Doing Openness Otherwise: Democratization and OA Publishing in HSS

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Abstract: Open access (OA) publishing has often been framed through democratization narratives that shape how openness is understood in the humanities and social sciences (HSS). This article examines these narratives and critiques how they are bound up with discourses that equate openness with technological, legal, or financial access to research outputs. In doing so, they abstract openness from the epistemic, social, and affective conditions under which scholarly knowledge is produced, evaluated, and experienced. In their mainstream, policy- and funder-driven forms, these discourses—and the technocratic model of openness they promote—have become entangled with prestige regimes that privilege measurable outputs, reward efficiency, and marginalize forms of scholarly labor that resist quantification. As OA publishing becomes increasingly embedded within performance-driven research cultures, HSS scholars often experience it less as an ethical or intellectual commitment than as an administrative obligation. Even those critical of this evolution frequently lack the time, resources, or institutional support to pursue alternatives. In response, the article foregrounds OA practices emerging from feminist, decolonial, and post-hegemonic traditions as democratic interventions into the very conditions of scholarly work. Through analysis of three publishing initiatives—*Ecological Rewriting: Situated Engagements with The Chernobyl Herbarium* (2023), the "Open Science Manifesto" (2017), and "editing otherwise" (2024)—it proposes that OA publishing can become a terrain of democratization through situated, collective experimentation with how knowledge is recognized, shared, and lived. Here, openness is not a technical fix or compliance measure but a practical insistence that scholarship can be done differently.

Keywords: critical open access, democratization of knowledge, experimental publishing cultures, knowledge equity & diversity, doing scholarship differently, affective dimensions of academic work, situated openness, critiques of metric regimes, processual publishing, interventionist publishing praxis

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Introduction

This article examines how democratization narratives within open access (OA) publishing have shaped the ways openness is conceptualized and enacted in the humanities and social sciences (HSS). It does so by tracing these discourses across institutional and policy contexts, geographies, disciplines, and scholarly traditions, combining close readings of advocacy texts, policy frameworks, and scholarly contributions with an analysis of three contemporary experimental OA initiatives.

Focusing on early advocacy texts (such as the Budapest Open Access Initiative [2002]), the work of prominent OA proponents such as Jean-Claude Guédon and John Willinsky, and the implementation of OA through policy frameworks such as Plan S and national funder mandates, the article shows how democratization is frequently equated with the broad dissemination of research outputs. These narratives are grounded in liberal-humanist ideals such as the value of individual reason, informed judgment, and civic responsibility—presuming that once financial, legal, and technical barriers are removed, equitable participation will follow. In doing so, they overlook the social, epistemic, and affective conditions under which scholarship is produced, evaluated, and experienced—and how these conditions can reproduce hierarchies of privilege and exclusion within scholarly communication.

As OA publishing increasingly becomes embedded in policy and funder mandates as well as in prestige-driven evaluation systems dominated by commercial actors, HSS scholars increasingly experience it as a bureaucratic obligation rather than an intellectual or ethical commitment. Even those critical of these dynamics often lack the time, resources, or institutional support to explore alternative models. In this context, the space for reimagining what openness could mean—or what democratization might require—is systematically constrained.

To challenge and intervene into these dominant imaginaries, the article advances the hypothesis that alternative conceptualizations of OA publishing—emerging from intersectional feminist, decolonial, and post-hegemonic traditions—offer critical resources for rethinking both openness and democratization in HSS. These approaches, often developed at the margins of dominant OA discourse and frequently overlooked as central to the OA landscape, understand openness not as a stable ideal or technical solution, but as a situated practice—shaped by and attending to the social, epistemic, and affective conditions under which scholarship is created, shared, and valued.

To ground, specify, and expand these alternative imaginaries, the article turns to three publishing initiatives: *Ecological Rewriting: Situated Engagements with The Chernobyl Herbarium* (Méndez Cota 2023), a collectively authored response to Michael Marder and Anaïs Tondeur's (2016) *The Chernobyl Herbarium*; the "Open Science Manifesto" (OCSDNet 2017), a collectively authored declaration articulating context-specific and

justice-oriented approaches to open science by members of the Open and Collaborative Science in Development Network (OCSDNet); and "editing otherwise," a horizontal editorial practice I developed during my guest editorship of the *Culture Machine* journal's special issue "Publishing After Progress" (Kiesewetter 2024c). These projects explore how openness can be practiced within existing constraints through modest shifts in publishing workflows, collaborative modes of authorship, and editorial practices attuned to lived experience, relational accountability, and epistemic pluralism. This article's original contribution lies in making that commitment legible—by grounding alternative conceptualizations of openness in specific, materially and epistemically situated publishing practices. In doing so, this article reaffirms the role of HSS as active contributors to the shaping of open futures for scholarly communication.

Open Access and Democracy: Between Ideals and Large-Scale Institutionalization

To unpack the entanglements between OA publishing, democracy, and specific visions of openness, this section examines how narratives of democratization have shaped the conceptualization and implementation of mainstream OA publishing—that is, large-scale, policy-driven initiatives and infrastructures aimed at embedding OA within national and international research systems. It begins by discussing early advocacy documents and foundational texts to explore how openness was framed as a normative ideal grounded in liberal-humanist visions of rational inquiry, historical continuity, and the public good. It then examines how these ideals have been institutionalized through funder mandates, policy frameworks, and commercial infrastructures that tie openness to output-oriented forms of prestige and competitive research assessment. Finally, it explores how these conditions are experienced and negotiated by HSS scholars through their publishing practices, professional identities, and emotional investments in their work.

Early OA Ideals and Democratic Aspirations

Historically, democratization narratives around OA publishing have often been phrased in response to the commercial enclosure of scholarly publishing. This evolution had started to intensify with the post–World War II expansion of higher education across Europe and North America. As Aileen Fyfe et al. (2017) explain, this expansion, accelerated by the advent of digital technology in the 1960s and 1970s, included, among other things, an increase in the number and size of universities; a growing fluidity in the academic labor market; and the amplification of research networks. Inherent in

this expansion was the promise of a worldwide market for scientific publications that appealed to existing and new publishers such as Taylor & Francis and Elsevier (now forming part of the RELX Group), who expanded their market presence by launching new journals, publishing primarily in English, promoting journal subscription fees and, later, in the context of OA publishing, Article Processing Charges (APCs).

This section examines how early OA discourses have linked democratization to openness, focusing on how these connections are articulated in relation to ideas about science, scholarship, and public knowledge. It traces the conceptual frameworks through which openness is imagined and considers the normative assumptions embedded in these framings.

A conceptual entanglement of OA publishing with democratization narratives has not least emerged from one of the central phrases of the first version of the 2002 Budapest Open Access Initiative (BOAI). This phrase stated that OA publishing, as a new publishing mode, bears the potential to "share the learning of the rich with the poor and the poor with the rich . . . [a]nd [to] lay the foundation for uniting humanity in a common intellectual conversation and quest for knowledge" (BOAI 2002).[1] This democratic aspiration is closely tied to what has become the most influential definition of OA publishing: the availability of research outputs online "without financial, legal, or technical barriers other than those inseparable from gaining access to the internet itself" (BOAI 2002). Similar definitions appear in the Berlin Declaration on Open Access to Knowledge in the Sciences and Humanities (2003) and the Bethesda Statement on Open Access Publishing (2003). Another conceptual gesture made by the BOAI was to forge a connection between the open sharing of scholarly outputs and a normative vision of scientific communication as historically—and inherently—democratic. This construction of historical continuity is encapsulated in the claim that "an old tradition and a new technology have converged to make possible an unprecedented public good. The old tradition is the willingness of scientists . . . to publish the fruits of their research in scholarly journals without payment, for the sake of inquiry and knowledge. The new technology is the internet" (BOAI 2002).

These three conceptual pillars—openness as access to research outputs, historical continuity, and the democratic ethos of science—are also reinforced in the work of influential OA advocates such as John Willinsky and Jean-Claude Guédon. Willinsky,

1. As various scholars have remarked, Western-led OA declarations—especially the Budapest, Berlin, and Bethesda (BBB) initiatives—have had far greater influence on academic discourse and policy than contemporaneous non-Western frameworks such as the UNESCO-backed Declaration of Science and Use of Scientific Knowledge and Scientific Agenda – Framework for Action (1999), the Santo Domingo Declaration (2002), or the Brazilian Manifesto (2005). These alternative declarations emphasized equity, epistemic sovereignty, and locally grounded participation but were largely sidelined, whereas the BBB initiatives have benefited from English-language dissemination, powerful institutional backing, and substantial funding and infrastructure (Kiesewetter 2023; Mboa Nkoudou 2020; Vessuri 2003).

for example, explicitly echoes the BOAI's language of historical continuity and public good. In his seminal book *The Access Principle*, he stresses that "OA is . . . a response . . . to the conjunction of two conflicting current events in the history of scholarship, one impeding and one accelerating that circulation" (2006, xii). The first event is the increase in journal prices in the course of the commercial consolidation of academic publishing, the second is the advent of the internet and digital publishing. For him, "the open access movement is but the most recent chapter" (5) of increasing access to scholarly outputs. It is carrying forward a long-standing scholarly sharing tradition including via the printing press from the late 15th century, study circles in the 17th century, public libraries and schools, and open universities in the 20th century, for example. Guédon, in a similar vein, emphasizes that the BOAI's (2002) central phrase—"an old tradition and a new technology have converged to make possible an unprecedented public good"—pointed out the age-old foundations and the democratic ethos of science communication "that emerged with the Scientific Revolution [where] thanks to new possibilities offered by print technology, a distributed form of human intelligence had begun to scale up in the seventeenth century" (2017, 2).

This link between scholarship, free sharing, and democracy reflects a long-running liberal-humanist tradition, the belief that individuals have a right to access and acquire knowledge, the capacity to reason, and the responsibility to use informed judgment in democratic life. Scholars such as Christine Borgman (2007) and Robert Merton (1942, 1973) have articulated how these values underpin the norms of scientific communication. According to Borgman, the tradition of sharing work with one's peers through publication has sustained the scholarly communication system for several centuries and is embedded in the scientific process (or "ethos") itself. As she argues, science has benefited from the "open exchange of ideas" and its success depends on "wide and rapid dissemination of new knowledge so that findings can be discarded if they are unreliable or built on if they are confirmed" (2007, 35). As part of his response to the rise of fascist regimes in the early 20th century, particularly the Nazi regime, Merton (1942) similarly argues that the "communality" of scientific knowledge—its status as a collective good—is key to its democratic function. In his view, science flourishes when findings are openly shared, free from ideological, nationalistic, or proprietary constraints, and when opportunities to contribute to knowledge are based solely on competence, not exclusionary structures (Merton 1942, 1973). Moreover, he stresses the responsibility of universities, presses, funders, and scholarly communities to actively defend the ethos of science against external and internal threats—such as political interference, economic exploitation, nationalistic agendas, and ideological distortions of research. This defense requires promoting the unrestricted circulation of knowledge by, among other things, limiting property rights in science to recognition and esteem rather than ownership. As Merton emphasizes, the scientist's claim to their intellectual property is confined to the

demand for acknowledgment, which, "if the institution functions with a modicum of efficiency, is roughly commensurate with the significance of the increments brought to the common fund of knowledge" (1973, 273).

Willinsky extends arguments such as Borgman's and Merton's into the digital age, arguing that ensuring wide access to research outputs is not only a technical possibility but a scholarly obligation, "integral to the scientific ethos" (2006, 41). He stresses that, "a commitment to the value and quality of research carries with it a responsibility to extend the circulation of such work as far as possible and ideally to all who are interested in it and all who might profit by it" (xii). Similarly, Guédon argues that engaging researchers in OA publishing should involve showing them that it enables "a much more productive, constructive and serene way of doing science" (2017, 30). Additionally, as Willinsky argues, extending access to research output beyond academia supports a broader democratic ideal: citizens' right to know, strengthening their participation in democratic decision-making. Yet for Willinsky (2006, 2020), democracy itself is not a fixed condition but an ongoing experiment: OA publishing becomes a way to test what democracy can become when the boundaries of who accesses, interprets, and engages with scholarly outputs are redrawn.

For both Guédon and Willinsky, the commercialization of scholarly publishing—through rising journal prices, paywalls, and profit-driven business models—poses a direct threat to the integrity of scholarly communication as a public, non-commercial good. For them, the transformation of scholarly communication through digital technologies places a renewed ethical demand on researchers, scholarly societies, and publishers to use these tools to "advance and improve access to research and scholarship" (Willinsky 2006, xii). Here, openness is presented as an expression of a long-standing scholarly ethos of selflessness—where broad dissemination is taken as a proxy for inclusion, and sharing is understood as inherently just.

As this section has shown, a part of the early OA discourse has been driven by an optimism that equates the democratization of science with societal and scientific advancement. In this context, openness is conceptualized as a normative ideal—defined as the legally, economically, and technologically unimpeded circulation of and access to scholarly outputs. This view draws on an idealized liberal-humanist ethos of rational inquiry and civic responsibility, where broad access to knowledge is assumed to enable critique, improve understanding, and foster public benefit. Underpinning this is a belief in the self-correcting power of intellectual competition, rooted in a meritocratic imaginary: Once techno-legal and financial barriers are lifted, all participants are presumed equally capable of contributing to and benefiting from scholarly discourse. In this framing, scholarly communication is cast as a neutral arena governed by procedural fairness, where reason, generosity, and shared inquiry naturally prevail. By foregrounding circulation and access, these ideals abstract openness from the situated, procedural,

and affective dimensions of scholarly life—erasing the structural asymmetries, institutional constraints, and emotional intensities that shape how scholarship is actually practiced. Yet it is precisely these dimensions that come into focus when openness is reimagined. The case studies discussed later in this article illustrate how such a shift can be enacted—by attending to the lived realities of scholarly labor that dominant frameworks routinely neglect.

Institutionalizing Openness: Policy and Prestige

Contemporary mainstream OA discourse—reflected in national strategies, funder mandates, and international initiatives such as Plan S—largely extends the liberal-democratic imaginary of early OA advocacy. In these contexts, restricted access to research outputs (such as books, articles, or data) is framed as a barrier to democratic participation and scientific progress. The Swiss National OA Strategy, for instance, claims that "the open dissemination of research findings brings added value to society and academia" (swissuniversities, n.d.). Similarly, the European Commission positions open science as a tool to enhance the societal value and impact of research. Plan S, a policy initiative launched by cOAlition S—a consortium of Europe-based national funders—maintains that "access to scholarly . . . research outputs must be free of charge, and open to all, to support the widest possible dissemination and reuse of results, for the benefit of research and society at large" (Plan S, n.d.).

This ongoing framing of OA publishing as a vehicle for the removal of technological, legal, and financial barriers to research outputs—and as a driver of societal benefit and scientific advancement—has underpinned many policy efforts to promote it at scale. Yet it arguably has also helped lend a patina of legitimacy to the persistent involvement of commercial players in its large-scale implementation by cloaking profit-driven models in the language of public good and democratic access. For example, APCs and platform fees have turned publication into a pay-to-participate system that privileges well-funded institutions and research economies while excluding scholars without access to comparable resources (Eve 2015; Fyfe et al. 2017). At the same time, building on their expanded market position in the course of the postwar growth of higher education, commercial publishers have, since the 1960s, steadily consolidated control over the structures of academic prestige. This includes the centralization of editorial processes, peer review governance, proprietary submission systems, and citation-based metrics (Aspesi and Brand 2020; Chen et al. 2019). These components, as Fyfe et al. (2017) stress, are now marketed as value-added services for efficiently managing and validating scholarship—an offer tailored to neoliberal research institutions operating in competitive, performance-driven environments. Often incentivized by government

funding schemes, research institutions increasingly adopt market-oriented logics, with significant consequences for HSS scholars—especially given that publishing is deeply tied to processes of scholarly subjectivation and academic becoming (Adema 2021; Kiesewetter 2023; Moore 2019). As commercial publishing infrastructures are increasingly entangled with institutional performance regimes, HSS researchers are pressured to align with university mandates aimed at securing international competitiveness and financial sustainability.

Within this entanglement of institutional priorities and commercial publishing agendas, national research assessment schemes such as Italy's Valutazione della Qualità della Ricerca (VQR) and the United Kingdom's Research Excellence Framework (REF 2029) alongside legislation in countries such as Argentina, Mexico, and the United States and funders such as the Swiss National Science Foundation (SNSF), the Wellcome Trust, and the European Commission have begun embedding OA requirements into broader frameworks of research evaluation and funding eligibility. In these contexts, openness is enacted as a static, top-down mandate—a compliance checkbox within a bureaucratic apparatus of performance metrics. As a result, mandated OA becomes directly tied to institutional and individual competitiveness, positioned as a prerequisite for securing funding, increasing visibility, and sustaining advantage within performance-based environments. Scholars in HSS often experience OA publishing as an administrative obligation—deeply entangled with prestige metrics such as citation counts and journal rankings (Bargheer and Verdicchio 2020; Eve and Gray 2020; Pia et al. 2020).

As it shows here, substantial parts of funder- and policy-driven OA discourse perpetuate the liberal-democratic abstraction that shaped early OA advocacy—namely, the idea that equal access to research outputs ensures equal participation in knowledge creation. This abstraction rests on a belief in the self-correcting power of intellectual competition, assuming that once access is granted, scholarly exchange will unfold through merit, fairness, and rational deliberation. Because this conception of openness, as I want to posit here, remains silent on the institutional, material, and epistemic conditions under which research is produced, assessed, and valued, it has been easily absorbed into existing prestige systems. These mechanisms are entangled with competitive research assessment frameworks and governed through infrastructures owned by commercial publishers. As a result, scholarly prestige becomes increasingly aligned with output-oriented standards such as citation counts, journal rankings, and publication volume—forms of distinction that reward efficiency and advantage. In this context, the liberal-democratic ideal of openness as unrestricted circulation obscures deeper inequalities by legitimizing systems that narrow scholarly value. Commercially controlled metrics now define what qualifies as research, who is authorized to produce it, and how contributions are recognized—reinscribing hierarchies under the guise of

access and efficiency. This alignment raises serious concerns about knowledge democracy, as I discuss in the following section.

Scholarly Experience and the Politics of Publishing

In HSS there has been a long-standing skepticism toward quantitative and output-centered indicators of scholarly value, such as citation-based metrics and journal rankings, that are seen as reductive and ill-suited to the interpretive, contextual, and relational research practices typically associated with HSS (Adema 2021; Gill 2016; Taylor and Bayley 2019). Yet these norms—codified, as I illustrated earlier, in national assessment frameworks, embedded in funding logics, and reinforced by a prestige apparatus dominated by commercial publishers—are increasingly entrenched in contemporary performance metrics within HSS (Knöchelmann 2023).

Rather than being solely externally imposed, these norms also foster a form of compulsive self-regulation, in which scholars increasingly organize their knowledge practices around actions that yield measurable outcomes while deprioritizing work that resists quantification (Ball 2012; Churcher and Talbot 2020; McCulloch 2017). For instance, scholars may adjust their writing styles and methodological choices to align with dominant publishing expectations, adopting more linear, empirically bounded, and generalizable formats that are more likely to be accepted by high-ranking journals and rewarded by evaluative systems (Knöchelmann 2023). Other scholars may forgo creative or non-utilitarian intellectual endeavors—such as experimentation for its own sake, informal conversations with colleagues, the dialogic exchanges of peer review, or reflexively engaging in the intricacies of transcultural or transepistemic dialogue—since such activities rarely yield the citation counts or visibility prized by dominant frameworks (Fitzpatrick 2011; Kiesewetter 2023; Magazine and Méndez Cota 2024). And some scholars might repurpose social connections as tools for securing publications, citations, and career advantage. As David Nicholas et al. (2019) point out, this includes informal intellectual exchanges, such as spontaneous conversations at conferences, being leveraged for co-authored publications, reciprocal citations, or professional networking aimed at academic advancement. The ways in which scholars adapt their research agendas, writing styles, and methodological frameworks to meet the measurable, outcome-oriented standards embedded in contemporary evaluation metrics lead to a systematic devaluation of more subjective, speculative, or embodied forms of research, including those rooted in the humanities and non-Western epistemic traditions (Chan et al. 2020; Mboa Nkoudou 2020; McCulloch 2017). In turn, historical inequities are perpetuated, raising critical concerns about epistemic justice—understood, following Miranda Fricker (2007) and Florence Piron et al. (2016), as the

effort to redress injustices in knowledge production by recognizing and transforming the power relations that determine whose knowledge counts, whose voices are heard, and which epistemic traditions are legitimized—alongside broader questions of knowledge equity, diversity, and the democratic role of scholarly publishing.

At the same time, these structural constraints also shape the emotional and psychological experience of academic life. For many HSS scholars, as Rosamund Gill (2016) writes, publishing is both a professional obligation and a site of existential identification, where the desire for meaningful or ethical scholarship often clashes with institutional pressures for metric-driven productivity. These tensions manifest as stress, alienation, and disconnection from one's work. The constant need to prove one's value through publication counts and citation impact intensifies this conflict and compounds existing structural inequities.

Emerging research on the often unspoken experiences of academics within contemporary performance regimes—particularly in the context of intersectional feminist, queer, and disability studies by scholars such as Mimi Khúc (2024) and Ela Przybyło (2025)—shows that marginalized scholars (including early-career researchers; women; faculty of color; queer, neurodiverse, and disabled academics) are disproportionately affected by these compounded pressures. As Khúc and Przybyło show, in addition to heightened emotional strain, they often take on extra, invisible labor under the banners of "collegiality," "community service," or "diversity"—work undervalued in performance metrics and sometimes even penalized as insufficient productivity.

Within contemporary universities, the stress, insecurity, and exhaustion many academics experience are often not treated as legitimate responses to structural dysfunction but as personal failings or signs of unprofessionalism: undesirable, disruptive, and weak, as Milicent Churcher and Debra Talbot (2020) note. These feelings are frequently pathologized, not least by academics themselves. Gill (2016, 48) stresses that scholars often describe their anxiety about academia's "always-on" culture in terms of addiction, and interpret their exhaustion, stress, or inability to "keep up" as failures of discipline or resilience. The framing of emotion as an obstacle to performance efficiency also echoes a long-standing dichotomy in Western thought that associates rationality with objectivity and control and emotion with subjectivity and unpredictability (Ahmed 2004; Anzaldúa 1987; Harding 2002). With little prospect of systemic reform in research and higher education, Churcher and Talbot suggest that "academics who are further and further estranged from the nature of their work may be drawn to look outside the sphere of their employment to recover a sense of joy, purpose, and meaning" (2020, 39).

As OA publishing remains entangled with commercial and exclusionary logics—and as the gap between its emancipatory rhetoric and mainstream enactment widens—some critics argue that OA has failed to deliver on its democratic promises. Instead, they contend, it has been co-opted by market-oriented publishers and

neoliberal academic governance to reinforce existing inequities (Mboa Nkoudou 2020; Kelty 2018; Kember 2024). As Thomas Hervé Mboa Nkoudou writes, "it must regrettably be admitted that open access (OA) has not fulfilled the lofty ambitions set out in the . . . BOAI . . . in 2002. Instead of reducing publication costs, accelerating the circulation of scientific information, ensuring the visibility of scientific publications, and promoting barrier-free access to scientific information, OA now often seems to reinforce and to create new inequalities" (2020, 25). At the same time, immersed in high-stakes assessment culture, many scholars lack the institutional support, time, and energy to engage with non-hegemonic publishing models—especially when dominant systems reward conformity to prestige economies that equate scholarly value with citation counts, journal rankings, and high-volume publishing.

Yet, as I want to stress here, to characterize OA publishing solely through the lens of co-optation, failure, or resignation risks obscuring the diversity of practices, motivations, and political commitments that have long shaped the OA publishing landscape. Rather than abandon OA altogether, I argue for a renewed insistence on its democratic potentials. Building on Willinsky's (2006) framing of democracy as an ongoing experiment, I explore how OA can be re-engaged as a site for affirming the humanities and social sciences' capacity to resist abstraction—through democratizing practices that critically address the epistemic, social, and affective conditions under which knowledge is produced, shared, and valued. Such insistence is especially urgent at a time when democratic institutions are under increasing pressure and the role of the humanities is being systematically contested and devalued. This re-engagement, as I will show, also entails a rethinking of openness itself—beyond a static compliance category tied to policy frameworks or the mere removal of technological, legal, and financial access barriers.

Doing Openness Otherwise

To re-engage the democratic potentials of OA publishing, this section draws on intersections among post-hegemonic, epistemic justice–oriented, decolonial, and intersectional feminist approaches to OA publishing. These approaches have emerged within HSS at various historical moments, across disciplines, and in diverse geopolitical contexts. As I have written elsewhere, often situated at the margins of dominant OA discourse, such initiatives have frequently gone unrecognized as integral to the OA ecosystem (Kiesewetter 2023). Additionally, assessed against the background of dominant expectations of scalability, this "radical wing of the movement" is often dismissed as "niche" (Poynder 2019, 73), "artisanal" and "cottage-sized" (Fisher 2015), or inherently unscalable, failing to meet dominant expectations of market viability and efficiency (Clarke 2015). Yet such framings, as Janneke Adema and Samuel Moore (2021) argue, obscure

the differentiated, situated practices these projects sustain—modes of collaboration and governance that promote care, diversity, and resilience through mutual reliance rather than economies of scale. Rather than subsume these initiatives under a single genealogy or categorize them through narrow frames—such as "niche," "artisanal," or "small scale"—this article seeks to pluralize the possible pasts, presents, and futures of OA publishing.

Across the histories of OA publishing, various advocates have challenged the liberal-democratic and access-oriented narratives outlined earlier. Drawing on anti-hegemonic movements and relational worldviews—such as *buen vivir* in Latin America, Ubuntu in Africa, and the work of theorists such as Arjun Appadurai and Boaventura de Sousa Santos[2]—they argue that mainstream affirmations of knowledge democracy often remain rhetorical, detached from the situated, collective struggles through which social, epistemic, and ontological transformation unfolds (see, for example, Hillyer et al. 2020; Piron et al. 2016; Raju et al. 2020). From this perspective, democratization through OA publishing cannot be reduced to technocratic fixes that equate openness with access or treat the removal of economic, legal, and technical barriers as proxies for democratic change. Instead, it must be reimagined as a plural, contested process grounded in epistemic justice—that is, addressing whose knowledge counts, who gets to speak, and which epistemologies are legitimized. This also requires attending to situated agency and embracing heterogeneity rather than assuming universality or neutrality. Other OA advocates draw on Chantal Mouffe's agonistic pluralism and Étienne Balibar's notion of a "democratization of democracy" to conceptualize OA as a form of continuous democratization, in which disagreement, experimentation, and critical self-reflection are integral to sustaining openness as a living practice—complicating the conflation of democratization with universal access (see, e.g., Adema and Hall 2013; Hall 2008). Some link OA publishing to activist traditions rooted in anti-capitalist, feminist, queer, anti-colonial, anti-racist, and labor movements. These include the Combahee River Collective, Kitchen Table: Women of Color Press, Precarias a la Deriva, and Cita Press, publishing initiatives that approach collaborative publishing as a form of resistance to dominant white, male, Western, and capitalist epistemologies (Adema 2024; Albornoz et al. 2020; Kiesewetter 2020, 2023). In these framings, OA publishing becomes a terrain for multilateral struggle and relational world-making, where academic and activist practices are entwined forms of shared praxis. This resonates with what Judith Fathallah (2026) writes about OA publishing as a site of agential intervention, where scholars enact and transform discourse through material and relational practices.

2. *Buen vivir* (good living), emerging in Latin America, critiques economic growth by emphasizing harmony with self (identity), society (equity), and nature (sustainability) (Hillyer et al. 2020). Ubuntu, a Zulu concept of communal justice, holds that actions are right when they foster harmony and honor relationships (Piron et al. 2016; Raju et al. 2020).

Building on these theoretical interventions, OA publishing has been understood as a doing—"less a project and model to be implemented, and more a process of continuous struggle and critical resistance" (Adema and Hall 2013, 33); "an entry point to intervene into the hegemonic system of traditional scientific knowledge" (Albornoz et al. 2020, 131); "a way to dis-establish the practice of admitting only those who speak our language or who position themselves as we do" (Amiran et al. 1990); or an "undoing scholarship," a sustained effort to deconstruct structures of oppression based on class, gender, and race within everyday academic processes and practices (Kiesewetter 2020, 115). Others have emphasized OA as a means of rejecting the "spirit of competition and individualism" while prioritizing "friendship and cooperation" in editorial processes (Le grenier des savoirs, n.d.). Further conceptualizations present OA as an opportunity to rethink research cultures themselves—not to import Global North methods wholesale, but to enable the emergence of bottom-up critical discourses in response to the top-down corporatization of university cultures (Magazine and Méndez Cota 2024, 12–13).

These perspectives render untenable the conceptual entanglement of openness with a liberal-democratic ideal of inclusion through fostering access to research output, as reflected in the conceptualizations of OA publishing I discuss earlier in this article. Such framings equate the removal of formal barriers with democratic participation while obscuring the structural, procedural, and affective conditions that shape whose knowledge is recognized, shared, and valued. The approaches foregrounded here, instead, draw attention to the problematic constraints of academic knowledge production under metricized evaluation regimes—constraints that compel scholars to prioritize output, legibility, and efficiency and marginalize more speculative, situated, or emotionally engaged modes of inquiry. Refusing these terms, they reimagine scholarly work as a site of democratization—through practices that attend to the actual conditions under which knowledge is produced.

This reorientation of OA publishing also reshapes the very notion of openness on which these practices are based. As Janneke Adema argues, doing OA involves cultivating "forms of openness that do not simply repeat . . . established forms . . . or succumb to the closures" (2018, 22–23) produced by the institutionalization of OA—such as its codification into policy mandates and compliance checklists, as discussed earlier. In this way, as Adema and Gary Hall (2013) note, OA opens space "for reimagining what counts as scholarship and research . . . what an author, a text, and a work actually is." Similarly, Denisse Albornoz et al. (2020) call for a vision of openness grounded in political engagement, community participation, and the collective imagination of "futures radically different from the present." In this spirit, Janneke Adema, Samuel A. Moore, Tobias Steiner, and I—as co-convenors of the Radical Open Access Collective, a network of around seventy not-for-profit presses, journals, and OA projects—have

proposed a shift from "openness" to "social justice activism." This shift moves beyond technocratic definitions to engage directly with the politics of creating diverse, equitable, and supportive publishing conditions, within and beyond the academy (ROAC 2025).

The approaches discussed above treat democracy not as a fixed ideal, but as a situated and ongoing process—shaped by the conditions under which knowledge is created, shared, and valued. Rather than define openness as access to research outputs, they reframe it as a relational practice tied to struggles over epistemic justice, institutional conditions, and scholarly experience. In this way, they shift the focus from openness as a policy goal to openness as a lived, collective practice—emerging from and responsive to the affective, procedural, and institutional realities of academic labor.

Yet, as I elaborated earlier, for many scholars—especially within HSS—the pressures of performance, precarity, and institutional exhaustion render such reimaginings difficult to pursue, no matter how resonant they may be in principle. Hence, the three publishing initiatives discussed in the following section do not offer systemic solutions—but they do create openings. They ground, concretize, and expand this reimagining of openness as situated praxis by illustrating how collective experimentation, relational engagement, and modest shifts in publishing practices can help scholars hold space to act, relate, and imagine otherwise, within and beyond the constraints of existing systems.

The three initiatives I examine are *Ecological Rewriting: Situated Engagements with The Chernobyl Herbarium* (Méndez Cota 2023), a project that reuses open-licensed books through collaborative rewriting; the "Open Science Manifesto" (OCSDNet 2017), a collectively authored declaration that articulates context-sensitive approaches to open science; and "editing otherwise" (Kiesewetter 2024a, 2024b), an experimental editorial praxis that foregrounds scholarly agency, relational accountability, and the emotional dimensions of academic labor in resistance to metric-driven publishing cultures.

Practicing OA Publishing as Democratic Struggle

Building on the arguments developed in the previous section, what does it mean to collaboratively reconfigure the conditions under which scholarly work is created, reviewed, and experienced? And how can such situated efforts complicate dominant conceptualizations of openness in practice?

Ecological Rewriting was developed by Open Humanities Press (OHP) and the Experimental Publishing Group of the Community-led Open Publication Infrastructures for Monographs (COPIM) project, as part of Combinatorial Books: Gathering Flowers, a pilot initiative aimed at stimulating the reuse of OA scholarly books. The pilot led

to the launch of a new series within OHP's Living/Liquid Books. This series is edited by Janneke Adema, Simon Bowie, Gary Hall, and myself. *Ecological Rewriting*—the first title in this series—was published bilingually in Spanish and English on the open source platform PubPub.[3] Contributors from across Mexico, led by Gabriela Méndez Cota, responded collectively to *The Chernobyl Herbarium* (Marder and Tondeur 2016), engaging its ecological, affective, and political resonances from a situated, decolonial perspective (Méndez Cota 2023). The "Open Science Manifesto" (OCSDNet 2017) was collaboratively written by OCSDNet's twelve researcher-practitioner teams based in Africa, Asia, Latin America, and the Caribbean, both within and outside academia. Supported by the networks' coordination team—Leslie Chan and four regionally based research associates—the project used collaborative writing, editing, and publishing as methods for building consensus across diverse communities (Albornoz et al. 2017). "Editing otherwise" was an experimental editorial approach I developed as guest editor of the "Publishing After Progress" issue of *Culture Machine*, an OA journal of culture and theory founded in 1999 by cultural studies scholars Gary Hall and Dave Boothroyd as an "experimental opening toward heterogeneity, an opening which can never be conclusive or contained" (Culture Machine 2000). *Culture Machine*—including its notion of openness as a continual, uncontainable movement toward plurality—is grounded in critical cultural studies approaches to OA publishing, some of which are explored in the previous section. With "editing otherwise," I aimed to bring concerns about knowledge equity and diversity into conversation with the psychosocial and emotional dimensions of academic life under productivity- and metric-driven publishing regimes (Kiesewetter 2024a, 2024b).

The special issue "Publishing After Progress" brought together a diverse group of contributors—academics, activists, and artists from Argentina, Belgium, Mexico, the Netherlands, Switzerland, the United Kingdom, and the United States—working across distinct disciplinary, cultural, and political contexts (Kiesewetter 2024a, 2024b). The open call for submissions, launched in winter 2023, was a deliberate performative act: a first step toward creating situated conditions in which a heterogeneous group could temporarily engage within a shared political domain. This domain was shaped through publishing practices that critically responded to the growing conflict between institutional expectations and contributors' own visions of meaningful engagement amid planetary emergencies, democratic deterioration, and systemic inequities in academic and non-academic publishing. Widely distributed through mailing lists, social media, and personal networks, the call explicitly welcomed submissions in English, Spanish,

3. PubPub is an open source publishing platform developed by Knowledge Futures, a nonprofit spun out of MIT. In July 2024, however, it announced a shift to a fee-based model, raising concerns among related communities about the sustainability of publishing on the platform (Adema et al. 2024).

German, and Italian and sought to include knowledge producers beyond the privileged spaces where the future of academic publishing is typically discussed—such as dominant OA and open science discourses. Working within a similarly heterogeneous constellation, the collaborative writing process behind the "Open Science Manifesto" allowed OCSDNet's members to recognize and navigate their different situated experiences, priorities, and commitments. As Albornoz et al. note, this process "allowed us to redistribute the narrative power in terms of defining the story we would tell as a collective, from the central OCSDNet coordination team to the network members who are implementing the projects on the ground" (2017, 299). Taken together, these examples challenge a core assumption embedded in the historical and contemporary OA frameworks discussed earlier—namely, that open access publishing inherently yields more democratic forms of knowledge production. Instead, they show that democratic scholarly exchange across difference must be actively cultivated rather than emerge from access to research outputs alone. These encounters are made possible through publishing practices that attend to the situated, relational, and often uneven conditions under which knowledge is produced and shared—treating difference not as a barrier to be overcome, but as a generative foundation for reimagining scholarly communication.

To define the scope of their rewriting, the authors of *Ecological Rewriting* used the collaborative open source web annotation tool Hypotheses to annotate the PDF of *The Chernobyl Herbarium* available on OHP's website. They then used the open source markdown editor HedgeDoc to collect their notes using tags to structure their insights and begin developing their response.[4] Each author elaborated a personal mode of engaging with Marder and Tondeur's book, reflecting on questions such as: What of the Chernobyl event resonates today in a place like Mexico? Taking up *The Chernobyl Herbarium*'s meditative, fragmentary form allowed contributors to experiment with more creative and testimonial registers in their own academic writing. As Méndez Cota and her co-authors note, while "modern conventions and styles of writing often require an erasure of subjectivity, singularity, and multiplicity in favor of a clear line of argument expressed through a detached or 'objective' voice," their process "rather than being preplanned as a critical program, materialized gradually through the collaborative process of becoming experimental writers or 'rewriters'" (Magazine and Méndez Cota 2024; Méndez Cota 2023).

4. For *Ecological Rewriting*, we chose open source tools, recognizing that equitable participation in knowledge creation also depends on the governance and accessibility of the technologies in use. Throughout the collaboration, we shared detailed guidance and held optional try-out sessions for the tools in use, acknowledging that open source technologies, despite their participatory promise, can reproduce technological, social, and cultural barriers (e.g., bandwidth issues; interfaces and documentation shaped by English-speaking, developer-centric norms; or expectations of participation grounded in dominant academic cultures and communication styles; Kiesewetter 2023).

Similarly emphasizing relational and evolving authorship, the initial phase of writing the "Manifesto" saw OCSDNet coordination team members invite each of the twelve research teams to analyze their local knowledge ecosystems (Albornoz et al. 2017). The resulting reflections were developed through remote consultations, group calls, workshops, and collaborative editing sessions. The coordination team then synthesized the inputs, followed by plenary feedback rounds in which the seven core principles of open science were refined from each team's situated perspective. This iterative process shaped the manifesto's content, tone, and multilingual translations (French, Spanish, Afrikaans) and led to its dissemination in various formats including infographics, videos, pamphlets, and posters. As these examples show, shifting OA publishing away from frameworks that assimilate difference under universalist and meritocratic logics—logics that, as discussed earlier, presume equal participation once formal barriers to access are removed—requires re-engaging with the epistemic, institutional, and affective conditions under which scholarly work is produced, evaluated, and shared. In this context, openness is tethered to output, scale, and visibility, reinforcing an ideal of scholarly communication as a neutral space governed by fairness and reason. The collaborative publishing practices examined here instead insist that equitable scholarly engagement across difference does not emerge automatically from access to research output alone. It must be actively cultivated through practices that treat heterogeneity not as a challenge to be managed, but as a generative condition for democratic scholarly exchange.

One such practice is peer review, which in HSS repeatedly has been critiqued for reinforcing normative standards under the guise of neutrality and, particularly in its double-blind form, fostering harmful behaviors (Bozalek et al. 2019; Fitzpatrick 2011; Ross-Hellauer 2017). In response, both *Ecological Rewriting* and "editing otherwise" adopted open peer review, foregrounding it as a collaborative, situated process. For *Ecological Rewriting*, each piece was reviewed by a named external reviewer, with feedback exchanged via Hypotheses. To address power asymmetries—many reviewers held senior roles—members of COPIM's Experimental Publishing Group created a code of conduct, developed technical and contextual guidelines, and acted as moderators to ensure horizontal, respectful dialogue. For "Publishing After Progress," I paired academic contributors with two academic reviewers and non-academic contributors with one academic and one non-academic reviewer. With this, I wanted to reflect both the journal's scholarly foundation and its commitment to heterogeneity. Pairings were designed to foster dialogue between contributors whose intellectual terrains resonated but weren't fully aligned, encouraging meaningful exchange. Reviewer guidelines were shared early, and contributors could opt out in favor of traditional double-blind review. I emphasized peer review as an ethical wager rather than as procedural formality, requiring consent-based, good-faith engagement in rethinking the norms of academic evaluation

and value. Reviewers were invited to reconceptualize scholarly value: not as externally imposed by universalist standards or metrics, but as emerging from the specific contexts in which work gains meaning. Authors and reviewers were encouraged to co-design their exchange, choosing feedback formats, languages, and communication tools that suited their needs. This led to rich, multi-channel exchanges (emails, shared online documents, annotated PDFs, and video calls), some of which are documented in *Culture Machine*'s "Interzone" section. Here, peer review was not a final judgment but a dialogic space of encounter, mutual transformation, and ethical co-becoming—where the value and relevance of a scholarly work emerged relationally through the entanglements of texts, people, and contexts (Kiesewetter 2024a, 2024b).

The participatory making of the "Open Science Manifesto" required ongoing adjustments to accommodate contributors' diverse positionalities, languages, and expectations. Engagement varied: for example, some participants were less motivated or lacked the resources to contribute, and the manifesto's relevance differed depending on local priorities and institutional contexts. In response, the coordination team shifted from writing to facilitating, supporting quieter voices through interviews, emails, and group or one-on-one calls (Albornoz et al. 2017). A similar dynamic shaped *Ecological Rewriting*, which required extensive (non-linguistic) translation and negotiation across conceptual, technical, and organizational dimensions. For members of the COPIM Experimental Publishing Group who facilitated the project, this meant accommodating the relational and open-ended nature of the co-authors' contributions; responding to varying levels of technical familiarity; and developing modular, recursive workflows and flexible timelines that aligned with the institutional and personal rhythms of everyone involved. Rather than impose a fixed schedule, the editorial process remained fluid and dialogically shaped. Key stages such as copyediting and peer review occurred when they made the most sense for the authors and the evolving work itself (Adema and Kiesewetter 2022; Bowie et al. 2022).

In "Publishing After Progress," too, editorial timelines were revised multiple times to reflect the social, emotional, and temporal realities of contributors. This flexibility was more than pragmatic—it was a deliberate effort to center the relational and affective conditions of academic labor and to resist the alienation and stress endemic to increasingly competitive environments (Kiesewetter 2024a, 2024b). The project pushed back against norms that treat exhaustion, frustration, or even joy as irrelevant to scholarly value. Instead, "editing otherwise" viewed these emotional dimensions as both inevitable and essential to how scholarship is imagined, made, and shared. Similarly, as Roger Magazine and Gabriela Méndez Cota (2024) emphasize, *Ecological Rewriting* approached OA publishing not as a technical intervention but as a commitment to nurturing—rather than evaluating or devaluing—the social relations and processes that sustain scholarly life.

Across the projects discussed here, the existential dimensions of academic work—relationality, emotion, and the intricacy of experience—were not treated as distractions from scholarship but as central to its practice. In doing so, they enacted an alternative vision of OA publishing: one that challenges dominant performance logics by enabling knowledge-making as a situated, collective, and affective endeavor.

Across all three projects, the labor of facilitation—including mediation, adaptation, and emotional support—placed considerable strain on those coordinating the process as they navigated diverse positionalities, timelines, and institutional pressures (Adema and Kiesewetter 2022; Albornoz et al. 2017; Kiesewetter 2024a, 2024b). These strains are unlikely to disappear, as such work remains structurally undervalued within academic reward systems that privilege quantifiable outputs over process-oriented, emotionally invested, and relational labor (Ahmed 2012; Churcher and Talbot 2020; Gill 2016). Acknowledging and addressing this labor was a core concern in *Ecological Rewriting*, "editing otherwise," and the "Open Science Manifesto": for example, through open project documentation, blogposts, scholarly OA articles, and public workshops. These acts of sharing were not merely reflective or aimed at streamlining publishing workflows. They also sought to enable others to imagine, adapt, and initiate similar practices in their own contexts—within and beyond OA publishing.

In this sense, making the labor of facilitation explicit was also an effort to foster what I have elsewhere called an "agency-sustaining mutual encouragement" among engaged knowledge producers (Kiesewetter 2024a, 2024b). These acts of sharing were not merely reflective exercises or attempts to streamline publishing workflows. They also aimed to enable others to imagine, adapt, and initiate similar practices within their own contexts—both inside and outside of OA publishing. In this sense, foregrounding the labor of facilitation became a way to foster what I have elsewhere called an "agency-sustaining mutual encouragement" among engaged knowledge producers (Kiesewetter 2024a, 2024b). This includes supporting others in cultivating the social, epistemic, and affective conditions under which academic (OA) publishing can function as a space to affirm the role of HSS—and of the university more broadly—as an experimental site of critical intellectual engagement and democratizing practice, beyond metrics of productivity and visibility.

As this section has shown, *Ecological Rewriting*, the "Open Science Manifesto," and "editing otherwise" foreground the procedural and emotional dimensions through which scholarly work is performed, valued, and experienced. For example, they do so by insisting on equity, diversity, and pluralism as existentially necessary for reshaping the conditions under which democratization in scholarly publishing can meaningfully occur; by experimenting with context-sensitive peer review processes that enable reciprocal, situated engagement with value rather than external, normative judgment; by adapting editorial workflows and timelines to participants' realities and needs,

supporting modes of working that resist linear or standardized procedures; and by inviting contributions in multiple languages, genres, and epistemic registers, thereby challenging dominant assumptions about what counts as legible or valuable academic work. These projects resist prevailing logics of academic productivity and performance. Instead, they affirm OA publishing as a space where scholarly work becomes a terrain of democratization—through situated, relational, and ongoing experimentation with the procedural, epistemic, and psychosocial conditions of academic labor. Across these initiatives, as I suggest here, openness (rather than being considered a neutral procedure or policy target) functions as an ongoing, active, and practical insistence that other ways of doing academic work—of being and becoming a scholar—are possible and perhaps already emerging. As generations of intersectional feminist scholars have reminded us, such emergence is not a utopian escape or a guaranteed future, but a commitment to continue within—and despite—the cracks of the current system (Anzaldúa 1987; hooks 1994; Solnit 2016).

Conclusion

This article has examined how democratization narratives within OA publishing have shaped the ways openness is conceptualized and enacted in the humanities and social sciences (HSS). As shown, dominant frameworks—especially those rooted in early advocacy documents such as the Budapest Open Access Initiative (2002) and taken up by influential figures such as Jean-Claude Guédon and John Willinsky—often have framed OA publishing as a continuation of a long-standing scholarly ethos of free sharing, portraying it as a democratic "public good" made possible by the convergence of "an old tradition" and "a new technology" (BOAI 2002; Guédon 2017; Willinsky 2006). Extending this continuity claim, contemporary policy initiatives such as Plan S, the Swiss National Strategy for OA, and the European Commission's Open Science policy promote OA publishing as a vehicle for societal benefit and scientific advancement. In these accounts, openness is conceptualized as unimpeded access to scholarly outputs, grounded in a liberal-humanist ethos of reason and civic responsibility—and a meritocratic belief in procedural fairness. It presumes that once financial and technical barriers are removed, equitable participation naturally follows, thereby abstracting openness from the structural, procedural, and affective conditions that shape how scholarly knowledge is actually created and valued.

As this article has shown, such output-centric definitions of openness have become deeply entangled with market-driven publishing models and performance-based academic governance. National research evaluation frameworks such as the United

Kingdom's Research Excellence Framework (REF) and Italy's Valutazione della Qualità della Ricerca (VQR) embed OA publishing requirements into systems that use citation-based metrics as proxies for scholarly prestige that are shaped by commercial players, whose proprietary platforms, impact metrics, and data analytics tools have become central to how scholarly value is quantified and rewarded. Openness here is reduced to a compliance measure—a checkbox in performance bureaucracy. Under these conditions, HSS scholars often experience OA publishing as a bureaucratic requirement embedded in metrics-driven academic cultures.

Within these evaluation cultures, pressures to meet output targets often lead to the marginalization of speculative, relational, or emotionally engaged forms of inquiry. For example, scholars may abandon dialogic, creative, or transdisciplinary projects that do not align with measurable outcomes, which raises democratic concerns about whose knowledge is recognized as legitimate, whose voices are heard, and which forms of scholarly engagement are valued or excluded. At the same time, the emotional strain produced by performance demands—especially for scholars in precarious or marginalized positions (Gill 2016; Khúc 2024; Kiesewetter 2023)—is frequently pathologized or dismissed. These pressures shape what is published by whom and how scholarship is experienced. Even though HSS scholars have traditionally been critical of output-driven metrics and their distorting effects on scholarly publishing, the institutional pressure to produce, perform, and remain competitive often leaves little time or support to explore alternative modes of conducting and publishing their research.

As OA becomes further entangled with commercial agendas, bureaucratic mandates, and prestige economies, many scholars have grown disillusioned with it as a site of meaningful engagement. This article, however, has insisted on OA's democratic potential, foregrounding alternative approaches rooted in intersectional feminist, decolonial, and post-hegemonic traditions. In their visions of OA publishing, they have understood democratization as an ongoing process shaped by the situated conditions of knowledge creation and sharing. Rather than defining openness as access to research outputs, they have reframed it as a relational practice tied to struggles over epistemic justice, institutional conditions, and scholarly experience. Openness thus shifts from a universalizing promise of access to a praxis of collective engagement—attuned to difference and committed to transforming the uneven conditions of knowledge-making.

Building on these insights, the article turned to three publishing initiatives—*Ecological Rewriting*, the "Open Science Manifesto," and "editing otherwise"—to specify and expand earlier conceptualizations of openness and democracy through attention to the conditions under which scholarly work is created and taken up. Across these projects, democratization is not an abstract goal, but enacted through situated scholarly practices: peer review as dialogic exchange; editorial workflows attuned to contributors' lived

realities; and invitations to publish across multiple genres, languages, and epistemic traditions. These practices reflect an ongoing effort to make scholarly communication more just and equitable. Here, openness operates as a collective insistence: a tenacious, often fragile commitment to holding space for doing scholarship differently, even amid institutional pressure and affective exhaustion. In this sense, openness affirms that other ways of doing academic work—of being and becoming a scholar—are both imaginable and already taking shape.

In this sense, and following Sarah Kember's (2014) call to "open out from OA," openness might be reimagined not as a policy-mandated destination but as a practice of holding space for other ways of doing scholarship (and becoming a scholar) to emerge, however tentatively, incompletely, or precariously. This is not a promise of transformation but a commitment to its possibility. And it is this commitment—enacted through concrete practices of writing, editing, reviewing, and collaborating otherwise—that reaffirms the role of HSS as active contributors to the open futures for scholarly communication.

Open Peer Review Reports

Open peer review reports for this article are available at the following location: https://doi.org/10.17613/ywr3x-qmn83

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