

Applications invited for a post-doctoral and a PhD position in the project "Epidemic traces. Remains of infectious disease control in Africa"

PhD post: Vaccination infrastructures and the logistics of immunity in Kenya

We invite applications for a three-to-four-year position as PhD candidate (SKO1017) in social anthropology to be based at the Department of Social Anthropology, starting in the beginning of the 2022-23 academic year. The candidate will independently develop and conduct a PhD research project in Kenya, examining how vaccination practices, institutions and infrastructures, as they have been deployed over time, shape present and future social, material, and political relations, including the conditions of health and its governance. This will form part of the broader project "Epidemic Traces. Remains of infectious disease control in Africa" (EpiTraces), which investigates how epidemic and anti-epidemic measures durably alter bodies, ecologies, landscapes, infrastructures, kinship and activism in various African sites.

For more information on this project, click [Epidemic Traces - Sosialantropologisk institutt \(SAI\) \(uio.no\)](#).

The candidate should have a very recent master's degree in social or cultural anthropology or a related discipline, and demonstrate an ability to think across humanities disciplines, combining ethnographic and historical methods with aspects of STS, material culture studies, archaeology and/or heritage studies, to examine how the past – as memory, and the materiality of bodies, circulations and habits, archives, technologies and infrastructure – continues to act in the present.

Job description

We invite applications for a 36-months position as PhD (SKO1017) in social anthropology, to be based at the Department of Social Anthropology, University of Oslo. For the right candidate an additional 12 month of teaching duty will be considered.

The PhD project will be part of the work-package "Infrastructures of vaccination and the logistics of immunity in Kenya", and will have Noémi Tousignant (University College London, UK) as external co-supervisor. This work-package investigates the mutual shaping of epidemics and immunization over time, looking at the dynamic relations among human and non-human epidemic outbreaks, prevention and anticipation, vaccination technologies and infrastructures, individual and collective immunities, and broader health systems among others. Vaccination is intended to elicit durable biological traces – via antibody formation – in individuals and groups, as a tool rather than a collateral effect of disease control. The expansion of vaccination coverage has played an important role in building up African healthcare infrastructures from the late-colonial and early post-independence decades. Vaccination's intentional remains include collective immunity, the absence of outbreaks, alive children, dense versatile health infrastructures, or trust in the state; but its plans and practices can also generate gaps, scars, failures, fragile relations, vulnerabilities and incapacity.

Proposed PhD projects should combine ethnographic with archival, material studies and/or oral historical methods. Among the themes that **can**, but need not, be explored by the project are: *tensions and interactions among the temporalities (routine, emergency, cyclical, eventful) of epidemics and of immunization; *how past immunization policies and ideologies (associated with, for example, colonial disease control, socialist healthcare, or decentralization) condition the infrastructures available for future ones; *and how present outbreaks of “vaccine-preventable diseases” are (re)interpreted as failures of vaccination and immunity, or as opportunities to wield and demonstrate the power of vaccines, antibodies and government.

We recommend that the proposed project take a case-study based approach. Below are some **illustrative** examples of potential case-studies, but other suggestions are welcome: *histories and legacies of socialist-era immunization programmes for imaginations of the public; *oral-historical investigations of recent outbreaks of measles (Dar es Salam 2006-2007) and cholera (refugee camps 2015), and the (intended/failed) role of vaccination in preventing or controlling these; *how vaccines and vaccination shape human-livestock relations; *what narratives of vaccine-induced changes in disease patterns say about kinship relations, state power and the nature of clinical expertise; how expectations about future malaria vaccination are anchored in memories of disease, care and medical research.

Qualification requirements

Applicants must hold a Master’s degree of equivalent (120 ECTS) in social or cultural anthropology; degrees in related disciplines (e.g. STS, sociology or geography) can be considered if previous work was anthropologically informed, and intellectual engagement with literature in these neighbouring fields would certainly be an advantage. The Master’s degree must include a thesis of at least 30 ECTS, with a minimum grade on the thesis of B (ECTS grading scale).

Fluent oral and written communication skills in English are a requirement; knowledge of Kiswahili and or willingness to learn it would be considered an advantage.

In assessing the applications, emphasis will be placed on the project description, as well as the applicant's academic and personal prerequisites to carry out the project. A good match between the candidate's proposal and the project’s planned activities and the specific requirements for the researcher position is a main selection criterion, along with the quality of the proposal and the qualifications of the candidate.

How to apply

The application must include

- Cover letter (statement of motivation and research interest, 1-2 pages)
- Project description, including research questions, theoretical framing and progress plan (max. 4 pages, excluding references).

- CV (including a complete list of education with grades, positions, pedagogical and administrative experience, publications and other qualifying activities)
- Copies of educational certificates (academic transcripts only)
- A complete list of publications (if applicable).

Selected candidates will be asked to submit

- A sample of writing that illustrate the applicant's research and communication ability
- List of reference persons: 2-3 references (name, relation to candidate, e-mail and phone number)

The application with attachments must be delivered in our electronic recruiting system. Foreign applicants are advised to attach an explanation of their University's grading system. Please note that all documents should be in English or a Scandinavian language.

The best-qualified candidates will be invited to interviews.

The successful applicant might be offered an option of up to 12 months of teaching duty (in addition to the 36 months).

It is expected that the successful candidate will be able to complete the project in the course of the period of employment.

Interested applicants are encouraged to contact project leaders and co-supervisors to discuss possible themes and case-studies:

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