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Sharing the moment as small stories:

The interplay between practices & affordances

in the social media-curation of lives

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Abstract

Sharing the moment live, a built-in logic of many social networking sites, is, I claim, an invitation for creating plots, which has led to systematic practices. I single out taking a narrative stance on Facebook as such a practice and show the interplay between key-norms and evolving media affordances for pre-selection of story ingredients, localization, visualization of the experience, and audience selection. These contribute to showing the moment as opposed to telling it, with selected friends serving as knowing co-narrators and with story-linking allowing for allusive, transmedia links. I review these practices in the context of increased story facilities that notably bring together several social media apps. I argue that although this curation promises a move beyond the moment, it ultimately serves to consolidate sharing-lives-in-the-moment. I reflect on the implications of this for the direction of travel in relation to stories on many social media platforms.

Keywords: narrative stancetaking; story-linking; Facebook statuses; selfies; algorithms; showing the moment; knowing participation; Snapchat Stories

1. Introduction

Social media[1] research has amply demonstrated that the ways in which platforms are designed and the algorithms that are produced in them, often in oblivion of their users, impact on how relations are formed and how users present themselves. Van Dijck's argument that "a platform is not a thing; it makes things happen" (2013: 180) is resonant with the burgeoning field of software and platform studies (e.g. Berry 2011; Chun 2011; Kitchin and Dodge 2011). Such studies attend to the ways in which the engineering of platforms, including filtering and sorting algorithms, functions as a sociotechnical actor, capable of influencing users' experiences and communication online (Beer 2009). In addition, the mediation of communication by platform design is recognized as economically motivated and shaped by strong links with advertising (Gerlitz & Helmond 2013). At the same time, this mediation is increasingly understood as a complex and dialectical process: the built-in logic of a platform creates possibilities for action and constraints, often referred to as *affordances* (Barton & Lee 2013: 27ff, citing Gibson 1977) but it rests upon users to comply or resist and selectively engage with it. Affordances are *perceived* possibilities and so they are by no means deterministic. They exist in every situation but it can be expected that the persistence of the user-generated content, its retrievability and replication, as well as the ability to distribute it widely, will shape communication choices online (boyd 2010). That said, establishing links between affordances, algorithms and users' either awareness of them or communication as influenced by them is not a straightforward project. Many of the algorithmic processes are opaque to analysts and users alike and the algorithmic context is not easily definable or reducible to specific parameters.

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[1] Although there are (subtle) differences and distinctions, for the purposes of this article, the terms social media and social networking sites are used interchangeably. The terms 'platforms' and 'apps' are employed alongside, when focusing on the environments and facilities of social media.

While there are extensive 'cultural and theoretical critiques of how the world itself is captured within code in terms of algorithmic potential' (Dodge 2010: 15, cited in Bucher 2012: 1165), what is still lagging behind is micro-analytical attention to how users' practices take up, harness or counter-act algorithmically-shaped media affordances; put differently, how perceived affordances are tweaked by users (cf. Jones 2015). This is even more under-represented in the case of the role of affordances in story-making practices: the scarce discourse and sociolinguistic analyses of the forms and functions of stories on social media (for details see Georgakopoulou 2013a, Page 2012) has hardly engaged with how the affordances and algorithms of specific platforms may be shaping the communicative *how* of stories or the users' participation in them. In a similar vein, although it is recognized that changes and developments in a platform reveal a lineage and progress regarding what works best or not, the *remediation* (Bolter & Grusin 1998: 14-15) of design choices for stories has not been sufficiently addressed. The need to look into the interplay between evolving affordances and story-making choices is even more apparent in the context of the main drive of sharing the moment that typifies many social networking sites. As I will claim below, this is essentially a directive to users for *sharing stories out of the moment*.

To address these gaps, in this article, I follow on from my work on small stories for the analysis of social media communication (Georgakopoulou 2013a,b; 2014, 2015). My starting point is the built-in logic and economy of breaking news in many social networking sites (Georgakopoulou 2013a). This is intimately linked with the algorithmically shaped preference for recency of posts: recency is notably one of three weighing factors in Facebook's algorithm Edgerank (cf. Bucher 2012). My contention has been that this essentially encourages the sharing of everyday life as stories, as a branded di-

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rective of living and telling, of *sharing-life-in-the moment*. My analysis of data from Facebook (and YouTube) has so far brought to the fore two systematic[2] interactional practices for creating stories out of the moment: taking a narrative stance and story-linking. They both depart from a sustained, lengthy, detailed sharing of stories but this departure makes them no less systematic in terms of their semiotic design, location, and type of audience participation they project and are dependent upon. In the present discussion, I single out the practice of taking a narrative stance on Facebook statuses and selfie-posts. I show that the systematicity of this practice need to be understood in the context of evolving media affordances that have increasingly provided pre-selection facilities and curation for sharing stories. In particular, I argue that taking a narrative stance has become increasingly visual and localized: shared selfies with friends and check-ins have allowed users to counter-act affordances of context collapse (Wesch 2008)[3] by doing *audience selection* (Bell 2001) and by providing opportunities for their selected friends to serve as co-narrators of the moment. Finally, I argue that taking a narrative stance increasingly benefits from and connects with story-linking. The two result in a prevalent mode of storying the moment, which in classic narrative terms can be described as *showing the moment* as opposed to *telling the moment*. They also afford numerous links, often allusive and only to be 'understood' by knowing recipients, between transmedia (i.e. online-offline, across media) worlds.

Having presented the above findings, I will critically review them in the context of a recent story-designing spree: this involves offering story facilities that purport to allow

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[2] I use the term systematic in its conversation-analytic meaning of a methodic organization of a sequence that involves a structurally linked relationship between parts. Below, I will show such a sequential organization in the case of taking a narrative stance on Facebook statuses.

[3] Context collapse refers to the indeterminacy that arises from the potentially infinite audience that is possible online as opposed to the limited and well-defined groups a person interacts with face-to-face.

users to go beyond the moment. This story curation notably brings together many social media apps and so, in the light of the present findings, it begs the question of the extent to which it builds on or, indeed departs from established practices of sharing the moment as stories. My review shows that the explicit designing of stories as an accumulation of moments comes with certain mismatches between the rhetoric of the design, the features and established practices and, ultimately, it only serves to further consolidate sharing lives-in-the-moment. I will conclude with the implications of this increasingly close link between social media curation and stories-in-the-moment for the kinds of lives and subjectivities that it is premised on and that it renders prominent.

Small stories for a narrative analysis of sharing the moment

My definition of small stories includes a range of activities that conventional narrative analysts have been reluctant to include in their analytical remit: from literally small to fragmented and open-ended tellings that exceed the confines of a single speech event. Small stories are invariably co-constructed, rendering the sole teller's story ownership problematic. They often revolve around mundane events rather than disruptions and recent, ongoing or even hypothetical, events, rather than memories from one's past. In previous work (Georgakopoulou 2007), I made the case for the significance of such activities in everyday life, as part of the fabric of social practices that ordinary people engage in, with consequence for how they present themselves and relate with others. More recently, I have argued that small stories research prefigured the current situation when social media affordances have made stories with such features more widely available and visible in (semi)-public arenas of communication (Georgakopoulou 2013a). Stories on social media are routinely mobile, multi-authored and multi-semiotic: widely distributed across media platforms and audiences (cf. Page 2012). Small stories methods and modes of analysis are thus well-placed to play a key-role in their exploration. In particular, they can help with shedding light on how users respond to the drive of sharing life-in-the-moment. This consists in a continuum of revelatory sharing about one's everyday life to sharing others' posts. At the heart of this logic of breaking news, which

typifies many social media apps,[4] seems to be a drive toward creating plots out of the moment. It is an ingenious bringing together of immersing ourselves in the immediacy of the here-and-now daily experience at the same time as being able to share it. The moment, a metaphor for the present, is not easily quantifiable, but there is evidence for how instantaneous to the user's experience it is viewed as: Facebook's initial prompt to users for updating their status was tellingly "what are you doing right now?".

To share the experience of the moment whilst being in the moment, inevitably requires some sort of stepping out, however momentary, from the flow of experience. The experiencer can then begin to take a perspective on it and create a, however incipient, plot. A plot involves locating experience in time and place and making tentative, meaningful connections between people, actions/interactions and emotions. To view sharing the moment in these terms, that is, as a drive toward *emplotting* (Ricoeur 1991) the ongoing present, is also justified by the fact that platform-designing has explicitly been evolving with the aim of providing us with more and enhanced facilities for sharing our 'stories' (see Section 4). When Facebook, for instance, allowed users to add a place for their posts, it claimed that this was so that they could pin their stories to a physical location (https://media.fb.com/blog/).

2. Data and Methods: Sharing the moment on social media

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[4] There are also algorithmic pressures for this live sharing of the moment: for instance, if you share a lot, the Edgerank algorithm of Facebook will ensure that your pages will be more visible amongst (potential) users. Algorithms still prioritize recency and older posts tend to drop from visibility, so to remain visible and in turn, popular, users need to keep on sharing (cf. Bucher 2012).

The data for this article are part of a larger project entitled "Life-Writing of the Moment: The Sharing and Updating Self on Social Media".[5] My aim has been to explore the dialectic between media affordances, algorithms and communication practices for the aforementioned directive of sharing life-in-the moment. And to ask: What are the main multi-semiotic forms (linguistic/textual, visual, auditory) for sharing life-in-the-moment on a range of social media (e.g., YouTube, Facebook, Instagram, Twitter) and genres (e.g. selfies, retweets, spoof videos, and remixes) and, where applicable, on the basis of specific incidents and issues (e.g., the Eurozone crisis)? How do facilities for sharing the moment evolve and are remediated?

My analysis employs a heuristic, originally developed for small stories in face-to-face contexts, as a flexible way of studying stories-in-context (Georgakopoulou 2007). The heuristic explores the connections of three separable but interrelated layers of analysis: (1) *ways of telling*, (2) *sites* (of the stories' tellings and tales), which in this case includes media affordances and (3) *tellers* (in the broad sense of communicators). It dictates a combined focus on online postings and various types of engagement with them, including transposition across media and sites, without, however, pre-determining what from each of the multi-layered ways of telling, sites and tellers will be of analytical importance and how their relations will be configured in different stories and media environments. Building on a view of stories as contextualized, social practices (see chapter 4 in De Fina & Georgakopoulou 2012), the heuristic accepts that algorithms and affordances form an integral part of the context of a social media app (cf. *site*), where a story occurs, and so their connections with how a story is produced need to be identified and accounted for. As no contextualized analysis of stories can be exhaustive, there is an acceptance that different analyses will have different priorities and that certain questions may require more focus on any one of the three analytical levels.

My project is open-minded about what platforms to investigate, often by following phases of sharing. For instance, I ended up focusing on YouTube videos as a prime circulation phase for news stories. Similarly, Facebook was selected as a prime platform for self-presentation and I have lately studied it in its close association with the inception of selfies as a salient genre for self-presentation.[6] This open-mindedness and real-time tracking of changes on platforms are an integral part of the methodological use of adaptive digital ethnography (Hine, Kendall, & boyd, 2009): this involves applying flexible routes to fieldwork over time to suit the mobile, ever-shifting landscape of social media. It also licenses the use of *remix* methods (see Markham, 2013), that is, of bringing together unlikely resources in imaginative, reflexive and even playful ways, in the spirit of social media practices of remixing. For instance, I have employed media engagements, such as acting as a "lurking" participant in a specific site, observing activities and postings, so as to identify key participants. I have also reflected on my own position, stakes, interests and political and ethical concerns vis-à-vis social media engagements. I have examined my position as a "newbie", somebody who finds it difficult to share and go beyond clicking on Like. I have also drawn on observations and developed analytical lines based on my identity as mother to a media-saturated teenage daughter. In fact, I involved her and her friends in the study of selfies (see below), from identifying top selfie-posters from their groups of friends, to formulating distinctions amongst selfie-types that corresponded to their reality.

Facebook data: Status updates & Selfies

I have specifically employed the above methods in two datasets on Facebook and YouTube, which incidentally remain the two most popular social networking sites. Key-

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[6] In 2014, when I embarked on studying selfies, 48% of all seflies were posted on Facebook, leaving other platforms far behind.

findings from the analysis of YouTube videos and comments on them[7] will be brought into the discussion below selectively, for gleaning additional insights into how the moment is storied. The study of Facebook involved two distinct phases. In the first phase (2010-2013), I investigated (i.e. systematically observed and analysed) the statuses, and comments on them, of a female prolific Facebook friend of mine, then in her '30s. This study led me to identify the increasing importance and frequency of visual posts, especially selfies, from 2014 onwards. I thus decided to move to this emergent salient practice of selfies-posting, by collecting data from female teenagers (16-17 years old), These, had emerged, in numerous published surveys, as part of the age-group of primary selfie-posters. The selection was done in March 2015, on the basis of who were the top 5 selfie-posters after a systematic observation of one year (see Table 1 for more details). In both cases, consent has been obtained from the primary users under investigation and any of their friends whose data have been employed in any form of exemplification. Principles of heavy disguise have been followed and there has been no reproduction of any identifying visual material. Finally, I have had no access to any private messages. A detailed discussion of the data-set collection and coding procedures is beyond the scope of this article (see Georgakopoulou 2016a for details) but it is notable that I created a network profile for each of the 5 users, regarding friends who engaged most with their posts (see averages of Likes and Comments per poster in Table 1). I also ended up with data from users in 4 languages, 7 locations, and 30 nationalities but any out-of-Facebook ethnographic observations were done with the London-based group of 4 young women (two of whom were part of the 5 analyzed selfie-posters): I spent time hanging out and having off-the-record chats about their media engagements, I had access to screenshots from their favourite posts, and I tracked the migration practices of their selfies to Instagram and Snapchat, as well as observing their posts on both these apps. This material directed me to delving into other posts on Facebook from the selected selfie-posters, so as to gauge the relative importance of selfies as part of statuses. It also

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[7] These data are part of my study of how key-news stories about the Greek crisis are circulated and discussed on social media (e.g. Georgakopoulou 2013b, 2014).

led me back to Gertie's wall for systematic observations of her Facebook use in the pe-riod 2010-2015, to get a sense of what, if any, transition she made toward selfies and other visual or video posts.

Finally, I have employed the method of what I call *zooming-in*: this involves the selective mining of data that may have been collected for different purposes and for different questions, to investigate further issues of analytical importance. Zooming-in has been employed for targeted, comparative analyses between Facebook and YouTube (Georgakopoulou 2016b). For instance, I went back to the comments of the analyzed Facebook statuses and of YouTube spoof videos and coded any references to the knowledge of the commenters about a post that went beyond the current communication: e.g. knowledge of offline, pre-posting activities, shared interactional history between a poster and a commenter, etc.

.Paratexts

To complement the micro-analysis of the above data-sets, I have looked into published surveys, platform blogs, including any publicity about new features for stories, and re-views of such new features in the 10 top online tech magazines, e.g. wired, tech crunch, mashable, cnet, techjuice, venturebeat, The verge, Digiday. Using advanced google search facilities, I have so far pulled 131 articles in such magazines related to the intro-duction of key-features, such as "On This Day" (Facebook 2015), Snapchat stories (2014) and Instagram Stories (2016). I will discuss these features in section 4 below. My analysis of these articles in relation to how stories are viewed and defined and how they connect with the imperative of sharing the moment has been assisted by NVivo. Overall, I treat this material as a sort of paratext (Genette 1980), an important part of the complex mediation between algorithms, affordances, discourses of media platforms and users' practices, which allows me to undertake a critical approach to social media affordances, in connection with the micro-analysis of the communicative how of stories.

3. Analysis

Taking a narrative stance as a systematic practice for sharing the moment

My analysis shows that a common and systematic practice of sharing the moment is that of taking a narrative stance. To postulate taking a narrative stance (or narrative stancetaking), I drew on the well-developed, within sociolinguistics, concept of stance (e.g. see chapters in Jaffe 2009). This refers to moments when speakers, more or less agentively and reflexively, position themselves in relation to the ongoing interaction (for details, see Georgakopoulou 2013b). In taking a narrative stance, a poster *mobilizes conventionalized communicative means to signal that what is being shared is or can become a story.* This is a common practice that, I found, cuts across the sharing of personal and news stories (Georgakopoulou 2013b). Below, I will show its systematicity on Facebook statuses in terms of its design and the audience engagement. I will also argue that certain norms for taking a narrative stance have consolidated since the 1st phase of my data-collection, as affordances have evolved.

In face-to-face conversations, the use of the so-called story-openers or story-prefacing devices, for instance, a reference to a time and place other than the current one that the interlocutors share, to an event, and to how that event needs to be understood (e.g. *funny, sad*) have been found to seek permission from the audience, for the teller to be granted the floor to tell a story (e.g. Jefferson 1978)*.* In the case of my data, taking a narrative stance with such story-openers appears to have been remediated for sharing the moment and it presents a few differences. Obviously, co-presence affordances do not

apply here: for instance, a recipient cannot change their body position, look at the potential teller of a story, after they have signaled a story telling, and indicate that they are ready for the story. There is also a time-lag, even by couple of minutes, between taking a narrative stance on a status and audience interest being expressed in it, and different 'friends' may tune into a post at different times. So, sometimes interest needs to be expressed from quite a few users before a story is told. The main difference, however, is that story-openers tend to refer to very recent happenings, often, in fact, to the here-and-now of the poster, making experiencing and posting almost concurrent. This –often hasty- configuration of the moment in some sort of an incipient plot may be all that a poster has, for the moment, which may lead to a story, dependent on whether there is enough interest or not. Finally, the actual story, when it emerges, is invariably a small story, literally too.

Below, I will illustrate a common pattern of taking a narrative stance, particularly before the increasing prevalence of visual posts on Facebook. This example comes from Gertie, whose posts I looked at in the 1st phase of my data collection, as suggested above. At that point, statuses on Facebook responded to the question: 'what are you doing right now?'. They were also in 3rd person.

    (1)

1 Gertie Brown is recovering from an unexpected operation as a result of a trip to A&E

2 on monday night -(

August 25 at 7.45pm

3 Charlotte Harris Oh my God! Are you ok?? Not the ideal end to what I hope was

4 otherwise a fabulous weekend and a lovely christening ... xxx

August 25 at 8.01pm ((Another 14 comments))

A few conventional story-signals can be found in Gertie's status (lines 1-2): a reference to a happening, a time, antecedent to the here and now, a place, and a proposal to how the event needs to be understood ('unexpected", followed by a sad face emoji). Charlotte's comment is typical in this respect and in fact 'are you ok?' or 'what happened?' with question and/or exclamation marks commonly occur in the data as responses to a status that announces or implies some disruption in the poster's life. Such comments ultimately serve as requests for elaboration on what has happened. As we can see in the example above, Gertie provides a small story of sequenced events and their evaluation, as a collective response to friends that have shown interest:

Gertie Brown: Thanks everyone. Not much to worry about. It was a painful abscess which I thought would go away with some basic home treatment but by Monday it was unbearable and huge so had to go to A&E to have it removed—cross & painful but on the mend! Apparently they are quite normal?!

August 26 at 9.03 am

Statuses such as the above that report disruptive or sad events in the poster's life were more likely to receive comments from their friends than a simple Like.[8] In turn, they led

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[8] 'Like' only was the case for routine everyday events at the time of this status and before 6 reactions (i.e. love, haha, yay, wow, sad, anger) were added with corresponding emojis, in 2015.

to a small story that elaborated on the status. There were other conventional associations too, regarding what sort of a moment carries the potential for further storying. A negative affective stance is such a signal, as we can see below:

(2)

1 Gertie is not happy with her mac :-(6 Like

2 Dan: sacrilege, how could someone say such thing!

February 10 at 12:19 pm · Like

3 Gertie: Grrrrrrrrrr i have been on the phone to mac support, technical help you name
4 it and they still can't work it out!! I'm tempted to cross the fence to pc!! Sorry but i'm

5 at my wits end :-(

February 10 at 12:24 pm · Like
6 Gertie: panic over, just sorted it out! Having been in a phone queue for 50 minutes –

7 problem now resolved so I won't be going to the world of pc just yet!!

February 10 at 12:29 pm · Like
8 Dan: that's lucky don't think I could have been friends with a mac deserter!

February 10 at 12:31 pm · Like

The initial negative proclamation of the status (line 1) is elaborated, after Dan's indirect request for elaboration (line 2). The elaboration takes the form of a small story of breaking news (lines 3-5), which is further updated within 5 minutes (lines 6-7). The update renders Gertie's initial unhappiness as "resolved". This is taken up by Dan, who provides the appropriate story-relevant response (Jefferson 1978) that assists in closing the story (line 8). This then enables Gertie to move on to another topic, i.e. making arrangements to see Dan (not cited above). We can then pose the sequential systematicity of taking a narrative stance in such cases as follows:

Negative affective stance in status

14

Request for elaboration in comment

Small story (breaking news & update) by poster as tied-reply to comment

Story-relevant response by commenter

Overall, as the above examples show, narrative stancetaking in the data presents sequential[9] systematicity and interactional implications: it projects the relevance of engagement from the audience that may allow the poster to "tell more". In addition, conventional associations seem to have emerged, regarding what sort of a moment carries the potential for (further) storying. To be specific, announcements of disruptions and negative affective stances, such as the ones exemplified above, are more likely to lead to a small story. It is notable that from the 600 statuses of Gertie analyzed for the period 2010-2013, all 176 statuses of this sort led to a small story, while only one fifth of the statuses that reported mundane moments[10] led to further engagement and comments rather than a simple Like. This finding is corroborated by big data. In a corpus examination of 1.000.000 words from the statuses of American users, Zhang (2010) reported that status updates with negative emotional words received fewer Likes but more comments than positive emotional updates. Zhang found this result counter-intuitive, but in light of this study's micro-analytical findings, the explanation can be sought in the conventional role of unhappy statuses as story-signals.

The relative evaluation of moments, as some being more *story-able* than others, should please the sceptics, the many commentators who were deploring at the time of Gertie's

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[9] Although the spatial architecture of Facebook does not allow us to talk about a turn-by-turn sequence, as we would in face-to-face conversations, it is still the case that a communicative act presupposes another and may be methodically tied to what follows. It is also the case that dyadic 'interactions' between poster and a commenter often develop as part of the relational emergence of a story after a status.

[10] E.g. Gertie has just had a delicious curry & watched the x factor.

statuses, the trivia that people posted on their Facebook (e.g. Thompson 2008). How-
ever, evolving affordances for sharing the moment have somehow redeemed the banal-
ity and the mundane, the sharing of ordinary everyday life, as I will show below.

Evolving affordances for taking a narrative stance

Pre-selection for story 'ingredients'

My study since 2010 has allowed me to see the connections of taking a narrative stance
with the changing, in some ways enhanced, facilities that Facebook has been rolling out
for sharing the moment. These affordances include check-ins, feelings, individual replies
to comments, tagging (i.e. creating a link to a friend's profile) and last, but not least, the
platform's push for visual and video elements. Such facilities readily contain elements
of narrative stancetaking, as they encourage the inclusion of time, place, events, and as-
sessments of the experience. Put differently, they are biased toward story ingredients
rather than, say, toward users putting forward views or exposés.

My analysis shows that the addition of such affordances has resulted in certain changes
in terms of the design of taking a narrative stance and the engagement with it. The first
is that explicit time-references (e.g. temporal adverbials such as 'just now'), that stress
recency or immediacy and that were prevalent in Gertie's statuses[11], seem to have been
reduced in favour of adding location and feelings. The second change can be described
as a standardization of stancetaking choices: the affordances of adding place, feelings
and shared check-ins serve as templates[12], a ready-made pre-selection, a menu of story

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[11] Also in Page's corpus analysis of statuses (2012).

[12] These features were added in 2013.

ingredients which users are encouraged to select. It is almost unexceptional in the 2nd phase of my data to see statuses that contain these pre-selections in some combination, even in creative or playful statuses. We can see in the example below that creativity combines with the poster embracing the affordances of sharing the moment: she produces a shared check in with named friends, a type of activity (*drinking whisky*) and a location (*remember*, the name of the club), enhanced by the map of the place that automatically comes on when a place is added (not reproduced below). In lieu perhaps of adding feelings, she uses a paraphrase of a song[13] by inserting the name of the club from where she is posting the shared status: *me gusta remember, me gustas tu*.

(3)

Mary B. drinking whisky with Ellie D. and eight others at remember

‘me gusta remember, me gustas tu’

This creative variation is still done within the pre-allocated facilities of how Facebook directs users to share the moment. This has implications for how stories emerge and develop, as I will suggest below.

Visual narrative stancetaking

Evolving affordances have led to a more visual and localized narrative stancetaking in my data. Of course, posts on social media are multi-modal and they have always been part of multi-modal environments. However, the wide use of smart phones and the push of photo postings from 2013 onwards, and, increasingly live videos, is leading to what I

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[13] Me gustas tu by Manu Chao.

see as a conventional division of labour amongst different modes on Facebook posts, with the photos (and the videos) *showing the moment* and the 'text' (i.e. language) being confined to brief affective captions. Sometimes, these captions are only done by emojis. It is worth pointing out that photos and videos weigh more than text on Facebook, as they are seen as priority posts by algorithms. In addition, as I will show below, the current designing spree of stories on apps is specifically directing users to producing audio-visual posts. We can see this transition from more text-based to more visual narrative stancetaking in two statuses from Gertie, one from 2012, the other from 2015. The statuses are typical of the progression that Gertie has made from *telling the moment*, i.e. describing it with language, mentioning other people she is with, as team 'Brant', rather than tagging them (see example 4 below), to *showing the moment* (example 5 below). This involves posting visual statuses (i.e. selfies, pictures) and using language only as a caption, normally as a brief description or assessment of what is shown. We can see this in example 5, where Gertie posts a picture of her partner and their dog just with the word *bliss*.

(4)

June 20, 2012

Gertie is enjoying Cornwall with team Brant. Beach in the rain is interesting ... sun please just for tomorrow would be a lovely bday pressie

INSERT EXAMPLE 5 AROUND HERE

Shared selfies, knowing friends and co-narration

The affordance of uploading shared selfies (group selfies or 'significant other' selfies, Georgakopoulou 2016a) from activities with friends has also implicated a strong connection of narrative stancetaking not just with place, but also with references to characters and relationships (routinely accompanied by heart-shaped emojis): e.g.

España with these beautiful chicas

me and my gorgeous girl in her messy room
getting ready with the bae

Selecting certain friends as ratified and primary recipients of a post with their named inclusion or tagging has increased possibilities for taking a narrative stance to lead not to "what happened?" replies but to a subsequent co-production of a story. In a similar vein, Page, Harper & Frobenius (2013) have reported that tagging affordances are conducive to the development of shared stories on statuses. In my data, there is an overwhelming preference for tagged or otherwise named and signaled individuals not just to produce a Like, but also to contribute a comment which displays their knowing status. References to shared events, even in the absence of any visual or tagging material, also introduce a preference for certain individuals to display their knowing status. This provides opportunities for the addressees to serve as co-narrators: i.e. to produce, expand on a story or bring in the back-story. This often results in a private chat on a semi-public forum (i.e. somebody's Wall) with certain friends appearing as being in the know and in the loop and others not.

(6)

Maria: [next to selfie of her and her best friend Anna, which is not reproduced here].

Waaaay up I feel blessed. With Hannah Bates.

Hannah: Awh luv u. xx

May 7 at 9 pm

Maria: Luv u too 🌷. We're gonna have so many more great times esp. now that we've got Mike. 😉

May 7 at 10.47 pm

Hannah: Ha ha very tru🌷🌷 let's hope we don't run into bryan again tho

May 7 at 10.58pm

As we can see in the example above, the private chat which develops between the two friends elaborates on the caption of their selfie[14], in ways which allude to their close-ness. In particular, with the reference to 'Mike' and 'Brian,' a back-story of shared inter-actional history is referred to allusively.

Knowing participation has thus become an increasingly conventional response to taking a narrative stance on statuses, as a result of visual posts, shared statuses, and of tagging, which have offered facilities for audience selection. The fact that close friends can serve as knowing co-narrators has, in turn, made the sharing of the moment highly allusive with plenty of online-offline, and more generally, transmedia, connections. This works well to strengthen bonds with friends with whom one interacts a lot outside of Face-book. It also suits the pressure for sharing the moment quickly and with a certain brev-ity, as users can rely on selected friends for amplification and co-authoring of their

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[14] The line ('Way up I feel blessed) is from the hip-hop song 'Blessings' by Big Sean, feat. Drake and Kanye West.

posts. This is in line with the relational algorithmic recipe of Facebook for a participatory subject that goes beyond the defaults of Like (and, the recently added, reactions). The ideal user is one who spends considerable time on Facebook and gets 'hooked' on it (Eyar 2014): popularity and scoring highly on affinity with friends is a major motivation for doing so. Popularity and affinity are themselves premised on participating, not just by posting, but also by engaging consistently with certain friends' posts (cf. Bucher 2012). Knowing participation thus proves to be a key-participation mode for generating such tied-engagement (i.e. post-comment-reply to comment, etc.) and frequency of Facebook interactions.

It is clear that not-knowing is a dis-preferred participation identity and I have cross-checked this with data from YouTube too (Georgakopoulou 2016b). This is beyond the scope of this article but it suffices to note that there is also a difference in participation between more staged, permanent and viewable moments on Facebook, for instance when posting *me-selfies* as a profile picture, and when posting *group selfies* or *significant other selfies*: the latter share the moment as fleeting, fun, enjoyed with friends, and it is in these cases that knowing participation has become important (idem). The increasing co-narration of the moment with one's friends is perhaps a factor in conceptualizations of Facebook amongst the millennials as the happy, glossy, positive platform of "perfect sharing" (Constine 2016).

Taking a narrative stance and story-linking

Taking a narrative stance has increasingly been connected in my data with transmedia connections, as I began to show above. These include cross-domain connections. My observations of posts in the data-set of adolescent Facebook users show an increasing tendency to story-link in their statuses, that is, to import share-ables, ready-made, circulated, popular scenarios from other sites: for example, memes from sites with popular

memes, heavily re-tweeted tweets, and so on. This story-linking is made possible by in-creasing media convergence which allows users to link their Twitter, Instagram, Face-book, and Snapchat feeds. They tend to have these apps open at the same time, anyway. The wide distribution of portable quotes is another affordance for creating readily avail-able share-ables. With story-linking, users 'borrow' and appropriate other stories, so as to suit their moment, and they often create analogies with their experience:

(7)

Saachi shared a tweet

This was me an' my uber driver last night

Sober in a taxi: Please. Stop talking to me.

Drunk in a taxi: … And that, Mick, is why I'm emotionally unavailable I suppose.

Retweets: 1,482 Likes 2,660

Story-linking in its association with taking a narrative stance to share "my" moment, seems to have been remediated from video-sharing sites, primarily YouTube. In my study of the circulation of key-news stories about the Greek crisis (2014), I showed how

story-linking was important for sharing political life on social media, not as facts or points of view but as affective, emotive, personalizing reactions.[15]

For the purposes of the present discussion, the developing links of taking a narrative stance with story-linking on Facebook statuses is suggestive of how, across platforms, norms for sharing the moment may be converging. It is especially notable that media-afforded story-ingredients and scenarios can be readily retrieved and adapted, so that users can share their moment on different apps. This is revealing of a level of ready-made story templates and story-curation that, potentially, cannot be resisted even by the most creative and individual users. This is due to the tension that storying-the-moment creates, between managing audience selection and reach, live (instant) sharing and likeability and popularity. Story-linking suits the need for quick and brief sharing that also has the potential to address different audiences, as my study of YouTube has shown (2015).

4. **Discussion**

Taking a narrative stance in the context of designing 'Stories'

I have shown so far that taking a narrative stance on Facebook statuses and selfie-posts is a systematic practice for sharing the moment in ways that allow a co-creation of plots. I specifically teased out key-aspects of its interrelation with evolving media affordances (since 2010, start of my data-set). These involve pre-selection facilities that have afforded an increasingly visual and localized stancetaking. Shared selfies with friends and

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[15] By creating chains of story-linking, and by inserting key-actors from the circulated incidents, into for example, memes, I claimed that a circulated moment became *rescripted*: its plot changed as it was being linked with popular culture templates (Georgakopoulou 2014; 2015).

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check-ins have also afforded opportunities for audience selection and for selected friends to serve as knowing (co)-narrators of the moment. In all these cases, small stories emerge and develop relationally and as a sequential implication of taking a narrative stance. Similarly, what moment will become emplotted is contingent on engagement with posts, as posters often do not (yet) have a story to report, upon initial sharing. This co-constructed, cumulative and intertextual storying of the moment, assisted by story-linking with (audio)-visual portables and quotables, has implications for any further attempts for story-curation on social media apps, as I will show below. Specifically, I will interrogate my findings in the context of the recent move to an explicit introduction of *story facilities*. This story-designing spree currently brings many apps together, particularly in their eagerness to offer facilities to users for sharing not just one moment, but all moments of their day. I am listing below the main such facilities:

■ Snapchat[16] Stories (2014)

■ Instagram[17] Stories (2016)

■ WhatsApp Status (2016)

■ Twitter moments (2016)

How do these facilities work with the logic of sharing the moment and the norms that have been developing for creating plots out of the moment, which I showed above? And how can we further such norms in the context of story-facilities? The critical analysis of the branding and rhetoric of "stories" as an app feature makes apparent notable convergences apparent in terms of how stories are conceptualized and what kinds of affordances are offered for them. Stories are launched as chronologically ordered multi-

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[16] Snapchat is the 3rd most popular social app amongst the 'millennials' after Facebook & Instagram. You send pics & videos & they self-destruct a few seconds after being viewed.

[17] Instagram: photo- & video-sharing social app acquired by Facebook in 2012.

modal collections with a beginning-middle-end and some continuity and permanence, relative to the single feed and the moment. For instance, Snapchat Stories, "a game changer for the app" (Cooper 2016), are a way of going beyond the app's pure ephemerality, by allowing users to post photos and/or videos that last for 24 hours, as opposed to being erased after viewed.[18] Perhaps more importantly, stories come with a high level of curation: many tools for drawing, including filters, bespoke graphics and emojis, template stories and style guidelines.

It is instructive to place this curation in the context of previous attempts, especially by Facebook, to go beyond the logic of the feed and to allow users to create a more continuous sharing of their everyday moments. The Timeline is such an early attempt followed by the video "A Look Back," which was launched for the 10th anniversary of the platform in 2014, and 'On this day' in 2015, which allows users to revisit posts and share them as memories. In the same vein as stories on Snapchat and Instagram, the discourses underpinning Timeline and Memories on Facebook are readily connectable with conventional conceptualisations of a story as a more permanent, temporalized and ordered activity. We note then an association of stories with the ideas of chronicling both today and "your past life" but in close association with the unit of moment on the one hand and with posts, either previous or current, within a given platform. Memories on Facebook, for instance, are retrospectively put together by Facebook to include previous moments within Facebook: *your posts and others' posts you're tagged in, major life events and when you became friends with someone on Facebook.* In this way, memories are designed as a retrievable archive of experiences, evoking a lay metaphor of memories with wide currency (Brockmeier 2015). We also note the increasing offering of pre-selection facilities for stories which provide users with choices from a menu. For instance, adding life-events, defined as collections of moments, to your Timeline on Facebook, effectively means that you choose from available categories: e.g. home and living,

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[18] Even though stories are just 10 seconds long, relatively speaking, they are more sustained activities than individual snaps.

family and relationship, health and wellness. Control for the users is normally confined to adjusting privacy settings, turning notifications on or off, adding filters, and other optional features. This applies to all story facilities on apps, including Snapchat and Instagram stories.

The selection and ready-made facilities for stories certainly tally with and build on what I have discussed in this article, that is, on evolving affordances for sharing the moment as stories. The explicit move, however, beyond the moment, on the face of it creates a mismatch, within the technological affordances of platforms, between fluidity, live sharing of the here-and-now and some sort of continuity and archiving. This mismatch extends to the actual features with which stories come. Putting together stories to go beyond the moment is still done in ways that allow for aggregative compilations of moments rather than for reflective and highly selective re-constructions. Put differently, sharing beyond the moment is done on the basis of the moment and it still is about live sharing, *sharing-in-the-moment*. This has implications for how features that promise more sustained story-activities are, or indeed, can be taken up by users. Kaun & Stiernstedt (2014) show that prioritizing recent posts and inviting users to constantly upload new materials is not conducive to collective remembering on Facebook. Flow, immediacy and liveness are found to be major elements, not only in terms of how users are asked to participate in making memories, but also in how they experience time.

To add to this, we can observe that a cumulative view of stories that sees every moment as the same is at odds with what users actually do in the data-set at hand. In particular, two practices reported in this article are at odds with attempts to introduce stories as 'solutions' for going beyond the moment. The first is the increasing importance and development of norms for sharing stories that create allusive, transmedia connections that go beyond the moment: sharing beyond the moment is thus done by users within the moment. The second practice is the relative evaluation of what moment is more story-able than others: as I showed, sustained storying can apply to the single moment, with audience engagement and chains of story-linking,

In view of the above, what do Facebook and other social platforms gain specifically from introducing stories as more sustained activities than a single feed and as sharing that goes beyond the moment? Van Dijck (2013) observes that the increased monetisation of Facebook (and in the case of her study, LinkedIn too) benefits from one identity. Platform owners have a vested interest in pushing the need for a uniform online identity to attain maximum transparency, not only because they want to know who their users are, but also because advertisers want users' "truthful" data. This monetary agenda is surely not to be under-estimated. At the same time, posing one-to-one links between monetary motivations and design-choices runs the risk of overlooking mediating factors such as the need for platforms to provide relationally rich environments to keep users hooked, in the first place. Users' bio-data and what they click on has been shown to provide ample information for advertising purposes, so a straightforward association of the extra-investment in creating story-facilities with monetary goals seems over-simplifying. The findings in this article allow us to suggest that there are more story-specific reasons for this close link of curation with stories. Stories, as I hope I have shown, however small, are an algorithmically preferred participation mode in terms of the hallmarks of the participatory subject and so we can expect any further curation on social media apps for a meaningful, personalized presentation to cater to stories. Ultimately, stories can provide a more personalized route to advertising too: bringing advertising brands as stories, making story ads as part of users' experience can be a powerful device (cf. Constine 2016).

Concluding Reflections: *The normativity of sharing lives-in-the-moment*

In the light of the above discussion, social media apps cannot seem to be able to forgo the logic of instant, live sharing. In fact, story-curation, even when setting out to go beyond the moment, seems to be building on the moment. We can, therefore, expect sharing-lives-in-the-moment to become further consolidated as the autobiographical mode

of choice and availability particularly for the 'millennials'[19], which form the main targeted group, especially of Instagram and Snapchat. This can be assumed to result in further systematicity of practices, such as taking a narrative stance and associated features of engagement with it, as discussed above. The increasing availability of practices for sharing-lives-in-the-moment can, in turn, be expected to render certain kinds of lives and subjectivities more available and perhaps more sought-after. Below, I will summarize what the findings of this study allow us to postulate as increasingly available story-practices for sharing the moment:

- Stories come into existence through sharing the moment and they develop relationally. Audience engagement, vital for any story-signalling to develop, can take a range of forms, from interest and requests for elaboration to knowing co-authoring. Although co-construction is commonly found in stories in face-to-face contexts too, the brand of relational becoming of stories found on sharing the moment presents two distinctive features: it licenses a tentative signalling of stories, of testing the waters, as the events are still ongoing, and it relies on an, often concurrent, development of storying and happenings. Related to this, the close link of a teller's ownership with their experience, routinely found in personal experience stories, is often disrupted.

- Showing the moment seems to be prevailing over telling the moment, with text and written language becoming more and more confined to brief assessments and "stories" as app facilities increasingly being identified with photographing and filming one's life, as it is happening. This places premium on specific narratorial positions, in particular, the narrator-experiencer as opposed to the narrator that can step back and reflect on the goings-on.

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[19] Variously called Generation Y and the 'me generation'. There seems to be a convergence that the term applies to those born around the mid-90s.

- There is pre-selection and iterativity of ready-made scenarios and templates, ideally brief and portable, for easy distribution. As we saw, this level of centralized curation is convenient for a quick sharing of the moment but it potentially renders individual story creativity and uniqueness more difficult, especially in terms of audience reach.

- Affordances for audience selection allow for knowing participation and densely allusive, transmedia connections. Although this is conducive to stronger bonds amongst users, it also has the potential to increase echo-chambers phenomena, with users being exposed to and engaging with a limited set of stories that re-affirm their worldview and perspective. It may also privilege specific lives and subjectivities, associated with the main targeted groups of story-facilities, as described above: in particular, goofy stories about having fun with friends and being out and about.

These practices are bound to present contextual variation in how different users may take them up. Their further exploration, however, would benefit from taking into account the evolving norms presented above and the communicative how of small stories that users in the data at hand seem to have been socialized into. In addition, the scrutiny of the interplay of small story-practices with media-affordances for sharing the moment is necessary for a critical assessment of the role of stories in the social-media curation of lives and selves.

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FACEBOOK PHASE 1: Status updates (2010-2013; *600 posts analyzed*)

PHASE 2: Statuses & selfie-posts (03/2014-03/2015; *189 selfies & 1,713 comments analyzed*

Kate (882 Friends)	Maria (1316 Friends)	Saachi (790 Friends)	Luke (1814 Friends)	Aris (1416
No of selfies: 44	58	87	39	27
'Me' selfies: 28	5	7	5	3
Selfies as profile pics: 13	5	5	8	2
Average Comments per selfie: 25 **Total comments analyzed: 3000** **Average Likes per selfie**: 161	53 388	29 264	11 135	15 153

Example 5