

## **Science workers in the city - AIDS, class and urban change**

Wenzel P. Geissler<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>University of Oslo, Institute of Social Anthropology, Oslo, Norway

p.w.geissler@sai.uio.no; wenzel.geissler@lshtm.ac.uk

Kisumu, western Kenya, is an epicentre of the HIV epidemic. Over the past decades - accelerated by the US government's PEPFAR programme - it has become a centre of HIV experimentality, including innovative interventions and clinical trials, conducted in transnational collaborations with funding flows that originate outside Kenya and exceed national health care and science budgets. This influx of resources and technologies, images and expertise, people and institutions, has changed the city - erasing and engaging, overwriting and reinscribing, older patterns and mobilities. From a stagnant backwater that, in terms of geography, circulation and consumption, seemed almost untouched by post-colonial urban change, in 1990, it has become one of Kenya's most dynamic cities (since 2001 officially recognised as such). Scientific endeavours, intertwined with non-governmental HIV activities, offer employment and incomes, new roles and associations, and exposure to new knowledges and lifestyles, to thousands of young people. This has affected the city's landscape: new residential areas are settled, new sites of work and intervention, as well as of consumption and entertainment appear (and disappear, within the ephemeral experimental temporality), and new means of transport circulate, initially accelerating and subsequently clogging city traffic.

A particularly dynamic group in this process are the over 1000 employees of the Kenyan Medical Research Institute's collaboration with the US government's Centres for Disease Control and Prevention (Kenya CDC) - Kisumu's largest, and a highly coveted employer. These young, motivated and adaptable people: doctors and scientists, fieldworkers and drivers - employed on temporary contracts from overseas grants - make a living by producing new kinds of knowledge about the city and its inhabitants. They are mapping the city, and they are denizens of the new city itself, with its changed class relations, spatial patterns, lifestyles and circulations. At the same time, their emphatically contemporary lives continue to engage - through architecture, townplans, memories and kinship - with older patterns and relations across the city. In this paper, I draw a map of their Kisumu. Through attention to the places and vectors of young scientific workers' lives - Where do they live (and how)? Where do they work, shop, move (and how) and where do they spend their leisure time? - I trace the geography of the HIV city, set against the backdrop of pre-HIV 1980s Kisumu, using information on housing, work, movement, consumption and leisure among an earlier generation of government-employed scientific research workers who had lived and worked in Kisumu until their retirement in the 1980s.