Is Twitch really an inclusive platform?

3 students from the Academy of Fine Arts in Pisa question the inclusivity policy of the popular live streaming platform Twitch.tv

Twitch is a **live streaming platform** owned by Amazon.com. It was launched on June 6, 2011 as a spin-off of the generic streaming platform Justin.tv. The site primarily allows streaming of video games, and is an **industry leader** in broadcasting eSports events and competitions.

Twitch values inclusivity and accessibility to be an inclusive workplace for all, where everyone can enter, contribute, grow, and thrive.

With this in mind, it has implemented an inclusive **storytelling policy** that being very strict and entrusted as sanctions and control primarily to algorithms and bots is creating quite a few problems for its end users: trying to avoid bias they go to **excessive implementation of political correctness**, banning certain terms such as "BLIND RUN" because it is considered offensive to visually impaired and blind people, when in fact the term does not refer to said category at all, but rather stands for streaming gameplay without knowing anything about the game.

This is not only a problem with Twitch, of course, Facebook and Youtube and other platforms also incur glaring stumbles at the algorithmic level both at the level of pattern recognition - sensational the case of Facebook censoring an old PowerMac G4 for being too sexy - and at the level of storytelling considered inappropriate so much so that the phenomenon of **AlgoSpeak i.e.** code language to circumvent

algorithms and online censorship is spreading (and meanwhile Google Documents implements checks automatically to suggest more inclusive storytelling! ?!).

Another example related to Twitch is for the use of badges and emojis, which each streamer chooses to use on their channel that must comply with regulations imposed by Twitch. However, there are standard emoji created by Twitch such as the " POGCHAMP " . The face of the said emoji belonged to Ryan 'Gootecks' Gutierrez. However, the streamer wrote a post of incitement to violence on Twitter inherent to the " 2021 United States

Old POGCHAMP emoji

Capitol attack "; Twitch disagreeing with what the streamer wrote decided to rehumanize his face from the emoji and change it every day.

Twitch is moreover in favor of diversity, anyone can create a channel on twitch, and days are also carried out that provide safe spaces where everyone can feel free to be themselves inherent in various categories such as "Asian Guild," "Black Guild," "Rainbow Road Guild," "Women+ guild."

The question that arises is therefore a very strategic one because it is the design of a new form of morality-almost a de facto law-that is defined by a private entity based on its current orientations (currently liberal but what if it were to change orientation tomorrow?) and enforced through automatisms: so is morality a private matter and its enforcement to be delegated to artificial intelligences?

It seems to us a huge question to answer and even more so at this time when in Europe the profile of the strict **regulations of accessibility and inclusive design** that already affect large private individuals also in Italy will become obligations extended to anyone operating in the marketplace by 2025 simultaneously forcing platforms such as Facebook, YouTube or Twitter to moderate the content they host.

Moreover, the comprehensibility of an interface concerns so many aspects also of usability that even on twitch could be definitely improved starting with the meaning of the icons used that are often difficult for end users to interpret.

But it is on the front of accessibility and thus inclusive design that we feel like bringing forward some criticism:

- At the time of writing it does not pass the minimum accessibility requirements as confirmed by the famous and authoritative **Accessibility in Mind validator**;
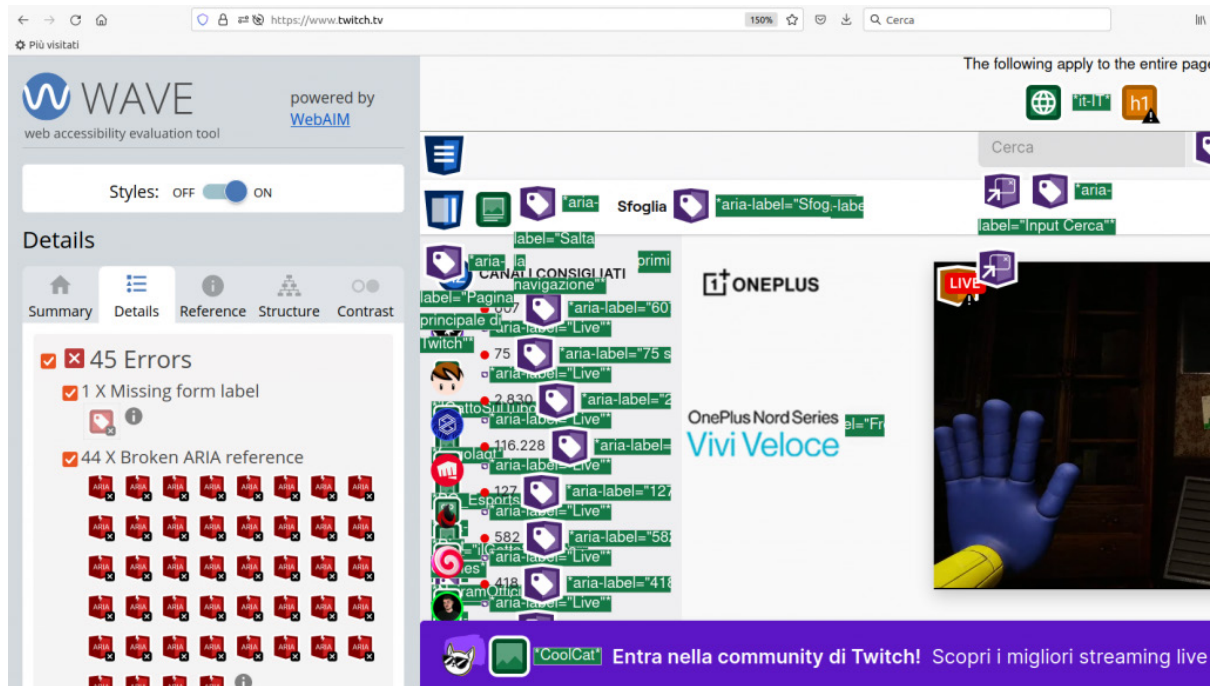
- Many images **lack a text alternative**;
- A **speech-to-text bot** could be adopted to make streaming accessible to deaf people and to produce **subtitles automatically** for streaming or deferred for broadcast videos;
- the support (on demand) of special tutors who can verbally tell blind people what is happening in the streaming could be experimented with;
- there are some **formal errors in the code** such as the hierarchization of h-markers and especially the **lack of natural language** indication that could challenge the operation of screen readers;
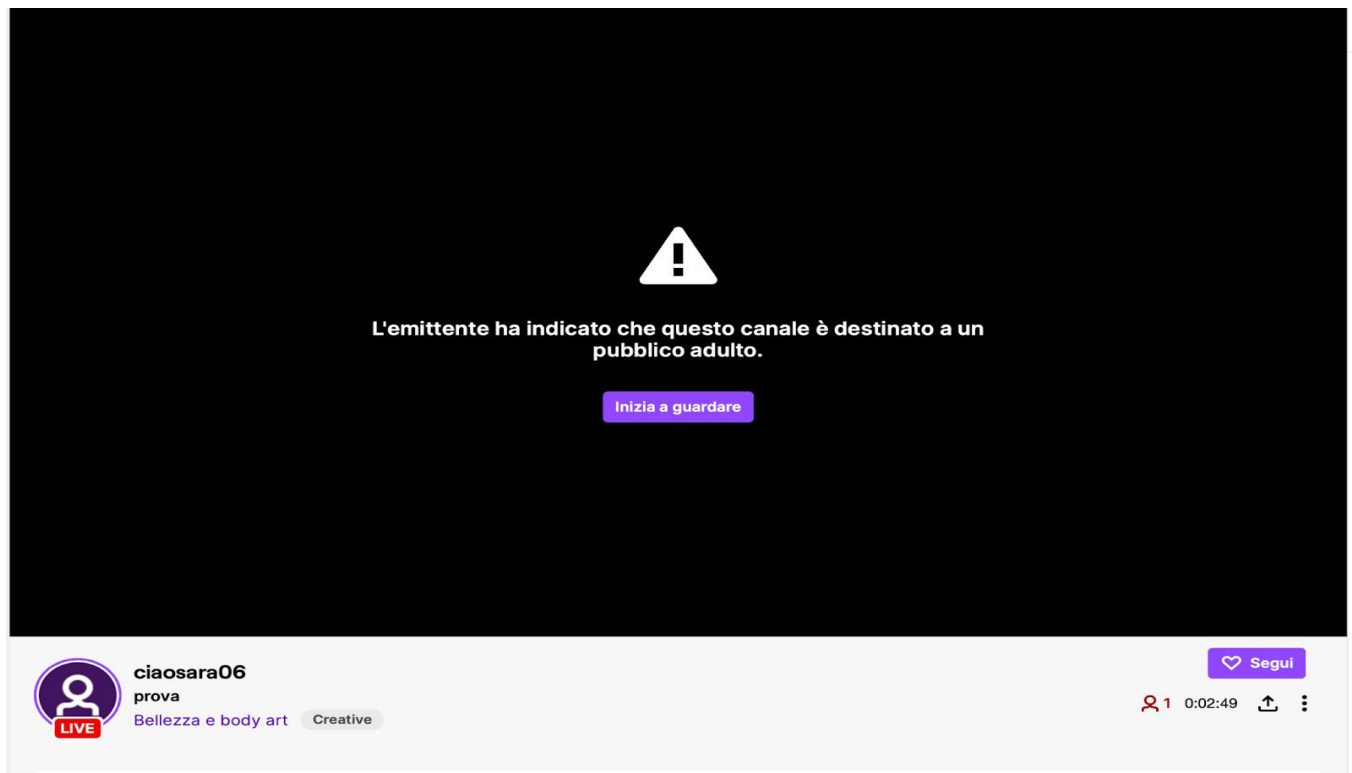
Returning then to the issue of storytelling moderation, some solutions seem really "cosmetic" such as the 13-year-old limit for having an account and the 18+ year old limit for viewing adult content facilitates

Ultimately, we feel we are appealing to twitch and all platforms of the digital majors not to pursue policies of inclusiveness on the basis of internal corporate policies and entrusted exclusively to artificial intelligence mechanisms but rather to adopt as many expedients as possible for sustainable and inclusive environments (but for real!) where a certain form of collective and individual free expression is equally guaranteed moreover sanctioned by public law.

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