

## **Migration, immigration, integration and reconstruction of identities: Learning from African experiences in UK**

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### **Abstract**

Globalisation comes with unprecedented opportunities for movement and resettlement of people with various skills across continents. A typical pattern starts with migration (movement), then settlement (immigration), integration (ex-change of cultural and socio-political heritages) and ultimately a renegotiation and reconstruction of identities.

In a new culture and country, the identities and skills of migrants are re-established, adapted and adjusted, but also reconstructed and reinterpreted in an ever dynamic evolution that is characteristic of many immigrants' stories and experiences.

Based mainly on an ethnographic approach, this paper looks at some experiences of African immigrants in UK over the last two decades, and attempts to map their trajectories as they moved across spaces and worlds and as they shape-shifted as cultural agents and recipients - migrating, immigrating, integrating and reconstructing their identities and socio-cultural lives. Using life stories, questionnaires, interviews, observations and field notes, the paper will discuss how the initial identities and socio-professional skills of im/migrants are transformed into tools for their journeys and integration in the new worlds they will eventually inhabit.

There are the physical journeys across countries and spaces, yet there are the deeper and less visible yet more complex journeys across various selves and internal identities, ever changing and shifting. Identities are reconstructed gradually as old lives are lost, and new lives are built, with various levels of success - all these dynamics interconnected in a continuing quest for peace, stability and existential meaning.

In movement between worlds and identities, migrants are carriers of floating heritages. Moving from old homes to new homes, migrants and immigrants are microcosms of rich and dynamic cultural exchanges as well as necessary processes of sociocultural and linguistic re-appropriation and self-reinventions.