

Editorial: What Does Openness Conceal?

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It is our pleasure to share some recent news from the journal regarding open access and evaluation indicators. S&TS is now listed in the Directory of Open Access Journals (DOAJ) and has an impact factor from Clarivate Analytics. As the relevance of open knowledge is more pertinent than ever, a few reflections about these developments are in order. I organise the thoughts by extending Marilyn Strathern's (2000) question what does visibility conceal.

Open access beyond technical concerns

Open access is often discussed as a positive value aimed at enabling availability of knowledge to everyone everywhere, thus expanding the reach of that knowledge. Unquestioned as a value, the implementation of open access, then, becomes simply as a technical matter for journals, publishers and sponsors to consider. S&TS and its sponsors European Association for the Study of Science and Technology and Finnish Society for Science and Technology Studies have over the past years deliberated the costs of open access following loss of income via library subscriptions and member-benefits to the sponsoring scholarly societies. In such discussions, the value of openness was deemed as more important than the financial gains made and the community of STS scholars broader than the paying members (Sariola 2017).

Publishing open access has generated different kinds of financial mechanisms to fund open access. Science & Technology Studies journal has

been fully open access since 2017; the journal is open access not only by the definition that it is openly available, but it is also free to publish in - we don't charge article processing charges (APCs). S&TS is among the few journals in the field of STS that does not follow either the pay-to-read or pay-to-publish model. The 'pay-to-publish' model, Marcel Knöchelmann (2021) argues in this issue, has mainly benefited corporate journals who by having parallel publication of open access papers made available by charging APC, *and* charge library subscriptions, effectively have their cake and eat it. The shift, then, has not radically altered the unjust and financially divisive publication structures of academic knowledge ecologies as pay-to-publish leaves many unable to pay for what can be exorbitantly high APCs.

Open access is, then, much more than a technical concern - it makes visible the political economies of publication ecologies, upheld by the various actors in the field, and their agendas.

Open vs. proprietary science

The present moment in the COVID-19 pandemic makes open science all the more important. The vaccine sold by AstraZeneca was originally produced by Oxford-based researchers. Various news sources have reported that the vaccine was originally intended to be openly available but that Bill Gates persuaded the developers to sell the license exclusively to AstraZeneca who now sell it to various countries under confidential, non-public, and proprietary contracts (Zaitchik, 2021).



The rationale for why Gates would turn a public good commercial can only be speculated. Tim Schwab (2021) in *The Nation* hints that Gates has direct financial motivations and holdings in vaccine companies. Another interpretation of why Gates might facilitate handing over exclusive license to a private company concerns open science. Linsey McGoey's (2015) book on Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation is instructive in highlighting how philanthropic funders like Gates have reorganized the health and development sector towards a philanthrocapitalist logic based on exclusive intellectual property rights. There is no such thing as a free gift, McGoey's book is aptly titled, that is pointing to the underlying market logic in how medical research is owned and organised. Open science models might potentially change the modus operandi of drug and pharmaceutical development and bring to question the present interlinkages of exclusive science and corporate investment, and as such, have profound impacts on how innovation political economies are organized. While there is much more to be said about open science and intellectual property rights, the example begins to shed light on the forces put on academic knowledge and reduction of the space for intellectual commons.

Open access policy Plan S and its limits

From January 2021, open access policy called Plan S was enforced in Europe. Plan S mandates that all funded research ought to be published open access. On its website, it states as its vision that "With effect from 2021, all scholarly publications on the results from research funded by public or private grants provided by national, regional and international research councils and funding bodies, must be published in Open Access Journals, on Open Access Platforms, or made immediately available through Open Access Repositories without embargo."i Plan S manifests in ten key principles that underscore, among others, that authors and institutions retain copyright; in case there are open access costs, they need to be fully transparent and that authors should not be the ones paying but institutions; that hybrid models of publication (some content being open and

some by subscription) are not accepted; and that funders when assessing research outputs should value the intrinsic merit of the work and not consider the publication channel, its impact factor (or other journal metrics), or the publisher.

At the end of 2020, the *Science & Technology Studies* journal was listed in the Directory of Open Access Journals, that is a platform to which journals are accepted following a validation and evaluation process. The aim of DOAJ is to flag high quality and ethical publication practices and distinguish predatory journals from academic venues. Journals listed in DOAJ are also Plan S compliant.

While Plan S makes laudable attempts to undo corporate publishing structures and inequitable access restrictions, it has been criticised for failing to address the hierarchy of journals, and what Vann (2017) and Fochler de Rijcke call 'indicator game' (2017).

During the transition period to Plan S, some scholars saw the change as a threat to their careers as they felt that with the expectation of publishing open access, they would not be able to submit their work to the most prestigious journals in their field (as they were not open access). The comment signals a publication hierarchy that open access does not (yet) resolve. Knöchelmann (2021) argues that open access does not go far enough in decolonizing knowledge and questioning knowledge hierarchies according to which accessibility was never the grounds for choosing a journal as a publication venue but rather the perceived rank that associates journals with prestige, authority, quality, and merit. Angela Okune, Sulaiman Adebowale, Eve Gray, Angela Mumo and Ruth Oniang'o (2021) in conversation with publishers based in Africa caution that Plan S has the risk of setting standards from above that are too narrow in their terms, constraining what kinds of publication types count as publishable, and what counts as quality peer review and scientific credulity, and thus end up upholding elitist knowledge structures. They poignantly ask: How can funders or other international organizations reduce the competitive friction of individualized 'success' and instead encourage more creative, egalitarian, and innovative models of partnership around scholarly publishing?

Closing words

Science and Technology Studies as a discipline and form of inquiry has a pertinent vantage point to analyse structures of knowledge and the implications of how the structures shape our intellectual endeavours. Thinking about what open access conceals presents an opportunity to think about the interlinkages of evaluations of individuals and institutions based on bibliometric ranking, what sorts of knowledge ecologies are created by these, by and for whom, and who benefits from the commercial structures of publishing ecologies. As knowledge structures are made and remade, they also present opportunities to rethink modes of practices and evaluate what they are

doing for the scholarly community of STS. While at S&TS we recognise that it is still crucial to many to see their work published in impact-factored journals, it is important that publication venues are considered beyond the merit warranted to the authors' careers, and to see them as representing particular values as institutions. Who are they for and what sort of agendas and logics define them? How are journals situated in the broader ecology of academic structures, careers, and collectives? What are the alternatives for crude evaluations and how can journals be part of that in ways that do not replicate various power hierarchies? S&TS would like to continue to offer a publication venue that critically examines structures of science and knowledge and the technologies that enable and produce them, including its own.

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