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Transforming European Societies through open access and transparency

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Transforming *European Societies* through open access and transparency*

As we mark the end of our third year as editors of *European Societies*, we witness a significant transition: the journal has now changed publishers, moving from Taylor & Francis to MIT Press. This moment of change provides an excellent opportunity to reflect on the journal's development and achievements over the past three years, considering both the progress made and the direction we envision for the future.

Growth, quality, and efficiency The past three years have been a period of significant growth and transformation for *European Societies*. The journal has seen an encouraging increase in submissions, in terms of both quantity and quality. This has allowed us to be more selective, ensuring that our published articles represent the most rigorous and innovative sociological research from or about Europe. Such progress owes much to our dedicated associate editors, who are based across Europe and beyond. Their tireless efforts have been integral to the journal's success, and we owe them an immense debt of gratitude.

One of the most visible improvements during this time has been the reduction in waiting times for authors. Timely communication and efficient editorial processes are essential for maintaining the trust of our contributors, and we are pleased that the changes we have implemented have borne fruit. Shorter review times have enhanced the journal's reputation for transparency.

Looking ahead, we are committed to further accelerating the pace of publishing. We encourage authors to share their manuscripts on preprint repositories such as *SocArXiv*,¹ ensuring that research findings are accessible at the earliest opportunity. To complement this, we have introduced a policy of publishing accepted manuscripts immediately on our website, replacing them with fully typeset versions as soon as they are available. These measures align with our broader mission of disseminating sociological knowledge efficiently and equitably.

Non-commercial open access Perhaps the most transformative development during our tenure has been the transition of *European Societies* to a

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¹ osf.io/preprints/socarxiv

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noncommercial, ‘diamond’ open access model. Diamond open access means that our articles will be free to read for everyone, and, importantly, authors will not be charged a fee. Following a deal brokered by the European Sociological Association (ESA), the owner of the journal title, all articles in the journal will be free to publish and free to read for the next three years. This marks a decisive shift away from the traditional subscription-based model, which often required authors or their institutions to pay significant fees to make their work accessible. We believe this change will lead to greater equity in publishing across Europe, bridging gaps between East and West and South and North and ensuring that high-quality sociological research reaches the broadest possible audience. Additionally, the entire back catalog of *European Societies*, dating back to its inaugural issue in 1999, is now freely available to readers worldwide. This achievement underscores our commitment to making sociological research a public good.

Replication packages Our policy of publishing replication packages (Präg, Ersanilli, and Gugushvili, 2022) alongside quantitative articles deserves special mention. Implementing this policy was a pioneering step in the discipline, marking a commitment to fostering reproducibility and transparency in sociological research. At the time, requiring replication packages was a bold and innovative decision, reflecting our dedication to upholding high standards of research integrity. This initiative has since been embraced by other leading sociology journals such as *Sociological Science*, *European Sociological Review*, and *American Journal of Sociology*. The widespread adoption of replication packages underscores their importance in promoting rigorous scholarship and ensuring that research findings can be verified and built upon by the broader academic community.

Artificial intelligence Artificial intelligence (AI) is poised to play a significant role in sociological research and publishing. AI tools can enhance data analysis, uncover patterns in complex datasets, improve discoverability, and provide support to authors not accustomed to writing in English. These advancements promise to make research more efficient and accessible. At the same time, they raise critical challenges, such as addressing algorithmic biases and ensuring transparency in their application. *European Societies* is committed to fostering rigorous scholarship and will engage thoughtfully with these emerging technologies to ensure they are leveraged responsibly, advancing sociological research while maintaining the integrity of the publishing process.

What the future holds While these accomplishments are gratifying, they also raise important questions about the future. Our term as editors, as well as that of the current Executive Committee of ESA, will conclude in two years. The sustainability of the diamond open access model will be a key challenge for our successors. We remain hopeful that a viable business model will emerge to ensure that *European Societies* continues to thrive in this new era of transparency

and openness. It will require the collective support of sociologists, both within and beyond the ESA, to maintain this vision of free and equitable access to sociological knowledge.

As a final note, we would like to express our sincere thanks to everyone who has contributed to the success of *European Societies* over the past three years: our authors, reviewers, associate editors, readers, our publishers, and ESA. Your dedication and support have been invaluable. We are confident that the journal is well-positioned to continue advancing sociological research and making a meaningful impact.

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