

Estimating Vacant Houses Using Deep Learning with Satellite Embedding Dataset

—A Case Study of Kashiwa City, Japan

衛星画像情報を用いた深層学習による空き家数の推定に関する研究
—柏市を事例として

Table of Content

1. Introduction
2. Background on Vacant Housing Detection
3. Data Used in This Study
4. Estimating Vacant Houses Using Deep Learning
5. Model Validation in Kashiwa City
6. Conclusion and Future Strategy

1. Introduction

1.1 Research Background

1.2 Research Subject

1.3 Research Objective

1.4 Research Methodology

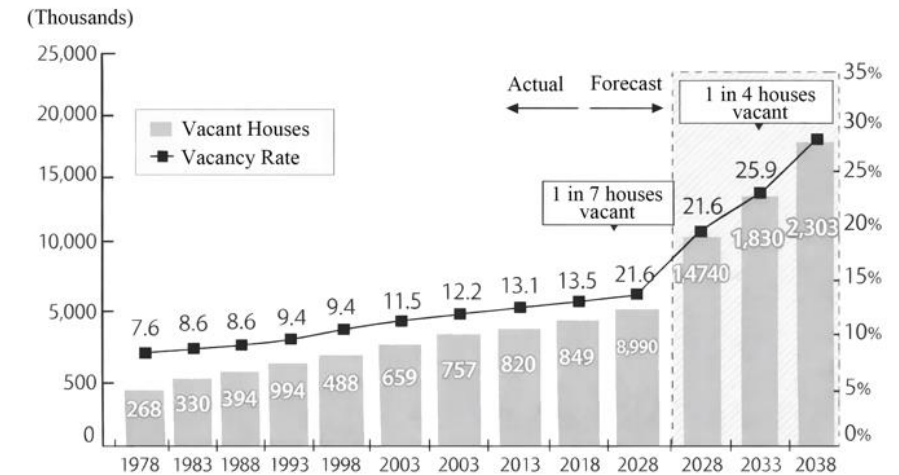
1.1 Research Background

Current situation

- **A major social problem in Japan**
- **Detection and monitoring required**
- 8.46 million vacant houses
- 13.6% vacancy rate

Need

- **A method support field surveys**
- **Providing vacant house information**



Trends in Vacant Houses in Japan



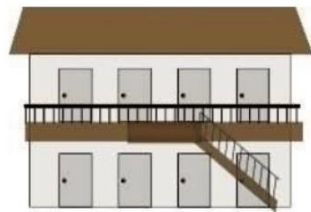
Source: Internet resources

1.2 Research Subject

- The subject of this research focuses on **vacant houses** from **145 cities** in **Japan** between **2020** and **2025** in block level. Vacant houses are classified into four official categories defined by the Vacant House Condition Survey.



二次的住宅



賃貸用の住宅



売却用の住宅



その他の住宅

Secondary dwelling
For-rent dwelling
For-sale dwelling
Other dwelling

Source: Housing and Land Survey

1.3 Research Objective

- Develop a framework that link **vacant house survey data** with **administrative blocks**.
- Apply **embeddings** as inputs to a deep learning-based vacant house estimation and validate the method in **Kashiwa City**.
- Evaluate the feasibility of vacant house estimation using only **open and free data** in Japan.

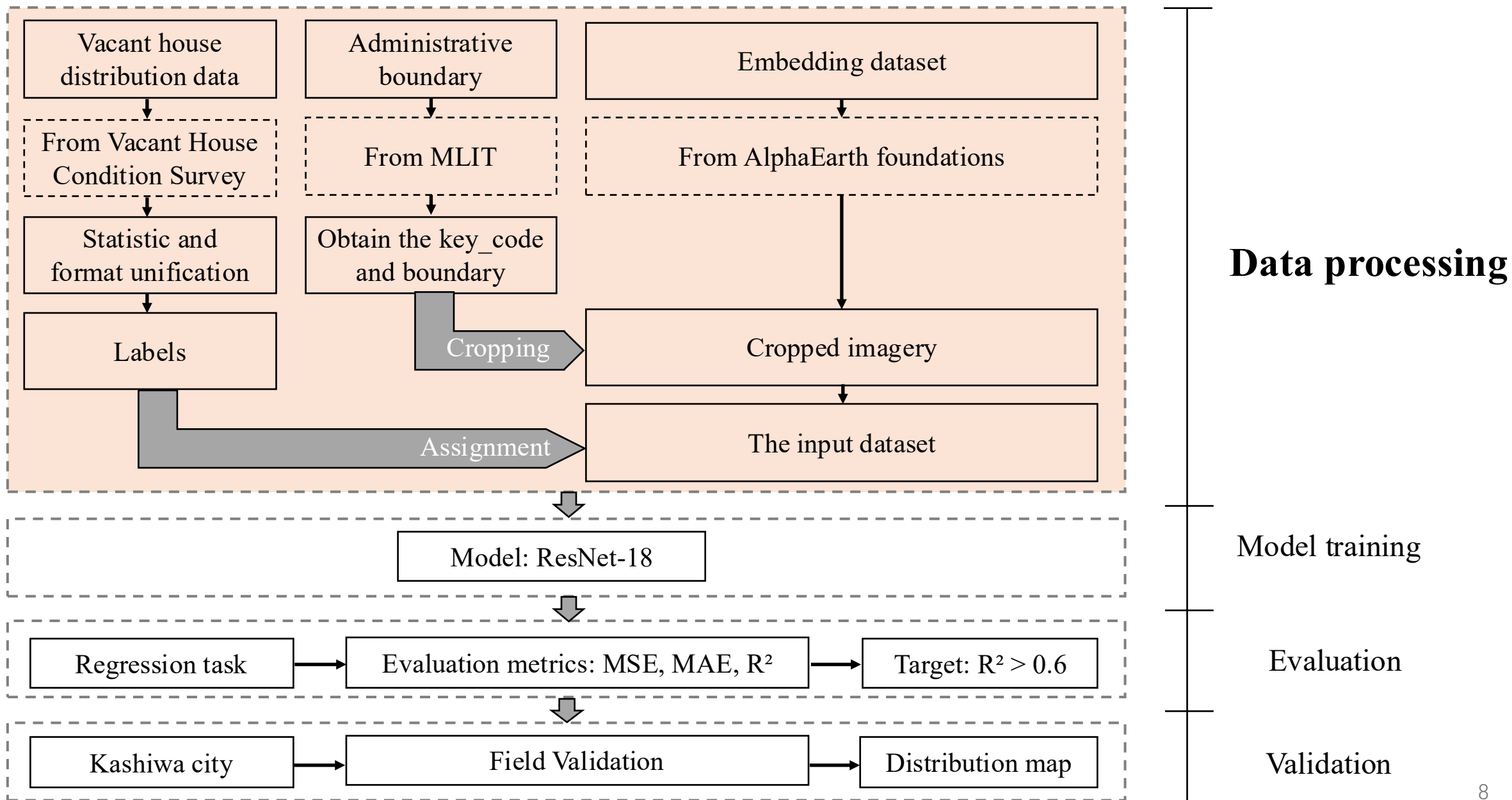


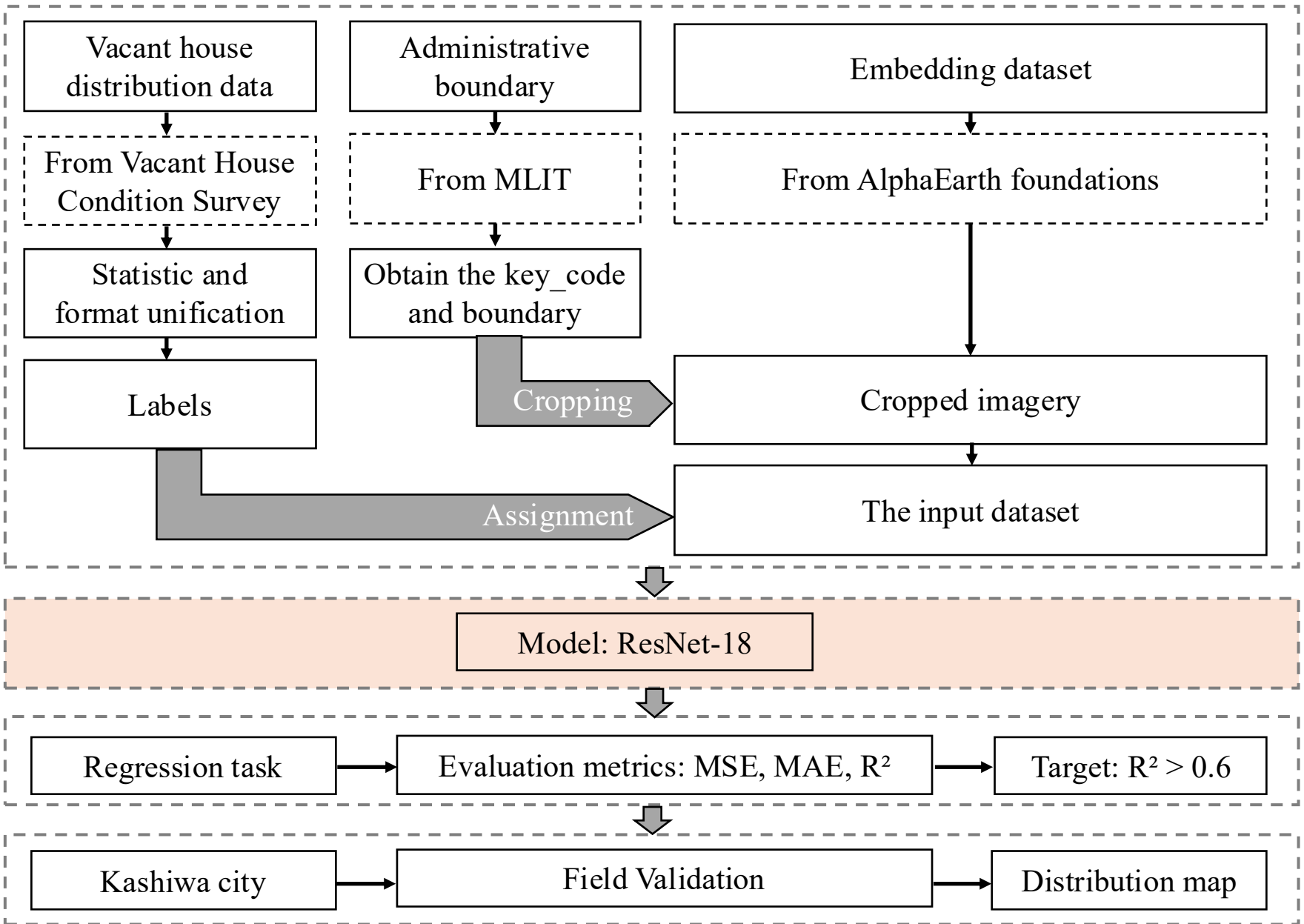
Source: Internet resources

1.4 Research Methodology

- First, datasets are integrated to generate labels and cropped satellite imagery.
- Second, the input data and labels are used to train the model based on ResNet.
- Then, model performance is evaluated using MSE, MAE, and R^2 , where $R^2 > 0.6$ is a satisfactory level for block-level vacant house estimation.
- Finally, the trained model is applied to Kashiwa City to generate spatial distributions and is supplemented by field surveys for model interpretation.

The next page presents the Research Methodology Flowchart



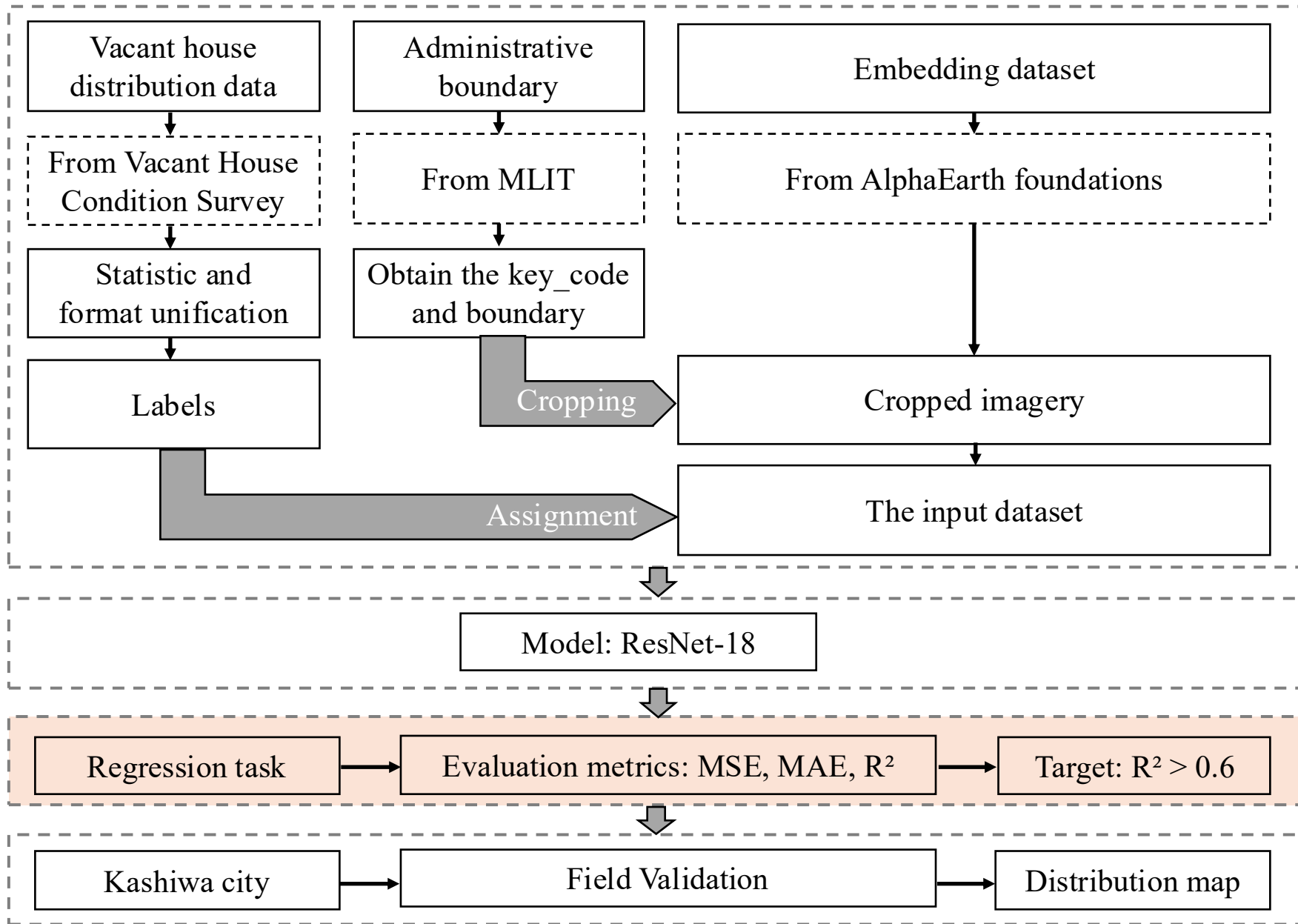


Data processing

Model training

Evaluation

Validation

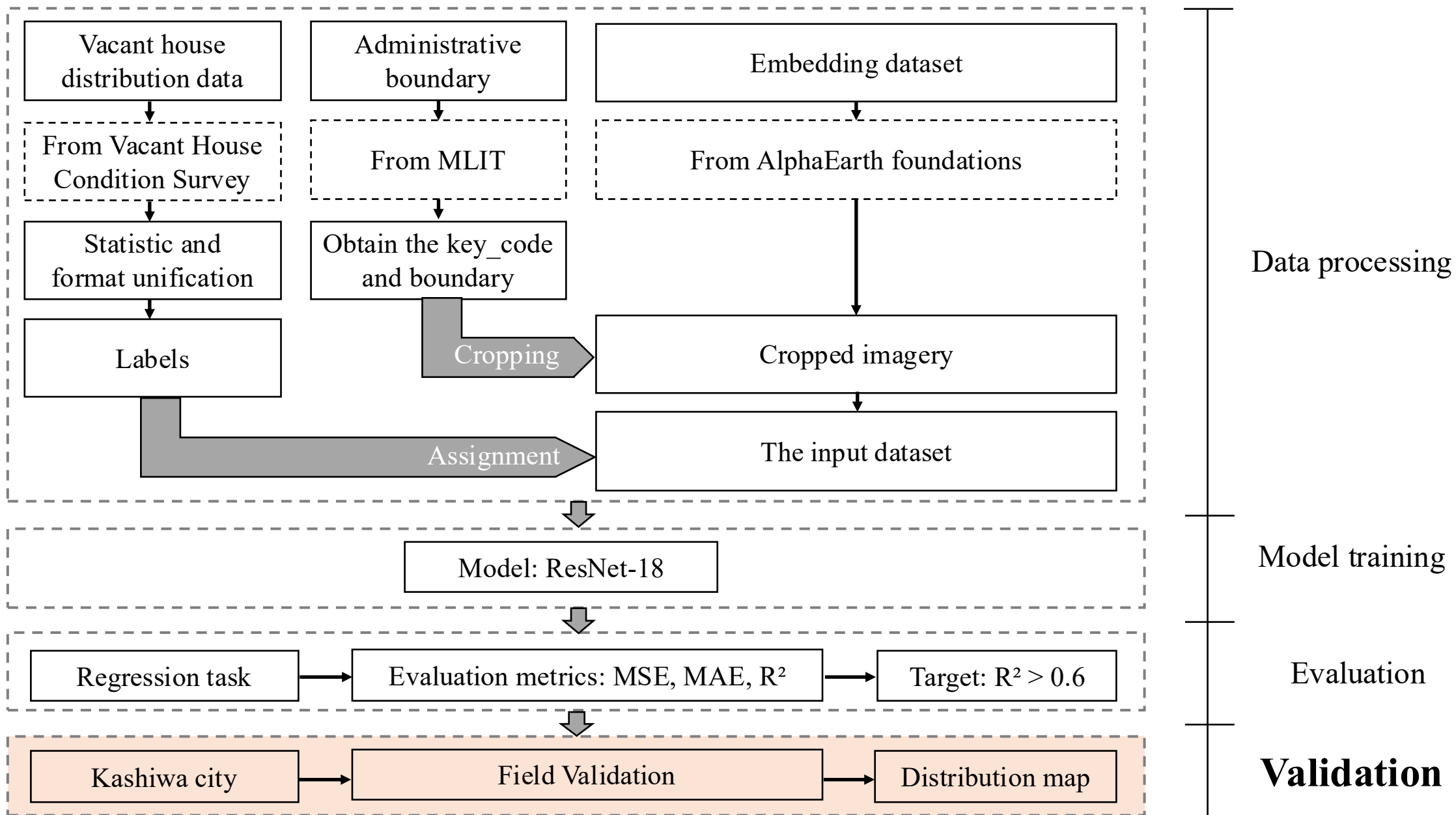


Data processing

Model training

Evaluation

Validation



2. Background on Vacant Housing Detection

2.1 Mechanism-Based Perspectives on Vacant House studies

2.2 Technology-Based Perspectives on Vacant House studies

2.1 Mechanism-Based Perspectives on Vacant House studies

Population Decline-Driven	Market Imbalance-Driven	Rapid Urbanization-Driven
Mechanism: population decline and aging, etc.	Mechanism: housing market failure, etc.	Mechanism: rapid urbanization
Region: Japan South Korea, etc.	Region: United States, etc.	Region: China, etc.
Ground Truth: not open government-acquired lists, etc.	Ground Truth: open government abandoned house lists, etc.	Ground Truth: not open human activates
Dataset: Census dataset, etc.	Dataset: Street View imagery, etc.	Dataset: Nighttime light, etc.
Task type: Regression, classification	Task type: classification	Task type: regression

2.1 Mechanism-Based Perspectives on Vacant House studies

Population Decline-Driven

Mechanism: population decline and aging, etc.

Region: **Japan**
South Korea, etc.

Ground Truth: not open government-acquired lists, etc.

Dataset:
Census dataset, etc.

Task type:
Regression, classification

Market Imbalance-Driven

Mechanism: market imbalance, etc.

Region: US, etc.

Ground Truth: open government abandoned house lists, etc.

Dataset:
Street view, etc.

Task type:
classification

Rapid Urbanization-Driven

Mechanism: population decline and aging

Region: China, etc.

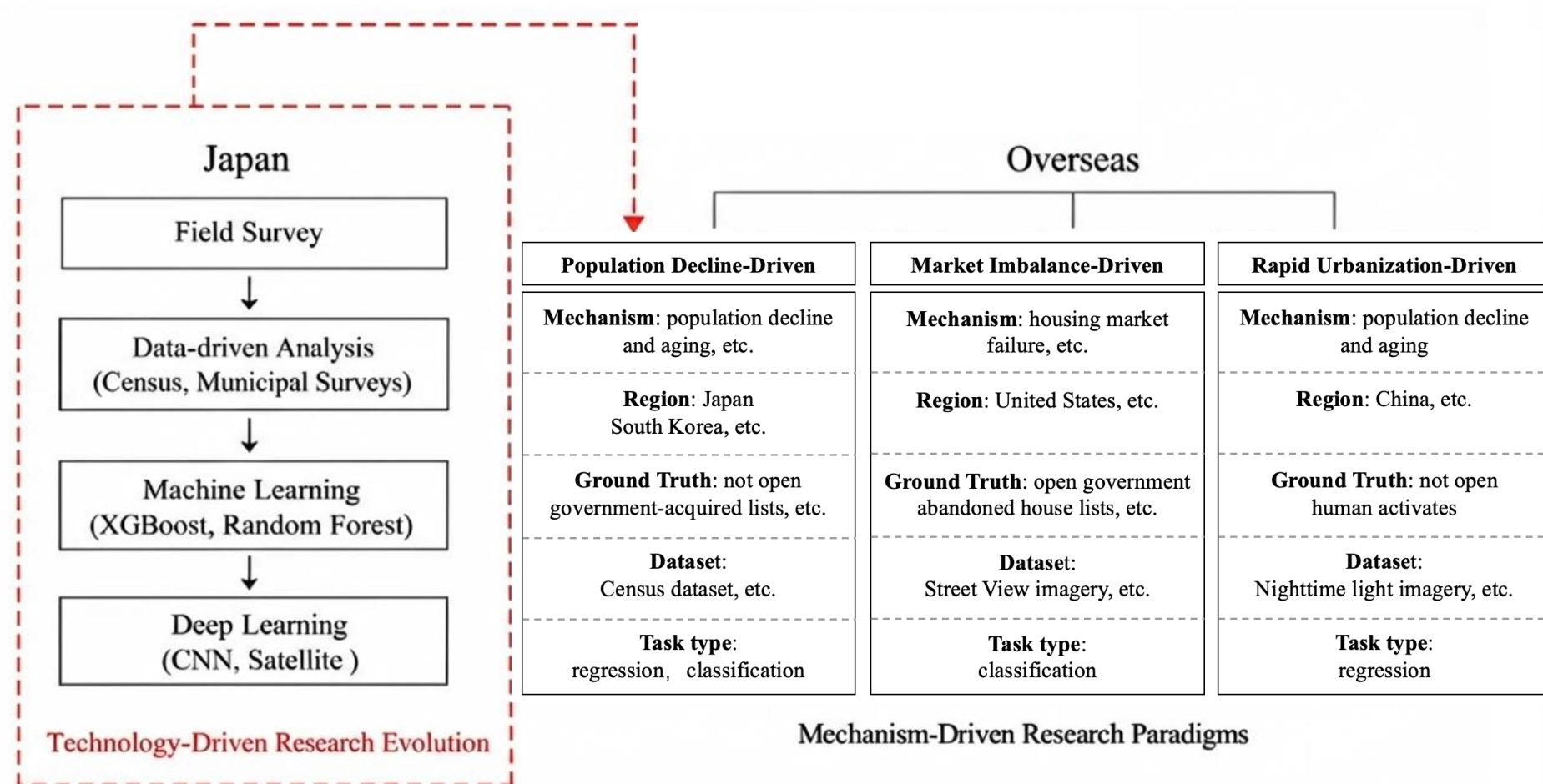
Ground Truth: not open human activates

Dataset:

Task type:
regression

- **Under this condition, ground truth data are not open due to privacy concerns.**
- **Studies rely on closed census datasets**
- **It is important to develop an estimation method suitable for Japan.**

Using Japan as a typical example to discuss the technological development of vacant house studies



2.2.1 Field Survey

Characteristics

- Vacant houses are identified through field surveys
- Provide detailed information

Limitations

- Require **time, money, and manpower**
- Unsuitable for large-scale monitoring



2.2.2 Data-Driven Analysis

Characteristics

- Faster than field surveys
- Utility usage data
- water supply, electricity supply, etc.

Limitations

- **Non-public data**
- Limited scalability
- Limited spatial resolution



Source: Internet resources

2.2.3 Machine Learning-Based Method

Characteristics

- **Combines more datasets**
- **Usually gives better results**

Limitations

- **Obtaining ground truth of vacant houses is difficult due to privacy concerns**

2.2.4 Deep Learning-Based Method

Characteristics

- Widely used for vacant house study
- Automatic feature learning

Limitations

- Black-box nature
- Hard to interpret

2.2.3 Machine Learning-Based Method

Characteristics

- Combines more datasets
- Usually gives better results

Limitations

- Obtaining ground truth of vacant houses is difficult due to privacy concerns

2.2.4 Deep Learning-Based Method

Characteristics

- **Widely used for vacant house study**
- **Automatic feature learning**

Limitations

- **Black-box nature**
- **Hard to interpret**

Limitations of Current Studies

- Reliance on **non-public** or proprietary data
- Ground truth collection requires **local cooperations**
- **Difficult to scale and apply to other regions**

What approach I want to create

- Use public and freely available datasets only
- Provide a fully reproducible estimation framework
- **All the datasets and the code will be made public**

3. Data Used in This Study

3.1 Vacant House Distribution Data

3.2 Japanese Administrative Divisions

3.3 AlphaEarth Foundations embedding dataset

3.1 Vacant House Distribution Data

Housing and Land Survey

(参考分析) 共同住宅の空き家についての分析
— 令和5年住宅・土地統計調査結果からの推計 —

住宅・土地統計調査は、全国約340万戸・世帯を対象に、5年に1度実施している基幹統計調査で、空き家についても調査の対象としています。空き家については、調査員が外観等から調査し、空き家の種類ごとに、外観等から判断できる建物の属性(建て方、構造、腐朽・破損の有無など)に関する結果を提供しています。

令和5年住宅・土地統計調査結果では、共同住宅の空き家は502万9千戸(空き家総数に占める割合は55.9%)となっており、空き家の種類別にみると、「賃貸用の空き家」が394万7千戸(共同住宅の空き家の総数に占める割合78.5%)と最も多く、次いで「賃貸・売却用及び二次的住宅を除く空き家」が84万8千戸(同16.9%)などとなっています。両者を合わせた「賃貸用等空き家」は479万4千戸と共同住宅の空き家総数の9割以上を占めています。(表1)

(注) 共同住宅の空き家の数は、その建物内に入る一つの住宅(空き家)の数です(以下同じ)。

表1 住宅の建て方、空き家の種類別空き家数及び割合—全国(2023年)

属性(戸)	総数	空き家の種類				賃貸用等 空き家 (①+②)
		賃貸・売却用及 び二次的住宅を 除く空き家 (①)	賃貸用の 空き家 (②)	売却用の 空き家 (③)	二次的 住宅 (④)	
総数	9,001,600	3,856,000	4,435,800	326,200	383,500	5,291,800
一戸建	3,523,300	2,851,100	212,600	190,800	288,800	3,063,700
マンション	418,400	136,500	271,000	5,500	6,000	402,500
共同住宅	5,028,900	847,600	3,946,700	128,900	165,800	4,794,200
その他	30,000	20,800	5,600	700	2,900	26,400
割合-1 (%) ①		55.9	9.4	43.8	1.4	1.2
割合-2 (%) ②			100.0	16.9	78.5	2.6
					2.1	96.3

① 空き家の総数に占める割合

② 共同住宅の空き家の総数に占める割合

資料:総務省統計局「令和5年住宅・土地統計調査」

今回、空き家の更なる分析に資するため、令和5年住宅・土地統計調査結果データを用いて、共同住宅の空き家総数の9割以上を占める「賃貸用等空き家」について、同じ建物内にある他の居住世帯の情報などを基に住宅の属性(所有の種類(民営・民営以外)、建築の時期及び床面積)を推定し、これらの住宅数等の推計を行いました。

なお、住宅・土地統計調査では、空き家については、所有の種類などの住宅の属性を調査しておらず、本稿における結果は、一定の仮定の下に推計を行った参考分析結果であることに御留意ください。

- Published by the nationwide government
- Provides estimated information

Vacant House Condition Survey

千葉県空家等対策計画

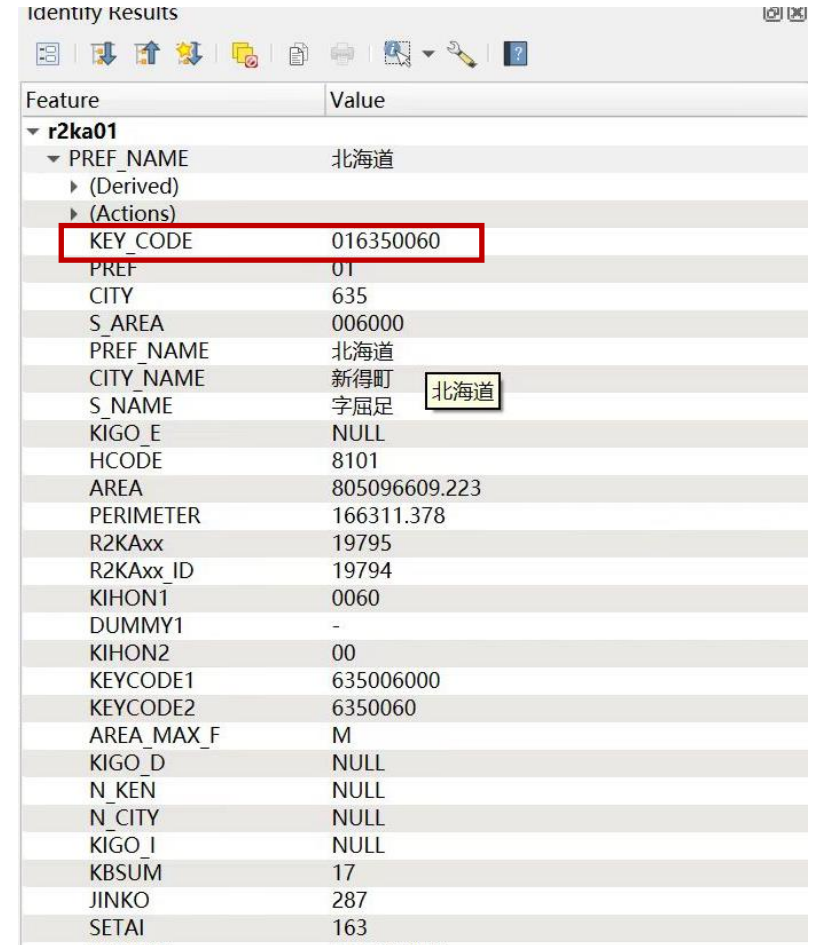
令和6年3月
千葉県

- Published by local government
- Based on field surveys
- More detailed information

Used this one as the ground truth

3.2 Japanese Administrative Boundary

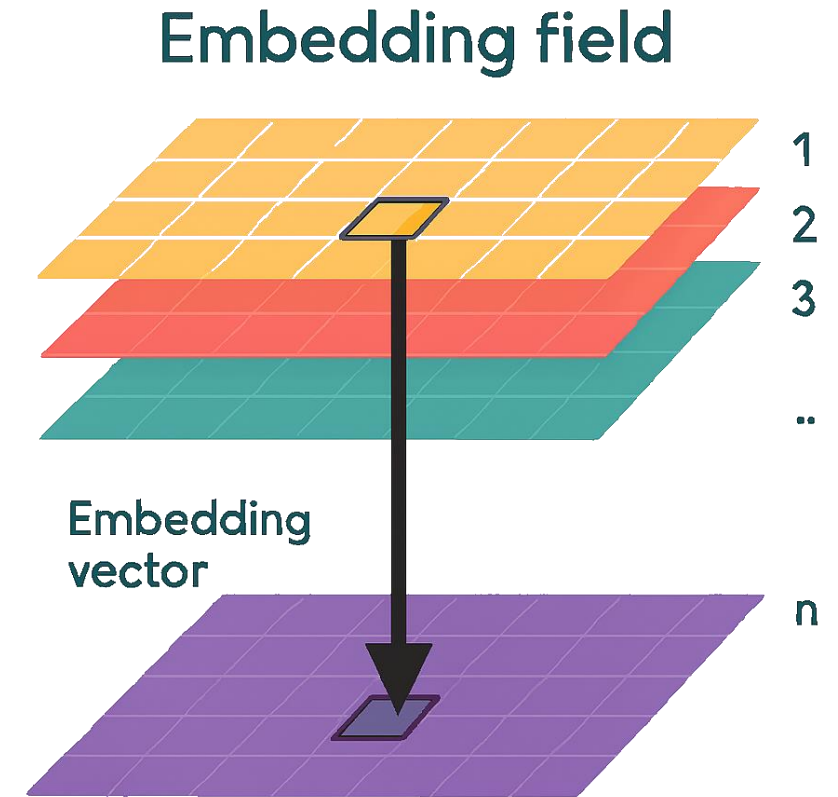
- Provided by the Ministry of Land, Infrastructure, Transport, and Tourism (**MLIT**)
- Get the **KEY_CODE** for each city block
- It is an important bridge connecting embeddings with vacant house information



Feature	Value
▼ r2ka01	
▼ PREF_NAME	北海道
▶ (Derived)	
▶ (Actions)	
KEY_CODE	016350060
PREF	01
CITY	635
S_AREA	006000
PREF_NAME	北海道
CITY_NAME	新得町
S_NAME	字屈足
KIGO_E	NULL
HCODE	8101
AREA	805096609.223
PERIMETER	166311.378
R2KAxx	19795
R2KAxx_ID	19794
KIHON1	0060
DUMMY1	-
KIHON2	00
KEYCODE1	635006000
KEYCODE2	6350060
AREA_MAX_F	M
KIGO_D	NULL
N_KEN	NULL
N_CITY	NULL
KIGO_I	NULL
KBSUM	17
JINKO	287
SETAI	163

3.3 AlphaEarth Foundations embedding dataset (AEF)

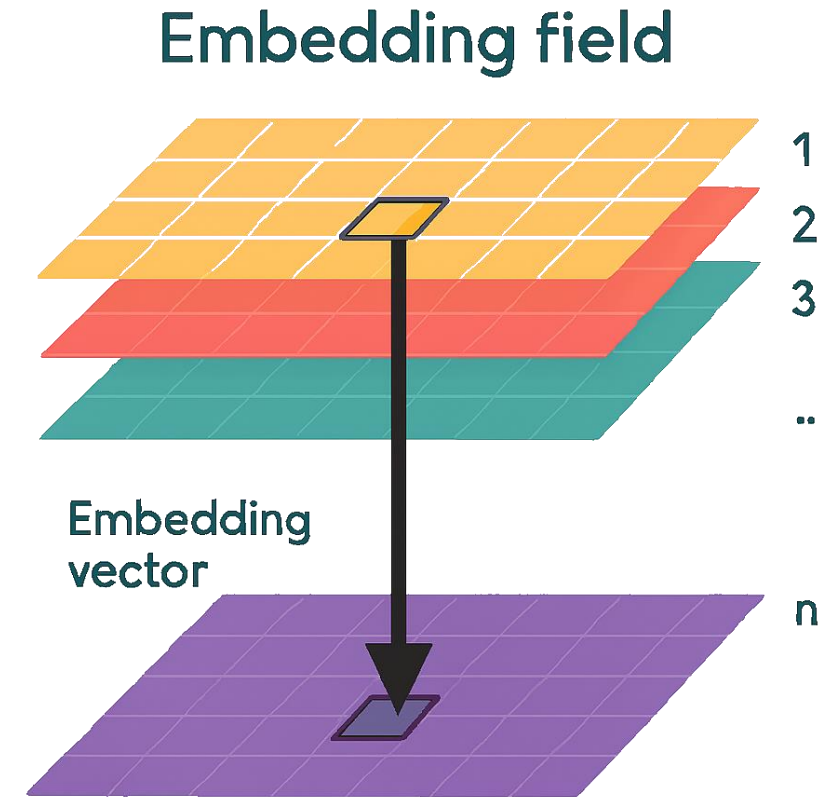
- **Developed by Google DeepMind, Sep 2025**
- **Multi-modal:** optical, radar, LiDAR, climate, text
- **10 m resolution**, 64-dim embeddings, annual
- **Designed for mapping and detection research**
- **Applications: land use**, disaster monitoring, etc.



Source: Internet resources

3.3 AlphaEarth Foundations embedding dataset (AEF)

- Embedding means turning complex data into a small set of numbers that only **keep the essential information**, which makes them more **suitable for model training**.
- This is one of the early studies that applies embeddings to vacant house estimation.



Source: Internet resources

Training Data Sources for AlphaEarth Foundations Model

- Embedding is one of its products
- Not only visual appearance
- But also land use
- Environmental context
- Human activity patterns, etc.

Type	Dataset
Optical	Sentinel-2
Optical, Thermal	Landsat-8, Landsat-9
C-band SAR	Sentinel-1A, Sentinel-1B
L-band SAR	ALOS PALSAR ScanSAR
Elevation	Copernicus DEM
LiDAR	GEDI
Climate	ERA5-Land
Gravity fields	GRACE
Land cover	National Land Cover Database
Text	Wikipedia
Text	GBIF

4. Estimating Vacant Houses by Using Deep Learning

4.1 Label Construction

4.2 Model Input Construction

4.3 Model Training and Evaluation

4.1 Label Construction

Labels

町名	建物棟数	空家等		特定空家等 (空家等の内数)		特定空家等/空家等 割合
		棟数	割合	棟数	割合	
東 央 部	川原町	434棟	19棟 4.4%	3棟 0.7%	15.7%	
	深堀町	1,515棟	72棟 4.8%	13棟 0.9%	18.0%	
	駒場町	531棟	14棟 2.6%	0棟 0.0%	0.0%	
	広野町	142棟	1棟 0.7%	0棟 0.0%	0.0%	
	湯浜町	616棟	29棟 4.7%	7棟 1.1%	24.1%	
	湯川町1丁目	589棟	35棟 5.9%	10棟 1.7%	28.5%	
	花園町	793棟	21棟 2.6%	5棟 0.6%	23.8%	
	湯川町2丁目の一部	618棟	43棟 7.0%	4棟 0.6%	9.3%	
	湯川町3丁目の一部	195棟	9棟 4.6%	2棟 1.0%	22.2%	
	日吉町3丁目の一部	25棟	2棟 8.0%	0棟 0.0%	0.0%	
根崎町の一部	26棟	2棟 7.7%	1棟 3.8%	50.0%		
地区計	5,484棟	247棟 4.5%	45棟 0.8%	18.2%		

- To ensure consistency, directly extracted KEY_CODE from administrative boundary shapefiles.

```

PROBLEMS 2 OUTPUT DEBUG CONSOLE TERMINAL PORTS
196 字松川 472010721
197 松川一丁目 47201072201
198 松川二丁目 47201072202
199 松川三丁目 47201072203
200 三原一丁目 47201073001
201 三原二丁目 47201073002
202 三原三丁目 47201073003
203 字寄宮 472010741
204 寄宮一丁目 47201074201
205 寄宮二丁目 47201074202
206 寄宮三丁目 47201074203
207 None 472010750
208 住吉町一丁目 47201076001
209 住吉町二丁目 47201076002
210 住吉町三丁目 47201076003
211 字当間 472010770
212 字鏡水 472010780
213 松島一丁目 47201079001
214 松島二丁目 47201079002
215 おもろまち一丁目 47201080001
216 おもろまち二丁目 47201080002
217 おもろまち三丁目 47201080003
218 おもろまち四丁目 47201080004
○ yino@yinoAir ~ %

```

4.1 Label Construction

- The survey data are provided at **three different levels of detail**.
- It is necessary to develop a method to transform them **into the same level**.
- Sheet 1: records **the number of vacant houses**
- Sheet 2: defines **the mapping between survey records and KEY_CODES**.

City-level

prefecture	city	Vacant house
福井県	あわら市	619

District-level

地区名	調査日	件数
葦崎地区	9月11日	117件
穂坂地区	7月12日	51件
藤井地区	8月10日	42件

Chome-level

町名	建物棟数	空家等	
		棟数	割合
川原町	434棟	19棟	4.4%
深堀町	1,515棟	72棟	4.8%
駒場町	531棟	14棟	2.6%

Why a $\log(1 + x)$ transformation is necessary

Reducing label imbalance

- Vacant house counts are highly uneven, with many zeros and a few very large values. The $\log(1 + x)$ transformation reduces the influence of extreme values.

Preserving zero values

- Many blocks contain zero vacant houses, which are meaningful observations. Using $\log(1 + x)$ keeps zero values valid:

$$x = 0 \rightarrow \log(1) = 0$$

Vacant House Count

0

1

10

100



Transformed Value

$\log(1) = 0.0000$

$\log(2) = 0.6931$

$\log(11) = 2.3979$

$\log(101) = 4.6151$

4.3 Model Training and Evaluation

Supervised Learning

- A supervised model learns only what the labels define.
- Each training sample is constructed as an image–label pair:

$$(x_i, y_i)$$

x_i : block-level satellite embedding representing the spatial pattern of the area

y_i : observed number of vacant houses within the block

4.3 Model Training and Evaluation

The model learns a regression function:

$$\hat{y}_i = f(x_i)$$

- Maps block-level patterns to a single number.
- This number represents the value of vacant houses.

Training reduced the difference between estimation and label:

$$\min \sum_i (\hat{y}_i - y_i)^2$$

4.3 Model Training and Evaluation

- This study focuses more on framework design rather than model accuracy
- chose ResNet-18 as a lightweight and stable baseline.

Regression Metrics

- **MSE:** Mean squared error, ≥ 0 . Lower is better.
- **MAE:** Mean absolute error, ≥ 0 . Lower is better.
 - where y_i denotes the observed vacant house count for block i ,
 - \hat{y}_i is the corresponding model prediction,
 - and N is the number of validation samples.
- **R^2 :** Goodness of fit, $R^2 \leq 1$. Closer to 1 means better prediction
 - where \bar{y} is the mean of the observed vacant house counts.
 - An R^2 value closer to 1 indicates stronger explanatory power,
 - while values near 0 suggest limited predictive capability.

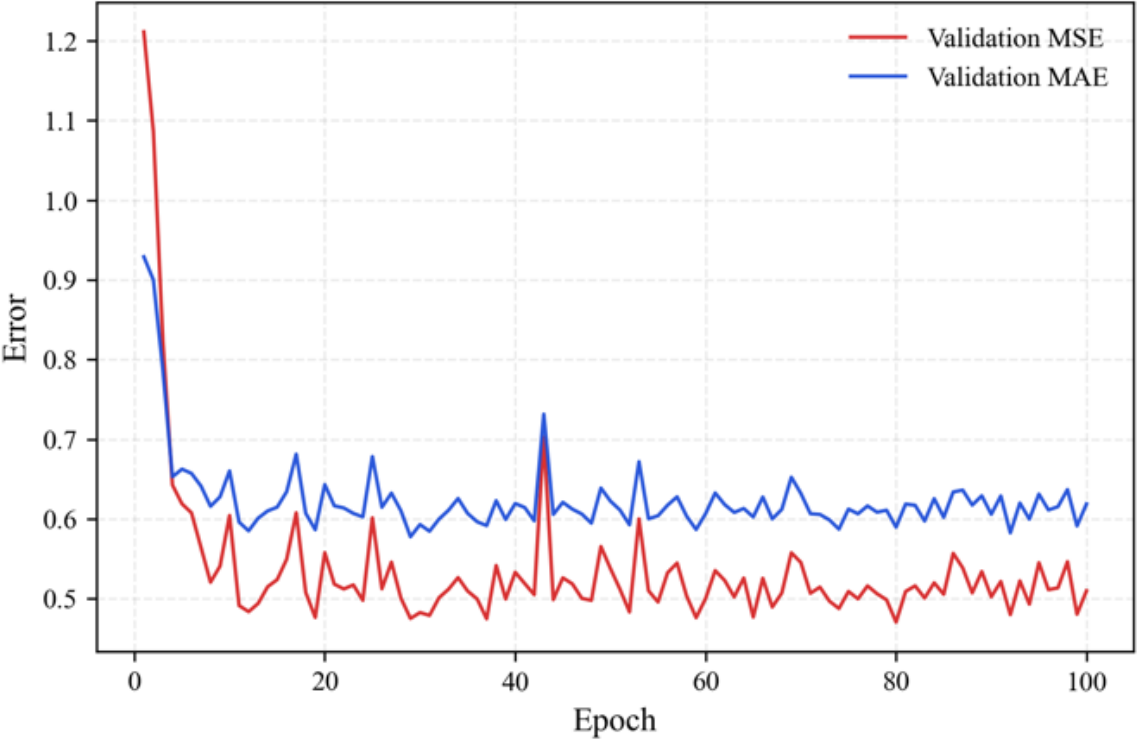
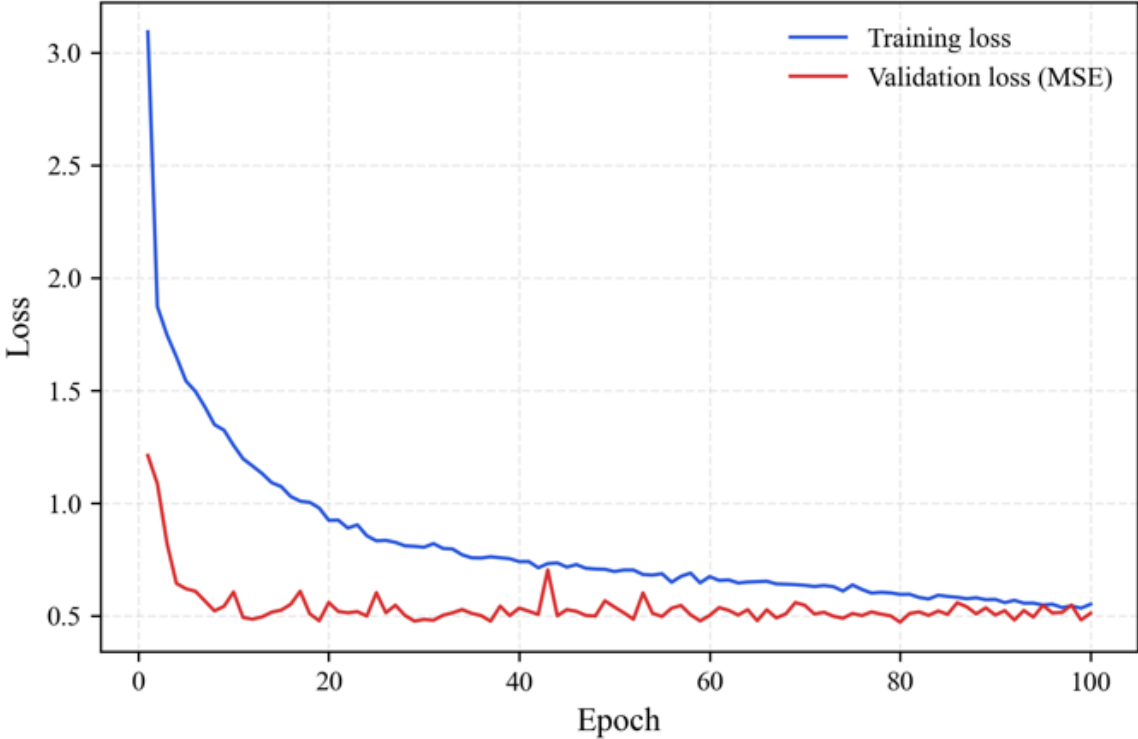
$$\text{MSE} = \frac{1}{N} \sum_{i=1}^N (\hat{y}_i - y_i)^2$$

$$\text{MAE} = \frac{1}{N} \sum_{i=1}^N |\hat{y}_i - y_i|$$

$$R^2 = 1 - \frac{\sum_{i=1}^N (y_i - \hat{y}_i)^2}{\sum_{i=1}^N (y_i - \bar{y})^2}$$

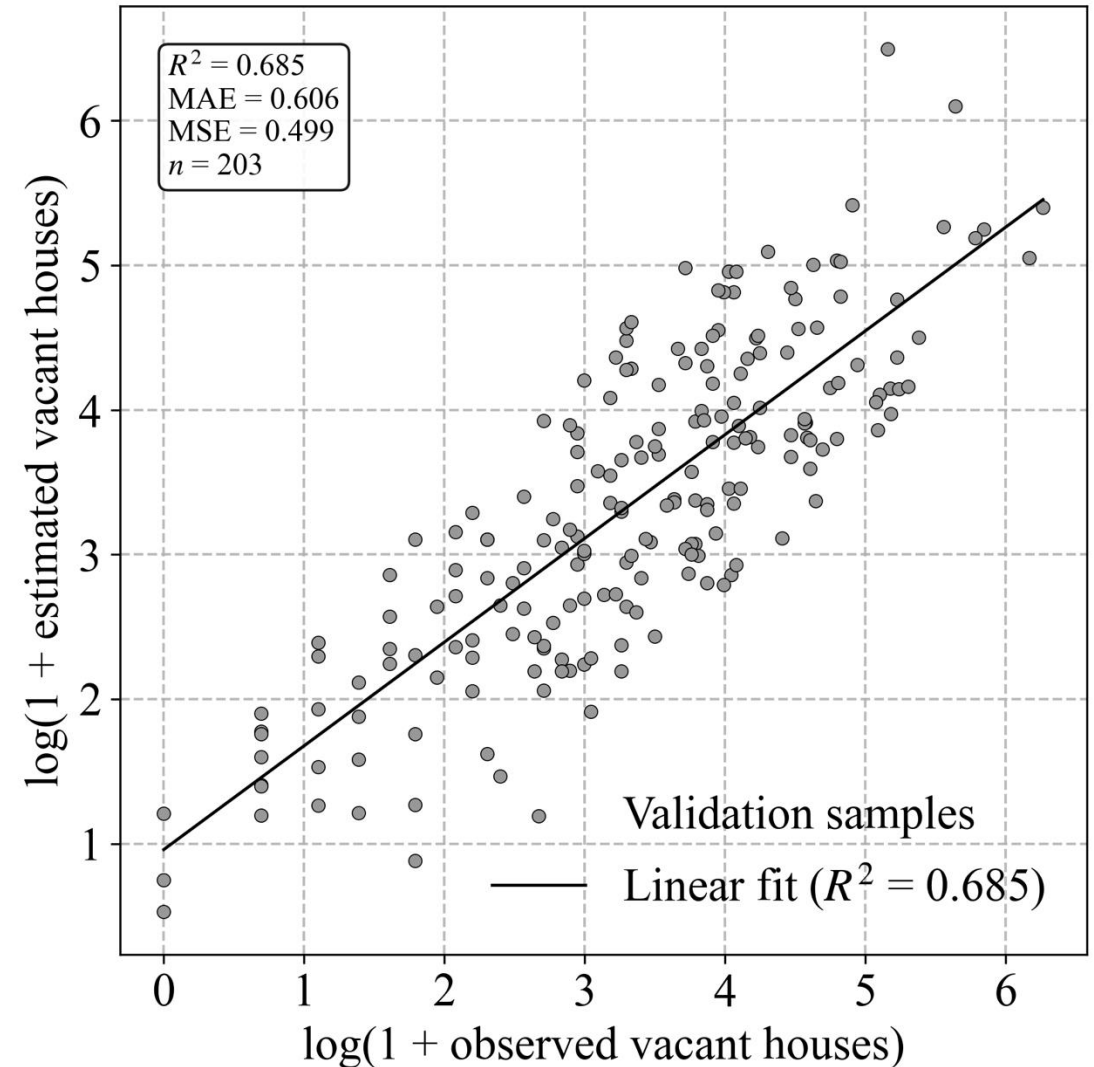
4.3 Model Training and Evaluation

- The MSE is around 0.5, and the MAE is around 0.6.



4.3 Model Training and Evaluation

- The input data **lack strong proxies** such as **water** or **electricity usage**
- A Model performance at the **block level** is stable and reasonable.
- An **R^2** of approximately **0.69** is **reasonable**. Indicating that the model captures the dominant spatial variation in vacant house intensity across blocks.



5. Model Validation in Kashiwa City

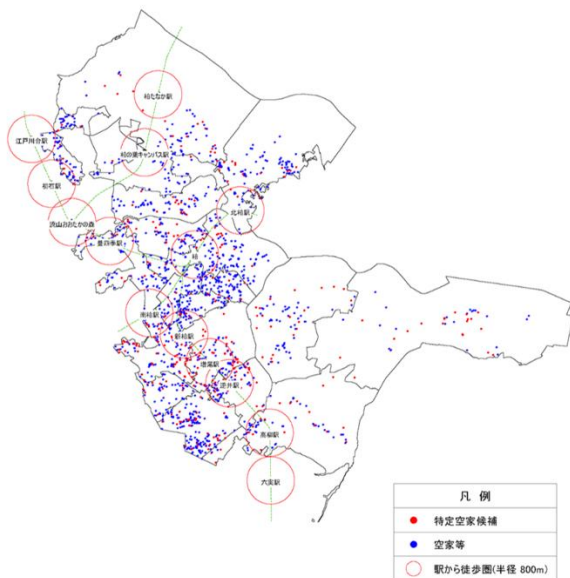
5.1 Overview of vacant houses in Kashiwa city

5.2 Block-level estimation results in Kashiwa city

5.3 Error-based Pattern Analysis with Field Survey

5.4 Summary of Findings

5.1 Overview of vacant houses in Kashiwa

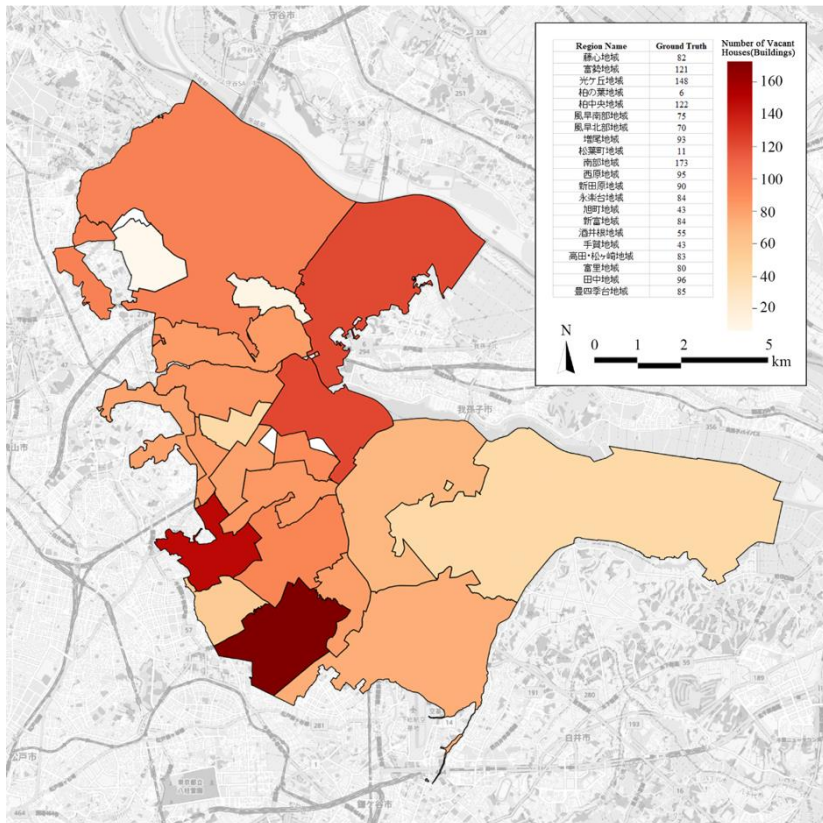


	空家等総数	空家等	特定空家等候補
平成29年度	1,631件	1,405件 (86.1%)	226件 (13.9%)
令和4年度	1,739件	1,367件 (78.6%)	372件 (21.4%)
増減	+108件 (+6.6%)	-38件 (-2.7%)	+146件 (+64.6%)

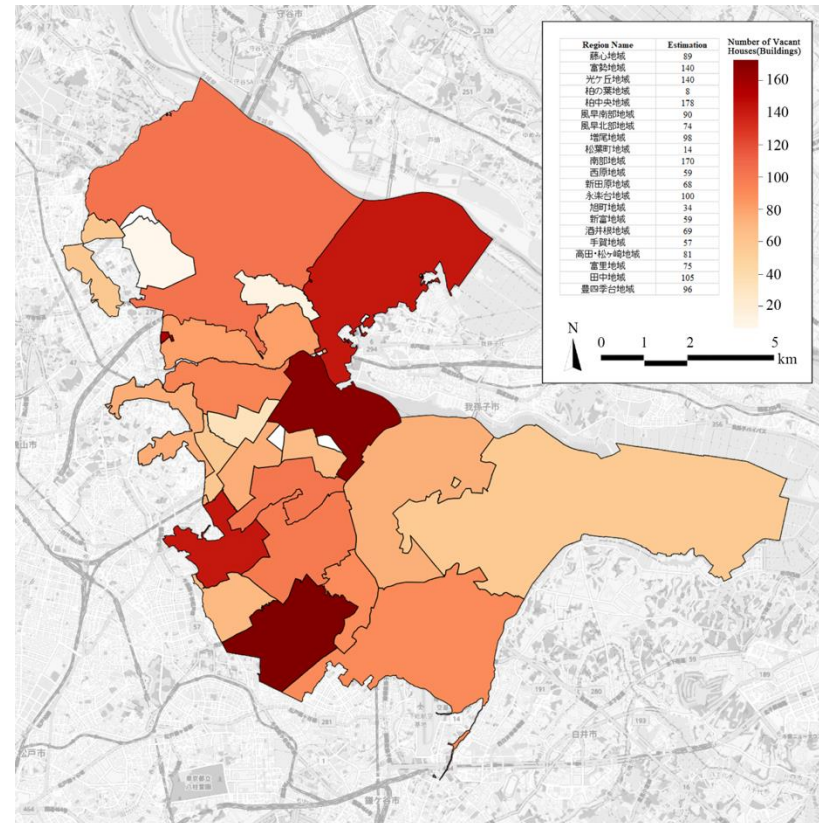
- A typical suburban city in Tokyo
- Common housing structures and vacancy patterns.
- Suitable for testing **model generalizability** rather than case-specific performance.

Source: Vacant House Condition Survey, Kashiwa City, 2023

Ground Truth



Model Estimation



- Captured the trend
- Similar overall color pattern
- Consistent hotspot locations

Region Name	Ground Truth	Estimation	Error
藤心地域	82	89	7
富勢地域	121	140	19
光ヶ丘地域	148	140	-8
柏の葉地域	6	8	2
柏中央地域	122	178	56
風早南部地域	75	90	15
風早北部地域	70	74	4
増尾地域	93	98	5
松葉町地域	11	14	3
南部地域	173	170	-3
西原地域	95	59	-36
新田原地域	90	68	-22
永楽台地域	84	100	16
旭町地域	43	34	-9
新富地域	84	59	-25
酒井根地域	55	69	14
手賀地域	43	57	14
高田・松ヶ崎地域	83	81	-2
富里地域	80	75	-5
田中地域	96	105	9
豊四季台地域	85	96	11

Average: 82.81 85.90 13.57

Surveyed Areas

Correct Estimation

Kashiwanoha (3 vacant houses)

Small Error

Toyoshikidai (12 vacant houses)

Large Error

Kashiwa Chuo (15 vacant houses)

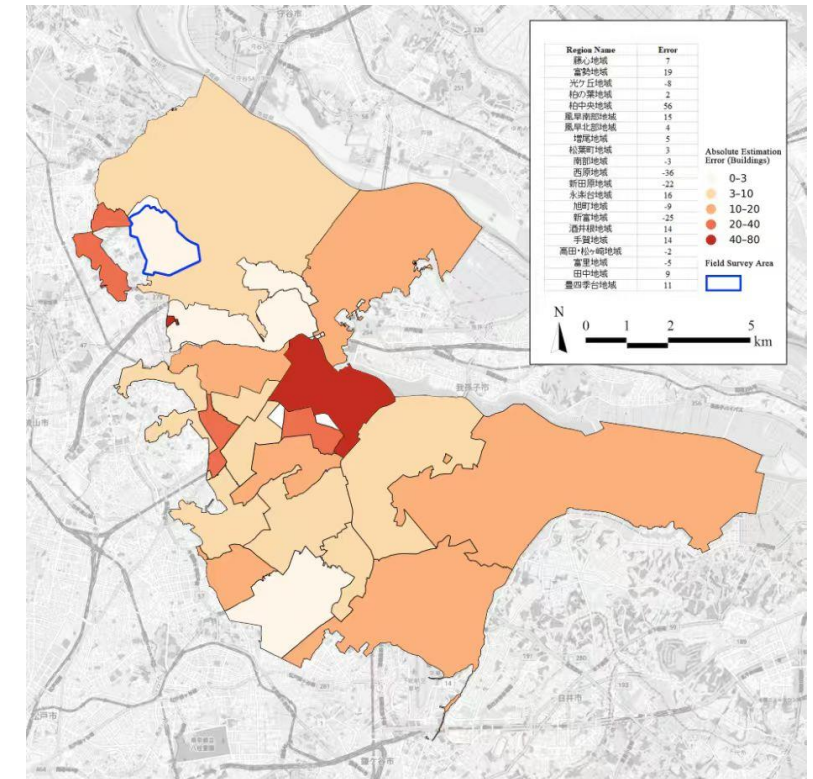
5.3.1 Correct Estimation: Kashiwanoha Area Vacant Houses: Few

Spatial Patterns:

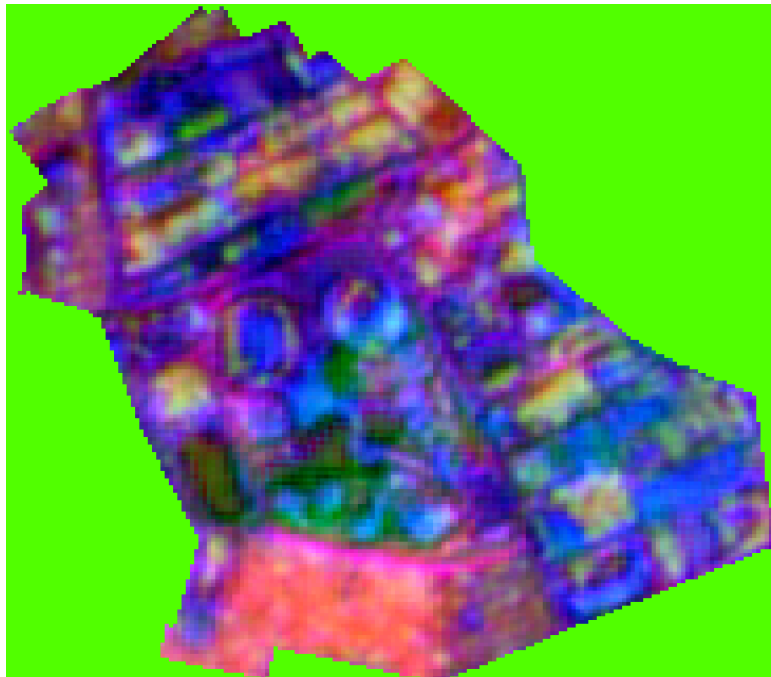
- Highly scattered distribution
- Low diversity in buildings

Interpretation:

- The model captures low-frequency, block-level patterns
- Such patterns match the model's representation capacity



5.3.1 Correct Estimation: Kashiwanoha Area



Satellite embedding



Traditional satellite image

- **Low building density**
- **Simple structure**
- **Lead to a small number of vacant houses**

Ground-truth: 6

Estimation: 8

Error: +2

Sample 1

Latitude: 35.890671

Longitude: 139.244845

Plan View (GIS-based) and Field Photo Location



Sample 2

Latitude: 35.886847

Longitude: 139.939422

Plan View (GIS-based) and Field Photo Location



Sample 3

Latitude: 35.879916

Longitude: 139.940622

Plan View (GIS-based) and Field Photo Location



Many human activity

Well-maintained surroundings

5.3.3 Large Error: Kashiwa Chuo Area

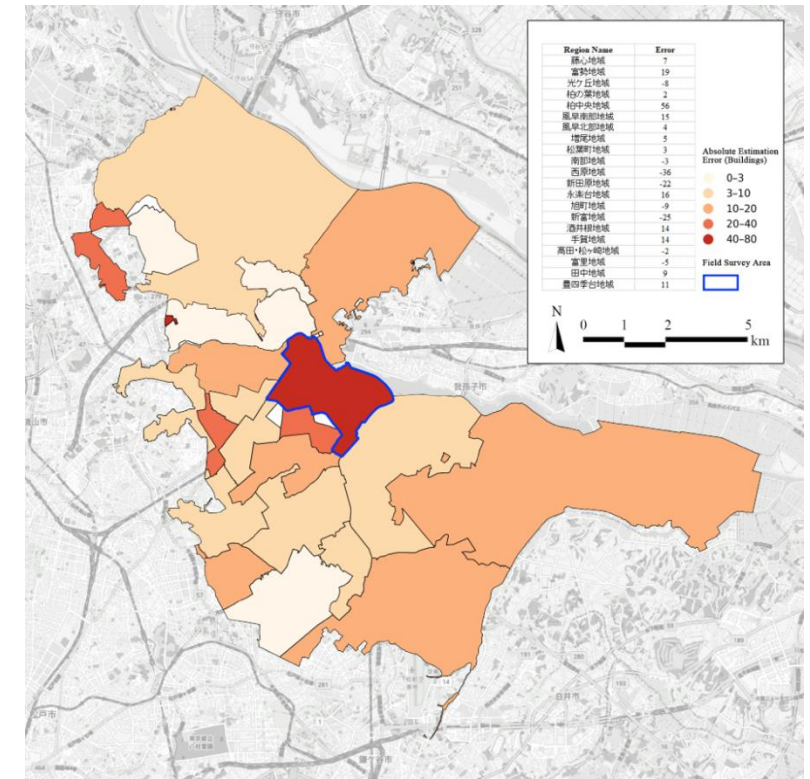
Vacant Houses: Many

Spatial Patterns:

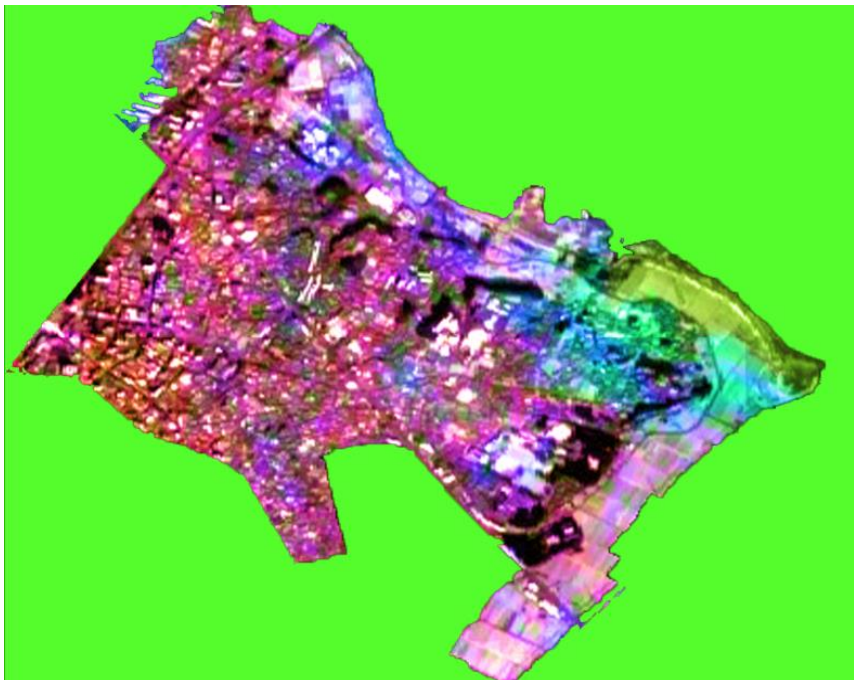
- Strong spatial clustering
- Homogeneous large-scale residential areas
- High vacancy concentration

Interpretation:

- High-frequency local patterns dominate
- Block-level aggregation amplifies local bias
- Spatial patterns exceed the model's representation capacity



5.3.3 Large Error: Kashiwa Chuo Area



Satellite embedding



Traditional satellite image

High building density
Complex structure

Ground-truth: 122

Estimation: 178

Error: +56

Sample 12

Latitude: 35.854069

Longitude: 139.993024

Plan View (GIS-based) and Field Photo Location



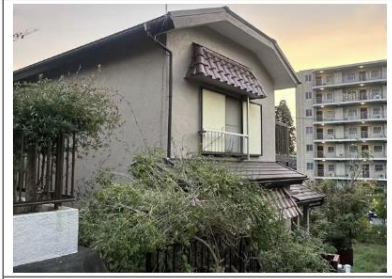
Dense buildings

Sample 14

Latitude: 35.8542966

Longitude: 139.9909842

Plan View (GIS-based) and Field Photo Location



Narrow streets

Sample 16

Latitude: 35.8557305

Longitude: 139.9868279

Plan View (GIS-based) and Field Photo Location



Mixed land use

5.4 Summary of Findings

Input dataset: Embeddings

contain block-level spatial information, including

- land use
- building density
- human activity pattern
- surrounding environment etc.

Model: ResNet-18

- The architecture of ResNet-18 mainly capture low-frequency patterns
- Hard to handle complex information

5.4 Summary of Findings

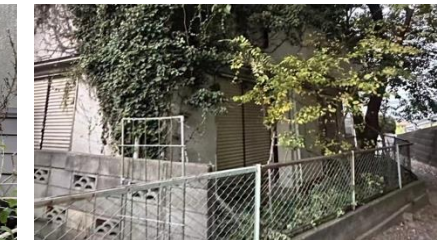
Correct estimation

- low-density areas
- stable spatial patterns

Struggles in

- High-density
- Complex environments

Block-level aggregation also increase local errors



6. Conclusion and Future Strategy

Conclusion

- An open and free data-based framework for vacant house estimation at the block level in Japan.
- This study shows that satellite embeddings can be applied to vacant house estimation.

Limitations

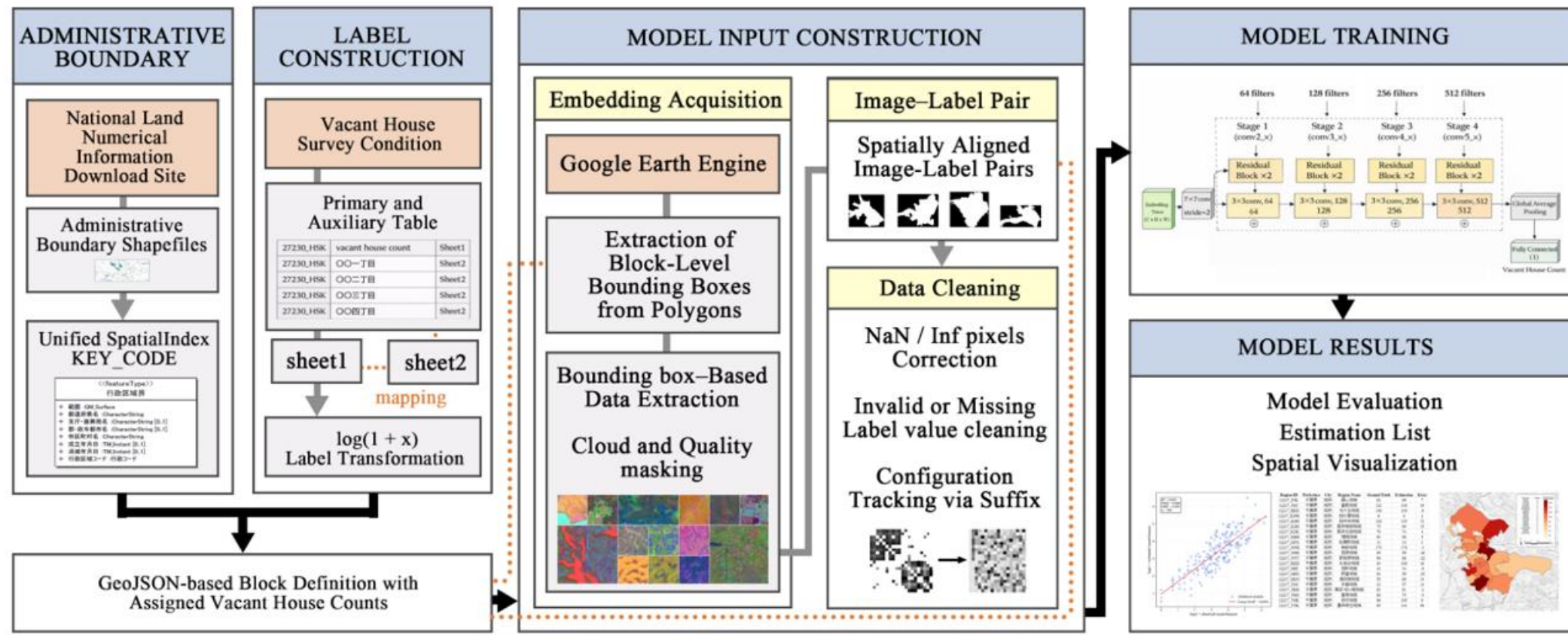
- Estimation limitations in accuracy.

Future Strategy

- Extend the framework to building-level estimation.
- Increase the amount of training data.
- Use more advanced models.

Supplementary Information

Framework



- ➔ Processing Flow
- ➔ Data Flow
- ⋯ Auxiliary Dependency
- Workflow Stage
- Processing Sub-step
- Data Source

Sheet 1 (Primary Table)

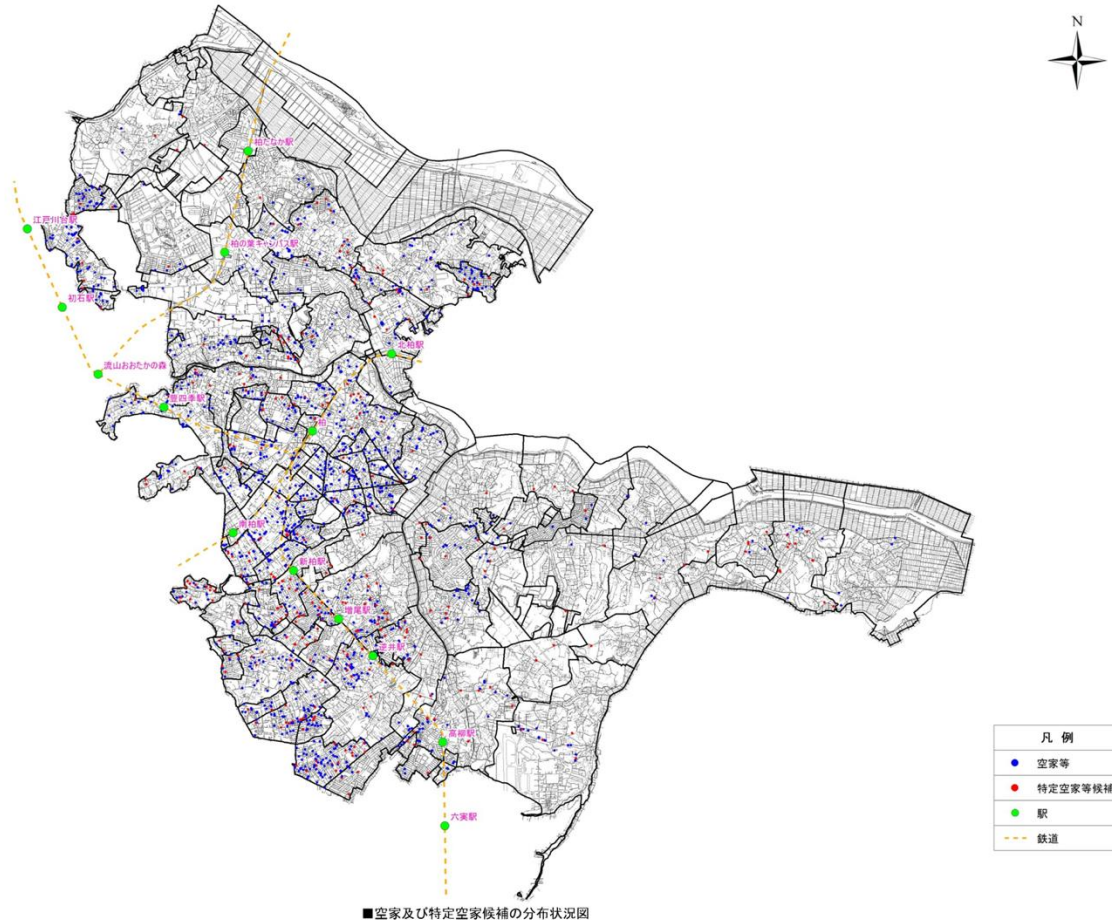
region_id	prefecture	city	region_name	region_type	vacant_count	survey_date	level_of_detail
11229	埼玉県	和光市	和光市	city	208	2022	2
28223_KSB	兵庫県	丹波市	柏原地域	district	177	2022	2.5
014060010	北海道	古平町	大字沖町	chome	12	2024	3

Sheet 2 (Auxiliary Table)

region_id	gis_code_name	gis_code	prefecture	city	region_name
11229	白子一丁目	11229001001	埼玉県	和光市	和光市
11229	白子二丁目	11229001002	埼玉県	和光市	和光市
11229	白子三丁目	11229001003	埼玉県	和光市	和光市
11229	白子四丁目	11229001004	埼玉県	和光市	和光市
...
28223_KSB	柏原町柏原屋敷	28223001001	兵庫県	丹波市	柏原地域
28223_KSB	柏原町柏原新町	28223001002	兵庫県	丹波市	柏原地域
28223_KSB	柏原町柏原古市場	28223001003	兵庫県	丹波市	柏原地域
...

mapping





5.3 Error-based Pattern Analysis with Field Surveys

Photos are not used as model input

Purpose of Field Validation :

- Used to understand model errors and identify feature patterns.
- Identifying vacant houses that can be spatially located using GIS.

Source: Vacant House Condition Survey of Kashiwa City

