

# Motivations for Migration: Why Migrant Entrepreneurs Choose to Settle in Depopulated Communities?

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## Abstract

This study uses Higashikawa Town, Hokkaido, as a case study, to investigate the motivations of migrant entrepreneurs to migrate to depopulated rural areas and settle there for the long term. As the population flows out to urban areas and the population ages, depopulation poses serious challenges to the maintenance of local industries and communities. In this study, the authors conducted semi-structured interviews with six migrant entrepreneurs and clarified the motivations for migration and the factors behind them through co-occurrence network analysis using KH Coder. As a result, the authors found that migrant entrepreneurs often migrate in search of self-realization and professional independence, which are largely contributed to by local networks, government support, and cultural and economic assets such as the "Craft Road". These supports and resources not only increase the feasibility of achieving individual goals, but also promote cultural exchange and regional revitalization. This study also showed that meeting the needs of migrant entrepreneurs and supporting them in achieving their individual goals is an important factor in realizing long-term settlement. It is believed that these supports and resources play a role in promoting cultural exchange and regional revitalization as well as enhancing regional sustainability.

*Keywords:* migrant entrepreneurs, motivation, depopulated areas, local industry

## 1 Introduction

The purpose of this study is to clarify the motivations that lead migrant entrepreneurs to depopulated areas, who are originally treated as outsiders and therefore highly likely to migrate periodically, to settle for a long period of time. This study takes up the case of entrepreneurs who moved to Higashikawa Town and examines whether they moved to a depopulated area and ended up settling there.

Japan's depopulation is occurring mainly in rural areas and is a phenomenon that combines population decline and aging. Japan's total population is gradually decreasing. According to statistics from the Cabinet Office [1], the number of people in Japan aged 65 years old and older is 35.89 million. This is 28.4 percent of the total population. The outmigration of young people to cities and the aging of the population are shrinking local economies and creating challenges for regional revitalization.

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Also, the statistical data on the Hokkaido Prefectural Government website shows that the total population decreased by 2.9% from 157,119 people between 2015 and 2020. Sapporo and Chitose are among the 12 municipalities experiencing a population increase; 167 other municipalities are experiencing a decrease, including Hakodate and Otaru. The largest rate of population increase (7.0%) was found in Shimukappu Village, followed closely by Akaigawa Village, Higashikawa Town, and Chitose City. The large loss of people in these areas has resulted in diminishing local communities, diminishing municipal water systems, and diminishing industrial activity. These municipalities have been hit particularly hard due to their already aging demographic base, so they have been unable to sustain essential municipal services while trying to attract new residents. However, there has recently been an increase in migration to these municipalities motivated by specific activities such as entrepreneurship or living in an attractive community.

In a questionnaire survey conducted by the Cabinet Secretariat, 20.8% (342 people) out of 1,648 respondents interested in immigrating answered that they wanted to start a business or wanted to become a sole proprietor [4]. This shows that the number of people who are interested in emigration and starting a business is increasing, but on the other hand, there are also concerns about whether they will be able to adapt to life in their new destination and how they can get a job in the area they have moved to [4]. Under these circumstances, an increasing number of people are moving to rural areas with their skills and knowledge. They are trying to establish themselves in the area through occupations that mainly involve handicrafts, such as cafes, wooden furniture, and pottery workshops [5]. Furthermore, the traditional image of migrants is changing as an increasing number of people are migrating for self-fulfillment, a motivation that is distinct from work, employment, and the pursuit of wealth. In particular, entrepreneurs who operate as independent managers can function as economically autonomous entities and therefore have the potential to be less dependent on a specific region. In other words, it is thought that the migration of human resources who already have skills and can create jobs could be a solution even in areas where depopulation is progressing. According to Florida [6], the aggregation of individuals possessing creative talents catalyzes enhancing the overall creativity within a region. Therefore, in this study, the authors clarify the motivations that determine the migration of migrant entrepreneurs to depopulated areas and cast a new light on the issues that depopulated areas have been facing to date.

The results of this research will not only provide an academic contribution to rural depopulation in certain countries, such as Japan but will also suggest support measures for regions facing continued depopulation due to the declining birthrate and aging population. The perspective of this research is not limited to problems unique to Japan but can provide advanced examples in Asian countries where declining birthrates and aging populations will become a problem in the future. Therefore, this study has the potential to generate both academic and societal contributions.

The remainder of this paper is structured as follows. Section 2 reviews previous studies on immigrant and migrant entrepreneurs and clarifies the positioning of this study. Section 3 explains the research area, data collection, and analytical method. Section 4 presents the results of the co-occurrence network analysis. Section 5 discusses the implications of the findings, and Section 6 concludes the paper by summarizing the main contributions and limitations.

## **2 Previous Studies on Immigrant and Migrant Entrepreneurs**

By reviewing previous research in Japan and other international contexts, the authors provide a comparison of what is meant by “immigrant” and “migrant” entrepreneurs, elucidating differences among motivations to migrate and defining the entrepreneurial aspects of those who migrate to create businesses in Japan.

The Oxford English Dictionary defines “immigrant” as “a person intending to reside abroad on a permanent basis,” while “migrant” is defined as “a person who moves continually from place to place in pursuit of a better life, usually through improved employment conditions.” Building on these definitions, this research emphasizes the analytical importance of distinguishing between the two classifications by examining how migration has shaped both the economic and social roles of these individuals.

In examining the new conceptual understanding of the field, authors have learned that immigrant entrepreneurs are integral to the community building aspect of local economies, as well as to the creative economy. Dheer [7] defines immigrant entrepreneurship as the process through which immigrants seek, create, and utilize resources within their host countries. According to Hunt [8], the economic success of immigrant entrepreneurs is largely attributable to their high levels of skills and their ability to leverage international and transnational networks. Kerr and Lincoln [9] demonstrate that high-skilled immigrants play a significant role in technological innovation, particularly through increased patenting activity in technology-intensive industries. Additionally, Allen and Busse [10] discuss how the intercultural exchange associated with immigrant entrepreneurship provides a multicultural business setting, which ultimately leads to the establishment of new products and new methods of conducting business. Baycan-Levent and Nijkamp [11] further state that they found evidence that immigrant entrepreneurship enhances creative output throughout cities and regions, as well as highlights the contribution of diverse cultural backgrounds to the creation of new types of ideas that inspire innovations. Similarly, Ndofor and Priem [12] illustrate that large numbers of immigrant entrepreneurs operate within high-growth business sectors and take full advantage of the business opportunities available to them in their new homes. They emphasize that, contrary to the assumption that many immigrants start businesses out of necessity, immigrant entrepreneurs more closely resemble market explorers who operate with strategic intent.

In addition, Dheer [7] indicates that immigrant entrepreneurs create entrepreneurial activity in their home country as well as in the host country, providing evidence that immigrants' skilled competencies and transnational ties can be beneficial to both businesses in the host country and the immigrant's country of origin. For instance, Wang [13] indicates that immigrant entrepreneurs in developing countries transfer their experiences from working as professionals to their communities, thereby providing externality advantages to the local population.

Moreover, from the point of view of immigrants and “strangers,” Simmel [14] shows how the concepts of “stranger” or “outsider” can be used to analyze the position of those who are entering into a new social grouping for the first time. More specifically, that the transfer of knowledge and technology, from outside sources, has the potential to generate new values within society. Building on the idea of “stranger,” Tokuda [15] provides a new definition for strangers; they are socially constructed beings who embody aspects of both resident and immigrant characteristics. Accordingly, research concerning immigration has emphasized that urban creativity is positively affected by the presence of individuals from diverse cultural and ethnic backgrounds within existing communities [16].

In Akasaka (2002), the author states that the term “outsider” is defined not by origin but by one’s actions and contributions to the local community, thereby emphasizing the importance of mutual understanding and adaptation between newcomers and residents. Kito (2002) reviews the effect of transformation and assimilation in interpersonal relationships in the context of the local environmental movement and suggests what role an outsider’s perspective could play in local development. Shikida (2003) classifies items brought from outside a region as sources of local technology transfer and regional change.

As previous studies indicate, traditional research on immigrant entrepreneurs has mainly focused on skills and networks, whereas this study focuses on the motivations of migrant entrepreneurs in Japan and elucidates their characteristics. It also examines the role of migrant entrepreneurs in contributing to local communities and promoting creativity and analyzes how the influx of new human resources from outside the region affects the regional development.

In doing so, this study aims to fill a gap in the existing literature by applying the knowledge of traditional immigrant entrepreneur research and showing the unique positioning of migrant entrepreneurs in Japan.

### 3 Method

#### 3.1 Overview of the Survey Area

Higashikawa Town, Hokkaido, is located in the center of Hokkaido, approximately 13 km from the center of Asahikawa City. The population peaked at 10,754 in 1950, but the population continued to decline after that, dropping to 6,973 in March 1993. The number of immigrants has increased since 1994, reaching 8,600 in 2023. This means that the number of people has increased by 1,700 (about 20%) over 30 years. The main reason for this population increase is the increase in immigration. The ratio of residents to all residents moving in is as high as 56.6%. The majority of these are immigrants who have moved in within the past 25 years [20].

Table 1: Major events in Higashikawa Town and the history of the furniture and woodcraft industry

Year	Major events
1955	Woodcraft Guidance Center (under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Commerce and Industry) opens. Matsukura Sadao is invited to be director.
1969	Higashikawa Town Business Promotion Association is formed. Construction of a woodworking complex begins.
1985	Higashikawa Town declares itself a "Town of Photography." The 1st Higashikawa Town International Photography Festival is held.
1994	The 1st National High School Photography Championship, "Photography Koshien '94," opens.
2003	Relocation support expands with subsidies for apartments and up to 1 million yen for start-ups.
2006	First presentation ceremony for the "Your Chair" Project. Higashikawa Tokyo Association is established.
2015	The first public Japanese language school in the country, Higashikawa Town, opens. NPO Daisetsuzan Nature School opens.

2016	The gallery and community hall of Higashikawa Town's cultural and artistic exchange facility "Centpure I" opens.
2018	The library and archives of Higashikawa Town's cultural and artistic exchange facility "Centpure II" opens.
2019	The Higashikawa Style Department is established in Higashikawa Town Hall (April 1, 2019).
2021	The first "Kengo Kuma & Higashikawa Town" KAGU Design Competition is held.

Source: Created by the author based on the Higashikawa Town History Editorial Committee [21] and the Higashikawa Town website.

Among the major industries in Higashikawa Town, agriculture remains the core sector. However, furniture and woodcraft industries are clustered in a specific area, with 28 small-scale furniture and equipment, clothing, handicraft, pottery, dyeing and weaving, and leather goods manufacturing businesses. This area is known as the "Craft Road" as a local tourism resource. To provide an overview of Higashikawa's historical background and the history of its furniture and woodcraft industries, the authors have compiled "Major events in Higashikawa and the evolution of its furniture and woodcraft industries" in Table 1.

The industry has continued for approximately 130 years since Higashikawa Village was established in 1897 when it was separated from Asahikawa Village. The main drivers of this industry were woodworkers who moved here when Western furniture production began in 1898. A woodworking complex was then developed in 1969, and the industry has continued to grow to the present day [22].

### 3.2 Data Collection and Analysis

In order to extract the factors that lead respondents to migrate, this study employed semi-structured interviews with respondents, investigating their current work situations, interactions with fellow craftspeople in the craftsmanship area around the Craft Road, and their thoughts on successors [20].

Table 2: Schedule of interviews with survey respondents

Date and time	Main business details of the survey target
2021/03/26 10:00-12:30	A: Manufacture and sale of wooden furniture, etc.
2021/03/26 15:00-16:00	B: Manufacture and sale of wooden furniture, toys, accessories, etc.
2021/03/27 15:00-16:00	C: Manufacture and sale of wooden furniture, etc.
2021/03/28 10:00-11:30	D: Manufacture and sale of wooden furniture, etc.
2021/03/29 15:00-16:00	E: Manufacture and sale of wooden furniture, etc.
2021/03/30 16:30-18:30	F: Production and sales of pottery and pottery classes

Source: Created by the author based on Nakajima (2023) [20].

The interview survey was conducted with six narrators on the above dates (Table 2). The authors examine why migrant entrepreneurs, who are originally treated as outsiders and have a very high possibility of relocating periodically, relocated to this area and establish long-term ties with the local community. In this study, it is assumed that migrant entrepreneurs do not initially intend to contribute to the sustainable development of the local community, but rather settle in

the area to fulfill their own dreams and desires. Responses from narrators regarding "current work," "interactions in the Crafts Road area," and "successors" are shown in Table 3.

Table 3: Narratives from Narrators Regarding Current Work, Interactions in the Craft Road Area, and Views on Succession

Narrators	Current work	Narratives about interactions in the Crafts Road area	Narratives about successors
A	<p>We want to make products that can be used for a long time using natural materials. We use wood from Hokkaido, and instead of using paints that are bad for the body, we use oils and vegetable dyes for the leather. We have 18 employees. All processes such as sawing, upholstering, painting, and packaging are done in our own workshop.</p>	<p>Some people have been living on the Craft Road for a long time, but in recent years the number of people moving here has been gradually increasing. I came from another town, so I'm not actively involved in the town or the local area. I don't have much contact with people who do woodworking in the area. However, recently, the Higashikawa Style Department was established in the town hall, so I may be involved in new work.</p>	<p>There are many people around me who have become independent, and quite a few of them are doing well. In addition to Higashikawa Town, they are in faraway places such as Tokyo and Nagano Prefecture. There are also gardeners who have become independent. After they became independent, we don't have much contact with each other.</p>
B	<p>We directly order educational toys from companies that deal in educational materials. We are proud that we can spread our knowledge nationwide from a small town like Higashikawa. We have six employees. We are in an environment where it is easy to obtain materials, machinery, consumables, etc. There is the Asahikawa Craft Design Association, which brings together nearby workshops, and we used this association as a foundation for our independence.</p>	<p>There was a time when we gathered in nearby workshops and thought up a general name for the area, and we came up with the name "Craft Road." The Asahikawa Craft Design Association holds exhibitions twice a year, one in Asahikawa City and the other in other areas. We also have monthly drinking parties, where we have the opportunity to interact with each other. Also, if there is a production request from the town hall, we plan to act immediately.</p>	<p>At my workplace, my daughter handles the teaching materials and my son manages the business side. One of them has also become independent. The relationships between the staff at the factory are very good, and it feels like we can do something new. I hope that someone who is still here will take over. Some of the staff are here on a short-term working holiday, and some are international students who are trainees.</p>

C	<p>We are doing great. It's all thanks to the local people. We are not originally from the area, nor do we belong to the town. But we have access to all the machinery, materials and other things we need. We believe that human relationships are the most important thing. Thanks to those relationships, we are able to make what we want to make. And so, we make a living by making things for others. We have 14 employees. Each person makes one product.</p>	<p>I frequently meet with narrator B. We each approach our work with creativity and individual ingenuity. My work is on display at the Higashikawa Town Hall "Centpure II" and other town facilities. I interact with the local community as a form of social interaction.</p>	<p>Some of them have already become independent and their businesses seem to be going well. There is one person who has become independent in Higashikawa Town. I haven't had any contact with him since he left. I think it's hard to do it alone. My son is helping me now, but I want him to learn how to make things first, and then I want him to manage the business.</p>
D	<p>I think we are more fulfilled mentally since we started doing things ourselves than when we were working for a company. We have a ton of materials here. We have two employees, a 77-year-old and another part-time worker.</p>	<p>I am very happy with the service I receive from the staff at the Higashikawa Town Hall. The Higashikawa Town Hall is supportive of small businesses like mine, as well as those who are new to the community; they are open to newcomers who produce and sell their own crafts or products. We are not competitors with each other. There is currently a demand for people to work in agriculture, and there are fewer young adults today who combine both woodworking and agriculture as there used to be in previous generations. If you know of any young people interested in either, please refer them to me.</p>	<p>I would like someone who really loves furniture and wants to do it to be my successor. The environment here is good, and it's spacious in the mountains. It's good to have someone who can do everything by themselves, but nowadays you have to be able to use a computer and do sales. If there's someone who can do everything by themselves, please introduce me to them.</p>
E	<p>Our customers are all over Japan. Thirty years ago, there was a sense that</p>	<p>I think narrator F has been familiar with the local situation for a long time. I know</p>	<p>There is no successor. I have accepted interns in the past. If someone asks me,</p>

	<p>wedding furniture and joinery were the best jobs. However, nowadays, artisans who make legs and crafts from other places are looked down upon. There is an accumulation of wood here. We don't have to compete or do the same thing. We want to create original products.</p>	<p>the people at the design center and the town hall staff. I am also a member of the Asahikawa Furniture Workshop Association. After living here for 30 years, you get to know a lot of things. There are about 50 members of community-reactivating cooperator squad, and I wonder what they will do when their term ends. I am also afraid that Higashikawa has become a so-called booming town, a town that is developing in terms of industry and living environment.</p>	<p>"What should I do if I want to do this kind of work?", I recommend a vocational training school. City office workers ask me, "Can I make a living?", but I answer that if you like it, you need to have the mindset of "I'll do it even if I can't make a living."</p>
<p>F</p>	<p>We are a couple who run a pottery class and an exhibition and sale. We feel that living in a town of about 10,000 people next to a big town is just right for us. This is because we can experience the good things of both a big town and a small town. People in small towns can use the facilities of big towns and use all the things of small towns. It is also good that it is easy to prepare the tools for work.</p>	<p>I have been involved in everything I can to get to know this region. 35 years ago (1986), a reporter from JR Hokkaido came to interview a nearby workshop, and the train's newsletter introduced the area as the Higashikawa Craft Road. That was the trigger for people in nearby workshops to start using the name. At the same time, the Asahikawa Craft Design Association was also established.</p>	<p>I teach pottery to other people's children. The connection with the community starts with interacting with the children. I have started receiving vegetables and fruits from farmers, but the farmers say they don't need any thanks.</p>

Source: Created by the author based on Nakajima (2023) [20].

In this study, the authors adopted a co-occurrence network analysis using KH Coder (KHC) text mining to identify common patterns in the results of the interview survey. KH Coder (KHC) is an open-source text mining software for analyzing Japanese text data. Among its analytical functions, a co-occurrence network is one of the functions for visualizing co-occurrence relationships between words and terms in a document. Since this survey focuses on the motivations that lead migrant entrepreneurs to depopulated areas, data related to motivations was extracted from the narrators' life stories.

## 4 Results

Using KH Coder's co-occurrence network, this study conducted a detailed analysis of text data related to "current work," "narratives about interactions in the Crafts Road area," and "narratives about successors." The results revealed the important roles and challenges faced by the Crafts Road and its surrounding areas in Figure 1 and the Japanese words represented in the co-occurrence network are explained in Table 4.

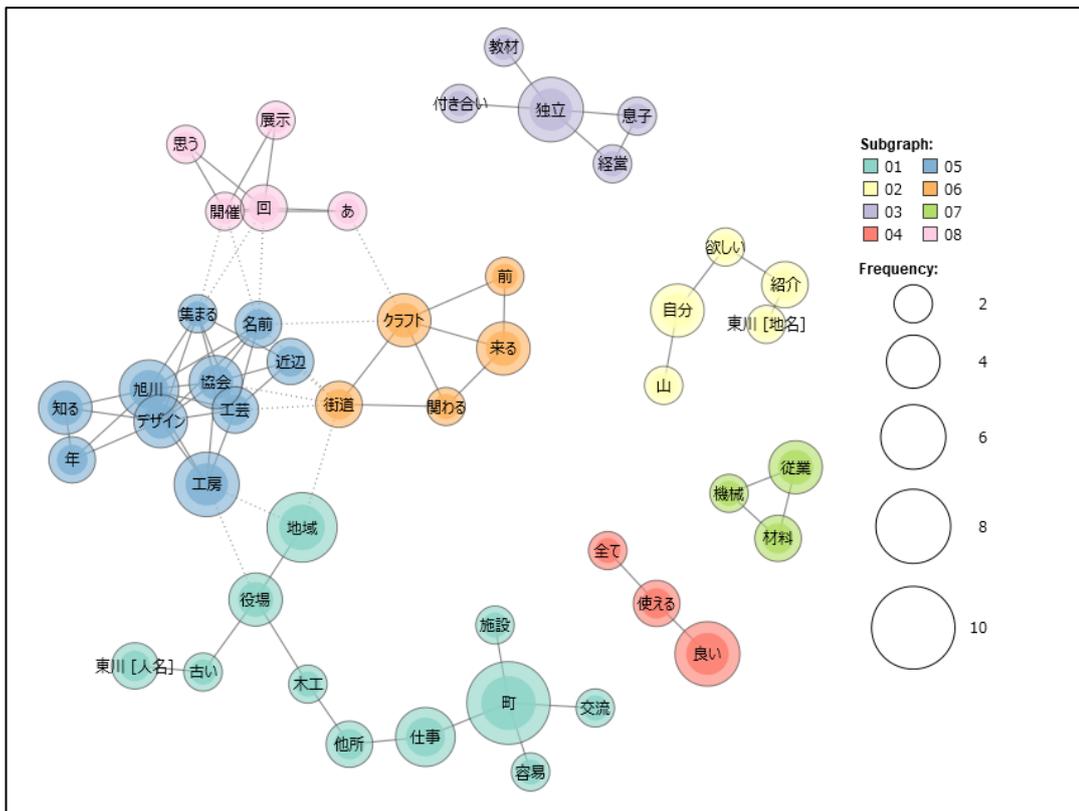


Figure 1: Results of the interview survey of immigrant entrepreneurs based on a co-occurrence network analysis

Table 4: English Translations of Key Terms Appearing in Figure 1

Japanese	Romanization	English
クラフト	<i>kurafuto</i>	craft
街道	<i>kaidō</i>	road
地域	<i>chiiki</i>	region
工房	<i>kōbō</i>	workshop
工芸	<i>kōgei</i>	crafts
デザイン	<i>dezain</i>	design
協会	<i>kyōkai</i>	association
役場	<i>yakuba</i>	town hall
木工	<i>mokkō</i>	woodworking
他所	<i>yoso</i>	other places
仕事	<i>shigoto</i>	work
独立	<i>dokuritsu</i>	independence/business start-up
息子	<i>musuko</i>	son
経営	<i>keiei</i>	management
教材	<i>kyōzai</i>	materials
自分	<i>jibun</i>	myself
良い	<i>yoi</i>	good
紹介	<i>shōkai</i>	introduction
旭川（地名）	<i>Asahikawa</i>	Asahikawa City
東川（地名）	<i>Higashikawa</i>	Higashikawa Town

Note: Only keywords related to the purpose of this research are extracted in this table.

Table 5: Frequency of key terms related to migrant entrepreneurs' motivations

Category	Keyword	Frequency	Interpretation
Cultural/industrial base	region	7	Local community as a social and economic space
	workshop	6	Place of production and interaction among artisans
	craft	4	Core concept representing local craft-based industry
	road	3	Spatial concentration of craft-related activities (Craft Road)
Institutional support	town hall	4	Local governmental and administrative support
	association	4	Collective organization facilitating collaboration
Individual motivation	independence	6	Desire for entrepreneurial autonomy
	myself	4	Self-realization and personal fulfillment
	management	2	Need for business and managerial skills
	good	1	Positive evaluation of work and lifestyle

Note: Only keywords related to the purpose of this research are extracted in this table.

First, it was confirmed that "craft," "road," and "region" are located at the center of the network and play very important roles in the overall context. In particular, the words "craft" and "road" are closely linked to each other, and activities and exchanges around the Craft Road are frequently mentioned in the narratives, suggesting that the Craft Road is a symbolic presence in the region as well as a center of cultural and economic value.

The co-occurrence analysis revealed that words such as "studio," "craft," "design," and "association" were strongly interconnected to themes related to craft, design, and association activities. The development of both traditional craft and contemporary design activities is a critical factor in the local economy, as well as the interaction between members of the local community. In addition, the appearance of terms such as "region," "town hall," "woodworking," "elsewhere," and "work" indicate strong links to both local community connection and professional activity within this category of study. Specifically, the words "woodworking" and "town hall" suggest that local specialty industries and government support are likely associated with the Craft Road activities.

The theme of succession and the challenges associated with achieving independence emerged as a third key finding. Words such as "independence," "son," "management," and "teaching materials" were found to occur together, and these words likely illustrate the process by which successors take over local craft production and the challenges involved in developing independence. In particular, the results indicate that providing knowledge about management and the tools required for independence is necessary for fostering the next generation of successor.

Craft activities and engagement within the local community extend beyond purely economic functions; they provide an avenue for personal growth through self-expression, experiencing emotional satisfaction, and establishing relationships with others (as denoted by the terms "myself", "good" and "introduction"). The words identified with inter-connection between regions, support the notion of cultural exchange by allowing for the flow of culture and ideas between regions. The results of this cultural exchange provide local residents with new ideas and assist in creating additional opportunities for revitalising the area. Collectively, these findings demonstrate that the Craft Road plays a crucial role in supporting sustainable development.

## 5 Discussion

The co-occurrence network analysis revealed the central role that the Craft Road plays in the local community. In particular, the words "craft," "road," and "region" were positioned at the core network, indicating that they form the cultural and economic foundation of the region. The Craft Road is a symbolic presence for local residents and tourists, and functions as a hub that connects local traditions and creativity. The frequent mention of the Craft Road is that local traditional crafts and contemporary design activities not only enhance the cultural value of the region, but also bring economic benefits. The impact of such activities on the local community goes beyond simple industrial promotion, contributing to the reconfiguration of regional identity and strengthening the bonds between residents.

The frequent appearance of words such as "studio," "craft," "design," and "association" shows the strong demand for a variety of craft and design-related activities along the Craft Road. These activities not only provide opportunities for revitalizing the local economy but also produce a special attraction for locals and visitors alike. Traditional crafts represent local cultures and serve as a tourist attraction to people coming from other areas. Conversely, modern design activities have opened up new markets and consumer bases. Taken together, the combination of these two

types of activity creates opportunities to integrate the cultural and economic value of the region and generate new business opportunities.

In terms of the relationship between the local community and government, the connection is highlighted by the co-occurrence of words such as "region," "town hall," "woodworking," "other places," and "work." Specifically, town hall appears as one way in which government agencies support the Craft Road by providing an institutional foundation for activities along the Craft Road

Government support is necessary for craft activities to continue growing and evolving. Such support includes funding, developing facilities and assisting in marketing craft activities.

The co-occurrence of terms such as "region" and "workshop" indicates that local communities serve as places of residence and professional activity. Local communities are more than just a place to live; they provide a place in which to work, have social interactions, and find self-realization.

Craft Road's operations focus on region-specific industries. By focusing on region-specific industries, Craft Road stimulates both local job growth through the various industries being established, as well as local social interaction through the many entrepreneurs working in those same industries. Therefore, Craft Road represents a central economic hub on which tradespeople in this region rely for their livelihood. Craft Road has identified two key challenges for its continued development: succession and independence from family-based businesses.

Several of the terms associated with Craft Road, including "independence," "son," "management" and "training materials," demonstrate that businesses along the road have encountered challenges with passing down traditional skills and craftsmanship across generations. Additionally, lack of these same skills and artisanship, combined with the current and future generations' inability to maintain their own independent craft businesses, will have a negative impact on craft businesses' ability to survive on Craft Road indefinitely. Many business owners have recognized that providing both management as well as educational resources is essential to training successors. Craft Road hopes that this support will encourage future generations of craft business owners to enter and sustain craft-based businesses.

Terms like "myself", "good", and "introduction" also suggest that the Craft Road represents more than just a way to earn money or engage in an exchange. providing a space in which individuals engaged in craft pursuits can express themselves through the creative process and their individual talents. Craft endeavors provide psychological rewards to people living in the region and foster a sense of achievement that helps create vitality within the entire area.

As phrases suggesting "inter-regional exchange" were identified, it became clear that the Craft Road is building a network with other regions. Such exchange has the potential to provide local residents with new perspectives and ideas, further diversifying the activities of the Craft Road. Connections with external regions are also expected to increase regional competitiveness, contribute to the development of new markets, and enhance cultural value.

## **6 Conclusion**

This study clarifies the motivations that lead migrant entrepreneurs to depopulated areas, who are originally treated as outsiders and therefore highly likely to migrate periodically, to settle for a long period of time. Focusing on the case of the case of entrepreneurs who moved to Higashikawa Town, this study examines whether they moved to a depopulated area and ended up settling there. As a result of interviews with six narrators about their life stories, it became

clear that the Craft Road not only serves as a cultural and economic base for the region but is also important as a place for self-realization and new exchanges. In light of these characteristics, it is possible to further increase the sustainability of the Craft Road by strengthening collaboration with the government, local residents, successors, and outside parties. The results of this analysis provide suggestions that can be applied in many regions as a practical model for regional revitalization.

Although this study's findings have various limitations, one of the main limitations of this research is the small sample size of six open-ended interviews. Accordingly, it is not possible to draw any general conclusions from these findings; further research is needed to determine whether or not similar results can be found in other depopulated areas or in communities that have different cultural/social backgrounds. Further research would enable a more thorough examination of how the acceptance of migrants into a community affects relationships between migrants and local residents overall.

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