Editorial

Entanglements of media, migration, and crisis
Introduction to the themed issue

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While writing this introduction to the special issue of *MedieKultur: Journal of Media and Communication Research*, examples of media articulating crises "all around us" are abundant and all-encompassing. In 2022, Collins Dictionary even declared the word "permacrisis" the word of the year (Bushby, 2022). Particularly of interest for this special issue, the specific conflation of the words "crisis" and "migration" continues to be an omnipresent and pervasive feature in global media discourses over past decades. The idea that migratory movements in themselves, the acts of individuals crossing different kinds of international or internal borders, can only be grasped within the language of crisis has become almost a default process of signification. Media and migration research has shown over many years how migration has been portrayed *as* a crisis in news media (Collyer & King, 2016; Maniou & Moutselos, 2024; Watson, 2024), how crisis rhetoric has repercussions for policy-making (Boswell et al., 2011; Fröhlich, 2023; Hutter & Kriesi, 2021), or how crisis framing constructs security threats to nation-states (Galantino, 2022; Huysmans, 2000). After all, the "securitisation" of migration, that is, the discursive entanglement of migration with national security, especially in the West post-9/11, and the subsequent fortification of border regimes is crucially linked to public, mediated imaginaries of migration through crisis vocabularies. The languages of "border crises", "migrant crises", "migration crises", or "refugee crises" continue to thrive, regardless of the plentiful critical scholarly interventions that have debunked the problematic implications of crisis rhetorics in the mediated narration of migration.

This critical scholarship on how media define the conditions and frames through which imaginaries and experiences of migration are structured (cf. Hegde, 2020) offers crucial nuances for how to approach the links between migration and crisis. Crises can be perceived as constructed events, or as ascriptions (Spector, 2022). In a constructivist understanding, such ascriptions are made in the context of a given situation, and therefore historically contingent. They are actively produced, experienced in contexts, and depend on positionalities. Ascriptions have the potential to mobilise and, as a result, become socially productive. As Sara Ahmed (2003) aptly notes in her discussion of the politics of fear in the securitisation of migration in post-9/11 USA:

> It is not simply that [...] crises exist, and that fears and anxieties come into being as a necessary affect and effect of that existence. Rather, it is the very production of the crisis that is crucial. To declare a crisis is not "to make something out of nothing": such declarations often work with real events, facts or figures [...]. But the declaration of crisis reads that fact/figure/event and transforms it into a fetish object that then acquires a life of its own, in other words, that can become the grounds for declarations of war against that which is read as the source of the threat. (Ahmed, 2003, p. 393)

This special issue takes its point of departure in opening up a perspective of crisis as socially produced and productive beyond the focus on migration, and re-embedding

scholarship on media and migration *in a contemporary structure of feeling of multiple, interlocking, almost overwhelming crises.*

For instance, the particular imaginaries of migration-as-crisis since 2015 in Europe have produced large-scale build-up of border infrastructures in Fortress Europe, accompanied by legal tightening of asylum legislation (Dijstelbloem, 2021; Gülzau & Mau, 2021; Perkowski, Stierl & Burridge, 2023). At the same time – if adopting an autonomy of migration perspective that radically centres the migrant in the theorisation of borders (Laakkonen, 2022; Nyers, 2010) – in these crises, new practices around digital media have emerged, new bands of solidarities and resistance have been formed (Ponzanesi & Leurs, 2022). Also, these aspects are part of "crisis" in the story of migration.

Thereby, this special issue departs from the observation that almost ten years after the 2015 "long summer of migration" in Europe, which arguably shaped ongoing research in the field of media and migration crucially, contemporary migration phenomena and experiences need to be regarded as embedded in an environment of interlocking permacrises as a structure of feeling. Such events and conditions range from global health crises, such as the Covid-19 pandemic; to war and imperialism, such as the Russian full-scale invasion of Ukraine, the war in Palestine/Israel and Lebanon, as well as in Sudan and the Democratic Republic of Congo; ongoing forced displacement; regular economic and financial turbulences in heightened post-2008 neoliberalism; to all-encompassing climate breakdown.

The positioning of individuals in relation to crises is shaped by a multiplicity of intersecting factors, including discursive, material, and embodied experiences. This applies to us as scholars of media and migration, as well as to the participants and interlocutors featuring in research practice. This leads to renewed questions for the field of media and migration: How are discursive framings of migration through crisis articulated in relation to *multiple* crises? How do migrants, as well as citizens of receiving countries, relate to multiple crises and imagine different political worlds forwards? Where do crisis imaginaries leave room to generate new forms of critique, resistance, solidarity, and hope?

Against this backdrop the authors of this special issue engage with the field of media and migration in their research articles. While we asked for a broad range of topics for this special issue, we received an overwhelming response to our call for papers that confirms our perception of the need to voice the many occurrences of migration research in times of crises. We were not able to accommodate all the exciting topics submitted, but we could find space for six articles covering a variety of topics and global areas researching migration in times of interlocking crises. The contributions to the special issue can loosely be grouped in three categories: mass media analyses, migrant media productions, and migrants' media use, practices, and identities.

The first group of articles centres around the analysis of mass media representations. In **Ester Minga's** comparative framing analysis, the interfolding of multiple crises is made visible. First, migration can become a crisis for the people migrating. Second, national

newspapers can create a momentum of crisis when portraying migrants as a threat to the nation and its people. Particularly, during the COVID-19 pandemic, as Ester Minga shows, migrants and asylum-seekers faced severe disadvantages concerning their living conditions in Portugal. At the same time, national newspapers aimed to unfold a crisis within a crisis when misrepresenting these marginalised groups' potentially inappropriate behaviour and violations of national law.

Jan Fredrik Hovden and **Rafal Zaborowski** present a multiple correspondence analysis of two datasets on press coverage of the "refugee crisis" in Europe in 2015 that have not previously been combined. They conclude that intra-national differences (newspaper type, editorial stance, format) are important for differences in explaining the balance between humanitarian and securitization attitudes. For example, media outlets with a left-wing orientation tend to prioritise humanitarian concerns, whereas those with a right-wing orientation tend to focus more on security measures. In terms of the format of the media in question, it can be observed that longer articles and op-eds tend to present more nuanced perspectives on the topic of migration, whereas shorter articles do not. It is noteworthy that press outlets in Serbia, Hungary, and the Czech Republic tend to favour shorter, event-focused articles that lack in-depth discussion.

Beyond mass media representations, the second group of contributions focuses on the production of migrant media. **Jessica Gustafsson** shows in her analysis of migrant podcasts in the Stockholm area that media practices rise up from marginalised groups to the centre of traditional mass media attention. Migrants use the power of online distribution to voice their experiences and opinions on how they are portrayed and treated in Swedish mass media and by Swedish society. Gustaffson's interviews with podcast producers reveal their practices and voices of resistance.

Triin Vihalemm and **Marta Vunš** analyse young Russian-speaking Estonians' and Russian-speaking media professionals' media engagement in Estonia against the background of the Russian full-scale invasion into Ukraine in 2022. On the one hand, in this contribution the crisis portrayed concerns among the minority language group of Russian speakers in Estonia, who, during the ongoing Russian war in Ukraine, feel partially unheard. On the other hand, Vihalemm and Vunš unfold a generational issue between the middle-aged media professionals working in established media companies and the young, mostly free-lancing, independent generation who rely on their individual strategies to retrieve and evaluate information mainly from their peers. Particularly the young and online-active social media users feel overlooked and misrepresented by mainstream public and private broadcasters. In conclusion, they define their own territory and agency by producing online content to reach their peers.

The last category, migrants' media use, practices, and identities, reveals multiple perspectives of migrants', as well as sedentary citizens', everyday life with and through media and mediated identities. Concerned with questions of living together in conditions of migration and economic crises, **Afroditi Koulaxi** develops the concept of "crisis reflexiv-

ity" in her study of citizens and non-citizens in the Athenian neighbourhood of Kypseli. She shows how the context of compounded crises in Greece conditions how residents of the neighbourhood, both Greek citizens and migrants and asylum-seekers, develop relationships and imaginaries about each other, characterised by both misinformation and fear, but also avenues towards justice and cosmopolitanism.

In their analysis of the discourse surrounding immigration and integration on the Swedish social media platform *Flashback*, **Jullietta Stoencheva** and **Biljana Mileva Boshkoska** examine the ways in which narratives are constructed and deployed in the articulation of crises. The results of the study indicate that extremist movements tend to utilise a multitude of crisis narratives. However, the predominant themes within these discourses are not directly related to immigration. Instead, they address broader societal issues, often framing immigration as a primary factor contributing to the perceived crisis. Crisis situations are articulated in accordance with the grievances pertaining to identity and belonging. These grievances reflect concerns pertaining to cultural dilution, economic strain, and the risks to safety and well-being posed by immigrants.

Ultimately, all contributions to this special issue are united by their specific focus on one or more crises as driving forces to their research of migration. Whether it be media representations of migrants, media practices and uses, or their identity negotiation and fostering of social relations via digital media – a multitude of crises shapes and conditions migration experiences, interactions and relations with the Other, and imaginaries of migration as a phenomenon. This special issue contributes to researching media and migration in times of crises in multiple ways: It provides arguments to continue researching in the interdisciplinary field of media and migration studies in times of crises, moving forward this critical scholarly engagement in a reflective way, in response to changing circumstances and historical-political conditions. Part of this engagement is to denaturalise the connection of migration with crisis, and foreground the politics embedded in perceiving migration as crisis (Hägerstrand, 1969; Lucassen, Lucassen & Manning, 2010). As this special issue shows, crises are not inextricably linked with migration but rather provide a research framework of themselves. As guest editors of this special issue, we hope that the contributions show the necessity to continue generating situated knowledge oriented towards social justice about migration in times of interlocking crises – where "migration" and "crisis" are two ascriptions that can occur simultaneously, can be productive and produced at the same time, and have the potential to influence and form public opinion and research agendas.

In addition to the articles, this special issue includes a book review relevant to the theme. In this review, **Philipp Seuferling** reviews Karina Horsti's book *Survival and Witness at Europe's Border: The Afterlives of a Disaster*. In this monograph, published in 2023 by Cornell University Press, Horsti explores different dimensions of the afterlife of the 3 October 2013 shipwreck disaster off the coast of Lampedusa, Italy, in which more than 360 people died. Seuferling describes Horsti's analyses as reflective, poignant, and criti-

cal, and emphasizes what he describes as one of Horsti's particularly great contributions, namely that of "survivor citizenship".

Open section

This issue also includes an article and a book review in the open section. In the article "Male jurors, male awards? The relationship between juries and award-winners at film festivals from a gender perspective: study of Animation film festival in Spain", **Montserrat Jurado-Martin** explores the composition of juries and awards given at animation film festivals in Spain. This is done from a gender perspective, and Jurado-Martin finds that most awards are given to men independent of how many women are in the jury.

In his thorough review of Iben Have's book, *Lydmedier: Teori og analyse*, **Anders Bonde** praises the book which he considers to be a significant contribution to media and communication scholarship. With its straightforward language, he also sees it as a useful addition to the curriculum in various branches of education. His constructive critiques are that the book could have interacted better with the research of Philipp Tagg and Theo van Leeuwen.

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