A Geostatistical Framework for Assessing Sampling Designs for Bottom Trawl Surveys with an Application to The Portuguese Autumn Survey

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October 10, 2007

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Abstract

This paper presents ...

Key-words: model-based geostatistics; hake; sampling design.

1 Introduction

Bottom trawl survey (BTS) design rely on previous knowledge of the target species, like spatial distribution and population structure; and statistical analysis of preliminary data (e.g. Ault et al., 1999; Hata and Berkson, 2004) or simulation procedures (e.g. Schnute and Haigh, 2003; Anon., 2005b). These results are combined with operational constraints such as trawlable grounds and vessel availability, among other, to define the BTS sampling design. The survey design is often reviewed across the years to adjust stratification (e.g. Smith and Gavaris, 1993; Folmer and Pennington, 2000), tow duration (e.g. Cerviño and Saborido-Rey, 2006; Wieland and Storr-Paulsen, 2006), technical issues such as gear changes (e.g. Zimmermann et al., 2003; Cooper et al., 2004) and other subjects.

The Portuguese BTS started in June 1979, covering the continental shelf and following a stratified random design. In 1989 the stratification was defined by 12 sectors along the coast subdivided into 4 depth ranges: 20-100m, 101-200m, 201-500m and 501-750 m, with a total of 48 strata. Due to constraints in the vessel time available the sample size was set to 97 locations evenly allocated to each stratum. The coordinates of the sampling locations were selected randomly, albeit constrained by the historical records of clear tow positions and other information about the sea floor, thus avoiding places where trawling was not possible. During this period the haul duration was set to one hour but recent experiments proved that half hour hauls with provide the same information about length distributions (Cardador, pers.comm.). In light of this findings haul duration was reduced to half hour and an additional set of hauls were available which motivated a revision of the sampling design. The revision was splitted into a preliminary phase using simulations and geostatistical analysis (Jardim and Ribeiro Jr, 2007) and a second phase during which a field test was executed to provide real information about the proposed sampling designs. In a third moment the decision will have to be made based on the scientific data provided and the existing financial and administrative constraints.

The field experience was carried out during the summer of 2001, with R/V Noruega off the southwest of Portuguese Continental shelf using a Norwegian Campbel Trawl with .... The survey executed two sampling designs previously tested on a simulation study by Jardim and Ribeiro Jr (2007). The survey area was limited on the south by the cape of S.Vicente (37.00^o north, 8.99^o west), on the north by Setubal's Canyon (38.30^o north, $\#\#.\#\#^o$ west), on the east by the 20m depth isoline and on the west by the 500m isoline. The survey area had approximately 4300km^2 and the maximum distance within the area was approximately 150km. The data collected considered in this work consists of date/time, geographical location and hake (*Merluccius merluccius*) catch in weight (kg). Geographical coordinates were transformed into UTM units and hake abundance was computed in kg/km and assigned to the haul starting coordinates. The area swept was computed using the haul start and ending positions to correct

haul speed variations.

Our analysis uses model-based geostatistics (Diggle et al., 1998; Diggle and Ribeiro Jr, 2007) to explicitly take into account spatial patterns of abundance and provide a flexible modelling framework. We selected a set of statistics to provide information about different aspects of the data, relevant for modelling fish abundance. In a global perspective we use mean abundance and the 95% percentile to summarize the areal behaviour of abundance, commonly used for studying time trends and building abundance indices for stock assessment. In a local perspective we use the observed values to assess the adequacy of the model, computing the coverage of the prediction confidence interval, and the prediction precision, computing a modified generalized cross validation index. Note that the assessment of the model adequacy and the prediction precision are extremely valuable statistics, once that kriging is in fact a linear predictor and the maps produced with it will be used to estimate the spatial distribution of abundance and the abundance index mentioned before. With relation to the analysis reported here we rely on our experience with bottom trawls surveys (Anon., 2002, 2003, 2004, 2005a, 2006; Sousa et al., 2005; Mendes et al., 2007; Sousa et al., 2007) to provide contextual information which supports the adoption of a particular class of models, and avoid as much as possible model mis-specification.

The work described on this paper aims at: (i) reporting a BTS field experience during which two sampling designs were tested, and (ii) describe a set of tools used to assess the performance of sampling designs. Although the results obtained are constraint by the characteristics of the area and the species analysed, we believe our approach can be applied to other areas and species, providing an important source of information about sampling design revisions.

2 Methods

This section describes the sampling designs to be tested and how they were built. It also describes the geostatistical modelling framework and the adjustments considered to cope with the small dataset available, a common characteristics of BTS due to its high price. At last we describe the technical details of the performance statistics chosen.

2.1 Sampling designs

Several authors discussed the advantages of systematic designs over random designs to sample spatial correlated variables like fish abundance (Cochran, 1960; Ripley, 1981; Thompson, 1992; Cressie, 1993; Chiles and Delfiner, 1999; Kimura and Somerton, 2006; Diggle and Ribeiro Jr, 2007). Nevertheless, in the case of spatial correlated variables there are two clear objectives that can not be combined in a

single criteria, estimation of the covariance function parameters and prediction (Muller, 2001). In the first situation it is important to have locations at short distances, to compute the function behaviour at the origin, and locations at distances close to the limit of spatial correlation, to estimate the correlation range (Muller, 2001). In the second case the best predictions will result from a design with higher covariance with the locations to be predicted (Thompson, 1992), which in the case of abundance indices, that require the full map of the variable, the best choice will be a design that covers the area evenly. However, it must be take into account that in the case of fish abundance the covariance function is unknown and must be estimated from the data. To combine both objectives several authors propose designs that mix a set of locations covering the area with additional locations at short distances (Muller, 2001; Diggle and Lophaven, 2006; Zhu and Stein, 2006; Diggle and Ribeiro Jr, 2007). Such designs were not considered for bottom trawl surveys until now, although fish abundance characteristics fit well in the assumptions of these proposals. Our sampling designs were built mixing a set of operational constraints with the geostatistical principles elaborated above, and considering the need to keep the continuity of the survey history. In particular, the two designs tested were built to distinguish between an hybrid random-systematic sampling strategy and a systematic strategy. Both designs use the same basis, a regular grid that covers the survey area. The hybrid design overlaps this regular grid with the existent random design keeping some continuity with the survey historical records (Top-left plot in Figure 1). The systematic design includes a set of locations positioned regularly at smaller distances creating 4 denser sampling areas (Bottom-left plot in Figure 1).

2.2 Geostatistical model

Geostatistical observations consist of pairs (x, y) with elements $(x_i, y_i) : i = 1, \ldots, n$, where x_i denotes the coordinates of each of the n spatial locations within a study region $A \subset \mathbb{R}^2$ and y_i the measurement of the corresponding observable study variable. We adopted the Box-Cox transformed Gaussian model with transformation parameter λ as presented in Christensen et al. (2001). Denoting by z_i the transformed values, such that $g_\lambda(y_i) = z_i$, the Gaussian model for the vector of variables Z observed at locations x can be written as a linear model $Z(x) = S(x) + \epsilon$, where S is a stationary Gaussian stochastic process, with $E[S(x)] = \mu$, $Var[S(x)] = \sigma^2$ and an isotropic correlation function $\rho(h) = Corr[S(x), S(x')]$, where $h = \|x - x'\|$ is the Euclidean distance between locations x and x'. The terms ϵ are assumed to be mutually independent and identically distributed, $\epsilon \sim \text{Gau}(0, \tau^2)$. For the correlation function $\rho(h)$ we adopt the exponential function with algebraic form $\rho(h) = \exp\{-h/\phi\}$ where ϕ is the *range* parameter such that $\rho(h) \simeq 0.05$ when $h = 3\phi$. Other function could be chosen but as long as the same function is used to model the observations of all designs tested the results would be the same in relative terms.

Following usual geostatistical terminology (Isaaks and Srivastava, 1989) we call $\sigma_T^2 = \tau^2 + \sigma^2$ the total sill, σ^2 the partial sill, τ^2 the nugget effect and 3ϕ the practical range. Geometric anisotropy (Isaaks and Srivastava, 1989; Cressie, 1993) is considered an extension of this model with parameter $\psi = \{\psi_A, \psi_R\}$ where ψ_A is the anisotropic angle and ψ_R is the anisotropic ratio.

Hereafter we use $[\cdot]$ to denote *the distribution of* the quantity indicated within brackets. Following the adopted model, $[g_\lambda(Y)] \sim \text{MVGau}(\mu\mathbf{1}, \Sigma)$, i.e. $[Y]$ is multivariate trans-Gaussian with expected value μ and covariance matrix Σ parametrized by $\{\sigma^2, \phi, \tau^2\}$ that can be estimated by maximum likelihood (Cressie, 1993; Diggle et al., 1998; Diggle and Ribeiro Jr, 2007). Consider a prediction target $T(x_0) = g_\lambda^{-1}(S(x_0))$, the realised value of the process in the original measurement scale at spatial locations x_0. Simulations from $[T(x_0)|Y(x)]$ are obtained by simulating from the multivariate Gaussian $[S(x_0)|Y(x)]$ and back transforming the simulated values to the original scale of measurement (Chiles and Delfiner, 1999; Diggle and Ribeiro Jr, 2007). These simulations are usually called *conditional simulations* referring to the fact they are conditioned to the observed values $Y(x)$.

To overcome the difficulty to identify all parameters with a small dataset we split inference in two steps. First the Box-Cox transformation parameter λ and the anisotropy parameter ψ are investigated by pooling all the observations in a single dataset and computing profile likelihoods (Diggle and Ribeiro Jr, 2007). With regards to the anisotropy parameters we further considered the north-south coastal orientation of the study region as the direction of greater spatial continuity and fixed ψ_A in 0 degrees azimuthal angle, remaining ψ_R to be estimated from the data. Having estimated these two parameters we regard their point estimates as constants in the model and proceed by computing for each design the maximum likelihood estimates of the other model parameters. Thereafter, we compute kriging predictions on a 2×2km grid within the study area, x_0, with a total of 1070 locations, and simulated 1,000 conditional distributions $[Y(x_0)|Y]$ for each design.

2.3 Performance statistics

Consider $E[Z(x_i)]$ and $\sigma_z^2(x_i)$ the kriging predictor and its variance on the Gaussian scale, at location $x_i \in x_0$; the back transformation when $\lambda = 0.5$ is given by $E[Y(x_i)] = (1 + 0.5E[Z(x_i)])^2 + 0.25\sigma_z^2(x_i)$. The global mean is estimated as the average of the predicted values $\hat{\mu} = m^{-1} \sum_{i=0}^{m} \hat{E}[Y(x_i)]$. The variance of $\hat{\mu}$, $\hat{\sigma}_\mu^2$, is computed by the sum of all terms in the covariance matrix of $[Y(x_0)|Y(x)]$, $\Sigma_Y(x_0)$, provided kriging predictions at locations x_i are dependent random variables. This parameter is also back transformed by $\Sigma_Y(x_0) = \Sigma_Z(x_0)[8^{-1}\Sigma_Z(x_0) + (1 + 0.5E[Z(x)])^2]$ where $\Sigma_Z(x_0)$ is the covariance matrix of $[Z(x_0)|Z(x)]$, when $\lambda = 0.5$. Further, we consider $t_s(x_0)$ a realized value of the conditional simulation $s = 1, \ldots, S = 1,000$ from $[T(x_0)|Y(x)]$. The 95th percentile was estimated by $\hat{p} = S^{-1} \sum_s \hat{p}_s$ where

$\hat{p}_s = p_{95}(t_s(x_0))$, the average of the empirical distribution $\hat{p}$ obtained from the conditional simulations. The variance of $\hat{p}$ is given by $\hat{\sigma}_p^2 = (S-1)^{-1}\sum_s(\hat{p}_s - \hat{p})^2$.

The coverage of the prediction confidence interval, ε, and the generalized cross validation index, ξ, were computed using cross-validation statistics (Hastie et al., 2001) combined with conditional simulations. First, we created a new data set by leaving one observation out at a location x_i, after we simulated 1,000 values of our variable at location x_i and repeated this procedure for all data locations. Consider $y(x_i)$ an observation of the process Y on location x_i, $i = 1, \ldots, n$. Consider $y(x_{(i)})$ the observed data set without the observation $y(x_i)$ and $t_s(x_i)$ a conditional simulation $s = 1, \ldots, S$ of $[T(x_i)|Y = y(x_{(i)})]$ on location x_i. The predictive confidence interval is given by $CI(x_i) = [p_{2.5}(t_s(x_i)), p_{97.5}(t_s(x_i))]$ and the proportion of observations lying inside the intervals $\xi = n^{-1}\sum_i(y(x_i) \in CI(x_i))$ provides the *coverage* of the prediction confidence interval. The cross validation index is given by $\varepsilon = n^{-1}\sum_i(S^{-1}\sum_s(t_s(x_i) - y(x_i))^2)$, the average of the mean quadratic error on each location estimated using the full set of conditional simulations.

3 Results

The two sampling designs and the observations of hake yield are presented in the leftmost panels of Figure 1. The base regular design is represented by the black triangles in the Figures. The abundance of hake observed showed that the distribution of yield was spread over the area, presenting lower values in the north and a small number of zeros.

The 95% confidence interval obtained for the Box-Cox parameter was $\approx [0.12, 0.55]$ and we set $\hat{\lambda} = 0.5$, the square root transformation. The profiled log-likelihood of the anisotropy ratio showed no evidence of anisotropy. Nevertheless, we carried out analysis using different values of ψ_R to check the sensibility of the results, which proved negligible.

With regards to the model parameters, the hybrid design presented higher estimates than the systematic design (Table 1). The total variance $\hat{\sigma}_T^2$ was 3.75, with $\hat{\tau}^2 = 0.75$ and $\hat{\sigma}^2 = 3.00$; and $\hat{\phi} = 16.64$. While the systematic design estimates were $\hat{\sigma}_T^2 = 3.20$, with $\hat{\tau}^2 = 0.61$ and $\hat{\sigma}^2 = 2.59$; and $\hat{\phi} = 10.21$. Looking at τ_{REL}^2 and $\sigma^2\phi^{-1}$, that give information about the variability of the spatial process, both designs showed similar relative nuggets but the hybrid design showed a lower ratio between sill and range, reflecting a higher spatial structure of the stochastic process. Notice that the practical range, 3ϕ, was $\approx 50km$ for hybrid and $\approx 30km$ for the systematic design.

The rightmost panels of Figure 1 show the abundance maps predicted and their variance, for each design. Both predictions are similar and the spatial pattern of variance reflect the influence of the observations, showing lower variability near the observed locations and higher variability in areas where extrapolation

was higher. The hybrid design had higher variance in the center-east of the study area and lower variance on the north due to a better coverage in this area.

The estimates of μ and p_{95} were similar although the hybrid design presented slightly lower values. The hybrid design showed a lower coefficient of variation for μ, $\text{CV}_\mu = 11.89\%$ than the systematic design, $\text{CV}_\mu = 13.25\%$. The p_{95} variance was slightly lower for the systematic design, $\text{CV}_{p95} = 11.09\%$, while the hybrid design presented $\text{CV}_{p95} = 11.31\%$. The coverage of the prediction confidence intervals was 0.94 for both designs. These results reinforce our choices about modelling given that if the model was wrong we'd expect ξ to be different from the nominal value of the confidence interval. The generalized cross validation index presented a lower estimate with the hybrid design, 16.32, than with the systematic design, 18.82, showing an higher prediction precision of the hybrid design. The above mentioned results reflect that the higher spatial structure of the stochastic process estimated for the hybrid design surpassed its higher total variability with relation to the estimation of these performance statistics.

4 Discussion

Assessing sampling designs for BTS raises interesting questions about appropriated methodologies to analyze data and derive statistics of interest, which are particularly relevant considering the multipurpose/multispecies nature of BTS and the small sample sizes.

The adoption of a formal criteria and loss function to find an optimum design seems unrealistic in practice due to the multidimensionality of the data and the conflicting objectives of inference and prediction. Here we follow a pragmatic approach to sampling design and started by choosing a design that joins a regular grid with the old random design, followed by a second design that uses the same regular grid but reallocates the random locations in a regular shape. This way we build designs that implement the two most promising strategies, considering the wide literature that support the use of systematic designs for spatial correlated variables, and test the possibility of keeping the continuity with the historical time series. To compare these proposals we rely on spatial modelling to compute statistics of primary interest and look for consistency among them, exploring several aspects of the same dataset. We advocate that the approach described above will provide valuable information to support the decision process.

The performance statistics were selected to reflect relevant characteristics and different aspects of spatial prediction. The global mean is the most used index of abundance, often estimated by the sample average. We favor the geostatistical estimator presented and its variance as a measure of uncertainty, considering it takes into account the spatial dependency within the area and insights about the spatial process. The 95th percentile estimated by conditional simulations can be used to identify areas of high abundance, giving information about candidate areas to protect. The coverage of the prediction confidence intervals

is a diagnostic tool. A small coverage reflects an underestimation of the variance or the inadequacy of the model to explain the available data. The cross validation index combined with conditional simulations, incorporates the prediction precision in the index, which is not taken into account by the traditional cross validation. For example, if a location has the same predicted value by different designs but with different prediction variances, our approach would distinguish both situations, differently from the usual cross validation index.

Our results showed that the hybrid design performed better in all cases except for σ_p^2. A clear parallel can be established with the *lattice plus closed pairs* designs of Diggle and Lophaven (2006), the *EK-optimal* designs of Zimmerman (2006) or the D_{EA} designs of Zhu and Stein (2006). All of these cover the study area and include a set of positions at small distance, albeit following different constructions, these designs performed better than their random or systematic competitors. Common to all these studies and our work, is the fact that the analysis were carried out in situations where the model parameters were considered unknown and needed to be estimated from the data, which made it clear that both parameter estimation and prediction are important for the precision of the prediction target.

Concluding, we consider that our results give indications that keeping the old random design and add a regular grid to build a new design can be a good and pragmatic solution to adjust BTS designs to modern model-based geostatistics techniques. Secondly, the performance statistics described above seem to capture the most important features of the data with relation to abundance estimation, constituting good measures to assess BTS performance.

5 Acknowledgments

The authors would like to thank the scientific teams involved in the Portuguese Bottom Trawl Surveys, in particular the coordinator Fátima Cardador, and the comments by Manuela Azevedo. This work was carried out within scope of the IPIMAR's project NeoMAv (QCA-3/MARE-FEDER, http://ipimar-iniap.ipimar.pt/neomav).

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Table 1: Estimates of model parameters and performance statistics by design. Model parameters are: τ^2, the short distance variance or nugget effect; σ^2 the variance of the spatial process; σ_T^2 the total variance; ϕ the correlation range parameter; and the transformation parameters λ, the Box-Cox parameter and the anisotropy parameters $\{\psi_A, \psi_R\}$. The relative nugget, τ^2_{REL}, and the ratio between relative sill and range $\sigma^2\phi^{-1}$, were computed to give more insights about the spatial process. Performance statistics are: $\bar{\mu}$ and $\sigma^2_{\bar{\mu}}$, the mean and variance of the global abundance; $\hat{p}_{95}$ and $\hat{\sigma}^2_p$, the mean and variance of the 95th percentile of the global abundance; ε, the generalized cross validation index and ξ, the coverage of the prediction confidence interval with nominal level of 0.95.

	hybrid	**systematic**
model parameters		
τ^2	0.75	0.61
σ^2	3.00	2.59
σ_T^2	3.75	3.20
ϕ	16.64	10.21
τ^2_{REL}	0.20	0.19
$\sigma^2\phi^{-1}$	0.18	0.25
ψ_A	0.00	0.00
ψ_R	1.00	1.00
λ	0.50	0.50
performance statistics		
$\hat{\mu}$	4.07	4.20
$\hat{\sigma}^2_\mu$	0.23	0.31
cv	11.89	13.25
$\hat{p}_{95}$	11.01	10.78
$\hat{\sigma}^2_p$	1.55	1.43
cv	11.31	11.09
ξ	0.94	0.94
ε	16.32	18.82

Figure 1: Study area on the Portuguese southwest coast. The top panels show information about the hybrid random-systematic design and the bottom panels about the systematic design. The leftmost plots show the sampling designs locations, the black triangles represent the regular grid common to both designs, and the open circles the additional locations. Follows the observations of hake yield (kg/km) and the predictions obtained by kriging, both on the square root scale. The rightmost plots present the kriging variance