IPFS - The Harsh Reality

So we learned that with IPFS, our data is replicated and our site will become immortal!

No, not even close. Absolutely not.

The thing is: to keep a copy of content via IPFS, you have to *pin* it (it must be PINNED).

Let's realize one thing: to visit something residing on IPFS, there are two main ways:

- Use a normal browser that displays it thanks to a gateway: the visitor doesn't even notice they are on IPFS. You yourselves, if you go to https://ipfs.example.org (https://ipfs.example.org), don't have much of a way to realize you are on IPFS. And even if you did, a normal browser does NOT support *pinning*. So nothing, you can't make a local copy of the content.
- Use *Kubo*, just as if you wanted to set up a node (because yes, to pin you must use a native IPFS application, so you'll use *Kubo* or similar). The problem is that the built-in browser of such applications sucks: it simply shows the immutable filesystem (literally showing you the files making up the site: `index.html`, `contatti.html`, `script.js`, etc.) and if you click on a file, it shows you the source code. But it does not render the page, i.e., it doesn't show it as if it were a website.

So the question is: either you visit a site with a normal browser (and don't pin it) or you use a tool to pin it (but you don't visit the site). Is this because IPFS is incompatible with pure browsing? No, simply that to date nothing exists that allows you to do both in a user-friendly way.

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Yes, exactly. Hoping that your cool content gets pinned by a random visitor is like hoping that:

1. The visitor lands on your page.
2. They realize they are on IPFS.

3. They write down the address of the page they are visiting.
4. They open Kubo and type the address of the page.
5. They pin the whole thing.

Plus, bonus track: your site has to be so COOL for the visitor to induce them to have enough hassle tolerance to go through all these steps, which, as you can understand, are not exactly the smoothest thing in the world.

So what?! What do I do with it?

Sweet jack shit. Or rather: on your own, the most you can do is pay an external service to pin what you point to (so it's not a visitor, but a bot doing exactly that job for a fee). If you are a group of people, you can agree that everyone pins the content, so that if one goes down, the other covers (pardon the expression: a sort of decentralized git for various types of content).

At the end of the day, it is useful mostly for large and viral content: it's a sort of CDN. As long as they stay in someone's cache (like the gateways) it's easier to make them available. But not forever. The cache disappears and gateways couldn't care less about making your stuff immortal.

In practice, the RANDOM user will do absolutely nothing (unless on purpose through the previous 5 steps) to keep what you published alive.

[May the Talpone be with you]

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