Causes, Consequences and Implications of Cyber-Exile: Article 93 of the Public Official Election Act and E-Campaigning in South Korea

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Authors
Yenn Lee, PhD
Royal Holloway, University of London
yenn.ok.lee@gmail.com

Han Woo Park, PhD (corresponding author)
Director of the WCU Webometrics Institute
Department of Media and Communication
YeungNam University, South Korea
hanpark@ynu.ac.kr

Abstract
Despite its 'globalness', Internet use is considerably shaped by local laws and regulations. An example of this is Article 93 of the Public Official Election Act in South Korea. Introduced in 1993, this article states that no one may distribute or display any materials containing endorsement of or opposition to a candidate or a political party in the 180 days prior to Election Day. Conflicts arise as the National Election Commission applies this article to blog posts, viewer comments made at news sites and, most recently, user-generated content on Web 2.0 platforms. Enforcement is easy in the Korean context, given that Korean users are required to verify their identities by submitting their Resident Registration Numbers when they join major online services. This encouraged, if not compelled, Korean voters to move to the international domain during the presidential election in 2007 to further their discussion against candidate Lee Myung-Bak when a financial scandal involving him emerged. The discussion was triggered by the discovery of two video clips implicating him. One of the videos was uploaded to YouTube and the second was disclosed through the website of a domestic newspaper and later a portal site Daum. The present study investigated how the two video clips were shared and discussed among online users. We employed a combination of network analysis techniques: hyperlink analysis, interaction network analysis, and semantic network analysis. The analytical outcomes suggested that once users moved to the international domain, discussion of local political issues took unexpected turns due to different audience profiles.

Keywords
e-campaign; election law; cyber-exile; network analysis; South Korea; YouTube

Many media outlets celebrated the year 2009 as the 40th anniversary of the Internet (e.g. Burkeman 2009). Its 'birthday' is disputed by different scientific communities as it is a complex technology born slowly from an accumulation of many conceptual ideas and small experiments, but the general consensus is nonetheless to date it back to the launch of the ARPANet (Advanced Research Projects Agency Network) in the US as a military initiative in 1969. Even though we put aside the fact that the Internet that we know today only started to take shape two decades later, when in 1989 Tim Berners-Lee proposed what is now called the World Wide Web, one thing we can safely say here is that the Internet is indeed a relatively young technology. This is a fact often neglected because of its unprecedentedly fast growth. Some of the initial hype might have cooled down, but the Internet has been woven into many aspects of our mundane life instead.

Despite its assumed 'globalness', however, the trajectories of its development have been manifested quite variously across societies (Anstead and Chadwick 2008; Banerjee 2003; Ducke 2004; Ho et al. 2003; Kluver et al. 2007). No technology is free from local contexts, but as Castells (2001, 50) stated in a now classic text *The Internet Galaxy: Reflections on the Internet, Business, and Society*, the Internet is "[…] a particularly malleable technology, susceptible to being deeply modified by its social practice, and leading to a whole range of potential social outcomes". For the past few years, this statement has been validating itself, and one of the major shaping factors has been each society's legal and regulatory framework. When an Italian court ruled against Google executives for violation of Italian privacy law in early 2010, for example, Cate (cited in Liptak 2010) summarised the incident by commenting that on the Internet, the First Amendment of the US is no more than a local ordinance.

Case Illustration: South Korea's 2007 Presidential Election and 'BBK Scandal'
Such tension between what is happening online versus local laws that users are subject to offline has been observed on numerous occasions in the South Korean electoral context (Lee 2009b). In the recent literature, South Korea is frequently mentioned for its pioneering embrace of the Internet in the realm of politics. The embrace has taken place not only through e-government initiatives implemented 'from above' during the late 1990s and early 2000s (Kim 2006; Kim and Park 2007; Lee 2008) but also through e-campaign efforts by grassroots organisations

and networks. As for the latter, the 'big bang' moment was the 16th presidential election in 2002. Owing to young liberal supporters' extensive use of online fundraising and viral campaigning, which led to the victory of a comparatively minor candidate, the event was soon labelled by both the domestic and international media as 'the world's first Internet election' (Hachigian 2003; Lee 2004; Watts 2003).

Unlike the 2002 election, Korean cyberspace was surprisingly silent, at least on the surface, during the following presidential election in 2007 (Park and Lee 2008). The electoral outcome seemed preordained as the front-runner Lee Myung-Bak of the conservative Grand National Party (GNP) maintained a wide margin in opinion polls throughout the entire election period. However, the campaign took a sharp twist when, shortly before the Election Day of 19 December, the rival United New Democratic Party (UNDP) released two video clips.

In the first one, Lee stated while being interviewed by a journalist[1] in 2000 that he had been directly involved in the establishment of BBK, a financial firm that was investigated the following year and found to be a scam. This contradicted both Lee's campaign speeches denying any connection with BBK and the state prosecutors' conclusion clearing him of any involvement.

More interesting was how this video was distributed among voters while the National Election Commission (NEC) prevented the distribution of such a video clip in cyberspace in the 6-month period prior to the election. To be specific, the NEC based this ruling on Article 93 of the Public Official Election Act. Introduced in 1993, this article "Prohibition of Unlawful Distribution or Display of Documents and Pictures" states that no one may distribute or display any materials containing endorsement of or opposition to a candidate or a political party in the 180 days prior to Election Day. Such materials are articulated as "an advertisement, letter of greeting, poster, photograph, document, drawing, printed matter, audio tape, video tape, or the like".

Conflicts emerge from the fact that the NEC applies this article to blog posts, viewer comments made at news sites and, most recently, 'tweets' and 'retweets' (RT) on Twitter. Enforcement is easy in the Korean case, given that Korean users are required to verify their identities by submitting their Resident Registration Numbers when they join major online services. Therefore, in the 2007 election, voters opposing Lee abandoned domestic social networking sites and moved into the international domain to further the debate, which inadvertently popularised the term 'cyber-exile' in the media. The clip, posted on YouTube on 5 December 2007 (**Figure 1**), attracted more than 900,000 views within a fortnight (**Table 1**).

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[1] The journalist, Park Young Sun, was later elected to the National Assembly in 2004 herself and has been a member of the UNDP since 2007.

The second video clip was disclosed through the website of a liberal daily, the Hankyoreh, three days before the election. In this 150-second extract from a recording of a speech that Lee gave at a local university in 2000, he again introduced himself as a founder of BBK and explained how well the company had fared. According to the Hankyoreh's own web statistics, this exclusive scoop attracted 1.5 million clicks. Moreover, after it appeared on a portal site Daum, it was flooded with more than 40,000 comments (**Table 2**).

Lee eventually tided over this scandal and went on to win the election, but these video clips considerably threatened his presidential bid. The present study will examine how the two video clips were shared and talked about among Korean online users, with a view to opening up a discussion on the causes and consequences of the phenomenon of 'cyber-exile' and its political implications to Korea as well as to the broader world.

Figure 1. YouTube Clip Implicating Lee in the BBK Scandal[2]

Table 1. YouTube Users' Reaction to the 'BBK Interview' Video

	View	Comments	Favorite (accumulated)
11 Dec	651,381	385	80
14 Dec	187,047	112	19
17 Dec	68,877	25	8
18 Dec	20,657	10	1

Table 2. Comments Posted on Daum re the 'BBK Speech' Video

	Screen IDs (excl. repeats)	Comments	Comments per ID
16 Dec	6,760	39,120	5.79
17 Dec	1,232	4,012	3.26
18 Dec	189	352	1.86
19 Dec	5	5	1.00
20 Dec	2	2	1.00
23 Dec	1	1	1.00
24 Dec	1	1	1.00
Total	7,641	43,493	5.69

Literature Review: When YouTube Meets Politics

As this study is concerned with political activities on and through YouTube, we first reviewed how this commercially successful video-sharing site intersects with contemporary politics in the existing literature.

In the mid-2000s, the term 'Web 2.0' was coined and promoted to highlight the then emerging trends of creative collaboration among online users. Web 2.0 examples include social networking sites like MySpace and Facebook, content sharing sites like Flickr and YouTube, and peer production sites like Wikipedia. Through these platforms, individual users have become better able to create and maintain their social networks and to participate in the process of the production, reproduction, and distribution of web content.

Given the participation-inducing nature, these Web 2.0 models have revitalised the early Internet idealism for better democracy (Bruns 2008; Jenkins 2006; Weinberger 2007) and YouTube has been no exception. As Marwick (2007) points out based on a content analysis of news coverage, YouTube has been portrayed in a rather celebratory tone in the media for its democratic (or

democratising) potential. This kind of portrayal has been supported by a handful of anecdotal cases. For instance, there was the so-called "macaca moment" during the 2006 midterm elections in the US. Republican Senator George Allen lost his bid for re-election to the Democratic challenger Jim Webb in Virginia, despite the former's wide lead over the latter in opinion polls. This result was attributed to a video clip containing Allen's racially discriminatory remarks made to Webb's aide during a campaign tour. The incident quickly became well known to the public once it was posted on YouTube, which effectively led to Allen's defeat (Sidarth 2006). Since then, the term "macaca moment" is used to refer to "high-profile candidate gaffes that are captured on YouTube, receive a cascade of citizen views and contribute to some substantial political impact" (Karpf 2010) – for example, in the 2007 Finnish national elections (Carlson and Strandberg 2008, 171). While Karpf (2010) cautions that in such incidents, YouTube have played a supplementary role and its influence is therefore overstated in the current discussion, the majority of the work done on this topic has so far assumed that there has been a 'YouTube effect' on politics.

The discussion on the political implications of YouTube thrived around the 2008 US presidential election as that was when Web 2.0 applications started to be incorporated in the American mainstream campaign repertoires. The then-candidate Barack Obama absorbed media attention for his online presence that evidently outshined Hillary Clinton's during the party primaries and later his Republican opponent John McCain's. Obama actively reached out and engaged with younger voters through Facebook and YouTube (Young 2008), establishing new records for campaign funds raised largely from online donations (Cooper 2008; Carpenter 2010).

A widely held view is that this particular election marked a significant change in the campaign practice of the country. Carpenter (2010) and Ricke (2010), for example, point out that YouTube – especially its joint project with PBS ("Video Your Vote") and one with CNN ("The CNN/YouTube Debates") – afforded more room than ever for ordinary voters' inputs into the campaign process and consequently served as "an instrument of "checks and balances"" (Carpenter 2010, 223). In the meantime, Church (2010) looked at the discourse of leadership in the YouTube clips of 16 candidates competing in the 2008 presidential race. He suggests that given the emergence of what he terms "the postmodern constituency" (2010, 138) and the unfiltered nature of the medium (2010, 139), voters' focus has been shifted from candidates' political experience to characters (See also Duman and Locher 2008).

Another strand of literature we drew upon is about the patterns of user interaction taking place on YouTube and the methodological implications of exploring them. Three themes were identified to inform our research design (which will be fully discussed in the next section). First, there are a group of

studies that focus on users' motives to share their videos on YouTube in the first place, ranging from perceived usefulness to interpersonal norms (e.g. Yang, Hsu and Tan 2010). Second, from a similar yet more specified perspective, another group of studies establish that YouTube is not only a source of information or entertainment for individual purposes; the act of "co-viewing" (Haridakis and Hanson 2009), video responses (Adami 2009), certain styles of commentaries (Jones and Schieffelin 2009), and the linkage from the Facebook 'walls' (Robertson, Vatrapu, and Medina 2010) are, in their own rights, new forms of social interaction. In this sense, Chu (2009) goes further to argue that YouTube has taken the role as a "cultural public sphere".

That said, others take a cautionary stance regarding YouTube's capacity as a public sphere. Hess (2009), for example, addresses the limitations of deliberation on YouTube, such as its dismissive and playful atmosphere. Moreover, after analysing a YouTube-like online platform (*16plus*, provided by the north Belgian public broadcaster VRT), Carpentier (2009) suggests that users do not seem to be as appreciative of increased means of participation as expected. Lange (2007) also reveals that video-based communication on YouTube is 'no less hostile' than anonymous, text-based communication. Blitvich's study (forthcoming) adds that impoliteness found among comments, although sometimes strategically employed, results in polarisation. Although, as Chadwick (2009) argues, deliberative processes and 'thick' citizenship cannot be the sole yardstick to assess the functioning of e-democracy in this Web 2.0 era, the question why YouTube is not a viable location for deliberating on serious political issues is still relevant to the case studied in this paper.

Having reviewed the existing literature, we have identified two lacunae. First, the intersection of politics and YouTube (or sites of the like) is still overall an underexplored territory. Second, perhaps more importantly, scholarly attention on this topic has been strongly skewed towards the American electoral politics. Against this backdrop, our case study, investigating into the conflicting dynamics between grassroots campaigns and the government interventionism in the Korean Web 2.0 environment, will provide useful data for global comparison central to the development of theoretical frameworks and context-sensitive research methods.

Methodology: Multilayered Network Analysis
We approached the case from three different fronts of network analysis: (i) hyperlink analysis, (ii) interaction network analysis, and (iii) semantic network analysis. We decided to employ a combination of these methods not only because these are most suitable to the nature of the data collected but also because the combination enabled us to discuss the position of network analysis in political

science and to 'showcase' how far one can take network analytical techniques to explore political issues.

First, we gathered, from search engine indexes on 11, 14 and 17 December, the URLs of the webpages that either sent a hyperlink to the YouTube clip or quoted its address in-text. We used three search engines for this process, i.e. Yahoo, Google, and a Korean one called Naver, with a view to having them complement one another in the overall picture. To be more specific, Yahoo was relatively stronger at locating webpages that sent out links to the video clip in question and Google was relatively stronger at retrieving webpages that quoted the URL in the body of the content. We also decided to include Naver results as it has an overwhelming lead over Yahoo and Google in the Korean search engine market (Lee 2009a, 312). Naver's success might be due to various factors, but it has been criticised for its use of a robot.txt file to disallow Google and other search engines to crawl the content produced within its platforms. Below is a summary of the hyperlink data collected (**Table 3**).

Table 3. Number of Webpages Directing Users to the YouTube Video

	Yahoo	Google	Naver
11 Dec	134	577	150
14 Dec	176	529	232
17 Dec	216	529	216

The hyperlink data was then supplemented and extended by a qualitative analysis of the actual content of the webpages. Based on this dataset, we discuss how voters disseminated, despite Article 93, the information that was potentially vital to the election campaign of different candidates.

Second, for interaction network analysis, we collected user comments made both on YouTube (436 items) and Daum (43,489 items) below each clip (See also **Tables 1 and 2** that featured earlier in the paper). The textual dataset was coded in terms of the political opinions conveyed in the messages (**Table 4**) and sorted by the contributors' IDs.

Table 4. Coding Scheme

Attitude	Criteria
Positive	Comments supportive of candidate Lee Myung-Bak, e.g., by arguing that the video clip is either misquoted out of context or doctored or that despite the scandal, Lee's strengths outweigh his shortcomings as a potential president
Negative	Comments critique of Lee and/or the prosecution clearing him
Neutral	Comments from users who appear to be unaware of the BBK scandal, comments directing attention to other political issues, or ambivalent mentions
Others	Irrelevant or nonsensical comments, 'cyber-flaming' towards fellow users, or other unintelligible phrases

(Park and Lee 2009)

For example, 9 out of 13 comments by a user with the screen name of *JapanEmpire* explicitly supported Lee.

> e.g.
> "GNP candidate and former Seoul mayor Lee Myung-bak is a wealthy, experienced, and sincere Christian, I'm sure he doesn't lie like others. Also, he will be the second best president after Park Chung-hee of the ROK.Korea needs a great president with strong leadership who will really improve the economy and possibly eliminate corruption." (Quoted verbatim)

On the other hand, *Seebuddy9* left 12 comments containing consistent messages against (and addressed to) Lee.

> e.g.
> "Hey Mr. Lee! You are not qualified as Korean president. You know why? Korean people saw your bottom of immorality. What about your criminal record in Korean police too. Now, Korean people fighting corruption against Mr. Lee and grand national party. The president of Korea should required transparency with strong accountability. That is reason you are not qualified. Withdraw your candidacy immediately!" (Quoted verbatim)

The following table is a summary of the coding results (**Table 5**).

Table 5. Attitudes Towards Candidate Lee

	English	Korean	Others	Total
Positive	13	5	0	18
Negative	134	111	0	245
Neutral	46	15	0	61
Others	79	27	3	109
Total	272	158	3	433

Interactions among users through the comment box were also visualised as follows (**Figure 2**). Colours indicate coded attitudes: i.e. red means 'positive' and yellow means 'negative' with green meaning 'neutral' and blue 'others'. The size of each node is proportional to the number of 'replies' exchanged. This process enabled us to explore the ways in which online users appropriate the comment facility and converse among themselves.

**Figure 2. Interactional Network Through the Comment Box re Lee**
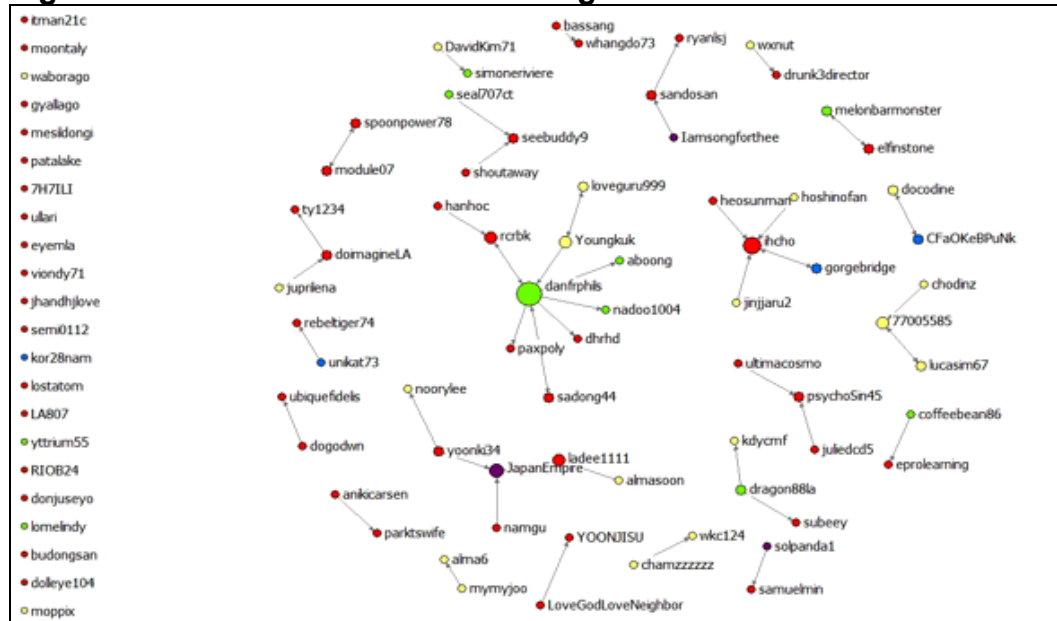
Last, a content and discourse analysis of the comments from both YouTube (420 items) and Daum (400 items, systematically sampled) was conducted in order to identify semantic patterns, if any, emerging from this rather intense online discussion. It was decided that the best method to adopt was to carry out a keyword-in-context (KWIC) analysis, a technique that focuses on the

correlation between a given word and its surroundings within a text. For the purpose of this study, we used KrKwic (Korean Key Word In Context), a free software package developed by Park and Leydesdorff (2004) for KWIC analysis in the Korean language. In addition, after charting 100 critical words from the 400 sampled Daum comments according to the KWIC results, we subjected those 100 words to a CONCOR (convergence of iteration correlation) analysis in order to identify issue clusters (**Figures 3 and 4**).

Figure 3. CONCOR Diagram
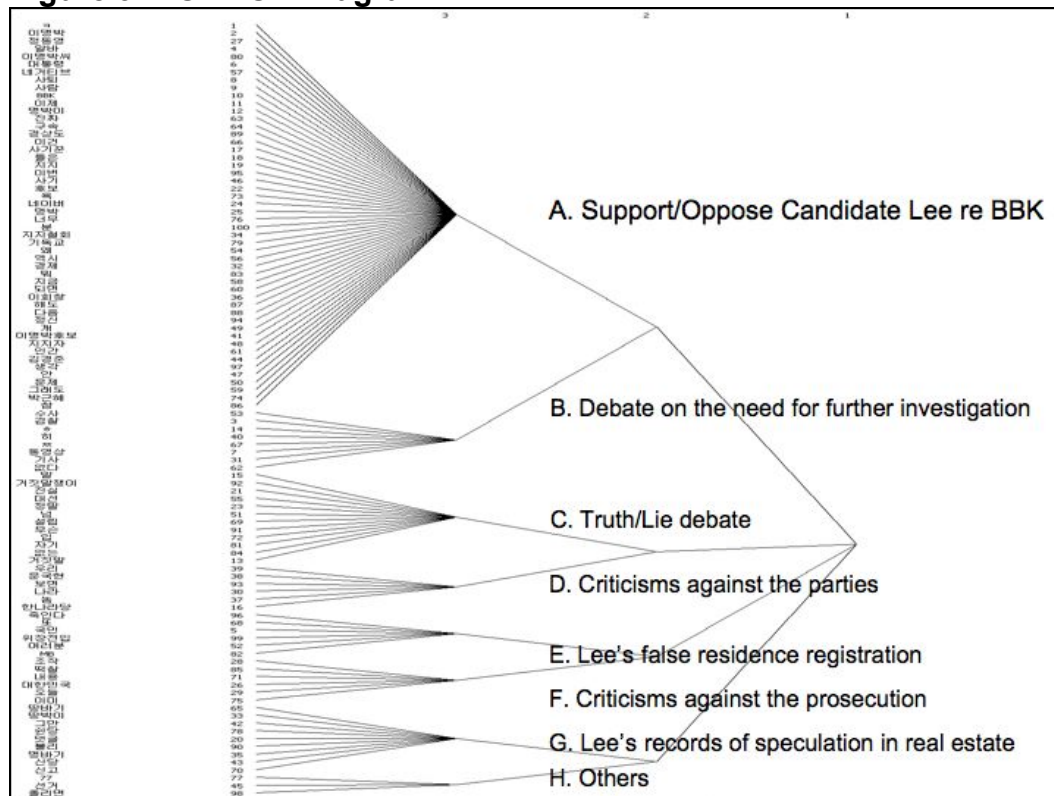
(Park and Lee 2009)

Figure 4. Correlation Between Word Clusters
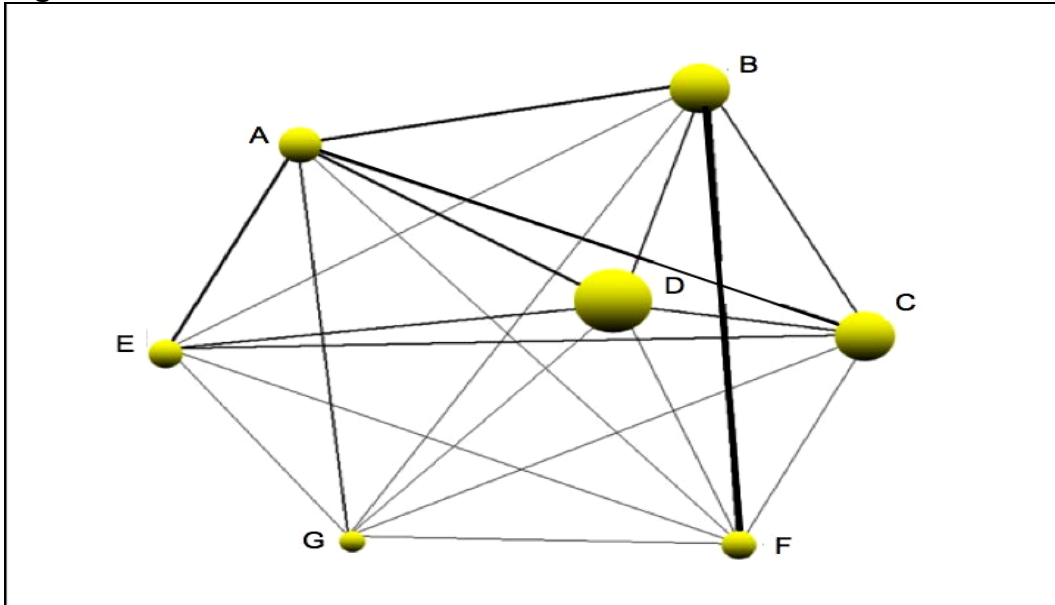
(Park and Lee 2009)

Key Findings and Discussion

The most immediate finding was that the exclusively targeted audience of the YouTube clip were Korean voters. It was obvious as the clip was in Korean with no subtitles provided and the original contributor's message was also in Korean, with no translation, explicitly addressed to the Korean public. The contributor's motive was clearly expressed in his additional explanation in response to the media buzz he unwittingly caused. In the 1,150-word text (right-hand side of **Figure 1** earlier), he explains that he cannot accept the state prosecutors' conclusion that Lee is not guilty and that he at first considered posting the clip right up on the bulletin board of the Public Prosecutions Administration's website but decided to post it to YouTube instead because of (in his own words) the "bother" that would have placed him in with the National Election Commission. He also emphasises that unlike media speculation, he is neither a member of any party nor a campaigner for any candidate. In short, this incident illustrates how Korean users appropriated a global social networking space for domestic political issues to circumvent the election law of their country.

However, the diffusion of information and the political discussion further to the clip stayed within the Korean cyberspace bounded by the invisible line of language. According to data provided by YouTube, most 'referrals' were from the following 5 webpages of Korean news services (**Table 6**). All of them were news articles with the clip embedded. More importantly, our collection of search engine

indexes indicated that the video was quickly spread in the Korean cyberspace through personal blogs, the Naver Q&A service, online communities, and public bulletin boards on web portals and newspaper sites (in such order). In these cases, the video was neither displayed nor linked, but users copied and pasted its URL in-text, mostly sparing actual expression of opinions.

**Table 6. Links Accounting for Most View Counts**

Source	URL	View Count (as of 11 Dec)
Kyunghyang (newspaper)	http://news.khan.co.kr/kh_news/khan_art_view.html?artid=200712061653151&code=940301	13.385
Hankyoreh (newspaper)	http://www.hani.co.kr/arti/politics/politics_general/255686.html	10,699
Naver News (portal)	http://news.naver.com/hotissue/ranking_read.php?section_id=100&ranking_type=popular_day&office_id=032&article_id	9.626
Empas News (portal)	http://news.empas.com/show.tsp/20071206n15502	8.820
Yahoo News (portal)	http://kr.news.yahoo.com/service/news/shellview.htm?linkid=4&newssetid=1352&articleid=20071206165331585740	8,601

Second, in both cases of YouTube and Daum, there was observed a power law distribution of participation (**Figures 4 and 5**), and other than those by a few recurring contributors, the overall amount of comments decreased fast over time (**Tables 1 and 2** in the previous section). However, this does not necessarily mean that voters' interest in the issue was short-lived. Rather, the discussion/debate became dispersed as duplicates of the video started to appear on YouTube as well as reproductions of the Hankyoreh article on Daum.

Figure 4. Power Law of Contribution: YouTube (as of 18 Dec)
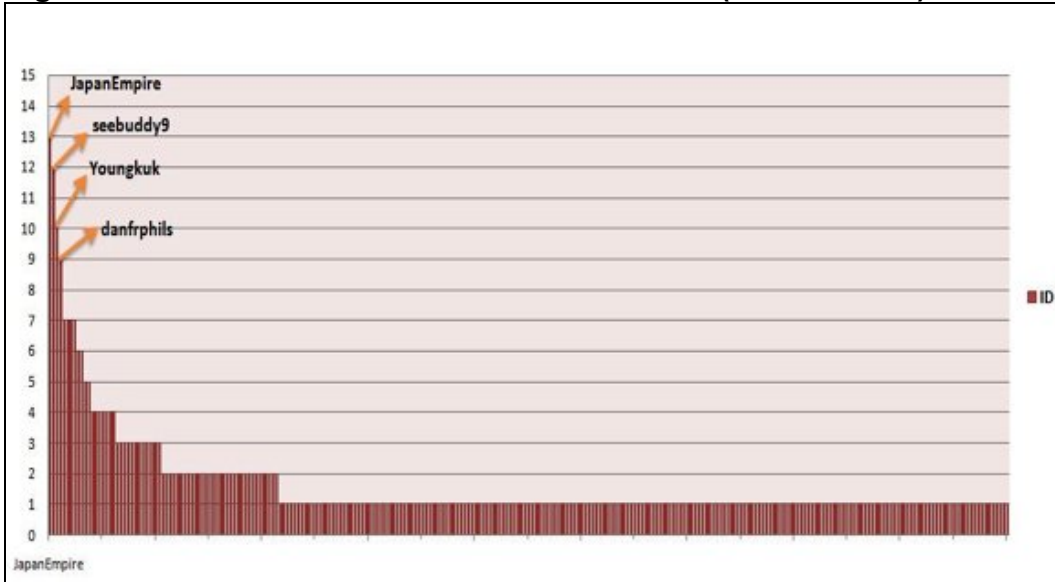
Figure 5. Power Law of Contribution: Daum (as of 24 Dec)
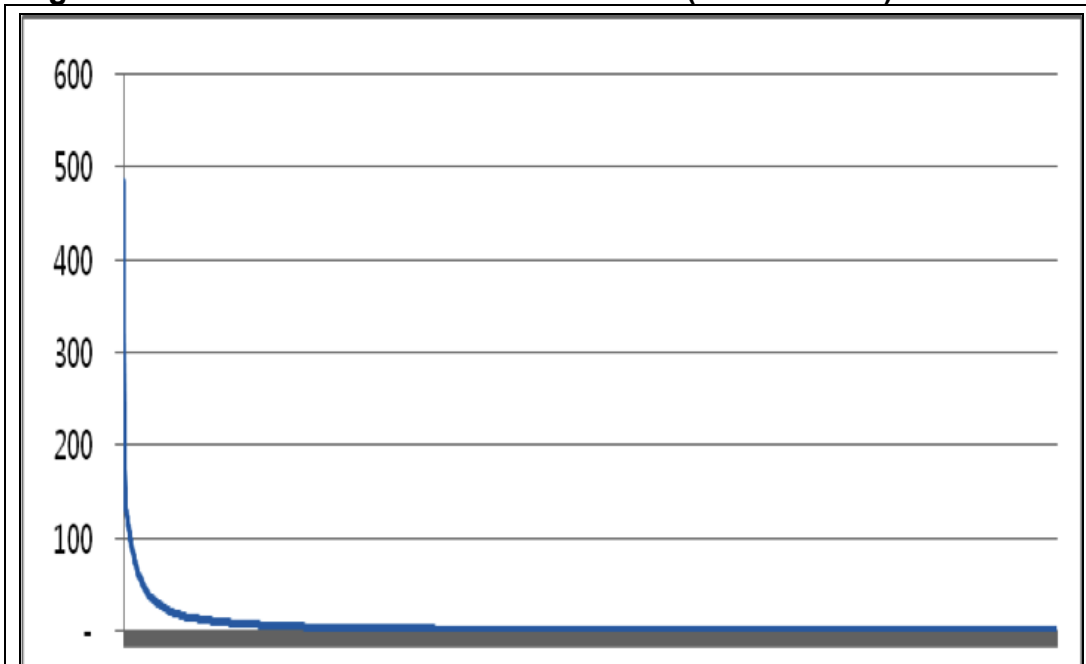
ID	위장취업 위장전입	tjhuop	Il Principe	잘생긴승근	노네버
Comments	484	453	415	326	320

Third, although a similar pattern of participation was identified in both spaces, the nature and content of the commentaries differed. On Daum, comments took playful forms specific to online communications, such as the employment of emoticons (e.g. 238 instances of '^^', which represents smiling), Internet jargons (e.g. 5,470 instances of 'ㅋ', a Korean consonant representing in this context giggling), and sarcastic nicknames for those allegedly involved in the BBK scandal (e.g. 220 instances of '*tteok-chal*', one given to the prosecution, implying corruption) (See also Park and Lee 2009). Nevertheless, the discussion stayed relevant to the topic. On YouTube, on the other hand, the discussion unexpectedly turned into racist flaming, possibly due to the different composition of the user base. For example, the very first comment left with regard to the video in question was:

itman21c   Stupid Korean want to make crook to the president…haha (Quoted verbatim)

This was immediately followed by:

Youngkuk   Who's the president you talking about? Do you even know what you're saying, itman21c? Just shut up, retarded singapole, singapore whatever! (Quoted verbatim)

Given this observation, we applied the same coding scheme to the comments but this time with a focus on the country rather than candidate Lee (**Table 7**). **Figure 6** below is a visualisation of the interactions among YouTube participants regarding Korea through the comment box below the BBK video (See also **Figure 2**). To summarise, YouTube is not a 'walled garden' and is therefore susceptible to irrelevant comments. In this case, racially motivated flaming was initiated by those who were apparently not directly concerned with Korean politics.

Table 7. Attitudes Towards Korea

	English	Korean	Others	Total
Positive	8	15	0	23
Negative	59	48	0	107
Neutral	99	59	0	158
Others	106	36	3	145
Total	272	158	3	433

Figure 6. Interactional Network re the Country of Korea
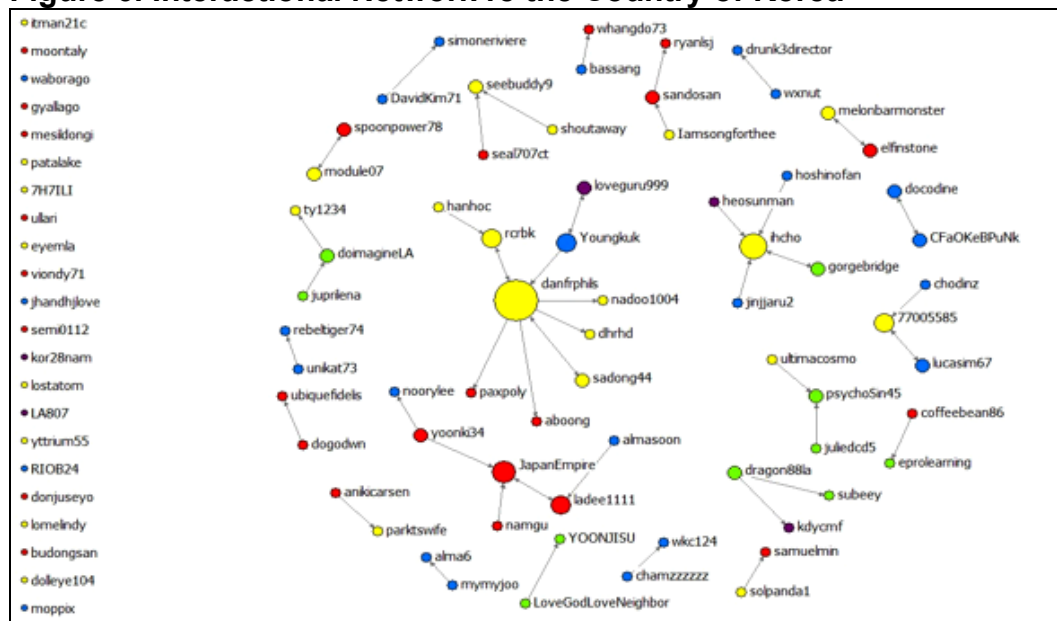
Conclusion

During the 2007 presidential election, Korean voters used the YouTube platform to share election-related information because the laws of their country prohibited them from doing so on domestic sites and YouTube provided a higher level of anonymity for them than Korean services. This incident illustrates tension between Internet-mediated grassroots political activity and the authorities' restrictive interpretations and application of existing laws against such activity (See also The United Nations 2010).

Discussion further to the video footage posted on YouTube was, however, brought 'back' to Korean cyberspace. Korean users have been known for their distinctive preference to local services (Lee 2009a, 312), but what is more notable

is that YouTube could not provide a suitable environment for this particular discussion anyway. Conversations within the comment facility of YouTube, by both Korean and seemingly non-Korean users, were often irrelevant to the actual content of the video and in some instances took on a racially motivated tone. This is unsurprising given the possibly higher level of uninterested parties in the composition of the user base. Participation was also very power-law distributed. The URL of the YouTube clip was actively circulated in Korean cyberspace, through blogs and online forums, but again, no in-depth discussion could take place because the 'sphere' was fragmented.

On the other hand, the discussion at the portal site Daum was, despite playful uses of emoticons and Internet jargons, intense and focused. Participation was similarly power-law distributed, but it was quantitatively far more than that on YouTube.

After having analysed different tools of circumventing Internet censorship around the world, Zuckerman (2010) argues that circumvention cannot be a long-term answer. His argument was more in lines with technical aspects, but it still raises an important question of how and to what extent we then should go 'beyond' that. Despite the specifics of the case studied, the significance of the present study lies in the fact that it demonstrates, in a concrete way, how the existing legal framework of a society affects its members' political activity on the Internet. We do not intend to advocate the 'walled garden' model for online forums, nor do we wish to unconditionally suggest lesser intervention from the authorities. Our analytical outcomes indicate that users can circumvent local regulations via the Internet and other digital communication technologies (and it is likely that more will do so), but discussions will get fragmented as a result of that, which would otherwise have been nurtured.

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