

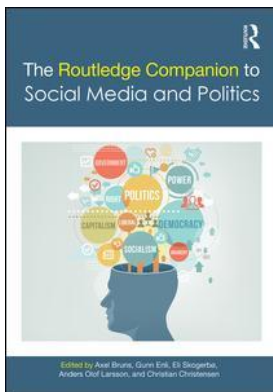
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VOICING DISCONTENT IN SOUTH KOREA

Origins and Channels of Online Civic Movements

Maurice Vergeer and Se Jung Park

Introduction

The presence of social movements is an indication of how civic engagement is working in a society, and judging from the increase in civic organisations in South Korea, the country is moving towards consolidating democracy. To support their rights and voice their concerns the people in South Korea have taken to the streets for a number of social problems, using the Internet and social media to organise events and mobilise participants. Among the most notable movements are the Candlelight protests, for instance, on the import of U.S. beef (2008) with an estimated attendance of seven hundred protesters and the Sewol ferry disaster (2014) with an estimated attendance of over a million protesters.

The main aim of this chapter is to analyse social movements in the context of South Korea, a relatively young democracy that has embraced information and communication technology. First, the chapter will give a brief overview of modern history of South Korea and discuss why people in South Korea are particularly tech savvy and how technology is being used in the country. South Korean society is characterised as having relatively low trust in political institutions and large businesses, due to insufficient governance. This conflicts with Korea's cultural heritage because Confucianism—which focuses heavily on wisdom and mutual respect, developing personal networks consisting of meaningful strong ties—is a major foundation of Korean culture. Second, the chapter will discuss how a number of social movements in South Korea use the Internet, a section focusses attention to government regulations that affect the use of the Internet by Korean people and politicians.

South Korea's Path to Wealth and Democracy

The development of South Korea towards a democratic and free state was drastically delayed by the Japanese occupation from 1910 until the end of World War II, as well as by the Korean War (1950–1953) that divided the country into the Democratic People's

Republic of Korea (a.k.a. North Korea) and the Republic of Korea (a.k.a. South Korea). After the Korean War, South Korea developed as a country under military ruling. The development of a modernized South Korea started in the late 1960s of the last century, under president Park Chung-hee when, for instance, the economic conglomerates known as *chaeböl* began to flourish. *Chaeböl* consist of relatively small, family owned companies, which through their company networks gain enormous economic power on the South Korean market as well as on the global playing field (Fukuyama 1996). Some of the largest conglomerates in the communications market (e.g. Samsung, LG, and SK) are now major players locally as well as globally (see Figure 20.1).

The economic politics laid the foundation of South Korean unprecedented explosive growth in economy: average yearly GDP per capita growth rate of 9.8 per cent between 1971 and 2012 (OECD 2014). However, this growth came at the expense of citizens due to Park Chung-hee's aggressive control (1962–1979) using military coercion toward citizens and suppression of democratic values (Fukuyama 1996). In the context of this chapter, the more interesting fact is that Park contributed to building the currently famous communication infrastructure in South Korea. Still, there are many moderating factors for the Internet to democratize Asian politics, such as political culture, regulatory regimes, and unequal access to the information technology (Kluser and Banerjee 2005: 33).

Within a few decades, South Korea went through an impressive process of economic and political transformation. Presently, South Korea has global players in the automobile market (e.g. Hyundai and Kia) and communications market (e.g. Samsung, LG).

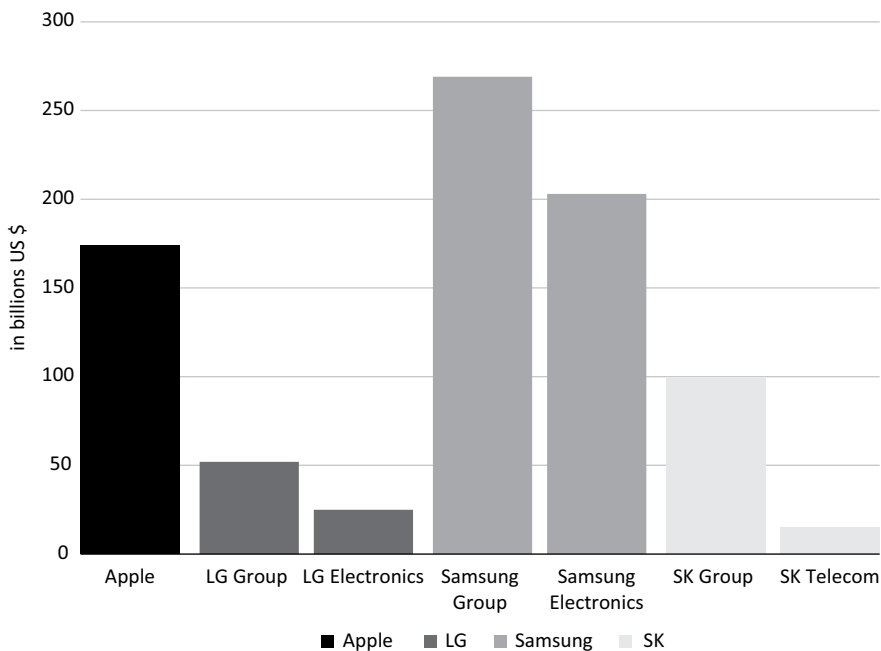


Figure 20.1 2013 Revenues of *Chaeböl* and Their South Korean Communications Subsidiaries Compared to Apple

Sources: Samsung (2014), SK (2014), LG (2014), KT (2014), Apple (2014).

In terms of adoption of new technology (e.g. smartphones, e-money, social media), South Korea has even surpassed Japan. However, partly due to this rapid industry development, the consolidation of democracy safeguarding people’s general well-being and freedom was regularly put to the test, even in the 21st century. The fact that the number of civic organisations has increased over the past decades suggests that there is still quite some discontent among Korean people (Park, Lim, Sams, Nam, and Park 2011), due to corruption, nepotism in government and industry, disregards for employee welfare by *chaeböl* companies.

Web Culture in South Korea

South Korea is considered the most wired country in the world (see Figure 20.2), outranking many advanced countries. Extremely fast broadband access is widely available,

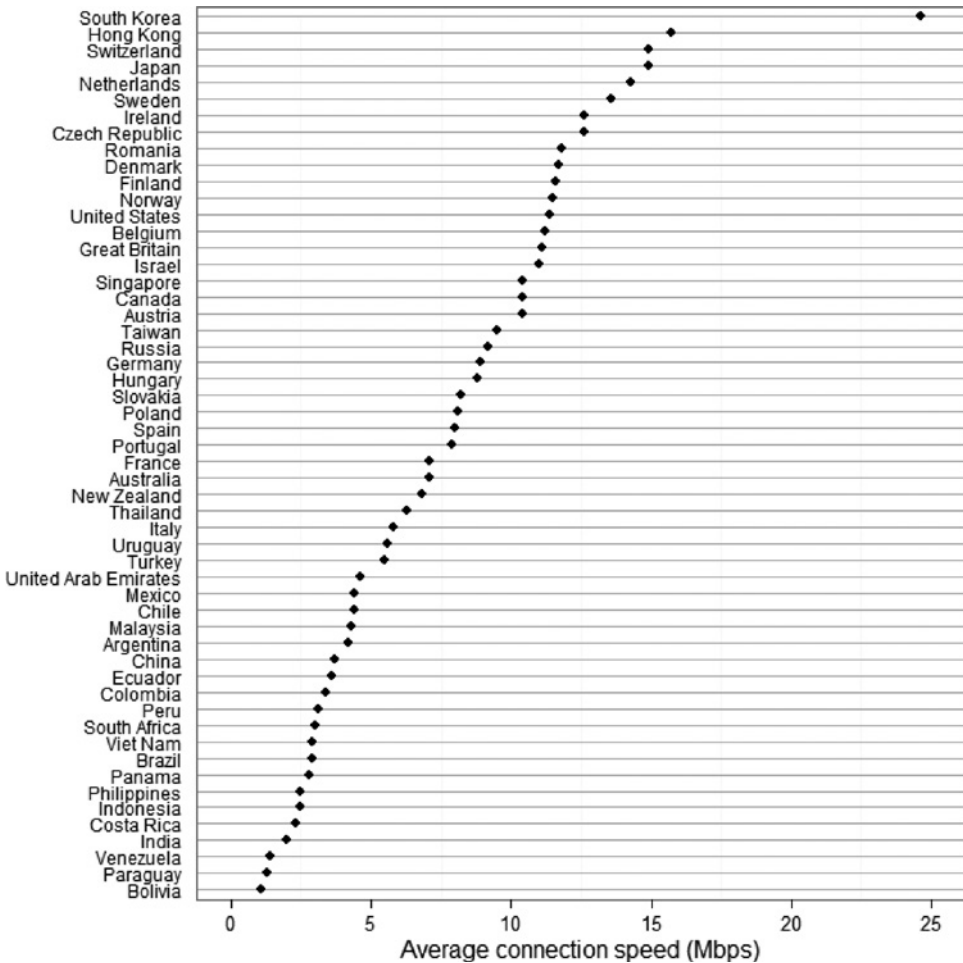


Figure 20.2 Internet Connection Speeds in Countries, Second Quarter of 2014
 Note: Data retrieved from Akamai report (Akamai 2014).

and wireless and mobile communication are ubiquitous, as indicated by high adoption rates and use of mobile television and electronic money, such as the T-Money service (Kim, Tao, Shin, and Kim 2010) remove this because it was already mentioned earlier in the sentence. People watching TV on their smart phones while commuting on the subway is quite common. Wired communication is commonly used for shopping, entertainment, and news. Another popular pastime activity for younger people is to play all sorts of computer games in PC Bangs (PC rooms often open 24/7) for a very small fee (Huhh 2008). This has led to a vibrant million dollar professional industry of e-sports in South Korea, where players attain celebrity status (Seo 2013; Dhoedt 2013). The popularity of computer games also led to young Koreans becoming addicted to computer games and the Internet (Heo, Oh, Subramanian, Kim, and Kawachi 2014).

South Korea has a leading role in Internet development and is characterised by a cultural homogeneity, with only 2.5 per cent of the population being foreigners in 2013 (United Nations 2014). These factors have resulted in a distinct South Korean Web culture; even though in recent years global platforms such as Facebook and Twitter have become widely used, South Korea is not entirely dependent on global services. Indeed, the country has a long history with national Korean social media and search engines. First, Cyworld (owned by SK Communications) was the dominant social network in South Korea for over a decade, until the competition from Facebook in recent years has imposed a serious decline in Cyworld's popularity. Compared to other social network sites Cyworld has several unique features, such as Cyworld's 'minihompy', which is a mini-homepage, a small section on the page which allowed users to create a living room with avatars, furniture, and gadgets. These virtual items can be bought for a small amount of money, and SK Communications was among the pioneers to implement and generate large revenues from micro-transactions. Cyworld was particularly known for using *Ilchon*, which reflects a traditional Korean concept of kinship to set up online social relations; an *Ilchon* is a relationship between two people, unique to those two people. The disclosure of information on Cyworld between these connected people could be specified differently for each *Ilchon* relation.

A second characteristic South Korean social media, Me2day, a Korean microblogging service similar to Twitter, was quite popular among young people in their teens and twenties. However, Me2day was closed down in late 2013 due to its steady decline in the number of users that was affected by the growing popularity of the global social media services such as Twitter and Facebook ("Naver to Shut Down" 2013). Moreover, in 2014, Kakao Talk (merged with Daum October 2014; see Tay 2014) and Line, a text and VoIP app for smartphones, introduced by the Japanese subsidiary of Korean company Naver, gained popularity in South Korea rapidly.

Third, the leading search engine in South Korea is not Google, like in most other countries, but, rather, the Korean Naver is number one and the Korean Daum is second. South Korean Web portals and search engines outrank Google, which in 2014 had only 4 per cent of the market for search engines in South Korea ("Now or Naver" 2014).

A key explanation of the quickly emerging mobile culture in South Korea is the large communication industry occupied by companies such as Samsung and LG, and SK telecom provider, who's Nate On—an online messenger—was extremely popular among young Koreans. Given the nation's strong reliance on the ICT industry, particularly Samsung, South Korea is sometimes referred to as the Republic of Samsung

(Harlan 2012). Indicative for Samsung's economic power in South Korea is its revenues of 216.7 billion U.S. dollars in 2013 (Samsung 2014) which is 17 per cent of South Korea's GDP of 1,304.6 billion U.S. dollars in 2013 (Worldbank 2014). Samsung's political power is exemplified by Samsung's former chairman Lee Kun-hee's special amnesty of his embezzlement and tax evasion conviction in order for him to retain his International Olympic Committee membership to campaign for the city PyeongChang to host the 2018 Winter Olympics (Sang-hun 2009).

Apple's iPhone, one of the most advanced and iconic smart phones, was launched in South Korea in November 2009, over two years later after its U.S. introduction (Garner 2009). This delayed introduction was due to strict regulations on location-based services by the Korean Communication Commission. At the same time, the late arrival protected the large market shares of local smart phones brands (e.g. Samsung, LG) on the Korean's internal smart phone market ("iPhone Pipe Dreams" 2008). Before Android phones and Apple's iPhone came to the Korean market, local smart phones brands already had contained proprietary software, resulting to Koreans being familiar with smart phones early on. Even though Samsung has used Google's Android software for their popular smart phone models, their newest products (from smart phones to UHD television sets) use their proprietary software Tizen, again distancing themselves from Google's Android dominance. Whether Samsung's Tizen will be successful depends not only on having a large consumer base (which they have) but also on apps available for Tizen. Even if Samsung succeeds to create a high adoption rate for Tizen, it is unclear whether this will lead to a specific web culture distinct from the Apple and Android ecology.

Sociopolitical Relations in South Korean Culture

The infrastructure of networked communication in South Korea is manifold and consists of both national and global social media services. This infrastructure is widely used by the Koreans to discuss politics and social issues, and to share political news about recent developments. In these discussions, it is common to express discontent towards the government or the ruling party and to make fun of politicians in power through political parody.

The use of social media in South Korea for political engagement as well as for socialising in everyday life must be understood in light of key characteristics of social relations in South Korean culture. First and foremost, South Korea is a collectivist society where family integrity, group membership, and social interactions are considered essential (Choi, Kim, Sung and Sohn 2011). This collectivism corresponds with high context culture, meaning that it involves indirect, ambiguous and harmonious communication between people (Ji, Hwangbo, Yi, Rau, Fang, and Ling 2010). Accordingly, communication is closely related to interpersonal trust, which is an key factor in South Korean society.

In spite of this characteristic collectivism and the high level of interpersonal trust, South Korea is not resistant of emancipatory developments, which is indicated by gender equality, personal autonomy, lifestyle tolerance, and people's voice. The so-called Asian values thesis, as voiced by retired Prime Minister of Singapore Lee Kuan Yew (Zakaria 1994), suggests that Asian collectivistic cultures are resistant of liberal democratic development. This thesis suggests that Asian cultures, in contrast to Western cultures, where modernization of societies leads to liberal democracy and individualism,

seems more resistant toward these developments. However, several comparative studies suggest that Asian countries do not differ significantly from Western, but that some Asian countries are probably at different levels of development (Dalton and Ong 2005; Welzel 2011). According to these findings, South Korea is about halfway in the ranking of subscribing to emancipative values, and thus surpassing several western countries (Welzel 2011: 19).

The effect of the Internet on the development towards democracy is depended on at least three key factors: political culture, regulatory regimes, and access information technology (Kluver and Banerjee 2005: 35). South Korea has a multiparty system, with one ideological dimension of conservatism, which focuses on modernization and social stability, versus progressivism, which emphasizes social welfare, humanism and egalitarianism. The Conservative Party, which politically oppressed social movements in the past, to date has been more powerful to than the progressive political parties. This political culture of low trust in political institutions might explain the vibrant social movements in South Korea.

Korean politics is at times unstable, polarized, and emotional, demonstrated by occasional scuffles between members of parliament and a major bribery incident which involved the Grand National Party in 2012 (Kim 2012). These incidents, in addition to the failure of the government to lead South Korea out of the economic crisis of 1997, may explain the decreased trust in politics among South Koreans. Figure 20.3 illustrates the Korean people's declining trust in political institutions and shows that the confidence in political institutions was relatively high in the 1980s, but the degree of trust subsequently decreased. The decrease in trust was particularly significant during the economic crisis of the late 1990s, with the 1997 economic crisis as it peak.

This crisis was a result of excessive outstanding bank loans to business conglomerates (*chaeböl*; e.g. Kia, LG, Samsung, Hyundai) to increase their economic competitiveness on the global market. These loans eventually became a national challenge, passed on from the private companies of South Korea to the citizens. When unable to pay back their loans, the conglomerates appealed to Korean citizens to donate their privately owned gold jewellery to the government to pay of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) loan. The Korean citizens responded to this appeal by donating more than 20 billion U.S. dollars to the Korean companies ("Koreans Give up Their Gold to Help Their Country" 1998). This remarkable individual sacrifice for a collectively perceived greater good is indicative of Koreans' commitment to the collective interest over the individual interests. As a parallel to this engagement of Korean citizens to contribute stability when the nation is in a economic crisis, the Koreans also take responsibility by engaging in civic movements when they observe that the Korean government fails. As seen in the Figure 20.3, the confidence in political institutions slightly increased after the economic recovery, but remains relatively low.

Political trust is however not necessarily related to social trust (Kim 2005). Political trust, particularly in new democracies, depends largely on the performance of political institutions. South Korea has a long history of oppression, a short history of democracy, in addition to several political scandals and abuse of political power. Considering these factors, it is not surprising that political trust is fairly low in South Korea compared to other democratic countries: South Korea ranks 23rd of 52 worldwide countries (see Figure 20.4). Moreover, zooming into East and South-East Asian countries (see Figure 20.5) South Korea is characterised by lower levels of confidence in political

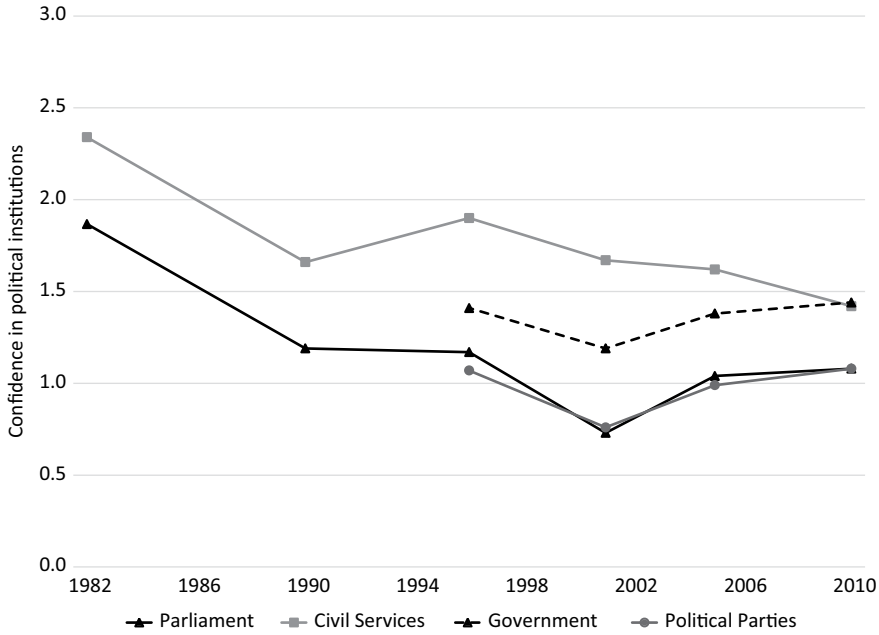


Figure 20.3 Level of Confidence in Political Institutions in South Korea

Note: Data analysis performed on World Values Survey (www.worldvaluessurvey.org). Dataset: WVS_Longitudinal_1981–2014_spss_v_2014_06_17_Beta.sav, wave 6 2010–2014. Answer categories: 0 = 'None at all', 1 = 'Not very much', 2 = 'Quite a lot', 3 = 'A great deal'.

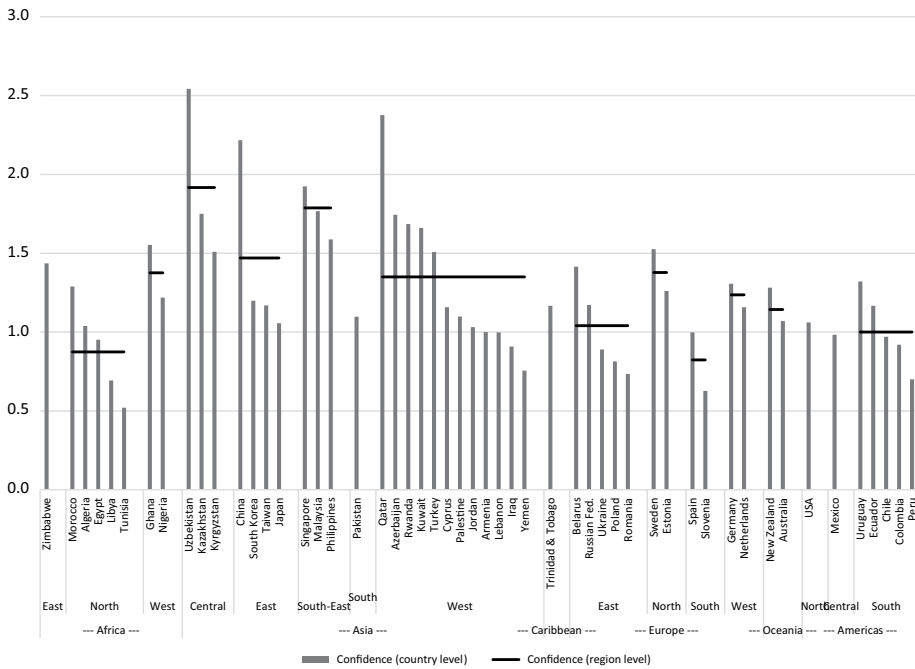


Figure 20.4 Confidence in Political Institutions in Countries and Regions

Note: Data analysis performed on World Values Survey (www.worldvaluessurvey.org). Dataset: WVS_Longitudinal_1981–2014_spss_v_2014_06_17_Beta.sav, wave 6 2010–2014. Average of three measurements of confidence in Government, Political parties and Parliament. Answer categories: 0 = 'None at all', 1 = 'Not very much', 2 = 'Quite a lot', 3 = 'A great deal'.

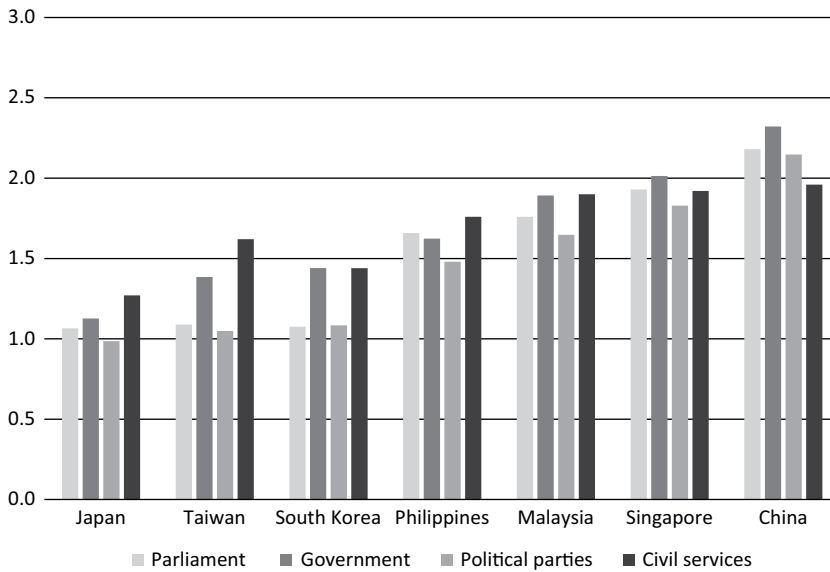


Figure 20.5 Average Level of Confidence in Political Institutions across East and South-East Asian Countries

Note: Data analysis performed on World Values Survey (www.worldvaluessurvey.org). Dataset: WVS_Longitudinal_1981–2014_spss_v_2014_06_17_Beta.sav, wave 62010–2014. Answer categories: 0 = 'None at all', 1 = 'Not very much', 2 = 'Quite a lot', 3 = 'A great deal'.

institutions, similar to Taiwan and Japan. Among the countries in these regions with significantly higher levels of confidence are the Philippines, Malaysia, Singapore, and China. It is worth noting that although the level of confidence in government is high, the confidence in parliament and the political parties is quite low.

The Role of Social Media in the 'Candlelight' Protests

The most fruitful examples of civic engagement fuelled by social media in South Korea in recent years are the protests labelled as Candlelight protests, OhmyNews, and the Gangeong movement. In all of these movements, the Internet and social media have been particularly influential factors for mobilising and organising events. In the following, we will discuss the role of social media in three types of civic engagement: large public gatherings, citizen journalism, and single-issue protests.

Candlelight Protests

The term 'Candlelight' protests refers to large gatherings of people in central locations of cities, carrying lighted candles, such as the Yangju event, the free trade agreement, and the Sewol ferry disaster. The civic engagement in South Korea is not always protest against its own government or the general establishment—sometimes such actions also oppose foreign governments. For example, there are two recent

cases involving protests against the U.S. in South Korea, of which the first Candlelight protest—the Yangju event in 2002—was a response to a tragic accident where two teenage females were killed by a U.S. army vehicle (You, Lee, and Oh 2014). The subsequent acquittal by a U.S. court caused a lot of controversy and animosity of Koreans towards Americans. The second Candlelight protest featured a similar expression of anti-American sentiment (cf. Shin and Izatt 2011). It took place in Seoul from May through July 2008 and lasted for over 100 days, attracting more than tens of thousands people at its peak. This protest was in opposition to President Lee's intention to lift the ban on U.S. beef import. This ban was imposed due to the outbreak of mad cow disease in the U.S., and the protesters were concerned that the import would damage Korean economy and endanger the health of Koreans. An extensive analysis of this protest by Seongyi and Woo-Young (2011) provided several interesting findings. First of all, the Internet played a significant role. Internet cafés, existing ones and those dedicated particularly to this protest, particularly on Daum.net, were populated mostly by youngsters and mostly by female teenagers. Furthermore, participation in these cafés took place mostly in existing entertainment groups of celebrities and K-Pop groups, showing that the function of these cafés serves multiple purposes. Seongyi and Woo-Young (2010: 248) argue that these entertainment cafés show more exuberant activities due to the tightly connected participants with a common interest and a common history. In the past, teenagers showed disinterest in politics, due to Confucianism beliefs, the ruling by an military authoritarian regime and the competitive education system which demands long hours of studying. However, during the Candlelight protest, young people, specifically young, empowered females, concerned about health issues, became politically active. During the protests the Internet was used as a core tool for information acquisition, political awakening, and networking among peer group (Seongyi and Woo-Young 2011). For teenagers, the Internet was considered a superior source of information, leaving traditional media far behind. Furthermore, the Internet was deemed trustworthy, again surpassing traditional media by a long stretch. The Internet and social media enabled initially politically disconnected Korean teenagers to participate and contribute to protests and public concerns.

One of the more recent Candlelight protests concerned the Sewol tragedy. On 16 April 2014, nearly 300 people, mostly schoolchildren, died in a ferry accident on a trip to Jeju Island. It resulted in repeated protests about the failing of the state's emergency control system, incorrect reports on the numbers of casualties, and the improperly operating coast guard, refusing assistance from Japan at the scene. Also, the position of President Park was discussed; it was rumoured she was absent for seven hours during the time the rescue operation took place (Klug 2014). Later in this chapter, we shall see that president Park's complaints about and attempts to curtail these the Internet rumours created controversy on Internet regulation and election laws in South Korea.

Citizen Journalism: OhmyNews

South Korea is characterised by a malfunctioning newspaper market, not least because the three major newspapers with a significant major market share are conservative and also have strong relations with those in power, known as political parallelism (Kim and Hamilton 2006). This political parallelism is further reinforced by

government-supported propagation of the Internet (instigated by President Kim Dae Jung administration 1998–2003).

As a response to this malfunction, as well as a result of the unemployment among journalists and the economic crisis in the press, many journalists turned to the Internet as a platform to disseminate news. Moreover, the Internet became a safe arena for progressive intellectuals, active on highly connected progressive websites (Park and Park 2013). As such, these groups created a common enemy: the conservative newspaper *Chosun Ilbo*. From this Oh Yeon Ho created OhmyNews, adopting the slogan ‘Every citizen is a journalist’. OhmyNews was an alternative medium, in the meaning that it published stories on issues largely ignored by the traditional news media. Studies show that about 50,000 citizens have contributed to OhmyNews, and that the website has over two million visitors on an average day (Kim and Hamilton 2006; Kern and Nam 2009). In comparison, two of the largest South Korean newspapers have a fairly similar readership, with a circulation of 2.3 million (*Chosun Ilbo*) and 2.2 million (*JoongAng Ilbo*) on an average daily basis (OECD 2010).

OhmyNews played a key political role during the 2002 presidential elections, when the news site supported the progressive candidate Roh Moo-hyun by giving him a platform to present his ideas and ambitions. Until then, Roh Moo-hyun had been largely ignored by the traditional—meaning the conservative—media. Roh’s subsequent election as president elevated OhmyNews quickly as an influential news organisation. In addition to contribution to Roh’s election, OhmyNews was also a key factor in organising the aforementioned Candlelight protests on the U.S. beef imports.

One of the more recent and in-depth analyses of a social movement in South Korea dealt with the Chopae Internet community that called for the closing of *Chosun-ilbo*, a conservative newspaper with a significant market share (Choi and Park 2013). Chopae, a Twitter community on Twitaddon.com, was analysed with a mixed method approach. Twitaddon.com and Twtkr.com operate as Twitter portals that provide easy access to specific Korean topical communities on Twitter. A content analysis showed that the community focused on four themes; the first and largest theme concerned the large anti-sentiment against the government, the G20 meeting and large conglomerates (i.e. *chaebö*l). The second main theme involved distrust in the South Korean’s government of explanation of the sinking of the South Korean warship Cheonan by the North Korean army, killing 46 seamen (26 March 2010). The third theme involved general rants about the government, while the fourth and final theme referred to critique against the Korean conglomerates’ reckless expansion as well as advocating consumer rights. Collective action consisted first and foremost of tweeting and retweeting messages about issues as well as the organisation of protests. Retweeting helped to circulate and resonate messages within the community, consolidating members’ thoughts but also expanding the audience. If hyperlinks were included in the tweets they were mostly from online based news media, whereas traditional news media were neglected, considered to be unreliable (Choi and Park 2013). Twitter was also used to plan offline activities, such as organising lectures with public figures, planning boycotts, and spreading leaflets. Rather than turning into an echo chamber (cf. Sunstein 2009) this community seems vibrant both online and active offline, and in turn, the time-consuming offline activities indicate that this movement is contradicting the general perception of online social movements being slacktivism without commitment outside the online context.

Gangjeong Movement

The Gangjeong movement revolves around the controversial governmental plans to build a naval base on Jeju Island. The controversy is related to both environmental issues about the destruction of precious nature, and to sensitive neighbour country issues related to the situation of the planned naval base close to China and Japan, which can be considered a provocative act: several islands and sea borders in the region are being disputed between South Korea, Japan, and China.

These geographical areas are of great economic interests because the Sea of Japan and the East China Sea have rich fishing grounds as well as natural gas reserves and valuable minerals. The website set up to inform about the governments' plans and the opposition against it is in Korean, Japanese and English. This suggests that the people want to engage more than only South Koreans but appeals to the international community.

In this single-issue protest, social media was used extensively, and particularly the popular global social networking sites were used actively: NoBaseJeju, on YouTube; No Naval Base on Jeju! and Save Jeju Island 생명평화 강정마을, on Facebook; and Save Jeju Now. on Twitter. The impact of these social media accounts are, however, questionable, and their popularity varied, with 182 followers on the Twitter account, 6,092 'likes' on their Facebook page, 2,960 group members, and their YouTube account having four videos, four subscribers, and 455 views. Accordingly, the visibilities of these platforms were relatively small, and this limited impact implies that even though the Internet and social media are very popular in South Korea, not all civic movements are successful in utilizing them. Nevertheless, the Gangjeong movement stands out as an example among the Candlelight protests and the OhmyNews, of civic engagements in South Korea in which social media has been a key part of the movements' activity.

Internet Regulation and Election Laws

In spite of the above examples of civic engagement in social media, the Korean government has imposed several hindrances to free speech and imposed regulations to curtail the privacy of users in online environments. First, the election laws have been used to restrict free speech in social media, such as the attempt to reduce the freedom of OhmyNews when its live broadcasting of an interview with the politician Roh Moo-hyun, was deemed illegal because the online news site was not considered a news medium by the National Election Committee. The Constitutional Court however later ruled that OhmyNews was a regular news media outlet and therefore decided that the live broadcast was in fact legal (Shin 2005: 44–45).

A second example of the hindrance of free speech in South Korea is the prohibition against the use of pseudonym on social media, which was imposed in 2007. The real-name verification procedure was made mandatory and forced users to sign up with an authentic name and ID in order to use a social media platform. The law against anonymous user-generated content was legitimized by claims that real-name verification reduces anonymous criticism on politicians. As a result of this law, the global social media network and video sharing service YouTube decided to discontinue their Korean language version, even though the international English version of YouTube was still accessible in South Korea. Again, the Constitutional Court ruled the regulation unconstitutional in 2012 (Ramstad 2012).

A third significant incident of restrictions of freedom of speech was when President Park complained about insults and rumours about her on the Internet in 2014, and her complaints resulted in the monitoring of social media. The rumours referred to the before-mentioned event when President Park was accused of being missing for seven hours on the day of the Sewol ferry disaster. The fact that President Park Geun-hye is the daughter of President Park Chung-hee (1962–1979), considered a repressive ruler and dictator, made the situation worse and increased the public's suspicion when prosecutors decided to monitor social media. Even though officials of the most popular social media app in South Korea, Kakao Talk, stated that messages could only be monitored by court order, many Koreans decided to switch to another social media app, mostly to Telegram, located in Germany, having encryption and no servers in South Korea ("South Koreans Boycott" 2014). Shortly after this incident, Kakao Talk introduced an encrypted mode as a strategy to regain legitimacy as a free and unmonitored social media service.

A fourth example illustrating the restrictions on social media in South Korea is the conservative government's arrest of the blogger with the pseudonym Minerva—the goddess of wisdom—in 2009. The blogger Minerva wrote about South Korea's economy and provided advice on how to prepare for the deepening economic crisis (Schwartz 2009). Minerva's predictions about the economy turned out to be quite correct, and his posts therefore attracted hundreds of thousands of page views on Daum's Agora. This subsequently attracted the attention of the South Korean press, who started to speculate about the true identity behind the pseudonym Minerva, which again resulted in even more people reading his posts. Particularly, his post on the planned acquisition of Lehman Brothers holdings by the Korea Development Bank was widely read and was even considered to be a threat to the public interest. This led to his arrest in early January 2009; the prosecutors had obtained the IP address from Daum, and his anonymity no longer protected his freedom of speech. Rather, the blogger Minerva was charged of "spread[ing] a false rumor maliciously intending to damage the public interest" (Schwartz 2009: para. 29) and risked an 18 months jail sentence. He was however found innocent late April 2009.

Last but not least, in preparations for elections, the use of social media was banned from political campaigning by the National Election Commission in fear of overheated campaigns as well as spreading false information about candidates. In 2012, this regulation was discontinued after the Constitutional Court ruled the ban should be lifted ("Twitter Ruled Legal for Election Campaigns" 2012).

In sum, the above discussion demonstrates recent dilemmas in the civic movement's use of social media and how these relate to freedom of speech issues. On the one hand, South Koreans embrace new media technology and engage in protests and public debates about political and social issues. On the other hand, the conditions for freedom of speech are unstable, and occasionally challenged by the authorities due to their need to monitor, regulate, and restrict.

Conclusion

This chapter shows that South Korea, consolidating its democracy and a global front-runner in Internet adoption, has a vibrant scene of social movements. It demonstrates the significant role of the Internet and social media to diffuse information among Koreans that subsequently took to the streets demanding action by the Korean government.

Even though civic movements were already present in South Korea for some time, these were mostly kept alive by older generations. By contrast, younger people were largely disconnected and disinterested from politics before the popularity of social media. Due to the development of social media, youngsters became more engaged in politics and began to express themselves enabled in online communities, and use social media to create communities of special interest around a social issue, or create petitions through posting and motivating people to sign up for the petitions. Even though conservative political forces in South Korea still dislike social movements and its direct impact on policy making is still debated, it appears that social movements have created a solid foundation offline as well as online.

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