
The Emergence of Ecological Alternative Movement in Korea

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Abstract: This paper attempts to analyze the characteristics and causes of the Korean ecological alternative movement and its theoretical, practical implications. The characteristics of ecological alternative movement are as follows. Its major proponents are conscientious pro-democracy activists and ecology-conscious farmers and housewives. It sets high value on the efforts to transcend capitalism, industrialism and the state-orientation and to form a cooperative and mutually beneficial community for peace and life. It also puts greater emphasis on the efforts to spread pro-environmental culture and life through face-to-face relationships. The reason why this movement has spread after the late 1990s is because the state-driven democracy faced its limitations amid the neo-liberal globalization, and civic groups failed to redress such problems. The ecological alternative movement was the result of the efforts of the community members to defend their own life in face of the structural failure of the dominant social paradigm.

Key words: ecological, alternative, environmental movement, life.

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I . Introduction

Korea is a rare country in Asia that succeeded in democratization and economic development. Since 1987, Korea has seen a rapid rise in the level of political democratization. Korea also has witnessed a remarkable decrease in the evils of the old system, such as political corruption, regionalism and cold war anti-communism. Nevertheless, the development of its social, economic and cultural democracy still does not work well in many aspects, and everyday life problems such as authoritarianism, discrimination and collective egoism are prevalent all over the society. In particular, following the IMF foreign exchange crisis in 1997, the whole society has been reorganized centering around “self-regulating markets,” thereby causing the retreat of democracy (Polanyi, 1957). As the “national competitiveness discourse” has become a dominant social agenda, the number of unemployed persons, irregular workers and small business owners increased. Overall social exclusion has been structured since 1997. Even though national welfare policies for those excluded from market sectors have been developed, they still fall short of the average of the OECD countries.¹

Then, what is the situation when it comes to ecological democracy?² Due to the opening of the political opportunity structure after 1987, the environmental movement has rapidly grown throughout

1. Public social expenditure per GDP of Korea of 2005(6.9%) is the lowest level in OECD countries (mean 20.5%). See OECD(2009: 222-23).

2. Here, ecological democracy refers to a system and culture in which the inherent value of creatures other than human beings and the rights of the future generation and biospecies are respected and the balance of the ecosystem is realized in a democratic manner. It is a democracy that extends the existing democracy confined in the frame of anthropocentrism to biospecies and further to nature (Dryzek, 2000).

the nation. This, along with the expansion of environmental consciousness, led to a steady growth of ecological democracy. Even in the midst of economic crisis, people's interest in and support for environment has continued in a relatively consistent manner. However, as the development of socio-economical democracy stagnated in the mid-2000s, the environmental movement also had to face quite a many difficulties. It is because the institutionalization of the mainstream environmental groups resulted in weakening their reformative spirit. On the other hand, the counter-environmental movement was proliferated by conservatives. Besides, neo-liberalism has become prevailing in Korean society, thereby weakening people's environment-oriented values. Since the 1990s, the mainstream environmental groups pursued strategies to green the state and society in a top-down manner through the ecological reform of the capitalist state, but it achieved only partial success.

Korea's democratization process after 1987 can be roughly summarized as its success in political and systemic democratization and its failure in social, economic, cultural and ecological democratization. The model of promoting democracy in the manner of enlightenment by reforming the state, with a focus on Seoul, in a top-down fashion underwent a great turnabout in 1997 and finally suffered a setback in 2007³. Already from the 1990s, criticism has been extended to this model of top-down democratization without reflection and participation from the bottom-up. This critical reflection was initiated by the ecological movement and the life(*saeng-myung*) and peace movement, which are differentiated from the mainstream environmental movement but can be placed under the category of environmental movement in a broader sense. This paper calls the movement of such trend "ecological alternative movement." The ecological alternative movement focuses on "ecology" rather than on "environment," since it seeks to go

3. The neo-liberal conservative Lee Myung-bak won the Presidential election.

beyond anthropo-centrism and pursues alternatives to industrialism and statism. It can be referred to as a social movement in that it seeks to change existing social systems and pursues new systems. This movement is different from the mainstream environmental movement in many aspects like value system, resource mobilization methods and the actors of the movement.

This paper attempts to analyze the characteristics of the social movements that seek ecological alternatives in the present situation where the top-down democratization model faces crisis and accordingly the mainstream environmental movement based on such model faces a difficult situation. The paper also seeks to clarify the causes for the development of those movements and their theoretical and practical implications. The research questions of this paper are as follows: 1) What are the characteristics (value system, primary actors, resource mobilization methods and major activities) of the ecological alternative movement?; 2) What caused the ecological alternative movement to develop?; and 3) What are the theoretical and political meanings of the ecological alternative movement?

Addressing these questions, this paper aims to explore the possibility of building an alternative society that is ecologically sustainable and socially reciprocal and cooperative beyond the confines of industrialism and capitalism in the 21st-century globe, when self-regulating markets are colonizing nature and society. In the face of this serious global ecological crisis, the ecological authoritarians, who rely on authoritarian states, and the liberals, who resort to the control of markets to deal with the crisis, will raise their voice. Given this, the paper examines as well whether a seed for constructing an ecological global community based on bottom-up ecological democracy beyond anti-democratic discourses is sprouting in the ecological alternative movement of Korea.

II. The Mainstream Environmental Movement and the Ecological alternative Movement

Korean environmental movement was touched off by pollution victims' protests. Based on these protests, democratic anti-pollution movement began to develop in Korea in the 1980s, and was inherited by some of the environmental movement groups that made their appearance in the 1990s. After the 1990s, the mainstream environmental groups and the mainstream environmental NGOs underwent the process of institutionalization.⁴ That is, they began to seek memberships, regularly raise membership fees and donations, and receive in part governmental assistance, while conducting movement for enactment of laws concerning environment and policy reform, as well as various activities such as development deterrence, public relations and education, thus setting the frame of their resource mobilization methods. And in the 1990s, the resistant or left-environmentalist ideology, which was prevalent in the 1980s, rapidly swept under the rug in exchange for new discourses of environmental movement, such as sustainable development and environment management. Whereas some of the anti-pollution groups in the 1980s sought radical and socialist alternatives, the mainstream environmental groups in the 1990s focused on managing capitalism and industrialism in an eco-friendly way. This trend has been continuing since the 2000s. These mainstream environmental

4. The mainstream environmental movement refers to the social movement held by professional environmental organizations, which attempts to change social systems by putting pressure on the government and enterprises with the aim to solve environmental problems. The Korea Federation for Environmental movement, the Green Korea United and the Citizens' Movement for Environmental Justice are representative mainstream environment organizations.

groups launched “advocacy movement,” which put pressure primarily on the central or local government through opposition to development or opposition to enactment.

After the 1990s, the mainstream environmental groups adopted such realistic environmentalist strategies, thereby expanding their influence on the mass. As a result of this, they succeeded in forcing the government to give up plans to construct a dam on the Donggang river, and made a great contribution to the establishment of resource recycling policies. This contributed, above all, to expanding the environmental consciousness among people. However, by adopting such realistic strategies, and to be concrete, by forming a “governance system” in consultation with important decision-makers of the government, enterprises and the media, the mainstream environmental movement lost its own driving force to reform society outside the existing social system, which is represented by capitalism and industrialism. The main cause for such transformation lies in changes in the political opportunity structure, such as changes in the ideological topology, reshuffle of social forces, and expansion of the openness of the political regime.

Unlike the mainstream environmental movement, the ecological alternative movement started as a movement pursuing alternatives that fundamentally surpass industrial paradigms. In the 1980s, the anti-pollution movement sought eco-friendly socialism beyond capitalism by combining socialism and environmentalism, while the ecological alternative movement pursues communities that go beyond industrialism. With the democratization in 1987, activities to ecologically transform people’s life and culture were launched. The “Hansalim Manifesto,” pronounced in 1989, is an important text that systemizes the basic ideas of the ecological alternative movement. Ecological alternative movement is conducted in various forms such as direct transactions of organic agricultural products, consumers cooperative societies, ecological communities, the “return to rural communities” (*gwinong*) movement, Local

Exchange Trading System (LETS), and social enterprises, and is also deployed under various names such as life movement, salim (life-giving) movement, life and peace movement, and community movement. The reason why this movement is called “ecological alternative movement” is that it pursues new alternatives to existing industrial and market paradigms (alternative), emphasizing harmonious coexistence and communication with the nature (ecological).

The discourses of the ecological alternative movement began to spread in Korea around the early 1990s, but not as rapidly as those of the mainstream environmental movement. Because the ecological alternative movement seeks small-scale, slow, bottom-up changes, unlike the mainstream environmental movement that pursues large-scale, rapid, top-down changes, its discourses cannot but spread relatively slowly. However, when the mainstream environmental movement cannot afford to try new reforms, being caught in the trap of institutionalization following its rapid growth, the ecological alternative movement began to sow the seeds for changes. Since the 2000s, the number of consumers’ cooperative societies has rapidly increased and alternative communities were formed in both rural and urban areas, while grass-roots organizations, such as medical cooperative societies, have also been increasing. This movement seeks to create alternatives to mainstream paradigms centered on the state, markets and industries and to realize them in reality, not through mere declaration but through transformation of people’s daily lives, values and culture.

III. Exemplary Cases of the Ecological alternative Movement

1. Hansalim

The wellspring of the Hansalim movement was a cooperation movement that started in the Wonju camp.⁵ Following the great flood around the Namhangang river in 1972, the residents in Wonju started a movement to develop rural areas in Gangwon region under the leadership of Jang Il-sun. They campaigned for production cooperation, credit cooperation, cooperation for joint use of tools and machines, and consumption cooperation, which were implemented in the form of cooperation movement, collaboration movement, or village democratization movement. However, they could not enhance the self-sustenance of the region by means of a movement that attempts to achieve development by inviting external input of agricultural machinery, livestock and capitals. After this experience of failure, the people of the Wonju camp launched a cooperative movement of producers and consumers by cultivating and selling organic agricultural products (Ku, Dowan 2007).

According to Yun Hyeong-geun, it was around the 1980s that the Wonju camp, which had conducted its activities with a focus on democratization movement, changed its direction to the life movement through self-reflection on its experiences. From 1982, some credit cooperatives and agricultural cooperative associations, which had joined the Wonju camp, started organic agriculture

5. The movement group that carried out democratization activities under the leadership of Jang Il-sun and Bishop Ji Hak-sun in Wonju, the hub-city of democratization movement in Korea, in the 1970s was called "Wonju camp" (Yun Hyeong-geun, 2003: 100)

and began direct transactions with urban consumers, who would buy such products (Yun Hyeong-geun, 2003: 104). In 1984, the Wonju Consumer Cooperative Society, which was to take charge of direct transactions of organic agricultural products, was established, and in 1986, the society opened a small cooperative “Hansalim Nongsan” in Seoul. Since then, the Hansalim movement began to develop as a life culture movement as well as a consumers’ cooperative movement.⁶

The Hansalim movement, as a life culture movement, originated from the “Hansalim Group.” Since 1986, such progressive intellectuals as Jang Il-sun, Kim Ji-ha, Choe Hye-seong, Bak Jae-il, Kim Min-gi and Yun Hyeong-geun had had more than ten informal gatherings to study community movement and life philosophy, which resulted in the creation of the “Hansalim Group” in October 1989. Upon its creation, the group issued the “Hansalim Manifesto.”

The ideology of the Hansalim movement, presented in the “Hansalim Manifesto,” is a new discourse of life that aims to overcome modern industrialism with the life ideology, ecologism and *Donghak* (the Eastern Learning).⁷ But the ideology of the Hansalim movement cannot be explained only in terms of the Manifesto, because the Hansalim movement, which was established and developed with the participation of housewives, farmers and activists, has created new ideologies and values that are different from those in the Hansalim Manifesto proclaimed by intellectuals in 1989. According to Yun Hyeong-geun, bio-regionalism, local autonomy, reviving agriculture as the root of ecology etc. are of importance as the ideology of the Hansalim Group (Yun Hyeong-geun, 2004).

6. Hansalim Co-op manages organic foods, eco-friendly food products, and so on.

7. Korean indigenous religion founded in the late 19th century.

Hansalim places great emphasis on the community of solidarity, as can be seen in its slogan, "Hansalim tries to ensure that the producers can take responsibility of the life of the consumers, and the consumers, in turn, can take responsibility for the livelihood of the producers." The Hansalim movement aims to create alternative life forms and values, based on this solidarity.

What has Hansalim accomplished? First, unlike the anti-pollution movement, the Hansalim movement succeeded in being established as an alternative life movement. The term "life movement" was unfamiliar to many until the early 1990s, but gradually spread and now became a major discourse even in the mainstream environmental movement.

Second, the Hansalim movement succeeded in establishing an economically sustainable basis for its activities. After setting up its own logistics center in 1996, Hansalim maintained steady growth. As of 2005, a total of sixteen local units were active over the country, and the number of members amounted to 130 thousand in 2006, while its sales amounted to 93 billion won, and its investments, 11.7 billion won. Both the number of its members and its sales had increased by more than 30 percent every year from 2000 till 2004, but since 2005, it has recorded a growth of about 15 percent.

Third, the achievements of Hansalim have impacted the development of other consumers' cooperative societies. According to Yun Hyeong-geun, as of 2005, there were a total of 115 local consumers' cooperative societies in Korea, including the Hansalim Consumer Cooperative Society as well as the Korean Association of Consumers' Cooperatives, the Dure Association of Consumers' Cooperatives and the Consumers' Cooperative Society that is under the aegis of the Korean Women Link.

These consumers' cooperative societies have served as the prop that supported the organic agricultural products market as well as the locomotive that drove the market forward in

an environment-friendly way. Despite this solid basis, consumers' cooperative societies in Korea have had a relatively weak voice in social issues, but they recently began to actively participate in social movement, for example, taking the lead in school meals movement⁸. as well as in the opposition to the opening of agricultural markets (Yun Hyeong-geun, 2006).

Despite these achievements, Hansalim has still some problems to overcome. First, as the Hansalim movement grew in scale, its characteristic as a community movement, which is centered on a face-to-face interaction, began to be weakened. Although increased interest in environment pollution and health led to the expansion of organic agricultural product markets, this is, for the most part, based on personal or individual interest in health and welfare. That is why the values pursued by Hansalim, which are represented in its "life and solidarity" slogan, in many aspects seem difficult to be expanded in reality. Second, as the scale of the movement expands, more focus was placed on distribution than on voluntary communication and cooperation between producers and consumers. In order to compete with the efficiency of markets, decision-making processes and actions similar to, though not quite the same as, those of enterprise bureaucracy are required. If this trend is accelerated, it will make difficult for the Hansalim movement to maintain its identity as a community movement. Third, Hansalim still lacks the vision and capacity to develop the life movement into local autonomy movement and green politics.

8. This movement aims to supply organic or eco-friendly low-mileage food to schools for the sake of children's health. Co-op movement activists mobilized their resources to increase school budget.

2. The Rural Community in Hongdong-myeon, Hongseong-gun County

The Hongdong-myeon township in Hongseong-gun county, Chungnam-do province is a case in which a village community was built in Korea with a focus on organic agriculture. In particular, the Mundang-ri town is a representative example in which the rice-duck farming system⁹. was first introduced and was successfully managed without fertilizers and chemicals. These new types of rural communities, such as the Poolmoo School (Poolmoo Agriculture Technical High School), consumers' cooperative societies, the Hongseong Branch of the Jeongnong Consumers' Cooperation, the Poolmoo Agricultural Producers' Green Cooperative and the Mundang Ecology Village, formed a local network between them.

Ju Hyeong-ro, a graduate of the Poolmoo School, launched the rice-duck farming method in 1993 and then succeeded in spreading the method by persistently persuading the farmers to adopt it. Presently, this farming method is used by most farm-houses in Mundang-ri and has even spread to neighboring villages. It was successful, because the graduates of the Poolmoo School, including Ju Hyeong-ro, have informed the farmers of the eco-friendly features of the rice-duck farming method, and also induced the interest and participation of urban consumers. The success of the rice-duck farming led to the stabilization of, or increase in, the farmers' income, by reviving the rural community in the region. As this success story was reported through the media and consequently attracted many visitors, including foreigners, to this region, the residents' pride in their community was accordingly enhanced, thus forming a virtuous cycle of

9. Rice-duck farming is a method of rice cultivation that excludes the use of chemical pesticides by releasing ducks in the paddy fields so that they eat weeds and harmful insects.

growth.

It was the Poolmoo School in Hongseong that played a significant role in leading the value of life and environment to be firmly established in Hongdong-myeon. This school has produced many agriculture experts who are to revive agriculture and rural communities, and also has provided updated information on environmental agriculture to rural communities through interchange with the 'Ainoukai' Association (lit. "Love Agriculture Association") in Japan. Hong Sun-myeong, who served for a long time as a teacher and principal at the Poolmoo School, has made a great contribution to establishing alternative rural communities in this region (Kim Baek-jun, 2000: 34).

Given this, it can be said that the environmental agriculture that was launched in Mundang-ri, Hongdong-myeon, led to the formation of new rural communities in Korean rural areas. This trend led to the creation of various production, consumption and credit organizations, such as the Poolmoo Agricultural Producers' Green Cooperative (producers' cooperative society), the Poolmoo Credit Cooperative Society, and the Poolmoo People, Inc.

These cases are characterized by the fact that various forms of organizations, such as joint-stock corporations, producers cooperative societies, consumers cooperative societies, agricultural cooperative corporations and village communities (like that in Mundang-ri), have created organic relations between production, consumption and distribution. With the increase in environmental farmhouses and the subsequent increase in production, such a network has become less organizational, but the self-sustaining networks established in this region are still of great significance, constituting important characteristics of this region.

3. The Urban Community in Seongmisan in Mapo-gu, Seoul

The case of Seongmisan is an exemplary case of a urban

community movement. That is, some urban residents living around Seongmisan, a small hill in Mapo-gu, have created a good example of an urban community by conducting a variety of communal activities such as the cooperative childcare movement, the consumers' cooperative movement, the "Save Seongmisan" campaign, and the establishment of alternative schools. As for administrative division, this district includes Seongsan-dong, Mangwon-dong, Hapjeong-dong, Yeonnam-dong and Seogyo-dong in Mapo-gu. Such communal activities started with the establishment of cooperative childcare centers in 1994. Now, a total of five cooperative childcare centers (ex. Chamnamu Childcare Center) and after-school programs (ex. Dotori and Puripsae) are available in this region. Presently, the number of the households constituting this community amounts to about 150. This community movement, which grew out of the pursuit of solutions to the childcare problems of the dual-income families in the district, developed into the establishment of a consumers' cooperative society in 2000. This consumers' cooperative society, whose main function was collective purchase of environment-friendly food, has sought partnership not only with the members of the cooperative childcare communities, but also with other residents in the same neighborhood. This consumers' cooperative society has a membership of more than 600 households, and has been taking the lead in various community activities. It also has played a significant role in organizing and executing a range of social and recreational programs for the residents, as well as in holding such annual community events as the Seongmisan Community Festival, the Green Concert and the community sports festival.

In August 2001, the community launched the "Save Seongmisan" campaign, when the Seoul Metropolitan Government attempted to build a water distribution system in Seongmisan, which had served as a relaxing green space for the residents. In opposition to this plan, the residents fought for three years to

save Seongmisan, and finally, in October 2003, they succeeded in making the Seoul Metropolitan Government lay aside the plan. In May 2002, the community opened an organic food store named "Our Village Kitchen," and, in October 2003, opened the nation's first cooperative-style auto service shop called "Vehicle Hospital." In June 2004, the "Mapo Solidarity for Participation and Autonomy" was formed and began activities of monitoring of and participation in the regional civil services such as welfare, education and environment, as well as acting as a watchdog on the activities of the Mapo-gu District Council. And in August of that year, the Seongmisan School was established as an alternative school in the district (Green Korea United, 2004: 6-8).

Moreover, they have made remarkable progress in education in the district through the activities of consumers' cooperatives. For example, they established a community school named "Our Village Dreamplace" as a kind of an open cultural center in 2001. Because, although after-school programs had already been provided to lower grade elementary school students, it was also required to set up a regional educational center that is operated out of the framework of cooperative societies, in order to accommodate higher grade elementary school students in after-school programs as well as to provide easy access to all children in the district.

The case of Seongmisan is characterized by the fact that the community's various organizations, such as cooperative childcare communities, consumers' cooperative societies, alternative schools, civil society organizations (CSOs) and community broadcasting stations, carry out various activities at the level of the life-world. Based on the links of trust and solidarity that were built through the experience of operating cooperative childcare centers and communities, a consumers' cooperative society was organized in the district, and this society, in turn, served as a base of power for the Save Seongmisan campaign. The residents in the district

gained self-confidence through this movement and took the lead in forming civil society organizations and community broadcasting stations, acting as agents of change and development in urban areas. The fact that all this process was carried out on the residents' own initiative, without any support from the mainstream environmental groups, shows that Korean civil society has become mature enough that its members have achieved the ability to build urban communities in cities.

IV. Characteristics of the Ecological alternative Movement

1. The Primary Actors of the Movement

As already mentioned above, the mainstream environmental movement has its roots in the democratization movement in the 1970-1980s. The mainstream environmental movement combined the resistance ideology of the democratization movement with the issue of "pollution," expanding the ideology of democracy to include the ideas of environment. For example, the members of the Korean Anti-Pollution Movement Association(1988-1993) considered themselves as democratization activists.

In comparison, the ecological alternative movement was started out of the reflection on the past practice of the democratization movement. Some of the renowned democratization activists in the 1960-1970s, such as Jang Il-sun, Kim Ji-ha and Bak Jae-il, realized the limitations of the struggle-centered approach of the democratization movement, and consequently launched an alternative culture movement that focuses on social cooperation and solidarity, respect for life and alternative lifestyle. These efforts resulted in the creation of Hansalim. Their goal was to return life to both nature and people by encouraging rural residents, who were suffering

from poverty and illness due to exposure to toxic pesticides, to cultivate organic agricultural products and to directly trade such products with urban consumers. Housewives responsible for the family meals also participated in this initiative for the sake of the health of their children as well as of the farmers in the nation, and this led to the creation of a network of solidarity between rural producers and urban consumers.

After the mid-1990s, grass-roots movements that seek to foster alternative lifestyles by way of consumers' cooperative movement and community movement began to grow. Most of the activists of these movements had participated in or had been affected by the democratization movement in the 1980-1990s. After the failure of the radical socialist movement, many people began to grope for a new, more realistic model of movement. In particular, those activists who fought for the cause of democracy or radical socialism reflected on the past practice of their movement and went off to local areas in pursuit of a new alternative movement. As a result of this, the alternative community movement became active, as shown in the cases of Wonju,¹⁰ Buan and Siheung.

Unlike these activists, common housewives with no experience of the democratization movement began to participate in the consumers' cooperative movement out of interest in safe food or curiosity for cooperative societies. A leader of Hansalim said she decided to become a member of the co-op out of curiosity after watching the story about Hansalim on a KBS TV show in 1989.

As examined above, the ecological alternative movement has members with various backgrounds. First, such activists who tried to overcome the state-centered, capital-centered, organization-centered movement practices through reflective examination of the democratization movement came to focus on grass-roots cooperation and

10. In Wonju, there are various kinds of cooperatives and also an association of the cooperatives.

on the values of life and ecology. Second, the farmers engaging in organic agriculture or eco-friendly agriculture are important members of the ecological alternative movement. Not only the hereditary farmers born in rural areas, but also the new farmers who have relocated from urban areas are actively participating in this movement. Third, housewives are core members of the ecological alternative movement. The producers' cooperative movement is mostly led by men, but as far as the consumers' cooperative movement is concerned, housewives play a central role in the formation and operation of the movement's organizations. Although the housewives generally began to participate in the consumers' cooperative movement out of individual interests, such as food safety, they expanded their movement to incorporate such issues as nature and environment, thus building a sense of solidarity with the farmers. Based on this power of cooperation, they attempt to establish an alternative economy in their own community, in the form of a cooperative society like the "Workers' Collective. (Workers' Co-op)"

2. The Ideology of the Movement

Unlike the mainstream environmental movement, the ecological alternative movement has as its basic premise the opposition to industrialism. The degree of opposition varies according to each person's perspective and interest, but, in general, most leaders of the movement agree in that they seek to overcome industrialism and industrial civilization in any way. The "Hansalim Manifesto," announced by the Hansalim Gathering in 1989, displays such ecological alternative values.

"The obsession for growth, as a result, has made capitalism and communism alike. (...) Both the two have pursued only economic growth and technological progress, consequently

strengthening centralized monitoring and control by technical bureaucrats and intensifying economic conflicts. This also led to social imbalance, bringing about the degeneration of environment and the exhaustion of natural resources” (Hansalim, 1990: 15).

This life ideology was combined with other ideas such as the Donghak (Eastern Learning) thought, Laozi’s philosophy, Buddhist philosophy, not to mention the Western ecological philosophy, and developed into alternative philosophy.¹¹ Through the 1990s, discourses critical of industrialist growth gradually spread in Korean society. The ideal of the ecological alternative movement is expressed in such catch phrases as “a society of voluntary poverty and coexistence” and “a circular society.”

3. Resource Mobilization Methods of the Movement

The ecological alternative movement usually employs different systems and methodologies from those of the mainstream environmental movement. The mainstream environmental movement attempts to achieve its avowed goals through advocacy and promotion activities, whereas the ecological alternative movement pursues alternatives in everyday life. In this respect, the ecological alternative movement is a movement in which the civil society itself seeks to develop an alternative culture and life-style, rather than criticizing and making demands upon the state and

11. The reason for this fusion can be explained in two ways. Firstly, there is similarity in Buddhism, Taoism and Deep ecology in terms of eco-centric thoughts, naturalism such as “leaving nature as it is” or “mother nature”. Secondly, alternative ecologists who were originally sympathetic to Asian and Korean eco-centric thoughts adopted western ecological thoughts such as deep ecology(A. Naess) or social ecology(M. Bookchin), when they recognized the seriousness of environmental degradation and industrialism.

enterprises. The main methodology of the movement is to make a change of life through the creation of consensus. The most important thing needed to change the world governed by industrial civilization and capitalist values is each individual's awakening. This is why the change of consciousness through education as well as the change of sensitivity through experience is considered important objectives in the ecological alternative movement.

In this line, various activities focusing on restoring humans' social nature, such as community building and village building have been conducted. Cooperative organizations like Hansalim formed a consumers' council as well as a producers' council, and created a community through small group meetings, such as neighborhood meetings (*bansanghoe*) usually consisting of 2-5 households.

The "beacon cooperative societies," which started at the Bucheon YMCA, have formed communities centering around the unit called "beacon," and based on these communities, formed autonomous urban communities. These movement methods are employed in many regional YMCAs, including the Gwangmyeong YMCA. In Wonju, cooperative societies in various sectors such as medical, silver care, culture and education, for example like the Wonju Cooperative Society (dealing with organic agricultural products) and the Balgeum Credit Cooperative, established a consultative committee between themselves, thus contributing to the development of cooperative living networks in local areas. In Asan, the producers belonging to Hansalim are testing an alternative development model that is ecological, sustainable, as well as socially and economically advantageous, with the objective of establishing local ecological circulation network.

V. Causes for the Development of the Ecological Alternative Movement

The ecological alternative movement began to burgeon in the 1990s, and has spread across the nation from the end of 1990s through this decade so far. This chapter examines this movement with regard to the structural changes following the economic crisis at the end of 1997, which led Korean society to be reorganized centering around markets.

First, the current of neo-liberal globalization appeared in the 1990s and has acted as a structural power that controls the economy, society, culture and politics of Korea since the late 1990s. The foreign exchange crisis of Korea in 1997 played a decisive role in steering the current of globalization into the direction of neo-liberalism. The Kim Dae-jung and Roh Moo-hyun administrations focused national resources on accelerating this trend, although they provided partly improvement of welfare policies. The discourses of “competition and efficiency” began to surpass those of “equity and justice.” The strategy of “enhancing national competitiveness” in face of neo-liberal globalization became the power that defines the social structure of contemporary Korean society. This means that the power of “self-regulating markets” came to overwhelm the state, society, and nature. It is in this context of expansion of neo-liberalism that those who attempt to defend and restructure our daily lives are carrying out the ecological alternative movement.

Second, the failure of “socialist states” caused many people to doubt and critically examine the state-centered model of resistance against capitalism. Some took a realist path, such as the mainstream environmental movement, while some others began to explore ecological alternatives. For example, a cooperative movement

leader in Wonju said that with the collapse of Eastern European socialism, he began to make a critical reflection on the revolutionary socialist movement that he had been actively involved in the 1980s. He views both socialism and capitalism as being based on growth-centrism as well as on state-centrism, but the only difference, in his view, is that socialism is defined by state-ownership whereas capitalism is predicated on private ownership. He concluded that neither can give hope to humanity, and thus came to seek new hope in cooperative societies or rural communities. The failure of state-centered socialism became a turning point for the development of the ecological alternative movement with an anarchist tint.

Third, 'the small success and the large failure' of the Kim Dae-jung and Roh Moo-hyun administrations, which had social democratic inclinations, expanded people's interest in the ecological alternative movement. Since the inception of the Kim Dae-jung administration, democracy was steadily institutionalized in Korea, and the post-authoritarian strategies of the Roh Moo-hyun administration accelerated this process. However, excessive annihilation of authoritarianism led to loss of authority and legitimacy, consequently undermining the basis of democracy. Although procedural democratization was realized, the degree of the people's satisfaction with democracy was rather lowered. As the top-down reform failed not only to complete democracy but also to make any progress in ecologism, people began to take interest in building new communities in a voluntary, bottom-up manner.

Fourth, the civil social movement, which had once exerted great influence in Korean society due to the success of the black-listing (against corrupt politicians) campaign by the Citizens' Coalition for the General Election (CCGE) in 2000, began to gradually lose its influence after the inauguration of the Roh Moo-hyun administration in 2003. Besides, conservative or old guard organizations were resurrected in a new, changed form, leading to

growing conflicts within the civil society. As a result, the public sphere became lethargic and the legitimacy of civil society was accordingly undercut. The solidarity among the labor movement, the farmers' movement and the civil social movement was weakened, and the mainstream environmental movement also faced a setback.

The changes in Korea's political opportunity structure after the end of the 1990s can be summarized as follows. Greater political openness increased the opportunities for various social groups to represent their values and interests, while weakening the solidarity of social groups that are capable of transforming the society. Difference was widened within the civil society, while solidarity for reform and change became loose. In contrast, the solidarity of conservative groups was rather strengthened. "The expansion of the openness of the political regime and the weakening of the solidarity of reformist groups," these two factors served as structural conditions for the decline of the mainstream environmental movement and for the gradual expansion of the ecological alternative movement in the 2000s. In sum, the failure of markets and the accompanying failure of governments to regulate markets, along with the failure of the "progressive" civil society organizations to present new alternatives, led to the development of the ecological alternative movement.

I suggested the success and failure of neo-liberalism, and the failure of old socialism and reformative administrations and progressive civil society as the background of the advent of ecological alternative movement. Why ecological alternative movement has been proliferated, not the other movement?

Firstly, this movement is based on community. People who suffer from system pressure such as economic competition and threat against life world such as food contamination etc. are eager to find a safe community. Though contemporary citizens live their everyday life in modern socio-economic system, they want

community in which social trust, subjective well-being and so on can be achieved. Though state socialism, social welfare state, progressive civil society can be an alternative to neo-liberal system, when they fail, ecological alternative movement can be a new alternative.

Secondly, this movement is based on life and region. Housewives can share their everyday life and narratives in co-op shops. They can build solidarity among organic farmers, consumers and nature. Though issue-attention cycle is relatively short, life on the basis of region is long lasting.

Thirdly, this movement is based on face-to-face relationships. The trust on the basis of face-to-face relationship and moral values such as ecology and cooperation is essential resources for the co-op and community movements. Because of this broad and thick trust network, ecological alternative movement can survive market system.

VI. Evaluations and Diagnosis of the Ecological Alternative Movement

One of the notable features of the ecological alternative movement is that it succeeded in creating environmental cooperative organizations on regional basis. Such organizations are transforming people's lives in ecologically sound ways and promoting economic sustainability of the movement. Without relying on exchange markets too much, they are creating economically viable, eco-friendly communities by creating the conditions in which human societies can coexist with the environment. These experiments show a marked difference from the "top-down environmentalism," "metropolis-oriented environmentalism," or "press-oriented environmentalism." The ecological alternative movement does not have the hollow sound of large bell: "environment without everyday life." The

alternative communities present hope for sustainable future.

However, there are criticisms against the ecological alternative movement. The consumers' cooperative movement may seem individualistic economic activity. Critics say that the alternative movement merely "complemented" the old regime, without presenting an alternative to it, because the increase of members of cooperative communities does not mean that it ensured ecological alternatives. Other critics denounce it as "middle-class movement" that just helps the wealthy people enjoying healthful diets. As the economic sustainability assumes greater importance, it tends to lose its character as a social movement, thus degenerating into a sort of business. Politically radical people even call the movement "social reformism," "anchoretism" or "isolationism." As the movement takes populist approach, the voices criticizing it as "reformism," "middle-class movement" and "commercialization" get stronger. If it emphasizes the anti-capital, anti-industry and anti-state principles, on the other hand, it runs the risks of degenerating into anchoretism, isolationism and fundamentalism. The ecological alternative movement has both aspects of a new alternative to dominant paradigm and of an apolitical isolationism or reformism. How should we interpret these conflicting aspects? This paper examines this question in terms of alternative discourses and practices regarding the capital, industry and state.

First, is the ecological alternative movement an alternative to capitalism? The movement has the purpose of overcoming capitalism, in that it aims to go beyond the exchange relations based on exchange value in the currency economy. However, the movement cannot but rely on capitalist markets if it is to maintain the economic sustainability of the cooperatives or communities in the global capitalist system. It attempts to improve logistics system or increase food mileage in order to raise productivity. To sell more, it is forced to turn to growth- and efficiency-oriented management. It is almost impossible to break away with the current economic

system that depends on fossil fuels and to form a self-sustaining economic community in Korea.

However, the movement has fundamental difference from the capitalist production-consumption system, in that it makes connections between producers and consumers beyond the capitalist commodity-currency relationships through cooperative organizations. It also has a marked difference from the capitalist governance as it forges social and democratic governance through consultations between producers and consumers based on the democratic principle of "one person, one vote." In short, the movement may be called as "a non-capitalist alternative operating in the capitalist market economy." Such alternative system is at the peril of degeneration and vitiation under the influence of capitalist competition system. Nevertheless, cooperation and mutual trust among the participants in the movement could raise the possibility of strengthening reciprocal social relationship. It shows that the success of alternative community depends upon cooperation and mutual trust of the community members.

Second, is the ecological alternative movement an alternative to industrialism? The ecological Hansalim Manifesto calls for an ecological culture of living against the industrial, machinery civilization. The ecological journal *Noksaeok pyeongnon* (Green Review) upholds poor and sharing communities of small farms as an ideal society. Overcoming the industrialism holds grave importance in such discourses. Participants in the ecological alternative movement cherish pro-environmental or ecological production, consumption, leisure and culture, with organic farming and the production of organic products and pro-environmental goods remaining the main goal of the movement. Ecological alternative movement is aimed at transcending the industry-based development model in the modern era.

The means to transcend the modern development model are varied. Some of the proponents of the alternative movement

dream a small farming society in their nostalgia for the pre-modern communities, while others pursue the ecological alternative development model without excluding technologies as a means of their struggle. What is certain is that both of them share the recognition that the industrialism relying on fossil fuels is ecologically unsustainable. Therefore, they pay much attention to the measures to develop and inseminate ecological technologies for solar power system, passive houses and biomass and bio-diesel fuels. However, there still is an immense gap between discourses and practices surrounding anti-industrialism.

Third, is the ecological alternative movement an alternative to the state? The activists of the alternative movement have no single position on the state. Some of them call for a welfare system operated by communities, instead of the state-operated welfare programs, while others argue for a measure to strengthen the state welfare system. There are also many cases of direct or indirect state subsidies to the alternative movement organizations. However, what should be noted is that they are not state-dependent organizations but autonomous ones based on their own cooperative ties. They are working out an ecological, democratic governance to solve problems on their own, remaining independent from the state. There are few cases of ecological alternative movement out rightly denouncing the state. They have the autonomous power, however, to form autonomous communities.

We have examined what kinds of discourses the alternative movement has about capital, industry and the state, and how it puts the discourses into practices. The movement tends to ideologically transcend capital, industry and the state, but its activities are within the dominant social structure.

Could this movement create an alternative system that transcends capital, industry and the state through new politics? This vision of alternative system can be found in the discourses of modern anarchists such as Noam Chomsky and Kojin Karatani.

They discuss hopes for global anarchism, which was much vitiated due to the collapse of socialist states. Karatani argues that an association of associations that surpasses the nation state has to have already been formed before it replaces the nation-state (Karatani, 2005).

The gap between the anarchist vision and the ecological alternative movement of Korea remains wide. The movement has to concentrate its resources for its economic sustainability and organization of cooperative ties. It is almost impossible to change communities with issues unrelated to or way beyond everyday life. The gap might be narrowed by opening a new political arena, based on concrete living conditions. In this stage, however, it is difficult to find a new bud of alternative politics transcending capital, industry and the state amid the wave of conservatism sweeping all central and local government elections in Korea.

How could the varied and small communities engaging in ecological alternative movement form solidarity strong enough to create an alternative political system that surpasses the state power? How could they have the power to transform the structure of capitalism and industrialism? To give answers to these questions in terms of alternative discourses, we might say that we can change the old regime through daily life of production and consumption within a reciprocal and mutually beneficial network, just as we do with elections. We can imagine a community where the members use the products produced by their own cooperatives, work at the Workers' Collective, get the medical treatment at medical cooperatives, study at alternative schools, hold discussions with neighbors, and the senior members of the community get the assistance from the Workers' Collective. The work for the community may be exchanged as currency of the community (LETS). If such communities are increased and develop their ecological and democratic association and solidarity, this would cause the weakening of the capital-industry-state union. This

association and solidarity may help reshuffle the local and central governments through elections as well as through ecological production and consumption. This is the vision of the ecological alternative movement. Isolated individuals are weak, but the communities organized by such individuals with free will are strong. The world would change, if the communities were united into a community of communities and an association of associations.

VII. Conclusion

We have examined a few examples of the ecological alternative movement and analyzed its traits. Its major proponents are conscientious pro-democracy activists and ecology-conscious farmers and housewives. It sets high value on the efforts to transcend capitalism, industrialism and the state-orientation and to form a cooperative and mutually beneficial community for peace and life. It also puts greater emphasis on the efforts to spread pro-environmental culture and life through face-to-face relationships, unlike the mainstream environmental movement that seeks a change from above.

The reason why this movement has spread after the late 1990s is because the state-driven democracy faced its limitations amid the neo-liberal globalization, and civic groups failed to redress such problems. In other words, the market, state and progressive civic circles suffered setback as the society and the nature ended up being colonized by the capitalism. Amid this situation, the ecological and social crisis became structural, causing socioeconomic polarization and aggravating the destruction of the environment. Given this, it can be said that the ecological alternative movement was the result of the efforts of the community members to defend their own life in face of the structural failure of the dominant social paradigm.

To what does the ecological movement pursue alternatives? The movement has the ideological purpose of transcending the capital-industry-state union. However, the movement is now focusing its efforts on experimenting and spreading alternative social relationship, which is expected to transcend the tripartite union within the scope of global capitalist system. It could go no further than to safeguard the community within the old regime because it has yet to secure the resources to overcome the old regime, which has enormous capital, technologies, symbolic tools, culture and violent power. The alternative politics of the ecological alternative movement is different from that pursued by the model of the old socialist maneuvering, which aimed at seizing the power by organizing counter-violence. It also differs from the social democracy that pushes for a reform of the old regime and enables the sharing of power through the development of party politics at the level of the national assembly. The alternative politics pursued by the ecological movement is aimed at exerting influence on and reforming the old regime through ecological democracy in daily life. It may be hard to imagine alternative politics such as slow politics or “anti-politics politics”. However, the time for change, like the candlelight protests in Korea in 2008, may come sooner than expected. When the ecological alternative movement, which still remains like an island, reshapes itself into a form of continent with broad connections, it could accomplish ecological democracy. In the ecological democracy, human beings and creatures would receive due respect not for their ability, but for the value of their existence itself.

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