

## **Seminar with Filip De Boeck:**

### **Cemetery State: A graveyard ethnography from Kinshasa**



**Wednesday 2 September, 12.00-14.00 at Fafø, Borggt. 2B (Annex Auditorium), Oslo.  
Organisers: Africa Network Norway and Fafø.**

Filip De Boeck is the program director of the Africa Research Center, Belgium and a professor of Anthropology at the University of Leuven. His academic interests include postcolonial identity in Africa, processes of accumulation and expenditure in informal economies, history, memory, death, and popular urban culture, especially with regard to children and youth. Together with Alcinda Honwana he edited *Makers and Breakers: Children and Youth in Postcolonial Africa* (2005). He also co-edited a special issue on children and politics in Africa for *Politique Africaine* (2000). His most recent publication is *Kinshasa: Tales of the Invisible City* (2006), with photographer Marie-Françoise Plissart.

In this seminar De Boeck will show parts of his recent documentary “Cemetery State”, centred on a graveyard in Kinshasa, the capital of the Democratic Republic of Congo. The focus of his talk will be our ultimate but intimate, internal Other, the other that is constantly with us and punctuates the line of our lives: Death. In Kinshasa, death and the way in which it is managed by urban youth, has generated radically new geographies of proximity and distance, of inclusion and exclusion between Kinshasa youth and their elders. The growing cultural rift between young and old, and the ongoing efforts at rephrasing existing notions of gerontocracy and authority that accompany these new fractures, are also played out along other fault lines, such as between public and private, modernity and tradition, politics and morality, between those who have a right to the city and those who don't, or between conflicting notions of citizenship and law. De Boeck's ethnography of youth's dealings with death, therefore, highlights ongoing efforts to reconceptualise the use of public urban space, the meaning of the public sphere, the content of citizenship, and the efforts of urban youth to generate a new moral ground from which to formulate alternatives to official ideologies as defined within the frameworks of state and church.