In the present-day society, both life and place of living have been almost completely controlled by modern systems, such as nation states, market economies, and technology, and overwhelmingly affected by, as well as presented and recognized with, the modern, specialized knowledge and ideologies (values) associated with the systems. Therefore, the innate characteristics of life and a place of living rarely manifest themselves and are difficult to recognize. In the process of modernization, “knowledge in life” to set the purposes, norms, and other aspects of life became fragmented and ambiguous, while the systems which were originally a systematized means of facilitating life for people and society were overgrowing. As a result, the whole society has been formed and directed by the logic of the systems. It seems we are in a situation where the tail is wagging the dog.

Based on the above recognition, this paper aims to reveal the innate characteristics of modern systems and life as “knowledge in systems (specialized knowledge)” and “knowledge in life,” respectively, and their relationships in the whole society. To this end, this paper suggests the following conceptual tools.

First, in order to understand the life of modern society that is fragmented and difficult to interpret, this paper takes a detour to compare it with the life of autonomous communities before and outside the early modern world. Secondly, the concept of “folkways” is used to make it easier to understand the cores of life in the comparison. Thirdly, the concept of the “hinterland” is used to reveal the relationships between places of living and civilization systems.

Key words: life, resident, a place of living, knowledge in life, folkways, specialized knowledge, systems and institutions, urban civilization, hinterland, multi-layered community groups, modernization