MOBILE CIVIL SOCIETY IN ASIA:

A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF PEOPLE POWER II AND THE NOSAMO MOVEMENT

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Abstract

From a historical and critical perspective, this paper examines the use of mobile phones in civil society movements in Asia, as evidenced in the People Power II movement in the Philippines and the Nosamo movement in South Korea. A comparative framework is proposed concerning (1) the temporal and spatial characteristics of the two incidents, (2) the distinct organisational forms of the movements that were shaped by unique contextual and structural factors as well as the common historical and institutional conditions they shared, and (3) the relationship between mobile communication and other media forms including traditional mass media and the Internet. The evidence being analyzed includes journalistic accounts, statistical sources, and a combination of secondary and primary research. A few tentative conclusions emerge, including: (1) mobile communication can be a key catalyst to civil society formation at times of emergency; (2) mobile phones work with the Internet and other media in creating an enlarged communication ecology, but to succeed, this has to be based on existing political struggles; (3) the rapidity and scalability of mobile civil society movements pose challenges to the political process. The overall argument is that, by analyzing an entire array of issues being glossed over in popular accounts of these two events, we can gain a much deeper and contextualised understanding about the socio-political aspects of political communication through the mobile phone. Pending issues for future research are also addressed.

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Introduction

The rapid diffusion of the mobile phone is renewing scholarly interest in information and communication technologies (ICTs) (e.g., Katz and Aakhus 2002; Fortunati et al 2003; Mitchell 2003; Ling 2004; Ito et al 2005; Castells et al 2006). From the United States to Europe to Asia, a new body of literature is emerging that gives rise to an impressive field of ICT research, similar to intellectual responses to the rise of the Internet in the mid-1990s. Most of these studies have focused on such issues as technology diffusion (e.g., Leung and Wei 1999; Limi 2005) and the influence of mobile "personal" devices on micro relationships (e.g., Fortunati et al 2003; Ling 2004; Ito et al 2005). This paper, however, examines the macro socio-political aspects of wireless technologies by comparing two incidents of mobile civil society in Asia: the People Power II movement in the Philippines and the Nosamo movement in South Korea. These two movements are among the world's first incidents of successful mobile civil society formation that resulted in new political leadership at the national level (Castells et al 2006, 185-213). Although amply recorded and frequently discussed, the two events have not been brought together for structured comparative analysis in order to understand better the socio-political use of mobile communication, including mobile voice telephony and short-messaging services (SMS).

The idea of a "mobile civil society" was proposed by Castells et al who argue that the use of mobile phones in social movements may lead to "a new form of civil society" (2005/6, 112). According to this view, mobile communication

> *provides a powerful platform for political autonomy on the basis of independent channels of autonomous communication, from person to person, and from group to group.*
>
> *The network logic of the communication process makes it a high-volume communication channel, but with a considerable degree of personalization and interactivity. In this sense, the wide availability of individually controlled wireless communication effectively bypasses the mass media as a source of information, and creates a new public space* (Castells et al 2005/6, 112).

Thus the mobile civil society consists of "instant communities of practice," which transform "an initiative to do something together into a message that is responded to from multiple sources by convergent wills in order to share the practice" (Castells et al 2006, 249). In western countries, this type of civil society movement has been popularised through media coverage of the 1999 anti-WTO demonstration in Seattle and through Rheingold's *Smart Mobs* (2002). In Asia, it materialised most impressively in two countries as an overwhelming force of social change that altered the political process at the national level: in January 2001, the Filipino President Joseph Estrada was ousted in the People Power II movement; in December 2002, Roh Moo-Hyun became the unexpected winner of the Korean presidential election thanks to mobile-equipped Nosamos (meaning "people who love Roh"). Mobile phones were used in both cases for purposes of political mobilisation, coordination, and identity formation among members of the civil society, in ways that reflected the transformation of contemporary social movements into more decentralised structures of "networked politics" (Castells 1997; Webster 2001; Juris 2004).

But why did such incidents of mobile civil society occur in some countries, but

not in others? What is missing in studies of mobile civil society, as Stoecker points out, is "a deeper structural analysis" (2004, 682). This paper intends to start filling this gap by providing a framework of comparative analysis about the context, organisational form, and media characteristics of a mobile civil society, using the Philippines and South Korea as the points of reference.

Cross-national comparison is "uniquely suited to evaluating general propositions about structural factors" (Chaffee 2001, 242). This paper is designed to facilitate more refined analysis about the origin, manifestation, and consequences of a mobile civil society in each case and a more systematic conceptualisation about the role of the mobile phone in social movements, not as a general abstraction, but as grounded development responsive to the social, historical, and institutional realities of particular political systems. More specifically, the underlying questions are:

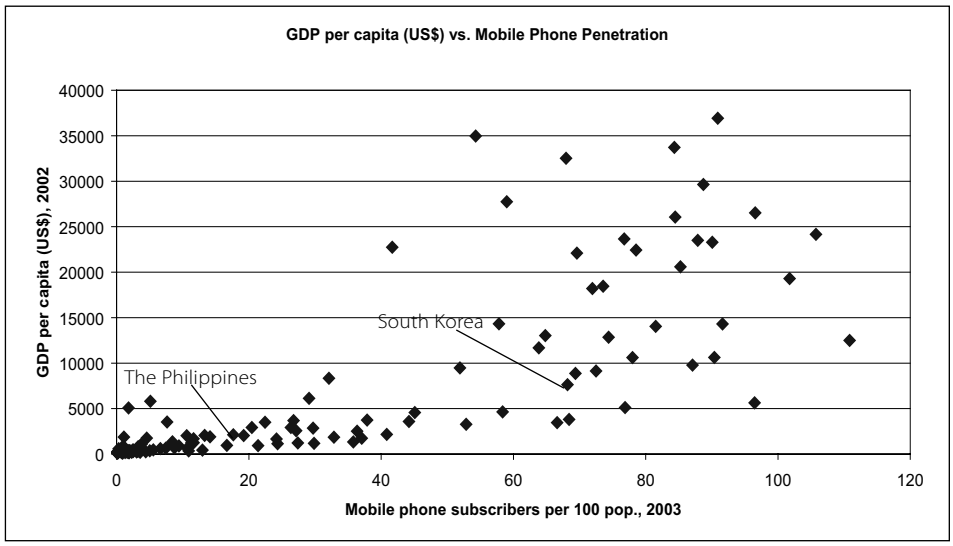
1. What are the basic temporal and spatial characteristics of a mobile civil society, as manifested in People Power II and the Nosamo movement?
2. How did the two cases differ and how were they similar in terms of their internal organisational structure and their main operational mechanisms?
3. What are the common contextual factors and unique historical and institutional conditions shaping the two cases?
4. What is the relationship among different media forms, especially between the mobile phone and older channels such as the Internet and mass media? Is mobile communication replacing older media, enhancing them, and/or working together with them to foster a new media ecology of political activism? And why?

To answer these questions, it is essential to examine media accounts of the events, including both domestic reports in the two countries and international news. However, the bulk of these narratives are end products of news-making processes that are often ideologically charged. To counter media biases, I rely on country experts who use critical perspectives on the basis of systematic empirical research (e.g., Kim, D.-Y. 2002; Pertierra et al 2002; Rafael 2003) as well as a combination of primary and secondary data sources. The purpose is not just to provide better descriptions, but to use this chance to develop a more general yet systematic framework for the comparative study of a mobile civil society.

Notably, besides People Power II and the Nosamo movement, there has also been active socio-political use of mobile communication in other parts of the world, especially Spain and the US (Castells et al 2006). This study focuses on the two Asian cases in order to control external variance, as they share a degree of similarity in the regional context in the aftermath of the Asian Financial Crisis. Meanwhile, if socio-economic status is taken as a main factor influencing technology diffusion, the case selection also carries strategic importance due to the major differences between the two countries in terms of their general economic and technological conditions. As shown in Figure 1, South Korea had much higher GDP per capita than the Philippines in 2002, and its mobile phone penetration was also much higher in 2003. The two societies represent very different stages of technological diffusion, although at the time of the two movements neither country belonged to the world's richest nations with the highest rates of mobile penetration. It is against these larger patterns of development that the following analysis should be considered: globally speaking, mobile civil society is not a privilege of countries

that are economically and technologically the most "advanced"; it is, instead, an outcome of specific socio-political processes and structures.

Figure 1: Mobile Phone Penetration versus GDP Per Capita: A Global Overview, 2002-03



Source: ITU World Telecommunication Indicators Database (2003).

The Background: Political Economy, Diffusion, and Social Uses

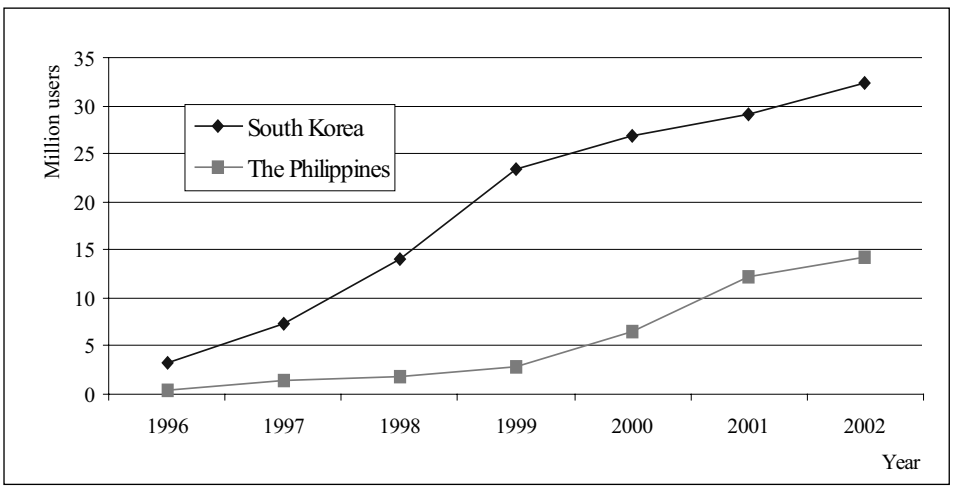
Distinct as they are, the histories of the Philippines and South Korea converged in the post-World War II period when both were subject to authoritarian control for decades, specifically under Ferdinand Marcos and Chun Doo-Hwan. The two regimes ended in February 1986 and June 1987, respectively, involving massive uprising that left a legacy of an active civil society in both countries (Mamot 1986; Smith and Lee 1993). By the late 1980s, within the international context of deregulation, the Philippines and South Korea had both proceeded to liberalise their telecom markets (Kim, D.-Y., 2002). One outcome of this change is the rapid diffusion of mobile phones.

The paths toward telecom liberalisation, however, diverge because of different state-industry connections and variance in economic growth. South Korea has powerful state agencies that guided its modernisation process (Park et al 2000). In the telecom sector, its Ministry of Post and Communication and Ministry of Commerce and Industry played a significant role in privatising state-owned telecom firms, increasing internal competition, and leading industrial development in strategic directions. Although business influence used to be weak in telecommunications, privatised firms like Samsung, LG, and SK Telecom have become "strong enough to claim equal partnership since the 1980s" (Kim, D.-Y. 2002, 344).

In contrast, the Philippine government has been relatively weak since 1986 and its business sector has "maintained strong political power" and "exploited economic benefits through political connections" (p. 344). The traditional telecom

monopoly, Philippine Long Distance Telephone, provided such notorious service that the government recognised poor telecommunications as a major obstacle to national development. Entry barriers into the telecom market were subsequently lowered to attract investors and improve the nation's connection with the global economy. It is through this process that the country's major mobile operators were created as new private firms to provide better phone service at lower price.

Figure 2: The Diffusion of Mobile Phones in South Korea and the Philippines



Despite divergent structural conditions, the diffusion of mobile communication has been impressive in both countries. Total subscription in the Philippines was less than half a million in 1996, but jumped to over 20 million in 2003. When People Power II occurred in 2001, there were about 11 million users nationwide, which means 13.8% of Filipinos had access to mobile phones at the time (Bociurkiw 2001; Toral 2003). In South Korea, the population of subscribers grew from 3.2 million in 1996 to 32.3 million by the end of 2002. The average annual growth rate was 53.5% during the period, lower than Philippines' 100.8% average growth rate. But since South Korea has a smaller population base, the penetration rate was 69.2% of the total population and 78% of the adult population (KISDI Report 2003).

With the rapid growth of mobile telephony, SMS usage became widespread among youth. According to Cheil Communications (2003), 93% of young Koreans between ages 17-19 send or receive SMS at least once a day. The percentage decreases with age: 92% for ages 20-24, 79% for ages 25-29, 58% for ages 30-34, and 47% for ages 35-39. SMS, together with mobile voice service, was found to play a major role in reinforcing traditional norms of family, school, and peer group, according to a study of teenagers in Seoul (Yoon 2003). In the Philippines, using SMS, or texting, "has been the preferred mode of cell phone use since 1999, when the two major networks, Globe and Smart, introduced free and, later on, low-cost messaging as part of their regular service" (Rafael 2003, 404). Popular accounts refer to Metro Manila as "the text messaging capital of the world" (Arnold 2000; Kaihla 2001). In 2001, about 100 million text messages were circulated in the region everyday (Bociurkiw 2001). Mobile-equipped youngsters emerged as "Generation Txt" to play a central role in People Power II (Pertierra et al 2002; Rafael 2003).

The Incidents: People Power II and the Nosamo Movement

As discussed above, although the political uses of mobile technologies have been documented in various journalistic and academic accounts, there is limited scholarly analysis on the actual processes and mechanisms of a mobile civil society. It is thus necessary to make an in-depth examination of the two Asian cases. In this section I will provide a condensed chronological view of key events in both cases, to be followed by a structured comparative analysis in the next section.

People Power II: Generation Txt and Their Enemies

Joseph Estrada was the sitting president of the Philippines at the dawn of People Power II. An actor turned politician, he won the election of 1998 by a landslide victory of 10.7 million votes by appealing to the lower class. But from the first day of his presidency, Estrada had been suffering from allegations of corruption, circulated via the Internet (Santos 2003) and SMS (Paragas 2003), including the accusation in October 2000 of his receiving about US$ 80 million in bribes. On October 12th, Vice President Gloria Arroyo resigned and soon became the leader of the anti-Estrada alliance. Within a week, opposition groups filed an impeachment charge against Estrada and protests started in Manila. On December 7th, the senate impeachment trial began (Gasper 2001; Kaihla 2001).

An unexpected act of violence occurred in the midst of this political turbulence. On December 30, 2000, five synchronised bombs exploded in Manila, killing 22, and injuring more than 120 (*Philippine Daily Inquirer* 2001). The explosions hit the airport, a light-rail train, a bus, a gas station, and a park near the US embassy (Reuters 2001). Police accused a Muslim rebel group connected to Al-Qaeda, although at the time many saw the explosions as related to the impeachment trial (Associated Press 2003).

On January 16th, 2001, the senate impeachment committee voted 11-10 to reject the opening of an envelope that was believed to contain crucial evidence against Estrada. Within hours, Manila residents poured into the streets to protest at the Shrine at Epifnio de los Santos Avenue (EDSA), the site of the 1986 People Power movement. Carrying a strong sense of history, massive demonstrations of People Power II lasted for four days from the 16th to the 20th, when the protesters received a deluge of sympathetic media coverage, which added tremendously to the political pressure on Estrada. On the 17th, all senator-judges resigned from the impeachment trial and the case was suspended indefinitely. The Defense Secretary and Finance Secretary resigned on the 19th. By then, most members of the Estrada cabinet had abandoned office, and the military had sided with demonstrators. On January 20, 2001, Estrada was escorted out of the Malacanang Palace by the Armed Forces Chief of Staff and the Vice Chief of Staff. By the end of the day, the Supreme Court declared the presidency vacant; Arroyo was sworn in as the new president (Pertierra 2002; Paragas 2003; Rafael 2003).

When Estrada acknowledged that he was "ousted by a *coup d'text*," media portrayals tended to stress the importance of "text power" during People Power II (Pertierra 2002, 101-103). But SMS was not the only means of mobilisation. Anti-Estrada forces started to accumulate in online forums as soon as he took office in 1998, which culminated in some 200 Web sites and about 100 email discussion groups by the time People Power II began (Pabico 2001). Codewan is one of the major anti-

Estrada forums that was established by the PLDT Foundation and connected with the Roman Catholic radio stations (Santos 2003, 250-251). Another famous website was E-Lagda.com, which collected 91,000 e-signatures to support the impeachment bid through both Internet and SMS (Bagalawis 2001). A large number of Internet and text messages were jokes and satiric jibes making fun of Estrada.

Although Internet communication was a channel for the expression of discontent, it was texting that made possible the swift gathering of tens of thousands, almost instantly after the voting result of January 16th. According to one protester, she was out on a date in the evening when the news broke. She first received a message from her best friend: "I THNK UD BETR GO HME NW (I think you'd better go home now)." But by the time she got home, already late in the evening, she had received numerous messages from others such as: "NOISE BARRAGE AT 11PM," "GO 2 EDSA, WEAR BLACK 2 MOURN D DEATH F DEMOCRACY." She immediately followed the instructions (Uy-Tioco 2003).

The prominent role of SMS was testified by its traffic volume. During People Power II, Smart Communications transmitted 70 million text messages; Globe Telecom handled 45 million messages each day as opposed to its normal daily average of 24.7 million. The demonstrators were reported to be texting so actively that it caused a serious strain on the mobile phone networks covering the EDSA area (Bagalawis 2001).

While most English-language Philippine media regard the movement as major progress in the country's democratic life, it is important to note that, "[n]early all the accounts of People Power II available to us come from middle-class writers or by way of a middle-class controlled media with strong nationalist sentiments" (Rafael 2003, 401). The celebratory tone of such writing is captured in one advertisement of Smart that features a mobile phone screen and a slogan, "Congratulations to the Filipino people for spreading and heading the cry for truth!" (Pertierra 2002, 108). Produced immediately after the movement, such accounts tend to gloss over many issues important to our understanding of this specific incident of a mobile civil society.

First, the characterisation of People Power II as non-violent and information-centered is a hasty simplification. The military always played a decisive role, as it was only after the armed forces sided with protestors that Estrada admitted defeat. Moreover, there was the deadly bombing of December 30, 2000, only 17 days before People Power II. Given the sensitive timing during the impeachment trial, the synchronised violence threatened an all-out civil war. This was possible because, despite the charges, Estrada still had overwhelming support in the countryside and among the poor (Lopez 1998).

Moreover, a seldom-told story is that, three months after People Power II, on April 25, 2001, Estrada was formally arrested on corruption charges. This quickly spurred "a crowd of perhaps one hundred thousand [who] formed at EDSA and demanded Estrada's release and reinstatement," and was dispersed by the armed forces on April 30, 2001 (Rafael 2003, 422). The pro-Estrada demonstration is referred to as the "Poor People Power" or EDSA 3. But surprisingly, as Pertierra's survey found out, some of the pro-Estrada protesters were also mobilised by text messages (2002, 118-123, 174). There was, of course, lower mobile penetration among these demonstrators. Of the total 527 mobile-equipped respondents, only 8.7% attended this demonstration, whereas 23.3% joined People Power II. There

was remarkable class difference: the working class accounted for 63% of all pro-Estrada protestors, but fully 72.4% of People Power II participants belonged to the upper or middle classes.

The fact that mobile phones also played a role – smaller though it was – in the pro-Estrada protest was, however, neglected in middle-class Filipino English-language news media, which framed the "Poor People Power" protesters as "unruly and uncivilised" (Rafael 2003, 422). But, fundamentally, the pro-Estrada demonstration calls into question the triumph of new media because these lower-class demonstrators could also appear in no time, despite a lower penetration rate.

The Nosamo Movement: Youth Politics in the 2002 Korean Election

Nosamo is the Korean acronym for "people who love Roh Moo-Hyun." These are young Koreans in their 20s and 30s, organised around the core group of the so-called "386ers," i.e. those who were in their 30s during the presidential election of 2002, who grew up in the pro-democracy movement of the 80s and were born in the 60s at the dawn of Korea's industrialisation era (Fairclough 2004). Using both the Internet and mobile phones, the Nosamo movement is now "a textbook example for the power of IT" (Hachigian and Wu 2003, 68). For years, the Nosamos had used the Internet to support Roh Moo-Hyun. But it was mobile communication, especially SMS, that mobilised large numbers of young voters on Election Day of December 19, 2002, and finally reversed the voting result in favor of Roh (Fulford 2003). The victory resulted from a strategic coalition between pro-reform forces and ICT-equipped youth groups in response to pressing problems in the economy and growing tension among different regions (Rhee 2003).

The central political figure, Roh Moo-Hyun, was a self-educated labor lawyer at odds with the conservative political forces that had dominated Korea by means of their capital, corporations, strong government ties, and close relationship with the US. In his campaign, Roh pursued a radical agenda to overhaul *chaebol*, the business oligopolies that "have long funded the country's political machinery" (Fairclough 2004). Roh's appeal also came from his personality because, despite repetitively losing elections, he refused to compromise or switch parties as many other opposition politicians did. Such an iconoclastic image won him "an almost cult-like following among young Koreans" (Demick 2003).

Roh was Korea's first major politician to launch a Web campaign in order to reach young voters. Back in 1995, he had used the Internet to attract voter support while running for the office of mayor of Pusan (Demick 2003). This was a highly innovative approach at the time not only because it used new technology. Roh's campaign offered messages substantially different from the mass media, which favored *chaebols,* close relationship with the US, and less compromise with North Korea. Given the conservative mass media environment, young Koreans had been feeling cynical and disenfranchised in the political process: "Less than 40% of the 8 million people in their twenties voted in parliamentary elections in April last year (2000), far below the 57% national average" (Kim, J.-M. 2001, 49).

But the new media campaigns of Roh and his supporters, extending from the Internet to mobile phones, fostered an alternative system of communication. At the center of this "counterpublic" (Fraser 1992, 123) was the Nosamo Group (www.nosamo.org), a voluntary organisation founded in June 2000 soon after Roh lost his second race in the parliamentary election (*Korea Times* 2002). It was self-funded by

membership fees and only informally affiliated with Roh's campaign organisation (Rhee 2003). But the group grew rapidly, with its membership leaping from about 100 to nearly 5,000 in November 2001 (Kim, J.-M. 2001), and then to more than 70,000 by the end of 2002 (Demick 2003).

The Nosamos were known for being aggressive. For instance, a professor who criticised Nosamos on a TV talk show received hundreds of angry emails and was widely condemned in online forums. For such activities, the Nosamos were referred to as "Internet Red Guards" with "violent words in cyberspace and an appeal to populism" (Demick 2003). Given the complaints from the conservative camp, about a month before the 2002 presidential election the National Election Commission barred the Nosamo Group from further fund-raising for the candidate, and the organisation's website was forced to close until Election Day (*Korea Times* 2002).

As the presidential election approached, Roh Moo-Hyun continued to suffer from his maverick penchant of challenging the political status quo. Mainstream media kept framing him negatively (Rhee 2003). A few months before the election, Roh was so far down in opinion polls that members of his own Millennium Democratic Party tried to force him out of the race (Demick 2003). On the eve of the election, Roh's key campaign partner, the multimillionaire Chung Mong-Joon, suddenly withdrew his support, dealing a heavy blow to his campaign at a critical moment (*Korea Times* 2002).

As the election began on December 19th, 2002, Nosamo members were caught in a deep sense of crisis due to Roh's trailing position in polls and Chung's unexpected betrayal. With their website still closed, young activists started the day by posting messages in other online forums saying "Let's go vote!" (Rhee 2003, 96). By 11 a.m., exit polls showed that Roh was losing by one to two percent (Fulford 2003). At mid-day, "[h]is supporters hit the chat rooms to drum up support. Within minutes more than 800,000 emails were sent to mobiles urging young supporters to vote. Previously apathetic young voters surged to the polls, and by 2 p.m., Roh took the lead and went on to win the election" (Fulford 2003).

A few elements contributed to this event in which mobile communication helped reverse the result of a presidential election. First, there was already a large-scale grassroots network centered on the Nosamo Group, whose members had frequent exchanges both online and offline. Second, Roh Moo-Hyun's center-left policies and iconoclastic image energised young voters, many of whom were highly devoted and ready to act promptly at a time of crisis. Third, Chung's sudden withdrawal on election eve and the temporary trailing of Roh created an urgent momentum to rally public support. And the mobile phone – the grassroots communication device that is always on, anywhere, anytime – turned out to be the best medium for mobilisation. The final factor is voter demographics: because young Koreans accounted for slightly more than half of the voter population, their choice was decisive as long as they came out to vote. Indeed, "60% of voters in their 20s and 30s cast ballots for Roh" (Rhee 2003, 95).

Comparative Analysis: Issues and Challenges of Mobile Civil Society

A lot has been said about ICTs adding to the inventory of spontaneous activism, creating networked movements as a new basis of political power (Castells 1997; 2007;

Rheingold 2002; Castells et al 2006). This is in part validated by the cases examined here, although in important ways empirical evidence from People Power II and the Nosamo movement reveals a nuanced social reality that refines, contradicts and transcends any simplified view. What this article hopes to achieve in the following pages is a more in-depth comparative analysis of the two cases along four dimensions: (1) the temporal and spatial logic of a mobile civil society, (2) its internal organisational form, (3) the influence of historical and institutional contexts, and (4) the relationship among mobile phones, the Internet, and mass media.

Speed and Scale

Like socio-political processes through previous media channels, the operation of a mobile civil society reflects public opinion among certain groups of people and organises their discontent, sense of crisis, and collective will for coordinated action. What makes the Philippine and Korean movements unique is the rapid and massive emergence of "instant communities of practice" (Castells et al 2006, 249) with such a formidable political force that they could decide a nation's presidency.

Three basic patterns emerged from both campaigns. First, speed is the key, which was enabled by the capacity of instant communication built into the technology. However, people chose to call and SMS each other, and act quickly together, not just because they had mobile phones but because there was enough collective impetus to react to the political situation. Second, both movements relied on large-scale mobilisation and high-volume communication throughout the process. Campaign logistics were coordinated in instant time at multiple levels, from individuals to families to peer groups, within and among activist networks. Third, both movements went beyond national boundaries, involving not only international media but also members of the Filipino and Korean diasporas. Although the anti-Estrada and pro-Roh expatriates did not necessarily play a direct role in using mobile phones, they made major contributions to the movements by participating in, and sometimes organising, key Internet forums, thus paving the way for effective mobilisation in both cases (personal interviews).

Instant communication, massive scale, transnational reach: these are, however, not entirely new features of contemporary politics. If we consider Castells' arguments about the temporal and spatial logics of "informational politics" (1997), then what mobile phones did in these two cases was to further the trend of high-speed and multi-scale operations and to push existing tendencies to a new level of rapidity and scalability.

This general pattern of "instant communities of practice" is, however, expressed differently. People Power II is a typical "flash mob" that appeared spontaneously to protest against the perceived injustice of the impeachment jury. Estrada was ousted within four days. But could this happen without mobiles? There was no mobile phone in the 1986 People Power movement, which nonetheless succeeded in toppling Marcos. As Pertierra maintained, People Power II "would have occurred without the existence of cell phones" (2002, 9) albeit probably at a slower speed. In other words, even without the mobile phone, it is still possible to organise social movements in the volatile circumstances of the Philippines. Although the mobile phone did enable anti-Estrada forces to create a political reality before others had time to counteract, this movement was highly limited in its social

scope by excluding the majority of the poor. Indeed, texting brings the challenge of "informational politics" because what it allows was not democracy in the traditional sense of universal suffrage but more precisely an immediate projection of the urban middle-class on to the national scene, ignoring the voice of others. In this sense, "a populist technology was used to oust a populist leader. The irony is that President Estrada is the only president whose election has been indisputable; all the others were marred by sufficient fraud to warrant significant doubts about their legitimacy" (Pertierra 2006, 9).

For the Nosamos, rapidity was also crucial. The mobile civil society was intensely active on a single day, which changed the election result within hours. The acceleration of speed carried the most decisive significance because, within this very short period of time, the Nosamos could respond to their crisis, but their enemies could not. Mainstream politicians were deprived of any meaningful chance to fight back, at least in this election. On the other hand, the social scope of the Nosamo movement, albeit primarily a youth campaign, was perhaps broader than People Power II, as the latter was largely restricted to the upper and middle classes in major metropolitan areas. The near saturation of mobile phones among Korean youngsters was a key condition. So was the size of the youth population as the largest potential voting block. Also important was that this was a normal electoral process, not a revolt as People Power II was. Nosamo members and their supporters were scattered throughout the country, less confined by class and geographical boundaries (Rhee 2003).

Another major difference between the actual spatial expressions of mobile civil society had to do with "swarming," originally a military strategy for nonlinear warfare that has been used by demonstrators since the anti-WTO protest in Seattle. The idea is that autonomous groups of activists, all coordinated by wireless devices, can rapidly gather and deliver a strong political message, for example by physically blocking the entrance to a high-level meeting, and then, before the arrival of more police, the protesters will quickly disperse and then reassemble through a similar process of mobile communication to hit the next target (Rheingold 2002, 174-182). During the Nosamo movement, there was no need for any physical gathering because the political action was not to protest but to vote; mobile messages were linked directly to the decision of individuals casting ballots. This is not to say that the Nosamos do not use mobile phones to coordinate logistics for political gatherings at other times. In fact, they do. But given the urgency of the situation, the wireless communication network became a virtual command system, from which spatially dispersed voting activities of young Koreans were influenced.

The swarming strategy was, however, partially utilised during People Power II, when the spatial movement of demonstrators was focused on the EDSA. In the first night of protest, texting played an instrumental role in starting the massive demonstration, coordinating logistics (e.g., going to EDSA, wearing black) and action (e.g., making noise at midnight). But there was little swarming in a dynamic sense with quick spatial dispersal from one place and re-assembly in another. Throughout the four days, the demonstration took place at EDSA, attracting much media attention, especial on TV (Paragas 2003). The broadcast images were not very different from more traditional movements in which activists occupy historic public space in order to construct a media spectacle that highlights their demands.

Here, the temporal-spatial logic of mobile civil society did not necessarily lead to a new type of social movement. Instead, it worked as a catalyst, albeit a crucial one, for rather conventional ways of protest.

Organisational Form

In an important way, the formation of a mobile civil society, as observed in both movements, differs from previous modes of political campaigning through mass media and most Web-based communication. The messages were distributed through existing interpersonal channels. Campaign credibility and persuasiveness were therefore greatly enhanced because people in these "networks of affinity" were "receptive subjects" (Castells et al 2006, 249-250). This was particularly the case among Korean youth because they tend to have strong peer connections and highly reciprocal relationships with each other (Yoon 2003), thus confirming Fischer's argument that a primary function of the telephone is to further existing tendencies of a given society (1992). In this sense, the "instant communities of practice" were a powerful development not just because of the technology but more precisely because of the network effect achieved through such a decentralised, yet highly effective, mode of communication. When people took action in both events, everyone knew someone, and hence formed the initial points of solidarity for collective action. It was due to these micro processes of interpersonal influence that mobile-equipped individuals could coordinate, at both the grassroots and more macro levels of operation, and form an alternative sphere outside the formal political system.

Despite their similarities as spontaneous networks reinforced by personal interactions, the two social movements were remarkably different in their internal structures. People Power II was a loose assembly of concerned citizens triggered by perceived injustice in the impeachment trial. At stake was one single issue: Estrada had to step down because of his corruption scandal. To achieve this goal, the flash mobs emerged with little centralised coordination. Although the crowds at EDSA accepted Arroyo as a nominal leader and they enjoyed support from the Catholic Church and the military, none of these formal political forces acted as the organisational backbone of the movement. There was so little regularised coordination among the various anti-Estrada forces that one could say the entire movement never accomplished coherence beyond the immediate goal. There were, on the one hand, elite politicians like Arroyo and powerful religious and military institutions and, on the other hand, fragmented grassroots groups formed around chat rooms, online bulletins, and circles of the Generation Txt. But how should the political system be fixed after Estrada? There was little deliberation and even less consensus because of the lack of an overarching organisational structure.

The situation differed in South Korea. Despite its relative independence from Roh's campaign organisation, the Nosamo Group acted as *the* central node of command and coordination. It not only drew direct and indirect support from formal political players, including Roh's party, but also had a rather well developed structure of internal organisation with key members in charge of different operations at the national, regional and local levels. Besides mobile calls and SMS, the Group had for years used electronic bulletins and online polls to make collective decisions and coordinate campaign logistics. "All the decisions about their activities are made through an electronic voting system and the final decision-making online committee

has its monthly meeting in chat rooms" (Kim, J.-M. 2001, 50). Members also met face-to-face at political rallies, including highly dedicated full-time volunteers who quit their well-paying jobs to join the campaign (Demick 2003). During the presidential election of 2002, they raised more than US$ 7 million over the Internet (p. 50). But this more formal and more centralised organisational form of the Nosamos also made them more vulnerable. Through the National Election Commission, their opponents could, for example, force the closedown of Nosamo.org.

Although the Nosamo Group is not a formal political party, it is still a structure that facilitates deliberation and decision-making through regular online discussions and internal polls. This structure has allowed the Nosamo movement to carry its functions beyond Roh's success in 2002, taking on more diverse issues ranging from candidates for cabinet positions to North Korea's nuclear program. After an online poll, the Nosamos even issued a statement criticising Roh's decision to support the War in Iraq (*Korea Times* 2003), demonstrating that organisations emerging from a mobile civil society can become sustainable political forces; and that the ephemeral flash mob is only one way of organising mobile-facilitated social movements.

Finally, mobile technology played a dual role in the organisation of both movements. As noted, technology is instrumental to resource mobilisation, message dissemination, and the coordination of logistics. Moreover, it has another equally important, yet seldom articulated, function, namely, a key signifier for collective identification among movement participants. Implicitly or explicitly, middle-class urbanites in Metro Manila and young activists in South Korea used their ownership of the technology and their capacity to network through ICTs to define themselves as similar to each other and distinct from others, be they unsophisticated country folks or old age conservatives. This technology-based identity was magnified in media accounts and relayed among participants to strengthen a unique sense of community, constituting a crucial part of what McAdam calls the "identity-movement linkage" (2003, 288).

Historical and Institutional Context

Despite their differences, the Philippines and South Korea both stand out in Asia with their civil society traditions since the 1980s. At the macro level of international geopolitics, underlying the two social movements was the impact of the Asian Financial Crisis and, since then, the effort of both countries to recover from it. There was the heightening of nationalism in this process against the IMF, World Bank, and especially the US, which has historically complex connections with the ruling elite and their oppositions in both societies.

In his presidential election, Roh Moo-Hyun took a stance distinctively critical of the US and argued for more contact with North Korea. This was among the key issues making him popular among young voters, many of whom remembered less of the Korean War than the Financial Crisis, and most 386ers were "skeptical of the US in part because Washington backed the same military rulers they fought against as college students" (Fairclough 2004). Estrada was also an outspoken nationalist for most of his political life, and was the first to propose the termination of American military bases in the Philippines back in 1991 (Alfredson and Vigilar 2001). The leading challenger to Estrada, Arroyo, was however educated in Harvard and enjoyed much support from the West. Although both Philippine and Korean

cases involved new technology, the development of the mobile civil society was still structured within "old" frameworks of international geopolitics. The difference was that domestic power games produced a more pro-US government in People Power II than was the case in South Korea.

At the national level, the political cultures of the two countries are comparable so far as the dynamism of civil society is concerned. A large part of this dynamism comes from history, so that when middle-class Filipinos started their protest, they would go to EDSA for the obvious reason of making connections with the 1986 People Power movement. The attempt to draw on activist legacy was also clear among Nosamos, most of whom regarded themselves as inheriting the revolutionary spirits of student demonstrations more than a decade ago. At large political gatherings, they would chant songs from the pro-democracy movement of the 80s such as "Morning Dew" (*Korea Times* 2002). Many of Roh's closest aides in the presidential election were former student activists (Fairclough 2004).

The strong commitment to democratic values, however, materialises into different institutional setups based on the social reality of political traditions in the two countries. Enjoying historical affinity with the chaebol, the Korean state is much more powerful in its command of the nation's economic and political resources. The Nosamo movement therefore had to face stronger pressure from mainstream politics. Serious challenges from the conservative camp, constantly posed through mass media and formal political procedures, made two significant contributions to the shaping of the Nosamo movement. This was the precise reason why Nosamos had to be organised more tightly, following a more regularised networking logic. Moreover, the Nosamos had to abide by the formal rules of the election and limit their activities, alternative as they were, within existing institutional parameters. Both of these consequences turned out to benefit the Nosamo movement, enabling it not only to succeed in instant mobilisation but also to grow into a more sustainable force.

In the case of People Power II, because the government was traditionally weak, it was not surprising that Estrada could barely put up a fight. The senator-judges would not have resigned from the impeachment trial committee nor would most key members of the Estrada cabinet have resigned from their posts had the state and legal system been more authoritative. On the other hand, the armed forces and the Catholic Church remained crucial powerbases throughout the process, showing the inadequacies of secular civilian politics in the country. Although EDSA 3 indicated Estrada's continuing popularity among the lower classes, the majority poor could not compete with the urban middle class due to their lack of influence with the church, the military, and mass media. In this context of structural inequalities across different classes, because one group was equipped with the new technology and the other much less so, the mobile-facilitated movement identified itself with the pursuits of wealthy urbanites. The relatively loose organisation of People Power II therefore resulted less from the technology of the mobile phone than from the lack of meaningful resistance on the part of Estrada and his lower-class followers.

Inter-media Relationship

Existing accounts of the two movements are overwhelmingly similar in proclaiming the "triumph" of ICTs over "old media." In a sense, this claim is embedded in the personal connections of the two key characters with modern media technolo-

gies: Joseph Estrada was a former movie star, a professional in the traditional image industry. He lost. Roh Moo-Hyun, the "president of cyberspace," is apt to use new media. He won. This oversimplified narrative, however, does not do justice to the rich inter-media dynamics in the two historic events.

A consistent pattern manifested in both cases was that the mobile phone worked with other media in forming an enlarged ecology of communication, reflecting the sense of emergency felt by the public at highly volatile political moments. Key events like the synchronised bombing in Manila and Chung's last-minute withdrawal were reported through traditional media. Mass mediated images and sound bites, together with person-to-person interactions, constituted a broad informational sphere in which certain social groups felt that their basic interests were endangered. It was under such circumstances that the two movements occurred with the help of mobile phones, stimulating collective action in an efficient way.

But specific inter-media relationship differed within the system of socio-political communication. Television, for example, played a much more important role in People Power II as TV news stories about the impeachment trial triggered SMS-based mobilisation and, then remained a "primary source of information" throughout the event (Paragas 2003, 281). Comparatively speaking, the influence of the broadcast media was minimal in the Nosamo movement because of the rapidity of events. Television was too slow to have much meaningful impact on the Election Day other than announcing the exit poll results and then Roh's ultimate victory. This was also the case for print media. In the Philippines, the most influential papers were in English, with a mostly middle class readership, which fought alongside with Generation Txt in the anti-Estrada campaign. But the major Korean newspapers all opposed Roh (Min 2003). Like TV, they were also bypassed in the processes of a mobile civil society due to even longer production cycle.

Among core activists, the Internet probably played a more important part than the mobile phone by providing not only content and distribution channel but also the logic of internal organisation. As discussed earlier, the Nosamo Group had an Internet-based organisational structure that used a range of online activities for deliberation, campaign organisation, and poll-based decision making. Even though nosamo.org was closed down, Nosamos continued to use other forums such as ohmynews.com and the website of Roh's party.

The anti-Estrada coalition on the Internet, which paved the way for People Power II, was less structured, with hundreds of newsgroups and chat rooms such as e-lagda.com. Starting in 1998, they had been mocking and criticising Estrada. This less centralised structure, together with the semi-serious content, was effective in popularising anti-Estrada sentiments. But when the time came for action, activists worried about the credibility of the SMS messages. In this case, a radio station was utilised to increase the trustworthiness of the campaign. As one activist revealed:

> *I was certain [texting] would not be taken seriously unless it was backed up by some kind of authority figure to give it some sort of legitimacy. A priest who was with us suggested that Radio Veritas should get involved in disseminating the particulars … We [then] formulated a test message … and sent it out that night and I turned off my phone … By the time I turned it on in the morning, the message had come back to me three times. … I am now a firm believer in the power of the text!* (in Rafael 2003, 408).

The broadcast of Radio Veritas was supposed to enhance the credibility of texting greatly because it was this station owned by the Catholic Church that played a central role in the 1986 People Power movement (Mamot 1986, 93). Traditional mass media, in this case, could therefore add to mobile civil society formation by contributing their historical resources in the political culture and organisational resources from existing institutions.

On the other hand, if the Internet is fully utilised as it was during the Nosamo movement, the function of mobile telephony and SMS will perhaps decline after critical moments of political emergency. This is because, in the present technological stage, wireless handsets are still limited in their capacity to support public deliberation, not to mention collective decision-making as the Nosamos did with their online referenda. The relationship between mobile civil society and online political organisation is therefore much more than a combination of two media forms. It is a symbiotic relationship in which long-term Web-based movement paves the way for mobile-facilitated social movements while mobile civil society, drawing from the online content and organising structure of the movement on the Net, triggers coordinated action quickly and at a large scale, hence creating new momentum that supports online activities in the long run.

However, not all mobile-facilitated campaigns could enter such a symbiosis with the Internet, and this was the case in the Philippines. While texting was prominently effective as an essential tool to form the instant communities of practice, the quality of political communication could not be guaranteed without more organised political deliberation. As Rafael criticised, because texting allowed little editing or elaboration, messages were "mechanically augmented but semantically unaltered … producing a 'technological revolution' that sets the question of social revolution aside" (Rafael 2003, 409-410).

Conclusion

This paper examines two critical events of a mobile civil society: the 2001 People Power II movement in the Philippines and the 2002 Nosamo movement in South Korea. By analyzing their internal structure, historical and institutional context, and inter-media relationship, the study shows that mobile communication can be a key catalyst to political activism at times of emergency with its unique advantages in speed and scalability. In both movements, mobile phones worked with other media, especially the Internet, to create impact. To succeed, grassroots mobile networking had to be based on existing struggles of the given society. In so doing, the organisation of the mobile civil society assumed characteristics of the surrounding political culture and institutional frameworks; while its internal structures and connections with the socio-political contexts are expressed through and sustained by media operations. This contributed to the formation of an enlarged communication ecology, in which new and old media operated, in various symbiotic and competitive relationships, as observed in the two cases.

Table 1 summarises the main findings of this comparative analysis demonstrating that there is an array of issues, variations, and challenges in People Power II and the Nosamo movement which were glossed over in popular accounts of the events. These form rich historical evidence about mobile civil society that we may better appreciate using the analytical framework of this study. Moreover, the comparison

Table 1: Mobilisation during People Power II and the Nosamo Movement: Comparing the "Instant Communities of Practice"

	People Power II	The Nosamo movement
Speed & scale	*Similarities*	
	- Rapid responsive movements at time of emergency - Massive mobilisation & instant coordination at multiple scales - Involvement of international diaspora groups	
	Differences	
	- Continuous action for four days - Limited socio-spatial scope - "Swarming" technique partially used	- Concentrated action in hours - More inclusive, although mostly youth - No "swarming"
Organisational form	*Similarities*	
	- Personal interactions leading to high message credibility - Spontaneous grassroots networks outside formal party system - ICTs as both instrument & signifier for collective identity	
	Differences	
	- Loose, issue-oriented groups - Less connected with Arroyo - "Flash mobs" that neither last nor expand to other spheres of action	- Formal Nosamo organisation - More connection to Roh - Long-term sustainability with devoted members & fundraising
Historical & institutional context	*Similarities*	
	- Traditions of active civil society & popularity of democratic values - Asian Financial Crisis triggering strong nationalist sentiments - Alliance with major players inside formal political institutions	
	Differences	
	- Weak state & court system - Powerful church & military - Pro-US middle-class coalitions	- Intra-institutional struggles within strong state system - Suspicions toward US
Inter-media relationship	*Similarities*	
	- Proclaimed "triumph" of "new media" over "old media" - Mobiles work with Internet & some mass media (esp. for deliberation) - An enlarged ecology of activist media supporting the movements	
	Differences	
	- TV news triggered mobilisation - Support from English-language media - Alliance with Catholic radio	- Website closedown increased reliance on mobile phone - Bypassing print & broadcasting media, esp. conservative press

opens up new avenues toward better understanding of political change, ICTs, and informational politics in general.

Is mobile civil society creating a "new politics"? The answer is both yes and no. On the one hand, despite the use of mobile phones, both movements depended on the organisational structure of existing activist networks, online or offline. The formation of a mobile civil society, therefore, reflected political legacy and the constraints of history. In the Philippines, higher mobile phone penetration among the rich reinforced the power of the traditional elite. In South Korea, the Nosamos still operated within the parameters of election politics: committed as they were, they did not constitute a fundamental break in this regard from the "old politics."

On the other hand, there were so many changes brought by the mobile civil society that it would be nonsensical to regard the movements as simply extensions of the past. Some are quantitative changes such as the speed of mobilisation and the scale of coordination; others are more qualitative such as the "instant communities of practice" and the enlarged political ecology, which used to consist of mass media

and computer networks with fixed terminals, but now includes moving pedestrians, people in their cars, "anytime, anywhere." Various media and groups of activists are connected to form the substance of social movements, whose structure may not be that different, but its formation process is remarkably transformed. The enlarged media ecology adds mobility and perpetual connectivity to politics. In so doing, it enlarges civil society itself.

Indeed, a mobile civil society is a mixed blessing. As a revolt of the urban middle class, People Power II faced opposition from the country's majority poor, who had less access to ICTs. The youth campaign of the Nosamos, on the other hand, was resisted by traditional political forces. Yet, as the opponents were swept away by the whirlwind of the mobile civil society, at least temporarily, the weaknesses of the mobile phone as a means of political communication were also exposed, especially its incapacity for sustained deliberation.

With the passing of time and further integration of mobile technologies into political life, the mobile civil society is spreading into more countries and becoming a more regular part of informational politics. The new cases emerging around the world will need to be examined, which will add considerably to the accumulation of knowledge about the socio-political role of ICTs. But before then, it is essential to remember what we have learned from People Power II and the Nosamo movement, which are not merely technological developments but historical events of an internal structure fostered within specific institutional frameworks, broader social contexts, and the enlarged media ecology that includes mass media, the Internet, and the mobile phone.

Note:

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