Do user comments belong to journalistic articles? A brief visual history of user interaction on selected German and American news websites 1996–2024

Johannes Paßmann, Martina Schories, Paul Heinicker

Abstract: The chapter reconstructs a brief history of online commenting, based on the position comments have to journalistic articles on news websites. Its key assumption is derived from paratext theory: Changes in spatial and temporal proximity of texts in the periphery of a main text—such as comments on the same web page as a journalistic article as compared to posts in a separate forum—indicate controversies over relevance of participants in a public discourse. Studying transformations of online comments is thus considered an access point to studying histories of public spheres. With help of a software the authors and colleagues developed, changes in commenting sections are traced and visualized. These changes are detected in a data sample of archived web pages provided by the Internet Archive.

Keywords: commenting, web archive, paratext, news websites, user comments.

In recent decades, online comments have experienced a fluctuating reputation, embodying both the hope and disillusionment of the democratic potential of the internet. Popular cultural memory of online comments' history might paint a clear picture: a participatory culture lasting until the late 2000s was followed by a decay of commenting practices within the platformized web and its influx of new users and devices. However, closer inspection indicates a more complex history.

Disruptive communication practices were rampant on the internet even before the World Wide Web was established. Practices like 'flaming', for example, were already widespread on the Usenet (Kiechle 2022). In our data analysis outlined below, we found, for example, that the *Los Angeles Times* had already shut down its bulletin boards in 1996 due to racial slurs (latimes.com 1996, later replaced by discussion boards the following year, latimes.com 1997). In interviews with some of the earliest bloggers, we learned that when user comments were introduced to blogs in the late 1990s, blog owners could hark back on practices of moderating problematic Usenet discussions in the 1980s.[1]

[1] Interview conducted by Lisa Gerzen and Johannes Paßmann with Dori Smith (Blog "The Backup Brain") on October 25, 2023 in San Francisco, Interview conducted by Lisa Gerzen and Johannes Paßmann with Matt Haughey (Blog "A Whole Lotta Nothing", Founder of *Metafilter*) on October 27, 2023 in Portland.

Johannes Paßmann, Ruhr-University Bochum, Germany, johannes.passmann@rub.de, 0000-0002-2822-6082
Martina Schories, Ruhr-University Bochum, Germany, martina.schories@rub.de, 0009-0003-1322-5356
Paul Heinicker, Ruhr-University Bochum, Germany, paul.heinicker@rub.de, 0009-0001-7695-974X

Referee List (DOI 10.36253/fup_referee_list)
FUP Best Practice in Scholarly Publishing (DOI 10.36253/fup_best_practice)

Johannes Paßmann, Martina Schories, Paul Heinicker, *Do user comments belong to journalistic articles? A brief visual history of user interaction on selected German and American news websites 1996–2024*, © Author(s), CC BY 4.0, DOI 10.36253/979-12-215-0413-2.20, in Sophie Gebeil, Jean-Christophe Peyssard (edited by), *Exploring the Archived Web during a Highly Transformative Age. Proceedings of the 5th international RESAW conference, Marseille, June 2024*, pp. 223-246, 2024, published by Firenze University Press, ISBN 979-12-215-0413-2, DOI 10.36253/979-12-215-0413-2

Still, something changed: a recurring pattern in interviews about the history of the internet as a public medium is that, at certain points in time, such as the 'eternal September' of 1993, the 9/11 terrorist attacks in 2001, the proliferation of smartphones and the 'platformization' of the web around 2010, or the Trump election and Brexit vote in 2016, commenting cultures transformed. This is also the case for practices of the Usenet: 'flaming' differed significantly from later practices of 'hate speech' (Kiechle 2022). As a result, examinations of online commenting histories will inevitably uncover both continuities and transformations in the technologies and practices of user-generated content.

We argue that one entry point into understanding these continuities and transformations is the positioning of users' content on journalistic websites. The placement of this content marks a zone of contact between those who published a text and those commenting on it. The changing positions of users' and producers' content to one another can be read as traces to the transformations of commenting practices specifically and public discourse online more generally. These changes can be studied through web archives. As a result, web archives and their preserved snapshots of websites can provide a useful lens for studying histories of public spheres online, as public spheres are not only determined by the question of *who may speak* but also of *who may speak when and where*. We want to demonstrate this approach by studying how journalistic media have positioned themselves in relation to these (at each point in time: new) modes of participation.

The question of *who may speak when and where* positions online commenting in a historical and media theoretical context that predates the internet considerably. Gérard Genette's theory of the *paratext* delves into the "undefined zone", or the "intermediary zone between the off-text and the text" (C. Douchet and A. Compagnon, as quoted in Genette 2010, 2. I.o. "zone indécise" and "zone intermédiaire", Genette 1987, 8). Every text is surrounded by numerous peripheral texts, with some, such as titles and book covers, considered *paratexts*, while others simply constitute *discourse*. For this distinction between (more relevant) paratext and (less relevant) discourse, the material position of those texts is crucial. What is in spatial and temporal proximity to a main text has much higher chances to be considered (noteworthy) paratext.

This chapter consequently traces the positioning of user-generated content on news websites over time. We understand the changes of the way journalistic texts and those of their readers are positioned to one another as indicators for a controversy around the larger question of whether users' texts should be considered paratexts to articles or just discourse. The spatial and temporal positioning is not the only actor in the negotiation of that

controversy, but a crucial one that is worth following in a web-historical context.

1. Sample

For this purpose, we leverage a specific, yet limited access to a history of online commenting: data of archived news websites obtained through the Internet Archive (IA) in the context of the *Archives Unleashed Cohort Program*. We analyze the data using the 'Technograph', a tool we developed that allows us to trace and visualize commenting systems and their changes. At its core is an automated pattern recognition process realized through the programming language R, which looks for structural evidence of commenting systems in the HTML code of these websites, such as occurrences of certain form tags or used frameworks.[2]

This process of extracting and visualizing patterns is a starting point for a qualitative analysis of the archived snapshots that the tool pointed to. Hence, in the analysis outlined below, the function of our software is to help us navigate through the multiplicity of data provided by the IA. This facilitates a more efficient use of the visual interface of the IA's Wayback Machine (IAWM) in a next step, allowing us to focus primarily on a set of archived web pages and situate them in a broader web-historical context.

Generally, our method has three blind spots. Firstly, we rely on data from a web archive, and these archives are constitutively incomplete (Brügger 2018; 2008). In our case, commenting sections are often not archived at all. Sometimes, for example, when they are implemented with JavaScript, we only find very rudimentary traces in the archive. The second blind spot of our methodology is that we primarily focus on web artifacts rather than on the practices and actor-networks they have been part of (Paßmann and Gerzen 2024).

We counter both blind spots by comparing various cases—spanning time and different countries. Thus, the central question of this chapter is not about the single positioning of a commenting section in relation to a news article, but rather about what changes in these positions over time might reveal. To make these formal and structural changes in the web pages more legible, we have developed what we call a Historiogram (Figure 1). It illustrates the chronological development of commenting practices with a specific focus on their position within news websites. The Historiogram follows the structure of a dual-axis chart. The x-axis encodes the temporal

[2] The Technograph has been developed by Martina Schories in cooperation with Lisa Gerzen, Robert Jansma, Anne Helmond, and Johannes Paßmann. A beta version is available via https://shiny.sfb1472.uni-siegen.de/b03-technograph/ and the code repository can be found on GitHub: https://github.com/SFB1472/tdp-b03-technograph.

course of observations from 1996 to 2024 and the y-axis represents the actual position of the observed commenting sections. The Technograph creates simple Historiograms automatically. However, the one displayed below has been built manually in order to show more details in a single figure and to add information we found browsing the IAWM (on the basis of the snapshots the Technograph pointed us to).

For each media outlet, the figure distinguishes between two categories: user posts that are situated directly on the article's web page (on site) and those that are not (off site). In order to make the aforementioned limits of our observation visible, we visualize periods of uncertain data with a transparent color gradient. In addition, we used small circles to mark points in time where we found hints of major redesigns of the respective websites. The results of these redesigns are partly illustrated on the right-hand side of the diagram with corresponding screenshots. All redesigns are explicitly referenced in the text.

We systematically analyzed the websites of four nationwide German print media outlets considered 'quality media' with a vested interest in providing a public discourse. This selection includes two daily newspapers (Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung, faz.net and Süddeutsche Zeitung, sz.de), one weekly paper (Die Zeit, zeit.de), and one weekly magazine (Der Spiegel, spiegel.de). However, this sample introduces a third blind spot, which we can only partially counter: a bias in the selection of analyzed websites. To mitigate this, we also sampled the website of a regional daily newspaper (Augsburger Allgemeine) situated on the periphery of 'quality' newspapers. For an international comparison, we added the New York Times (NYT), and for a non-German, non-global perspective, we analyzed the Los Angeles Times (LAT). Despite these efforts, a bias towards 'quality' newspapers persists.

2. Comments as paratexts?

Reading the Comments, a book Joseph M. Reagle published in 2016 about "Likers, Haters and Manipulators at the Bottom of the Web", argues that the position of online comments in "the bottom half" of websites characterizes their status. As a marginal medium, they had often been neglected—too often, he argues. Their positioning reflected their marginality as a zone that was "much like California during its gold rush […] lively and lawless." While reluctance to read the comments was understandable, Reagle advocates it was "wise to understand them", countering the observed tendency in the mid-2010s to disable or ignore commenting sections as the bottom half (Reagle 2015, 3).

We also contend that the question of where comments are situated holds semantic significance. In literary and media theory, this argument has been elaborated most prominently by Genette (2010; 1997) for paratexts of books. Texts positioned in the periphery of a main text contribute to its meaning, and this meaning also depends on the material positioning of the potential paratext in the periphery to the main text. For instance, a critic's remark printed on the back cover of a novel, due to its proximity to the main text, becomes a "peritext", which means in most cases that it can be considered a paratext. When the same remark remains "anywhere outside the book", the situation is less clear: it could, under certain circumstances, be considered an "epitext" (Genette 2010, 344).

In essence much paratext research follows the logic of Goffman's "frame analysis" (Goffman 1986 [1974]). Paratexts function as a kind of frame for understanding the main text (Stanitzek 2005; Dembeck 2007). In recent decades, the concept of paratext has been used primarily to expand the boundary between text and discourse. The prevailing argument has been the necessity to broaden the concept of text, recognizing more elements in the periphery of a main text as integral to it. Along these lines, trailers have been considered paratexts of movies (Hediger 2004; Zons 2007), packages, controllers, and similar items have been categorized as paratexts of computer games (Jones and Thiruvathukal 2012), and gaming streams have been considered the main text with the games themselves functioning as paratexts (Consalvo 2017), among other examples.

Paratext research, advocating for extending the boundaries of the units of analysis, echoes a typical argument of the second half of the 20th century: Similar to Goffman's argument of the "frame", most media theories have advocated to extend the boundaries of human action (e.g., considering media the "extensions of man", McLuhan 1994), and the "project" of actor network theory (ANT) was "to extend the list and modify the shapes and figures of those assembled as participants […]" (Latour 2005, 72). This move towards extension of the object of analysis has also been the main argument of paratext theory and research.

As argued earlier, today, it would be of limited benefit to pursue this path further by simply extending the textual boundaries of online texts to online comments and advocate—similarly to Reagle—for their inclusion into the textual unit of main text and paratext (Paßmann 2023). Rather than participating in the boundary work of determining what belongs to the frame of the text, i.e. what is paratext and what is not, we contend that this question itself marks a controversy that should be studied with the concept of paratexts (ibid.). All kinds of actors, including websites, participate in this boundary work, and this boundary work can be rephrased as the question: what should (not) be considered a paratext?

When zeit.de relaunched its modes of user interaction in September 2009, they published an article explaining their updates (zeit.de 2009). They noted that the most obvious change was the "positioning of user comments directly below the articles," stating, "This conforms with our idea that debates are an important part of a text" (ibid.). In Genette's sense, this would be the most explicit form of authorizing a text in the periphery, rendering it a paratext. This authorization functions through two acts: the quoted explanation, and the placement of comments in direct neighborhood to the articles.

This extension (and delimitation) of textual boundaries is a daily practice for people dealing with online comments. When the editors of Zeit Online write that comments belong to the text and simultaneously redesign the commenting section to make comments readable alongside the main text (i.e. the article), they extend the textual boundaries of their article. Comments are not considered part of the article, but they gain recognition as their (legitimate) periphery. On the one hand, there are practices of "sorting texts out" of this legitimate periphery: moderation of commenting sections decides what may be visible in the texts' periphery. Journalists also contribute to delimitation with their speech acts, such as when they claim that they never read the comments because they are useless or even harmful (Paßmann 2023). When Reagle (see above) advocates for "reading the comments", he also works on the boundaries of the main text. In that case, his argument supports an extension of the text boundaries; *reading the comments* means recognizing comments as paratexts.

This implies a plethora of actors negotiating the text boundaries between online articles and their comments, among them journalists, commenters, moderators, websites and their positioning of texts to another, and, last but not least, academic research, by advocating for extending the boundaries—in the (typical 20th-century) tradition of paratext theory. The relevant boundary being negotiated here is not so much between *text* and *paratext*, but rather between *paratext* and *discourse*. This is a fundamental zone of conflict because the distinction between paratext and discourse challenges what and who belongs where.

We argue that the negotiation of these boundaries is a central practice in the history of online commenting. Online commenting is inherently concerned with the negotiation of the paratext/discourse distinction. The way users' content is positioned on websites in relation to the main text is a crucial factor in this negotiation practice. At stake in this negotiation is the question of recognition: in a quite Hegelian sense, websites participate in determining which voices are recognized as (peripheral) members of the main text.

Whereas zeit.de appears to align itself more or less directly with its commenters—or, more precisely, their comments—, the NYT appears to have been keen to maintain a clear distinction between comments and the journalists' articles. The NYT has a longstanding tradition of intensive user interaction. In the earliest archived snapshots from 1996, there is a call to "join the discussion in the new forums" (nyt.com 1996). This interaction remains in dedicated spaces of specific web pages—and not below the articles.

The first texts with users' comments visible at the bottom half of the web page (within the same window) were found in archived snapshots from 2009 (nyt.com 2009). However, all these texts are framed as blog posts—in this case from the NYT blog "Room for Debate": roomfordebate.blogs.nytimes.com. This blog is subtitled "a running commentary on the news" (ibid.). This implies that comments are not directed at the NYT authors' articles, but rather at *the news*. The editors only initiate discussions on current topics, such as the rescue of the American International Group (AIG) with "$170 billion in United States taxpayer bailout money." External specialists are invited to comment on these news topics, and in the bottom half of the web page, below the posts from expert bloggers, users' comments on the topic are displayed. In the right column of the page, selected user comments on all currently discussed topics are prominently visible as "Comments of the Moment" (ibid.). These comments appear on the same page as posts from expert bloggers, who, at least in the cases we found in the archive, are not members of the NYT. Even here, comments cannot be considered paratexts to journalistic main texts (or even blogging main texts) since there is not a main text these comments refer to; there is just a 'topic'. They are, in Genette's sense, merely discourse from the perspective of journalistic articles.

During the 2010s, the NYT seems to have extended its textual boundaries considerably. The first articles featuring a 'comments' icon at the end of the text date from February 2010 (nyt.com 2010a). Not all articles had these commenting options at that time. Clicking the comments icon (in the shape of a speech balloon) opens a dedicated subsite for 'readers' comments' (nyt.com 2010b, see Fig. 1 no. 8). This subsite begins with a very brief teaser of the article (one sentence) and its heading. Below that, comments are displayed in full length. On the one hand, comments are explicitly referred to in the main text. However, it requires the user's action to read the comments, and even after that, the main text and comments are not visible on the same web page. Without delving too deeply into Genette's nomenclature here, this commenting section might be considered an

"epitext", a peripheral text that is not as easily recognizable as a paratext as the "peritexts", which are in direct proximity to a main text. Whether or not comments 'belong' to the articles and would thus be a paratext (in the position of an epitext) is consequently not clearly determined by the NYT. This changed in the mid-2010s.

In snapshots from August 2016, we, for the first time, found comments displayed on the same web page as articles. In the right column, not even on the bottom half, but directly beside the text and between other boxes in that column, such as 'related texts' and 'trending', three 'recent comments' are displayed (nyt.com 2016b). Below these three comments are two links, one named 'see all comments', and another one 'write a comment'. A click on 'see all comments' opens a margin that fills the whole right column of the page (see Fig. 1 no. 9).

The margin has two tabs, one with 'all comments', and one with 'readers' picks'. On top of the margin, a notice reads: "The comments section is closed. To submit a letter to the editor for publication, write to letters@nytimes.com" (ibid.). The comments are threaded and marked with counted 'Recommends'. To the left of the 'Recommend' counter is a Facebook-like thumb, and to the right of it are Facebook and Twitter icons. The 'readers' picks' are ranked according to the number of 'Recommends'. On top of the article, in a row right below the heading, a speech balloon is depicted with the number of comments this article 'received' (see Fig. 1 no. 10). This balloon is repeated at the bottom of the article in larger size—not below it, but indented into its last paragraph. A click on the balloon again opens the comments in the margin, filling the right column of the page.

This website design approach undertakes several efforts to present the comments as something to read (and write) while or after reading the article. In other words, the design strongly attempts to render the comments paratexts. After (at least) twenty years of intensive user interaction that was very keen to keep comments away from the main text, the design found in snapshots from 2016 even exceeds that of classic weblogs displaying comments on the bottom half. Commenting sections are indented into the main text itself, displayed next to the text so that, as a result, at least the first three 'most recent' comments are perceived during reading the main text, rather than afterward.

With one more click, opting to open the commenting section fills the screen with a binocular (or *stereoscopic*, if you will) view of two almost equal columns: the article on the left and the comments on the right. Moreover, as the number of comments is displayed on three points on the website, the design offensively implies that commenting is a frequent, usual, and popular practice that *one does* when reading NYT articles. This raises the question of why, after decades of consistently separating articles and

comments, in 2016, the NYT brought them even closer together than classic blogs. The fact that this is the year of the Brexit referendum and the Trump election begs interpretation.

The popularity markers remain on the NYT article's websites until the present day (nyt.com 2024). The number of comments still appears three times on the website, though in a more modest manner. The speech balloons are much smaller and not indented into the main article text. Clicking on the balloons still opens the comments in a dedicated margin in the right column of the website, but the stereoscopic view has disappeared. While in 2016, text and comments could be fully read next to one another, in the 2024 interface, first, the comments overlap the article. Second, the article is turned dark. And third, one cannot scroll the article anymore when comments are open. This pattern is even more noticeable on the NYT for iPad app, where even less of the commented article is visible (approximately 20% of the—dark—screen), and for the NYT mobile app for Android smartphones, where the comments appear in an entirely new window. Moreover, in the current NYT design, all comments are at least one click away from the article text; no comment is displayed by default on the same web page as the article.

In that sense, to a large extent, the NYT reverts to the pre-2016 textual order. In this historical view, the offensive speech act, or rather: web-design act, of ostensively rendering comments paratexts appears as an exception. The NYT's web and app design no longer suggests by default to read the articles with their comments. In contrast to the mid-2010s, today, one can easily read the NYT articles without users' comments.

4. German quality papers

For all four cases of German quality print media websites we analyzed, we found a pattern generally similar to the sequence outlined above for the NYT. They all started with separate forums (frequently positioned in the tradition of letters to the editors) and, over the 2000s and 2010s, gradually brought user content closer to the articles. From there, however, they experimented with a diversity of strategies.

The Süddeutsche Zeitung introduced online comments displayed below the articles by default in late spring 2007 (sz.de 2007, see Fig. 1 no. 5), after hosting a forum (i.e. an architecture containing user posts on a separate web page) for article comments for at least four years already (sz.de 2003). The earliest example of a commenting section below an article we found for zeit.de dates to July 2006 (zeit.de 2006). In a snapshot from November 2005, we found hints to 'Leser-Kommentare' (reader's comments) next to an article text (right column), seemingly linking to another web page

(zeit.de 2005). A ‘forum’, however, can already be found in April 1999—and this forum is hosted not only on a separate web page, but also under its own third-level domain (zeit.de 1999).

For spiegel.de, we found the first forum in snapshots from 1997 (spiegel.de 1997). In June 2001, a subsite for letters to the editors concerning online articles was introduced (spiegel.de 2001b), and a ‘mailto’ link for these ‘online letters’ was displayed below the articles in those days (spiegel.de 2001a). Selected (e-mailed) letters to the editors were published on a separate website (spiegel.de 2001b). The first time we found user comments below an article was in a snapshot from March 2010 (with posts from January, spiegel.de 2010). The first snapshots we found of these posts labeled as comments (‘Kommentar’) date back to 2014 (spiegel.de 2014a).

The website of the *FAZ* is comparably slim before 2001; we could not find any trace of user or reader interaction (faz.net 1997). The newspaper launched its own ‘portal’ FAZ.NET in January 2001 (de.wikipedia.org 2024). In snapshots of that year, we, for the first time, found hints to a forum (a non-loadable graphic named “Foren & Chat”) (faz.net 2001). In January 2002, a forum subpage was archived for the first time (faz.net 2002). Until mid-June 2005, the forum was linked on the starting page (faz.net 2005). In a snapshot from November 2005, we, for the first time, found ‘readers’ opinions’ displayed below the articles. Visible on the same web page are only the comments’ headings (which refer to the article, faz.net 2005).

In October 2011, the FAZ conducted a major relaunch (faz.net 2011). As a result, the number of comments an article ‘received’ was displayed in a speech balloon next to the article’s teaser (on the starting page, for example). At the end of the article itself, there is an icon inviting comments. To read the comments, one must click a specific tab at the beginning of the article (see Fig. 1 no. 1). Once the tab is open, the article disappears (ibid).

That means, on the one hand, the links to the comments are prominent and commenting is framed as a popular practice. On the other hand, comments and articles do not appear in the same window. In that sense, the FAZ’s commenting system, as relaunched in 2011, shares similarities in terms of paratextuality with the current presentation of comments in the NYT.

Three years later, the FAZ discards the tabbed commenting system again and relocates comments below the articles. However, again, only the comments’ headlines are visible by default (faz.net 2014). The comments’ peritexts (their headlines) are peritexts for the articles, as they are positioned on the same web page, but not the comments themselves (see Fig. 1, no. 2).

Today, the website’s textual order is again comparable to that of the NYT, as comments only appear in the right column of the website upon

demand. When the comments are opened, they can, given the browser's window is wide enough, be displayed in the stereoscopic view, similar to what the NYT had from 2016 on (and later changed). However, as of today, for FAZ, users need to create an account and log in to write and read comments, placing the comments one degree further away from the main text.

On a general level, both the FAZ and NYT not only follow the two steps from forum to comments as peritext, but also also share the third step of providing a separate commenting space that one has to actively opt into in order to read the comments—and in order to read the comments and the articles (more or less easily) in the same window.

The current Süddeutsche Zeitung (SZ) appears to follow a similar layout at first glance. Positioned above the commentable articles, just below the headline, is a speech balloon with a counter indicating the number of comments. When clicked, a designated margin on the right side of the web page opens, allowing for a stereoscopic reading. The differences from the FAZ and NYT mainly concern the conditions for commenting and reading. For the NYT, a paid subscription is required not only to access articles, but also to read and post comments). On the other hand, the FAZ requires only a (free) account to read and post comments, a privilege limited to articles without a paywall (something most articles have). With the SZ, an account is only required for posting comments, not to read them. However, similar to the FAZ, the SZ has a mix of paywalled and free articles.

The history of SZ's online comments is a bit more complicated, with only a few highlights mentioned here.[3] They disabled their commenting system in 2015 and introduced a specific forum that aimed not to comment on individual articles (as paratexts to texts), but rather on *topics*—like how journalists comment on topics, too (Wüllner 2015). This resembles the NYT's *Room for Debate* subsite, observed in snapshots from 2009. Briefly, before transitioning from comments back to a forum), starting in 2014 each article subpage linked to the *rivva Debattenmonitor,* an external website that displayed all public comments, tweets, and posts about this article (sz.de 2015).

In January 2021, the SZ changed the audience dialogue software from *Disqus*—a commenting system prevalent worldwide for the past two decades that also changed the way they considered comments, problematizing them more and more (Paßmann, Helmond, and Jansma 2023)—to *Talk*, a software developed by Mozilla, the Washington Post, and

[3] Lisa Gerzen and Johannes Paßmann also interviewed the person responsible for SZ's comments section since the mid-2000s. Some aspects from that interview were published in Paßmann and Gerzen 2024. More detailed publications, including the SZ's specific audience interaction history, will follow.

the NYT. However, for the purpose of this article, our focus will be on the most fundamental changes in the textual order of articles and user-generated content. It was not until June 2022 that the SZ announced a 'Relaunch' of readers' comments on their own web pages:

The commenting function will be part of the articles again. Right next to the opinions of the authors are the opinions of the readers. The reason for this change is, in addition to the associated appreciation for reader comments, also the clearer reference to the article and passage in question. This initially applies to all opinion articles on SZ.de. But it will gradually be expanded to include other articles (sz.de 2022).

First of all, we can see here that the semantics of recognition of readers are, as in most other explanations of editors (re-)introducing comments, setting the tone: engaging users as *more than recipients*. For the chronology of the SZ, however our research, reveals a cyclical journey, starting with (off-site) forums, transitioning to (on-site) comments, reverting to (off-site) forum posts commenting on topics addressed by the editors, too, and recently, reintroducing (on-site) comments (see Fig. 1). However, the way they return to (on-site) comments has transformed.

The reintroduction of commenting sections is, at least initially, limited to articles that are commentary in a journalistic sense. This return to comments aims to redefine them not so much as comments to journalistic texts, but as something that could be termed, alluding to British sports culture, *co-comments*. In this context, the posts are intended to comment on what journalists have commented on and, ideally, complement the main comments. These revived comments have also transformed: paywalls now restrict access to commenting, introducing a selection, or, to use the literal Latin sense of the word ('eligere'), a *re-elitarization*, as choices are made. The SZ prioritizes commenters who pay for their service. While this is a general development that we cannot elaborate on here, the introduction of paywalls signifies a shift in the concept of audience. The media in question are moving away from a focus solely on "getting noticed by many" (Werber et al. 2023) online. Rather, there is an increasing focus on identifying and catering to *their* audience.

Spiegel.de has a similarly, perhaps even more, complicated history following their introduction of users' comments below articles in 2010 (officially labeled as comments only in 2014, spiegel.de 2014a, see Fig. 1 no. 3). What makes this history complicated is that firstly, the Spiegel has its own nomenclature of this genre: the discussions unfold in a forum, however, these forums are often linked under the articles, starting in 2014 with a call to comment. In our understanding, this would classify it as a commenting function, because it is displayed in the same window as the

article (rendering it a peritext), and the content posted is, to varying degrees, readable when only the article is opened.

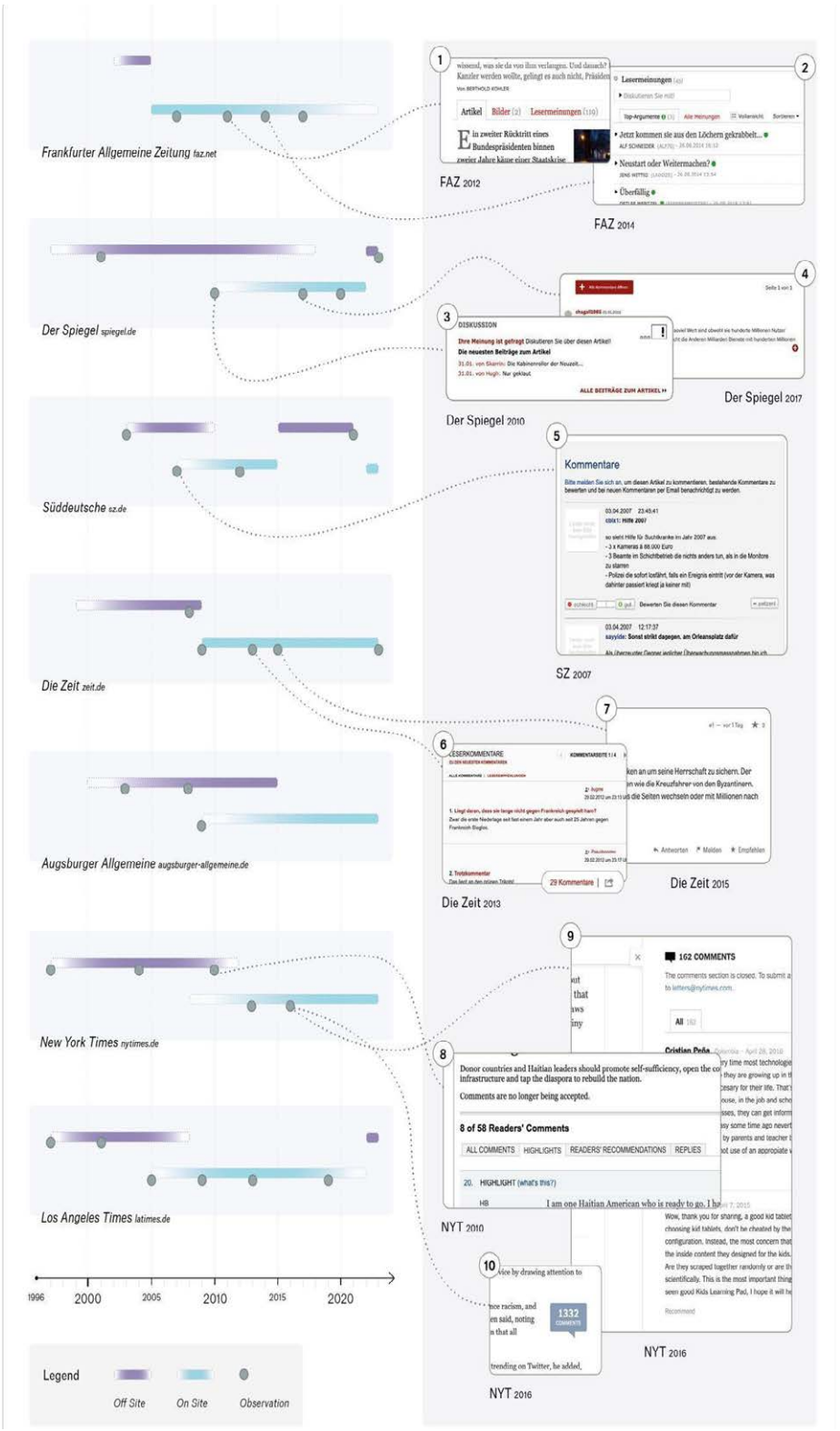
Secondly, as with the other examples discussed earlier, not all articles are open for comments. Some have no option for user interaction at all, while others have topical forums linked on the left margin of the article's web page (spiegel.de 2014b). Thirdly, Spiegel experiments with its user posts. For instance, a redesign first observed in snapshots from 2017, discards the left margin but still allows comments to be displayed below the articles (spiegel.de 2018, see Fig. 1 no. 4). The overview we are outlining here remains thus on a somewhat superficial level.

However, two updates introduced by Spiegel seem noteworthy here. After positioning their 'forum' posts as comments under (selected) articles in 2010 (see Fig. 1 no. 3), they underwent a 'reformed' website design in December 2019 that also included an updated commenting function (spiegel.de 2020). The editors expressed that it was "about time to rethink the commenting section" (ibid.). The update brought several new features reminiscent of social media platforms, such as 'ignore user', 'report comment', a liking function, up- and downvotes, and threaded replies. Most interestingly, the update included a tab with comments recommended by the editors. In this sense, some comments are, using Genette's terminology, authorized by those who wrote the main text. While the commenting section remains an 'undefined zone', certain comments are explicitly recognized as paratexts.

In a second major update, exactly four years later, introducing 'Spiegel Debatte', the editors wrote: "After months of development and a lot of feedback from our users, SPIEGEL Debatte is replacing the previous comment section under articles on SPIEGEL.de" (spiegel.de 2023). This debate is intended to focus on topics defined by the editors on a daily basis and is exclusive to subscribers. They call this feature a 'platform' that incorporates all kinds of platform-like activities, allowing users' posts to be sorted according to 'relevance'. One such activity is the editors' recommendation, denoted by a 'Der Spiegel' icon.

Die Zeit stands out in this comparison: they implemented numerous updates to their commenting sections (see Fig. 1 no. 6 and no. 7). In their current version, for example, users need to scroll down through article recommendations and advertisements to access the commenting section. However, after the updates mentioned above—introducing a commenting function linked under the article in 2006 and displaying comments there in 2009—, they essentially maintained the same textual order to the present day: comments remain on-site.

Figure 1. The Historiogram: A visual chronology over on-site user interactions (i.e. mostly comments) and off-site interactions (forums and platforms).


Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung faz.net
Der Spiegel spiegel.de
Süddeutsche sz.de
Die Zeit zeit.de
Augsburger Allgemeine augsburger-allgemeine.de
New York Times nytimes.de
Los Angeles Times latimes.de
1996
2000
2005
2010
2015
2020
Legend
Off Site
On Site
Observation
1
2
FAZ 2012
FAZ 2014
3
4
DISKUSSION
Ihre Meinung ist gefragt Diskutieren Sie über diesen Artikel!
Die neuesten Beiträge zum Artikel
ALLE BEITRÄGE ZUM ARTIKEL
Der Spiegel 2010
Der Spiegel 2017
5
Kommentare
SZ 2007
6
7
LESERKOMMENTARE
29 Kommentare
Die Zeit 2013
Die Zeit 2015
8
9
162 COMMENTS
Donor countries and Haitian leaders should promote self-sufficiency, open the co
Infrastructure and tap the diaspora to rebuild the nation.
Comments are no longer being accepted.
8 of 58 Readers' Comments
ALL COMMENTS
HIGHLIGHTS
READERS' RECOMMENDATIONS
REPLIES
20. HIGHLIGHT (what's this?)
I am one Haitian American who is ready to go. I ha
NYT 2010
NYT 2016
10
1332
NYT 2016

5. Discussion

The general pattern observed across all cases studied is firstly that these news websites typically initiate forums, with this trend often emerging in the 1990s. The Augsburger Allgemeine, considered one of the prominent regional newspapers in Germany—that is to say, just one level below the nationwide quality newspapers—, has a forum, first captured in a 2001 snapshot (augsburger-allgemeine.de 2001). Their article pages subsequently linked to a commenting function in 2008 (augsburger-allgemeine.de 2008), eventually evolving into an on-site commenting section in 2010 (augsburger-allgemeine.de 2010).

We interpret this pattern as the adaptation of the traditional media practice of writing 'letters to the editor' in the new context of the (often 1990s) World Wide Web. As mentioned above, even established media such as Die Zeit make iconographic references to letters to the editor, drawing upon a tradition of public discourse that quality newspapers can leverage.

The subsequent move from forums to online comments reflects an influence from blogging on news organizations. This pattern, as described to us in an interview with early blogger and MetaFilter founder Matt Haughey, saw commenting, in the form of a reader's text displayed on the same web page as the text it refers to, established in blogging around 2000. It was later introduced to news websites due to various challenges these platforms faced, especially those of print media, throughout the 2000s. Factors such as the burst of the dot-com bubble, the growing competition from blogs to journalism in the aftermath of the 9/11 terrorist attacks, the economic success of certain blogs following the launch of Google Ads, and, last but not least, a decline in sales of newspapers and printed magazines, exerted pressure on the media and their news websites. As a result, in the late 2000s and early 2010s they began adopting practices from blogging and, subsequently, social media platforms, such as the implementation of comments below their articles.

However, the news organizations could only adopt these new practices because they were following their already established practices of forum-based audience interaction. The continuity of these practices becomes evident through the intermediate steps from forums to comments, such as forums linked under an article, links to commenting subsites that do not display the comments themselves under the articles, and so forth. In this sense, media practices follow the logics of historical practices as reproductions of existing practices in new contexts (Sewell 2005; Schäfer

2016; Bourdieu 1990). Every new media practice is, in that sense, a sequel to an old media practice.

What we found most striking during our research was that initially some news organizations, such as the NYT, FAZ, and Der Spiegel, seemed keen to maintain a distinct separation between articles and comments, as if they wanted to prevent the user content from being read all too clearly as paratexts to journalistic articles. At a certain point, however, in all cases, this demarcation was breached at least once. They all made the step to treat comments as peritexts, allowing them to appear on the same web page, within the same window, and by default (rather than one click away).

Today, however, almost all of them re-introduced at least a new subtle separation. The NYT, FAZ, and Augsburger Allgemeine link on their article web pages to commenting sections, but only reveal the comments upon clicking. Technically, these comments are 'on-site' as the URL remains the same, however, they require a click to be read. In other words, the articles are presented with a commenting *section*, but without *comments*. Even the 'hardest case' of our sample, Die Zeit, the last medium displaying articles with comments, positions them only after a lengthy scroll over recommended articles and advertisements. Loosely following Reagle (see above), one might say they placed their comments on the *very bottom half* of the web page. On the other end of the spectrum, Der Spiegel built its own separate 'platform' with editor's recommendations, gamified counters, and more features akin to social media.

The websites' designs thus operate on the boundaries between paratext and discourse, and it is not the sole actor in this process. Genette refers to these actors, entitled to determine what is considered a paratext, as 'associates': "By definition, something is not a paratext unless the author or one of his associates accepts responsibility for it, although the degree of responsibility may vary" (Genette 2010, 9). By positioning the comments in close proximity to the text, the website and its associates assume a different kind of responsibility for these texts, as opposed to housing them in a forum or relocating them to a platform. This responsibility encompassed not only a spatial dimension, but also a temporal one. For instance, the NYT's commenting section, according to an FAQ answer from April 2016, is closed after 24 hours (nyt.com 2016a).

As argued earlier, many other actors accept or reject this responsibility, including persons Gillespie refers to as the "Custodians of the Internet" (Gillespie 2018), such as moderators. Journalists also negotiate this question of responsibility; some claim they avoid reading the comments due to perceived irrelevance and harm (Paßmann 2023), while others responsible for audience dialogue in newspaper companies assert that journalists typically read most of the comments (ibid.). All these material or semiotic

speech acts contribute to the ongoing discussion of whether or not, and under which conditions, "the author or one of his associates accepts responsibility". This can also be a legal issue, for example when inhumane comments are not deleted for a certain time period, raising the question of whether the author of the main text who refrains from monitoring comments can be held accountable for the content (ibid.).

The websites' design, the positioning of journalists' and users' texts in relation to one another, stands out as a strong, perhaps the most influential, non-human actor in this negotiation process. Being relatively easy to modify, websites make this paratextual perspective not only 'still useful', but arguably even *more* helpful than in the case for which it was developed: books. In the case of websites, textual orders are constantly being changed, and routinely archived by web archives. In contrast, the decisions related to the positioning of texts and their (material) periphery to one another in the mediality of books are often *black boxed* (Latour 2005), with authors and publishers negotiating elements like book titles, cover designs, and preface content. Once these decisions are made, they are reified in the material artifact of the book, potentially allowing literary scholars to reverse-engineer them afterwards. This difference is not categorical for websites, but quantitative: web archives contain a multitude of transformations of textual orders, frequently accompanied by explanations, debates, reversals, and more.

In order to navigate through the wealth of—relevant but especially also irrelevant—data provided by a web archive, the Technograph was of help in the process. In hundreds of thousands of archived web pages, it pointed to a small selection of pages with updates in their commenting sections. It did not find all of the changes in all of the websites, but it proposed points of departure, and in a next step, it helped systematize the findings and make them visible. In an iterative-cyclical process, the visualizations raised new questions, for example by showing gaps in our Historiogram or intervals of uncertainty. Some of these gaps could be closed in the next iteration. However, some intervals remained uncertain because it became evident that certain periods even of large and popular web pages are very poorly archived. In that sense, the Technograph and the Historiograms created with its help also sensitized not only in a general manner for the incompleteness of web archives, but also for the intervals of specific incompleteness, which we could consequently visualize through color gradients (Fig. 1).

6. Conclusion

Taking a web-historical perspective on the newspapers' interaction features reveals a long-ranging negotiation concerning the placement of

users' posts. Paratext theory proves invaluable in understanding this negotiation as a practice of positioning within the 'zone indécise' of texts, which may be perceived as belonging to a main text or be sorted out. This is a fruitful perspective not because we as web historians could (or should) categorize a given text as a paratext, but rather because it helps us understand the conflicts and controversies involving a diverse and heterogeneous group of actors. They engage in continuous negotiations over whether or not users' texts should be construed as paratexts.

The traces preserved in web archives constitute a rich source for this topic, because when conflicts around comments are negotiated, when commenting sections are altered, closed, or shifted to a separate subpage, the implications extend beyond the comments themselves. The cases studied might thus be understood not only as boundary work questioning whether or not and to what extent user comments belong to journalistic articles, but also as an ongoing practice on whose texts a media outlet should take care of. This seems to have changed over the recent decades.

The brief history of online comments outlined above points to a developing mutual selection process between media and their users, readers, or audience. We assume that these practices of *taking care of* differ among different news websites. The sample we analyzed does not include, for example, local newspapers, yellow press, television or radio websites, news portals, and many more. It only focuses on archived web interfaces and the question of how the different texts are positioned in relation to one another. This points to various strands of future research that have yet to be undertaken, but could draw upon the theoretical, methodical, and historiographical directions outlined in the chapter at hand.

In the cases studied here, actors that select participants are manifold: paywalls, valuation via likes, upvotes, etc., or single acts of editors recommending individual comments, are all part of a longer historical process of media outlets finding, selecting, and taking care of readership. Our research shows media outlets experimenting repeatedly, switching from forums to comments and back again, attempting to leverage the societal, economic, or democratic potential of the internet.

If, in a literal sense of the word, this appears to be a history of 're-elitarization' of public discourse, it is anything but a one-sided selection by social elites picking and choosing who may speak. Rather, it appears as a contingent, mutual, and heterogenous selection of technologies and practices by a range of actors that a history of online comments can identify. However, this does not mean that all actors involved in the process are equal or even that they possess a similar agency. Quite the contrary, a website's design is a rather powerful actor that, rather than only selecting who may speak, determines who may speak when and where. Our brief

visual history outlined in this chapter could just point to the fact that controversies about these positionings of user-generated content are ongoing from the early web until today.

What these changes in positioning mean, for example the NYT allowing user comments to appear as peritexts on the article web pages only for a brief period starting in 2016, cannot be answered only on the basis of updates in commenting sections derived from web archive data. However, it directs us to possible controversies worth studying if we want to understand the transformation of public spheres over the recent decades.

Funding

This publication is part of the subproject B03 “Historical Technography of Online Commenting” of the Collaborative Research Centre 1472 “Transformations of the Popular” (438577023), funded by the German Research Foundation (DFG).

Acknowledgement

We thank Lisa Gerzen for her helpful comments. Lisa is also a member of the subproject “Historical Technography of Online Commenting”; the chapter thus also builds upon the research she conducted within that project.

References

augsburger-allgemeine.de. 2001. “Foren. Meinungsaustausch bei Ihrer Augsburger Allgemeinen Zeitung.” December 23, 2001. http://web.archive.org/web/20011223234743/http://www.augsburger-allgemeine.de/Portal/start?pagename=index&sptnid=984043348689.

———. 2008. “550 Briefe: Wirtschaft Protestiert Gegen Stillstand Bei A-8-Ausbau.” May 2, 2008. https://web.archive.org/web/20080502222146/http://www.augsburger-allgemeine.de/Home/Nachrichten/Bayern/Artikel,-Wirtschaft-protestiert-gegen-Stillstand-bei-A-8-Ausbau-_arid,1216708_regid,2_puid,2_pageid,4289.html#kommentar.

———. 2010. “Nachrichten Augsburg Bayern.” October 31, 2010. https://web.archive.org/web/20101031130140/http://www.augsburger-allgemeine.de/Home/Nachrichten/Startseite/regid,2_puid,2_pageid,4288.html.

Böhnke, Alexander. Paratexte Des Films: Über Die Grenzen Des Filmischen Universums. transcript Verlag, 2007. https://doi.org/10.1515/9783839406076.

Bourdieu, Pierre. 1990. *The Logic of Practice*. Translated by Richard Nice. Stanford/CA: Stanford University Press.

Brügger, Niels. 2008. “The Archived Website and Website Philology.” *Nordicom Review* 29 (2): 155–75. https://doi.org/10.1515/nor-2017-0183.

———. 2018. *The Archived Web: Doing History in the Digital Age*. Cambridge (Mass.): The MIT Press.

Consalvo, Mia. 2017. “When Paratexts Become Texts: De-Centering the Game-as-Text.” *Critical Studies in Media Communication* 34 (2): 177–83. https://doi.org/10.1080/15295036.2017.1304648.

Dembeck, Till. 2007. *Texte rahmen. Grenzregionen literarischer Werke im 18. Jahrhundert (Gottsched, Wieland, Moritz, Jean Paul).* Berlin, Boston: De Gruyter. https://doi.org/10.1515/9783110975123.

de.wikipedia.org. 2024. “Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung.” In Wikipedia. https://de.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Frankfurter_Allgemeine_Zeitung&oldid=242340528#Publizistische_Ableger.

faz.net. 1997. “Frankfurter Allgemeine Online.” 1997. http://web.archive.org/web/19970126031017/http://www.faz.de/.

———. 2001. “F.A.Z. Aktuelle Ausgabe.” 2001. http://web.archive.org/web/20010309172354/http://www.faz.de/IN/INtemplates/faznet/

default.asp?tpl=faz/overview.asp&rub=%7b7113DBFA-05D2-4BA6-94AC-23EE31EEE75B%7d.

———. 2002. “Foren.” January 24, 2002. http://web.archive.org/web/20020124115715/http://www.faz.net/IN/INtemplates/faznet/default.asp?tpl=forum/forum_overview.asp&rub=%7bEEA0DD83-6AE7-47c6-B146-75E5A5F54FB6%7d.

———. 2005. “Aktuell.” June 14, 2005. https://web.archive.org/web/20050614234631/http://www.faz.net/s/homepage.html.

———. 2011. “Die F.A.Z. Im Internet: Übersichtlich, Meinungsstark Und Diskussionsfreudig.” October 4, 2011. https://web.archive.org/web/20111004121255/http://www.faz.net/aktuell/die-f-a-z-im-internet-uebersichtlich-meinungsstark-und-diskussionsfreudig-11447692.html.

———. 2014. “Janukowitschs Macht Zerbröselt: Flucht Aus Kiew.” 2014. http://web.archive.org/web/20140529155827/http://www.faz.net/aktuell/politik/janukowitschs-macht-zerbroeselt-flucht-aus-kiew-12815733.html.

Genette, Gerard. 1997. *Palimpsests: Literature in the Second Degree*. Translated by Channa Newman and Claude Doubinsky. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press.

———. 2010. *Paratexts: Thresholds of Interpretation*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Gillespie, Tarleton. 2018. *Custodians of the Internet: Platforms, Content Moderation, and the Hidden Decisions That Shape Social Media*. New Haven: Yale University Press.

Goffman, Erving. 1986. *Frame Analysis: An Essay on the Organization of Experience*. Boston: Northeastern University Press.

Hediger, Vinzenz. 2004. “Trailer online. Der Hypertext als Paratext.” Oder: Das Internet als Vorhof des Films. In *Paratexte in Literatur, Film, Fernsehen*, edited by Klaus Kreimeier and Georg Stanitzek, 283–99. Berlin: Akademie Verlag.

Jones, Steven E., and George K. Thiruvathukal. 2012. *Codename Revolution: The Nintendo Wii Platform*. Cambridge (Mass.): The MIT Press.

Kiechle, Oliver. “Ein gespaltenes Netz? – Das Usenet der 1980er-Jahre zwischen Regulierung und Anarchie.” In *Zur Geschichte des digitalen Zeitalters*, edited by Ricky Wichum and Daniela Zetti, 125–42. Geschichte des digitalen Zeitalters. Wiesbaden: Springer Fachmedien Wiesbaden, 2022. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-658-34506-8_7.

latimes.com. 1996. “Los Angeles Times Speak Out.” December 23, 1996. http://web.archive.org/web/19961223084507/http://www.latimes.com:80/HOME/SPEAKOUT/.

———. 1997. “Los Angeles Times Discussions.” August 5, 1997. http://web.archive.org/web/19970805154359/http://www.latimes.com:80/HOME/DISCUSS/.

Latour, Bruno. 2005. *Reassembling the Social: An Introduction to Actor-Network-Theory*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

McLuhan, Marshall. 1994. *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man*. Edited by Lewis H. Lapham. Cambridge (Mass.): The MIT Press.

nyt.com. 1996. “The New York Times on the Web.” December 19, 1996. https://web.archive.org/web/19961219002950/http://www.nytimes.com/.

———. 2009. “When Bonus Contracts Can Be Broken – Room for Debate Blog.” March 21, 2009. https://web.archive.org/web/20090321143730/http://roomfordebate.blogs.nytimes.com/2009/03/17/when-bonus-contracts-can-be-broken/#comments.

———. 2010a. “Editorial – Thinking About a New Haiti.” February 6, 2010. https://web.archive.org/web/20100206054052/http://www.nytimes.com/2010/02/01/opi

nion/01mon1.html.
———. 2010b. “Thinking About a New Haiti – Readers’ Comments.” February 6, 2010. https://web.archive.org/web/20100206062634/http://community.nytimes.com/comments/www.nytimes.com/2010/02/01/opinion/01mon1.html.
———. 2016a. “Comments.” April 3, 2016. https://web.archive.org/web/20160403071334/http://www.nytimes.com/content/help/site/usercontent/usercontent.html.
———. 2016b. “Hillary Clinton Denounces the ‘Alt-Right,’ and the Alt-Right Is Thrilled.” September 2016. https://web.archive.org/web/20160901001117/http://www.nytimes.com/2016/08/27/us/politics/alt-right-reaction.html.
———. 2024. “Hillary Clinton Denounces the ‘Alt-Right,’ and the Alt-Right Is Thrilled.” January 27, 2024. https://web.archive.org/web/20240127172635/http://www.nytimes.com/2016/08/27/us/politics/alt-right-reaction.html.
Paßmann, Johannes. 2023. “Sorting Texts out (or in). Revisiting Paratexts Praxeologically.” Preprint. https://doi.org/10.13140/RG.2.2.36824.26889.
Paßmann, Johannes, and Lisa Gerzen. 2024. “Follow the Updates! Reconstructing Past Practices with Web Archive Data.” *Internet Histories*, 5 February. https://doi.org/10.1080/24701475.2024.2310405.
Paßmann, Johannes, Anne Helmond, and Robert Jansma. 2023. “From Healthy Communities to Toxic Debates: Disqus’ Changing Ideas about Comment Moderation.” *Internet Histories* 7 (1): 6–26. https://doi.org/10.1080/24701475.2022.2105123.
Reagle, Joseph M. 2015. *Reading the Comments: Likers, Haters, and Manipulators at the Bottom of the Web*. Cambridge (Mass.): The MIT Press.
Schäfer, Hilmar. 2016. “Praxis als Wiederholung. Das Denken der Iterabilität und seine Konsequenzen für die Methodologie praxeologischer Forschung.” In *Praxistheorie. Ein Soziologisches Forschungsprogramm*, edited by Hilmar Schäfer, 137–59. Bielefeld: Transcript.
Sewell, William H. Jr. 2005. *Logics of History: Social Theory and Social Transformation*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
spiegel.de. 1997. “Spiegel Online Forum.” June 15, 1997. https://web.archive.org/web/19970615022041/http://www.spiegel.de/forum/.
———. 2001a. “Gespräche Gescheitert: Windows XP Ohne AOL – Netzwelt – SPIEGEL ONLINE.” June 8, 2001. https://web.archive.org/web/20010608201136/http://www.spiegel.de/netzwelt/ebusiness/0,1518,137643,00.html.
———. 2001b. “‘Bianca’s Smut Shack’ – Service – SPIEGEL ONLINE.” June 9, 2001. https://web.archive.org/web/20010609122254/http://www.spiegel.de/service/0,1518,137202,00.html.
———. 2010. “Best of Engadget: Das iPhone Fällt Nicht Weit Vom Ast.” March 4, 2010. http://web.archive.org/web/20100304045925/http://www.spiegel.de/netzwelt/gadgets/0,1518,674791,00.html.
———. 2014a. “Jan Böhmermann: Porträt Vom ‘Neo Magazin’-Moderator.” January 14, 2014. https://web.archive.org/web/20140114144756/http://www.spiegel.de/kultur/tv/jan-boehmermann-portraet-vom-neo-magazin-moderator-a-939862.html.
———. 2014b. “Champions League: Atlético Madrid Gewinnt Gegen Chelsea.” August 18, 2014. https://web.archive.org/web/20140818033329/http://www.spiegel.de/sport/fussball/cha

mpions-league-atletico-madrid-gewinnt-gegen-chelsea-a-967088.html.
———. 2018. “Volker Kauder Warnt Tsipras Vor Ende Des Griechischen Sparkurses.” February 14, 2018. https://web.archive.org/web/20180214125931/http://www.spiegel.de/politik/deutschland/volker-kauder-warnt-tsipras-vor-ende-des-griechischen-sparkurses-a-1016139.html.
———. 2020. “Diskutieren, Was Ist.” January 8, 2020. https://web.archive.org/web/20200108173806/https://www.spiegel.de/backstage/diskutieren-was-ist-a-a633c185-38ef-425b-a1c6-8531f49683c5.
———. 2023. “Neue Community: Freuen Sie sich auf SPIEGEL Debatte.” Der Spiegel. November 7, 2023. https://www.spiegel.de/backstage/neue-community-freuen-sie-sich-auf-spiegel-debatte-a-4a1bae59-84a4-4d71-ab37-922e6a0e5f48.
Stanitzek, Georg. 2005. “Texts and Paratexts in Media.” *Critical Inquiry* 32 (1): 27–42. https://doi.org/10.1086/498002.
sz.de. 2003. “Sueddeutsche.De.” April 29, 2003. https://web.archive.org/web/20030429173428/http://www.sueddeutsche.de/index.php?url=/sz/kommentar&datei=index.php&email=auto-online@sueddeutsche.de&ressort=auto&urlalt=auto/service/64133&dateialt=index.php.
———. 2007. “Videoüberwachung Erste Erfolge Der Virtuellen Streife.” June 18, 2007. https://web.archive.org/web/20070618140929/http://www.sueddeutsche.de/,ra10l1/muenchen/artikel/456/108348/.
———. 2015. “Frankreich: Wehe, Wenn Der Schmerz Nachlässt.” 2015. https://web.archive.org/web/20150110205411/http://www.sueddeutsche.de/politik/frankreich-nach-dem-anschlag-auf-charlie-hebdo-wehe-wenn-der-schmerz-nachlaesst-1.2295265.
———. 2022. “Warum gestaltet die SZ ihre Kommentarfunktion um?” Süddeutsche.de. 2022. https://www.sueddeutsche.de/projekte/artikel/service/sz-transparenz-blog-e120891/.
Werber, Niels, Daniel Stein, Jörg Döring, Veronika Albrecht-Birkner, Carolin Gerlitz, Thomas Hecken, Johannes Paßmann, Jörgen Schäfer, Cornelius Schubert, and Jochen Venus. 2023. “Getting Noticed by Many: On the Transformations of the Popular.” *Arts* 12 (1): 15–36. https://doi.org/10.3390/arts12010039.
Wüllner, Daniel. 2015. “Lassen Sie uns diskutieren.” Süddeutsche.de. January 21, 2015. https://www.sueddeutsche.de/kolumne/ihre-sz-lassen-sie-uns-diskutieren-1.2095271.
zeit.de. 1999. “Debatte.” April 29, 1999. https://web.archive.org/web/19990429121439/http://www.debatte.zeit.de/.
———. 2005. “Halte Was Du Hast, Dass Niemand Deine Krone Nehme.” November 6, 2005. https://web.archive.org/web/20051106094428/http://www.zeit.de/leben/leben_hat_uns/simon_23.
———. 2006. “Sieben Für Deutschland.” July 26, 2006. https://web.archive.org/web/20060726122422/http://www.zeit.de/online/2006/22/Netzwerk_Abgeordnete.
———. 2009. “In Eigener Sache: Die Neuerungen Im Kommentarbereich.” September 9, 2009. https://web.archive.org/web/20090909142221/http://community.zeit.de/user/die-redaktion/beitrag/2009/09/05/eigener-sache-die-neuerungen-im-kommentarbereich.