

JLGC Seminar
Re-imagining town centres
Local lessons from Japan and the UK

Tatsuno town, Nagano

Valuing spontaneity and sustainability in the urban realm



Cabinet Office Regional Revitalisation Advocate

Section Manager, Industry
Promotion Division,
Commerce and Industry
Promotion Section,
Tatsuno

Takao Nozawa



Representative Director of MARU to
Edit Inc.

Representative of Tobichi Company
MMMstudio Licensed Architects
Director of Local Innovation Initiatives

Kota Akahane

Community Architect
Licensed Architect
Real Estate Agent
Regional Power Creation Advisor,
Ministry of Internal Affairs and
Communications
Vacant House Utilisation Advocate,
Nagano

25 November 2024

1

Tatsuno Town, Nagano

Access

2.5h

from Shinjuku

At the geographical centre of Japan
Close to the centre of Nagano

New residents

3rd

Nationwide

The *Rural Living Book* published by Takarajimasha
3rd best town nationwide in the 2021 ranking of the most desirable rural places to live
Best place to live for seniors in the 2018 ranking of the most desirable rural places to live

Tourism

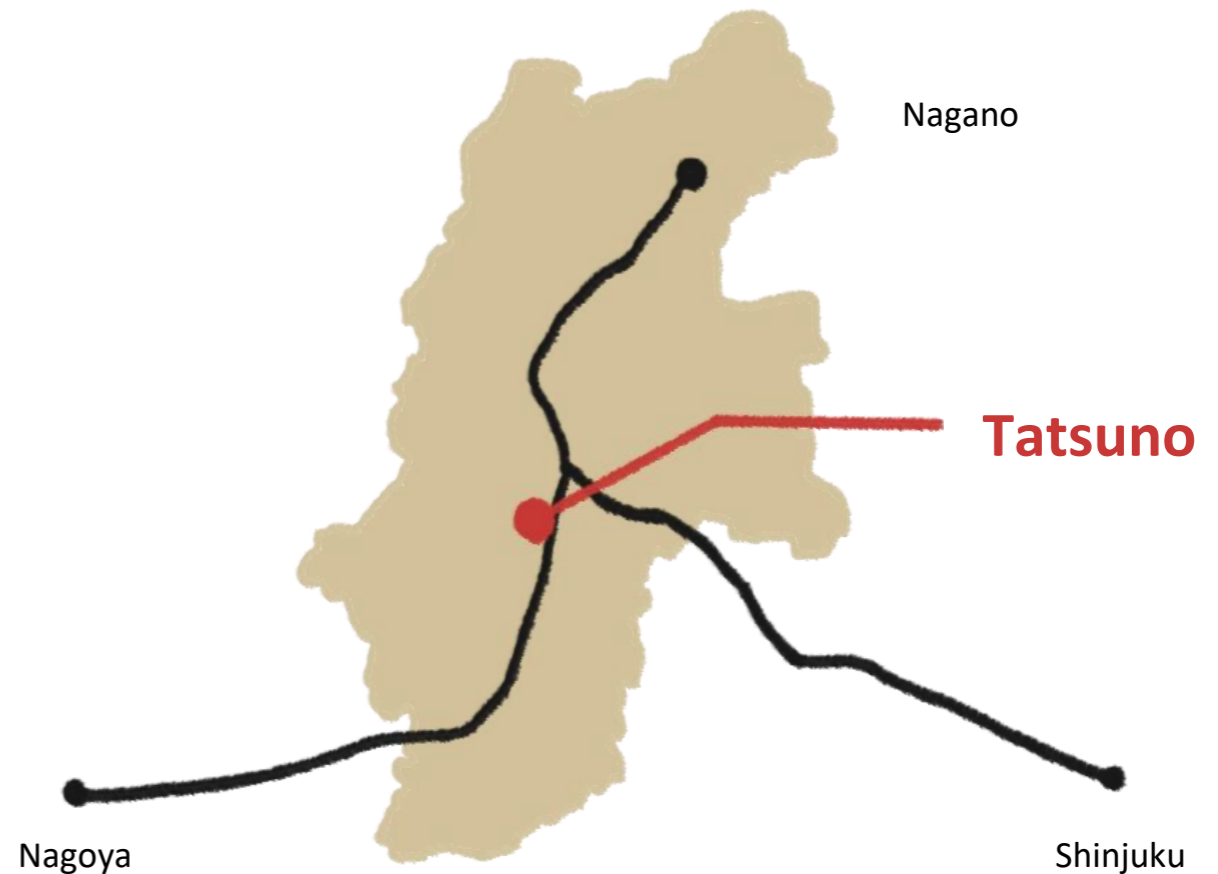
Approx. 200 thousand Genji-botaru fireflies

The largest population in Japan
(Up to 20,000 in a single day)

Population

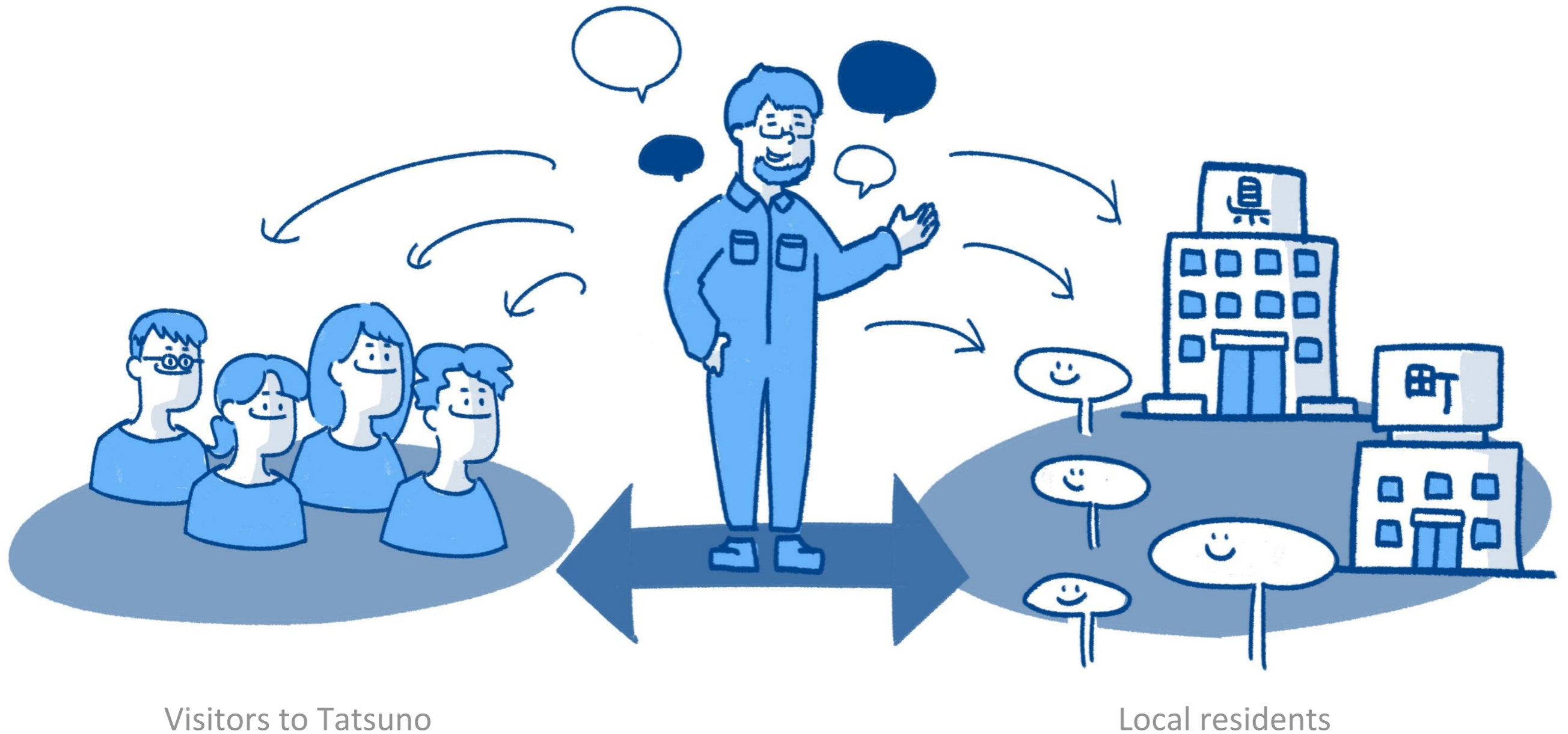
Approx. 20 thousand

18,156 people in 7,577 households (data from 1 April 2024)
*34.46% over 65



The coordinator acts as an interpreter, facilitating connections with local residents

(Transformation connector)



A town that enables creators

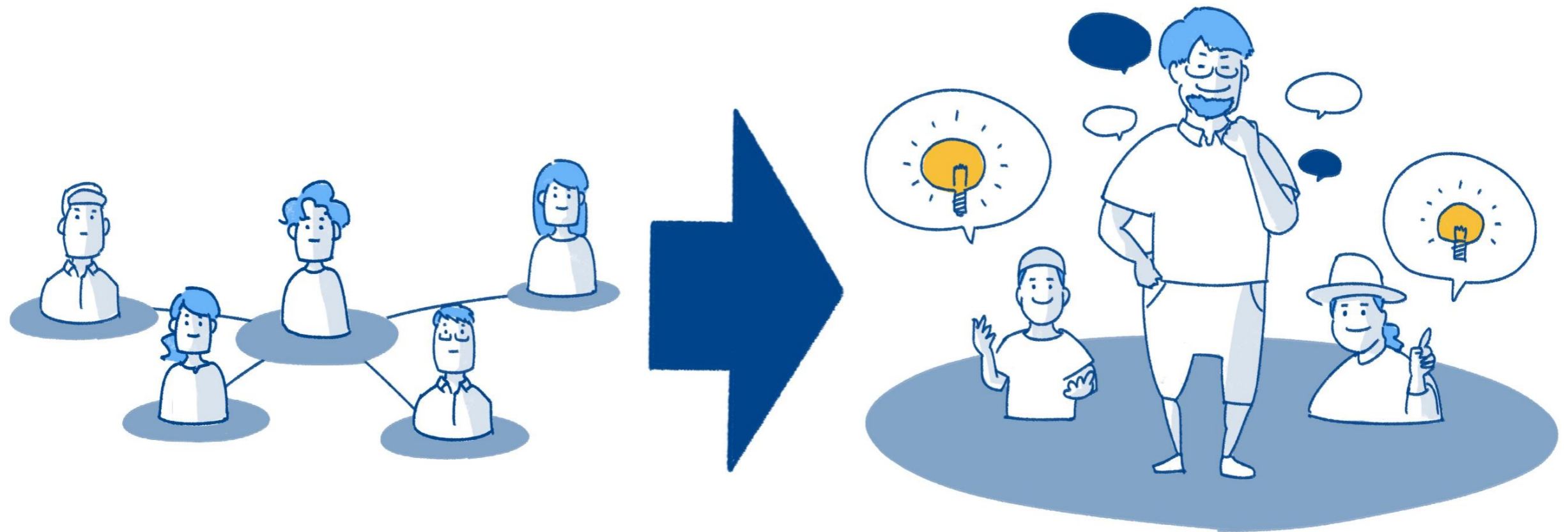
A town that creates prototypes

Vacant house DIY specialists: Azukabo, Waon, O to &, etc.



From people with local links to co-creators

We can think together and create together, allowing more people to enjoy the local area.



We need to avoid an unproductive relationship that exploits the local community.

Large free spaces, such as vacant houses, are transforming the town.



Uptake from vacant house bank

80 %

Deals agreed for over 200 houses
(Since 2014)

DIY renovation of vacant houses & shops

20 +

(Since 2016)

DIY renovation outcomes

[Farmhouse Cafe \(Azukabo\)](#)



[Guesthouse \(Atelier Waon\)](#)

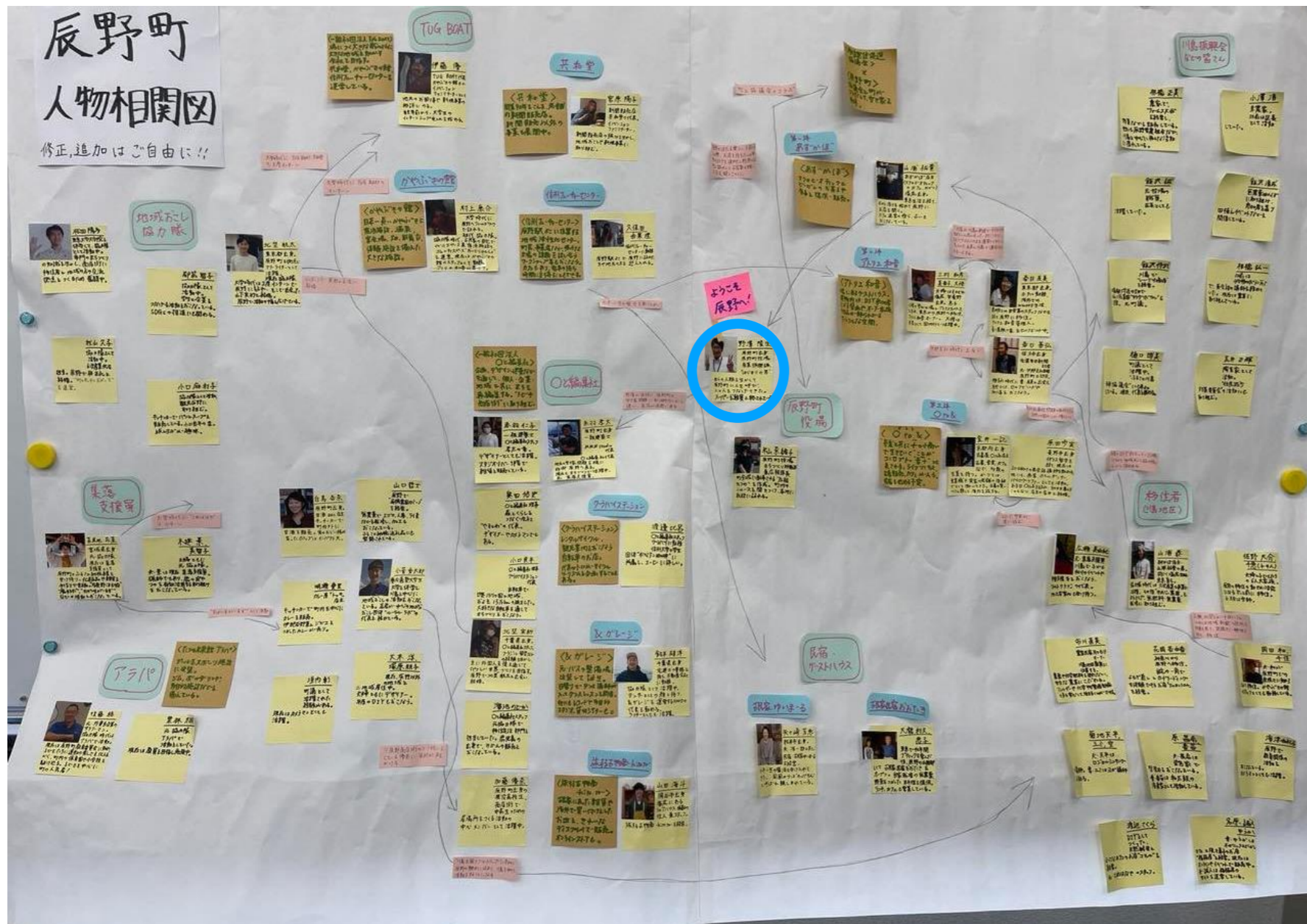


[Used clothes shop \(O to &\)](#)



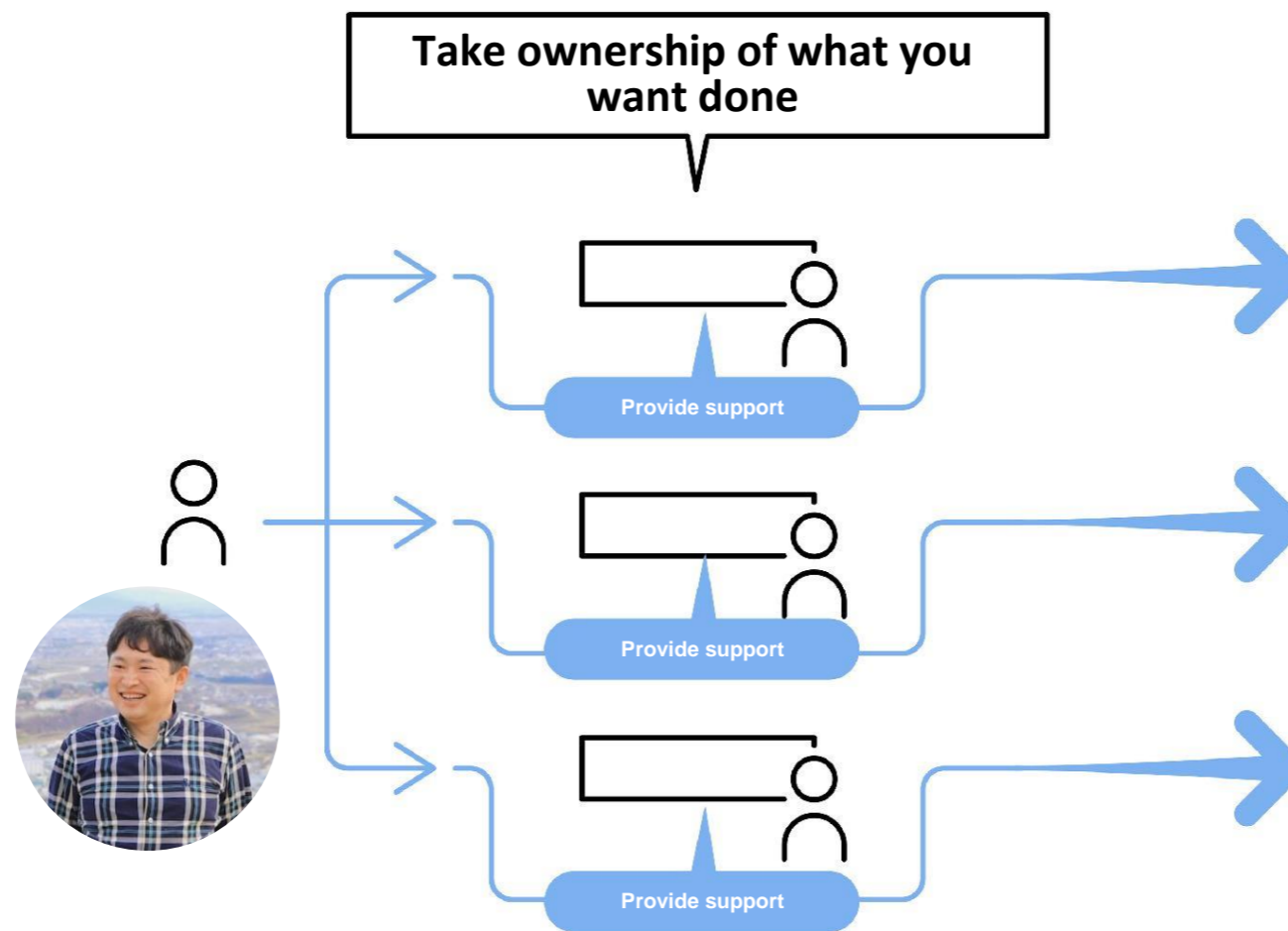
Bringing people together

More and more people are joining up to help breathe life into the town
The urban development stakeholder ecosystem comprises over 100 people



“The Originator”

Fully supporting stakeholders creating from scratch and maintaining continuity



Creating something from scratch is enjoyable. Take ownership of it!

Advancing the vacant housing bank

- Creating DIY events
- Accelerating registration of vacant houses



Increases number of houses to show people

Easier for people visiting Tatsuno to imagine living here



Bringing people together

- Valuing freshness
- Connecting people



People start to come together



Pushing the project forwards

- Supporting creation from scratch
- Finding people who can think for themselves



Active stakeholders come together

2

Tobichi High Street

A day 10 years from now

トビチ
.....
Market

by MARU to Edit Inc.

What would we like to see our town centre become?

On 7 December 2019, the Tobichi Market was held in Tatsuno, Nagano. The market was made up of 21 vacant shops and houses, and brought together 53 businesses from Nagano and further afield. More than 4,000 Tatsuno residents and visitors came to town in the winter to enjoy wandering through the high street.

That alone was enough to make me cry tears of happiness. Our members were just as emotional – some crying, some laughing, all joyful. The theme of Tobichi Market was “A day 10 years from now”. As people move, so does the town. Slowly but surely, it moves. We would love our town to become somewhere everyone could enjoy living. Let’s look to the future, and make it a reality.

Tobichi Market, 7 December 2019



Viewings of unused real estate, consultations and town tours



38 shops have opened in 5 years thanks to Tobichi Market and the town tours.



Former pharmacy ⇒ Equinox Store
(Cafe + clothing + cosmetics)



Former bar ⇒ amarillo (speciality takeaway)
⇒ Fujiwara Sangyo (bento shop)



Former local bus office ⇒ Sin O to & (used clothes shop)
⇒ Too Moon To Sun (used clothes shop) ⇒ Pizzeria
Meglio (restaurant)



Former local bus office ⇒ &garage
(cultural centre)



&garage Dance school and studio for hire



Krindo Co-working space



High-Five COFFEE STAND highfive



Kaymakli



Rocaltus TATSUNO



or siesta kitchen



-hito.to- Antique shop



Maru to en shouten



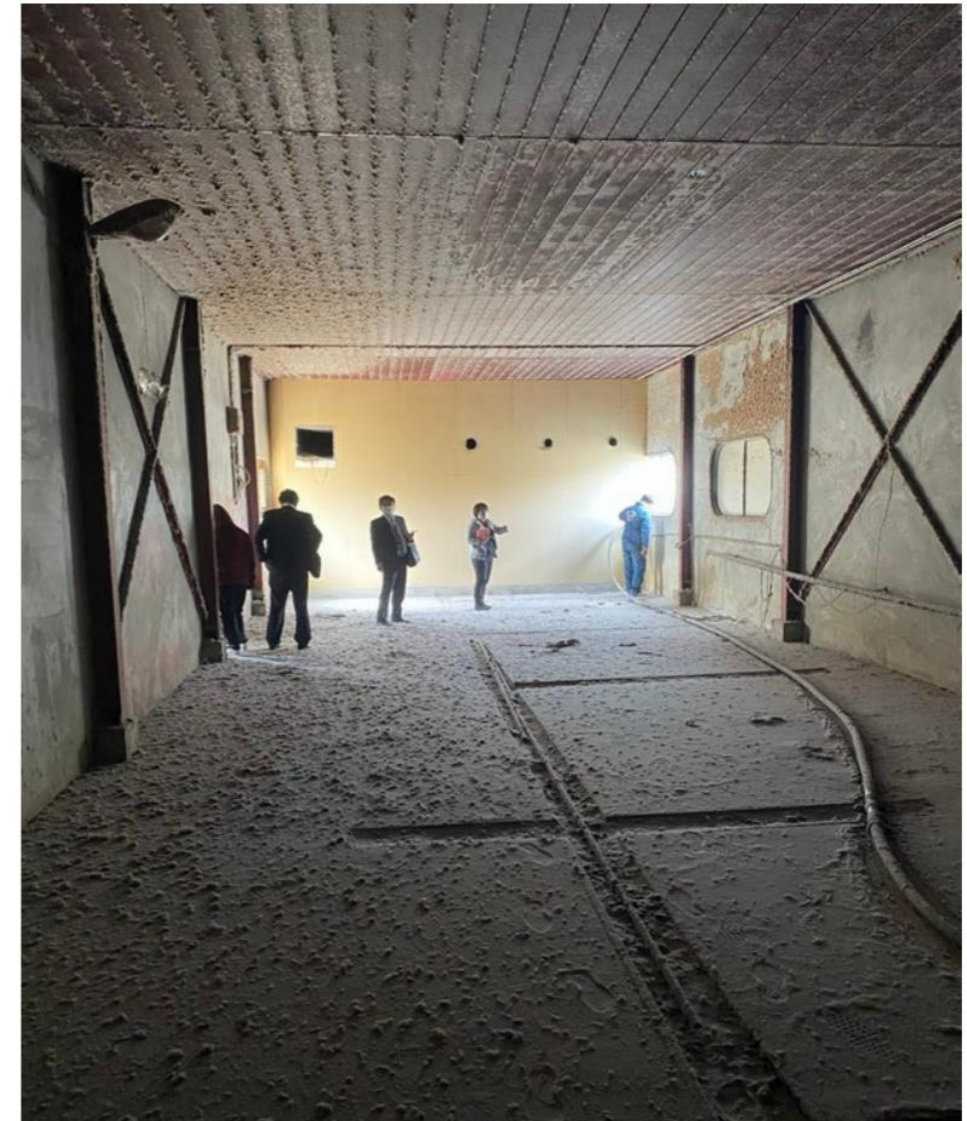
Tokoto

*Selection of shops

**“Wouldn’t it be great to have entertainment facilities in a rural town?”
Local renovation starting with a cultural area**



A grand dream sketched out while gazing at the derelict bus terminal



A section of the garage coated in dust and mould

From dream to reality



1. Dance school opens Sept 2021



2. Used clothes shop opens May 2022



3. Pizzeria opens July 2024

Tobichi high street was featured on
the 13 May 2024 edition of
NHK Close-up Gendai



Turning dead space into something precious Small businesses at the forefront

Thriving small businesses bring unique charm and excitement to the town

A small business is attracting attention for its ability to offer unique products and services while remaining profitable by keeping costs low, despite its small scale.

A commercial facility hosting 150 businesses has sprung up under a railway bridge in Tokyo.

A rural shopping precinct has transformed vacant shops into stylish spaces, encouraging 100 new residents to move there. National and local government bodies are expanding support systems to promote economic growth and solve local issues. We look into the possibilities and challenges for the small businesses that are enlivening the town.

You can read summaries of past episodes by
visiting the programme's website.

An aerial photograph of a town nestled in a valley. The town is densely packed with buildings, mostly with grey and brown roofs. A river winds through the town, and a road follows its course. The valley is surrounded by green hills and mountains, with a blue sky and scattered white clouds above. The text "Thank you for your attention!" is overlaid in the center of the image.

Thank you for your attention!