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EDITORIAL

Introducing Routledge Open Research: a new platform for the arts, humanities and social sciences [version 1; peer review: not peer reviewed]

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Abstract
This editorial by Professor John Connolly reflects on the exciting new developments in academic publishing and how Routledge Open Research in the arts, humanities and social sciences provides cutting edge and innovative publishing opportunities for authors.

Keywords
Routledge Open Research; Editorial, Arts, Humanities, Social Sciences, Open Access

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Any comments on the article can be found at the end of the article.

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The launch of the Routledge Open Research platform is an exciting new step in the world of academic publishing in the arts, humanities and social sciences. The whole idea of the platform is to bring into the spotlight research of all types and to also publish work that can sometimes fall between the cracks within 'traditional' models of publishing. For example, the platform publishes policy reports, commentaries, essays as well as other outputs such as research articles and conference proceedings. The platform offers an open approach to publishing in that authors are encouraged to share the data and methodologies underpinning their work. The Routledge Open Research platform aims to democratise the publishing process through their approach to transparency in this regard. The platform also allows for targeted forms of content e.g. thematic topics areas in the social sciences that bring together interdisciplinary insights into a curated collections.

The flexibility of the Routledge Open Research publishing model will offer attractive options for scholars in a time of considerable change within the academic context. One of the big challenges that face academics who are seeking to publish their work is the length of time it can take for publications to work through the publication process when submitting to traditional journals and this, quite frankly, can mean that data dates very quickly. It is also possible for academics to 'miss the boat' when it comes to maximising the impact of their research due to the need to often wait long periods for research to see the light of day. Researchers often want rapid and quality publication processes, including more control over timings, especially if planned research dissemination strategies are aligned with policy cycles, key social developments and current affairs. In this respect, Routledge Open Research provides researchers with quick turnarounds as well as providing confidence that quality peer review processes are in place.

The next decade of academic publishing also needs to respond more fully to the moves in recent years towards cross-disciplinary research *within* the arts and humanities and also *between* the natural and social sciences. Research Councils and other funders have encouraged major changes in terms of how researchers need to refract different insights in order to address 'wicked problems', such as climate change, global health security, international conflicts, inequalities, human trafficking, drugs misuse and homelessness (to name some examples) (Connolly & Van der Zwet, 2021; Head, 2022). The wickedness of such problems are due to their complexity and intractable nature and the fact that there is not one policy instrument or solution that can address them. This warrants the need for multiple insights from different academic positions and lenses. Even within specific areas of policy development, such as Britain's exit from the European Union (Brexit), it is clear that the societal implications of Brexit are so wide-ranging that attention from academics across political science, economics, sociology, history have key roles to play when it comes to documenting how the 'governance disentanglements' of a polity will have implications for the governance architectures of the UK, EU and beyond. In short, Routledge Open Research is positioned to be a place to document the ongoing challenges,

opportunities and outcomes of societal and governance reforms. As alluded to earlier in this editorial the intention of the platform is to also provide academics with datasets that can be used for different analytical purposes to, for example, help shape policy debates and social narratives.

Even if we take one example of a governance challenge stimulated by Brexit, and the so-called opportunities that emerge from it, then it is clear that there are acute governance challenges within governance challenges. The 'levelling up' agenda is one such example of a post-Brexit intervention by the UK Conservative government to address territorial inequalities in an effort to secure the continued support of areas in the north of England that once supported the UK Labour Party. The agenda is also framed as a way to replace EU structural funding for regions through the introduction of a new UK Shared Prosperity Fund, as well as other funding measures. Academics have been concerned about the politicisation of the levelling up agenda, its opaqueness, the challenges of evaluating the success of the levelling up agenda due to its ambiguities, and the extent to which the approach can turn around the acute inequalities that were exacerbated long before Brexit due to the post-2010 welfare reform agenda linked to cuts in public expenditure (Connolly *et al.,* 2021; Institute for Public Policy Research, 2022; Tomaney & Pike, 2020). When governments seek to address chronic problems that require addressing regional disparities then the path to policy failure is paved by not understanding the multi-faceted nature of disparities. The UK government's agenda is based on an economic model of levelling up, but economics are linked to disparities in health, education and wellbeing. There is also the layering of the COVID-19 pandemic on top of pre-existing social and economic problems (Karyotis *et al.*, 2021). Put simply, ambiguities in policy aims and non-cohesive approaches to public policy will produce outcomes that are unmeasurable, which, of course, can also be in the interests of policy-makers in terms of allowing for scope to dodge lines of accountability and allow for blame games (Hood, 2002; McConnell, 2015). With levelling up can see just how many lines of academic inquiry can emerge from one macro-policy development! But this is also the case for the array of contemporary global challenges that call into question the world security that can challenge non-governmental organizations (NGOs), governments and private organisations. Climate change is a good example of how the challenges of our time require multi-stakeholder cooperation between such actors. This includes investment in green economies, making strides to make reductions in carbon emissions, and for corporations to operate more sustainably. With this in mind, researchers might be keen, for example, to evaluate progress against the COP26 pledges (Lennan & Elisa, 2022). A further example, given the disturbing and ongoing developments with the war in Ukraine, is how oppressive regimes impact on the global order and how the West should respond to dictators e.g. how and when should interventions be implemented and how do these shape international relations? The COVID-19 pandemic and other health security threats in the past and present (such as Ebola and antimicrobial resistance) has also demonstrated that countries are only as strong as their

weakest link therefore understanding that weakest link, and the structural underpinnings for it, requires research from those in the arts, humanities and social sciences as well as those in the natural sciences.

These are just some examples of global and national governance challenges, but it is important to emphasise that the Routledge Open Research platform is inclusive and pluralistic in its remit and welcomes submissions from all areas of the arts, humanities and social sciences. Routledge Open Research provides leverage for researchers to help inform debates in an accessible and transparent format. Indeed, research is for sharing so why not submit to Routledge Open Research? We look forward to hearing from you.

Professor John Connolly

Chief Editorial Adviser - Routledge Open Research

Data availability
No data are associated with this article.

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