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From Rurality to Urbanity: Issues and Modes of Land Management in Azaguié, Côte d'Ivoire

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Abstract

Communalization, as a process of creating local authorities, is a development tool perceived as such by all developing countries, and more specifically those of sub-Saharan Africa. Communalization in Côte d'Ivoire began at the end of the law of November 18, 1955, with the creation of three full-fledged communes: Abidjan, Bouaké and Grand-Bassam. The objectives assigned to them were, among others, the modernization of the rural landscape, the improvement of the living environment and the management of the land. The year 1980 saw a significant increase in the number of communes to 38 (Adiko A.R., 2003: 11) ^[1]. Thus, Azaguié, our study area, which became a commune at that time, still has difficulty in presenting a shining urban landscape. In addition, like all the peripheral communes of Abidjan, Azaguié must deal with the problem of land management. This raises the problem of the consequent

determination of the stakes and the modes of land management of this town that has become a commune. The objective of this study is to analyze the issues at stake in Azaguié's transition from rural to urban and to reveal the current land management methods. To achieve this, the approach was based on existing documentation and field surveys. Thus, communal authorities and customary chiefs and 110 heads of households were interviewed. The results of our investigations reveal that despite the installation of basic services and the provision of equipment and infrastructure, the modernization of the commune of Azaguié remains weak. In addition, population growth and the proximity of the Abidjan metropolis have given rise to a specificity of land management involving both the public authorities and the village communities.

Keywords: Azaguié, Rurality, Urbanity, Issue, Land Management

1. Introduction

The development of a locality is assessed by the level of infrastructure. Indeed, these infrastructures correspond to the basic facilities that underpin contemporary societies and are part of a land-use and public services policy. They are financed by public funds but can sometimes be financed by private funds. They facilitate the life of citizens and develop communication, transportation, health or education in order to offer a certain quality of life and provide access to basic services for societies. To achieve this end, most of the states in sub-Saharan Africa, including Côte d'Ivoire, have opted for the policy of decentralization. Its major objectives are to bring the administration closer to the people and to allow the harmonious development of Côte d'Ivoire by reducing the regional disparities of colonization (Adiko Aimée Rodrigue, 2003: 5) ^[1]. At the same time, since 1980 the communes have been at the center of the decentralization policy in Côte d'Ivoire. Communalization as a process of creating territorial communities is a perceived development tool. Thus, from 38 communes in 1980 (Adiko A. R., 2003: 11) ^[1], Côte d'Ivoire has 201 communes in 2018 (Council of Ministers, May 2018).

This study analyzes, in the case of Azaguié, which has been a municipality since 1980, the issues involved in Azaguié's transition from a rural to an urban area and reveals the current land management methods. Azaguié is located 38.6 km from the city of Abidjan and 27.1 km from the commune of Abobo, the gateway to Abidjan via the eastern road. Given its proximity to the city of Abidjan, especially Abobo, Azaguié is in fact experiencing an evolution marked by a significant demographic growth and rapid spatial growth. Its extension area was only 9,108 ha in 1998 for a population of 8,962 inhabitants. This population has increased to 21,976 inhabitants and the commune has expanded to 20,130 ha as a result of the growing demand for housing and facilities (INS-RGPH, 1998 and 2014 ^[6]). The uncontrolled urbanization of the commune of Azaguié is

becoming increasingly difficult for local elected officials due to the pressure and influence of the city of Abidjan. Indeed, the Abidjan populations in search of cheaper housing or home ownership are rushing to communes not far from Abidjan. This phenomenon is all the more uncontrollable as land speculation in the face of urban expansion is leading to all kinds of land parcelling operations. It is the customary owners who are involved in this uncontrolled urbanization and the non-respect of urban planning regulations. This private management of space leaves the opportunity for other actors to intervene, especially intermediaries between the buyer and the landowners. We are witnessing a growing commodification of land. However, the mayor's office and certain state structures intervene afterwards to formalize the right of acquisition.

In this system of mutation of the rural areas of Azaguié in favor of urbanization, the local elected officials participate in the provision of equipment and infrastructure. These achievements are only possible thanks to the mobilization of funds by the municipal council. These funds come in part from tax revenues, taxes, taxpayers' taxes. These locally mobilizable sources of funding are still very inadequate in the face of municipal expenses; hence the need for aid granted by the State and contributions from external

partners. However, due to the economic crises that the country is experiencing, the Ivorian authorities are concentrating their resources on the development hubs (Bouaké, San Pedro, Man, Korhogo, Ferkéssédougou, Daloa, Gagnoa) which are capable of boosting regional development and counterbalancing the excessive weight of Abidjan to the detriment of certain communes such as Azaguié. Despite this provision, the municipal council is striving to offer its population a modern living environment. From the above, the fundamental question that emerges is: why the communalization of Azaguié? The subsidiary questions that arise from this central question are: what is at stake in the transition of Azaguié from rural to urban? What is the mode of land management in Azaguié?

2. Materials and Methods

2.1 Presentation of the Study Area

The commune of Azaguié is located 38.6 km from the city of Abidjan, in the southern region of Côte d'Ivoire. It is bordered to the north by the commune of Agou, to the south by the commune of Anyama, to the east by the commune of Tiassalé and to the west by the commune of Agboville. It is made up of two major sectors: Azaguié-Ahoua and Azaguié-Gare (Fig 1).

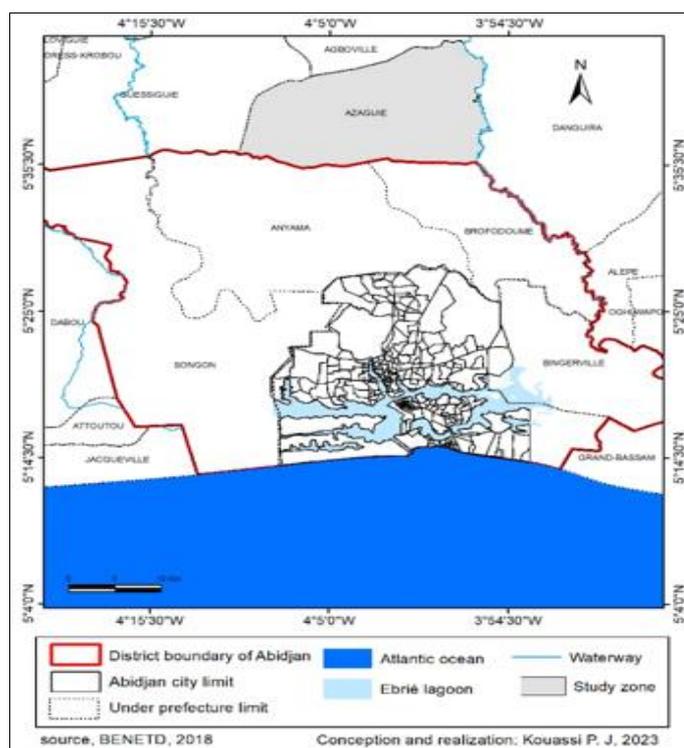


Fig 1: Presentation and location of the study area

The commune of Azaguié covers an area of 20,130 ha and is home to a population of 21,976 inhabitants (INS, 2014) [6]. The choice of this commune for this study is explained by the strong influence that Abidjan, the country's economic capital, has due to its proximity and accessibility.

2.2 Methods of Data Collection

The results come from a documentary research and a field survey.

The documentary research consisted of consulting books, research works on land tenure practices, urban sprawl and

administrative documents of the Azaguié City Hall. These documents provided a clearer idea of land management methods in Côte d'Ivoire, identified the factors that explain urban sprawl and provided an understanding of demographic trends.

The field survey conducted in the commune of Azaguié, carried out in the period of September and October 2021, included observation, interviews and a questionnaire survey. The observation consisted of direct contact with the study area. It allowed us to identify the situation of extension of

the commune, the forms of appropriation of the space and to take photographs.

The questionnaire survey, conducted among heads of households, made it possible to understand the residential reasons for this locality and the living environment in terms of infrastructure and equipment. Since it was impossible to interview all households, a sample was determined using the reasoned choice technique. Indeed, the Azaguié communal area has 4398 households according to the latest General Census of Population and Housing (INS-RGPH, 2014, p. 9) [6]. A rate of 2.5% on the headcount is applied. Thus, 110 heads of households were sampled. The criterion for choosing the head of household was guided by his or her length of time in the locality, up to 10 years before the survey. The questionnaire was supplemented by an interview guide for customary and administrative authorities in the Azaguié land chain. These were the directors of the Ministry of Construction and Urban Planning, the Land Registry, the Tax Department, and the head of the technical department of the town hall. The interview data collected was transcribed and processed manually. The software Sphinx, Excel and Word were necessary for the processing of quantitative data. The cartographic realization was made with the help of the software Arc Gis 10.2.2.

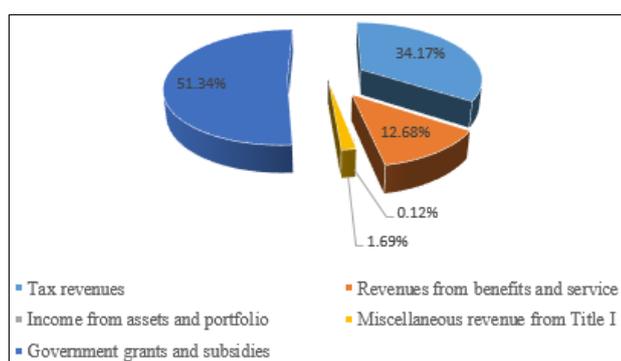
The combination of these different techniques and tools allowed us to develop a plan that is articulated around two points. The first of these points reveals the stakes involved in the communalization process in Azaguié and the second point focuses on the land management method.

3. Results

3.1 Challenges of the Communalization Process

3.1.1 Financial Resources Mobilized Locally for the Development of the Commune

Resource mobilization is an essential element in the implementation of the communalization process. The commune of Azaguié, like all communes in Côte d'Ivoire, has various forms of revenue to finance its local development activities (Fig 2).



Source: Field survey, 2021

Fig 2: Share of municipal revenues in the overall budget

The financing of municipal investments is governed by Article 24 of Law No. 80-1180 of 17 October 1980 on municipal organization. These revenues can be mobilized locally and then supplemented by external contributions. An analysis of Fig 1 shows that 51,34% of the financial resources mobilized for the development of Azaguié come

from external contributions, in particular State aid and assistance funds. Also, in order to boost its modernization, the commune draws its financial resources from the collection of tax revenues, revenues from services, revenues from property and portfolio and miscellaneous revenues from Title I. These pockets of income represent 48,66% of these resources.

The State grants operating aid to the commune in the form of a General Operating Grant (GOG) to compensate for the weight of delegated expenses. It is an important part of the subsidy granted by the State. Table 1 shows the breakdown of the overall budget granted by the State.

Table 1: The operating and investment budget allocated to the commune of Azaguié over a five-year period

Year	Global budget (Euro)	Operating budget (Euro)	Investment budget (Euro)
2016	118 011,87	61 558,96	56 452,91
2017	118 011,87	61 558,96	56 452,91
2018	155 152,40	61 558,96	93 596,49
2019	188 023,36	61 558,96	126 464,40
2020	214 402,60	72 799,78	141 602,82

Source: Ministry to the Prime Minister, in charge of the Budget and State Portfolio, 2017, 2018, 2019 and 2020

Over the period from 2016 to 2020, nearly 474 569,52 Euro were mobilized as investment budget. Table 1 shows that the investment budget is increasing from one year to the next over this five-year period. Indeed, at the Council of Ministers meeting of 27 June 2018 in Yamoussoukro, the Council adopted a decree creating a deferred development zone on the perimeter covered by the master plan for urban development of Greater Abidjan. Thus, certain communes such as Azaguié, on the outskirts of the city of Abidjan, have been taken into account in this plan. This perimeter, the new communes and sub-prefectures (Grand-Bassam, Bonoua, Anyama, Azaguié, Alépé, Brofodoumé, Bingerville, Songon, Dabou, d'oghwapo and Jacquville) which have been integrated into the city of Abidjan, will also serve the Ivorian State to control land speculation and to constitute sufficient land reserves to carry out major projects of collective interest. This integration of the municipality of Azaguié into the greater Abidjan area has enabled it to see its investment budget almost doubled in 2018, 2019 and 2020. However, it appears that its investment budget is higher than its operating budget during these years. These funds have enabled the commune to put in place some infrastructure and equipment, necessary for the reconfiguration of the landscape of the commune of Azaguié.

3.1.2 The Modernization of Azaguié as a Challenge in the Communalization Process

The main challenge of the transition from rural to urban is the modernization of the landscape through the construction of infrastructure and equipment. The municipality has made investments in different areas, notably in road infrastructure, economic facilities, socio-community facilities (health, educational and socio-cultural), and equipment. Table 2 lists the various achievements resulting from the investment budgets for the five-year period 2016-2020.

Table 2: Allocations to the commune of Azaguié from the investment budget

Year	Designation	Cost in Euro
2016	Acquisition of 700 tables - benches in the elementary school of the Commune	6 090,60
2016	Rehabilitation of the Abbè dispensary - Bégnini	16 609,74
2016	Electrification works in the districts of the Commune (low voltage and public lighting)	33 752,57
2016	Total	56 452,91
2017	Acquisition of 700 tables - benches in the elementary school of the Commune	3 160,18
2017	Acquisition of a generator including installation accessories for the urban health center of Azaguié	12 181,20
2017	Construction of the fence of the city hall of Azaguié	15 226,49
2017	Construction of 10 garbage bins	4 567,95
2017	Electrification of the exterior and interior of the Azaguié town hall	15 226,49
2017	Installation of 20 road signs in the neighborhoods of Azaguié station, Azaguié Ahoua and street addressing	6 090,60
2017	Total	56 452,91
2018	Not received	
2018	Total	93 596,49
2019	Acquisition of 400 tables and benches for the public elementary school of Azaguié Ahoua and Azaguié gare (4th tranche)	18 536,73
2019	Construction of the fence of the nursery school of Azaguié station (2nd stage)	9 135,90
2019	Construction of a nursery school in Azaguié-bambou	17 967,26
2019	Electrification of the main and secondary roads of the Azaguié Commune	28 551,95
2019	Rehabilitation of the Azaguié market - station	41 614,01
2019	Rehabilitation of the Abbè-Begnini market	10 658,55
2019	Total	126 464,40
2020	Heavy re-profiling of 50 km of roads in the town of Azaguié	15 226,49
2020	Opening of 50 km of roads in the town of Azaguié	16 745,57
2020	Rehabilitation of the market of Azaguié-gare	21 317,09
2020	Construction of a hospitalization and diaper room at the urban health center (csu)	30 453
2020	Construction of a public elementary school of six (06) classrooms plus office in Abbè ancien carrefour	15 226,49
2020	Construction of twenty (20) classrooms in the public elementary school of Azaguié-Ahoua, Azaguié-gare and Azaguié-bambou	27 407,69
2020	Construction of a kindergarten with an office, a sanitary block and a courtyard	15 226,49
2020	Total	141 602,82

Source: Ministry to the Prime Minister, in charge of the Budget and State Portfolio, 2017, 2018, 2019 and 2020

In view of the table, the operations to improve the living conditions of the populations of the commune taken into account by the investment budget concern educational development projects, health and social development projects, infrastructure development projects and the development of distribution, warehouses and stores.

The transformation of Azaguié into an urban center is also a desire of the municipality and the actions of the private sector in providing facilities. Fig 3 shows the spatial distribution of facilities and infrastructure in Azaguié.

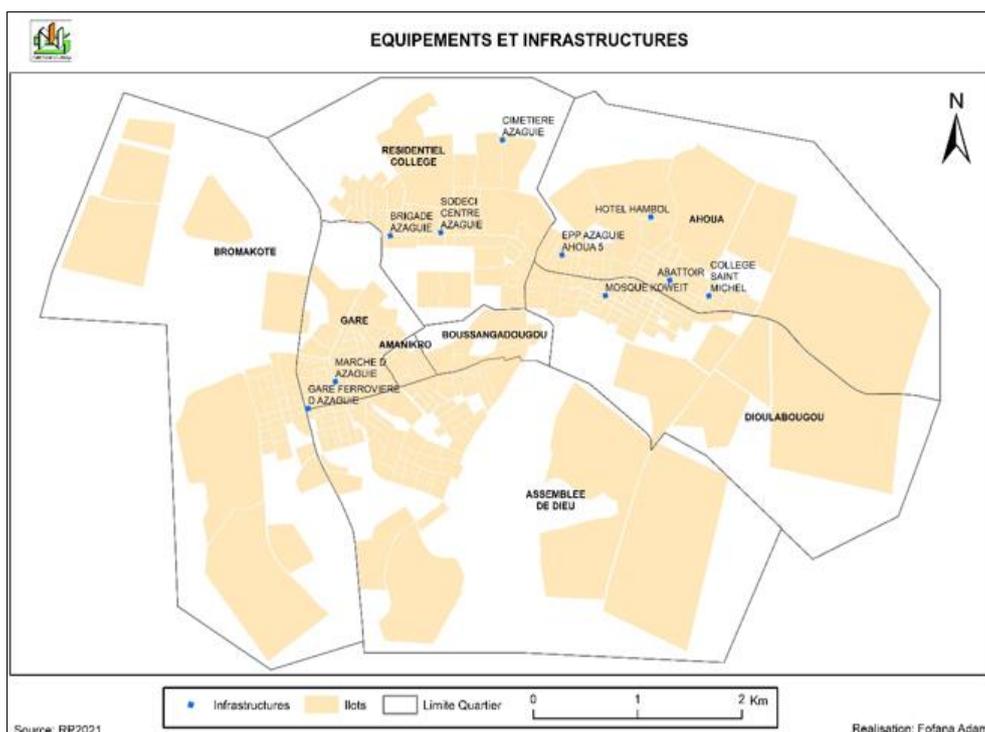


Fig 3: Distribution of equipment and infrastructure in the commune of Azaguié

Public actions have enabled the gradual deployment on the territory of facilities and infrastructures that meet the needs of the population. These different achievements reveal an urban hierarchy over rural management and constantly erase the rural footprints. However, the map shows a disparity in the location of facilities and infrastructures. The central neighborhoods are the most privileged while the neighborhoods located on the communal periphery are disadvantaged. The achievements do not follow the rhythm of the creation of the districts.

3.1.3 Accelerated Demographic Dynamics and Socio-Professional Change

The population of Azaguié is experiencing very significant demographic growth. From 8,962 inhabitants in 1998, its population increased to 20,019 inhabitants in 2014 and to 38,066 inhabitants in 2021 (RGPH, 1998, 2014^[6] and 2021^[5]). Correlatively, its urbanization rate has continued to increase. It was 89% in 2014, it exceeds 92% in 2021. In 23 years (from 1998 to 2021), the population of Azaguié has multiplied by 4. Apart from the natural growth of the population, this exponential evolution of the demography and the strong presence of city dwellers in the municipal area can be explained by the integration of this commune into the greater Abidjan area. Indeed, close to the district of Abidjan, precisely Anyama by 18 km, Azaguié has become the new urbanization front of the Ivorian economic capital. Because of its easy accessibility, via the A1 highway and the Agboville road (B107), the commune of Azaguié is popular because of the relatively low cost of rent compared to the large urban center of Abidjan and the acquisition of land. However, the arrival of these new city dwellers and the urban dynamics of Azaguié have reconfigured the socio-professional framework of the population. The activities carried out by the heads of household are listed in the table below.

Table 3: Proportion of activities of heads of households surveyed

Socio-professional categories of heads of households surveyed	Proportion (%)
Farmers	29
Shopkeepers	17
Craftsmen	15
Civil servants	18
Private sector employees	12
Retired	9
Total	100

Source: Field Survey, 2022

In the 1975 census, the town was defined as a locality with more than 10,000 inhabitants and between 4,000 and 10,000 inhabitants with at least 50% of the heads of household having a non-agricultural activity. According to our field surveys, 29% of the heads of households surveyed in Azaguié are engaged in agricultural activities. This proportion is well below the norm for identifying rurality. However, this expressive presence of farmers (29%) in this locality is due to the existence of many agro-industrial plantations of ornamental plants, sweet bananas belonging to the Eglin Company, a plantation of Chinese bamboo and poultry farms.

In addition, there are individual plantations of rubber trees, papaya, oil palm, coffee, cocoa and cassava (B. D. P. V. Dje *et al.*, 2017, p. 2889)^[4]. Apart from retirees (9%), Azaguié

has 62% of heads of households who work in the socio-professional field resulting from modernity; in particular tertiary activities (trade, handicrafts), in the public service and employees in the private sector. The local civil servants (18%) reside there as a result of the decentralization policy. This change in socio-professional activities has given the study area a transformation of its demographic content.

The integration of Azaguié into the greater Abidjan area means that the commune is influenced by the advance of the city of Abidjan. This has resulted in a transformation of land use and management.

3.2 Land Management in Azaguié

3.2.1 The Allotment in the Structuring of the Commune

The subdivision of the locality was accelerated after its erection as a commune in 1980. This was done under the leadership of the state structures in place. The use of a surveyor is mandatory for the establishment of the topographic plan on the basis of which the architect designs the subdivision project. Of the three types of allotment that exist in accordance with the texts in force (private allotment, village allotment and administrative allotment), the village allotment is the most fashionable. Very early on, under the impetus of urbanization, the administrative authorities initiated subdivision operations. However, urban sprawl, which affects landowners' plots, forces them to develop their property. The latter, in collaboration with the customary chiefs, carry out subdivisions. The file provided for this application also contains a subdivision project that mentions the feasibility study, which includes a constructability analysis and the necessary investments. It also includes the definition of the project, the development permit, the marketing, the choice of the companies, the follow-up of the works and the transfer of the common equipment. The file of the allotment project is necessary for the constitution of the technical file. The technical file thus composed is deposited at the town hall where it is submitted to a public inquiry, which lasts for a certain period. Then, the file is sent to the Ministry of Construction, Sanitation and Urban Planning for verification before being forwarded to the Ministry of Construction and Urban Planning. In fear of being dispossessed of their property, in view of the advance of urbanization, landowners subdivide their plots of land all over the place. However, the municipal authorities, for public purposes and in accordance with the requirements of urbanization, define urban plans by monopolizing certain lots. This way of doing things participates in the structuring of the communal space dictated by the town hall. In a forward-looking vision, the mayor's office takes charge of urban development operations in collaboration with the customary authorities. The reshaping of the communal space leads the populations to participate in local development and its fragmentation makes it possible to protect the land heritage of the village community. The subdivisions in Azaguié concern rural areas used for agricultural purposes in order to provide the commune with a minimum of collective facilities that are indispensable for the development of an urban area. The agricultural purpose is gradually disappearing, leaving the place to a use controlled by urban requirements. This transformation affects the way landowners manage their land, as they must now collaborate with the administration.

3.2.2 Land Acquisition in the Face of Dual Urban Influence

The land of Azaguié is undergoing the advance of the city of Abidjan and the expansion of the city of Azaguié. This double dynamism introduces a change in land governance. Faced with the influx of applicants, landowners begin to sell lots, either directly or through an intermediary called a démarcheur. The sale of land belonging to a head of a family or an individual is done before by information; thus, the community is informed. With the inclusion of Abidjan, the head of the family subdivides their plot of land into lots of 400 m², 500 m² or 600 m² depending on the position of the property in relation to the town center. When it is close to the urban center, the segmentation of the plot is smaller. Correspondingly, the price of a lot varies between 2 28 397 Euro and 4 567 Euro depending on the position of the lot in relation to the urban center. While these lots were negotiated between 152,26 Euro and 761,32 Euro. Land speculation is very recurrent, as the increasing demand for land leads to a rise in the cost of land. No land can be the subject of a final concession order unless it is the result of a subdivision approved by the Ministry in charge of construction and urban planning and whose perimeter has been previously registered. It is upon delivery by the landowner that the purchaser begins the procedures with the state authorities to obtain the right to full ownership of the ceded plot. It is after all these steps that the acquisition is declared legal. The buyer can then enjoy his property in all legitimacy.

4. Discussion

The challenges of urbanization have accelerated in developing countries. This recent and rapid urbanization in recent years in Sub-Saharan Africa has resulted in a level of urbanization that will vary by 2020 from an average of 63% in landlocked Sahelian countries to 70% in coastal countries such as Nigeria and Côte d'Ivoire (J. M. Cour, 2007: 374)^[7]. This urbanization that pushes to the increase of the urban population is accompanied by an increase in the size of the cities. The size of the cities which necessarily passes by a sprawl. This urban sprawl is characterized by the growth of suburbs, because the cities are densifying, spreading out and occupying surrounding rural areas. The challenge of urbanization has more of a disadvantage, as the excess urban population has not kept pace with the construction of social housing, forcing people to fall back on undeveloped rural land (V. M. Diahou, 2009)^[3]. The corollary of this is the unprecedented recomposition of rural areas through the provision of infrastructure, equipment and, above all, a change in habitat. Azaguié is an example, given its proximity to the Abidjan district. The evolution of its demographic content has been parallel to that of the city of Abidjan. Is the city of Abidjan that the urban population is growing more and more. Its population, which was 500,000 in 1988, rose successively to 3,125,890 in 1998, 4,707,000 in 2014 and 5,616,633 in 2021 (INS-RGPH, 1988, 1998, 2014^[6] and 2021^[5]). This population flow intensifies commercial activities, animating the urban center of the city whose area of influence exceeds the city limits. This has been amplified by the policy of communalization of local authorities. Azaguié, which became a full-fledged commune in 1980, began its development following the decentralization policy. According to M. Kahina and A. Khelloudja (2014: 126)^[8], the commune is considered an essential actor in territorial development. It proceeds with

the development of its territory by implementing activities likely to drive economic development and takes part in the planning of its territory and the improvement of the living conditions of its population. N. E. Kouadio (2021: 157) lists the achievements of the municipal authorities of Bocanda in developing and modernizing the commune. These include road infrastructure, economic facilities, and social and community facilities. B. Yéo and N. S. Bohoussou (2017: 56)^[14] emphasizes the actions of municipal authorities in providing equipment and infrastructure for the well-being of urban residents. According to these authors (B. Yéo and N. S. Bohoussou, 2017: 53)^[14], the financial resources needed to constitute the investment budget come essentially from local tax resources. These include market revenues, flat-rate taxes, fees, revenues from various services, in particular legalizations, document certificates, civil status issues, etc. The commune of Azaguié does not shy away from this way of collecting funds for the modernization of its locality. However, A. A. Adomon (2015: 166 and 167)^[2] structures the financing of communal investments in two main parts. He groups the own resources of local taxation listed by B. Yéo and N. S. Bohoussou (2017)^[14] as locally mobilized revenues. In addition, he maintains that these revenues are supplemented by external contributions, in particular aid or subsidies provided by the State or by organizations or donors.

The recomposition of Azaguié following its erection as a commune has resulted in changes in the habitat, socio-professional changes and new land management. At the professional level, the urban advance is leading to a reduction in land on a daily basis, but the most widespread strategy is socio-professional reconversion, which young people who have dropped out of school are engaged in. This reconversion is done in particular from agricultural activity to small trades: masonry, carpentry, sewing, electricity, hairdressing, motorcycle cab driving, contract work in factories, etc. (R. K. Oura, 2020: 145)^[12]. In terms of land management, landowners and traditional chiefs are no longer the only actors involved in land management. According to the same author (p.140), there are six categories of actors involved in the land chain in the city of Bouaké the political authorities (the Mayor and the Deputy), the administrative and judicial authorities (the Regional Prefect, the Director of Construction and Urban Planning, the Director of the Environment and Sustainable Development, the Director of Taxes, the Director of the Land Registry, the Director of Agriculture and Rural Development), the Director of the Land Registry, the Director of Land Management and the Director of the Land Registry, the Director of the Land Registry, the Director of Technical Services of the town hall, the public prosecutor and the commissioner), private operators (canvassers, notaries, surveyors, property developers, topographers, developers), local populations (purchasers, landowners) and customary authorities. This is similar to that of Azaguié in the acquisition of land by a third party. The lack of control of these actors by both the administrative and customary authorities has created a great deal of land insecurity with fairly serious consequences for the villages.

5. Conclusion

The communalization of territorial communities is an expression of decentralization that allows for the local development of spatial entities. The commune of Azaguié is

an example. With the financial support of the State, it mobilizes its funds through tax revenues for investments. It has thus become an essential partner in the strategy of regional development, for which modernity remains the main issue. The result is a transformation in the use of land and its management. The land of Azaguié is undergoing numerous transformations, through the provision of modern equipment and infrastructure, and through a change in land governance, with the complementarity of the public administration and the interference of intermediaries, thus creating strong land speculation.

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