

# The Archie Mafeje Institute for Applied Social Policy Research

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The Archie Mafeje Institute for Applied Social Policy Research, in short the Archie Mafeje Research Institute (AMRI), is a policy research institute based at the University of South Africa is dedicated to promoting the legacy of Archie Mafeje in terms of innovative knowledge production for applied social policy in pursuit of progressive change in African society through the provision of fresh thinking and novel policy ideas for the fight against poverty, inequality, social disintegration, lack of social justice, weak citizenship, collapse of institutions of community and family and other societal ills. It conducts research and facilitates scholarly and policy debates based on a rigorous understanding of African social formations and a clear definition of societal transformation aimed at social justice and poverty eradication in Africa. In particular, AMRI is concerned with change that results from knowledge garnered from the experiences and thought patterns of ordinary Africans.

## Archie Mafeje

Archie Mafeje left South Africa at the height of apartheid after being refused a university position [see his biographical profile below]. He worked in various universities and research centres, including in Cairo, Dar-es-Salaam, Harare, Windhoek and The Hague, where he produced cutting edge research on different dynamics of societal transformation. He joined Unisa as a professor in 2002 until his untimely death in 2007. Throughout his academic life, he inspired the wider community of African scholars to pursue independent and critical approaches to knowledge production to contribute towards Africa's renewal agenda and global peace. As a result of his passion for alternative and transdisciplinary discourses on the African condition, Mafeje dedicated his life to promoting endogenous knowledge that would inform solutions to African social problems and to building an epistemic community of African scholars dedicated to creative thinking about critical African policy challenges. For this reason, AMRI aims to provide a platform for African scholars and analysts to become thought-leaders for social transformation on the continent.

## **Vision and Mission**

The vision of AMRI is to become a dynamic Pan-African research institute and a repository of knowledge on Africa's social formations (past, present and future) with the aim of influencing progressive social transformation in Africa. Hence, the overall mission is to (1) become an African knowledge production think-tank that will provide thorough ongoing research in areas of social change, this will contribute towards Africa's renewal agenda and global peace, (2) to contribute towards Africa's renewal and global reform through alternative knowledge, dynamic academic and policy conversations, cutting-edge publications, a sought-after repository of information on African societal transformation and community engagement, and therefore (3), the main purpose of the Archie Mafeje Research Institute is to enhance endogenous and Pan-African research for application in resolving Africa's social challenges.

## **Aims**

The aims of AMRI are to: (1) create new and alternative knowledge through critical research on Africa, based on theories and epistemologies reflecting endogenous thought; (2) build, sustain and strengthen Pan-Africanist research communities in order to leverage a critical mass of endogenous scholarship for social transformation, and to (3) to promote innovative ways of influencing change on the continent through research that informs policy processes, training and community empowerment and information dissemination

## **Intellectual Agenda**

Given the Pan-African outlook of AMRI, its research will primarily entail: (1) generating knowledge that affirms Africa and contributes to the renaissance of Africa; (2) understanding the social condition of the people of Africa on the continent and globally; (3) enhancing an Africa-centered perspective on social transformation, based on endogenous knowledge and the articulation of local experiences, and (4) promoting comparative applied policy research in African countries and the diaspora, including comparative studies

## **Methodological Orientation**

AMRI emphasizes indigeneity in relation to universal knowledge as a basic aspect of a research methodology based on sound scholarship and applied and sustained research, thus AMRI will value Multi, Inter and Transdisciplinary approaches (MIT) by seeking to bridge the compartmentalization of knowledge disciplines, and second, it will influence change by promoting debate and dialogues around varied perspectives and discourses, while disseminating its works widely.

Therefore, the thematic areas for research will engage broad thematic areas that constitute the institute's intellectual agenda to include: (1) critical enquiry into African knowledge production and epistemological systems, with the aim of generating endogenous Afrocentric perspectives and paradigms; (2) understanding African families in the context of demographic change, based on rigorous ethnographic approaches; (3) understanding the social institutions that are relevant to transforming the African state; (4) conceptualizing the land and agrarian reforms that redress inequality and eradicate poverty, and (5) rethinking the concepts and processes of inclusive development for the 21st century.

### **Publication Agenda**

AMRI intends to publish: (1) policy briefs to provide trenchant analysis of topical policy issues and questions for the benefit of policy actors and broader civil society in Africa; (2) research papers to provide in-depth analysis of major themes relating to societal transformation in Africa and South Africa; (3) books (edited and authored) dedicated to wide-ranging analysis of conceptual and policy questions related to the institute's intellectual agenda; (4) a journal to provide space for seasoned and upcoming scholars to engage with a variety of theoretical, empirical and policy questions; and (5), a website and other e-publications for easy consumption by the broader public

### **Governance, Funding, Sponsorship**

The institute is governed by a non-executive board of directors, comprising a representative of the Vice-Chancellor of the University of South Africa, accomplished scholars and policy practitioners. Their primary task is to provide strategic guidance and oversight of the work of the institute, including overseeing the work of the director and formulating policy and regulations that govern the operations of the institute. This board also provides the link between the institute and the university's governance structures. The board meets once every quarter and the final board meeting also considers its composition. Ultimately, the institute resides within the University of South Africa's College of Graduate Studies. Although the institute was established through seed funding from the University of South Africa, it supplements this core funding through external grants and contracts. It also accepts applications for corporate membership from universities, companies and NGOs that value a partnership with the institute.

### **Scientific Committee**

An AMRI Scientific Committee will be composed of renowned African academics and policy practitioners that can guide the institute's intellectual agenda, including the design of long range and short-term research plans, strategic dialogues, publications and community engagement. Thus, it provides an intellectual platform for AMRI to brainstorm social research issues of relevance to the continent and to support the incubation of strategic research ideas of AMRI. The board appoints members of the Scientific Committee, and the chair of the Scientific Committee reports to the board. The Scientific Committee is thus a subcommittee of the board.

## **Monwabisi Archbald Mafeje, Ph.D.**

Dr. Monwabisi Archbald Mafeje was born on 28 March 1936 in Engcobo in the Eastern Cape, South Africa. He grew up in an academic setting – his father was headmaster of the local primary school and his mother was a teacher. Sent to Healdtown (an illustrious school whose former pupils included South African State President Nelson Mandela and founder of the Pan African Congress Robert Sobukwe) Mafeje was influenced by History teacher (and activist, journalist and writer) Livingstone Mogotsi. After completing his schooling he studied for a year at Fort Hare University before being expelled for political activities. He moved onto the University of Cape Town (UCT) in 1957 where he enrolled in Zoology, before quickly changing tack and signing up for a BA degree in Social Anthropology. It was a successful switch, with Mafeje obtaining a first-class Honours degree. After obtaining his Master's degree, cum laude, in Political Anthropology, Mafeje headed abroad to Cambridge University in England, to write his Doctoral thesis based on fieldwork in rural Uganda. There he obtained a Ph.D. in anthropology and rural sociology in 1966. He travelled the world and eventually made footprints in areas such as Tanzania where he held a senior position at the University of Dar es Salaam. He also held professorial posts at the American University in Cairo and Makerere College.



In 1973, at the age of 34, he was appointed professor of anthropology and sociology of development at the Institute of Social Studies in The Hague by an Act of Parliament and with the approval of all the Dutch universities, becoming the first African scholar to be so distinguished in The Netherlands. His name appears in the prestigious blue pages of the Dutch National Directorate. During the long years of his exile from South Africa, the Council for the Development of Social Science Research in Africa (CODESRIA) became Mafeje's home where he contributed in no small measure to charting an Afrocentric approach to the study of African issues. But he also had an enormous impact outside of Africa where he had many experiences as visiting researcher, fellow or professor at Cambridge University, at the University of Copenhagen, at the Nordic Africa Institute in Uppsala, at Umeå University in Sweden and at NorthWestern University in Chicago. His most productive years were during the 1980s and 1990s, publishing widely on a diverse range of topics. He wrote a path-finding article, 'The Ideology of Tribalism', and also book chapters entitled 'The Land Question and Agrarian Revolution in Buganda', 'Religion, Class', and 'Neo-Colonialism, State Capitalism or Revolution'. Archie during his academic years Mafeje entered numerous debates challenging the concept of a dual economy, on the nature of the agrarian and land questions in Africa, and on the significance of the Soweto uprising in South Africa. Archie Mafeje described himself as being South African by birth, Dutch by citizenship, and Egyptian by domicile.

In 2000 Mafeje finally returned to his homeland, South Africa where he was appointed a research fellow by the National Research Foundation (NRF) working at the African Renaissance Centre at the University of South Africa. Although he was involved with the CODESRIA throughout his lifetime, it was only upon his return to South Africa that he became a member of the scientific committee of the council, and in 2003 was awarded honorary life membership. In 2005, in respect of his outstanding contributions, he was appointed a CODESRIA Distinguished Fellow.

Professor Archie Mafeje, died in Pretoria, South Africa two days before his 71st birthday on 28 March 2007. In his tribute to Mafeje, Professor Fred Hendricks from Rhodes University stated that, "He was a respected scholar and deeply committed to the pan-Africanist cause of political, economic and cultural emancipation." Adebayo Olukoshi, Executive Secretary of CODESRIA, declared Mafeje as, "A great pan-African, an outstanding scientist, a first rate debater, a frontline partisan in the struggle for social justice, and a gentleman of great humanitarian principles." Archie Mafeje will be remembered for being opinion minded, intelligent and focused and for being a scholar who did not fear to raise matters that are challenging within the social scene.

**Source** (accessed 2-27-17):

[http://www.unisa.ac.za/sites/corporate/default/Colleges/Graduate-studies/Schools,-Institutes-&-Research-Chairs/School-of-Transdisciplinary-Research-Institutes-\(STRI\)/Archie-Mafeje-Research-Institute-\(AMRI\)/About-Archie-Mafeje](http://www.unisa.ac.za/sites/corporate/default/Colleges/Graduate-studies/Schools,-Institutes-&-Research-Chairs/School-of-Transdisciplinary-Research-Institutes-(STRI)/Archie-Mafeje-Research-Institute-(AMRI)/About-Archie-Mafeje)

[http://www.unisa.ac.za/sites/corporate/default/Colleges/Graduate-studies/Schools,-Institutes-&-Research-Chairs/School-of-Transdisciplinary-Research-Institutes-\(STRI\)/Archie-Mafeje-Research-Institute-\(AMRI\)/About-the-Institute](http://www.unisa.ac.za/sites/corporate/default/Colleges/Graduate-studies/Schools,-Institutes-&-Research-Chairs/School-of-Transdisciplinary-Research-Institutes-(STRI)/Archie-Mafeje-Research-Institute-(AMRI)/About-the-Institute)