

Risk management in Ivory Coast : Case Study of Population Evictions in Port-Bouët, Abidjan

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Beginning in 2011, the State of Ivory Coast decided to evict populations in risk zones of the Autonomous District of Abidjan in order to reduce the impacts of natural disasters. The last major eviction operation concerned the cleansing of the coastline in the Port-Bouët commune, threatened – according to authorities – by the advancement of the sea. This paper aims to analyse the evolution of the coastline in the commune of Port-Bouët during the period 2001-2016 and to measure the surface area of zones evacuated by the authorities in October 2014. The coastal dynamics and the surface area of the evacuated coastal zone have been analysed using high resolution spatail images available in Open Access on Google Earth between 2001 and 2016. The diachronic comparison of 29 satellite images shows that the coastline was broadly stable throughout the commune of Port-Bouët over the past 15 years. The eviction at the end of 2014 covered a zone of 10,4 km. The most densely populated area is the destroyed stretch between the main road and the beach, which varies in width between 63 and 289 m. The total surface of evictions is La superficie totale 124 ha.

Eviction is synonymous with forced displacement, violent and authoritarian that has direct and indirect consequences on the health, economic and social wellbeing of affected populations. Additionally, the justifications given for the evictions were the threat imposed by coastal erosion in Port-Bouët and the construction of a highway connecting Abidjan to Grand-Bassam. However, our analysis proves that the coastal dynamics have been relatively stable over the past 15 years. The government's arguments are therefore unsubstantiated. What's more, the forced displacement of these populations should respond to a number of requirements, such as the Kampala Convention (ratified by Ivory Coast) that guarantees the protection of people internally displaced by natural disasters, development projects or armed conflicts. The Ivory Coast has therefore agreed to « carry out a just and equitable compensation, and to provide forms of reparation, if need be, to displaced persons for the damages resulting from displacement ». Clearly, this has not been respected.

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Pierre Ozer (pozer@ulg.ac.be) has a PhD in geographical sciences (University of Liège, 2000). He has worked for various institutions such as the Università degli Studi di Genova (Genoa, Italy), the University of Luxembourg, the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO, Rome) and the Luxembourg University Foundation. In 2009 he was elected full member of the Royal Academy for Overseas Sciences, Brussels. He led the Belgian scientific delegation to the United Nations international negotiations to combat desertification (UNCCD COP-9). Pierre's main research interests include desertification processes, natural risk and disaster management, the impacts of environmental changes on public health and adaptation strategies to climate change. Pierre Ozer teaches these subjects at the University of Liège, but also in the Università degli Studi di Genova (Italy), Università degli Studi di Sassari (Italy), the University of Angers (France), Universitatea din Bucuresti (Romania) also at the University of Parakou (Benin) and the University of Djibouti (Djibouti). In 2016, he launched the specialised Master degree in risk and disaster management at the University of Liège in collaboration with the Catholic University of Louvain. He is the author of five books and over 300 scientific and 'public' publications in those fields. Pierre is the scientific coordinator of The Hugo Observatory.

