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**Alternative or Radical Media?**
An Exploration of Civil Media@Taiwan

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Abstract

Alternative media, as another choice for the public besides mainstream media, has been increasingly growing in Taiwan during the era of Web 2.0. In an attempt to report social issues properly, alternative media is trying to break the hegemonic range of mainstream media while being oriented by the public. Civil Media@Taiwan has been established since the year of 2007. During its ten-year history, Civil Media@Taiwan has identified itself as an alternative medium. Although the rise of alternative media has been studied by researchers from different fields, there have been very few studies on alternative media in Taiwan. The aims of this study are first to reveal the principles and practices of alternative media, then to investigate whether Civil Media@Taiwan is alternative media or radical media. The theoretical approaches used in the research include the theories on alternative media, and theories on radical media. Content analysis on the official website of Civil Media@Taiwan and semi-structured interviews of fourteen interviewees are utilized as the methodology. The study has two research questions, which examine whether Civil Media@Taiwan is alternative or radical, and how it serves the public. The journalistic profession and the organization of Civil Media@Taiwan are investigated in order to answer the research questions. The results of the study conclude that Civil Media@Taiwan is partly alternative and partly radical, but combining the characteristics of both kinds of media. Moreover, Civil Media@Taiwan serves the public by challenging the rules of journalism and broadening the hegemonic range from mainstream media.

Keywords

Civil Media@Taiwan, Alternative Media, Radical Media, Participation
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1 Introduction

1.1 Motivation

Having spent half a year in Taipei during the winter of 2013 as an exchange student of Ming Chuan University, I studied mass media in Taiwan from different aspects: Taiwanese newspapers, broadcasting, and TV channels. We students were requested by the professor to read one of the four main newspapers per day. During that time, the Taiwanese mainstream media gave me an impression of partisanship and corruption characterizing the business of catching the attention of audiences with shallow news.

The word about Professor Guan, leader of Civil Media@Taiwan had spread to Wuhan, China, where I did my Bachelor’s degree in 2012. Prof Guan, was described as the "pioneer of Taiwanese alternative media" by other scholars. The main premise at Civil Media@Taiwan, "go wherever nobody goes" has been the initial catalyst for me to research in this regard and the realm of alternative media in Taiwan.

After initial efforts of gathering information, it became clear that research on Taiwanese Alternative Media can be regarded as an academically blank space. In order to fill this void, this thesis consults the actuators of Civil Media@Taiwan directly by interviewing them while they are actively working in the field.

According to McQuail (2013), the appearance of online media has not only widened the "knowledge gap", but also turned the gap into a "digital divide". Since the online media has a higher effectiveness than mass media at the task of informing everyone (McQuail, 2013), it seems that alternative medium have the chance to survive in the domination of mainstream media.

For the aforementioned reasons, this study is motivated to explore the main characteristics of Taiwanese alternative media in the case of Civil Media@Taiwan.
1.2 Research Questions and Aims

With all that said, there are not many studies on either alternative media or radical media in Taiwan. Downing (2001) identified radical media as normally small-scale media that express alternative perceptions on hegemonic policies, preference, and viewpoints. Based on the identities of alternative media from Bailey, Cammaerts and Carpentier, and the theories about radical media from Downing, this study will delve into the case of Civil Media@Taiwan. To make the study more concrete, two research questions are formulated as follows:

Question 1: Should Civil Media@Taiwan be seen as an alternative media or radical media?

Question 2: How does Civil Media@Taiwan serve the public?

To answer the questions, firstly, previous studies on alternative media and radical media will be reviewed. Then, a content analysis of the website and fourteen semi-structured interviews with the staff of Civil Media@Taiwan will be conducted in order to examine the journalistic profession and organization of Civil Media@Taiwan based on the theoretical framework.

The primary aim of this study is to analyse whether Civil Media@Taiwan is an alternative medium, as they identify themselves. There will also be a discussion about how Civil Media@Taiwan contributes to the social responsibility as the Fourth Estate and to respect all the citizens based on the analysis.

1.3 Roadmap

There are seven chapters in this thesis. The first chapter starts with the introduction of the study, including research questions, aims, and the outline of the thesis.
Chapter 2 introduces the background of journalism in Taiwan, containing the history and current situation of Taiwanese mainstream media, alternative media, and the case of Civil Media@Taiwan.

Chapter 3 describes the literature review of this study. Based on the previous research about critical theory, alternative media, public sphere and participation are also discussed here. At the end of the chapter, the research gap of the field is identified.

Chapter 4 is the theoretical framework. The categorization of theories with four dimensions to identify alternative media built by Bailey, Cammaerts and Carpentier (2008) is introduced. The studies of Downing (2001) on radical media are presented. The research on radical media conducted by Downing argues for five characteristics of radical media.

Chapter 5 expresses the methodology and research design of this study. Content analysis on the website of Civil Media@Taiwan and semi-structured interviews are introduced as the two approaches for the research. Limitations and ethics are also mentioned, in order to remain rigorous.

Chapter 6 investigates Civil Media@Taiwan from two aspects. The first is the analysis on the profession of Civil Media@Taiwan from sources of content, themes, the tendency of reports, and journalism in Taiwan. The second is the analysis of the organization of Civil Media@Taiwan from independence and democracy. Both the analysis about profession and democracy are mainly based on the theories of radical media from Downing (2001) and alternative media from Bailey, Cammaerts and Carpentier (2008).

Chapter 7 introduces the conclusions and discussion of the thesis. In this chapter, the research questions are answered, and the contribution of this research is expressed. Moreover, the research which can be done in the future is also outlined.
2 Background

2.1 Mass Media in Taiwan

2.1.1 History

Throughout the history of Taiwan, evidences show human habitation for thousands of years (Olsen and Miller-Antonio, 1992). From the year 1642 AC, Taiwan had been ruled in the order by the Netherlands, Spain, the Kingdom of Tungning\(^1\), and China during the Qing Dynasty\(^2\). The history of being ruled by different regimes makes Taiwan a place with mixed cultures and political powers. That is to say, the journalism in Taiwan emerged in a complex environment. In 1895, Taiwan was ceded by the Qing to Japan, and started its period under Japanese rule till the year of 1945 when Japan lost the second world war. The Republic of China (ROC) which led by the Kuomintang (KMT) took the rule of Taiwan then. In 1949, KMT lost the Chinese Civil War and the control of mainland China. In the same year, the ROC government withdrew to Taiwan and ruled Taiwan till now. Taiwan had been ruled by KMT as a single-party state for more than forty years until the democratic reforms in the 1980s, which resulted in the first direct presidential election in the year of 1996. Taiwan experienced a high-speed economic growth after the second world war and democratization after the democratic reforms. Now Taiwan is known as one of the “Four Asian Tigers” together with Singapore, South Korea and Hong Kong as the most developed areas in Asia. The first newspapers and broadcasting in Taiwan originated from the period under Qing and the Japanese.

The year of 1947 marks the most important turning point in modern Taiwanese history. The anti-government uprising incident, known as February 28 Incident, followed by the White Terror, which was the suppression of political dissidents. In 1945, after Japan had surrendered at the end of the second world war, Allied Forces handed the temporary administrative control of Taiwan to the KMT government of ROC. Local inhabitants became resentful due to frequently corrupt conduct, arbitrary seizure of private property

\(^1\) Kingdom of Tungning is a government that ruled a part of Taiwan between the year of 1661 and 1683.

\(^2\) Qing Dynasty was the last imperial dynasty of China, lasting from 1644 to 1912.
and economic mismanagement on part of the KMT authorities. The February 28 Incident triggered civil disorder and an open rebellion that lasted for days (Kerr, George H and Stuart, John Leighton 1947). Thereafter the KMT government violently put down the protest, suppressed political dissidents and killed thousands of civilians beginning from February 28, 1947.

In the same year, the government promulgated the martial law, which was identified as “the longest imposition of martial law by a regime anywhere in the world” (Mulvenon & Yang, 2003). During the 42-year White Terror period, the freedom of speech in Taiwan had been controlled by the government. The government promulgated the restriction on newspaper licensing. With the ban on mass media and political parties, party newspapers and broadcasting had dominated the society of Taiwan till the late 1980s. As the martial law was canceled in 1987, the restriction on newspaper licensing was repealed in 1988. The control on broadcasting and television was lifted in 1993. The mass media in Taiwan has been developing and prospering rapidly ever since.

During the seventy years history of Taiwan as the base of ROC, the Taiwanese mass media has changed its role from the tool of the government into the watchdog for people, from the tight government control into the highly degree of freedom (Chai, 2000). At the beginning, media in Taiwan had been censored seriously since the former president Chiang Kai-shek held the view that Taiwanese media was the propaganda tool of his party KMT and Taiwan was the base where he could “recover” the mainland of China. Further, as the economy developed, the society of Taiwan has changed into more prosperous but democratic. Correspondingly, the political system of Taiwan has been forced to change so that it can satisfy the changing needs of people. This is how the restrictions on Taiwanese mass media was eased and how one of the “freest” but sophisticated presses in Asia came to be (Chai, 2000).

### 2.1.2 Media Reforms

Taiwanese media experienced the first wave of reforms during the democratization and legalization process after lifting the martial law in 1987. During the one-party era, media
became a part of the political agenda (Rawnsley and Rawnsley, 2004). The government granted only 31 licenses for newspapers between the year 1960 and 1988, and most of them were owned and managed by the state (Chen and Chu, 1987: 53–55, 91). The main TV channels during that time were owned by the KMT government and the military. In this way, the alternative views were blocked from spreading. The dominance of KMT-affiliated media was first challenged by the founding of Liberty Times (自由时报) in 1989 as soon as the press control was cancelled. Newspapers, TV channels and broadcasting were deregulated and received licenses from then. Further, cable TV got legalized in 1993 which resulted in the outspread of all kinds of TV channels. With a large amount of entrants flooding into the media market and occupying the major market shares, traditional pro-KMT media lost their dominance and suffered financial losses from 2002 (Rawnsley and Rawnsley, 2012).

The second wave of media reform began as the Democratic Progressive Party (DDP) won the election unexpectedly and Chen Shui-bian became president in the year 2000. During his leadership, three media reforms were initiated. First, he withdrew the power of the government, political parties and military from the ownership and management by legislation in 2003. Then, he set up the Communications Commission Journal of the British Association for Chinese Studies to administer the commercial media. Moreover, he led the development of the Taiwan Broadcasting System into a public service oriented agency in 2006.

Some scholars hold the similar view with Chai (2000) that Taiwan has one of the most competitive and liberal environment for media, with the highest internet penetration rates in the world and twelve local TV news channels serving citizens 24 hours without break every day (Rawnsley, Smyth and Sullivan, 2006). Similar with what happens in other democratic countries, such a competitive and liberal journalistic environment results in the overflow of political news reports. Citizens are able to access any information about social movements via the internet, especially social media.

Both types of information result in the description of the characteristics of Taiwanese media as hypermedia political campaigns, mediatized political spectacles, and
communicative abundance (Rawnsley, Smyth and Sullivan, 2006). Stepping into the political media environment, Taiwanese citizens are able to participate in political activities at anytime by following the news, voting and protesting. However, the quality of news has been subject of concern for long time. During the White Terror period, media in Taiwan had been restricted and monitored. Nowadays the presses in Taiwan are not controlled by the government any more, but instead, the National Press Council exists to govern themselves. The goal of the council is to enhance speech and press freedom by improving ethics of journalists, therefore avoiding government interference.

2.1.3 Current Situation

The progressive commercialization of mass media in Taiwan is a big step for the country as it turned from strict control into a high degree of freedom in a short time. The freedom score is a measure of the level of liberalization in a given country. According to the Freedom House3, the freedom score of Taiwan in the year 2017 is 91 (/100), while American media scored 89 and Sweden scored 100.

2.1.4 Mainstream Media in Taiwan

Throughout this thesis, references to the term mainstream media include the four biggest Taiwanese media companies: United Daily News4, Liberty Times5, Apple Daily6 and China Times7.

Today, the mainstream media in Taiwan are on decline. There are four reasons for this. First, political power has never been fully withdrawn and therefore political parties have been influencing mainstream media from the background. Most of Taiwanese mainstream media belongs to either the Pan-Blue Coalition (which KMT plays the main role in) or Pan-Green Coalition (dominated by DPP) to some extent (Chen, 2010). Most mainstream media in Taiwan are owned by enterprise groups. Controlled by businessmen instead of

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professional people, they utilize product placement as the main market strategy (Li and Li, 2006). It is not uncommon to even derive commercial benefit from reporting “news” while advertising products. Third, the internet era forces traditional media to be present online to not lose their audiences. Earnings per advertisement on the web are much lower than before and therefore mainstream media optimize their revenue stream by attracting a high number of clicks. Lastly, the public addiction to amusement has weakened the professional characteristics of Taiwanese mainstream media. The weakness of Taiwanese mainstream media can be characterized through three aspects:

First, chasing exclusive news content became common practise for most of Taiwanese mainstream media. The so called “instant news” requests journalists to report every kind of news in the shortest time after an incident. In the era of the internet the click-through-rate (CTR), a metric to measure per article revenue, has become of great importance for any commercial online media platform. The CTR is so defining that it influences the news production process. In other words, the vicious competition of instant news between Taiwanese mainstream media shapes themselves in a way that the quality and depth of reports are no longer cared for (Wu, 2009). Speed and amount are valued much higher in regard to successful media coverage (Wu, 2009). Plagiarism is on the rise because editors produce articles by putting information from different sources together to be faster and therefore achieve a higher CTR for "exclusive" content. Neither copyright nor accuracy matter at this point. Hence, lack of responsibility on the journalists side leads to the loss of credibility and a lower position in the eyes of Taiwanese society.

Second, chasing clickbait and amusement for the audiences fragments the topics of coverage. In instant news, clickbait can be the indiscreet remark of a politician, some drunk giddy goats or the wardrobe malfunction of female celebrities. For example, when searching for "走光" (which means wardrobe malfunction in Chinese) on the website of Apple Daily, there are at least three relevant news per day, it seems the audiences are interested in female celebrities showing their bodies involuntarily or on purpose. Above all, clickbait must be the headline that attracts audiences to move their mice and click. The length of articles are regularly less than three to four hundred words, while clickbait often takes a large part. Although some incidents have potential to be reported in a deeper
way and may help to raise awareness for social problems, journalists choose to give up their efforts on in-depth coverage.

2.2 Working Conditions of Journalists in Taiwan

Third, Key Performance Indicators (KPI) has been the only way to evaluate the qualities of a journalist. In the past, a qualified journalist may relate to professionalism, social responsibility and enthusiasm. Instead of the previous standard, most mainstream media in Taiwan evaluate their journalists by various KPI surrounding CTR. Taking the chain of United Daily News as an example, a journalist needs to complete two video news and at least twenty instant news every month to be qualified. The performance indicators of instant news include speed and CTR. Different with United Daily News judging by the amount of news, Liberty Times requests its journalists to achieve at least 60,000 CTR in total per month. United Daily News and Liberty Times are two of the four mainstream media that rule Taiwan. The most popular online only medium in Taiwan ETtoday.net even formulates their slogan as “our readers only have three seconds” to encourage its employees to look for instant news with clickbait so that the news website can gain a higher CTR.

The working conditions of Taiwanese journalists are getting worse with the claim of timeliness, attention, and amount. Within the news scene, the journalists need to report brief news, interview, write complete text news and record videos simultaneously. Besides interviews and press conferences, they also have a feature report to work on every week. In other words, they always need to play the different roles of text journalist, photographer and editor in order to achieve their KPI. It is not rare for them to work more than 10 hours per day, sometimes longer than 12 hours during the election season.

According to Guo Anjia (2017), one of the interviewees and former Civil Media@Taiwan (CM) employee, currently working for Liberty Times, she experiences bad working conditions and low pay. However even more she despises the pointless content which in

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9 http://www.ettoday.net/ Access: 7-26-2017
her words “consumes the ideals and ardor of journalists on journalism”. As a consequence, more and more journalists are leaving this industry.

2.3 Alternative Media in Taiwan

Alternative media in Taiwan have been flourishing in recent years as a reflection of the decline of social responsibility in mainstream media. The resources of labor and finance of alternative media are usually limited much more than the ones of mainstream media. They avoid to compete directly with mainstream media and often operate in a unique way. That is why alternative media journalists go to scenes that mainstream media deem uninteresting, and interview the people that mainstream media does not listen to. With the rebellious spirit, alternative media keep revealing those social issues hidden by the government or enterprises. Many important issues which relate to the everyday life of citizens are reported by mainstream media only because of the public concern which was raised first by alternative media. Take the strike of China Airlines in 2016 as an example, it is the second largest strike in the history of Taiwan. The strike last from the 24th to 27th of June. There was few media reporting it at the beginning, however, Civil Media@Taiwan got informed by the organizers in an early time and published the first report\(^\text{10}\) about the strike on the 21st of June.

Since mainstream media cannot get rid of the influence from enterprises and political parties, outstanding journalists left their job and started to establish alternative media for better conditions. Similarly, more and more audiences are losing their trust on the mainstream media.\(^\text{11}\) They turn to the internet to find specific information that mainstream media ignores. Topic selection, in-depth coverage, professionalism, consciousness and independent source of funds are the proclaimed base of aspiring alternative media in Taiwan. New platforms like Civil Media@Taiwan keep developing with an ever increasing audience. Many university students determine to work for alternative media during their studies or after graduation due to the disappointment in the work ethic of mainstream media in the first place (Xu Shikai, 2007).


2.4 Civil Media@Taiwan

2.4.1 Origin

Civil Media@Taiwan has been established since 2007 as a part of the Taiwan e-Learning and Digital Archives Program\textsuperscript{12} (TELDAP) which is run by the government department Ministry of Science and Technology of the Republic of China\textsuperscript{13} (MOST). It aims to integrate digital archives from the aspects of science, culture, humanities, society and economy. Moreover, it also intends to expand the public understanding on Taiwanese culture and gather more resources for studies on the culture in Taiwan. The participants of this program include specialists, scholars and people from research institutes and the public. They contribute experiences and knowledge from their own fields on promoting digital archive access then share with the public, to encourage all citizens to participate and develop the public domain. Further, a large amount of public and private cultural institutions like museums and universities have already been in the progress of digitization. TELDAP can be regarded as a learning revolution raised by ICT. As the result of this program, the accessibility of knowledge has been increasing for scholars. What’s more, the general public is now able to break the barriers, utilizing the internet to learn from knowledge that had been locked in academic institutions in the past time. It may then be spread to other people and preserved for future generations.

TELDAP is constituted by seven sub projects\textsuperscript{14}, they are: (1) e-learning and human resource development; (2) request-for-proposals project; (3) social and cultural development; (4) regulation mechanism and licensing platform development; (5) DAODIN social network service system; (6) geographical information application; (7) dissemination and academic application of cultural heritage.

There are five expected achievements of TELDAP: (1) to serve the public as a bridge, which is called "common application"; (2) to introduce regulations to the public, which is called "common interoperability"; (3) to motivate the public to share and invent, which is

\begin{flushleft}
\textsuperscript{14} http://teldap.tw/en/project_4.html Access: 7-25-2017
\end{flushleft}
called “common utilization”; (4) to set up a system for resource sharing, which is called “common Access”; (5) to bridge the digital divide, which is called "common distribution".

Figure 2.1: Working principles of TELDAP.


### 2.4.2 History and Current Situation

Civil Media@Taiwan was set up as an alternative medium with the goal of recording social movements in Taiwan by video. According to Prof Guan (2017), the establisher of CM, during the period as a part of TELDAP, CM had been funded by MOST every year until the October of 2012.

CM was launched to “record” (Guan, 2017) the Taiwanese social movements via videos in different fields, including environment, immigration, human rights, gender and social welfare.

Prof Guan (2017) suggests that from the point of view of CM, the Taiwanese mainstream media are not friendly to protesters and report social movements in a biased way. CM aims for recording the complete process of social movements to reserve and express the
voice of citizens who are ignored by the mainstream media. Furthermore, it hopes to allow for every citizen to be able to feel engaged in the progress of social movements while watching videos on its website. This should improve his/her democratic consciousness and encourage them to participate in social issues.

Compared with mainstream media in Taiwan, CM focuses on reporting issues of social movements mainly through videos. The videos always last around 10 minutes, introducing the progress of social movements.

There are five main ways how CM encourages diverse opinions and communication of views. First, “Golden Time of Drawing Room” is a talk show that CM cooperates with PTS News Network\(^{15}\) (PNN) to produce one time per week. Prof Guan and journalists of CM discuss and analyse deeply with professional guests about the social issues that happened in the last week in this talk show. Second, CM also cooperates with different Taiwanese media and media abroad to exchange and post manuscripts on their own columns on the website of CM. These columns provide fresh opinions of media in Hong Kong, Japan, mainland of China, Malaysia, Taiwanese mainstream media, and other Taiwanese alternative media. Third, CM annually goes on a tour to give speeches in high schools and universities around Taiwan to “listen to the voices of people” and encourage them to participate in social issues. Fourth, CM published two books. One is *Citizens Should Not be Cold Blood*, which gathers the stories of alternative media journalists and citizen journalists in Taiwan to show their experiences engaging in social movements. The other one is *The Front Line of Light and Shadow*, which is about the observation from scholars and practitioners on Chinese Alternative Media. Furthermore, CM cooperates with community colleges to set up workshops and give lessons about journalistic video recording and editing.

In the past eight years, CM has produced more than 2000 videos recording social movements in Taiwan. CM regards these videos as the way for the public to learn and understand social movements. Since CM views the videos as public resources for

everyone, they decide their copyright to follow the Creative Commons\textsuperscript{16} (CC) licenses, which is free of charge for the public to use and share without a commercial purpose.

There are several methods that CM gathers money to run the organization. Before October of 2012, CM got funded by MOST every year. When the TELDAP coverage finished, the team decided to keep running CM privately by the support of the leftover funds. In the year of 2014, the Civil Media Association was set up due to the law in Taiwan that only associations could get donations from the society. Individual donations have become the main source of funds for CM from then on.

There are various ways to donate to CM for individual citizens. CM prefers subscription the most, it has also taken the largest part of the donation every month. Besides, people can also transfer their donation irregularly through internet, post office, bank, telephone and so on. Every month, CM will publish the bills from last month in a detailed way, including the income, balance, cost of everything including labor, transfer, insurance, office supplies and so on. It is so accurate that anyone can clearly get to know the operating conditions of CM even the price of one tape is noted there. Besides, the name of each donor is also shown on the website with the amount of his/her donation.

Besides donation and royalty payment, merchandise is also a way that CM earns money. Take the social movement towel\textsuperscript{17} as an example, with the name and logo of CM printed on it, you can pay 300 TWD (around 9.9 USD) to show your appeal of “defence”, “record” and “action”, those three words written in the middle of the towel.

\textsuperscript{16} https://creativecommons.org/licenses/ Access: 7-25-2017
\textsuperscript{17} https://core.spgateway.com/EPG/civilmedia/9DrDk8/ Access: 7-25-2017
3 Literature Review

In order to better understand the main characteristics of Civil Media@Taiwan and how it serves the public, it is necessary to have an overview of critical theory. In this chapter, the critical theory will be described as the theoretical background. Moreover, the field of previous alternative media studies will be reviewed with a general and specific pattern, and then analysed by using the previous research in the public sphere and participation. The literature review first focuses on critical theory in general, and four of its main features will be introduced. Since critical theory perceives mainstream media as controlling the society hegemonically on the side of elite interest, it is necessary for other forms of media, especially alternative media to fill the blank space of the demand from voiceless people. The literature review will then introduce the studies on alternative media before the era of the internet and in recent research. In the following section the relationship between alternative media, public sphere and counter-public sphere are reviewed in order to give insight into the effect of alternative media in the frame of the public sphere. Lastly, the role of alternative media in the participation of citizens is examined. The two concepts of participation through the media and participation in the media are introduced in order to understand whether research on participation can fit into studies of alternative media. After the systematic review, the research gap in the field is identified.

3.1 Critical Theory

Critical theories are realistic, dialectical and axiological (Fuchs, 2009). Horkheimer (2002) viewed critical theory with the key purpose of making each individual happy; it needs a condition in which there is no oppression or exploitation.

Hall (1977) pointed out that mainstream media commonly established a hegemonic view of the world by various means. Sometimes they disintegrate the interests and solidarity of a typical social class, sometimes they ignore or mask specific aspects of the truth, and sometimes they promote a fake consensus of society to advocate for an imagined unity. Gramsci (1971) stated this idea directly by describing mainstream media as a hegemonic
power. According to him, mainstream media rarely “make propaganda” in public, but that does not mean that they hold no misleading social consensus.

When McQuail (2013) introduced critical theory in his book *Journalism and Society*, he viewed mainstream media as reporting on the side of government or elite interests while controlling the society in a hegemonic way, although most of the time this is not done on purpose. He argued that radical criticism during the 1960s and 1970s described mass media as the tool of capitalist-bureaucratic countries for culture and information, but without any chance to democratise or reform (McQuail, 2013). The internet was once viewed as a free and alternative platform with a liberating future in which the public can hear many different voices. However, in recent years, it has been changed into a new division of mass media controlled by the constraints and demands from the social and economic aspects of the world (McQuail, 2013). McQuail explained that according to critical theory, industrial society is based on a system of dominance. His interpretation of the four main features of critical theory is given in figure 3.1.

**Figure 3.1: Four main features of Critical Theory**

1. **Mass media have been mainly owned and ruled by part of the interests of class society.**
2. **Journalism and news reporting are on the side of capital-owning class inevitably.**
3. **The responsibility of journalism is to expose the truth within the limitation of the system, the “freedom of the press” based on liberal ideas cannot ensure true freedom for most people.**
4. **The only solution against this condition is to break up power roles and make media really free.**

Source: McQuail, 2013, p. 46-47
Critical theory has nothing to do with the alternative rules about the social responsibilities of media (McQuail, 2013). However, McQuail (2013) held the view that critical theory assumes the media, which is in the process of reform, should serve the public no matter whether the inequality, injustice, and falsehoods are erased from the society or not. Although the thesis is not based on critical theory, it is used as the theoretical background. Alternative media and radical media are the main focus of this research. However, critical theory can still help as a background with which to analyse not only why and how journalism is supporting the current situation to some extent, but also the limitations of most news reported by most outlets (McQuail, 2013).

In *Digital Disconnect: How Capitalism Is Turning the Internet Against Democracy*, McChesney (2013) outlined the media reform movement and updates it for the digital age. Combining critical theory, and political economy with media studies, McChesney argued that democracy had been undermined and weakened by the internet, which is leveraged by capitalism. However, McChesney admitted that people are currently still in the midst of a critical juncture while the “battles” across the internet have played an important role for all the citizens who are seeking to achieve a better society (McChesney, 2013).

Fuchs (2009) added supplemental ideas on the current situation of mass media, suggesting that there are new ways to commodify media content and audiences. However, the countless voices heard today could still be easily ignored by the elites and the public, due to a shortage of political power and excessive commodification (Fuchs, 2009). Furthermore, Fuchs stated that critical theory in another way in which the media plays various roles in capitalism, each of its roles is independent from each other. From his view, media can be regarded as ideological legitimation systems, platforms for circulating and advertising productions, contradictory forces and systems that mirror class struggles, fields of capital accumulation, and alternative media.
3.2 Alternative Media

Various terms have been used to describe this range of media that is different from mainstream media, for example, “citizens” (Rodriguez, 2001), “radical” (Downing, 2001), and “activist” (Waltz, 2005). That being said, researchers progressively change their minds when examining alternative media by using the adjectives "blended" (Downing, 2001, 2003), "porous" (Atton, 2002a), "flexible" (Couldry & Curran, 2003), and "hybrid" (Harcup, 2005). Coupled with the change of mind, some new assumptions emerge to label the relationship between mainstream and alternative media as a “continuum” (Harcup, 2005) or “converging spectrum” (Kenix, 2012).

Alternative media has no single and straightforward definition in academia (Atton, 2002a; Caldwell, 2003). Researchers and people in the field of media have struggled to specify the reasons why it is “alternative” (Rauch, 2014). The American Library Association (1980) clarified alternative media early on as “uncommercial, focusing on social responsibility, while identifying itself as alternative”. Comedia (1984) later characterized alternative media as the antagonist of mainstream media, which has the mainstream view to report subjects conventionally while following the established order in the capitalist system.

Before the internet appeared, alternative media appeared in different forms, such as radio, magazines, newspapers, documentaries, and films (Downing 2001). Alternative media has earned new strategies and practices with the emergence and growth of the internet, such as online participatory journalism (Lievrouw, 2011). With this in mind, the user-friendly and interactive nature of the internet has facilitated alternative media in two ways. First, it not only promotes citizen participation in cooperating to create content (Gillmor 2004). Second, it lowers the charge of production and distribution of alternative media so that it can reach a broad range of audiences (Leung & Lee, 2014).

With the help of the internet, social movement groups can solve the persistent struggle of either leaning on mainstream media but losing control of their voice or using alternative media to reach a wider public (Owens & Palmer, 2003). However, serious apprehension...
and mistrust of mainstream media could help promote the use of alternative media (Tsfati & Cappella, 2003). With alternative political perception as its key feature (Downing, 2001) and challenging the power of mainstream media as its aim (Couldry & Curran 2003), alternative media may guide its audiences to criticise the mainstream media (Leung & Lee, 2014). For Downing (2001), everything can be an alternative to something else in a sense. Therefore, alternative media is also almost oxymoronic at some point (Rauch, 2014).

The objectives of alternative media theories are oriented on the structure (Fuchs, 2010). Meyers (2008) deemed certain types of media or journalism as “alternative” based on four aspects: (1) media practices and rules, (2) structure and commerce, (3) self-definition of the practitioners, and (4) ideologies and political stances. Fuchs (2010) viewed alternative media as a neglected field of research that is under-researched, under-represented, and under-resourced in the social sciences, especially in the study of media and communication. According to Fuchs, few connections between social theory and alternative media theory have been settled. Furthermore, most academic works have no specific section on alternative media nor do they even talk about it.

Fuchs (2010) defined alternative media as mass media that challenge powerful capitalist forms through five aspects: production, content, structures, reception, and distribution. Alternative media is also described as challenging the political and economic powers that rule society (Lee, 2015), and as questioning the representations of reality in mainstream media (Couldry & Curran, 2003).

The study of alternative media might have been encouraged by the arrival of Web 2.0 as researchers investigate how ICT links the media producers and consumers, as well as alternative and mainstream media (Harlow, 2016). That being said, with ICT allowing activists to be present more often, online media could carry out movements and act by itself (Lievrouw, 2011). Because the internet has been assumed to be the catalyst of political engagement (Chadwick, 2006; Dahlgren, 2005), research on alternative online media could prove how the internet can influence social movements (Leung & Lee, 2014). Can mainstream still keep its domination at that time? Will current alternative
media become mainstream media with the development of ICT and a boom of social movements? More empirical studies and theories on alternative media are needed (Fuchs, 2010).

### 3.3 Alternative Media and the Public Sphere

Habermas (2001) viewed the ideal form of the public sphere as a reachable environment in which all citizens are able to shape public opinion by discussing, electing, criticising and controlling the limit of the state power. Meanwhile, he pointed out that the public sphere can change and be influenced by specific interests that set “a climate of nonpublic [sic] opinion” that is controlled by advertising and commercial media Habermas (2001). The true public sphere in Habermas’s mind can encourage political parties and competing associations to help the public not only assess all information but also participate in public discussions (Habermas, 1989). Likewise, Fuchs (2010) argued in favour of this point of view and describes media as “social systems that reach the large public”. To that end, Fuchs (2010) pointed out that media is a part of communication processes in the public sphere, and the notion of the public sphere is necessary for the social theory of alternative media. However, since different social classes possess unequal resources, a situation which may lead to unequal public opinion formation. Hence, Habermas’s concept of the public sphere is regarded as romanticised to some extent (Harlow, 2016).

Habermas (2001) mentioned the fragmentation of the public sphere, which may form the marginality of some alternative media especially small-scale participatory media (Sandoval & Fuchs, 2010). According to Fuchs (2010), this kind of non-commercial media without professional organisations tends to produce fragmented content that can only be accessed by isolated subgroups rather than the general public. This lack of access not only lowers the possibility of political communication with a wide range of people, but also makes the media itself suffer from a shortage of resources. To put it different, some alternative media is blocked by the fragmentation of the public sphere from both public visibility and the possibility of setting up a counter-public sphere with all oppressed, exploited, excluded individuals and groups (Fuchs, 2010). Similar to Fuchs’s theory, Warner (2002) also pointed out that the counter-public sphere is “subaltern”
(Squires, 2002) while “alternative” (Downing 1988). This kind of media is characterised as an “alternative ghetto” (Comedia, 1984) and “nonprofit [sic] dogs” (Knoche, 2003) without significant political relevance or threat to the current situation.

Public visibility is crucial for “raising the awareness of the repressive characteristic of capitalism and for supporting radical social transformations” (Sandoval & Fuchs, 2010). Therefore, small counter-publics have to get together to create a joint counter-public sphere (Sandoval & Fuchs, 2010). To that end, these groups will be able to grow to be more visible in society and, thus, more likely to protest against the dominant discourse and mobilise social movements (Sandoval & Fuchs, 2010). Because alternative media can motivate public debate (Downing, 2001), it can also criticise oppression and domination, as well as report on issues that capitalist mass media chooses to ignore (Sandoval & Fuchs, 2010). In this case, alternative media has set up a “subaltern public sphere” (Squires, 2002) or “alternative public realm” (Downing, 1988) that helps create a counter-public sphere (Warner, 2002).

### 3.4 Alternative Media and Participation

Boyle and Schmierbach (2009) claimed that the media can promote participation through reinforcement and the mobilising of information. On the one hand, the media can bring political debate and action to the public, thereby strengthening the role of participation in normal people’s lives (Curran, 2005). On the other hand, people understand how they are involved by the media mobilising information (Lemert & Ashman, 1983) because access to information is vital in both enabling and encouraging participation (Verba, Schlozman & Brady, 2002; Schussman & Soule, 2006). In both ways that the media promotes participation, journalists should play a vital role in democratising citizens (Entman, 2005). However, scholars have found that the mainstream media does not cover as many social movements and their participants as they do other topics (Boyle & Schmierbach, 2009). Protesters mostly get negative coverage or no coverage at all (Boyle et al., 2004, 2005).
Chan and Lee (1984) identified the "protest paradigm" as the process through which the media uses its social control to subdue or marginalize social movement groups, stopping them from threatening the current situation. It is often difficult for activist groups to make their voices heard by other people via mainstream media (Ryan, Carragee, & Schwerner, 1998). As a result, this difficulty has influenced alternative media’s ability to reinforce and mobilise participation in protests and coverage of the events (Boyle & Schmierbach, 2009).

Print news media and television have been connected in traditional participation (Chaffee & Frank, 1996; Boyle & Schmierbach, 2009). Newspapers, especially, have been viewed as strong predictors of social movements (McLeod et al., 1996; Shah et al., 2001) that can report more details than television (Boyle & Schmierbach, 2009). They not only improve citizens’ political knowledge and interest (Robinson & Levy, 1996), but also promote local political discussion (Shah et al., 2005). However, with the development of ICT, the internet now provides a rich source of news with better control on both the amount and quality of information that normal users can access (Boyle & Schmierbach, 2009). Kim and Ball-Rokeach’s (2006) research on community storytelling networks points out that talking to other community members and connecting to local media can promote participation. Similarly, the use of online information can develop political messaging and the discussions of normal citizens (Shah et al., 2005), as well as their chance to learn more about local and even national issues (Boyle & Schmierbach, 2009). Particularly, online media is connected with counter-public sphere production (Harlow, 2015) and political participation, including protests and social movements (Park et al., 2009). Therefore, the internet is important for community-building because it heightens community and social participation (Norris, 1998).

Alternative online media mostly plays the role of a gateway to connect relevant sources of support and information (Carty & Onyett, 2006), which is also one of the reasons why it is efficient at improving protester participation (Boyle & Schmierbach, 2009). According to the theory of uses and gratifications, people use the news to satisfy various expectations by seeking information and other kinds of media (Rubin, 2002). Postmes, Spears, and Lee (1998) held the view that people’s immersive and anonymous online
communication can improve the solidarity of a community, a phenomenon called "social identity model of deindividuation effects". That is, online media can promote the participation of isolated alternative participators in the community (Boyle & Schmierbach, 2009). Many scholars believe that using news media can increase participation while entertainment and other sorts of media may decrease activity (Shah, 1998; Shah et al., 2001). Above all, active people are key for participatory democracy, but the government can rarely speak for citizens or think about them if they are not active enough or trying to influence the government (Boyle & Schmierbach, 2009).

Carpentier (2007) identified two concepts: participation through the media and participation in the media. According to Carpentier, participation through the media refers to participation in decision-making procedures while participating in the media means involvement in content production procedures. For some researchers, content-related participatory production procedures are the most important part of alternative media projects (Dagron, 2004; Atton, 2008). In this way, alternative media can help those who participate in the production become active citizens (Rodriguez, 2003). Atton (2002a) argued that alternative media should be able to forecast the future of society beyond current capitalism, which is explained as prefigurative politics. He suggested that prefigurative politics could be detected more deeply by participatory, alternative, and anti-capitalist organisation practices than by media content alone. However, Dagon (2004) pointed out that alternative communication is participatory communication in principle, while Atton (2002a) surmised that, compared with the alternative "ghetto", the proponents of social change choose small-scale media organisations to reach a wider public. Hence, Sandoval and Fuchs (2010) concluded that alternative media can hardly differentiate between repressive and emancipatory media usage and, thus, only focuses on participatory production progresses. That is to say, alternative media and mainstream media are similar in their output. They only differ in terms of the production process. Therefore, they wonder whether participation can fit the alternative media definition and study.
3.5 Current Progress and Research Gap

While reviewing the previous research, it is notable that alternative media has been increasing quickly with the help of modern technology and internet; however, related studies are far from sufficient. On the one hand, Habermas (2001) presented the concept of the public sphere, which is described as idealistic (Fuchs, 2010) and romanticised (Harlow, 2016). Therefore, alternative media creates spaces that are cared for by isolated and voiceless subgroups. Alternative media produces a “subaltern public sphere” (Squires 2002) or “alternative public realm” (Downing, 1988) which then becomes part of the counter-public sphere (Warner, 2002). On the other hand, if alternative media belongs to participatory media and if it can promote citizen participation has been doubted by scholars (Sandoval & Fuchs, 2010). However, a large section of the studies on alternative media focuses on the Western world, especially the US, the UK, France, Germany, and some other developed, capitalist countries. Of the studies done by Western scholars, none are found to have researched Taiwanese alternative media. Even among studies in China, most focus on the history, commercialisation, or current situation of Taiwanese TV channels and newspapers. Only a small number mention alternative media—for example, Chen (2010) and Li and Li (2006).

According to Downing (2001), everything can be considered alternative during the history of development. Some of the interviewees of Civil Media@Taiwan mentioned that the alternative media in Taiwan might become mainstream in the future. However, very few studies focus on alternative media in Taiwan, and even fewer concentrate on the differences between alternative media and radical media there. To reveal the principles and practices of Civil Media@Taiwan, concepts and theories about radical media are used to analyse its main characteristics. The theories are presented in the theoretical framework.
4 Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework provides the basis for the analysis of Civil Media@Taiwan. Two theories are part of the theoretical framework. First, the theory raised by Bailey, Cammaerts and Carpentier (2008) on alternative media will be reviewed with four dimensions. Then, the theory of radical media—put forward mainly by Downing (2001), will be introduced. Five factors will be used as dimensions by which to judge and evaluate Civil Media@Taiwan as radical media. Since this study is based on the case of Civil Media@Taiwan, the theoretical framework will be based on the theories of alternative media and radical media to examine the main characteristics of Civil Media@Taiwan. The concept of alternative media is chosen because CM identifies itself as an “alternative media”, while the theory of radical media is used because the analysis on the website and semi-structured interviews show CM may fit some characteristics of radical media.

4.1 Alternative media

As we saw in the literature reviews, there are many different concepts of alternative media being used. Bailey, Cammaerts, and Carpentier (2008) built a theory with four dimensions to identify alternative media. Firstly, central to alternative media is the participation of community members to organize media and create content. Second is the alternative arrangement of content (“independent”, “nondominant”, “small-scale”, “nonhierarchical” discourses) against mainstream media (“commercial” or “state-owned”, “dominant”, “large-scale”, “hierarchical” discourses). Thirdly, alternative media forms the third voice between commercial media and state-owned media, while remaining counter hegemonic in a civil society. Fourthly, the alternative media link the local and the international, form various relationships between the state and the market, and contact different social movements and protest groups.

The four dimensions to alternative media, as Bailey, Cammaerts and Carpentier (2008) would say, are an adequate model with which to frame the notion of jamming, which moves from “anti-public spheres, to autonomous public spheres, to counter-public
spheres, to the mainstream public sphere”. It exposes the interlinkages between the
market and the state, as well as civil society and citizens. Moreover, compared with other
theories about alternative media, this one raised by Bailey, Cammaerts and Carpentier fits
the case of Civil Media@Taiwan better. In this way, people are able to go through
mainstream media and alternative media to investigate them “in conjunction and
interaction with each other” (Bailey, Cammaerts and Carpentier, 2008).

As for the theory of this study, the concept of alternative media from Bailey, Cammaerts
and Carpentier (2008) will be used. Three reasons make it relevant for this study and
most useful for the analysis. Firstly, CM identifies itself as an alternative media. This is
not only written on its website, but also expressed by all of the interviewees. Secondly,
both the profession and organization of CM show that it fits some characteristics of
alternative media. It will be expressed in detail in the section of the analysis. Thirdly,
compared with other models, the theory raised by Bailey, Cammaerts and Carpentier
focus more on the nature of alternative media in a comprehensive way. This is because
CM is an online medium, with social movements as its main focus. It is mostly anti-
government, but never talks about a revolution. CM is different from those alternative
media which worked out in some political revolution (just like Arabic Spring). Compared
with national politics, CM focuses more on the normal life of the voiceless people, which
fits the theory of Bailey, Cammaerts and Carpentier. To that end, it is chosen as the
theoretical framework for the research.

4.2 Radical Media

In the book Radical Media: Rebellious Communication and Social Movements, Downing
(2001) talked about radical media and gives the definition of radical media as normally
small-scale media that expresses alternative perceptions on hegemonic policies,
preference, and viewpoints (Downing, 2001, v).

According to Downing, radical media and their journalistic practices are not always in
opposition to those of mainstream media in the sense that they might also be concentrated
on producing benefit and operating within hierarchical structures. However, they are
usually regarded as the democratic alternative choices against media monopolies (Downing, 2001).

Especially when mainstream media are operating in a professional and organizational routine manifested in a monolithic media system, those radical, dissident or so called “unofficial” voices can easily be dismissed, marginalized and demonized (Atton, 2002b). Atton even concluded that radical media is a super democratic channel of communication that the public can speak through if there is no access to the mainstream media (Atton, 2002b).

4.2.1 Characteristics of Radical Media

McQuail (2013) introduced four normative roles of media. First is the monitorial role, which helps to interpret the function of “surveillance” for media. The monitorial role means to gather various sources from public to private, from the government to individual, and then report corresponding information about the present events or situation to audiences. Second is the facilitative role. To fulfill this role, the media needs to serve social institutions by supplying information especially from the fields of law, education, and the economy. In the talk show “Golden Time of Drawing Room”, CM invites professional people from various fields to explain social news in a deeper way, which seems to suit such a facilitative role. As the third role, the collaborative role requests media to interpret an opposite relationship which might exist between the sources of authority and the press. This role can mostly only be noticed during the emergent conditions of a country. Lastly is the radical role, which is viewed as a typical characteristic of democratic societies. It is believed to voice support for rebuilding and challenging the establishment. This will be investigated in the section of the analysis. In other words, the media needs to focus not only on the criticism of news reporting, but also on their duties of warning.

Atton (2002b) held the view that radical media can be characterized by three factors. Firstly, their internal structures are often loose, which can be found in social movements due to the anti-authoritarian spirit and the lack of hierarchy. Then, the group members in
the organization are normally independent. It is a common phenomenon that they share skills and rotate their jobs. Thirdly, radical media continue working on absolving themselves from the dominant power of the country, the government, and other institutions. To put it another way, radical media has the main goal to reverse the “hierarchy of access” so that the voiceless people can be provided a voice (Atton, 2002b).

The view of Atton (2002b) can be extended by Downing (2001), that radical alternative media serve the public based on the alternative public spheres and the idea of counter-hegemony as “developmental power agents”. Moreover, Kellner (1990) noticed a symbiosis in the relationship between radical alternative media and social movements. He figured out that radical alternative media are closer to democracy compared with the reachable and influential mainstream media (Kellner, 1990).

According to Downing (2001), radical media have five main characteristics which are shown in figure 4.1 compared with mainstream media. Firstly, radical media broaden the extent of information, exchange and reflection from the hegemonic range of mainstream media. Secondly, compared with mainstream media, radical media are more sensitive to the voices and demands from the minorities and the voiceless. This is because they not only keep a close relationship with social movement groups, but also lead in reporting issues which are ignored by mainstream media at the beginning, but noticed by the public later. Third, there is no need for radical media to censor themselves for the benefits of government, media giants, or religion. Fourth, the inner structures of radical media are usually more democratic than hierarchical. Last but not least, together with social movements, some of the radical media have participated in developing a kind of new culture while influencing the formal institutions mutually.
There have been a large part of the studies on radical media done in the last century. As time passed by, Downing (2016) updated his opinions on the “significantly reconfigured” media-sphere focusing on two main points. First, social media have demonstrated their extraordinary affordances in various social movements. Second, the structural (political-economic) imbalances of social movement media have been reconfigured due to the remarkable growth in opportunities for information distribution, mass political education, horizontal exchange, and rapid political mobilization. Downing (2016) pointed out that to adapt to the digital age, it is necessary for media activism to engage energetically with information policy activism. That is to say, utilizing internet and smartphone technologies should be central to all of the social movement media formats, collectively generate workable economic, cultural and political alternatives in a globalized world (Downing, 2016).

Source: Downing, 2001
5 Methodology

This chapter gives insight into the research design and methodology applied in this study. Firstly, a two-step methodological approach with the criteria for the data selection and analysis will be explicitly introduced, including the content analysis of the CM website, and the semi-structured interviews with the people from CM. Then, the reasons to use these two research methods will be provided with a clarification of the data selection and analysis for each method. At the end of this chapter, the limitations and ethics of this study will be discussed.

5.1 Research Design

Given the diversity of the case study analysed in this thesis, a qualitative study was conducted using two different research methods: content analysis and semi-structured interviews.

Firstly, a content analysis of the Civil Media@Taiwan website was undertaken. Many scholars hold the view that content analysis is a flexible method to analyse textual data (Cavanagh, 1997), including online posts, interview transcripts, speeches, observations, and so on. (Julien, 2008). Content analysis outlines a series of analytic approaches, including intuitional, impressionistic, and interpretive analysis, as well as a strict textual, systematic analysis (Rosengren, 1981). Content analysis has a long history as a methodological approach dating back to the eighteenth century in Scandinavia (Rosengren, 1981). It spread to the US in the early twentieth century as an analytic method (Barcus, 1959). According to Berelson (1952), content analysis is “the systematic, objective, quantitative description of the content of communication”, and researchers use it mostly as either a quantitative or qualitative method. Content analysis has been applied as one of the main research methods in the field of communication and media over the past few decades (Riffe & Freitag, 1977), and its goal is "to provide knowledge and understanding of the phenomenon under study" (Downe-Wamboldt, 1992).
Secondly, the semi-structured interviews of fourteen people who once worked or currently work for Civil Media were conducted. According to Locke and Golden-Biddle (2002), a semi-structured interview is an open-ended data-gathering method to access information from an unknown field. It is a way to understand an organisation members’ opinions of their work, lives, the actions flow from them, and the events they observed or participated in (Locke & Golden-Biddle, 2002). Semi-structured interviews aim to investigate the events and behaviour whose limits are an “empirical question” (Locke & Golden-Biddle, 2002). The main challenge of a semi-structured interview is to keep it reliable and valid so that the research can earn credibility (Brink, 1991). Reliability and validity in a semi-structured interview depend on “conveying equivalence of meaning” rather than “the repeated use of the same words in each question” (Denzin, 1973). Louise Barriball and While (1994) pointed out two primary considerations when selecting semi-structured interviews as a method of data collection. On the one hand, it suits investigations of the perceptions of interviewees about sensitive and complex issues and “enable[s] probing for more information and clarification of answers”. On the other hand, the use of a standardised interview schedule may not suit the different educational, professional and personal backgrounds of the interviewees (Louise Barriball & While, 1994).

The reason why these two methods were chosen is that both of them suit the research aims of this study and help to analyse the research questions. The content analysis gives a general introduction of the background of CM, while the semi-structured interviews help to answer the research questions in the employees’ own words. The initial content analysis of the website managed to give a general understanding of CM, and the semi-structured interviews helped analyse the organisation’s features and profession in a deeper way. In regards to the profession, the process CM uses to select topics and produce news reports and videos will be introduced.

In the part of organization, the CM’s running process will be introduced— for example, the inner structure, salary, and sources of funding. According to Shoemaker and Vos (2009), the central role of the media in modern public life is gatekeeping, which means it decides not only what information is selected for reporting but also how the information
will be reported. In other words, the “content and nature” of the news are determined by the media (Shoemaker & Vos, 2009).

5.2 Content Analysis

5.2.1 Data Selection
The website was investigated for three content aspects: (1) What is the tendency of all the posts on the website from 2007 to 2016? (2) What main topics does CM mainly report? and (3) What are the main sources of the content on the website? There were three criteria for selecting the data used in the research. For the first aspect, because CM has its own statistics of the number monthly posts, the data was collected and calculated based on CM’s database. For the second aspect, main topics were found in the hashtags on each post given by the editors. For the third aspect, the data was selected from the sources given by the editors, and the amount of each source was collected and analysed.

5.2.2 Data Analysis
In this study, both quantitative and qualitative content analysis were defined as the methodological approaches to analysing the objective presentation of the content on the CM website, as well as the subjective interpretation of the text data through semi-structured interviews.

On the one hand, quantitative content analysis can answer the "what" questions by showing the numerical characteristic of texts (Julien, 2008). The articles on the CM website are coded in a systematic classification process, and the themes are identified as well. The original hashtags given by the CM editors about themes and sources are regarded as codes and were used in this study. A problem that could occur during the research process is the reliability of the codes. Because the editors are not researchers, they might not use an academic method to identify and classify the hashtags. However, while the codes might not be rigorous enough data, they were still kept and used in this study because a unified standard to select data is necessary. Moreover, the original data is important for the results to reveal the main characteristics of CM’s posts. The results will
be shown in the next parts of data selection and data analysis from the aspects of
tendencies, main topics, and main sources. On the other hand, as one of the various
research methods used to analyse textual data (Hsieh and Shannon, 2005), qualitative
content analysis also helps in expressing data and reflecting meanings (Julien, 2008). It
will be used on analyzing the transcripts of the semi-structured interviews, to code the
answers of those open end questions and gather the useful information.

5.3 Semi-Structured Interviews

Of the fourteen interviewees, six are currently working for CM as full-time employees or
part-time student correspondents. The other eight interviewees once worked for CM. All
of the interviews were recorded with the permission of interviewees. The interviews were
semi-structured with open-ended questions, conducted between April and June of 2017,
and lasted about one hour each. All of the interviews were conducted in Chinese. Prof
Guan, the leader of CM, was contacted first before the research. According to Prof Guan,
the employees could not be forced to accept the interview request because the inner
structure of CM is not hierarchical. The help he provided for the research study was,
informing the employees that a master’s student wanted to interview them about CM and
providing contact information of employees who were willing to be interviewed.
Surprisingly, all interviewees were willing to spend their time answering all the
questions. They were friendly and voluntary.

The ideas for the questions in the interviews were based on the previous study on the
current situation of Taiwanese mainstream and alternative media, as well as on a content
analysis of the official CM website. Because the analysis is based on a case study and
most of the employees in CM were interviewed, the names of interviewees are handled
transparently for this particular study. During the interviews, different kinds of
journalistic skills were used to ensure the reliability of the interviewees’ answers. For
example, the interviewees were interviewed separately so that their opinions would not be
influenced by other people. Moreover, the transcript of Huang Yijing’s interview—a
previous employee who already left her position at CM—was regarded as more reliable
than other interviewees who are currently working for CM. The semi-structured
interviews analyse organisation and profession. The interview questions will be attached in the appendix.

5.3.1 Data Selection

Among the fourteen interviewees, six of them are current employees, including the team leader (Prof Guan), two editors and three journalists. One famous citizen journalist of Taiwan, Chen Kunlong, was also interviewed as one of the organisers who helped to set up CM. He has helped CM during different stages of its history. The other seven interviewees once worked for CM but have already left their positions.

CM is based in Taiwan. Due to the distance and visa limitations, all of the interviews were conducted online via voice-over-IP (VoIP) services using both video and audio. Two main problems occurred during the process of interviews. First, some people who once worked for CM were impossible to contact because it has been too long since they left the positions. Therefore, the number of interviewees could not be larger. Second, some of the interviewees wore a "mask" to some extent and stand by CM; therefore, it was difficult to get at what they really think. The author managed these issues with her previous experiences as a journalist. The basic information of the fourteen interviewees is illustrated in table 5.1, including their names, positions at CM, and the date that each of them was interviewed.

Table 5.1: Basic information of the fourteen interviewees.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Position</th>
<th>Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Guan, ZX</td>
<td>Organizer, leader</td>
<td>2017-05-23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yang, JR</td>
<td>Editor &amp; administrative staff</td>
<td>2017-06-02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jiang, XY</td>
<td>Editor &amp; journalist</td>
<td>2017-06-03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Xu, SK</td>
<td>Journalist</td>
<td>2017-06-05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Su, CY</td>
<td>Journalist</td>
<td>2017-06-09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zhang, YL</td>
<td>Journalist</td>
<td>2017-06-16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Name</td>
<td>Position</td>
<td>Date</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------</td>
<td>-------------------------------------------</td>
<td>--------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chen, KL</td>
<td>Former organizer &amp; Citizen journalist</td>
<td>2017-06-03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Huang, YJ</td>
<td>Former editor &amp; Administrative staff</td>
<td>2017-05-31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Xu, JH</td>
<td>Former network engineer</td>
<td>2017-06-02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chen, JF</td>
<td>Former journalist</td>
<td>2017-06-05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lv, YC</td>
<td>Former journalist</td>
<td>2017-06-06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Huang, YQ</td>
<td>Former administrative staff</td>
<td>2017-06-09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chen, WL</td>
<td>Former journalist</td>
<td>2017-06-06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guo, AJ</td>
<td>Former journalist</td>
<td>2017-06-16</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5.3.2 Data Analysis

In the beginning, the transcripts of all the interviews were coded by the cross-platform application Dedoose with 29 different codes, which were concluded by the author based on the contents of interviews. Figure 5.1 shows all of 29 codes. Then, the codes were merged and categorised into two parts—“profession” and “organisation”—including 17 final codes. The profession category mainly introduces the process of how CM produces news, and it includes ten codes: “experiences”, “mainstream / alternative media”, “differences”, “competition”, “impression of CM”, “government”, “social movements”, “topics”, “voice”, “serve public”. The organisation category expresses the inner structure of CM. The readers can get to know how CM runs different aspects through seven codes: “history”, “staff”, “salary”, “funds”, “citizen participation”, “views”, “value”.
5.3.3 Examining Organization

The inner structure of CM was investigated and analysed to explore its main characteristics. All of the fourteen interviewees were asked open-ended questions to delineate the history and current situation of CM. The organisation is relevant to the study because it showcases CM’s operations from various angles. The organization includes funding sources, salaries and self-recognition of current or former employees. Table 5.2 provides a detailed description of the seven main codes used during the process of coding the interview transcripts regarding organisation. According to Downing’s (2001) radical media theory, four of the codes—“history”, “funds”, “citizen participation”, and “value” were used to investigate the independence of CM. The other three codes—“staff”, “salary”, and “view” were used connected Downing’s radical media theory to evaluate whether the inner structure of CM is democratic or hierarchical.
Table 5.2: Descriptions of coding themes of organization from the semi-structured interviews.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Categories of themes</th>
<th>Coding descriptions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>History</td>
<td>The different stages Civil Media has experienced during its ten-year history; the roles that the government has played during the ten-year history of CM; how CM has changed from a government-funded program into an independent media in ten years.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staff</td>
<td>The way that CM is organized by the staff; different departments of CM; the responsibilities that different staff has; Daily routine when working for CM.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Salary</td>
<td>The amount of salary that the staff can get paid per case or per month; the progress about how the amount of payment is decided.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Funds</td>
<td>The sources of current and previous funds; the way how CM uses the funds every month; the progress of CM to utilize crowdfunding to work on expensive in-depth coverage.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Citizen participation</td>
<td>The possibility whether normal citizens can participate in the work of CM; the standard to select people to write for public columns on the website.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Views</td>
<td>The reasons that the former and current staff chose to work for CM; the reasons that they finally left their position in CM; the different views they hold on CM.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Value</td>
<td>The role of CM in social movements; the nature of CM; the possibility whether CM can change the life of normal citizens.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5.3.4 Examining Profession

The profession category is more about the process of how CM creates news, including the standards for topic selection, its standpoint while reporting, and the influence that CM has on the society. Moreover, the views of the interviewees on mainstream media, alternative media, the government, and the public were also gathered.

Profession is relevant to the study because CM defines itself as an alternative medium run by professional journalists with a basic rule of selection rather than citizen media that everyone can easily participate in and speak for themselves. That is, professional is one of
the main characteristics that make CM and other alternative media and citizen media different. The detailed descriptions of the main twelve codes of the interview transcripts on the aspect of profession are illustrated in table 5.3. Based on the Downing’s (2001) theory, five of the codes—“mainstream/alternative media”, “differences”, “competitions”, “impression of CM”, and “government”—were used to explore whether CM has broadened the hegemonic range from mainstream media. Three of the codes—“experiences”, “topics”, and “voice”—were used to judge whether CM promptly responds to the demands of the voiceless and excluded. Moreover, two other codes—“social movements” and “serve the public”—were used to investigate whether CM has involved in the tendency to reform on culture and society connected with the radical media theory of Downing (2001).

Table 5.3: Descriptions of coding the themes of profession from the semi-structured interviews.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Categories of themes</th>
<th>Coding descriptions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Experiences</td>
<td>The own experiences of the interviewee, just like the jobs he/she has before and after working for CM, the experience impressed him/her the most as a journalist, the major he/she had in university.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mainstream / Alternative Media</td>
<td>The opinions of interviewee on mainstream media and alternative media in Taiwan, just like the current situation, the future; their expectations on journalism in Taiwan.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Differences</td>
<td>The differences between mainstream media and alternative media in Taiwan according to the interviewee, just like whether the society views mainstream media and alternative media in different ways, whether the citizens treat the journalists of mainstream media and alternative media differently, and the differences between CM and other alternative media in Taiwan now.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Competition</td>
<td>The views according to the interviewee; whether there is competition between CM and mainstream media or whether there is competition between CM and other alternative media; whether mainstream media compete with alternative media.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Impression of CM</td>
<td>According to the interviewee, how mainstream media, other alternative media, the government, normal citizens, the police and the interviewee himself/herself thinks of CM.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Government | the reason and way the government paid for CM in its first five years; the way that CM has kept independent and isolated while being funded by the government; the reason that the government stopped funding CM.

Social movements | The history and current status of social movements in Taiwan.

Topics | The topics that CM mainly report; the standard of CM to select topics to report.

Voice | The position of CM while reporting news; whether CM has its own voice; whether the journalists add their own voice in their reports.

Serve the Public | According to the interviewee, the way he/she thinks himself/herself serves the public while working for CM; whether the mainstream media serve the public in the way they should do; what alternative media can do to serve the public in Taiwan.

5.4 Limitations

Although it is believed that the research questions can be answered by the research design, there are still limitations.

Little time and great distance limited the resources and the depth that the research could achieve. Due to the physical distance and the seven-hour time difference between Sweden and Taiwan, it was not possible to visit the CM offices or other alternative media offices in person. It was also not possible to attend the speeches that are given by CM employees in high schools and universities, and it was not possible to observe how the CM journalists work practically at sites of social movements. The semi-structured interviews via audio or video call worked extraordinarily well, however, and enough materials were gathered for the analysis. Still, only fourteen people in total were interviewed. This number limits the study’s scope of inside CM. In other words, it was not possible to consult other sources on CM, such as alternative media, mainstream media, the Taiwanese government, audiences, or citizens.

The blank space of research on alternative media in Taiwan has restricted the study as well. As shown in the literature review, alternative media belongs to a neglected field of
research, that is an under-researched, under-represented, and under-resourced spot in social sciences, especially in the studies of media and communication (Fuchs, 2010). In the book *Mass Communication Theory*, which is viewed as a guide of the study, McQuail (2005) talked about alternative media in less than two pages. Furthermore, it is easy to find articles from the Taiwanese media that analyse the current situation and future of mainstream media and alternative media, but it is difficult to find research in that regard. These factors made the study more difficult, especially the theoretical aspect.

The tendencies of reporting were analysed based on more than 2,000 posts on the CM website. However, the analysis was lost due to a data failure, and it is impossible to do it again because of the time restriction. To that end, the study is only based on the interviews.

Finally, because this is an independent study, the statistics and coding work were carried out by the author alone. In other words, there were no other researchers to double-check the data in the content analysis or the coding results. Therefore, the validation of the data could be influenced by manual or subjective mistakes during the process of statistics and coding.

5.5 Ethics

As the foundation of all research, ethics require researchers to think about different aspects of the study based on their ethical significance (O’Leary, 2004). Hence, it is necessary to respect the interviewees and other participants, as well as protect their privacy. Because this study focuses on CM, the previous and current employees were contacted directly and provided most of the information for the research. Three main ethical issues concerned the involvement of participants in the main method of this study: the semi-structured interviews. First, all the interviewees were given basic information about the research study, including the research design, research questions, main focus and interview questions. Second, all the interviewees were informed that what they said would be used in the research study. Third, all of the interviewees agreed to include their names in the study.
Because CM is an open-source platform that provides public content that is accessible by anyone, this study also analysed the basic contents of the official CM website. According to O’Leary (2004), scholars are unconditionally responsible for chasing the objectiveness and integrity of their research. Although most of the interviewees have negative opinions of mainstream Taiwanese media, it is important to keep a neutral view of both mainstream and alternative media without a personal preference. This study aims to contribute to research on public-oriented, alternative Taiwanese media in an unbiased and objective way, which why it contains no discussions about CM’s products or any judgements of CM itself.
6 Analysis

In this chapter, the main characteristics of CM will be analysed from two aspects. Firstly, the profession of CM is investigated by content analysis in two different ways: examining the website of CM, and analyzing the record of semi-structured interviews. The profession of CM will be examined from four factors: sources of content, themes, the tendency of reports, and journalism in Taiwan. Secondly, the organization of CM is examined from two factors: independence and democracy. Theories of alternative media (Bailey, Cammaerts and Carpentier, 2008) and radical media (Downing, 2001) are used as the main sources. To that end, whether CM is alternative media or radical media will be analysed via two forms of professionalism and organization.

6.1 Investigating the Profession of Civil Media@Taiwan

6.1.1 Analysis of the Sources of Content

There are two ways of content analysis used in this research. Firstly, the contents on the website of CM are classified and analysed. There are four main categories of the contents on the website, they are: reports produced by CM itself, submissions from the public, social movement information provided by social movement organizations, and cooperation columns provided by individuals and other alternative media. Based on the content analysis of the website, the structure of the contents has changed since the establishment as an association in 2014. Social movement information including interview invitations, press releases and statements provided by various social movement organizations have replaced the production of CM as the largest part since 2015.

Secondly, the semi-structured interviews are recorded, and the contents of the interviews are analysed. Based on the interviews of two editors of CM, Yang Juanru and Jiang Xinyi (2017), from 2012 to 2014, the contents on CM are mainly articles and videos about social movements produced by CM itself. According to them, individuals could also submit but that was the main way to participate. In conclusion, based on the content
analysis of the website and the interviews, social movement organizations have become the main source of CM, while individuals take part very little, but keep increasing.

**Social Movements Organizations as Priority**

Among the contents on the website of CM, the part of “social movement information” includes three main aspects. Firstly, interview invitations. They are about time, location, organizers and themes of the upcoming social movement events. Such invitations are targeted towards CM, but CM publishes the information to the audiences in order to encourage participation of others. Secondly, the statements published by social movement organizations. Thirdly, the press releases. They are written by the social movement organizers themselves, to provide the information and details about the social movements for those journalists who did not attend the event so that they can report on the media. If journalists of CM attend the event, CM posts the articles made by its own journalists together with the releases provided by the event organizer, to provide the audiences a comprehensive understanding. The concept of social movement organization in Taiwan is given by the interviewee:

There are mainly two kinds of non-government organizations in Taiwan. One focuses on the public welfare, usually with a religious background. Their main activity is charity. They have a good relationship with the government most of the time, rather than protesting. The other ones focus on human rights, environment protection, or the aboriginal, among others. They show much higher rebellious spirit and are more radical than welfare organizations. They usually protest to the government. That is why we cooperate with social movement organizations, rather than welfare organizations (Huang Yijing, 2017).

Each of the posts were tagged by the editors when posted online. Since the total amount of posts peak in the year of 2015, a classification is given in figure 6.1.
It shows that in the year of 2015, more than a half of the posts on CM’s website were about social movement information that were provided by social movement organizations rather than CM itself. The 675 reports produced by CM take the second largest part of the whole amount, but it is still less than a half of the amount of social movement information.

There are two important observations from the chart in figure 6.1. Firstly, in the year of 2015, the information about social movement takes the major part of the contents on the website of CM. Secondly, in the year of 2015, the main part of the contents CM posted on its website are not created by itself.

According to many interviewees, "CM cooperates with many labor unions and nongovernment organizations about social movements, environment protection, among others. They protest, we record and report (Guo Anjia, 2017)". "Those organizations of protesters always inform CM one or two days before the events happen, so that we can prepare well to report (Chen Weilun, 2017)". That is how CM has had a closer connection with NGOs and unions about social movements (Prof Guan, Yang Juanru, 2017):
It is a way for social movement organizations to speak for themselves by posting their interview invitations, statements and press releases on the website of CM (Guan, 2017).

There are two reasons why we post the interview invitation from social movement organizations on our website. Firstly, citizens can hardly receive interview invitation if they are not working in the field of media, but they also have the right to know what social movements are happening. So we provide them a platform to know the information and participate. Secondly, we not report the social movements through textual articles and videos by ourselves, but also post the press releases written by the social movement organizations themselves. That is to provide different perspectives of reporting for our audiences, and to record the process of social movements comprehensively. We had a low visibility and could rarely get interview invitations until 2015. As our popularity became higher, our relationship with social movement organizations are getting better and can get lots of information provided by them (Yang Juanru, 2017).

For the reason that the information provided by social movement organizations takes the majority of the contents on CM, Huang Yijing has her own view:

I regard CM as a platform only for social movements, rather than an alternative media. Hence, those interview invitations, press releases, statements, submissions and columns are the vast majority of the contents on CM. Meanwhile, the articles and videos produced by CM itself only take one fifth or even less, because we don’t have enough people to report by ourselves (Huang Yijing, 2017).

**Citizen Participation as a Supplement**

Although a large part of the contents on CM are provided by social movement organizations, it is possible for all citizens to participate. Submission is the main approach for individuals to speak through CM:
Normal citizens cannot get involved in the running of organization, but they can submit their editorials and the reports made by themselves. The editor will publish with the signature of the author as long as the submission fits our standard. There is no payment, everything is voluntary. CM is not responsible for their speech (Guan, 2017).

As for the standard of selection, the individual submissions must revolve around social movements (Yang Juanru, 2017), public interests, and major events (Lv Yanci, 2017). There is a column named “The Course of Citizenship outside of Classroom”, submissions from citizenship teachers and history teachers of high schools will be published here regularly:

The teachers submit to CM, then ask their students to read the submissions as long as they are published. That is how I got to know CM and how CM is known by many high school students (Lv Yanci, 2017).

On the other hand, individual exposure rarely works in CM. Some individuals did contact with CM and expected help, but they never succeeded:

If individual come to us and spill the news pegs, we decide whether to dig by two points. First, whether mainstream media has reported it. Second, whether there is social movement organization on his side. We would investigate and report if the individual has the endorsement from social movement organization while no attention from mainstream. If not, we will introduce the familiar NGOs to help him/ her (Chen Jiafeng, 2017).

If the individual has no social movement organizations on his/her side, we will be careful. Most time we would listen to his/her story, stay concerned, but not report. Because social movement organizations are more reliable than individuals, we don’t have so many labors and money to investigate for everyone (Huang Yijing, 2017).
Summary

Downing (2001) held the view that broadening the hegemonic range from mainstream media is one of the main characteristics of radical media. It is possible to determine that CM fits this characteristic according to one reason. Social movements are always reported by mainstream media in a limited way, yet CM identifies itself as a platform to publish everything from social movement organizations. Published content that social movement organizations provide helps the public to get to know more about the things outside of the hegemonic range of the mainstream media. The most important aspect in that regard is that CM publishes any social movement content, even if the content is contrary to publications of other movements on the platform. CM actively tries to break the range of mainstream media which allows for citizens to understand the basis of social movements in a different way.

For Bailey, Cammaerts and Carpentier (2008), the alternative arrangement of content (“independent”, “non dominant”, “small-scale”, “nonhierarchical” discourses) against mainstream media (“commercial” or “state-owned”, “dominant”, “large-scale”, “hierarchical” discourses) is another characteristic of alternative media. CM has been trying to keep independent from the control of advertorials and the government. It tries to be financially independent by small-scale and individual donations. It tries to be professionally independent by reporting social issues freely and breaking the domination from mainstream media. It claims to report in a nonhierarchical way. However, since CM takes information from social movement organizations as primary source, and it is always against the government, it is not proper to conclude that CM has the alternative arrangement of content against mainstream media.

6.1.2 Analysis of the Themes

The themes that CM reports include various aspects of the society. From environment to human right, from gender to law, CM has been working on covering the social movements from various fields. In the standard of CM, the social movements which are
against the government but with no attention from the public are the perfect cases to report. So that CM can provide help as an alternative media at the most appropriate time. This section is mainly based on the semi-structured interviews, while content analysis on the website of CM is also used for the analysis.

Current Range of Themes

There is a wide range of themes that CM reports. From the homepage on the website, there are different categories, just like environment, human right, labor, Taiwanese aborigines, immigration, gender, law, empowerment, anti-globalization, politics, culture, etc. Each of them is also tagged to mark and classify every post. The amount of each category has been counted for every year from 2007 to 2016 using the tags as variables.

Figure 6.2: Tendency of the amount of posts of the four main themes: Environment, Human Rights, Labor and Gender.

Figure 6.2 shows the four main themes on the website of CM and their tendency between 2007 and 2016. Based on the content analysis on the data of the four themes, environmental issues had been reported the most during the year 2009 and 2011, while labor issues appeared most frequently after 2014. The amount of the themes about human
rights, labor and gender has the upward trend, while the trends of human rights and gender grow more slowly than that of labor. The first peak of environmental themes appears in the year of 2011, with the inflection point in the next year. According to the content analysis of the semi-structured interviews, an interviewee gave his own opinion on the change of environmental themes:

I investigated and reported the themes of environment and labor in the most time, especially in the year of 2011. Because the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear disaster caused the widespread concern from the public. There are also nuclear power plants in Taiwan, people were worried whether such nuclear disaster might also happen in Taiwan. I remember I went to Orchid Island to investigate the radioactive waste problems there at the same year (Chen Weilun, 2017).

Selection Standard of Themes

Based on the interview transcripts, there are two standards to select themes for CM. One is “rebelloius spirit” (Huang Yijing, 2017), the other one is comparably low attention from the public.

Prof Guan (2017) explained that CM pays special attention on the themes about class struggle, labor, Taiwanese aborigines and demolition. With this in mind, Huang Yijing added “against government” as the first factor to consider:

First we would estimate whether one event has enough rebellious spirit. If it is against the government, while covering any of the themes about human rights, aboriginal, demolition, labor, gender, we must report (Huang Yijing, 2017).

However, CM never investigates or continues reporting an event that mainstream media covered, no matter how much it fits the standard of CM. Because it is the little attention on the event urging CM to report and help it attract more attention. Several of the interviewees make an explanation:
Sometime we even do not really care about the specific themes as long as nobody knows it and no other media has reported it (Chen Jiafeng, 2017).

The mainstream media in Taiwan do not care about the themes of labor. Many laborers are “silent” because no media listen to them. That is why they have little public attention no matter how much they protest, that is also the reason that CM should report them and help their voice to be heard. If mainstream media are attracted and the protesters get enough attention, the work for CM finishes. For example, it was CM that first reported the strike of employees at China Airlines in 2016, which was ignored in the beginning. The goal of CM was achieved when various mainstream media started to report this event and the voice of the employees got heard by the public. That was the time for CM to finish reporting this theme (Huang Yijing, 2017).

Many interviewees mentioned one sentence that Prof Guan always mentions the phrase “We go wherever nobody goes”. To report the themes which are not considered by any other media. This standard will rarely bring high CTR for CM. But if people want to look back the history many years later when the similar event happens, they will be able find the fact and the complete process recorded by CM (Lv Yanci, 2017).

**Summary**

Downing (2001) pointed out that responding to the demands of the voiceless and the excluded promptly is another characteristic of radical media. CM has done much on speaking for the minority. It defines itself as staying on the side of the protesters by not shedding light on the government opinion. Many of the interviewees even admitted that CM was “not neutral”. However, CM usually observes the social movement organizers not enough. It rarely criticize the organizers as long as they are on the side of social movements. What’s more, according to the previous full-time employee, Huang Yijing (2017), CM never reports anything about the internal problems of social movement organizations. It seems CM fits this characteristic of radical media. The premise of
“going wherever nobody goes” implies that journalists at CM aim to report incidents promptly. However, promptly in the sense that they try to be first in knowing about an incident, not in the sense that they will be the fastest in replicating other reports. Their capabilities in that regard are clearly limited by shortage of staff and the comparably low budget.

According to Bailey, Cammaerts and Carpentier (2008), alternative media link the local and the international, form various relationships between the state and the market, and contact different social movements and protest groups. Based on the analysis of the themes on its website, CM has a long-time cooperation with various Taiwanese and foreign alternative media to provide fresh themes and opinions to its audiences. Moreover, it also cooperate with some mainstream media in Taiwan, just like Apple Daily. To that end, those audiences who are interested in social movements can be attracted from mainstream media. At the same time, mainstream media may also earn a good reputation that they not only care about advertorial, but also social issues. From the aspect of themes, CM fits the characteristic of alternative media.

6.1.3 Analysis of the Tendency of Reporting

The principle of “objective but not neutral” dominates the tendency of CM. While standing on the side against the government, CM mostly speaks for the voiceless and the excluded to make their appeals to be heard and their demands to be satisfied. This is also how CM is serving the public, according to the interviewees. Since everything can be alternative to something else in a sense (Downing, 2001), CM has been on the process to reform media while speaking for the minority as well as promoting the social involvement. More than 2000 posts on the website of CM in total were investigated, the various standpoints were analysed. However, the analysis is lost due to the data failure, and it is impossible to do it again because of the time restriction. This is one of the limitations in this study.  

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18 This analysis is only based on the interviews. Because as written in the method part, the analysis was actually done but the data was lost.
**Objective but Not Neutral**

Besides “we go wherever nobody goes”, the other sentence that Prof Guan (2017) always mentions is “we are objective but not neutral”. Based on the opinions of the interviewees, it is believed that “objective but not neutral” is the basic tendency of CM. Here are the explanations from some interviewees:

News report must be objective and real, however, our standpoint is never neutral. We identify ourselves as alternative media based on reporting social movements, with the aim of media reform. Besides, we hope the appeal and voice of social movement organizations and the excluded can be presented completely to the public. That is why “we go wherever nobody goes” (Lv Yanci, 2017).

We report the truthful process of social movements with confirmation, but not whatever the organizers tell us. That is why we are objective. We view ourselves not neutral due to the selection standard of themes, we prefer to those with less political resources. For example, we choose to report the requests of the protesters because the official reply from the government is reported by enough mainstream media, while nobody care about the protesters (Jiang Xinyi, 2017).

Should media have its own standpoint? The answer for the correspondent Xu Shikai is yes:

The standpoint of CM is to help the protesters speak (Xu Shikai, 2017).

Not only standpoint, tendency also exists in the news reporting from CM:

The tendency is already obvious in the progress to select themes. Although I tend to the protesters, I am a journalist first. Hence, I report and record the social movements from a distance to try to keep objective (Su Ciyi, 2017).
I tend to the social movement organizations during the progress of reporting. But when I cannot agree with everything they protest, I would present the voices of both sides and leave it to the audiences to judge. I am a journalist not a protester. My duty is to record rather than to participate (Xu Shikai, 2017).

**Against the Government**

The standpoint of CM can be viewed as on the side of social movements but against the government. “Our principle to report news is to stand on the opposite of power”, said Zhang Yilian (2017), an undergraduate journalism student. He has been working for CM as a correspondent in recent two years. In the summer of 2016, Zhang went to Dalinpu, a village in southern Taiwan, suffering from pollution and the oppression of the government. He stayed there for one week to interview and investigate the struggle between the local people and the government.

A local provided me the place to stay for free, others were very willing to talk with me and tell me how serious the pollution is, but how powerless the government is. I made a thirty-minute documentary from the twenty-gigabytes videos. And it won the first prize of a national documentary competition (Zhang Yilian, 2017).

Furthermore, CM rarely reports in a balanced way. That is to say:

We don’t need to present the reply from the government on the specific social movements. We even don’t mention their voice. We only report the voice of the protesters. Balanced report is the method which mainstream media use. Alternative media has their own standpoints and their own characteristics. They chase for media reform, they confirm the authenticity of the events, they are the typically balanced way of alternative media to report. Presenting the voice of the protesters and the reply from the government is what mainstream media do. Alternative media is always aggressive on the government rather than balanced to
show the differences on contents with mainstream media and the competitiveness (Guo Anjia, 2017).

**Speaking for the Voiceless**

For CM, it is important to “give everyone the chance to speak” (Chen Jiafeng, 2017). “Everyone” specifically means those voiceless and excluded people that are ignored by mainstream. Zhang Yilian explained why he chose to go to Dalinpu to in-depth cover the incident in a documentary by himself:

I just want to present the fact and let more people know what is happening here to those poor local residents. As there are more reports from the mainstream media, the pollution here has earned more attention from the public, government officers also visit here. In one word, the voice of the local residents are louder and can be heard by more people now (Zhang Yilian, 2017).

Although the mainstream media have much more resources and power, CM does not give up reporting for the voiceless justly. Sometimes CM also has to face the consequences:

I doubted whether the MOST stopped funding CM because we reported its pollution incident. We were criticized immediately after the report, but we wouldn’t stop only because it was our source of funds. Moreover, CM has offended a Taiwan power company by reporting the problem of nuclear waste. The Taipei city government was also unsatisfied on us because we reported issues about demolition. But those giants rarely care, because as an alternative media, CM is powerless compared to mainstream media. The reports of CM can rarely spread widely (Huang Yunqi, 2017).

CM regards itself with the duty to help the voiceless to speak. As a result, the protesters have a good impression on it:
While working in the sites of social movements, we usually got positive feedback from the protesters. Many of them told us they had read our reports before, and they stood by us because CM reports the issues comprehensively. They often gave a snort of contempt on the mainstream media due to their twisted reports (Chen Jiafeng, 2017).

Summary
Involving in the tendency of reform on culture and society is one of the main characteristics of radical media (Downing, 2001). CM is able to fulfill its responsibility and promote the media reform without the pressure from advertisers, which is different from mainstream media. Furthermore, more and more citizens are interested and are getting involved in social issues with the contribution of CM. It is possible to say that CM has participated in the tendency to change the opinions of people and the social process. However, there are two weak points of this tendency of reports that CM needs to overcome.

First, it might be beneficial for the audience to report the voices of protesters, as well as the reply from the government. Only to report from one side and urge the government can put pressure on the government to put forward particular solutions. Yet the unbalanced way of reporting can hardly create an open discourse without the involvement of mass media. Second, CM is always against the government and does not dare to report anything in line with the view of the government. This is due to the fear of giving up its identity, probably resulting in the loss of a large part of donations.

By contract, alternative media form a third voice between commercial media and state-owned media, while keeping counterhegemonic in the civil society (Bailey, Cammaerts and Carpentier, 2008). CM does reform the culture and society in this way. They identify themselves as objective but not neutral, they go wherever nobody goes. They interview those people who are ignored by mainstream media, and let their voice to be heard by the public. CM was born against the government, it has the nature to speak
for the protesters. In conclusion, CM can be viewed as both radical media and alternative media on the aspect its tendency.

6.1.4 Analysis of the Journalism in Taiwan

Downing (2001) held the view that radical media has five main characteristics. Firstly, radical media work on broadening the hegemonic range from mainstream media. However, according to Chen Kunlong (2017), the Taiwanese mainstream media have already changed into commercial media. As a citizen journalist who has worked for various alternative media and radical media in Taiwan, Chen gives his impressions on Taiwanese mainstream media:

The biggest problem of Taiwanese mainstream media is that they lack reports on social issues. It is the obligation of media to report important issues of the country and society. However, many mainstream media rarely do that. In-depth reporting about social issues need lots of people to spend long time working on it, while many mainstream media are not willing to give journalists enough resources for that. Placement marketing has filled the newspaper and TV channels, the journalists of mainstream media are not journalists, but salesmen working for advertorial. That is why I would prefer to regard Taiwanese mainstream media as commercial media (Chen Kunlong, 2017).

Downing (2001) pointed out that responding to the demands of the voiceless and the excluded promptly is another characteristic of radical media. Zhang Yilian (2017) describes mainstream media from an opposite way:

Mainstream media are too commercial now, they report social movements in a specific way only to catch more attention. In another word to say, they report those moments of conflicts during the movement. For example, protesters throwing eggs to the government officers are reported by media much more often than they giving speech to express their requests. Being influenced by the mainstream media, the audiences may easily misunderstand the protesters as angry and impulsive (Zhang Yilian, 2017).
Involving in the tendency of reform on culture and society is one of the main characteristics of radical media (Downing, 2001). Xu Shikai (2017) figured out that the freedom of speech in Taiwan is never a problem. However, it is too much freedom that reforming the current society.

The freedom of speech is a sword with double edges, and the freedom of the journalism in Taiwan is too much. Although there is no control from the government, however, a media can be abandoned by the market as long as the readers do not like the contents. Journalism in Taiwan rely too much on entertainment or other gossips that can easily catch eyes. People who are really interested in serious social issues are either intellectuals or those who have direct influence. But it is still difficult to attract attention from the masses. The problem of Taiwanese journalism is that some people like the content, some people not. They debate with each other, but nobody really cares about the truth (Xu Shikai, 2017).

According to Downing (2001), the third characteristic of radical media is the independency from various authorities. Xu Junhan (2017) points out that compared with mainland of China, journalism in Taiwan has already “died”:

I never knew that media could influence the society so much, until I went to work in mainland of China. Now I have been living there for five years. I think it seems like that Taiwanese journalism has freedom, however it is still controlled by the minority, similar with mainland of China, even worse. People in mainland of China know that they are controlled. While people in Taiwan never know that they are calculated and controlled, they never know their journalism environment is really bad. There are a lot of issues forbidden to be reported in mainland of China, but lots of journalists are trying to hit the border of control. Some of them can spend the whole year only to write an in-depth report. Many of the journalists in mainland of China have their ambition to make progress on the freedom of speech. However, Taiwanese journalism have already given up. People feel like they have freedom, but actually they have nothing.
Moreover, the democratic inner structure also plays an important role in radical media (Downing, 2001). Jiang Xinyi (2017) gives her own explanation about this in Taiwanese journalism:

The inner structure of mainstream media in Taiwan also influences their ways to report. Many journalists are from middle class. They have the professional training in universities in Taipei and other big cities. That is to say, many journalists have little chances to get to know the bottom of society and the protesters. It may influence the standpoints of mainstream media. What the worse is, most Taiwanese people do not care about other people’s issues, because they have been adapted to the control from the White Terror. The individualism of journalists may also influence the journalism in Taiwan (Jiang Xinyi, 2017).

Bailey, Cammaerts and Carpentier (2008) built a categorization of theories with four dimensions to identify alternative media. In this section, it can also be used to analyse the journalism in Taiwan from the angle of alternative media.

Firstly, the central of alternative media is the participation of community members to organize media and create content (Bailey, Cammaerts and Carpentier, 2008). According to Guo Anjia (2017), the journalism in Taiwan has been controlled by audiences. Media can produce anything into “news” as long as the audience likes it. In addition it can exploit the journalists legally to a certain degree. The journalistic baseline is CTR. As time passes by, larger parts of the audiences do not trust mainstream media as much as before (Guo Anjia, 2017). Trust from the audiences and distinction from the competitors are essential for a media. The disappointment of the public on the mainstream media creates the possibility for alternative media to survive, as the editor of CM explained:

We insist on producing complete and long-term reports. When people want to know more than what mainstream media report, they can read ours (Jiang Xinyi, 2017).

The second characteristic of alternative media is the alternative arrangement of content ("independent", "non dominant", "small-scale", "nonhierarchical" discourses) against mainstream media ("commercial" or "state-owned", "dominant", "large-scale",
“hierarchical” discourses) (Bailey, Cammaerts and Carpentier, 2008). Due to the development of information and communication technology, Taiwanese mainstream media have already got lost in the internet era\(^{19}\). Nowadays, most mainstream media in Taiwan are owned by companies instead of intellectuals as before.\(^{20}\)

Negligible revelations have been valued too much by some Taiwanese mainstream media, this leads to the decline of content quality. For example, Apple Daily pays lots of money for the providers as bonus once their revelations are used, with the reason that people can trust and think of Apple Daily first when something happens. However, it also requires the journalists to handle every revelation provided by people, while they are busy with arranged work already. When revelation is regarded as a way to make money for citizens, fake and abuse might be brought and out of control. Meanwhile, spending the limited resources on negligible revelations may lead to waste.

It is normal for journalists to be asked to produce instant news from videos of driving recorders and monitors, while the “news” can be a car which hits the refuge island, or a cute shop assistant in 7-Eleven (Guo Anjia, 2017).

Thirdly, alternative media form a third voice between commercial media and state-owned media, while keeping counterhegemonic in the civil society (Bailey, Cammaerts and Carpentier, 2008). The better utilization of ICT for Taiwanese media is not to attract audiences on the form of contents, but to change the ways of news reporting to fit the Web 2.0. Xu Junhan, the previous engineer of CM, has moved to the mainland of China and worked there for five years. He expressed his view on mass media in Taiwan:

Most media in Taiwan has been totally controlled by their advertisers. They do not dare to contrary to the consortiums and political parties. At least half of the contents made by mainstream media are advertorials, media cannot become the fourth estate according to this (Xu Junhan, 2017).


However, Guo Anjia (2017) also figured out that the “freedom of the press” which is based on liberal ideas cannot ensure the real freedom for most people. For example, Taiwanese mainstream media focus on catching more attention in way that they even twist the truth. Taking mainstream TV channels as an example, one news report usually lasts for less than 3 minutes. In the eyes of the interviewees, for the case of protesting social movements, only conflicts are reported that happen during the protests, which leave the audience with negative impressions. Protesters are supposedly are pictured as aggressive and violent. It is how protesters can be easily misunderstood by normal citizens misled by mainstream media, and also what CM wants to supplement. In one word, the employee’s claim that it is common that CM is the only media whose journalist stays at the protest scene to record by video until the last speaker finishes talking.

Finally, alternative media link the local and the international, form various relationships between the state and the market, then contact different social movements and protest groups (Bailey, Cammaerts and Carpentier, 2008). According to Xu Shikai (2017), those journalists who really want to do in-depth reports cannot get enough money from the media, because nobody would like to read “serious news”. Each media has its own audiences, it can only report contents that its audiences like. The journalism in Taiwan is controlled by the market. Guo Anjia (2017) also has his supplement:

Journalism in Taiwan is quite shallow, especially in the era of real-time news. People can easily reach news via their phones. While the news reported by different media are similar, because they report everything. Media are losing their specific standpoints and characteristics. That is why when I buy a newspaper, I pay for its brand, rather than its content. Many people say that Taiwanese journalists have low quality. But the point is: the serious news report about policies can only get several hundreds clicks, while the news about parliamentary has an affair could easily hit more than ten thousands clicks. Whose problem is this? Nowadays, media can only earn money through large amount of pageviews. Audiences only like reading those garbage news, I can only report garbage to earn
clicks. In one word, the market makes media more and more lazy. However, Taiwanese journalism hasn’t found an effective model to profit.

**Serving the Public**

According to the interviewees, CM serves the public based on the role of the fourth estate and the nature of alternative media. Prof Guan elaborated his idea about how CM should serve the public:

Media should not be satisfied to be an information provider, but help to promote the dialogue and public discussion in the society. So that various voices can be heard, and finally media can fulfill the function as the fourth estate to supervise the power (Guan, 2017).

Specifically, CM is serving the public from three aspects. Firstly, CM serves the public recording the history as a database:

A main goal of CM is to record the process of social movements in Taiwan and digitize them into a database. So that it can help the people in the future to review what happened in the history. CM is working very well now, it has recorded many issues not well known by the public (Chen Jiafeng, 2017).

Secondly, CM serves the public by providing alternative perspectives:

We go to those places where no other media go. In this way, CM can report the issues known by the minority, then provide diverse perspectives and voices. One of the reasons why alternative media exist is to fill the vacancy of mainstream media. With public as the source of funds, CM is never controlled by the government and consortiums. That is why I feel like getting involved in the process of a reform of media and society (Lv Yanci, 2017).
It is not important whether the public agrees with all of the various voices, it is the rights for everyone to speak equally matters (Huang Yunqi, 2017).

Although alternative media have their own problems (for example, those voices not conducive to the social movement organizations are rarely mentioned), they could meet the responsibilities what the mainstream media can never achieve due to the media environment (Xu Shikai, 2017).

Finally, CM serves the public by accelerating social involvement:

We want the audiences to understand the social issues happening surround their everyday life from an alternative perspective, rather than being guided by mainstream media. We hope to arouse the concern of the public on social issues, and then lead to the participation (Huang Yunqi, 2017).

Both the current state of mass media and the ideals of certain professional people in the field of media have promoted the establishment of kinds of alternative media. What’s more, the tendency of media reform has appeared. All things considered, these are the reasons why CM could be established with the donations from a certain part of the population.

6.2 Investigating the Organization of Civil Media@Taiwan

6.2.1 Analysis of Independence

CM has kept independent on its funds and standpoints in most of the time. Between 2007 and 2012, CM valued its academic characteristic more than a government funded program. It ran as a “database” and “academic institute” (Guan, 2017) with the responsibility to record the progresses of social movements in Taiwan objectively. From the year of 2014, CM has changed its role into a non-government association funded by individual donation. With the social responsibility and the expectation raised by the donors, CM regards itself as an alternative media to report and record social movements.
in Taiwan from an alternative angle. In one word, CM has changed into an independent database and alternative media against the hegemony from the mainstream media. This section uses the interviews as the main point to analyse, while some of the content analysis on the website of CM is also used for the investigation.

**Independent Sources of Funds**

As what has been introduced in the part of background, CM has been established since 2007 as a part of the "Taiwan e-Learning and Digital Archives Program" (TELDAP) which was run by the government department Ministry of Science and Technology of the Republic of China (MOST).

The establisher of CM, Guan Zhong Xiang, explained the reason why he set up the organisation:

> The social movements in Taiwan have been ignored or distorted by the mainstream media for long time. CM is a database, with the duty to record the processes of social movements and the actions of protesters to provide the public different voice from mainstream media (Guan, 2017).

According to Prof Guan, CM kept its independence although it got funded every year from MOST:

> CM has been totally independent. During the first five years, CM got funded as an “academic institution” rather than media from MOST. That is the reason the government never intervened our work before (Guan, 2017).

Yang Jianru, who has been an employee in CM for nine years, confirmed its dependence as well:
CM was a government funded program during its first five years. We got several millions TWD (one million TWD equals around 33,000 US Dollar) every year, the money was more than enough (Yang Juanru, 2017).

Five years later, in 2012, MOST stopped funding CM. Its role has changed from database into alternative social movement media (Guan, 2017). Since only association can get donation due to the law in Taiwan, CM changed from a government funded program into a non-government association in the year of 2014, running by individual donations from the public directly:

The daily expenses of CM are mostly from individual donations. There are three main sources of funds. First is regular donation every month from subscription, it takes the largest part. Then the is individual donation, it is unstable and ranges from several hundreds to several hundred thousand TWD. The third way is copyright fee, but not much. CM has no business activities, we only earn money when people want to buy our copyrights (Guan, 2017).

According to the interviewees, visibility and activity are important to get attention and donation for a non-government association. When CM transitioned from state funds to independent by the means of donations, the work ethic had to be adjusted in that regard. On one hand, the employees post new contents on the website everyday to keep their activity visible, so that they could establish the new role of CM as media:

We were more like the laborers hired by the boss, Prof Guan. Each of us did what he assigned us to do. We did not have meetings as frequently as now, so the whole team was in shortage of communication. Everyone just worked on his/ her own job. We rarely reported as soon as something happened, because there was no request of timeliness for CM as a database instead of media. Now it totally changed. We need to show our audiences clearly what we have done in time, so that they can know us more and donate more. We post news reports everyday on the website. Now we are working more like a media, rather than database (Yang Juanru, 2017).
Figure 6.3 shows the amount of posts on the website of CM each year from 2007 to 2016. One can see an obvious watershed at the year of 2013, one year before the association was set up and CM started to collect donation. It is clearly visible that during the period of CM as a government funded program between 2007 and 2012, the amount of posts each year remained under 500, while there is a significant growth from the year 2013 on. The peak appears in the year of 2015, with the amount of at least four times more than each year before 2013. The data supports the opinions of the interviewees, that CM started to post more frequently on the website when it needed to feed itself.

**Figure 6.3: Amount of posts on the Civil Media@Taiwan website by year.**

On the other hand, the employees of CM have tried many ways to improve their visibility and popularity among citizens. For example, they utilize their contacts with professional people in different fields. Moreover, they give annual speeches in high schools and colleges, and universities in Taiwan:

> I built the specific website for donation. Prof Guan usually utilize his relationships to let more people know us and donate. When he chats with his colleges, he encourages those professors to donate. As a famous scholar in the field of media,
he gets invitations to give speech for students and other citizens every month. When he gives speech, he always introduce CM to the audiences and encourages them to donate through their mobile phone. If the donation increases obviously, we are sure Prof Guan must have given speech today (Xu Junhan, 2017).

Not only Prof Guan utilizes his relationships and influence to help CM earn more donation, Chen Kunlong does the same as a famous citizen journalist in Taiwan:

I helped them to set up the association in the year of 2014. My position in CM is that of a supervisor but without payment, because we are friends and help each other. Sometimes I attend their meeting and help them to write articles to raise funds. Besides, I also introduce CM to my college students and audiences to earn more donations when I give lessons and speeches. We prefer stable, small-amount individual donation rather than large sums, because we are not willing be controlled by money (Chen Kunlong, 2017).

There are various reasons why people choose to donate for CM. As a previous employee of CM, current mainstream media journalist, Guo Anjia keeps donating stably to kinds of alternative media for years. Here are three main reasons he gave:

First, I support social movements. Second, I support the spirit of alternative media. Third, I hope alternative media can continue running well to replace mainstream media one day (Guo Anjia, 2017).

Moreover, since CM produces at least one in-depth coverage per year (Jiang Xinyi, 2017), crowdfunding is also utilized to raise money for depth coverage:

The depth coverages always lasts several months to half a year. We produced the coverage while raising funds through crowdfunding online. The money raised by crowdfunding could cover half of the expense. The other half we needed to pay by regular donations. The income was always less or equal to the expense. Hence, we
were always not sure when the money would run out and whether we would still be employed next year (Chen Jiafeng, 2017).

**Independent Standpoint**

The interviewees hold the view that it is the economic independence that creates the independent standpoints of CM, so that CM is not controlled by money and can do its own job well. Its duty to record the social movements in an objective and fair way can also be fulfilled while fighting against the hegemony from mainstream media:

The public trusts us and donates to us. Therefore, we should work in a way that worths their trust and expectations on alternative media. It is the social responsibility urging us to do what the society expects us to do. We reject large sums of donation from foundation or other organizations, because we don’t want to be influenced. We have good relationship with social movement organizations, but we won’t only say good things on them (Xu Shikai, 2017).

Donation means dialogue with the public directly. Different with mainstream media, alternative media have no pressure from advertorial. However, they need to inform the donors about the plan and use of the donation, they have the responsibility to illustrate clearly what they are currently doing for the public (Chen Weilun, 2017).

Our first goal is to make CM into a database about social movements in Taiwan with video, text and picture, so that when people in the future want to review the events, they can find the fact and evidence (Chen Jiafeng, 2017).

**Summary**

According to Downing (2001), the third characteristic of radical media is the independency from various authorities. CM has been attempting to be independent and it
has met the independence to some extent. However, CM is still partly dependent due to two factors.

First, CM is not totally financially independent. In its first five years (2007-2012), CM was an “academic institution” (Guan, 2017) funded by the state. When there was no fund from the government, CM ran by the saving from before and donations from foundations (2012-2014). As soon as the association was established, CM started to run by individual donations. CM is indeed open because it publishes the finance report every month to show the funds sources. However, although Prof Guan (2017) claimed that CM rejects large amount of funds, a donation with 720,000 TWD (around 23,700 USD) is found in the finance report of the January, 2017. It is possible to judge that CM is less financially independent than what it claims to be.

Second, CM claims it is not responsible for posts provided by other individuals or organizations, referring to its objective standpoint. The content on the website is tagged accordingly in that regard. However, in the past the standpoint of CM was confused with the ones of particular social movements, leading to anger from a part of the audience.

CM wants to present diverse voices, so it published the statement from an organization against LGBT. This resulted in the misunderstanding from some audiences. They thought CM was against the human rights and criticized CM (Huang Yijing, 2017).

At least three quarters of the contents are not produced and rarely commented by CM itself. Therefore it is not always easy for CM to convey its own standpoint. Under the assumption that individual donors pose a diffuse authority on the media they support, giving opposing social movements equal opportunities shows the intention of CM to be objective and to free itself from this authority to some degree. However, the fear of losing donations admittedly influences the quarter of content that is produced by CM. Reports produced by CM are claimed to be not neutral in regard to the standpoint against the government. The conclusion is that they depend on their audiences more than they wished for.
6.2.2 Analysis of the Democracy

According to Prof Guan (2017) and most of the interviewees, one of the most valuable thing of CM is the democratic working atmosphere. CM is different with mainstream media, where journalists need to work under various pressure from the editors, click through rate (CTR) and advertorial. However, interest and responsibility play more important roles in CM. In the organization of CM, everything is negotiable. Employees can discuss and decide everything together, even the amount of their salary. For people working here, a democratic inner structure is vital for a media to survive in the era without press censorship but the discretion from the audiences.

Democratic Environment for Full-time Employees

Many interviewees hold the view that the internal structure of CM is democratic rather than hierarchical. Working in the office location in central Taipei, no matter leader or not, no matter full-time or part-time, everyone is equal in their mind. Due to the limited fee, there are not many full-time employees. However, the small group creates more freedom. Although Prof Guan is the establisher of CM, his job is voluntary without payment. Besides him, most time there are three full-time employees working in CM with diverse division of work, rather than independent and professional departments:

We do not have that much work for one employee to only focus on one job, so all of the three would share the work as editor, journalist, accountant and administrative assistant together (Guan, 2017).

In one week, I usually spent three days working as a journalist on reporting, two days working as a administrative assistant on arranging and preparing meetings. My work schedule was flexible but around eight hours, I could leave as long as I finished the work for today (Huang Yijing, 2017).
For the division of work, there is also a democratic progress that everything can be discussed and decided together. The previous employee, Chen Weilun, backed this up:

Different with mainstream media that the editors decide everything, in CM, the journalists decide by themselves about what topics to report and how to report. Prof Guan would just suggest rather than interfere (Chen Weilun, 2017).

Not only topics selection, even the amount of salary can be determined by the employees together, no matter full-time or part-time employees:

We have a meeting every week to discuss everything. For example, we evaluate the work from last week, and arrange what kind of topics to report in the next week. Every half a year, we adjust the amount of salary and year-end awards based on the change of donation. If we cannot make an agreement in the meeting, we will put off and make the decision in the next meeting. There is no press censorship in Taiwan nowadays, but the inner democracy is important for media (Guan, 2017).

There is no slogan, no motto, no internal regulations of CM:

We hire those professional people who have similar ideas with us on media, we discuss everything and decide together (Jiang Xinyi, 2017).

We have no rules or disciplines, but we deal with issues based on the conclusions from the previous meetings (Zhang Yilian, 2017).

We do not have those things. We might talk about our goal in the meeting, but freedom and democracy play important role in the organization (Chen Jiafeng, 2017).
Democratic Environment for Part-time Correspondents

Most time, the inner structure of CM includes Prof Guan, three full-time employees and several part-time correspondents. Most of the correspondents are university students of Prof Guan from National Chung Cheng University and Shih Hsin University. For Prof Guan:

The correspondents are treated equally as full-time employees, they also attend the weekly meetings. We regard them as friends rather than colleagues. They are paid by piece, with labor insurance and transportation fee (Guan, 2017).

The unity from the correspondents is valued by the full-time employee as well:

CM cannot afford more full-time employees. Therefore it can only cooperate with part-time correspondents. Many of them are students who are interested in social movements. We have regular meetings via video together with correspondents in different places. What’s more, all of them have their own official e-mail address to receive tasks and select what they want to do. If necessary, they can get help from the whole team by email or group chat in time. All of these aspects aim to help those correspondents to participate in the organization, and decreasing the estrangement (Yang Juanru, 2017).

To justify the location of the office in central Taipei, one of the part-time correspondents Jiang Xinyi gave her opinion:

CM has a stable office and three full-time employees in Taipei because the government and agencies are mainly there. The news happen in the south can only be reported by the correspondents, most of whom are students of Prof Guan from National Chung Cheng University, located in Chiayi County, southern Taiwan. There are around six correspondents including me (Jiang Xinyi, 2017).
For the working progress of correspondents, they work in similar ways as full-time employees do, while they also have enough freedom to choose what to do:

The editors often post events in the group chat one night before the day they are happening. Then we choose which one to report based on our own schedules and interests. The correspondents in Chiayi County have a high turnover rate (Jiang Xinyi, 2017).

I worked for CM one or two days per week and less than eight hours every day. I could attend one event and produce one article per day. I always wrote as long as I could to report from a deeper and broader way. I could post the article online at the same day, and post the video in the next day (Lv Yanci, 2017).

I choose to work for CM on the day when I have no courses in university. If I am not available, CM never forced me to work for them no matter how much they need me. But if there is a very important event or one that I am very interested in, I would skip the course and go to report (Xu Shikai, 2017).

In conclusion, CM provides the part-time correspondents the same freedom and democracy as the full-time employees. In the words of Su Ciyi, a freshman who just joined CM and works as a correspondent:

CM does not control us at all, we have more than personal space. We can put forward anything to discuss equally on the meeting. One of the reasons is that we don’t have many people, everyone’s voice can be heard (Su Ciyi, 2017).

**Democratic Negotiation of Salary**

For the full-time employees, Prof Guan holds the view that the salary CM provides is higher than the average initial salary of media in Taiwan:
The salary is 30,000 TWD (around 990 US Dollar) per month at least, the year-end awards equals to the salary of one and a half month. With the insurance, transportation fee and other things together, the formal salary is about 34,000 TWD (1120 US Dollar). But the salary can hardly improve, that is why some employees left their positions after working several years (Guan, 2017).

Although the salary CM pays for full-time employees is lower than the average of Taiwanese media (Chen Jiafeng, 2017), the payment of 1,600 TWD (53 US Dollar) per piece for part-time correspondents is higher than what other media pay for their correspondents(Xu Shikai, 2017). For in-depth coverage, the correspondents can estimate the time he/she has spent, then get paid based on 1,600 TWD every eight hours (Zhang Yilian, 2017).

For the progress to decide salary, most interviewees think it is a democratic consultation with a timely change:

Every year we discussed the change of salary together on the meeting, the payment for one piece of news has changed from 1,200 before to 1,600 TWD now. Our payment changed immediately as long as we made the decision. Our organization runs in a high efficiency without many people (Lv Yanci, 2017).

**Summary**

Downing (2001) pointed out that another characteristic of radical media is the democratic inner structure, rather than the hierarchical. Based on the interview transcripts, CM can be judged as not entirely democratic, but with a flat hierarchy.

CM is not entirely democratic because of two reasons. Firstly, although it is claimed that the salary can be decided by everyone together every half a year (Guan, 2017), the fact is that the weight of the opinion of senior employees is greater than those of junior (Huang Yijing, 2017). Secondly, it is claimed that everyone participates to discuss and decide the issues to report. Although it is true that everybody can discuss everything together, Yang
Juanru actually decide which issues to report and which not. Because she is the full-time employee who has worked in CM for the longest time, she broke the hierarchy but stay in a higher position than other employees. Hence, CM can be classified as flatly hierarchical.

For alternative media, the participation of community members to create content and organize media is the central (Bailey, Cammaerts and Carpentier, 2008). Citizens can interact with CM either by submitting contents (unpaid), or donating. According to the interviewees, citizens cannot participate in the daily organization, CM is operated by professional people. It seems that the inner structure of CM is not really democratic. Audiences of CM can easily create contents for it, but whether the submissions can be finally posted depends on the professional team of CM. Moreover, the outsiders can never really get involved in its organization. From this aspect, CM cannot really be seen as an alternative media.

In conclusion, CM can be seen as not perfectly fitting the model for alternative media set up by the theories of Bailey, Cammaerts and Carpentier (2008). However, CM cannot be regarded as fully independent or democratic. Above all, CM is neither absolute alternative media, nor definite radical media. It gathers the main characteristics of both to serve the public as well as possible.
7 Conclusions and Discussion

7.1 Research Questions Revisited

7.1.1 Research Question 1: Should Civil Media@Taiwan be seen as an alternative media or radical media?

Using Downing's model (2001) for the analysis, CM partially fits the five characteristics of radical media.

Firstly, it has been broadening the hegemonic range from mainstream media by publishing all the content that social movement organizations provide. It tries to help the public to get to know more about the social movements outside of the reports from the mainstream media. Secondly, CM has done much in the way of speaking for the voiceless and the excluded. It defines itself as staying on the side of the protesters by not shedding light on the government’s opinion. Thirdly, CM fulfills the responsibility of radical media to promote media reform without the pressure from advertisers, which is different from mainstream media. Additionally, more and more citizens are interested and are getting involved in social issues with the contribution of CM. However, CM is not entirely independent or democratic. CM does not fit the characteristic of radical media in terms of independence, because it is not totally financially independent. Moreover, in the past the standpoint of CM was confused with the ones of particular social movements, leading to anger from a part of the audience. CM does also not fit the characteristic of radical media in terms of democracy. It can be judged as not entirely democratic, but with a flat hierarchy.

Following the categorization of theories to identify alternative media made by Bailey, Cammaerts and Carpentier (2008), CM can be seen partially as an alternative media.

Firstly, CM forms the third voice between commercial media and state-owned media, while remaining counter-hegemonic in a civil society. They go wherever nobody goes, interviewing the voiceless and excluded people that are ignored by other media outlets.
They are on the side against the government, they speak for the protesters. Moreover, CM provides the complete process of social movements and the correct appeals of the protesters. It maintains a counter-hegemonic voice in a civil society.

Secondly, CM links the local and the international, forms various relationships between the state and the market, and contacts different social movements and protest groups. It not only cooperates with different alternative media in Taiwan and abroad to provide fresh opinions, but also cooperates with some Taiwanese mainstream media to publish content there and attract more audiences by utilizing the popularity of mainstream media. Furthermore, due to its principle of “objective but not neutral”, CM insists on standing on the side of protest groups and focuses on reporting social movements. It fulfills the second characteristic of alternative media.

Thirdly, CM has an alternative arrangement of content against mainstream media. It is trying to be financially independent via small, individual donations. It claims to run with a democratic inner structure, while reporting social issues freely without pressure from advertorials. It has been striving to break the domination of mainstream media by recording social movements properly. However, a flatly hierarchical discourse still exists in its structure and selection of themes. What's more, one of the two standards to select the themes is against the government, rather than against mainstream media. That is to say, CM partly fits the third approach to judge alternative media.

Lastly, the core of alternative media requires the participation of community members to organize media and create content (Bailey, Cammaerts and Carpentier, 2008). However, CM is constituted by professional people in the field of journalism and communication. It is impossible for outsiders to participate in its organization. There are two ways to interact with CM, one is to create content and submit it without pay, and the other one is to donate. Although CM has been working on making a democratic public sphere, promoting citizen awareness and social participation for citizens, there is rare direct participation of community members for CM.
In conclusion, CM can be seen as not perfectly fitting the model for alternative media setup by the theories of Bailey, Cammaerts and Carpentier (2008). However, CM cannot be regarded as fully independent nor democratic.

There are several points that both the model of radical media (Downing, 2001) and alternative media (Bailey, Cammaerts, and Carpentier, 2008) cover. In the model of radical media, there are two characteristics that state radical media should “broaden the hegemonic range from mainstream media”, while “responding to the demands of the minority”. In the model of alternative media, the characteristics become more precise on the content from two aspects: “alternative arrangement of content (“independent”, “nondominant”, “small-scale”, “nonhierarchical” discourses)” and “the third voice between commercial media and state-owned media”. In the model of radical media, the characteristic of “involving in the tendency of reform on culture and society” is expressed more exhaustively in the model of alternative media by “linking the local and the international”. Therefore, it can be viewed that the model of radical media contributes to the research with a macro direction, while the model of alternative media helps one to understand what CM is doing in a more detailed manner.

There is a more obvious difference between the model of radical media and alternative media. For Downing (2001), independence and a democratic inner structure are two important characteristics of radical media. From the section of the analysis, it is seen that CM partially fits them. Meanwhile, Bailey, Cammaerts and Carpentier (2008) pointed out that the core of alternative media is the participation of community members in organizing media and creating content. However, it seems that CM does not fit the core at all. Thus, it is possible to conclude that CM fits radical media more than alternative media as defined by Bailey, Cammaerts and Carpentier.

7.1.2 Research Question 2: How does Civil Media@Taiwan serve the public?

In general, news media can promote participation, however, entertainment and other means of media use may inhibit the participation (Shah, 1998; Shah et al., 2001). Based on the characteristics of alternative media, CM serves the public in a macro way.
Alternative media has the mission to challenge not only the powerful capitalist forms (Fuchs, 2010), but also the political powers which rule a society (Lee, 2015). Moreover, alternative media should question the representations of mainstream media on the reality (Couldry and Curran, 2003). From the content analysis of the website and the interviews, we can find that CM argues that the political economy of the mainstream media avoids specific themes from being discussed by the public, due to the fear of the unsatisfactory reactions from editors, media owners and advertisers. That is why CM identifies itself as the fourth estate and serves the public by supervising the power and promoting social participation.

According to the content analysis on the website and the interviews, CM serves the public in a micro way based on the characteristics of radical media. Radical media need to broaden the hegemonic range from mainstream media, as well as respond to the demands of the voiceless and excluded promptly (Downing, 2001). First, CM offers a form of journalism opposing to the mainstream, whereby social movement activities and protesters have a platform for their own voices. Second, CM regards itself as a database to record the history of social movements in Taiwan and provide the recordings of the complete and correct process of social movements for people in the future. Third, CM goes wherever nobody goes and interviews the powerless that no other media cares about, so to speak. In this way, the demands of voiceless can be noticed and fulfilled.

All things considered, it seems reasonable to conclude that although CM combines the characteristics of both alternative media and radical media, it maintains the goal of serving the public and helping the voiceless to become loud enough to be heard by society. In the current environment of mass media in Taiwan, CM is serving the public in its own way, which is to record the process of social movements and spread awareness.

### 7.2 Contribution

Alternative media is a neglected field of research (Fuchs, 2010). This is also a case in Taiwan, where the Taiwanese alternative media is especially under-researched. Few Taiwanese scholars have researched their local alternative media. Moreover, a large part
of the research about journalism in Taiwan is in Chinese. This study fills a blank space in the field of research on alternative media in Taiwan. It sheds light on the practices of public-oriented journalism in Taiwan, in the regard of alternative media and radical media, breaking the barriers for readers who do not speak Chinese.

The results of this study are reliable and valid for the research in the field of alternative media in Taiwan, due to the application of semi-structured interviews and the personal experience (as a journalist) of the researcher. According to Louise Barriball and While (1994), the semi-structured interview technique enables the researcher with the flexibility to validate the meaning of the answers from the interviewees. Moreover, the success of the semi-structured interview method depends on the skills of the interviewer “in making a number of difficult field decisions” (Louise Barriball & While, 1994).

The study also contributes to the social relevance and professional relevance to understanding Taiwanese journalism from a new angle: alternative and radical media. The results reflect the deficiency of the profession of journalism and the social responsibility from the Taiwanese mainstream media. The way to manage this problem and develop the research is to use a unified series of codes made by the researchers in the future.

The study also has its shortcomings. In this study, two kinds of codes are used in the content analysis. One kind of code is developed by the editor of CM, Yang Juanru. They are mostly the hashtags and categories of each news report. The other kind of code is created by the author, which has been introduced in the part of the methodology. The codes developed by the researcher are used in the study. The tags from Yang Juanru are also used to show the original content of CM, but not in the analysis part. However, the online editors of media may not be so rigorous as researchers; they may have no uniform standards for classifying the tags. Hence, researcher-defined codes are recommended here. The future research of alternative media and radical media can develop a series of codes by the scholar, rather than using the hashtags raised by the media.
7.3 Further Research

For further exploring alternative media and radical media in Taiwan, it would be interesting to do research on the audiences in order to evaluate the effect of alternative media and radical media on the public. This is because a balanced investigation from different sides is necessary for the studies, rather than the single analysis merely on alternative media itself. Illustrative case studies are recommended for the future research, to show the existing situation by various instances. There are various options for the research in the future to investigate: the relationship of the mainstream media and alternative media in Taiwan, the reform of the Taiwanese social movement media in the digital era and the different responsibilities that the media itself and citizens think that the Taiwanese alternative media should have. An exploratory case study is also a good way to analyse the different impressions and trust of Taiwanese citizens in their mainstream media and alternative media comprehensively.

7.4 Discussion

The critical theory as it is interpreted by McQuail (2013) views mainstream media as reporting on the side of the government or elite interests, while controlling the society in a hegemonic way, although most time they are not doing this on purpose. Many similar organizations like CM, who identify themselves as “alternative media”, have been contributing to broadening the access of citizens to media. They are not owned or controlled by the interests of a class society. In comparison, they prefer small-scale donations from individuals. To that end, they are not reporting on the side of the capital-owning class, but to speak for their donors, who really care about social issues that are ignored by the mainstream media.

According to critical theory, the only solution is to break up power roles and make the media truly free. This is what various Taiwanese “alternative media” outlets are currently trying to do. This research provides insight into the current situation of Taiwanese journalism. It will also help those people who really show concern about social issues and
want the Taiwanese society to become better. They can not only learn lessons from this study, but could also get inspiration from it.
References


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Hsieh, H. and Shannon, S.E. 2005, "Three Approaches to Qualitative Content Analysis", *Qualitative Health Research*, vol. 15, no. 9, pp. 1277-1288.


## Basic Information of the Interviewees

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Position</th>
<th>Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Guan, ZX</td>
<td>Organizer, leader</td>
<td>2017-05-23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yang, JR</td>
<td>Editor &amp; administrative staff</td>
<td>2017-06-02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jiang, XY</td>
<td>Editor &amp; journalist</td>
<td>2017-06-03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Xu, SK</td>
<td>Journalist</td>
<td>2017-06-05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Su, CY</td>
<td>Journalist</td>
<td>2017-06-09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zhang, YL</td>
<td>Journalist</td>
<td>2017-06-16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chen, KL</td>
<td>Former organizer &amp; Citizen journalist</td>
<td>2017-06-03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Huang, YJ</td>
<td>Former editor &amp; Administrative staff</td>
<td>2017-05-31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Xu, JH</td>
<td>Former network engineer</td>
<td>2017-06-02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chen, JF</td>
<td>Former journalist</td>
<td>2017-06-05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lv, YC</td>
<td>Former journalist</td>
<td>2017-06-06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Huang, YQ</td>
<td>Former administrative staff</td>
<td>2017-06-09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chen, WL</td>
<td>Former journalist</td>
<td>2017-06-06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guo, AJ</td>
<td>Former journalist</td>
<td>2017-06-16</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Question List of Semi-structured Interview

1. **The organisation (the media itself):**
   - Are there different stages for the development of CM?
   - 公庫成立至今經歷了哪些發展階段？
   - Where does CM get money to run the organisation?
   - 公庫日常運營的經費從何而來？
   - Does CM get profit? Deficit? Or break even?
   - 公庫日常運營狀態為盈利，虧損，還是收支平衡？
   - How does CM use the money?
   - 公庫如何使用經費？
   - Does CM use the money to expand its business and to get more money?
   - 公庫是否用經費拓展業務以獲取其他盈利？
   - Does CM has its own building or office? Does CM pay for the rent?
   - 公庫是否有自己的辦公區間？是否需要付房租？
   - How many different departments are there in CM? How do they run the organisation?
   - 公庫由哪些部門構成？它們各自的職責是什麼？
   - Who are the target audience of CM? How does CM perceive and get their interest?
   - 公庫的目標受眾是什麼樣的人？公庫如何引起他們的閱讀和捐款興趣？
   - Is there a board to manage CM?
   - 公庫由一個管理委員會運營嗎？
   - Do the stuffs have equal power to decide how to handle missions and what topics to cover?
   - 公庫成員在處理日常事務和採訪選題上是否有平等的決定力？
   - What issues does the head usually decide and what can the normal stuff manage?
   - 公庫老大通常對哪些事物有決定權？普通成員對哪些事物有決定權？
   - Do normal people participate in the management or news reporting of CM? How do they participate?
   - 普通民眾可以參與到公庫的日常事務和新聞報道中來嗎？他們如何參與？
   - Does CM have the pressure of competition?
   - 公庫是否面臨同類媒體的競爭，比如 苦勞網，立報，新頭殼，公視新聞議題中心等。
   - Has CM got the pressure from the mainstream media that dominate the market?
   - 公庫是否面臨主流媒體的競爭？
2. The profession (the practice of journalism):
- What’s the goal of journalism for CM?
- 公庫做新聞的目標是什麼？
- How does CM team work as journalist? (the nature of the profession)
- 公庫成員如何像記者一樣工作？
- What do CM stuff think of mainstream media nowadays?
- 公庫成員如何看待當今的主流媒體？
- What do people in CM think that journalism should be?
- 公庫成員認為新聞業應該是什麼樣子？
- Why is CM different from traditional digital media / mainstream media?
- 為什麼公庫和主流媒體不同？和其他在線媒體不同？
- If normal people contribute acknowledge or participate in news report of CM, how are they treated? Will they be presented by name? Will they be regarded as contributor? Will they get material pay back? Do they get money?
- 如果普通人參與公庫新聞報道，他們會得到怎樣的待遇？署名？得到物質酬勞？得到金錢報酬？
- What does CM team think that how journalism should serve society and people?
- 公庫成員認為新聞媒體應該如何服務公眾？
- How does CM select stories and topics to report? Is there a selection criteria?
- 公庫如何決定報道的選題？選題標準是什麼？
- What is the standard of good quality for news reports of CM?
- 公庫對於高質量新聞報道的判斷標準是什麼？
- Can CM make voiceless people be heard? How?
- 公庫可以讓缺少發聲渠道的普通民眾的意見被聽到嗎？如何做？
- Is CM still dependent on state?
- 公庫依賴國家和政府嗎？
- How does CM keep independent and reporting without fear and favor?
- 公庫如何做到保持獨立性，無畏無懼地公平報導呢？
- Is CM the gate of communication between politicians and citizens? Example?
- 公庫是政治家和普通民眾的溝通渠道嗎？舉例說明
- Is there any personal comments on the report of CM?
- 公庫的會做有傾向性的報道嗎？或者公庫記者可以在新聞報道中加入自己的個人觀點嗎？