

<p><b>Institution: University of Roehampton</b></p>
<p><b>Unit of Assessment:</b> Panel D, UoA 36 Communication, Cultural and Media Studies</p>
<p><b>Title of case study:</b> Documentary Film Practice as Self-reflexive Interaction Between the Filmmaker and Marginalised Communities</p>
<p><b>1. Summary of the impact</b> (indicative maximum 100 words)</p> <p>The impact case study relates to two documentaries, <i>ABC Colombia</i> (2007) and <i>Home Sweet Home</i> (2012). Enrica Colusso’s practice-as-research exposes, challenges and critiques social structures and institutions, relations of power, oppression and resistance affecting marginalised communities. Her work prioritises the experience of ordinary people living in difficult times. Through the process of filming, screening and broadcasting of her documentaries, this work has had a direct impact upon the communities she films, on the organizations that support them, and on the audiences that view them. This work has an international reach, and significant impact in the following areas:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Shaping public discourse and enhancing understanding of complex issues surrounding disenfranchised and marginalised communities in Colombia and London.</li> <li>• Influencing and empowering local community action.</li> <li>• Informing and influencing policy debates around the impact of the drug trade in Colombia and the urban regeneration of the Elephant and Castle.</li> </ul>
<p><b>2. Underpinning research</b></p> <p>Enrica Colusso (Senior Lecturer, 2003 to date) has established a research commitment to a documentary practice in which the filming process, and subsequently the film-text, become a fertile space of encounter between the self and the world. The process is both a way of relating to and a negotiating with those involved: the maker, the people filmed and the audience. This is practice-as-research conceived as a cognitive and relational process, a way of creating models of subjectivity and fostering film’s transformational power and social impact with an end-goal that extends beyond the finished artefact. Colusso’s documentary practice puts at its centre the process of engaging and interacting with actuality, of mediating it through shooting, editing and screening.</p> <p><i>ABC Colombia</i> (2007) follows children in a one-classroom elementary school. It is an intimate portrait of a small rural community in an area entirely controlled by paramilitary forces, rendered through the eyes of the children who grow up there, and who are often forced into very difficult choices between picking coca leaves or joining the paramilitaries. The film follows the personal growth of the young protagonists in this problematic environment through an entire school year, exploring some of the realities that nurture and perpetuate the violence in Colombia from the cross perspectives of the children and the author. The film is narrated as a personal journey of discovery and inquiry by the author who, together with her Colombian husband, is building a home there. The parallel processes of filming and building entwine, functioning as a way of coming to terms with this complex reality that is at the same time a part of the author’s existence and utterly “other”.</p> <p>Colusso’s latest project <i>Home Sweet Home</i> (2012), explores a different community, among the most ethnically diverse and deprived areas in central London, The Elephant and Castle. Fifty-four months in the making (from conception to completion), <i>Home Sweet Home</i> interrogates the social, political, economic and aesthetic vision that informs a radical urban regeneration scheme. The documentary follows the people affected as well as the decision-makers behind the scenes of the massive regeneration scheme set to completely transform the borough. The film offers a complex, intimate narrative of urban and social change where conflicting visions and interests are at stake.</p> <p>Drawing on the extensive video archives (over 200 hours) created for <i>Home Sweet Home</i>, with other relevant data and archives, including content from the National Archives and the local Cuming Museum’s catalogue, <i>Ghost Town</i> is an interactive documentary that provides an opportunity for users to critically engage with its traces, to develop into active citizens capable of connecting, understanding and engaging with the complex modern urban space we inhabit, and</p>

ultimately empowering them to promote change and play an active role in society.

### 3. References to the research (indicative maximum of six references)

#### Films:

1. *ABC Colombia* (90mins, 2007). First broadcast by ARTE, September and October 2007 (France and Germany), it has had a wide distribution on television, in its video format, in DVD, and online, both within the academic and other contexts (third sector and community).
2. *Home Sweet Home* (90 mins, 2012). TV Transmission by ARTE (France and Germany) and distributed on DVD by Les Film d'Ici. REF2.
3. *Ghost Town*, interactive documentary (2013). REF2.

#### Indicators of Quality:

##### Grants:

- European Media Development Fund (*ABC Colombia* and *Home Sweet Home*).
- ARTE France, Channel 4, ITVS (US), Yle (Finland), PROCIREP (the French Société des producteurs de Cinéma et Télévision), CNC (Centre National de la Cinematographic, France) *ABC Colombia*).
- In September 2010 *Home Sweet Home* was commissioned by ARTE, to the sum of £135,000.
- CNC (Centre National de la Cinematographic, France) £ 42,000 (*Home Sweet Home*)
- September 2011 the Commission for support of creative television work of the PROCIREP granted a further £15,000 towards *Home Sweet Home*.

##### Awards:

*ABC Colombia* - Spirit Award for documentary at the Brooklyn International Film Festival; the Audience Award at the London Latin American Film festival; the Prix Media 2009 (*Documentary*) Fondation pour l'Enfance (France); the Youth Award and the Jury Award at Cimameriche Film Festival (2009).

##### Nominations:

*ABC Colombia* - Prix Italia; TV3 Award (la Corporación Catalana de radio y televisión - Corporació Catalana de Ràdio i Televisió – CCRTV) a platform for all productions covering the violation of human rights; 2008 Learning on Screen Award, BUFVC, UK, category: broadcast; The International Academy of Television Arts & Sciences selected *ABC Colombia* in the Documentary category for the 2008 International Emmy Awards competition.

*Home Sweet Home* – nominated for the Time Out Best City Film Award (June 2012).

### 4. Details of the impact (indicative maximum 750 words)

Colusso's practice as research - as exemplified across various formats and outlets including TV and documentary film, social media, academic publications and participation in various public forums - has led to enhanced audience awareness of the relationship between politics, hierarchies of power and resistance. Her work demonstrates extensive public engagement, reaching and impacting on social activists, opinion formers and policy makers, as well as the communities with which they collaborate.

#### **Reach:**

The reach of Colusso's research is evidenced by the range of international broadcasters and

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festivals that have showcased her work. In 2007 *ABC Colombia* was screened in France and Germany on ARTE and More 4 in the UK. Since 2008, it has been broadcast on Yle TV in Finland in May 2008 and PBS World in July 2008 in the USA as part of the 'Global Voices' series. The film has also been available online via amazon.com, Hulu, iTunes, and YouTube, with a total of 200,744 streams on this platform alone. *Home Sweet Home* was broadcast in France and Germany on ARTE TV on the 18<sup>th</sup> and 31<sup>st</sup> October 2012 respectively, and is also available in these countries as video on demand.

**Significance:**

In addition to high-profile broadcasts and online streaming, which has broadened public awareness of these issues, Colusso has screened *ABC Colombia* and *Home Sweet Home* to community audiences and to policy makers to influence change. This direct engagement with the communities affected and those who govern them has had a significant impact on both as evidenced in the following examples.

*Shaping public discourses and enhancing understanding of issues surrounding disenfranchised and marginalized communities:*

Organisations such as Children of the Andes and Justice for Colombia have benefited from public screenings of *ABC Colombia* which have increased awareness of the situation for children in Colombia, as well as by fundraising generated by the screenings of the film (for example, 16 November 2008 Latin American Film Festival). As Heidi Araque, Events Community Fundraiser for Children of the Andes (COTA), explains, the film helped "reach a number of people who were unaware of our work to support children at risk and to re-engage existing supporters, making them reflect on some of the obstacles that need to be overcome if Colombia is to be a more peaceful and secure country." Similarly, Eva Tarr-Kirkhope, Director of the London Latin American Film festival (LAFF), states that "COTA & LAFF see *ABC Colombia* as a great instrument to raise awareness about the situation of some of the most disadvantaged Colombians. Part of the proceeds of the night will go to the charity Children of the Andes."

Selections of Colusso's work-in-progress of *Home Sweet Home* were screened for a series of events exploring urban regeneration and the processes of social transformation in one of the most deprived areas of central London. These included her participation in *The Elephant in Time* (18<sup>th</sup> June 2009, organized by the British Film Institute). The event brought together architects, documentarists, historians and local residents to explore the past, present and future of this part of London, allowing for a multidisciplinary and lively debate on the reality of the regeneration and the role of media in documenting and critically representing change. Colusso also participated in the Open City/Design for London City Visions Exhibition (May 2010) which showcased her film-in-progress as part of the exhibition's closing event.

Since the film was completed in June 2012 it has been presented to various audiences in London: from the wider community at Open City Docs Film Festival to the local community (Tate Film Club, and Pembroke House screening organised by UrbanLab Films UCL and Open City Docs), to more specialized groups such as urbanists, architects and policy makers, facilitating open debate and discussion of the issues of urban regeneration. Audience feedback from *Home Sweet Home* screenings within local communities demonstrate that the film changed perception and raised awareness of the complexity of the issues affecting residents, as illustrated by the following examples:

*"I've realized there are many conflicting views coming from different realities"*

*"I am more conscious than ever to hear about how the people removed are coping in their new homes. I am more keen than ever to see the situation resolved"*

*Influencing and empowering local community action:*

The various constituencies who are the subject of - and participants in - these films are the ultimate

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beneficiaries of this practice-as-research, as the work enhances public and political awareness, which is forging new paths to social change.

For instance, after the filming of *ABC Colombia* a 17 year old participant decided (with the filmmaker's support) that he would not join the paramilitary after all. He is now living in Bogota, happily married and working. Similarly a local residents' participant and social activist can attest to *Home Sweet Home's* impact on local councils and decision makers, as well as its value as a 'truthful' and detailed record of the process and a work which challenges the clichés about people living in council estates, and its impact on both individuals and the community (source four).

As some of the viewers of both films have also stressed, one of the strengths of Colusso's work is the powerful voice they give to people who would otherwise not be heard. This has a significant impact on the people filmed, by fostering their sense of worth and self-awareness, and on the different constituencies and institutions responsible for addressing the root causes of the violence, as it provides invaluable access to the reality on the ground.

An indicator of the *significance* of this impact is evident from personal testimony by Oscar Teran, in a personal email to Colusso after watching *ABC Colombia* on 31 December 2010: "*Not only have you created a beautiful film but you have given a powerful voice to your subjects.*"

### *Informing & influencing policy:*

*ABC Colombia* was selected to be screened to members of the USA Congress examining Colombian paramilitary communities to inform votes on an aid bill (Hewlett Foundation Report 2008). Similarly, in October 2008 the film was selected to be shown in the Cultural Educational Film Symposium organised by the Independent Television Service (ITVS), the Naval Postgraduate School, the Defence Language Institute Foreign Language Centre and Monterrey Institute of International Studies. The purpose of the symposium and accompanying screening was to explore the use of documentary films to train future military and civilian leaders in cultural awareness and international affairs.

It was also screened at the Geneva Forum on Social Change organised by ITVS and Geneva University (June 2009) and was accompanied by a panel discussion in which Colusso was an invited panellist, which took place at USC and was streamed live in Geneva as part of this Forum. The forum focused on the use of documentary film as a tool for education, cultural diplomacy and policy making in international public affairs.

### **5. Sources to corroborate the impact** (indicative maximum of 10 references)

1. Producer and consultant; Head of Documentary Unit at ARTE France 1987/2008.
2. Events and Community Fundraiser – Children of the Andes: "ABC Colombia helped to illustrate, without simplifying or sensationalizing, some of the difficulties that many young people face in Colombia. It helped Children of the Andes to reach a number of people who were unaware of our work to support children at risk and to re-engage existing supporters, making them reflect on some of the obstacles that need to be overcome if Colombia is to be a more peaceful and secure country."
3. Director & Founder London Latin American Film Festival
4. Elephant & Castle local residents' participant and social activist
5. Southwark Council's Director of the Elephant & Castle Regeneration
6. Audience feedback collected at screenings of *Home Sweet Home* at the Tate Community Film Club on the 8<sup>th</sup> April 2013 and at Pembroke House on the 15<sup>th</sup> April 2013.