



“Of hopes, villains, and Trojan horses: Open Access academic publishing and its battlefields”

Public defence of the doctoral thesis

Elena Šimukovič
8 September 2023

University of Vienna, Department of Science and Technology Studies
Universitätsstraße 7 (NIG), staircase 2, 6th floor (seminar room)

Good morning everyone, dear committee members, dear Uli, dear friends/colleagues and guests,

It is **my pleasure** to welcome you here today to the public defence of my doctoral thesis.

For those who don't know me well, **my name** is Elena Šimukovič and I've been a doctoral student at this department since 2014.

In my thesis, I examined the expectations related to Open Access to scientific publications, and how they were translated into practice.

This exploration was substantially **enriched with** my practical work experience at different academic libraries.

Open Access and its basic idea(l)s

“An **old tradition** and a **new technology** have converged to make possible an unprecedented public good. The old tradition is the willingness of scientists and scholars to publish the fruits of their research in scholarly journals without payment, for the sake of inquiry and knowledge. The new technology is the internet. The **public good** they make possible is the world-wide electronic distribution of the peer-reviewed journal literature and completely free and unrestricted access to it by all scientists, scholars, teachers, students, and other curious minds.

Removing access barriers to this literature will accelerate research, enrich education, share the learning of the rich with the poor and the poor with the rich, make this literature as useful as it can be, and lay the foundation for uniting humanity in a common intellectual conversation and quest for knowledge. <...>

While we endorse the two strategies just outlined [i.e. self-archiving and new open access journals], we also encourage experimentation with further ways to make *the transition* from the present methods of dissemination to open access. Flexibility, experimentation, and adaptation to local circumstances are the best ways to assure that progress in diverse settings will be rapid, secure, and long-lived.” [emphases added]

Budapest Open Access Initiative (BOAI) declaration, February 2002



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I would like to start with some of my **favourite quotations** from the declaration of the Budapest Open Access Initiative. It was published in February 2002 and is widely seen as **the birth certificate** of the Open Access movement.

Here, an **old tradition** of publishing research results for the sake of inquiry and knowledge was seen as facing a **new internet technology** that was quickly spreading at that time.

By combining both, as signatories of the declaration hoped, it was possible to create **an unprecedented public good**.

That is, a world-wide **electronic distribution of scholarly literature** and completely free and unrestricted access to it.

Open Access and its basic idea(l)s (cont.)

“An old tradition and a new technology have converged to make possible an unprecedented public good. The old tradition is the willingness of scientists and scholars to publish the fruits of their research in scholarly journals without payment, for the sake of inquiry and knowledge. The new technology is the internet. The public good they make possible is the world-wide electronic distribution of the peer-reviewed journal literature and completely free and unrestricted access to it by all scientists, scholars, teachers, students, and other curious minds.

Removing access barriers to this literature will accelerate research, enrich education, share the learning of **the rich with the poor and the poor with the rich**, make this literature as useful as it can be, and lay the foundation for uniting humanity in a common intellectual conversation and quest for knowledge. <...>

While we endorse the two strategies just outlined [i.e. self-archiving and new open access journals], we also encourage experimentation with further ways to make *the transition* from the present methods of dissemination to open access. Flexibility, experimentation, and adaptation to local circumstances are the best ways to assure that progress in diverse settings will be rapid, secure, and long-lived.” [emphases added]

Budapest Open Access Initiative (BOAI) declaration, February 2002



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Removing access barriers such as conventional journal subscription paywalls was associated with very high expectations.

Not only shall it **accelerate research** and make this literature as useful as it can be,

But, even more importantly, stimulate knowledge sharing **between the rich and the poor** and help unite humanity in a common intellectual conversation.

I **will return** to this point at the end of my presentation.

Open Access and its basic idea(l)s (cont.)

“An old tradition and a new technology have converged to make possible an unprecedented public good. The old tradition is the willingness of scientists and scholars to publish the fruits of their research in scholarly journals without payment, for the sake of inquiry and knowledge. The new technology is the internet. The public good they make possible is the world-wide electronic distribution of the peer-reviewed journal literature and completely free and unrestricted access to it by all scientists, scholars, teachers, students, and other curious minds.

Removing access barriers to this literature will accelerate research, enrich education, share the learning of the rich with the poor and the poor with the rich, make this literature as useful as it can be, and lay the foundation for uniting humanity in a common intellectual conversation and quest for knowledge. <...>

While we endorse the two strategies just outlined [i.e. self-archiving and new open access journals], we also encourage experimentation with further ways **to make the transition from the present methods of dissemination to open access**. Flexibility, experimentation, and adaptation to local circumstances are the best ways to assure that progress in diverse settings will be rapid, secure, and long-lived.” [emphases added]

Budapest Open Access Initiative (BOAI) declaration, February 2002



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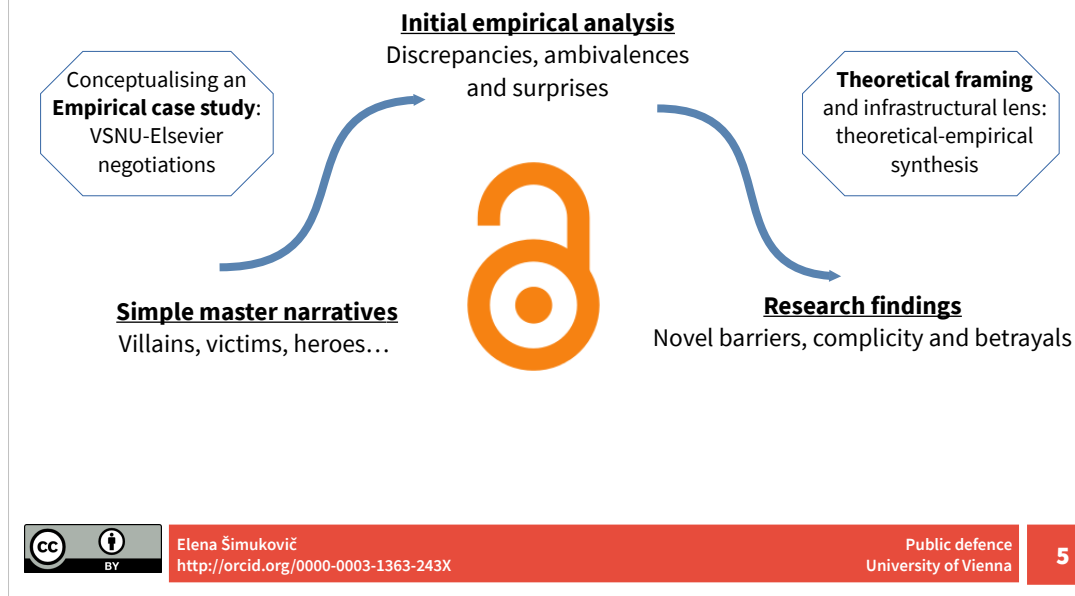
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Lastly, it is important to note that some sort of a **transition** to full Open Access from the present methods of disseminating scholarly literature,

Where most academic journals are **accessible only to** researchers and students at universities and affiliated institutions through their library subscriptions, was inscribed into Open Access definition **since its inception**.

PhD thesis project: A narrative overview



Fascinated by this vision, I set out to explore Open Access and its implementation in my own research.

But because **my pathway** when writing this thesis wasn't straightforward or linear, I have chosen to outline the overall thesis project and its individual parts with the help of a **narrative overview**.

That is, I will **begin by** briefly presenting my research topic and how I approached it, here depicted as an orange **Open Access icon** in the middle,

Then, **in the bottom left corner**, I will move on to the master narratives that I often encountered in Open Access debates. After which, moving **clockwise**, I will sketch out the empirical case study that I have conducted in order to narrow down my focus to one particular dispute.

Then, I will showcase some **initial surprises and discrepancies** that I quickly discovered as well as **the theoretical framing** that I have compiled in order to productively examine them.

Finally, I will **highlight** some of my major research findings.

Open Access as my research topic



- Approaching Open Access and its multiplicity:
 - A proposition that scholarly literature should be **freely available online**, especially if it results from public funding (BOAI, 2002);
 - A set of publishing practices that encompass **different models and labels** (Green, Golden, hybrid, Diamond / Platinum Open Access...);
 - A prominent topic on many science policy agendas and (inter-)national strategies, including Open Access **transition plans**;
 - **Affects everyone** in this room as authors, readers and/or infrastructure providers in academic publishing.

See also chapter 1. Introduction – On choosing Open Access as a research topic and sub-chapter 5.2 Defining Open Access and its many (sub-)species in the thesis.



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Studying Open Access as my research topic some **20 years after the initial Budapest declaration** meant that I had to approach it from multiple angles.

First of all, its general proposition that all scholarly literature shall be freely available online, especially if it results from public funding, is **still valid today**.

At the same time, Open Access has become **a set of publishing practices and models** that are commonly labelled as Green, Golden, hybrid or Diamond Open Access, among others.

Then, for at least a decade, it has also been **a prominent topic** on many science policy agendas nationally and internationally, with a number of Open Access **transition plans** (such as those in NL, AT or NO).

Finally, I see Open Access as something that **affects everyone** in this room, whether knowingly or unknowingly, in your roles as authors, readers or infrastructure providers in academic publishing.

Research questions



➤ Main research question:

How is the shift towards full Open Access re-ordering the academic publishing system?

➤ Sub-questions:

- What expectations towards science and the academic publishing system are expressed through the shift to Open Access?
- How is Open Access imagined by different actors?
- How does the shift to Open Access affect actual publication practices?



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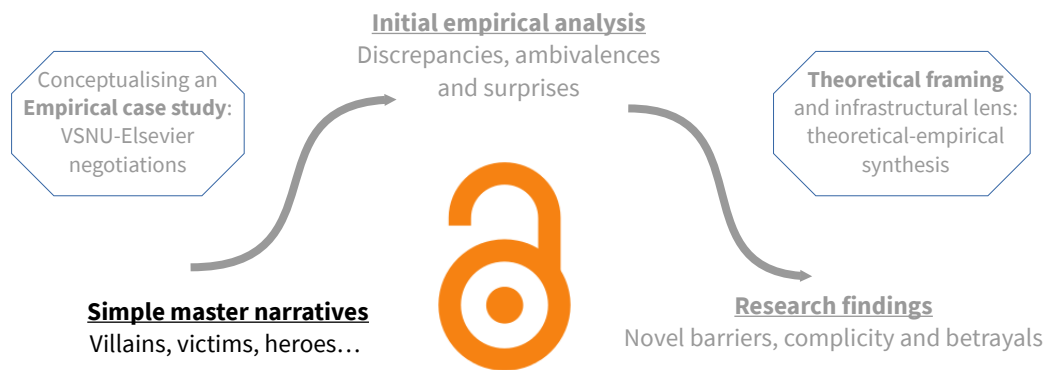
Because of **the massive economic and political dimensions** that the concept of Open Access has acquired by now, I wanted to formulate **research questions** that would help me to capture the far-reaching implications that large-scale Open Access initiatives and other developments can possibly have.

More specifically, in my thesis I asked how **the proposed shift towards full Open Access** is potentially **re-ordering** the whole academic publishing system.

To answer my main research question, I formulated the following **sub-questions**:

- What expectations towards science and the academic publishing system are expressed through the shift to Open Access?
- How is Open Access imagined by different actors?
- and, ultimately, How does the shift to Open Access affect actual publication practices?

PhD thesis project: Simple master narratives



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My points of departure were some simple **master narratives** that I often encountered in the field.

Master narratives in Open Access debates

- Taking inspiration from Ulrike Felt et al. (2007, pp. 74-76), where:
 - “master narratives serve simultaneously as prior framing, starting-point, justification, and mode of sense-making for the policy domain” and
 - “each narrative offers **its own heroes, villains and victims**, and its own lasting moral prescriptions for confronting other crises” (emphasis added).



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Taking inspiration from a report by my thesis supervisor Ulrike Felt and co-authors, I learned about master narratives. The **functionality** of such narratives was said to serve simultaneously as prior framing, starting point, justification and mode of sense-making especially for the policy domain. At the same time, each master narrative typically offered **its own heroes, villains and victims** as well as moral prescriptions for confronting various crises.

Master narratives in Open Access debates (cont.)

- Taking inspiration from Felt et al. (2007, pp. 74-76), where:
 - “master narratives serve simultaneously as prior framing, starting-point, justification, and mode of sense-making for the policy domain” and
 - “each narrative offers its own *heroes*, *villains* and *victims*, and its own lasting moral prescriptions for confronting other crises” (emphasis added).
- When applied to the Open Access case:
 - **Villains** – major commercial publishers who lock up scientific publications behind subscription paywalls,
 - **Victims** – researchers, libraries, and broader society who cannot access the latest publications and/or need to pay exorbitant fees,
 - **Heroes** – science policy-makers or engaged researchers who aim to change the workings of the academic publishing system.

See also sub-chapter 1.2 VSNU-Elsevier negotiations as an exemplary empirical case in the thesis.



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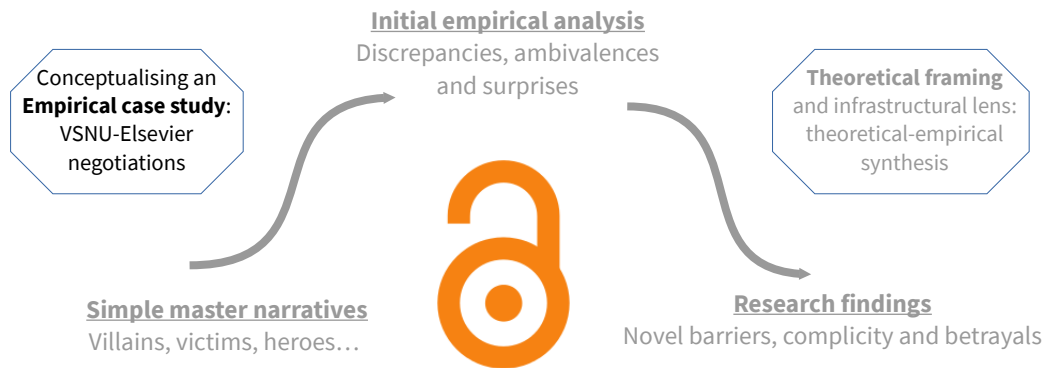
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When these narratives are applied to the case of Open Access, one can immediately recognise such **designated roles**.

To start with, major commercial publishing companies can be seen **as villains** who lock up scientific publications behind paywalls and whose profit margins can reach as high as 40%. Then, researchers, libraries and broader society are commonly portrayed **as victims** of this situation, who cannot access the latest scientific publications or need to pay exorbitantly high fees, even if such research and resulting publications were funded with taxpayer money.

Then, as in the empirical case that I have chosen, there is sometimes **a hero**, such as a thrilling politician who has set out to change the workings of the whole system for the better.

PhD thesis project: Empirical case study



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However, I suspected that **the situation was not that simple**, and therefore I looked for an empirical case to investigate all the particularities in more detail.

Empirical case study: VSNU-Elsevier negotiations



- Ambitious target of Dutch state secretary S. Dekker to reach 100% Open Access in ten years, by 2024
- Negotiations between the university association VSNU and Top 8 scientific publishers focused on Big Deals:
 - VSNU-Elsevier negotiations (mid-2014 to spring 2016)
 - “Pilot Gold Open Access” agreement for 2016–2018
- Testing novel negotiation principles and the invention of “The Dutch Approach” (4 success factors)
- Spreading experiences from the Netherlands as *a test case* for other countries to follow suit
- Significant impact on numerous follow-up negotiations (“Read & Publish” or “transformative” agreements)

Image source: <http://www.magazine-on-the-spot.nl/openaccess/eng/index.html> (March 2016)



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The empirical case that I studied can be described as **a major controversy** that took place some years ago.

It was **triggered by** an ambitious target of Dutch state secretary Sander Dekker to reach 100% Open Access to scientific publications from the Netherlands in ten years, or by 2024.

In response, the university association VSNU started **negotiations with the 8 largest publishers** such as Elsevier, Springer, Sage and Wiley on the so-called Big Deals or journal subscription packages.

In my thesis, I extensively analysed **one of the most difficult negotiations** between Dutch universities as represented by VSNU and the publisher Elsevier, that lasted for almost two years and resulted in the “Pilot Gold Open Access” agreement for 2016-2018.

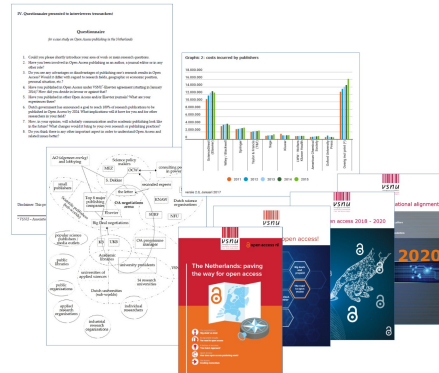
What was remarkable in the course of these events, is that VSNU tested novel negotiation principles and invented **“the Dutch approach”** with 4 success factors.

And, as can be seen from the cover of one of its magazines, VSNU positioned itself very self-confidently as **paving the way for Open Access** and serving as a test case for other countries to follow suit.

In this respect, the Dutch approach was indeed **very successful** as there are now many so-called R&P or transformative agreements in place that were modelled on the Dutch experience.

Empirical case study: Materials and methods

- Studying the VSNU-Elsevier negotiations as an exemplary empirical case:
 - Letter by state secretary S. Dekker to the Dutch Parliament (November 2013);
 - Semi-structured *interviews* with: VSNU-Elsevier negotiation team members, the letter-writer, researchers from various areas and institutions in the Netherlands (30+ in total);
 - Scanned copy of VSNU-Elsevier *contract* for 2016-2018 and its later amendments;
 - Open Access monitoring statistics, press releases, public presentations etc.
- Constructionist *Grounded Theory* and *Situational Analysis*:
Theoretical sampling, situational maps, emerging analytical categories (Charmaz, 2006; Clarke, 2005).



See also chapters 2. *Research approach* and 3. *Working with Grounded Theory as a “theory/methods package”* in the thesis.



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In this light, the VSNU-Elsevier negotiations served **as an exemplary empirical case** through which I could study all the issues that I was interested in.

In terms of the **materials**, I was able to collect and analyse a rich variety of documents and additional information, such as

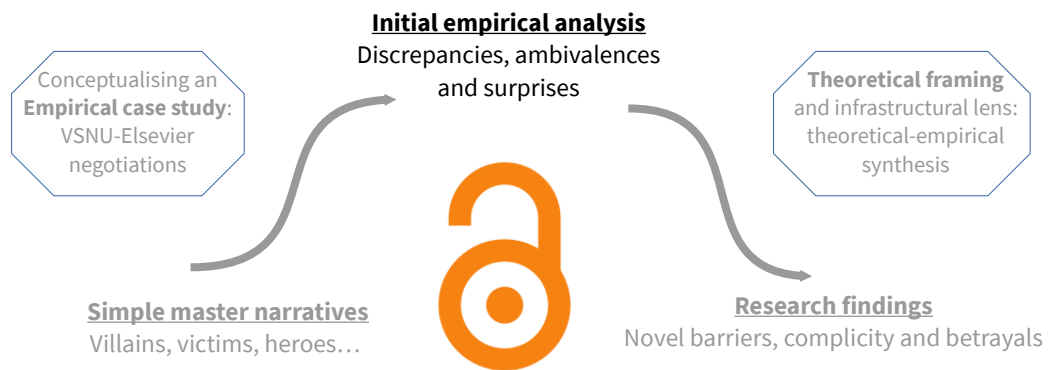
The letter to the Dutch Parliament that was sent by state secretary Dekker in late 2013,

More than 30 **interviews** that I conducted with negotiation team members on both sides, as well as the letter-writer or someone who was involved in actually writing the letter for Sander Dekker, and also researchers in the Netherlands.

Then, I further examined the original **contract agreement** between VSNU and Elsevier, and complemented it with **various monitoring statistics**, press releases, public presentations and so forth.

In terms of the **methods**, I relied on the constructionist Grounded Theory and Situational Analysis approaches and applied such strategies as theoretical sampling, drawing of situational maps, and developing my own emerging analytical categories.

PhD thesis project: Initial empirical analysis



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When I started to analyse this empirical case in more detail, I quickly discovered **a number of discrepancies and surprises**. I will now show you some notable examples.

Initial empirical analysis

- Discrepancies, ambivalences and surprises:
 - **Mixed feelings** among numerous negotiators with respect to the VSNU-Elsevier agreement, despite the official success story:

“I’m not too happy with the Open Access arrangement, because if, initially, you compare [agreements with other publishers], it’s a very meagre result, but it’s Elsevier (...)”
[int_3:290-303] (see p. 171 in the thesis).



First, when interviewing VSNU negotiators, they often expressed **mixed feelings** towards the resulting Open Access arrangement with Elsevier.

Here, you can read **an original quotation** where one negotiator described it “**a very meagre result**”, which contrasted starkly with the official reading of a success story.

Initial empirical analysis (cont.)

- Discrepancies, ambivalences and surprises:
 - **Mixed feelings** among numerous negotiators with respect to VSNU-Elsevier agreement, despite the official success story;
 - Increased costs and even **bigger “Big Deals”** with major publishers, despite declared aims to invent a “new” system and strengthen the bargaining power of research institutions;



Next, although **the declared aims** in Dekker’s letter were to invent **a new academic publishing system** and to strengthen **the bargaining power** of research institutions vis-a-vis major publishers,

Their negotiations resulted in increased costs and **even bigger Big Deals**, and thus an even higher dependency on the same few publishers.

Initial empirical analysis (cont.)

- Discrepancies, ambivalences and surprises:
 - **Mixed feelings** among numerous negotiators with respect to VSNU-Elsevier agreement, despite the official success story;
 - Increased costs and even **bigger “Big Deals”** with major publishers, despite declared aims to invent a “new” system and strengthen the bargaining power of research institutions;
 - Limited interest among eligible researchers and **low uptake levels** of the Open Access arrangement in its first period in 2016-2018:



Another discrepancy was **a limited interest** among eligible researchers in whose name the VSNU team conducted its negotiations.

Initial empirical analysis (cont.)

- Discrepancies, ambivalences and surprises:
 - **Mixed feelings** among numerous negotiators with respect to VSNU-Elsevier agreement, despite the official success story;
 - Increased costs and even **bigger “Big Deals”** with major publishers, despite declared aims to invent a “new” system and strengthen the bargaining power of research institutions;
 - Limited interest among eligible researchers and **low uptake levels** of the Open Access arrangement in its first period in 2016-2018:

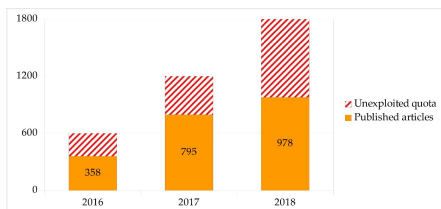


Figure 7: Number of Open Access publications under the VSNU-Elsevier agreement in 2016-2018

See Figure 7 in the thesis (p. 196)

Based on data from the national Open Access monitor, available at <https://www.openaccess.nl/en/in-the-netherlands/monitor> [last checked on 15/08/2023].



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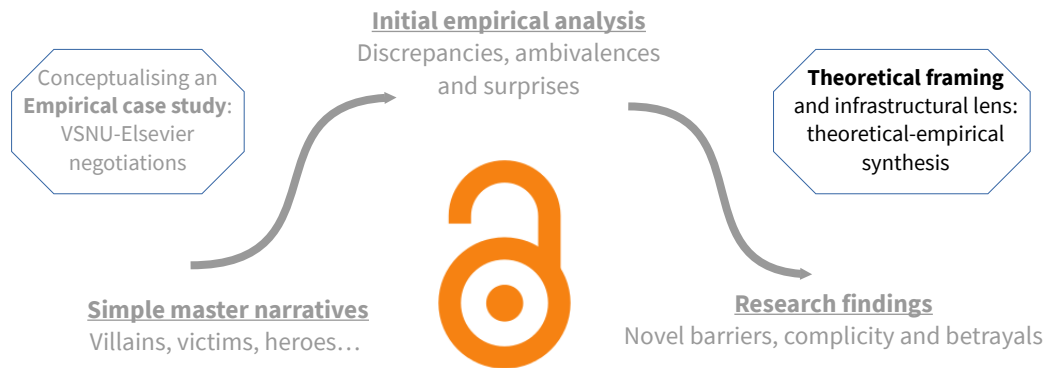
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Here, you can see a figure from my thesis where the dashed bars in each column show **the unexploited quota** in the agreement with Elsevier.

That is, the maximum number of Open Access articles in Elsevier journals was designed to increase from 600 to 1200 to 1800, and the demand for it was expected to **“explode”**. But Dutch researchers didn’t appear to be very eager in taking up this offer and the quota was **not even used in full**.

PhD thesis project: Theoretical framing



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Given such initial surprises and discrepancies, **how then to analyse** them productively?

My answer to this question was to compile **a theoretical framework** with an infrastructural lens at its core.

I will now show you **the main steps** of how I proceeded, as well as some highlights from my **theoretical-empirical synthesis**.

Theoretical framing: Defining infrastructure

1) To productively analyse my empirical case, I propose conceptualising the academic publishing system as **a socio-technical infrastructure**:



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My first step was to conceptualise the academic publishing system as **a socio-technical infrastructure**.

Theoretical framing: Defining infrastructure

1) To productively analyse my empirical case, I propose conceptualising the academic publishing system as **a socio-technical infrastructure**:

- Recalling a basic definition by Susan Leigh Star:
 - “People commonly envision infrastructure as a system of substrates – railroad lines, pipes and plumbing, electrical power plants, and wires. **It is by definition invisible, part of the background for other kinds of work. It is ready-to-hand.** This image holds up well enough for many purposes – turn on the faucet for a drink of water and you use a vast infrastructure of plumbing and water regulation without usually thinking much of it” (Star, 1999, p. 380; emphasis added).



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Speaking of infrastructure, it is quite **easy to understand** this concept when thinking of some **common examples** such as railroad lines, pipes and power plants.

In the words of Susan Leigh Star as one of the main figures in this field, infrastructure is by definition **invisible**, at least when it works well;

It is part of the background **to support other kinds of work** and it is **ready to hand**.

Theoretical framing: Defining infrastructure

1) To productively analyse my empirical case, I propose conceptualising the academic publishing system as **a socio-technical infrastructure**:

➤ Recalling a basic definition by Susan Leigh Star:

- “People commonly envision infrastructure as a system of substrates – railroad lines, pipes and plumbing, electrical power plants, and wires. **It is by definition invisible, part of the background for other kinds of work. It is ready-to-hand.** This image holds up well enough for many purposes – turn on the faucet for a drink of water and you use a vast infrastructure of plumbing and water regulation without usually thinking much of it” (Star, 1999, p. 380; emphasis added).

➤ Acknowledging the salient features or dimensions of infrastructure:

• Embeddedness	• Embodiment of standards
• Transparency	• Built on an installed base
• Reach or scope	• Becomes visible upon breakdown
• Learned as part of membership	• Is fixed in modular increments, not all at once or globally
• Links with conventions of practice	



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There are further a number of **salient features** that typically characterise infrastructures, such as:

- being learned as part of membership,
- utilising links with conventions of practice, or
- embodiment of standards.

Theoretical framing: Defining infrastructure

1) To productively analyse my empirical case, I propose conceptualising the academic publishing system as **a socio-technical infrastructure**:

> Recalling a basic definition by Susan Leigh Star:

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That – as a system of substrates – enables not only the communication of research findings (or the substance), but that is also an integral part of evaluation procedures for establishing individual reputational profiles necessary for academic career progression.

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See also chapter 4. *Theoretical framing* and the definition on p. 48 in the thesis.

- | | |
|--------------------------------------|---|
| • Reach or scope | • Becomes visible upon breakdown |
| • Learned as part of membership | • Is fixed in modular increments, not all at once or globally |
| • Links with conventions of practice | |



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Building on such fundamental ideas, I proposed my own **working definition** of academic publishing as a socio-technical infrastructure that, as **a system of substrates**, in Star’s terms, enables **not only** the communication of research findings, or the substance, But is also an integral part of **evaluation procedures** that are necessary for (establishing individual reputational profiles and) academic career progression. **In other words**, for a typical researcher, it is very important where to publish their work because publication lists are often used to inform various assessment exercises, including those related to promotion and funding decisions.

Theoretical framing: Defining (re-)infrastructuring

- 1) To productively analyse my empirical case, I propose conceptualising the academic publishing system as *a socio-technical infrastructure*;
- 2) Taking a relational and processual perspective:
 - *Infrastructuring* – the processes involved in building, maintaining and/or adapting infrastructures (using the *-ing* gerund form);



Then, my second step was to take a relational and processual perspective by adding **the -ing terminology**.

Here, the verb infrastructuring can be used to describe the **processes** that are involved in building, maintaining or adapting infrastructures.

Theoretical framing: Defining (re-)infrastructuring

- 1) To productively analyse my empirical case, I propose conceptualising the academic publishing system as **a socio-technical infrastructure**;
- 2) Taking a relational and processual perspective:
 - *Infrastructuring* – the processes involved in building, maintaining and/or adapting infrastructures (using the *-ing* gerund form);
 - *Re-infrastructuring* – as a particular occasion of infrastructuring that is driven by a political intervention and aims at
 - Adjusting or “turning” mature infrastructure according to new logics and directions,
 - Bringing novelty without being trapped in the existing arrangements or harming what is in place,
 - Maintaining embeddedness as one of the main design concerns and activities.

For more details, see Grisot & Vassilakopoulou (2017) and chapter 4. *Theoretical framing* in the thesis.



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Third, I've learned about the concept of **re-infrastructuring** as a particular occasion of infrastructuring.

Here, it was illuminating to discover that all these characteristics **applied very nicely** to the empirical case that I examined in my thesis:

- The VSNU negotiations were driven by **a political intervention** or Dekker's letter,
- The **mature infrastructure** of the subscription-based publishing of academic journals was supposed to be adjusted or “turned” to **a new logic** of Open Access,
- Because of that, negotiators on both sides had to **balance novel with old elements** when prolonging their regular Big Deals, and attempted **to not harm** what is already in place, so to avoid a possible no-deal situation.
- As a result, dealing with such **partially conflicting goals** and **maintaining their embeddedness** implicitly became the guiding principle and a concern that shaped all activities of negotiation teams.

Theoretical framing: Extending infrastructural lens

- 1) To productively analyse my empirical case, I propose conceptualising the academic publishing system as *a socio-technical infrastructure*;
- 2) Taking a relational and processual perspective, or *re-infrastructure*ing;
- 3) Extending the main theoretical framework, where necessary:
 - Actor-Network Theory (ANT) and the “sociology of translation” (Callon, 1986);
 - Design scripts of a “technical object” (Akrich, 1992);
 - (Non-)users of technologies (Oudshoorn & Pinch, 2003; Wyatt, 2003);
 - Repair and maintenance studies (Jackson, 2014; Denis & Pontille, 2015).

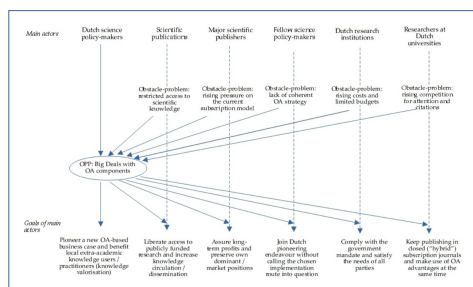


Lastly, over time I encountered **some limitations** of the main theoretical framework with the infrastructural lens at its core and **extended it** where I deemed necessary.

Here, you can see a list with **additional conceptual lenses**, that I used when elaborating my theoretical-empirical synthesis. In the following, I will showcase **several examples** for how I applied them in my thesis.

Results from my theoretical-empirical synthesis

- Constructing Big Deals with Open Access publishing quotas as an **“Obligatory Passage Point”** (Callon, 1986) through necessary alliances and detours in Dekker’s letter:



See Figure 4 in the thesis (p. 118)

Section 7.3.1.2 Linking big ambitions with Big Deals as “obligatory passage points”



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For example, by taking inspiration from **the sociology of translation** and the scallop story by Michel Callon, I came to **liken** the novel Big Deals with Open Access publishing components to an Obligatory Passage Point.

This **helped me greatly** in demonstrating **the instrumental role** of provisions made in Dekker’s letter and the importance ascribed to continuing business relationships with major publishers.

Results from my **theoretical-empirical synthesis**

- Constructing Big Deals with Open Access publishing quotas as an “**Obligatory Passage Point**” (Callon, 1986) through necessary alliances and detours in Dekker’s letter;
- Considering the Article Processing Charge (APC) model as a “**technical object**” (Akrich, 1992) and **de-scripting** the VSNU-Elsevier agreement, incl. the pilot Open Access arrangement;



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As another example, I compared **the Article Processing Charge (APC) model** in Open Access publishing with **a technical object** as proposed by Madeleine Akrich.

In this way, **the values of the designers** of the Open Access arrangement and how these designers viewed their **targeted users** and organisational relations could be also exposed more clearly.

Results from my **theoretical-empirical synthesis**

- Constructing Big Deals with Open Access publishing quotas as an “**Obligatory Passage Point**” (Callon, 1986) through necessary alliances and detours in Dekker’s letter;
- Considering the Article Processing Charge (APC) model as a “**technical object**” (Akrich, 1992) and **de-scripting** the VSNU-Elsevier agreement, incl. the pilot Open Access arrangement;
- Categorising **users and non-users** of the Pilot Gold Open Access arrangement (Wyatt, 2003), e.g. switching from “involuntary non-users” to “voluntary users”:

	Usage	
Voluntariness	Voluntary users	Voluntary non-users
	Involuntary users	Involuntary non-users

See *Table 1* in the thesis (p. 267)

Section 9.4.3 Enacting closed-ness: On “home-made” exclusions and other blind spots



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Next, I extended the categorisation of users and non-users by considering the **voluntariness** of their choice.

An interesting case was that of researchers at universities of applied sciences, who were **initially excluded** from the VSNU-Elsevier agreement on Open Access.

By using their secondary affiliations to research universities or other eligible institutions, they were able to circumvent this new eligibility barrier and to **switch from** the category of “involuntary non-users” to “voluntary users”.

Results from my **theoretical-empirical synthesis**

- Constructing Big Deals with Open Access publishing quotas as an “**Obligatory Passage Point**” (Callon, 1986) through necessary alliances and detours in Dekker’s letter;
- Considering the Article Processing Charge (APC) model as a “**technical object**” (Akrich, 1992) and **de-scripting** the VSNU-Elsevier agreement, incl. the pilot Open Access arrangement;
- Categorising **users and non-users** of the Pilot Gold Open Access arrangement (Wyatt, 2003), e.g. switching from “involuntary non-users” to “voluntary users”:
- Considering librarians as **maintainers** of the academic publishing infrastructure, while performing an infrastructural inversion (Bowker, 1994; Star & Bowker, 2006).



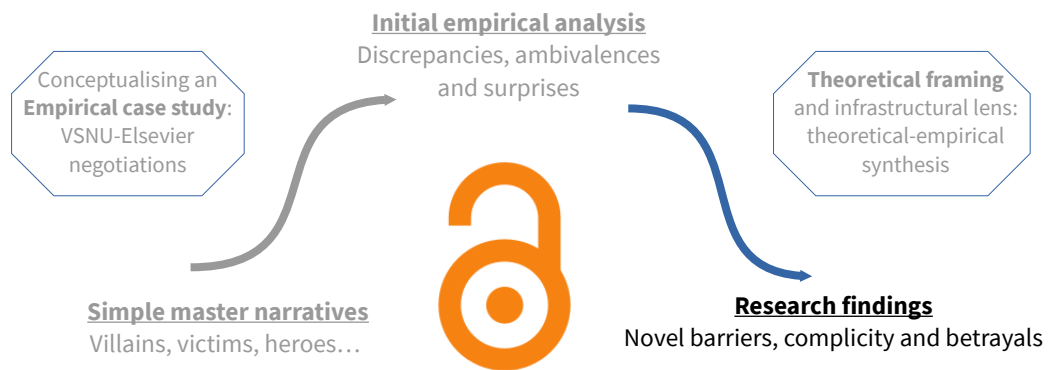
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Lastly, I dedicated a full chapter to the role of **libraries and librarians** by performing an infrastructural inversion. This allowed me to bring in a **more nuanced perspective** on the workings of the academic publishing infrastructure, and especially to shed light on the **invisible labour** involved in it.

PhD thesis project: Research findings



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Now, I will move on to **the major research findings** from my thesis.

Major research findings

- **Novel barriers** when replacing subscription paywalls with APCs:
 - Shifting from a “pay-to-read” to a “pay-to-say” principle, even worse
 - Rich ↔ poor, or just rich → poor? (cf. BOAI, 2002)
 - Drawing boundaries between individual researchers, institutions, countries



First of all, I observed that **novel barriers** were being erected when subscription paywalls were **replaced** with article processing charges, or APCs, for Open Access publishing. In my view, shifting from a pay-to-read to a pay-to-say principle, as desired in the Dutch strategy, would have **even more detrimental effects** on scholars worldwide. Because it is **relatively easy** to circumvent the old paywalls, in case someone has no direct access to a publication, but there is **no reliable solution** to combat new inequities if one cannot afford to pay for APCs.

In this light, it is **questionable** whether such Open Access initiatives are still in line with the goals of the initial Budapest declaration where the knowledge exchange was supposed to take place **between the rich and the poor**, and not only *from the rich to the poor*.

This means that **another set of boundaries** is being drawn between individual researchers, institutions and countries according to their **economic situation**.

Major research findings (cont.)

- **Novel barriers** when replacing subscription paywalls with APCs;
- **Complicity** of many actors in the current state of academic publishing affairs:
 - Researchers, librarians, research funders, administrators, and policy-makers along with big commercial publishing companies
 - Big Deals with OA components as mainly motivated by self-interest (↑ own visibility, citations, ranking positions and knowledge valorisation)
 - Problematising common master narratives – not simply villains, victims, and heroes (cf. Felt et al., 2007)



Secondly, returning to the notion of master narratives, I argue that big commercial publishers are **not the only villains** in this story.

Instead, other actors such as researchers, librarians, research funders, administrators and policy-makers all contribute their “fair share” to the current situation and are **complicit** in the problematic state of affairs in academic publishing.

What is more, as I demonstrated in my thesis, concluding Big Deals with Open Access publishing components was mainly **motivated by self-interest** such as to increase one’s own visibility, citation rates and ranking positions as well as to promote competitiveness and knowledge valorisation in national economies, and not so much by the broader goals as outlined in the Budapest declaration or even claimed in Sander Dekker’s letter.

Major research findings (cont.)

- **Novel barriers** when replacing subscription paywalls with APCs,
- **Complicity** of many actors in the current state of academic publishing affairs,
- **Betrayals** of the initial Open Access idea(l)s:
 - Metamorphoses and mutations in recent Open Access initiatives
 - No one rightful definition, but what I term the “Open Access multiple”
 - Tracing betrayals in the practice of translation in this thesis (cf. Law, 2006)



Thirdly, I conclude that through numerous metamorphoses and mutations of past years, the initial ideas and ideals of Open Access have been **betrayed**.

(And, **even more unsettling**, I pose the question of whether this betrayal originated **from within** the ranks of Open Access’ own advocates – here, you might recall **the Trojan horses** in my thesis title.)

At the same time, it is true that there is **no one rightful definition** of Open Access, but instead what I termed “the Open Access multiple”.

And, following John Law, it is “much more interesting to trace betrayals in the practice of translation”, which is **exactly what I did in this PhD thesis**.

Major research findings (cont.)

- **Novel barriers** when replacing subscription paywalls with APCs,
- **Complicity** of many actors in the current state of academic publishing affairs,
- **Betrayals** of the initial Open Access idea(l)s.

Lastly,

“... all the controversies, ambivalences, discrepancies, paradoxes, and surprises **make perfect sense** when considering attempts to reform the academic publishing system through the conceptual lens of (re-)infrastructuring” (p. 335 in the thesis).



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Lastly, I want to add that all the controversies, ambivalences, discrepancies, paradoxes and surprises that I have uncovered **make perfect sense** when studying them through the lens of re-infrastructuring.

Concluding remarks: *Or, How could be otherwise?*



- Key takeaway message from my thesis:

Combining Big Deals with Open Access publishing quotas is *the wrong pathway* to implement Open Access – instead, researchers, academic libraries, research institutions and their funders should choose publishing models that are in line with their overarching goals and missions.

For further discussion, see sub-chapters 12.1 *Linking my research findings with the latest BOAI declaration* and 12.3 *Final remarks and suggestions for future work* in the thesis.



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On a very final note, if I were to put a key takeaway message from my thesis **into one sentence**, it would be the following:
In my view, combining Big Deals with Open Access publishing quotas is the **wrong pathway** to implement Open Access; Instead, researchers, academic libraries, research institutions and their funders should choose publishing models that are **in line with** their overarching goals and missions.

[Pause]



Thank you for your attention!

- Full-text of the thesis, including all references, is available online:
 - Šimukovič, E. (2023). *Of hopes, villains, and Trojan horses: Open Access academic publishing and its battlefields*. University of Vienna, Vienna. <https://doi.org/10.25365/thesis.73661>



With that said, I **thank you** for your attention and **look forward** to our discussion.

N.B. The setup of this presentation and particularly the navigation scheme (a narrative overview) was inspired by the storytelling approach as presented in this book:

Nussbaumer Knaflic, C. (2023). *Storytelling with you: plan, create, and deliver a stellar presentation*. ISBN: 9781394160303 (Paperback)

Concluding remarks (cont.) - Additional slide

- On the overarching aims of Situational Analysis:

In the end, as Clarke (2005, p. 293) notes,

a “good interpretive analysis of the situation of inquiry ideally produces new working sensitizing concepts or elaborates and refines old ones, integrates theoretical advances with grounded empirical work, and is explicitly located, situated, and historicized” (p. 32 in the thesis).



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*** This slide was prepared to support my answer in case an explicit question about the aims of (constructionist) Grounded Theory and, consequently, the achievements of my thesis was posed ***

As a concluding remark, I want to cite Adele Clarke where she notes that **a good interpretive analysis** ideally produces new working concepts, elaborates or refines old ones, integrates theoretical and empirical work, and is explicitly located, situated and historicised.

I believe that I have fulfilled all these tasks **in good conscience**.