

In Dialogue with Society

Democratic Engagement Through Theatre

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<p>Abstract</p> <p>This research project explores how theatre can contribute to democratic engagement. The starting point was artistic probes investigating aspects of democracy: participation, deliberation and inclusion. The probes resulted in three productions presented at theatre institutions in Sweden. In <i>Skapa Demokrati</i> (Creating Democracy), participation was promoted by encouraging the audience members to create a democracy together. The performance thus allowed participants to experience a democratic process by actively engaging in the making of a constitution. In <i>Öva Demokrati</i> (Practicing Democracy), deliberation was in focus. The performance allowed the audience to deliberate on suggestions for strengthening Swedish democracy. Through methods inspired by political science, the audience was invited to speak and listen to arguments for the different proposals. In the performance, they were also presented with a variety of ways of voting to illustrate how different electoral systems can encourage engagement and give minorities a chance to be heard. In <i>Monument</i>, different strategies were used to promote inclusion. The project started with the idea that monuments say something about society. The monuments were used as vehicles to include voices from the residents of Helsingborg. The artwork presented these different experiences through a multi-perspective script. Other outreach activities also helped enable inclusion. Narrative analysis for theatre was used to reflect on these probes, allowing for a deeper understanding of how performances were conceptualised and structured, and how they made meaning for the audience. Lastly, the performance <i>Ibsendekonstruktion II: Brand</i> was written and staged to reflect on how the research has changed the artistic practice. The research has resulted in strategies for inclusion and a novel theatre format, the conversational theatre, which encourages participation and deliberation. These outcomes provide the theatre with methods to be in dialogue with society.</p>	
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