

## Korea as a conserver society

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**Abstract** In the Spring 2012 Issue of *Social Business* Emeritus Professor Stan Shapiro revisited the pioneering work of the Canadian Conserver Society Project with which Dr Jim Dator had been involved. The Canadian Conserver Society inspired the research discussed here which is a report to Korea Telecom in 2009 titled *Through a Brushwood Door: Should Korea become a Conserver Society?* We summarise in some detail the work both of the Science Council of Canada's *Committee on the Implications of Canada as a Conserver Society* and of the GAMMA group in the 1970s, and discuss some of the most significant changes in relation to economics, the environment, and energy over the past forty years. These changes all lead to the conclusion that Korea must engage in a nationwide discussion of its future and specifically focus on the possibility of shifting from a Consumer Society to a Conserver Society, taking into account some historical, cultural, and intellectual traditions within Korea that could be called upon to facilitate such a transition.

**Keywords** Conserver society, Consumer society, Futures, Korea

## INTRODUCTION

In the Spring 2012 Issue of *Social Business* Emeritus Professor Stan Shapiro revisited the pioneering work of the Canadian Conserver Society Project with which Dr Jim Dator had been involved. Ten years before, in 2002, Shapiro had also published a lengthy evaluation of this project in the *Journal of Business Administration and Policy Analysis*, in which he emphasised the renewed necessity of a Conserver Society for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. He again stressed numerous ways businesses can make money in a Conserver Society. He compared the work of the Conserver Society with the

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recommendations of the World Business Council on Sustainable Development Report, *Sustainable Production and Consumption: A Business Perspective* (Falkman, E.G., April 1996, Geneva, Switzerland), further reinforcing the point that businesses now should embrace and not run from the Conserver Society perspective.

The Canadian Conserver Society inspired the research discussed here which is a report to Korea Telecom in 2009 titled *Through a Brushwood Door: Should Korea become a Conserver Society?* The report was referred to the Korea Institute for Public Administration (KIPA) which has taken on the promotion of the idea within Korea. The central conclusions of the *Brushwood Door* report were:

1. It is time for Korea seriously and deeply to consider becoming a “Conserver Society” instead of a “Consumer Society”. For at least sixty years, Korea has followed the path of economic development through continued economic growth with enormous success. But there are growing indications that Korea - and the world - might need to find different paths towards different futures. Thus, a nationwide exercise in considering a “Conserver Society” alternative is imperative.
2. Some organisation in Korea should become the lead institution in undertaking this exercise. KIPA might follow the example of Canada during the 1970s when their National Science Council led a nationwide consideration of “The Implications of Canada as a Conserver Society”.
3. Korea, and the world, in 2012 are quite different from Korea, Canada, and the world in 1975 - in some ways much better, in others much worse. The differences need to be carefully assessed in light of new challenges and opportunities rushing from the futures.

This study begins with an elaboration of these conclusions. It then summarises in some detail the work both of the Science Council of Canada’s *Committee on the Implications of Canada as a Conserver Society* and of the GAMMA group in the 1970s. Next discussed are some of the most significant changes in relation to economics, the environment, and energy over the past forty years. These changes all lead to the conclusion that Korea must engage in a nationwide discussion of its futures and specifically focus on the possibility of shifting from a Consumer Society to a Conserver Society, taking into account some historical, cultural, and intellectual traditions within Korea that could be called upon to facilitate such a transition.

The original Canadian Conserver Society Project was not, and should not ever be viewed as, “anti-business” or “anti-capitalist” or “anti-free market”. Using the market, entrepreneurial and other business acumen to achieve the goals of a Conserver Society are matters of careful, scientifically-informed social system design, not of ideology of any kind. In the *Brushwood Door* report ([www.futures.hawaii.edu](http://www.futures.hawaii.edu)) extensive bibliographic material is provided that describes the challenges facing Korea that make it essential that Korea re-examines both its policies towards the future and how Korean businesses can thrive in a Conserver Society.

## RATIONALE FOR THE REPORT

Korea has a long history, and over that history has gone through many changes, from warring clans, to divided kingdoms, to a modern nation-state, to a colonised

territory, to (currently) two polities divided by ideology. This study focuses on South Korea during this latter period when that nation moved swiftly from a country utterly devastated by war, to one relying for its economic development and wealth first on agriculture, then on the export of unprocessed agricultural and mineral resources, to processed foods and simple industrial products, to the manufacture and export of heavy industrial equipment, to the manufacture of cheap and then increasingly sophisticated electronic and biotechnological products. Korea now produces world-class electronic products and is moving increasingly from the production of goods to becoming a leading provider of cutting-edge information and know-how. In many ways, Korea is rapidly becoming a world leader in innovative ideas and ways of organisation - including government.

Looking at these changes from another point of view, Korea has moved at a speed unmatched by any other country in the world from an agricultural society, to an early light industrial society, to a mature heavy industrial society, to a post-industrial information society, and most recently into potentially the world's first dream society. In following this trajectory, Korea was simply doing, with incredible speed and success, what all nations have been trying to do, and some have successfully done, for the past two hundred-plus years - move from a sedentary and stable society based largely upon agricultural production through a turbulent and stressing period based largely on industrial production, to a dynamic and exciting era based largely upon the production of knowledge and ideas, and then the production of hopes and dreams.

#### *Continuous economic growth and development*

In doing so, Korean leaders were pursuing ideas of continual scientific/technological innovation, and of perpetual social and environmental change, ideas generally known and promoted worldwide by many national, international, and transnational organisations as “development” and more specifically “economic development”. The intention of “development” is to turn all of the world into societies characterised by continued economic growth - into societies where tomorrow is always better than today and each generation is better off than the one before it both in terms of overall wealth and in the possession of ever-increasing, and increasingly sophisticated, consumer goods.

All educational, economic, and governmental policies, practices, and institutions of modern states, such as Korea, are focussed on this one task: to create and then sustain a society of continuous economic growth. And no country in the world has been better at that, and in such a short period, than South Korea.

#### *Counter voices*

While there were always some voices in all societies, including Korea, who demurred from such a goal, such voices were overwhelmingly drowned out everywhere by those who wanted more growth, more jobs, and more products to consume. Among the many reasons for this pro-growth position was that population was continuously growing, and so wealth and goods needed to continue growing as well. Another reason was the unquestioned belief that planet Earth is not only endlessly bountiful in the resources that humans want to exploit but also endlessly absorptive of wastes that human development produces.

But beginning in the late 1960s and early 1970s more people were beginning to question whether a society of continuous economic growth was either possible or

desirable. Some argued it was not possible because humans live on a planet with finite resources being used up at a pace faster than they can be replaced. Others maintained that continuous economic growth as the main point of life and policies was undesirable, even if technologically possible, because the resulting social change was destroying cultures and values that had served for millennia, values that many people still found to be highly valuable and relevant. Others said continued economic growth was undesirable because the processes that enabled it also destroyed the environment of the Earth, and therefore were fundamentally unsustainable.

There was for a short period of time in the 1970s a pause in the ideological dominance of continued economic growth as many people insisted, instead, that there are, or should be limits to growth; that a Sustainable Society, based on principles of “sufficiency” or “enoughness” was both necessary and desirable. Small is beautiful, some said. However, those voices were soon silenced or muffled in the 1980s onward when the world, and Korea, enjoyed a spurt of high economic growth (with some short episodes of recession - some quite serious) previously unknown in the experience of humanity.

Many people proclaimed that the key to continued economic growth for everyone and forever had been discovered in an economic theory often known as “global neoliberalism”, a theory which advocates minimal (preferably no) restraints by governments on economic activities, and seeks “free trade” - the rapid creation of a single global open market for labour, for capital and for all goods and services.

Many economists and policy makers announced that they knew how to prevent damaging economic cycles - especially recessions or depressions - and that, if their precepts were precisely followed, a world of unprecedented continued economic growth for all would soon ensue.

It turned out, in late 2007, through 2008 and continuing, that this belief was wrong. The global economic system, led by its financial sector, collapsed and is still collapsing. Those who were most vocal in demanding government keep its hands off economic activities immediately turned to government, demanding - and getting - sums of money as “bailouts” in amounts that would have seen preposterous to even contemplate a year or so earlier.

At the same time, mounting concerns about the effective “end of oil” before new equivalent energy sources come online have emerged, though still often hotly denied, while doubters about the reality of global climate change and sea-level rise have been muted not only by the unanimity of all credible scientists but also by the actual experience of climate change and the consequences of sea level rise.

So while most policy makers at present remain obsessed with finding policies and actions that will get the old economy working again, more and more people are saying that it is not possible to do so, even if it were desirable. There is insufficient energy, time, and resources to do so, and thus every society, including Korea, needs to re-examine its preferred future, and to focus on something other than continued economic growth.

## THE CONSERVER SOCIETY REVISITED

The Spring 2012 issue of Social Business carried an article *Revisiting Marketing in a Conserver Society* by Stanley J Shapiro who was centrally involved in the original

Conserver Society initiative. His was a two part paper. The first was a reprint of his original article *Marketing in a Conserver Society* which appeared in *Business Horizons* in 1978. The second presents the author's reflections, a third of a century later, and begins with some previously unpublished additional material written at the same time which elaborates on marketing thought in the mid-1970s. This is followed by a select bibliography of conserver society literature with a brief discussion of each item. The paper closes with some comments on the decline of the conserver society 'brand' and its repackaging in a growing literature on 'sustainability'. Shapiro's conclusion that very limited progress has been made in replacing a dominant consumption ethos with a conserver mindset was very similar to that which prompted the preparation of this *Brushwood Door* report.

The concept of a Conserver Society arises from a deep concern for the future, and the realisation that decisions taken today, in such areas as energy and resources, may have irreversible and possibly destructive impacts in the medium to long term. The necessity for a Conserver Society follows from our perception of the world as a finite host to humanity, and from our recognition of increasing global interdependence. In a Conserver Society, the pricing mechanism should reflect, not just the private cost, but as much as possible the total cost to society, including energy and materials used, ecological impact, and social considerations. This will permit the market system to allocate resources in a manner that more closely reflects society needs, both immediate and long term.

The Canadian Conserver Society Project was undertaken by the Science Council of Canada, from 1973 until 1978. In order to specify the features of a Conserver Society in detail, the Science Council commissioned and encouraged nationwide research and discussion on the limitations, evils, and pathologies of Canada as a Consumer Society, and the necessity, advantages, and alternative ways of Canada becoming, and sustaining itself as, a Conserver Society. The GAMMA group, a joint McGill University and University of Montreal initiative, was independently funded to research Conserver Society options.

In his article Shapiro discusses the origins of the GAMMA Conserver Society initiative and the questions that it addressed. He comments

*As one might expect of a study concerned with nothing less than completely reorienting an industrialised nation of over 22 million people, GAMMA's investigation of conserver society prototypes was exceedingly wide ranging in scope. Some 15 researchers were involved with their disciplines, ranging from agriculture to urban studies and from anthropology to zoology.*

While the focus of his paper is on key marketing dimensions it contains a succinct summary of the concept of a "Conserver Society", and an operational definition, and spells out three alternative prototypes identified as:

1. CS1 - Growth with Non-Waste Industry;
2. CS 2 - A stable-state Industrial Society;
3. CS 3 - A People-focused Society.

## FIVE ALTERNATIVE MODELS OF A CONSERVER SOCIETY AS DEVELOPED BY GAMMA

### *Conserver Society Zero (CS0)*

#### Key concepts:

- Continued Economic Growth
- Continuous Inefficient Production and Consumption
- Doing More with More

Conserver Society Zero is basically the *status quo*. It is the world of the 1970s when Canada was confidentially growing in every way - through high fertility, high immigration, expanded agricultural and industrial production, and the early stages of a full-fledged Consumer Society. There is no concern about conservation, efficiency, or anything that gets in the way of continuous growth in the production and consumption of goods. Resources are considered limitless and the Earth is believed to be able endlessly to absorb and naturally recycle the waste products of these human processes. All boats rise as the economy continues to grow.

### *Conserver Society model 1 (CS1)*

#### Key concepts:

- Growth with Conservation
- Efficiency and Expansion
- Doing More with Less

Conserver Society One is aware of the limits to growth, and is designed to change people's behaviour whether or not they change their values. While it is desirable for people to want to be thrifty and save resources, it is also assumed they will want to have a growing economy. Since there is so much waste in the existing Consumer Society, the goal of Conserver Society One is to design the economy so that there is growth without waste - expansion through efficiency. By being more efficient and less wasteful, steady growth can be maintained with less use of energy and other resources, thus doing more with less.

If anything, Conserver Society One is a return to a world driven by the original Protestant Ethic made famous by Max Weber. The Protestant Ethic is sometimes considered to be the key to ending the poverty of the European Middle Ages and enabling the world of continuous economic growth and of modern capitalism. Before the Protestant Reformation, the Roman Catholic Church taught that work was a curse for Adam and Eve having defied God in the Garden of Eden. Work is a penalty for sin. Thus work is something to be avoided and endured at best. Protestants, on the other hand, believed that successful individual initiative, entrepreneurship, re-investment, progress, economic growth and increased, shared wealth were all signs of God's approval.

Nonetheless, showing off one's wealth is reprehensible, and merely hiding it away like a miser is not much better. Instead of either stuffing one's money under a mattress, or spending it away on frivolous consumer products - big cars and big houses stuffed to overflowing with goods - the poorest as well as the wealthiest

person should reinvest whatever they have so that not only they personally but also the society as a whole will grow and prosper. Conspicuous consumption is to be avoided above all else.

Conserver Society One can come in two forms: The traditional Anglo-American version of the Protestant Ethic which stresses individual entrepreneurship guided by Adam Smith's Invisible Hand, or a French, statist version with efficiency-directed central planning leading the way.

*There are six primary components to the design of Conserver Society One:*

1. Reform of inefficient consumption = RICH: whereby riches accrue from the increase of efficiency and the reduction of waste in production and consumption. CS1 focuses on efficiency in water, electricity, heating and cooling fuels, and gasoline consumption. It penalises waste in packaging, mandates recycling, and uses waste from one system as a resource in another whenever possible.

2. Sharing by Renting: Renting, reducing the demand for new products by promoting more efficient use of existing ones; favours the production of durable goods of high quality and penalises planned-obsolescence; allows more people to have a higher standard of living by sharing in the use of products; and encourages a diverse but equitable society with minimal differences between the richest and the poorest. The rental of apartments in energy and resource efficient condominiums is favoured over the urban sprawl of privately owned homes.

The ownership of rented goods can be in the community as a whole, probably meaning the state; in corporations (such as rental cars now); in a co-operative; or by an efficient mixed of those three, with private ownership of some personal items, of course.

There are disadvantages: the rental period should coincide with each use period so that items are not idle for long periods; on the other hand, all items can't be in full use at all times or there would be a "nightmare of traffic jams, pollution, and energy waste". Rental locations may also be inconvenient and transfer times lengthy, and people may be more likely to take better care of things they own than things they rent.

3. Better Time Management: Wasted time means wasted resources. Rush hour traffic and downtown buildings that stand empty at nights and weekends are examples. Staggered work hours, blurring the distinction between night and day and week days and weekends, and greater use of fees for piecework rather than salaries for time spent, are all possible solutions.
4. Conserver Technology: Ideally, the relation between humans and the environment via technology would produce no waste, no pollution, and no unused byproducts. That is not possible, but that should be the goal. This means that some earlier technologies might come into use again, but it mainly means new, high-tech devices that better achieve these aims, are designed, produced and used.
5. Full-Cost Pricing: At the present time, there is a vested interest in being wasteful. More products must be produced and consumed if they are used inefficiently and wear out quickly. More importantly, at the present time, the cost of pollution, environmental degradation, resources depletion, and recycling are not reckoned in the selling price of virtually any product. Economists call these "externalities" and ignore them. Full-cost pricing would include these externalities into the cost

of all products since society must pay the cost, one way or another, at a later time. The people who enjoy the use of a product, and not future generations who do not, should bear the full costs. Perversely, at the present time, resource-consuming industries can write off resource depletion from their taxes as well! Better they be taxed, and that the consumer's cost reflects the depletion involved.

6. An Optimum-Mix Economy: Conserver Society One is neither a full-market nor a command economy. It promotes the judicious mix of communal guidance and individual initiative and profit. It is absolutely false to say that conservation is anti-business, or that conservation is "too costly" to engage in at this time because it lowers profits and displaces workers. Quite to the contrary, there are tremendous new business and labour opportunities in conservation of all kinds - energy, recycling, new resources and new technologies, new forms of packaging, marketing and advertising appropriate to a Conserver One Society, these and many more.

There is also a role for the state. If business does not account for externalities, government must. Moreover the market is often unreliable. Monopolies or oligopolies distort true market prices. Some activities have historical subsidies or price indexing, and in general, where advertising reigns, there is insufficient and distorted information about products and their true costs. Often there is a lag in prices so that the price of an exhaustible resource increases too late to save the resource from exhaustion. And sometime the cost or risk of a socially-valuable activity seems to require governmental intervention. In all of these cases the government has an affirmative role to play. At the same time, the state also will have to continue to perform its duty of preserving individual liberties and safeguarding the rights of minorities in relation to the overall needs and preferences of society.

Principles that will be used to determine the optimum-mix economy include that whoever can do the job most efficiently should perform it. When the state plays an active role, should it be at the local, provincial, or federal level? In terms of modes of intervention, the state should first encourage desired behaviour through moral suasion. When that is not enough, it should use a carrot-and-stick approach including tax credits, subsidies, or interest-free loans along with surtaxes and penalties. When even that is not enough, the government must regulate the activity directly - or perhaps even undertake it as a governmental function. In general the first two modes are preferred over the third.

### *Conserver Society model 2 (CS2)*

#### **Key concepts:**

- An Affluent Stable State
- Moderation is the Ultimate Virtue
- Do the Same with Less

While CS1 is based on efficiency, it still encourages economic growth and wealth accumulation. CS2 is based on the belief that there should be limits to growth and to the accumulation of wealth and consumer products. The challenge is to determine at what point there has been "enough" growth and from then on that a steady-state, no-growth economy is preferable. It is also necessary to recognise that some things should stop while others continue growing for a while.

The necessity of limiting growth is well illustrated by a story told by a member of the Science Council of Canada, Tuzo Wilson, a Canadian geophysicist famous for his theory of plate tectonics and continental drift, and Director of the Ontario Science Centre. He asks us to imagine that we decide that the ideal growth rate for a human is 50% per year. So if a male baby is born weighing eight pounds, by his first birthday he weighs 12 pounds, by his third he weighs 18 (and so would be considered very small), by four years old he weighs 27 and by five he is 41 pounds - and doing very well. However, if he continues at this rate of growth, he weighs 60 pounds at age six, 90 pounds at seven, 135 pounds at eight, and 200 pounds at age nine, and is now turning into a monster. Clearly, we expect a person to stop growing at such a high rate and ideally to achieve a steady-state. “*We do not point an accusing finger at a thirty-year old adult and call him ‘a no-growth human’*”, Wilson (Science Council of Canada, 1976, p. 171f) concluded, so why can we not also understand that economies eventually reach a desirable size and should strive to maintain it from then on, rather than to grow endlessly?

This is the CS2 principle of “doing the same with less.” It embraces Zero Artificial Needs Growth - ZANG; Zero Industrial Growth - ZIG; Zero Urban Growth - ZUG; Zero Energy Growth - ZEG and, very importantly, Zero Population Growth - ZPG. In such a stable situation, since there is general affluence for everyone, labour takes only a fraction of the time it takes now so that people are able to spend more time with family and friends - or merely become introspective and reflective. In a stationary state, no one is poor and no one desires to become rich - certainly not obviously richer than anyone else!

ZANG distinguishes true needs from artificial ones, and both true and artificial from harmful needs. It does not encourage the development of artificial needs by seductive advertising, marketing, and packaging, and it of course does not permit the encouragement of harmful needs at all. While all advertising that provokes unnecessary consumption is discouraged, balanced, fair, and accurate information about products (showing calorie content or GMO data, for example) is desirable.

Typically, economic growth has been justified because population has been growing. The economy has to grow to keep up with the growing population. Therefore the key to CS2 is zero population growth. It may be necessary to have minus population growth - that is to say, depopulation - for a while in order to bring down the population to the level that can be easily sustained by zero economic growth and a healthier, rejuvenated environment.

“Moderation” is the key virtue. “Enough is enough”. More is generally not better. CS2 seeks optimum growth, optimum wealth, optimum population, which is somewhere between maximum and minimum levels.

### *Conserver Society model 3 (CS3)*

#### Key concepts:

“The Buddhist Scenario”

Being, not Buying

Do Less with Less, and Doing Something Else

The patron saint of CS3 is E. F. Schumacher, author of the world famous book, *Small is Beautiful*. He believed in what he called “the Buddhist Scenario”, stating “*The Buddhist sees the essence of civilisation not in a multiplication of wants but in*

*the purification of human character*" (Schumacher, 1973, p. 205). The aim of CS3 is neither efficient economic growth nor an affluent stable state. It is to refocus our lives on spiritual growth and development. In the terms of Tuzo Wilson's analogy, the thirty year old man does not keep growing in weight, but grows instead in maturity, understanding, wisdom and enlightenment.

Whether CS3 is truly "Buddhist" or not is irrelevant. Rather the term was chosen by Schumacher and others as a way of getting Westerners to consider a completely different purpose of life, and style of life. In contrast to CS2, CS3 has three principal strategies: Negative Artificial Needs Growth - NANG; Negative Industrial Growth (that is, deindustrialisation) - NIG; and Negative Urban Growth (that is, a return to a sustainable agrarian society) - NUG.

CS3 argues that if we do not adopt these strategies voluntarily, humans numbers and activities will overshoot the carrying capacity of Earth, and we will be forced to return to earlier ways of life whether we like it or not.

The values of CS3 distinguish between "appropriate technology" and "inappropriate technology", and between "alienating technology" and "technology on a human scale". It facilitates local self-sufficiency and the satisfaction of basic subsistence needs in small rural communities, enabling "right livelihood" which is work that will enable each of us to develop our own unique qualities while helping us overcome our egos by participating in meaningful and necessary communal tasks. Working will not be separated from living and leisure since the pace of life will be steady, slow, and enjoyable.

This is the way of Voluntary Simplicity, with the slogan "live simply so others may simply live". Health and happiness abounds in such a world with all human needs - biological, social, and psychological - in harmony.

False measures of satisfaction and achievement, such as GNP which counts income from "bad" things equal to the income from "good" ones while ignoring many factors that are not quantified (such as the unpaid labour of mothers and housewives) will be replaced by true Quality of Life - or QOL - measures.

### *The Squander Society (CS-1)*

#### Key concepts:

Conservator Society Minus One

The More Activity the Better, Even if it is Wasteful

Do Less with More (in order to stimulate ever-increasing production)

In order to contrast the three versions of a Conservator Society with the current situation, the GAMMA group posited the characteristics of a Squander Society. Its three underlying assumptions are that waste not only is not bad, it is positively good; that the environment is an endless source of resources and repository for our garbage; and that only the present is worthy of consideration: let the future take care of itself.

Under these circumstances, any attempt to restrain any kind of economic activity in the name of environmental protection or in the interests of future generations is rejected. Two reasons are usually given: 1) These restrictions will have a negative impact on jobs, individual initiative, and economic growth. 2) The free-market is better at taking care of these concerns than is governmental policy. Indeed, the more wasteful a society is, the greater are the employment opportunities since new goods and services will be needed to replace the old ones.

The Squander Society requires full employment, insisting that all people work even if their labour is not needed. Thus numerous fictitious jobs are created with pay as low as possible. Their purpose is to keep people disciplined, diverted, and in debt, even though their labour is not actually needed. These jobs are of course shed as soon as there is an economic downturn. By contrast, in the Conserver Society, each task that is truly required should be performed as efficiently and economically as possible.

In a Squander Society when production exceeds the purchasing power of workers (as it inevitably will), one solution is the creation of easy consumer credit, so that artificial needs still can be created and then satisfied by artificial money. A penny saved is a penny not spent, and thus wasted, according to the values of a Squander Society. The limits to consumer debt soon become apparent in a Squander Society, and so the economy becomes one of endless booms and busts fueled by new and ever more complex debt instruments, until the house of cards finally collapses for good.

## CONCLUSIONS ABOUT THE CONSERVER SOCIETY PROJECT

It is clear that the Conserver Society project was an extraordinary intellectual and political feat. It is impressive in its scope and intention. Among its most important features is the fact that alternative models of what a “Conserver Society” could mean were explored in detail - only sketched here.

However, the project ended in 1978, and from the early 1980s Canada and the rest of the world embarked on a period of economic activities that in many ways exceeded the description of the Squander Society. That period ended with the collapse of the global fiscal system in 2008 that may or may not be able to recover - even if such a recovery is desired.

In his paper Shapiro reviews the published literature which relates to the Canadian conserver society initiative, and lists 25 items of which the last is the *Brushwood Door* report on which this paper is based. On this he comments this “... is an intriguing study prepared by a researcher who had worked at the Science Council of Canada in the mid-1970s. Some thirty five years later, after reviewing original Conserver Society thinking, he laid out the case for Korea then becoming a Conserver Society” (Shapiro, 2012).

In the *Brushwood Door* report, I reviewed “a sample of warnings about the pathologies of the Consumer Society that have been made in widely respected publications from the 1970s to the present” (Dator & Park with Kramer, 2009). The following excerpts, mostly from 2009, are still particularly relevant:

1. “Climatologists tend to fall into two camps: there are the cautious ones who say we need to cut emissions and won’t even think about high global temperatures; and there are the ones who tell us to run for the hills because we’re all doomed”, says Peter Cox, who studies the dynamics of climate systems at the University of Exeter, UK. “I prefer a middle ground. We have to accept that changes are inevitable and start to adapt now”.

“I would like to be optimistic that we’ll survive, but I’ve got no good reason to be”, says Paul Crutzen [of the Max Plank Institute, Germany]. “In order to be safe, we would have to reduce our carbon emissions by 70 per cent by 2015. We are currently putting in 3 per cent more each year”.

Vince (2009)

2. *The world is only at the beginning of a depression that will last for quite a while and will get far worse than it is now. The immediate issue for governments is not how to recover but how to survive the growing popular anger they are all, without exception, facing.*

Wallerstein (2009)

3. *If it is not apparent to you yet, it will be soon: there is no magic bullet for this economic crisis, no magic bailout package, no magic stimulus. We have woven such a tangled financial mess with subprime mortgages wrapped in complex bonds and derivatives, pumped up with leverage, and then globalised to the far corners of the earth that, much as we want to think this will soon be over, that is highly unlikely.... We are going to have to learn to live with a lot more uncertainty for a lot longer than our generation has ever experienced. We keep pouring money into the dark banking hole of this crisis, desperately hoping that we will hear it hit bottom and start to pile up. But so far, as hard as we listen, we can't hear a thing. And so we keep pouring ....*

Friedman (2009)

4. *Q: Do we have time...to save ourselves from climate change?*

*A: Not a hope in hell. Most of the "green" stuff is verging on a gigantic scam. Carbon trading, with its huge government subsidies, is just what finance and industry wanted. It's not going to do a damn thing about climate change, but it'll make a lot of money for a lot of people and postpone the moment of reckoning. I don't think humans react fast enough or are clever enough to handle what's coming up. Kyoto was 11 years ago. Virtually nothing's been done except endless talk and meetings.*

Lovelock (2009)

5. *The planet is now so vandalised that only total energy renewal can save us. It may be too late. But without radical action, we will be the generation that saved the banks and let the biosphere collapse.*

Monbiot (2008)

6. *We face an ecological credit crunch far greater than the global financial crisis. The Earth's natural resources are being depleted so quickly that the equivalent of two planets would be required to sustain current lifestyles by the mid-2030s.*

New Scientist (2008)

7. *The government in March stopped publishing the figure that measures the extent of America's money supply, possibly because by some estimates the financial risk exposure in the global markets for leveraged derivatives now stands at a sum somewhere in the vicinity of \$60 trillion, four times the size of the American economy.*

Lapham (2007)

8. On September 7, 2006, Nouriel Roubini, an economics professor at New York University, stood before an audience of economists at the International Monetary Fund and announced that a crisis was brewing. In the coming months and years, he warned, the United States was likely to face a once-in-a-lifetime housing bust, an oil shock, sharply declining consumer confidence and, ultimately, a deep recession. He laid out a bleak sequence of events: homeowners defaulting on mortgages, trillions of dollars of mortgage-backed securities unraveling worldwide and the global financial system shuddering to a halt. "These developments," he went on, "could cripple or destroy hedge funds, investment banks and other major financial institutions like Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac". The audience seemed skeptical, even dismissive. "The United States will likely muddle through the crisis but will emerge from it a different nation, with a different place

*in the world. Once you run current-account deficits, you depend on the kindness of strangers", he said, pausing to let out a resigned sigh. "This might be the beginning of the end of the American empire".*

Mihm (2008)

9. *We've taken the past 200 years of prosperity for granted. Humanity's progress is stalling, we are facing a new era of decay, and nobody is clever enough to fix it.*

Appleyard (2005)

10. *Growth is eventually detrimental to human well-being and, as a consequence, a steady-state economy is a long-run necessity; a steady-state economy can accommodate the requirements of a capitalist system; [...]. As such, there is no reason why a steady-state economy and a democratic-capitalist system should not thrive in each other's presence.*

Lawn (2005)

## SOME MAJOR CHALLENGES NOW COMPARED TO THE 1970S:

### Population

The Korean and global population is vastly larger now than it was in 1970. At the same time, fertility is very low and dropping in Korea. Continued global population growth increasingly threatens the ability of Earth to support humans at all, while decreasing Korean population challenges conventional economic theories and practices based on continued population growth. In 1970, many humans lived in self-sufficient rural, agricultural communities. Now, most live in highly-dependent and increasingly-crowded urban areas. Adequate housing is a growing challenge.

### End of oil

More than half of the oil available in the Earth has already been used up within just 100 years. Thus while there will be temporary dips, the price of oil will rise very sharply overall as demand increases and supplies drop. This fact is one of the most important to bear in mind: in the economic downturns of the last 200 plus years of the modern era, there were always abundant energy sources waiting to be called upon to get the productive engines turning again. This is not the case now and for the foreseeable future. Even if we somehow were to have once again the wealth necessary to spend to achieve renewed economic growth, we do not have the abundant and cheap energy sources required to renew and sustain such growth.

### End of other conventional fuels

There aren't abundant energy sources in existence that can quickly and efficiently replace oil. Shortages of coal and fissile material for nuclear power plants also loom, while the increased burning of fossil fuel sources contributes even more massively to an already over-burdened and severely-threatened environment.

### No energy alternatives

Moreover, while many sustainable alternatives to fossil fuels exist in principle, none exists now in anything remotely approaching sufficient amounts and rates of efficiency to replace oil. It will take time, money, and energy to develop them. Thus

a serious “gap” between the effective “end of oil” and the emergence of effective alternative sources may emerge. How many years that gap might be is uncertain, but it might be very long indeed.

### **Net energy**

One of the most important points to know and remember when assessing energy futures is “EROI” (Energy Return on Investment) or “Net Energy”. In order for an energy source to replace oil, it must equal or surpass the ability of oil to generate almost more energy than it consumes. At the present time, there is no alternative energy system even near the efficiency of oil. All current alternatives require a substantial energy subsidy from oil - and as oil itself gets more and more scarce, its own net energy efficiency will get worse and worse. Be sceptical of claims of new sources replacing oil. Find out what the EROI is before embracing it too enthusiastically.

### **Global climate change**

Global climate change is real, serious, and ongoing. The fact that most nations have refused to do anything about either the causes or consequences of global climate change, including sea-level rise, simply means that the challenge for current and future generations to deal with them will be greater and greater. The longer nations continue to waste their time, talent, and wealth on consumer-driven Continued Economic Growth, and refuse to consider and move towards some kind of a Conserver Society, the fewer will be the options available to humanity, and the greater the severity of the resulting calamity.

### **Food shortages**

There was great concern in the 1970s about food shortages. Worldwide famine was predicted. While there were indeed many pockets of serious famine and deaths, the Green Revolution of genetically-modified plants, and vastly-increased industrial agriculture, postponed the days of reckoning for several decades. For a while there were food surpluses. Now the spectre of food scarcity has arisen once again. Humans in the industrialised and industrialising nations of the world basically eat oil. Without massive oil-burning processes and oil-based pesticides and fertilisers (along with biologically-modified foods), the predicted famines would have occurred long ago. Now, as we approach an era of oil and other energy shortages and higher prices, humanity edges closer and closer to the possibility of global food shortages again. Local food security must become a major concern for all communities, large or small.

### **Water shortages**

Similarly, potable water sources are becoming more and more polluted, and harder and harder to access. As long as there is ample cheap energy, we can perhaps dig deeper, decontaminate, and otherwise find and create drinkable water. But since energy will be increasingly scarce and expensive, obtaining pure water will become an increasingly important matter, and a source of conflict. Water and air are life’s two most essential resources, and both are in decreasingly affordable supply to more and more humans.

### **New and renewed diseases**

While many of the old diseases that plagued humanity were contained and thought eliminated in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, careless use of medicines and new environments for vectors as a consequence of global warming and sea level rise may wipe out past victories at the same time as new health challenges, such as HIV/AIDS, Ebola, and Avian flu pandemics, threaten.

### **Increased threat of nuclear, biological, and space-based warfare**

While most wars of the future are expected to be small scale and local, involving “terrorists” of one kind or another, the possibility of globally-threatening nuclear warfare has actually increased as the number of bomb-possessing nations has increased. Biological warfare remains so far only a possibility, but a grave one, and the likelihood of weaponising space also increases as the number of space-faring nations increases over the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

### **From an industrial society to a consumer society**

Even though the Canadian Conserver Society project specifically stated that it sought to convert Canada from a Consumer Society to a Conserver Society, the Canadian economy, as well as the economy of the United States, was still heavily dependent on primary and secondary sectors of resource extraction and industrial production in the 1970s. Many people were farmers, fishers, miners, and factory workers. A true Consumer Society where most people were in white collar or service occupations, propped-up by ever-increasing national, corporate and especially personal debt that enabled many people to acquire cleverly-advertised consumer goods, was still several decades in the future. In the 1970s, general-use credit cards with ever-rising credit limits were in their infancy. Most people had to save their money if they wished to buy consumer products, or pay so-called “lay away” installments, only acquiring the goods when all payments were made. Governments tightly regulated airlines, railroads, banks, and other financial institutions. Rates of taxation were very progressive. This began to change by the very end of the 70s, and substantially so from 1980 onward.

By the time the system collapsed in 2008, the economy was different in every way from what it had been in 1975. The engine of economic growth was now not the goods-producer, but the goods-consumer, seduced into acquiring ever-improved products at ever-reduced prices by downsizing and outsourcing labour, deregulating or failing to enforce rules over fiscal, productive and related activities, and providing extravagant and expanding lines of credit to people who often did not ask for them and who had no ability or perhaps even intention to repay them. In brief, North Americans, Europeans, Koreans and some others were encouraged to acquire products produced overseas by money lent to them by people overseas. Almost all deregulated activities thrived, but those in the financial sectors vastly more so by creating ever-more complex debt instruments in an orgy of creativity and fiscal fantasy that finally fell apart, bringing down the entire house of cards with it, and ruining the present and future lives of many millions of people worldwide, with more yet to come.

### **Anthropocene era**

In sum, until recently, the resources of nature, and the ability of nature to absorb and recycle the wastes of human productivity, were greater than the ability of humans

to deplete resources and produce waste. Now we live in a world where, in effect “nature is dead”. We live in an increasingly “artificial world” that requires heroic human imagination, attention, care, and management in order to survive. More and more human time, money, and attention must be diverted away from the production and acquisition of consumer goods and turned towards “*governing evolution*” as Walter Truett Anderson (1987) put it. Humans now live in a new geological era of their own unintentional making that is called the “Anthropocene Era”. Humanity is now the major force controlling the future of life and death of everything on the planet. Even though we may not be ready (intellectually and emotionally) to take up this unique responsibility, we must attempt to do so since it was humans who created the situation we now must manage [See Appendix C of the original *Brushwood Door* report for a bibliography on the Anthropocene Era].

## SOME MAJOR ADVANTAGES NOW COMPARED TO THE 1970S

### More smart humans

We have many more and much better educated and globally-aware people. Julian Simon (1998) is correct in calling humanity the “*Ultimate Resource*”. Humans are a resource we have in true abundance. Very importantly more people, especially young people, understand and embrace the challenges ahead. They are willing and able to work for an exciting alternative to a Consumer Society. Older people who find it difficult to accept the need for and desirability of a Conserver Society should at least step out of the way to let younger people create one, if they are unwilling to join them in the quest.

### Models of sustainability

While there were many people in the 1970s who produced plausible models for new economic systems focused on sustainability and sufficiency, we have had forty more years to refine and develop those ideas. Thus, there is no need to start from scratch. Viable models of the economic engine of a Conserver Society already exist and can be used and improved quickly. Indeed, because of years of research, education, and activism, there is much greater awareness of sustainability challenges and solutions now, even though there have been inadequate actions taken so far.

### End of old ideologies

In the 1970s, the attention and talent of the world was diverted in a ridiculous “Cold War” between two competing, highly-militarised ideologies, both focused single-mindedly on Continued Economic Growth. The cumbersome and authoritarian Communist system collapsed almost exactly twenty years before the chaotic, debt-burdened, global neoliberal financial system collapsed. Both systems were unsustainable in many ways. Now that this ideological diversion is out of the way, bright, talented and energetic people, especially young people, are free to turn their attention away from being either commissars, quantfund wizards, or generals to envisioning and creating viable Conserver Societies.

## Rise of Asia and Islam, and the decline of Europe and North America

The past era of global economic development along with population growth and decline has resulted in the re-emergence of East, Southeast, and South Asia into cultures of world-class standing and influence. Europe and North America have relatively (and in population, absolutely) declined. It is unlikely that any single culture will dominate the next 200 years the way Western civilisation dominated the past 200. A new era of cross-cultural contacts and of new cultures promises great hope for the emergence of new ideas and processes to face the challenges of the future.

## Communication revolution

The emergence of increasingly powerful and sophisticated communication technologies is a huge difference between 2010 and the 1970s. “High tech” in the 1970s meant vacuum tube television sets to most people. Computers were massive cumbersome machines that actually computed something. There were no desktops or laptops or multitasking mobile phones; no internet, no Google, no YouTube, no Wikipedia. Related dramatic advances in robotics and artificial intelligence are especially important.

## Biological revolution

The idea that it would be possible to use biology as a technology was only a crazy idea in the 1970s. Now it is an increasingly powerful technology by which we may solve energy, materials, food, communication, and transportation challenges - as well as all those presented by the Anthropocene Era.

## Space exploration and settlement

While it has been forty years since humans walked on the moon, several nations plan to do so again in the coming decades, while also planning to go to Mars shortly after. While many things could prevent that from happening, including prolonged economic depression and energy shortages, if space settlement does proceed it will result in new knowledge and new ideas and, eventually, the emergence of new species of “spacekind” separate from Earthbound “humankind” and the spread of Earth-born cultures across the inner solar system and beyond.

## The singularity

Ray Kurzweil, Susantha Goonilatake and many others who focus on the convergence of robotics, artificial intelligence, artificial life, genetic engineering, new materials, nanotechnology, space exploration and related high technologies foresee the imminent coming of the *Singularity* when a world of abundance and leisure will result. Their knowledge and optimism must also be embraced by those envisioning alternative models of Conserver Societies. [For a bibliography of technological optimism and anti-environmentalism, see Appendix D of the original *Brushwood Door* report.]

As noted in the introduction, the purpose of our report was to explore the implications of a conserver society for Korea. We believe that this is deeply embedded in Korean tradition. In many ways, the way of life of a Conserver Society is nothing new at all. What is in fact new is the recent period of economic growth without concern about its effects upon the environment in which we all must live, and the cultures we all cherish - and without understanding the limits to all such growth. It

is now time to consider reviving the older, sustaining virtues once again, and to learn to live meaningful and fulfilling lives that are not spent solely in endless acquisition, consumption, and waste.

We can excavate traces of a Conserver Society throughout Korean history in terms of three Korean properties: a deep concern for future generations; self-fulfillment in harmony with nature; and the virtue of moderation. Let us look at historical and contemporary evidence that shows that Koreans cherished such a Conserver Society.

### Deep concern for future generations

There is a Korean saying: “*A farmer will not eat seeds even though he starves to death*”. In an agricultural society, seeds signify lives of the future while grains of rice imply lives of the present. If a farmer ate the seeds, he would not only commit suicide in a way, but also would destroy the lives of the next generation. So, the saying connotes that a farmer has a deep concern for future generations.

Even though we moved from an agricultural society to a post-industrial society, we still find the farmer’s consideration for the future in our mothers’ carefulness for children. Korean senior citizens remember the time when Korea was devastated in the 1950s and 1960s. Mothers did not eat meals as often as their children ate because there was not enough food for everyone. Mothers often said to their children who worried about their mother’s health, “*I am already full by seeing you eat*”. Unfortunately, this kind of careful behaviour has become threatened in affluent society. We are in danger of becoming careless persons who eat the seeds of the future.

However, many Koreans still harbour the farmer’s mind that takes care of the next generation by sacrificing itself. Through news media, we often hear touching stories about senior citizens who gave huge donations to colleges as scholarships. What is interesting about these stories is that the senior citizens are not millionaires. Most of them earned money by selling small rice cakes or vegetables. They are so frugal that they could save the money. In fact, what they donated is almost all the money they saved. Why did they do this? It was because they could not get any education themselves since they were so poor when they were young. Poverty frustrated them. So, they want the next generation not to be discouraged by poverty.

This kind of sacrifice is not the only way to take care of future generations. In the past, Koreans developed social structures aimed at brightening the future. *Dooreah*, for example, was the farmers’ cooperative system in the late Chosun Dynasty that enabled members of a community to exchange their labours and to share what they had. Regarding the role of *Dooreah*, the famous Korean writer and activist, Kee-Sook Song (2005), asks us, “*How many children miss lunch every day in Seoul?*”. He answers, “*more than 100,000 children*”. This is outrageous because Seoul is a highly economically developed city. There is plenty of food for everyone. But it is sadly true that many go hungry today.

Song argues that in the past, even poor children did not skip meals when society followed the *Dooreah* tradition. When it was a year of famine, those who had food shared it, and local governments aided the poor. The *Dooreah* tradition led people to help each other by humane activities. *Dooreah* was not only for the current generation’s sake, but also for the next generations who will continue to live in a community. People wanted to transfer their humane system, *Dooreah*, to their descendants. However, according to Song (2005), when Japan ruled the Korean peninsula from 1910 to 1945, its government prohibited Koreans from organising

*Dooreah* activities because the government worried that Koreans would use them to protest against the Japanese government.

*Dooreah* evolved into a unique cultural organisation. Young-Dong Bae (2005) argues that *Dooreah* was not only a way to mobilise farming labour but also a way to organise cultural activities. For example, *Homissisi* was a festive event that celebrated the end of weeding. *Nonmaegi* was a workers' celebration after they have transplanted young rice plants. *Dooreah* was vibrant and full of fun. As Kang-Hyun Choo (2006) points out, *Dooreah* is not obsolete, but rather a renewable spirit that enables contemporary people to find a proper balance between labour and happiness that can lead Koreans to sustainable growth.

### Self-fulfillment in Harmony with Nature

When autumn returns, Koreans pick fruit from many trees. But, as for the persimmon trees, people leave some persimmons to let the birds eat them. Winter is just around the corner, so birds need food. The persimmons left are called *Kachi-bab*. *Kachi* means a magpie and *bab* means food. In Korea, a magpie is regarded as an auspicious bird that brings good fortune. Most people do not seriously believe this superstition - they just want to live in harmony with all of nature.

Korean ancestors stressed the importance of enjoying their relationship with nature. Contemporary Korean people also like to live with nature. There are many people who enjoy the slow life that looks for the real value of living. Even though society changes faster, people enjoying the slow life pause and rethink how to fulfill their lives with nature. Some people move away from metropolitan cities and build their own house with yellow earth to get natural energy. They experience that their mental and physical pains are cured by living with nature now, just as they were in the old days. After curing themselves, they began to work again, creating new businesses that are pro-nature: sharing eco-farming skills, providing slow food (instead of fast food), and building earth-houses.

We have another example that shows self-fulfillment by living in harmony with nature. Let us go to Buan village in the Chunbuk province of the southern part of Korea. Buan is a farming and fishing village. The population is 65,000. In 2003, this small and peaceful village became famous because the Korean government appointed Buan as an area for dumping nuclear waste. Even though the government made a promise to give Buan people huge reparation payments, the people declined the government's offer. Many people demonstrated against the government, and hundreds were injured by policemen who tried to stop them from protesting. In 2004, the people voted whether they wanted the reparations in return for allowing construction of a building for nuclear waste, or whether they wanted to leave Buan as it is. A majority of the people rejected the reparations.

Five years later, through the efforts of the people, Buan was reborn as a green energy village. While they protested against the government's nuclear energy policy, they also acknowledged that the environment is important for their lives. So, they set up three solar power plants and started organic farming without fertilisers. They began to teach children about the importance of the environment. Now, they have a plan to reduce their energy consumption by 30% in 2015, and to develop alternative energies such as solar and wind powers. Hyun-Min Lee (2008) notes that the Buan people will not forget what they strived for in 2003. They have taken pride in constructing their green energy village. The people show what local wisdom is and prove what lives living with nature rather than against it truly are.

One can argue that old traditions do not work any more in contemporary society because cultural and social contexts are different from those of the old days. This is partially true. However, consider cremation rituals that were prevalent in the unified Shilla Dynasty (654-935) and the Goryeo Dynasty (918-1392)<sup>1</sup>. The rituals of cremation came from Buddhism. Buddhism is close to the idea of a Conserver Society with regard to its philosophical preference that it is more important to be rather than to have. Both of the Dynasties encouraged people to burn dead bodies into ashes in accordance with Buddhism. Mee-Rea Koo (2002) notes that King Mun-Mu of the Shilla Dynasty expressed his dying wish: “*If you excessively prepare for my funeral after I die, you will waste material and human labour. Please burn my body into ashes and follow a frugal funeral service*” (Koo quoted this from the Goryeo historian, Kim Bu-Sik’s book *Samkusaki*). There are complicated reasons why people wanted to burn corpses according to Buddhism, but Korean ancestors like King Mun-Mu wanted to conserve natural resources for the future.

This concern for nature can be also found with contemporary people. Until the 1970s, cremation was not a popular funeral method for Koreans who were influenced by Confucianism. After the Chosun Dynasty banned cremation by law, people did not burn their parents’ corpses. Only 10% of Koreans had cremation funerals in 1970. However, the rate of cremation has gradually increased up to 58.9% as of 2007. According to survey data from the Ministry for Health, Welfare, and Family Affairs (2007), the main reasons why people want cremation are to protect the environment; more effectively to use lands; and to save money. This is a good example to show that even old traditions can be useful in fulfilling the needs of contemporary people.

### Moderation

Throughout Korean history, moderation has been the key virtue of Koreans. They were able to find a balance between material satisfaction and spiritual happiness. For example, the Chosun Dynasty encouraged people to activate *Sunbi* spirituality. What is *Sunbi*? According to Harvard Professor Tu Wei-Ming, Korean *Sunbi* is like the Chinese “Exemplary Man” (君子) who exhibits human dignity and civic spirit (Seung-Hwan Lee, 2001). Jang-Tai Kim (1978) interprets *Sunbi* as a person who keeps a virtuous mind even though he is seriously hungry. Seo-Hyeng Lee (2001) notes that *Sunbi* is honest, moral, and diligent. The best example of *Sunbi* is Jeong Yak-Yong who lived in the late Chosun Dynasty. Jeong was a prolific scholar, pragmatist, and an honest government officer.

Regarding *Sunbi* spirituality, Jeong said, “*A profound thinker, Sunbi always has integrity in his mind and thinks of greed as a disease*” (Lee, Seo-Hyeng, 2001). According to Seo-Hyeng Lee (2001), this *Sunbi* spirituality is based on *Hwarangdo* of the Shilla Dynasty and *Yangri* spirit of the Goryeo Dynasty. *Hwarang* were youths who excelled in beauty, bravery, and martial arts. They were disciplined to have integrity and humane leadership. *Yangri* was a clean-handed government officer who whole-heartedly supported the people. In the Goryeo Dynasty, every man, especially noble men, should be frugal in their lives. Integrity was the number one priority for those men. They were self-sufficient and enjoyed their frugal lives (Hoon-Pyo Yoon, 2006). Thus, *Sunbi* spirituality has a long tradition.

However, in the 19th Centuries, *Sunbi* was regarded as an irrational moralist who was not practical but rigidly against the changes of society. According to Do-

<sup>1</sup> The dates of these dynasties overlap because the Goryeo dynasty was founded in 918 and defeated the Shilla dynasty in 935, unifying Korea.

heum Lee (2008), in the 19th Century, there were four types of attitudes towards capitalism: an irrational moralist, a rational moneymaker, an irrational moneymaker, and a rational moralist. In the text of *Oh-Ryun-ga* (the prose poem of the Confucian five moral rules), the poetic narrator, *Choya-nongbu* (the farmer in the retired country) is an irrational moralist. He follows Confucian morals too seriously and keeps himself away from money. He regards money as waste paper. In contrast, in the text of *Dendong-eomi-hwajeon-ga* (A badly burned wife's prose poem), *Dendong-eomi* is a rational moneymaker. She makes her money rationally but has a weak sense of Confucian morals. Do-heum Lee (2008) argues that the rational moneymaker gradually won the struggle against the irrational moralist. Capitalism legitimated rational moneymakers.

Even though *Sunbi* partially reflected the irrational moralist in the past, *Sunbi* spirituality can be renewed as pragmatism (Hong-Chan Cho, 2004). Cho (2004), as an example, takes Kil-Jun Yu who was a progressive politician in the late 19th Century and the early 20th Century. Yu grew up following *Sunbi* spirituality and tried to make a balance between a tradition-minded person and a revolutionary. When he was eighteen years old, he went to Japan to study Japanese modernisation and then went to the United States to research ideas of western democracy and freedom. After Yu came back to Korea, he revolutionised the old Korean political system in order to catch up with Western industrialisation. Yu did not follow Western ways without thinking. Rather, he developed his own political and economic philosophy in order to create a new Korean system.

In a Conserver Society, Koreans can go beyond Yu's pragmatism into a new pragmatism that enables people to secure not only the lives of future generations but also Mother Nature. Koreans can pave the way to a sustainable economic growth that is in harmony with nature. In order to facilitate this way, Koreans should acquire the ancestors' wisdom while developing more future-oriented minds and behaviour. In short, Koreans should restore and restrengthen the three fundamental Korean properties: deep concern for future generations, self-fulfillment in harmony with nature, and moderation. [See Appendix E of the original *Brushwood Door* report for a bibliography of sources cited.]

Since the *Brushwood Door* report was written, the Korea Institute for Public Administration has increasingly sponsored discussions of the Conserver Society concept in Korea. More and more leaders and citizens are aware that the path towards economic growth that Korea followed so very successfully for fifty years has run its course. Korea is no longer catching up. It has arrived, and now must create its own new way forward. Many people feel the Conserver Society might indeed be that new way.

The future has a long fuse. The Conserver Society in Canada that flourished brilliantly, and then languished in the 1970s, seems about to flourish and thrive in Korea, and then, one hopes, in all parts of the world.

## CONCLUSION

When concerns about energy, food, materials, pollution, population and the like were first discussed by the broad public globally in the 1970s, many scientists and activists were certain that the facts were so clear and the options so limited that decision-makers in government, business, education, and all other institutions would

rally behind policies and processes that would ensure a just, fair, equitable, peaceful, and sustainable future for everyone. The work on a Conserver Society by the Science Council of Canada was only one example among many globally, but in my view, the most extensive and impressive in many dimensions. But a Conserver Society did not emerge. The claims of the “doomsayers” and “environmentalists” were ridiculed and rejected by powerful advocates for continued economic growth.

But it is becoming clearer and clearer that the concerns of forty years ago were fully justified, and that, since we did not act then, it is absolutely imperative that we act now - if indeed, there is still time. Since the *Brushwood Door* report was written, the Korea Institute for Public Administration, among others, has sponsored discussions of the Conserver Society concept in Korea. The Samsung Press Foundation has for two years sponsored groups of journalists and other media specialists to attend a three week workshop in futures studies. The Foundation believes the time has come for Korea’s citizens and leaders to re-envision its future, and it wants journalists to serve an active role in leading and promulgating the results of that process.

More and more leaders and citizens are aware that the path towards economic growth that Korea followed so very successfully for fifty years has run its course. Korea is no longer catching up. It has arrived, and now must create its own new way forward. Many people feel the Conserver Society might indeed be that new way.

Of course, most people in Korea and elsewhere are either unaware of the situation or unconvinced of its seriousness. Many more are so locked into notions and practices of growth that they seem unable to imagine any alternative. But the future has a long fuse. The Conserver Society in Canada that first flourished brilliantly, and then languished in the 1970s, may yet again flourish and thrive, originally in Korea, and then, one hopes, in other parts of the world.

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