

Antigone's diary – A Mobile Urban Drama, a Challenge to Performance Studies, and a Model for Democratic Decision Making.

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'Antigone has disappeared, but we found her diary. Join us in the search of her traces.' Sophocles' drama has been transferred from ancient Thebes to a contemporary suburb of Stockholm. Students at a local high school have recreated the classical tale in their own environment and their own language, guided by RATS Theatre's director Rebecca Forsberg. Originally a professional, independent theatre company performing in the north-western suburbs of Stockholm under the name of Kista Teater, the artistic director has been employed by the Department of Computer and System Science at Stockholm University since 2012. RATS stands for 'Research in Arts and Technology for Society, which is also the name of one of the department's priority research area. The company's work is nationally known (and has been seen internationally) and they are recognised for their expertise in digital performance.

Cellular phones are not prohibited in this theatrical enterprise, on the contrary, they constitute the event's particular means of communication. Whether you download an app onto your own phone or borrow a device from the organizers, what you will hear are the fragments of Antigone's diary. You will find sculptures, parks, kiosks and other places through the GPS and every time you approach the site for the performance's next scene, your phone lets you know when you are there. And every time you leave the place, Antigone will ask you a question: 'What makes you angry?' or 'When can one break the rules?'. You can answer the questions through text messages and once you have done so, you can see what other participants have answered before you.

How does it end? Haimon, Antigone's friend and lover, whispers into your ear: 'What does freedom mean to you?' It is up to us, the participants, to find appropriate responses to this eternal question.

This theatrical event, highly technified and transforming the audience into the production's primary agent, gives rise to a number of intricate questions. In this article, we begin by describing the production of *Antigone's Diary* as it appears to the participating audience. Issues that arise from the performance will then be discussed. Of particular interest is the collective process of creating this mobile piece of theatre as well as the actual responses of the participants. We will conclude the article by reflecting both on the theoretical implications of this multimedia performance and its outcome in terms of civic engagement and its potentials for public decision making.

Antigone's Diary in the suburb of Husby

Antigone's Diary takes place in Husby, a suburban area north-west of Stockholm. The subway ride from the city centre takes almost half an hour. In May 2013, Husby came to international attention as a result of a week of riots: young men roamed the streets and burned cars, threw stones at the police and shattered shop windows. These riots were reported world-wide and frequently compared to the outbursts of violence in the suburbs of Paris in 2005 and 2007. The unrest in Husby had ostensibly been attributed to local indignation following the police's murder of a 69-year old man. As is often the case in such incidents, the reasons are much more intricate.

Husby was developed and built by the Stockholm City Council in the early 1970s and the first tenants moved in around 1974. The subway station was opened in 1977. At the time of writing this (2013), about 12,000 people currently live there, and of these 83% are immigrants or the children of immigrants. The suburb contains two elementary schools, one school for the upper grades of the compulsory school system, a library, a sports hall and an ice-hockey hall as well as a very popular indoor aqua park (with swimming pool, wave machine and water slides). High unemployment and low education have turned Husby into an immigrant ghetto. This picture is enhanced by Husby's proximity to another suburb of a very different kind: Kista.

Kista might be described as the Silicon Valley of Swedish computer engineering: it features a conglomerate of world-known technological industries, such as Ericsson, IBM and Microsoft, as well as more than 1,000 businesses and incubators working within the area of computer and system development. The computer departments of Stockholm University and of the Royal Institute of Technology are

located there. About 25,000 employees and thousands of students work in Kista. The social standard of this suburb becomes obvious when one arrives by subway and has to pass through *Kista Galleria*, a large shopping mall featuring a significant number of fashionable global brands.

Husby may be the next stop after Kista on the subway's blue line, with only a field separating the two locations. They are, however, in many ways, a whole world apart. Coming out of the subway in Husby, there is no shopping mall, but a rather narrow square with some private and public enterprises: a pizzeria, a kebab restaurant, an Asian grocers, a dry-cleaner, a pharmacy and a doctors' surgery, a day centre for aging Iranians, a public assembly hall. On the square and the adjoining streets, women of all ages go about their business, wearing shawls and niqabs, while groups of men sit on some of the benches chatting in the sun.

The performance of *Antigone's Diary* always begins right in the middle of Husby's central square, where a little podium with some odd posters marks the place where the audience gathers. Some of the spectators come from the subway, but most members of the audience are teenagers from the local schools who have been especially invited to be part of the piece. (Photo no. 1) Although these youngsters instinctively know how to download the application they are told they need for this production, many prefer to use the mobile-phones that are provided by the producer: they have split earphones so that two participants can share one phone and thus share the experience, which often seems preferable to most of the school-age children who participate in the production. Whenever the participants are ready, they push their start button and the performance begins. The voices that the 'spectators' hear are pre-recorded by professional actors, who are not present at the scene. The participants have to imagine the characters — what they look like, what they are wearing and their behaviour implies — according to the expressive signs of the sound track. After a short prologue that invites them to join in the search for Antigone, the first scene plays around the podium in the square. Now, the participants hear the voice of a guard who urges both Antigone and the 'ancient' chorus who are also present through the headphone to remove the sculpture on the podium. Most of the young members of the audience – usually about 30 participants at any one time – probably know little or nothing about the myth of Antigone, so they take in all the fictional information they hear on their mobile-phones. The imagined characters of the play are said to have no permission to build anything on the square, but they maintain their right to support

Antigone's idea of beautifying their suburb. The chorus gets angry about the guard's stubbornness and Antigone asks the participants 'What makes you angry?' Now the display of the mobile-phone opens for a text message that can be sent in response to the question. This opportunity is much welcomed, especially by the young participants who immediately tap in their comments. Those who share the phone try to agree on what their message should be. As soon as the text has been sent, the participants can scroll the responses of other members of the audience, including those from earlier performances. Thus the collective answers to the question become part of the information that the performance transmits.

Meanwhile the participants move to the second performance space – some manage to write while they are walking – following the GPS map on their display. On the one hand, the group walks in a collective movement, but on the other hand each participant or group of participants choose their own pace. (Photo no. 2) As they walk they listen to music and only when they arrive at the designated location does scene number two start in their earphones. This second scene is located at the schoolyard and the recording they hear imitates the loudspeaker voice of a headmaster, but in the play it is Creon who speaks. He addresses the citizens of Thebes, friends and students, and tells them that Eteocles has been buried and that Polynieces will remain unburied to be eaten by dogs and birds. Sophocles' tragedy remains present in this contemporary narrative. Whoever defies this order will be condemned to death. Antigone is upset and her voice in the earphones asks the participants 'When is it permissible to refuse an order?'

Scene number three plays in the bedroom of Antigone's stepmother Eurydice, the wife of Creon. This time the outdoor location has little to do with the fictional environment. A concrete wall has been roughly painted so that a window might be pictured, but the listeners need to use their imaginations to picture this scene. (Photo no. 3) Antigone's stepmother is asleep and not willing to engage in Antigone's worries about the unburied Polynieces. The question she asks the participants is: 'When do you feel lonely?'

The fictional bus stop where scene four takes place and the Cultural Centre of scene five will have to be imagined by the listeners because at that point they are walking on a nondescript path within Husby's housing estates. In scene six, when Antigone buries her brother and speaks to the dead body in a moving monologue, the group has come to a park, where some roughly hewn stones with inscriptions actually

evoke a graveyard. In the following scene Antigone meets Haimon in a shopping mall, here played outside a grocery shop. As with several other locations, only some colourful stripes hanging from a rope between lamp-posts point to this as the place of the scene. In scene nine the chorus fuses lines from Sophocles' play with descriptions of the local environment. Antigone responds with a significant question: whether Husby subway station is the first or the last stop on the blue line. In the next fictional scene Antigone is taken by the police and pushed into a police car. When a crowd approaches the car, the officers notice a fire in a parking lot.¹ They decide to take Antigone to a disused subway station – the grave, in which Sophocles' Antigone is buried alive. For local participants the nameless, disused station is a recognisable referent, a place of fear and to be avoided. For the participants, the conjuring of this station creates a palpable sense of the horror of Antigone's fate.

The twelfth and final scene brings the scattered group back to the square. (Photo no. 4) The listeners hear mass protesters shouting in Arabic – using recordings from the events in Cairo's Tahrir Square in 2012 – demanding the end of Mubarak's dictatorship. Haimon whispers the last question about what freedom means to each individual participant. The responses to this question stretch from simple statements such as 'summer vacation' over 'democracy' and 'justice and equality' to quoting Janis Joplin's famous 'freedom is just another word for nothing left to lose.'

The creative process

Since its premiere in 2011, *Antigone's Diary* has been performed over 50 times in Husby. More than half of the performances were arranged for classes of local school children, but teenagers also participated also in performances which were targeted at a more general public. Some performances were part of a cultural festival initiated by the City Council of Stockholm. Since attendance at the performances is not dependent on ticket sales, the total the number of participants can only be estimated: approximately 1,200 up to and including the autumn of 2013. Having attended many of these performances, it strikes us as observers how closely the audience groups focused on the performance while they walking through the rather dull and largely

¹ This sounds indeed prophetic in the light of the later riots. *Antigone's Diary* premiered more than two years before the events in May 2013.

identical housing areas of this suburb. This is not only true of experienced theatregoers, but also the groups of teenagers from the nearby schools who followed the delineated path from scene to scene, focusing on the play through their earphones and regularly responding to the questions. This was made possible through the particular way in which this production was devised.

The artistic director of RATS Theatre, Rebecca Forsberg, was fascinated by Sophocles's drama and its basic conflict between state authority and individual responsibility. This classical tragedy has been revived many times and in particular during or after periods of political crises. The play's productions in post-War Europe are well documented, further inspiring such dramatists as Bertolt Brecht and Jean Anouilh to write their own versions of the play.² Rebecca Forsberg was convinced that *Antigone* would speak to the youngsters of Husby, provided that she could find a language that communicated with young people in a mixed suburban community. In order to achieve this, Forsberg opted to collaborate closely with a group of teenagers living in Husby.

After an initial dramaturgical revision of Sophocles' play in the classical Swedish translation of the poet Hjalmar Gullberg – keeping the storyline intact, but localizing the environment – she met with ten schoolgirls aged 13 to 15. The girls who volunteered to participate in the project attended evening courses at a community-driven theatre organisation for young people. Over a period of three months they had twelve meetings, during which they discussed each scene in detail. Departing from Forsberg's version of the text, the girls discussed what each scene meant to them, how they could relate the story of *Antigone* to their own experiences and how this could be expressed in a language they could understand. After each encounter, Rebecca Forsberg rewrote the scenes they had talked about and returned to the next meeting with new texts that once again were tested and discussed. What initially had sounded strange and abstract to the girls became concrete and tangible. *Antigone* and her diary became part of their group, a character they could identify with.

The contact with this group of teenage girls was especially valuable for the development of the questions that concluded each scene. How did these 'readers' interpret the problems that *Antigone* met in these situations? The conflicts that arise

² See, for instance, Gary Chancellor, 'Hölderlin, Brecht, Anouilh: Three Versions of *Antigone*', *Orbis Litterarum* vol. 34/1 (1979), pp. 87-97.

out of each of the confrontations Antigone encounters were understood in an existential, moral and socially relevant way. Therefore, the questions were formulated in a language that these adolescents could identify with. Admittedly, audience members in their thirties and above confessed to us that the questions seemed a bit too general, rather pretentious and in a way impossible to answer. The girls' group, however, insisted on the wide format of topics that should be raised through the production and as the analysis of the responses will show, they were right. *Antigone's Diary* articulated conflicts that trouble youngsters during adolescence. It would most likely have been impossible to arrive at these problematisations, reduced to simple, straightforward questions, without the close and intimate collaboration between the artistic director and the group of girls living in Husby. When the new play script was completed, the voices were recorded by professional actors and a chorus of only three additional actors.

Another type of collaboration, just as concrete and constructive as the development of the script, concerned the physical locations of the walk. Johanna Gustafsson Fürst, a professional artist who specialises in sculpture, collaborated with the same group in order to decide on the exact route of the walk and the physical elements for each stop. The places where the various scenes would play should be marked by sculptures or other means of identification (Photo no. 5). At the same time, these indicators were not supposed to distract the attention too much from the natural environment of the suburb. The idea was to integrate the genuine architecture and other features of the quotidian experiences of the area's inhabitants into the performance. The sculptures would then provide recognizable points of orientation. During Easter week, when the schools were closed, a small number of dedicated classmates assisted the group of girls in painting and building the sets for each scene.

The reception of the performances

One would expect that an open-air event of this kind might trigger a dissolute atmosphere or else invite young people to act up, show off or use it as an opportunity to play around. Instead, the young participants focused meticulously on the performance (Photo nr. 6). The appearance of the audience groups in the streets created a sense of curiosity in the locals who stumbled on the event and a recognition

that something special was happening in the area – a public event with particular implications.

Manilla Ernst, a Master's student from the Centre of Children's Studies, carried out interviews with approximately fifty young participants, which confirmed the impressions of other observers along the walk. She followed seven of those performances which were especially arranged for pupils of local schools (Photo no. 7). Some of her conversations deserve to be quoted.³ In an interview with a class of 13-year old girls and boys, Ernst asked:

- Was it difficult to keep up your concentration?
- (unison) NO!

Girl 1: You heard music while walking, and the music was part of the performance...

Girl 2: ... and the distances were not so long; when you had answered the question, you had already arrived at the next stop.

Girl 1: We were longing to hear the next scene, how the story continued; it was very exciting.

[...]

Girl 3: In our class, you know, it is never quiet. NEVER!

Boy 1: ... chaos all the time...

Girl 4: Chaos all the time. But that day, all were quiet, only listened to what we heard. Answered questions. *Check this good question, check it, check it! Have you answered? What did you answer?* But when we otherwise make excursions, to museums or something ... always chaos!

A small group of 16-year old pupils who volunteered to be interviewed had the following conversation:

- When you go to a regular theatre and sit in the auditorium, then, as an audience, you are never part of the performance,
- No, exactly

³ Manilla Ernst, '...det var bättre än teater, vanlig teater.' - *En receptionsstudie av den unga publikens upplevelser av sin delaktighet i mobiltelefondramat Antigones dagbok*, ['This is better than theatre, regular theatre' – A reception study of the young audience's experience of participation in the mobile phone drama Antigones Diary], Master thesis at the Centre of Research in Children's Culture, Stockholm University 2014 (unpublished).

- No, you're not supposed to talk or say anything, you only watch...
- ... and you fall asleep!
- It's only for the eyes. This performance was everything. The body, thoughts – all involved. It was very good.

Also adult audiences expressed similar feelings about their experiences of the performance. A group of women who attended Swedish-language classes at a local community centre were surprised that they 'understood almost everything' of what they heard in their earphones and they were especially pleased by the shouting in Arabic in the last scene.

These enthusiastic reactions can most probably be directly related to the many revisions of the text that Rebecca Forsberg worked on together with the initial group of girls. The clarity of the spoken language allowed the production to be accessible to all age groups, including the local citizens whose command of Swedish is far from perfect. The impact of a fully understandable text as the basis for the communicative encounter with the performance cannot be overestimated. It is a significant feature of RATS Theatre's ambitions to interact with the inhabitants of a suburb that is marginalised from dominant cultural practices. In this respect, *Antigone's Diary* serves as a model for the dialogue between authorities and citizens, which will be further analyzed in the final section of this article.

As Manilla Ernst's interviews indicate, the movement through the suburb also contributed to the positive reactions of the youngsters. Several observations can be noted. Firstly, the participants were outdoors, moving about freely at their own pace. Secondly, they walked as a group, although scattered out along the various scenes. Instead of trotting along as an isolated individual, the participants had a sense of belonging, but without feeling any particular demands from the temporary community. A third observation concerns the environment through which the groups strolled. For those living there the view was familiar, but the story of Antigone affected their perception of the space and environment. In their imagination, this impoverished suburb became the place where intriguing and important things happened. Also for those who travelled here from the city of Stockholm, Husby was integrated into their understanding of this ancient myth – the narrative was taking

place in *this* particular suburb.⁴ The relation to Husby as the place of action was indeed tangible throughout the walk.

The seriousness with which the audiences encountered the performance is also very well expressed in the text messages that were sent off in response to the questions (Photo no. 8). Manilla Ernst has examined the content and character of all the 714 text messages that were sent in during the performances she observed. She divided the messages into five categories, of which the main category consisted of proper answers to the questions that were asked. No less than 617 or 86.4% of all the texts that were sent in were indeed reflections and responses to the questions that concluded each scene. Considering that a small number of messages were sent by mistake or otherwise unreadable and that some responses concerned the performance as such rather than a specific question, only about 5% remain for the category of making fun of the questions. But even the small percentage of participants who ridiculed the topics bothered to send text messages; this points to the fact that they were obviously listening to and engaging with the performance.

It is of course difficult to summarize the content of the answers. In the published Swedish book about *Antigone's Diary* containing the full text of the performance, the text messages are printed after each scene.⁵ It is striking how serious these responses are. The question after scene three – ‘When do you feel lonely?’ – might serve as example. A random list of answers reads like this: ‘when I am alone’ – ‘when one cannot meet the family’ – ‘in the evening’ – ‘when my dad leaves my bedroom’ – ‘at three o’clock at night, sometimes’ – ‘when nobody stands up for me’ – ‘when I am with a lot of other people and I only think of how little we share with each other’ – ‘when one is solo para siempre’ – ‘when someone you trusted betrays you’.

Since each participant also could scroll the responses of other people, these messages became part of the ‘manuscript’. Thus the audiences were not only interacting with the performance, they were also interacting with each other. Here the sense of a collective experience became manifest – collective also in the sense that the text messages were anonymous or at most tagged with a common first name (this is excluded in the published text). Again, the seriousness of the messages might have had an encouraging effect on the participants, their engagement and willingness to

⁴ Meanwhile the text has been translated into English and might very well be produced in a different location, but even then the performances will become specific to the performance environment.

⁵ *Antigones dagbok. Om ett drama i mobilen och staden* (Stockholm: Kista teater, Styx förlag 2012)

contribute with their own opinions. We would argue, therefore, *Antigone's Diary* provided experiential access to a theatrical event that carries theatre beyond the limits of the conventional co-presence that has dominated theatre and performance studies over the last two decades.

The theoretical challenges of *Antigone's Diary*

The paradigmatic assumption of co-presence implies that the performer and the spectator are in the same place at the same time. This means that an actor is only an actor when there is an audience present to watch him or her. In other words: the agent A and the beholder B form an inseparable unity in time and place. Theatre can only occur in the form of a performance and when the performance ends there is no longer any 'theatre'. This unity has been attributed ontological status, for example by Peggy Phelan in her book *Unmarked*, in which she claims that the disappearance of theatrical events positions theatre outside the media market.⁶ Theatrical performances are not reproducible. This *sine qua non* of theatre as an art form has been questioned by Philip Auslander who holds the opinion that theatre in the twentieth century already is contaminated by mediatisation. In *Liveness* he argues that there is no longer a dividing line between live and media.⁷ Erika Fischer-Lichte, again, maintains live performance (*Aufführung*) as the nucleus of theatre and refutes Auslander's mediatisation theory as exaggerated and imprecise in relation to the empirical examples he refers to.⁸ Whether one agrees with an ontological description of theatrical performances or sees theatre as part of a mediatised culture, the co-presence of performer and spectator maintains its place in theatre and performance theory.

In relation to *Antigone's Diary* two alternative options remain: firstly, it could be claimed that *Antigone's Diary* is not 'real theatre', i.e. this production does not qualify as a theatre event and therefore cannot be analyzed within the framework of Theatre and Performance Studies; or, secondly, that the paradigm of what constitutes 'theatre' is inadequate and needs to be revised and expanded in order to cover contemporary forms of digitalized theatrical performances.

⁶ Peggy Phelan, *Unmarked. The Politics of Performance* (London & New York: Routledge 1993).

⁷ Philip Auslander, *Liveness. Performance in a Mediatized Culture* (London & New York: Routledge 1999).

⁸ Erika Fischer-Lichte, *Ästhetik des Performativen* (Frankfurt/M: Suhrkamp 2004).

On way of proceeding with these questions is to look for another concept of theatrical events. Edward Scheer and Rosemary Klich offer such an alternative view in their book *Multimedia Performance*.⁹ In the introduction to this book, the authors state:

As advances in technology and science alter our perception of the world, so then do our perceptions of the world inform our art-making. While the pervasiveness of digital media has been viewed by some as posing a threat to the cultural value of theatre and the ideas of the ontology of performance, increasingly critical opinion in performance studies has moved to endorse the new aesthetics of performance.

[...]

Multimedia performance, as a medium that incorporates both real and virtual, live and mediatised elements, is in a unique position to explore and investigate the effect of extensive mediatisation on human sensory perception and subjectivity.

[...]

How do performers and artists respond to the technology-saturated consciousness of contemporary culture, and how do they employ media technologies to create live events relevant to and consistent with the aesthetic regimes of a mediatised society?

This question provokes Scheer and Klich into examining the mixture of elements and techniques that frequently characterize the many performances that serve as examples in their book. From this point of view, *Antigone's Diary* utilizes at least four techniques that can be easily distinguished:

1. Radio theatre as it has been heard since the 1920s, i.e. a pre-recorded sound track that in this case is received through the earphones of the mobile telephone.
2. Site-specific performance, a tradition within performance art that has been practiced at least since the 1960s, with the performance taking place in a particular location that adds a special value to the perception of the spectators.

⁹ Rosemary Klich & Edward Scheer, *Multimedia Performance* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan 2012), pp. 2-3.

3. Social media that provide the means for interactive engagement, as with text messages that are sent immediately during the performance and that also give access to the responses of other participants in a shared experience.
4. Movement as a constitutive element is integrated into the perception of the performance – the participants need to transport themselves to various locations to experience the drama through their earphones.

The combination of the traditional forms of radio drama in a site-specific environment with the technology of social media and a collectively moving audience creates a new, innovative experience, that none of these aesthetic traditions could have achieved on their own. This, we would argue, is the point that makes *Antigone's Diary* worthy of theoretical exploration.

Ever since Orson Welles's scary but fictional *War of the Worlds* in 1938 – conceptualized as a news program about an invasion of the earth by creatures from Mars – radio drama has been received through the listener's radio transmitter. The experience is that of sitting at home in your own environment, listening to the broadcast of a play. In the case of *Antigone's Diary*, the listeners are not in their homes, but had to visit a particular location – the suburb of Husby – and, even more so, an exact place in the suburb, where the broadcast can be received and heard. This creates a double exposure: on the one hand, the participant hears a traditional radio drama through the earphones of the mobile telephone, a dramatized version of Sophocles' drama; on the other hand, the broadcast is related to the specific environment of the suburb, where it can be heard: the quotidian sights of the surroundings together with the artificial sculptures constitute the milieu of the audible experience – they are integrated into the overall perception of the story that the listeners follow. In other words: it is a realtime experience in one's own environment that is shared with other participants.

While the participants are in a specific environment – and for many of them it is their own suburb – they also have the opportunity to engage interactively with the performance. The use of social media, inviting the participants to sending text messages during the performance, creates a sense of immediacy, a physical engagement, which is additionally enhanced by the walking tour. In other words: there is an imminent feeling of 'presence', despite the fact that the performers (or what theatre habitually sees as 'the actors') are absent, i.e. only heard through the earphones. Nevertheless, this sense of presence concerns both time (the ongoing

performance) and place (the suburban streets and squares where the performance is perceived).

The story on the radio makes the participants aware of the fictional character of the encounter. The listeners know that the tale of *Antigone's Diary* is fiction, a symbolic narrative from an earlier era. The interactive responses to Antigone's questions by means of text messages allow for an immersion into the fictional story here and now. At the same time, the messages offer an insight into other participants' reactions and thoughts about Antigone's disappearance. The personal encounter is expanded into a collective experience.

Antigone's Diary can be said to constitute a site-specific realtime event as a collective experience that invites the participants to an immersive involvement with the fictional plot. (Photo no. 9) This theoretical description of the event should not be misunderstood as a definition of multimedia performances. It points, however, to certain effects that can be expected from *Antigone's Diary*. Before elaborating upon the potential of these performances, some crucial conditions for such-like events should be considered: accessibility, comprehensibility and interactivity.

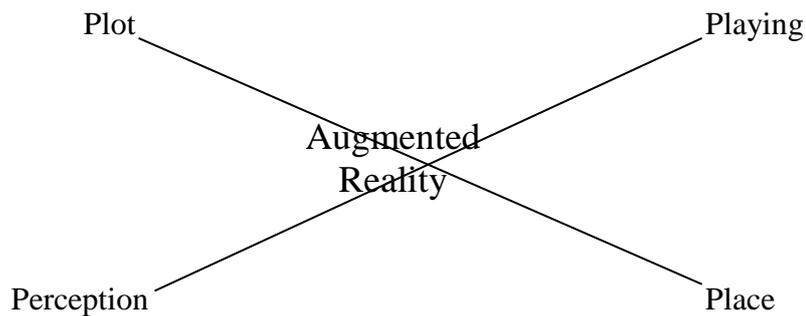
Accessibility signals that the performance takes place in the vicinity of the main target group, the youngsters of Husby. The location is next to the participating students' school playground and close to where they live. For more habitual theatre goers, this means a trip of half an hour from the centre of Stockholm and usually a confrontation with an environment that they are not familiar with – an evident difference to the experience of the local population.

Comprehensibility means that the language and the intellectual framing of the story are understandable for young audiences, due to the fact that they have been developed together with the target group. The questions that are asked during the performance are both comprehensible and stimulating for teenage participants. The responses show, as we indicated earlier, that the questions were taken seriously by the majority of the young participants.

Interactivity involves an active engagement with the plot and the existential problems emanating from it to provide a channel for participants through which they can react and respond to stimuli they are confronted with. Without the interactive options, young participants might well have dropped out of the performance, as was indicated in the interviews when pupils compared this performance with other

excursions organized by their schools. The use of social media offers a familiarising device through which to relate to this cultural experience.

Under the conditions of accessibility, comprehensibility and interactivity, a performance such as *Antigone's Diary* can offer complex interplay between plot and place as well as between playing and perception. These four elements can graphically be imagined in the following way:



The line between Plot and Place indicates the close relationship between the story of the radio drama that the participants hear while they are in this particular place, the suburb of Husby. We have described *Antigone's Diary* as a site-specific radio drama, which can be included as one of the many innovative concepts of multimedia performances. At the same time, the line between Playing (the walk in their own environment) and Perception (the option for interactive participation) marks the immersive qualities that are supported by the collective movements and the individual use of social media.

At the intersection of the two lines, i.e. at the point where the site-specific radio drama is meeting the moving and interactive participants, an effect can be observed that is best described as Augmented Reality. Lev Manovich distinguishes between Virtual Reality (VR) and Augmented Reality (AR) in the following way:

In the case of VR the user works on a virtual simulation, in the case of AR, she works on actual things in actual space. Because of this, a typical VR system presents a user with a virtual space that has nothing to do with that

user's immediate physical space; while, in contrast, a typical AR system adds information that is directly related to the user's immediate physical space.¹⁰

Augmented Reality directly affects the experience of one's physical environment, which certainly is the case in *Antigone's Diary*. But this is only one possible impact of this mobile performance. There are several other powerful elements that are likely to affect the participant in terms of an extended awareness, namely concerning the aesthetic potential of ancient myth and the existential conditions of human life. The plot of this tragedy has become comprehensible and it provides a particular, aesthetic pleasure to recognize one's own thoughts and reflections in a story that dates back over thousands of years. Today's listener becomes united with a historical heritage that for most of the youngsters in Husby lies far beyond their earlier experiences. They are confronted with the fact that conflicts between personal convictions and public acceptance have followed human societies throughout the ages. Such insights contribute to the experience of the immersive power of the performance.

The augmented aesthetic reality also points directly to the existential conditions that the inhabitants of Husby have lived through. The tension between individual desire and public authority are familiar issues in families who have arrived in Sweden as refugees or migrants and feel marginalized, displaced and uprooted. The seriousness of the text messages indicates that the existential foundation of the performance was felt and responded to.

Augmented Reality as the intersection of a radio drama in Husby that keeps the participants moving in the familiar environment and offers interactive participation, or in more general terms, Augmented Reality as effect of a complex interweaving of plot, place, playing and perception: this is what *Antigone's Diary*, we would argue, ultimately achieves.

Artistic methods in citizen interaction

Antigone's Diary was, as we mentioned at the beginning of this article, produced by RATS Theatre, a section of the Department of Computer and System Science at Stockholm University (DSV). Why does a university department with 250 employees,

¹⁰ Lev Manovich, *The Poetics of Augmented Space*, <http://www.manovich.com/DOCS/Augmented>, 2005, quoted from Klich & Scheer, *Multimedia Performance*, p. 207.

15 professors and more than 100 PhD students employ a theatre group? Even though the performances certainly provide aesthetic pleasure, no department in the contemporary age could afford the luxury of hiring artists just for entertainment reasons. As the acronym of the group indicates, they are engaged to undertake ‘research in arts and technology for society’ but it is worth asking precisely how experts in performance contribute to research in computer science.

DSV belongs to the Faculty of Social Sciences at Stockholm University and is generally more inclined towards exploring the relationship between humans and computers and other digital devices at various levels rather than the more formal aspects of computer science. Primary research areas include e-government – the applications of digital services in society – or e-learning, which includes the development of educational models utilising digital devices as well as other aspects of Human-Computer-Interaction (HCI). Situated in the middle of a hub of high-technology businesses on the one hand, and having Husby as the neighbouring community on the other hand, computer science moves constantly between technological advancements and social and political needs.

In this context, the development of e-democracy has had a special focus. Husby, as we have indicated earlier in this article, has been considered, not the least in the media’s coverage, as a ‘problematic’ suburb, neglecting the potential and activism of its multi-cultural inhabitants.

Indeed, the local population have displayed a degree of scepticism with regard to numerous kinds of reforms that have been initiated during recent years, not the least because these are considered to have been imposed on the citizens without a significant dialogue in advance. Here *Antigone’s Diary* has had an interesting function. It has been able to engage different groups of people and has, to a certain extent, changed the media image of Husby. Newspaper images of ethnic males presented as potentially dangerous ‘other’, have been replaced by attentive young women with headphones, listening to mobile theatre. So it is highly relevant to consider whether such modalities can be used for citizen communication on a broader setting, involving people whose voices are not often heard to any significant extent from a societal perspective. This is particularly interesting since deliberative forms of democracy in which citizens participate more actively in the planning and decision-making procedures are generally considered utopian. The prevailing formal processes give disproportional power to people having the means, time and opportunity to

participate in decision-making and negotiations. Naturally, this situation in effect undermines a reasonable concept of democracy; at DSV, a significant amount of researchers of the department have for several years been concerned with participatory decision-making, as well as with the processes around it. These researchers are interested in how decisions are shaped and how they ought to be shaped. In particular, they have examined the transparency in processes and in the underlying data as well as various systems of rules for decision-making and participation. The research group has undertaken a series of projects in order to try to understand how open regulatory systems and methods for arriving at decisions of public relevance can be created. They have worked with politicians, government agencies and their staff. Many have been well disposed towards the research while some have been negative. This is a difficult area – to understand why the perspectives are so narrow; what one could do to ameliorate the situation. In trying to understand this field one should probably start by asking what a decision actually is. Viewed abstractly, a decision is merely a concept. Concepts frequently designate a form and define how the form is used. In order to make form accessible in a specific context, it is necessary to study both the form and the context.

After all, this is all a matter of choice. We all seem to have a notion about individuality that we express in choices. And we can hardly choose to refrain from choosing, but an individual's own room for manoeuvre is always limited. A group naturally lends power to a decision that the individual often lacks. How are we to unite our professed individuality with more or less carefully considered concepts of collective choice mechanisms and power structures? Growing populations lead to different types of representations as well as to principles regulating relations, characteristics, agendas and participation. The collective aspect is of particular interest here, since people are not engaged to any significant extent and the actual empowerment, if there is one at all, tends to belong by a very small group, where a large proportion of the citizens are ignored.

In this context, it is worth noting that *Antigone's Diary* is all about decision-making. While Antigone herself is confronted with personal conflicts – with the ruler Creon, her sister Ismene, her lover Haimon – the performance does not stop at the fictional content. These conflicts are at the same time experienced by a collective of participants. The design of the performance with its interactive possibilities opens up for an immersive experience, which eventually implies access to an augmented

reality. If we return to Menovich's observations, quoted above, this means an experience 'that is directly related to the user's immediate physical space'. In terms of decision-making, experiences of augmented reality enhance the insight citizens can gain into questions that concern their physical environment, such as city planning or other far-reaching political strategies.

The concerns involved here are many, but everything circulates around how to design public process models and how these can be incorporated in high complexity decision-making, encompassing different points-of-view, different perspectives, multiple objectives, and multiple stakeholders using different methods for appraisals. In the public decision implementation, such a decision framework should furthermore allow for different groups of citizens providing their assessments of planning options using methods designed for different points-of-view. Typically in planning decisions, this includes environmental impact assessment methods such as life-cycle assessments, return-on-investment calculations, equality and ethical assessments as well as political ideology alignment made by necessity by decision-makers. So the step from participating in a theatre play might seem to be large, but the largest problem with participatory decision-making is inevitable — public involvement. There are platforms and methods that can provide adequate support for structuring, discussing and analysing decisions, but the main problems are not there.

A democratic process for participatory decision-making should be transparent, encouraging participation, and enabling a rational treatment of the information delivered through a multitude of participation channels. More specifically, the process must support formations of opinions and agendas and facilitate communication and mapping of interests among stakeholders. It must also contain means for modelling the interests, ideas, assessments, as well as attitudes of the citizens and support transparent decision evaluation, even when conflicting and/or diverging information prevail. (Photo no. 10)

Over the years, we have implemented such a transparent participatory communication and analysis in a Participatory Analytic Decision Model (PAD).¹¹ The analytical parts of this model are well covered by utilising decision analytical

¹¹ Karin Hansson, Göran Cars, Love Ekenberg and Mats Danielson, 'The importance of recognition for equal representation in participatory processes', *Footprint – Delft Architecture Theory Journal*, 13 (2013), 81-98.

methods.¹² Transparency here is crucial, covering everything from agenda setting, problem awareness to feasible courses of action via objectives formulations, alternative generation, consequence assessments, and trade-off clarification. The process carries the decision from problem awareness to a recommended course of action via objectives formulations, alternative generation and outcome assessments.

Also the elicitation from a technical viewpoint is quite unproblematic.¹³ However, the real issue is how to avoid widening the gap between different groups when various participatory methods and regulations seem to fail significantly in many cases.

How can *Antigone's Diary* contribute to this intricate elicitation, modelling and development of e-democracy? First and foremost this concerns the public interaction in the Participatory Analytic Decision or PAD Model. The performance shows how such interaction can be organized and also points out the conditions, under which the interaction can become successful. The creative process that has been invested in *Antigone's Diary* became a crucial prerequisite for the interaction potential of the performance. The clear, intelligible plot enhanced the communication, while the perceived lack of comprehensibility of the problems at hand is something that forcefully prevents active participation in decision-making processes. City planning is a typical example: The ground plans and blueprints are difficult to understand for most people and the terminology used to explain such documents is of such a technical character that only experts tend to understand them. In this situation, a significant proportion of people who are concerned or likely to be affected by the proposed plans are largely excluded from the public discourse.

¹² See Mats Danielson, Love Ekenberg, Jim Idefeldt and Aron Larsson, 'Using a Software Tool for Public Decision Analysis – the Case of Nacka Municipality', *Decision Analysis*, 4.2 (2007), 76–90; and Mats Danielson, Love Ekenberg, Anders Ekengren, Torsten Hökby and Jan Lidén, 'Decision Process Support for Participatory Democracy', *Journal of Multi-Criteria Decision Analysis*, 15.1–2 (2008), 15–30.

¹³ See Mats Danielson, Love Ekenberg, Aron Larsson and Mona Riabacke, 'Weighting Under Ambiguous Preferences and Imprecise Differences in a Cardinal Rank Ordering Process', *International Journal of Computational Intelligence Systems*, 7,1 (2014), 105–12; Mats Danielson, Love Ekenberg and Ying He, 'Augmenting Ordinal Methods of Attribute Weight Approximation', *Decision Analysis*, 7.1, (forthcoming); Aron Larsson, Mona Riabacke, Mats Danielson and Love Ekenberg, 'Cardinal and Rank Ordering of Criteria – Addressing Prescription within Weight Elicitation', *International Journal of Information Technology & Decision Making*, *International Journal of Information Technology & Decision Making* (forthcoming); and Mona Riabacke, Mats Danielson and Love Ekenberg, 'State-Of-The-Art in Prescriptive Weight Elicitation', *Advances in Decision Sciences*, Hindawi Publishing Corporation, *Advances in Decision Sciences*, Volume 2012, Article ID 276584, 24 pages, 2012. doi:10.1155/2012/276584.

Despite not having a notion of pre-conceptive decision theory, *Antigone's Diary* skilfully pointed out the importance of place, where city planning can serve as an obvious example. Often the plans are exhibited in the official locations that the authorities are based in instead of bringing the exhibition to the population likely to be affected by these changes. The accessibility in terms of the location that is part of the stakeholders' own environment is as essential for city planning as it was for the drama of Antigone. Furthermore, guiding the participants to the exact locations which are the objects of the public discussions, creates not only a virtual engagement but becomes the playground for practical involvement. The movement through places, especially in collective groups, enhances the participatory potential. Participation becomes a kind of playful way of engaging with serious issues. In addition, the social media allow participants to instantly give expression to their perception.

Applied to the example of city planning the advantages are obvious: the authorities need to create materials that are comprehensible also for laymen, i.e. they have to be developed with the citizens *who* are affected by what is proposed. The forms of presentation need to be accessible in the places *where* they are to be implemented. The interaction with the citizens has to take place *while* they are engaged in the questions at hand. The involvement has to be formatted so that the citizens feel *that* they are concerned. In the case of city planning, the experiences of *Antigone's Diary* can almost be literally transformed into a model of public decision-making. Other public decision-making might require other elaborate analyses of the principles of public participatory processes.

The model of Augmented Reality as the intersection between Plot and Place on the one hand, and the relationship between Playing and Perception on the other hand, can serve as an analytical tool for the Participatory Analytic Decision Model. In particular this concerns the discursive and the public interaction layers which are dependent on the interest and willingness of various stakeholders to become involved. *Antigone's Diary* illustrates a number of pertinent points about the issue of community involvement that have implications for the ways in which participation (on both a theoretical and practical level) can be considered by those working with these communities or supposedly representing their 'interests'

Epilogue: *On My Street*

After the riots in Husby in May 2013, Rebecca Forsberg wrote a piece for the local community, in which she re-used the characters from *Antigone* and her family, inspired by reports and discussions in the Swedish press. Again, *Antigone* was in a precarious situation, struggling with her mother who wanted to keep her off the streets, while *Antigone* sought to keep her friends away from burning cars. Creon represented the authorities who blamed the situation on unemployment and a low level of education among the rioting youngsters rather than seeing the wider causes of societal inequality. The play was called *On My Street* and was performed as a reading in June 2013 in the assembly hall in Husby, accompanied by a chamber orchestra.

In the play *On My Street*, *Antigone*'s mother is horrified by the violence in the streets, reminding her of the terrors of Beirut, Bagdad or Bengal, from where she recently escaped. Husby should not – must not – turn into another place of meaningless social and political eruptions. *Antigone* fights to stop the fighting of her brothers, their destructive actions of throwing stones and burning cars. She tries to convince them that democratic participation in decision making is a better alternative. The performance attracted a large and varied local audience. The spectators listened carefully to the dialogue. Their long applause indicated that theatrical presentations mattered to the community, in times of crisis as well as in the longer perspective.

The next step in the development of the *Antigone* theme is to project the images of the play onto the facades of the houses surrounding Husby's central square. There the inhabitants of the suburb can watch *On My Street* without having to attend a formal theatrical performance. Hopefully, they will get involved in the arguments while pursuing their daily business, realizing that the struggle for democratic involvement is an ongoing process and that they – the stakeholders of this suburb – are invited and urged to participate in the discussions of their future physical, social and mental environment. *On My Street* brings the people of Husby back to the square where *Antigone's Diary* started. Building a bridge between arts, daily life and politics needs many hands and technologies, and everyone who wants to cross this bridge can participate in its construction.



Photo 1: Beginning: the sculpture at Husby Square



Photo 2: Participants walking to the next scene



Photo 3: The bedroom of Antigone's stepmother



Photo 4: The last scene: Back at Husby Square



Photo 5: The sculpture indicating scene 11: entrance to the subway station



Photo 6: A local resident wondering what these visitors are doing in his suburb



Photo 7: Teenagers listening to the story



Photo 8: Young participants reading messages



Photo 9: Listening school kids from Husby



Photo 10: The neighbouring Kista Science Tower – fully visible from Husby