

**USER AGENCY IN PLATFORM GOVERNANCE: CRITICAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS  
OF TWITTER USER AGREEMENT**

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## ABSTRACT

Platform governance is shaping the public discourse happening on social media platforms. Therefore, it is necessary to rethink platform governance by taking a critical look at the documents it is expressed through. There is a gap in such previous research that focuses on a specific platform and analyses critically the discourse within its governance document and this thesis aims to fill it. Social media platforms are privately owned public spaces where different actors have a key role in governing them. However, the governance by different actors has brought about a contestation among the power they hold and the extent of each of their agencies.

More specifically, this thesis will look into Twitter and the power within its governance document, Twitter User Agreement, to learn how much agency is given to the user of the platform in governing the public conversation on Twitter. By looking at the platform governance of social media platforms as it is explained by Tarleton Gillespie throughout his work and using the co-governance lens offered by Robert Gorwa in 2019, this thesis adds new insight to the existing research on platform governance. Researchers have pointed to the shortcomings of the governance methods employed by platforms for many years by now and call for moving towards a more distributed responsibility and power amongst key actors are not new among experts on the topic. However, this thesis aims to contribute to the discussion on platform governance by looking at one of the most popular social media platforms to see whether any steps towards sharing the power of governing the platform with its users are evident in their actions. The choice of material to research for this thesis, therefore, came from the idea that a platform's governance documents seem to be the most obvious place where such intentions should be expressed.

For the aim of this research, critical discourse analysis was conducted. By taking a look at both the content of the User Agreement as well as its context — how a user is first introduced to it and where the document leads the reader through actions it encourages and affords — this research reveals just how little a user is empowered to do in governing the platform itself and the public discourse it hosts. While the document expresses attempts to share responsibility and provide users with knowledge about how moderation works on the platform, it lacks any encouragement for the users to take action as well. The document does not exhibit to drive acts of moderation or governance on the part of the user in the same way as the platform promises to moderate content on its own. Thus, this thesis concludes that co-governance is yet to be reached by Twitter through

their User Agreement, as Twitter governs the conversation they host without inviting the user to join in the conversation over how exactly this is, should and could be done.

## INTRODUCTION

Platform governance, often enacted through content moderation, is shaping the public discourse happening on social media platforms (Gillespie 2018; DeNardis and Hackl 2015; Klonick 2017). Whether it is taking place through the ever-developing technology, AI, and algorithms or whether human moderators or users reporting others play a role, there are always certain limitations and restrictions to our expression on the platforms we use every day by the platforms themselves. Taking a look at who are the actors involved in the governance of platforms offers insight to better understand its impact on society and the potential advantages and harms it holds. This thesis aims to critically analyse the discourse of the documents governing our communication on social media platforms through the example of Twitter and its User Agreement to understand how it empowers users in governing the public discourse the platform hosts.

In contemporary society, social media platforms are strongly connected to how people receive news, access knowledge, and discuss issues of public concern (DeNardis and Hackl 2015, 769). As social media platforms are an important part of our everyday lives, they have had a role to play during recent humanitarian and geopolitical crises — for example, the COVID-19 pandemic (Rosenberg, Syed, and Rezaie 2020) and the war launched in Ukraine by Russia in 2022 (Bernot and Childs 2022). Thus, social media platforms have entered a new era in online speech governance (Douek 2021), as it is vital to moderate the public discourse happening on them. Because platforms intervene (Gillespie 2015) and they are not neutral in their intermediation of public discourse (Suzor 2018), it is now necessary to rethink platform governance and take a critical look at the documents it is expressed through.

The importance of researching platform governance as a new media phenomenon is therefore obvious. Tarleton Gillespie, a media scholar and a researcher devoted to the topic, has discussed how platforms intervene in their usage as they not only “guide, distort, and facilitate social activity,” but “also delete some of it” (2015, 1). Internet governance researcher Nicolas Suzor has stated that “the ways in which platforms are governed matters” (2018, 2). However, an aspect yet under-researched is the key parties — such as the businesses behind platforms and the users — in today’s platform society and the power relationships they form through the layers of governing platforms (Gorwa 2019, 855). Governing platforms successfully is not only about uncovering how it should be done and what practices it must involve, but also about learning

how to balance the power exercised by different actors over the public communication on them (Douek 2021, 768).

Gillespie (2018, 8) has argued that many users are becoming aware of the moderation taking place on social media as they are more often becoming subjected to this. The contestation between the privately-owned platforms that have created digital public spaces (Gillespie 2018; Treem et al. 2016; DeNardis and Hackl 2015; Almeida, Doneda, and Córdova 2016) and the general public who demands more power in governing these spaces and calls for new lenses of governance with more shared power with the users — such as co-governance — has led to the need for changing the principles of social media platform governance (Gorwa 2019). This paper will take a critical look at Twitter and the power within its governance documents to study how much agency is given to the user in governing the public conversations on the platform.

Therefore, this thesis addresses the question: how and to what extent is the Twitter User Agreement empowering the user in co-governing the public discourse that Twitter hosts? More specifically, the research question aims to unpack, how the document discursively involves the user and gives them agency to participate in Twitter's governance. The intention is to focus specifically on the governance document of Twitter — its User Agreement — to identify, analyse, and discuss its content and context related to platform governance and the power of key actors and their relationship. This research of the document will be conducted through the method of critical discourse analysis as explained by Norman Fairclough and the tools provided by James P. Gee in 2014. Critical discourse analysis enables understanding the context of the document and how it is first introduced to the user during the initial use of the Twitter mobile app. Lastly, as the User Agreement often leads the reader to different pages through hyperlinks, a look is taken into the Twitter Help Center as well. The affordances in these two additional materials further express the power held by the document.

The following thesis will first introduce a theoretical framework to explain what are social media platforms and their governance, the documents expressing it, the roles of key actors in shaping public discourse online through these governance documents, and what user empowerment should look like in practice. Next, it will introduce the methodology and corpus of materials in further detail as well as give a thorough overview of the analysis conducted into social media platform governance on the example of Twitter. It is a topic widely discussed in scholarly work in recent years, however, the growing demand for reshaping platform governance and sharing the

agency in making decisions is all the more reason to investigate the power of the actors behind them. Additionally, by taking a thorough look into a specific social media platform's governance document — in this case, Twitter and its User Agreement —, this thesis adds to the existing research on the topic to uncover whether the more distributed way of governing platforms has reached outside of the scholarly discussions and into the reality of governing the conversations on social media. Thus, this thesis aims to learn how Twitter is empowering its user and sharing the agency of governing the conversations held on the platform but also suggests looking at specific examples of platform governance being expressed by platforms themselves to bring more detailed insight into the current research landscape.

## 1. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This chapter together will lay a theoretical foundation for the research of Twitter's governance document. To study the Twitter User Agreement, it is first important to understand social media platforms and platform governance as a phenomenon. More specifically, this chapter explains the documents that describe the use and guidelines of platforms, because it is these documents through which platform governance is imposed. Additionally, overviews of the actors that have a role in governing social media platforms as well as what user empowerment consists of are in order.

### 1.1. Social media platforms — privately owned public spaces

As established, this thesis focuses on social media platforms. However, the term has been difficult to unambiguously and clearly define even though such services are an almost ubiquitous part of the everyday lives of many of their users. This is due to no singular “scope, format, topic, audience, or source” (Treem et al. 2016, 768-769) applying to all of the platforms potentially suitable to be described with this term. Just like *social media*, so is the term *platform* very ambiguous. However, the following paragraphs make an effort to define them in the scope of this thesis. More generally, the term *platform* can be used both to refer to the services provided by technology companies and to the companies themselves (Gorwa 2019, 856).

Professor of communications Caleb T. Carr and assistant professor Rebecca A. Hayes discussed different efforts to explain social media platforms and reached the following definition for them: “Internet-based channels that allow users to opportunistically interact and selectively self-present, either in real-time or asynchronously, with both broad and narrow audiences who derive value from user-generated content and the perception of interaction with others” (2015, 50). Internet governance scholar Laura DeNardis and Tech policy researcher Andrea M. Hackl define social media platforms as the providers of three specific technological affordances: the intermediation of user-generated content, the possibility of interactivity among users and direct engagement with content, and the ability for a person to articulate network connections with others (2015, 762).

Amongst other utilities, these platforms offer users convenience, engagement with others, and access to content through their interfaces and thus communication — that could otherwise have



happened in physical places — takes place in these privately owned public places (Almeida, Doneda, and Córdova 2016). According to Gillespie, social media platforms afford more people the opportunity to get in contact with each other (2018, 5). From the previously cited definition, it is also clear that user-generated content, interaction, and self-presentation are each important notions when discussing social media platforms (Carr and Hayes 2015). Additionally, Jeffrey W. Treem and his co-authors, all researchers of communications, see their ability to constitute “genres of communication” as a connecting notion of social media platforms (2016, 771). All of these descriptions emphasise the importance and value of communication and discourse on these channels.

One such social media platform is Twitter. Created in 2006, it has become one of the better known social media platforms around the world (Burgess and Baym 2020, 5) and today claims that its “purpose is to serve the public conversation” (“Twitter User Agreement” n.d., 37). It began as a place to share personal thoughts as “tweets” in a limited number of characters (Poynter 2010, 165), but by now has grown to geopolitical scales as both a tool and source vital to journalists, academics, and politicians (Burgess and Baym 2020, 4). Far from the platform being just a piece of technology or the company that provides its services, it is viewed as a place to host public discourses surrounding geopolitical topics such as the serious events of Arab Spring in the early 2010s being only a few of many similar examples (Burgess and Baym 2020, 14-17) or riots incited by former US President Donald Trump in 2020 (Suciu 2021). Due to Twitter being a valuable source during newsworthy events — described even as a “nervous system for the planet” and a “global newsroom” (Burgess and Baym 2020, 3) —, it is an important source of data for researchers.

In academic research, social media platforms are seen as a place where public opinion is shaped (Treem et al. 2016, 773), and thus they act as intermediaries (Suzor 2018). By hosting public discourse, they mediate users’ communication and therefore their decisions influence public culture, social dynamics, and people’s lives (Gillespie 2015). However, it is important to note that this power to shape the public is in the hands of private companies that own these platforms and can set and enforce the boundaries of appropriate communication (Gillespie 2015, 197). As DeNardis and Hackl discuss, these publicly accessible platforms should, from a technical perspective, be neutral in their intermediation of content provided by others, however, the infrastructure and platforms provided by private companies play a significant role in determining

the conditions of participation in the public space they have created (DeNardis and Hackl 2015). It is the governance of these social media platforms that this thesis will look further into.

## **1.2. Platform governance and the key actors involved in it**

Although social media platforms, Twitter amongst them, might present themselves as neutral in their mediation of the public discourse they host, they are not, as pointed out by Suzor (2018, 3). They play a decisive role in what is promoted, constrained, allowed, and censored on their platform and they decide the conditions under which content, or even accounts as a whole, are removed (DeNardis and Hackl 2015). Governance consists of rules and how they are established (Ang 2020, 320), it is a network of interactions connecting various actors and behaviours (Gorwa 2019, 856).

DeNardis and Hackl (2015, 761) explain that internet governance is a broad term describing the technical infrastructure, its design and administration, that keeps the internet operational together with the policies surrounding it. In his explanation of internet governance, media law and policy professor Ang Peng Hwa refers to the definition decided upon in 2005 by the working group of the World Summit that states it to be the “development and application by governments, the private sector and civil society, in their respective roles, of shared principles, norms, rules, decision-making procedures, and programmes that shape the evolution and use of the Internet” (2020, 320). From these definitions, two important aspects emerge in addition to the technical elements of the internet itself: stakeholders and rules (Ang 2020).

On the one hand, internet governance concerns what Ang calls the rules (2020, 321), the daily decisions regarding the content on social media platforms. These decisions are based on various elements such as rules of operation, terms of use, social norms, operation or code, and laws (Almeida, Doneda, and Córdova 2016). Platforms must moderate to protect users and to remove unsuitable content as they are responsible for intermediating (Gillespie 2018, 5). These intermediaries intervene in cyberbullying and online harassment, censor speech and terminate accounts, block or delete content, and for a mostly unnoticeable interaction with the user, they design technical affordances and form terms of service (DeNardis and Hackl 2015).

On the other hand, the governance of platforms is shaped by the actors, who are also seen as stakeholders, who are the main focus of this thesis. Though the term “governance” suggests that

the most important agent is the government, it is not the case on the internet, as there are two other parties involved as well: the private sector and civil society (Ang 2020, 320). On platforms, the responsibility of governing is divided between platform companies, users, and governments, — the first provide the online environments, the second make decisions about their behaviour on these platforms and the latter set the overall ground rules as laws and policies (Gorwa 2019, 855). While the definition referenced by Ang suggests that these stakeholders — parties involved in internet governance — have specific roles to play, this interpretation is too limiting from the current point of view of social media platforms (2020, 321). Instead, platform owners are taking steps towards better governance of their platforms together with the other stakeholders — for example, the co-governance lens is seeking to provide more democratic accountability (Gorwa 2019) — leaving behind stiff regulations and instead are taking into account the societal influence and context of content on the platforms (Douek 2021).

Suzor (2018) uses the definition by Burris, Kempa, & Shearing stating that governance is the “organized efforts to manage the course of events in a social system” to point to the significance of private actors in shaping the behaviour of the public. While platforms are often directed to intervene by external actors such as governments (DeNardis and Hackl 2015), another reason for moderating is so the business could present their better side to their users, advertisers and partners and the public as a whole (Gillespie 2018, 5). Thus, platforms are businesses motivated by their financial needs making choices to satisfy all other stakeholders as well as themselves (Gillespie 2015).

Ang (2020, 321) has pointed out that some representatives of the public demand equal power with other actors, such as governments, to negotiate and formulate platform rules. However, social media platforms are struggling to fulfil this contentious demand (Ang 2020, 321). Until now, users have had very little room to negotiate the way platforms are governed because they are seen as consumers, who are legally bound to the terms and conditions they accepted to use the service offered by private businesses (Suzor 2018). This makes platforms responsible for how they tend to the public discourse on their platforms and calls for a rethinking of their governance (Gillespie 2018, 209). Gillespie suggests a new approach: a shared responsibility of governing together with the same public that is governed (2018, 209).

Gillespie is not alone in this suggestion, as already in 2005 the World Summit, from where Ang’s definition of platform governance stems, produced a recommendation for how the internet

should be governed and it included the aspect of involving multiple stakeholders — governments, the private sector and civil society (Ang 2020, 324). Gillespie (2018, 209) explains that even though many platforms have begun to innovate how they engage users in content moderation, they have done little to support user participation at the level of governance and shared decision making by discarding the promise of providing the necessary tools to the users to do so. He asks for platforms to give agency to users to address tensions in public discourse and “responsibly support that process with the necessary tools, data, and insights” (Gillespie 2018, 211). Robert Gorwa (2019, 864), who is a doctoral candidate examining the political role of large technology platforms, describes co-governance as a way of providing more values of democratic accountability and transparency — which platform governance often lacks (Suzor 2018, 5) — to platform governance approaches without making extreme changes to its current practices. This should be done instead of what the platforms are currently doing: discouraging users from going further than just reporting content that might violate platform rules and promising to handle it from there (Gillespie 2018, 212).

This expresses the contestation of who has the power and the final say in how to shape the governance of platforms, which has ignited the need to rethink the practices of governance itself. Although it is an ongoing process with no endpoint to arrive at (Douek 2021, 833), co-governance that involves multiple stakeholders — civil society, private sector, governments but also academia — might be a solution for the future of social media platforms (Almeida, Doneda, and Córdova 2016).

### **1.3. The documents governing the use of platforms**

The established overview of social media platform governance expresses that a part of these practices is the documents stating these rules: the terms of use, conditions, community guidelines, or terms of service. The contractual clauses that govern the use of a social media platform are “norms” stated by private companies that own the platforms (Almeida, Doneda, and Córdova 2016). Suzor calls the agreement to the terms stated in these documents “the price of entry”, as users consent to the control of the platform, but still are personally responsible for their actions on it (2018, 3).

Though, as it is becoming more and more clear to users that platforms moderate their activities (Gillespie 2018, 8), it is still common to not read the terms by which users are supposed to consume the service, as exemplified by recent research done by Ibdah et al. (2021), Robinson and Zhu (2020), and Obar and Oeldorf-Hirsch (2020). The reason to ignore these terms stated in the documents is often simple. As Miller et al. put it, “there is very little incentive to do so, as these are not negotiable” (2021, 97) and according to Almeida, Doneda, and Córdova, they “tend to be overly imposed, due to the virtual impossibility of bargaining” (2016, 83). Additionally, what makes the terms difficult to get acquainted with, is the fact that users have to often “tread through a labyrinth of terms and policies” which are in separate documents on different sites (Tan 2018, 99), almost as if to intentionally make reading them a nuisance.

Scholars discussing platform governance are adamant that researching this phenomenon cannot focus merely on the governance documents (Gillespie 2018, 209; DeNardis and Hackl 2015) but should also take into account other expressions of governance that are beyond the scope of this thesis. However, as Gillespie (2018, 46) has emphasised, these documents should not be taken lightly and dismissed either. Importantly, they describe how platform companies see themselves as arbiters of public propriety and deployed only when helpful to be then sidestepped by the platforms themselves when these guidelines have become too constraining (Gillespie 2018, 46). As platforms play a vital role in governing the public conversation they host, it is necessary to fill the gap in researching the governance concerns of platform responsibilities and understand that platforms can no longer keep moderating and yet avoid the responsibility for the content their users create (Suzor 2018, 3).

As the time spent on social media by internet users keeps on growing (Tan 2018, 1) it is necessary to take a critical look at the documents that express how platforms are governed. Gillespie instructs researchers to ask what these documents say, how they sound and even what they hope to accomplish (2018, 46). The various parts of the documents can differ in many ways when the platform creators work to make sense of and establish their power over the users (Gillespie 2018, 47). Suzor claims these documents often “struggle to provide the clarity that is required to guide behaviour, they provide no protection from unilateral changes in rules, do nothing to ensure that decisions are made according to the rules, and present no meaningful avenues for appeal” (2018, 8). While often unclear, broad, and subject to change according to the platform’s will (Suzor 2018, 7) it is these documents that platforms refer to when making moderating decisions, which is all the more reason to analyse how they sound and what they say

— i.e how they come across to a reader concerning what is explicitly stated in the documents — to reveal the power held by private curators of public speech (Gillespie 2018, 45-73).

#### **1.4. Co-governance and user empowerment**

As is evident from the previous framework, the power of governance is not clearly defined and there is no single correct way of shaping the public discourse happening on social media platforms. On one hand, platforms themselves are structuring user activity through moderation, algorithms, governance documents and so on (Gillespie 2018, 23). On the other hand, users have power over platforms as well (Gillespie 2018, 23). Many authors who discuss platform governance — for example Ang (2020) and Gorwa (2019) amongst others —, emphasise the importance of both individual users and civil society as stakeholders in deciding how to successfully govern platforms.

Whether the solution that involves all key actors is called co-governance (Gorwa 2019), a multi-stakeholder approach (Ang 2020), cooperative responsibility (Helberger, Pierson, and Poell 2018) or “platform cooperativism” (van Dijck, Poell, and de Waal 2018b, 15), it is not perfect, but it aims to fix some of the shortcomings of governance that is currently practised by platforms. ARTICLE 19’s report (2018) — produced as a part of a Europe-wide campaign “Media against hate” — finds content moderation and the policies defining it lacking in many aspects such as respect for human rights standards, legal certainty, accountability or transparency over decision-making and consistency in stakeholder engagement. Helberger, Pierson, and Poell (2018) claim that platforms promise to empower individuals to effectively take up their role in governance, but in practice, platforms have failed to keep this promise, because their business interests do not always align well with those of public. Ang (2020) admits, however, that the multistakeholder model — notwithstanding its weaknesses — is the best, as any alternatives are simply worse.

Therefore, the question of how platforms should be co-governed is bound to emerge. Helberger, Pierson, and Poell (2018) suggest sharing the responsibility of governing and they propose four key steps to distribute power amongst stakeholders. First, it is necessary to collectively define the public values at play and, secondly, each actor has to accept their role when it comes to the realization of these values (Helberger, Pierson, and Poell 2018). Thirdly, a process must be developed for public deliberation and exchange and, lastly, the outcome of these agreements

needs to be translated into policies, documents and technologies (Helberger, Pierson, and Poell 2018). ARTICLE 19 (2018) proposes creating a Social Media Council, an independent self-regulatory body which could tackle content moderation issues and topics such as terms and conditions, community guidelines and the content regulation practices of social media companies. While this is an ambitious task, the manner in which this council would work, consists of many elements social media platforms can already adapt to initiate steps towards co-governance (ARTICLE 19 2018). For example, platforms should be more transparent in their decision-making, work in a more open and participatory manner, and have robust complaints mechanisms and clear procedural rules in place to initiate participation from other actors such as users (ARTICLE 19 2018).

User empowerment, therefore, emerges from the shared responsibility of governing platforms. According to ARTICLE 19 (2018), it is positive that social media platforms are taking action in response to public concerns. For example, platforms are increasingly more engaged in initiatives addressing problems related to content such as combating hate speech and terrorism (ARTICLE 19 2018). While an individual user is unlikely to influence platforms' policies they can come together with others to become a collective power, which can be a force to be reckoned with, as van Dijck, Poell, and de Waal (2018b, 15) claim "because user metrics are one of the biggest currencies in the platform economy". Users can protest, collectively point out public concerns, put pressure on advertisers and create social movements (van Dijck, Poell, and de Waal 2018b) to make a difference on their own.

However, platforms themselves can also work towards empowering users. For example, users can rate and flag content or other users (van Dijck, Poell, and de Waal 2018a, 14) if platforms afford to do so. According to Helberger, Pierson, and Poell (2018), platforms have an obligation to cooperate with and empower users, which could be done by creating awareness, informing and educating users. Platforms must work on creating an environment where active participation is expected from the user, they are more knowledgeable about their responsibilities and abilities to give feedback and they are treated as equal partners to platforms and governments in governing the platforms (Helberger, Pierson, and Poell 2018). Overall, platform governance should be collaborative, transparent and open to meaningful participation for all key actors, for it to be successful and suitable for our contemporary society (ARTICLE 19 2018).

In conclusion, the keywords relating to co-governance are therefore transparency, responsibility, participation, knowledge and awareness. In addition to providing users with general governance documents, they should be invited to participate in the creation of such governing guidelines and not just wait for users to come together on their own and begin civil society initiations for governance to follow the needs and values of the public (Helberger, Pierson, and Poell 2018).



## **2. METHODOLOGY**

To study how the agency in governing the platforms is divided between the key actors of users and platform owners, the following investigation is conducted through the use of critical discourse analysis (abbreviated as CDA). The following chapter will provide an overview of this methodology as well as the corpus of materials of the research to analyse the agency given to the users of Twitter through their platform governance document, the Twitter User Agreement.

### **2.1. Operationalisation of the research question**

As announced in the introduction of the thesis, the following research question was posed: how and to what extent is the Twitter User Agreement empowering the user in co-governing the public discourse that Twitter hosts? The research question aims to uncover how the document discursively involves the user and gives them agency to participate in Twitter's governance. This aim is reached through CDA as this methodology enables analysing the notion of power in society and societal processes.

Critical discourse analysis is described by Norman Fairclough (2010, 5), who is amongst the founders of critical discourse analysis in sociolinguistics, not as a method but as a methodology. As CDA can combine many methods of research, it does not force researchers to pick an existing collection of methods but instead allows combining theoretical perspectives and frameworks with relevant tools to take a unique approach to the research at hand. According to Fairclough, critical discourse analysis could be described as a transdisciplinary analysis of relations between discourse and other elements of a social process, it includes a form of systematic analysis of texts and it is normative in that it addresses social wrongs and possible ways of making them right (2010, 11-10). This means that CDA enables researchers to address the wrongs in society by looking at the discourse they involve and the context they are surrounded by to offer possible solutions or ways of mitigation.

As the posed research question focuses specifically on user empowerment, the analysis will look for expressions of possible co-governance in the document's content and context. Therefore, this research will offer insight into how a governance document is involving the user and to what extent they are given an agency to participate in the same platform's governance. This thesis focuses on the specific example of Twitter, however, this operationalisation of CDA is intended

to apply to other platforms as well. The methodology used for the following research provides an in-depth approach as an example for future researchers on platform governance through the platform-specific example of Twitter. Thus, this research aims to fill a gap in how thoroughly a platform can and should be analysed to study the phenomenon of social media platform governance.

## **2.2. Analysis of platform governance**

Fairclough's description of CDA is what the following analysis of Twitter's governance of users' communication aims to follow. It is the most suitable method to look into how social practices are shaped by inherently political notions such as power, which is expressed in the terms of use of the social media platform through language (Gee 2014a, 86-87). This thesis will analyse Twitter's governance document and look into the content of it, but additionally, it looks into both how this document is introduced to the user, as well as where it leads the reader next, as both of these aspects add to the context within which the document exists. Thus, this research will use CDA tools suggested by Gee (2014b) to take a critical look at both the content and context of the corpus of this study.

CDA was chosen as the methodology, as it connects the analysis of a text to its societal context. Stephanie Taylor has defined the critical discourse analysis by explaining that it takes into consideration the "workings of power in society and the role of language in establishing and perpetuating dominance", and it tends to involve a multi-level analysis consisting of, for example, the text's linguistic features as well as the location of it within a wider social context (2013, 96). Professor Ruth Wodak (2001, 11), who is with Fairclough among the defining figures in developing this methodology, explained that from the perspective of CDA, a text is often the work of many authors where discursive differences are negotiated and governed by differences in power. For Wodak, "CDA takes an interest in the ways in which linguistic forms are used in various expressions and manipulations of power" (2001, 11), which is why I have chosen this methodology to guide the research of a platform governance document in search of the power it holds and distributes between actors. As DeNardis and Hackl (2015, 766) have argued, private companies that own social media platforms dictate the conditions of participation in these public spaces and that is a lot of power over free expression. Therefore, the fact that platform

governance is directly connected to the social media platforms stating to enact power over the users directly connects the phenomena to the method of critical discourse analysis.

James P. Gee, an author who has provided researchers with an insightful overview of the theoretical knowledge and practical methods with which to conduct CDA, describes the methodology “as tied closely to the details of language structure (grammar), but that deals with meaning in social, cultural, and political terms” (2014b, 1). Gee (2014b) has also developed a wide variety of tools which will be used for the following analysis of the Twitter User Agreement. Though they are all incorporated into the research on some level, the content of the document was analysed most through tools which provoke questions such as: why was the text written in one way and not in another; what activities is this text encouraging; what identities and relationships are being built through this text? Through the tools that lead to these questions, it is possible to understand the role of the wording, language, grammar, and vocabulary in shaping the power and agency in the document (Gee, 2014b).

Furthermore, his tools help to learn about the context of the document as well. By using “the frame”, “the cohesion” and “the intertextuality” tools, it was possible to study the role of the design and location of the document and references to and from the document (Gee, 2014b). These tools provoked the questions of how the text is framed in its context; how easy the text is to understand from a reader’s and platform user’s point of view; and how is the text referring to other sources or destinations of additional texts? These questions were used to learn the role of the design and location of the document and references to and from the document (Gee, 2014b). According to Gee (2014a, 142-143), the validity of discourse analysis is made up of four elements: convergence, agreement, coverage and linguistic details. By answering the questions posed by the use of Gee’s tools (2014b) it is possible to ensure the trustworthiness of the research and its results if each tool leads to a discovery that is in agreement with others found within the same research. Additionally, the analysis is of sufficient coverage if it can be applied to related sorts of data and the results of the research are valid the more attention is paid to the linguistic details of the corpus during the analysis (Gee 2014a, 142-143).

Gee’s tools are important in finding expressions of user empowerment, which is the focus of this thesis. The key notions related to user empowerment were discussed in the final subchapter of the theoretical framework. With the help of that literature overview, it is possible to recognise elements of user empowerment in the corpus of materials of this study. The following research

will look for expressions of creating awareness, informing and educating users and expectations of active participation from the user's side as described by Helberger, Pierson, and Poell (2018). In addition, notions of collaboration, transparency and openness to meaningful participation as described by ARTICLE 19 (2018) are also studied. It is through finding language that invites users to engage with platform governance and exhibits of working towards educating users on the topic that it can be determined to what extent is Twitter empowering its users to co-govern the platform.

### **2.3. Corpus of materials**

This subchapter gives an overview of the corpus that this study looks into: the Twitter User Agreement document, the Twitter mobile app, and the Help Center on the company's homepage. Because the focus of this thesis is to learn how a governance document of a social media platform is giving agency to its users in governing the platform, it is necessary to look into the document itself, but also where it is initially introduced to the user on the Twitter app and the materials it directs the reader to. Thus, the research first focuses on the content of the User Agreement itself, the wording, vocabulary and language used. Secondly, the research reveals the context of the document by analysing the Twitter Help Center briefly and walking through the Twitter app to learn how a user would find their way to the document and where it takes them next.

The platform governance document of Twitter is the User Agreement, a 39-page document found on the Twitter Terms of Service page located at <https://twitter.com/en/tos> and downloadable by a button in the corner of the page. The Terms of Service page itself only consists of what the title states — the Terms of Service (abbreviated: Terms). However, the User Agreement is a longer document consisting of the aforementioned Terms, as well as the Twitter Privacy Policy (abbreviated: Privacy Policy) and the Twitter Rules (abbreviated: Rules). Amongst these, the Terms chapter might at first seem like the longest one, however, it exists in two almost identical versions aimed at Twitter's users in different locations of the world — users living in the European Union, EFTA States (European Free Trade Association that currently includes Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway and Switzerland (“About EFTA | European Free Trade Association” n.d.)), or the United Kingdom, or those who live outside of this area, such as users living in the United States. The differences in these documents are mostly juridical due to differing state

regulations in these areas, however, some minor changes regarding the wording exist as well. Thus, in reality, the longest chapter of this document is the Privacy Policy which takes up 18 of the 39 pages of the document, while the Terms are only 10 and 7 pages long and the Rules a mere 3.

Starting off the research by looking at the content of the Twitter User Agreement, I first ask how the vocabulary and wording used in this document empower the user of the platform. With the use of Gee's (2014b) tools, more specific questions can be asked when analysing the User Agreement such as why could these grammatical choices have been made instead of any other choice when aiming to give agency to the user? What practices, identities and relationships does this document aim to express and establish considering that the document is created by the platform and aimed first and foremost at the (potential) user of the platform? Are the language, phrasing and any terms used in the document ostensibly connected to empowering users and giving them agency to govern the platform as well? As CDA puts a strong emphasis on the societal power within the discourse in question, I next take a look at the context of the text by asking questions ignited by Gee's (2014b) tools more relating to how the document comes across to a reader, how the User Agreement is framed and made cohesive.

The context of the document is, in addition to the User Agreement itself, analysed through two other sources: the Twitter mobile app and the Help Center website. They are analysed to understand how the Twitter User Agreement is first introduced to the user of the platform and how the Twitter app affords users information on how they are governed when using the platform. Analysing what the User Agreement itself affords in the form of clickable links is insightful as well. By combing through these links it becomes clear how most often the user is directed to the Help Center with any additional questions they might have. Gee's tools help to question this context of the document as well, by enabling to ask whether these additional texts and materials also incorporate language related to user empowerment and co-governance such as creating awareness on the topic and educating the user but also inviting them to participate in governing in any way.

In conclusion, looking at the context of the document provides the research with an overview of the location of the document, how it is introduced to the users and where it leads the reader through hyperlinks as these have a role in situating the text in its societal context and shaping its

power. These texts are used to contextualise the main corpus, the User Agreement, and make this research a much more layered one.

### **3. ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION**

The following chapter introduces the findings of the research conducted through the previously explained methodology. These findings are then analysed with the research question and the previously established theoretical framework in mind to find expressions of user empowerment in the Twitter User Agreement.

#### **3.1. The content of the Twitter User Agreement**

To understand the power of actors in platform governance within the User Agreement, it is necessary to first analyse its content. From the platform governance aspect, it is the first chapter, the Terms that state to govern the access and use of the services provided by Twitter, including the use of the platform. From the lens of user agency, however, it is the chapter of Privacy Policy that expresses Twitter's goal of empowering the user "to make the best decisions about the information" they share with the platform ("Twitter User Agreement" n.d., 19). The introduction of the Privacy Policy chapter expresses the platform's aim to give the user both knowledge of their privacy-related data and also "meaningful" control over it (19). The chapter dedicated to Rules aims to ensure participation in the public discourse for all "freely and safely" (37). Using such vocabulary seems engaging and reassuring to the user, and expresses that the platform has the user's best interests in mind.

The language of the text in the document varies quite a bit. While the Terms are more technical and the vocabulary is suitable for a juridical text, the Privacy Policy is written in a more common and clearer language. The Rules are brief and simply written, they seem easy to comprehend for anyone interested. Though the readability of the text varies, the vague wording of complicated topics is continuous throughout the document. Using wording such as "reasonable" or "meaningful", stating that the platform "may" take certain actions seems as if the authors of the document aim to be purposefully ambiguous and leave much room for interpretation. This can be then easily used by the platform to avoid any responsibility if they were to be accused of any misdoings related to platform governance. At places where the statements might prompt inquiries for specifications, such as most of the content in the Rules chapter, the document leads the reader to "Learn more" by clicking hyperlinks which mostly refer to articles with additional information on the Twitter Help Center webpage. This can be seen both as a way of educating

the user on the topic of governance and providing them with additional materials to learn about content moderation happening on the platform, but it can also take the reader away from the text at hand and decrease their attention to the document.

The document is notable in regards to what activities it expresses to expect and encourage. To elaborate, the text offers the reader the opportunity to learn more about topics they might be interested in and have questions on, as previously mentioned. But an additional way of gaining more information is by contacting the platform. This is possible by clicking on linked phrases of text which lead to opening an e-mail application on the user's device to initiate sending an inquiry to the relevant e-mail address. For example, the following sentence is the last one in both of the Terms versions: "If you have any questions about these Terms, please contact us" (11; 18). The word "us" is hyperlinked to lead to the Help Center's contact page. This not only exhibits, how the user can get in touch with the platform's creators, but it also creates a distinction between the user — "you" — and the platform — "us".

This distinction is evident throughout the whole User agreement. The document states the following in regards to the platform's Privacy Policy: "If you have questions about this policy, how we collect or process your personal data, or anything else related to our privacy practices, we want to hear from you. You can contact us at any time" (20). This is an example of how contacting the platform with questions or when looking for further information is encouraged. However, the text lacks any encouragement to give feedback or negotiate the document's content in any way. Instead, it is again emphasising the roles of relevant counterparts by differentiating how the platform stands as a collective "we" as opposed to the user — "you". This expresses, therefore, that there is little effort made for the user to participate in the governance of the whole platform's content as has been advised by Helberger, Pierson, and Poell (2018) or ARTICLE 19 (2018).

The most obvious expression of power lies in how the document states the responsibilities of the user and the rights of the platform. For example, in the Privacy Policy chapter, it is stated "We give you control through your settings to limit the data we collect from you and how we use it, and to control things" (20). However, this only applies to the data collected by the platform from an individual user — the power given to a user is thus very specific and limited to their privacy settings. The Terms explain that the user is responsible for their use of Twitter and for their content, to which they retain their rights as owners. However, two paragraphs later the document



states that the user grants Twitter “a worldwide, non-exclusive, royalty-free licence (with the right to sublicense) to use, copy, reproduce, process, adapt, modify, publish, transmit, display and distribute such Content in any and all media or distribution methods now known or later developed” (14). Therefore, platforms keep governing public conversations, but these examples show that they also work hard on avoiding responsibility for content posted by users just as Suzor (2018, 3) has claimed that they do. Therefore the platform avoids responsibility instead of working towards sharing it as Helberger, Pierson, and Poell (2018) suggest. This avoidance of responsibility is very contrasting to the platform’s promise of governing the content and raises the question of what is the platform willing to take responsibility for, if not its own actions of moderation.

Another noticeable indication of power comes from the Rules chapter, which has 18 short paragraphs consisting of only one or a few sentences. Amongst them, 15 contain the phrase “you may not” (37-39) expressing the variety of actions that the user is not allowed to perform on the platform, such as promoting violence or terrorism, engaging in the harassment of someone and so on. The most telling sentence amongst all these is the second to last one in the document. It states: “we may need to change these rules from time to time in order to support our goal of promoting a healthy public conversation” (39). This directly follows the last sentence stating what the platform prohibits its users from doing. These expressions of power connect to Suzor’s (2018, 8) claim that platforms do not protect their users from changes in these documents and, even worse, do not ensure in any way, that they follow their own rules when making decisions of governing. While ARTICLE 19 (2018) calls for more clarity and transparency in the procedures of moderation, these elements of the document have expressed the power the platform believes it holds over its users instead of working towards sharing it.

In conclusion, the User Agreement can be seen as supporting the use of the platform but less its governance. The discursive elements of the document’s content — such as the vocabulary used and the engaging phrasing or calls to action found in the document — do reflect elements of activating the user’s agency. However, other notions that become clear through a more thorough examination of the text can act more as prohibiting and limiting the user’s agency instead. For example, the document exhibits avoidance of responsibility to some degree, but it does emphasize the importance of users taking responsibility for their own content. Thus, a notable effort to share responsibility is made. Another expression of user empowerment lies in the various destination where the reader is taken from the document as these exhibit signs of sharing

knowledge and affording users to learn more about content moderation. In this way, the platform does make an ostensible effort to empower the user by educating them on the topic.

### **3.2. The context offered by the Twitter mobile app and Help Center**

To understand the User Agreement as a whole, it is necessary to look into how the document is introduced when a person takes their first steps in becoming a user of Twitter. This shapes the power dynamics of the two parties involved and can be seen as the first expression of platform governance during the process of platform use. After account creation and reading the User Agreement, the reader is led to the Twitter Help Center. This material is analysed to learn about any possible ways a user could participate in platform governance.

The Terms part of the User Agreement is introduced to the user just after the signing up process. However, in the first steps of beginning to use the mobile app, the user is not invited to participate in its governance, but instead, the governance is only briefly introduced to them. While many of the steps and features of the signup process are accompanied by a box, which the account creator can choose to tick or not, the text that states the user's agreement to the Terms, Privacy Policy and Cookie Use, does not require any form of agreeing to. Instead it establishes very similarly to the beginning of the Twitter User Agreement that the user agrees to the Terms, Privacy Policy and Cookie Use, and to the fact that the platform can use their data according to their Privacy Policy by just signing up to use Twitter. This text, accompanied by hyperlinks that take the user to separate articles and documents in the Help Center, does not require any other confirmation than just that the user continues the account creation. Thus, although the introduction of the document is explicit, it can easily go unnoticed, as the user's attention is not grabbed by a box needing to be ticked or a button asking for confirmation that the document has been read.

It is in the first steps that very little effort is exhibited from the platform to make sure their user is aware of the terms of their service, privacy policy, and rules. As the user can just continue with their registration — the button to continue is ready to take the user to the next step — little is done by the platform to ensure the user reads through the legally binding documents. However, the last step of account creation puts more focus on the governance documents as there the governance documents are referred to in a slightly bigger text. It is more obvious that the user is agreeing to specific terms while they sign up, as the wording “By signing up, you agree to our

Terms, Privacy Policy and Cookie Use” is right above the “Sign up” button, making the connection between the user’s actions and their consequences more clear than the previous steps. Thus, the platform does make efforts to provide users with some agency from their first interaction onwards by creating an awareness of the governance to some extent. Although this is not explicit enough, the signup process does provide the user with information on the document that explains how their actions are governed on the platform.

Moving forwards, it is necessary to take a look at where the document itself leads the reader to. The User Agreement consists of a large amount, exactly 210, hyperlinks. Only ten of those lead the reader to contact the platform by initiating an e-mail application, while the rest open a webpage. Of these, 76 lead the user to the various pages in the Twitter Help Center — 18 of them to the “Forms” page and 30 open the “Rules and policies” page or a specific article there. While there are plenty of other hyperlinks taking the user to pages on ads, developer features, settings or other services provided by Twitter such as Periscope, the hyperlinks to the Help Center are most relevant in the scope of platform governance. All in all, however, a large and somewhat convoluted network of hyperlinks is created with the document, creating a “labyrinth” of pages as described by Tan (2018, 99) consisting of parts of the terms governing the platform’s content. This network of pages seems to be created to inform users in case they have questions or wish to learn more about the platform and its governance, which would express an intention of educating the user as Helberger, Pierson, and Poell (2018) suggest. However, it also seems to produce an opposite experience, because it is confusing and disorienting for the reader. Thus, this labyrinth can diminish their agency instead of enhancing it.

When the user reaches the Twitter Help Center and ends up at the “Rules and policies” page, they reach, in turn, a web of articles explaining any term or topic a user might have questions about. There a user can find multiple ways of reaching out to the platform. Firstly, all the pages there have a “Contact us” button in the top menu bar as well as the footer of the page — this leads to the “Forms” page where the user can fill out a form regarding the nature of their issue. In the top menu bar is a “Resources” tab with the name “Our rules” which aims to explain how the platform enforces its rules by combining videos accompanied by buttons on the topics of the rules themselves, how they are evolved and enforced, how user reports are reviewed and how a user can appeal a violation. This can be seen as an attempt at transparency, which Gorwa (2019, 864) considers a part of co-governance and Suzor (2018, 5) claims platform governance often still lacks.

Lastly, the articles found on the “Rules and policies” page are accompanied by sharing and feedback functions at the bottom. The user can choose to let the platform know if the article they read was helpful for them by choosing a happy or frowning emoji to express their opinion. Depending on the expressions of opinion chosen by the user, they are prompted to answer different questions about their experience on the page and they are even provided with a chance to explain their choice in a field for any additional feedback. Thus, this page exhibits to involve the user and engages them in the conversation surrounding the content in the Help Center. This can be seen as an effort toward inviting the user to participate in platform governance.

This subchapter has therefore shown how, on one hand, the Twitter app itself lacks much encouragement for participation in platform governance, but the users who end up at the Help Center are met with more affordances enabling them to give feedback and get into contact with the platform on the topic. Considering how many steps a user has to take to reach these affordances with which to participate in platform governance and how easy it can be to get disoriented on all of these pages, the user agency found in the Help Center is disproportionately small. The extent of this user agency is further discussed in the next subchapter 3.3. These results have brought to light the tension between the user experience and the intentions stated in the document as discussed in the subchapter 3.1.

### **3.3. The extent and limitations of the user agency**

By now it is clear through the analysis of the corpus that user agency is both defined and limited by the actions that the document encourages to take and what it affords the user to do. The research has shown that the document is clear in its purpose of governing the public discourse happening on Twitter, empowering the user in controlling their information, providing them knowledge about platform governance, and ensuring free and safe participation in the public conversation. However, it is less clear how the platform expects the users to participate in the governance itself.

As Gillespie (2018, 47) has instructed researchers to question how the document sounds, due to different parts using distinctive language, the User Agreement likewise sounds unclear and full of legal jargon at parts, such as the Terms, and very simplified in other places, such as the Rules. Thus, they imply to be read by very different audiences, but still expect to be understood by all

who read them expressing the platform's authority and their lack of consideration to those who are not familiar with legal language, but are still expected to make sense of the document equally to those who are.

Next, the study shows that the User Agreement, just like researchers have previously established on the topic of similar platform governance documents (Miller et al. 2021, 97; Almeida, Doneda, and Córdova 2016, 83), is not negotiable. No feedback on the document or the governance activities of the platform is expected from the reader. In addition, the platform keeps the power of changing the documents at their own will and only notifies the user how and when they so please. Thus, just as Suzor (2018, 7-8) stated, the platform fails to provide users with meaningful ways to appeal to the decisions they have made on their own. Even the most straightforward affordance of governing the platform's content such as reporting posts and users is not discussed or encouraged in the document other than in relation to the copyrights that a user has over their own content.

However, the document does encourage asking questions by contacting the relevant representatives through e-mail or filling out forms on the company webpage. On the one hand, all the incorporated "Learn more" buttons hyperlinked to articles with additional information can be seen as the platform inviting the user to become more knowledgeable on the topic of governance which can potentially enhance the user's participation in the governance activities themselves (Helberger, Pierson, and Poell 2018). On the other hand, however, all the hyperlinks and hyperlinked parts of the text lead the user to various destinations, away from the document at hand, diffusing their attention and possibly confusing the reader.

As Tan (2018, 99) pointed out, creating a web of such documents makes the terms difficult to get acquainted with leading to a less engaged and less knowledgeable reader. At the same time, if a user was to follow all the various links, they would find more opportunities to reach out to the platform, give feedback, and learn about the governance of public discourse. The forms and the feedback field of the articles found in the Help Center can all be very limited and specific in format for reaching out to the platform. However, they do present users with opportunities of expressing their agency, more explicitly than could be seen elsewhere within the corpus.

Lastly, as previous research has found that it is still uncommon to read the platform governance documents (Ibdah et al. 2021; Robinson and Zhu 2020; Obar and Oeldorf-Hirsch 2020), this research shows that there is no obligation to do so either because during no steps of the platform

use did Twitter express any expectations for the user to truly read through the document and understand its content. The user does not have to confirm that they have read the User Agreement in any other way than by beginning to use the platform, which makes the document very easy to ignore. From this discovery emerges the result that besides the content of the document itself, the context of it — how it is introduced to the user during the initial sign up on the app — does not express any intention to share the responsibility of governance in the way that the contemporary landscape of social media platforms demands and researchers such as Gillespie (2018, 209) or Helberger, Pierson, and Poell (2018) have suggested already years ago.

## CONCLUSION

This thesis looked into the phenomenon of platform governance and studied the power held by key actors who have a role in defining what platform content can be and what not. This moderation of content is currently held very strongly by the private owners of the public platforms which sparked the interest of looking into a platform-specific example to learn to what extent a user is given agency in the platform governing process. While scholars such as Gillespie (2018) and DeNardis and Hackl (2015) might be dismissive of researching individual platform governance documents, I would argue that it is nevertheless necessary to focus on these documents and the discourse they withhold as this expresses the very actors of power and agency in defining what governance on a platform looks like. It is only when an understanding of their discourse is established that it is possible to make claims on what exactly and in what ways must be changed to make platform governance work better in contemporary society.

This thesis aims to fill this gap in previous research where little focus has been on platform-specific examples and rarely have the documents themselves been the subject of study outside of law studies. For this reason, Twitter was chosen as the platform of interest due to its continuous popularity amongst users, and the following research question was posed: how and to what extent is the Twitter User Agreement empowering the user in co-governing the public discourse that Twitter hosts? To answer this question, critical discourse analysis methodology was employed with specific CDA tools proposed by James P. Gee (2014b) and the corpus of the study consisted of the Twitter User Agreement, the Twitter app's signup process and the Help Center situated on their homepage. These materials were chosen as the interest of this research lay in not how the platform is governing, but instead in how the platform is expressing to be governing and thus expressing the extent to which this governance involves other key actors besides the platform itself.

One of the concepts introduced in the theoretical framework of this thesis was Gillespie's (2018, 209) suggestion for a new approach to platform governance: a shared responsibility of governing together with the users. Robert Gorwa (2019) names this the co-governance lens and it is treated as a necessary solution to current issues with platform moderation in which users are not empowered. The analysis conducted on Twitter's document and its content and context shows that this method of governance is still far from reach. While the User Agreement does exhibit signs of user empowerment by educating the users and providing them with the opportunity to

learn more about the content moderation practices of the platform, it still lacks in clarity and transparency necessary for the users to understand Twitter's governance in its entirety. Additionally, the platform expresses to give much of the responsibility for their own content to the users themselves, but it lacks in providing users with any meaningful ways for active participation in platform governance in governance in general. Even the already existing tools for moderating content, such as reporting posts or users, are covered little in the document. Suzor (2018) states that users have had very little room to negotiate platform governance and the conditions they need to comply with, and others such as Helberger, Pierson, and Poell (2018) call for a shared responsibility that comes with many obligations to the platform in order to better platform governance. This thesis proves Suzor's claims to be true even years later and Helberger, Pierson, and Poell's calls have been answered on a very small scale. Although users are being educated on the topic through the document, there is still very little for a user to do even if they have feedback to offer the platform on how it is or should be governed.

Overall, the platform governs the conversation they host while doing little to invite the user to join in discussing how exactly this is done. Only by offering opportunities to ask questions, contact representatives, and give feedback on specific articles found in the Help Center can the user truly reach out to the platform and voice their input. This, however, does not guarantee a conversation to start between these two key actors in platform governance. It also expects the user to have an interest in starting the conversation themselves and would need the user to get acquainted with a large, long, and confusingly interconnected web of documents beforehand to even learn where their input is needed. Thus, the extent to which Twitter has empowered its users to participate in platform governance is still very limited.

From this conclusion, a question is sparked: what should the future withhold for both platform governance itself and the research of the phenomenon? This thesis has provided the existing literature and research on the topic of platform governance with an example of studying a social media platform to understand to what extent a user is invited to join in the conversation surrounding it. While previous researchers have noted how important this topic is, this thesis shows how little their insight has yet been put into action by large platform owners. As this thesis only looked at what the existing discourse by Twitter itself on the topic of platform governance looks like, future research could benefit a lot from a study conducted through a more experimental lens. It would be insightful to learn whether giving feedback and contacting the platform has any real influence — does the platform even answer such inquiries and allow such a



conversation to begin if initiated by an individual user and not a larger group of the civil society? Additionally, different methods of co-governance and possible approaches to platform governance that involve the user more and enhance the regulation and moderation happening should be researched in the future as well.

In conclusion, this research has shown that Twitter has made some efforts to share the responsibility of governance, however, the extent to which it has empowered its users to participate in co-governing the platform is still very limited. While existing literature on the topic has expressed the need for involving the user more in a platform's governance, this thesis emphasises the need for and works as an example of how to research platforms such as Twitter to hold them accountable for failing to involve users in the governance process in contemporary society.

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