

EDITORIAL

Strengthening community-driven publishing in soil ecology: *Soil Organisms* becomes a PCI-friendly journal

Nico Eisenhauer^{1,2*} & Anton Potapov^{3,4,1}

¹ German Centre for Integrative Biodiversity Research (iDiv) Halle-Jena-Leipzig, 04103 Leipzig, Germany

² Institute of Biology, Leipzig University, 04103 Leipzig, Germany

³ Senckenberg Museum of Natural History Görlitz, 02826 Görlitz, Germany

⁴ International Institute Zittau, TUD Dresden University of Technology, 02763 Zittau, Germany

* Corresponding author, email: nico.eisenhauer@idiv.de

Published online 1 August 2026

Scientific publishing is undergoing a period of profound transformation. While the rapid dissemination of scientific discoveries has never been more important, concerns about publication costs, reviewer fatigue, editorial transparency, and inequitable access to publishing opportunities continue to challenge the research community. These issues are particularly relevant in soil ecology and biodiversity research, where much of the world's expertise is distributed across institutions, countries, and regions with highly variable access to publishing resources.

Since its relaunch as an international open-access journal, *Soil Organisms* has actively supported a vision of scientific publishing that is fair, community-driven, and accessible to all researchers. Our previous editorials emphasized the importance of fostering an inclusive platform for global soil biodiversity research and promoting rapid, transparent, and broad communication of scientific advances (Eisenhauer & Xylander 2019; Eisenhauer et al. 2023). Today, we are pleased to announce another step in this direction: *Soil Organisms* has joined the growing network of PCI-friendly journals and is now listed as a Category 1 PCI-friendly journal (Figure 1). The directly associated PCI journal is *PCI Ecology* (<https://ecology.peercommunityin.org/>).

Peer Community In (PCI) is a non-profit initiative that organizes expert-led peer review of preprints through

disciplinary communities. Manuscripts recommended by PCI undergo a rigorous review process after being made openly available as a preprint, thereby decoupling scientific evaluation from traditional journal publication. Importantly, PCI recommendations remain fully compatible with subsequent publication in scholarly journals, allowing authors to benefit from transparent, community-based peer review while retaining flexibility in choosing a publication venue (Figure 1).

By becoming a PCI-friendly journal, *Soil Organisms* signals its support for this innovative model of scholarly communication. We welcome submissions that have already received a PCI recommendation and will consider PCI reviews and recommendations as part of our editorial assessment process. This approach can substantially reduce duplication of reviewing efforts, accelerate editorial decisions, and make more efficient use of the valuable time contributed by reviewers and editors. At a time when reviewer workloads are increasing across disciplines, reducing unnecessary repetition in peer review is not only practical but also essential for maintaining the sustainability of scientific publishing.

The PCI model aligns closely with the values that have guided *Soil Organisms* in recent years. As a diamond open-access journal without publication fees, we are committed to minimizing financial barriers for authors while ensuring unrestricted access to scientific



© 2026 by the author(s), licensed by Senckenberg Gesellschaft für Naturforschung. This article is published under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License (CC BY 4.0).

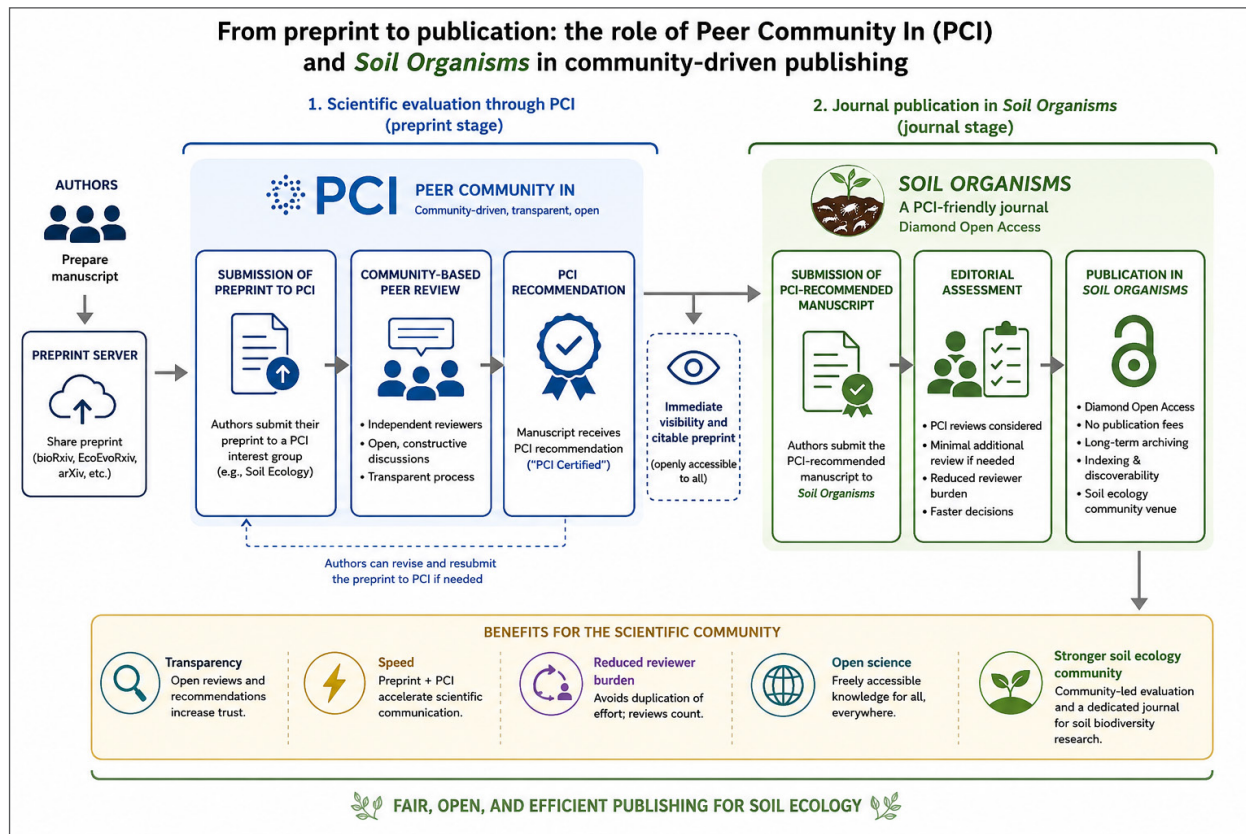


Figure 1. Workflow illustrating how manuscripts move from PCI to *Soil Organisms* as well as the resulting benefits for the scientific community. This figure was created with ChatGPT.

knowledge. We believe that scientific quality should be determined by the rigor and relevance of research rather than by the financial resources available to researchers or institutions. PCI shares this philosophy by providing free, community-driven peer review and promoting open science practices.

For the soil ecology community, this collaboration offers several additional benefits. Soil biodiversity research increasingly relies on international collaborations, interdisciplinary approaches, and the rapid exchange of ideas. Preprints have become an important vehicle for accelerating scientific communication, yet concerns about quality assurance and recognition sometimes limit their broader adoption. PCI helps bridge this gap by providing transparent expert evaluation of preprints, enabling authors to share their findings rapidly while simultaneously receiving rigorous peer review. As a PCI-friendly journal, *Soil Organisms* can contribute to creating a publication ecosystem in which scientific discussions begin earlier, reviews become more visible and constructive, and research outputs are assessed on their scientific merits rather than on journal prestige alone.

The collaboration also strengthens the role of scientific communities in shaping the publication process. Soil

ecology has always benefited from a strong culture of collaboration and shared expertise. Community-based review initiatives such as PCI build on these strengths by placing scientific evaluation directly in the hands of active researchers. This fosters transparency, accountability, and constructive dialogue, while helping to recognize peer review as a valuable scholarly contribution in its own right.

PCI is not intended to replace journals. Rather, it represents a complementary model that can enhance the efficiency, openness, and fairness of scientific publishing. Journals continue to play important roles in curation, long-term archiving, community building, and scientific communication. By integrating PCI-reviewed manuscripts into our editorial workflow, *Soil Organisms* seeks to combine the strengths of community-driven peer review with the visibility, continuity, and disciplinary focus provided by a dedicated journal for soil biodiversity and soil ecology research. Close collaboration between editorial teams between *PCI Ecology* and *Soil Organisms* is envisaged (e.g. for reviewer selection).

As scientific publishing continues to evolve, experimentation with new models will be essential. We see our collaboration with PCI as an opportunity to contribute to a more transparent, efficient, and equitable

publishing landscape. We encourage researchers in soil ecology, soil biodiversity, and related disciplines to explore the opportunities offered by PCI and look forward to welcoming PCI-recommended manuscripts to *Soil Organisms*. By strengthening links between open peer review, preprint culture, and community-driven publishing, we can help ensure that scientific communication remains aligned with its primary purpose: the rapid, rigorous, and equitable dissemination of knowledge for the benefit of science and society.

References

- Eisenhauer, N., & Xylander, W. E. (2019). Soil Organisms—an international open access journal on the taxonomic and functional biodiversity in the soil. *Soil Organisms*, 91(2), 33–35.
- Eisenhauer, N., Xylander, W. E., & Potapov, A. (2023). Spotlight on the unseen majority—the way to open community-driven publishing for global soil biodiversity. *Soil Organisms*, 95(3), 173–177.

