



# Rethinking the presentation at Olduvai Gorge site museum within Integrated Landscape Management (ILM) framework

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## Abstract

Despite the relevance of the Olduvai complex and of the remarkable research undertaken for decades, the picture that one gets from the current site museum display is that of the incomplete and fragmented representation of Olduvai Gorge cultural landscape. Noticeable, there are aspects and themes of presentation and interpretation at the site museum which have remained largely unchanged despite the ever changing and dynamic cultural landscape and knowledge resulting from research. This paper raises issues of comprehensive integrated presentation of all themes represented in the territory framed in the broader perspective of heritage management within integrated landscape management framework. The paper opined that 21<sup>st</sup> century museums (OG site museum) need to take into consideration the presentation of all territorial themes that incorporate tangible and intangible heritage visible or not on the cultural landscape. In the end the paper recommends rethinking presentation by modelling integrated preservation and presentation strategies that ensure the message of the past and present are interpreted and presented effectively to the indigenous communities as well as the visitors for sustainable heritage management.

## Introduction

The incomprehensive presentation and interpretation of the past, inadequate knowledge construction and dissemination to the public and outdated structural facilities have remained a key dimension of dissatisfaction at Olduvai Gorge site museum. Reasons for such negative occurrence is mainly attributed to heritage management and have been fully examined by researchers elsewhere (Kusimba and Kusimba, 2003; Mabulla, 2000, and Kimambo, 2014). It is very unfortunate that despite the good will and efforts geared at improving the situation, drastic changes need to be undertaken. In Tanzania, Department of Antiquities (DoA) is charged with custodianship and development of site museums of Olduvai gorge and Kaole (found in Kaole ruins) among others which represent specific

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themes of paleontological, archaeological, historic, ethnographic and political collections (Kayombo, 2005; Msemwa, 2005; Masao, 2010).

It is imperative to know that museums that carry specific themes such as Olduvai Gorge pose a network of challenges that need to be differently addressed and constantly revised given their unique mission and public expectations. Suffice it to say that Olduvai Gorge's breakthrough in these notorious challenges of poor and fragmented presentation of the site, lack of interest of general public in site museum and inadequate consideration and integration of stakeholders' interests (often conflictive); is yet to be realized with the adoption of integrated landscape management. The main objective is therefore to bridge the gap between heritage and heritage users which will enhance knowledge construction and dissemination, quality experience and heritage longevity. The paper strongly believes by adopting and adapting this framework, a more clearer complete and comprehensive storyline of Olduvai Gorge cultural landscape and true sustainability of heritage management born out of improved stakeholders' partnership and integration (knowledge socialization) will be realized.

The Rio+20 conference in 2012, amidst a bitter feeling of failure when thinking back on the aims and expectation of 1992, stressed the relevance of human behaviour in the framework of sustainability. This awareness increases the interest of societies on the understanding of different strategies, across different territories and across time. This explains the growing interest in Human evolution and, specifically, on Olduvai Gorge.

Understanding humans as a link involving society (human organisations), environment (human context) and economics (human behaviour) enables to understand humanities as a set of expertise for integrated landscape management for sustainable development. A new role for the Humanities is, then, to build critical conceptual capacities, promoting new integrated landscape management plans that value these issues, but also to give coherence to the tripod of sustainability, to bridge the gap with other sciences to rephrase the dichotomy between economics and culture and to promote the didactics of dilemmas and of convergence within diversity.

The specific relevance of archaeology in such a programme for humanities is twofold. On one hand its expertise in assessing adaptation mechanisms, economyenvironment balances, techniques and technology. On the other hand it offers an interdisciplinary approach that goes beyond humanities, involving social and natural sciences when addressing those topics. In fact, archaeology provides in depth understanding of the relation between resources and needs, between techniques and energy, or between knowledge and territory. This is how it looks into the past, e.g. when discussing the emergence of space dominance by early hunters, the role space and time notions in the conquest of symmetry, or when assessing transitions into farming relating resources, climate and human social dynamics. Archaeological research offers to contemporary society, hence, an integrated insight into past landscapes and their human dynamics, contributing to disseminate awareness of adaptation mechanisms and of the need to value all levels of information. It is this insight that calls for a specific type of reasoning that proves to be useful in contemporary society and, we believe, it is in this line that heritage management can be useful for fostering a dynamic of cultural integrated landscape management.

## Materials and methods

In this section the paper explores the nature of heritage found at Olduvai Gorge, existing infrastructure for research and museology and the appropriate methodology pursued. The undisputed relevance of Olduvai Gorge greatly lies on her unique tangible and

intangible heritage. Its remarkable paleontological and archaeological richness had long been underscored by Dr(s) Leakeys whose unparalleled legacy at Olduvai forever lives. Their dedicated scientific work at Olduvai was responsible for the great discoveries of three hominin remains of *Paranthropus/Australopithecus boisei*, *Homo habilis* (handy man) and *Homo erectus/ergaster* (Leakey, 1959; Leakey *et alia.*, 1964; Leakey, 1971; M. D. Leakey, 1976; Clarke, 2012; Dominguez-Rodrigo *et alia.*, 2013). Archaeological heritage inform of “living floors” and stone artefacts of Oldowan and Archeulian industries were carefully studied and properly treated through the enduring work of MD Leakey who also pioneered conservation through field (site) *musea* vision (M. D. Leakey, 1971; M.D Leakey & Roe, 1994; Willoughby, 1997; Tobias, 1997). It is of no wonder that in 2010 Olduvai Gorge under Ngorongoro Conservation Area assumed a privileged sit at UNESCO World Heritage list as a World Heritage Cultural Heritage Landscape (UNESCO Report, WHC 10/34.COM/20). In stressing the importance of Olduvai at national level, Mabulla (2000) opined that, “this famous World paleontological and archaeological site provides the country with comprehensive documentation of hominin biological and cultural evolution patterns spanning 2 million years ago”. Today, the living seminomadic Maasai community who calls Olduvai home has further beautifies the landscape with their remarkable intangible heritage of their resilient traditional systems. These include but not limited to the fascinating traditional cultural dances, songs, legends, bead working, traditional medicine to mention but a few. The need therefore to integrate traditional system that are heritage friendly become unescapable and paramount to promote cultural identity and minimize community alienation. Existing infrastructure for research is a mosaic of old structures/buildings constructed by the Leakey’s in the 1950’s and newly erected modern buildings. The Oldest camp with permanent infrastructures is that of the Leakey camp (Fig. 001, 002) which is now being used for research purposes by the longrunning project The Olduvai Paleoanthropology Project (OLAPP) initiated in 1989, The Olduvai Geochronology Archaeology Project (OGAP), Olduvai Vertebrate Paleontology Project (OVP) and Conservation of Olduvai Project (COP). The Aguirre-Mturi Research station at Olduvai Gorge was built in cooperation of The Olduvai Paleoanthropological and Paleoeological Project (TOPPP) and Cives Mundi. This research station is being used by the Spanish-Tanzanian team and their students for field schools and research purposes at large (Fig. 003).



**Figure 001**  
Leakey's camp structures.



**Figure 002**  
New site laboratory.



**Figure 003**  
Aguirre-Mturi station.

The current museum’s facilities at Olduvai include the information center built by the Leakey’s in 1970 and opened to the public in 1972 (Paresso, personal communication) and was later expanded through the construction of adjacent hall by the Getty Conservation Institute in 1966 (Kimambo, 2014). The museum complex includes orientation room, Olduvai and Laetoli room (Fig. 004), two lecture venues (banda in Swahili) (Fig. 005) and newly constructed washroom facilities (Fig. 006).



**Figure 004**  
Museum entrance.



**Figure 005**  
Lecture venue.



**Figure 006**  
Washroom facility.

## Methodology pursued for data collection

This paper uses some field work data that I collected for my master's thesis on the current trends and management of Olduvai Gorge cultural landscape in Aug-Sept 2014. Specific set of data that will be used in this discussion comes from the 46 recorded questionnaires that were distributed to the local community members and tour guides and 24 interviews made on tourists and scientific researchers. Questionnaires were designed to address specific segments of the research target. First set of questionnaires were to be administered to the Maasai leaders, researchers, Ngorongoro Conservation Area Authority officials and Antiquities' department officials at Olduvai. This type of questionnaire included information on first: basic demographic data, second: sociocultural data including; family structure, medical care, housing, clothing and symbols, religion, leisure and third information with regards to heritage. These questionnaires were printed in both English and Swahili and included multiple choice questions where the respondent was asked to choose from the various options one which best reflected their opinions and the open spaced questionnaires were intended to offer much freedom of expression and opinions from the respondent. Interviews were conducted in three languages Swahili, English and Ma (Maasai language). The latter I was assisted in translation and interpretation by a fellow masters student on Heritage management from the University of Dar es Salaam who is also a proudly Maasai. Personal interviews were both recorded using voice recorder and where necessary notes were jotted down. Telephone interviewing (Kothari, 2004) became necessary given the time constraint that I faced and the need to keep up with new updated information from key interviewees. This method provided an opportune and proved effective in gathering wider yet vital information and knowledge beyond the limits of the questions I had set.

## Results

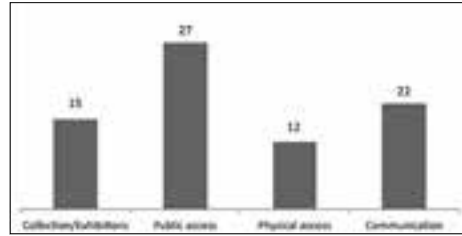
Herein are the statistics presented in table, graphs and quoted statements reflecting various stakeholders' responses with regards to their perceptions on the relevance of the site museum at Olduvai Gorge (Table 001). Recorded questionnaires (46 in number) were

**Table 001**

NO	Stakeholders segment	Total in number	Total in percentage
1	Local Maasai	36	51.4%
2	Tourists	19	27.1%
3	Tour guides	10	14.2%
4	Scientific Researchers	5	7.1%
<b>Total</b>		<b>70</b>	<b>99.8%</b>

distributed to local community members and tour guides and 24 personal interviews were administered to tourists and scientific researchers. These figures make a total of 70 people.

The graph below represents stakeholders' responses indicating specific presentation challenges at Olduvai site museum (Fig. 007). Results indicate that the majority of the stakeholders (38.6 %) registered their sentiments with regards to public access



**Figure 007** – Stakeholders responses indicating specific presentation challenges at Olduvai site museums.

which included partial engagement resulting from a strong sense of alienation mostly raised by the community members. Communication challenges ranked the second where 22 respondents (31.4%) raised concerns on the inadequate and outdated information, limited languages used and lack of interactive communication devices such as touch panels, brochures, recorded sounds to mention but a few. The other 21.4 % (15) mentioned few collections of the museum displays, inadequate exhibitions and poor information presentation to be a major source of dissatisfaction. On the other hand the last group pointed to the poor infrastructure in terms of inaccessibility of site (poor roads), lack of refreshment facilities/services and the small size museum. When a local Maasai community member was asked why he visited the museum and the relevance of the museum this is what he had to say, “I visit the museum to see what these visitors (*wageni* in Swahili) go to do in the museum. It has been there for more than 50 years yet there are no improvement on social facilities and our lives in general”. On the other hand the interviewed researcher’ experience from Perugia University (Italy) was different as witnessed in his words, “It is a great pity that the museum is very small, outdated with few collection”. The tourist from Canada put it this way, “It is a site museum with organized material but very small. It requires expansion, more informative communication aids such as big screens, brochures and use of many languages also scientific updated information”. The last but not least were the remarks of the tour director of Abercombie and Kent Ltd who stressed that emphasis need to be put on community development especially of Maasai community whom he thinks they have been left behind in National priorities.

## Discussion and conclusion

Judging from the ongoing discussion and results presented the need to bridging the gap between heritage presentation to the community and strengthening stakeholders’ partnership and integration stands out. According to Webber (2001) integrated presentation ensues that all the message of the past encoded in the heritage are interpreted and presented effectively to the indigenous communities which I strongly believe to be a remedy to community alienation and a catalyst to promoting cultural identity.

Such a premise is rooted from the realization of the expansion of the concept of cultural heritage to encompass now all past evidences, material or intangible, that may be assigned value by segments of contemporary societies, allowed for all human groups to be entitled to have their specific heritages recognised. This demonstrates the need of heritage to take cognizance of different stakeholders’ interests which are often conflictive given their diversity in nature. In this context cultural heritage management of Olduvai Gorge in a broader sense and heritage presentation in particular needs to be framed within integrated landscape management as part of global territorial management.

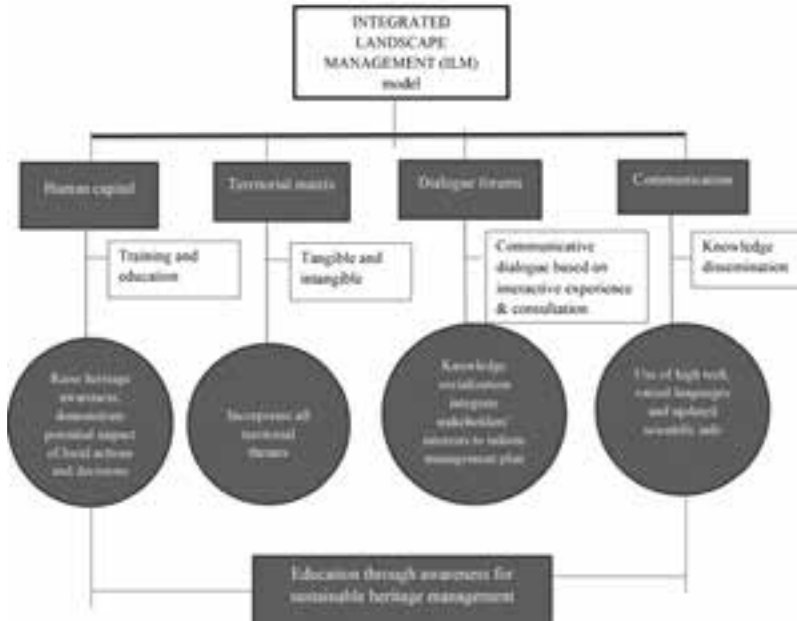


Figure 008 – Proposed integrated landscape management model for Olduvai Gorge.

Enfolding integrated landscape management and operation. Scheunemann and Oosterbeek (2012) extrapolate Integrated Landscape Management as a stakeholder-oriented and participatory process that attempts to influence the direction of a transition towards a more sustainable regional development and improvement on the quality of life. It has a prerequisite a longterm vision, then, experiments in niches to prepare bigger interventions and to build new coalitions between actors. Chief amongst the rationale behind integrated management is the realization of a system of resources of often of nonrenewable nature that make up the territory. Secondly is the need to protect and secure an even access to different human groups implying articulation of different and often contradictory perspectives, interests and agendas (Oosterbeek, 2012). In this sense human groups are part of the territory but with different perceived perceptions on the territory and these differences in perceptions are referred to as “landscapes”. By taking into consideration all factors and the presence of different actors (stakeholders) relevant to the territory, it provides a breakthrough for a systemicholistic understanding for the informed governance of Cultural heritage management. Of great importance to this subject are the four pillars upon which this model is grounded namely formations, territorial matrix, dialogue forums and most important communication. This *modus operandi* provides room for the flow of information, ideas and views from various stakeholders resulting into the rapprochement of presentation strategies at Olduvai Gorge. The proposed integrated landscape management model and its anticipated resultant benefits for improved presentation at OG are summarized in the Fig. 008 below.

In the process of stakeholder involvement training and education to the general population and literally to every community member is essential. This process may be executed in phases given magnitude of the process itself and resources available. The main aim is to create heritage awareness to a wider community without exception since cultural heritage

is a collective memory of humankind (Oosterbeek *et alia.*, 2010). Another core element for ILM is territorial governance which is linked to the concept of territorial competitiveness to ensure coordination between different stakeholders (Scheunemann and Oosterbeek, 2012). This is where the proposal to incorporate all territorial themes at Olduvai comes in. Such may include though not limited to themes featuring in historical (the materiality of Maasai history) or formal organization of the traditional cultural systems in a living museum to create a sense of belongingness. Furthermore in an attempt to foster coordination between stakeholders' temporal scientific exhibitions for the public may be mounted to complement OG information centre but also to generate knowledge combined with entertainment (edutainment). The logic behind dialogue forums which are based on interactive experience and consultation aims at harnessing as much knowledge as possible from different stakeholders, talk of merging scientific knowledge with traditional knowledge for instance. The process of knowledge socialization is key to informed management plan which is a product of consolidation of knowledge within a spirit of partnership and multidisciplinary. In the end communication the cumulative knowledge arised from the effective and appropriate dialogue need to be communicative efficiently and effectively to the wider public in every possible way.

In concluding, heritage management has the obligation to understand the nature of diverse stakeholders involved, their diverse interests and make a provision for a constant review and changes moving away from a traditional monolith heritage management. Such understanding is guided by a plausible reasoning that stakeholders change and so is the context. This does not downplay the previous proposed heritage assessment or even that which is currently applied at OG; but simply means assessment of the conditions of heritage and stakeholders now have changed hence calling for a new paradigm shift in cultural heritage management for true sustainability a model we call integrated landscape management.

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