

The dialectic of open

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Dr. Heather Morrison

Associate Professor, University of Ottawa School of Information Studies

<https://uniweb.uottawa.ca/?lang=en#/members/706>

Principal Investigator, **Sustaining the Knowledge Commons**

Sustainingknowledgecommons.org

Quiz 1. Open – a good thing?

An open mind.

Quiz 2: Open – a good thing?

An open wound.

Quiz 3: Open – a good thing?

An open door.

Quiz 4: Open – a good thing?

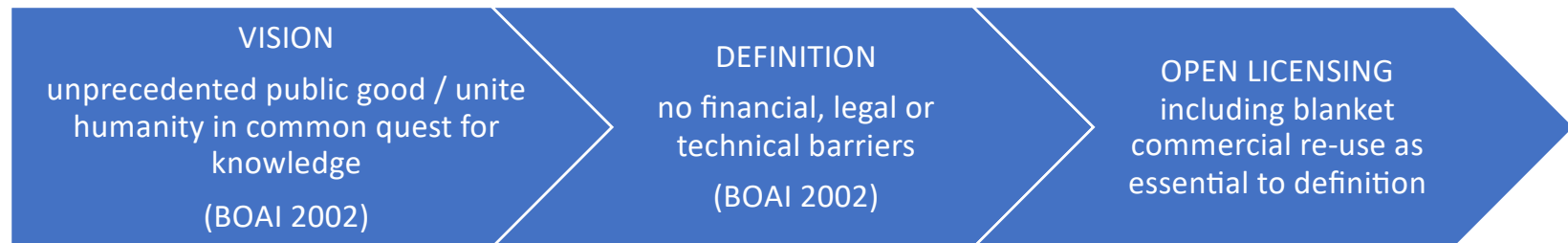
An open door. The person you want to visit is in their office and available!

Quiz 5: Open – a good thing?

An open door to your home – but you left it closed and locked before you left for Congress.

By now the key point should be obvious: “open” per se is neither good nor bad. Whether a particular instance of “open” is a good thing depends on the context and one’s perspective.

Research problem: reification of open access



Reification: 3 examples



EU funders policy

Recommends use of open licenses CC-BY, CC-0 (public domain), CC-SA

“Does not accommodate non-commercial restrictions” <https://www.coalition-s.org/implementation/>

Canada – open government license implementation guidelines

“The information provider grants you a worldwide, royalty-free, perpetual, non-exclusive licence to use the information, **including for commercial purposes...**”

<https://open.canada.ca/en/open-government-licence-implementation-guidelines>

Gates Foundation open access policy

- Publication on open access terms: CC-BY license
- “permit all users of the publication to copy and redistribute the material in any medium or format and transform and build upon the material, including for any purpose (**including commercial**)”
- <https://www.gatesfoundation.org/How-We-Work/General-Information/Open-Access-Policy>

Research questions & method

Questions

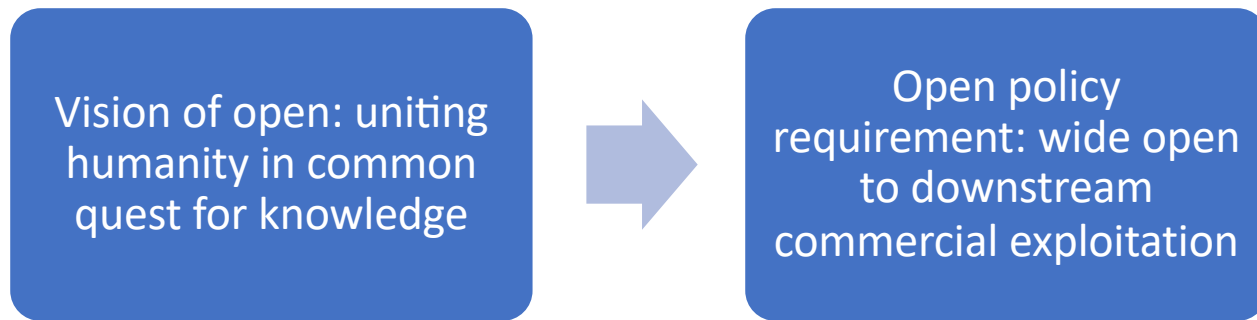
- How might this have happened?
- What are some of the potential social implications? Are they necessarily desirable?
- If not, what can be done?

Method

- Empirical evidence (where available)
- Critical dialectics (Frankfurt School)
 - Form of logic
 - Contradictions
 - Social context as factor
 - Critical: problems & solutions

How might this have happened?

- What happened:



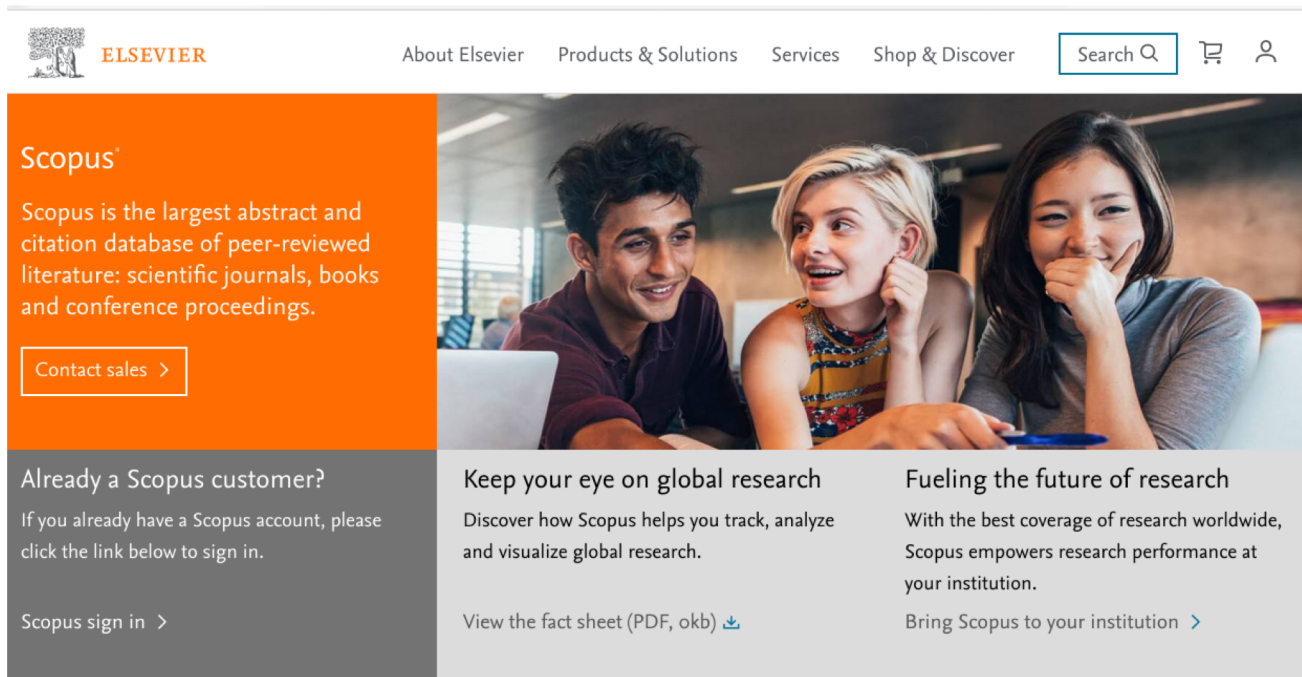
How might this have happened?

- What happened:



Potential social implications: a case study, a scenario, and two perspectives.

Case study CC-BY / CC-0 → for-pay Scopus



The image shows a screenshot of the Elsevier website. The header includes the Elsevier logo, navigation links for 'About Elsevier', 'Products & Solutions', 'Services', and 'Shop & Discover', a search bar, and icons for a shopping cart and user profile. Below the header is a large banner for Scopus. The banner is divided into three main sections: an orange section on the left with the Scopus logo and a description of the database, and two grey sections on the right. The orange section contains the text 'Scopus is the largest abstract and citation database of peer-reviewed literature: scientific journals, books and conference proceedings.' and a 'Contact sales >' button. The first grey section is titled 'Keep your eye on global research' and contains the text 'Discover how Scopus helps you track, analyze and visualize global research.' and a link 'View the fact sheet (PDF, okb)'. The second grey section is titled 'Fueling the future of research' and contains the text 'With the best coverage of research worldwide, Scopus empowers research performance at your institution.' and a link 'Bring Scopus to your institution >'. A large image of three people (two men and one woman) looking at a laptop is positioned behind the text in the grey sections.

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What happens

- Gates Foundation *How we work* “To bring about the kinds of changes that will help people live healthier and more productive lives, we seek to understand the world’s inequities”
<https://www.gatesfoundation.org/How-We-Work>
- CC-BY policy
- Downstream re-use includes for-pay Scopus
- Rich: pay for Scopus. Poor: do without.

Evaluation

- Profits to Elsevier ✓
- Added value for the rich ✓
- Uniting humanity in a common quest for knowledge ✗
- **Development of underdevelopment** (“helping” developing world but policy results in further inequity; neocolonialism) ✓
- Gates Foundation goals?

Open educational resources scenario (or killing the geese that lay the golden eggs)

1. Public institutions' resources → CC-BY / CC-0
2. Private for-profit institutions: free resources in for-pay packages / no obligation to give back!!
3. Private for-profit institutions appear high quality more cost-efficient (minimal investment in pedagogy)
4. In neoliberal societies: governments seek to cut funding to public institutions
5. Private advantage is short-term; loss of investment in pedagogy results in lower quality education and lack of public competition allows privates to raise prices

Government data – 2 perspectives

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First Nations Governance Information Center
<http://fnigc.ca/about-fnigc/vision.html>

Vision: “every First Nation will achieve **data sovereignty** in alignment with its distinct worldview.”

OCAP principles: ownership – control – access - preservation

Discussion (observations)

- Empirical approach and social phenomena: alternate universes (for experiments) for wait for catastrophe (e.g. climate change)
- Policy development in capitalist, neoliberal, neocolonial context without critical thought tends to replicate these social trends
- Critical dialectics (logic focusing on contradictions in social context): logical predictions, assess social impacts, and plan more rationally
- Note that critical dialectics fits contemporary Western society; may not be needed in holistic, rational society (Horkheimer, Adorno)

Recommendations

- Practice critical dialectics in policy development
- Teach critical dialectics
- Abandon policy driving ubiquitous open licensing including for commercial purposes
- Start with broad social questions e.g.: equity, decolonization, address climate change
- Develop context-specific and flexible approaches designed to fit both open and social goals (e.g. support First Nations data sovereignty; degrees of “open” a decision for each Nation)

Thank you

Thank you for listening. Here are my coordinates if you would like to discuss further:

Heather.Morrison@uottawa.ca

<https://uniweb.uottawa.ca/?lang=en#/members/706>

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Selected references

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