

# Crafting a Pattern Language for ‘Seeing of Essence’

Supporting the Practice of Grasping and Expressing the Essence of Things  
based on Husserl's Phenomenology

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## Abstract

In this paper, we present the current results of the 'Seeing of Essence' Practice Patterns, a pattern language we are actively crafting to grasp and express the essence of various subjects. Initially proposed as a philosophical method in Edmund Husserl's phenomenology, we've found that Seeing of Essence resonates with the activities involved in crafting pattern languages. This paper provides a comprehensive overview of the pattern language's system and summaries of 28 pattern seeds obtained to date. We expect that even these summaries will offer valuable insights into the practice of Seeing of Essence. Finally, we illustrate the crafting process of this pattern language through photographs, showcasing its development.

## 1. Introduction

Over the past two decades, Iba Lab has elucidated the essence of good practices across a wide variety of domains, formulating over 3,000 patterns in more than 90 fields. In this process, we have developed, refined through firsthand practice, and standardized methods for creating pattern languages (Iba and Isaku 2012; Iba and Isaku 2016; Iba, 2023). However, while the creative process has been codified, the quality of pattern mining and pattern writing heavily relies on the individual practitioners, even when they follow the same protocols. Particularly, the distinction between highly insightful patterns and more mundane ones stems from the practitioner's ability to grasp a practice's 'essence' during the gathering of narratives and their skill in eloquently 'expressing' that essence. Adeptly grasping essences is an intuitive skill for those already experienced, one not readily imparted through explicit guidance.

In light of this challenge, we have realized that the long-emphasized quest for 'essence' in formulating pattern languages closely parallels essence-seeking phenomenology. The recurring notion of 'essence' aligns with a phenomenological sense – through patterns, we creatively reveal the essential meaning of good practices. Hence, entire pattern languages embody a genre of essence description. Recognizing the artful skill of essence extraction, beyond vague intuition, can accelerate collective uplift. We have thus begun assembling a pattern language detailing finely-honed best practices for unlocking and sharing seminal insights into the universal core of the matter at hand.

In this paper, we present selected patterns and overviews that illuminate the refined, essence-oriented analysis informing the formulation of insightfully practical pattern languages.

## 2. Seeing of Essence as Essential Method in Husserl's Phenomenology

Seeing of Essence, namely *Wesensschauung* in German, is the essential method in Phenomenology, which is a philosophy of essentialism founded by the philosopher Edmund Husserl (Husserl, 1929, 1948, 1950a, 1950b, 1952). It has had a fundamental influence on the history of philosophy, known as the 'Phenomenological Turn.' We believe, from the perspective of phenomenology, that to grasp patterns in good design/practice (Alexander, 1979, 2002a, 2002b; Iba, 2015) means to conduct *Seeing of Essence* of their existence and generation, and to craft a pattern language means to make the *Essence Description*, which can be shared with others (Iba and Munakata, 2021; Iba, 2023a, 2023b). Grounded in this understanding, we have dedicated the past five years to an intensive study of Phenomenology.

In phenomenology, the essence is apprehended to elucidate the meaning of the object of consciousness in conscious experience. Husserl explains this in his book, *Ideas*, as follows:

“obviously here, as elsewhere in phenomenology, this does not mean to engage straightforwardly in actual experiences, i.e., to proceed empirically, as if the empirical thesis, which binds itself to contingent facts, would be pertinent. The task is rather to examine, in eidetic intuition, the essence of the experienced in general and as such, precisely as it is made explicit in any experience, whether carried out actually or imaginatively (by means of a fictional transfer of oneself into a possible experience) in order then to grasp intuitively, in the unfolding of the intentions essentially involved in such an experience, the sense of the experienced as such --- the sense of the relevant class of regional objectivities --- and to express this sense in rigorous analysis and description.” (Husserl, 1952, p.97)

When the word ‘essence’ is mentioned, it has a variety of meanings depending on the position the person takes. For example, some people may think that it is something inherent in the objective world, while others may think that it is something that exists in some transcendental world, as in Plato's theory of Ideas. Husserl also refers to essence as ‘form’ (*eidōs*), and *Seeing of Essence* is sometimes referred to as *Eidetic Reduction*:

“it is then exclusively directed toward the invariant essential forms. For instance, the phenomenology of perception of bodies will no be [simply] a report on the factually occurring perceptions or those to be expected; rather it will be the presentation of invariant structural systems without which perception of a body and a synthetically concordant multiplicity of perceptions of one and the same body as such would be unthinkable.” (Husserl, 1929, p.165)

The essence is perceived as the core ‘invariant structural system’ of a consciousness object, without which the object ceases to be itself. When a person perceives an object, that perception presents one possible concrete manifestation of that object. At that moment, the individual and concrete characteristics are merely 'contingent' or accidental, being just so by chance. Husserl emphasized, “Individual existence of every sort is, quite universally speaking, ‘contingent.’ It is thus; in respect of its essence it could be otherwise.” (Husserl, 1950b, p.7). This means that to clarify the essence of a particular object, one must strip away the individual and concrete parts from what appears in consciousness and capture the essence that holds true even for similar, different entities. This is what is undertaken in *Seeing of Essence*.

As we delved into Husserl's works, we came to understand that while Husserl discussed the principles of *Seeing of Essence*, he seldom spoke about its practice. Additionally, we discovered that there is scarcely any literature by other authors discussing the practice of *Seeing of Essence*. As a result, those familiar with the principles can apply them, but many struggle to

grasp what these principles mean in practice, leaving them unable to execute. Therefore, we decided to compile the methods of this practice into a pattern language of practice. What we present in this paper are the current results of this endeavor.

### 3. Current Achievements

The pattern language presented here is crafted with project members at Iba Lab, based on our latest methodology for crafting pattern language (Iba and Isaku, 2016; Iba, 2022). The patterns were extracted from philosophers and researchers experienced in conducting and teaching Seeing of Essence. Specifically, these include the critic and philosopher Seiji Takeda, philosopher Ken Nishi who engages in and practices philosophical dialogue (Nishi, 2010), Ittoku Tomano who focuses primarily on debates about education and society, Midori Inagaki who is dedicated to fostering a symbiotic society through Japanese language education, and Takashi Iba, one of this paper's authors, who has contributed to developing pattern languages through Seeing of Essence. Detailed information about the crafting process of this pattern language can be found in the Appendix.

The current status is at a stage where the overall system and the 'pattern seeds' for the pattern language being crafted have been established. Figure 1 is a depiction of Seeing of Essence, which represents a deep dive into exploring the essence. The following is an overview of the system and summaries of the pattern seeds.

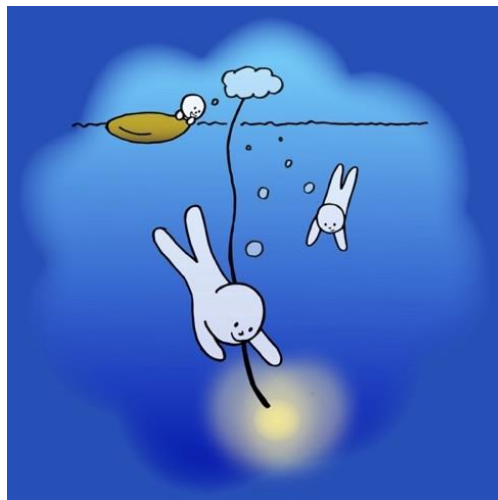


Figure 1: A Depiction of Seeing of Essence as a Deep Dive into Exploring the Essence.

#### 3.1 Overview of the 'Seeing of Essence' Practice Patterns

Figure 2 represents the overall view of the 'Seeing of Essence' Practice Patterns. At its core is the concept 'Essence for Living Better,' and the subsequent practical patterns are divided into three main categories: 'A. Grasping the features of the focus objects and extracting their essence,' 'B. Refining and polishing descriptions for shareability,' and 'C. Crafting them into a crystal infused with the power to enhance living.'

# 'Seeing of Essence' Patterns

A Pattern Language for Grasping and Expressing the Essence of Things

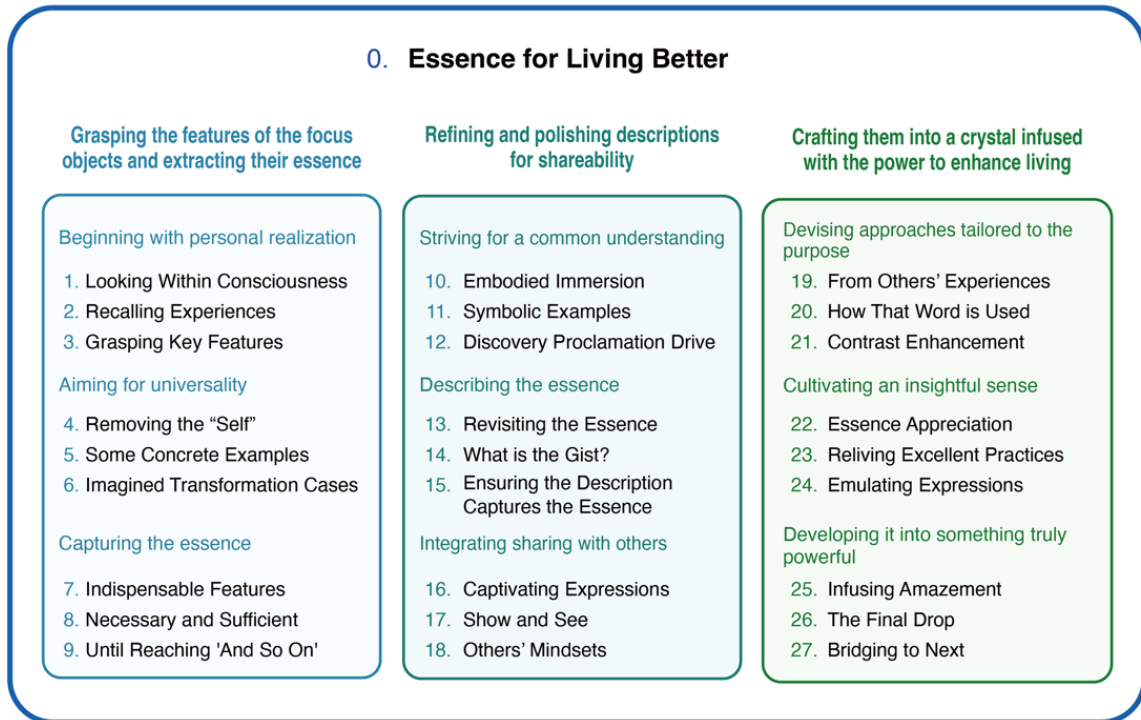


Figure 2: Overview of the 'Seeing of Essence' Practice Patterns.

## 3.2 Summary of Pattern Seeds

In the subsequent sections, we will present the summary of three pattern seeds contained in each of the three groups, corresponding to the trio of categories succeeding The Core Pattern.

### Core Pattern

#### 0. Essence for Living Better

Explore and articulate an 'essence' that resonates deeply and universally, enabling its application in enhancing lives and building a better society, and establishing it as a foundation for practical use and further exploration.

#### A. Grasping the features of the focus objects and extracting their essence

##### A.1 Beginning with personal realization

###### 1. Looking Within Consciousness

Reflect on your consciousness about an object to grasp its essence, focusing on "how you are apprehending it." Use this as the starting point to explicitly articulate meanings that were previously grasped only implicitly.

###### 2. Recalling Experiences

Refer to your concrete recalled experiences to identify the features you perceive as existing within them.

### **3. Grasping Key Features**

Instead of relying on highly personal and idiosyncratic sensations, diminish and remove that “selfness” to identify features that others would likely recognize as well.

## **A.2 Aiming for universality**

### **4. Removing the “Self”**

By gathering and comparing several concrete related examples, set aside features specific only to individual cases as incidental and focus on aspects common across cases.

### **5. Some Concrete Examples**

Mentally generate hypothetical examples with the currently grasped features. Alter some of those features to determine, without being limited to actual experiences, which characteristics across various ranges are important.

### **6. Imagined Transformation Cases**

Among the determined features, identify those essential traits without which the object would no longer remain itself to pinpoint the most intrinsic attributes.

## **A.3 Capturing the essence**

### **7. Indispensable Features**

Even when some seemingly indispensable traits become apparent, it is uncertain whether all crucial features have been covered. Persist in refinement until you feel assured of the complete necessity and sufficiency.

### **8. Necessary and Sufficient**

While leveraging experiences, examples, and imagination to determine the necessary and sufficient features, aim for the point at which continuing further would yield redundancy. Then decide to conclude that section and move forward.

### **9. Until Reaching ‘And So On’**

Step into the perspective and feelings of close acquaintances and intended beneficiaries. Generate a vivid first-person realization of whether those individuals would also perceive the extracted essence as accurately capturing reality, making adjustments where necessary.

## **B. Refining and polishing descriptions for shareability**

### **B.1 Striving for a common understanding**

### **10. Embodied Immersion**

Articulate the grasped essence not merely in abstract concepts but with a tangible sense of “life flowing” through them. Use or imagine both real and hypothetical examples that can symbolically represent that essence.

### **11. Symbolic Examples**

If there is not yet a compelling urge to broadly proclaim and share the unfolding essential insight, then persist in sharpening the idea until it reaches the threshold of an exhilarating discovery, motivating enthusiastic communication.

#### **12. Discovery Proclamation Drive**

Once the essence is finally grasped, turn a conscious gaze back upon it as an object unto itself to describe exactly what it is through words.

### **B.2 Describing the essence**

#### **13. Revisiting the Essence**

Ask “what is the crux here?” and continually attempt to encapsulate the heart of the essence into a single, concise phrase that names its core.

#### **14. What is the Gist?**

Once an economical encapsulation has been reached that seems to capture the essence, carefully consider the potential breadth of interpretations for the selected words. Refine your word choices and phrasing until there is confidence that the intended essence has been perfectly expressed.

#### **15. Ensuring If the Description Captures the Essence**

Rather than merely explaining the essence, also search for novel expressions that compellingly convey its appeal in thought-provoking ways that linger in the mind.

### **B.3 Integrating sharing with others**

#### **16. Captivating Expressions**

When an essentially descriptive account has been composed to apparently elegant effect, present it to others to then incorporate their impressions and interpretations into subsequent refinement.

#### **17. Show and See**

Gradually build up familiarity with the thinking and perceptions of those in dialogue or relationship to realistically simulate “if this person encountered this, surely this is how they might respond” as an inner conviction guiding intuitive judgment.

#### **18. Others’ Mindsets**

Especially when seeking insight into unfamiliar objects beyond your personal range of exposure, rely upon vivid second-hand accounts. Inform your sympathetic imagination with these accounts, overlaying your own analogous experiences until substantial examples become directly available to work with.

## **C. Crafting them into a crystal infused with the power to enhance living**

### **C.1 Devising approaches tailored to the purpose**

#### **19. From Others’ Experiences**

When attempting to extract essences that seem more abstract or conceptual, bring to mind scenarios where relevant words do or might arise in application. Consider through this what the intended meanings could be.

## **20. How That Word is Used**

Clearly distinguish close concepts and additionally determine and cross-compare essences of comparable or contrasting reference cases when beneficial to precisely locate the unique attributes of each one.

## **21. Contrast Enhancement**

Exposure to revered masters' skillfully delineated "essences" fosters an intuitive sense for what compelling universal insights potentially resonate across all people, sensitizing a capacity to recognize artistic achievement in precise insight matched to eloquent expression.

### **C.2 Cultivating an insightful sense**

## **22. Essence Appreciation**

Immersive study of especially lucid write-ups on essence-extraction, as though walking through practitioners' footsteps, trains capacity for explicit methodical breakthroughs. Intuitively grasp how attention focuses ever more incisively toward aspects of greatest explanatory relevance.

## **23. Reliving Excellent Practices**

Reading masters of eloquence who creatively encapsulate extracted essences, combined with everyday conversational pattern uptake, enriches innate expressive powers. Gradually transform linguistic sensibility to voice insights persuasively.

## **24. Emulating Expressions**

Recalling the visceral excitement as new essences took form – "Oh wow, here it is!" – and intentionally imbuing descriptive prose with infectious residual exhilaration passes along quickening sparks of insightful inspiration to receptive minds ready to catch fire.

### **C.3 Developing it into something truly powerful**

## **25. Infusing Amazement**

Committed efforts distill the oceanic ambiguity of initial wonder down to a penetratingly coherent account that leaves no lingering dissatisfaction. Create a narrative water-tight to outward objection and radiating indubitable rightness to those previously harboring intrinsic doubts.

## **26. The Final Drop**

If you are truly aiming for an essence that holds power, refine, purify, and concentrate until you achieve an unwavering certainty in every aspect, becoming a 'crystal' of distilled clarity.

## **27. Bridging to Next**

Each incremental advance paves the way for successors' progress by openly publishing clear, concise, communicable accounts. Provide springboards for others' discoveries that widen humanitarian understanding.

## 4. Future Work

In this paper, we have introduced an overview of the ‘Seeing of Essence’ Practice Patterns, which form a comprehensive pattern language dedicated to grasping and expressing the essence of various subjects. Going forward, we plan to evolve these pattern seeds into detailed descriptions through meticulous pattern writing and draw pattern illustrations. Our goal is to finalize and publish the completed pattern language at forthcoming conferences such as PLoP and EuroPloP.

## Acknowledgements

First and foremost, we extend our profound appreciation to Seiji Takeda, Ken Nishi, Ittoku Tomano, and Midori Inagaki for their invaluable contributions to the mining interviews focused on the practice of Seeing of Essence and for the significant learning we derived from their writings. Additionally, heartfelt thanks are due to Sae Adachi, Mirai Okanishi, Haruka Kimura, Elly Shimamura, and Tsubasa Yokomori for their six months of dedicated collaboration at Iba Lab on this project. Your collective efforts have been indispensable. Our appreciation also goes to Shuhei Iwata, Eimi Yokokawa, Chisato Tsujimoto and Hayato Kurata, who were part of the team for a portion of the project.

## Appendix: Crafting Process of the ‘Seeing of Essence’ Practice Patterns

The pattern language presented here is crafted with project members at Iba Lab, based on our latest methodology for crafting pattern language, shown in Figure 3 (Iba and Isaku, 2016; Iba, 2022).

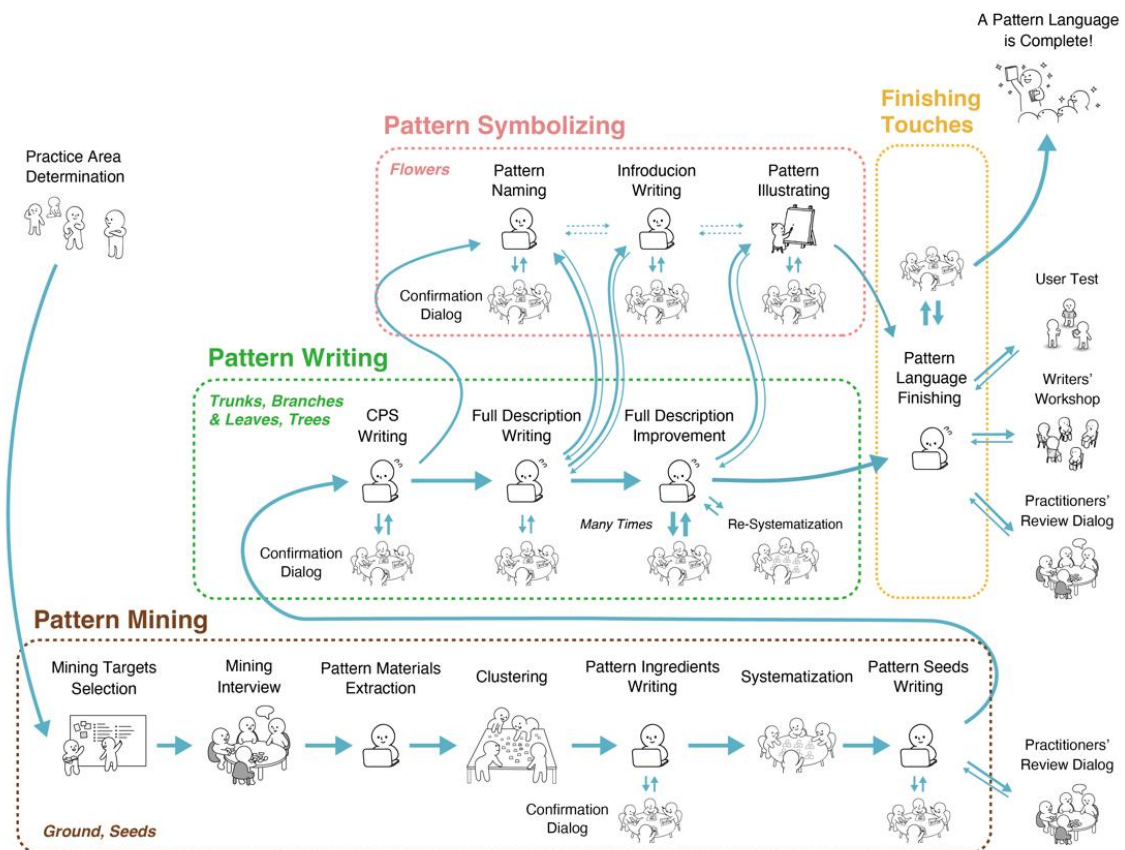


Figure 3: The Pattern Language Crafting Process Developed at Iba Lab.



The initial step involved Mining Interviews with practitioners of Seeing of Essence (Figure 4). The interviewees included the critic and philosopher Seiji Takeda (Professor at Graduate School of Leadership and Innovation, Shizenkan University / Professor Emeritus of Faculty of International Research and Education, Waseda University), philosopher Ken Nishi (Adjunct Professor at Tokyo Medical University) who discusses and practices philosophical dialogue, Ittoku Tomano (Associate professor at Faculty of Education, Kumamoto University) who primarily debates education and society, Midori Inagaki (Associate Professor at International College of Liberal Arts, Yamanashi Gakuin University) working towards a symbiotic society through Japanese language education, and Takashi Iba, one of the authors of this paper, who has been involved in crafting pattern languages through Seeing of Essence.

We delved into what they value in practicing Seeing of Essence (What), how they do it (How), and why it's important (Why), uncovering their explicit and tacit knowledge (Iba and Yoder, 2014; Iba, 2021a). Each was interviewed once or twice, accumulating over 30 hours of narrative data.

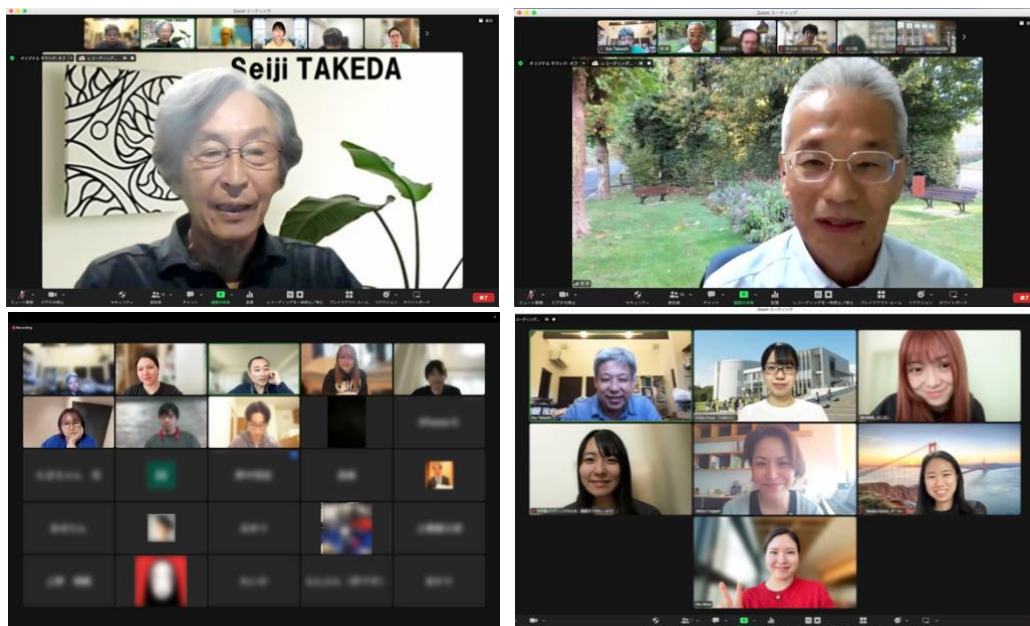


Figure 4: Scenes of the Mining Interviews.

After transcribing all the interviews, we extracted significant parts. Each member noted what they deemed important, summarized those sections, and then, in teams of two or three, cross-referenced their notes to pinpoint truly significant parts (Figure 5). These key points were then noted on Material cards. Once all the interview Material cards were prepared, with each interviewee's cards on differently colored paper, we moved to the next phase.

The next phase was Clustering as shown in Figure 6 (Iba, *et al.*, 2017). Clustering began with randomly placing the Material cards on butcher paper on a table. As we reviewed the cards, we grouped those with similar meanings, confirming with other team members before moving them closer together. This pairing process was diligently repeated until clusters of Material cards formed on the paper, becoming the ingredients of the patterns. We then summarized the key points of each cluster and noted them on Ingredient cards. While the Material cards were in various colors, the Ingredient cards were all on white paper to denote their consolidated data.



Figure 5: Scenes of Extracting Significant Parts.



Figure 6: Scenes of Clustering.





Figure 7: Scenes of Differentiating the whole of the practice in Systematization.

The subsequent phase was Systematization (Iba, 2021b). We spread out the Ingredient cards and broadly understood what ingredients we had. Then, stepping back from individual cards, we considered what's important when thinking about the practice as a whole. If we had to name three crucial things in the practice of Seeing of Essence, what would they be? Everyone pondered this, shared their thoughts, and discussed to determine the three main parts (Figure 7). Then, we created areas for these three main parts on the butcher paper and started placing relevant Ingredient cards in the corresponding areas. We checked to ensure a balanced distribution of cards across all parts. If one part was significantly unbalanced, we adjusted the content to achieve a better balance.

After that, we discussed the three important aspects of each part, created sub-part areas, and distributed the Ingredient cards (Figure 8). This was done for all main parts. Once everything fit into the system, we moved to the final step of Systematization: reading the Ingredient cards allocated to each sub-part and dividing them into three patterns. Thus, the main parts became categories in the system, sub-parts became groups, and the three clusters within those became the three pattern seeds. This concluded the Systematization phase.

However, the system wasn't set in stone after Systematization. The order of patterns and the system needed adjustments alongside the content review of individual patterns. But establishing positions within the overall system allowed us to delve into the content of individual pattern seeds. We then entered the pattern writing phase, starting by writing what we call 'CPS': one sentence each for Context, Problem, and Solution (Iba, 2021a). One or more people drafted CPS sentences for each pattern seed, which were then reviewed and discussed by everyone to identify areas for improvement (Figure 9). We took these back, rewrote them by the next meeting, and this process was repeated.



Figure 8: Scenes of Classifying Ingredient cards in Systematization.



Figure 9: Scenes of Reviewing the draft of pattern description.





Figure 10: Scenes of Review with Mining interviewees.

Once we felt the content was sufficiently developed and of good quality, we presented the in-progress pattern seeds to the interviewees for feedback (Figure 10). We received feedback from Ittoku Tomano, Ken Nishi, and Seiji Takeda, making improvements after each session. What we present in this paper are the pattern seeds as developed up to this point.

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