**Ocen successfully defended his Thesis on Wednesday January 25, 2017**

Makerere Institute of Social Research (MISR) is proud to announce and congratulate Laury Lawrence Ocen upon the successful defence of his Thesis; **"*Reading Monuments: Politics and Poetics of Memory in Postwar Northern Uganda”.***

Ocen was the first to defend his thesis from the pioneer class of nine students who joined the PhD programme in January 2012. MISR launched its Interdisciplinary PhD in Social Studies in January 2012. The five-year programme entails two years of coursework and three years of dissertation research and writing. Four broad themes define the programme’s intellectual focus: Political Studies, Political Economy, Historical Studies, and Cultural Studies. Students specialize in one field, but take classes across all four. This allows students to be grounded theoretically, while also giving them a broad foundation in historically informed debates in the humanities and social sciences. In addition, there is a set of core courses, with a focus on theory and historiography, required of all students. The courses are taught by MISR faculty, faculty from other Makerere units, and by distinguished visiting scholars through the MISR Global Scholars Programme.

Dr. Okello Ogwang and Dr. Florence Ebila were Ocen’s supervisors and Associate Professor Okaka Opio Dokotum; the Vice Chancellor Academic Affairs at Lira University was his viva voce opponent.

In the thesis Ocen presents monuments as material objects located on former sites of war to remember experiences of mass killings and abductions only. By so doing, other equally important experiences of war such as hunger, infant and child mortality, disease, beatings by soldiers, suicide, curfew laws, etc. are ignored or ineffectively represented. To take care of these forgotten experiences of micro suffering during the war, Ocen suggests remembrance options that allow peasants, children, small traders, women, and other marginal groups to remember the war in their own fashion. Ocen argues that systems of remembering dictated by financers and power holders may not be totally ignored, but practiced alongside private memory practices in the remote countryside. Ocen also discusses the importance of memory practices that accommodates local cultures, values and customs, instead of adopting fully foreign practices embedded in commemorations, prayer days, anniversaries, and museum storages.

The opponent, Associate Professor Okaka Opio Dokotum raised important issues. He suggested that Laury Ocen should integrate song texts in the local languages of survivors, namely Leblango and Acholi. In the thesis Ocen seems to have used the English translations only. He also suggested that Ocen should think of elaborating faithfully the role and functions of the locals who participated in the erecting of some of these memorial sites.

In conclusion, the examination board found Ocen’s defence excellent. Congratulations to Dr. Laury Lawrence Ocen.