

Archiving migrant lives. Notes from A Philippine History of Denmark

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Philippine workers have since the mid 20th century occupied jobs on the Danish labor market – predominantly at the Copenhagen hotels, factories and airport – yet not been paid much attention by neither labor history nor migration studies. Venturing into “the politics of historical memory” (Mabalon 2013), the archival project A Philippine History of Denmark seeks to transform histories of Filipinas/os in Denmark into History by collecting private photos, documents such as work contracts, letters, telefaxes, and association publications as well as oral history related to migration routes, labor import and -export, work life, social and religious networks and labor union participation in-between Denmark and the Philippines.

The project draws on the tradition of ethnographic historical inquiries tracing lives and communities abroad in relation to the place(s) they once occupied and are in various ways still connected to; a perspective that particularly Filipino-American scholars have developed (e.g. Choy 2005; 2010; Vergara 2009; Mabalon 2013).

The generations of Philippine migrants to Denmark have in various ways always been contemporary, in motion, a community happening but not settling into the fabric of official history; yet groups of Filipinas/os and Philippine associations have maintained traditions of documenting their own existence and experiences. Collecting for the archive entails tracing the different waves of migrants, and asking them to lend out or donate what has not been lost. Particularly documenting the Filipino Pioneers – as the arrivals of 1960-1973 refer to themselves – is of urgency, as this generation has reached or is beyond retirement age.

The materials collected are primarily found in private homes in Denmark and the Philippines, and the project includes reconstructing the archive of (the first) Filipino Association in Denmark (FAD, est. 1970) as well as the archive of the labor union that historically has organized the majority of Philippine workers in Denmark: The Hotel and Restaurant Workers’ Union (HRF/RBF/3F).

Besides physical collecting practices, social media platforms are utilized – drawing also on inspiration from e.g. Marselis and Schütze (2013) and the project Historisch Beeldarchief Migranten at International Institute of Social History – to collect digitally, to call for additional information on materials already collected, and to call for materials or individuals related to for instance specific events.

The archival project seeks to inscribe the lives of Filipinas/os in Denmark into the body of national history, as well as to render visible the micropolitics of the history of migration by letting ordinary (labor) migrants emerge as creators of a third kind of history in its own right: A history that is taking place in Denmark, in the Philippines, in-between, as well as in places that are neither. The archive will be made available online and launched in Copenhagen and Manila, while its histories are conveyed throughout the process (e.g. Andersen 2016; forthcoming).

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Biography:

Nina Trige Andersen is a historian and journalist (MA, Roskilde University), specializing in relations between the Nordic countries and East- and Southeast Asia, with particular attention to labor history and to people, ideas, and things traveling across borders. She is on the editorial board of the Danish journal *Arbejderhistorie* [Workers' History] and on the organizing team of *Kønshistorisk Netværk i Danmark* [Gender History Network in Denmark]. Participates in the research networks *Öresundsnetværket för genushistorisk forskning* [the Öresund Network for Gender History Research] and *GLORDIC. Global in the Nordic – Nordic in the Global. Gendered and Historical Approaches Network*.