My interests are threefold in this chapter *Documentary as Co-creative Practice From Challenge for Change to Highrise: Kat Cizek in conversation with Mandy Rose* in i-docs ‘The evolving Practices of Interactive Documentary’.

- in documentary for social change
- in collaborative practice
- in interactive technology

I want to look forward into the future of documentary and think about how it might impact upon our approach to teaching, to begin to take the documentary paradigm into the 21st century.

### social change

Inspired by the Challenge for Change (1967 to the eighties) produced by the National Film Board of Canada hundreds of activist programmes in French and English were made. [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Challenge_for_Change](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Challenge_for_Change)

One particularly successful social initiative is known as the Fogo Island process where men from three different sectors on the Fogo Islands, “filmmaker Colin Low, community worker Fred Earle, and head of Memorial University’s Extension Service Donald Snowden worked from a shared vision”. The islanders were faced with resettlement by the government, but the collaboration engendered cohesion and a social project evolved to build a new fishing industry which still exits today - and a new era of growth has occurred too. An Inn has been built on Fogo - it is wholly a social business and it hosts the first cinema on Fogo and Fogo Island Arts have artists studios and residencies. [https://www.fogoislandinn.ca/between/fogo-process](https://www.fogoislandinn.ca/between/fogo-process)

It promoted participatory film and video involving non-filmmakers in the process and in determining the use and outcome of the film.

Director Katarina Sizek was recruited as artist in residence by NFB to reinvent the Challenge for Change programme (for 5 years) and which created the interactive documentary *Highrise* 2009 and since them has spurred related projects with many different partners - innovative use of archive, sound, poetry, interviews, music - the
extraordinary thing about it being in intent it seeks to “drive and participate social change rather than document it”. Obviously huge money is required to make projects of this caliber and technical refinement.

**HIGHRISE has generated many projects, including mixed media, interactive documentaries, mobile productions, live presentations, installations and films. Then the Universe Within examines people’s lives within highrises.**

http://highrise.nfb.ca/about/

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**- Collaborative practice**

Mandy Rose is one of the organisers of iDocs the Interactive Documentary conference that arose from the University of Western England, in Bristol, Associate Professor and Director of the Digital Cultures. The i-Docs website is one arm of the i-Docs project which is a research strand within the Digital Cultures Research Centre at UWE Bristol.

http://i-docs.org

She interviewed Katarina Sizek.

Co-creation: “a broad term that implies a thoughtful process which the intent to make quality media with partners instead of just about them, to make media as a media-maker together with people that aren’t media-makers: citizens, academics, professionals, technologists, organisations”.

Sizek

For me this chapter is inspirational, it’s led me to go back and see where the effect of the Challenge for Change programme has gone - in particular the Fogo Island Process which still sees ongoing transformation of remote community life - which before the film programme was divided and at risk of extinction.

I’m interested in the approach that the team takes as teachers in how we facilitate students toward their filmmaking outcomes. I believe that the students should be assisted in making the film that they want to make, regardless of type of film. For assessment
purposes of course it has to conform to certain parameters in regard to film length, quality and have supporting academic analysis with it.

Each of the team has their strengths and the CL steers the overall vision for the students and staff - but I’m inspired by the NFB aspiration to “drive and participate in social change rather than document it”. Of course not everyone wants to do this. The pressure is on to create work opportunities in the creative industries for students and University quality metrics include measuring employment prospects. However collaborative projects create innovation, and will be the foundation of student success in their working lives.

There are so many limitations on what can be achieved in four terms - and social participation in communities takes primarily an investment in time from both parties. But in particular the guiding principle will inform the nature of the collaboration:

Cizek:
At the beginning of a collaborator with a potential co-creator, I try to move the conversation away from “I’m making a film about you and your ideas’ to ‘We are making something together and we don’t know yet what it’ going to be. It involves your expertise, it involves my expertise, but I’m not pointing the camera at you”.

In the wider filmmaking economy in the last 10 years there’s been an intensification of the drive for young practitioners to be solo operators - in fact many students come to us from press / promotional organisations where they must produce everything on their own. However to develop their own authorship paradoxically they need to work collaboratively especially with contributors.

It is this relationship that will drive their work to be distinctive and to have impact.
- **in interactive technology**

Cizek “technology allows us to be collaborative in new ways”. “So co-creation come about in dialogue with the ethnology as the tools for collaboration change and evolve.”

Partner with organisations who have the technology i.e. the New York Times worked for the first time in partnership with the National Film Board of Canada - they worked with the multimedia team in NY with photographs submitted by the public. So work undertaken in various departments all had their part - archive, photography, rights and social media.

However it’s important to remember that these are big initiatives with big organisations who can invest in technology and in innovation - though Cizek refers to working with others who already have a structure and expertise and if I am to visualise it it looks like honeycomb structure expanding horizontally and vertically with other self standing structures / cells.

At Sheffield I saw that Google partnered with an Australian project *Belongings* that used bluetooth on individuals’ phones to control interaction with life size films of refugees to Australia, who discussed one object that they’d bought with them on their way.

It’s harder to innovate in technology without investment and easier to use existing technology and structures in new ways, rather than to develop it.

Yet using existing technologies within a shared vision across sectors can transform communities.