

Brêthes, J. C.; O'Boyle, R. N. (eds.): *Méthodes d'évaluation des stocks halieutiques*. Centre International d'Exploitation des Océans. Halifax: Nouvelle Ecosse, Canada, 1990. Vol I: xxi and 610 pp.; Vol. II: xvi and 331 pp.; US\$ 60.-.

This two-volume document is based on material presented to the participants of a course in (tropical) fish stock assessment sponsored by the International Center for Ocean Development (ICOD) and held from February 2 to 29, 1988 in Dakar, Sénégal for participants from francophone West Africa. The course in question was one of the first projects of ICOD, which was founded by the Canadian Parliament in 1985 and abolished in 1992 for reasons that need not concern us here. The document is thus part of the light emitted by a shooting star among development agencies. Tradition has it that one makes a wish upon seeing a shooting star. My wish is that many francophone colleagues will obtain a copy of this document, despite the demise of its publisher. The reason for this is not that the various contributions in this document jointly review the entire field of population dynamics – although they do, quite competently. Neither is the reason for this the fact that the

authors – doubtlessly prodded by the editors – did their best to illustrate the methods they presented with datasets from West African fisheries and with several “model papers” made up for didactic purposes – although they did this, quite laudably.

The reason is that all of this was done in French - and that there is presently no other book, in French, doing a similar job. Or put in a nutshell: *Méthodes d'évaluation des stocks halieutiques* is useful (to Francophones), but only because it is in French. As such, it will enable fisheries biologists, in West Africa, France, Belgium, Switzerland, perhaps even in Canada to find, under one cover (two covers actually!) comprehensive and reasonably current accounts of qualitative fisheries research methods, covering: basic principles, sampling methods, surplus production modelling (including effects of environmental variability), length-based stock assessment methods, Virtual Population Analysis (VPA) and fisheries management, and thus replace Ricker (1980)¹⁾, the only comparable volume, but now terribly dated.

The obverse of this is that *Méthodes* doesn't present anything that is not available in English. There we have one of the effects of the fragmentation of science resulting from our use of different languages: different standards must be applied for publications in different languages. And still, the editors managed to add their little bits of this huge problem, by not translating into French a 7-paged section by M. Pennington, on trawl survey design (why not?), and more strangely, by providing, for calibration of VPA a program listing in APL (A Programming Language – a strange idea, actually). I could add more minor quibbles, e.g., note that for most sources available both in French and English, it is the English version which is cited (even in the case of Ricker 1980, one of the major references in fish population dynamics that was translated into French), but I won't, because they do not detract from the overall value of this document.

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1) Ricker, W.E. 1980 Calcul et interprétation des populations de poissons. Bull. Can. Pêch. Aquat. Sci. 191F, 409p.