



Resilience in the context of AIDS and Stigma in Mali

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The field of AIDS in Mali is characterized by high dynamics. Enormous sums of international funds flow into this sector, which shape the local appropriation of the concept of the disease and represent an incentive for engagement in this area. Since 2004 a national program enables people living with HIV (PLWHIV) to have free access to antiretroviral therapies. Due to this intervention the state of health of many patients could stabilize. But even if the illness does not cause the physical symptoms typical for AIDS, new forms of social vulnerability appear. PLWHIV are confronted with concrete experiences of stigma or fear them.

In an urban setting shaped by poverty and by constantly changing living conditions, capabilities for improvisation, social navigation and self-organization are essential. Therefore, this study of resilience focuses on pathways seropositive persons may embark on, in order to live with the conditions of their sickness without drastic economic and social losses. Additionally it aims to identify measures which might foster their resilience.

The central research questions of this study are the following:

How master PLWHIV stigma related risks without losing their social reputation? What kind of new forms of sociability are negotiated thereby? And where are the limitations of trust?

The research uses theories of agency and actor-centered approaches. It understands actors as fluctuating between conditions of individual agency and structural constraints in which they continuously have to locate themselves.

Over a period of three years, several two to four months long field-stays take place in Bamako and Mopti. This longitudinal approach favors qualitative methods and considers both the temporal as well as spatial dimension, related to the mobility of PLWHIV.