The Rise of Diamond Open Access Journals in Earth Sciences: Past Developments, Present Tensions, and Future Pathways

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Abstract

Over roughly the last decade, a visible, community-led Diamond Open Access (OA) ecosystem has emerged in the Earth sciences, not as a departure from tradition, but as the latest expression of a long-standing culture of open, society-supported scholarly communication. While free-to-read, fee-free publishing initiatives have deep roots in the field, predating the Diamond terminology by decades and encompassing regional infrastructures and institutional serial publishing by geological surveys and learned societies, the period since the mid-2010s has brought a new wave of explicitly Diamond-identified, community-governed disciplinary journals that have transformed the visibility and ambition of this model. This article analyzes that transition through a field-specific lens, taking journals such as Volcanica, Seismica, Tektonika, Geomorphica, Geodynamica, Sedimentologika, Advances in Geochemistry and Cosmochemistry, Open Paleontology, Planetary Research, and Journal of Studies of Earth's Deep Interior as emblematic of a broader shift in scholarly communication. Building on current Diamond OA debates, we argue that Earth sciences Diamond journals are not merely "no-fee" outlets but sociotechnical experiments in reclaiming agency, redistributing publishing labor, and redefining value away from commercial metrics. This article develops three claims. First, the Earth sciences Diamond turn has been enabled by existing community infrastructures and high levels of volunteer coordination, but it remains uneven and fragile. Second, Diamond models strengthen equity for authors and readers while exposing unresolved tensions around labor sustainability, institutional support, and recognition regimes still structured by prestige metrics. Third, Earth sciences offer a strategically important testbed for a wider transition towards commons-based scholarly communication, especially where global fieldwork, data justice, and decolonizing commitments demand alternatives to the pay-to-read and pay-to-publish systems. We conclude that the next decade should prioritize durable funding compacts, shared technical infrastructure, and reform of research assessment so that Diamond OA can scale without reproducing extractive or technocratic governance.

Keywords

Diamond Open Access; Earth sciences publishing; Scholarly communication; Research equity; Commons-based infrastructure; Research assessment reform

1 Introduction

Diamond Open Access (OA) has emerged as a major focus of contemporary scholarly publishing policy and debate, transforming the publishing landscape and reshaping scholarly communication. In its widely accepted sense, Diamond OA (a term coined by Fuchs and Sandoval 2013, and also called in some instances Platinum OA) refers to publication models that are free to read, free to publish, and free to share; i.e., there are no subscription paywalls or article processing charges (APCs) (e.g. Bosman et al. 2021; Ancion et al. 2022; Taubert et al. 2024). UNESCO extends this definition by emphasizing that Diamond OA is an equitable model grounded in shared infrastructures, open licensing, and the treatment of knowledge as a digital public good (UNESCO, 2021; 2026).

This article responds to debates on the future(s) of Diamond OA by focusing on Earth sciences over the last decade (Kumari and Subaveerapandiyan, 2025; Beigel, 2026). We use “Earth sciences” broadly, including geoscience subfields and adjacent planetary and environmental domains where publication cultures, data practices, and global collaboration patterns overlap. Although non-commercial, free-to-read and free-to-publish initiatives in the Earth sciences and related fields long predate the “diamond” terminology (e.g., see Thomas et al. 2023), this article focuses on a recent cohort of community-led disciplinary journals that explicitly position themselves within this model. These include Volcanica, Seismica, Tektonika, Sedimentologika, Geomorphica, Geodynamica, Advances in Geochemistry and Cosmochemistry, Open Paleontology, Journal of Studies of Earth’s Deep Interior, and Planetary Research. Our central argument is that the recent wave of Earth sciences Diamond OA journals should not be analysed solely in terms of publishing costs, absence of APCs, or toll-free access. These journals also and fundamentally represent a drive for researchers to regain greater control over publication media, editorial processes, publishing

infrastructure, and disciplinary communication from increasingly consolidated commercial publishers (Harrison, 2021; Fernández-Blanco et al. 2023) and, more ambitiously, to reimagine what scholarly publication can look like. Diamond OA creates an opportunity to move beyond the conventional static PDF formats toward multimedia, interactive, and data-rich publication modes that commercial publishers have been slow or unwilling to adopt. These possibilities remain largely unrealized, not for lack of vision, but because community-led Diamond OA journals must still contend with considerable infrastructural and cultural inertia. The long-term sustainability of such initiatives remains uncertain, particularly given their dependence on volunteer labor (Farquharson and Wadsworth 2018; Taubert et al. 2024) and the continued importance of established prestige metrics within academic hiring and evaluation systems (e.g., Hicks et al., 2015; Vaucher and Thomas, 2026).

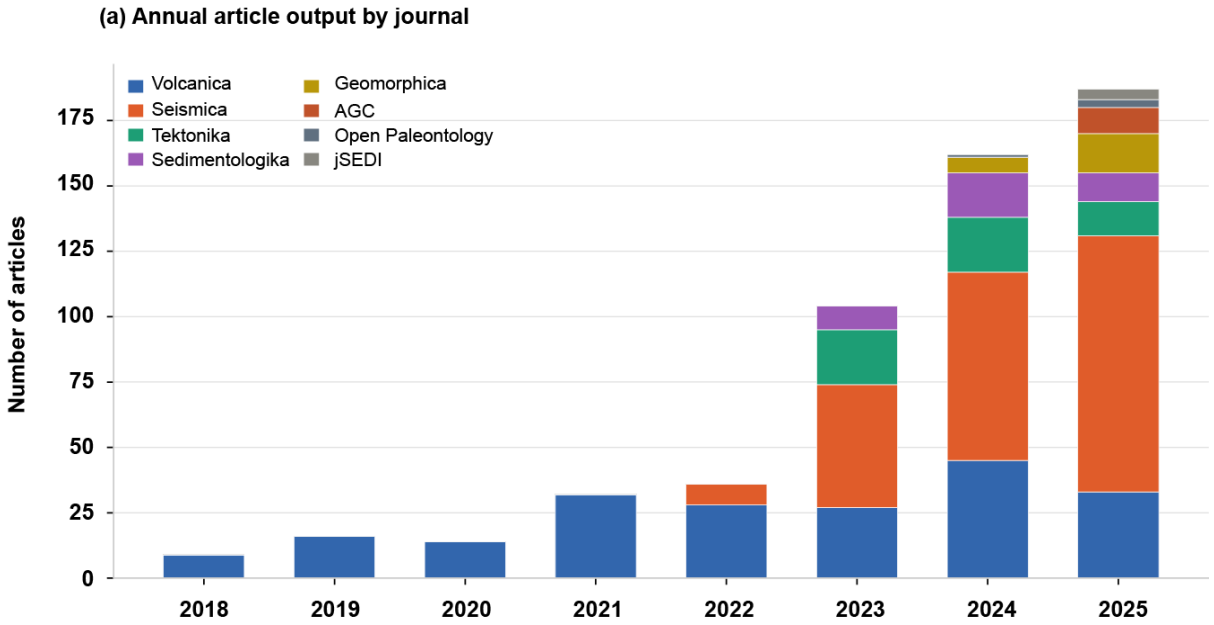

Figure 1 Growth of Diamond Open Access publishing options in the Earth sciences from 2017 to June 2026. (a) Annual article output indexed in OpenAlex for eight community-led Diamond OA journals: Volcanica, Seismica, Tektonika, Sedimentologika, Geomorphica, Advances in Geochemistry and Cosmochemistry (AGC), Open Palaeontology, and Journal of Studies of Earth's Deep Interior (jSEDI). (b) Chronological timeline of journal launches and major open access policy milestones over the same period. Planetary Research and Geodynamica are not represented in panel (a), as no articles were indexed in OpenAlex to June 2026; Geodynamica launched in July 2025 with two articles indexed in 2026. Source: OpenAlex, accessed June 2026.

Accessibility alt-text/long description: *Fig. 1a:* Stacked bar chart showing annual article counts for eight Earth science Diamond Open Access journals from 2018 to 2025. Each bar is divided into colour-coded segments representing individual journals. The total rises from 9 articles in 2018 (Volcanica only) to 187 in 2025, when all eight journals are active. Seismica is the largest contributor from 2023 onward, reaching 98 articles in 2025. Volcanica shows consistent output throughout, peaking at 45 articles in 2024. Tektonika, Sedimentologika, Geomorphica, AGC, Open Palaeontology, and jSEDI each appear from their respective launch years with growing contributions.

Fig. 1b: Vertical timeline spanning 2017 to June 2026, with years marked along a central spine. Each entry is tagged with either a coloured square (journal launch, colour matching the corresponding bar in panel a) or a dashed circle (open access policy event). Journal launches include Volcanica (2017), Seismica, Tektonika and Sedimentologika (2022), Geomorphica (2023), Open Palaeontology (2024), AGC, jSEDI and Geodynamica (2025), and Planetary Research (2026). Policy events include Plan S (2018), the UNESCO Recommendation on Open Science (2021), the DIAMAS project launch (2022), the European Commission Diamond OA Action Plan (2023), the Barcelona Declaration (2024), and the BOAI 25th anniversary recommendations (2025). The 2026 row is marked with an asterisk indicating partial-year coverage to June 2026.

2 From “No Fee” to Knowledge Commons: Conceptual Grounding

Diamond OA journals in the Earth sciences are best understood not merely as 'no-fee' outlets but as sociotechnical experiments in reclaiming community agency, redistributing publishing labor, and redefining how scholarly value is produced and recognized (Fuchs and Sandoval, 2013; Ancion et al., 2022; Gatti et al., 2025). This framing does not require dismissing subscription or hybrid models, which continue to serve important functions across the scholarly communication landscape and remain the dominant mode of publication in many disciplines. The question is not whether Diamond OA should replace other models, but

what it makes possible that other models structurally cannot: governance accountable to research communities rather than shareholders, infrastructure that keeps metadata and workflows within nonprofit ecosystems, and publishing practices that do not place financial barriers on either reading or authorship (Larivière et al., 2015; Grossmann and Brembs, 2021).

A growing body of scholarship has explored what follows from these structural differences. A fee-free model can still be extractive if governance is centralized, labor is invisibilized, or infrastructure becomes dependent on opaque platforms (Guédon, 2024; van Bellen and Céspedes, 2025). Conversely, Diamond OA functions as a commons-oriented system when ownership, decision-making, and technical dependencies remain accountable to scholarly communities (Rooryck, 2023; Taubert, 2025). The value of Diamond OA therefore lies not in the absence of a cost but in the presence of a different set of relationships between researchers, institutions, and the knowledge they produce together.

Earth sciences bring particular urgency to this discussion for three reasons (Pourret, 2020). First, APC-heavy models are exclusionary in fields where research already carries high fieldwork and analytical costs. Second, Earth science research is globally distributed but institutionally unequal, with significant participation from regions systematically under-resourced in publishing (Pourret et al., 2021). Third, many Earth science communities have strong traditions of society-based collaboration, shared data norms, and collective stewardship that can support commons-based publishing experiments (e.g., Klöcking et al. 2023). These traditions have deeper institutional roots than is sometimes acknowledged. Geological surveys (at national, state, and provincial scales) produced freely accessible technical reports, maps, and monographs long before open access became a policy agenda, establishing habits of knowledge sharing, collaborative fieldwork, mentoring, and methodological standardization that persist in contemporary research culture (Oldroyd,

1996). The GEUS Bulletin[1], published by the Geological Survey of Denmark and Greenland, exemplifies this continuity particularly well: having published serial geological reports since the late nineteenth century, it formally transitioned to Diamond OA in 2020, making explicit what had long been implicit in the survey publishing tradition, that geological knowledge produced with public institutional support belongs in the public domain. University and departmental publication series played a similar role, circulating research outputs outside commercial circuits and training generations of scientists in the norms of communal knowledge production. The motivations behind these earlier efforts were not always disinterested (e.g., resource extraction and colonial surveying imperatives shaped much of this output) but from the perspective of scientific practice, they cultivated precisely the collaborative dispositions and infrastructural reflexes that now underpin community-led Diamond OA publishing. Diamond OA, in this reading, is less an innovation imposed from outside than a digital continuation of modes of scholarly exchange that the Earth sciences have long practiced in other forms. Major disciplinary societies such as the American Geophysical Union (AGU) and the European Geosciences Union (EGU) have long modeled open science norms at scale: EGU notably publishes nineteen open-access journals through Copernicus Publications, the majority of which operated without APCs for most of their history, establishing a community expectation that quality Earth science publishing need not be mediated by author-side fees. Quantitative evidence supports this reading: of 265 geoscience journals listed in the Directory of OA Journals (https://doaj.org/), 136 charge no publication fees, reflecting pre-existing community norms rather than a radical departure from disciplinary culture (Open Access in Geosciences, open-access.network, April 2026). Shared data norms further reinforce this disposition: the progressive adoption of FAIR data principles across the geosciences (Garcia-Silva et al., 2019; Bailo et al., 2022), nascent adoption of CARE principles (Carroll et al., 2021) and and infrastructure initiatives such as

[1] The GEUS Bulletin (https://geusbulletin.org) has published geological reports continuously since 1873 under various serial titles. Its transition to Diamond OA in 2020 was announced on the journal website. Accessed June 2026.

the NSF Geosciences Open Science Ecosystem, have cultivated a community habitus oriented toward openness, interoperability, and collective stewardship that translates naturally into support for Diamond publishing models (Stall et al., 2022; Dwivedi et al., 2022). Additional evidence is seen in the ready adoption of preprints by the Earth science community (Narock et al., 2019; Pourret and Ibarra 2023).

3 A Ten-Year Evolution in Earth Science Diamond OA

3.1 Early momentum and proof of concept

The mid-2010s marked a visible acceleration in Earth sciences community publishing. It is worth recognizing that a longer tradition of society- and institution-supported, no-fee journals had already demonstrated the viability of this model well before the current wave. Journals such as *Acta Palaeontologica Polonica* (Polish Academy of Sciences), *Palaeontologia Electronica* (a pioneer of born-digital, no-APC palaeontology publishing since 1998), *Carnets de Géologie*, *Rivista Italiana di Paleontologia e Stratigrafia*, *Geologica Belgica*, *Journal of the Geological Survey of Brazil*, and *Scientific Drilling,* just to cite a few, had long sustained rigorous peer-review and international readership without author-facing charges, often through institutional subsidy, learned society support, or volunteer editorial labor (Bosman et al., 2021; Khoo, 2019; Arasteh and Blake, 2026). The journals of the French academy of sciences (the Comptes Rendus de l'Académie des Sciences series), previously hosted by Elsevier, switched to a Diamond Open Access model in 2020, with publishing and dissemination support provided by the Centre Mersenne, the open-science publishing platform operated by Mathdoc (CNRS and Université Grenoble Alpes). The Sedimentary Record also switched models in 2020, from a (free-to-read, free-to-submit) bulletin/newsletter to a fully fledged journal (Pickering and Lee, 2021). More recently, *Lethaia*, a formal outlet of the International Commission on Stratigraphy and the International Palaeontological Association, left Wiley and transitioned to Diamond OA, extending this recognition to journals renegotiating their relationship with commercial publishers (Doyle et al., 2022). Against this backdrop, *Volcanica* became a landmark case of the newer

generation (Farquharson and Wadsworth 2018): a scholar-led, no-APC journal that demonstrated editorial quality, international reach, and operational feasibility entirely outside commercial pipelines, and that explicitly articulated a Diamond OA identity as part of its founding rationale (Pourret et al., 2025; Bosman et al., 2021).

3.2 Expansion and diversification

The early 2020s brought diversification across subfields. *Seismica* (Rowe et al., 2022), *Tektonika* (Fernández-Blanco et al., 2023), and *Sedimentologika* (Thomas et al., 2023) emerged with distinct disciplinary identities while sharing core Diamond commitments. This dynamic widened with journals and initiatives in geodynamics, geomorphology systems, paleontology and geochemistry-focused communication spaces, including *Geodynamica* (Maffei et al., 2025), *Geomorphica* (Lefebvre et al., 2025), *Open Paleontology* (Drage et al., 2024), *Advances in Geochemistry and Cosmochemistry* (Pourret et al., 2025), *Journal of Studies of Earth's Deep Interior* and *Planetary Research*. Together, these initiatives suggest a shift from one-off pilots toward an ecosystem model of distributed, scholar-governed publishing (Table 1; Figure 1).

Table 1. Comparative profile of selected Earth-science Diamond Open Access journals.

Sources: journal websites; OpenAlex (article counts, accessed May 2026). AGC = Advances in Geochemistry and Cosmochemistry; jSEDI = Journal of Studies of Earth's Deep Interior. Dashes indicate data not publicly available.

Journal	Launch year	Article volume (to date)	Volunteer team (total no.)	Editorial governance	Peer review model	Ownership	Funding model	Licensing	Platform	Regional representation
Volcanica	2017	212	~50 (incl. 11 executive editors, 8 tech team)	Executive Editorial Committee + handling editors; rotating leadership	Single-blind; standard peer review, option for double-open or double-blind	Community-led	Institutional support; volunteer labour.	CC BY 4.0	OJS + LaTeX + pandoc	Global; concentration in Western Europe + North America
Seismica	2022	269	~70 (5 executive editors, 16 members of	Executive editors + pool of managing editors;	Open review (reviews published); CC0	Community-led; fiscally hosted	Volunteer labour; institutional support; limited donations	CC0	OJS	Global; concentration in Western Europe + North America

			management committee, 20 operational/ functional team members, ~40 handling editors)	volunteer-driven	data policy					
Tektonika	2022	65	~22 (5 Executive editors, 17 Associate editors)	Executive editors + Associate editors; structured editorial board	Double-blind; ~83 days to decision, ~330 days to publication	Community-led initiative	Volunteer labour; no institutional funding declared	CC BY 4.0	OJS	Global; concentration in Western Europe + North America

Sedimentologika	2022	47	~50 (4 executive editors, 22 associate editors, 10 copy-editors/typesetters, 13 steering committee)	Executive editors + steering committee + associate editors; dedicated copy-editing team	Standard peer review	Community-led; hosted at Univ. of Geneva Library	University hosting; volunteer labour	CC BY 4.0	OJS	Global; concentration in Western Europe + North America but representation in Asia, Oceania and South America
Geomorphica	2023	28	30+ (editors-in-chief, associate editors, managing editors, EDI team, tech team, ethics team, advisory board)	Multi-team structure incl. EDI and ethics teams; editor-in-chief + editorial board	Triple-anonymous peer review system, reviews published with papers; EDI considerations in	Non-profit association; hosted at Penn State University Libraries	Financial support from the international association of geomorphologists; University library hosting; volunteer labour	CC BY 4.0	OJS	Global; concentration in Western Europe + North America but representation of South America, Africa and Oceania

					review process					
Advances in Geochemistry and Cosmochemistry (AGC)	2025	19	~53 (8 executive editors, 30 handling editors, 15 function team members)	Executive editors + handling editors	Standard peer review; Option for double-blind review	Community-led; hosted at Uppsala University	University hosting; volunteer labour	CC BY 4.0	OJS	Global; concentration in Western Europe + North America
Open Palaeontology	2024	8	~26 (3 managing editors, 15 handling editors, 2 tech/comms, 6 steering committee)	Managing editors + steering committee + handling editor pool	Fully open peer review as standard; option for double-blind review process	Community-led non-profit	Volunteer labour; grant funding including hosting provision (SOAP2; Swiss universities)	CC BY 4.0	OJS + Overleaf + Google Drive + Slack	European concentration; Asia and North America represented

					with unblinding on publication; all review exchanges published					
Geodynamica	2025	2	28 (19 editorial team members, 5 technical team members and 4 media & outreach members)	Horizontal editorial management + Steering committee composed of 2 representatives of each team	Standard peer review	Community-led; hosted at eScholarship, University of California Los Angeles (UCLA)	University library hosting; volunteer labour	CC BY 4.0	Janeway	Global, concentration in Western Europe
Journal of Studies of Earth's	2025	8	17	Editorial board; global	Standard peer review	Community-led; hosted by	Public research infrastructure	CC BY	EpiSciences / ENS Éditions	Global (Europe, N. America, Asia, Australasia)

Deep Interior (jSEDI)				representation		EpiSciences / ENS Éditions	(EpiSciences); volunteer labour			
Planetary Research	2026	0	19	Editor in chief, handling editors, associate editors	Single-blind or double blind, peer-review reports	Independent non-profit association	Government grants, funding consortium, donations	CC BY 4.0	OJS	Global

Alt-text: Comparative table summarising launch year, article volume, volunteer team size, editorial governance, peer review model, ownership, funding model, licensing, platform, and regional representation for ten Earth-science Diamond OA journals: Volcanica, Seismica, Tektonika, Sedimentologika, Geomorphica, AGC, Open Palaeontology, Geodynamica, jSEDI, and Planetary Research.

This phase is characterized by three advances:

1. Institutionalization of workflows. Editorial teams have refined submission, review, copy-editing, and production pipelines, often through Open Journal Systems (OJS) and library partnerships, with early adopters documenting and sharing their experiences.
2. Normative innovation. Journals increasingly connect OA to broader commitments around transparency, open data, ethical field practice, and inclusion in editorial governance.
3. Community signaling. The visibility of successful launches lowers perceived risk for authors, making Diamond publication a more normalized career choice in some subfields.

3.3 Consolidation and strategic contestation

By the mid-2020s, Earth science Diamond OA had shifted from novelty to strategic contention. The key question was no longer whether such journals could exist, but whether they could scale whilst preserving community governance and avoiding mission drift. This mirrors wider concerns in Diamond OA debates: policy-led standardization can improve interoperability and discoverability, yet it can also pull journals toward technocratic compliance frameworks disconnected from local needs or bibliodiversity goals (Moore, 2025). Earth sciences now occupy a transitional moment. The model has passed the initial proof-of-concept. The unresolved challenge is long-term durability under conditions where labor, funding, and recognition systems remain structurally misaligned.

4 Three Fault Lines in the Earth Science Diamond Transition

4.1 Labor: collective commitment versus structural precarity

Diamond OA depends on substantial labor by editors, reviewers, and technical support staff. In community-led Earth science journals, this labor is often mission-driven and intellectually meaningful, but also structurally fragile. Without explicit workload planning, recognition mechanisms, and administrative support, the organizational fabric of a journal can unravel rapidly: contributors who are not formally tied to tasks, not supervised, and not institutionally accountable may simply disappear or stop responding, leaving critical functions unmanned

with little warning (Bosman et al., 2021; Tennant et al., 2019). This fragility is compounded by the broader precarity of academic employment: many of those who volunteer for editorial and technical roles are themselves in unstable or contingent positions, postdoctoral researchers, fixed-term lecturers, early-career scholars without permanent contracts, meaning that the labor sustaining Diamond OA journals is doubly vulnerable, exposed both to individual burnout and to the structural instabilities of the academic labor market it depends upon (Alperin et al., 2019). The result is a frequent and dangerous concentration of responsibilities among a small set of highly committed contributors whose departure, for whatever reason, can threaten journal continuity entirely.

The labor question should therefore be treated as infrastructural, not incidental. Sustainable Diamond OA requires formal recognition of editorial service in hiring and promotion criteria, explicit succession planning embedded in journal governance, and dedicated funding lines for professional administrative and technical support where possible (e.g., Vaucher and Thomas, 2026). Mission-driven commitment is a genuine asset of community-led publishing, but it cannot substitute for the organizational structures that allow journals to survive the inevitable turnover of their most dedicated contributors.

4.2 Infrastructure: openness, interoperability, and control

Earth science Diamond journals have benefited from open-source platforms and library-hosted systems. This has reduced entry barriers and strengthened institutional accountability. Yet infrastructure remains a site of power (Figure 2). Decisions about hosting, covering not only articles but increasingly expanded scholarly outputs including data, code, and software, as well as metadata standards, indexing, preservation, and platform governance and communication tools determine whether journals remain autonomous or become dependent on external actors. As Earth science publishing evolves toward richer and more diverse output types, the infrastructural choices made now will shape whether Diamond journals can accommodate and steward these outputs on community terms, or

whether they will be forced to rely on commercial platforms whose governance priorities diverge from those of the research communities they serve (Figure 2; Bilder et al., 2020; Bosman et al., 2021).

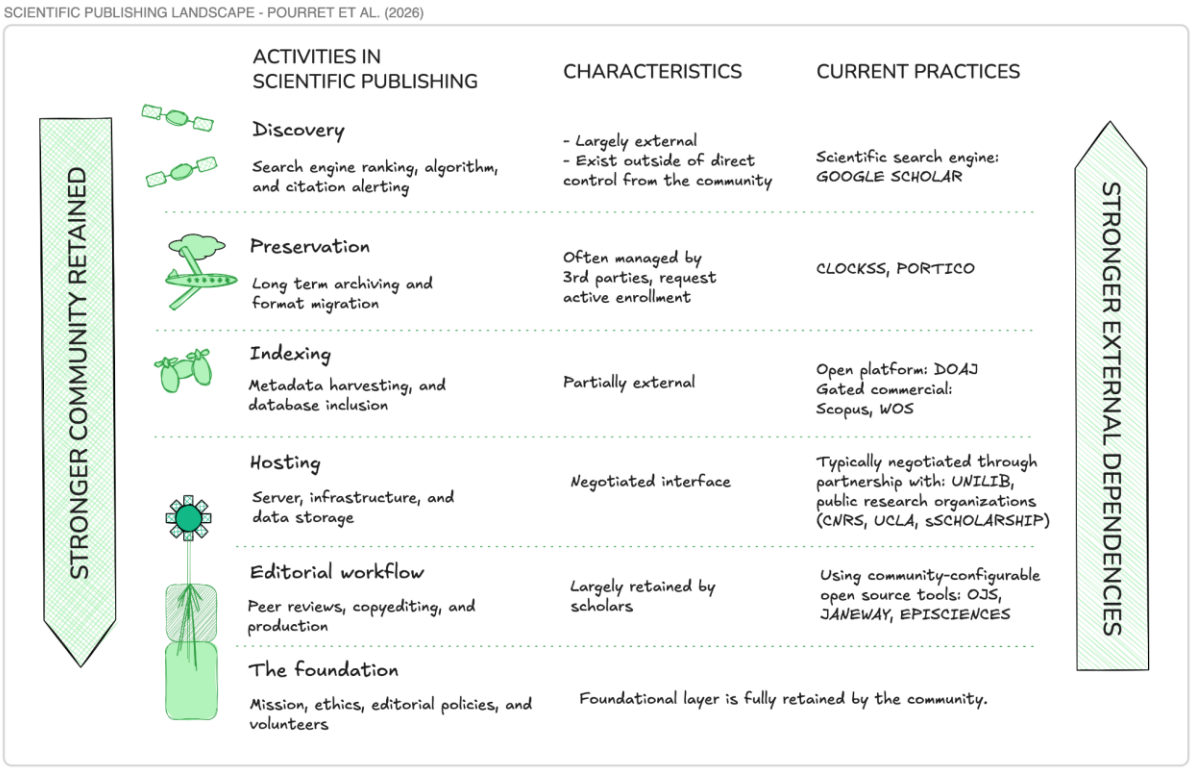

Figure 2 Sketch of governance and infrastructure stack map showing control points (community governance, editorial workflows, hosting, indexing, preservation, and discovery). Accessibility alt-text/long description: Layered systems sketch illustrating where governance control is retained by scholarly communities versus outsourced to external providers.

A robust Diamond strategy in Earth sciences should favor shared nonprofit infrastructures with transparent governance, though it must be acknowledged that not all existing Diamond OA journals currently meet this standard, and governance transparency remains an uneven and underaddressed weakness across the landscape (Bosman et al., 2021; Bilder et al., 2020). Strengthening this dimension will likely require active impulsion from nonprofit infrastructure initiatives and community-led governance frameworks rather than relying on individual journals to self-regulate. Interoperability is essential, but should not come at the

expense of local autonomy, multilingual publishing, or plural editorial models. Standardization must be negotiated, not imposed.

4.3 Evaluation: the persistence of prestige economies

Perhaps the most significant barrier to wider Diamond adoption is the persistence of journal-centric research assessment (Vaucher and Thomas, 2026). Authors, especially early-career researchers, still navigate systems where publication venue prestige, operationalized above all through the Journal Impact Factor, is used as a proxy for research quality (Hicks et al., 2015). Obtaining an Impact Factor is itself a long and uneven process for Diamond OA journals: *Volcanica*, for instance, secured one only after a protracted effort, while *Seismica* is currently pursuing the same path, in part because researchers outside Europe and North America have reported that an Impact Factor is a formal requirement for publishing with certain institutions (van den Ende et al., 2021). The problem is compounded when journals are not yet indexed in major databases, since invisibility in Google Scholar or Scopus can effectively exclude a journal from grant and promotion dossiers regardless of its scientific merit, a situation that disproportionately affects newer community-led outlets (Piwowar et al., 2018; van Bellen et al. 2025). Even within Europe, where Impact Factor dependence is sometimes assumed to be weaker, researchers report that grant applications explicitly require an Impact Factor to appear alongside publications on a curriculum vitae. Emerging alternatives such as OpenAlex's two-year mean citedness score offer a technically sound substitute, but the absence of an official stamp continues to matter in practice.

Even when scholars support Diamond OA principles, they may perceive real career risk in prioritizing newer community-led outlets. This perception is reinforced when established researchers advise early-career colleagues against submitting to new Diamond journals, citing concerns that the work will not be taken seriously, or that journal longevity cannot be guaranteed (Yoon et al., 2024). Such advice is not always wrong given current evaluation structures, but it creates a self-fulfilling dynamic that slows adoption and places the

reputational burden disproportionately on those least able to absorb it. Some early-career researchers still invest substantial sums (i.e., often several thousand euros or dollars) in high-prestige Gold OA venues because they are convinced, through a form of peer pressure as much as rational calculation, that it matters for their career, even in contexts nominally committed to San Francisco Declaration on Research Assessment (DORA)-aligned recruitment (McKiernan et al., 2016).

Addressing this tension, where early-career researchers support Diamond principles but face genuine career risk in acting on them, requires aligning publishing reform with assessment reform, two agendas that have largely advanced in parallel without sufficient coordination. The rise and growing track record of Diamond OA journals in the Earth sciences offers precisely the evidence base needed to make that case to hiring committees, funders, and institutional leaders: these are not experimental outlets but peer-reviewed, community-governed venues with demonstrable editorial standards, growing citation records, and expanding author communities. Established researchers have a particular responsibility here: both by publishing in Diamond journals themselves and by actively pioneering changes in hiring, promotion, and grant evaluation policies that would reduce the structural disadvantage these journals currently face (Hicks et al., 2015; DORA, 2012). On a more optimistic note, there are emerging anecdotal signals from within the Diamond OA community that generational change may help shift norms from below. Surveys suggest that awareness of and support for OA varies across career stages, with younger researchers generally showing greater familiarity with OA principles and reform initiatives (Rowley et al., 2017; Tennant et al., 2016), though neither study disaggregates findings by Diamond OA specifically or measures actual submission behavior. Early-career researchers, many of whom came of age intellectually during the open access transition, may therefore be more favorably disposed toward Diamond initiatives and more willing to submit to recently launched journals than some of their senior colleagues, even while remaining justifiably anxious about whether those choices will be recognized in future academic hiring. Whether

this generational openness is real, how widely it extends across disciplines and regions, and whether it can translate into durable norm change before assessment systems catch up, remain empirical questions that the Diamond OA community would benefit from investigating systematically. Longitudinal surveys tracking submission behavior, attitude formation, and career outcome perceptions across career stages and geographic contexts would help determine whether bottom-up generational pressure constitutes a genuine driver of publishing reform or remains, for now, a hopeful but unverified premise. A broader structural shift may also be needed: a community move toward multi-metric academic profiling, which foregrounds the diversity of individual research contributions rather than collapsing evaluation onto a single journal-level proxy, could meaningfully shift the balance away from Impact Factor dependence and toward assessment frameworks more compatible with Diamond OA publishing (Crameri, 2023). Such an approach would not only reduce the structural disadvantage facing newer community-led journals but would also better reflect the actual breadth of scholarly work that Diamond OA models are designed to support.

5 Regional and Decolonial Stakes

Debates about Diamond OA are inseparable from global inequalities in knowledge production. Latin American publishing infrastructures are frequently recognized as long-standing examples of non-APC, publicly oriented scholarly communication, most notably through platforms such as SciELO and AmeliCA, which have articulated an explicit political economy of open access grounded in public funding and regional solidarity (Becerril-García et al., 2018; Khanna et al., 2022). These models challenge the assumption, still prevalent in European and North American policy discourse, that open access must be brokered through commercial intermediaries or large institutional consortia. The Global South more broadly offers a range of instructive cases: journal ecosystems in countries such as Indonesia have long operated outside dominant bibliometric frameworks, raising fundamental questions about whose research counts, for whom, and measured by what standards, questions that

Diamond OA governance must confront if it is to avoid replicating Northern-centric prestige hierarchies (Irawan et al., 2021). At the same time, recent critiques warn that Diamond OA can be reabsorbed into commercial logics if governance and ownership are not actively protected (Posada and Chen, 2018; Beigel, 2026). The risk is not merely financial capture but epistemic: if Diamond journals are evaluated, aggregated, or ranked by the same infrastructures that sustain the APC economy, their transformative potential is structurally neutralized. Equity in Diamond OA therefore demands attention not only to who pays, or does not pay, but to who governs, who is indexed, and whose knowledge systems are rendered legible within global scholarly communication.

For Earth sciences, these stakes are acute. The field depends on geographically distributed data, sites, and communities, yet publication authority remains concentrated in well-resourced institutions and anglophone circuits (Flowerdew, 2007). A genuinely transformative Diamond model must do more than remove fees. It should address linguistic hierarchies, editorial representation, and collaboration practices that have historically marginalized local expertise, particularly in regions where field sites are located but publication power is externalized (Beigel, 2014). This is where decolonizing commitments become operational rather than rhetorical. Community-led journals can embed policies on local collaboration, data sovereignty (Carroll et al., 2020), multilingual accessibility, and inclusive reviewer pools (Bosman et al., 2021; Ancion et al., 2022). *Volcanica* offers a concrete example of such commitments in practice: its Special Issue on Volcano Observatories in Latin America was conceived explicitly to amplify direct field observations from Latin American volcano, institutions whose expertise and proximity to active volcanic systems is unmatched, yet whose findings have historically been underrepresented in international journals, and was published in full bilingual format, in both English and Spanish, deliberately lowering the linguistic barriers that typically filter regional scientific knowledge out of global scholarly circuits (Forte et al., 2021; Chevrel et al., 2021). *Seismica* offers a comparable instance of this editorial commitment in practice. Its special issue dedicated to

the 2023 Türkiye–Syria earthquake sequence was conceived as a rapid community response to a catastrophic event, centering the voices and data of researchers working in and on the affected region. While full bilingual publication was not adopted, abstracts were made available in Turkish, extending accessibility to local scientific communities and acknowledging the linguistic asymmetry that typically separates field-site expertise from international publication circuits (Seismica, 2023). Taken together, these examples suggest that Diamond OA journals are developing an editorial repertoire (e.g. special issues, translation practices, rapid response formats) that is structurally difficult for commercial publishers to replicate, both because of the slower decision-making cycles inherent to profit-driven operations and because the communities most affected by events such as the Türkiye–Syria earthquake are rarely those whose purchasing power or institutional affiliations drive commercial publishing priorities. This kind of editorial design illustrates what it means for a Diamond OA journal to operationalize decolonial commitments rather than simply endorse them in a mission statement: combining flagship publication formats with multilingual accessibility, regional partnership, and community-responsive editorial decisions. Yet such practices require resources and institutional backing that cannot rest on goodwill alone, and these examples remain the exception rather than the norm across the broader Earth science Diamond OA journal landscape. Scaling them will require the same structural investments, in funding, labor recognition, and governance, that the Diamond OA model more broadly demands.

6 Lessons for the Broader Diamond OA Agenda

Earth science developments offer at least four broader lessons for Diamond OA policy and practice.

1. Visibility follows coordination. Trust grows when journals are embedded in active disciplinary networks and communicate clear editorial values (Laakso et al., 2021).

2. Costs are real but manageable. Diamond does not mean cost-free; it means cost redistribution (Bosman et al., 2021). The commercial publishing sector routinely extracts profit margins of 30–40% from the scholarly communication system (Larivière et al., 2015), margins that Diamond OA eliminates entirely by keeping costs at the level of genuine operational need rather than shareholder return, redirecting the equivalent value toward editorial quality and community infrastructure. Relatively modest public or institutional investments can sustain high-quality publishing when profit extraction is removed (Willinsky, 2009).

3. Infrastructure choices are political choices. Open-source and library-based systems can protect autonomy, but only if governance remains transparent and the community accountable (Tkacz, 2014; see also Figure 2).

4. Publishing reform requires assessment reform. Without changes to evaluation systems, Diamond journals face structural disadvantages that editorial excellence alone cannot fully offset. A significant part of this problem operates at the individual researcher level: many scholars lacking APC funding feel compelled to publish in expensive Gold OA journals to meet career advancement criteria. Breaking this cycle requires the Diamond OA movement to actively demonstrate to researchers that career progression does not inherently depend on journal-level prestige metrics (Hicks et al., 2015; Alperin et al. 2019; Vaucher and Thomas, 2026). Cultivating this awareness bottom-up, among early-career researchers, department heads, funding-body reviewers, and hiring committees alike, is an essential complement to top-down policy pressure, and the most realistic pathway toward the systemic regulatory shifts that equitable research assessment ultimately demands (Pourret et al., 2022).

7 Pathways for the Next Decade

If the first decade of Earth science Diamond OA established feasibility, the next decade must establish sustainability. Six priorities follow:

1. Long-term sustainability requires universities, libraries, funders, and scholarly societies to build pooled, multi-year funding compacts for nonprofit journals and shared infrastructure, treating community-led publishing as a collective scholarly responsibility rather than a discretionary cost (Bosman et al., 2021; Fuchs and Sandoval, 2013).

2. Editorial and peer-review labor currently sustains Diamond OA publishing largely through the invisible goodwill of scholars whose institutional career systems offer neither formal credit nor workload relief for this work, and addressing this structural deficit requires explicit recognition frameworks that count journal service in hiring, promotion, and tenure evaluation (Alperin et al., 2019; Tennant et al., 2019).

3. The operational costs of copyediting, typesetting, technical maintenance, metadata curation, and long-term preservation are frequently duplicated across Diamond OA journals that lack the economies of scale available to commercial publishers, and addressing this inefficiency requires active mutualization of shared services and infrastructure across journal communities before burnout and resource fragmentation undermine what editorial goodwill has built (Bosman et al., 2021; Larivière et al., 2015).

4. Diamond OA frameworks risk reproducing the homogenizing pressures of commercial publishing if they default toward anglophone norms, standardized metrics, and centralized governance structures. Resisting this requires building bibliodiversity into Diamond models by design, actively protecting multilingual publishing, regional editorial autonomy, and plural governance forms rather than treating these as optional accommodations to a single dominant standard (Shearer et al., 2020; Beigel, 2014). Operating outside commercial constraints also creates genuine space for editorial innovation that subscription and APC-based models have been slow to pursue: Diamond journals can experiment with diverse output types (i.e. interactive visualizations, datasets, software packages, multimedia reports, and data papers) that better reflect the full range of scientific contribution and align naturally with open science norms around FAIR data and reproducibility (Hrynaszkiewicz et al., 2021;

Stall et al., 2019). Finally, the rapid development of artificial intelligence tools introduces both opportunities and risks that Diamond OA governance must begin to address explicitly. On the one hand, AI-assisted workflows (i.e. for copyediting, language support, metadata curation, and format conversion) could meaningfully reduce the volunteer labor burden that represents one of the model's most acute vulnerabilities, and language assistance tools in particular could help lower the anglophone barriers that disadvantage non-native English-speaking authors and reviewers (Hosseini and Horbach, 2023). On the other hand, AI-generated or AI-assisted submissions risk increasing editorial workload rather than reducing it, accelerating the production of low-effort manuscripts that stretch already thin volunteer reviewer pools and potentially undermining the quality signals on which newer Diamond journals depend for their reputational credibility (Cabanac et al., 2021). It should be noted that there is tension between social justice and climate justice in multilingual scholarly communication, especially related to the use of AI translation tools (Bowker, 2025): often, the most under-represented languages in science also correspond to communities most vulnerable to negative climate outcomes. These concerns are reinforced by recent evidence showing that scientific information continues to circulate unevenly between languages (e.g. Farquharson, 2025). Such findings emphasise the importance of ensuring that Diamond OA infrastructures support genuine multilingual participation, rather than unintentionally reinforcing existing inequalities through technologies that are often assumed to be neutral, but are in fact anything but (Bowker 2024; Peeters et al. 2026). Developing community norms and transparent editorial policies around AI use is therefore an emerging governance priority for the Diamond OA ecosystem.

5. Decolonial commitments in Diamond OA publishing remain rhetorical unless operationalized through concrete editorial policies that systematically address the geographic and linguistic asymmetries through which publication power has historically been concentrated in well-resourced anglophone institutions at the expense of the communities and field sites on which Earth science knowledge depends (Beigel, 2014; Carroll et al.,

2020). Some Earth science Diamond journals are beginning to move beyond declarations of intent toward enforceable editorial practice. Geomorphica has instituted a Land Recognition policy that requires authors to acknowledge the traditional and cultural significance of the lands on which their research was conducted, both institutional locations and field sites, actively connecting the act of publication to the broader history of colonialism and Indigenous dispossession that has shaped where and how geoscience knowledge is produced (Lefebvre et al., 2025). Advances in Geochemistry and Cosmochemistry has addressed the related problem of parachute science directly in its editorial guidelines, explicitly discouraging research practices that extract data or samples from lower-resourced regions without meaningful involvement of local researchers, and requiring that local collaborators be included in author lists using CRediT attribution roles and that at least one local researcher be suggested as a reviewer for submissions focused on specific geographic areas (Pourret et al., 2025). These policies represent a qualitative shift in what Diamond OA governance can mean in practice: not merely the removal of financial barriers to reading and publishing, but the embedding of equity, positionality, and relational accountability into the editorial process itself. Inclusive authorship practices, fair representation in editorial boards and reviewer pools, data sovereignty provisions, and recognition of indigenous land and knowledge systems are not optional accommodations to a dominant standard but constitutive elements of a publishing model that takes its decolonial commitments seriously.

6. Funders and institutions should adopt evaluation practices consistent with DORA-like principles, reducing dependence on journal prestige proxies (DORA, 2012; Curry et al., 2020). National and institutional promotion frameworks must remove reliance on journal-level metrics such as Scimago rankings and Journal Impact Factor, shifting evaluation toward intrinsic research quality and regional impact (Hicks et al., 2015). This reform is especially critical because many Diamond OA platforms are newly established, community-driven initiatives that either lack commercial indexing or intentionally forgo traditional metrics to resist publishing monopolies. Retaining metric-heavy assessment systems creates an

artificial barrier that effectively penalizes scholars who support equitable and open research ecosystems.

These priorities are mutually reinforcing. Funding without labor recognition will fail; interoperability without autonomy will centralize control; openness without assessment reform will remain fragile. The key policy objective is systemic alignment.

8 Conclusion

The rise of Diamond OA journals in Earth sciences over the last ten years marks a significant transformation in how scholarly communities imagine and organize publication. Journals such as Volcanica, Seismica, Tektonika, Geomorphica, Geodynamica, Sedimentologika, Advances in Geochemistry and Cosmochemistry, Open Paleontology, Planetary Research, and Journal of Studies of Earth's Deep Interior demonstrate that high-quality, community-led, fee-free publishing is possible across diverse epistemic cultures within the geosciences. Yet this transition remains unfinished. The central challenge is not whether Diamond OA works in principle, but whether scholarly institutions are willing to support it in practice through funding, governance, infrastructure, and evaluation reform. If these alignments are achieved, Earth sciences may provide one of the clearest pathways toward a non-extractive, globally equitable scholarly communication system.

In that sense, the Earth science decade of Diamond OA is less a completed success story than a strategic opening: proof that another publishing order can be built, and a reminder that its future will be decided by collective choices made now.

Competing Interests

OP is a founding member of Advances in Geochemistry and Cosmochemistry and is a community advisor for Open Research Europe; MAM is a founding member of Advances in Geochemistry and Cosmochemistry and the coordinating editor. MA and TD are founding members of Geodynamica and are steering committee representative for the editorial board

and media & outreach lead respectively; TWWH is a founding member, steering committee member, and managing editor of Open Palaeontology; CM is Executive Editor for Tektonika; LSHL and AL are the Editor-in-Chiefs and steering committee members of Geomorphica. CT and RV are founding members, steering committee members and journal managers of Sedimentologika. JIF is a founding member and Editor-in-Chief of Volcanica. ST is Executive Editor for Open Science at Seismica. LW is a founding member and Chief Editor at jSEDI. MAW is Editor-in-Chief of Planetary Research.

Competing interests were assessed across the previous five years in line with JEP and COPE guidance.

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