

Sociability Networks in the City of Bujumbura

Oscar Toyi¹, Ildephonse Sindayigaya² 

¹Faculty of Languages and Social Sciences, Université du Burundi, Bujumbura, Burundi

²Ecole Doctorale, Université du Burundi, Bujumbura, Burundi

Email: toyioscar57@gmail.com, isinda1986@gmail.com

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Abstract

Faced with the profound changes predicting transformations in the mindsets, Bujumbura got a new look that created social networks. The target of this article is to analyze the role and importance of social networks in the everyday life of Bujumbura citizens. The researcher used documentary techniques to inquire through some associations' reports and their statutes what their objective is, aiming to survey how useful networking socially is. Results show that people in Bujumbura are gathered in associations especially according to professions such as driving bicycles (taxi-velo), and women who sew clothes. Results confirm that networking is also operational among people according to the generation whether old people or youth helping one another. Results finally attest that, in Bujumbura, in compliance with the law on cooperatives, even though membership in associations is free, social networks formed in cooperatives (Sangwe) are viewed as having a political-eyed target spread on every hill or quarter in the country but their members, though thriving to succeed, are facing many problems even though they are founded by the governmental budget. Social networks are of great importance in Bujumbura in as much as Burundi esteems that development is quickly achieved in group than being alone.

Keywords

Burundi, Bujumbura, Social Network, Cooperative, Women's Association, Taxi-Velo

1. Introduction

The concept of “sociability network” known in French as “réseau de sociabilité” can be understood as the whole of the relations which an individual maintains taking into account the form of these relations (Liao, 2017: pp. 649-650; Verduyn et al., 2017: p. 281). The network is the set of objects or persons connected

or maintained in links or the set of links thus established. Sociability is the ability to live in society. Defined in terms of contact, exchanges, and relationships between a group of actors, sociability networks have the general characteristics of social networks. Sociability networks have as their framework a series of interactions of various forms and are centered on relations, not on individual or collective attributes. They provide the material for an important chapter of sociology or they are opposed to physical networks without regard to the places or settings of sociability that the latter can give rise to, such as bar cars or station buffets for the railway network (Gond et al., 2017: pp. 233-237; Kappeler, 2019: pp. 1-2).

In Burundi, sociability is largely implemented around the Kiswahili language (Nassenstein, 2019: pp. 205-207) and youth associations especially in the inter-religious council using traditional drummers and sports like football (Muna & Mbugua, 2021: p. 4). In Burundi, sociability is a way of life, especially in rural areas and through it, there is the interplay between corporeality and **sociality**, which is central to reproductive navigation in rural **Burundi** (Schwarz & Merten, 2023: pp. 78-80).

Applied indifferently to all sorts of administrative objects, companies, family circles, associations, groups of friends, etc., the first two expressions are distinguished, however, by the unequal emphasis placed, on the one hand, on the structuring and regulation of the relationships in question (McEwen & McEwen, 2017: pp. 459-461; Serrat, 2017: pp. 39-40) and, on the other hand, on the willingness to engage more or less strongly in public relations (Avidar, 2017: pp. 956-957; Dhanesh & Duthler, 2019: pp. 4-6; Quesenberry, 2020: pp. 223-226).

Sociability is the set of interpersonal relationships between individuals. More precisely, sociability is the existence, between individuals, of real social relations, chosen and reciprocal relations that individuals wish to maintain (DiMaggio, 2019: pp. 19-21; Smith, 2023: p. 149). So, to what extent are sociability networks created and functioning?

The new information and communication spaces are linked to material spaces and reinforce the capacity to exploit the real. Authors can distinguish formal (or organized) sociability from informal (or spontaneous) sociability. Formal sociability designates relationships that are more or less constrained by the same framework of existence (e.g., sociability among colleagues at work) (Yu & Gershtein, 2006: pp. 14724-14725).

Informal sociability refers to relationships between individuals who choose each other outside of any institutional framework (such as friends). Authors also distinguish between private society, which is intimate, especially within the family, and public sociability, which is turned, on the contrary, towards the outside (as in circles or salons at other times or in associations, coffee's today. These sociability links consist essentially of discussions, meetings, common leisure activities, and outings (Sanborn, 2022: pp. 227-228; Swart et al., 2019: pp. 189-191).

Social networks also offer new opportunities for the individual. Whether it is to get known, find a job, or join a community of interest, social networks are a very powerful source of social links (Camacho et al., 2020: pp. 101-103; Can &

Alatas, 2019: pp. 19-22). Social networks are applications based on internet technologies that offer a service of connecting internet users to develop communities. With their development, the world seems to be at the door of individuals who communicate and relate more easily with each other (Ellinor & Girard, 2023: pp. 177-179).

Therefore, this article analyzes the role and importance of social networks in the everyday life of Bujumbura citizens.

2. Methods and Methodology

For the methodological procedure, this article is the result of the documentary technique in data collection with a qualitative approach. The authors also paid a visit to certain places that could inform us about youth associations in Burundi. This allowed them to get an idea of the various ways youth and children can rejoice in their right to association. Apart from observation during the visit, the authors used a documentary technique.

The analysis of the results was carried out using legal methods. It is a combination of the deductive and inductive methods. The deductive method starts from the comparison of facts and contents of legal texts in a general way to deduce a conclusion on the state of application of a rule of international and regional instruments of protection of the rights of migrant workers and members of their families, especially about the pension. In the inductive technique, the starting point is a few isolated cases, and then a generalization is made for all similar cases. The references in the text and the bibliography are the results of the software Zotero applying the format Chicago Manual of Style, edition (full note).

3. Results

3.1. Relations with the Rural World and Urban Centers

The relationship between cities and the countryside is largely the basis for land use planning in all countries in general, and in Burundi in particular, which is an essentially agricultural country. A national or regional territory evolves essentially based on relations between the two worlds (rural and urban).

The first aspect of urban-rural relations concerns the competitive, even conflicting, aspects of the relations between the two environments: competition over land, the incessant quest for building materials at the expense of rural spaces and landscapes, and controlled migration.

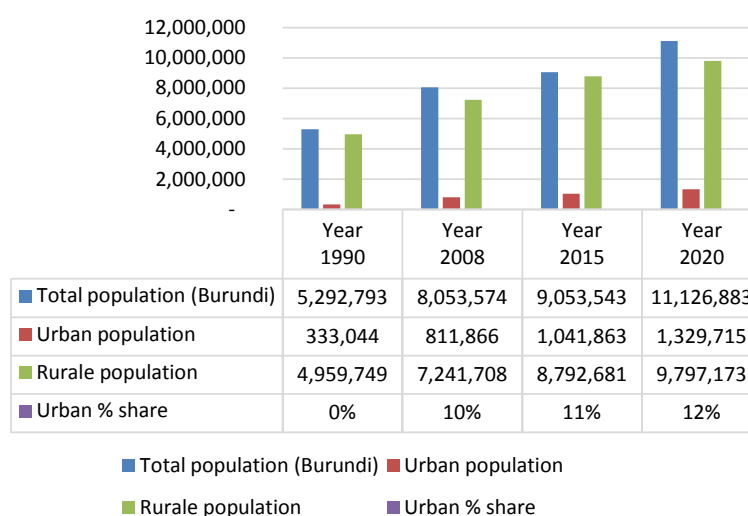
The second aspect is that, succinctly, it is possible to summarize them as positive relations or relationships:

- ⇒ The countryside provides the various cities with large volumes of temporal or seasonal migrant workers.
- ⇒ Intense daily and/or weekly exchanges are established between the cities and the rural hinterland.
- ⇒ Cultural contacts are established through urban confrontations.

- ⇒ The city attracts a large number of rural people to establish commercial relations and wealth creation.
- ⇒ The city is fed in large part by the countryside, with its fruits, vegetables, cereals, meat, and dairy products;
- ⇒ The city offers the peasants solutions to modernize and increase the productivity of their activity.

In return, any increase in rural productivity is inevitably accompanied by an increase in urbanization, induced by the demand for upstream and downstream services, a demand generated by the development of trade (national and international) in agricultural products.

Evolution of the urban population of Burundi



These results are found in the 1990 and 2008 census data, optimal projections from SDAU studies of Gitega, Ngozi, and Rumonge (Sindayigaya, 2015: p. 7).

3.2. Contribution of Digital Sociability to Social Ties

3.2.1. A Strengthening of Strong Ties

Authors can assume two sociological effects in the study of the consequences of digital social networks. They could reinforce strong ties by allowing an increase in the frequency of exchanges between friends and by increasing the frequency of offline meetings, i.e. without a screen between the protagonists. The social networks would then play the role of facilitator of events or occasions of outings between friends. Researchers note then the possibility to increase the frequency of concrete relationships between individuals as has been proved in former research (Chakravarty et al., 2019: pp. 426-427; Walsh, 2020: p. 842).

3.2.2. Increase the Size of One's Relational Network

They can also be an opportunity to increase the size of one's relational network. Through the multiplication of exchanges, our circle of relationships can be extended to new people who will become part of our contacts and may lead to

meetings. This seems to be in line with recent results that showed that through the multiplication of exchanges, the distance between individuals taken at random decreases time after time (Emmert-Streib & Dehmer, 2021).

3.2.3. Mobilizing Weak Ties to Gain an Advantage

They can also mobilize weak ties. The sociologists Ferrary & Granovetter (2017) highlighted the strength of weak ties: by giving us access to a relational space that is different from those close to us, our networks can give us access to information that is unknown to our circle of strong ties, which then constitutes an advantage. In the job search, they could also play an essential and particularly effective role.

However, some recent studies (Dredge & Schreurs, 2020; Firth et al., 2019; Lieberman & Schroeder, 2020), show that the impact of social networks remains limited when it comes to increasing offline sociability. Facebook would tend to increase weak ties more than strong ones. On the other hand, it would not affect sociability since we can see that the biggest users of Facebook are also those who go out the most with their friends and relatives.

4. Discussion

4.1. Meeting the Needs of Urban Youth

The response to the needs of young people in urban areas requires an analysis of the structure of the age pyramid. It is necessary to note that the analysis of the age structure reveals the youthfulness of the population: 39% of the inhabitants of Bujumbura, for example, are less than 14 years old, and the average age is 21 years (Bujumbura Population 2023, n.d.; Population Division-United Nations, 2018).

According to the employment survey conducted by ISTEERBU in the city of Bujumbura in 2007, the migration flow to the capital is by far the most important demographic movement observed in the entire country. The points to remember are the following:

- ⇒ A broad base of the age pyramid indicating a high birth rate (characteristic of African cities, including Bujumbura);
- ⇒ An influx of young people in the 15 - 24 age group, which inflates this part of the pyramid, due to migration to Bujumbura, the capital, and GITEGA, the second largest city in the country (Catalogue de données central, 2014; Institut de la Statistique et des Etudes Economiques du Burundi (ISTEERBU), 2019).

Among the main motivations for urban migration, the same ISTEERBU survey reveals the following:

- The employment search is the primary reason in 38% of cases; the pursuit of studies in 12% of cases, security reasons and family reunification following in percentages of cases.
- It can be noted that for men, the employment search justifies 52% of the cas-

es of migration while for women, the primary reasons are family reunification and the pursuit of studies.

- In terms of schooling and vocational training, it was found that young people who drop out at the end of primary school are unemployed, without any qualifications, or jobs.
- They are exposed to delinquency which can be a source of insecurity and instability because of their vulnerability (Institut de la Statistique et des Etudes Economiques du Burundi (ISTEEBU), 2019).

On the other hand, youth are a potential labor force if vocational training programs are put in place for them (Card et al., 2011: pp. 288-289; Chakravarty et al., 2019: pp. 79-81; Hanushek et al., 2017: p. 78; Kluve et al., 2019: p. 239).

4.2. Different Regulatory Texts on Sociability Networks in Burundi

To manage the different sociability networks in Burundi, decrees, notes, and ordinances have been signed by the different bodies with competencies in the matter.

4.2.1. Law n°1/02 of January 27, 2017, on the Organic Framework of Non-Profit Associations

According to this law, a non-profit association (Association sans but lucratif, ASBL in the acronym), is any association that does not undertake commercial, industrial, and political activities as its main objective and whose purpose is not the sharing of profits the members however, is not considered a lucrative activity, the fact for an association to undertake activities tending to make its assets fruitful to better achieve its purpose (Chapter I, section 1; article3, paragraph 7).

In this same article, the terms “Federation”, “union”, “forum”, “platform”, and “network” are assimilated into the term “collective” which is a non-profit association formed by several non-profit associations to achieve common objectives;

Section 3 of the said law presents the legal regime of ASBLs:

Article 4: non-profit associations are created and administered freely following the legislation in force, their statutes, and their internal regulations. Article 5, speaks of the modalities of operation of non-profit associations having acquired legal personality:

- hold meetings;
- electing representatives and their organs;
- to manage and make funds available;
- to acquire property free of charge or for a fee;
- to take legal action.

Article 6 specifies the regime of declaration and approval of non-profit associations: the regime of declaration and the regime of approval. In article 7, it is specified that non-profit associations are freely created. They acquire legal personality only if their statutes and the names of their founding members have been approved.

A standard declaration form is made available to the public by the municipal administration. Article 8 stipulates that the declaration provided for in Article 7 is made by the president of the constituent general assembly to the municipal administrator where the association has its headquarters and a receipt is issued as soon as the file is complete.

The declaration shall indicate the name, object, and headquarters of the non-profit association as well as the names, occupations, and residences of those responsible for its administration or management. The declaration files are submitted for study to the commission set up within the local council, as the case may be, which in turn submits the minutes to the local council for a decision.

About approval, Chapter II indicates the types of non-profit associations and the procedures for their establishment:

Thus, in Article 14, it is specified that the approval procedure is open to any non-profit association. It is obligatory for non-profit associations having one of the following characteristics:

- Nonprofit associations of the collective type;
- Non-profit association of the collective type;
- Non-profit association of the collective type;
- Non-profit association of the collective type
- ✓ Non-profit association of foreigner types.

Non-profit associations under the declaration regime must justify the approval regime.

Article 15 refers to non-profit associations operating in several provinces and specifies that non-profit associations of foreigners are approved by the Minister of the Interior. Article 16 stipulates that associations and groups of an international nature shall be approved by the Minister of Foreign Affairs. Article 17 shows that mutual associations and foundations are approved by the Minister of Justice. Article 18 states that professional or cooperative organizations, cooperatives, and pre-cooperative groups are approved by competent ministers. Article 19 states that associations of a school and/or academic nature are approved by the Minister having education in his or her attributions. The school and/or academic activity initiated by a non-profit association remains under the authority and management of the initiating association. Article 20 states that legal personality is granted to the non-profit association by the competent Ministry at the request of its legal representative, and Article 21 specifies that the request for approval is accompanied by several administrative documents.

This request is addressed to the Minister of home affairs with a copy to the technical ministry which gives its opinion within one month and it is mentioned that the refusal to give the required opinion is equivalent to acceptance. Thus, Article 22 specifies that the Minister having the approval of non-profit associations in his attributions appoints, by ordinance, a commission in charge of processing the files of associations in charge of requesting approval. Article 23 mentions that the non-profit association acquires legal personality from the day

of its approval by the competent minister and specifies that the minister decides within two months after the submission of the complete file. After this period and unless there is a valid reason, the minister is required to approve the association within a maximum of one month. As for article 24, the minister having the approval of non-profit associations in his attributions can at any time ask the association to provide him with additional information and documents concerning its activities and mentions that the association is obliged to comply with them within one month.

4.2.2. The Administration of Cooperatives

In terms of the relationship between society and the state, the central issue in countries in transition is that of the constant weakening of the “total society” system and the emergence of civil society and social reconstruction (Sun, 2007: pp. 57-58). This implies the role of cooperatives, and Burundi is responding well. In Burundi, cooperatives are governed by law n° 1/12 of 28 June 2017. It defines the rules relative to their creation, organization, and advantages. However, many cooperators know little about this law, and some of the reforms it recommends have not yet been implemented. “Apart from the existence of a national law on cooperatives, cooperatives must above all conform to the seven principles established by the international cooperative alliance and universally recognized.

The first of these is that membership in a cooperative is voluntary and open to all. Furthermore, a cooperative must be founded on principles of mutual aid, according to the definition of the word “cooperative” itself, and as stated in the law governing cooperative societies (Pönkä, 2019). A cooperative society is a grouping of natural or legal persons based on the principles of union, solidarity, and mutual aid, whose members have voluntarily joined together to achieve an economic and social goal, through the constitution of a democratically managed enterprise, to their common advantage and benefit, and in whose operation they actively participate.

The craze for cooperatives has increased since 2017, the state is in the dance with the creation of cooperatives “Sangwe”, currently counted at more than 2900 on all hills of Burundi. While the sensitization to join the cooperatives was done in the middle of the 2020 electoral process, public opinion did not appreciate the way of joining them. Some people considered that these cooperatives were only reserved for members of the ruling party. As a result, we find ourselves with a biased understanding of the word “cooperative” different from what we should understand with the definition that the law provides. Others still consider cooperatives as commercial associations that are only looking for simple financial gain. Far from it, a great nuance deserves to be pointed out: a cooperative society whose bases must be founded on the social is quite different from a commercial enterprise essentially founded on individual ends.

The members of the Sangwe cooperatives are at work in the development of the agricultural and livestock sector with a credit of 10 million Burundi francs (BIF) granted to each hill throughout the country. Nevertheless, they are facing

many problems such as climatic hazards, lack of veterinarian medicines, agricultural monitors, selected seeds, etc. (Niyongabo, 2020; Nkurunziza, 2020).

To this end, because of their social character and their dedication to the community, article 89 of the law on cooperatives stipulates that through ANACOOOP (National Association of Cooperatives), the State grants advantages to cooperative societies in the form of technical assistance, subsidies, low-interest loans and other benefits to support their growth.

In the same context and according to the same law on cooperatives, the State is called upon to set up, through ANACOOOP, a fund to support cooperatives (Article 90). Moreover, Article 91 provides for the exemption of all taxes and duties during the first five years of existence, as well as customs duties and other taxes on the import of inputs or production or processing equipment to cooperatives in the fields of agriculture, art, education, and health.

The establishment of ANACOOOP in 2019 was a very important step. Among its many missions, it plays first of all the role of advising the government in the elaboration of any policy related to cooperatives, ensuring the application of the rules governing cooperatives, guaranteeing the effective granting of benefits, etc. To strengthen the cooperative movement, the cooperative law requires, in Article 18, the establishment of a national framework of the cooperative movement that exclusively brings together cooperators to facilitate advocacy on their behalf. At present, this framework has not been created. The absence of a framework is very prejudicial, the cooperators do not have this channel of expression and exchange which could facilitate their operation. Each cooperative or union of cooperatives must register with ANACOOOP at its headquarters in Gitega or its branch in Bujumbura.

4.3. Role and Functioning of Certain Social Networks

4.3.1. The Bicycle Drivers' Cooperative in Nyakabiga

At the mercy of the bicycle pedal, they have just come down to the city to try to earn a living, but also to help their relatives who have remained on the hills and with the very little they earn, given the burdens of urban life, achieving their goal is almost impossible (BBC, 2017). In Nyakabiga, they seem to have found a way to cope as they confirm their job is very demanding, especially in terms of energy; they have to eat at least three times a day, preferably a hearty meal (Niyogusenga, 2021). In other words, with a meal of 1000 Fbu and more, one must then disburse at least 3000 per day, only for food. Breakdowns also oblige the average user of the taxi-bike to spend 500 Fbu or 700 Fbu. On top of that, we have to pay the rent, the medical expenses, the contingencies..." explains a certain Marcel, a taxi-bike driver in Nyakabiga, in Bujumbura's town hall, before the bicycles and tricycles were expelled to the peripheral neighborhoods.

But the great sensitization intended for the population to join the cooperative did not fall on deaf ears among the taxi-bike drivers in this district of the economic capital. They will also find a great opportunity to alleviate their financial problems. On November 11, 2020, the cooperative of taxi-bikes of Mukaza is

born. From 37 at the beginning, the members of the cooperative are now 65, including 5 women traders.

The funds of the cooperative are mainly made up of members' contributions: 100 Fbu per day and per at the beginning, before increasing to 1500 to 2000 Fbu per week. In only six months, they have registered more than three million Burundian francs in their account. Today, the cooperative has even started a bistro in Nyakabiga where they combine sales of local beverages with industrial beer. The cooperative offers small loans of up to 150,000 Fbu, with a monthly interest rate of 10%. Membership fees and monthly interest rates are set by consensus.

In general, the members of the cooperative indicate today that the cooperative contributes a lot in covering their expenses. In the future, they plan to set up a restaurant, a mill, and a store for the sale of bicycle spare parts. They also plan to start mutual insurance that will allow them to cover their health care expenses.

4.3.2. The Amahoro Youth Club-ASBL

This is an association that brings together young people from Burundi in the country and those in the diaspora. These young people consider that peace is a necessity for all, and are:

- ✓ Desiring to involve all the youth of Burundi, those living on the Burundian territory, and those of the diaspora in the search for peace;
- ✓ Anxious to help young people to blossom and participate in the development of the country;
- ✓ Convinced that all youth should have access to the same rights and opportunities;
- ✓ Determined to fight all forms of discrimination and to promote gender equality in rights and duties and propose to be the spokespersons of the victims of subjective social discrimination (*Statutes / The Amahoro Youth Club-AYC-Burundi, 2007*).

Their overall objective is to contribute to the search for peace and sustainable development in Burundi through the development of youth and the fight against discrimination.

4.3.3. "Twibanire" Association

This is an association that brings together women seamstresses. These women dressmakers, who work on "Avenue de la Mission" in downtown Bujumbura, decided to form an association because there is strength in numbers (*Iradukunda, 2021*). Three years ago. This association is of capital importance for their members, they say; each one must contribute a certain amount per month. The fund obtained is granted to a member who has a project to realize (*Gendron, 2015: p. 59*).

The latter must repay with interest on the agreed due date. And in case of non-compliance with the agreed deadline, he must pay a fine.

4.3.4. Association "Génération Visionnaire du Flambeau" (GVF)

This association can be classified as an informal group of 25 young scholars

within the Evangelical Church of Friends. Their first objective is social assistance in different happy and/or unhappy events. In the case of the marriage of one of these members, the others each contribute a sum equivalent to a fund of Fanta to support him.

In events of misfortune, they also intervene for the patient. This has increased the mutuality between them, they say, regardless of their origins (Bigirimana, 2019) in almost all the provinces of the country but who meet in Bujumbura, firstly for university studies, secondly for their local church which they share. To facilitate their permanent installation in the city, they have set up a system of which consists in contributing monthly a sum that goes from 5000 to 30,000 Fbu, according to their urgent capacity to accomplish it at ease with an affordable interest rate, as in the case of “Twibanire”.

4.3.5. The Cooperative of Intellectual Christians for Development “COCIDE”

The Cooperative of Christian Intellectuals for Development brings together young people who have completed at least the first cycle of higher education and are committed to sustainable development, mainly in the agro-pastoral field. In its vision, COCIDE wants to be a training center for other young people in targeted areas that generate income in the short term but also bring growth based on innovation. Authors can enumerate a long list of associations and clubs in several fields (economic, socio-cultural, ...) whose internal system of functioning is almost identical to the previous ones mentioned above: friends, cultural and sports clubs, prayer groups, clan associations, mutuality, groups working in the digital sector, etc. which facilitate the socio-economic integration of their members.

5. Conclusion

Faced with the profound changes that occurred in the world, the sociology of development by social networks got a wide ground in Burundi and especially in Bujumbura city. The networks of sociability in Bujumbura are numerous and multiple; some function informally and others formally. This study shows that sociability networks in Bujumbura city depend on the ages (youth apart and adult apart). Youth gather themselves around jobs such as riding bicycles and also grouped in associations such as the “Amahoro Youth Club”. Adults are mostly grouped in associations such as Twibanire, Génération visionnaire du flambeau, and some associations with religious targets such as The Cooperative of Intellectual Christians for Development. These associations or cooperatives must be governed and admitted in compliance with the competent authorities. Their existence is advantageous, as many of their members testify, especially in the creation of jobs.

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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