

HOW RESEARCH ARTICLES ARE REVIEWED AT AGER

Public information for authors

This document summarises the criteria guiding external peer review. It is not the operational form completed by reviewers, but it sets out its core dimensions so that authors know in advance how their submission will be assessed.

1. PURPOSE AND PRINCIPLES

Research articles that pass the internal editorial screening are sent to external specialists for double-anonymous peer review. Reviewers assess the scientific contribution and prepare a reasoned report. The indicative response options do not generate an overall score and do not replace the narrative assessment.

- Subject-specific and methodological expertise of reviewers.
- Confidentiality of the submission and absence of competing interests.
- Prohibition on uploading the submission to publicly available generative AI tools.
- Personal responsibility for every comment included in the review report.

2. SCIENTIFIC ASSESSMENT CRITERIA

Fit with rural and territorial research

- Substantive relevance to depopulation, rural development or territorial development.
- Integration of the rural or territorial dimension into the research problem, design and discussion.
- Relevance to AGER readership and contribution beyond the immediate case study.

Originality and contribution

- Distinctiveness in relation to the existing literature and the authors' previous publications.
- Clarity of the novelty and of the theoretical, methodological or empirical advance.

Scientific coherence

- Clarity of the objectives, research questions or hypotheses.
- Alignment between the conceptual framework, methodology, results, discussion and conclusions.
- Consistent use of concepts and conclusions that are proportionate to the evidence.

Methodology and evidence

- Appropriateness of the research design and justification of the cases, sources, sample or participants.
- Transparency, traceability, limitations, ethics and data protection.

Presentation and documentation

- Clarity of the writing and presentation of the results.
- Relevance and suitability of tables, figures and maps.
- Currency and correspondence of in-text citations and references.

3. OPEN SCIENCE, ETHICS AND INCLUSION

- Consideration of sex and gender where relevant to the research topic, data or population.
- Absence of discriminatory language, stereotypes or unsupported generalisations.
- Availability of data, instruments, code and materials, or an explanation of any restrictions.
- Consistency with any protocols or preregistrations.
- Consent, ethical review, anonymisation and data protection, where applicable.
- Clear disclosure of the use or non-use of artificial intelligence.

4. STRUCTURE OF THE REVIEW REPORT

- Overall assessment and strengths.
- Major concerns affecting validity, contribution or scope.
- Minor comments on presentation, citations, figures or writing.
- Essential missing references, only where they are directly relevant to the research.
- Confidential comments and recommendation to the Editorial Board.

5. POSSIBLE RECOMMENDATIONS

- Publishable without substantive changes.
- Publishable after minor revision.
- Major revision and further review required.
- Not suitable for publication.

6. OPEN PEER REVIEW AND RECOGNITION

Once the review process has concluded, and only if the article is published, reviewers may voluntarily authorise the anonymous or signed publication of their report. Reviewer identities are not disclosed during the review process. AGER checks the quality and coherence of all reports, issues review certificates and, with reviewers' consent, publishes an annual list of reviewers without linking them to individual submissions.

1 September 2026



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