CHARACTERIZATION OF MEDITERRANEAN VEGAS AND HUERTAS AS BIOCULTURAL LANDSCAPES

Study case 1: Vega of Motril-Salobreña

1 Location and general description

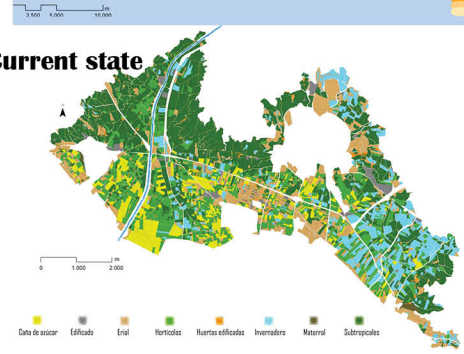
South of Spain (Granada, "Tropical Coast")
Approx. 32 km²
Two municipalities
River plain and delta (Guadalfeo River)

2 Long history of human influence

Long geomorphological processes to form the delta.
Sedimentation process increased by facts linked to the introduction of sugar cane during the Muslim period.
Presence of marshy areas that were especially managed to allow sugar cane harvesting,
allowing space occupation.
Construction of terraced fields in vega's borders (first half of last century).
Placement of particular vegetal structures named *salves* to create a specific microclimate for crops.

A particular irrigation system through *acequias*.

3 Current state



Coexistence of traditional and new land uses.
Gradual degradation of traditional features (e.g. *acequias*. That is causing flooding events due to their lack of maintenance and destruction)
Partial removal of remnant vegetation (hedgerows)
Sugan cane practically dissapeared (last "official" sugar harvesting in 2006).
High biodiversity values (especially birds) with hotspots linked to ponds.
Archaeological remains from ancient periods of occupation.
Sugar mills and associated mechanical devices (unique in Europe)

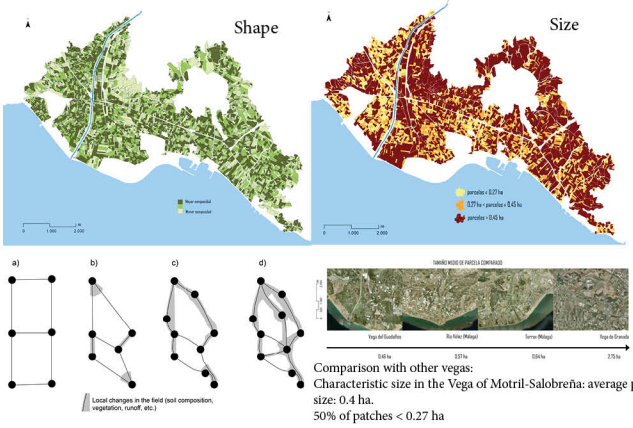
4 Exploring possible biocultural indicators (ongoing research)

Are vegas and huertas landscapes of high biocultural diversity compared to other landscapes in the region/country?

There are links between some Andalusian vegas (such as the Vega of Motril-Salobreña) and vegas from north of Morocco: *Nasrid vegas*

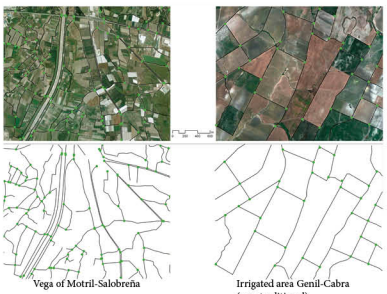
A) Landscape mosaic analysis

Characteristic field pattern



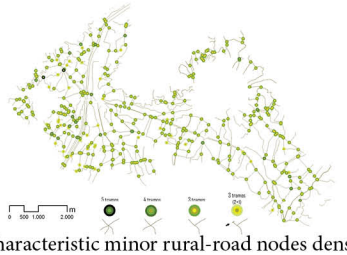
Comparison with other vegas:
Characteristic size in the Vega of Motril-Salobreña: average patch size: 0.4 ha.
50% of patches < 0.27 ha

Characteristic minor rural-road structure



Vega of Motril-Salobreña

Irrigated area Genil-Cabra (non traditional)



Characteristic minor rural-road nodes density.
Proposal: application of centrality measures (a test of this application is under evaluation)

B) Landscape resource analysis

Some general indicators (inspired by the CKP method: Cuerrier et al. 2015):
-Agreement of population about the cultural value of vegas.
-The term -vegas- is a specific one within the context of e.g. other agricultural landscapes in Spain.
-Occupation of vegas as preferential places for human activity along time (e.g. in Andalusia).
-High diversity of use (compared to other landscapes).
-Agricultural local varieties.
-Presence of archaeological sites, particular management techniques and particular "sugar lexicon" and "vegas lexicon".
-Uniqueness of e.g. Vega of Motril-Salobreña (together with other small vegas from Malaga, they are the only places with sugar cane in Europe).
-Presence of local markets linked to local agriculture.
-Local associations linked to cultural landscape features, e.g. *Friends of Acequias*
-Existence of a particular profession: *acequiero* (the person entrusted with the functioning of *acequias*)

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