Welcome to Sweden

Can visual language facilitate entry into Swedish society for preliterate?
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1. Introduction

1.1 Abstract
During the fall of 2015, Sweden had the biggest incoming refugee wave since 1992, where more than 80,000 people searched refuge in Sweden, unfortunately it will not be the last. Using 2015 as a case study, I explore the question: Can visual language facilitate entry into Swedish society for preliterate?

Preliterate tends to be set aside in many situations like in 2015. There have been several debates and claims on improving the happenings of 2015, but how come that no one has taken preliterate into consideration? How can we in modern society adjust to this quite huge new group of people? How can we make the entry into society more efficient, and how can we provide important information for preliterate – is visual language the answer?

To answer these questions, I have collaborated with Merit utbildning Malmö AB (Merit AB), a company that through various assignments like SFI (Swedish for immigrants) and Stöd och matchning (Vocational support, skills and employment matching services), helps newly arrived to find their place in Swedish society. They allowed me to conduct several workshops with their students, this to ensure that the end result would be by the target group and for the target group. The workshops were primarily based on metadesign methods like 5 levels of storytelling and Designing miracles.

After conducting several workshops with both research groups (focus group and reference group), the experience taught me to trust in the process and take a step back as a designer, and let the participants, design the result.

The process concluded in an app called Welcome to Sweden, whose content is reflected at Malmö Central Station. While designing the app, the methods to reach out to preliterate were taken in to account. The information is provided in visual language as well as audio, and translated into the most common languages of those who came to Sweden 2015. The app is not the whole solution to the problematics, but my studies show that it would work better for many more in the target group and, in particular, information provided in this way would be more appropriate for the target group preliterate.

1.2 Keywords
Preliteracy
Visual language
Literacy
Visual literacy
Visual communication
1.3 Introduction

2015 is often associated with the wave of refugees coming to Europe. Over 1 million people applied for asylum for the first time in European Union member states, and over 150,000 people came to the Swedish borders in hope for a better future. Due to Malmö’s closeness to Denmark and the rest of Europe, Malmö Central station became the first place in Sweden where the wave of refugees became visible.

There have been a lot of debates regarding the handling of the wave of refugees in Sweden, and Malmö especially. One topic has often been forgotten in these debates, even though the information was provided in many languages it was all text-based and not adjusted to preliterate and persons with shorter educational backgrounds. Volunteers and other workers wore vests with writing on them to show with language they spoke, something that benefited those who could read and write.

There are no statistics on how many of those who came to Sweden during 2015 were preliterate. Of the immigrants who got a residence permit and started SFI, roughly 30 percent of those who started their SFI studies had less than a primary school education according to Skolverket.

Illiteracy is not only an issue that comes with immigration and globalization, illiteracy is an issue that exist everywhere. According to EU High Level Group Of Experts On Literacy; one in five European 15-year-olds and almost one in five adults lack the literacy skills required to successfully function in modern society.
An illiterate is defined as a person who lacks the ability to read and write. A person who has skills in reading and writing is called literate. To indicate that illiteracy is not a permanent state, the term here is preliterate.

Smartphones, computers, tablets and other medias have become a big part of both the Swedish society and globally, university courses in memes have been created, emojis have become the new way to communicate. In spite of this development, we are still left in this text based society. What would happen if we incorporated a more visual language into our society? And most importantly, would visual language facilitate entry into Swedish society for preliterate?

2. Our text based society
2.1 History
According to *The designers atlas of sustainability*, writing was introduced in Sumaria around 3500 BCE, and it was imprints or carving on clay tablets, wax or metal. The history of text looks different depending on where you are in the world. In some countries, text has not existed until recently.

It was not until the printing press debuted in Europe in the 1400s that written communication became more widely available. During this time, fiber-based paper was also becoming more common, but it was not until the industrial pulping machines came along in the 1800s that paper stopped being a luxury item.

A hundred years ago, faster forms of visual and audio media were introduced; such as photography, telephones, radio etc. Movies and television were introduced even later.

Over time, text as a mediating resource has had profound impact on the whole community, how we teach and develop knowledge and how we communicate. In Sweden, as well as in most of the western countries, reading and writing abilities are taken for granted and many of the societal requirements that are associated with the ability to unhindered reading and writing are embedded in the community’s structure.

As an adult, you are expected to be employed, but most employers in Swedish society has a literacy requirement. You are also expected to be able to help your children with their homework, fill in a job application, understand the table of content on food, pay bills etc. The things that most people take for granted, like being able to write down a note, send a text message, send an email, and in some cases, communicate with various authorities and companies through text, are all part of the identity of being an adult.
2.2 Literacy – what does it mean?

Literacy is a dynamic concept in constant change and its definition depends on context\textsuperscript{16}. An illiterate is defined as a person who lacks the ability to read and write. But you could also look at it as a person who has \textit{never had the chance to learn} to read or write. A person who has skills in reading and writing is called literate. To indicate that illiteracy is not a permanent state, the term is preliterate\textsuperscript{17}.

The term Literacy also includes aspects of the spoken formal language, so called written language based speech, this type of language that we encounter in our daily life such as the way teachers speak in classrooms, or how the news anchor speaks on the television, apps, radio etc\textsuperscript{18}.

Language changes over time, words evolve and get new definitions, or a wider definition. An example of that is the word literacy in English. How you interpret pictures, different types of logotypes and symbols, multimodal text messages or visual texts, as well as learning and understanding of digital media and basic mathematical skills, are now included in both the meaning and concept of literacy\textsuperscript{19}.

2.3 Visual literacy

There are several definitions of visual literacy. In the Ted talk “Visual literacy: Why we need it” Brian Kennedy argues, visual literacy is the ability to construct meaning from images\textsuperscript{20}. That means that a person should have the ability to interpret the content of the visual images, examine whatever social, cultural, political or economic impact they might have. As a result of the interpretation, you must be able to articulate the purpose, or purposes, served by these images from the viewpoint of both the audience that they have been created to affect and the image-maker, or makers, who created and disseminated them\textsuperscript{21}.

Kennedy continues to argue that visual literacy is not a skill, rather that it uses skills as a tool box. Visual literacy is a form of critical thinking that enhances your intellectual capacity.

Just like any language, there is always a downside, and in this case, it is visual illiteracy. But what does it mean to visually illiterate? Or more specifically illiterate? To not be able to construct meaning from visuals?

Some argues that Visual literacy and text literacy goes hand in hand. Michelle Harrell opened her TED talk, Visual Literacy by saying; In today’s society, being literate means being visually literate\textsuperscript{22}. In that case, does that mean that visual illiteracy and text illiteracy goes hand in hand as well?

In the SFI research community, it is agreed that when learning a new language as an adult it is like for children who are learning their first language, and that it is the spoken language that comes first. However, in the SFI syllabus\textsuperscript{23} for short-educated students the first goals of reading comprehension are to understand pictures, symbols and word images.

Visual language is always used in the starting point when learning the spoken language, it works as a foundation and also as support. When using visual language as a foundation, you learn to see patterns, draw conclusion from them, and with time to recognize them.
If illiteracy and visual illiteracy went hand in hand, that would mean that the methodology primarily used when teaching preliterate Swedish would not be as successful as it is today. Due to this, one would argue that Michelle Harrell has not worked closely with preliterate using visual language.

3. Methodology and process
The design process will be conducted in three stages: research, prototyping and evaluation. Throughout those stages a reference group and a focus group will have a recurring role.

There was already an overriding goal for both groups before the process began – to create a kit that would facilitate the entry into Swedish society for preliterate? It was also clear that the three steps were used to shape the kit.

The three steps were chosen primarily to make the process as easy as possible for everyone involved. During the research, the goal is to get a deeper understanding of what happened in 2015, the definition of literacy and visual language. Another important part of the research stage is to get a deeper understanding of what the two research groups experienced during the time period.

At the end of the research step, the plan is to have a general idea of what the kit should contain. During the second step, the plan is to prototype and start visualizing the outcome of the previous step, while working closely with both research groups.

The third and final step is the evaluation, where an in-depth evaluation of the entire process will be provided, as well as an evaluation together with the research groups of the final version of the kit. Does the kit facilitate the entry into Swedish society for preliterate?
3.1 Merit AB
One of the bigger parts of the project was to decide collaborators, knowing that the collaborator would have to have experience of working with preliterate, as well as visual language - Merit AB became a natural choice. Merit AB\textsuperscript{24} is a company that has a lot of experience of working with preliterate using visual language, and over the years they have also created their own methods on how to use visual language when teaching preliterate Swedish, which was a factor that would be very interesting to take part of. Seeing how the methods that they have created, did not only benefit preliterate, but all of their students, was intriguing, and something that I wish to explore further.

In addition to the methods practiced at Merit, as well as the experience that they have with working with preliterate, the fact of me being employed at Merit AB played a big part in why they were chosen as a collaborator.

Merit has a development team, the team consist of roughly ten people, and the members changes depending on which assignment is being developed. I was given the chance to be a part of the team, and it has played a huge part in who I am as a designer today.

There have been several assignments that has been very educational for me as a designer, but working together with the development team on the learning platform has been one of the biggest ones. Over the years the platform has developed to try to cover as many needs as possible. When trying to achieve this, I learned what the needs where, and how to meet them through visual language.

They thought me to pay attention to the target group, to listen in, and use that information to try to develop the platform. By learning that, I suddenly saw the same things as the rest of the members of the team – the impact of technology in our society, and especially with preliterate. The usage of internet, the impact of smartphones of apps etc. made us aware of how all of the students, no matter literacy skills and educational background used modern technology. This inspired the development team to mimic what was happening in technology in the learning platform. Over time we have gone from a learning platform that was text-based, to one that looked similar to Merit’s webpage at the time, to small images, and today the entire learning platform is shaped and designed as an app.

While working with the development team, I was able to work closely with the students of Merit AB, and I got firsthand experience on how they understand visual language today, and how they use modern technology. It has also provided me with a lot of information of what type of visual language works, and what does not.

3.2 Stage 1: Research
3.2.1 Focus groups
Throughout the process I have worked with more than one focus group, since newly arrived are a very wide audience, the best way to ensure that as many as possible is represented was to have many groups. It is also important that the students that are a part of the focus group have different schooling backgrounds,
cultures, nationality, ages, gender, religious belief, that they study different assignments at Merit AB and that they live in different cities.

The question that is being explored throughout the process is: Can visual language facilitate entry into Swedish society for preliterate? The hope was that the focus group would provide me an intel on their start into Swedish society, and how they wish that the kit should look like.

3.2.2 Reference group
The reference group consists of a group of staff members from Merit AB, that have different fields of expertise regarding working with preliterate through various assignments, as well as visual language.

When the focus groups could provide me of information on their take of coming to the central station in Malmö, and what they wished to be different. The reference group could share their view on the matter, as well as teaching me on how to work with visual language and preliterate, and the methodology it is based on.

3.2.3 Interviews and observation
Most of the time while working on this project was spent at Merit’s different schools, the reasoning behind that was to be as close to the target group as possible. By being on location I got the ability to observe and take part in the practice when working with preliterate, as well as visual language. It also allowed me to conduct interviews in action, where the questions were related to the work that they were doing at the moment.

By being on location, the students started to recognize me, as well as knowing what thesis question I was working with. This made it a lot easier to later ask who wanted to be a part of the focus groups, because a relationship was already formed. Knowing that the topic could bring out horrible memories, it was extremely important to create a relationship prior to the workshops, but also allowed me to know how to shape the groups.

3.2.4 Workshops
The main methodology used in the workshops throughout the process is metadesign, but specifically methods like: designing miracles\textsuperscript{25} and five levels of storytelling\textsuperscript{26}. As mentioned before, it is vital that the end result is by the target group for the target group, and metadesign seemed like the most fitting approach. Especially because metadesign methods tend to emphasize the ‘we’ rather than the ‘I’, which was the outcome I was looking for. A factor that was important was that the end result would be created and shaped by both research groups, and that my role as a designer would be to visualize the result.

\textbf{Designing miracles\textsuperscript{27}:}
Designing miracles is a method that encourages the users to challenge rationalist tendencies to overlook intangibles.

This involves three steps:
- Find something impossible
- Is it really impossible, what makes it impossible
- Develop a strategy of changing the impossible to possible
Instead of letting obstacles hinder the brainstorming process, this method allows the participants to forget about everything that makes your idea impossible, and pushes the participant towards the dream solution.

**Five levels of storytelling**

Five levels of storytelling, is a method, primarily used in the beginning of a process, mainly because while working with the methods, it allows the participants to go from ‘I’ to a ‘We’, and it works as a great way to unite a new team.

The method has five levels, in which the leader only provides them with one level at the time, every step is allocated 7 minutes. The participants are provided with a piece of paper, and five different colors of markers, each marker representing each level, the participants are asked to document their stories as they work through various forms like text, drawings etc.

The levels are the following:
- Sensual
- Factual
- Connectivity/ systematic/ the outside world
- Future – what ifs
- Summary – retell to the facilitator

There was a struggle to choose which methods to use in the workshops. It was important that the methods promoted visual language so that preliterate could be a part of the workshops, but also allowed text for those who felt more comfortable using that. Another factor was that I wanted a method that allowed them to tell their stories, to give everyone a general idea of what they went through during the fall of 2015, and what they wished to be different. Letting the members of the group create their own dream solutions, without thinking about it being possible or not, was also an important aspect. Five levels of storytelling and Designing miracles are methods that cover those needs, as well as making it possible for everyone to be a participator, no matter literacy skills.

The methods chosen also made it possible to use the same methodology for both research groups, by doing that, could I not only compare and analyze the result of the methods, but the research groups as well.

### 3.2.4.1 Workshops with reference group

Time, to have the right amount of time while working on Five levels of storytelling and Designing miracles is vital. Unfortunately, the two hours that the workshop was supposed to have got shortened to roughly an hour and fifteen minutes. Due to the time limitations, the methods felt very rushed, it also did not allow the participants to go in depth and start to discuss the subjects that was brought up.

The first thing that they wanted to change was to acknowledge that desperate times, needs desperate measures, and that the normal routines, and protocols could not be followed. Therefore, they wanted to create two bags, one for the volunteers filled with new temporary routines, different forms of communication that is not text based etc. The other bag is for the refugees filled with hygiene articles, clothing, a blanket, a sim card, and a gift card that would be loaded with
money, and work all over the city.

Together with the bags, they wanted to create pop-up booths that would be stationed in different locations in the city, but primarily around the locations of the Swedish authorities. The pop-up booths would be staffed with people that spoke different languages and would be able to help on location, but an important part was an app. The app should be extremely functional, where questions like: where is the washroom, where can they convert money, where can they find clothes, etc. are answered. In the app, there should also be short films about Sweden, the different authorities etc.
3.2.4.2 Workshops with focus groups.

Throughout the research period several workshops have been conducted with the focus groups, the different group has contained students from Merit Ab, that has different schooling background, gender, religion, nationality etc. The groups have consisted of three to six people. The reasoning behind keeping the groups small, was that it was important for the process that the workshop became a safe environment, due to the topic being very sensitive.

The workshops with the focus groups were conducted in a similar fashion as the ones with the reference group, but with some modifications. Five levels of storytelling, is supposed to be conducted in five stages, where every level has a timespan of seven minutes. To be able to conduct the method within its original timespan, it requires a very high level of oral production and interaction, and for students who are learning to speak Swedish - it is an acquirement that they were lacking at the time. Therefore, it made sense to remove the time-aspect, and let every level start and finish when it felt natural to the groups.

It became clear throughout the process that it was hard for them to come up with dream solutions, because they were very stuck in their rationalist tendencies. What became clear was that they wanted something that would help them feel like they were in control of the situation, and that they knew what they were coming into before arriving at the central station. When asked what this was, they mentioned the tv-screens on the trains, and why we did not use them as a way to prepare the refugees of what was to come, once they arrived. They wanted a movie that should be easy to understand, translated into the most common languages amongst the ones that came. They were not really in...
agreement regarding the content, but what stood out, was that they wanted to know the process of; how to become a Swedish citizen, who would be able to answer their questions, how to find housing etc.

3.2.4.3 Evaluation and outcome
One thing that became very clear during the workshop with the reference group was that they always focused on preliterate, but always had the others that came during the fall of 2015 in mind. It was important for them that the solution would not only benefit preliterate, but would work for everyone else as well.

Another thing was that it was clear that they always thought about visual language, and how to use it when working with preliterate and newly arrived, but when working with the methods they chose to only communicate in text, and this I find very interesting.

Since the members of the focus groups were so many, as well as had different schooling background, there was a clear connection between education and thinking text rather than visual language. This led to me having to take a moderator role so that the workshop went in the right direction.

Looking at the result of the workshops it became very clear that both research groups saw the same needs, this made the process easier of entering the prototype face. By receiving a quite detailed description of the components of the app, as well as wishes of everything that should go together with the app, the second stage in the process was initiated.

3.3 Stage 2: Prototyping
3.3.1 Research and investigation
In the beginning of stage 2, more research was conducted, but this time with more focus on visual language and the power of the image. Even though visual language is considered to be a global language, it has the same cultural characteristics and traits as any other language. That means that no matter how visually literate you are, as an interpreter, you are going to interpret the image based on your references and culture that you come from.

This process allowed me to work extremely close to one of the student at Merit who is preliterate. By working with her, I got a bigger understanding of what graphic design, design approach that should be taken.

3.3.1.1 Design approach
From the middle of Afghanistan comes a preliterate student who would like to remain anonymous, therefore she will be referred to as Student X. When visiting the house of emigration in Växjö, last year, we understood that she had lived at a farm her entire life, but also worked as a seamstress. But when entering the exhibit of “Småland Väver” (Småland Weaves), we understood that she also been weaving, by pointing at the knots in the back of the weaving pieces she communicated how she had done it in her past.
It felt important to work closely with her so that I could get a bigger understanding of which design approach would be suitable for the end result. By working with three different types of images that portrait the same thing, I got an understanding of what design approach was comprehensible for her, and what was not.

By showing one picture at a time, it became very clear that she did not understand the illustrated pictures from the book: *From the subway to the recliner*. Because of this I leaned that the most suitable design approach for the app would be photo or vector-based illustrations that look very realistic.

### 3.3.1.2 Trial and error

As a result of the research stage in the process, it became clear that the end result should be an app, an app in which you would find information regarding the most vital pieces of information a refugee would need, when coming to Sweden. The app would be based on vector graphics together with audio in several languages, so that the information would be accessible to as many as possible.

The app would be a part of a collaboration between the digital world and Malmö train station. By placing the icon next to the “object” it represents, it enhances the understanding of the icon to those who did not understand the icon by itself.
This would not only benefit preliterate, but also every immigrant who came to the central station, this way, the app would have more meaning, and also work as a preview of the train station.

To maintain the original goal, a project by the target group and for the target group, it was important to keep the prototyping phase as transparent as possible, so that both research groups could take part of the process, and have as much say as possible.

Figure 10. Illustration: Gabriela Mas. The first mockup of the app.

### 3.3.3 Outcome and result

#### 3.3.3.1 Fist version

Since the app would contain films, the movies had to be translated into as many languages as possible so that everyone could receive the information. There are over 7000 active languages today, the dream would be to have every single language represented in the app. This would be very hard to achieve at start, but as time goes, and as the app evolves, hopefully it would end up with all 7000 languages represented. But as a foundation, the app would include the 12 most common languages of those who came the fall of 2015. That means that the languages that would exist in the app from the beginning would be: Arabic, Albanian, Dari, Persian, Tigrinya, Somali, Serbian, Bosnian and Croatian, Pashto, Urdu, Kurdish (Sorani and Kurmanji), Amhariska and Turkish.

In some countries, you speak more than one language, and sometime some flags can represent more than one language, because of this, it would be beneficial to have an additional page where the user could specify, and pick the right language. The flags provided in the app, would also be the ones that would be visible at the station.

Focusing on the content of the app, animated movies as well as iconography would be the main communication form. As mentioned prior, the information, and the icons in the app would also be placed next to the “object” it represents. By doing this, the understanding of the icons will become greater. It will also benefit those who did not understand the meaning of the icon, by placing them next to the “real” thing, they will learn the significance.
After receiving feedback from both research groups as well as the panel provided by Linnaeus university, some changes of the first draft were made. To highlight those changes; circles has been added to the bottom of every page where there are more options, like the language page. Logos has been removed, and is now replaced with icons instead, a feedback page as also been added. Looking at the map, it has now become a three dimensional, rather than two, more icons had to be developed, and the existing icons should be developed.

3.3.2.2 Iconography
When exploring iconography, and design approaches regarding iconography, a lot of research was conducted. What type of icons are being used in the Swedish society today? How does other cultures and countries work with, but most importantly use icons? What are the icons communicating? Where should I draw the line of being innovating and creating my own icons, versus accepting that in some cases they will have to look like they do?
The research process started by looking into the most common icons that we use frequently in today’s society, like hospitals, washrooms, handicap-signs etc. Knowing that some of those who came to the station where in desperate need of medical attention, it felt like an important icon to include in the app, as well as at the location. In Sweden, you tend to look after a cross (figure 12, top row, second from the left) if you are in need of medical attention, but that reference point differentiates depending on where you are from. Figure 12 represents some of the icons used in the world to symbolize healthcare and hospitals, it became clear that they look very different, and that religion had a big impact in the visualization.

The goal is to create an icon that looks as similar to the symbol we use in Sweden, but sometimes there are laws and regulations that prevents that, an example of this is a red cross on a white background. Due to these regulations, you sometimes have to use other colors or another approach, and therefore it increases the need of using the same icon at the train station.

When conducting the research, it became clear that some icons should not be altered, rather designed in a fashion where it is almost a copy of the existing ones. The reasoning behind that is because they are icons that are being used very frequently in Sweden and that there is a point that they learn the icons, so that when they move around in the cities, they have a general idea of the significance. Icons for restaurants, washrooms, etc. are examples of those icons that should remain as similar to the original as possible.

When should we stop using logos, and start using illustrations? To design an icon that would represent the immigration office was difficult. On one hand, there is a point in using the actual logo, even though it might be difficult to comprehend the significance of the logo the first time you see it, it will benefit the user of the app a lot more if the real logo was used. Another factor is that over time they learn what the logo represents.
Figure 16. Logo of the Swedish immigration office.

Figure 17. Illustration: Gabriela Mas
First attempt for an icon to represent the immigration office. The illustration was inspired by figure 19.

Figure 18. Second attempt for an icon to represent the immigration office.

Figure 19. Illustration: Immigration office.
The goal of the project was to facilitate the entry into Swedish society, therefore it felt better to make it as comprehensible for the user, and use an icon instead of the logo.weden, but sometimes there are laws and regulations that prevents that, an example of this is a red cross on a white background. Due to these regulations, you sometimes have to use other colors or another approach, and therefore it increases the need of using the same icon at the train station.

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Looking at the logo of the immigration office, it does not communicate that it is representing the place in which you go to seek for asylum, or a residency. Deciding to take a closer look at the other visual language they use, the illustration of how the process looks like for asylum seeking children that comes to Sweden without parents (figure 19), spoke to me a lot. Mainly because it was hard to understand what they were trying to communicate, but there was a point of using a similar approach.

The experience with student X taught me that, that type of illustration would not be easily understood by the target group, and therefore something had to change. Figure 17 shows how new icons were made from the illustration provided by the immigration office.

3.3.2.3 Evaluation
When shown the alterations made to the first draft, the reference group reminded me of the methodology when teaching preliterate Swedish. You start by giving them a word, but instead of studying just the single word, you put the word into a sentence. Was there any way to use that method in the visual language? That instead of having an icon by itself on the main page of the app, what would happen if the icon was placed in a scenario – would that increase the understanding of the icons?
3.3.2.4 Final Version
The app is portraying the result of a 10 week long process, in which both interviews and workshops has been the main methodology. The app is based on what both research groups wished to have at Malmö central station 2015, and hopes to function as a seed of change.

The app consists of several things, but the part that has gotten the most focus throughout the process is the map and the icons that comes along with it. The reasoning behind that is because there was a need to not only use visual language in a digital world, but to reflect it at the train station as well.

The icons used for the map was developed together with the target group and aimed to resemble either the real object, or icons/ symbols used in Swedish society. The election of which icons that should be used, was based on the wishes of both research groups as well as other actors that were involved in the process.

3.4 Stage 3: Evaluation
The process was conducted over ten weeks, during these ten weeks, several people have been involved. The focus group has had close to 30 members, a research group of five people have participated in the process. By having so many involved in the same project at the same time, brings both positive and negative things to the process.

Going in to the process, the initial thought was to let metadesign and its methodology be the gateway into the subject. While the project was evolving and the result was taking shape, the need of metadesign methods became even greater, especially since I started the process without knowing what the end result would be.
If the possibility of redoing the project was possible, there are a few things that I would have made differently. Scheduling regarding the reference group, reaching out to more volunteer organizations that were at the central station, are some examples of smaller things that I would have done differently. Example of bigger things that I would change would be me not contacting the Municipality of Malmö, and the immigration office for an interview.

When working on this project, there was one group who was underrepresented in my focus groups: preliterate. If this project could have been conducted throughout a longer time period, I would have gone down to Skåne, just to spend time with them, and allow them to play a bigger role in the process.

### 3.4.1 Research and investigation

Time, that has been the biggest feedback given from both research groups, they wanted more time to work with the methods in the workshop, as well as more time to have more meetings.

The focus groups pushed that they would have liked to have one final meeting where they would get the chance to meet all of the members of the focus groups, and discuss the topic further. Unfortunately, there was no time or budget to be able to conduct that final meeting during the process, but hopefully it will in the future.

Another thing that was highly appreciated by both groups was to see how their suggestions became reality throughout the process, and that they could see that most of their opinions were included in the final result.

### 3.4.2 End result

Allowing the target group and experts in the matter being the ones that designed the project was very important. Creating an app was never something crossed my mind in the starting stages of the process, but after conducting workshops, interviews, now it seems like the best solution – because that is what they wanted.

Looking at the functions of the app, there are some things that are borderline to what a preliterate can understand – the map is an example of that. You have to read a map to be able to understand an app. Why keep it? Even though the main target group of this project was preliterate refugees, there were so many others that came that would have benefited from having a map. But it would have benefited the preliterate to first see the icon in the app, and later see them placed around the station. The map would then work as a table of content, rather than a map.

The app should have the role of a seed rather than a final product, to elaborate on this, the result is based on workshops and interviews with those who came the fall of 2015, or were in contact with the refugees. The app is as a result of a wish that they wanted back then. We do not know what happens in the future, and what reason will cause people to leave their home and seek refuge in Sweden, but then hopefully the app can work as a foundation for upcoming needs.
4. Welcome to Sweden

4.1 Project statement
Welcome to Sweden aspires to plant a seed in how we welcome those who seek refuge in Sweden, by amplifying the voices of those who came during the fall of 2015, and allowing an often-forgotten target group, preliterate, to be heard and a part of the Swedish integrational process.

4.2 + Change
Welcome to Sweden is a social sustainable development project. In *The designer’s atlas of sustainability*, Thorpe refers to the World Commission on Environment and Development’s original definition for sustainable development and that it “meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.”

The project is based on the events of the fall of 2015, and how it affected the involved actors. By lifting the question, and working closely with two research groups, a solution was provided – an app. This app contains the needs that the members of both research groups had at 2015, the wish is that this app will work as a seed, and throughout time will develop into a resilient app that will have the ability to change to cover the different needs of the future.

5. Conclusion

5.1 Discussion
Going into the process, the question: *can visual language facilitate the initial entry into Swedish society*, was asked. After conducting several workshops and interviews one would argue that yes it can. By providing information in other methods than text, you do not only facilitate entry into Swedish society but you also ensure accessibility to everyone, no matter literacy skills.

Today’s society is based on written language, in spite of the visual language development that has arrived due to social media and modern technology. Qarin Franker argues in the book *Swedish as a second language*, that we must stop taking the written language for granted. Welcome to Sweden is a project that does not take written language for granted. It rather highlights that there is one group that tends to be forgotten, and that it is our democratic obligation to make sure that the information can be accessed to everyone, no matter literacy skills.

Frank continues to argue that “*today, visual literacy has become increasingly necessary to develop, to be able to achieve success and to actively participate in community development.*” But why is the Swedish society left behind in this development? The classic photo’s status as an image or a publisher of “reality” has been concealed at the same time with the many editing tools available for manipulating them. Is this one of the reasons why Sweden and its authorities has refrained from using visual language as a communications tool?
Visual language is being used all over the world. In several SFI conferences the topics of visual language and preliterate has come up, but always in the connotation that preliterate cannot use visual language, and that they would not understand how to work with modern technology.

In the book *New medias and communication*\(^40\), Eric Carlsson description of how the Arabic spring of 2010-2011 is an example of how the people could through modern technology share their truths and protests online. Why is this relevant? It was due to social media and visual language that the rest of the world got an insight of what was happening in the affected areas, it was due to visual language that people around the world would get an understanding of what was going on. What would happen if the same information was provided in written Arabic? How much would the rest of the world have understood?

By introducing a politically neutral actor that has prioritized preliterate as well as visual language, one cannot help but hope that it will motivate the Swedish authorities as well as the Swedish state to keep preliterate in mind for future development, as well as starting to work more visually.

### 5.2 Conclusion

During the fall of 2015 over 150 000\(^41\) people searched for refuge in Sweden. Using the autumn of 2015 as a case study, I explored the question: Can visual language facilitate entry into Swedish society for preliterate?

There is no statistics on how many of those who came that were preliterate, of those who got a residence permit, and started their SFI-studies, roughly 30% had less than primary school education\(^42\).

By collaborating with Merit AB, I was able to create to research groups that played an important role in the process. The process was conducted in three steps: research, prototyping and evaluation, and the research groups had a reoccurring role in these steps. The goal of the process was to create a kit that was by the target group for the target group. To ensure that goal, several workshops were conducted in a metadesign fashion, basing the workshop on metadesign methods like five levels of storytelling as well as designing miracles.

The result concluded in an app called Welcome to Sweden, and an important factor of the app is that the visual language and the iconography would be reflected physically at Malmö central station. The layout and visual language is also based on a SFI-method used to teach preliterate Swedish, instead of just teaching every word by itself, you put the word into a sentence. This method has been transferred over to visual language, and instead of using a single icon at the main page of the app, the icon is now placed inside a scenario, this to give the user a greater understanding.

The app should have the role of a seed of change rather than a final product, to elaborate on this, the result is based on workshops and interviews with those who came the fall of 2015, or were in contact with the refugees. The app is as a result of a wish that they wanted back then. We do not know what happens in the future, and what reason will cause people to seek refuge in Sweden, but then hopefully the app can work as a foundation for upcoming needs.
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7. References


25.
8. Appendices

List of literature that has been a big part of the process, but is not cited in the thesis.

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