

FOR2026

Book of Abstracts

The Future of Open Research

Reliable - Responsible - Equitable

4-6 May 2026 | Munich

FOR2026 CONFERENCE

The Future of Open Research: Reliable, Responsible, Equitable
Munich, 4-6 May 2026

Book of Abstracts

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Environments

Organizing and Program Committee: Desantila Hysa, Sabina Leonelli, Paola Castaño, Rena Alcalay, Richard Williams, Nathanael Sheehan.

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PREFACE

The future of open research is uncertain. On the one hand, decades of activism and institutional support have placed the value and significance of intelligent strategies and formats for open research (and its dissemination) beyond doubt. Openness is central to the development of trustworthy, accountable, collaborative, and socially engaged knowledge. On the other hand, open research measures need to be tailored to diverse research conditions around the globe and across domains, which in turn requires substantial investment, local engagement, responsiveness to the ethical and social dimensions of inquiry, and attention to diversity, equity, and inclusion. While the implementation of open science principles is certainly facilitated by ever more accessible digital technologies and training programmes, for many researchers around the world, acquiring the expertise and skills to engage in open research practices remains elusive. Exposure to open research initiatives often happens as an end-user rather than as an active contributor. This is because well-resourced environments produce the tools, set the research goals, define the standards and methods, which leads to them benefiting disproportionately from the opportunities. This makes even the best-intentioned projects into opportunities for the best-resourced environments (which are often in charge of producing open science tools) to impose their own understanding of research goals, standards, and methods on everybody else. Therefore, without domain- and location-specific input, the risk is that open research amplifies existing inequities and discrimination in the production, use, and evaluation of knowledge, thereby inflicting damage to the research system instead of the promised improvements. And this is not to mention the ongoing debates over how politically unpalatable open science may be, the extent to which open research has been appropriated by commercial entities such as large publishing companies and digital platforms, the fraught intersection between open science and artificial intelligence, and the ongoing difficulties in supporting and maintaining open research activities and tools in the long term. This conference brings together scholars, activists, and policymakers to address these challenges and explore the future of open research. A key outcome is the *Munich Manifesto for Equitable Open Research*, aimed at fostering reliable, responsible, and inclusive practices.

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From the Umbrella to the Forest. Exploring Open Science through Images

Francesca Di Donato

CNR, Pisa, Italy

Abstract

This contribution analyses the visual metaphors used to describe Open Science (OS) and shows how these reveal the values, priorities and cultural assumptions of the movement.

The journey begins with the metaphor of the 'umbrella' (Fecher, Friesike, 2013). The umbrella brings together and shelters related concepts under a single term: it is a tool created by humans for a specific purpose. However, what lies beneath the umbrella varies significantly, reflecting the different priorities of the respective community.

The 'mushroom' metaphor, introduced by Méndez (2017), marks a significant transition from an artefact to a natural organism, and represents a conceptual shift. In addition, the mushroom is not merely a vessel for observable practices. The idea of a hidden and foundational system represented by the roots is here introduced (Rafols et al., 2024).

The next step in this evolution is the 'wheel' (Kramer, 2017), representing OS as a circular infinite research workflow. The image illustrates the various stages of the research process (from discovery and analysis to publication, dissemination and evaluation) as a continuous cycle, and evokes the hermeneutic circle. Through the wheel - among the most significant examples of human invention - OS is elevated from a collection of practices to a fundamental process for knowledge production, dissemination and assessment.

The concept of a process is further elaborated on using the 'taxonomy' (Pontika and Knoth, 2015) and the 'tree' metaphors (YERUN, 2018; Méndez, 2022). By organising the components of OS into a hierarchical structure, the taxonomy/tree provides detail about the ecosystem.

The final metaphor is the 'graph', used by UNESCO (2020). The image immediately evokes the topologies of the Internet and the World Wide Web. The graph describes OS as a dynamic, decentralised and distributed network of relationships.

This vision of a complex, living network serves as a bridge to my proposed synthesis to represent OS as a 'forest'. The forest is a natural organism like the mushroom, it includes the symbolism of the tree, and its vast system of interconnected roots functions as a living graph.

In this contribution I will discuss how the metaphor embodies a number of OS principles and values (collaboration, inclusiveness and biodiversity, collective intelligence) but also its ability to represent the real tensions and inequalities that persist in our

knowledge ecosystems (in terms of unequal distribution of resources, lack of equal opportunities, exclusion and competition, and efficiency without equity).

A value of the forest metaphor, then, is that it makes these tensions visible, challenging the status quo and forcing us to confront the gap between our principles and our practices (Sepehri, 2025). But it also helps us to radically change the way we evaluate research quality and value, encouraging us to go beyond conventional parameters of efficiency and excellence and ask new and deeper questions about our work, such as: 'Is it sustainable? Is it inclusive? Is it creative? Is it alive?' (Mounier, 2022)

Narrative CV

I graduated in Political Science from the University of Pisa (1999) and in 2003 I obtained a PhD in the History of Political Philosophy from the Sant'Anna School of Advanced Studies of Pisa. The methodology I developed during my PhD is based on the study of original texts, on the analysis of concepts and their historical and political context, and on the comparison between “modern” and “contemporary”. From 2004 to 2015 I held research positions at the University of Pisa and the Scuola Normale Superiore in Pisa. From 2015 to 2020, I worked at Net7srl as head of the Digital Humanities and Open Science department. Since 2020, I have been a researcher at the Institute of Computational Linguistics at the National Research Council of Italy (CNR), where I work as a Researcher. The common thread running through my scientific career has been the study of open models and systems of science creation, management and communication (Open Science). In particular, over time I have developed a theoretical interest focused on the conditions of the republic of science (its practices and means), and on the comparison between the traditional system of science communication, and the paradigms of online digital science communication and their concrete applications. The monograph “La scienza e la rete. L'uso pubblico della ragione nell'età del web” (FUP, Florence, 2009) brings together a first reflection on these theme. Since 2004, I developed the idea of a possible convergence between Open Access and the Semantic Web. This interest led to the design of “HyperJournal”, an open source application for the publication of OA academic journals. HyperJournal, which experimented with alternative metrics based on semantic web technologies and Social Network Analysis, was used by the journal ‘Bollettino telematico di filosofia politica’ (2005-2011). Furthermore, my research is focused on the link between the system of knowledge production and communication and the research evaluation system. In 2022 I was a member of the Core Group who drafted the “Agreement on reforming research assessment”. Since 2023 I've been involved in the GraspOS eu funded project, which aims at developing, assessing and operating an open and trusted federated infrastructure for next generation research metrics and indicators. Currently, I'm co.chairing the Italian National Chapter of CoARA. In addition to the research activities, I have been involved in intensive teaching activities, including university teaching assignments, master's programmes, doctoral schools, public institutions and research bodies. Interacting with students has allowed me to deepen and revisit my reflections on the main topics I have dealt with over time. In recent months, I have been finishing writing a monograph on OS for CNR Edizioni, which brings together twenty years of research. The work presented here is part of this monograph. My publications (all open access) are available on my ORCID profile: <https://orcid.org/my-orcid?orcid=0000-0003-0144-8934>