

The *South African Journal of Science* follows a double-anonymous peer review model but encourages Reviewers and Authors to publish their anonymised review reports and response letters, respectively, as supplementary files after manuscript review and acceptance. For more information, see [Publishing peer review reports](#).

Peer review history for:

Kgotleng DW, Basinyi S, Black W, Chiwara-Maenzanise P. 100 Years of palaeo-research and its relevance for transformation and social cohesion in South Africa. *S Afr J Sci.* 2025;121(1/2), Art. #18624. <https://doi.org/10.17159/sajs.2025/18624>

HOW TO CITE:

100 Years of palaeo-research and its relevance for transformation and social cohesion in South Africa [peer review history]. *S Afr J Sci.* 2025;121(1/2), Art. #18624. <https://doi.org/10.17159/sajs.2025/18624/peerreview>

Reviewer 1: Round 1

Date completed: 11 July 2024

Recommendation: Accept / **Revisions required** / Resubmit for review / Resubmit elsewhere / Decline / See comments

Conflicts of interest: None

Does the manuscript fall within the scope of SAJS?

Yes/No

Is the manuscript written in a style suitable for a non-specialist and is it of wider interest than to specialists alone?

Yes/No

Does the manuscript contain sufficient novel and significant information to justify publication?

Yes/No

Do the Title and Abstract clearly and accurately reflect the content of the manuscript?

Yes/No

Is the research problem significant and concisely stated?

Yes/No

Are the methods described comprehensively?

Yes/No

Is the statistical treatment appropriate?

Yes/No/**Not applicable**/Not qualified to judge

Are the interpretations and conclusions justified by the research results?

Yes/Partly/No

Please rate the manuscript on overall contribution to the field

Excellent/**Good**/Average/Below average/Poor

Please rate the manuscript on language, grammar and tone

Excellent/**Good**/Average/Below average/Poor

Is the manuscript succinct and free of repetition and redundancies?

Yes/No

Are the results and discussion confined to relevance to the objective(s)?

Yes/No

The number of tables in the manuscript is

Too few/Adequate/Too many/**Not applicable**

The number of figures in the manuscript is

Too few/Adequate/Too many/**Not applicable**

Is the supplementary material relevant and separated appropriately from the main document?

Yes/No/**Not applicable**

Please rate the manuscript on overall quality

Excellent/**Good**/Average/Below average/Poor

Is appropriate and adequate reference made to other work in the field?

Yes/**No**

Is it stated that ethical approval was granted by an institutional ethics committee for studies involving human subjects and non-human vertebrates?

Yes/**No/Not applicable**

If accepted, would you recommend that the article receives priority publication?

Yes/**No**

Are you willing to review a revision of this manuscript?

Yes/**No**

With regard to our policy on 'Publishing peer review reports', do you give us permission to publish your anonymised peer review report alongside the authors' response, as a supplementary file to the published article? Publication is voluntary and only with permission from both yourself and the author.

Yes/**No**

Comments to the Author:

I think that this is an important article to include in this special edition. It is great that you touched on ways Paleo-science intersects with the public and has impacted members of the public through who does research, paleo-science practice in public institutions such as museums and universities and the role of education. The paper focuses on transformation and the role palaeoanthropology can play as a driver of transformation in the southern African region, and the need for transformation in the discipline. In relation to the former, I think there needs to be more work to historicize the discipline and to explore how it adds to social cohesion in the present. I also think when we are considering transformation in relation to the broader public, it should not be a one-way process where the public is transformed by the discipline. Maybe we should also think about how the discipline can be transformed through its engagement with the public, beyond including them in workshops. How can a radical approach to dialogue and subverting knowledge hierarchies transform the discipline and the public. I've added a few readings in relation to the museum, education and archaeological practice in my notes. In terms of transforming the discipline, I think the authors have made important contributions related to how marginalized scholars continued to be marginalized through policies, funding models and hiring practices. The last comment is that the focus of the issue is Taung, and yet the community of Taung is missing. They have called for the return of the fossil and want to have a museum opened at the site, there is also a cultural festival which started because of the famous fossil discovery. I am not sure if this is mentioned in another part of the special issue. If not, then I think it should be included in this article.

[See Appendix 1 for Reviewer 1's comments made directly on the manuscript]

Author response to Reviewer 1: Round 1

Page	Row	Section	Reviewer's comment	Author response
1	32	Introduction	Can the author clarify how? It would be useful to read Shepherd 2003 and explore this issue. Shepherd, Nick. "Archaeology dreaming post-apartheid urban imaginaries and the bones of the Prestwich Street dead." <i>Journal of social archaeology</i> 7, no. 1 (2007): 3-28. re national building and the role of sites such as the cradle and the role of paleoanthropology.	We reworded the sentence to read: It has formed the basis of many African countries' post-colonial identities and reclaiming of its prehistorical advancements
2	45	Introduction	The authors should explore how this was central to the developing nation of South Africa. The idea of the South Africanization of Science and science being an important part of the newly formed nation	The subsequent paragraph provides the details required by the reviewer.
2	51	Introduction	What are the socio politics of the union	Through entrenchment of racial

			they are referring to?	segregation and the notion of white superiority which was ultimately legislated in 1948 through apartheid
3	63	Introduction	Maybe read and include the following in this example. Shepherd, Nick. "When the Hand that Holds the Trowel is Black..."	We referred to Kuljian's (2016) work which is also mentioned in the preceding sentence, by adding a sentence 'Kuljian7 explores in detail the unheard voices of black field workers who played a role in these discoveries but were removed from this history'"
3	95	Discovery of the Taung Child	Maybe used the word local	Amended 'native' to "local"
4	109	Collaboration and diversity of voices	Maybe they could give an example of this. I think it is important to	This is demonstrated by restitution guidelines developed by Black et al.
5	158	A rocky journey to the present	This should be fleshed out in some way. See Ciraj, and Patricia Hayes. 2002	Referred to the liberties which institutions afforded scientists humans and their bodies in the name of racial science.
6	178	A rocky journey to the present	Can they provide examples of this?	The same example is provided in row 109
6	191	Research and human capital support	Paleoscience graduates or all graduates. I think it would be important to have paleoscience figures if you are discussing paleo science positions and post graduation opportunities.	We reject the reviewer's suggestion to have palaeosciences figures. The discussion is based on graduate data from all south Africa's HEI's. The reviewer requires a full research project, which is a larger scope of this manuscript, to justify our sentence.
6	206	Research and human capital support	It would be great if there were some examples of alternative interpretations of human evolution because the work is being done by a marginalized scholar.	This work is yet to be done as an academic study. Therefore we did not include the reviewer's suggestion.
7	207	Research and human capital support	This is a repetition of what has been said previously.	We deleted the sentence.
7	211	Science and education awareness	it would however be great if we thought about education in broader and more politically transformative terms	We recommend maintaining this section as is.
9	288	Towards a socially responsive discipline	What about a museum in Taung? This is about the Taung fossil and yet there is little discussion of the Taung community. They have called for the return of the fossil, and they want to create a local museum.	Paragraph included to state that the TSW MA has built a museum which we suggest should be interpreted to accommodate the locals.
9	296	Towards a socially responsive discipline	Maybe you could expand on how they included marginalized groups? What did they do to achieve this?	An example provided is the development of community based museums

11	350	Sustainable infrastructure development	What was the effect on the community, why did this interpretation need to be challenged?	We argue that the subcontinent cannot afford to let misinformation (created by the likes of Chan et al) guide the scientific narrative due to its high levels of illiteracy.
11	372	Transforming a sustained human capital	Share some of the policy recommendations.	Inserted the pillars of the Palaeo strategy "This strategy dictates for a transformed discipline which focuses on all pillars of the field, empower museums, support universities, creating awareness and making South Africa a tourism destination."
12	391	Awareness, education and leadership for change	What does this mean?	Meaning inserted in parenthesis (inquiry and learner dialogue-based learning)
12	392	12	This would be a good place to explore it!	In the concluding section, "into a transformed and socially cohesive future," we make broad strategic suggestions towards fostering an ideal discipline.

Reviewer 2: Round 1

Date completed: 26 July 2024

Recommendation: Accept / Revisions required / **Resubmit for review** / Resubmit elsewhere / Decline / See comments

Conflicts of interest: None

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Yes/No

Select a recommendation:

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Yes/No

Comments to the Author:

I appreciate the opportunity to review this manuscript and I understand the goals of the article as a reflection or commentary on the field of palaeoanthropology 100 years after the discovery of the Taung Child. I agree, in the most part with the subject and points made in the article, and think this would be worth publishing. I have, therefore, spent quite a lot of time making suggestions to improve the writing to get it to a point where I think it will be suitable for publication in this journal. These suggestions are made with the intention of presenting points more succinctly, carefully and positively. I am not sure if this contribution has been solicited by the editor for a special issue, and if this article is going to be held to the same expectations for objective scientific writing as other articles in the SAJS. Without this prior information, I have commented based on the assumption that it will be considered as a scientific article that requires evidence-based writing to ensure that every point is substantiated and supported. Even if the points in the article are relevant, they must be objectively presented and supported. This is the major limitation of the paper as it stands. It is not an insurmountable issue, but it is an important issue that needs to be addressed carefully in order that the audience receive the information to a standard and style that they would expect in this journal.

Beyond the need for considerable attention to be paid to providing objective evidence-based commentary, my second concern is the exclusion of information given on other southern African countries. A few references are made to Zimbabwe and Botswana, but none to Namibia, Mozambique, Zambia, or any of the other countries included in 'southern Africa'. 'Southern Africa' should, at the very least, be defined as an area, and, since colonialism is invoked regularly as the root of many of the issues in palaeoscience practice, communication and inclusion, a history of colonialism in the region would be useful to contextualise the common challenges that these countries face. Where appropriate, the authors should make it clear that data is drawn from a specific country, and does not include other countries in the region. The authors should take care to not just to use South Africa as the only source of data, or consider it necessarily representative of all the other countries in southern Africa (if it is, then the authors should demonstrate this), especially in its museum employee profile.

My third concern is the fluid use of archaeology, palaeoanthropology and palaeontology as interchangeable terms to describe fields within the 'palaeosciences'. This is not correct. Each has its own history and has made

it's own strides towards change (regardless of perceived or 'real' success). Archaeology is not necessarily a palaeoscience and many archaeologists would be distressed if included under that umbrella. I think it is fair to say that all scientists in South Africa involved in these fields acknowledge the need for change and has, in some way, attempted to implement systemic changes. I feel like these efforts shouldn't go unacknowledged and would provide some contrast to the generally critical tone.

My fourth concern is a confusing structure that seems to mix discussion of the past, or origins of issues, with the present without any transitions. I don't know if this is a deliberate method to demonstrate a point about a lack of progress, but it is a little confusing and I think unnecessarily conflates a lot of history into broad generalizations that are difficult to substantiate, or as a reader, really appreciate.

As noted above, I've made quite a few comments on the pdf that I think will improve the document. There are some small issues that are important to address because they undermine the whole point of the article - for example, use of the term 'tenure' is not correct or relevant here and should be avoided because it implies the adoption of a US employment system by African universities and museums.

[See Appendix 2 for Reviewer 2's comments made directly on the manuscript]

Author response to Reviewer 2: Round 1

Page	Row	Section	Reviewer's comment	Author response
2	34	Introduction	worth expanding what you mean here by 'biases' relevant to this sentence	Included South African biases to demonstrate that regional palaeosciences became SA influenced
2	37	Introduction	palaeo-heritage field? missing a word here - 'the palaeo-heritage' isn't enough	Amended palaeo-heritage to palaeosciences
2	44	Introduction	Or challenge	Inserted 'or challenge'
2	53	Introduction	, which	Inserted a comma
2	63	Introduction	Check spacing	Spacing was correct. No need to amend.
3	69	Discovery of the Taung Child and the birth of Palaeosciences.	This was not at Swartkrans	Amendment to Kromdraai
3	70	Discovery of the Taung Child and the birth of Palaeosciences...	This specimen was not initially called Australopithecus africanus by Broom, but I'm not sure if you are attempting to give the original taxonomic attribution here, or what the specimen is now attributed to. Needs clarity.	Now attributed to
3	71	Discovery of the Taung Child and the birth of Palaeosciences...	You need to be clear here	Amended the sentence to "any direction paleoanthropological discoveries and announcements were to take"
3	73	Discovery of the Taung Child and the birth of Palaeosciences.	Makes mention	Amended to mentions
3	74	Discovery of the Taung Child and the birth of Palaeosciences.	This is an odd word choice. To Dart, the accounts probably were realistic, regardless of how deeply insensitive and selective those accounts were. I	Inclusive is a fair term.

Page	Row	Section	Reviewer's comment	Author response
			would say 'inclusive' here, more than 'realistic', which is a highly subjective concept.	
3	74	Discovery of the Taung Child and the birth of Palaeosciences.	This is a little problematic as it stands. 'Most probably' provides a margin of doubt here (tells me that you don't know that 'manual labourers' did play a critical role. You need to be positive given what you are trying to say. I think you should be trying to provide evidence that manual labourers were involved and then show us that they were not acknowledged. For example, some of the images. For example, the image of the site of discovery of TM1511 at Sterkfontein by Robert Broom. Here, although Black lime miners were in the photograph, they were not named in the image caption in the newspaper - is this Broom's fault, or the paper editor, or both?	Removed probably too
3	77	Discovery of the Taung Child and the birth of Palaeosciences..	What do you mean by 'full credit' and how would one credit fully a support team? Defining this clearly is important if you want to propose new standards.	Amended to read "The practice of not acknowledging all workers in the scientific process"
3	81	Discovery of the Taung Child and the birth of Palaeosciences..	Do you have an example or reference of this recognition? Multidisciplinarity doesn't necessarily equate to inclusiveness, so it isn't clear how the recognition of multidisciplinarity is a counter to the first phrase about the centralisation of individuals	We disagree with the reviewers' comments. In a multidisciplinary project a single individual would not be able to have all the skills required.
3	81	Discovery of the Taung Child and the birth of Palaeosciences..	cultivates	Amended to cultivates
3	83	Discovery of the Taung Child and the birth of Palaeosciences	workers	Amended to contributors
3	84	Discovery of the Taung Child and the birth of Palaeosciences..	Would not allow	Amended to allow

Page	Row	Section	Reviewer's comment	Author response
3	85	Discovery of the Taung Child and the birth of Palaeosciences..	What would 'recognition' have looked like in this socio-political environment? If you are projecting idealistic behaviours on people in the past then it would be appropriate (as objective commentators) to demonstrate sensitivity to the context in which they were operatin	The recognition would have to acknowledge their role in the publications and other records. That is all it would take.
3	85	Discovery of the Taung Child and the birth of Palaeosciences..	This is too emotive a term for a piece of scientific writing, in a science journal. Even if this is a commentary, the language should be objective. If you want to use a word like 'cult' you need to define that term and justify its use given its prominent religious association	Changed to preeminent personalities
3	85	Discovery of the Taung Child and the birth of Palaeosciences..	tense - present or past?	Changed to 'drove'
3	86	Discovery of the Taung Child and the birth of Palaeosciences..	The phrasing here is challenging following the last sentence. What would be useful, from an objective perspective, is to summarise what role Black people were allowed to take in projects.	Sentence simplified to state that no article mentions black labourers in the mines. It is difficult to summarise what role they were allowed to take as there is no reference to that effect.
3	87	Discovery of the Taung Child and the birth of Palaeosciences..	What about 'idolised'? I'm not sure idealized is the right term here.	Changed idealised to 'idolised'
3	88	Discovery of the Taung Child and the birth of Palaeosciences..	this could be better written	Reduced the wording of the sentence.
3	91	Discovery of the Taung Child and the birth of Palaeosciences..	It is worth clarifying what you mean here	a multidisciplinary team of experts and research facilities
3	94	Discovery of the Taung Child and the birth of Palaeosciences..	On a continental scale and for Australopithecus perhaps, but geographic distribution of remains of hominins is controlled by where their remains were preserved.	We believe our statement mirrors that of the reviewer.
3	94-95	Discovery of the Taung Child and the birth of Palaeosciences..	Of course this is the case, but how does this sentence fit in here. I'm a little confused by the structure. This is a general statement of your beliefs - does it belong in this section?	We agree. We have deleted the sentence 94-94.
3	96	Discovery of the Taung Child and the birth of Palaeosciences..	idealised	Changed idealised to idolised as per row 87
3	96	Discovery of the	I don't understand this reference -	This is an upcoming article.

Page	Row	Section	Reviewer's comment	Author response
		Taung Child and the birth of Palaeosciences..		
4	101	Discovery of the Taung Child and the birth of Palaeosciences..	'restorative' suggests that previously it was better. It clearly was not better so I think this word choice could be improved... 'bring about inclusive change' perhaps.	Changed restorative to inclusive
4	101	Discovery of the Taung Child and the birth of Palaeoscience	Why does UNESCO need an article here unless you are missing a word after UNESCO (e.g., policy).	Included UNESCO communications and stakeholder engagement guide of 2017.
4	109	Collaboration and diversity of voices for inclusive palaeosciences	Odd that your statement focuses on human evolution and human remains but you cite a paper that focuses on soil science. I suggest finding a more field-appropriate reference.	Error fixed; all three references are focused on community involvement in reburials. (Morris 1996; Boutin, et al. 2017; and Meloche et al 2020)
4	117	Collaboration and diversity of voices for inclusive palaeosciences	OK. Fair enough, but it would still be appropriate to provide evidence that this encouraged public interest and support for the discipline. Arguably (and I'm aware I'm playing devil's advocate here), Berger's Rising Star 'science comms' antics have also encouraged public interest and support for the discipline on a global scale but you give that as an example of exclusive research practice.	Two community based research with museums are referred to as examples; the HARP and the !Khwatttu research centre.
4	123	Collaboration and diversity of voices for inclusive palaeosciences	As interesting as this is, this is still a highly subjective statement that needs to be substantiated. You could say that it is 'intended to be' like this, but you can't say 'results in a welcoming and inclusive journey for any visitor' without evidence of this. I can imagine that there are many people in the world that would not feel welcome or included in any discussion about human evolution.	Sentence deleted
4	124	Collaboration and diversity of voices for inclusive palaeosciences	You should take a sentence to explain what this phrase means	The succeeding sentences (row 125-130) provide an explanation for the phrase
4	127	Collaboration and diversity of voices for inclusive palaeosciences	participate in what? the research, the interpretation, the representation, the communication? all of it?	added "in research and its interpretation"
4	127	Collaboration and diversity of voices for inclusive	I have issues with the phrasing here. Being 'given a platform' suggests that these groups are not included from the start as integral members of	Yes, what the reviewer suggests is exactly what we mean in this sentence

Page	Row	Section	Reviewer's comment	Author response
		palaeosciences	teams, but only later when given consideration by a team.	
4	128	Collaboration and diversity of voices for inclusive palaeosciences	Grammar and phrasing need some work here	Recorded the sentence. Deleted necessitates and included we need
4	130	Collaboration and diversity of voices for inclusive palaeosciences	states	Deleted mentions and added 'states'
4	130	Collaboration and diversity of voices for inclusive palaeosciences	Why is this here	Error {r} deleted
4	134	Collaboration and diversity of voices for inclusive palaeosciences	I think you need to provide some evidence of these practices because this is a new idea that you are presenting - with scientists not just excluding, as you've outline above, but centering science on themselves.	We added an example of the humanity exhibition which employed what Hodder calls for in reflexive positionality
5	139	Collaboration and diversity of voices for inclusive palaeosciences	what do you consider a 'current generation' of scholars. Universities and museums include people of multiple generations	Amended to include academic
5	139	Collaboration and diversity of voices for inclusive palaeosciences	How do you know this? This is a considerable generalisation. As at all times, there are some that work to protect and some that exploit. Not all 'the current generation' are blissfully blameless in unethical behaviour.	Amended sentence to read, academic and scientific responsibility
5	141	Collaboration and diversity of voices for inclusive palaeosciences	How? I think you need to be careful and specific here. This is a strong statement that has to be substantiated with evidence. How has exclusion of one of the 'current generation' of scholars led to the damage or intentional ruin of a heritage artefact?	Singular perspective as opposed to inclusive broad-based view
5	141	Collaboration and diversity of voices for inclusive palaeosciences	Relevance of the sentence?	This sentence provides an example of how ignorance of other 'voices can lead to rebellion which likely manifests in aggressive acts
5	146	Collaboration and diversity of voices for inclusive palaeosciences	I'm not sure what this means, tangibly. Please explain. What is a space that is 'pertinent to humanity', and how is this relevant?	
5	149	Collaboration	By whom	Scientific community

Page	Row	Section	Reviewer's comment	Author response
		and diversity of voices for inclusive palaeosciences		
5	152	A rocky journey to the present	Sub-heading: are you referring back to historical commentary now? Why? What is the purpose of this section that wasn't covered in Section 1's subsection? This title could be more focused and informative about what it focuses on	Present perspectives?
5	155	A rocky journey to the present	are responsible for - I think the language here is unnecessarily combative	Changed to responsible for
5	156	A rocky journey to the present	individuals	Error. Individuals deleted to read a variety of samples and objects
5	157	A rocky journey to the present	I appreciate what you are trying to say but I don't think it is as clear cut as you state.	We agree with the reviewer's sentiment that it is unfair to paint everyone working during the time as a willing participant of racist practices. Hence we qualify this statement with the next one which states that the research was a product of the times. They met the socio-politics of their generation. This means whether willing or not, the system functioned to create a racialised environment.
5	163	A rocky journey to the present	Really, access was easy for the public? Evidence for this?	Here we are stating that access was for selected public and researchers. In a system of racial segregation black people did not have access to these museums
6	170	A rocky journey to the present	What 'old practices' are you referring to here? You could argue that the 'discoverers' are still	such as the inhumane treatment of human remains of Africans
6	179	A rocky journey to the present	impetus	intention
6	180	A rocky journey to the present	collaborative	Demographic representation is what we refer to here
6	181	A rocky journey to the present	Equally valued	Demographic representation is what we refer to here
6	184	Research and human capital support	be more specific - they don't fund everything	Prominent means important. We are not implying that they fund everything
6	185	Research and human capital support	Where are the stats?	These are illustrated in Figure 1
6	188	Research and human capital support	'Tenured' is American terminology	Tenured amended to permanent
6	190	Research and	What is 'development support' You	Development support is amended to

Page	Row	Section	Reviewer's comment	Author response
		human capital support	are making significant leaps in the text without making the links and explaining your concepts.	research and training
6	193-194	Research and human capital support	Show us the data	Reference to figure 1
6	195	Research and human capital support	Evidence for senior staff moving between senior positions at academic institutions?	The statement does not refer to moving between institutions. It mainly refers to occupied posts
6	197	Research and human capital support	American terminology	Amended tenured to permanent
6	200	Research and human capital support	Which gaps?	This will create knowledge gaps in indigenous perspectives of the science.
7	206	Research and human capital support	'Regional Archaeologist' needs definition, who do you mean and what kind of work are these individuals doing? Is this CRM work?	Local based.
7	207	Research and human capital support	Too broad an issue. Do you mean domestic funding	Sentence on funding deleted here
7	212	Science and education awareness	This could be better worded	Replaced 'relevance' with 'connection'
7	214	Science and education awareness	Could be better phrased	Changed the statement to read: This is the main avenue for the public to interact with exhibitions and archaeology.
7	216	Science and education awareness	Evidence, or an example or case study would be useful.	Masiteng's (2020) study of DMNH's practices of handling human remains is provided as an example
7	230-1	Science and education awareness	What year?	1995 added
8	243	Science and education awareness	what is are 'areas of palaeosciences'?	Sub-disciplines
8	253	Science and education awareness	Better phrasing needed	Added "or is biased towards" to enhance the sentences clarity
8	255	Science and education awareness	Needs refinement	Added a full stop to replace a comma to simplify the sentence.
8	269	Science and education awareness	Clarity is needed	Reworded the sentence by adding demonstrating that there is opposition to evolution
8	283	Science and education awareness	what does this mean?	Deleted 'democracy' and replaced it with 'decolonisation'
9	289	Towards a socially	What are the underlying issues that hinder capacity? This is a	We feel the main issue is economic stability. This is a sufficient and

Page	Row	Section	Reviewer's comment	Author response
		responsive discipline	multifaceted problem, and its complexity deserves objective discussion	'accepted' justification for lack of access.
9	291	Towards a socially responsive discipline	evidence for catering to foreign visitors	This is provided in row 289 where we reference Nqcoo (2020) who discusses politics of representation in South Africa's Museums
9	292	Towards a socially responsive discipline	Language could be better	Deleted interest to read: Amended to read, museums and public interpretation centers
10	315	Towards a socially responsive discipline	Language could be better	Deleted 'to empower'
11	362	transforming a sustained human capital	evidence for this from funding body policies?	Added less support for research jobs
11	363	Sustainable infrastructure development	It isn't clear what you mean here. What is 'systematic infrastructure development' - physical infrastructure?	We mean research infrastructure. We added 'research' as a prefix to infrastructure
11	364	transforming a sustained human capital	How will this work	Engagement between government, funding agencies and stakeholders
11	366	transforming a sustained human capital	How is this relevant to transforming a sustained human capital?	Dialogue and reflexive change will propel transformation which will have a ripple effect to transforming human capital. We added a transformed human capital to elaborate on the connection between the paragraph and the heading
11	375	Sustainable infrastructure development	At the core of what?	At the core of this transformation
12	385	Awareness, education and leadership for change	that	Replaced 'which' with 'that'
12	386	Awareness, education and leadership for change	Have to make this more explicitly link with the section title, which it isn't at the moment	Elaborated on the section by adding "such as the Palaeosciences Strategy dictate the creation of jobs in the field" to create a link with the section on human capital
12	394		you mean the 'apathy' has contributed?	Yes
12	407	Into a transformed and socially cohesive future	Example	Amended the sentence to read, a demographically representative

Reviewer 1: Round 2**Date completed:** 28 October 2024**Recommendation:** Accept / **Revisions required** / Resubmit for review / Resubmit elsewhere / Decline / See comments**Conflicts of interest:** None

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Do the Title and Abstract clearly and accurately reflect the content of the manuscript?

Yes/No

Is the research problem significant and concisely stated?

Yes/No

Are the methods described comprehensively?

Yes/No

Is the statistical treatment appropriate?

Yes/No/Not applicable/Not qualified to judge

Are the interpretations and conclusions justified by the research results?

Yes/Partly/No

Please rate the manuscript on overall contribution to the field

Excellent/Good/Average/Below average/Poor

Please rate the manuscript on language, grammar and tone

Excellent/Good/Average/Below average/Poor

Is the manuscript succinct and free of repetition and redundancies?

Yes/No

Are the results and discussion confined to relevance to the objective(s)?

Yes/No

The number of tables in the manuscript is

Too few/Adequate/Too many/Not applicable

The number of figures in the manuscript is

Too few/Adequate/Too many/Not applicable

Is the supplementary material relevant and separated appropriately from the main document?

Yes/No/Not applicable

Please rate the manuscript on overall quality

Excellent/Good/Average/Below average/Poor

Is appropriate and adequate reference made to other work in the field?

Yes/No

Is it stated that ethical approval was granted by an institutional ethics committee for studies involving human subjects and non-human vertebrates?

Yes/No/Not applicable

If accepted, would you recommend that the article receives priority publication?

Yes/No

Are you willing to review a revision of this manuscript?

Yes/No

Select a recommendation:

Accept / **Revisions required** / Resubmit for review / DeclineWith regard to our policy on '[Publishing peer review reports](#)', do you give us permission to publish your anonymised peer review report alongside the authors' response, as a supplementary file to the published article? Publication is voluntary and only with permission from both yourself and the author.

Yes/No

Comments to the Author:

It does not seem as though the article has changed substantially since I last read it. I think certain comments were not addressed, maybe because I made them in a separate document and not in the text itself. I find that the authors make many statements, but they don't clearly articulate how issues they are addressing developed. For example when discussing the colonial nature of palaeoanthropology they really don't explore how it developed as a colonial discipline. Because of that they cannot properly address the colonial legacies. They don't properly explore how knowledge generation as a form of domination over people was a keyway in which the discipline was important for the colonial and the apartheid state domination. They touch on this in relation to the collection of human remains, and the museums as accessible spaces, but they don't delve how the status quo developed in any depth.

I think that part of my issue with the paper is that there are different understandings of decolonization. My understanding is that decolonization is a political project of undoing colonial structures including how knowledge is produced. I find that the authors have an approach that centres funding, and economic changes. The argument as it stands is that if we give more people of colour funding then the discipline will transform, if the country has more money, then we will see transformation, which I agree with to a certain extent. However, these approaches won't change practice, decolonization requires a political commitment to marginalised groups. I don't think public private partnerships, and turning to tourism to meet the financial needs of the discipline will achieve the goal of decolonizing the discipline. The authors discuss communities, but in large part the paper views the inclusion of more scholars of colour as a priority for transformation. The scientist is still centred in this approach.

These are, however, differences in how to approach decolonization and the article as it stands presents one option for transforming the discipline from the perspective on one group of scholars. On that basis it can be published if the authors believe in this approach.

[See Appendix 3 for Reviewer 1's comments made directly on the manuscript]

Author response to Reviewer 1: Round 2

Page	Row	Section	Reviewer's comment	Responses highlighted in turquoise
1	5	Abstract	'of'	Sentence deleted based on reviewer 1's comment
1	8	Abstract	Scientific practice	Amended to scientific practice
1	24	Introduction	One could argue that even in first world countries where there are no economic issues we still face issues of racism and inequality, is this an issue that can be solved through a different economic approach	In developing countries economic issues are typically the underlying problem to development. We changed the statement to 'socio-economic challenges'
1	30	Introduction	The paper places the discovery within the history of scientific practice. Yet there is no elaboration on how scientific practice was a key part of colonial domination through the generation of knowledge about the land, by armature scientists and later on professionals in particular disciplines. Again the paper makes statements without clarifying how	Rows 30-35 links colonial basis for scientific advancement and its influence on European centered achievements

Page	Row	Section	Reviewer's comment	Responses highlighted in turquoise
			it contributed to an issue such as white superiority. How was the knowledge used? Why did it foster better relations between white people in the union, how did it facilitate British settler domination.? There is a lot of literature on this that can be referred to.	
3	88	Discovery of Taung Child	Is someone inherently decolonial because they are from South Africa. Decolonization requires a particular type of politics and undoing systems through the research process. Can there be transformation by replacing international scholars with local scholars if local scholars only aim to do the same type of research?	No someone is not inherently decolonial based on their country of origin. However the socio-politics of the region (within the global south) calls for a discourse on decolonization which is aligned to equity, inclusivity and economic emancipation from colonisers post-independence. Hence transformation cannot happen if the region imports researchers whose concern is not aligned with local needs.
4	120	Collaboration and diversity of voices...	This is slightly confusing can you elaborate.	Error fixed to refer to an example provided by the HARP project.
6	182	Research and human capital support	Should we see researchers as capital, are we producing products or knowledge?	Human capital is a term utilized in South Africa's higher education sector to refer to humans with knowledge and skills (personnel). We are producing both.
6	186	Research and human capital support	Again is this just an issue of funding, will there be any sort of change if scholars of colour do get funding and will they be able to do things differently in relation to communities.	Funding towards support of decolonisation initiatives
6	203	Research and human capital support	the scientist is still centred I this approach to transformation.	Changed scientist to communities
n/a		Research and human capital support	Do we want more people of colour to assimilate into existing systems of knowledge production or do we want to change systems of knowledge production?	It is not just about colour. The need is for representativity within the discipline.
n/a		Practical solutions to drive effective...	Is economics the only explanation for how things function in post apartheid South Africa. What is at play, how are museums and their exhibitions also determined by post-colonial nationalist history making?	No economics is not the only explanation. The issue of museums and their post colonization is addressed in section 4

Page	Row	Section	Reviewer's comment	Responses highlighted in turquoise
n/a		Practical solutions to drive effective...	How did Thabo Mbeki for example embrace human evolution and the cradle as part of his African renaissance agenda.	The reviewer's question is not clear. How TM embraced the concept is not documented. Assumptions would have to be made in that regard. The only inference we can make is through his speech (I am an African) where he makes reference to the region's contribution to the evolution of humanity.
n/a		Sustainable infrastructure development	Again is it only financial? What are the cultural mechanisms at play. Why is it politically important for the USA for example to continue to dominate human evolution research. Will getting more money for local science fundamentally change the discipline?	Similar to the suggestion made in row 194, page 6 above, funding is required to support decolonization initiatives
n/a		Transforming a sustained human capital	Museum such as Red Location failed because it was aimed at attracting tourists, while being located in a place where communities did not have access to proper housing. Is tourism the solution to heritage issues and funding for research? Is the discipline going to be more responsive to communities, when it is doing work to ensure tourists are satisfied with exhibits?	That is not what is meant here. Research and human capital support are not the same socio-economic problem as housing. Tourism is aimed at local development.
12	387	Transforming a sustained human capital	s public private partnership going to result in transformation. What is the transformation we are aiming to achieve? If the discipline has to answer to the private sector can it be truly responsive to community needs.	Demographic and developmental transformation

Reviewer 2: Round 2

Date completed: 25 October 2024

Recommendation: Accept / **Revisions required** / Resubmit for review / Resubmit elsewhere / Decline / See comments

Conflicts of interest: None

Does the manuscript fall within the scope of SAJS?

Yes/No

Is the manuscript written in a style suitable for a non-specialist and is it of wider interest than to specialists alone?

Yes/No

Does the manuscript contain sufficient novel and significant information to justify publication?

Yes/No

Do the Title and Abstract clearly and accurately reflect the content of the manuscript?

Yes/**No**

Is the research problem significant and concisely stated?

Yes/**No**

Are the methods described comprehensively?

Yes/**No**

Is the statistical treatment appropriate?

Yes/**No**/Not applicable/Not qualified to judge

Are the interpretations and conclusions justified by the research results?

Yes/Partly/**No**

Please rate the manuscript on overall contribution to the field

Excellent/Good/Average/**Below average**/Poor

Please rate the manuscript on language, grammar and tone

Excellent/Good/Average/**Below average**/Poor

Is the manuscript succinct and free of repetition and redundancies?

Yes/No

Are the results and discussion confined to relevance to the objective(s)?

Yes/No

The number of tables in the manuscript is

Too few/Adequate/Too many/**Not applicable**

The number of figures in the manuscript is

Too few/Adequate/Too many/**Not applicable**

Is the supplementary material relevant and separated appropriately from the main document?

Yes/No/**Not applicable**

Please rate the manuscript on overall quality

Excellent/Good/Average/**Below average**/Poor

Is appropriate and adequate reference made to other work in the field?

Yes/No

Is it stated that ethical approval was granted by an institutional ethics committee for studies involving human subjects and non-human vertebrates?

Yes/No/**Not applicable**

If accepted, would you recommend that the article receives priority publication?

Yes/**No**

Are you willing to review a revision of this manuscript?

Yes/No

Select a recommendation:

Accept / **Revisions required** / Resubmit for review / Decline

With regard to our policy on '[Publishing peer review reports](#)', do you give us permission to publish your anonymised peer review report alongside the authors' response, as a supplementary file to the published article? Publication is voluntary and only with permission from both yourself and the author.

Yes/No

Comments to the Author:

I appreciate that the author has taken time to consider the reviewers' comments. I see that many of those comments have been addressed and I note that those corrections have improved the text. I have presented most of my review comments on an attached word document. I agree that such a paper is useful at this time, and that many of the topics raised are important and must be discussed transparently with lots of stakeholders. In that respect, the idea of the paper's inclusion in a special issue on the Taung centenary is a good one. However, there are fundamental issues with the paper that I think must be addressed if this is going to make an insightful, meaningful contribution to the field. It would be a shame if such a paper didn't hit the mark.

The first issues is that the paper doesn't do what it says it will do in the title. The title explicitly says it will consider the issue from a southern African perspective but references Botswana and Zimbabwe only very

selectively. When 'data' are presented, it doesn't include any information from other southern African countries and many of the statements don't draw on any information other than South African. You could change the title if you wanted, but something must change to avoid this being misleading. A really comprehensive sourcing of information from across southern Africa would be a useful contribution and allow nuanced comparisons to be made across the region, which at the moment isn't possible, but is needed (and promised in the title).

The second issue is that the paper isn't presented in a manner expected of a science paper. I commend the author for including some kind of data, but the data presented in Figure 1 aren't cited and the 'statistics' mentioned don't present corresponding data or sources for the statements made about the 'data'. The data presented is also not particularly useful and could be much more insightful and demonstrative of the author's point. I would encourage the author to take the time to gather useful, representative data. I've made some comments on the word document to help in this manner. I am concerned that sources are being cited that are inappropriate or misleading. For example, "Abramo G, D'Angelo CA. 2014. How do you define and measure research productivity?" is cited as a reference discussing "mishandling of indigenous people, affording scientists inhumane liberties objectifying their bodies in the name of racial science". I don't see anything in this paper about this topic. There are also popular books being used to talk about historical events that are not primary sources of historical information.

The third issue is one of oversimplification. This is not an easy paper to write and I appreciate that the author is attempting to make a statement about the state of the discipline and what can be done to improve it. However, the generalisation of the issues means that many complex facets of the issues are going unacknowledged. Whether this is deliberate or not, I can't tell. This makes for a higher contrast picture (bordering on black and white), but not a sensitive one when sensitivity is a key goal of transformation. The goal of a piece like this is to stimulate discussion, which is very much needed. However, one should want the discussion stemming from this article to be about how well it understands and presents all the facets of the issues objectively, and identifies barriers that can be broken down and bridges built. One doesn't want discussion stemming from this article to focus on what is missed or omitted with questions being about why those omissions were made. We need more substantiation of statements, comparisons founded on data, peer-reviewed information and examples to demonstrate the patterns you are talking about.

[See Appendix 4 for Reviewer 2's comments made directly on the manuscript]

Author response to Reviewer 2: Round 2

Page	Row	Section	Reviewer's comment	Response in red
1	5	Abstract	Could be better written	Added: the discipline grew exponentially in the continent
1	8	Abstract	Whose, or what's interaction with southern African indigenous peoples?	researcher's
1	8	Abstract	There is still very little in this article about any southern African country other than South Africa - this makes the title misleading and inaccurate. Content either needs to include representative examples from southern Africa, or the title needs to be changed	Title is changed to "100 years of palaeo-research and its relevance for transformation and social cohesion in South Africa"
2	36	Introduction	Why do you need a date and an in text citation?	Deleted date
2	45	Introduction	'handling' of what?	Deleted handling
2	53	Introduction	Not sure about 'rooted in' maybe	Inserted influenced

Page	Row	Section	Reviewer's comment	Response in red
			'influenced by'	
2	65	Introduction	I would reference Christa's journal article here first and then her popular book so that the peer-reviewed source is the primary source on the information	Noted. Journal article inserted as reference 8.
2	60-67	Introduction	I see this as an interesting but different case - instead of the exclusion of Black characters involved in the discovery (which was made initially by cavers), I see this as more problematic in that the team initially assembled to excavate remains included no Black scientists and very few southern Africans and is unjustifiable	We agree with the reviewer. We also present the same point of exclusion of black people in the search process. Despite their inclusion in later research teams.
2	67	Discovery of the Taung child...	Arguably influenced the direction	Amended and added influenced.
3	69	Discovery of the Taung child...	This was flagged before and in the 'response to reviewers' document' was said to have been changed.	The initial response we provided is that we have amended the sentence to read "The practice of not acknowledging all workers in the scientific process"
3	82	Discovery of the Taung child...	Example?	Added an example of a couple of research teams (Clarke 1998 and Herries et al. 2020)
3	87	Discovery of the Taung child...	Is someone inherently decolonial because they are from South Africa. Decolonization requires a particular type of politics and undoing systems through the research process. Can there be transformation by replacing international scholars with local scholars if local scholars only aim to do the same type of research?	We agree with the reviewer that the replacement of international people with locals does not inherently constitute decoloniality. However, we underline that the premise for decoloniality is multivocality and representativity. A homogenous team would not be able to reach a decolonized state
3	90	Discovery of the Taung child...	Tense? Are you still talking about the historical context? This is the same paragraph but the topic has changed to commentary on the current state... confusing flow	Changed the tense, "drive" to "drove".
3	91	Discovery of the Taung child...	Tense... 'came'? The tenses and mixed and confusing temporal focus of this paragraph needs some work	Changed to came
3	95	Discovery of the Taung child...	tense	Changed the tense; perpetuate to perpetuated

Page	Row	Section	Reviewer's comment	Response in red
3	N/A	Discovery of the Taung child...	I have an issue with the focus on South Africa here when the title clearly states 'southern Africa'... what about in other southern African countries?	The title is amended to reflect South Africa and not southern Africa
4	N/A	Collaboration and diversity of voices for inclusive palaeosciences	The text talks specifically about research... how is this a demonstration of inclusive research?	The call for transformation is of the whole palaeosciences practice and not only for research
4	126	Collaboration and diversity of voices for inclusive palaeosciences	Who is 'we'? You haven't personalised this yet	changed 'we' to 'a'
4	134	Collaboration and diversity of voices for inclusive palaeosciences	Clarify language here...	The prior statement was not clear what was being referred to. It has been changed to "like what has been undertaken at !Khwa ttu Harp project."
4	132	Collaboration and diversity of voices for inclusive palaeosciences	Still not clear who is included in 'this current generation'... all practicing academics?	Inserted 'researchers' to demonstrate the group being referred to here.
4	137	Collaboration and diversity of voices for inclusive palaeosciences	Which event in particular - the writing has moved through various topics so it isn't clear which event you are referring to?	Rewrote the sentence to state 'this neglect' to refer to the state of neglect of other voices
4	138	Collaboration and diversity of voices for inclusive palaeosciences	Missing a subject	Inserted 'the discipline'
5	145	Perspectives towards transforming the discipline	Subjective - expand and explain	For ease of clarity sentence reworded to "take into consideration the realities of other stakeholders"
5	150	Perspectives towards transforming the discipline	I would avoid personalising content in a scientific journal.	Changed 'our' to 'the regions'
5	160	Perspectives towards transforming the discipline	What does this mean?	To create clarity, the sentence is amended to include misusing human remains and objects
5	152	Perspectives towards transforming the discipline	'known' or 'knowing' very different things	Amended the error to 'knowing'
5	159	Perspectives	I don't see anything in the cited	Amended the error to

Page	Row	Section	Reviewer's comment	Response in red
		towards transforming the discipline	reference (23) that is relevant to this statement or supports this statement. This is a methods paper about measuring research productivity. I would expect to see a citation for a reference that talk explicitly about the subject of the sentence	reference 7
5	162	Perspectives towards transforming the discipline	'also' here suggests you've demonstrated someone else doing this, which I don't see above. This is a new point so 'also' may not be the best word here.	Noted. Removed 'also'
5	176	Perspectives towards transforming the discipline	in Zim or in SA, or both?	In South Africa
6	174	Perspectives towards transforming the discipline	Sufficient to achieve what? Worth being explicit here	Added 'to change colonial legacies'
6	177	Perspectives towards transforming the discipline	Are you a discipline? The wording here is awkward... it says you, as a discipline, are not seeing... Again, who is 'we'	amended to read 'palaeosciences is'
7	n/a	Research and human capital support	<p>This graph isn't going to demonstrate change because it lumps all the years of data together. What is the point of this. I would think, given the closing sentence of your last paragraph that you would like to show data that allows you to demonstrate that there has been no change. This graph doesn't do that. Why not present this by year from 2013 to 2023? Then we could see what has and hasn't changed. Why did you choose these years? Why not present a 30 year record from 1994 covering a very important period)... This graph could be a lot more informative and engaging with pertinent data.</p> <p>Is this also only a South African record? I'm still not sure why you are avoiding drawing on data from other southern African countries when your title explicitly states you are</p>	<p>We disagree with the reviewer here. The work required by the reviewer in this point is a longer term research project which is beyond the scope of this manuscript We believe the graph provides synopsis of the lack of transformation that characterizes the palaeosciences.</p>

Page	Row	Section	Reviewer's comment	Response in red
			considering a southern African context.	
7	181	Research and human capital support	Figure 1 doesn't show this.	Noted. The figure is removed from text.
7	N/A	Research Development and support	<p>There is an important comment acknowledgement and consideration missing here. The comment originally placed on line 194 was "Explain how this is relevant to the previous statement that includes all MSc and PhDs from all fields... Isn't this inevitable? There are dozens of fields with relatively few permanent positions in SA - this isn't a palaeo-specific issue. If you had shown us how many people were graduating with MSc and PhD degrees in palaeosciences vs permanent positions that would be relevant. Also, MSc degrees aren't typically going to get jobs in most universities so is this relevant? You would also need to include contract employment positions if you are trying to demonstrate a poor hiring potential in archaeology, palaeoanth (who don't typically do much contract work), and palaeontology.</p> <p>Why is this only in South Africa? The title of your paper is southern Africa. Why aren't you including information from all southern African countries (and you need to define this region because it could include anything from six to 15 countries) I'm not sure the data would look the same if you included them."</p>	<p>Again, the reviewer is suggesting that we undertake research (developing a research project to determine palaeosciences graduations) is a project that is beyond the scope of this manuscript.</p> <p>To answer the last part of the reviewer's comment, the title is changed to reflect South Africa and not southern Africa</p>
7	194	Research Development and support	Why is this not a definite number? Why is it 'at least'? It suggests you don't actually know. What is your data source? 'an online analysis' just isn't enough for a scientific journal.	Removed at least to "there were 66"
7	200	Collaboration and diversity of voices for inclusive palaeosciences	This is a complicated situation the nuance of which isn't really acknowledged. In numerous instances, senior white scientists are in the process of training	We reject the reviewer's stance. Training of black students is not new. 30 years post democracy the discipline should not still be training

Page	Row	Section	Reviewer's comment	Response in red
			black students (including white scientists at UCT) but this takes at least seven years (from honours to a first post-doc) and often more like 8 or 9 years. Maybe try and present data showing the number of black PG students in palaeoscience fields over the last 30 years - that would be insightful. Arguably, for those white senior scientists invested in training black students, without funding, there would be no locally available training. Yes, more positions need to be created to accommodate upcoming scientists and that is a national policy on university funding	black students. At some point these black students should graduate and practice. We cannot commend the discipline on keeping black people in a state of perpetual training.
7	194/197	Collaboration and diversity of voices for inclusive palaeosciences	This seems like an oxymoron - how can one dominate or occupy an available vacancy? Is it vacant or not? A vacancy must, by definition, be empty	Changed vacancy to position
7	206	Collaboration and diversity of voices for inclusive palaeosciences	I find this a little narrow in perspective. PG funding is a complicated machine that includes lots of good initiative but also very little money. You talk about the fossil access processes but not the funding protocols. PAST and the NRF (or through GENUS) have transformation goals and strict application processes including multiple committees and reviewers. I think this needs to be acknowledged because at the moment it sounds like they just make their mind up based on who they feel like funding. Some useful data here would be some ideas about how much money is made available to support numbers from the NRF.	None of what the reviewer is stating is implied nor stated in the paragraph.
7	228	Science education and awareness	Doesn't quite make sense - could use some adjustment of language	Sentence reworded.
7	n/a	Science education and awareness	This sentence doesn't quite fit here	Sentence is deleted
8	233	Science education and awareness	Complex sentence - suggest simplifying	The paragraph was too long. We separated it into 3 sentences.

Page	Row	Section	Reviewer's comment	Response in red
9	n/a	Science education and awareness	Again, a South African study.	Acknowledged as per the amended title of the manuscript
10	290	Practical solutions to drive effective transformation and social cohesion	This needs clarifying - 'select' can mean many things and leaving it hanging means it includes all types of 'select'. The point must flow onto the next sentence. It could mean that there are very few with dedicated digital platforms and so the select audience are those that can physically visit the exhibit - absolutely the case	Euro-centric audience is what is meant and inserted into the sentence
11	325	Practical solutions to drive effective transformation and social cohesion	It would be interesting to have an example or two from a country that was not an English colony, like Namibia or Mozambique to demonstrate the issue extends beyond this paradigm	Added an example of Nwadjahane site in Mozambique by Cruz (2022).
11	330	Practical solutions to drive effective transformation and social cohesion	What do you mean by 'issues'?	Inserted challenges faced by museums
11	374	Sustainable infrastructure development	All fair enough but whose job is this? Where does this responsibility lie?	Government through funding institutions
11	375	Sustainable infrastructure development	Not a sentence	Sentence deleted
11	375	Transforming a sustained human capital	Who in government? If you want this to be a proposal with tangible solutions then you need to be brave and lay this responsibility on someone	We named the DSAC and the DSI
12	392	Transforming a sustained human capital	And where is that support now? 22 years later?	We don't understand the reviewer's question which sounds rhetorical. NRF's support exists through the AOP.
12	390	Transforming a sustained human capital	You mean dismantling of funding agencies?	No the research status quo. Changed the working to 'rethinking of the research status quo'
12	392	Transforming a sustained human capital	check grammar	Added 'the practice of developing and archiving
13	427	Into a transformed socially cohesive	Why UCT? What evidence are you drawing on here? UG curricula? Faculty diversity? Leadership	Noted. This is provided as an example. We included the term collaboration in the

Page	Row	Section	Reviewer's comment	Response in red
		future	demographics? You need to be specific and substantiate everything because if you exclude other institutions that will just be yet another subjective perspective.	development of the humanity exhibition.
13	4430	Into a transformed socially cohesive future	You don't use either of these terms in the text and so it is odd that they appear now.	Deleted multi-faceted and multi-pronged and added inclusive.

Reviewer 1: Round 3

Date completed: 20 December 2024

Recommendation: Accept / **Revisions required** / Resubmit for review / Resubmit elsewhere / Decline / See comments

Conflicts of interest: None

Does the manuscript fall within the scope of SAJS?

Yes/No

Is the manuscript written in a style suitable for a non-specialist and is it of wider interest than to specialists alone?

Yes/No

Does the manuscript contain sufficient novel and significant information to justify publication?

Yes/No

Do the Title and Abstract clearly and accurately reflect the content of the manuscript?

Yes/No

Is the research problem significant and concisely stated?

Yes/No

Are the methods described comprehensively?

Yes/No

Is the statistical treatment appropriate?

Yes/No/**Not applicable**/Not qualified to judge

Are the interpretations and conclusions justified by the research results?

Yes/**Partly**/No

Please rate the manuscript on overall contribution to the field

Excellent/Good/**Average**/Below average/Poor

Please rate the manuscript on language, grammar and tone

Excellent/Good/**Average**/Below average/Poor

Is the manuscript succinct and free of repetition and redundancies?

Yes/No

Are the results and discussion confined to relevance to the objective(s)?

Yes/No

The number of tables in the manuscript is

Too few/Adequate/Too many/**Not applicable**

The number of figures in the manuscript is

Too few/Adequate/Too many/**Not applicable**

Is the supplementary material relevant and separated appropriately from the main document?

Yes/No/**Not applicable**

Please rate the manuscript on overall quality

Excellent/Good/**Average**/Below average/Poor

Is appropriate and adequate reference made to other work in the field?

Yes/No

Is it stated that ethical approval was granted by an institutional ethics committee for studies involving human subjects and non-human vertebrates?

Yes/No/**Not applicable**

If accepted, would you recommend that the article receives priority publication?

Yes/**No**

Are you willing to review a revision of this manuscript?

Yes/**No**

With regard to our policy on 'Publishing peer review reports', do you give us permission to publish your anonymised peer review report alongside the authors' response, as a supplementary file to the published article? Publication is voluntary and only with permission from both yourself and the author.

Yes/**No**

Comments to the Author:

Overall, the paper seems very similar to previous drafts. There are some changes that have been made, but these are surface level. The comments that I made about the previous drafts still stand. The paper could be read as one approach to decolonization. Debate about what constitutes decolonization is necessary in the field and thus the paper should be published to allow for a conversation about the approach used by the authors. Debate is necessary as we try and figure out how to transform the discipline of paleoanthropology. This paper takes a very economical approach and an approach of adding on to a colonial system of scientific knowledge production. As stated previously because there is not an appropriate exploration of the 'colonial wrongs' the authors don't grapple with the nature of knowledge production and how the inclusion of black scholars can 'decolonize' the discipline so that we don't repeat the 'colonial wrongs'.

[See Appendix 5 for Reviewer 1's comments made directly on the manuscript]

Author response to Reviewer 1: Round 3

Page	Row	Section	Reviewer's comment	Response in red
2	127-128	Collaboration and diversity of voices for inclusive palaeosciences	Again a better understanding of the nature of coloniality and how it shaped human evolution knowledge production would allow for a better analysis of the legacies of colonialism. How is the language of global history used to undermine local ownership and how is this a form of neo colonial control by agencies such as UNESCO. This is just a comment, as I think the authors are unlikely to explore these issues further.	We recognise the reviewers comment. However, the scope of the reviewer's request is too big for this paper.
7	214-217	Research and human capital support	This change does not speak to the key issue, which is do we as scholars want to reproduce the science that we are trying to transform. Again the issue is that we need to train more scholars of colour to assimilate to a scientific practice which centres objects over communities.	Addressed in sentence and added: "Should the current situation continue, there will be knowledge gaps in the understanding of the region's human past and a reliance on stories narrated by Westerners without the involvement of local communities. This will create a knowledge gap in indigenous perspectives within the discipline"

Page	Row	Section	Reviewer's comment	Response in red
11	359	<i>Sustainable infrastructure development</i>	Should South not be capitalized if West is?	We capitalised 'Global South' as suggested.
13	421	Awareness, education and leadership for change	Public private partnerships are a neo-liberal response, which does not align with the concept of decolonization. Numerous archaeologists have written about the dangers of working with private companies to protect heritage. Often archaeologists work against and not towards the best interests of communities and the planet.	Deleted the phrase: "that can stimulate public and private buy-in to the field". Inserted reference number 66: Lesley G. "Archaeologies of Intellectual Heritage?" In: C. Gnecco C, Lippert, D. Ethics and Archaeological Praxis. New York, Springer; 2015. p. 229–43.

Associate Editor comments to Author: Round 3

See Appendix 6 for Associate Editor's comments on manuscript

Author response to Associate Editor: Round 3

Page	Row	Section	Reviewer's comment	Response in turquoise
3	74	Introduction	Is it appropriate to also cite Christa Kuljian's peer reviewed article here as recommended by the reviewer? Response does not make this clear either way	We cited Christa's journal article and not the book. The reviewer suggested referencing academic peer reviewed journals as opposed to the book.
3	90	Discovery of the Taung Child and the birth of Palaeosciences in Southern Africa	See previous reviewer comment about mixing tenses within a sentence and how this is confusing to the reader	Fixed to present tense throughout the document
3	93	Discovery of the Taung Child and the birth of Palaeosciences in Southern Africa	Present tense	Amended 'was' to 'is'
6	196-198	Research and human capital support	Reference or data to support?	To avoid confusion and to ensure the discussion flows, the sentence 'However, our research demonstrates that the trend of funding support is still in favour of projects led by White male researchers over Black people and women' is deleted as this is discussed in later sentences and referenced.
6	196-198	Research and human capital support	Is this also for ref 28? If so please cite	Yes, it is. The reference number has changed to ref number 30.

Page	Row	Section	Reviewer's comment	Response in turquoise
6	197-198	Research and human capital support	Include a reference to support this	Reference added
7	217	Research and human capital support	Please acknowledge that this is a broader issue that is not unique to the palaeosciences	the broad issue is acknowledged
7	219	Research and human capital support	Why communities? Previously written as local scientists which seems more appropriate	agreed. 'communities' is changed to 'scientists'
7	218	Research and human capital support	Would work better to add a separate sentence acknowledging the need to include local community engagement in transformation	added 'engaging local communities'