

Representations of migration, borders and memories in exhibitions: a multimodal text analysis

Eva Insulander*

Abstract

Many museums and galleries today address migration stories in their exhibitions. In this article, a methodological framework based on a multimodal social semiotic approach is used for the analysis of the meaning potentials of exhibitions. A particular focus is directed towards how the conceptions of migration, borders and memory represent themselves multimodally, in terms of general structure, orchestration of semiotic resources, the use of figurative language and explicit/implicit values. This methodological framework helped uncover hidden messages of interests and ideologies in different exhibitions. The study contributes to research on multimodal texts and exhibitions, as well as educational research.

Key words: Exhibitions, multimodality, representation, migration, borders, memories

Introduction and background

Across historical and political periods, migrations have affected cultures and societies. However, in our contemporary societies, the speed and scope of migrations have produced far-reaching social, economic and political changes (Welsch 1999; Chambers, 2012). Questions that relate to migration and intercultural inclusion are some of the most important tasks for political and cultural institutions to deal with. Museums are also affected by this, and several migration museums have opened in different countries, such as the Immigration Museum in Melbourne, the New Immigration Museum of the State of São Paulo, the Musée de l'Histoire de l'Immigration in Paris and the Documentation Centre and Museum of Migration in Cologne. The Migration Museum Project in the UK is another recent example of initiatives in this direction. Many museums and galleries are also opening new exhibitions, or expanding existing ones, in order to deal with topics on emigration and immigration, from historical and contemporary perspectives. (Baur 2013; Cimoli 2013; Poehls 2011).

Museums, and other memory institutions, preserve and display collective memories in relation to the social needs and cultural interests of different groups. Processes of cultural transmission are selective and reconstructive (Halbwachs 1992; Erll 2011). These institutions display personal stories from refugees, provide information about the history and politics of immigration and highlight questions about geographical, physical and imagined borders, in an attempt to promote acceptance and a more open attitude toward contemporary migration, challenge assumptions and contribute to change in conceptions of identity (Macdonald 2003; Whitehead, Lloyd, Eckersley and Mason 2015). In an increasingly heterogeneous society, it seems to be an important task for museums and galleries to relate collective and personal memories to issues of borders and differences. The last few years have shown that, despite a history of migration, many European citizens consider immigration to be a problem. Exhibitions have the potential to explain a society in transition, provide different perspectives on current topics and an alternative narrative of migration (Mason, Galanti, Lloyd and Sayner 2018). However, exhibitions often use complex texts and combine several modes and media, and may therefore be demanding for visitors to follow. Values can, for instance, be expressed verbally and in images and through the choice and combination of artefacts. In this article, I investigate representations of *migration*, *borders* and *memory* in three different exhibitions. A multimodal analysis is valuable when you want to study texts, such as exhibitions, in relation

to their cultural, historical and social context, and explore how they represent versions of the world in relation to interests and ideologies (Björkvall 2009).

Analyzing exhibitions: a multimodal approach

The interest in studying migration and refugees tends to increase when these questions become prioritized in the political agenda (Black 2001). For instance, Baur (2010) and Lanz (2016) focus on exhibition design practices in museums and galleries devoted to migration. Elements and recurring objects in these museums, such as luggage, migrants' letters, pictures and clothes, are defined as 'visual metaphors' with symbolic value, and are used to evoke shared experiences of immigration. Lanz (2016) shows how the concepts of immigration and emigration are often treated differently in terms of design; emigration museums often use playful solutions such as full-scale reconstructions, and as a contrast immigration museums tend to be more abstract and suggestive, using artworks and testimonies. Naguib (2015) investigates the 'intangible heritage' of narratives of migration and personal life stories, which are of increasing interest to museums. However, life stories tend to focus on the individual aspect rather than on entire communities; they complement authorized narratives of history and, instead of institutionalized voices, they bring forth emotional aspects and multivocality. Another feature in exhibitions on migration is the geographical map, depicting migratory routes and flows through particular regions and nations within certain periods of time. Maps also uncover the social construction of geographic and political entities, and show that migrations have been present in all times, and that the very idea of nation states may be challenged by the use of maps (Poehls 2011; Sutherland 2014). More recently, research has addressed issues of affect and empathy in museums, seeing empathy as an affective interpretative strategy in exhibition design (eg. Witcomb 2013). Others have analyzed actual visitor responses to museums' attempts to cultivate empathy (Mason et al. 2018; Schorch 2015). I have examined visitors meaning making elsewhere (eg. Diamantopoulou, Insulander and Lindstrand 2012; Insulander 2010), however it is beyond the scope of this particular study.

These studies of migration in museums may be categorized as either museologically or museographically oriented, and they illustrate how migration is represented in theoretical rather than empirical terms. Few studies of migration in museums have employed an analytical framework that allows for more detailed, multimodal analyses of exhibitions. Halliday's (1978) theory of communicative metafunctions has been used in relation to exhibitions by, for instance, Stenglin (2004) and Insulander (2010). While Stenglin (2004) primarily focuses on the communicative aspects of museums and analyses the composition of three-dimensional space, I am working from an educational perspective and investigate exhibitions as knowledge representations in relation to choices of epistemic resources (Insulander 2010; see also Selander 2017). None of these studies concern exhibitions on migration, but a few other studies have investigated the representation of national narratives on migration in exhibitions (Pang 2004; Lindstrand and Insulander 2012) and ideologies of biculturalism and reconciliation (Martin and Stenglin 2007). Halliday's theory was used in all of the abovementioned studies.

The analysis in the present study draws upon a model for analysis of multimodal texts in education developed by Danielsson and Selander (2014, 2016) (Table 1). The model was developed within the conceptual framework of Designs for Learning (Selander and Kress 2010), which in turn refers to multimodal social semiotics (Kress 2010) and Halliday's metafunctional theory. In communication, we use different modes (writing, image, graphic design etc.) and orchestrate them in different ways into signcomplexes. All modes contribute to the meaning in their specific way, and different modes have different modal affordances (Kress 2003) that affect the content, as in this article with a focus on the representations of migration, border and memory. Different modes do different things; an image is suitable for representing aspects such as spatial information, while writing is suited for logic reasoning or for presenting information sequentially. An exhibition often consists of complex combinations of modes. A wider concept of reading and writing involves the idea that museum exhibitions may be 'read' multimodally (see, e.g., Kress 2010; Insulander 2010). Exhibitions as multimodal texts can be seen as signcomplexes that convey meanings to visitors through objects, verbal texts, images, sound, etc. Meaning is constructed when resources are put to use, but resources also have meaning *potentials* (van Leeuwen 2005).

The model offers a way of doing a systematic analysis of the use of different resources in multimodal texts. It was originally developed for educational purposes, to be used by teachers and students in the classroom as a way to harness students' meaning-making in various disciplines (Danielsson and Selander 2014, 2016). Danielsson (2017) has recently extended its use to analysis of classroom interaction. In this article, the model will be applied as a framework for understanding exhibitions as complex signs. The model assists a thorough and systematic analysis of how meanings of migration, borders and memory manifest themselves multimodally, in terms of general structure, orchestration of semiotic resources, the use of figurative language and explicit/implicit values (see Table 1). An analysis of the general structure facilitates a first understanding of what the exhibition is about. This first step focuses on the producer's choices in terms of how to represent certain content, with different modes and media. The next step involves a closer look at the interplay between the different parts of the exhibition. An analysis of the interplay between different resources will make clear the structure of and relationship between different entities of the exhibition, for instance the section labels that mark the different themes in relation to what is displayed in the showcases. It may also reveal incongruity in the use of different resources, for instance if the message of an image or object contradicts the message in writing, and so on. An analysis of metaphors, analogies and values will reveal the assumptions that an exhibition makes. Meanings of political ideology or 'the other' may not be obvious at first glance, but can be identifiable when looking more closely. From a multimodal perspective, implicit meanings may be expressed across modes, e.g., verbally, in images or in combinations of objects.

Three exhibitions were selected for the analysis: *The Legacy*, *Narratives About Escape and Borders*, *Migrants and Refugees*. These were on display during 2015 at one museum and two libraries in Sweden. Each exhibition was produced with different purposes and by different means. For instance, *The Legacy* was produced by an ethnic organization to raise awareness of the situation of a particular ethnic group in Sweden. A regional museum with a vision to help people affect society and improve their life situation produced *Narratives About Escape*. The third exhibition, *Borders, Migrants and Refugees*, was produced by a cultural journal with the ambition of crossing boundaries, questioning truths and being creative. During visits to each one of these exhibitions, I collected a variety of materials, including notes, photographs of panel- and roll-up texts, interviews, films and additional materials like digital roll-ups, catalogues and books.

The Legacy

The Legacy [Arvet] exhibition at Västmanland County Museum, Västerås, was produced by the Archive of Finns in Sweden [Sverigefinländarnas arkiv]. This exhibition deals with migration from national and local perspectives, and it was produced with the intention of raising awareness of a particular population, i.e., the Finns in Sweden, a Finnish-speaking minority consisting of established and recently arrived residents. The exhibition depicts the encounter between the Finnish and Swedish cultures, and aims to illuminate the possibility for Finns in Sweden to pass on their language and culture to the next generation. *The Legacy* shows how a number of second-generation immigrants from Finland perceive their Finnish legacy, and how they uphold it in Sweden. It deals with questions of loss of culture, identity and language. It is a travelling exhibition, which is partly recreated depending on the local context.

The analysis of the exhibition starts with a focus on the general structure. Different exhibits have been arranged in quite a large space in sequences according to different themes. Visitors will first come across an introductory panel about the exhibition (Figure 1) and, after that, a film with a crash course in the Finnish language. The layout is open, so the visitor can then choose to continue to the left or to the right. To the left, there is a section with information and material gathered from preschools, workplaces and other settings in the municipality. The visitor will find drawings of Finland by preschool children, information about and personal accounts of bilingualism, and an explanation of Finnish administrative areas [förvaltningsområden] in Sweden, where the inhabitants have the right to use their minority language. At the far end of the space, there is one section with roll-ups representing well-known people of Finnish origin (Figure 2). The roll-ups include photographs and excerpts from interviews, where these people

reflect upon their Finnish legacy. To the right, there is another section with drawings, posters and essays from schools in the municipality, which deals with how children relate to Finland in different ways. Language seems to be the most salient theme of this exhibition, with personal narratives about language and identity as essential features (Naguib 2015). The visitor may choose the order in which to 'read' the exhibition, and can 'navigate' the space freely.

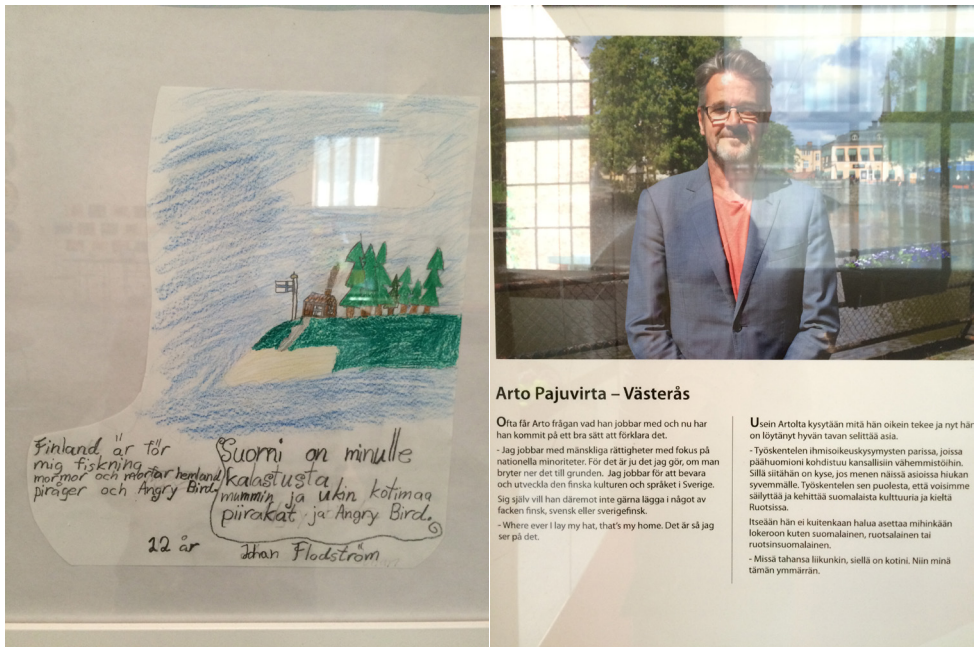
Looking at the interaction between different parts of the textual (in its wider sense) representations of the exhibition, we notice that some elements require more careful reading by the visitor, since image and verbal text complement each other rather than providing a consistent message. In Figure 3 is the quotation: 'Finland to me is fishing, the homeland of grandma and grandpa, pastry and Angry Birds'. But none of these things is actually represented in the image. This is also the case in the other panel (see Figure 4) where the person in the image is a public relations officer in a Finnish administrative area, but his profession is not made clear in this specific panel: 'Often, Arto is asked about what he does at work and now he has come up with a good way of explaining it - I work with human rights with a special focus on national minorities. When it comes down to it, I work to preserve the Finnish culture and language in Sweden.' The visitor has to read the complementary text to understand the connection between the professional title (public relations officer in a Finnish administrative area) and the job description (to work with human rights with a special focus on national minorities). If we move on in our analysis, we notice that there is congruence between concepts, descriptions and explanations. The Finnish administrative area is one example of this, which is explained in terms of legal protection, organization and rights. Other concepts are equally explained.

	Multimodal text focus	Analysis of exhibition
General structure – setting	Thematic orientation and sequencing.	What is the exhibition about and how is the content arranged? What aspects appear as central? Analysis of the content and arrangement of different entities and themes. What modes are used and for what purpose?
	What do each of the resources express?	
Interplay between textual parts	Proximity/closeness and coherence between writing and other semiotic resources.	What is the function of different resources? Analysis of the interplay between different resources, such as intro panels, section panels, standard object labels, images, diagrams, etc.
	Congruence and coherence between concepts, descriptions and explanations.	
Figurative language (in writing and images, etc.)	What analogies and metaphors are used?	Deconstruction of the figurative language in different modes. How well do the analogies function for the specific content?
Values	Explicit	How are values and norms represented, explicitly and implicitly in different modes? What norms are expressed?
	Implicit (in metaphors, images, perspectives)	

Table 1. Model for working with multimodal texts in education (modified from Danielsson and Selander 2014, 2016; Danielsson 2017)



Figures 1-2. General structure of The Legacy.



Figures 3-4. Interaction between the parts of and figurative language in The Legacy.



Figures 5-6. *Figurative language in The Legacy.*

Looking at the figurative language of analogies and metaphors, we notice how the verbal text in Figure 4 contains expressions like ‘Break down to the ground’ [Bryta ner till grunden] and ‘Wherever I lay my hat, that’s my home’ [Där jag lägger min hatt, är mitt hem]. Such metaphors may not be easily comprehended and may actually confuse the visitor.

The figurative language of analogies and metaphors is also evident in figures 5 and 6, which is where subtle messages about memory, social boundaries and power relations in Finnish national culture and identity become evident. Emotionally evoking expressions like ‘My body carries memories’ [Min kropp bär på minnen], ‘They are always present in my blood circulation’ [De finns hela tiden i mitt blodomlopp], and ‘They are stored in the archives of the social office’ [De finns arkiverade på socialkontoret], all contribute to the personal and emotional character of the exhibition (Naguib 2015). This effect is produced through literary tools, and reveals a negative minority identity based on previous experiences and stereotypes about being Finnish, although the general message in the exhibition is to provide grounds for a positive minority identity. In the film with the short Finnish language course, a woman says that, in the old days, someone compared the sound of the Finnish language to ‘throwing an iron bed down the stairs’. Prejudiced assumptions and attitudes are thus displayed but also contradicted in the abovementioned examples.

The final step of the analysis is to go more thoroughly into the explicit and implicit values of the exhibition. In this case, we find expressions like ‘The value of the Finnish language’ [Värdet av det finska språket], ‘I am frustrated over not having learned the language’ [‘Jag är frustrerad över att jag inte fått språket’], which clearly expresses positive and changing values about the Finnish language. Images also reveal values, and in Figure 6 we find resemblance with Delacroix’s *Liberty Leading the People*. Delacroix’s work is a symbol of the Finns in Sweden and of the fight to uphold the Finnish legacy, despite difficulties and social boundaries. As this exhibition uses people’s life stories and personal effects, it gives a personal account of migration (Naguib 2015) as well as a more nuanced image of Sweden, the Finns in Sweden and national belonging (Sutherland 2014). Its clear focus on a particular group means it does not try to exert influence on attitudes towards migration or immigrants in general.

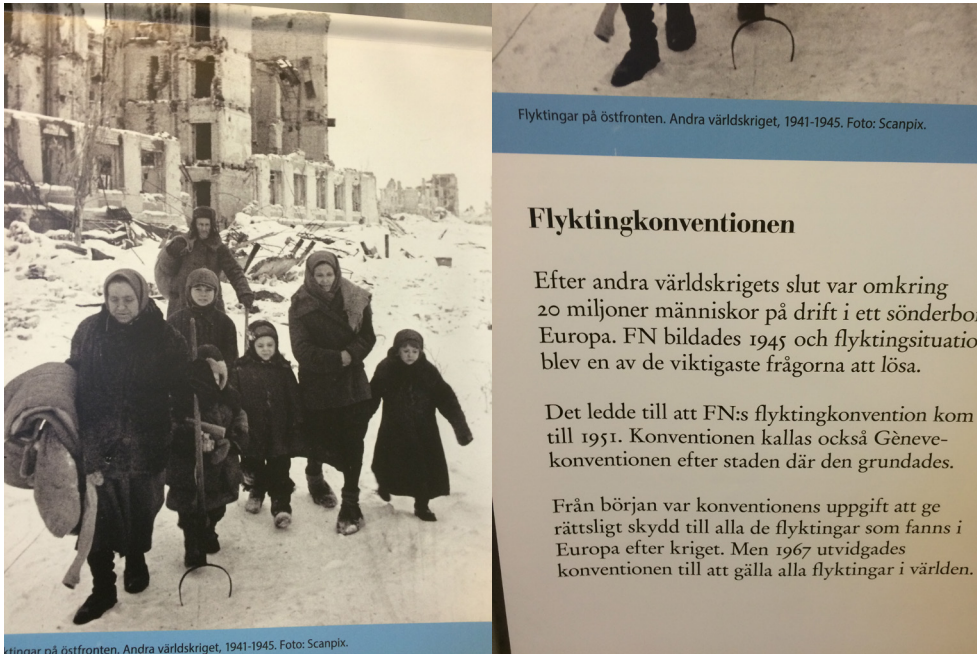
Narratives About Escape

Narratives About Escape [Berättelser om flykt] at Eskilstuna Library was produced by curator Lena Wernewik at Sörmlands Museum, as part of the museum's mission to collect and display cultural heritage regarding migration. The exhibition mainly deals with questions of migration from a national, Swedish, perspective. It originated in a public appeal by the museum to collect memories of migrants, which resulted in an overwhelming majority of narratives from people having left their home countries by compulsion. In this exhibition, these personal narratives are combined with contemporary and historical facts about refugees into a book. *Narratives About Escape* is a travelling exhibition about people who have been forced to leave their homes, families and friends to form a new life somewhere else. The exhibition mixes personal narratives with facts about migration and at different times, from 1700 until today



Figure 7. General structure of Narratives About Escape.

The structure of this small-scale exhibition is linear, with different panels arranged in a semicircle, from left to right (Figure 7). It has a clear start and end, even though the visitor can choose to take the reverse route. A separate display case in the centre of the semicircle explores the living conditions of asylum seekers in Sweden, for instance regarding supplies and financial support. The panels present short narratives of people from different periods in history, mixed with information about central concepts, definitions, numbers and regulation of migration. Text panels include titles like 'Narratives About Escape' (introductory/concluding text), 'Nasrin from Afganistan', 'Refugees of the world', 'Sadia from Somalia' and 'Asylum seekers get large hand-outs from the state, don't they?'. It is a small-scale exhibition and it is easy to get a comprehensive understanding of its design. The visitor may comprehend that its overarching message is to break with prejudice against immigrants, to cross social borders through contextualizing the phenomenon of migration historically and personally.



Figures 8-9. *Interaction between the parts of Narratives About Escape.*

Looking at the interaction between the parts of the exhibition, there is an ironic contrast between the display case with the few belongings of an asylum seeker (Figure 7) and the label 'Asylum seekers get large hand-outs from the state, don't they?' This interaction is a reply to prejudice against migration and refugees by way of using irony. In Figure 9, the text deals with the fact that 20 million refugees were on the move after the Second World War, which led to the establishment of the 1951 Refugee Convention. The image in Figure 8 shows a family carrying some belongings through a city in ruins, apparently refugees on the Eastern front. We can conclude that there is proximity and coherence between text and image. There is also congruence between the concepts, descriptions and explanations that facilitate interpretation. The Convention is explained and its purpose described.

When it comes to the figurative language, we can take a closer look at analogies and metaphors in the following excerpt (translated from Swedish):

The family Shelest from Uzbekistan

We fled and hid in Moscow
It was like a nightmare
That always was with us
With false ID documents
We reached Sweden
We didn't choose this country
We seek shelter
And we still seek it.

The lines 'It was like a nightmare' and 'We seek shelter' bring up emotions, and may lead to mental visualizations of the horrible conditions of escape. The figurative language is not related to a specific knowledge domain, but gives the exhibition a personal and emotional character. In terms of 'visual metaphors', there is the display case that contains a plastic bowl with cooking utensils. Next to it, there is a plastic bag from IKEA with towels and bedclothes. Here, we have both the 'visual metaphors' of objects that are loaned to asylum seekers (Baur

2010; Lanz 2016) and the personal approach through life stories (Naguib 2015). The message is that refugees in Sweden do *not* live a life of luxury.

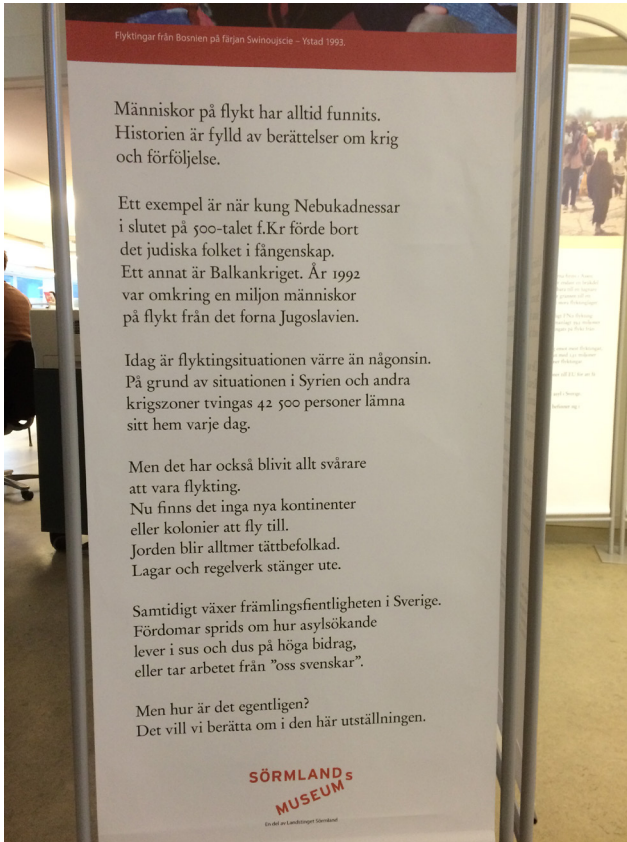


Figure 10. *Figurative language in Narratives About Escape.*

the personal narratives try to appeal to the emotions and create a mutual understanding of what migration may mean to the individual (Naguib 2015).

Borders, Migrants and Refugees

Borders, Migrants and Refugees [Gränser, Migranter och Flyktingar] at Vårby Library was produced by the journal *Glänta*, an independent publishing house and quarterly journal operating at the intersection of philosophy, politics, aesthetics and history. The exhibition deals with the consequences of global migration and shows a selection of Philippe Rekacewicz's so called radical migration policy maps. The exhibition thus takes an international and global perspective. Rekacewicz is a journalist and cartographer of the left-wing, anti-capitalist magazine *Le Monde Diplomatique* and his maps are based on research on demography, migration, war and conflict. They illustrate current migration flows and conflict hardships around the world. Rekacewicz uses data as a means for social awareness and involvement.

The exhibition as a whole has a linear structure with panels/maps on display on the four walls of one single room (Figure 11). Two rows of maps are fastened to the wall. At the front of the room, there is a small table with three non-fiction books about migration. The different maps have headlines such as 'Closed Europe', 'The view from Cairo', 'The view from Warsaw', 'When Africa came to Vienna' and 'Dying at Europe's gate'. These headings provide visitors

Values are expressed both explicitly and implicitly in the text, through metaphors, images and perspectives. The abovementioned figures 8-9 show that it is difficult to be a refugee. Xenophobia is explicitly condemned and the exhibition contains texts that clearly respond to prejudices against asylum seekers. Figure 10 states that 'Today the refugee situation is worse than ever. Due to the situation in Syria and other war zones, 42 500 people are forced to leave their homes every day. But it has also become more difficult to be a refugee' [...] '...xenophobia is on the rise in Sweden. Prejudices about how asylum seekers are living privileged on their high allowances and taking the jobs from native Swedes. But how is it actually? We would like to tell you in this exhibition'.

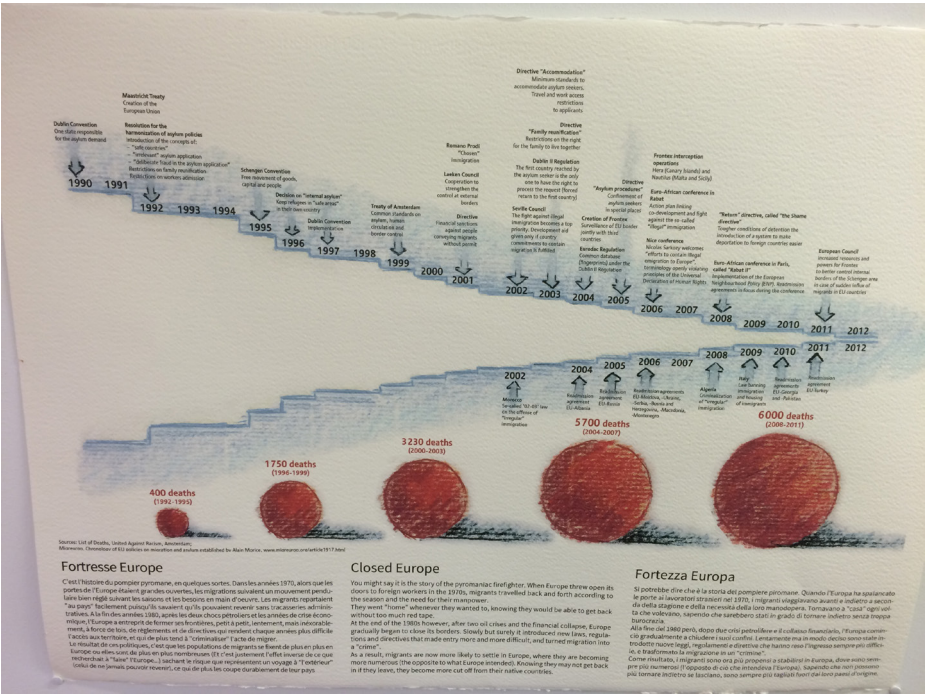
This exhibition uses both information and personal narratives to deal with the issue of migration. On the one hand, it uses an academic discourse to present facts that try to influence visitors' attitudes towards migration and immigrants; on the other hand,

with clues to the central ideas of the exhibition, which is about global migration flows and the resulting conflicts in Europe. At first glance, the maps seem very detailed and include many different symbols and numbers. The images and text seem to require close attention by the visitor. The exhibition takes on an academic and serious tone, as it contains words like deaths, conference, council, agreement and directive.



Figure 11. General structure of Borders, Migrants and Refugees

If we look at the relationship between different resources on the panels, we can see that the different entities on the maps (illustrations, numbers, symbols and smaller textboxes) often give supplementary information to the main verbal text. The different illustrations and symbols do not facilitate the reading of the text, but rather provide a more complex and nuanced message to the visitor. In figures 12-13, the main verbal text tells the story of how the borders of Europe were first opened to foreign workers in the 1970s, and how the borders after the 1980s were gradually closed. In the process, several laws and regulations made it more difficult for people to enter and leave Europe, which turned illegal migration into a crime. In addition, there is an illustration with five red globes that represent the number of deaths since the year 1900, which were in some way related to migration, asylum-seeking or racism. The image also illustrates the closing of borders by portraying a gap that gets narrower as time goes by. Arrows indicate how various pieces of legislation affected the closing of borders. Each mode conveys meaning in its own way, and the maps are rather demanding in terms of interpretation. They include loads of information in terms of numbers, symbols, colours and verbal text. Taken together, this exhibition may be regarded as educational in an academic sense. As mentioned, three non-fiction books about migration are placed on a small table, for example *Shifting Sands* by Raja Shehade and Penny Johnson, which is about the history of the Middle East. The collection of non-fiction books may be seen as a way to stress the academic discourse of this exhibition. Several concepts are introduced in the panels, but they are not always described or explained; in figures 12-13, oil crises and financial collapse are



Figures 12-13. Interaction between the parts of Borders, Migrants and Refugees.

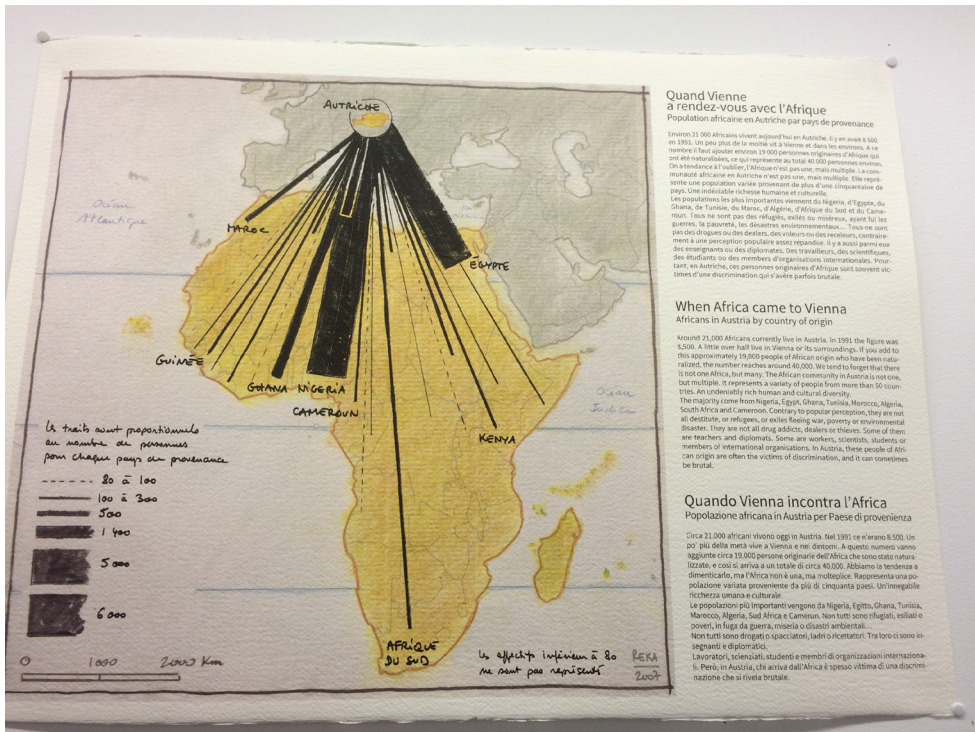


Figure 14. Values in Borders, Migrants and Refugees.

mentioned without any further information. Other concepts like readmission agreement, third countries and names like Frontex are introduced in the same way. Figurative language with metaphors and analogies is frequently used, concerning both the illustrations and text. As mentioned above, the red globes symbolize the number of deaths and the gap symbolizes the closing of borders. Metaphors and analogies like 'the pyromaniac firefighter', 'the financial collapse' and 'migrants become cut off' are part of the academic discourse, but are also used as tools to provoke mental images. The metaphors add a serious tone that tells about conflicts and what is going on, to provide visitors with details and facts.

Values are expressed both implicitly in metaphors, images, perspectives and explicitly in the verbal text. The verbal text in Figure 14 includes sentences like: '[...] An undeniably rich human and cultural diversity' and 'Contrary to popular perception, they are not all drug addicts, dealers or thieves. Some of them are teachers and diplomats'. This is an interesting choice of words, since it may lead us to think that most immigrants actually *are* drug addicts, dealers and thieves. What the producer does here is to acknowledge some people's anxiety about the issue, to reflect a conflict. The overall message is, however, to promote greater tolerance of migration and immigrants. Implicitly in several of the maps, we may notice the use of colours: red is often for death numbers, refugees or countries that have legislation that oppresses their inhabitants, green is used for liberal countries, where citizens can move freely and so on.

In this exhibition, the academic, informative and educative discourse is dominant, but values and opinions are also expressed. The producer uses facts, figures and maps to convince and influence visitors' attitudes towards migration and migrants (Poehls 2011). The idea of national belonging is problematized using illustrations and symbols (Sutherland 2014), representing the closing of Europe and the closing of borders as problematic.

Conclusion and discussion

The three exhibitions had in common a goal to discuss geographical, historical, political, social, cultural and/or economic borders, and to get visitors to critically reflect on their own perceptions and attitudes. At the same time, the exhibitions gave three different accounts of migration, borders and memories, and used different means and modes in order to get their message through. The first one, *The Legacy*, used life stories and personal accounts to create a personal image of migration, borders and memory. It was devoted to one particular group (Naguib 2015), the Finns in Sweden and, through stories from children, citizens and celebrities, it tried to change peoples' attitudes towards this group.

The second exhibition, *Narratives About Escape*, used life stories together with visual metaphors (Baur 2010; Lanz 2016) and facts to illustrate a complex image of migration from historical and contemporary perspectives. Primarily, it looked at migration from a Swedish perspective. It was both personal and educational in its approach, and tried to change people's attitudes towards immigrants and migration in general.

The third exhibition, *Borders, Migrants and Refugees* avoided the personal. Instead, it used academic discourse, exploring numbers and maps, pointing at global economic imbalances to educate and to affect people's attitudes towards migration and migrants (Poehls 2011). It also questioned the idea of national belonging itself (Sutherland 2014).

Exhibitions often tell several stories at the same time, which may be revealed if looking more closely. The model for the analysis of multimodal texts (Danielsson and Selander 2014, 2016) helped uncover messages of values and political ideology. For instance, in *The Legacy*, we noticed how it generally provided more neutral, or perhaps even playful (Lanz 2016) information about the migration of a particular group. Looking at the personal accounts, it was mainly through the use of suggestive metaphors (Lanz 2016) and values that prejudice against the Finns in Sweden was uncovered. In the metaphors, expressions of negative as well as positive minority identities were displayed. In *Narratives About Escape*, the ambition of breaking with prejudice against immigrants was visible at all levels of the text, from the general level to the metaphors that were used. The producers had also created coherence between the different parts and modes, which meant that interpretation was potentially straightforward. *Borders, Migrants and Refugees* was, however, more complex by comparison and challenged the visitor through multiple messages at all levels of the text, also through numbers and complex maps that challenged social constructions (cf. Poehls 2011). An abundance of abstract information was given in different parts of the text, mixed with suggested solutions that demonstrated values and clear standpoints about the positive aspects of migration (cf. Lanz, 2016), but without avoiding conflicts and controversies.

There were other notable differences in how the exhibitions represented refugees and migrants. For instance, the Finn minority was considered an uncontroversial subject and a rather well integrated group in comparison with how migrants were described in the other two exhibitions, which address conflicts in society and prejudices about migrants. Hostility towards migrants; seeing them as drug addicts, dealers and thieves or living a life in luxury, are discussed and contested. What clearly emerges from this study is the complexity of the relationships between community and museum professionals and the importance of the collaboration between them. At this time when Europe can be said to be in crisis regarding migration and the rise of the far right, museums certainly have an opportunity to provide alternative narratives.

The article has provided a multimodal analysis of three exhibitions on the topic of migration in Sweden, in order to provide a comparative study. The analysis and comparison constitutes an important first step towards understanding communication in displays that deal with sensitive, contested and difficult histories. The comparisons have been used to explore different representations in contemporary exhibition practices and point to a new understanding of how processes of meaning making shape individuals and society. A step further would be to analyze visitors' meaning making of migration narratives. A multimodal social semiotic approach could involve a detailed study of empirical traces of meaning making in diverse sets of data produced during field work, such as video documentation, drawings and photos produced during visits. A similar approach, in combination with detailed multimodal exhibition analyses, has been used by myself and my colleagues in previous large-scale studies (e.g. Diamantopoulou et al. 2012; Insulander 2010). These studies provided an insight into what meaning making entails, not only in terms of cognitive understanding but also as emotional engagement, interest and

identity construction. However, multimodal analysis is a very time consuming business, which is something that needs to be taken into account when designing studies.

Received: 28 September 2017

Finally accepted: 1 February 2019

Acknowledgements

This article is part of the project *Border Education – Space, Memory and Reflections on Transculturality (BE-SMaRT)*, a Key Action 2 Project, funded with support from the European Commission. This publication reflects the views only of the author(s), and the Commission cannot be held responsible for any use that may be made of the information contained therein. Partners in this project are: University of Education Freiburg (Olivier Mentz, Christina Brüning, Hans-Peter Burth, Chloé Faucompré, Markus Raith), Mälardalen University Eskilstuna (Laila Niklasson, Eva Insulander), St. Mary's University College Belfast (Tracy McKay, Angela Vaupel, Anthony Grant), University of Tartu (Äli Leijen, Mairo Rääsk, Maarit Saks), University of Lyon (Pascal Clerc, Dominique Chevalier, Vincent Porhel), University of Ljubljana (Tatjana Resnik Planinc, Mojca Ilc, Bostjan Roglej, Katja Vintar-Mally), European Academy Otzenhausen (Antje Brandt, Ronja Lindenberg, Michael Matern).

References

- Baur, R. (2010) 'La rappresentazione della Migrazione', *Nuova museologia*, 22 27-34.
- Björkvall, A. (2009) *Den visuella texten: multimodal analys i praktiken* [The visual text: multimodal analysis in practice], Stockholm: Hallgren and Fallgren.
- Black, R. (2001) 'Fifty years of refugee studies. From theory to policy', *International Migration Review*, 1 57-78.
- Chambers, I. (2012) 'The Museum of Migrating Modernities', in Beatrice Ferrara (ed) *Cultural Memory, Migrating Modernities and Museum Practices*, 13–32, Milan: Politecnico di Milano.
- Cimoli, A.C. (2013) 'Migration Museums in Europe: Narratives and their Visual Translations,' in Luca Basso Peressut, Francesca Lanz, and Gennaro Postiglione (eds), *European museums in the 21st century: setting the framework*, 313–407, Milano: Mela books.
- Danielsson, K. and Selander, S. (2014) *Se texten! Multimodala texter i ämnesdidaktiskt arbete* [View the text! Multimodal texts in education], Malmö: Gleerups.
- Danielsson, K. and Selander, S. (2016) 'Reading multimodal texts for learning – a model for cultivating multimodal literacy', *Designs for learning*, 8 (1) 25-36.
- Danielsson, K. (2017) 'Vågor och vibrationer – val av lärresurser i ett fysikklassrum [Waves and vibrations – choice of learning resources in a physics classroom]'. In Eva Insulander, Susanne Kjällander, Fredrik Lindstrand and Anna Åkerfeldt (eds.) *Didaktik i omvandlingens tid. Text, representation, design* [Didactics in a time of transformation. Text, representation, design], Stockholm: Liber
- Diamantopoulou, S., Insulander, E., and Lindstrand, F. (2012). 'Making meaning in museum exhibitions: design, agency and (re-)representation'. *Designs for learning*, 5 (1-2) 11-28.
- Erlil, A. (2011) *Memory in culture*, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Halbwachs, M. (1992) *On collective memory*, Chicago: University of Chicago press.

- Halliday, M. A. K. (1978) *Language as social semiotic*, London: Arnold.
- Insulander, E. (2010) *Tinget, rummet, besökaren. Om meningsskapande på museum [Artefacts, spaces, visitors. A study of meaning making in museums]*, Dissertation, Stockholm: Stockholm University.
- Kress, G. (2003) *Literacy in the new media age*, London: Routledge.
- (2010) *Multimodality. A social semiotic approach to contemporary education*, London: Routledge.
- Lindstrand, F. and Insulander, E. (2012) 'Setting the ground for engagement – multimodal perspectives on exhibition design'. *Designs for learning*, 5 (1-2) 30-49.
- Lanz, F. (2016) 'Staging migration in museums. A reflection on exhibition design practices for the representation of migration in European contemporary museums', *Museum and Society*, 14 (1) 178-192.
- Macdonald, S. (2003) 'Museums, national, postnational and transcultural identities'. *Museum and Society*, 1 (1) 1-16.
- Martin, J.R. and Stenglin, M. (2007) 'Materialising reconciliation: negotiating difference in a post-colonial exhibition'. In Royce, T. and Bowcher, W. (Eds.) *New directions in the analysis of multimodal discourse*, 215-38, Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Mason, R., Galani, A., Lloyd, K and Sayner, J. (2018) 'Experiencing mixed emotions in the museum. Empathy, affect, and memory in visitors' responses to histories of migration,' in Wetherell, M. and Campbell, G. (eds.) *Emotion, affective practices, and the past in the present*, 124-148. London and New York: Routledge.
- Naguib, S-A. (2015) 'Collecting Moments of Life. Museums and the Intangible Heritage of Migration', *Museum international*, 65 (1-4) 77-86.
- Pang, A. (2004) 'Making history from colony to nation: A multimodal analysis of a museum exhibition in Singapore,' in Kay O'Halloran (ed) *Multimodal discourse analysis*, 28-54, London: Continuum.
- Poels, K. (2011) 'Europe, Blurred: Migration, Margins and the Museum. Culture unbound', *Journal of Current Cultural Research*, 3 337-353.
- Schorch, P. (2015) 'Experiencing differences and negotiating prejudices at the Immigration Museum, Melbourne'. *International Journal of Heritage Studies*, 21 (1) 46-64.
- Selander, S. (2017) *Didaktiken efter Vygotskij. Design för lärande [Didactic science after Vygotskij. Design for learning]*, Stockholm: Liber.
- Selander, S. and Kress, G. (2010) *Design för lärande. Ett multimodalt perspektiv [Design for learning. A multimodal perspective]*, Stockholm: Norstedts.
- Stenglin, M. (2004) *Packaging curiosities: towards a grammar of three-dimensional space*, Dissertation, Sydney: University of Sydney.
- Sutherland, C. (2014) 'Leaving and longing: Migration museums as nation-building sites', *Museum and Society*, 12 (1) 118-131.
- Van Leeuwen, T. (2005) *Introducing social semiotics*, London: Routledge.

Welsch, W. (1999) 'Transculturality: The Puzzling Form of Cultures Today,' in Mike Featherstone and Scott Lash (eds) *Spaces of Culture: City, Nation, World*, 194–213, London: Sage Publications.

Whitcomb, A. (2013) 'Understanding the role of affect in producing a critical pedagogy for history museums,' *Museum Management and Curatorship*, 28 (3) 255–271.

Whitehead, C., Lloyd, K., Eckersley, S. and Mason, R. (eds.) (2015) *Museums, Migration and Identity in Europe. Peoples, Places and Identities*. Farnham: Ashgate.

*Eva Insulander, PhD, Senior Lecturer
Department of Education
Stockholm University
106 91 Stockholm,
Sweden

E-mail: eva.insulander@edu.su.se
Phone: +46-8-163601, +46-72-1474236

Eva Insulander holds a PhD in Education and is a senior lecturer at the Department of Education at Stockholm University. She is a member of the Multimodal Analysis of Interaction and Learning Research Group and section editor of the e-journal Designs for Learning. Her research focuses mostly on designs for learning, with an interest in social semiotics and multimodal analysis of educational communication, primarily in the context of museum and history education. She has been involved in several research projects focusing on museums as arenas for learning and communication.