Country Report on "Present Situation of Citizen's Media Movement and Media Education in Taiwan"

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Country Report Presentation I-II

International Conference on the Media and Democracy

in the Knowledge Society

27 – 30 September, 2006, Seoul, Korea

● Background.

After the end of Martial Law Era in 1987, Taiwan gradually transforms its governance from the authoritarian regime to a democratic one. However, the over commercialization and total privatization oriented policy didn't adjust until 1997 when the Act of Public Television Service (PTS) was approved, and most critically, KMT regime stepped down in 2000.

And since the outbreak of democratization in 1990, the media and communication-related graduates of the higher education have kept coming back from overseas and further trained more graduates locally. Those faculty members were easily associated with the critical communication studies and organized the reform study protested against the commercial media and state mouthpiece systems.

Above those two trends, functioning as the corrective mechanism on KMT long-term communication policy, activated the social resentment toward the past undemocratic forces and topple them down altogether with other corruption in 2000.

A new communication policy was settled down into execution. Based on an enlargement of public interest, integrating public television group and fostering civilian assembly on the media reform issues are expecting to put into the reality and fight. This current report is followed these tracks initiate by a civilian movement to redress the media landscape which badly distorted by a simply maximization of profits principle without any taming for 40 years.

Firstly, the civilian assembly is developed for combating the vicious circle of media business as the following scenario to roll out,

(1) Campaign for Media Reform
(2) Taiwan Media Watch Foundation
(3) Citizens' Coalition for Media Reform

Secondly, an integrated approach of public service broadcasting reasonably provide media education service from minority to general public through:

(1) community-based media literacy program
(2) the civic journalism contributing to election reporting

(1) Campaign for Media Reform

媒體改造學社 Campaign for Media Reform (CMR)

SINCE 3.31.2000
無線電視民主化聯盟
Campaign for Citizens' TV

Established at May 4, 2003, as the voluntary civil organization, Campaign for Media Reform (CMR) is aiming to promote a restructuring of Taiwan media in public interest through any means if available. Previously, CMR was transformed from the Campaign for Citizen's TV after its target was enlarged to the media as a whole.

CMR is consisting of the individual members from "academic circles, the press community and social movement, as well as others striving to improve the media milieu" based on the long-term advocacy at finalizing KMT authoritarian regime. Gained the emerging demand in fulfill the public interests, CMR was mainly involved the transformation issue of state-owned terrestrial TV service before 2006.

For cracking down the complete privatization of TV industry, CMR concentrated every means and resource to fight back with the liberal or conservative academic circle and the co-opted private interest of GIO (Government Information Office) higher officers. On May 17, 2004, CMR successfully rallied a group of supporters to march and protest in front of GIO to turn down its sale proposal of government share in two terrestrial stations.

During the second-half of 2005, CMR fiercely combated with the opponents for drafting the Bill for Transferring Official Shares of Broadcasting Enterprise. It went successfully to legalize the expansion of "Public Television Group" with a sunrise rule within three years. CMR, now, is struggling with other reform issues as a whole, including, license renewal, citizen engaging review, independent media regulator, cable monopoly dismantle and so on.

(2) Taiwan Media Watch Foundation

財團法人 台灣媒體觀察教育基

MEDIA WATCH

Taiwan Media Watch Foundation was formed in 1999. With the academic, culture, and media professional supports, the major concern of organization works as a watchdog functioning to correct daily TV program, which abuse the humanity, and lacking of integrity. It reasonably cooperated with charity foundation to ask for a healthy TV watching entertainment, especially regarding the children.

After 2005, Media Watch is moving into an action-oriented phase. The new leadership of it decided to closely recruit the citizen participation into the monitor activity. The most regular movement is call for citizen registering the TV Monitor Volunteer. Media Watch convenes a seminar or study group meeting each two-week for debate, analysis, and file the complaint about the program quality as a training program for them. Those program dedicate to a citizen perspective on media issue rather than a passive consumer one's.

Media Watch extends its action by utilizing the media outlet and public assembly. A 50-minute "Media Watch" is on air each week broadcast by prime time of Education Radio Service. It is a media literacy genre fostering the public as a whole in the way to train their criticism on the media.

This summer, a Journalist Camp is organized by Media Watch. This occasion bridged the public and senior news professional knowledge on the making of TV news. This encounter fired the great emergent ambition to monitor and correct the wrongdoing caused by current fierce competition in vicious circle within eight 24-hour cable news channels. It is hoping to expect a completely new tide of citizen movement for battling against tabloid-ization of TV news.

(3) Citizens' Coalition for Media Reform

Citizen's Coalition is raised through the debating of the license renewal for satellite broadcasting program supplier (i.e. channel) in 2005. Leading by the Awakening Foundation, which advocated women rights, a 21-NGO joined together to advocate the human right issue between media and public, which is long-term abused by 24-hour news channels through the tabloid-style reporting upon the disadvantageous group.

Coalition is criticizing cable news channels by which the privacy of minority group is frequently infringed. They request to revoke the license of satellite channel operators if they continuously broadcast the tabloid news to portrait the stereotype of minority. It proposed a third way to regulate the media other than state-control or self-control.

During October to December 2005, Coalition successfully introduced the talk between citizen group and legislators on the issue of newly established-independent media regulator, National Communications Commission (NCC). Under media restructuring climate, they bridged the gap within long-term dividing opinions about handling over the human rights being violated issue. As a result, a consultative role has been legitimated to citizen group in the future institutional reform.

Moving into 2006, the major concern of Coalition is to lobby for a regular seat in the NCC consultative committee on the media content and programming.

In the end of 2005, Coalition also published a Guide to News Reporting and Human Rights. It forced the Satellite Television Broadcast Association accommodate with public outcry in establishing a news self-discipline and advisory committee. Both committees invited Coalition to play a majority role. It is a rare instance to mediate the advocacy group with professional practitioners to functioning self-discipline on news business. And Coalition has won more supports from civilian sector, now turn out to be consisting of 65 NGO members as following categories:

Healthcare	Culture	Gender	Labour	Welfare	Justice	Media	Youth	Environment	Community	Education	Human Rights
2	4	28	1	1	1	5	8	2	5	5	3

(4) Community-Based Media Literacy Program

Currently, the media literacy program is promoted by community college and public service broadcaster together. Except the basic course "Introduction to Media" provided through annual program, Miaoli Community University has launched an extended learning program in 2004 called "TV-Turnoff Week". The leader of this program asked each participant try a week of "Life without TV". Other than called for leaving the living room, the college organized a series of social activity, including reading, traveling, drawing etc as a substitute. In final, this course is hoping to cultivate a healthy attitude of citizen to associate media and personal life, also, to train their capabilities in criticism of media and further demand a better quality and diverse programming.

TV Turn-off Week now is marching to its third term with growing from 60 units to 215 units in 2006 attracted 100,000 people to involve.

Back to normal business, sourcing its own faculty member of media literacy is another important action. In 2004, PTS run a training workshop for 362 Community Seed Media Teachers in cooperation with National Association for the Promoting of Community University.

PTS, as the sole public service broadcaster in Taiwan, is doubtlessly responsible for making media literacy program. Based on the six-successful-year's children program "Mighty Media", it finally rolled out the citizen one as kinds of continuous education. The "TV Watching: Alternative Approach" was featured in 8 episodes and later making DVD as the supplement for general education. Its major concern is uncovering the nature of commercial television and pursuing the public interest of viewership. By simply telling a story and making funned scenario, a serious television policy reform is easily appreciated by citizen group.

(5) The Civic Journalism contributing to Election Report and Watch

Since 2005, under leadership of the Third Board of Director, PTS practices the public or citizen journalism with critical support from community universities. The first movement is programming a completely new type of forum genre, called "People's Voice". Based on a scale of Town Hall Meeting, People's Voice abandoned the past elite-oriented forum by adopting the general-people approach to select the participants. The program put them in a dialogue situation with interacting host and selected experts. The participants mainly registered through community university administration. Others came from the diverse association and regional civil office recommendation, or by mailing direct self-application form.

The discussion is concentrated on the public issue. Rejecting an ideological debate, each participant should reflect the local viewpoint and consult with expert. In final, activate rather than indoctrinated a solution, citizen should bring back the topic collectively to further a democratic talks within its neighbourhood.

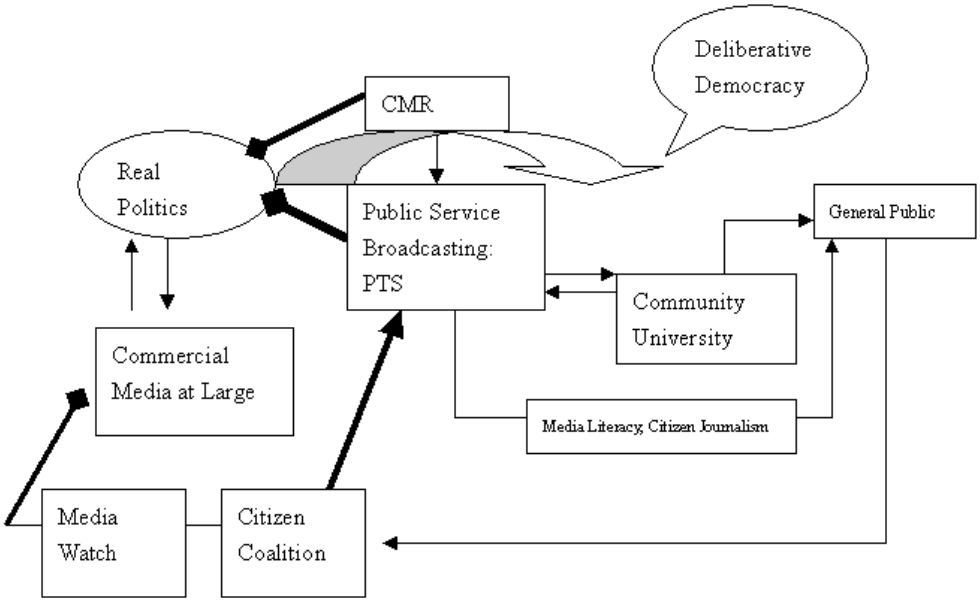
The second movement is actively utilized the concept of civic journalism into the real politics. In the end of 2005, PTS, Taiwan Thinktank, and Taipei Society jointly convened a deliberative TV debate for city and county mayoral elections. They chose one regional constituency as a pilot study. By random sampling, screening through in-depth consultation, the qualified citizen representative is scheduled to meet the candidate. To fulfill the criteria of people choosing the civil servant, a political debate is replaced by an oral defense organized by citizen-participant team. All the major issues are related to the local demand and questioned directly about candidate's soundness.

With this successful experiment, PTS decided to introduce a large scale of deliberative democracy for the coming Municipal City (Taipei, Kaohsuing) Mayor Election in the end of 2006.

To warm up this third movement, coupling with a series of conference, workshop, grant, award ceremony, PTS organized a first Civic Journalism conference in

August with warm support from local community university. Consisting of 80% registrants from community university, this program try to spread the ideal of citizen journalism and empower the general people. Moreover, it will be also functioning as an interactive platform with long-term advocacy in media reform, such as Citizen Coalition, Media Watch, Thinktank, and PTS professional associated with local and American experience, finally, to consolidate the similar citizen initiative elsewhere.

Conclusively, current citizen movement and education of Taiwan is structured by three concrete forces, as public service broadcasting, civil organization on media reform, community university respectively (see following figure).



Those three forces jointly consolidated for empowering general citizen involvement into public policy making. A third campaign of civic journalism for the pivotal democratic election is enhancing by its synergy of critical social forces originated with where the past four-year of media reform was exactly struggled. There to been seen a virtuous circle within the citizen media movement and education in Taiwan, is critically confirmed when society gathering momentum for a new demand of democratization.

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Photo Provided:

Benla Photo Album http://www.pixnet.net/benla

Taiwan Media Watch Foundation http://www.mediawatch.org.tw/modules/xcgal/

NCC, what kinds wee need?

http://blog.chinatimes.com/benla/archive/2005/09/15/16489.html

PTS Website:

Watching TV: Alternative Approach http://www.pts.org.tw/~web02/mediaview/p2.htm

People's Voice http://www.pts.org.tw/php2/program/citizen/

Deliberative TV Debate http://www.pts.org.tw/~web01/interview/index.htm