



Is Open Science Good for Research and Researchers?

EDITORIAL

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The Open Science movement has in recent years swept through academic organisations from UNESCO (UNESCO 2022) to the EU (European Commission 2022) and national research funders as well as universities. In principle, the aim to make all research accessible and free to anyone sounds like a compelling and entirely tenable initiative. According to UNESCO (2022) ‘open science has the potential of making the scientific process more transparent, inclusive and democratic’, who could be against transparency, inclusivity and democracy?

Certainly, fighting academic publishing conglomerates that make ridiculous profits out of the free labour of researchers and peer reviewers without allowing researchers access to their own research output can be full-heartedly supported (on the academic publishing world, see Näre & Bendixsen 2017). However, if research publishing is fully open, with a fully open license that does not prevent reuse for commercial purposes, new business opportunities for so-called predator publishing houses emerge. There are a number of international presses that republish research that has been open access published elsewhere and therefore profit from the good intentions of the open science movement.

Moreover, as we discussed in the editorial of 2019 (Näre & Bendixsen 2019), implementing open access publishing without recognition of the role that well-established journals play in scholars’ career building can, at worst, add to scholars’ precarity. Especially so if research assessment and evaluation continue to reward individuals on how often and in which journals academics publish – with journal quality most often measured in terms of impact factor – instead of the quality of their research. Indeed, the San Francisco Declaration on Research Assessment – DORA (2022; <https://sfedora.org/>) – is an important step that seeks to move research assessment away from quantitative indicators, such as impact factors or citation counts.

However, most problematic, at least for qualitative researchers, is that the open science initiative includes not only open availability of research outputs, but requires researchers to open their data and methods as well as their educational materials

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to the wider public. Again, making educational materials open and available creates opportunities for for-profit publishing houses to use these materials in textbooks without remunerating either the scholars or their employers. We can imagine that some educational institutions might be interested in reusing teaching materials for free.

The demand for open data is particularly problematic for social scientists who are studying politically sensitive topics, such as migration, and/or structurally marginalised and oppressed individuals, such as asylum seekers and refugees. The demand to make data available to the wider public and/or academic community is in stark contrast with the ethical requirement to protect research participants from harm. Consider, for instance, if a researcher studying irregular migration would be required to open their data. Even in anonymised form, such data are likely to contain information that can directly harm the research participants, if accessed by immigration officials, border guards or the police. Indirectly, such sensitive data can be used to incite the wider public's antipathies and even hatred against migrants.

Finally, the initiative for open data raises questions about the ownership of data. In Finland, many universities have relied on the spirit of the open science movement especially when revising their legal agreements regarding data ownership. Recently, the University of Helsinki proposed a change in data ownership regulations that would allow the University and third parties to access the data collected by researchers employed at the University. Such a proposition threatens ethnographic and qualitative research that is based on a trusting personal relationship between the researcher and the research participant. If a researcher cannot promise the research participant full anonymity and protection against harm, ethnographic and qualitative research will not be possible in the future. This is already a problem in Sweden, where the Public Access to Information and Secrecy Act, not Open Science Principles, determine that all the research conducted at Swedish public universities are public property and data must be shared with those who request it. Recently, three researchers at the University of Gothenburg were sentenced to pay fines and conditional caution for refusing to comply with the Act.

This year brings again major changes to our editorial team. Synnøve Bendixsen, who has been working as an Editor-in-Chief since 2013, is leaving us. I would like to thank Synnøve for being an amazing colleague at the journal. She has worked incredibly hard in developing the journal, putting her intellect and insight into working with the authors, reviewers and the manuscripts. It has been a true honour to work with her. Luckily, Synnøve will be replaced by excellent scholars. Dalia Abdelhady from Lund University and Nahikari Irastorza from Malmö University have already started working as new Editors-in-Chief. I look forward to working with them both.

A peer-reviewed journal cannot operate without referee work. The pandemic continues to affect journal processes in that many academics are struggling and do not have the time to dedicate to refereeing. Hence, we are extremely grateful to the following people who despite these difficult times accepted our request to read and comment on the work of their colleagues in 2021: Beint Magnus Aamodt Bentsen, Berit Aasen, Edward Alessi, Sharam Alghasi, Dorte Jagetic Andersen, Merja Anis, Kudrat-E-Khuda Babu, Vanessa Barker, Disa Bergnehr, Tuva Beyer Broch, Katia Bianchini, Mariya Stoyanova Bikova, Karin Borevi, Kathy Burrell, Martina Cvajner, Inge Dahlstedt, Solvig Ekblad, Olav Elgvin, Anne Lise Ellingsæter, Henrik Emilsson, Ada I. Engebriksen, Heikki Ervasti, Gunn Elin Fedreheim, Eerika Finell, Katja Franko, Dirk Gebhardt, Thomas Geisen, Sandra Gentin, Stacy Gillis, Gunthorunn Gudmundsdottir, Egle Gusciute, Hanne Haaland, Kjell Hansen, Daniel Hedlund, Elli Heikkilä, Timothy

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COMPETING INTERESTS

The author confirms that she is the editor-in-chief of *Nordic Journal of Migration Research*.

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