

Prospectus

Archie Mafeje  
Research  
Institute *(AMRI)*

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# About Us

The Archie Mafeje Institute for Applied Social Policy Research, in short Archie Mafeje Research Institute (AMRI), is a policy research institute based at University of South Africa. It 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.

Professor Archie Mafeje left South Africa at the height of apartheid after being refused a university position. 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

### Vision

The institute aims 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.

### Mission

To become an African knowledge production think-tank that will provide thorough research in areas of social change to contribute towards Africa's renewal agenda and global peace.

To produce alternative knowledge, dynamic academic and policy conversations, cutting-edge publications, a sought-after repository of information on African societal transformation and community engagement.

### Purpose

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.



## Objectives

### The institute aims

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

## AMRI's Intellectual Agenda

### Given the Pan-African outlook of AMRI, its research will primarily entail

- Generating knowledge that affirms Africa and contributes to the renaissance of Africa
- Understanding the social condition of the people of Africa on the continent and globally
- Enhancing an Africa-centred perspective on social transformation, based on endogenous knowledge and the articulation of local experiences
- Promoting comparative applied policy research in African countries and the diaspora, including comparative studies

## Methodological Orientation

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

## AMRI's Thematic Areas for Research

The broad thematic areas that constitute the institute's intellectual agenda include

- Critical enquiry into African knowledge production and epistemological systems, with the aim of generating endogenous Afrocentric perspectives and paradigms
- Understanding African families in the context of demographic change, based on rigorous ethnographic approaches
- Understanding the social institutions that are relevant to transforming the African state
- Conceptualising the land and agrarian reforms that redress inequality and eradicate poverty
- Rethinking the concepts and processes of inclusive development for the 21<sup>st</sup> century

## AMRI's Publications Agenda

AMRI intends to publish the following:

- Policy briefs to provide trenchant analysis of topical policy issues and questions for the benefit of policy actors and broader civil society in Africa
- Research papers to provide in-depth analysis of major themes relating to societal transformation in Africa and South Africa
- Books (edited and authored) dedicated to wide-ranging analysis of conceptual and policy questions related to the institute's intellectual agenda
- A journal to provide space for seasoned and upcoming scholars to engage with a variety of theoretical, empirical and policy questions
- Website and other e-publications for easy consumption by the broader public.

## Governance

The institute is governed by a non-executive board of directors, comprising a representative of the Vice-Chancellor of Unisa, 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 will reside within Unisa's College of Graduate Studies.

## Funding/Sponsorship

Although the institute was established through seed funding from Unisa, 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

A Scientific Committee comprising renowned African academics and policy practitioners guides the institute's intellectual agenda, including the design of long range and short-term research plans, strategic dialogues, publications and community engagement. 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.

### The current interim Scientific Committee members are

- Dr Sphamandla Zondi (chair), Head: Institute for Global Dialogue
- Prof Lenka Bula, Director of Projects and Advisor in the Vice-Chancellor's office, Unisa
- Prof Shadrack Gutto, Institute for African Renaissance Studies, Unisa
- Prof Fred Hendricks, Dean of Humanities: Rhodes University
- Mr Wiseman Magasela, Deputy Director-General: Department of Social Development, SA
- Prof Veronica McKay, A/Deputy Dean, College of Education, Unisa
- Prof Sam Moyo, President: Executive Director: African Institute for Agrarian Studies
- Prof Hellicy Ngambi, Executive Dean of the College of Economic and Management Sciences, Unisa
- Prof Dzodzi Tsikata, Head of the Centre for Gender Studies and Advocacy, Senior Research Fellow at the Institute of Statistical, Social and Economic Research (ISSER) and Deputy at the University of Ghana



*“Archie Mafeje was an independent Pan-Africanist and cosmopolitan individual who sought to understand the world at a global level in order to locate Africa within that tapestry. In many ways, Archie Mafeje was one of the African intellectual pathfinders. He contributed immensely to the African people’s search for self-understanding, self-determination and political emancipation as they struggled against alienation and misrepresentation”.*

Professor Dani W Nabudere

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