I am a creative technologist and digital artist working at the intersection between art, documentary and social innovation. I conceive, design and implement creative communications projects which offer vulnerable communities a way to advocate for themselves.
Twenty years ago in Peru, over 300,000 women were surgically sterilised against their will as part of an insidious government policy. Indigenous, impoverished and lacking in education, their stories have historically been denied or ignored.

Quipu Project is a living documentary which centers around the connection between a free phone number and an online website. With this the women can use their own available technology to tell their stories in their own words.

The result is a powerful record of both their experience of government abuse and their ongoing search for justice.

Collaborators:

Rosmerie Lerner,
Maria Court
Bristol University
Helios Design Labs,
Various grassroots women’s organisations
The main innovation of Quipu Project, that of connecting a free phoneline to the Internet, began as an experiment in participatory documentary making and has since become a seminal case study in the field.

Co-designed during workshops with our team in Peru, callers are able to either record their own story or listen to the archive of stories recorded by others. Each testimony can be accessed with a personal number allowing participants to listen back to themselves, thereby practicing public speaking.

This method not only overcomes barriers of literacy, digital access and geography, but also provides the familiarity and intimacy of a phone call. Participants can speak in their own time and their own language to express themselves fully.

Spread across Peru in a series of physical workshops and national radio broadcasts, the project has connected many disparate activist groups, allowing them to hear the similarities in their experience and gain affirmation in their fight for justice.
The growing archive is housed online in an interface inspired by a pre-Incan communication device, the quipu. The pre-Incan artefact uses strings and knots to encode meaning, and so too does our virtual quipu with each string representing one person’s testimony, and its knots showing where particular themes are spoken.

The online audience are also able to record their own audio message in response to what has been heard, which is then made available on the phone-line.

The interactive design, built with Helios Design Labs, focuses on simplicity both mirroring the simplicity of the phoneline, and foregrounding the voices in our archive. After a short introductory film you can browse freely, or follow themed knots.

These curated paths highlight the scale of the sterilisation campaign and repetition of experience across those affected by it. The background visuals are abstract, but themed to match the atmosphere of sections of testimony.
The process of moderating, translating and subtitling the archive is managed by a custom built content management system as well as third party web platforms and required an international workflow including the help of many volunteer translators.

Co-created with two researchers at the University of Bristol the project is also designed as a research object with careful effort put into the preservation and integrity of first hand testimonies, and it’s publication into the British Library under an open license for use by other practitioners.

Since its online launch at IDFA 2015 the project has grown an international following and widespread recognition within the field of interactive documentary. It has been exhibited at film festivals internationally as well as temporarily installed in the Peru’s national museum of memory, LUM.

Key Achievements:
- Over 170 testimonies
- 70 audience responses
- Over 8 hours of audio material.
- Over 6 hours spent listening to other stories on the phoneline
- Successful crowdfunding campaign of £20,000
- Academic article by our researchers in Antipode
- Guardian commissioned short film by our co-directors.
- Nominet Trust 100 most inspiring social technology projects of 2015
- Chapter in “i-docs: evolving contemporary practice” by prolific documentary theorist Mandy Rose.
- Invitation to British Consulate in Peru.

Links:
- Guardian short film (2017) 20mins
- Interview with Esperanza Huayama on BBC Woman’s Hour (2017)
- Vice, Broadly Article (2016)
- BBC Radio Click (2015) 10mins
- REACT ‘Making Of’ (2013) 5mins
- Quipu Project blog
Has making drugs illegal done more harm than good? It’s time to talk about legalisation.

Anyone’s Child: Mexico is an interactive documentary which explores this controversial subject through the lens of Mexico where the ‘war on drugs’ has lead to the death or disappearance of well over 160,000 people in the last decade.

"THESE PLANTS HAVE ALWAYS BEEN AT OUR REACH"

Collaborators:
Transform Drug Policy Foundation, University of Bristol
Funded by the University of Bristol’s Brigstow Institute and working with Professor Matthew Brown – a co-creator of Quipu Project – the initial idea was to explore how we could adapt the methodology developed by Quipu into new contexts to tell other stories.

‘Anyone’s Child: Families for safer drug control’ is the public facing campaign from Transform Drug Policy Foundation, and NGO who advocate for the legalisation and regulation of drugs.

The aim of their campaign is to tell the human stories which illustrate the real harms of drug policy, and convey to the public some of the in depth research which informs their advocacy work.

Anyone’s Child: Mexico centers around four, character driven, interactive chapters each exploring a different aspect of the central theme.

The protagonists are drawn from Anyone’s Child existing network and have all been tragically affected by the excessive violence, corruption and criminality which has exploded under the war on drugs.

The main thread of the narrative is composed from extracts of audio interviews conducted over the phone. These are interspersed with contextual text, and against a background of collaged images and video, and the option of hearing experts speak about drug policy.
This approach allowed us to explore deeper personal narratives and convey the complexity of the topic, whilst foregrounding the human voices.

The visual assets were sourced from existing material created by partners and members of Anyone’s Child’s network as well as from the participants themselves.

The interactive design is a simple scroll based interface, leading the audience through a linear narrative and providing the means to curate the diverse material into a coherent framework.

In the second phase of the project we are opening the conversation across Mexico asking people to contribute their experience of life under the war on drugs.

Designed primarily for desktops and in English, the result has been well recieved and the university have further funded translation and ‘mobile friendly’ tweaks.
In 1947 the British partitioned India and created Pakistan and riggled the largest migration in human history as people tried to relocate along religious lines.

Between 10 to 12 million people were displaced.

In Home 1947, two-time academy award winning director Sharmeen Obaid-Chinoy seeks to document the experiences of mass migration and ask what does it mean to be at home?

The 1947 partition of India displaced between 10 to 12 million people, creating an overwhelming refugee crisis in the newly constituted territories.

Collaborators:
Sharmeen Obaid-Chinoy
Shanaz Gulzar
Mike Robbins
Manchester International Festival
The Home 1947 digital platform is a part of a larger documentary installation by film director Sharmeen Obaid-Chinoy and commissioned by the Manchester International Festival.

The digital platform was conceived to be both part of the exhibition as a ‘digital room’ as well as its online presence and a way for people to be involved remotely.

Having seen the success of Quipu’s method, Sharmeen and her team asked me to create a similar platform with phone numbers in Pakistan, India and the UK. Due to the short time scale I recruited the help of Mike Robbins, the creative director of Helios Design labs.

The design is composed of a series of ‘living photographs’ made either from slow moving videos, or still images reconstructed with code to give the perception of depth as the audience moves their phone.

The result is a dreamlike atmosphere, both nostalgic and haunting, which blends video, archive images and illustration to evoke the sense of memory.

The platform is designed ‘mobile first’ with the intent that it could be used in situ during the exhibition as well as from anywhere else in the in world.
History is written by the winners, but who are they? And what else were they besides winners?

Mapping Intercultural Conversations is a research project exploring the application of network analysis to historical texts.

Centering around three historical figures, important to Chilean Mapuche history, the project uses data to visualise their diverse social networks through time.

Collaborators:

Bristol University
Universidad Catolica De Chile
Centro De Estudios Interculturales e Indigenas.
This project is the prototype for an ongoing research project between researchers at Bristol University and the Catholic University of Chile.

Their goal was to use network analysis tools to explore the complex social networks behind historical figures, and how this complexity reveals and questions perceptions of national identity.

At the center of the project is a data set, drawn from primary source material, which details all of the events that three key historical figures were known to have attended. Under each event is listed all known attendees.

I worked with the historians to analyse the social networks that can be derived from the data, and how this could be explored by a high school audience.

We focused on building a simple visualisation tool that preserves links to the original source material in downloadable format.

This project has been presented to the Chilean department of education for further funding. The next phase will see an interactive narrative layer suitable for students and the general public, who will be able to suggest new additions to the data.
ALL WORK

Bringing Memories in from the Margins (2019)
Digital Consultant
Art’s and Humanities Research Council, Newton Fund

Thread - When Everything Falls Apart (2019)
Creative Technologist, Director, Writer
Daniella Raytchev

My Health Story (2018)
Creative Technologist, Designer
Guy’s & St Thomas’ Charity, Rosa Productions

Who Are We Project (2018)
Digital Consultant
Tate Exchange, Open University

Mapping Intercultural Conversations (2017)
Creative Technologist, Designer
University of Bristol

Creative Technologist
S. Obaid Chinoy, Manchester International Festival

Anyone’s Child: Mexico (2017-18)
Creative Technologist, Designer
Transform Drug Policy Foundation, Uni. of Bristol

Aurator (2016)
Back-end Dev, Audio Archive Consultant
Britt Wray & Nadja Oerlt / WISBY

Quipu Project (Sept 2013 – Jan 2018)
Creative Technologist, Technical Director
Tribeca New Media Fund, Arts and Humanities Resarch Council

Spin Cycle (2013)
Digital Arts Consultant
Emergency Exit Arts

Ur_Msg (2012)
Social Media Researcher, Creative Technologist
The Connections @ St Martins / Goldsmiths Uni.

TALKS / PRESENTATIONS

I regularly speak about my practice to students, academics and industry peers.

Madeira Film Festival (2018)
i-Docs symposium (2018)
British Consulate, Peru (2017)
Assoc. of Women Huancabamba, Peru (2017)
University of Westminster (2017)
Amnesty International Hq, London (2017)
Kings College London (2017)
Cambridge University (2016)
Queen Mary’s University, Belfast (2016)
National Film and Television School (2016)
i-Docs Symposium (2016)
Sheffield DocFest (2015)
i-Docs Symposium (2014)

CONSULTANCY

I provide workshops, consultancy and mentor fledgling projects in the field of participatory media and interactive documentary

Bringing Memories in from the Margins: Inclusive Transitional Justice and Creative Memory Processes for Reconciliation in Colombia (2018 – ongoing)
Barrel Stories (2018 – ongoing)
The Maltese Fisherman WT (2018 – ongoing)
London Arts and Humanities Partnership (2018)
Mapping Multilingualism and Digital Culture (2017)
Global Health Film Festival (2016)
Made – in development (2016)
Syrian Digital Journalists (2016)
Aurator (2016)
If-Lab (2016)
Mozfest (2016)
Mozfest (2014)

EDUCATION

Master’s Degree in Creating Social Media
Distinction (2012)
Centre for Creative and Social Technology
Goldsmiths, University of London

Bachelors Degree in Fine Art
Upper Second Class Honours (2009)
Central Saint Martins School of Art and Design
University of the Arts London