

IDENTIFYING PERSPECTIVES AND FRAMING ATTITUDES ON SPEAR FISHING IN THE CANARY ISLANDS (SPAIN): A Q-METHODOLOGY APPROACH

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Abstract: Spearfishing regulation in The Canary Islands (TCI) has been subject to conflict for years since it restricts the activity in its spatial access to resources. The administration argues that a precautionary approach is necessary because of the potential environmental impact that the activity could have on the fragile fish populations. There is little scientific information assessing this impact. Understanding the range of perceptions among social groups is a key challenge for successful management of any activity and its development. Q-methodology is used to explore existing perceptions or lines of thought of five spearfishing-related key-stakeholder groups (recreational fishers -including spearfishers-, professional fishers, regional administration, scientists and representatives of civil society having to do with the sea) towards spearfishing in TCI in order to find out whether they are the result of differences between sectors and which are the differentiating and convergent aspects. The 30 participants were asked to sort 33 statements about environmental, socioeconomic and regulation aspects. The factor analysis identified three distinct factors, each representing a different perception. The results show that the main perception, influenced mostly by environmental and regulation topics, is not generated by differences between the professional and spearfishing sector but with the components of other sectors. In contrast, the second line of perception expressed by factor 2, influenced mostly by social aspects, segregated the professional and recreational sector. Within each sector there are also differences or differences in the magnitude of the perception of the activity depending on its scope of action and geographical area. This study contributes to the scarce scientific information on social research on spearfishing in The Canary Islands.

Key words: The Canary Islands, Spear Fishing, Q-methodology

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