

## COMMENTARY

# Is ISIS “the” Crisis? Media Studies as Contemporary History – A Provocation

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Prompted by recent events in Syria and Iraq and British media representation of stories about them, this polemic asks what is meant by each of the terms in the notion of “the global crisis”: is there a singularity, a “the”? who defines crisis? how global is global?

British media stories concerning ISIS sympathisers raise deep concerns over agency, engagement and compassion and over the invoked norm of a ‘we’ that seems to not include British or other muslims. The displacement of peoples as refugees from ISIS and from other crises plays out with altogether diverse and disproportionate consequences across the world and yet is reported in very sporadic and partial ways in the UK. What are we to make of all this?

The academic fields of media and cultural studies are suffering from intense fracturing and over-specialization. Yet to understand such multi-faceted contemporary issues we need to reassemble the relevant elements of our field and include insights from other disciplinary areas, including gender studies, international relations, technology and social media studies and studies of specific urban communities.

This moment represents a context where counternarratives to both ISIS abroad and to austerity politics at home are urgently needed. The decades of the 1930s, 1950s, 1980s all produced new theoretical approaches and political formations. The current moment is best described as a crisis of complexity and a crisis of politics. We need to produce a new politics of inclusivity, solidarity and resistance that engages with these disturbingly plural and difficult global realities embedded within colonial and sectarian histories.

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**Keywords:** Syria; ISIS; migrants; media studies; interdisciplinarity; agency and representation

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### Competing Interests

The author has no competing interests to declare.

### Author Information

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