

# Afrostructuring Scientific Publishing

**Mame-Penda Ba**

Editor-in-chief of *Global Africa*

For the past few days, I had been basking in jubilation that nothing seemed able to disturb. *Global Africa*, the journal we had created less than three years earlier, had just been successively indexed by African Journals OnLine (AJOL) and Directory of Open Access Journals (DOAJ) at one-week intervals in August 2024. This double validation of the strength of our editorial processes, established to ensure quality, regularity, transparency and accessibility, was well worth a few victory dance steps, especially as, with this indexation, Senegal had just joined the list of French-speaking African countries represented in the DOAJ! And to share this success, this glorious title, we took to our social networks and communicated the happy news in every language. We had nearly reached the Holy Grail for journals—our application for Scopus indexing. We were still awaiting the results, having been informed that the process would take several months.

It is then, that I had to stop my victory dance, dead in my tracks, when I reread the text by David Mills and Toluwase Asubiaro featured in this issue. Their article was among the proofs for issue 7 of *Global Africa*, which, by a fortunate coincidence, focused on the challenges of scientific publishing in Africa. Mills and Toluwase's work was one of a number of articles that show how the geopolitics of global scientific publishing excludes Africa, its languages and its researchers-without, of course, limiting ourselves to this topic. These articles point out that the embryonic systems set up in the wake of independence were permanently altered by the structural adjustments of the 1980s, and the absence of funding, expert human resources, and strategy. As a result, they show, African journals remain anonymous, of poor quality, and are, for that matter, absent from indexes.

So to my pride was added a mixture of discomfort, prudishness and doubt, almost dissipating my euphoria, rooted in the realization of a contradiction inherent in celebrating our access to the Holy Grail reserved to a few. With a quick introspection, I realized that my discomfort stemmed from the fact that I was celebrating—in the same way as my Nigerian colleagues Nnaji and Adibe (Mills & Asubiaro, 2024)—, in fact, the “true” birth of *Global Africa*, namely the guarantee that we would finally be seen and recognized by the research community on a global scale. We might already be there, we might already be relevant, we might already be “beautiful”, but it didn't matter that we already existed if it was not sanctioned by our ticket to the very elite club, the very dandy aristocracy of scientific journals (in open access for DOAJ). Because we gained recognition from others, we were finally “visible” and therefore fully legitimate and henceforth approachable by all researchers. This is what indexing offers. For someone who thinks in terms of decoloniality, pluriversality, decentralization and existence outside the Western gaze, this was a major contradiction.

**How to cite this paper:**

Ba, M.-P. (2024). Afrostructuring scientific publishing. *Global Africa*, (7), pp. 8-9. <https://doi.org/10.57832/1vcr-wr20>

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So I quickly put an end to my victory dance, in order to measure once again the weight of the burden and the immensity of the responsibility borne by African editors. I would say, for the sake of synthesis and because the little space offered by an editorial cannot accommodate the moods of an African editor, that their mission is to go beyond dilemmas and contradictions. I say this because, in the final analysis, what emerges from this issue is that all the formulas proposed for building stimulating ecosystems of research, publication and dissemination of scientific results, taken in their contexts, are relevant. They do not exclude each other, but complement each other, because in reality, we need to be relevant and recognized, big or small (as the case may be), but beautiful always; we need to celebrate all the recognition given to quality work, without feeling guilty, but without forgetting the injustices of the system; we need to make available all the possibilities that avoid uniformity and monolingualism.

Moving beyond these dilemmas means ensuring quality, legitimacy and credibility (which now almost always means inclusion in indexes), while at the same time maintaining our duty to express indignation at the incredible violence that a small group of multinational scientific publishers is inflicting on the global South, and on Africa in particular (see Madeleine Markey's text).

But our real task is to build diversified public infrastructures for research, its publication and its use, infrastructures that have in common the sharing of knowledge, its inclusion at the heart of the continent's development projects and the simultaneous offer of responses to the global vulnerabilities produced by the publishing industry.

This is what I call the "afrostructure" of scientific publishing: thinking about, building and financing African scientific publishing on the basis of intelligent (using digital technology and AI), collaborative, multilingual, sovereign systems (endogenous financing), open to all publics (scientists, decision-makers, civil society, citizens, private sector, media) attentive to the diversity of values, to the presence of women and young people, and offering forms of recognition of scientific work that go beyond the mere production of articles.

If, as I believe, we are to shape our own destinies, to mold today what is to come, we need to think about the conditions for achieving the African presence of African journals in the world, a presence that is not imitation, integration, or assimilation into the processes of others, but a presence that offers an alternative to the frenzied race for the industrial production of articles, the imposition of a hegemonic language of Western standards. This return to meaning, to people, to genuine discussion of what we have (not) found, in a multiplicity of languages, scientific cultures and questionings, is also what we expect from Africa.

We also expect Africa to play a key role in a return to multilingual science and a world of translation. We must and can impose on the Anglo-American giants of scientific publishing and the major universities that dominate international rankings, the translation of articles, as well as a new slogan: fewer articles, better articles. *Global Africa's* experience shows that translation costs are perfectly bearable for journals belonging to large groups, since the full translation and revision of an issue containing eight research articles in another language costs 3,000 euros. They are free when authors are asked to provide abstracts of their articles in their mother tongue.

The idea that translation is expensive and delays the editorial process is therefore a mere scarecrow designed to maintain a status quo that is detrimental to bibliodiversity and plurilingualism. Thanks to a group of translators working simultaneously, we only take around four weeks to translate and revise each article, and are therefore well within the forty-week timeframe between submission of a complete article and its publication in at least two languages.

This issue is a delight. It reflects the generosity and rigor of its scientific coordinators (David Mills, Stephanie Kitchen and Bouchra Sidi-Hida), who have worked with dedication over the past year. Thanks to them, we have all the elements we need to take the right measure of the challenges facing African scientific publishing and find the best answers. It puts a lot of bright stars in our heads, as does Gaindesat-1A, the first nanosatellite that Senegal has just sent into space.