



The case of Kamiyama Town,
Tokushima, Japan

Local Co-Creation Ecosystem Enabling “Creative Depopulation”

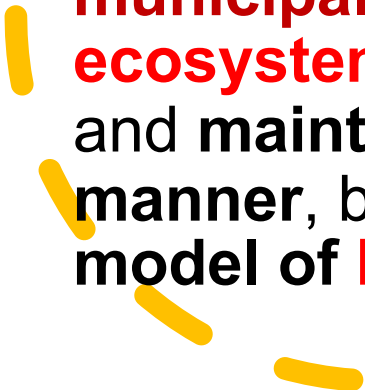
Junya Sano,
Osaka-seikei University
Shinya Ominami,
NPO GreenValley Inc.
Taichi Goto,
Region Works LLC



Local Co-Creation Ecosystem Enabling "Creative Depopulation"

-Kamiyama Evolutionary Theory: Community Design that Transforms Depopulation into Possibility

- A "**local co-creation ecosystem**" is a **functional network of diverse players that enables innovative solutions to local issues** and is an autonomous system that can be sustained through interaction and co-evolution.
- This presentation will analyze and report on how **small municipalities with declining populations** can create such **ecosystems**, accumulate **social capital** as a local public good, and **maintain and develop their local communities in a flexible manner**, based on the **community development ecosystem model of Kamiyama-town**, Tokushima Prefecture, Japan.

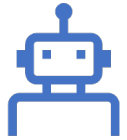


Junya SANO

Associate Professor, Public Policy Course,
Faculty of Business Administration,
Osaka Seikei University

- Born 1971 in Tokushima City, Japan.
- M.A. in Sociology
- PhD (Social Innovation)
- After working as a staff member of an international environmental NGO, Associate Professor at the Rikkyo University, Assistant Professor at the University of Tokushima and Associate Professor at the Doshisha University
- Main courses taught: Modernity and Social Welfare / Regional Cooperation PBL / Social Business Theory
- From this spring, will be a full-time teacher at the newly opened Kamiyama Marugoto College of Technology in Kamiyama-cho, Tokushima Prefecture.





1) What is creative depopulation?

- The idea is to **accept the decline in population** as a **given**, and to **creatively build sustainable, high wellbeing communities** that are **rich in creativity in culture and industry**, based on the rich creative activities of the community.
- And at the same time have **innovative and flexible economic systems** that are rooted in the local area
- And increase their **value as places to work by developing diverse work styles** and occupational categories .



2) What is local co-creation?

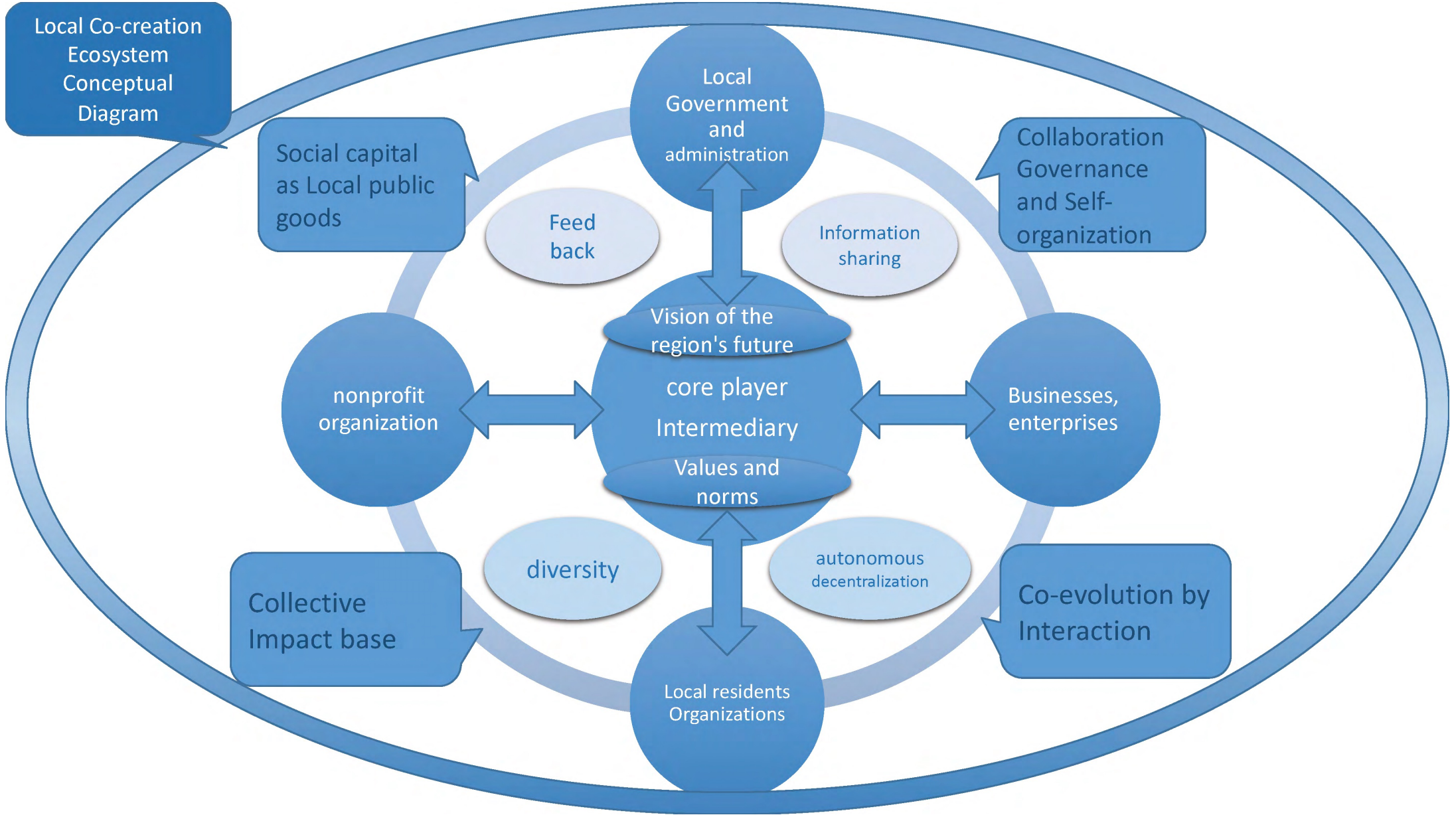
- **Collaboration across diverse sectors and player** positions to **solve local problems and build better communities** together, to jointly create **new value** for local communities.
- And to make **value proposals to society, starting from the local area.**

3) What is a local co-creation ecosystem?

- A functional **network of diverse players** in a region that solves complex regional issues through **cross-sectoral collaboration**
- The proactive **participation of residents.**
- An **autonomous system** that is sustained through **interaction and co-evolution.**



[Source] myProduct Corporation.
<https://myproduct.co.jp/business/local-co-creation>



Local Co-creation
Ecosystem
Conceptual
Diagram

Social capital
as Local public
goods

Collaboration
Governance
and Self-
organization

Local
Government
and
administration

Businesses,
enterprises

Vision of the
region's future

core player
Intermediary

Values and
norms

nonprofit
organization

Co-evolution by
Interaction

Local residents
Organizations

Collective
Impact base

Feed
back

Information
sharing

diversity

autonomous
decentralization

Kamiyama Project

~Think about the future of a region
from the viewpoint of creative depopulation~



NPO GreenValley Inc. Former Chairperson Shinya Ominami

1) Kamiyama Town – shrinking & aging



Photo: Scenery of Kamiyama Town
(Courtesy of NPO Green Valley)

- Typical **depopulated and ageing mountainous area** with a population of **4,789** (2,339 households) (as of January 2023).
- Increased **migration of urban residents** due to the establishment of **satellite offices for IT companies**.
- The population, which was more than 20,000 in 1955, has now decreased by nearly 20%.
- The **ageing rate is also 54.3%** (2020).

location

2 h to/from Tokyo

10

Osaka

Tokyo HND Airport

1h

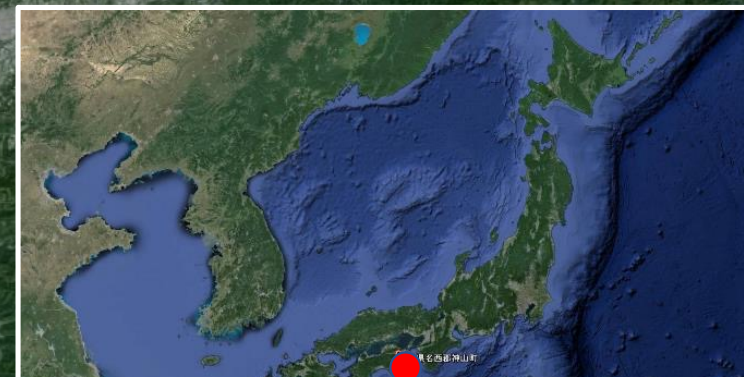
Tokushima TKS Airport

1h

Kamiyama Town

徳島県名西郡神山町

Image Landsat



2) Activities of Non-profit Organization



Photo: Shinya Ominami.
(Courtesy of NPO Green Valley)

- **Shinya Ominami**, former Director of the **NPO Green Valley**, a key person in the revitalization of the region, was born in Kamiyama, but studied at **Stanford University** when he was young.
- In **1992**, he established the **Kamiyama International Exchange Association** which launched the **Kamiyama Artist in Residence** (Kamiyama AIR) project in **1999**.
- The International Exchange Association was reorganized into the **NPO Green Valley** in **2004**.
- **Three organizational visions** with the mission of 'transforming the Japanese countryside into something beautiful'.
 - (1) **Creative rural development** with '**people**' as content.
 - (2) Creating a '**world-class countryside**' where the wisdom of diverse people can merge.
 - (3) Creating sustainable regions through '**creative depopulation**'.

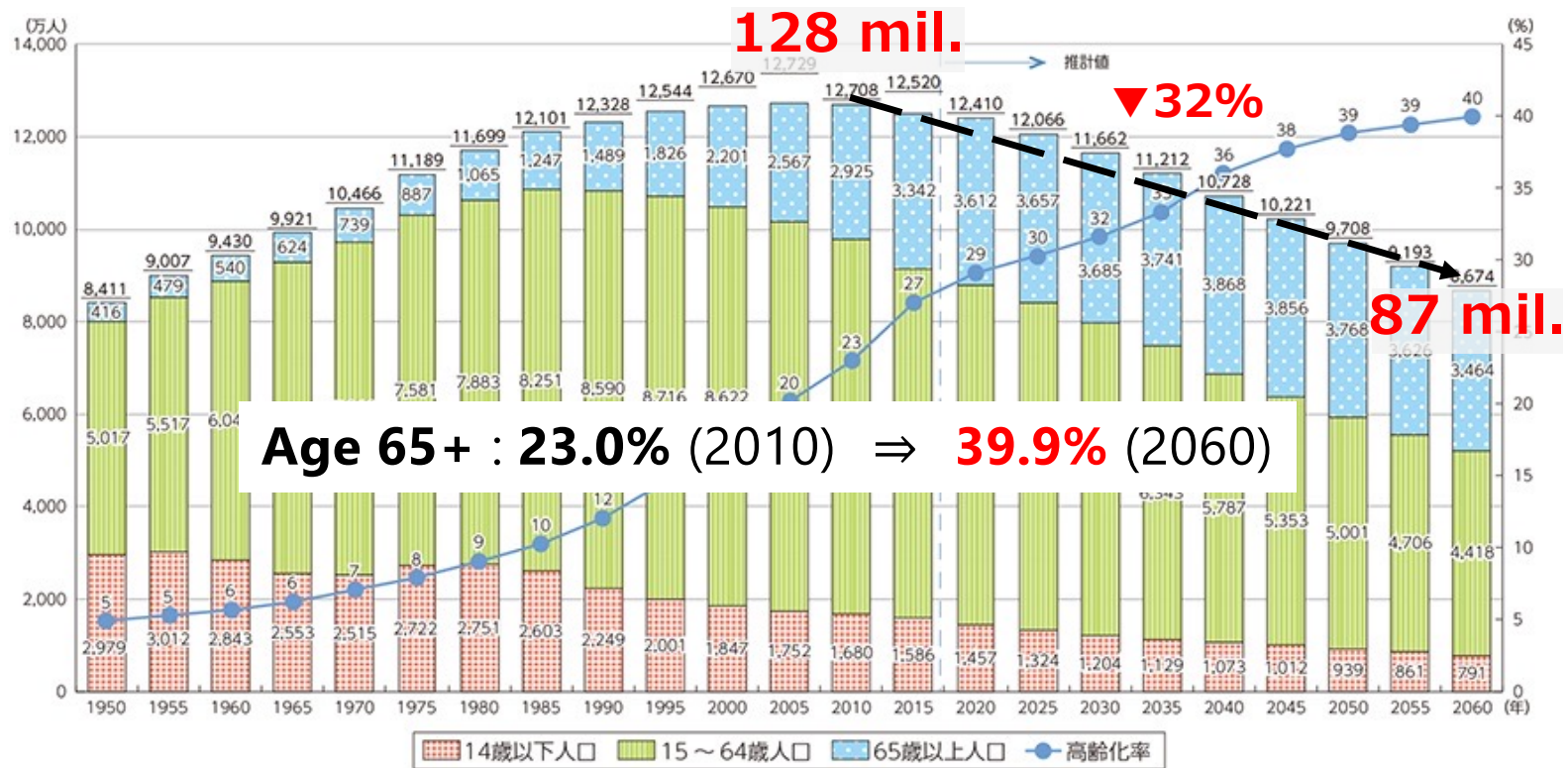
A Key Concept of the Kamiyama Project



Creative depopulation: No way to stop the depopulation trend, so concentrating on the **quality of the population** by bringing in **young people and diverse working styles** focused on improving **the quality of life**.

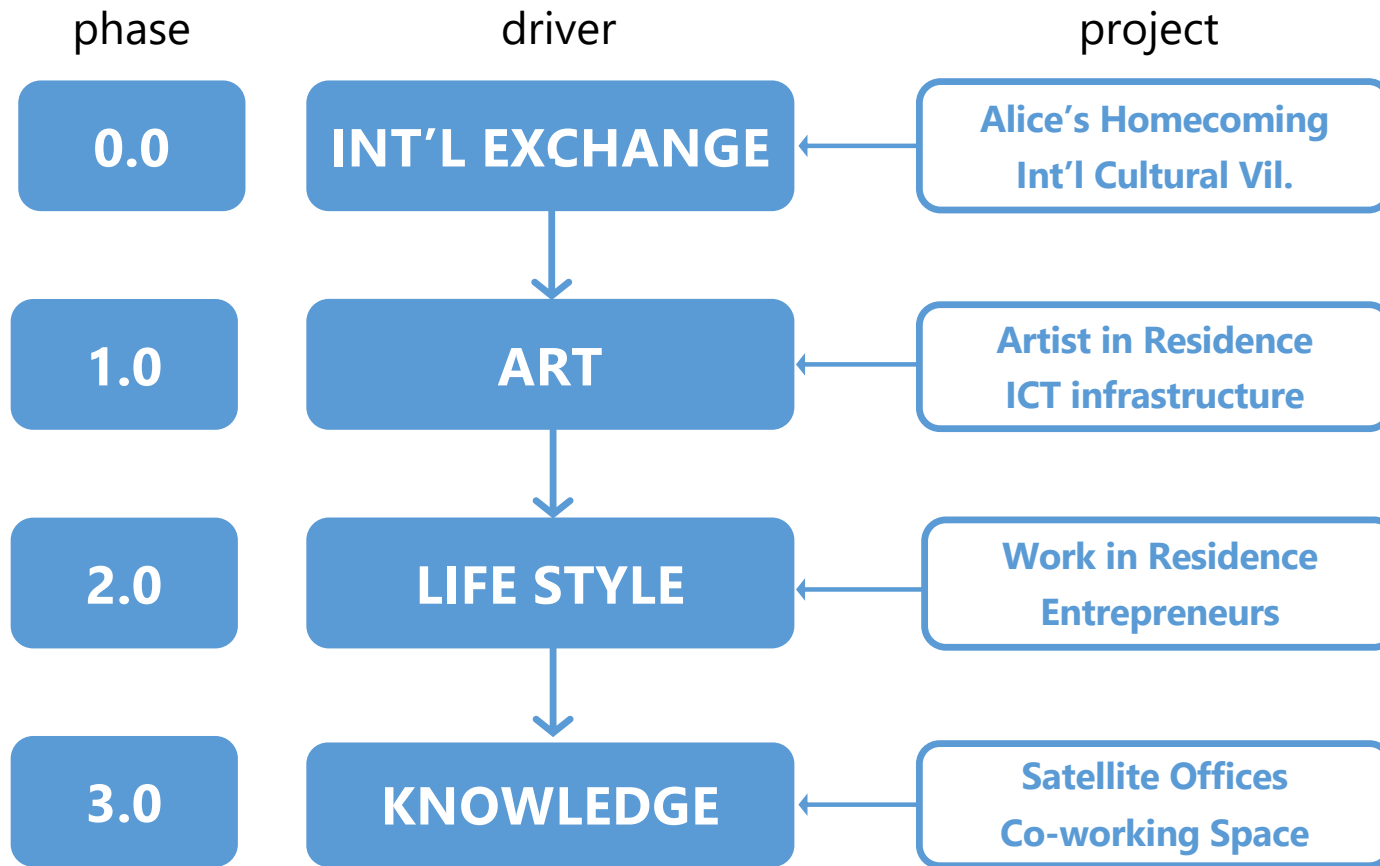
Population Projections for Japan

The overall population of Japan peaked in 2008 and Japan will be facing a full-scale depopulating society.



(出處) 2015年為止為總務省「國勢調査」(不包含年齡不詳人口)、2020年以後為國立社會保障・人口問題研究所「日本未來人口推估(平成24年1月推估)」(出生中位・死亡中位推估)

History of Revitalization 0.0~3.0



A cluster of creative people has grown in the past 20+ years

Created by Taichi Goto, Region Works LLC)

early development of tolerant community

“Just do it” leadership upon 1,200-year pilgrim tradition of hospitality

- Artist in residence since 1999
- Classes for career design since 2010
- Work in residence since 2010

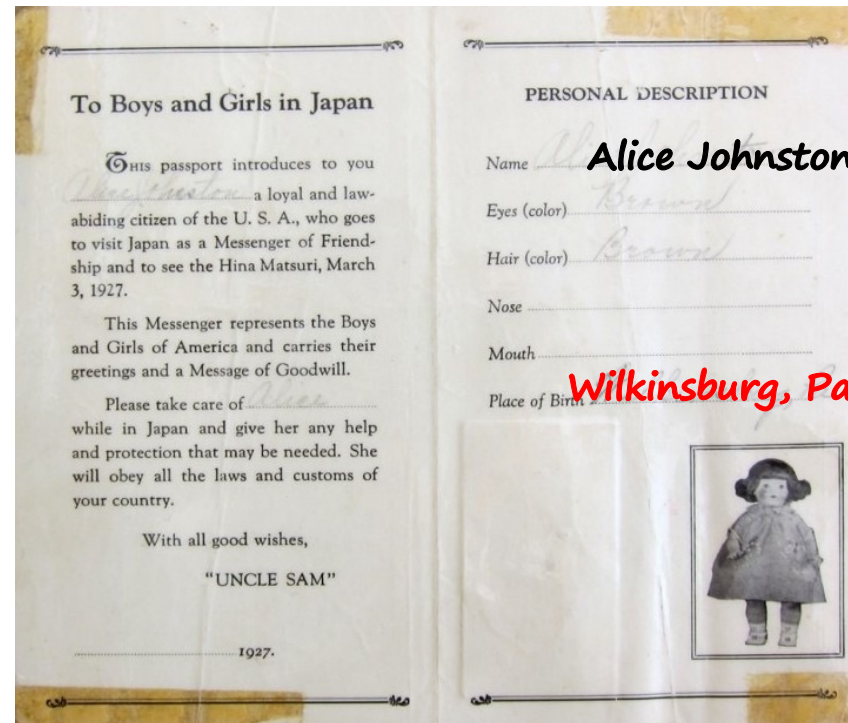


The beginning was a small International Exchange

One of the 12,739 friendship dolls sent from America as gifts to Japanese children in 1927 in response to a call by a pro-Japanese missionary has been stored at Jinryo Elementary School in Kamiyama.



Alice Johnston Doll



Passport

Kamiyama • Artist • in • Residence (1999)



3 or 4 artists every year were invited and supported by citizens.

artist in residence

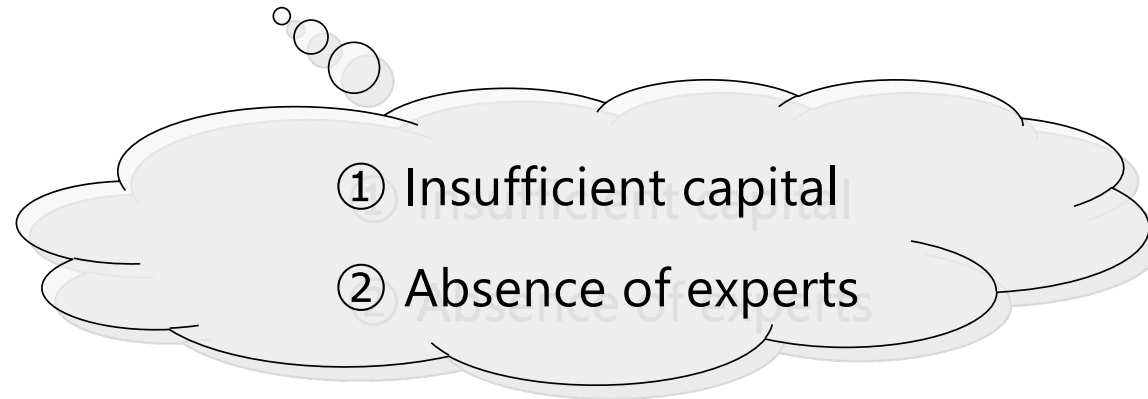
3-5 artists stay in the Town for 2 months then exhibit in late October
hospitality of the entire Town without professionals



“Two approaches” to “Community building through art”

① **Sightseers** to look around artworks

- ▮ Get together “pieces from **artists with a solid reputation!**”



② **Artists** coming in for production

- ▮ **Increase artist's desire** to stay and focus on “**Placemaking**”.

work in residence

appoint businesses, shops, restaurants and entrepreneurs
convert old houses into satellite offices with broadband



Workers-in-Residence

Appoint the “workers” and entrepreneurs”

who are necessary for the future of the town



Won't you open
a **bakery**?



Welcome,
designers!

Satellite offices were created through informal networks!



an
ts'

king

king'

Satellite Offices in Kamiyama



17 companies incl. IT venture companies, set up **satellite offices**, transferred their head offices, and established new companies.

Sansan Inc. (Shibuya ward in Tokyo)



Temporarily stationed staffs
from the Tokyo head office + **Permanently** stationed staffs
(**immigrants**)

Plat-Ease Corp. (Shibuya ward in Tokyo)



A workplace attractive for youth is created
(6 from the town and 12 from outside the prefecture)

French Bistro “Café on y va” (December, 2013)



Mr. Koki Kanazawa (from Aichi Pref.)

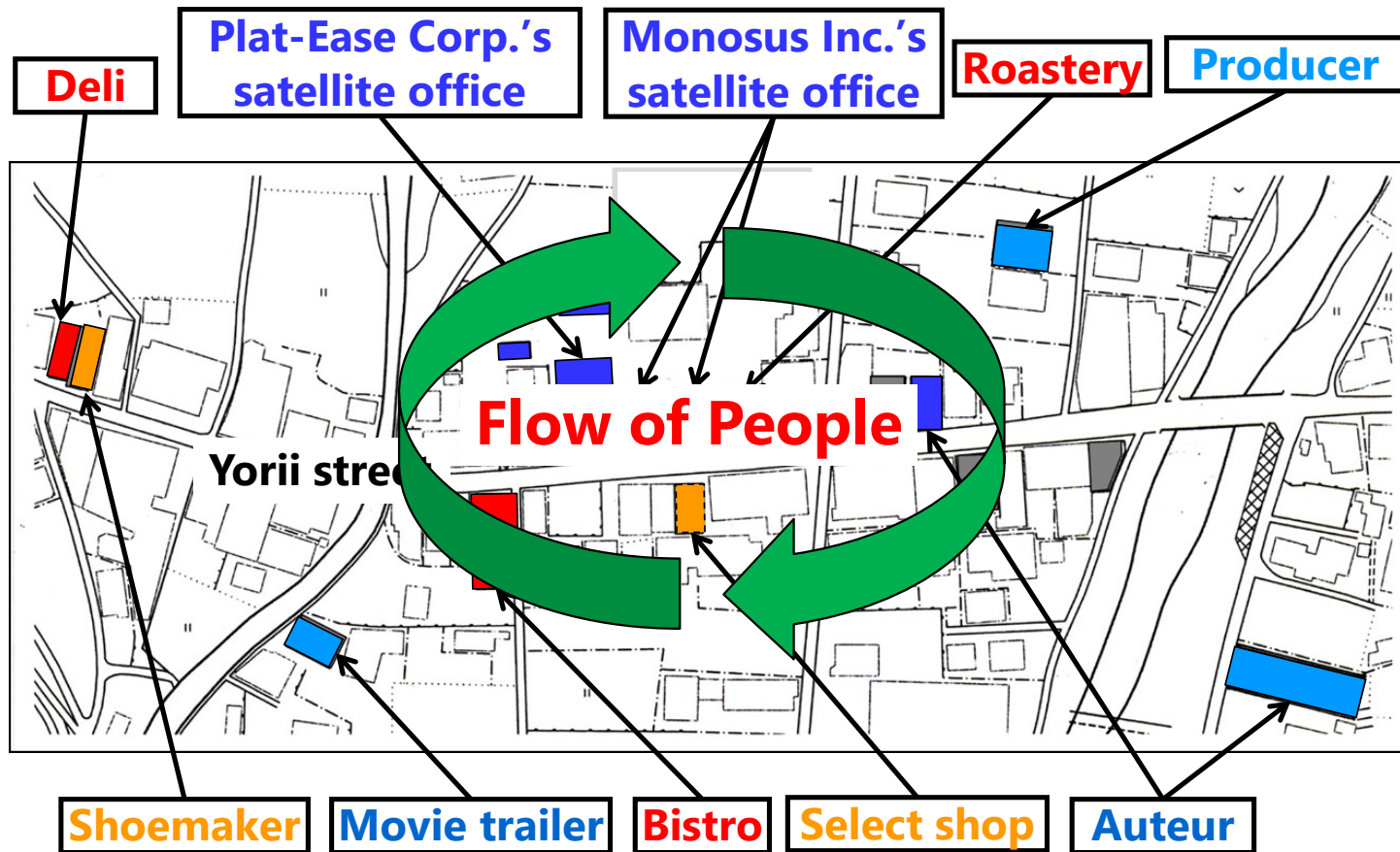


Custom made shoemaker 『LICHT LICHT KAMIYAMA』

MAME-CHIYO Coffee Roastery



Regenerating a shopping street utilizing WIR concept



Clusters of offices, creators, artisans, restaurants & stores

Kamiyama Valley Satellite Office Complex



Used as Satellite Office (15 company • 26 people)

Kamiyama Beer Project



Photo by Masataka Namazu

KAMIYAMA WATER CONSERVATION PROJECT

Product Design utilizing timber from forest thinning

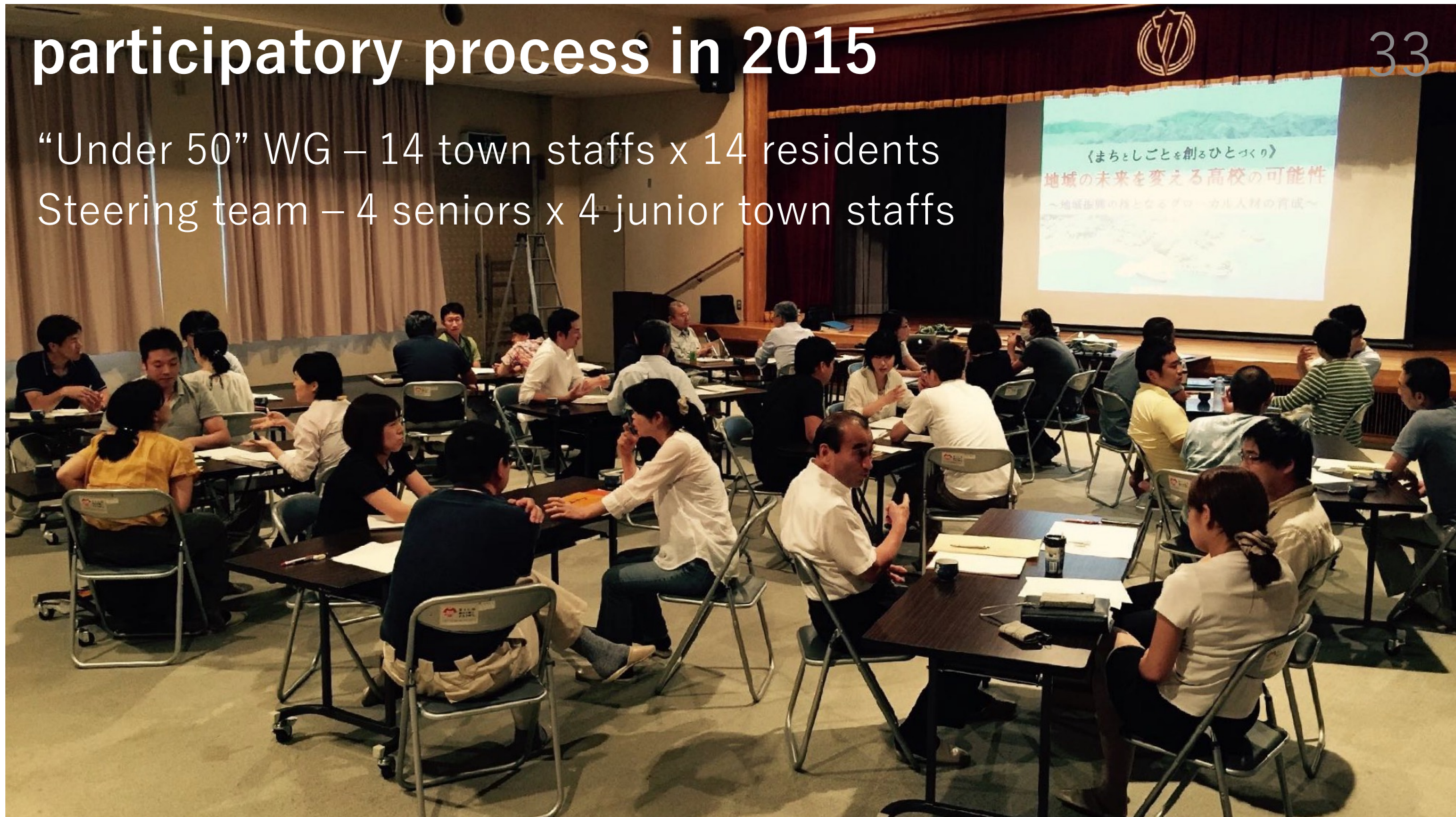


participatory process in 2015

“Under 50” WG – 14 town staffs x 14 residents
Steering team – 4 seniors x 4 junior town staffs



33

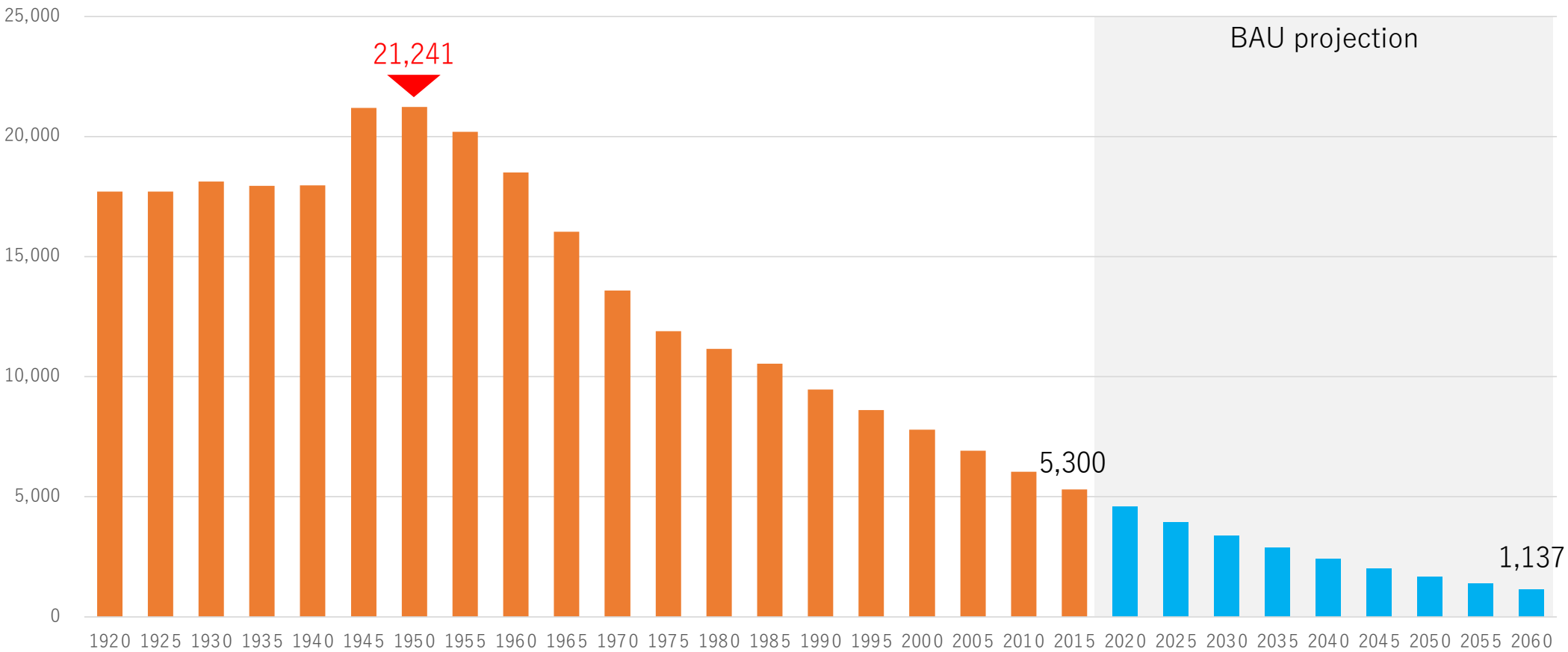


BAU business as usual scenario

Elderly people will live a small life without future generations.

- A **high school** will be closed around 2020.
- A **junior high and elementary schools** will be closed around 2040.
- Public **bus** service will be discontinued.
- **Cable TV** service will be discontinued.
- **Satellite offices** will be closed.
- A **hospital, clinics, retail stores** and a **taxi** company will go out of business.
- Kamiyama Town will be merged with adjacent cities.
- Little public investment.
- Local culture, landscape and tradition will not be interested.

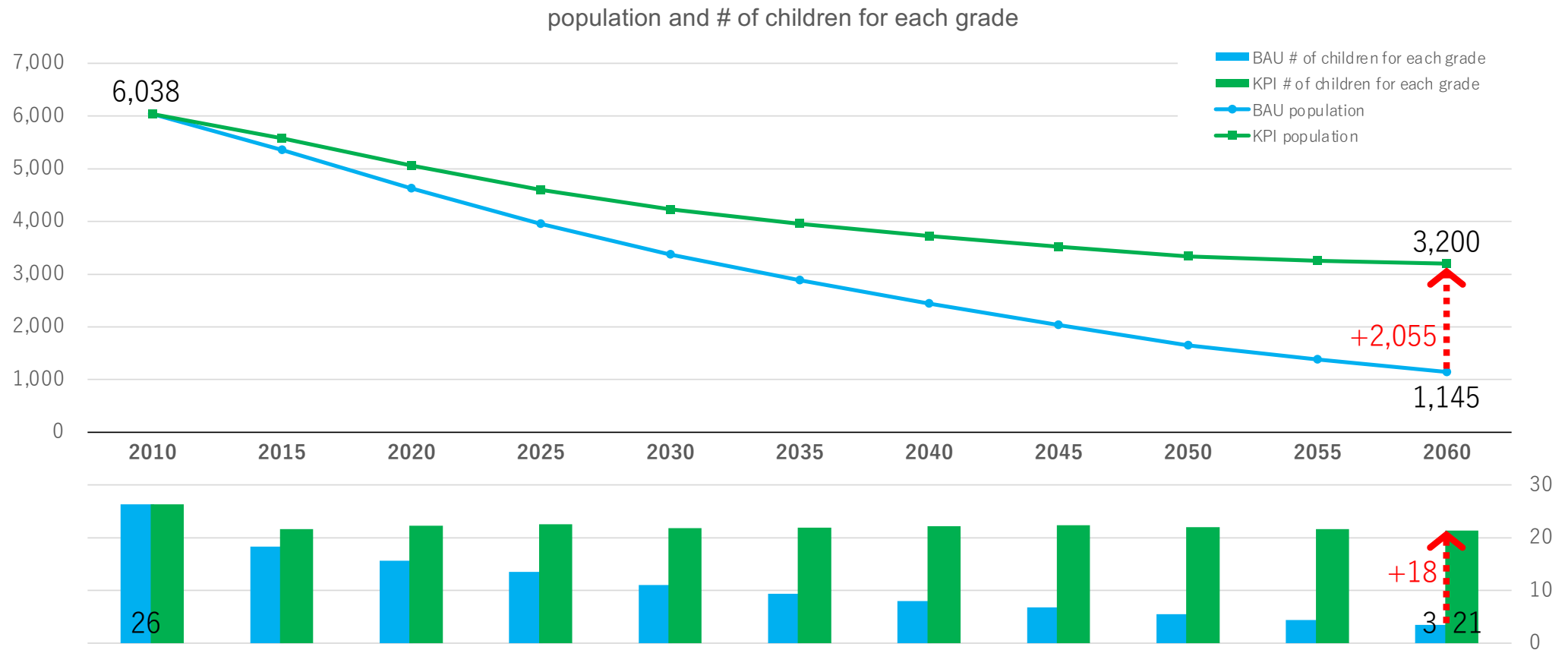
population projection



Data Source:
1920~ Kamiyama Town archive
1970~ National Census
2020~ projection by Kamiyama Town

selected scenario & KPI

+44 additional in-migration each year to maintain quality primary education




narrative vision & initiatives

To inherit local wisdom & lifestyle for future generation.

- People
- Home
- Education
- Work
- Local economic circulation
- Safety
- Sense of future opportunities

Synergy b/w initiatives
&
daily public relations



new platform – Kamiyama Linkage Corp.

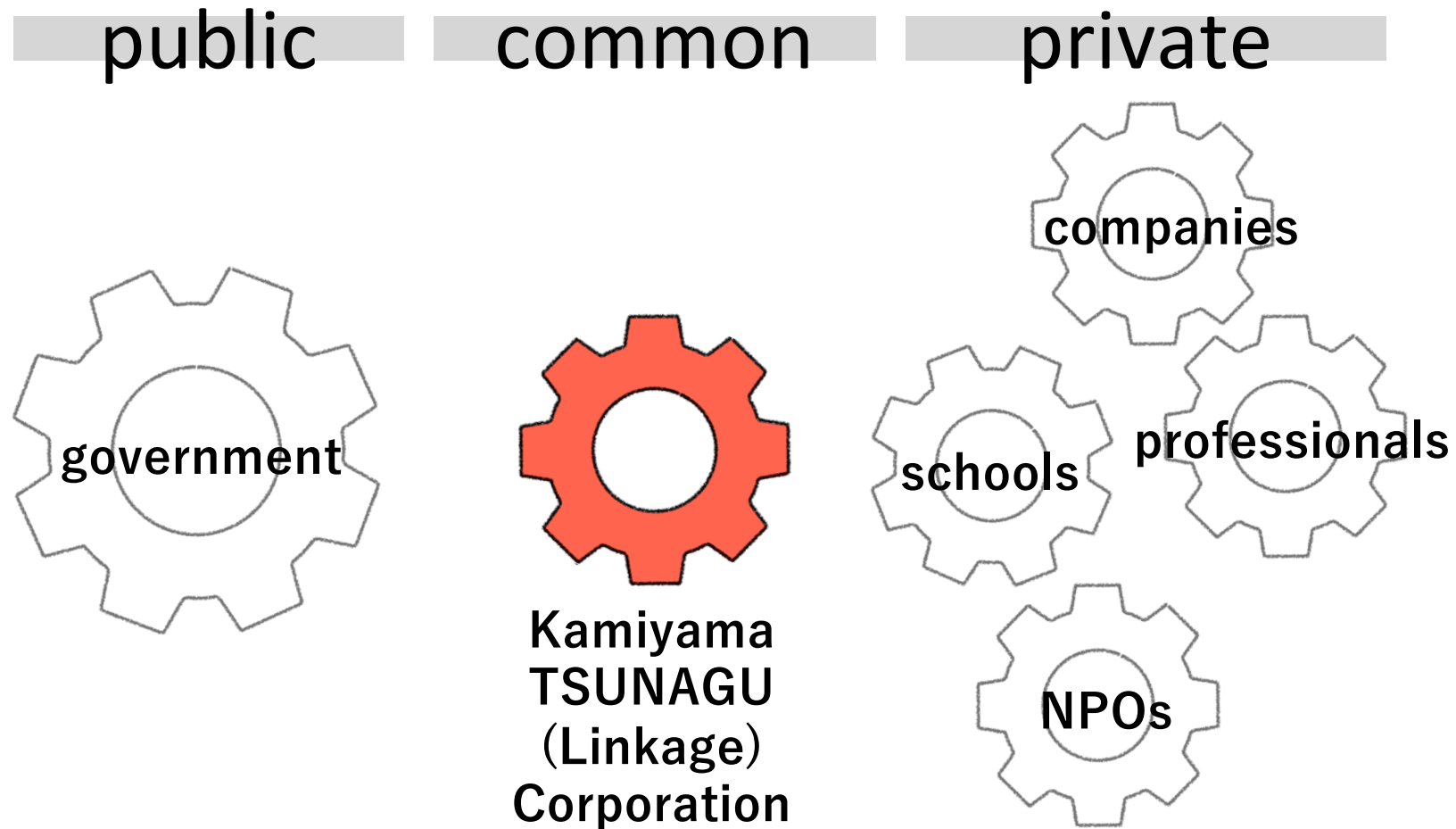


2015



2022

new platform – Kamiyama Linkage Corp.



projects: collective actions



Food Hub



housing for trial migrants



public rental housing



int'l learning



local bus tours



boarding tech. school
(Apr. 2023~)

Food Hub Project



Food Culture & Industry Development



chef in residence

retreat for c



public rental housing (20 units)





神山町

まちを将来世代につなぐプロジェクト #23

大埜地の集合住宅 暮らしと関係の始まり

local bus tours

46



An aerial photograph showing a boarding technical school campus. The school buildings are situated on a hillside overlooking a river. The campus is integrated with the surrounding town, with residential houses and agricultural fields visible. A bridge crosses the river in the foreground. The text 'boarding technical school' is overlaid in white on the top left.

boarding technical school

whole town as a campus

dorm & cafeteria

technology x design x entrepreneurship

200 students

(@40 x 5 grades)

21 teaching staffs

50 guest lecturers

(entrepreneurs, VCs, artists)

study rooms

Kamiyama Marugoto College of Technology

unprecedented fund raising mainly from outside of the town

hometown donation

capital investment
2.4b JPY



long-term investment

scholarship
1b JPY x 6 corps



crowd funding

mentors & supporters
30k JPY x 1,000 people

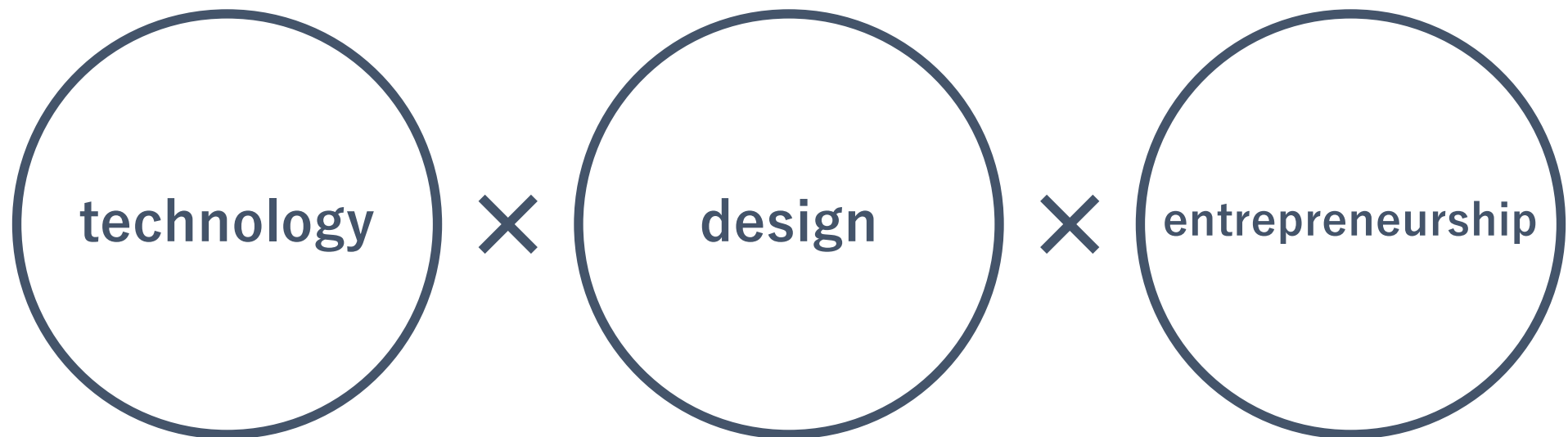


- What will students learn?

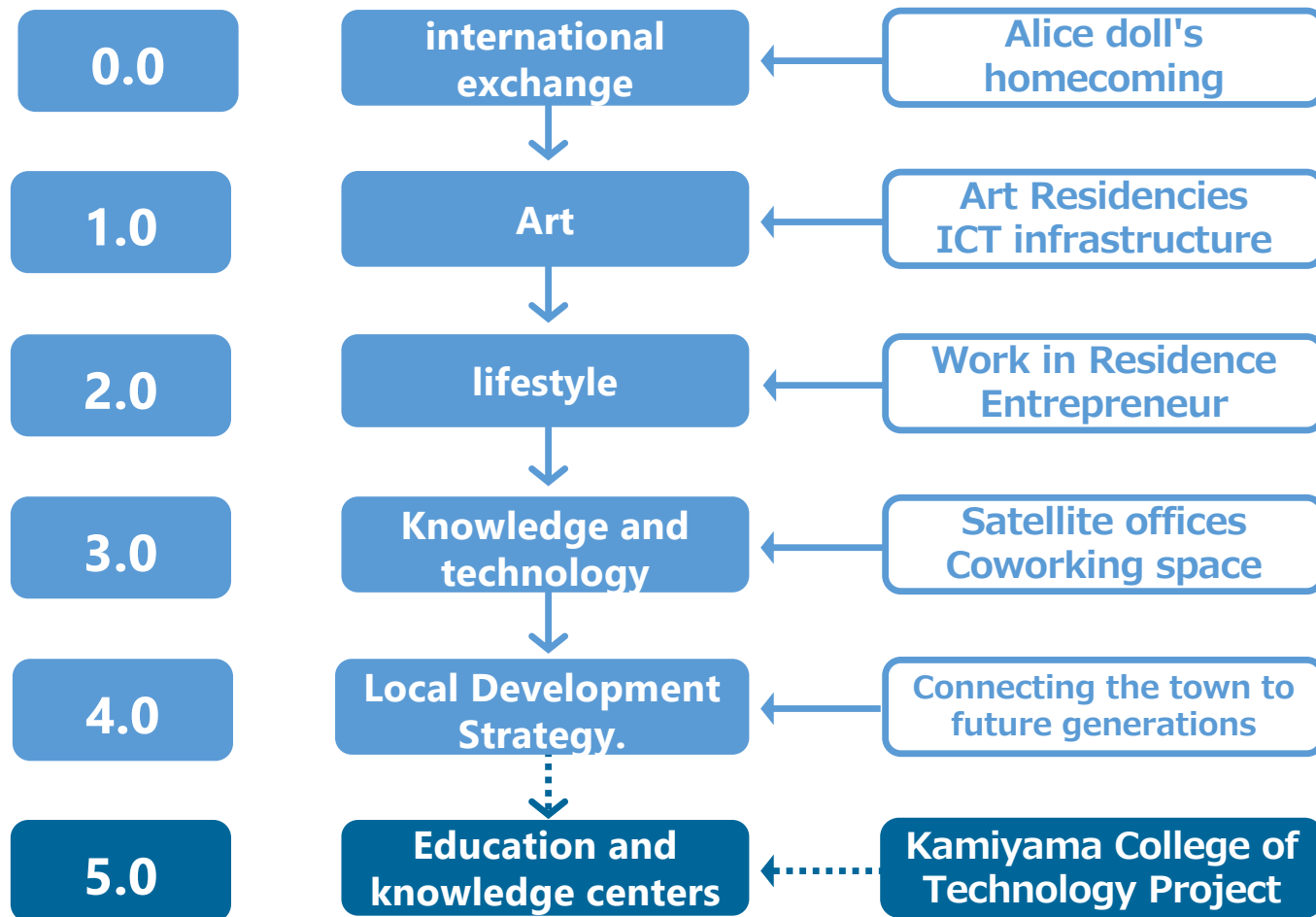
Technology education, including software and AI; and

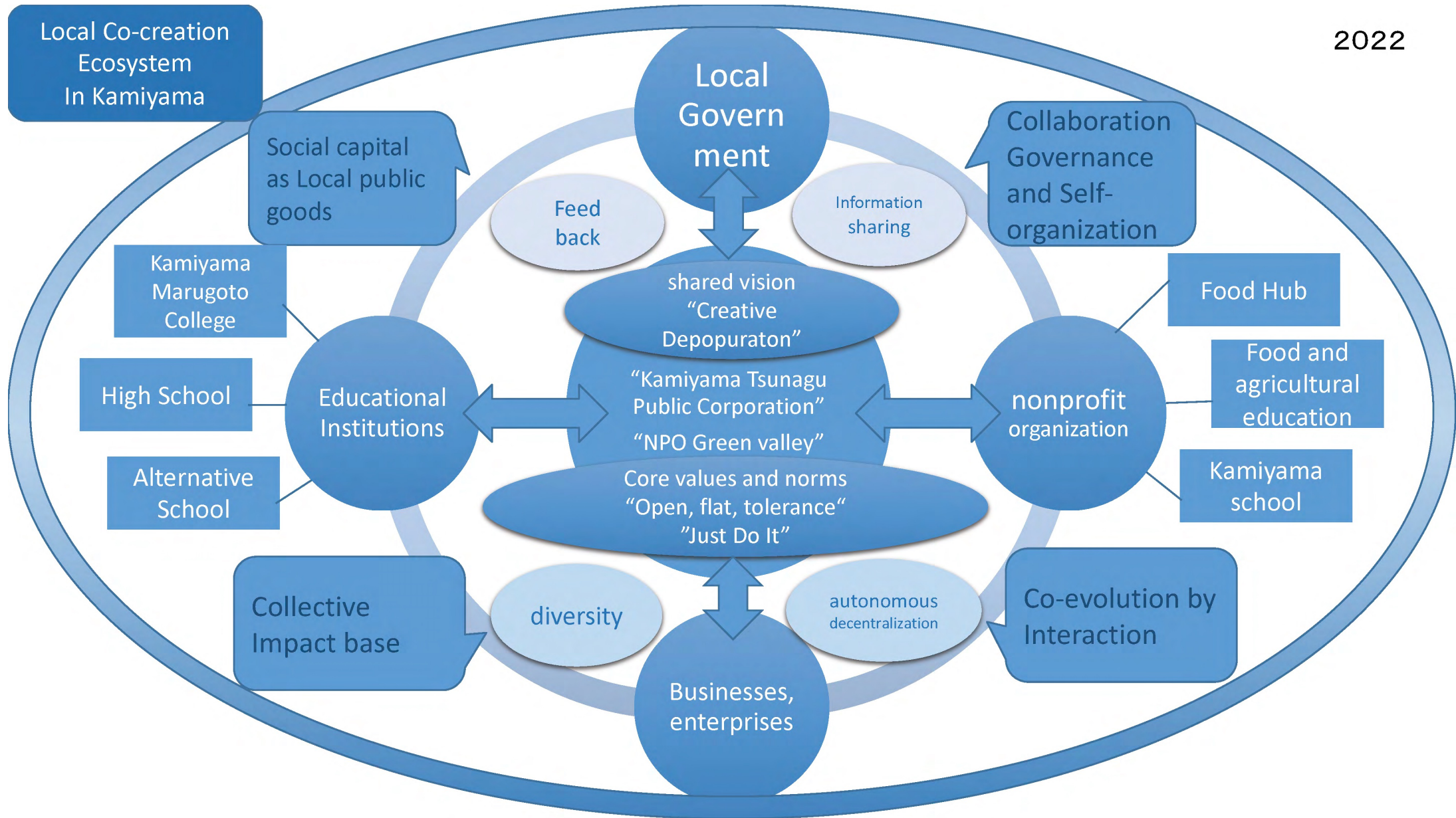
Design education such as UI/UX and art.

And fostering entrepreneurship.



5.0 in Kamiyama Town (Kamiyama Marugoto College Project).





Components of the local co-creation ecosystem in Kamiyama Town.

(1) Regional vision Visualization and sharing	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● 'world-class countryside'● Creative depopulation● Humanomics● Towns with a sense of possibility● Toward Exciting future
(2) Propagation and sharing of values and norms	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Open flat tolerance.● "Just do it."● Don't give me reasons why you can't do something, give me ways you can do it.● Connecting comfortably
(3) Formation of social capital as a local public good.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● The openness of the local community, which has welcomed the Shikoku pilgrims traditionally.● The ease with which we do not reject those who come and do not pursue those who go.● An attitude of accepting and connecting the heterogeneous and diversity.

Clustering of creative population



- It also functions as a platform for the formation of a region where **the rural values** of the existing inhabitants and **the new values** of the people who have experienced the city and moved to the region are **mixed together**.
 - The creation of **diverse and flexible links (ecosystems)** between organizations and individuals through networks between these different actors is a major point in future regional regeneration.
 - **'openness, flatness and tolerance'** as the key to the creation of a region that attracts such **creative population**.
 - **Richard Florida** points out in **Creative Capital** that creative people gather in urban areas that have these elements and form new economic zones.
 - **Kamiyama** is a typical depopulated mountain village, but by deliberately creating these urban elements, it has succeeded in **attracting a generation of creative and entrepreneurial young people** to the area.
- 

Formation of open social relational capital

- Fostering a **social climate** in the region that is free, moderately "Slow and easy" and **tolerant of diverse ways of being**.
- By creating a situation in Kamiyama where **various challenges**, including **entrepreneurship** are possible, and by having a generation of **local adults who support and encourage the challenges of the younger generation**, who have found it difficult to find a place for self-realization in existing urban society and companies, have been **attracted to Kamiyama**.

Creation of 'place' and humanomics

- The concentration of **creative human resources** has led to a further concentration of creative human resources, and has given birth to a situation in which activities leading to **various regional innovations beyond the expected**, known as '**humanomics**', have **spontaneously emerged** in the region.
- A situation where a '**town grows out of the ground**' (Ominami), sharply differentiating it from **conventional, artificial and planned regional development**.
- **Green Valley** has **the spirit of challenge**, "**Just Do It!**" motto expresses a lightness of spirit that is **not afraid of failure** and is **willing to act** on ideas that it thinks are good, while at the same time being **tolerant of failure**.



The Korean edition of “Kamiyama Evolution” has been published.