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# **PURSUIT OF PATTERN LANGUAGES FOR SOCIETAL CHANGE**

**A comprehensive  
perspective of  
current pattern  
research and  
practice**

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Edition Donau-Universität Krems

ISBN Paperback: 978-3-903150-43-0

ISBN eBook: 978-3-903150-44-7

Printed on demand in many countries. Distributed by tredition

Krems, October 2018

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# We would like to thank all authors, contributors and participants of the PURPLSOC Conference 2017

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# **Life Transition Patterns: A Pattern Language for Shaping Your Future**

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This paper presents Life Transition Patterns, a pattern language that supports people in making life decisions about subjects such as school and career, to fabricate their own future. Twenty seven patterns in the pattern language enable high school and university students to think about their life path more thoroughly and put forward the notion that making career choices is a way to design your own style of living. Readers of this pattern language are able to search for the 'right' place (school, company, etc.) to actualize their ideal lifestyle through the understanding of the given concepts. This pattern language was created as a result of interviews with a diverse group of university students and working adults, who have been searching for their ideal way of life throughout the course of their careers. The paper presents a summary of all 27 patterns and also provides examples of the usage of the pattern language.

Life Transition, Career Design; Creative Society,  
100-year life, Pattern Language

## 1. Introduction

In Japan, choosing a life path has traditionally been defined as making choices about the school to attend, the major to study and the company where one wants to work. This thought process was shaped by a common value that existed up to the time of Japan's rapid economic growth: that happiness is attained by enrolling into a high ranking university and then being successful in attaining employment in a well-known company. In other words, a person's future is guaranteed to be a successful one as long as one is able to keep achieving these short-term goals.

However, much has changed in current Japanese society and that traditional value system is no longer valid. Existing jobs may become obsolete, and new ones may be created. More, people could even design their own jobs. Therefore, devising a life path is no longer the simple process of attending a prestigious school and working for a large company.

Therefore, we created a pattern language that enables high school and university students to think about the course of their life more thoroughly. This pattern language suggests that to make career choices is to design your own style of living. Readers of this pattern language are able to search for the right place (school, company, etc.) to actualize their ideal style of living through the understanding the concepts given forth.

## 2. Life Transition in a Creative Society

Social realities have changed drastically with the development of Information Technology. What direction will these changes take in the future? The transformations of our recent past can be classified as epochs pertaining to the three "C"s: Consumption, Communication and Creation (Iba, 2016a) (Figure 1).

More than a half-century ago, began the age mass consumption where one's capability to enjoy an array of products and services expressed the richness of that individual's life and became the symbol of happiness and success. Thus, people began to focus on these signs of status and attain this first "C" which stands for consumption.

In the latter half of the 1990s, the Internet and cell phones became popular, and the age of communication arrived. This technological advancement created our so-called "Information Society." In this era, relationships and communication with other people were the main concerns of people. Building fruitful relationships and engaging in the creation of online and offline communication networks (in the real world) began to represent the fullness of one's life. The second "C," of communication, thus, defined this time.



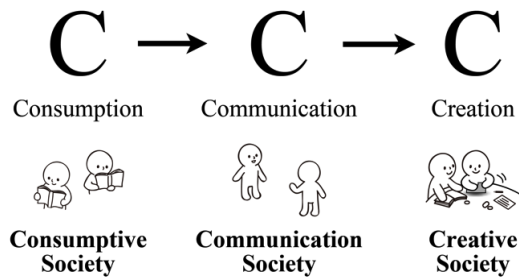


Figure 1: An overview of social change to a Creative Society

We are now entering the era of the third “C” of creation. Richard Florida described the positive trends of the world as stemming from the viewpoint of “creative economy” and “creative cities.” Daniel Pink named the era following the “information age” as the “conceptual age” where design and sympathy become important. A “fab society” where everyone can make objects by themselves is held up as a vision in the context of personal fabrication (Commission on the General Planning of Fab Society, 2015). All of these are oriented to the same direction of creativity as the act of ‘making’ is performed by more and more people. Moving along this trajectory, the next iteration of society may be termed the “creative society.”

People of this creative society will be able to design and make their own goods, tools, concepts, knowledge, mechanisms, and ultimately, they will shape their own future with their own hands. The production of goods would no longer be limited to just companies and organizations but would be undertaken by all people according to their own needs and tastes. In the forthcoming creative society, people would begin to put value in the act and process of conception. To be able to create what one desires will become the symbol of the wealth and fulfillment of a life. In this future creative society, devices such as 3D printers and laser cutters, and places like the Future Center and the Living Lab will underpin activities of production of structures, systems, methods, as well as goods.

Every human will become a designer and creator of objects to best suit particular lifestyle visions. Goods that are now bought will all become custom tailored by people for themselves. Hand in hand with the trend towards a creative age, society is transitioning to a time of longevity in lifespans. The development of medical technology has lengthened life expectancy, and it is becoming important to conceive of life-designs of 100 years or more. Lynda Gratton and Andrew Scott, in their book entitled *The 100-year life*, emphasize the change from a “three-stage life” to a “multi-stage life.” To elucidate further, the 20th century conception

of the first stage of education, followed by a career, and then by retirement comprised the “three-stage life.” This life-design incorporated only two major transitions: “from education to employment,” and “from employment to retirement.” In the future, as human life is further lengthened, people will experience multiple stages and many life transitions.

” *“There are real opportunities to move away from the constraints of a three-stage life to a way of living that is more flexible, and more responsive - a multi-stage life with a variety of careers, with breaks and transitions.” (Gratton & Scott, 2016, p.5)*

Simple judging criteria such as “a good school of a high rank” and “a well-known and stable workplace” will no longer suffice in such a society. People will need to become more aware of their personal strengths, desires, potential and will have to set themselves multiple goals accordingly. Also, in order to advance through various stages, they would also need to continually upgrade, enhance and shape themselves. They may intermittently need some time to concentrate on training and strengthening the skills in the form of investing for themselves, or sometimes practicing something to enhance yourself. Lynda Gratton and Andrew Scott says.

” *“The longer your life, the more your identity reflects what you craft rather than a reactive response to where you began...In a way that past generations simply didn't have to do, each one of us will need to think about who we are and how we construct our life and how this reflects our identity and values.”(Gratton & Scott, p.20-21)*

In other words, living with shaping yourselves in various ways will be the basis of life in the emergent age. It would be necessary to think about the selection of career paths that adjust to the characteristics of this age. Therefore, in this research, we created a pattern language for designing careers and lives.

### 3. Creation Process of the Proposed Pattern Language

Life Transition Patterns was created using the standard process of creating a pattern language. The method contains three different phases (Iba and Isaku, 2016): Pattern Mining, Pattern Writing and Pattern Symbolizing (Figure 2).



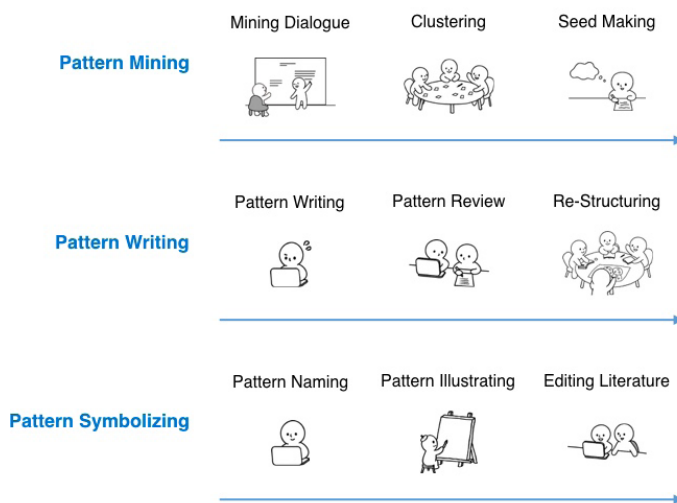


Figure 2: Process of Creating a Pattern Language

### 3.1. Pattern Mining

In the phase of Pattern Mining, we first conducted a “Mining Dialogue” to extract knowledge of practice from some teachers, “Clustering” to find common patterns among the obtained data, and “Seed Making” for organizing them by writing down the ideas in a specific format”.

In the mining dialogue, we interviewed students who all had different backgrounds and attended different universities. Every mining session lasted around 4 hours and was conducted with 2 to 4 students. In the end, 437 elements that they thought were important for selecting a school were collected and written down on sticky notes.

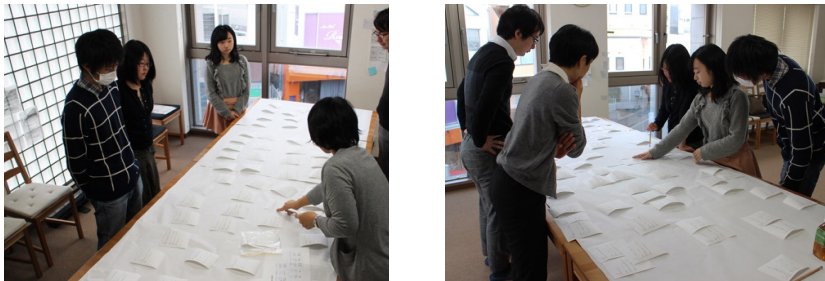
In the clustering phase, we classified the collected data in groups based on the KJ method (Iba and Isaku, 2016; Sasabe et al., 2016). 8 people collaborated together to figure out the essence of the contents written on individual sticky notes and arranged their positions according to their meanings (Figure 3). In this way, after 8 hours, groups of paper with similar meanings gradually began to materialize, and 437 fragments of data were classified into 68 groups.

In the seed making stage, every single group generated in the clustering phase was recorded according to a specific format known as the “Seed of Pattern” to summarize the context, problem and solution of each idea. Writing them down in simple form, helped us avoid the duplication of ideas and stop the leakage of important elements. It also made the step of

Structure Building much easier and faster. Structure Building is the process of figuring out the whole picture of good practices of career design from the similarities and relevancies seen among the 27 patterns (Figure 4). It starts with a bottom-up approach, but it is also important to consider the readers' perspectives, such as legibility and the heuristic level of each pattern. In the end, three main categories (A,B,C) were generated.



*Figure 3: Clustering in the phase of Pattern Mining*



*Figure 4: Structure Building in the phase of Pattern Mining*

### 3.2. Pattern Writing

Pattern Writing is the next phase of creating a pattern language. At this stage, we noted down the full description of the Seed of Pattern: its context, problem, force, solution, action and consequence. It was necessary in this phase to consider the position of every single pattern with regard to the whole picture, as well as to review what was discussed in the mining dialogue.

First, to conduct the Pattern Review, we re-evaluated patterns recorded by individual writers using the method of group discussion (Figure 5). All the patterns were assessed from different perspectives to eliminate misunderstanding and to improve the quality of the description. Sometimes it was necessary to reconsider the relationships and positions of pat-

terns and to re-structure them. In fact, this phase of revising and correcting was repeated over and over again, to make our patterns reach the expected level of quality.



Figure 5: Pattern Review in the phase of Pattern Writing

### 3.3. Pattern Symbolizing

Pattern Symbolizing is the last phase of creating a pattern language, and it includes Pattern Naming and Pattern Illustration to symbolically express the patterns (Figure 6). This process remains exploratory and some of the pattern content may be improved further in this phase, since the essence of patterns has to be reconsidered to draw symbolic illustrations. The patterns were completed and collated into a designed booklet and onto cards.

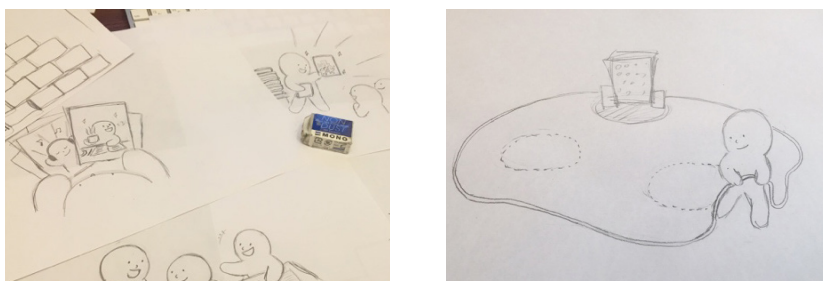


Figure 6: Pattern Illustrating in the phase of Pattern Symbolizing

## 4. Patterns

Life Transition Patterns comprise 27 designs which are classified into 3 categories: A, finding ways to shine; B, finding places that shine; and C, working toward the desired direction. Figure 7 demonstrates a journey map for Life Transition Patterns. Table 1-3 depicts the summary of the patterns in the category A-C respectively.

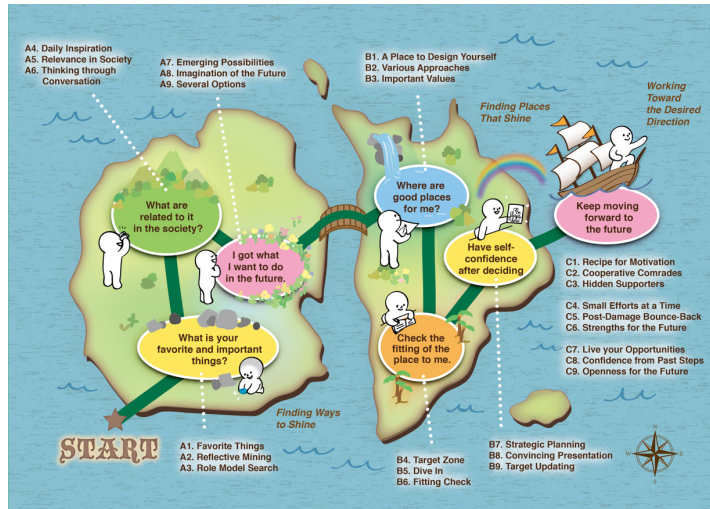


Figure 7: Journey Map for Life Transition Patterns.

A. Finding Ways to Shine			
No.	Pattern Name	Pattern Illustration	Context, Problem and Solution
A1	<b>Favorite Things</b>		You are starting to think about your future direction. In this context, putting too much value on societal expectations and other people's opinions can hinder you from living your life as you like it. Therefore, start thinking about your future direction based on what you are passionate about and things that are important to you.
A2	<b>Reflective Mining</b>		You have activities that you enjoy doing. In this context, although you enjoy those activities, you cannot imagine a realistic future in which you could pursue them as a career. Therefore, discover the general direction of your interests by identifying the essential elements in the activities that you enjoy.
A3	<b>Role Model Search</b>		You are thinking about what kind of future direction would be good for you. In this context, if you base your imagination on your past experiences, you will limit your options to things that you already know. Therefore, find people whose lifestyle or work you admire; analyze the aspects of their thought or actions that impress you the most; and incorporate those into your life.










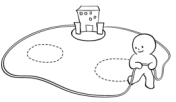
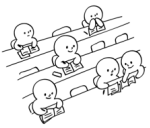

A4	<b>Daily Inspiration</b>		You want to incorporate your interests into your future career. In this context, if you put off thinking about it, you may not be able to find the opportunity to connect your interests to your career path. Therefore, when you encounter something that you find interesting in your daily life, and deepen your understanding of it.
A5	<b>Relevance in Society</b>		You want to incorporate your interests into your future career. In this context, you don't know how your hobbies are relevant to society or how they can be absorbed into a career. Therefore, learn how the activities that you like are used or practiced in society by exploring related news, books, etc.
A6	<b>Thinking through Conversation</b>		You are developing some ideas about your future path. In this context, reflecting on your own, you may not be able to reach the required depth of thought or you may overlook unconscious biases. Therefore, talk about your ideas with people whose interests are similar to yours, or with people who will encourage you.
A7	<b>Emerging Possibilities</b>		You are trying to make a certain decision about your life path. In this context, as you gain depth in your ideas and garner knowledge about various things, it becomes harder to make decisions. Therefore, instead of becoming anxious about making a quick decision, consider the process as a necessary approach and believe that good options will arise as a result.
A8	<b>Imagination of the Future</b>		You are faced with a decision between several options. In this context, you find all of your options attractive and do not know how to proceed with your decision-making. Therefore, for each option, imagine what your everyday life would be like and what kind of future it could bring, and think about which one would bring out your best qualities.
A9	<b>Several Options</b>		You have several visions of the future that are very attractive. In this context, when you narrow your choice to just one and give up the other options completely, you may regret it later. Therefore, consider the fact that you have various options to potentially broaden your future possibilities, and make efforts to stay in touch with all of them in some way.

Table 1: Patterns in Category A: Finding Ways to Shine

B. Finding Places That Shine			
No.	Pattern Name	Pattern Illustration	Context, Problem and Solution
B1	<b>A Place to Design Yourself</b>		You want to start listing up concrete options for your future. In this context, if you put too much emphasis on factors such as prestige or rank, you may make decisions without considering what you want to do at that place and how you would like to shape your future. Therefore, look at places that will enable you to work on what you would like and will thus bring you closer to achieving your future aspirations.
B2	<b>Various Approaches</b>		You want to look for places where you can pursue your interests. In this context, if you only look at places that are obviously related to your interest, you may overlook other possibilities. Therefore, extensively research what kinds of ways you can take to achieve your desired future, and choose the one that fits you the best.
B3	<b>Important Values</b>		You want to look for places where you can get closer to your desired future. In this context, you may either not be able to find the right places at all, or you may find too many of them. Therefore, come up with several options that interest you, compare them by looking into each in detail, and review what qualities/factors are important to you.
B4	<b>Target Zone</b>		You are beginning to understand what kinds of qualities you are looking for in a school/company. In this context, if you narrow your choices too much, you risk not getting into any of them and losing the benefit of options. Therefore, search for various places that meet the qualities/factors that are important to you and consider each of them as places that can help you get to your ideal future.
B5	<b>Dive In</b>		You are beginning to get an idea of specific schools/companies to which you want to apply. In this context, if you make decisions based on available information and your current understanding of the school/company, what you actually get may be different from what you had in mind. Therefore, get experiential knowledge of what you would actually do at each school/company.
B6	<b>Checking Suitability</b>		You are beginning to get firm ideas about specific schools/companies to which you want to apply. In this context, even if a place seems suitable to you in terms of your interests and other conditions, it may not turn out to be a comfortable environment for you. Therefore, visit the school/company and see for yourself whether the environment you will be spending a great deal of time at is actually a fit for you.

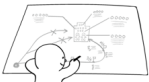





B7	<b>Strategic Planning</b>		You have a target school/company, but it seems like an unrealistic choice due to factors such as grades or tuition fees. In this context, you may feel as though your goal would be impossible for you to attain and give up. Therefore, instead of surrendering, think about getting to that goal through a different plan or approach.
B8	<b>Convincing Presentation</b>		You have decided where to apply, but people around you (such as family) do not support your decision. In this context, you thus begin to question whether you should listen to what others say instead of going with what you want, and begin to feel uncertain about your choice. Therefore, explain to your near ones why you want to go to a particular institution and how you are going to make it happen.
B9	<b>Target Updating Target</b>		You are starting to feel uncertain about the direction you had in mind and were originally happy about. In this context, if you stick to your original plan just because you have committed to it, you may be overlooking a newer or better option. Therefore, as you work toward your goals and discover that your way of thinking/perceiving is evolving, update your targets based on what you currently feel is best for you.

Table 2: Patterns in Category B: Finding Places That Shine

C. Working Toward the Desired Direction			
No.	Pattern Name	Pattern Illustration	Context, Problem and Solution
C1	<b>Recipe for Motivation</b>		You are working towards achieving the goal you have set for yourself. In this context, Although you know you must work hard, it is difficult to maintain your motivation consistently over a long span of time. Therefore, consider the inconsistencies in your motivation as an inevitable factor, and find your own methods for enthusing yourself.
C2	<b>Cooperative Comrades</b>		You are working toward achieving the goal you have set. In this context, it is difficult to go beyond your abilities if you are studying/preparing on your own. Therefore, create supportive relationships with people working towards a similar goal, or people who are going through the same situation as you.
C3	<b>Hidden Supporters</b>		You are working toward achieving the goal you have set and are going through a difficult time. In this context, you are coming close to giving up or compromising your goal. Therefore, think about the people who have helped you and all that they have done, and use that support as motivation for you to continue working hard.



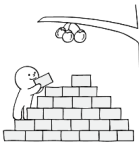





C4	<b>Small Efforts</b>		There are things you are not good at and you want to do something about them. In this context, if you blindly try to improve in areas of weakness, your efforts are unlikely to bring actual results. Therefore, continue setting small goals that make you work a bit harder each time.
C5	<b>Post-Damage Bounce-Back</b>		While working toward achieving your goal, something didn't go as you had planned. In this context, it takes you time to absorb and accept the situation and to recover from the setback. These events prevent you from taking the next action. Therefore, keeping in mind that everything you experience is a valuable hint for the next step you must take, reflect on what happened and start working toward your next act.
C6	<b>Strengths for the Future</b>		You are working hard every day toward your desired goal. In this context, if your everyday life is a constant repetition of studying/preparing without any room for you to do the things you enjoy, you will start to feel a sense of purposelessness. Therefore, think about how studying/preparing for your goal is beneficial to your life as a whole in addition to the role it plays in the achievement of your desired goal.
C7	<b>Live your Opportunities</b>		You currently have other things that you are involved in, such as sports teams, student councils, and other extracurricular activities. In this context, you either commit too much to the things you are currently involved in and put off your preparations for the future, or give up on them completely. Therefore, find a balance and work hard on the things that you can only do now, but plan for the future so that you do not regret later.
C8	<b>Confidence from Past Steps</b>		You are working hard to realize your goal. In this context, things do not always work out even if you work hard, and you may be tempted to give up on the way to your goal. Therefore, look back on your efforts and progress you have made thus far and let that give you the confidence to keep going.
C9	<b>Openness for the Future</b>		You have entered the a new stage of your career. In this context, once you actually get there, despite feeling a sense of accomplishment and security for getting in, the future becomes somewhat predictable once you actually get there, causing you to lose your sense of excitement. Therefore, as you gain expertise in your new environment, also discover your personal strengths and your individuality and find potential future directions.

Table 3: Patterns in Category C: Working Toward the Desired Direction

## 5. Utilizing Patterns

The pattern language proposed in this paper is provided in the form of a booklet and a set of cards (Figure 8). The booklet is designed to be read by a single person, and the card set is primarily intended for use in dialogues. In the context of this paper, we would like to introduce this pattern language may be applied using the set of cards: in counseling, in dialogues for sharing experiences, and in the inquiry of meaning.



Figure 8: Life Transition Patterns Booklet and Cards

### 5.1. Counseling with Patterns

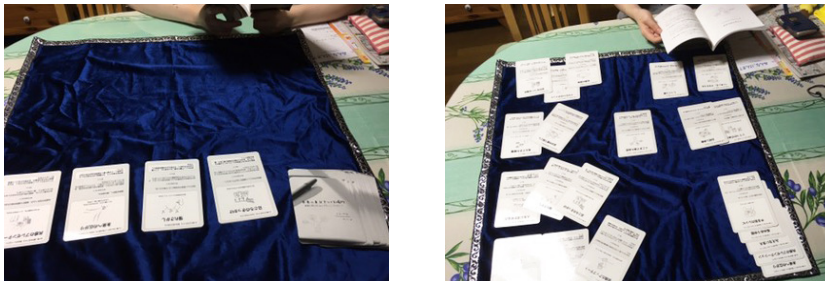
The first way to use the set of cards is to apply them in counseling sessions for people who are thinking about their career paths. The use of the cards can encourage them to think for themselves rather than taking advice based from others.

There are several ways to use the card in counseling. First of all, a counselor can talk while looking at the group of cards chosen according to the stage of the thought process. There is also a method called the “Pattern Concierge” (Mori et al., 2016) that introduces the cards that are deemed to be suitable for the problem the person is facing. A person may also pick up a card at random and talk about it.

Here, as in the last method displayed, we introduce the case of a college student from the Iba Laboratory counseled a younger sister who was thinking about her career (Figure 9). First, the cards were shuffled, turned over and placed on a table. They were flipped one by one and the pattern was read in the booklet. The pattern on the card was discussed in detail and the process was repeated with another card. When the number of cards added up to a certain extent, a cluster was created with cards that were related and the discussion completed so far was summarized. Then, the counselor moved on to the next card until

all the cards on the table were ultimately set into and converged into appropriate clusters.

The sister who consulted felt, "It was a good experience because I had been reconsidering things about myself occasionally, but I had never reflected this deeply on myself. I think it was right for me to do this." She also said, "I thought most of the cards I drew were applicable to me and I even felt like something is leading the order of the cards I picked but I guess this was because I am suffering." Other remarks from her included the fact that "The contents of the cards were easy to understand because there are examples in the book." The pattern cards can be used as a counseling tool in this way.



*Figure 9: Counseling with the Life Transition Patterns*

## 5.2. Dialogue for Sharing Experience with Patterns

Second, the pattern cards may be applied in dialogue workshops, which have been held with various pattern languages so far. In such modules, people talk about their own experiences based on the patterns (Iba, 2012, 2015, 2016b, 2017). In the paragraphs that follow, we present the method for conducting a dialogue workshop with college students using the Life Transition Patterns cards (Figure 10).

Make a team of 5-6 people seated around a table. Use only the 9 patterns of category (A) at the initial stage. Shuffle the cards, distribute a card to each person, and keep the rest on the table. Participants must read the card allocated to them, recall an experience related to the pattern displayed on the card, and then describe it in detail. Participants should take turns to introduce the content of the pattern on their card and to relate their story.. Participants are free to recount personal events or even occasions that may have occurred to others around them. They may share narratives that may or may not have yielded positive results for them. They may also say that they are getting no ideas from their card or that they have no experience to share with regard to that particular design. Generally speaking, all the participants would have something to share because as college students, each one would have had some experience of conducting some kind of course/career selection or would have done some decision making so as to participate in some groups or clubs at their educational institutions.

This cards get people to talk and the dialogue comes alive. Talking about the experiences they have already had leads to ideas about future career selection. Thus, the stories shared by participants become learning they can utilize in their future. When everyone has finished talking, list all the remaining cards on the tables and discuss them openly. When all the patterns in a particular category have been discussed, the participants are encouraged to simultaneously point at their favorite card saying “Three, two, one!” One segment of the dialogue workshop can now end after a short discussion about why the participants chose a particular card as their favorite. Now the facilitator may move on to the next category and repeat the same process.



Figure 10: Dialogue Workshop for Sharing Experience

### 5.3. Inquiry of Meaning with Patterns

The third way of utilizing the pattern cards is through conducting meaning inquiry workshops. In such a session, a person reflects on why what the pattern is saying is important to make a better life. The point of asking why is the characteristic of this meaning inquiry workshop, whereas in the dialogue workshop above discussions were primarily hinged on the experience of how it was done and in what kind of context.

In his book *Overcrowded* regarding the “innovation of meaning,” Roberto Verganti emphasized that “people search for meaning” (Verganti, 2016, p. 32). He said, “the most distinctive change in our society: the shift from the search for solutions to the search for meaning” (Verganti, 2016, p. 27). Here, the meaning is “the purpose people try to achieve: why they do things” (Verganti, 2016, p.32). Based on this point, Takashi Iba, one of the authors, proposed

to use the patterns as tools for exploring deeper meaning within ourselves rather than to merely support the practice of making sense of the world around us.

Here, we introduce the meaning inquiry workshop conducted at an online school (Figure 11). In a course offered by this online school, Takashi Iba introduced this pattern language as a lecturer and more than 250 people participated. The participants' remarks are displayed on the timeline in real time.

The first pattern introduced was "Favorite Things." The question asked to participants was: "Why is practicing 'Favorite Things' important to the enhancement of the quality of life and to the creation of happy lives?" Some of the many observations tendered were :

- » "Because the excitement continues to accelerate."
- » "Because a person can find happiness in doing what one likes, and because it directs people to gain the ability to explore by themselves."
- » " 'Favorite Things' may correspond to potential abilities. "
- » "It feels like I can be myself when I think from the perspective of 'Favorite Things.' "
- » "Although it depends on people when to feel happy, I believe no one feels unhappy when doing something they like."
- » "I think selecting 'Favorite Things' is linked with one's essential energy, which leads one to more humane activities."

Next, the following comments about "Relevance in Society" were shared. Participants said:

- » "I think it is important to increase one's number of friends and to broaden the idea of what one likes."
- » "You may feel like you are supported by meeting social requirements or considering the needs of other people."
- » "When you have a connection to society, you can feel that you belong to it. This attachment is very important."
- » "Because it makes you feel the significance of being more social."
- » "Because I'm not living alone, it is important to think about society and about how I can help my society."
- » "Through social connections, what I consider a desired outcome will lead to someone else's happiness and that would make me happy in turn, leading to a virtuous circle."

Remarks posted with regard to the meaning of the pattern “Hidden Supporters” were:

- » “In order to advance without forgetting appreciation.”
- » “Because it will become a driving force to go a step further when you are discouraged.”
- » “When I think of someone who has supported or cheered me up to this moment, it makes me feel like I cannot give up so easily.”
- » “To always be modest.”
- » “Because people cannot survive alone.”
- » “I can feel that I’m happy to be alive.”

Following such a meaning inquiry workshop, participants said: “Thinking about the meaning leads to the essence, bringing in a three dimensional perspective in the dialogue;” “There is a possibility that ‘the origin of one’s life’ can be found, and the field of vision could be accelerated to spread to people suffering from hesitation;” and “By seeking the meaning, more essential questions may be visualized.”

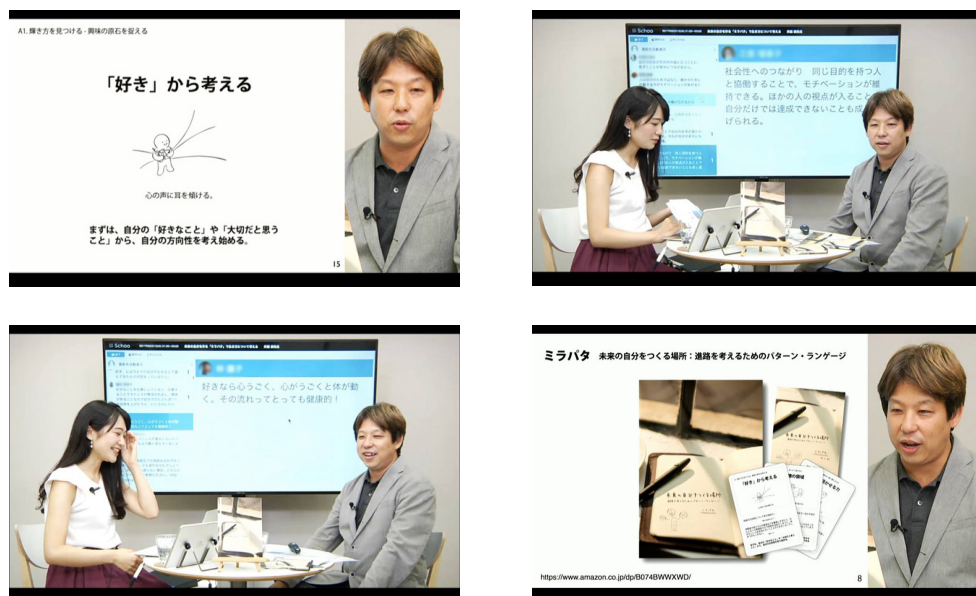


Figure 11: Meaning Inquiry Workshop in an Online School

## 6. Conclusion

The paper presented the content of the twenty-seven designs that comprise Life Transition Patterns, and also provided examples of some applications of the pattern language. We anticipate that there are many other ways of using this pattern language, and we would be happy to receive knowledge of other ways this pattern language could be put into practice.

## 7. Acknowledgement

We would like to thank our project members from CreativeShift Inc. and Kawaijuku Educational Institution. We would also like to express our appreciation to our interviewees. Our gratitude is also extended to Ayaka Yoshikawa for translating the patterns into English and to Haruka Mori for supporting us in the writing of this paper.

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*We thank the following for their kind support in  
reviewing the contributions for this book:*

*Artemis Anniou  
Peter Baumgartner  
Anne Dörner  
Tomoki Furukawazono  
Tina Gruber-Mücke  
Takashi Iba  
Susan Ingham  
Taichi Isaku  
Hajo Neis  
Ana Pinto  
Richard Sickinger  
Wolfgang Stark  
Anne Stieger  
Stefan Tewes  
Christina Weber*

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