

# DECODING THE MIDDLE/UPPER PALAEOLITHIC TRANSITION IN NW IBERIA: INSIGHTS FROM THE SITE OF COVA EIRÓS

Mikel Díaz-Rodríguez<sup>1,2,3,4</sup>, Arturo de Lombera-Hermida<sup>1,4,5</sup>, Xosé Pedro Rodríguez-Álvarez<sup>6,7</sup>, Ramón Fábregas-Valcarce<sup>1,4</sup>, Hugo Bal-García<sup>1,4</sup>, Tania Mosquera-Castro<sup>1,4</sup> & Xes Aldea-Moreira<sup>1,4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Grupo de Estudos para a Prehistoria do Noroeste Ibérico, Arqueoloxía, Antigüidade e Territorio (GEPN-AAT), Dpto. de Historia, Universidade de Santiago de Compostela, Praza da Universidade, nº 1, 15782 Santiago de Compostela, Spain.  
<sup>2</sup> Department of Archaeology and Heritage Studies, Aarhus University, Moesgård Allé 20, 8270 Højbjerg, Denmark.  
<sup>3</sup> BIOCHANGE – Center for Biodiversity Dynamics in a Changing World, Aarhus University, Aarhus, Denmark.  
<sup>4</sup> CISPAC – Centro de Investigación Interuniversitario das Paisaxes Atlánticas. Edificio Fontán, Cidade da Cultura de Galicia, Monte Gaiás, s/n, 15707, Santiago de Compostela, Spain.  
<sup>5</sup> Grupo Consolidado de Investigación en Prehistoria: evolución humana, cambio climático y adaptación cultural en las sociedades preindustriales (GIZAPRE), Universidad del País Vasco (UPV-EHU), Micaela Portilla Ikergunea, Vélez de Elorriaga z/g, 01006 Gasteiz, Spain.  
<sup>6</sup> Universitat Rovira i Virgili, Departament d'Història i Història de l'Art, Tarragona, Spain.  
<sup>7</sup> Institut Català de Paleoecologia Humana i Evolució Social (IPHES-CERCA), Tarragona, Spain.

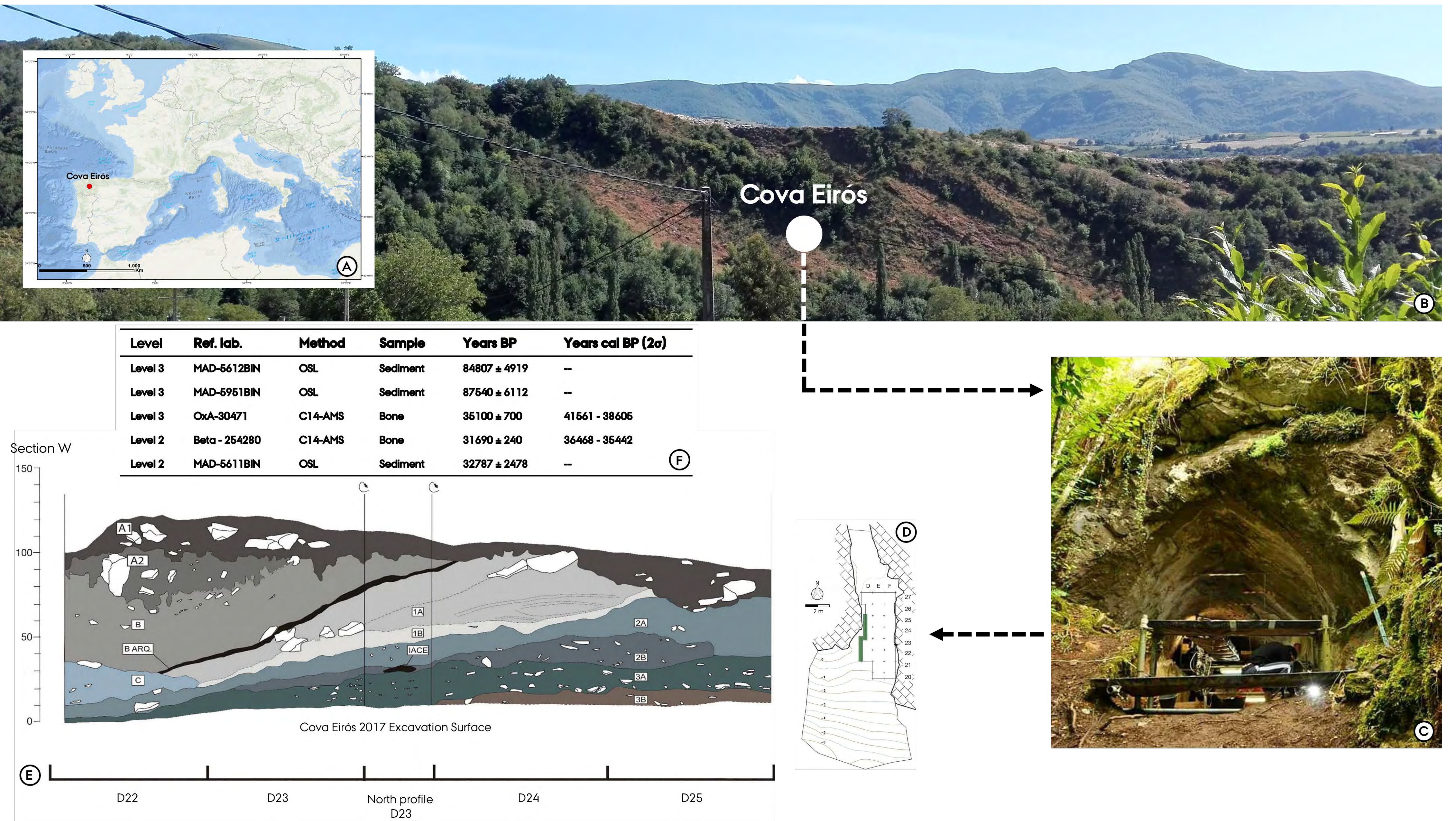


Figure 1. A) General location of Cova Eirós site; B) Location of the site seen from the valley; C) Cave entrance; D) Excavation surface; E) Stratigraphic sequence; F) Archaeological dates for Level 3 and Level 2. Calibration was made using rcarbon package and applying IntCal20 calibration curve.

## Introduction

Cova Eirós is located in the municipality of Triacastela (Lugo, Spain) at an altitude of 780 meters above sea level and 25 meters above the Bezcós stream. The cave has a length of 312 meters, an entrance opening 2 meters high and 3.5 meters wide. From 2008 onwards, it has revealed a sequence of Palaeolithic occupations during the Upper Pleistocene, particularly remarkable are the archaeological records from Levels 2 (Upper Palaeolithic) and 3 (Middle Palaeolithic). Also, the cave has the first known evidence of Palaeolithic cave art in NW Iberia.

## Material and methods

In this poster we present the main conclusions of the study previously published and based on the archeo-paleontological materials from levels 2 and 3 of Cova Eirós site, recovered during the 2008-2014 fieldwork seasons (de Lombera-Hermida et al., 2021). For more information, the published paper can be accessed through the QR code attached at this poster.

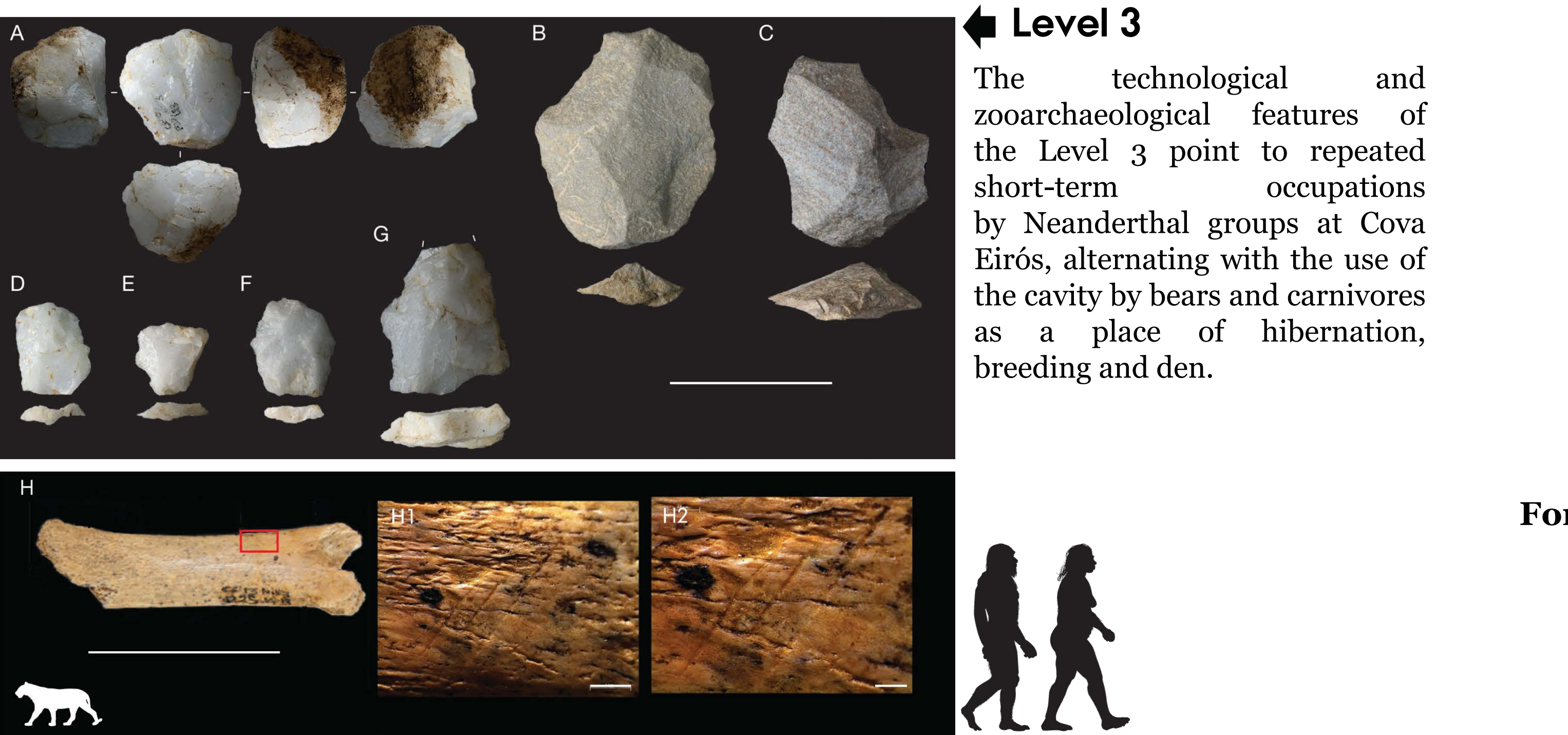


Figure 2. Lithic industry and faunal remains from Level 3. A) Centripetal hierarchized core on quartz; B-C) Preferential Levallois flakes on quartzite; D-G) Levallois flakes on quartz; H) *Panthera leo spelaea* (Goldfuss, 1810) rib showing cutmarks; H1-H2) Detail of the cutmarks under binocular stereo microscope. Scale bars A-G, 5 cm; H, 0.5 mm; H1-H2, 20 µm.

## Conclusions

- Cova Eirós gives a more complete vision about the technology and subsistence strategies of the last Neanderthal and the first AMH groups that occupied the Iberian northwest.
- The site shows the flexibility of the late Middle and early Upper Palaeolithic groups regarding the lithological and geographical constraints of this land.
- Late survival of Neanderthal groups (c. 40 kyrs cal BP) in the mountainous regions.
- The radiocarbon dates from Level 2 and its contextualization with other EUP NW sites (A Valiña, Lugo), point to a later settlement of the AMH in NW Iberia (c. 35 ka cal BP), several millennia after their first arrival to the Cantabric Coast.

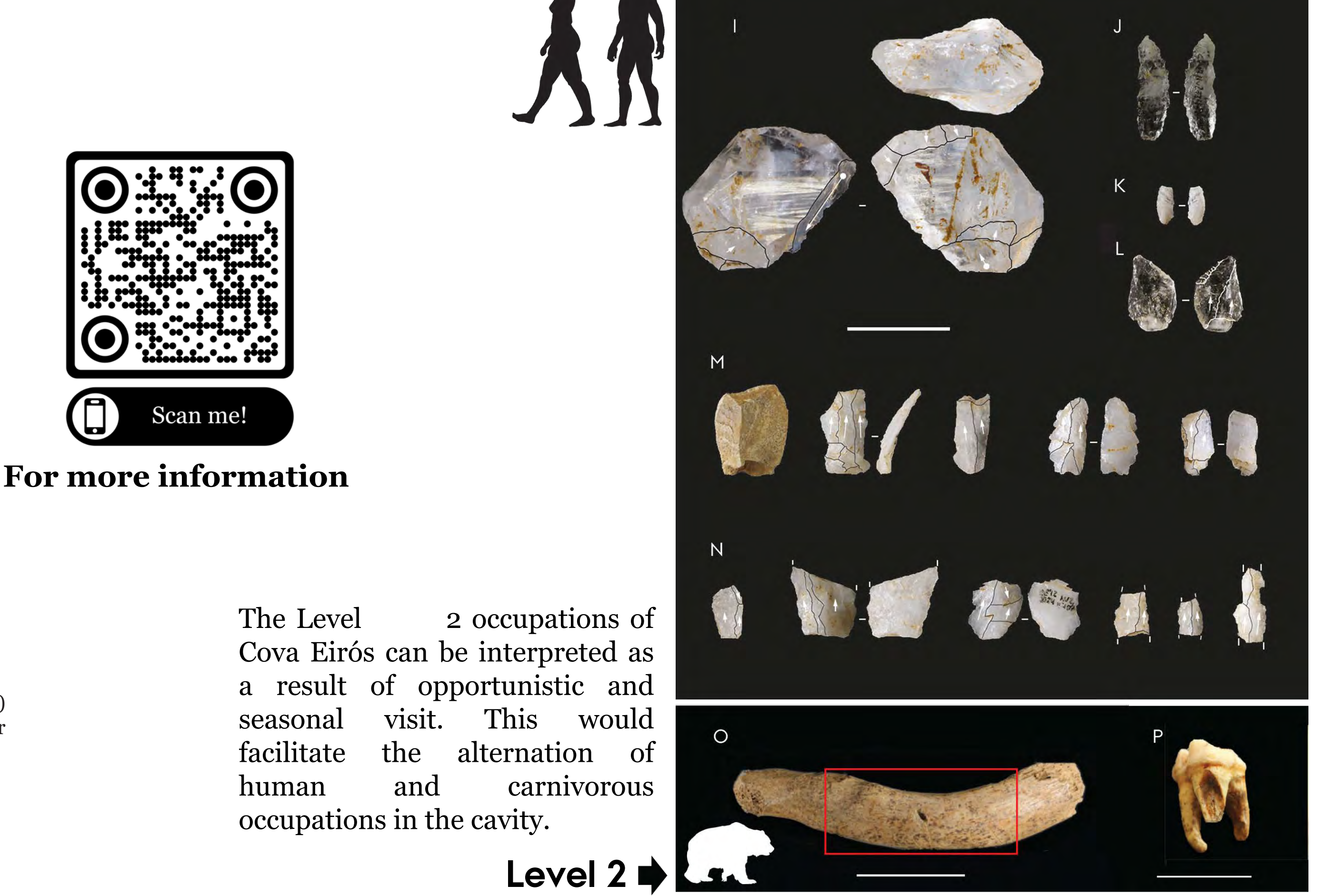


Figure 3. Lithic industry and faunal remains from Level 2. I) Core on automorphic quartz; J) Bladelet on automorphic quartz; K) Fragmented bladelet on xenomorphic quartz; L) Truncated bladelet on automorphic quartz; M) Bladelets on chert and xenomorphic quartz; N) Proximal and mesial fragments of bladelets on xenomorphic quartz; O) *Ursus spelaeus* Rösenmüller-Heinroth, 1794 rib with cutmarks; P) *Ursus spelaeus* M<sup>1</sup> with deliberate anthropogenetic marks. Scale bars I-O, 2cm; P, 0.5 cm.

## References

de Lombera-Hermida, A., Rodríguez-Álvarez, X.-P., Ameijenda Iglesias, A., Díaz Rodríguez, M., Rey-Rodríguez, I., Valverde Tejedor, I., Pérez-Alberti, A., Cunha, P.P., Bal García, H., Aldea Moreira, X., Lorenzo Salgueiro, C., Mosquera Castro, T., Fábregas Valcarce, R., 2021. Between two worlds: Cova Eirós and the Middle-Upper Palaeolithic transition in NW Iberia. *Comptes Rendus Palevol* 20.