

PALOMERA Interview

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General information

Stakeholder type (multiple choice, delete irrelevant):

- policy makers

Country the interview is focused on: Denmark

Language of the interview conducted: English

Interviewer

I have a number of questions here. We can see if not all of them are relevant for the Danish context. But could you briefly just to start, describe your own background and how it relates to, well, open access? I understand it on the policy side, the policy-maker side of it, since we are also interviewing funders and university representatives. But can you just briefly introduce yourself and your professional experience with Open Access?

Interviewee

Yes, I will. Well, I'm a senior advisor at the Danish Agency for Higher Education and Science, and the agency is part of the Ministry of Higher Education and Science. I have been occupied with Open Access since 2014, and I've been also part of writing our strategy on Open Access, and the strategy we have is actually from 2014, and it was launched by our former minister, I think it was in April 2014. But in 2018, the strategy was revised, as we could see that we would not be able to reach 100 % open access in 2022. So, we postponed the target to 2025 in the new version of the strategy. I've been working with Open Science for many years, including Open Access and FAIR data. I'm also a member of the National Point of Reference Expert Group in the EU, and I'm also a member, an alternate, of the Steering Board of European Open Science Cloud.

Interviewer

I think you are just exactly the right person we should talk to when it comes to this. You seem to have a very diverse and a long experience with a fairly new phenomenon. The history of open access isn't that long. I think around there, 2014 was maybe when things

really started happening on the policy level. So you've been following it from the start. Something just very fundamental that we're trying to confirm is the definition of what could be an academic book, because they come in many different shapes and sizes. As soon as we detach ourselves from scientific articles, it becomes much harder to say when a piece of work is an academic book? If I read up our proposed definition to you, and we can see if you agree that it matches how you would perceive academic books. In our project, we've defined academic books as scholarly, peer-reviewed books, which include monographs, book chapters, edited collections, critical editions, and other long-form, scholarly works. So very long description, trying to cover a lot. But the fundamental criterion we have is that they should be peer-reviewed.

Interviewee

Yes, I agree.

Interviewer

If a policy is created for open access books in universities or on a national level, it should mainly focus on peer-reviewed works because otherwise it's ballooning up into an impossible scale, really. But do you agree that this peer-reviewed criterion sounds like a good distinction for trying to separate academic books from all the other books?

Interviewee

Yes, definitely, I agree. It's also a criteria in the Danish Open Access strategy that the articles, the scientific articles, must be peer reviewed. So yes, I definitely agree.

Interviewer

We haven't received a lot of critique for that, but often it can also be a bit subject-dependent that some... Well, in some disciplines, they aren't maybe peer reviewed, but they are still part of scholarly works. But I think for 99 % so far we have got an agreement that peer-reviewed could probably be a good criterion for some of the recommendations we might produce from the project. Actually, we are looking at open access policies in all European countries, in Denmark also for institutions and on the national level. You mentioned that in 2014, the current version of the National Open Access Policy in Denmark was issued or put into place. Did I understand that that's



currently the one that is still in place, that it hasn't been renewed or remodeled after that still, the 2014 version?

Interviewee

It was revised in 2018, actually.

Interviewer

Okay, so there's been some adjustment to it in 2018. Is it so that that doesn't include any mention of or any policy that would be applicable to books that it would specifically mention Open Access books or something like this.

Interviewee

Yeah, that's right.

Interviewer

And I think a characteristic trait of Danish Open Access policy, I guess I may be generalizing here, is that it's been fairly focused on green open access in comparison to other countries that have chosen other strategies. Am I correct in that assumption?

Interviewee

Yes. The current strategy focuses on green Open Access. Golden Open Access is also allowed, but it says in the strategy that gold is okay if it doesn't result in cost increase.

Interviewer

Is there an ongoing policy-making process? For example, in Finland, we have a permanent National Open Science Coordination that has working groups from the scholarly community that are basically constantly, I wouldn't say constantly writing suggestions for new policies, but there is an ongoing process for renewing policies. But is there in

Denmark any type of fixed body or working group that would periodically see over the policies? Or has it been more based on sporadic demand that it's, for example, 2018 was renewed? Or how does the process look like behind the policies?

Interviewee

We had steering committee of Open Access until 2018. The committee helped revising the strategy, and after the revised strategy was launched, the committee was closed. But... in this revised strategy it says that it must be evaluated before 2025. At the moment, we are actually evaluating the strategy. We have set up a working group with representatives of the universities and the Royal Danish Library and representatives of staff running the Danish Open Access Indicator. We will finalize the report in, I think, in November, December this year. We will also present the results of the evaluation for all the rectors of the Danish universities and the directors of the research foundations. We will discuss with them recommendations for the next steps. Should the strategy be revised again? What about plan S and coalition S and the golden open access model? Should we allow for more golden open access? What about the rights retention strategy? There's a lot of questions that will be addressed in this evaluation report. I don't know if it will be translated to English, but there will be an English summary of the report that might be interesting for you and others.

Interviewer

Definitely. Is this like a preparatory stage maybe? It doesn't include a renewed policy, but it evaluates the current status and maybe comes up with some recommendations or suggestions for alternatives for the policy or something.

Interviewee

Yes. It will be presented for our minister with the recommendations, and then it is up to the minister whether she wants to adjust the present strategy or whether the recommendations will inspire her to replace the current strategy with a quite new and different one.

Interviewer

Sounds really interesting and it seems like many things are happening like this under the surface. I was also talking to a representative in Norway where they're also in the middle of an assessment period, not yet renewing policy, but trying to consult with universities



and representatives to find some consensus or at least common ground for trying to promote open access in a different way than before. It's very interesting to hear.

Interviewer

Do you know anything about how well universities in Denmark have adopted or taken this current national policy into use? Is it so that it's very harmonized that the Danish universities just refer to the national policy or something very similar in their approaches to open access? Or is it, from your perspective, very diverse?

Interviewee

I think they have adopted the strategy at all eight universities. Part of this, one might call it a success, is that we monitor progress at the universities, the progress of open access. We do that every year. We have a national open access indicator and we are in contact with the universities and we present them for the preliminary results of open access in order for them to step up their performance. The indicator has created some competition between the universities. So, when we present the data and the results, some of them are very proud if they, this year, had 100% open access. For instance, our IT university, it's a small university, they have, I think, around 100 publications each year. They have, in several years, had 100% open access. It's easier for them, of course, because they don't have so many publications, but nevertheless they've been very proud and told the public about it on their homepage and so on. So the monitoring thing is an important tool in our effort to promote open access in Denmark.

Interviewer

This sounds very useful. I think it's also something that Denmark has been very proactive in comparison to other Nordic countries in this monitoring aspect. It started very early.

Interviewee

It might be something that you don't maybe know so much about, but do you know anything about if there is a different funding opportunity or incentive for researchers to write open access or try to make their books open access versus not? For example, in Finland and in Norway, the university funding model incentivizes open access. Universities get paid more in government funding if works are published open access. So in that way, there is this indirect incentive. It doesn't come to the researcher as a money



income, but the university is incentivized to make as much open access as possible because it gives them thousands of euros extra in funding. But do you know any type of some economic dimension of these open access books as it relates to Denmark?

Interviewee

No. There's no economic incentives for promoting open access in Denmark. I'm pretty sure I haven't heard of it. And we at the ministry, we don't incentivize Open Access economically.

Interviewer

Okay, yeah, I thought so as well. And I didn't also find very many examples of foundations in Denmark would offer grants or scholarships for covering these pretty large book processing fees or book fees, which might be 8,000, 10,000 euros. But it seems like that isn't really a practice yet, at least in Denmark, that prospective authors could apply for funding to make a book available, open access that they are writing. I think it's still fairly rare.

Interviewee

Yes.

Interviewer

Okay, that's useful. It's also hard maybe to have a simple answer to this, but how do you see the positioning of just books overall in the research assessment system in Denmark? Are books, well, maybe not monetarily, but is it something that universities are incentivized to focus on in comparison to articles, like what's the culture or research assessment environment for books? Do you have any observations that it would be a very valued form of making one's results available? Or is it very discipline specific? What is the overall context of book publishing?

Interviewee

I think it's discipline specific in humanities and maybe also in social sciences, but definitely in humanities. But I don't know the answer to your question.



Interviewer

I know, and it is not really a question, more like what is your general feeling. Well, maybe also in these policy evaluation discussions, because it seems like books haven't... Well, partly they maybe haven't been a priority because they are a harder nut to crack when it comes to coming up with good funding models, because it's not as easy as these annual agreements with big publishers or Green Open Access. They require other tools. But also I've seen discussions where books have been just left a bit as a lower priority maybe also because it's so discipline-specific that it's only relevant for a certain part of research, because other natural sciences aren't really focused on books. So it's easy that it falls a bit between the cracks when it comes to that.

Interviewee

Yes. That might be right. But I don't know what are the tendencies of books versus articles. I don't know.

Interviewer

It's tricky. Then another category we have here is the technological side. Is there currently already in Denmark? Is there a web portal or web services that would be basically ready for open access book publishing or distribution? Do you have a national portal or are universities well equipped, as you see it, to already distribute open access books?

Interviewee

There is a portal at the Royal Library homepage. It's called Tidsskrift.dk. It's a website with primarily Danish books and articles.

Interviewer

Okay, so it already contains books. I was thinking from the name that it's only about the journals, but maybe it has actually some longer works. I haven't dug that deep.



Interviewee

But- No, maybe not. Maybe it's not books, actually, because you are right, the name tidsskrift.dk , it's not a place for books, but it's primarily for Danish journals, and the Danish Ministry supported this platform. We supported the platform because we wanted these journals to be open access. We gave some money to educate the people to make the journals digital and open access. But it's a long time ago. But maybe not books.

Interviewer

So far, but it seems like maybe something like that could host some sub-page or something if books would start to become more common, maybe that type of service or part of that service could extend books.

Interviewee

Yes.

Interviewer

But I guess also the strong repository strategy of Denmark probably could also help for universities to distribute open access books that their authors or researchers are publishing. Because I guess most universities in Denmark have a repository since the green open access culture is quite strong.

Interviewee

Yes. All universities have their own repositories. Yes, sure. We collect information from these repositories when we are making the yearly open access indicator measurement.

Interviewer

How is it from a legal perspective? You said that you have this open access monitor. But is there any, I wouldn't say punishment, but shall we say if some institution is lagging a bit behind or is there any compliance, shall we say, following or something that would be a negative for those that do not perform?



Interviewee

No.

Interviewer

So, it's just for awareness and information, I guess?

Interviewee

Yes. There have been some talks with the universities. When we have talks with the management of the universities, sometimes open access will come up in the dialogue. If a university is lagging a little bit behind, we might ask mention it and ask what the university will do to perform better with regard to open access, but there are no repercussions if they don't. So, it's on a voluntary basis this strategy. We want to promote open access, but we don't punish universities who don't perform well. We think the competition element is the way to do it, to show and allow for comparisons on how universities progress in Open Access.

Interviewer

How have the licensing discussions been in Denmark when it comes to policies? Is it widely accepted that Creative Commons licensing is basically what is seen as open access? Or is it more liberal than that so that it doesn't need to be clearly with a specific license to be considered open access, for example, in the policies or in how universities promote this? Is there some particular license that seems to be the most popular alternative in policymaking so far?

Interviewee

We haven't actually addressed this question about licenses in Denmark. But I think we might support, but I don't know, but I think we would support the CC-BY or something, this creative commons model. But we haven't actually discussed it in Denmark, and we haven't yet had a discussion about rights retention and those sorts of things, and Plan S and so on. I think Plan S and the golden model, I think in Denmark we think that it might be a very expensive model because you might reverse the model from the license (subscription licenses) to open access



journals, and some say that it would cost the same as we spent on licenses today. But we are not certain if the publishers will just increase or raise the prices on APCs and so on. So, if there's no cap on an APC, we might still pay a lot of money on publishing also open access. I think that's why we have focused on the green model because, it's not costless, but we don't pay APCs.

Interviewer

I only have basically one final question, and fairly open ended that. What do you see in Denmark that would be needed to make the environment for open access books better in a way? What could be some ideas or observations for what would be needed to maybe even start a discussion on this, if actual progress hasn't yet been made? What are some maybe blocking elements or some challenges in actually progressing towards more open access books in Denmark? Is there anything in particular?

Interviewee

I think that the monographs constitute a very little percentage of all publications in Denmark, and I think that some of the barriers about making monographs open access and to have a policy on monographs might be that there will be resistance among researchers as they earn a little bit of money on these monographs. I also think that it will not be demanded either by the staff at the universities who help the researchers with open access, because I think it's more complicated to get the right to open access with monographs than articles. I think there might be some administrative costs that are higher with monographs than with articles. It's my impression. I think the ministry might be a hesitant too about including monographs in the national Open Access strategy as we foresee critique from researchers and others. And as monographs only constitute a small share of all the publications in Denmark, the cost benefit analysis might be that it's not worthwhile doing it.

Interviewer

Those are definitely some notable challenges to try to overcome or for opening up, at least making it easier for those that would want to publish open access books, that there would be maybe more options. But you're right that maybe forcing it or having it as a mandatory policy would be a very hard battle in a way and maybe not even worth it.

Interviewee



Yeah. And the business model is different with monographs. So, it's a little bit complicated, I think. I don't think that the next strategy in Denmark will make it mandatory that books should be open access.

Interviewer

Thank you very much. This was super useful. I'll stop the recording here.

