



Reflections on open access from the Global South – Melisew Dejene Lemma

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The Nokoko journal is committed to a world where people are free from all forms of oppression and exploitation, where respect for individuals' varied differences is maintained, and where everyone can realise their full potentials. NokokoPod is a companion to the journal, covering current African issues. It aims to bring forth new perspectives that broaden, trouble, complicate and enrich current discourses. Edited and annotated versions of the conversations will be made available on the journal website.

This issue of NokokoPod discusses open access from the perspective of the Global South, and specifically from Ethiopia. The podcast for this discussion is available on the Nokoko journal website. This conversation took place on July 11th, with Logan Cochrane and Melisew Dejene Lemma in Hawassa, Ethiopia. This version of the PDF has been reviewed by Logan Cochrane and Melisew Dejene Lemma. In addition to the conversation, a set of annotations have been added as footnotes so as to strengthen the value of these publications and enable them to act as a resource for listeners and readers who want to have additional context and/or find additional resources on the topics discussed.

Logan: In this episode of NokokoPod we are joined by Melisew Dejene Lemma, who is an Assistant Professor of Development Studies, Journalism and Communication at Hawassa University, to give us some perspectives on access to literature, open access and particularly experiences from Ethiopia. Across the Global South, different countries have different degrees of access to academic literature. Recently I was speaking with some scholars from Ghana and South Africa, for them and their institutions, access to academic literature was less of an issue because they have access to a wide range of journals and publishers. However, that is not the case for all the countries in the Global South. The context of this conversation is about the ability to access academic literature in Ethiopia.

Logan: Let us start off by discussing your own experience. You have done three of your degrees - BA, MA, PhD - in the Global South, and particularly in African countries. Could you tell us a bit about your research experience, getting access to academic materials, what access you had, what materials you could read, and what you could not read?

Melisew: Thank you very much for having me for this discussion. Coming to my experience, if I start from the first degree, my B.A., I did it at Addis Ababa University, which is one of the more established universities in the country.¹ It was in 2004 that I did that degree. What was different at that time was that there was limited access in terms of connectivity to the internet and most of my research was based on published books. I was using a few published journals, printed versions, not as online publications. That was really a challenge for me, to get diverse information about the state-of-the-art or

¹ The first university in Ethiopia was founded in 1950, as Haile Selassie I University, which became Addis Ababa University in 1975 (it was briefly called University of Ethiopia, in 1974, after the fall of Haile Selassie).

up-to-date literature. That was my experience, as part of this country with limited internet access. One of the problems of this lack of access to literature is that students might find themselves reproducing knowledge that was already there because of lack of access. When it comes to my post graduate studies, I did my M.A. at the American University in Cairo, as a scholarship student. That was a different experience because I had a lot of access to literature there. I was able to access most of the journals and internet connectivity and access were not an issue. I should add that during that experience, I was able to explore a lot of recent experience and knowledge in my area of research, especially in journalism and communication. I can compare myself to what I did during my B.A. years and when I was doing my M.A., it was a big difference. For the M.A., I had access to almost all of the big publishers, including articles and journals that were published a week before or the day before, for example. I was able to access these recent publications. As a result, I was in a kind of a different person while doing the M.A., compared to when I was studying in my B.A. years. Coming to my PhD, it was a sandwich arrangement. Most of my PhD years were in Ethiopia (Hawassa University) but I was also an exchange student in the Norwegian University of Life Sciences. It was really challenging for me to get access to academic literature from Ethiopia, especially when it comes to journals and books which are of recent publication.² Since I had this challenge in mind, I was using my professors to send me some articles - including some international guests who taught in the doctoral program in Ethiopia. When I was leaving for Norway as an exchange

² None of Ethiopia's public universities, of which there are more than 30, have paid subscriptions to the major academic publishers. This is discussed in more detail below. The largest corporate publishers (e.g. Reed-Elsevier / RELX, Wiley-Blackwell, Springer, and Taylor & Francis, Sage) own a majority of academic articles. For more, see:

Lariviere, V., Haustein, S. and Mongeon, P. (2015) The Oligopoly of Academic Publishers in the Digital Era. *PLoS ONE* 10(6): e0127502.

student, because I had this experience, much of my time in Norway was spent downloading literature that I felt might be very important for my future use. At the time, I was not very focused for making a collection for my dissertation. However, because I knew that I might face this access problem, I was hunting for everything that was available. During that exchange, I was able to see that world, in the Global North (though I travelled to different countries for training and for work). As a student, especially situated here in Ethiopia, and this may be the case for the Global South, it is really a challenge being a student because you do not have access and you do not have internet connectivity. There is a big divide that you can see between the Global North and Global South.

Logan: Sitting here, at your university in Ethiopia, and you are looking for academic materials - how do you find these? What are the avenues available to you?

Melisew: If it comes to the online engagement, most of the resources that we have are the open access materials.³ There is an issue of quality, as you can imagine.⁴ Getting access to something that

³ We use the Nature definition of open access, meaning “free, unrestricted online access to research outputs such as journal articles and books. OA content is open to all, with no access fees.” See:

<https://www.nature.com/openresearch/about-open-access/what-is-open-access/>

⁴ We do not discuss the debate regarding ‘predatory’ journals in this discussion. However, for some reading on that discussion, see:

Beall, J. (2012) Predatory publishers are corrupting open access. *Nature*, 489(7415), 179.

Beall, J. (2016) Predatory journals: Ban predatory from the scientific record. *Nature* 534(326), <https://doi.org/10.1038/534326a>

Cochrane, L. and Nigussie, Z. (2018) The State of Knowledge on Food Security in Ethiopia: Knowledge Production and Publication Accessibility. *Journal of Rural and Community Development* 13(3): 152-166.

may not be necessarily academic, you might have information, but that information may not have been reviewed through an academic process. That is a challenge. When it comes to printed materials, when you visit libraries in universities in Ethiopia it is not that uncommon to find a book that was published in the 1960s and the 1970s. That is not because the books are classic. Rather, it is what we have. A common book may be very much dated; 30, 40 or even 50 years old. You will find this book in the library and you have to live with that. As knowledge is dynamic, that book or the ideas in it, might be outdated, but you have to live with it. You do not have an option.

Logan: You may not know that it is outdated.

Melisew: Yes, you may not know. That is the case.

Logan: There is some research suggesting that the majority of published articles in journals are owned by companies, most of which are based in the Global North.⁵ When you try to access that high quality, peer reviewed material what do you encounter?

Melisew: Lots of things! By the way, you cannot access most of the publishers, the big companies. You can name them: Taylor & Francis, Wiley, Elsevier, Sage, and others. Unless they have a special

Seethapathy, G. S., Kumar, J. U. S., & Hareesha, A. S. (2016) India's scientific publication in predatory journals: Need for regulating quality in Indian science and education. *Current Science*, 111(11), 1759–1764.

Xia, J., Harmon, J. L., Connolly, K. G., Donnelly, R. M., Anderson, M. R., & Howard, H. A. (2014) Who Publishes in "Predatory" Journals? *Journal of the Association for Information Science and Technology*, 66(7), 1406–1417. <https://doi.org/10.1002/asi.23265>

⁵ As one example, see: Lariviere, V., Haustein, S. and Mongeon, P. (2015) The Oligopoly of Academic Publishers in the Digital Era. *PLoS ONE* 10(6): e0127502.

kind of arrangement for a specific journal, it is really difficult to access the journals from these publishers.⁶ This is because universities in Ethiopia are not able to afford to pay the subscription fees to these big organizations. In the Ethiopian scenario, what we can access is only the JSTOR collection, which has a non-profit arrangement and an arrangement with some universities that are able to apply and get the advantage of using the resources that are in that database.⁷ Access to materials from JSTOR is a big thing, in terms of filling the void, a big void, for students, researchers and academics in Ethiopia. However, I think as per the agreement, some of the articles that you find are at least five years old. You cannot access very recent publications. However, this option is better than old the books that you find in the library because the books are much more dated. However, due to these limitations, you may not be adding value in terms of accumulating knowledge. Let me share the experience of my students and myself, in terms of getting access to academic literature. I cannot access most of the journals owned by those big companies. When I try to publish my own articles, among the comments that I have received from peer reviewers of the journals from those publishers is that I am using dated literature. The case is even worse when you see my students, who are my M.A. students and writing their theses. Even this year, some of the materials listed in their bibliography or references were from the 1960s and the 1970s. Why they are doing that? I know. This may be funny for a professor who is in the Global North, who can access any of those state-of-the-art

⁶ An example of such an agreement on an individual level is that some publishers grant scholars in the Global South access to their journals, for a limited time period, after registering. On the institutional level, a university may be granted access to a database of materials by a publisher or platform, based on a time-specific agreement of access or because of a successful application to have a set (or subset) of materials made available to students accessing those materials from on-campus.

⁷ Not all JSTOR materials are open access. There is a subset of materials that have been made open access (see: <https://www.jstor.org/>).

publications. However, for me and my students, that is not an option.

Logan: There are two components you are describing. A component of being able to read relevant and recent literature. Then, a compounding factor that because you are not able to read that literature, and therefore include it in your own research, you face additional barriers in trying to publish. Since you are relying on more dated material, the rejections are more common and comments state that you have not included the most recent evidence on the topic. As a result, the open access question also presents a barrier on the ability of scholars in the Global South to themselves publish. That is very interesting.⁸

Melisew: I think that is the case, generally in the Global South. If you see the contribution of the Global South in terms of knowledge, for example in terms of publishing, these barriers and filters exist. First of all, in order to break through those journals, you have to include those recent kinds of knowledge productions. In

⁸ In this conversation, we discuss some barriers. However, there are many others. For example, participating in international conferences is critical for sharing research and building international networks, however scholars from the Global South are regularly denied visas to participate. The result of all these barriers is that scholars from the Global South are under-represented in academic publishing. This is not a new challenge. The under-representation has been identified as a challenge multiple times, in multiple fields. See:

Collyer, F. M. (2018) Global patterns in the publishing of academic knowledge: Global North, global South. *Current Sociology*, 66(1), 56-73.

Cummings, S. & Hoebink, P. *Eur J Dev Res* (2017) 29: 369.
<https://doi.org/10.1057/s41287-016-0002-2>.

Peace, A. M. and Kang, A. J. (2018) Power, Knowledge and the Politics of Gender in the Global South. *European Journal of Politics and Gender* 1(1-2): 37-53.

Sumathipala, A., Siribaddana, S., & Patel, V. (2004) Under-representation of developing countries in the research literature: ethical issues arising from a survey of five leading medical journals. *BMC Medical Ethics*, 5(1), 5.

order to come up with such kind of knowledge products, you need to get access to those state-of-the-art publications. It is a kind of spiral in terms of not only not being able to access, but also publish it. Even after you publish, if you want other colleagues to access your work, if it is not open access, universities here in Ethiopia could not afford to access these journals and publications. Even the relatively established universities, like Addis Ababa University, cannot afford to pay for the journals. They have really limited access. This is the situation in Ethiopia.

Logan: To give an example, at my university in Canada, just for the online access of e-books, journal subscriptions and so on. The university is paying more than CAN\$ 5 million dollars, per year.⁹ That does not include all the physical resources in the library, and all the other costs of running the library, just the subscription fees for the journals. If you look at the budgets of universities in Ethiopia, that would be a significant percentage.

Melisew: Very significant. Maybe 15% or 20% of the budget. Furthermore, this cost is paid in hard currency (Ethiopia is not connected to the international banking system yet, which is required to pay for individual articles or subscriptions, meaning a specific arrangement is needed for payments). We also have to consider the situation in the arrangement of Ethiopian universities. They do not have this tradition. Even if they wanted to push forward the idea of subscribing to articles, journals or e-books, it would not be easy because that might mean allocating 20% percent of your budget to spend on that.¹⁰

⁹ As of 2018 data, Carleton University spent CAN\$ 5.74 million on e-resources, for a single year.

¹⁰ There is a significant trade off here – shifting budgets to paying such fees would mean either finding new sources of revenue or cutting significant costs. The decision is not a simple one of changing the culture.

Logan: For yourself and for your graduate students as well, are there other barriers that you would face in trying to access academic materials (other than the financial component of not having subscription fees)? For example, here in Ethiopia we have seen that even some of the journal webpages, when you try to access the journal webpage, the entire journal website is inaccessible because the IP address is blocked for the university. As a result, you cannot even read the abstract.

Melisew: Even myself, what is frustrating is that I need to read the abstracts in order to obtain a kind of window view of what the article is about. In those cases, you find yourself in a difficulty because when you go to the website it says "IP Blocked" and you cannot get access to even the abstracts. This happened to me several times, even with the big publishers (e.g. Wiley and Taylor & Francis, I usually experience this issue with these two). After several attempts, I had to email them and tell them that when I tried to access the journal, the IP address was blocked (when accessing from on-campus and from my personal computer). This also happened to me when I was trying to submit my own article. Even to submit my own article, the website says "IP Blocked". So, I emailed them. And, actually, thanks to them, they were able to respond telling me that there may be a problem with my cache or something like that and I have to clear some things, and if I could not solve the issue, that I should get back to them. However, this did not occur only once. This is a usual experience in Ethiopia.

Logan: This is another barrier. There might be an assumption, that "Okay. You do not get access to the article, but at least you can read the abstract and sort of follow the trends." But, no. You cannot do so because the entire set of journals that are offered by the publisher are inaccessible because the IP address is blocked.

Melisew: What I should mention here is that I was lucky to have foreign supervisors. My professors were very helpful. When I needed support getting access to a certain article, I could ask. Even without asking, these professors were providing materials to me on a weekly basis, as a personal share. However, you can imagine how many students in Ethiopia can have this privilege. In my view, it is a very limited privilege. So, this is really a challenge. We should figure out some solution for this.

Logan: The typical experience, of an M.A. or a PhD student who is completely doing their program within Ethiopia: there is a lot of research being done about Ethiopia, can you talk about their experience? What are some of the problems they encounter when they do not have access to all of the available knowledge out there? Or, a limited set of the available knowledge that is out there? What are the problems that result, such as research question identification or writing or methods and so on?

Melisew: That is a problem. You have to know what has been done already. You should not replicate or duplicate efforts. Research is about adding novelty in terms of knowledge and experience. Due to these barriers, it is really difficult because the research might have already been done. In order to figure out which problem has a gap, in terms of research, you do not know, frankly speaking. As a researcher, you may feel, based on your own experience or from your own experience living with the community, that a sort of problem exists and try to articulate that as a research problem. However, that research question might have been researched already somewhere by somebody. Not necessarily an Ethiopian. It is not a problem, if conducted by a foreigner, for me knowledge does not have frontiers. The issue is that a lack of access is creating a big knowledge divide.

Logan: That is a good transition to thinking about development studies, where we both work. I would say that in this field there is recognition that access is a challenge. More scholars around the world who are working in development studies recognize that knowledge should be open access and available to those who are anywhere in the world. I would say that there is less recognition in other fields. But the problem is the same. If you are a medical student in Ethiopia and you want to understand the most recent ways to diagnose or treat diabetes, or for structural engineering to build a building, or security for protecting the banking infrastructure, all of the students, in all of these fields, are all experiencing these challenges. Could you speak about your reflections on the cumulative impact?

Melisew: I think that is a big issue. I personally feel that knowledge is a public property and that it should be shared. However, when I say that I do not mean it in a way that is unfair, in terms of people being compensated for what they are doing.¹¹ Rather, we should look for a mechanism where we can share knowledge for a better kind of world that we should live in. I can imagine, even though I am not in the field of medicine or technology, that this is a critical issue. These areas of research are dynamic and that are dealing with human life directly. A lot of up-to-date information changes and best practices may change. Students need to be aware of these changes and catch up with those developments. Most of the problems are, in a way, global problems. Solving a certain problem somewhere may not necessarily mean that you are solving the problem everywhere. Especially for the fields of medicine

¹¹ There are recent examples of universities in the Global North that highlight that it is not paying that is the issue per se, but the very high, unjustified, cost. In 2019, the University of California stopped its subscription with Elsevier, citing both the cost and the case for open access (<https://news.berkeley.edu/2019/02/28/why-uc-split-with-publishing-giant-elsevier/>).

or technology, the problem may be more pronounced than that of social sciences. I think we should look for a mechanism to address the challenges of access. For instance, there are some frontiers that are sharing, some open access journals. I think that they are doing great, in terms of developing an alternative. I know there are some agricultural collections of literature, and for some other fields, because of their philosophy they feel that knowledge should be shared and offer open access materials. I think that such kind of approach should also be taken up by others. When you are being impacted in terms of access, lack of access, the results manifest themselves into complex forms. Policymakers are affected because they make bad policies, not because they are bad people but because they do not have the necessary and up to date information. That means, in terms of quality, they are inducing less quality while they should maintain a higher standard. This is a big issue because it affects the whole system, as a country, even as a world, because we are talking about Sustainable Development Goals, a fair and just world, a world without poverty, and things like that. However, you cannot eradicate poverty without having proper knowledge and research. I feel this is a big issue that needs immediate intervention.

Logan: I was recently reading an M.A. thesis from the health field, here in Ethiopia. As you said, most of the literature that was cited was from the 1960s and 1970s. This student will graduate, may hold a position at the Ministry of Health or may hold a position at a hospital, who knows where they will end up, but they will end up somewhere. The issue is not so much that they themselves are not interested in doing the best, but it is their training and their ability to access training. To an extent, there is almost a generational effect because the supervisors faced, and continue to face, the same sort of challenges. Systematically the country is decades behind.

Melisew: That is right. I share your view. That is the case, 100%. As an example, this year I examined some M.A. students from Jimma University and Hawassa University, and I also have my own advisees that I supervised. Most of them had to live with this lack of access problem. If they come and ask me for certain up-to-date information, I may only forward that question to somebody who is outside the country, if s/he can willingly share her/his time in order to send a certain article or something. In that case, we are living behind. We are approaching 2020, but the literature our students have access to, and are citing are including from the 1960s. We are a full generation behind. That is a systematic denial of access. The result is a big problem of the country lagging behind in terms of knowledge, research and even technology.

Logan: At its root, this is a system that enables access to evidence for those who have access to the financial resources to pay for it and disadvantages or excludes those people and countries that do not have that financial access.

Melisew: For me this is a kind of ethical quandary: those who can afford, are getting better knowledge and those who cannot afford, cannot get the knowledge. This also leads you to a question of where the knowledge is produced from. Those who are researching the Global South may be researchers in the Global North. That is a good thing, in this global world that is what you should do. However, after researching those people in the Global South and extracting information and experience from them, they fail to help those same people to get access to the knowledge which they were a part of producing. That is really an injustice. There is an ethical issue. I do not know who should be responsible. I feel that the big publishers should think about this and even researchers should start thinking about this. Both should grapple with how we can solve the problem of this knowledge divide and resource divide, and address those

problems. This relates to professionalism and ethics, and ought to be a requirement.

Logan: For making the ethical case clear, a parallel might be in the pharmaceutical industry. Some of the trials for new pharmaceutical products are conducted in the Global South. Regulation might be weaker, compensation might be lower, risk thresholds lower, et cetera. If that drug is later approved as an effective medicine, it may not be available in that country, from which the people were tested. We can similarly see in the academic world where researchers from the Global North come to the Global South and are studying everything, all the disciplines, and bring that knowledge back to the Global North, making it available to other people in the Global North, and not necessarily by their choice but in a sense their participation in a system that excludes the Global South from accessing that knowledge.

Melisew: That is right. By the way, you have a lot of examples in history about these trials and experiments being conducted in the Global South.¹² These tests have even negatively affected those subjects. There are also many success stories, but those successes may not benefit the people who were pivotal in terms of enabling that research. I think we should ask this question. Is the system fair? Being a researcher, being an academic, even being a publisher, when we are making money, what are we making money out of? We should think of the situations like that.

Logan: For me, it is a question of justice. There are some trends where there is a push towards open access. We see a few different directions. One direction is the big publishers, the big corporate

¹² For example, see: Shah, S. (2003). Globalization of clinical research by the pharmaceutical industry. *International Journal of Health Services*, 33(1), 29-36.

publishers. They give the option for an author to pay a large fee, usually several thousand U.S. dollars, and that article will then be open access, that single article. If there is an issue in the journal, a couple of the articles may be open access. That is one trend that we see. Do you have any reflections on if that changes your situation in terms of accessing academic materials?

Melisew: It would be a drop in an ocean, in my view. This change is a good thing. However, the issue is: who is going to take the burden? It is the researcher who is producing the knowledge. In terms of thinking about it from an ethical perspective, the publisher should be expected to contribute something. Open access should also come from the publishers' initiative. It is only thanks to a few researchers who are able to fund their own publications to be open access, maybe from their own pocket or from their own funding or those who fund them. I think they are doing a great thing. Downloading one recent article, in this part of the world, means a lot. It may not mean something for somebody in the Global North, but for us researchers who are sitting here in the Global South, it means a lot. For instance, if I would like to download a certain article the publishers ask me to pay maybe US\$ 35 or US\$ 40, per article. If you see this amount, this might be a quarter of a salary of a researcher in the Global South. This is a significant amount of money. And not only that, even the payment system, if you take Ethiopia, for instance, you cannot have the hard currency or the mechanism to pay that amount - unless someone living in the Global North is helping you. We should think of the change as having a significant contribution by the publishers. And, some researchers who can have a due impact on this should contribute, in terms of pushing forward the idea of open access.

Logan: There are some critical responses to this corporate approach of giving the option for an author to pay US\$ 3000 or US\$

3500 to make a single article available as open access. They have said that if you are sitting in the Global South, and there is a journal that this occurs in, there is maybe twelve articles in the issue and one of them is open or two of them is open, that one of the challenges is the researcher in the Global South does not actually know which is open, when it is open, or in which journal.¹³ There is not an open access database of that sense, other than just hoping it pops up on Google Scholar. What are your thoughts about that?

Melisew: That is half of the circle, maybe less than half of the circle. After a long trial and attempt, you may find that a particular article is open access. It is a matter of time. You need to do a lot of searching because there is an assumption for granted that most of the journals from X publisher are not open access. Then comes relevance. There might be a journal or issue, of interest to you, and the issue may have one open access article, whereas the rest are not open access. That open access article may not be the article that you want. If, by chance, it is an article that you would like to read, like to cite, and make use of in terms of research - this single article does not tell you the whole story of the issues in the journal, especially if the issue is a special issue. The issue may have a broader theme that different authors are contributing to, and different articles are fitting into the issue. What you are able to get, is a minute part of the story. It may mean something to get that single article, but it is not as such significant.

Logan: A second trend that we see are new publishers emerging, one group of them are also corporate, profit earning journals. They have a fee to publish, it is much lower, but everything is open

¹³ These critiques are not as much in the academic sphere, but more in blogs and opinion pieces. For example: <https://www.universityworld-news.com/post.php?story=20190422104333956>

access. An example of a publisher like this is MDPI, which has many journals.¹⁴ Everything is open access, but every author must pay a fee in order for the article to be there. There are some other publishers, such as Academic Journals, which is hosted in Kenya and Nigeria.¹⁵ A number of these publishers have emerged in the last few years, where in principle everything is open access but there is a cost to participating in that system. What are your reflections on this, as an alternative?

Melisew: I think this is a good frontier. The publishers you mentioned, MDPI for instance, I have my own experience with that. Their review system is very rigorous and a fast track kind of process and you need to pay. The difficulty is that you may not be able to afford to pay. However, when you see the other side of the coin, these publishers are doing a great job for the readers in the Global South. Somebody who is able to afford to publish through that system is really helping those who are sitting and reading from the Global South. That is very significant. However, in terms of affording to pay the fees of those publishers, some of them might seem reasonable, but it is not. It is not really easy for a researcher in the Global South to pay the fee. The issue of journals that are published by Africans or others in the Global South by themselves, some universities host them. However, sometimes these journals struggle in terms of sustainability. For instance, there are good journals from Ethiopia, but they are not visible as they are not online. Why are they not visible

¹⁴ MDPI is a Swiss publisher, which is not new (founded in 1996), but has rapidly expanded its open access journal offerings. It currently hosts over 200 journals. The publisher has been subject to criticisms, such as publishing issues with many articles (beyond what was typical in the printed journal era) as well as challenges of quality.

¹⁵ Academic Journals hosts over 100 open access journals. It has been subject to greater criticism than MDPI. However, some of its publications are being indexed in Web of Science, which is a curated database of rigorous, high-quality research (corporate owned), suggesting that if this was the case, it may be changing.

or online, and therefore not accessible, even to an Ethiopian audience? It is because of a lack of funding and resources. You need reviewers. You need to have the infrastructure for hosting. Different stakeholders, including African governments, should collaborate in terms of availing research in this way. However, I do not think that this would be without a challenge.

Logan: Regarding the group of for-profit publishers, to give a sense for listeners, the cost of publishing - even if it is less in a journal and a publisher like MDPI, being US\$ 550 or US\$ 750 - this payment is more than a monthly salary for a faculty member in Ethiopia. It is a significant sum.

Melisew: The salary of a professor in Ethiopia is about US\$ 400, or slightly above that. As a result, you have to pay your monthly salary to publish a journal article, if you have to publish. In this publishing process, even if it is open access, there is the challenge of getting accepted. These journals also have their standards (recent references and citations in your manuscript), and academics in the Global South are relying upon what they can get access to. It is not the case that all journals that are open access or based in the Global South publish quality research, but some of them do publish high quality research. You need to meet those requirements, in addition to being able to fund open access fees. That is a challenge that continues.

Logan: A third trend that I see, which you mentioned, is public institutions and public universities beginning to host their own journals. Here in Ethiopia there are some 30 or more journals that public universities are hosting.¹⁶ This is also a trend we see in

¹⁶ For one listing of journals, see: <http://logancochrane.com/blog/list-of-ethio-pian-academic-journals>

Canada, where our research councils and different donors are supporting the development of new journals that are fully open access.¹⁷ The support provides some sort of core funding to take care of costs: the website, the administration, editorial processes or administrative supports. The result is that there is no fee to submit, to publish or to read. This seems to be a kind of third frontier, which is promising, but as you said it also has challenges of getting that core funding.

Melisew: That is right. For instance, the Ethiopian Journal of Education is one of the oldest journals in the country, but it had limited accessibility until a few years ago.¹⁸ They were not online. Even Ethiopian students were not able to read the issues, unless the libraries purchased the printed issues and made them available to students. Taking our own Ethiopian example, some journals might start a quarterly journal, being hosted and managed by a public university. However, they find themselves in a struggle to even publish once in a year. This is because of a lack of reviewers, the scientific board needs to be in place, the board needs to monitor quality, there are also running costs to managing a journal, and there are technical and editorial issues that need to be met for standardization of the journal. All this requires: human and material resources, as

¹⁷ Canada's International Development Research Centre (a research donor), for example: <https://www.idrc.ca/en/open-access-policy-idrc-funded-project-outputs> Also, the Tri-Council, the major research funder: http://www.science.gc.ca/eic/site/063.nsf/eng/h_F6765465.html?OpenDocument At least in terms of policies. These donors are supporting open access journals, such as ACME: An International Journal for Critical Geographies (funded by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council, part of the Tri-Council) and the Journal of Rural and Community Development (also funded by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council). This journal, *Nokoko*, is also an example, although it is supported by a university alone, in this case Carleton University and the Institute of African Studies.

¹⁸ The Ethiopian Journal of Education was started in the 1960s.
(<http://ejol.aau.edu.et/index.php/EJE/about>)

well as expertise. One option that I can see could work in the short term is that universities may collaborate with other experienced researchers from the Global North. This may provide the expertise required.

Logan: Maybe a concluding point on one of the challenges: There are these three trends that we spoke about, the corporate journals making individual articles open access, the emergence of new corporate publishers with fees but everything is open, and thirdly, not necessarily new, but more public universities hosting fully open access journals with no fee to read or to publish. One of the challenges that is preventing a shift to the journals of the new publishers and the journals hosted by public universities is that in the Global North and in the Global South, for university hiring, for promotion and for getting tenure you must publish in those corporate owned journals, such as Elsevier, Wiley, Sage, Taylor & Francis et cetera. There is actually a significant barrier that needs to be addressed, before that shift can take place because there are these institutional requirements in place. As a result of these requirements, researchers continue to put their research behind paywalls and behind gates. And, because of that, those in the Global South do not have access to the high-quality research, even if they are from the Global South and they know this challenge, but they need to get the job.

Melisew: That is the issue. It is a matter of opportunity cost. It is a costly opportunity cost that you may incur. For instance, in my university, in order to get promotion from a lecturer to an assistant professor to an associate and a full professor, there are these requirements of publishing an article in a reputable journal. Reputability in their terms actually might mean different things, but mostly the one you mentioned. Reputable means a journal which is published and hosted by those big corporate publishers. When I publish my own research that I conducted in Ethiopia or anywhere in the Global

South, and publish it in a certain 'reputable' journal, that means that students and researchers who are situated in the Global South are not able to access it. That is the irony. The institutional requirements push you. In order to get promoted, you need to go for 'quality' journals, and the ' 'quality' journals are the journals owned by the big corporate owners, and these are the corporate owners that are not making the research available for people in the Global South. It is a kind of irony, a kind of paradox. I think we have to live with this system, until we find a kind of middle ground to arbitrate these issues. We have to live with it because it is choosing between your career and trying to make a contribution of research in your own country. The researcher in an Ethiopian context is in a kind of a dilemma - living in-between these two issues, or goals.

Logan: On this, the dilemma is shared in the Global North. Many departments or disciplines have set journals, whether they are Tier 1 journals or whether there is a specific list based on the field, in most cases these are journals owned by these major corporate publishers. Even if an emerging scholar or an established scholar in the Global North is thinking about where they should publish, and they recognize that there is an access issue in the Global South, they themselves are conflicted because they want to have that publication recognized. For that, it ought to be in a journal with a good impact factor. That recognition helps with getting a promotion. It also helps with getting research grants, and so on. There is the individual level of the choice of the individual researchers and then there is also the institutional level, regarding what is valued within the university.

Melisew: This takes us back to the ethics question that we discussed earlier. Some people sometimes publish for an Ethiopian audience, selecting journals that are published in Ethiopia. There are others who understand the difficulties and the challenge in the Global South, in Ethiopia specifically. And, they would like to

contribute, but it is not without sacrifice. The system there in the Global North, and even here in the Global South as this system is actually an extension of the system already there (the global system which is now operating) - these systems are pushing you to publish in those corporate journals, so that you get your funding, your promotion, and your big name - big name in terms of profession. Or, they sacrifice a little bit and contribute to knowledge production and access and do justice in terms of contributing research and knowledge to this really evidence deficient context.

Logan: I want to thank you for taking the time for the discussion. Being based in the Global North, I find that many of my colleagues who do not work in the Global South may not be aware that this is an issue. Additionally, they may not be aware of the scale of the challenges. As we mentioned, it is not just accessing articles, but even reading abstracts, there are impacts on publishing and upon the entire educational process from the B.A. to the M.A. to the PhD and beyond. That there is a cumulative effect impacting the country, in terms of the collective ability to conduct research and to have trained, skilled professionals who make informed decisions. I hope that this conversation helps to fill some of that gap.

Melisew: Thank you very much for giving me the opportunity to share some of these challenges and to share information on the situation we are living with to the rest of the world.