



# Publishing by Institutions and Organisations in the Global South: the challenges for librarians and users.

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... and if you're wondering, yes, there are penguins in Cape Town.

Along with brightly painted houses ... and a furniture-shaped mountain.

But it's not all cute penguins, joyous fascades and flat-top geology. . .

There's a darker side ...







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... plastic pollution.

For example, this litter washed ashore on Cape Town's Milnerton Beach.


(Photo: Professor Peter Ryan, University of Cape Town)





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Why focus on plastic?

Because the 4th [#UNEP](#) Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee on Plastic Pollution just met. Their aim? An agreement  global production of plastic by 40%.

Why? To protect our health and the environment.

And because plastics and penguins don't mix.





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To help inform the delegates, #UNEP prepared a paper.

(it wasn't published in a journal . . . but you can find it here

<https://bit.ly/4buX4DU>)



UNITED  
NATIONS

UNEP/PP/INC.4/TNF/1



United Nations  
Environment  
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**Intergovernmental negotiating committee to develop  
an international legally binding instrument on plastic  
pollution, including in the marine environment**  
**Fourth session**  
Ottawa, 23–29 April 2023  
Item 4 of the provisional agenda\*

**Preparation of an international legally binding instrument on  
plastic pollution, including in the marine environment**

### **Plastic pollution science (updated for the fourth session of the intergovernmental negotiating committee)**

#### **Note by the secretariat**

1. Pursuant to paragraph 5 of the United Nations Environment Assembly resolution 5/14 of 2 March 2022, titled "End plastic pollution: towards an international legally binding instrument", an ad hoc open-ended working group met in Dakar from 30 May to 1 June 2022 to prepare for the work of the intergovernmental negotiating committee to develop an international legally binding instrument on plastic pollution, including in the marine environment. The open-ended working group agreed on a list of documents that the secretariat would provide to the intergovernmental negotiating committee at its first session. Among other things, the secretariat was requested to provide a document on plastics science, including monitoring, sources of plastic pollution, chemicals used in manufacturing, flows across the life cycle, pathways in the environment, health and other impacts, solutions, technologies and costs.





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It notes:

“Millions of workers in informal settings ensure waste collection and recycling in countries across the world.”

Some, like these women, work in the Global North . . .





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. . . but many are in the Global South.

~90,000 are in South Africa.

As Ismail Rachid said yesterday . . . the North/South divide can be pretty blurred . . .

(Photo: South African Waste Pickers Association)





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And, being DEI-aware, UNEP wrote,



“Measures taken to address plastic waste pollution must be inclusive of informal waste pickers.”

Waste pickers are represented by NGOs like @WIEGOGLOBAL, International Alliance of Waste Pickers @globalrec\_org and @GAIAnoburn



Tikitoro, a Fijian waste-picker, persuaded Fiji to formally recognise waste pickers in 2022.

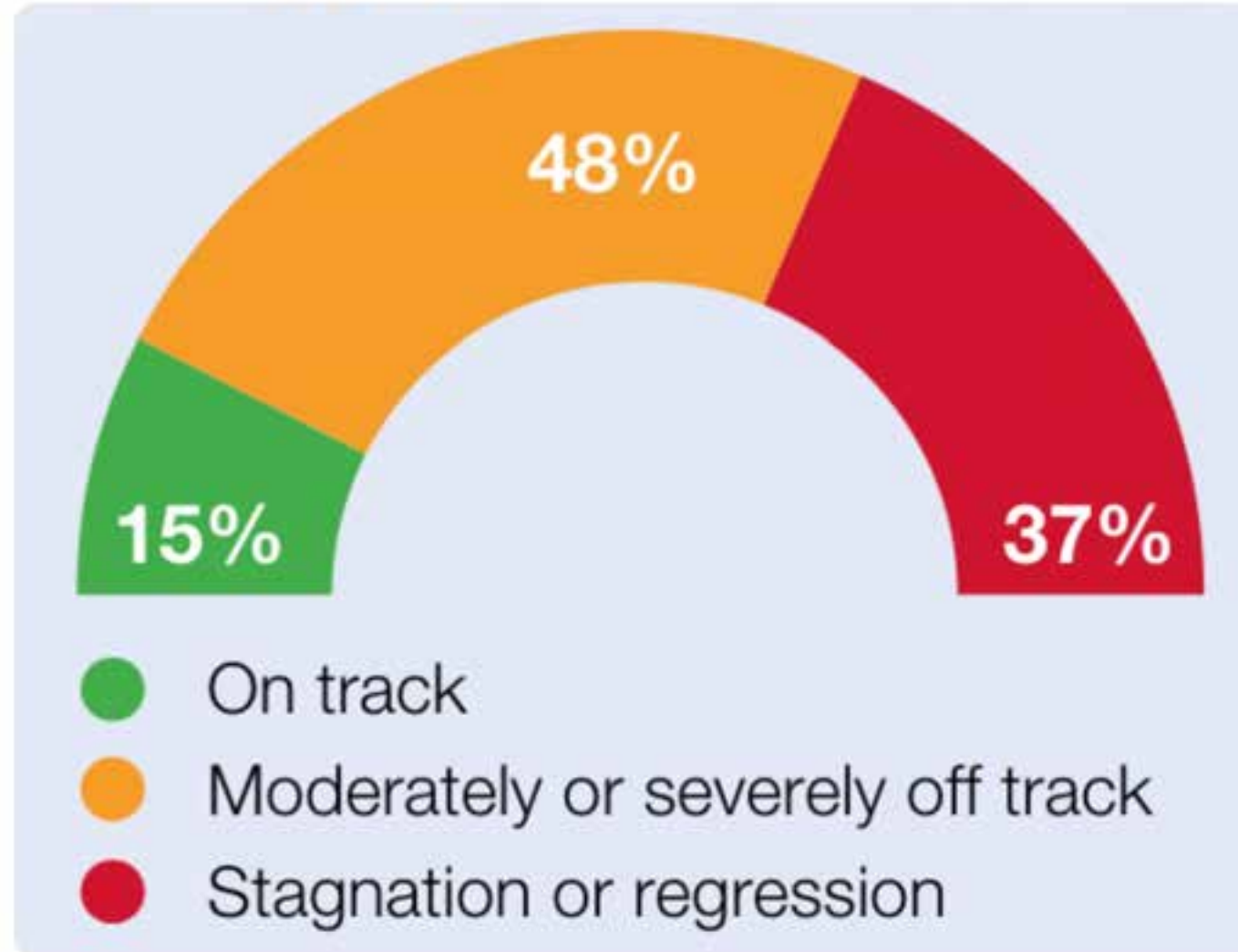




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This desire to be inclusive is in tune with a trend where Global North aid is being 'localised': i.e. being distributed, as far as possible, through local organisations. It is hoped this 'localised' approach will get the SDGs back on track.

e.g.: <https://bit.ly/3yjGfNy>





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Kennedy Odede, of @hope2shine, a Kenyan NGO, says aid agencies still have "a colonial mindset". "They believe they can throw money at the problem, but that's not how you create change. Change needs local NGO knowledge." hence @Charter4Change <https://bit.ly/4b8DHjY>

Charter **4**  
CHANGE

**Localisation of Humanitarian Aid**



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So, you might think that [#UNEP](#)'s authors sought out waste pickers' views and drew on NGO reports as they prepared the paper.









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UNEP was thorough. It drew on 127 "peer-reviewed scientific journals and reports published by intergovernmental organizations".

Perhaps the voices of waste pickers - and those who work with and represent them locally - are included in those sources ?



Let's take a look . . .



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The 127 "peer-reviewed jnls and IGO reports" break down like this:

👍 Journals 📄 = 85

👍 IGOs 🏛️ = 31

and ... err ...

😬 others ? = 11

### Notes

<sup>1</sup> OECD, *Towards Eliminating Plastic Pollution by 2040. A Policy Scenario Analysis* (Nov. 2023)

<sup>2</sup> M. Wagner and others, *State of the science on plastic chemicals - Identifying and addressing chemicals and polymers of concern* (2024), <http://dx.doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.10701706>.

<sup>3</sup> P.J. Landrigan, and others, "The Minderoo-Monaco Commission on plastics and human health", *Annals of Global Health*, vol. 89, no. 1 (2023).

<sup>4</sup> M. MacLeod, and others, "The global threat from plastic pollution", *Science*, vol. 373, no. 6550 (2021), pp. 61-65.

<sup>5</sup> L. Persson and others, "Outside the safe operating space of the planetary boundary for novel entities", *Environmental science & technology*, vol. 56, no. 3 (2022), pp. 1510-1521.

<sup>6</sup> N.J. Beaumont and others, "Global ecology and the marine plastic", *Marine Pollution Bulletin*, vol. 142 (May 2019), pp. 1-10.

<sup>7</sup> H.V. Ford, and others "The global threat from plastic pollution", *Science of the Total Environment*, vol. 800 (2021), pp. 1498-1507.

<sup>8</sup> J. Zheng and S. Subramanian, "Plastic pollution and climate change", *Climate Change*, vol. 9, no. 5 (2019), pp. 374-387.

<sup>9</sup> W.W.Y. Lau and others, "Plastic pollution and climate change", *Science of the Total Environment*, vol. 750 (2020), pp. 1455-1461.

<sup>10</sup> S.B. Borrel and others, "Plastic pollution and climate change", *Science of the Total Environment*, vol. 750 (2020), pp. 1455-1461.

<sup>11</sup> United Nations, *Turning resource into wealth* (2019), pp. 44-50.

<sup>12</sup> C. Veloso and others, "Plastic pollution and climate change", *Science of the Total Environment*, vol. 750 (2020), pp. 1455-1461.

<sup>13</sup> UN-Habitat, *Urbanization and its implications for the future* (2014), pp. 1-10.

<sup>14</sup> F. Vidal and others, "Plastic pollution and climate change", *Science of the Total Environment*, vol. 750 (2020), pp. 1455-1461.

<sup>15</sup> The Pew Charitable Trusts, *Plastic pollution and climate change* (2020), pp. 1-10.

<sup>16</sup> UNEP, *Turning resource into wealth* (2019), pp. 44-50.

<sup>17</sup> M. Bachmann and others, "Plastic pollution and climate change", *Science of the Total Environment*, vol. 750 (2020), pp. 1455-1461.

<sup>18</sup> UNEP, *Basel Convention on the control of transboundary movements of hazardous waste and their disposal* (UNEP, May 2023).

<sup>19</sup> International Organization for Standardization, *International Vocabulary (ISO, 2013)*.

<sup>20</sup> For an elaboration on different definitions of microplastics and their implications, see I. Rognerud and others, *Addressing microplastics in a global agreement to end plastic pollution* (Nordic Council, 2023).





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I scanned the cited papers.

17/127 mention waste pickers

None were written by them or their NGOs 🙄

So much for localisation . . . So much for DEI . . .

### Notes

<sup>1</sup> OECD, *Towards Eliminating Plastic Pollution by 2040: A Policy Scenario Analysis* (Nov. 2023)

<sup>2</sup> M. Wagner and others, *State of the science on plastic chemicals - Identifying and addressing chemicals and polymers of concern* (2024), <http://dx.doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.10701706>.

<sup>3</sup> P.J. Landrigan, and others, "The Maastricht-Monaco Commission on Global Health", *Health Affairs*, vol. 42, no. 1 (2023).

<sup>4</sup> M. MacLeod, and others, "The global threat from plastic pollution", *Environmental Science & Technology*, vol. 54, no. 11, pp. 61-65, (2020).

<sup>5</sup> L. Persson and others, "Outside the safe operating space of the planet", *Environmental Science & Technology*, vol. 56, no. 3 (2022), pp. 151-159.

<sup>6</sup> N.J. Beaumont and others, "Global ecological footprint", *Ecological Economics*, vol. 142 (May 2019), pp. 1-10.

<sup>7</sup> H.V. Ford, and others "The state of the world's environment 2020", *Total Environment*, vol. 58, no. 1, pp. 1-10, (2020).

<sup>8</sup> J. Zheng and S. Sidiropoulos, "Global environmental quality", *Environmental Science & Technology*, vol. 9, no. 1, pp. 1-10, (2019), pp. 374-379.

<sup>9</sup> F. Vidal, "The state of the world's environment 2020", *Environmental Science & Technology*, vol. 54, no. 11, pp. 61-65, (2020).

<sup>10</sup> F. Vidal, "The state of the world's environment 2020", *Environmental Science & Technology*, vol. 54, no. 11, pp. 61-65, (2020).

<sup>11</sup> F. Vidal, "The state of the world's environment 2020", *Environmental Science & Technology*, vol. 54, no. 11, pp. 61-65, (2020).

<sup>12</sup> F. Vidal, "The state of the world's environment 2020", *Environmental Science & Technology*, vol. 54, no. 11, pp. 61-65, (2020).

<sup>13</sup> F. Vidal, "The state of the world's environment 2020", *Environmental Science & Technology*, vol. 54, no. 11, pp. 61-65, (2020).

<sup>14</sup> F. Vidal, "The state of the world's environment 2020", *Environmental Science & Technology*, vol. 54, no. 11, pp. 61-65, (2020).

<sup>15</sup> F. Vidal, "The state of the world's environment 2020", *Environmental Science & Technology*, vol. 54, no. 11, pp. 61-65, (2020).

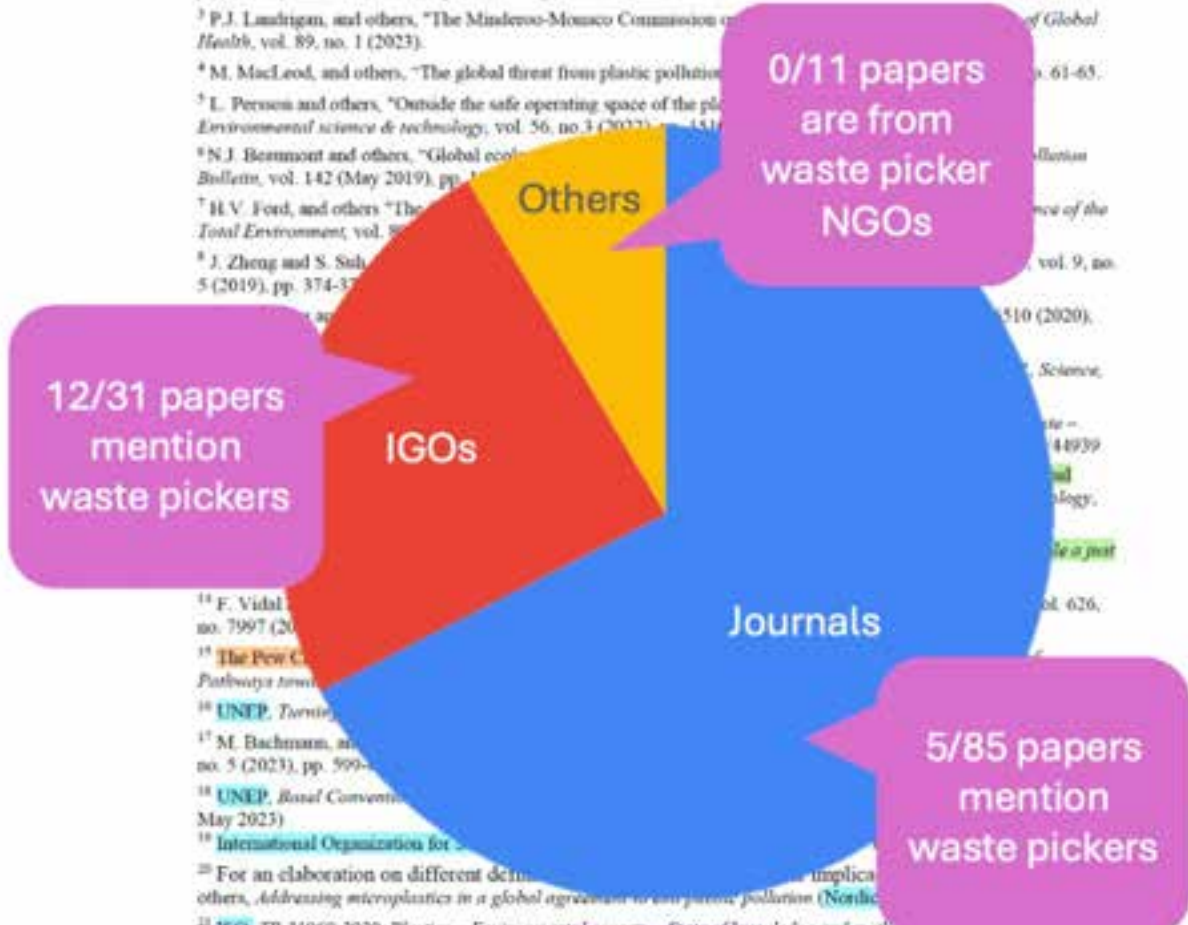
<sup>16</sup> F. Vidal, "The state of the world's environment 2020", *Environmental Science & Technology*, vol. 54, no. 11, pp. 61-65, (2020).

<sup>17</sup> F. Vidal, "The state of the world's environment 2020", *Environmental Science & Technology*, vol. 54, no. 11, pp. 61-65, (2020).

<sup>18</sup> F. Vidal, "The state of the world's environment 2020", *Environmental Science & Technology*, vol. 54, no. 11, pp. 61-65, (2020).

<sup>19</sup> F. Vidal, "The state of the world's environment 2020", *Environmental Science & Technology*, vol. 54, no. 11, pp. 61-65, (2020).

<sup>20</sup> For an elaboration on different definitions of waste pickers, see M. Bachmann and others, *Addressing microplastics in a global agreement to eliminate plastic pollution* (Norilic, 2023).



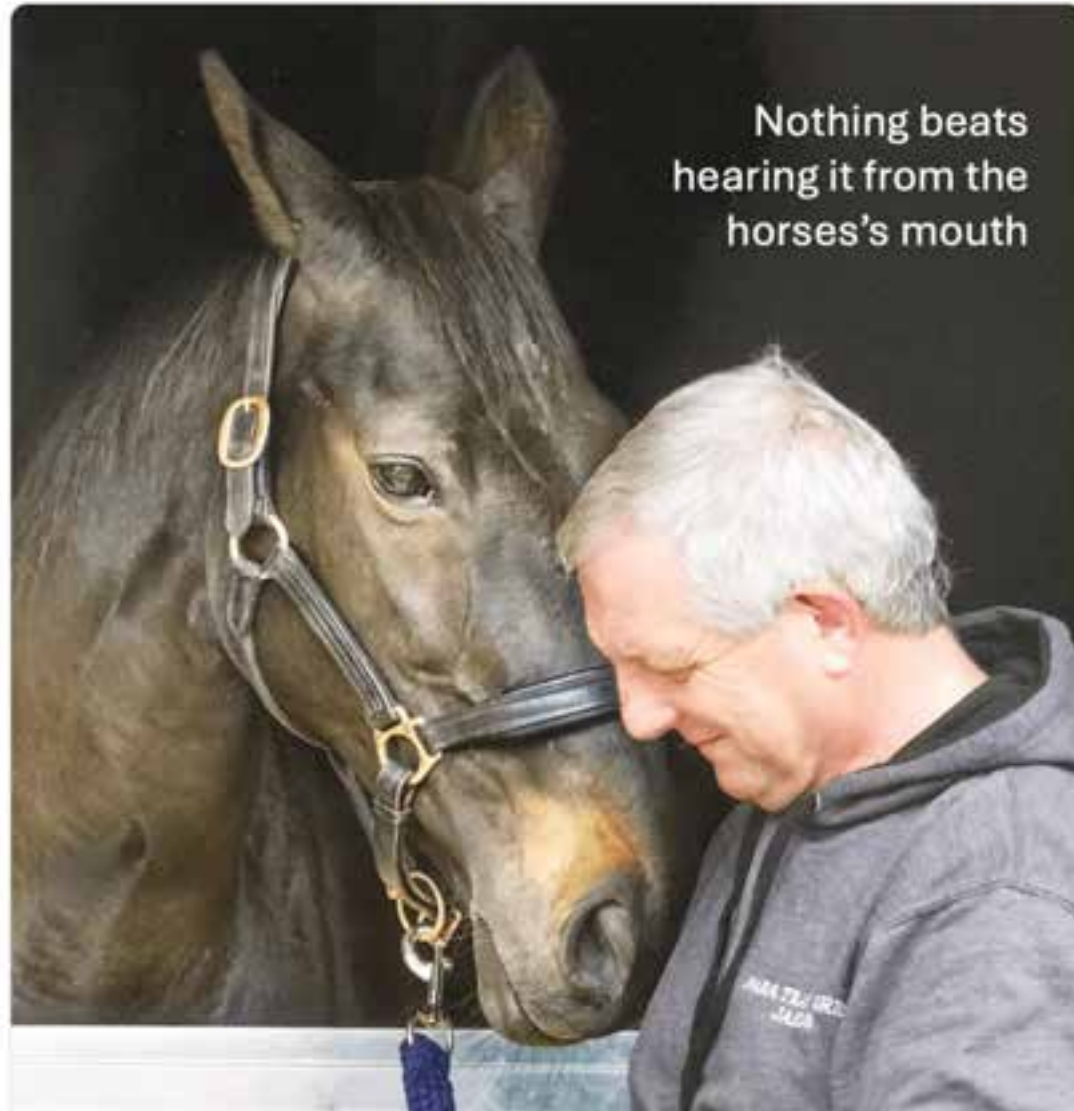


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The few waste picker voices are being filtered by academics and inter-governmental organisations.

Even when UNEP consults NGOs, 2/11 are GN industry groups, none of the other 9 are local, waste-picker NGOs.

A 'colonial mindset' lives on? 🙄





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To be clear, I'm not beating up on UNEP (Ok, I am a bit) because as we heard from Gracian Chimwaza yesterday, it's hard to find [#greylit](#). It's easier to draw from sources you know and can be found easily, even if that content isn't the best fit.

But I think there's more to it.







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I think there are **2** reasons why **#greylit** presents such a challenge for librarians and users.

One's as tangible as Table Mountain. The other's not.





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Tangible: Metadata, supply chains & persistence.

By definition, #greylit is hard to find because it has no metadata and it's absent from the supply chains that feed discovery services and libraries e.g. ESBCO, Clarivate, Google Scholar etc.

It also tends to go missing.

You can't pick up the phone and order #greylit from your library supplier





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For example, how was UNEP supposed to find this case study by a team at Witwatersrand Uni about Jo'burg waste pickers?

BTW, I highly recommend this 8' video version: <https://bit.ly/4a3M9Qr>

The image shows the cover of a report titled "Separation at source by reclaimers". The cover features a photograph of a street in Johannesburg with a white wall on the right side that has a mural of a green dinosaur. The text "Separation at source by reclaimers" is written in white on a green background at the top. Below the title, there is a red dotted line. In the bottom left corner, there is a logo with the text "Reclaim Revalue Reframe" and "Building Capacity for Waste Picker Integration". In the bottom right corner, there is a teal box with the text "Case study" and a green box with "#01". At the bottom, there are logos for the United Nations, the Department of Environmental Affairs, CSIR, and a small red circle logo.

Separation at source by reclaimers

Reclaim  
Revalue  
Reframe

Building Capacity for  
Waste Picker Integration

Case study

#01

United Nations  
Department of Environmental Affairs  
CSIR





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Or this, from @GAInoburn and @groundWorkSA ...

<https://bit.ly/3QB6cPc>

# MAKING WASTE WORK

THE SOUTH AFRICAN WASTE PICKERS' ASSOCIATION'S  
SUCCESS STORIES





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Or even this, released by Berkeley National Laboratory, specifically prepared \*FOR\* the UNEP meeting but not cited in UNEP's paper.

<https://bit.ly/3QvgsZm>



Sustainable Energy and Environmental Systems  
Energy Analysis and Environment Impacts Division  
Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory

## Climate Impact of Primary Plastic Production

Nihan Karali, Nina Khanna, Nihar Shah

April 2024



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None of these can be found in traditional scholarly discovery systems. Worse, they may be gone tomorrow. .orgs don't understand the need for persistent links and preservation.

Their content might be open, but if it's hard to find or goes missing, it might as well not exist.







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One solution is to teach .orgs to wrap their content with standardised metadata?

Some are making the effort . . . 🙌🙌🙌 @ITOCA\_SA but . . . training 40k disinterested .orgs is a bit of a stretch . . .

Key word: disinterested . . .





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Another would be if .orgs published via journals and books. That way, their content would get great metadata and join the regular supply and discovery chains. Librarians and users would be happy.

So, why doesn't that happen?





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Please meet @wxrisk World Weather Attribution. Set up by @ImperialCollege, @KNMI, Princeton et al. They publish using 'media channels' b/c jnl articles appear >1 yr after an extreme weather event and "the public has moved on".

Source: <http://bit.ly/3EYKnDD>



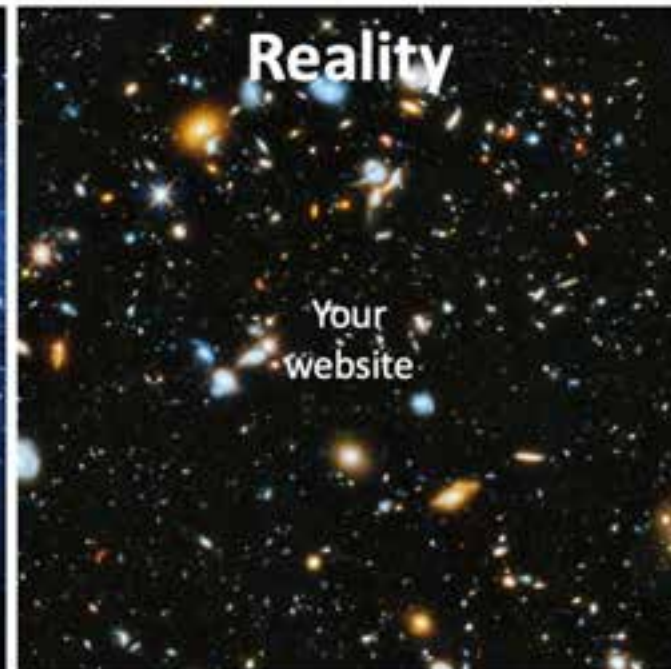




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Orgs publish 'through media channels' because . . .

- ✓ they can (make & post a PDF, easy!)
- ✓ speed & control over timing (v. important)
- ✓ branding ("me" & funding)
- ✓ it's cost-free (for them/their audience) 🤔
- ✓ "everyone can find my website" (perception  $\neq$  reality)



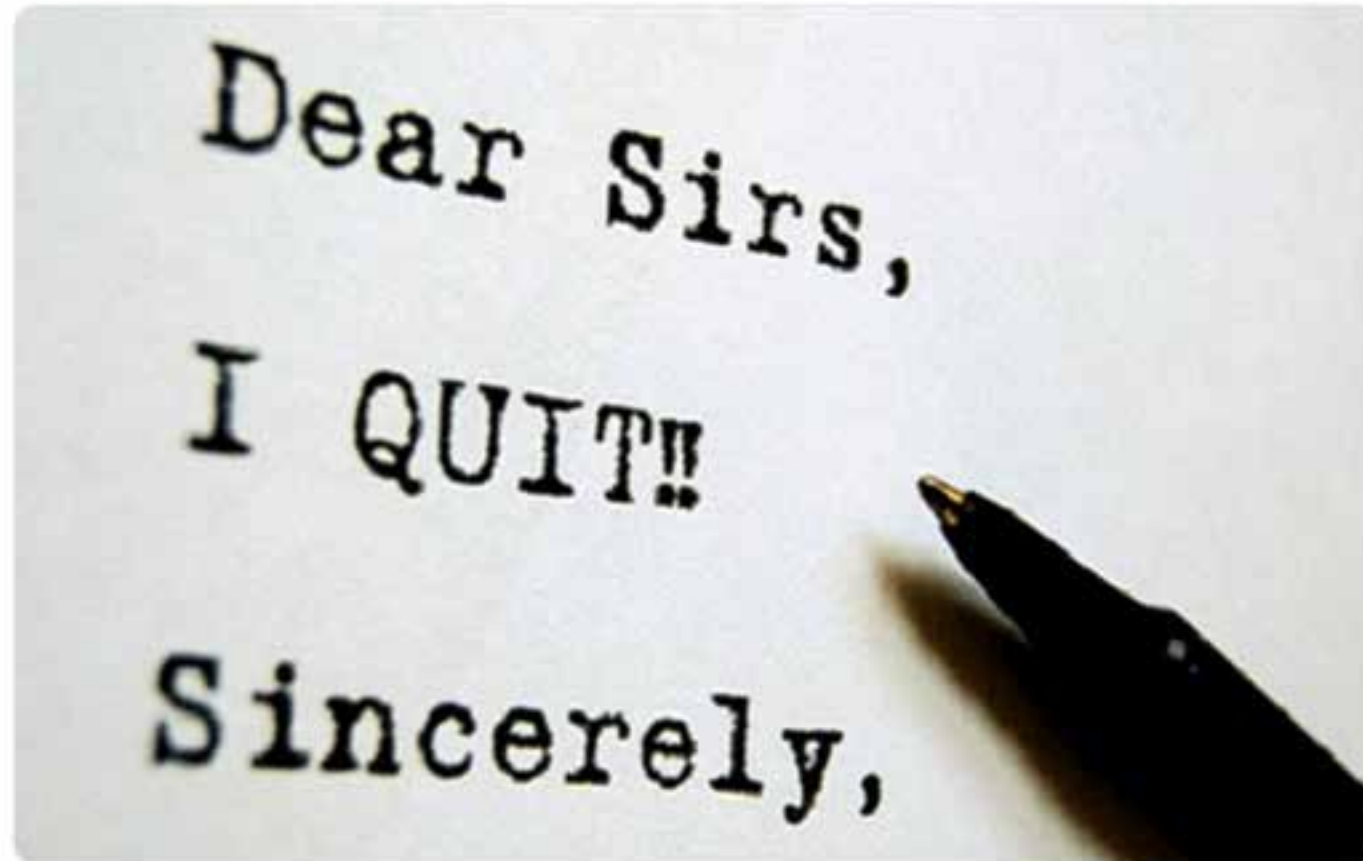


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... and it's noteworthy that some .orgs have quit working with publishers, preferring to do it themselves. (I'm 🙄 at you @UNFCCC )

So, they're hardly likely to reverse course.

What to do?





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How about using tech to harvest content from .org websites, auto-generate some scholarly-compatible metadata and create a fully-searchable database, with copies in a dark archive . . .

🤔 I wonder if anyone's thought of doing that?

(Do the QR thing or <http://bit.ly/3Xvz4Kr>)







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Now to the harder, intangible, problem.

The 'tell' is UNEP's emphasis on peer-reviewed. The implication is that non-journal content isn't reviewed by experts and can't be trusted.

Except, of course, IGO content, which, as everyone knows, is unimpeachable. 🤔





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Well, UNEP - please meet @RetractionWatch because not all peer-reviewed journal content is trustworthy.

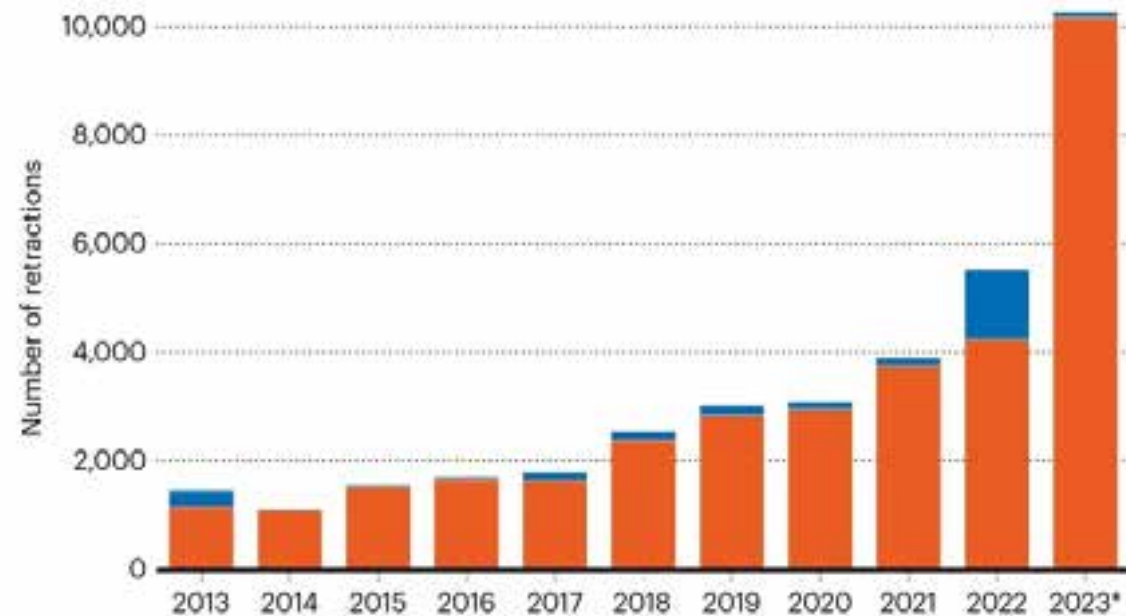
Also, UNEP, please know that most #greylit IS peer-reviewed (and here's the evidence <https://bit.ly/POCO-3Nlmckr>)

#greylit is so mis-understood 😊

### A BUMPER YEAR FOR RETRACTIONS

Retraction notices in 2023 have passed 10,000, largely because of more than 8,000 retractions by Hindawi.

Journal articles Conference papers





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Trust. When it comes to research on plastic waste, which of these brands is more trustworthy? 🤔

But there's another thing . . .







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Here's what a 🇸🇦 government research team told me about journals.

"Journals are like the good kids in class. They sit in the front, behave, are studious, but dull.

[#GreyLit](#) is like the kids at the back of the class. Riotous, difficult, but often brilliant".





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More seriously, they said journals are 'diagnostic'.

"Academics tell you what the problem is - but you already know that.  
[#GreyLit](#) tells you what works/what doesn't. For us, GreyLit is more useful  
than jnl articles, every time."

Well, journals, how do you feel about that? 🤔





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Now our topic today was:

#Publishing by Institutions and Organisations in the Global South: the challenges for librarians and users.

... but we've ended up realising that the GS bit is moot. Librarians and users have the same challenge with .orgs wherever they are ...







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. . . whether you are - a famous Lab in Berkeley, 🇺🇸 or small project at Witwatersrand Uni 🇿🇦 - your content is:

- ▶ hard for librarians and users to find
- ▶ deprecated and mis-understood.

You are that difficult, brilliant, kid at the back of the class





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Yet your content is probably more accessible to non-academics b/c

- ▶ written in non-academic English
- ▶ more likely to have other language versions
- ▶ more likely to have video & summary versions
- ▶ retains 'locality'

and it's almost always free, once you've found it 😊





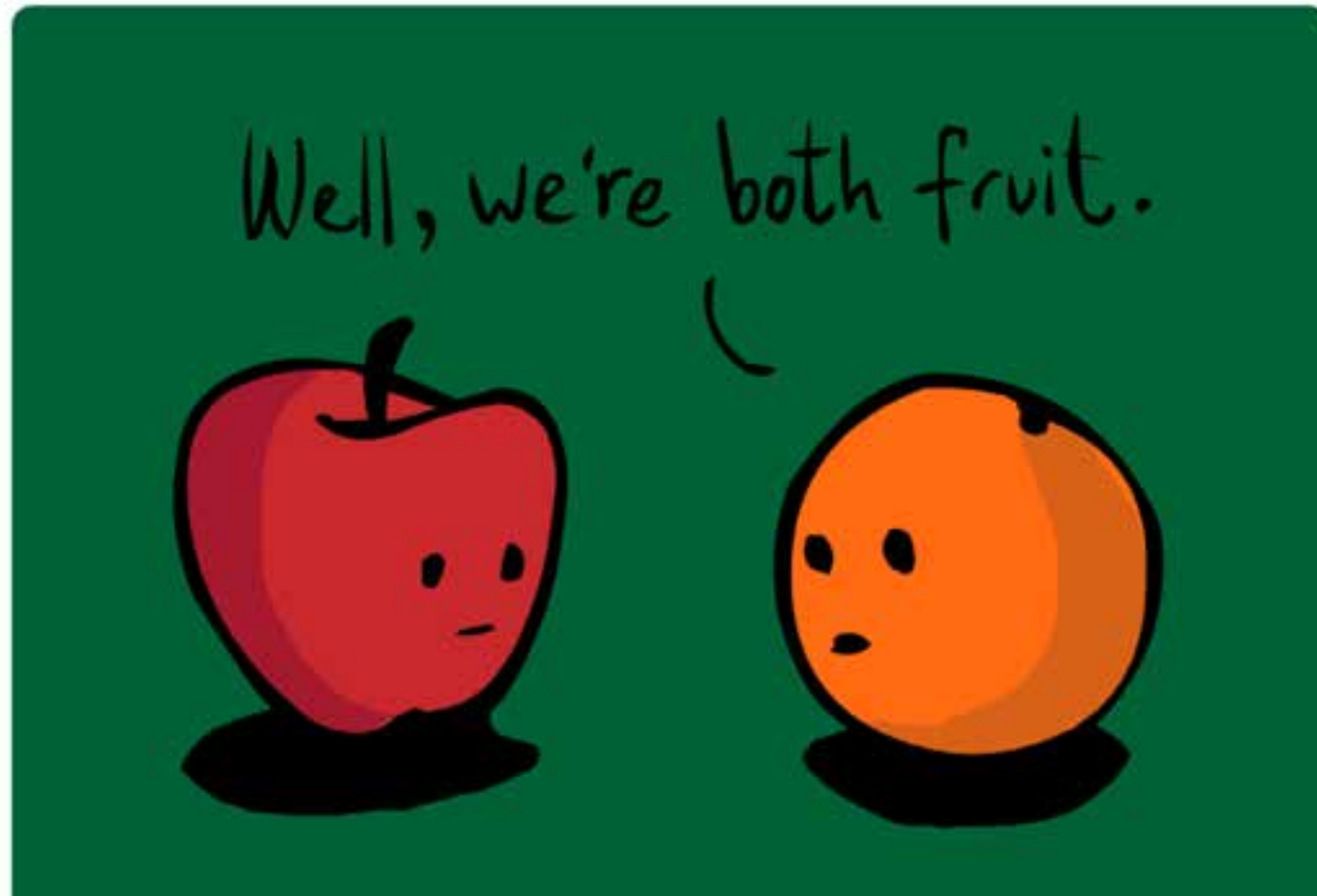
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So, we have two publishing models:

Journals (& books)

GreyLit

Let's compare ...







### Journals (& books)

- ✓ it works. Dr Buhle's "hope" ...
- ... & her "disappointments" ...
- ✗ expensive
- ✗ rigid
- ✗ slow
- ✗ legacy, 'closed', format/ C20th analog heritage
- ✗ author & author's institution lose control
- ✗ not local
- ✗ restricted audience (even when OA)

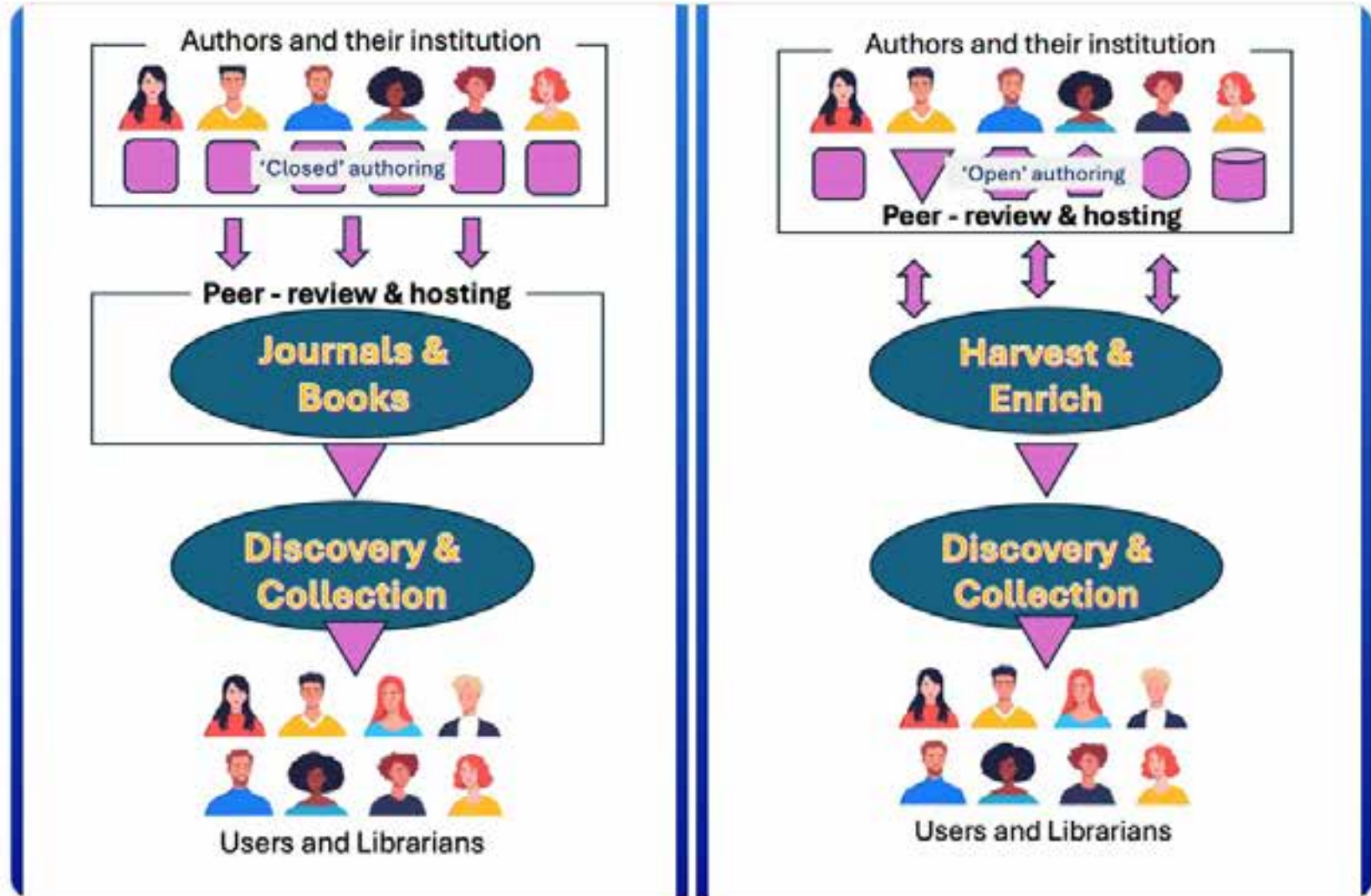
### GreyLit

- ✗ it works, until you try and find it ("disappointment")
- .. but there's "hope" b/c
- ✓ inexpensive
- ✓ flexible
- ✓ fast
- ✓ 'open' format (incl. indigenous)/ C21st digital-first
- ✓ author & author's institution keeps control
- ✓ local
- ✓ larger potential audience



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As Michele Casalini said yesterday, "there is more than one recipe".



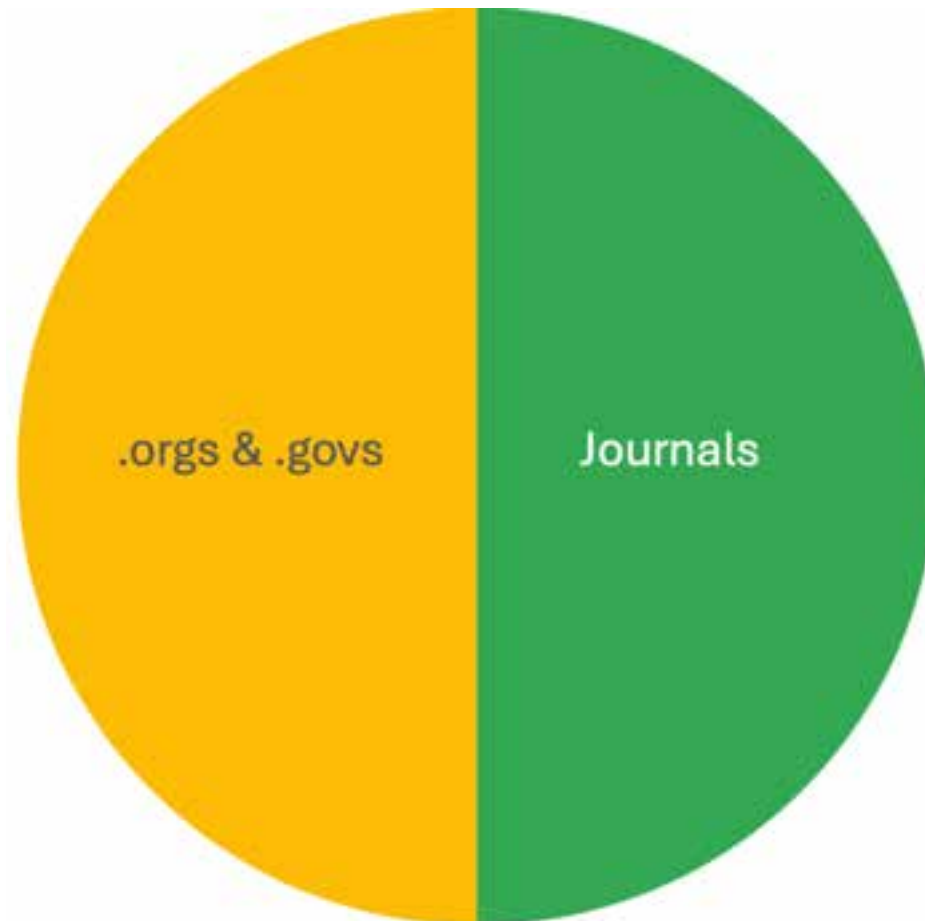


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I like to say, "there's a ton of scholarship beyond journals".

Think of this: for every one of the ~40k journals around the world there is at least one .org & .gov posting research on their website.

How many .orgs & .govs have you got in your library collection?







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Now that [@policy\\_commons](#) is taming boistrous 'back-of-the-class' kids, UNEP's got no excuse not to include waste-picker NGO reports in the paper for the next Committee on Plastic Pollution.

Who knows, some might be so brilliant that an agreement will actually be reached.





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Oh, and ...

One more thing...



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There's a ton of scholarship scattered across the world's archives. Especially stuff taken during the colonial era and now housed in GN museums and university archives.

Guess what, the same harvest and enrich methodology works here too.

e.g. >500,000 open books, magazines, and other primary sources about Africa from 4,350 collections in 600 GN archives.

+ a collection of magazines, newspapers, and films from the legendary Kenyan journalist, Hilary Ng'weno.

Free for anyone in Africa <https://africacommons.net/>



African History & Culture



East African Magazines, Newspapers and Films





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Phew, that was a long thread.

Thank you and any questions!