

# Correspondence

## Don't dismiss non-English citations

We find it inexcusable for peer reviewers to dismiss citations to scientific papers that are not published in English. Journals written in other languages are a valuable repository for much locally relevant applied science (see, for example, M. Neff *Nature* 554, 169; 2018). And in most countries today, these works are accessible through free, automated translation services.

We experienced such discrimination after submitting a paper to an English-language journal. It was a bibliometric evaluation of research activities at universities in Belarus and Ukraine, so some citations were inevitably in Russian. One reviewer complained that this “precludes ... checking that source to determine if it does actually support the authors' statements”. Another demanded more information in the text about the work of an internationally recognized bibliometrician, Irina Marshakova-Shaikevich, “since she writes in Russian”.

In our view, substituting non-English citations with anglophone alternatives risks transposing credit for ideas and violates citation standards. Papers should be evaluated on academic criteria, not on superficial grounds of communication.

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## Building rapport for better policymaking

Marie Claire Brisbois and colleagues advise scientists to interact with government policy analysts to improve evidence-based policy (see *Nature* 555, 165; 2018). In our experience, the interaction between academia

and policymakers needs to be a two-way process.

We are members of the Centre for the Evaluation of Complexity across the Nexus, a consortium of academics and practitioners who work with UK government departments and agencies to improve policy evaluation and design across the water–energy–food–environment nexus ([www.cecan.ac.uk](http://www.cecan.ac.uk)). We test and promote innovative methods and approaches through co-designed and co-produced case studies that span, for instance, rural policy after Brexit, energy security and food-safety regulation.

Progress in these complex policy areas depends on sharing knowledge and building trust and capacity with civil servants across the political spectrum.

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## World Heritage Site fish faces extinction

The North Sea houting (*Coregonus oxyrinchus*) is a whitefish that is endemic to the Wadden Sea, an area including the North Sea coasts of the Netherlands, Germany and Denmark. A critically small population in Denmark's Vidaa River, estimated at 3,500 adult individuals in 2014, is the last remaining worldwide. We call on the Danish authorities to prevent further decline of this fish through informed conservation planning and management before it is too late.

The Wadden Sea is a World Heritage Site that harbours the world's largest unbroken system of intertidal sand and mud flats. The North Sea houting is protected under the Bern Convention and the EU Habitats Directive. Yet Denmark's conservation efforts since 1992 have been limited to population estimates, insufficient regulation of the predatory great cormorant (*Phalacrocorax*

*carbo*) and unsuccessful habitat-restoration projects.

The habitats needed by this fish for spawning and juvenile development are still unclear, so it is not possible to protect or restore them. This basic knowledge is essential for future restoration projects. We urgently need to understand why the population is still in decline and to put effective conservation measures in place. The North Sea houting must not end up next to the great auk (*Pinguinus impennis*) on museum shelves.

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## Pesticide policies need holistic view

New pesticide policies are needed for more sustainable agricultural production, but their wider implications need to be considered. Efforts to ban ubiquitous pesticides such as glyphosate and neonicotinoids are ongoing (see, for example, *Nature* 555, 150–151; 2018).

In Switzerland, proposals have been made to suspend subsidies for farms that use pesticides and to ban all synthetic pesticides. In Italy, the municipality Mals has banned pesticide use by farmers. Furthermore, private industries are increasingly restricting pesticides and have introduced labels for glyphosate-free products.

Stricter policies can have unintended effects, however. They may encourage changes in land use and management practices that decrease food production and quality, or increase soil erosion and greenhouse-gas emissions. Banned pesticides might even be substituted with more harmful ones.

Technologies such as sensors, drones and robots could help to

monitor and control pesticide application (see A. Walter *et al. Proc. Natl Acad. Sci. USA* 114, 6148–6150; 2017). Pesticide taxation is another, complementary possibility (R. Finger *et al. Ecol. Econ.* 134, 263–266; 2017).

To avoid misguided policies, trade-offs between different policy goals need to be quantified for a holistic assessment. For example, modelling approaches could assess the impact of more-stringent pesticide policies on plant protection and land use and quantify the economic consequences (T. Böcker *et al. Ecol. Econ.* 145, 182–193; 2018).  
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## Singapore Index for climate change

The Singapore Index of Cities' Biodiversity was set up ten years ago by the National Parks Board of Singapore and the United Nations Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity as urban development boomed. I suggest that this self-assessment tool could also be applied to safeguard biodiversity against the effects of climate change on cities (see X. Bai *et al. Nature* 555, 23–25; 2018).

The index consolidates important biodiversity indicators to help cities to evaluate and benchmark their conservation efforts (see [go.nature.com/2hammaa](http://go.nature.com/2hammaa)). The National Parks Board of Singapore (see [www.nparks.gov.sg](http://www.nparks.gov.sg)) received the 2017 UNESCO Sultan Qaboos Prize for Environmental Preservation, and the board's experience could benefit cities across the globe.

Singapore should continue to apply the index to manage biodiversity in the face of climate change, for example in heat islands or in areas prone to flooding.  
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