

# Effects of granulometric gradient on macrofaunal assemblages in Los Cristianos harbour (Tenerife, Canary Islands)

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Along the rapid increase of coastal tourism worldwide, evidence is accumulating on the numerous environmental coastal impacts that it causes on marine environments. One of the most important anthropogenic pressures is the construction of marinas or recreational harbours. Typically, most of the studies provide snapshots of the spatial distribution of macrobenthic communities inside and outside of the marina area. However, there is no much information about sedimentary dynamics inside the harbour and their effect on macroinfaunal. In the innermost stations of Los Cristianos harbour a different macrofaunal community was present, dominated by the amphipods *Cheirocratus assimilis* and *Corophium acutum* and the polychaete *Nainereis laevigata*. Changes in macrofaunal assemblages could be used as early warnings in identifying environmental impacts before they cause major shifts in the marine environment.

Key words: Harbour, Macrofauna, soft-bottoms, Los Cristianos, Canary Islands, Atlantic

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## INTRODUCTION

In recent years, the increase of recreational uses of coastal areas has led to a greater demand for boat-mooring facilities. To meet this demand, the number of marinas or recreational harbours has rapidly increased and concerns about their environmental impacts are growing (e.g. Chapman et al. 1987; Guerra-García & García-Gómez, 2005; Callier et al. 2009)

Harbours are enclosed areas with low rates of water renewal, and characterized by high sedimentation rates, presence of persistent contaminants in water and sediments, such as, hydrocarbons and heavy metals, and low values of oxygen in the water column (Estacio et al. 1997). More-

over, the accumulation of contaminants (mainly heavy metals and hydrocarbons) is potentially high in marinas (McGee et al. 1995) and are likely to be contaminated by a mixture of organic and inorganic chemicals, such as, trace elements (Hall et al. 1992), tributyltin (Alzieu 2000), biocides encountered in antifouling paints (Thomas et al. 2002), polychlorinated biphenyls and chromated copper arsenate (Lenihan et al. 1990; Weis & Weis 1992).

Benthic fauna is particularly vulnerable to the former sources of contaminants, especially the infaunal species which are constantly in contact with sediment particles and interstitial water (Traunspurger & Drews 1996). Macrobenthic animals (> 0.5 mm length) have been traditionally

used as bioindicators of environmental changes (Pearson & Rosenberg 1978).

An ecological assessment in Los Cristianos harbour, located inside Los Cristianos Bay, was conducted in order to characterize macrofaunal communities inside the dock and the implications of creating a new artificial beach inside the bay. The northern part of the bay present a very busy harbour with ferries and heavy maritime traffic, connecting Tenerife and other minor islands (La Gomera, La Palma and El Hierro), whale watching boats and yachts. The inner part of the bay is partially covered by a fine-sandy beach, named Los Cristianos beach. The southern part of the bay is occupied by natural rocky substrates and a very coarse sand beach. Los Cristianos harbour is characterized by the presence of a dense *Cymodocea nodosa* meadow, with a long leaf length (25-35 cm). In terms of exposure, Los Cristianos Bay is considered to be an enclosed bay protected from the dominant north-west winds, named "Alisios".

The main aims of the present study are (i) to study the macrobenthic assemblages of Los Cristianos Bay and (ii) the environmental consequences of the granulometric gradient due to the presence of Los Cristianos Harbour inside the bay.

## MATERIAL AND METHODS

### STUDY AREA

This study was conducted in Los Cristianos Bay, a locality on the south coast of Tenerife (Canary Islands, NE Atlantic Ocean) (Fig. 1). There is no previous information about macrofaunal assemblages of this bay, although seasonal variations of meiofauna have received attention in a recent study (Riera et al. in press).

The study site is located in a sheltered bay, with a recreational harbour in the northern half of the bay. Los Cristianos beach can be classified as ultradissipative (*sensu* Short, 1999), characterized by the presence of fine sands and a semidiurnal 2 m tide range.

Sediment samples were collected manually by SCUBA divers at a range of 5-15 m depth in January 2005 (Table 1). Sediment cores (20 cm inner diameter) were pushed into the sediment to a depth of 20 cm (surface = 0.04 m<sup>2</sup>). All abundance data are referred to the unit sampled area (0.04 m<sup>2</sup>). Three replicates per station were collected for faunistic analysis and an adjacent sample was taken for sediment analysis (granulometry and organic matter content).

### ANALYSIS OF MACROFAUNA

Samples were preserved in 10% seawater formaldehyde solution and decanted through a 0.5 mm mesh sieve. This sieve has been extensively used in the Canarian archipelago with good results (Riera et al. 2011, 2012). The fraction remaining on the mesh sieve was separated into different taxonomic groups under a binocular microscope and preserved in 70% ethanol. Macrofaunal specimens were determined to species level, whenever possible, by means of a binocular microscope and a LEICA DMLB microscope equipped with Nomarski interference contrast.

### GRANULOMETRY AND ORGANIC MATTER

The granulometry of the sediment was obtained from subsamples of 100 g. Samples were dried at air temperature, sieved on a stack of graded sieves ranged from 0.063 mm and 2 mm mesh, and the residue on each sieve weighted (Buchanan & Kain, 1971). The percentage of organic matter was determined according to the method of Walkley (1947), adapted and modified by Jackson (1960).

### STATISTICAL ANALYSES

Biological descriptors of the community (abundance, Shannon's diversity and Pielou's evenness) were calculated. Differences on univariate indices among stations were tested with non-parametric Kruskal-Wallis test. The affinities among communities based on species composition were established using a dendrogram and a MDS (non-metric multidimensional scaling). The Bray-Curtis similarity index was used to compare communities. The abundance data were square

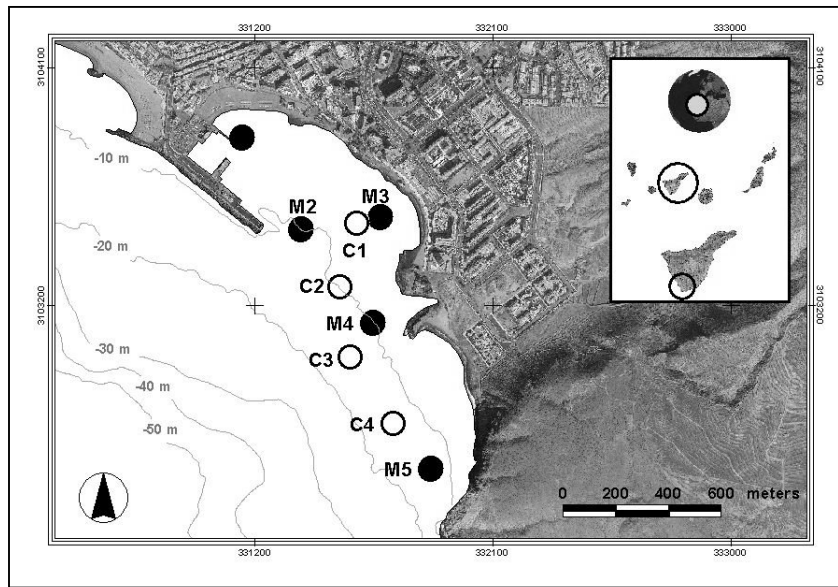


Fig. 1. Location of sampling sites; M, Sandy bare bottoms; C, *Cymodocea nodosa* meadows.

Table 1. List of sampling stations.

Stations	UTM coordinates	Depth (m)	Seabeds	% Silt/clay	% Fine sands
M1	28°04'59''N, 16°71'78''W	8	Sandy bottoms	38.74	39.62
M2	28°04'63''N, 16°71'56''W	8	Sandy bottoms	4.7	71.71
M3	28°04'65''N, 16°71'25''W	10	Sandy bottoms	3.37	69.98
M4	28°04'28''N, 16°71'28''W	10	Sandy bottoms	2.19	78.29
M5	28°03'79''N, 16°71'05''W	12	Sandy bottoms	6.98	80.66
C1	28°04'63''N, 16°71'34''W	5	Seagrass	2.37	63.27
C2	28°04'41''N, 16°71'41''W	5	Seagrass	3.9	74.95
C3	28°04'17''N, 16°71'36''W	8	Seagrass	4.39	78.37
C4	28°03'94''N, 16°71'19''W	8	Seagrass	6.32	72.24

root transformed because the data were not normally distributed. Non-parametric tests were preferred since they are free of assumptions about the distribution of the data or variance homogeneity (Lehmann 1975).

Dominance curves represented the rate of abundance of the dominance species in the whole macrofauna community structure. The ANOSIM routine (Clarke 1993) was used to analyse differences between stations and soft-bottom communities, to identify the macrobenthic species responsible for the observed trends indicated by the SIMPER routine. Multivariate analyses were carried out using the PRIMER 5.2. Package (Ply-

mouth Routines In Multivariate Ecological Analysis) (Clarke & Warwick 1994).

Spearman correlation analyses were used to examine relationships between macrofaunal data and sedimentary analyses (organic matter and granulometry).

## RESULTS

A total of 1.101 specimens were collected during the study; the tanaid *Apseudes talpa* was the most abundant species with 141 specimens (13% of the overall abundance). The second and the third

species were the amphipod *Ampelisca brevicornis* and the polychaete *Aponuphis bilineata* with 122 and 117 individuals, respectively (Table 2; Anex).

In terms of species richness, 72 taxa were collected, belonging to 14 taxonomic groups. The most abundant groups were polychaetes with 365 specimens (33.2% of overall abundance), followed by amphipods and tanaids with 290 (26.3%) and 198 (18%) individuals, respectively.

The abundance was low in all sampling

stations (< 50 individuals/unit area (0.04 m<sup>2</sup>)), with the exception of station M1 with a mean of 125 specimens/unit area (Fig. 2). The species richness presented low variations, except the station M1 with the maximum value (20 taxa), with an overall mean of 10 species (Fig. 3). Shannon's diversity (H') varied between 1.60 in station M5 and 2.69 in station M1; no significant differences were found among sampling stations (Kruskal-Wallis test, H = 14.82, p = 0.063) (Fig. 4).

Table 2. List of collected species. Abundances, species richness, Shannon's diversity (H') and Pielou's evenness (J') of the sampling stations.

GROUP	SPECIES	C1	C2	C3	C4	M1	M2	M3	M4	M5
Amphipoda	<i>Ampelisca brevicornis</i>	15	4	3	0	3	3	8	42	44
Amphipoda	<i>Amphilochus neapolitanus</i>	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0
Amphipoda	<i>Bathyporeia</i> sp.	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Amphipoda	<i>Cheirocratus assimilis</i>	0	0	0	0	50	0	0	0	0
Amphipoda	<i>Corophium acutum</i>	0	0	0	0	81	0	0	0	0
Amphipoda	<i>Dexamine spinosa</i>	0	0	3	0	0	0	0	0	0
Amphipoda	<i>Elasmopus rapax</i>	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0
Amphipoda	<i>Erichthonius brasiliensis</i>	0	0	4	0	1	0	0	0	0
Amphipoda	<i>Harpinia antennaria</i>	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0
Amphipoda	<i>Phtisica marina</i>	0	0	5	2	0	0	0	0	0
Amphipoda	<i>Pontocrates arenarius</i>	0	0	0	0	0	0	4	0	0
Amphipoda	<i>Urothoe marina</i>	12	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0
Bivalvia	<i>Abra alba</i>	0	0	0	0	7	0	0	0	0
Bivalvia	<i>Lucinella divaricata</i>	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	0
Bivalvia	<i>Mactra glabrata</i>	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Bivalvia	<i>Parvicardium scriptum</i>	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
Bivalvia	<i>Solemya togata</i>	0	1	5	7	4	0	0	0	0
Cumacea	<i>Bodotria arenosa</i>	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0
Cumacea	<i>Iphinoe canariensis</i>	1	0	0	0	3	0	1	6	2
Decapoda	<i>Palinus caronii</i>	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
Decapoda	<i>Philocheras bispinosus</i>	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
Decapoda	<i>Pisa nodipes</i>	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	0
Decapoda	<i>Polynices lacteus</i>	0	0	2	1	0	0	0	0	0
Decapoda	<i>Upogebia pusilla</i>	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0
Echinodermata	<i>Brissus unicolor</i>	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Gastropoda	<i>Atys macandrewii</i>	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0
Gastropoda	<i>Bela ornata</i>	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	3
Gastropoda	<i>Bittium latreillii</i>	0	3	2	6	4	0	2	12	1
Gastropoda	<i>Haminoea hydatis</i>	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0
Gastropoda	<i>Hastula lepida</i>	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	1
Gastropoda	<i>Jujubinus exasperatus</i>	2	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	0
Gastropoda	<i>Monophorus thiriotaie</i>	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Gastropoda	<i>Nassarius cuvierii</i>	0	1	4	4	6	3	0	1	1
Gastropoda	<i>Natica dillwynii</i>	0	0	0	3	0	0	0	0	0
Gastropoda	<i>Smaragdia viridis</i>	0	0	1	3	0	0	0	0	0
Gastropoda	<i>Tricolia pullus canarica</i>	0	1	0	0	0	2	0	0	0

Table 2. (continuation)

GROUP	SPECIES	C1	C2	C3	C4	M1	M2	M3	M4	M5
Isopoda	<i>Anthura gracilis</i>	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0
Isopoda	<i>Cymodoce truncata</i>	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0
Isopoda	<i>Eurydice pulchra</i>	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	0
Misidacea	<i>Gastrosaccus sanctus</i>	7	0	0	0	0	0	5	0	0
Nematoda	<i>Synonchus fasciculatus</i>	1	1	0	0	7	0	0	0	0
Nemertea	<i>Nemertino</i> sp.1	1	0	0	0	2	3	0	0	0
Nemertea	<i>Nemertino</i> sp.2	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Oligochaeta	<i>Grania</i> sp. 1	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	0
Oligochaeta	<i>Tubificidae</i> sp.1	0	1	2	0	7	0	0	0	0
Ostracoda	<i>Cypridina mediterranea</i>	1	19	20	2	25	0	1	7	0
Polychaeta	<i>Aponuphis bilineata</i>	9	20	15	39	7	14	0	9	4
Polychaeta	<i>Armandia polyophthalma</i>	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
GROUP	SPECIES	C1	C2	C3	C4	M1	M2	M3	M4	M5
Polychaeta	<i>Cauleriella bioculata</i>	0	2	0	0	8	0	0	0	0
Polychaeta	<i>Chone collaris</i>	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Polychaeta	<i>Chone filicaudata</i>	0	0	0	0	0	11	0	0	0
Polychaeta	<i>Cirrophorus armatus</i>	2	2	0	0	9	5	0	0	1
Polychaeta	<i>Dispio uncinata</i>	0	0	0	0	0	1	3	0	0
Polychaeta	<i>Euclymene oerstedii</i>	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0
Polychaeta	<i>Lumbrineris cingulata</i>	0	0	0	0	23	0	0	0	0
Polychaeta	<i>Megalomma vesiculosum</i>	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0
Polychaeta	<i>Nainereis laevigata</i>	0	0	1	0	25	0	0	0	0
Polychaeta	<i>Nephtys cirrosa</i>	3	1	0	3	13	0	1	2	0
Polychaeta	<i>Onuphis eremita</i>	0	0	0	1	0	9	0	4	1
Polychaeta	<i>Platynereis dumerilii</i>	1	2	4	2	2	0	0	0	0
Polychaeta	<i>Poecilochaetous serpens</i>	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0
Polychaeta	<i>Prionosprio steenstrupi</i>	2	1	0	0	2	11	15	1	4
Polychaeta	<i>Psammolyce arenosa</i>	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
Polychaeta	<i>Pseudomystides limbata</i>	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0
Polychaeta	<i>Schistomeringos albomaculata</i>	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
Polychaeta	<i>Scoloplos armiger</i>	3	2	0	0	8	1	17	1	3
Polychaeta	<i>Sigalion squamatum</i>	2	0	1	0	0	5	2	6	1
Polychaeta	<i>Spio filicornis</i>	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0
Polychaeta	<i>Syllis prolifera</i>	0	0	0	0	6	0	0	0	0
Polychaeta	<i>Trichobranchus glacialis</i>	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0
Tanaidacea	<i>Apseudes talpa</i>	4	48	46	22	6	9	0	0	6
Tanaidacea	<i>Leptocheilia dubia</i>	0	1	0	0	55	1	0	0	0
Abundance		73	115	126	100	372	82	63	97	73
Species richness		21	22	23	17	33	17	15	15	14
Shannon Diversity (H')		2.58	2	2.28	2.04	2.69	2.48	2.16	1.98	1.6
Pielou Evenness (J')		0.85	0.65	0.73	0.72	0.77	0.88	0.8	0.73	0.61

## HABITAT (MEADOWS VS. BARE BOTTOMS)

Sampling stations were divided into two groups depending on the bottom type: *Cymodocea nodosa* meadows (stations C1, C2, C3, C4M) and Sandy bare bottoms (stat. M1, M2, M3, M4, M5). A high homogeneity was found among stations of the same habitat, especially in *Cymodocea*

*nodosa* meadows. Significant differences were found in macrofaunal community structure between *Cymodocea nodosa* meadows and sandy bare bottoms (one-way ANOSIM,  $R = 0.276$ ;  $p = 0.2\%$ ). The tanaid *Apseudes talpa* and the polychaete *Aponuphis bilineata* were the most abundant species in *Cymodocea nodosa* meadows

whilst sandy bare bottoms were populated by the amphipod *Ampelisca brevicornis* and the polychaetes *Scoloplos armiger* and *Prionospio steenstrupii*.

The abundance of individuals was not significantly different between the two habitats (Mann-

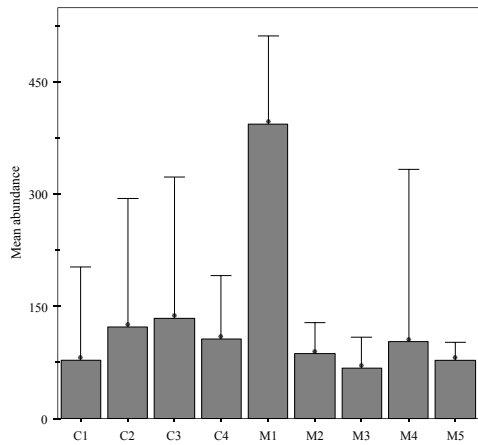


Fig. 2. Macrofaunal abundance  $\pm$  standard errors of sampling stations (C, *Cymodocea nodosa* meadows, M, sandy bare bottoms). Abundances refer to unit area ( $0.04 \text{ m}^2$ ).

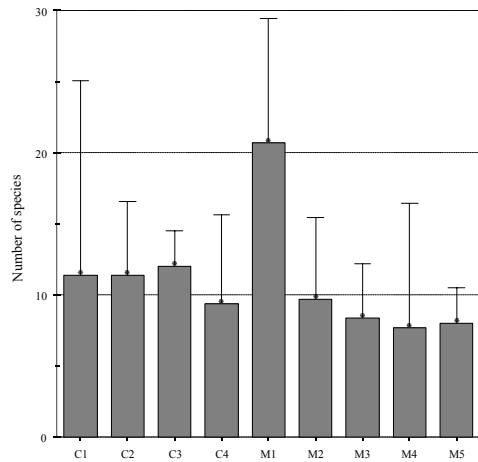


Fig. 3. Macrofaunal species richness  $\pm$  standard errors of sampling stations (C, *Cymodocea nodosa* meadows, M, sandy bare bottoms). Species richness are referred to unit area ( $0.04 \text{ m}^2$ ).

Whitney test;  $U = 81.50$ ,  $p = 0.678$ ), being slightly higher in sandy bottoms with a mean of 45.8 specimens/unit area compared to *Cymodocea nodosa* meadows (34.5 individuals/unit area) (Fig. 2).

In terms of species richness, no significant differences were found between the two habitats (Mann-Whitney test,  $U = 67$ ;  $p = 0.259$ ), with a mean of 10.87 species in sandy bottoms and 11 species in *Cymodocea nodosa* meadows.

No significant differences were found in Shannon's diversity ( $H'$ ) between meadows and bare bottoms (Mann-Whitney test,  $U = 79$ ,  $p = 0.591$ ), with a mean of 1.91 in sandy bare bottoms and 1.85 in *Cymodocea nodosa* meadows.

Sampling stations were divided into two groups at 28.7% of similarity (Fig. 5). The first group consisted of the stations C2, C3, C4 y M1, and was characterized by high abundances of the ostracod *Cypridina mediterranea*, the polychaete *Aponuphis bilineata* and the tanaid *Apseudes talpa*. The station M1 was separated from this group at a 35% of similarity, due to high abundances and diversity ( $H'$ ). The second group was formed by the remaining stations (C1, M2, M3, M4, M5) and was characterized by the presence of the polychaetes *Scoloplos armiger* and *Prionospio steenstrupii*.

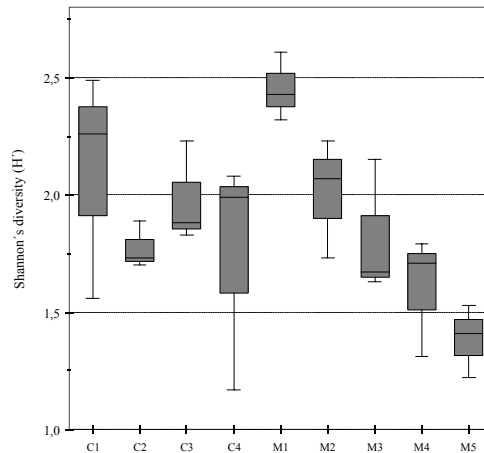


Fig. 4. Shannon's diversity ( $H'$ )  $\pm$  standard errors of sampling stations (C, *Cymodocea nodosa* meadows, M, sandy bare bottoms). Shannon's diversity refers to unit area ( $0.04 \text{ m}^2$ ).

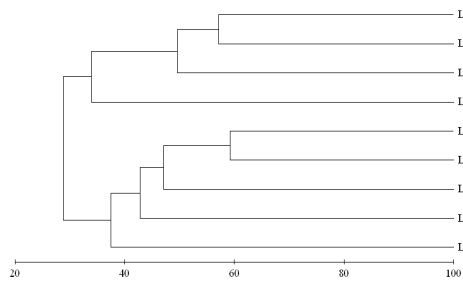


Fig. 5. Dendrogram of similarity of sampling stations and Bidimensional ordination (MDS) of sampling stations (stress = 0.02). LC, Los Cristianos; C, *Cymodocea nodosa* meadows, M, sandy bare bottoms.

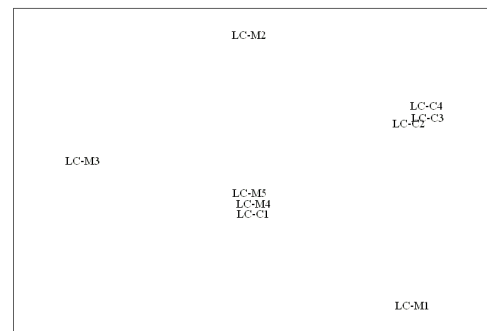


Fig. 6. Dendrogram of similarity of sampling stations and Bidimensional ordination (MDS) of sampling stations (stress = 0.02). LC, Los Cristianos; C, *Cymodocea nodosa* meadows, M, sandy bare bottoms.

In the MDS (Fig. 6) sampling stations are separated into five groups, three of them consisted of only one station (M1, M2 and M3), belonging to sandy bottoms with a heterogeneous community structure. The remaining stations are separated in two distinct groups, the first (C2, C3 and C4), characterised by the dominance of the tanaid *Apseudes talpa* and high densities of the polychaete *Aponuphis bilineata*. The second group formed by stations C1, M4 and M5 is dominated by the amphipod *Ampelisca brevicornis*.

The station M5 is dominated by the amphipod *Ampelisca brevicornis* (60% of the overall abundance). At the level of 40% of dominance,

four stations are found (C2, C3, C4 and M3), dominated by the tanaid *Apseudes talpa* (C2 and C3), the polychaete *Aponuphis bilineata* (C4) and the amphipod *A. brevicornis* (M4). The polychaetes *Scoloplos armiger* and *Prionospio steenstrupi* represented 50% of the overall abundance in station M3. The most abundant species in stations (C1, M1 and M2) represented 20% of the total abundance (*A. brevicornis* in station C1, the amphipod *Corophium acutum* in M1 and *A. bilineata* in station M2) (Fig. 7).

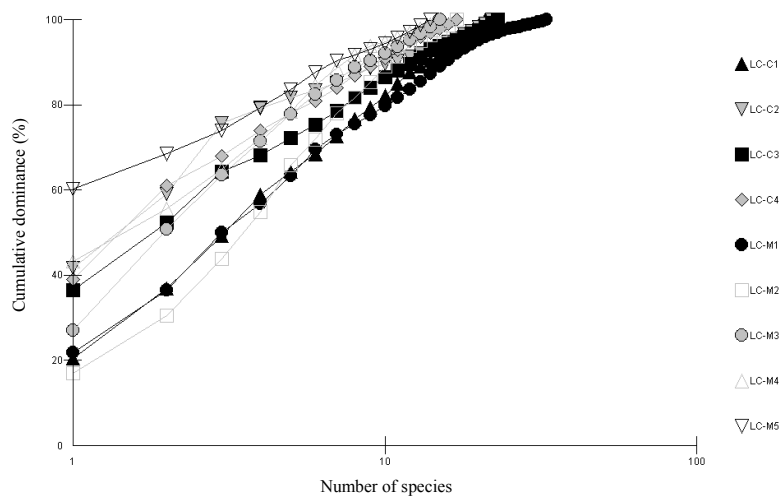


Fig. 7. Dominance curves of sampling stations.

The percentage of very fine sands and silt/clay were the abiotic factor that best explained the macrofaunal community structure in Los Cristianos. One of the main reasons is the presence of maximum values of diversity and abundance in station M1, characterized by a high content of silt/clay. The remaining stations were represented by the sedimentary fraction of fine sands. Other important abiotic factors were fine sands, gravels and organic matter, more heterogeneous in sandy bare bottoms (0.05-1.3%) compared to seagrass meadows stations (0.5-0.6%) (Table 3).

The tanaid *Apseudes talpa* was negatively correlated with fine sands, being the most abundant species in stations characterized by coarser sediments. To the contrary, the amphipod *Corophium acutum* was negatively correlated with fine sands, but positively correlated with very fine sands and silt/clay content, reaching highest densities in these sediments (Table 4).

Table 3. Correlation table of abiotic factors.

Variables	Correl.( $\rho$ )
Very fine sands, Silt/Clay	0,285
Fine sands, Very fine sands	0,27
Gravels, Fine sands, Very fine sands	0,261
Gravels, Very fine sands, Silt/Clay	0,254
Organic matter, Fine sands, Very fine sands	0,244

Table 4. Correlations between abiotic variables and the most abundant species ( $p < 0,01^{**}$ ).

	<i>Apseudes talpa</i>	<i>Corophium acutum</i>
Fine sands	-0,573**	-0,547**
Very fine sands		0,547**
Silt/Clay		0,547**

## DISCUSSION

The effects of sediment accumulation have been studied in different habitats (e.g. algal turfs in rocky bottoms (Phrathep et al. 2003), coral reefs (Richmond 1993), mangroves (Ellison 1998), seagrasses (Vermaat et al. 1997), freshwater systems (Henley et al. 2000) and estuaries (Ryan 1991). Special emphasis has been placed in the effects of sedimentation in commercial harbours since the process of sedimentation reduces the

navigational or approach channel depth of a harbour, or tends as secondary effect to shift channel locations. Several authors have estimated the sedimentation rate (3-5 mm/year) in commercial harbours (Dominik et al. 1991), because of the importance of this problem in high costs of maintenance dredging. Goff et al. (1998) observed in Wellington harbour (New Zealand) seasonal patterns of sediment accumulation (low rates in summer and high rates in winter), although they found individual peaks related to flood events that occurred along the study period. Harbours usually show high organic matter inputs due to the increasing sedimentation caused by port structures (McCready et al. 2006), although no differences were found between inner and outer stations of Los Cristianos harbour.

Unfortunately, the sedimentation rate is unknown in Los Cristianos harbour, however, the increase of sedimentation level is clearly discerned during the last ten years (beach width 80 m), with a significant rise ( $> 3$  m) (R. Riera *pers. obs.*).

Los Cristianos Bay harboured a diverse macrofauna that sometimes reach high abundances ( $> 1000$  ind/m<sup>2</sup>). This bay is characterized by a high sedimentary stability, with a clear dominance of fine sands and low organic matter content, especially in *Cymodocea nodosa* meadows. The most abundant species were the tanaid *Apseudes talpa*, the amphipod *Ampelisca brevicornis* and the polychaete *Aponuphis bilineata*. The autoecology of the former species are different, with no interference among their habitats *Apseudes talpa* is a digger species that inhabits the upper 1-2 cm of the sediment. The amphipod *Ampelisca brevicornis* is a superficial detritivorous that inhabits the first millimeters of the sediment and the infaunal polychaete *Aponuphis bilineata* builds sandy tubes (Desroy & Retière 2001).

The presence of very fine sands and silt and clay was observed in inner stations of Los Cristianos harbour. These stations are characterized by a more diverse and abundant macrofauna, due to the presence of the amphipods *Cheirocratus assimilis* and *Corophium acutum* and the polychaete *Nainereis laevigata*, very abundant species in muddy-sand bottoms in other geographical regions. The former species are commonly found

in constantly disturbed environments such as harbours probably well accustomed to turbulence caused by the transit of big boats and ferries (> 30m long).

The species *Cheirocratus sundevalli* has been collected in superficial layers of the sediment (0-5 cm) inside commercial harbours, with high levels of organic matter (> 5%) and total phosphorus (> 500 ppm) (Guerra-García et al. 2003). Several species of the genus *Corophium* (*C. runcicorne* and *C. sextonae*) have been found in deeper levels of the sediment (> 10 cm) since they build U-shaped galleries that allow them to escape from the top layers of the seabed (Guerra-García et al. 2003). The polychaete orbiniid *Naineris laevigata*, has been recorded in muddy bottoms, as well as, fluctuating environments (Giangrande & Fraschetti 1995).

In short, the macrobenthos in Los Cristianos Harbour is characterized by two differentiated assemblages, one of which occupies seagrass meadows and medium-sand seabeds (outer stations) and the second one is associated with finer sediments, such as, silt and clay and very fine sands (inner stations). However, a multidisciplinary study is necessary to evaluate precisely the environmental effects of sedimentation inside Los Cristianos harbour.

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