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THE APPLICATION BY SPAIN OF THE CONVENTION CONCERNING THE PROTECTION OF THE WORLD CULTURAL AND NATURAL HERITAGE OF 1972*

Abstract: Spain is a State Party to the 1972 UNESCO Convention since 1982. The work will carry out an analysis of the application by Spain of this Convention with reference to the tangible and intangible goods that have been declared a World Heritage Site in Spain, as well as a detailed study of them. Specifically, as of 2021, forty-nine assets had been declared in Spain: forty-three are cultural, four are natural and two are mixed. We find among them four sites shared with other countries: one with France, another with Portugal, a third with Slovenia and a fourth shared with eleven other European countries. On the other hand, Spain has seventeen intangible assets, which makes it one of the two countries in Europe, together with France, with a greater number of assets declared Intangible Cultural Heritage. In addition, Spain also has eleven documents distinguished as Memory of the World by UNESCO. The Spanish regulations approved in accordance with the obligations derived from the 1972 Convention will also be addressed in order to end up detecting the main problems that exist for adequate protection.

1. *Introduction*

Spain is one of the most culturally rich countries in the world. For this reason, the Spanish Constitution of 1978 recognises the protection and conservation of its heritage as one of its inalienable rights, establishing that the public authorities shall be responsible for the conservation, access and enrichment of the historical, cultural and artistic heritage of the Spanish nation¹.

As a result of this commitment, which extends to the international level, Spain acceded in 1982 to the Convention Concern-

* Double-blind peer reviewed content.

¹ Articles 44 and 46 of the 1978 Constitution.

ing the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage, drafted by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and adopted in Paris on 16 November 1972. This international treaty establishes that certain places on earth possess *Outstanding Universal Value* and belong to the common heritage of mankind and should therefore be preserved for present and future generations. Outstanding Universal Value is of such extraordinary cultural and/or natural significance that it transcends national boundaries and becomes important for present and future generations of mankind as a whole. The conservation of this heritage is therefore of paramount importance to the international community as a whole. Among other criteria, a property is considered to be of Outstanding Universal Value if it meets requirements such as representing a significant exchange of human values, providing a unique testimony to a cultural tradition, or being an eminently representative example of a type of building, architectural or technological ensemble.

Following the inclusion in 2021 of the so-called 'Paisaje de la Luz' in Madrid, Spain has forty-nine sites on the World Heritage List, which places it in fourth place in the world of States with the highest number of sites recognised as World Heritage Sites by UNESCO. Italy ranks first with 58 sites, followed by China with 56 and Germany with 51 sites. It should be noted that, in terms of regions, Castilla y León is the region in the world with the most cultural properties included on this list, with eighth. The list includes a total of 1155 World Heritage sites from 167 States.

However, being part of the 1972 Convention not only grants the right to have sites on the World Heritage List with the projection that this entails at an international level, fundamentally as an attraction for tourism, as they all have a great capacity for attracting tourists. Belonging to the World Heritage List is, without a doubt, an international recognition, but it also entails a responsibility. Being a Party entails duly complying with all the obligations that the Convention imposes on States in order to achieve the main objective of protecting the world's cultural wealth. In this way, the Con-

vention establishes the duties of States Parties in identifying potential sites and their role in the protection and conservation of those sites. By ratifying the Convention, each country commits itself not only to conserve World Heritage Sites located on its territory, but also to cooperate in the preservation of the World Heritage of other countries. States Parties are also encouraged to integrate the protection of cultural and natural heritage into their planning programmes, to train their professionals and develop services linked to their environment, to undertake scientific and technical conservation research and to adopt measures that link their heritage values to the everyday life of the community. It establishes the obligation of States Parties to report periodically to the World Heritage Committee on the state of conservation of their properties, and encourages them to strengthen people's appreciation of World Heritage properties and enhance their protection through educational and information programmes.

In order to properly comply with all these obligations, it is essential to have specific internal regulations that are effectively applied. The following is a description of the existing legislation in Spain.

2. Spain's domestic legal framework for the protection of cultural heritage

One of the defining characteristics of States with great cultural wealth is the enactment of national laws to protect their heritage. This is the case of Spain which, as we have indicated, has recognised in its Constitution the protection and conservation in this field as one of its inalienable rights.

To this end, a distribution of competences between the State and the Autonomous Communities is established, as laid down by the Constitutional Court in its judgment 17/1991 of 31 January 1991. According to this distribution, the State has competence for the control and defence of Spanish cultural, artistic and mon-

umental heritage against exportation and despoilment, as well as for adopting the necessary measures against anything that contributes to this. While the Autonomous Communities hold the rest of the powers related to the promotion, enrichment of culture and the custody and conservation of their cultural heritage. In this respect, the Autonomous Communities have assumed, through their Statutes of Autonomy, powers over those elements of interest to them, and most have drafted their own legislation on the protection of Historical Heritage. The following Autonomous Community laws are worth mentioning:

- Law 14/2007, of 26 November, on the Historical Heritage of Andalucía, and Law 8/2007, of 5 October, on museums and museum collections of Andalucía.
- Law 3/1999, of 10 March, on the Cultural Heritage of Aragón.
- Law 1/2001, of 6 March, which contains the regulatory norms of the Cultural Heritage of Asturias.
- Law 4/1999, of 15 March, on the Historical Heritage of the Canary Islands and Law 11/2019, of 25 April, on the Cultural Heritage of the Canary Islands.
- Law 11/1998, of 13 October, on the Cultural Heritage of Cantabria.
- Law 4/1990, of 30 May, regulating the Historical Heritage of Castilla-La Mancha; Law 4/2001, of 10 May 2001, regulating the Archaeological Parks of Castilla-La Mancha; and Law 4/2013, of 16 May, on the Cultural Heritage of Castilla-La Mancha.
- Law 12/2002, of 11 July 2002, on the Cultural Heritage of Castilla y León.
- Law 9/1993, of 30 September, on the Cultural Heritage of Cataluña.
- Law 2/1999, of 29 March, on the Historical and Cultural Heritage of Extremadura.
- Law 8/1995, of 30 October, on the Cultural Heritage of Galicia.

- Law 12/1998, of 21 December, on the Historical Heritage of the Balearic Islands.
- Law 7/2004, of 18 October 2004, which contains the regulations governing the Cultural, Historical and Artistic Heritage of La Rioja.
- Law 10/1998, of 9 July, on the Historical Heritage of the Community of Madrid.
- Law 4/2007, of 16 March 2007, which contains the regulations governing the Cultural Heritage of the Autonomous Community of the Region of Murcia.
- Foral Law 14/2007, of 4 April, on the Heritage of Navarra.
- Law 7/1990, of 3 July 1990, on Basque Cultural Heritage.
- Law 4/1998, of 11 June, on Valencian Cultural Heritage.

At the state level, under the mandate of the Spanish Constitution, Law 16/1985 of 25 June 1985 on Spanish Historical Heritage was enacted². A law in line with the constitutional precept that arose with the firm intention of protecting and enriching Spanish art and culture. It is, therefore, a cultural heritage protectionist law that also seeks to enhance its legacy.

This law is complemented by the more recent Law 10/2015, of 26 May, for the safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage, which regulates for the first time at state level, in a comprehensive manner, this elusive manifestation of culture, providing formulas and legal techniques different from the classic model of public legal intervention in the promotion, encouragement and management of the cultural phenomena of the community. For this reason, it is not a law of conservation or (physical) maintenance of cultural heritage (movable or immovable), but rather, as its title indicates, of safeguarding the practices and communities (fundamentally local) that carry them, from a diachronic, functional and intergenerational approach.

² This law consists of a preamble, seventy-nine articles, nine additional provisions, eight transitional provisions, a final provision and a repealing provision. This law was subsequently regulated by Royal Decree 111/1986 of 10 January 1986 and Royal Decree 64/1994 of 21 January 1994, amending the former.

As a result, Spain has an ambitious and specific set of regulations to protect our extensive cultural, tangible and intangible heritage³, which must be understood in line with the obligations imposed by the UNESCO Convention of 1972, which is also part of our legal system.

3. *Process followed in Spain for the declaration of a World Heritage Property*

Undoubtedly the best known and most remarkable aspect of the 1972 Convention is the inclusion of a property or site on the World Heritage List. This possibility is duly regulated, with the World Heritage Committee (composed of representatives of 21 States)⁴ issuing the procedural instructions for the inscription of cultural and natural properties on the World Heritage List. In carrying out this task, the Committee is advised by independent bodies such as the International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS), the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) and the International Centre for the Study of the Preservation and Restoration of Cultural Property (ICCROM).

Inclusion on the World Heritage List is according to the following categories:

- *Monuments*. Monuments are considered to be architectural works, sculptures, paintings and archaeological pieces or structures, inscriptions, caves and groups of elements that are of exceptional value from a historical, artistic or scientific point of view.
- *Ensembles*. These are groups of isolated or assembled constructions, whose architecture, unity and integration into the land-

³ All these Spanish regulations, state and autonomous, can be consulted at www.boe.es/biblioteca_juridica/codigos/codigo.php?id=175&modo=2¬a=0&tab=2.

⁴ Spain is one of them, along with the United States, Canada, Israel, Morocco, Tunisia, South Korea and Madagascar, among others.

scape give them a universal value from the same points of view as for monuments.

- *Sites.* This category includes works of man, or the combined works of man and nature, including archaeological sites, which are of outstanding universal value from a historical, aesthetic, ethnological or anthropological point of view.

According to the 1972 Convention, the first step that a country must take in order to include a property on the World Heritage List is to make an inventory of properties that are likely to be declared World Heritage in the future. This Inventory is known as the Tentative List and aims to reflect the cultural and natural diversity of a country with potential Outstanding Universal Value.

The World Heritage Centre launched the Global Strategy in 1994 with the objective of establishing a credible, representative and balanced World Heritage List and encourages States Parties to harmonise their Tentative Lists at regional and thematic levels. The principles of this Strategy should be taken into account in the selection of nominations.

It is the responsibility of the national authorities to determine an order of priority, according to which the nomination dossiers will be constituted following the recommendations contained in the *Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of the World Heritage Convention*. Properties eligible for subsequent nomination to the World Heritage List should remain on the Tentative List for a minimum of one year before they can be formally nominated. Dossiers must be sent to the World Heritage Centre by 1 February each year for submission to the World Heritage Committee at the following year's session in June.

In Spain, the body responsible for this work is the Historical Heritage Council, which is the highest national consultative body in this field. The State and all the Autonomous Communities are represented on it. The Council is responsible for submitting to the national government the Indicative List of aspiring assets, grouped by cultural periods and trends, with justification of their value, also taking other similar national or foreign assets as a reference. Cur-

rently, the Spanish Tentative List is made up of thirty-one⁵.

The Indicative List in Spain is compiled in the following steps:

- Each Autonomous Community selects the properties in its Community that are likely to be declared World Heritage in the future.
- This selection is presented to the World Heritage Working Group I, created in 2010 by the Ministry of Culture and endorsed by the Historical Heritage Council. This group is made up of representatives of the Ministry and representatives of the heritage areas of all the Autonomous Communities⁶. It deals in a technical way with the study of new proposals to integrate the Spanish Tentative List in order to obtain the best results by means of quality proposals that are in line with the Global Strategy.
- The Autonomous Community submits to the Historical Heritage Council both the properties that could be included in the Tentative List and the recommendation of the technical report of the Working Group on these properties.
- The Plenary Session of the Historical Heritage Council approves the additions to the Spanish Tentative List.
- The Ministry forwards these Tentative List inclusions to the World Heritage Centre, which, if the necessary requirements are met, forwards them to the World Heritage Committee for evaluation.
- With regard to the latter procedure, it should be noted that the World Heritage Committee considers a property to be of outstanding universal value for inscription on the List when it meets at least one of the following requirements:
- It bears a unique or exceptional testimony to a civilisation or cultural tradition that has disappeared.

⁵ See the list in: <http://wbc.unesco.org/en/tentativelists/state=es>.

⁶ See the complete information about these groups in: www.culturaydeporte.gob.es/cultural/areas/patrimonio/mc/patrimoniomundial/iniciativas/grupos-de-trabajo-sobre-patrimonio-mundial.html.

- It exerts a considerable influence, in a given period or in a given cultural area, on the development of architecture, monumental arts, urban planning or the creation of landscapes.
- It is an outstanding example of human settlement or occupation of territory representative of traditional cultures, especially when they are vulnerable to irreversible mutations.
- It provides an outstanding example of a type of building or architectural or landscape ensemble that illustrates a significant period in the human history.
- It is a masterpiece of man's creative genius.
- It is directly or materially associated with events or living traditions, ideas, beliefs or artistic and literary works of exceptional significance.

In addition to any of these criteria, any property for which registration is sought must meet two preconditions:

- Respond in its conception, materials and execution to the value of authenticity.
- To enjoy legal protection and adequate management mechanisms to ensure their conservation.

4. *A brief note on each of Spain's World Heritage Sites*

Taking as a criterion the location by Autonomous Communities in alphabetical order, we proceed to make a brief description of each of these forty-nine World Heritage Sites in Spain⁷.

We can see in the following image the approximate location of each one of them to get a preview:

⁷ See the detailed description of each of them in I. BUQUERAS Y BACH, *El Patrimonio Mundial Cultural, Natural e Inmaterial de España*. Ediciones Alimar, Barcelona, 2019. See also https://viajes.nationalgeographic.com.es/a/sitios-patrimonio-humanidad-espana_13602; www.sitiosdeespana.es/articulo/los-48-lugares-patrimonio-de-la-humanidad-en-espana; www.lasexta.com/noticias/cultura/49-bienes-patrimonio-humanidad-espana-cuales-son-donde-estan_2021072660fe87004aebd80001c37187.html.



Source: Ministry of Culture and Sport - Graphic: Á. Celorio

4.1. *Andalucía*

Alhambra, Generalife and Albaicín in Granada. The magnificent palace of the Alhambra and the gardens of the Generalife were declared a World Heritage Site in 1984. The Albaicín quarter was added to the list ten years later, in 1994. Situated on two adjacent hills, the Albaicín and the Alhambra form the medieval core of Granada overlooking the modern city. On the eastern side of the fortress and royal residence of the Alhambra are the gardens of the Generalife, the country house of the emirs who ruled this part of Spain in the 13th and 15th centuries. The Albaicín quarter preserves a rich collection of Hispano-Muslim buildings harmoniously blended with traditional Andalusian architecture.

Mezquita y Centro Histórico de Córdoba (Mosque and Historic Centre of Cordoba). The Mosque was inscribed in 1984; the His-

toric Centre in 1994; and the Patios de Córdoba in 2012. Córdoba's period of glory began in the 8th century, after its conquest by the Muslims, when some 300 mosques and countless palaces and public buildings were built. The city's splendour then rivalled that of Constantinople, Damascus and Baghdad. In the 13th century, during the reign of Ferdinand III the Saint, the great mosque was transformed into a Christian cathedral and new defensive buildings such as the Calahorra Fortress Tower and the Alcázar de los Reyes Cristianos (Fortress of the Christian Monarchs) were built.

Ciudad Califal de Medina Azahara (Caliphate City of Medina Azahara). This city near Córdoba was created in the mid-10th century by the Umayyad dynasty to be the seat of the Caliphate of Córdoba, but it was to last less than a century, as a civil war that destroyed the Umayyads destroyed it 80 years after its creation. After centuries of neglect, it was declared a World Heritage Site in 2018.

Catedral, Alcázar y Archivo de Indias de Sevilla (Seville Cathedral, Alcázar and Archive of the Indies). These three buildings, declared World Heritage Sites in 1987, form an admirable monumental ensemble in the heart of Seville. The Cathedral and the Alcázar are two exceptional testimonies to the Almohad civilisation and to Christian Seville, whose art was heavily impregnated with Muslim influence from the time of the city's reconquest (1248) until the 16th century. The ancient minaret of the Giralda, a masterpiece of Almohad architecture, stands on the side of the cathedral, the largest Gothic building in Europe, and houses the colossal tomb of Christopher Columbus. The old fish market, now converted into the Archivo de Indias (Archive of the Indies), houses invaluable documentary collections from the Spanish colonies in America.

Parque Nacional de Doñana (Doñana National Park). Declared a World Heritage Site in 1994 and extended in 2005. The Doñana Park occupies the right bank of the estuary of the Guadalquivir River, near its mouth in the Atlantic. It is remarkable for the great variety of its biotopes: lagoons, marshes, scrubland, Mediterranean scrubland and mobile and fixed dunes. It is the habitat of five endangered bird species, has one of the largest populations of herons

in the Mediterranean region and serves as a winter refuge for more than half a million water birds.

Conjuntos Monumentales Renacentistas de Úbeda y Baeza (Renaissance Monuments of Úbeda and Baeza). Declared World Heritage Sites in 2003. The urban configuration of these two small towns located in Jaén dates from the periods of Arab domination (9th century) and the Reconquest (13th century). In the 16th century, both towns underwent major changes with renovation works inspired by the Renaissance style. These urban transformations were due to the introduction of humanist ideas from Italy into Spain and had an important influence on Latin American architecture.

Dólmenes de Antequera (Dolmens of Antequera). It was in 2016 that this natural site was declared a World Heritage Site. Located in southern Spain, this site comprises three megalithic monuments: the tholos of Romeral and the dolmens of Menga and Viera; as well as two nearby natural sites that offer panoramic views of great beauty: the Peña de los Enamorados and El Torcal. Built with large blocks of stone in the Neolithic and Bronze Age periods, the three funerary monuments are buried in their original burial mounds and form chambers and spaces with linteled or false-domed roofs, making them one of the most remarkable architectural ensembles of prehistoric times in Europe and an outstanding example of European megalithic art.

4.2. Aragón

Arquitectura Mudéjar de Aragón (Mudejar Architecture of Aragon). Teruel, Zaragoza, Calatayud, Cervera de la Cañada and Tobed are the places where we find the 10 examples of Mudejar art in Aragon, declared World Heritage Sites in 1986 and 2001. The Mudejar monuments – whose construction began in the 12th century and continued until the beginning of the 17th century – are characterised by an extremely refined and ingenious use of brick and glazed ceramics, especially in the bell towers.

Pirineos-Monte Perdido (Pyrenees - Monte Perdido, shared with France). In the Central Pyrenees, the Monte Perdido massif is the highest limestone massif in Europe at 3,355 metres. It was declared a World Heritage Site in 1997 and extended in 1999. This declaration includes two large and deep canyons – the largest in Europe – on the Spanish side, and three large glacial cirques on the northern French side. In addition, Monte Perdido is a pastoral area where you can observe a rural way of life that is widespread in the mountainous regions of Europe, and which has only been preserved intact in this part of the Pyrenees throughout the 20th century.

4.3. *Asturias*

Monumentos de Oviedo y del Reino de Asturias (Monuments of Oviedo and the Kingdom of Asturias). The cradle of pre-Romanesque architecture, Oviedo and the surrounding area has a series of churches that are considered to be representative of this style. These churches, included on the World Heritage List in 1985 and 1998, are: Santa María del Naranco, San Miguel de Lillo, Santa Cristina de Lena, San Julián de los Prados and the Cámara Santa of the cathedral of San Salvador. Also included is the Foncalada, a notable work of hydraulic engineering.

4.4. *Baleares*

Ibiza, Biodiversidad y Cultura (Ibiza, Biodiversity and Culture). In addition to its marine ecosystems, Ibiza was declared a World Heritage Site in 1999 for its history. The archaeological sites of the human settlement of Sa Caleta and the necropolis of Puig des Molins bear witness to the important role played by the island in the Mediterranean economy of Protohistory, and more specifically of the Phoenician-Carthaginian period. The Alta Vila, an extraordinary example of Renaissance military architecture, had a great in-

fluence on the design of the fortifications of the Spanish settlements in the New World.

Paisaje Cultural de la Sierra de la Tramontana (Cultural Landscape of the Sierra de la Tramontana). On the island of Mallorca, this mountain range has changed its landscape due to the millenary agriculture in an environment with scarce water resources where terraces were common. Here, water mills and stone constructions without mortar decorate this landscape, declared a World Heritage Site in 2011.

4.5. *Canarias*

Parque Nacional de Garajonay (Garajonay National Park). In the centre of the island of La Gomera (Canary Islands), this national park is one of the few remaining examples on the planet of a Tertiary forest in which the laurel forest covered almost everything. It has been a World Heritage Site since 1986.

San Cristóbal de la Laguna. Popularly known as La Laguna, this city on the island of Tenerife is divided into the Upper City, laid out according to philosophical principles, and the Lower City, with historic buildings from the 16th, 17th and 18th centuries. It was declared a World Heritage Site in 1999

Parque Nacional del Teide (Teide National Park). Declared a World Heritage Site in 2007. Located on the island of Tenerife, this site essentially comprises the Teide-Pico Viejo stratovolcano, which at 3,718 metres above sea level is the highest peak in Spain. This volcanic structure rises 7500 metres above the ocean floor and is estimated to be the third highest in the world. Teide's global importance lies in the fact that it is a vivid illustration of the geological processes underlying the evolution of oceanic islands.

Risco caído y las montañas sagradas de Gran Canaria (Risco Caído and the sacred mountains of Gran Canaria). Beyond its scenic value, the heart of the island of Gran Canaria has been recognised as a World Heritage Site for its importance as a pre-hispanic reli-

gious centre. A site in which the almogarenas, the temples where the main celebrations and rites in honour of Mother Earth took place, stand out.

4.6. *Castilla La Mancha*

La Ciudad Histórica Amurallada de Cuenca (The Historic Walled City of Cuenca). It was declared a World Heritage Site in 1996. Built for defensive purposes by the Muslims in the territory of the Caliphate of Cordoba, Cuenca is a fortified medieval city in an excellent state of conservation. Once conquered by the Castilians in the 13th century, it became a royal city and episcopal see, and the construction of buildings of great value multiplied, such as the first Gothic cathedral in Spain and the famous hanging houses, suspended high above the gorge of the Huécar River.

La Ciudad Histórica de Toledo (The Historic City of Toledo). It was in 1986 that Toledo was declared a World Heritage Site. The repository of more than two millennia of history, Toledo was successively a Roman municipality, capital of the Visigothic kingdom, stronghold of the Emirate of Cordoba and advanced command post of the Christian kingdoms in their struggle against the Muslims. In the 16th century it was the temporary seat of supreme power, under the reign of Emperor Charles V. Its monuments are masterpieces of different civilisations, created in a context in which the presence of three great religions – Judaism, Christianity and Islam – was an essential factor; this coexistence is the reason why it is known as the city of the three cultures.

Patrimonio del Mercurio: Almadén e Idria (Mercury Heritage: Almadén and Idria). The mercury mines of Almadén, in Ciudad Real, were declared a World Heritage Site in 2012 along with the mines of Idria, in Slovenia, where mercury was first found in 1490. These two sites are proof of the importance of the mercury trade, which generated important commercial exchanges between Europe and America for centuries.

4.7. Castilla y León

Catedral de Burgos (Burgos Cathedral). The Cathedral of Santa María de Burgos is one of the jewels of Spanish Gothic architecture. Included on the World Heritage List in 1984, the temple took almost three centuries to complete (13th-16th century) and its interior houses jewels in the form of paintings, choir stalls, altarpieces, tombs and stained glass windows.

Old Town of Segovia and its Aqueduct. It was in 1986 that UNESCO included the old city of Segovia on the list. Probably built around 50 AD, Segovia's Roman aqueduct remains exceptionally intact. This imposing double-arched construction is set in the magnificent setting of the historic city, where you can admire other monuments such as the Alcazar, whose construction began in the 11th century, and the 16th-century Gothic cathedral.

Ciudad Vieja de Segovia y su Acueducto (Old City of Ávila and Churches Outside the Walls). Founded in the 11th century, Ávila has the most complete medieval walls in Spain with 82 semicircular towers and nine gates. And it was this, together with the history that can be seen in its streets that led to its inscription on the World Heritage List in 1985.

Ciudad Vieja de Salamanca (Old City of Salamanca). Salamanca was conquered by the Carthaginians in the 3rd century BC and was later a Roman city. Subsequently, it was under the power of the Muslims until the 11th century. The heyday of its university, one of the oldest in Europe, coincided with the city's golden age. Declared a World Heritage Site in 1988, it has important Romanesque, Gothic, Renaissance and Baroque monuments. Highlights include the Cathedral, the Casa de las Conchas, the University and the towers of La Clerecía, and its Plaza Mayor.

Cuenca Arqueológica de Atapuerca (Atapuerca Archaeological Basin). In the province of Burgos and a World Heritage Site since 2000, the importance of the Atapuerca site lies in the fact that it contains fossil remains of the first human beings to settle in Europe, from almost a million years ago to the present day.

Las Médulas (The Médulas). It was in 1997 that this site was declared a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Las Médulas is an ancient open-pit gold mine exploited at the beginning of the 1st century A.D. by the Roman Empire, using a technique based on hydraulic power. After two centuries, the mine was abandoned and the landscape was devastated. Due to the absence of subsequent industrial activities, the spectacular traces of the use of the ancient Roman technology are visible everywhere, both on the bare mountain slopes and in the waste disposal areas, which are now cultivated.

Yacimientos de Arte Rupestre Prehistórico del Valle del Côa y Siega Verde (Prehistoric Rock Art Sites of the Côa Valley and Siega Verde). While the Côa Valley is located in northern Portugal, Siega Verde is in Castilla y León. These sites were declared World Heritage Sites in 1998 and extended in 2010, thanks to the large amount of petroglyphs from the Upper Palaeolithic (22,000-10,000 BC), unique in the world.

4.8. *Cataluña*

Obras de Gaudí (Gaudí's Works). Seven buildings by Antoni Gaudí have been included on the UNESCO World Heritage List between 1985 and 2005: Park Güell, Palau Güell, Casa Milà, Casa Vicens, Gaudí's work on the Nativity façade and the crypt of the Sagrada Família, Casa Batlló and the crypt of the Colònia Güell.

Palau de la Música Catalana y Hospital de Sant Pau (Palau of Catalan music and Hospital of Sant Pau). Declared a World Heritage Site in 1997. These buildings are two of the most beautiful contributions of the Catalan architect Lluís Domènech i Montaner, an Art Nouveau specialist, to Barcelona's architecture. The Palau de la Música Catalana is an exuberant steel-framed building, spacious and full of light, which was decorated by a plethora of great artists of the time. The design and decoration of the Hospital de Sant Pau are also bold and perfectly adapted to the needs of the patients.

Iglesias Románicas Catalanas del Vall de Boí (Catalan Romanesque Churches of the Vall de Boí). Located in a valley surrounded by steep mountains in Alta Ribagorza, this group of nine Romanesque churches was declared a World Heritage Site in 2000 thanks to its landscape and historical value.

Monasterio de Poblet (Monastery of Poblet). In 1991, the Monastery of Santa Maria del Poblet was included on this list as one of the largest and most complete Cistercian abbeys in the world. Built around the church built in the 13th century, the monastery, impressive for the severe majesty of its architecture, has a fortified royal mansion and houses the pantheon of the kings of the Crown of Aragon.

Conjunto Arqueológico de Tarragona (Archaeological Ensemble of Tarragona). Ancient Tarraco was one of the main cities of Hispania during the Roman Empire. Its amphitheatre, aqueduct and other constructions have been preserved. The complex was declared a World Heritage Site in 2000.

4.9. *Extremadura*

Ciudad Vieja de Cáceres (Old City of Caceres). Romanesque, Islamic, Northern Gothic and Italian Renaissance. The architecture of Cáceres is beautiful and surprising, which is why it was inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage List in 1986.

Conjunto Arqueológico de Mérida (Archaeological Ensemble of Merida). The origins of the Extremaduran city of Merida date back to 25 BC, when Augustus, at the end of his campaign in Hispania, founded the colony of Emerita Augusta, which later became the capital of the Roman province of Lusitania. The remains of the ancient Roman city, which are complete and well preserved, include a large bridge over the Guadiana River, an amphitheatre, a theatre, a large circus and an extraordinary water supply system. This archaeological site was declared a World Heritage Site in 1993.

Monasterio Real de Santa María de Guadalupe (Royal Monastery of Santa María de Guadalupe). In the province of Caceres and declared a World Heritage Site in 1993, the importance of this monastery lies in its illustration of four centuries of Spanish religious architecture – with its mixture of Gothic, Mudejar, Renaissance, Baroque and Neoclassical styles – as well as in its history. It was here that the Catholic Monarchs received Christopher Columbus in 1486 and 1489 and where they went to rest after the reconquest of Granada in 1492. Its famous statue of the Virgin of Guadalupe became a powerful symbol of the Christianisation of much of the New World.

4.10. *Galicia*

Ciudad Vieja de Santiago de Compostela (Old City of Santiago de Compostela). Home to one of Christianity's most famous pilgrimage sites and a symbol of the Spanish Christians' struggle against Islam, this city in north-western Spain was razed to the ground by the Muslims at the end of the 10th century. Completely rebuilt in the following century, Santiago de Compostela, a World Heritage Site since 1985, is one of the most beautiful urban areas in the world, enhanced by its Romanesque, Gothic and Baroque monuments. The oldest are concentrated around the cathedral, the tomb of the apostle St. James, which is accessed through the magnificent Portico de la Gloria.

Muralla Romana de Lugo (Roman Wall of Lugo). Built at the end of the 2nd century and declared a World Heritage Site in 2000, the wall of Lugo surrounds the old part of the city. It is more than two kilometres long and is crowned by 85 powerful towers. It is the most beautiful archetype of a late Roman fortification in all of Western Europe.

Torre de Hércules (Tower of Hercules). Located in the city of A Coruña and declared a World Heritage Site in 2009, this impres-

sive lighthouse has been lighting the way for sailors since the early 1st century. The Tower of Hercules has served as a lighthouse and emblem of the entrance to the port of A Coruña since the 1st century AD, when the Romans built it under the name of Farum Brigantium. This 55-metre lighthouse is built on a 57-metre-high rock. The tower consists of three levels that taper towards the top, the first of which corresponds to the structure of the Roman lighthouse. Adjacent to its base is a small rectangular Roman building. The site also includes the Iron Age petroglyphs of Monte dos Bicos, a Muslim cemetery and a sculpture park.

4.11. *Madrid*

Monasterio y Real Sitio del Escorial (Monastery and Royal Site of El Escorial). It was in 1984 when UNESCO included this famous Herrerian style monastery on the World Heritage List. It was built at the end of the 16th century according to a grid layout. The austerity of its style broke with prevailing architectural trends, subsequently exerting a marked influence on Spanish architecture for more than half a century. Originally a place of retreat for King Philip II, the monastery was the centre of his political power in the last years of his reign.

Universidad y Recinto Histórico de Alcalá de Henares (University and Historic Site of Alcalá de Henares). The Complutense City was included in the World Heritage List in 1998. Founded by Cardinal Jiménez de Cisneros in the early 16th century, Alcalá de Henares was the first planned university city in the world. It was the example of the *civitas dei* (city of God), an ideal urban community that Spanish missionaries transplanted to America and served as a model for a whole series of universities in Europe and other parts of the world.

Paisaje Cultural de Aranjuez (Cultural Landscape of Aranjuez). Declared a World Heritage Site in 2001, it is an example of the complex relationship between man and nature. Over the course of

three hundred years, Spanish monarchs devoted themselves to designing and caring for this site of Aranjuez, making it a sample of the evolution of the concepts of humanism and political centralisation, as well as a landscape in which the characteristics of the French Baroque garden of the 18th century converge with those of the urban way of life of the Age of Enlightenment.

El Paseo del Prado y el Buen Retiro, paisaje de las artes y las ciencias -Paisaje de la luz- (The Paseo del Prado and Buen Retiro, a landscape of arts and sciences). Located in the heart of Madrid's city centre, this 200-hectare cultural landscape has been evolving since the Paseo del Prado was created in the 16th century, the prototype of a Hispanic boulevard with a longitudinal grove of trees arranged in three rows. The Paseo is home to an emblematic symbol of the city: the Plaza de Cibeles. The site is highly representative of the new conception of urban space and development introduced by the regime of enlightened despotism that prevailed in the 18th century. The largest area of the site is occupied by the 120 hectares of the Jardines del Buen Retiro. Remnants of a former royal palace of the same name from the 17th century, these gardens are representative of the different styles that have characterised landscape art from the 19th century to the present day. Adjacent to these gardens are the Royal Botanical Gardens and the residential district of Los Jerónimos.

4.12. País Vasco

Puente Vizcaya (Vizcaya Bridge). Declared a World Heritage Site in 2006. Also known as the Portugalete Suspension Bridge, it crosses the River Nervión in the Ibaizábal estuary, to the west of Bilbao. Designed by the architect Alberto de Palacio y Elissague, the bridge, 45 metres high and 160 metres long, was completed in 1893. It was the first bridge in the world that simultaneously allowed the passage of ships across the river and the transport of passengers and vehicles from one bank to the other, thanks to a sus-

pended nacelle. It served as a model for the construction of many similar bridges in Europe, Africa and America.

4.13. *La Rioja*

Monasterios de San Millán de Yuso y de Suso (Monasteries of San Millán de Yuso and Suso). Cradle of the Spanish language, these monasteries were declared a World Heritage Site in 1997. The site of the monastic community founded by Saint Millán in the mid-6th century became a place of pilgrimage over time. In honour of this saint, a beautiful Romanesque church was built in Suso, which is still preserved today. At the beginning of the 16th century, the community settled on land below the old monastery and built the new monastery of Yuso, where it is still active today. Inside, the *Glosas Emilianenses* are the earliest known written testimony to the monastery.

4.14. *Valencia*

La Lonja de la Seda (The Silk Exchange). The Silk Exchange of Valencia is in fact a group of buildings erected between 1482 and 1533, originally intended for the silk trade and since then it has been used for mercantile purposes. Of all of them, the *Sala de Contratación*, a spectacular room in the flamboyant Gothic style that represents all the power that was displayed here during the 15th and 16th centuries, stands out. The Silk Exchange of Valencia was declared a World Heritage Site in 1996.

El Palmeral de Elche (Palm grove of Elche). Within the Alicante city of Elche, this immense palm grove is the largest in Europe with 200,000 specimens. Its origins date back to the first Muslim settlements, although it was the Umayyad prince Abderramán I who created a system of irrigation channels to irrigate this palm grove. It was included in the World Heritage List in 2000.

4.15. *Shared*

There are some Assets which, due to their characteristics, are located in several Autonomous Communities, and some are even shared with other States.

Camino de Santiago (the Way of St. James). This route, declared World Heritage in 1993, begins its route in the town of Valcarlos (Navarre), joins in Puente de la Reina with the Aragonese Route that crosses municipalities such as Jaca, Estella, Logroño, Santo Domingo de la Calzada, Nájera, Burgos, León and Astorga. Burgos, León and Astorga. It thus crosses Navarre, Aragon (Huesca and Zaragoza), La Rioja, Castile-León (Burgos, Palencia and León) and Galicia (Lugo and A Coruña). In addition to the French Way, there are other routes to Santiago in Spain: the Northern Way, the Silver Route, the Portuguese Way and the English Way. The importance of the Way of St. James lies not only in the artistic works it has left us – it is marked by more than 1,800 religious and civil buildings of historical interest – but also in the religious, cultural and economic links established in this pilgrimage network. The history of the Way of St. James dates back to the beginning of the 9th century with the discovery of the tomb of St. James the Greater, evangeliser of Spain. The growing belief in the miracles of St. James led people to start making pilgrimages to Santiago de Compostela to obtain his grace. These pilgrimages were the beginning of the Way of St. James, which was consolidated in the 12th and 13th centuries with the granting of certain spiritual indulgences. This first route, which started in Oviedo, has been called the Primitive Way.

Cueva de Altamira y Arte Rupestre Paleolítico de la Cornisa Cantábrica: (Altamira Cave and Palaeolithic Rock Art of the Cantabrian Coast): Cantabria, Basque Country and Principality of Asturias. The Cantabrian region of the Iberian Peninsula preserves one of the most important collections of Palaeolithic rock art in Europe, dating from between 35,000 and 11,000 years ago. The exceptional and universal values – exceptional testimony to the Palaeolithic human groups of southern Europe – recognised by UNESCO in

1985 for the Altamira cave, are extended to 17 other sites with Palaeolithic cave art in the Cantabrian region, which were inscribed on the World Heritage List in 2008 as an extension of Altamira. It was thus assumed that this cave is not an isolated case, but one more example of the work of those human groups in a specific territory. The Caves of La Peña, Tito Bustillo, Covaciella, Llonín and El Pindal in Asturias; Chufin, Hornos de la Peña, the Caves of Monte Castillo (El Castillo, La Pasiega, Las Chimeneas and Las Monedas), El Pendo, La Garma and Covalanas in Cantabria, and Santimamiñe, Eka-in and Altxerri in the Basque Country add to and complement the importance of Altamira by contributing to a better understanding of the first art of mankind. Much of its importance lies in its geographical dispersion, which demonstrates that the Cantabrian region was a territorial and cultural unit during the Upper Palaeolithic.

Arte Rupestre del Arco Mediterráneo de la Península Ibérica (Rock Art of the Mediterranean Arc of the Iberian Peninsula). Year of inscription: 1998. This is a unique and representative cultural manifestation of a post-Palaeolithic prehistoric society that inhabited the mountain ranges and landscapes of the eastern part of the Iberian Peninsula, between the Pre-Pyrenees of Huesca and the southeastern mountain ranges, occupying large areas of the Autonomous Communities of Catalonia, Andalusia, Murcia, Valencia, Aragon and Castile-La Mancha. It constitutes the largest collection of rock art in Europe and shows us exceptional images of daily life in a fundamental period of the cultural evolution of mankind: the Epipalaeolithic and Neolithic periods, between 10,000 and 3,500 BC. The collection consists of more than 750 sites located in rock shelters or cliffs; the landscape interest, as well as the historical interest, was a key element in the inclusion of these properties on the World Heritage List.

Hayedos primarios y maduros de los Cárpatos y otras regiones de Europa (Primary and mature beech forests of the Carpathian and other European regions). Year of inscription: 2017. This serial property extends over a vast territory spread over twelve European countries. Beech forests are indispensable for understanding the history and

evolution of the genus *Fagus*, which, given its wide distribution in the northern hemisphere and its ecological importance, is of global relevance and a living testimony to the genetic adaptability of trees. The Spanish components, representative of southern beech forests in the European context, are distributed in *Madrid (Montejo de la Sierra)*, *Castilla-La Mancha (Tejera Negra)*, *Castilla y León (Cuesta Vieja and Canal de Asotín in Picos de Europa)* and *Navarra (Lizar-doia and Aztatparreta)*.

5. Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity and the Memory of the World Programme: the Spanish inscriptions

In 1999, UNESCO launched the Masterpieces of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity Programme. This programme was conceived as an instrument to make known and enhance the diversity of this type of heritage, constituting a decisive stage in UNESCO's strategy for the safeguarding of Intangible Heritage. The experience gained through this Masterpieces programme, especially in the framework of the associated safeguarding activities, was invaluable in the preparation of the Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage, which was adopted on 17 October 2003 and entered into force on 20 April 2006. This Convention left behind the series of proclamations of Masterpieces and opened the way for a new system of inscription and promotion of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity. In order to give it greater visibility, the Convention establishes a two-list system:

- Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity: is composed of expressions that illustrate the diversity of intangible heritage and contribute to a greater awareness of its importance and is considered the equivalent of the World Heritage List.
- List of Intangible Cultural Heritage in Need of Urgent Safeguarding: is composed of elements of intangible cultural heri-

tage that communities and States Parties consider in need of urgent safeguarding measures to ensure their transmission. Inscriptions on this List help to mobilise international cooperation and assistance to enable the actors concerned to take appropriate safeguarding measures.

Spain has seventeen inscriptions on the Representative List of Intangible Cultural Heritage. Namely: *Caballos del vino* (2020); *Cerámica de Talavera de la Reina y El Puente del Arzobispo* (2019); *Técnica constructiva tradicional de la piedra seca* (2018); *Tamboradas, rituales de toque de tambor* (2018); *Espacio cultural de la fiesta de las Fallas valencianas* (2016); *Las fiestas del fuego del solsticio de verano del Pirineo* (2015); *Fiesta de los patios de Córdoba* (2012); *Fiesta de «la Mare de Déu de la Salut» de Algemesí* (2011); *los ‘castells’* (2010); *el canto de la Sibilla de Mallorca* (2010); *la cetrería, un patrimonio humano vivo* (2010); *la dieta mediterránea* (2010, extension 2013); *el flamenco* (2010); *el Silbo Gomero* (2009); *Tribunales de reyes del Mediterráneo español: el Consejo de Hombres Buenos de la Huerta de Murcia y el Tribunal de las Aguas de la Huerta de Valencia* (2009); *el Misteri d’Elx* (2008); *la Patum de Berga* (2008).

While there are three included in the Register of Programmes, Projects and Activities for the Safeguarding of Heritage that most adequately reflect the principles and objectives of the Convention: *Inventario Montseny* (2013); *Revitalización del saber tradicional de la cal artesanal en Morón de la Frontera* (2011); and *Centro de Cultura Tradicional Museo Escolar de Pusol* (2009).

Moreover, in 1992 UNESCO established the Memory of the World Programme. The impetus originally came from a growing awareness of the parlous state of preservation of, and access to, documentary heritage in various parts of the world. War and social upheaval, as well as severe lack of resources, have exacerbated problems that have existed for centuries. Significant collections around the world have suffered a variety of fates. Looting and dispersal, illegal trade, destruction, inadequate housing and funding have all played a part. Thus we find that much of this documentary heritage has disappeared forever or is endangered.

At the proposal of Spain, the following have been included in this Programme: The Archive of Simancas; the Archive of Santiago Ramón y Cajal and the Spanish School of Neurohistology; Capitulations of Santa Fe; Treaty of Tordesillas; the work of Fray Bernardino de Sahagún; the 'Llibre del Sindicat Remença'; the documentary corpus of The 'Decreta' (or Decrees) of León of 1188; and a selection of vocabularies and dictionaries of various indigenous languages, translated into Spanish at the end of the 18th century. Jointly with Portugal: the Codex Calixtinus and other medieval copies of the Liber Sancti Jacobi; the Treaty of Tordesillas; and the texts of the Commentaries on the Book of Revelation (Beatus of Liébana) from the Iberian tradition. And with Japan, a collection of materials brought to Japan by the Keicho mission to Europe has been presented.

6. *A final thought on the list of Spanish World Heritage Properties and the urgent problems that need to be addressed as a conclusion*

As we have already seen and exposed, Spain has a total of forty-nine properties inscribed on the World Heritage List. From the remote times of Atapuerca to the originality of Catalan modernism, from the biodiversity of Ibiza to the poetry of the Alhambra, the properties declared World Heritage allow us to take a journey through the history of our territory, highlighting the most outstanding elements that have been produced. Natural wealth and biodiversity are also part of our common heritage, as culture and nature are inextricably intertwined. The inclusion of properties on the World Heritage List highlights our wealth of heritage, while at the same time demonstrating the commitment of administrations and citizens to its conservation⁸.

All of these assets are of different typologies:

⁸ See www.culturaydeporte.gob.es/cultural/areas/patrimonio/mc/patrimoniomundial/presentacion.html.

(a) *Natural*: Garajonay National Park; Teide National Park; Doñana National Park; and primary and mature beech forests in the Carpathians and other regions of Europe.

(b) *Cultural*: Gaudí's work; Monastery and Royal Site of El Escorial; Burgos Cathedral; Alhambra, Generalife and Albaicín of Granada; Historic Centre of Córdoba; Altamira Cave and Palaeolithic Rock Art of the Cantabrian Coast; Old City of Segovia and its Aqueduct; Old City of Santiago de Compostela; Old City of Ávila and churches outside the walls; Monuments of Oviedo and the Kingdom of Asturias; Old City of Cáceres; Historic City of Toledo; Mudejar architecture of Aragon; Cathedral, Alcázar and Archive of the Indies of Seville; Old City of Salamanca; Monastery of Poblet; Royal Monastery of Santa María de Guadalupe; Archaeological Ensemble of Mérida; The Way of St. James; Historic Walled City of Cuenca; La Lonja de la Seda de Valencia; Palau de la Música Catalana and Hospital de Sant Pau; Las Médulas; Monasteries of San Millán de Yuso and Suso; Rock art of the Mediterranean Arc of the Iberian Peninsula; University and historical site of Alcalá de Henares; San Cristóbal de La Laguna; Atapuerca archaeological basin; Catalan Romanesque churches of Vall de Boi; Archaeological Ensemble of Tarraco; Palm Grove of Elche; Roman Wall of Lugo; Cultural Landscape of Aranjuez; Renaissance Monumental Ensemble of Úbeda and Baeza; The Bridge of Vizcaya; Tower of Hercules; Prehistoric Rock Art Sites of the Côa Valley and Siega Verde; Cultural Landscape of the Sierra de la Tramontana; Mercury Heritage: Almadén and Idrija; Dolmens of Antequera; Caliphal City of Medina-Azahara; Risco Caído and the Sacred Mountains of Gran Canaria; The Paseo del Prado and the Buen Retiro, landscape of arts and sciences.

(c) *Mixed*: Ibiza, Biodiversity and Culture; Pyrenees-Monte Perdido.

We can see that in Spain there is a very marked predominance of cultural heritage over natural heritage: forty-three cultural properties, four natural properties and two mixed sites. While the first monuments (some of which were later extended to urban areas)

were inscribed in 1984, the first Spanish natural property on the List was inscribed two years later (Garajonay National Park) and the first mixed property, Monte Perdido, was inscribed eleven years later, in 1997. On the other hand, and reinforcing the way in which the Spanish list reflects the character of the List in general, we find that cultural properties are basically monuments, historic cities and archaeological sites.

Another aspect that should be highlighted, and which explains the large number of Spanish properties declared World Heritage, is the attitude of the Ministry of Culture over the last few decades. It is not so much a question of Spain being among the countries with the most heritage of universal value, which in itself is debatable in view of UNESCO's own principles and criteria, nor even of competing with other states in terms of the best models of heritage management; the reason is different. In a political context such as Spain's, in which cultural competences have been transferred to the Autonomous Communities for many years, one of the responsibilities that still resides in the Ministry of Culture is the management of new World Heritage nominations, as well as the Tentative List. In this respect, the Spanish State has taken as a criterion that all the Autonomous Communities should have properties included on the List. This non-explicit objective has been translated into a process whereby all of them currently have a property on the List, a process that culminated in 2006 when the only Autonomous Community that did not yet have any property, the Basque Country, obtained its first property when it added the Vizcaya Suspension Bridge to the List. Only the autonomous cities of Ceuta and Melilla do not have any properties, nor are they likely to do so in the future⁹.

However, this honour of being one of the States with the greatest World Cultural Heritage must be in line with the due protection to which Spain is obliged by being a party to the 1972 Convention, and to which we have referred above. There are several prob-

⁹ V. FERNÁNDEZ SALINAS, *La protección del Patrimonio Mundial en España*, in *Revista electrónica de Patrimonio Histórico*, 2008, 2.

lems present in this respect that call into question the due fulfilment of these international protection obligations.

One of the main problems is the over-exploitation of properties for tourism, either because of pressure of use that exceeds their carrying capacity, or because they are transformed to appear as an attractive tourist attraction. The most significant loss in these cases affects the authenticity of the property. If we also take into account that the intention, declared or not, of many of the authorities that encourage the inclusion of a property on the World Heritage List is to include their locality and/or territory in tourist circuits, the result is worrying. As proof of this, we can see how the Jewish Quarter of Cordoba has not improved but, on the contrary, has worsened since it was added to the List by the extension of the Mosque-Cathedral (which had already been added to the List ten years earlier) in 1994, with the loss of authenticity as a result of tourist erosion. Similar assessments could be made of some neighbourhoods or areas in Granada, Toledo or Ibiza, among others.

Secondly, the real estate dynamic should be mentioned. In a country like Spain, where construction is considered a basic sector, a driving force of the economy and on whose health the health of the State as a whole depends to a large extent, the protection of cultural heritage rarely takes precedence over real estate interests. Thus, the situation of heritage has suffered in all the Autonomous Communities and in cities at all levels. During the 1960s and 1970s, the destruction of the historic fabric was a constant feature from which few towns were spared and, in recent decades, the transformation, if not the simple prolongation of the destruction, has accompanied the updating of many historic centres. Almost all of them look better, but from the point of view of authenticity, the assessment cannot be so optimistic. Real estate activity has also taken advantage of the image and prestige that has accompanied World Heritage declarations. This has led to the fact that, sometimes with the signature of a prestigious architect, sometimes simply with mediocre projects or very permissive plans, initiatives have been produced that are not

in keeping with the heritage character of these towns. The most significant cases are those of Oviedo and Seville.

Likewise, there is inadequate or very generic management of the heritage. In relation to this inadequate management, we can point to basic aspects such as the lack of surveillance of the assets, which is especially significant in relation to the assets inscribed in the Rock Art of the Mediterranean arc, to other problems related to urban traffic or the criteria used in restorations and rehabilitations. Another noteworthy point that we also find in relation to this management is the use of interventions in cultural assets (or the lack of them) as a weapon of war between local political parties, which occurs with all types of parties and throughout the country. Suffice it to recall Calatrava's project to build three skyscrapers in Oviedo or the Can Botino building in Ibiza.

All of the above leads us to point to the existence of a certain relaxation in the fulfilment of UNESCO's obligations once properties are inscribed on the World Heritage List. In general, during the years in which a nomination dossier is being prepared, extreme care and actions are taken to influence the property in question and, in general, all existing properties in the locality or territory in which it is located. However, once on the List, this care is perceived to be relaxed. Neither the municipal nor the regional authorities¹⁰ are able to control the new processes imposed by the increased influx of tourists and a real estate market that always participates in the requalification processes of a listed town. This situation is worrying, to say the least, in the historic centres of large cities, although smaller towns, such as the Aragonese Mudejar or the Médulas in León, are no strangers either.

In the same sense, we also note a certain lack of compliance with the obligation of prior notification to the World Heritage Committee of any new work or restoration affecting the property, as fore-

¹⁰ The Ministry of Culture is absolved on principle, as cultural competences have been transferred to the Autonomous Communities, although the responsibility before UNESCO is that of the Spanish State.

seen in Article 172 of the Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of the World Heritage Convention. On many occasions, the simple fact of considering the referral of certain projects to UNESCO would prevent ideas contrary even to common sense from being proposed – such as the construction of skyscrapers less than 300 metres from Oviedo Cathedral – and would allow intervention in the processes before irreparable situations arise.

Finally, a message to reflect. Spain is a world leader, recognised by UNESCO, in Cultural, Natural and Intangible Heritage. Unfortunately, however, Spaniards are not generally aware of the diversity and richness of our heritage, of which we should feel proud and be disseminators.

We need to know it, care for it, love it and promote it. So let's keep in mind that Heritage is a bridge that links the past with a better future for all.