duction, i.e., make the creation of relatively homogeneous content more likely. Zeng and Abidin call this process *circumscribed creativity*: "Circumscribed creativities are creative potentials that are afforded, as well as restrained, by the features and logics of platforms. In the context of TikTok, the platform offers a technological infrastructure that celebrates and encourages memetic content" (Zeng and Abidin 2021, 2462). Examples of such mimetic content include the lip-synching and dance challenge videos described above, where it is not necessary for users to create original content – the challenge is rather to respond creatively to content that already exists on the platform. Thus, TikTok enables and provokes certain creative practices of imitation, while other practices that focus on the production of original content are initially less likely, at least in the context of lip-synching and dance challenge videos. It is also likely that the content of particularly high-reach content creators will appear on the For You pages of many TikTok users. When these videos are subsequently used by many users as the basis for new videos, the result is the production of countless videos with similar audiovisual content (Abidin and Kaye 2021, 59–60). One possible result of the platform logic described above is the production of large amounts of "aesthetically similar content" (Kaye, Zeng, and Wikström 2022, 79). It is therefore not surprising that some "platform-centric genres" (Southerton 2021, 3260) – such as the aforementioned lip-synching and duet videos – that have emerged on TikTok are also generally comparatively easy to identify as TikTok videos and would be unusual in their specific form on other platforms. Overall, it can be seen that TikTok promotes the development of specific platform vernaculars to a greater extent than other platforms due to the functional logics described above.

## 4.6    Niches on TikTok

While in many ways content production is driven by the logic of the platform – at least to some extent – and therefore may seem limited to certain types of content, TikTok also offers a wide range of topics. The platform may be best known for silly content by and for young people, but the content is diverse and there are various thematic niches on TikTok with specialized communities sometimes forming around niche topics. These are often related to education or science communication. For example, Southerton shows that videos created by medical professionals providing medical-related content are extremely popular on the platform. An investigation in March 2021 showed that videos tagged

with the hashtag #doctorsoftiktok had a total of 428 million views at that time, while videos tagged with the hashtag #nursesoftiktok had as many as 1.8 billion views (Southerton 2021, 3250). Zeng, Schäfer, and Allgaier show that videos focused on science communication are extremely popular on TikTok and that presenting such topics is also compatible with the logic of the platform. However, this requires a specific framing of the scientific content, including in particular targeted juxtaposition with humorous elements (Zeng, Schäfer, and Allgaier 2021, 3230).

Young people's political awareness, for example on the topic of climate change, is also documented in countless TikTok videos (Basch, Yalamanchili, and Fera 2022; Hautea et al. 2021). According to Pomerantz and Field, TikTok has even become the platform par excellence for political activism among young people. Many TikTok users claim that videos with political content shared on the platform have helped them to learn about politics and social justice issues and to develop political awareness (Pomerantz and Field 2022, 63). By focusing on the sharing and editing of existing content, TikTok's functional logic can also foster issue-centered communities, which is why the platform is often used for the political activation and mobilization of young people (Sadler 2022, 4). Clearly, the functional logics or affordances of TikTok also influence how young people articulate and communicate their political attitudes and messages. For example, Zeng and Abidin show that the duet feature in particular allows TikTok users to directly reference other users' political statements, articulate approval or disapproval, and express alternative opinions (Zeng and Abidin 2021, 18). In this way, the platform ensures a low threshold for the articulation of political positions, which presumably makes it easier for young people in particular to access political debates.

## 4.7  Controversies

TikTok has been controversial from the start for two main reasons. The first is the potential influence of the Chinese government on the operations of the platform company ByteDance and thus how data trails generated by users are handled. The second is content moderation on TikTok, which is often subject to criticism. This is based on the assumption that certain content and certain groups of people can achieve greater visibility on the platform than others. As a result, the main critique goes, well-known cultural hegemonies based on cate-