

# LIFE PROJECT REPORT

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**Project name (as stated on LIFE website): Southeast Asian Film Screening**

**Group name/number: -**

**Supervisor(s): Suphon Niamkamnoet, Withee Poositasai**

**Participants: Julija Matsak, Waleed Khalid, Prachi Devendra Sarmalkar, Anastassia Janovskaja**

## Background and description of the project

Southeast Asian countries are usually promoted as tourist attractions, showing only one side of the country offering beautiful nature, rich traditions, and exotic experiences. Our project aims to unmask those stereotypes of peaceful countries which are displayed internationally by the states, revealing the complexity of political and socio-cultural issues of Southeast Asian countries, especially of Thailand and Myanmar where people are suffering from the abuse of military authorities. Considering film as a medium to transmit the experience beyond boundaries, we hope that our project of screening films from Thailand and Myanmar will establish an understanding among the audience as well as shape their view toward Southeast Asian people. Regardless of race, gender, nationalities, and religion, we are all equal as humans. In opposing the oppression of the military states, we also would like to empower those artists who work in promoting the human rights movement, fighting for the freedom of expression in Thailand and Myanmar.

## Implementation of activities

To fulfill the goals of promoting the human rights movement and reconstructing the image of Thailand and Myanmar, we decided to organize a two-day screening event, depicting political films directed by Thai and Burmese filmmakers along with two talk sessions discussing the film. The reason that we decided to show films from both Myanmar and Thailand is that both countries counter similar controversy caused by the military states as well as the political situations in one country affecting one another. To cover the overall political scene of both countries and deliver our message effectively, we decided to put our selected films into programs; one focus on Myanmar, another focus on Thailand. Concerning that the program might be too long for the audience, we divided our event into two days two or three hours each. Watching political films might need some clarification about the contexts, so we consider adding talk sessions after film screenings as an opportunity for the audience to discuss and get more information about the films. At the end of the project, we will gather and publish all the information, filmmaker interviews, talk sessions, and film details as an archive for further education.

## Stakeholders of the project

1. **SEA directors and producers** - We cooperate with them to screen their film in our event. We help them gain recognition along with the issue they raised in the SEA region.
2. **BFM school, Tallinn University** - We cooperate with BFM school and their staff to use Nova cinema as a place to film the movies.
3. **Tallinn University Media** - We will cooperate with them for marketing our event to Tallinn university offline and online media channel.
4. **Scholars related to SEA studies** - We will invite them to the event discussion. They can provide an academic perspective for SEA issues related to the films screening in the event.
5. **Students and citizens in the SEA region** - We will invite them to the event discussion. They can provide personal experience as a citizen for SEA issues related to the films screening in the event.
6. **Estonian residence** - Main audience of the event. We will mainly focus asian studies students and people who reside in Tallinn.

## Basis of research

What we do in our project is use the method from Asian Cinema Education<sup>1</sup> as a guideline and gather information about films according to the usage. Festival Skills webinar provided by the Asian Cinema Education is one of the references in studying the organization and tasks of a film event. Apart from the practical skills, the site also provides methods of analyzing, talking, and writing about films which are very useful in our project. The research is divided into two parts; film research and context research. In the process of searching Southeast Asian films, we also research from the international film festivals and on the Facebook page of SEAFIC<sup>2</sup> which is the organization that promotes and provides news about SEA cinema. We also examine film review websites, for example, IMDB and MUBI, in order to get more information about the films. In the context of research that helps promote content and talk sessions, we will explore the news and discuss it with our mentor and student from Thailand and Myanmar.

## Interdisciplinarity

Regarding the problem of unmasking the image of Thailand and Myanmar as tourist attractions, first, our team needs to understand the political context of the mentioned countries. As we are from different countries and fields of studies, our team has different background knowledge about Thailand and Myanmar. In this process, we applied the method of film studies in order to analyze the film and the message of the directors. After providing teams of articles and documentaries about the political context in Thailand and Myanmar, we invited our team to watch films and discuss together and share our understanding of the films. According to our aim of raising awareness about the abuse of human rights in Thailand and Myanmar, we need to access as many audiences as possible. Therefore, market

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.piecsmakow.pl/education>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.facebook.com/seaficlab>

analysis is one of the important methods to identify our target. Although we know our target, we still need to work on how to convince our target audience where we need to think about marketing and event promotion. Apart from academic and practical knowledge, we also require technical skills in creating a website and video productions for the archive.

## Project results

In the beginning, we listed some potential films, watched them together, and made the decision about our film programs. Before we made the decision, we researched the socio-cultural context of Thailand and Myanmar from online articles and documentaries. We have agreed on our theme focusing on the violence against free speech by the military states and choices of films that are suitable enough to address the current situation of Thailand and Myanmar. As a result, we choose *Myanmar Diaries* (2022) and *Ferris Wheel* (2015) as program one to show the violence in Myanmar and its effect on Thailand. In program two, we will show *Mr.Zero* (2015) and *Red Aninsri* (2020) addressing the manipulation of the Thai state in controlling public opinion.

After the decision was finalized, we assigned roles to the team; contacting filmmakers, marketing and public relations, content creation, website creation, and visual design. Now, we got permission to screen 3 films and another film is in process. We planned to promote our events in two ways; online and offline. For online promotion, we will use the Facebook platform to communicate with the audience. We decided to communicate in English both on Facebook and a website of our event which will publish further details and archive the content related to the event. One of the content will be video interviews of filmmakers. The reason that we communicate in English is because all the films we have chosen provide only English subtitles. If we use Estonian or Russian in communicating, it may cause misunderstanding of audiences. In addition, we also see the possibility to promote our event on the TLU webpage and student newsletter as well as collaborate with local communities. For offline promotion, we planned to attach posters in public spaces, for example, at the university, in the old town, and in cafes.

In April, we were informed that one of the Burmese films, *Myanmar Diary* (2022), cannot participate in our screening due to specific circumstances. Therefore, we have to find two more short films, which are *Angry Folks* (2019) and *Letter to Letter to San Zaw Htway* (2021) to compensate for the time of our screening. We contacted the speakers from the Asian Studies, TLU School of Humanities, for our talk panel. One of the Thai panelists had to leave for Thailand on 21st of May, so we changed to screening the Thai program first on 20th May and the Burmese program later on 27th May.

There were some problems in the distribution process. For example, we printed out the posters already but we found later that there were some mistakes, so we have to edit and reprint it again. That makes our distribution start a little bit later than our plan. We created our own website, Facebook page, and Fienta event. We decided to use Fienta to organize and manage events, and to register for tickets. After everything was ready, we started our promotion by sending materials to the partner distributors, for example, Asian Studies Center in Tartu, Tallinn

University website and newsletters. Another obstacle occurred when one of our partners published our event only two days before the event date. However, the event still went well as there were 72 participating event registration in Fienta; 33 people in program one and 39 people in program two. The screening went perfectly without any disruption. According to the surveys, most of the participants were very satisfied with the screening; 82.4% are very satisfied and 17.6% are satisfied with the event.

## Conclusion

Although all the participants are from different countries and cultures, they talk to each other and exchange their experiences to learn and understand each other. It is films that create a space where we can share, understand, and feel empathy to each other beyond all boundaries of nations, cultures, races, and gender.



# LIFE ACTION PLAN

Activity and short description	Timeframe (which month)	Stakeholders	Person (name + study field) or team responsible
Phase I: Introduction <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Get to know team</li> <li>● Timeline planning</li> <li>● Film programming</li> </ul>	February	Team Members	<b>All members</b>
Phase II: Event preparation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Contact filmmaker and cinema</li> <li>● Contact partners promoting partners</li> <li>● Visual design</li> <li>● Contact speakers</li> <li>● Communication platform</li> <li>● Website creation</li> </ul>	March-May	Team Member Distribution Partners Filmmakers Speakers Tallinn University	<b>Prachi</b> (Literature, Visual Culture, and Film Studies)  <b>Julia</b> (Asian Studies)  <b>Waleed</b> (Open Society) <b>Suphon</b> (Literature, Visual Culture, and Film Studies) <b>Anastassia</b> (Modern European languages and cultures) <b>Withee</b> (Open Society)
Phase III: Event promotion <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Website creation</li> <li>● Facebook Distribution</li> <li>● Partner Distribution</li> <li>● Offline Distribution</li> </ul>	April-May	Team Member Distribution Partners	<b>Withee</b> (Open Society) <b>Anastassia</b> (Modern European languages and cultures) <b>Julia</b> (Asian Studies) <b>Prachi</b> (Literature, Visual Culture, and Film Studies) <b>Suphon</b> (Literature, Visual Culture, and Film Studies)
Phase IV: Day of event <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Moderator</li> <li>● Registration desk</li> <li>● Media controller</li> <li>● Photographer</li> <li>● Gatekeeper</li> </ul>	May	Team Member Distribution Partners Filmmakers Speakers Tallinn University	<b>Prachi</b> (Literature, Visual Culture, and Film Studies) <b>Anastassia</b> (Modern European languages and cultures) <b>Withee</b> (Open Society) <b>Julia</b> (Asian Studies) <b>Waleed</b> (Open Society)
Phase V: Archive and Feedback	May-June	Team Member Tallinn University	<b>All members</b>

# LIFE MEDIA COVERAGE

1. **Website:** <https://burmesethaifilmscreening.web.app/>

**BURMESE AND THAI  
FILM SCREENING**

20.05.22  
27.05.22  
SuperNova  
Cinema, TLU

Political short films by independent filmmakers under  
military regimes

Get FREE ticket

See the programs

**PROGRAM 1: THAILAND FOCUS**

Friday, May 20, 2022  
17:00-19:00  
@ SuperNova Cinema (NOVA Building 4th floor, Tallinn University)

**FILMS**

**PANELISTS**

Dr. Hellelaan Saksoom  
Faculty of Social Sciences  
Chiang Mai University

Sanna Kuumu  
Artist

Get FREE ticket

**PROGRAM 2: MYANMAR FOCUS**

Friday, May 27, 2022  
17:00-19:00  
@ SuperNova Cinema (NOVA Building 4th floor, Tallinn University)

**FILMS**

**Angry Folks (2019)**

A heart-warming film about two queer young protest singers who put their beliefs into music in order to help Myanmar's factory workers understand their rights - and fight for them.

Director: Aung Myat Myat

Country: Myanmar

Duration: 17 minutes

Watch Trailer

## 2. Facebook Page and Event: <https://www.facebook.com/Burmese-and-Thai-Film-Screening-107534211931969>

**BURMESE AND THAI FILM SCREENING**  
20.05.22  
27.05.22  
SuperNova Cinema, TLU  
Political short films by independent filmmakers under military regimes

**About** See all

- 1 Burmese and Thai Film Screening is a two-day program featuring five short films related to political issues in Myanmar and Thailand followed by discus... See more
- 1 SuperNova Cinema is located in the NOVA Building of Baltic Film, Media, Arts and Communication School of Tallinn University 4th floor, room N406 ht... See more

6 people like this, including 1 of your friends

7 people follow this

<https://burmesethaifilmscreening.web.app/>

Send message

suphonk@tlu.ee

Film

**Photos** See all

**Page transparency** See all

Facebook is showing information to help you better understand the purpose of a Page. See actions taken by the people who manage and post content.

Page created - 13 April 2022

**Add your business to Facebook**

Showcase your work, create ads and connect with customers or supporters.

Create Page

**Create Post**

Photo/video Check In Tag friends

**Burmese and Thai Film Screening**  
29 May at 19:36 · 🌐

Thank you all for coming! And don't forget to fill our survey🙏  
[https://docs.google.com/\\_/1FAIpQLSdNii5RzYn9.../viewform](https://docs.google.com/_/1FAIpQLSdNii5RzYn9.../viewform)

**Burmese and Thai Film Screening**  
25 May at 00:06 · 🌐

Angry Folks (2019), Myanmar  
Director: Aung Htet Myet  
Duration: 17 min... See more

YANGON FILM SCHOOL PRESENTS  
ပြည်သူ့အသံများကို ဖြောင့်မတ်စွာ  
Up the workers in Myanmar!

WITH KYAW ZIN LIN, AUNG THALING DO  
PRODUCED BY AUNGCHIT MYET  
COPROD BY HTUN TAU KADE THAI, HENRY YANONKE MYO  
COPROD BY MYAT ME AYE, IT THIN ZIN AUNG  
EDITING MYAT ME AUNG, MELANIE SANFORD, AUNG MYANMAR  
PRODUCED BY LINDSEY HERRINGTON  
THANKS TO SHIN THANT & ACTION LABOUR RIGHTS

**BURMESE AND THAI FILM SCREENING**  
20.05.22  
27.05.22  
SuperNova Cinema, TLU  
Political short films by independent filmmakers under military regimes

20 MAY – 27 MAY

**Burmese and Thai Film Screening**  
Supernova Cinema

+11 people reached in the last seven days

Manage

7 days

Event by Burmese and Thai Film Screening

Supernova Cinema  
Narva mnt 27, 10120 Tallinn, Harju County, Estonia

Public · Anyone on or off Facebook

About Discussion

**What to expect**

20.05.2022 and 27.05.2022  
Burmese and Thai Film Screening

at Supernova Cinema, (NOVA Building 4th floor, Tallinn University)

\*The door open 15 minutes before the screenings.

In Southeast Asian military-led states of Thailand and Myanmar, the authorities violate h...see more

3. **Fienta:** <https://fienta.com/burmese-thai-film-screening>

fienta

# BURMESE AND THAI FILM SCREENING

20.05.22  
27.05.22  
SuperNova  
Cinema, TLU



## Burmese and Thai Film Screening

🕒 Fri 27. May 2022 at 17:00 – 19:00  
please arrive 15 minutes before the screenings.

📍 SuperNova kino • Narva maantee 27, 10120 Tallinn, Harju maakond

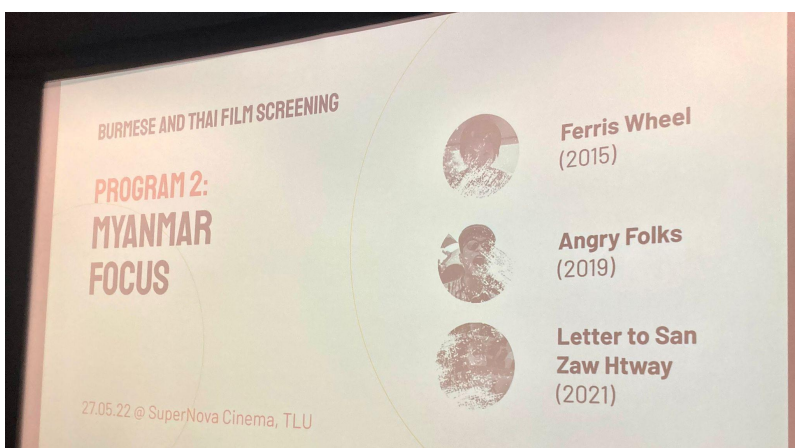
Online ticket sales has ended.

\* Limited seats\*

In Southeast Asian military-led states of Thailand and Myanmar, the authorities violate human rights and attempt to control the communication and media in order to maintain their power. Under the strict censorship and restrictions, independent filmmakers have sought ways to raise people's voices, addressing the grave political issues of the day.



## Photos from the event



# LIFE SELF-REFLECTIVE REPORT

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## Prachi Sarmalkar

I joined this project with the expectations of learning how the process of curating films and arranging film screenings or festival go. As an avid cinema-goer, the curiosity to peek behind-the-scenes provoked me to join this project.

My role in the team was that of the communication manager. Being a group of 4 under 2 supervisors, my responsibility entailed communicating with required persons, via emails, like BFM cinema, film productions, film schools for the distribution and screening of the films. The supervisors made it clear that we were all on the same level and that there were no hierarchies in the group.

The few wrinkles I experience in my work were getting no response or having two film schools agree to give their films which hindered with our final arrangement planning yet, whenever our team met in the week on zoom or on our mutual WhatsApp group discussion, helped me resolve these very smoothly. In future, I would try not to rush with things in the fear of being late.

Two of the four team members contributed more than others as even after repeatedly telling one group member, we saw no fruition of their tasks and the other group member's work was too basic or not up to mark; yet the supervisors seemed to avoid confessing that either because of repeatedly doing so and getting no result, or because the supervisors wanted to avoid unnecessary conflict in the group. However, they were very kind supervisors who took into consideration others view.

During the project, I learned of myself a lot as a part of a group. I learnt that I'm capable of handling complicated situations and that to work as a group, means to let go and work together for the smooth execution of the final project. I learnt about what it takes to curate the films, panellists etc., It was inspiring to learn through the experience, the power of such screenings in raising awareness about politics in distant lands.

I would recommend the supervisors to have difficult conversations with the group members rather than just taking all tasks on their own head as by the end, it was really disheartening to see one of the supervisor take

all responsibility on her head, with lack of response which lead to me feeling that, maybe, I made a mistake that the said supervisor was avoiding confronting me with. Other than that it was an absolutely delightful experience.

## Julija Matsak

### **Introduction** *Why did you join the project? What were your expectations?*

Because I wanted to participate in a project that is Asian study related. My expectations were to gain more insight into Southeast politics and cultures.

### **Team, roles and my contribution** *Describe your role in the team. How did the group dynamic and collaboration work? If you experienced conflicts then how did you solve them in your group? How would you evaluate your and your team members contribution? Why did such group dynamic form?*

My main tasks were to make sure the communication and information distribution between our targeted audience were clear and understood. I took the initiative to set up meetings with the University of Tartu Asia Center and the Confucius Institute in Tallinn University. I also had spoken on the phone with marketing and student body people from our university and onboarded them with instructions on how to advertise our event. The plan was to share posts and posters, also send out informative newsletters both in English and Estonian to spread the news. I would say my part in the team was mostly the negotiator's role between different parties in order to make the communication better. I also did some content writing for the posts at least in the beginning and made some summaries of films in order to have a brief overview of the films. Overall I would say our project was well organized and people always had something to do and contribute. Weekly meetings help people stay on track and shift tasks if needed.

### **Personal development** *What did you learn whilst doing the project (specifically related to your activities)? Which experiences were the most important ones? What were the difficulties and victories? What would you do differently in the future?*

I learned more about Burma and Thailand politics and military regimes. Since I am interested in politics and also social movements regarding human rights it was a good experience to be part of the project. Difficulties were to get the movie screening rights, communication with long distant partners. Victories were when we finally could close the screening program and made it public to our audience. In the future I would start communicating with movie directors right away in the beginning.



**Summary Summarize the project for yourself? What feelings and thoughts do you have by the end of the project? What will you take with you for the future? What would you recommend to the supervisors and developers of the LIFE course?**

From the looks of registration participants I would say that our messages were well received by the targeted audience. I feel great and happy that our event was so successful and well planned. our proactive tasks to test out the cinema and so on helped us to be more prepared. It would have been better to get a grade for the project, not just pass or fail, since this would allow to evaluate individuals more precisely and motivate them.

## Anastassia Janovskaja

### Introduction

When I saw the theme of this project, I knew immediately that I needed it. I am a great enthusiast for studying Asia, even though my university major is Romance Studies. My expectation was to finally educate myself about serious crimes against humanity in countries such as Myanmar and Thailand. I wanted to expand my understanding of these phenomena as well as meet people who had grown up in this environment. Studying these phenomena through film language is the most interesting approach for me, as I make films in my spare time. I can understand the language of film, so learning about Myanmar and Thailand through the prism of art has not only been enlightening but also useful and engaging for me.

Apart from the theoretical knowledge, I wanted to put my skills in organizing events into practice, an opportunity that also sparked my interest, as these skills could be applied in the future.

### Team, roles and my contribution

My role in the team consisted mainly of managing the media, which mainly consisted of maintaining the Facebook pages and making plans for the other members of the group.

Although occasionally I would take on other small tasks, such as checking tickets for the event itself or putting up posters in town, as well as making arrangements with café and restaurant workers to allow the event to be advertised.

I can't speak badly of the other participants in the project, simply because I think everyone did a great job. Everyone had his or her own task, someone drew the design for the posters and the website, another participant wrote the website itself. The girl who negotiated with the filmmakers had a very responsible job, another girl, for example, actively monitored deadlines and in general was our leader. Therefore the work went very smoothly, without missing deadlines or unnecessary stress.

There was not a single conflict in my memory, everyone treated each other with respect, and let's say, if someone had problems completing their assignment, everyone was sympathetic and patient. For example, I do not often use Facebook, although it is an important aspect of my assignment and another member of the team specifically made a zoom call with me, where she explained how the "publication planner" works.

On the whole, I can only speak positively about our collective work, despite the fact that all our decisions were born out of long discussions and sometimes arguments (which never turned into personal disrespect). In retrospect, it was worth the gamble. The result of our project exceeded all expectations and, in my opinion, was on par with professional film festivals, despite the minimal budget and amateurism.

## **Personal development**

By far the main satisfaction of the work done was my overall understanding and context of the political situation in Thailand and Myanmar. Just three months ago, my perceptions of these countries were ethereal and perhaps even romanticised. In these three months, in a sense, I have become a new person who has a clearer knowledge about this part of the world, which is not so much covered in the Estonian media environment. I have learned about prominent political figures, human rights activists, and their ideologies and what gives them the strength to fight the regime. To be honest, this philosophical aspect was the most important for me.

However, there were also more practical achievements. For example, probably in the first place I had to take responsibility in the form of making up a plan for other people, even if my media plan was not the only one, but important enough to fulfill the event goals. For this I had to re-learn how to work in Excel. And also learn how to use platforms such as Trello. Strange as it may seem, writing posts for Facebook caused a lot of obstacles for me. Since many films were made as anonymous as possible and had little information about themselves, this is due to the heavy censorship of Thailand and Myanmar. I had to sit for hours with a translator on different sites with different languages, from Chinese to Dutch, to get bit by bit some information about the author or the process of making the film.

The other obstacle was more of a cultural one, I had a plan to contact Thai restaurants in Tallinn to allow advertising for our event, but this idea had to be canceled, as it is quite difficult to understand who among the Thais living in Estonia are royalists and who are not. This could cause a lot of unpleasant incidents. Since the films in our program speak about the protest against militarism and royalism.

## **Summary**

Working on the project has brought me a lot of pleasure, I have met different people from other cultures who share my enthusiasm. It was just wonderful to see how a collaboration of different people, with different knowledge and academic degrees, unite in order to bring something really useful and educational to life. In addition, at the event itself, I met people who need help in organizing a museum-exhibition about Hong Kong

and who need a person from Estonia. This project helped me to understand what I'm really interested in and what I'm capable of. I would like to thank everyone for their support and pleasant practical and academic experience.

## Waleed Khalid

### **Introduction** *Why did you join the project? What were your expectations?*

I joined this project because of my interest in global politics and Southeast Asia in general. I have traveled to Thailand and during my time there I was amazed by the kind and joyful nature of the people that live there even though they lived under such harsh governmental and institutional control there was a spark of joy and hope for the future in their eyes. During this project I expected to learn about different perspectives through the art of film and storytelling, while sharing those perspectives through this event to a wider audience that was curious about that part of world.

### **Team, roles and my contribution** *Describe your role in the team. How did the group dynamic and collaboration work? If you experienced conflicts then how did you solve them in your group? How would you evaluate your and your team members' contribution? Why did such group dynamic form?*

As a person with IT and design background my role was to contribute any assistance with regards to IT and design related tasks which could be making online surveys, design posters and banner or helping in online marketing or helping place poster all over the university. The group dynamic was great the team was wonderful, and each person contributed according to their expertise to the best of their abilities. Due to the hard working and collaborative nature of all my teammates, we hardly faced any conflicts and as everyone was very motivated to finish this project successfully. It is my belief that everyone contributed to the best of their ability with the supervisors for this project leading the way through great task management and planning. Due to everyone being an expert and great in a specific skill the group dynamic was in great equilibrium.

### **Personal development** *What did you learn whilst doing the project (specifically related to your activities)? Which experiences were the most important ones? What were the difficulties and victories? What would you do differently in the future?*

During this project I learned a lot about event management and the whole life cycle of such an event, I learned about marketing and project management. With respect to design, I learned how to design to convey a message to a specific audience. Overall, I would count each experience great but watching the event unfold live and seeing my own contributions in action was a great experience. Due to the great dynamic of the team, there were not many difficulties of course managing time with our own studies and professional work was difficult at times but we all managed well due to great collaboration. The one thing I would do differently would

be getting more films to show or having more days to share great stories and films to a even greater audience.

**Summary Summarize the project for yourself? What feelings and thoughts do you have by the end of the project? What will you take with you for the future? What would you recommend to the supervisors and developers of the LIFE course?**

This project was a great learning experience with practical and field work that was very enjoyable because of working with people from different backgrounds and getting to learn about different prospects, hopes and ideas of different people either be it from people in my team or the movie producers who said a thousand things through the art of film making. After the finishing the project the feeling of sharing those thoughts and idea to a wider audience gave a great sense of accomplishment that I would take with me into the future. I would recommend to the supervisors and developers of the life project to keep this program and take it new heights with more topics and diversity as there is huge potential for the life course to become a great platform from collaboration and cultural diversity.