

# Citizen Journalism

## One small map of a giant public sphere discourse

Presentation by Elspeth Tilley

From a paper jointly authored by Dr Elspeth Tilley (Massey University) and Dr John Cokley (University of Queensland)



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What's this?



# What's this....?

TIME NAMES ?POWER LINE? 2004 BLOG OF THE YEAR - TIME - Microsoft Internet Explorer

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Sunday, Dec. 19, 2004

New York ? ?Power Line? (www.powerlineblog.com) has been named Blog of the Year by TIME magazine, in this week?s Person of the Year issue. George W. Bush was named 2004 Person of the Year.

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?Before this year, blogs were a curiosity, a cult phenomenon, a faintly embarrassing hobby on the order of ham radio and stamp collecting. But in 2004 blogs

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Internet



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# And this?



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# And what is this....?

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Posted at 7:18PM on 27 Feb 07. Permalink.

**Chip Matthews**  
From: Auckland  
Since: Nov 2006  
Posts: 1

**Reply**

Oh my gosh, I'm just glad we all made it home finally. 6-7 hours to get home from Chch is a bit much ain't it? The fact that they couldn't locate one of our bags on the earlier portion of our mission, along with several staff members also failing to locate it, to seeing the bag come through with all our luggage in AK was a nice strange part to our day, very inline with how our journey developed. And for the blog watchers in the group, it was a very nice blip in our day to meet ya, and to be able to chat about meeting ya for the rest of our trip so thank you bro, you helped make the ordeal a lil easier!

Chip/opensouls

Posted at 11:53PM on 27 Feb 07. Permalink.

**Robin Draper**  
From: Connecticut  
Since: Feb 2007  
Posts: 11

**Reply**

I'm sitting at my desk at work taking a break and keying in these comments. Makes me look like I'm busy at work.  
Anyway, I don't know much about cheesemongers and blue veined cheeses but it seems to me that you should use your blog to also promote some healthy eating.

Check out this site [www.palmoliftruthfoundation.com](http://www.palmoliftruthfoundation.com) This site gives us the lowdown on what appears to me to be one of the best kept health secrets. This cheap natural oil is supposedly extremely rich in antioxidants and is transfat free too! No wonder the Asians lead such long healthy lives, as I understand they use the stuff for everything, from cooking to baking and even as food supplement in capsule form!

Posted at 1:16AM on 28 Feb 07. Permalink.

**Paul Capewell**  
From: London  
Since: Nov 2006  
Posts: 54

**Reply**

Robin: Yawn.  
Pongy cheese and old whisky is far more fun.  
Great post Russell :)

Done Internet



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And what is this?



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# And these ....?

The screenshot shows a Microsoft Internet Explorer window displaying the BusinessWeek website. The main headline reads "Wal-Mart's Jim and Laura: The Real Story". The sub-headline states: "The bloggers backing the big retailer are not fake people, but real fans. However, Wal-Mart is paying plenty for their support". Below the article, there is a sidebar with "STORY TOOLS" including links to post a comment, e-mail the story, and print the story.

"Walmarting across America" – Walmart sponsorship revealed.

The screenshot shows a Microsoft Internet Explorer window displaying thezeromovement.org website. The main heading is "THE ZERO COKE MOVEMENT". The page features several buttons: "HQ", "ZERO COKE", "FAQ", "INGREDIENTS", "PEEPS ON COKE ZERO", "SPREAD THE WORD", and "JOIN". A cartoon character on the right says "WHAT THE HECK IS IN THIS STUFF?". At the bottom, there is a chart showing "80%\*" and "100%\*" with a note: "\*Our goal for the world."

Anti-site – part of widespread response to Coke's "The Zero Movement"



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## So... what's it *called*?

Especially... are they journalism? Are they journalists?



There were distinct differences of opinion!



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# Does it *matter* what it's called?

- Discourse.... The patterns by which language and thought are mutually constitutive..
- Semiotic background, discourse analysis as deconstruction to denaturalise *some* (never all!) of the guiding or recurrent mythologies present in a particular text or texts
- Myth as the ‘big’ patterns -- highly ‘loaded’ or multi-level (connotative) language or imagery (from Barthes)

# Myth

- “Myth is an arrangement of the past, whether real or imagined, in patterns that resonate with a culture’s deepest **values and aspirations**. Myths create and reinforce archetypes so taken for granted, so seemingly axiomatic, that they go **unchallenged**. Myths are so fraught with meaning that we live and die by them. They are the maps by which **cultures navigate** through time.” (Wright, 1991, p. 5)



## **Red flag words... myth signs around citizen journalism**

- Truth
- Reality
- Objectivity
- Freedom
- Democracy
- Quality
- Citizens
- Journalists



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# Participant typology....

- ☛ remaining so-called professional (i.e. employed) journalists
- ☛ news publishers
- ☛ citizen' audience groups who read, watch, listen to and—importantly—create news content in the form of conventional news and feature articles (or programs), email newsletters, blogs, social networking sites and channels, and a range of other products such as SMS, MMS, and now television
- ☛ academics who observe, research, critique (but also teach in) the media disciplines
- ☛ free-speech advocates, who adopt the formal role of speaking out about news media operations as well as other aspects of the societies in which they live.



## **Patterns in participant discourse:**

- Journalists: quality, job losses
- Publishers: empowerment, timeliness
- Citizen journalists: truth, independence
- Academics: devaluing of intellectual, loss of focused agora vs empowerment
- Free speech: elitism vs democracy, freedom of expression



## Some circulating heuristics.....

- *The Myth of the Robinson Crusoe Citizen*
- *The Myth of the Noble Citizen*
- *The Myth of Perfect Plurality*



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## The questions...

- As well as ‘where should the fulcrum sit?’, should we be asking ‘is it all the one lever’?
- If not ‘citizen journalism’, then what name/s *could* it be called????
- Is there something called ‘journalism’ that is worth ‘defending’, if so what are its parameters and attributes? Or if not, how can it be shared or pluralised without destroying its essence?



## References

- Barthes, R. (1972). *Mythologies*. London: Cape.
- Wright, R. (1991). *Stolen Continents: The ‘New World’ through Indian Eyes since 1492*. Toronto: Viking.
- See full paper and complete list of references at:  
[http://communication.massey.ac.nz/fileadmin/Jeanz/tilleyfinalreffed\\_P.pdf](http://communication.massey.ac.nz/fileadmin/Jeanz/tilleyfinalreffed_P.pdf)

