The power of free

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The Power of Free:

In search of democratic academic publishing strategies

by

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The Power of Free:

In search of democratic academic publishing strategies

Jan Blommaert

In this polemical essay, I intend to engage with the current system of academic publishing, in light of the debates about possible Open Access publishing strategies. I write my remarks from my own position in the field: as an Arts scholar (a linguistic anthropologist to be precise), tenured at a European University (Tilburg University, to be precise), with a degree of seniority in my field and with a reasonably full publishing track record. It is my view that the debate on Open Access, which currently opposed in a rather random way a "Gold" versus a "Green" strategy, should consider some fundamental issues related to the economic dimension of academic publishing, of the motives and rationale for publishing as an academic, and on available alternatives. Lacking such reflections, the debate risks becoming a reiteration of stereotypes and "inevitabilities" and may lead not to improvement but to a "race to the bottom".

The structure of the field of publishing

Academic journals are good because of the material published in them. This material has been developed by researchers in their capacities of authors, editors and reviewers. The quality, reputation and impact of journals are therefore not achievements of the journals and their publishers: they are overwhelmingly achieved by the academic community that furnishes top-quality materials to them. After all, it's not journals that are cited but articles. And note that the production chain of articles is equally almost entirely done by unpaid academic actors: from the author who provides the "raw material", over the editors and reviewers who improve them, to the authors again who do the proofreading (and increasingly, the marketing). As to the publishers: their actual labor investment and impact on the production process are shrinking rapidly, as electronic submission and processing gateways, outsourced copy-editing and marketing are becoming industry standards. The real effort of publishers, and their only important contribution in the production chain, is marketing and distribution: publishers bring the journals to the readership. But the point here is that the "value" of journals, largely residing in their reputation and impact figures, is almost exclusively ensured by the unpaid raw-to-finished materials they publish. This value – it is easy to overlook that – therefore also *depends* on the availability of unpaid raw-to-finished materials and on the willingness of those who produce them to pass them on to publishers for publication. Journals would cease to exist when authors decide not to submit their material to them anymore under the conditions offered to them.

Such is the baseline economic relationship in which academics and publishers find themselves. Journal publishers depend on authors, editors and reviewers, and in a free market of ideas and knowledge circulation, this fundamental relationship should at all times prevail. The fact is, however, that government regulations have maneuvered publishers into a monopoly position: formal and informal criteria for academic funding and career development almost everywhere include intensive

publishing in a restricted list of journals, overwhelmingly commercially published. This top-down criterion has created a monopoly for publishers, and thus reversed the baseline economic relationship between authors and publishers, turning it into a relationship of unilateral dependence – the field has become heteronomic, to use Bourdieu's terms. Academics are now *forced* to publish in a limited set of outlets, and their unpaid materials now also remain unrewarded: journals are sure of an almost unlimited supply of cheap materials produced by a labor force that has no bargaining position whatsoever.

This monopoly position has made academic publishing an extraordinarily lucrative business. To give one example: Reed Elsevier STM reported a 39% profit margin in 2013 – an astronomical margin trumping that of the large majority of industries worldwide. This bonanza explains the tremendous tendency towards concentration in the academic publishing market, as well as the rapid proliferation of new journals in many fields of science. Journals, it seems, are no-risk ventures driven by an extraordinary return on investment and with no countervailing forces in the market. Pricing policies, consequently, are exorbitant: downloading a PDF of an individual article can cost 30-50 Euro apiece, a price that often equals that of an expensive book.

This is where Open Access enters the scene. Open Access publishing has *in itself* now become an additional criterion for academic publishing, as governments as well as funding bodies increasingly argue that publicly funded science should be accessible to all. When the Open Access requirement met the monopoly structure of the academic publishing industry, one of the most absurd phenomena occurred: authors having to *pay* journals to publish their own article in an Open Access formula. Whoever wants to see his/her paper made available freely in an Open Access platform by Elsevier, Wiley, Kluwer has to pay the equivalent of about 200-300 downloads – fees rising into the thousands of Euros per article.

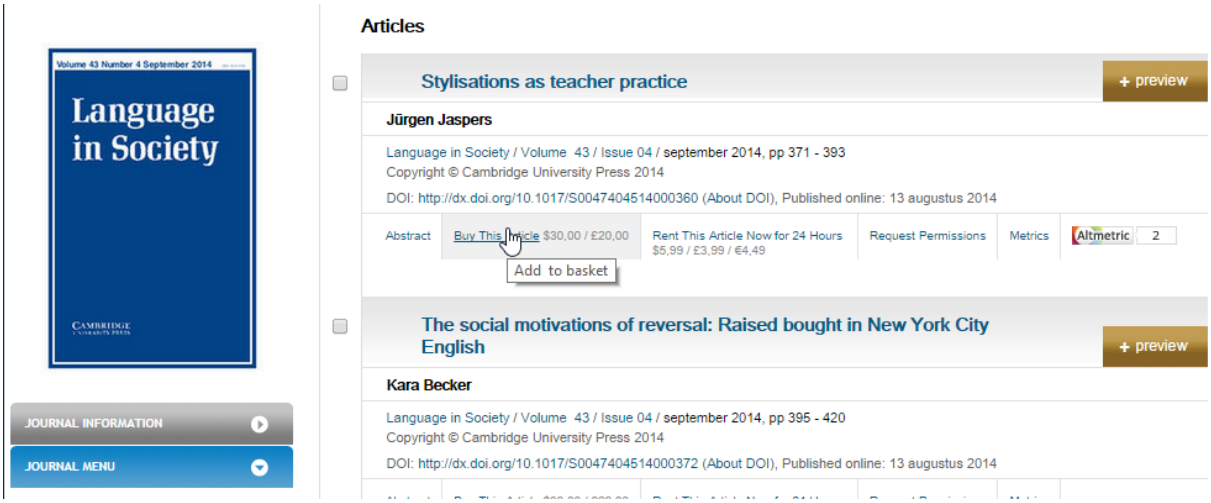

Figure 1: Non-Open Access download offer, Language in Society (Cambridge University Press)

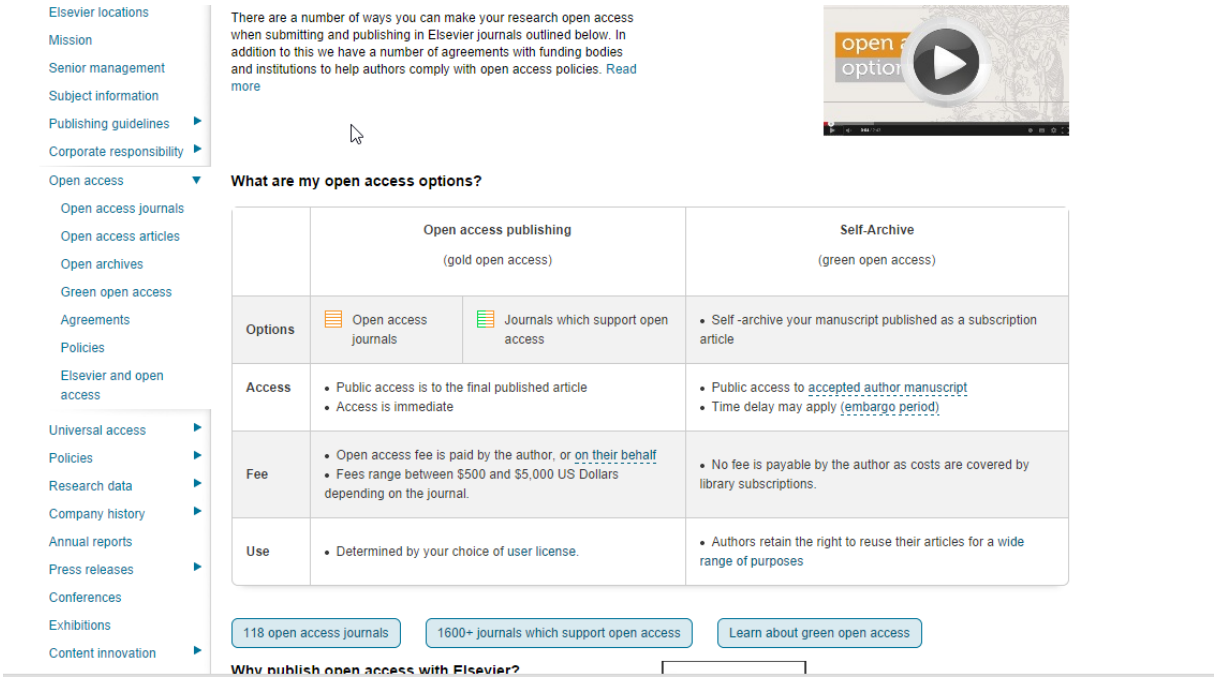

Figure 2: Open Access Options, Elsevier

So authors are facing a choice of sorts: either they publish under "normal" conditions, which means that their article will cost up to 50 Euros per individual download by an interested reader, or they go for Open Access and foot a bill running into the thousands of Euros per article. Recall – it was mentioned earlier – that this choice is increasingly made by governments and funding bodies: authors simply *have* to go for the expensive Open Access strategy (aptly called "Gold Open Access") if they want to have their work recognized and rewarded by those who fund their efforts. For the point is worth underscoring: academics *have no choice* in this series of transactions. The Open Access requirement is effectively *enforced* along with that earlier requirement of publishing in a restricted list of commercially published journals, through the accounting and evaluation culture that determines academics' career trajectories. Together, both forces lead to one single outcome: no choice whatsoever for academics – unless they consider some of the points to be discussed further.

This is probably one of the most extreme forms of legally sanctioned labor exploitation imaginable. Authors invest sometimes hundreds or thousands of hours in the creation of an intellectual product that is written up in an article; this article is offered free of charge to publishers, who package it, so to speak, into a marketable commodity. The marketing of this commodity, however, now has to be *paid for* by those who already offered the raw-to-finished materials that make up the commodity. Or to put it differently: in order to get our articles published we have to sign contracts in which publishers appropriate the copyrights to our works, usually without restrictions and qualifications; if we wish to have our intellectual products to be actually and effectively distributed and read, we have to pay *copyright fees for our own material.* We have to buy back that which we were unconditionally demanded to hand over free of charge to publishers. And while our copyrights had no value whatsoever in the first stage of production – they were handed over without compensation when we offered our article for publication – these same copyrights suddenly become extraordinarily expensive for those who got nothing in return when they transferred them to the publisher. It is absurdly unfair.

Academics, we can see, have to pay whatever profits can be earned by publishers – here is the no-risk enterprise in its most extreme shape.

It is frankly stunning to see that governments, funding bodies and universities are willing (and even advocate) to enter into such a form of daylight robbery. Imagine a university with 1000 academics, each writing four articles per year, for each of which 4000 Euros need to be paid as Gold Open Access publishing fee: 16 million Euros per year would have to be spent (from precarious budgets) *on having articles marketed* by an industry which, recall, reaps the amazing amounts of profit noted above. This industry is simply *subsidized*, usually (in the EU) through taxpayers' money, and its labor force – academics – find themselves in a situation of extreme exploitation, of forced labor, if you wish. To the extent that the current system of academic publishing is supposed to be "industrial" (many observers qualify it as such), it lacks some fundamental features of a healthy competitive and sustainable industry.

Sustainability issues

It is amazing to see that Gold Open Access is often presented as the most "sustainable" strategy of Open Access publishing. An industrial model based on such radical forms of exploitation can hardly qualify for any level of sustainability, because it introduces a heteronomic actor in the academic field: money. Readers who cannot pay the 30 Euros per download in a non-Open Access model will not read the articles; part of the market, thus, is lost. And authors who cannot afford the thousands of Euros required for Gold Open Access publishing will equally drop out of the market. (Note that junior researchers are the ones most sensitive to the "publish or perish" pressures; it is their budgets and opportunities we should be concerned with in the first place, certainly in an academic labor market which becomes increasingly selective and competitive). Publishers appear happy to operate within a market that has these structural limitations of access; evidently, academics have no interest whatsoever in accepting such limitations. In terms of sustainability, the fact that the present system of money-for-publication imposes a *de facto* discriminatory restriction on who can write and who can read academic texts is a critical issue. Young, aspiring academics in every part of the world ought to have access to channels of publication as producers and consumers, regardless of the level of investment they can bring to this. If money excludes potentially brilliant academics from full participation in the academic world, we're back in the days of the gentleman-scientist.

So: sustainable? A robber economy rather, in which phenomenal profits can be made for a short time, at a price not borne by those who make the profits. The number of candidate-robbers in this highly lucrative business is rising exponentially: not a day passes without receiving emails announcing a new Open Access journal and inviting contributions to it, sometimes accompanied by that most basic of marketplace tactics: offering a discount or a free first ride. Such journals sometimes bear the most ludicrous disciplinary pointers ("Open Journal of Applied Sciences", "Journal of Science and Humanities") and appear to be in it for one reason: money. They promise exactly the things that junior academics desperate to see their papers published need: an ultra-fast turnover of papers in an outlet that claims to operate through the usual peer-review procedures, announces some level of indexing in standard registers of science and other academic databases, possesses an ISSN number and sends PDF offprints – all to be paid for with hard cash.


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Figure 3: Advertisement e-mail "Open Journal of Applied Sciences"

The presence of such maverick journals should warn and alert us: something is very wrong in the field of academic publishing, and Gold Open Access appears to seriously jeopardize quality standards in academic publishing. This, too, can hardly be seen as an index of sustainability. But there is a more fundamental argument.

Let us remember the role of publishers in the production cycle of academic publications. It is actually very restricted: publishers take care of marketing, circulation and distribution. And in order for these services to be Open Access, publishers now ask us to buy back the copyrights which we transmitted to them as the payment for – exactly – marketing, circulation and distribution. There was a time, of course, that publishers owned the exclusive channels for such jobs: printing infrastructure and pre-financing capital sufficient to cover the production and distribution costs of large quantities of books and journals. These times, naturally, have gone, and I shall return in greater detail below to this matter. But the present Gold Open Access model still presupposes this old economy of resources in the fields of printing, marketing, circulation and distribution of academic work. We are supposed to find ourselves, as academics, still in an entirely powerless position vis-à-vis publishers when it comes to publishing and circulating our works. We are supposed not to be aware of the fact that the Web 2.0 has drastically changed this situation, and to accept that none of us would be able to adequately judge the scope of academic publics and the ways to approach them with published work. It is this suggestion that enables the publishers to charge us for the copyrights to our own work as a condition for actually circulating them. And it is the same suggestion that is the engine behind the Gold-rush described earlier, with an avalanche of new and unreliable Open Access journals now competing for our despair to get published.

The fact is – and I shall elaborate that below in some detail – that none of this is true. We do possess adequate instruments and means to challenge the monopoly publishers still claim in that field. In

fact, the monopoly held by publishers nowadays has nothing to do anymore with the production cycle of their products; it is purely an effect, described earlier, of top-down enforcement by academic authorities and funding bodies. For every aspect of the production chain, individual academics possess sufficient and adequate alternatives to the means offered to them by publishers. We can be our own publishers, perhaps more effective ones and surely much cheaper ones than the current commercial publishers – the only thing needed is a change in institutional rules and criteria for "what counts" as publications.

Smart people in the publishing world do realize that such a change might very well be not too far off. We can see it in the rising rates charged for Gold Open Access publishing – a rise not explicable by higher costs of production for publishers and neither by dwindling profit ratios. The former are aggressively pushed down continually, with less and less real and expensive hands on the job; the latter, as we have seen earlier, are actually quite astonishingly handsome. The rising costs charged to authors is best explained as an effect of a behind-the-scene awareness that this market will reach its limits somehow, perhaps soon, and that the current relative market advantage needs to be maximally exploited – grab it while it lasts, a rather classic feature of a robber economy. It is, in short, an expression of the *unsustainable* nature of this system. Those who realize this have good reasons for it, and to these we can now turn.

Alternatives: Three truisms

To recap the points relevant for what follows: I have argued that the actual contribution of publishers in the production chain of academic publications is restricted to marketing, circulation and distribution; in return for these services publishers unilaterally and unconditionally appropriate our copyrights, and if we wish the circulation of our publications to be democratic, we have to buy back the rights to our own work; I added that this mechanism rests on two things: (a) an illusion about publishers' monopoly position in these fields, and (b) institutional pressure on academics to submit to this system of exploitation; even in the face of a heteronomic restriction on the academic market of knowledge and ideas (the money factor excluding both authors and readers), and even in the face of potentially astronomical costs for academic institutions – money that could be much better spent.

In what follows, I shall elaborate the first of these factors: the illusion of a monopoly for commercial publishers in the field of marketing, circulation and distribution of academic publications. I hope that the arguments elaborating that first point might be helpful in changing the second factor. And I will have to state three truisms.

> *First truism.* The primary motive for academics when they write is *to be read*, to enter into a dialogue with specific groups of peers, to get feedback on the ideas and results they have communicated, and to do this *democratically* from within an idealistic understanding of the "market of knowledge": science – as the Nobel Prize Committee reiterates each year – is to benefit mankind, all of it and always. Academics usually have no interest in making publishers rich (and evidently, they themselves become rich only in extremely exceptional cases by publishing hard). The connection between publishing and career development is experienced by huge (and growing) numbers of academics, very many of them among the younger and more junior ranks of faculty, as a suffocating pressure turning research into punishment

rather than joy. And as a potential road towards irrelevance – publish many small scraps of material because you won't have the time to work on something substantial – and corruption. Here speaks someone who works in the same institution as did the infamous Diederik Stapel, one of recent history's most renowned cases of pervasive academic fraud. Stapel was a prolific academic author, publishing papers in Science and many other top journals and having, consequently, a stellar career until the exposure of his fraud in 2011. In his defense, Stapel emphasized the compelling nature of "doing" publications not for academic reasons but for career ones. So the primary motive for publishing needs to be kept in mind: we publish because of our shared need for dialogue and debate on research issues and outcomes, which is, and remains, the most potent form of quality control in science. And we resent any obstacle to such dialogue and debate.

Second truism. The Web 2.0 has turned all of us into low-cost knowledge producers and publishers. The minimal logistical ICT provisions present in many thousands of universities around the world enable every individual academic to do his/her own Open Access publishing – minimal wordprocessing, editing and web publishing skills are required for this, and such skills are now widely distributed among academics (few of us still have access to departmental typists anyway). And overhead costs are minimal – in fact, they largely overlap with the overhead costs of *research itself*, and there is no economic or logistic reason why the stage of publishing ought to be separated from the other stages of research and development. There is even less of an academic reason for this: doing one's own publishing does not prejudge academic quality, while it enables *speed* and *targeting* in the circulation of research products. We can publish our products much faster, and direct them far more precisely to target audiences, than commercial publishers. This brings us to the third truism.

Third truism. Academics know their world, its structure, scope and modes of operation. They know their peers, they know the authoritative figures in their fields and they can distinguish between what is new, interesting and uninteresting in their domain of expertise. And they have a pretty accurate idea of the target audiences for their research output as well. Most of us, for instance, would understand that the "Open Journal of Applied Sciences", apart from other questionable features, targets an audiences much to diffuse to be an effective forum of debate. Most of us, consequently, would avoid such outlets, go for much more specific ones, and "pitch" our publications towards the specific sub-audiences we intend to engage in a dialogue with. Academic markets, if they are not defined commercially, are small and democratic "niche" markets interested in "boutique" products and defined by elevated levels of expertise and affinity with topics, approaches and styles of work. Numbers for such audiences can vary significantly, from a handful of dozen to several thousands of scholars – but *all of them matter*, and no audience is *a priori* restricted by criteria other than intellectual ones. Whoever is interested can get in – that is the democratic aspect of academic markets. We should not forget that when we read academic papers, we read them because we are interested in or looking for *specific* forms of information, not generic ones; and that when we enter into an academic dialogue, we do this with *specific* colleagues, not "the world of applied sciences" or any other communicative fiction (which can of course be a commercial reality). This means that, if we publish ourselves, we would be perfectly capable ourselves to engage highly competent reviewers of work and also capable of directing our publications to the audiences *that matter*. In fact, no one would be better qualified to make such marketing,

circulation and distribution decisions competently and effectively than an experienced scholar deeply involved in an academic field of expertise.

Those three truisms should just be kept in mind for they condition much of what I shall say in what follows. The upshot of these truisms is that academics are perfectly equipped to control the *entire* production cycle of their publications. It seems to me quite evident that any sustainable and healthy academic publishing strategy should take them as givens; denying or dismissing their relevance is done at one's own peril. Note that the three truisms, and especially the second one, often lead to categorizations of "Green Open Access": Open Access publishing done locally, outside the commercial publishers' systems, with products stored in local repositories. Green Open Access is currently described as "less sustainable" than Gold Open Access. The reasons for that inferiority are rarely given and even less rarely offered for critical examination, and the first and third truism certainly conceal strong arguments in favor of a *superior* and more sustainable model of academic publishing. There is very little value and achievement in publishing papers that remain unread; such a waste, actually, defines unsustainability. Greater autonomy for academics in publishing, combined with a removal of the heteronomic barriers restricting access to publishing and reading in the present system, are better candidates as recipes for sustainability.

Alternatives: resources

The revolution brought by Web 2.0 to the academic trade has generated several resources that, certainly when taken together, offer individual academics as well as collectives of academics effective and powerful alternatives to the Gold Open Access strategy. I will not say anything new here: the literature on these topics is rapidly expanding. I shall briefly review some extraordinarily useful, easily accessible and user-friendly tools and resources.

Copyrights

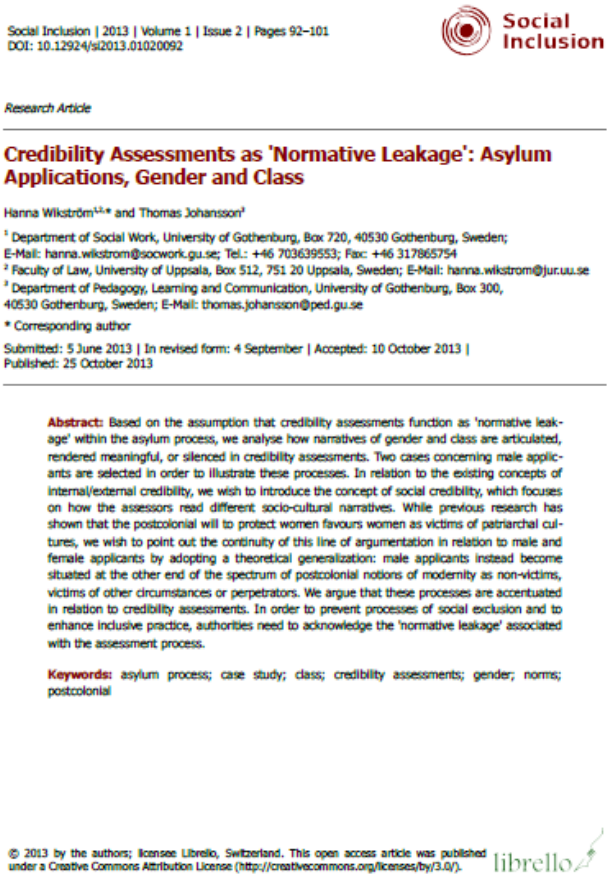
No fiction author would ever sign the kinds of copyright agreements we are forced to sign as a precondition for publication of our work with commercial publishers. We usually hand over *all* rights, in any form and worldwide, to publishers. These publishers, in effect, often include a unilateral right *not to publish* work transferred to them – they thus own an effective censorship right on work developed by academics, with very little in the way of appeal possibilities for the author. Increasingly, they also impose a moratorium of re-use of published material in the author's subsequent work (as when an article later becomes a chapter in a book), imposing, for instance, a two-year ban on such forms of re-use, and thus directly intervening in the planning and rhythm of academics' scientific development. Whenever we sign such contracts, we sign an absurdity. The consequences of this absurdity are already known: it is because work published by a commercial publisher is no longer our property, that publishers can charge authors copyright fees for the circulation of their work in Gold Open Access models.

Copyrights protect us from piracy, from the unlawful appropriation of our work by others. The copyright contracts we now sign turn *authors* into potential pirates (even prime suspects of piracy) of *their own* work: another aspect of the absurd system described above. Something is very wrong here, too.

Figure 4: Creative Commons

For several years, *Creative Commons* has been offering an alternative. Creative Commons is a nonprofit organization dedicated to the free and open circulation of knowledge and information, and it has developed several types of legally binding licenses that (a) establish and make legally enforceable the authorship and ownership of creative products, while (b) establishing clear conditions under which the products can be shared freely with others. Concretely: when one has written a text ready for circulation, a simple visit to the Creative Commons website enables one to acquire a type of license for that text, stating, for instance, that work can be shared if the author and original source are identified, if the shared part remains intact, and if the sharing is done outside of commercial channels. No money needs to change hands (including no fees for acquiring the license), while the authors of the text enjoy exactly the same legal protection as with any other form of copyright formula.

Several academic journals have started using Creative Commons as their copyrighting and licensing tool. Authors remain the owners of their work and cannot, consequently, incur fines for "piracy" of what they themselves thought out and developed. These journals, needless to say, do circulate well and articles from such journals do get read and cited.



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Social Inclusion

Research Article

Credibility Assessments as 'Normative Leakage': Asylum Applications, Gender and Class

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Abstract: Based on the assumption that credibility assessments function as 'normative leakage' within the asylum process, we analyse how narratives of gender and class are articulated, rendered meaningful, or silenced in credibility assessments. Two cases concerning male applicants are selected in order to illustrate these processes. In relation to the existing concepts of internal/external credibility, we wish to introduce the concept of social credibility, which focuses on how the assessors read different socio-cultural narratives. While previous research has shown that the postcolonial will to protect women favours women as victims of patriarchal cultures, we wish to point out the continuity of this line of argumentation in relation to male and female applicants by adopting a theoretical generalization: male applicants instead become situated at the other end of the spectrum of postcolonial notions of modernity as non-victims, victims of other circumstances or perpetrators. We argue that these processes are accentuated in relation to credibility assessments. In order to prevent processes of social exclusion and to enhance inclusive practice, authorities need to acknowledge the 'normative leakage' associated with the assessment process.

Keywords: asylum process; case study; class; credibility assessments; gender; norms; postcolonial

Figure 5: Journal Social Inclusion using Creative Commons licenses.

There is, thus, a sustainable alternative for the absurd copyright arrangements currently offered to academics by commercial publishers. It does not rob them of their rights to use, circulate and distribute their own writings; it does not force potential readers to spend the price of a good book on downloading a PDF of an article, and it does not impose a massive cost on authors who wish to see their work published and on their institutional authorities who fund the research.

Modes of circulation

Another set of readily available resources has to do with new modes of circulation. The traditional journal (and book) is increasingly complemented by what is now called *Public Learning Platforms*: online platforms on which various formats of academic communication can be offered, ranging from short announcements and squibs to full-blown papers, data sets and case files. Such platforms offer speed of publication – a few clicks is what it takes to get work published – and an entirely new scope of audiences, since such platforms are, as a rule, open and accessible to anyone who enters the internet. And platforms can vary in organization from a relatively straightforward blog to sophisticated multimedial, interactive and layered platforms.

Figure 6: Public Learning Platform Medium

Universities across the world increasingly encourage their staff to explore and exploit the possibilities and the innovative potential for science communication offered by such Public Learning Platforms. For junior researchers, the versatility of such platforms offers a low threshold to enter the world of publishing. They often find a very responsive and active readership there offering intense stages of critical discussion on the published work – a stark contrast to the deep silence often following publication in a listed journal.

Apart from Public learning Platforms, *online journals* also provide important innovative potential. Rather than the classic "volume-issue" formats, including the "special issue" one, journals such as *Semiotic Review* have adopted a "rolling" strategy, in which articles can be published when they have been approved, and in which editors (or invited editors) can group published papers into thematic sets replacing the old-school "special issues", often after a specific thematic call for papers which remains open for several months. The organizational format here is utterly flexible and, again, offers the increasingly important speed of publication: no backlogs of approved but unpublished papers are accumulated, and publication time is no longer determined by the schedule of the printer.

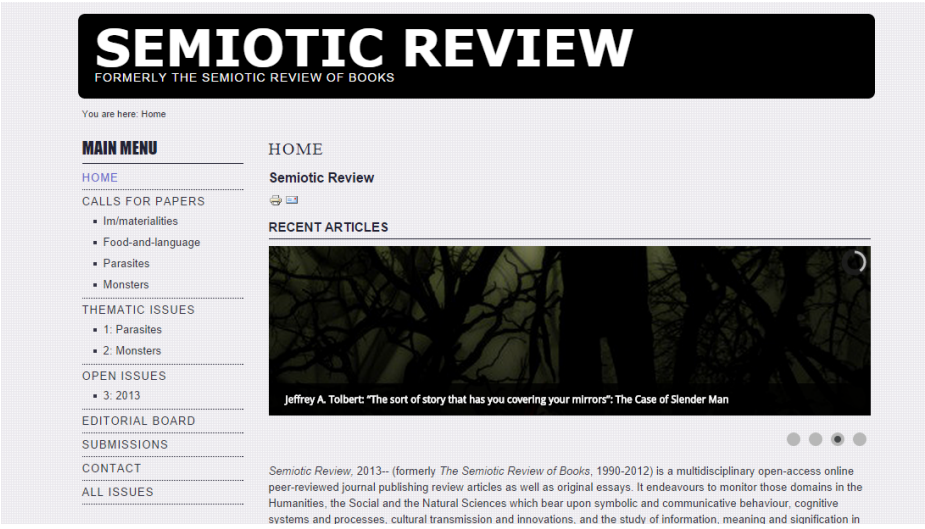

Figure 7: Semiotic Review

Speaking for myself, for two years now we edit an online working papers series under Creative Commons licenses, called *Tilburg Papers in Culture Studies,* accessible to all wishing to consult and download the papers. Papers come online less than a week after being received by the editors and get hundreds of views and downloads within weeks after publication. This format now attracts very senior academics as well as very junior ones, from affluent as well as poorly resourced universities, and reaches the specifically targeted audiences to which the authors "pitch" their work.

A third and important new resource – an offspring of the social media revolution – are the *academic sharing platforms* such as Academia.edu and ResearchGate. Such sharing tools are, in effect, perhaps the most "ecological" tool available at present: researchers can build their own communities (remember the *specific* and *targeted* audiences mentioned earlier), following or being followed by scholars around the world sharing similar interests and domains of expertise. There is a high level of interaction going on, and the number of paper downloads sometimes far exceeds the couple of hundreds anticipated by commercial publishers when they calculate their Gold Open Access publishing fees.

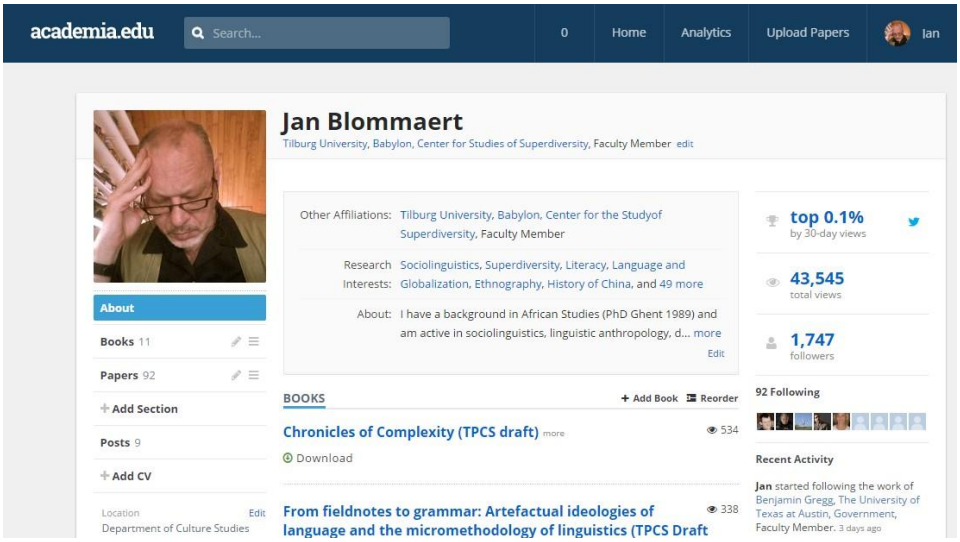

Figure 8: The author's Academia.edu profile

What these new modes of circulation have in common is:

1. Autonomy: authors are very much in charge of what circulates and how it circulates;
2. Speed of publication: no queues or backlogs;
3. Precision in audience targeting, both wide in scope and specific in orientation – it is a peer-to-peer system;
4. Intensity: circulation is intense with high numbers of readers and with high levels of debate and interaction;
5. Low thresholds: authorship and readership are free and undiscriminating;
6. Low cost: basic available office infrastructure and skills suffice.

We see a system of circulation here which is ecological, in the sense that it is entirely determined by the needs and resources within the academic community, and sustainable. No heavy capital investments are required, younger generations of scholars can enter the world of publishing without major obstacles, and the system is driven by the bottom-line motives of academic authors: to see

their work being read, discussed, and taken up by peers. That the intensity of circulation may result in good citation index figures is a happy side-effect.

A personal publishing strategy

These resources are there, they are user-friendly and free of charge. They offer academics the effective possibility to break the unilateral dependence on commercial publishers; they offer their academic and governmental authorities the possibility to save many millions of Gold Open Acces subsidies, and to invest these funds in – why not? – improving research conditions and creating sustainable academic jobs.

It would be foolish to dismiss these resources as marginal. They are not: they have rapidly acquired a crucial place in the economies of knowledge and information in which academics have their place. Creative Commons, for instance, now licenses many millions of knowledge products (200 million pictures on Tumblr alone), and the flexibility and dynamism of online journals and series attracts large number of academics for the reasons given earlier. It would be even more foolish to argue that academics should stay out of this brave new world of social-media-like platforms and modes of circulation: they have everything to win by engaging fully with it. The most precious prize to be won there is their autonomy as intellectuals – an old principle defining academics as a profession and something that has been the prime mover in scientific development.

The Web 2.0 environment, in actual fact, now invites, encourages and enables all of us to develop our own personal publishing strategies. Such strategies will, at least for the foreseeable future, continue to include “traditional” publishing – articles in journals, the occasional book – but can now be *complemented* by a layered and more versatile range of publishing modes, starting with, for instance, a Facebook page, leading to a blog where the “friends” ready to go beyond the “like” button can find longer arguments, and thence to one’s ResearchGate profile where the few truly committed ones can find scientific materials underpinning the “smaller” statements. Here, the academic has the opportunity to once and for all escape from the Ivory Tower of science-for-the-sake-of-science, and communicate with another set of specifically targeted audiences than the ones drawn from the academic community.

The future of publishing, thus, lies in the reconstruction of an autonomous academic who publishes bot “formally” – the traditional modes – and increasingly “informally” using the resources described here. Open Access would be a default mode here; the color of this Open Access is of little relevance, as long as the system *improves* the academic system of production in a sustainable and democratic way. We can all start doing this ourselves.