

# Evolution of Agullana's landscape 1950 - 2008

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Gratitude: Enric Tubert for the patience

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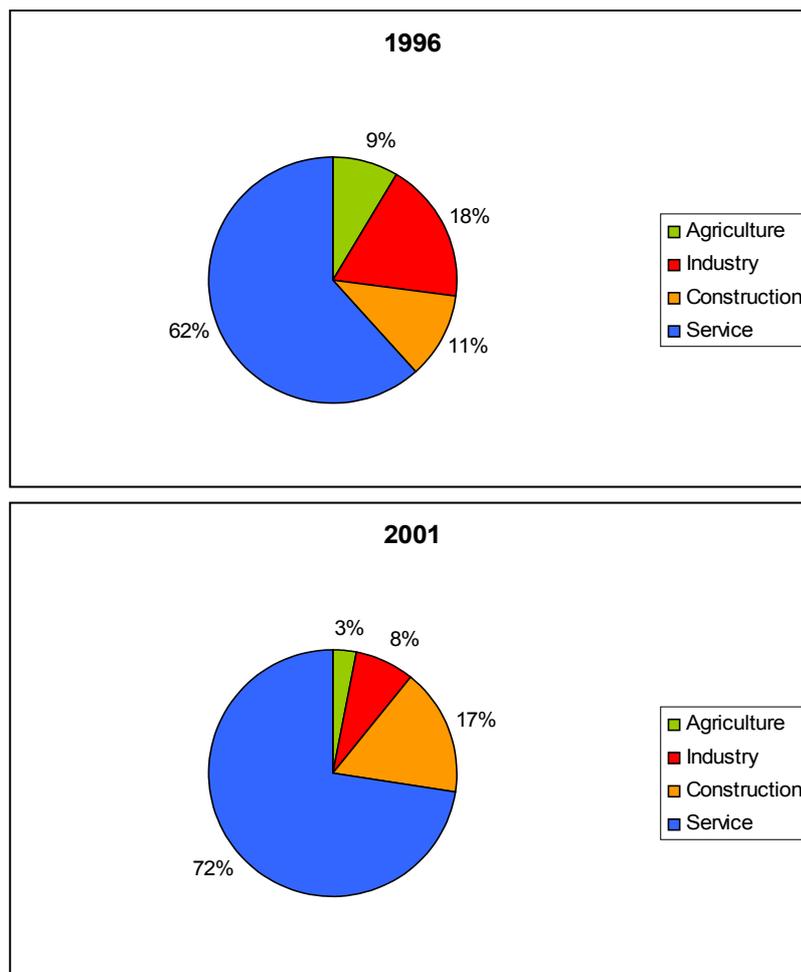
# 1. Municipality Introduction

The municipality of Agullana, with an extension of 27,7Km<sup>2</sup>, is a town in the Alt Empordà county, at the French border.

As we can see in the diagram, of the next page, the municipality has an elongated shape drawn from the North-West to the South-East. The northern area of the municipality is a mountainous area and the South-Eastern is a plain where we can find the population and the crops.

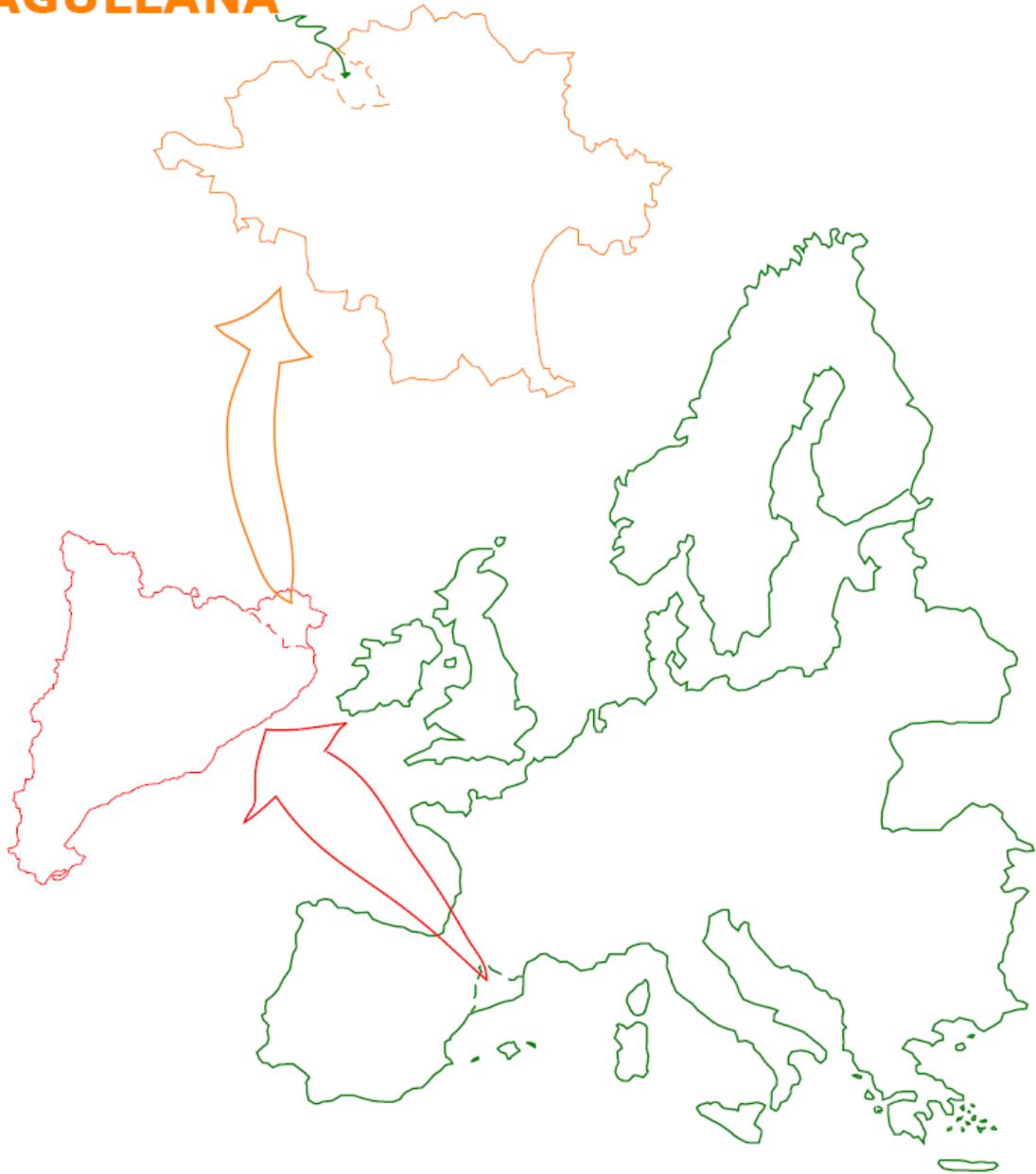
The South-eastern tip of the municipality is crossed by the Nacional II road, the A7 highway and the new construction from the high speed train. The high electricity line (MAT), is also projected to cross it.

The most important economic activity is in the services sector, followed by construction, then industry and agriculture.



Source: own elaboration from Idescat information

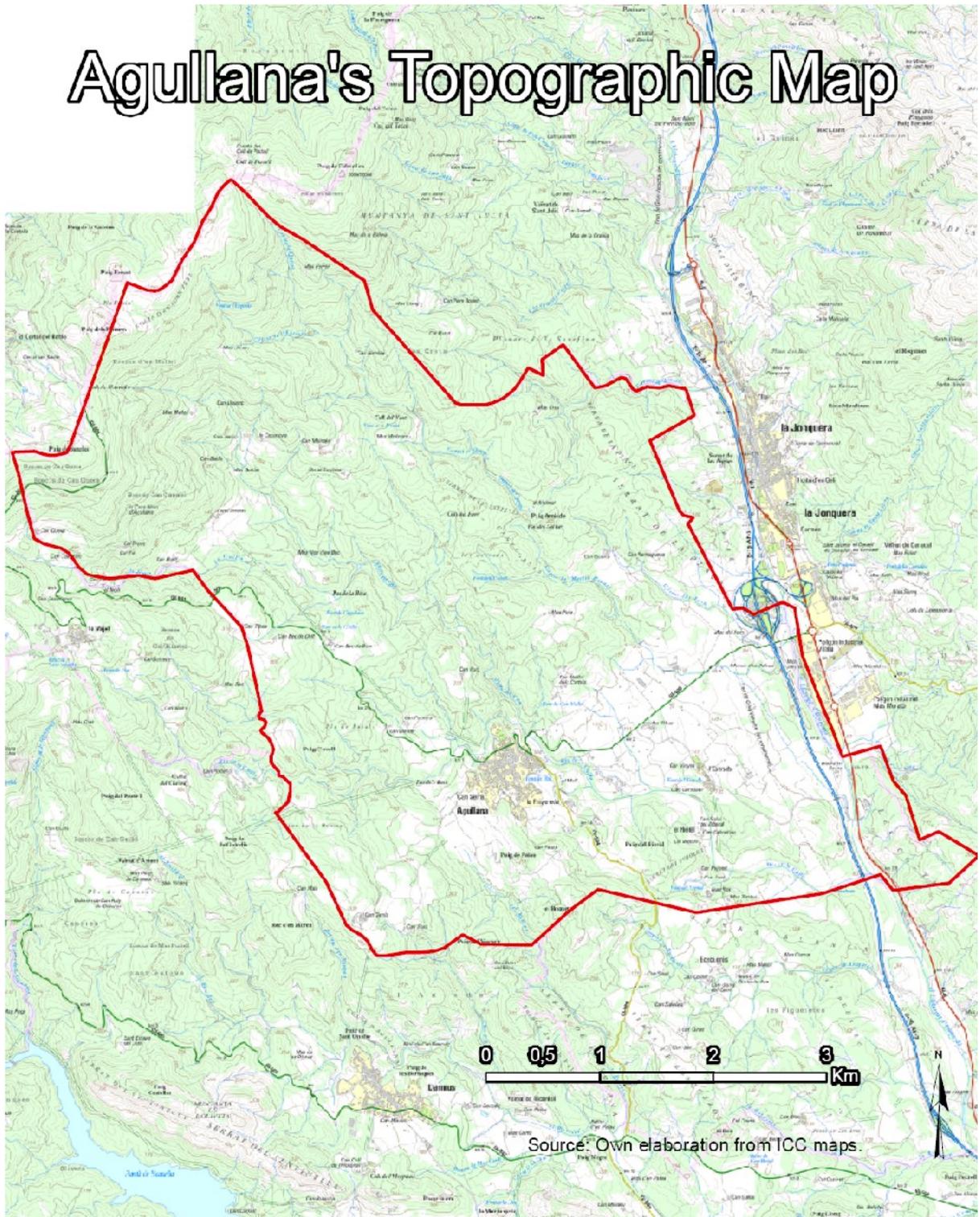
# AGULLANA



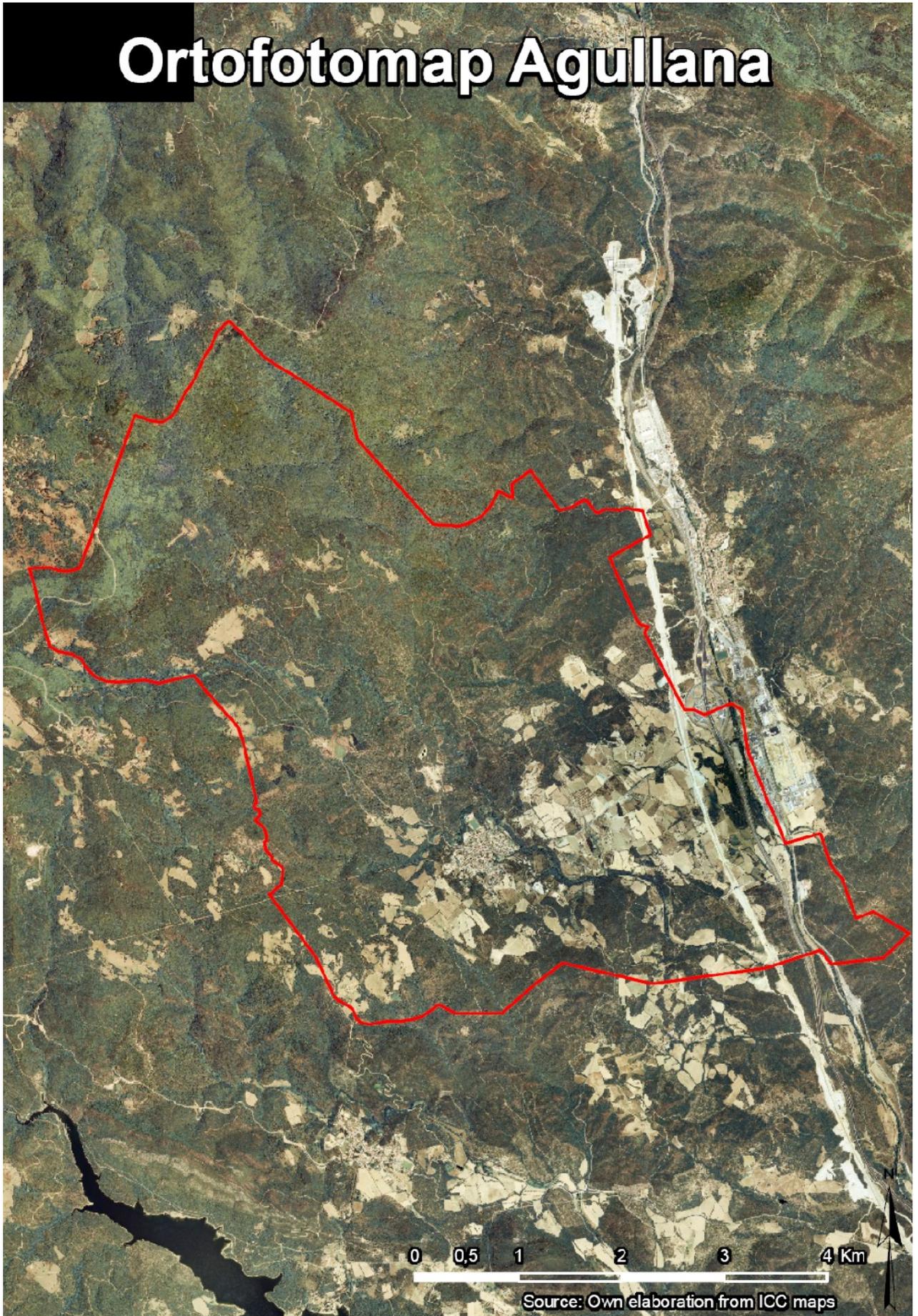
Source: Own elaboration



# Agullana's Topographic Map



# Ortofotomap Agullana



Source: Own elaboration from ICC maps

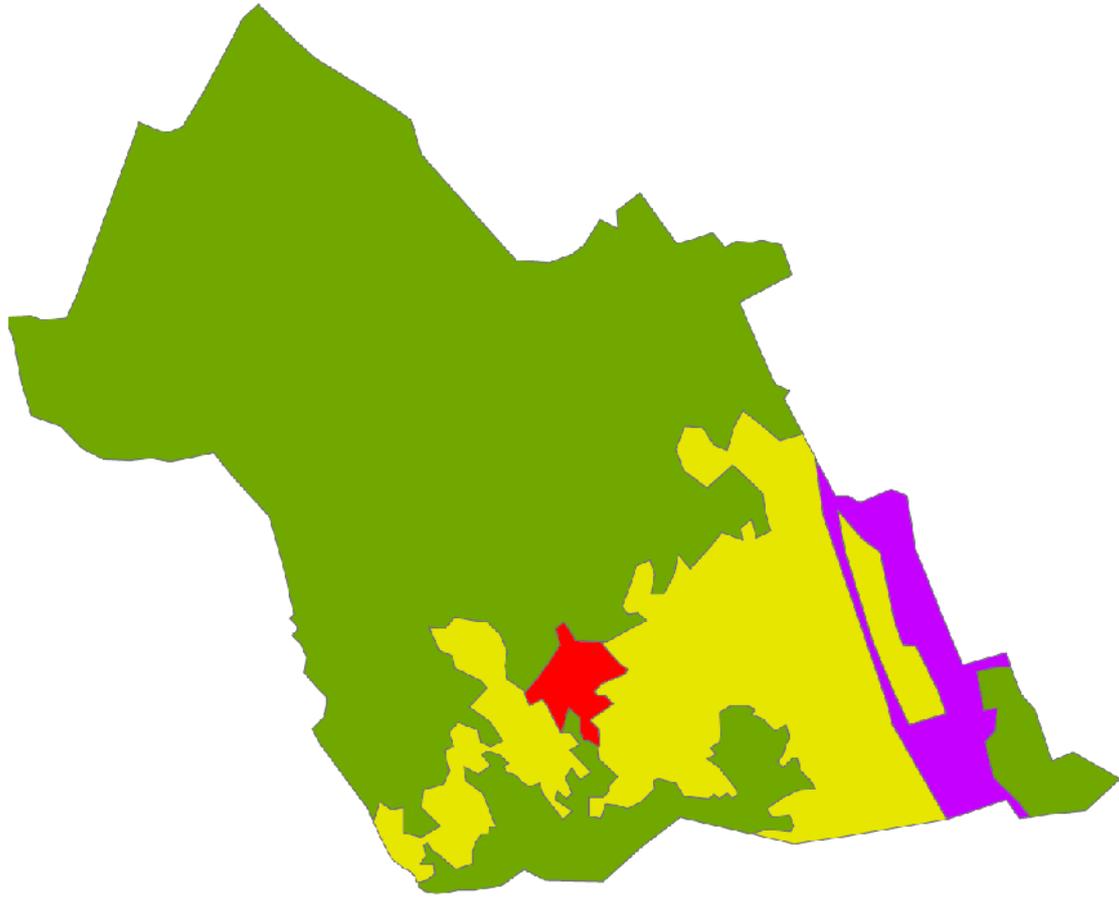
## 2. Landscape typology

The municipality of Agullana has many landscapes; we make a distinction of four typologies to help synthesize the landscape reality of the municipality:



Estrada

# Landscape tipology



0 0.5 1 2 3 Km

- Urban landscape
- Forestal landscape
- Agricultural landscape
- Road landscape



- The urban landscape: this is located in the urban population nucleous.

Agullana has only 753 habitants. However it is a very urban town with wide streets. It is because the town was an important cork industrial area in the sixties.

Most buildings have two floors and we can find some monumental buildings such as: the Santa Maria church (a Romanic building), or the modernist buildings: Asil Gomis, la Concordia or la Casa Estela.

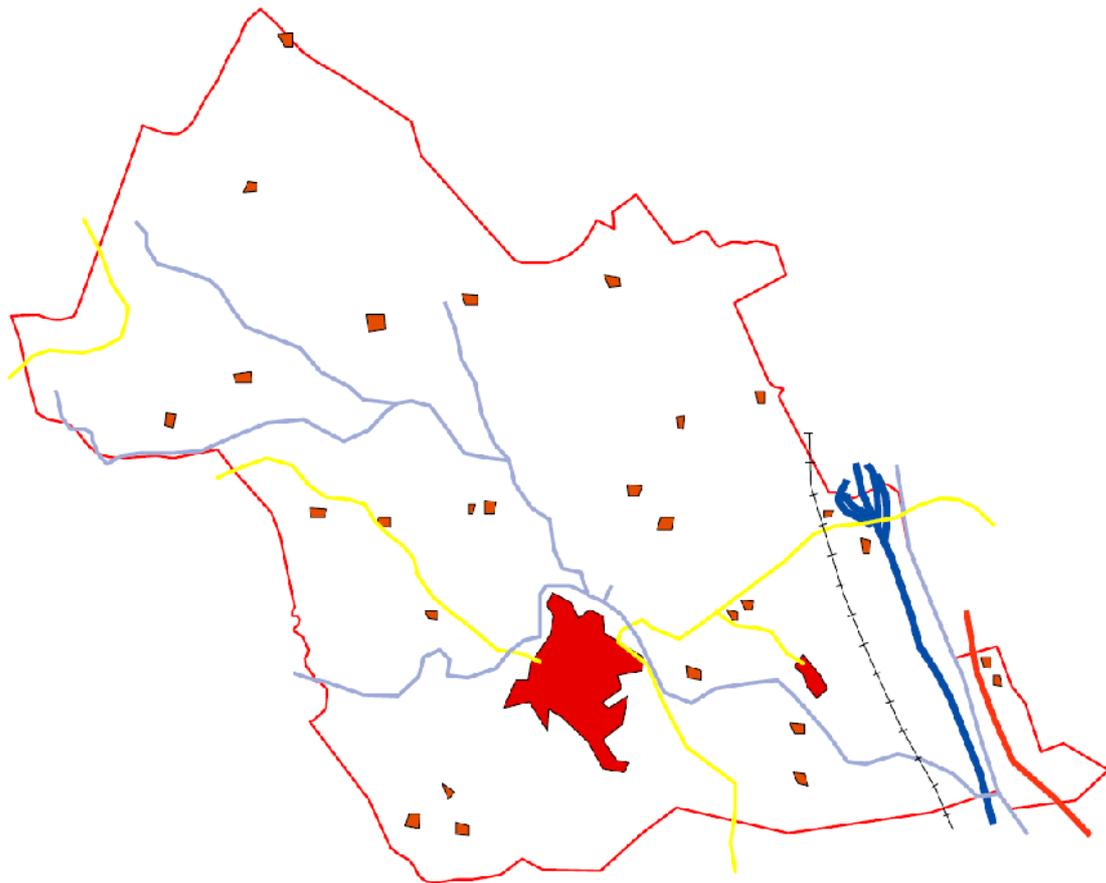
The Estrada nucleos have more rural aspect, we put in the agricultural landscape.





- The landscape with the largest extension is the forestall landscape. The forest consists of *Quercus suber*. In this typology we include the disperse farmhouses, principally around the north of the municipality, because most of them don't have much crops. A diagram map can be seen in the next page with the farmhouses distribution.





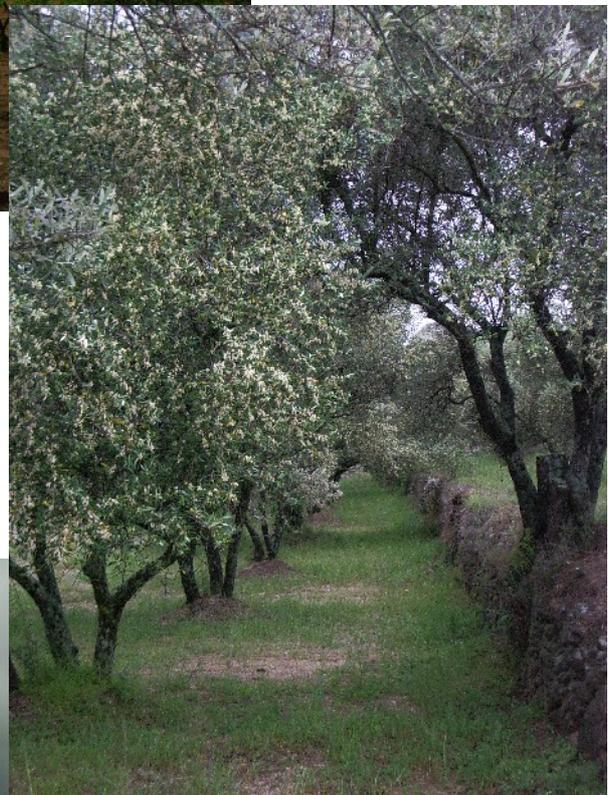
- **A7 highway**
- **Nacional II**
- **County road**
- Railroad**
- **Riber**
- Urban nucleus**
- Framhouse**

0 0,5 1 2 3 Km

Source: Own elaboration



An other important typology is the agricultural landscape. It consists of crops, specially vineyards, olive trees and wheat fields. Among them we can find some farmhouses.



- The last landscape typology is the road landscape. It consists of the Nacional II road, the A7 highway, the new construction of the high speed train and all the activities that these roads generate. For example, the gas stations, the restaurants, the brothels, lorry parks and supermarkets where French people can find some products cheaper than in France, such as: olive oil, tobacco, alcohol...



### 3. What about the changes?

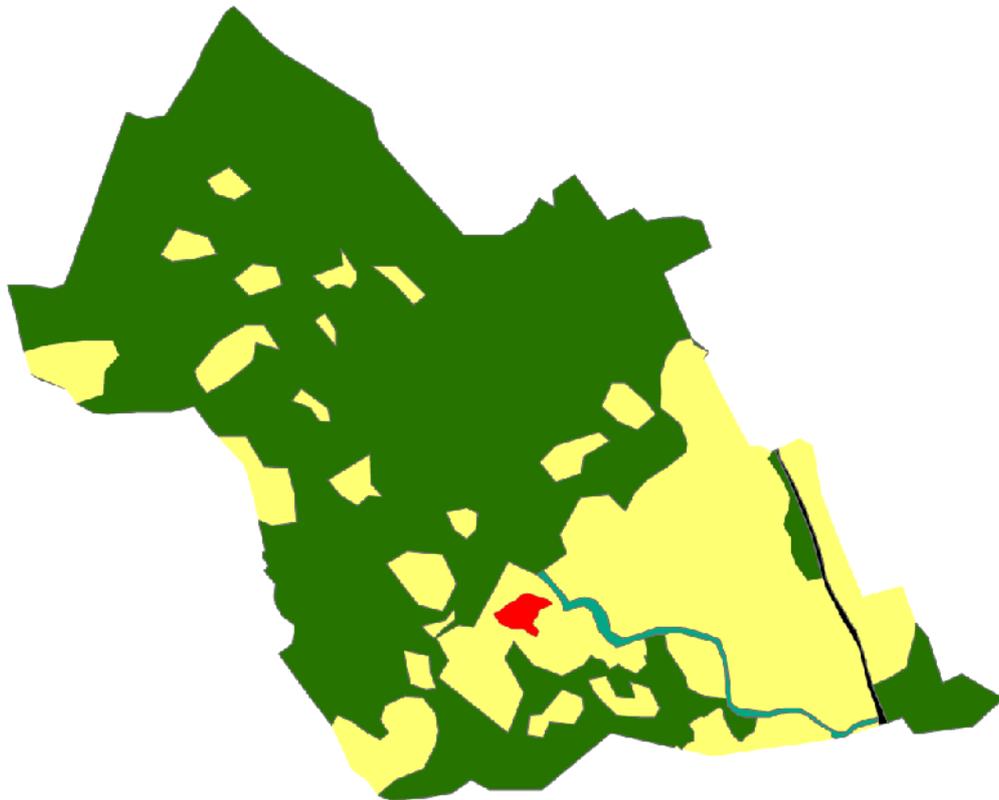
On the maps you can find in the next page, we can see how the crops located between the urban centre and the national road N-II have diminished, specially due to the new traffic infrastructures like the AP-7 highway and the newly built high-speed train (AVE) railroad.

A commercial pole has growth around the highway, especially thanks to the difference of prices between both sides of the border that makes many French costumers come here to shopping.

We can see a slight increase of the forest surface on the Northern part of the municipality, due to the abandoning of some crops which have been replaced with forest, but in Agullana this rural abandoning process is not an outstanding phenomenon. Actually, the further a village is from infrastructures, the more important the rural abandoning process is, as we could see in other villages from the same mountainous area, so the impact of the infrastructures in Agullana is very important because it has changed the natural dynamics of a mountainous area like this one.



# 1956



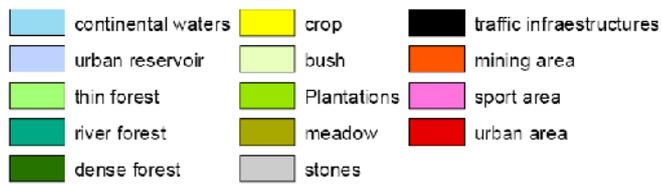
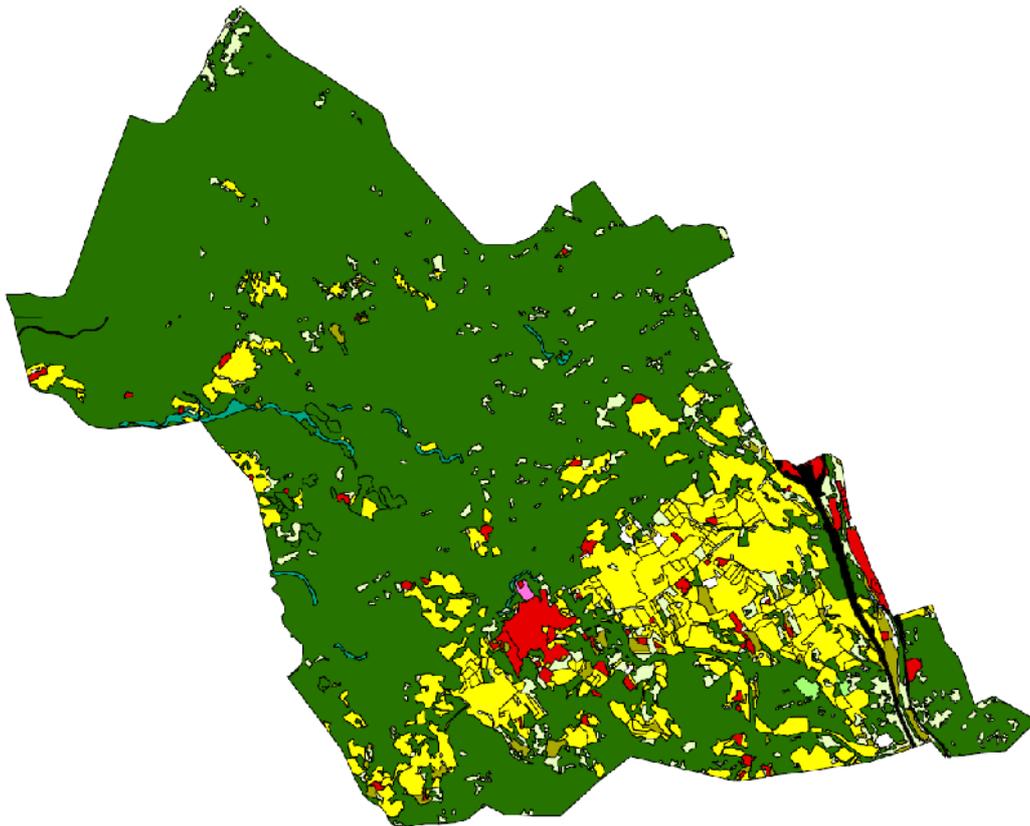
- traffic infrastructures
- crop
- forest
- urban area
- river forest

0 0,5 1 2 3 Km

Source: Own elaboration



# 2003



### 3.1. Chronology

Between 1890 and 1924, Agullana was characterized by an urban lifestyle, but linked to vineyards and olive trees. In this period, cork industry was not an important activity yet, specially because of the economic crisis of United Kingdom and Germany -the main purchasers- during the First World War that made cork's demand decrease. Between 1950's and 60's, Agullana had an economy based on the cork and still on the Mediterranean mountain landscape, vineyards and olive trees.

On 1950's, Franco's dictatorship closed the borders and based Spanish economy on the self-providing system, very typical from fascist governments. Related to this closing, the smuggling became important and Agullana was one of Catalonia's towns where this activity was present in the day-to-day, with cork and pipes as the main products. Because of this activity, security forces guarded Agullana in a very strict way, but beneath the traditional rural houses there was a subtle smuggling network working.



This situation remained until the 60's, when vineyards and olive trees became more and more important, and cork industry got investments and there were eight factories into operation. Agullana's population increased and so did the number of shops, fourteen at that moment, so that the village could provide itself. Between 1960's and 70's, the train is built by the coast so Agullana's cork industry gets isolated and loses any option to grow.

At the same time, the reform of Franco's dictatorship's economic and political system flatters the opening of the international borders, and the establishment of customs gave a lot of people from the village the chance to become officials and control the entry and leaving of people between Spain and France. Also in this period, the road is tarmaced, helping to mobility. Smuggling still existed but the main products now were cigarettes and alcohol. La Concòrdia society was created and it's been very important for Agullana till nowadays.



The 70's and the global crisis brought new productions to Agullana, vineyards are not profitable at this moment and local farmers try to plant peach trees, apparently in a better moment. Besides, Palomers corporation, owner of a bank, starts a new livestock business with important investments in facilities and technology. Cork continued its crisis until nowadays. In the 80's also the new Palomers livestock farms lost profitability till they had to close.

On 1986, Spain, Greece and Portugal join the EU. Customs disappear and Agullana lives hard moments with a loss of population. A lot of people gets unemployed without qualification, and also a lot of shops close, because of the departure of population. Few years later, Agullana can notice the kind of economical development that the custom's disappearance brings, but this kind doesn't please the village.



From the 90's, La Jonquera –the village nearby– starts to grow and a lot of people from Agullana start business related to services, like restaurants, rural tourism and supermarkets. This growth also affects Agullana, where immigrants and other workers from tertiary sector come to make up for the loss of population suffered years before. This new population built the new houses located on the highest part of the village and also a new industrial and commercial area is built to promote these new commercial activities, which start to attract new business linked to prostitution, gas stations and supermarkets.



Regarding to agriculture, irrigation loses profitability and vineyards become profitable again, because the new rural development policies include the promotion of vineyards.

Currently, the industrial and commercial area is one of the biggest service areas in Europe. We can find around eight and ten thousand trucks parked there, and an important number of cigarettes, alcohol and prostitution consumers. The three shops that sell more cigarettes in Spain are located in here. With regards to agriculture, the village has chosen to sell quality products in a very productive market promoted by cooperatives, like El Trull. We can also find livestock products and quality wines. Also Fil d'Or's jam is an example of these quality products. Only one of the cork factories has survived, and tertiary sector has become very important with rural tourism houses and three restaurants. The village is getting population and building new estates, also some state subsidized housing. Thanks to the new immigration, there's young people again and the school is working, a good indicator of the healthy economical, social and demographic situation that Agullana is living nowadays.

## 4. Driving forces

The two main driving forces that explain this evolution in Agullana's landscape are the corridor position of Agullana and its border location.



On one hand, Agullana has historically been one of the main ways to cross the Pyrenees from Catalonia to France. Romans already used this way to build the Via Augusta, one of the main routes of the Empire, during XXth century the construction of National Road N-II from Barcelona to France, at the end of XXth century the AP-7 highway, next to the N-II, at the beginning of XXIst century the high-speed train, not finished yet, all of them are examples of the importance of Agullana and La Jonquera as a place to pass through. The corridor effect involves an economic development in the area surrounding, specially service areas with gas stations, restaurants, truck parks to park in the weekends, etc. and even other business like prostitution, very related to the carriers and to the roads in general. Sometimes, this kind of development is not welcome by the inhabitants of the village but it gives a chance to its population to find a job closed to home.

There's one last point related to the corridor effect, and it is that this effect is important to the areas located exactly by this corridor, if we go further to the villages next to Agullana on the other side, like Darnius for example, we can see very different processes more linked

to rural abandonment and loss of population. We can say then that the effects of the corridor on landscape and economy are different as long as we are further from it, there is then a distance effect inside of this corridor effect.

On the other had, we have the border location of Agullana as another driving forces of landscape evolution. We could see this effect specially in two moments. The first one in 1955, when customs were opened and they created a lot of jobs for Agullana's inhabitants and it made the village grow and helped to its local economy. The other important moment in 1986, when Spain joined EU and customs disappeared, and a lot of people lost their jobs and were unemployed without qualification. Few years later, local economy was recovered with the services activities like gas stations and supermarkets, favoured by the border opening because French people living in France but closed to the border come to these service areas to fill their car's deposits and to make the shopping because of the cheaper prices on the Spanish side.

Another element related to the border location is the practice of smuggling, that has been developing depending on the political moment, from basic products like sugar until other products like alcohol or cigarettes.

We can see then that, even if Agullana is a mountain village with a traditional Mediterranean agriculture landscape, due to these two main driving forces, the effect of all the infrastructures passing through the village and the situation regarding to the French border, it doesn't follow the same dynamics of a normal mountain rural village. Its economy and landscape is conditioned by these two elements since a lot of centuries ago.



## 5. Future scene

Future prospects are linked to the service area and the model of growth that this area supposes to Agullana. Agullana-La Jonquera service park is growing, building in the still empty room remaining. We can say then that Agullana's future is already decided, although its population is not pleased with prostitution and with the big number of trucks working in this area, according to some people we have interviewed, though it's true that some of them found a job in this park. For this reason, all the new business initiatives go in this direction, and Agullana represents just a small part of this park if we compare with the part located in La Jonquera.

We find also another phenomenon that has a big impact on landscape, the progressive construction of communications, that are taking the place of the traditional agriculture fields: the National Road N-II, the AP-7 highway, the high-speed train (AVE), the next construction of the high-power electrical infrastructure (MAT) and maybe even the transfer of water from the French river, the Roine, to Catalonia due to the drought (although this last example is at the moment just a speculation). Agullana is suffering a process of landscape transformation ran by the economic model.



Although this progressive destruction of a part of the territory, Agullana has still a chance in the agricultural development linked to quality and guarantee of origin products. Some farms are working in this sector, specially with the olive trees, where productions are directed to kinds of wine and olives characteristic from this area and with a high quality, far from failed previous initiatives. Together with the promotion of cooperatives to face the hard market competition, this new quality productions can be the incentive to keep the traditional landscape of this village, very precious and with a big natural and cultural value.

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**Note: all the photos included in this study were taken by the students themeves**

