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## Introducing the Replication Studies section

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## INTRODUCTION



# Introducing the Replication Studies section

Jan Ditzen <sup>a</sup> and J. Paul Elhorst <sup>b</sup>

*Spatial Economic Analysis* is pleased to announce a new section, Replication Studies, devoted to short papers that replicate or extend published empirical results and discuss their sensitivity to relevant changes in the model, estimation method and/or interpretation.

Empirical studies are part of the backbone of the social sciences because they help to support theories and form policy recommendations. In recent decades there has been a 50% increase in the share of published empirical studies in comparison with articles focused on economic theory and econometric theory. In addition, empirical papers receive more citations than theoretical papers (Angrist et al., 2017). It is 35 years since Dewald et al. (1986) emphasized the importance of replications in empirical research. Out of a sample of 54 published papers in the *Journal of Money, Credit and Banking* in 1980, they found only eight (15%) were replicable without problems and 14 (26%) were incomplete. More recently, Vilhuber (2020) found that about 30% of replication attempts fail. Still, replication studies are not common. Empirical work from well-published and highly cited articles or top five journals is more likely to be reproduced (Berry et al., 2017; Hamermesh, 2007), but the number of replication studies for even well-published works is small. Berry et al. (2017) find that only 3.5% of the papers that cited empirical works published in the *American Economic Review* in 2010 are replications. Replications in regional science, spatial economics and economic geography are also scarce and unsatisfactory to our knowledge. By contrast, in experimental economics and financial economics, two subfields within the economics literature, replications are more common (Ingerslev et al., 2021; Maniadis et al., 2017).

The literature suggests two reasons for the lack of replication studies (Dewald et al., 1986; Galiani et al., 2017; Vilhuber, 2020):

- Accessibility of data and codes. In recent years, it has become easier and more common to share codes and data. Sharing is supported by platforms such as GitHub as well as by more journals requesting that codes and data are made publicly available by authors. For example, the American Economic Association (AEA) has a data editor leading a data replication team that assists authors.
- Missing incentives to publish. Berry et al. (2017) state that there is substantial uncertainty over the number of replication studies. This might be because replication studies are often treated as insufficiently novel for publication. In a survey, Galiani et al. (2017) found that out of the 204 editors and co-editors of 11 top journals in economics, only 29% would publish replication studies confirming existing results.

We at *Spatial Economic Analysis* believe that replicating empirical results should form part of the core of the social sciences. Without the ability to replicate results, the social sciences will

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struggle to convince and defend their findings, interpretations and policy recommendations. With this in mind, we want to take the next step and encourage scientists to work on replications by introducing the Replication Studies section.

Replications are defined following Clemens (2017) as either:

- Replications in the narrow sense, which can be a verification or reproduction of results. In both cases the same raw data, specification and methods should be used as in the original study, but with different or updated software, or corrections to the software. Thus, this definition includes corrections to coding errors in the data-cleaning process or the estimation of parameters. The definition of replication in the narrow sense also extends to more detailed discussions about how to replicate results.
- Robustness tests, which should use different raw datasets, specifications or methods and include the re-analysis of results and its extension. Robustness tests include changes in the specification, recoding of variables or the use of recently developed statistical or econometric methods.

We invite replications of studies that are within the aims and scope of *Spatial Economic Analysis*. This includes published articles with a focus on regional science, economic geography, urban economics, input–output analysis, spatial statistics or economics, and spatial or network econometrics. The study being replicated must have been originally published in a peer-reviewed journal.

We encourage submissions from both established scholars and early-career researchers seeking to publish replication results from their master’s or doctoral theses. Articles submitted to the Replication Studies section will be subject to the same peer-review process as any other manuscript submitted to the journal, ensuring the high quality of published pieces.

Contributions to the Replication Studies section should include a summary of the original published article being replicated, a short motivation for why it is being replicated, the empirical set-up and its results. Manuscripts should highlight differences between the original study and the replication, explaining and discussing the implications of these differences, and provide a discussion of the newly established results. Data and code should also be made available as supplemental data online. Manuscripts should be no more than 4000 words. For more information on how to submit, see the Instructions for Authors at: <https://rsa.tandfonline.com/action/authorsubmission?show=instructions&journalcode=rsea20/>. We look forward to reading your submissions to the Replication Studies section.

## DISCLOSURE STATEMENT

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

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