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Operations of dialogue

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Abstract Proposal Paper to be Read at the General Conference

Title: Operations of Dialogue

This paper will critique my practical research which involves the construction of performance strategies informed by Habermas's theories of communicative action. Central to the concept of communicative action is the insistence that active political debate should no longer reside with politicians alone but should actively shift to the public sphere. In my practice as research I have been actively engaged in creating and critiquing performance making processes through which performer/participants engage in a series of dialogues with experts and interested parties associated with specific political and/or social concerns. The performer/participants also engage in dialogues with each other which are recorded and used as instructive tools during the process and then later, in the final performance, sections are re-enacted in order to chart the performer/participants journey in terms of changes in both political perspective and developments in dialogue conduct. Habermas argues that communicative action is a fundamental vehicle for social change in terms of its ability to achieve consensus and understanding between participants who are possibly from different backgrounds and with different vested interests. Unsurprisingly Habermas has been criticised for the idealised nature of this concept. This paper discusses how communicative action offers the theatre practitioner a new vocabulary for the making and understanding of political theatre.