Supporting Volunteer Moderation Practices in Online Communities

Across platforms from Facebook Groups to Reddit to Twitch and Discord, millions of users volunteer their time to moderate their communities. This labor is essential to the functioning of these platforms, but the role that it plays in the broader content moderation ecosystem is not yet well defined. In this thesis I propose to analyze the sociotechnical mechanisms of this type of moderation in order to determine its strengths and the areas in which it might be supported through design. I will perform qualitative and quantitative analyses to study the social roles of moderators, the language that users employ to attempt to shift other users’ behaviors, and the ways rules can be written to better encourage positive behaviors. I will synthesize these results through development of a conversational agent designed to engage with users in an online community.