Chapter 3

The Green Open Access: Significant Scientific Considerations in the Light of Public Policy and Access to Knowledge

ABSTRACT

This chapter considers green open access (e.g., OARs). OARs constitute a contemporary response regarding the dissemination of information. Thus, it is important to examine theoretical arguments about the desirability of OARs in the digital age. The chapter argues that OARs could be seen as a form of social justice towards strengthening social cohesion in modern societies. The argument relies on the concept of public policy as one means of achieving social justice. The discussion about OARs aligns with public policy, and social justice considerations should be examined. Additionally, the chapter demonstrates that public policy should concentrate on social cohesion, whereas open access could be considered as an instrument towards social cohesion. The chapter is divided into three broad topics. First, two main justifications for access to knowledge are addressed: (1) the philosophical justification, based on the concept that knowledge is power, and it is significant that everyone has access to knowledge; and (2) the pragmatic justification that it is impractical to enforce copyright in the traditional sense in this digital age. Second, the concept of social justice and relevant theories are considered. Third, theories concerning connections between public policy and social justice towards social cohesion are examined.
INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, it is argued that unfettered access to information and knowledge is important to create a just global society. Access to knowledge through OARs can be understood as a related dimension of this concept. OARs are an efficient mechanism to enable interaction of technical developments with copyright laws to disseminate information legitimately. Scholars argue that knowledge is power and, therefore, OA can determine an appropriate pathway to power (Elden & Crampton, 2012). Thus, current copyright laws and policies should be examined, and such examination would lead to a rigorous theoretical argument about the desirability of OARs in the digital age. OA can also be understood as a form of social justice, which can strengthen social cohesion in modern societies. Public participation can ensure that just policies are enacted and, therefore, the creation of public spaces for consensus formation is necessary (Boeder, 2005; Rawls, 2009). This argument will be developed by relying on the concept of public policy that constitutes a means of achieving social cohesion, as good governance requires that people participate in policy formation.

The chapter deals with three broad, interrelated matters. In the first part, an examination of justifications for OA (as a means of access to knowledge) is undertaken. There is discussion about two main justifications for access to knowledge: (a) the philosophical justification that knowledge is power and for that reason it is important that everyone has access to knowledge, and (b) the pragmatic justification that recognises that in this digital age it is impractical to enforce copyright in the traditional sense. The first justification relies on Foucault’s views about the relation between power and knowledge, wherein he argues that knowledge is power. The second section addresses the pragmatic issue and uses examples that highlight the impracticability of copyright enforcement, which necessitates reform of the copyright regime. Both justifications for greater access to knowledge are, in turn, arguments for access to information resources like the OARs.

The second matter follows from the above. That is, access to knowledge is necessary to create a just society. For enabling a socially just society, an assessment of social justice theories is required. Thus, in the second part of the chapter, there is a focus on the concept of social justice; the argument in this chapter relies on Rawls’ theory of justice, which attempts to solve the issue of distributive justice. Rawls’ views help to point out the importance
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