

“Feeling of Life” System with a Pattern Language

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Abstract

In this paper, we present the “*Feeling of Life*” System (FoLS) where users grasp and express the aliveness of their experiences with a pattern language. In the system, the users express, store and share *photos* and *stories* that they have feel some degree of *life*. The word “life” has a double meaning; one is the daily life and another is the concept of aliveness in a broad sense, discussed by Christopher Alexander in his book *The Nature of Order*. In this paper, we introduce “The 4th Place” as a case of the system, which uses the *Generative Beauty Patterns*, a pattern language for one to live lively and beautiful in daily life. Although the service of our system has just started and we have limited results so far, we would like to share our ideas and an example of the system with the pattern community.

1. Introduction

For the past ten years, we have created many pattern languages of human actions, where we call this type “Pattern Language 3.0” (Iba, 2011a; Iba, 2012b), like the Learning Patterns (Iba, *et al.*, 2009; Iba and Miyake, 2010; Iba and Sakamoto, 2011), the Presentation Patterns (Iba, *et al.*, 2012), the Collaboration Patterns (Iba and Isaku, 2013), the Generative Beauty Patterns (Arao, *et al.*, 2012), the Survival Language (Furukawazono, *et al.*, 2013a; 2013b), the Change Making Patterns (Shimomukai and Iba, 2012; Shimomukai, *et al.*, 2012), the Pedagogical Patterns for Creative Learning (Iba, *et al.*, 2011, Shibuya, *et al.*, 2013), the Personal Culture Patterns (Nakada, *et al.*, 2013), the Global Life Patterns (Matsuzuka, *et al.*, 2013) and so on.

When mining these patterns, we always focus on great successful cases in the target domain, and value the aliveness of these cases (Iba and Isaku, 2012). However, even if we could capture the aliveness, the documented patterns cannot hold the aliveness due to their abstractness of description. To overcome the limitations, we usually add illustrations or photos that express aliveness (see examples of the

Collaboration Patterns in Figure 1 and the Generative Beauty Patterns in Figure 2)¹. Furthermore, we often hold workshops to make an opportunity to use pattern languages as a media for dialogue, where participants exchange their vivid experiences related to the patterns (Iba, 2011b; Iba, 2012a; Iba, *et al.*, 2012). Through the dialogue, participants can feel the aliveness of experiences related to the patterns. But there are few opportunities for workshops, and it is not possible for a reader of a pattern paper or book to communicate with others as they read.

On the backdrop, we realized that a new system for sharing their experiences and feeling of aliveness is the key to the diffusion and real application of pattern languages. In this paper, we will first give an overview of the concept “Quality Without A Name” and “life” behind the idea of pattern languages. Then, we present a system that supports people to grasp and share the aliveness of the experiences through using each patterns of a pattern language, and name it “*Feeling of Life*” System (FoLS). Section 3 describes the Life Feeling System and Section 4 demonstrates the system, “The 4th Place” with Generative Beauty Patterns.

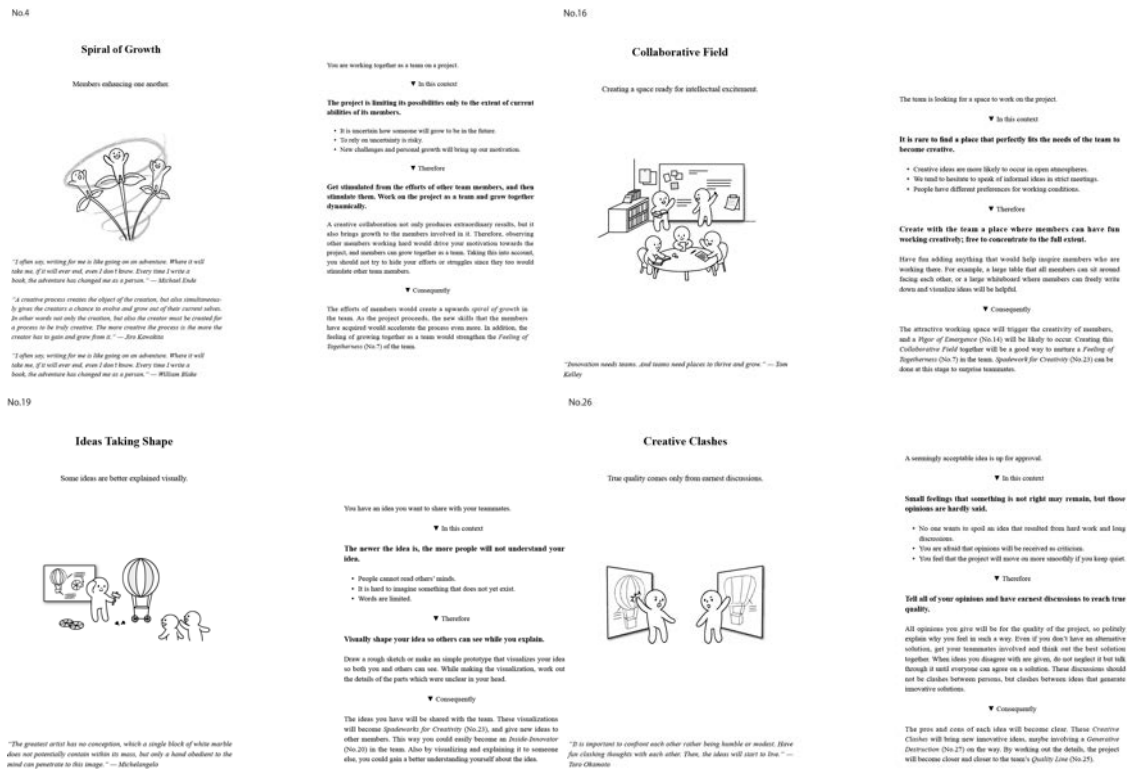


Figure 1 The illustrations that express aliveness in the Collaboration Patterns

¹ Another way to express the aliveness and quality is well-known “thick description” in Anthropology



Figure 2 The photos that express aliveness in the Generative Beauty Patterns

2. From “Quality Without A Name” to “life”

When Christopher Alexander proposed the idea of pattern language, he aimed to support people in realizing the *Quality Without A Name* (QWAN) and participate in design in the field of architecture. He stated in his book *The Timeless Way of Building*, “There is a central quality which is the root criterion of life and spirit in a man, a town, a building, or a wilderness. This quality is objective and precise, but it cannot be named” (Alexander, 1979, p.19) and then “The search which we make for this quality, in our

own lives, is the central search of any person, and the crux of any individual person's story, It is the search for those moments and situations when we are most alive" (Alexander, 1979, p.41). This is the core attribute of pattern languages.

The reason why he named the quality "Quality Without A Name" is that he did not understand deeply about it at that time. After publishing *A Pattern Language* (Alexander, et al., 1977) and *The Timeless Way of Building* (Alexander, 1979), Alexander had explored the quality more deeply for about 30 years, and published the books *The Nature of Order*. In that book, he emphasizes the conception of *life*². His concept "life" does not mean creatures in a biological sense, but the one in a broad sense. In this sense, for example, wave and fire are alive, namely they have some degree of *life*. He says, "What I mean is that the wave *itself* – the system which in present-day science we have considered as a purely mechanical hydrodynamical system of moving water – *as some degree of life*." (Alexander, 2002, p.31)

Interestingly, Alexander mentions not only architecture but also events in the daily life: "We certainly feel different degrees of life in different human events."(*ibid.*, p.36). He takes an example of shaking hands, and says, "In one case it feels full of life; in another case, mechanical, dead."(*ibid.*). Then, about the life, "It occurs most deeply when things are simply going well. When we are having a good time, or when we are experiencing joy or sorrow — when we experience the real."(*ibid.*, p.37). We agree to Alexander's conception of life and aliveness of events in the daily life, and furthermore we think this conception of life seems be more acceptable for the events in the daily life than for physical space in architecture.

Here, in addition, I would like to pay attention to a methodological implication of *The Nature of Order*: the ability of the photos to express the aliveness. When Alexander demonstrates the degree of *life*, he uses photos to ask participants to choose which of the two photos has higher degree of *life*³. In addition, in the *mirror-of-the-self* test⁴, he also uses the photos to asking which of the two objects seems like a better picture of the self. It implies that Alexander considers photos as the media that can capture *life* of things. Photos can express a kind of quality that sometimes the language cannot grasp or express. Indeed, Alexander, in *A Pattern Language* (Alexander, et al., 1977) and *The Timeless Way of Building*

² Indeed, about the aim of the book *The Nature of Order*, Alexander states, "Throughout this book, I shall be looking for a broad conception of life, in which each thing — regardless of what it is — has some degree of life. Each stone, rafter, and piece of concrete has *some* degree of life." (Alexander, 2002, p.31) and "My aim in this book is to create a scientific view of the world in which this concept – the idea that everything has its degree of life – is well-defined."(*ibid.*, p.32).

³ This experiment is presented in the chapter 2 "Degrees of Life" of *The Nature of Order, Book 1* (Alexander, 2002).

⁴ This test is presented in the chapter 8 "The Mirror of the Self" of *The Nature of Order, Book 1* (Alexander, 2002).

(Alexander, 1979), used photos to express the aliveness, and his approach was garnered immense praise, for example by Joshua Kerievsky (2008). This implication encourages us to use photos to represent the aliveness and share it with others.

As discussed above, photo looks like a good medium to represent the aliveness, but is it sufficient? We don't think so. The target Alexander focuses on is architecture, in other words physical objects, so photo and diagram are good media to capture them. However, the target we focus on is human actions, therefore it inevitably contains something moving or changing over time, and conceives the meaning. Photo is not good at handling the motion, change, and meaning, so we need another representation to capture the aliveness of human actions. The media we would like to take here is *story*. Story can express the event as "wholeness", not as a "point," containing the sequence of events, meaning, and feeling.

The significance of the form of *story* for human has been studied in academic fields like cognitive science. Roger C. Schank, a cognitive scientist, says, "Humans are not ideally set up to understand logic; they are ideally set up to understand stories."(Schank, 1991). Don Norman, another cognitive scientist, also states, "Stories have the felicitous capacity of capturing exactly those elements that formal decision methods leave out. Logic tries to generalize, to strip the decision making from the specific context, to remove it from subjective emotions. Stories capture the context, capture the emotions", and "Stories are important cognitive events, for they encapsulate, into one compact package, information, knowledge, context, and emotion." (Norman, 1994). Furthermore, the effectiveness of storytelling has been pointed out also in the practical fields of communication, management, and organization (Brown, et al., 2005; Simmons, 2009).

Thus, in this paper, we will take *photos* and *stories* as media for representing aliveness of experiences around human actions.

3. "Feeling of Life" System (FoLS)

Feeling of Life System (FoLS) is the system to express, by using *photos* and *stories*, the aliveness of experiences related to each pattern, to store the aliveness and to share it. *Photos* show the scenes or objects that have the aliveness, or shows the feelings or the objects that express your feelings. *Stories* tell what happens or feelings when the *life* appears, like novels or poetry.

The "Feeling of Life" System (FoLS) attempts to *personalize* a pattern language that is always universal things, by using the users' own *photos* and *stories* to express their own life containing aliveness. As Alexander said, "*A language gives you back your confidence in what seemed once like trivial things*" (Alexander 1979, p.545), and to "express the life" with different patterns again and again

help people to realize the aliveness.

Now, We describe the basic functions of the “Feeling of Life” System (FoLS) : **expressing**, **storing** and **sharing**. These three functions are basically different things, but they infect and give power each other, so the system is can be called cyclic. Users will get *piecemeal growth* by **expressing** and **storing**, or being inspired by others’ and, then do new **expressing** (Figure 3).

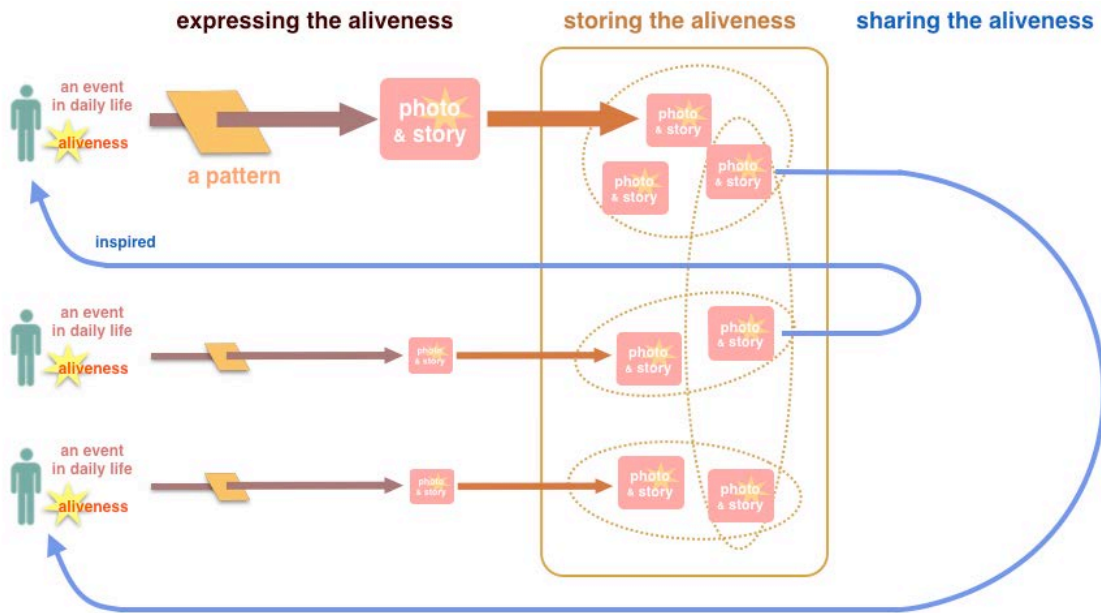


Figure 3 The cycle of expressing, storing and sharing of the “Feeling of Life” System (FoLS)

3.1 Expressing

On the “Feeling of Life” System (FoLS), users express the aliveness by *photos* and *stories*. The “expressions of the life” – a set of *photos* and *stories* – is connected with a pattern. There are two ways of expressing. One is finding a right pattern that fits to their experiences. The other one is finding their right experiences that fit to a pattern. The first one is the approach to “express the life” with an experience as a start. The other is the approach to “express the life” with a pattern as a start.

3.2 Storing

On the system, the “expressions of the life” – *photos* and *stories* – are stored. This makes users see the index of the life they already grasp, and makes users grasp the wholeness that cannot be understood fragmentary. Users also can know which patterns they haven’t expressed yet. This will be motivation of the next expressions or new experiences. Users can also compare experiences with each other that are

connected with same patterns but are different experiences.

3.3 Sharing

On this system, users can see others' "expressions of the life" – *photos* and *stories* – and their own "expressions of the life" can be seen by others. This sharing of the "expressions of the life" will be a chance to know the aliveness you have not grasped yet. In addition, if you have already experienced, but couldn't remind, or couldn't connect with a pattern, this sharing will give you some hints. And inspired by others, you can get new experiences. This system won't create the connection of users, because the system is not a SNS (Social Networking Service) that connects the people directly, but create experiences or qualities connected to patterns.

4. Implemented System: The 4th Place

Here we introduce "The 4th Place" system as an example of the "Feeling of Life" System (FoLS), which uses the *Generative Beauty Patterns*, a pattern language for one to live lively and beautiful in daily life. "The 4th Place" is the web service⁵ where users **express** daily life as *photos* and *stories* based on a pattern of the *Generative Beauty Patterns*. Those works (the sets of a *photo* and a *story*) are **stored** and **shared**, so users can see all works or see works that connected specific patterns. And users can see others' works and add to users' favorite list if they like it. In addition, users can make a work referring to others' works. In this system users can communicate with others by the pattern language and works.

4.1 Concept

"The 4th Place" system is the place where you can leave daily life, reconsider your own self and organize yourself. Ray Oldenburg, an American sociologist, calls the "third place" where people gather and communicate like café or bar (Oldenburg, 1989; Oldenburg, 2002). He distinguishes the "third place" from one's home, which he calls the "first place", and the workplace, which he calls the "second place". In information society, our era, there are many place like the "third place" on the Internet. On the other hand, what we want to present in the "Feeling of Life" System (FoLS) is the calm place, where you can reconsider and organize your own self. We define such place as "The 4th Place." Many famous author or poet, like Ernest Hemingway and William Wordsworth, who created great works, had such calm place

⁵ This system, which is open to public at the site <http://www.the4thplace.jp/>, is implemented in Ruby on Rails. This system provides the menus in English. It provides it in Japanese in Japanese only if the user accesses from the OS in Japanese.

where they can leave from daily life and be alone, like hiding place (Fleming and Fleming, 2007). Such place, you can leave busy daily life and be alone, will be important place in future (Figure 4).



Figure 4 The images of “The 4th Place” system

4.2 System Design

“The 4th Place” system consists of five pages (Figure 5): *Home*, *Desk*, *User*, *Wall* and *Generative Beauty Patterns*. *Home* page is the starting page in the system, which shows a calm atmosphere of “The 4th Place” (Figure 5, top middle). We stage a tree house, which has a big window and a desk, where users can reconsider their own self. Users can move to *User* page clicking left indicator or can move to *Wall* page clicking right indicator.

The *Generative Beauty Patterns* page is the page to **recognize** the user’s own life by the pattern language (Figure 5, bottom right; Figure 6). The color pencils representing each patterns name are on the left side of the page, and the right side of the page shows the *context* (the time you use this pattern), the *problem* (the problem which usually happens in the *context*) and the *solution* (what you should do when the *problem* happens). Clicking the “create work”, right bottom button, user can create new work that connected the pattern. In this process, the user can **express** the daily life that she **recognizes** in this page by the *Generative Beauty Patterns*.

The *Desk* page is the page to “express the life” that the users feel in daily life (Figure 5, bottom left; Figure 7). Users who read the *Generative Beauty Patterns* create a work in this page, in other words uploading their own *photo* of impression scene of daily life and writing *story* of what they feel or think. Users also need to title the work and choose a pattern, which relates the work. Then, users can post the work clicking the pencil button. If users want to keep the work draft and post it later, check the box on the bottom of the right page.

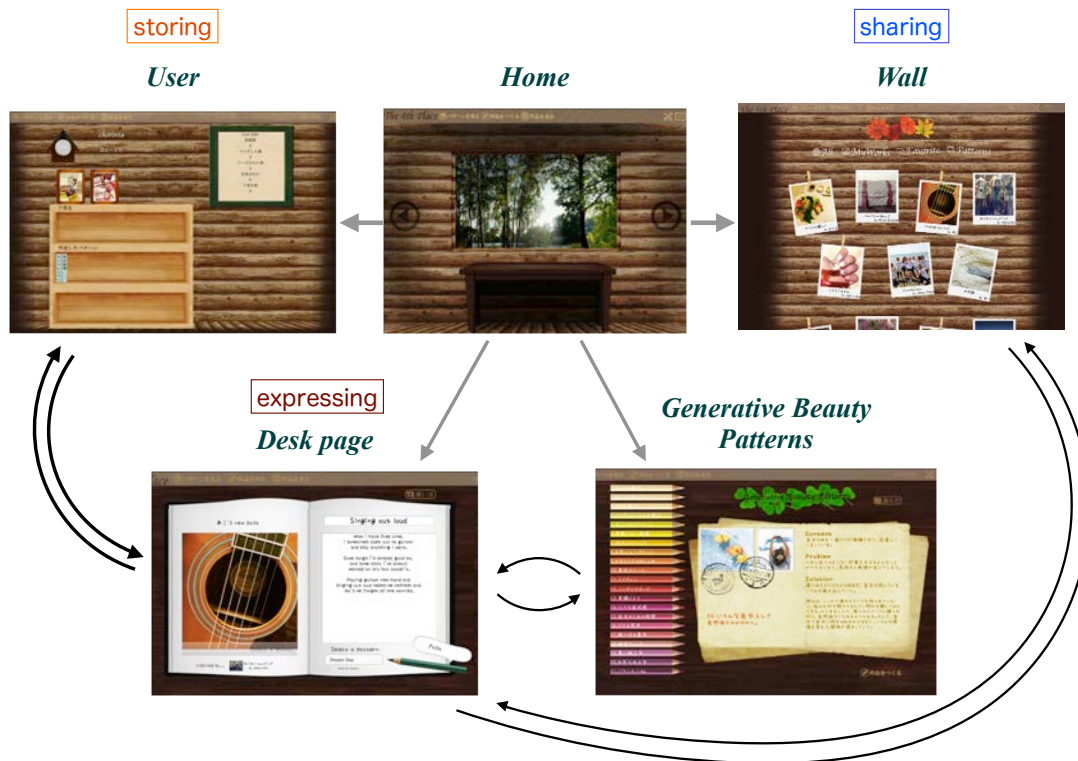


Figure 5 The Overview Structure in "The 4th Place" system



Figure 6 Generative Beauty Patterns page in "The 4th Place" system

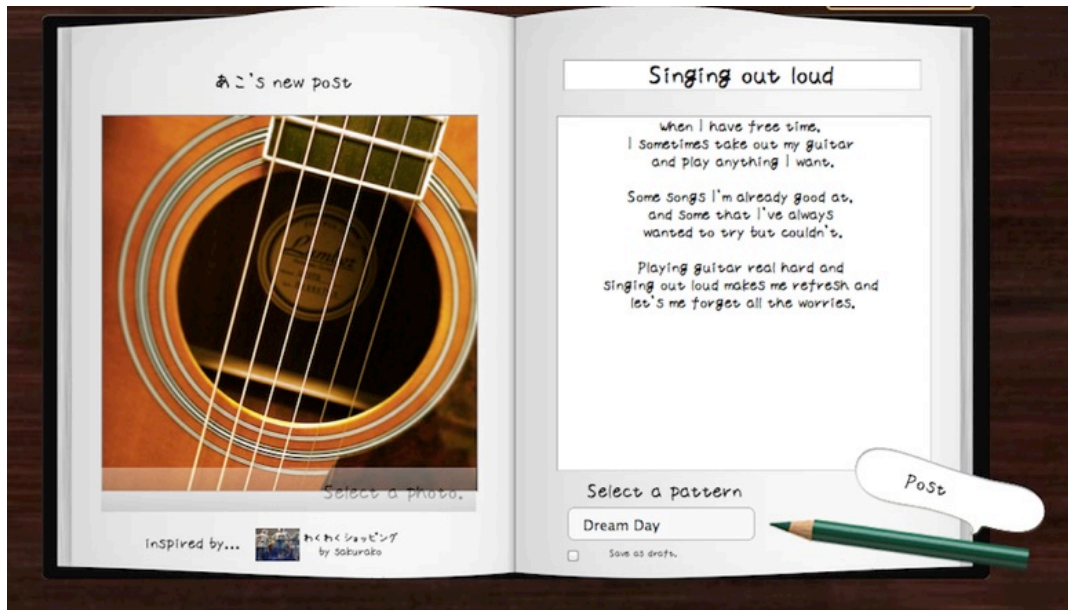


Figure 7 Desk page in “The 4th Place” system (after creating work)

The *User* page is the page to “store” own works (Figure 5, top left). There are recent four works on the top of the shelf. The lower of those four works are drafts, not yet posted. On the middle and bottom shelves, there are patterns users have already written. Users can know which patterns they have already written or not. This page also tells users how many works they posted, how many time they favorite others’ works, how many works they got favorite and how many works inspired others.

The *Wall* page is the page to “store” all users’ works (Figure 5, top right; Figure 8). *All* page of the Wall shows new arrival works. Users can see all works on this page. The *My Works* page of the Wall shows users’ own works. The *Favorite* page of the Wall shows the users favorites. *Patterns* page shows the works sorted by each patterns.

Clicking one work, users can read the story of the work (Figure 9). If the user chooses her own work, she can edit or delete the work. If the user liked the work, she can set the work as favorite by clicking the pink tag, and the work shows how many favorites it gathers on the bottom of the left page. If the user wants to create new work inspired by the work, she can create new work by clicking the pencil on the right, and move to the *Desk* page.



Figure 8 Wall page in “The 4th Place” system

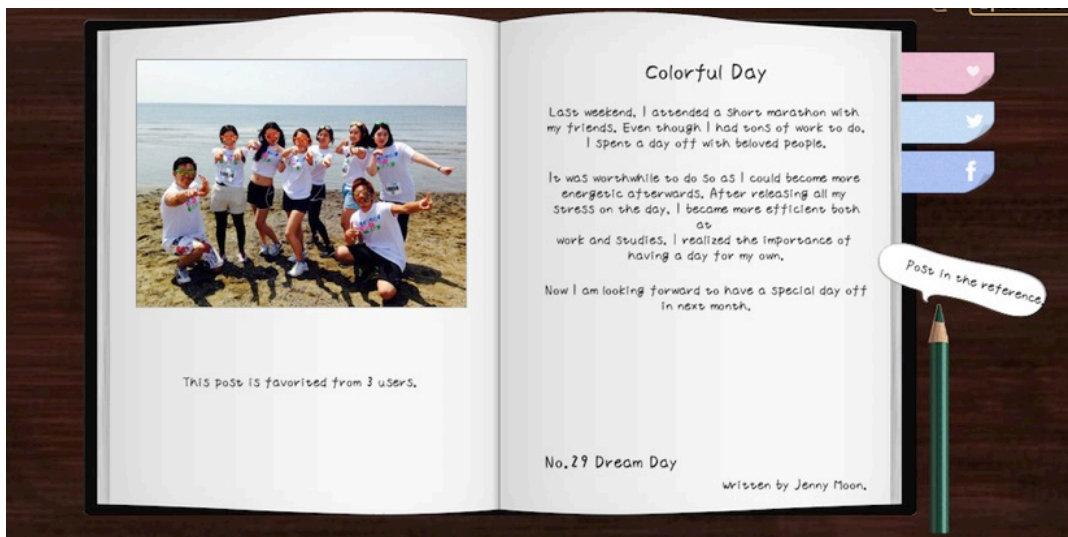


Figure 9 Work page in “The 4th Place” system

5. Conclusion

In this paper, we presented the “Feeling of Life” System (FoLS), the system to support users to grasp, express, and share the aliveness with each patterns of a pattern language. Behind this proposition, we

have the hypothesis that through repeating to grasp and express the aliveness by using *photo* and *stories*, users can approach the wholeness that is aimed with the pattern language. To prove this hypothesis is true, we need to investigate that our aim will be achieved in this system, and this is our future work⁶. As well as ordinary survey to the users, we need to investigate qualitatively the change of the sense over time.

In addition, we think the evolution of a pattern language is also important. Now, we hold the workshops to improve existing patterns and create new patterns with users. Through these workshops, we learn how to evolve a pattern language and will implement this mechanism to our system in the near future. We are also interested in the cultural differences of patterns in a certain theme of pattern language. We are now making Korean and German version of the Generative Beauty Patterns, and are going to hold workshops to study the cultural difference. These considerations might deepen our understanding of the conception of *life* behind the idea of pattern language.

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Appendix: Real-Site Event of “The 4th Place”

We held a real-site event of “The 4th Place,” when we present the system at the SFC Open Research Forum 2013, which was organized by the Faculty of Policy Management, the Faculty of Environment and Information Studies, and the Faculty of Nursing and Medical Care. This is a two-days event open to the public on Nov 22nd and 23rd, 2013, in Japan. On the site, participants expressed, stored, and shared the aliveness of their experiences (Figure 10). Each participant chose a *photo* from her mobile phone and sent it to the staff, then the staff printed out the photo in the Polaroid-type form. The participant wrote a short sentence or words to express their feeling or tell the *story*. Finally, the number of works reached to more than 100 works (Figure 11). We think that the participants enjoyed choosing photos, writing words, and sharing it with others, as you can see the facial expression of the participants just after making their works (Figure 12).

⁶ We have already an experimental real-site event of “The 4th Place.” See Appendix of this paper.



Figure 10 The real-site event of “The 4th Place”



Figure 11 The works expressed, stored, and shared in the real-site event of “The 4th Place”



Figure 12 Participants' facial expression implying "Feeling of Life"

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