

Citizen Journalism

One small map of a giant
public sphere discourse

Presentation by Elspeth Tilley

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What's this?



What's this....?

TIME NAMES ?POWER LINE? 2004 BLOG OF THE YEAR

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 06, 2007

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Sunday, Dec. 19, 2004

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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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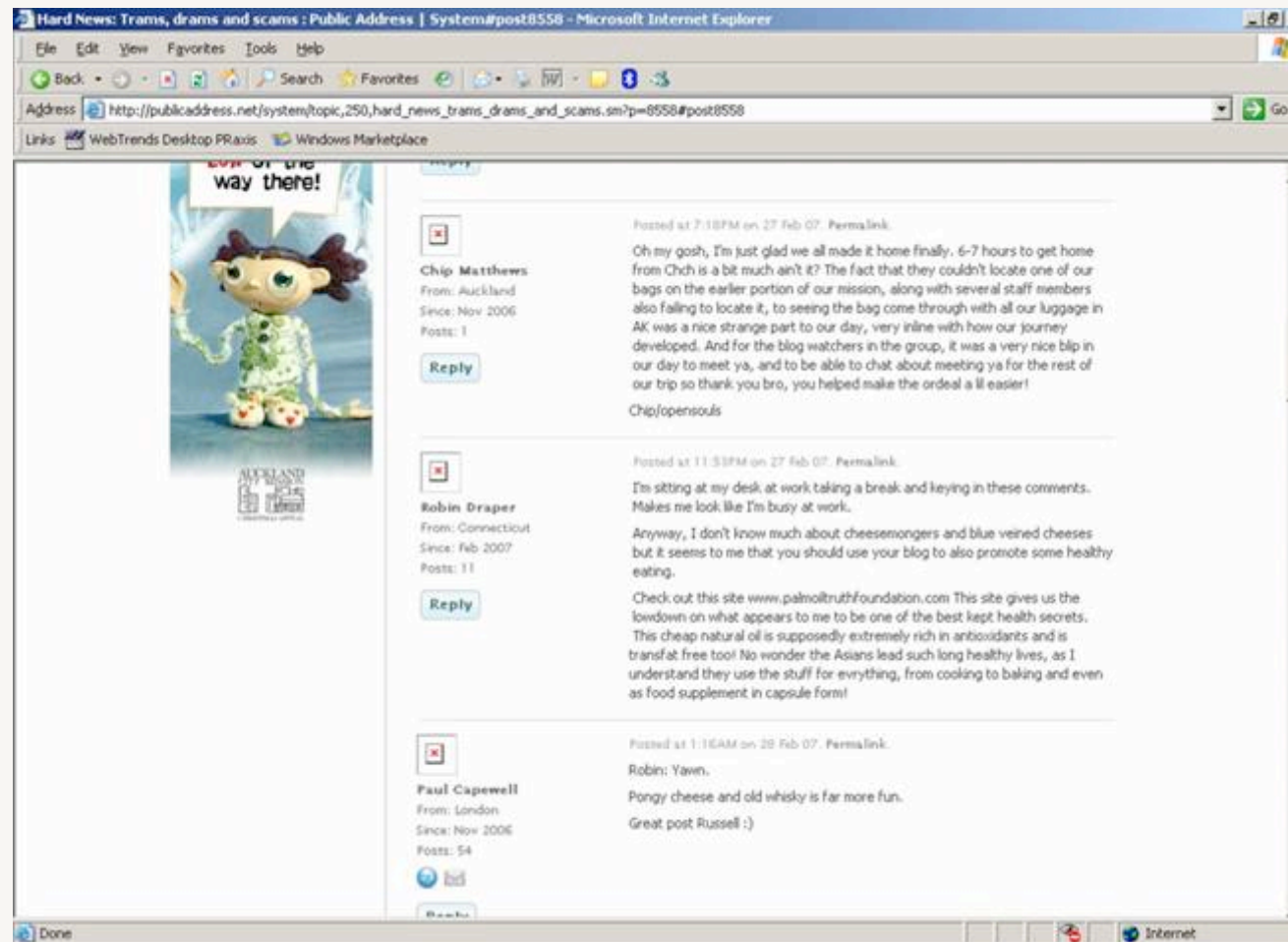


And this?



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And what is this....?



And what is this?



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And these?



“Walmarting across America” – Walmart sponsorship revealed.

Anti-site – part of widespread response to Coke’s “The Zero Movement”



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

Especially... are they journalisms? Are they journalists?



There were distinct differences of opinion!

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

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*

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

