The Appropriation of YouTube for the Social Construction of Casual Knowledge through Life-Hack Videos

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Final Thesis

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June 3, 2016

Abstract

YouTube contains a wide variety of tutorial videos wherein individuals present a certain expertise. Among these tutorials are life-hack videos that regard the presentation of an atypical practice. Uploaders construct a life-hack narrative and share this through a *YouTube* video page. These life-hack videos can be considered as narratives, as they consist of multiple narrative units that are chronologically ordered. Through storytelling, uploaders are able to logically convey an atypical practice to an audience. By structuring knowledge in a narrative form, viewers are able to encode the narrative sequence and form a mental representation in memory. Subsequently, viewers form an interpretation of the meaning that is shared through the narrative. The comment section allows individuals to express their interpretations and participate in the sharing of understandings. The process of presenting life-hack narratives and expressing understandings on a *YouTube* life-hack video page constitutes the social construction of casual knowledge. How this specifically is achieved is examined through a textual analysis of the content from three life-hack video pages. By analysing the narrative structure of life-hack videos, an understanding is formed about how knowledge is embedded within a story. The textual analysis of comments allows for the identification of interpretive frameworks that frame the narrative of a *YouTube* life-hack video page. Eventually, this paper describes how casual knowledge is socially constructed through the reinforcing presence of uploader, cognition and commenters.

Table of contents

Introduction

When we come across difficulties or other puzzlements, we can often turn to *YouTube* in search of a tutorial. People are using the platform to share their expertise and provide answers to all sorts of questions. Uploaders broadcast tutorials for software, programming, dancing, cooking and make-up among many others. Through all the casual knowledge that is present on the digital platform, *YouTube* has become a dynamic tool of inquiry. Users use the extensive database of *YouTube* in search of tutorials and in turn critique, discuss and comment on the content of a video page. Hereby the viewers can contribute in the production of meaning. Individuals appropriate the affordances to collectively discover information, and collaboratively create content (McLoughlin & Lee 2007, 666). Among these tutorials or "how-to" videos are life-hack videos. This specific form of *YouTube* video might be considered as a cultural practice through its common production methods, specific usage of *YouTube* and form of social interaction by the protagonist. Within life-hack videos, viewers are introduced to an atypical practice by a protagonist who appropriates physical objects for purposes different from the intended design. Subsequently, the protagonist guides viewers through a chronological sequence of sub-goals that are needed to achieve an end-state. This end-state is often proposed within the title of the video. Viewers use the comment section to participate in the construction of knowledge, by exchanging different interpretations. With this specific usage of *YouTube*, individuals can be enacted in a form of social knowledge construction that is of interest in this research.

By analysing the content of a life-hack video page, this research argues how knowledge is presented in a narrative form. Individuals appropriate the affordances of uploading to construct a video page. Through this, a life-hack narrative is presented to an audience with an external contour that frames the story. Life-hack videos become narratives through how broadcasters present a script and temporal sequence within a preconfigured setting (Herman 1997, 1048). As linguist David Herman states: "narrative specifically can be viewed as tool-systems for building mental models of the world" (2000). Life-hack uploaders construct short narratives in which they guide viewers through several narrative clauses. These narrative clauses contribute to the creation of a story world. By investigating the narrative structure of "How to open a wine bottle with a shoe" (Munchies 2014), "How To Open a Can with a Machete – Survival Hack #53" (CrazyRussianHacker 2016) and "Make a Candle from an Apple in 1 Minute" (HouseholdHacker 2015), the conventions of the life-hack narrative are delineated. This allows me to indicate how storytelling techniques are attributed by uploaders to logically convey knowledge to an audience in a narrative form. By analysing the structure of narrative and its specific functions, an understanding will be formed about how knowledge is embedded in a life-hack story.

The constructed narratives of life-hack videos may be perceived as mental representation or schematic structures by its viewers (Mandler 1984, 18). When encoding a narrative, people perceive

the essential characteristics of a story and reconstruct a mental representation in memory (Bordwell 1989, 26). These mental representations are open for different interpretations by its viewers. The comment section of a *YouTube* video page allows individuals to express these various interpretations. By commenting on a video, viewers become participants in the production of meaning. The comment sections of the three cases allow for the exploration of different modes of engagement with the life-hack narratives (Michelle 2007, 194). Through this, various forms of meaning making are investigated and different interpretative frameworks are identified. The expressed interpretations possibly influence or frame readings of others. As viewers become aware of a certain textual expression of an interpretation, their reception of the narrative will differ from those who did not read it (Genette & Maclean 1991, 266).

Through a textual analysis of the contents from the *YouTube* life-hack video pages, this research provides an answer to the following questions:

Main question:
How is *YouTube* appropriated for the social construction of casual knowledge through life-hack videos?

Sub-questions:

1. How is this knowledge presented in form of a structured narrative within the three research cases?

2. How do viewers interpret the life-hack narrative and express this within the comment section?

3. How do the expressed interpretations of the life-hack narrative contribute to the construction of meaning?

In order to analyse the narrative of the three *YouTube* videos and delineate the structure of the story, transcriptions of the videos were made. These transcriptions consist of the verbal communications, physical activities and behaviour of the protagonist. The textual analysis of the narrative allows for the identification of some recurring characteristics (Labov & Waletzky 1966, 27). This provides further insights into the practice of knowledge transfer through the usage of storytelling techniques by life-hack uploaders. Also a textual analysis of the comments is performed, through which various meanings of individuals are identified (Michelle 2007, 186). During the analysis, much attention is paid to the functionality of *YouTube* that is appropriated by its users for the distribution of content. *YouTube* as a digital tool facilitates and affords the cultural practice of life-hack videos.

The Significance of YouTube Interactions

As Snickars and Vonderau state within the introduction of *The YouTube Reader*, the digital platform previously did not receive appropriate attention from the academic field of media studies (2009, 17). However, *YouTube* has recently received more attention from the academic field because of its unique characteristics as a social digital tool. *YouTube* has become a platform full of amateur and professional practices that foster interaction and collaboration. This is achieved through the properties of *YouTube* that provide an interactive viewing experience by targeting community engagement (Uricchio 2009). Individuals are able to present themselves visually and orally, hereby addressing an audience personally. In turn, individuals are present to perceive the content and comment on the video. Patricia G. Lange has argued how this usage of *YouTube* may constitute affinity (2009). *YouTube* allows persons to utilize the affordances of *YouTube* to connect with like-minded people. The digital platform affords individuals to interact and form connections around all sorts of subjects. As Lange states, certain videos: "enable an interaction that gives viewers a feeling of being connected not to a video, but to a person who shares mutual beliefs or interests" (ibid., 83). Also Andrew Tolson recognizes this in his study of communicative practices on *YouTube* (2010)*.* According to him, the personalised form of presentation within a video may remind us of face-to-face communication. Viewers are directly addressed by a person and are able to comment and discuss with one another within the comment section. With this, *YouTube* facilitates a distinct form of online social interaction.

This paper contributes to the ongoing research on interactive practices on *YouTube* by analysing the video pages of life-hack videos. By borrowing ideas from cognitive narratology this paper provides insights about the usage of *YouTube* for the transfer of casual knowledge through networked interactions. Uploaders can make use of digital storytelling techniques to personally convey a message to an audience. In this way, digital storytelling allows individuals to use technologies for telling a tale (Dreon, Kerper & Landis 2011). By telling a tale through *YouTube*, an interactional process is initiated as a message is present to be perceived by an audience. Subsequently the audience may communicate a certain understanding or provide feedback within the comment section. The narratives and comments of the regarding life-hack video pages of this study expose a specific form of social interaction. Through the study of these interactions a specific cultural practice on *YouTube* is analysed that is directed at the construction of casual knowledge. The study of the communicational practices allows me to provide new insights into the cultural and social logic of *YouTube*.

Additionally, this research contributes to a further understanding of how people can make sense of the world through the internet. George Siemens argues how learning may reside in non-human appliances, as online social networks are able to control a flow of knowledge (2005). *YouTube* is one of those digital tools that allows individuals to connect and exchange ideas and knowledge. The

digital platform contains unique functionalities that allow individuals to use the platform for educational purposes. Educators have already explored the values of *YouTube* for educational purposes within formal settings. Curtis Bonk argues how videos can be: "created, watched, shared or commented on; hence, they link to the emerging culture of participatory learning" (2011, 16). Also Burke and Snyder recognize the value of *YouTube* for learning, as: "internet-based resources like YouTube integrate relevant content and encourage learners to reflect on how the material can be applied to settings within their discipline" (2008, 2). However, *YouTube* also forms an interesting tool for the construction of casual knowledge. The unique properties that are of value for educational settings, may also be used for the act of informal learning. The analysation of interactions on life-hack video pages will provide an understanding of a distinct form of online sense-making.

Presenting and Understanding Stories on YouTube

YouTube lends itself as a digital open stage where individuals can present audio-visual material and potentially reach huge numbers of viewers. The functions of the social platform allow individuals to publish any sort of theme or style of video, what makes the slogan "Broadcast Yourself" very fitting. Chris Anderson argued in an article for *Wired* how free online video may help humanity become smarter (2010). He explains how online video supports individuals to reach an international audience and share any sort of talent or concept in desire of fame or social recognition. Chris Anderson describes this phenomenon as *crowd accelerated innovation*, because of how people are able to tap into different disciplines and develop new skills. Communities are formed around a niche and can be considered as places that are open for visitations by anyone who´s interested. Media and communication scholar Howard Rheingold argued how these digital places of communities have a cognitive and social nature (1993, 55). Individuals may use *YouTube* as a digital place for the social construction of knowledge through videos. This is achieved by utilizing the functionalities of the digital open platform to present audio-visual material and interact with an audience.

Life-hack uploaders make use of the functions of *YouTube* to share knowledge in a narrative form. A narrative can be considered as a technique for: "recapitulating experience, in particular, a technique of constructing narrative units which match the temporal sequence of that experience" (Labov & Waletzky 1966, 13). Linguists William Labov and Joshua Waletzky argue how a narrative is structured by several narrative clauses that cannot be displaced within a temporal sequence (ibid., 27). These narrative clauses are actions or events that happened in a specific temporal order and are communicated in this specific order to properly convey a story. Between these narrative clauses, a temporal juncture indicates how two narrative clauses are separated by time. Labov and Waletzky therefore broadly define narrative as: "any sequence of clauses which contains at least one temporal juncture" (ibid.,28). As in the case of "How to Open a Wine Bottle with a Shoe", the underlying

structure of the story is coherent to the real order of actions and happenings of an experience. Without this, a narrative would lose its meaning and possibly become incomprehensible. Thus, narrative clauses are orderly restricted, as the specific order of narrative clauses has to be maintained for readers to construct the right meaning. Psychologist David Rumelhart agrees with this theory and argues how short stories consist of multiple relationships between narrative clauses (1975). By constructing a narrative that consists of multiple relationships between narrative clauses, *YouTube* broadcasters are able to structure meaning and initiate a cognitive process. Broadcasters guide viewers through several goals and sub-goals (narrative clauses) to solve a certain problem or task.

Each unit of a narrative articulates specific elements and conditions of the real experience, such as the setting or complication. Therefore, storytelling can be considered as a functional technique for recapitulating experiences (Labov & Waletzky 1966, 13). Through the analysation of structural elements, Labov and Waletzky were able to formulate an overall structure of oral personal narratives (ibid, 32). According to this framework, narrators construct stories governed by specific narrative functions. Labov and Waletzky argue how narrators firstly introduce listeners to a setting, that they define as the *orientation section* (ibid.). Subsequently listeners are guided through four phases of narrative clauses: firstly the *complication*, secondly an *evaluation*, thirdly the *resolution* and finally the *coda*. The coda can be considered as a concluding part of the narrative that does not have to be related to the rest of the story (ibid., 39). The overall structure describes the narrative functions that are communicated through the clauses. This research from Labov and Waletzky illustrates how a general structural model can be constructed through the analysis of a specific narrative form. By identifying and analysing a narrative clause, its specific function for the complete story world can be defined. Storytellers properly transfer information or knowledge by constructing a chronological sequence of actions and happenings that form narrative clauses. Life-hack broadcasters achieve this by producing and uploading a structured narrative in audio-visual format.

During the production of a life-hack video, the narrative is assigned with a certain focal stance. Because of this stance, viewers of a story are restricted by the narrator in the amount of information they receive about a character and the story world (Edmiston 1989, 729). Within literature studies, this is often described as focalization (Edmiston 1989, 729). Gérard Genette defines focalization as the point of view, or vocal stance, the narrator and its characters take in within a story (1980, 189). William Edmiston pays attention to texts wherein the narrator and character are the same person (1989). Within these types of stories two forms of focalizations are possible, internal and external focalization (ibid., 739). Through internal focalization, the experiencing self (character of the story) is the subject of perception, without further statements from the narrator. As Edmiston further explains: "the experiencing self is the focalizer when a narrative statement contains nothing more than what he could have perceived or known at the moment of event" (ibid.). The readers, or viewers, of a narrative with

internal focalization are thus restricted to the observations of the character as they happen in front of our eyes. With the second form of focalization, a narrator is present to recount the story from the outside (ibid.). This is called external focalization. The narrator is aware of the complete temporal sequence and may reflect on his previous actions from the present. Through a focal stance, life-hack uploaders are able to frame the temporal sequence from a certain perspective. Protagonist address viewers, while acting out the practice and reflecting on their actions. This allows uploaders to place the focus on the protagonist as the focalizer, who thereby becomes the subject of perception. The narrative is communicated from the focal stance.

By perceiving a life-hack narrative that is communicated on the open platform of *YouTube*, individuals can construct a mental representation of the essential structural elements of the story. To understand a narrative and make proper inferences, the spectator must mentally structure the story events into a coherent whole (Bordwell 1989, 27). Film theorist David Bordwell states that: "in constructing a story while following it, and in reconstructing it in memory, we work with the gist–the essential events and points" (ibid., 26). According to Bordwell, it is the underlying structure of stories that we assimilate for the construction of mental representations. We tend to forget the surface structure, like word choice and intonation (ibid.). The underlying structure of a story is built by the related actions, events and causalities. Viewers perceive these essential elements that are important for the reception and understanding of the message. As cognitive science professor Jean Matter Mandler and Nancy Johnson state: "people assimilate these sequences to form story schemata that guide comprehension and control retrieval from memory" (Mandler & Johnson 1977, 148). The narratives of life-hack videos may function as tool-systems for building mental models of the world. The story logic of life-hack videos enables people to comprehend and build story worlds of the presented experiences. In this sense, narratives of life-hack videos may be considered as cognitive artefacts (Herman 2000).

Each element of the narrative is open for reception and commentary. Viewers are able to communicate different interpretations through utilizing the comment section of a video page. Individuals are able to critically reflect on the setting, sub-goals, protagonist and production method among others. When doing so, participating viewers express various modes of reception. Commenting viewers may take in a distanced position in relation to the text, while others demonstrate a more transparent mode of reception (Michelle 2007, 195). A transparent mode of reception can be defined as one wherein: "the text provides the preliminary resources for its interpretation" (ibid., 196). In this mode of reception, readers evaluate a text according to its own internal logic. This mode of reception could be described as a preferred reading by the authors of a given text, as readers or viewers accept the story world and suspend disbelief. A second mode of reception described by communication scholar Carolyn Michelle is the referential mode, which is less closely related to the reality of the text

itself in comparison with the transparent mode (ibid., 199). In the referential mode of reading, viewers perceive a text as lifelike and compare the story-world to experiences and knowledge from their personal world. In a third mode of reception, the mediated mode, individuals perceive the text as a media production and take in a more distanced relationship (ibid., 203). In this mode viewers comment on the technical production, textual references or intentions and motivations of the author. These three modes of reception clearly illustrate various degrees of relational positions between viewers and a text. Commenters of a life-hack video may demonstrate one or more of the three modes of reception within the comment section. By receiving the narrative and constructing and expressing an interpretation, commenters expose a dominant/preferred, negotiated or oppositional reading (ibid., 194). Thus, commenters use an interpretative framework to express a degree of agreement with the story world. This indicates how commenters make sense of the world through stories. The expressions of different interpretations allow individuals to frame discourse, as readers of a comment view the video in different light than those who didn't (Genette & Maclean 1991, 266). The posting of a comment can effectuate a very different reading of the audio-visual text among other viewers.

This process of storytelling and perception learns us that the communication of stories is followed by reception, through which cognitive transfer takes place (Eder 2003, 282). The cognitive perspective on narratives allows us to recognize that textual structure has a function. This function is attributed by broadcasters to transfer their knowledge to recipients or participants. Viewers are able to comment and enter the discussion, what is supported by the technical functions of *YouTube*. This corresponds to the idea of the social construction of knowledge, developed by Brown and Adler (2008, 19). Through the participation of individuals, understanding is produced within a community. During this process, each contributing element works reinforcing (Garrison & Anderson 2003, 28). The teaching presence, cognitive presence and social presence are of importance for the initiation of this social process. This research provides insights into how this process takes form within life-hack video pages on *YouTube*.

Method

To explore how knowledge is socially constructed within a life-hack video page, the contents and social interactions from the video case of *Munchies, CrazyRussianHacker* and *HouseHoldHacker* will be investigated through a textual analysis. With a textual analysis, I obtain: "a sense of the ways in which, in particular cultures at particular times, people make sense of the world around them" (McKee 2003, 1). Firstly, the narrative structures will be delineated. By analysing the narrative structure and its external contours, like the title and description, I am able to identify various functions that communicate the meaning of a life-hack video. Users utilize the affordances of *YouTube* for the sharing of narratives, in which they propose an understanding of the world. The narrative structures that are

exposed from the *YouTube* videos form clear evidence for the delineation of storytelling techniques applied by broadcasters. Secondly, receptions of the narrative by the viewers are identified through a close reading of the comments. A textual analysis of the comments allows me to identify different responses to the meaning proposed in a life-hack video (Michelle 2007, 194). This is achieved by borrowing ideas from cognitive narratology that incorporates concepts about human intelligence (Herman 2009; Mandler & Johnson 1977). Finally, a close reading of comments is conducted to analyse how they contribute to the social understanding of knowledge. This complete method is fundamental for the argument of how different elements on a life-hack video page contribute to the social construction of knowledge.

In order to conduct a textual analysis of the narratives and exposing the structure, transcripts of the three cases have been made (appendix A). This approach is based on the research of media scholar Andrew Tolson into communicative practices on *YouTube* (2010). The analysis of transcripts allows Tolson to make observations about the structural features of a *YouTube* video (ibid., 279). Also Labov and Waletzky apply a similar approach in their research on short narratives from oral storytellers (1966). The transcriptions of oral versions of personal narratives are used to compose an overall structure of short oral narratives. This is achieved by extending the transcripts with a system of symbols and subscripts to identify various different clauses within the narrative (ibid., 21). David Rumelhart applies a similar system of symbols and characters within his analysis of short textual narratives to identify narrative functions and delineate the underlying structure of short stories (1975). Within this research the three transcripts are supplemented with a system of symbols and characters quite similar to those created by Labov and Waletzky (1966), and Rumelhart (1975). However, within the transcripts of this research much more attention is devoted to the audio-visual nature of *YouTube* videos. Next to citations of oral expressions, the transcripts also contain descriptions about the protagonist's physical behaviour and the image composition within the video. The symbolic system indicates the functions of the different elements of the story world. Within the analysis, the transcripts are used to delineate the specific characteristics that are implemented to transfer knowledge through storytelling.

A textual analysis of comments allows for an exploration of the sense-making practices of commenters (McKee 2003, 14). Recipients of a life-hack narrative might form an identical understanding of a text, though their interpretation and evaluation of its meaning differs. A textual analysis of the comments, with respect for the concerning cultural artefact, allows for the identification of various interpretations and receptions (Michelle 2007, 186). By citing comments and making critical judgements about the implications of textual responses of viewers, conclusions are formed regarding various modes of receptions. This is achieved by evaluating the denotative and connotative meanings of comments. By observing various modes of reception and recognizing its function for the life-hack video page, a better understanding will be formed about how knowledge can be socially negotiated

on a *YouTube*. The social and cultural contexts of comments are not evaluated, though these are of importance for the nature of receptions (Michelle 2007, 182). However, the focus of this research is on the social processes itself that are achieved through contributing texts.

During the analysis of the three cases, much attention will also be paid to the functioning of *YouTube*. It is important to recognize that individuals achieve the social production of knowledge within the digital realm. The workings of *YouTube* support individuals to achieve the sharing of mental models and understandings of the world. The affordances of the *YouTube* platform are communicated through the interface and enable the activities of sharing content and posting comments. By acknowledging the technical nature of the cultural practice, a better understanding will be formed about how the virtual objects of participants are actualized through the relation between user action and machine action (van den Boomen 2014, 41). This is achieved by reflecting on the workings of *YouTube* that are communicated through the design of the interface (Norman 1999, 40). Through this, I'm also able to recognize how the external contours of a life-hack narrative are constituted.

Each case is selected because of the presented practice, specific usage of *YouTube* and similar form of communication. All the three cases regard the exposition of an atypical practice. The protagonist verbally guides the viewer through several steps in order to accomplish an end state, what will be further delineated within the analysis. Hereby the videos form a recipe for organizing the regarding atypical practice. This recipe is presented on *YouTube* through uploading an audio-visual narrative with relating title and description. By using the affordances of *YouTube* the uploaders composed titles that briefly describe the activity of the narrative. Also, in each case one protagonist directly addresses the audience to communicate the narrative. Nonetheless, each case also contains unique characteristics. For example, within the video from *HouseholdHacker* the protagonist only presents himself by showing his hands. Additionally, we hear a voice, also representing the protagonist, narrating the happenings. The video from *Munchies* is produced and broadcasted on a more professional channel, as *Munchies* is an initiative of media company *Vice.* In this video, the uploader doesn't act as the protagonist within the video. *CrazyRussianHacker* presents himself as a character within his video and pertains a reputation with more than seven million subscribers. With respect for the unique characteristics of each video, the corpus of this study forms a distinct sample of life-hack video pages as a cultural practice on *YouTube*.

Life-Hack Storytelling

Story presentation

The *YouTube* platform contains specific mechanics and functional aspects that afford uploaders to construct a video-page. When uploading a video, uploaders are requested to provide a video title and

description, among others (appendix B.1). As in the case of video A, the title "How to Open a Wine Bottle with a Shoe" communicates an understanding to the audience. The titles from video C and B fulfil an identical function by summarizing the happenings of the narrative. Each title acts as a supplement and also includes an indication of the theme. The titles of videos A and B contain the words "how to", what it typical for tutorial videos on *YouTube*. The title of video C starts with "make a", what also communicates the intention of making something. Additionally, the titles from each video describe the physical objects that are involved within the life-hack practice. This allows the audience to make inferences about the content of the video as the title acts as a first indicator of the narrative. The title guides the attention of the audience and already structures expectations (Stanitzek 2005, 32)

The video description may also be appropriated for communicating an understanding of the video narrative. Within the case of video C, *HouseHoldHacker* used the description area to summarize each of the performed actions of the life-hack narrative. In case A and B, the description area is primarily used to give a more extensive description of the video than the title does. The description of video A contains the following statement:

> "Once you get a taste for exquisite wines you're more likely to end up in situations where an actual cork is in between you and the liquid inside. Billy, has tried the infamous "shoe" technique, which worked, surprisingly"

This description has a humorous tone. This may inform us about the mood within the video. By reading the description, viewers may create a better understanding of the context. Also, in each of the cases the uploaders promote themselves by referring to their social media accounts and directing viewers to other published *YouTube* videos. These hyperlinks form gateways to further background information about the uploaders who are the producers of the video content. In this way, the description of a video contributes to an initial framing of the video.

The title and description of a video page allow individuals to make inferences about the life-hack narrative and therefore fulfil a functional role. The video title and description are the means by which a video is presented to the audience. The uploading interface guides users in their composition of a video page by requiring textual elements that are strongly related to the narrative. The digital mediated video sharing on *YouTube* ensures a uniform end product (appendix B.2). This process signifies the relation between user and technology that constitutes the video page. By requesting users to provide textual elements, the life-hack narrative is proposed to the audience in a distinct manner. The process of video publishing is the means by which an audio-visual life-hack narrative becomes a *YouTube* video page. Through this process, the provided textual elements of the uploader contribute to the understanding of the narrative and thereby fulfil a function role. Because of this, the additional textual elements could be described as paratext, as these elements provide the narrative which its

initial contours (ibid., 30). The paratexts that are composed by the uploader contribute to a better reception of the narrative and support the structuring of understanding (Genette & Maclean 1991, 262).

Story focalization

Within the life-hack video cases, the narratives contain a certain focal stance through the presentation of a protagonist. In the case of videos A and B we see a person who is experiencing the execution of the practice (screenshots appendix A). In the case of video C, the hands that carry out the atypical practice become the representation of a protagonist. Each essential step of the life-hack practice is performed and framed through camera work. Within the transcripts the framing is described by the text between the symbols "//" and "\\". This is followed by a screenshot of the video. Subsequently, the behaviour of the protagonist is described between the symbols "<<" and ">>". For example, within the transcript of video B at 00:44, the behaviour of the protagonist (<SG4<Protagonist smashes the can on the table>SG4>) is communicated by a close-up of his hands (/SG4/Close-up of protagonist's hands\SG4\). Through this, the protagonist visualizes an action that is essential for the achievement of the end state. This indicates how a character and his handling is the main subject of perception. Within each case, the protagonist is a participant in the story that focalizes the events through his behaviour. The handling and actions performed by the protagonist are the depiction of how the atypical practice is carried out and experienced. By framing these actions, the focus is placed on the experiencing self as we follow the protagonist through the story. Hereby, the protagonist of the life-hack narrative becomes the focalizer of the practice, what reminds of internal focalization (Edmiston 1989, 739).

The focalization of the atypical practice through behaviour is supplemented with instructional and reflective commentary from the protagonist himself. The protagonist directly narrates his actions and thereby additionally presents himself as an observer of his actions, what reminds of external focalization (ibid.). Within the transcripts the explanations of the protagonist are indicated by "SGex". These explanations indicate that the protagonist is in the known of the specifics of the atypical practice. Within the narrative of video A, the protagonist provides explanations like: "we need a shoe. It should be kind of robust as well" (line 5). By stating conditions for the actions to work, the protagonist becomes a narrator who is reflecting on his actions. The protagonist may step out the story and observe the happenings. In video A, this is achieved by alternating images of the protagonist expressing reflections into the camera (external vocalization) and images of the protagonist performing the atypical practice (internal vocalization). Video B contains a similar form of focalization. Within the case of video C, a voice is commenting (external focalization) on the happenings that are visualised through the performing hands (internal focalization). The commenting voice does not have to be from the protagonist that is represented by the hands. Through the combination of internal and external

focalization, life-hack videos contain a hybrid form of focalization. The protagonist carries out the atypical practice as a character within the story, but also verbally comments and reflects on these actions.

The focalization of the narrative is characterized by conversational talk and behaviour from the protagonists. In videos A and B, the protagonist addresses the viewers by looking into the camera. In line 4, 5, 7, 9, 16, 17 and 18 of the transcript from video A, the protagonist involves the audience by making use of the plural "we". The protagonist of transcript B makes use of a similar technique. He also speaks into the camera, addresses the audience directly and makes use of the plural form "you" to engage the audience. In video C, the audience is verbally addressed by the narrator. The narrator directly addresses the viewers as a plural "you" and "we". This can be seen in line 1, 3, 6 and 9 of the transcript. This may remind viewers of direct conversational talk and construct a feeling of co-presence (Tolson 2010, 281). This conversational character of life-hack videos may invite the audience to comment, debate and provide feedback (Burgess & Green 2009, 54).

Story structure

The form of hybrid focalization, that is constructed through the production of audio-visual material, presents the viewers with the narrative. This allows narrators to communicate various narrative clauses and functions. In each of the cases, the audience is first introduced to the *setting*. Within the transcriptions, this is indicated with the symbol "S". The text between "/S/" and "\S\" describes the framed video images that contribute to the communication of the setting. The behaviour of the protagonist that is also contributing to the communication of the setting is located between "<S<" and ">S>". Oral expressions from the protagonists are numbered, followed by a symbol to indicate the narrative function of his sayings. As can be seen in transcription A, the protagonist communicates the setting within line 1 and 2. We are introduced to the protagonist through a close-up and personal introduction, through which he becomes a character within the story. Subsequently, he communicates the happenings that will follow in the video, his physical location and his current state. Transcript B and C each contain a similar introduction to the setting. In both videos, the uploaders introduce themselves through a trademark introduction animation and orally communicate the goal of the video. The elements that contribute to the setting can thus be defined as an orientation section, as it introduces the viewers to a person, place and behavioural situation (Labov & Waletzky 1966, 32).

Within video A, the protagonist clearly states the situation wherein the atypical practice forms a solution to a problem (line 3). His statements introduce the audience to a *complication* (C). The communication of the complication is supported by the visual image of the protagonist holding up a wine bottle, without the presence of a bottle opener. Within transcript B, the complication is also orally communicated, though of a different nature. The protagonist explains why his tutorial video is of

importance by stating the difficulty of the practice in line 3. The complication that is associated with the practice forms the justification for the narrative. Within video C, the narrator only communicates the complication within the evaluating section near the end. The narrator states how it might be useful during a power outage (line 15). This illustrates how a complication is not very important for a life-hack narrative. The complication is primarily the uncommon practice itself, what is typical for gratuitous life-hack narratives. The complication therefore can be considered as a free clause (Labov & Waletzky 1966, 22). The narrative function of communicating a complicating event can be placed freely within the narrative sequence or not at all.

After the orientation section and possibly communicating a complication, the protagonist guides viewers through several *sub-goals* (SG). These sub-goals are addressed in chronological order, as every sub-goal has to be carried out before the next can be performed. Within the transcripts, the order of sub-goals is indicated by numbers that identify the strict sequence. The sub-goals, as narrative clauses, are separated through a temporal juncture. Sub-goals can be defined as narrative clauses, because of their restricted position within the narrative sequence (Labov & Waletzky 1966, 22). In each case, the protagonist communicates the physical act of a sub-goal through his behaviour. As can be seen within transcript C, sub-goal four (SG4) regards the pouring of lime juice over the exposed fruit. This is communicated by actually performing the sub-goal (<SG4<…>SG4>) and framing this action with a camera (/SG4/…\SG4\). The oral expressions concerning a specific sub-goal are considered as explanations (SG4ex), as this is not the actual sub-goal itself. By performing the sub-goals, that are in service of the central goal, the protagonist is able to logically convey the practice. Additionally, the protagonist my repeat the sequence of sub-goals to form a recapitulation, indicated by *repetition* (RT). This however does not form a regular feature of life-hack narratives, as only videos B and C contain a repetition part.

When all the essential sub-goals are performed, the protagonist presents the *resolution* (R). It is the end state that is already indicated within the title of the video. This end state is anticipated by the viewers and communicated through the framing of the final action from the protagonist. For example, in video B the protagonist cuts of the top of a can and achieves the main objective of the narrative. In video A, the protagonist pulls out the cork of the wine bottle. This final action is made possible through all previous undertaken sub-goals. In some cases, the resolution is followed by an *evaluation* (E) of the achievement. This evaluation is always expressed verbally, as it is a mental reflection on the atypical practice.

Each of the life-hack videos ends with a concluding section that is not related to the atypical practice. As in the case of video A, the ending is indicated by a black screen with production credits. In the other two cases, the video ends with a trademark animation that contains links to other videos. Also during the concluding section of videos B and C, the protagonist verbally requests an action from

the viewer. In the case of video B, viewers are requested to leave a "like" (line 22). The protagonist of video C requests viewers to have a look at his other uploaded videos (line 13). These endings are not related to the atypical practice and defined as the coda. As Labov and Waletzky state: "the coda is a functional device for returning the verbal perspective to the present moment" (1966, 39). The coda is not of importance for the transfer of the life-hack practice itself.

This brief analysis of the narrative structure of the life-hack videos allowed for the description of the linear story sequence that is constructed through multiple narrative clauses. This sequence allows uploaders to properly convey an atypical practice in a narrative form. A life-hack practice is presented within a setting and demonstrated through several sub-goals that lead up to the resolution and evaluation. Because of this sequence, a life-hack video can be considered as a narrative (Labov & Waletzky 1966, 28). The following structural narrative functions were identified:

1. **Setting**: The setting regards the communication of place, character (protagonist) and location through video framing, behaviour and oral expressions.

2. **Complication**: The complication indicates the relevance of the tutorial. It is a free clause that can be placed freely within the narrative sequence or even be left out.

3. **Sub-goals**: The sub-goals are the necessary steps in service of a higher goal. The sub-goals are restricted narrative clauses within the temporal sequence.

4. **Resolution**: The resolution indicates the final action of the protagonist through which he achieves the end state. It is the result of the various sub-goals.

5. **Evaluation:** The evaluation is an expression of a mental reflection on the atypical practice.

6. **Coda**: The coda is a concluding section of the video that does not regard relevant information of the atypical practice. It takes viewers to the present moment.

Understanding Life-Hack Stories

With the analysis of story structure, we have gained insights into the conventions of specific life-hack narratives on *YouTube*. These conventions could be described as narrative functions that communicate a mental representation to its audience. The story sequence forms a schema that fits into the expectation of how a story develops and how the presented data can be stored in memory (Bordwell 1989, 26). The narrative conventions of the life-hack videos guide individuals in a structured manner through the relevant knowledge or information. By understanding the chronological order of sequence within life-hack videos, viewers are able to mentally create a representation of the narrative. As Herman states: "every act of telling arguably requires that a listener or reader use scripts to help set the narrative in motion, to cocreate the story" (1997, 1051). Narrative elements function as cues for the process of encoding a story as a representation of knowledge (Herman 2009, 33). Uploaders share

structured stories to guide viewers through the narrative functions, what supports the cognitive process. The setting, sub-goals, resolution and evaluation form the essential elements of life-hack videos. We work with the essential events for the reconstruction of a story in memory (Bordwell 1989, 26). This allows us, for example, to remember that we need a wall and a shoe for opening a wine bottle without a corkscrew. Or that we can open a can with a machete safely if we place the can on its side. It is these essential events and actions that form the narrative cues for storing a narrative within our memory (ibid.).

During the construction of mental representations from life-hack videos, viewers may compose different interpretations. Each individual part of the presented narrative sequence is open for different interpretations and responses from viewers. The comment section of the *YouTube* video pages grants access to these various meanings and levels of engagement that are present among viewers. The affordance of commenting that is implemented within *YouTube*, allows individuals to communicate their unique understanding and reception of various narrative elements. Some commenters showcase a more engaged mode of reception by accepting the story world, production method and proposed setting. Comments from these individuals are from within the story world and indicate a higher level of engagement. Some examples of these kinds of comments are:

> *Video A*
> **jamesanderson1711**
> 1:13 yeah and then you get red wine all over your shirt, nahhh
>
> *Video A*
> **Linda Hoekstra**
> This guy seems so cool to hang out with
>
> *Video C*
> **Hans Olo**
> So the apple is just a random container and I could exchange it with every other item I find? Just fill it with a wick and oil.

These type of comments accept the presented story world as real life and showcase how individuals suspend disbelief. The comments indicate how viewers may rely on the accuracy of the narrative to be a truthful depiction of reality. The commenter "jamesanderson1711" refers to a specific part of the video by citing the time and describing a result from one of the sub-goals. The protagonist within video A did indeed get red wine on his shirt. For this commenting individual, the sub-goal of slamming the bottle against the wall (SG4) is associated with spilling wine over your shirt. He communicates how this has become a truthful depiction of sub-goal 4 within video A. The comment from "Linda Hoekstra" indicates how she accepts a specific part of the setting to be a truthful representation of reality. According to her, the protagonist seems like a "cool person to hang out with". This indicates how she

perceives the protagonist to be an honest representation of the person he is in real life. The comment from video C extends on the atypical practice by questioning other possible applications. She accepts the story world of the uploader as something that can be achieved in reality. These commenting individuals have encoded the story world and hold the mental representations to be a truthful or honest depiction of reality. The comments are reflections of the acceptance of the story sequence presented within the life-hack videos. The narrative clauses provided by the video form the interpretive framework for the comments of preferred or transparent readings.

Other commenters take in a more distanced position in relation to the narrative and provide feedback and critiques that are based on lifeworld experiences and prior world knowledge:

> *Video A*
> **Bozomonkey2007**
> I would wrap bottle within a jacket or wear heavy gloves while doing this. You are almost breaking the bottle to do this. Just imagine how hard you'd do it opening your second or third bottle with a heavy wine buzz trying to show off to your friends.
>
> *Video A*
> **Guillaume Svennskhov**
> Additional tip: put the bottle in a sock before sticking it in the shoe and then it won't break and ruin your pants!
>
> *Video B*
> **Pleurop Tv**
> Don't try it on a can with a thin liquid inside I got it all over the place

This form of reception can be defined as a referential mode, as individuals: "make comparisons and analogies between that depicted reality and their own knowledge and experience of the extratextual world" (Michelle 2007, 199). Within these quoted comments, individuals address certain sub-goals and provide feedback based on personal experiences with the atypical practice. Commenter "Bonzomonkey2007" accepts the narrative structure and probably mentally reflected on its applicability for various situations. He extends on the atypical practice by stating how one could use a jacket and gloves for safety reasons. Also "Guillaume Svennskhov" provides a comment that is directed at the improvement of personal safety. "Pleurop Tv" argues that the applicability of the practice in video B is limited, because of a personal experience with the life-hack practice. In each of the comments, individuals address narrative clauses by making use of referential knowledge. This illustrates how individuals encode the narrative, examine its applicability and subsequently provide feedback. Some individuals do this to contest the presented knowledge, while others agree to the practice and possibly provide additional knowledge. Within this mode of reception, individuals use the presented story world in combination with lifeworld knowledge and experiences as an interpretive framework for commenting.

Other commenters recognize the narrative as a media production and provide analytical feedback. These commenters address the production methods implemented by the broadcasters. For example:

> **Video A**
> **Chochopav**
> Muthafucker is cheating ...you don't edit shit like that, you film uninterupted for as long as it takes! Innocent, but worrying lie from VICE...
> Soon we'll probably be seing a merge...CNN/VICEtv
>
> **Video B**
> **A7] Falconn2**
> "wut up errabuddy an welum beck to mah leburatoery wher sefty is numma won priaorty"
>
> **Video C**
> **Hadiya Howard**
> The clarity of this video is amazing. Great camera

Within each of these comments, individuals externally observe the story world and criticize or compliment components of the structured narrative. The comment from "Chochopav" criticizes the editing work and argues that the video has become untrustworthy. It is a direct evaluation of the production method and recognizes that the video is a media production. The second comment has a more positive connotation and also addresses the technical production by complementing the video quality. What can be seen in the comment from "A7] Falconn2" on video B, is how Individuals can criticize the character or setting within a media production. Here the commenter ridicules the protagonist for his Russian accent. In the case of video B, many more individuals posted similar comments to address the accent of the protagonist. Within these type of comments, individuals primarily pay attention to the aesthetic qualities. This can be defined as a mediated mode of reception. As Michelle states: "a mediated mode of reception with an aesthetic focus is one in which the viewer draws attention to any of various features of technical production, such as narrative construction, plot, pace, timing, camera work, use of visuals or captions, editing, scriptwriting, performance, and characterization" (ibid., 203). With these type of comments, lifeworld knowledge and experiences form the interpretive framework.

Not all comments expose one distinct mode of reception. Individuals have access to each of the three described interpretative frameworks, as the following comment illustrates:

> **Video B**
> **Jasminemm**
> Crh love ur vids so much. Ignore all the haters, you do an amazing job and ur accent is epic

Here the commenter complements the aesthetic quality of the broadcaster's productions by saying: "Crh luve ur vids so much", what can be categorized as a mediated mode of reception. Complementing of the protagonist as a real person indicates a transparent mode of reception (ibid., 196). For commenting on the protagonist, the commenter draws from resources inside the story world itself. Additionally, "Jasminemm" refers to the ridiculing comments of others that are aspects of real life. This illustrates how individuals can compose comments that are formed through multiple interpretative frameworks. Thus, not all comments can be categorized into one clear mode of reception, while others can clearly exhibit a strong homogeneous form of reception.

By employing the story world and/or one's lifeworld experiences, individuals are able to construct and expose an oppositional, negotiated or preferred response (ibid., 210). By receiving and encoding the narrative sequence, individuals correlate the proposed knowledge with other story schema and world knowledge to construct meaning. Specific elements of the structured story that were identified within the first part of this analysis, are received by the audience and in turn considered to be accepted or not. Each participating viewer, with his own cultural background and beliefs, possesses a unique composed set of interpretive frameworks and therefore demonstrates a different response within the comment section. These different oppositional, negotiated or preferred responses indicate how individuals take in various positions in relation to the text.

Social Understanding Life-Hack Stories

The interpretations that are shared through the comment section automatically become public statements. This is afforded by *YouTube*, what supports the participation of viewers within the construction of knowledge. Similar to the conversational speech of protagonists within the life-hack videos, also comments imply to address other individuals. Commenters may seem to directly address the protagonist himself, as can be seen in the previous comment from "Jasminemm". It may also seem that participating viewers address others in general, like the comment from "Hans Olo". The previous cited comments indicate the interactional character of *YouTube*, because of how individuals directly express statements regarding the presented story world. Participants do this in a digital public area where they can negotiate meaning, frame discourse and reach out to others. This nicely illustrates how people can make use of *YouTube* as a practical instrument. As Rheingold argues: "if you need specific information or an expert opinion or a pointer to a resource, a virtual community is like a living encyclopedia" (1993, 51). Individuals tap into knowledge presented by the uploader, contemplate its accuracy and relevance, and may participate by sharing their opinion or position.

Viewers can participate in the exchange of interpretations and knowledge by constructing a conversation. This is achieved by commenting on a comment, what is visualised through a hierarchy within the comment section. Through this, participating viewers can construct multiple conversations

within the comment section of a life-hack video page. Also, commenters can tag names to indicate to who they are replying. Hereby *YouTube* supports the creation of digital places where conversation is facilitated. An example of a conversation from a life-hack video page:

Video C
jordanalt
But won't it stink out your house with veg oil :/ that shit would just be nasty

> **HouseholdHacker**
> It's not noticeable... You can also use olive oil.
>
> **Perktube1**
> +HouseholdHacker do you think coconut oil will work?
>
> **Dacr0n**
> +HouseholdHacker doesnt olive oil smell even more as it burns?
>
> **Tobi Sterling**
> +Perktube1 i think any kind of oil would work, tbh.
>
> **skullcharger887**
> +Perktube1 that would rock
>
> **jordanalt**
> Might as well put some scented oil that way it'll smell way better then smelling veg oil lol, Great idea tho
>
> **ton321**
> You can use scented oil from any craft shop if that is a concern.
>
> **Jesse Sisolack**
> +Perktube1 Only kind of. I have tested coconut oil. It burns a very hot blue flame that gives off almost no light and does not last very long. It seems to have some problems wicking since it is a bit thicker. It does work a bit better if the oil is kept warm so it can wick better, but again, very low light output.
>
> **Lina Laughs**
> I don't think it would stink that bad.
>
> **jordanalt**
> +Lina Laughs well tbh I was just thinking of the obvious, but wouldn't of thought of making a candle from cooking oil, as well as light might as well give it some colour and nicer smell then it smelling like a fry up or something greasy ☺
>
> **Tom Olofsson**
> Maybe almond oil would smell better.
>
> **Rhett Having a Vietnam Flashback**
> +jordanalt You could also use Peanut oil. Smells like peanuts, mmmm... Watch out for nut allergies doh.
>
> **WiredIntoTheGrid**
> +HouseholdHacker ...Pssst!...does it work with......Lube? ...Just askin 8-)
> Peace & Ta Ta for now

This conversation cited from the webpage of video C illustrates the social construction of knowledge through appropriating the affordance of commenting on *YouTube.* What can be seen within this example is how "jordanalt" appropriates the comment section to express a referential interpretation in form of a question. Within this example, the protagonist and broadcaster *HouseHoldHacker* takes part in the social exchange of knowledge. The protagonist continues to be involved in the construction of meaning and understanding by replying to the comment. With the response, the uploader is able to further expand the presented story world. Through this, the uploader may also strive to effectuate a more transparent and preferred reading among the viewers. In this example, a viewer responded with a referential interpretation of the narrative. This interaction between participating viewer and uploader illustrates the use of *YouTube* as a tool of inquiry. Additionally, other viewers participate within the conversation to provide referential knowledge. By accepting the story world and using real world knowledge, commenters are engaged in a conversation about various applications of a specific sub-goal (SG6). The shared narrative provides the initial frame of understanding that in turn is debated within the comment section.

The conversational comments among participating viewers indicate how different interpretative frameworks are constructed. Within the previous cited conversation, the contributing viewers showcased a similar interpretative framework. Each individual contributed new insights and ideas to further extend on the atypical practice. Through the similar interpretative frameworks, a relative peaceful conversation is constructed. However, individuals are also able to contest the interpretative framework of one another:

The comment from "chochopav1" can be defined as a mediated mode of reception that criticizes the production method. This argument is contested by "Mikee Tja", as he makes use of an interpretative framework composed of the narrative and own lifeworld experiences. The two different modes of reception clash, as each participating viewer has taken in a different position in relation to the text through different interpretative frameworks. This also indicates how the audience is able to gather within the comment section and debate the reliability or applicability of the narrative. The construction of understanding has become social, as participating viewers express various understandings and interpretations. Both previous conversations from life-hack pages illustrate how participating viewers tap into a fluid community that is constructed around a life-hack video to negotiate meaning.

Through the design of *YouTube*, the comment section forms an inseparable element of the video-page. The comment section is a very dynamic element of the life-hack video pages, because of how individuals may always contribute new messages and understandings. These textual contributions become functional elements, similar to the title and description provided by the uploader. Comments form paratexts that possibly influence certain understandings of other viewers. Comments as paratexts therefore constitute diverse objects among viewers (Genette & Maclean 1991, 269). By reading comments of other viewers, individuals perceive a life-hack video as a cultural text in a different way. Viewers do not have to accept the comments of others, what can be seen in the short conversation between "chochopav1" and "Mikee Tja". However, readers of the comment have become aware of a mode of reception that is different from his or her own. By composing a comment and communicating a certain understanding, commenters are able to direct the attention of others to certain elements of the narrative. An example of this process is how commenters can direct attention towards the setting and protagonist:

> *Video B*
> **Connor Gibson**
> He says machete like 'Ma cheddar'.
>
> **Squeebo234**
> Instructions unclear, my cheddar stuck in ceiling fan.
>
> **QixGames**
> Cause everyone knows you have a "Machedda" Lying around :3
>
> **ECH0MysterSir**
> You know what cheese you shouldn't eat? Machedder

These are just a few of the comments from video B that comment on the accent of the protagonist and how he pronounces machete like "machedder". It could be that each individual composed a similar comment from an own interpretation. It however seems more likely that most

individuals constructed these messages after reading comments from others. These comments also indicate how participating viewers make fun of the protagonist and therefore interpret the video as comical. The commenters distance themselves from the story world by criticizing the characterization, what is an aspect of the production aesthetic. This subsequently may influence readings of other viewers, who after reading the comment may focus on the characterization element of the narrative. The creation of a paratext hereby becomes part of the cognitive process that is initiated by the uploader. This illustrates how understanding is socially constructed through the expression of interpretations by commenters. The meaning awarded to a life-hack video is influenced by the structured narrative, its external contours, and the textually shared interpretations from participating viewers. Hereby the social construction of knowledge on a life-hack video page is constituted by the presence of uploader, cognition and participating viewers.

Conclusion

The *YouTube* platform is an important digital tool for making sense of the world. Individuals gather around audio-visual stories and exchange ideas. As in the case of life-hack videos, knowledge is presented in form of a short story and open for perception and interpretation by a wide audience. This research has allowed me to argue how *YouTube* life-hack video pages are created and utilized for the social construction of knowledge. Life-hack uploaders use *YouTube* as a social tool to present stories. They make use of the affordance of uploading, through which they present an audio-visual narrative with a title, description and other textual elements. Uploaders create a digital object that becomes a site of presentation and interaction through their appropriation of the digital functionalities. The narrative is presented as a video with additional textual elements that together communicate a meaning. Viewers are present to engage with the presented material and perceive the story world. Through the structural elements of the narrative, the audience can build a mental representation of the atypical practice and consequently form a unique interpretation. The comment section is appropriated to express interpretations by commenters. Through a textual analysis of these comments, various modes of comments were identified. By making use of a certain interpretative framework, viewers create different understandings. The expressed interpretations communicate a preferred, negotiated or contested reading. These expressed readings become paratexts that frame a certain understanding and possibly influence the readings of other viewers. Hereby, understanding is socially constructed through the interactions between uploader, viewers and commenters.

This research of the construction of knowledge through life-hack videos helps us to better understand how a digital tool can be attributed for casual or informal learning. As the internet has become a common site for the social exchange of knowledge, a better understanding is needed of how these practices become culturally embedded. Brown & Adler argue that the presence of niches on the

internet supports the existence of the Long Tail in learning. (2008, 26). By entering digital places for the gathering of knowledge, the internet has become a common place for inquiry. *YouTube* contributes a great deal to this, because of the presence of tutorial videos on different subjects. Also other forms of *YouTube* videos, like vlogs, contribute to a certain understanding of the world. By analysing various digital cultural practices from a cognitive perspective, we will come to understand how these cultural practices transform knowledge into a networked form. Also Siemens recognizes how: "meaning in a network is created through the formation of connections and encoding nodes" (2005, 15). From this perspective, we are able to research how the internet allows us to socially make sense of the world.

Through a textual analysis, I was able to critically examine the specific cultural practice of life-hack videos from a cognitive perspective. By borrowing theories and ideas from the field of cognitive narratology, the narratives were analysed as tools for building mental models. Together with the textual analysis of comments and acknowledging the technical nature of *YouTube*, critical arguments were made. However, the conclusions drawn from the analysation of the gathered data are all based on the interpretation and critical investigation of a single researcher. Because of this, the method applied within this research may be perceived as to subjective. Nonetheless, his method is appropriate for answering the main research question, as the sense-making practices of humans are of interest. As McKee states: "there is a value in the more intuitive work that happens in the humanities" (McKee 2003, 119). The creation of transcripts that included critical elements of audio-visual material, allowed me to delineate narrative functions that are used for the communication of knowledge. This method of the textual analysis through transcripts, based on older research from Labov & Waletzky (1966) and Rumelhart (1975), might form an interesting approach for other research into digital storytelling. This type of research allows for the evaluation of how knowledge is constructed in a narrative form.

Within this research, no attention is paid to the cultural background of the uploaders and commenters. To further understand how the practice of life-hack videos is embedded within individuals' lives, an ethnographic research would provide interesting insights. By entering a dedicated community and becoming part of the digital social exchange of knowledge, a researcher could make arguments that also account for the cultural backgrounds of individuals. This type of research can extend on the arguments made within this analysis. An ethnographic research would also contribute to a further understanding of how individuals make use of the internet to obtain information from a community of inquiry within their everyday lives. By ethnographically researching the experiences of individuals with the narrative and other community members from a cognitive perspective, researcher contribute to a better understanding of the social production of knowledge on the internet. This allows us to further grasp how media platforms are utilized for the sharing of mental models of the world and how people make sense of the world through online social environments.

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Appendix A

Transcripts of video cases

Symbolic system:
<< >>: behaviour of protagonist
//\\: visual frame/video image
S: setting
C: complication
SG: sub-goal
ex: explanation

E: evaluation
IR: internal response
R: resolution
RT: repetition
Coda: coda

VIDEO A: How to Open a Wine Bottle with a Shoe
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fXihX13xjqQ

00:00   /S/Close-up of protagonist\S\

                           <S<Protagonist speaks to the viewer>S>
                           1   S   "At some moment you'll reach this point at which you start trashing around randomly"

00:04   /S/Introduction video sequence with text and thematic audio that keeps playing throughout the video\S\

00:11   /S/Close-up of protagonist\S\

                           <S<Protagonist speaks to the viewer>S>
                           2   S   "My name is Billy. We are in Berlin. I am thirsty. Thirsty for red wine"

00:15   /C/Close-up of protagonist\C\

                           <C<Protagonist holds up bottle of red wine>C>
                           3   C   "But I do not happen to have a bottle opener with me. I thus need to find some way to get the cork out of this bottle. And I think I have come up with something that could work"

00:31   /SG1/Close-up of protagonist\SG1\

                           <SG1<Protagonist stands next to a wall>SG1>

4   SG1ex   "We need a wall. A firm, sturdy wall. Luckily we are in Berlin. And there happen to be lots of sturdy walls around"

00:40   /SG2/Close-up of protagonist's feet\SG2\

<SG2<Protagonist takes off shoe>SG2>

5   SG2ex   "We need a shoe. It should be kind of robust as well"

00:43   /SG3/Close-up of protagonist's hands\SG3\

<SG3<Protagonist holds wine bottle within the shoe>SG3>

6   SG4ex   "And then we are going to hit the shoe against the wall

00:45   /SG4ex/Close-up of protagonist\SG4ex\

<SG4ex<Protagonist speaks to the viewer>SG4ex>

7   SG4ex   "so that the cork works itself loose"

00:51   /SG4/Close-up of protagonist's hands\SG4\

<SG4<Protagonist smashes shoe with wine bottle against the wall several times>SG4>

00:59   /SG4ex/Close-up of protagonist\SG4ex\

<SG4ex<Protagonist speaks to the viewer>SG4ex>

8   SG4ex   "One needs to make sure that the bottle hits the wall linearly"

9   SG4ex   "And one may not be afraid"

10   E   "And I currently have a problem: I am afraid! But thirsty too!"

01:07   /SG4/Close-up of protagonist's hands\SG4\

<SG4<Protagonist smashes shoe with wine bottle against the wall several times>SG4>

11   SG4ex   "The cork is slowly working its way out"

01:15   /Rex/Close-up of protagonist\Rex\

<Rex<Protagonist holds up wine bottle>Rex>

12   Rex   "Once it has come out this far, I believe it should not be that much of a problem to slowly pull out the remaining part of it"

01:22   <R<protagonist pulls out the cork>R>

13   E   "And we opened the bottle without a bottle opener"

01:29   /C2/Close-up of protagonist\C2\

<C2<Protagonist speaks to the viewer>C2>

14   C2   "We currently don't have a glass. A second thing we are missing"

15   R2ex   "So what else can we do than drink straight out of the bottle. Cheers!"

01:41   <R2<Protagonist drinks from the bottle>R2>

01:43   /E/Close-up of protagonist\E\

<E<Protagonist speaks into the viewer>E>

16   E   "It is insane! I managed to open it. I need to show Willy"

01:50   /Coda/Close-up of protagonist\Coda\

<Coda<Protagonist walks away to an entrance of a building>Coda>

17   Coda   "Willy!"

01:56   /Coda/Black screen with production credits\Coda\

VIDEO B: How To Open a Can with a Machete - Survival Hack #53
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AQwQuqxZmmc

00:00 /S/Introduction animation\S\

00:04 /S/Close-up of protagonist\S\
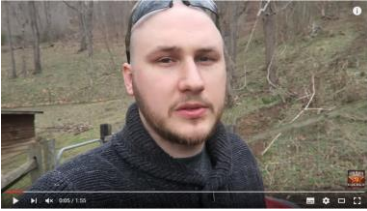
                <S<Protagonist speaks to the viewer>S>

1	S	"What's up everybody. Welcome back to my laboratory where safety is number one priority. And today I'm going to show you how to open a can with a machete"
3	C	"A machete is big and bulky. It is pretty hard to work with a little can, you know. It's pretty dangerous you don't wanna cut yourself"
4	S	"So I'm gonna show you how to open a can with a machete the safe way and the easiest way"

00:27 /SG1/Close-up of protagonist's hands\SG1\

                <SG1<Protagonist holds a machete and a can>SG1>

5	S	"So, how to open a can with a machete"

00:33 /SG2ex/Close-up of protagonist's hands\SG2ex\

                <SG2ex<Protagonist places machete vertical on the top of the can >SG2ex>

6	SG2ex	"A machete is too big and almost uncomfortable to keep on it like this. Just takes a lot of effort"

00:37 /SG2/Close-up of protagonist's hands\SG2\

                <SG2<Protagonist places the can on its side>SG2>

7   SG2ex   "What the effortlessly way to do it is to put the can sideways"

00:42   /SG3/Close-up of protagonist's hands\SG3\

<SG3<Protagonist places machete vertical on the side of the can>SG3>

8   SG4ex   "and then what you want to do is lift the can up and go like this; boom, boom, boom."

00:44   /SG4/Close-up of protagonist's hands\SG4\

<SG4<Protagonist smashes the can on the table>SG4>

9   SG4ex   "You see, machete got inside of the can and I didn't hit it with the machete, because I don't wanna miss it and slide and hit my hand."

00:56   /SG4/Close-up of protagonist's hands\SG4\
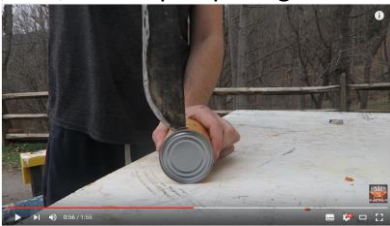
<SG4<Protagonist smashes the can on the table>SG4>

10   SG4ex   "So just go like this"

01:01   /SG5/Close-up of protagonist's hands\SG5\

<SG5<Protagonist places the machete horizontally on the hole>SG5>

11   SG5ex   "And then once you did one hole, what you wanna do, place the machete next to you stomach"

01:03   /SG6/Close-up of protagonist's hands\SG6\

<SG6<Protagonist stretches his fingers>SG6>

12   SG6ex   "You see how I'm holding my fingers

01:06   /SG6ex/Close-up of protagonist's hands\SG6ex\

<SG6ex<Protagonist grabs the blade of the machete>SG6ex>

13   SG6ex   "Don't hold it like that,

1:07   /SG6/Close-up of protagonist's hands\SG6\

<SG6<Protagonist stretches his fingers>SG6>

14   SG6ex   "Hold it like this"

01:10   /R/Close-up of protagonist's hands\R\

<R<Protagonist cuts off the top of the can>R>

15   Rex   "And just cut it down, boom."

16   E   "And you open a can really easily. What do you guys think? And also, it's safe
                      to open it this way"

01:22   17   RT   "Let's try this one more time"

01:23   /RT SG1/Close-up of protagonist's hands\RT SG1\

<RT SG3<Protagonist places machete vertical on the side of a can>RT SG3>

18   SG3ex   "Set it like this.

01:25   /RT SG4/Close-up of protagonist's hands\RT SG4\

<RT SG4<Protagonist smashes the can on the table>RT SG4>

20   SG4ex   "Boom, boom, boom. Done.

01:29   /RT SG5/Close-up of protagonist's hands\RT SG5\

<RT SG5<Protagonist places machete horizontally on the hole>RT SG5>

21   SG5ex   "Now I'm gonna set the machete like that, and…

01:35   /RT R/Close-up of protagonist's hands\RT R\

<RT R<Protagonist cuts off the top of a can>RT R>

22   Rex   "And boom"

23   E   "Even though it's liquid, machete blocked it from coming out from spilling all the liquid. Awesome"

01:45   /Coda/Close-up of protagonist's hands\Coda\

<Coda<Protagonist speaks to the viewer>Coda>

24   Coda   "What do you guys think? Please thumbs up for this video, thank you for watching and I'll see you next time"

01:50   /Coda/End animation\Coda\

VIDEO C: Make a Candle From an Apple in 1 Minute

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IYydmbBQa7A

00:00   /S/Close-up of candle apples\S\

<S<Protagonist speaks to the viewer>S>

1   S   "today on Household Hacker we're gonna make a candle from an apple"

00:03   /S/Close-up of burning Apple MacBook\S\
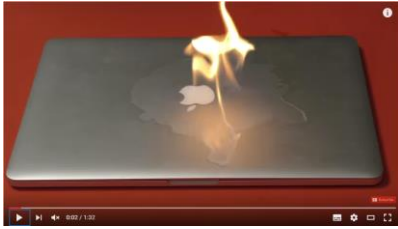
<S<Protagonist speaks to the viewer>S>

2   S   "no no, not that kind of apple"

00:05   /S/Introduction animation with thematic music\S\

00:09   /SG1/Close-up of needed items for the atypical practice\SG1\

<SG1ex<Protagonist speaks to the viewer>SG1ex>

3   SG1ex   "to make an apple candle you need a few items. Vegetable oil, an apple a wicker string and a knife"

00:14   /SG2/Close-up of protagonist's hands\SG2\

<SG2<Protagonist cuts out a piece of the apple>SG2>

4   SG2ex   "pick yourself out a fine looking apple and slowly cut a circle or square until you have a full cut"

00:24   /SG3/Close-up of protagonist's hands\SG3\

<SG3<Protagonist scrapes out the apple with a spoon>SG3>

5   SG3ex   "then you can pop out the top with a knife, or grab a spoon to scrape it out with ease"

00:30   <SG4<Protagonist pours lime juice>SG4>

6 SG4ex "here's an interesting side note. You can stop the apples from browning by squirting a little lime juice over the exposed fruit. Remember that next time you're cutting up some apple slices"

00:37 /SG5ex/Close-up of the apple\SG5ex\

<SG5ex<Protagonist tries to light the apple stem>SG5ex>

7 SG5ex "now, unfortunately you can't use the apple stem as a wick, just as you can see here. It's simply won't stay lit. So grab yourself a wicker string"

00:43 /SG5/Close-up of the apple with wick\SG5\

<SG5<Protagonist cuts the wick>SG5>

8 SG5ex "and cut it to be even with top of the apple"

00:47 /SG6/Close-up of the apple with wick\SG6\

<SG6<Protagonist pours vegetable oil in the apple>SG6>

9 SG6ex "now grab your vegetable oil and pour it directly over the wick to fill up the apple. Make sure to leave some of the wick above the oil line or this simply won't work at all"

00:51 /R/Close-up of the apple with cut wick and vegetable oil\R\

<R<Protagonist lights the wick>R>

10 Rex "once the wick and oil are in place, get out a lighter and spark it up. If you did it right, it should stay lit for at least a couple hours depending on how much oil you have inside"

01:02   /RT/Close-up of an apple\RT\

<RT SG2<Protagonist cuts an apple>RT SG2>
11   RTex   "now if you want to add some holiday cheer"

01:03   /RT SG3/Close-up of an apple\RT SG3\

<RT SG3<Protagonist scrapes out the apple with a spoon>RT SG3>
12   RTex   "grab another apple of a different colour

01:07   /RT SG5/Close-up of an apple\RT SG5\

<RT SG5<Protagonist places the wick>RT SG5>
13   RTex   "and follow the same steps as before"

01:09   /RT SG6/Close-up of an apple\RT SG6\

<RT SG6<Protagonist pours vegetable oil on the apple>RT SG6>
14   RTex   "We stuck with red and green to keep with the holiday theme"

01:11   /R2/Close-up of burning apple candles\R2\

<R<Protagonist shows the apple candles>R>
15   E   "One red apple and one green apple is perfect. They burn strong and they
                    emit plenty of light in case you found yourself in a power outage and
                    needed to make a quick and simple emergency candles as well"

01:21   /Coda/Frame of Christmas tree\Coda\

<Coda<Protagonist places the candles under Christmas tree>Coda>

16   Coda   "but the best thing to do is to use them as a great addition to your Christmas decorations so while your friends and family with your amazing Christmas survival skills"

01:28   /Coda/Outro animation\Coda\

13   Coda   "check out these other holiday videos here. See you next time"

Appendix B

1.

2.