

POSTDOC IN PROJECT TO DEVELOP DIALOGIC MULTISPECIES METHODS

NATURAL SCIENCES / SOCIAL SCIENCES

START DATE: FEBRUARY 1, 2025

DEADLINE: 2 NOVEMBER

Located in the French-speaking part of Belgium, the University of Liège welcomes nearly 27,000 students of 123 different nationalities in a dynamic, multicultural city less than an hour away from Brussels and Cologne, two hours from Paris and three hours from London and Amsterdam. ULiège is spread across 4 campuses and boasts over 5,700 staff members, including 3,600 teachers and researchers active in all areas of the humanities and social sciences, science and technology, and health sciences.

As a key player in social change and environmental awareness, ULiège promotes ethical, transdisciplinary and open science. It contributes to the socio-economic development of its region through numerous partnerships with several institutions, including the university hospital (CHU). Given its international orientation, the University participates [in the European University of Post-Industrial Cities \(UNIC\)](#) initiative and has one of the most extensive collaborative networks in the world.

ULiège offers attractive career prospects [in a high-quality working environment](#) where well-being, diversity and equality of opportunity are promoted. Since 2011, ULiège has been proud to display the European [Human resources strategy for researchers \(HRS4R\)](#) label, which reflects its commitment to open, transparent and merit-based procedures. In addition, it upholds quality and diversity in line with the recommendations of the [Coalition for Advancing Research Assessment \(CoARA\)](#). ULiège encourages its academic staff to travel internationally and welcomes international researchers through its EURAXESS center.

ABOUT THE RESEARCH PROJECT

Title project: Animal Communicators: Intuitive communication as a key to dialogic multispecies methods (ANICOM)

Duration: Five years

Funding body: European Research Council (ERC) Consolidator Programme

Host institution: University of Liège (ULiège)

Principal Investigator: Vanessa Wijngaarden, research professor in social anthropology (PI)

This is a collective research project that explores intuitive interspecies communication and the collaboration with animal communicators and Indigenous knowledge holders in the development of novel multispecies methods.

Summary: As the ‘social’ in social sciences is rethought beyond the human, multispecies research across disciplines increasingly asks how to speak with and for non-human others. Intuitive interspecies communication (IIC), a strategy practiced by successful animal communicators to engage in explicit, detailed, two-way communication with non-human animals, may hold uncharted resources for doing research *with* rather than *on* animals. Research on IIC has been curtailed to specific domains and mythologized, while the worldwide boom in professional animal communicators has been ignored.

ANICOM’s unique engagement with animal communicators’ practical strategies for relating across nature/culture and mind/body dichotomies is ground-breaking in the often largely theoretical discussions of the ontological and species turns. It simultaneously unsettles continued divides between humans and animals as well as dominant and subjugated ways of knowing. The project triangulates participant observation, Q method, interviews and audio-visual methods (including video-diaries and video-elicitations) with natural science approaches, to collaboratively work with expert animal communicators, and a variety of animals in Europe, Africa, Asia and North America. It addresses unexplored possibilities for cross-fertilization between new materialism and posthumanism on the one hand, and Indigenous studies and knowledge systems on the other, while engaging with the latest insights in biosemiotics and animal cognition.

It thus develops transdisciplinary innovations that include non-human animals as full research participants, while achieving a deeper reflexivity on the limitations of humans thinking animals outside the human-animal relationship. Its ultimate objective is to establish the resources and foundation for dialogic multispecies methods (DMM), a dynamic set of conceptual, theoretical and methodological approaches and tools to engage with the views, experiences and knowledges of non-human animals in academia.

The team will include the PI (a social anthropologist with a double background in anthropology and political science), a postdoc, 3 PhD candidates, 8 collaborating animal communicators, and animal individuals from 12 species with a focus on mammals and birds.

JOB DESCRIPTION

Over the course of four years, the postdoc will provide the natural scientific entry point into ANICOM, executing fieldwork at eight case study locations to co-develop new research methodologies. They will work in collaboration with an interdisciplinary team to overcome the gap between the natural and social sciences, professional and Indigenous animal communicators and a variety of non-human animals. Specifically, they will research the answers animal communicators obtain by employing their knowledge of established (natural) scientific frameworks and theories, e.g. through work with audiovisual tools, data sheets and ethograms, as well as cooperation with ethologist, veterinarians and other external experts.

They will have the opportunity to creatively develop novel approaches and theoretical ideas, as well as support the PI with establishing and furthering cross-disciplinary cooperation networks (e.g. with veterinary medicine) and the collection and synthesis of data from the 8 case studies and a worldwide Q methodological enquiry.

Sub-projects of ANICOM:

- A. PI: IIC in Southern Africa 1. KhoiSan (Namibia); 2. Afrikaans (South Africa)
- B. PhD 1: IIC in North and South 1. Belgium; 2. Shona (Zimbabwe)
- C. PhD 2: IIC in Europe 1. Sámi (Finland); 2. English (United Kingdom)
- D. PhD 3: IIC in the East and West 1. India; 2. Cree (Canada)
- E. **PostDoc: IIC in the natural sciences (all locations)**

The vacancy in this call is for sub-project E. In case of strong incentives, there is some flexibility in the location of case studies and selection of animal species, to best suit the expertise of the postdoc, PhD students and collaborating animal communicators and animals.

SPECIFIC DUTIES AND ACTIVITIES

- ▶ Conduct ethnographic field research (9 months in total)
- ▶ Submit for publication a minimum of 5 articles or book chapters
- ▶ Perform as lead editor of a special issue or edited volume
- ▶ Participate in the creation of an ethnographic feature film and teaching package
- ▶ Present research results in international conferences
- ▶ Participate in activities of ANICOM and at the Faculty of Social Sciences at ULiege
- ▶ Participate in organisational and supervision activities where appropriate

PROFILE

○ REQUIRED SKILLS :

- ▶ A PhD degree in biology, ecology, evolutionary biology, conservation biology, animal studies, zoology, wildlife biology, fisheries and wildlife, veterinary science, animal behavior, psychology, or another relevant field. In exceptional cases, an MA or MS in one of the above fields, and a relevant PhD in the humanities/social sciences may be accepted.
- ▶ Relevant experience in research with animals, preferably in animal behaviour, animal cognition, animal sociality, animal psychology, or animal communication.
- ▶ Curiosity towards methodology and the development of cutting-edge research approaches.
- ▶ Competency and confidence to work proactively and independently on-campus and in field situations.

○ DESIRABLE SKILLS :

- ▶ Profiles that cross the borders between natural and social sciences are encouraged, and the candidate needs an openness to work across academic, disciplinary, cultural and species divides.
- ▶ Strong (academic) writing skills and experience with video are appreciated.
- ▶ Experience and affinity with a variety of domesticated and wild mammal and bird species.
- ▶ Good time-management and organisational skills.
- ▶ Creative and critical thinker.
- ▶ Enthusiasm for the research subject and the ability to bridge and translate between different worlds.
- ▶ Having an existing connection to the research sites, or with relevant non-Western, Indigenous or other minority peoples, is an advantage.

○ HUMAN SKILLS :

- ▶ Be a valuable, committed and generous contributor to an academic team.
- ▶ Responsible, ethical, and trustworthy in their own work.

○ LANGUAGES :

- ▶ Fluency in English is required.
- ▶ Knowledge of French or Flemish, Shona, Finnish, Hindi, Cree or a Sámi language is of value.

We are dedicated to promoting equality and diversity and welcome applications from candidates of all backgrounds. Passionate candidates who meet most, but not all, requirements are still encouraged to apply.

TERMS OF EMPLOYMENT

- ▶ **TYPE OF CONTRACT:** 3-year fellowship + one-YEAR EMPLOYMENT
- ▶ **WORK SCHEDULE:** Full-time, 38h/week (option for 19h/week in the 4th year)
- ▶ **CONTRACT DURATION:** 4 years (3 years + one year)
- ▶ **EXPECTED START DATE :** February 1, 2025

OUR OFFER

Basic net monthly salary for full-time work year 1-3: € 3.060 euros

Basic gross monthly salary for full-time work year 4: €5.415,33 euros (116s with 3 years).

The position also offers employment benefits and access to a [wide range of training opportunities](#) are also included.

WORK ENVIRONMENT

Although the working language of the project is English, the postdoc will be based at the French speaking Université de Liège, at the outskirts of Liège, Belgium. They will be integrated in the vibrant social science research milieu at the *Institut de Recherches en Sciences Sociales* and part of the research centre *Laboratoire d'anthropologie sociale et culturelle (LASC)* where several multispecies projects are taking place. Regular physical attendance at project meetings, attendance and help with organising trainings in fieldwork methods and analysis software, multispecies methods workshops, a summer school, communal nature residencies and other events will be required, and thus the postdoc is expected to take up residence in Belgium starting February.

Expect to work in close collaboration within a passionate, dynamic, interdisciplinary and multicultural team with excellent academics who are keen to expand and challenge their understandings of divergent ways of knowing. Our work and discussions will be highly innovative and reflexive, stretching across the boundaries of the natural and social sciences as well as other types of knowledge. Adequate research funding as well as training and support in research methods and relevant skills and theories to supplement existing skills and streamline cooperative work will be provided.

HOW TO APPLY?

Please send the following documents in PDF to vanessa.wijngaarden@uliege.be with the message title 'PD application ANICOM' by November 2.

The following documents must be attached to the email in three separate PDF files:

- 1) In the first file, named 'ANICOMPD_applicant last name_A': (a) a motivation letter (maximum 700 words); (b) a full curriculum vitae with detailed information on degree results and language skills; and (c) the names and contact details of two reference persons.
- 2) In the second file, named 'ANICOMPD_applicant last name B': a short research proposal (single-spaced, maximum 2000 words). In this proposal the applicant may reflect on their personal relationship with IIC, describe in detail how they would carry out subproject E, and give an impression of how they would contribute to the team.
- 3) In the third file, named 'ANICOMPD_applicant last name C': one writing sample (e.g. article, draft, report, conference paper, essay or MA thesis chapter) in English, preferably showing the applicant's ability to use (ethnographic) methods and theorize (single-spaced, maximum 10,000 words). If the candidate would prefer to submit a sample in French, please enquire into this option with the PI per email.

SELECTION PROCEDURE

- ▶ In a second phase, short listed candidates will be **interviewed remotely** at the start of December 2024. The interview will be based on their application, scientific track-record and proposed ideas and reflections.
- ▶ Interviewees will be notified shortly after the interview. Successful nominees will be expected to start in Liège early February 2024.

Our corporate policy is based on diversity and equal opportunity. We select candidates on the basis of their skills and do not discriminate on grounds of age, sexual orientation, origin, beliefs, disability or nationality.

CONTACT DETAILS

Informal inquiries about the project are welcome. Please feel free to contact the principal investigator Prof. Vanessa Wijngaarden by email: vanessa.wijngaarden@uliege.be (Profile: www.vanessawijngaarden.com)

Release date: October 5, 2024

Privacy policy

Personal data collected following your application will be processed by Vanessa Wijngaarden of the University of Liege for the sole purpose of recruitment.

The data will be processed within the framework of pre-contractual measures (art. 6-1, b. of the General Data Protection Regulation) and kept for up to 9 months after the publication of the vacancy. Your personal data will not be passed on to any third parties.

In accordance with the provisions of the GDPR (EU 2016/679), you may exercise your data protection rights (right of access, rectification, erasure, restriction, and portability) by contacting ULiège Data Protection Officer (dpo@uliege.be - Mr. Data Protection Officer, Bât. B9 Cellule "GDPR", Quartier Village 3, Boulevard de Colonster 2, 4000 Liège, Belgium). You may also lodge a complaint with the Data Protection Authority (<https://www.autoriteprotectiondonnees.be> , contact@apd-gba.be).