

Little brother is watching –  
reflexive civic watch through  
ICTs

**Siru Firenze 2007**

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# Civic organisations watch – monitoring big corporations / governments

- Civic organisations acting on the Internet:
  - <http://www.corpwatch.org>
  - <http://www.hrw.org>
  - <http://www.carbontradewatch.org>
  - and so forth...
- Plurality of issues and topics
- Utilising email lists, RSS feeds, webblogs, newsletters, audio-visual material



# ICTs facilitate effective monitoring

- Complementing the role of mass media being as a watch dog of power
  - Watch dogging unethical activities by corporations, governments and its officials
- Institutionalised semi-official little brothers
- ICTs empowering also individualised civic watch – accessible publicness virtually to every one

# Reflexive individual civic watch: YouTube

- Taser events: Florida University 17.9.-07, UCLA 14.11.-06, millions of views
- Sarkozy au G8 not broadcasted in French TV, clip on YouTube ~10 millions views
- USA: George Allen Macaca-incident (~500 000 views), Finland: Petri Salo-gaffe (~39 000 views before national elections)

# Reflexive individual civic watch: Webblogs

- ✦ Political consumerism in blogs: *the Buzz Machine* 2005 targeting Dell company
- ✦ Warblogging alternative war information, Abu Ghraib 2004, *My War-blog* 2004, independent blogs by war journalists, civilian bloggers in war zone
- ✦ Blogs launched by net movement: copy right blogging in Finland autumn 2005

# What is Reflexive Politics?

- *REFLEXIVE POLITICS*: action emerges from issue specific questions/conflicts through individual political judgement based on intuitive and subjective views and values. Refers also to outcomes resulting in action.
- activity by the people instead of activity for the people: action-oriented politics. DIY-Do it Yourself approach, de-medialization
- Political environment fractures into diverse, complex and multi-spatial networks utilising various platforms
- Course and consequences of action are not necessarily separable from the action - participative action itself might be the **THING**

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# Reflexive politics through ICTs

- Utilising the complex structure of overlapping public spheres *micro-, meso- and macro-public spheres* (John Keane 2000): *complex mosaic of differently sized, overlapping and interconnected public spheres*
  - ICTs enable digital *micro-politics* bringing the “snowball-effect” that can be transformed into *meso-*, or even *macro-political* publicness
  - Political *micro-public spheres* foster new ideas and modes of action
  - *Micro-public spheres* challenge hegemony bringing a situational, actionist power by practising public deliberation and by presenting alternative political views
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# Individualised civic watch

- Style of reflexive politics
- Personal broadcasting / narrowcasting emerge on interactive Web platforms
- In origin not related to organisational or institutional watching, may end as showcase, though
- Civic watch from below inverts Foucauldian panopticon / Orwellian Big Brother schemes allowing citizens to observe the corporate activities, misuses of official authorities, political elites etc. → For instance Covert filming – footages ended up on YouTube



# The Case: Petri Salo Gaffe 1

- Petri Salo, MP of National Coalition Party, candidate in 2007 Parliamentary Election caught covertly on tape by camera phone by an unaffiliated individual civic watch
- Salo used racist slur of Somali immigrants in campaign event in private talk for vote
- Civic watch offered her footage to the FST (Finnish Swedish Television - part of national broadcasting company). News broadcasted by Radio Vega and TV-Nytt 5.3., uploaded on YouTube 6.3. Several news papers reported the incident during the following days.
- In Salo's constituency covered the case more broadly and for longer period

# The Case: Petri Salo Gaffe 2

- After a week the civic watch publicly announced her motives (12.3. in Radio Vega, 15.3. New papers in Salo's constituency)
  - The covert filming was not set up, Salo was not noosed
  - No affiliation to any parties, or political organisations
  - Motive was to make known the views of experienced MP (running candidacy for 3. term)
  - Salo was elected gaining 6000 votes, lost 3000 votes compared to the last elections. Salo himself believes that the incident costed him a minister post

# Conclusion

- Individualised civic watch employs the styles of reflexive activity
- De-medialised public spheres on the Net enables to carry out self-made monitoring of political and economical organisations, elites, public authorities and officials