

# Challenge and Significance of Social Capital Research

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## 1. Objective

In order to be a sustainable society, sense of community based on mutual support and trustworthy relationships is required. All we need for this is to clarify, from the viewpoint of social capital, the controversial points of neoliberalism and open a new public space through embedding in society the power of civic community that we have developed over the past quarter of a century.

## 2. Against Neoliberalism

Ever since the 1990s, storm of neoliberalism that emphasizes globalism and market fundamentalism has swept the world. Overemphasis of self-determination and self-responsibility as an alternative to the community and public interest, and undue reliance on market competition by neoliberalism lead to unequal society divided people into winners and losers. Also, in Japan, along with the growing of the suicide rate and depression, households on welfare, jobless laborers, and non-regular workers have increased. As bonds consciousness has faded, a kind of anomie situation comes true which value and norms to be referred to are not determined.

Public concern about social capital began to rise in the mid-1990s when storm of globalization of neoliberal initiative has come to sweep over the world. In the background, there is a fear for the decline in the quality of society.

Modern society has a tendency to promote individualism, but solidarity among members will be lost if society does not hold the communality, then pathological phenomena occur frequently.

## 3. Building functioning democracy

In his book *Making Democracy Work* (1993, Princeton University Press), Robert Putnam defines social capital as follows: it refers to features of social organization such as trust, norms (of reciprocity), and networks which are possible to improve the efficiency of society by the adjusted activities. And by using this concept, democratic institutions in Italy is analyzed why the difference occurs in the degree of penetration between the northern and southern parts.

In addition, in *Bowling Alone* (2000, Simon & Schuster), he explored the lack of social capital as the reason why the community has declined in the United States. Social capital is nothing less than to make democracy work. In order to overcome the dysfunction of democracy that advanced industrial societies are suffering, it is necessary to review the significance of social capital.

## 4. Conclusion

In free competition principle of merit system which does not mind outwitting others, people tend to fall into the idea that we can do no wrong if one does not interfere with the rights and freedom of others. Being captured to the acquisition of results, people tend to lack of consideration for others too. Social capital is responsible for people to reproduce the spirit of community by trust, norms of reciprocity and network (human bondage). Progress of individualism is the fate of modern society. It is indispensable, however, to make democracy work through recognizing that human existence is a living with others against this fate and building a bond of solidarity and mutual support.