

## **What really matters in creating mass mobilization, classical organization or new social media? : A comparative case study of the mass mobilization process in France and South Korea**

### **Abstract**

This article explores *why* people adopt different processes to participate in mass mobilizations, using the *2006 Anti-CPE (labor law) Movement in France* and the *2008 Candlelight Movement against American Beef Imports in South Korea* as case studies. In France, initiators and participants followed the ‘ready-made’ way: left-wing organizations led the whole process of mass mobilizations. In contrast, in South Korea, initiators came from ‘nowhere’: they were middle and high school students without any political organizations; participants were ‘tainted’ by the left wing political line. The key finding of this study is that the levels of demarcation of political lines in people’s everyday life may explain this difference. In France, strong establishment of a political line in people’s everyday life brought fewer new actors, creating less surprise but a solid mobilization; in South Korea, the less-established political line in people’s everyday life attracted more new actors, creating more surprise but ‘frivolous’ mobilizations.

**Key words:** Mobilization process, New media, Micro-mobilization, Meso-mobilization  
Political organization

Here are two pictures from Paris and Seoul. In May 2006, demonstrators filled the streets of the ‘Quartier Latin’ in Paris to protest ‘Contract Premier Embauché’, or first working contract. Under this law, an enterprise can lay off employees less than 25 years old

without compensation. This labor law was designed by the right-wing government to create *flexibility* in the job market for young people who are badly hurt by unemployment in France. The scene of mass mobilization was a 'déjà vu'. In the front of the cortege were the leaders of major labor unions, some left-wing politicians, and the leaders of student unions. Behind them were university and high school students chanting together with some 'adults'. In some circumstances, many retired people also participated in demonstrations to express their solidarity with the movement. The social movement anti-CPE was a success from a mass mobilization point of view. Several big mass mobilizations occurred on the national level, a great proportion of people supported the protest, and eventually the CPE law was canceled.

In May 2008, people holding candles filled every corner of the streets near the City Hall in Seoul, South Korea. The Candlelight movement (mass mobilization against American beef imports) had shaken the country for more than three months; in particular, the leadership of newly elected President Myung-Bak, Lee was seriously damaged. The most astonishing fact about the Candlelight movement compared to the movement in France is that the initiators were middle and high school students without any 'tangible' organizations. Like many other mass mobilization cases in other countries, those who proclaim themselves as 'organizers' of a mobilization share more or less the same political and social characteristics: labor unionists, politicians, civil society activists, etc. From a mass mobilization perspective, the Candlelight movement in South Korea succeeded: tens of millions people poured into the streets every weekend for three months to protest against American beef imports; ultimately the trade agreement was revised.

These two scenes lack a common thematic element. Unlike the international protests of the Occupy Wall Street movement in 2011-12, the South Korean and French protestors did not share an issue. The South Koreans opposed the importation of 'risky' American beef, while the French opposed a law making it easier for employers to fire their workers.

Why then compare mass mobilizations in these two countries? By examining these two different mobilizations in different corners of the world, I intend to propose an answer to the following questions. In the 21<sup>st</sup> century of Information Age, is the process of mass mobilization in France and in South Korea different? If so, what is the difference in how mass mobilizations is created in these two countries? Does this difference in the mobilization process reveal different functioning (or nature) of an ‘old’ (France) and a ‘young’ (South Korea) democratic society? Could this ‘young’ democratic society’s mass mobilization process bring new inspiration to ‘old’ democratic societies like America in the 18<sup>th</sup> century did to Alexis de Tocqueville’s Europe?

### **Aspects of the Processes of Mobilization**

Creating a social movement is not just a matter of mobilizing resources, claiming actors’ identity, catching political opportunities, or moving people’s emotions. A social movement is a complex phenomenon and all these elements must be analyzed simultaneously. One of the best ways to analyze those elements at the same time is to analyze the mobilization process. In analyzing the mobilization process, it can be seen who the actors are, what they are claiming, how they perceive, catch or create political opportunities for the movement, and how they emotionally affect members of the public who could eventually become movement participants or supporters. In this way, it might be understood why certain movements successfully create mass mobilizations and maintain their movements while others do not.

There are three kinds of mobilization process, Macro-, meso-, micro-mobilization. The macro-mobilization process occurs when existing large-scale organizations, such as traditional labor unions, successfully create mass mobilizations. The meso-mobilization process is operated by small or medium-size organizations which already have existed before the ‘targeted mobilization’. As Gerhards and Rucht (1992) proposed, in the meso-mobilization

process, existing organizations perform as a 'medium' to connect individuals or small groups that eventually become essential elements to create mass mobilization. 'Black churches' in the U.S. South during the Civil Right movement are a good example of this type of process. Snow, Rochford, Worden, and Benford (1986) analyzed the importance of the micro-mobilization process vis-à-vis frame alignment to create group identity, which is one of the important elements to create a successful mobilization and maintain a social movement. When it comes to a large-scale mass mobilization, these types of mobilization processes usually combine to bring about a successful mass mobilization. It should be noted that since the Internet became one of the most important tools of communication, the character of the mobilization process has changed. These days, people seem to rely on the meso- or micro-mobilization process rather than macro-mobilization process. Keeping this in mind, this article analyzes the different *processes of mass mobilization* in two countries, France and South Korea, to find out how people decide *collectively* or *individually* to take an action-in these two situations, to go into the streets.

If individuals have questions about an issue or try to solve a problem, usually they will follow four steps; of course this process is not just linear or irreversible. First, they ask questions and gather information; second, try to understand the situation based on that information; third, decide whether to act; however, even if they *decide* to act, nothing will happen if they don't *take* action so the forth step is *take an action*. The collective action process is more complicated than the individual one because it requires an essential additional component: others must agree to act in concert. Thus it is essential to know *whether others hold the same opinion and will take an action at the same time*. In the context of this paper, I am interested in learning what kind of processes individuals (or groups) follow to express their opinions or to know others' opinions and, finally, to take an action against (or for) what they consider 'unfair' (or fair). In other words, by analyzing these two cases, this article tries

to identify different processes of collective decision-making to participate in mass mobilizations. Were participants content to *accept* existing mobilization resources such as left-wing or right-wing frames and organizations, whatever the forms? Or were they trying to *find* new frames and completely different kinds of organizations? And finally, what explain this difference?

### **Why Analyze the Processes of Mass Mobilization?**

Through analysis of mobilization process, scholars can identify who the actors are, what they claim, how they act together, and may even identify what they believe in. For example, South Koreans participating in the 2008 Candlelight movement showed their ‘mistrust’ and even anger against established media even though freedom of speech had been assured since 1987. In a strict sense, the level of ‘independence’ is always disputable even in an ‘old’ democratic society. The South Korean media gained independence from political suppression in 1987. However, that does not mean that the media played the role of a counter-power against political and economic rule; rather, the media served that rule.

The focus of this analysis is not whether the ‘classical’ media played their ethical role as a ‘true voice’ of people in South Korea, but what kind of result was generated by this ‘collective disbelieve’ in established media at individual and collective actions levels. In other words, what affected this misbelieve in the process of mass mobilization? The most ‘disbelieved sectors’ in South Korea are politics (politicians) and established media. The South Korean people still have a vivid collective memory of their long dictatorship and its captive press.

Then whom do South Koreans trust? What do they believe in? The 2008 Candlelight mass mobilization process reveals an interesting element. People trust what others trust. However, that does not mean that they merely follow the collective opinion of the populace

because the ‘majority’ said or believed so (cf. Tocqueville’s (1991) *tyranny of the majority*). In the case of South Korea’s Candlelight movement, people trusted or approved *others’* opinion because it did not come from ‘interested’ people like political elites or established media, but from ‘*others like me*’, people who were ‘*disinterested*’. In other words, if others are more disinterested than I am, it is worth more to trust them and to act like them. The initiators of the Candlelight movement were not university students, labor unionists, or civil society activists but middle and high school students. They were the most *disinterested* and *pure* elements in the political field. That is why many adult participants and university students expressed their feeling of guilt and shame about these younger students who acted by going into the streets by themselves to protest American beef imports. With time, as with many other large-scale social movement cases, the ‘amateur’ initiators of the Candlelight movement gave way to ‘professional’ activists to manage the movement.

### **Why Compare France and South Korea?**

Beyond their different socio-historical experiences, these two countries have similarities, especially in the political field. First, they have a similar president-centered power-sharing system of governance. In such a system, when a serious disagreement breaks out between ‘dominants’ and ‘domineés’, the latter tend to express their discontent on the streets. That is why there are so many mass mobilizations in France and South Korea. Sometimes such large-scale mass mobilizations ‘threaten’ not only the political elites, but also the representative democratic system itself. That was true in these two cases.

Second, the political party systems are also quite similar: Their political parties are organized mainly on the basis of politicians’ personal ability, not by the parties’ clear political ideology. Historically in France, political ideologies are divided into left and right, and politicians follow these lines from the start. However, the interesting thing is that candidates

create new parties during almost every presidential election. It is not the presidential candidate who represents the party, but the party represents the candidate. In South Korea as well, the 'person' is more important than the political parties' ideology. That is why South Korean candidates frequently produce that same kind of political phenomenon before presidential elections. Because these 'newly' created political parties are controlled by political 'figures' rather than acting according to clear established political lines, there is much more room for corruption. In the French case, those 'new' political parties belong to center, left-wing, or right-wing parties. South Korea's political parties' lines, however, are not as clear as France's. It may be observed frequently that politicians change their political camp according to their political calculus rather than according to political conviction. With this 'personality-centered' political party system, if the public strongly supports their leader, everything is fine, but as soon as the public withdraws support, the whole political decision-making system could be in danger because there is no intermediate zone to manage the disagreement.

Third, the initiators of the two mobilizations analyzed here were young people, although the South Koreans were younger than the French. In both countries, people - especially young people - generally think of themselves as uninterested in politics. It would be useful to know why those who were known as individualists, even 'egoists', decided to act together to claim common goods or correct an unfair situation.

Since neo-liberalism came to govern most of the globe, French people aged 18-to-25 suffered particularly. Because of high unemployment, they have been obliged to accept part-time jobs and low-paid or unpaid internships; they also lack social protections and are called the *CPE generation*. South Korea also shows evidence of similar socio-economic conditions among this age group, labeled the *880,000 won generation* (Wou. S. H. and Park. K. I., 2007). The '880,000 won generation' means that the young citizens aged 18-to-25 will receive a monthly

average income of 880,000 won, equivalent to 600 Euros, because of their precarious job contracts.

It is beyond the scope of this article to identify whether the causes and consequences of these similar socio-economic conditions among this age group brought about those mobilizations. Rather, this article focuses on the analysis of the different processes of mobilizations of these two countries to find out which element(s) created different mobilization processes, if they exist. This will allow an eventual explanation of the nature of democracy in these societies: how do citizens *conceive* their democracy and how do they *apply* that conception in political and everyday life?

## **Method**

To explore why people decided to adopt different processes of mass mobilization in the two situations, I conducted face-to-face and e-mail interviews among participants in the anti-CPE movement in Paris and participants in the 2008 Candlelight movement in Seoul. In Paris, I interviewed twenty university students and one of the most important student leaders from December to February 2009.

In France, interviewees may be classified into three categories:

- a. Category 1: students of Parisian Universities: No entrance exam
- b. Category 2 : Parisian Grand Ecoles : Difficult entrance exam
- c. Category 3 Regional Universities

Even though officially there is no classification among public universities, Parisian universities remain 'privileged' institutions compared to regional universities. Being a student in Parisian universities reflects a specific social and cultural class. I selected interviewees aged from 18 to 24. The 18-year-old students were second- or first-year high school students when the CPE movement erupted. This age range was essential to compare how and why the

mobilization process between the two countries differed. South Korea's Candlelight mass mobilizations in 2008 were initiated by middle and high school students and generated a large mass mobilization that eventually threatened the government's political agenda.

In Seoul, I interviewed twenty university students, two civil society activists, and ten adult participants from March to July 2009; as the Candlelight movement had no 'visible' leader, the respondents were 'ordinary' participants. As, the large-scale interview-based research (the sample size was 333 respondents) was done previously by Kim. C.K., Lee. H. J., Kim. S., and Lee. C. (2010) via two follow-up surveys (2008, 2009) of the same teen respondents who participated in the candlelight protest in June 2008, that number of respondents was sufficient for this qualitative study.

## **Anti-CPE movement in France, 2006**

### **Description of the Mobilization**

In 2006, socio-economic and political circumstances were unfavorable for Jacques Chirac's right-wing government. That was the last year of his presidential mandate, and his government had been weakened not only by his lame duck status but also by the riots of 2005. The riots first broke out in a Paris's suburb<sup>1</sup> and spread to other big cities where many African and North African immigrants had settled since the 1960s. Furthermore, the national unemployment rate was still high: 9.5 percent of the working-age population and 21 percent of the 15-24 aged population. Under these socio-economic circumstances, the government presented the CPE law that the General Assembly was supposed to vote on in March. Starting in February, left-wing university students unions organized national level protests against the law, including demonstrations on the street and blockage of university campuses and high school buildings.

The protests successfully mobilized various age groups. The anti-CPE protests went

on for about three months, something that could not have been possible if most of labor unions had not given strong support to the movement. For example, an inter-professional national strike was organized for March 28<sup>th</sup>, and about 3 million people participated. On April 4<sup>th</sup> labor unions again gave notice of strike action; that day, 40 percent of public primary schools and 25 percent of secondary schools were disrupted by teachers 'strike. Finally on April 10<sup>th</sup>, Prime Minister announced cancellation of the law. Two particulars of this movement should be highlighted: 1) Mass mobilizations of university students were much more important and intense in regions other than in Paris; 2) Many retired people participated in the street demonstrations with their *grandchildren (young people)*.

### **Who Were the Actors?: Triple Actors**

Because the CPE law principally concerned high school and university students, they were the main actors of the anti-CPE movement. The second groups of actors were labor unions. The CPE law did not directly apply to actual workers, but its principal characteristic clearly conflicted with the ultimate purpose behind the very existence of labor unions, that is protection of workers. Union leaders could not compromise on that principle; thus they supported the anti-CPE protests. For union leaders, that choice was political. In a sense, it was written in the 'political game manual' in France between right-wing governments and labor unions: attack versus counterattack.

However, it could have been different for ordinary workers who already held 'secure' jobs. After all, they were not obliged to go into the streets to protect the security of their jobs; they could have stayed away from demonstrations and strikes, which could eventually bring many inconveniences into their daily lives. But they showed a strong solidarity with the young people suffering from precarious socio-economic conditions.

The third actors were retired people. That was an interesting phenomenon because in

many other counties it is unusual to see retirees participate in protests alongside young people. That was especially true in the French case because the anti-CPE movement did not concern their working conditions: they were no longer in the workforce. Their participation provides evidence that people may move more promptly to realize their convictions, than to realize their interests.

How could these different aged groups act collectively? This question leads to the article's main subject, namely the analysis of the process of mobilization. To analyze this process, the most important thing is to inquire into how the actors are connected through political, social, and cultural networks. This can be analyzed by examining how they communicated and decided to act collectively—in other words, to 'go together'.

### **How Did They Connect?**

First, high school students had national organizations supported by political parties, usually by left-wing and the conventional right-wing party. Most of those students knew that such organizations existed but were not interested in them, except for a few politically mature students. Usually their family members were part of political organizations such as a political party, local government, or national government. They had been nourished with political lullabies from childhood. But most high school students did not fit that picture; in general they had 'no opinion' about politics. In an interview, this Science Po student explained why she participated in anti-CPE demonstrations while in high school.

**Question: How did you decide to participate in demonstrations? Did you go to hear the debate between the students in your high school? How did it work?**

Answer: I went once or twice to see the debate assembly. Well, in general because we had no fixed idea, we listened to the organizers. They prepared their speech before the debate, they had a strong argument about the subject, and they knew how to speak. In a sense, they were already

trained to speak in public so we felt a little bit intimidated by their words. I know they ‘repeat’ what they learned from their parents or their older brothers and sisters, whatever. Still, it was impressive.

**Question: Did you decide alone to go to the streets? You were not scared?**

Answer: I decided with my friends and had permission from my parents. No, I was not afraid at all. In any case, we all knew how it would work at the street demonstrations: we met in the Metro station, where elder students and some of our professors waited for us and went together to the Place de la Nation or to the Quartier Latin. I had a lot of fun with my classmates.

**Question: Did you use social media many times to know if your classmates, personal friends, or virtual friends were going to demonstrations or simply to discuss the CPE law or the movement?**

**Did you have many virtual friends? How about your friends—did they have many?**

Answer: No. Concerning who would go with me, I already knew with whom I would go. To discuss the movement, it was enough to go and see the debate and read a little bit in the newspaper. No, I don’t have ‘virtual’ friends. My old friends and classmates are my major physical and virtual friends. With them I communicate, not others. I don’t feel any need to find such friends.

Another interview was with one of the leaders of the movement:

**Question: We saw a lot of high school students in the street. Did you frequently meet the high school leaders to prepare the demonstration together?**

Answer: No, I was too busy preparing the communications with the journalists but one of my coordinators took charge of it. In general, we tried to help high school students to organize the demonstration properly to prevent any sudden incidents. Usually they listened to our advice.

These interviews show that high school students were, in fact, highly supervised, physically and mentally, by ‘elder’ people and political lines even though their actions were not systematically ‘controlled’ by these two elements. In everyday life, they are tightly

connected by a school system: classmates, neighbors, friends, sports clubs, etc. Such physical connections still play an important role in either their personal or 'public' life. Although they cannot participate in elections, they temporarily enter the political field through occasional demonstrations on the street, which happen frequently in France every time big social political issues emerge. The process of participation in anti-CPE mobilization was 'ready-made' for them; there was no room for surprise. Because the road map was already drawn by the leaders of student organizations and helped by 'elders,' they did not need to find another way of communication to mobilize or to know others' thoughts. At any rate, they knew what friends with them thought. The mobilization of conscience (Klandermans, 1988) or conviction (Chazel, 1992) and action were accomplished by their parents, elder students, and teachers.

There is a great difference between South Korean high school students and their French peers. The French students could be guided by 'classical organizations' even though they were not interested in them, but that was not so for South Korean students. South Korean students lack any kind of political organizations, and in their daily life they prefer to chat via the Internet with their virtual friends than with their classmates. This article discusses the South Korean situation later.

Second, as for university students, they were clearly divided into left-wing and right-wing student unions. At the universities in general, right-wing unions are not very popular and their activities are less visible. In some regional universities such as those in the city of Rene, extreme-left students unions historically have 'controlled' the important mobilizations. During the anti-CPE movement as well, there were different independent mobilizations in regional universities, but their mobilizations did not influence the mainstream: the major national student union MNEF (a branch of the Socialist Party) is supported by most socialist labor unions.

With the labor unions' entrance into the anti-CPE movement, the picture became

more than clear. Protesters entered the political field and engaged in a political battle between left and right, even though their claim was labeled ‘economic’. Most students replied that they were not interested in politics; by participating in anti-CPE demonstrations they chose to be politically involved, whether they wanted to or not. Then what was the picture of ordinary university students’ process of mobilization? For example, here is an excerpt from an interview with a woman who was a University Bordeaux student in 2006:

**Question: How did you decide to go to the general assembly (assemblée générale)? Were you alone or with your friends?**

Answer: I went there from curiosity. That was first time I was in the middle of some ‘exciting things’ on campus. I was brought up in a ‘left-wing family’. My mother was a civil servant; my father is a train driver. In my family we have had many political discussions with my parents’ friends. They never forced any political lines on me, but with time I became left.

**Question: Are you a member of any student unions?**

Answer: No. Even though I say to myself I am left, and they do something useful for students, I don’t think I will join them because I don’t like their ‘all-settled’ mind. They are too inflexible. I mean left-wing student unions. I don’t even think about the right-wing unions. I know they exist but I’ve never seen any of them personally.

**Question: Why did you participate in the demonstration? Why do you think other generations also participated? Was it an economic protest or deeper?**

Answer: I think it was more than economic protest. Of course we were angry about the CPE law. We knew that even with the university diploma, we could not find a job. This law told us that ‘even if you get a job, you should be afraid of being laid off in two years!’ Our parents’ generation thought that if such a law passed, all the social achievements that they and their parents struggled for would collapse. They were afraid for their children’s future.

To sum up the process of mobilization in the anti-CPE case, participants followed the

‘conventional’ way of mobilization and were connected by pre-existing social networks. Politically colored organizations put out their arguments or proposed a solution to a problem of concern, and the participants accepted playing their role on this political stage. In a sense, they ‘consumed’ a social movement product and allowed established organizations to speak in their name.

## **Candlelight Movement in South Korea, 2008**

### **Description of the Mobilization**

On April 18th 2008, the South Korean government announced an agreement on hygienic conditions for American beef imports; several media had already evoked visions of the economic damage American beef could pose for Korean breeders. A documentary aired by one broadcasting company, MBC, had already reported that the actual agreement could not prevent possible contamination with BSE (bovine spongiform encephalopathy). That documentary provoked anxiety and anger among ordinary people, especially middle and high school students. The government had decided to use American beef first for school meals because it was ‘cheap and good quality’<sup>2</sup>; the public interpreted this measure to mean that students would be part of an ‘experiment’. In another false step by the government, police arrested the documentary’s producer and journalist, and then prohibited its screening, claiming that it disseminated false information and caused severe unrest in society.

At that stage, nothing noteworthy happened until some middle and high school students proposed a Candlelight Assembly on an Internet portal site café. In a surprise to all, that Candlelight Assembly not only continued for more than three months but also drew tens of millions of people of different ages across the country into the streets. Finally, President Myung-bak, Lee presented his excuses and revised the agreement with the Americans.

## Who Were the Actors? Quadruple Actors

The people directly and immediately affected by the American beef imports were South Korean breeders, so the protest against the agreement could have been limited to a protest by only one ‘interest group’. Although there were protests organized by the breeders and some NGOs, the public did not pay attention until middle and high school girls<sup>3</sup> organized a Candlelight Assembly in the plaza of Seoul City Hall<sup>4</sup>. So the initiators and main actors were middle and high school students. Many researchers have tried to find out how these students became main actors. One reason proposed was the ‘liberalization’ of middle and high school management, announced the end of April 2008 by the minister of education. This measure augmented class hours<sup>5</sup> and put more weight on English-language classes<sup>6</sup>. For parents, this new education policy meant a higher cost for their children’s private education. In 2008, they already were spending more than 23 percent of their income for private schooling. After the announcement, more middle and high school students and their parents participated in the Candlelight Assembly. In this way, American beef imports served as a ‘trigger’ for mass mobilization against right-wing government policies.

Thus the second actors were parents with an average age between the mid-40s through 50. Members of that generation had experienced the 10<sup>th</sup> June Democracy Movement in 1987 and were the ‘main actors’ of that movement. Since then, they had returned to a ‘normal’ train of life: work and families. Twenty years later, they found themselves in a similar place, but now with their children.

Here is the explanation from one ‘parent participant’ in the Candlelight Assembly.

In 1987, I was in the protest after the death of Han –Yol, Lee<sup>7</sup> when one million people gathered in the Seoul City Hall Plaza. I was at the same city hall. We were so proud and enthusiastic... but with life going on, our dream blurred away. Independence, justice, anti-Americanism, pride; these words lost their colors and became tasteless... But today, I am happy. It reminds me of our energy in June 1987.

Another interviewee described the difference in the atmosphere of the Candlelight Assembly demonstrations compare to the 1987 generation and the worry about the high cost of private education under the government's new education policy.

I participated frequently in demonstrations in 1987. I was a leader of a national organization of Catholic students. At that time, this organization did not have a 'religious' character but rather was a pro-democracy and anti-military government organization.... I am now a middle management executive in a big company. I have been so occupied by work and my family life that I have not seen my campus friends in ages. Guess what? I met one of them here, at the very Plaza where we shouted together 20 years ago! ... Now, we are holding candles instead of stones, 'signing' instead of 'crying'... It's like a feast...In an ironical side of history, now we are being lead by our children... holding candles... I feel 'ashamed' but at the same time feel pride at these young middle and high school students.

...

About education, I don't know where and when this never-ending competition for our children and never-ending spending to private education by parents started. It just cannot be going on like this... Compared to other unprivileged people, economically I am in better condition. But even for me, if it continues like this, I cannot prepare my retirement correctly because of the private education cost... We should stop this spiral.

The third actors were university students; in numbers, they were more important than parent participants. At first, they were quite indifferent about the Candlelight Assembly, but over the course of time that changed due to the anti-neo liberalist government's policy, starting with American beef imports, new education policies, and the character of new members of the ministry: they all come from the highly privileged class. People aged 18-25 were suffering from unemployment. The unemployment rate in 2008 reached 7.6 percent for the 15-29 aged population and 3.1 for the total active working-age population. From a global

point of view, those statistics were not bad, but for the South Korean population it meant a large percussive hit to the collective psychology because they had experienced almost full employment for fifteen years except during the financial crisis in 1997. For the time being, the choice these young people made to surmount that ‘worrying’ social and economic situation was to adjust to the demands of the job market, not to protest. For example, most large Korean global companies demanded the TOEIC test when they recruited new employees. Most students prepare for the test for a whole university year.

The fourth actors were not uncommon: NGO activists and some left-wing politicians. Even though they were ‘late-comers’ to the Candlelight Movement, the movement could continue without major accidents thanks to their ‘know-how’ to organize and maintain mass mobilizations. An important NGO activist interviewed shows how they felt helpless before the middle and high school students’ Candlelight Assembly.

I was stunned when I saw the middle and high school students assembled in the Seoul City Hall Plaza. They came with funny pickets made by themselves, chanting together, criticizing government’s education policy, risky beef etc. I said myself, ‘God! It is my job to organize the protest, not yours!’ I spent my whole life for that. I was so ashamed. ...What was going wrong?

Then how could these different actors have decided to act together? This question leads to an analysis of the process of mobilization of the 2008 Candlelight Movement in South Korea.

### **How Did They connect?**

First, middle and high school students had no political organization, unlike in France. They had student committees in school but those had no political character. Under age 17, they are not allowed by law to participate in any political activities. These teenagers, like

those in many other countries, spend a lot of time on the Net. They chat and converse with virtual friends rather than with their classmates. These interview excerpts illustrate the character of teenagers in South Korea:

**Question: Why do you prefer to chat on the Net rather than with your classmates or your neighborhood friends?**

Answer: I don't know but...I think the relation is *simpler* and *lighter* than with neighborhood friends. You just share your opinion or information, that's all. You need not to see them. You have less risk of getting angry with your virtual friends. If you get angry, you just quit chatting or quit being a member of the Internet Café. It's cool. You are not obliged to see them.

**Question: How much time do you spend chatting on the Net?**

Answer: It depends: sometimes four or five hours per week. But I also spend time with my neighborhood friends and classmates too. We use a lot of SMS. It's more efficient and you don't disturb others. I think our generation is addicted to the Internet and cellular phone. For example, if I find the battery of my phone is discharged, I became nervous. Somebody can call me or send me a SMS but I cannot respond.

By choice, they connected more on the Net rather than in their physical surroundings like in France. In consequence, Koreans have 'other' important 'references' for everyday life - 'virtual friends - compared to young French high school students.

The same mode of connection was found for university students, as this interview excerpt shows:

**Question: How did you decide to go the City Hall Plaza?**

Answer: Well, I am a very 'rational' or 'individual' person. I don't like to talk about a topic if it does not concern me directly. But I learned about the problem of American beef imports by Internet. I read some private opinions in the blogs and 'independent' media<sup>8</sup>. When I participated in the Candlelight Assembly for the first time, I listened carefully to others' opinions and realized that if we allow the importation, it could be dangerous for my family. After that, I participated in mobilization as long as I

could.

Here again, the decision reference for university students was not based only on their surroundings but another sphere: the Internet, more specifically, others' opinions on the Net—nobody else, neither political elites nor established journalists. An interesting part of the process is that these people realized a 'cross encounter' by participating in the mobilization. That's why a lot of diverse Internet Café members met by appointment in the City Hall Plaza under their own flag or picket, whatever they decided to recognize. These Internet Café members could belong to a cooking café, a fashion mania café, or a dance café, or other type.

## **Conclusion**

In the anti-CPE mobilization, French people used the 'already settled' mobilization frame of left-wing and tangible organizations, while in the Candlelight Movement, South Koreans refused to use the already existing framework and organizations to create their mass mobilization. As illustrated by other scholars the process of mobilization can be divided into two stages: consensus mobilization, then action mobilization (Klandermans, 1984). In each stage, the way and means (tools) of communication among individuals is critical. In fact, people select the means of communication according to their goal of communication. If people already know the *agenda*, they will not continually seek to learn others' opinion because they do know more or less the procedure (2006 Anti-CPE in France). However, if people confront an '*unknown agenda*', they continually seek to know what others think (2008 Candle movement in South Korea). That's why it is important to study the role of the Internet (Donk, Loader, Nixon, & Rucht, 2004) and other social media -how people connect, and why they choose this tool of communication - in the process of mobilization to explain how social media mobilize consensus and action. Social media could play an important role as a *tool* of communication, not as an essential element to create a successful mobilization, especially

where the established mass media do not play their normative role as venues for political communication and dissemination of political information in a civil society. That is why South Koreans have mainly used social media in the process of consensus and action mobilization.

However, this does not mean that people in ‘old democratic societies’ believe in traditional media, and that the media fully play their normative role: In France, journalists are considered just like politicians who write/criticize social, economic, cultural, and political affairs according to their political lines. They also are main actors in the political field, just like politicians. Therefore, there is no reason people should believe more in journalists than in politicians. Then why in France, did people not rely on social media to create mass mobilizations like South Koreans did? If we look at the mobilization process more closely, we see one element that Koreans lacked: the *politicization* of people’s daily life. In the CPE case, my interview with high school students who participated in demonstrations clearly revealed this scheme: 1) students learned about the CPE law from media or their parents and felt concerned; 2) in school, anti-CPE movement leaders and members of left-wing organizations organized debate meetings (*assemblée general*) with the approval of the principal, where they gave a persuasive speech as they are accustomed to doing; 3) students decided to go into the streets with their friends, parents, or teachers, and in general already knew who would participate.

That was not the case in South Korea. The initial actors or ‘simple’ participants had any ‘visible’ political references to use when they decided to act and they had no idea who and how many people would participate. In such an uncertain condition, to know others’ opinion could be an ultimate element for people’s decision whether they act or not. But here, not anyone else’s opinion count: others just like ‘me’ because ‘me’ and ‘others’ are *equal*: there are no social, political, cultural and physical elements weighing the relationship between

'me' and 'others' like in French case. And 'me' and 'others' agree that politicians and established media are not worth counting on; they are all 'interested' people. That's why Koreans gave more importance to *what others there thought and acted*. They wanted to know what was happening in other people's minds, so that is why they frequently connected by clicking a mouse. It was not because the Internet offers rapid and correct information about BSE (bovine spongiform encephalopathy) or the international trade agreement process. During the 2008 Candlelight Movement, South Koreans relied on the public forum site on the Internet rather than national newspaper or broadcasting sites.

These two different mobilization processes reveal how citizens conceive of their democracy and how they apply that conception in their political and everyday life. South Koreans conceive that democracy should be more direct and more egalitarian, while the French accept the established intermediary apparatus.

#### **Limits and further research points of this article:**

As this article's research method is qualitative based on interviews, it could not treat more profoundly the question: how can measure the levels of the *politization of people's everyday life* in a certain country? Some elements could be included for better analysis: number of unions, adherence rate to unions, the number of NGOs per capita, etc. One of the interesting further research points is whether Koreans (young democracy) will progressively abandon this process of mass mobilization (relying on social media) then adopt French style (relying on classical organization) mass mobilization process, or French people will abandon their 'ready-made' mass mobilization style and take other options.

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### **Internet sites**

<http://kostat.go.kr>.

<http://www.ccej.or.kr/>

<http://www.peoplepower21.org>

<http://www.greenkorea.org/>

<http://www.ngokorea.org>

<http://www.stat.nic.or.kr/> (Korea Network Information Center)

<http://www.nec.go.kr>

<http://home.nec.go.kr:7070/sinfo/sinfo.htm>

## **APPENDIX**

### **1. Questionnaire Guide for Korea**

#### **Questions for classification of questionnaire**

- First name:

- Age:

### **Before going to the Candlelight Assembly**

1. Did you participate in the Candlelight Assembly?
  - a. If yes, why?
  - b. If not, why?
2. How did you decide to participate in the Candlelight Assembly?
  - a. Did you decide alone or with your friend
  - b. If you had a friend, how did you communicate?
  - c. Who were they? school friends, on-line friends?
  - d. Among your friends, do you think there was a leader or 'leader-like' friend?
  - e. Were there national levels of student organizations or associations?
3. When you decided to participate in the Candlelight Assembly did you prepare the chants or actions with your friends or alone before going there?
4. Where did you get information about mad cow disease, the Candlelight Assembly?

### **In the Candlelight Assembly**

1. Could you describe how the Candlelight Assembly was organized?
  - a. Were there 'visible' organizers?
  - b. Did you see many small or big 'organized' groups?
2. What did you claim in the Candlelight Assembly?
3. What did other participants claim in the Candlelight Assembly?
4. Did participants express their opinions freely during 'public debate'?
  - a. Who were they?
  - b. What did they talk about or make claims about?
5. What kind of 'participants were most visible?
6. When was the most 'moved' moment?
7. Do you remember the songs that you sang during the demonstrations? Which ones?

### **Personal opinions about the Candlelight Assembly**

1. When did you participate in the Candlelight Assembly for the first time, and what did you do?
2. How old were you?
3. Did you already have an experience of participating in demonstration at the high school?
4. Did you already have a discussion with your friends about social problems when you were in high school?
5. Could you describe your family's political inclination?
6. What was your family or parents' reaction to the Candlelight Assembly?

7. Would you participate in a public demonstration again if this kind of ‘social issue’ arose again?
8. Do you think the Candlelight Assembly was a ‘success’?
  - a. If yes, in what aspect
  - b. If no, in what aspect
9. What is the principal value for Koreans, Korean young people and you?

## 2. Questionnaire guide for France

Interviews were conducted in French; this guide is translated from the French version. The author included more open-ended questions for French interviewees than Korean interviewees)

1. First name:
2. Age :
3. Where do you live? (This question is important because depending on the area in Paris, you can estimate their or their parents’ economic-social status.)
  - Do you live alone or with your parents?
4. Are you interested in politics?
5. Which political line do you prefer or identify with?
6. How about your family members? Is it different from yours?
7. Did you participate in the Anti-CPE movement?
  - c. If yes, why?
  - d. If not, why?
8. Explain how you decided to participate in the Anti-CPE demonstration: Did you decide alone, where did you get information about the CPE law, demonstrations... etc.?
9. Are you a member of a student organization (political or not)?  
What did you think about ‘political student organizations or the members of these organizations?
- 9 In your opinion why did high school and university students massively participate in the Anti-CPE movement?
10. Do you remember the songs that you sang during the demonstrations? Which ones?

11. When was the most ‘moved’ moment?
12. In the Ant-CPE demonstrations, we saw three generations: high school and university students, parents, and retired persons. Did you communicate with all of them?
13. In your opinion, why did grandparents’ participate in the Anti-CPE movement?
14. How do you categorize the Anti-CPE movement? Was it an economic protest or would you give other reasons? If there are other reasons, what were they?
15. Do you think that the Anti-CPE movement was a success?
16. Were there changes after the Anti-CPE movement? Which ones?
17. What is the most serious problem for most young French people?
18. How do you see French young people’s future?
19. What is the principal value for the French, French young people and you?

## ENDNOTES

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<sup>1</sup> In Clichy-sous-bois, a Paris suburb, the majority of residents are migrants from Africa. On October 27<sup>th</sup> two teenagers were killed accidentally by electrocution when they were chased by police. Many residents, especially the young, blamed the police for their deaths.

<sup>2</sup> These terms were used by the President Myung-bak, Lee: he expressed his incomprehension about why people were so angry about the American beef imports. One of the famous picket phrases was ‘Mad cow, you eat it!’

<sup>3</sup> One of the ‘mysteries’ of the 2008 Candlelight movement is why the initiators and the majority of teenage participants were female. One NGO, *Na Num Mum Hwa* (For share of culture), created its character as an image, *Candlelight Girl*: a little girl holding a candle, which became a popular symbol of this movement.

<sup>4</sup> This place is called *Gwang Hwa Moon* (one of the ancient main gates of Seoul), it was a symbolic place for the democratization of South Korea, especially after 1987, the year of the turning point of South Korean political conditions.

<sup>5</sup> Middle and high school students already spent more than 11 hours a day in school; they were obliged to stay at school even after classes to study. Especially during their last year of high school, students arrive at 7h30 and leave at 22h. The Ministry of Education has ‘tolerated’ this kind of practice for students in their last year. But this ‘liberalization’ means that the principal of school can decide on class hours and extra classes. In South Korea, harsh competition for admission to good universities starts in elementary school; this measure meant that most students stay longer in school than before.

<sup>6</sup> To enter a major university in South Korea, English is very important. That is not because speaking English is important per se, but it became an important means of selection for university admission. Members of the privileged class can provide expensive extra private English classes or can send their children to an English-speaking country during vacations, but many parents have difficulty affording such measures. Thus, giving more weight to English classes means closing major university doors for most students except those in the privileged

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class.

<sup>7</sup> The student who died during the demonstration against the military government in 1987 became one of the icons of the democracy movement of the 1980s with Jong-Chol PARK. We can compare this incident with a similar example in Europe, that of Iyan, Palach of the Czech Republic, who immolated himself to protest against the invasion by Soviet troops during the Prague spring of 1968.

<sup>8</sup> The most famous independent Internet press is *Oh My News*. This is an exclusive internet news which was founded in 2000. This internet 'newspaper' run by free lance journalists who are paid directly by readers who judged the article is worth to pay. The general characters of the articles are rather left.