



Négociations et expériences dans les relations sociales et sexuelles et VIH/sida à Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso (working title)

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Ouagadougou is an urban centre in which the influences of many diverse actors are articulated on various levels. Economic conditions and social values are changing rapidly. The national HIV/AIDS prevention campaigns are based on Euro-American representations of the body and society with the corresponding biomedical terminology and social and moral concepts. Together with interventions of numerous NGOs, religious communities and different media these concepts create often confusion among people and even lead to contradictory information in the population. Therefore interpretations of HIV/AIDS are manifold and influence the thinking of, speaking about and acting on this illness.

The aim of the project is the exploration of generation- and gender-specific discourses on social and heterosexual relationships of people in regard to HIV/AIDS within the ongoing social and economic transformations. The study is interested in the narrated experiences of men and women with relationships in regard to HIV/AIDS. An emphasis is placed on adolescents and their navigation within this changing context.

During the 14 months of field work (2003-2004, with annual follow-ups) different qualitative methods of social research were applied. Besides participant observation the main methods were focus group discussions, individual in-depth interviews and interviews with religious opinion leaders and health professionals.

The data are analysed in the framework of action theory and constructivist-interpretative approaches. Preliminary results show that in gendered and generational relations the power balance is shifting. In the city relationships are constantly renegotiated between men and women. Thus various types of relationships co-exist. Men and women of three generations hold different views on relationships and the occurring social changes. These discourses are an expression of the uncertainty within the social and economic transformations. The youth, especially girls, are blamed for transgressing social norms. Girls, however, try to live self-determined relationships, while balancing autonomy and the possible loss of reputation and potentially risking their health.

The results of this study highlight areas of women's and adolescents' health actions that require strengthening and supporting. This study further is able to inform public health efforts in regards to family planning, sexually transmitted diseases and HIV/AIDS as well as sex education for adolescents and the application of the new family law in Burkina Faso.