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Unravelling Pleistocene palimpsests: a taphonomic and spatial reassessment of Buena Pinta Cave (Pinilla del Valle, Madrid, Spain)



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Buena Pinta Cave (Pinilla del Valle, Spain) offers an exceptional context to investigate the interplay between carnivores, Neanderthals, and abiotic processes in Middle-Late Pleistocene cave environments. Although the site was traditionally interpreted as a hyaena den with sporadic Neanderthal presence, particularly in its western sector (Level 23), an integrated analysis combining detailed taphonomic study, GIS, and spatial statistics approaches reveals a far more complex formation history.



The assessment macrofaunal and lithic remains shows marked differences in density patterns, vertical and lateral distributions, surface modifications, and both carnivore and Neanderthal activity traces. These contrasts indicate that the deposit is not a homogeneous unit, but a palimpsest composed of overlapping episodes: carnivore accumulations, water-reworked assemblages and ephemeral human presence.

In this talk, we will address how this integrated framework allows us to disentangle distinct formation phases with a replicable methodological approach for enhancing the temporal and functional resolution of other complex Pleistocene cave assemblages.