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**EFFECTOS DE LA RIZOSFERA Y DE LAS ENMIENDAS  
ORGÁNICAS EN LA FITORECUPERACIÓN DE SUELOS  
CONTAMINADOS CON ELEMENTOS TRAZA**

Memoria presentada por

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para optar al grado de Doctora por la

Universidad de Sevilla

Sevilla, 12 de Septiembre de 2016



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**CERTIFICA:**

Que la presente Memoria de Investigación titulada “EFECTOS DE LA RIZOSFERA Y DE LAS ENMIENDAS ORGÁNICAS EN LA FITORECUPERACIÓN DE SUELOS CONTAMINADOS CON ELEMENTOS TRAZA”, presentada por Dña. María del Mar Montiel Rozas para optar al grado de Doctor, ha sido realizada en el marco del Programa de Doctorado de Recursos Naturales y Medioambiente del Departamento de Cristalografía, Mineralogía y Química Agrícola.

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“But man is a part of nature, and his war against nature is inevitably a war against himself.”

—Rachel Carson (1964)



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## **ABREVIATURAS EN ORDEN ALFABÉTICO**

*Se remite al texto de las publicaciones científicas para las abreviaturas encontradas en ellas.*

|         |                                     |
|---------|-------------------------------------|
| AOs     | Ácidos orgánicos                    |
| CB      | Compost de biosólidos               |
| CA      | Compost de alperujo                 |
| COT     | Carbono orgánico total              |
| DTPA    | Ácido dietilentriamino pentaacético |
| EDTA    | Ácido etilendiaminotetraacético     |
| ET      | Elemento traza                      |
| HMA     | Hongos micorrícicos arbusculares    |
| LE      | Leonardita                          |
| MP      | Metal pesado                        |
| NTA     | Ácido nitrilotriacético             |
| RMN     | Resonancia magnética nuclear        |
| Suelo A | Aznalcázar                          |
| Suelo B | Aznalcóllar                         |
| Suelo C | Tharsis                             |
| SR      | Coficiente de estratificación       |



## FE DE ERRATAS

Se hace constar que se han detectado las siguientes erratas:

- Capítulo V, apartado V.1: en la Tabla 1 de la publicación “Evaluation of phytostabilizer ability of three ruderal plants in mining soils restored by application of organic amendments” el valor de WSC dado para el tratamiento BC-PO ( $10,853 \pm 93.1$ ) debe ser sustituido por  $1193 \pm 93.1$ .
- Capítulo V, apartado V.2: en la página 278 de la publicación “Effect of heavy metals and organic matter on root exudates (low molecular weight organic acids) of herbaceous species: An assessment in sand and soil conditions under different levels of contamination”, al final de la primera columna el término *citric* debe ser sustituido por *oxalic* en la siguiente frase: “In this case, the metal uptake and the concentrations of malic and citric acids released into...”
- Capítulo V, apartado V.4: en el abstract de la publicación “Organic amendments increase phylogenetic diversity of arbuscular mycorrhizal fungi in acid soil contaminated by trace elements”, en la línea 8 el término *last* debe ser sustituido por *first*: “Twelve years after the last addition, molecular analyses of...”



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## Resumen

Actualmente, la degradación de los suelos es uno de los problemas ambientales de mayor importancia a nivel global. Desde un punto de vista antropogénico, los suelos además de actuar como soporte físico proveen de servicios ecosistémicos, entre los que destaca la producción de alimentos. Los cambios en sus condiciones físicas, químicas y biológicas, resultado de la actividad humana, provocan su degradación y, consecuentemente, la degradación de los organismos asociados como las comunidades vegetales y microbiológicas. Esta degradación conlleva una alteración de la funcionalidad del ecosistema repercutiendo finalmente, directa o indirectamente, sobre la salud humana. Por todo ello el mantenimiento y la recuperación de la calidad del suelo es fundamental.

Los trabajos que componen la presente Tesis doctoral se centran en el estudio de diversos factores relevantes en la recuperación de suelos contaminados por elementos traza. Este tipo de suelos se consideran un importante problema ambiental debido a los altos niveles de elementos traza que presentan y que por tanto pueden entrar en la cadena trófica. De entre las distintas técnicas para la recuperación de suelos contaminados destaca, desde el punto de vista medioambiental, la fitorecuperación, que engloba varias técnicas sostenibles. Entre ellas, la fitoestabilización implica la estabilización de los contaminantes a nivel radicular mediante el uso de plantas y de enmiendas.

En esta Tesis se evalúa el efecto de 3 enmiendas orgánicas (compost de biosólidos, compost de alperujo y leonardita) y de distintas especies vegetales potencialmente fitoestabilizadoras sobre la dinámica de los elementos traza en la interfase suelo-planta, centrándose en algunos de los procesos que se producen a nivel de rizosfera. Para ello se han llevado a cabo experimentos tanto a nivel de microcosmos como a nivel de campo. Los suelos de estudio se sitúan en el Corredor Verde del Guadiamar (Sevilla), afectado por el vertido de residuos mineros procedente de la rotura de la balsa de decantación de Aznalcóllar, y en una zona con contaminación crónica por elementos traza cercana a la explotación minera de Tharsis (Huelva).

En primer lugar, se evaluó la capacidad de tres especies vegetales ruderales (*Poa annua*, *Medicago polymorpha* y *Malva sylvestris*) para estabilizar elementos traza en el

suelo minero de Tharsis y mejorar su calidad. Asimismo, se estudió el efecto de los compost añadidos al suelo. La adición de compost incrementó el pH, el carbono hidrosoluble y la producción de biomasa vegetal. En general, la acumulación de elementos traza en las tres especies vegetales estudiadas estuvo dentro de los intervalos normales en plantas. Las mayores concentraciones de As y Pb se encontraron en *P. annua* mientras que *M. sylvestris* fue la que acumuló mayor concentración de Mn y Zn. Salvo alguna excepción, el factor de bioconcentración fue menor que 1 (indicando la idoneidad de estas especies para la fitoestabilización). Entre las especies estudiadas, *M. polymorpha* fue la que reunió las características más adecuadas para promover la estabilización de elementos traza en la rizosfera y mejorar la calidad del suelo.

En segundo lugar, se estudió la exudación de ácidos orgánicos de bajo peso molecular de las tres especies analizadas anteriormente bajo diferentes niveles de Cd, Cu y Zn. Tanto la cantidad como la composición de los exudados variaron según el medio de crecimiento (arena lavada / suelos contaminados), el nivel de contaminación, el contenido en materia orgánica y la especie vegetal. Los ácidos más abundantes fueron el ácido oxálico y el málico, seguidos del cítrico y el fumárico. En general, el aumento de concentración de metales pesados en el medio estuvo relacionado con una mayor concentración de ácidos orgánicos. En los suelos con mayor contenido de materia orgánica se observó una reducción de la cantidad de exudados y de la composición de los mismos, estando compuestos únicamente por ácido oxálico (exceptuando *M. polymorpha*).

En tercer lugar, se identificaron los ecotipos de hongos micorrícicos arbusculares presentes en las tres especies vegetales bajo las mismas condiciones experimentales en los suelos en los que se midió la exudación de ácidos orgánicos. El diferente contenido de materia orgánica, fósforo y elementos traza de los suelos permitió evaluar el cambio en la comunidad fúngica acorde a las condiciones del suelo. La adición de ambas enmiendas (materia orgánica exógena) no afectó a la comunidad endomicorrícica. Sin embargo, el contenido en materia orgánica nativa del suelo fue, junto al contenido en elementos traza, el factor que influyó en mayor medida en la comunidad fúngica. El incremento de la calidad del suelo (es decir, un mayor contenido en materia orgánica y una menor concentración de Cd, Cu y Zn) se tradujo en la disminución de la abundancia de Glomeraceae y en un aumento de la abundancia de Claroideoglomeraceae en la comunidad.

Paralelamente a los experimentos en microcosmos, se analizó la diversidad filogenética de las comunidades de hongos micorrícicos arbusculares presentes en suelos enmendados en la parcela “El Vicario” (situada en el Corredor Verde). El proceso de restauración en esta parcela comenzó en 2002 por lo que se evaluó el efecto a largo plazo del compost de biosólidos y de la leonardita sobre estos microorganismos bioindicadores. Además, se identificaron los ecotipos presentes y los cambios de la comunidad en función de las condiciones del suelo. Entre las variables del suelo, la concentración de elementos traza fue el factor que afectó en mayor medida a la composición de la comunidad fúngica. El filtro ambiental causado por este factor se redujo principalmente por la adición de compost de biosólidos, encontrándose en estas parcelas la comunidad más diversa.

Finalmente, se evaluó si la aplicación de enmiendas orgánicas para la restauración de un suelo degradado (“El Vicario”) podía implicar, además de la mejora físico-química del suelo, que éste actuara como un sumidero de C. Los resultados de este estudio mostraron que ambas enmiendas (compost de biosólidos y leonardita) modificaron la composición molecular de la materia orgánica del suelo promoviendo la retención de C. Entre ambas, la opción más adecuada para el secuestro de C a largo plazo en el suelo es la leonardita debido a su composición molecular rica en compuestos aromáticos y derivados de la lignina, relativamente estables.

## Abstract

Nowadays, soil degradation is one of the most important global environmental problems. From an anthropogenic point of view, soils act as physical support and provide different ecosystem services (e.g. the food supply). Changes on soil physical, chemical and biological conditions due to human activity cause soil degradation and, consequently, damage the associated organisms such as plants and microbiological communities. Soil degradation alters ecosystem function and affects, directly or indirectly, human health; therefore, it is crucial to maintain and improve soil quality.

The experiments carried out in this Thesis are focused on the analysis of several factors affecting the remediation of trace element contaminated soils. These soils constitute an important environmental problem due the possible entrance of trace elements into the food chain. From the environmental point of view, among the different techniques for the remediation of contaminated soils, highlights phytostabilization that is a sustainable technique that involves stabilization of contaminants at root level by using plants and amendments.

This Thesis evaluates the effect of three organic amendments (biosolid compost, *alperujo* compost and leonardite) and different plant species with potential phytostabilizer ability on trace elements dynamics in the soil-plant interface, focusing on some of the rhizosphere processes. The results are based on field and microcosms experiments. The studied soils are located in the Green Corridor of Guadiamar (Sevilla), affected by the spill of the Aznalcóllar mine, and in Tharsis (Huelva), an area presenting chronic contamination by trace elements.

Firstly, the ability of three ruderal plant species (*Poa annua*, *Medicago polymorpha* and *Malva sylvestris*) to stabilize trace elements in Tharsis soil and to improve its quality was evaluated. Likewise, the effect of *alperujo* and biosolid composts on soil properties was also studied. Amendment addition increased pH, water-soluble carbon and plant biomass. In general, trace element accumulation in the studied plants was within normal ranges. Higher As and Pb concentrations were found in *P. annua* whereas *M. sylvestris* accumulated the highest concentration of Mn and Zn. With some exception, *bioconcentration* factor was lower than 1 (indicating the suitability of these species for phytostabilisation). Among the studied plant species, *M. polymorpha*



showed the best characteristics to promote the trace element stabilization in the rhizosphere and improve soil quality.

Moreover, the exudation of low molecular weight organic acids by the mentioned plant species was analysed under different Cd, Cu and Zn concentrations. Both amount and composition of exudates varied according to the growing media (washed sand/contaminated soils), contamination level, organic matter content and plant species. Oxalic and malic were the main acids in the exudates and, in a lesser concentration citric and fumaric acids were also identified. In general, the increase of heavy metal concentrations in the media was related to a higher organic acid concentration in the rhizosphere. A decrease of exudates and a modification of their composition (being composed solely of oxalic acid excepting *M.polymorpha*) were observed in soils with the highest organic matter content.

In addition, with the same plant species and experimental soil conditions of the organic acids exudation experiment, the arbuscular mycorrhizal fungi ecotypes were identified. The different organic matter content, phosphorus and trace elements in the studied soils were keys to evaluate the shift in the fungal community according to the soil conditions. The addition of both amendments (exogenous organic matter) did not affect the arbuscular mycorrhizal fungal community. However, native soil organic matter content was, besides the trace element contents, the most influential factor on fungal community. With an increase in soil quality (i.e., higher organic matter content and lower Cd, Cu and Zn concentration), a decrease of Glomeraceae abundance and an increase of Claroideoglomeraceae occurred.

While simultaneously carrying out the microcosm experiments, the phylogenetic diversity of arbuscular mycorrhizal fungal communities in amended soils of “El Vicario” plot (located in the Green Corridor) was analysed. The restoration process began in 2002 allowing the evaluation of the long-term effect of biosolid compost and leonardite on these communities. In addition, the ecotypes and community shifts were related to the soil conditions. Among soil variables, trace elements concentration was the most relevant factor affecting the composition of the fungal community. Environmental filtering caused by this factor was reduced mainly by the biosolid compost addition, and in the plots amended with this compost the most diverse community was found.

Finally, the effect of organic amendment applications on the increment of C sink in the Vicario plot was studied. Results showed that both amendments (biosolid compost and leonardite) modified the molecular composition of soil organic matter promoting the C sequestration. Between both, leonardite was the most suitable option for long-term C sequestration in the soil due to its molecular composition rich in aromatics and lignin-derived compounds, with a very slow turnover and low mineralization rate.





# **CAPÍTULO I**

## **INTRODUCCIÓN GENERAL**

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## **I.1. ESTADO ACTUAL DE LOS SUELOS**

La degradación del suelo es uno de los problemas más importantes a nivel global debido a su impacto negativo sobre la productividad agrícola y el medio ambiente así como su efecto en la seguridad alimentaria y la calidad de vida (Eswaran et al., 2001). Se entiende como degradación del suelo la existencia de “un cambio en el estado de salud del suelo que resulta en una disminución de la capacidad de los ecosistemas para proporcionar bienes y servicios a sus beneficiarios” (FAO, 2016). Actualmente, se considera que el 70% de los suelos del mundo están degradados, de los cuales el 25% se consideran altamente degradados, el 8% parcialmente degradados y el 36% ligeramente degradados (FAO, 2011). La erosión hídrica y/o eólica, la pérdida de materia orgánica y nutrientes, la compactación, la salinización, la contaminación y la acidificación son procesos que conducen a la degradación del suelo. Todo ello conlleva una pérdida de su calidad y, a su vez, una disminución de la biodiversidad.

El término “calidad del suelo” hace referencia a su capacidad para funcionar como un sistema vivo, para sostener la productividad vegetal y animal, mantener o mejorar la calidad del agua y del aire, y mantener la salud de los organismos (Doran, 2002). Mediante la adopción de prácticas adecuadas de manejo del suelo la calidad del mismo puede ser protegida (o en su caso restaurada) (Lal, 2015). A su vez, un manejo adecuado evitará/atenuará la pérdida de biodiversidad y la simplificación de la composición de las comunidades del suelo, lo cual afecta negativamente a las funciones del ecosistema y su sostenibilidad (Wagg et al., 2014) y, por tanto, a la salud de los organismos vivos incluidos los seres humanos (Wall et al., 2015). Un aumento de la calidad y de la diversidad de las comunidades del suelo contribuye a mejorar los servicios ecosistémicos que nos ofrece el sistema tales como alimento, eliminación de residuos, amortiguación de la contaminación o moderación del clima a través del ciclo del C.

La estabilidad del suelo viene dada por su resistencia (capacidad de un sistema para soportar una perturbación) y su resiliencia (tiempo requerido por el sistema para recuperar el estado anterior a la perturbación o alcanzar un nuevo estado estable) (Griffiths y Philippot, 2013). La biodiversidad del suelo también está relacionada con el nivel de resiliencia y de resistencia del ecosistema. Por ejemplo, Griffiths et al. (2000) mostró que los suelos con mayor diversidad eran más resistentes a las perturbaciones y

con un grado de resiliencia mayor que aquellos suelos con comunidades microbianas menos diversas.

De entre las amenazas que afectan a los suelos, la contaminación es sin duda una de las más preocupantes. Un suelo contaminado es aquél que ha superado su capacidad de atenuación natural para una o varias sustancias, y como consecuencia, pasa de actuar como un sistema protector a ser causa de efectos negativos para el agua, la atmósfera, y los organismos. A nivel europeo, se estima que el número de enclaves potencialmente contaminados es superior a los 2,5 millones (Panagos et al., 2013). De entre las formas de contaminación de suelo, los elementos traza y los hidrocarburos constituyen el principal grupo de contaminantes en la contaminación edáfica en la Unión Europea, contribuyendo al 60 % de los casos de contaminación.

En esta Tesis se aborda la problemática de suelos contaminados con elementos traza, y en este ámbito, uno de los principales problemas ambientales lo constituyen las zonas afectadas por vertidos mineros o por la actividad minera. Estos suelos se convierten en una fuente de contaminación (para la atmósfera, los recursos hídricos y los seres vivos) en los que los procesos de formación del suelo, el establecimiento de una cobertura vegetal así como el número, diversidad y actividad de los microorganismos (con el consecuente efecto en los procesos de descomposición de la materia orgánica y de mineralización) se ven negativamente afectados por las elevadas concentraciones de elementos traza (Wong, 2003).

Para llevar a cabo con éxito la restauración de este tipo de suelos contaminados y degradados, deben de tenerse en cuenta tanto factores químicos como biológicos y las interrelaciones entre ellos (Figura I.1). El enfoque de recuperación de suelos que se desarrolla en la presente Tesis se basa en la utilización de diferentes enmiendas orgánicas y especies vegetales fitoestabilizadoras con el objetivo de analizar el efecto que tienen a nivel rizosférico y la repercusión de estas variaciones en la movilización de elementos traza en el suelo.



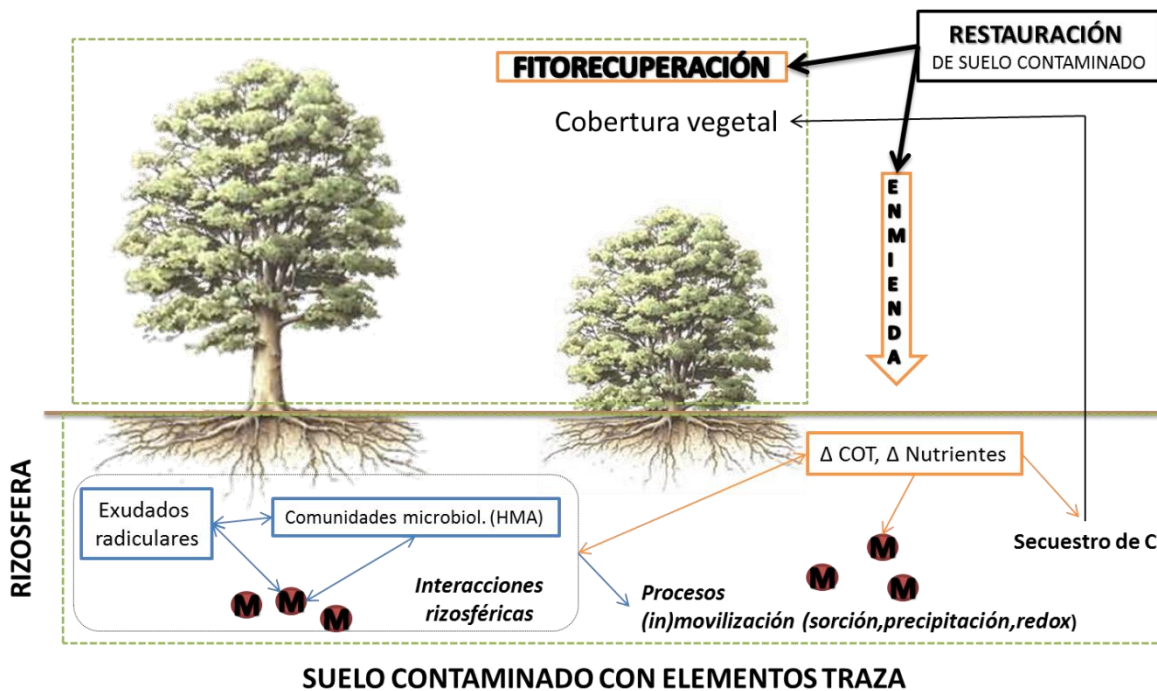


Fig. I.1. Diagrama esquemático del enfoque de restauración de suelos contaminados por elementos traza seguido en esta Tesis. Las relaciones uni y bilaterales entre los componentes estudiados son resaltadas mediante líneas.

### I.1.1. INDICADORES DE CALIDAD DEL SUELO

Los índices de calidad del suelo son una herramienta para la evaluación de la sostenibilidad y de la capacidad de respuesta de los ecosistemas. Para utilizarlos adecuadamente se debe tener en cuenta que las escalas espaciales y temporales son críticas y que la calidad del suelo depende de propiedades y procesos inherentes y dinámicos (Karlen et al., 2001). Estos indicadores pueden ser físicos (textura, densidad aparente, capacidad de retención de agua y tasa de infiltración de agua), químicos (pH, conductividad eléctrica, C orgánico total, capacidad de intercambio catiónico (CIC)) o biológicos (actividades enzimáticas, respiración, abundancia y diversidad de las comunidades del suelo) (Tabla I.1). Además, se han propuesto índices multiparamétricos que integran diversos índices (principalmente químicos y biológicos) como el pH, las actividades enzimáticas o el C de la biomasa entre otros (Bastida et al., 2008). El tipo de indicador aplicado también depende de la escala de trabajo (Tabla I.1). En todos los casos, un indicador adecuado debe de ser simple de medir, funcionar para todo tipo de ambientes y ser sensible a condiciones de estrés revelando de forma fiable donde se ha producido una alteración (Schloter et al., 2003).

Actualmente existe una falta de consenso acerca de cuáles son los mejores indicadores de calidad del suelo (Karlen et al., 2001; Gil-Sotres et al., 2005). Esto se debe a la diversidad de propiedades físicas, químicas, microbiológicas y bioquímicas que deben de integrarse para establecer la calidad del suelo (Bastida et al., 2008). La falta de estandarización de algunas metodologías, los problemas de escala espacial (debido a la heterogeneidad del suelo) y la imposibilidad de aplicación en algunas partes del mundo, son algunas de las razones que explican la poca aplicabilidad de algunos de los índices propuestos (Bastida et al., 2008).

*Tabla I.1. Indicadores potenciales de calidad de suelo medidos a diferentes escalas (adaptado de Karlen et al., 2001).*

| Escala   | Biológicos   | Químicos                               | Físicos  |
|----------|--|--|--|
| Parcela  | Biomasa microbiana                                     | pH                                     | Estabilidad de los agregados                     |
|          | Mineralización de N                                    | C y N orgánico                         | Distribución del tamaño de agregado              |
|          | Materia orgánica particulada                           | Macronutrientes disponibles            | Densidad aparente                                |
|          | Respiración  | Conductividad eléctrica                | Porosidad  |
|          | Nematodos  | Concentración de micronutrientes       | Infiltración                                     |
|          | Comunidades microbianas                                | Metales pesados                        | Profundidad del perfil                           |
|          | Enzimas del suelo                                      | CIC                                    |  |
|          | Perfiles de ácidos grasos<br>Poblaciones de micorrizas | Xenobióticos                           |  |
| Campo    | Rendimiento del cultivo                                | Cambios en materia orgánica            | Espesor y color de la capa superficial del suelo |
|          | Infestación de malas hierbas                           | Acumulación de metales pesados         | Compactación                                     |
|          | Incidencia de enfermedades                             | Cambios en salinidad                   | Encharcamiento                                   |
|          | Deficiencias nutricionales                             | Pérdidas por escorrentía o lixiviación | Surcos y cárcavas                                |
|          | Características de crecimiento                         |  |  |
| Regional | Productividad  | Acidificación                          | Desertificación                                  |
|          | Riqueza y diversidad de especies                       | Salinización                           | Pérdida de cobertura vegetal                     |
|          | Biomasa, densidad y abundancia                         | Cambios en la calidad del agua         | Erosión eólica e hídrica                         |
|          |  | Cambios en la calidad del aire         | Sedimentación de ríos y lagos                    |

De entre todos los índices citados, los índices microbiológicos han sido motivo de gran interés en los últimos años. La evaluación de la actividad microbiana se puede

llevar a cabo mediante la medida de actividades enzimáticas. Dichas actividades juegan un importante papel en los ciclos biogeoquímicos, fundamentales en la liberación de nutrientes, aumentando su biodisponibilidad, pero también contribuyen a la mineralización y movilización de contaminantes (Schloter et al., 2003). La actividad utilizada más frecuentemente es la deshidrogenasa (como una medida general de microorganismos viables en suelos degradados) seguida de la fosfatasa,  $\beta$ -glucosidasa y ureasa (Gil-Sotres et al., 2005). Asimismo, la respiración del suelo también es un buen indicador del estatus biológico del mismo ya que está correlacionado con los niveles de carbono disponible en el suelo y el contenido de materia orgánica (Sikora y Rawls, 2000). Por otro lado, la identificación y estudio de microorganismos como los hongos micorrícicos arbusculares (ver sección I.4.1) proporciona información fiable acerca de la calidad del suelo que estamos estudiando, ya que algunos filotipos se consideran bioindicadores de suelos contaminados (Lenoir et al., 2016), así como de la respuesta de las comunidades del suelo frente a condiciones de estrés.

## **I.2. CONTAMINACIÓN DE SUELOS POR ELEMENTOS TRAZA**

*Elemento traza* (ET) y *metal pesado* (MP) son dos términos usados para referirse a elementos inorgánicos, algunos de ellos con potencial carácter contaminante, que se encuentran en el suelo. Ambos conceptos difieren en los elementos que incluyen. El término *metales (-oides) pesados* hace referencia a elementos con densidades mayores que  $6 \text{ g cm}^{-3}$  (exceptuando el arsénico, el boro y el selenio, que son metaloides) (Park et al., 2011). El concepto de *elementos traza* varía de acuerdo al objeto de estudio (suelo, plantas, animales,...). En Ciencia del Suelo, es ampliamente aceptado que *elemento traza* incluye aquellos diferentes de los 8 elementos más abundantes que componen las rocas de la biosfera (O, Si, Al, Fe, Ca, Na, K y Mg) y presentes en el medio natural a niveles  $<0.1\%$ . Por tanto, ET son todos aquellos elementos que se encuentran en pequeñas cantidades en sistemas naturales y que, cuando están presentes en concentraciones disponibles suficientes, pueden ser potencialmente tóxicos para los organismos vivos (Adriano, 2001).

Los ET, además de no poder ser degradados como en el caso de los contaminantes orgánicos, presentan un largo tiempo de residencia en el suelo. Sin embargo, su importancia en los suelos no depende tanto de su cantidad total como de la fracción soluble, móvil y biodisponible. La biodisponibilidad de los ET depende de su

bioaccesibilidad, esto es, de la fracción del elemento disponible que interactúa con la superficie de contacto de los organismos y que puede ser potencialmente absorbido o adsorbido. Un ET es biodisponible cuando es bioaccesible y es adsorbido o absorbido en las membranas biológicas de organismos con capacidad para asimilarlo y metabolizarlo (McGeer et al., 2004).

La mayoría de elementos de la tabla periódica se pueden encontrar en los tejidos vegetales, siempre que se cuente con métodos analíticos suficientemente sensibles para detectarlos (Markert, 1993). Hojas y raíces no pueden evitar cierta absorción de elementos del medio si éstos están disponibles en la forma química apropiada. Así, cuando están presentes, las plantas son capaces de absorber elementos minoritarios sin función metabólica alguna que no son frecuentes en los suelos (Shaw y Bell, 1994). Se consideran ET esenciales para las plantas a aquellos que no pueden ser sustituidos por otros en sus funciones bioquímicas específicas y que tienen una influencia directa en el organismo, de manera que éste ni puede crecer ni completar algunos ciclos metabólicos sin dichos elementos (Kabata-Pendias, 2001). Una excesiva concentración de ET (tanto esenciales como no esenciales) tiene un impacto negativo sobre los procesos metabólicos de los organismos. En general, las plantas son más tolerantes a un incremento en la concentración de un elemento que a concentraciones por debajo de las requeridas nutricionalmente. El cobre, el níquel, el plomo, el mercurio y el cadmio son considerados los ET más tóxicos para las plantas vasculares y los microorganismos (Kabata-Pendias, 2001). En la Tabla I.2 se encuentran recogidos los valores de concentraciones considerados deficientes, normales, tóxicos y tolerables de algunos ET en plantas. Entre los efectos derivados de la exposición a niveles tóxicos de un elemento se encuentran los cambios en la permeabilidad de la membrana celular y daños en el aparato fotosintético (Kabata-Pendias, 2001). A nivel de planta completa, los síntomas más visibles de fitotoxicidad incluyen una reducción del crecimiento, sobre todo radical (con frecuencia es uno de los primeros síntomas), clorosis y necrosis en hojas y, posteriormente, síntomas típicos de senescencia y abscisión. Los cambios estructurales y ultraestructurales ocasionados por la exposición a ET han sido ampliamente documentados por Barceló y Poschenrieder (1999).

Tabla I.2. Concentraciones ( $\text{mg kg}^{-1}$ ) aproximadas de elementos traza en hojas maduras consideradas deficientes, normales o tóxicas para las plantas (valores generalizados para varias especies sin incluir plantas muy sensibles o altamente tolerantes a elementos traza; adaptado de Kabata-Pendias, 2001).

| Elemento | Deficiente | Suficiente o Normal | Excesivo o tóxico | Tolerable para cultivos |
|----------|------------|---------------------|-------------------|-------------------------|
| As       | -          | 1-1,7               | 5-20              | 0,2                     |
| Cd       | -          | 0,05-0,2            | 5-30              | 0,05-0,5                |
| Cu       | 2-5        | 5-30                | 20-100            | 5-20                    |
| Mn       | 10-30      | 30-300              | 400-1000          | 300                     |
| Ni       | -          | 0,1-5               | 10-100            | 1-10                    |
| Pb       | -          | 5-10                | 30-300            | 0,5-10                  |
| Zn       | 10-20      | 27-150              | 100-400           | 50-100                  |

### ***1.2.1. MOVILIDAD Y BIODISPONIBILIDAD DE LOS ELEMENTOS TRAZA EN EL SUELO***

La solución del suelo (fase líquida) es la que está más relacionada con la biodisponibilidad y la movilidad de los ET. Por tanto, todos aquellos procesos físico-químicos que afectan a esta fase influirán en el riesgo que estos elementos suponen para otros compartimentos como las aguas, la atmósfera y los organismos. Hay diversos factores que tienen una gran influencia sobre estos procesos físico-químicos en el suelo: pH, la presencia y concentración de ligandos orgánicos e inorgánicos, los exudados radiculares y los nutrientes (Violante et al., 2010). Las interacciones químicas y biológicas que controlan la movilidad y biodisponibilidad de los ET incluyen (Figura I.2):

**Adsorción-desorción.** La retención de ET en las superficies cargadas de los componentes del suelo puede producirse de dos maneras: mediante adsorción específica (que implica la formación de un enlace químico entre los iones en solución y los de la superficie del suelo) o no específica (unión mediante atracción electrostática).

El equilibrio entre el ET en solución y la fase sólida del suelo viene determinado por la composición de la solución del suelo y las propiedades del mismo (Bolan et al., 2014). Entre estas últimas, el pH es uno de los factores más determinantes en los procesos de “sorción” afectando consecuentemente a la disponibilidad de ET. La disminución del

pH en el suelo favorece, en general, la desorción de elementos catiónicos promoviendo el aumento de su movilidad y biodisponibilidad e incrementando la toxicidad en el medio. Además, la capacidad de sorción varía con la profundidad siendo mayor en las capas superiores del suelo debido a la mayor disponibilidad de sitios de adsorción en la superficie de coloides orgánicos (Mouta et al., 2008).

**Complejación (quelación).** La quelación es un proceso mediante el cual los ET forman complejos estables con ligandos orgánicos o inorgánicos aumentando o disminuyendo la solubilidad de estos elementos. Senesi (1992) considera tres tipos de moléculas orgánicas que pueden formar complejos con los ET: a) moléculas orgánicas de origen natural y de estructura y propiedades químicas conocidas: los ácidos alifáticos, los polisacáridos, los aminoácidos y los polifenoles; b) moléculas orgánicas de origen antropogénico derivadas de las actividades agrícolas, industriales y urbanas y c) ácidos húmicos y fúlvicos que se acumulan en el suelo.

Los grupos funcionales más importantes que actúan como ligandos son aquellos que contienen oxígeno, es decir, los grupos carboxilo, fenol, alcohol y carbonilo. A su vez, la configuración espacial de estos grupos también es importante, p.ej., dos grupos carboxilos adyacentes en una cadena alifática, o configuraciones de tipo ftalato o salicilato en anillos aromáticos, pueden aumentar la capacidad de complejación.

La facilidad para formar complejos es mayor a pH neutro o alcalino ya que se produce la disociación de los grupos funcionales carboxílico, fenólico, alcohólico y carbonilo en la materia orgánica del suelo aumentando la afinidad de estos ligandos por los cationes metálicos (Bolan et al., 2014). Según Adriano (2001), el orden de afinidad de los ligandos por los metales es:  $\text{Cu}^{2+} > \text{Cd}^{2+} > \text{Fe}^{2+} > \text{Pb}^{2+} > \text{Ni}^{2+} > \text{Co}^{2+} > \text{Mn}^{2+} > \text{Zn}^{2+}$ .

El grado de solubilidad de los complejos órgano-metálicos depende de dos factores: la fuerza del enlace y la movilidad de los complejos (determinada por el tamaño del grupo orgánico) (Kabata-Pendias, 2001). A pesar de aumentar la movilidad del elemento en el suelo, la formación de estos complejos organometálicos puede disminuir la disponibilidad de estos elementos para la planta, ya que éstos son asimilados por la misma en forma de iones libres. En el caso de los complejos donde el ligando es un ácido fúlvico o húmico la disponibilidad de los ET puede disminuir. Estos compuestos

presentan altos tiempos de permanencia en el suelo debido a una mayor resistencia a la degradación microbológica (Piccolo, 1989).

**Precipitación-disolución.** Los mecanismos de precipitación-disolución tienen lugar cuando se alcanza el producto de solubilidad de un determinado compuesto y están principalmente influenciados por el pH y el potencial redox del suelo (Ross, 1994a). Estos procesos controlan solubilidad de los ET en suelos calcáreos y con  $\text{pH} > 7$  (He et al., 2005). Cuando el pH y la concentración de ET en el suelo son altos, la precipitación se considera un mecanismo de inmovilización de ET catiónicos en el suelo en presencia de aniones (sulfatos, carbonatos, hidróxidos y fosfatos) (Adriano, 2001). Por el contrario, otros elementos como el As, Mo, Se, V y Cr que se encuentran mayoritariamente en forma de aniones, aumentan su solubilidad al incrementar el pH (Adriano, 2001).

Los mecanismos de precipitación-disolución pueden verse también muy afectados por el potencial redox debido a los diferentes estados de oxidación que presentan elementos como Fe, Mn, Cr, Cu, As, Ag, Hg y Pb. Cuando las condiciones redox del suelo cambian, la relación especies oxidadas/especies reducidas puede variar así como la movilidad y nivel de toxicidad de dichas especies. Por ejemplo el Cr (III) es menos móvil que el Cr (VI), mientras que el As (III) es más móvil que el As (V).

Bajo condiciones reductoras se favorece la precipitación de determinados elementos, como el Cd, en forma de sulfuros insolubles, en cambio, en condiciones oxidantes ocurre el proceso inverso y tiene lugar la disolución de estos minerales y la consiguiente liberación de los ET (Ross, 1994b).

Igualmente, la co-precipitación es considerada un mecanismo de retención de ET en el suelo, limitando su movilidad y biodisponibilidad para los organismos (Carrillo-González et al., 2006) produciéndose principalmente en presencia de oxihidróxidos férricos y resultando en cambios significativos en las propiedades químicas de la superficie del sustrato (Bolan et al., 2014).

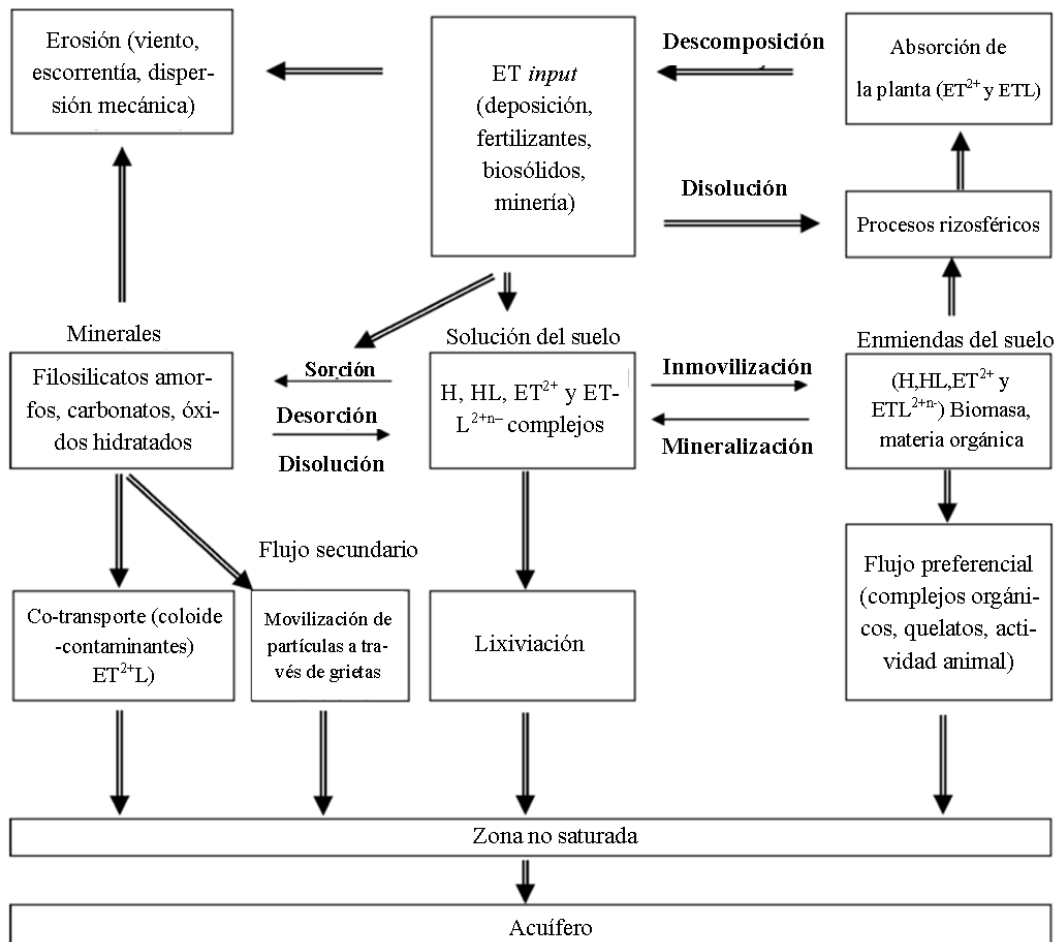


Fig. I.2. Mecanismos y vías de movimiento de los elementos traza en el suelo (adaptado de Carrillo-González et al., 2006). ET, elemento traza; H, hidrógeno, L, ligando.

**Modificación biológica.** Hay que considerar que tanto las plantas (en concreto su sistema radicular) como las comunidades microbianas juegan un papel importante en la disponibilidad de ET. La modificación del ambiente rizosférico, la transformación de los ET y la biosorción son procesos derivados de la presencia y desarrollo de las raíces en el suelo.

Las plantas poseen diversos mecanismos celulares involucrados en la detoxificación de metales pesados. Entre ellos se encuentra la inmovilización de ET mediante la ligación de metales a proteínas termoestables (fitoquelatinas y metalotioneinas) o la acumulación en vacuolas (Hall, 2002). Además los exudados radiculares (concretamente los ácidos orgánicos) juegan un papel importante ya que, además de servir como fuente de C para los microorganismos, se comportan como agentes quelantes que potencialmente incrementan la biodisponibilidad de los metales (Kim et



al., 2010). En el apartado I.4.2. se explica en mayor profundidad el papel de estas moléculas en la rizosfera.

Los microorganismos pueden secretar diversas moléculas que influyen en la movilidad y toxicidad de los ET en la rizosfera. Por ejemplo, las metalotioneinas, las fitoquelatinas y los exopolímeros compuestos de polisacáridos son moléculas que intervienen en la quelación y detoxificación de metales (Park et al., 2011). Otro compuesto que tiene bastante interés en ambientes contaminados es la glomalina, que es una glicoproteína producida por micorrizas arbusculares con un gran potencial para la inmovilización de metales y que se encuentra mayoritariamente en la pared de las esporas y las hifas (Lenoir et al., 2016). Por otra parte, otras moléculas de bajo peso molecular excretadas por hongos y bacterias denominadas sideróforos juegan un papel fundamental en la complejación de Fe. Estas moléculas compiten por Fe (III) presente en minerales u otras fuentes de nutrientes bajo condiciones limitantes de Fe (Sposito, 2008). Además, complejan tanto cationes metálicos bivalentes como trivalentes además de Fe<sup>3+</sup> (p.ej. Al<sup>3+</sup>, Co<sup>3+</sup>, Mn<sup>3+</sup>), lo cual reduce su toxicidad para los microorganismos a la vez que facilita su incorporación (Sposito, 2008).

Los microorganismos también presentan mecanismos de detoxificación basados en la transformación redox de los elementos. Los ET pueden ser usados por los microorganismos como donadores o aceptores finales de sus cadenas de transporte de electrones para la obtención de energía. La reducción de Cr (VI) (tóxico para los organismos) a Cr (III) (no tóxico para las plantas y necesario en la nutrición animal) es un proceso extendido en las comunidades del suelo (Gadd, 2008). Asimismo, el Cr (III) se retiene más fuertemente en las partículas del suelo (y por tanto es menos biodisponible) que el Cr (VI). De igual manera, la oxidación microbiana de As (III) a As (V) conlleva una disminución de la biodisponibilidad y de toxicidad del As (Park et al., 2011). Pero estas transformaciones redox llevadas a cabo por los microorganismos también pueden aumentar la disponibilidad de otros elementos como el Fe (Fe (III) → Fe (II)) y el Mn (Mn (IV) → Mn (II)).

Los microorganismos también están involucrados en la metilación de metales en el suelo como As, Hg y Se que puede resultar en la volatilización de dichos elementos (Park et al., 2011). A pesar de que puede producirse a partir de procesos químicos y biológicos, la metilación biológica es el proceso predominante.

### **I.3. RECUPERACIÓN DE SUELOS CONTAMINADOS POR ELEMENTOS TRAZA: FITORECUPERACIÓN Y ENMIENDAS ORGÁNICAS**

En los procesos de restauración de suelos pueden aplicarse diferentes técnicas que se elegirán en función del tipo de contaminación, del tamaño del área afectada y de los recursos económicos. Una alternativa económicamente viable y respetuosa con el medio ambiente es la biorecuperación, que consiste en la eliminación, atenuación o transformación de sustancias contaminantes mediante procesos biológicos resultado de la actividad natural de bacterias, hongos o plantas superiores (Wenzel, 2009). Estos procesos pueden favorecerse e incrementarse mediante la aplicación de enmiendas orgánicas, que conllevan una mejora de las condiciones biológicas y físico-químicas del suelo, que a su vez afecta a la transformación, movilidad y biodisponibilidad de los ET (Madejón et al., 2006; Bernal et al., 2007; Pérez de Mora et al., 2011). De este modo, las condiciones de desarrollo y crecimiento para las comunidades de microorganismos y las plantas mejoran, por lo que el proceso de biorecuperación es más eficiente. En general las técnicas de biorecuperación son una alternativa menos costosa y destructiva que las técnicas convencionales como la vitrificación, la desorción térmica o la encapsulación entre otras (Marques et al., 2009).

#### ***I.3.1. FITORECUPERACIÓN***

El conjunto de tecnologías que usan las plantas (y sus microorganismos asociados) para eliminar, estabilizar, disminuir y descomponer contaminantes en un determinado medio se incluyen dentro del término *fitorecuperación* (también llamado *plant-assisted bioremediation*) (Lasat, 2001). Su efectividad y eficiencia dependerá fundamentalmente de la biodisponibilidad de los ET (relacionada directamente con la química del suelo y las modificaciones de solubilidad y especiación química derivadas de las reacciones a nivel raíz-microorganismos) y de las características de la planta (que varían en función del objetivo de cada técnica de fitorecuperación). Las plantas utilizadas deben ser metalófitas, es decir, tolerantes a la presencia de metales en el medio. Seis grandes familias de plantas vasculares incluyen a las especies vegetales más tolerantes: Caryophyllaceae, Cruciferae, Cyperaceae, Gramineae, Leguminosae y Chenopodiaceae. Sin embargo, las plantas tolerantes pueden suponer un gran riesgo para la salud ya que pueden crecer en sustratos contaminados y, en algunos casos, acumular cantidades

extremadamente altas de ET en sus tejidos, generando una entrada de contaminantes al resto de la cadena trófica (Kabata-Pendias, 2001).

El término fitorecuperación engloba varias técnicas que se basan en el aprovechamiento de diferentes mecanismos de las plantas para la eliminación, degradación o estabilización de los contaminantes (Tabla I.3).

Tabla I.3. Diferentes tecnologías de fitorecuperación (adaptada de Meier et al., 2012a).

| TÉCNICA                   | MECANISMO                                | CONTAMINANTE          | APLICACIÓN EN SUELOS CONTAMINADOS CON METALES |
|---------------------------|--|-----------------------|---|
| <b>Fitoextracción</b>     | Hiperacumulación                         | Inorgánico y orgánico | Sí  |
| <b>Fitoestabilización</b> | Quelación                                | Inorgánico y orgánico | Sí  |
| <b>Fitofiltración</b>     | Acumulación en la rizosfera              | Orgánico e inorgánico | No  |
| <b>Fitovolatilización</b> | Volatilización a través de las hojas     | Orgánico e inorgánico | Sí  |
| <b>Fitodegradación</b>    | Degradación por raíces y microorganismos | Orgánico              | No  |

A continuación, se describen las diferentes técnicas que pueden ser aplicables en suelos contaminados con ET:

- La **fitoestabilización** emplea plantas y sus microorganismos asociados para inmovilizar contaminantes en el suelo a través de la absorción y acumulación en las raíces, la adsorción sobre las raíces o la precipitación en la rizosfera (Bai et al., 2015) (Figura I.3). Las plantas usadas deben presentar un comportamiento “excluser”, es decir, mantener una baja concentración de metales en su parte aérea. Este tipo de plantas han desarrollado mecanismos fisiológicos especiales, entre ellos la capacidad de impedir la entrada de metales en la raíz y/o su transporte a la parte aérea de la planta lo que les permite presentar coeficientes de translocación raíz-parte aérea muy bajos (relación metal en parte aérea: metal en la raíz <1). Además de ello, deben utilizarse plantas nativas adaptadas a las condiciones de sequía, salinidad y temperatura del área y que tengan una vida relativamente larga o capacidad para autopropagarse (Berti y Cunningham, 2000). De esta manera, se facilita la implantación de la cobertura vegetal de manera natural y se evita la entrada de plantas potencialmente invasivas que

generarían una disminución de la diversidad vegetal de la zona. El establecimiento de una cobertura vegetal desarrollada es un factor muy importante a tener en cuenta en esta técnica de remediación, ya que reduce en gran medida la difusión (vertical y horizontal) de contaminantes (p.ej. por lixiviación a acuíferos o mediante la acción del viento) (Vangronsveld et al., 2009) previniendo la entrada de los contaminantes en la cadena alimentaria.

La elección del tipo de planta también afectará al mayor o menor éxito de la estrategia de recuperación del suelo. Por un lado, es importante el uso de gramíneas que permiten un establecimiento rápido de la cobertura vegetal evitando la difusión de contaminantes por la acción del viento. Por otro lado, el uso de arbustos y árboles establece una red radicular más profunda que minimiza la erosión. La inclusión de diferentes tipos de plantas incrementa la diversidad funcional del ecosistema. Por ejemplo, en ambientes semiáridos los arbustos y árboles proveen de una mayor cantidad de nutrientes disponibles a las gramíneas a la vez que reducen el estrés hídrico y mejoran las propiedades físicas del suelo (Mendez y Maier, 2008).

Al utilizar la fitoestabilización como método de recuperación de suelos, es indispensable el seguimiento a largo plazo de los contaminantes ya que estos no se eliminan, sino que se encuentran estabilizados en el suelo (Figura I.3). El suelo actúa como un compartimento de almacenaje de los ET evitando su entrada en la cadena trófica y minimizando la lixiviación y contaminación de ambientes acuáticos. La biodisponibilidad de los ET (y por tanto su toxicidad para los organismos) disminuye debido a que las plantas favorecen ciertos procesos como la precipitación de los ET a formas menos solubles (sulfuros y carbonatos metálicos), la quelación con compuestos orgánicos, la adsorción de los ET sobre la superficie radicular y la acumulación en las raíces. Para incrementar estos procesos en el suelo es normal combinar esta técnica con el uso de enmiendas orgánicas o inorgánicas.

El objetivo final de la fitoestabilización es la sucesión a largo plazo de la comunidad vegetal y que ésta a su vez promueva el desarrollo de las comunidades microbiológicas y la recuperación de las funciones del ecosistema para alcanzar la autosostenibilidad (Mendez y Maier, 2008).

- La **fitoextracción** consiste en la eliminación de contaminantes del suelo mediante la acumulación en las partes aéreas de las plantas y posterior recogida de la biomasa vegetal (Figura I.3). La biomasa obtenida es tratada (mediante compostaje, tratamientos térmicos,...) para reducir el volumen y posteriormente es eliminada o reciclada para recuperar los ET que pueden tener un valor económico (Vangronsveld et al., 2009). Las plantas acumuladoras son las adecuadas para usar en esta técnica, ya que acumulan ET en su parte aérea aun cuando éstos se encuentren a bajas concentraciones (relación metal en la parte aérea: metal en la raíz >1). Además, deben presentar un rápido crecimiento, altos valores de biomasa y ser fáciles de recolectar. La eficiencia de esta técnica puede incrementarse mediante el uso de enmiendas que acidifiquen el medio, incrementando la movilidad y disponibilidad de los ET en el suelo y con la inoculación de bacterias promotoras del crecimiento de plantas (*plant growth-promoting bacteria*), que incrementan la incorporación de metales por la planta (Seshadri et al., 2015). La fitoextracción presenta varios inconvenientes para constituir una verdadera alternativa de recuperación de suelo ya que, generalmente, las plantas hiperacumuladoras desarrollan poca biomasa, sólo son capaces de acumular uno o dos elementos (por lo que no son eficaces en suelos multi-contaminados) y la eficacia de la extracción disminuye tras cada cosecha. Además, las altas concentraciones de ET que pueden alcanzarse en la parte aérea de las plantas suponen un riesgo ya que aumentan las posibilidades de que los contaminantes pasen al resto de la red trófica. Estas razones, junto al alto coste necesario para la recuperación de los metales a partir de los tejidos de la planta, han desaconsejado muchas veces esta técnica en favor de la fitoestabilización (Figura I.3).

- La **fitovolatilización** consiste en la incorporación de contaminantes del suelo por las plantas, su transformación en compuestos volátiles y posterior liberación a la atmósfera (Ali et al., 2013). Esta técnica se usa principalmente en suelos contaminados con contaminantes orgánicos aunque en suelos contaminados con elementos como el Hg y Se también es aplicable (Adriano et al., 2004). Sin embargo, es una técnica cuestionada ya que no elimina los contaminantes sino que estos se transfieren desde un compartimento (suelo) a otro (atmósfera) pudiendo generar un riesgo para los organismos.

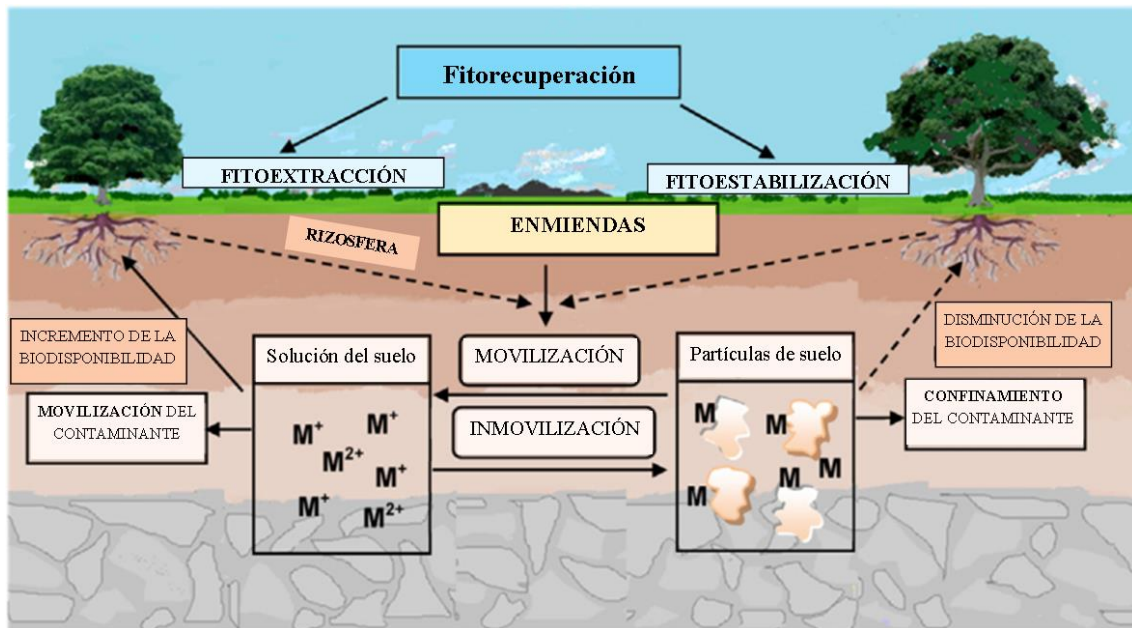


Fig. 1.3. Fitoestabilización vs Fitoextracción: relación entre la (in)movilización y la disponibilidad de los elementos traza en cada técnica (adaptado de Bolan et al., 2014).

### 1.3.2. ENMIENDAS ORGÁNICAS. TIPOS Y EFECTOS SOBRE LAS CONDICIONES FÍSICO-QUÍMICAS DEL SUELO

El término “recuperación natural asistida” hace referencia a los procesos biogeoquímicos naturales que regulan la movilidad de los ET en suelos con un alto nivel de contaminación y que son facilitados por las enmiendas (Adriano et al., 2004). El uso de enmiendas en combinación con técnicas de fitorecuperación en suelos contaminados por ET es algo generalizado (Kayser et al., 2000; Pérez de Mora et al., 2011; Kohler et al., 2014; Pérez-Esteban et al., 2014). Estos suelos degradados suelen presentar un pH ácido, altas concentraciones de ET, bajas concentraciones de nutrientes, un bajo contenido de materia orgánica y baja capacidad de retención de agua. El uso de un tipo u otro de enmienda dependerá de si el objetivo es la movilización o inmovilización de los ET en el suelo; esto es, si los ET deben ser liberados en la solución del suelo aumentando su biodisponibilidad (p.ej. en fitoextracción) o eliminados de la solución del suelo mediante procesos de adsorción, complejación y precipitación (p.ej. en fitoestabilización).

La **movilización** de los elementos contaminantes en el suelo se puede conseguir mediante la aplicación de diferentes enmiendas. Por ejemplo, los **fertilizantes fosfatados** favorecen los procesos de desorción de As. El uso de fosfato está

relacionado con el incremento de la disponibilidad de As en el suelo ya que ambos compiten por los sitios de sorción en las partículas del suelo. Además, una alta concentración de P en el suelo puede inhibir/disminuir la absorción de As por las plantas, ya que son incorporados por el mismo sistema de transporte (Bolan et al., 2014). También pueden aplicarse al suelo compuestos que actúan como **agentes quelantes** tales como el ácido etilendiaminotetraacético (EDTA), el ácido dietilentriamino pentaacético (DTPA), el ácido nitrilotriacético (NTA) o el ácido cítrico, los cuales mejoran la solubilidad de los ET mediante la formación de complejos metálicos (Walker et al., 2003; Meers et al., 2004; Evangelou et al., 2006; Quartacci et al., 2007). No obstante, esta “fitoextracción asistida” parece poco viable, ya que los agentes quelantes son productos caros y, además, al aumentar la movilidad de los ET para facilitar la absorción por la planta, pueden incrementar la infiltración de éstos hacia horizontes del suelo más profundos y, en consecuencia, provocar la contaminación de las aguas subterráneas (Kahn et al., 2000). Los ácidos orgánicos de bajo peso molecular (ej. ácido oxálico, cítrico,...) han mostrado ser mejor opción que los quelantes sintéticos, ya que son más fácilmente degradables y favorecen la movilización de ET en el suelo sin incrementar el riesgo de lixiviación de estos elementos (Nascimento et al., 2006). Por otro lado, algunos estudios han puesto de manifiesto la eficacia de algunos **residuos orgánicos** en la movilización de ET, que dependerá del elemento, del tipo de suelo y de las características de la enmienda (ej. conductividad eléctrica, capacidad de intercambio catiónico, pH) (Bolan et al., 2014). En el caso del As, varias enmiendas orgánicas han demostrado ser efectivas en su movilización, como por ejemplo el compost procedente de residuos de jardinería (Hartley et al., 2010), aunque otras disminuyeron la cantidad de As incorporada por la planta (Cao y Ma, 2004).

La **estabilización** de los ET se logra mediante la adición de agentes inmovilizantes. Para elegir la enmienda apropiada para cada contaminante es necesario conocer la afinidad del ET por los óxidos, fosfatos y sulfuros presentes en el suelo (Kumpiene et al., 2008). Los **compuestos de fósforo** mejoran la inmovilización de los ET mediante a) adsorción directa del ET sobre los compuestos fosfatados; b) adsorción del ET inducida por los aniones de fósforo; c) o precipitación del ET con fosfatos que se encuentran en la solución del suelo, siendo éste uno de los principales mecanismos de inmovilización debido a la baja solubilidad de estos compuestos P-ET en un amplio rango de pH (Bolan et al., 2014). Apatita, zeolita y  $\text{KH}_2\text{PO}_4$  son algunos de los compuestos utilizados como

enmiendas en procesos de fitoestabilización (Castaldi et al., 2005; Raicevic et al., 2005; Katoh et al., 2015). Por otro lado, el uso de **compuestos alcalinos** como hidróxido de calcio ( $\text{Ca}(\text{OH})_2$ ), cal ( $\text{CaO}$ ), piedra caliza ( $\text{CaCO}_3$ ) o espuma azucarera tiene como principal objetivo neutralizar la acidez del suelo. Estos compuestos mejoran la sorción de los ET mediante la disminución de la concentración de  $\text{H}^+$  y el incremento de los sitios cargados negativamente (Bolan et al., 2014). La efectividad de los mismos en la estabilización de ET ha sido ampliamente demostrada (Chen y Wong, 2006; Conesa et al., 2007; Hattab et al., 2014; Madejón et al., 2010) pudiendo ser utilizados también como suplementos para neutralizar la acidez provocada por otras enmiendas (Kumpiene et al., 2008; Madejón et al., 2010). Los **óxidos metálicos** (Fe, Al y Mn) también son una alternativa adecuada, ya que su gran área de superficie activa y su naturaleza anfótera les permiten inmovilizar un amplio rango de contaminantes en el suelo (Bolan et al., 2014). La inmovilización de los ET se puede producir mediante sorción sobre la superficie de los óxidos o por coprecipitación con óxidos recién formados (Kumpiene et al., 2008). La especiación influye en gran medida en el proceso de sorción de los ET sobre los óxidos. La presencia y complejación de ligandos orgánicos e inorgánicos (ácidos orgánicos de bajo peso molecular, fosfatos, ácidos húmicos,...) con metales influye sobre la adsorción de éstos sobre óxidos y por lo tanto afecta a la eficiencia de la inmovilización. Los óxidos de hierro (goethita, ferrihidrita) presentan una alta afinidad por el As, por lo que han sido muy utilizados para la recuperación de suelos contaminados con este elemento (Komárek et al., 2013). Sin embargo, los óxidos de Mn son más eficientes que los óxidos de Fe adsorbiendo metales como Cd, Cu y Pb (Michálková et al., 2014). El uso de lodo rojo (*red mud*; residuo procedente de la extracción de Al a partir de bauxita) ha sido aplicado en suelos para la inmovilización de ET debido a su alta composición de óxidos de Fe (25-40%) y óxidos de Al (15-20%) (Komárek et al., 2013).

Frente a los compuestos anteriormente mencionados, las **enmiendas orgánicas**, además de modificar el pH y las condiciones redox disminuyendo la disponibilidad de los ET, suponen un *input* de nutrientes y materia orgánica que mejoran la estructura del suelo e incrementan su fertilidad (Bernal et al., 2007). La capacidad de retención de agua y la porosidad del suelo aumentan mientras que se produce una disminución de la densidad aparente (Jones et al., 2010). El aporte de carbono también produce un incremento de la actividad microbiana del suelo (Pérez de Mora et al., 2005; Baker et



al., 2011). Además, el aporte de materia orgánica también favorece la inmovilización de metales ya que, a excepción de algunos minerales no cristalinos que presentan alta densidad de carga, muestra la mayor capacidad de sorción de ET en forma catiónica (Violante et al., 2010). Al aplicar compost orgánicos, un aspecto a tener en cuenta es la concentración de ET que presentan en su composición, ya que en algunos casos puede ser elevada y suponer un incremento en la toxicidad del suelo. Además, al hacer aplicaciones en campo debe calcularse la cantidad adecuada a aplicar de forma que reduzca la disponibilidad de ET y proporcione el adecuado nivel de nutrientes a las plantas a la vez que se evite/ minimice la pérdida de nutrientes por lixiviación.

### ***1.3.3 SECUESTRO DE CARBONO: SERVICIO ECOSISTÉMICO DERIVADO DE LA APLICACIÓN DE ENMIENDAS ORGÁNICAS***

En la última década, el desequilibrio en el ciclo del carbono provocado por actividades antropogénicas ha cobrado mayor importancia. El incremento de CO<sub>2</sub> en la atmósfera conlleva cambios climáticos que tienen repercusiones económicas (ej. agricultura), ecológicas (desaparición de especies) y sociales (desastres naturales). Por ello, actualmente ha cobrado relevancia el desarrollo de estrategias dirigidas a aumentar el *stock* de carbono orgánico inmovilizado en el suelo.

El secuestro de C implica la transferencia de CO<sub>2</sub> atmosférico a otros compartimentos (océano, pedosfera, biosfera y/o estratos geológicos) para reducir la tasa neta de aumento del CO<sub>2</sub> atmosférico (Lal, 2008). Tras los océanos, el suelo actúa como el mayor sumidero de carbono. Para evaluar la eficiencia de las estrategias destinadas a secuestrar C en el suelo, debe calcularse la diferencia entre las “entradas” (hojarasca, enmiendas orgánicas,...) y las “salidas” de C (respiración, lixiviación de C orgánico disuelto,..) (Izaurre et al., 2007).

En el contexto actual de cambio global, la restitución de la capacidad de secuestro de carbono de un suelo degradado es un aspecto de especial importancia. En los suelos degradados se produce una disminución de la productividad y de la cantidad y calidad de la biomasa que retorna al suelo, lo cual va asociado a una reducción del contenido de carbono orgánico en el suelo (Lal, 2004). Por ello, el uso combinado de plantas y enmiendas puede contribuir positivamente a la provisión de este servicio ecosistémico en los suelos degradados. Los aportes exógenos de materia orgánica en forma de

enmienda, así como los propios aportes orgánicos vegetales a través de exudados radicales y hojarasca, aumentan directamente los *stocks* de carbono del suelo degradado. La viabilidad de esta estrategia para favorecer el incremento de carbono orgánico inmovilizado en el suelo, y por consiguiente la calidad del suelo, ya ha sido mostrada previamente (Lal, 2008; Powlson et al., 2011).

Para conseguir secuestrar C en el suelo, la reducción del “*turnover*” de carbón y el incremento de su tiempo de residencia en el suelo son dos factores necesarios (Jastrow et al., 2006). Este tiempo de residencia depende de la composición molecular de la enmienda aplicada, ya que cuanto mayor sea el contenido en aromáticos y compuestos derivados de la lignina más se favorece el secuestro de C (Marschner et al., 2008). Para conocer la relación entre la composición molecular de la enmienda y el almacenamiento de C en la matriz del suelo existen técnicas de alta resolución como la espectrometría de resonancia magnética nuclear (RMN) (Simpson et al., 2011). Además de la composición molecular, la cantidad de enmienda añadida también influye en la cantidad de C secuestrado, siendo mayor conforme se incrementa la dosis de enmienda (Fabrizio et al., 2009; Ryals y Silver, 2013).

#### **I.4. RIZOSFERA**

La rizosfera es la zona comprendida entre las raíces y el suelo donde se producen un gran número de interacciones entre microorganismos e invertebrados que afectan a los ciclos biogeoquímicos, al crecimiento y a la tolerancia de las plantas frente al estrés (biótico y abiótico) (Philippot et al., 2013). La combinación de varios factores tales como la arquitectura física de la matriz del suelo, la distribución espacial y temporal de los rizodepósitos y el rol de las raíces como sumideros de agua y nutrientes determinan la ecología de este área (Hinsinger et al., 2009).

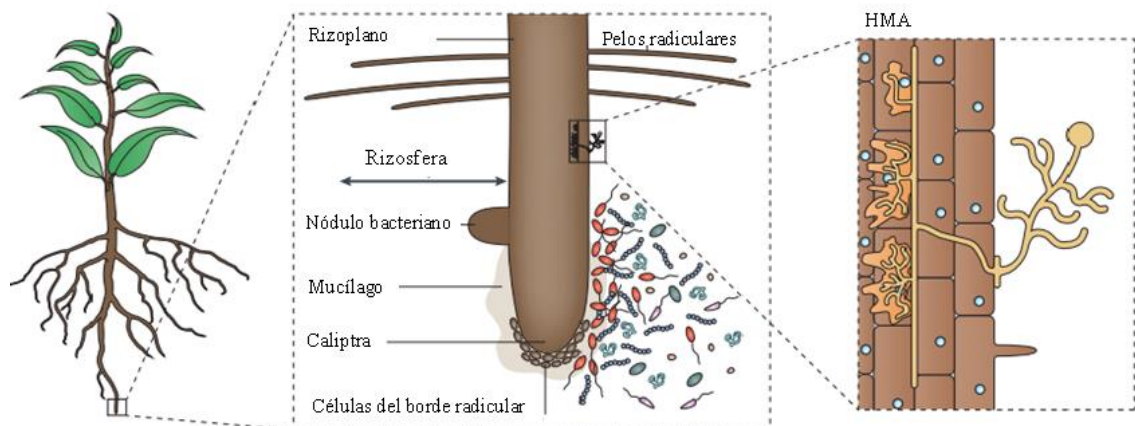
La microbiota presente en la rizosfera está compuesta por bacterias, hongos, oomicetos, virus y arqueas. Estos microorganismos pueden ser atraídos (o no) por los rizodepósitos (nutrientes, exudados, células y mucílago liberado por las raíces) (Philippot et al., 2013). La liberación de estos compuestos orgánicos por las raíces, además de suponer una fuente de energía necesaria para el desarrollo de comunidades activas de microorganismos, actúan como señales químicas (a nivel raíz-raíz o raíz-microorganismos) con diferentes respuestas para la misma señal (p.ej. pueden alejar a

un organismo al mismo tiempo que atraen a otro o atraer a organismos muy diferentes con consecuencias distintas para la planta) (Bais et al., 2006).

Las interacciones entre la raíz y los microorganismos pueden ser negativas (ej. patogénesis por bacteria u hongos) o positivas (ej. relaciones simbióticas con micorrizas arbusculares, colonización de la raíz por *plant growth-promoting bacteria*,...) (Bais et al., 2006), las cuales juegan un papel fundamental en la salud de las plantas y la fertilidad del suelo.

#### ***1.4.1. SIMBIOSIS EN LA RIZOSFERA. PAPEL DE LOS HONGOS MICORRÍDICOS ARBUSCULARES EN LA TOLERANCIA DE LA PLANTA A ELEMENTOS TRAZA***

Los **hongos micorrícicos arbusculares (HMA)** son organismos muy abundantes en el suelo y pertenecen al filo Glomeromycota (Schüßler et al., 2001). Forman asociaciones simbióticas en casi todos los ecosistemas y con la mayoría de las plantas terrestres, de las cuales los HMA obtienen carbohidratos mientras que la planta adquiere nutrientes inorgánicos. El intercambio de compuestos se produce en unas estructuras formadas por estos hongos en el interior de las raíces denominadas arbusculos (Collins et al., 2010; Figura I.4).



*Fig. I.4. Esquema de la rizosfera y del desarrollo dentro de la raíz de las estructuras fúngicas (hifas y arbusculos) de los HMA (adaptado de Philippot et al., 2013).*

El efecto de los HMA sobre el crecimiento de las plantas es diferente según la especie, ya que dependerá de su capacidad de adquirir nutrientes, de actuar como barrera ante los patógenos y de mejorar la tolerancia de las plantas en condiciones de estrés (sequía, contaminación) (Rosendahl, 2008).

Los HMA juegan un papel importante en la nutrición de las plantas ya que facilitan la absorción de elementos que están presentes a baja concentración en el suelo. De hecho, tuvieron un papel crucial en el avance de las plantas desde el agua al suelo facilitando la absorción de agua y nutrientes (Schüßler et al., 2001). Las raíces micorrizadas presentan dos vías mediante las que incorporar nutrientes: directamente a través de la epidermis y los pelos radiculares o mediante el sistema de hifas de los hongos en las células corticales de la raíz (Smith y Smith, 2011). De entre todas las relaciones nutrientes-HMA, numerosos estudios se han centrado concretamente en su interacción con el fósforo. Las hifas actúan como pelos radiculares que incrementan el volumen de suelo con el que está en contacto la planta, lo cual explica que se produzca un incremento en la incorporación de P por la planta en suelos pobres para este elemento (Richardson et al., 2011). Normalmente, el nivel de micorrización de las raíces decrece conforme aumenta el P disponible en el suelo (Duong et al., 2012). Sin embargo, no es hasta alcanzar altas concentraciones de P en el suelo cuando la colonización claramente se ve reducida, por lo que la disminución a concentraciones intermedias de P puede deberse a un crecimiento de la raíz más rápido que la velocidad a la que es colonizada por HMA (Richardson et al., 2011). Además de tener un efecto en el estatus nutricional de la planta, los HMA desempeñan un papel importante en la modificación de la estructura del suelo. La red externa de hifas junto a la glomalina producida por estos hongos mejora la estructura del suelo ya que estabiliza las partículas del mismo en agregados mayores y más estables (Wilson et al., 2009). La glomalina se deposita en las paredes de las hifas extraradicales y en las partículas de suelo adyacentes. Su importancia como agente aglomerante se debe a la alta concentración a la que se encuentra en el suelo y a su naturaleza recalcitrante (Bronick y Lal, 2005).

Los HMA pueden jugar un papel fundamental en la recuperación de los suelos contaminados con ET ya que facilitan el establecimiento y soporte de una cubierta vegetal (Solís-Domínguez et al., 2011) y promocionan la acumulación de metabolitos secundarios como carotenoides y flavonoides que incrementan la capacidad antioxidante de la planta (Hristozkova et al., 2016). Además disminuyen la biodisponibilidad de ET segregando agentes quelantes extra e intra celulares (glomalina, metalotioneinas) que los inmovilizan o reteniéndolos en sus estructuras (membrana plasmática, vacuolas) (Meier et al., 2012a). La simbiosis de las plantas utilizadas en fitorecuperación con HMA conlleva una mayor inmovilización de los ET en las células

parenquimáticas internas de la raíz donde se encuentran las estructuras fúngicas (vesículas, arbusculos, hifas intraradicales; ver Foto I.1) (Hildebrandt et al., 2007) y una reducción de la translocación de ET al tallo (Christie et al., 2004; Amir et al., 2013; Shabani et al., 2016). Sin embargo, la extracción de ET por las plantas en simbiosis con HMA va a depender de la cepa de HMA, del tipo de planta y del elemento (Gamalero et al., 2009). La resistencia que proporcionan estos hongos a la planta en ambientes contaminados viene dada también por la regulación de la expresión de genes de la planta relacionados con la tolerancia a metales pesados (Cicatelli et al., 2010). Por ejemplo, la regulación positiva de la transcripción de genes que codifican metalotioneinas (Cicatelli et al., 2010) o los transportadores ABC (Shabani et al., 2016), los cuales están involucrados en procesos de transporte celular como la excreción de compuestos potencialmente tóxicos.

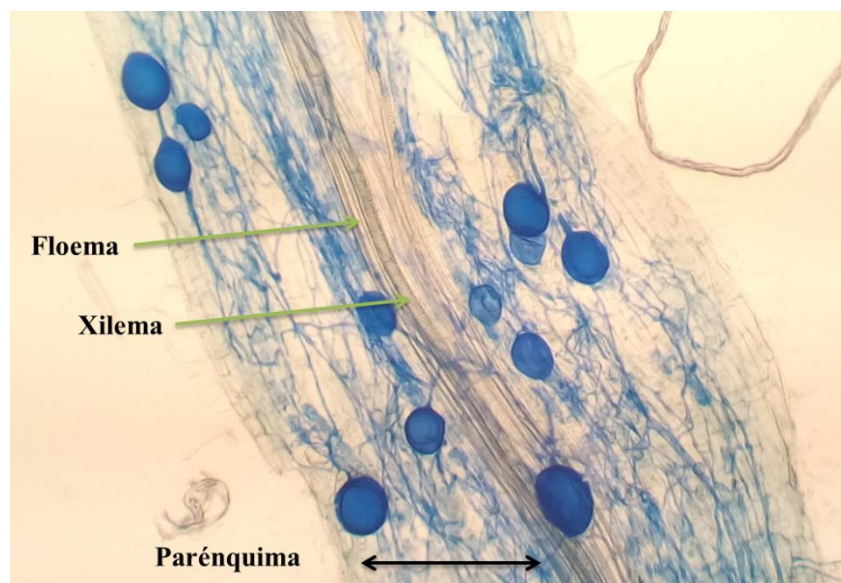


Foto I.1. Red de hifas y vesículas desarrolladas por HMA en las raíces de *Medicago polymorpha* (aumento 10X).

Existen filotipos de HMA adaptados a las condiciones de estrés derivadas de la presencia de ET en el suelo. El número varía de acuerdo al gradiente de contaminación, reduciéndose conforme se incrementan las concentraciones de metales (Zarei et al., 2008). En este tipo de suelos la mayoría de especies de HMA detectadas pertenecen al género *Glomus*, las cuales parecen ser las mejores adaptadas a ecosistemas alterados

(Vallino et al., 2006; Zarei et al., 2008; Lenoir et al., 2016). Conocer los filotipos de HMA que conforman las comunidades naturales en suelos contaminados permite la aplicación de los inóculos adecuados en cada caso en los tratamientos de recuperación de suelos degradados.

La utilización de inóculos de HMA junto con la aplicación de enmiendas ha mostrado tener un efecto sinérgico en la mejora de la calidad del suelo y el crecimiento de las plantas en suelos contaminados (Wang et al., 2012; Curaqueo et al., 2014; Kohler et al., 2015). Sin embargo, el efecto de las enmiendas orgánicas sobre la colonización de los HMA no está del todo claro. En la mayoría de los estudios, la aplicación de compost tiene un efecto positivo o neutro en el establecimiento de la simbiosis (Cavagnaro, 2015) aunque el efecto puede variar según el tipo de compost (Duong et al., 2012). Por otro lado, no todos los filotipos de HMA se ven afectados igualmente por la adición de enmiendas, las cuales modifican la composición de la comunidad fúngica pudiendo incrementarse o no la presencia de cada uno de los filotipos (Toljander, et al., 2008; Alguacil et al., 2011).

#### ***1.4.2. EXUDADOS RADICULARES EN LA RIZOSFERA. EFECTO DE LOS ÁCIDOS ORGÁNICOS EN LA (IN)MOVILIZACIÓN DE ELEMENTOS TRAZA***

Los exudados radiculares incluyen dos clases de compuestos: compuestos de bajo peso molecular (aminoácidos, ácidos orgánicos, azúcares, fenoles) y compuestos de alto peso molecular (mucílago y proteínas) (Bais et al., 2006). Los metabolitos excretados tienen un rol muy importante principalmente en el estatus nutricional y la defensa de la planta. Por ejemplo, en ambientes donde la disponibilidad de nutrientes es escasa ciertos compuestos exudados (flavonoides) actúan como señales para microorganismos envueltos en la obtención de nutrientes como los hongos micorrícicos arbusculares. Estas señales controlan el desarrollo de la simbiosis planta-HMA induciendo la germinación de esporas y el crecimiento de la red de hifas (Dakora y Phillips, 2002).

Como se ha indicado anteriormente, muchos ET (micronutrientes) son necesarios para un buen desarrollo de la planta aunque una vez superada cierta concentración tienen efectos tóxicos. Por ello, las plantas han desarrollado mecanismos homeostáticos que implican la coordinación de los transportadores de iones metálicos para la

absorción, la translocación y la compartimentación de estos elementos (Haydon y Cobbett, 2007).

Los **ácidos orgánicos (AOs)** se encuentran entre los compuestos que juegan un papel destacado en la detoxificación y tolerancia de metales pesados mediante la quelación de metales en el citosol (Hall, 2002). Además también actúan como fuente de nutrientes, agentes quelantes de minerales poco solubles, señales quimiotácticas para los microorganismos, inductores de genes *nod* y “detoxificadores” de Al (Dakora y Phillips, 2002).

Tanto la cantidad como las proporciones relativas de los AOs excretados por las raíces varían acorde a la especie vegetal, su estatus fisiológico y las características del medio en el que crece la planta (Agnello et al., 2014). La aireación, la actividad microbiana y la disponibilidad de nutrientes varía según el medio de crecimiento (hidropónico vs suelo) lo cual repercute en la morfología y fisiología de la raíz y consecuentemente en los exudados (Agnello et al., 2014). La influencia de los AOs sobre el pH, que es el factor principal que determina la disponibilidad de los ET (ver apartado I.2.1), aún no está totalmente clara. Algunos estudios han puesto de manifiesto que los exudados radiculares reducen el pH en el suelo rizosférico (Dakora y Phillips, 2002; Seshadri et al., 2015) aunque otros indican que el efecto es mínimo (Agnello et al., 2014) o incluso que se produce un incremento (Zeng et al., 2008). Debido a los valores de pKa de los AOs (véase Tabla 1 en Agnello et al., 2014) y al pH del citosol (pH~7), la mayor parte de los AOs están en su forma disociada y son liberados como aniones orgánicos en la rizosfera (Agnello et al., 2014). La gran diferencia de potencial eléctrico a través de la membrana plasmática de la mayoría de las células de la planta asegura que el gradiente electroquímico favorezca el movimiento pasivo de los aniones orgánicos fuera de la célula (Ryan et al., 2001). Además, la velocidad de difusión de los ácidos orgánicos (aniones) a través de la bicapa lipídica depende del gradiente electroquímico. La presencia de concentraciones elevadas de ET puede desencadenar un incremento en el flujo de salida debido a la activación de los canales de aniones incrustados en la membrana plasmática (Rengel, 2002).

Los AOs forman complejos con iones metálicos libres que se encuentran en la solución del suelo, disminuyendo la fitotoxicidad. Los iones metálicos libres son más tóxicos que cuando están complejados, debido a la generación de especies reactivas de

oxígeno o al desplazamiento de otros iones metálicos presentes dentro de las metaloproteínas haciéndolas no funcionales (Haydon y Cobbett, 2007). La formación de los complejos organometálicos AO-metal depende fundamentalmente de las concentraciones relativas de ambos, del pH y de la constante de estabilidad de cada complejo.

El patrón de exudados radicales de la planta, además de ser dependiente de la especie y el genotipo, depende del nivel de estrés derivado de la contaminación por metales al que se ve sometida la planta. La presencia de metales en el medio de crecimiento estimula la exudación de ácidos orgánicos quedando patente que es un mecanismo de respuesta de la planta para tolerar altas concentraciones de metales (Quartacci et al., 2009; Meier et al., 2012b). Los resultados mostrados por Quartacci et al. (2009) indican que en suelos contaminados por varios ET la cantidad exudada de ácidos orgánicos es superior a la de ácidos fenólicos y flavonoides. El incremento de la contaminación afecta a la composición y cantidades relativas de cada uno de los AOs en los exudados (Haoliang et al., 2007). En general, el ácido oxálico parece ser el principal ácido orgánico medido en los exudados radiculares de plantas que crecen en suelos contaminados por ET (Zeng et al., 2008; Quartacci et al. 2009; Javed et al., 2013), aunque otros estudios mostraron que los exudados estuvieron compuestos en su mayor parte por otros ácidos orgánicos, como el cítrico y málico (Haoliang et al., 2007; Meier et al., 2012b). Destacar que el ácido cítrico tiene una gran capacidad de extracción de metales del suelo mediante la formación de complejos, por encima del ácido málico (Qin et al., 2004) y del ácido oxálico (Ding et al., 2014). La mayor estabilidad de los complejos citrato-ET explica la mayor eficacia del ácido cítrico en la desorción de ET del suelo (Qin et al., 2004).

Los exudados que contienen ácidos orgánicos (en forma aniónica) pueden alterar las concentraciones de ET en la solución del suelo incrementándose su biodisponibilidad (Ryan et al., 2001). Existe una relación entre la concentración de ET en la parte aérea vegetal y la presencia de AOs exudados en la rizosfera. En general, la presencia de AOs estimula la incorporación de ET en los tejidos vegetales (Nigam et al., 2001; Han et al., 2006). A pesar de ello es necesario analizar la correlación entre cada ácido orgánico y elemento, ya que un mismo ácido orgánico puede estimular la absorción de un elemento pero no la de otro (Zhixin et al., 2013). Por ejemplo, los resultados mostrados por Zeng et al., (2008) ponen de manifiesto la existencia de una correlación positiva entre la



acumulación de Cr en la planta y la secreción de oxálico, málico y cítrico mientras que Meier et al. (2012b) mostraron que la concentración de Cu en la planta estaba correlacionada positivamente con la exudación de ácido succínico y negativamente con el ácido cítrico.

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## **CAPÍTULO II**

### **OBJETIVOS**

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## **Objetivos de la Tesis.**

El objetivo general de esta Tesis ha consistido en la evaluación del **efecto de enmiendas orgánicas y especies vegetales fitoestabilizadoras** sobre la dinámica de los elementos traza en la interfase suelo-planta y sobre los procesos que se producen a nivel de rizosfera. Al aplicar técnicas de fitoestabilización han de tenerse en cuenta tanto factores químicos como biológicos y las interrelaciones entre ellos. Con el objetivo de dilucidar las modificaciones rizosféricas, resultado de la aplicación de enmiendas al suelo, y la dependencia de la especie vegetal, se han llevado a cabo experimentos tanto a nivel de microcosmos como a nivel de campo. A continuación, se enumeran los objetivos específicos de esta Tesis:

**Objetivo 1. Selección de especies vegetales adecuadas para utilizar en técnicas de fitoestabilización. Análisis de la absorción de elementos traza en los tejidos vegetales y respuesta a los cambios físico-químicos derivados de la aplicación de enmiendas en un suelo con contaminación crónica.** La elección de la especie vegetal cobra gran importancia en la restauración de suelos mediante fitoestabilización. Para ello se propone analizar la respuesta de tres plantas ruderales y autóctonas de ambientes mediterráneos en suelos degradados por la contaminación a los que se añaden enmiendas orgánicas (**Capítulo V.1**).

**Objetivo 2. Estudio del efecto de enmiendas orgánicas y de diferentes niveles de elementos traza sobre los exudados radiculares y la comunidad de hongos micorrícicos asociada a las raíces.** Tanto los ácidos orgánicos de bajo peso molecular exudados como los HMA están relacionados con la respuesta y tolerancia de las plantas a condiciones de estrés. El estudio se realiza en suelos con contaminación crónica o debida a vertidos mineros, lo que permitirá conocer como varían ambos factores en función del estado de degradación del suelo y del origen de la contaminación. En el **Capítulo V.2** se analiza cómo afecta el tipo de sustrato, de enmienda y diferentes niveles de contaminación a la cantidad y composición de los exudados así como la relación entre los ácidos orgánicos y la incorporación de elementos traza en la planta. El análisis de la comunidad de HMA bajo diferentes niveles de contaminación y calidad del suelo se desarrolla en el **Capítulo V.3**. El objetivo es identificar qué filotipos de HMA están presentes y dominan las comunidades bajo determinados niveles de

contaminación del suelo para posteriormente poder conocer el nivel de recuperación de éste según la presencia o ausencia de determinados filotipos.

**Objetivo 3. Evaluación de la calidad de los suelos enmendados y no enmendados: establecimiento de indicadores biológicos para la valoración de la eficacia de las técnicas de fitoestabilización a largo plazo.** El uso de índices biológicos es una herramienta muy útil para determinar la calidad del suelo y por tanto la eficiencia del proceso de restauración. Para llevar a cabo este objetivo se analiza la eficacia del proceso de recuperación iniciado hace 16 años en una parcela afectada por el vertido minero de Aznalcóllar mediante el análisis de organismos indicadores como los hongos micorrícicos arbusculares en plantas creciendo en parcelas control y en parcelas tratadas con enmiendas orgánicas (**Capítulo V.4**).

**Objetivo 4. Evaluación de la capacidad de un suelo recuperado mediante la aplicación de enmiendas orgánicas de favorecer el secuestro de C. Comparación de enmiendas y dosis.** En un contexto de cambio global, el uso de suelos recuperados como sumideros de C es una cuestión de gran valor ambiental. En el **Capítulo V.5** se analizan cuáles son las características moleculares adecuadas que debe presentar una enmienda orgánica para, además de mejorar la calidad del suelo a corto plazo, favorecer la retención de C.







## **CAPÍTULO III**

### **ÁREA DE ESTUDIO**

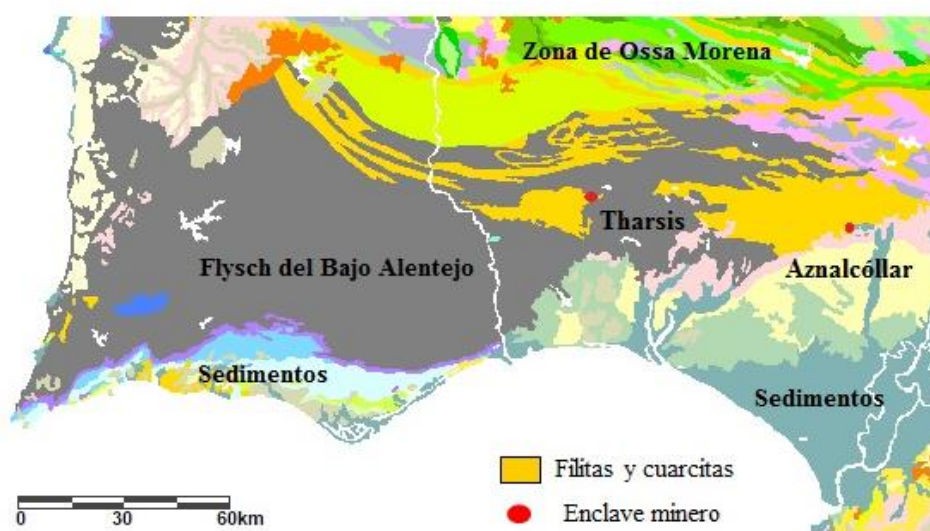
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Las áreas de estudio se localizan en el Corredor Verde del Guadamar (Sevilla) y en la cuenca minera del municipio de Tharsis (Huelva). Tanto el complejo minero de Aznalcóllar como el de Tharsis están situados en la Faja Pirítica Ibérica, una de las áreas metalogénicas más importantes del mundo, y probablemente la mayor concentración de sulfuros masivos de la corteza terrestre (Mapa III.1). Ocupa una superficie de 8000 km<sup>2</sup> que se extiende desde la parte occidental de la provincia de Sevilla, ocupando gran parte de la provincia de Huelva, hasta la costa atlántica portuguesa.



Mapa III.1. Faja Pirítica ibérica. Localización de los enclaves mineros de Tharsis y Aznalcóllar (Fuente: IGME).

La Faja Pirítica Ibérica presenta una continuidad geológica que ha propiciado históricamente un desarrollo económico, social y cultural basado en la explotación de sus recursos metalíferos. Actualmente, en las dos zonas de estudio la actividad minera se encuentra paralizada desde hace años debido a razones económicas (Tharsis) y de carácter ambiental (Aznalcóllar) aunque la reapertura de ésta última parece inminente.

### III.1. ZONA DEL CORREDOR VERDE DEL GUADAMAR

En 1998 la rotura del muro de contención de la balsa de decantación de los Frailes de la explotación minera de Aznalcóllar liberó al río Agrio, y desde éste al río Guadamar, lodos y aguas ácidas (pH ~ 3) con una alta concentración de metales en disolución, fundamentalmente Fe, Pb y Cu procedentes de la flotación de la pirita.

Además de estos ET, el vertido contenía Zn, As, Co, Tl, Bi, Cd, Sb, Hg, Se y Ag (Grimalt et al., 1999). El área afectada fue de 4630 ha a lo largo de 62 km de longitud y 500 m de anchura media, alcanzando la zona limítrofe con el Parque Nacional de Doñana. Esta área comprendía, en su mayoría, zonas agrícolas y pastizales. Los análisis de los horizontes superficiales de suelo (0-15 cm) mostraron que las concentraciones de determinados ET se encontraban muy por encima de los rangos normales de suelos no contaminados de la cuenca, en particular As, Cd, Cu, Pb, Sb, Tl y Zn (Cabrera et al., 1999; López-Pamo et al., 1999).



*Mapa III.2. Situación y delimitación del Corredor Verde del Guadamar.*

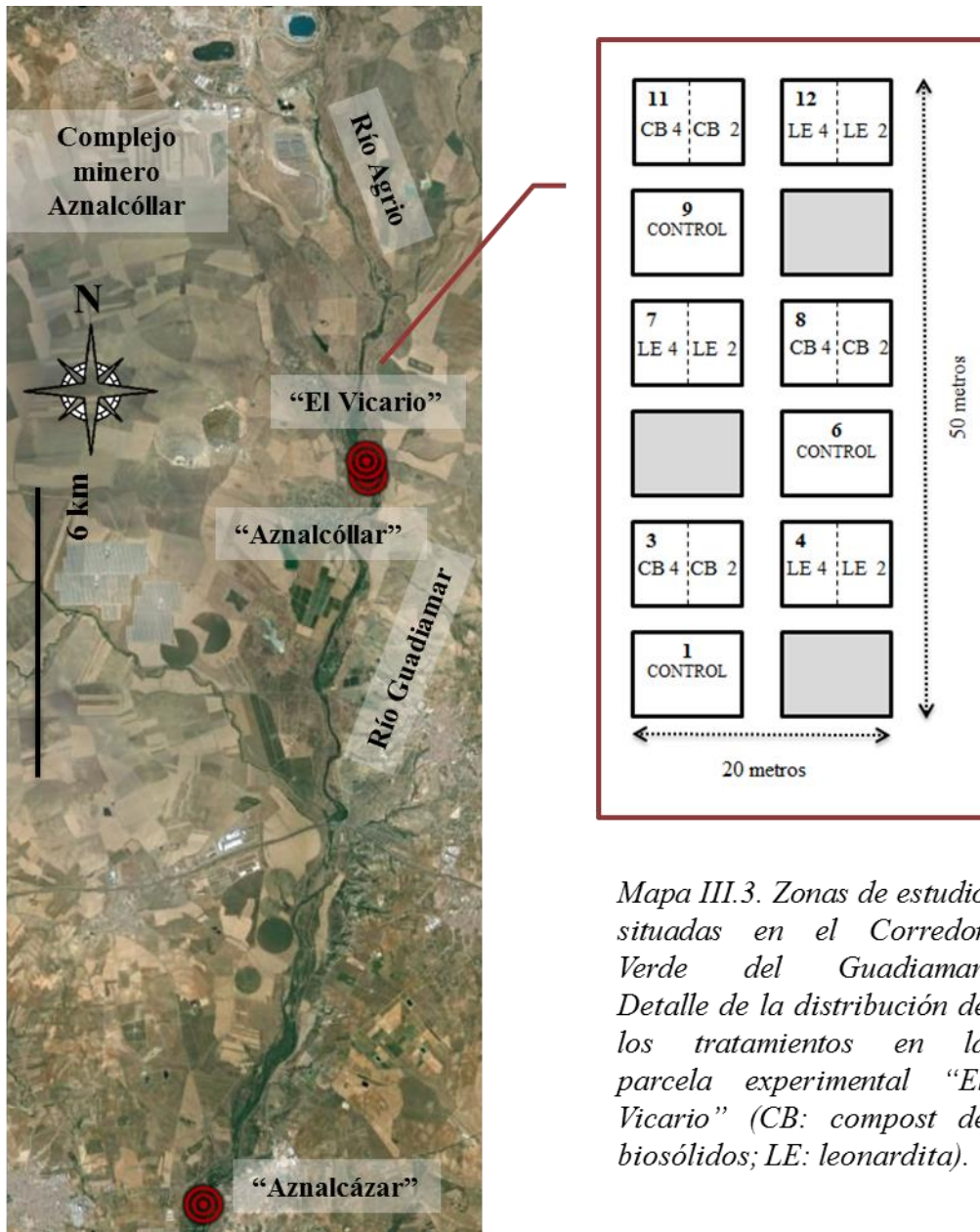
Las primeras actuaciones consistieron en la construcción de muros de contención para sellar las conexiones con las zonas de cultivo y con el P.N. de Doñana, la retirada de los lodos tóxicos y de la capa superficial de suelo contaminado y la aplicación de enmiendas calizas, férricas y orgánicas con el objetivo de disminuir la biodisponibilidad de los ET. Una descripción detallada de las actuaciones realizadas se encuentra recogida en Arenas et al. (2001).

Tras los trabajos de recuperación, el Corredor Verde del Guadiamar fue declarado Paisaje Protegido en 2003 realzando su valor ambiental como conector entre dos Parques Nacionales: Doñana y Sierra De Aracena y Picos de Aroche (Mapa III.2).

Dentro del Corredor Verde del Guadiamar, se han elegido dos zonas de estudio para la presente Tesis: una perteneciente al término municipal de Sanlúcar la Mayor y otra a Aznalcázar (Mapa III.3):

- En la zona más cercana a la mina de Aznalcóllar se encuentran dos zonas de trabajo: la parcela experimental “El Vicario” y el punto de muestreo llamado “Aznalcóllar”. “**El Vicario**” se encuentra en el margen derecho del río Guadiamar, a 10 km de la mina de Aznalcóllar. Desde el año 2002, nuestro grupo de investigación tiene establecido un experimento a largo plazo. En esta parcela experimental los trabajos de recuperación consistieron únicamente en la eliminación de los lodos y de la capa superficial de suelo (0-10 cm). El experimento en la parcela comenzó en 2002 dividiendo el área experimental en subparcelas donde se aplicaron diferentes tratamientos con enmiendas. Para desarrollar algunos de los experimentos de la presente Tesis doctoral se seleccionaron 9 parcelas (7 m x 8 m) (Mapa III.3). Además de las parcelas control, se trabajó en parcelas enmendadas con compost de biosólidos (CB) y leonardita (LE) (para una descripción detallada de estas dos enmiendas véase el anexo III.2). Las parcelas enmendadas estaban subdivididas en función de la dosis de enmienda aplicada. A una parte se le aplicó la enmienda durante 4 años (2002, 2003, 2005 y 2006), mientras que a la otra mitad solo durante dos años consecutivos (2002 y 2003). Una descripción más detallada del diseño experimental y del seguimiento realizado a lo largo de todos estos años se encuentran recogidos en los siguientes trabajos: Madejon et al. (2006), Burgos et al. (2006), Burgos et al. (2008), Madejón et al. (2009, 2010), Pérez de Mora et al. (2011), Xiong et al. (2015). La segunda zona es un punto de muestreo cercano a la parcela “El Vicario” cuyo suelo se ha empleado para los experimentos en condiciones de microcosmos. Este suelo presenta características similares a las de la propia parcela del Vicario pero con un pH menos ácido (**suelo “Aznalcóllar”**).

- La segunda zona de estudio situada en el Corredor Verde se encuentra a 25 km de la mina de Aznalcóllar, en el margen derecho del río Guadamar. Se trata de una zona que fue sometida a una abundante aplicación de enmiendas orgánicas. Para la realización de los experimentos de microcosmos el suelo se tomó de un punto próximo al cauce (**suelo “Aznalcázar”**) en una zona de ribera.



Mapa III.3. Zonas de estudio situadas en el Corredor Verde del Guadamar. Detalle de la distribución de los tratamientos en la parcela experimental “El Vicario” (CB: compost de biosólidos; LE: leonardita).

Las características texturales de los tres suelos pertenecientes al Corredor Verde se encuentran recogidas en la Tabla III.1. Las características químicas y el contenido en ET de estos suelos se muestran en las Tablas III.2 y III.3. El contenido en carbono orgánico total (COT) fue ligeramente superior en el suelo más alejado de la mina



(Aznalcázar) mientras que el contenido en nutrientes (NPK) fue similar entre los suelos con la excepción del contenido en potasio disponible. En este caso, las concentraciones en los suelos de Aznalcázar y “El Vicario” fueron muy superiores a la encontrada en Aznalcóllar. Las principales diferencias entre la zona de estudio más cercana y la más alejada de la mina se encuentran en las concentraciones de As y Pb (mayores en “El Vicario” y Aznalcóllar) y de Mn y Zn (superiores en el suelo de Aznalcázar). Además, los suelos Aznalcázar y Aznalcóllar presentan un pH similar entre sí y superior al de la parcela “El Vicario”.

*Tabla III.1. Características de los suelos de estudio.*

| Suelo               | Textura   |          |             | Clase textural   | Fuente de contaminación | Tipo de suelo     |
|---------------------|-----------|----------|-------------|------------------|-------------------------|-------------------|
|                     | Arena (%) | Limo (%) | Arcilla (%) |                  |                         |                   |
| <b>“El Vicario”</b> | 49,8      | 29,1     | 21,1        | Franco-arcillosa | Vertido Aznalcóllar     | Fluvisol calcáreo |
| <b>Aznalcóllar</b>  | 60,7      | 23,9     | 15,4        | Franco-arenosa   | Vertido Aznalcóllar     | Fluvisol calcáreo |
| <b>Aznalcázar</b>   | 39,1      | 34,6     | 26,3        | Franca           | Vertido Aznalcóllar     | Fluvisol calcáreo |
| <b>Tharsis</b>      | 43,8      | 33,8     | 22,4        | Franca           | Crónica                 | Regosol eútrico   |

*Tabla III.2. Carbono orgánico total ( $g\ kg^{-1}$ ), pH, Nitrógeno Kjeldahl (%), fósforo y potasio disponible ( $mg\ kg^{-1}$ ) en los suelos estudiados (media  $\pm$  error estándar).*

| Suelo               | pH              | COT              | P-Olsen         | N- Kjeldahl      | K-disp           |
|---------------------|-----------------|------------------|-----------------|------------------|------------------|
| <b>“El Vicario”</b> | 3,47 $\pm$ 0,10 | 12,0 $\pm$ 3,00  | 12,0 $\pm$ 2,00 | 0,12 $\pm$ 0,013 | 140 $\pm$ 23,0   |
| <b>Aznalcóllar</b>  | 6,10 $\pm$ 0,10 | 9,60 $\pm$ 0,60  | 12,6 $\pm$ 0,61 | 0,09 $\pm$ 0,002 | 34,0 $\pm$ 0,5,0 |
| <b>Aznalcázar</b>   | 7,00 $\pm$ 0,02 | 17,60 $\pm$ 0,50 | 9,60 $\pm$ 0,80 | 0,14 $\pm$ 0,004 | 177 $\pm$ 5,00   |
| <b>Tharsis</b>      | 6,05 $\pm$ 0,03 | 52,8 $\pm$ 1,30  | 11,8 $\pm$ 2,60 | 0,39 $\pm$ 0,004 | 518 $\pm$ 41,0   |

Tabla III.3. Concentraciones pseudo-totales de elementos traza ( $\text{mg kg}^{-1}$ ) en los suelos estudiados (media  $\pm$  error estándar).

| Suelo        | As             | Cd              | Cu              | Mn              | Pb             | Zn             |
|--------------|----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|----------------|----------------|
| "El Vicario" | 145 $\pm$ 23,0 | 2,57 $\pm$ 0,09 | 112 $\pm$ 8,80  | 450 $\pm$ 40,0  | 286 $\pm$ 54,0 | 205 $\pm$ 14,0 |
| Aznalcóllar  | 273 $\pm$ 3,70 | 0,23 $\pm$ 0,02 | 87,0 $\pm$ 1,20 | 163 $\pm$ 5,20  | 451 $\pm$ 7,60 | 107 $\pm$ 6,60 |
| Aznalcázar   | 102 $\pm$ 3,70 | 1,78 $\pm$ 0,03 | 112 $\pm$ 0,50  | 521 $\pm$ 0,69  | 197 $\pm$ 14,4 | 527 $\pm$ 6,50 |
| Tharsis      | 262 $\pm$ 13,0 | 0,70 $\pm$ 0,05 | 97,0 $\pm$ 3,70 | 2008 $\pm$ 8,00 | 885 $\pm$ 50,0 | 463 $\pm$ 14,0 |

### III.2. ZONA MINERA DE THARSIS

Las minas de Tharsis forman uno de los sistemas mineros más occidentales de la red de minas de Sierra Morena. Las actividades de explotación minera se paralizaron hace años y actualmente la zona se ha declarado Bien de Interés Cultural. El punto de muestreo se encuentra en plena cuenca minera a menos de 1,5 km de la corta de mayor tamaño (Mapa III.4). Este suelo difiere respecto a los tomados del Corredor Verde en el origen de la contaminación por ET (crónica debido a la actividad minera) y en el tipo de suelo (Tabla III.1).

Los valores medios de carbono orgánico total así como las concentraciones pseudo-totales de ET se muestran en las Tablas III.2 y III.3. En comparación con los suelos del Corredor Verde del Guadiamar, el suelo de Tharsis se caracteriza, además de por presentar un mayor contenido en COT, por las mayores concentraciones de Mn y Pb así como por un mayor contenido en N y K disponible.



Mapa III.4. Localización de la zona de muestreo en la cuenca minera de Tharsis.

### ANEXO III.1. ESPECIES VEGETALES

En los experimentos llevados a cabo en condiciones de semicampo (véase Capítulos V.1, V.2 y V.3) las especies vegetales seleccionadas fueron las siguientes: *Poa annua* L., *Medicago polymorpha* L. y *Malva sylvestris* L. (Imagen III.1).

Todas estas especies son consideradas ruderales, esto es, propias de terrenos incultos o de aquellos donde se vierten desperdicios o escombros, aunque pueden habitar en la mayor parte de los climas y lugares (especies cosmopolitas). El criterio de selección se basó en, además de su capacidad para desarrollarse en suelos degradados, en su amplia área de distribución en el territorio español y concretamente su presencia en las zonas de estudio. Con el objetivo de conocer las posibles diferentes respuestas y grado de importancia que tiene la especie vegetal en cada uno de los parámetros estudiados en la presente Tesis se llevó a cabo la elección de especies pertenecientes a familias distintas (Poaceae, Leguminosae y Malvaceae).



Imagen III.1. Detalle de las tres plantas empleadas en los experimentos de microcosmos (Fuente: Sistema de Información de la Vegetación Ibérica y Macaronésica (SIVIM)).

Tanto *P. annua* como *M. polymorpha* son plantas anuales que completan todo su ciclo de desarrollo durante la estación favorable y de las que sólo perduran las semillas en la época desfavorable (terófitos). Son frecuentes en climas mediterráneos, con inviernos templados y veranos secos, durante los cuales el reposo vegetativo absoluto se convierte en una ventaja. Por otra parte, *M. sylvestris* es una planta perenne en la que se produce una reducción periódica de las partes aéreas en condiciones desfavorables y que presenta las yemas de recambio en la superficie del suelo o inmediatamente debajo (hemicriptófito).

En el experimento llevado a cabo en campo (Capítulo V.4) fueron seleccionadas dos especies de las familias más representativas y abundantes en las comunidades vegetales de la parcela experimental: Poaceae y Asteraceae (Pérez de Mora et al., 2011). Las especies seleccionadas fueron *Lamarckia aurea* (L.) Moench y *Chrysanthemum coronarium* L. (Imagen III.2). Ambas especies, al igual que *P. annua* y *M. polimorpha*, presentan una forma vital de terófito. La distribución de ambas especies es muy amplia en todo el territorio, encontrándose sobre todo en pastizales, veredas y caminos.



Imagen III.2. Especies vegetales seleccionadas en la parcela experimental “El Vicario” (véase Capítulo V.4). (Fuente: Sistema de Información de la Vegetación Ibérica y Macaronésica (SIVIM)).

## ANEXO III.2. ENMIENDAS ORGÁNICAS

En la presente Tesis se utilizaron tres enmiendas orgánicas: leonardita, compost de alperujo y compost de biosólidos. Sus principales características se encuentran recogidas en la Tabla III.4. En los ensayos de microcosmos los tratamientos establecidos fueron con compost de biosólidos y compost de alperujo mientras que en los experimentos llevados a cabo en la parcela experimental “El Vicario”, además de compost de biosólidos, se aplicó leonardita.

El compost de alperujo (CA) es el principal subproducto de la industria española de aceite de oliva por lo que el compostaje y utilización como enmienda de este residuo es un método adecuado para su reciclaje. El alperujo es rico en potasio y materia orgánica parcialmente humificada, no fitotóxico, rico en material lignocelulósico y contiene bajas concentraciones de metales pesados (Albuquerque et al., 2009). Los beneficios que esta enmienda orgánica tiene sobre la calidad del suelo han sido demostrados en trabajos previos (Albuquerque et al., 2011; Ciadamidaro et al., 2015). El alperujo utilizado en

esta Tesis proviene de la cooperativa “Coto Bajo” Guadalcazar (Córdoba, España) y es resultado de la mezcla de residuos de leguminosas y abono de agricultura ecológica.

El compost de biosólidos (CB) procede de la transformación de desechos urbanos en sustancias húmicas biológicamente estables que pueden ser aplicadas como enmiendas orgánicas, entre otros usos. A pesar de que este tipo de compost suele presentar contenidos elevados de ET, mejoran las propiedades del suelo, la actividad microbiana y contienen micro y macronutrientes esenciales para el crecimiento de las plantas (Vangronsveld et al., 2009), por lo que es uno de los más ampliamente utilizados en la recuperación de suelos (Alvarenga et al., 2008; Madejón et al., 2009). Esta enmienda se utilizó tanto en los experimentos de semicampo como en la parcela experimental, aunque las distintas partidas de compost de biosólidos presentaron pequeñas diferencias físico-químicas (Tabla III.4). El compost de biosólidos utilizado en “El Vicario” procedió de una planta de tratamiento de aguas urbanas (SUFISA, Jerez de la Frontera, España) mientras que el aplicado en los experimentos en macetas procedió de la planta de compostaje de EMASESA (Sevilla, España) y se produjo a partir de aguas residuales y residuos de poda de parques y jardines.

La leonardita (LE) se encuentra asociada con depósitos superficiales de lignito y está compuesta en un alto porcentaje por ácidos húmicos. Proviene de la degradación química y biológica de los residuos de plantas y animales enterrados hace millones de años. Aunque su uso más común ha sido como fertilizante en agricultura, la eficacia que muestra en la adsorción/absorción de ET hace este material interesante para su uso como enmienda en la recuperación de suelos contaminados (Solé et al., 2003).

El contenido en carbono orgánico es similar en las 3 enmiendas, aunque ligeramente superior en la leonardita y el compost de alperujo. Esta última enmienda es la única que presenta un pH básico (Tabla III.4). En general, el contenido en ET es mayor en el compost de biosólidos con excepción del As que se encuentra en mayor concentración en la leonardita. En cuanto al contenido en nutrientes, el menor contenido en fósforo y el mayor contenido de potasio lo presenta la leonardita en comparación con el resto de las enmiendas utilizadas.

Tabla III.4. Características de las enmiendas utilizadas.

|                                | Enmiendas       |                               |                                |                 |
|--------------------------------|-----------------|-------------------------------|--------------------------------|-----------------|
|                                | CA <sup>a</sup> | CB (microcosmos) <sup>a</sup> | CB ("El Vicario") <sup>b</sup> | LE <sup>b</sup> |
| <b>pH</b>                      | 8,10            | 7,10                          | 6,93                           | 6,08            |
| <b>Humedad(%)</b>              | 14,90           | 15,60                         | 25-30                          | 25              |
| <b>N(%)</b>                    | 1,56            | 2,27                          | 1,31                           | 1,17            |
| <b>P(%)</b>                    | 2,54            | 3,43                          | 1,24                           | 0,04            |
| <b>K(%)</b>                    | 2,30            | 0,82                          | 0,93                           | 3,97            |
| <b>COT (%)</b>                 | 29,1            | 22,6                          | 19,5                           | 28,9            |
| <b>As (mg kg<sup>-1</sup>)</b> | 2,45            | 13,5                          | 5,63                           | 34,9            |
| <b>Cd (mg kg<sup>-1</sup>)</b> | 0,25            | 1,94                          | 0,73                           | 0,83            |
| <b>Cu (mg kg<sup>-1</sup>)</b> | 94,2            | 188                           | 121                            | 28,2            |
| <b>Mn (mg kg<sup>-1</sup>)</b> | 360             | 570                           | 257                            | 66,2            |
| <b>Zn (mg kg<sup>-1</sup>)</b> | 185             | 600                           | 258                            | 64,5            |

<sup>a</sup> Más información disponible en Madejón et al., (2014).

<sup>b</sup> Más información disponible en Madejón et al., (2006).

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## **CAPÍTULO IV**

# **RESUMEN GLOBAL DE LOS RESULTADOS**

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**Objetivo 1. Selección de especies vegetales adecuadas para utilizar en técnicas de fitoestabilización. Análisis de la absorción de elementos traza en los tejidos vegetales y respuesta a los cambios físico-químicos derivados de la aplicación de enmiendas en un suelo con contaminación crónica.**

Exposición de los resultados de los experimentos llevados a cabo para responder al Objetivo 1 de la presente Tesis:

El efecto de las enmiendas (compost de biosólidos (CB) y compost de alperujo (CA)) sobre las propiedades del suelo procedente de Tharsis fue evidente (Figura 3A, Capítulo V.1). Las enmiendas aumentaron significativamente el C lábil y el pH en el suelo además del contenido de COT, aunque este aumento no fue significativo. Las enmiendas modificaron la disponibilidad de los ET; se produjo una reducción de la disponibilidad de Mn (con ambas enmiendas), de Zn (principalmente con CA) y un ligero aumento de la disponibilidad de Cu y As (con ambas enmiendas) (Figura 1, Capítulo V.1).

En cuanto al contenido de nutrientes del suelo, destacar que la concentración de N total inicial era elevada pero con la adición de las enmiendas se incrementó en un 25%. A pesar de ello, al final del experimento la cantidad de N en el suelo descendió ligeramente (sobre todo en los tratamientos control y con CA con *M. sylvestris*). Las concentraciones de P y de K disponible se incrementaron significativamente con la adición de ambas enmiendas, siendo ligeramente mayor la disponibilidad de ambos elementos en los suelos tratados con CB.

Asimismo, la adición de enmiendas modificó la calidad bioquímica del suelo, estimada mediante actividades enzimáticas. Las enmiendas produjeron un incremento de la actividad deshidrogenasa, especialmente en suelos enmendados con CA (Tabla 1, Capítulo V.1) y un descenso de las actividades fosfatasa y  $\beta$ -glucosidasa.

Las distintas especies estudiadas (*P. annua*, *M. polymorpha* y *M. sylvestris*) también tuvieron influencia sobre las propiedades del suelo especialmente en los contenidos de C lábil, que fueron más altos en la rizosfera de *M. polymorpha* (Tabla 1, Capítulo V.1).

La producción de biomasa de las especies vegetales estudiadas se vio positivamente afectada por ambas enmiendas, aunque el tratamiento con CA estimuló en mayor

medida la producción de biomasa en todas las especies ensayadas (Figura 2a, Capítulo V.1). Todas las especies estudiadas mostraron un comportamiento distinto en cuanto a absorción de ET (Figura 3B, Capítulo V.1), siendo *M. sylvestris* la que más afectada se vio por la disponibilidad de ET, acumulando más ET (con excepción del As) en su parte aérea. Las mayores concentraciones de As se encontraron en *P. annua* (Figura 2b, Capítulo V.1). En general, la concentración de As en la parte aérea de todas las plantas estudiadas disminuyó ligeramente con la adición de enmiendas. Para el resto de elementos, *M. sylvestris* fue la especie más influenciada por la adición enmiendas. Las concentraciones más altas de Cu, Mn y Zn se encontraron en la parte aérea de esta especie creciendo en suelo sin enmienda (Figura 2c-f, Capítulo V.1). Estas concentraciones disminuyeron significativamente en suelos enmendados. En estos suelos, las menores concentraciones de Mn y Zn se encontraron en *P. annua* y *M. polymorpha* mientras que las concentraciones de Cu y Pb fueron similares en todas las especies.

El factor de bioconcentración (razón [elemento en planta]/[elemento en suelo]) fue en todos los casos inferior a 1. Además, las concentraciones en planta estuvieron en todos los casos (con excepción del Zn en *M. sylvestris* creciendo en suelo no enmendado) por debajo de las concentraciones consideradas aptas para que una planta sea utilizada en procesos de fitoestabilización. Los resultados muestran que *M. polymorpha* es la especie de entre las estudiadas con las mejores características para ser empleada en técnicas de fitoestabilización en este tipo de suelo.

**Objetivo 2. Estudio del efecto de enmiendas orgánicas y de diferentes niveles de elementos traza sobre los exudados radiculares y la comunidad de hongos micorrícicos asociada a las raíces.**

Exposición de los resultados de los experimentos llevados a cabo para responder al Objetivo 2 de la presente Tesis:

Los experimentos se llevaron a cabo en macetas instaladas al aire libre que se llenaron con suelos procedentes de tres zonas de estudio: Aznalcázar (suelo A), Aznalcóllar (suelo B) y Tharsis (suelo C). Se establecieron, además del control, dos tratamientos según la enmienda aplicada: CB y CA. Las especies vegetales seleccionadas fueron *P. annua*, *M. polymorpha* y *M. sylvestris*. Para el estudio de los exudados radiculares, además del experimento en suelo, se estableció un experimento en arena lavada para conocer el comportamiento de las plantas bajo un gradiente de contaminación por metales sin interacción con otras variables del suelo.

Cuando las plantas crecieron en el medio de arena lavada, se detectaron cuatro ácidos orgánicos de bajo peso molecular (AO) (de menor a mayor concentración): fumárico, cítrico, málico y oxálico. La exudación de AOs difirió entre especies, siendo *M. polymorpha* la especie que excretó mayor cantidad de AOs. Por el contrario, la menor concentración fue medida en la rizosfera de *M. sylvestris*. Tanto *P. annua* como *M. polymorpha* exudaron AOs desde las dosis más bajas de metales en el medio, mientras que *M. sylvestris* comenzó a liberar AOs en una concentración significativa a partir de la dosis intermedia (3 mg Cd/l, 30 mg Cu/l, 120 mg Zn/l) (Figura 2, Capítulo V.2). La composición de los exudados radiculares dependió principalmente de la especie vegetal mientras que el factor “contaminación” afectó más a la producción de biomasa y a la absorción de metales por parte de la planta (Figura 3, Capítulo V.2).

Los suelos de las zonas de estudio seleccionadas mostraron entre sí diferencias significativas en sus propiedades químicas. Los valores de pH del suelo A (ligeramente más básico) fueron estadísticamente diferentes del resto de suelos. Asimismo, la disponibilidad de Cd, Cu y Zn fue significativamente menor en el suelo C respecto al suelo A, aunque las concentraciones disponibles de Mn fueron menores en este último suelo. Por otro lado, entre el suelo B y C solo hubo diferencias en la disponibilidad de dos elementos, Cu y Zn (ambos concentraciones mayores en B). Los suelos procedentes

del Corredor Verde (suelos A y B) presentaron menor contenido de carbono orgánico que el suelo C (Tabla 1, Capítulo V.2). El carbono orgánico aumentó acorde al siguiente orden:  $B < A < C$  encontrándose diferencias significativas entre los tres suelos.

El efecto de la enmienda en los valores de pH de los suelos no fue significativo. El contenido de materia orgánica se incrementó en el suelo A (con CB) y C (con ambas enmiendas). Además, la disponibilidad de P se incrementó de forma significativa en los suelos enmendados. Las enmiendas redujeron en general la disponibilidad de los ET (principalmente de Mn).

En cuanto a la concentración de ET en los tejidos vegetales, las mayores concentraciones de Cd y Zn se encontraron en *M. sylvestris*, seguida de *P. annua* y *M. polymorpha* (Figura 4, Capítulo V.2). La concentración de Cu fue similar entre todas las especies. Aunque en el suelo de Tharsis (suelo C) la mayor concentración de Mn se encontró en la parte aérea de *M. sylvestris*, en los suelos del Corredor Verde *P. annua* fue la que acumuló mayor cantidad de Mn. El efecto de las enmiendas sobre la absorción de ET por las plantas fue mínimo.

La composición y concentración de los exudados radiculares se vieron afectadas significativamente por el tipo de suelo, siendo similares los encontrados entre los suelos del Corredor Verde y totalmente diferentes a los medidos en el suelo de Tharsis (Figura 5, Capítulo V.2). Además, en este suelo (con y sin enmiendas) las concentraciones fueron mucho más bajas que las medidas en los otros dos suelos. El ácido oxálico fue el único AO medido en los tres suelos y exudado por todas las especies analizadas (Material suplementario Tabla S2, Capítulo V.2). Por otro lado, el ácido fumárico fue solo exudado (a bajas concentraciones) por *M. sylvestris* en los suelos del Corredor Verde y por *M. polymorpha* en el suelo C (Figura 5, Capítulo V.2). El ácido cítrico sólo se detectó en los exudados de *M. polymorpha* creciendo en los suelos A y B (suelos del Corredor Verde) y de *P.annua* en el suelo B enmendado. Las cantidades de ácido oxálico y málico fueron superiores a las exudadas por las plantas creciendo en arena lavada, excepto en el suelo C.

De entre todas las plantas, la más influenciada por el tipo de suelo en la excreción de AOs fue *M. polymorpha*. Además del tipo de suelo, el tipo de planta también influyó



siendo *M. sylvestris* la especie donde se observó una fuerte relación entre la absorción de ET en la parte aérea y la exudación de fumárico.

Como se comentó anteriormente, existió una clara diferencia entre los suelos del Corredor Verde y el de Tharsis que se hizo más patente en los suelos sin enmienda (Figura 6A, Capítulo V.2). La adición de enmiendas produjo cambios en la importancia que tuvieron los factores “Tipo de suelo” y “Especie vegetal” sobre los exudados radiculares, especialmente en el tratamiento con CA (Figura 6B-C, Capítulo V.2). En los suelos tratados con esta enmienda, el factor “Tipo de suelo” cobró más importancia que en las parcelas control y en las tratadas con CB. En suelos tratados con CA, la acumulación de Cd y Zn en la planta y las concentraciones de málico y oxálico estuvieron positivamente relacionadas entre sí y negativamente con el COT. Sin embargo, la aplicación de CB tuvo un efecto menor que el CA ya que, al igual que en los suelos control, el factor “Suelo” se explicó por el COT y los ácidos oxálico, málico y cítrico mientras que el factor “Especie vegetal” se explicó por la concentración de metales en planta y por el ácido fumárico. Sin embargo, en el tratamiento con CA el factor “Especie vegetal” está relacionado con los ácidos fumárico y cítrico. En general, el contenido de ET en las plantas estuvo positivamente correlacionado con los ácidos oxálico y málico exudados. Además, para todas las especies el contenido en COT del suelo estuvo inversamente correlacionado con la disponibilidad de Cu y Zn y con la concentración de AOs en los exudados.

La colonización de las raíces por HMA también se vio afectada por las características de los suelos (concretamente por el contenido en materia orgánica y la concentración de ET en suelo) y la especie vegetal. Sin embargo, el aporte de enmiendas no afectó de forma significativa a la colonización. En el suelo afectado por contaminación crónica (suelo C) se encontró menor colonización y presencia de estructuras fúngicas (exceptuando los arbusculos) que en los suelos del Corredor Verde (A y B) (Figura 1, Capítulo V.3). Entre las especies vegetales, las raíces de *P. annua* fueron las que mostraron una menor colonización en todos los suelos y tratamientos.

Es de destacar que un incremento en la concentración de P en el suelo llevó aparejado una disminución de la colonización total y del porcentaje de hifas (Tabla 2, Capítulo V.3). Por otro lado, la abundancia de vesículas estuvo negativamente relacionada con el contenido en COT y positivamente con la disponibilidad de Cu y Zn.

Asimismo, un aumento del COT, del pH y de la concentración pseudo-total de ET (Cd, Cu, Mn, Zn) estuvo relacionada con un aumento de los arbúsculos.

Por otro lado, se observó que una mayor concentración de Zn y de Cd en la planta estuvo relacionada con un mayor grado de colonización y de hifas en todas las especies. De igual modo, la concentración de ET en las plantas también estuvo relacionada con la diversidad de HMA. Concretamente, en *M. polymorpha* y *M. sylvestris* se observó una relación entre los índices de diversidad y las concentraciones de Mn (positiva) y de Cd (negativa) en planta.

A partir de los análisis filogenéticos se identificaron en los 3 suelos de estudio un total de 12 filotipos pertenecientes a 4 familias de HMA (de menor a mayor abundancia): Acaulosporaceae, Paraglomeraceae, Claroideoglomeraceae y Glomeraceae. En general, los dos filotipos más abundantes correspondieron a *Rhizophagus irregularis* y *Claroideoglossum claroideum* (Tabla 3, Capítulo V.3).

En los suelos del Corredor Verde (A y B) la comunidad estuvo claramente dominada por *Rhizophagus irregularis*. En el suelo B la riqueza de HMA fue inferior a la encontrada en la comunidad desarrollada en el suelo A, suelo en el que se identificó una mayor variedad de *Glomus* sp. y una baja presencia de *Claroideoglossum*. Por otro lado, en el suelo C la composición de la comunidad difirió completamente de las encontradas en los suelos del Corredor Verde, siendo dominada por el filotipo *Claroideoglossum claroideum* (Figura 2, Capítulo V.3). Las comunidades de HMA que se encontraron en este suelo fueron más diversas que las encontradas en el resto de suelos (Figura 1, Capítulo V.3). De hecho, los filotipos Par2 y Aca3 (correspondientes a las familias Acaulosporaceae y Paraglomeraceae) solo estuvieron presentes en este suelo. De acuerdo con lo expuesto, el análisis de la estructura filogenética mostró una mayor dispersión en las comunidades presentes en los suelos B y C en comparación con la encontrada en el suelo A (“clustered”).

Al igual que en el grado de colonización, el efecto de las enmiendas sobre la composición de las comunidades de HMA fue poco significativo. Entre los filotipos presentes en las macetas control y las tratadas con CA no hubo diferencias destacables (Tabla 3, Capítulo V.3). La única diferencia se encontró entre los filotipos identificados

en el tratamiento con CB y el resto de tratamientos, debido a la presencia de Par2 y la ausencia de Glo10.

El contenido en COT del suelo fue la principal variable que afectó a la comunidad fúngica, seguido de la disponibilidad de ET (exceptuando el Zn) (Tabla 4, Capítulo V.3). También se evaluó el posible efecto de las concentraciones pseudo totales de ET, encontrándose que tanto el Cd como el Mn tuvieron un efecto significativo sobre la comunidad de HMA (Tabla S3, Capítulo V.3). En menor medida, la concentración de Cd en la planta afectó a la comunidad de HMA. Sin embargo la concentración de P en la planta no tuvo un efecto significativo.

Las comunidades de HMA, además de verse afectadas por las condiciones del suelo (Figura 3, Capítulo V.3), variaron de acuerdo a la especie vegetal. El efecto de la especie vegetal fue significativo tanto en el suelo A ( $R^2=0,56$ ) como en el suelo C ( $R^2=0,62$ ) (Figura S2, Capítulo V.3).

**Objetivo 3. Evaluación de la calidad de los suelos enmendados y no enmendados: establecimiento de indicadores biológicos para la valoración de la eficacia de las técnicas de fitoestabilización a largo plazo.**

Exposición de los resultados de los experimentos llevados a cabo para responder al Objetivo 3 de la presente Tesis:

Los muestreos se realizaron en “El Vicario”, donde se puso en marcha el proceso de recuperación natural asistida en 2002, con el objetivo de evaluar a largo plazo el efecto de distintas enmiendas (Compost de biosólidos (CB) o Leonardita (LE)) sobre la recuperación del suelo mediante el análisis de las comunidades de HMA. Se analizaron dos especies de las familias más representativas y abundantes en las comunidades vegetales presentes en la parcela experimental: *Lamarckia aurea* y *Chrysanthemum coronarium*.

La calidad del suelo aumentó como resultado de la aplicación de ambas enmiendas: aumento del pH, del contenido de C orgánico total y el P disponible. Por otro lado, la disponibilidad de los ET (Cd, Cu, Zn, Mn) disminuyó con la excepción del As. La concentración de este elemento se incrementó en las parcelas tratadas con CB acorde a la dosis aplicada (Tabla 1, Capítulo V.4). Las mayores concentraciones de P disponible ( $35 \text{ mg kg}^{-1}$ ) se encontraron en las parcelas con la mayor dosis de CB. El mayor contenido en COT se obtuvo en las parcelas con la dosis más alta de LE.

Las enmiendas, bajo estas condiciones de campo y transcurridos más de 8 años desde la última adición, no tuvieron un efecto significativo sobre la acumulación de los ET en las plantas. Las diferencias encontradas se debieron a la especie vegetal. Las concentraciones de As, Mn y Pb en la parte aérea de *L. aurea* fueron significativamente mayores que en *C. coronarium*. Sin embargo, no se encontraron diferencias para el resto de elementos (Cd, Cu y Zn).

En el área experimental se identificaron 18 filotipos pertenecientes a 4 familias (de menor a mayor abundancia): Paraglomeraceae, Diversisporaceae, Glomeraceae y Claroideoglomeraceae (Tabla 3, Capítulo V.4). Los análisis de rarefacción mostraron que el número de filotipos identificados en cada tratamiento se encontraron por encima del 75% del número total (Figura 1, Capítulo V.4). La especie más abundante de HMA identificada fue *Rhizophagus intraradices* (29,4% de los clones secuenciados).

Mediante el análisis de la estructura filogenética de la comunidad de HMA, se identificó una transición desde comunidades filogenéticamente agrupadas (tratamientos con LE) a sobredispersadas (tratamientos con CB) (Figura 2, Capítulo V.4). La familia de HMA dominante también se vio afectada por la enmienda aplicada. En las parcelas con LE, la comunidad micorrícica estuvo dominada por Glomeraceae mientras que la aplicación de CB redujo la dominancia de esta familia en favor de una mayor presencia de Claroideoglomeraceae (Figura 2, Capítulo V.4). Además, una mayor adición de enmienda (independientemente del tipo) produjo un incremento en el número de filotipos y una distribución más equitativa de las familias de HMA en la comunidad. Por otro lado, aunque la composición de la comunidad en las parcelas control fue similar a la encontrada en las parcelas de compost con la dosis más alta, las comunidades estuvieron dominadas por familias diferentes (Glomeraceae en el caso de los controles).

La composición de las comunidades fúngicas se vio afectada por el tipo de planta, la localización de la parcela y, en mayor grado, por el tipo de enmienda (Material suplementario 4, Capítulo V.4). De entre las variables del suelo analizadas, sólo la concentración de ET afectó significativamente a la composición de la comunidad. De hecho, la comunidad control difiere claramente de las comunidades desarrolladas en parcelas tratadas con enmiendas (Figura 3, Capítulo V.4). Entre estas últimas la diferencia fue menor. La comunidad de HMA presente en los tratamientos con la dosis baja de LE se correlacionó en mayor grado con la disponibilidad de ET, revelando la disminución de filotipos asociada a altas concentraciones de ET.

**Objetivo 4. Evaluación de la capacidad de un suelo recuperado mediante la aplicación de enmiendas orgánicas de favorecer el secuestro de C. Comparación de enmiendas y dosis.**

Exposición de los resultados de los experimentos llevados a cabo para responder al Objetivo 4 de la presente Tesis:

En la misma parcela de estudio del apartado anterior (“El Vicario”), en la que se aplicaron dos enmiendas (CB y LE), se evaluaron diferentes parámetros físicos y químicos a lo largo de los tres años de estudio.

La densidad aparente del suelo disminuyó a lo largo del estudio, principalmente en los primeros 8 cm de suelo. Al final del experimento, los suelos enmendados con la dosis más alta (aplicación durante 4 años) mostraron los valores más bajos de densidad aparente ( $< 1 \text{ g cm}^{-3}$ ) (Figura 1, Capítulo V.5). Igualmente, el pH disminuyó a lo largo del perfil de suelo manteniéndose los valores similares durante el estudio. La aplicación de ambas enmiendas produjo un incremento de pH que fue proporcional a la dosis aplicada (Tabla I, Capítulo V.5). Los resultados mostraron que el efecto de las enmiendas sobre el pH se mantuvo estable ya que los últimos aportes de materia orgánica se produjeron en 2003 (dosis baja) y 2006 (dosis alta) mientras que los muestreos se realizaron entre los años 2012-2015.

Se observó un incremento neto del contenido en C lábil en todas las parcelas, tanto enmendadas como controles (Figura 2a, Capítulo V.5). La diferencia en el contenido de C lábil entre la parte más superficial (0-4 cm) y la más profunda (8-16 cm) del suelo se acentuó con el avance del experimento. En general, el coeficiente de estratificación (SR) no varió en gran medida para ninguno de los tratamientos con la excepción del incremento observado en las parcelas con LE-dosis baja ( $SR_{1ER \text{ MUESTREO}} = 1.2$  a  $SR_{3ER \text{ MUESTREO}} = 2.1$ ) (Figura 3, Capítulo V.5).

El contenido de carbono total en el perfil completo de suelo (0-16 cm) se mantuvo similar entre muestreos, excepto en el caso de los tratamientos con LE que mostraron un incremento proporcional a la dosis aplicada (Figura 2b, Capítulo V.5). Al igual que el resto de parámetros estudiados, el contenido de C en el suelo disminuyó a lo largo del perfil. En las parcelas con mayores dosis de enmiendas, el contenido de C en superficie fue significativamente mayor que en profundidad (8-16 cm) (Figura 4, Capítulo V.5).

Entre ambos tratamientos, las mayores concentraciones en los primeros 8 cm se encontraron en parcelas tratadas con LE (con dosis alta). Los valores de los coeficientes de estratificación en las parcelas aumentaron según el tratamiento: Controles (SR~1.5) < Biocompost (SR=2) < Leonardita (SR>2).

El efecto de las enmiendas, además de sobre los parámetros físicos y químicos, también quedó patente en la tasa de respiración. Debido a que el CB mejora en mayor medida la actividad microbiana, las mayores tasas de respiración se midieron en parcelas con este tratamiento (Figura 5, Capítulo V.5).

La adición de enmiendas produjo cambios dependientes de las dosis en la composición molecular de la materia orgánica del suelo. Los análisis realizados mediante Resonancia Magnética Nuclear mostraron que la LE es una enmienda rica en compuestos aromáticos y C carboxílicos mientras que el CB contiene una baja cantidad de aromáticos y es rico en alquilos (Figura 7, Capítulo V.5).

Finalmente, el almacenamiento de C en el suelo siguió una tendencia positiva a lo largo del experimento, excepto en el caso de las parcelas con CB- dosis baja (Tabla II, Capítulo V.5). Ambas enmiendas favorecieron el secuestro de C en el suelo, aunque la aplicación de LE produjo una mayor retención de C. Además, la dosis de enmienda afectó de forma significativa al balance de C, incrementándose el C retenido en el suelo en función de la mayor cantidad de enmienda aplicada.





## **CAPÍTULO V**

# **PUBLICACIONES CIENTÍFICAS**

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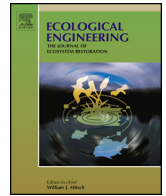
## **V.1. Evaluation of phytostabilizer ability of three ruderal plants in mining soils restored by application of organic amendments**

### *Evaluación de la capacidad fitoestabilizadora de tres plantas ruderales en suelos mineros restaurados con enmiendas orgánicas*

#### **Resumen**

Los suelos de zonas mineras abandonadas son considerados un importante problema ambiental debido a los altos niveles de elementos traza que presentan. El objetivo de este trabajo fue seleccionar la especie vegetal autóctona más adecuada para estabilizar la contaminación así como mejorar la calidad de un suelo degradado situado en una zona minera abandonada. Con este objetivo, se estudiaron tres especies vegetales: *Poa annua*, *Medicago polymorpha* y *Malva sylvestris*, en combinación con dos enmiendas orgánicas (compost de biosólidos (BC) y compost de alperujo (AC)) y en suelo sin enmiendas (CO). Las enmiendas aumentaron el pH y disminuyeron la movilización de los elementos traza en el suelo. El carbono hidrosoluble (WSC) también aumentó con la adición de ambas enmiendas, encontrándose la mayor concentración en los tratamientos donde crecía *M. polymorpha*. La evolución de la disponibilidad de los elementos traza en el suelo fue dependiente del tipo de enmienda, de la especie vegetal y de las características del elemento. El tratamiento con compost de alperujo fue el que estimuló, en mayor medida, la producción de biomasa. Las mayores concentraciones de As y Pb se encontraron en *P. annua* mientras que *M. sylvestris* fue la que acumuló Mn y Zn en mayor concentración. Teniendo en cuenta las propiedades químicas y bioquímicas así como las concentraciones de elementos traza en la parte aérea, la especie vegetal más adecuada para estabilizar los elementos traza en la rizosfera y mejorar la calidad del suelo fue *M. polymorpha*.





Short communication

## Evaluation of phytostabilizer ability of three ruderal plants in mining soils restored by application of organic amendments



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## ABSTRACT

Abandoned mines involve a serious environmental problem because these soils contain high levels of trace elements. The aim of the study was selecting the most adequate autochthonous plant species to stabilize contamination and improve soil quality of a contaminated soil from an abandoned mine. For this purpose three plant species were studied: *Poa annua*, *Medicago polymorpha* and *Malva sylvestris*, in combination with two organic amendments (biosolid compost (BC) and “alperujo” compost (AC)) and a soil without amendments (CO). Soil pH increased due to the effect of amendments under all studied plants, which promotes the immobilization of trace elements in soil. Water soluble C (WSC) increased with the addition of both amendments and the highest concentration was found in soils under *M. polymorpha*. The evolution of trace element availability in soil depended on the amendment, plant species and characteristics of the element. The best treatment to stimulate biomass production was AC. The highest concentration of As and Pb was found in *P. annua* whereas the highest concentration of Mn and Zn was found in *M. sylvestris*. Considering chemical and biochemical properties, and concentrations in shoots *M. polymorpha* would be the most suitable plant to stabilize trace elements and improve soil quality. Nevertheless, the best results were obtained with the plant-amendment combination.

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### 1. Introduction

Phytostabilization is a phytoremediation technique that tries to limit the mobility and bioavailability of pollutants in soil by plant roots, and involves the establishment of vegetation on the contaminated site that enhances the value of the land (Ali et al., 2013). This technique exploits plant transpiration and root growth to reduce leaching and control erosion. Selection of appropriate vegetal species is an important factor for the success of phytoremediation techniques. These plants should accumulate trace elements (TE) from substrate into their roots but restrict their transport and entry into their aerial parts (Sheoran et al., 2011). Moreover, the chemical and biological reactions occurring in the rhizosphere play an important role in the bioavailability of TE. Plant roots can change the physical, chemical, and biological conditions of the soil in the rhizosphere and enrich it with organic substances of plant and microbial origin (Bolan et al., 2011).

Currently there is an increasing tendency in using autochthonous or non-invasive plants to decrease any harmful effects on the ecosystems by introducing new plants to the

environment (Suchkova et al., 2014). Therefore exploring the potential of different adapted native species to these environmental conditions for the phytostabilization of TE contaminated soils is compulsory.

Contaminated soils usually presented unfavorable conditions for plant growth, therefore, the addition of amendments into this type of soils has a durable and positive effect on plant growth (Pérez de Mora et al., 2011) and can also enhance key biological processes affecting the immobilization of heavy metals (Martínez-Fernández et al., 2014) resulting in an improved quality of soil properties (Pérez de Mora et al., 2006).

The aim of this study was to evaluate the ability of three different species to stabilize TE at rhizosphere level under different physical and chemical conditions created in the soil by the addition of organic amendments.

### 2. Materials and methods

#### 2.1. Soil and compost characterization

The experiment was carried out using soil from an abandoned mining area located in Tharsis (Huelva), where the main activity was the extraction of pyrite (FeS<sub>2</sub>) (Madejón et al., 2011). This is a loamy soil with an acid pH (pH 5.5) and a relatively high content

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in organic matter (9%). Soil was collected from the upper 0–25 cm of soil.

Biosolid compost (BC) and “alperujo” compost (AC) were used as amendments. The principal properties of both composts were reported in [Madejón et al. \(2014\)](#).

## 2.2. Plant species

Three plant species were selected for the experiment: *Poa annua* L. (PO), *Medicago polymorpha* L. (ME) and *Malva sylvestris* L. (MA). These species are common in the Mediterranean areas and are considered as ruderal plants. These plants have the ability to proliferate and persist in high intensity disturbance and stress conditions so they grow in human-modified environments. As a matter of fact, these species readily colonize contaminated soils ([Madejón et al., 2006](#)).

## 2.3. Experimental design

The experiment was carried out in containers situated outdoors arranged according to a complete randomized block design. Three treatments were established: biosolid compost (BC), alperujo compost (AC) and a control (CO) without amendment. Four replicates per treatment and plant species were performed. A single addition of amendments (75 g/pot) was made and afterwards seeds of the species were established. Soil samplings were performed at 3 (initial sampling) and 182 (final sampling) days after the amendment addition.

The experiment was carried out for 6 months (April–October) and the pots were regularly irrigated by dripping (3 days per week) to ensure the plants water demand. From mid-July to mid-September there was not irrigation to simulate natural conditions in Mediterranean area. Plants were harvested in June and October (final sampling). The second sampling was carried out after a reseeded in September. Biomass and TE concentration in vegetal tissues were measured in both samplings.

## 2.4. Chemical and biochemical analysis

Soil pH was measured according to [Hesse \(1971\)](#). The available Cd, Cu, Mn, Pb and Zn concentrations in soils were determined as described [Houba et al. \(2000\)](#). Soil available-As (0.5 M NaHCO<sub>3</sub> extracts, 1:10 w/v) was measured by hydride generation ICP-OES. Pseudo-total TE concentrations in soil samples were determined by digestion with aqua regia in a microwave oven and TE in the extracts were determined by ICP-OES (inductively coupled plasma-optical emission spectrometry). Total organic carbon (TOC) was determined according to [Walkley and Black \(1934\)](#) and total Kjeldahl-N (TKN) by the method described by [Hesse \(1971\)](#). Water-soluble carbon (WSC) content was determined on using a TOC-VE Shimadzu analyser after extraction with water using a sample-to-extractant ratio of 1:10. Available-P and available-K was determined according to [Olsen et al. \(1954\)](#) and [Dewis and Freitas \(1970\)](#), respectively.

Dehydrogenase activity was determined by the method of [Trevors \(1984\)](#),  $\beta$ -glucosidase activity as indicated by [Tabatabai \(1982\)](#) and Phosphatase activity by the method proposed by [Tabatabai and Bremmer \(1970\)](#).

Vegetal material was washed with a 0.1 N HCl solution and with distilled water, then they were oven dried at 70 °C and finally grounded and passed through a 500- $\mu$ m stainless-steel sieve. Dried plant samples were digested by wet oxidation with concentrated HNO<sub>3</sub> under pressure in a microwave oven. Determination of TE in the extracts was performed by ICP-OES. The accuracy of the analytical methods was assessed through a plant reference sample (INCT-TL-1, Tea leaves).

**Table 1** Evolution of TOC, WSC, TKN and enzymatic activities in soils (mean values  $\pm$  standard error,  $n = 4$ ; 1, initial sampling; 2, final sampling). For each column, treatment and sampling values followed by different letter differ significantly ( $p < 0.05$ ).

| Treatment | Plant | Sampling | Chemical parameters |                  | Microbiological parameters |                  |   |  |   |                 |
|-----------|-------|----------|---------------------|------------------|----------------------------|------------------|---|--|---|-----------------|
|           |       |          | pH                  | TOC (%)          | WSC (mg kg <sup>-1</sup> ) | TKN (%)          | Dehydrogenase ( $\mu$ g INTF g <sup>-1</sup> dry soil h <sup>-1</sup> ) | Phosphatase ( $\mu$ mol PNF g <sup>-1</sup> dry soil h <sup>-1</sup> ) | $\beta$ -Glucosidase ( $\mu$ mol PNF g <sup>-1</sup> dry soil h <sup>-1</sup> ) |                 |
| CO        | PO    | 1        | 5.30                | 5.35             | 422                        | 0.39             | 3.48  | 7.31   | 3.21  |                 |
|           |       | 2        | 6.14                | 5.30 $\pm$ 0.36  | 543 $\pm$ 63.5ab           | 0.43 $\pm$ 0.02b | 1.56 $\pm$ 0.40   | 4.78 $\pm$ 0.64  | 3.19 $\pm$ 0.52   |                 |
|           | ME    | 1        | 5.30                | 4.16             | 441                        | 0.41             | 3.10  | 0.45   | 5.93  | 4.26            |
|           |       | 2        | 5.90                | 5.20 $\pm$ 0.16  | 581 $\pm$ 36.5b            | 0.45 $\pm$ 0.03b | 1.28 $\pm$ 0.32   | 0.37   | 8.79 $\pm$ 1.13   | 2.85 $\pm$ 0.38 |
|           | MA    | 1        | 5.30                | 5.73             | 500                        | 0.37             | 2.90  | 0.31 $\pm$ 0.02a   | 5.87  | 3.89            |
|           |       | 2        | 6.10                | 5.20 $\pm$ 0.07  | 373 $\pm$ 15.0a            | 0.31 $\pm$ 0.02a | 0.32 $\pm$ 0.08   | 0.54   | 4.62 $\pm$ 0.58   | 2.11 $\pm$ 0.25 |
| BC        | PO    | 1        | 6.48                | 6.20             | 1300                       | 0.54             | 7.25  | 0.53 $\pm$ 0.06  | 3.56  | 1.80            |
|           |       | 2        | 6.76                | 6.52 $\pm$ 0.27b | 10,853 $\pm$ 93.1          | 0.53 $\pm$ 0.06  | 3.14 $\pm$ 1.14   | 3.06 $\pm$ 0.38  | 1.48 $\pm$ 0.41   |                 |
|           | ME    | 1        | 6.48                | 5.07             | 1150                       | 0.54             | 5.96  | 0.45 $\pm$ 0.03  | 3.20  | 2.94            |
|           |       | 2        | 6.52                | 6.06 $\pm$ 0.15a | 1326 $\pm$ 140             | 0.45 $\pm$ 0.03  | 2.10 $\pm$ 0.57   | 0.57   | 2.56 $\pm$ 0.31   | 2.20 $\pm$ 0.56 |
|           | MA    | 1        | 6.48                | 5.12             | 1430                       | 0.57             | 5.54  | 0.50 $\pm$ 0.01  | 4.53  | 2.68            |
|           |       | 2        | 6.57                | 5.53 $\pm$ 0.04a | 1060 $\pm$ 48              | 0.50 $\pm$ 0.01  | 2.95 $\pm$ 0.33   | 0.48   | 1.35 $\pm$ 0.18   | 1.82 $\pm$ 0.08 |
| AC        | PO    | 1        | 6.58                | 5.97             | 715                        | 0.49             | 7.24  | 0.65   | 3.42  | 2.70            |
|           |       | 2        | 6.61                | 5.57 $\pm$ 0.19  | 978 $\pm$ 66.3b            | 0.57 $\pm$ 0.04c | 4.92 $\pm$ 1.22   | 3.06 $\pm$ 0.35  | 2.20 $\pm$ 0.09   |                 |
|           | ME    | 1        | 6.58                | 6.40             | 783                        | 0.48             | 5.63  | 0.48 $\pm$ 0.03b   | 3.87  | 2.81            |
|           |       | 2        | 6.47                | 5.20 $\pm$ 0.16  | 1127 $\pm$ 7.5b            | 0.45 $\pm$ 0.03b | 4.88 $\pm$ 0.41   | 0.31 $\pm$ 0.02a   | 3.70 $\pm$ 0.36   | 2.17 $\pm$ 0.09 |
|           | MA    | 1        | 6.58                | 5.37             | 782                        | 0.48             | 4.79  | 0.48   | 3.54  | 2.33            |
|           |       | 2        | 6.38                | 6.04 $\pm$ 0.06  | 602 $\pm$ 34a              | 0.31 $\pm$ 0.02a | 2.44 $\pm$ 0.44   | 0.31 $\pm$ 0.02a   | 3.35 $\pm$ 0.54   | 1.38 $\pm$ 0.16 |

## 2.5. Statistical analysis

All statistical analyses were carried out with the program SPSS 21.0 for Windows. Results were analyzed by ANOVA, considering plant or treatment as the independent variable. Significant statistical differences of variables between species were established by Tukey' test ( $p < 0.05$ ). Data normality and homoscedasticity were tested prior to analysis, and when necessary, variables were transformed. To investigate the effects of different plant species and amendments, the principal component analysis (PCA) was performed for the studied soil characteristics. Another PCA analysis was carried out using TE content in plant tissues to check if there were differences among plant species.

## 3. Results and discussion

### 3.1. Soil chemical characteristic

One of the main objectives of phytostabilization is maintain the optimum pH in order to reduce TE bioavailability. Initially, both amendments increased soil pH by more than one unit, due to the alkalinity of both amendments (Table 1). The effect of plants on pH was more evident in CO treatment, comparing both samplings (Table 1). All studied plants increased soil pH, especially in case of *P. annua* and *M. sylvestris*. In the case of BC treatment, pH values were similar in time or slightly higher for the three plants. In AC treatment, due to the initial higher pH, there was no plant effect, and even slight decreases in soil pH were observed under *M. sylvestris* and *M. polymorpha*. The increase of soil pH in time in CO soil could be attributed to the rhizosphere, which contributes to the alkalization processes. Plant roots can alter local soil pH through

various rhizospheric processes such as assimilation, production of anions/cations, and release of organic acids (Bolan et al., 2011).

The soil had a relative high TOC content that could explain the lack of differences of TOC in soil due to the organic amendments. Despite this result, the effect of amendments was clear in WSC contents from the initial sampling (Table 1), especially with BC. The increment of this fraction is very positive due to the importance of WSC as C source for microorganism and therefore important for soil ecosystems. In the final sampling, after plant growth, WSC increased in all treatments because plant cover influences the quantity of exudates and plant debris that soil receives, which in turn increases WSC in the soil (Caravaca et al., 2002). Under the three treatments, *M. polymorpha* seemed to be the species that exudates more labile C, whereas lower amounts were found in the rhizosphere of *M. sylvestris* (Table 1).

The initial values of TNK were high (Hazelton and Murphy, 2007) although the addition of amendment increased this value by 25% (Table 1). Although *M. polymorpha* is a leguminous plant, no increment in time of TNK was observed with this species. In fact, the values tended to decrease at the final sampling in all soil. Significant lowest values at the final sampling were found in soils with MA-CO and MA-AC. This could be due to the tendency of Malva sp. to accumulate nitrates in the leaves. In contrast, TNK concentrations in soil with *P. annua* were similar or increased in time.

### 3.2. Trace elements in soils and plants

#### 3.2.1. Soils

Pseudo-total TE concentration ( $\text{mg kg}^{-1}$ ) of As, Cu Mn, Pb and Zn were: 225, 92, 2090, 785 and 506, respectively. The addition of amendment reduced slightly the pseudo-total concentration of TE in soils (except for Cu) (data no shown).

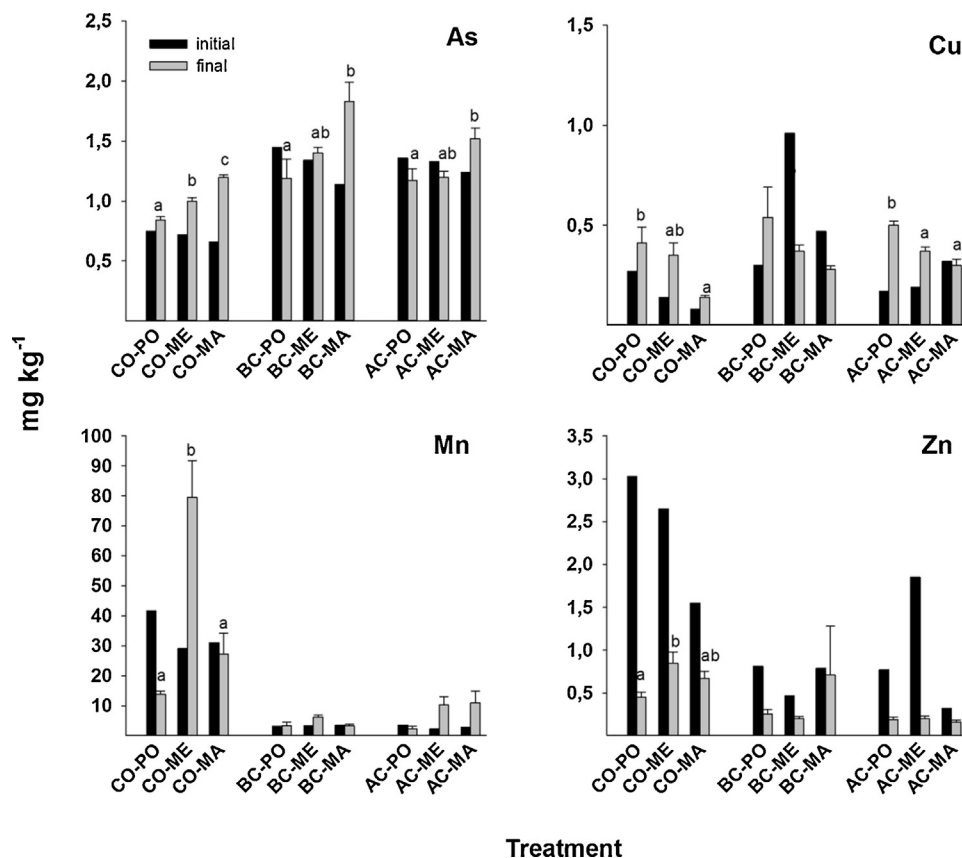
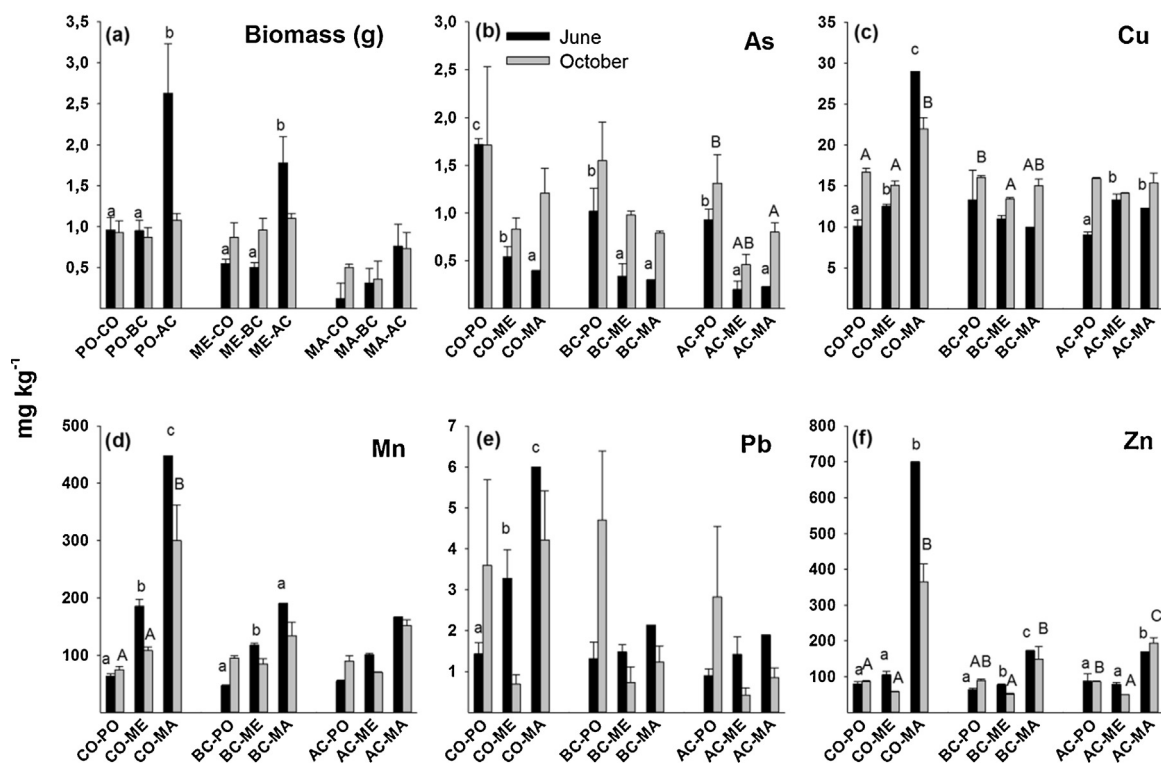


Fig. 1. Available As extracted with 0.05 M NaHCO<sub>3</sub> and available Cu, Mn and Zn extracted with 0.01 M CaCl<sub>2</sub> in the three treatments studied with the studied plants at initial and final sampling. For each treatment and sampling columns with different letter show significant differences due to plant species.



**Fig. 2.** (a) Dry biomass per plot and (b–f) trace elements in the studied plants for the three treatments studied at initial and final sampling. For biomass for each plant and sampling values followed by different letter differ significantly ( $p < 0.05$ ). For TE for each treatment and sampling columns with different letter show significant differences due to plant species. Lowercase letters correspond to the first sampling and uppercase letters to the second sampling.

Values of CaCl<sub>2</sub>-extractable TE showed very low concentrations in soils compared to total levels (Fig. 1). This low mobility is related to the aging of the soils having a significant influence on the mobility TE (Anxiang et al., 2009). In general, the main objective of the amendment addition and plant cover establishment is the reduction of TE availability in soils. However, these results showed that the evolution of TE availability depended on the element, amendment and the type of plant species.

In the case of Mn and Zn, a reduction of their availability was evident when adding amendments (Fig. 1). Concentrations of available Mn decreased to values  $\leq 10$  mg kg<sup>-1</sup> with BC and AC for all plants. The Mn solubility in soils is highly dependent on pH. In well-drained soils (as in this case) the solubility of Mn always increases with acid pH (Kabata-Pendias and Pendias, 2001). Amended soils in combination with *M. polymorpha* and *M. sylvestris* showed an increase of Mn in time due to the slight decrease of pH values (Table 1) and a possible mobilization of the labile Mn added through the amendment (Fig. 1). Available Zn decreased along the experiment and the lowest values were measured in AC treatment. In general, the amendments reduced the availability of Zn in both treated soils compared to CO since the initial sampling due to the pH increment (Table 1). In CO soils, there was also a decrease of available Zn due to plant effect. *P. annua* seemed to be the plant that less mobilized Zn in soils.

The results showed an increase of As and Cu availability, especially for BC treatment, from the initial sampling. In the case of Cu, the addition of the element through BC and solubilization effects induced by dissolved organic matter might be the reason of this increment of availability. Regarding the species, in CO and AC treatments, Cu was significantly mobilized by *P. annua* and *M. polymorpha* compared to *M. sylvestris*. Similar results have been found by Ciadamidaro et al. (2013) who have pointed out that the presence of plants tends to increase micronutrients in non-contaminated soil. For BC treatment, due to the amount of Cu incorporated with amendment, higher initial contents of Cu were

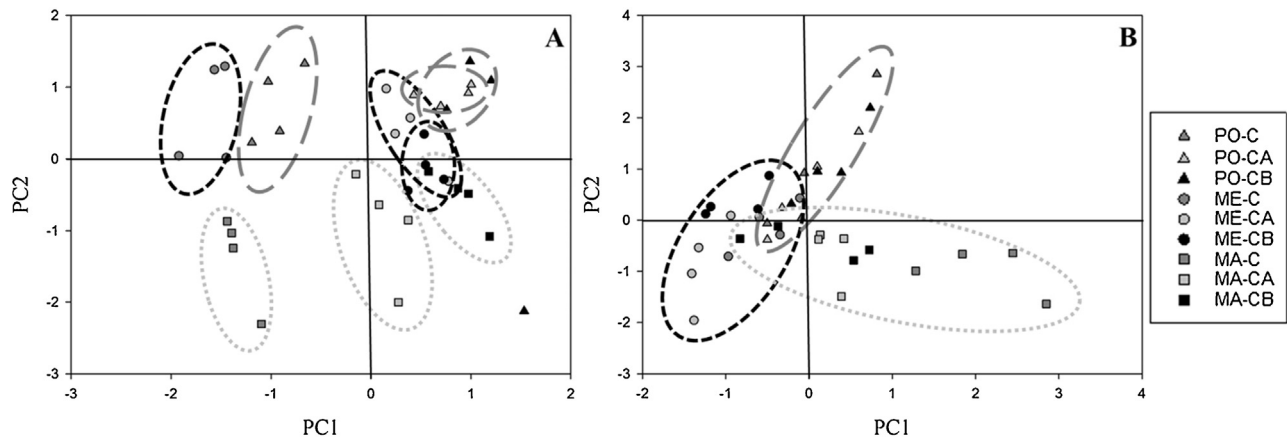
found although Cu values tended to decrease in time except in *P. annua*, in which initial values were lower than in BC-ME and BC-MA (Fig. 1). For As, the rise of pH could be responsible for the increase of availability in the amended pots under all species. The increase of As availability in amended soils has been advised by Hartley et al. (2009) who concluded that caution must be taken when treating As-polluted soils with some organic amendments because can enhance As mobility. Finally available Pb concentrations were below the detection limit (0.05 mg kg<sup>-1</sup>). This could be related with the relatively high contents of TOC in soils (Table 1) that could help to increase the retention of Pb in the soil.

### 3.2.2. Plants performance and trace element contents

The effect of amendments was evident for biomass production considering each species (Fig. 2). In sampling 1, significantly higher values were found in AC treatment, although it was not observed any effect due to BC. The low biomass of *M. sylvestris* was remarkable in the sampling 1, which could be due to the slower germination and plant establishment as a result of the different strategies developed by each plant family. This data suggests that in spite of the adequate levels of TOC and nutrients in the initial soils, the AC stimulated biomass production. After the regrowth, differences between treatments were not observed (second sampling).

According to Mendez and Maier (2008), to consider a plant for phytostabilization concentrations in the aerial part must be (in mg kg<sup>-1</sup>): for As  $\leq 30$ , for Cu  $\leq 40$ , for Mn  $\leq 2000$ , for Pb  $\leq 100$  and for Zn  $\leq 500$ . For all TE, the three plant species could be used for phytostabilization, except for CO-MA for Zn in sampling 1 (Fig. 2). The general tendency was a reduction of TE uptake due to amendment addition; although this tendency was not evident in all cases, it was according to the principles of phytostabilization (Bolan et al., 2011). In general, maximum values for all TE were observed for *M. sylvestris* in the sampling 1, except for As; this could be related





**Fig. 3.** (A) Principal component analysis of soil variables (pH, dehydrogenase activity,  $\beta$ -glucosidase activity, phosphatase activity, COT, WSC, N and available trace elements). Circles corresponding to the different treatments. (B) Principal component analysis of trace elements (As, Cu, Mn, Pb and Zn) in aerial parts of plants studied. Points corresponding to each specie are grouped by circles.

with a concentration effect due to the low biomass in sampling 1 in CO-MA (Fig. 2).

Concentrations of As increased in all species in sampling 2 in agreement with the increase of As availability in soil (Fig. 1). This result could be related with pH increase in soils (Table 1). Significant higher As contents were found in *P. annua* for all treatments (maximum  $4 \text{ mg kg}^{-1}$  in CO). The ability of *P. annua* to accumulate As when is available has been reported by Comino et al. (2009). This plant also accumulated higher amounts of Pb with time in all treatments. Accumulation of Pb in *M. polymorpha* and *M. sylvestris* was lower in the second sampling, showing the effect of the stabilization of Pb in soil. Higher concentrations of Pb in *P. annua* compared with *M. polymorpha* and other species were found by Madejón et al. (2006) in contaminated soils. Copper concentrations in plants were higher in sampling 2, with the exception of CO-MA treatment. The effect of plants on Cu mobilization could be the main cause for this increment in time. In the case of treated soils this fact could be also related with Cu content of both amendments. *M. sylvestris* tended to accumulate significantly more Cu than the other species in CO treatment (Fig. 2). In the case of Mn, the amendment effect was evident, especially in *M. polymorpha* and *M. sylvestris*. *P. annua* seemed to be the specie that was able to exclude the highest amounts of Mn from their aerial part and *M. sylvestris* was the plant that reached the highest Mn levels showing significant differences comparing with the other (Fig. 2). Results showed that Zn contents in *M. sylvestris* tissues were significantly higher than in the other species. Nevertheless, amendments clearly reduced its Zn concentration in *M. sylvestris* compared with CO. The lowest values were found in *M. polymorpha* amended or not. These data show the different behavior of plants and amendment for each element. Therefore, depending on the contaminant, a specific species could be more adequate than another.

The bioconcentration factor (BF), also known as the biological absorption coefficient, is defined as the total element concentration in shoot tissue/total element concentration in soil. To consider a plant for phytostabilization, this coefficient must be  $<1$ . BF was always much lower than 1 for all plants and treatments.

### 3.3. Soil quality

The use of plants for phytostabilization also implies soil quality improvement. In this regard, the enzymatic activities are useful for monitoring changes in soil quality (Epelde et al., 2008). Dehydrogenase activity (DHA) is used to determine overall microbiological activity of soil (Nannipieri et al., 2002). The addition of

amendments, especially AC, increased DHA from sampling 1 (Table 1) however values tended to decrease in time. Among the studied plants *P. annua* maintained higher activity in all soils. Significant lower values were found in CO and AC soils with *M. sylvestris*.

Phosphatase and  $\beta$ -glucosidase activities are both hydrolases that presented a different pattern compared to DHA. As stated above, the original fertility of the soil was high; therefore the main purpose of the amendment addition was TE availability reduction. Unlike the results found in other contaminated soils with a lower content of TOC and nutrients (Pérez de Mora et al., 2006), in this study the addition of amendment induced an inhibition of both activities (Table 1). Acid-phosphatase is involved in the mineralization of organic phosphate esters in acid soils (Pant and Warman, 2000). A negative correlation between acid-phosphatase and available-P was found ( $r = -0.694$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), which is in accordance with the feedback inhibition of the enzyme by available-P (Pérez de Mora et al., 2006).

### 3.4. Principal component analysis (PCA)

In order to integrate all soil data, PCA was performed using all soil studied properties (except pseudo-total TE) (Fig. 3A). The analysis showed that the first two components did account for 71% (PC1 49% and PC2 22%) of total variance. PC1 was associated to pH, WSC and available Mn (variable loadings 0.963, 0.888 and  $-0.881$ , respectively). PC2 was associated to available Cu, TNK,  $\beta$ -glucosidase activity (variable loadings 0.815, 0.702 and 0.648, respectively). PC1 was clearly associated to amendment additions, because negative values corresponded to non-amended soils (Fig. 3A). However, the difference due to plant species was caused by PC2, which separated *M. sylvestris* soils (negatively affected by PCA 2) from the other two species.

PCA analysis of parameters measures in plant tissues showed that PC1 did account for 62.6% of the variance and PC2 22.3%. PC1 was associated to Zn, Mn, Cu and Pb (variable loadings 0.900, 0.865, 0.825 and 0.795, respectively) and PC2 was associated to As (variable loading 0.804). Therefore, PC1 was associated to cationic TE and PC2 to anionic TE. The difference between *M. sylvestris* and the other plants was obvious, the former being positively associated to cationic TE and negatively affected by As. The effect of amendments was not as evident as in soils, although in *M. sylvestris* higher scores of PCs 1 could be observed in non-amended soils. In the case of *P. annua*, it was positively associated to PC2 (As) (Fig. 3B). Remarkably, the species negatively affected by both PCs was *M. polymorpha*, showing less ability for TE accumulation.

#### 4. Conclusions

This study shows the importance of the species chosen for phytostabilization purposes. These results revealed that in this soil affected by chronic TE contamination, *M. polymorpha* is the most suitable species for the stabilization of contaminants in soil, consequently reducing the transfer to the shoot and improving biochemical quality in the rhizosphere environment. *P. annua* can also be very useful for phytostabilization although precautions must be taken in soils with high amounts of As. However, *M. sylvestris* presented fewer benefits due to lower plant cover development and lower capacity to stabilize contaminants. This study has also shown the improvement caused by the organic amendments, enhancing the positive effects of any vegetation.

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## **V.2. Effect of heavy metals and organic matter on root exudates (Low Molecular Weight Organic Acids) of herbaceous species: an assessment in sand and soil conditions under different levels of contamination**

*Efecto de los metales pesados y de la materia orgánica sobre los exudados radiculares (ácidos orgánicos de bajo peso molecular) de especies herbáceas: evaluación en condiciones de arena y de suelo bajo diferentes niveles de contaminación*

### **Resumen**

La biodisponibilidad de metales pesados puede ser modificada por los exudados radiculares. Entre ellos, los ácidos orgánicos de bajo peso molecular (LMWOAs) juegan un importante papel en este proceso. Tres especies vegetales potencialmente usadas en fitorecuperación (*Poa annua*, *Medicago polymorpha* y *Malva sylvestris*), se evaluaron en términos de incorporación de metales y de excreción de LMWOAs en ambientes contaminados con diferentes concentraciones de Cd, Cu y Zn. Los experimentos se llevaron a cabo en arena lavada y en 3 suelos contaminados donde se aplicaron dos enmiendas orgánicas (compost de biosólidos y compost de alperujo). Los LMWOAs excretados en mayor cantidad por todas las plantas estudiadas fueron los ácidos oxálico y málico, aunque se detectaron también los ácidos cítrico y fumárico. La tendencia general consistió en la liberación de mayores cantidades de LMWOAs por parte de las plantas en respuesta a un aumento del estrés derivado de la presencia de metales pesados. Se trata de un eficiente mecanismo de exclusión, que reduce la incorporación de metales en la planta permitiendo el crecimiento de ésta a altos niveles de contaminación. En el experimento donde se utilizó la arena lavada como sustrato, la composición y cantidad de los ácidos orgánicos dependió principalmente de las especies vegetales y del nivel de contaminación. *M. polymorpha* fue la especie que liberó las mayores concentraciones de LMWOAs tanto en sustrato de arena como en suelos sin enmiendas, mientras que se observó una disminución de estos ácidos con la adición de enmiendas. Los resultados mostraron un efecto claro de la materia orgánica en la composición y cantidad total de LMWOAs exudados. El incremento de materia orgánica y nutrientes a través de las enmiendas mejoró la calidad del suelo reduciendo la fitotoxicidad. Como resultado, disminuyó la exudación de ácidos orgánicos y

estuvieron compuestos únicamente por ácido oxálico (excepto en el caso de *M. polymorpha*). La exudación de LMWOAs ha resultado ser un mecanismo importante de respuesta contra el estrés derivado de la contaminación por metales pesados, único para cada especie y modificable mediante la adición de enmiendas orgánicas.



# Effect of heavy metals and organic matter on root exudates (low molecular weight organic acids) of herbaceous species: An assessment in sand and soil conditions under different levels of contamination<sup>☆</sup>



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## ABSTRACT

Bioavailability of heavy metals can be modified by different root exudates. Among them, low molecular weight organic acids (LMWOAs) play an important role in this process. Three plant species (*Poa annua*, *Medicago polymorpha* and *Malva sylvestris*), potentially used for phytoremediation, have been assessed for both metal uptake and LMWOAs excretion in contaminated environments with different concentrations of Cd, Cu and Zn. The experiments have been carried out in washed sand and in three contaminated soils where two organic amendments were added (biosolid compost and alperujo compost). The most abundant LMWOAs excreted by all studied plants were oxalic and malic acids, although citric and fumaric acids were also detected. The general tendency was that plants responded to an increase of heavy metal stress releasing higher amounts of LMWOAs. This is an efficient exclusion mechanism reducing the metal uptake and allowing the plant growth at high levels of contamination. In the experiment using wash sand as substrate, the organic acids composition and quantity depended mainly on plant species and metal contamination. *M. polymorpha* was the species that released the highest concentrations of LMWOAs, both in sand and in soils with no amendment addition, whereas a decrease of these acids was observed with the addition of amendments. Our results established a clear effect of organic matter on the composition and total amount of LMWOAs released. The increase of organic matter and nutrients, through amendments, improved the soil quality reducing phytotoxicity. As a result, organic acids exudates decreased and were solely composed of oxalic acid (except for *M. polymorpha*). The release of LMWOAs has proved to be an important mechanism against heavy metal stress, unique to each species and modifiable by means of organic amendment addition.

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## 1. Introduction

Heavy metal bioavailability is the most important factor to be monitored in the restoration process of a contaminated soil. Such bioavailability depends on several factors as soil characteristics and plant species growing in this soil. An unclear idea exists regarding the effect of rhizospheric processes on heavy metal availability (Kidd et al., 2009). Root exudates both high-molecular weight (polysaccharides and proteins) and low-molecular weight (i.e. amino acids, organic acids, sugars, phenolics) compounds play an important role in these rhizospheric processes (Bais et al., 2006).

Among them, low-molecular weight organic acids (LMWOA) are the most abundant and reactive with metals (Koo et al., 2010).

The changes in the rhizosphere produced by root exudates vary according to the plant species growing in each soil. In addition, the exudation of organic acids, both in quantity and in relative proportions, is directly affected by the presence of metals in the soil (Meier et al., 2012). These key aspects should be considered in phytostabilisation since the choice of the plant species generates a variation at rhizosphere level that results in an increase/decrease in the availability of metals and therefore determine the success of the stabilization strategy.

Understanding the role of organic acids in the plant tolerance to heavy metals is crucial for the successful implementation of phytoremediation technologies. Several previous studies have reported that the organic acids behave as natural chelating agent (Kim et al., 2010; Agnello et al., 2014) and can involve a pH decrease leading to

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the acidification of the rhizosphere (Zhixin et al., 2013; Seshadri et al., 2015). Apart from the scarce and unclear knowledge of the role of organic acids, metal uptake and accumulation in plants is a complex process and the physiological mechanisms involved are still greatly unknown. Metal plant response is complex, varying considerably between species, specific for different metals, and metal concentration-dependent (Arnetoli et al., 2008).

The experimental growth conditions (most studies have been conducted in hydroponics i.e. Zhao et al., 2001; Meier et al., 2012; Hawrylak-Nowak et al., 2015) affect to the development and size of the root, and therefore can affect the excretion of organic acids. Plants growing on artificial matrix (sand culture system) with the addition of contaminants through nutritive solution can help to understand plant uptake behaviour in a pollution gradient. Even more, this type of experiments allows a more accurate study of the roots, and their exudates, because their analyses are easy to handle, avoiding interferences due to soil particles (Liao et al., 2003). However, these types of studies need complementary experiments using soils from real contaminated areas as a matrix for plant growth. The interpretation of both experiments offers a wider knowledge about plant mechanisms of heavy metals uptake and accumulation and the response, at rhizosphere level, to stressful conditions created by contamination.

In the restoration of contaminated soils, the use of organic amendments is widespread (Ciadamidaro et al., 2015; Hattab et al., 2015; Montiel-Rozas et al., 2015) but the effect of them on LMWOA exudate by roots has been scarcely studied. A few previous studies have reported the increase of LMWOAs release in soil solution due to the amendment addition (Peña et al., 2015). Thus, it would be interesting to evaluate the direct and indirect effects of the organic amendments on root exudates (concretely LMWOA), both in quantity and composition. The aims of the present study were: a) to test the response (in terms of LMWOA release) of three potential species to use in phytoremediation strategies to different Cd, Cu and Zn concentrations; b) to analyse the effect of the addition of organic amendments used in soil restoration (*alperujo* compost and biosolid compost) in the quantity and variety of LMWOAs released and c) to evaluate the effect of LMWOAs in the metal uptake of the aerial parts of the plants. For this purpose, we studied plant behaviour growing in artificial matrix (sand) and under soil conditions by using three contaminated soils differing in metal availability and organic matter content.

## 2. Material and methods

### 2.1. Experimental design

To assess the response of different plant families, the following species were used: *Poa annua* L. (Poaceae; PO), *Medicago polymorpha* L. (Leguminosae; ME) and *Malva sylvestris* L. (Malvaceae; MA). In case of *M. sylvestris*, a germination pre-treatment was applied to seeds (10 min at 80 °C; 24 h in distilled water).

Two microcosms experiments were carried out (1 and 2). The Experiment 1 (“washed sand and increasing gradient of contamination”) was carried out in pots filled with washed sand in a greenhouse with a temperature of  $23 \pm 2$  °C and increasing doses of metals solution (containing Cu, Cd and Zn) were added. Five treatments according to different contamination levels were established: Dose 1 (D1; 0.5 mg Cd/L, 5 mg Cu/L, 20 mg Zn/L); Dose 2 (D2; 1.5 mg Cd/L, 15 mg Cu/L, 60 mg Zn/L); Dose 3 (D3; 3 mg Cd/L, 30 mg Cu/L, 120 mg Zn/L); Dose 4 (D4; 6 mg Cd/L, 60 mg Cu/L, 240 mg Zn/L) and Dose 5 (D5; 10 mg Cd/L, 100 mg Cu/L, 400 mg Zn/L). Five replicates per dose and plant species were set up (75 pots). Contaminants solutions were prepared from CdCl<sub>2</sub>, CuSO<sub>4</sub>·5H<sub>2</sub>O and ZnSO<sub>4</sub>·7H<sub>2</sub>O salts. To maintain the correct plant development, pots

were irrigated with nutritive solution (Hoagland) every 3–4 days. After germination of seeds (1 cm of radicle emerged), contamination solutions were applied progressively for 3 weeks: 20 ml, 40 ml and 60 ml per pot respectively. One week after last contamination, it proceeded to organic acids extraction.

The Experiment 2 (“Metal contaminated soil”) was carried outdoors in pots that were filled with three contaminated soils: Soil A and B from an area affected by a mine spill (Grimalt et al., 1999) and Soil C from an area chronically contaminated by metals (Tharsis mining area, Huelva). Total Cd, Cu and Zn in the soil were 1.70, 113 and 508 mg kg<sup>-1</sup> respectively in soil A, 0.28, 88 and 121 mg kg<sup>-1</sup> respectively in soil B and 0.65, 105 and 456 mg kg<sup>-1</sup> in soil C.

In each soil and for each species three treatments with four replicates per treatment were established (108 pots). Treatments were: biosolid compost amended soil (BC), *alperujo* compost amended soil (AC) and non-amended soil (CO). Biosolid compost was collected from the composting plant “EMASESA” (Seville, Spain) and was produced by the mixture of sewage sludge and pruning from parks and gardens from Seville city. The *alperujo* compost (a semisolid by-product obtained from the two-phase centrifugation system for olive oil extraction) was prepared by the cooperative “Coto Bajo” Guadalcazar (Córdoba, Spain) by mixing *alperujo* with legume residues and manure from organic farming. The main characteristics of the amendments are reported in Ciadamidaro et al. (2015). A single addition of amendments (25 g per kg of soil) was made and afterwards (one week) seeds of the species were established.

The experiment was conducted for 6 months. The pots were regularly irrigated by dripping (three days per week) to ensure the plants water demand. Biomass harvesting was performed at the end of the experiment. In both experiments, containers were arranged according to a complete randomised block design.

### 2.2. Organic acids extraction and analysis

To measure the LMWOA release from roots in both experiments, complete plants were extracted carefully from of each pot and roots were carefully washed with distilled water. Each plant was placed in a tube and the complete root system of the plant was submerged in a 0.01 M CaSO<sub>4</sub>·2H<sub>2</sub>O solution for 2 h under the same controlled climate conditions described for plant growth (Aulakh et al., 2001). The tubes were covered with aluminium foil to create dark conditions for roots. The extracts of root exudates were filtered to eliminate cell debris (0.45 µm) and kept at -20 °C until HPLC analysis. Finally, each root from the tubes was weighted (fresh and dry) for subsequent calculations.

Chromatographic analysis was conducted in an HPLC system (Waters 1525-Milford, MA) connected to an autoinjector 717 and a photodiodes detector (PDA) 2996. Chromatographic analysis was conducted on a reverse phase column (Synergi™ 4 µm Hydro-RP (250 × 4.6 mm), Phenomenex). The mobile phase was KH<sub>2</sub>PO<sub>4</sub> buffered with 20 mM at pH 2.5. The injection volume was 25 µl and the wavelength was 220 nm.

The calibration line was obtained by external standards at a concentration range of 10–40 mg L<sup>-1</sup> from which the quantification of the samples was performed with a correlation coefficient (R<sup>2</sup>) of 0.99 for each of the organic acids analysed. The detection limit was 0.05 mg/L for all organic acids. Identification of LMWOAs was performed by comparison of retention times and by addition of standards for each organic acid. The different retention times were 3.7, 5.8, 11.4, 12 and 14 min for oxalic, malic, citric and fumaric acids, respectively.

### 2.3. Soil and plant analysis

Plant biomass of each pot was harvested at the end of both experiments, and fresh and dry weight was recorded. Vegetal material was washed with a 0.1 N HCl solution and with distilled water. They were oven dried at 70 °C and, finally, grounded and passed through a 500- $\mu$ m stainless-steel sieve. Dried plant samples were digested by wet oxidation with concentrated HNO<sub>3</sub> under pressure in a microwave oven. Determination of Cd, Cu and Zn in the extracts was performed by ICP-OES (inductively coupled plasma-optical emission spectrometry). The accuracy of the analytical methods was assessed through three plant reference samples (INCT-TL-1, Tea leaves, INCT-OBTL-5 and NCS DC 73348).

Soil sampling was performed at the beginning and at the end of the Experiment 2, although only final data have been presented in this study. Soil pH was measured according to Hesse (1971). Pseudo-total concentrations of Cd, Cu and Zn in soil samples were determined by digestion with *aqua regia* in a microwave oven and the available concentrations of these elements were determined as described Houba et al. (2000). Cadmium, Cu and Zn in the extracts were determined by ICP-OES. Total organic carbon (TOC) was determined according to Walkley and Black (1934).

### 2.4. Statistical analysis

To test significant differences between studied variables one-way ANOVA was performed. It was carried out to analyse differences between species (considered as independent variable) in LMWOAs concentrations for each dose and soil-treatment combination, differences between heavy metal uptake and biomass for each dose (Experiment 1) and differences between pH and TOC in each soil-treatment combination. Normality and homoscedasticity of data were tested with Kolmogorov-Smirnov and Levene test, respectively. Non-normal variables were transformed prior to ANOVA by logarithmic transformation. Post-hoc analyses were based on Tukey's test when variances were equal whereas Dunnett's T3 test was used in case of unequal variances. Significance level used was 0.05.

A Spearman's correlation analysis was performed to determine the relation between LMWOAs, metal concentration in plant tissues and biomass (in case of Experiment 1) and between TOC, metal availability and LMWOAs (Experiment 2).

For Experiment 1, the Transfer Factor (TF; metal concentration in shoots divided by metal concentration in roots) was calculated for each species and dose.

To show clearly the trends found in the organic acid exudation under different conditions evaluated (soil-treatment-plant), it was performed a heatmap using *heatmap* function (stats package in R). A heatmap is a graphical representation of data where the similar values contained in a matrix are placed near each other according to the clustering. The similarity level is represented by a colour gradient. In addition, a dendrogram was added to the left side and to the top of the graphics. A Factorial Analysis was carried out to explain the interdependence between all variables through the factors obtained. For the experiment 1, the variables used were as follows: Plant biomass, LMWOAs, Cd, Cu and Zn contents in roots and shoots. For the experiment 2, TOC in soil, LMWOAs and Cd, Cu and Zn contents in shoot were used. In this case, the Factorial Analysis was performed for each treatment. The sampling adequacy was verified by KMO index (>0.6 in all cases). To maintain the independence of factors, Varimax rotation (orthogonal) was chosen. The extraction method was the Principal Component Analysis and, after establishing the rotated factors, the values taken by the factors on each observation were calculated by regression method.

## 3. Results

### 3.1. Experiment 1: washed sand and increasing gradient of contamination

#### 3.1.1. Biomass, metal accumulation and distribution in plant tissues

Values of biomass yield did not differ significantly between the first three doses in ME and PO species (Fig. 1A). As the metal concentration increased (doses 4 and 5) plant biomass decreased significantly, especially in case of ME. No differences were found between dose 4 and 5 for any of the species. In general, the highest values of biomass were found for PO, whereas the lowest were obtained for MA. By comparing biomass values between species at each dose, only significant differences were found at the highest doses of metals (4 and 5).

The three species maintained similar metal concentration in both roots and shoots at the lowest doses (1–3). At these contamination levels, the highest concentrations of metals were found in MA species for the three elements, except for Cu in shoots (Fig. 1B).

Cadmium and Zn presented similar behaviour in plants; the accumulation in shoots was increasing slowly with the increment of the concentrations to doses 3 (showing significant differences between doses; Fig. 1B). At highest doses (4 and 5), MA was the species with the highest Cd and Zn accumulation in aerial parts.

The pattern of metal accumulation in roots was similar to shoots (Fig. 1B). Metal accumulation in roots was higher than in the aerial plant part with the exception of the Zn, which resulted in general higher values of Transfer Factor (TF) for this element, especially for MA plants (2.3 and 1.9 at doses 1 and 2, respectively). As the doses of the Zn in the media increased, TF values of PO and MA tended to decrease, whereas no clear tendency was detected for ME. TF values for Cd and Cu were <1 for all species tested.

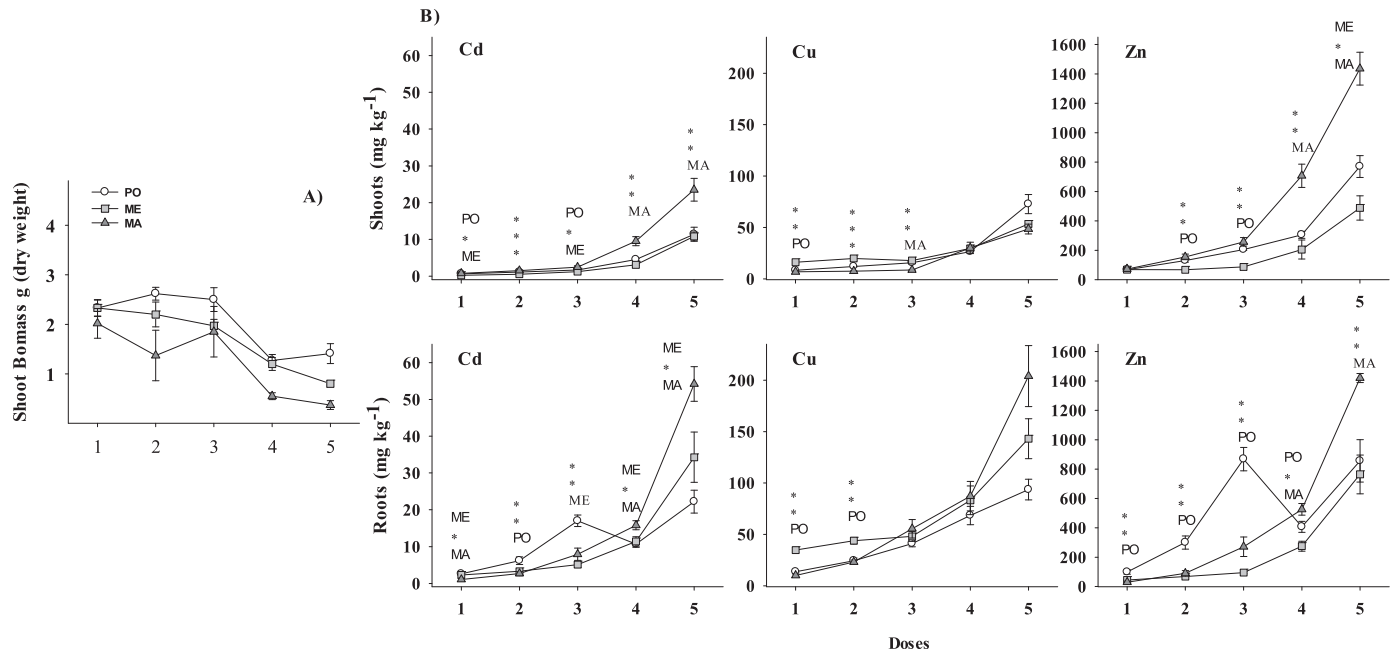
#### 3.1.2. Low molecular weight organic acids

In the experiment 1, the LMWOAs excretions from the roots varied among species (Table S1). In general, the highest concentrations of LMWOAs were found on the exudates of ME, whereas the lowest were obtained in MA. Despite the differences in LMWOA concentrations, ME and MA species showed a similar pattern along the contamination gradient from dose 3 (Fig. 2). From this contamination level, oxalic was the most abundant acid in the rhizosphere. Malic and fumaric acids were maintained at similar concentrations in lower doses whereas citric acid concentration increased progressively. In the case of PO, the pattern was completely different. Oxalic and malic acids showed a similar behaviour; a decrease from dose 1 to 2 was reported, followed by a slight increase at dose 3 and a subsequent increment at dose 4. At the highest dose, the main acids released by PO were oxalic and citric.

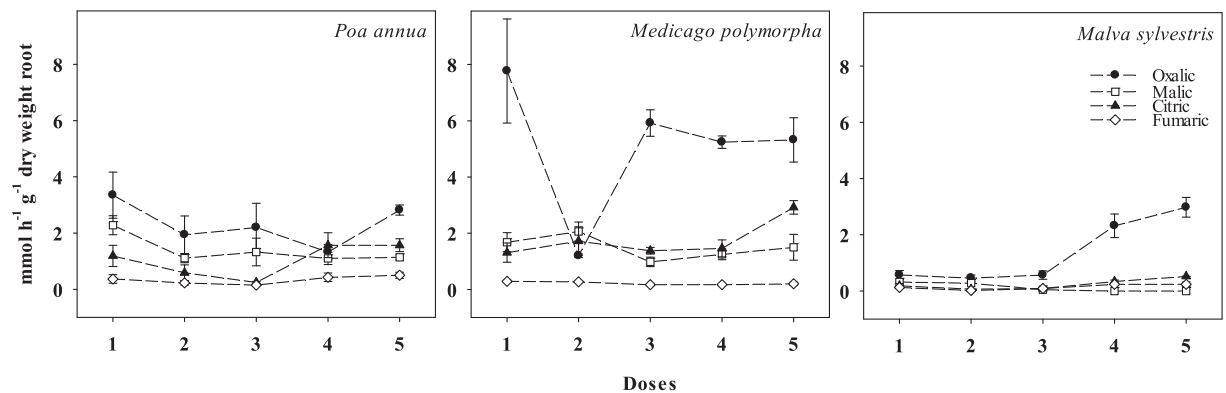
Apart from the fact that the highest levels of oxalic acid were measured in ME roots, significant differences with the other species were only found from dose 3. In the case of malic acid, significant differences were found at low doses (1 and 2), whereas from dose 3 results showed that exudates concentration did not differ between species. Citric acid released differed at all contamination levels except at dose 2. Fumaric acid was measured in all doses and species exudates. Although this organic acid was released at lowest amounts, the only differences were found at low Cd, Cu and Zn concentrations (dose 2).

#### 3.1.3. Factorial analysis and correlations

The main factor (Fact 1; explain 52.7% of variance) corresponds to the "Contamination" factor (Fig. 3). This factor was explained by an inverse relation between biomass and metal concentrations



**Fig. 1.** A) Dry biomass (g) (significant differences are indicated through the text) and B) heavy metals concentrations metals in shoots and roots for each specie grown in washed sand at each contaminant dose. PO, *P. annua*; ME, *M. polymorpha*; MA, *M. sylvestris*. Significant differences between species for each doses and element are marked as follows: \*\*\*, differences were found between 3 species; \*\*PO\*\*ME/\*\*MA differences between specie indicated and the others species; differences between two species are indicated with the initial species and \* (e.g. PO\*ME).



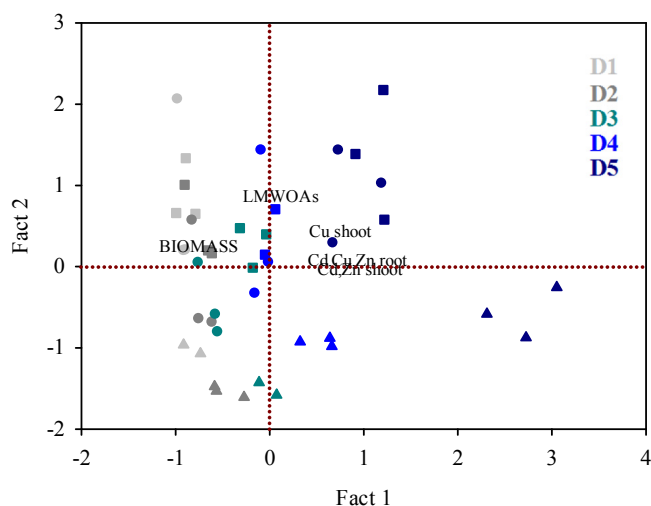
**Fig. 2.** Mean values (Standard errors, n = 3) of LMWOAs (mmol h<sup>-1</sup>) for each doses and plant species. Significant differences are indicated through the text.

(both in root and shoot). Across the x-axis, factor scores were arranged according to an increase of metal concentration in rhizosphere according with higher doses in the media. The second factor ("Plant species") explained 22.4% of variance and it was related to LMWOAs. The analysis showed that the root exudates were mainly dependent on the plant species. The effect of different plant species on root exudates pattern was clearer in the case of MA since it was strongly negatively correlated with LMWOAs ( $p < 0.01$ ), particularly in low doses. At the highest dose the response of the MA was mainly described by factor 1 (see Fig. 3).

In general, a significant inverse correlation between biomass and metal concentration in vegetal tissues was found at  $p < 0.01$  for all species, corroborating the results extracted from Factorial Analysis (Fact 1). However, correlations between heavy metals and LMWOAs varied according to the species. A positive correlation between Cu content in shoots of PO and citric and fumaric acids was

found ( $p < 0.05$ ), whereas the increase of metals in roots was negatively correlated with malic acid ( $p < 0.05$ ). The highest concentrations of metals in roots and shoots of ME were accompanied by an increase of citric acid and a decrease of fumaric acid ( $p < 0.05$ ). Similarly, to PO, a negative correlation between malic acid and metals in roots (significant for Cd and Zn) was observed. By contrast, all metals both in roots and shoots (except Cu in root) of MA were significantly correlated with all LMWOAs: positively with oxalic, citric ( $p < 0.01$ ) and fumaric acid ( $p < 0.05$ ) and negatively with malic acid ( $p < 0.01$ ). Likewise, correlations found between different organic acids differed for each species. Positive correlations were found between oxalic-malic acids and citric-fumaric acids in case of PO and malic-fumaric acids in ME. However, all LMWOAs were correlated in case of MA (oxalic, citric and fumaric were correlated positively among them and negatively with malic acid).





**Fig. 3.** Factor scores corresponding to different plant species and contaminant doses applied are arranged along two main factors. Variables used in the Factorial analysis (Biomass; Low Molecular Weight Organic Acids; Cd, Cu and Zn in roots and shoots) are marked in black colour. *P. annua*, Circles; *M. polymorpha*, Square; *M. sylvestris*, Triangle.

## 3.2. Experiment 2: metal contaminated soil

### 3.2.1. Soils

Values of pH of the three studied soils ranged from 5.88 to 7.10 (Table 1). PO species tended to acidified the rhizosphere of soils A and B as it is shown in the results obtained in treatments without amendment addition. Soils A and B presented lower TOC content than soil C. For that reason, the effect of the amendment addition was only observed for soils with low organic matter content without a clear influence of the species.

In general, all studied soils presented low available Cd, especially in soils B and C (below the detection limit). Available Cu was increased by amendments, especially by BC addition. Among species, ME and PO tended to mobilize more Cu than MA. The opposite was found for Zn, amendments reduced Zn availability although MA was the species that also mobilized less Zn (data no shown).

### 3.2.2. Biomass, metal accumulation and distribution in plant tissues

Although amendments increased plant biomass, significant differences were not found between treatments in any case, except in MA in soil C (significant higher biomass in AC compared to CO). In this regard, ME was the species more positively affected by both amendments and, to a lesser extent, MA (Table 1). The increase of biomass found in ME and MA pots in the C amended soil was remarkable.

**Table 1**

Mean values of pH, Total Organic Carbon (TOC) and biomass by species for each treatment and soil. Significant differences between species per soil and treatment are indicated by different letters ( $p < 0.05$ ). CO, No Amendment; AC, Alperujo compost; BC, Biosolid compost; PO, *P. annua*; ME, *M. polymorpha*; MA, *M. sylvestris*. Standard errors in parenthesis.

|   |    | pH           |              |              | TOC (g kg <sup>-1</sup> ) |              |             | Shoot biomass (g) |               |              |
|---|----|--------------|--------------|--------------|---------------------------|--------------|-------------|-------------------|---------------|--------------|
|   |    | PO           | ME           | MA           | PO                        | ME           | MA          | PO                | ME            | MA           |
| A | CO | 7.10 (0.03)a | 6.99 (0.00)b | 6.99 (0.01)b | 18.5 (1.0)                | 18.2 (0.7)   | 16.2 (0.4)  | 0.76 (0.23)ab     | 1.89 (0.52) b | 0.08 (0.01)a |
|   | AC | 6.92 (0.01)  | 6.91 (0.03)  | 6.97 (0.02)  | 21.3 (1.7)                | 22.8 (1.6)   | 18.9 (0.8)  | 1.33 (0.26)ab     | 3.07 (0.78)b  | 0.4 (0.13)a  |
|   | BC | 6.88 (0.02)  | 6.85 (0.01)  | 6.96 (0.05)  | 28.6 (1.4)a               | 24.2 (1.4)ab | 20.5 (1.7)b | 0.64 (0.18)a      | 2.85 (0.47)b  | 0.27 (0.09)a |
| B | CO | 6.50 (0.08)a | 5.93 (0.05)b | 5.88 (0.03)b | 6.3 (0.7)a                | 9.6 (0.4)b   | 7.8 (0.3)c  | 0.53 (0.04)ab     | 1.45 (0.61)b  | 0.03 (0.01)a |
|   | AC | 6.20 (0.07)a | 6.46 (0.04)b | 6.51 (0.02)b | 11.9 (1.7)ab              | 15.2 (0.5)a  | 11.0 (0.3)b | 0.57 (0.14)a      | 3.10 (0.43)b  | 0.13 (0.03)a |
|   | BC | 6.44 (0.06)  | 6.57 (0.04)  | 6.59 (0.04)  | 10.9 (0.4)                | 14.0 (0.4)   | 14.9 (2.2)  | 0.51 (0.08)a      | 2.80 (0.56)b  | 0.06 (0.03)a |
| C | CO | 6.14         | 5.9          | 6.1          | 53 (3.7)                  | 52.1 (1.6)   | 52.6 (1.4)  | 1.90 (0.15)a      | 1.71 (0.22)a  | 1.54 (0.28)a |
|   | AC | 6.61         | 6.47         | 6.38         | 55.8 (3.8)                | 60.5 (2)     | 60.3 (1.3)  | 1.67 (0.32)a      | 5.23 (1.10)ab | 6.01 (1.52)b |
|   | BC | 6.76         | 6.52         | 6.57         | 65.2 (2.7)                | 60.7 (1.5)   | 55.3 (0.4)  | 2.15 (0.14)a      | 5.04 (1.61)a  | 3.94 (0.52)a |

The effect of the amendments on metal uptake was different depending on the soil and plant species (Fig. 4). In soils A and B significant differences were only observed for PO and ME (not enough plant material was obtained for MA replicates). In soil A, significant differences for PO and ME were not observed, although all metal concentrations in PO shoots tended to increase due to the amendment addition, especially when BC was added. In soil B, significant lower concentrations due to amendment were only found for Cd in PO species. Finally, in soil C significant differences were found for Cu in ME and MA species due to amendments, and in Zn only for ME species (Fig. 4).

Among species, concentrations of Cd and Zn were significantly higher PO than in ME in soils A and B (statistic differences with MA could not be carried out due to the lack of replicates in soil A and B) (Fig. 4). In soil C, significant differences were found for the three species and elements (Cd, Cu and Zn, MA > PO > ME). According to the metal availability in the soils, Cd and Zn uptaken by all species were the highest in soil A, followed by the values obtained in soil B (here, particularly in case of Cd). Copper concentration was similar in the three studied soils despite the availability in C soil was lower than in A and B soils.

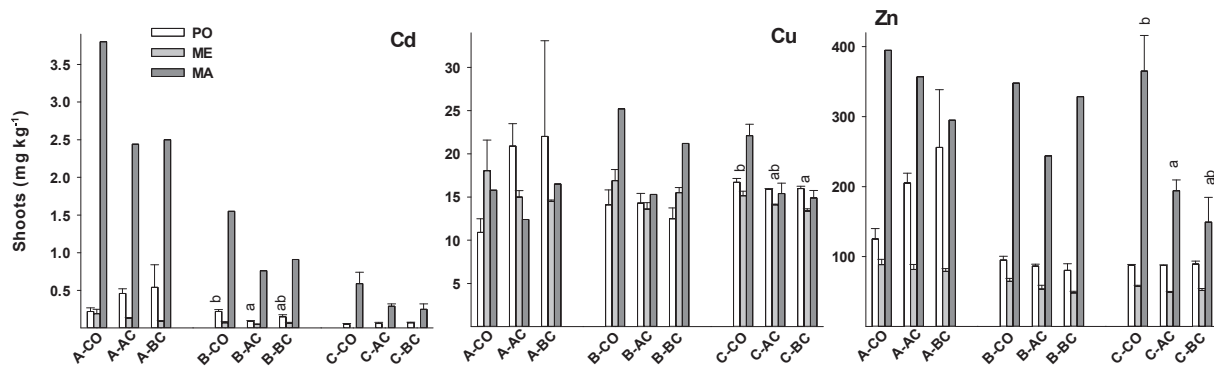
### 3.2.3. Low molecular weight organic acids

The effect of soil type on exudates amounts was clear being similar between soil A and B and completely different to soil C (Fig. 5). Oxalic acid was the only LMWOA that was released in the three soils and in the rhizosphere of the three species (Table S2). Fumaric acid was only measured in MA exudates in soil A and B (and in ME in soil C) at low concentrations (Fig. 5 and Table S2). Citric acid was only released by the roots of ME (in soil A and B) and of PO (in soil amended B soil). In the case of soil C (amended or not), concentration of LMWOAs for all the species was much lower than values obtained for the other two soils. In this soil, exudates composition did not differ between treatment-species combination except for ME growing in amended soils (Fig. 5), where four LMWOAs analysed were released.

In general, contents of oxalic and malic acids released for plant growing in soils soil A and B were higher than those obtained for plants growing in washed sand (Experiment 1). However, content of these acids measured in soil C was lower than those found in the experiment using washed sand (Fig. 2 and Table S2).

### 3.2.4. Factorial analysis and correlations

By means of Factorial analysis, we established the importance of “Soil” (Fact 1) and “Plant species” (Fact 2) in this study (Fig. 6). In non-amended treatments (CO), factor 1 (35.2% of variance) was described by TOC and LMWOAs (except fumaric acid) whereas factor 2 (34.3%) was explained by metal concentrations in plant and fumaric acid. There was a clear difference between soils, mainly



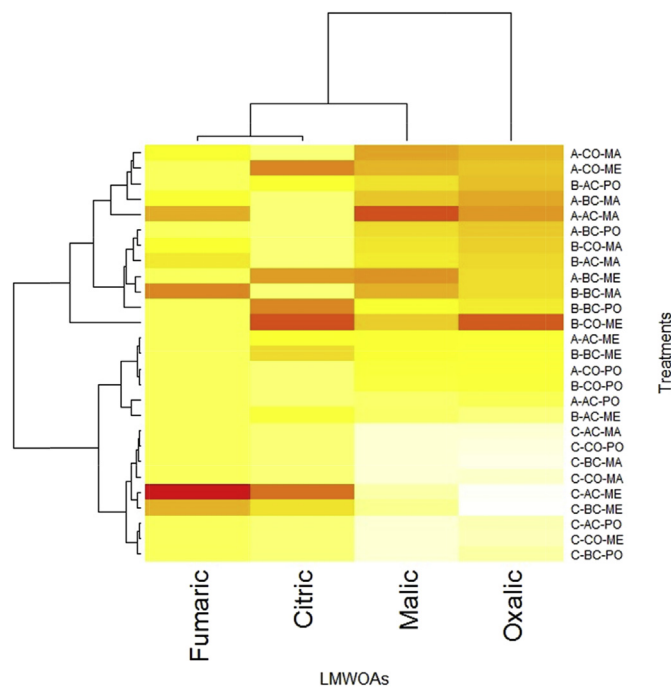
**Fig. 4.** Cadmium, Cu and Zn in aerial part of plants grown in the three studied soils (A, B and C). Significant differences for each soil and plant per treatment are indicated with different letters. CO, No Amendment; BC, Biosolid compost; AC, Alperujo compost; PO, *P. annua*; ME, *M. polymorpha*; MA, *M. sylvestris*.

with soil C (highest TOC content and lowest LMWOAs exudates). The plant species factor played also an important role in this separation. MA species showed a strong relation with metal in plant and the release of fumaric acid in contrast to PO and ME. However, ME was the species most affected by Soil factor. Characteristics of soil C (higher organic matter than the other soils) made that the differences between species were smaller than in the other soils.

The application of organic amendments entailed changes in the arrangement of factor scores and, therefore in the importance of factors in each case, especially with the alperujo compost (AC). In this case, factor 1 (41.7% variance) became more relevant than in control. Factor 1 was explained, in addition to TOC, by oxalic and malic acid and metal uptake (Cd and Zn), whereas the variables described by factor 2 (24.8%) were citric and fumaric acid. Factor scores were mainly arranged along a single axis (factor 1). In this case, the metal uptake and the concentrations of malic and citric

acids released into the rhizosphere were directly related between them and opposed to the TOC content, which established the difference between the 3 studied soils. In treatments applying biosolid compost (BC), factor 1 (32.7%) was defined by TOC, oxalic and malic acids whereas metal uptake and fumaric acid were related to factor 2 (32.4%). Citric acid was partially related to both factors (Fact 1: 0.668; Fact 2:  $-0.574$ ).

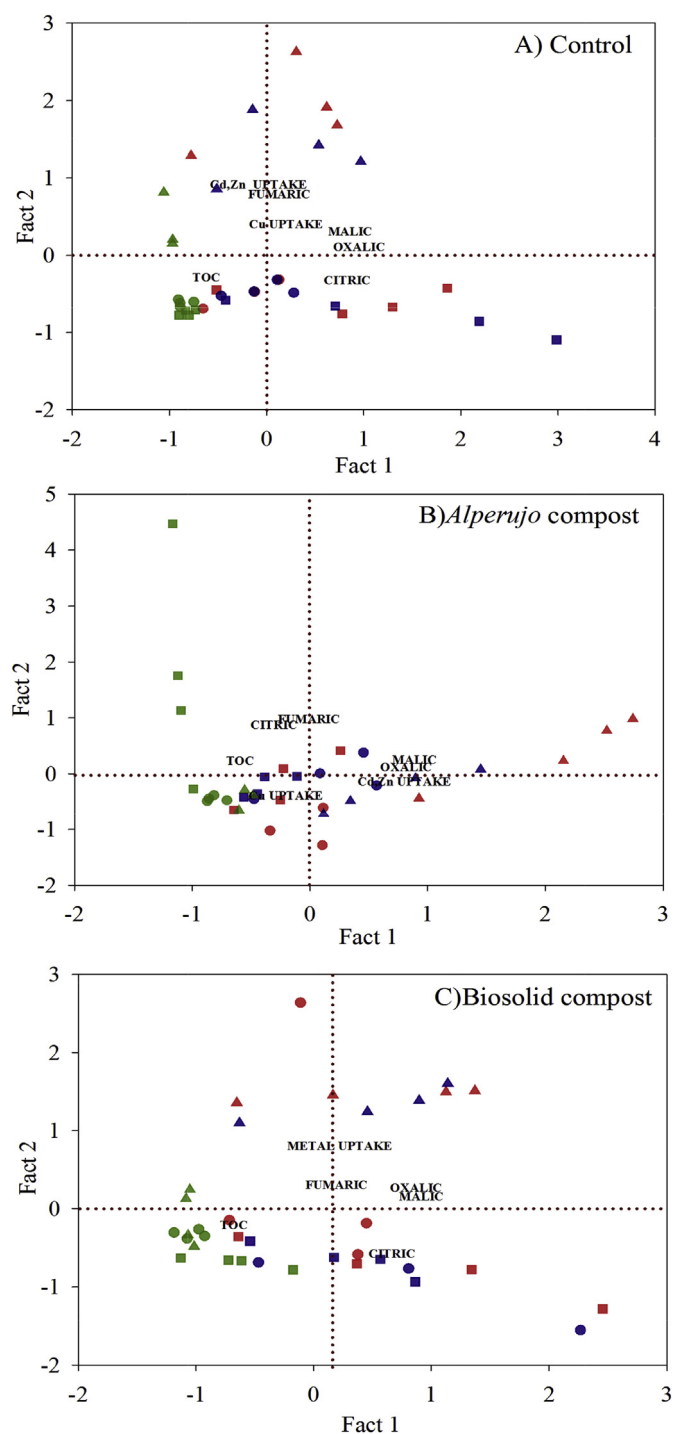
The correlation analysis showed that, for all species, TOC was inversely correlated with Cu and Zn available, and with LMWOAs concentration ( $p < 0.05$ ). Correlation between metals bioavailability and organic acids also depended on the plant species. The availability of Cu in the soils was positively correlated with an increase of malic acid (PO and MA  $p < 0.01$ ; ME  $p < 0.05$ ) and with oxalic and fumaric acids (in MA) ( $p < 0.01$ ). However, fumaric acid content decreased with the increase of Cu and Zn availability in ME rhizosphere ( $p < 0.01$ ). In the case of PO and MA, LMWOAs were positively correlated with Zn availability (PO  $p < 0.01$ ; MA  $p < 0.05$ ). In general, metal content in plants were positively correlated with oxalic and malic acid. However, correlations between metal concentrations in aerial parts and fumaric acid were found positive for MA and negative for ME.



**Fig. 5.** Heatmap clustering. Heatmap shows the different exudates (LMWOAs) composition according to the different treatments, plants and soils. For each organic acid, values are colored from clear yellow (low) to red (high). (For interpretation of the references to colour in this figure caption, the reader is referred to the web version of this article.)

#### 4. Discussion

For the three studied species (PO, ME and MA) the LMWOAs detected were oxalic, malic, citric and fumaric acids in all plant exudates (except specific cases). In particular, the main LMWOAs released (in both experiments) were oxalic and malic acid in agreement with previous studies carried out in contaminated environments with other plant species (Zeng et al., 2008; Quartacci et al., 2009). The scarce exudation (and in many occasions the absence) of fumaric acid measured in root exudates can be related to stress type (resulting from metal presence) since malic, citric and oxalic have a higher involvement in the complexation of metals (Hinsinger et al., 2006). Several factors can affect plant exudates e.g. plant nutrient status (Bowsher et al., 2015), metal stress, soil type (pH, organic matter content, soil structure) and plant species (Chiang et al., 2006). These acids are also released in response to low nutrient availability (Dakora and Phillips, 2002) but as the nutritional requirements were covered in washed sand medium, the root exudates only responded to the stress derived of contamination without other factors interfering. In this medium, citric acid was the LMWOA that clearly reflected the effect of the contamination gradient tested, due to its increase at high doses, independently of the species. The biomass decreased and the highest metal concentrations in plants at high doses coincided with the citric acid increase which could be related to the ability of citric



**Fig. 6.** Factor scores corresponding to different plant species and soils are arranged along two main factors. Factorial analysis was carried out for the different treatments (Control, *Alperujo* and Biosolid compost) and the variables used (Total Organic Carbon; Low Weight Molecular Organic Acids; Cd, Cu and Zn uptake by plant) are represented in black colour. *P. annua*, Circles; *M. polymorpha*, Square; *M. sylvestris*, Triangle; Soil A, red colour; Soil B, blue colour; Soil C, green colour.

acid to promote the movement of heavy metals in the rhizosphere (mainly Zn and Cd) at near neutral pH (Schwab et al., 2008; Ding et al., 2014).

In absence of soil, the organic acids composition and quantity depend mainly on plant species and metal doses (Meier et al., 2012). The experiment carried out in washed sand allowed to

study metal plant uptake of each species, because this substrate reduces the environmental variables that can affect/modify metal mobility. Metal mobility, and hence the metal concentration that can be uptaken by plants, may vary in the rhizosphere according to the species (Montiel-Rozas et al., 2015). The different plants behaviour could be related to the strategy that each plant species develops in heavy metal contaminated environments (Bao et al., 2011). In this study, the three studied plants tended to exclude metals until moderate contamination rates (until dosis 4). However, at higher doses MA accumulated higher metal concentrations in their tissues than the other plants. Although at higher concentrations of Cd, Cu and Zn a significant increase of oxalic acid was observed, the highest metal accumulation in MA concurred with the presence of lowest levels of LMWOAs. This is in agreement with previous findings that established the higher exudation of LMWOAs as an efficient exclusion mechanism reducing the metal uptake and allowing the plant growth at high levels of contamination (Meier et al., 2012). The concentrations of organic acids in ME exudates (a leguminous species) were the highest (Fig. 2) and, in MA, the lowest, composed mainly by oxalic acid. This result is related to the LMWOAs production increment as a plant mechanism against toxicity generate by metals due to the chelating character of organic acids (Han et al., 2006; Xu et al., 2007). Malic acid concentration in PO (a graminaceae species) exudates was, together with oxalic acid, relevant at all contamination levels. Cadmium and Cu concentrations found in PO roots (the lowest concentrations found in all species) could be related to the possible role of oxalic and malic acids alleviating phytotoxicity under metal stress (Zeng et al., 2008). Another factor that could explain the lower metal concentration in *P. annua* roots is the secretion of phytosiderophores (amino acids) which form stables complex with metals (Hinsinger et al., 2006).

Different factors affect to plant exudates when plants grow in soils. In this study, the low differences between pH values in the soils allowed to evaluate the relation of organic acids with other variables as Total Organic Carbon and study plant behaviour without a decisive influence of pH which has a strongly effect on heavy metal extraction/availability and on organic acids (types and concentrations) (Ding et al., 2014). In the studied soils, a clear effect of amendments on soil pH was not detected. However, the effect of amendments in the amount and composition of LMWOAs was different depending on the plant species, increasing in treated soils growing PO and decreasing in the case of ME exudates. Modification of production and composition of plant exudates because of amendment application has been established in previous studies (Koo et al., 2006; Park et al., 2011).

Soil factor was more important since there were clear differences between LMWOAs composition found in contaminated soils (Fig. 6). In soil with higher organic matter content (soil C), with the exception of ME in amended soils, only oxalic acid was found in the exudates. In the other soils (A and B), more similar in terms of organic matter content, the composition of the exudates was similar.

Soil C showed a better nutritional level than Soil A and B. As it has been said above, LMWOAs were also released in response to low nutrient availability (Dakora and Phillips, 2002), which could explain the lower contents of oxalic acid and no malic excretion in this soil. Particularly, malic acid excretion has been reported as a plant response in phosphorus deficient conditions (Bais et al., 2006).

The organic carbon content in soils was directly related to the decrease of metal availability in the rhizosphere due to its ability to complex metals (Park et al., 2011). Subsequently, the reduction of metal stress results in a decrease in quantity and diversity in organic acids exudates. Numerous studies have shown the

important role that the LMWOAs play on bioavailability and mobility of the metals in soils (e.g. Hinsinger et al., 2006; Haoliang et al., 2007). Acidification or modification of redox conditions and chelating ability are the mechanisms to change the metal and nutrient availability (Seshadri et al., 2015). In the present study, the higher Cu availability in soils with lower organic matter content was related to the exudation of malic acid. The efficacy in Cu desorption from soil particles showed by malic acid is due to high stability of malate-metal complexes (Qin et al., 2004). Moreover, it should be noted that the level of Cu in aerial parts of plants varies scarcely between soils, despite the availability of this element was much lower in soil C.

Addition of amendments also leads to a biomass increase, although PO was the species less affected. Nevertheless, high biomass values in all cases were found in soil with higher organic matter (soil C). Thereby, plant growth conditions were better due to a reduction of stress conditions and results in a similar organic acid exudation of all species. The amendments also supplied nutrients and among the amendments applied, *alperujo* compost reduced differences between species in soils A and B. This effect could be related to the intrinsic characteristics of amendment since they provide higher concentrations of nutrients and less heavy metals than biosolid compost (Madejón et al., 2014).

## 5. Conclusions

The assessment of LMWOAs exudates in two different matrixes has allowed to know the potential response of each plant species to exposition at different Cd, Cu and Zn concentrations (both in metal uptake and LMWOAs exudation) as well as the behaviour in real conditions under different heavy metal stress levels.

Both composition and amount of LMWOAs vary according to the species and the soil conditions. In addition to metal availability, nutrient level as well as organic carbon content have a direct effect on the plant and therefore on its exudates. Due to different tolerance to metal stress and physiology, plant exudates differed although the main organic acids released by all species were oxalic and malic acids. Both organic acid concentration and composition were related to metal concentration in vegetal tissues. Thereby, the leguminous (*M. polymorpha*) was the species with lowest metal concentrations in tissues, highest values of biomass and a more diverse composition of organic acids exudates. Effect of amendments on plant exudates varied according to the species. The concentration of LMWOAs exudates by *P. annua* roots increased in amended treatments whereas *M. polymorpha* exudates decrease (mainly with *alperujo* compost addition). To conclude, the exudation of LMWOAs has demonstrated to be an important response mechanism of plants to phytotoxicity caused by heavy metals since increasing their excretion at high contamination levels. Moreover, there is also an important influence of the soil quality, in terms of organic matter and nutrient contents, because the highest LMWOAs concentrations were produced under poor soil quality conditions.

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## Appendix A. Supplementary data

Supplementary data related to this article can be found at <http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.envpol.2016.05.080>.

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### **V.3. Native soil organic matter as a decisive factor to determine the arbuscular mycorrhizal fungal community structure in contaminated soils**

*La materia orgánica nativa del suelo como factor decisivo para determinar la estructura de la comunidad de hongos micorrízicos arbusculares en suelos contaminados*

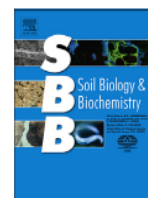
#### **Resumen**

Las funciones beneficiosas que los hongos micorrízicos arbusculares (HMA) proporcionan a las plantas en términos de nutrición y protección frente a condiciones de estrés son notables. Este estudio se centra en la identificación de los ecotipos de HMA asociados a diferentes especies vegetales (*Poa annua*, *Medicago polymorpha* y *Malva sylvestris*) creciendo en tres suelos degradados con diferentes contenidos de materia orgánica, fósforo y elementos traza (ET; Cu, Cd, Mn y Zn). Los suelos se enmendaron con compost de biosólidos y de alperujo. Los cambios en la estructura de la comunidad de HMA, en la diversidad, la riqueza, la colonización radicular y la incorporación de ET por las plantas fueron evaluados.

Tanto los factores del suelo como la especie vegetal tuvieron un efecto significativo sobre la composición de la comunidad de HMA así como sobre la colonización radicular. Sin embargo, la diversidad de HMA y la riqueza sólo se vieron afectadas por las condiciones del suelo. Entre los factores del suelo, la materia orgánica fue el que influyó en mayor medida a la comunidad de HMA. A medida que aumentó la calidad del suelo (entendida como un mayor contenido en materia orgánica y menores concentraciones de Cd, Cu y Zn) Glomeraceae disminuyó en favor de un incremento de Claroideoglomeraceae en la comunidad. Asimismo, la diversidad fúngica y la riqueza se incrementaron y el nivel de colonización disminuyó con la mejora de la calidad del suelo. La absorción de ET varió según la especie vegetal. En general, las menores concentraciones de ET se encontraron en *M. polymorpha*. La adición de las enmiendas (materia orgánica exógena) no afectó ni a la incorporación de ET por las plantas ni a ninguna de las variables fúngicas. Finalmente, este estudio señala la importancia de la identificación de los ecotipos de HMA adaptados a suelos degradados, ya que son

fundamentales para la mejora de la eficiencia de los inóculos utilizados en los procesos de restauración ecológica.





## Native soil organic matter as a decisive factor to determine the arbuscular mycorrhizal fungal community structure in contaminated soils.

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### ABSTRACT

The beneficial functions that arbuscular mycorrhizal (AM) fungi provide to the plants in terms of nutrition and protection against stress conditions are noteworthy. This study is focused on the identification of AM ecotypes associated with different plants species (*Poa annua*, *Medicago polymorpha* and *Malva sylvestris*) growing in three degraded soils with different organic matter, phosphorus and trace element (TE; Cu, Cd, Mn and Zn) content. Soils were amended with biosolid and *alperujo* compost. Shifts in AM fungal community structure, diversity, richness, root colonization and plant TE uptake were evaluated.

Both soil factors and plant species had a significant effect on AM fungi community composition as well as on root colonization. However, AM fungal diversity and richness were only affected by soil type. Among soil factors, soil organic matter was a major driver of AM fungal community. With increasing soil quality (understood as higher organic matter content and lower Cd, Cu and Zn concentrations) Glomeraceae decreased in favor of an increase of Claroideoglomeraceae in the community. Likewise, AM fungal diversity and richness increased and root colonization decreased according to the soil quality improvement. TE uptake varied among the plant species; In general, lowest TE concentrations were found in *M. polymorpha*. No effect due to amendment (exogenous organic matter) addition was found either in AM fungal parameters measured or TE plant uptake. This study has pointed out the importance of the identification of AM fungal ecotypes adapted to degraded soils because they are fundamental for improving the efficiency of inocula used in ecological restoration processes.

### 1. Introduction

The remediation of trace elements (TE) contaminated soils is of great importance due to the increasing number of sites potentially contaminated by metals and metalloids (Panagos et al., 2013). From an environmental point of view, phytoremediation is the most advisable technique to restore functionality of these contaminated soils. Among the different phytoremediation approaches, phytostabilisation is the most reliable for a large-scale contaminated areas (including multi-elemental contamination) because is a more realistic possibility of risk-managed and monitored natural attenuation (Dickinson et al., 2009). This technique is based on the establishment of a vegetation cover that promotes *in situ* stabilization of TE by combining the use of metal-tolerant plants and soil amendments. In addition to the reduction of the mobility and toxicity of pollutants, this technique improves soil fertility and plant establishment (Alkorta et al., 2010).

Plants used in phytostabilisation should promote the retaining of metals at the root level, restricting their

transport to aerial parts (Montiel-Rozas et al., 2015). Several studies have shown that synergistic interactions between plants and rhizosphere microbes, like plant growth promoting rhizobacteria and arbuscular mycorrhizal (AM) fungi, are beneficial for phytostabilisation (Kidd et al., 2009; Mench et al., 2009). Particularly, AM fungi can promote plant growth (Labidi et al., 2012), immobilize TE (González-Chávez et al., 2004) and promote the accumulation of secondary metabolites (e.g. carotenoids and flavonoids) which increases the antioxidant capacity of the plant (Hristozkova et al., 2016). Nevertheless, the role of AM fungi in the TE uptake into the plant is not clear. Gaur and Adholeya (2004) reported that AM fungi can limit the transfer of TE to their host plants by precipitating in polyphosphate granules in the soil, adsorbing into fungal cell walls and chelating metals inside the fungus. However, other studies have shown the opposite (Marques et al., 2006; Punamiya et al., 2010).

Due to the functional diversity exhibited by AM fungal species, the knowledge of fungal community composition in different contaminated soils becomes important. Although the effect of TE on AM fungal abundance and diversity has been studied (Krishnamoorthy et al., 2015; Montiel-Rozas et al., 2016a), research is still necessary to understand the

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factors that determine the structure of the AMF community (Yang et al. 2015a). Indeed, the tolerance against TE conferred by different AM fungal species and ecotypes to plants can be variable (Gaur and Adholeya, 2004; Zarei et al., 2008), and thus the identification of the AM fungal community and the description of their relationship with soil properties are crucial aspects for the understanding of the ecology of AM fungi in TE contaminated soils.

Most phytostabilisation programs include the addition of amendments (Kidd et al., 2009), which enables changes in soil properties (at physical, chemical and biological level; Clemente et al., 2015). Consequently, AM fungal community could change in response to the addition of an organic amendment (Montiel-Rozas et al., 2016a). Therefore, the effect of amendments on AM fungal richness, abundance and phylogenetic structure of their community is another key point to be considered.

Although the effect of AM fungal inoculation on plant status in stressful environments has been widely studied (Cozzolino et al., 2016; Firmin et al., 2015), the tolerant AM fungi ecotypes as well as the structure and composition of AM fungal communities developed in contaminated soils are less known. The identification of AM fungal Operational Taxonomic Units (OTUs) in contaminated soils could help to create “ad hoc” inoculum for each case of study and guarantee the success of the remediation process. Accordingly, the main objective of this study was identify the differences in richness, diversity and phylogenetic structure of AM fungal communities as well as the dominant OTUs present in three soils differentiated by fertility and contamination level. Additionally, we aimed to test the relative importance of different soil factors for structuring the AM fungal communities and to test the effect of two organic amendments both in the AM fungal community composition and root colonization degree.

## 2. Material and methods

### 2.1. Experimental design and sampling

The experiment was carried out in pots (3L) placed outdoors and filled with three contaminated soils: soil A and B (soils from different sites inside the area affected by the Aznalcóllar mine spill; Grimalt et al., 1999) and soil C (from an area chronically contaminated by heavy metals; Tharsis, Huelva, SW Spain). Contamination level differs between soils as shown by pseudo-total concentrations of TE: A soil (Cd=1.78; Cu= 112; Mn=521; P= 484, Zn=527, mg kg<sup>-1</sup>), B soil (Cd=0.23; Cu= 87; Mn=163; P= 430, Zn=107, mg kg<sup>-1</sup>) and C soil (Cd=0.70; Cu= 97; Mn=2008, P=687, Zn=463, mg kg<sup>-1</sup>). Likewise, both pH and Total organic carbon (TOC) varied among studied soils, being A soil slightly more basic than B and C soils and increasing TOC content as follows: B < A < C (see Table 1 in Montiel-Rozas et al., 2016b). Soil texture also differed among soils, ranging from loam (A and C) to sandy loam soil (B).

Three treatments were established according to the organic amendment applied (25 g per kg of soil): control (C; unamended), biosolid compost (BC) and alperujo compost (AC). The main characteristics and a description of both amendments are reported in Ciadamidaro et al. (2015).

According to their presence in the degraded soils and their phytostabilizer ability (Montiel-Rozas et al., 2015), three plants species were selected: *Poa annua* L. (Poaceae), *Medicago polymorpha* L. (Leguminosae) and *Malva sylvestris* L. (Malvaceae). Plant species were grown separately in pots. It were established four replicates for each soil type and amendment combination making a total of 27 treatments (108 pots). Pots were arranged according to a complete randomised block design.

Soils and plants were sampled after a period of 6 months. Rhizospheric soil was collected of each replicate and was air-dried, crushed and sieved (<2 mm) prior to preparation for chemical analysis. Aboveground plant material (shoots) was washed with a 0.1N HCl solution for 15 s and with distilled water for 10 s and then was oven dried at 70 °C for 48h. Dried plant material was ground and passed through a 500-µm stainless-steel sieve prior to preparation for analysis. Roots were cleaned with distilled water and the four replicates per treatment (soil type-amendment type-plant species) were pooled into a single sample and homogenized. Then, they were divided into two parts. One part was kept in 35 mg aliquots at -80°C for molecular analyses. The other part was kept in 70% ethanol for root staining and mycorrhizal colonization measurements.

### 2.2. Chemical analysis

Soil pH was measured in a 1:2.5 sample/1M KCl extract after shaking for 1 h. Available-P and TOC were determined according to Olsen et al. (1954) and Walkley and Black (1934), respectively. CaCl<sub>2</sub>-extractable TE (Cd, Cu, Mn and Zn) were determined according to Houba et al. (2000). Pseudo-total TE concentrations in soil samples (<60 mm) were determined by digestion with aqua regia (1:3 v:v conc. HNO<sub>3</sub>:HCl) in a microwave oven (Microwave Laboratory Station Mileston ETHOS 900, Milestone s.r.l., Sorisole, Italy). Dried plant material was digested by wet oxidation with concentrated HNO<sub>3</sub> (65%, trace analysis grade) under pressure in a microwave oven. Trace elements in all the extracts were determined by ICP-OES spectrophotometer (Varian ICP720-ES). For plant extracts, the accuracy of the analytical methods was assessed through BCR analysis (Community Bureau of Reference) of a plant sample (INCT-TL-1, INCT-OBTL-5 and NCS-DC-73348).

### 2.3. AM fungal root colonization

Roots were ink stained according to Vierheilig et al. (1998). Roots were cleared with 10% (wt/vol) KOH at 85°C for 10 min and were heated for 3 min in a 5% ink-vinegar solution at 85°C. AM fungal colonization was measured in 44 fragments of 1 cm per sample. Total colonization (%) and colonization by fungal structures (percentage of hyphae, vesicles and arbuscules) were estimated according to Hernández-Cuevas et al. (2008).

### 2.4. DNA extraction and PCR amplification

Frozen roots were powdered using a bead beater at 30 Hz with 3-mm beads (Qiagen TissueLyser, Crawley, UK). DNA extraction was performed using the DNeasy Plant Minikit as instructed by the manufacturer (Qiagen, Crawley, UK). The primer pair FLR3/NDL22 (Gollotte et al. 2004; Van Tuinen et al. 1998) was used for the amplification of approx. 350 bp of the 28S rDNA D2 region. PCR was carried out in a final volume of 20 µl containing 10 µM of each primer, 5 µl HOT FIREPol® Blend Master Mix (Solis BioDyne, Tartu, Estonia), and 1 µl of the template DNA. PCR conditions were as follows: 95 °C for 15 min, 95 °C for 30 s, 57 °C for 30 s, and 72 °C for 1 min (34 cycles), followed by 10 min at 72 °C. PCR products were run on a 1.5 % agarose gel in TAE buffer and visualized under UV light after staining with GelRed (Nucleic Acid Gel Stain, ×10,000 in water, Biotium, USA).

Two bands of different size were revealed in the gel. In previous studies using the same primer pair both bands were characterized and the larger band was found to contain the glomeromycotan sequences (Montiel-Rozas et al., 2016a). Accordingly, the larger band in each gel was excised and purified using the Montage DNA Gel Extraction Kit (Merck Life Science, Copenhagen, Denmark). PCR products were then cloned using the TOPO TA Cloning Kit (Invitrogen, Life Technolo-

logies, Karlsruhe, Germany). Positive transformed clones were re-amplified with the FLR3-NDL22 primer pair and sanger sequenced.

### 2.5. Phylogenetic analysis and OTU designation

Sequences were aligned (MAFFT 7.0) and chimeric sequences were identified and excluded by means of *uchime* algorithm implemented in Mothur (Schloss et al., 2009) using an external reference dataset of 11,446 of AM fungal LSU sequences obtained from GenBank. Tamura Nei nucleotide substitution model with a discrete gamma distribution was found to be the best fitted using MEGA 6.0 (Tamura et al., 2013) and it was used to calculate subsequent evolutionary distances between sequences. Sequences were grouped to 97% similarity and a representative sequence of each group per treatment was selected using Mothur (Schloss et al., 2009). Representative sequences were re-aligned using MAFFT 7.0 (FFT-NS-2 strategy, assuming multiple conserved regions and long gaps) and ordered in a phylogenetic neighbor net (SplitsTree4, Huson & Bryant, 2006). The monophyletic clade approach (MCA) was implemented to define OTUs which were identified in the split network as terminal clades without reticulations (Lekberg et al., 2014). A phylogenetic tree was also performed using a neighbor-joining approach in MEGA 6.0 software (Tamura et al. 2013), to verify how the delimitation of MCA fitted in with the phylogeny.

The abundance matrix of OTUs per sample was constructed by accounting for the number of clones belonging to each OTU. To test if the sampling intensity was adequate to identify the great majority of OTUs present in each soil, rarefaction curves for each treatment- species combination were calculated and the maximum number of OTUs inferred.

### 2.6 Nucleotide sequence accession numbers

Non-chimeric sequences were submitted to the GenBank database (<http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/genbank/>) under accession numbers KX684201 - KX684854.

### 2.7. Statistical analysis

One-way ANOVA was used separately to test differences between soil type, amendment type and plant species regarding pH, Olsen-P, TE concentration and TOC in soil, TE concentration in plant tissue, mycorrhizal colonization and diversity. Normality and homoscedasticity of data were tested by Shapiro-Wilk and Levene test, respectively. Non-normal variables were transformed prior to ANOVA by adequate transformation according to the skewness and kurtosis. Post-hoc analyses were based on Tukey's test (or Dunnett's T3 test if the variances were unequal). Significance level used was 0.05. TE concentration in soil and TOC did not satisfy the requirements of normality and testing between soil types was carried out by U Mann Whitney test.

For each plant species, the relation between TE and phosphorus concentration in plant with AM fungal diversity was evaluated by means of linear regression. A Spearman's correlation analysis was performed to determine the relationship between root colonization (both total colonization and fungal structures percentages) and TE concentration in plants, TOC content, soil TE and AM fungal diversity respectively. These statistical analyses were carried out with the program SPSS 23.0 for Windows.

Prior to multivariate statistical analyses, the OTU abundance matrix was Hellinger transformed using *decostand* function in *vegan* package (Oksanen et al. 2012) in R. Diversity indices (Simpson (1-D) and Shannon) were calculated for each soil-amendment-plant combination using *diversity* function in *vegan* package (Oksanen et al. 2012).

The effect of the different factors (amendment type,

plant species and soil type) on AM fungal community composition was analysed by permutational multivariate analysis of variance (PERMANOVA, McArdle and Anderson 2001) embedded in the function *adonis* in *vegan* package (Oksanen et al., 2012). The importance of quantitative soil variables on AM fungal community was also analysed by means of PERMANOVA. Since the OTU abundance matrix was previously Hellinger transformed, Euclidean distance was used in this analyses as measure of dissimilarity (Legendre and Gallagher 2001).

A Non-metric Multidimensional Scaling (NMDS) ordination (using Euclidean distance), was carried out to allow for a representation of AM fungal community variation and the function *envfit* (Oksanen et al. 2012) was used to draw vectors representing soil variables with a statistical effect on AM fungal community composition (assessed by PERMANOVA).

The phylogenetic dispersion of the AM fungal community was analyzed using evolutionary distances between OTUs and calculating the standardized effect size of mean pairwise distance (SES-MPD) with the *picante* package in R (Kembel et al., 2010). The index was calculated using the abundance matrix plus the evolutionary distance matrix of the OTUs per sample and were applied by using independent swap algorithm as the null randomization model. Both abundance-weighted and abundance-unweighted data were used for the calculation; however, since both approaches reached similar results, only those abundance-weighted will be commented. The mean values of the SES-MPD per treatment were then used to judge the clustering or segregation against random theoretical communities of the AM fungal community. Significance of the calculated index was tested with t tests.

## 3. Results

### 3.1. Effect of amendment addition on soil properties

The effect of organic amendments depended on the tested soil. Generally, amendment addition slightly altered the pH, whereas P availability increased significantly compared to the control ( $p < 0.001$ ,  $F = 47.75$ ). Organic matter content was significantly increased by both amendments in soil C whereas the increase in soil A was only significant when BC was applied. Despite of the low TOC content in soil B, amendments had no significant effect on this variable.

Trace element availability decreased with amendment addition being Mn the most affected element. Indeed, in soils C and B, Mn availability was significantly lower after amendment addition than in control pots. Main differences were found between A and C soils ( $p < 0.001$ , for all TE): overall lower TE availability was observed in C ( $Cd < 0.005 \text{ mg kg}^{-1}$ ;  $Cu, Zn \leq 0.4 \text{ mg kg}^{-1}$ ) except for Mn ( $18 \text{ mg kg}^{-1}$ ). Copper and Zn availability was similar in soils A and B ( $Cu \sim 2 \text{ mg kg}^{-1}$ ;  $Zn \sim 1-1.5 \text{ mg kg}^{-1}$ ) and higher than in C soil ( $p < 0.001$ ). Phosphorus availability was slightly higher in C soil, although statistical differences with the other two soils were not detected.

### 3.2. Trace elements and phosphorus concentration in plants

Trace element concentration in plant tissues varied according to the plant species in all soils except for Cu (Table 1). In general, lower TE concentrations were measured in *M. polymorpha* shoots.

Cadmium and Zn accumulation decreased as follows: *M. sylvestris* > *P. annua* > *M. polymorpha*. *M. sylvestris* was the species that accumulated significantly higher amounts of these two metals in all soils (reaching the maximum in A soil). However, Mn accumulation in plant did not follow the same tendency. Higher Mn uptake was found in *P. annua* (A and B soil) and *M. sylvestris* (in C soil), showing both species significant differences compared to the rest of species in each case. Phos-

phorus content in aerial parts was similar between soils. Significant higher values were found in *M. sylvestris*, except for C soil (Table 1). Amendment addition did not have any significant effect on metal accumulation in plants and no clear trends were detected (data not shown).

### 3.3. AM fungal colonization

Total AM fungal colonization (%) as well as the extent of AM fungal structures (hyphae, vesicles and arbuscules) were measured (Figure 1). No effect attributable to amendment addition was found whereas soil type had a significant effect on overall colonization (Table S1). With the exception of arbuscules, plants grown in C soil showed lower colonization values and lower presence of AM fungal structures (Table S1). In general, major differences were found between C and A soils, with significant differences in hyphae and total colonization. Vesicles were significantly lower in C than in the other soils. Likewise, colonization differed according to the plant species except for arbuscules.

Among plants, the lowest overall colonization and structures presence was found in *P. annua* roots, being significantly different of *M. polymorpha* and *M. sylvestris* ( $p < 0.05$ ) (Table S2). *M. sylvestris* showed the highest colonization in A and B soils whereas *M. polymorpha* showed the highest values in C soil (see statistical differences Fig. 1).

The concentration of TE in plants was related to fungal colonization. A positive correlation was found between Zn in plant and hyphae and total colonization for all species (*P. annua*,  $r_{Zn-hyphae} = 0.72$ ,  $r_{Zn-colonization} = 0.68$ ; *M. polymorpha*,  $r_{Zn-hyphae} = 0.74$ ,  $r_{Zn-colonization} = 0.68$ ; *M. sylvestris*,  $r_{Zn-hyphae} = 0.86$ ,  $r_{Zn-colonization} = 0.76$ ;  $p < 0.05$ ). Cd was positively related with hyphae and total colonization in *P. annua* ( $r_{Cd-hyphae} = 0.72$ ;  $r_{Cd-colonization} = 0.71$ ;  $p < 0.05$ ) and *M. sylvestris* ( $r_{Cd-hyphae} = 0.76$  ( $p < 0.05$ );  $r_{Cd-colonization} = 0.91$  ( $p < 0.01$ )). Mn in plant tissues was only correlated with vesicles in the case of *P. annua* ( $r_{Mn-vesicles} = 0.67$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ).

Likewise, the colonization and fungal structures were affected by soil TOC. For all species, hyphae, vesicles and total colonization were negatively correlated to TOC. Correlations were significant for vesicles in *P. annua* ( $r = -0.80$ ;  $p < 0.05$ ) and *M. sylvestris* ( $r = -0.92$ ;  $p < 0.01$ ) and for colonization in *P. annua* ( $r = -0.70$ ;  $p < 0.05$ ). However, arbuscules showed a positive relation with TOC although no statistical significance was found in any plant species.

Analysis of overall data showed the existence of significant correlations between colonization and P and TE (both available and total concentrations) in soil (Table 2). Total colonization was negatively correlated to available P ( $p < 0.01$ ) and Mn ( $p < 0.05$ ) whereas the extension of fungal structures in root increased when increasing availability of Cu (vesicles) and Cd (hyphae and arbuscules). Moreover, pseudo total TE concentrations showed significant correlations with AM fungal root colonization being Cd (positively) and P (negatively correlated) the elements that had the greatest impact on AM colonization (Table 2). In addition, the presence of arbuscules in roots was positively related to total Cu, Mn and Zn. However, vesicles were negatively affected by total Mn and Pb.

### 3.4. AM fungal diversity

The most diverse AM fungal communities estimated by the Shannon and Simpson indexes were found in C soil (Fig. 1). These values were statistically different in soil C compared to those in soil A (lowest values) (Shannon:  $p = 0.033$ ,  $F = 3.940$ ; Simpson:  $p = 0.034$ ,  $F = 3.915$ ). No significant change in these indices was observed as response to amendment addition.

Except for *P. annua*, the diversity of AM fungi and the concentration of some TE in plants was correlated (positive lineal relationship between Mn in plant and both diversity

indices for *M. polymorpha* ( $p < 0.01$ ,  $R2Shannon = 0.678$ ,  $R2Simpson = 0.679$ ) and for *M. sylvestris* ( $p = 0.07$ ,  $R2Shannon = 0.376$ ,  $R2Simpson = 0.394$ ). On the contrary, Cd and diversity was negatively related with the diversity indices in both species (*M. polymorpha*:  $p = 0.07$ ,  $R2Shannon = 0.382$ ,  $R2Simpson = 0.373$ ; *M. sylvestris*:  $p < 0.05$ ,  $R2Shannon = 0.499$ ,  $R2Simpson = 0.548$ ). Regarding P uptake, only in the case of *M. polymorpha* a positive relation between AM diversity and P uptake was recorded ( $p = 0.01$ ,  $R2Shannon = 0.600$ ,  $R2Simpson = 0.560$ ).

AM fungal diversity and colonization was only significantly correlated in A soil, where both vesicles and hyphae were negatively correlated to Shannon (hyphae:  $r = -0.688$ ; vesicles:  $r = -0.671$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ) and Simpson (hyphae:  $r = -0.684$ ; vesicles:  $r = -0.656$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ) indices. Among plant species, total colonization was negatively correlated to Simpson index in *M. sylvestris* ( $r = -0.669$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ).

### 3.5. AM fungal community composition

Phylogenetic analysis showed the presence of 12 OTUs belonging to four AM fungal families: Acaulosporaceae, Paraglomeraceae, Claroideoglomeraceae and Glomeraceae (Table 3). The number of OTUs detected in each soil ranged from 71% (A soil) to 92% (B soil) of the total estimated richness. Rarefaction curves for each treatment and plant species are showed in Fig. S1.

OTU richness varied as follows: B soil < A soil < C soil (Figure 2). The estimated OTU richness was similar between A and C soils (4.8-4.9) and higher than that found in B soil (2.9). Amendment addition decreased OTU richness in A soil whereas a similar richness was found between control and amended treatments in B and C soils.

**Table 1.** Concentration of trace elements (mg kg<sup>-1</sup>; Mn, Cd, Cu, Zn) and phosphorus in plant shoots in each soil. For each element, differences among the plant species for each soil are marked. Values labeled with the same letter do not differ significantly. PO: *P.annua*; ME: *M.polymorpha*; MA: *M.sylvestris*.

| TRACE ELEMENT | SPECIES | SOIL A      | SOIL B       | SOIL C       |
|---------------|---------|-------------|--------------|--------------|
| Mn            | PO      | 142±7 b     | 218±25 c     | 86±6 a       |
|               | ME      | 38.8±1.9 a  | 54.9±6.9 a   | 87±11 a      |
|               | MA      | 33.1±3.4 a  | 138±14 b     | 195±52 b     |
| P             | PO      | 0.28±0.01 a | 0.41±0.04 a  | 0.52±0.05 c  |
|               | ME      | 0.29±0.01 a | 0.36±0.02 a  | 0.45±0.01 ab |
|               | MA      | 0.5±0.02 b  | 0.64±0.08 b  | 0.31±0.03 a  |
| Cd            | PO      | 0.38±0.08 b | 0.15±0.04 b  | 0.06±0.01 b  |
|               | ME      | 0.13±0.03 a | 0.06±0.01 a  | 0.002±0 a    |
|               | MA      | 2.91±0.4 c  | 1.07±0.24 c  | 0.36±0.1 c   |
| Cu            | PO      | 16.96±3 a   | 13.6±0.56 a  | 16.2±0.27 a  |
|               | ME      | 15.86±1.1 a | 15.35±0.96 a | 14.2±0.5 a   |
|               | MA      | 14.87±1.3 a | 20.5±2.87 a  | 17.4±2.4 a   |
| Zn            | PO      | 186±32 a    | 87.4±4.13 b  | 87.9±0.62 a  |
|               | ME      | 82.97±2.9 a | 55.3±4.8 a   | 52.7±2.4 a   |
|               | MA      | 349±29 b    | 306±31 c     | 235±64 b     |

The AM fungal family dominating the community varied from Glomeraceae to Claroideoglomeraceae in the continuum A soil – B soil – C soil (Fig. 2). In A soil, the AM fungal community composition was dominated by Glo7 (identified as *Rhizoglyphus irregularis*; Table 3) and it was very similar between amended treatments and plant species. The highest Glomeraceae diversity was found in A soil. In fact, Glo4, Glo6, Glo8 and Glo10 only appeared in this soil. The analysis of the phylogenetic dispersion agreed with these results since a significant phylogenetic clustering was only detected in treatments with

**Table 2.** Correlation coefficients between root colonization and soil variables (pH, Total organic carbon, available and pseudototal trace elements concentrations). Significant correlations are in bold (\*\* p<0.01; \* p<0.01, n=27).

|                               | pH             | TOC             | av-Cd          | av-Cu         | av-Mn          | av-Zn          | av-P            | Total Cd       | Total Cu       | Total Mn        | Total P        | Total Pb       | Total Zn       |
|-------------------------------|----------------|-----------------|----------------|---------------|----------------|----------------|-----------------|----------------|----------------|-----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|
| <b>Hyphae (%)</b>             | 0.230          | -0.316          | <b>0.424*</b>  | 0.186         | -0.342         | 0.337          | <b>-0.578**</b> | <b>0.421*</b>  | 0.249          | -0.200          | <b>-0.464*</b> | -0.368         | 0.199          |
| <b>Vesicles (%)</b>           | 0.026          | <b>-0.638**</b> | 0.100          | <b>0.469*</b> | -0.335         | <b>0.611**</b> | -0.281          | 0.009          | -0.060         | <b>-0.643**</b> | <b>-0.390*</b> | <b>-0.445*</b> | -0.251         |
| <b>Arbuscules (%)</b>         | <b>0.545**</b> | <b>0.499**</b>  | <b>0.584**</b> | 0.006         | -0.250         | -0.173         | -0.063          | <b>0.692**</b> | <b>0.731**</b> | <b>0.431*</b>   | 0.194          | -0.305         | <b>0.634**</b> |
| <b>Total colonization (%)</b> | 0.246          | -0.357          | 0.357          | 0.224         | <b>-0.393*</b> | 0.362          | <b>-0.510**</b> | <b>0.399*</b>  | 0.222          | -0.275          | <b>-0.417*</b> | <b>-0.405*</b> | 0.124          |

soil A (ses.mpd= -2.019; t= -10.165, p< 0.001).

The dominance of Glo7 was reduced in B soil allowing the appearance of members of Claroideoglomeraceae in the community (Table 3, Figure 2). The AM fungal community in C soil was clearly dominated by Cla12 (identified as *Claroideoglomus claroideum*). OTUs corresponding to Paraglomeraceae and Acaulosporaceae as well as Glo5 and Cla11 only appeared in C soil. The phylogenetic structure in soils B and C was found to be overdispersed in contrast to soil A (soil B: ses.mpd= 0.478; t= 5.140; p= 0.001; soil C: ses.mpd= 0.713; t= 2.298; p= 0.055).

Soil type and plant species had a significant influence on AM fungal community composition (Soil type: pseudoF= 36.34, p= 0.001, R<sup>2</sup>= 0.64; Plant species: pseudoF= 3.52; p= 0.014; R<sup>2</sup>= 0.062). In addition, the interaction of both factors also affected significantly the community (pseudoF= 3.52, p= 0.004, R<sup>2</sup>= 0.12). However, the analysis showed that amendments (pseudoF= 1.38, p= 0.222, R<sup>2</sup>= 0.024) did not have any significant effect. Accordingly, the variance explained by soil variables was analysed (Table 4). Among the tested variables, only available Zn and P did not affect significantly the AM fungal community composition. Total organic carbon content was the most influential variable, followed by TE availability. Results were similar when the analysis was performed using the pseudo-total TE concentrations. In this case Cd and Mn were the elements influencing in a greater extent the community (Table S3).

The relationship between TE concentration in plant and fungal communities was also studied. Results showed that Cd was the only element that was related significantly to AM fungal community composition (pseudoF= 2.93, p= 0.048, R<sup>2</sup>= 0.10). Phosphorus concentration in plants was included in the analysis to evaluate if the nutritional status of the plant and the AMF community composition were related although results did not show significant effects.

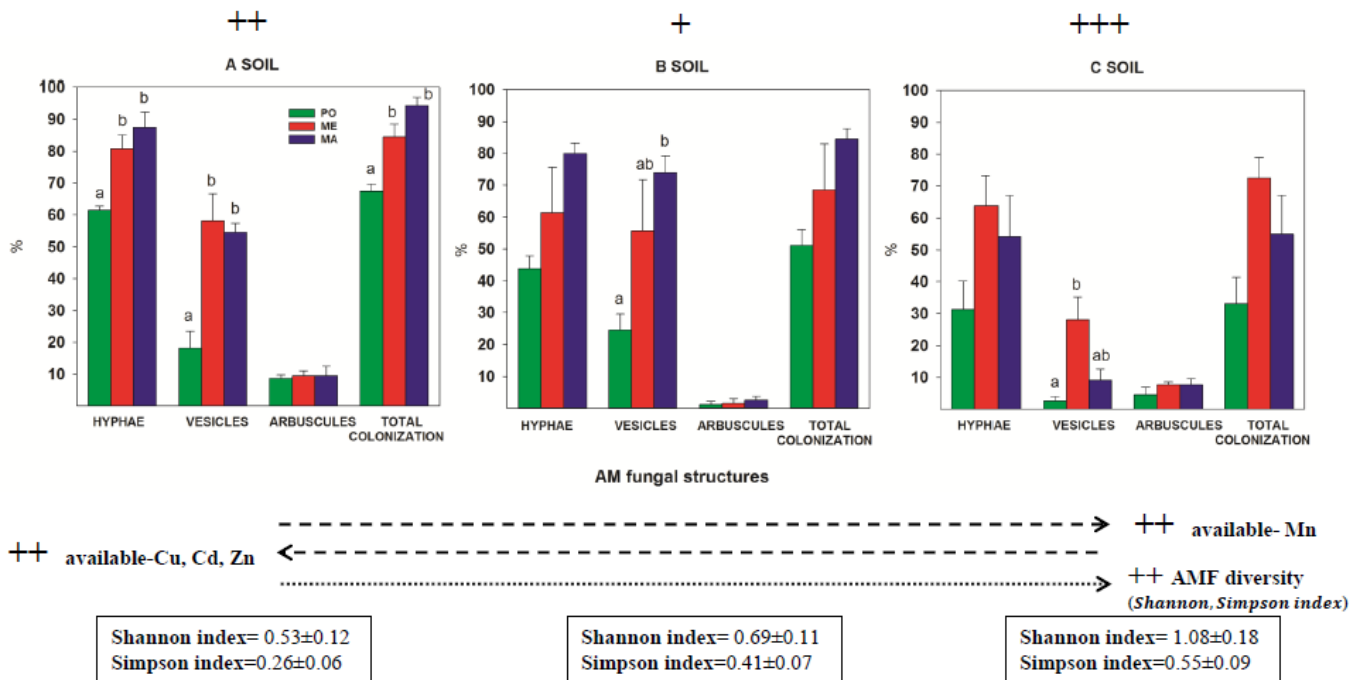
NMDS ordination showed clear differences among AM fungal communities (Fig. 3). Those developed in C soil were clearly different from those present in A and B soils, which were more clustered (Fig. 3).

In each soil, the effect of plant species and treatments was analysed separately. In A and C soils, plant species was the factor that significantly affected the AM fungal community (R<sup>2</sup><sub>A soil</sub>=0.56; R<sup>2</sup><sub>C soil</sub>=0.62; p<0.05; Fig. S2). However, neither treatments nor plant species had a significant effect on the OTUs that formed the community in B soil.

#### 4. Discussion

Our findings showed that the native soil organic carbon and TE concentrations were the drivers of AM fungal communities although organic carbon had a greater influence. Soils analysed differed in quality; concretely, the better conditions were found in soil C (lower Cd, Cu and Zn availability and higher TOC content). As a result of the differences in soil quality, the AM fungal diversity, colonization and community structure were different among soils.

Phylogenetic analysis showed that OTUs belonging to Acaulosporaceae, Paraglomeraceae, Claroideoglomeraceae and Glomeraceae were able to establish a symbiotic relationship in a Mediterranean contaminated environment. In general, all of these families have been previously identified in TE contaminated soils (Schneider et al., 2013; Yang et al., 2015a). Although Gigasporaceae is relatively abundant in AM fungal communities in this type of degraded soils (González-Chávez et al., 2009; Krishnamoorthy et al., 2015), they were not present in the studied soils probably because they appear predominantly in sandy soils with low pH and low organic matter (Lekberg et al., 2007).



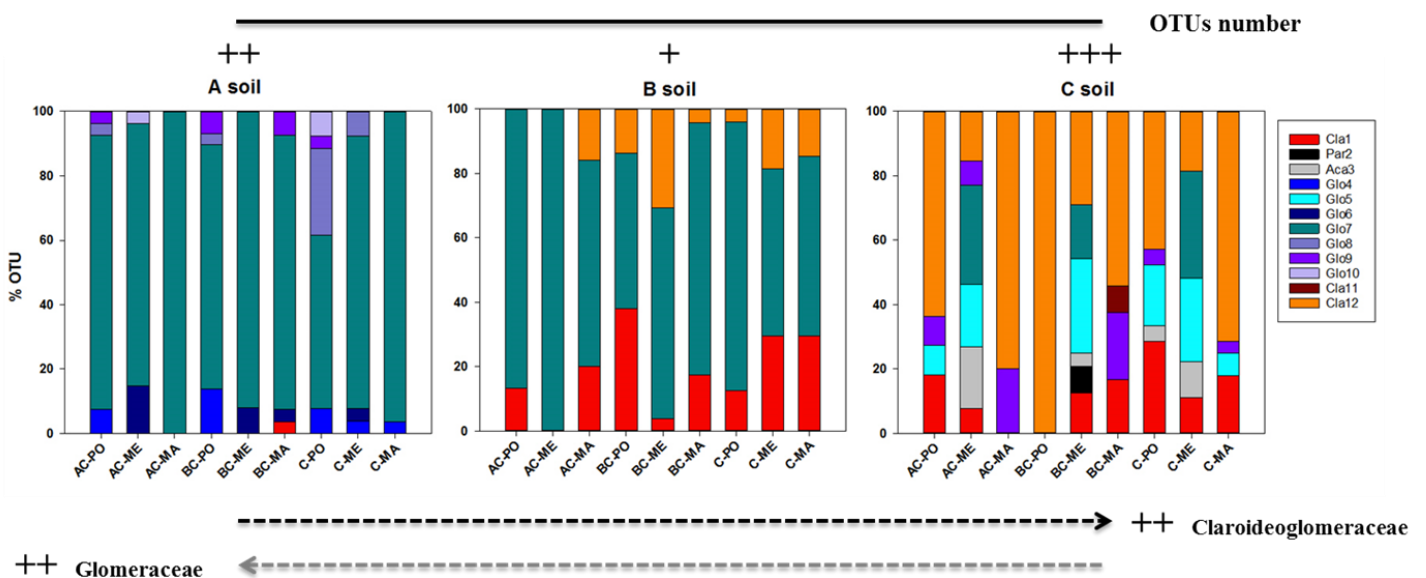
**Figure 1.** Root colonization by AM fungi in each soil. Total colonization and fungal structures (%) are indicated for each plant species (mean ± SE). Significant differences are only indicated among plant species. Values labeled with the same letter do not differ significantly (p < 0.05).

The dominance of AM fungal community varied according to the improvement of soil quality in origin, i.e. the diversity of the AM fungal communities was, in general, higher in treatments with soil C, which had better characteristics. Indeed, chemical soil characteristics were critical factors in the AM fungal community structure, over the host plant. Trace element concentrations (especially Cd and Mn) and particularly TOC were the soil factors that mostly affected to AM fungal community. Soil organic carbon content seemed to allow the presence of certain OTUs with varied distributions. The TOC gradient (B < A < C soil) was associated with an appearance of communities dominated by *Claroideoglomeraceae* members. Our results are in accordance with previous studies that showed how communities dominated by *Glomeraceae* shift to communities dominated by *Claroideoglomeraceae* when contamination by TE diminished (Montiel-Rozas et al., 2016a).

The abundance of *Glomus* sp., concretely *Rhizophagus irregularis*, was higher in the studied soils with highest Cd, Cu and Zn concentrations. This is in accordance with Lenoir et al.

(2016), who found that in soils affected by abiotic stress (in this case high TE concentration and low TOC) ruderal AM fungal species, as *Glomeraceae* (Chagnon et al., 2013), tend to dominate. On the other hand, *Claroideoglomus claroideum* y *Claroideoglomus luteum* were the most abundant OTUs in soil with high Mn content and organic carbon.

As we mentioned above, AM fungal diversity varied according to soil quality. Values of diversity index found in this study were similar to those found by Hassan et al. (2011) in different TE contaminated soils and contrast with the high diversities found in non-disturbed soils (e.g. Lekberg et al., 2013; Oehl et al., 2003). Lower AM fungal diversity was found in soil A where, despite having higher organic matter content than in soil B, the available Cd concentration was the highest of all soils. A similar decrease, with increasing TE concentrations, was detected by other authors (Zarei et al., 2008, Wei et al., 2014). In addition to the soil parameters, fungal diversity was also related to Mn and Cd content in plants (except in



**Figure 2.** Phylotypes composition of AMF communities for each plant-treatment. Different OTUs are indicated by colours. Par, Paraglomus; Cla, *Claroideoglomeraceae*; Glo, *Glomeraceae*; Aca, *Acaulosporaceae*.

**Table 3.** Assignment of OTUs found in the experimental soils based on Blast searches against GenBank (the closest hit is showed when the similarity was higher than 97 %). It is indicated the relative abundance of each OTU in each soil, treatments and plants species. In each case, the most abundant OTUs are marked in bold

| OTU          | Correspondence                         | Query cover (%) | Identity (%) | Accession number | % OTUs identified |             |             |             |             |             |           |                |               |  |  |  |
|--------------|--|-----------------|--------------|------------------|-------------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-----------|----------------|---------------|--|--|--|
|              |  |                 |              |                  | SOIL              |             |             | TREATMENT   |             |             |           | PLANT SPECIES  |               |  |  |  |
|              |  |                 |              |                  | A                 | B           | C           | Control     | AC          | BC          | P. annua  | M. poly-morpha | M. sylvestris |  |  |  |
| <i>Cl1</i>   | <i>Claroideoglossum luteum</i>         | 100             | 99           | HQ857084.1       | 0.4               | 18.9        | 14          | 14.2        | 6.3         | 11.2        | 12.7      | 7.4            | 12.3          |  |  |  |
| <i>Par2</i>  | <i>Uncultured Paraglossum</i>          | 99              | 98           | AB547188.1       |                   | 1.1         |             |             |             | 0.9         |           | 0.9            |               |  |  |  |
| <i>Aca3</i>  | <i>Uncultured Acaulospora</i>          | 100             | 97           | HG969371.1       |                   | 5.6         |             | 1.7         | 2.4         | 0.5         | 0.5       | 3.9            |               |  |  |  |
| <i>Glo4</i>  | <i>Uncultured Glomus</i>               | 98              | 100          | HM216003.1       | 4.1               |             |             | 1.7         | 1           | 1.9         | 3.9       | 0.4            | 0.5           |  |  |  |
| <i>Glo5</i>  | <i>Glomus invermaium</i>               | 100             | 100          | LN624111.1       |                   | 14.5        |             | 5.6         | 2.9         | 3.3         | 2.4       | 8.3            | 0.9           |  |  |  |
| <i>Glo6</i>  | <i>Rhizophagus intraradices</i>        | 100             | 99           | AY541904.1       | 3.3               |             |             | 0.4         | 1.9         | 1.4         |           | 3              | 0.5           |  |  |  |
| <i>Glo7</i>  | <i>Rhizophagus irregularis</i>         | 100             | 99           | FR750190.1       | <b>83.9</b>       | <b>69.5</b> | <b>11.7</b> | <b>51.5</b> | <b>70.4</b> | <b>56.3</b> | <b>58</b> | <b>61.3</b>    | <b>57.5</b>   |  |  |  |
| <i>Glo8</i>  | <i>Uncultured Glomeraceae</i>          | 100             | 99           | HE775338.1       | 4.5               |             |             | 3.9         | 0.5         | 0.5         | 4.4       | 0.9            |               |  |  |  |
| <i>Glo9</i>  | <i>Funneliformis geosporum</i>         | 100             | 99           | EU931263.1       | 2.5               |             | 6.7         | 1.3         | 2.9         | 4.2         | 2.9       | 0.9            | 4.6           |  |  |  |
| <i>Glo10</i> | <i>Uncultured Glomeraceae</i>          | 100             | 99           | JX683749.1       | 1.2               |             |             | 0.9         | 0.5         |             | 1         | 0.4            |               |  |  |  |
| <i>Cl11</i>  | <i>Uncultured Claroideoglomeraceae</i> | 98              | 97           | KP265031.1       |                   |             | 1.1         |             |             | 0.9         |           |                | 0.9           |  |  |  |
| <i>Cl12</i>  | <i>Claroideoglossum claroideum</i>     | 100             | 99           | HQ857048.1       |                   | 11.6        | <b>45.3</b> | 18.9        | 11.2        | 19.1        | 14.1      | 12.6           | 22.8          |  |  |  |

**Table 4.** Permutational Multivariate Analysis of Variance. Analysis of the soil variables (Total Organic Carbon, pH and available trace elements) effects on arbuscular mycorrhizal community composition. Values in bold indicate the significant factors.

|                  | Df | SumsOfSqs | MeanSqs | F.Model | R2             | Pr(>F)       |
|------------------|----|-----------|---------|---------|----------------|--------------|
| <b>TOC</b>       | 1  | 4.33      | 4.33    | 25.2127 | <b>0.40087</b> | <b>0.001</b> |
| <b>pH</b>        | 1  | 0.523     | 0.523   | 3.0454  | 0.04842        | <b>0.046</b> |
| <b>av-Cd</b>     | 1  | 1.0454    | 1.0454  | 6.0873  | 0.09679        | <b>0.006</b> |
| <b>av-Cu</b>     | 1  | 0.4237    | 0.4237  | 2.4672  | 0.03923        | <b>0.086</b> |
| <b>av-Mn</b>     | 1  | 0.8465    | 0.8465  | 4.9287  | 0.07836        | <b>0.004</b> |
| <b>av-P</b>      | 1  | 0.1923    | 0.1923  | 1.1195  | 0.0178         | 0.302        |
| <b>av-Zn</b>     | 1  | 0.1776    | 0.1776  | 1.034   | 0.01644        | 0.352        |
| <b>Residuals</b> | 19 | 3.2631    | 0.1717  |         | 0.30209        |              |
| <b>Total</b>     | 26 | 10.8016   |         |         | 1              |              |

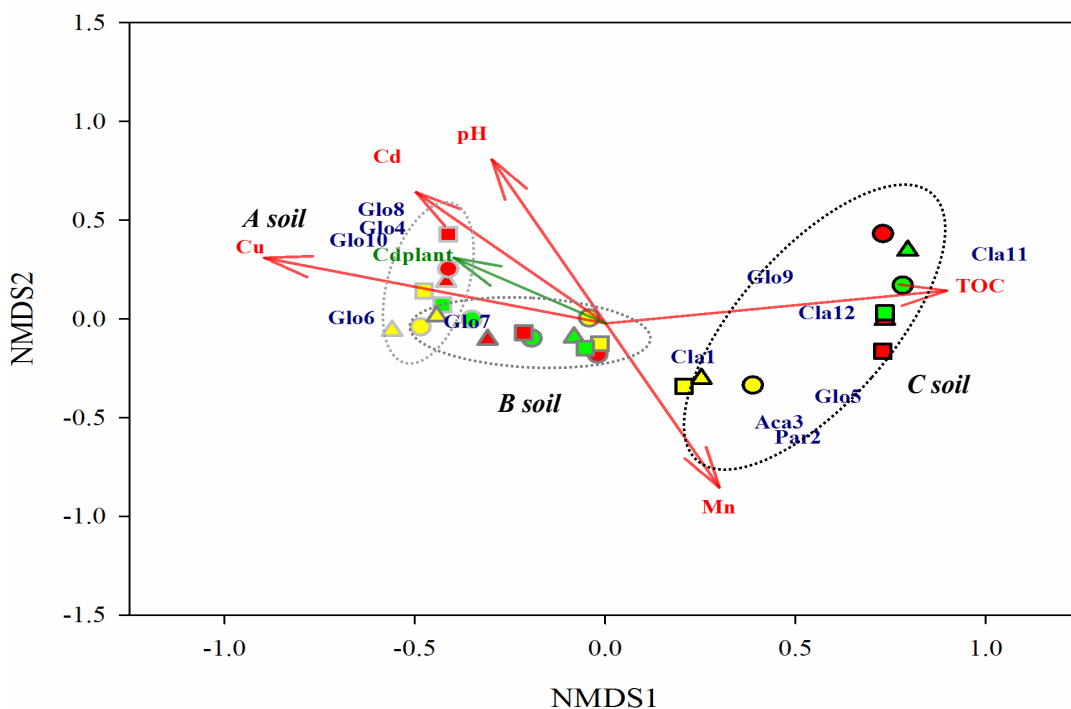
It is noteworthy that the improvement of soil characteristics by organic amendment addition did not increase the AM fungal diversity in contrast with previous studies (Hazard et al., 2014; Qin et al., 2015). No effect due to amendment addition could be explained by the short duration of the experiment in contrast with other studies (Montiel-Rozas et al., 2016a). On the other hand, the presence of biased communities in the studied soils as consequence of abiotic stress (not being present propagules of OTUs adapted to better conditions) could also be an explanation. Nevertheless, it should be noted that a slightly difference between AM fungal communities developed in plant growing in control and treated soil with alperujo compost was found in C soil. The higher AM fungal diversity, initially present in C soil, would have allowed the appearance of more diverse AM fungal community with the soil quality improvement due to the *alperujo* compost addition.

Different colonization strategies are showed by different AM fungal families (Klironomos and Hart, 2002), which can explain the *Glomeraceae* and *Claroideoglomeraceae* dominance in the studied roots. These families are known to colonize roots in a greater extent than soils (Hart and Reader, 2002). AM fungal root colonization has been related with processes like the protection against fungal pathogens, improvement of nutrient acquisition and plant productivity (van der Heijden and Scheublin, 2007) as well as plant growth and resistance to TE toxicity (Christophersen et al., 2009). AM fungal colonization varies according to the metal stress to which the plant is subjected. In general, a decrease of colonization degree occurs with increasing TE content in the soil (Yang et al., 2015b) although another studies have reported the opposite (Affholder et al., 2014; Vogel-Mikuš et al., 2006). In the present study,

both soil characteristics and plant host had an important effect on root colonization level. Highest colonization values (for all plants species) were found in the soil with higher pseudo-total and available Cd, Cu and Zn concentrations. However, root colonization decreased according to the increase of Mn (available and pseudo-total) in soils in agreement with previous findings (Wei et al., 2014). On the other hand, colonization level decreased, as TOC increases in soils, in opposition to the findings of Carrasco et al. (2006).

The mycorrhizal dependence varies between plant species and it is usually related to their root colonization extent (González-Chávez et al., 2009). Grasses usually exhibit lower colonization extents. In agreement, the studied grass (*P. annua*) ranged between 30-65 % of root colonization, below the other two species which showed percentages between 60-95%. In the most degraded soils (A and B), the presence of vesicles was more elevated in *M.sylvestris* and *M.polymorpha* roots compared to the site with better soil quality (C soil) according to previous results (Tian et al., 2009). Storage of lipids (Feddermann et al., 2010) and metals (González-Guerrero et al., 2009) are the main function of vesicles. Thus, according to the results, their development can be considered as a response to lower nutrient availability and higher TE concentrations.

Our results showed that both Zn and Cd concentrations in shoots were positively related to colonization degree and hyphal abundance. These results are in agreement with previous studies (Punamiya et al., 2010). Even now, the effect of AM fungal root colonization on metal uptake is not clear since that depends of several factors such as plant species (Yang et al., 2015b), fungal species/ecotypes (Hassan et al., 2013), and soil chemistry.



**Figure 3.** NMDS ordination of AM fungal communities. Each treatment-plant species combination is indicated by soil and the OTUs position. Significant variables (TOC, pH, available Cd, available Mn, Cd in plant,  $p < 0.05$  in PERMANOVA; available Cu,  $p < 0.1$ ) are fitted into the ordination. AC, triangle; BC, circle; C, square. *P. annua*, red; *M. polymorpha*, yellow; *M. sylvestris*, green.



Changes in soil condition caused by amendment addition did not involve any significant effect in root colonization. Previous studies have showed an increase in mycorrhizal colonization by amendment addition (Duong et al., 2012; Gryndler et al., 2005) whereas others reported a decrease (Cavagnaro et al., 2014) or no effect (Cozzolino et al., 2016; Hazard et al., 2014).

## 5. Conclusions

Native organic matter content was the main factor that drove the AM fungal community composition in contaminated soils, whereas TE concentrations had a secondary role in determining the fungal community. Both amendments (exogenous organic matter addition) had very little or no effect on root colonization, diversity and AM fungal community composition. Commonly, long-term experiments are needed to see the amendment effect so the short duration of this experiment could explain the absence of any effect.

AM fungal community varied among the studied soils; the decrease of Glomeraceae OTUs abundance was related to the high organic carbon content and low Cd, Cu and Zn concentrations in soils. *Rhizophagus irregularis* appeared as the most generalist OTU identified in the contaminated soils studied. However, the dominance of *Claroideoglomus claroideum* became significant according to the soil condition improvement. Our findings have allowed the identification of fungal ecotypes adapted to different conditions of metal concentrations and organic carbon, which can be applied to the preparation of inoculum consortia in each situation and improve the efficiency in phytoremediation strategies.

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#### **V.4. Organic amendments increase phylogenetic diversity of arbuscular mycorrhizal fungi in acid soil contaminated by trace elements**

*Las enmiendas orgánicas incrementan la diversidad filogenética de los hongos micorrízicos arbusculares en suelo ácido contaminado por elementos traza*

##### **Resumen**

En 1998, un vertido minero tóxico contaminó un área de 55 km<sup>2</sup> situada en una cuenca fluvial que desemboca en el Parque Nacional de Doñana (España). La restauración de estos suelos contaminados con elementos traza incluyó la aplicación de métodos físicos, químicos y biológicos. En este trabajo, el proceso de restauración contempló la aplicación de diferentes tipos y dosis de enmiendas orgánicas: compost de biosólidos (BC) y leonardita (LEO). Transcurridos más de 8 años desde la última aplicación de enmiendas, se realizaron análisis moleculares de las comunidades de hongos micorrízicos arbusculares asociados a las especies vegetales *Lamarckia aurea* y *Chrysanthemum coronarium*, así como análisis de las concentraciones de elementos traza presentes en suelo y en los tejidos vegetales. Los resultados mostraron una mejora en la calidad del suelo, reflejada por el incremento del pH y la disminución de la disponibilidad de los elementos traza, como resultado de la adición de enmiendas y de las dosis aplicadas. Adicionalmente, la diversidad filogenética de la comunidad de micorrizas arbusculares se incrementó, alcanzando la máxima diversidad con la mayor dosis de compost de biosólidos. El principal factor que afectó a la comunidad fúngica fue la concentración de elementos traza. De este modo, el estudio de la comunidad de micorrizas arbusculares estudiada refleja una comunidad adaptada a diferentes niveles de contaminación como resultado de las enmiendas. El estudio destaca el efecto a largo plazo de las enmiendas estabilizando el sistema suelo.



# Organic amendments increase phylogenetic diversity of arbuscular mycorrhizal fungi in acid soil contaminated by trace elements

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**Abstract** In 1998, a toxic mine spill polluted a 55-km<sup>2</sup> area in a basin southward to Doñana National Park (Spain). Subsequent attempts to restore those trace element-contaminated soils have involved physical, chemical, or biological methodologies. In this study, the restoration approach included application of different types and doses of organic amendments: biosolid compost (BC) and leonardite (LEO). Twelve years after the last addition, molecular analyses of arbuscular mycorrhizal (AM) fungal communities associated with target plants (*Lamarckia aurea* and *Chrysanthemum coronarium*) as well as analyses of trace element concentrations both in soil and in plants were performed. The results showed an improved soil quality reflected by an increase in soil pH and a decrease in trace element availability as a result of the amendments and dosages. Additionally, the

phylogenetic diversity of the AM fungal community increased, reaching the maximum diversity at the highest dose of BC. Trace element concentration was considered the predominant soil factor determining the AM fungal community composition. Thereby, the studied AM fungal community reflects a community adapted to different levels of contamination as a result of the amendments. The study highlights the long-term effect of the amendments in stabilizing the soil system.

**Keywords** Trace element contaminated soils · Ecosystem restoration · Soil biodiversity · Mine spill · Soil fungal community · Bioindicator

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## Introduction

In 1998, the breakdown of a tailing pond dam in the pyrite mine of Aznalcóllar (SW Spain) released a toxic spill of approximately 5,000,000-m<sup>3</sup> highly contaminated water and toxic sludge that affected a total of 4286 ha along the Agrio and Guadiamar river valleys (Grimalt et al. 1999). In spite of an attempt to remove the toxic sludge mechanically, the affected area still shows a high degree of contamination with trace elements (TEs) almost two decades after the spill (Domínguez et al. 2016). The term “trace elements” refers to elements that occur in natural and perturbed environments in small amounts and that, when present in sufficient bioavailable concentrations, are toxic to living organism (Adriano 2001). TEs include heavy metals as well as metalloids, such as As.

Restoring TE-polluted sites is usually conducted by immobilization of these elements in the soil by phytostabilization and application of amendments. The addition of amendments has been shown to be efficient in the restoration of natural

environments as it improves immobilization of metal(loid)s in soils through adsorption reactions (Park et al. 2011) and thereby reduces TE concentrations in above-ground plant biomass, allowing establishment of a healthy vegetation cover (Kidd et al. 2009; Pérez de Mora et al. 2011). Its effectiveness may vary, however, depending on the type of organic amendment and application practice (Pérez de Mora et al. 2011).

Several studies have focused on the effect of organic amendments on soil biota, revealing overall positive effects of such applications (Adriano et al. 2004; Lee et al. 2004; Ohsowski et al. 2012). Arbuscular mycorrhizal (AM) fungi are considered as one of the key soil organisms providing multiple benefits to plants (Jeffries et al. 2003). Their symbiosis with plants improves plant access to mineral resources and provides protection against biotic and abiotic stresses (Veresoglou and Rillig 2012; Philippot et al. 2013). The role of AM fungi in protecting plants against TE contamination also has been highlighted (Hildebrandt et al. 2007; Meier et al. 2012), and this feature has been exploited in combination with organic amendments to accelerate ecosystem restorations (Ohsowski et al. 2012).

Despite the known benefits of AM fungus addition to restore TE-polluted soils, information on the impact of organic amendments on native AM fungal diversity and community structure is limited. It is known that AM fungal species differ in their capacity to tolerate TE (Hildebrandt et al. 2007; Chiapello et al. 2015; Lenoir et al. 2016) and negative effects caused by TE contamination on species diversity have been reported (Zarei et al. 2008). Environmental degradation usually reduces the phylogenetic diversity of AM fungal communities, often driving communities to be dominated by a single family, i.e., Glomeraceae (Vallino et al. 2006; Hassan et al. 2011; López-García et al. 2013), but whether TE contamination will have a similar effect is not known.

In general, soil biodiversity is important in providing ecosystem multi-functionality (Wagg et al. 2014). Specifically, an array of functions linked with diverse AM fungal communities may enable an increase in plant diversity and ecosystem productivity (Maherali and Klironomos 2007). Indeed, the existence of functional diversity among AM fungal taxa has been shown (Feddermann et al. 2010) as well as its important role in providing ecosystem services (Gianinazzi et al. 2010). Because phylogenetic clades of AM fungi can be related to different traits (Powell et al. 2009), any increase in AM fungus phylogenetic diversity could lead to an increase in the potential functions that the AM fungal community can provide to the ecosystem (van der Heijden et al. 1998; Díaz and Cabido 2001). In fact, it has been observed that the existence of a community made up by species with complementary functional traits (i.e., high phylogenetic diversity) can lead to enhanced ecosystem functions (Maherali and Klironomos 2007) although low phylogenetic diversity can be compensated by high intraspecific diversity (Munkvold et al. 2004).

Several studies have discussed the effect of different amendment types on AMF communities (Warnock et al. 2007; Toljander et al. 2008; Alguacil et al. 2011), such that the recovery of AM fungal phylogenetic diversity could be a potential strategy to evaluate if restoration strategies are progressing adequately.

In this study, we aimed to assess soil characteristics, plant TE uptake, and AM fungal phylogenetic diversity after application of Leonardite and biosolid compost for restoration of the polluted ecosystems in a long-term field trial in the area of the mining spill of Aznalcóllar (SW Spain). Sampling was done 12 years after the first application of amendments as previous studies at the site have revealed that the soil physicochemical parameters were stabilized at this time (Madejón et al. 2006, 2009; Pérez de Mora et al. 2011). Additionally, because of the stochastic nature of dispersal and subsequent recolonization after a disturbance event (Vellend 2010), the spatial structure of AM fungi also was considered. We tested the hypothesis that an external input of organic matter and nutrients by amendments has a positive effect on the AM fungal community by reducing environmental filtering caused by TEs.

## Materials and methods

### Field site and experimental design

The field site is situated in the south of Spain (N 37° 26' 21", W 06° 12' 59") 10 km downstream from the Aznalcóllar mine. The study area was affected by the spill, and a layer of toxic sludge covered the field (Online resource 1). In addition to amendments, one of the first remediation actions was a mechanical removal of the first 10–15 cm of topsoil. Afterward, the upper soil layer was mixed with the added amendments. Two organic amendments were applied: biosolid compost (BC) (coming from an urban wastewater treatment plant) and Leonardite (LEO) (a low-rank coal rich in humic acids). The most relevant characteristics of both amendments are reported in Madejón et al. (2006). The study area was divided into 15 plots (7 m × 8 m) (see Online resource 1). The four treatments involved the use of BC and LEO (with application doses of 30 and 25 Mg ha<sup>-1</sup>, respectively), each with two different repetitions of application doses: two additions (2002, 2003), referred as BC2 and LEO2, or four additions (2002, 2003, 2005, and 2006), referred as BC4 and LEO4. Three replicated plots (3.5 m × 8 m) of each treatment were established together with control non-amended plots. The amendments were mixed with the topsoil (0–15 cm) of each subplot using a motor hoe (RL328 Honda). This tillage also was performed in the non-amended plots. The soil was clay loam and contains variable amounts of available TE (Mn, Cd, Cu, Pb, and Zn) (Madejón et al. 2009). The plant community



composition in the study area is reported in Pérez de Mora et al. (2011).

### Sampling

Sampling was carried out in March 2014. The two most abundant natural colonizing plant species in the experimental area *Lamarckia aurea* (L.) Moench (Poaceae) and *Chrysanthemum coronarium* L. (Asteraceae) were chosen as target species. Soil was sampled in four randomly chosen sampling points in each plot and subsequently pooled, resulting in three replicates per treatment. Because the sampling points in each plot were pooled, the central position of each plot was used as the coordinate for the spatial analysis. Plants were sampled from three to four randomly chosen sampling points in each plot (depending on the abundance of the target species). Roots and shoots of different individuals were pooled by plot into a single sample. Individual plants were sampled while avoiding the breakage of roots as much as possible, then carefully rinsed with distilled water and separated into roots and shoots. Roots were kept at  $-80^{\circ}\text{C}$  for later molecular analyses. Shoots were oven-dried ( $70^{\circ}\text{C}$ , 48 h) and milled for measuring TE concentrations in the plant tissues.

Soil samples were taken with a soil corer to a depth of 15 cm. Soil was air-dried, crushed, and sieved ( $<2$  mm) prior to preparation for chemical analysis.

### Chemical analysis

Soil pH was measured according to Hesse (1971). The available Cd, Cu, Pb, Mn, and Zn concentrations in soils were determined as described Houba et al. (2000). Soil-available As (0.5 M  $\text{NaHCO}_3$  extracts, 1:10 *w/v*) was measured by hydride generation inductively coupled plasma-optical emission spectrometry (ICP-OES). TEs in all the extracts were determined by ICP-OES using a Varian ICP720-ES (simultaneous ICP-OES with axially viewed plasma). Water-soluble carbon (WSC) of soil was determined in 1/10 soil sample/ELIX water extracts after 1-h shaking followed by filtration through Whatman number 2 paper, using a total organic carbon (TOC) V-CSH Shimadzu analyzer. TOC was determined according to Walkley and Black (1934). Available P was determined by extraction with sodium bicarbonate at pH 8.5 (Olsen et al. 1954).

Dried shoot samples were digested by wet oxidation with concentrated  $\text{HNO}_3$  (65 %, trace analysis grade) under pressure in a microwave oven. Determination of TEs in the extracts was performed by ICP-OES. The accuracy of the analytical methods was assessed through international Certified Reference Material (BCR<sup>®</sup>) analysis of a plant sample (NCS DC 73348).

### DNA extraction and PCR amplification

Frozen roots were powdered using a bead beater at 30 Hz with 3-mm beads (Qiagen TissueLyser, Crawley, UK). DNA extractions were carried out using the DNeasy Plant Mini kit (Qiagen, Crawley, UK). A fragment of approximately 350 bp of the large ribosomal rDNA was amplified with the primer set FLR3 (Gollotte et al. 2004) and NDL22 (Van Tuinen et al. 1998). The LSU-D2 region was used because it is known to give sufficient resolution to distinguish AM fungus species (Stockinger et al. 2010). PCR was carried out in a final volume of 20  $\mu\text{l}$  containing 10  $\mu\text{M}$  of each primer, 5  $\mu\text{l}$  HOT FIREPol<sup>®</sup> Blend Master Mix (Solis BioDyne, Tartu, Estonia), and 1  $\mu\text{l}$  of the template DNA. PCR conditions were as follows:  $95^{\circ}\text{C}$  for 15 min,  $95^{\circ}\text{C}$  for 30 s,  $57^{\circ}\text{C}$  for 30 s, and  $72^{\circ}\text{C}$  for 1 min (34 cycles), followed by 10 min at  $72^{\circ}\text{C}$ . PCR products were run on a 1.5 % agarose gel in TAE buffer and visualized under UV light after staining with GelRed (Nucleic Acid Gel Stain,  $\times 10,000$  in water, Biotium).

This PCR reaction produced two different size bands. Cloning and sequencing of the two different size excised bands for a subset of samples showed that Glomeromycota sequences were contained in the larger, approx. 450 bp, band. This band was then excised from all samples to be used in the subsequent cloning and sequencing.

Cloning and sequencing were used to characterize the AM fungal community as we expected a limited AM fungal diversity because of the degraded state of the site. PCR products were purified from the gel band with the Montage DNA Gel Extraction Kit (Merck Life Science, Copenhagen, Denmark). Purified PCR products were cloned into pCR<sup>®</sup>2.1-TOPO<sup>®</sup> vector and transformed into competent *Escherichia coli* cells following the manufacturer's instructions (TOPO TA Cloning Kit, Invitrogen Life Technologies, Karlsruhe, Germany). Positive transformed clones were re-amplified with the FLR3-NDL22 primer pair. Forty colonies per sample were sequenced.

### Phylogenetic analysis and OTU designation

Sequences were aligned using MAFFT 7.0 and grouped into 97 % similarity groups using Mothur software (Schloss et al. 2009) to obtain preliminary operational taxonomic units (OTUs). Representative sequences of each preliminary OTU were subjected to a Blast against the GenBank database (NCBI) to discard non-AM fungus OTUs. Chimeric sequences were identified by uchime implemented in Mothur using a reference dataset of 11,446 of AM fungal LSU sequences obtained from GenBank. Preliminary phylogenetic trees using a neighbor-joining approach were calculated using MEGA 6.0 software (Tamura et al. 2013), and sequences positioned on long branches were checked for the presence of chimeric artifacts.

Subsequently, monophyletic clade approach (MCA) was implemented to define OTUs (Lekberg et al. 2014). This approach does not assume a universal similarity threshold to OTU delineation, and consequently, it can account for differences in speciation and substitution rates among lineages, thereby improving our ability to understand the ecology of sequence clusters (Powell et al. 2011). MCA uses a neighbor net algorithm for constructing phylogenetic networks, and monophyletic clades (OTUs) are identified in these networks as terminal clades without reticulations (Lekberg et al. 2014). Rarefaction curves for the cloning were generated to verify that a major portion of OTUs were identified in each cloning.

The abundance matrix of OTUs per sample was constructed by accounting for the number of clones belonging to each OTU. Prior to statistical analyses, this matrix was Hellinger-transformed.

### Nucleotide sequence accession numbers

Three hundred twenty-six non-chimeric sequences were submitted to the GenBank database (<http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/genbank/>) under accession numbers KP728471–KP728796.

### Statistical analysis

Significant differences of pH, WSC, TOC, TE concentrations in soil, and OTU richness were analyzed by one-way ANOVA, considering that the treatments were the independent variable. Normality and homoscedasticity of data were tested with Kolmogorov-Smirnov and Levene's tests, respectively. Non-normal variables were transformed prior to ANOVA by logarithmic transformation. Post hoc analyses were based on Tukey's test when variances were equal, whereas Dunnett's T3 test was used for cases of unequal variances. The significance level used was 0.05. Pearson's correlation analyses were performed to determine the relationships between pH and available TE concentrations.

Spatial structuring in the distribution of AM fungi was detected by principle coordinates of neighbor matrices (PCNM; Borcard and Legendre 2002) calculated using the *pcnm* function (vegan package in R, Oksanen et al. 2012). Forward selection of PCNM axes was conducted with *ordiR2step* (Blanchet et al. 2008), and the axis with the highest adjusted coefficient of determination was selected to feed subsequent analyses.

To reduce the number of dimensions in the multivariate analysis, all TE values were subjected to a PCA analysis and the first axis was used for the subsequent analyses. The effects of the type of organic amendment and application dose, spatial structure, and plant host species on the AM fungal community were analyzed by permutational multivariate analysis of variance (PERMANOVA, McArdle and Anderson 2001)

embedded in the function *adonis* (Oksanen et al. 2012). Because the OTU abundance matrix previously was Hellinger-transformed, the use of Euclidean distance in the subsequent analyses is equivalent to using Hellinger distance as a measure of community dissimilarity (Legendre and Gallagher 2001). To ensure that the detected effects were not a consequence of differences in multivariate dispersion rather than compositional change,  $\beta$ -dispersion analyses were carried out within and between groups (Anderson et al. 2006).

We used redundancy analysis and variance partitioning to resolve the contribution of each of the factors to the total variance (Legendre and Legendre 1998). Each of the variance partitions was subjected to a constrained redundancy analysis and subsequent permutational statistical test (Oksanen et al. 2012).

Because of collinearity with amendment treatments, soil chemical parameters were not included in the variance partition model. Instead, the effects of soil variables were quantified by stepwise model building for constrained ordination methods using the *ordistep* function (Blanchet et al. 2008).

A non-metric multidimensional scaling (NMDS) ordination (using Euclidean distance) was carried out for visualization of AM fungal community structure. The function *envfit* (Oksanen et al. 2012) was used to insert amendment treatments and a vector representing soil variables having a statistical effect on AM fungal community composition.

The phylogenetic diversity of the AM fungal community was analyzed using phylogenetic distances between OTUs with the *picante* package in R (Kembel et al. 2010). We obtained two estimates of phylogenetic diversity: the standardized effect size of mean pairwise distance (SES-MPD) and the standardized effect size of mean nearest taxon distance (SES-MNTD) both being calculated with abundance-weighted or abundance-unweighted data. The use of both complementary phylogenetic dispersion indices is intended to search for strong patterns in the phylogenetic structure of the community (Webb et al. 2002). Evolutionary distances (using a neighbor-joining algorithm with kimura-2 parameter as the substitution model) between OTUs were calculated using MEGA 6.0. Both indices were calculated using the abundance matrix plus the evolutionary distance matrix of the OTUs per sample and were applied by using *independent swap* as the null randomization model. The mean values of the SES-MNTD and SES-MPD per treatment were then used to judge the clustering or segregation of the AM fungal community. Significance of the calculated indices was tested with *t* tests.

## Results

### Chemical characterization of soil

Application of soil amendments improved the soil characteristics; i.e., soil pH, soil organic carbon, and available P

increased while TE availability decreased (Table 1). The strongest effects were obtained by four times applications of both types of amendments. The concentrations of available Cd, Cu, and Zn showed significant differences between treatments (Table 1). Cd and Zn availabilities were significantly reduced by application of amendments compared to the control plots (Table 1). In contrast, Cu concentration was elevated by BC addition. Pb and Mn did not show significant differences among treatments although the lowest TE concentrations were found when BC was applied four times. In general, amendments resulted in a reduction in availability of all elements with the exception of As for which concentrations were slightly elevated in treatments with the high amendment rate, probably because of the high pH values in these plots. An inverse relationship between pH and TE availability was observed, where an increase in pH resulted in a decrease of TE available for organisms. Thus, Cd ( $-0.784$ ;  $p < 0.01$ ), Zn ( $-0.731$ ;  $p < 0.01$ ), and Mn ( $-0.619$ ;  $p < 0.05$ ) were significantly, negatively correlated with pH. No significant correlation between pH and As ( $-0.374$ ) was found, nor was As correlated with the other TE.

P availability was significantly higher in BC than in control and LEO2 plots (Table 1). Organic carbon was slightly increased by all treatments compared to control plots, with the exception of LEO4 where TOC was three-fold higher than the control plot and significantly higher than the rest of treatments.

Labile carbon (WSC) increased in amended plots compared to controls (Table 1) and was higher in four- compared to two-fold amendment additions. Thus, the highest WSC content was seen in the BC4 and LEO4 plots which were significantly different from control plots.

### TE uptake by plants

As, Mn, and Pb concentrations in shoots of *L. aurea* were significantly higher than in *C. coronarium* ( $p < 0.001$ ,  $F = 18.46$ ,  $F = 39.70$ ,  $F = 15.32$ , respectively). The rest of the TE concentrations were similar in both species (Table 2). Amendment type and number of applications did not affect the uptake of TE significantly.

### Effect of organic amendments on the AM fungal community

Eighteen OTUs were identified in the experimental area as shown by the MCA analysis (Online resource 2). The rarefaction analysis showed that an average of 75 % of the total number of OTUs present was found in each treatment (Fig. 1).

The OTUs belonged to four families: Claroideoglomeraceae (8 OTUs), Glomeraceae (6), Diversisporaceae (3), and Paraglomeraceae (1). Blast search against GenBank revealed that seven of the detected OTUs

corresponded to known described AM fungus species (Table 3). Glo18, corresponding to *Rhizophagus intraradices*, was found to be the most abundant in the study area (29.4 % of sequenced clones). Two other OTUs, Cla11 and Glo16 (Table 3), appeared in 15.4 and 11.8 % of the analyzed clones, respectively. Glo17, corresponding to *Glomus invermaium*, appeared in 7.2 % of the clones, and the rest of the OTUs appeared in fewer than 5 % of the clones. The presence of the identified OTUs in different treatments is shown in Table 3.

The OTU richness ranged from 3.5 to 8 species per treatment with an average of 5.5. No differences in OTU richness were found among treatments (data not shown).

The analysis of the phylogenetic structure of the AM fungal community, SES-MPD and SES-MNTD indices, revealed a transition from phylogenetically clustered to overdispersed communities (i.e., a transition from negative to positive values) in the continuum LEO2-LEO4-BC2-BC4 (Fig. 2). No significant phylogenetic clustering or overdispersion was found, however, for comparisons to the generated null communities, except for weakly significant clustering for LEO2 ( $t = -10.455$ ;  $p = 0.061$  for SES-MNTD no abundance-weighted). No significant differences were found among mean values of amended treatments (results not shown), but weakly significant differences were recorded between LEO2 and BC4 (SES-MPD abundance-weighted,  $p = 0.081$ ; SES-MNTD abundance-weighted,  $p = 0.064$  according to Dunnett's T3 test). The control treatment showed notably large standard errors (Fig. 2).

This pattern also could be observed in the distribution of the glomeromycotan families. The dominance of a single Glomeromycotan clade in LEO2 (Glomeraceae, Fig. 2) is in agreement with a phylogenetically clustered community (in comparison with the other treatments). From LEO2-LEO4-BC2-BC4, the dominance of Glomeraceae—the percentage of clones belonging to this family—was reduced and a more equal distribution of clones among families was observed (Fig. 2). The distribution of families in control treatments was similar to that of BC4 (Fig. 2). Nevertheless, the AM fungal community in BC4 was dominated by Claroideoglomeraceae with OTUs Cla9, Cla11, and Glo18 being the most abundant, whereas the community in non-amended plots was dominated primarily by the Glomeraceae Glo16, Glo17, and Cla5 (Table 3; Online resource 3). Disregarding the control treatment, a four-fold addition of any amendment showed an increased number and more equal distribution of AM fungal families compared to the two-fold addition treatment.

The result of the PERMANOVA analysis revealed that amendment type, plant host species, and the spatial coordinates (PCNM) had significant effects ( $p < 0.05$ ) on AM fungal community composition (Online resource 4). In contrast, neither application dose nor its interaction with amendment type

**Table 1** Average of soil parameters by treatment ( $\pm$ SE)

| Treatment | pH               | TOC<br>(g kg <sup>-1</sup> ) | WSC<br>(mg kg <sup>-1</sup> ) | P<br>(mg kg <sup>-1</sup> ) | NaHCO <sub>3</sub> -As | Available elements (mg kg <sup>-1</sup> ) |                       |                       |                       |                       |
|-----------|------------------|------------------------------|-------------------------------|-----------------------------|------------------------|---|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
|           |                  |                              |                               |                             |                        | CaCl <sub>2</sub> -Cd                     | CaCl <sub>2</sub> -Cu | CaCl <sub>2</sub> -Pb | CaCl <sub>2</sub> -Zn | CaCl <sub>2</sub> -Mn |
| Control   | 3.47 $\pm$ 0.1 a | 12 $\pm$ 3 a                 | 563 $\pm$ 101 a               | 12 $\pm$ 2 a                | 2.33 $\pm$ 1.1 a       | 0.29 $\pm$ 0.0 a                          | 2.33 $\pm$ 1.4 ab     | 0.61 $\pm$ 0.2 a      | 42 $\pm$ 7 a          | 68 $\pm$ 23 a         |
| LEO2      | 4.89 $\pm$ 0.8 a | 19 $\pm$ 5 a                 | 663 $\pm$ 70 ab               | 11 $\pm$ 1 a                | 1.37 $\pm$ 0.1 a       | 0.13 $\pm$ 0.1 ab                         | 0.46 $\pm$ 0.2 ab     | 0.23 $\pm$ 0.2 a      | 17 $\pm$ 10 ab        | 20 $\pm$ 11 a         |
| LEO4      | 5.91 $\pm$ 0.5 a | 36 $\pm$ 3 b                 | 948 $\pm$ 18 b                | 22 $\pm$ 3 ab               | 2.22 $\pm$ 0.8 a       | 0.05 $\pm$ 0.0b                           | 0.24 $\pm$ 0.1 ab     | 0.59 $\pm$ 0.3 a      | 3.48 $\pm$ 2 b        | 15 $\pm$ 7 a          |
| BC2       | 4.37 $\pm$ 0.9 a | 17 $\pm$ 2 a                 | 670 $\pm$ 81 ab               | 25 $\pm$ 2 bc               | 2.78 $\pm$ 0.8 a       | 0.10 $\pm$ 0.1 b                          | 0.25 $\pm$ 0.1 a      | 0.40 $\pm$ 0.2 a      | 10 $\pm$ 7 b          | 13 $\pm$ 6 a          |
| BC4       | 5.17 $\pm$ 0.5 a | 18 $\pm$ 4 a                 | 1004 $\pm$ 87 b               | 35 $\pm$ 2 c                | 3.41 $\pm$ 0.9 a       | 0.04 $\pm$ 0.0 b                          | 0.32 $\pm$ 0.0 b      | 0.19 $\pm$ 0.1 a      | 1.6 $\pm$ 1 b         | 5 $\pm$ 3 a           |

pH, total organic carbon (TOC), water-soluble carbon (WSC), Olsen P (P), available As (extractant 0.5 M NaHCO<sub>3</sub>), and available trace elements (extractant 0.01 M CaCl<sub>2</sub>). Values labeled with the same letter do not differ by Tukey's post hoc test ( $p < 0.05$ )

was found to influence the AM fungal community (Online resource 4). The effect caused by amendment type was not attributable to a difference in the multivariate dispersion because the beta dispersion analysis found no differences among amended treatments ( $F = 1.344$ ;  $df = 4$ ;  $p = 0.343$ ). Variance partitioning analysis revealed that amendment type (17.95 %,  $p = 0.038$ ), plant host (12.38 %,  $p = 0.015$ ), and spatial structure (11.84 %,  $p = 0.043$ ) explained a significant proportion of the variance exhibited by AM fungal community composition. No paired combinations of this group of three variables significantly explained any proportion of variance, and the combination of the three explained a minimum proportion (2.85 %). In combination, the whole model explained a total of 45.02 % of the variance.

The analysis of soil variables showed that only TE concentration affected AM fungal community composition ( $p = 0.02$ ), and this effect was maintained when the model included the spatial structure ( $p = 0.03$ ). This analysis was carried out using the first axis of the TE PCA which was correlated mainly with Cd, Cu, Zn, and Mn values (see Online resource 5).

In the NMDS ordination, the control community was clearly separated from the communities in the soils with the two

types of amendments (Fig. 3). The communities found in the two types of amendments also appeared clearly separated but to a lesser extent. The TE1 PCA axis appeared correlated to a major extent with LEO2 treatments and revealed a few glomeromycotan OTUs associated with high concentrations of TEs (Fig. 3).

## Discussion

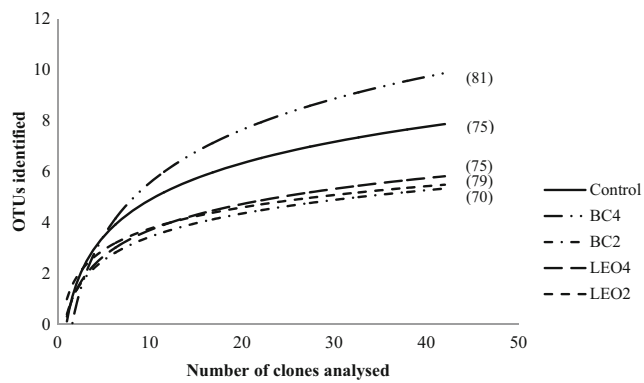
Overall, we found positive effects of amendment addition on soil properties and AM fungal diversity of this TE-polluted soil with some differences between amendment types, but the number of applications affected only the phylogenetic diversity.

Both amendments decreased TE availability in soil which seems to be related to pH increase by amendment addition. Moreover, organic C and available P also increased with amendment addition. These results agree with previous studies (Madejón et al. 2006; Pérez de Mora et al. 2011). TE availability was the most influential factor affecting the AM fungal community composition among all soil variables analyzed. Indeed, the negative impact of TE contamination on the

**Table 2** Concentrations of trace element (mg kg<sup>-1</sup>) and phosphorus content (%) in aerial plant tissues (mean  $\pm$  SE;  $n = 3$ )

|                      | Treatment | As              | Cd              | Cu               | Mn               | Pb              | P               | Zn            |
|----------------------|-----------|-----------------|-----------------|------------------|------------------|-----------------|-----------------|---------------|
| <i>L. aurea</i>      | Control   | 6.02 $\pm$ 1.4  | 1.19 $\pm$ 0.0  | 14.95 $\pm$ 2.5  | 396 $\pm$ 11     | 16.10 $\pm$ 3.4 | 0.22 $\pm$ 0.03 | 176 $\pm$ 8   |
|                      | LEO2      | 3.09 $\pm$ 0.8  | 1.26 $\pm$ 0.2  | 21.50 $\pm$ 7.9  | 333 $\pm$ 95     | 13.38 $\pm$ 7.5 | 0.23 $\pm$ 0.03 | 247 $\pm$ 60  |
|                      | LEO4      | 3.39 $\pm$ 1.2  | 1.15 $\pm$ 0.2  | 10.92 $\pm$ 2.5  | 299 $\pm$ 113    | 6.55 $\pm$ 3.3  | 0.26 $\pm$ 0.05 | 186 $\pm$ 38  |
|                      | BC2       | 9.27            | 1.16            | 19.24            | 513              | 21.88           | 0.24            | 226           |
|                      | BC4       | 2.25 $\pm$ 1.1  | 1.16 $\pm$ 0.2  | 13.51 $\pm$ 2.1  | 317 $\pm$ 70     | 9.32 $\pm$ 3.9  | 0.30 $\pm$ 0.06 | 236 $\pm$ 81  |
| <i>C. coronarium</i> | Control   | 0.33 $\pm$ 0.09 | 2.22 $\pm$ 1.54 | 18.41 $\pm$ 6.84 | 109 $\pm$ 61     | 0.96 $\pm$ 0.15 | 0.28 $\pm$ 0.08 | 328 $\pm$ 154 |
|                      | LEO2      | 0.79            | 0.75            | 24.83            | 50.41            | 1.51            | 0.28            | 193           |
|                      | LEO4      | 0.02            | 0.22            | 8.43             | 32.40            | 1.09            | 0.25            | 73            |
|                      | BC2       | 0.82 $\pm$ 0.24 | 1.10 $\pm$ 0.48 | 18.26 $\pm$ 5.32 | 65.05 $\pm$ 7.51 | 1.72 $\pm$ 0.35 | 0.31 $\pm$ 0.0  | 212 $\pm$ 92  |
|                      | BC4       | 0.50 $\pm$ 0.18 | 0.97 $\pm$ 0.55 | 18.34 $\pm$ 7.67 | 57.13 $\pm$ 1.92 | 1.04 $\pm$ 0.29 | 0.31 $\pm$ 0.03 | 159 $\pm$ 60  |

Values without SE are treatments in which only a combined sample was possible due to low plant biomass



**Fig. 1** Rarefaction curves for the expected number of AMF phylotypes (*y*-axis) against the number of analyzed clones (*x*-axis). Numbers in parentheses indicate the OTU percentage covered by sampling for each treatment. Rarefaction curves were performed from the average of all replicates of each treatment

AM fungal community seemed to be compensated by amendment addition as found by previous studies (Zarei et al. 2008; Schneider et al. 2013). Most studies have reported a positive effect of addition of amendments on AM fungal diversity (Alguacil et al. 2009), but in the present study, we further recorded that the benefit of the amendment also included a change in the phylogenetic structure of the AM fungal community.

Among AM fungi, some functional traits have been found to be phylogenetically conserved (Powell et al. 2009). This is

a key feature that allows inferences about community assembly processes from the phylogenetic community structure (HilleRisLambers et al. 2012). Usually, communities exposed to a strong environmental filter, such as TE contamination or low soil pH, experience selection pressure toward species exhibiting similar traits (close phylogenetic relations or phylogenetic clustering) which allow them to survive such conditions (Mouillot et al. 2013). Our data suggest that BC promoted a more phylogenetically diverse AM fungal community than the LEO treatments, which may demonstrate a greater reduction of environmental filtering by BC addition than by LEO. This may have implications for the number of ecosystem services offered by the AM fungal community because communities composed of similar species, or OTUs, usually exhibit reduced functional diversity (Gravel et al. 2012).

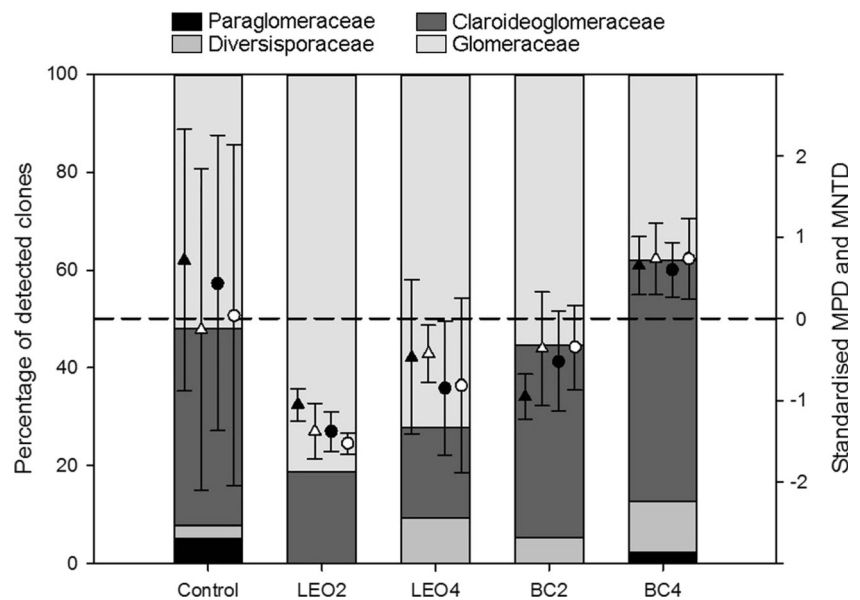
In our study, the most phylogenetically clustered communities were dominated by fungi belonging to Glomeraceae. This is a ubiquitous family which usually dominates in niches unfavorable for most other AM fungi (Alguacil et al. 2009; López-García et al. 2013). Members of this family, such as *Funneliformis mosseae*, often have been regarded as ruderal strategists (Chagnon et al. 2013).

According to our results, improvement of the chemical conditions of the soils by compost addition resulted in a reduction of environmental filtering caused by the presence of metals, among other factors. In amended plots, this reduction affected the community structure reducing the presence of

**Table 3** Assignment of OTUs found in the experimental area based on Blast searches against GenBank (the closest hit is showed when the similarity was higher than 97 %) and relative abundance of each OTU within each treatment

| OTU          | Closest relative (accession no.)             | Max. identity (%) | OTU percentage within each treatment |      |      |      |      |
|--------------|--|-------------------|--------------------------------------|------|------|------|------|
|              |  |                   | Control                              | LEO2 | LEO4 | BC2  | BC4  |
| <i>Par1</i>  | <i>Paraglomus occultum</i> (KC166256)        | 98                | 5.2                                  | –    | –    | –    | 2.3  |
| <i>Div2</i>  | Uncultured <i>Diversispora</i> (HM037694)    | 97                | 2.6                                  | –    | 5.5  | –    | –    |
| <i>Div3</i>  | <i>Diversispora insculpta</i> (KJ850194)     | 98                | –                                    | –    | –    | 5.3  | 4.6  |
| <i>Div4</i>  | Unknown                                      | –                 | –                                    | –    | 3.6  | –    | 5.7  |
| <i>Cla5</i>  | Unknown                                      | –                 | 15.6                                 | –    | 1.8  | –    | 2.3  |
| <i>Cla6</i>  | Unknown                                      | –                 | –                                    | –    | –    | –    | 3.4  |
| <i>Cla7</i>  | <i>Claroideoglomus drummondii</i> (KP191488) | 98                | 1.3                                  | –    | –    | –    | –    |
| <i>Cla8</i>  | Unknown                                      | –                 | 10.4                                 | –    | –    | 1.8  | 5.7  |
| <i>Cla9</i>  | <i>Claroideoglomus walkeri</i> (KP191489)    | 97                | 1.3                                  | –    | –    | 3.5  | 14.9 |
| <i>Cla10</i> | Uncultured Glomeromycota (DQ468742)          | 98                | –                                    | 9.1  | –    | –    | –    |
| <i>Cla11</i> | Uncultured Glomeromycota (AB727858)          | 99                | 2.6                                  | 12.1 | 12.7 | 26.3 | 23.0 |
| <i>Cla12</i> | Unknown                                      | –                 | 9.1                                  | –    | 3.6  | 7.0  | –    |
| <i>Glo13</i> | <i>Funneliformis mosseae</i> (AJ628049)      | 99                | –                                    | 6.1  | 7.3  | 1.8  | 1.1  |
| <i>Glo14</i> | Uncultured Glomeromycota (FN643145)          | 99                | –                                    | 18.2 | –    | –    | –    |
| <i>Glo15</i> | Uncultured Glomeromycota (FR871368)          | 98                | –                                    | 9.1  | 5.5  | –    | –    |
| <i>Glo16</i> | Uncultured Glomeromycota (HF970313)          | 98                | 33.8                                 | –    | –    | 8.8  | 6.9  |
| <i>Glo17</i> | <i>Glomus invermaium</i> (HG969389)          | 98                | 15.6                                 | –    | 1.8  | –    | 10.3 |
| <i>Glo18</i> | <i>Rhizophagus intraradices</i> (AY541854)   | 98                | 2.6                                  | 45.5 | 58.2 | 45.6 | 19.5 |

**Fig. 2** Percentage of detected clones corresponding to different AM fungal families represented in different colors in bars. The SES-MPD and SES-MNTD provide an overall measure of phylogenetic structure of the AM fungal community (Webb et al. 2002) which are presented as symbols  $\pm$  SE. *Black triangles*, SES-MPD+ abundance; *white triangles*, SES-MPD – abundance; *black circles*, SES-MNTD+ abundance; *white circles*, SES-MNTD – abundance



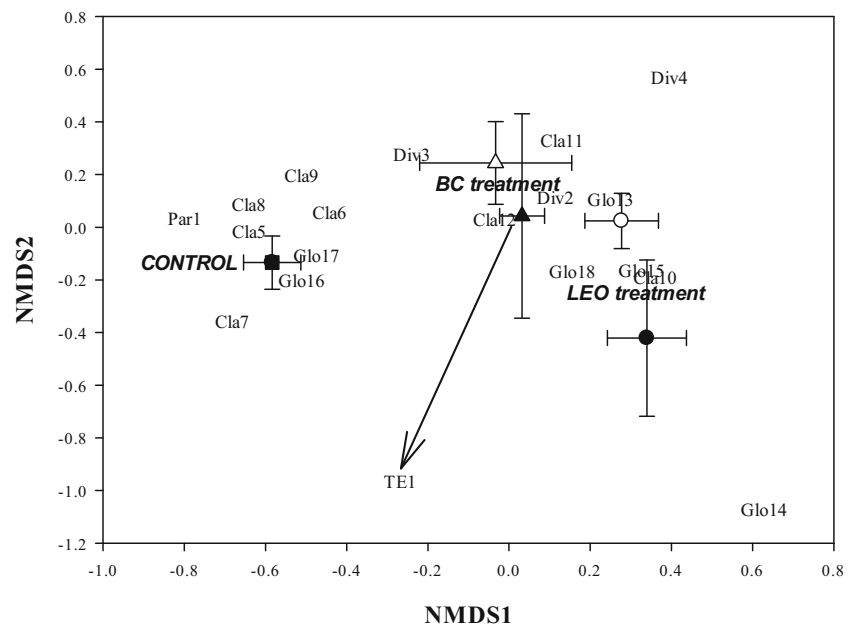
Glomeraceae OTUs and increasing Claroideoglomeraceae, but also Diversisporaceae and Paraglomeraceae OTUs. The presence of the latter two AMF families has been reported previously in TE-contaminated soils (Vallino et al. 2006; Bedini et al. 2010).

It is noteworthy that phosphorus availability did not affect the AM fungal community although this parameter is regarded as a key factor driving species composition of AMF communities (Gosling et al. 2013). This may be explained either by TE availability overruling any effect of phosphorus availability (Yang et al. 2015) or because a threshold phosphorus availability to affect the AM fungal community composition was

not reached (Treseder and Allen 2002; Liu et al. 2015; Wang et al. 2016).

In our study, no consistent reduction in TE uptake by the target plant species caused by the addition of organic amendments was detected, but other studies in the experimental area have demonstrated a reduction of TE in the shoots of plants growing in the amended plots compared to those growing in control plots (Madejón et al. 2006; Pérez de Mora et al. 2011). Organic amendments might chemically reduce TE bioavailability in soils by inducing various sorption processes upon pH increase. In general, TE sorption/dissolution processes are influenced by many factors: pH, redox potential, type of soil

**Fig. 3** NMDS ordination of AM communities. Arbuscular mycorrhizal fungal OTUs and average positions of different treatments ( $\pm$ SE) are shown. As the most influential parameter ( $p=0.03$ ), the first axis of PCA of available TE (vector TE1) and the factor relating the amendment type (*bold letters*) were fitted into the ordination. BC2, *black triangle*; BC4, *white triangle*; LEO2, *black circle*; LEO4, *white circle*



constituents, cation exchange capacity, etc. (Garg and Chandel 2010). Nevertheless, several factors may affect TE uptake by plants, e.g., plant species, metal element, and availability of TE (Kumpiene et al. 2008). Previous studies have demonstrated that AM fungi may act as a barrier against TE toxicity reducing the translocation from root to shoot probably because of immobilization of TE in fungal structures and proteins (Kaldorf et al. 1999; González-Chávez et al. 2004; González-Guerrero et al. 2009; de Melo et al. 2014).

The pronounced spatial variability in the experimental area because of irregular patchy distribution of TEs is an important factor to consider in this study. Such spatial variability has been reported in previous studies in the area (Burgos et al. 2008), and we also observed for AM fungal phylogenetic structure in control plots. It seems that the application of amendments reduced spatial variability perhaps by the mechanical homogenization of soil during amendment application. It is important to note that, in some cases, biodiversity can be reduced in an ecosystem by reducing spatial variability and, consequently, the diversity of habitats (Costanza et al. 2011) which may directly affect the ecosystem services provided by species assemblages (Lavorel et al. 2011). In our particular case in which spatial variability is associated with highly polluted patches, however, the homogenization provided by the soil amendments served restoration purposes through a general improvement of soil habitability as a result of pollutant dilution.

Additionally, in our study area, the AM fungal community appeared to be spatially structured; i.e., close sampling points exhibited similar fungal communities. Although this phenomenon could have been caused by unmeasured environmental factors that were spatially structured, the nature of the experimental scenario makes it more likely that stochastic events, such as dispersal, structured the AM fungal community during recolonization after the huge disturbance. The role of dispersal in AM fungal community ecology is not well understood, but some studies are revealing spatial distributions which can be explained by dispersal processes (Lekberg et al. 2007; Horn et al. 2014). Regardless of the contribution of stochastic events, the clear phylogenetic structure of the assemblages and the quantified effects of amendment application and plant hosts show that AMF communities also are significantly shaped by deterministic processes.

In summary, we found that BC had the most favorable effect on soil conditions and AM fungal diversity. It is widely known that the combination of organic amendments and AM fungi has a positive effect on plant growth and nutrition (Curaqueo et al. 2014). The findings in our study point to novel exploitation of the synergistic effects of such interactions (Wang et al. 2012) by promoting the diversity of indigenous AM fungi in the affected areas. This approach differs from the common approach of searching for AM fungal taxa tolerant to TE contamination (Wang et al. 2012; Curaqueo et al. 2014).

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## **V.5. Carbon sequestration in restored soils by applying organic amendments**

### *Secuestro de carbono en suelos restaurados con enmiendas orgánicas*

#### **Resumen**

Debido a los efectos del cambio climático, el estudio de los diferentes sumideros naturales de carbono ha alcanzado una gran importancia. La restauración de áreas contaminadas puede ser una estrategia ideal para el secuestro de carbono. El área de estudio fue afectada por el vertido minero de Aznalcóllar ocurrido en 1998. El proceso de restauración del área contaminada estuvo basado principalmente en el uso de dos enmiendas orgánicas: leonardita (LE) y compost de biosólidos (BC). El objetivo de este estudio fue comprobar si la aplicación de estas enmiendas promovió el secuestro de carbono a largo plazo en este suelo contaminado. Se establecieron cinco tratamientos: parcelas control, parcelas con adición de compost de biosólidos y parcelas con leonardita (ambas enmiendas fueron añadidas en dos dosis: 4 y 2). La adición de enmiendas implicó una mejora en la calidad del suelo, que estuvo directamente relacionada con la dosis aplicada. Esta mejora se produjo por la disminución de la densidad aparente, el incremento del pH, mayores tasas de respiración y una mejora del coeficiente de estratificación. Los análisis de resonancia magnética nuclear mostraron cambios en la composición molecular de la materia orgánica del suelo, dependientes de la dosis de enmienda. Ambas enmiendas promovieron la retención de carbono, aunque el secuestro de carbono fue mayor en los tratamientos con leonardita debido a la menor tasa de mineralización de su materia orgánica. El efecto que tuvo la dosis de enmienda en el balance de carbono fue más importante en los tratamientos con leonardita, mientras que en las parcelas con compost de biosólidos el balance fue similar para ambas dosis. Nuestros resultados sugieren que la mayor dosis de leonardita incrementó significativamente el carbono orgánico total y es la opción más adecuada para el almacenamiento de carbono a largo plazo en el suelo, debido a su composición molecular rica en compuestos aromáticos y derivados de la lignina relativamente estables.



# CARBON SEQUESTRATION IN RESTORED SOILS BY APPLYING ORGANIC AMENDMENTS

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## ABSTRACT

The study of different natural carbon sinks has become especially important because of climate change effects. The restoration of contaminated areas can be an ideal strategy for carbon sequestration. The studied area was affected by toxic Aznalcóllar mine spill in 1998. Restoration process of the contaminated area was based, mainly, on the use of two organic amendments: leonardite (LE) and biosolid compost (BC). The objective of this study was to verify whether the application of these amendments promotes the long-term carbon sequestration in this soil. Five treatments were established: untreated control, biosolid compost (doses 4 and 2) and leonardite (doses 4 and 2). The addition of amendments implied an improvement in soil quality that was directly related to the amendment dose: decrease in bulk density, increase in pH, higher respiration rates and an improvement in the stratification ratio. Dose-dependent changes in the molecular composition of soil organic matter were shown by nuclear magnetic resonance analysis. Both amendments promoted carbon retention, although because of the low mineralization rates of soil organic matter in LE treatments, the carbon storage was higher. The dosage effect on the carbon balance was more important in LE treatments, whereas in the BC treatments, the balance was similar for both doses. Our findings suggest that LE4 significantly increased the total organic carbon and it was the most suitable treatment for long-term carbon storage, because of its molecular composition rich in relatively stable aromatic and lignin-derived compounds. Copyright © 2015 John Wiley & Sons, Ltd.

KEY WORDS: trace element contaminated soil; C sequestration; <sup>13</sup>C NMR; biosolid compost; leonardite

## INTRODUCTION

It has been estimated that around 33% of total world soils are in state of degradation (Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), 2014), and as a consequence, desertification processes can be found in the five continents because of the impact of fire, soil erosion, waste disposal and land-use change (Mohawesh *et al.*, 2015). Certain anthropogenic activities and the use and abuse of soil resources by the humankind resulted in the degradation of the soils and, consequently, the ecosystem services that it offers (Keesstra *et al.*, 2012; Brevik *et al.*, 2015). Among those services, restored soils sustain diverse plant communities, are less susceptible to erosion, stores higher amount of organic carbon and have a globally improved soil quality. In recent decades, greenhouse gas emissions have increased because of anthropogenic activities (e.g. fossil fuel combustion, land-use change and biomass burning), creating an imbalance in the global carbon cycle. Currently, it is important to develop strategies to increase immobilized organic carbon stocks. One of the best-studied options is terrestrial C sequestration, which is considered as a 'win-win' strategy, because of its benefits in terms of soil quality (Lal *et al.*, 2003). According to Lal (2004a), the term 'soil C sequestration'

implies the fixation of atmospheric CO<sub>2</sub> via plant photosynthesis and the storage of C as soil organic matter (SOM). To evaluate whether C sequestration strategies are efficient, sequestered C is determined by the difference between inputs (e.g. plant litter and organic amendments) and outputs (e.g. soil respiration and dissolved organic C leaching) according to Izaurralde *et al.* (2007).

Soil plays a relevant role in the mitigation of the climate change as it could act as an important C sink. Changes of land use (Muñoz-Rojas *et al.*, 2012; Barua & Haque, 2013) as well as the restoration of degraded soils by the use of organic amendments have been identified as viable strategies to sequester C (Bendfeldt *et al.*, 2001; Lal, 2008).

The addition of organic amendments to trace element contaminated soils contributes to soil recovery by reducing the soil losses and trace elements mobility and increasing biochemical and physical soil properties (Hueso-González *et al.*, 2014; Paz-Ferreiro *et al.*, 2014). Moreover, the addition of these amendments might produce net carbon storage in soil (Shrestha & Lal, 2006). Because of the long period of time required for soil to reach a new equilibrium after changes in land use, the effect of organic amendments on SOM should be studied through long-term field experiments (Diacono & Montemurro, 2010). Macías & Camps-Arbestain (2010) revealed that, in general, the addition of a high amount of SOM results in a larger fraction of SOM being susceptible to oxidation and microbial decomposition. However, according to the literature, the degradation rate depends on organic

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matter (OM) quality (Rovira & Vallejo, 2002), OM distribution (Don *et al.*, 2013) and the priming effect on the microbial community (Kuzuyakov *et al.*, 2000).

High-resolution molecular analyses, such as nuclear magnetic resonance (NMR) spectrometry, can help to reveal the relationship between the molecular composition of the amendment and the storage of C within the soil matrix (Simpson *et al.*, 2011). Solid-state analyses at the magic angle spinning (MAS) provide useful information on the composition of SOM in its natural state, without the use of solvents. However, the variability and high complexity of soil have often limited the applicability of NMR to bulk soil samples (Knicker, 2011). Nevertheless, several methods have been developed to improve the resolution of the spectra and to overcome long instrumental times and line broadening for SOM analyses. Among these, the demineralization of samples via hydrofluoric acid digestion and the use of pulse sequencing to cross-polarize the C nuclei have been selected as suitable techniques for the present study (Berns & Conte, 2011).

The relationship between the application of organic amendments and carbon retention in soils has been studied by different authors, who have reached contrasting conclusions. Fontaine *et al.* (2004) concluded that inputs of fresh C accelerate the decomposition of soil C and induce a negative C balance, whereas other studies showed that a higher amendment rate leads to an increase in the amount of C that is sequestered into soils (Fabrizio *et al.*, 2009; Ryals & Silver, 2013) and has a small influence on the microbial community (Kätterer *et al.*, 2014). All these studies conclude that the stability of OM supplied to the soil is an important factor for C sequestration.

Degradation rates of SOM are also widely affected by climatic conditions. Dryland ecosystems are regions in which the Aridity Index ranges from 0.05 to 0.65, including dry sub-humid regions such as the studied experimental plot. These ecosystems have an important potential to sequester carbon, for example, the C sequestration rate can reach 0.04–0.06 Mg C ha<sup>-1</sup> y<sup>-1</sup> by adopting the correct practices for the restoration of degraded soils (Lal, 2004b).

After previous results on the efficiency of these organic amendments in the restoration of this trace element contaminated soil, the objectives of this study were as follows: (a) to evaluate whether the restoration of degraded and trace element contaminated soils in Mediterranean semiarid areas could imply carbon sinks via the application of two different organic amendments; (b) to compare the effect of the quantity and quality of the two amendments on the C balance; and (c) to determine which material is the most appropriate for the retention of C in these degraded soils.

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

The study site is an experimental field ('El Vicario'; latitude 37°26'21"N, longitude 06°12'59"W) that was affected by the toxic Aznalcóllar mine spill (Grimalt *et al.*, 1999). The spill, which contained trace elements such as As, Cd, Cu,

Pb and Zn, left a layer of acid toxic sludge at the surface. Shortly after the accident, the sludge and approximately 10–15 cm of underlying topsoil were mechanically removed. The soil is a clay loam classified as Typic Xerofluvent (USDA Soil Survey Staff, 1996). The climate in the area is Mediterranean continental sub-humid, characterized by high temperatures and irregular rainfall.

The experiment was set up in October 2002 in a completely randomized block design (Madejón *et al.*, 2010). Within experimental area, nine sampling plots were selected (7 m × 8 m each). Two organic amendments were used: biosolid compost (BC; 30 Mg ha<sup>-1</sup> y<sup>-1</sup>) from the wastewater treatment plant and Leonardite (LE; 25 Mg ha<sup>-1</sup> y<sup>-1</sup>), a low grade coal rich in humic acids. In October 2005, each amended plot was divided into equal halves. One half received amendments for 4 years (October 2002, October 2003, October 2005 and October 2006), whereas the other half received amendments for 2 years (October 2002 and October 2003). Hereafter, the notations (4) and (2) will indicate the number of years of manuring applied to the plots. Five treatments were established: unamended control (NA), BC4, BC2, LE4 and LE2. After each addition, the amendments were mixed with the topsoil (0–15 cm depth) using a rotary tiller (RL328 Honda).

Soil samplings were carried out in November 2012, October 2013 and January 2015 at four depths between 0 and 16 cm (0–4, 4–8, 8–12 and 12–16 cm), except in the case of samples used to measure pH, which were taken at three depths (0–5, 5–10 and 10–15 cm).

Soil samples were air-dried, crushed and sieved (<2 mm) prior to preparation for chemical analysis. To determinate bulk density (BD) and water content (WC), soil subsamples were oven dried at 100 °C for 48 h.

Soil pH was measured according to Hesse (1971). Water-soluble carbon (WSC) content was determined on using a TOC-V CHS Shimadzu analyser after extraction with water using a sample-to-extractant ratio of 1:10. Total organic carbon (TOC) was determined according to Walkley & Black (1934). Stratification ratios (SRs) were calculated as described by Franzluebbers (2002) from WSC and TOC values at 0–4 cm divided by those at a deeper layer (4–16 cm).

Soil respiration (*in situ* rates) was measured from March 2014 to February 2015 between 09:30 and 12:00, in two collars per plot (a total of six collars per treatment), using portable infrared gas analyser coupled to a soil respiration chamber (EGM-4, PP Systems). These collars included both heterotrophic and autotrophic respiration. Any aboveground plant growth within the collars was regularly removed.

Three soil cores were taken per treatment and soil depth for soil dry BD determination (Grossman & Reinsch, 2002). Carbon net balance was carried out with TOC data for three consecutive years and using values corresponding to total soil profile (0–16 cm). Amendment addition (input) and withdrawal of biomass (output) were taken into account to calculate balance of Mg C ha<sup>-1</sup>. Three withdrawals of biomass were carried out (2007, 2010 and 2012), and total quantity of biomass removed was different for each

treatment: 1.19 Mg C ha<sup>-1</sup> in NA, 5.68 Mg C ha<sup>-1</sup> in BC4, 4.07 Mg C ha<sup>-1</sup> in BC2, 4.67 Mg C ha<sup>-1</sup> in LE4 and 4.01 Mg C ha<sup>-1</sup> in LE2. C addition through amendments was carried out as described previously. To the mean value of Mg C ha<sup>-1</sup> of each treatment was added the value of carbon removed as biomass and subtracted the carbon amount introduced with amendments. Thus, we eliminated artificial changes carried out in the plots, and values were compared with control.

In order to perform a correct evaluation of samples via NMR analyses, air-dried subsamples were mixed together to obtain a composite sample for each treatment for a total of five samples. This procedure avoids the influence of the spatial variability of SOM throughout the field on the results obtained (Knicker *et al.*, 2012). To remove the mineral phase from the samples and avoid signal suppression by paramagnetic compounds, a demineralization procedure was carried out with HF. The samples were treated four times with a HF solution (10%), shaken and centrifuged (10 min at 3,000 rpm using a fixed angle rotor) to demineralize them and to remove paramagnetics (Goncalves *et al.*, 2003). After each centrifugation, the supernatant was carefully discarded to avoid soil losses and harmful spills. Samples were subsequently washed with distilled water until pH was above 5 and freeze-dried. Cross-polarization spectra of the HF-treated samples were obtained with a Bruker AVANCE III 400-MHz spectrometer, operating at a <sup>13</sup>C frequency of 100.58 MHz. The spectra were acquired using a ramped <sup>1</sup>H-pulse during a Hartmann–Hahn contact time of 1 ms to avoid mismatches and allow semi-quantitative analyses. Spinning speed was set at 14 kHz, with a pulse delay of 300 ms, and about 20 k scans were acquired for each sample.

Free induction decay (FID) signals were adjusted by applying a multipoint baseline correction, a zero filling and an exponential filter function with a line broadening between 50 and 100 Hz according to the sample under analysis.

Quantification was performed by dividing the spectra into five different chemical shift regions comprising 0 to 45 ppm (alkyl C), 45 to 60 ppm (methoxyl/N alkyl C), 60 to 110 ppm (O-alkyl C), 110 to 160 ppm (aromatic C) and 160 to 220 ppm (carbonyl/amide C). To detect the limit of significance between the same resonance ranges of different samples, the values described by Diekow *et al.* (2005) were used. Briefly, differences of 8.3% for the carbonyl C, 5.0% for aromatic C, 2.2% for O-alkyl C and 4.9% for alkyl C were considered significant. Spectra were evaluated with MestReNova version 10 (Mestrelab Research, Santiago de Compostela, Spain).

Normality and homoscedasticity of data were tested with the Kolmogorov–Smirnov test and Levene test, respectively. Analysis of variance analyses were performed to study differences between treatments and samplings, respectively, considering in each case the treatments or samplings as the independent variable. *Post hoc* analysis was based on Tukey's test when variances were equal, whereas Dunnett's T3 test was used in case of unequal variances. The significance level  $\alpha$  was

set at 0.05. Statistical analyses were carried out using IBM SPSS Statistics 21.0 (SPSS Inc., Chicago, IL, USA).

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Soil Physical Characteristics

During the experiment, BD values decreased over time, mainly in the first 8 cm (Figure 1), agreeing with other data from studies that demonstrated similar decreases in contaminated soil as an effect of organic amendments and fresh input of new SOM (Diacono & Montemurro, 2010; Daynes *et al.*, 2013). In the first sampling, the BD values of the different treatments were very similar for all depths, whereas in samplings 2 and 3, a decrease in the BD values in the topsoil was observed compared with sampling 1. The differences

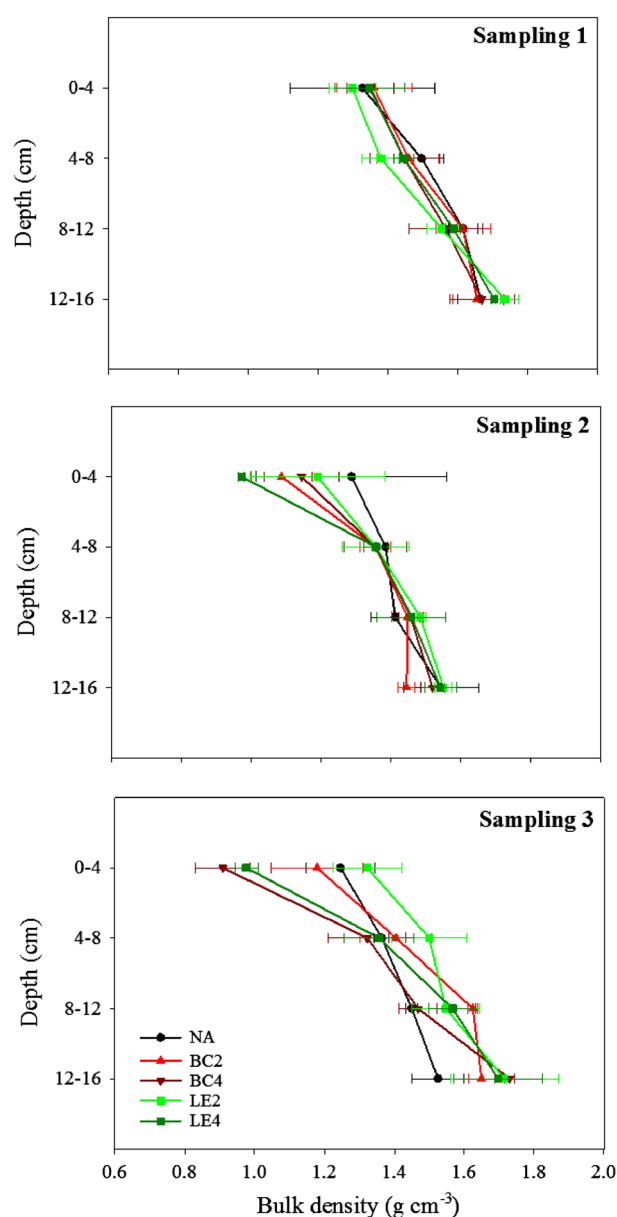


Figure 1. Bulk density values along the soil profile for each treatment and sampling (mean  $\pm$  standard error). This figure is available in colour online at [wileyonlinelibrary.com/journal/ldr](http://wileyonlinelibrary.com/journal/ldr).

induced by treatments throughout the experiment depended on the types of amendment added and the dose. The LE4 and BC4 treatments showed the lowest BD values at the end of the experiment (LE4 = 0.98 and BC4 = 0.91 g cm<sup>-3</sup>), whereas initial values were about 1.35 g cm<sup>-3</sup> (Figure 1). In all samplings, the lowest BD values were found in the upper depths and increased along the soil profile (significant differences are indicated in Table S1 in the Supporting Information). These results might be related to the fact that combinations of organic amendments result in substantial flocculation and in the formation of a large number of soil aggregates that cause improvements in soil structure and explain decreases in BD and increases in soil porosity, especially at surface (Larney & Angers, 2012; Oo *et al.*, 2013).

Water content was measured at different depths in each sampling. No significant differences in WC were found for deeper layers, with the exception of LE4 plots in the final sampling (data not shown). In general, values did not vary with depth in all treatments. The soil WC was very similar between samplings 1 and 3 (values ranging from 0.2 to 0.3) but decreased considerably (WC < 0.15) in sampling 2.

#### Chemical Analysis

The pH values were similar between samplings and decreased along the soil profile in all treatments (Table I). Changes in pH that were associated with the amendments were also analysed by previous articles as a restoration technique in soil contaminated with trace elements (Beesley *et al.*, 2010). The increase in pH values observed for the amended soils was proportional to the amendment rate; plots receiving four doses of amendments (4) had a higher pH than plots with a lower dose (2), but this effect was independent of the type of amendment, because LE and BC plots both showed similar pH values. The similar increase in pH with both amendments is due to the intrinsic pH values of the amendment added (Madejón *et al.*, 2006). In the experimental area, the pH values of the amended plots

remained stable over time (Madejón *et al.*, 2010), which demonstrates the suitability of the selected amendments for the long-term stable increase in pH in contaminated areas.

The concentrations of WSC were similar for amended and unamended treatments and significantly increased during the experiment (Figure 2a). Differences in the WSC content between sampling 1 and subsequent samplings might have been influenced by climatic conditions and methodology, which caused a high variability in values, depending on the sampling season, as reported by other authors in the same region (Melero *et al.*, 2011; Panettieri *et al.*, 2015). Moreover, the removal of plant biomass in 2012 (sampling 1) might have affected this parameter, because it is known that plant cover influences the quantity of exudates, which in turn increases the soil WSC concentration (Caravaca *et al.*, 2002).

Results showed that the WSC content decreased with increasing depth (Figure 3). Significant differences in labile C were observed between the first 4 cm and the 8–16 cm layer in amended plots except BC2 (data not shown), although differences varied between samplings. Comparing initial and final results, the WSC showed a net increase, with the maximum peak corresponding to the second sampling and a subsequent decrease; the WSC profile for BC4 plots

Table I. pH values in profile 0–15 cm

| Depth (cm) | Treatment | Sampling 2     | Sampling 3    |
|------------|-----------|----------------|---------------|
| 0–5        | NA        | 3.49 ± 0.09 a  | 3.67 ± 0.26 a |
|            | BC4       | 5.92 ± 0.08 b  | 6.08 ± 0.40 a |
|            | BC2       | 4.33 ± 0.91 ab | 4.84 ± 0.82 a |
|            | LE4       | 6.41 ± 0.17 b  | 6.05 ± 0.31 a |
|            | LE2       | 5.15 ± 0.86 ab | 5.02 ± 0.82 a |
| 5–10       | NA        | 3.39 ± 0.05 a  | 3.48 ± 0.22 a |
|            | BC4       | 5.09 ± 0.76 a  | 5.46 ± 0.85 a |
|            | BC2       | 4.36 ± 1.02 a  | 4.41 ± 0.99 a |
|            | LE4       | 5.97 ± 0.48 a  | 5.99 ± 0.30 a |
|            | LE2       | 4.95 ± 0.85 a  | 4.49 ± 0.83 a |
| 10–15      | NA        | 3.52 ± 0.07 a  | 3.43 ± 0.18 a |
|            | BC4       | 4.50 ± 0.84 a  | 4.74 ± 0.91 a |
|            | BC2       | 4.44 ± 0.94 a  | 4.14 ± 0.88 a |
|            | LE4       | 5.35 ± 0.76 a  | 5.50 ± 0.54 a |
|            | LE2       | 4.57 ± 0.69 a  | 4.22 ± 0.84 a |

Values are shown for each treatment and samplings in 2013 and 2015 (mean ± standard error; *n* = 3). Significant differences among treatments at each depth are marked with different letters (*p* < 0.05).

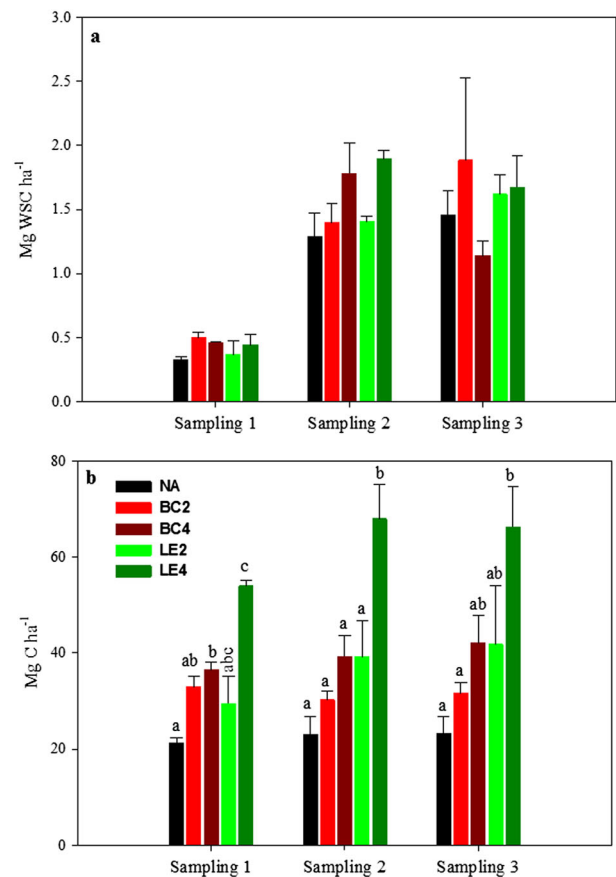


Figure 2. (a) Water soluble carbon content (WSC; mean ± standard error) per hectare in the total profile. (b) Total C content (mean ± standard error) per hectare in the total profile (0–16 cm). Different letters indicate significant differences between treatments (*p* < 0.05). This figure is available in colour online at [wileyonlinelibrary.com/journal/ldr](http://wileyonlinelibrary.com/journal/ldr).



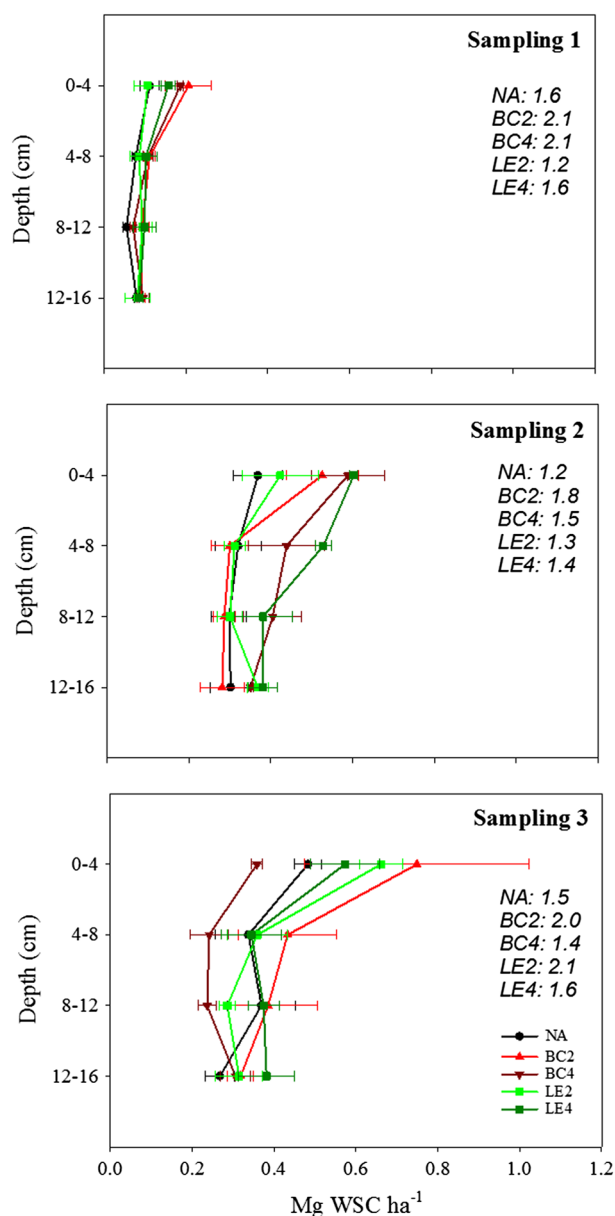


Figure 3. WSC content ( $\text{Mg ha}^{-1}$ ) values along the profile for each treatment and sampling (mean  $\pm$  error). Stratification rate values for each treatment are indicated for each sampling. This figure is available in colour online at [wileyonlinelibrary.com/journal/ldr](http://wileyonlinelibrary.com/journal/ldr).

showed a decrease at all depths, whereas that in LE4 and LE2 was slightly lower in the first 8 cm and in the range 8–16 cm, respectively. For the other treatments, values were higher at the end of the experiment at all depths. In the final sampling, the SR was higher than that in previous samplings for the LE2 treatment ( $\text{SR} > 2$ ), whereas BC2 showed values close to 2.0 and NA, BC4 and LE4 showed lower values of about 1.5 (Figure 3).

The carbon content in the soil profile remained similar among samplings, except for the LE treatment (Figure 2b). Both the LE4 and the LE2 treatments showed an increase in  $\text{Mg C ha}^{-1}$  over time (Figure 2b), which was proportional to the dose applied. The greatest increase in  $\text{Mg C ha}^{-1}$  occurred in plots where leonardite was applied for 4 years (from

53.97  $\text{Mg C ha}^{-1}$  in 2012 to 66.31  $\text{Mg C ha}^{-1}$  in 2015). Significant differences were observed in all samplings between NA and LE4 plots, and in the second sampling, LE4 plots showed a significantly higher amount of carbon than the other treatments. Differences between treatments were small in the final sampling and were only statistically significant between NA, BC2 and LE4.

Carbon content diminished along the soil profile (Figure 4); this stratification trend was more evident for LE2, LE4 and BC4 treatments. Other authors have also observed this decrease in soil C concentration with depth (Parras-Alcántara *et al.*, 2015a, 2015b).

Significant differences were observed in all samplings between the upper 8 cm and deeper soil layers in BC2 plots.

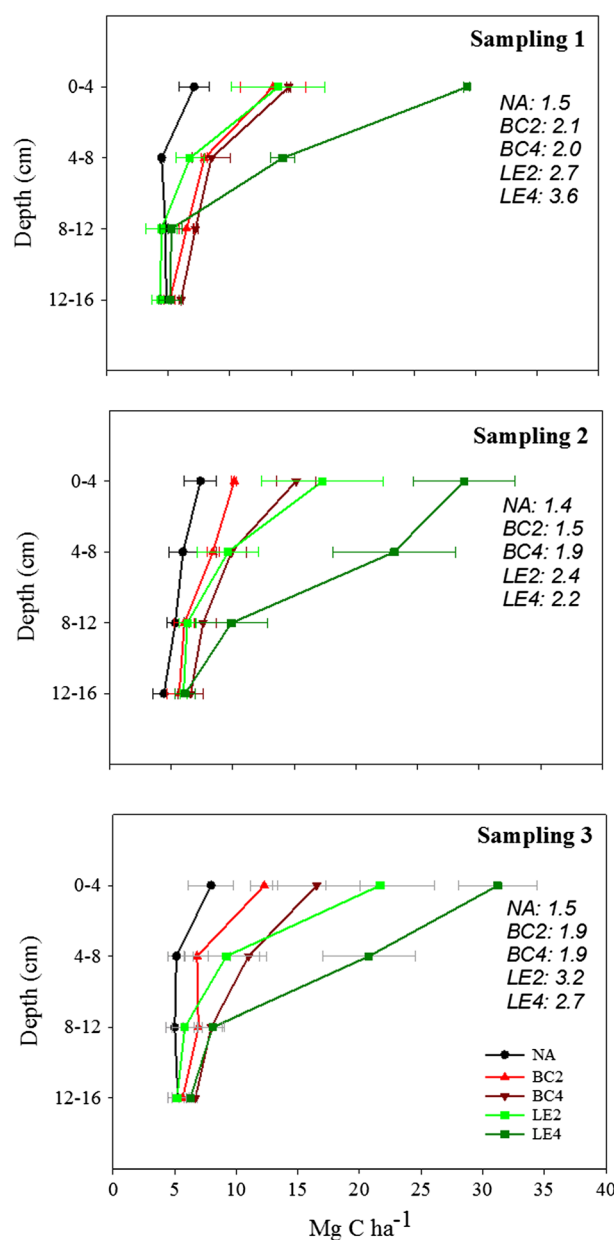


Figure 4. C content ( $\text{Mg ha}^{-1}$ ) values along the profile for each treatment and sampling (mean  $\pm$  standard error). Stratification rate values for each treatment are indicated for each sampling. This figure is available in colour online at [wileyonlinelibrary.com/journal/ldr](http://wileyonlinelibrary.com/journal/ldr).

Treatments that received a higher amendment dose (BC4 and LE4) showed a significantly higher C content in the upper 4 cm than at the 8–16 cm depth. The LE4 plots showed the highest values of TOC in the upper 8 cm of soil for all treatments. No significant differences were observed in NA and LE2 either related to depth or between different samplings (Table S2 in the Supporting Information). Carbon storage in amended plots mainly occurred in the topsoil, whereas the carbon contents at deeper layer were similar to those in the unamended controls. A higher level of SOM in topsoil has been correlated with higher fertility and improved soil quality (Franzluebbers, 2002) and with better physical conditions and improved water balance (Curtis & Claassen, 2009).

Values of SR for NA and BC plots were constant during the experiment (Figure 4), although the value in BC plots (SR=2) was higher than in NA (SR of ~1.5), because of an improvement in the physicochemical soil conditions due to amendments addition (Franzluebbers, 2002). No variation in SR values was observed at a higher dose of BC. The highest SRs were measured for LE plots (from 2.5 to 3.5); at the end of the experiment, there was an increase in the SR in LE2 plots (SR=3.2) and a slight decrease in LE4 plots (SR=2.7). According to Franzluebbers (2002), a SOC SR >2 is a good indicator of dynamic soil quality and therefore is uncommon in degraded soils. The SR value for the amended treatments indicated an adequate restoration from initial conditions. Sá & Lal (2009) reported that SR is also a good indicator of soil C sequestration, because it is positively related to the SOC that is retained in the soil, similar to the results of this study. The LE4 and LE2 treatments showed the highest SR values and also the highest C retention values.

### Respiration Rate

The respiration rates measured over 1 year are shown in Figure 5 and showed seasonal changes, with the lowest values being recorded in July, because of the low WC of the soil and higher temperatures and, therefore, low microbial

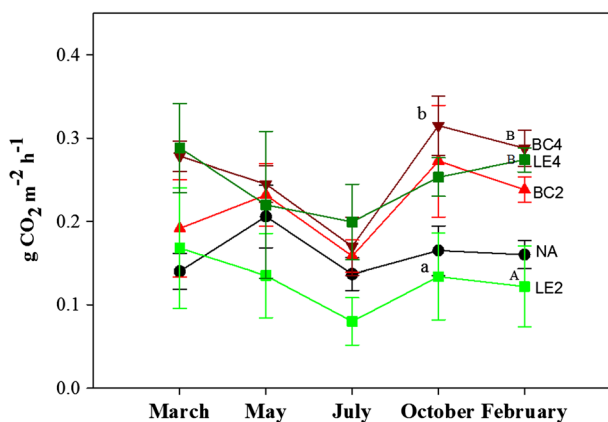


Figure 5. Respiration rate measured for each treatment during 2014 (mean  $\pm$  standard error). For each sampling, significant differences ( $p < 0.05$ ) between treatments are indicated with different letters. This figure is available in colour online at [wileyonlinelibrary.com/journal/ldr](http://wileyonlinelibrary.com/journal/ldr).

and plant activity. As reported by other authors, drought and high temperatures promote a decrease in microbial activity independently of plot fertility (Schloter *et al.*, 2003). Differences in respiration between treatments were more evident in March, October and February, which coincided with periods of high water availability. In these months, water was not a limiting factor, and the soil fertility status of each plot was critical. Nevertheless, the LE2 and NA plots showed the lowest values. Significant differences were found between LE2 and BC4 treatments in October and between treatments with a higher dose, and in NA plots at the final sampling. The low values for LE2 might be the result of a lower degree of plant cover than in the other amended plots. This is probably related to the lower applied dose and to the highly degraded OM provided by LE (see further discussion below), which might be less effective in terms of plant fertility. Among others, Nwachukwu & Pulford (2011) observed that the organic amendments improved microbial respiration in contaminated soils, with a positive correlation between the amendment rate and respiration rate. In general, the highest respiration rates were observed in the BC treatments. This is related to the ability of BC to improve soil microbial activity and, therefore, to increase soil respiration parameters, compared with LE, as described by Pérez de Mora *et al.* (2005).

### Cross-polarization MAS <sup>13</sup>C NMR Spectroscopy

The addition of amendments produced dose-dependent changes in the molecular composition of SOM, because of their intrinsic characteristics (Francioso *et al.*, 2001; Caricasole *et al.*, 2011). Analyses of the corresponding soil samples reflected the chemical composition of the amendments (Figure 6), even several years following the addition of amendments. Leonardite is a sub-bituminous coal that is rich in aromatic and carboxylic C and is poor in carbohydrates, whereas BC is a composted material that is rich in alkyl C, typical for oxidized and stable OM, and contains a low amount of aromatic C (Figure 7). The relative intensity resulting from easily metabolizable compounds such as carbohydrates, which comprised the O-alkyl signal of the spectra, was higher for soil treated with the biosolid compost than for that treated with leonardite but was similar to that in control plots. The addition of relatively oxidized and stable amendments to soil, with a higher alkyl-to-O-alkyl ratio, caused an increase in the SOM content without promoting a rapid mineralization by the microbial community. As confirmed by previous studies in the same region, cross-polarization MAS <sup>13</sup>C is a valuable tool to assess the status of SOM and also to evaluate the effects of land use on soil quality (Panettieri *et al.*, 2014).

### Net Carbon Balance

In the first sampling, carbon balance results were similar between the amended and unamended plots (Table II). The values of C content for each treatment were about 25 Mg C ha<sup>-1</sup>, with the exception of the LE4 treatment, where the total amount was about 37 Mg C ha<sup>-1</sup>. These values increased during the experiment, except in BC2, where values

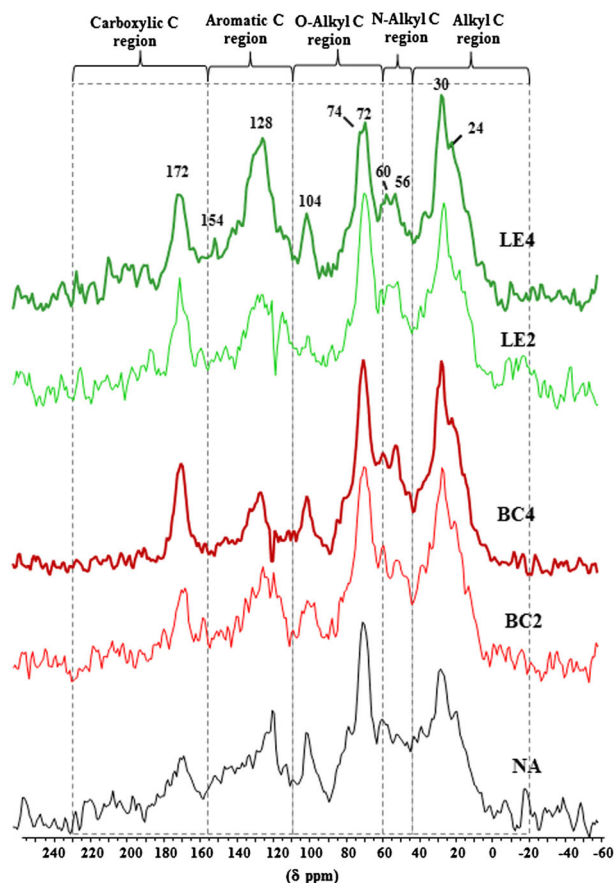


Figure 6. Cross-polarization MAS  $^{13}\text{C}$  NMR superimposed spectra of the topsoil (0–5 cm) collected from the different plots of ‘El Vicario’ experimental area.  $\delta$ , chemical shift. This figure is available in colour online at [wileyonlinelibrary.com/journal/ldr](http://wileyonlinelibrary.com/journal/ldr).

remained constant throughout the experiment. The highest increase in C balance was observed for the LE treatments and was related to the highest C contents.

To determine the net quantity of carbon accumulated in the soil and to reveal the effect of amendments, the values of the control plots (NA) were subtracted from the carbon balance values. The carbon that was stored in the soil

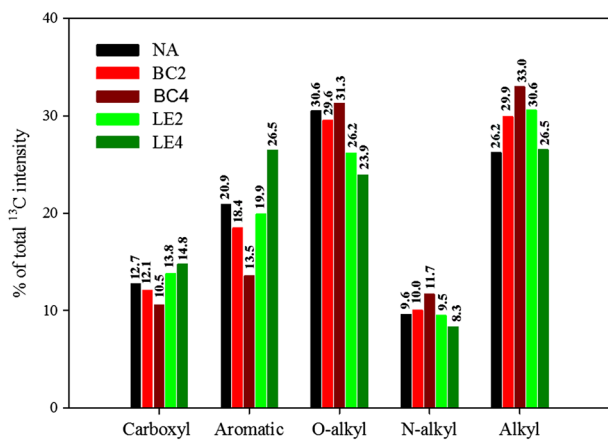


Figure 7. Relative intensity distributions of the  $^{13}\text{C}$  NMR spectra obtained from the bulk soil (0–15 cm) treated with HF of ‘El Vicario’ experimental soil. This figure is available in colour online at [wileyonlinelibrary.com/journal/ldr](http://wileyonlinelibrary.com/journal/ldr).

increased over time in all treatments studied, except in BC2 (Table II). The use of more stable litter inputs and the consequent reduction in SOC turnover rates are necessary conditions to accumulate large amounts of net organic C in soils (Verheijen *et al.*, 2014). Both amendments promoted carbon retention, although the application of leonardite caused a greater retention of soil carbon. This amendment also caused a more stable SOM, because of its molecular composition, which is rich in aromatic and lignin-derived compounds with a very slow turnover and low mineralization rate (Marschner *et al.*, 2008; Kleber, 2010). Several authors have demonstrated that the application of more stable organic amendments, with a slow turnover and lower mineralization rate, positively affects C sequestration (Sánchez-Monedero *et al.*, 2008; Fabrizio *et al.*, 2009). Nevertheless, a comparative balance between carbon storage and plant fertility is necessary, because the addition of highly stable OM such as leonardite coal provided a considerably lower benefit to soil fertility compared with other types of amendments (Verheijen *et al.*, 2014). According to the NMR data, biosolid compost had higher intensities assigned to labile carbon pools (i.e. O-alkyls) than leonardite and, therefore, was more easily degradable by the microbial community.

The rate of amendment significantly affected the carbon balance; the addition of a higher amount of BC or LE led to a greater amount of carbon being stored in the soil, agreeing with previous findings by other authors (Aguilera *et al.*, 2013; Srinivasarao *et al.*, 2014). For the LE plots, this trend was more pronounced in sampling 2 and remained stable until the end of the study. For the BC4 treatment, there was a slight increase in carbon storage throughout the experiment, being the C sequestered in these plots significantly lower than that in the LE treatments.

The labile soil C content is an important variable to assess the ability of amended soils to store carbon. The addition of fresh organic amendment stimulates the activity of microbial community and promotes a higher vegetative cover, which improves the soil quality. Labile C pools are easily metabolizable and might have a priming effect on microbial communities, resulting in an overall loss of soil C via greenhouse gas emission. During the experiment, the total WSC content increased in all treatments and control plots, demonstrating a broader restoration of the microbial community and root system. The percentage of labile carbon increased in all treatments, except in BC4 (the value decreased between samplings 2 and 3; data not shown). At the end of the experiment, a higher proportion of labile carbon of the total C content along the soil profile was observed in BC2 and unamended plots, whereas LE4 and BC4 showed similar values.

From a restoration perspective, both organic amendments have contributed to the increased OM quantity and quality, in the trace element contaminated soil under evaluation. Leonardite with a more stable OM contributes to the increase of the total C content in this soils, whereas biosolid compost contains easily metabolizable compounds such as carbohydrates that contribute to the increased soil biochemical

Table II. Net balance of Mg C ha<sup>-1</sup> in the three samplings

| Treatment | Sampling | Profile C content<br>(Mg C ha <sup>-1</sup> ) | C extraction<br>(Mg C ha <sup>-1</sup> ) | C addition<br>(kg C ha <sup>-1</sup> ) | Balance | Carbon storage<br>(Mg C ha <sup>-1</sup> ) |
|-----------|----------|---|--|--|---------|--|
| BC4       | 1        | 36.54   |  |  | 25.84   | 3.46                                       |
|           | 2        | 39.21   | 5.68                                     | 16.38                                  | 28.51   | 4.23                                       |
|           | 3        | 42.10   |  |  | 31.40   | 6.89                                       |
| BC2       | 1        | 33.06   |  |  | 28.94   | 6.56                                       |
|           | 2        | 30.23   | 4.07                                     | 8.19                                   | 26.11   | 1.83                                       |
|           | 3        | 31.62   |  |  | 27.50   | 2.99                                       |
| LE4       | 1        | 53.97   |  |  | 36.97   | 14.59                                      |
|           | 2        | 67.92   | 4.67                                     | 21.67                                  | 50.92   | 26.64                                      |
|           | 3        | 66.31   |  |  | 49.31   | 24.80                                      |
| LE2       | 1        | 29.49   |  |  | 22.67   | 0.29                                       |
|           | 2        | 39.21   | 4.01                                     | 10.83                                  | 32.39   | 8.11                                       |
|           | 3        | 41.84   |  |  | 35.02   | 10.51                                      |
| NA        | 1        | 21.19   |  | —                                      | 22.38   |  |
|           | 2        | 23.09   | 1.19                                     | —                                      | 24.28   |  |
|           | 3        | 23.32   |  | —                                      | 24.51   |  |

Data correspond to soil profile comprised between 0 and 16 cm ( $n = 3$ ). C extraction corresponds to total withdrawal of biomass, and C addition corresponds to quantity of amendment applied according to treatment.

properties (Pérez de Mora *et al.*, 2006). Moreover, previous studies carried out in the same experimental area reported that the concentrations of available trace elements in BC plots were lower than in LE plots (Madejón *et al.*, 2010) because of the greatest alkalization of the soil caused by BC. Moreover and probably related with the better biochemical condition and this decrease of trace element availability, vegetation cover and diversity of the native species were higher in BC treatments (Pérez de Mora *et al.*, 2011). Accordingly, the choice of either amendment depends on the objective to be reached; the addition of leonardite provides favourable conditions for long-term C storage in the soil, whereas biosolid compost, although it led to less C sequestration, improved other soil characteristics, to achieve a complete soil restoration.

### CONCLUSIONS

The results demonstrate that the application of both leonardite and biosolid compost favours carbon sequestration in a degraded soil and improves its physical and chemical conditions. The amount of carbon sequestered was dose-dependent in both cases. Thus, a fourfold application of leonardite was detected as the best combination of amendment and dose for carbon storage in the long term because of its higher content in aromatic, which result in a slow turnover and low mineralization rate. Despite the advantages of leonardite, it should also be considered that using compost for field manuring and contaminated areas restoration concomitantly mitigates the environmental problem of the management of the residues resulting from treated solid waste. From an environmental point of view, both amendments are capable to store carbon in degraded ecosystems, although leonardite is the most suitable if other factors such as soil fertility are not taken into account. Therefore, the choice of the amendment to use depends on the final objective: optimize carbon storage (leonardite) or increase soil fertility (biosolid compost).

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#### SUPPORTING INFORMATION

Additional supporting information may be found in the online version of this article at the publisher's web site.

## ANEXO V.1. MATERIAL SUPLEMENTARIO DE LAS PUBLICACIONES CIENTÍFICAS

A continuación se incluye la información suplementaria correspondiente a cada publicación:

### **Capítulo V.2. Effect of heavy metals and organic matter on root exudates (Low Molecular Weight Organic Acids) of herbaceous species: an assessment in sand and soil conditions under different levels of contamination**

**Table S1.** Mean values (n=3) of LMWOAs (mmol h<sup>-1</sup>) for each doses and plant species .PO, *P. annua*; ME, *M. polymorpha*; MA, *M. sylvestris*. Standard errors in parenthesis. For each organic acid and doses, species with same letter do not differ significantly (p<0.05)

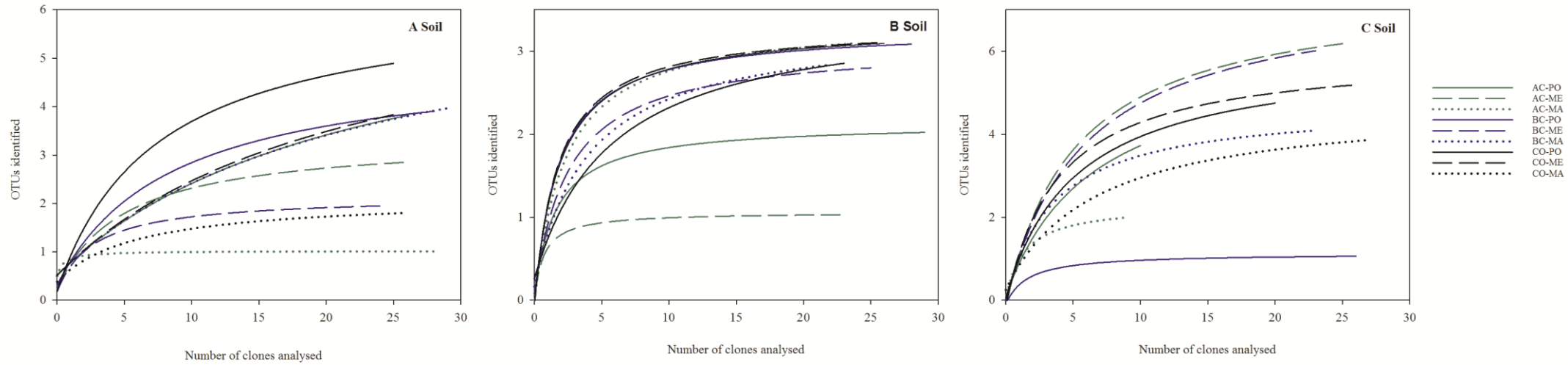
| Doses | Species | Oxalic        | Malic          | Citric         | Fumaric        |
|-------|---------|---------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|
| 1     | PO      | 3.35 (0.82) b | 2.28 (0.34) b  | 1.19 (0.38) b  | 0.37 (0.15) a  |
|       | ME      | 7.77 (1.85) b | 1.68 (0.34) b  | 1.31 (0.34) b  | 0.29 (0.04) a  |
|       | MA      | 0.57 (0.57) a | 0.32 (0.08) a  | 0.19 (0.07) a  | 0.13 (0.03) a  |
| 2     | PO      | 1.94 (0.67) b | 1.11 (0.16) ab | 0.59 (0.28) a  | 0.23 (0.08) b  |
|       | ME      | 1.20 (0.06)ab | 2.06 (0.34) b  | 1.72 (0.51) a  | 0.27 (0.02) b  |
|       | MA      | 0.46 (0.11) a | 0.28 (0.01) a  | 0.07 (0.002) a | 0.02 (0.003) a |
| 3     | PO      | 2.20 (0.86) a | 1.33 (0.49) a  | 0.25 (0.03) b  | 0.15 (0.03) a  |
|       | ME      | 5.92 (0.47) b | 0.98 (0.17) a  | 1.38 (0.12) c  | 0.17 (0.04) a  |
|       | MA      | 0.57 (0.15) a | 0.05 (0.01) a  | 0.09 (0.02) a  | 0.09 (0.02) a  |
| 4     | PO      | 1.33 (0.26) a | 1.10 (0.22) a  | 1.57 (0.44) b  | 0.43 (0.15) a  |
|       | ME      | 5.24 (0.22) b | 1.25 (0.19) a  | 1.46 (0.30) b  | 0.17 (0.01) a  |
|       | MA      | 2.32 (0.42) a | n.d.           | 0.34 (0.05) a  | 0.24 (0.02) a  |
| 5     | PO      | 2.82 (0.18) a | 1.14 (0.09) a  | 1.57 (0.23) b  | 0.50 (0.11) a  |
|       | ME      | 5.32 (0.79) b | 1.50 (0.46) a  | 2.92 (0.24) c  | 0.20 (0.06) a  |
|       | MA      | 2.98 (0.35) a | n.d.           | 0.52 (0.01) a  | 0.24 (0.08) a  |

**Table S2.** Mean values (n=3) of LMWOAs (mmol h<sup>-1</sup> g<sup>-1</sup> dry weight root) for each treatment and soil. CO, No Amendment; AC, Alperujo compost; BC, Biosolid compost; PO, *P.annua*; ME, *M. polymorpha*; MA, *M. sylvestris*. Standard errors in parenthesis. For each organic acid, soil and treatment, species with different letter differ significantly (p<0.05)

| Soil | Treatment | Species | Oxalic        | Malic        | Citric      | Fumaric      |              |
|------|-----------|---------|---------------|--------------|-------------|--------------|--------------|
| A    | CO        | PO      | 7.53 (1.20)a  | 1.91 (0.23)a | n.d.        | n.d.         |              |
|      |           | ME      | 13.6 (1.78)b  | 4.40 (0.72)b | 0.69 (0.20) | n.d.         |              |
|      |           | MA      | 14.7 (1.05)b  | 4.95 (0.58)b | n.d.        | 0.02 (0.01)  |              |
|      | AC        | PO      | 5.89 (1.44)a  | 1.15 (0.23)a | n.d.        | n.d.         |              |
|      |           | ME      | 7.81 (2.63)a  | 2.15 (0.93)a | 0.19 (0.08) | n.d.         |              |
|      |           | MA      | 17.6 (1.72)b  | 7.61 (1.07)b | n.d.        | 0.07 (0.02)  |              |
|      | BC        | PO      | 13.3 (3.19)   | 3.37 (0.57)  | n.d.        | n.d.         |              |
|      |           | ME      | 11.6 (2.52)   | 5.39 (2.20)  | 0.60 (0.18) | n.d.         |              |
|      |           | MA      | 16.1 (3.70)   | 3.98 (1.00)  | n.d.        | 0.02 (0.001) |              |
|      | B         | CO      | PO            | 7.36 (1.38)  | 1.82 (0.33) | n.d.         | n.d.         |
|      |           |         | ME            | 23.5 (6.49)  | 3.78 (0.44) | 0.97 (0.36)  | n.d.         |
|      |           |         | MA            | 12.8 (4.17)  | 3.10 (1.04) | n.d.         | 0.02 (0.007) |
| AC   |           | PO      | 14.2 (2.32)   | 3.20 (0.80)  | 0.19 (0.08) | n.d.         |              |
|      |           | ME      | 4.21 (1.70)   | 1.19 (0.49)  | 0.14 (0.03) | n.d.         |              |
|      |           | MA      | 12.1 (4.82)   | 2.97 (1.23)  | n.d.        | 0.04 (0.008) |              |
| BC   |           | PO      | 10.5 (2.75)   | 2.50 (0.83)  | 0.70 (0.30) | n.d.         |              |
|      |           | ME      | 7.57 (0.85)   | 2.14 (0.32)  | 0.35 (0.11) | n.d.         |              |
|      |           | MA      | 11.7 (2.20)   | 4.59 (0.64)  | n.d.        | 0.09 (0.03)  |              |
| C    |           | CO      | PO            | 1.26 (0.35)  | n.d.        | n.d.         | n.d.         |
|      |           |         | ME            | 2.27 (0.17)  | n.d.        | n.d.         | n.d.         |
|      |           |         | MA            | 1.76 (0.43)  | n.d.        | n.d.         | n.d.         |
|      | AC        | PO      | 2.44 (0.92)   | n.d.         | n.d.        | n.d.         |              |
|      |           | ME      | 0.40 (0.08)   | 0.43 (0.12)  | 0.78 (0.24) | 0.19 (0.09)  |              |
|      |           | MA      | 1.45 (0.58)   | n.d.         | n.d.        | n.d.         |              |
|      | BC        | PO      | 2.89 (0.28) b | n.d.         | n.d.        | n.d.         |              |
|      |           | ME      | 0.23 (0.08)a  | 0.70 (0.27)  | 0.32        | 0.07 (0.02)  |              |
|      |           | MA      | 0.99 (0.19)a  | n.d.         | n.d.        | n.d.         |              |



**Capítulo V.3. Native soil organic matter as a decisive factor to determine the arbuscular mycorrhizal fungal community structure in contaminated soils**



**Figure S1.** Rarefaction curves for the expected number of AM fungal phylotypes (y-axis) against the number of analysed clones (x-axis). Rarefaction curves were performed from the average of all replicates of each treatment-plant species combination.

**Table S1.** Percentage of AM fungal structures and root colonization for each soil (n=9; mean±SE). Significant differences are indicated among soils. Values labeled with the same letter do not differ significantly (p<0.05).

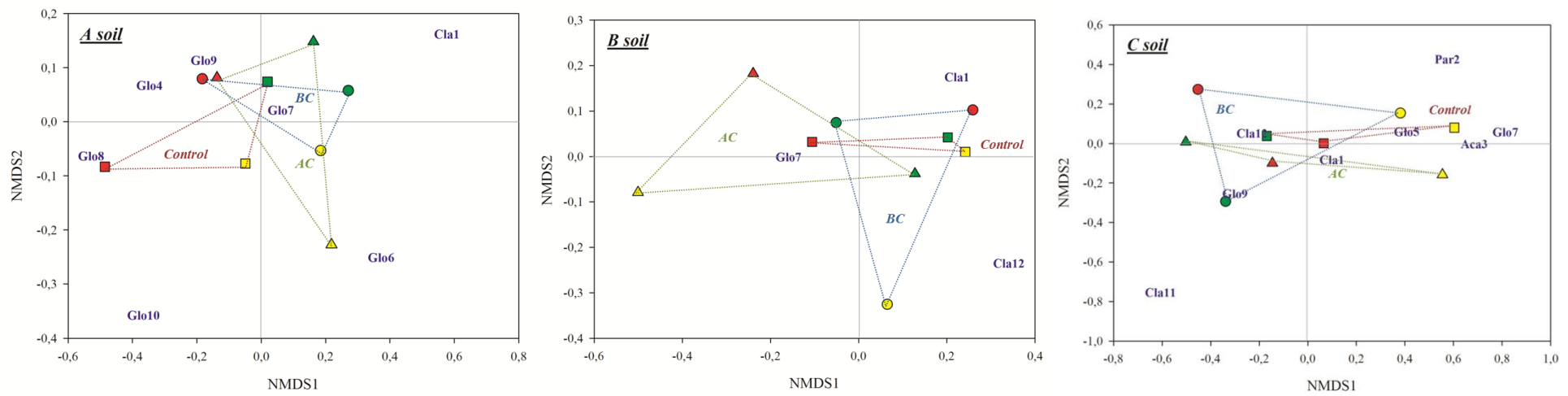
| Soil     | Hyphae (%) | Vesicles (%) | Arbuscles (%) | Total colonization (%) |
|----------|------------|--------------|---------------|------------------------|
| <i>A</i> | 77±4 b     | 44±7 b       | 9±1 b         | 82±4 b                 |
| <i>B</i> | 62±7 ab    | 51±9 b       | 2±1 a         | 68±7 ab                |
| <i>C</i> | 50±7 a     | 13±4 a       | 7±1 b         | 54±7 a                 |

**Table S2.** Percentage of AM fungal structures and root colonization for each plant species (n=9; mean ± SE). Significant differences are indicated among species. Values labeled with the same letter do not differ significantly (p<0.05).

| Plant species | Hyphae (%) | Vesicles (%) | Arbuscles (%) | Total colonization (%) |
|---------------|------------|--------------|---------------|------------------------|
| <i>PO</i>     | 46±5 a     | 15±4 a       | 5±1 a         | 51±6 a                 |
| <i>ME</i>     | 69±6 b     | 47±7 b       | 6±1 a         | 75±5 b                 |
| <i>MA</i>     | 74±6 b     | 46±10 b      | 7±1 a         | 78±7 b                 |

**Table S3.** Permutational Multivariate Analysis of Variance. Analysis of the soil variables (Total Organic Carbon, pH and pseudo-total trace elements concentrations) effects on arbuscular mycorrhizal community composition. Values in bold indicate the significant factors.

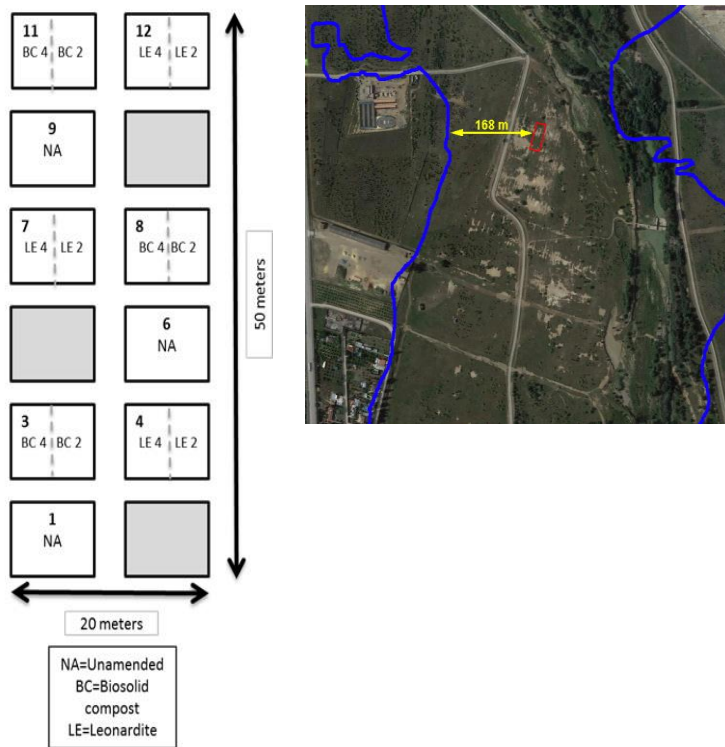
|                  | Df | SumsOfSqs | MeanSqs | F.Model | R <sup>2</sup> | Pr(>F)       |
|------------------|----|-----------|---------|---------|----------------|--------------|
| <b>TOC</b>       | 1  | 0.5046    | 0.5046  | 3.41    | 0.04671        | <b>0.025</b> |
| <b>pH</b>        | 1  | 1.1655    | 1.1655  | 7.877   | 0.1079         | <b>0.002</b> |
| <b>Total Cd</b>  | 1  | 0.8118    | 0.8118  | 5.487   | 0.07516        | <b>0.005</b> |
| <b>Total Cu</b>  | 1  | 0.2607    | 0.2607  | 1.762   | 0.02414        | 0.161        |
| <b>Total Mn</b>  | 1  | 4.8445    | 4.8445  | 32.741  | 0.4485         | <b>0.001</b> |
| <b>Total P</b>   | 1  | 0.1715    | 0.1715  | 1.159   | 0.01588        | 0.287        |
| <b>Total Zn</b>  | 1  | 0.2316    | 0.2316  | 1.565   | 0.02144        | 0.187        |
| <b>Residuals</b> | 19 | 2.8113    | 0.148   |         | 0.26027        |              |
| <b>Total</b>     | 26 | 10.8016   |         |         | 1              |              |



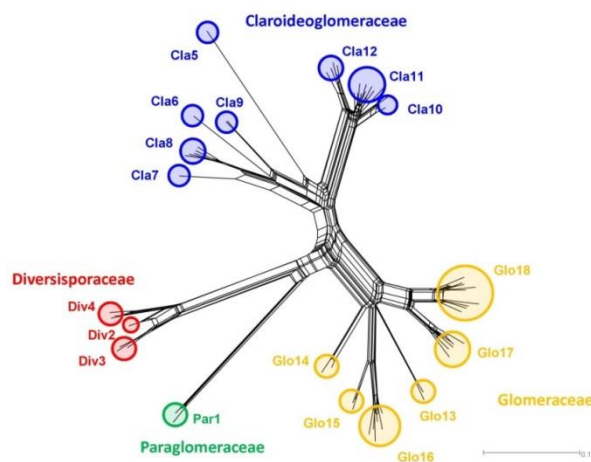
**Figure S2.** NMDS ordination of AM fungal communities by soil. Each treatment-plant species combination and the OTUS position are indicated. AC, triangle; BC, circle; C, square. *P. annua*, red; *M. polymorpha*, yellow; *M. sylvestris*, green.

**Capítulo V.4. Organic amendments increase phylogenetic diversity of arbuscular mycorrhizal fungi in acid soil contaminated by trace elements**

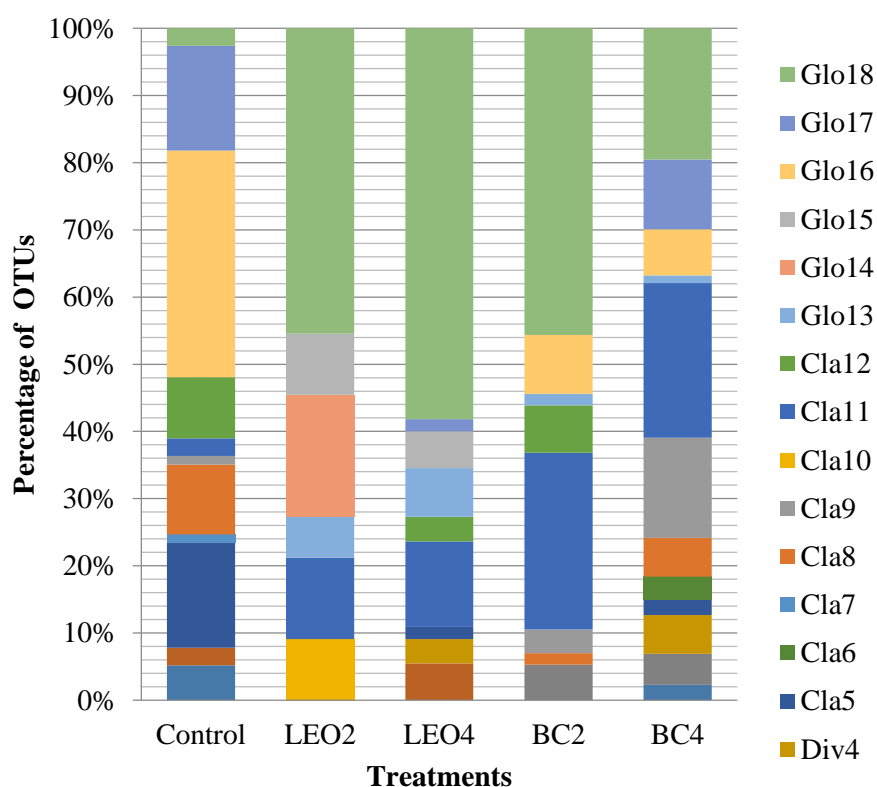
**Online resource 1.** Distribution of amended plots in the experimental field (modified from Madejón et al. 2006) and location of plots inside of the area affected by mine spill (limits are indicated by blue lines).



**Online resource 2.** NeighborNet split network (Huson et al., 2011) on the site dataset based on the Monophyletic Clade Approach.



**Online resource 3.** Relative abundance of OTUs identified in each treatment.



**Online resource 4.** Permutational multivariate analysis of the effect amendment treatments, plant host identity and spatial processes on arbuscular mycorrhizal community composition.

|                       | Df | SumsOfSqs | MeanSqs | F.Model | R2      | Pr(>F)         |
|-----------------------|----|-----------|---------|---------|---------|----------------|
| Amendment type        | 2  | 1.8687    | 0.93434 | 2.12510 | 0.28692 | <b>0.01399</b> |
| Application dose      | 1  | 0.3359    | 0.33586 | 0.76388 | 0.05157 | 0.68232        |
| Amendment:Application | 1  | 0.2980    | 0.29797 | 0.67770 | 0.04575 | 0.79221        |
| Plant species         | 1  | 0.9146    | 0.91461 | 2.08022 | 0.14043 | <b>0.02498</b> |
| Space                 | 1  | 0.8975    | 0.89749 | 2.04127 | 0.13780 | <b>0.03796</b> |
| Residuals             | 5  | 2.1984    | 0.43967 | 0.33754 |         |                |
| Total                 | 11 | 6.5130    | 1       |         |         |                |

Signif. codes: 0 '\*\*\*' 0.001 '\*\*' 0.01 '\*' 0.05 '.' 0.1 ' ' 1

**Online resource 5.** Principal Component Analysis (PCA) of available trace element in the experimental area.

| PC Axis | Eigenvalue | % variance |
|---------|------------|------------|
| 1       | 3.933      | 65.543     |
| 2       | 1.008      | 16.802     |
| 3       | 0.589      | 9.818      |
| 4       | 0.422      | 7.040      |
| 5       | 0.036      | 0.602      |
| 6       | 0.012      | 0.195      |

| Correlations | Axis 1 | Axis 2   | Axis 3  | Axis 4   | Axis 5   | Axis 6    |
|--------------|--------|----------|---------|----------|----------|-----------|
| As           | 0.4387 | 0.7842   | 0.4276  | -0.09674 | -0.01576 | 0.004222  |
| Cd           | 0.8541 | -0.3199  | 0.2683  | 0.3029   | -0.01029 | 0.06591   |
| Cu           | 0.8763 | -0.04594 | -0.192  | -0.4304  | 0.08012  | 0.03808   |
| Pb           | 0.6559 | 0.4712   | -0.4924 | 0.3241   | 0.01919  | 0.0007817 |
| Zn           | 0.9444 | -0.2158  | 0.2011  | 0.09548  | 0.08101  | -0.07303  |
| Mn           | 0.9595 | -0.1415  | -0.1205 | -0.1478  | -0.1497  | -0.02402  |

### **Capítulo V.5. Carbon sequestration in restored soils by applying organic amendments**

**Table S.1.** Bulk density values ( $\text{g cm}^{-3}$ ) at each depth in the different samplings (mean $\pm$  error; n=3). For each treatment and sampling values followed by different letter differ significantly ( $p < 0.05$ ) indicating differences in depth.

| Sampling | Depth (cm) | NA              | BC 2               | BC 4               | LE 2               | LE 4               |
|----------|------------|-----------------|--------------------|--------------------|--------------------|--------------------|
| 1        | 0-4        | 1.33 $\pm$ 0.21 | 1.36 $\pm$ 0.11    | 1.35 $\pm$ 0.07    | 1.30 $\pm$ 0.07 a  | 1.35 $\pm$ 0.10 a  |
|          | 4-8        | 1.5 $\pm$ 0.06  | 1.46 $\pm$ 0.09    | 1.45 $\pm$ 0.10    | 1.38 $\pm$ 0.05 ab | 1.45 $\pm$ 0.03 a  |
|          | 8-12       | 1.62 $\pm$ 0.04 | 1.61 $\pm$ 0.08    | 1.57 $\pm$ 0.10    | 1.55 $\pm$ 0.04 bc | 1.59 $\pm$ 0.02 ab |
|          | 12-16      | 1.67 $\pm$ 0.07 | 1.66 $\pm$ 0.07    | 1.67 $\pm$ 0.09    | 1.73 $\pm$ 0.04 c  | 1.70 $\pm$ 0.01 b  |
| 2        | 0-4        | 1.29 $\pm$ 0.27 | 1.09 $\pm$ 0.09 a  | 1.14 $\pm$ 0.11 a  | 1.19 $\pm$ 0.19    | 0.97 $\pm$ 0.01 a  |
|          | 4-8        | 1.39 $\pm$ 0.06 | 1.36 $\pm$ 0.04 b  | 1.36 $\pm$ 0.09 ab | 1.36 $\pm$ 0.10    | 1.36 $\pm$ 0.03 b  |
|          | 8-12       | 1.41 $\pm$ 0.07 | 1.45 $\pm$ 0.05 b  | 1.46 $\pm$ 0.03 ab | 1.48 $\pm$ 0.02    | 1.46 $\pm$ 0.10 b  |
|          | 12-16      | 1.54 $\pm$ 0.11 | 1.45 $\pm$ 0.02 b  | 1.52 $\pm$ 0.03 b  | 1.55 $\pm$ 0.02    | 1.54 $\pm$ 0.05 b  |
| 3        | 0-4        | 1.25 $\pm$ 0.10 | 1.18 $\pm$ 0.13 a  | 0.91 $\pm$ 0.08 a  | 1.32 $\pm$ 0.10    | 0.98 $\pm$ 0.03 a  |
|          | 4-8        | 1.36 $\pm$ 0.02 | 1.40 $\pm$ 0.10 ab | 1.32 $\pm$ 0.11 b  | 1.5 $\pm$ 0.11     | 1.36 $\pm$ 0.10 ab |
|          | 8-12       | 1.45 $\pm$ 0.02 | 1.62 $\pm$ 0.01 b  | 1.47 $\pm$ 0.05 bc | 1.55 $\pm$ 0.10    | 1.57 $\pm$ 0.07 b  |
|          | 12-16      | 1.52 $\pm$ 0.07 | 1.65 $\pm$ 0.04 b  | 1.73 $\pm$ 0.01 c  | 1.72 $\pm$ 0.16    | 1.70 $\pm$ 0.13 b  |

**Table S.2.** C content (Mg ha<sup>-1</sup>) at each depth in the different samplings (mean ± standard error; n=3). For each treatment and sampling values followed by different letter differ significantly (p <0.05) indicating differences in depth.

| Sampling | Depth (cm) | NA         | BC 2         | BC 4          | LE 2       | LE 4          |
|----------|------------|------------|--------------|---------------|------------|---------------|
| 1        | 0-4        | 7.10±1.26  | 13.50±2.66 a | 14.79±0.18 a  | 13.92±3.82 | 29.28±0.26 a  |
|          | 4-8        | 4.46±0.162 | 7.93±0.23 ab | 8.50±1.56 ab  | 6.76±1.12  | 14.29±0.98 b  |
|          | 8-12       | 4.78±0.188 | 6.49±0.57 b  | 7.22±0.21 b   | 4.45±1.26  | 5.25±0.91 c   |
|          | 12-16      | 4.83±0.401 | 5.13±0.45 b  | 6.04±0.18 b   | 4.35±0.68  | 5.15±0.91 c   |
| 2        | 0-4        | 7.37±1.31  | 10.11±0.21 a | 15.15±1.62 a  | 17.29±4.95 | 28.81±4.12 a  |
|          | 4-8        | 5.96±1.13  | 8.38±0.48 ab | 9.89±1.22 ab  | 9.61±2.51  | 23.10±4.98 ab |
|          | 8-12       | 5.34±0.71  | 6.07±0.81 b  | 7.59±1.11 b   | 6.30±0.68  | 9.88±2.91 bc  |
|          | 12-16      | 4.41±0.89  | 5.65±1.00 b  | 6.57±1.03 b   | 5.99±0.28  | 6.12±0.80 c   |
| 3        | 0-4        | 7.94±1.84  | 12.25±1.10 a | 16.50±3.53 a  | 21.67±8.42 | 31.22±5.16 a  |
|          | 4-8        | 5.13±0.65  | 6.80±0.92 b  | 10.98±1.44 ab | 9.18±2.72  | 20.75±3.75 ab |
|          | 8-12       | 4.99±0.69  | 6.92±0.33 b  | 7.94±1.04 ab  | 5.81±1.04  | 8.08±0.82 b   |
|          | 12-16      | 5.25±0.48  | 5.65±0.33 b  | 6.67±0.14 b   | 5.17±0.72  | 6.26±0.09 b   |





## **CAPÍTULO VI**

### **DISCUSIÓN GENERAL**

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Las actividades mineras producen perturbaciones drásticas en el paisaje y alteraciones en las propiedades del suelo (ej.: pH ácidos, alta densidad aparente, baja disponibilidad de nutrientes, baja producción de biomasa, altas concentraciones elementos traza,...) por lo que para minimizar los riesgos asociados a la contaminación es necesario la recuperación de estos suelos (Shrestha y Lal, 2006). Para ello, es indispensable conocer las estrategias más adecuadas para hacer frente a este tipo de contaminación y los diferentes aspectos que influyen en el proceso de recuperación.

En la presente Tesis doctoral además de evaluar el carácter fitoestabilizador de varias especies vegetales (Capítulo V.1 y V.2), se profundiza en aspectos a nivel rizosférico (como los ecotipos de micorrizas arbusculares presentes en estos suelos (Capítulo V.3 y V.4) y la respuesta vegetal en términos de ácidos orgánicos exudados (Capítulo V.2)) que pueden ser clave a la hora de hacer futuras intervenciones en suelos contaminados por elementos traza. Por último, se evalúa el posible uso de suelos recuperados como sumideros de C mediante la adición de enmiendas orgánicas (Capítulo V.5).

## **VI.1. EXPERIMENTO DE MICROCOSMOS: SUELOS DE AZNALCÁZAR, AZNALCÓLLAR Y DE THARSIS**

### **Respuesta vegetal a nivel rizosférico bajo diferentes niveles de contaminación por ET: comunidades de HMA asociadas y exudación radicular. Influencia de las enmiendas orgánicas.**

Dos de los aspectos fundamentales que condicionan el éxito de la fitoestabilización son la elección adecuada de las enmiendas y de las especies vegetales. Además de evaluar la acumulación de ET en los tejidos vegetales y el efecto directo de las enmiendas sobre la disponibilidad de los mismos y el pH (Clemente et al., 2005; Domínguez et al., 2008; Pérez-Esteban et al., 2014), es necesario evaluar otros aspectos que pueden verse afectados por el aporte de materia orgánica así como por el tipo de especie vegetal y la calidad del suelo. Entre ellos, en los experimentos llevados a cabo en esta Tesis se prestó atención a dos aspectos: la comunidad de HMA y la exudación de ácidos orgánicos de bajo peso molecular.

***- Selección de especies vegetales adecuadas para ser empleadas en procesos de fitoestabilización.***

Para que una especie sea considerada adecuada en técnicas de fitoestabilización, entre otros aspectos, debe restringir la acumulación de ET en la parte aérea y tolerar altas concentraciones de los mismos en su rizosfera (Domínguez et al., 2009; Robinson et al., 2009) así como mejorar en lo posible las condiciones bioquímicas del suelo.

Además de crecer de forma natural en suelos contaminados, la concentración de ET en la parte aérea de las tres especies vegetales estudiadas (*P. annua*, *M. polymorpha* y *M. sylvestris*), estuvo por debajo de los valores límite establecidos por Mendez y Maier (2008). Además, el factor de bioconcentración en todos los casos fue menor que 1, indicando la capacidad de estas especies para estabilizar los ET en el suelo (Mendez y Maier, 2008).

El nivel de actividad microbiológica en el suelo varió según la especie vegetal. La medida de la actividad deshidrogenasa (empleada como indicador de la actividad total en el suelo (Nannipieri et al., 2002)) fue menor en la rizosfera de *M. sylvestris* indicando una menor estimulación de las comunidades y, por tanto, una menor incidencia en la mejora de la calidad del suelo respecto a *P. annua* y *M. polymorpha*.

De las tres especies estudiadas, *M. polymorpha* (Leguminosae) mostró una mayor acumulación de ET en la raíz que en la parte aérea, tal y como ha sido constatado por otros autores (Branzini et al., 2012; Rangel et al., 2014). Las leguminosas, además de presentar un sistema radicular profundo y alta biomasa, tienen la capacidad de establecer una relación simbiótica con bacterias fijadoras de nitrógeno lo cual las convierte en especies con carácter pionero para colonizar y restaurar sistemas degradados (Gómez-Sagasti y Marino, 2015). De hecho, parece que los nódulos radiculares juegan un papel importante en la acumulación de ET en la raíz (Zribi et al., 2015). Debido a estas características, la utilización de leguminosas en procesos de fitoestabilización ha sido ampliamente estudiada con resultados muy positivos (Walker et al., 2007; Martínez-Alcalá et al., 2012).

*Medicago polymorpha* fue la especie que acumuló una menor concentración de ET en la parte aérea a la vez que exudó una mayor cantidad de C lábil en la rizosfera, con la consiguiente estimulación de la actividad microbiana. En contraste, *M. sylvestris*

acumuló la mayor concentración de ET tanto en su parte aérea como en la raíz, y presentó una baja biomasa y un sistema radicular de menor desarrollo. Además, el establecimiento de esta planta requiere de más tiempo respecto a las otras debido a las características de sus semillas, que necesitan un tratamiento pregerminativo para superar su latencia.

Las gramíneas (en nuestro caso *P. annua*) son otra familia ampliamente estudiada en fitorecuperación (Madejón et al., 2006; Conesa et al., 2007; Renella et al., 2008). A pesar de la rápida colonización del suelo (disminuyendo los procesos erosivos) y de presentar una acumulación de ET en la parte aérea más baja que *M. sylvestris*, *P. annua* fue la especie que acumuló la mayor concentración de As. En general, las leguminosas acumulan una mayor concentración de As en las raíces limitando su translocación a la parte aérea (Rangel et al., 2014; Gomes et al., 2014). En estas plantas, la simbiosis con endomicorrizas reduce las concentraciones de As (Dong et al., 2008), de Zn (Burleigh et al., 2003) y de Cu (Lin et al., 2007), entre otros elementos, en la parte aérea. De acuerdo con ello, el alto nivel de colonización encontrado en *M. polymorpha* puede haber influido en la menor acumulación de ET en su parte aérea en comparación con el resto de las especies estudiadas. Por otro lado, *M. sylvestris* (Malvaceae) fue la especie más colonizada por HMA y, sin embargo, la que más ET acumuló en sus tejidos lo cual coincide con las características que presentan algunas hiperacumuladoras (Liu et al., 2015a).

La concentración de exudados de todas las especies disminuyó en Tharsis como respuesta a una menor disponibilidad de ET y una mayor disponibilidad de nutrientes (Dakora y Phillips, 2002), siendo *M. polymorpha* la especie que respondió más positivamente al efecto de las enmiendas aplicadas en este suelo (encontrándose la mayor variedad de AOs exudados junto a la mayor diversidad de HMA).

Tanto la composición como los factores que afectan a las comunidades de HMA y a los exudados radiculares se discuten en profundidad en los siguientes apartados.

A la vista de los resultados, podemos concluir que *M. polymorpha* es la especie que tiene una mejor capacidad de adaptación (seguramente por la simbiosis con rizobios y micorrizas) a las diferentes condiciones del suelo además de incrementar la calidad del mismo mediante la fijación de N y el aporte de C lábil.

**- Exudados radiculares: mecanismo de respuesta vegetal a la contaminación por ET en el suelo.**

Un paso más para entender el comportamiento de las plantas frente a los ET, y con ello profundizar en los distintos procesos que se producen en la fitoestabilización, es el estudio de los exudados radiculares. Entre ellos destacan los ácidos orgánicos de bajo peso molecular, que son los más reactivos con los ET (Koo et al., 2010).

Para poder estudiar el efecto único de los ET en las distintas especies vegetales se llevó a cabo el experimento en arena lavada (eliminando el efecto de otras variables del suelo) con concentraciones crecientes de Cd, Cu y Zn (principales contaminantes de los suelos estudiados). Además, los suelos utilizados presentan valores de pH similares, lo que permitió evaluar el efecto de otras variables (p. ej. el contenido en carbono orgánico del suelo) sobre los exudados sin la influencia del pH, que tiene un importante efecto sobre la disponibilidad de ET y sobre la concentración y composición de los ácidos orgánicos (Ding et al., 2014).

Los ácidos oxálico, málico, cítrico y fumárico fueron los ácidos orgánicos detectados en los exudados radiculares de las tres especies vegetales estudiadas. Entre ellos, los más abundantes fueron el oxálico y el málico, coincidiendo con lo encontrado por otros autores en medios contaminados por ET (Zeng et al., 2008; Quartacci et al., 2009).

En ausencia de suelo, la composición y cantidad de los ácidos orgánicos dependieron principalmente de las especies vegetales y el nivel de contaminación (Meier et al., 2012). El comportamiento de las tres especies vegetales (en términos de exudados) varió según crecieron en una matriz de arena lavada o en suelo. En arena lavada, la mayor concentración de exudados se detectó en la rizosfera de *M. polymorpha* coincidiendo con la menor acumulación de ET en la parte aérea. Por otro lado, *M. sylvestris* incrementó su concentración de ácidos orgánicos exudados conforme aumentaba la contaminación en el medio, lo que coincidió con un incremento de Cd y Zn en raíz y parte aérea y de Cu en raíz. La variación en la cantidad de ácidos orgánicos liberados puede deberse en gran parte a las diferentes estrategias de respuesta de las plantas frente a los ET (Bao et al., 2011). Resultados previos (Quartacci et al., 2009; Tuason y Arocena, 2009) ya habían mostrado como la composición y cantidad de los ácidos orgánicos varían según la especie.

Sin embargo, hay que considerar que el sistema radicular de las plantas creciendo en matrices artificiales difiere tanto morfológica como fisiológicamente al de aquellas que crecen en un suelo real (Jones, 1998), lo cual hace que sea difícil comparar los resultados de diferentes estudios llevados a cabo en diferentes medios (Kidd et al., 2009). Esto pone de manifiesto la necesidad de llevar a cabo los experimentos en suelo y complementarios a los llevados a cabo en matrices artificiales, para tener un conocimiento más realista sobre el comportamiento de la planta en el suelo.

En el experimento llevado a cabo en suelos contaminados se detectaron los mismos ácidos orgánicos que en arena lavada, siendo también los más abundantes oxálico y málico. Sin embargo, la concentración de exudados en el suelo (exceptuando el suelo con mayor calidad, Tharsis) fue mayor que la encontrada en la matriz de arena para todas las especies. En el experimento en suelos destaca, especialmente, la presencia de ácido oxálico ya que la producción de este ácido parece estar estimulada por la exposición de las plantas a concentraciones elevadas de ET (Ahonen-Jonnarth et al., 2000) además de considerarse una estrategia de las plantas para la adquisición de nutrientes (Pan et al., 2016). Por este motivo, se midieron las mayores concentraciones de oxálico en los suelos que presentaban el menor contenido en materia orgánica y nutrientes. Por otro lado, los ácidos oxálico, málico y cítrico son capaces de incrementar la concentración de fósforo disponible para la planta mediante la complejación de hierro o aluminio en fosfatos férricos y de aluminio (Bais et al., 2006). La mayor disponibilidad de P en el suelo de Tharsis podría explicar en parte la menor exudación de ácidos orgánicos (principalmente en los suelos enmendados).

El efecto de la concentración de los ET sobre la exudación de ácidos orgánicos es aún un aspecto que continúa evaluándose. De momento no es posible establecer tendencias generales debido a que el medio en el que se desarrolle el experimento así como la especie vegetal y el genotipo tienen una gran influencia. De acuerdo con lo observado en los suelos de estudio, Gherardi y Rengel (2004) mostraron como la disminución de Mn en el medio llevaba asociado un incremento en la exudación de ácidos orgánicos en *Medicago sativa*. La mayor concentración de Mn junto a la menor disponibilidad de Cd, Cu y Zn (suelo de Tharsis) estuvo asociada a las menores concentraciones de exudados en todas las especies. Por otro lado, estudios previos han mostrado que el incremento de la concentración de Zn (Xu et al., 2007) y de Cd (Chiang

et al., 2006) en el medio conlleva un incremento de la exudación de ácidos orgánicos coincidiendo con lo encontrado en los suelos de Aznalcázar y Aznalcóllar.

En los suelos de estudio el contenido en carbono orgánico fue el factor que influyó en mayor medida sobre la cantidad y composición de los exudados. El incremento del COT en el suelo está relacionado con una disminución de la disponibilidad de los metales en la rizosfera debido a su capacidad para complejar metales (Park et al., 2011). Esto explica que en el suelo con un mayor contenido en carbono orgánico (y por tanto un menor estrés derivado de los metales) los exudados estuvieran compuestos, en su gran mayoría, únicamente por ácido oxálico a bajas concentraciones.

La influencia de las enmiendas orgánicas en los exudados radiculares se ha puesto de manifiesto en algunos estudios (Koo et al., 2006; Park et al., 2011). Sin embargo, en nuestro caso el efecto de ambos compost (de biosólidos y de alperujo) sobre los exudados no fue muy significativo. Aunque algunos autores han relacionado el incremento de la exudación en la rizosfera con el aporte de enmiendas orgánicas al suelo (Peña et al., 2015), el efecto de estas varió según la especie vegetal produciendo un incremento y una reducción de los exudados en la rizosfera de *P. annua* y de *M. polymorpha*, respectivamente.

***- Comunidad de hongos micorrícicos arbusculares en suelos contaminados por elementos traza: “drivers” de la comunidad e importancia en el proceso de fitoestabilización.***

Otro aspecto importante a tener en cuenta en los procesos de fitoestabilización que ocurre a nivel rizosférico son las interacciones suelo-planta con los hongos micorrícicos arbusculares. Las diferentes concentraciones de carbono orgánico y ET de los suelos seleccionados en este estudio (Aznalcóllar, Aznalcázar y Tharsis) permitieron comparar las comunidades presentes en cada caso en un gradiente de calidad del suelo. Se produjo un incremento de filotipos pertenecientes a Claroideoglomeraceae con la mejora de las condiciones del suelo. Otros autores ya han mostrado previamente como comunidades dominadas por Glomeraceae han evolucionado a comunidades dominadas por Claroideoglomeraceae conforme mejoraron las condiciones en el suelo (Hassan et al., 2014).



La comunidad micorrícica se vio influenciada significativamente por factores abióticos del suelo (contenido de materia orgánica y concentración de ET) y en menor medida por la especie vegetal, coincidiendo con lo observado en otros estudios (Dumbrell et al., 2010). Aunque las concentraciones (tanto disponibles como pseudo-totales) de Cd y Mn tuvieron una influencia significativa sobre las comunidades de micorrizas arbusculares, el contenido de materia orgánica nativa del suelo fue el factor que ejerció mayor influencia sobre las comunidades endomicorrícicas. Moche et al. (2015) obtuvieron resultados similares, ya que identificaron el contenido de carbono orgánico como la principal variable del suelo que diferenciaba las comunidades de bacterias y hongos en tres suelos distintos.

En el experimento en macetas, la aplicación de materia orgánica exógena a través de los compost no afectó de forma significativa a la diversidad, colonización o composición de las comunidades de HMA. Aunque el efecto de las enmiendas orgánicas sobre la comunidad endomicorrícica ha sido ampliamente estudiado (Sullivan et al., 2006; Toljander et al., 2008; Warnock et al., 2010; Alguacil et al., 2011), la temporalidad del experimento y las condiciones en macetas del mismo, podrían explicar el no haber encontrado un efecto significativo de las enmiendas sobre las comunidades del suelo. Además de ello, hay que considerar la posibilidad de que la diversidad inicial presente en forma de propágulos en los tres suelos fuera diferente a consecuencia del diferente nivel de estrés abiótico. La ausencia de propágulos de filotipos adaptados a mejores condiciones explicaría que no se apreciara ningún efecto de la enmienda, a pesar de la mejora de las condiciones del suelo tras su aplicación. Sólo en el suelo de Tharsis se apreció una pequeña diferencia entre las comunidades presentes en el tratamiento con compost de alperujo y en el suelo no enmendado. La adición de la enmienda propició un incremento de la diversidad de la comunidad, ya que la mejora de las condiciones del suelo permitió el desarrollo de filotipos menos generalistas.

La presencia de Glomeraceae, Claroideoglomeraceae, Acaulosporaceae y Paraglomeraceae en suelos contaminados por ET ya había sido mostrada por otros autores (Schneider et al., 2013; Yang et al., 2015). Sin embargo, aunque Gigasporaceae es otra de las familias de HMA que se encuentran en este tipo de suelos degradados (González-Chávez et al., 2009; Krishnamoorthy et al., 2015), no apareció en ninguno de los suelos estudiados. Esta ausencia puede explicarse por el nicho en el que suele estar presente esta familia, esto es, en suelos arenosos con pH ácido y bajo contenido en

materia orgánica (Lekberg et al., 2007). Además de ello, *Gigaspora* sp. suele aparecer en ecosistemas en etapas avanzadas de sucesión ecológica (Hart y Reader, 2002).

Además de los filotipos dominantes, tanto la diversidad como la colonización de las raíces variaron acorde a la calidad del suelo. Los valores de diversidad obtenidos están dentro del rango normal encontrado en suelos contaminados por ET (Hassan et al., 2011) y muy por debajo de los encontrados en suelos no degradados (Lekberg et al., 2013). La diversidad se incrementó a medida que aumentó la calidad del suelo. Sin embargo, la colonización (total y a nivel de estructuras) disminuyó a la vez que el contenido de ET, de acuerdo con estudios previos (Vogel-Mikuš et al., 2006; Affholder et al., 2014).

## **VI. 2. EXPERIMENTO DE LARGA DURACIÓN: PARCELA “EL VICARIO”**

### **Efectividad de la fitoestabilización como técnica de recuperación de suelos contaminados por ET. Parámetros para evaluar el éxito del proceso de recuperación a largo plazo.**

El uso de fitotecnologías se considera una herramienta sostenible aplicable en ambientes contaminados independientemente de la latitud que, además de conllevar un beneficio ambiental, repercute positivamente en la salud humana (Schwitzguébel et al., 2011). Mientras que la fitoextracción se ve limitada por distintos factores, entre ellos el alto coste de los procesos de tratamiento de la biomasa contaminada así como por la generación de productos peligrosos para el medio ambiente resultado de dichos procesos (Sas-Nowosielska et al., 2004), la fitoestabilización no presenta este problema además de conllevar múltiples beneficios a nivel ecológico. A pesar de ello, su efectividad a largo plazo continúa siendo evaluada ya que se ve afectada por diversos factores como las especies vegetales usadas, la acumulación de ET en las plantas, la sucesión de las comunidades vegetales y la diversidad microbiana (Mench et al., 2010).

Los resultados obtenidos en la presente Tesis dejan constancia del éxito a largo plazo de la estrategia de fitoestabilización llevada a cabo en condiciones reales de campo en la parcela experimental “El Vicario” (el proceso comenzó en 2002), afectada por el vertido tóxico de Aznalcóllar. Existen muy pocos estudios a largo plazo que evalúen el efecto de las enmiendas en la recuperación de suelos contaminados, con lo que los datos presentados en esta Tesis consideramos que son de gran interés.

La evaluación de la recuperación de este suelo se realizó a través de parámetros físicos, físico-químicos y biológicos. Concretamente, el pH, la concentración de ET disponibles y de COT, la densidad aparente, el coeficiente de estratificación de carbono orgánico y la comunidad de HMA fueron las variables estudiadas. Otros estudios han puesto de manifiesto la necesidad de combinar análisis químicos con estudios a nivel microbiológico para evaluar adecuadamente la eficacia del proceso de recuperación (Moreno et al., 2011).

Los valores de pH, de COT y de ET disponibles se mantuvieron similares (e incluso más bajos en cuanto a la disponibilidad de ET) a los obtenidos en años anteriores (Madejón et al., 2006, 2009, 2010; Xiong et al., 2015). Ambas enmiendas aumentaron el pH y el carbono orgánico y, en general, redujeron la disponibilidad de todos los ET exceptuando el As, cuya concentración fue ligeramente mayor en las parcelas enmendadas con mayor dosis, lo cual puede deberse al incremento del pH en esas parcelas (Hartley et al., 2009).

Por otro lado, la aplicación de las enmiendas orgánicas (leonardita y compost de biosólidos) así como el incremento de la dosis de las mismas, produjo una disminución de la densidad aparente, coincidiendo con resultados previos (García-Orenes et al., 2005; Daynes et al., 2013). La densidad aparente es un indicador del nivel de compactación del suelo (Karlen et al., 2001), por lo que dichos resultados demuestran una mejora de la calidad del mismo.

Igualmente, el coeficiente de estratificación del carbono orgánico en las parcelas enmendadas constató la mejora de la calidad del suelo. Al final del experimento, los coeficientes se habían incrementado respecto a anteriores muestreos principalmente en las parcelas enmendadas con leonardita. En dichas parcelas el coeficiente fue superior a 2, lo cual es indicador de una mejora de las condiciones fisicoquímicas del suelo (Franzluebbers, 2002). Ambas enmiendas conllevaron un incremento del contenido en materia orgánica y de calidad en el suelo (de acuerdo con Ryals y Silver, (2013) y Scotti et al., (2015), entre otros) a la vez que produjeron cambios en la composición molecular de la materia orgánica del suelo debido a sus características intrínsecas (Caricasole et al., 2011).

A diferencia de lo obtenido en el experimento en macetas, la identificación de filotipos así como el análisis de la estructura filogenética de las comunidades de HMA permitieron corroborar la mejora en la calidad del suelo derivada principalmente del aporte de enmiendas orgánicas. La larga duración del experimento permitió ver el efecto del aporte de materia orgánica exógena en contraposición a lo observado en el experimento en macetas. Estos resultados tienen gran importancia puesto que los HMA son considerados indicadores de la calidad del suelo debido a que, además de reflejar cambios en el ecosistema, tienen una importante relevancia ecológica (Winding et al., 2005). Además de mejorar la resiliencia de las comunidades vegetales bajo condiciones de estrés ambiental (Barea et al., 2011), tienen otras funciones ecológicas como la contribución a la mejora de la estructura del suelo o la descomposición de la hojarasca (Van der Heijden y Horton , 2009).

El filotipo más abundante en el área de estudio fue *Rhizophagus intraradices* (anteriormente *Glomus intraradices*; actualmente algunos autores lo incluyen dentro del género *Rhizoglomus* (Sieverding et al., 2014)). Esta especie se considera generalista, debido a su presencia en diversos ambientes (Öpik et al., 2006), y fue el único filotipo (junto a una especie del género *Claroideoglomus*) identificado tanto en las parcelas control como en las enmendadas. De hecho, su presencia en suelos contaminados ha sido demostrada; por ejemplo, dominando las comunidades endomicorrícicas en suelos contaminados con Zn y Pb (Yang et al., 2015) o multicontaminados con ET (Krishnamoorthy et al., 2015). Su presencia y predominancia en suelos contaminados puede deberse al papel que desempeña en la respuesta de la planta en situaciones de estrés, mejorando la tolerancia de ésta a los metales pesados (Castillo et al., 2011; Spagnoletti et al., 2016). En el área experimental también se identificaron filotipos pertenecientes a *Diversisporaceae* y *Paraglomeraceae*. Debido a la dominancia del género *Glomus* en suelos contaminados por ET, la presencia de estas familias en este tipo de suelos suele ser menor (da Silva et al., 2005; Vallino et al., 2006; Bedini et al., 2010).

La estructura de las comunidades de HMA se define por la competencia por los nichos y/o el “filtro ambiental” (Maherali y Klironomos, 2012). En el suelo puede haber diversos factores que actúen como “filtro ambiental” afectando tanto a la estructura de la comunidad fúngica como a la riqueza y diversidad, lo cual repercute en las funciones del ecosistema (Wagg et al., 2014). Dicho “filtro ambiental” puede deberse a la

presencia de contaminantes orgánicos y/o inorgánicos (Hassan et al., 2014; Yang et al., 2015), al nivel de fertilidad del suelo (Liu et al., 2015b), al grado de alteración del hábitat (Moora et al., 2014), al gradiente de pH (Dumbrell et al., 2010) o a la textura del suelo (Lekberg et al., 2007), entre otros.

En la parcela experimental “El Vicario” la disponibilidad de ET actuó como “filtro ambiental” sobre las comunidades fúngicas. Acorde a la mejora de las condiciones químicas (menor disponibilidad de ET y mayor contenido en P) se produjo un incremento del número de filotipos pertenecientes a Claroideoglomeraceae en detrimento de la abundancia de *Glomus* sp. Estos resultados coinciden con estudios previos, que ponen de manifiesto la dominancia de filotipos oportunistas pertenecientes a Glomeraceae en suelos afectados por un mayor estrés abiótico (Carter et al., 2014; Krishnamoorthy et al., 2015; Lenoir et al., 2016).

Los resultados obtenidos muestran la transición desde comunidades agrupadas filogenéticamente (*clustered*, parcelas con leonardita) a comunidades sobredispersadas (*overdispersed*, parcelas con compost de biosólidos) acorde con la mejora de la calidad del suelo. Estos resultados coinciden con lo expuesto por Webb et al. (2002), que establecieron que la agrupación de las comunidades es resultado de la existencia de un “filtro ambiental” mientras que la sobredispersión de las comunidades resulta de un proceso de exclusión competitiva. El cambio en la estructura filogenética de las comunidades fúngicas en la parcela de estudio demuestra una mayor reducción del “filtro ambiental” debido a la aplicación de compost de biosólidos (asociado a un incremento de la diversidad filogenética) en comparación con la leonardita. El grado de diversidad filogenética puede ser usado como un indicador de la funcionalidad del sistema, ya que comunidades compuestas por filotipos similares normalmente llevan asociada una diversidad funcional menor (Gravel et al., 2012). Este cambio en la estructura filogenética de la comunidad endomicorrícica debido a factores abióticos ha sido mostrado por otros autores en un gradiente de contaminación por hidrocarburos (Hassan et al., 2014) y en un gradiente de fertilidad (Liu et al., 2015 b, c).

La alta variabilidad encontrada en las parcelas control respecto a la estructura filogenética puede deberse a la alta variabilidad espacial en el área experimental debido a una distribución irregular de los ET (Burgos et al., 2008). Dicha heterogeneidad en la distribución de los ET también ha sido encontrada en otros suelos contaminados

(Conesa et al., 2011). A la vista de los resultados, la adición de enmiendas disminuyó dicha variabilidad mejorando la habitabilidad del suelo.

Además del efecto significativo que tuvo el tipo de enmienda, la cantidad aplicada también afectó a las comunidades de micorrizas arbusculares. En las parcelas con una mayor adición de enmienda (independientemente del tipo) se produjo un incremento de la diversidad filogenética de acuerdo con estudios previos (Alguacil et al., 2009, 2011).

A pesar de que el contenido de P disponible en el suelo es un factor influyente sobre la comunidad de HMA (Gosling et al., 2013), en nuestro caso no se observó un efecto significativo sobre la misma. Este resultado podría explicarse por el efecto de las enmiendas sobre la disponibilidad de ET, que pudo haber enmascarado el efecto del P sobre la comunidad micorrícica (Yang et al., 2015). Por otra parte, las concentraciones de P en el suelo podrían encontrarse por debajo del intervalo a partir del cual se observa un efecto sobre la comunidad (Liu et al., 2015b; Wang et al., 2016).

Los HMA juegan un papel importante en la agregación del suelo (Rillig et al., 2015), relacionándose con un aumento de la porosidad, y consecuentemente con una reducción de la densidad aparente (Celik et al., 2004; Milleret et al., 2009) así como con el secuestro de C en el suelo (Zhu y Miller, 2003; Rillig, 2004). Entre los procesos mediados por estos microorganismos, se encuentra el incremento de la proporción de macroagregados del suelo (derivado de la red de hifas externa y la glomalina asociada) que conlleva un aumento de la protección física del C lábil (Wilson et al., 2009). Por todo ello, la mejora de la calidad del suelo derivada de la aplicación de las enmiendas se debió tanto a un efecto directo de dichas enmiendas sobre las propiedades físico químicas del suelo como a un efecto indirecto mediante la mejora de las comunidades de HMA.

El objetivo final de la fitoestabilización es alcanzar un sistema que sea autosostenible y que recupere sus funciones ecológicas (Mendez y Maier, 2008), por lo que el incremento de la diversidad y la mejora de la estructura filogenética de los HMA, el incremento del coeficiente de estratificación, la disminución de la densidad aparente y el mantenimiento de las concentraciones de ET disponibles en las parcelas enmendadas respaldan el éxito del proceso de recuperación a largo plazo llevado a cabo en “El Vicario”.

Todo ello pone de manifiesto que la aplicación de la enmienda orgánica adecuada y en su caso la inoculación de ecotipos resistentes de micorrizas o la estimulación de las comunidades existentes, pueden resultar en un efecto sinérgico, mejorando las propiedades físicas (densidad aparente, agregación del suelo), químicas (mejora del pH, disminución de la disponibilidad de ET) y biológicas (estimulación de las comunidades microbianas, incremento de la cobertura vegetal) del suelo así como en un incremento de la funcionalidad del ecosistema.

### **Secuestro de Carbono en suelos degradados por la contaminación. Efecto de las enmiendas orgánicas en un experimento de larga duración.**

Como se apuntó anteriormente, tanto la leonardita como el compost de biosólidos incrementan el contenido de materia orgánica del suelo a la vez que modifican su composición molecular. Además de ello, ambas enmiendas favorecieron el secuestro de C en el suelo aunque en diferente grado. La adición de inputs de C más estables promueve una mayor acumulación neta de carbono orgánico en el suelo ya que conllevan una reducción del “turnover” del carbono orgánico (Jastrow et al., 2007). Por ello, la leonardita favoreció en mayor medida la retención de C en el suelo resultado de su composición molecular, rica en aromáticos y compuestos derivados de la lignina (lento “turnover” y baja tasa de mineralización) (Marschner et al., 2008; Kleber et al., 2010). El efecto positivo sobre el secuestro de C de la aplicación de enmiendas orgánicas más estables ha sido mostrado por otros autores (Sánchez- Monedero et al., 2008; Fabrizio et al., 2009). Por el contrario, el compost de biosólidos es rico en alquilos y contiene una baja cantidad de aromáticos, lo que hace que sea más fácilmente degradable por los microorganismos del suelo. A pesar de ello, hay que considerar los beneficios que conlleva además del secuestro de C, como la mejora de la calidad del suelo en términos de fertilidad (Torri et al., 2014).

Además del tipo de enmienda, la dosis aplicada también afectó a la concentración de C en el suelo. Para ambas enmiendas, el incremento en la cantidad aplicada estuvo asociado con una mayor retención de C en el suelo. Ojeda et al. (2015) en un suelo minero enmendado con lodos de depuradora y Aguilera et al. (2013) en suelos agrícolas enmendados con diferentes enmiendas orgánicas obtuvieron resultados similares en ambientes mediterráneos. Asimismo, Hua et al. (2014) encontró una relación positiva entre la cantidad de C secuestrado en el suelo y la cantidad de C aportado con diferentes

enmiendas orgánicas en un experimento de larga duración (29 años). Los resultados obtenidos corroboran que la utilización de enmiendas orgánicas en suelos degradados es una estrategia viable de secuestro de carbono (Lal, 2008).

Por tanto, la elección de una u otra enmienda en futuras aplicaciones dependerá de cual sea el principal objetivo; esto es, de si se quiere favorecer en mayor medida el secuestro de C en el suelo (leonardita) o si el proceso va encaminado principalmente a la estimulación de las comunidades microbianas y el establecimiento de una mayor cobertura vegetal (compost de biosólidos).



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## **CAPÍTULO VII**

### **CONCLUSIONES**

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A decorative L-shaped line consisting of three parallel lines, extending horizontally from the end of the 'CONCLUSIONES' text and turning vertically downwards at the right end.



1. Entre las especies estudiadas, *Medicago polymorpha* fue la que menos elementos traza acumuló en su parte aérea, estabilizando estos elementos a nivel radical. Además presenta un mayor desarrollo de biomasa y de sistema radical, lo que facilita su colonización. Todo ello la convierte en la candidata más adecuada para procesos de fitoestabilización. *Poa annua* presenta también un comportamiento adecuado para la fitoestabilización, aunque no es recomendable en suelos contaminados con As. Finalmente, *Malva sylvestris* es la menos adecuada, debido a que acumula concentraciones más altas de elementos traza en la parte aérea y genera una menor cobertura vegetal.
2. La exudación de ácidos orgánicos fue un mecanismo de respuesta vegetal frente a la contaminación por metales, incrementándose su excreción acorde al nivel de contaminación. La composición (principalmente oxálico y málico) y cantidad de ácidos orgánicos exudados dependió de la especie vegetal y especialmente de las condiciones del suelo (en particular el contenido de C orgánico y la concentración de elementos traza). El incremento de la materia orgánica en el suelo conlleva una disminución del estrés por metales y un aporte nutrientes y, como resultado, una disminución de la concentración de ácidos orgánicos y un cambio en su composición, excretándose únicamente oxálico. El efecto del aporte de materia orgánica exógena sobre los ácidos orgánicos varió según la especie vegetal, produciendo efectos opuestos en *P. annua* y *M. polymorpha*.
3. La comunidad de hongos micorrícicos arbusculares en los suelos de estudio estuvo principalmente afectada (a nivel de estructura y composición) por la concentración de elementos traza y el contenido de carbono orgánico del suelo. Sin embargo, la concentración de P disponible en suelo no afectó significativamente a las comunidades de HMA en ninguno de los suelos de estudio.
4. La reducción del filtro ambiental (elementos traza) producida por la mejora de las condiciones del suelo, permitió la transición desde comunidades agrupadas filogenéticamente (clustered) a comunidades sobredispersadas (overdispersed) con la consiguiente mejora de la funcionalidad del sistema. El aporte de materia orgánica exógena repercutió (positivamente) sobre la comunidad fúngica

reduciendo el filtro ambiental. Sin embargo, este efecto no es inmediato y para confirmarlo son necesarios varios años desde la aplicación de las enmiendas.

5. La identificación de los filotipos de HMA, y el conocimiento de la estructura de su comunidad nos permite utilizar a estos microorganismos como indicadores del estado de recuperación de un suelo. En los suelos de menor calidad o en menor estado de recuperación, *Rhizophagus intraradices* y *Rhizophagus irregularis* fueron los filotipos más abundantes. Sin embargo, la disminución de ambos filotipos (Glomeraceae) en beneficio de un aumento de filotipos pertenecientes a Claroideoglomeraceae es indicador de un estado más avanzado de recuperación (mayor calidad) del suelo.
6. La adición de enmiendas orgánicas (concretamente, compost de biosólidos y leonardita) para la recuperación de suelos contaminados con elementos traza en clima Mediterráneo, además de mejorar las condiciones físicas, químicas y biológicas del suelo, promovió el secuestro de C a largo plazo. La cantidad de C secuestrado dependió tanto de la composición molecular de la enmienda orgánica como de la dosis aplicada. La aplicación de la dosis más alta de leonardita resultó ser el mejor tratamiento para el secuestro de C a largo plazo debido a su composición rica en aromáticos que resulta en una menor tasa de mineralización y “turnover”. Sin embargo, aunque la utilización de compost de biosólidos implicó un menor secuestro de C, esta enmienda incrementó en mayor medida la fertilidad y la actividad de las comunidades del suelo además de suponer un reciclaje de residuos y ser una opción más económica.



## CONCLUSIONS

1. Among studied plant species, *Medicago polymorpha* accumulated the lowest trace element concentrations in aerial parts, stabilizing such elements at root level. Moreover, its higher biomass and root system development could facilitate the colonization of new environments. For these reasons, this plant species was considered as the most suitable for phytostabilisation. *Poa annua* also showed adequate characteristics to use in phytostabilisation, but its use was not advisable in As contaminated soils. Lastly, *Malva sylvestris* was the least suitable species for this purpose due to the high accumulation of trace elements in shoots and the low vegetal cover development.
2. Organic acids exudation was a plant response mechanism to trace element contamination, increasing the exudates according to the contamination level. The composition (mainly oxalic and malic acid) and the amount of organic acids depended on vegetal species and especially on the soil conditions (particularly organic carbon content and trace elements concentration). The soil organic matter increase entailed a decrease of heavy metal stress and a nutrient supply, and as result, a decrease of organic acids concentration and a modification of their composition, releasing oxalic acid exclusively. The effect of exogenous organic matter addition on organic acids varied according to the vegetal species, causing contrary effects in *P. annua* and in *M. polymorpha*.
3. In the studied soils, arbuscular mycorrhizal fungal community was mainly affected (at structure and composition level) by the trace elements concentration and the organic carbon content in the soil. However, P availability in the soil did not affect significantly to the AMF communities in any of the studied soils.
4. Environmental filtering (trace elements) reduction resulting from the improvement of soil conditions, allowed the transition from phylogenetically clustered to overdispersed communities, thereby improving the functionality of the system. The exogenous organic matter supply affected (positively) fungal community by reducing the environmental filtering. However, this effect was not immediate and was only noted several years after amendment application.
5. The identification of arbuscular mycorrhizal fungal phylotypes and the knowledge of community structure allowed the use of these microorganisms as indicators of soil remediation stage. In soils of lower quality or lesser

remediation state, *Rhizophagus intraradices* and *Rhizophagus irregularis* were the most abundant phylotypes. However, the decrease of both phylotypes (Glomeraceae) accompanied by an increase of phylotypes belonging to Claroideoglomeraceae was indicative of a more advanced state of soil recovery (higher quality).

6. In addition to physical, chemical and biological conditions improvement, the use of organic amendment (biosolid compost and leonardite) for the remediation of trace elements contaminated soils in Mediterranean conditions promoted the long-term C sequestration. The amount of C sequestered depended on molecular composition and applied rate of organic amendment. The highest dose of leonardite was the best treatment to promote long-term C sequestration due to its composition, rich in aromatics resulting in a lower mineralization rate and turnover. Despite the use of biosolid compost entailed a lower C sequestration, this amendment increased the fertility and activity of soil communities in a greater extent. Moreover biosolid compost use could be a cheaper option that involves organic waste recycling.