

The significance of the Seoul Declaration and challenges for the social economy

Naonori Tsuda

President of the NPO Forum for promoting the Symbiotic Economy in Japan

Professor Emeritus of Momoyama Gakuin University

Our NPO Exercise in Japan

- The purpose of our NPO is to introduce the thought behind and system of the European social economy to Japan.
- We have worked for a long time to pass two laws, for the worker's cooperative and for people with disabilities.
- We have held symposia, inviting activists from Japan and overseas.

The significance of Seoul Declaration2013 and GSEF2014

- Seoul Declaration 2013 is a declared challenge to the contradictions of capitalist society, and suggests a goal of establishing a new society.
- The cooperative 10- year plan in Seoul City is a concrete plan of the Declaration, and is a tribute to tremendous amount of effort expended.
- The GSEF Charter is a foundation for future international solidarity, and is in agreement with the Council' s discussions and decision.

The Future of the social economy and challenges

The Following describes the relationships between the contemporary crises and the capitalistic economic system, between social change and social economy, and between social changes and a new civilization, as well as the challenges of the social economy.

1) The capitalistic economic system as causes of the crises

The capitalist economy intensifies the contradictions of the world and further deepens the crises. The crises of capitalism consist of three types.

- Crisis of the economic system in the form of bank failures and financial collapse-
- Crisis of humanity as the result of economic crisis, spreading social inequality and excluding vulnerable people.
- Crisis of the environment resulting from the destruction of nature by mass production, mass consumption and mass waste, for which capitalist production bears responsibility.

2) Relationship between the paradigm of the capitalist economy and crises

This contradiction cannot be resolved by only modifying capitalism. Because the intensification of the conflict is directly connected to the paradigm of the capitalist economic system, which consists of the following five aspects.

- Neo-liberalist thought
- Competition system
- Profit-making companies
- Market system
- System of government and policy

3) Conditions of a new society to overcome the crises

To overcome the crises, vision to create a good society must be achieved first.

- Solidarity in society for working people and all of humanity. (-no exploitation).
- True coexistence and symbiosis in society for all people. (-no exclusion or isolation).
- Cooperating center-oriented society. (-non-competitive center).
- Balanced and whole harmonious society. (-non-ego-driven society).
- Society that focuses on trust and bonds. (-no isolation or fragmentation).
- Permaculture society that cherishes nature. (-no human ego).

4) Direction of the paradigm shift

To prevent the intensification contradiction, the paradigm of the capitalist economic system as the root cause of crises should be changed through social revolution. The direction of this transformation is as follows.

- Neo-Liberalism: Transformation to value system that include love, justice, fairness and solidarity.
- Profit-making companies: Transformation to companies seeking to benefit human society, and the governance of voting from “1 share, 1 vote” to “1 person, 1 vote”.
- Competition system: Transformation to a system of cooperation or a solidarity system.
- Market system: Transformation to a system regulated by public interest criteria and planning.
- Government and policy system: Transformation to a system with auditing of the government and with the government in solidarity with civil society.

5) Social change and the new civilization

If the paradigm change is achieved and the conditions of a new society to overcome the crisis are satisfied, a new civilized society will appear. Let us call such a new society a “solidarity society”. The characteristics of this society are as follows.

- Solidarity society aims at the transformation from a money-goods oriented world to a spiritual value-oriented one.
- Solidarity society aims at the cooperative-solidarity system that seeks to overcome the competition-oriented society.
- Solidarity society aims at the universal value system.
- Solidarity society aims at human progress, shifting from an ego-driven to an altruistic society.

6) The European social economy is an initial model for a new civilization

The initial model of a solidarity society as a new civilization already exists: the social economy of Europe. The following are common features of the European social economy.

- Based on the non-profit sector. (-not for-profit purposes).
- The purpose of the non-profit sector's core consists of spiritual-oriented values. (-not only money-goods-oriented).
- Members share values, such as democracy, participation, solidarity, and fairness.
- Emphasis on common service and the public interest. (-not self-interest).
- Historically, began as a response to communities' needs.
- The idea of symbiosis with nature extends ideology to a permaculture that saves the world from destruction.

7) Challenges for the social economy

As the social economy is still in its early stages as a new economic system, further innovation and evolution are necessary. For example, the following are important for future international researchers and activists.

- Theoretical and practical analysis of the “solidarity system” to increase efficiency and to encourage cooperative values should be promoted. (see Tsuda[2012])
- As a new safety net system, a workers’ enterprise buyout system like those in western countries should be introduced. (see Tsuda[2014a])
- To stop the destruction of nature by the scientific and technological progress, the idea of symbiosis with human and nature should be explored. (see Tsuda [2014a])

Bibliography

- **Books**

- Naonori Tsuda [2012] *Cooperatives of Social Change and Solidarity System'*, (in Japanese), Kōyō shobo.
- Naonori Tsuda [2014a] *Solidarity and Symbiosis with Nature: challenges to a new civilization*, (in Japanese), Minerva Shobo.

- **Papers and presentations**

- Naonori Tsuda [2014b] “Towards an economic system that overcomes capitalism,” (in Japanese), *Official Journal of the Japanese Association of Sociology of Law*, No.80, (posted: by 2015 Years 9 -Publishing Calendar).
- Naonori Tsuda [2014c] “Towards an economic system that overcomes capitalism,” Presentation at the Association of Socio-economic Systems (Power Point).
- Naonori Tsuda, K. Kitajima, K. Tomizawa Roundtable [2014d] “Social economy, Solidarity Economy and Economics,” *Life and Lifestyle Research Institute Report* No.47.