Letter of Recommendation

I am Jong-geol Kim, professor of global social economy at Hanyang University.

The Republic of Korea currently stands at the center of great transition in time. The ever-escalating economic and social crises across the globe are a testament to the creative destruction already underway due to this era of transition. The era of crisis is shaking all of our existing beliefs. Looking at any statistics, Korea’s expanding unhappiness is surely an ongoing phenomenon. The grim realities of increasing income inequality, declining labor income share, growing percentage of non-regular workers, and a widening gap between household and corporate income, indicates that we live in a world where the middle class has collapsed and poverty is passed down from one generation to another.

In response to serious social issues, solutions are always a point of discussion. The current government has announced a series of measures to provide new economic growth engines, such as job creation for youth through promoting social startups, supplying social houses, and promoting social economy.

Such measures are benchmarked in the Comprehensive Support Plans for Social Economy announced by the Seoul Metropolitan Government in 2012. Despite a short history of social economy, the collaboration between the private sector’s long tradition and Seoul City’s policies is producing positive results.

The number of social enterprises in Seoul has increased about four times for three years since the end of 2012, and their sales and scale of employment have also expanded approximately two times. About 50% of new employment in social enterprises comes from socially vulnerable groups.

The Seoul Metropolitan Government has opened a venue for social economy, particularly room for innovative youth activists to meet and rest. Connecting with others and sharing ideas necessitates physical space. Through Social Investment Funds, the government is also lending low-interest startup loans to young people with innovative ideas but no capital to start businesses. In addition, the government supports international youth networks such as the Asia Innovative Youth Activists Forum to encourage them to experience a bigger world and meet with their peers.
Of Seoul’s 25 autonomous districts, 20 districts already have private sector social economy networks, and those involved the network are collectively developing and implementing social economy policies in cooperation with the Seoul Metropolitan Government.

Under co-governance between the private and public sectors, the infrastructure for social economy is continually expanding. Building on this firm foundation, citizens, especially youth, will realize their potential and their dreams for themselves.

The Seoul Metropolitan Government’s policy places the highest priority on its citizens. To best serve them, it is constantly innovates and seeks solutions through the promotion of social economy.  
Social economy is a movement and campaign that revives cooperation, collaboration, solidarity, and equality.  
Social economy is an economy of public participation rather than governments or markets.  
Social economy is an economy governed by such motives as altruism, reciprocity, honor, and devotion.  
It is my belief that the Seoul Metropolitan Government policies promoting citizen-led social economy will resolve the economic crisis and inequality issues currently facing the city.

Therefore, I strongly recommend the Seoul City Government’s “Comprehensive Support Policy through the Establishment of Social Economy Ecology” for the UN Public Service Awards.

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