

Clothilde Gaudet

Sabine Rosenberg

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The Web we have to save: Reflection

Hossein Derakhshan explains in his article the contrast between today's web and the web of 2008- which he got arrested for interacting with. In the 6 years he was gone, social media had become crucial to spreading one's work. However, the algorithms in place don't promote works unless they are deemed interesting enough for the viewer.

Blogs were extremely popular in 2008 - with readers participating with comments. Derakhshan's blog was widely visited despite it being banned in Iran.

Hyperlinks were crucial back then - they connected ideas, people, within the blog text. Now, it is difficult to share more than one link on Facebook (only one will be previewed). One cannot link to the definition of a word, or link back to a previous post contextualizing the current one...

Things posted within social media platforms are treated as more valuable by algorithms than posts from other sites - which leaves little space for cross-pollinating ideas across platforms. While people are still using the internet's infrastructure, it is packaged in a simpler, narrower way that doesn't lead out through the web. Instagram, for example, does not link outside of its platform. Derakhshan describes the concept of the gaze, with the gazer having power over the one being gazed at; When a powerful platform like Facebook links to an external page, its gaze brings life to this page, which would get little attention/life otherwise. With links being deprived of attention by big social media platforms, the external pages die.

Social media just keeps referring to itself and sharing stuff in a closed loop, leaving external pages out, and unevenly distributing power to the most popular celebrities' content.

The stream lets people see the content they want without going out and looking for it. Now, it is harder to find these voices, as algorithms feed you what they think you want to see/should see. There is a lack of diversity in content. Power is taken away from people and given to big corporations. Also, social media observes you through the content you consume.

The author concludes that the web has lost its teeth and is now more entertainment than education and communication.

Works cited:

Derakhshan, H. (2015, July 14). The Web We Have to Save. Retrieved from <https://medium.com/matter/the-web-we-have-to-save-2eb1fe15a426>