An interesting [new paper](#) by a group at Dalhousie University compares several key aspects of fisheries management with a measure of the probability that fisheries are sustainable. The authors conclude that "policy transparency" is more strongly related to sustainability than scientific robustness, implementation capability, or the extent of subsidies, overcapacity, and foreign fishing.

The measure of "policy transparency" is (perhaps unavoidably, for a global study) pretty crude. The various management elements were assessed on the basis of [a survey](#) of experts around the world. Three questions were asked about transparency: (1) "Is participation in decision-making of stakeholders, local communities and managers open and transparent?"; (2) "Are there pressures, from any source (e.g. economical, political), to increase catches or to implement regulations that err on the side of risk rather than caution?"; and (3) "Is scientific advice followed in decision-making?" But the conclusion is quite plausible:

> The significant effect of policymaking transparency on fisheries sustainability likely relates to the fact that this particular attribute forms the core of the fisheries management process. Firstly, it determines the extent to which scientific advice will be translated into policy, whereas transparent and legitimate participation of involved parties is likely to promote compliance with regulations. Our findings indicate that policymaking transparency is likely to work as a ''sustainability bottleneck'' through which other positive attributes of fisheries management are filtered.

This paper is a good reminder of a lesson that [Josh Eagle](#) and [Buzz Thompson](#) drew several years ago in [this paper](#)(subscription required, abstract available [on SSRN](#)) for fisheries and that [I've argued](#) is generally true for natural resource policy: good sources of scientific information are necessary but not sufficient for effective resource management; the process of translating information into understanding, and then into policy, is at least as critical, and at least as likely to be a source of problems.