
Open Access Movements: Emancipation or Hypocrisy?

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Dear Readers,

Please, let me add some comments to the worldwide debate on the pages of *KOME: An International Journal of Pure Communication Inquiry* and elsewhere regarding Open Access movements and the fact that some prestigious universities and research institutions declined to renew their subscriptions at major academic publishers. The most famous example here is the German Project DEAL¹ where dozens of leading German institutions quit their former agreements with global publishers to enter into a contract that entails golden Open Access (OA) function; meaning that the authors or their institutions will be charged to pay paper processing fees for the Publishers.

In this short letter, I will try to point out some ethical problems regarding the above-delineated plans. Hungary, this relatively small semi-peripheral country joined this global movement in a very radical way. As opposed to the German, American and Swedish participants of the OA movement, Hungary abolished all its contracts with Elsevier, including not just ScienceDirect but also Scopus and SciVal. Moreover, Hungary did it in a very radical manner since the services mentioned above are inaccessible in all Hungarian institutions: as opposed to the glorified German example, where Scopus and SciVal could be accessed from many institutions and even from public libraries, Hungary cut its access entirely.

Since I am the one who started the argument against this blindfold action publicly,² I felt that I must make my arguments clear in front of the global audience, and with this, I would like to attract attention to some very hypocritical statements regarding the OA movement. First of all, one should clearly see that such a thing as free work does not exist in the world-system of global academy, where academic capital is accumulated in not just material but also symbolic forms. Thus, it is rather displeasing when global hegemonies of the world of transnational academy state that the beneficiaries of the OA movements will be the scholars of the developing or peripheral countries. As against this musical but unfortunately false statement I have two arguments. First, in the case of a golden OA model, authors or their institutions should pay processing fees that vary from 1.500 to 5000 USD or even more. Of course, the institutions of

¹ <https://www.projekt-deal.de/about-deal/>

² <https://newsbeezer.com/hungaryeng/index-tech-science-hungarian-researchers-have-been-cut-off-from-the-scientific-cycle/>

peripheral scholars could not afford to pay these fees so they would be ousted from the central scholarship to an even greater extent than nowadays. So while they might be able to freely and humbly read what their more central colleagues write, they might not be able to contribute as authors. In my opinion, this is the exact definition of central imperialism and intellectual colonization, and I do not think that any responsible scholar would argue that this is what global academy needs. And, even if peripheral scholars were given discount prices for publication fees at central OA periodicals, editors will be counter-interested in publishing too many peripheral articles because the growing number of these papers would go against not just profit but even against the normal maintenance of the journal. With this, central journals would be financially interested in being biased against peripheral scholars and this will be added to the already existent inequalities of the field of global science.

Second, and maybe more importantly: publication practice is only a small aspect of the operation of transnational scholarship since much more powerful agents strive for maintaining or even raising their leading positions.

When the shocking phenomenon that there is almost no one global South educated core staff member at the most prestigious central departments, and peripheral scholars should be subjected to global North reeducation in order to be hired by central HEIs ceases to exist, I will immediately believe in the rhetoric that suggests the promotion of the periphery (Demeter 2018a).

When the well-known fact that leading international periodicals are full of central editorial board members and there are only a minimal number of global South people there vanishes, I will believe (Demeter 2018b).

When scientific production will count more than elite central degrees and credentials when it comes to recruitment, I will believe.

And, when international grants like ERC cease to go almost exclusively towards rich and prestigious central institutions, I will surely believe.

Till then, please do not say that alternative business models like OA will serve the interests of peripheral scholars.

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