

# THE DESIGN OF TOURIST ROUTES FOR AN APPRECIATION OF THE TERRITORIAL HERITAGE. HISTORICAL DITCHES IN THE SIERRA NEVADA NATIONAL PARK<sup>1</sup>

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Routes have a specific weight in the global tourism. When they are linked to tourism in protected areas provide added values, the integration of human elements as cultural landscapes makers. This article proposes the design of routes passing through part of the system of ditches of the southern slopes of Sierra Nevada National Park (Andalusia). Routes design incorporates the enhancement of heritage and landscape resources on rural and natural areas. Selected heritage elements are the systems of ditches, like ancient man-made structures. By way of canals, the system of ditches divert water from high mountains to the irrigation ones. This infrastructure is very important in National Park and in cultural landscapes of the Alpujarra in Granada. La Alpujara was designed as *Bien de Interés Cultural* (BIC) by the andalusian government and it is a quite representative part of Sierra Nevada protected area.

The introduction section includes a review of scientific literature on the design of tourist routes, highlighting those aimed routes in rural areas and / or protected natural areas. Special emphasis has been placed on proposals that cover natural elements which relate to river basins or water infrastructure. In the second section of the ditches in Sierra Nevada, the authors explain and justify their consideration as heritage resources, completely useful even today. This is due to two reasons. The first reason is the wide historical dating of heritage elements and their functionality in shaping agricultural landscapes. And the

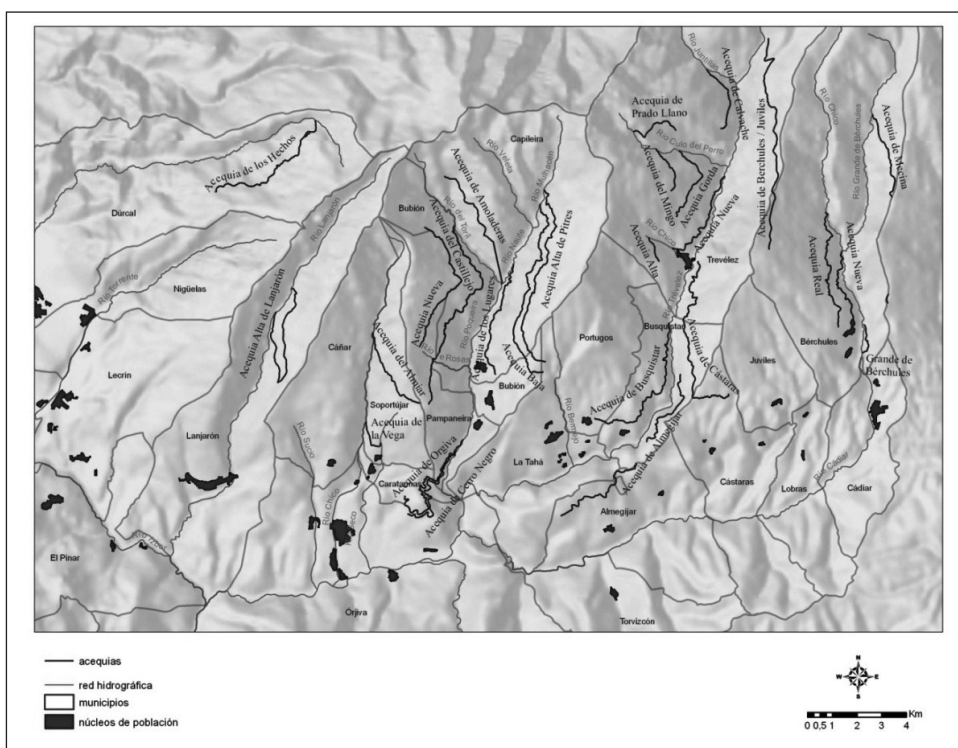
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second reason is because the ditches are infrastructure related to the way in which the ancient civilizations colonizing the territory. Similar examples can be found in Pakistan or the Andes mountains. In this section, the article explains how the ditches work and why men have taken advantage of water resources by the same means since ancient times.

The central part of the paper presents the sources and methodology used in this work. The sources used come from the scientific literature, and information from topographic maps and aerial photographs. The sources have also been accessed to existing routes in the Alpujarras, especially those related to local roads in the mountains. The methodology has been based on the analysis, classification and evaluation of this information in the fieldwork and office. The first methodological step was to identify and assess available information. The second step involved the initial characterization of the system of ditches: location, route, altitude and slope. And third, this analysis has allowed the systematization of information for building a georeferenced database and its application in relation to the respective tributary rivers and the existing local road network. The ultimate purpose is to achieve such recognition enhances the use of the ditches by means of the design of tourist routes.

### MAP OF THE DITCHES SYSTEM ON THE ALPUJARRA OF GRANADA



Source: Mapa Topográfico de Andalucía 1/10.000. Made by J. E. Ibáñez.

The proposed routes are shown in the outcomes section. The authors have designed two routes in the Alpujarra Media, between the Sierra Nevada and the upper and middle segments of the Guadalfeo river basin. The proposal is emphasized by the combination of environmental, heritage and landscape current aspects related to the practice of rural tourism, and nature tourism specifically. Designed routes allow put in value the interaction between humans and the environment across the path of the ditches in the practice of slow tourism.

In conclusion, the paper argues the importance of putting in value natural and cultural heritage in the vicinity of La Alpujarra. The ditches have to be understood as heritage elements and part of cultural landscape on the Sierra Nevada protected area. The design of tourist routes on the basis of the ditches system, is key to put in value the territorial heritage. The existence of old ditches as irreplaceable elements of water infrastructure and its links to cultural landscapes allow the defense of territorial heritage. Integrating cultural and natural heritage as an argument for the design of tourist routes will be a clear advantage for the preservation of these resources for coming generations.

