

## Response to Matthias Egger and Angelika Kalt

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I am grateful to Drs. Matthias Egger and Angelika Kalt for their comment [1]. They granted me the opportunity to clarify some of the points I had raised in my paper.

Green OA is a reasonable strategy for journal articles. Many publishers permit the publication of the accepted manuscript version in an institutional depository, and this may prove useful for scientific communication and archiving. That said, it is far from ideal, as it requires that materials be duplicated, thus giving potential rise to error, disregarding editorial changes to submitted manuscripts, and generating unnecessary costs. Moreover, green OA is quite unsuitable for scholars in the humanities, as they are accustomed to making precise references to page numbers. This well-established scholarly procedure, on the other hand, requires the use of the article published in a journal or book. As I lay out in my paper, the policy of the SNF is “more damaging for book publishing than for publishing papers in periodicals”. Indeed, I am convinced that the effect of this policy is devastating for scholars in the humanities. Firstly, it prohibits scholars funded by the SNF to offer their manuscripts to the best publishing houses in the German-speaking world (e.g. Suhrkamp, Fischer, Hanser, C. H. Beck, Klett-Cotta, Meiner, Matthes & Seitz, and others), for the simple reason that these publishers would not accept a book manuscript which has been or will be published via green OA in a depository after 12 months. Certainly, book authors should not be excluded from OA, but they should have the freedom to make the decision on their own. Secondly, the SNF policy supports those global publishers (e.g. Springer, Brill, de Gruyter) whose newly developed business model will sooner or later substitute printed books either by ebooks at high prices or by OA models. It is all too predictable that this business model will lead to new publisher monopolies and suppress small publishing houses. Given that printed books are the gold standard in many branches of the humanities, I fail to see any advantage in fundamentally altering the longstanding practice. It is disheartening that funding institutions like the FWF of Austria or the SNF might enable monopolists to destroy the culture of academic books.

The situation proves different in the STM disciplines in many respects. Nonetheless, it is an indisputable fact that, with its new policy, the SNF is strengthening the position of the largest global publishers. I am delighted to read that Egger and Kalt share my views on noncommercial publishing, but I would wish for the SNF strategy to include sustainable support for noncommercial forms of high-quality

OA publishing. That is not to say that the SNF should take the general lead in this complex matter, but what should prevent it from encouraging and backing the exploration of new forms of academic communication, including platinum OA, which seems to be an effective way to secure the necessary separation between cultural and economic capital?

Apart from these practical issues, I continue to find it disconcerting that policymakers (be they politicians, private or public funding institutions, universities, etc.) feel entitled to prescribe the ways in which researchers communicate. Making OA coercive may prove less detrimental via the option of green OA, but I cannot conceal my suspicion that this may merely constitute a further step in the attempt to gain increasingly more control over research activities. This translates into creeping erosion of academic freedom. I do not stand alone with this suspicion, and the law faculty of the University of Constance has sued the federal state of Baden-Württemberg, as the state intends to make OA coercive for all articles in periodicals published by researchers working in its respective universities. The case will now be brought before the German Constitutional Court in Karlsruhe [2]. That said, why should federal judges have to opine on an issue that is so central to academic freedom? This deplorable escalation would have been prevented if the state and its institutions had been more cautious in regulating academic research. Scientists should not be hindered in publishing OA, and perhaps they should indeed be encouraged to do so, but they certainly must not be forced.

Matthias Egger and Angelika Kalt conclude their statement with the often repeated opinion “*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*”. This grand statement of euphemistic principles is, of course, morally unimpeachable. Nonetheless, there are many different manners of implementing the said principles – some of which may, through good faith, entail severe unintended consequences. Lastly, the legitimate interests of readers, recipients and consumers must be weighed against the legitimate interests of researchers, scholars, or authors. If we do not defend the interests of the latter, anti-scientific and anti-intellectual populists will increasingly succeed in imposing their fundamentalist views, casting scientists as clerks of the public, no different than employees of a private company. Such a

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scenario would deal a blow to academic freedom in a liberal society. I am fully aware that the issue of knowledge (and cultural products in general) as a public good deserves much more careful discussion than I am able to provide in this response, and I address this point more elaborately in my book [3]. Like Matthias Egger and Angelika Kalt, I too am convinced of our need to adapt the system of academic publishing to the technological, economic, and socio-cultural situation in the early twenty-first century. That said, we should avoid throwing out the baby with the bathwater.

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**References**

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- 3 Hagner M. *Zur Sache des Buches*. Göttingen: Wallstein Verlag; 2015. pp 209–215.