

Natural recovery of genetic diversity by gene flow in reforested areas of the endemic Canary Island pine, Pinus canariensis

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25 the surrounding natural stands was found for nuclear markers. However, chloroplast

26 microsatellites presented lower haplotype diversity in reforested stands, and this may 27 be a consequence of the lower effective population size of the chloroplast genome, 28 meaning chloroplast markers have a higher sensitivity to bottlenecks. Understory 29 natural regeneration within the reforestation was also analysed to study gene flow 30 from natural forest into artificial stands. Estimates of immigration rate into artificially 31 regenerated forest were high (0.68–0.75), producing a significant increase of genetic 32 diversity (both in chloroplast and nuclear microsatellites) which indicates the capacity 33 for genetic recovery for *P. canariensis* reforestations surrounded by larger natural 34 stands.

35

36 *Keywords:* silviculture, chloroplast microsatellites, nuclear microsatellites, assignment 37 test, temporal samples, gene flow

38

39 **1. Introduction**

40 Silvicultural practices can potentially affect the genetic structure of forests and this 41 problem is of concern for forest geneticists (see Lefèvre, 2004, for a review). In 42 particular, artificial regeneration of forest (plantations or sowing) may produce a loss 43 of genetic diversity through the processes of unplanned selection and genetic drift 44 (Ledig, 1992). Detection of a reduction in genetic diversity with neutral markers 45 because of artificial selection is unlikely because only a few genes might be involved 46 (Lefèvre, 2004) but the quantification of genetic drift to assess potential losses of 47 adaptive variation can be done from neutral molecular markers as it is a process that 48 affects the whole genome (Glaubitz et al., 2003b).

49 Bottleneck effects may be present within forest regeneration practises because of the 50 use of a limited number of seed trees and the unevenness of the number of seeds 51 collected or produced per tree (Glaubitz et al., 2003a; Burgarella, 2004).

52

53 An additional concern for artificial populations is the extent of genetic exchange with 54 natural populations. Potential negative effects of gene flow from artificial plantations 55 into natural forests ('genetic pollution') have been considered (Lenormand, 2002) and 56 have gained recent public awareness with the use of transgenic crops (including tree 57 species, DiFazio et al., 2004). Gene flow from natural population into seed orchards 58 (i.e. seed production plantations for reforestation) is also considered a negative effect 59 ('pollen contamination') because it reduces the genetic gain obtained from the 60 breeding programs and may increase maladaptation (El-Kassaby, 2000). However, 61 under other circumstances, gene exchange between artificial and natural populations 62 can also be positive. For small declining populations gene flow from surrounding 63 reforestation may increase their effective population size ('demographic rescue', 64 Lefèvre, 2004). Also, gene flow from natural forest into reforested stands may be a 65 natural way to recover the genetic variation lost in the reforestation process. This 66 could potentially create an admixed landrace well adapted to local conditions, and 67 with high evolutionary potential to respond to environmental changes.

68

69 *Pinus canariensis* is endemic to the western Canary Islands, where it forms one of the 70 main forest ecosystems of the archipelago. Its area of distribution has been diminished 71 by five centuries of overexploitation (decreasing from covering 25% of the territory to 72 now covering 12%). A great reforestation effort has been made since the 1940's, 73 resulting in a mosaic of reforested and natural pine forest (del Arco Aguilar et al.,

74 1992). A high genetic differentiation has been found among populations of *P.* 75 *canariensis* (Gómez et al., 2003) with some endangered marginal populations 76 presenting particular genetic characteristics (Vaxevanidou et al., 2006). In the present 77 study we analyse the genetic diversity and immigration rates within a transect of 78 reforested stands connecting two natural forest fragments in Tenerife. Hence, we are 79 assessing the effects of the reforestation process on the genetic integrity of the 80 artificial stands and their potential to naturally recover to the levels of diversity of the 81 surrounding natural forest.

82

83 **2. Materials and methods**

84

85 *2.1 Plant material and sampling design*

86 El Teide mountain (Tenerife, Spain) is crowned by a pine forest belt (the Corona 87 Forestal Natural Park). A proportion of these pine woods are artificial stands planted 88 from the 1940's to repair the past overexploitation (Parsons, 1981; del Arco Aguilar et 89 al., 1992). We have chosen as our study site an area where there is still a small 90 interruption of the forest with only a narrow strip of planted trees connecting two 91 natural forest fragments (figure 1). Artificial *Pinus canariensis* stands were planted in 92 Fasnia between 1956 and 1965 and in Arico between 1981 and 1985. The current 93 vegetation cover for those areas is 30–60% for Fasnia and < 30% for Arico (del Arco 94 Aguilar et al., 1992). The provenance of the plants is unknown but most probably seed 95 were collected from different locations in Tenerife island (Climent et al., 1996). Nine 96 sites were sampled in these plantations (sites 2–6 in Arico and 7–10 in Fasnia, figure 97 1); in each of the nine sampling stations 10 planted adult trees and 10 understory 98 naturally regenerated seedlings were sampled (except at site eight where 11 planted

99 trees and 10 seedlings were sampled). From the natural forest in Arico (site 1) and 100 Güímar (site 11) we have sampled 50 and 47 mature trees respectively. Both old trees 101 and seedlings were selected randomly and with an average separation of 10 m among 102 them. From each individual needles were collected and preserved in silica gel in the 103 summer of 2002.

104

105 *2.2 Molecular markers*

106 Genomic DNA was purified using a CTAB protocol based on the Doyle and Doyle 107 (1987) method. Samples were genotyped for eight chloroplast microsatellites (Pt1254, 108 Pt15169, Pt26081, Pt30204, Pt36480, Pt71936, Pt87268 and Pt110048; Vendramin et 109 al., 1996) and eight nuclear microsatellites (SPAC 11.5, SPAC 11.8 and SPAG 7.14, 110 Soranzo et al., 1998; PtTX3116 and PtTX4001, Auckland et al., 2002; ssrPt_ctg4363, 111 ssrPt_ctg4698 and ssrPt_ctg7731, Chagné et al., 2004). PCR amplifications were 112 performed in a Perkin-Elmer 9700 thermal cycler (details in Navascués, 2005). PCR 113 products were sized using an ABI PRISM 3700 DNA Analyzer (Applied Biosystems). 114

115 *2.3 Genetic diversity indices*

116 For chloroplast microsatellites, total number of haplotypes (*nh*, direct count of 117 haplotypes which are scored as unique combinations of alleles for all cpSSR loci), 118 effective number of haplotypes (*ne*, Nielsen et al., 2003), unbiased haplotype diversity 119 (H_e , Nei, 1978) and average genetic distances among individuals (D^2_{sh} , Goldstein et 120 al., 1995) were calculated for each sample:

121
$$
n_e = (n-1)^2 / \sum_{h=1}^{n_h} p_h^2 (n+1)(n-2) + 3 - n
$$
 [1]

122
$$
H_e = \frac{n}{n-1} \left(1 - \sum_{h=1}^{n_h} p_h^2 \right)
$$
 [2]

123
$$
D_{sh}^{2} = \frac{2}{n(n-1)} \frac{1}{L} \sum_{i=1}^{n} \sum_{j=i+1}^{n} \left(\sum_{k=1}^{L} \left| a_{ik} - a_{jk} \right| \right)^{2}
$$
 [3]

124 where *n* is the number of individuals in the sample, p_h is the relative frequency of the 125 hth haplotype, n_h is the number of different haplotypes in the sample, *L* is the number 126 of loci, a_{ik} is the size (number of repeats) of the allele for the ith individual and at the 127 *k*th locus, and a_{jk} is the size of the allele for the *j*th individual and at the *k*th locus.

128

129 For nuclear microsatellites the arithmetic mean among loci was calculated for the 130 following indices: number of alleles (*A*, direct count), effective number of alleles (*Ae*, 131 Nielsen et al., 2003), and unbiased gene diversity (*He*, Nei, 1978):

132
$$
A_e = (2n-1)^2 \left/ \sum_{i=1}^{A} p_i^2 (2n+1)(2n-2) + 3 - 2n \right.
$$
 [4]

133
$$
H_e = \frac{2n}{2n-1} \left(1 - \sum_{i=1}^{A} p_i^2 \right)
$$
 [5]

134 where *n* is the number of individuals in the sample (i.e. sample size), p_i is the relative 135 frequency of the ith allele in the sample and *A* is the total number of different alleles in 136 the sample.

137

138 Significant differences in the genetic diversity indices between pairs of samples were 139 tested by a Monte Carlo approach (see, for instance, Glaubitz et al., 2003a for similar 140 analysis) programmed in Fortran language (source code available from the authors on 141 request). The null distribution (both samples hold the same genetic diversity) of 142 differences for each index was constructed by resampling (with replacement) 143 individuals among samples. The result is a mixture of individuals from both samples 144 distributed in two new samples (with sizes equal to the original sizes). The genetic 145 diversity parameters of both samples and their differences are computed (samples are 146 compared always in the same order and sign of differences is kept). This process is 147 repeated 10 000 times to build the null distribution of the genetic diversity differences 148 expected for two samples (with the specific sizes of the empirical samples) drawn 149 from populations with the same genetic diversity (i.e. the same population). The 150 empirical difference value is then compared with the null distribution. Since we are 151 interested in testing for the reduction of genetic diversity (i.e. null hypothesis, h_0 : 152 diversity in natural forest ≤ diversity in artificial stands) we perform a one-tailed test. 153 The *p*-value for rejecting the null hypothesis is estimated as the proportion of 154 iterations with differences greater than or equal to the observed difference value. This 155 process is used to test chloroplast haplotype diversity, individual nuclear locus 156 diversity and average (among loci) nuclear diversity. Two types of comparisons were 157 made, 1) samples from the natural forest with samples from the trees planted in the 158 artificial stands and 2) samples from the trees planted in the artificial stands with the 159 natural regeneration in the artificial stands.

160

161 Significant differences in allele frequencies (nSSR) between pairs of samples were 162 tested with a Fisher exact test (Raymond and Rousset, 1995) using the program 163 Genepop 3.4 (available at http://wbiomed.curtin.edu.au/genepop/).

164

165 *2.4 Temporal change in allelic frequencies*

166 Allele frequencies change through time through the influences of gene flow and 167 genetic drift (assuming neutral variation). Using the change in allele frequencies in 168 samples of different generations has been mainly used for estimating effective 169 population sizes (e.g. Waples, 1989). Recently Wang and Whitlock (2003) have 170 developed a new maximum likelihood method that estimates immigration rates and 171 effective population sizes simultaneously. This method, implemented in the MLNE 172 program (available at http://www.zoo.cam.ac.uk/ioz/software.htm), has been used on 173 the nSSR data of the reforested samples using the planted trees as the parental 174 generation and the natural regeneration as the following generation. To estimate the 175 gene flow, the method also uses the allele frequencies of the potential external source 176 of genes, which in our case were taken from the surrounding natural stands.

177

178 *2.5 Additional analysis of gene flow*

179 A hierarchical AMOVA on cpSSRs was used to study the paternal heterogeneity from 180 the sampled seedlings, as in Dyer and Sork (2001). The chloroplast is paternally 181 inherited in conifers; therefore, cpSSR variation in the seedlings might reflect the 182 genetic diversity of the pollen clouds of the area. However, in our case, having 183 sampled seedlings on the ground, we cannot ignore some influence of seed dispersal 184 in our data. Canopy density can influence the dispersal of propagules diminishing 185 windspeed (see Nathan and Katul, 2005). Thus, sampling sites were nested into two 186 AMOVA groups, Arico (low vegetation cover) and Fasnia (high vegetation cover, del 187 Arco Aguilar et al., 1992).

188

189 The genotype assignment method developed by Rannala and Mountain (1997), 190 implemented in their program Immanc 5 (available at 191 http://www.rannala.org/labpages/software.html), was used on the nSSR data to detect 192 immigrants among the seedlings. This method allows performing the test for different 193 levels of immigrant ancestry considering the probabilities of external origin of: A) the 194 whole genotype (first generation immigrant, i.e. the individual has two foreign 195 parents), B) half of the genotype (second generation immigrant, i.e. the individual has

196 one foreign parent), etc. The program calculates the relative probability for each 197 individual to be born from parents with no recent immigrant ancestry rather than from 198 both foreign parents (denoted $\Lambda_{d=0}$) or from one foreign parent (denoted $\Lambda_{d=1}$). 199 These calculations are based on the allele frequencies of the studied population and 200 the potential source populations using a Bayesian approach. The null distribution 201 (individual with no immigrant ancestry) of the statistic ln Λ is built by a Monte Carlo 202 simulation and *p*-values and statistical power (for $\alpha = 0.05$) are estimated for each test. 203

204 In our case the interpretation of the Rannala and Mountain (1997) assignment tests are 205 slightly different, because we have effectively only one generation of possible 206 immigrants. 'First generation' immigrants (whole genotype of external origin) will 207 correspond to seeds developed and fertilised outside the stand. 'Second generation' 208 immigrants (half genotype of external origin) will correspond to seeds from the stand 209 fertilised with pollen from outside (the alternative possibility, seed from outside 210 fertilised with pollen from the stand and dispersed into the stand, is considered highly 211 improbable and will be ignored in the interpretation). The proportion of 'seed-212 immigrants' $(d = 0)$ and 'pollen-immigrants' $(d = 1)$ in the analysed seedlings will be 213 estimates of seed and pollen immigration rates. To check the accuracy of the method 214 we examined the results of these tests on the planted trees, which we consider by 215 definition 'non-immigrants'. The proportion of planted trees detected as immigrants 216 will give us the error rate of the method.

217

218 **3. Results and discussion**

219 *3.1 Genetic differences among samples*

220 Significant differentiation (χ^2 = 50.438, d.f. = 16, *p* < 0.001) in the nSSR allele 221 frequencies was detected between planted and natural forest. However theses 222 differences cannot be interpreted as introduction of foreign material as significant 223 differentiation (χ^2 = 54.787, d.f. = 16, *p* < 0.001) was also detected between the two 224 spatially close natural stands. Also, there were significant differences in the allele 225 frequencies between planted trees and understory natural regeneration for both 226 reforested stands (Arico: $\chi^2 = 27.282$, d.f. = 16, $p = 0.038$ and Fasnia: $\chi^2 = 28.005$, d.f. $227 = 16$, $p = 0.032$). These changes may be the result of the effects of drift and gene flow 228 in the reforested stands (see next section).

229

230 Levels of nSSR genetic diversity in the reforested stands are, in general, similar to 231 those found in the surrounding natural forest (table 1, results for individual nSSR loci 232 not shown). Mean expected heterozygosity presented a significantly lower value in 233 the plantations but the diversity index based on allele number, which is more sensitive 234 to population bottlenecks (Nei et al., 1975), showed no significantly lower values and 235 in some cases allele diversity was even higher. Therefore, it is unclear what the lower 236 H_e value indicates. The higher proportion of rare alleles (alleles with frequency \lt 237 0.01) in the reforested stands (27.45%) in comparison to the natural forest (19.42%) 238 suggests to us that a possible mixed origin of the seedling stock (or different seedling 239 origins for the different reforestation phases) could produce an accumulation of alleles 240 from different areas (explaining high levels of allelic diversity) but with lower 241 frequencies in the mixture (resulting in low *He* values). In fact, observed 242 heterozygosity (mean $H_o=0.648$) is lower than the expected heterozygosity suggesting 243 the possibility of a Wahlund effect $(F_{IS}=0.112, p$ -value = 0.006).

245 For cpSSRs, there is a significantly lower effective number of haplotypes in both 246 artificial stands compared to natural forest (table 1). Bottlenecks associated with the 247 reforestation process could have had a stronger effect on cpSSR diversity than in 248 nSSRs because the effective population size for the chloroplast genome is half the 249 nuclear effective population size. However, no significant reduction was found at *H^e* 250 and D^2_{sh} , probably because these measures are less sensitive to population size 251 changes. Alternatively, the lower haplotype diversity found could be attributed to a 252 low genetic diversity provenance for the seedlings used in the plantation. However, 253 low diversity populations of *P. canariensis* are mainly marginal (Vaxevanidou et al. 254 2006) which are unlikely locations for seed collection by Forest Services.

255

256 In the comparison of the reforested areas with their natural regeneration we found a 257 significant increase in the effective number of haplotypes and in the mean effective 258 number of alleles (table 2). Although the increase on mean A_e was not apparent when 259 the two reforested stands were studied separately, the whole reforestation area had a 260 significant gain in alleles for loci SPAC 11.8, PtTX3116, PtTX4001, ssrPt_ctg4698 261 and ssrPt_ctg7731 (data not shown). This increase of the allelic diversity in the 262 reforestation may be attributable to gene flow from the natural stands.

263

264 *3.2 Gene flow into the artificial stands*

265 Three different methods have been used to explore the immigration dynamics within 266 the reforested stands. First, we examined the temporal changes in allele frequencies 267 between the planted trees and the following generation, represented by the understory 268 natural regeneration. We applied the Wang and Whitlock (2003) maximum likelihood 269 method using the allele frequencies in the natural forest as the potential external

270 source of immigrants. The estimates (and 95% confidence intervals) of effective 271 population size (N_e) and immigration rate (m) obtained from this method are $N_e =$ 272 36.88 (29.09–50.12) and *m* = 0.68 (0.46–0.88) for Arico and *Ne* = 28.83 (22.95– 273 38.78) and *m* = 0.75 (0.54–0.94) for Fasnia.

274

275 Two other methods were employed to characterize gene flow in the area but none of 276 them shed further light on the subject. The results of the AMOVA test gave non-277 significant differentiation of the pollen diversity for both among sites and among 278 stands (Φ -statistics < 0.033, $p > 0.17$). This result suggests a high pollen dispersal 279 capacity. A second method was the estimation of immigration rates by the 280 identification of immigrants among the natural regenerated seedlings with the Rannala 281 and Mountain (1997) assignment test. The immigration rates into the reforested 282 patches, calculated as the proportion of identified immigrants over the sample size, 283 are $m_{seed} = 0.07$ and $m_{pollen} = 0.12$. However, these estimates are unreliable as when 284 the same assignment test was applied to the planted trees (considered 'non-285 immigrants') 15 individuals were identified as second generation immigrants (pollen 286 dispersal) and 6 as first generation immigrants (seed dispersal). These error rates are 287 in the same order of magnitude as the estimated immigration rates obtained. This poor 288 performance of the test is due to the low genetic differentiation among the samples 289 which resulted in very low statistical power (results not shown).

290

291 The high levels of gene flow suggested by these results are not surprising as pines are 292 predominantly outcrossing and wind pollinated (Ledig, 1998). Previous estimates of 293 immigration rates in artificial stands are available from pollen contamination studies 294 in seed orchards. Among the factors influencing the pollen contamination levels in

295 seed orchards are the distance to the nearest stands of the same species and the 296 relative pollen production of the seed orchard to the surrounding forest (Adams and 297 Burczyk, 2000). Wind direction can also increase pollen contamination locally 298 (Yazdani and Lindgren, 1991). The range of pollen immigration rates found for pines 299 in such studies are high, ranging from 0.26 to 0.75 (both estimates for *Pinus sylvestris* 300 seed orchards, Harju and Muona, 1989; Yazdani and Lindgren, 1991) depending on 301 the particulars of each case. Immigration rates calculated in natural stands from 302 paternity analysis are also high 0.30–0.31 (minimum estimates, Lian et al., 2001; 303 González-Martínez et al., 2003) but decrease to 0.05–0.07 in isolated populations 304 (Schuster and Mitton, 2000; Robledo-Arnuncio and Gil, 2004). Therefore, the close 305 proximity to big natural forest and the small size of the reforested stands studied 306 offers some explanation for the high levels of immigration into the reforested area.

307

308 **4. Conclusions**

309 The effect of the reforestation process was detected in the chloroplast genome with a 310 reduction in the effective number of haplotypes while the effects on the nuclear 311 genome were uncertain. The difference in the effective population size between the 312 two genomes could explain a different sensitivity to bottlenecks. These results suggest 313 that, for the particular case studied, the planted stock originated from a reduced 314 number of trees. Despite the lower haplotype diversity found within the plantations 315 the richness of their future genetic pool does not seem jeopardized because both 316 chloroplast and nuclear genetic diversities appear to increase within the understory 317 natural regeneration. High levels of gene flow from the adjacent and larger natural 318 stands explain this rise in diversity. These results highlight the importance of the 319 presence and abundance of natural forest for the regeneration of genetically rich forest 320 (see, for example, Glaubitz et al., 2003a; Glaubitz et al., 2003b). However, these 321 conclusions should not be extended to other *P. canariensis* plantations, many of 322 which are located far from natural stands (such as those found on north Tenerife, del 323 Arco Aguilar et al., 1992). Current management of these reforested areas is mainly 324 focused on the reduction of the number of trees to facilitate natural regeneration (Gil, 325 2006). This present work suggests the utility of studying the genetic makeup of 326 artificial stands and their present or future natural regeneration. This may allow for 327 the assessment of whether the reforestation process reduces genetic diversity (which 328 will depend on the particular reforestation management done at different times and 329 places) and, for those stands affected, their potential to recover genetic diversity in the 330 following generations. This may identify stands for which the plantation of new 331 individuals, from a controlled provenance and originating from numerous parental 332 trees, may be beneficial for increasing their pool of genetic diversity.

333

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444 *Figure 1*.— Map of the study site on the South-eastern slope of Tenerife (Canary 445 Islands). Sampling locations are marked with white circles proportional in diameter to 446 the sampling size.

447

452

453 *Table 2*.— Diversity indices in the reforested areas and their understory regeneration, 454 and statistical significance of the differences. Analysis done for the whole reforested 455 area, reforested area in Arico (planted in 1981-85) and reforested area in Fasnia 456 (planted in 1956-65). Sample sizes in parentheses.

457 * Significant at $\alpha = 0.05$