

PhD position (1)

Applications are invited for 1 PhD position in social anthropology, to be based at the Department of Social Anthropology, University of Oslo. The position will be part of the project “Amber Worlds: A Geological Anthropology for the Anthropocene (AMBER)” led by Associate Professor Alessandro Ripa, and funded by the European Research Council. The contracts will commence in spring 2024, run for 3-to-4 years (see below), and the location of employment is Oslo, Norway.

The project

Amber is a fossil resin secreted by plants between 300 and 16 million years ago, mostly during phases of climate breakdown and ecological crises. Today, geologists and palaeontologists believe that the study of amber specimens can help us answering key questions about the planet’s climatic history, and understanding how and why species adapted, or failed to adapt, during previous phases of mass extinction. Amber is also a well-known and sought-after organic gemstone, fuelling violent mining economies from Myanmar to Russia, Ukraine, and Mexico, and constitutes a global market increasingly driven by Chinese demand. Amber thus offers a privileged entry point to interrogate the current moment characterised by growing extractivism, trade, environmental crises, and conflict. And it is a compelling lens through which we can address some of the key empirical and theoretical challenges posed by the Anthropocene.

The AMBER project, funded for 5 years by an ERC Starting Grant, builds on recent literature (variously referred to as the “vertical” or “geological” turn) arguing that anthropological engagements with the nonhuman must pay closer ethnographic attention to a study of the geological, and to how scientific knowledge production is tangled up with broader socioeconomic processes of resource exploitation and circulation. As a violently extracted, organic gemstone with great scientific value for the (extinct) lifeforms it often contains, amber offers a unique ethnographic entry point to study such dynamics and the relations between them. This project’s main objective is to explore the nexus of extraction, exchanges, and extinctions through the global entanglements of amber and thus lay the groundwork for a geological anthropology for the Anthropocene that moves beyond the divisions between human and nonhuman, life and nonlife, and the biological and the geological. In doing so, AMBER will contribute a more effective toolbox to both the study and the communication of current planetary crises.

The position

The successful applicant will form part of a larger research environment comprising at least 4 researchers. Each researcher will carry out fieldwork and analyse material collected in one geographical area of amber extraction, commerce, and/or scientific research.

Potential candidates are invited to suggest a specific research focus and field site within the context of amber extraction, trade, and/or science. Some examples of possible case-studies include:

- Dominican amber

- Chiapas amber (Mexico)
- Kachin amber (Myanmar)
- the Chinese amber market
- Baltic amber extraction and trade
- Bitterfeld amber (Germany)

These represent just a few potential suitable fieldsite topics; applicants are welcome and encouraged to propose other ideas that speak to the project's core concepts.

More about the position

The PhD fellow will conduct 12 months of ethnographic fieldwork. The remaining time should be spent in residence in Oslo. Applicants must have native or near-native competence in English, and should ideally have previous experience working in the fieldsite they are proposing. Local language qualifications are an essential requirement, enthusiasm for group-work and comparison a must.

The appointment is for the duration of three years; the contract may be extended by an additional year for the PhD candidate to be involved in teaching and other administrative tasks at the Department of Social Anthropology (depending on performance and availability of teaching duties).

The PhD fellow must take part in the Faculty's approved PhD program and is expected to complete the project within the set fellowship period. The main purpose of the fellowship is research training leading to the successful completion of a PhD degree.

Qualification requirements

- Applicants must hold a degree equivalent to a Norwegian MA degree in Social Anthropology or a closely related discipline. A solid grounding in social anthropology and familiarity with neighbouring disciplines like STS, political ecology, and material culture studies would be useful.
- Applicants should have some prior research experience including ethnographic fieldwork. A focus on extractivism, and/or global circulations and scientific knowledge production will be an advantage.
- Fluent oral and written communication skills in English.

What we offer

- Salary according to "SKO 1017 PhD Fellow", payrate NOK 501 200 - 544 400 per annum depending on qualifications
- Funds for research, travel, conference participation and dissemination, books and equipment
- A stimulating and international research environment
- A friendly and inclusive workplace allowing for a good work-life balance
- Access to [Norway's excellent public services and welfare schemes, including generous parental leave provisions](#) and affordable and accessible childcare (including the [university's kindergartens](#))

- Norway's capital with its [rich cultural life and easy access to beautiful nature](#)
- Practical support for international staff moving to Norway (international staff [may also benefit from tax cuts in their first years](#))

How to apply

The application must include:

- An academic curriculum vitae (including publications and awards, if applicable);
- A letter of motivation in which you summarise a) your experience and interests; b) why you are applying for this position; and c) why you are the best candidate (2 pages max);
- A project outline detailing the proposed case study as well as a sketch of how you would address the topic theoretically and methodologically (2 pages max);
- Your Master's thesis (if in a language other than English, please provide a table of contents and a brief summary in English)
- The names and contact information of two academic referees (NB: these will only be contacted if you are shortlisted).
- copies of educational certificates (academic transcripts only).

Formal regulations

Please see the [guidelines and regulations](#) for appointments to Research Fellowships at the University of Oslo.

No one can be appointed for more than one PhD Research Fellowship period at the University of Oslo.

According to the Norwegian Freedom of Information Act (Offentleglova) information about the applicant may be included in the public applicant list, also in cases where the applicant has requested non-disclosure.

The appointment may be shortened/given a more limited scope within the framework of the applicable guidelines on account of any previous employment in academic positions.

The University of Oslo has an [agreement](#) for all employees, aiming to secure rights to research results etc.

Inclusion and diversity are a strength. The University of Oslo has a personnel policy objective of achieving a balanced gender composition. Furthermore, we want employees with diverse professional expertise, life experience and perspectives.

Contact persons

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