

Feature Article

The movie hackathon: An experimental event to produce community-based local movies

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1. Community-based local movies

In recent years, under the influence of new tourism development, tourists tend to demand unique scenes, where the residents spend their daily lives, instead of conventional enclosed tourist spots. They would not purchase stereotypic souvenirs with labels of the price for tourists. In place of that, they ask for the daily meals of dwellers, and local ordinal natural scenes. The extreme daily life for residents is extraordinariness for tourists.

In order to distill the natural daily lives in local towns, a movie could be an important tool. A movie has a narrative story and sequence. Therefore, it contains a large amount of information and brings imagination from the audiences.

Up to now, Japanese movies in local cities have depicted their warm humanity and beautiful scenery, represented by “Otoko wa Tsurai yo” or “Tsuribaka nisshi.” However, these images in the films were brought from the viewpoints of persons who did not live in the towns. Owing to development of devices, cameras and computers, even local dwellers can easily make a film and render their daily life. These movies depict the local town from an inside viewpoint.

However, such movies cannot be seen easily. They are not commercial based; therefore, it is necessary to attend film festivals where the movie is nominated. Although there are more than 100 movie festivals held in Japanese local towns, necessary to visit the place for watching.

The movies nominated in such festivals have strict limitations in their budget; therefore, most of them are “short films” which are films of less than 30 minutes. Today, even for beginners, a short film is not difficult to make, some make them by iPhone or Mac.

By means of support by national policy, regional revitalization, today, a number of short films are produced in local towns and many festivals are held there. Therefore, it seems that local people start to send their own charms by means of films. However, it is not common to see local movies by the residents in film festivals. Most of them are films on Tokyo or movies produced by directors living in Tokyo.

For distilling natural charms in local towns, it is necessary to overcome this condition and seek scenes from the viewpoints of local dwellers. For the purpose, this article suggests the movie hackathon in which local residents produce a movie about their town and carried out in Fukui. In this article, the background and overview of the project is explained.

2. Independent films on local towns

2.1 Film festival

For activating cities, a number of film festivals have been held in local towns. Yubari international fantastic film festival is one of them, it started in 1990. The festival was organized by the city of Yubari, and invited famous directors and actors in winter to Hokkaido. Under such severe conditions, they could be on good terms very much. In 2007, the city came to financial collapse and the festival was suspended. After the interruption, citizens instead of the local government restarted the festival. Therefore, the festival became a community-based event.



Figure 1: Yubari international fantastic film festival

Residents in Yubari enjoy the preparation of the annual festival to welcome directors and actors, and actually these participants could have important exchanges. In addition, some movies located in Yubari were born from the exchanges. However, the festival itself did not any local directors. Therefore, it can be said that this festival is community based, however the

movies shown in the festival are not community based ones.

2.2 Fukui Ekimae short film festival

In order to seek for the charms of local towns, the Fukui Ekimae short film festival was started in 2015. The theme of the festival is “town.” Independent movies demonstrating how people live in town were collected. Moreover, it was expected that more people would try to make a film about their own town, after watching these movies.

In the first year, 31 films were applied. In the next year, the number increased to 62. Most of the applications were by persons living in Tokyo, and there were limited numbers of films from local cities. In 2015, there were 16 nominations, but there were just five from directors living in local towns.

The purpose of the festival to produce local directors could not be succeeded at the beginning. After watching movies, they did not start their own shooting. They looked at the screen as a world that they do not belong to.

Actually, there are so many problems for producing a movie with a local narrative story by local people. First, there are limited numbers of people interested in film-making. Secondly, film-making is normally carried out by a strict hierarchy to implement the director’s intention; therefore, it is difficult to depict the institutional mind of local people. An order is given from producer to director and director to the staff one-way. Furthermore, there is a strong bias on films. People tend to believe that the movie is just art, and could not notice that a film has a possibility to reveal social and cultural aspect of a locality, and could be a strong tool to visualize them. Therefore, it was attempted to seek a contrivance to visualize the ordinary life of local into a film in the festival, and to find an ideal form of producing community-based films by means of the movie hackathon.

3. Movie hackathon

3.1 Background of movie hackathon

The movie hackathon is another version of hackathon, which is an event well known in ICT field. In hackathon, a group of programmers come together, stay several days, and collaborate to build up applications. Through the event, each of programmers could sophisticate their ability. In movie hackathon, residents and students were asked to come to the event. To come together and concentrate to make a film in several days.

The purposes of the movie hackathon are to

- Make beginners and novices understand and be fond of film-making
- Build up a community circle of participants
- Share the subject in the region and seek for the solution

After planning this project, the downtown area of Fukui was chosen as real practice area, and Miyata, K. was asked to be the producer, and carry out the project together.

The downtown of Fukui represents the history of Fukui.

In 1945, 90 % of the central area was burnt by air raid during WWII. After the war, just three years later, a huge earthquake hit Fukui. Therefore, in the central, there are no historical buildings. The burnt buildings were built up within short terms after the destruction, and they are planned to be demolished and redeveloped at this moment. Recently, the shopping street in front of Fukui station was demolished and new buildings were constructed in exchange.

Now, it can be considered whether such conventional ugly buildings have any charms for local dwellers. Actually, many of them spent very important times in the area and possessed emotional attachment even they look ordinary. The charms by mean of rendering the emotional attachment can be visualized. For carrying out the practice, it was decided the downtown as the stage for films to be produced.

For preparing the budget of the project, crowd funding was applied for. For distilling the charms of downtown, the returns by support of shops located in downtown were prepared. Then, it was possible to seek the charms by support of shops and the movie could help the revitalization of the town. This cycle could be very sustainable.

3.2 Procedure of the movie hackathon

For this project, this is the first time of challenge, therefore, in the process many problems occurred. Actually, the project could not be carried out as expected. It was necessary to set several groups before the event, otherwise it could not be finished in several days. In addition, with only beginners, the project could not be completed. Therefore, it was decided to bring three directors who were praised in the festival in last year. Three groups were set and the directors were distributed to the groups as leaders. And, professional actors were prepared too. The duration of the event was set to three days, and editing and other post-production was planned to be held after the event.

The leader of team A was Kamiya, R. He received the grand prize in the festival 2015. Team B was lead by Okada, H. He lives in Fukui, he has his own film making group, and the members of the group joined the hackathon. Team C was unique. Kohire, T. became a director in the team and he brought his staff from Tokyo. Kohira was born in Fukui and lives in Tokyo. The other participants were randomly distrib-



Figure 2: Meeting of Team A



Figure 3: Meeting of Team B



Figure 7: Final meeting of Movie hackathon



Figure 4: Meeting of Team C



Figure 5: Film shooting (Team A)



Figure 6: Film shooting (Team B)

uted to these teams.

Each team had different process to make a film. Team A made a workshop on the first day, and they understood each other at the beginning. And, they did location hunting together. In team B, the majority were local people, so the leader started the shooting immediately by following their schedule. Team C brought staff from Tokyo, so they used the time for exchanging their ideas with local people.

3.3 Results of the movie hackathon

The most difficult matter was how to manage to make the schedule of actors. Limited human resources, limited number of devices, and limited places for shooting. These three teams made considerations and built the three-day schedule first. The producer knows the downtown are very well, therefore, it was possible to receive permission to enter the site and film making shortly.

After fixing their schedule, in their spare time, some went to check other team's shooting and appeared on films. Such interesting activities were produced by the conditions three teams act in parallel.

The film by team A was named "Annainin." In the movie, a young man who is seeking a job felt difficulty and committed suicide. However, a man called annainin appeared and showed him a real world, and he changed his mind. In the movie, every participant appears in the film.

The title of the film of team B was "home." This movie was an action movie. As they are constituted of members living in Fukui, they did film shooting as they do as usual. However, several participants joined the group, therefore, they made a different approach.

Differing from expectations, the director in team C brought his staff from Tokyo, and he tried to make the film in their way. Therefore, the movie was made as a normal movie and different from community-based film-making.

In the final days, every director and the participants came together, exchanged their experience of the past three days, and looked together at the materials shot.

After editing by directors, these films were shown in the festival on 22nd Oct 2016. Actually, many people came to the theater to see acquaintances who appeared in the films and en-



Figure 8: “Annainin” [The Mercury] by Team A



Figure 9: “Home” by Team B



Figure 10: “Kawaru anatani kwarzuni” by Team C



Figure 11: Special Session in the festival

4. Conclusion

In the project, a new process to produce a film was suggested; however, the suggestion could not be carried out in a perfect way. More communication before the start was necessary. Also, it was necessary to understand that directors would persist in their style and cannot depart from conventional ways in film-making.

However, it could be seen that the films were born typically in movie hackathon. Generally, a movie is art, could be understood as a process to visualize the director’s intention by means of well-organized preparation, and sophisticated techniques. It can be likened to French cuisine. Films produced in hackathon can be likened to a staff meal for fishermen. Depending on which kinds of fish were caught, the dish would be changed. The films read the atmosphere of the site and minds of dwellers, and have been produced as impromptu films.

The film by team A, some residents observing the shooting were involved as actresses. They used a wave of the town for making the film strong. In French cuisine, the director is center of the world. In fisherman’s staff meal, the raw material is the most important.

As the first experimental event, the final purpose of the movie hackathon could not be reached. However, an experience was achieved. By the experience, the process can be applied to farmer’s village or fisherman’s village. With communication with them, a film can be produced to reveal the daily scenes in local towns. By involving in the making and watching the film, participants’ view on the town could be changed and the gaze of local people was visualized. This is one of the styles to find tourism resources and the birth of community based local film. In addition, it can be used for tourism development.

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joyed in different ways.

Team A and Team B, they used participants and gave them a role. On the contrary to this, team C made a film in the normal way. Therefore, some people offered compliments on the their films. Still general people are used for normal film shooting.