

General guidelines for reviewers

*GAI*A – *Ecological Perspectives for Science and Society* is a peer-reviewed academic journal dedicated to inter- and transdisciplinary research on and for sustainability transformations.

*GAI*A provides a platform for presenting and promoting theoretical and empirical insights associated with sustainability transformations. Articles focus on analyzing, interpreting, reflecting on, and discussing the diversity and dynamics of human-nature relationships informed by ecological knowledge and directed towards sustainability. *GAI*A particularly encourages submissions that transgress disciplinary boundaries, transcend established knowledge domains, or explore novel methodologies, such as participatory and transdisciplinary research processes.

With a clear commitment to Open Access, *GAI*A addresses science and practice alike, and aims to foster society's competence for sustainability-oriented action. *GAI*A speaks to a heterogeneous and critical audience. Articles are chosen for their scientific quality, thematic significance, and accessibility to readers from different backgrounds and disciplines.

Compared to disciplinary journals, *GAI*A attaches greater importance to the literary quality of its articles: Papers (only original ones should be submitted) begin with an introduction suitable for non-specialists. The significance of the topic in the environmental and sustainability context is emphasised. The style is discursive, short and precise. Papers end with practical conclusions.

The **Research** section of *GAI*A contains three categories of texts:

1. *original scientific articles* of environmental and sustainability research;
2. *review articles* that place environmental problems and development in a broader context; and
3. *design reports* which focus on the configuration of inter- and transdisciplinary research projects in terms of their research and communication design.

Design reports are a *GAI*A-specific format. The possible contents and requirements are disclosed in specific guidelines for authors (these can be consulted [here](#)) and reviewers are requested to respond to some additional, specific questions. In short: Design reports are not merely reprints of the proposal or epistemological treatises but rather discuss the underlying reasoning for the project design and critically present the design principles. Design reports look at the decisions taken concerning the design of the research and communication, offering an explanation and critique of the project design and the processes shaping it, paying special attention to the question of how partners from scientific and non-scientific cultures communicate, what form of communication architectures they have, and how they handle the results. Design reports contribute to raising the level of experience in the setting-up and implementation of inter- and transdisciplinary projects with a focus on research and communication. They include recommendations or lessons learnt. Design reports can be published before a project terminates.

All articles are subjected to a **double-blind peer review** and cross-read by a so-called non-expert reviewer. Responsibilities of reviewers are outlined in *GAI*A's [Code of Conduct](#).

Expert opinions are based on: the article's *scientific quality* (e.g., theory, methods, literature relevant to the subject), the *quality of presentation* (e.g., length, conciseness, style), the *novelty* of empirical data, methods, theoretical analyses, interpretation and approaches to problem-solving, and the article's *relevance* for environmental sciences and sustainability transformations.

The **non-expert reviewers**, with expertise in a field outside the article's subject, reflect *GAI*A's transdisciplinary scope and diverse audience. Their role is to evaluate whether the manuscript engages an interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary readership and offers practical insights. They assess its relevance to sustainability transformation, including policy and action implications, while ensuring it is clear and comprehensible. This process ensures the article is accessible, broadly applicable, and actionable.

Additionally, the Editors encourage reviewers to provide detailed comments. In particular, when recommending acceptance for publication, specific suggestions are valuable to help authors refine their papers. Referee reports are shared with the authors, regardless of whether the manuscript is accepted or rejected. For submissions receiving generally positive feedback, the Editors invite authors to carefully address the reviewers' comments and submit a revised version of their paper.

Referees are kindly requested to submit their reports **within three weeks**. If prompt attention to a manuscript is precluded, we ask to propose other referees.

Manuscript reviewer form for non-expert reviewers

Please note: It is essential that you detail your recommendation on separate pages. Please refer to the respective passage (page, line); do not write comments directly into the manuscript. To be most helpful, your review should follow the guidelines for reviewers.

Title: _____

Recommendation

- I recommend the publication of this article, usually following minor revisions.
- This article requires major changes; decision of acceptance or rejection after revision.
- I cannot recommend the publication of this article.
- Because of the topic, I recommend the publication of this article in the following periodical instead:

Evaluation (see also guidelines for reviewers)

yes to some rather no
 extent not

General aspects (all manuscripts)

1	Significance				
1.1	Is the topic significant?				
1.2	Is the article of interest for scientists in other fields?				
1.3	Is the article of interest for <i>GAIA</i> ? (inter- or transdisciplinary; environmental/sustainability sciences)				
2	Scientific relevance and quality				
2.1	Is the scientific rationale/argumentation conclusive?				
2.2	Is the topic handled critically?				
2.3	Are all relevant aspects presented?				
2.4	Are precise conclusions available?				
2.5	Are the conclusions justified sufficiently?				
3	Examples				
	If examples are adequate to illustrate the topic: Does the manuscript provide sufficient examples; are they well chosen and high-quality?				
4	<i>Design report</i>				
	(questions 4.1 to 4.7 apply to design reports only)				
4.1	Is the project inter-/transdisciplinary?				
4.2	Is the understanding of inter-/transdisciplinarity explained?				
4.3	Is the research <i>design</i> presented/discussed? (development of the research questions/involvement of participants/explanation of the inter-/transdisciplinary approach)				

yes to some rather no
 extent not

- 4.4 Is the communication *design* presented/discussed?
 (the processes and structures/communication with the public and stakeholders and among researchers/
 illustration of method and content of communication/
 demonstration of communication as exchange process and, if applicable, an assessment of progress)

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- 4.5 Are the decisions and design principles critically presented and reflected?

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- 4.6 Are the approach and experiences gained evaluated?

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- 4.7 Does the design report advance the knowledge of setting-up and implementing inter-/transdisciplinary projects?

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Exposition

- 5 Text
- 5.1 Is the text comprehensible for scientists in other fields?

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- 5.2 Is the text arranged clearly?

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- 5.3 Does the length of the article conform to the content?
 If no, please specify possible abridgments/
 deepenings in the detailed commentary.

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- 5.4 Is the literary standard adequate?

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- 5.5 Please rate the clarity of the writing style

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- 6 Abstract
 Does the abstract contain the main fields of the article and the line of reasoning?

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- 7 Keywords
 Is the selection of keywords suitable and complete?

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- 8 Tables and figures
- 8.1 Are the tables and figures scientifically correct?

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- 8.2 Do the tables underline and complete the statements of the text?

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- 8.3 Do the figures illustrate the article?

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- 9 Title
- 9.1 Does the title attract attention?

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- 9.2 Does the title suit the article content?

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Detailed commentary