**University of Leicester**

**Future 50 PhD Scholarship**

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**Section 2 – *Project Information***

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| **Project Title** | *Cultural Development, African Diaspora Youth and Digital Technologies* |
| **Project Highlights:** | 1. | **A transdisciplinary approach** – working across development studies, sociology and media studies. |
| 2. | **Driven by action research** – exploring alternative and more sustainable routes to development in Africa |
| 3. | **Embedded within a new Research Institute** – benefiting from the support and inspiration of an emerging community of scholars helping cultural organisations to adapt to a digital age. |
| **Project Summary**  |
| ‘Culture’ has become a central element to both Development practice and Development Studies – understood as a source of profound social and economic transformation through its influence on aspiration and collective action. Development initiatives must resonate with people’s everyday cultural lives, adopting what Amartya Sen highlights as an approach that encompasses the freedom and capabilities to pursue a life of dignity. And yet, scholarship in this area has taught us that there is no single development model that is globally applicable, and moreover that the desire to impose Western models has resulted in cultural homogenisation (Radcliffe 2006). Diaspora communities, for instance, can instead take a development approach embedded in the cultural context where development initiatives are being implemented. These communities can be considered a potent force for development for their countries of origin, and in their host countries they can be seen as bridge-builders that understand western development priorities and homeland development needs, with the credibility of being accepted as social actors in both settings.Scholars have begun to scrutinise understanding of lived experiences of those diasporas who feed into these transnational activities (Osman 2017; Akesson et al 2015; Hammond 2012). This is especially problematic for conflict-generated diasporas (Lyons 2012) who carry the trauma of conflict and can exacerbate tensions and conflict dynamics with their development initiatives and interventions.This doctoral project will seek to examine how African diaspora youth are reimagining development in the context of culture and heritage. And, within the context of the university’s new Institute for Digital Culture, it will ask in particular how digital technologies are enabling convivial spaces to approach development via cultural and heritage pathways. The project will seek to partner with established diaspora and cultural organisations to take a comparative approach by focusing on African countries of origin with the highest number of diaspora populations living in the West: Nigeria; Somalia; Zimbabwe; and Ghana. Purposeful in its approach, the project will seek to provide recommendations for public policy and development agencies, as well as cultural organisations, to adopt a culture and heritage approach to development in Africa that can offer more sustainable and dignified pathways.Radcliffe, S. (Ed.). (2006). Culture and Development in a Globalizing World: Geographies, Actors and Paradigms (1st ed.). Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203641019>Walker, E.B., Boyer, D.M. Research as storytelling: the use of video for mixed methods research. Video J. of Educ. and Pedagogy 3, 8 (2018). https://doi.org/10.1186/s40990-018-0020-4 Stupples, P. (2014). Creative contributions: The role of the arts and the cultural sector in development. Progress in Development Studies, 14(2), 115–130. UNDP 2019, https://hdr.undp.org/content/how-cultural-and-creative-industries-can-power-human-development-21st-century |