

Thesis Abroad Report

Location: Kigali, Rwanda

Period of Stay: 29th June- 17th August 2019

Preparation (planning, organization and application at the host institution)

I had applied to do research on Impact Hub Kigali via email while I was in Cape Town, South Africa. However, this was often slowed by the lack of consistent correspondence on the side of the hub. Often, correspondence was faster through social media platforms such as Facebook. I also reached out to other innovation hubs while in Kigali, namely, Iris Hub and FabLab Rwanda who also accepted to be part of my research. I also expanded my research to other organisations including the Japanese International Cooperation Agency (JICA), the ICT Chamber, 250 Startups and Inkomoko Entrepreneur Development to gain a more accurate understanding of the ecosystem of innovation hubs and the environment in which female entrepreneurs in Kigali.

Initially, I was forced to delay my planned arrival in Kigali by two weeks as I initially had to get a research permit and research visa. The research permit was to be granted by the National Council of Science and Technology (NCST), who require all applying for a research permit to also gain affiliation from a local organisation. The Impact Hub Kigali was unable to act as my affiliated institution and so I asked another hub, that is, the Iris Hub to step in and supervise my research. I then flew to Rwanda without a visa as Kenyans do not require a visa for their first 90 days in Rwanda. Once I arrived in Kigali, I was then able to submit my affiliation forms to the NCST who then granted my research permit. With this permit, I was then able to apply for a research visa from the Immigration office in Rwanda.



View of the city from FabLab Rwanda, Telecom Towers.

Source: Author's own

Accommodation

Before I arrived in Rwanda, I was able to find a cottage in Kigali on the Airbnb app. It was conveniently located in Kinamba which was a 5 minute ride from the city centre by motorbike or ‘moto’ as they are referred to in Kigali. This made it convenient for my commute around the city while collecting data. While it was initially above my monthly budget for rent, I was able to negotiate for a reasonable amount.

Value of the Stay Abroad

I spent about 350 Euros monthly on rent, food and transport.

Everyday life and Leisure

Kigali is a very safe and quiet city, ideal for a woman living alone. The streets are very clean and the people are incredibly friendly and welcoming. Many people speak Swahili, as do I, which made me feel at home and comfortable. The main mode of transport is ‘moto’, or a motorcycle taxi which can take you wherever you wish to go in the city. The only drawback is that often moto drivers are not very conversant with the locations of restaurants and shops, so often one has to direct them to where one wants to go.



View of Kigali from Kibagabaga

Source: Author's own

The internet connection in Kigali is not as fast as one would hope, in contrast to the fast internet speeds in Nairobi, Kenya.

There are many interesting places to go to in Kigali, including a wide selection of restaurants, offering a variety of cuisine. If one is also interested in learning about Rwanda's history, the Genocide Memorial offers an honest but painful look at the Rwandan Genocide, as well as information on genocides around the world.

Conclusion

Best experience: My best experience was when I met an official from the NCST who expressed great interest in my research after reading my seminar paper. He stated that the NCST would be greatly interested in my results. This validated all the hard work that I had put into my proposal.

Worst experience: I had requested for assistance from the IEE in helping me get an affiliated institution, as part of the requirements for an application of a research permit. However, such assistance was not forthcoming and I had to find an affiliated institution on my own. This therefore delayed my travel to Rwanda.

Signed


