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Taste for colours in Basque country during Upper Palaeolithic - Integrative approach to contextualise rock art.

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Scientific questions

Is there a shared selection preference for colouring materials across the Gravettian territory in northern Spain?
Are the colouring materials part of a specific chain to produce cave art, or are they part of a cross exploitation for multiple uses?

Materials & Methods

- Four rock art caves: Lumentxa, Ondaro, Morgota, Armiña with cave art & colouring remains in archaeological layers
- Multiscalar observations & analyses: Microscopy (optical, SEM) & geochemistry (LA-ICP-MS)

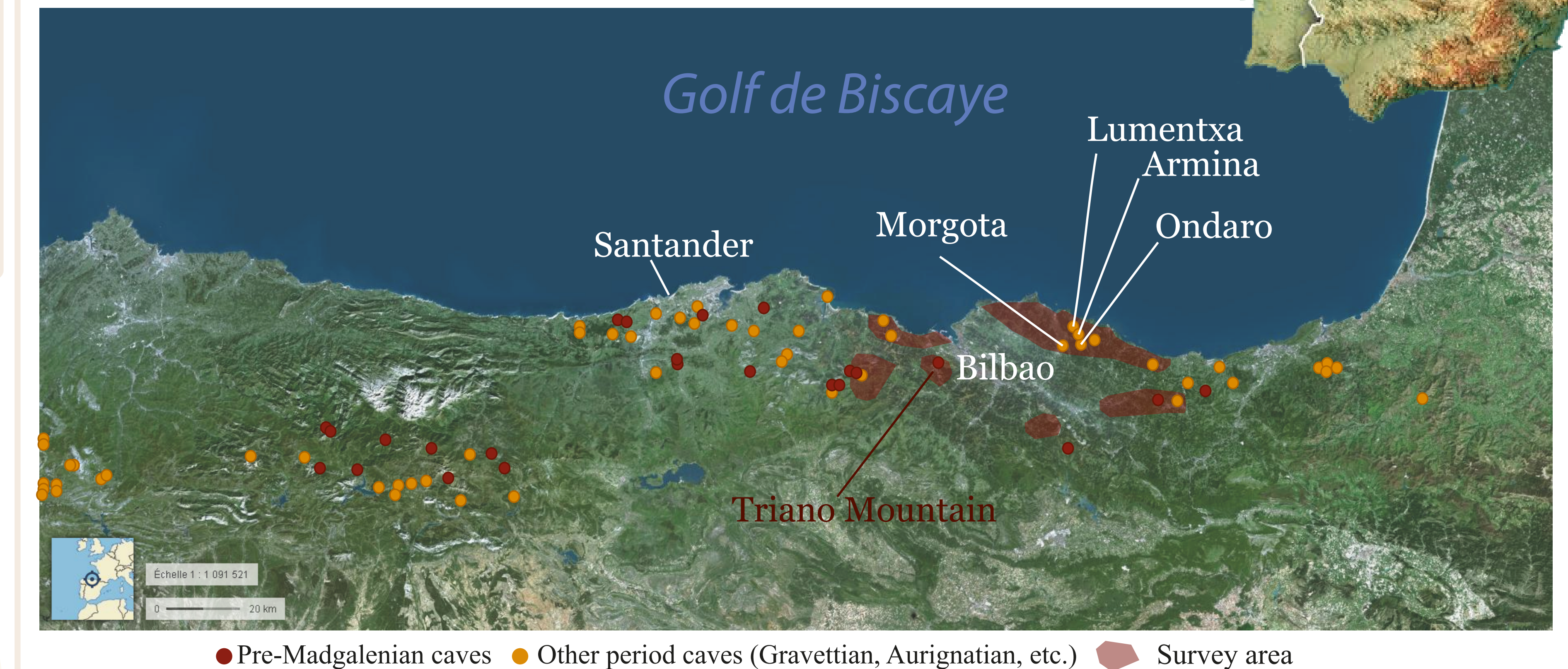
First Results on 4 caves

- 9 different lithologies toward the 4 caves
- Lithology A & D: same material, at different stages of weathering present in the four caves.

A shared taste for a specific material

Geographic & archaeological context

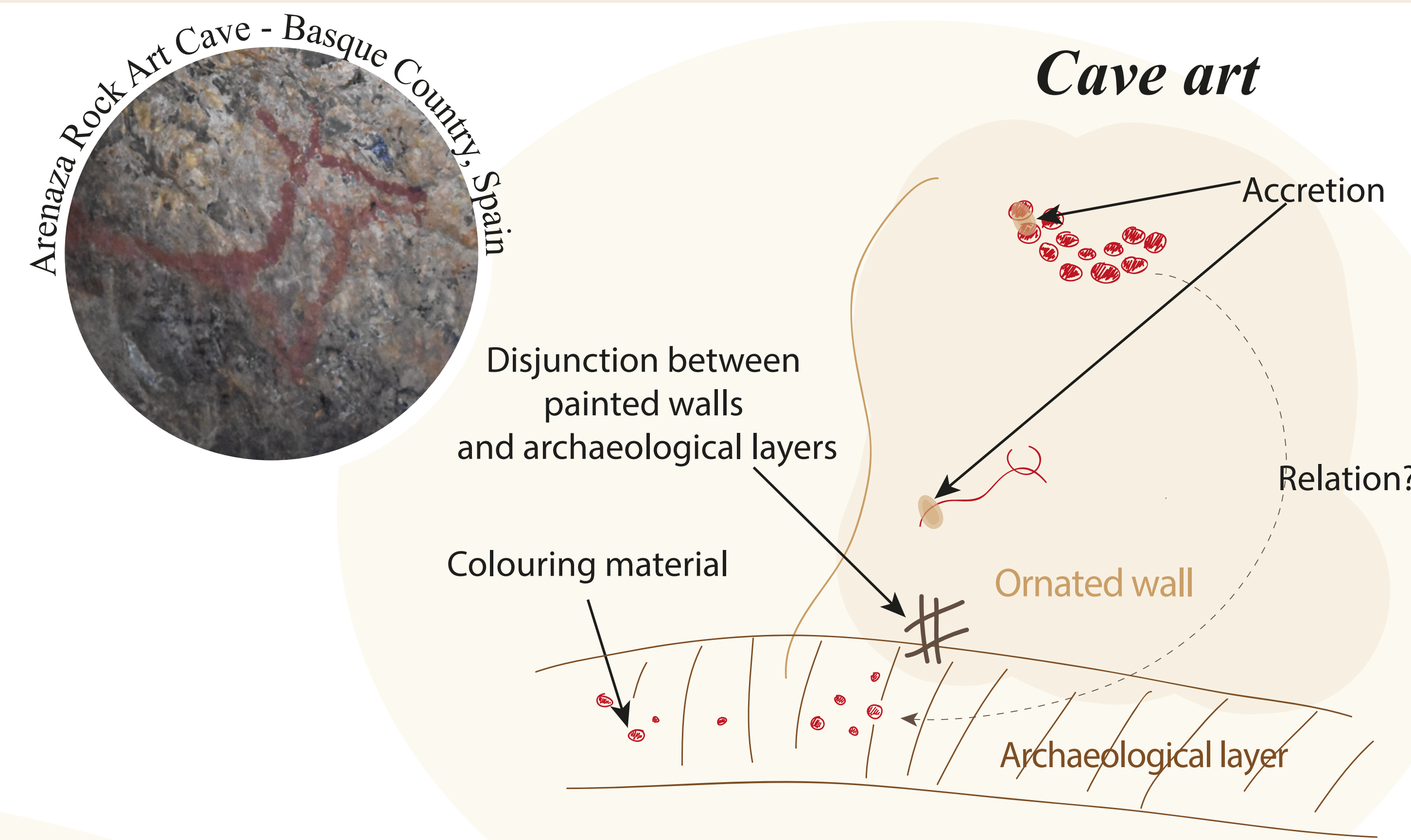
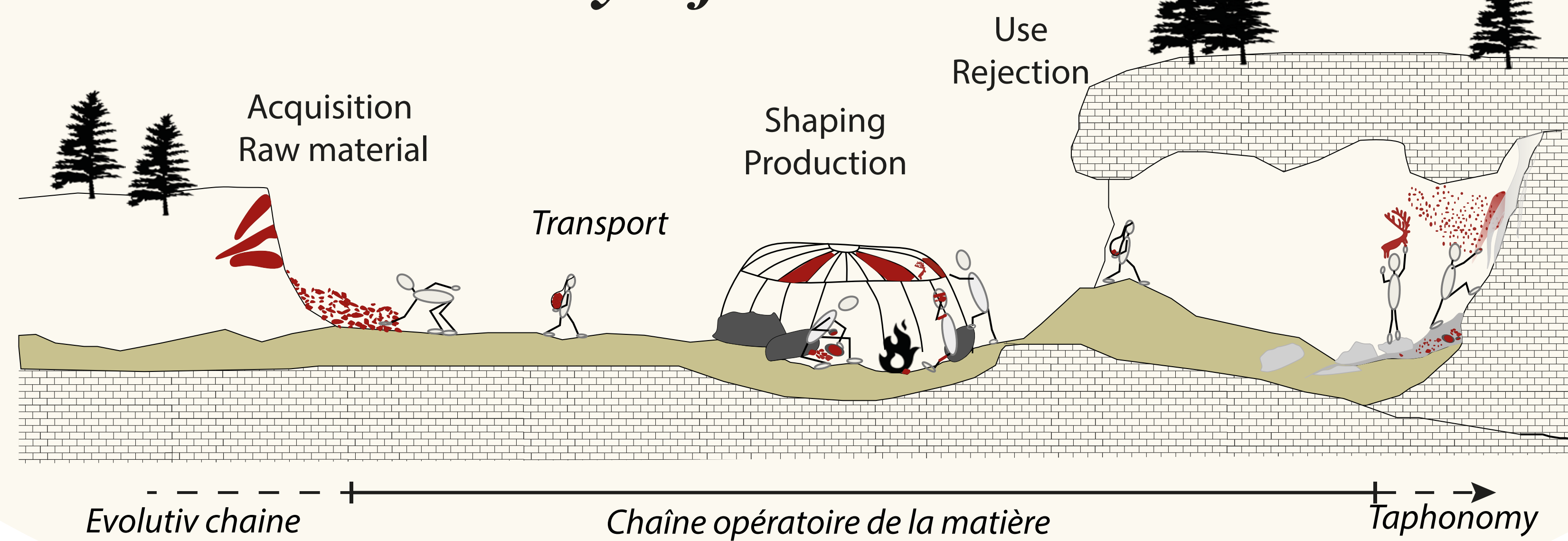
A montaneous area with a high concentration of caves and rock art caves from different prehistoric periods.



A probable hydrothermal origin (local)

Hematite morphology of lithologies A, C & D are compatible with hydrothermal formation.

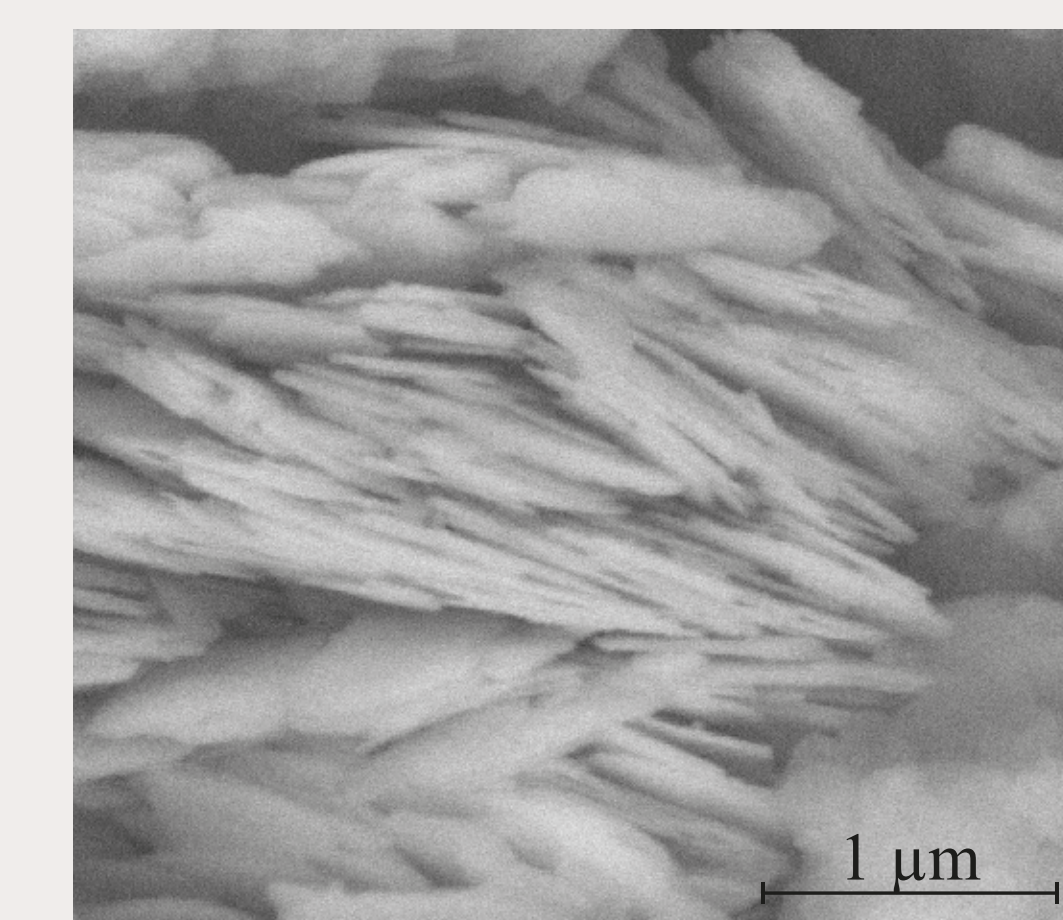
Daily-life activities



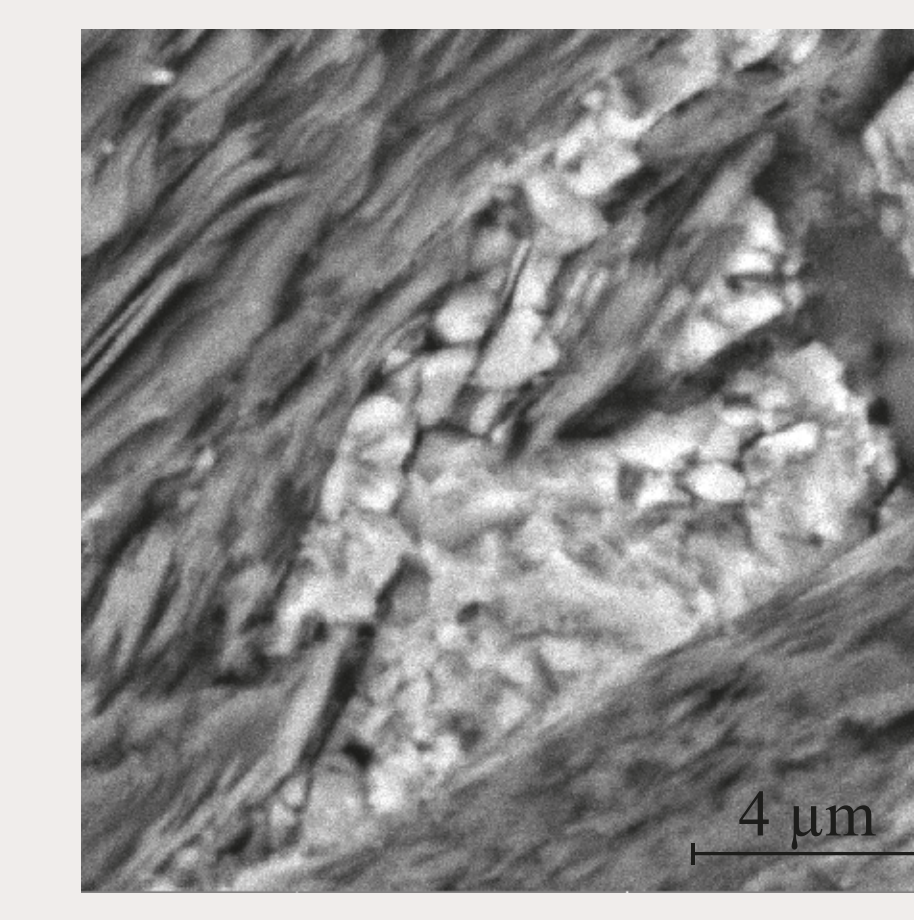
Colouring material as a connector between different contexts (archaeological levels, painted walls) and cultural marker (selection) through the North of Spain.

Mineral landscape

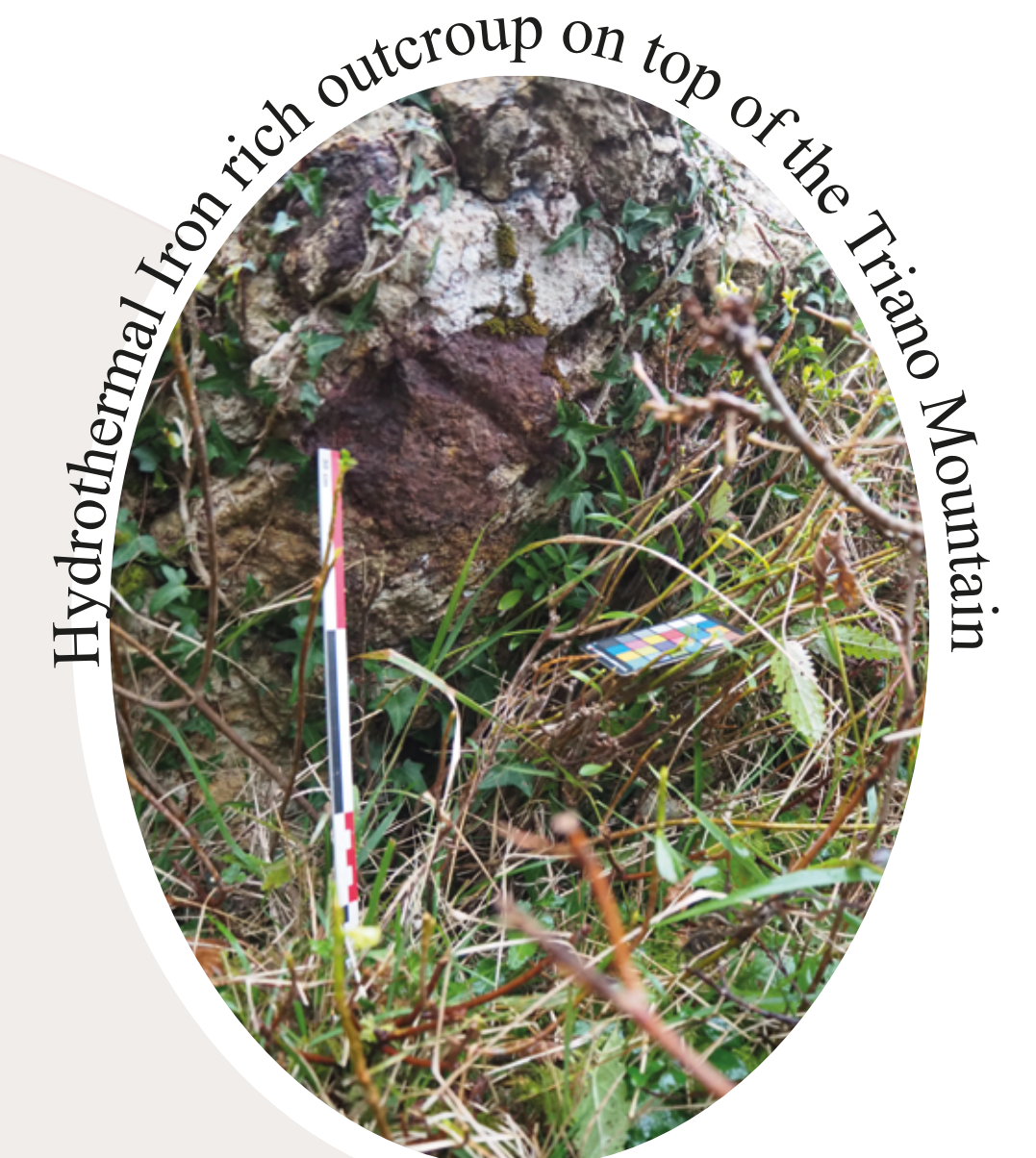
A diversity of formation, rock type and outcrop availability



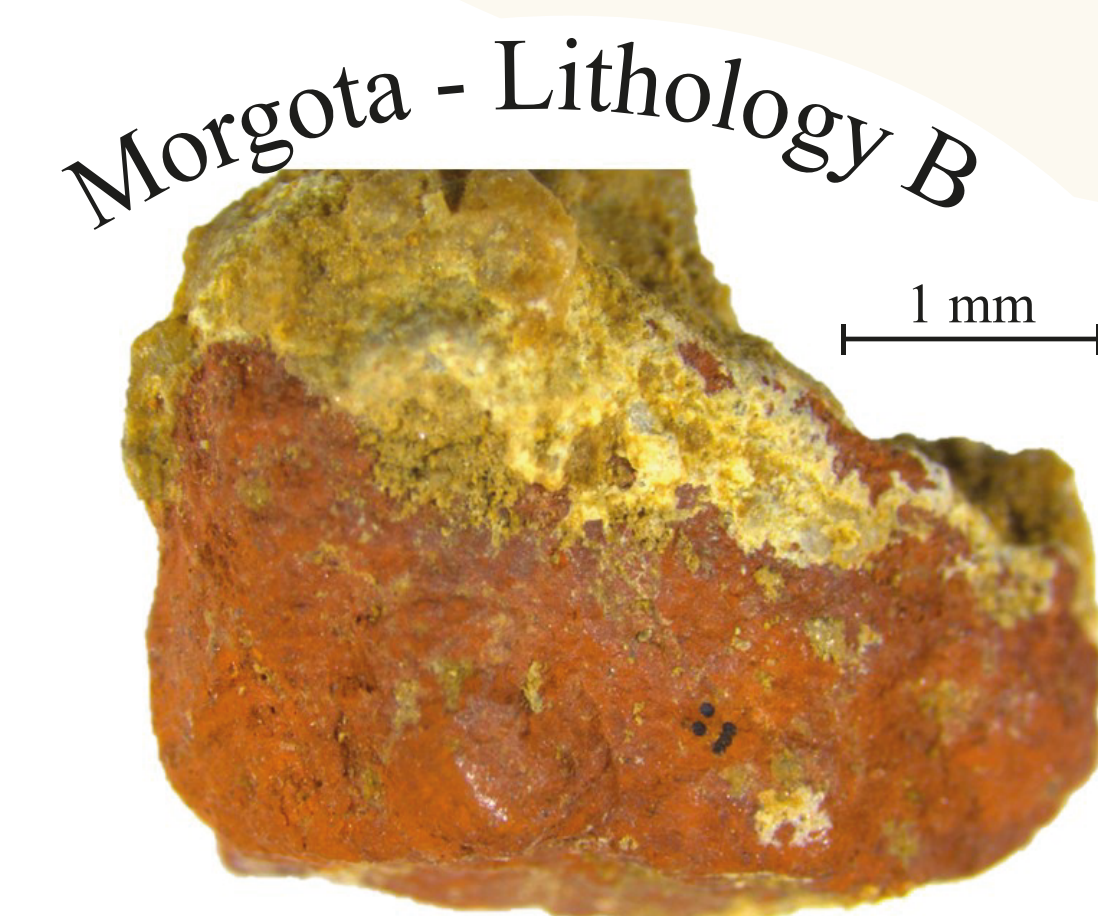
Armiña lithology D



Hydrothermal reference (Amoroto, Spain)



Hydrothermal Iron rich outcrop on top of the Triano Mountain



Project Prospect

- Expanding the number of caves to cover a bigger area over the Gravettian territory
- Acces to μ-samples from paintings and drawings on the cave's walls to establish links with archaeological layers based on pigment morphology and geochemistry
- Opening the study to induce open air sites

Bibliography

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- Pradeau et al. 2016. Procurement strategies of Neolithic colouring materials: Territoriality and networks from 6th to 5th millennia in North-Western Mediterranean ». J. Archaeolog. Sci. 71: 10-23.