

Empirical Study of Local Resource Management of Auditory Environment in Terms of Soundscape Concept

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Abstract

This paper aims to clarify the characteristics of soundscape as a local resource. “Soundscape” is a concept proposed by Canadian composer Raymond Murray Schafer in the late 1960s that focuses on how people listen to and understand the sounds characteristic of a place. In my research, I adopt two of Schafer’s sound concepts, the “keynote sound” and the “soundmark.” First, the keynote is an important sound that prescribes and supports the way of listening of local people, although it is not necessarily consciously heard. Contrarily, the soundmark is consciously heard, and the way in which it is heard is markedly characterized by the region and society in which it sounds. The way in which a sound is heard and whether it is heard as a keynote sound or soundmark differs depending on the experiences and cultures of the individuals who listen to it.

In this paper, I compare two cases and characterize the soundscape as a local resource. The research areas are Matsukawa village, Nagano prefecture, where the soundscape was managed as a local resource, and Kanazawa city, Ishikawa prefecture, where it was not managed.

In Matsukawa, two local groups organized in different settlements each started to utilize bell cricket chirping. One group collects living bell crickets as a basis for activities, and the other holds hiking events around the bell cricket habitat. The difference between the activities of these two groups was based on their experience of and attitude toward the soundscape. In addition, the utilization of bell cricket chirping as a local resource in Matsukawa was helpful for residents to develop their local identity. It should also be noted that the utilization of the soundscape concept helped them gain a new understanding of their hometown.

On the other hand, Kanazawa city, Ishikawa prefecture, focused on how the local residents listened and characterized the sound of the canals. First, I performed a quantitative analysis by measuring sound pressure levels, and audible spatial range of canal sound. As a result, I identified loud sounds that exceeded the regulations set by the Ministry of the Environment. In addition, it cleared that the extent of the sound transmission depended on the shape of the area such

as streets and structures, and it changed seasonally as the water flow fluctuated. I also conducted a survey with questionnaires and group interviews to clarify the local residents' consciousness and evaluation of keynote sounds in their daily lives. Local residents were not conscious of the water flow sound, but they subliminally evaluated the sound as a context of their daily lives. This suggests that the water flow sound is a keynote sound perceived by local residents.

As reflected in these two cases, the management of the soundscape as a local resource can be summarized as follows. First of all, it is necessary to notice sounds, that is, to hear them as soundmarks rather than keynote sounds, in order to begin to appreciate the soundscape as a local resource. Though changes in the soundscape are promoted by outsiders, it became clear that it is important to preserve the endogenous soundmarks discovered by residents, not the exogenous soundmarks of outsiders. Additionally, the usefulness of the soundscape as a local resource is demonstrated through the process of moving from discovery to utilization. However, since the usefulness of soundscape as a local resource differs from region to region, it is difficult to find commonalities in potential uses. However, the soundscape serves to foster regional identity, as residents participate in the process of discovering and utilizing local sonic resources. Also, regarding the regionality of soundscapes, it can be said that the keynote sound represents personal life and the soundmark is rooted in the viewpoint and consciousness of the group's area shared.

Key words: Soundscape, Local resource, Keynote sound, Soundmark, Bell cricket, Canal

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