



# VOLPOWER



## Challenging Integration through Everyday Narratives

VOLPOWER Academic Workshop: Online Event 29<sup>th</sup>-30<sup>th</sup> April 2021

**Abstract deadline: 15<sup>th</sup> March 2021**

This academic workshop will focus on social inclusion, migration and volunteering in everyday contexts following micro-site research. We are interested in proposals from scholars who study integration narratives and how they contribute to the evolution of joint socio-spatial belongingness. Selected papers from this workshop will be submitted as an edited volume to IMISCOE book series.

The EC AMIF-funded VOLPOWER (<http://www.volpower.eu>) is a research project with a team composed of social scientists, geographers, sociologists, arts and sports researchers as well as stakeholders from the humanitarian sector. The project works with 42 young volunteers based in the UK, Italy, Austria, Croatia, Slovenia, Malta, and the Netherlands. The project is led by Glasgow Caledonian University with a team composed of Prof Umut Korkut, Dr Maggie Laidlaw, Marcus Nicolson and Doga Atalay. The project recently launched its digital exhibition entitled “Joint Narratives and Digitalised Aesthetics of Youth Volunteering” (<http://www.volpower.eu/digital-exhibition/>). Our website also lists a number of Volpower reports as well as results of our Volpower survey on migration and youth volunteering.

This 1.5-day academic workshop in April 2021 looks at negotiations of socio-spatial belongingness in micro-communities. Rather than adopting a functionalist approach to understand the integration processes of migrant groups, this workshop foregrounds the lived-experiences of both migrants and host communities in their micro-environments. We are interested in understanding diverse communities to study their belongingness in their socio-spatial environments transformed by migration (cf. Zapata-Barrero, Martiniello and Sievers 2017). We consider it crucial to study how such communities negotiate their identities vis-à-vis the narratives set by the wider society in their nation states. We are looking for applications from scholars with an interest in **migration studies**, **volunteering**, **diversity**, **identity** and **narrative study**. We are also interested in attracting proposals from researchers who study these themes using ethnographic and creative arts informed research methodologies.

We think that the increasing attention that states pay to participation and citizenship as a precondition to determine belongingness and citizenship is not working. We argue that integration is not a macro process (i.e., belonging to a nation state) but rather built through relations at the micro-level. Hence, inclusion is a more pertinent term to what diverse communities look for at the face of migration. This is the reason why, in diverse communities, we need to better understand how the identity negotiation operates newcomers and host-communities unfolds.

In this workshop, we follow the strand of research established in critical migration studies, by scholars such as Glick-Schiller, Caglar, Hess, De Genova, Gilroy, Yuval-Davis, who challenge the term integration. Integration is an obscure concept: integration into what? integration into which socio-spatial setting? Integration into whom? We argue that these are ever-changing categories that will benefit from critical study. In order to see where we stand on these themes, please see our [Discover Society](#) articles published in the [#DS84](#) issue of the journal.

While many scholars have dropped, scrutinized or distanced themselves from the concept of integration, a substantial part of the literature is occupied by indicator-oriented research (e.g. Ager and Strang 2004; 2008, Home Office Indicators of Integration Framework 2019). We argue that social integration is a context-dependent term that can never be 'measured' with indicators that would determine integration. Instead, we prioritise understanding 'social interaction' first and foremost in order for an inductive theory building that spells out the importance of the everyday and the mundane in relation to the production of common narratives.

Building common narratives composes the heart of this process. While the narrative literature is extensive, we concentrate on how it refers to such themes as nation building, gender, creativity, and way of life. Therefore, we approach inclusion as a process of building common narrative communities. Hereby, we also introduce the spatial aspect of inclusion as we advocate the need to shift our focus from the macro-level relationship and narratives to micro-level interactions and belongingness.

Volunteering in sports and creative arts activities, as explored in the VOLPOWER project, can be considered as a mechanism that fosters both social interaction and belongingness between diverse groups. We are particularly interested to receive contributions which look at the interrelation between volunteering, social inclusion and migration.

The workshop will be formulated around panel discussions which will look at the following.

- Social inclusion processes generating new narratives
- Re-writing the stories: Understanding social interaction through everyday narratives
- Spaces of cross-cultural interaction
- Volunteering as a space for intercultural cooperation

**Workshop Structure:** The workshop will be a 1.5-day event, including two plenary lectures from experts in the field of migration research, alongside 4-panel discussion groups. Panellists will have the chance to discuss their work in a constructive academic setting. We will announce the keynote speakers in March.

We welcome contributions from critical academics, including early career and minority scholars. We are particularly interested in conceptual and comparative papers. The intention is to present our work and develop research papers which can later be formulated in to co-authored chapters of an open-access IMISCOE book. Participants are expected to present draft-papers at the workshop.

Abstracts of 300-400 words which should be sent to [volpower@gcu.ac.uk](mailto:volpower@gcu.ac.uk) by 15<sup>th</sup> March 2021.

More info about the VOLPOWER project can be found at <http://www.volpower.eu/>