

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY OF THE PROJECT ON THE SOCIAL VALUE OF ALTAMIRA



GROUP 5: SOCIAL VALUE

OBJECTIVE: To analyse in depth the characterisation of Altamira as a heritage enclave and the multiple dimensions of human experience surrounding it, thus producing knowledge regarding what it has meant and generated in social terms, from its modern discovery to the present day.

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[We would like to thank Mercedes Tejería Martínez, aged 8, a resident of Cabezón de la Sal, and her aunt, for their generosity in giving us the artwork which illustrates the cover. It was done on an iPad after having visited the Neocave]

Between September 2012 and August 2014, the *Research Program for the Preventive Conservation and Conditions of Access of the Cave of Altamira (Altamira Programme)* was carried out, promoted by the SPANISH MINISTRY OF EDUCATION, CULTURE AND SPORTS and led by the SPANISH INSTITUTE OF CULTURAL HERITAGE (IPCE), with the cooperation of the Spanish Department for State Museums. In this context, a research project to account for the **Social Value of Altamira** was developed, led by a team from the INSTITUTE OF HERITAGE SCIENCES (Incipit) of the SPANISH NATIONAL RESEARCH COUNCIL (CSIC).

This paper has been translated into English from the Executive Summary delivered by Incipit in August 2014. The English and the Spanish version are equal. The only slight difference in this is the inclusion of links to the e-copies of Reports and Annexes that combine the *Final Report of the Project on the Social Value of Altamira*, and are fully accessible through DIGITAL.CSIC, the open-access repository of our institution.

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And all those who have, in one way or another, given answers to our many questions.

“It’s all here”.

Enrique Gran speaking to Lucio Muñoz after visiting the cave in 1992

INTRODUCTION

The general objective of the **Project on the Social Value of Altamira** (SVA) is to carry out a detailed study of the characterisation of Altamira as an enclave of our heritage and the multiple dimensions of human experience related to the site. We aim to analyse how any given entity is appropriated by differing social agents and is, thereby, converted into a place of heritage (heritagised) and experienced as a phenomenon (in all its facets) from both individual and collective subjectivity as well as being manipulated and managed (as an object) by one or more social institutions. With this in mind, we must start from two premises: 1) ‘Social Value’ does not exist as a pure concept as all value is social by antonomasia; the term ‘Value’ already implies ‘Social Value’; and 2) Neither does ‘Heritage Value’ exist because if something is considered as heritage it is precisely because it is valued as such. The term ‘Heritage’ already implies ‘Value’. Therefore, from our point of view, the concept of ‘Heritage’ already implies that of the ‘Social Value of Heritage’. These premises are, above all, conceptual rather than nominal, so at no time do they constitute a problem to name the project ‘Social Value of Altamira’, a label under which all the work which has been carried out is perfectly comprehensible.

Secondly, we propose that the SVA Project be fully interweaved with the Plan for Preventive Conservation which will emerge from the Research Programme now being finalised. This will have a clear effect on the research objectives (which are clarified in objectives 6 and 7 of the Project). The results of this programme should serve to optimise the way that Altamira is managed. By ‘optimising the management’, we understand that a management model of the site should be designed and put into practice (as a dynamic process which can be constantly updated) which combines the two main variables of access to the site and its preservation in the most balanced way possible.

Thinking of a theoretical model in order to analyse Altamira as a heritage enclave forces us to rethink the theoretical coordinates by which we carry out our research on this subject. That is to say that we are forced to think what Altamira is (ontology) and how we can access it (epistemology). As a heritage site, Altamira is a complex and multi-dimensional entity which can only be accessed via an interdisciplinary strategy in an attempt to obtain, as far as possible, integrated, comparable (although, in many cases, not commensurable) and usable results in a practical context of management like the Plan for Preventive conservation should be.

As specialists who share the notion that heritage exists because it is valued socially, facing a case such as Altamira, an extraordinary site which is closed to the public, takes us back to a vision of heritage which is focused on its exceptionality but distanced from its social function. We are faced with the practical and theoretical imperative to open the cave once again to the

public as a consequence of its social character. In other words, we are initially led to allow Altamira to live and play a role socially by all means possible. However, as things are never so simple, the study of the social value of Altamira becomes a magnificent and fortuitous case of analysis to study in depth what the regime of existence for heritage sites should be today, going beyond official and officialised policies and building new heritage management structures which respond to the demands of the 21st century public. Our study cannot, by itself, provide data and weighty conclusions regarding whether Altamira should remain closed, be opened up fully for visits or whether a restricted visit should be enabled. On the other hand, our study does contribute conclusions and data to determine how any of these solutions would be good or bad as it shows under which circumstances an exclusive and opaque heritage regime would be maintained or how a transparent policy, integrating the public, neighbours, diverse agents, disputed interests, etc., could be built.

This executive report aims to synthesize in a few pages the work obtained from this interdisciplinary strategy carried out over the past two years. However, the true scope of the results obtained cannot be understood without referring to the partial technical reports (and their corresponding annexes) of each of the studies making up the project, nor without evaluating the theoretical strategy which integrates them and the consequences which are manifested in our contribution to the Plan for Preventive conservation.

OBJECTIVES

It can be stated that the general aim of the SVA Project is to study in great detail the characterisation of Altamira as an enclave of our heritage and the multiple dimensions of human experience related to the site. This characterisation is exclusively concerned with the modern existence of Altamira; that is to say, the multiple circumstances which have surrounded the existence of Altamira as an exceptional site since its discovery in 1868 (or in 1879, depending on to whom we wish to attribute the discovery), to the present day. It is not our aim, therefore, to generate historical knowledge by using Altamira as an archaeological landscape or as a work of art, but to generate knowledge of what Altamira has meant and produced in social terms, from its modern discovery to the present day.

The objectives of the SVA Project were defined as follows:

1. To identify the different dimensions of the value of the use of Altamira as a heritage site.
2. To study the social impact of Altamira, fundamentally in quantitative and contemporary terms, taking available data as a starting point and carrying out a specifically designed opinion poll.
3. To measure the direct and induced economic impact on the area and to foresee the economic impact of the opening up of the cave and its effect on the different areas of relevance, beginning with the museum itself.
4. To study the social perception of Altamira from a symbolic viewpoint, on several levels: a micro or ethnographic approach; discourse analysis; and processes of identification on different scales, including the perception and visibilization of the

Altamira Programme, and the social perception with respect to the debate on its possible re-opening.

5. To study the impact and social use of Altamira in different discourses: Science, Art, Education and Communication, introducing a historic and diachronic perspective, without renouncing an assessment of the contemporary impact of Altamira in all these aspects, including the social use of the Altamira Programme.
6. To design strategies and actions for the optimal management and socialisation of the cultural value of Altamira.

As a consequence of the 5th meeting of the Programme (Altamira, 16th-17th July 2013), a seventh objective was included, which, in reality came to replace the 6th one:

7. To contribute to the global proposal of the Plan for Preventive conservation of the cave, with and without a programme for regular limited and controlled visits.

The partial reports, which give account of each of the studies carried out, correspond to objectives 2 to 5. Objective 1 is dealt with in the document entitled *El Valor Social de Altamira: Marco Estratégico*¹, which is included in Volume I of the Programme Report (although part of the discussion is including in this Executive Summary). Objective 6 corresponds to the contribution of the SVA Project to the Plan for Preventive conservation and is including in an independent volume within the Research Programme Report².

METHODOLOGY

We have organised the Project in accordance with a disciplinary criterion (it is the differing disciplines participating which make it possible to speak about the different studies within the Project). It has been necessary to organise the work in an interdisciplinary sense with the different disciplines, each with their own techniques (which, in many cases are shared) and their own teams, collaborating towards the same aim: identifying the social value of Altamira. What is more, the data which was being obtained by the different teams served as a base for and/or was contrasted with the rest.

Disciplines involved

This disciplinary accommodation allowed the Project to be organised into a series of studies, each one of which aimed to obtain results via the use of different techniques. However, all of this was carried out with close collaboration between disciplines. Specialists from diverse fields collaborated in the design, carrying out and analysis of the different studies (which shall be detailed below), each one of which was directed in accordance with the criteria and procedures of the various disciplines.

¹ <http://hdl.handle.net/10261/112864> (Spanish version)

² <http://hdl.handle.net/10261/113135> (Spanish version)

- A sociological study
- An economic study
- An anthropological study
- A study of Altamira on the Internet
- A study of Altamira in the Media
- A study of Altamira in Art
- A study of Altamira in Material Culture
- A study of Altamira in Science
- A study of Altamira in Education

In the first three cases, the main role played by each of the disciplines involved meant that the corresponding study is characterised from the point of view of each discipline (sociological, economic and anthropological). These are the main studies of the SVA Project, given that their objects of study are the social agents which value Altamira. Each study is based on very different techniques, although this did not impede a high degree of collaboration between the specialists involved nor the generation of synergies which have enriched the respective results.

From the outset, a qualitative approach was developed with regard to the object of the study. The collection of information using this strategy implied different levels and units of analysis by way of differing activities, such as researching and analysing secondary sources, carrying out semi-structured interviews, the designation of a panel of experts, etc.

Taking this first approach as a starting point, it was possible to design a quantitative approach (based on sociology and economics) for the object of study by way of the collection of data through surveying. Different questionnaires were designed, aimed, on the one hand, at carrying out a study of the visitors to the museum of Altamira. This survey was divided in two parts, the first of which was aimed at evaluating the visit in terms of its degree of satisfaction and at obtaining the necessary data for the economic impact study. The second part consisted of a study of public opinion in general, looking separately at the Autonomous Community and the country as a whole, integrating questions aimed at obtaining useful data for the different studies which made up the project.

The anthropological and ethnographic methodology consisted of the carrying out of field work principally based on the technique of participant observation registered in a field diary and complemented by qualitative production and observation techniques of particular discourses, such as semi-structured interviews (either individual or collective), life stories or discussion groups. Official discourses by the social collectives who give life to the phenomenon in question, presented in documentary sources (informative leaflets, videos, photographs, websites, statistical registries, etc.), were also observed. With the aim of articulating a strategy combining different techniques, the territories and specific places in which Altamira possesses social significance were identified in order to then determine the agents and institutions which participate in its management and decision-making. In addition, other agents and social groups which do not participate in the management and decision-making processes regarding the current situation of Altamira but who are concerned by it were identified.

All of this allowed us to encompass, via different sociological and anthropological techniques, a significant variety of agents on different levels (Figure 1) and to elaborate a plan of work based on three territorial spheres (local, Autonomous Community and State, figures 2-4).

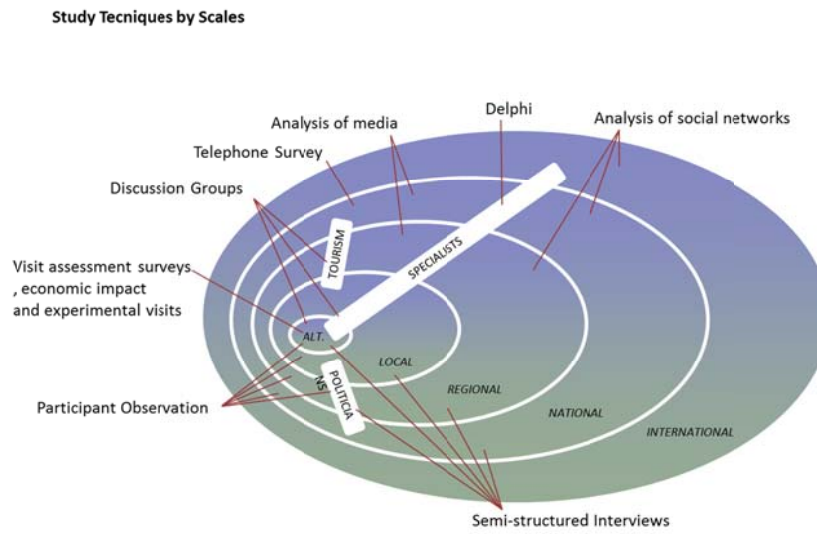


Figure 1. Study techniques applied to each scale of the public.

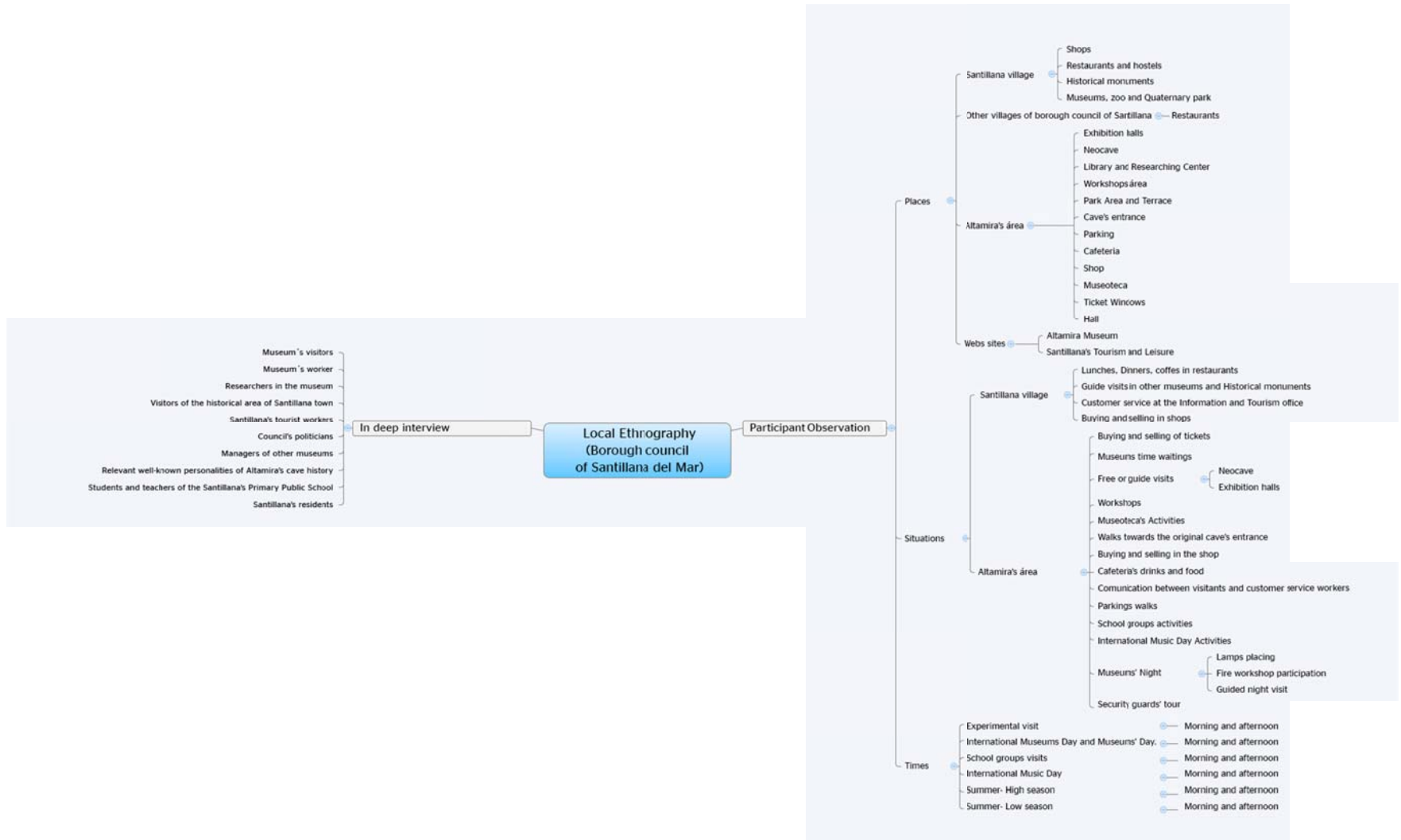


Figure 2. Diagram of the work plan. Scale 3

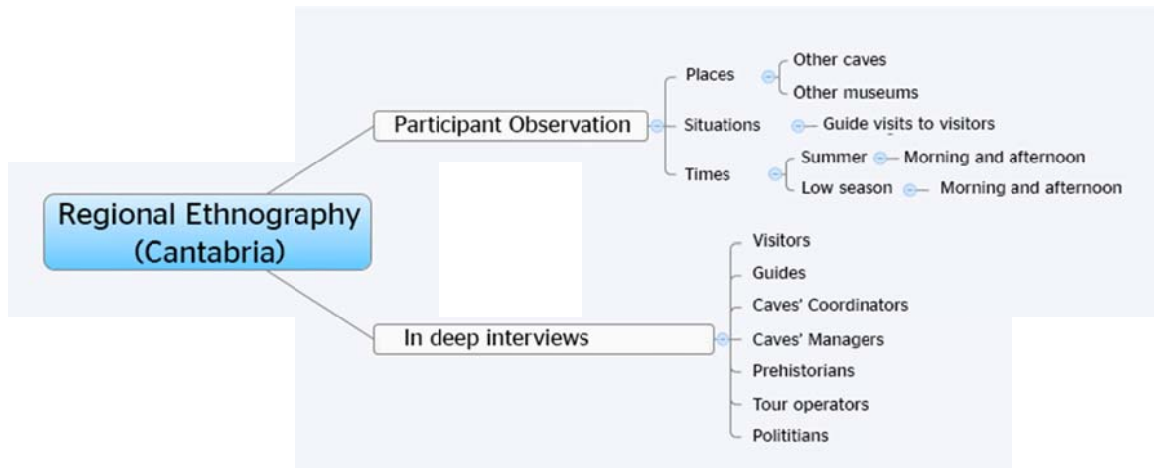


Figure 3 Diagram of the work plan. Scale 2

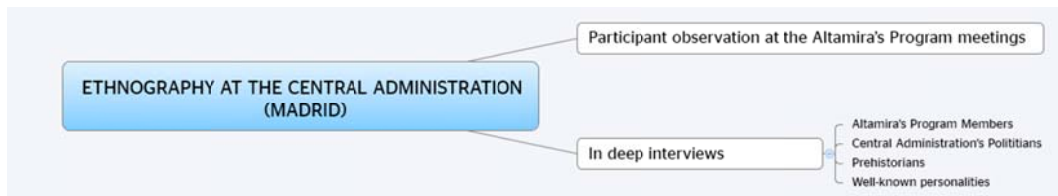


Figure 4. Diagram of the work plan. Scale 1

As far as the remaining studies are concerned, their results are the product of the action and interaction of differing disciplines: the Communication Sciences (the analysis of discourse and contents), Semiotics (iconographic analysis), Archaeology, History, the History of art and Scientometrics, all of these in collaboration with the main disciplines involved in the Project (sociology, economics and anthropology).

From this organisation into different studies, and from the disintegration of the heritage values which make up the value of Altamira (as a whole), we were able to draw up a table in which we can appreciate which studies will allow for the analysis of which values and to what degree (a darker grey indicates that the value in question is a principal objective of the study; a lighter grey indicates that it is a secondary or lateral objective; a white box indicates that the study does not allow for results on that specific value to be obtained). This table has been designed on the basis of an analytical concept of heritage value, in which this is made up of multiple layers of value around a given entity (in this case Altamira), which produce both objectivation and subjectivation value processes³.

³ For a more detailed explanation of the process of production of heritage value, see the document *El Valor Social de Altamira: Marco Estratégico*, in volume I of the Research Programme Report. <http://hdl.handle.net/10261/112864> (Spanish version)

	<i>Legacy</i>	<i>Existence</i>	<i>Instrumental</i>	<i>Aesthetic</i>	<i>Documental</i>	<i>Political</i>	<i>Economic</i>	<i>Educational</i>
Sociological			X					
Economic			X					
Anthropological			X					
Altamira on the Internet			X					
Altamira in Science			X					
Altamira in Art			X					
Altamira in Material Culture			X					
Altamira in Education			X					
Altamira in the Media			X					

Table1: Table identifying heritage values included in the different studies making up the SVA Project.

We have discriminated the instrumental value because this dimension concerns functional heritage elements. That is to say, it is a value which must be taken into account in those sites whose current function is identical or easily assimilated to the original function (an historic building in use, for example).

Working group

The coordination of the SVA Project has been carried out by *David Barreiro* (Incipit, CSIC) and *Felipe Criado* (Incipit, CSIC), with the aid of (for technical management) *Cristina Sánchez-Carretero* (Incipit, CSIC), *Eva Parga-Dans* (freelance researcher) and *Virtudes Téllez Delgado* (freelance researcher).

The management team has been able to rely on the technical and scientific advice of *Antoni Nicolau* (Kultura), *Teresa Marot* (Kultura), *José Antonio Lasheras* (MNCIA) and *Pilar Fatás* (MNCIA).

The General Sub-department for State Museums also contributed towards the work with consultants such as *Héctor del Barrio Alvarellós* and *Ángela García Blanco* (Permanent Laboratory of Museum Visitors) advising on some fundamental questions relating to the work carried out with visitors.

In order to carry out all the work, the management team was able to count on the constant collaboration of the scientific and technical staff of the National Museum and Research Centre of Altamira (MNCIA), some of whom formed part of the different teams of the Project.

In addition, some of the work has been carried out by members of other institutions which also form part of the Research Programme (such as Alicia Herrero, from the General Sub-department of State Museums).

Finally, the SVA Project enjoyed the collaboration of specialists from several different university institutions (the University of Santiago de Compostela, the Complutense University of Madrid and the University of the Basque Country).

Each study has been carried out by a team of specialists and each team has been directed by one person.

The Sociological Study

Leader: *Eva Parga-Dans* (freelance researcher)

Collaborators: *EDESGA* (*Sergio Gómez, Raimundo Otero, Raquel Rodríguez, Raquel Albela, Ana Touriño* and *Paula Rama*)

The Economic Study

Leader: *Fidel Martínez Roget* and *Xesús Pereira* (Department of Applied Economics, University of Santiago de Compostela)

Collaborators: *EDESGA, Eva Parga-Dans* (freelance researcher)

The Anthropological Study

Leader: *Virtudes Téllez Delgado* (freelance researcher)

Collaborator: *Cristina Sánchez-Carretero* (Incipit, CSIC)

Altamira in the Media and on the Internet

Leader: *Manuel Gago Mariño, Sabela Cereijo*

Collaborators: *Xosé Pereira Fariña* (Department of Communication Sciences, Faculty of Communication Sciences, University of Santiago de Compostela)

Altamira in Material Culture

Leader: *Manuel Santos Estévez* (freelance researcher)

Collaborators: *Pilar Fatás* (MNCIA)

Altamira in Art

Leader: *Pilar Fatás* (MNCIA)

Collaborator: *José Antonio Lasheras* (MNCIA)

Altamira in Science

Leader: *Estíbaliz García Gómez* (Acreditaciones y Sexenios)

Altamira in Education

Leader: *David Barreiro* (Incipit, CSIC)

Collaborators: *Gonzalo Ruiz Zapatero* (Department of Prehistory, Complutense University), *Virtudes Téllez* (freelance researcher)

Annexes of Freelance Research

This summary includes two contributions which, due to their specific characteristics (they have not been carried out within the framework of the research strategy designed within each subproject), are considered annexes to the Project as a whole, more than to one specific subproject:

Annex I: *Homo libris. Xurxo Ayán* (Built Heritage Research Group, University of the Basque Country).

Annex II: *La imagen de Altamira en la crítica de arte a mediados del siglo XX y su influencia en la creación contemporánea. Alicia Herrero* (General Sub-department of State Museums, MECD).

RESULTS

The presentation of the results obtained in the study is articulated on the basis of integrated consideration. In other words, firstly a synthesis of the main results of each subproject is presented, and then they are related integrally with the specific hypotheses proposed at the beginning of the project, as well as in relation to the general formulated hypothesis.

Synthesis of the partial reports

The Sociological Study⁴

Once the work methodology had been designed, the public defined and the questionnaires made up (comprising questions of interest for other studies involved in the Project), the sociological study was carried out on two different populations; visitors to the museum and the population on a national scale. For the former, a specific questionnaire was produced and carried out at the museum itself in three waves in order to obtain significant data relating to seasonality. In total, 1028 people were surveyed. For the latter, a questionnaire was also designed and carried out via telephone, again with a sample of 1000 people surveyed⁵.

The data obtained on a national scale via the telephone survey revealed a relatively broad knowledge of Altamira (82.9%) among the population. Of these, 69.4% had never visited Altamira, 59.8% associated Altamira with its cave paintings and 59.2% identified the site as belonging to humanity rather than to any particular political community. The degree of knowledge of the cave among the immigrant population, however, was much lower.

⁴ <http://hdl.handle.net/10261/113130> (Spanish version)

⁵ Both questionnaires, as well as the resulting technical reports, are attached as annexes in the complete documentation of the Project.

Going into greater detail by disassociating the cave of Altamira from the museum, it was found that knowledge of the latter was quite inferior. This, however, is not a revealing fact in itself, although it is illustrative. 40.9% of the population did not know of the existence of the museum and a third of those that did know about it did not know to which entity it belongs.

As far as the situation of the cave is concerned, 67.3% of the population knew that it is not possible to visit the site, whilst 15.6% had no knowledge of this fact (to these must be added the 17.1% that did not even know of the existence of Altamira). It is also interesting to note the high percentage of the population (45.8% of the total) that is of the opinion that the cave should be financed via taxes coming from all the Spanish people, whereas 27.4% indicated *others* and a small minority are of the opinion that it should be financed by taxes on a local or Autonomous Community level, or by private or European funds.

As far as the debate on the re-opening of the cave is concerned, there is widespread acceptance of the idea of a limited opening. In fact, 57% of the people surveyed believed that the cave should be opened to a limited number of visitors, compared to 14.4% who thought that it should remain closed in order to guarantee its future preservation. However, 72.1% were of the opinion that it should be up to expert opinion whether or not the cave should be re-opened and that these experts should be the ones to take the final decision. There was widespread rejection of the idea that politicians should decide on this matter (only 1.1% supported this view). On the question of how the selection process should be handled in the case of a hypothetical re-opening, 43% considered that it should be on a first come first served basis with the options of *those that pay the most* (0.5%) and *for public figures* (0.2%) being almost totally rejected.

With regard to the population visiting the Altamira museum, a high percentage of the sample had not visited the original cave (91%). The percentage of people who know that the cave is closed to the public grew in comparison to the population surveyed on a national level (84.1%). The percentage of people who think that it is quite good, good or very good that the cave is closed in order to guarantee its future preservation also increased significantly (95.5%), with 68% not feeling cheated for not being able to visit the original cave (32% said they did feel cheated). In addition, the degree of satisfaction with the visit to the museum is significantly high. The visit to the Neocave obtained a mark of 5.91 out of 7 and the museum as a whole 5.88 out of 7. After the visit, 78% claimed to be interested in visiting other caves.

The Economic Study⁶

The aim of the economic study was to estimate the direct and indirect economic impact generated by visitors to the museum on the economy of Cantabria. In order to achieve this, in parallel to the survey on the degree of satisfaction of the visit, and again in three waves, 1067 adults were surveyed after their visit to the museum had finished.

The data obtained put the average expenditure per visitor in Cantabria at €470.30, with an average daily expenditure of €104.50 and an average stay of 4.5 days. Based on the

⁶ <http://hdl.handle.net/10261/113139> (Spanish version)

information supplied by the survey, in relation to the different purchases made by visitors to the region, an expenditure vector was elaborated. Once the influence of the museum in the decision to travel to the region had been estimated, leaks via imports were discounted and the figures were transformed into basic prices. Then, the total direct and indirect impacts were estimated based on the input-output framework of Cantabria for 2007.

The total impact generated on production in the region by visitors to the MNCIA was estimated to be €36.2 million (basic prices), of which €28 million related to direct impact and the rest indirect. The multiplier value was, therefore, 1.29. In the areas of tourism and culture, it is normal, as in the case of this study, to use transaction or sales multiples, which relate initial touristic expenditure with the total output generated in an economy. The estimates carried out following this methodology, based on the estimation of the indirect effects via Leontief Model, normally place the multiple between 1 and 1.5.

The number of jobs associated with this impact is estimated at 558 with the business turnover being close to 0.2% of the regional GDP.

The Museum of Altamira manages to attract a large number of visitors to the region and has a great influence on people's decision to choose Cantabria as a holiday destination. On a scale of 0 to 100 (in which 0 represented "not at all" and 100 "totally"), Altamira influenced the decision to travel to Cantabria for 56% of the people surveyed. In addition, a high degree of satisfaction with the visit to the museum can be noted (as was seen in the previous section), which is reflected in the equally high levels of loyalty of the visitors towards the museum and towards Cantabria in general. This loyalty should be converted into new visits to the museum in the future, with the consequent economic impact on the region, given that visitors, once they are in the area, generate expenditure which has different kinds of repercussions on the regional economy, be they immediate or in the short to medium term.

Altamira, as a whole, has managed, over the years, to generate economic value apart from the original cave. No evidence exists to show that re-opening the original cave would, in itself, greatly increase these economic effects. Except for a massive influx of visitors to the cave, there would not be a significant effect on the numbers of tourists in the region and neither would the average daily expenditure increase. In fact, the data available for the period 1982-2002, when an annual quota of visitors was admitted to the original cave, no differential incidence on tourism in Cantabria was reflected. Overnight stays in the region's hotels remained below one million until 1989, with an average annual growth rate of 2.5%. In 1998 and 1999, there was a significant jump with the figure exceeding two million. From the moment in which the original cave was closed, the number of overnight stays in the region has continued to grow, albeit affected by the economic context. At the present time, overnight stays in the region's hotels are around 2.3 million.

On the other hand, the data supplied by the MNCIA for the days coinciding with the experimental visits included in the Research Programme is not conclusive as far as their impact on the number of visitors to the museum is concerned. If the visitor numbers registered in the museum on the days of the experimental visits are compared with the corresponding dates in 2013 and 2012, an increase of 10% can be observed in relation to 2013 but a 5% reduction in relation to 2012. It would be necessary to observe the evolution of the number of visits over a certain period of time in order to extract more definite

conclusions regarding the influence the opening up of the original cave would have on the number of visitors. In any case, such an opening should be framed within a process of optimization of the global and permanent “call effect”. For this to happen, it is highly likely that new touristic initiatives need to be implemented and the current ones to be adapted.

The Anthropological Study⁷

During the different phases of the anthropological research, which included observation field work over a six-month period (between June and November 2013), 145 people were interviewed using semi-structured, individual or collective interview techniques and discussion groups⁸. Documentary sources provided mainly by the workers of the Altamira museum and the tourism sector of Santillana, as well as by other social agents, were also used (historical photographs, tourist brochures, educational manuals, documentary videos, podcasts of radio programmes and websites). The research carried out allowed the abundance of information obtained to be organized by way of a series of analysis axes.

In the first place, the changes undergone by the diverse *meanings* of Altamira, whose polysemy is one of its main riches and attractions, must be considered. A generational shift in the concept of ‘Altamira’ can be detected, with people of between 40 and 50 years of age associating it with the cave whereas younger people associate it with the current ensemble (in which the museum plays a prime role). This shift affects feelings of belonging and, ultimately, the individual’s position with regard to the debate on the access regime to the original cave. Another change concerns the position occupied by agents as far as their roles of responsibility for caring for the cave are concerned. The cave of Altamira has passed from being a site of heritage to being a site of heritage worthy of preservation (almost always in relation to the debate concerning its opening or closure), with the majority of archaeologists and/or prehistorians being the most emphatic in their opinions.

Also worthy of note are the changes undergone by the *identifying links*. Younger generations show an emotional disconnection in relation to the cave of Altamira. They do not have memories of having visited it nor do they feel nostalgic for it. In addition, the identifying links with the town of Santillana del Mar have been reoriented and the presence and/or weight of the cave in these links have lessened. The young people of Santillana del Mar do not find in the museographic discourse a direct manifestation of the identifying links created by their elders regarding the cave. A change can also be observed among some politicians and inhabitants of Santillana, who are beginning to value the historical-artistic whole of the town as a source of economic income. This results in a lessening of their demands for a limited re-opening of the cave, due to the fact that they are conscious that its preservation could be transformed into future economic value.

In relation to this last point, the relationship between Altamira and *tourism* in the imagination of the social agents must be highlighted. The brochures which are available in the tourist

⁷ <http://digital.csic.es/handle/10261/113143> (Spanish version)

⁸ The total calculation of these people does not include those who attended the experimental visits to the original cave and filled in questionnaires on exiting it.

information office of the town council in Santillana del Mar show this connection very clearly, albeit with Altamira as a secondary element, as just one more attraction in Santillana. Cantabria's leisure guides, however, create a symbolic distance between the two. Online searches which tourists can make to organize their trip to Cantabria make Altamira invisible if they wish to visit caves and search via the website for Prehistoric Caves of Cantabria. This is a consequence of the administrative division of heritage from the Autonomous Community.

This dispute has an effect in *political-administrative* terms as certain agents in the Autonomous Community demand jurisdiction in the management of the cave for themselves, whereas others accept State management or propose alternative solutions for co-management. On the whole, the workers of the museum opt for State management, although decision-makers in Madrid are unaware of the internal problems expressed by the workers and do not experience the day-to-day stress. At the same time, the majority of visitors from other communities are not part of this dispute, as can be seen in the results of the surveys which have been carried out.

In general, several conflicts have been generated, and continue to be generated, around Altamira. One of them concerns the museum, the criteria of which are opposed by certain social agents (some politicians and regional prehistorians). Another is related with the reduction in the influence of the inhabitants of Santillana in the participation/collaboration in the management of visits, as occurred in earlier times in which the client networks coincided directly in their view of making it possible to visit the cave in a certain way. The professionalization of the museum led to the breaking up of these client networks and to the origin of this conflict, as well as leading to the appearance of other conflicts related with work dynamics. As a consequence, the management began to become identified with the intervention of politicians from Madrid and of scientists from outside of Cantabria, as well as with some economic effects, such as the supposed reduction of profits generated by visits and the expropriation of land in the area surrounding the cave.

What has been revealed by the anthropological research, therefore, is a *struggle between socially heterogeneous meanings and values*. As a result, some social agents tend to favour the promotion of the Neocave and the discourse regarding preservation in the museum. Many local agents seem to put more emphasis on economic interest, though this is owed to the fact that the only link the adopted management model allows them is to access to a part of the profits. This commercialization of Altamira, which also coincides with a certain demand from the media to maintain and increase the number of visitors, is aggravated by the inclusion of the site in package tours and the homogenization of the discourse of the Neocave, which makes it difficult for the visitor to have a satisfactory visit in terms of experiences, culture and education.

What is more, the carrying out of this *Research Programme* has been, and indeed still is, a cause for conflict, generating misgivings among those who feel that conclusive results were already presented four years ago and that; a) this research serves no other purpose than to justify a contrary decision to the previous one; b) the research allows scientists to continue benefitting economically from the cave, without explaining clearly what they are doing in the cave to aid its preservation; c) the opening of the cave reduces the possibilities of carrying out research within the cave (the time scientists are inside the cave will be limited) and its

scientific and educational potential. On the other hand, there is a generalized idea among the inhabitants and business owners of Santillana del Mar and those of other towns of Cantabria, as well as among some rock art professionals, that the only group to benefit from a hypothetical re-opening of the cave would be politicians.

The Visitors' Books⁹

Alongside the other studies, an analysis of the contents of Altamira's visitors' books was carried out. These are valuable documents which allow us to identify a series of patterns of regularity as far as complaints and suggestions on the part of the visitors are concerned. However, it should be taken into account that "visitors' books" constitute in Altamira, as in all other places, a specific type of discourse used by part of the general public which is not representative of the public as a whole. Neither are they literally a complaints or suggestions box, although many of the comments they contain appear as such. There are, for example, comments relating to the language used in the guided visits, the management of the space and the good acceptance of the educational activities carried out by the museum.

In addition, revising the visitors' books allows us to see first-hand the public's culture regarding museums. For example, it can be noted that many members of the public understand the caution undertaken by the specialists and the Government in order to preserve the cave for the future. This degree of maturity regarding heritage is important when it comes to setting out a new preventive programme and is connected to a generalized feeling in favour of a more democratic management of this cultural site. Many visitors are no longer satisfied to play the role of passive subjects, simply receiving information. They also want to take part in the processes of the social generation of knowledge of the past.

Altamira in the Media and on the Internet¹⁰

Initially, two different studies were planned. The first aimed at studying the treatment given to Altamira in the written press and the second had the objective of detecting its relevance on electronic media, both on social networks and in comments to digital editions of the press¹¹. Given the fact that both of these studies were carried out by the same team, and given the similarities between them, the decision was taken to merge the results into one partial report, the results of which are synthesized here.

On the one hand, an analysis of all the news published about Altamira in the years 2001, 2002, 2003, 2004, 2009 and 2013 in different types of media was carried out. The first aspect which stands out concerns the institutional nature of the majority of the news. That is to say, the source of the information is an institution, either the museum itself (to a far greater extent

⁹ <http://digital.csic.es/handle/10261/113191> (Spanish version)

¹⁰ <http://digital.csic.es/handle/10261/113173> (Spanish version)

¹¹ As far as the first is concerned, a diachronic analysis of contents in historical media was also considered but this could not be carried out due to a lack of resources. However, the groundwork of gathering sources was, indeed, done (historical newspaper archives).

than any other), or the Ministry of Education Culture and Sport, or the Autonomous Community of Cantabria.

In the earlier years, the types of media which paid greatest attention to Altamira were local or regional news outlets (74%, with *El Diario Montañés* standing out). This figure reduced to 58% for 2013, although this could be due to the fact that in this year the sample included the digital editions of nationwide daily newspapers.

As far as topics are concerned, those relating to specific events stand out, such as those regarding the opening of the cave and/or its state of preservation. Between 2001 and 2004, the news was primarily concerned with the first re-opening of the cave, the damage this supposed as far as its state of preservation was concerned, its closure to the public and speculation regarding its future re-opening. However, in 2013, the topics referred to most in the media are visits to the museum (32.29%) and specific exhibitions (19.79%), followed by the state of preservation of the cave (12.50%).

In addition to the specific analysis of the media, a question relating to the impact in the press was inserted into the questionnaire in the telephone survey (see the sociological study). With regard to this, half of the people surveyed stated that they had seen some news about Altamira recently in the media (45.3, although it did not cause a change of opinion in the majority of cases), whereas 37.5% said they had not seen any news items relating to the cave.

Surveys were also carried out on various social networks between February and May/June 2014. Given the great differences between the various networks, it is not possible to apply a single methodology or data treatment method to them all. Therefore, the decision was taken to select contexts which could provide more significant data from the available resources: Twitter and comments to the digital media.

The first element which can be observed is that discussion about Altamira on Twitter is greatly affected by the news promoted by institutional sources. The absence of discussion not provoked by these sources is noteworthy. The majority of tweets published are headlines from the media which are retweeted by users to their communities. The number of tweets evaluating situations or giving opinions is notably small (5%). Cantabria generated the highest number of tweets, followed by the Basque Country, Castile and Leon and Asturias, although Madrid also (perhaps due to its high number of users) channelled several discussions by this means. Outside of Spain, only the southwest of France had some degree of relevance.

The most widespread news item on Twitter (with 90,000 potential readers) was concerning the process of opening up the cave for the start of the experimental visits, with a considerably higher percentage than for any other news, possibly due to the desire to promote and make personal use of the news associated to the holding of the draw. Other widely broadcasted tweets regarded the announcement of the experimental visits (18th January 2014), the beginning of these visits (27th February) and the interview given to ABC by Gaël de Guichen (6th May 2014).

The other elements analysed were the conversations “in context” carried out alongside news published in the media. These provide both qualitative and quantitative information which is notably different to social networks like Twitter as the expression of opinions grows due to the fact that the user has a prior context to refer to. With this in mind, we have selected 18th January and 27th February, the dates of the announcement of the experimental visits and the first visit respectively. As far as the first case is concerned, the negative reception of this news item stands out, especially in the area close to the cave. It was considered to be a “political” and not technical decision. In the second case, the number of comments is much reduced and, in general, in the nationwide media these negative opinions become more neutral (which essentially means more heterogeneous conversations). However, negativity continued to prevail in *El Diario Montañés*. Likewise, a difference can be detected between both items of news with regard to the topic matter and the agents mentioned. In the case of the announcement, more preference was given to arguments relating to the favouritism of politicians, whereas in the second event there was a total dispersion and heterogeneity in comments on the subject and the characters involved.

Altamira in Art¹²

When considering the influence of Altamira on contemporary art, one should start from one fundamental fact: the coincidence in time between the first discoveries of Palaeolithic rock art (with Altamira at the forefront) and the emergence of avant-garde movements. Rock art provided avant-garde artists with a new artistic reality to which they could look; some were more interested in form and others in concept. In any case, this new reality spurred them on to consider alternative forms of creation and expression. In Spain, this association occurred later than in the rest of Europe and America and it would not be until after the Civil War that it would take on a decisive influence in renovation movements (such as the Altamira School).

Three axes of analysis can be defined in the deconstruction of the influence of Altamira in contemporary art: experience, the formal and the conceptual.

The first aspect concerns direct aesthetic experience, the experience of contemplation and the feelings and emotions that it gives. Some artists of note in this area were Henry Moore, Nicolás de Stäel, Joan Miró, Mathias Goeritz, Hellen Frankenthaler, Elaine de Kooning, Miquel Barceló, Mario Merz, Antonio López and Richard Serra. All of them, in one way or another, stressed the relationship between the aforementioned experience and the recognition of the artistic worth of the authors of the paintings, in some cases insisting on the idea that Art had evolved little since those times as far as the will to create is concerned.

On the other hand, some artists especially appreciate the plastic values of Altamira and are inspired by them in form, copying and imitating themes or translating formal solutions to their own creations. Within these solutions, the use of volumes, the use of protuberances in the rock as an expressive resource, the textures which can be obtained and the very concept of incorporating the medium into the work have obtained special importance. Wolfgang Paalen visited Altamira in 1933 looking for the essence of artistic expression. The influence that the

¹² <http://digital.csic.es/handle/10261/113175> (Spanish version)

paintings had on him was reproduced in the case of other abstract expressionists, such as Robert Motherwell (*Altamira Elegy*) and Hellen Frankenthaler (*Before the Caves*). Later, Elaine de Kooning saw a connection in the paintings with the very processes of abstract expressionism (processes, actions, impulses, etc.) and reinterpreted Palaeolithic motives. Other examples in Europe are Andrea Benetti and his *Manifesto dell'Arte Neoruprestre*, as well as, in Spain, the Equipo Crónica (Crónicas de la Transición).

Finally, other artists have taken, above all, the concept from Altamira. Here, we can highlight the Altamira School, between 1948 and 1950, with the fundamental participation of Mathias Goeritz, which played a significant role in the regeneration of contemporary artistic creation following the Civil War by proposing a debate on the role of avant-garde art, its meaning and its opening up to international tendencies. However, this School, at the same time as being a platform for renovation, was also a platform for institutionalization and for the legitimization of the regime through culture, as it counted on the support of the Francoist authorities.

Altamira in Material Culture¹³

In order to undertake an analysis of the use of the image and images of Altamira as a commercial entity, a symbol of identity, an emblem or decoration in diverse objects of daily use, a total of 53 objects were catalogued, whose design incorporated some kind of image of Altamira. Thirty-three of these objects were souvenirs (key rings, stickers, pencils, watches, etc.). Nine of them were commemorative objects of some kind, such as medals, stamps and sugar packets. Six objects can be described as having the intention of creating identity (a rugby team, a football supporters' club, shoe shops and ADIC (the Association for the Defence of the Interests of Cantabria)). Finally, three objects used the image of Altamira without the aim of creating an identity, such as the Altamira bicycle, the *peliqueiro* mask (a traditional carnival mask from the region of Ourense) and an amateur Catalan cyclo-cross club.

Information was obtained on several different aspects relating to the design of these products which reveal the intentions of their creators. The most interesting cases are those of Fuji's *Altamira* bicycle and the *Bisonte* brand of tobacco.

Following the analysis of these objects of material culture, some of the ideas put forward at the moment of proposing the project could be confirmed. The source of information by which the figures used in the decoration of the products is obtained is indirect, very possibly by way of postcards, publicity material or other already existing commercial objects.

It can also be stated that the main source which has inspired designers are the illustrations of Henri Breuil. Due to the fact that they are drawings and not photographs, Breuil's images are clearer and more easily transferred to other media. Photographs, however, although they are more faithful portraits, lack the clarity of drawings and printing them onto different objects is technically more complicated.

¹³ <http://digital.csic.es/handle/10261/113181> (Spanish version)

Practically all the figures used are derived from the Great Hall of Polychromes, with the hunched bison being the most used images. On the other hand, exceptional use is made of other images, such as portraits of Sautuola or images of the space of the cave. Initially, it is possible that the preference for the hunched bison is due to their dynamic appearance and their corpulence, which lend these images great strength and expressiveness. With the passing of time, the reproduction of these bison has been favoured by the fact that they are the most easily recognized images among the general public¹⁴.

Altamira in Science¹⁵

In order to carry out this study, two types of quality index were used: the number of quotes received and Altamira's presence in bibliographies, catalogues and repositories. In the first case, scientific production was studied which is indexed in the most wide-reaching specialized catalogues, repositories, compilations, aggregators and databases (Web of Science, Google Scholar and Publish or Perish). In the second case, WorldCat, Microsoft Academic Search, HISPANA and EUROPEANA were used.

On the one hand, the consultation of WOS and PoP/Google Scholar showed a low number of publications on the subject of Altamira over the first years, until 1999 when Saiz-Jiménez and his team began to publish studies on preservation. The number of studies has grown and remained constant up to the present day.

On the other hand, in MaS and Open WorldCat the number of publications remained low at the beginning with research being focused on historical-artistic aspects until 1980/1981. During these years, excavations were carried out by Joaquín González Echegaray and Leslie Gordon Freeman, the last excavations to be performed in the cave. One year later, the Ministry of Culture took over the management of Altamira. It was also during this era that the public debate was begun on whether the cave should be closed definitively due to maintenance problems and the need for studies to evaluate the state of preservation of the site¹⁶. Then, in 1997 and 1999, an increase in the number of results can be observed, which has been maintained up to the present day. Preservation and maintenance work predominates over other types, such as the traditional historical-artistic aspect or museology.

The quotes gathered from PoP and WOS were compared with those received in publications on Lascaux and Chauvet in order to determine the degree of relative importance with sites analogous to Altamira. WOS, up to the present day, has 2311 quotes, triple the number of those on the French caves, in spite of the fact that the number of results from which these quotes are obtained are similar (188, 204 and 173 publications, for Altamira, Lascaux and

¹⁴ To gain more insight on this subject, please consult both the partial report "Altamira in Art" and the research annex "La imagen de Altamira en la crítica de arte a mediados del siglo XX y su influencia en la creación contemporánea".

¹⁵ <http://digital.csic.es/handle/10261/113183> (Spanish version)

¹⁶ Fraga Iribarne, Manuel (2nd May 1981). "Pregunta: Cierre al público de las Cuevas de Altamira. Presentada por don Manuel Fraga Iribarne". *Boletín oficial de la Cortes Generales. Congreso de los Diputados*. Cabanillas Gailas, Pío (23rd September 1981). "Contestación: Cierre al público de las Cuevas de Altamira. Presentada por don Manuel Fraga Iribarne". *Boletín oficial de la Cortes Generales. Congreso de los Diputados*.

Chauvet, respectively). In the consultation on PoP/Google Scholar, 9628 quotes were found on Altamira, six times more than those found for Lascaux and Chauvet from a total of 162 results, three times more than those found on the French caves. From 1995, the increase in the number of quotes has been maintained, making reference to general studies on museology and to specific studies on the site.

The type of documents archived by the databases consulted were basically articles (41%) and books (42%). The remaining 17% corresponded to other types, such as papers, images, reports, theses, audio-visual documents, etc., with English (58%) predominating over other languages (18% were in Spanish).

Altamira in Education¹⁷

This study focused exclusively on the treatment given to Altamira in school manuals, both in text books and in images. More specifically, it was based on a selective dump in the search for a chronologically extensive sample (between 1900 and 2007) of the bibliographies of the MANES (Manuales Escolares Españoles – Spanish School Manuals) research project, located in the central library of the UNED (the National University of Distance Education)¹⁸.

The documentation gathered is incorporated in 59 volumes of general reading and primary and secondary text books from all eras, from 1900 to the present day. They were selected from a total sample of 130 volumes consulted (of which only those which explicitly mentioned Altamira were chosen). The list and the selected references can be consulted in the corresponding documentary annex to Executive Report 10 – ‘Altamira in Education’.

The sample is homogenous, although it proved more difficult to gather documentation corresponding to the 1960s and 1970s. This period, therefore, should be considered as underrepresented in the sample we have handled.

As a general rule, Altamira appears contextualized in topics corresponding to Prehistory, to the Palaeolithic and, even more specifically, to Palaeolithic Art. Some references are to the historical context (Archaeology and Prehistory) but, in general, references to Altamira concern the art and artistic expression of the age, its possible meaning and its importance in cultural evolution. In this regard, Altamira began to be recognized at the same time that biblical theories and the character of Tubal (supposedly the first inhabitant of the Iberian Peninsula) began to be abandoned in Spain. This can be observed, for example, in one of the first documented volumes, in which these theories are explicitly rejected as being implausible and mythical.

Altamira usually appears in connection with other outstanding archaeological and monumental elements, which were added to over the 20th century. Likewise, the sites of La Pasiega and El Castillo are often mentioned as centres of Franco-Cantabrian rock art from early times. Later, caves from outside Cantabria, such as Tito Bustillo and Santimamiñe,

¹⁷ <http://digital.csic.es/handle/10261/113189> (Spanish version)

¹⁸ We would like to thank Ignacio Martín Trillo and his colleagues for the help given in consulting and selecting the material which makes up the dossier.

(although the latter had already been discovered in 1916) and from outside Spain (especially Font-de-Gâume and Lascaux in France) were added.

Other associations refer to the most outstanding heritage elements within the imagination of Spanish identity, independently of the specific period and the geographical area. In this case, the most outstanding elements include the hand axes of San Isidro and Torralba, dolmens (the cave in Menga), taulas and *talaiots* and the recent prehistorical settlements of the southwest, such as Los Millares.

In addition, it is not until more recent times (and not in all volumes) that Franco-Cantabrian rock art is definitively distinguished from Levantine rock art as belonging to clearly different historical moments and cultural contexts. This confusion, in some cases, is added to by the ambiguous use of textual and graphic references to both types.

As far as the use of images is concerned (ignoring the evolution of formats and of technological developments, although they must be taken into account in the analysis), the image of “Altamira as an object” can be seen, made up of illustrations of the content or essence of the element in question, of recreations or scenes in which Altamira becomes an excuse to recreate the prehistoric way of life and, more specifically, the artistic act in itself. All of this ignores questions which go beyond the central topic of Altamira and which have to do with the repeated use of stereotypes when representing the men and women of the Palaeolithic period.

On the other hand, although (as has already been mentioned) technology cannot be ignored as a determining factor, the repeated use of Breuil’s drawings must be highlighted. This, however, has lessened as other ways of illustrating (photography) and other modes (detailed views) have acquired protagonism.

Specific Hypotheses

Up to this point, an attempt has been made to synthesize the most significant results obtained by each of the studies. As has already been pointed out, the global objective of the Social Value of Altamira Project is to obtain a holistic vision of the heritage phenomenon that is Altamira, a vision which includes all of these results and analyses them from a conception of Altamira as a complex, multidimensional, multivocal and polysemic entity.

This analysis, now carried out from the conception of Altamira projected by the multiple agents and entities which have been involved in the study, is articulated from diverse specific hypotheses (plus one of a general character) which were formulated prior to the work being carried out. Each one of these hypotheses (which are detailed below) has been contrasted with the main results obtained from the various studies (this is reflected in the corresponding column of table 2). It is from this contrast that the pertinent conclusions can be drawn, which shall be presented in the last section of this executive summary.

On the value of legacy

It has increased over the last forty years as the problems concerning the preservation of the site have promoted a general conscience that it is preferable for it to remain closed. Although it may not be used in the present, it can be preserved for future generations.

On the value of existence

In the collective imagination, Altamira is connected to people's daily experience. Except in the case of those people that have had a close relationship with the site, this presence in the imagination has declined progressively over the last forty years, or the experience of contemplating the authentic paintings has been replaced with the visit to the museum.

On the aesthetic value

The aesthetic value of Altamira can be seen in two moments: the direct experience of contemplation and the influence in the processes of creation (recreation). Both these moments of the aesthetic value of Altamira have decreased over the last forty years.

On the documentary value

Altamira has documentary value in various areas relating to the production of knowledge: semiotics, aesthetics, history, preservation, etc. Throughout its history, the attention paid to Altamira by scientists has passed from some aspects to others, according to the changing circumstances of the site itself. As a whole, the scientific impact of Altamira has decreased over the last forty years, coinciding with the hegemony, as far as scientific production is concerned, of themes relating to the preservation of the site.

On the political value

The political value of Altamira has historically been linked to the political-institutional context. Its strength as a symbol of identity for distinct communities (local, regional and nationwide) has prevailed over all other values. These distinct levels of identity have experienced moments of ascent and decadence throughout history. From the 1960s (the beginning of the massive affluence of visitors), the site's political value has been linked to its economic value. This has been manifested in a fight for power among communities, not only for the property of a symbol, but also for the property and management of the wealth it generates.

On the economic value

The economic meta value (the direct and indirect profits of the visit) has been transferred from the original cave to the museum and has undergone an increase. The economic valorisation is not in direct relation to the visit to the original cave, but to Altamira as a whole. Not even an unrestricted re-opening would generate, in itself, an increase in the value generated by visitors.

On the educational value

The educational value of Altamira, in all its dimensions (knowledge, values, attitudes, experience), incorporates the original cave, the museum programme of the site (exhibitions, activities) and the various educational materials generated over the course of history.

The educational value of the original cave is extremely limited by physical factors and by preservation concerns. This evidence has led to an inflation of the educational component of the museum, as a means of compensating for the absence of the “authentic” experience, to the detriment of the other values it possesses (of existence, aesthetics, political-associative).

Altamira has lost presence in school text books.

	<i>Legacy</i>	<i>Existence</i>	<i>Instrumental</i>	<i>Aesthetics</i>	<i>Documental</i>	<i>Political</i>	<i>Economic</i>	<i>Educational</i>
Sociological	The majority of the population and the visitors are in favour of preservation rather than access.	The majority of the population have never been to Altamira but know of its existence.		The majority of the population identify Altamira with its paintings.	The majority of the visitors would like to have more information on the cave.	The majority are of the opinion that Altamira is not an issue which should be decided upon by politicians.	The majority are of the opinion that Altamira should be financed by nationwide taxes.	The majority of the visitors said they had learned a lot in the museum.
Economic	The majority are of the opinion that Altamira should be financed by nationwide taxes.	The existence of Altamira was the main factor in travelling to Cantabria for 56% of the visitors to the museum.		-	-	-	Altamira generates a significant impact on the Cantabrian economy, independently of whether the cave is open or closed.	-
Anthropological	On a local level, an emotional detachment among the population can be observed, given that the memory of the older population will not be reproduced among the younger generations due to the fact that the cave is closed.	On a local level, an emotional detachment among the younger generations towards Altamira can be observed.		The link with “the ancestors” is produced in a more sensory way rather than cognitively. The Neocave is a faithful reproduction of the motives, though not of the atmosphere.	For some experts, opening the cave would be detrimental to research. The current situation also does not guarantee the possibility of research in the cave.	Among the local population, it is perceived that decisions regarding Altamira are taken elsewhere. On a regional level, there is a displacement, as far as prestige and effort are concerned, towards other Cantabrian caves.	On a local level, a process of detachment can be observed between the prosperity of Santillana and that of Altamira. However, the idea of the “call effect” of restricted visits still remains.	The homogeneity of expositive discourse lessens its educational potential. The MNCIA promotes the educational values of Altamira, but there are some aspects which could be included in the discourse and the practice.
Altamira on the Internet	The tendency of the comments analysed is to judge negatively the possible re-opening of the cave, although this is decreasing.	The low level of presence of Altamira on the Internet was detected. Its presence is generally due to the institutional context.		-	-	The management of the cave is identified with the interests of politicians rather than with those of the public.	The management of the cave is identified with economic interests rather than with those of the public.	-

Altamira in the Media	Preservation is one of the most common themes in the news analysed.	The presence of Altamira in the media is growing, especially in the media of the Autonomous Community of Cantabria.		-	The information and documentation in the MNCIA guarantee full and deep access to the historical context of Altamira. The MNCIA is a recurrent element in the media studied.			
Altamira in Science	The main subject matter in current scientific production regards preservation.	-		-	There are hardly any modern scientific articles of basic research on Altamira.	-	-	There is hardly any scientific dissemination on Altamira, except that which comes from the MNCIA itself.
Altamira in Art	Altamira still bears unique witness to Franco-Cantabrian rock art.	-	-	The aesthetic influence of Altamira reached its peak in the first half of the 20th century, although it remains to the present day.	Altamira is still a paradigm of Franco-Cantabrian rock art.	-	-	The expository discourse is centred on the times of Altamira, rather than on the work in itself.
Altamira in Material Culture	-	In spite of the fact that it is impossible to enter the cave, Altamira's motifs continue to be a symbolic reference point.		The standardization of some of the motifs has made them autonomous from the originals. Recently, a recovery has been made thanks to reproduction techniques and to the Neocave.	-	Alternative symbols of identity have appeared (labarum)	The motifs of Altamira have become standardized, normalized and reproduced to the point of triviality.	-
Altamira in Education	The preservation dimension is still not included in school text books.	Altamira is still present in school text books.		School text books focus on the role of Altamira as a historical rather than artistic witness.	The contents of school text books are outdated as far as the state of research is concerned.	School text books focus on the role of Altamira as a historical rather than artistic witness.	References to identity remain in text books, although they have been softened.	Altamira remains in school text books as a point of reference, though it is considered to be less unique.

Table 2: Interpretation of the results obtained and their integration with the model.

The General Hypothesis

The general hypothesis proposed at the beginning of the Project, which cuts through all the various specific hypotheses we have just described, was as follows:

Altamira has lost visibility and relevance over, approximately, the last forty years, as has been reflected in the different fields and materials which have been objects of study in the project. The disintegration of social value in its different dimensions provides information about which of these dimensions has undergone a loss of value and which have not.

Despite the specificities of each hypothesis, this general hypothesis has been considered in each one of them. Contrasting this general hypothesis, therefore, is an exercise in which we will attempt to reflect the results obtained in each subproject. These results only refer to the general hypothesis. In other words, we shall attempt to interpret the results, on the one hand, in historical terms. Has Altamira lost visibility and relevance over the last forty years? On the other hand, we shall maintain the model on which the structure and strategy of the project has been based. Has Altamira lost visibility and relevance over the last forty years, in each one of the dimensions of value considered? We shall attempt to answer this question.

Values which have increased

The legacy value: save for the case of text books, in which the topic of preservation is absent, the rest of the analyses carried out reveal that this factor has acquired more and more presence in the different media and in the opinion of the agents. The figures of heritage recognition (World Heritage) have consolidated this dimension of the legacy.

Documentary value: in spite of the fact that in the first half of the 20th century, regardless of the prevailing paradigms, Altamira was regarded as a unique site for historical comprehension, and since then a great deal of evidence from the same context and from others has appeared, it has maintained its documentary value thanks to the work of mediation carried out by the MNCIA; this, in spite of the practical impossibility of carrying out research in the cave, apart from work regarding its preservation.

Political Value: The political dimension of Altamira must be analysed in two ways. One relates to association, which is important on a local level and which has decreased since the first problems regarding preservation appeared. Another is the symbolic-institutional aspect, in which fractures and tensions caused by the identity dispute around the site have been seen. The recent claim of Cantabrian identity generated a negotiation regarding identity which has not been closed. This symbolic dispute is materialized, in practice, in a dispute around the tutelage and management of the site. In this way, the political value of Altamira, as a whole, has increased, in spite of the fact that the identity traditionally linked to the site (that of Spanish identity, which Altamira played a significant role in creating), has been diluted as the latter has slid towards

other heritage phenomena (such as Atapuerca or manifestations of immaterial heritage) and as the evolution of Spanish identity itself has tended, over the last forty years, towards disintegration and its articulation through other activities and spaces.

Economic Value: In spite of the current state of access to the original cave, it is undeniable that the infrastructure built in Altamira has absorbed and exceeded itself in terms of capacity (at least in the period following its re-opening in 1982). The data supplied by the economic study leave no room for doubt. However, perhaps because of this, there are opposing views among the agents surveyed. On the one hand, there are those who maintain the opinion that having Altamira open to the public would generate more profits. But on the other hand, there are those who believe that, regardless of the state of access to the original cave, Altamira is, in itself, a crowded and overexploited site, a fact which reduces the quality of the museum visit.

Educational Value: To a greater degree than was the case with the documentary value, the creation of a modern museum in Altamira has maximized the educational potential of the site, independently of whether the original cave can be visited or not. In any case, a visit to the original cave could never be made in the same conditions for observation which are provided by the Neocave, not taking into account the rest of the museum, which only adds to the educational value of the site. One nuance to add to this categorical statement could be the extremely important sensorial component of the educational experience in that the Neocave is smaller than the original. This can be seen in the questionnaires carried out during the experimental visits undertaken within the framework of this Research Programme. Another aspect to be noted are the deficiencies detected in the teaching materials which were analysed as regards the updating Altamira can supply as part of the contents. The last factor to note is the evolution of the cultural level of the Spanish people, as shown by the reply rate to the telephone survey.

Values which have been maintained

Aesthetic value: The specialists responsible for the study on Altamira in Art consider that both the value of contemplation and that of influence in the processes of creation have been maintained over the last forty years. However, this is an assessment whose data for this study is difficult to quantify. In order to make this affirmation, they took several circumstances into account: the number of references of “historical” artists compared to current ones; known references to rock art in the first half of the 20th century compared to the current situation; the difficulty/ease of access to the cave and the ease/difficulty of access to images which reproduce Altamira.

However, while it is true that this is a parameter which is difficult to quantify, the aesthetic experience provided by the contemplation of the original paintings (the authenticity, the sensorial experience, the context, etc.), is not comparable to contemplating the paintings in the Neocave, since it is not only a question of (undeniable) quality in the reproduction of the paintings.

Values which have decreased

Existence value: Except in the case of the media included in the study, for which it is still a thematic reference point, Altamira has lost relevance in media and agents. This can be put down both to the restriction of access (in the conscience of the local population) and to the normalisation of the value of the site (*vide infra*), in direct relation with the constant and progressive growth of new heritage sites. Altamira loses relevance because there are more and more relevant sites as time goes by.

Final Evaluation

If we attempt to make a global evaluation, we would have to state that Altamira has only suffered a loss of relevance, as we suggested in our initial hypothesis, in two dimensions of its Social Value (aesthetics and existential). This is especially important as far as the existence value is concerned, given the fact that it is essential to all heritage sites. Any step that may be taken in the future, be it part of the Plan for Preventive conservation, the museography programme of the MNCIA or whatever management model may be adopted, must take into account the problems detected in this study in this regard. *The participation of the local population in the management of any heritage site is key to its socialization. And in order for this participation not to generate perverse effects, it is necessary for it to be based on the promotion of appreciation for the site: only that which is valued is protected. Any preventive conservation strategy that may be adopted must take this principle as a starting point.*

As far as the other values are concerned (legacy, documentary, political, economic and educational), Altamira continues to be as relevant, or even more so, as it always has been. Indeed, what has come about is a phenomenon of *normalization* (in the words of Gonzalo Ruiz Zapatero). Altamira has stopped being “exceptional” not because it has lost the value which society once gave to it, but because this social evaluation has become fragmented and dispersed. On the one hand, this is because the mechanisms of identity have become concentrated in the community of Cantabria and have become diluted in the rest of Spain. On the other hand, it is because, in the second half of the 20th century, new items (relating to heritage or not) have appeared demanding evaluation and appreciation from society in its multiplicity and heterogeneity. That is to say, it has stopped being “exceptional” not because it has stopped being valuable and unique, but because the field of heritage is undergoing continuous growth and all its components lose specific importance with each new aggregate.

CONCLUSIONS

The conclusions section is based on the above-mentioned evaluations. Firstly, we aim to analyse the results according to a socio-historical interpretation. This is something which, from our point of view, is essential in order to understand what Altamira is and what it means today, with the aim of facilitating informed decision-making with regard to the future.

Secondly, we aim to synthesize the main conclusions of the Project as far as any future preventive conservation strategies which may be adopted are concerned.

Understanding Altamira

Within the scope of a *Research Program for the Preventive Conservation and Conditions of Access of the Cave of Altamira*, the presence of a specific study regarding the Social Value of Altamira is neither a complimentary nor an anecdotic matter and, as such, its consequences cannot be disregarded and must be integrated into future management strategies and decisions regarding the site.

As was stated at the beginning of this executive summary, this project set out with two main final objectives. The first was of an analytic and descriptive nature: to delve deeper into the characterization of Altamira as a heritage enclave and the multiple dimensions of human experience around it, both socially and historically. The second, of a performative nature, was to optimize the management conditions of Altamira, combining in the most balanced way possible the two main variables (access to the site and its preservation).

The work carried out produced two fundamental ideas:

1. That the second objective (optimizing the site's management) is not feasible without having fulfilled the first objective. In order to know what to do with Altamira (what decisions to take and why) it is necessary to know what Altamira both is and has been.
2. That a strategy of preventive conservation should not only incorporate the perspective of the social relevance of the object, or objects, of preservation, but also that this perspective is that which should articulate the work as a whole (what has already been done and what still remains to be carried out). Cultural heritage does not have an intrinsic value. Rather, its value stems from the position which it occupies in its social context. This position stems from the value which social agents, who vary according to the historical context, attribute to it.

The work carried out contributes towards understanding Altamira both socially and historically and, therefore, towards understanding the demands and decisions which are posed or taken regarding the site. In addition, this comprehension is what allows us to understand what role the site plays in social relations as a whole, what role we believe it should play and what steps should be taken and/or prioritized in order to achieve these aims.

Just like any such entity anywhere in the world, Altamira is a product of its own history. This history is that of its social (political, economic and cultural) conditions, of its emergence, constitution and use. We use the term the "third life of Altamira" in order to differentiate between its first life (its original use as a prehistoric habitat) and its second

(the long period of lethargy between the moment of the collapse and its rediscovery for social life). This “third life of Altamira” is the object of our research.

The use of the term “life” to refer to a specific site is not a random choice. We do not need to think that places or things have the same range of characteristics as human beings to admit that, around a site like Altamira, social processes have been developed which are articulated, starting from its very existence, in other words, from the social recognition of its identity. A site or place thus acquires an ‘identity for someone/something’. To paraphrase Castilla del Pino, to be is to be something or someone and to be something or someone is to be something or someone *for somebody*. It is us humans who confer identity onto each other, and who give identity to things. Just as a human being is an organism or body and this body becomes a person at the moment it interacts socially, so an object or a place stops being an indeterminate part of the world (a pre-existence) when it is given a social identity. This is when *matter* is converted into *culture*. In any case, it is not even necessary to be in agreement with this idea to accept that Altamira possesses some form of life, for the preservation specialists in Altamira know that the cave breathes, perspires, sweats and leaks and it does so in a way which is difficult to predict and objectify, and which cannot be reduced to the linearity of a simple natural process. Altamira is a non-linear system in which natural and social processes converge, as well as evaluations on the part of different people/institutions on these processes and their effects.

By distinguishing itself socially as a world entity, it is feasible to analyse, reconstruct, describe and understand what social processes occur (or have occurred) around Altamira. The contemporary social life around Altamira, including the material vicissitudes of the site themselves (both those caused by humans directly and those perceived by humans), constitutes its third life.

From the moment of its modern discovery, Altamira has undergone many changes at many different levels (from its very outward appearance to its use as a political symbol or as an economic resource). Only an approach from an historical point of view can provide us with a diachronic view of these changes. However, this historical approach is not feasible if we do not know who or what we have to ask. This is why we turned to the analysis of written documents (the press, school text books, visitors’ books, etc.) and to artistic creations, material culture, etc. Furthermore, this approach would be useless if it were not used to attempt to understand the present and to understand why the social agents with whom we have worked to a greater or lesser degree sustain a certain opinion or defend a certain position regarding Altamira.

However, this diachronic vision cannot be reduced to an analysis of the changes undergone by the cave since its rediscovery. This information is, of course, necessary but is provided as part of the results of this Research Programme in the report entitled ‘*Historia de la conservación de la cueva de Altamira (1868-2012)*’. We have been able to generate a diachronic view of the social processes in which this singular history has taken place.

Altamira was the first place in which evidence of rock art from the Palaeolithic era in Europe was documented. This fact has greatly affected the history of the site. This is primarily because, as is well-known, scientific recognition of its authenticity came at a

time when other evidence appeared in the Franco-Cantabrian area. From the beginning, therefore, the destiny of Altamira has been affected by the fact that it is located in Spanish territory. It does not matter too much to us whether this was an important factor in its late recognition. What is important, however, is that, for this reason, it acquired symbolic value¹⁹ from the very beginning. This occurred in an historical context in which the consolidation of a Spanish national identity was of great importance. It should not be forgotten that, until the beginning of the 20th century, the existence of an official discourse (for the elite and transmitted by the written press) which had been putting forward this idea of Spain for some time, co-existed with the social reality of an extremely disjointed territory, without a good road infrastructure, without means of communication, with extremely high levels of illiteracy (64% in 1900: Liébana 2009) and with an extremely unequal distribution of population over the territory. This meant that the concept of “Spain”, if it did indeed exist, was not well-established, be it socially or culturally, among the majority of the population.

The beginning of the “third life of Altamira” coincided with attempts to expand and consolidate the concept of identity. In order to achieve this, “national” symbols were constructed, along with the use of other instruments, such as the generalisation of a public education system with all its deficiencies (in 1900, 60% of children of school age were unschooled). These symbols had their roots in the supposed “history of the nation”, as had been the case in other neighbouring countries. The changes in Alfonso XIII’s attitude towards the cave of Altamira during his reign (1902-1931) reflect these attempts to promote the symbolic and identifying dimension of the site. During the 1920s, he began to visit the cave every year during his summer retreat in Santander.

A council for the preservation and defence of the cave was created in 1910, but it was not until 1924 that work was begun to adapt the entrance and interior of the cave for visits. The words of Father Carballo to Alfonso XIII at this time were particularly eloquent: “the Cave of Altamira, which should be a glory of Spain before foreigners, is exactly the opposite. It is denigrating for us to have it in such a state of abandonment”²⁰. It was the Duke of Alba who assumed responsibility for the cave as the President of the Higher Council of Excavations and Antiquities. In 1925, the local council and the Duke of Alba signed an agreement ceding the management, though not ownership, of the cave for not more than 99 years.

Here, two things are relevant: the association between Altamira and Spain and the assumption of management work of important sites (Altamira would be declared an Architectonic-Artistic Monument in the same year) by the ruling oligarchy, resident in Madrid.

The fact that Altamira came to be considered a “monument” is significant. Again, we see Altamira as a product of its own history. Its value as a work of art and as an archaeological testimony was heightened. In an age in which artistic creation was accelerating its processes of autonomy with the appearance of the avant-garde, which

¹⁹ For a fuller vision of the conflict between creationism and evolutionism within the framework of the supposed controversy between France and Spain for Altamira, see Moro (2009).

²⁰ Carballo, J. (1950). “Marcelino S. de Sautuola”, *Antología de escritores y Artistas Montañeses*, 14: LXXXVII

looked towards events which broke pre-established evolutionary ideas, Altamira was on the front line and became a point of reference, due to the fact that there were still few sites which were so complete and so well-preserved. On the other hand, in an age in which Archaeology was built, above all, around sites from the historical or proto-historical age, Palaeolithic sites were still in the minority and exceptional (although, for some time, more fertile sites, archaeologically-speaking, had begun to be discovered along the Cantabrian coast). Both Altamira's scientific and artistic value are invariably linked to the discourse of legitimisation of the "Spanish nation" (it was shown that in Altamira the "first Spaniards" were at the forefront of Western culture), which pushed for the modernisation of an underdeveloped state.

Following the Republican interval, during which some scientific and educational publications, as well as certain media (with the newspaper *El Sol* being the most eloquent example), presented Altamira as something more than just a symbol of identity, its symbolic-national value gained a new dimension during the rule of Franco, primarily due to the evolution of the contexts of reference:

- 1) New sites with art began to appear (the other great work of prehistoric Franco-Cantabrian art, Lascaux, was discovered in 1940), at the same time that contemporary artistic creation was evolving in new ways, for which the previous quest for references from the past became less necessary. Even so, the particular situation of Spain following the Civil War meant that, in the beginning, attempts were made (especially via the Altamira School) to reconstruct an avant-garde movement in Spain, in spite of everything. Unlike in the previous period, these attempts were not made by a generation from a cultural context prone to innovation, but by the attempt of the Franco regime to institutionally lead any initiative of this type. Altamira was, therefore, used yet again as a national symbol.
- 2) Prehistory began to become established in Spain as an academic discipline. The earlier elitist character (the great masters and their disciples) gave way to a more specialised, diversified and plural education, in spite of the deficiencies and perversions of the Francoist institutions, including the universities, which made this process slow and with many anomalies in comparison with other countries. At the same time, this diversification went hand in hand with a constant growth in the number of archaeological discoveries. Altamira began to become less exceptional from this point of view, even taking into account the fact that its archaeological value never became as relevant as that of other sites along the Cantabrian coast. In spite of this fact, however, school text books still maintained outdated ideas exalting the past grandeur of the Spanish nation.

Secondly, Altamira acquired a new dimension due to the new connotations of nationalist discourse built up and maintained by the Franco regime. The media and social technology underwent great advances, in spite of a high degree of underdevelopment and inequality, which was accentuated following the war. The mass media grew progressively, as did the education system, albeit deeply influenced by the ideological directives of the regime, thus converting Altamira into a popularized national symbol. Generations of Spaniards were educated in a History based on a list of

Visigoth Kings, the Sun which never set and the image (generally using an indirect reproduction of the originals made by Abbot Breuil, a man of the Church) of the bison of Altamira.

Thirdly, with the creation of the *Patronato de la Cueva de Altamira* (the Altamira Cave Trust) in 1940 (this would be widened to include all Santander's caves in 1944), which formed part of the General Directorate for the Fine Arts, and which also took control of the Prehistoric Museum of Santander, the decision-making centre leant decidedly towards the State capital. Indeed, in 1944 the town council of Santillana was excluded from the Trust. Thus, the symbolic relevance of Altamira and its central role within Cantabrian rock art as a whole became institutionalized. All important decision-making fell to Madrid. In the 1950s, a series of structural measures were proposed with the aim of ensuring the stability of the cave and a restriction was put on visits. This would later be revised as the environmental and structural studies were carried out. Meanwhile, the management model of the cave was maintained and strengthened based on clientelism, in which certain local agents played a fundamental role, though always under the guidance of the Trust and advised by technicians²¹.

The connection between life on a local level and Altamira was not restricted to the practical management of the cave (the guides were local people). As Spain came out of the economic crisis and a period of development began, Altamira consolidated itself as a tourist attraction. Between 1955 and 1973, the number of visitors each year to the cave went from 55,000 to 173,000. In the period of the tourism boom in Spain, Altamira was an attraction of the highest order. Altamira, therefore, acquired considerable specific importance in the surrounding area, which is still an element to be taken into account in the imagination of the local population today. The tourism industry is closely linked to the proliferation of iconic images of Altamira and to its use as a commercial brand for numerous products and elements of material culture.

In 1969, the conflict surrounding the tutelage of the site was revived yet again. The local council took legal action based on the breach of the 1925 agreement. At the same time, calls for action on the part of many scientists and experts began to be heard regarding the damage being suffered by the paintings. In 1975, the recently created Dirección General de Patrimonio Artístico y Cultural (General Directorate of Artistic and Cultural Heritage), following the merger of Fine Arts, Archives and Libraries, published a note playing down the risk to the paintings. In 1976, an Investigating Commission was set up which recommended that visits be restricted and the idea of building a

²¹ Regarding this system of clientelism, it could be said that relationships were established between different people based on benefits and counter-benefits derived from an unequal relationship established by the giver over the beneficiary. In this way, the one that gives obtains the profits when what is given is returned. The people who establish this type of relationship do not always occupy the same position, sometimes they give and sometimes they return what is given. In this process, they establish relationships of recognition, commitment and debt with the giver. Not returning what is given implies a constant sense of debt to the other. Therefore, an attempt is made to return as much as possible, as a gesture of gratitude. The alternation of positions leads to the alternation of prestige of the person carrying out the service.

replica of the site began to gain support²². Later, in 1977, it was recommended that the cave be closed in order to carry out a detailed study of its state of preservation. In the same year, the local council and the State Administration came to an agreement by which a levy would be paid annually to the former. In 1978, the council ceded full control to the state. The Ministry of Culture took control and, in 1979, set up the MNCIA and its Trust.

Before this, however, in 1976, the Asociación para la Defensa de los Intereses de Cantabria (ADIC) (Association for the Defence of Cantabria's Interests) was set up, which would lead to the founding of the Partido Regionalista Cántabro (Cantabrian Regionalist Party). This was a politically active nucleus which, from its beginnings, demanded competence over Altamira and which manifested its disagreement over the provisional closure of the cave. In 1982, the cave was reopened with a stricter control over the number of visitors, as recommended by the team from the University of Cantabria, which had carried out the studies.

In 1985, an agreement was signed between administrations (including that of the Autonomous Community) which modified the make-up of the Trust (in which the President of the Community assumes the presidency) and designated the MNCIA as a National Museum (in accordance with the recently passed Spanish Historical Heritage Law). That year, in which Altamira was also declared a World Heritage Site, could have been the beginning of a model modernisation of Altamira's management. However, Altamira exemplifies three of the great problems of modernisation associated to the political transition in Spain.

- 1) On the one hand, it was based on pre-existing economic, political and social structures (in Altamira, the cave's management practices dating from before 1977 remained in place), which affected later development to a great degree.
- 2) On the other hand, it came too late and was not systematic enough. When a new management team arrived at the museum in 1992, the management of the cave underwent a process of professionalization and preservation measures began to be taken beyond the cave itself (land was acquired) as well as inside the cave. This, however, was done in a disjointed way and by different teams from different institutions and places. This type of things had occurred in neighbouring countries either well before World War II or as part of the process of modernisation and building of the welfare state of the post-war period.
- 3) Lastly, the problem of the territorial model was not resolved. In a case such as that of the Community of Cantabria, which was established at the end of 1981, this was intensely relevant due to the fact that Cantabria is not a historical nation, rather, it had been a province of Castile for a century and a half. This dichotomy of identity is still present in Cantabria today and the conflicts regarding the tutelage and management of Altamira are closely related to it.

²² It was J. Carballo who first had the idea of making a replica. He suggested the idea to the Marquis of Comillas in 1924 and to Alfredo García Lorenzo in 1931. In 1954, the reproduction of the ceiling of the Hall of Polychromes was begun by German technicians, directed by Erich Pietsch. This work would culminate in the inauguration of two replicas, that of the Technical Museum in Munich (1962) and that of the National Archaeological Museum in Madrid (1964). There is yet another replica in the Spain Village theme park in Ise-Shima, Japan (1994).

In addition to all of this, the 1980s were a period of agitation and crisis marked by the industrial reconversion affecting mining and industry in the region. This led to any alternative economic resource (such as tourism) being seen as a form of salvation. In this context came the restriction of visits to Altamira and the professionalization of its management (in the 1990s), which led to an existential distancing of the local population from the site.

In the 1990s, cultural tourism made a strong emergence as an important resource and a growing number of competitors to Altamira appeared. In addition, heritage policies were consolidated. In both cases, power was given to the Communities, which allowed (with greater or lesser success) heritage policies to be integrated and oriented towards the protection and promotion of cultural heritage. Altamira was isolated from the heritage sites of Cantabria.

The difficulties experienced in carrying out research in the cave has led to it losing significance in the scientific literature, although the problem of its preservation has meant that it maintains a presence and relevance in publications. It is significant that there is not much research carried out backed by funding from the institution.

One year after the establishment of the new headquarters of the MNCIA (2001), the decision was taken to close the cave to the public as a temporary preventative measure, a situation which has been prolonged to the present day. The Ministry of Culture charged certain CSIC scientists with the task of analysing all aspects affecting the preservation of the rock art, proposing corrective measures to risks and proposing a visiting system in accordance with the previously-mentioned conditions²³. During the previous decade, these studies were carried out and the recommendation was made to keep the cave closed to the public in order to prevent the deterioration of the paintings.

In any case, neither the results of the studies, nor the studies in themselves reached beyond academia. There was no knowledge on the part of social agents of what was going on inside the cave. The local population, or those with most connection to the site, was not able to judge or evaluate the current situation of the cave. Thus, the perception they have is marked both by the memory of the golden age and by their mistrust of the management's actions. In the opinion of some social agents, the experts lie outside the management of the site, within universities or the CSIC, while those managing the site are seen more as technicians or politicians than as experts, or it is considered that their actions owe more to political than to scientific criteria. This perception is made worse by the fact that, in many cases, those holding this view are not able to distinguish between the Museum and Madrid, and others, who may be able to do so, consciously do not. In spite of the fact that it works well and is well-accepted, the Museum has difficulties in transmitting the idea of association with the cave and a message focused on preservation, as its project dates from before the closure of the cave in 2002. The Neocave was planned as an alternative and complement to the original cave, not as its substitute.

²³ This task does not imply that the CSIC, as an institution, shares the results obtained and evaluations transmitted by its scientific staff. This caution is also applied to the results obtained and evaluations transmitted by some people involved in this project on the Social Value of Altamira, also belonging to the CSIC.

For the more distant population, or that which has less connection to the site, Altamira has simply lost relevance. This, however, is not particularly worrying as a process of normalization has been taking place, in which, without its associated values being reduced, Altamira has begun to occupy a notable, but not exceptional, place in the scientific and heritage panorama in Spain. Outside of Cantabria, this process of normalization has led to Altamira's value as a point of reference for symbolic identity being reduced. This could be attributed to the fact that the Spanish feeling of nationalism which defended this idea has become dispersed or has lessened in parts of the national territory.

As far as its economic value is concerned, the number of visitors which the museum receives exceeds that of original cave at its height. It is significant that, in spite of this, the perception of many local people has not changed. To a certain degree, this can be put down to the fact that Altamira has been used for political gain by different parties. Equally, it can be attributed to the absence of transparency in decision-making and the lack of public participation. This fact, again, shows Altamira to be an example of the deficiencies of the political model inherited from the Transition.

Meanwhile, our studies have shown that the economic value generated by Altamira is significantly high, that it has a notable call effect on the region and, more importantly, that the re-opening of the cave would not necessarily increase this value. It could even be argued that its re-opening could lead to a reduction due to the dissatisfaction and frustration that could be generated if the number of visitors exceeded the museum's capacity in high season. This is significant when we note that our studies detected that one of the main aspects valued by visitors to Altamira is the high level of satisfaction at the end of their visit, thus favouring a feeling of loyalty among the visitors. This makes it difficult to understand the insistence on economic arguments on the part of some privileged social agents (mainly politicians from the Autonomous Community) and they should be made to explain publicly which management model could be employed to maximize economic value by re-opening the cave.

Our historical contextualization concludes with the need to take, as part of the Plan for Preventive conservation which is supposed to be established (indeed, this need is included in the very concept of 'preventive conservation') the necessary steps to favour a closer relationship with the people – the local, and more distant, population, the experts and non-experts – as regards the problems of the site and its fragility. An active participation in its upkeep should be encouraged as the problem is not so much that the cave is closed, but that the people do not know why it is closed and they do not expect anyone to consult them on the matter.

Therefore, the open/closed dilemma is a false one. There are specific conditions in which both keeping the cave closed and re-opening it is bad for Altamira from the point of view of its social value. If one decision or another is taken, the measures derived from our studies must be implemented and the decision-makers should be put in a position in which their decisions are taken in a well-reasoned, reasonable, transparent and debatable way.

General Conclusions

1. Altamira had greater social relevance in the past than it does at the current time. This apparent loss of relevance can be understood as a normalization of the value of Altamira, rather than a true loss of value.
2. Identities are built around Altamira and tensions and conflicts are caused. Emotional links exist which differ from one generation to another, from one place to another and from one group to another. These social fractures, tensions and links revolve around who has tutelage and management of the site.
3. In the opinion of the majority of agents surveyed, the preservation of the cave should be in the hands of the experts, who should carry out their responsibilities in a transparent and well-argued way. The needs of Altamira's preservation can be, in themselves, a cause for interaction and dialogue between the scientific community and the public.
4. In relation to the previous point, it would be appropriate to develop a communications strategy within the Plan for Preventive conservation. Its objectives could be to broadcast the actions being taken to preserve the cave and to contribute towards social awareness regarding the fragility of heritage. In this way, the plans for transparency and clarity of arguments proposed and initiated in the Research Programme will be carried out
5. The Museum of Altamira, which manages the cave, as a result of its peculiarity and singularity, will strengthen its role as an instrument for raising awareness among citizens towards heritage and its preservation.
6. The complex history of Altamira, since its discovery in the modern age has been unique. This is great factor for attraction which has generated a large amount of historical and modern documentation, which could be used by the museum in its activities.
7. Altamira has a significant impact on the Cantabrian economy, independently of the state of access to the cave. A hypothetical re-opening of the cave, in the light of the existing data, would not necessarily lead to a greater economic impact.

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