

Abstract for ISA 2012

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### **Internet activism and real-name system in Korea**

This paper aims to explain internet activism and government reaction against problems that internet activities provided over the past years.

In 2008 thousands of citizens went out on the street to oppose American beef import which was part of FTA US-Korea deal. The wave of protest on nation wide that lasted more than four months originally started by teenagers' discussion online. In the following year an internet blogger was arrested over releasing unverified information that would harm national economic security. Then series of social celebrities including former president committed suicide when they were involved fatal scandals on-line. As shown here internet activism has brought victory of direct participation and democracy in a speedy way at low cost and at the same time this also brought the other side of darkness in the society including cyber bullying, cyber crime and unmediated reaction and comments that stimulates public emotion. This paper is based on the literature on populism and direct democracy and mass media. It starts with the event caused by internet activities and its reaction from the government and the citizens. It then moves on to the hotly debated issue over real-name system in Korea discussing its pros and cons (anonymity-freedom of speech vs. create rumours, unmediated information or thoughts. The paper concludes possible direction of policy and citizens attitude discussing to step in middle way introducing better policy without oppressing freedom of speech.