



## **AmeliCA vs Plan S: Same target, two different strategies to achieve Open Access.**

BY ARIANNA BECERRIL-GARCÍA

On 4 September 2018, a group of national research funding organizations, with the support of the European Commission and the European Research Council (ERC), announced the launch of COAlition S, an initiative to make full and immediate Open Access (OA) to research publications a reality. It is built around Plan S, which consists of one target and 10 principles (Science Europe, 2019). The target is:

“By 2020 scientific publications that result from research funded by public grants provided by participating national and European research councils and funding bodies, must be published in compliant Open Access Journals or on compliant Open Access Platforms.”

At the same time but in another region of the world AmeliCA was brewing, the extension of REDALYC's philosophy, knowledge and technology to the Global South (Becerril-Garcia & Aguado-Lopez, 2018). AmeliCA is a multi-institutional community-driven initiative supported by UNESCO that arises in response to the international, regional, national and institutional contexts of Open Access, which seeks a collaborative, sustainable, protected and non-commercial solution for Open Knowledge in Latin America and the Global South (AmeliCA, 2018). This institution of Commons was launched at the Conference of CLACSO on November 21, 2018, in the "UNESCO Special Forum: Democratization of academic knowledge. The challenges for open access to knowledge."

Firstly, both initiatives have a common goal: to make Open Access a reality. However, Plan S and AmeliCA imply two very different visions and two conceptualizations on the circulation of scientific knowledge. What is the main difference between them? How is it possible that, arising almost simultaneously and with the same goal, some of their proposed strategies are counterposed?

It is necessary to explain a little bit of the history, culture and regional idiosyncrasies. Latin America has created and maintains a non-commercial structure where the scientific publication belongs to the academic institutions and not to large publishers. Each institution is part of an informal cooperative that has never been explicit; each institution finances journals with its own members, and then that content is available through Open Access to other institutions. Within this ecosystem, the needs of interoperability, visibility and more recently international technical standards, technology and innovation are covered by platforms such as CLACSO, Latindex, Redalyc, among others. This means that everyone gets the benefit of everyone's investment. This kind of informal cooperation has worked even before Open Access obtained its official name from the Budapest Declaration.

Redalyc, for instance, has developed technology for the digital edition of scholarly journals that has made available for free to Latin American high-quality journals. Such is the case of Marcalyc, a web system for XML markup of scientific articles under the standard JATS that allows, as well, to generate the ePUB, HTML and PDF formats along with an intelligent reader and mobile article reader, everything in an automated way. In addition to providing interoperability, visibility, metrics and other services.



Neither fees for authors nor fees for readers have been included in the editorial tradition of the region. Open Access lay normally in institutional budgets, and for the case of public universities this budget comes from national levels. This means that public budgeting has had an important role in the circulation of scientific knowledge.

AmeliCA revolves around strengthening editorial teams within academic institutions through providing technology and knowledge to ensure low costs in scholarly publishing which guarantees Open Access sustainability without APCs. It also includes projects like metrics for the evaluation of the scientific work, OJS communities of users and developers, policies on copyright and use of licenses, XML JATS digital edition tools, among others.

Coincidentally, Plan S and AmeliCA are based on ten principles, which underline the strategies of each one. On the one hand, Plan S focuses on regulating commercial agreements when APCs are involved; and on the other, AmeliCA, focuses on building an infrastructure from and for academic institutions.

# Principles to achieve Open Access

## Europe



Making full and immediate Open Access a reality

Authors retain copyright of their publication with no restrictions. All publications must be published under an open license, preferably the Creative Commons Attribution Licence CC BY. In all cases, the license applied should fulfil the requirements defined by the Berlin Declaration;

The Funders will ensure jointly the establishment of robust criteria and requirements for the services that compliant high quality Open Access journals and Open Access platforms must provide;

In case such high quality Open Access journals or platforms do not yet exist, the Funders will, in a coordinated way, provide incentives to establish and support them when appropriate; support will also be provided for Open Access infrastructures where necessary;

Where applicable, Open Access publication fees are covered by the Funders or universities, not by individual researchers; it is acknowledged that all scientists should be able to publish their work Open Access even if their institutions have limited means;

When Open Access publication fees are applied, their funding is standardised and capped (across Europe);

The Funders will ask universities, research organisations, and libraries to align their policies and strategies, notably to ensure transparency;

The above principles shall apply to all types of scholarly publications, but it is understood that the timeline to achieve Open Access for monographs and books may be longer than 1 January 2020;

The importance of open archives and repositories for hosting research outputs is acknowledged because of their long-term archiving function and their potential for editorial innovation;

The 'hybrid' model of publishing is not compliant with the above principles;

The Funders will monitor compliance and sanction non-compliance.

## Latin America and the Global South



Open Knowledge for  
Latin America and the Global South  
Social Sciences and Humanities

- 1 Scientific knowledge generated by public funds is a common good and access to it is a right.
- 2 Open Access must be legally protected in order to avoid the appropriation of scientific knowledge for profit.
- 3 Open Access has no future or meaning without an evolution of research evaluation systems.
- 4 The consolidation of Open Access must consider the transition to digital scientific communication as an essential axis.
- 5 The economical investment in Open Access must be coherent with its benefit to society just as commercial solutions are paid.
- 6 The adverse economic scenarios that Open Access faces must be overcome with work schemes based on collaboration and sustainability which seek to ensure that scientific publishing continues to be supported and led by the academy.
- 7 It is necessary to recognize the diversity of scientific journals and stop the pressures that seek to homogenize them. On the other hand, journals must support the strengthening of institutional repositories by means of the disappearance of embargo and rights cession policies.
- 8 The social impact of science is the foundation of Open Access' existence.
- 9 It is necessary to respect the different dynamics of generation and circulation of knowledge by area, especially the dynamics of the social sciences and the humanities.
- 10 Open Access must be permanently conceptualized and accordingly defined. The three "B" homogenize the conditions of the development of science and the conditions of the South are different from those of the North.

Becerril-García, A. (January 10, 2019). AmeliCA vs Plan S: Same target, two different strategies to achieve Open Access. [Message on a blog]. Ameli Blog. Retrieved from <http://www.amelica.org/en/index.php/2019/01/10/amelica-vs-plan-s-mismo-objetivo-dos-estrategias-distintas-para-lograr-el-acceso-abierto/>



There are coincidences between the proposals of Plan S and AmeliCA, such as establishing that decisive steps must be taken to achieve Open Access. However it is clear that the Plan S strategy is regulatory and indicative, while AmeliCA proposes actions and projects in response to the issues faced by publishing and dissemination of science.

For example, both initiatives recognize the problems of research assessment systems that provide incorrectly-based incentives for indicators such as the impact Factor, even the two express their commitment to the principles of the San Francisco Declaration on Research Assessment (DORA, 2012). However, AmeliCA has also organized a multidisciplinary working group of experts from various countries to generate metrics more relevant and fair for researchers, science and Open Access.

The Plan S establishes a mandate and in its principle number four establishes that where applicable, Open Access publication fees are covered by the funders or universities, not by individual researchers. The mandates are not new, in Latin America there are more than 50, But, a mandate to guarantee the payment of APC to publishers instead of securing investment for the development of academic infrastructure is not keeping the origin of the problem? Why not taking back control of scientific publication by academic institutions is proposed? It seems that the objective is sought without affecting the current corporate publishing structure that today stifles and opposes the objectives of openness and transparency and links its pricing scheme and Sustainability In the control and manipulation of indicators criticized by all.

Although in regions like Latin America the Open Access has been the natural form of scientific communication. This emerged as a concept in the Global North in response to the high costs of subscriptions to publications from the commercial oligopoly. Decade and a half later we observed that, as it is pointed out by Claudio Aspesi (2014): the finances of Elsevier and Wiley seem to be very healthy. Open Access has turned out to be a great business when subscription costs are transferred to the costs to be published..

However, restrictions on publishing for researchers in countries with scarce economic resources are increasing. Although the Plan S proposes to establish APC levels and equitable waiver policies, the problem remains: the control of science is in the hands of a few and the countries and

their academic institutions do not have any control beyond commercial agreements. Waiver policies or establishing APC levels are mechanisms disruptive to systems which are not operating under commercial or market rules as the one in Latin America.

Large publishers enjoy economies of scale which makes them “too big to fail” companies and can be considered natural monopolies that acquire a market power that impedes competition. They reach an optimum level of production to produce more at lower cost. However, overcrowding in the use of information and communication technologies gives the stage for the breaking of that power.

In order for a monopoly to exist, additionally, the company should exercise control over an indispensable resource to produce the product, besides the circumstance that other similar goods or services are not found on the market to replace the offered by the monopolist. For scientific diffusion, this indispensable resource is “quality legitimization” given by publications based on misused indicators that value the quality of research depending on the journal where it is published.

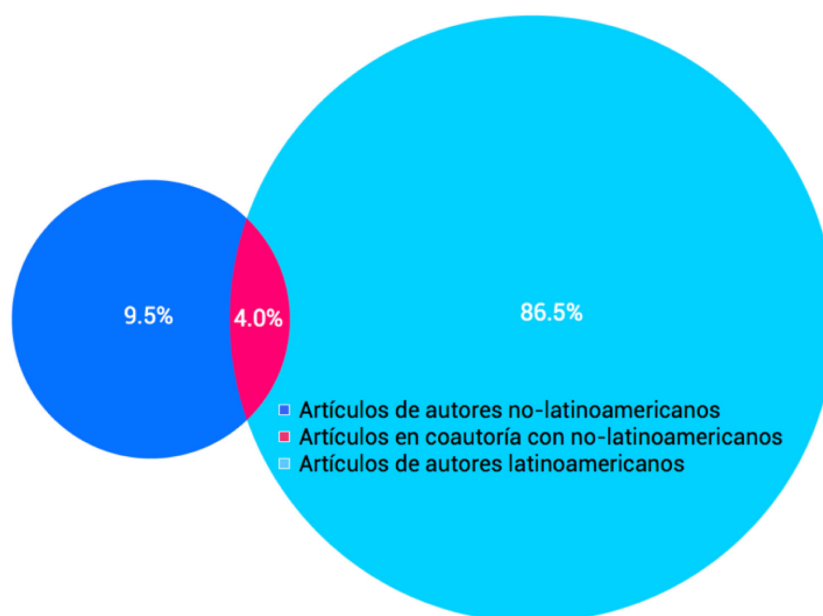
Guédon (2017) already rightly pointed out that scientific research has never been sustainable. Ever since the 17th century, it has been heavily subsidized. The cost of communicating scientific research is a tiny fraction of the cost of research, somewhere between 1% and 2%. So why should we ask that particular phase of the research cycle to obey particular financial rules couched in terms of “sustainability” while the overwhelming part of scientific research has to be constantly subsidized? Part of the answer to the question is the legacy of the print era. The digital world works differently.

In regions such as Latin America, scientific communication is supported by permanent institutional budgets, i.e., subsidized by the institutions that generate science. Then, AmeliCA proposes a cooperative set of actions that take advantage of that ecosystem, technology, knowledge and experience of multiple organizations so that the scientific communication remains an activity in control of the academy and that avoids losing those subsidies by implementing commercial solutions of Open Access such as the APCs-based ones. AmeliCA works on optimization of available economic resources and processes to achieve sustainability.

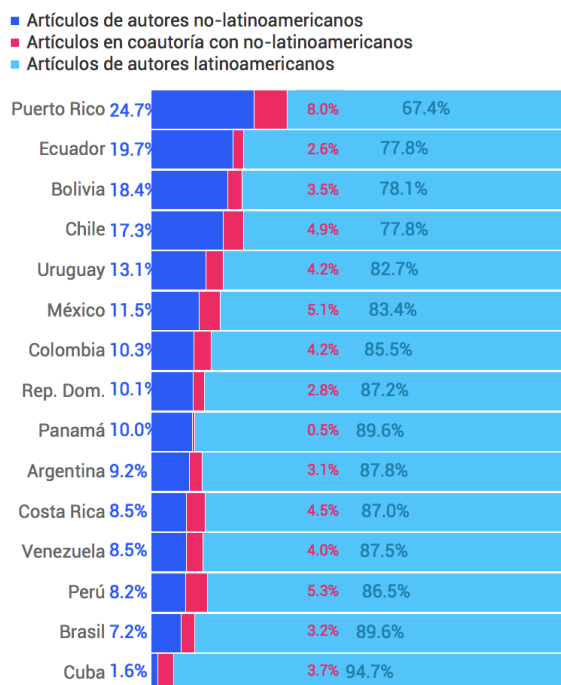
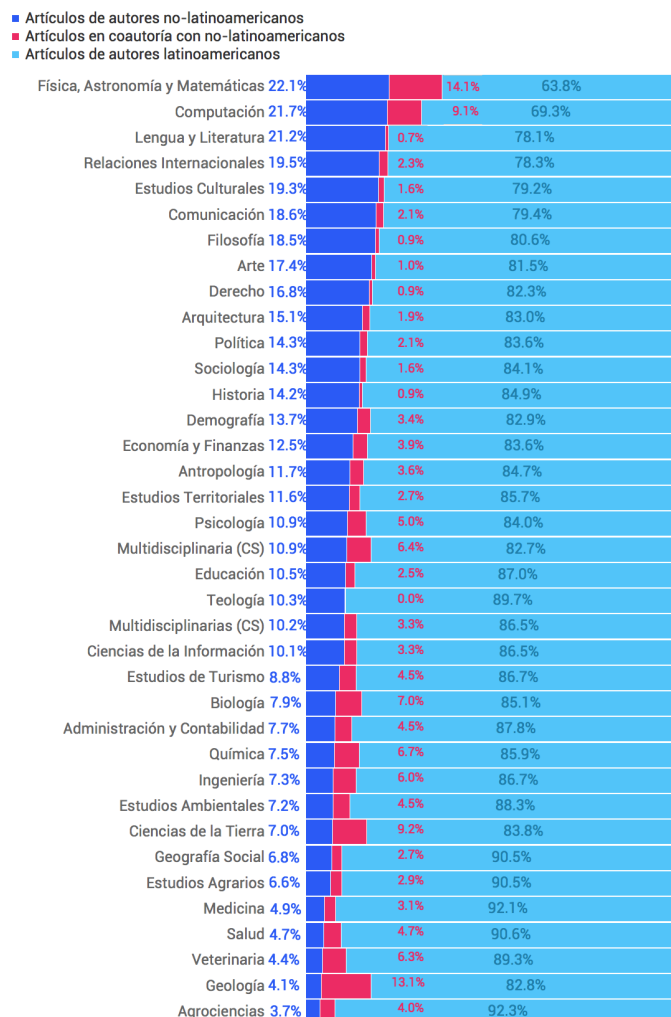
The Eurocentrism should, in the 21st century, recognize that there are other regions that do not necessarily share its vision and that Open

Access concerns everyone, but from the Global South it is seen with concern that a model is being established that again opposes the South and the North, instead of seeking the construction of common platforms that use technologies that prevent, from now on, the possibility of simply being controlled.

The scope of AmeliCA covers the Global South to reinstate, strengthen and guarantee the sustainability of Open Access controlled by the scholarly community. Plan S does not take into account that decisions made in a region may influence systems of scientific communication from other regions and other Open Access approaches. What if a researcher from a Plan S member country wants to publish in a Latin American journal? Should Latin American journals then meet Plan S requirements, which are intended for journals published by commercial publishers? We must not forget that there are contributions from researchers from outside Latin America published in journals from this region. In Redalyc for example, 13.5% of the articles comes from non-Latin American authors and for some countries or areas of knowledge the participation of non-Latin authors represents up to 20%.









Science is a global institution and as such decisions and actions made at some point in the system influences and have consequences in other latitudes. We must seek as humanity a more equitable participation of all nations in the scientific discourse that comprehends local agendas, diversity and contributes in the reduction of gaps.

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