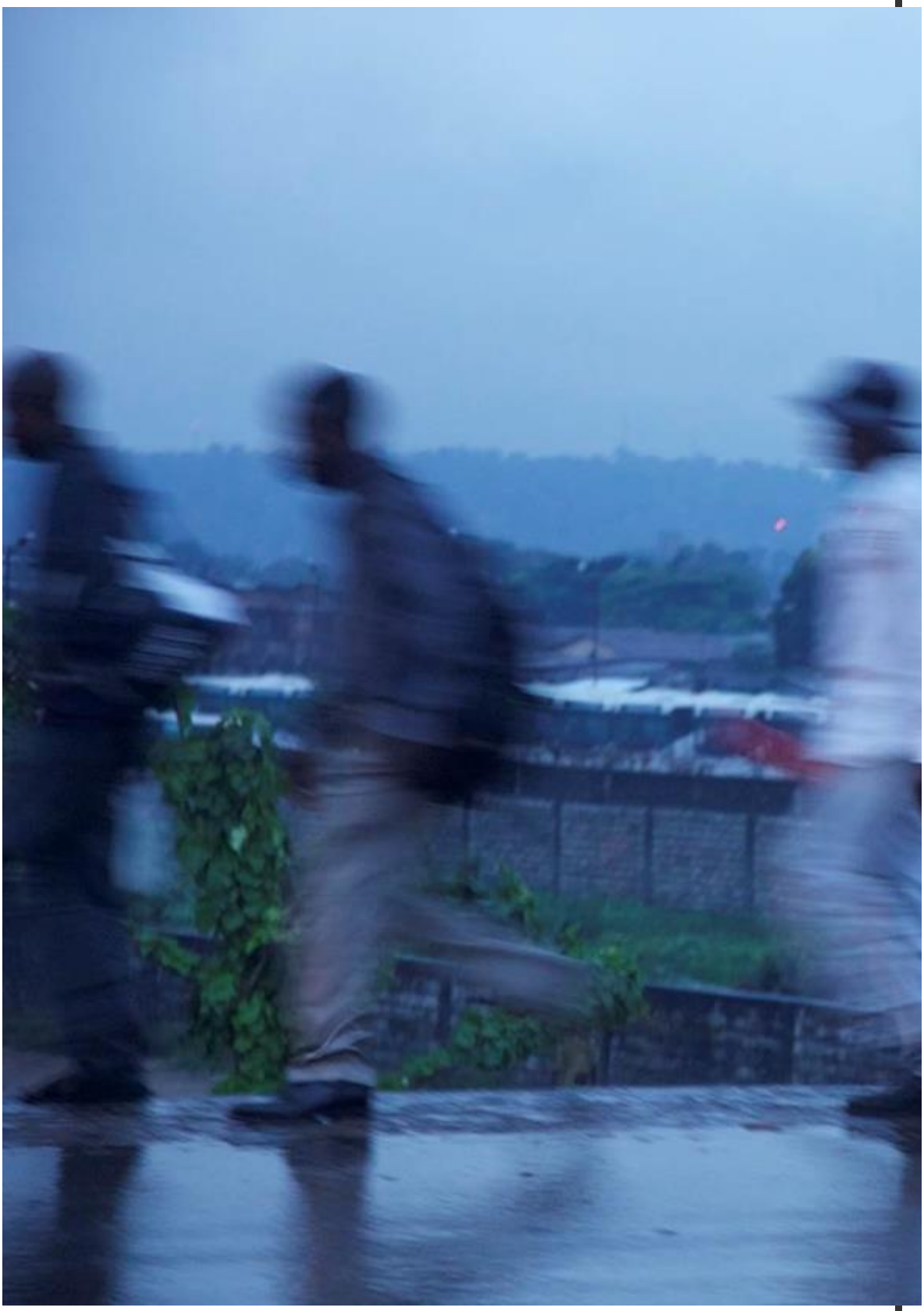

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JOHANNESBURG



The making of publics in Kinshasa

By Professor Filip de Boeck

Institute for Anthropological Research in Africa, University of Leuven, Belgium

You are invited to a special lecture hosted by the Humanities Graduate Centre, the African Centre for Migration & Society, the Centre for Indian Studies in Africa and the Department of Social Anthropology of the University of the Witwatersrand.

Date: Monday 17 November 2014
Time: 6 pm to 7.30 pm
Venue: Humanities Graduate Seminar Room, South West Engineering Building, East Campus, Wits University

Refreshments will be served

RSVP by 13 November to: info@migration.org.za

The Religion & Migration Initiative's exhibition, *Routes & Rites to the City: Migration, Emplacement and Religious Diversity*, will be shown in the Atrium, South West Engineering Building. The Religion & Migration Initiative is funded by the Max Planck Institute for the Study of Religious and Ethnic Diversity,
Super-Diversity South Africa Project.

Abstract

'What sort of collective life and what sort of knowledge is to be gathered (...) once modernity has been thrown into doubt while the task of finding the ways to cohabit remains more important than ever?" (Latour, 2005, *Reassembling the Social*, pp. 16-17)

Filip De Boeck's presentation takes this question to Central Africa's urban worlds. Based on recent ethnographic data from Kinshasa, the capital of the Democratic Republic of Congo, this presentation will reflect upon the changing connotations of what constitutes the public sphere and the meaning of the categories of public and private, of 'publics' and of diversity in the urban locale. It will explore how, in the megalopolis that Kinshasa is, various publics from within and across various (often entangled) spaces, constantly offer a ground for questioning, recalling, bypassing, or resisting official definitions of the public 'thing' (without excluding a consensus with, a simultaneous adherence or conforming to, or a longing for the realization of the official definitions).

Biography

Professor Filip De Boeck is the coordinator of the Institute for Anthropological Research in Africa (IARA, formerly the Africa Research Centre), a research unit of the Faculty of Social Sciences, University of Leuven, Belgium. Professor De Boeck is actively involved in teaching, promoting, coordinating and supervising research in and on Africa.

Since 1987 he has conducted extensive field research in both rural and urban communities in D.R. Congo (ex-Zaire). His current theoretical interests include local subjectivities of crisis, postcolonial memory, youth and the politics of culture, and the transformation of private and public space in the

urban context in Africa.

His numerous publications include *Kinshasa. Tales of the Invisible City*, a joint book project with photographer Marie-Françoise Plissart (Ghent/ Tervuren: Ludion / Royal Museum of Central Africa, 2004), which was also translated into French (*Kinshasa. Récits de la ville invisible*. Brussels: Renaissance du Livre, 2005), and for which De Boeck received the Henry Lavachery award from the Académie Royale des sciences, des lettres et des beaux-arts de Belgique in 2008.

In 2010 De Boeck released 'Cemetery State', a 70 minute long documentary film which examines urban youth's politics of death in a Kinshasa graveyard. A Belgian Dutch co-production, it won the Mirror Award (Spiegelprijs) in April 2010, and was screened at several national and international film festivals.

Together with Congolese photographer Sammy Baloji, De Boeck is currently working on a book and exhibition project about new urban extensions in DR Congo. This is part of a larger research project on new satellite cities in three African countries (Kenya, Congo, Ghana).