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Affective Sphere: Women's Living-politics in South Korea

My research is located in women's political activities, beginning in 2008's spring in Seoul. An initial issue that stimulated this political event was the Korean government's decision to import US beef, which raised serious concerns due to the popular suspicion that US beef was subject to BSE (Bovine spongiform encephalopathy, commonly known as "mad cow disease"). As ordinary people's demonstrations against the government spread quickly and nationwide, the debated issues also expanded to include other, more comprehensive political problems which had been aggravated in Korean society: neoliberal-oriented government policies on education, housing, social welfare and most fundamentally the right to health and safety.

One of the leading activist groups in my focus was women's communities. They originated in cyber communities for several years as voluntarily organized in entire anonymity and self-specialized in cosmetics, fashion and plastic surgery. They seemed, at least in appearance, to be very feminine and far from 'political' in a traditional patriarchal perspective. However, faced with political disturbance, they took action in a unique politico-cultural style, in which they confidently featured their own voluntary, horizontal, and loose companionship through young and female subcultural vernaculars. In conducting in-depth interviews with the female participants, I explore how the politico-cultural significance and limitations of such emergent living politics argue for the potentiality of an *affective sphere* in the anticipation of different forms of political sense and action.