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Article:
Rae, A. and Hincks, S. (2018) Open to whom? Open-access publishing and global knowledge networks. Regional Studies, Regional Science, 5 (1). pp. 183-189. ISSN: 2168-1376

https://doi.org/10.1080/21681376.2018.1461492

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Regional Studies, Regional Science

ISSN: (Print) 2168-1376 (Online) Journal homepage: https://rsa.tandfonline.com/loi/rsrs20

Open to whom? Open-access publishing and global knowledge networks

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To cite this article: Alasdair Rae & Stephen Hincks (2018) Open to whom? Open-access publishing and global knowledge networks, Regional Studies, Regional Science, 5:1, 183-189, DOI: 10.1080/21681376.2018.1461492

To link to this article: https://doi.org/10.1080/21681376.2018.1461492

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Published online: 02 Jun 2018.

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REGIONAL STUDIES, REGIONAL SCIENCE
2018, VOL. 5, NO. 1, 183–189
https://doi.org/10.1080/21681376.2018.1461492

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EDITORIAL

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Open to whom? Open-access publishing and global knowledge networks

INTRODUCTION

We are now into the fifth volume of *Regional Studies, Regional Science* (RSRS). At the time of writing, we have published nearly 2000 pages of scholarly content across a range of paper types, by authors throughout the world. Our reach extends far and wide, and our papers have been downloaded more than 200,000 times. We are pleased with this progress and with the continued flow of submissions to the journal. However, as editors, we feel it is also a good time to reflect on our experiences to date and where we sit in relation to open-access publishing in the context of wider global knowledge networks. We also think it is a useful exercise to reflect upon who we might be 'open to' in terms of the topics we cover, the types of papers we publish and where our authors and readers are based, building on some of the observations we made in a previous editorial for this journal (Rae, Hincks, & Stephens, 2017).

The next section considers what we know about the state of open-access publishing to date. In some subjects, such as physics and computer science, open access is hardly new, but for many regional scholars it may feel novel. Or, it may simply be a novelty, something one does to satisfy institutional policies and pad out the CV. We would caution against such a view and point to a fundamental underlying purpose of open access: the democratization of knowledge. Thus, we consider in the third section the question of intellectual echo chambers, and how we are attempting to extend our knowledge networks beyond the Anglo-American realm, too often the 'default' in academic publishing. We do this in an attempt to understand more about who we might be speaking *to*, but also what we are writing *about*.

Open access may not be the silver bullet some people claim but, to invent a metaphor, it might be a golden one if we think carefully about what it is for, who we are speaking to, and what we publish. Therefore, the penultimate section of the paper highlights two contributions that we think highlight the role of RSRS in providing a platform for widening global knowledge networks on regions through the dissemination of 'standard' and 'non-standard' contributions to scholarly debate. The first is a paper by Ann Markusen on the career and contributions of Brazilian regional scholar, policy-maker and polymath Clelio Campolina Diniz, more often known as Campolina in his native Brazil and by those familiar with his work. The second is a new regional graphic by Geoff Boeing, which looks at the important question of daytime urban population densities, with a focus on the San Francisco Bay Area. We want to highlight both papers as a means of encouraging similar contributions from other scholars that help broaden the horizons of knowledge in regional studies and regional science.

WHAT DO WE KNOW ABOUT THE STATE OF OPEN ACCESS?

If one wishes to understand the open-access publishing landscape, a good starting point is the Directory of Open Access Journals (DOAJ), based at Lund University in Sweden. Launched in

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2003, it now lists over 11,000 open-access journals across all subject areas. This single number is surprising to many, since within disciplines it is often the case that people know very few open-access titles.

Yet, it is a fact that the open-access knowledge landscape is vast, and still expanding. It is also quite diverse. For example, Indonesia is the nation with the greatest number of open-access titles, at 1214 or 10.9% of the global total listed on DOAJ. This is followed by Brazil, with 1201 (10.7%), the UK with 1044 (9.3%), Spain with 599 (5.4%) and Egypt with 592 (5.3%). The United States is next on the list with 585 (5.2%) of the global total. Given the power of the United States in global higher education and research, this figure may be considered surprisingly low, yet we also know that the number of titles in itself is not necessarily indicative of publishing volume, reach or impact. We look here instead at the number of papers published – accepting as we do that quantity is not necessarily akin to quality.

A recent paper by Wakeling et al. (2016) examined the state of open-access mega-journals by means of a bibliometric profile, and this perhaps provides a more meaningful analysis of the state of open access globally in relation to volume and reach. Between 2006 and 2014, for example, *PLOS ONE* had published more than 140,000 papers and *Scientific Reports* had published over 18,000 papers from its launch in 2011 until 2014. In 2016, *PLOS ONE* published more than 30,000 papers and in the first quarter of 2017 *Scientific Reports* published 6214 research articles, compared with 5541 articles in *PLOS ONE* (Davis, 2017). These are the two largest open-access journals in the world and they have grown almost exponentially over the past decade.

This growth has not gone unnoticed in the scholarly community at large, yet within some disciplines there is still a relative lack of knowledge about the scale of the phenomenon and a degree of caution in relation to whether open-access publishing is some kind of 'fad' or managerial flight of fancy. This last issue is a key question as far as we are concerned, since the underlying purpose of open access must surely be about removing barriers to knowledge (Suber, 2003). This might also help explain why open-access publishing has generated so much interest in regions where the cost of journal subscriptions and access to traditional dissemination platforms could be an insurmountable hurdle for institutions and individuals.

A number of scholars in recent years have been very helpful in charting the development of open-access publishing over time, since the rise of the internet. Laakso et al. (2011) looked at the development of open access between 1993 and 2009, based on analysis of DOAJ data, which at the time listed 5175 open-access titles, 6000 fewer than today. Their analysis showed that in 1993 there were 247 open-access articles published across 20 journals. By 2000, this had grown to 19,521 articles across 385 journals. By 2009, the final year of their study, this had grown 10-fold to 191,851 papers. As mentioned above, *PLOS ONE* alone had by 2014 published more than 140,000 papers.

The evidence is unequivocal: over the past decade we have seen a rapid rise of open-access publishing, the emergence of mega-journals and increased engagement with open-access publishing at an institutional level. Many universities across the world, and many research funders, now require scholars to publish their work in an open-access format, either in a wholly open-access journal or through the payment of 'gold' open-access fees to an existing, non-open journal. Another alternative is the use of 'green' open access, or self-archiving, where papers are placed in an open-access repository, such as arXiv, or an individual institutional repository (perhaps with an embargo period). Yet despite this growth, adoption and acceptance of open-access publishing within the fields of regional studies and regional science has often been less than enthusiastically pursued.

A critical question in light of this rapid growth is whether the new publishing landscape of open access will simply replicate existing knowledge networks and hierarchies or whether it will truly alter the landscape of scholarly publishing by making it more democratic and inclusive. That is our hope as editors of RSRS, yet we are also well aware of the fact that perceived journal

quality, impact factors, and a whole host of other issues and metrics dictate where people choose to publish and what people read; often much more so than who the audience might be or how they might access knowledge.

This is perhaps understandable, given established institutional structures and historic employment incentives. Yet the real opportunity with open-access publishing is not just access to papers but also access to the *opportunity* to publish in the first place. The relationship between author and audience, in our view, is at the heart of the open-access landscape and here at RSRS we have from the very beginning encouraged submissions from scholars in a wide variety of nations working on regional problems of all kinds, including those at the early stages of their career (e.g., Oliveira, 2015).

Thus, on the one hand, we wish to make a contribution to what gets written as well as what is being read. Crucially, we also have an eye on the *where* element here. Are we simply speaking to existing audiences, in an open-access analogue of existing publishing practices? Or are we speaking to new knowledge networks? The evidence below suggests that RSRS is moving in the right direction, but we are not complacent.

BEYOND ANGLO-AMERICAN KNOWLEDGE NETWORKS: RSRS IN PROFILE

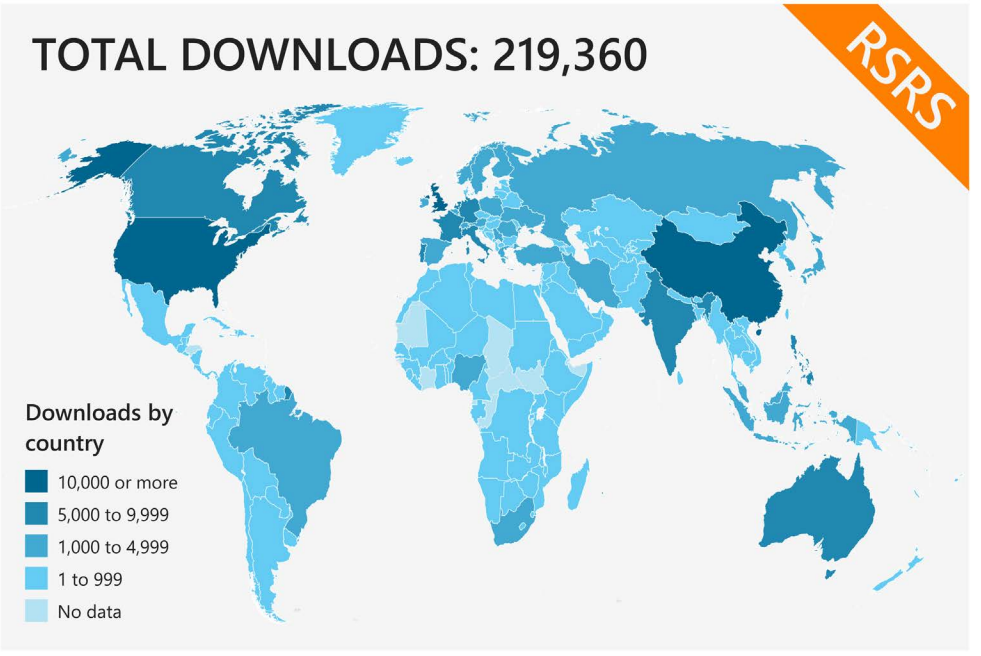
The rise of open-access publishing has run parallel with the global growth of the internet since the early 1990s. It is no coincidence, therefore, that the disciplines most closely involved in its development – such as computer science and physics – were also at the forefront of developments in open access. Within the fields of regional studies and regional science, awareness, adoption and acceptance of open access has been slower, but through RSRS we are attempting to help change the publishing landscape.

One way we see this happening is through a widening corpus of knowledge that draws on existing scholarly networks in the Anglo-American world yet also enables new and different voices to emerge. The Regional Studies Association (RSA) and our publisher, Taylor & Francis, are committed to this idea through RSRS, but also through the recently launched sister journal *Area Development and Policy*, which focuses on the so called 'BRIC' countries of Brazil, Russia, India and China (and beyond).

Through RSRS, we want to increase access to scholarly work in regional studies and regional science, but we also want to create more opportunities for scholars with different stories and different intellectual lineages to publish. Thus, the idea of opportunity and equality of access go hand in hand and, after nearly five years, this is reflected in our published papers. In order to shed more light on this, the editors have taken recent paper download data from the RSRS website (supplied by Taylor & Francis in February 2018) and explored the geographical spread of paper downloads at the country level.

Over the four-year period from the beginning of 2013 to the end of 2017, RSRS papers were downloaded almost 220,000 times. This compares very favourably, and often significantly exceeds, download metrics from more established social science journals covering similar fields. It also reconfirms our initial feeling that if we launched an open-access journal there would be an audience for it (Rae et al., 2017). However, the question of *who* and *where* is one we have not fully explored until now.

Unsurprisingly, given the fact that we publish in English and that global higher education is dominated in research activity by the United States and the UK, these two countries top the list for downloads, at 42,291 and 23,957 respectively. However, this only accounts for just over 30% of the global total, so we know that 70% of download activity comes from other nations. When we look at the rest of the top 10 countries by download, China is in third place (12,463), India fourth (9819), and the Philippines fifth (9214). The rest of the top 10 is comprised of nations



RSRS JANUARY 2018

This map provides an overview of the distribution of paper downloads from RSRS, from when we launched at the start of 2014 up to January 2018.

The top ten countries by total number of downloads are shown in the table to the right.

Country	Downloads
United States	42291
United Kingdom	23957
China	12463
India	9819
Philippines	9214
Germany	9104
France	9087
Netherlands	6947
Australia	6617
Italy	6131

Figure 1. RSRS paper downloads, January 2014 to January 2018.

from the Global North (Figure 1). The BRIC nations account for a total of 13% of global downloads, rising to over 14% if South Africa is included (i.e., the five 'BRICS'). Our content has been downloaded from 195 counties and territories globally, though there is a long tail in the distribution. We have seen a total of 1000 or more downloads from 36 nations, including Iran, Nigeria, Malaysia, Turkey, Singapore and Indonesia.

As stated above, we are also very keen to ensure a diversity of authors, and this is also reflected in our download statistics. Our most downloaded paper remains Kitchin Lauriault, & McArdle, (2015) on urban indicators and real-time dashboards, which now has nearly 24,000 downloads and more than 50 CrossRef citations. It also has an Altmetric Attention Score of 229 at the time of writing, which easily places the paper within the top 5% of all papers globally. Beyond this paper, we are particularly encouraged that our second most-viewed paper is by authors from the Philippines (Figueroa, Samsung, & Jihyun, 2015), which has nearly 13,000 downloads and focuses on disparities in Philippine public school facilities using a spatial analytical approach.

The lists of most read and most cited articles can be found on the RSRS website, and we feel it is a good representation of what we are trying to achieve with respect to the democratization of knowledge and speaking beyond what might be thought of as traditional academic echo chambers. Further examples here include Rasul and Sharma (2014) on the poor economic performance of

two Indian regions, and a paper on tourism in the Algarve written by an (at the time) early career scholar (Cruz, 2014). In relation to this latter point, it is important to emphasize that through our early career editorial team we help mentor scholars from all over the world through our supported writing process. This process is supported financially through the RSA.

In short, we are pleased with progress to date, but we also want to do more. On the one hand, we want to be more proactive in encouraging submissions on topics that look beyond the traditional boundaries of scholarship in regional studies and regional science, and we will continue to publish different kinds of papers. We briefly touch on both these issues below, with reference to contributions from Markusen (2018, in this issue) and Boeing (2018, in this issue).

A NEW TYPE OF RSRS PAPER FOR VOLUME 5 AND BEYOND

In this fifth volume, we debut a new kind of paper in RSRS. Ann Markusen's profile of Clelio Campolina Diniz charts the 50-year career of the Brazilian economist, regionalist and planner. Markusen explores Campolina's early life in rural Minas Gerais as the youngest of seven siblings through to his appointment as a clerical worker and then his job at the regional development bank. Markusen draws upon several days of interviews with Campolina to describe his time as an economist at the Development Bank (Banco de Desenvolvimento de Minas Gerais). After further education in engineering, Campolina served as an engineer for the bank, spent several months in Chile to complete a course on planning and then undertook further study to pursue a master's degree in economics. Following this, in 1976, Campolina took up a post at the world-famous CEDEPLAR institute (Centro de Desenvolvimento e Planejamento Regional) in Belo Horizonte.

This biographical foreground provides some very important context for Campolina's later contributions, which Markusen charts in relation to regional studies (e.g., linking city to region), academic and research leadership, and national policy-making during his time as Minister of Science and Technology during the administrations of presidents Lula (2003–10) and Dilma Roussef (2011–16). His continued commitment to Brazilian and Latin American development into retirement can be seen in his commentary on Herminio Martins from 2015 and his paper on the accelerated metropolitanization and the urban crisis from 2016 (Campolina Diniz & Vieira, 2016). His present work explores the idea that studies on 'development' should be broadened from a narrow focus on economic development to include cultural and environmental values, analysis, and policy prescriptions. We encourage readers to access and engage with Markusen's paper, especially those unfamiliar with the work of Campolina.

Similarly, we encourage readers to take a close look at Geoff Boeing's Regional Graphic and short commentary, which introduces the approach of estimating local daytime population density from census and payroll data using a particularly innovative methodology. This subject has a long lineage in urban planning, including early work by Schmitt (1956), and helps answer the vexed question of how urban density changes over the period of the working day and how many people there are within a given location. The temporal question in regional analysis is often frustrated owing to incomplete or non-existent data, so Boeing's contribution here represents an important advance in both method and metric. The fact that there are 10 census tracts in the San Francisco Bay Area with daytime population densities greater than 50,000 and a peak population density of more than 127,000 in an area with only 1800 residents speaks to the striking nature of population fluctuations in the city, and the value of Boeing's approach.

FINAL WORDS

Reflecting upon the first four volumes of RSRS, and working on the fifth, we as editors are pleased with the progress we have made and of our continued commitment to openness, intellectual

diversity and academic inclusivity. We are also pleased to see the level of engagement with RSRS and the strong download metrics. In terms of what we publish, we remain committed to the long-standing publishing hallmarks of quality, methodological rigor and clear communication. Clarity in writing, we would argue, takes on increased importance in open-access publishing since it has a much wider potential non-specialist audience than many traditional journals.

This commitment to publishing norms and our desire to help change the landscape of academic publishing has led to recognition by independent bodies across the world. In addition to being listed in DOAJ, RSRS was also rated 'A' in the Australian Business Deans Council Journal Quality List, is now indexed by Scopus and also indexed in Clarivate Analytics' Emerging Sources Citation Index. The Emerging Sources Citation Index has been developed by Clarivate Analytics (a Thomson Reuters spin-off company) and is intended to identify emerging high-quality, peer-reviewed publications.

As with previous editorials, we end with a renewed call for papers. But this time we particularly encourage submissions that help widen and extend the types of knowledge we as scholars engage with in regional studies and regional science. In this regard, Markusen's paper provides a great starting point. As editors we are always happy to discuss potential contributions with authors, and we would welcome approaches from authors who seek to continue what Markusen has begun with her profile of Campolina. Likewise, we are keen to encourage scholars with different kinds of contribution to submit to RSRS. Boeing's Regional Graphic demonstrates that advances in knowledge need not be particularly long and that they can have a significant impact. We look forward to your submissions.

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