

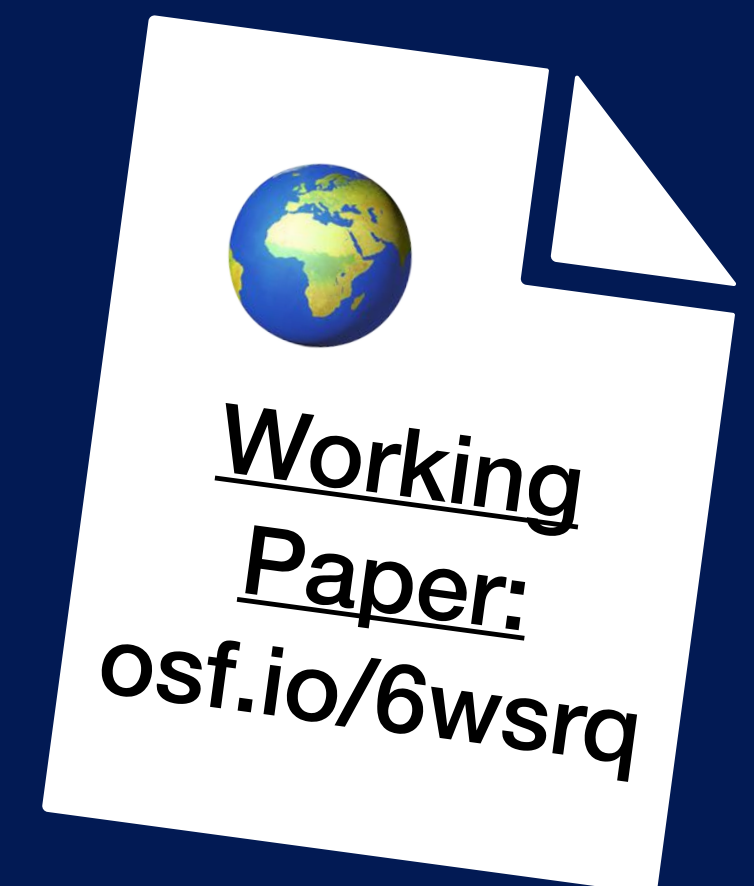


11 June 2026
4th EU-DPRN Summit

Does Digital Platform Interoperability Deliver On Its Expectations?

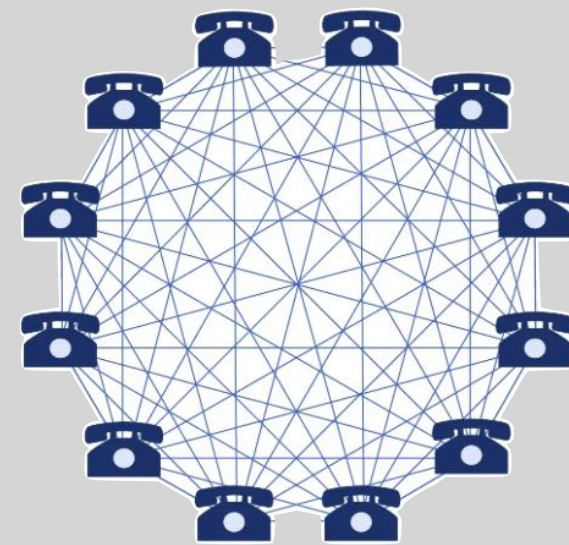
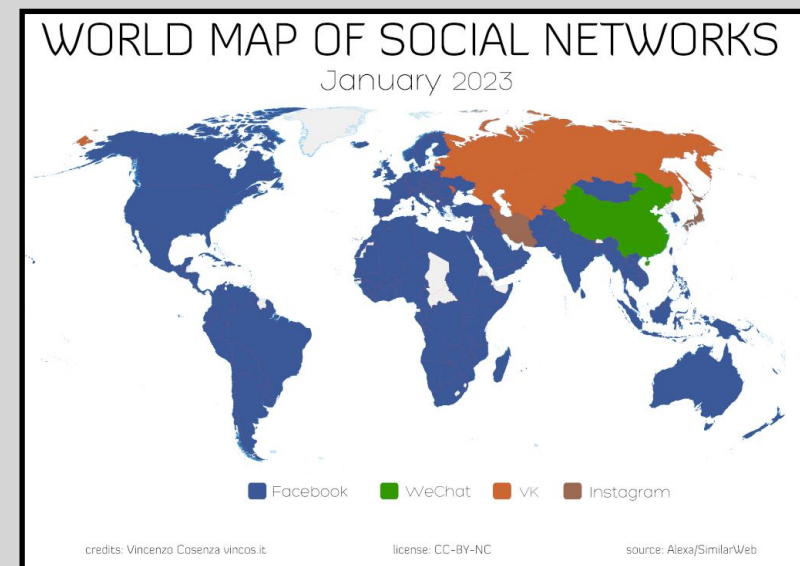
- Evidence From User Switching On Mastodon

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Motivation

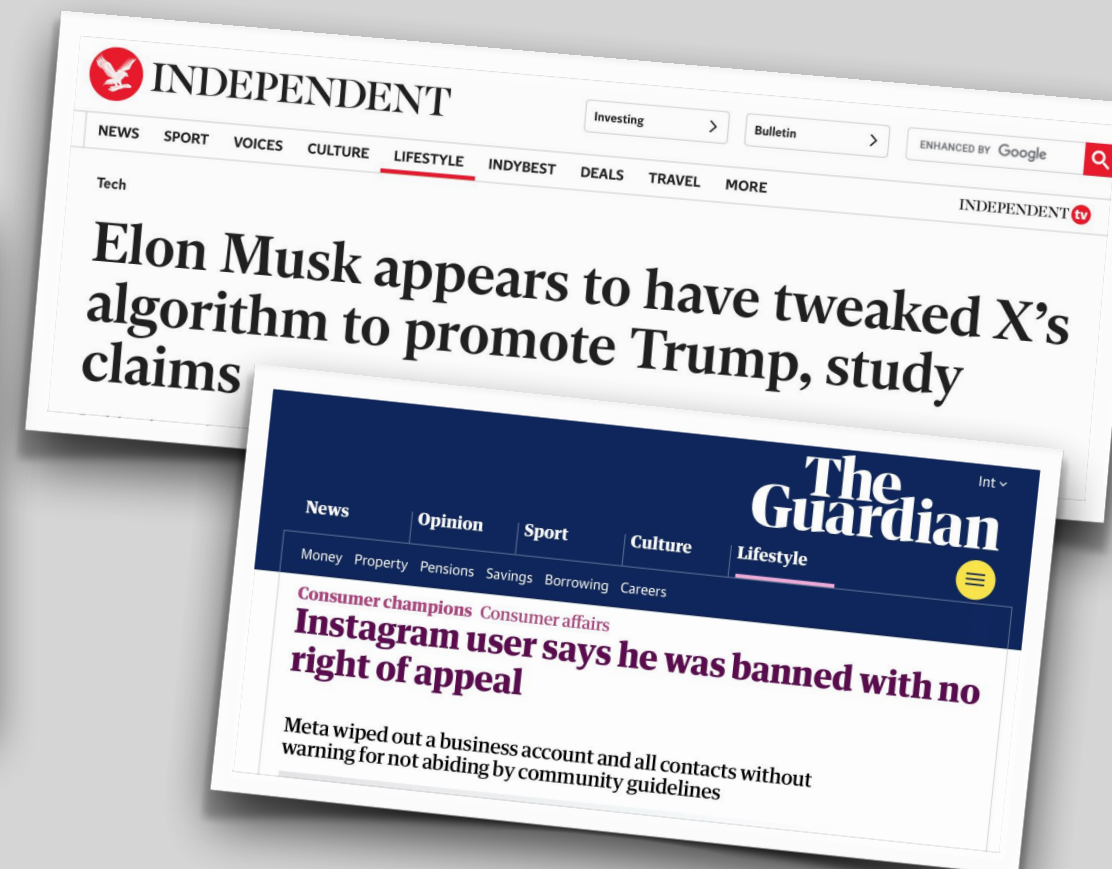
Platform Monopolies



! User
Choice

Political Platform Power

"**Governance** is an essential part of what platform companies do, and it can generate significant **value** for users" (Gawer, 2021)



Solution? Interoperability

Equitable Interoperability: The "Supertool" of Digital Platform Governance

Authors:†

Fiona M. Scott Morton, Yale U
Gregory S. Crawford, Universit
Jacques Cr mer, Toulouse Scho
David Dinielli, Yale University
Amelia Flett
Paul Heidhu
Monika Sch

CONGRESS.GOV

Legislation

Examples: hr5, sres9, "has

S.1634 - ACCESS Act of 2025

119th Congress (2025-2026) | Get alerts

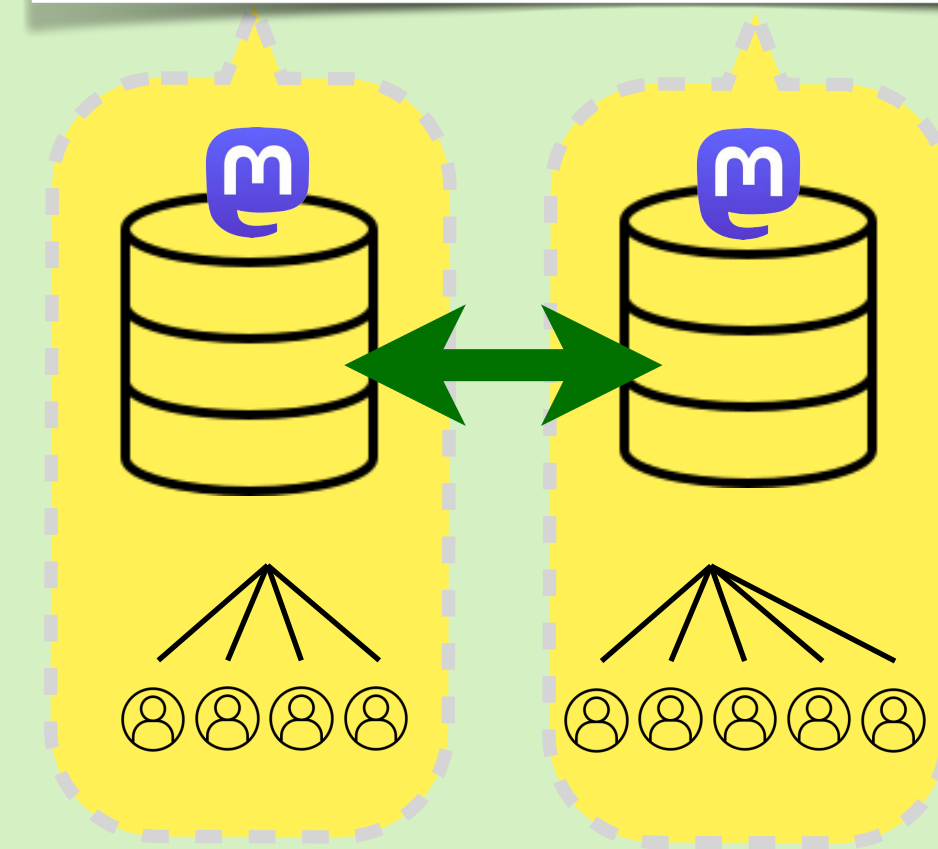


Digital Markets Act

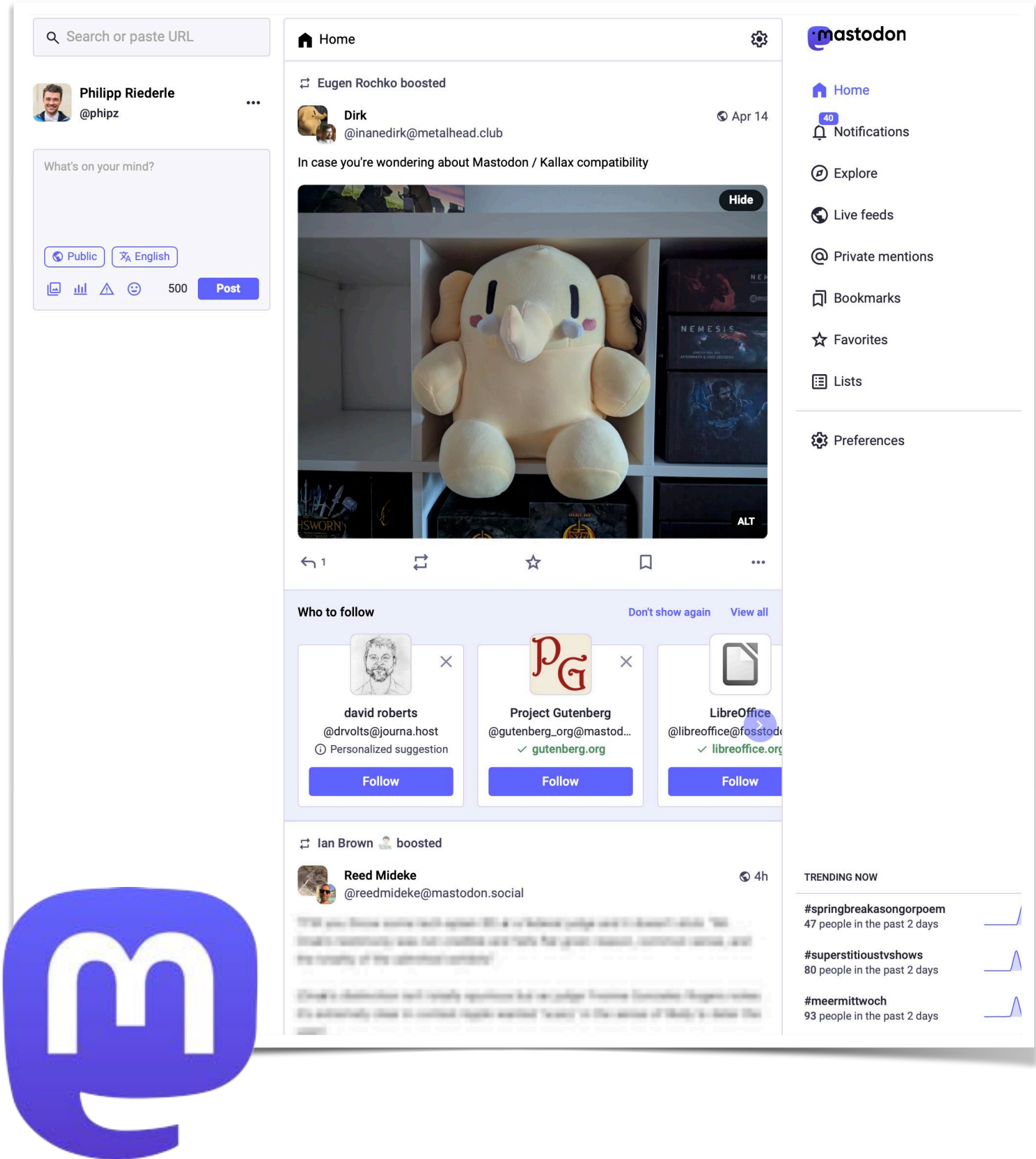
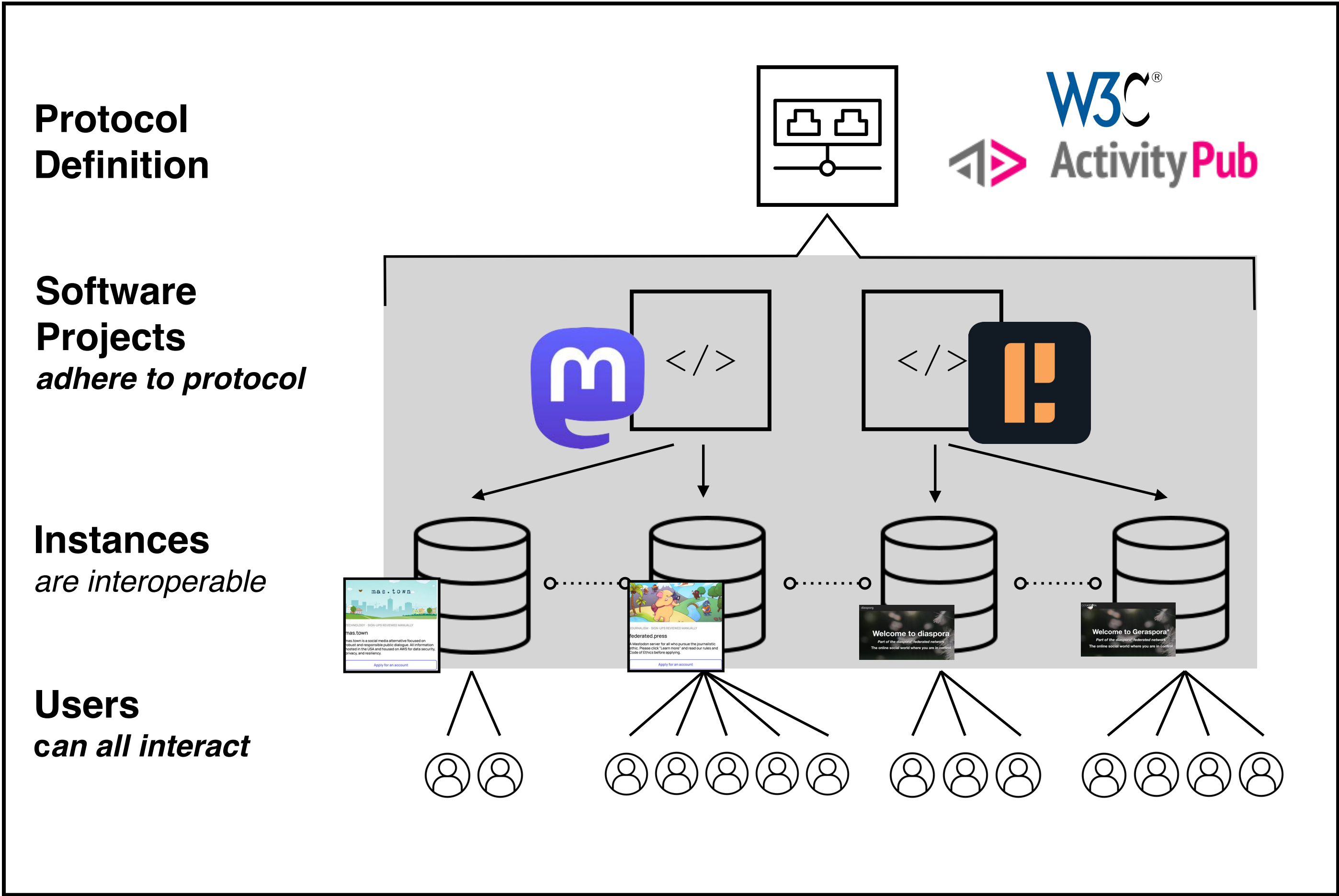
Article 7

Obligation for gatekeepers on **interoperability** of number-independent interpersonal communications services

1 Where a gatekeeper provides number-independent interpersonal communications



The Empirical Case: Mastodon



Interoperability Expectations

- (E1)
network effects
irrelevant for users'
provider choice
- (E2)
facilitates users'
individual provider
choice and switching
- (E3)
limits user choice to
homogeneous
providers



User Switching on Mastodon

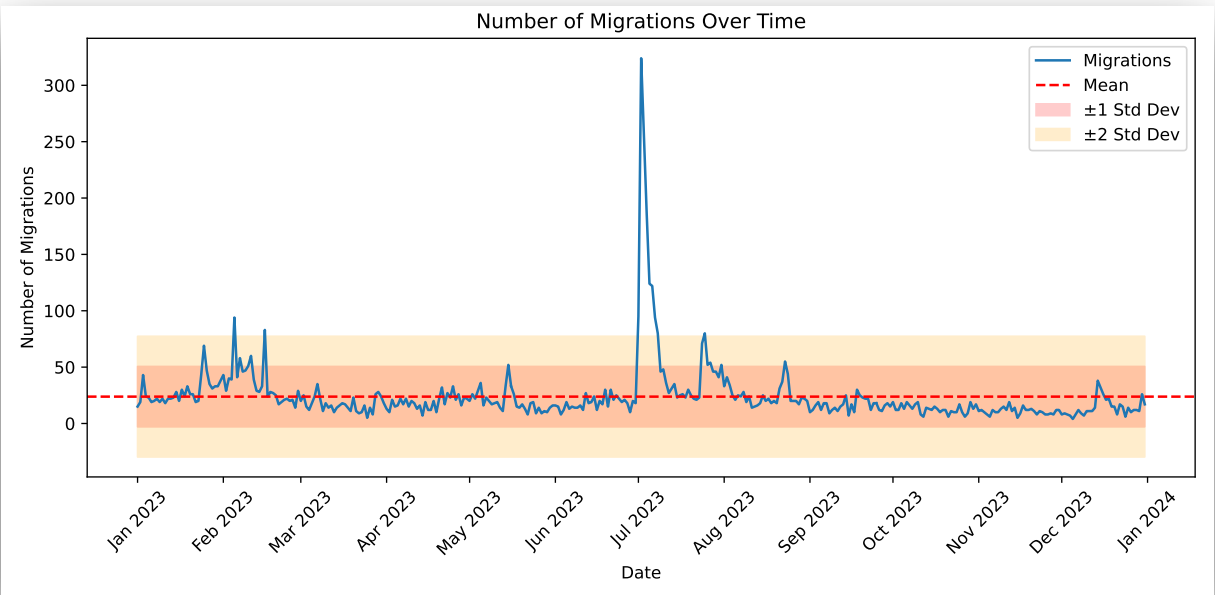
- (1) Why do users switch between instances?
- (2) What are users' switching experiences?
- Novel Dataset: Migrations + Posts
- Quantitative Keyword Identification
- Qualitative Thematic Analysis

Interoperability Learnings

- (E1)
tie-based vs. open-
network interactions
- (E2)
user assets vs.
provider services
- (E3)
horizontal + vertical
differentiation

Data Access

- **User Posts and Migrations within Mastodon Network in 2023**
 - 5,707 Mastodon instances
 - ~39,000,000 posts
 - 510,109 unique users
 - 8,696 unique users (~2 %) switched servers
 - Ethics safeguards (Terms review)



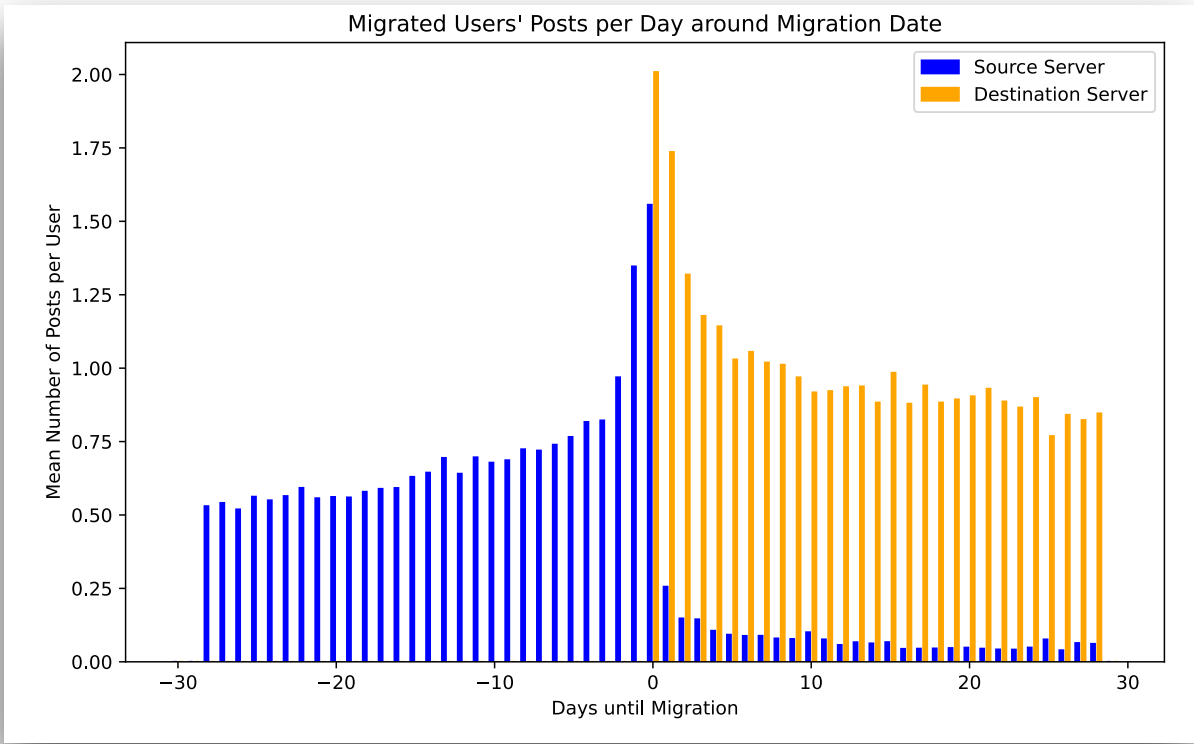
Quant. Keyword Identification

- **Migrant vs. Non-Migrant Corpus**
 - Fightin' Words Method (Monroe et al., 2008)
 - Candidate Set for Filter Terms, followed by Manual Selection

Rank	Term	Z-Score	Posts	Users
1	instance	26.37	1,564	869
6	account	18.46	1,815	1,035
8	server	17.54	1,145	670
16	migrate	15.88	409	347
32	move	12.65	1,101	731

Qual. Thematic Analysis

- **(1) Switching Reasons**
- **(2) Switching Experiences**
 - Complete, exploratory coding: "instance"
 - Confirmatory coding (~100 posts each): "account", "server", "migrate", "move"



Empirical Findings

(1) Switching Reasons

1. **Local Community** (e.g., topic-specific, value-aligned, local feed)
2. **Identity** (Username, Instance Name)
3. **Content Governance** (Rules + Enforcement)
4. **Organisational Governance** (e.g., Operator Profile, Funding, Jurisdiction)
5. **Quality of Service** (Technical Reliability, Longevity, Responsive Support)
6. **Proxy Reasons** (Social Influence, Size, Self-Hosting)

(2) Switching Experiences

1. **Bundled Sets of Criteria**
2. **Decision Paralysis**
3. **Loss of Usernames or Posting History**

‘I’m starting to think I might have to move to another Mastodon server **if posts criticising the Israeli government are going to be removed.**’ *

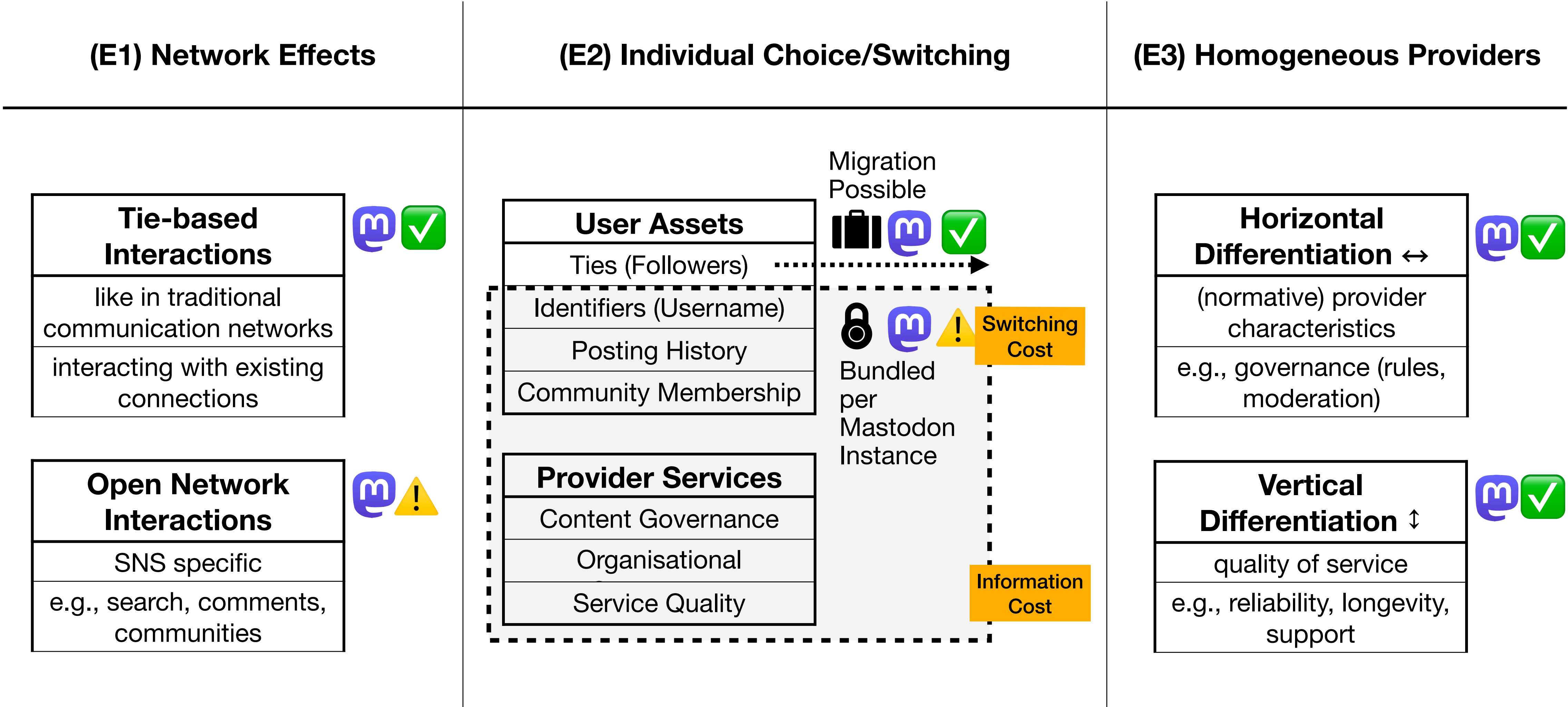
‘Time to switch. **Smaller servers are better for the fediverse**, and for users more generally. (...)’ *

"My **criteria** for a new Mastodon instance are:
1. Mastodon Covenant, **2.** Established, **3.** Europe-based,
4. Not blocked here, **5.** Not blocking major instances such as mastodon.social, **6.** Run by a public organisation, and
7. A memorable domain name." *

"(...) **Choosing** a new instance has honestly been the biggest thing holding up the move. **It was not easy** (...)" *

Discussion: Three Lessons for Social Media Interoperability

**Checkmarks reflect Mastodon's specific implementation, not interoperability in general.*



- **Evidence** that Interoperability ***can* expand user choice** in social networking!
- **but**: SNS is different to prior communication networks -> implementation conditions
- **Contributions**
 - open-network vs. tie-based interactions
 - user-assets vs. provider-services
 - horizontal vs. vertical differentiation
- **⚠** If specificity is underestimated
 - > **regulators insufficiently prepared** + expectations not realised



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