A momentary world

Momentary social networks or deep-tech forums - is there nothing in between? Where is our promised external, collective memory?

The internet you know today had been pretty different a while ago. *Like music: there were things before mp3, like CD, before that, LP, and somewhere in the distant path, the gramophone.* Around and close before 2000, the web was full of community pages, chats, IRC channels, MSN & ICQ messaging, forums.

Virtual places where people, who might never ever met before could get together, from any part of the world to exchange opinions, to talk about an interest they share. This was all happening faceless, without the need of a real ID or using your "real" name - we used avatars and faces you might not be able to wear in public. It was fantastic, tonic and vibrant. *Yes, like anywhere else there was a dangerous side to this. You just had to keep in mind not to talk about bank account details (and similarly sensitive data) to strangers.*

When social networks appeared these little sanctuaries had already started to fall apart. There's a never-ending list of reasons. Quality differences compared to the new platforms. Crazy amount of way too small to be an interest sites for ~10 person, who left a bigger communities because they had an argument on a tiny topic. It became easy to open new websites a lot of us never knew how hard is to keep something alive on our own. Collaboration-incapable participants who believed they are so different they cannot join hands with others. Tired, "I'm too old for this", "I don't listen to music like this any more" people who only participated because the needed to belong to somewhere.

By the time I'm writing these lines a significant amount of my friends are beginning to think that social networks made their lives more shallow than it used to be. There are no long-running talks and debates — the posts and replies are full of "More..." buttons and they disappear from a wall without trace, without reason, without notification. You never look back at the past events, to see some of the photos taken there — hell, there are no more photos of the event itself, just "Look, I was here" pictures everywhere! You never look back at a former topic, because it's impossible to find it in the maze of the user interface.

Facebook, Tumblr, Twitter, Instagram, Snapchat: all of them are going towards a world where everything is momentary and going back even a few days intentionally is out of interest and business. *(But if this was true, there were no things like retro, right?)* Even the search engines are tailored nowadays, showing results they believe to be relevant for you. Not the absolute results (most relevant keywords, etc.) but something that has a connection to your mailing, to your likes, to your +1s that could more possible be sold to you. I've read a brilliant article on some large business site about how today's teenagers are not becoming the computer ninjas we expected them to be, mostly because of the too easy to use devices - and I'm not able to find it. 15 years "experience" of daily search engine usage, and I cannot find it.

UPDATE: After downloading my Facebook archive and cutting through a few hundred posts, I've found the article[^1].

Personally I'm finding this similar to be locked in a moment of time. No past, no accidental encounters, no out of comfort zone titles. You still have the illusion of a wide, broad acknowledgement when you update your status, post a selfie (lots of followers, yet none is clicking on "More..."), or that you have the chance to meet new people in groups, and so on, but that's and illusion - it's not working.

I really wish people will realize that there should be something in between the momentary, closed world of social networks and the way too deep, highly technical forums, because we need something in the middle. Something that do work as our external, long term, collective memory[^2] in a useful way.

Links

1. http://www.forbes.com/sites/netapp/2013/11/14/kids-cant-compute-problem/
2. http://www.theatlantic.com/technology/archive/2012/02/we-the-web-kids/253382/