

**DIGITIZATION, SECOND MODERNITY, AND PSB
FOR ALL CAMPAIGN--**

**Digital Democracy Reinventing Taiwan TV Industry through a Global-local
Interrelationships**

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Introduction

On June 30 2006, a second financial aid to develop a public digital broadcasting service was deployed by Taiwan legislature Yuan (i.e., parliament). The total amount of USD 137.38 million of above aid is divided by USD 85.94 million for HDTV network, USD 30.89 million for second single frequency digital network, and the rest parts for DVB-H mobile TV, and newsroom automation & non-linear post-production network, digital archive. These four projects are commissioned to Public Television Service Foundation (PTS, the solely public service broadcaster in Taiwan currently) through a special budgetary bill mandate (named as the Expanding Infrastructure Investment).

Since launching the “Digital Video Broadcasting” (DVB) standardization in 2001, a completely new policy rhetoric has been activated. Consequently, gained the third victory in the battle of public interest in digital age today, the case of commissioning-PTS digital plan strongly spelt again the end of over-commercialization broadcasting policy in Taiwan. The progress and perspective of this local public service broadcasting is moving against the global trend of privatization and liberalization within the major Western advanced industrialization countries. This resilient and counterbalancing nature of digital terrestrial television addresses a local version of when globalization clashing with the “Risk Society”. It generated a second phase of modernization (or second modernity) acted upon the television industry in this island.

The Taiwan case above is picturizing a different backdrop in the other way around by toppling down the state-supported media privatization through the public interest-advocated movement mobilizing around the issues of media reform and digitization. Situated within a lived experiment, the technology transfer or advancement contributed critically to enhancing public interest either through the scale or scope of the new media industry.

This paper will argue how and why historical track built in the way to keep the technology implementation in line with the interest of a social reform project. As a result, the financial plan of digitization was ratified by state just one day before a concept of public television group being put into practice by forming a “Taiwan Broadcasting System”. A phenomenon represented the coalescence of several initiatives promoted by public interests. Consequently, the argument finally should

explore a networking alliance structured by a central goal for media reform and facilitated by a new type of organizational communication.

Taiwan Broadcasting Media during Second Phase of Modernization

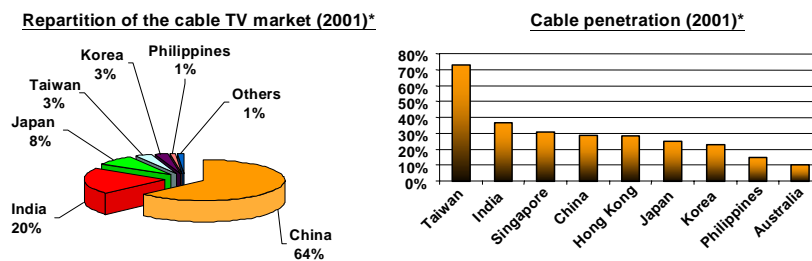
The media reform in Taiwan was reluctantly inaugurated by internal and external democratic forces after the martial law was lifted in 1987. So-called a Culture-turn was simultaneously pervaded within the Western world as well as the Asian advanced industrial countries, included Taiwan (Lee, 2001). Under the control of authoritarian-bureaucratic KMT (Nationalist Party) regime for another 13 years, a conservative power of media industry interacted with the postmodernism-driven consumer sovereign was happened (Budd, Entman & Steinman, 1990). It treated the media reform in the sense of liberating the forces for maximizing profits and corporate power resulting in a free marketplace without democracy.

KMT is unwilling to initiate a reform upon its owned-terrestrial television network by releasing the supervision and crackdown policy on cable TV service, which mostly run through underground way in stead. The general TV household of late Eighties in Taiwan soon gradually switched over to subscribe the cheap service and more channels even including the sex and violence oriented programming. It packaged an unbeaten boutique for over 100 channels in charge of USD 16 per month. This promotion directly contributed to the making of cable industry ubiquitously in the island. Now, the cable penetration is moving to its tip around 80% nationwide. The plethora of electronic media universe (for example, 100 channels serving each household) has already rendered the traditional mass media obsolete nominally. It confirmed the age of narrow communication or taste fragmentation is virtually happened supported by Postmodernism claim (Lee, 1999).

Without the major force of impartial broadcasting network in place (there is no public broadcasters until 1997), Taiwan witnessed a leapfrogging development from what a critic said, “once faced a problem of channel scarcity, now has to contend with the embarrassment of channel abundance” (Lee, 1999: 147). However the passing of modernity is not yet to be claim given that there is even not totally established the modernization of media industry in Taiwan. Due to the lack of a representative democracy and public service broadcasting (Chen, 1998: 25; Lee, 2001: 83) altogether, the postmodernism is footless within this late democratic context. Although the diversified media environment is superficially unearthed, the real situation there is nothing other than a “radicalization of modernity” under the guise of a likely western

post-modernity. (Giddens, 1990; quote in Liu, 2000).

The historical track of the above Taiwan case is painted in front of the backdrop of the “Second-Phase Modernization” (Giddens, 1998). Firstly, as German sociologist Ulrich Beck said (1997: 107), “where the prospect of a thousand channels is bringing an end to the system of publicly operated media and opening wide the door to randomness”. This phenomenon is called as a risk or congestion in the notion of choices being excluded caused by quite general modernization impacting on every corner of society. For example, the alarming high cable penetration in Taiwan is confirmed by international or regional market survey (see figure 1). Moreover, without the subscription mechanism, each household fairly receives more than 100 channels, twenty-four hours a day and seven days a week, all the year and nationwide. It brings too many channels competing for too few advertising.



* Source Morgan Stanley, 2002

Figure 1. Taiwan Cable TV Market Credit in Southeast Asia Region

(Castaignede, 2002)

For survival or keep operating this dominated cable system, internally, it must cut the cost of programming, and churn out channels as many of the same for securing its moderate profits. Externally, it is reasonable to run business vertically to exclusively own all the popular channels in preventing any potential threats enacted from the new comers of this service market, especially through the digitization. As a result, an originally serving minority and local tastes based-cable system, turned to be an universal service for mass market within the lowest denominator. The unscramble channels for tabloid news, pornography, commercials, violent and superstition

materials is directly reached each home as a whole with no differentiation. It manufactured a risk beyond the have/have-not dichotomy in media access during modernization, to problematize a lacking of choice for all or denial by no one in the new era called “manufactured risk” (Giddens, 1998: 28).

Different from the external risk in welfare state or modernized state, the second modernity defined the manufactured risk in the sense of unexpected consequence or side effect created by the first-phased modernization. Before the second phase, people level the risk by the amount of property one obtained. It is the “class positions being determines consciousness (of risk)”. However, moving into second phase, thanks to science and technology, the risk is ascribed by civilization not by property. It was the “consciousness (knowledge) determines being (in terms of what victimization by side effect)” (Beck, 1986: 53 ; quote in Kuo, 1999: 148).

Conclusively, the total notion of risk society and second phased-modernization happened in Taiwan recently started from the discursive movement on the discontent with the cable TV. Contemporary social movements, as Giddens proposed (1994: 120), conducted the discourse on social phenomena previously went un-discussed. They problematized the tradition majority of society appreciated (lots are beautiful, for example, 100 channels) then proposed the solution gaining from the same strain of science and technology for continuous modernization. Movements chose digital terrestrial television (DTT) to be a rival against current dominant multiple operating system (MSO) as a modernization of modernization.

The following chapter will demonstrate how the concept of “risk society” being utilized to initiate a second phased-modernization within a local television sector. Under this context, social groups for progressive movement, including public service broadcasters (PTS), levered on their knowledge and discursive-intensive capabilities to act upon the globalization and digitization originally promoted for the liberation of private interests. It bridged over the traditional movement to a new one by transforming the form of demonstration and protest into a deeply involvement into the field of real decision-making process using knowledge based-actions. As a result, the PTS successfully gained the support from an internet mediated-knowledge networking to pursue a public interested-goal in digital age. Originally, a digital revolution engaged with profit-making and rationalization of private interest was dialectically turned out to be opposite one in realizing the public interest in the first place (Beck, 1997: 117; Giddens, 1994: 122).

A Great Divided on the Risk Distribution by Digitization

The digitalization process of terrestrial television began at 1998 by enacted Advanced Television System (ATSC) as the standard of Taiwan digital television industry. It went without saying that initiative simply complied a long-term Sino (KMT) -American relationship where followed by every sectors nationwide. Moreover, given a standardization serving U.S. big-four terrestrial TV networks, the traditional free-to-air (FTA) commercial television stations in Taiwan will continuously strengthen their footprints in media landscape by bringing High Definition Television (HDTV) only without new comers' competition (Brinkley, 1997).

However, the continuously skyrocketing growth of cable penetration with its 100 more channels greatly decreased market share of FTA Commercial TV (see Table 1.). This alarming signal depressed the commercial television to churn out HDTV. HDTV is developed by a concept of "picture-quality" oriented programming which missed the goal of better quality program approach. It provided no solution to help general TV household leave the poor quality of cheap cable TV service by only few choices and high installation charge (Stokell and Ball, 2000).

Table 1. The Growth of Cable Penetration Rate (1994-2001)

Year	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001
%								
National Total	43.37	54.15	59.57	65.97	68.09	67.87	71.96	72.34
Taipei	50.57	60.30	69.00	73.52	81.30	78.68	83.73	82.82
Kaohsiung	63.86	72.98	80.51	88.68	91.05	92.45	92.19	90.78
Taiwan Province	40.07	51.23	55.89	62.51	63.63	63.69	68.05	68.85

(Source: The ROC Survey of Family Income and Expenditure)

The over-commercialized TV policy and authoritarian regime designated-profession reached their incapability when facing digitization challenge. It created a momentum letting go the private interest's hold on the policy arena of new technology. The clash between industrial policy (risk taking) and traditional TV

know-how explored a space waiting other social forces fulfill the original mission. There are three battles for digitization brought by PTS and civilian NGO alliance directly confronted with the private interest of media monopoly as follows.

A. Implementing Digital Video Broadcasting-Terrestrial (DVB-T)

From 2000 to 2001, PTS is marching to its three-year performance review and proposed an amendment of PTS Act to settle the stability of long-term annual budget. As complied with the international model of public service broadcasting law model (ITU, 1999), PTS is born by a democratization movement of electronic media spanned 20-year finally fulfilling the vision of its service should be “of the people, by the people and for the people”. (CMRTV, 2001).

During this transition, a PTS digital television study group was formed by consisting of the core staffs from technology, production, programming, research and marketing. Those above members were trained either by engineering, or social science disciplines with much on-site professional knowledge. This research group showed a progressive nature by making a dialogue with social and cultural perspectives on technical issues. It was first ever initiative in Taiwan television industry. Also making the group confirmed the democratic reform was continuously practiced within public television service. It brought the expertise long time relied on economic utility, effectiveness, speed and functionality to meet the demand from social justice, citizenship, cultural heritage together. As what Beck observed (Beck, 1997:117), original type of technology would abolish the objective constraint by its internal logic and replace it with the ethics and practice of the objective alternative.

Facing the failure of HDTV pursued by major commercial TV service, PTS was the pioneer in promoted the DVB-T, a European standard developed by major public service broadcasting sector and professional groups worldwide (De Bruin and Smits,1999). It went without saying to introduce the European standard will bring the whole pro-public interested-TV structure counterbalanced the pro-private interest ones of Taiwan. However, pro-public interest based-concept of digitization would also contribute to commercial stations by its interoperability and diversified service.

Under this condition, Taiwan Digital TV Committee (for expediting the implementation of digital television technology) show their supports to DVB-T in way of catching relative autonomy against the passing authoritarian-bureaucratic regime consisting of KMT elite and U.S. conservative power. The promise of more

channels, cheap convert box, mobile reception critically won the consent of the Association of Terrestrial Television Networks (ATTN, largely consisting by commercial stations) to accept European standard (Green, 2001).

A departure for attending International Broadcasting Convention in Amsterdam (IBC) was organized by ATTN in Sept., 2001. It was first ever for major commercial broadcasting network operators participated into the R&D activity on broadcasting service and technology. Other than serving political and economic power blocs' PR or promotion, IBC, as an emerging civil society (assembling colleague worldwide), keep enlarging its consistency annually for building a future DVB industry. To associate this occasion, a new-born broadcasting profession is gradually replaced the traditional one by engaging with knowledge sharing and public assembly .

B. Approving a five-year consecutive Digital Video Broadcasting National Project

Having adopted DVB-T standard, DTV promotion faced a completely new vision and request. Firstly, for implementing the multi-channel, more funds on programming are need; to launch mobile reception and embedded Multimedia Home Platform solution, much R&D investment should be deployed. Moreover, a single transmission operator or designated ones is defined by European DVB-T spelling the demise of vertical integration of tradition terrestrial network operators. By releasing their shares of transmission station to a third party neutral platform operator, it is a reform to enhance the transparency of spectrum usage and diversity of programming making by dedicating more channels to new comers from digital video business. This policy model discouraged commercial TV from implementing DVB-T transmission platform.

Facing this downfall, PTS, for rationalizing its long-term development, addressed a scenario of digitalizing a nation started by establishing a public digital network comprise of public service broadcasting together. The total outcome of the project is engineering a competitive force against the dominated cable system for diversified TV service in future.

To ensure the non-commercial nature of digitization, PTS launched a DTV website beneath R&D Department Portal. During the great uncertainty caused by digitization against traditional TV industry, the service of knowledge sharing had impacted on the professional and academia at large. Based on the strategic analysis of digital television in public interest, PTS translated and compiled the most advanced

industrial countries' endeavour and the local adaptation process together. It activated a risk-taking position of PTS handling this transformation issue over to be settled by a self-help group through sharing knowledge and solution.

The previous digital television research group directed the R&D Department in several paralleling strategic action for pursuing the public interest in digital age. Except the general electronic publishing about DTT policy research, the second regular action is convening the annual conferences related the topic of Digital TV. From 2001 to 2003, there were three critical conferences as “**New Vision: Public Television in the New Millennium Conference**”, “Digital TV Content Development Seminar”, and co-hosted a “ Press Conference: New Release--The White Paper of Taiwan DTT Industry”.

Those above events, coordinated by R&D Department, fostered a public sphere between the international guest speakers from Germany, Australia, United States, Denmark, Singapore and local practitioners from media colleague, academia, government officers, NGO and so on. The conferencing circulated the international perspective on DTT, through presentation, background papers and research reports, to enhancing the public service broadcasting as a whole. Several international trade organizations (APTS, DigiTAG, IDATE), regional organizations (ABU, EBU), intergovernmental organizations (COE, UNESCO, AIBD), academic research centres (AMIC, OBS, PCMLP), NGOs (IIC, Nader96), leading corporate members (BBC, BCRI, YLE), to name just a few, were acknowledged by participating public for their expertise on DTT issue and the contribution to general public interest as well.

Finally, the discourse of public digital network and national infrastructure has been accepted by trade union, telecommunications industry, and higher officers governing technology policy. PTS also established a Digital Video Lab in the end of 2002. There, exhibition of current DTT experiment and the vision being planned, helped total visiting stakeholders reach the consensus of implementing DVB-T as a reform.

May 5, 2003, the Education & Culture, Science & Technology Subcommittees of Legislature approved a five-year consecutive plan. This project was commissioned to PTS by mandate for installing a nationwide DVB-T network replaced the current analog vertical one. Behind these actions, a nature of risk society was illustrated in a form of knowledge-intensive movement. Acted upon an advanced technical oriented issue, the movement successfully transcended the decision pattern of past

authoritarian regime as Beck said (1997: 99), “moving political constellation of industrial society become unpolitical, while what was unpolitical in industrialism is becoming political”. As a result, the PTS-led projects were supervised by National Information and Communication Initiative to affirm the political and cultural sovereign in digital age. However, the traditional maneuvering instrument of the politics and media relations, such as Government Information Office, lost its leadership of digital switch on policy by stepping down to an executive role.

For strengthening democratic dialogue or gaining universal public support one another, the networking alliance sharing the knowledge of DTT is followed three tracks synchronically to build (see figure 2). These virtual coalitions, formed by internet (globally, technics-tie) or association (domestically and internationally, personal-tie) respectively, started up a liberalization of technology through making DTV encounter a humanity and social cultural approaches. Powered by a regular meeting within several DTT on-site research professions, website-based knowledge is handling to wire a network extended to the worldwide professional society and NGOs. Through the annually attending the international conference and professional organization assembly, this network is continually strengthened by countless debate, interaction, sharing, conclusion, translation and learning. It legitimated the action plan by following the worldwide trend and accommodating the local context.

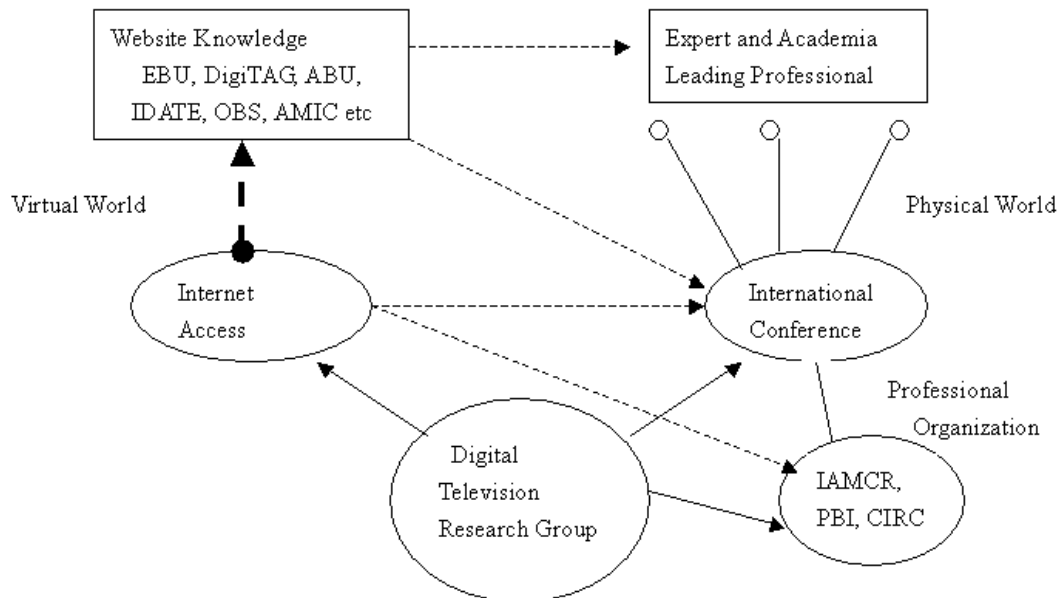


Figure 2. The Knowledge Alliance Networking for DTT Reform

C. Winning Moderate Support at Battle of PSB for All Enhancing Projects

After the budget being delivered in 2003, PTS digitization is stepping in the implementation phase. Base on the blueprint of a uniform multiplex operator platform, the vision of more channels of, more access to digital television reserved for civil society is going to be settled. Acted upon this promise, the continuous fund should be disbursed after the five-consecutive plan is finished. Paralleling the amendment of Broadcasting & Television Law in the end of 2003, a new democratic movement is started by prohibiting the military, government and party from owning the broadcasting business and contributing to a new digital universe. It drew the conclusion that the state-owned media enterprise should be transformed to be a public-owned one as a dedicative solution.

PTS joined the “PSB for All Campaign “ initiated by International Federation of Journalists (IFJ, 2001) of Tokyo Meeting for public service broadcasting in particular and of Seoul one’s for media in general on 2001. A civilian coalition for ending privatization was set to sail as named by Campaign for Media Reform in 2003. Politically, a White Paper of Presidential Communication Policy is decisively cited by supports for a deep democratic transformation one the one hand. The majority of legislature, one the other hand, endorsed the public service concept of impartiality followed by their oppositional forces’ governing strategy. Professionally, curbing the monopoly of cable TV and establishing national information infrastructure referring as another internet booming track is well understood.

Those five dimensional movements tracked by each other reinforced the choice of public service as means of digitization. It is a concrete manifesto confirmed by the Clause 1, Article 14 of the Bill for Transferring Official Shares of Broadcasting Enterprise (effective from January, 2006). From 2004 to 2005, a government funded-project named “Public Broadcasting, Cultural Creativity, and Digital Television” is proposed to legislature. PTS, supported by 48 NGOs, signed the Statement of Trust and Remit once adopted this project in Sept. 2005. This is a new type of collaboration between PSB and civilian sector by building their mutual sharing vision through a media professional mission job. Under the negotiation within five movements in the field, without approved unanimously in every subject of its proposal, the purely infrastructure establishment was finally set into action by pouring USD 137.38 million as a two-fiscal year executive plan in the end of June 2006.

Conclusion: Looking Technology Transfer forward into a Scale Expansion of PSB

Since 2001, PTS annual government appropriation has been set to USD 30 million ceiling without tuning with inflation. It is the digitization, which brought the first ever biggest public investment into the TV sector, let PSB continually receive the counterpart expansion against the over privatization and commercialization encroachment. Digitization, supposedly, went attack the traditional public service broadcasting system by emphasizing its fragmentation, individualization, and globalization (Chalaby and Segell, 1999). Impacted upon the risk society, however, digitization dialectically transforms the knowledgeable movement into a critical PSB turn on this island-nation long-term influenced by radicalization of modernity.

Equipped the most households in Taiwan with cable-wired TV service, a multi-channel universe turn sour is totally deteriorated into a nightmare for each home. Knowledge advocacy action successfully persuaded NGOs, professional organization, legislature and government to switch their mindset of media welfare from have/have-not (being) to content/discontent (consciousness). It gave the great opportunity to PTS prove its knowledge-based profession in the battlefield of TV rating game competing for resources and fund.

By defining DTV as a national infrastructure, PTS reminded the public with the successful innovation curve of internet adoption to pursue the public interest in the first place. Through the instantaneous electronic communication, the Taiwan DTT case demonstrated internet networking and international assembly strengthen a citizen-based solidarity in media issue and win the reform. Later, a tentative coalition between NGOs and media professional is sounded, if not completely without problematic, to enlarge the participants into the monitor and planning on science and technology transfer issues. Those events reviewed a core aspect of liberalizing technology in which way to implement, following the emerging interplay between global and local interrelationship.

One thing to be attested is whether or not, once transmission platform is in place, should the operation and maintenance of new public digital service in time to be funded and turned on? The Taiwan case so far is only partially confirmed by only launching its technical efforts and rejected the rest for lacking long-term business planning. This long-term weakness of versioning TV service is next critical challenge to “citizen-based PSB for all” projects and also confronted the core nature of reflexive modernization still very much indeed within any risk society.

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