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Where is the Social Democracy in Subscription Paywalls? Effects and Impact of Transitioning Journals from Subscriptions to Open Access on Researchers in Developing and Transition Economies

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Where is the Social Democracy in Subscription Paywalls? Effects and Impact of Transitioning Journals from Subscriptions to Open Access on Researchers in Developing and Transition Economies

Presenter 1 Title

Colleen Campbell, OA2020 Partner Development, Max Planck Digital Library

Session Type

Event

Abstract

Nearly 20 years after the Budapest, Berlin and Bethesda Declarations on open access, the global academic community continues to struggle toward realizing its objective of an open information environment in which the world's scholarly and scientific literature is freely available and at the service of society to accelerate research, enrich education and lay the foundation for a common, global intellectual exchange. Championing the cause, stakeholders in some geographic contexts have succeeded in delivering open access publishing options for their research outputs by fostering highly-regarded, locally-developed journals, platforms and repositories, yet a an enormous portion of the world's scholarly literature continues to be published in subscription journals with mounting paywalls. To address this lacuna, many institutions and national consortia have begun to negotiate transformative agreements as a strategy to transition those journals from closed to open, repurposing former subscription expenditures to cover open access publishing costs and basing their negotiations on the principle that such agreements should be cost-neutral. But just what does cost-neutral mean in developing and transition economies? How does the current subscription expenditure relate to their publishing trends? Does transitioning the business model underlying scholarly journals from subscription to open access merely move the barrier from "pay to read" to "pay to publish"? Keen to better understand the financial implications of transformative agreements in and on Low and Middle-Income Countries (LMICs), the Open Access 2020 Initiative LMIC Working Group has been investigating this issue, engaging researchers, librarians and consortium leaders through the EIFL network. OA2020 is an initiative of research performing organizations from around the world who adopt strategies to transform scholarly journals from closed to open, and EIFL (Electronic Information for Libraries) works with libraries to enable access to knowledge for education, learning, research and sustainable community development. Through this collaboration, key insights from librarians, data analysts, library consortia coordinators, and researchers have been incorporated into practical recommendations the working group is eager to share!

Because of the highly collaborative nature of our work, the presenters will present together, trading off to highlight different aspects of the overall project. Rick Burke, Executive Director, SCELC, will moderate this session.

Location

Keywords

Open Access, Transformational Agreements



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Where is the Social Democracy in Subscription Paywalls?

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Max Planck Digital Library
Open Access 2020 Initiative

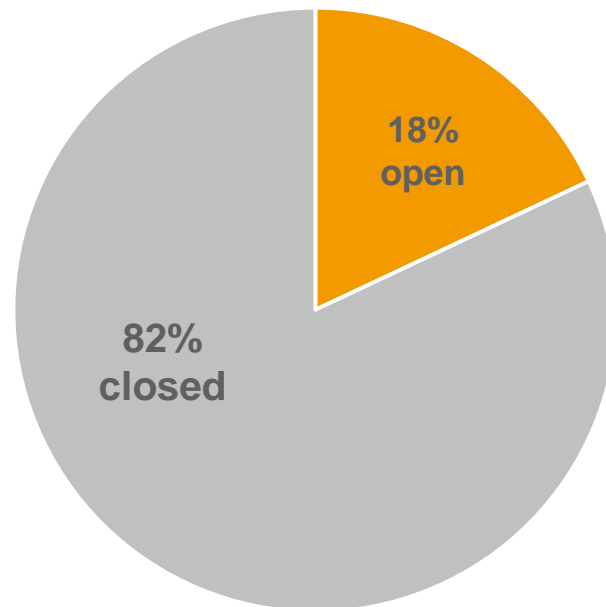
Moderating **Rick Burke**
Executive Director
SCELC

Current scenario in scholarly publishing

Global publisher market shares 2014 – 2018

Original articles and reviews indexed in the Web of Science

Global subscription spend
= 7.6 Bn Euro
(10Bn USD)



github.com/subugoe/oa2020cadata

Data Sources: Web of Science in-house database Competence Centre for Bibliometrics for German Science.
Publisher names were disambiguated using Crossref metadata. OA status obtained from the Bielefeld GOLD OA list.
Funding: Federal Ministry of Education and Research of Germany (BMBF), Project OAUNI (01PU17023A)

A global initiative to face publishers at eye level

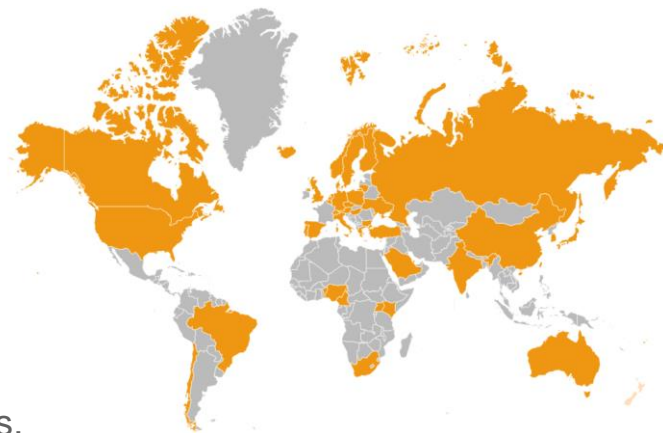
Open Access 2020 Initiative

We aim to **transform** a majority of today's **scholarly journals from subscription to OA** publishing in accordance with community-specific publication preferences.

We will pursue this transformation process by **converting resources currently spent on journal subscriptions into funds to support sustainable OA business models.**

Accordingly, we intend to re-organize the underlying cash flows, to establish transparency with regard to costs and potential savings, and to **adopt mechanisms to avoid undue publication barriers.**

At the same time, we continue to **support new and improved forms of OA** publishing.



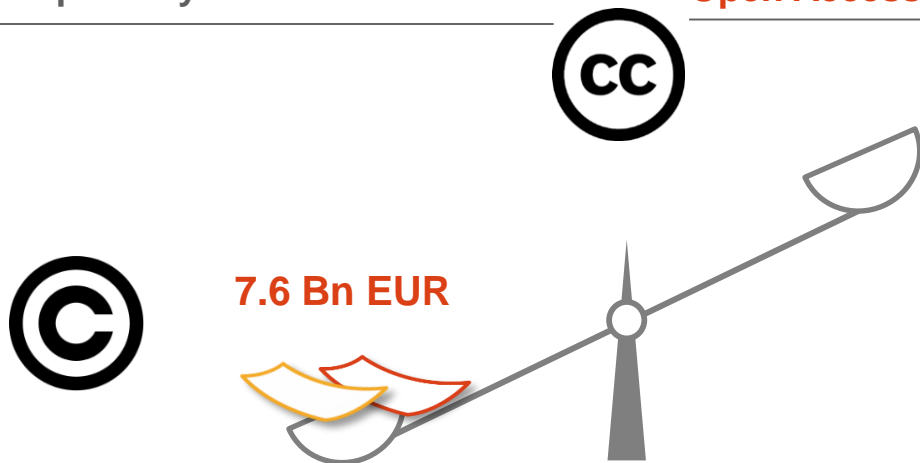
What are transformative agreements?

TA's are a **temporary** and **transitional pathway** to open access.

They are centrally negotiated agreements with scholarly publishers in which **former subscription payments are repurposed to cover open access publishing** of the research articles by an institution's or country's authors.

Subscription system

Open Access



What transformative agreements are not

Transformative agreements are transitional, they are **not** the new normal.

Rather, they are one key component to a comprehensive open access strategy. They provide a **practical** and **immediately viable** framework to **disinvest from the subscription paywall** system while respecting the scholarly communication needs of researchers.

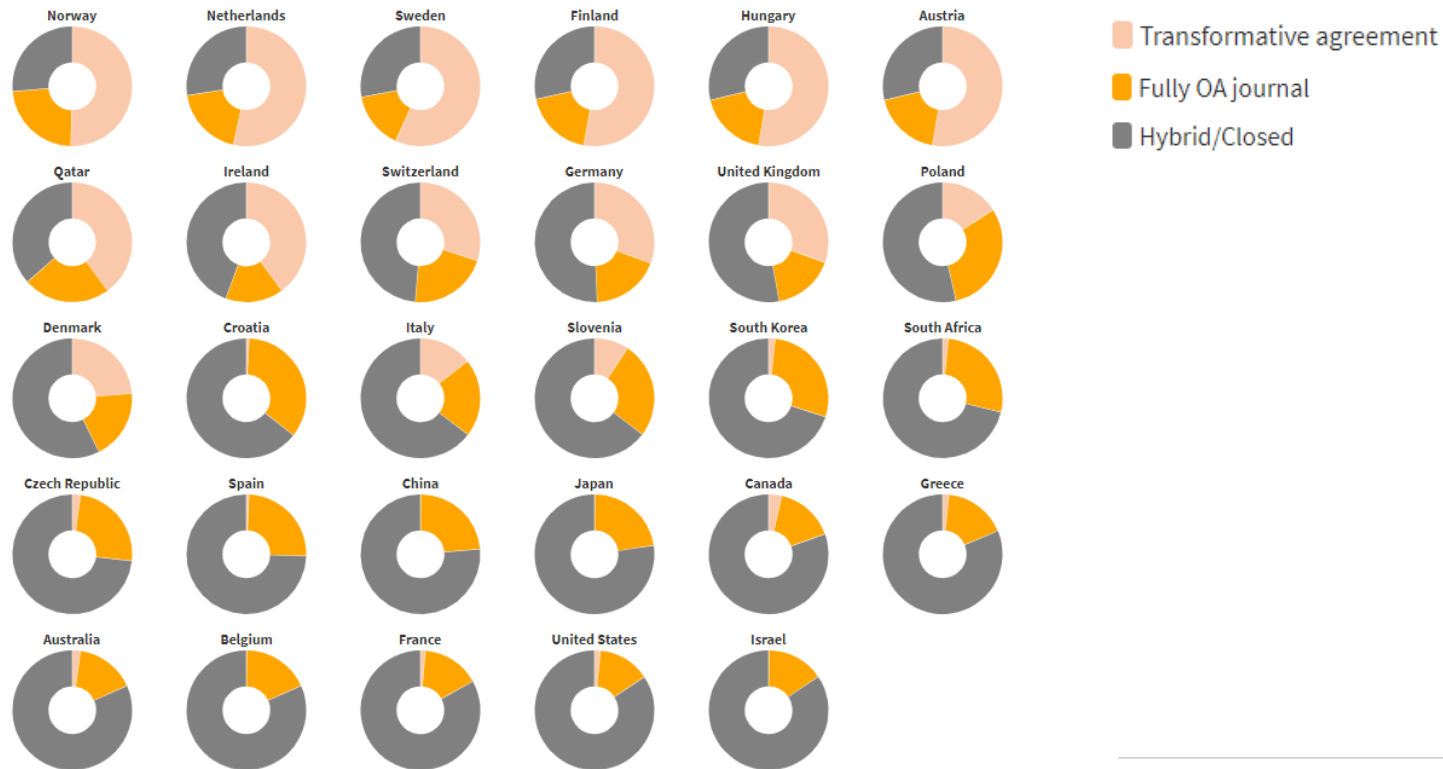
Subscription system

- Opaque, inequitable pricing
- Market dominance of publishers
- Undue pressure on authors
- Hidden costs of APC's in the wild
- Lump-sums that have eaten up materials budgets (to the detriment, especially of SSH)
- Perpetuation of paywalls

Transformative Agreements

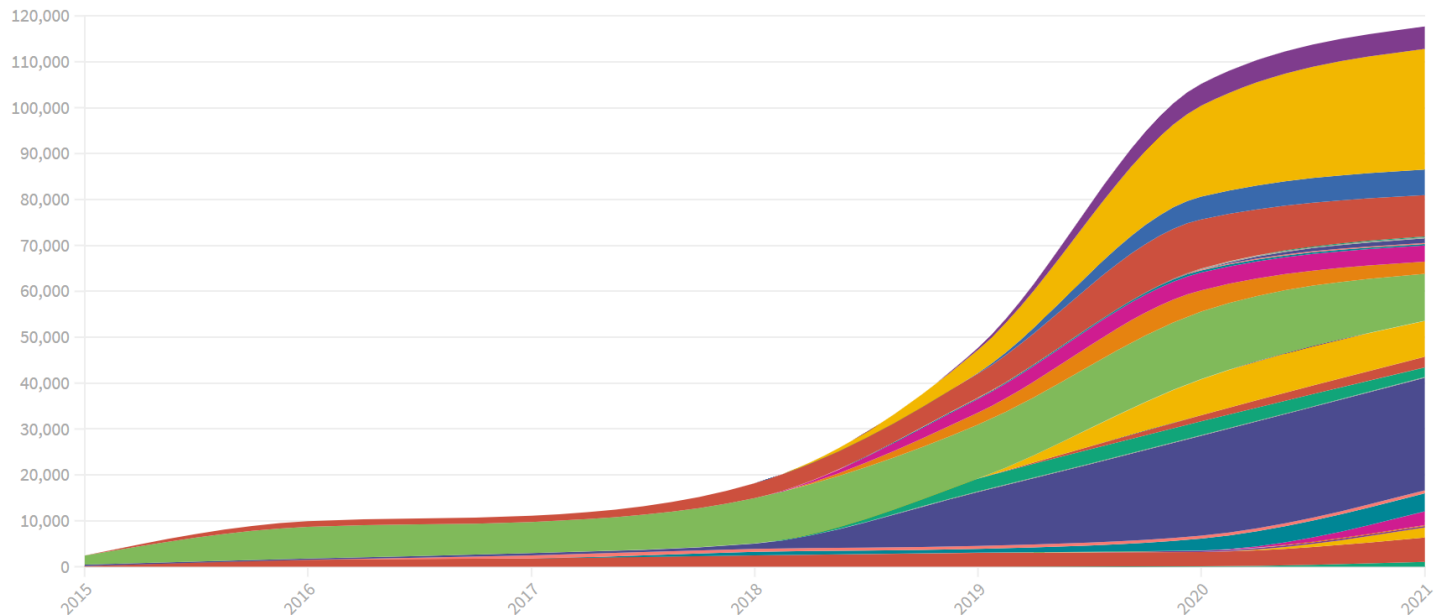
- Transparent cost per service
- Introduction of market pressure
- Authors retain copyright
- No double-dipping
- Funds are equitably distributed and follow researchers where they choose to publish
- Exponential growth of open access

Positive impact of transformative agreements



<https://esac-initiative.org/about/transformative-agreements/agreement-registry/>
<https://github.com/subugoe/oa2020cadata/>

Positive impact of transformative agreements



Number of articles covered by transformative agreements

<https://esac-initiative.org/market-watch/>

But how can we be sure that the transition we are driving does not have unintended consequences?

OA2020 LMIC Working Group Study

in partnership with EIFL and library consortium coordinators in EIFL countries



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Mat Willmott

Aims of the study

- Analyse publishing output and the financial streams around scholarly publishing in Lower Middle Income Countries (LMICs)*
- Model cost projections in order to investigate the potential for transformative agreements and a future scenario based on OA publishing

* World Bank Classification system based on GNI/capita

Group	July 1, 2020 (new)
Low income	< 1,036
Lower-middle income	1,036 - 4,045
Upper-middle income	4,046 - 12,535
High income	> 12,535

US	65,850 US\$
Australia	54,150 US\$
Germany	48,580 US\$
India	2,120 US\$
Ghana	2,220 US\$
Kenya	1,750 US\$
Ukraine	3,370 US\$
Georgia	4,780 US\$

<https://datahelpdesk.worldbank.org/knowledgebase/articles/378834-how-does-the-world-bank-classify-countries>
<https://datahelpdesk.worldbank.org/knowledgebase/articles/906519>

Answers we sought in our study

- How much is currently being spent on subscriptions and open access publishing?
- What discounts and waivers are scholarly publishers currently applying?
- How do the publishing trends of researchers in these countries relate to the overall financial investments being made in closed scholarly journals?
- Would current spend on subscriptions and APCs cover all publishing costs in a purely open access world based on current market conditions?
- What does this data tell us about how consortia from LMICs might engage in the global effort to transition the current corpus of scholarly journals to open access?

Scope of our study

Scope

- Four LMIC sample countries: Kenya, Ghana, Georgia, Ukraine
- Three largest publishers: Elsevier, Springer Nature, Wiley
- Timescale: 2016-18
- WOS

Quantitative and qualitative work

Project components

- Worked with local consortia to collect information about **subscription spend**
- Gathered **publication output** information for these countries/publishers
- Contacted 1,458 authors of OA articles to collect information about **APC spend & waivers/discounts received**
- Collated responses, analyzed data, modeled **cost projection** scenarios
- Discussion with consortia to share **survey results** and get feedback

What we learned: data insights

Subscription payments

	Institutional members	Consortium-level agreements with the three publishers considered	Aggregate total annual subscription fees of those agreements (USD)
Consortium 1	140	2	160,000
Consortium 2	80	2	390,367
Consortium 3	70	1	284,000
Consortium 4	60	0	0

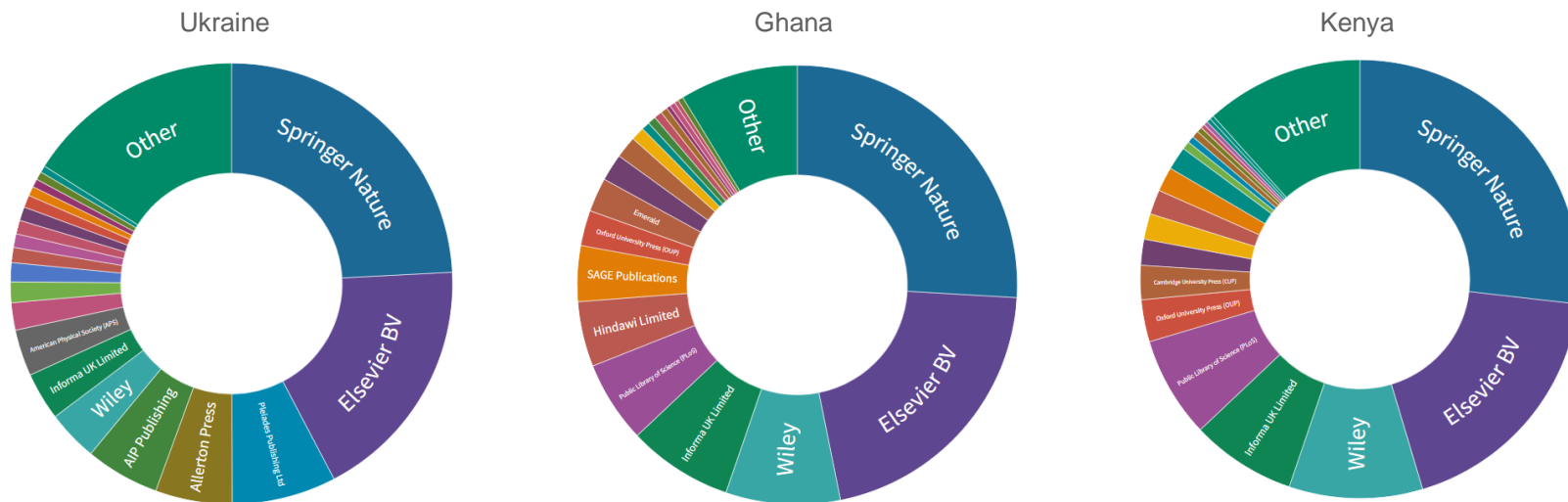
What we learned: contextual insights

Subscription payments

- Libraries and consortia in LMICs are spending money on subscriptions, despite charitable efforts such as Research4Life
- Subscription pricing is opaque, and negotiations with libraries/consortia are sometimes circumvented by negotiations at the Ministry level
- Researchers have inconsistent access to paywalled content because libraries cannot always afford to renew (or to even subscribe in the first place!)

What we learned: data insights

Publishing trends of authors



Top 20 publishers based on corresponding author share

<https://esac-initiative.org/market-watch/>

What we learned: data insights

Publishing trends of authors

Publication data

Corresponding author papers	2016			2017			2018			Total
	E	SN	W	E	SN	W	E	SN	W	
Closed	89	71	56	91	78	58	90	80	56	669
Open access – gold	8	113	6	9	139	16	14	160	10	475
Open access – hybrid	27	18	8	36	26	13	29	17	10	184
Total	124	202	70	136	243	87	133	257	76	1,328
% of total in OA	28%	65%	20%	33%	68%	33%	32%	69%	26%	50%

What we learned: data insights

APC payments

Journal type	Publisher	OA articles	Article responses	APC payment status			Known APC payments	
				Waived	Payment made		Total	Average
					Known amount	Unknown amount		
Fully OA	Springer Nature	411	120	80 (67%)	25	15	\$59,168	\$2,367
	Wiley	31	11	9 (82%)	2	0	\$2,750	\$1,375
	Elsevier	31	2	2 (100%)	0	0	\$0	\$0
	Total	473	133	91 (68%)	27	15	\$61,918	\$2,293
Hybrid OA	Springer Nature	61	16	9 (56%)	3	4	\$8,880	\$2,960
	Wiley	31	6	0 (0%)	6	0	\$17,600	\$2,933
	Elsevier	92	19	2 (11%)	10	7	\$33,647	\$3,365
	Total	184	41	11 (27%)	19	11	\$60,127	\$3,165
Grand total		657	174	102 (59%)	46	26	\$122,045	\$2,653

What we learned: contextual insights

Open access publishing

- Publishers have discount and waiver policies for authors in LMICs, but these are decided unilaterally
- Claiming a waiver or discount is by no means a simple process
- Waiver and discount policies usually exclude open access publishing in hybrid journals
- Policies may not align with the realistic possibilities of authors in LMICs
- Author decisions on where to publish their articles are influenced by their ability to pay APCs

“I did not pay any fees but had to enter into a long negotiation with the waivers office to consider a full waiver. It is indeed a painful task.”

“We received a full waiver after we explained that we did not have funds available for the Article Processing Charges, and that the charges were higher than the monthly wages of some lecturers in Ghana”

Observation 1

Library and research funds are currently flowing from LMIC's to large commercial publishers in subscription fees and open access publishing fees in both in fully OA and 'hybrid' journals.

There is a large and inexplicable variance in the amounts from country to country.

Current levels of investment are not necessarily proportionate to the volume of a country's article output.

Possible actions

- Start tracking spending and publishing trends and sources
- Explore opportunities for cross-border consortium approaches

Observation 2

For some countries, the current total investments seem to be sufficient financial leverage for a transformative agreement that is cost-neutral (at least), but the relevant stakeholder groups do not currently have oversight of the various financial flows.

Possible actions

- Convene and align relevant stakeholders

Observation 3

Waivers and discounts provide some level of economic relief, but optimization and standardization is needed on the immediate term.

With data in hand, longer term approaches can be explored by the community to ensure equitable opportunities for authors in LMICs to publish their articles openly in the scholarly journals of their choice.

Possible actions

- Central agreements to govern application of waivers and discounts.
- Multi-stakeholder re-evaluation of waiver/discount criteria
- Multi-stakeholder exploration of additional mechanisms for equitable conditions for open access publishing services

Opportunities

Collaboration and partnerships

Workshop with the Training Centre in Communication (TCC Africa), the Canadian Research Knowledge Network (CRKN) and OA2020

<https://www.tcc-africa.org/about/>

15th Berlin Open Access Conference

<https://oa2020.org/b15-conference/>

EIFL principles for negotiating open access agreements with publishers

https://www.eifl.net/sites/default/files/eifl_principles_for_oa_agreements.pdf

Opportunities

Learn more and share experiences!

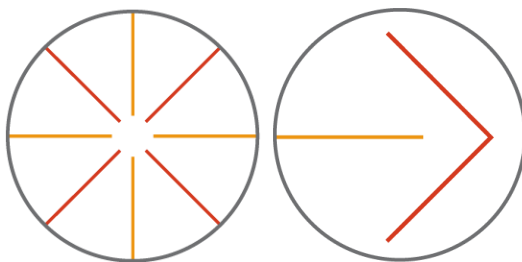
Unbuckling the subscription model: a South African perspective

http://www.sparcafricasymp.uct.ac.za/sites/default/files/image_tool/images/509/Presentations/Day_three/Unbuckling%20the%20Subscription%20Model-%20a%20South%20African%20Perspective%20-%206%20December%202019.pdf

INASP Study “Open Access: challenges and opportunities for LMICs and the potential impact of UK policy”

<http://blog.inasp.info/oa-lmics-uk-policy/>

Thank you!



Participate in **OA2020** **Accelerate**
the transition

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<https://oa2020.org>