



## AFRICA IN MOVIMENTO / AFRICA ON THE MOVE

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**TITLE:** COSMOPOLITAN LIVES IN THE RWANDAN CAPITAL: “DIASPORA” YOUTH IN THE HOMELAND

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### ABSTRACT:

This paper looks at young professionals who were born outside of Rwanda and have moved Rwanda post its 1994 genocide. Born in exile to a Rwandan parent(s), they grew up in the Rwandan diaspora and are now living in Rwanda. They identify themselves and others like them by the country which they came from, and form friendship accordingly. They have imagined and re-created Kigali as a cosmopolitan city. There are continuities and discontinuities as they are creating an environment that reflects who they are and what they like to do, and despite a contested view of cosmopolitanism in Kigali, the lifestyles this diaspora enjoyed abroad are being replicated and adapted to a new terrain and context in Kigali. They are able to belong in society in Rwanda by creating social and economic connections that allow them to move from the present to the future. This former diaspora living in Rwanda – who at times use the term “diaspora” to refer to others like themselves who - feel that their role is to open up, change the mind-set of local Rwandans, to ‘cosmopolitanize’ local Rwandans. Things and people move slowly in Kigali, and their presence is to make things move faster. Janet, born in Uganda and who grew up in Canada and studied in South Africa, calls herself an Afropolitan, a term she finds as most accurate to describe her life, and the lives of other fellow Afropolitans. “Africans, who lived in two or more places, who are studying some place, grew up somewhere else, have parents, birth parents from somewhere else, and are planning to build another life somewhere else, so you are cosmopolitans, this is what we are, and we are Afropolitans.” Beyond cosmopolitanism, Afropolitanism highlights this bond and uniqueness that some diaspora feels, separates them from the other citizens. This paper explores this “foreign” bond amongst the former diaspora community becomes central once the diaspora returns home. I will also explore their relationship with other citizens, the city and the state, and how ideas about the ‘self’ are tied to multiple ‘lived’ spaces.

### AUTHOR'S ACADEMIC PROFILE:

*HAYDÉE BANGEREZAKO IS A PH CANDIDATE at the Makerere Institute for Social Research. Her research, based on historical and ethnographic methods, focuses on women, spirituality and power in the central and eastern African region. Her research interests include the youth and state relations, work, gender, film, the performance of political power and resistance to it.*