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Storying leaks for sharing: The case of leaking the "Moscovici draft" on Twitter

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1. Introduction

Twitter as a reporting tool provides affordances for the instant streaming of breaking news, creating a public forum for reacting to global events, such as natural disasters, sports events, national elections, (Weller et al., 2014; Vis, 2013), and more recently leaks (e.g. the trending hashtag #PanamaPapers following the Panama Papers leak; ICIJ, 2016). Such uses of Twitter - and social media more generally - open up important research questions about the changing role of the journalist in newsmaking and sharing online.

According to a review of studies conducted between 2004 and 2014 by Kümpel et al. (2015), research on news sharing online has been prototypically conducted in the United States using content and network analysis. This has led to an over-emphasis on single users' influence and network structures, leaving little space for the systematic consideration of the role of context in practices of sharing or the discursive processes underlying news construction.

Discursive-oriented research has provided context-sensitive alternatives, drawing attention to social media and news values (Bednarek and Caple, 2012), civic engagement (Papacharissi, 2010, 2015; Murthy 2013), and the reconfigured roles of 'lay' and 'expert' audiences (Thornborrow, 2015). In this diverse and growing body of work, social networks are viewed as dynamic contexts (Cotter, 2010), where news is (co)constructed in "a participatory media culture that is at once intensively discursive and discursively intensified" (van Hout and Burger, 2015: 4), facilitating feelings of engagement in networked audiences (Karatzogianni and Kuntsman, 2012). There is, however, further scope for developing this line of research, focusing on practices of text-making that include the embedding of journalistic and participant voices.

This article argues that such developments require a more systematic conceptualisation of the term *sharing* and a more open-ended and flexible analytical lens into *story-making online*. Its objective is to provide a discourse-narrative approach to news storying and sharing as networked practice, shaping and shaped by emerging breaking news formats. The discussion is based on discursive understandings of *news discourse* as "text-in-co(n)text [...] a process, or a series of processes of entextualization and contextualization" (Catenaccio et al., 2010: 1846).

The proposed approach is illustrated on the basis of the close examination of the release of a leaked Eurogroup draft statement (aka "the Moscovici draft") on social media on the 16th February 2015, by former Channel 4 economics editor, Paul Mason. The article addresses the following research questions:

- (a) How is the leak event shaped as a story for sharing?
- (b) How (and why) is the story of the leak shared with networked participants?

Section 2 outlines the theoretical background for the study. **Section 3** presents the data under examination and outlines the methods and analytical framework. **Section 4** discusses the practices of story-making and sharing in the specific case selected for study. Lastly, **Section 5** summarises the key findings and offers concluding remarks

on the implications of this study for the study of news-making and sharing in relation to digital storytelling and audience engagement.

2. Sharing and storying online: theoretical background

The study is theoretically grounded in the socio-discursive study of sharing (John, 2017; Androutsopoulos, 2014) and the sociolinguistics of (digital) narrative (Georgakopoulou, 2015a; Dayter, 2015; Page, 2012). It is suggested that key insights that have emerged in the socially-oriented, discourse-based study of digital texts are relevant to the linguistic study of news production which focuses on: (i) the varied use of linguistic resources in the process of text-making and (ii) text trajectories that is the shifting of texts between and among contexts (Catenaccio et al. 2010: 1846). This section presents the socio-discursive insights which have been integrated to the proposed approach to news making online as a *networked practice of news storying-and-sharing*.

Storying is understood in line with the research paradigm of *small stories* that encompasses a wider gamut of (co-) tellings, which have been traditionally under-represented in studies of narrative (Georgakopoulou, 2007; Bamberg and Georgakopoulou, 2008; Georgakopoulou, 2015a). Studies of online stories frequently draw on *small stories* research as a frame of analytical reference (De Fina and Georgakopoulou, 2012: 121). Studies of e-mail communication (Georgakopoulou, 2004), Facebook (Page, 2010) or Twitter (Dayter, 2015), for instance, have pointed to the salience of stories centred on the *here-and-now*, often shared across multiple tellers in a sequence of updates. These stories - termed **breaking news stories** - have been found to depart from the 'canonical' story format characterized by a beginning, middle and end and analytically described in terms of the narrative units of *abstract, orientation, complicating action, resolution, coda* (Labov, 1972; 2013). Instead, breaking news stories are shaped by the affordances of the medium in which they are articulated and they typically involve the shortening of the distance between the narrating and the narrated world: in this type of stories, the emphasis is placed on reporting events that happened in the recent past or unfolding in the *here-and-now* (De Fina and Georgakopoulou, 2012, p.122-123). In online environments this instantaneous sharing of moments gives rise to tellings that obtain their shape and meaning by other participants' contributions and assessments (*co-construction*), across lines of thematic and sequential development (*multinearity*), hypertextual linking (*intertextuality*) and posting across media (*transportability*). For example, Twitter stories have been found to unfold in an ambient, gradual way of cumulative self-reporting featuring a double-edged format: stories that fit the 140 character constraint of the tweet termed *microstories* and longer stories that span several tweets, termed *multi-turn stories* (Dayter, 2015: 26).

In more recent work on breaking news stories online (Georgakopoulou, 2015b; Georgakopoulou, 2015c), attention has been drawn to the use of breaking news stories as a rhetorical resource or a 'display' communication act that licenses the announcement of the mundane and the trivial, and that links tellability with the ability to tell now in **moments of narrative stancetaking**. These are described as "moments where the teller is in a position to announce that something has just happened and to tell more and update if necessary" (Georgakopoulou, 2015b: 65). In these moments, the teller does not simply announce what has happened but also takes a stance to the events and the key characters involved. Narrative stancetaking is particularly relevant

to the study of journalistic practices of storytelling, in that it draws attention to the way the journalist's and networked participants' voices are embedded in newsmaking. Small story insights are arguably important for developing more sophisticated understandings of journalistic practices of storytelling events online as they happen, whereby narrativity is drawn upon as a key resource for encoding stances to events and for engaging networked audiences in sharing.

Sharing on social media is understood as a networked semiotic practice (Androutsopoulos, 2014) that incorporates the *distribution* of digital content via multimodal resources (e.g. hyperlinks, pictures, videos) and *communication* to and with others about anything from everyday minutiae to views on current events (John, 2017: 62). Sharing is to be studied empirically based on the discursive modelling proposed by Androutsopoulos (2014). In his study of sharing practices among multilingual peers on Facebook, Androutsopoulos (idem: 8) suggests that sharing online takes place in three sequential stages: 1) the stage of **selecting** significant moments for sharing (*what?*), 2) the stage of **styling** selections drawing on preferred or appropriate linguistic codes and resources (*how?*), and 3) the stage of **negotiating** moments with networked audiences (*audience follow-up*).

In Androutsopoulos's study, the analysis of the first stage of sharing is based on his empirical observation of what users choose to post (or not to post) and in addition, on how participants view their own sharing activities (for instance, as more or less 'emotional'). At the stage of styling, the analysis considers what resources participants mobilize to articulate and contextualize their posts (e.g. using dots to indicate that a post is part of a sequence of updates). Lastly, at the stage of negotiation the analysis turns to the networked audience and the degree and mode of their engagement with the moments shared (e.g. whether participants like, share, comment on or co-construct moments) (idem: 9-10).

In this article, the scope of that framework is extended beyond the study of everyday languaging practices on Facebook to the study of journalistic practices of sharing leaks on Twitter; in adapting the framework the importance of *storying* and *narrative stancetaking* is foregrounded as a key aspect of sharing moment-by-moment updates online. Importantly, as the next section explains, the proposed conceptualization of journalistic practices of breaking news online as (small) *storying* and *sharing* takes into account two key aspects of digital text practices: (i) networked users' navigation, often concurrently, of different platforms in *polymedia* environments (Madianou and Miller, 2012) and (ii) users' increased *crossposting*, i.e. their reposting from one platform to another (Adami, 2014: 226).

3. Research data and methods

The close qualitative examination of the release of a draft Eurogroup statement via Facebook, Scribd and Twitter by Paul Mason, former Channel 4 economics editor is presented in this article as an illustration of news making as networked practice of storying and sharing. The data for this study consist of a series of tweets relating to the leak event on Paul Mason's Twitter account @paulmasonnews on the 16th February 2015 following the Eurogroup meeting of European Member-States' Finance Ministers in Brussels (Weardne and Fletcher, 2015). Leaks raise important questions for journalists regarding, for instance, access to data and ethics, collaboration with as well as verification of sources. In addition, their impact is closely linked with the timing,

mode and medium of dissemination; in that respect the release of leaks in journalistic practice is intricately connected to practices of storytelling, sharing and public participation and hence worth of closer empirical, discourse-based study.

The tweets that form the data for analysis were initially saved as they appeared on my own twitter feed, while I was following the stream of updates and comments on the Eurogroup meeting. Time stamps of the tweets were recovered through cross-checks with other sources e.g. Paul Mason's twitter feed, the Guardian blog, and @asteris' compilation of tweets on Storify (Masouras, 2015), a platform that allows users to curate and maintain content from Twitter and other social media platforms.

Data collection for this study focused particularly on the continuous feed broadcast between Monday, 16th February, 7:47PM and Tuesday, 17th February, 2:00 AM. For ease of cross-referencing, individual tweets have been numbered in ascending order (Appendix). In addition, the study has also taken into account the direct replies in response to a specific tweet. On Twitter, reactions to a specific tweet can be recorded by individual users on a text box below each tweet which features the prompt 'Reply to @username'. Direct replies to a tweet are known on Twitter as 'conversations' and they are automatically grouped together, highlighting some of the most interesting exchanges surrounding a given tweet (Kumar, 2015).

The basic units used in the analysis are: (i) individual tweets, i.e. 140-character microposts, (ii) sequences of tweets and (iii) replies to tweets viewed as ***Tweet events*** analogously to Facebook *wall events* (Androutsopoulos, 2014: 7); the Tweet event includes minimally one tweet followed by direct replies and making up a multi-authored sequence which appears on the text box below each tweet. In this case, direct replies to tweets were manually recovered by clicking on each tweet and reviewing the replies that appeared on the specific tweet page. Since, however, on Twitter replies appear in the recipient's Home timeline if they are following the sender, not all replies are recoverable.

The initial step to the analysis involved the organization of tweets into thematically related sequences (see Appendix). This was followed by reiterative discourse-narrative analysis of microposts, sequences of microposts, and tweet events in relation to the following stages of sharing adapted to the study of news-storying and sharing for addressing the study's research questions:

- (a) **The stage of selecting:** analysis of this stage has been mainly based on empirically observable entextualization practices on Twitter as well as other related online contexts, e.g. Paul Mason's social media accounts, interviews and relevant articles (Mason, 2010; Mason, 2015). The examination of this stage helps to situate the document 'selected' for leaking in a wider context of sharing;
- (b) **The stage of styling:** the main focus in this analytical step is on (i) the styling of microposts across social media contexts, also known as *crossposting* - the recontextualization of textual material published in one online semiotic space and reposted to another semiotic space (Adami, 2014: 226) (ii) the key aspects of (small) storytelling and narrative stancetaking, as indexed in both microposts and micropost sequences;

- (c) The stage of negotiation:** in this stage the analysis turns to the examination of tweet events. The examination of this stage allows an insight into participant roles afforded by uses of narrativity as a sharing resource.

Section 4 presents the analysis organised around the three stages of sharing.

4. Sharing the leak as a breaking news story

4.1 Selecting: contextualizing the leak event

Leaks are highly entextualizable items in contexts of news reporting, as they reveal information that can illuminate an issue of public interest. Selecting leaks for release is not always, though, at the discretion of a journalist; it largely depends on the journalist getting access to trustworthy sources and be deemed to be a trustworthy mediator. In the case of the leak under focus, the journalist Paul Mason seems to have been at an ideal position for receiving (from multiple sources) and releasing the draft Eurogroup statement: an award-winning newswriter with a large readership and social media following, a specialist economics editor covering the Greek crisis for Channel 4 (until 2016), and an insider to the Syriza party (as a result of the access he was granted to key Syriza politicians in the context of a documentary he produced on the confrontation between Greece and its European partners during 2015).

The document leaked by Paul Mason on the 16th February, shortly after 11.00PM (UK time) was a draft statement allegedly authored by Pierre Moscovici, the European Commissioner, in advance of the Eurogroup meeting of the same day. The meeting was part of a series of the negotiations on a possible Greek bailout agreement relaunched shortly after the coming to power of the anti-austerity party Syriza (in coalition with the party of Independent Greeks) on the 25th of January 2015. The meeting was preceded by a high level of anticipation for European partners and Greece to reach an agreement amidst rumours of the possibility of Grexit, i.e. the forced exit of Greece from the European Union. No consensus was reached, however, and talks ended in a dramatic break-up attracting increased media attention.

The draft document that became known as the “Moscovici draft” got its first mention by the Greek Finance Minister, Yanis Varoufakis, at the national briefing following the Eurogroup meeting who referred to it as “the splendid document” that he was prepared to sign (Smith, 2015). The draft statement in question included recognition of Greece’s humanitarian crisis and spoke of a four-month bridging programme as a transitional stage to a new contract between Greece and its creditors. The document that was ultimately presented at the Eurogroup was, however, reportedly different from that draft and for that reason, it was not signed by the Greek party, resulting in the breakdown of talks.

As Paul Mason suggested in his blog post following the release of the leak on social media, the main motivation for publically releasing the draft statement was that it promised to shed new light on why consensus was not reached in Brussels (Mason, 2015). The selection was, furthermore, discursively motivated: sharing a draft, unsigned document of high administration opens up the inner workings of high level decision-making processes to public scrutiny and reveals some of the complexities, ambiguities and power asymmetries in negotiations between European member

states. In this case, the leaked statement helped to contextualize the Greek negotiating party's decision not to agree with its partners, thus creating opportunities for shaping alternative interpretations of political events compared to mainstream media.

Furthermore, the embedding of the leak in the temporality of the here-and-now points to the selection of the leak as a piece of breaking news. This breaking news story is used as a 'display' communication act, which foregrounds the importance of the seemingly trivial - in this case, a draft, unsigned document - alongside the journalist's ability to tell and share now. Each shared moment of the breaking news storying of the leak is ***an act of narrative stancetaking*** anticipating further uptake and circulation from networked participants (Section 2). This uptake is determined by the meanings associated with the re-entextualizing of the "draft" document on the public forum of social media, and in particular Twitter. In this case, re-entextualizing, i.e. lifting a text and re-inserting it in a new context (Bauman and Briggs, 1990), involves picking out a slice from the *behind-the-scenes* or the "backstage" of negotiations and moving it into the "frontstage". As Goffman suggests, moves from the front region to the back region or even the entire back region are kept hidden from members of the audience as part of impression management techniques (Goffman, 1959, pp. 69-70). The leaking of the "Moscovici draft", a document that was more positively oriented to the Greek side than the agreement ultimately presented at the meeting, is arguably, then, an impression management strategy foregrounding to European audiences the missed possibility of reaching a deal positive for the Greek side; it indexes a particular position on the negotiations, namely a positive alignment to the Greek side as the expression of the anti-austerity position on economic debt crises in Europe.

The next section turns to the examination of the styling of the microposts for sharing and the story formats that emerge in the context of that sharing.

4.2 Styling

The study of styling is examined on two levels: the level of microposts as standalone units (4.2.1) and the level of microposts in sequence (4.2.2).

4.2.1 Breaking the leak event as *it happens*

This sub-section sheds light into the stylistic adaptations entailed in sharing the leaked document online *as it happens*. The initial draft document was released at 11:07PM via Paul Mason's Facebook account and shortly after, at 11:08PM, on Twitter:

Example 1¹

Facebook

[11:07PM]

The draft Varoufakis nearly signed, which is claimed to have been offered by Moscovici [embedded document]

Example 2:

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¹ Examples are numbered sequentially across Section 4. The timestamp of the post is indicated in square brackets at the start of the given example. For examples taken from Paul Mason's Twitter feed, the order of the post in the sequence of microposts for analysis is indicated in square brackets (see also Appendix). The format of the presentation of the document (e.g. embedded image, hyperlink) is indicated in square brackets at the end of the given example. Italics are used to highlight parts of the micropost picked out for discussion.

Twitter

[11:08PM] [Micropost 5]

I *just posted* the Moscovici draft to my Facebook page [embedded hyperlink to FB].

On Facebook the released document is embedded to the Facebook wall update window, appearing immediately below a short post contextualising the document (Example 1). On Twitter the release document is crosslinked to the Facebook page (Example 2). In this instance of crossposting (see Section 2), the marker of recency (“just”), coupled with the simple past tense in which the main verb is articulated (“posted”), echoes the typical emphasis of breaking news stories online on the here-and-now, and links the newsworthiness of the leaked document with the ability to tell and share now.

Example 3:

Twitter [11:10PM] [Micropost 6]

Paul Mason @paulmasonnews · 16 Feb 2015

This is the draft @yanisvaroufakis claimed @pierremscovici presented then withdrew.

Draft Eurogroup Statement on Greece

The Eurogroup reiterates its appreciation for the remarkable adjustment efforts undertaken by Greece and the Greek people over the last years. Over the last week the Eurogroup and the institutions have engaged in an intensive dialogue with the new Greek authorities.

The Greek authorities have expressed their strong commitment to a broader and deeper reform process aimed at durably improving growth and employment prospects, enhancing social fairness and ensuring stability and resilience of the financial sector. In particular the Greek authorities commit to implementing long overdue reforms to tackle corruption and tax evasion, and improving the efficiency of the public administration. At the same time the Greek authorities reiterated their unequivocal commitment to honour their financial obligations towards all their creditors. The Greek authorities will make the most efficient use of the continued provision of the technical assistance.

We discussed the policy priorities of the new government on the basis of work undertaken by the institutions and the Greek authorities. We welcomed that in a number of areas the Greek policy priorities can contribute to a strengthening and better implementation of the financial assistance programme and can serve as the basis for a new arrangement. The Greek authorities intend to make the best use of existing built-in flexibility in the current programme as work commences on the new arrangement. They will work closely with their European and international partners to secure agreed parameters for structural reforms.

The Greek authorities agree to ensure appropriate primary fiscal surpluses and financing in order to ensure debt-sustainability. Any new measures will be funded and will not endanger debt sustainability or financial stability.⁽¹⁾

The above forms the basis for a request to extend the current loan agreement, taking the form of an intermediate step to a new arrangement, that will be discussed and decided during this period of six-months. We also agreed that the IMF would continue to play its role in this agreement. The Eurogroup is favorably disposed to such a request by the Greek authorities.

Moreover, we were informed by the EC, the ECB and the IMF that it would be prudent to extend the availability period of the EFSF bonds in the HFSF buffer for six months, in parallel to the extension of the EFSF programme. The Eurogroup looks favorably at such an extension. Following a request by Greece, the EFSF can make the necessary arrangements. The Eurogroup emphasizes that these funds can be used for bank recapitalization and resolution costs and will only be released on the basis of an assessment by the institutions and a decision of the Eurogroup.

We remain committed to provide adequate support to Greece until it has regained full market access as long as it honors its commitments within the newly-agreed framework.

Possible points to give:

1) Refrain from uni-lateral actions with net fiscal implications

739 295

As Example 3 shows, at 11:10PM Mason adds a further crosspost from Facebook to Twitter, this time embedding the image of the document to the micropost. The crosspost is articulated in the form of an elliptical grammatical construction lacking punctuation marks, relative pronouns and avoiding the use of passive voice (cf. Example 1). Key participants' names are preceded by the addressivity marker @, an aggregatable and searchable deictic marker (Zappavigna, 2011: 791).

At 11:32PM Paul Mason crossposts again to Twitter (Example 4), this time from the open document publishing and sharing platform Scribd (Example 5):

Example 4:

Twitter

[11:32PM] [Micropost 11]

So here is the original @pierre moscovici draft on Scribd: [hyperlink to scribd]...*make of it what you will. Tomorrow is another day*, Ellada² [clickable image of document]

Example 5:

Scribd

[11:31PM] *Just uploaded* Draft (4) Eurogroup Statement on Greece [hyperlink to Scribd]

The post on Scribd features the use of the recency marker “just” and the main verb in the simple past tense “uploaded”, in a format that is typical for announcing the leak as an event on that platform. The crossposted micropost on Twitter, which includes a hyperlink to Scribd and an embedded clickable hyperlink image of the document, is expressed as a conclusive post of the breaking news of the leak. This is indicated in the use of the summative adverb “so” at the opening of the post, the call to the audience to evaluate it (“make of it what you will”) and the temporal projection to the next day as a day of hope (“tomorrow is another day, Ellada”).

Crossposting from Facebook or Scribd to Twitter is not based on the automatic publishing affordances of social media platforms, which would entail no changes to the discursive shape of the post announcing the leak across different platforms; rather, it features the user’s minimal adaptations in line with the platform-specific formats and audience (e.g. as an embedded text, hyperlink, image, or uploaded document). Users’ preference for the discursive adaptation of posts in crossposting activity in association with context considerations was also found to be the case in Adami’s study of such practices in a food blog (Adami, 2014: 226).

Crossposting activity from Facebook and Scribd to Twitter in Examples 2-4 indicates the use of social media as a communicative environment of affordances rather than as discrete platforms (Madianou and Miller, 2012). In this case, for instance, Facebook is selected as the ‘original’ medium for showing the document, prompting users to comment on its content; Twitter facilitates the wider dissemination of the leak via the multimodal affordances of embedded hyperlinks or images, and affords a direct, ongoing engagement with networked participants via moment-by-moment updates; Scribd is best suited to the publication of documents but lacks the interactivity affordances of social networking platforms. It is the combination of these different platforms’ affordances that licenses the reiteration of the release of the document in a range of social media contexts promoting its visibility across different sections of networked participants.

In terms of their format, crossposts exhibit key features typical of breaking news updates, such as the use of recency markers (“just”) and deictic markers pointing to

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² Trans. :“Greece”.

embedded hyperlinks or images (“here”, “this is”) (cf. Page 2010). They are presented as multimodal ensembles, combining embedded images or hyperlinks and short contextualising text. Embedded images of hyperlinks are added as evidence of the existence of the document, while in the short contextualising text, the journalist is gradually and cumulatively encoding his position to the leaked document. To be more specific, the gradual shift from references to the draft document allegedly authored and offered to the Greek party by Pierre Moscovici (Examples 1 & 3) to references to the document as “the Moscovici draft” (Examples 2 & 4) establish the existence of the document as reportable rather than as contested fact and open up the discussion and evaluation of its content.

While individual microposts seen as standalone updates offer a snapshot of the breaking of the leak *as it happens* across social media contexts, a different picture emerges when one considers all the updates posted on that day by Paul Mason on his Twitter feed. The next sub-section turns to the post-factum examination of microposts as a multi-turn story (Dayter, 2015).

4.2.2 Storying the leak event as it happened

In real-time stand-alone microposts are accessed by users alongside other updates on their timelines, resulting in a sense of fragmentation and at times opaqueness. This differential access by different users accounts for the journalist’s continuous posting, which eases readers’ catching up with the story at any point of their accessing the feed. In addition, the reiteration of the noun “draft” or the use of substitution (e.g. “one”) across posts helps establish the leaked document as the main topic of the reporting across microposts, forging discursive links across individual microposts. This contributes to the creation of a sense of microposts as being part of an unfolding multi-turn story as well as a record of the leak event as it happened.

The initial analysis of the multi-turn story on Twitter has pointed to the unfolding of the story in three temporally and topically related sequences (from 07:47PM to 02:00AM) made up of sub-sequences (*chains*) and framed by a pre-sequence and a post-sequence closing the feed (Appendix):

(A) The *pre-sequence* involves entextualizing slices from the briefing to the Greek press after the end of the meeting (Microposts 1-4);

(B) The *main sequence* includes three interrelated chains:

Chain 1: *breaking the leak* (Microposts 5-11);

Chain 2: *re-breaking the leak* by sharing a more up-to-date version of the document (Microposts 12-17);

Chain 3: *closing* the reporting on the leak event (Microposts 18-19);

(C) the *post-sequence* summarizes the key points emerging from the journalist’s earlier tweeting (Microposts 20-24).

The following discussion considers how each of these sequences is stylistically and functionally embedded to the unfolding of the sharing of the leak event as a breaking news story made up of slices from the ‘behind-the-scenes’.

To start with, the pre-sequence to the leak, broadcast as a backchannel to the National Briefing of Yanis Varoufakis represents selected snippets from the Greek Finance Minister’s press conference for non-present networked participants. As Example 6 shows, the journalist uses Yanis Varoufakis’ reported words about a “draft communique” as evidence for the existence of the document. Retrospectively, the sequence creates anticipation for further updates on the existence and contents of the draft document, thus serving to frame the breaking news of the leak.

Example 6

[7:48PM] [Micropost 2]

Varoufakis: Moscovici presented draft communique – GR was happy to sign: apply for extension leading to 4 month intermediate prog [sic]

Approximately four hours after the pre-sequence, at 11:07pm, the leak is announced on Paul Mason’s Facebook account and its storying unfolds in two stages: the initial breaking of the leak via crossposting from Facebook (Chain 1) and the updated announcement of the most up-to-date version (Chain 2). In the first chain, the announcement of the leak event as a story is articulated via a minimal narrative (Labov, 1972) that forms the skeletal storyline of the story behind the leak:

Example 7

[11:10PM] [Micropost 6]

This is the draft @yanisvaroufakis claimed @pierre moscovici presented then withdrew [embedded image].

As shown in Example 7, the minimal narrative is made up of three narrative clauses - i.e. clauses expressed in the simple past tense - that report three temporally ordered micro-actions (“claimed”, “presented”, “withdrew”) making up a microstory, in which the main protagonists and their relationships to the document are established. This concise form of storying is amenable to further entextualizations, thus, serving as a portable. Its transportability is evidenced in the embedding of the story in the Guardian’s rolling coverage at 11:22PM as the closing post of that day’s reporting (Weardne and Fletcher, 2015) and in a further update by Paul Mason on his Twitter feed, presenting the same story with minor changes in its discursive shape, just ten minutes after the original post (Example 8):

Example 8

[11:20PM] [Micropost 9]

Confused? Earlier the Greeks claimed they’d seen draft from @pierre moscovici which they wd have signed. It’s here: [embedded hyperlink to FB].

Example 8 is framed by a direct address to networked participants “confused?”, serving as a reorientation of networked participants to the main storyline after two microposts that provided clarifications on the number of footnotes and pages in the draft (Appendix: Microposts 7 & 8). This moment of sharing also serves as an act of narrative stancetaking, linking the newsworthiness of the leak with the ability to tell and

share now (“it’s here”). As illustrated in Example 9, narrative stancetaking is central in the sharing of the breaking news of the leak event:

Example 9

[11:53PM] [Micropost 18]

My final word on tonight: *this* proves @pierremoscovici offered something conciliatory to the Greeks: [embedded image]

In Example 9, the document, re-presented via a deictic (“this”) coupled with an embedded image, is assessed as a “conciliatory” offer to the Greek party by the European commissioner. This type of narrative stancetaking is further established across the main sequence via the cumulative evaluation of the leaked document in comparison to the document presented to the Greek Minister of Finance; its assessment as a more positive offer is encoded via the reiterative use of comparators in and across individual microposts (e.g. “one other critical difference”, “in latter not in former”; “stronger”; “even stronger”).

These evaluative points are ultimately brought together in the concluding post-sequence broadcast in the early hours of the 17th February. In a sequence of five microposts, Paul Mason sums up the previously accumulating and seemingly fragmented breaking news story of the leak offering a set of key points that assess its relevance to the ongoing discussions on the Greek bailout agreement (Microposts 20-25). Continuity across the posts in this sequence is established by the use of numbered listing (Examples 10 & 11):

Example 10

[1:55AM] [Micropost 21]

2) the earlier 18:20 seems an unagreed draft 3) both demonstrate Eurogroup stepping back from agreements proposed 4) nobody signed them..

Example 11

[1:56AM] [Micropost 22]

5) both counter earlier claims that no document exists 6) both sides clearly leaking but journos obliged to protect sources so...

In summary, the unfolding of this breaking news story is found to rely on the articulation of a concise storyline and evaluation(s). The storyline takes the form of a minimal narrative and helps to contextualise the released document shown via available multimodal affordances (e.g. hyperlinks or images). Evaluation is encoded in moments of narrative stancetaking distributed across microposts and sequences, thus pervading the story.

The analysis of the multi-turn story also points the following set of narrative functions that underlie the storying of the leak as a breaking news story: (i) **framing** (opening/closing), (ii) **breaking the leak** (announcing or updating the leak via a minimal narrative and/or embedded hyperlinks or images) and (iii) **evaluating** the importance of the leak. The repeated and phased release of the document coupled with the cumulative building up of its evaluation contributes to keeping the leak into audiences’ awareness, while emphasising its importance and promoting a particular position on the negotiations. Importantly, the inclusion of evaluations in a separate sequence entirely devoted to comments arguably sets Paul Mason’s tweeting activity

on current affairs apart from tweets posted by ordinary users, journalists or politics bloggers; his updates contribute an in-depth interpretive angle grounded in his professional expertise and political engagement with the Greek crisis. In that respect, this mode of storying and sharing a leak online points to the “boundary work” the journalist is engaging in, consolidating his position on social media as an authority, who defines what issues are worthy of being covered and why.

The final section looks at the different ways in which the journalist orients to networked participants in relation to the range of possibilities afforded for audience engagement.

4.3 Negotiating: orienting to networked participants

In the previous sub-section, breaking the news of the leak was said to rely on crossposting (Section 4.2.1). This indicates a general orientation not exclusively to Twitter publics but to what can be termed *polymedia publics*, which include networked participants who navigate, often concurrently, different platforms for keeping up-to-date with current affairs and for cutting through to specialists’ or insiders’ points of view.

The journalist also orients directly to networked participants, making use of explicit markers of interactivity, such as direct addresses. Interestingly, such instances appear in posts that serve a framing function, be it opening, reorienting to the leak, or closing its coverage:

Example 12 [Chain 2, Opening]

[Micropost 12]

Developments upcoming: There’s an even later draft! *Stand by!*

Example 13 [Chain 1, Reorientation]

[Micropost 9]

Confused? Earlier the Greeks claimed they’d seen draft from @pierre-moscovici which they wd have signed. It’s here: [embedded hyperlink to FB]

Example 14 [Chain 2, Closing]

[Micropost 10]

So here is the original @pierre-moscovici draft on Scribd: [scribd.com/doc/25597609/...make of it what you will](https://scribd.com/doc/25597609/...make-of-it-what-you-will). Tomorrow is another day, Ellada

As Examples 12-14 show in these moments networked participants are (i) prompted to remain tuned in to the live feed (Example 12), (ii) accommodated in the rapidly, seemingly fragmented developing multi-turn story, recognizing that users can access the feed at any point (Example 13), or (iii) encouraged to use their own judgement for assessing the importance of the released document (Example 14).

Orientation to networked audiences is further evidenced in tweet events. Tweet events in reply to Paul Mason’s tweets often also feature the journalist’s direct interaction with networked participants. Tweet events highlight the multilinear development of storying across different points of interest and afford participants a range of opportunities for interaction on the timeline feed of the journalist, including: (i) asking for clarification on

specific points (Example 15), (ii) engaging in phatic communication via retweeting, crossposting, or hashtagging (Example 16), (iii) commenting on the importance of the leaked document (Examples 17-18), or even (iv) challenging the veracity of the leak (Example 19):

Example 15 (in response to Micropost 6)

User1: Sure. *Would be interesting to know* what's offered in return, apart from refraining from unilateral actions.

Paul Mason to User1: that's all there is. there is just one footnote so its clearly a draft

Example 16 (reaction to Micropost 5)

RT: I just posted the Moscovici draft to my Facebook page: facebook.com/paulmasonnews #Varoufakis #Eurogroup #greece @UserMJK

Example 17 (reaction to Micropost 5)

Different, very different MT@paulmasonenews: I just posted the Moscovici draft to my Facebook page: facebook.com...

Example 18 (reaction to Micropost 5)

RT: Paul Mason has provided the Moscovici draft meme. *It's real.*

Example 19 (reaction to Micropost 6)

User4: Are you implying it could have been possible that *the Greek FinMin @yanisvaroufakis had fabricated its existence?*

PaulMason: no - but there were doubts - as with God. Now they are dispelled

Interestingly, tweet events involving users' clarification requests are found to contribute to the direction and shape of the incipient storying: Paul Mason is seen to incorporate clarifications on the number of footnotes and pages in the released document to the main timeline feed (Examples 20 & 21).

Example 20

[11:17PM] [Micropost 7]

Clearly the Moscovici draft was a text. However, clearly it was a proposal, hence single footnote.

Example 21

[11:18PM] [Micropost 8]

to be clear, there is no second page of the Moscovici draft as I received it that's it.

The integration of key points from peripheral discussions unfolding in parallel to the main reporting indicates that in this case, story co-construction is led by the main teller rather than being equally distributed across networked participants. Overall, in this type of storying and sharing, participants are seen to play a minimal (or phatic) role in the co-construction of the unfolding story, seemingly challenging popular representations of social media as sites of citizen journalism (cf. Murthy, 2013). The role of networked participants is found to be limited to challenging or echoing, adding to and further disseminating the narrative stances embedded in the breaking news story of the leak.

That role, however, is not at all trivial as it is integrally linked to the circulation and sedimentation of counter-stances to political events.

5. Conclusion

The close qualitative examination of Paul Mason's release of a draft Eurogroup statement via Facebook, Scribd and Twitter on the 16th February 2015 presented in this article offers an insight into news making and news sharing as a networked practice of *storying-for-sharing* online. This study proposes a discursive-narrative approach to 'small' data as an alternative to content-based approaches to 'big' trends with a view to shed light into changing journalistic practices of storying and modes of audience engagement online.

In response to the first research question concerned with how the leak event was shaped into a story for sharing, the analysis pointed to its double-edged articulation at the level of individual microposts as well as micropost sequences.

At the level of microposts as standalone units, it was found that the release of the Eurogroup draft statement is shaped into a breaking news story on Twitter based on the use of crossposting from other platforms involving slight discursive and multimodal reshaping of the recontextualized text in line with the specific affordances and constraints of the platform. Standalone microposts combine images and hyperlinks with text to bring to the fore a slice of 'behind-the-scene' happenings in instantaneous updates which (counter) contextualize the outcome of the Eurogroup meeting of the 16th February 2015.

At the level of micropost sequences, the narrative development of posts was found to revolve around (i) a concise, portable storyline re-entextualized in the feed (and in other media) with slight modifications and (ii) cumulative evaluation creating and sedimenting (counter)-stances. The unfolding of the story is characterized by a high degree of *reiteration* at the level of lexical choice, *multilinearity* of the telling branching out in individual Tweet windows as directed by networked participants' contributions and *fragmentation* resulting from the way updates appear on users' personal timelines.

With respect to the second research question relating to how (and why) the breaking new story of the leak was shared with networked participants, the analysis suggested that sharing breaking news online essentially involves narrative stancetaking. Sharing updates as acts of narrative stancetaking invites networked participants to follow-up with replies, retweets and comments and further contribute to the circulation and sedimentation of assessments about events and their protagonists. Through turning 'behind the scenes' happenings to stories that cut through mainstream news-ness, participants are afforded opportunities to tune in to the events as they happen and construct counter-stances (see Miscione and Landert, this issue), potentially neutralising corporate media's attempt to solidify dominant ideologies (Mason, 2010). At a broader level, the study points to the continued importance of professional journalists in mediating breaking news as principal tellers and evaluators. In brief, in the pressing, rapid live reporting of the leak shared as a piece of breaking news, narrativity is drawn upon as a key resource for sharing characterized by the following features:

- *Incipient temporalization*: use of markers of instantaneity and recency that link the newsworthiness of the story with the ability to tell and share *now* via narrative stancetaking;
- *Emergent and cumulative patterning*: standalone microposts making up a post-factum narrative sequence characterized by a concise, portable storyline and cumulative evaluation(s);
- *Polymediality*: crossposting to and from other social media platforms in line with each platform's multimodal affordances.

These are arguably relevant analytic heuristics to the study of digital story-making for sharing more generally. The lack of a 'proper' story development either in the main feed or in users' replies seems to reassert Thornborrow's (2015) conclusion that social media are not sites for 'canonical' extended storytelling; rather they serve as sites for showing slices of stories, disseminating them as widely as possible and importantly, for prompting follow-up reactions. Other media, such as blogs, are then used to recount the story in more traditional formats (Mason, 2015).

To conclude, the study of news online needs to take into account the construction and sedimentation of narrative stancetaking and the positions afforded to networked participants. This can be arguably achieved by (i) looking closely at 'small' data rather than 'big' data and 'big' trends where positions to events can be difficult to capture and (ii) applying a lens on newsmaking online as *a networked practice of news storying-for-sharing*, shaping and shaped by dynamic formats of incipient and cumulative storying.

Appendix

DATA

A. Pre-sequence [9 min]

Backchannel to National briefing by Greek Finance Minister

	TIMESTAMP	TEXT
1	7:47PM	Varoufakis: last Weds, turned down demand to “extend and successfully conclude” current program;
2	7:48PM	Varoufakis: Moscovici presented draft communique – GR was happy to sign: apply for extension leading to 4 month intermediate prog
3	7:51PM	Varoufakis: the splendid document I was prepared to sign was withdrawn by Djisselbloem and replaced with another document
4	7:56PM	Varoufakis: goes into game theory shtick – wants to change motives of Eurogroup and not act from selfishness

B. Main sequence

Chain 1: Breaking the leak [24min]

5	11:08PM	I just posted the Moscovici draft to my Facebook page: facebook.com/paulmasonnews
6	11:10PM	This is the draft @yanisvaroufakis claimed @pierremoscovici presented then withdrew [document image]
7	11:17PM	Clearly the Moscovici draft was a text. However, clearly it was a proposal, hence single footnote.
8	11:18PM	to be clear, there is no second page of the Moscovici draft as I received it that's it.
9	11:20PM	Confused? Earlier the Greeks claimed they'd seen draft from @pierremoscovici which they wd have signed. It's here: facebook.com/paulmasonnews .
10	11:24PM	One other critical difference between @pierremoscovici draft and Djijselbloem one: debt sustainability on 2012 lines in latter not in former
11	11:32PM	So here is the original @pierremoscovici draft on Scribd: scribd.com/doc/25597609/ ...make of it what you will. Tomorrow is another day, Ellada [document image with caption 'Draft (4) Eurogroup Statement on Greece, Moscovici draft, scribd.com']

Chain 2: Re-breaking the leak [14min]

12	11:38PM	Developments upcoming: There's an even later draft! Stand by!
13	11:46PM	OK (1/4) – the document I was leaked was not the 'final' Moscovici draft. I now have that also. The one I published was datelined 18:20...
14	11:47PM	(2/4) The right one is headlined 'Close of business'. It has a significant different text including 'humanitarian crisis' and is stronger.
15	11:48PM	(3/4) The 'close of play' version of @pierremoscovici is here [image of document].
16	11:49PM	So this 'close of play draft' pic. Twitter.com/szjyFcPoW4 is even stronger pro-the Greek position than my earlier one.
17	11:50PM	For transparency, I was sent 18:40 version by trusted source to show it existed, but this one superseded it.

Chain 3: Closing [2min]

18	11:53PM	My final word on tonight: this proves @pierremoscovici offered something conciliatory to the Greeks:
19	11:56PM	As Greek media only sporadically getting it: here's the last draft @pierremoscovici offered, [image of document]

C. Post-sequence:**Evaluating the leak [8 min]**

20	1:53AM	Late night points: 1) of two documents claimed to form basis of agreement between Varoufakis and Moscovici, the latter is more important
21	1:55AM	2) the earlier 18:20 seems an unagreed draft 3) both demonstrate Eurogroup stepping back from agreements proposed 4) nobody signed them..
22	1:56AM	5) both counter earlier claims that no document exists 6) both sides clearly leaking but journos obliged to protect sources so...
23	1:57AM	7) the definitive version will have to wait for Eurogroup and commission responses. But no chance of getting this as don't comment on leaks
24	2:00AM	8) let's focus on the substance as claim/counterclaim about process is becoming theme of every Euro/EC summit. Two sides not far apart IMP

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