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Suk-Ki Kong <sup>a</sup>

<sup>a</sup> Asia Center, Seoul National University, Seoul, South Korea

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## Politics of cosmopolitan citizenship: the Korean engagement in the global justice movements

Kong Suk-Ki\*

*Asia Center, Seoul National University, Seoul, South Korea*

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This article explains why and how the Korean social movements engage in the Global Justice Movement (GJM). We believe that Korean social movements gradually developed consciousness of cosmopolitan citizenship through engaging in the GJM. We found that international opportunities like the UN and World Social Forum processes, whether positive or negative, have forced Korean social movements to engage in the GJMs. Environmental and human rights movements (belonging to the 'new social movements') were increasingly disappointed with the UN process and focused on the GJM with changing the strategy from institutionalization to global campaigns or south-to-south collaboration. Labor and peasants movements (belonging to the 'old social movements') continue to struggle with developing sustained networks because of lack of the so-called 'rooted cosmopolitans.' Despite such differences, Korean civil society becomes more conscious of global justice as a new master frame to tackle neoliberal globalization within the future.

**Keywords:** global justice movement; Korean social movements; cosmopolitan citizenship; neoliberal globalization

### 1 Introduction

How can we explain the big surge of the Global Justice Movement (GJM) in the late 1990s? For specific answers, we need to look at a series of global protests against corporate-driven forms of globalization, the so-called 'neoliberal globalization' over the decades. We observed that workers, environmentalists, peasants, and human rights advocates marched together in the streets of Seattle, Porto Alegre, Genoa, Florence, Mumbai, Nairobi, Bélem, and Dakar, and so on. This 'blue–green–purple–red alliance' was hailed by many activists to herald the birth of transnational social movements to resist neoliberal globalization (Podobnik 2005). Such a series of global protests show how individuals as global citizens can engage with the world by raising their voice against poverty, scarce resources, climate change, and global inequality.

Scholars of social movements argue that the GJM can be defined as a reaction to neoliberal globalization, an expression of 'globalization-from-below,' a key element of global civil society, and an exemplar of the globalization of local activism (della Porta 2007, Juris 2008, Moghadam 2008). In particular, the World Social Forum (WSF), a team of Latin American and French activists launched in 2001, provides a transnational public

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\*Email: skong@snu.ac.kr

sphere in which the marginalized from the global south work together not only to advance a just and equitable global order, the so-called 'alternative globalization,' but also to practice a democratic form of globalization by raising previously excluded voices into the international decision-making processes. Essentially, this means that the GJM contributes to restoring the democratic rule in world politics. Furthermore, it contributes to raising consciousness of the so-called cosmopolitan citizenship among participants who could play a pivotal role in bridging various societies beyond the national border (Linklater 1998, Dobson 2006).

However, the GJM is also struggling with many challenges such as underrepresented regions and unsustainable linkages from transnational to local groups. Even within the WSF, for instance, Asia and Africa are seriously underrepresented world regions (Glasius and Timms 2005). Although new communication technologies, primarily the Internet, have steadily reduced the costs of mobilizing transnational advocacy, they could not accomplish sustained networks from transnational to local groups and vice versa (Smith *et al.* 1997, Keck and Sikkink 1998, Guidry *et al.* 2000, Khagram *et al.* 2002). Although the GJM has developed actions oriented to sensitize citizens to seek after alternative values and ideas to global injustice, it needs to develop robust and sustained networks by actively utilizing various levels of political opportunity structures (POS). Now the GJM is increasingly influenced by a dynamic interaction of POS at multiple levels (Keck and Sikkink 1999, Stiles 2000, Khagram *et al.* 2002).

In Korea, both academia and activists have hardly paid attention to either the new type of GJM or the fact that Korean social movements have not engaged in it until the early 1990s because of the pro-democracy movements which took place over a long span of time. Fortunately, the overlap between the two long-term processes of democratization and globalization in the late 1980s helped the Korean social movement organizations (SMOs) focus on the 'new social movements' (Kriesi *et al.* 1995), which focus on identity and lifestyle. We call the new social movements as 'civil movements,' meaning citizens' movements concerning the environment and human rights issues that rose remarkably after the democratic transition in 1987. Civil movements largely retain reformist strategy or insider strategy and focus more on quality-of-life issues that formerly had been disregarded and overshadowed by the pro-democracy movements. In contrast, the 'people's movements' that I refer to here mean the 'old social movements,' focusing on class-based mobilization and economic demands, bravely criticized the government policy for the 'rush-to economic development' that ignores the basic rights of workers and farmers while favoring the needs of the big business groups, Chaebol, in Korea. People's movements keep conflicting relationship with the authoritarian government by fighting for the restoration of human rights and democracy (Kim 2000, Choi 2002, Koo 2002, Kong 2006). After the collapse of the military regime in 1987, people's movements have also met new opportunities as well as threats with the advent of neoliberal globalization.

Given the enormous changes in the socio/political context at a national level, both civil and people's movements tried to expand their activism into the international arena. I believe that transnational activism should be a key mechanism to explain the ups and downs of Korean engagement in the GJM as a global citizen. By examining the pattern of transnational activism in South Korea, I try to answer the question of why Korean social movements rapidly engaged in the GJM and how they become aware of global issues in terms of global framing and transnational networks. I also explore how different types of transnational activism subsist along the movement sectors. Before mentioning the cases, let me highlight the new patterns of transnational activism in the neoliberal era.

## 2 Patterns of transnational activism in the neoliberal era

Recent research on transnational activism has largely focused on nonstate actors' independent role as enactors (Boli and Thomas 1999), world civic political actors (Wapner 1996), advocates (Keck and Sikkink 1998), campaigners (Khagram 2004), brokers (Smith 2002), and rooted cosmopolitans (Tarrow 2005) who play a pivotal role in developing and enhancing international norms, ideas, and collective beliefs. In addition, it is noted that both international relations and social movement theories converge on three mechanisms to explain various types of transnational activism including transnational advocacy, coalition, and movements (Keck and Sikkink 1998, Lewis 2000, Imig and Tarrow 2001, Brysk 2002, Rothman and Oliver 1999, Smith and Johnston 2002). Despite the increasing number of studies on transnational actors, however, there are still many gaps in approaches to transnational activism studies, one of which combines two contrasting approaches like 'top-down' versus 'bottom-up,' temporary versus long-term processes, and a comparative approach to different movement sectors. More attention requires for the fact that transnational actors have been struggling with both internal and external obstacles including an incapability of developing sustained networks, and a gap in representation between the global north and south in transnational public sphere like the WSF (Teivainen 2002).

In particular, a new pattern of transnational activism converges into the GJM, which attempts for globalization from the bottom by developing alternatives to neoliberal economic globalization from the top. While the Battle of Seattle, in late 1999, is usually cited as the origin of the GJM, there were some precursors of anti-neoliberal movements in the form of resistance to structural adjustment policies. As seen in Table 1, most of the key players in the GJM have been working on previous issues such as food riots or anti-IMF riots, indigenous movements, anti-debt campaigns, anti-sweatshop movements, anti-MAI coalition, development and human rights.

Many participants at the Seattle WTO meeting could witness and learn a great deal from each other and cultivate skills for organizing protests at the local, national, and transnational levels (Smith 2001). The Seattle battle served as a seedbed for the establishment of the WSF. It also served as a basis for subsequent global protests in cities such as Prague, Quebec city, Genoa, Barcelona, and Washington, D.C., all of which provided critical spaces for learning, coalition building, and action (Juris 2008, Moghadam 2008, Smith 2008). Although there was a brief retreat in the protests after 11 September 2001, global resistance to neoliberal capitalism continued, and expanded into antiwar campaigns right after the invasion and occupation of Iraq in 2003.

As a parallel, there have been a series of UN world conferences on environment, human rights, habitat, and women that provided a transnational public sphere in which global north and south actively engage in international decision-making process in the early 1990s (Clark *et al.* 1998). After the collapse of the military regime in 1987, Korean social movements also tried to expand their activism into the transnational arena with more favorable political opportunities (Kong 2006).

How did Korean social movements engage in the GJM processes? To get a clearer picture of global engagement, I focus on two questions: why civil and people's movements are commonly interested in transnational activism and how their transnational activism has evolved or converged. To answer these questions, I combine comparative and case studies and then consider three key concepts: transnational political opportunity structure (TPOS), global framing, and transnational networks (Smith *et al.* 1997, Tarrow 1998, 2005, Schmitz 2006). For TPOS, I include the UN world conferences; WSFs; regular

Table 1. Key players and frames of the Global Justice Movement.

Movement issues	Key players and frames
Environment	Greenpeace, Friends of the Earth Environmental protection and sustainable development
Indigenous rights	Congreso Nacional Indígena de México, Zapatistas Cultural and land rights
Feminist (women)	DAWM, World March of Women, WLUML, WIDE, Feminist Articulation Mercosur Feminist dialogues, gender justice, women's human rights
Human rights	Amnesty International, Fédération internationale de droits humains, Students against Sweatshops, Global Exchange
Labor	Australian Council of Trade Unions, Canadian Labour Congress, COSATU, KCTU Worker and trade union rights, against job loss and outsourcing, worker solidarity
Antipoverty (development)	Oxfam, Jubilee South, Make Poverty History Against neoliberalism, for sustainable development, end Third World debt
Peace	Peace Boat, Code Pink, WILPE, Stop the War Coalition, United for Peace and Justice Against militarism and war, creating sustainable peace
Religious	Christian Aid, World Council of Churches, Catholic Agency for Overseas Development Support for the poor, abolish the debt, critique of neoliberalism
Third worldist	Focus on the global south, Third World Network, Third World Forum Against neoliberalism and imperialism, for deglobalization and local/regional solutions
Anticorporate governance	50 Years is Enough!, ATTAC, Public Citizen Democratic global governance, tax financial markets

Source: Adapted from Moghadam (2008, p. 93).

meetings of international financial organizations like the WTO, World Bank, and IMF; and G8 summit. I suppose that civil and people's movements groups respond differently to such new TPOS and strategically mobilize global frames to apply to local settings by developing various networks across, beyond, and below national borders.

I examine the degree of transnational activism by looking at two aspects: quantity like scope and scale and types of strategy.<sup>1</sup> The scope includes not only the range of participation from local to national, regional, and global meetings but also variety of network partners; the scale includes size, frequency, and sustainability in terms of transnational and local linkages. I also examine the types of strategy adoption including that of the insider and the outsider. The insider strategy is concerned with institutionalization into the intergovernmental organizations while the outsider strategy is concerned with direct action.

Based on these two aspects, I explored patterns of transnational activism along the movement sectors. Figure 1 shows the patterns taken by the Korean movement groups in the course of transnational activism based on the three key mechanisms: TPOS, global framing, and transnational networks.

In the early stage of transnational expansion, Korean civil movements engaged more actively in transnational movement activism than people's movements with more favorable political opportunities at both domestic and international levels. For example, environmental and human rights movements attended the UN world conferences in Rio

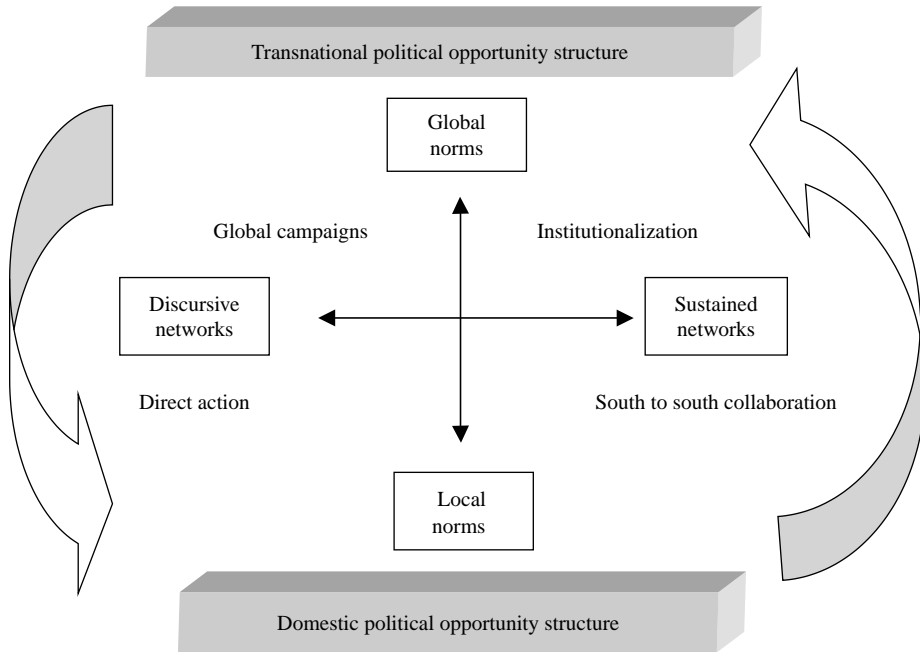


Figure 1. Patterns of transnational activism in Korean social movements.

and Vienna in 1992 and 1993, respectively. With more favorable political opportunities at multiple levels, the Korean civil movements could further advance the scale and scopes of transnational networks but also internalize global norms and ideas to local settings more effectively. On the other hand, labor and peasant groups began to engage in anti-neoliberal globalization movements in the late 1990s with the advent of the IMF bailout system. While people's movements somewhat delayed engaging in GJMs, however, a long tradition of pro-democracy movements enabled them to play a more central role in collaborating with many global south partners at new transnational public spheres like the WSF. They took an initiative in developing transnational advocacy networks for promoting human rights in global south NGOs with strong, contentious, pro-democracy movements. For instance, transnational campaigns against the WTO meeting at Cancun, Mexico, in 2003 and Hong Kong, China, in 2005 made Korean labor and peasants groups prominent leading groups for anti-neoliberal campaigns. In addition, they also became the largest group of participants at the Mumbai WSF in 2004. However, they were quickly disappointed with the WSF after the Porto Alegre WSF in 2005. Did the UN and WSF processes drive the way? Korean social movements witness, learn, and frame such global goals as climate justice, social rights, global justice, and food sovereignty (Kong and Lim 2010).

In addition, Korean social movements focused on developing sustained networks with which they could transform their narrow worldview into a cosmopolitan one. Unfortunately, Korean social movements largely rely on discursive or coalition networks in which they tended to employ the outsider strategy of direct action by using the Internet, decentralized networks easily forged through WSFs, as well as global campaigns like antiwar and anti-neoliberal globalization movements. How can this trend be reversed? Institutionalization or south-to-south collaboration still seems a distant prospect. Let me

track the dynamics of the Korean transnational activism by focusing on its engagement in the GJM.

### 3 Korean engagement in the global justice movement in a comparative perspective

To what degree have Korean social movements engaged in transnational activism, including transnational advocacy networks, campaigns, and social movements? Historically, the Korean SMOs have been so embedded in and embraced by the pro-democracy movement over the past three decades that they have been impeded from expanding beyond their national border. Although the Korean pro-democracy movement became strong, contentious, and dynamic enough to mobilize nationwide support from the general public, most subgroups of the movement such as labor, farmers, and students were isolated and marginalized from the international community until the mid-1990s (Koo 1993, Kim 2000, Choi 2002). Paradoxically, a quick and inevitable incorporation into a neoliberal world capitalist system with the advent of the IMF bailout regime in Korea forced the Korean social movements to commit themselves to linking strong, dynamic, and contentious domestic activism with the transnational arena in the hopes of moving from the status of marginal bystander to a regional mediator and eventually achieving the position of a transnational broker. In the course of transnational expansion, however, Korean social movements have met many obstacles (Kong 2006).

On the one hand, both human rights and environmental groups quickly joined transnational activism by engaging in the UN-led conferences. First, strong and contentious activism for democracy provided human rights groups in Korea with both obstacles and leverages to expand their activism into the transnational public sphere. The ratification of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR) in 1990 and joint membership into the UN with North Korea in 1991 enabled human rights groups to prepare well for their first encounter with various human rights groups at Vienna in 1993.<sup>2</sup> Surprisingly, most of the Korean participants at the Vienna conference were awakened to a variety of new issues and norms on human rights such as the rights of refugee, gays and lesbians, children, and indigenous people,. Since then, however, they have been slow and even reluctant to develop transnational networks and use their invaluable experiences and resources to integrate global norms and ideas into various domestic issues. Now they are facing the task of overcoming this static and master frame 'democratization' by grafting various new global frames into local claims. Likewise, most movement sectors in Korea have to overcome this strong master frame of democratization by developing a cosmopolitan worldview.

Second, environmental movements have tried to quickly switch into another master frame, 'sustainable development,' since the 1992 Rio UN Conference on Environment and Development. They swiftly turned their attention to new issues such as sustainable development, climate change, and GMOs. However, within a decade, the Korean government gradually changed its initial direction in the opposite way. The government misinterpreted the sustainable development frame to its advantage and then employed neoliberalism ideology for economic development. Arguably, environmental groups are now facing a new and strong frame competitor: neoliberalism. They again focus more on frame convergence in 'justice' at multiple levels. Like other sectors, environmental groups also have been struggling with globalizing themselves beyond the old-fashioned pro-democracy movement. They not only have to integrate global norms and ideas into local concerns but also have to globalize local issues to a transnational level.



On the other hand, Korean labor and peasant groups slowly engaged in transnational activism with rapid worldwide spread of anti-neoliberalism. The WSF emerged as a challenge to the broad global changes that limited space for democratic participation as neoliberal globalization expanded and deepened. A global wave of protest against neoliberal globalization emerged during the 1980s and 1990s as citizens made efforts to define the course of globalization as 'Another World is Possible.' The series of WSFs mobilized tens of thousands of participants all over the world and provided an 'open space' for exchanging ideas, resources, and information through which the participants built networks and alliances and promoted tangible alternatives to neoliberal globalization (Smith 2008). In other words, the open space served as a pivotal learning space for the GJMs to ensure more equitable participation (Sen and Waterman 2004). The number of participants rapidly increased from 10,000 at Porto Alegre in 2001 to 100,000 at Mumbai, India, in 2004. Followed by this, the number saw an increase from the 100,000 to 150,000 at Porto Alegre in 2005 to slightly lower numbers of 70,000 at Nairobi, Kenya, and, finally, to 66,000 at Belém, Brazil, in 2009 (Kong and Lim 2010).

How did Korean social movements engage in the UN and WSF processes? With a comparative perspective, I examined four movement sectors including civil movements (environmental, human rights) and people's movements (labor, peasant) and explored the reason why different patterns of transnational activism evolved along the movement sectors.

### 3.1 *Environmental movements*

The Rio world conference in 1992 provided significant motivation for Korean environmental groups to scale up their activism on a global scale. Despite their first-time participation, surprisingly 60 participants including professors, lawyers, national newspaper reporters and op/ed writers, activists, business leaders, and NGO staff attended the Rio conference where they were overwhelmed at the size and learned about various environmental issues such as nuclear waste dumps, greenhouse emissions and climate change, preservation of wetlands, and the dangers of dam construction, land reclamation, and GMOs. A Korean delegate describes his impression:

Such a huge number of topics and events made me feel totally lost. Frankly, right after the Rio conference, I did not realize its significance for helping us to understand environmental issues. Afterwards I could understand and refocus the issues bit by bit. I believe that it is not the case with me. Likewise many environmental groups gradually realized lessons at Rio and tried to apply them to local concerns.<sup>3</sup>

The Kim Young Sam regime (1993–1997) also opened various access channels to environmental groups so that they could participate in the policy-making process. Thus, environmental groups gradually adopted and carried out moderate strategies to influence the government policy-making that affected the environment. In the mid-1990s, under this favorable domestic condition, activists gradually integrated the new frames into local issues centering around preserving the ecosystem, stopping the spread of nuclear power plants, saving the rivers and lakes, cleaning up air pollution, preserving tidal flats, and protecting animals and their ecosystems. In particular, many environmental movement activists and professionals have followed up on the global frames of 'sustainable development' and 'wetlands' by participating in such international conferences as the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change in 1993, Manchester Global Forum on 'Agenda 21' in the UK in 1994, the UN Convention on Sustainable Development (UNCBD), and the Ramsar Convention. For global framing processes, there have been increasing clashes between the movement and government goals. The Saemangeum



anti-land reclamation movement struggle in Korea highlights the fierce competition between movement and government goals. Environmental groups framed the Saemangeum preservation into the Ramsar Convention, the UN CBD and even the need to protect the global ecosystem for the cancellation of the national project. Even though the movement failed to stop the project, it was successful not only in applying global norms to local settings but also in expanding transnational networks.

Korean environmental groups searched for international partners like Greenpeace, Friends of the Earth, and World Watch Institute to advocate their concerns on the environment and then developed transnational ties through mutual support, visits, information exchanges, skill sharing, and funding. At the same time, they turned their focus to networking with neighboring regional NGOs, from grassroots to national groups, in the late 1990s. Such networks provided staff members formerly excluded from international affairs with many opportunities to learn, understand, and apply new knowledge to local concerns. Throughout the process, they developed a capacity to adapt new ideas and knowledge into local concerns and develop transnational ties they utilized later to strengthen local voices for eco-friendly policy-making in the local context. In other words, environmental movements extended their network activities from the global NGOs to local grassroots groups in Asia.

However, they face many obstacles in the course of forging transnational networks. Like other movement sectors, Korean environmental groups have been so strongly intertwined with pro-democracy movement that they routinely engage in those national issues as occasion demands. Although many environmental groups have been aware of the necessity of transnational cooperation due to the Rio conference, they often relapse into national or local issues right after international conferences in spite of a sense of urgency awakened at the conferences. An environmental group leader stresses this phenomenon at the early stage of transnational activism as follows:

Although many activists and government officials attended on the largest scale ever, they remained at the periphery of the main activities carried out by global NGOs. Frankly I felt so shamed there because we seemed to go there as a kind of bystander but not an actor. I have had similar experiences at several UN-led conferences. Every time I make a resolution to more actively engage in transnational cooperation. Unfortunately, as soon as I return home, I cannot avoid attending to urgent domestic issues and leave the transnational activism behind.<sup>4</sup>

As the big wave of neoliberalism strongly influenced policy-making process all over the world, both external and domestic political opportunities are getting narrower. The departments of the government on economy and finance have gained much more leverage with the increasing impact of neoliberal policies and programs than those on the environment. Under these unfavorable contexts, Korean environmental groups have easily returned to outsider strategies such as direct action, mass demonstrations, and sit-ins since the early 2000s. They now realize issue convergence in justice by engaging the GJM and focus on mobilizing global frame, climate justice. Simultaneously, they try to maintain the balance of developing sustained networks between global and local NGOs.

### 3.2 *Human rights movements*

Thirty-three human rights lawyers and activists attended the Vienna world conference in 1993. Of them, 18 belonged to the South Korean NGOs' Network for the UN World Conference on Human Rights (KONUHC) and the other 15 belonged to overseas Korean groups. Korean human rights groups differed from the environmental groups that gathered in Rio the previous year in terms of their preparation process. They also went through a

frame extension process following the Vienna conference in 1993. They were excited about new human rights issues such as the ICESCR, and minority rights related to indigenous people, homosexuals, race, ethnicity, children, and migrant workers. Focusing on these issues enabled them to go beyond the call for civil and political rights to which they had previously devoted all their energies during the pro-democracy movement in the 1980s. A Korean delegate recalled his impression of the new frames:

I went to Vienna, simply hoping to find an advocate to help us appeal our mysterious death cases. But I was so surprised to realize how broadly human rights issues are. For me, most issues sounded brand new. Frankly I could not understand such diverse issues at that time but felt humbled. Actually we learned, discussed, and applied many new frames that we are working on today at the Vienna conference.<sup>5</sup>

Since the Vienna conference, small local human rights groups tried to expand their activism into global human rights issues but readily focused on domestic networks, which have been dominated by temporary networks closely related to broad-based social movements. Only a few key human rights groups were able to address such broad-based issues by developing transnational ties across national boundaries and by engaging in UN commissions related to specific issues. The human rights movement sector has hardly developed individual commitment to the UN Commission on Human Rights through participation into the organizational level of transnational networks with global human rights groups on a full scale but rather focused its efforts on the UN reviewing sessions by writing counterreports to government reports on ratified international treaties.

The Korean government unwillingly submitted reports that did not include sufficient information about the implementation of the ICCPR in practice and about factors and difficulties that might impede the application of the covenant. The government continued to show off its 'fair and equitable' legal system without phasing out the National Security Law in spite of the increasing pressure from the UN. Fortunately, the Korean NGOs' experience of transnational advocacy and campaigns throughout the preparation of the counterreport prompted all NGOs involved to recognize the need to develop a strong solidarity to draft convincing alternatives to a common, converging issue: global justice.

Human rights groups often identify brand-new ideas by mobilizing global norms throughout their participation in the UN review process on the government report due to a lack of organizational capacity, obsession with the ICCPR, and the particular political contexts and culture of national security and economic development. Such obstacles caused human rights groups to remain focused on traditional human rights issues and stopped them from developing a master frame that could embrace various issues like agriculture, environment, and poverty in terms of the right to live. Human rights groups tend to keep their traditional strategy, direct action, because of the historical legacy of long contention with the government. Interestingly, they focus more on a new way of influencing the recalcitrant government by engaging in international institution like the UN Human Rights Council, as well as collaborating with global NGOs like Amnesty International. Amnesty International Korean Section is actively mobilizing transnational advocacy to press the government to properly protect the migrant worker's human rights, a current political hot potato in Korea.

### 3.3 Labor Movements

Korea has shown a continued process of conflicts between a strong state and contentious society. This character between the strong government and contentious civil society has been crystallized by the long-term pro-democracy movement whose key player has been labor movement groups. Labor movements deeply embedded in the pro-democracy

movements during the authoritarian regime burst into flames with the collapse of the military regime in 1987. Labor movements criticized the contradictions generated by the rush-to industrialization and its side effect of class inequality. As the number of trade unions skyrocketed in the early 1990s, they played a central role in developing solidarity among people's movement groups.

The sudden collapse of the socialist countries in Eastern Europe brought about a crisis of movement goals among labor movement groups. Such an ideological crisis drove labor movements in three ways. One is a corporative approach within worker groups and the second is a solidarity approach beyond the work place. The third one is to overcome a narrow mind among workers who only care about their interests and then expand their views into social issues on a global scale with engaging in anti-neoliberal globalization networks. Labor movements tried to tackle a core issue, neoliberal globalization, led by three international financial organizations, namely, the WTO, World Bank, and IMF, as well as local trade agreements like NAFTA.

Like the Rio and Vienna world conferences, the Seattle battle against the third WTO ministerial meeting in November 1999 became a triggering event for labor movements to jump into transnational activism. Right before the WTO meeting, Korean people's movements launched a network named Korean People's Action against Investment Treaties and the WTO (KoPA) on 15 September 1999.<sup>6</sup> KoPA aimed to make people clearly recognize the negative effects of the WTO by opposing the investment treaties and control of transnational financial capital as well as by demanding the cancellation of foreign debt and redistribution to the poor. KoPA also engaged in WSF processes as a member of International Council by stressing on the importance of transnational solidarity among global south NGOs. A union staff explained the reason for its quick engagement in the WSF as follows:

Labour movements have been gradually relegated to interest groups, who only think of union benefits among members rather than consider labour issues as part of social problems on a global scale. I believe that the WSF provides leverage for Korean labour movements to jump back.<sup>7</sup>

KoPA increasingly engaged in global resistance to stop the WTO and financial market until it was dissolved in 2005. KoPA sent seven members to the Seattle battle and four to the first WSF in Porto Alegre, Brazil. From the third WSF, KoPA and labor movements organized a large number of participants as a formal body of Korean delegates. They held workshops with partners like Brazil and South Africa in the global south and then developed ties with ATTAC France. Arguably, continued participation at the WSF enabled Korean labor union members to realize the danger of falling into struggles for just union interest rather than social issues and to learn global justice frames against neoliberal globalization. The WSFs served as a transnational public sphere for them to communicate and share their experiences with various social movements and union members from all over the world.

With the surge of antiwar movements in 2003, labor movements in Korea enjoyed a large number of participants at the Mumbai WSF in 2004 and then the Porto Alegre WSF in 2005. Global south NGOs were fascinated by such dynamic activism by the Korean participants in WSFs and even expected Korean NGOs to play a central role in leading transnational activism in Asia. Practically, though, the rosy image did not reflect the reality of Korean social movements. Since the 2005 WSF, the number of Korean participants at the WSF has rapidly decreased from 150 to 10. Now as only a few leaders in the labor movement keep joining the WSF, most transnational activism still remains discursive and limited to temporary campaigns by mainly relying on the Internet, meaning that the

Korean labor movements do not have enough capacity to hold the WSF in Korea because of a lack of support from the local and central governments. Labor movements are not only deeply embedded in the pro-democracy movements but also so obsessed with their own labor issues.

Labor movements have been struggling with globalization of issues and strategies and managed to focus on locally based global campaigns by targeting key international events like G8, WTO, APEC meetings, Global Action Day, and WSFs with loosely connected networks based on the Internet. Labor movements became marginalized again in the collaboration of diffusing the GJMs horizontally.

### 3.4 *Peasant's movements*

Korean peasant groups were the last to engage in the GJM because they have been domestically bounded. They came to know the WSF process when they joined the KoPA to struggle against the WTO in early 2000s. They used to be ambivalent about mobilizing transnational resources because they mainly focused on struggling with the government to get more compensation and to protect their products from agricultural imports. As Korean peasants were getting more threatened by the increasing number of international free trade agreements (FTAs), namely, Korea–Chile, Korea–USA, Korea–Canada, and Korea–Australia FTAs, they fiercely fought against the government agricultural policies.

Accidentally, a triggering incident took place at the fifth WTO ministerial meeting at Cancun, Mexico, in September 2003, where Kyung-Hae Lee, a member of the Korean peasant's group, stabbed himself to resist against neoliberal economic policies led by the WTO. Lee stood on top of a police barricade near the WTO conference carrying a sandwich board that stated, 'WTO Kills Farmers.' The incident awakened the significance of engaging in transnational protests against global major agricultural corporations among Korean farmers. For instance, Korean Farmer's League and Korean Women Peasant Association tried to learn various global frames but not ideologies based on class struggles by becoming a member of Via Campesina, an international movement of peasants, small- and medium-sized producers, landless, rural women, indigenous people, rural youth, and agricultural workers. In actuality, Korean peasant's movements do have only a few staff members to deal with international affairs like networking and they largely depend on Via Campesina to sustain transnational ties and learn new global frames such as biodiversity, climate change, and food sovereignty.

Despite the limitations, Korean peasant groups actively engaged in global campaigns to the sixth WTO ministerial meeting in Hong Kong that took place in December 2005. At the global protests against the Hong Kong WTO meeting, Korean peasants, due to lack of language, negotiation, and tactics aligned to global skills, still prefer direct action rather than engaging in discussing alternatives to neoliberal economic globalization led by the WTO. Fortunately, they keep focusing on networking with Via Campesina through which they can learn step by step and apply global frames like green agriculture, biodiversity, climate change and agriculture, and food sovereignty. It means that Korean peasants become aware of global issues with a new cosmopolitan worldview and they keenly realize the necessity of transnational activism to overcome upcoming threats to them.

### 3.5 *Comparison of four movement sectors*

As summarized in Table 2, we can see variation among four movement sectors in the process of transnational activism around the GJM.

Table 2. Characteristics of transnational activism in Korean social movements.

	Environment	Human rights	Labor	Peasants
POS	UNCED, UNCSD, UNFCCC, Ramsar	UNCHR, Vienna UNHRC, Geneva	WSF WTO, IMF World Bank G8 meeting	WTO G8 meetings
Framing process	Sustainable development Climate change Biodiversity GMO; wetland	ICCPR, ICESCR, UN Treaties	Another World is Possible	Food sovereignty Biodiversity Climate change
Networks	Greenpeace, Friends of the Earth, World Watch Institute, International Rivers Network	Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch	ATTAC COSATU Global South	Via Campesina
Issue convergence	Climate justice	Social rights	Global Justice	Food sovereignty
Transnational activism	Advocacy networks Lobbying active framing sustained networks	Advocacy Networks Lobbying Pro-democracy movements	Global Justice Direct actions Transnational Protests	Weak ties Information and Leverage politics

Environmental and human rights groups as part of civil movements have actively developed transnational networks with global NGOs like Greenpeace, Friends of the Earth, and Amnesty International right after their first encounter with two UN world conferences. They also tried to develop south-to-south networks like Indonesia WHALL, JAWAN, East Timor Networks, and Mother of May Plaza in Argentina. Environmental groups kept sustaining networks with diverse environmental NGOs from both global north and south by more actively engaging in the UN-led follow-up conferences. Some groups like Korea Federation for Environmental Movements acquired a consultant status with the UN Economic and Social Council by which they could understand, learn, and apply various global norms, ideas, and principles to local issues. But human rights groups had met more difficulty in keeping sustained networks with global south NGOs because of their relapse into strong domestic network activities against the national security law. In addition, human rights groups are getting frustrated with the UN process because of its limits in pressing the government into changing the concerned policies. The government often neglects its responsibility to publicize various human rights violations directly affecting individuals, families, and communities such as workers', children's, and women's rights, and racial discrimination. Rather the government always argues its peculiar situation of divided country and North Korea's threat. Despite unfavorable contexts, human rights groups change their focus from civil and political rights to minority rights, namely, women, children, ethnic, indigenous peoples, and to economic and social rights.

Interestingly, environmental and human rights movements having kept distance from each other in the early phase of transnational activism are now converging in the issue of global justice: climate justice and social rights. Such converging processes have been accelerated by neoliberal economic globalization; inter alia, the IMF bailout system in the

late 1990s. Threatened by neoliberal globalization networks, they more often meet and work with each other to search for an alternative, the so-called master frame, 'global justice' versus Washington Consensus through the engagement of the WSFs. However, both movement sectors are still reluctant to develop transnational ties with global south, especially south-to-south networks. Most of them are more likely to rely on the insider strategy, institutionalization, by engaging in the UN process as well as by sustaining networks with global north NGOs.

On the other hand, labor and peasant groups as part of people's movements have had less developed transnational networks than civil movements. They used to struggle with the repressing government and then have been obsessed with local issues or their own interests. A series of WSFs provided a learning classroom for labor and peasant groups that could move onto global social issues later. Although they are less prepared for learning global norms, they swiftly mobilized global norms like global justice and democratic globalization while engaging in WSF as well as anti-WTO protests. Korean people's movements, fascinated by the WSF process, demonstrated their strength and dynamism at both WSFs and anti-WTO campaigns. Amazingly, Korean activists rapidly became key players in carrying out transnational protests with their creative direct action and skills. However, such an easy engagement in the GJM did not drive them to the initiative of developing an alternative to neoliberal globalization. They were so exhausted and frustrated with the WSF process that they quickly disengaged themselves from it. Fortunately, peasant groups keep focusing on networking with *Via Campesina* and taking slow but steady steps of learning and understanding global norms.

#### 4 Conclusion

I have explored both domestic and international contexts to answer the two critical questions: why Korean social movements swiftly took the strategy of transnational activism in 1990s and how the pattern of transnational activism varied along the movement sectors with reference to the UN-led conference and the WSFs. I would like to draw some findings from these comparisons.

First, civil movements including environmental and human rights movements, which have focused on the insider strategy or institutionalization, are now turning towards issue convergence in global justice and focusing more on south-to-south collaboration, especially in Asia.

Second, civil movements with favorable political opportunities actively expanded into transnational sphere earlier than people's movements after engaging the UN world conferences in early 1990s. However, such institutional strategy of civil movements could not sustain and hardly reached the goal of combining global framing and transnational networking based on sustained networks. Instead, they have experienced a kind of reverse trace from institutionalization to global protests because of limits of the UN process as well as the recalcitrant government oriented to national economic growth and security. Paradoxically, such unfavorable political opportunities made both environmental and human rights movements converge in a master frame, global justice with the increasing threat of neoliberal economic globalization. As seen in Figure 1, civil movements turn their attention from institutionalization either to global campaigns or to south-to-south collaboration.

Third, people's movements including labor and peasant movements were quickly fascinated by the WSF and actively engaged in global justice protests along the WSF, WTO, and G8 meetings. They also tried to develop global south networks and mobilized



brand-new frames such as food sovereignty, biodiversity, climate change, antiwar, and alternative globalization. However, these activities could not be sustained without sustained networks between transnational and local partners. Interestingly, latecomer peasant groups collaborate closely with Via Campesina to mobilize sustained transnational networks as well as global frames for local concerns.

Fourth, people's movements caught up with transnational mobilization strategy late by engaging in the WSFs in the early 2000s, even though they have often mobilized advocacy from international religious groups during the military regime. Whereas labor movements have kept consistently loose networks with European groups like ATTAC, peasant groups have recently tackled transnational activism strategy. Such historical backgrounds could help labor movements engage more easily in antiglobalization and antiwar movements around the world through the WSF process. Peasant groups slowly developed the transnational mobilization strategy by becoming a member of Via Campesina after participating at the Cancun protests. Although Korean people's movements demonstrated strong and dynamic activism at both Cancun and Hong Kong battles, however, they could not sustain such dynamic activism because of lack of networks and little knowledge of global frames. Now they realized the necessity of developing a robust relationship with global south NGOs.

Despite such differences along movement sectors, both civil and people's movements increasingly understand the necessity of engaging in the GJM, and hence tried to combine three key aspects: norms as movement frames, forms as mobilizing structure (networks), and transnational public sphere to link local issues to global ones, and vice versa. More actively engaging the GJM makes Korean civil society become more conscious of global justice as a new master frame to tackle neoliberal globalization. However, there still lacks the so-called 'rooted cosmopolitans,' which can play a brokerage role in linking transnational–national–local groups (Tarrow 2002). Without them, Korean civil society might keep relying on the top-down strategy of transnational mobilization. Indeed, this might lead to a reverse of the GJM searching for globalization from below.

## Notes

1. I collected three kinds of data based on interviews of the participants at the world conferences organized by the UN since the early 1990s as well as at the world social forums since 2001; scrutiny of online and offline documents published by movement groups, the government, and business groups. I also analyzed the data by combining two supplemental methods: quantitative and qualitative analyses. The quantitative data used here mainly come from the *Mingandanche Chongram (Directory of Korean NGOs, 2003)*, *Hanguk Siminsahoe Yeongam (Korea Civil Society Yearbook, 2003, 2004, and 2006)*, and *Hanguk Siminsahoe Undongsa, 1987–2002 (Korean Civil Society and NGOs, 2004)* as well as the *Ingwon Harusosik (Human Rights Daily News, 1993–2003)*.
2. Particularly, religious and women's networks with transnational groups were significant for the Korean human rights groups to engage in the UN-led conference. The latter could hold successfully the 'International Symposium on the National Security Law' with Asian NGOs even for their first participation. It might be impossible without financial supports of the World Council of Churches and the South Korea Council for Comfort Women.
3. Interview with Yeyong Choi, staff of Korean Federation for Environmental Movements on 9 July 2003.
4. Interview with Sam-Jin Lim, ex-general secretary of Green Korea United on 4 July 2001.
5. Interview with Lae-Goon Park, staff of Sarangbang Group for Human Rights on 10 July 2003.
6. KoPA consisted of more than 40 social movement organizations that include the civil and people's movement groups. The key groups are as follows: Korean Confederation of Trade Unions, Korean Farmer's League, People's Solidarity for Social Progress, Green Korea United, and People's Solidarity for Participatory Democracy, Korea Federation for Environmental

Movements, Sarangbang Group for Human Rights, Policy and Information Center for International Solidarity, etc.

7. Interview with Chang-Geun Lee, chief of International Affairs at Korean Confederation of Trade Unions on 18 September 2008.

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