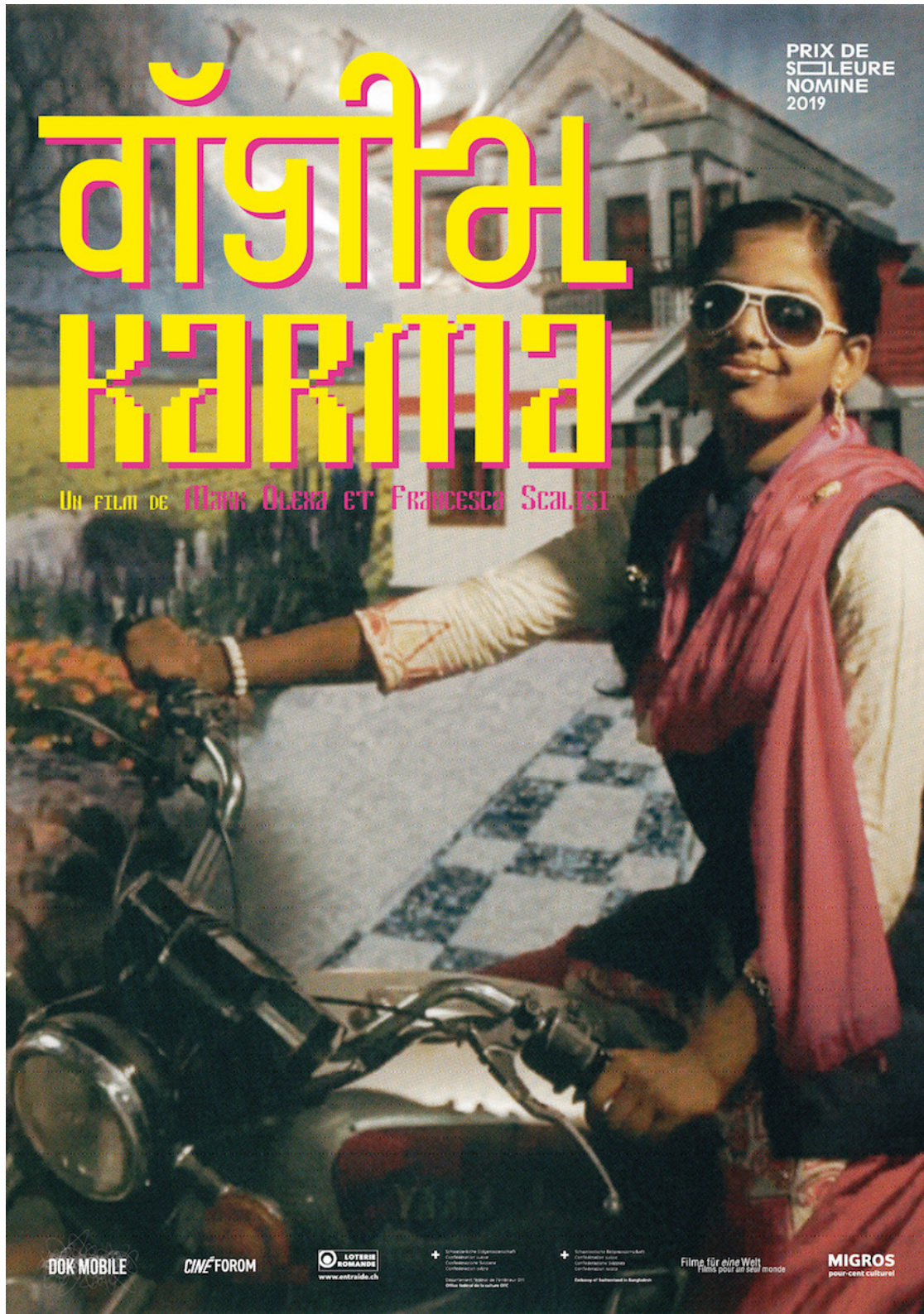




presents



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# DIGITALKARMA

A documentary by Mark Olexa and Francesca Scalisi (Switzerland, 2019, 78 min)

## SYNOPSIS

In a remote village nestled in the foggy hills of northern Bangladesh, Rupa fights against a predetermined destiny. With only a bike, a camera and her knowledge, she defies traditions and tries to make a place for herself in her community. When a twist of fate hits her family, Rupa's freedom is threatened. Will she be able to maintain the fragile balance between the expectations of her loved ones and her own dreams?

## WORLD PREMIERE

54es Journées de Soleure, Prix de Soleure Nominee

FIFF – Fribourg International Film Festival

Festival Ciné Jeunesse Zurich

DOK.fest München

Fünf Seen Filmfestival – **Horizonte Audience Award**

Chicago International Film Festival

São Paulo International Film Festival

Dhaka International Film Festival

Silk Road International Film Festival

Nepal Human Rights International Film Festival

## CREDITS

Directed, written and produced by Mark Olexa and Francesca Scalisi

Cinematography: Mark Olexa

Sound: Graciela Barrault, Saiful Fardin and Francesca Scalisi

Editing: Luca Gasparini, Suzana Pedro and Francesca Scalisi

Sound editing and mixing : Florian Pittet

Music : Al Comet

WEBSITE : [digitalkarma-film.ch](http://digitalkarma-film.ch)

FACEBOOK : [facebook.com/digitalkarmafilm](https://www.facebook.com/digitalkarmafilm)

TRAILER : <https://vimeo.com/278640853>

## DIRECTORS' NOTE

Bangladesh is an enigmatic and fascinating land. As we set foot into the Bengali consulate we were greeted by a poster with a beautiful Bengal tiger. Under the poster we could read the words: "Come to visit Bangladesh before the tourists arrive." One of the poorest country in Asia, and yet, according to a study from the London School of Economics, the happiest in the world, Bangladesh is a land facing countless problems: cyclones, floods, overpopulation and widespread arsenic pollution of drinking water sources. Despite all these issues, this country is teeming

with energy. It is a land with one foot in the past and the other in the future. A land of treasures waiting to be discovered.

We were inspired to make *Digitalkarma* after reading an article about the “E-SheBees”, a team of women who cycled throughout Bangladesh to share knowledge on new technologies and healthcare. We were struck by their stories, which not only speak about women rights and emancipation, but also about the disruptive clash between ancient traditions and modern technologies. These women face enormous challenges in this region, where violence against women is far too common. In our documentary, we follow Rupa, a young E-SheBee, and witness her struggle between social expectations and personal ambition. It is especially interesting to observe the family dynamics in this story, where Rupa’s loving father finds himself torn between the fear for his daughter’s future and the desire to support her dream.

By following Rupa and her family for four years, we aimed at capturing her inner fight, the inner turmoil that fueled her quest for emancipation. But as insecurity creeps into the family, support for Rupa’s dream starts to weaken. Rupa’s future becomes uncertain and we are faced with the image of a dream slowly falling apart. At the end of the film, Rupa makes a video-diary with her small camera, opening up about her hopes and fears for a future that looks like a jump into the unknown. What started as a film about hope and emancipation becomes a film on fate. Because, in documentary, reality cannot be controlled.

#### DIRECTORS’ BIOGRAPHY

**Mark Olexa** (b. 1984) is a Swiss director and producer. **Francesca Scalisi** (b. 1982) is an Italian director and editor. In 2012, they co-founded DOK MOBILE, a film production company based in Fribourg, Switzerland. Together, they directed and produced the short film ***Morion*** (2015), which received the Award for Best Short Documentary at Slamdance, at the Chicago International Film Festival, at the Brooklyn Film Festival and at FRONTDOC. The film was also awarded with a Special Mention at the Winterthur Kurzfilmtage, Minimalen and FIDBA. It was screened at IDFA, Tampere Film Festival, BFI London International Film Festival, Palm Springs International ShortFest and Uppsala Film Festival among others.

Mark and Francesca’s mid-length documentary, ***Half-life in Fukushima*** (2016), which was shot in Japan in S16mm, received the Award for Best Documentary at the Silk Road Festival and at the Broadway International Film Festival. It was screened at a number of festivals, including Visions du Réel, Hot Doc, Millenium Film Festival Brussels and the San Francisco International Film Festival.

In 2017, they directed and produced the short film ***Black Line*** (Ligne noire), which received the Jury Grand Prize at Winterthur Kurzfilmtage and at Regard Saguenay. It also received the Best Short Documentary Award at the Melbourne International Film Festival and the Young Jury Award at the Clermont-Ferrand Film Festival. It was screened at more than 60 festivals including Hot Docs, the

Rotterdam Film Festival and the Palm Springs International ShortFest.

Mark and Francesca are also the founders and artistic directors of the Flying Film Festival, a short film competition in partnership with Swiss International Air Lines (SWISS). The Flying Film Festival is the first festival in the world to be held entirely in the air and its aim is to promote short films to a wider audience.

## FILMOGRAPHY

**Black Line** (Ligne noire), HD, doc. 10 min (2017)

Awards: Best Short Documentary at Cork International Film festival, Best Short Documentary at Melbourne International Film Festival, Grand Prize of the International Competition at Kurzfilmtage Winterthur, Young Jury Award at Clermont-Ferrand International Short Film Festival, Grand Prize at Regard – Saguenay International Short Film Festival, Festhome Distribution Prize at ForadCamp, Best Short Documentary Award at Crossing The Screen Film Festival, Special Mention at Reykjavík International Film Festival and at Riga International Short Film Festival 2ANNAS

Festivals (not exhaustive): Rotterdam International Film Festival, Clermont-Ferrand International Short Film Festival, Tampere Film Festival, Regard – Saguenay International Short Film Festival, Go Short – International Short Film Festival Nijmegen, Docudays UA International Human Rights Documentary Film Festival, Hot Docs, DocumentaMadrid, Nashville Film Festival, IFFSA Toronto, VIS Vienna Shorts Festival, CinemAmbiente - Environmental Film Festival, Huesca International Film Festival, Kortfilmfestivalen Grimstad, Palm Springs International ShortFest, Zinebi Bilbao International Festival of Documentary and Short Films

**Half-life in Fukushima** (Demi-vie à Fukushima), S16, doc. 61 min (2016)

Awards: Best documentary at Silk Road Film Festival Dublin, at Broadway International Film Festival New York and at dokumentART, Green Image Award Tokyo.

Festivals (not exhaustive): Visions du Réel, Hot Docs, San Francisco International Film Festival, CinemAmbiente Film Festival, Doc Buenos Aires, FIDBA, This Human World Vienna, Atlantidoc Uruguay, Journées de Soleure, Filmer le travail, Seoul Human Rights Film Festival, Millenium Film Festival Brussels

**Moriom**, HD, doc. 12 min (2015)

Awards: Grand Jury Prize at Slamdance, Golden Plaque at Chicago International Film Festival, Best Documentary Short at Brooklyn Film Festival, at FrontDoc and at Landshuter Kurzfilmfestival, Special Mention at Internationale Kurzfilmtage Winterthur, at Minimalen Film Festival and at Nashville Film Festival

Festivals (not exhaustive): IDFA, Tampere Film Festival, Palm Springs International Shortfest, Thessaloniki International Film Festival, Uppsala Film Festival



# DIGITALKARMA ON TOUR



Schweizerische Eidgenossenschaft  
Confédération suisse  
Confederazione Svizzera  
Confederaziun svizra

Embassy of Switzerland in Bangladesh



## LOCAL PARTNERS



In January, the film was screened at the Dhaka Film Festival, the most important film festival in Bangladesh. This was the perfect opportunity to make the film known in the country. Following this important showcase, we decided together with Rupa, the main character of the film, to organize 13 screenings between mid. February and March in the region of Sylhet where she lives and where the film was shoot, mostly in tea gardens and minorities villages. The tour of the film will have its climax with the debates conducted by Rupa about:

- Equal opportunities for girls and boys
- Opportunities & limitations of the new technologies in rural Bangladesh
- Empowerment as a catalyst for change

We value the opportunity to have the protagonist of the film talking directly about her experience of empowerment, which continues even after her marriage, and will be answering directly to the questions of the audience as a way to inspire the community and to promote reflection about the topic of this movie. Moreover, the screenings give Rupa the occasion to apply her entrepreneurship - she will receive a salary for her contribution to the tour - which confers in our opinion an additional meaning to the documentary.

We estimate that each screening will welcome a minimum of 80 people; approximately 30-50 families from the hosting village and nearby villages will be present. Our target audience will be not only young women (12-25 years), but also older women and, of course, men of different ages in order to increase their awareness of women empowerment. The real obstacles to women empowerment in the target villages include restriction from family, socio-cultural norms and the socio-economic condition of these women. Most of the young women are not allowed to leave their homes by their families, are at high risk of early marriages and forced

marriages, and often the guardians of these women are illiterate and unaware of the importance of women empowerment.

The tour of the film is entirely supported by the Swiss Embassy in Bangladesh. Thomas Baumgartner, Counselor - Head of Political, Economic & Cultural Affairs at the Swiss embassy in Bangladesh, says about Digitalkarma's tour: «Digitalkarma artfully blends various development challenges of Bangladesh, including women empowerment, underage marriage, digitalization, skills and market development, into a captivating and inspiring narrative of hope. The Embassy of Switzerland is providing support to the local NGO Spreeha in order to showcase the movie and organize discussion and debate groups in the region where the movie was produced. This will help create awareness on these development issues and hopefully empower more young women and men to follow the pioneering footsteps of the movie's protagonist Rupa».

The Digitalkarma's tour arised the interest of Juli Huang prof at Edimbourg University. She will in fact document the afterlife of the film, using ethnographic methods and participant observation within a documentary tour to understand the film's impacts on the life of Rupa, its main protagonist, and her family and community. We will explore themes of storytelling and self-reflection, women's empowerment and changing gender roles, the place of entrepreneurship in rural Bangladesh, and digital media and its cultural resonances. Expected outputs include an article to publish in a major peer-reviewed academic journal (e.g. Visual Anthropology Review, Visual Ethnography, South Asian Popular Culture, or BioScope: South Asian Screen Studies) and an article to publish in a major cultural commentary outlet (e.g. The Atlantic, or Monocle).

Timetable of the screenings:

Screening n°	Date	Day	Location	Upazila	District
1	15-Feb	Saturday	Munshibazar	Kamalganj	Moulvibazar
2	16-Feb	Sunday	Alinagar	Kamalganj	Moulvibazar
3	17-Feb	Monday	Longla	Kulaura	Moulvibazar
4	23-Feb	Sunday	Madhabpur	Kamalganj	Moulvibazar
5	24-Feb	Monday	Boromchal	Kulaura	Moulvibazar
6	25-Feb	Tuesday	Rajnagar	Rajnagar	Moulvibazar
7	1-Mar	Sunday	Rajghat	Sreemangal	Moulvibazar
8	2-Mar	Monday	Kalighat	Sreemangal	Moulvibazar
9	6-Mar	Friday	Jaflong Khashi Punji/Tea Garden	Jaflong	Sylhet
10	7-Mar	Saturday	Pagla	Dakshin Sunamganj	Sunamganj
11	8-Mar	Sunday	Kalagul Tea Garden	Sylhet Sadar	Sylhet
12	21-Mar	Saturday	Monipuri Para	Chunarughat	Habiganj
13	22-Mar	Sunday	Teliapara Tea Garden	Madhabpur	Habiganj

## FILM STILLS



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## DIRECTORS STILLS



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