

Mapping cinemas in the Russian-governed Warsaw

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Zarys treści: Już od pierwszych pokazów filmowych w końcu 1895 r. Warszawa przeżywała znaczny rozkwit kina. Tak jak na całym świecie rozwój ten był uwarunkowany w równym stopniu specyfiką miejsca, jak i czasu. Niniejszy artykuł prezentuje rozwój i zakres lokalnego rynku kinowego na tle szerszego kontekstu geopolitycznego. Dodatkowo, bazując na przykładzie z 1911 r., mapuje kina w QGIS, ujawniając przestrzenne wzory i korelacje.

Słowa kluczowe: kino, Warszawa, Imperium Rosyjskie, GIS, nowa historia kina (NCH)

Introduction

Cinema, introduced with the first commercial film screening by the Lumière Brothers in Paris on 28 December 1895, rose from a novelty to industrialised mass entertainment on a global scale in a very short time. This development was part of the general modernisation process linked with growing urbanisation, industrialisation, increasing transport networks, rapid population increase, rising disposable income, social transitions and triggered demand for leisure activities. Hence, the first film shows were organised by travelling entrepreneurs within the framework of the established forms of entertainment such as cabarets and variétés, curiosities and panopticons, panoramas, photoplasticons and salons of optical illusions and fairground attractions.

While the introduction of the moving image occurred almost simultaneously around the world, the subsequent founding of fixed cinemas, i.e. businesses in a particular location that specialised exclusively or primarily in showing films as their primary source of income, proceeded at a different pace and scale. This

Abstract: Starting with the first film shows in late 1895, Warsaw experienced a considerable rise of cinema. Like in other places worldwide, this development was conditioned as much by the place's particularities as by the time. Thus, the article illuminates the growth and scope of the local cinema market against the larger geopolitical context. Furthermore, using a sample for 1911, it maps the cinemas in QGIS, revealing spatial patterns and correlations.

Keywords: cinema, Warsaw, Russian empire, GIS, NCH

observation draws more attention to the spatial dimensions of cinema on different levels. This article thus contributes to the consideration of the extent to which cinema growth was related to the geopolitical position, geographical location, the degree of urbanisation and industrialisation, transport systems, urban infrastructure, population size and density. It investigates the scope and dispersion of venues taking Warsaw, the third metropolis of the Russian Empire, as an example.

Starting with the first film shows, it discusses the political, economic and infrastructural prerequisites for the development of cinema. Simultaneously, it benefits from the proliferation of digital technologies. Using the Geographical Information System (QGIS), the topography of the cinema in 1911 is mapped, identifying links with preexisting urban infrastructure such as transportation systems, shops, theatres and others. It is also considered to what extent spatial patterns in cinema dispersion allow conclusions to be drawn about the potential audiences in relation to class. Conversely, explorations of cinema-going habits of the three ethnicities living

in Warsaw, Poles, Jews and Russians, go beyond the scope of this article and will be conducted in a separate publication.

State of research and methodological approach

By investigating the range and topography of cinema in Warsaw, the article touches upon various disciplines such as social history, urban history and film studies. For the local framework, this article builds on historiographical research on the city of Warsaw done by Stefan Kieniewicz,¹ Andrzej Gawryszewski,² Stanisław Herbst,³ Eugeniusz Szwanowski,⁴ Józef Kazimierski,⁵ and Irena Pietrzak-Pawłowska.⁶ For the larger context, it utilises historical investigations by Malte Rolf on Russian rule in Warsaw.⁷

Further reference is the pioneering works on the origins of the Polish film industry undertaken by Władysław Balcerzak,⁸ Władysław Jewsiewicki,⁹ Władysław Banaszkiwicz, and Witold Witczak,¹⁰ Edward Zajicek,¹¹ and Małgorzata Hendrykowska.¹² To set the issue within a broader context, this article also uses

investigations on early Russian cinema by Denise J. Youngblood,¹³ Yuri Tsivian,¹⁴ and Natascha Drubek.¹⁵ Focussing on the cinemas in Warsaw, the article contributes to the local cinema historiographical research that has already been carried out for other cities in the Polish lands by Łukasz Biskupski,¹⁶ Barbara Gieryszewska,¹⁷ Mariusz Guzek,¹⁸ and others. Research has also been done for Sankt Peterburg by Brigitte Flickinger¹⁹ and Anna O. Kovalova.²⁰

Simultaneously, the article benefits from the international research on cinema history conducted mostly in the USA, Western Europe and recently in other parts of the world. Methodological guidelines stem foremost from the newly established sub-discipline of film studies, the New Cinema History (NCH). Aligned with social history, the NCH has also been influenced by economic history, urban studies, geography and other disciplines across the humanities and social sciences.²¹ The spatial turn of film studies has led cinema history in a direction that increasingly intersects with cultural geography. Using different approaches, new cinema historians agree that the exhibition business is shaped as

¹ S. Kieniewicz, *Warszawa w latach 1795–1914* (Warszawa, 1976).

² A. Gawryszewski, *Ludność Warszawy w XX wieku* (Warszawa, 2009, series: Monografie / Instytut Geografii i Przestrzennego Zagospodarowania im. Stanisława Leszczyckiego PAN, vol. 10); id., 'Rozwój demograficzno-społeczny Warszawy w XX wieku', *Mazowsze. Studia Regionalne*, 5 (2010), 11–28.

³ S. Herbst, *Ulica Marszałkowska* (Warszawa, 1998, series: Ulice Mojego Miasta).

⁴ E. Szwanowski, *Ulice i place Warszawy* (Warszawa, 1963).

⁵ *Dzieje Śródmieścia*, ed. J. Kazimierski (Warszawa, 1975).

⁶ *Wielkomiejski rozwój Warszawy do 1918 r.*, ed. I. Pietrzak-Pawłowska (Warszawa, 1973).

⁷ M. Rolf, *Imperiale Herrschaft im Weichselland: Das Königreich Polen im Russischen Imperium (1864–1915)* (Berlin, 2015, series: Ordnungssysteme, vol. 43).

⁸ W. Balcerzak, *Przemysł filmowy w Polsce* (Warszawa, 1928).

⁹ W. Jewsiewicki, *Polska kinematografia w okresie filmu niemego* (Łódź, 1966).

¹⁰ *Historia filmu polskiego*, eds W. Banaszkiwicz, W. Witczak (Warszawa, 1966).

¹¹ E. Zajicek, *Poza ekranem. Kinematografia polska, 1918–1991* (Warszawa, 2009); id., *Zarys historii gospodarczej kinematografii polskiej* (2nd edn, Łódź, 2015).

¹² M. Hendrykowska, *Śladami tamtych cieni. Film w kulturze polskiej przełomu stuleci 1895–1914* (Poznań, 1993).

¹³ D.J. Youngblood, 'Russia', in *Encyclopedia of Early Cinema*, ed. R. Abel (New York, NY, 2005).

¹⁴ Y. Tsivian, *Early Cinema in Russia and Its Cultural Reception* (Chicago, 1998).

¹⁵ N. Drubek, *Russisches Licht: Von der Ikone zum frühen sowjetischen Kino* (Göttingen, 2012, Series: Osteuropa medial, vol. 4); ead., 'Hidden Figures. Rewriting the History of Cinema in the Empire of All the Russia', *Apparatus. Film, Media and Digital Cultures of Central and Eastern Europe*, no. 13 (2021), 94–129.

¹⁶ Ł. Biskupski, *Miasto atrakcji. Narodziny kultury masowej na przełomie XIX i XX wieku. Kino w systemie rozrywkowym Łodzi* (Warszawa, 2013).

¹⁷ B. Gieryszewska, *Kino i film we Lwowie do 1939 roku* (Kielce, 2006).

¹⁸ M. Guzek, *Filmowa Bydgoszcz, 1896–1939* (Toruń, 2004).

¹⁹ B. Flickinger, 'Der Publikumsmagnet Kino vor 1918 in den Metropolen London und St. Petersburg', in *Kinoöffentlichkeit (1895–1920): Entstehung, Etablierung, Differenzierung = Cinema's Public Sphere (1895–1920)*, ed. C. Müller (Marburg, 2008).

²⁰ A.O. Kovalova, 'The Film Palaces of Nevsky Prospect: A History of St Petersburg's Cinemas, 1900–1910', in *A Companion to Russian Cinema*, ed. B. Beumers (Chichester–Malden, 2016, series: Wiley Blackwell Companions to National Cinemas).

²¹ *Explorations in New Cinema History: Approaches and Case Studies*, eds R. Maltby, D. Biltereyst and Ph. Meers (Malden, MA, 2011).

much by the particularities of a place as it is conditioned by time. Robert Allen, one of the founding fathers of the NCH, defines it concisely: “And yet two of the most notable and enduring characteristics of cinema as a cultural form have been its mobility and geographic reach”.²²

Therefore, the NCH has recognised mapping with digital tools as an important methodological tool. Adapted in cinema history by Deb Verhoeven, Kate Bowles and Colin Arrowsmith²³, Robert Allen,²⁴ and Jeffrey Klenotic,²⁵ the Geographical Information Systems (ArcGIS and later QGIS) has already stimulated a growing number of single and collaborative mapping projects.²⁶ Specially created maps have exemplified how to visualise diverse connections between the distribution of cinemas and various factors such as urban infrastructure, transportation systems,

population density and more. As Klenotic has already stressed, mapping allows considering individual venues not just as locations on a map but as part of larger geographic areas with different social, cultural, and political characteristics. This makes maps not an end product, but a starting point for exploring cinema history.²⁷

Following this line of research, the article adds to my previous work²⁸ and aims to demonstrate what can be gained for the aforementioned disciplines if cinemas, which are usually listed in alphabetical order, are assigned to their location on a city map. Consequently, it simply asks why cinemas were where they were. Which areas were characterised by a greater density of venues, and what can that tell us about the potential cinema-goers? It also raises the question of the intensity of the local market, which will be assessed by a comparative analysis with other cities in Tsarist Russia.

Sources

Like in other places, documentation illuminating film exhibition venues in Warsaw is very scarce. Travelling showpeople and owners of smaller cinemas preferred not to spend money on advertising, whereas larger cinemas only put advertisements in the press infrequently. Thus, the source database consists firstly of these short press entries, brief comments and infrequent articles criticising the rise of cinema. Fortunately, looking for a needle in a haystack has been facilitated by digital technology. Consequently, through optical character recognition (OCR) and data mining methods, I could search extensive collections of historical daily Polish newspapers that had been digitalised and made available

²² R.C. Allen, ‘The Place of Space in Film Historiography’, *Tijdschrift voor Mediageschiedenis*, 9, no. 2 (2006), 15–27 (here: p. 24).

²³ D. Verhoeven, K. Bowles and C. Arrowsmith, ‘Mapping the Movies: Reflections on the Use of Geospatial Technologies for Historical Cinema Audience Research’, in *Digital Tools in Media Studies. Analysis and Research. An Overview*, eds M. Ross, M. Grauer, and B. Freisleben (Bielefeld, 2009), pp. 69–81.

²⁴ R.C. Allen, ‘Reimagining the History of the Experience of Cinema in a Post-Moviegoing Age’, in *Explorations in New Cinema History*.

²⁵ J. Klenotic, ‘Putting Cinema History on the Map: Using GIS to Explore the Spatiality of Cinema’, in *Explorations in New Cinema History*.

²⁶ L. Roberts and J. Hallam, ‘Film and Spatiality: Outline of a New Empiricism’, in *Locating the Moving Image: New Approaches to Film and Place*, eds J. Hallam and L. Roberts (Bloomington, Ind., 2014, series: The Spatial Humanities); L. Horak, ‘Using Digital Maps to Investigate Cinema History’, in *The Arclight Guidebook to Media History and the Digital Humanities*, eds Ch.R. Acland and E. Hoyt (Sussex, 2016); T. Porubčanská, ‘Approaches to Spatial Analysis in a Local Cinema History Research’, *Journal for Media History/Tijdschrift voor Mediageschiedenis*, 21, no. 1 (2018), 54–75; D. Biltreyst, Th. van Oort, and Ph. Meers, ‘Comparing Historical Cinema Cultures: Reflections on New Cinema History and Comparison with a Cross-National Case Study on Antwerp and Rotterdam’, in *The Routledge Companion to New Cinema History*, eds D. Biltreyst, R. Maltby and Ph. Meers (Milton, 2019, series: Routledge Media and Cultural Studies Companions); J. Noordegraaf et al., ‘Semantic Deep Mapping in the Amsterdam Time Machine: Viewing Late 19th- and Early 20th-Century Theatre and Cinema Culture Through the Lens of Language Use and Socio-Economic Status’, in *Research and Education in Urban History in the Age of Digital Libraries*, eds F. Niebling, S. Münster, and H. Messemer (Cham, 2021, series: Communications in Computer and Information Science, vol. 1501), pp. 191–212.

²⁷ Klenotic, ‘Putting Cinema History’.

²⁸ K. Pryt, ‘Importierte Unterhaltung: Filme der deutschen Ufa in Warschau 1919–1939’, *Geschichte und Gesellschaft*, 46, no. 1 (2020), 122–154; ead., ‘Cinemas and Cinema Audiences in the “Third Space” in Warsaw (1908–1939)’, in *Researching Historical Screen Audiences*, eds K. Egan, M. Smith, and J. Terrill (Edinburgh, 2022), pp. 65–85.

online by the University Library of Warsaw (Crispa): <https://crispa.uw.edu.pl>.

Secondly, data mining methods have been applied to the impressive collection of Russian film periodicals provided online by the commercial international academic publisher Brill: <https://primarysources.brillonline.com/browse/early-russian-cinema>.

Among the Russian film trade journals is the leading *Sine-Fono*, published from 1907 to 1918, the most accurate data on cinema topography in Warsaw. Conversely, city guides, which were published by Polish and Russian publishers, are of low source value in this case, as they generally paid little attention to screening locations and did not publish complete lists of cinemas.

The Rise of Cinema in Warsaw

Starting with the first shows in the late nineteenth century until the outbreak of the First World War, the cinema market in Warsaw unfolded within the geopolitical parameters which had been ushered in by the partitioning of Poland in the late eighteenth century. Hence, it was separated by state and trade borders from the Polish lands belonging to German Empire and Austria-Hungary. Conversely, it belonged to the regional market of the Polish Kingdom, which had been established in 1815 within the Russian Empire and lost its autonomy in 1863. Constituting from then on a sub-region within the legal and economic system of the Romanov empire, the Polish Kingdom represented one of the most densely populated, industrially developed and economically important Russian peripheries.

Its capital, the residence of the Russian administration, accounted for 781 thousand inhabitants (about 20 per cent of the total urban population of this Kingdom) in 1910.²⁹ Being by far the largest Polish city, it ranked third in the empire after

Sankt Petersburg with nearly two million and Moscow with more than one and a half million. It was followed by Odesa and Kyiv, each of which had half a million inhabitants.³⁰ Being the westernmost metropolis of the empire, it also functioned as an important transportation and trade hub.

It is not surprising that the first film screenings took place in Warsaw very early on:³¹ 13 December 1895 saw the presentation of Edison's invention – the 'kinetoscope' – at 1 Niecała Street.³² However, according to the Russian film historiography, the cinema was introduced in the empire on 6 May 1896 in Sankt Petersburg and three weeks later in Moscow.³³ Verification of this date is beyond the scope of this article but could be undertaken in further research.

As the Polish film scholar Edward Zajiček explains, the exponential growth of cinema began in the following years. Concerning the entire Polish territories, Zajiček estimated that the years 1896–1902 marked a period of 'travelling cinema', which was followed by a 'seasonal cinema' phase in the years 1903–1907, before evolving into 'permanent cinema' after 1908.³⁴ However, I would like to add that this process was neither straightforward nor did it progress uniformly, with variations occurring locally and over time.

Due to the scarcity of sources, it is difficult to determine the geographical scope of the early screenings. Data mining results indicate that the new invention was shown in central areas frequented by wealthier patrons of the local society, while performances in other more remote parts of the city are less documented. The most press entries were found for the years 1902 and

²⁹ B.R. Mitchell, *International Historical Statistics: Europe 1750–1988* (3rd edn, New York, NY, 1993), pp. 72–74.

³¹ Zajiček, *Poza ekranem*, p. 11.

³² 'Kinetoskop', *Kurier Warszawski*, 1[13] Dec. 1895, p. 344.

³³ Youngblood, 'Russia'.

³⁴ Zajiček, *Poza ekranem*.

²⁹ Gawryszewski, *Ludność Warszawy*, p. 104.

1903, signalling that the novelty enjoyed growing popularity despite the economic crisis that had persisted since the beginning of the century.³⁵ As the exhibition business thrived despite the general downturn, the shift to permanent cinemas was in the offing. In Warsaw, as it is assumed in the Polish film historiography, the first cinema to operate seasonally and soon also permanently was launched under the name 'Bioscop' at 114 Marszałkowska Street in October 1903. (The same entrepreneur soon opened a second 'Bioscop' at 4 Krakowskie Przedmieście.) Contrarily, I would suggest giving precedence to the 'Elizeum Theatre of Illusions', as it had been opened in the converted basement of the 'Panorama' building at 18 Karowa Street as early as March 1903.³⁶

By this time, the French world-leading film producers Pathé Frères and Gaumont had already sensed the potential of the Russian market. Foremost, Pathé Frères's firm expanded exponentially, building a global network of film distribution, and penetrated various regions of the empire. After founding its first Russian subsidiary in Moscow in 1904, the company opened additional offices in Sankt Petersburg (1905) and Odesa (1906), later advancing to Rostov, Warsaw (1908), and finally to Kyiv (1909).³⁷ In addition to distributing, Pathé Frères went into production, laying the foundation for the Russian film industry centred in Moscow.³⁸

However promising, the growth of the film industry and cinema market in the empire was weaker than in the far more modernised states of North America and Western Europe, which had experienced a real cinema boom in 1905 and 1906. In Warsaw, like in other Russian cities,

a weaker economy, a lower standard of living and the empire's unstable political situation affected this development considerably. Foremost, political events linked to both the outbreak of the Russo-Japanese war in 1904 and the 1905 revolution, which was also called the first Russian revolution and lasted until 1907, had an adverse impact. Within this period, the USA, Germany, and other Western countries experienced a cinema boom that enabled more audiences to attend the new and cheap entertainment regularly.³⁹

Conversely, martial law, including a ban on public gatherings also in entertainment venues of different kinds, shaped everyday life in Warsaw for two years, 1905–1906. Many entrepreneurs closed their businesses as frequent detentions, strikes and armed clashes between revolutionaries and the government forces prevented people from leaving their homes unnecessarily. Among all Russian regions, the repressions were the harshest in the Polish Kingdom, with the number of death sentences remaining consistently high until 1909. In addition, banishments peaked in 1907–1908, when more than 8,500 people were forced to leave the Kingdom.⁴⁰

Regardless, the situation gradually calmed down after the Tsar accepted the sharing of his autocratic power with a newly established parliament in May 1906. The following year witnessed relative political liberalisation and new freedoms for national minorities in the Russian empire. Enjoying new liberties, people started to seek entertainment again, triggering a cinema boom as early as 1907 that coincided with a general economic upturn. New entrepreneurs, many of them Jewish, entered the local cinema market that continued to grow until the early 1920s.

However, it still remains a methodological challenge to estimate the strength

³⁵ Gawryszewski, *Ludność Warszawy*.

³⁶ 'Elizeum – Teatr złudzeń', *Słowo*, 4 March 1903, p. 3.

³⁷ J. Lucchesi Moraes, 'Cinema in the Borders of the World: Economic Reflections on Pathé and Gaumont Film Distribution in Latin America (1906–1915)', *Cahiers des Amériques latines*, no. 79 (2015), 137–153.

³⁸ Youngblood, 'Russia'.

³⁹ *Encyclopedia of Early Cinema*, ed. R. Abel (Abingdon–New York, 2005).

⁴⁰ Rolf, *Imperiale Herrschaft*.

and geographic reach of the local cinema market. At the time, there was no binding terminology referring to cinemas, and the press mentioned several terms such as illusions or names derived from projector cameras such as cinematographs, bioscopes (also spelt bioskopes) and vitographs (not confused with The Vitagraph Company of America). Later, also cinema theatres and light theatres were common. In addition, most press articles gave only general descriptive information about the number of venues, while numerical data were rare and often contradictory. To give some examples, *Goniec Wieczorny* reported in August 1907: "In Warsaw, an incredible number of 'theatres' of illusions, cinematographs, bioscopes, sensation shows and finally so-called 'cabarets', tingel-tangels, cafes with music, etc. have been opened".⁴¹ In January 1908, the daily *Ślowo* reported: "Nowadays there is hardly a street in Warsaw without a bioscope [...] or a similar cinema theatre. Ha, on some privileged streets, such as Marszałkowska Street, there are a dozen or so of them".⁴² Conversely, two months later, the *Kurier Polski* gave a factual account of 17 cinemas,⁴³ whereas the *Kurier Warszawski* sounded the alarm by the end of the year: "In Marszałkowska Street from Królewska Street to Piękna Street there were as many as six illusions, vitographs, bioscopes and so on. A seventh has now opened. Admittedly, thanks to these 'theatres' the street is brightly illuminated in the evening, but aren't there too many of them, at least in one street?"⁴⁴ Later, the *Ślowo* surpassed this figure reporting as follows: "The number of cinemas in Warsaw continues to grow. They have already penetrated the poorest districts and remote suburbs, where they are very popular. [...] At present, there are 63 illusion houses in Warsaw and Praga;

they are also located in districts such as Mokotów and Brudno".⁴⁵ The last figure was adopted in the research,⁴⁶ but it seems to be the least credible, as other press articles mention much smaller figures for the same time. It has to be noted that the *Ślowo* increased the number of screening venues by adding suburbs that were only later annexed to Warsaw.

The Russian sources also give a much smaller number of cinemas. According to the statistical data collected by the Russian Ministry of the Interior, only 24 venues were operating in Warsaw by 14 July 1911,⁴⁷ while the leading film journal *Sine Fono* listed 30 permanent cinemas.⁴⁸ The trade journal data is more convincing, whereas the official figures may have been underestimated, as some theatre owners may not have reported their business to the responsible authorities to avoid paying taxes. Since the same can be believed for other Russian cities, these official statistics allow cross-city comparisons. Data on the number of seats or attendance would allow precise conclusions to be drawn here but are not available for this time.

Not surprisingly, both Sankt Petersburg and Moscow led the statistics providing 115 and 56 venues, respectively. Still ranking third in relation to size, Warsaw was remarkably surpassed by both smaller cities, Kyiv and Odesa, which had 30 and 29 cinemas, respectively.⁴⁹ Extrapolating the number of cinemas to the population size of the cities makes this comparison even more illuminating (Table 1). Accordingly, Kyiv was at the top of the list with one cinema per 16,833 inhabitants, followed closely by Sankt Petersburg and

⁴⁵ 'Kinematografy', *Ślowo*, 20 May 1911.

⁴⁶ M. Hendrykowska, 'Początki kinematografii polskiej. Pierwsze dwie dekady', in *Sto lat polskiego filmu. Kino okresu Wielkiego Niemowy*, part 1: *Początki*, ed. G.M. Grabowska (Warszawa, 2008).

⁴⁷ 'Rozmaitości. Statystyka kinematograficzna', *Organ* (1912), p. 15.

⁴⁸ G.A. Krzhizhanovsky, 'Po gorodom i teatram: Varshava', *Sine-Fono*, 15 Oct. 1911, p. 2.

⁴⁹ 'Rozmaitości. Statystyka kinematograficzna', p. 15.

⁴¹ 'Teatry złudzeń', *Goniec Wieczorny*, 27 Aug. 1907, p. 392.

⁴² 'W wioskopie', *Ślowo*, 16 Jan. 1908, p. 15.

⁴³ 'O bezpieczeństwo w iluzjonach', *Kurier Polski*, 27 March 1908, p. 87.

⁴⁴ 'Za wiele', *Kurier Warszawski*, 11 Dec. 1908, p. 343.

Odesa, where one venue serviced a population of 17,060 and 17,448, respectively. With a proportion of 27,375, Moscow lagged well behind, and Warsaw was by far the taillight with one cinema per 33,542 inhabitants. Confirming the relative weakness of the Warsaw cinema market, these results shed new light on the differences between the cities: Sankt Petersburg, which had almost five times as many cinemas as Warsaw, surpassed it only two times in terms of proportion. Likewise, Moscow, which had more than twice as many cinemas as Warsaw, exceeded it by a much lower rate in terms of proportion. Conversely, Kyiv and Odesa, which had only four and five cinemas more, respectively, beat Warsaw twice in terms of proportions.

Table 1. The number of cinemas to the population size

City	Population 1910	Cinemas 1911	One cinema operating for approximately
Kiev	505,000	30	16,833
Sankt Petersburg	1,962,000	115	17,060
Odesa	506,000	29	17,448
Moscow	1,533,000	56	27,375
Warsaw	781,000	24	32,542

Considering it, the local cinema market can be rated as poor or, at best, mediocre. The westernmost metropolis of the empire, which hosted first film screenings very early, was outstripped by other Russian cities during the shift to permanent venues. Likewise, the most economically powerful Polish Kingdom took only a subordinate position within the Russian film market, counting a total of 1500 cinemas by 1913.⁵⁰ The *Sine Fono* explained the lag of the regional Polish cinema market as a result of its geographical location on

the outskirts of the Russian film market, with its centre located in Moscow. Other reasons cited were higher taxes for film screenings and greater bureaucratic hurdles for opening a cinema than in other parts of the empire.⁵¹ Both latter arguments are convincing, while the geographical foundation is controversial and has to be proved in further research. It would be interesting to explore to what extent the Polish Kingdom was disadvantaged in film circulation within the empire and to what extent it could benefit from the relative proximity to the leading film trading cities such as Berlin and Paris. A systematic analysis of the cinema programmes could provide valuable information here. It can be stated with certainty that the regional market in the Kingdom started to branch out after local distribution offices had opened in 1908, which purchased films abroad themselves, mainly in Paris, bypassing Moscow's intermediation.⁵² With more than a hundred cinemas, the regional market also gave birth to the distinct film-producing industry centred in Warsaw.⁵³

Cinema Topography 1911

As Robert Allen has already stressed, places of moviegoing did not operate in a vacuum and should be therefore perceived as "internally heterogeneous nodal points in a social, economic and cultural cartography of cinema".⁵⁴ Based on this concept, Jeffrey Klenotic has comprehensively explained the ability of GIS to reveal spatial patterns in cinema distribution that can be interpreted in relation to various urban, economic or social settings that, at first glance, might seem unrelated.⁵⁵ Taking up this idea, a list of venues published by the *Sine Fono* in 1911 is used to

⁵⁰ Youngblood, 'Russia'.

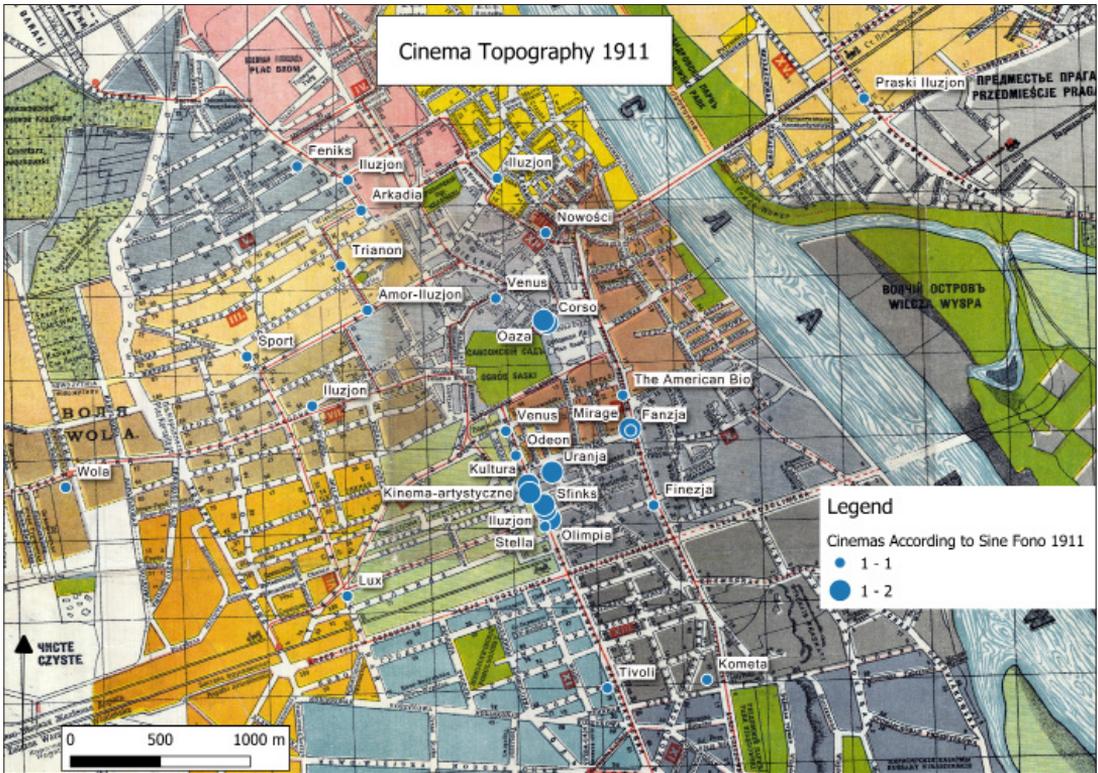
⁵¹ 'Senat raz'yaskil, chto gorod'skaya dumy neprav oblagat' sborom Teatry-Sinematografy', *Sine-Fono*, 1 Aug. 1911, p. 21.

⁵² Balcerzak, *Przemysł filmowy w Polsce*.

⁵³ A. Jasielski, *Wyprawa po celulidowe runo* (Warszawa, 1958).

⁵⁴ Allen, 'The Place of Space', pp. 15–27.

⁵⁵ Klenotic, 'Putting Cinema History'.



Map 1. Cinema Dispersion According to Sine Fono 1911

create the cinema topography and analyse it spatially.⁵⁶

This leading Russian film paper listed thirty permanent cinemas with names and addresses, giving them a two-stage categorisation. Thus, nine venues were classified high, whereas the remaining twenty-one were labelled low. Regrettably, it did not clarify on what basis this categorisation had been made as information on seating capacities, and the standard is missing. It can be assumed that the first-class cinemas were both larger and of a high standard; hence catered for upper-class and upper-middle-class audiences. Conversely, it cannot be accepted with the same probability that the second-class cinemas targeted lower classes of patrons only. Mapping with QGIS makes it possible to use the

alphabetically arranged list to create a cinema topography that visualises its spatial particularities and dependencies.

In reference to venues targeting wealthier patrons, three different spatial clusters can be identified on the map. The highest cinema numbers were located at Marszałkowska Street, which with its adjoining streets, also hosted distribution companies evolving into the centre of the emerging domestic film industry. The crucial factor was the proximity of the Warsaw–Vienna Railway Station, which had been created at the corner of Jerozolimskie Avenue in 1844–1845, transforming the area into the most important communication and commercial centre of the city. In late 1866, the first horse-drawn tram line was laid there, linking this terminal with Sankt Petersburg Station (now Vilnius Station) and Terespol Station (now East

⁵⁶ Krzhizhanovsky, 'Po gorodom i teatram'.

Station) in the Praga. At first, the route led through Marszałkowska Street, Królewska Street, Krakowskie Przedmieście, Castle Square over the Kierbedź Bridge to Targowa Street with branches in Kijowska Street. At the turn of the century, the system was expanded and converted to electric trams, significantly increasing inner-city mobility in 1908.

Being a hub of mobility, Marszałkowska Street also became the centre of commerce. Consequently, the centre shifted from the area of Teatralny Square to the intersection with Jerozolimskie Avenue as soon as 1870. By this time, many several-storey, often richly decorated, and impressive tenement houses were built there. Consequently, many guesthouses, companies and banks settled there. Some were new, and others moved there from Nalewki Street. Furthermore, Marszałkowska Street drew dozens of doctors, lawyers, and private educational institutions and housed more than 300 stores and shops in the second decade of the century.⁵⁷

Within this geography of mobility and commerce, the cinema business flourished at best, as demonstrated by the cinema clustering in the immediate vicinity of the railway station. At 114 Marszałkowska Street, the former 'Bioscop' reopened after the revolution under the name Olimpia. In the adjacent buildings at numbers 118 and 116, other venues, 'Illuzjon/Siła' and 'Sfinks', were created, whereas the second-class 'Stella' operated on the other side of the street at number 111. Providing tastefully decorated waiting rooms and auditoriums, all these venues focussed on upper-class and upper-middle-class Varsovians.

In addition, this intense clustering near the station raises the question of the extent to which travellers were among their patrons. Although the scarce source basis does not allow for a precise examination,

this exposed spatial pattern suggests that these venues also might have served visitors from the neighbouring towns and villages who came to Warsaw by train for commercial or other purposes. For the villagers, as shown in other studies conducted for other cities such as Antwerpen using oral history methods, "[g]oing to the pictures was part of a trip to the metropolis as a whole".⁵⁸ Similar assumptions can be made for the 1910s Warsaw. Attending film screenings might have been for them a part of a social experience associated with the big city, along with shopping, dining or enjoying different kinds of entertainment.

Further cinema dispersion on Marszałkowska Street was linked to the distribution of different businesses on the north-south axis. To the south, there was only the 'Tivoli' cinema at number 69, whereas to the north, the 'Kultura', 'Odeon' and 'Venus' operated at numbers 125, 137 and 147, respectively. In addition, it should be mentioned that two first-class venues, the 'Kinema Artystyczne' and 'Urania' were located at cross streets 2 Sienna and 5 Moniuszki, respectively. Established chiefly in converted shops or school-rooms, cinemas helped to pave the way for different forms of entertainment at Marszałkowska Street, since premises like 'Sfinks' and 'Kultura' temporarily hosted cabarets, and a theatre was opened a little further.⁵⁹ Consequently, this earlier predominantly commercial street had gained its place in the topography of entertainment.

Conversely, the former city centre around the Theatre Square, where both 'Oaza' and 'Corso' venues were located, had already been both a commercial hub and a centre of highbrow culture. Surrounded by impressive constructions that hosted the Grand Theatre, the magistrate,

⁵⁷ Herbst, *Ulica Marszałkowska*.

⁵⁸ Ph. Meers, D. Biltreyst, and L. van de Vijver, 'Metropolitan vs Rural Cinemagoing in Flanders, 1925–75', *Screen*, 51, no. 3 (2010), 279.

⁵⁹ B. Król-Kaczorowska, *Teatry Warszawy* (Warszawa, 1986).

and the police, Theatre Square is still the city's most prestigious area. After a crossing of two horse tram lines had been laid there around 1881, the square also functioned as a vital intersection of urban traffic. Visitors stopped there to watch ballet or opera performances or the variety theatre that was also hosted in the building of the Grand Theatre. They could also run errands in the most expensive shops or dine in the fine establishments settled under the pillars of the theatre building.⁶⁰

Based on this high-class entertainment area, the neighbouring houses to the west at Wierzbowa Street respectively also attracted well-heeled visitors with restaurant facilities. At number 9, a fine dining restaurant 'Oaza' was opened in April 1903, which started to show films on a regular basis at the latest in 1906. Its patrons, as the cameraman and witness of those days Jan Skarbek-Malczewski remembered, "consisted of the *crème de la crème* of the capital and the country".⁶¹ Two years later, in 1908, the first literary cabaret 'Momus' was also set up there, and an exquisite cinema 'Oaza' was created in the garden belonging to this property.⁶² Likewise, the adjacent building at number 7 had hosted a brasserie and a cabaret before it was converted into the permanent 'Corso' cinema in 1910. Meeting the needs of upmarket audiences, well-respected venues marked the northern edge as the area for high-end cinemas. Simultaneously, they faced competition from smaller venues such as 'Nowości' at Miodowa Street and 'Trianon' at Karmelicka Street, which advertised quite frequently in daily newspapers targeting educated parts of the population.

Further cinema clusters can be sited on the main communication artery leading from the Royal Castle, the seat of the Governor-General at that time, to the south,

constituted by both streets Krakowskie Przedmieście and Nowy Świat. Both thoroughfares had already been functioning as transport and commercial hubs. Krakowskie Przedmieście, where aristocracy and clergy had historically resided, was the route of the first horse-drawn tram line. In addition, it also hosted the pavilions of the University, noble guesthouses like the Hotel Europejski and the Bristol Hotel, the Merchant Resource Association and the first department store in Warsaw. This prestigious setting did not have much growth potential for cinemas, as only the American Bioscop was operating at number 4. Small in size, it likely served an upmarket neighbourhood audience and the equally affluent guests of the Bristol Hotel.

The situation was quite different at Nowy Świat, where numerous entertainment establishments had already been working. A tram line was launched along the street only in 1881, but summer theatres began to perform in the gardens of its tenement houses as early as 1870. Since then, countless restaurants, cafés and beer gardens have appeared there. Furthermore, the boulevard hosted a highly respected art gallery run by Aleksander Krywult at the junction with Świętokrzysta Street at number 63. In 1909, this well-connected premises was converted into a prestigious cinema that targeted Warsaw's upmarket audience. Decorated with metropolitan splendour and providing an auditorium that could accommodate up to four hundred spectators,⁶³ 'Miraż' strived for first place among all cinemas.⁶⁴ The premises were also rented by a cabaret, whereas two second-class cinemas, 'Fantazja' and 'Finezja', opened at numbers 61 and 21, respectively.

Like high-standard venues, cinemas targeting the lower classes opened primarily

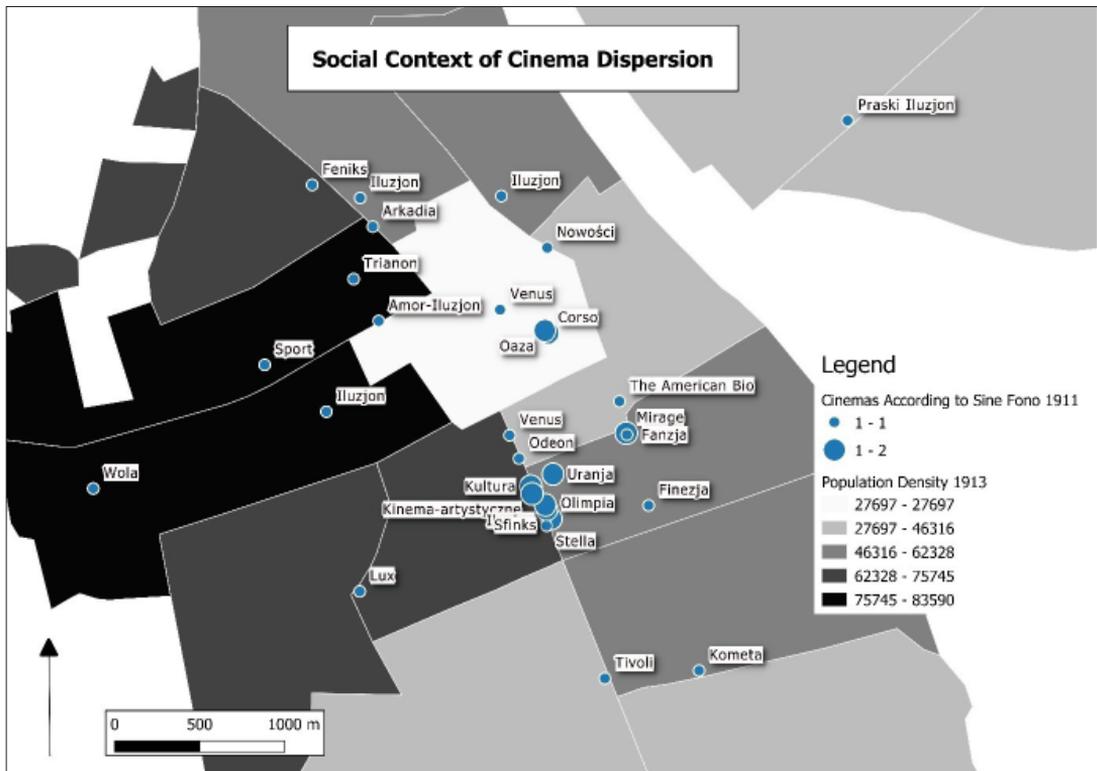
⁶⁰ Pietrzak-Pawłowska, *Wielkomiński rozwój Warszawy*.

⁶¹ J. Skarbek-Malczewski, *Byłem tam z kamerą* (Warszawa, 1962), p. 5.

⁶² 'Oaza [przy ul. Wierzbowej]', *Kurier Warszawski*, 16 Aug. 1908.

⁶³ 'Iluzjon "Mirage"; Klatka schodowa; Poczekalnia; Sala widzów', *Świat*, 13 Jan. 1912, p. 24.

⁶⁴ 'Scena i ekran', *Organ*, 13 July 1911, pp. 9f.



Map 2. Cinema Topography vs Population Density in 1910s Warsaw.

along public transportation lines. However, these less documented, thus more difficult to investigate venues were more dispersed across the city, mirroring population density. As the map above shows (Map 2), the moderately populated worker district on the right bank had one venue, the ‘Praski Iluzjon’, at 34 Targowa Street. Located in the main transport and commercial artery of Praga, the cinema further benefited from the tram line and its proximity to Sankt Petersburg Station. Similar to the case of the central Warsaw–Vienna Railway Station, it can be assumed that part of its customers consisted of visitors, which came, in this case, from the towns located in the eastern part of the country.

Concluding from the second map, the number of cinemas was also directly related to population density. Not surprisingly, both the most populated worker

ambits (III and VII) on the left bank accounted for as many as six venues. The already mentioned ‘Trianon’ still attracted wealthier patrons, whereas ‘Wola’, ‘Iluzjon’, ‘Sport’, ‘Amor’ and ‘Arkadia’ on the district’s edge targeted primarily viewers with a lower social status. The same can be assumed for the northernmost ‘Feniks’, both ‘Iluzjons’ in the ambits IV and II and the ‘Lux’ cinema located at the tram hub on the junction of Twarda Street and Żelazna Street. The latter marked the southern edge of cinemas targeting predominantly poorer strata of the population.

Summary and Conclusions

By investigating the scope and dispersion of cinemas in the Russian-ruled Warsaw, the article contributed to empirical research undertaken within new cinema history. The need to re-examine the date

and place of the first film screenings in the Russian Empire was pointed out. In contrast to previous research on the Russian film market, further examinations could prove if Warsaw was the first to host film screenings in the Romanov Empire.

This article also proposed another revision: While Polish film historiography has seen 'Bioscop', which opened in October 1903, to be the first fixed cinema in Warsaw, this article suggested giving precedence to 'Elizeum Theatre of Illusions' as it had been launched seven months earlier. Although the shift from travelling to permanent cinemas was quite early, the cinema boom did not begin until 1908, after the unrest linked to the first Russian revolution had subsided. Calculations based on statistical information about the number of cinemas and the population demonstrated the lag of the Warsaw cinema in relation to other cities in the European part of the empire. Furthermore, mapping with QGIS visualised the cinema topography and revealed striking spatial patterns and correlations. The first map showed that venues clustered generally along the already existing arterial roads and that the proximity to the railway stations was also a striking factor. The second map also illuminated that there is a correlation between

population density and the concentration of cinemas in working-class neighbourhoods, while this observation does not hold for upscale cinemas in the city centre. These observations raise new questions about the venues with their economic and social settings that might be investigated more in-depth by scholars from different disciplines depending on their focus. This confirms that maps are not an end product but rather a starting point for exploration, which could greatly enrich our knowledge about cinema in Warsaw, the city, its infrastructure and the people who live there.

Acknowledgements

To use QGIS, I had to acquire practical skills that might be self-evident for geographers but are not for ordinary historians such as myself. For this reason, I attended a five-day training course in ArcGIS that was organised at my university for natural science. Real progress was made, however, upon switching to QGIS and attending an online training offered by the geohistorian Tomasz Panecki for humanities scholars exclusively. He also deserves my special thanks for georeferencing historical city maps. ■

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Mapowanie kin w Warszawie rządzonej przez Rosjan

Streszczenie

Artykuł analizuje kwestię liczby i rozmieszczenia kin w Warszawie w ostatnich latach rosyjskiego panowania, wnosząc wkład do badań empirycznych podejmowanych w ramach interdyscyplinarnej Nowej Historii Kina (NCH). Punktem wyjścia analizy jest założenie, że kina jako komercyjne miejsca pokazywania filmów nie powstawały w próżni, lecz podlegały regułom wolnorynkowym. To spostrzeżenie zwraca uwagę na ekonomiczny i przestrzenny wymiar kina. Na bazę źródłową złożyły się artykuły z lokalnej prasy, dane ilościowe pozyskane z dwutygodnika „Organ”, rosyjskich czasopism filmowych,

roczników statystycznych oraz historyczny plan miasta.

Lokalny rynek kinowy został przedstawiony na tle położenia geopolitycznego i geograficznego, a dotyczące go dane ilościowe porównane z innymi miastami Imperium Rosyjskiego. Następnie, z pomocą Systemu Informacji Geograficznej (QGIS), stworzono topografię kina w 1911 r., pozwalającą zidentyfikować powiązania z infrastrukturą miejską, taką jak systemy transportowe, sklepy, teatry i inne. Wskazano też możliwości podjęcia rozważań na temat potencjalnych uczestników pokazów filmowych. ■

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