National Policy and Local Participation in Making Aboriginal Digital Archive: The Lesson from Taiwan

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The digital divide has become a new form of exclusion in the information society and aboriginal people have been in the "wrong" side due to their social disadvantages unless proper resources and strategies are put. Therefore, in our project to promote Taiwan's cultural diversity and digital archive, we have paid much attention on aborigine's culture and their right of access in the information society.

This paper is a review of our efforts in making aboriginal digital archive in Taiwan. Based on the thesis of participation communication, we design a model of cooperation to invite key actors, including public sectors and private sectors, in this project. The process of cooperation includes three parts: to form a work team, to survey on aboriginal people's needs, and to produce aboriginal digital contents based upon the survey results.

By examining the process of cooperation, we find that many factors influence the cooperation between the public and private sectors, including mutual trust and understanding, efficient communication and negotiation, and proper resources to carry out the project. Cooperation positively affects the making of digital archiving and the empowerment of aboriginal people. For those aboriginal people and grassroots groups, participating in the process would help to cultivate and accumulate the autonomy of their own, the capability to use ICTs and preserve their culture heritage which in a long term are beneficial to their development.

While our project shows that when proper resources are allocated and good training are given, aboriginal people are able to connect traditional culture with modern technology for their autonomy and development, through cooperation and participation in making their digital archive. However, challenges need to be encountered such as training local ICT expert, enduring participation from aboriginal communities and stable funding to support the project.