18 BRIDGES

Toolkit Workshop

Crisis

CRISIS AS APPEARANCE
🕐 45MIN

OBJECTIVE

To understand the visual and mediatised discourses of the refugee crisis.

This is the first image that comes up when one googles the term 'refugee crisis' at the moment of writing these lines. Image by photographer Massimo Satsini.

STEP 1

Think of the hegemonic narrative of the refugee crisis, as the appearance of certain bodies on the shores of Europe in the summer of 2015. This narrative was accompanied by many images of boats packed with people approaching the shore.

In groups, looking at the image above, discuss and answer the following questions:

- If you did not have any knowledge of the situation, how would you perceive this image?
- The mainstream narrative speaks of "flows" of migrants and of "waves" of people arriving in Europe. Can you find visual support of these claims in this image?
- From where is the image shot? What perspective do you have as the viewer?
- How would your perception of the phenomenon represented in this image differ if the image was shot from the perspective of someone on this boat?
- What else do you see in this picture?

STEP 2

A cruise ship full of tourists approaches the shores of Lesvos after a cruise in the Aegean sea, a very usual sight in summer.

- What is the difference between a ship full of tourists cruising the Aegean sea and the boat represented in this image?
- Whose mobility is framed as irregular, illegal, or criminal, and why?

STEP 3

Do you (still) believe that the refugee crisis started with the appearance of these bodies on European soil? Discuss in groups for 10 minutes and try to write down other potential factors that in your view contributed to the so-called "refugee crisis".

STEP 4

Look at the list you came up with and try to think what would be a different way of representing this crisis? Why would such images be important?
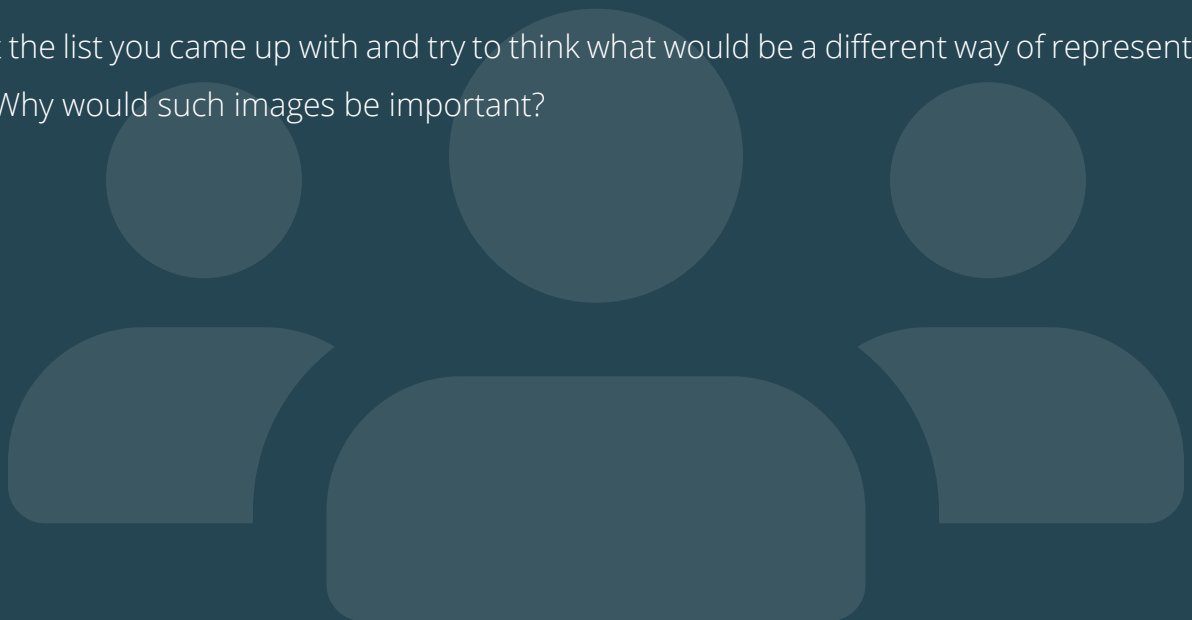
THE LIST

OBJECTIVE

Crisis presupposes a prior condition (and a return to) normality. In this exercise we want to understand what exactly is considered "normal".

Create smaller groups to complete the steps below and then share findings with the class.

STEP 1

Using the internet, social networks or knowledge based on personal involvement, conduct research on different evocations and aesthetics of crisis in the last decade. A useful resource and starting point for your reflection, is the ongoing project "Aesthetics of Crisis" by Julia Tulke.

http://www.aestheticsofcrisis.org/

STEP 2

From your positionality, consider what are the shifts in your daily environments that can be attributed to declared crisis. Create your own archive of crisis (including slogans, images, words, ideas, etc) and answer the following question: what does crisis look like in different spaces?

STEP 3

As we discussed above, crisis presupposes a prior condition and a return to normality. Describe what was the presupposed normality in each of the examples in your archive? Discuss what normality looks like for you. Does normality exist now? Did it ever? If you answered "yes" to these two questions, is normality a desirable condition for our collective well-being?

STEP 4

Compare the two conditions (crisis and normality) and try to think beyond this binary system. What does a desirable condition for our collective well-being look like?

RESOURCE LIST

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BRIDGES

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