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Circulation space(s) of the French-speaking Switzerland living arts productions

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Mathias Rota¶

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Abstract

Quality data on art are hard to gather – especially those concerning productions far away from the main historical centers of production. In our research on the Swiss living art sector, we faced these issues when we seek to objectify the circulation space of the French-speaking Swiss productions. To map the circulation space of Swiss productions, we scrapped a collaborative website that compiles information about all the French-speaking productions since 2009. We then crossed two visualization tools: density map and network. Our visualization show first that French-speaking Swiss productions circulation area is structured around two main poles: French-speaking Switzerland and Paris region. Under this perspective, the Swiss living art production appears located at the periphery of the French artistic field. Nevertheless, a cluster approach reveals that this circulation space is segmented. Most of the production are touring only locally, within the Swiss borders. Only a small proportion reach the Paris/French circuit.

Quality data on art are hard to gather – especially those concerning productions far away from the main historical centers of production/diffusion (Mc Pherson 2001). In our research on the living art sector in Switzerland, we faced these issues when we seek to objectify the circulation space of the French-speaking Swiss productions. To do so, we scraped the data of a collaborative website that compiles information about all the French-speaking productions in the living arts since 2009¹. We gathered data about 7937 French-speaking Swiss shows produced between 2009 and 2019 and about the 1171 venues where they got programmed. We enriched the data base with GPS coordinates of the cities where the venues were located.

To map the circulation space of French-speaking Swiss productions, we crossed two perspectives. We started with analyzing the network of the cities where productions were co-programmed (N=577). We simplified this network using the disparity algorithm from the backbone package (Neal 2022) – that keeps the most statistically significant edges regarding an independence situation (p=0.01). We plotted this network on a density map of the venues (Figure 1.a). This figure highlights two circulation zones: a very dense one, with local circuits, in Western (French speaking) Switzerland, and a sparser one, in Paris region, mostly for one shot performances. Here, the French-speaking Swiss living art production appears located at the periphery of the French artistic field. This illustrate a long-term tendency in Swiss art productions circulation: in this small, multi-linguistic country, relatively dominated on the symbolic level, for each of the subpart of the country (French-speaking, German speaking, Italian speaking), the attraction of the cultural poles of the related neighborhood countries (Italy, Germany, or France) are stronger than the national poles (Jost 1985).

This picture nevertheless hides the within structure of the sector. As we know, artistic professions are among the most inegalitarian occupational groups (Bataille et al. 2020). In line with that idea, we used the Louvain

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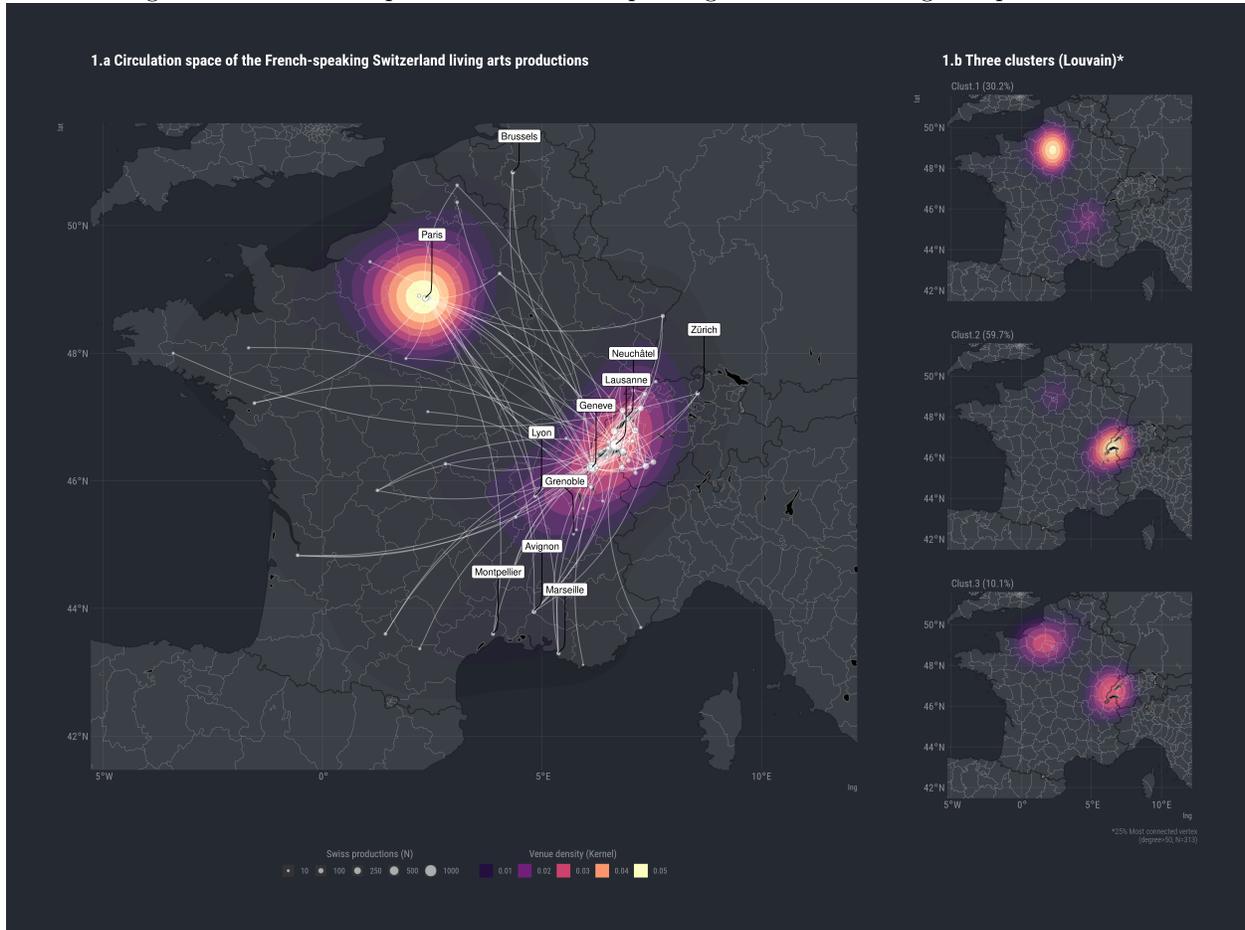
‡UNIL

§UNIL

¶HES-SO

¹<https://www.lesarchivesduspectacle.net/>

Figure 1: Circulation spaces of the French-speaking Switzerland living arts productions



Note: The colors of the areas represent the probabilities of finding one venue where a French-speaking Swiss living art production has been programmed between 2009 and 2019. For instance, in the light-yellow zone around Paris, this probability is equal or superior to 0,05. The size of the points is relative to the number of productions programmed per cities during the period. For instance, it is more than 1200 productions that were programmed in Lausanne or Geneve between 2009 and 2019. Edges are figured between cities where the same productions have been programmed during the period. Only significant edges (at the level of 99%) have been plotted.

method for community detection (Blondel et al. 2008), which led to the distinction of three main types of circulation among the 25% most connected venues (Figure 1.b).

Here, we clearly see two opposite situations (Clust 1 & 2). For 30,2% of the shows (Clust 1), the main area for touring is the Paris region, and secondarily the Lyon-Grenoble area, which is also densely populated and highly economically developed. These Swiss productions are mainly export products and get only a few gigs in their homeland. The second cluster gathers most of the cases in our database (59,7%) and shows a very different situation: French speaking Switzerland is the center of the touring world for these typically “local” productions. Finally, the third cluster shows a small part (10,1%) of the Western-Swiss productions for which gigs are balanced between Paris Region and a rather big area including French speaking Switzerland and the neighboring French areas.

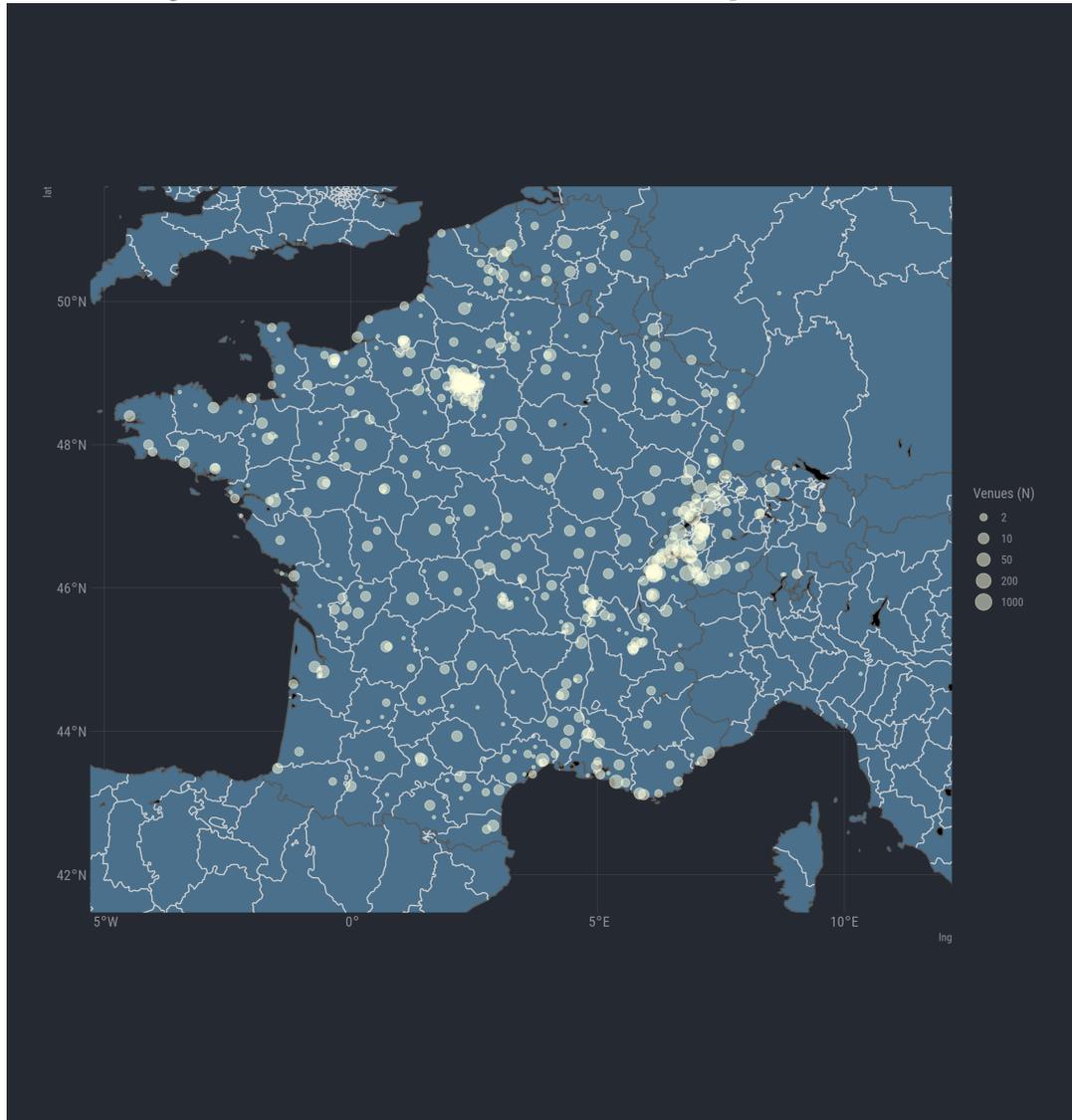
We make the hypothesis that these three clusters correspond to different areas of the Swiss living arts production field, different social positions, and dispositions, and we are currently doing fieldwork to test it.

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Additional figure:

Figure 2: Venues mentioned in the "Archives du spectacle" database



Note: This figure represent the localisation of all the venues where swiss productions where programmed between 2009 and 2019 in France/Switzerland and near according to the "Archives du spectacle" database.