

“Take these broken links” - Twitter, the Q-drops and the collapse of a digital ecosystem

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Abstract

The QAnon-movement, a conspiracy theory and political movement who gained fame in the storming of the Capitol in Washington D.C in the beginning of 2021, see the messages from the source “Q” as their most important source of information. “Q” has posted short messages on different message boards (4Chan, 8Chan et cetera) since November 2017. The messages comment on contemporary political events and claim to foresee political development. [1] Who the source, “Q” is, is not known, although speculations exist on the internet. At least we know that the person or persons making the posts seems to want us to believe that they have insight into the backstage of the political scene. [2] In the beginning of 2021 I downloaded the 4953 messages from Q, usually called the Q-drops, as raw text and as pictures. This has given me the possibility to do different types of content analysis of the messages using tools as awk and grep of the Unix and Linux operating systems. [4] Now I want to use this material to analyze the core utility of the internet – its core purpose according to the hypertext pioneer Ted Nelson; “the cells interlinked within cells interlinked” to use Vladimir Nabokov vibrant *zukunftsvision* from the postmodern poetry of *Pale fire*. [5]

The analysis I want to present in this poster focus on the relation between the Q-drops and Twitter-content. Preserving the Q-drops using the technique I have described above saves all the content created by Q, but not content that has been linked from external platforms. Twitter is one of these major platforms and also a platform that during the US Election 2021, and in the aftermath of the Capitol-riots, purged accounts connected to the followers of the QAnon-movement. [5] How many Twitter-links in the Q-drops have survived and what is the consequences for interpretation of the material without the links that now are dead? Is it possible to see a pattern regarding which type of links, regarding types of accounts etcetera, that still are alive and working? The analysis I am suggesting could help us understand digital ecosystems and our possibilities to understand them when a movement within that ecosystem has been deplatformed and the only witness of their former content are broken links.

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