SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY, & SOCIAL MOVEMENTS IN KOREA

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MY RESEARCH TRAJECTORY

- The scientific construction of Korean medicine (1999-2003 and 2010-2013)
- Hwang Affair and Hwang Supporters (2005-2006)
- US beef and Candlelight protests (2008)
- ‘Samsung Leukemia’ Case (2011-2013, with Heeyun Kim)
How do we interpret Hwang supporters as public participation in science?

Movement-oriented STSers: supporters of public participation in science. But they severely criticized Hwang supporters and tended to describe crazy people.

Critics on movement-oriented STSers: Why do STSers criticize public participation (Hwang supporters) without considering social contexts?
Hwang supporters’ protest in Seoul (2006)
Widow of Mr. Jung who burned himself to death for Dr. Hwang (2006)
Hwang Supporters and Me (participant observation) in front of KBS
HWANG SUPPORTERS

- Organized through the Internet
- Online and offline connections
- Politics of accusations: Korean government, media, Dr. Shatten (Hwang’s US collaborator etc.)
- Conspiracy theories: Freemason, CIA, Samsung, Jewish people etc.
Public feeling for science: politics of hope (stem cell research as hope technology), fear of losing valuable ‘national’ technology to the US and others, promise (curing diseases)

Nationalism: science as national identity

Losing public trust: Korean government, media, scientists (conspiracy theories)
Candlelight Protest against US Beef Import in Downtown Seoul, June 2008
PD Notebook, a renowned investigational program in Korea, aired the sensational topic “Is US Beef Safe from Mad Cow Disease?” on April 29.

- It depicted consumption of US beef as very risky mainly due to loose US surveillance system.
- It interviewed several experts who warned about the risk of US beef.
CONTROVERSIES IN THE MEDIA REPORTS

- OIE (the World Organization for Animal Health) gave the US “controlled BSE risk status”: Was this decision scientific or political?
- Import of beef from cattle over 30 months old
- US surveillance system governing beef production
- Definition of Specified Risk Materials (SRMs)
Opposing the government decision on US beef import, several netizens suggested candlelight protests in downtown Seoul

Candlelight protests as a peaceful and nonviolent way of political expression: a new protest culture in Korea since 2002

On May 2, 10,000 people gathered and protested in downtown Seoul
Candlelight protests were held almost every night from the start of May to mid-August 2008—more than 3 months.

Formation of “People’s Council against Mad Cow Disease”: alliance between ordinary citizens and activists organization.

Called for the nullification of US beef import and requested retreat from neoliberal policies proposed by Lee Government.
Expansion Period (May 2 – June 10): 1 million people protested on June 10, the symbolic day for Korean democracy

Contestation Period (June 11 – June 29): Korean government’s hard-line policy against candlelight protest

Ending Period (June 30 – August 15): leaders arrested; fatigues of prolonged street demonstration
MULTI-TENTACLED PARTICIPATION

- Multiple modes of participation: street demonstration, online impeachment, spreading information on BSE, attacking conservative media, boycotting US beef, joining official politics such as congressional hearings, legal confrontations.

- Melee participation: the participation is not orderly, predetermined, and definitive.

- Conflictual nature of participation rather than consensual one.
Formation of “Expert Council,” providing expert knowledge to “People’s Council against Mad Cow Disease”

- Totaled about 20 experts
- Council included scientists, doctors, veterinarians, lawyers, and social scientists
ROLES OF COUNTER-EXPERTS

- Providing scientific facts and information on mad cow disease to media
- Countering the Korean government’s major arguments about scientific facts of mad cow disease
- Informing the public about the risk of US beef
- Defending indicted journalists in court
- Providing legal, trade, and ideological information
Phil Brown’s boundary movement (2007): hybrid movement that blurs the boundaries between lay and expert forms of knowledge and between activists and the state.

Blurring traditional distinctions b/w movement and nonmovement actors as well as b/w laypeople and professionals.

Configuration: individual activists, outside supporters, scientists, academics, legislators, government officials and agencies, etc.
Initiation of the candlelight protests by ordinary citizens via the Internet; activists later joining the movement

Construction of counter expertise from academia and expert activists

Blurring boundaries among media, science, law, and movement

Blurring boundaries between natural and social science or science and policy
A father’s (Sang-Ki Hwang) struggle (2007): former Samsung worker, Yumi Hwang’s death (mid 20s, leukemia)

Finding 4 more cases

Attempting to spread news on Samsung workers’ deaths

Illness experience → social discovery → collective illness experience → politicized illness experience → social movement

Formation of social movement organization: “Sharps”
PATIENTS (CUMULATIVE, PAST 5 YEARS)

- Total 155 patients, 138 Samsung workers
- Cancers: 114 Blood Cancers 36
Demonstration in front of Samsung Headquarter
FIELD-CENTERED SCIENCE AND MAKING CAUSALITIES

- Oppositional experts: 15 doctors, scientists, and lawyers
- Collecting evidences from workers
- Connecting patient illness experiences with credible sciences
- Conducting scientific research: industrial hygienics, epidemiology, occupational health
- Investigating other similar cases: US, Taiwan, UK cases
CRITIQUE OF SCIENCE AND EXPERT BY ‘SHARPS’

- Lack of field-centeredness: Experts do not visit factory or they do not study factory environments in detail.
- ‘Undone science’: lack of research in worker’s illness in semiconductor industry
- Interest-ladenness of science: Samsung’s hired science
- Imperfection of science: need to bring on social and cultural rationalities
WHY SOCIAL MOVEMENTS?

- Conflictual nature rather than consensual nature
- Limit of deliberative model (consensus conference, technology assessment etc)
- Limit of artificial construction of public
- Diversity of social movements
- Challenging double delegations (political decision making to politicians + knowledge making to experts)
INDETERMINACY OF PARTICIPATION

- Emergent publics
- Diverse modes of participation
- Participants as ontological subjects as well as epistemological subjects
- Mobility: online-offline connections in the information age. Networked publics
ROLES OF THE STATE

- Public vs. State
- Authoritarian decision-making
- Top-down approach: technocratic approach
- Inclusion of citizens after confronting severe public resistance
Collaborative expertise: citizens and counter-experts
Natural sciences and social sciences
Cultural and social reasoning
Information Age: Access to making and disseminating knowledge
Challenging technocratic expertise
TRANS-BOUNDARY MOVEMENT

- Blurring movement and non-movement
- Connection between online and offline activities
- Reformulating the relationship between politics and science
- Beyond Local/National/Global