

Technical comment on: Hagner M. Open Access, data capitalism and academic publishing

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The opinion-based review by Michael Hagner is a thought-provoking read, which touches on many issues we are grappling with at the Swiss National Science Foundation (SNSF) [1]. Unfortunately, his article also grossly misrepresents the SNSF's strategy for open access (OA), by describing it as "a coercive measure that robs researchers of the freedom to publish their research where they see fit."

In contrast to Hagner's assertion, SNSF grantees dispose of several options to render their findings openly accessible to the research community and public at large. In addition to publishing in OA journals, i.e. the "gold route" to OA, with article processing fees covered by the SNSF, they may choose the "green route" and make their publications available in a repository or archive. Finally, although not encouraged by the SNSF, authors may also choose to pay to have their article published OA in a traditional subscription journal ("hybrid"). Moreover, the SNSF facilitates the gold OA publication of book chapters and entire books by covering their processing charges. With this policy, the SNSF addresses the publishing needs of its grantees across all disciplines. In other words, unlike other funding agencies, the SNSF's OA 2020 Strategy is flexible and hardly restricts grantees' choice of publication outlet. The strategy is described in detail on our web pages [2].

As Hagner points out, an increasing number of deceptive or predatory "pseudo-journals" and publishers are taking advantage of the OA initiative. These journals and publishers "are murky operations, making money by collecting fees while ... failing to provide services such as peer review and archiving" [3]. We are taking this development very seriously at the SNSF and have alerted the community to the issue and possible solutions, including the Think.Check.Submit campaign, which provides clear guidance to help researchers make informed choices about their publications [4]. Furthermore, we re-analyzed the data from a recent study of 1,907 papers in more than 200 supposed predatory journals [3] and will do the same with the dataset recently assembled by a data journalist [5], in order to identify predatory journal articles based on SNSF-supported research. Our impression so far is that the problem remains limited in scope in Switzerland, as only two (0.1%) of the 1,907 articles published in predatory journals

are likely to have stemmed from SNSF-funded research [3].

We very much agree with Michael Hagner that OA publishing is a complex issue, with different stakeholders pursuing different interests. It is our strong conviction that findings from research funded with tax payer's money are a public good and should be accessible not only to the academic community but to anyone who wishes to use, apply, interpret, or critically review such research. OA is in the science community's interest, by enhancing the academic, economic, and societal impacts of research [6, 7]. Like Mr Hagner, we welcome the efforts by committed scientists and institutions to promote innovative, noncommercial forms of high-quality OA publication.

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