



UNIVERSITY OF NAIROBI

Department of Anthropology, Gender and African Studies

PhD candidate in anthropology. Dual PhD degree between University of Nairobi and KU Leuven, Belgium

The University of Nairobi (UoN), in collaboration with, KU Leuven (KU), invites applications for one fully funded 3-year PhD fellowship in anthropology starting on 1 September 2026. The positions are funded by the EU Research and Innovation programme Horizon Europe, under a grant by Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions Doctoral Networks (MSCA-DN). The successful candidates must commence their PhD degree programme on 1 September 2026.

Background HEALENAE

UoN and KUL have embarked on the collaborative project **HEALENAE: Health and Environment in Africa and Europe** run by a consortium of universities: Aarhus University (Denmark), University of Cape Town (South Africa), University of Edinburgh (UK), KU Leuven (Belgium), University of Nairobi (Kenya), Oslo University (Norway) and Makerere University (Uganda).

The HEALENAE Doctoral Network offers a cross-continental, innovative, interdisciplinary, and multi-sectoral anthropological approach to pressing, interrelated health and environmental challenges across contemporary Africa and Europe. HEALENAE seeks to develop a strong interdisciplinary network that is based in **anthropology, global one health, environmental and regional studies**, to examine connections, correspondences and new challenges for health and environmental contexts in and between Africa and Europe.

By exploring specific topic areas of health and environment through long-term anthropological fieldwork, the research will provide insights into and enable future mitigations of challenges related to current changes of demographics, disease patterns, climate and environmental harm, accelerated urbanisation, unequally distributed growth, refugee challenges, gender and generational dynamics. The HEALENAE Doctoral Candidates will collaborate across projects

to bring together insights anchored in different sectors and countries. They will analyse these in relation to each other and create clarity of interlinkages between specific health and environmental domains in an intercontinental perspective. **Together, approaches from anthropology, post-colonial and regional studies on health and environment offer unique research perspectives and methods providing grounded, bottom-up understandings of how environments and health issues play out in everyday settings.**

The research network offers an academically stimulating and interdisciplinary working environment, an innovative training programme that allows the PhD fellows to obtain specialist knowledge on a specific research topic as well as transferable skills that can be employed in academic as well as non-academic institutions. The HEALENAE PhD education includes one year of fieldwork in Africa and/or Europe, annual training schools and writing retreats and 6 months stay with the secondary university. HEALENAE also offers an attractive salary as well as funding for research, travel, conference participation and dissemination, books and equipment.

The HEALENAE project strives equal opportunity for diversity among the DCs. We encourage candidates from all continents, applicants with disabilities and minorities to apply. The fellowship will include a salary taxable under national laws as outlined in the table on p.118 of the MSCA Work Programme 2023-2025: wp-2-msca-actions_horizon-2023-2024_en.pdf

Available position

HEALENAE will recruit altogether 15 PhD fellows, referred to as Doctoral Candidates (DCs). The Department of Anthropology, Gender and African Studies, University of Nairobi (Kenya) and KU Leuven, Belgium invite applications for 1 dual PhD fellowship in the field of anthropology where the two universities have mutual strengths and can offer excellent research environments. The available position is hosted by Department of Anthropology, Gender and African Studies, University of Nairobi (Primary University) and KU Leuven, Belgium (Secondary University)

This will be a one fully-funded 3-year PhD fellowship in anthropology of health and environment under the broad topic **Urban commons: environments, infrastructures, and health**. The successful candidate must commence their PhD degree programme by **September 1, 2026**.

Project 10: Urban commons: environments, infrastructures, and health

Supervisors: Onyango-Ouma (UoN) & Ann Cassiman (KUL)

Project Title	Urban commons: environments, infrastructures, and health
Objectives	<p>Aim: To study shared urban environment spaces and infrastructures and how they shape human health diversely in terms of how European policies, funding models and activist groups affect a Kenyan setting.</p> <p>Objectives: 1: To investigate how political, economic, social and cultural environments impact people's health in urban areas; 2: To assess shared infrastructures that affect health, e.g., green space, housing, access to clean water and food, clean air, transport, education 3: To explore personal health practices, e.g., physical activity, food consumption, drinking, smoking, and their influence on the prevalence of NCDs; 4: To document citizens' active engagement (public participation) around environmental and health issues (including pollution, toxicity, air quality, waste disposal and sanitation) in their respective communities.</p>
Expected Re-sults	<p>The study will contribute the understanding of urban environments, infrastructures, and health as shared resources affecting human beings in Kenya as shaped by European policies on trade, waste management and environmental standards (e.g. green spaces). Furthermore, the effect of transboundary pollution is significant including transboundary movement of people, goods and viruses between Western Europe and Kenya. The influence on urban commons of the significant role of European funding and support for health, environmental and infrastructure initiatives in Kenya. The study will generate knowledge on shared urban environments and infrastructures and their influence on human health. This is important for addressing urban health and environmental concerns including waste disposal, pollution, green spaces, and water and food infrastructures, among others. The project may develop mechanisms for citizens' active engagement through citizen science around environmental and health issues in urban area. The project will stimulate policy debate on urban environments, infrastructures, and health, and illustrate the need for approaching these from a commons perspective in urban planning.</p>
Planned second-ment(s)	<p>1: KUL, one semester after fieldwork (M29-M35), to engage in another academic environment and get face to face supervision from co-supervisor Ann Cassiman; 2: During fieldwork, the DC may also spend time with a relevant urban environmental and health organisation.</p>
Enrolment	UoN and KUL

Requirements

Interested candidates should submit an application including the following documents:

- Motivation/cover letter (statement of motivation and research interests, max one A4 page of 2,400 characters including spaces)
- CV (including a complete list of education, positions, publications and other qualifying activities)
- Project description outlining how the candidate envisages completing the work to be undertaken during the course of the term of appointment.
The overall project description (excl. list of project literature/bibliography/reference list and timetable) must not exceed 12,000 characters including spaces, tables, diagrams, footnotes, endnotes and illustrations (5 A4 pages of 2,400 characters each)
- Project literature/reference list
- Timetable
- Cover sheet (stating your degrees)
- Copies of educational certificates (Bachelor and Master's degrees). The diplomas or diploma supplement/transcript of records must state: name of university, education (Bachelor or Master), duration (number of years, full-time), courses, marks and (if given) ECTS credits.

Please see a detailed description of the requirements for the application in the guide for the application facility: <https://african-studies.uonbi.ac.ke/programs/doctor-philosophy-anthropology> .

University of Nairobi Admission Requirements

The following applicants shall be eligible for admission:

A holder of a Master's degree in Anthropology or any other Social Science discipline from the University of Nairobi.

b) A holder of a Master's degree or equivalent academic qualifications in Anthropology or any other Social Science discipline from other institutions recognized by the University of Nairobi Senate

c) A holder of a Master's degree in any other discipline from the University of Nairobi, or any other institution recognized by the University of Nairobi Senate, who provides evidence of social science based study and research.

Applicants can be of any nationality. We encourage applicants who have African language skills and relevant experience outside the academy. However, in order to be **eligible, candidates must have not resided more than 12 of the last 36 months in Kenya before the recruitment date.**

The Doctoral Candidate is required to spend time at each university, have a supervisor at each institution and will receive a dual degree issued by each university.

The Doctoral Candidate is expected to take part in the HEALENAE dual degree PhD programme and to complete the project within the set fellowship period. Since the doctoral student will receive a dual degree, his/her research project will be subject to an evaluation meeting according to the standards of both University of Nairobi and KU Leuven. The format of the evaluation will be an oral examination before an examination committee (*Viva Voce*) at the University of Nairobi and a public defence at KU Leuven.

The details regarding time spent at each university, supervision, evaluation as well as other legal matters will be specified in a contract prior to the start of the PhD project.

At UoN, Department of Anthropology, Gender and African Studies offers a 3-year PhD programme in Anthropology, focused on coursework, research, and thesis. In addition, students are expected to publish 2 peer-reviewed articles before graduation. Students are expected to spend 1 year each on coursework, fieldwork and thesis/publication. Courses include research methods, theory, applied anthropology, and anthropology in Africa. Seminars are based on trends in anthropology, proposal development, data analysis, and writing and publication. The department has a strong tradition in cultural anthropology (incl. medical and environmental anthropology) and gender studies, and in recent years, one health, environmental health and the commons have become key research areas.

At KU Leuven, the Department of Social and Cultural Anthropology offers a PhD programme with a strong focus on sub-Saharan Africa, the Maghreb (and their various diasporas in Europe) and with thematic spearheads centred on urbanisation, development issues concerning resource management, mobility and popular culture. The department runs weekly doctoral seminars under the doctoral programme that is embedded in the Faculty of Social Sciences' PhD School, in which general theoretical and methodological courses (on quantitative and qualitative research) are offered to doctoral students. The Doctoral Candidate will have access to these PhD courses.

Enrolment at University of Nairobi

The PhD students at University of Nairobi have to adhere to the set philosophy and dictates of the program. Further description of the program can be found on the website: <https://african-studies.uonbi.ac.ke/programs/doctor-philosophy-anthropology>.

The PhD scholar will be enrolled as a PhD student at the Department of Anthropology, Gender and African Studies, University of Nairobi. In general, the student is expected to meet all the program requirements including attending all the relevant coursework at the University of Nairobi.

Application:

If you have general questions to the PhD application process, please contact DAGAS administrator, iagas@uonbi.ac.ke.

If you have questions about the PhD position, please contact supervisor W. Onyango-Ouma, onyango.ouma@uonbi.ac.ke.

If you have questions about the EU requirements or the HEALENAE program, please contact Mia Korsbaek, korsbaek@cas.au.dk

The application must be submitted in English.

Applications for the PhD fellowship should be submitted to the administrative email address: iagas@uonbi.ac.ke.

The HEALENAE project will conduct interviews with shortlisted applicants.

Successful candidates for the PhD fellowship will proceed to apply for admission via University of Nairobi enrolment online system.

Guidelines for the application system: <https://african-studies.uonbi.ac.ke/index.php/programs/application.uonbi.ac.ke>

Deadline for applications: **March 1, 2026, at 23.59 East African time (EAT).**

See all HEALENAE PhD positions: www.healena.eu