

Völkerrechtsblog as an Infrastructure for Global Science Communication and Open Education in the Digital Era

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Abstract

Open Access publishing has numerous advantages and is said to be beneficial to the human rights to information, education, and science. Yet, the transition to Open Access has been slow, with the legal discipline lagging far behind. Moreover, Open Access brought about new risks of exclusion

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and hegemony. The aim of this article is to discuss the role of blogs, long considered as pioneers in the debate, in contributing to a sustainable Open Access transformation in the legal discipline. As editors and founders of *Völkerrechtsblog*, we have followed these developments closely and have also been part of them. After briefly introducing *Völkerrechtsblog*, the article addresses the question of how blogs and digital Open Access publishing can contribute to education in the legal discipline. The article concludes with some reflections on future visions for blogs and sustainable Open Access publishing in the legal areas.

Keywords

Open Access; academic communication; digitalization; publishing infrastructure; right to education; right to science

Völkerrechtsblog como infraestructura para la Comunicación Científica Global y Educación Abierta en la Era Digital

Resumen

La publicación en acceso abierto tiene numerosas ventajas y se dice que es beneficiosa para los derechos humanos a la información, la educación y la ciencia. Sin embargo, la transición hacia ella es lenta, y la disciplina jurídica está rezagada en este aspecto. Además, el Acceso Abierto conlleva nuevos riesgos de exclusión y hegemonía. El objetivo de este artículo es discutir el papel de los blogs, considerados durante mucho tiempo pioneros en el debate, para contribuir a una transformación sostenible del Acceso Abierto en la disciplina jurídica. Como editores y fundadores de *Völkerrechtsblog*, hemos seguido de cerca los avances en este campo y hemos formado parte de ellos. Tras presentar brevemente *Völkerrechtsblog*, el artículo aborda la cuestión de cómo los blogs y la publicación digital en Acceso Abierto pueden contribuir a la educación en la disciplina jurídica. El artículo concluye con algunas reflexiones sobre las visiones futuras de los blogs y la publicación sostenible en acceso abierto en el ámbito jurídico.

Palabras clave

Acceso abierto; comunicación académica; digitalización; infraestructura editorial; derecho a la educación; derecho a la ciencia

A. INTRODUCTION

Digitalization and new media have also reached the legal discipline. Yet, in contrast to other disciplines, especially the natural sciences, a certain “net resistance”¹ notoriously still prevails. The transition to Open Access, understood as the free accessibility to scientific literature via the

1 Klaus Graf, “Vermitteln Blogs das Gefühl rastloser Masturbation? Eine Antwort auf Valentin Groebner [Do blogs convey the feeling of restless masturbation? A response to Valentin Groebner]”, *Redaktionsblog*, last modified February 17th, 2013, accessed March 19th, 2019, <http://redaktionsblog.hypotheses.org/951>.

internet, lags. A recent study found once again that the transition to Open Access in the legal discipline remains “in its infancy.”² At times Open Access is even met with resistance: When the *University of Konstanz* attempted to force its scientists to make their publications openly available after a certain period of time, it was precisely members of the Faculty of Law who filed a legal action against this requirement, invoking their academic freedom.³

This skeptical attitude stands in contrast to the many promises and advantages attributed to Open Access. Positive effects on international visibility, reception, and quoting frequency of digital and freely accessible publication formats have also long been shown for the legal discipline.⁴ Already in 2011, the German Science Council (Wissenschaftsrat) pointed out that the humanities and social sciences needed to adapt to developments in infrastructure in order to remain internationally competitive.⁵ In its report on the future of legal studies, the Council also explicitly highlighted the importance of electronic and Open Access publishing for the international visibility of German scholarship.⁶ In its latest report on the transformation to Open Access, the Science Council stated that the open accessibility of research (published under a free license) should become the default publishing mode and even part of good academic practices, as soon as the required structures are sufficiently developed.⁷

Besides advantages for researchers and academics, Open Access is additionally believed to have an important potential to make the system of knowledge production more equitable, democratic, and inclusive, and to contribute to closing the “knowledge gap”. One of the triggers of the Open Access movement was the so-called “Serials Crisis” in which libraries and universities, even in affluent Western institutions, could not afford the increasingly expensive large publishers’ journals anymore. The possibility of digital publishing at low cost seemed to offer a solution by making knowledge universally accessible to everyone with an internet connection. This early enthusiasm is visible in the documents that mark the beginning of the modern Open Access movement, such as the Budapest and the Berlin Declarations on Open Access, dating from the beginning of the new millennium.⁸ In other words, the internet, with its

2 Anna Severin, Matthias Egger, Martin Paul Eve, and Daniel Hürlimann, “Discipline-Specific Open Access Publishing Practices and Barriers to Change: An Evidence-Based Review,” *F1000Research*, 1925, No. 7 (2018), doi:10.12688/f1000research.17328.2.

3 See the Open Letter from February 1st, 2016, available at http://www.ordnungderwissenschaft.de/2016-2/07_Infoteil/14_Joewisch_konstanzer-juristenfakultaet_verweigert_zweitveroeffentlichungspflicht_odw_2016.pdf (last visited March 19th, 2019). The Administrative Court of Baden-Württemberg referred the question to the Federal Constitutional Court in a decision dated September 26th, 2017.

4 See e.g., the study by Carol Watson and James M. Donovan, “Citation Advantage of Open Access Legal Scholarship,” *Law Library Journal* No. 103 (2011): 553-573.

5 “Recommendations on Research Infrastructures in Humanities and Social Sciences,” German Science and Humanities Council, WISSENSCHAFTSRAT, Berlin, January 2011, accessed November 21st, 2022, https://www.wissenschaftsrat.de/download/archiv/10465-11_engl.pdf?__blob=publicationFile&v=3.

6 “Prospects of Legal Scholarship in Germany. Current Situation, Analyses, Recommendations,” German Science and Humanities Council, WISSENSCHAFTSRAT, Hamburg, November 2012, accessed November 21st, 2022, https://www.wissenschaftsrat.de/download/archiv/2558-12_engl.html.

7 “Empfehlung zur Transformation des wissenschaftlichen Publizierens zu Open Access [Recommendation for the transformation of scientific publishing to Open Access],” German Science and Humanities Council, WISSENSCHAFTSRAT, Cologne, January 2022, accessed November 21st, 2022, https://www.wissenschaftsrat.de/download/2022/pm_0222.html.

8 See “Declaration of the Budapest Open Access Initiative (BOAI),” BOAI, Budapest, February 2002, accessed November 21st, 2022, <https://www.budapestopenaccessinitiative.org/read/>; and “Berlin Declaration on Open

unprecedented communication possibilities, seems to have a great potential for materializing the right to information and the rights to science and education, as enshrined, for example, in the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights.⁹ Indeed, the UN Committee on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights (CESCR) in its recent General Comment on the “right to science,” has explicitly asked States to promote Open Science,¹⁰ and, in 2021, UNESCO adopted a recommendation on Open Science.¹¹

Yet, almost twenty years after Open Access was first implemented, and despite new boosts received by the movement during the Covid pandemic,¹² the “Access Revolution”¹³ remains unfulfilled and faces new challenges. Today, digitalization’s risk of exclusion is discussed at least as much as its potential to include.¹⁴ In the context of access to publications, commercial publishers have successfully undertaken an “economic re-interpretation”¹⁵ of Open Access by charging authors for publishing rather than readers for accessing academic content. This shift of costs only leads to a shift of the problem rather than to its solution and entails the risk of creating new exclusions. Therefore, today the question is no longer how the digitalization and the transformation to Open Access can be achieved, but rather how it can be achieved in an inclusive and sustainable way.

The aim of this article is to discuss the role of blogs in contributing to a sustainable Open Access transformation in the legal discipline. As editors and founders of *Völkerrechtsblog*, an academic blog in the field of international law, we have followed these developments closely and have also been part of them. From 2019 to 2022, *Völkerrechtsblog* received funding from the German Research Foundation (Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft, DFG) aiming at the development of a model project in digital and Open Access publishing. Indeed, blogs,

Access to Knowledge in the Sciences and Humanities,” Open Access, October 2003, accessed January 30th, 2022, https://openaccess.mpg.de/67605/berlin_declaration_engl.pdf.

- 9 UN, International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights of December 16th, 1966.
- 10 CESCR, “General Comment No. 25 on science and economic, social, and cultural rights (article 15 (1) (b), (2), (3) and (4) of the International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights),” April 2020, <https://docstore.ohchr.org/SelfServices/FilesHandler.ashx?enc=4slQ6QSmIBEDzFEovLCuW1a0Szab0oXTdlmnsJZZVQdxONLLLJiul8wRmVtR5Kxx73i0Uz0k13FeZiqChAWHKFuBqp%2B4RaxfUzqSAfyZYAR%2Fq7sqC7AHRa48PPRRALHB>.
- 11 UNESCO, “UNESCO Recommendation on Open Science”, General Conference, 41st session, November 2021, <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000379949.locale=en>; UNESCO, “Recommendation concerning the promotion and use of multilingualism and universal access to cyberspace,” 32nd session, September 30th – October 17th, 2003, https://en.unesco.org/sites/default/files/eng_-_recommendation_concerning_the_promotion_and_use_of_multilingualism_and_universal_access_to_cyberspace.pdf.
- 12 See e.g. “A Joint Appeal for Open Science by CERN, OHCHR, UNESCO and WHO,” UN, Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, October 2020, accessed January 30th, 2022. <https://www.ohchr.org/en/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=26433&LangID=E>
- 13 Peter Suber, *Open Access* (Cambridge/Massachusetts/London, England: The MIT Press, 2012), 2.
- 14 See: UN, Human Right Council. Special Rapporteur on the Right to Education, “Right to education: impact of the coronavirus disease crisis on the right to education – concerns, challenges and opportunities: report of the Special Rapporteur on the Right to Education,” A/HRC/44/39, June 2020, <https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/G20/158/03/PDF/G2015803.pdf?OpenElement>.
- 15 Niels Taubert and Peter Weingart, “Changes in Scientific Publishing: A Heuristic for Analysis.” In *The Future of Scholarly Publishing. Open Access and the Economics of Digitisation*, ed. Niels Taubert and Peter Weingart (Cape Town: African Minds, 2017), 1-33, 16.

as genuinely digital and freely accessible publication formats, have been described as important pioneers¹⁶ and “glimmers of hope”¹⁷ in the Open Access skeptical legal discipline in Germany. While the format “blog” originally was mainly found in the United States, blogs such as *Völkerrechtsblog* or *Verfassungsblog* today have become indispensable in the German-speaking countries. Having had a leading role in preparing the ground for Open Access publishing in legal scholarship, they are now important independent voices that further accompany the ongoing transformation processes.

In what follows, we shall first briefly introduce *Völkerrechtsblog* and share some lessons learned during the period in which it received funding (B). We shall then address the question of how blogs and digital Open Access publishing may contribute to education in the legal discipline (C). The article concludes with some reflections on future visions for blogs and sustainable Open Access publishing in the legal areas (D).

B. INTRODUCING VÖLKERRECHTSBLOG

After other projects paved the way, *Völkerrechtsblog* was created in 2014 as part of the *Arbeitskreis junger VölkerrechtswissenschaftlerInnen (AjV)*. The *AjV* is an informal network aiming at connecting international law scholars of the younger generation from Germany, Austria, and Switzerland.¹⁸ The members of the *AjV* have in common that they all began their studies after 1990 and therefore belong to a generation that has directly experienced the technical developments and is curious about their latest challenges.

The original idea behind *Völkerrechtsblog* was to make use of the potentially global virtual public sphere on the internet and to promote a truly transnational academic discourse. In international law, transnational academic communication is a matter of disciplinary identity. By definition, the subject matter of international legal studies is not limited to individual legal systems (contrary to other legal branches). Nevertheless, in Germany and other countries, publishing outlets are oriented towards a national audience; paywalls continue to build additional obstacles to a truly transnational flow of knowledge and discourse. Also, regarding international law, Open Access has not yet become the standard – with unfortunate consequences especially for researchers and students from less affluent institutions in the Global South. This puts into question the internationality of international law today,¹⁹ and is an obstacle to the production of knowledge in international legal studies.

The internet seems to offer solutions to many of these problems. Digital publishing is not only cheaper and faster than print, but also potentially allows reaching the *global* community

16 See also “Siggenger’s Theses on Scientific Publishing in the Digital Age,” #Siggenthesen; “Wikis und andere soziale Medien sind zentral für einen offenen und freien Wissenschaftsdiskurs [Web media such as blogs, wikis and other social media are central to open and free scientific discourse]. #Siggenthesen Nr. 5”, #Siggenthesen, accessed November 21st, 2022, <https://www.merkur-zeitschrift.de/2016/10/24/siggenthesen/>.

17 Hanjo Hammann, “Open Access in der Rechtswissenschaft, [Open Access in law]” (Conference, University of Bern, May 2016), 1140-1142, 1141.

18 For more information, see <https://voelkerrechtsblog.org/about/the-blog/> (last accessed November 21st, 2022).

19 See Anthea Roberts, *Is International Law International?* (Oxford: Oxford University Press 2017).

of international law scholars. These were the parameters we had in mind when creating *Völkerrechtsblog*. Thanks to *Wordpress*, the operation of an editing platform is possible with little technical effort and prior knowledge in an extremely cost-effective way. The *Völkerrechtsblog* project thus started at the kitchen table, as an initiative of a group of doctoral students, motivated to test and experiment with the new spaces and possibilities provided by the internet for international legal scholarship.

The profile of *Völkerrechtsblog* should therefore be seen within this context. First, it is important to note that *Völkerrechtsblog* sees itself as a so-called academic blog, i.e., a blog that is operated from within the academic community and claims to participate in bringing forward a disciplinary discourse.²⁰ In contrast to other blogs, the *Völkerrechtsblog*' primary purpose is not to cover news in international law; rather, it sees itself as a "second loop of reflection", that covers topics from a theoretical perspective. In other words, *Völkerrechtsblog* is located between journalism and academia, often taking up, but not limited to, current developments, and intended to reflect upon them from an academic perspective ("slow blogging") and make our expertise accessible to a larger audience.²¹

To ensure quality and professional standards, the editorial team relies on a peer-review process by a scientific advisory board consisting mostly of younger yet already established members of the academic community.²² This warrants a link back to classical forms and established representatives of the academic community and makes clear that it is not the goal of *Völkerrechtsblog* to break with current structures. Rather, we seek to complement existing formats and build bridges between classical and newer formats.

The idea of dialogue and exchange is at the forefront of the project. *Völkerrechtsblog* is conceived as a platform where ideas can be tested and further developed. And it does so with the goal of academic exchange in the interest of advancing disciplinary knowledge. Accordingly, articles on the blog are shorter than those in conventional formats, 1000-1500 words, and may also be more thesis-like and less formal than classic journal articles. Contributions to the blog also appear in German, English, or French to reach the widest possible audience.

This dialogical element is also reflected in the cooperations established. Through partnerships with renowned journals – so far *Verfassung und Recht in Übersee (VRÜ)*, *Archiv des Völkerrechts*, *Leiden Journal of International Law (LJIL)*, *Swiss Review of International and European Law (SRIEL)*, *Nordic Journal of International Law* and *Heidelberg Journal of International Law*²³ – we invite authors with the relevant expertise to discuss articles currently published in these journals on *Völkerrechtsblog*, thereby making them accessible to a wider audience. The articles referred to are usually made accessible online free of charge by the publishers, so that

20 See for a conceptual discussion Hannah Birkenkötter, "Blogs in der Wissenschaft vom Öffentlichen Recht. Ein Beitrag zur Erschließung neuer Formate [Blogs in Public Law Scholarship. A contribution to the development of new formats]," In *Formate der Rechtswissenschaft*, ed. Andreas Funke and Konrad Lachmayer (Weilerswist: Velbrück Wissenschaft, 2017), 117-139, 125 f.

21 See for a brief overview Dana Schmalz and Michael Riegner, "Völkerrecht 2.0 – es ist angerichtet [International Law 2.0 – Dinner is served]," April 2014, *Völkerrechtsblog*, doi: 10.17176/20170104-153908.

22 For an overview see *Völkerrechtsblog*, "International Law & International Legal Thought." <https://voelkerrechtsblog.org/about/team-and-contact/>.

23 See "Partners and sponsors," *Völkerrechtsblog*, accessed November 21st, 2022, <http://voelkerrechtsblog.org/about/partners-and-sponsors/>.

the blog has positive repercussions in terms of *Open Access* in traditional formats.²⁴ This type of cooperation increases acceptance from and visibility of the professional community.

Another format that combines classic with new forms of publication is the book symposium: In this case, reviewers discuss on the blog the work directly with the author of a book.²⁵ Conference symposia build similar bridges.²⁶

In addition to the publication of articles, *Völkerrechtsblog* has a service section that provides up-to-date information on job postings and events in the field of international law in German-speaking countries. Since 2016, we have been cooperating with the *German Society for International Law (DGIR)* providing the Society with the content of the service section in the form of a newsletter.

From a legal point of view, *Völkerrechtsblog* uses the *Creative Commons Share Alike 4.0 license agreement* (attribution) for its content contributions, which is also used by other legal blogs. The contributions in *Völkerrechtsblog* are provided with a stable *Digital Object Identifier (DOI)* and are preserved at the Berlin State Library using the Open Access repository *<intR>² Dok*. We also promote all our content on social media (Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn, and Instagram). Social media and in particular Twitter, have become important additional avenues for exchange; today many discussions take place on Twitter and, conversely, Twitter debates have already motivated authors to write texts in *Völkerrechtsblog* on many occasions.

Eight years after its creation, *Völkerrechtsblog* is a successful institution and indeed an indispensable part of the publishing infrastructure with a growing number of authors, readers, and articles published. The data on readers impressively proves that electronic and freely accessible publications are indeed received almost worldwide: The digitally recorded readers of *Völkerrechtsblog* come from more than 180 countries in all continents. In addition to the German-speaking countries, the US, India, Russia, China, and Turkey are among the countries in which the blog is most frequently read.²⁷ Besides the readers, our numbers suggest that authorship becomes more international, too, including an increasing number of authors from outside Europe. More specifically, we receive an increasing number of submissions from India. However, other than the location of readers, the location of authors is not recorded by *Wordpress* and we do not systematically collect the data – because of the inherent difficulties of the exercise, but also due to our limited resources. Evidence for the internationalization of authorship is thus more anecdotal than empirical.

The funding received from the DFG allowed the blog to consolidate and professionalize itself and to expand its structures. Numbers indicate that the project has been a success. Yet, one of the challenges that remains is how to sustainably fund Open Access infrastructure. In the

24 Namely, VRÜ and LJIL provide articles discussed in the International Law Blog Open Access. See for a more recent example Iris Canor, “Is a bird in the hand always worth two in the bush?,” *Völkerrechtsblog*, September 13th, 2017, doi: 10.17176/20170913-105951.

25 See for example “Möllers Book Forum,” *Völkerrechtsblog*, accessed November 21st, 2022, <http://voelkerrechtsblog.org/category/symposium/mollers-buchforum/>.

26 One example is the symposium “Global South and Comparative Constitutional Law” in the conference held under the same name at Humboldt University. See “Global South and Comparative Constitutional Law,” *Völkerrechtsblog*, accessed November 21st, 2022, <https://voelkerrechtsblog.org/category/symposium/global-south-in-comparative-constitutional-law/>.

27 *Wordpress* statistics of the *Völkerrechtsblog* on file with the authors.

case of *Völkerrechtsblog*, this is not so much associated to the technical infrastructure of the blog itself, but rather to the personnel required to operate and maintain it. In a way, the blog has become a victim of its own success, with the steadily growing numbers of submissions and articles challenging the structures time and again. The solution we have adopted to finance these structures differs from other Open Access business models in that we do not charge readers for accessing nor authors for publishing. Rather, we rely on a community-based model and have signed an agreement with several international law chairs within Germany who support the work of the blog through a given number of working hours. While this model is well suited to the community-based ideal of the blog, it has its limits, the most important being that the budgets chairs have are tight. Furthermore, probably the model is not transferable to other projects. The question of how Open Access infrastructure serving the community can be funded thus remains open. We shall come back to this in the last section of this paper.

C. BLOGS AND EDUCATION

The high costs of accessing or buying academic content is not only an obstacle for researchers, but also for students and individuals wishing to access academic content for educational purposes. Textbooks are often expensive, leading to unequal opportunities for those who cannot afford them.²⁸ The access gap is particularly large in the “Global South”. This has tangible consequences in terms of human rights, since in the digital era, access to knowledge is deemed crucial for the exercise of several human rights, including the right to education.²⁹

Internet and Open Access promise solutions for this problem, too. The Agenda for Sustainable Development explicitly states that “(...) the spread of information and communications technology and global interconnectedness has great potential to accelerate human progress, to bridge the digital divide and to develop knowledge societies (...).”³⁰ The CESCR has clearly stated that, in the digital era, the right to science requires States to put in place an infrastructure for the spread of science and scientific education. It states that “(i)n particular, States should promote open science and open-source publication.”³¹

In the context of educational resources, rather than Open Access, the term “Open Educational Resources” or “OER” is used. Like Open Access, OER means not only free accessibility, but publication under an open license, that is, these materials can not only be accessed, downloaded, and stored, but also reused and built upon.³² On the one hand, this is deemed beneficial for the accessibility of these materials, but also overall more cost-efficient and therefore

28 See on this Fengchun Miao, Sanjaya Mishra, and Rory McGreal, *Open Educational Resources: Policy, Costs and Transformation*. (Canada: UNESCO and Commonwealth of Learning, 2016), 227-228.

29 UNESCO, “Recommendation on Open Educational Resources (OER),” 40th session, November 25th, http://portal.unesco.org/en/ev.php-URL_ID=49556&URL_DO=DO_TOPIC&URL_SECTION=201.html

30 UN, General Assembly, “Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development,” Resolution A/RES/70/1, September 25th, 2015, para. 15, https://www.un.org/en/development/desa/population/migration/generalassembly/docs/globalcompact/A_RES_70_1_E.pdf.

31 CESCR, General Comment No. 25, para. 16.

32 Miao, Mishra, and McGreal, *Open Educational Resources*, 1.

a tool to level the playing field globally. In 2019, UNESCO released a recommendation on OER stating that it “(...) can support quality education that is equitable, inclusive, open and participatory, as well as enhance the academic freedom and professional autonomy of teachers by widening the scope of materials available for teaching and learning (...).”³³ The challenges brought about by OER are similar to those Open Access faces: both OER’s quality and sustainability must be ensured.³⁴

In German legal academia, OER are only now beginning. A pioneer project that should be mentioned is the 2020 initiative “OpenRewi,” aimed at providing free and high-quality teaching material for the legal discipline.³⁵

The contribution of blogs in this context is twofold: on the one hand, they provide high quality open access content. They also provide greater accessibility than conventional academic literature: because of its aim to reach a broader audience outside of the academic community, the format is shorter, and the language is often simpler. This allows students to find up-to-date and high-quality material to illustrate what they have learned in the classroom. On the other hand, *Völkerrechtsblog* also accepts submissions by students, subject to the usual quality-control (peer review procedure). In other words, it offers the possibility to experience academic publishing, receive feedback from members of the academic community, and participate in the discourse. In this sense, *Völkerrechtsblog* also contributes to open the discourse.

At the same time, blogs in general also entail risks for digital education. One potential risk is that they amplify voices that are already privileged, such as those from established academics in Europe or North America. That is why *Völkerrechtsblog* aims at including a diversified pool of authors that also represent voices from the Global South. Another risk might be that established blogs crowd out similar projects or sources from Southern jurisdictions. In that regard, *Völkerrechtsblog* seeks to cooperate, rather than compete with, publishing partners from the Global South, such as the *Afronomics* blog. This cooperation ideally leads to a mutual reinforcing of the impact each partner has and to amplifying the voice of authors from the South on both platforms. A third downside may be the fact that even Open Access is now subject to commercialization, as pointed out below in the outlook. *Völkerrechtsblog* cannot address this structural risk alone, but at least, it calls for a critical promotion of Open Access as a tool for digitalizing education.

D. VISIONS OF THE FUTURE

Looking back on almost a decade of existence and three years of funding by the German Research Funding Organization, it is fair to say that *Völkerrechtsblog* is a success story. The blog has become an important actor in the (German and international) publication landscape in international law and has also actively participated both in the debates about Open Access and in the process of transformation itself by providing an openly accessible publication

33 UNESCO, *Recommendation on Open Educational Resources*. See: World Open Educational Resources, “Paris Declaration on Open Educational Resources,” June 2012, <https://en.unesco.org/oer/paris-declaration>.

34 See UNESCO, *Recommendation on Open Educational Resources*, para. 13(f) and para. 14.

35 “About us”, *OpenRewi*, accessed November 21st, 2022, <https://openrewi.org/>.

infrastructure. Despite these important achievements, challenges remain, and many of them are associated with more general challenges. While some Open Access projects suffer from lack of acceptance in the academic community, partly due to a (perceived) lack of quality guarantee, this is not the case of *Völkerrechtsblog* which is a popular publication format. However, the remaining challenge concerns funding, and paradoxically, its growing popularity increases this challenge. Here it is important to say that, despite trends going in this direction, we have consciously decided not to commercialize our services and to abstain from charging authors for publishing.

Our main mission remains the further opening and expansion of the discursive space geographically, but also with the goal of abolishing hierarchies within the academic community. Our understanding of Open Access is that not only the supply, but also the production side in knowledge production should be inclusive. We will thus continue with our efforts to provide a platform for authors from more marginalized regions and keep cooperating with other projects with the purpose of mutually amplifying our voices. Against this background, we find it problematic that Open Access is becoming mainly a business model for large academic publishers. We, like many others, believe that “biblio-diversity” is necessary, and that non-commercial, community-driven infrastructures should be part of this diverse ecosystem. Clearly, the struggle for Open Access is not over, and we shall remain part of it.

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