



Media and
Communications

Media@LSE Working Paper Series

Editors: Bart Cammaerts, Nick Anstead and Richard Stupart



How we remember and forget via Facebook

The Mediatization of Memento and Deletion Practices

JACOPO VILLANACCI



Published by Media@LSE, London School of Economics and Political Science ("LSE"), Houghton Street, London WC2A 2AE. The LSE is a School of the University of London. It is a Charity and is incorporated in England as a company limited by guarantee under the Companies Act (Reg number 70527).

Copyright, Jacopo Villanacci © 2017.

The author has asserted their moral rights.

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system or transmitted in any form or by any means without the prior permission in writing of the publisher nor be issued to the public or circulated in any form of binding or cover other than that in which it is published. In the interests of providing a free flow of debate, views expressed in this paper are not necessarily those of the compilers or the LSE.

Abstract

This work is a piece of explorative research about how people engage with memory through the means of Facebook. The project is motivated by 4 research questions: 1. What difference do users think it makes to have a memory on Facebook? 2. What are the main memory-related practices people enact on the platform in order to store and manage remembrances? 3. What are users' reactions when Facebook autonomously prompts memories? 4. When do users decide to 'forget' things on Facebook and how do they actualise this decision? To address these questions, a pure qualitative approach was employed: twelve in-depth, semi-structured interviews whose transcripts were successively analysed through inductive-deductive thematic analysis.

Results show how personal memories on Facebook are not just the outcome of users' ex-ante content selection, but also of their mere engaging with the platform. Commenting, liking and interrelating, users leave traces of their behaviour. These traces generate 'layered memories' and, when assembled, 'archives of selves', or the gathering of diffused secondary information allowing users to go through past versions of their personae. Algorithmically prompted memories are also considered and shown to be perceived as inappropriate in two situations: when Facebook tries to interpret multiple personal memories by reconstructing their narratives and when prompted memories are seen as forced confrontation with a past clashing with the users' current 'self'. Informants attested they mainly react to these conditions undertaking two kinds of practices: the privatisation and the deletion of Facebook memories.

1 INTRODUCTION

The origin of this work is a comparative research project I conducted one year ago between Paris and London. My purpose was to understand the role of affect and emotions in Facebook mediation of the terror attacks that struck Paris in November 2015. As often happens, in seeking answers to my original question many new ones came to light. Yet, one specific thing kept on swirling around my head: a consistent number of Parisians I talked with confessed to me their concern about the possibility that, in the years to follow, some of the new Facebook applications (like ‘On This Day’ and ‘Your Year in Review’)¹ would suddenly remind them about those dramatic and anguishing moments. Initially, I saw their worry as a protensive reaction, outcome of both the increasing knowledge we nowadays have of digital social media working patterns and the degree of ‘social media stickiness’ (Ahmed, 2014; Dean, 2015; Karppi, 2015) permeating our daily life. An exciting and worth studying hypothesis, indeed. But I was framing the matter solely in the psychological realm of individuals and not in the factuality of daily life — in other words, I was disregarding consequences on human habits. Also, ‘at Facebook they would never make such a mistake’, I thought.

Contrary to my expectation, after having started my Master’s degree at the LSE and having begun to exchange insights regarding my new puzzle, I discovered that it was a burning matter on the Internet. Among others, the most shocking case I discovered is that of Eric Meyer, a father and web designer who wrote on his blog a piece entitled *Inadvertent Algorithm Cruelty* (Meyer, 2014). He writes: ‘I didn’t go looking for grief this afternoon, but it found me anyway, and I have designers and programmers to thank for it’ (ibid.). Eric did not want to generate his Facebook Year in Review video, given the kind of year he had, and he therefore avoided clicking on the application. But then Facebook plastered a message on his timeline: ‘Eric, here’s what your year looked like!’, written on a digital postcard with stylised cutouts of partying people framing a close-up of his little daughter, Rebecca. She had died few months previously. I therefore understood that the matter was far more complex than I had initially thought. The question of how we remember and forget things online must be tackled not solely intellectually, for example on the ontological/epistemological (what is memory in the digital age? How is it constructed?) and ethical levels (to what extent can we consider an algorithm guilty? Who/what has the right to decide what we should or should not remember?), but also on a more immediate day-to-day basis. We must understand how it feels and what are the consequences of living in incessant contiguity with media capable not only of having an unlimited memory, but also of more or less deliberately throwing us into states of remembrance.

While the literature about online storage and archives (for example, Featherstone, 2000; Neiger et al., 2011; Blackman, 2015; Giannachi, 2016), content production and sociality online (Hardey, 2002; Turkle, 2011; Pybus, 2013 and Boyns and Loprieno, 2014 among others) is rather plentiful, it seems that specific reflections about memory on social media and especially about how users practically engage with it, though obviously not absent (see for example van Dijck, 2007; Neiger

¹ ‘On This Day’ shows you what happened on your Facebook timeline on that same day in previous years. ‘Your Year in Review’ generates an automatic video displaying the most relevant contents (according to the Facebook algorithm) that you shared throughout the year.

et al., 2011; Mayer-Schönberger, 2011), are to a large extent still needed. This work seeks therefore to better explore and examine these last issues by focusing on the specific case of Facebook and on users' memento and deletion *practices*. Accordingly, the main research question on which I shall concentrate is: 'how do people remember and forget things via Facebook?'. To delimit my area of interest, I have segmented this query into four sub-research questions: 1. What difference do users think it makes to have a memory on Facebook? 2. What are the main memory-related practices people enact on the platform in order to store and manage remembrances? 3. What are users' reactions when Facebook autonomously prompts memories? 4. When do users decide to 'forget' things on Facebook and how do they actualise this decision?

In trying to answer these questions, the work is structured as follows. I shall open the theoretical section (Chapter 2) with a brief overview on the classics on social memory (Halbwachs, 1992[1952]; Connerton, 1989; Nora, 1984-1992), followed by the re-introduction of three elements I believe the classics omitted, namely the individual, the media supports and digital memory practices (van Dijck, 2007; Ashuri, 2011; Pinchevski, 2011). I will conclude the literature review with a critical illustration of the main issues regarding digital forgetting (Mayer-Schönberger, 2011; Bartoletti, 2011). Drawing on Bartoletti (2011), the main points and the implications thus far noted will be subsequently reorganised on three planes (ontology, extension and control) and my research questions restated. My theoretical framework, centred on non-linear approaches, will follow, introducing 'media as practice' (Couldry, 2012) and the concept of mediatization, specifying the understanding I will embrace (Krotz, 2007; Hepp, 2013; Couldry and Hepp, 2017). Given the explorative aim of my research and its focus on users' stories, perceptions and practices, I have opted for a qualitative approach. Specifically, my method is constituted by in-depth, semi-structure interviews — Chapter 3 will thus focus on methodology, research design and ethical concerns, giving rationale for the decisions taken and procedures followed. Chapter 4 will contain empirical findings and it will be structured thematically. Firstly, I shall consider how users *generate* and store memories on Facebook, then introducing the idea of 'layered memories'; secondly, I will evaluate users' reactions to automatically triggered remembrances and their practices of control re-appropriation. Finally, a recap of the main results will be given in the conclusion (Chapter 5), together with suggestions for future research.

2 LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 THE CLASSICS ON SOCIAL MEMORY

To set the stage, this work starts with a very concise illustration of the main contributions given by three key figures in the study of social memory: Maurice Halbwachs (1992[1952]), Paul Connerton (1989) and Pierre Nora (1984-1992).

2.1.1 Halbwachs: the cadres of collective memory

Halbwachs states his central claim distinctly: ‘memory depends on the social environment’ (ibid.: 1992[1952]: 37). The social environment the author points to is not the context from which the memory comes, but the one *in* and *through* which it is recalled. The outcome is a process of *reconstruction* of the past in the present, the present working as a lens through which we remember and then re-live our memories (ibid.: 40). A rather fascinating consequence of this conception is that it leads to an ever-evolving past. The already-lived, in the moment of its recall, cannot be experienced in the exact same situation in which it was generated, thus leading every time to a different recollection. The cause of this variation in reconstruction processes, according to Halbwachs, is found in what he calls ‘collective frameworks’, the *cadres*² of social memory (ibid.). It is through them that memories are recast, through what all individuals of a collectivity share in time and space — ideas, places, words, experiences, imaginaries and so on. ‘Collective frameworks are precisely the instruments used by the collective memory to reconstruct an image of the past which is in accord, in each epoch, with the predominant thought of the society’ (ibid.: 40).

The broader point advanced by Halbwachs, also constituting a rejection of Bergson’s focus on individualistic perceptions and subjective sense (see Murray, 2004: 285; Boyer, 1994: 25-26), is therefore that memory has less to do with our brain and individuality, and a lot to do with our external, present collective reality. This has implications also for issues of remembering. Frameworks are not stored in the brain, but in collective spaces, in our interrelations and in collective dynamics. Consequently, a lasting memory is not so because it is well impressed in our brain, but because it keeps being connected with the thoughts that come to us from the social milieu (Halbwachs, 1992: 53). By following this line of reasoning, *forgetting* is conceived not as an image whose clarity dissolves

² There is a not negligible translation loss here: the word ‘framework’ seems to suggest something more open and negotiated than the French ‘cadre’. Although Halbwachs considers as collective frameworks, for example, both physical environments (1980: 131-134) and language (1992: 43-45), the word *cadres* helps stressing how even mental spaces have always to refer to physical objects to acquire the sense of permanence and stability characterising a collective framework (see Connerton, 1989: 37). Also, the word *cadre* better stresses the formidable power that society has on memory, to the point of being conceived as an *imposition* on our past (Halbwachs, 1992: 50).

over time, but as something that disappears as a consequence of the dissolution of those *cadres* that make it relevant.

2.1.2 Connerton: bequeathed ceremonies and bodily practices

In *How Societies Remember* (1989), Connerton mainly embraces Halbwachs' view of memory as something social. Yet, some important differences must be addressed. Per Connerton (1989), it is not just that the past is shaped by the present, but also that the present is dependent on our knowledge of the past (ibid.: 2). Connerton does not change the answers to the questions posed by Halbwachs, but adds a new one: how do we perceive the present in function of the past? Abandoning Halbwachs' linear approach, Connerton stresses the impossibility of detaching our present from our past, 'not simply because present factors tend to influence our recollections of the past, but also because past factors tend to influence, or distort, our experience of the present' (ibid.: 3). Here is the main novelty of this account, the bequeathing of commemorative ceremonies and bodily *practices* over time. Recollections are here part of the ritualistic dimension of society, where the commemoration must be bodily relevant in order to keep cultural memory alive. Through a clever Saussurean analysis of late XIX French society, Connerton shows how clothes and dressing practices constitute a perfect example: clothes are signs (ibid.: 33; see also Barthes, 1990; Laurie, 1981), they mediate, keeping alive the symbolic hierarchies enabling social memory.

Connerton's entire theoretical apparatus is therefore based on the idea of people coming together, sharing moments of ritual relevance, where the localisation of memory is not necessarily placed in objects, but first and foremost in *shared practices*. Nora (1984-1992) starts by noticing the increasing shortage of these authentic forms of sharing and goes on to describe a consequential necessity of artificial sites where memory is preserved.

2.1.3 Nora: fear to forget, lieux the mémoire

Between 1984 and 1992, Pierre Nora edited *Les Lieux de Mémoire*, a monumental work in seven volumes gathering articles on symbolic items (like monuments, ceremonies, songs, pieces of literature) that, over time, have come to crystallise the essence of French identity. His theoretical core lies in the difference between *milleux* and *lieux de mémoire*. The former indicates spontaneous and traditional environments of memory, handed down — resounding Connerton — through traditions, ceremonies and values. The latter indicates instead sites of memory, symbolic elements purposively employed to stop the clocks, eternalise death and materialise the immaterial (Nora, 1996: 18-19). A *lieux de mémoire* is then 'any significant entity, whether material or non-material in nature, which by dint of human will or the work of time has become a symbolic element of the memorial heritage of any community' (ibid.: xvii). The moment of the *lieux de mémoire* is that of the end of memory and the beginning of history, when we cease to live *in* collective memory. Instead, driven by the fear of losing

it, we start to conserve it in media (like museums, remembrance parks and anniversaries) (ibid.: 12). Through a vicious circle, what we are really losing, according to Nora, is what he defines 'true memory'. This takes refuge in our gestures, our habitual behaviours and unspoken traditions. Therefore, we are augmenting our attachment to 'ingrained memories', which are voluntary, no longer spontaneous, individual, psychological and never social forms of memory (ibid.: 13). We are becoming more and more dependent on the archive, on the material, on the immediacy of the recording — as well as, I would add, to the nomological constraints archives impose (see Derrida, 1996).

In summary, the lack of that sociability central in Halbwachs, and of those daily ceremonial practices crucial in Connerton, lead, in Nora, to the development of artificial memory strategies. However, there are many variables which seem mostly ignored by these authors, especially when we start to evaluate digital social media. I have identified three main points: first, as also (Bartoletti, 2011) argues, the different ways specific media might inform memory reconstruction and experience are mainly overlooked. Second, the individual realm is obliterated by the analysis of more ample dynamics. Third, can we really talk of a loss of spontaneous memory practices in the digital age? To address these points is the ambition of the next pages.

2.2 MEMORY AND ARCHIVES IN THE DIGITAL AGE

In what follows, I shall recover the aspects so far neglected: the individual, the digital supports of memory and digital practice. If it is true that the modern individual cannot be deemed outside society (Mead, 1934; see also Davis, 1973), the complex net of relations between the two should not be underestimated — and digital media, as I will show, constitute a not negligible variable in this net of tensions.

2.2.1 Mediated Memories

A more materialist approach to memory is offered by van Dijck (2007). In her book, media are not conceived as simple containers of remembrances anymore, but as junction points between the individual, their practices and behaviours, and their culture. This is conceptually enclosed in the idea of 'mediated memory', that is 'the activities and the objects we produce and appropriate by means of media technologies, for creating and re-creating a sense of past, present, and future of ourselves in relation to media' (2007: 21). Mediated memories find their place in the human mind, are possible because of technologies and are embedded in the cultural context of their use (ibid.: xiv). In this view, what I have introduced as 'the classics on memory' are not necessarily discredited, but upgraded by weighing a greater number of variables.

This conceptual upgrade of memory, characterised by the understanding of the individual as constructed in a dialogue with society, is expressed in the idea of *personal cultural memory*. Even in the wording of the concept lies a new relevant aspect: although memory must be placed in a framework of social ideas and imaginaries to allow its reconstruction in the present — as Halbwachs (1992[1952]) writes — the individual, or better ‘the self’, cannot be utterly obliterated, inasmuch as ‘without the capability to form autobiographical memory, we are unable to create a sense of continuity in our personhood’ (van Dijck, 2007: 2). This does not mean that we have a new monadic element in our framework, but that we have new variables, i.e. the self and self-formation, that must be considered in their interactions with culture and society (see Mead, 1934 and Davis, 1973). If we add to this that identity is never fixed but always in motion, as Hall (1990) and Hall & Du Gay (1996) show, we might start to distinguish the exciting complexity of the matter.

2.2.2 Digitization and beyond

The classics on memory presented earlier do not methodically consider, to a large extent, what difference it makes to use one media rather than another to store remembrances. Nevertheless, this does not mean that implications of mediation have never been addressed before. The history of critical reflections on media can be traced back to Plato³ (see Hansen, 2010; Joinson, 2003) and, over time, swinging between techno-determinist and social-constructivist accounts (see Bargh & McKenna, 2004), it has focused on the skill of writing, the printing press, the TV, finally arriving at Facebook and WhatsApp. So, having to a certain extent always been so, ‘if there is no pure experience prior to mediation’ (Livingston, 2009: 4), why should we now be worried or curious about the way in which media influence our lives?

From the perspective of my research, thus focusing on memory, one of the risks of mediation is the possibility of deliberate emendations, a risk exemplified by Le Goff’s (1992) concern about the power of media to *manufacture* the past rather than register it. The point is that when we turn to digital media, and more generally to digitalisation processes, deliberative and accidental edits of stored material might be immensely favoured — so much so that a prosperous area of research has flourished in this regard, often framed in the field of Cultural Studies. I am thinking of ideas like Fuller’s (2009) ‘archive data afterlives’, Beer & Burrows’ (2013) ‘archives in motion’ and Lisa Blackman’s current research on ‘the haunted life of data’ (2015; 2016). This peculiar dynamism credited to digital data and to the different forms of their accumulation (i.e. archives), together with the increasing level of entrenchment of digital media in our daily life (see Deuze, 2012), confer

³ ‘If men learn this [i.e. to write], it will implant forgetfulness in their souls’ (Plato cited in Hansen, 2010: 173).

strength and relevance to reflections about the *active* role of Social Networking Sites⁴ (SNS) and about how this relates to users' acts of memory.

Not only do digital media make memory a topological skill⁵, but they also require us to understand their structures and functioning to take the right decisions. Although van Dijck (2007) partially focuses on these issues, and I agree with the non-linearity of her approach (i.e.: mediated memories), I believe her understanding of digital social media is far too anchored to the idea of 'digitisation'; neglecting the structures and affordances of digital media, which comprise but are not exhausted by their digital texture. By this I do not mean that it is impractical to find relevant, broad features and trends regarding specific kinds of data, platforms and networks (see, for example, Castells 2009; boyd, 2010; Fuchs, 2014; Helmond, 2015), but that to consider the whole digital sphere as a single block, homogeneously characterised by the same stable features risks being misleading and simplistic – notably with Facebook, which constantly introduces new features (see also Couldry and Hepp, 2017: 36-38, 53-56 for insights on media diversification from a transcultural perspective). Think of the peculiarity of the Facebook Safety Check⁶ or the forenamed memory application 'On This Day'. There are behaviours and content selection choices that Facebook enacts, both based on direct and indirect invitations to users as well as adjusted to their reactions (i.e. machine learning algorithm – McGee, 2013; Levy, 2017; see also McStay, 2016 on 'Empathic media'). Consequently, Facebook explicitly invites people to recall moments selected through its algorithm and asks users to select criteria to be followed to structure these operations.

Facebook unsurprisingly has a research department⁷ dedicated to these matters, yet the field of Media and Communication Studies seems to take less note of their implications. This is a shortage this work wants to begin to address, but from a users' perspective, to understand whether and to what extent all this is changing how they conceive memory, how they practically engage with it and what are their reactions. These are the points that have led to my research questions RQ1, RQ2 and RQ3 (see this work: § 2.3).

2.2.3 A new form of digital social memory: joint and enhanced

Although the analysis of users' practical engagement with social media memory is rather understudied, ontological reflections on and consequential taxonomical ramification of the forms of

⁴ 'As a medium coevolves with its quotidian users' tactics, it contributes to shaping people's everyday life' (van Dijck, 2013: 5).

⁵ Intended as the ability to individuate the position of data online (van Dijck, 2007: 50).

⁶ A system allowing users to swiftly know whether acquaintances in an area in trouble are safe.

⁷ <https://research.fb.com/category/applied-machine-learning/>.

memory supported by digital social media are not lacking in the literature. Among these, in addition to van Dijck (2007), Ashuri (2011) is a notable contribution.

Digital social media allow the convergence of usually distinct memory features and actors, consequently leading to the constitution of a new form of memory that Ashuri (2011) labels 'joint memory'. This is an advanced form of memory combining in itself two distinct forms of recollection: 'common memory' and 'shared memory' (ibid.: 105). The former is the aggregation of units of memory gathered by enough people, referring to a happening that all of them experienced; the latter refers instead to a process of standardisation achieved through communication, allowing those who were not there at the moment of the happening to be plugged into that experience by means of memory institutions like archives, monuments, street names and the like. Ashuri (2011) proposes that digital social media allow the two to be catalysed into the form of *joint memory*, where the public and the private meet, as well as the institutional and the communal. Joint memories are therefore 'public recombinations of personal recollections' (ibid.: 107), they make witnesses, commentators and end-users cooperate.

As a consequence of the above, digital social media allow, as Pinchevski (2011) writes, a democratisation of memory. Already discussed by Nora in terms of access — since the objectification of memory and its consequential detachment from the social would allow everyone to witness the same calcified past(s) — digital social media would bring this democratisation back *within* the social (ibid.: 254). Reading (2011: 245) interprets this as the formation of a new collective consciousness of memory and of its very same production and experience, thus reviving the image of an Halbwachsian affective community of remembrance acts. Here, thanks to digital social spaces, 'the archive becomes an eminently social practice, a veritable living memory' (Pinchevski, 2011: 254). In other words, the difference between these commentators' accounts and Nora's *lieux de mémoires*, as I see them, is in the level of engagement that users collectively experience in living and generating online memories. From this perspective, the loss of spontaneous memory rites would thus require more attentive consideration, evaluating first what effectively is the relevance and diffusion of digital memory practices at a collective level.

2.2.4 Forgetting: select, delete, forget

Before summarising the points so far illustrated, forgetting must be explicitly considered. Although it was implied in every single line of the above reflections, as 'there is no work of memory without a corresponding work of forgetting' (Passerini, 1983: 196), there are aspects that must be plainly outlined.

A common mistake, which may cause many misinterpretations when evaluating memory issues, is to invariably consider remembering a virtue and forgetting a fault (Connerton, 2008).

Forgetting does not exhaust itself in a negative act, but, strange as it may sound, coincides with a generative moment. It is not a vacuum, but a form of knowledge production, is 'an effect which is produced through the gaps, silences, and omissions in the stories we tell, [...] an integral part of the very structure of knowledge' (Norquay, 1999: 2). Connerton (2008: 63) states this openly when introducing a kind of forgetting he calls 'forgetting that is constitutive in the formation of a new identity'. He defines it as an 'active process of creation' (ibid.), where the subject purposively erases aspects of their past to construct a new identity. If we extend this approach by considering the classics on social memory, forgetting even unfurls as an individual and social necessity, allowing self and social coherence through the deletion of contradictory elements⁸. Embracing this approach, to wit, that human forgetting is implicit in the very same notion of memory intended as a form of structured preservation, as a selection that implies discard, we cannot avoid asking: what are the implications of the current tension between digital systems' infinite storage capacity and our structural need to forget?

Mayer-Schönberger (2011), one of the few who posed this question in a systematic way, argues that forgetting, from being the default, has today turned into the exception. The main reason for this has to be found in storage costs plummeting: in the moment in which our personal experiences, once digitised, 'become lighter than bees' wings' (Jeffries, 2011), it is no longer *economically* worth it to spend time and select them. Consequently, we find ourselves in a context where Google, quantitatively speaking, knows us better than we do ourselves. Mayer-Schönberger pinpoints two consequential dangers: firstly, the transfer of power 'from the surveilled to the surveyors' (2011: 197), leading to a Foucauldian hyper-panopticism sizing additional spatial and temporal dimensions⁹ (like, for example, our past). Secondly, the impact on human decision-making, which, due to our increasing inability to forget and reconstruct our past, would problematise the abovementioned role of forgetting in establishing coherence at the individual and social level.

Although these reflections are extremely relevant to heighten awareness of our digital era and gain better chances to handle it, they also hinge on too broad an assumption, whose lacuna will lead to my sub-research question RQ4 (see this work: § 2.3). On Facebook, users *can* and *do* select contents in their archives. The novelty is not the act itself, but its qualities and conditions. These are conditions of massive archives of experiences under the form of Ashuri's joint memory on which 'the selection [enacted by] users is oriented towards their need for identity and social recognition' (Bartoletti, 2011: 102). The question regarding forgetting on Facebook is thus not whether we select or not, but how we do it and what the implications of such practices are on biography construction. In other words, the

⁸ Isn't it also in this way that Halbwachs' *cadres* should be understood?

⁹ Jon Ronson's excellent book *So You've Been Publicly Shamed* (2015) is illuminating in this regard.

work of coherence does not seem to disappear from Facebook, rather, it might take new forms and involve additional actors (human and not-human). Once again, to consider just one variable, which in the case of Mayer-Schönberger (2011) is the medium, is not enough; once again, to consider instead a lattice of individual, socio-cultural and technological elements is likely to be a better option.

2.3 FINAL POINTS: ONTOLOGY, EXTENSION AND CONTROL OF DIGITAL MEMORY

To conclude this theoretical background, I want to report three consequences Bartoletti (2011: 99-101) derives from the qualities of digital-social memory so far outlined¹⁰. These are not only worth bearing in mind, but also effective to integrate further implications of the main facets so far highlighted. I shall lay them on three levels: ontology, extension and control.

On the ontological level, a personal memory archived on a SNS, given its large accessibility, should be regarded as a form of both autobiographical past and a founding of collective past, thus requiring an understanding of the term 'sharing' not just in terms of accessibility but also of negotiation of meaning. As regards extension, the distinction between 'pure' memory and mediated memory is losing relevance and turning into a continuum, 'at least as far as the mediation in social media is the immediate form in which the memory is created and automatically recorded and stored' (ibid.: 100). Finally, on the level of control, the fact that this form of memory is autobiographical and collective, private and public, user and platform generated leads to new problems of control over one's own archives. The four dimensions introduced throughout this literature review (i.e. forms of online memory, practical engagement¹¹ with them, Facebook invitations and new conditions for digital forgetting) together with the three integrations just presented and my interest for the user perspective, lead to the segmentation of my main research question 'how do people remember and forget things via Facebook?' into 4 sub-questions:

¹⁰ Here a clarification is required. Although the two definitions share many elements, Bartoletti (2011) talks of 'grassroots cultural memory' instead of 'joint memory', concentrating more on archives of knowledge rather than on archives of experiences. The reason I have rather decided to employ Ashuri's definition is twofold: firstly, because of my interest in people's lives, which constitute the main content users intentionally store on Facebook (Beer & Burrows, 2013: 61). Secondly, because the word 'grassroots' might imply an idealistic conception of the Internet — seen as a positive space of free cooperation — that is anything but presumable (see Dean, 2009; Morozov, 2011; Curran et al., 2012); *per contra*, 'joint' is both more neutral as well as able to retain an understanding of digital memory as junction point between users, technology and cultural context.

¹¹ Practice will be treated in further details in my theoretical framework.

RQ1: What difference do users think it makes to have a memory on Facebook?

RQ2: What are the main memory-related practices people enact on the platform in order to store and manage remembrances?

RQ3: What are users' reactions when Facebook autonomously prompts memories?

RQ4: When do users decide to 'forget' things on Facebook and how do they actualise this decision?

In the last section of my theoretical chapter, I shall introduce the essential elements of the theoretical approaches I intend to use to frame my investigation. These are 'media as practice' (Couldry, 2012) and 'mediatization'.

3 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK: A NON-LINEAR APPROACH

The physiognomy of this research, aiming to understand how media usage is involved in change, can easily be misinterpreted as an investigation about causation. Let me state this clearly, this work is not positioned in classic epistemology of causation. Rather, it embraces a non-linear approach to understand 'new types of causal complexities' (Couldry, 2012: 134). Drawing on 'media practice' and 'mediatization', the goal is to better grasp the lattice of elements addressed in the previous paragraphs and in relation to memory.

3.1.1 From practice theory to media as practice

Practice theory is an extremely valuable approach to overcome the dichotomies of main social theory strands between individual and totality, agency and structure. By envisioning social life as a nexus of practices, as 'a contingent and perpetually metamorphosing array of manifolds of human activity' (Schatzki, 1997: 284), this theory claims that meaning, knowledge, human activities and historical transformations are understandable in their formation, reiteration and variation *within* the field of practice, which is articulated, in the tradition I am drawing on¹², around *localised* and *shared* practical understandings¹³ (Schatzki, 2001: 11-12). I am drawing on Schatzki's situated approach for two reasons: firstly, because I believe he better de-intellectualises practice and action, individuating a neat

¹² See Schatzki (1997) for a critical discussion of the differences between Giddens, Bourdieu and Schatzki's approaches.

¹³ Although Connerton did not directly draw on this theory, it is recognisable a certain assonance.

set of elements which allow us to frame an action in a given practice. These elements, are 'practical understanding', 'explicit rules' and 'teleoaffective structure'¹⁴ (see Schatzki, 2001: 58-61). Secondly, because it is largely this approach that Couldry (2012) relies on in introducing his 'media practice' theory, which constitutes one of the two load-bearing elements of my theoretical framework.

A practice approach to media rejects media as simply texts, external objects and apparatuses of production and perception (typical of 'media effect' theory), and focuses instead on media-related practices (ibid.: 35-37). Such an approach perfectly adapts to the aims of my inquiry, based on the assumption that we cannot analyse media and their usages as detached elements, external to the 'media-culture-society nexus' (Hjarvard, 2012: 33). Our reasoning, if we really want to unearth the complexity of media-related issues, must proceed *through* the media, without remaining circumscribed inside them. To do this, it is necessary to enlarge our view and ask: 'what are people (individuals, groups and institutions) doing in relation to media across a whole range of situations and contexts?' (Couldry, 2012: 37). The area where I am interested in posing this question is that of memory and forgetting on digital social media.

Among the media-related practices presented by Couldry (2012) at least two are essential to this work and must be born in mind throughout the next chapters: 'presencing' and 'archiving'. The former understands practices like 'going on Facebook' as media-enhanced responses to the everyday requirement to give oneself a public presence (ibid.: 50). The latter moves the focus of the former from space to time: "'archiving" is the individual's practice of managing *in time* the whole mass of information and image traces s/he produces' (ibid.: 51-52).

3.1.2 Mediatization

The second load-bearing element of my theoretical framework is 'mediatization', a concept that allows me to maintain a dialectical, non-linear approach in assessing processes of change, while retaining at the same time my focus on the medium. Mediatization is not only a concept through which we can describe change, but, as Hepp (2012: 8) argues, an open attitude to a certain panorama of investigation: that of the study of 'the interrelation between media-communicative change and socio-cultural change'. In the last two decades, the term mediatization has become increasingly central in media and communication studies (Hjarvard, 2012), but at the same time also rather debated. I do not have the space to give due justice to all the articulation of this debate, nevertheless, to clearly state my position and then the understanding applied in the next pages is essential.

¹⁴ That is the hierarchies of normativised ends, projects and tasks (i.e. teleologies) in their likewise normativised combination with emotions and moods (i.e. affectivities) (see Schatzki, 1996: 99-101, 160).

If the term 'mediation' regards the process of communication in general, 'mediatization' specifically aims to describe social change intended as an outcome of ongoing mediation processes (Couldry and Hepp, 2013: 197). The dispute arises in defining the 'how' through which this change takes place. The term 'mediatization', in part, undeniably and inherently recalls a sense of subjugation (Livingston, 2009), and it is in fact in this way that one of its two main acceptations has unfurled (see, for example, the idea of 'substitution' in Schultz, 2004 and of 'direct mediatization' in Hjarvard, 2008). This understanding leverages on the idea of a media logic which subordinates and is annexed to domains outside the traditional media sphere (for example, politics, education and family) (Livingston, 2009). However, as Couldry (2012: 134-136) clearly puts it, this approach is problematic for two reasons. Firstly, we should ask, if media do have a proper logic, is it the same for every media — as mentioned earlier (this work: 14), the tendency to understand the digital media environment as homogeneously undifferentiated can be seriously deceptive, especially considering that the same media can today host different applications. Secondly, the linearity of a such process would lead to generalisations in social ontology — are in fact all the different components of society equally and altogether bended by this media logic? A good solution to this impasse is offered by Krotz (2007) who presents 'mediatization' as one of the four characterising meta-processes of our times (together with globalisation, individualisation and commercialisation). In this way, adding the final elements to the understanding I intend to embrace, we are not dealing with a single process of change anymore, but with a context-sensitive and long-term 'molding force' (Hepp, 2012) which encompasses and is encompassed, in dialectic relations, by a variety of transformations in culture and society¹⁵.

¹⁵ The very last development of this approach is that of 'deep mediatization' (Couldry and Hepp, 2017), a consequence of the increasing technology-based interdependence through different 'waves of mediatization', and which has led, the authors argue, to an 'increased interrelatedness of contemporary digital media' themselves (ibid.: 55).

4 METHODOLOGY

4.1 WHY INTERVIEWS?

Two elements lie behind the choice of in-depth interviews. These are the explorative bent of the research and its concentration on users' perspectives. My intention is to 'maximise the [awareness of the] variety of unknown phenomena (Bauer and Aerts, 2010: 32) and to understand users' choices and actions. To reach this, I decided to be guided by a Weberian 'looking through the eyes of those being studied' (Bryman cited in Bauer et al., 2010: 14), something that mere observation¹⁶ does not easily supply, being devoid of a dialogic interaction with the subject. Individual¹⁷ in-depth interviews, instead, are likely to better reveal the complexity of the issue under study, they lead to more flexibility, to the exploration of subjects' view and attitudes, and they attenuate the presumption that 'one knows what other people think, feel' or do (Livingston, 2010: 4).

4.2 DATA COLLECTION

Inspired by Couldry (2000: 201), who writes that sampling in in-depth interviews aims to increase persuasiveness rather than statistical generalisability, I found in Bauer and Aerts' (2010) *corpus construction* a good alternative to statistical random sampling. My target population is 'all the people between 18 and 35 years of age, who are intense Facebook users for more than 5 years, live in London and speak English'. This is the outcome of five inclusion criteria. Location and language were practical requisites for conducting unmediated, face to face interviews. The minimum threshold of 5 years of Facebook subscription was to increase the chances that informants had stored sufficient material on the platform to have had related experiences regarding personal digital memories. The last two elements were selected to help satisfy Bauer and Aerts' corpus construction criteria of *relevance, homogeneity* and *synchronicity* (2010: 31). To the first two corresponds the decision to focus on specific age categories, globally the most active age classes on Facebook — 18-24 (30%) and 25-35 (29%), male and female combined (Source: Statista, January 2017¹⁸). *Homogeneity*, referring to the

¹⁶ Supporting interviews with observation would have arguably been the best option. For time constraints this was impractical.

¹⁷ I did not opt for focus groups because of some slippery aspects of my research questions. Specifically, I identified potential ethical issues in treating 'forgetting' in a collective environment, where it would have also been trickier to take care of individual interviewees. I will elaborate on this in section 3.4, p. 26.

¹⁸ <https://www.statista.com/statistics/376128/facebook-global-user-age-distribution/>

material substance of data, was met by employing the same elicitation technique¹⁹ to gather information from all my informants.

I carved up my sample by using two variables: age class (18-24 and 25-35) and sex. The first one was intended to spot possible variations related to age and the life moment in which informants started using Facebook. For the sake of the *relevance* criterion, age variation had to be restricted to the two most active age classes. Regarding the second variable, there was simply no reason not to stick to ‘the default option to use standard socio-demographic variables’ (Gaskel, 2010: 41). To get as close as possible to the saturation point, I decided for 3 informants for each category resulting from my 2 by 2 carve-up — my simple size was therefore of 12 informants²⁰.

4.3 DATA ANALYSIS: AN INDUCTIVE-DEDUCTIVE APPROACH

Considering that the specific focus of this research is still a relatively unexplored area, it is worthwhile to listen to people before theorising. My goal was to identify a variety of recurrent representations, experiences and practices, rather than immediately checking if it was possible to find confirmations of pre-existing theories. These motifs constitute the bulk of reasons why I opted for thematic analysis — that is ‘a search for themes that emerge as being important to the description of a phenomenon’ (Fereday and Mui-Cochrane, 2006: 3) — and why I devised an inductive-deductive approach to it.

Partially drawing on Fereday and Mui-Cochrane (2006), I tried to contain, wherever possible, latent constraints deriving from the existing literature. Accordingly, I first went through the interview transcripts extrapolating 32 data-driven codes, only successively assuming a deductive attitude and individuating 30 additional theory-driven ones. I finally rearranged and clustered all of them by following the principles of non-redundancy and meaningfulness presented by Attride-Stirling (2001: 394). The resulting codebook (see Appendix B) is structured in 11 code families²¹ articulated in their relative sub-types, which constituted the actual tools used in the analysis. Finally, I added two open categories (Y1 and Y2) to assess the recurrence of: Y1 — specific formats through which users store

¹⁹ That is interviews based on an unchanged interview guide. The interview guide was constructed in 3 phases: I identified the main themes I needed to cover to answer my research questions; I translated them into a series of commonly understandable questions and, finally, I considered the whole social and interpersonal event of the interview adding a warm-up phase and possible follow-up questions (for the final interview guide, see Appendix A).

²⁰ Potential informants were recruited through both advertising (i.e. Facebook posts) and snowball sampling, carefully ascertaining a multiplication and differentiation of my entry points. I then undertook a purposive selection by checking the frequency of informants’ posts. No economic compensation was offered.

²¹ 1. Quality of memory; 2. Archiving; 3. Forgetting; 4. Processed Memory; 5. Practice; 6. Perception of...; 7. Materiality of memory support; 8. External forces (in respect to the individual); 9. Loss of Control; 10. User’s Concerns; 11. Evaluation.

remembrances; Y2 — mentions of similar concrete objects of memory (both offline and online). Regarding the actual coding, codes' sub-types were operationalised in the most classic way, that is by going through the transcripts and signalling their detection. To identify patterns, I drew upon Saldana's criteria of similarity, difference, frequency, sequence, correspondence and causation (2009: 6).

4.4 ETHICAL CONCERNS

My broad approach to ethics was mainly devised by following the 'LSE Research Ethic Policy and Procedures'^{22 23} and thus accompanied by the submission of a Research Ethic Review Checklist. A consent form specifying affiliation, area of enquiry, permission to audio record, details about data storing and anonymity and confidentiality was signed by my informants at the beginning of each interview.

The focus on forgetting required more attentive considerations. To ask people to evoke the 'forgotten' and, in my case, the 'deleted' might involve risks (see Norquay, 1999: 20-21), since, if it is true that memory implies forgetting, we should also bear in mind that 'so often forgetting indicates suffering' (Passerini, 1983: 196). Consequently, although I did not concentrate on negative experiences themselves, the possibility of unintentionally reviving them was real. As I stated in my Research Ethic Review, if highly sensitive issues had been uncovered, they would have been automatically deleted from the transcripts and not referred to in the analysis. Nevertheless, a trickier point was constituted by the fact that, as Dickson-Swift (2008) scrupulously explains, we cannot always easily understand where the interviewee's limit of non-sensitivity is. If this is true in any research involving human participants, in mine, as explained, it was something to be properly pondered. To cope with this possibility, at the end of each interview I systematically asked my informants if they wanted anything they felt too private or sensitive to be deleted from the transcripts — a precaution specified already in the consent form.

²² <http://www.lse.ac.uk/intranet/LSEServices/policies/pdfs/school/resEthPolPro.pdf>.

²³ An additional relevant source which I draw on was the 'Statement of Ethical Practice for the British Sociological Association' — specifically, points 13, 17, 28, 29, 30 of the 'Relationship with Research Participants' section and points 34 and 36 of 'Anonymity, Privacy and Confidentiality'.

4.4.1 LIMITATIONS AND REFLEXIVITY

As Couldry (2000: 196) writes, 'every piece of research involves choices and there is no point pretending they are objective'. Indeed, it is undeniable that, in addition to the events that triggered the idea of this research (see this work: § 1), the determination to undertake it was strongly related to my feeling involved in Facebook dynamics of remembering and forgetting. Consequently, it was not always easy to understand when I was mistaking a general tendency for a personal habit or issue. This was largely solved by asking for external revisions of interview questions, which were then additionally probed in a pilot study.

In conducting interviews for this project, I noticed at least two other drawbacks worth mentioning: language and on-the-run questions. The former issue is non-detachable from the method, when, as a non-native speaker, you deal with other non-native speakers. The shades of meaning lost might be considerable, and, sometimes, misunderstandings can occur. Finally, concerning on-the-run questions, I believe this is a skill gained only with practice. By 'on-the-run questions' I mean follow up questions put forward during the interview and that aim to test an idea arising while listening to an interviewee. It is rather hard to quickly formulate questions able to probe your thesis without disclosing it or influencing your informants — in my case, this was true especially when asking about forgetting. Interview was a powerful method in the context of this research — indeed, I believe the best possible — but it also required awareness of the consequences of its malleability.

5 EMPIRICAL FINDINGS

5.1 OVERVIEW

In what follows, I shall present a selection of the main findings of my research. Deeply interrelated, they make a presentation strictly abiding by the sequence and partitioning of my research questions somewhat impractical as well as ineffective. I will therefore proceed thematically: after introducing a central theme to understand all the successive ones (i.e. 'Facebook positive norm'), I shall firstly consider how memories are stored and generated on Facebook, then introducing the idea of 'layered memories'. Secondly, I will consider and interpret main reactions to automatically triggered remembrances, concluding by presenting users' practices of control re-appropriation. To neatly present a good amount of findings in a relatively short space, I decided to display them using classes and dichotomies. It is crucial to bear in mind that these findings are not to be interpreted in terms of either-or structures, as the way in which they originally unfolded was through entanglements, mutual influence and shades.

5.2 A HAPPY PLACE: FACEBOOK POSITIVE NORM

Going through the interview transcripts, I soon realised that a theme was recurring extensively in *all* of them. Trivial and ordinary as it might seem, this motif is arguably one of the main mechanisms behind many of Facebook users' memory dynamics I will illustrate further on. This is the conception of 'Facebook as a positive space', and the efforts to maintain it as such. When I asked my informants what kind of contents they store on Facebook, they consistently answered:

*When I am happy, when I am having fun or when I am doing something worthwhile²⁴.
(Jennifer)*

To build up my profile, to boost my image [...] To allow people to see the happy me. (Karen)

Things I am really excited about [...] That I am sure the world would care about. (Thomas)

I want to post just happy things, I want my social media to show that I am not struggling, that I am OK and happy. (Michelle)

²⁴ A few words on quotation: quotes have been selected by extracting the sentence(s) in which the main ideas I am referring to are contained. Transcription conventions are the same as presented in Appendix: A. Omissions (signalled with a '[...]') are enacted only within the same interviewee's answer.

This kind of quote, recurring in all my interviews, shows how my informants decide what to post (thus what to store) based on both what they feel is positive and what they feel others will perceive as such. Still, over-simplification would be wrong, for the 'positive' lingering in these passages clearly takes different forms. It regards emotions, self-presentation, social engagement and, sometimes, also the avoidance of heated arguments by not answering or by deleting comments. To exemplify this latter case, I will use Mark's words, a 26 year-old from the States.

Quite often I post things politically related... and... she [his mother] is usually completely opposite to my view [...] Usually, whatever she posts, I just delete it. She kind of controls and spoils my posts. (Mark)

As Mark kept on saying, he does not delete just what his mother says, but everything anyone writes that 'is going to generate a discussion or to start an argument' (Mark). What I call 'positivity' unfurls therefore also as active attempts to maintain a positive atmosphere on the platform, keeping it free from violent discussions and disruptions. Additionally, deletion acts with this aim are enacted not only *ex-post* but also *ex-ante*, when deciding what not to share. Sally, for example, was rather explicit in this regard, telling me: 'I don't post like "I feel shit", "I have headache" [...] or "the world sucks" ... I mean, who gives a crap? But I would post "I went to the British Museum!"'. Facebook and the memories it is able to prompt have to be joyful, positive and socially accepted. In all these examples, there is clearly a lot more going on, since an impressive variety of tensions is enclosed. Yet, at this initial stage, I want to make one single point, as simply and clearly as possible: this variety seems traversed, to different extents, by a strong and steady motif, that is the pursuit of the positive²⁵ or, as I shall call it here, the 'Facebook positive norm'.

5.3 WHAT DIFFERENCE DOES IT MAKE TO HAVE A MEMORY ON FACEBOOK?

To store events and experiences on Facebook is different from having them on a concrete offline support. Apart from differences in terms of material substance and related different affective ways of re-experiencing memory, also stressed by the majority of my sample (particularly by the informants in the higher age class), another steady theme was the relation between the kinds of memory stored and the different usages of the platform users developed over time.

²⁵ This pursuit does not imply the actual absence of disruptions on the platform.

Before, I was used to post daily. You know, I was used to go on holiday, taking amazing pictures and posting them all. Now I don't do that anymore. (James)

Back in time, I was used to post more, trying to get people attention [...] [and] just between 9 and 10pm, because I knew more people were connected [...] Now, I don't post that much, I mean... you have to select. (Sirichai)

Rather consistently, both age components of my sample explained how they had two main phases on Facebook. In the first one, when they started to use it, they were publishing more or less everything as it was happening to them — “I want to eat”, “I am in love”, “I am sad” [...] I was really posting everything every time’ (Thomas). What Couldry (2012) calls ‘presencing’ seems here to take the form of a frenetic compulsion, and digital biographies consequently constructed are intimate, going into depth, registering feelings (good and bad)²⁶, thoughts, tiny details, or what we could call the ‘singular affective contingencies of everyday life’. These aspects were not just dictated by users’ inclinations, but also by Facebook’s direct invitation. As my informant Thomas stressed, this phase also coincided with a period in which, ‘many years ago, Facebook was asking you “what are you doing?”, “what are you thinking?” ... I was simply answering those questions’. The way in which users were constructing their stories online was informed by a plurality of elements, with the behaviour and structure of the digital media proving to be central.

In the second phase, users’ content selection seems to be becoming a central practice and worry. Thomas exemplified this general change of attitude by saying ‘now I have to pay attention. Whatever I post could affect someone else’. The most repeated sentences to define the contents shared in this new current phase²⁷ were: ‘what I am OK *everybody* to see’ and ‘important *events*’. Graduations ceremonies were the most reported cases, but also parties (when users were depicted in an ‘appropriate’ way), trips, achievements of different kinds and so on. ‘Presencing’ still appears to be a sort of compulsion, yet not a frenetic one, but rather controlled and well pondered. What we witness is possibly the intrusion of the Facebook positive norm, a consequential ‘purification’ of the material published and an artificial drying up, so to speak, of our resulting biographies²⁸. However, this is just one side of the coin and it is by exploring the perceived qualities that digital memories have for users that a new layer of complexity is discovered.

²⁶ This appears to be one of the very few cases in which the ‘pursuit of the positive’ was not invariantly respected.

²⁷ All my informants, according to what they said, were in this second phase when we talked.

²⁸ Rather relevantly, as I shall show in paragraph 4.4, this second phase does not necessarily imply the immediate erasure of contents coming from the first one: the singular affective contingencies of everyday life remain there, unchanged.

To summarise, what is worth noticing is that the way we live on the platform, the way in which we use and experience it inform the kind of memories we store. This is largely different from what could happen, for example, with an offline diary. Topics stored in the latter probably do change throughout our life phases, but the diary arguably remains a detached object, a tool. On Facebook, this relation seems more direct: what we store, additionally to instances like those of an offline diary, is often ‘just’ the trace of our behaviour, of our living and interrelating on the platform.

5.3.1 Layered memories and archives of selves

It was when my informants were talking about the specificity of digital memories without being asked to that they disclosed the most useful details. The general idea of Facebook memories as joint memories (see this work: § 2.2.3) was largely confirmed. Shirley, just to give an example, explained how recalling a stay in a luxury hotel during one of her trips felt different exactly because she had shared it on Facebook. She ‘got a lot of likes, comments and people were asking info about the trip’. Her private memory seemed therefore ‘publicly recompiled’ (Ashuri, 2011: 107). However, as I have forewarned, the goal of this work is not primarily to test theories, but rather to listen, explore and try to go beyond previous theories.

Karen, one of my younger informants (20 years old), shared with me an episode that made me reflect. She told me that thanks to the comments under a picture posted years before on Facebook, depicting her holding a duck beside a lake, she managed to understand everything about that memory – ‘*everything*’, she stressed twice. Where she took the duck from, why she was holding it, what was funny about that moment, and even more. By letting her talk, something that goes beyond the idea of joint memory was unveiled:

When you get like 17 comments from people, you like... I can see what the 13-years-old version of me was answering [...] it makes me live the memory more, because it comes with kind of live updates. (Karen, emphases added)

Karen is telling us that not only was she reliving a moment of that lakeshore day, but she was also reliving herself while talking about that memory in the past. We are in front of a ‘layered memory’: Karen is not just seeing a picture of herself or a comment she successively wrote; she is going through a past-version of herself thanks to the multiple dialoguing traces she and her friends left around the picture when going through it in a middle past. What is more, this ‘middle past’ can be multiple, thus leading to multiple layers. Firstly, because people can collectively engage with a picture in different moments throughout the years. Secondly, because the very same moment the picture is uploaded on Facebook may constitute a memory layer in itself, distinguishable though related from the moment in which the picture was taken (see Diagram 1). The main point of all this is that Facebook seems

capable of *making memories possible* for the user, who generates them *in* the digital-social environment. This could exceed the understanding of digital media as archives of the already-lived, turning them into the places where the lived takes form and is experienced in first place.

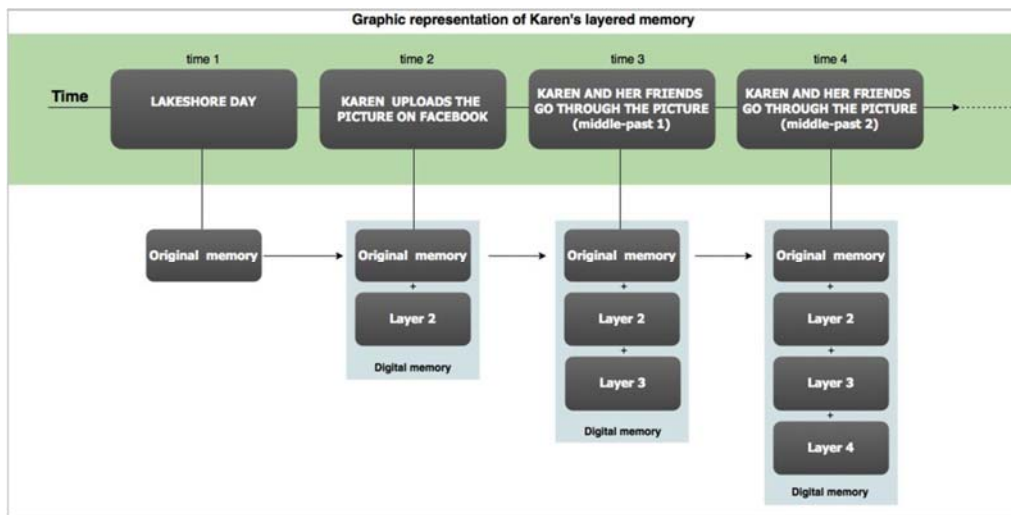


Diagram 1: Graphic representation of Karen's digital layered memory.

To show the potential relevance of the hypothesis I am advancing, and to also defend myself from potential criticism for having over-interpreted an isolated case, it is useful to stress that this was by no means something uncommon among my informants — especially among the youngest. Shirley gave me the example of the pictures taken a year before on her birthday: 'I can remember the pictures I took, and where I took them. And then I remember posting them [...] I even remember what I was thinking when I published those pictures'. Reynas, describing the experience of going through the Facebook statuses and comments he had written years ago about a girl he used to like, told me: 'I could perfectly understand the mental condition of the boy who wrote that, I could understand his mentality. I could see where he comes from, grew up and what his transitions were'. *Transitions*, this is a crucial word. Thanks to these layered memories, Facebook is shown to be the means through which a good number of my interviewees were not only remembering events, but also going through past versions of their 'self' (the 13-years-old version of Karen, for example), their life transitions (Reynas), sometimes also through their struggles and emotive states (as Shirley kept explaining), upgrading Facebook to something more than a simple archive of remembrances and events, but to an archive of selves.

5.4 'FACEBOOK DOES NOT KNOW'

In the previous two sections I have shown how vast and complex the corpus of memories stored on Facebook can be. The web of elements involved in the production of these archives comprises technological affordances, the outcome of collective dynamics around Facebook posts, and individual attitudes to the platforms varying with the passage of time. As introduced in the theoretical chapter, it is worth asking: what are users' reactions when these contents are automatically exhumed by the platform? Generally, my informants told me they do not mind when Facebook prompts past memories by proposing a single content like a picture or a post. The motivations given can be interpreted in terms of Facebook positive norm: rather simply, they explained that potentially harmful contents are usually not on Facebook at all. Nevertheless, a consistent theme regarding users' negative reactions to selections enacted by Facebook was noticeable, particularly but not exclusively in the oldest segment of my sample. The patterns of codes I detected suggest two related situations: when Facebook is trying to act as a human and when users feel a loss of control over their memories.

The first condition was unearthed especially when talking about Facebook Year in Review video (see this work: § 1, note 1). Sally told me, with a vexed tone, 'how do *you* know what my best memories are!?', Thomas that 'the year in review has nothing to do with my actual year' and Mark that 'it feels like it is just regurgitating things', interrupting my next question to stress 'it is, it is [annoying]!'. Algorithmic selection is evidently an issue here, but in the end this should also apply to single pictures or posts, likewise selected by the algorithm. What is the difference with the Year in Review video? Based on interviewees' elaborations, a likely explanation is related not simply to the selection of memories, but to the automated *reconstruction* of a narrative. Facebook Years in Review video aims to tell a story by connecting episodes people experienced and stored. The point is that the flow of these stories is perceived as 'regurgitated', not always making sense for the memories' owners. They may be good memories (usually with lots of likes) in their individuality, but they often do not make sense in the bigger picture. This is arguably because they are aligned without considering the real connections between events and the people depicted. As my informants Thomas and James respectively stated, '[Facebook] simply does not know', '[it] does not really understand the nature and the death of relationships', or, depending on the account one might have, it is not good enough, yet. The second condition (i.e. loss of control) is related to the *when* and *how* users want to remember.

I don't want to be reminded every single day of what I was doing a year ago [...] I don't want to relive my life every day. (Shirley)

It is quite wired to wake up in the morning and suddenly being reminded of something that you posted previously, sometimes is unsettling. (James)

These two excerpts, once unpacked, are explicative. As the reader can notice, there are no references to the quality of memories — and there are none around them in the full transcripts either. The point for Shirley and James does not seem to be that Facebook recalls bad things, but that Facebook forces them to immerse in the past. I see here a strong assonance with what Connerton (1989) refers to at a social and Mayer-Schönberger (2011) at an individual level, that is the need to reconstruct our past through the lenses of our present. The issue arguably is that the fixity of Facebook memories — for a picture cannot change by itself, neither does a status published — problematises this process. As I introduced earlier through the idea of layered memories, Facebook remembrances might be perceived in such a complex and intimate way that to critically detach oneself from them might not always be easy. James' words perfectly exemplify this, in his stutters and tentative tone it seems almost possible to perceive the struggle this might represent: 'You know, I guess we do change over time but... it's, it's still all there... it's still all there as it was'. We witness the forced confrontation of the user with multiple, immovable past selves. Nevertheless, as I shall illustrate in the next section, although it is a confrontation that Facebook may impose, users can contrast it through a variety of strategies, also related to forms of forgetting.

5.5 PRACTICES OF CONTROL RE-APPROPRIATION: PRIVATIZATION AND DELETION

My sample uniformly showed me that users want control back on their memories, on experiencing them and on the representations those memories can give to others.

The relationship ended. Those photos [once on Facebook] now live on my mobile phone. I can watch them when I wanna watch them. I don't want Facebook to bring them up, I don't need other people to remember them, and I don't want Facebook to use them in any way.
(Sally)

Sally discloses her awareness of what Facebook can potentially do with her memories, of who could go through them if they remain available and her consequential decision to delete them from the platform. I interpret these kinds of acts as forms of re-appropriation practices challenging Facebook operations, intended as both what Facebook algorithm can potentially do and as what Facebook structure allows others to do. Two widespread practices aimed at reacquiring control were spotted: privatisation and deletion. The former is the act of changing the privacy settings of a content from a wider visibility to 'only me' in order to hide it from other users. To give a few examples, Jennifer and Sirichai offer rather representative explanations:

I have privatised them and not deleted because I wanted to keep those pictures, but not wanting to share them with the world anymore. (Jennifer)

I did not want other people to see myself in that status [...] I locked them [the pictures] first and later I deleted them. Usually, I do it in this way. I think I just need time to let them go. (Sirichai)

These words show how privatisation happens when the desire to detach personal memories from Facebook dynamics (in these cases, publicity and joint memory-related ones) and the user's emotional attachment to them converge. Jennifer and Sirichai wanted to withdraw their memories from Facebook's public arena, but at the same time, to delete them would have meant losing them forever²⁹. Consequently, they found an escape in privatising them. An additional example will better display how many aspects so far illustrated are entangled in this practice. Reyansh told me he had 3 chapters in his life, and that he links them with three different places: his village in India, his successive stay in Delhi and his current experience in London. The first of the three also coincides with the above-illustrated phase in which users engage in compulsively 'presencing' themselves on Facebook. His profile is packed with memories and everyday affective contingencies from those days. He explained: '[the three phases] are all still on Facebook, but the first one is the one I locked away, keeping it just for myself [...] I don't want to relive it again. I hated that time... it's now just for me'. When Reyansh says that he does not want to relive it, he means that he wants to retain the control on *when* to relive it and *who* to share those memories with. He did not delete them because, as he confessed me, he likes to privately look back on his past, to make comparisons and, as I illustrated before, to autonomously go through his life transitions. In order to reach these goals, which I have interpreted as a hunt for control re-appropriation, he navigated the options offered by the platform and withdrew his memories from Facebook algorithmic and collective dynamics.

Among the actions and practices disclosed by my informants, deletion, the second strategy interviewees employed to reacquire control, is the one which emerged as being informed the most by the Facebook positive norm. When do users decide to 'forget' things on Facebook? As I will show, a plausible answer could be: every time that something comes to clash with the pursuit of the positive. To give a practical example, a recurrent worry among my interviewees was recruiters flicking through their profiles. 'Oh gosh, do I want my future employer to see that? I might delete it', Mark told me. Shirley also referred to a precise year of her life by saying 'when I look for a job they will

²⁹ Interestingly, Sally and Karen were the sole respondents in my sample to mention the movement of memories from Facebook to other supports. The overwhelming majority of my sample appears instead to see Facebook deletion as a permanent loss and a form of forgetting.

look for my name on Facebook and see all my shitty posts from 2008'. Notably, James even turned this operation into a deeply structured practice, repeated every few months: 'I go through every single picture, and either delete the entire album or very particular photos [...] In certain ways I self sensitise my own Facebook'. In these examples, memories are not just memories anymore, they are also publicly available versions of oneself. Yet informants' concern does not seem to be publicity, but rather *what version* of themselves is viable and how it might spoil the *self-presentation* they want to give.

'Staging the self' for others is not the only noteworthy example of how memories are moulded on Facebook. There are other circumstances in which contents are deleted because they do not meet the Facebook positive norm. A second one, largely attested in my sample, is when memories stored do not allow self-reconstruction. 'Maybe there is a book I was reading at that time and it's rather childish now, I might take it off [...] it's un-relevant, not important anymore', Mark explained. 'It doesn't necessarily fit who I am now. This is why I do a selection of what I want and what I don't want to remember about myself', Michelle pointed out. The book Mark mentioned, and the pictures Michelle was referring to arguably represent personas which they can no longer identify with. In their words and reported actions it seems possible to identify a clash between the past and present. Mark's tone was haughty, as if to say 'I don't really care'. Yet he took the time to go back on his timeline, select those contents and delete them. Michelle was instead more straightforward, and explained that in order to free her current development from her past, she simply erases whatever she does not like to recall. As we can see, memories collected on Facebook can be and are modified. They are modelled over time (to the point of deletion) based, in these two specific cases, on who we feel we have become and who we feel we should show we are. Although true that, as Mayer-Schönberger (2011) writes, our search for self-coherence enacted through forgetting is problematised by the perfect memory of digital media, this does not seem to be the only truth we should consider. Indeed, users also react and contrive new strategies by navigating the possibilities offered by digital media. Memories are mediatized not in the sense that they succumb to *a* media logic, but, as illustrated throughout this chapter, in that they are the outcome of multiple tensions (individual needs and actions, collective and cultural dynamics, technological structures and affordances) which traverse, are moulded and mould the digital social-media space, giving birth to layered memories and archives of selves.

6 CONCLUSION

This work began by retracing key theoretical reflections on social memory and highlighting their lack of attention to aspects like the specificity of the medium, the individual realm and online memory practices. Moving to the scrutiny of existent analysis of memory in the digital age, it illustrated how linear approaches seem impractical to understand the complexity of the matter and how concepts like *mediated memory*, *personal cultural memory* and *joint memory* seem more effective — although some limitations were also highlighted. A similar critique was made with regard to digital forgetting, for an overly narrow focus on the infinite memory capacity of digital media might easily lead to a disregard for users' reactions and the consequential assembling of media practices like deletion and privatisation. Based on the above, it was concluded that, in this kind of enquiry, the perspective of the memories' owner (or 'the user') had been somewhat ignored by the field of media and communications studies, hence the focus of this work on how *people* remember and forget via Facebook and its qualitative approach based on in-depth, semi-structure interviews.

Throughout the first half of the empirical chapter, it has been shown how memories stored on Facebook have the peculiar feature of being not only the product of users' *ex-ante* selection processes, strongly influenced by a 'Facebook positive norm', but also of their wondering and living the platform, that is commenting, interrelating, linking, liking and so on. As a consequence, biographies which users generate and store proved to be also the product of the different kinds of platform usages they develop over time. The traces left by these activities and attitudes allow users to both enrich their digital memories with meta-contents as well as generate additional memory layers, enabling them to go through past versions of themselves and of their respective transitions (i.e. archives of selves).

In the second half of the empirical chapter, users' reactions to algorithmically prompted memories were considered. Informants were mainly seen not to have particular issues with this kind of function, especially as the 'Facebook positive norm' makes the storing of bad memories rather unlikely. However, two exceptions emerged, and in both informants appeared to register a sense of loss of control. The first is when Facebook tries to 'appropriate' and interpret user's multiple memories, constructing narratives which are felt extraneous by the memories' owner; the second one is when these memory triggers are felt as forced confrontations with a past clashing with the users' current persona. Two strategies were highlighted as being instrumental in escaping these and other Facebook dynamics such as publicity and joint-memory: privatisation and the deletion of contents.

The findings of this research offer additional layers of complexity to the understanding of how users engage with memory on Facebook. They are the outcome of a research project aiming at shedding new light on the potential implications of spending days and nights with our 'entire' lives secured in a pocket, where our biographies are re-organised in Facebook pictures, events and statuses. This work

has just scratched the surface of a highly-ramified matter that, as often happens, from the fields of media and communications studies overlaps with domains like ethics, internet privacy, users experience, social psychology and cultural studies. I maintain that ethical and socio-psychological concerns are among the most pressing issues here. Regarding the former, we must insist on asking questions like 'to what extent can we consider an algorithm guilty?' and 'who/what has the right to decide what we should or should not remember?'. Regarding the latter, Facebook, by supporting the 'presencing' and the 'archiving' of the self, 'help[s] you tell the story of your life', as Mark Zuckerberg stated when introducing the Timeline feature in September 2011 (cited in Lee, 2014: 41). Yet, as shown in this work, the 'Facebook positive norm' and practices like privatisation and deletion should seriously make us ask ourselves: what are the main social and societal pressures determining the way in which users amend contents they stored on Facebook? And what is the actual degree of critical detachment they retain towards their own amended biographies? These questions are something that further research might want to consider.

To my brother, Leonardo.

*A great human being, who I admire
and with whom I share the weight of an
imposing and wonderful memory.*

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This work is the outcome of the multiple influences have traversed me during this year of study at The London School of Economics and Political Science. I have been lucky enough to feel part of and draw on ideas from different academic departments of this institution as well as keeping alive connections with my previous ones — Goldsmiths University in particular. Consequently, the personalities, places and contexts influencing this work are, so to speak, countless and the traces they have left in these pages visible only to a certain extent. Reordering these influences, selecting ideas and finding a focus would have not been possible without the invaluable guidance of my supervisor, Professor Nick Couldry. I want to truly thank him not only for the support he gave me in elaborating this dissertation, but also and especially for the inspiration and availability offered throughout this entire year.

REFERENCES

- Ahmed, S. (2004) *The cultural Politics of emotion*, Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.
- Ashuri, T. (2011) 'Joint memory: ICT and the rise of moral Mnemonic agents', pp. 104-113 in Neiger, M., Meyers, O., Zandberg, E. (Eds.) *On Media Memory: Collective Memory in a New Media Age*, London: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Attride-Stirling, J. (2001) 'Thematic networks: an analytic tool for qualitative research', *Qualitative research* 1(3): 385-405.
- Bargh, J. and McKenna, K. (2004) 'The Internet and Social Life', *Annual Review of Psychology* 55(1): 573-590.
- Barthes, R. (1990) *The fashion system*, Berkeley, Calif.: University of California Press.
- Bartoletti, R. (2011) 'Memory and Social Media: New Forms of Remembering and Forgetting', pp. 82-111 in B. Pirani (Ed.) *Learning from Memory: Body, Memory and Technology in a Globalizing World*, Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Publishing.
- Bauer, M. and Aarts, B. (2010[2000]) 'Corpus construction', pp. 19-37 in Gaskell, G. and Bauer, M. (eds.) *Qualitative researching with text, image and sound*, London: SAGE Publications.
- Bauer, M. W, Gaskell, G. and Allum, N. C. (2010[2000]) 'Quality, Quantity and Knowledge Interests: Avoiding Confusion', pp. 3-17 in Gaskell, G. and Bauer, M. (eds.) *Qualitative researching with text, image and sound*, London: SAGE Publications.
- Beer, D., & Burrows, R. (2013) 'Popular culture, digital archives and the new social life of data', *Theory, culture & society* 30(4): 47-71.
- Bird, E. (2011) 'Reclaiming Asaba: Old Media, New Media, and the Construction of Memory', pp. 88-103 in Neiger, M., Meyers, O., Zandberg, E. (Eds.) *On Media Memory: Collective Memory in a New Media Age*, London: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Blackman, L. (2015) 'The haunted life of data', pp. 185-209 in Elmer, G., Langlois, G., & Redden, J. (Eds.) *Compromised Data: From Social Media to Big Data*, New York: Bloomsbury Publishing USA.

- Blackman, L. (2016) 'Social Media and the Politics of Small Data: Post Publication Peer Review and Academic Value', *Theory, Culture & Society* 33(4): 3-26.
- boyd, d. (2010) 'Social Network sites as networked publics: Affordances, dynamics, and implications', pp. 39-58 in Papacharissi, Z. (Ed.) *A networked self: Identity, community, and culture on social network sites*, New York: Routledge.
- Boyer, M. (1994) *The city of collective memory*, Cambridge: The MIT Press.
- Boyns, D. and Loprieno, D. (2014) 'Feeling Through Presence – Toward a Theory of Interaction Rituals and Parasociality in Online Social Worlds', pp. 193-210 in T. Benski and E. Fisher (eds.) *Internet and Emotions*, New York, NY: Routledge.
- Castells, M. (2009) *Communication power*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Connerton, P. (1989) *How societies remember*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Connerton, P. (2008) 'Seven types of forgetting', *Memory Studies* 1(1): 59-71.
- Connerton, P. (2013) *How modernity forgets*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Couldry, N. (2000) *The place of media power: Pilgrims and witnesses of the media age*, London: Routledge.
- Couldry, N. (2012) *Media, society, world: Social theory and digital media practice*, Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Couldry, N. (2013) *Media, society, world*, Cambridge: Polity.
- Couldry, N. and Hepp, A. (2013) 'Conceptualizing Mediatization: Contexts, Traditions, Arguments', *Communication Theory* 23(3): 191-202.
- Couldry, N. and Hepp, A. (2017) *The mediated construction of reality*, Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Curran, J., Fenton, N. and Freedman, D. (2016) *Misunderstanding the Internet*, London: Routledge.
- Cvetkovich, A. (2015) *An archive of feelings*, London: Duke University Press.
- Davis, J. (1973) *Self and action: a study in the social philosophy of George Herbert Mead*, Ph.D. Thesis. LSE – London School of Economics and Political Science.
- Dean, J. (2015) 'Affect and Drive', pp. 89-100 in Hillis, K., Paasonen, S. and Petit, M. (eds.) *Networked affect*, Cambridge: MIT Press.
- Derrida, J. (1996) *Archive fever: A Freudian Impressio*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

- Deuze, M. (2012) *Media Life*, Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Dickson-Swift, V. (2008) *Undertaking Sensitive Research in the Health and Social Sciences*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Featherstone, M. (2000) 'Archiving cultures', *The British Journal of Sociology* 51(1): 161-184.
- Fereday, J., & Muir-Cochrane, E. (2006) 'Demonstrating rigor using thematic analysis: A hybrid approach of inductive and deductive coding and theme development', *International journal of qualitative methods* 5(1): 1-11.
- Fuchs, C. (2014) *Social Media: a critical introduction*, London: Sage.
- Fuller, M. (2009) Active Data and its Afterlives, <http://fuller.spc.org>, March 2009, URL: <http://fuller.spc.org/fuller/matthew-fuller-active-data-and-its-afterlives/> [Last consulted 20 December 2017].
- Gaskell, G. (2010[2000]) 'Individual and Group Interviewing', pp. 38-56 in Gaskell, G. and Bauer, M. (eds.) *Qualitative researching with text, image and sound*, London: SAGE Publications.
- Gaskell, G. and Bauer, M. (2010[2000]) *Qualitative researching with text, image and sound*. London: SAGE Publications.
- Giannachi, G. (2016) *Archive Everything: Mapping the everyday*, Cambridge: The MIT Press.
- Halbwachs, M. (1980) *The collective memory*, New York: Harper & Row.
- Halbwachs, M. (1992[1952]) *On Collective Memory*, Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.
- Hall, S., & Du Gay, P. (Eds.) (1996) *Questions of Cultural Identity*, London: SAGE Publications.
- Hall, Stuart (1990) 'Cultural identity and diaspora', pp. 222-237 in Rutherford, J. (ed.) *Identity: community, culture, difference*, London: Lawrence & Wishart.
- Hansen, M. B. (2010) 'New media', pp. 172-185 in Mitchell, W. J. T., & Hansen, M. B. (Eds.) *Critical terms for media studies*, Chicago :University of Chicago Press.
- Hardey, M. (2002) 'Life beyond the screen: embodiment and identity through the internet', *The Sociological Review* 50(4): 570-585.

- Helmond, A. (2015) 'The Platformization of the Web: Making Web Data Platform Ready', *Social Media + Society* 1(2): 1–11.
- Hepp, A. (2012) 'Mediatization and the "molding force" of the media', *Communications* 37(1): 1-28.
- Hillis, K., Paasonen, S. and Petit, M. (eds.) (2015) *Networked affect*, Cambridge: MIT Press.
- Hjarvard, S. (2008) 'The Mediatization of Society. A theory of media as agents of social and cultural change', *Nordicom Review* 29(1): 105-134.
- Hjarvard, S. (2012) 'Doing the right thing: media and communication studies in a mediatised world', *Nordicom Review* 33(1): 27–33.
- Jeffries, S. (2011) Why we must remember to delete—and forget—in the digital age, *The Guardian*, 30 June, URL: <https://www.theguardian.com/technology/2011/jun/30/remember-delete-forget-digital-age> [Last consulted 20 December 2017].
- Joinson, A. N. (2003) *Understanding the psychology of Internet behaviour. Virtual Worlds, Real Lives*, New York: Palgrave.
- Karppi, T. (2015) 'Happy Accidents: Facebook and the Value of Affect', pp. 221-234 in Hillis, K., Paasonen, S. and Petit, M. (eds.) *Networked affect*, Cambridge: MIT Press.
- Krotz, F. (2007) 'The meta-process of `mediatization' as a conceptual frame', *Global Media and Communication* 3(3): 256-260.
- Laurie, A. (1981) *The language of clothes*, New York: Random House.
- Lee, N. (2014) *Facebook nation: Total information awareness*, New York: Springer.
- Levy, S. (2017) Inside Facebook's AI Machine, *WIRED*, 2 February, URL: <https://www.wired.com/2017/02/inside-facebooks-ai-machine/> [Last consulted 20 December 2017].
- Livingstone, S. (2009) 'On the mediation of everything: ICA presidential address 2008', *Journal of communication* 59 (1): 1-18.
- Livingstone, S. (2010) 'Giving People a Voice: On the Critical Role of the Interview in the History of Audience Research', *Communication, Culture & Critique* 3(4): 566-571.

- Mayer-Schönberger, V. (2011) *Delete*, Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- McGee, M. (2013) EdgeRank Is Dead: Facebook's News Feed Algorithm Now Has Close To 100K Weight Factors, *Marketing Land*, 16 August, URL: <http://marketingland.com/edgerank-is-dead-facebooks-news-feed-algorithm-now-has-close-to-100k-weight-factors-55908>
[Last consulted 20 December 2017].
- McStay, A. (2016) EMPATHIC MEDIA: THE RISE OF EMOTION AI, *Arts & Humanities Research Council*, URL: <https://drive.google.com/file/d/0BzU2NrGCFp7qd0tOWjJDcFgxdGc/view>
[Last consulted 20 December 2017].
- Mead, G. H. (1934) *Mind, self and society*, University of Chicago Press: Chicago.
- Meyer, E. (2014) Inadvertent Algorithmic Cruelty, *Meyerweb*, 24 December, URL: <http://meyerweb.com/eric/thoughts/2014/12/24/inadvertent-algorithmic-cruelty/>
[Last consulted 20 December 2017].
- Morozov, E. (2011) *The net delusion: How not to liberate the world*, London: Penguin.
- Murray, C. (2004) *Encyclopedia of modern French thought*, New York: Fitzroy Dearborn.
- Neiger, M., Meyers, O., Zandberg, E. (Eds.) (2011) *On Media Memory: Collective Memory in a New Media Age*, London: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Nora, P. (1984-1992) *Les lieux de mémoire*, 7 vols., Paris: Gallimard.
- Nora, P. (1989) Between Memory and History: Les Lieux de Mémoire, *Representations* (26): 7-24.
- Nora, P. (1996) *Realms of memory*, New York: Columbia University Press.
- Norquay, N. (1999) 'Identity and forgetting', *The Oral History Review* 26(1): 1-21.
- Papacharissi, Z. (Ed.) (2010) *A networked self: Identity, community, and culture on social network sites*, New York: Routledge.
- Passerini, L. (1983) 'Memory', *History Workshop Journal*, 15: 196.
- Pinchevski, A. (2011) 'Archive, Media, Trauma', pp. 253-264 in Neiger, M., Meyers, O., Zandberg, E. (Eds.) *On Media Memory: Collective Memory in a New Media Age*, London: Palgrave Macmillan.

- Pybus, J. (2015) 'Accumulating Affects: Social Networks and Their Archives of Feelings', pp. 234-249 in Hillis, K., Paasonen, S. and Petit, M. (eds.) *Networked affect*, Cambridge: MIT Press.
- Reading, A. (2011) 'Memory and Digital Media: Six Dynamics of the Global Memory Field', pp. 241-252 in Neiger, M., Meyers, O., Zandberg, E. (Eds.) *On Media Memory: Collective Memory in a New Media Age*, London: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Ronson, J. (2015) *So You've Been Publicly Shamed*, London: Pan Macmillan.
- Saldana, J. (2009) *The coding manual for qualitative researchers*, Los Angeles: SAGE.
- Schatzki, T. R. (1996) *Social practices*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Schatzki, T. R. (1997) Practices and actions: a Wittgensteinian critique of Bourdieu and Giddens, *Philosophy of the Social Sciences* 27(3): 283-208.
- Schatzki, T. R. (2001) 'Introduction: practice theory', pp. 1-14 in Cetina, K. K., Schatzki, T. R. And Von Savigny, E. (Eds.) *The practice turn in contemporary theory*, London: Routledge.
- Schultz, W. (2004) 'Reconstructing mediatization as an analytical concept', *European Journal of Communication* 19(1): 87-101.
- Steafel, E. (2015) Paris terror attack: Everything we know on Saturday afternoon, *The Telegraph*, 21 November, URL:
<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/europe/france/11995246/Paris-shooting-What-we-know-so-far.html> [Last consulted 20 December 2017].
- Thumim, N. (2012) *Self-representation and digital culture*, Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan
- Turkle, S. (2011) *Alone Together*, New York: Basic Books.
- van Dijck, J. (2007) *Mediated memories in the digital age*, Stanford: California.
- van Dijck, J. (2013) *The culture of connectivity*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.

APPENDIX A: INTERVIEW GUIDE

REMEMBERING AND FORGETTING VIA FACEBOOK

—

INTERVIEW GUIDE

WARM-UP

In this first brief stage, after an informal presentation, I will try to put the interviewee at ease with few general and friendly questions — these questions and my approach will vary depending on the kind of person will be sitting in front of me.

INTRODUCTION OF MY RESEARCH TOPIC AND GENERAL INSTRUCTION

- Formal self-introduction (academic affiliation, field of study)
- Brief illustration of my research aims and nature
- Instruction (anonymity, no need to answer, right to withdraw at any time, reassurance of no right/wrong or superficial answers)
- Signing of a hard copy of the consent form (a digital copy was sent in advanced)
- Check if everything is clear before starting

BEGINNING OF THE ACTUAL INTERVIEW

[0. Background information]

- How long have you been on Facebook?
- What kind of user would you say you are? (Rough frequency of usage and kind of usage)
- Do you use any other social media with regularity?

[if yes]:

- Which one?
- Do you use them for the same contents and aims you use Facebook for?

[1. What difference do users think it makes to have a memory on Facebook?]

- Would you say that Facebook is an important part of how you remember things?
 - How/in what ways?
- Is there a particular reason why you would preserve something on Facebook rather than somewhere else offline?
 - Do you feel there are any differences for you between remembering things online (through posts, Facebook pictures, comments and so on) and offline (through concrete objects of any kind, or going to places, meeting people and so on)?
- Has it ever happened to you, as far as you can remember, to see the same content on Facebook (a picture, a post, a comment...) and react to it differently in different moments of your life?
 - For example, have you ever gone backwards on your timeline to see what you were posting in the past? If you have, how did it feel like?
 - What do you do after having seen your past, do you just keep on scrolling or do you sometimes modify those past items?
- Have you ever put or done something on Facebook just for the sake of remembering it rather than to share it with others?

[2. What are the main practices people enact on the platform in order to store and manage remembrances?]

- Is there any particular way in which you store contents on Facebook? For instance, things you publish just for yourself, or with a limited amount of people, contents you save, and so on.
- Do you have any kind of habits on Facebook, like things that you do with regularity in terms of time (on certain days or after a certain amount of time) and space (when you are in specific spaces)?
 - Can you think of something linked to acts of remembering?
 - Let's consider also recurrences independent from you. For example, is there anything that you expect Facebook to do exactly in certain moments or days?
- As far as you can remember, have you ever joined a Facebook group that gathers people who have experienced something common in the past? An event of any kind, a difficult moment, a situation, a specific condition...

[if they show to have a deep experience of something like that]:

- How did it feel like?
- Do you have some additional thoughts you would like to share?
- Is it possible that contents and memories you post are spoiled by other users' activities on it?
 - For example, is there a kind of person that you prefer to comment or interact with your posts and some other that you prefer they would not?

[3. What are users' reactions when Facebook autonomously prompts past memories?]

- What is your opinion about the Facebook application that reminds you about past memories?
 - Facebook has different facilities of this kind: "your year in review", "memories", the celebration of a friendship anniversary and so on. Does your previous comment work for all of them or for some you have different thoughts and different reactions?
- Has it ever happened to you that Facebook reminded you something you didn't want to remember?
 - If yes, what was your reaction — also from a concrete point of view, what did you do?
- If I may ask, what are, if any, the kind of things that you don't want Facebook to remind you?
 - If you do, how do you protect yourself from the possibility of Facebook reminding you about these things?
- Is there anything that you would like to remember through Facebook, but that the platform does not help you to remind or relive — have you ever thought "Facebook is not able to give me this"?

[4. When do users decide to "forget" things through Facebook and how do they actualise this decision?]

- What are things that you are more likely to delete from Facebook?
- Do you think that you would put the world 'delete' and 'forget' on the same level?
 - Do they have a similar or a different meaning from your perspective?
- How is Facebook related to forgetting in your life?
 - Has it ever happened that you wanted to forget something/someone, but in order to achieve that goal you also acted on your Fb?
 - Would you say you had to or it was just your preference to do so?

- Once you delete something/someone, do you think you feel differently (better/worst, freer/more distant/more or less worried...) towards what/who you have deleted?
- Imagine that Facebook is evaluating the possibility to insert a data expire date, which means that contents, after 10 years from their being uploaded, will be automatically delated from your profile. What would be your reaction to this?

[Release]

- Do you have any general comments and clarification you would like to add?
- Do you have any question to me?
- Before concluding I just would like to ask you: is there anything you said during this interview, something you feel sensitive that you would prefer is excluded from the research?

TRANSCRIPTION CONVENTIONS:

Pause in interview:	...
Long pause:
Ellipses:	examp...
Overlap:	A: [examp... B: ...example]
Omission:	(...)
Interviewee emphasis:	<i>italic</i>
Inaudible:	(inaudible)
Intonation/noises/comments:	[in squared brackets]

APPENDIX B: CODEBOOK

CODEBOOK

CODE TYPE	1. Quality of memory	2. Archiving	3. Forgetting	4. Processed memory	5. Practice	6. Perception of...	7. Materiality of memory support	8. External Forces (in respect to the individual)	9. Loss of Control	10. User's Concerns	11. Evaluation	Y1. Formats: open category to assess if interviewees tend to use specific formats (pics, songs, written text...) to store remembrances.	Y2. Objects: open category to assess if interviewees frequently mention similar objects of memory
SUB-TYPE A	Collective memory (t)	Archive of remembrances	Facebook problematizing forgetting	User's memory perception changing over time (t)	Strategy of memories organisation	Facebook as environment (t)	Concrete A — quality emphases by the interviewee	External forces A — self-reported	Loss of control over data	Data ownership	Purposive-drive usage	.	
SUB-TYPE B	Individual memory (t)	Archive of feelings (t)	Repressive erasure (t)	Mediatized memory (t)	Unfriending	Space of memory	Digital A — quality emphasised by the interviewee	External forces B — Hypothesised	Loss of control over emotions	Privacy	Emotionally-driven usage		
SUB-TYPE C	Joint memory (t)	Archive of recurrences	Forgetting for the perceived good of the user (t)	Reconstruction	Data erasure	Facebook as having agency (t)	Concrete B — deem relevant by the researcher		Loss of control over intimacy	Ability to recall	Positive		
SUB-TYPE D		Archives of content	Forgetting as surfeit of information (t)	Amended memory: a) consciously b) unconsciously	Habits	Time perceived differently on SNS (t)	Digital B — deem relevant by the researcher		Loss of control over self-representation		Negative		
SUB-TYPE E			Forgetting as humiliated silence (t)	Personhood building up (t)	Learning	Facebook as memory aid	Offline-online comparison		Loss of control over recall acts				
SUB-TYPE F			Facebook autonomous reconstruction		Sharing								
SUB-TYPE G					Selection								
					Privacy setting Change								

'(t)': deductive code.

1C: In this I am also including aspects of Bartoletti's (2011) idea of 'networked memories'.

3C: It comprises Connerton's (1989) general ideas of 'prescriptive forgetting' and 'new identity formation' — when the user try to forget or to delete information to better their position or state.

4B: By this I do not mean a memory that is simply stored or relived through media, but the instances in which the user does something related to memory which is shaped by wider media dynamics. For example, when the user stores a content with privacy setting 'only me' OR delete a content because they know how Facebook might use that content if they do not act in that precise way.

6A: For example, the intersection of 6A and 11C ('Facebook as environment' and 'Qualification — positive') would give 'Facebook as a positive place'.

8B: External forces (8B) and repressive erasure (3B) might give 'structural amnesia' — as they might lead to forgetting as a consequence of social norms/pressures.

9D: This might be in strong relation to personhood building up (5F).

Media@LSE MSc Dissertations Series

The Media@LSE MSc Dissertations Series presents high quality MSc Dissertations which received a mark of 74% and above (Distinction).

Selected dissertations are published electronically as PDF files, subject to review and approval by the Editors.

Authors retain copyright, and publication here does not preclude the subsequent development of the paper for publication elsewhere.

ISSN: 1474-1938/1946