku culture is nevertheless never presented as a topic of research. Paraphernalia mobility is never thought of as a social mobility occurring when transportable objects are used in various places of common cultural practices of consumption. Anime visuality is never seen as a social visibility delimited by a tangible material environment of commodities circulating in physical space because we lack vision concerning the urban territories occupied by otaku culture. We tend to think more about the mobility within techniques of animation, rather than the mobility of otaku commodity inside cities. In most "otaku studies" the too obvious notion of urban space constructing the material conditions of social interaction mediated by media commodity circulation is missing: everyone knows how a cultural phenomenon

is a part of everyday life so we fail to discuss "when" and "how" it occurs. Stephen Graham and Marvin Simons (2001) address a similar interrogation in *"Splintering Urbanism"*, arguing that Cultural Studies often fail to adequately understand the urban aspect of modernity because the invisible infrastructural space is taken for granted and discussed through images of modern cities (p.31).Media and Production Studies of otaku culture also tend to elude this question of the formation of a urban space of media circulation because they focus on moving images' specificity, considering media mobility as an intrinsic logic of sight, and media circulation only as the organization of industrial commodity distribution.

Subsequently, the mapping of urban otaku media environments still represents an underused method of inquiry. However, beneath the evident presence of otaku culture in Japanese cities, lie specific practices of circulation, sociability and communication. The hybridization of animation techniques transformed into media commodities makes sense of urban space as infrastructures of cultural production and media circulation. This specificity therefore asks for the meeting of Cultural Media Studies with Infrastructure Studies in order to enlarge the questions surrounding media mobility: anime and game paraphernalia, fanzine, cosplay and other media commodities are mobile landmarks in the landscape of local, regional and national cultural production. Social interactions of visibility and agency are negotiated at different urban scales by otaku fans as they interact with transportable media commodities that can be exchanged, resold or altered: more than a common experience of sight, otaku culture is a common experience of "localized" urban intimacy in a material environment of collectible, transportable, and fragmented media commodities. Considering cultural phenomena in an evolving media environment unravels "inter-local" practices of fan mobility making sense through cultural production of "local" urban infrastructures and social bounds. Otaku mobility is also a socio-cultural dynamic of occupying urban infrastructural space with the constitution of repeated practices of media commodity circulation.

In this paper, I make a case for otaku "pedestrianity" as a notion unifying various nuances of media, human and cultural mobility in the urban space of the everyday life. Keeping in mind otaku media commodities as transportable objects, I map the territories of their circulation in the "anime sanctuary" Otome Road (East Ikebukuro, Tokyo) to render visible the emplacement of otaku cultural practices in cities. Media mobility in sanctuaries is enacted by fan mobility: moving across the city ensures various mediated social experiences in theaters, shops, restaurants, parks and other leisure spots. The cyclical interactions with urban infrastructures of cultural commodity circulation demonstrate how subject mobility is mediated by socio-cultural practices of local differentiation materialized into media commodities as delimited material environments. Furthermore, anime sanctuaries reveal how recycling and interacting with media commodities represent an intimate yet collective sense-making process of repurposing urban space through cultural production. Reframing cultural production as a social event taking place in urban infrastructures reminds us of the recent re-emergence of national tourism practices in Japan and questions how space and identity are negotiated through cultural production as a social practice mediating cities.

To continue, the mapping methods of media circulation respond to the conceptualization of the everyday otaku life in less limited socio-political terms. As such, otaku history points at the evolution from devalued subcultural practices of

social interaction through mobile images to a tolerated subaltern position of urban visibility: otaku agency acts as an *infrapolitical* agency walking in cyclic and episodic events of local cultural production, and justifying its existence in the cultural horizon with recognizable economical weight and urban occupation. Although otaku identity is mostly thought as a static one, romanticized in various subcategories of subcultural niches (Hikikomori, Akibakun, Fujoshi), the paradoxical mobility of otaku fans across urban and social infrastructures and the exacerbated "localness" of social relations and media disponibility points at the growing importance of cultural practices in creating visible difference across urban spaces for transparent communities. How can we understand this need to be visualized in urban space while being an invisible pedestrian?

Otaku are pedestrians: Recycling shops, seasonal events, fanzine and walking in Ikebukuro

This section elaborates on media mappings to visualize the mobility of otaku media commodities in East Ikebukuro's infrastructures. Because the circuits of otaku product circulation are connected with various local media productions, I will stress the importance of fan mobility (walking) as the unification of an urban territory of cultural production. A typology and localization of otaku media commodities in Ikebukuro will be sketched to explore otaku culture as a common intimacy with material space emerging through the transportability of media commodities. I will then explain how the cyclical logic of media circulation has become apparent in the recent history of Ikebukuro to emphasize on otaku phenomenon as mobile practices making sense in social terms of the time and space of local urban infrastructures using cultural production as a goal and a calendar.

Media	Format	Distribution Area	Recycle Area	Connected Events
"Tokuten" limited reservation gifts proposed by distributors to attract clients	Any	Official Distributor Cafés	K books Lashinbang	Fares Official Release Musicals Exhibits
Drama CD Situation CD	Audio plus some images	Stella Worth Animate	K books Lashinbang	Rejet Fest Animate Girls Festival
Books	Manga Magazine Novels	Animate Stella Worth K books Toranoana	K books Mandarake Fromage	Fanzine Events Summer book fares
DVD	Anime Live Events Musicals	Animate Stella Worth	K books Lashinbang	TV release
Accessories Poaches Bracelets Clear files Rubber Straps Acrylic Straps Metallic badges	Plastic Metal	Official Distributors Hand Made shops Game Centers Cafés	K books Lashinbang Caramel Cube Mandarake	Animate Girls Festival Fares Fanzine Events Musical Live and Concerts Lotteries
Dolls Towels	Fabric	Game Centers	K books Lashinbang	Lotteries Crane Games

Figure: Media Commodities in Ikebukuro

Across the various amounts of textual and material specificities of these media commodities, their places and modes of distribution point at three recurring qualities:

otaku media commodities represent a paradoxical mass production of limited, transportable, collectible items. From fanzine to official production, otaku media commodities are limited in number when it comes to a specific object. The majority of Ikebukuro's media commodity circulation is moreover represented by small accessories released as limited-series, lottery items, randomly dispatched collectibles or hand-made products. In the case of mass media production such as books or DVD, official distributors often propose a unique production of reservation gifts (*tokuten*) to artificially recreate a certain rarity of broadly distributed products. The limited access to singular commodities describe a map of ephemeral disponibility across Ikebukuro spotted in specific places: as such, media distribution differentiates various "localities" inside urban infrastructures. On the one hand, the principal aspect of such media commodities is to be present in a specific location during a limited time (Animate café, theatrical release). On the other hand, otaku commodities are portable enough to be transported outside of their originally delimited distribution territory.

Otaku media commodity therefore demonstrates an ambiguous limited ubiquity in the city. Because limited media disponibility is fixed by short schedules, random modes of collection and hyper specific distribution sites, media circulation in cities like Akihabara, Nakano, or Ikebukuro, is characterized by the presence of recycle shops where one can search for particular items outside of official distribution circuits (1). As Map 1 suggests, in the case of Ikebukuro, the vast selection of amateur and official media commodity production induces a dynamic between places of periodic official release (Animate, fanzine event in the Sunshine City) and the recycle shops of Otome-Road (K books). In other words, a single item may draw multiple contexts of (in)direct social interaction when transported across Ikebukuro: one can use Twitter to exchange collectibles sold in Animate in the nearby parks, then resell them in a second hand shop of Otome road before someone else finds them. Therefore, Ikebukuro's media circulation represents an interactive actualization inside urban infrastructures of a shared material environment of transportable media commodities (2).
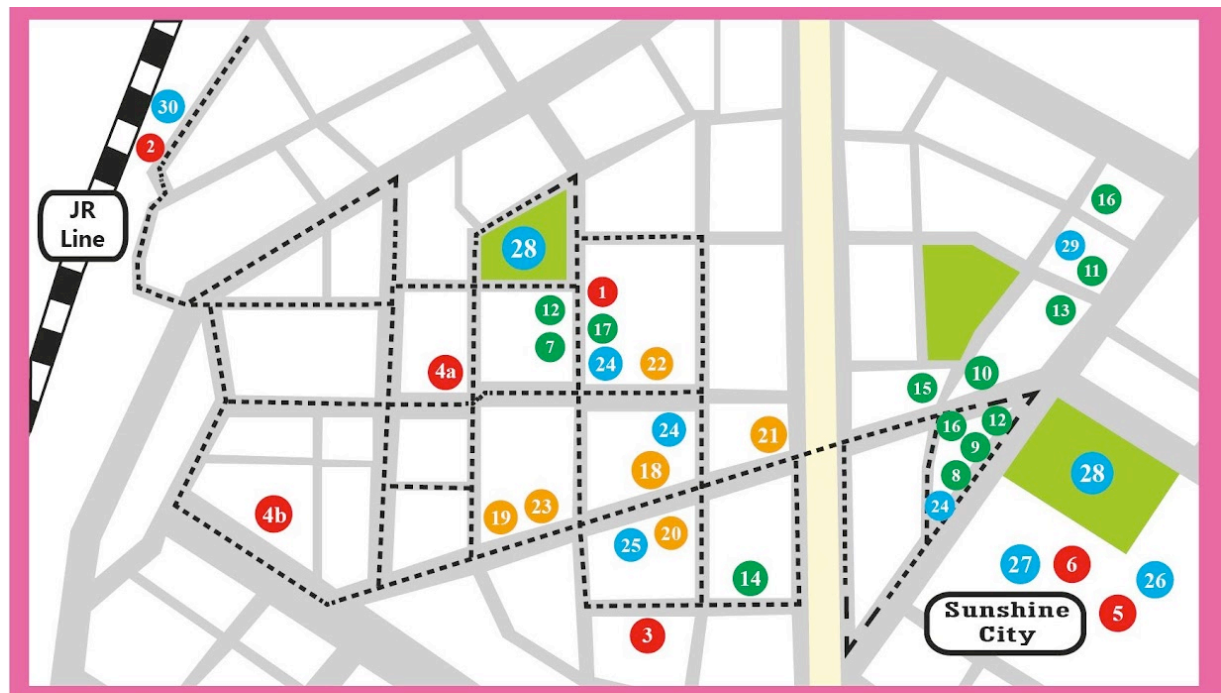
Official distributors :
1. Animate
2. P. Parco
3. Stella Worth
4a. Toranoana (fanzine)
4b. Toranoana (girls' shop)
5. Pokémon Center
6. Jump Store

Recycle shops :
7. Lashinbang Jump
8. Lashinbang Audio
9. Lashinbang Character Goods
10. Mandarake (fanzine)
11. K books (fanzine)
12. K books Characters goods
13. K books Games, CD, DVD
14. K books Musical
15. K books Anime Idols
16. Caramel Cubes (handmade items)
17. Fromage (fanzine)

Leisure spots :
18. Taito Station
19. Adores
20. Adores Girls
21. St. Tropez
22. Karaoke no Tetsujin
23. Sunshine Cinema

Coffee shops, event halls :
24. Animate Cafes
25. Anime Plaza
26. Namjatown
27. Sunshine City
28. Parks (official cosplay spots)
29. Swallow Tail
30. Nico Nico Douga

----- Cosplay walking area

Map 1: Infrastructures of media commodity circulation in Otome-Road.

In that regard, media commodity disponibility and transportability highlights "walking" as the unifying logic of an infrastructural network of territories mediated through the consumption, recycling and performance of otaku media. Because such interactions with media commodities polarize different scales of everyday life that can also be traced out of sanctuaries as such, I propose to understand the uses of otaku media commodities as mobile landmarks in cities' material space, delimiting zones of

specific interactions. Acting as an otaku appears as a way to regulate sociability and intimacy by interacting with the material environment emerging from the circulation of media commodities. As the transportable yet static state of otaku products is associated with hyper-specific infrastructures of cultural performances, fans are embedded in a walking-static dynamics as spectators in theaters, consumers in shops, gourmets in cafés, performers when dancing or singing in a karaoke box, or invisible pedestrians moving across the city.

In other words, walking in Ikebukuro impels navigation tactics in between seasonal "fairs" (promotional events), monthly fanzine and cosplay meetings, and weekly sales in second hand shops. Shops, parks and other leisure spots represent fixed points in East Ikebukuro's infrastructures colored by a calendar of official and informal "*events*" announcing a new wave of media commodities to interact with. Walking becomes moreover essential to collect exchange and transport fragments of collections that can be continuously enlarged or resold during successive events. There is therefore a strong bound between the in situ sociability delimited by the consumption of limited (in number, access and occupied space) commodities and the material aspect of transportability of otaku media. As map 2 suggests, the common intimacy with the urban infrastructures of "anime sanctuaries" like Otome-Road comes with the repeated frequentation otaku fans experience during "cultural events" taking place inside the city: the intimate relation to collectible commodities is lived as various group experiences grounded in local infrastructures. "Cultural" events, such as the Reject Festival or Animate Girls Festival, bring a specific temporality into urban infrastructures through cultural production, giving a physical meeting point to a large range of fans from random strangers to preformed social groups.
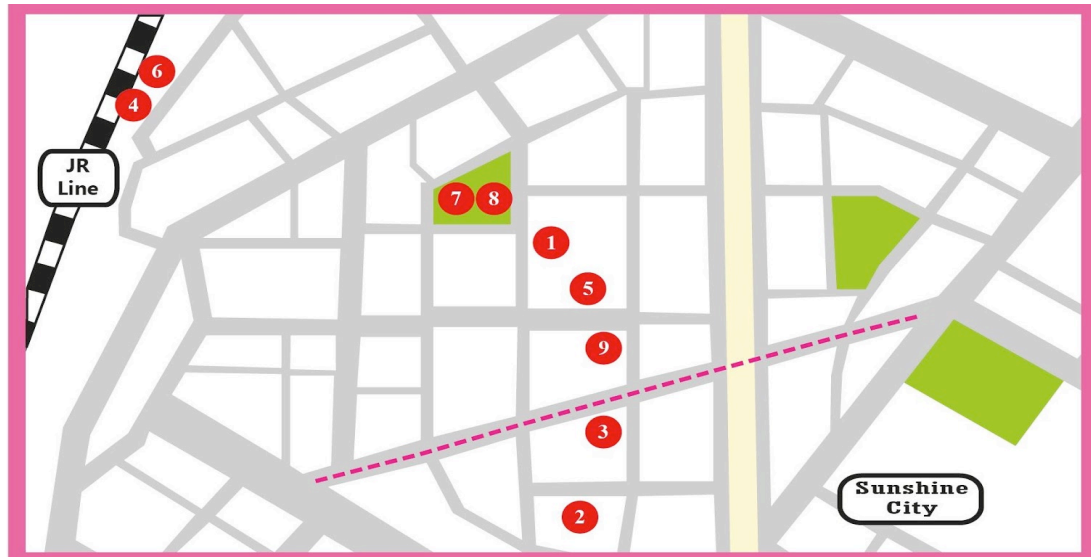
Rejet Collaboration 2015 in Ikebukuro :
1. Animate: Rejet tokuten distribution Aug. 11th - Sept. 1st
2. Stella Worth: Rejet bromides (small photos) distribution Aug.
3. Adores: Rejet badges in crane games Aug.
4. Rejet Shop (in P.Parco department store): fan letter distribution, limited collection of badges Aug. 15th-31st
5. Karaoke no Tetsujin: Original Rejet drinks with premium coasters Aug. 8th - Sept. 30th
6. Rejet Cafe in Nico Cafe: Original Rejet food with premium coasters Aug. 20th - Sept. 30th
7. Live Stage: Rejet live performance Aug. 15th-16th
8. "Traditional" Japanese Festival: Limited premium accesories booth Aug. 15th-16th
9. Bus Tour Anitentokkyu: Roundtrip bus service to the Comic Market with Rejet music and design Aug. 14th-16th
------ Rejet Decorations

Map 2: Mapping the infrastructures of Rejet Fest 2015.

How did this logic of events as moments of limited cultural production and social intercourse become a part of Ikebukuro? The origins of media circulation funding the present logic of pedestrian mobility in Ikebukuro started to appear in the mid 1990's with the opening of the first K-books store (a fanzine recycle shop). As the anime paraphernalia distributor Animate was implanted in front of the Sunshine City since 1983, otaku commodities (mostly school accessories) where already present in the neighborhood. The progressive implantation of fanzine and character goods recycle shops next to Animate in the following decade highlights both the expansion of fanzine events hosted in the Sunshine City and the start of anime paraphernalia recycling in Ikebukuro. As it is suggested in Map 1, the cultural practices of recycling content in fanzine and recycling media commodities in recycle shops created a long standing navigation logic in between the JR Station and the Sunshine City: also it used to be a otaku male oriented area, Ikebukuro's otaku communities also possessed a strong female population, sneaking into recycle shops for school accessories and old fanzines, frequenting fanzine events with friends from their school clubs and studying in the nearby Sunshine cram schools. At the beginning of the 2000's, Ikebukuro's female otaku community took over the city with the proliferation of more specialized second hand shops and "only girls" fanzine events. The sanctuarisation of Ikebukuro as "the girl's road" after 2005 results of the accentuation of official and amateur limited production of media commodities during delimited events feeding the circuits of pedestrian mobility and recycled commodity circulation. The latest stage of this local coordination is represented by Map 2 with the promotional campaigns

orchestrated by the conjoined forces of the Toshima prefecture, the local shops association, and fanzine associations (3). This emergence of limited spaces of cultural production matches the definition of subculture in Japan given by Marc Steinberg (2010) as a niche market, niche meaning in the case of Ikebukuro a spatial delimitation of cultural production as a mode of limited sociality inside a restricted urban space (p.1).

As such, Ikebukuro's case affirms the importance of otaku culture as a set of cyclic cultural practices making sense of urban interactions that occurs with the exchanges of transportable commodities operating as a landmarks polarizing specific social interaction between connoisseurs. The interaction of otaku fans with media pushes to the creation of a common infrastructural network of media mobility delimited in limited areas of social interaction: Ikebukuro, Akihabara, Nakano and other small "otaku" cities across Japan all recreate the same media ecosystem functioning as a space of social and media recursivity performed through recycling interactions. The transformation of urban space into "sanctuaries" focused on limited collectible media commodity seems to emerge from a repetitive relationship to urban space building on cities infrastructures to develop a temporality of recursive social interactions between people sharing the same intimacy of material space.

In this section, I mapped Ikebukuro's network of commodity diffusion to examine what is beneath media circulation; revealing under the infrastructural organization of commodity mobility the invisible mobility of fans walking across the city. This displacement of the notion of media mobility as driven by cultural actors that gives media commodities a social value of interaction was described as a localization process of cultural events, highlighting the creation of a common material space through the transformation of urban infrastructures into networks of commodity circulation. But is this form of socio-cultural recursivity a particularity of otaku culture? How can we frame this urban dynamic of circulation inside a wider cultural landscape?

Becoming pedestrian, recovering agency: consumption, cultural events and social transparent visibility

In this section, I confront the notion of subculture often applied to otaku culture with the urban space occupied by otaku media commodity circulation. The aim is to develop a nuanced definition of otaku culture as a subaltern regime of visibility inside urban everyday life.

In her 2012 article, Rie Tadai points at how cultural production has been used since the late 1990s in different prefectures of Japan to build a cyclical social bond focused on the revaluing of local urban infrastructures (p.157). As the decentralization in 2000 (*Chihô bunkenikkatsuhô*) asked some localities to regain their sovereignty, annual festivities were gradually used as an occasion to occupy urban space (Tadokoro, 2014, p.95). Cultural events therefore make sense of the relative stability of urban infrastructures in terms of particular moments of sociability emerging from cultural production (4). To regain visibility and a sort of self-sufficiency, localities must therefore perform their differences during repeated events of cultural production. In that regard, the otaku case specificity is to be embedded in a high speed calendar of such local "festivities", with urban infrastructures changing their cultural production

depending on the flows of multiple industrial and amateur media production schedules. We nevertheless face the issue of the paradoxical pedestrian ubiquity of otaku culture, occupying more and more urban space and yet still considered as a minor phenomenon. If the notion of subculture in Japan is almost a synonym for "niche market", how can we make sense of this "invisible" proliferation of a specific intimacy in terms of community visibility and social agency?

The previous section described the particularity of otaku culture as a cyclical relationship with urban infrastructures: otaku cultural events generate differences between urban infrastructures singularized by specific media commodity production and circulation. In that regard, the 'subcultural" aspect of otaku culture slightly differs from the shocking texture of subculture described by post-war Subcultural studies. Subculture is often understood as a form of conscious resistance to hegemonic taste, disrupting its codes to create a new order in cultural landscape (Hebidge, 1979). The urban aspect of otaku culture however points at a pedestrian and transparent visuality of media commodity circulation that does not combine with an aggressive definition of subculture. There is therefore a gap between the discourses of Subcultural Studies or Area Studies focusing on otaku culture as a scandalous, hyper-sexualized (if not pornographic) textual production and the materiality of otaku culture that can be observed in mapping its territories. It seems therefore highly reductive to focus on media commodities only as texts. One recurrent understanding of Fan Studies gave by Northern American academics follows the evolution of Henry Jenkins' work from the conceptualization of fan culture as a textual culture (*Textual Pochers*, 1992) to transmedia narratives converging across media (*Convergence Culture*, 2008). The history of Ikebukuro nevertheless reveals how fan communities also emerge from media circulation as an interactive edification of a common material environment delimiting specific urban territories. Furthermore, the territorial aspect of otaku culture does not fit with the notorious American representation of the subjugated relation of fan culture poaching the industry's popular texts to communicate: recycling practices of otaku media circulation reveal how otaku culture becomes a milieu, a semi-transparent media-ecology between cultural actors.

Otaku media circulation nevertheless draws a visible ensemble of interconnected urban niche markets. Niche as a "limited" reception, does not intend the same publicity as participation culture or mass culture would. The specificity of the Japanese case is profoundly embedded in the exacerbation of otaku culture as everyday life practices of precise commodity consumption implying limited cultural performances in restricted spaces. Niche as "subculture" therefore intends a small urban space with little publicity. The history of otaku sanctuaries moreover points at the ephemeral installation of niche urban spaces in Tokyo: if Shinjuku, Nakano or Hachijôji used to be important otaku sanctuaries, few of these agglomerations have survived over time. The question of the singularity of a niche territory implies replacing it inside a network of various localities, giving sense to each other because they produce different organizations surrounding the production and circulation of media commodities. In other words, otaku culture differentiates places of circulation inside urban infrastructures, just like a mechanism of geo-localization delimiting regional specificities. In the case of Nakano it is anime antiques, Akihabara is the touristic spot of anime *moe* and electronic products…Ikebukuro on the other hand, is growing as the concentration of various infrastructures inviting pedestrian mobility and fan performances across only shop franchises (Pokemon Center, Jump),

broadcasting channels (NicoNico), performance events and "girls" targeted media commodities such as Boy's Love fanzine and Otome games. Such a niche is however an ambiguous space growing in affluence when attracting flows of pedestrians while remaining "minor". The comparison of niche markets eventually happens in pedestrian terms: as every place is singular, they comparatively become a part of an evident landscape.

This emergence of a network of limited territories inside the national cultural landscape is furthermore crucial to speak about recent otaku culture: what does it means to be visible but pedestrian for a niche community? As French sociologist Michel Maffesoli (2000) elaborated on the amount of "energy" social groups need to produce in order to perpetuate their existence, he concluded that most communities "barely" produce the strength to assure their survival (p.38). The repetition of recycling and cyclical practices demonstrates how cultural production and commodity circulation has become a tool to generate this social energy in and across otaku sanctuaries. In other words, otaku social recursivity emerges from media recycling as a limited action inside an intimate territory. As otaku media commodities draw up a cartography of various direct and indirect zones of interaction and intimacy shared through their exchange, they also tend to federate a recognizable and tolerated mode of consumption: otaku culture became a "pedestrian" culture, in between urban areas and a "pedestrian", a common part of the landscape.

If we however take "the" otaku identity roughly intended as a fixed subcultural subject, it rapidly crumbles under the multiplicity of times and spaces when a person "acts" as an otaku. In that regard, otaku agency becomes ambiguous because it is always in flux and in-between communities, places and media: it is somehow visible as it takes place inside cities, and invisible because it tends to become pedestrian and anonymous enough to be a normative part of the landscape. This visible transparency of otaku culture has historically rose from the enlargement of the intimate material space of otaku media commodities presence in cities: as a discriminated subculture in the late 1990's otaku culture struggled to find its acceptance as a market in Japan's cultural landscape (Otsuka, 1990, p.41). The shift of the mid 2000's emergent otaku niche market did however characterize otaku agency as an *infrapolitical* public (Scott, 1979) not acting to change a specific social sphere but acting to be recognized a part of Japan. In that regard, the largest fanzine convention (Comic Market) editorials started to respond to censorship, pedophilia accusations, and other discriminations, by referring to fanzine events as "*matsuri*", using the connotation of the term "festival" as a recurrent, non dangerous annual practice (5). This lexical rapprochement of otaku events with local festivities foretells how grounding cultural production inside urban infrastructures and a cyclical calendar delimited the fan communities as minor threats. Otaku events started to draw limited yet repeated occupations of urban space that were enough self-regulated and economically beneficent enough to be normalized. Using the interconnected small windows proposed by dispatched urban infrastructures, otaku culture became pedestrian as a movement connecting urban space and as a landscape of cultural commodities. In conclusion, the limited exception of otaku festivities emerging from limited media production and circulation eventually gave birth to an everyday routine.

As such, otaku agency appears as an ambivalent subaltern position inside urban space. In her book, "*Unlearning the City*", Chattopadhyay Swati (2012) investigates urban

infrastructures as spaces of public performance while resisting against deterministic definitions of infrastructures as structures delimiting human action in social stasis. Chattopadhyay therefore defines subalternity as tactics of occupying urban infrastructures to leave visible traces of infrapolitical formations while remaining invisible. The recent development of otaku culture somehow reminds of her analysis of street art and cricket in India (p.52): it occupies urban space in visible ways and yet stays sufficiently pedestrian and ephemeral to give privacy to its participant. According to Chattopadhyay, subalternity is a material place inside hegemony (understood as the structures of infrastructures) but where social mobility is elsewhere because subaltern agency does not fit the visual regime of political representations. The otaku case nevertheless slightly differs from Chattopadhyay's work because its subcultural aspect as a niche demands a specific territorial visibility in order to become an accountable form of market, building visual regime inside a space usually understood either as neutral or hegemonic. The complexity of the otaku agency relies on its dependence on specific urban infrastructures monopolized by transportable commodities. As such, otaku fanzine and commodity circulation as a practice is fighting neither against the hegemony of industrial copyright nor for a specific community's rights. It is the practice of a limited public, using urban infrastructures in order to exist in hegemony with the synergic power of recycling and cyclical practices invading the pedestrian space of urban everyday life.

The questions of otaku pedestrianity moreover transcend the academic epistemology of walking inspired from Michel De Certeau (1990) with notions of poaching as trespassing: if walking in between events tends to be an invisible pedestrian action, it is also delimiting a recognizable market place translating infrapolitical agencies into consumer agency. Ikebukuro became a sanctuary because it gave visibility to fluid communities occupying urban space through various cultural practices of media commodity circulation and therefore offered an ecological feedback to segmented industries. If Chattopadhyay's demonstration reminds us of how cultural practices are a negotiation in between power structures and everyday life, the otaku festivities reminds us how cultural practices reunite social energies in making sense of a specific place as a space of visible interaction. Future researches on otaku culture need to develop a vocabulary of media mobility that reminds of its pedestrian complexity. As the "environmental" tendency of otaku culture continues to expand, the gaps between images based commodities become a spatial distance that has to be understood as social, economical and therefore political interactions.

Conclusion: Methods in between mobility and stasis, pedestrians

Behind visibility as a method of the enquiry of mobility lies the question of what is unseen when we focus on anime as a vertical cultural production determined by the techniques of animation. As such, the walking mobility of otaku pedestrians delimits blurred moments of subjectivity in between various social places where people gather to enter in interaction with otaku media commodities. Breaking the static characteristics of subcultural groups as a mode of (mainly textual) representation demands seeing the material circulation in between the colorful images of animation. The media mapping of urban infrastructures mobilized by the cultural practices of collectible sociability nevertheless opens another questioning about power structures of sight and stasis because urban infrastructures are mostly understood as clusters for

community regulation and planning. The ambivalence of otaku culture then emerges from the media circulation observed in cities like Ikebukuro: the mobility of media commodities inside urban space highlights the co-penetration of technological, urban and economic structures of industrial institutions with the transportability and intimacy of invisible pedestrians occupying a subaltern place paradoxically inside and outside of the economics of mobile media. Therefore, I would argue that it is pedestrian but crucial to think of otaku culture as a technological milieu of transportable media commodities with its communication practices, rituals and interactions. If thinking of otakus as people interacting with each other through cultural practices is fundamental to reach divergent definitions of media mobility, outside of the pre-delimited authorship and official agency drawn by anime as a technology, it is also important to consider how otaku is a non exclusive form of subjectivity taking place in a specific context of social interactions polarized by transportable media commodities. The notion of mobility applied to otaku culture has to be "environmentalized" from its history of the normalization of fan practices as it becomes a part of various local niche media ecosystem, to the political representation of its community walking across zones of visible and invisible agency. Because otaku culture is a set of static and mobile contradictions, mass yet pedestrian, local yet everywhere, rare yet ubiquitous, we need to take a closer look at the relations of material space to transportable commodities to unravel larger questions about the formation of communities of cultural practices and their imbrications in concrete spaces of everyday life.

1 The intimacy with one particular object in a collection is indeed heavily linked to famous characters. I however insisted on the randomization of commodity disponibility through blind packages and lotteries to reveal how the limitations of official circulation induce fan mobility in the city and exacerbate second hand circulation. The transformation of distribution practices into localized events and the inflation of *tokuten* and collectibles seems like a heavier argument that the presence of characters to explain the pedestrian aspect of fan mobility.

2 Most shops are well aware of the pedestrianity of their customers and actively build relationships to federate "tour" logics in between official distributors and recycle shops with collection or bag decoration contests.

3 Recent "fairs" mobilizes all of the different levels of official and fan organization as the Rejet Summer Matsuri 2015. The most influent event is however Animate's AGF.

4 In Tadai's article both commodity production and cultural performances such as dancing and acting are described as cultural production; another possible mapping of otaku practices could be focused on such ephemeral practices of cosplay and performances.

5 The term is heavily stressed from Comic Market 81 Pamphlet of December 2011.

References

Azuma, H. (2003). *Dôbutsukasuru posutomadan*. Tokyo: Kôdansha Gendai-shinsho.

Chattopadhyay, S. (2012). *Unlearning the city*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Condry, I. (2013). *The Soul of Anime: Collaborative creativity and Japan's Media success story*. Durham and London: Duke University Press.

De Certeau, M. (1990). *L'invention du quotidien tome 1*. Paris: folio essays.

Graham S., & Simons M. (2001). *Splintering Urbanism: Networked Infrastructures, Technological Mobilities and the Urban Condition. London:* Routledge.

Hebidge, D. (1979). *Subculture: the meaning of style*. New York: Routledge.

Jenkins, H. (1992). *Textual Poaches*. New York: Routledge.

Jenkins, H. *(2008).Convergence Culture*. New York: NY University Press.

Lamarre, T. (2009). *The Anime Machine: A Theory of Animation*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Maffesoli, M. (2000). *Le temps des tribues, la fin de l'individualisme dans les sociétés post modernes.* Paris : La table ronde.

Miyadai, S. (2007). *Sabukaruchaa shinwakaitai*. Tokyo: Chikumabuko.

Okamoto, T. (2013). *Nijisousakukankô*. Hokkaidô: Ebetsu.

Otsuka, E. (2004). *Otaku no seishin*. Tokyo: Kôdansha Gendaishinshô.

Scott, J. (1979). *The Moral Economy of The Peasant: Rebellion and Subsistence in South East Asia*. London: Yales University Press.

Steinberg, M. (2010). *Otsuka Eiji and Narrative Consumption; An Introduction to "World and Variation"*. Mechadamia, 7, 99-104.

Steinberg, M. (2012). *Anime's Media Mix franchising Toys and Characters in Japan*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Steinberg, M. (2015). *Nihonhanazemediamixsurukuninanoka*. Tokyo: Kadokawa.

Tadai, R. (2012). *Bunkatekiibentoga chiikikyôdôno machizukuriwo hatasuyakuwarinikansurukenkyû: Furuimachinamiwo yûsuruchihôtoshizojireini*. Rûdanidaigakuin seisakufakukenkyû, 1, 149-168.

Tadokoro, Y. (2014). *Komyunitikafetomobiliti: chihôkûkanniokerutsunagarinohenyô. Tsunagarutsunagaranainoshakaigaku*. Tokyo : Kôbundô, 80-106.