

***Reassembling Scholarly Communications: Histories, Infrastructures, and Global Politics of Open Access*, ed. by Martin Paul Eve, Jonathan Gray, Cambridge (Massachusetts) 2020, The MIT Press, pp. 438.**

This book is an edited collection of small essays on all kinds of aspects of Open Access, or more broadly, on Scholarly Communications. It contains 25 chapters, grouped in 6 sections: a. *Colonial Influences*; b. *Epistemologies*; c. *Publics and Politics*; d. *Archives and Preservation*; e. *Infrastructures and Platforms*; f. *Global Communities*. Everything is capped ‘classically’ by *Bibliography*, *Index*, and especially useful *Abbreviations* and *Glossary*, where one can find explanations of nomenclature commonly used in Open Access circles - although it is worth pointing out that this book is not entirely intended for someone who is not familiar with the Open Access project as stated on multiple occasions by the book’s editors.

The astute reader will quickly notice that this very rich collection of papers are in a sort of dialog with each other (cf. the review written by Joshua Neds-Fox and published in *College & Research Libraries* 82 (2021), no. 3, p. 462), which opens the discussion about Open Access even further without stating anything definitively, as Open Access is constantly dynamically evolving. One of the major goals of this publication as explained in the *Introduction* is: [...] *how has the translation of publishing into the digital space, and the subsequent imaginaries, practices, and infrastructures of “openness” that have logically followed, been conditioned by histories, present discussions, and future projections of the scholarly communications environment*”? - see p. 1; which *expressis verbis* means for the reader that the books’ contributors are trying to understand how the current governmental regulations (especially in the so called Global North) related to the higher education systems, e.g., in the UK The Research Excellence Framework, or even broader, how modern technologies intertwined with the different economical capabilities shaped by the past, form Open Access as a method of academic publishing (cf. the review by Joshua M. Avery published in the *Journal of Librarianship and Scholarly Communication* 9 [2021], article no. eP2412).

The beginning of the book offers the reader an introductory take on Open Access. So we are told by the book’s editors that the very first contemporary move towards Open Access came in 2002 with the promulgation of the three declarations of Bethesda ([MD], USA), Budapest, and Berlin, i.e., considerations about the conditions which have to be met so that the peer-reviewed research could be freely available for everyone online as a fully open medium of academic communication - cf. *Introduction*, p. 2; and furthermore, there are two routes to achieve Open Access: Gold and Green. The first one is defined and stipulated by the publishers which condition business models how peer-review research can be made freely accessible to read and reuse usually after the article processing charge has been covered by the author or their institution. The second one, is based on the authors’ requirement to deposit their ‘early version’ of a work into the institutional (or subject) repository they are representing. The main difference between them is the business model introduced by the publishers which has to secure their revenues. Therefore, if they cannot sell the author’s submitted material for publication to the readers, they offer professional publishing services to the authors instead - cf. p. 3.

The first section of this book (*Colonial Influences*) contains four chapters: (*Epistemic Alienation in African Scholarly Communications: Open Access as a Pharmakon*, pp. 25-40 - Thomas Hervé Mboa Nkoudou; *Scholarly Communications and Social Justice*, pp. 41-52 - Charlotte Roh, Harrison W. Inefuku, and Emily Drabinski; *Social Justice and Inclusivity: Drivers for the Dissemination of African Scholarship*, pp. 53-64 - Reggie Raju, Jill Claassen, Namhla Madini, and Tamzyn Suliaman; *Can Open Scholarly Practices Redress Epistemic*

Injustice?, pp. 65-79 - Denisse Albornoz, Angela Okune, and Leslie Chan). The material in it deals with the global inequalities in access to scholarly communications, which is the result of the postcolonial world we live in. In other words, some countries are more privileged to have wider access to knowledge (the Global North) than others, less economically proficient nations (the Global South), which have to overcome in the first place certain challenges (e.g. lack of resources for academics - sparsely provisioned libraries, no central funds; underdeveloped technological infrastructure - lack of electricity, access to the internet, unsafe work-placements; weak circulation of knowledge - books are mainly published in print, small amount of repositories, no human skill set and experience for data management positions. Cf. *Introduction*, p. 12.

The second section (*Epistemologies*) includes four chapters (*When the Law Advances Access to Learning: Locke and the Origins of Modern Copyright*, pp. 83-102 - John Willinsky; *How Does a Format Make a Public?*, pp. 103-112 - Robin de Mourat, Donato Ricci, and Bruno Latour; *Peer Review: Readers in the Making of Scholarly Knowledge*, pp. 113-123 - David Pontille and Didier Torny; *The Making of Empirical Knowledge: Recipes, Craft, and Scholarly Communication*, pp. 125-144 - Pamela H. Smith, Tianna Helena Uchacz, Naomi Rosenkranz, and Claire Conklin Sabel) and is trying to find an answer to, how Open Access was moulded in the historical process of transforming academic research into a more contemporary notion of digitally open data (e.g. *The Making and Knowing Project* created by Columbia University - see the chapter: *The Making of Empirical Knowledge*; see also <https://www.makingandknowing.org> [accessed: 21/07/2021]). It is worth mentioning the *Peer Review* article in this section as it closely corresponds with the one from the next section in the book (*Publics and Politics*): *The Royal Society and the Noncommercial Circulation of Knowledge*, pp. 147-160 - Aileen Fyfe - cf. *Introduction*, p. 12-13.

The *Publics and Politics* section continues with the following articles: *The Political Histories of UK Public Libraries and Access to Knowledge*, pp. 161-172 - Stuart Lawson; *Libraries and Their Publics in the United States*, pp. 173-180 - Maura A. Smale; *Open Access, "Publicity", and Democratic Knowledge*, pp. 181-191 - John Holmwood. S. Lawson's proposition seems to be linked to what T. H. Mboa Nkoudou and J. Willinsky posit (*Epistemic Alienation in African Scholarly Communications and When the Law Advances Access to Learning*) in the first two sections of this book.

The next section is entitled: *Archives and Preservation*, and comprises four chapters: *Libraries, Museums, and Archives as Speculative Knowledge Infrastructure*, pp. 195-203 - Bethany Nowviskie; *Preserving the Past for the Future: Whose Past? Everyone's Future*, pp. 205-214 - April M. Hathcock; *Is There a Text in These Data? The Digital Humanities and Preserving the Evidence*, pp. 215-228 - Dorothea Salo; *Accessing the Past, or Should Archives Provide Open Access?*, pp. 229-247 - István Rév. The last article in this section perfectly reflects its topic as the Author is taking an interesting endeavour to explain why some sensitive archives should be fully open to access by the public and not only to the specific group of people depending on their profession, e.g. historians; but at the same time the institutions providing access to them should stay cautious and respect the individuals described in those resources in accordance with their private right to stay unanimous (the issue of public archive versus private archive tied by the rule of *des fonds*).

The fifth section of this book (*Infrastructures and Platforms*) groups five articles (*Infrastructural Experiments and the Politics of Open Access*, pp. 251-263 - Jonathan Gray; *The Platformization of Open*, pp. 265-276 - Penny C. S. Andrews; *Reading Scholarship*

Digitally, pp. 277-284 - Martin Paul Eve; *Toward Linked Open Data for Latin America*, pp. 285-295 - Arianna Becerril-García and Eduardo Aguado-López; *The Pasts, Presents, and Futures of SciELO*, pp. 297-313 - Abel L. Packer), which are intending to help the readers in better understanding how closely connected Open Access is with contemporary technologies, e.g. online platforms, data mining tools (JSTOR - ‘distant reading’; Cambridge University – ContentMine) and the importance of creating a general Open repository where those recent technological approaches can be fully effective.

The sixth and last section in the book (*Global Communities*) has four chapters (*Not Self-Indulgence, but Self-Preservation: Open Access and the Ethics of Care*, pp. 317-329 - Eileen A. Joy; *Toward a Global Open-Access Scholarly Communications System: A Developing Region Perspective*, pp. 331-341 - Dominique Babini; *Learned Societies, Humanities Publishing, and Scholarly Communication in the UK*, pp. 343-349 - Jane Winters; *Not All Networks: Toward Open, Sustainable Research Communities*, pp. 351-359 - Kathleen Fitzpatrick) which concludes the entire book, but also draws the readers’ attention to a further discussion about different challenges which the Open Access project might confront in the future.

The fact that all of the book’s contributors came from fields of Humanities and Social Science was deliberate. With thanks to that, the methodological approach in the book was quite innovative in regards to Opens Access, which is mostly dominated and was developed by the STEM disciplines, offering interesting, albeit more ‘philosophical’ (e.g. see the chapter *Libraries, Museums, and Archives as Speculative Knowledge Infrastructure* about Afrofuturism), take on Open Access. This warrants further and deeper discussion about Open Access and Scholarly Communication, which can go even farther than the thematic frames of that book as it is underlined by the editors, cf. *Introduction*, p. 18. This humanistic approach is noticeable in the composition of the book, which allows to be perused by the intuitive choice as anyone prefers. It is possible mainly because this is a collection of different papers covering varied topics, which are not coherently interconnected in the terms of narration (cf. the review by Mark C. Wilson in *Journal of Scholarly Publishing* 52 (2021), no. 3, p. 190). Therefore, following this pattern, I have mainly drawn my attention to at least one of them from each section.

The opening chapter (*Epistemic Alienation in African Scholarly Communications*) compares the Open Access movement to a drug, which depending on the context can have healing or poisoning properties. The Author used the term well known in the Ancient Greece, ὁ φαρμακός - scapegoat/ τό φάρμακον - medicine (cf. *A Greek-English Lexicon*, ed. by Henry George Liddell, Robert Scott, Clarendon Press, Oxford 1996 [9th revised edition], p. 1917), alluding to the Greek ritual of purification of the city invaded by evil. This article posits an interesting view on Open Access from an African standpoint, proving that the main problem for ‘the third world’ countries to adopt Open Access is epistemic alienation/exclusion which is the result of post colonialism dependent on the Western paradigm, which cannot be fully adapted by most African countries. Africa simply cannot follow the gold Open Access route as African authors cannot afford paying for APCs (Article Processing Charges) to publish in the most prestigious journals with the highest impact factors (φάρμακον as poison in this respect). The only remaining option is the Green route which helps to promote their research and develop Open Access as a movement (φάρμακον - as a drug with healing prerogatives). In research, this alienation is depicted by how European thought and language are still influential and prominent over local scholarship and vernacular languages, barely existing in scientific literature. Eurocentrism against more direct epistemologies. Therefore, Budapest Open Access

Initiative from 2002 created good ideas but not entirely suitable in every single economic reality. The third chapter in this section (*Social Justice and Inclusivity*), offers an interesting idea created in South Africa, called Ubuntu, a term adapted from Zulu which means more or less equality within community. The same equality should be promoted in Open Access research to create equal access to scholarship by anyone. In return, this will facilitate even more research by active participation. This idea also promotes academic libraries as institutions providing free services (Diamond Open Access) to the authors and readers. In that way, it will help to move from the monopoly of the publishers as the only paid agents for the research publication services to fully open platforms as the one provided by the University of Cape Town and their library (with 5 journal titles, 3 monographs and 2 textbooks produced there and fully open to access out of all 55 in the entire South Africa), funded centrally by the government.

The second section starts (*When the Law Advances Access to Learning*) with a historical account about the beginnings of the copyright law in Great Britain (5th of April 1710 - Statute of Anne) as a result of an initiative created by John Locke (29th of August 1632 – 28th of October 1704), who had died before his idea came to pass, and his liberal theory of property, where for the first time in history the author of a work had the legislative rights over the reproduction of their work with limited time for 28 years. We are told that J. Lock believed the freedom to print by anyone would enhance learning and would liberate the book trade from the monopoly of certain companies (e.g. The Stationer's Company) controlled by the Parliament (Press Act 1662-1695). These analyses might be interesting in comparison with the contemporary problems in Scholarly Communications where academic research is oscillating between the noble ideas of Creative Commons and the interest of powerful private companies. Further in this section, the readers are introduced to the modern way of the *Peer Review* process, which has significantly evolved from its practices in the past when every submitted manuscript was followed by a commentary, usually written by multiple commentators, and then concluded with a final reply from the author. These days, platforms like arXiv.org or F1000Research seem to promote a new methodology based on crowdsourcing (everyone who visit their website is invited to share a review), citation metrics, or as in case of the latter the Post Publication Peer Review, where authors can revise their versions of the publication. In close relation to this article is the one (*The Royal Society*) which can be found in the third section of the book as mentioned above. Its subject is focused on the longest running scholarly journal, *Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society*. After its foundation in 1665 by Henry Oldenburg, it was the first peer-reviewed journal in the UK that promoted ideas which we now regard as Open Access by granting free copies of their *Transactions* or *Proceedings*, from 1750s until late 1950s, to the trusted institutions all around the world, and, creating in that way a system of mutual exchange of scholarly research. From 1954 though, only the Queen has received a free copy as The Royal Society turned into a subscription-based model to meet the high demands of new times. Nevertheless, it seems as *Transactions* are a good example of how ideas of the Open Access founding declarations were not exactly something truly innovative as non-commercial scholarly based and reviewed research had already been in use before that. The next article (*The Political Histories of UK Public Libraries and Access to Knowledge*) from the third section brings a wider context to what J. Willinsky offered the readers in his article (*When the Law Advances Access to Learning*) and develops even further a few points from the opening chapter of this book (*Epistemic Alienation in African Scholarly Communications*) as it was already prompted earlier. The Author 'packed' his paper with an impressive bibliography which clearly indicated that his proposition was extracted from some bigger research he had conducted on the topic (see S. Lawson, *Open Access Policy in the UK: From Neoliberalism to the Commons*, London 2019, Birkbeck, University of London -

available via EthOS, ID: uk.bl.ethos.774255). Unfortunately, this might create a problem for the reader, as the text itself seems to be patchy and heavily loaded with contextual information about the historical/political bases for popularisation of academic scholarship in the UK, which has laid the foundation for the modern access to knowledge through library services. Having said that, the content which that article is built on is very interesting. We are told that the crucial moment in history of Public Libraries in the UK took place in the XIX (1850) century when the Government implemented in England and Wales the Public Libraries Act. It allowed town councils to found their own libraries empowered by the local taxes and by significant help of wealthy entrepreneurs. This, along with some general reforms in education, which granted access to universities to people from the different backgrounds (mostly to the working class), and also to women for the first time in history, had a strong impact on broadening the access to academic scholarship. This also created certain problems as the primary intentions to drive the working class people away from the potentially revolutionary tendencies, postulated by socialism, formed a new way of imperial propaganda especially visible in the British colonies in India, Kenya, Ethiopia, where Public Libraries were erected with the purpose to educate everyone in accordance with the colonial paradigm (historically the same rhetoric were used by the Athenians in the Melian dialog during the Peloponnesian War, cf. Thucydides, *The Peloponnesian War*, V 84-116). The Author collocates these findings with the current division in Open Access between the Global North and South, which is the result of certain political decisions in countries like, e.g., the UK.

The fourth section starts with a kind of manifesto called Afrofuturism (in: *Libraries, Museums, and Archives as Speculative Knowledge Infrastructure*), where the Author shares some personal views about the current state of digital data management/infrastructure (which in their view is the results of the liberal solutions from the XIX century), and what are the biggest challenges that we as an Open Access community should overcome to create more dialog-based, open, and non-algorithmic access to knowledge. Kept more or less on the same note is the other article (*Is There a Text in These Data?*) from this section, in which the readers are informed about certain difficulties in applying the Open Access system to Humanities. It turns out that the biggest problem that needs solving is that of digital preservation and general access to past resources. Most of the modern academic institutions seem to lack sufficient preparation to provide fully reliable and permanent service to maintain the digital preservation, which academic research in Humanities is based on. The subscription based services (e.g. Dropbox) seem not to be ideal either as they simply store the data for as long as the subscription is kept, and no matter how valuable the saved data, if the subscription is discontinued, all the files are removed from the cloud storage. And also, the intransigence of academic humanists to move from print versions to the electronic ones, mainly due to their sheer reluctance and distrust - similarly to what had happened in the past with the introduction of the print codices overthrowing handwritten manuscripts - copyright issues and varied infrastructural challenges, etc., are the reasons for Humanities being placed as the underdog, in the process of their transformation to become more Open Access efficient.

In the last two sections (*Infrastructures and Platforms, Global Communities*), the readers' attention is being turned towards new, sometimes experimental, technologies (e.g. openaccessbutton.org; controversial Sci-Hub) and infrastructures (software, metadata standards, web technologies) weaved around Open Access research in order for them to create new ways of bringing about academic scholarship to the public (cf. *Infrastructural Experiments and the Politics of Open Access*). The chapter entitled: *The Platformization of Open* seems to build on those certain speculative propositions concerning the modern threats of data control in the Global North. The idea behind Open Practise (i.e. Open Access, Open Data, Open

Knowledge, Open Science, Open Source, Open Government, Open Research) to enhance the ways of how the research data is accessed via services provided by the privately owned companies offering computational services - platforms - is rather dubious. It certainly creates new and better links to information (The Fourth Industrial Revolution) but the price the researchers have to pay is their data ‘leakage’ (‘legally’ acquired as a result of privatisation of intellectual property) and the data workflow being in the hands of very wealthy ‘game players’ in the academic sector (Microsoft, Uber, Elsevier, etc.) which have acquired whether in-whole or in-part, ownership of such platforms like Github, Research-Gate, Social Science Research Network (SSRN), etc. From the other side of the spectrum, the last two chapters in the fifth section move our focus from the Global North to the Global South and Latin America. This is a very interesting area of investigation in Open Access as the endeavours in Latin America to create an open and free from any publishing charges ecosystem had been created there even before the BOAI. The first attempts to build an Open Access platform took place in 1997 with the pilot study of SCiELO (Scientific Electronic Library Online) in Brazil. Since then SCiELO has become the biggest harbour of Open Access research hosting 1000 journals housed by a variety of educational institutions in Latin America, Caribbean, Southern Africa (South Africa), and Europe (Portugal, Spain) with 51 000 publications *per annum*. It certainly still is not the same level of academic publishing as in the Global North in terms of sheer numbers, and there are many challenges still to overcome, e.g., about one third of their research is populated by World of Science and Scopus (mainly due to language issues), but there seem to be a great potential especially visible in the constantly growing Open Infrastructure comprising many platforms (e.g. CLACSO, Redalyc, Latindex) and some optimistic initiatives, i.e., AmeliCA, which are being compared even with the very popular in the Global North Plan S.

The last four chapters in the book (in the sixth section) share the same theme and they can be read as one big conclusive epilogue. The Open Access Movement is a global initiative and even though there is definitely a strong sense of division within it, there are also common goals and certainly many great prospects for the future which are conditional upon how well certain challenges are being resolved both in the Global North and in the Global South. These are mainly in the Global North context: deprivatisation of Open Access business models; bigger governmental, academic, or funds granting institutions financial support; no author-pay system; the removal of hybrid journals publishing offers; creation of the new infrastructures for the Humanities (e.g., like MLA Commons in the US or New Historical Perspective series in the UK); promotion of university presses; to mention only a few. In the Global South perspective these are: adopting DORA (San Francisco Declaration on Research Assessment) postulates to increase visibility of the local research; broaden access to global scholarship and active participation in it; more international collaborative initiatives in order to cut the ties of the so called double bind issue of academics from Latin America, etc. Across all of the last four papers it seems as their contributors agree that the creation of one common network of Open Access repositories (similar to *La Referencia* which originated in Chile) would significantly help implementing all data mining tools to eradicate the potential conflicts with the publishers’ copyright issues, and to solve the current problem of the overabundance of research; and would help promote scholarship which do not have the support of the research proxy values (Journal Impact Factors) from less economically developed countries.

This book is a good source of knowledge on the current shape of Open Access. It promotes a strong theme of division in Open Access between the so called the Global North and South regions as represented by the book’s contributors. The first group seems to be interested in the constant pursuit of higher numbers of impact factors, larger funding pools, faster workflows, which is well encapsulated in the Global North’s obsession with metrication

of all research data. The second group is more into spreading the idea that the academic knowledge is an added value and will benefit everyone's lives, and it should be freely available to all, which continues the proposal introduced by the Open Access founding declarations (cf. M. C. Wilson, *Journal of Scholarly Publishing*, p. 191-2). What both 'worlds' have in common are the challenges they face, and the most crucial one appear to be the abundance of research data to be processed by academics so that they could stay up to date with the recent scholarship. The task itself is impossible to achieve as simply one journal PLOS ONE (Public Library of Science) publishes 20 000 articles *per annum*, and the current solutions of prioritising research in accordance with the Journal Impact Factors measurement does not really deliver fair results as stated by DORA - cf. *Reading Scholarship Digitally* in the section five (*Infrastructures and Platforms*). For that and other reasons, the book warrants further discussion about the scope of Open Access and it certainly is a great source of erudition/open discussion for everyone involved in or interested in Open Access publishing, and it should be highly recommended within the environment of scholarly communication.

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