

## **Mediated and non-mediated communication practices of Filipino au pairs in Denmark**

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### **Abstract**

My Master's thesis in Communication for Development, on which this article is based, focused on six young, educated Filipino migrants who decided to be au pairs in Denmark. In the study, I discussed the historical practices of a Filipino migrant to illustrate the migration patterns of Filipinos, including the trend of coming to Europe to be au pairs. The theories were based on transnationalism, migration, diaspora, cultural citizenship and media. Through these theories, I explored how the participants were excluded and included in the Danish society, as well as the role of networks in their lives. A constructionist approach to the analysis and participatory method were used in the study. The narrative responses of the participants indicated that some of them came to Denmark to gain cultural knowledge and skills, while others wanted to work in a Danish household. Nevertheless, from the standpoint of communication for development, behavior change is necessary to take the next step out of their despair. The au pairs themselves must acknowledge that they have carried with them something valuable to Denmark, their education; hence many au pairs must stop thinking that they are domestic workers.

### **Introduction**

It is estimated that 3000 Filipinos leave the Philippines each day to work in a foreign country. This does not come as a surprise, since the economic state of the country stimulates the idea of working abroad to overcome poverty, and for many, this is their central motivation. However, there are also those who leave the country to improve their linguistic and cultural knowledge and skills, and these are the au pairs. The influx of young, educated Filipinas into Denmark has been subjected to social and political inquiries. One might want to ask how it has developed into this, and there are, undoubtedly, several factors that have contributed to the transpiration of the au pair issue. From the data that I gathered, reports of abuse on Filipina au pairs were made to a women's group in Copenhagen, Babaylan, that in return started to campaign for the rights of the victims. It turned out that the concept of *au pair*, in many cases, became synonymous to domestic labor. Subsequently, a number of studies were done on this subject matter scrutinizing the experiences of the Filipino au pairs in the hands of their host families.

As a Filipino immigrant, I could not help but develop an interest in understanding and finding solutions that could improve the social status of my fellow Filipinos. Hence, my objective was to gain further knowledge about the exclusion and inclusion of the participating au pairs in the Danish society by exploring their mediated and non-mediated practices. Based on the aforementioned theories, the research generated research questions were:

- What functions does the internet have for the participants in relation to communication with their family, professional advancement, and civic participation?
- How do activities such as household services in host families, cultural and language studies, and social interactions affect the civic engagement of the participants?
- How do they benefit or not benefit from being part of the religious and socio-cultural networks in terms of network building and access to knowledge and information about the host society?

### **Why is this relevant to Communication for Development (ComDev)?**

The ComDev aspect of my research was founded on three components: 1) the concepts of culture, communication, and development based on a case study; 2) Tufte's (2005: 117) argument that it is imperative to advocate the rights, problems, and communication for social change highlighting the underlying causes of the problem that was necessary for behavior change. Furthermore, communication for development entailed insight on "why people do what they do and understand the barriers to change or adopting new practices" (The World Bank, 2004), hence interviews about the lived experiences of the participants brought to light the causes of the problems and consequently engendering potential solutions; and 3) the methodology part of my research, which was partly based on participatory research. The participatory element in this case was the feedback from the participants which had been integrated in the study.

### **The portrait of a Filipino as a migrant**

According to Tulud Cruz (2010:17-18), the Filipino migration could be best explained through four waves of migration. The first wave happened in the 1900s, and at that time it was mostly men who were recruited as cheap laborers in sugar and pineapple plantations in Hawaii and later on in mainland USA as apple pickers. The second wave took place between the 1940s and 1960s, at a time when immigration policies in the US, Canada, and Europe were less constrained, and most of those who migrated were professionals, high skilled workers, and war brides. The second wave was also known as the 'brain drain' period, since many intellectual workers left the country. The third wave marked the 'brains and brawns' which happened in the 1980s during the term of the now deceased Philippine dictator, Ferdinand Marcos, who saw the revenue potential of the remittances of the overseas workers. Both academic and low skilled workers were exported by the country to different parts of the world. The fourth wave came about in the 1990s, and this was called the 'feminization of Philippine labor migration', since a remarkable exodus of Filipino female nurses, entertainers, and domestic helpers took the chance of working abroad. It should be noted that during this time, many educated women left the country to work as housemaids as well in many European countries.

Kelly (2007:3) pointed out that in Canada, many Filipino immigrants underwent a process of "deprofessionalization, deskilling, and class deterioration", since Canada's labor migration policies focused only on individuals with professional qualifications, and yet many Filipino workers ended up working in less attractive sections of the labor market. In Denmark, Mongaya Høgsholm (2007:314) disputed that the same trend happened in the 1960s, wherein educated migrants worked in blue collar industries. After 4-5 decades, a new group of young,

educated Filipino women started to come to Denmark as au pairs, who according to Mongaya Høgsholm became domestic workers to Danish families which turned out to be an extreme contradiction to the meaning of au pair. The term *au pair* means ‘on even or equal conditions’. Hence, a person who wants to be an au pair will be on equal terms with the members of a host family. In Denmark, the au pair system is for foreign individuals who want to take the opportunity to learn the host family’s language and broaden their cultural horizon, which can be useful for the person’s personal and professional skills. Au pairs, in return, get a minimal allowance and they are expected to participate in the family’s household chores. Ideally, the au pair scheme is rooted on a cultural exchange program, where both au pair and host family can learn from each other.

Sometime in the late 1990s, the Philippine government set a ban on the deployment of au pairs to Europe due to violence and mistreatment. Nevertheless, the prohibition did not stop young Filipino women to travel to Denmark and other European countries as au pairs. In 2010 the ban was lifted on Denmark, Norway, and Switzerland; subsequently in 2012 to the rest of Europe. In Denmark, au pairs were given a type of student visa, since they were language and cultural learners, not workers. However, during the ban, thousands (Danish Immigration Service, 2011) of Filipino women were granted an au pair visa by the Danish government. This only showed that Denmark did not respect the ban. But how did the supposed to be au pairs leave the Philippines? It was simple, by bribing the immigration authorities. One could argue that during the ban, there was no au pair from the Philippines, so the next question is, did they become au pairs when they came to Denmark? In the papers, yes they were au pairs, but not in reality. Moreover, since neither the Filipinos nor the Danish government respected the Philippines’ policy on the deployment of Filipino au pairs, then it could be presumed that these young women were never part of the cultural exchange program, and that many of those who came to Denmark as au pairs during the ban could have seen this as a chance to work in Denmark as housekeepers.

## **Theoretical background**

Migration, culture, and media were the core theories framing this research. I expounded on a number of notions beginning with transnationalism as understood by Vertovec and Cohen (1999), who pointed out that the concept consisted of five foundations namely: a) the reconstruction of place or locality; b) the movement of capital; c) mode of cultural reproduction; d) a site for political engagement; and e) the making of transnational communities and networks. The concept of transnationalism was a fitting choice to further understand the Filipinos as migrants and as transnationals, and this was supplemented by theories of migration (Massey et al. 1993) to explain the probable reasons on why a person migrates, and diaspora (Hall, 1991) to explore the identity of the Filipino community in Denmark.

Second, I emphasized the exclusion and inclusion aspects through Dahlgren’s civic culture and citizenship (2000, 2009). Civic culture primarily elucidates engagement of different social groups, hence producing a more heterogeneous and democratic milieu, while citizenship is more directed to the exercise of the cultural rights of an individual, for example, language and traditions. I have as well included Freire’s (1973) advocacy on marginalized groups to underline certain behavioral manifestations of the participants’ social status.

Third, since there were two cultures involved, taking into consideration the notion of Intercultural Communication (Hofstede in Gudykunst & Kim, 2003) proved to be necessary. I explored upon the dimensions of individualism vs. collectivism and low vs. high context communication. The narratives of the participants showed that misunderstandings between them and their host families were linked to both parties' cultural differences, so I delved into the intercultural communication problems that transpired between the participants and their host families. The two dimensions helped draw out several important practices of both parties, for example, why the Filipino au pairs send their allowances to their families in the Philippines and why the au pairs had trouble expressing themselves verbally in contrast to their host family.

Last but not least, bringing into light the mediated practices of the au pairs, discussions on interactive and mass media were also emphasized. For this reason the most appropriate were Dahlgren's (2000: 322) four dimensions of civic culture namely: a) the mass media as a tool for arming the citizenry with information; b) the role of the private sphere, hence, the host family's residence; c) media practices and routines of an individual; and d) citizen identity as a fundamental element for civic engagement.

## **Methodology**

There were several considerations in relation to which methodology was most fitted for my research, and in the end, I decided to draw upon the constructionist approach. Crotty (1998:8) pointed out that the objective truth was not waiting for us to discover it. My interpretation of the empirical data was founded on my cultural background and personal experiences which is why the constructionist approach was essential for this matter. Hence, the analysis was made as a result of how I viewed the world. Furthermore, I incorporated the concept of phenomenology to supplement the analysis of the lived experiences of the participants. Cohen (2000) explained that this approach was potent particularly if a researcher wanted a fresh viewpoint. The combination of these two concepts was necessary, since the narrative data from the participants were constructed meanings of their lived experiences, then it was only appropriate for me, as the researcher, to provide my own constructed meanings on their narration.

As I have mentioned earlier, the study partly involved Participatory Research (PR) mainly for the reason that the participants' voices were critical in finding solutions to the problems they were facing. In PR, a certain group's voice must be greatly considered to boost up its social status. Moreover, Servaes and Arnst (1999: 111) argued that PR was about "conscientization and empowerment" and the ability of an individual/group to change their situation. PR was applied by means of identifying the problems from the participants' narratives. In addition, the participants were given the possibility to read the initial analysis of their narratives and were in turn asked to provide their feedback.

Qualitative interview and participant observation were the two methods I used in the research. The participants were interviewed using four different question guidelines. This was because the six participants were divided into these three categories: 1) new au pair- Michelle; 2) au pairs for more than a year- Analisa and Grace; 3) former au pairs who became students and consultants- Eleanor, Bernadette, and Lorraine. By doing this, one can have a look at the

different stages an au pair undergoes. In addition, the different stages provided a more imaginative direction of a beginning and a possible end.

The planned interview set-up was supposed to be face-to-face; however, five of the participants were tied up in their schedules, and to solve this problem I asked them instead to write down their answers. A written narrative proved to be effective and valuable, since the participants had the chance to be with their own thoughts, and they were able to provide a more personal narration of their experiences. The participant that I interviewed personally also gave me compelling answers, however I was not able to write down the complete narration, and as an alternative I used key words and summaries for the responses. The personal interview was not recorded as per request of the participant. Filipino and English languages were used during the personal interview, while the narrative responses were written in English.

The participant observation was done in December 2011. I had the chance to be invited by the individuals I contacted, and as well as concerned members of different organizations. By establishing contacts and networks, I was able to be part of the various social events, au pair seminars, and cultural lectures. I felt welcomed and greatly assisted. In many ways, being present at the events enabled me to meet new contacts. This method was also useful, since I was able to gather data about the numerous efforts that were being done for the benefit of the au pairs.

In my opinion, a researcher's cultural competence is a valuable aspect of research. I was able to pass by the usual cultural, linguistic, and social barriers between a researcher and its subject, and this was possible because of the commonalities that I shared with the participants. However, one could argue that this did not always have to be the case. The individual participants could be in many ways different from me. In addition, the years that I spent in Europe could have also changed my perspectives. Nevertheless, I argue that culture is inherent, but at the same time it is also dynamic.

### **Excerpts from the analysis**

I started my interview by asking the au pairs about their past, present, and future. Some gave short answers, while the others gave a more vibrant account of their life. Below were the responses:

**Question:** How would you describe your life in the Philippines? In Denmark? what about your future? (in three words, please)

**Bernadette:** [Past] There was peace of mind, happy, and relaxed, because I am with my family and relatives. [Present] Hard time/difficult; lonely (missing my family); difficulty in adjusting in the culture. [Future] Optimistic; peace of mind (with my family); Career.

**Michelle:** My life in the Philippines is complicated in a sense that I am facing some problems; difficult; successful.

**Lorraine:** [It was] fine. Better. No plans yet

**Analisa:** In the Philippines, I was born out of poverty [...].I grew up with my grandparents and absentee/neglectful parents. In spite of that, I worked hard and was determined to finish my studies until college through a scholarship program from Elementary to College through the church. I am still happy even life is a bit hard and I only manage a very simple kind of living.

**Grace:** My life in Philippines before was quite happy but in terms of my salary and intentions of helping my family's need was hard for me. Although my salary was not enough I am very happy because I'm with my family, friends and relatives but still I decided to work in Hong Kong as a domestic helper.

**Eleanor:** I am an independent person and I managed to support my education in Philippines. After my graduation I worked and help supporting my brother and sister in their studies but as the economic situation of the Philippines even you are a graduate of a bachelor's degree or in a high standard university, it is very hard to find a decent job/appropriate job that can sustain your family's needs.

It was clear that their life in the Philippines, somehow, had a positive connotation. This did not come as a surprise since family values were a great part of a person's life and existence. However, for some, economic instability seemed to be a common denominator. Nevertheless, it was noticeable that a few of the responses also provided certain self-independency.

Networks also played a big role in the decision making of the participants. However, the au pair concept was not clear to some of them, while others were more determined to come to Denmark on the cultural exchange program. Also, to come to Denmark as an au pair was not simple, since bribing authorities and paying to get a host family posed to be hindrances.

**Question:** Can you tell me about your journey to Denmark in terms of what made you decide to be an au pair (family or own decision)? How did you know about the au pair system? Do you have friends or relatives who are abroad (or are in Denmark) who know about the au pair program?

**Michelle:** It was my own decision to apply as an au pair with the help of a friend working here (Denmark).

**Lorraine:** My relatives here in Denmark introduced the au pair system [to me].

**Bernadette:** It was my friend who told me about the au pair program, but she also explained that it is about cultural exchange, *not* working as a domestic helper.

**Grace:** My aunt who lived here in Denmark helped me to find a host and help me to process my papers. I paid under the table payment to one of the Immigration officer in order to pass the immigration check up. I paid 15 thousand pesos.

**Eleanor:** [...]A friend of mine who's been an au pair here in Denmark encouraged me to apply as an au pair here and I grabbed that opportunity coz as she mentioned it very different situation being an au pair to a domestic worker. [...] She referred me to a Danish family whom she was working before as her extra (black job) [...] without knowing that in return to her referral I need to pay her an amount of 5,000 kroner. I only knew this scheme the day that I arrived in here in Denmark (September 2011).

Below is a follow up question regarding their understanding of the au pair scheme.

**Question:** Did you come to Denmark for the cultural exchange program as an au pair or to work in a Danish household? If the former, what are your cultural expectations or plans to improve your cultural horizon and how do you think you can maximize your

stay in Denmark? And if the latter, why did you decide to work as a housekeeper in Denmark and not another profession abroad?

**Bernadette:** I came to Denmark for the cultural exchange experience. This was also the reason why I didn't send money to my family. I wanted to know about the Danish culture. But I learned a lot about the Danish culture, especially their way of communicating. They are straightforward, and I like it because I am also a straightforward person.

**Analisa:** I don't have any idea about aupair when I was back in the Philippines but when I was offered about it I did my research about this whole concept and I love the idea of having a cultural exchange program and not a domestic helper. [...] My only cultural expectations is that they treat me as an Au pair who is in equal terms with them and to help me adjust and integrate in the Danish culture and society so I can learn about their culture, beliefs, and attitudes and apply in my personal life those that will make me a better person during my stay with them.

**Eleanor:** My expectation of being an au pair here in Denmark is really a better condition than in a country that I worked before coz my mind was thinking that this is Europe. The salary/allowance is high, aiming to study and improved my situation and also the way that Western treated migrant workers is different but not all host families are complying with the cultural exchange rules. In reality, au pair scheme is a domestic work and still there were abuses that exist. Because of this cultural exchange program; not considering au pair work as work; au pairs don't have specific laws applied to us.

**Grace:** In Denmark, I am happy because compared to the salary in Hong Kong and my situation in Hong Kong was a little bit high and the schedule here is quiet easy. Before I thought that I am very lucky compared to others coz my host family is kind but later on that I am aware of what really an au pair is because of my involvement in FOA; they abused me in other way around. I am not aware before that au pair is a cultural exchange and perform only light housework. [...] My cultural expectations were although it is cultural exchange but it is the same as domestic workers' duty. I have planned to go to language school but it has not materialized. My host family was not that supportive in terms of schooling and also I am thinking that I need to budget my allowance also...

The participants' social exclusion and inclusion were manifested in their relationship with their host families. The responses were varying, mostly because of the individual mindsets of the participants.

**Question:** Can you describe your relationship with your host family? How do they treat you, and how do you see yourself with them? Which are good, and which ones are not so appealing to you? Do you go to a language school (for how long)? How do you feel about going to a Danish language school (both positive and negative aspects)? Have you gained cultural knowledge (and/or language) during your stay in Denmark, and in which ways do you find it beneficial or not beneficial?

**Bernadette:** I had a good relationship with my host family, especially my host mom. She liked my sense of fashion, so she would sometimes ask me to help her with buying nice clothes.

**Michelle:** My host family is so good to me. They treat me so well.

**Eleanor:** My host family here in Denmark was not that bad compared to other au pairs I talked to. [My host parents are educated and they work from home]. I did all the housework and cooking but as others experienced 5 hours is not enough to clean a 3 storey house plus an office and do cooking every day but because of the Filipino

mentality that as long as they treated you good it's fine but sometimes the more you tolerate them they will find a way of abusing you coz they are thinking that even you work more than 5 hours is just fine with you. If they know that you didn't know the law/rules they will close their mouth too of course it's for their advantage.

**Grace:** I don't know how to describe my relationship with my host family. I called them ma'am and sir. At first they didn't correct me and told me that it is only first name bases. I tried to call them by their name but they didn't responded so I have nothing to do but continue calling them ma'am and sir. Before, they will call me and ask me to work even though it's my day off, I pick up three kids alone, they don't have concern if I got sick or need to go to the doctor.

**Analisa:** Since my former host family moved to [another country last year], I transferred here with my present Danish family[...] [Analisa had been taking care of the host family's children for a week, and when the host mom came from her trip she thought the house was messy. The host mom complained about it][...] They told me I should do more in my job to them but I said that it's not a job it's a cultural exchange program and my host dad said ``We are not interested in the cultural exchange`` and my host mom said that's why we get Au pair just to help us``. [...] I actually called them Sir and Ma'am, but as much as I can I try to avoid saying this because I still believe I am not their cheap domestic worker.

On the use of media for communication and learning, it turned out that it was mostly dependent on access to technology. Some of them took advantage of the internet for getting information, while others used it to socialize.

**Question:** How do you manage or maintain your communication with your family and friends?

**Bernadette:** I usually call them. We have a computer at home, but we don't have connection to the Internet, since my family does not use our computer very often.

**Michelle:** To keep in touch with my mom and sisters on weekdays I just text them through Chikka, then on Saturdays I call them.

**Grace:** I often use internet in chatting with them and sometime I used my mobile phone to call them.

**Eleanor:** Internet is a good communication to them or sometime called them by phone.

**Analisa:** I still communicate with them through phone call, facebook and Skype, but seldom with my parents they don't know much about internet.

**Analisa:** Every day I use internet but not only for Facebooking, checking emails on yahoo or chatting as I also like to research and study on my spare time. I also like to listen to music on YouTube and hear or download lots free educational audio, files, articles, ebook, etc. One of my favourite website is TED [...] I use my smart mobile phone outside or at home through wifi. I always use applications such as TED, Merriam Webster, Google, Yahoo, Facebook, Viber for free call and text. It's educational, easy to use, and convenient for me. I also like taking pictures and copying some relevant articles on my phone.

**Grace:** I use internet at my host family's home. They have given me free Wi-Fi connections. I open Facebook but not that often. I check my emails and most often I used my mobile phone in accessing internet connections.

**Eleanor:** During my stay with my host family, I shared their network so no need for me to pay. [...] Skype is the most common. This way also you can read and watch news that's happening in the Philippines and anywhere. I often check my emails and Facebook. Outside, I can use the library to access to the internet for free or free Wi-Fi if I will use my mobile phone.

**Bernadette:** I use the Internet for social networking, like Facebook, but I also read news articles from the Guardian, Yahoo, and Copenhagen Post. It is now easy to have access to news, since there are many news companies that use Facebook to offer their service.

## Feedback

Out of the six participants there were only two, Analisa and Bernadette, who managed to share their feedback. The use of feedback allowed me to understand the experiences of the participants during the research process. In addition to this, there were suggestions and recommendations from the respondents which could be valuable to other au pairs.

For Analisa, she explained that her participation helped her to be reflective about her life, in terms of the situation with her family, friends, host family, and her experiences as an au pair. Furthermore, she hoped that the study would not be focused on the debate of cultural exchange or cheap labor, but instead would carry a different perspective for the improvement of the au pair system. She, in addition, recommended that a more systematic structure should be done to educate more host families to respect the au pair program. After all, there were host families who followed the rules and had a meaningful time with their Filipino au pairs. Analisa also narrated that being an au pair was not a simple matter, since it also meant that she was always at the mercy of her host family. All in all, she believed that the au pair program was good for her, since it had been an excellent learning experience, however, host families must also be encouraged to understand the real meaning of it.

Bernadette clarified that the study was useful, for it explained the circumstances and experiences of the participants. She also pointed out that the au pairs who had better conditions in the Philippines were more open to their host family; this was because the au pairs who had left a great responsibility in the Philippines were more apprehensive in terms of losing their au pair status. Furthermore, Bernadette disclosed that there were, without a doubt, many educated au pairs in Denmark, but their opportunities were only limited to being au pairs. She believed that au pairs could contribute a lot to the Danish society if they were only given the possibility to put into practice what they have learned from the cultural exchange program. Her final note was that the study was helpful since it pointed out how an au pair's knowledge and skills could slowly deteriorate because of the limitations of the program.

## Findings and recommendations

In relation to the participants' mediated practices, the study found out that they used the internet for communication with their family and friends. However, knowledge and access to a computer and internet connection were great considerations, in the lack of these, SMS and phone calls were the alternative options. In addition, social networking sites were popular among the participants since this allowed them to keep up with their friends as well as a resource for news updates. In terms of self-improvement, the internet was used to educate oneself through e-books and educational articles. Access to electronic mass media also

enabled the participants to be updated with the news both in the homeland and host country. The internet was able to provide the participants the possibility to explore both interactive and mass media which were necessary for their personal development and participation in the civic culture.

In the context of social inclusion, some of the participants had a good relationship with their host family; hence it meant the participants enjoyed their cultural journey in Denmark. Moreover, social inclusion happened mostly through membership in different Filipino social organizations, religious groups, and even transnational groups, while social exclusion was eminent among three participants, since they were not on equal terms with their host family. Furthermore, language studies were hindered due to the au pair's financial limitations. Cultural studies were restricted to house works for several of them, and some of the participants were told by their host family that the au pair program did not mean anything for them. An au pair's motivation can be influential to an au pair's social participation and eventual emancipation.

Networks were crucial to the participants' identity. Social organizations and religious groups served as a 'home' and a place for personal and professional development. In addition, the participants' involvement and membership in these groups allowed them to practice their cultural traditions and language. However, the study also found out that family networks played a vital role in informing and misinforming aspiring au pairs about the program. Therefore, the Filipino community in Denmark should greatly consider the role of these small networks of friends and family.

The study recommended further research on how participatory communication could be utilized and applied to engage all the stakeholders from the au pairs, host family, social organizations, sending and receiving countries, and up to the mass media in finding long term solutions. The debate on 'cultural exchange vs. cheap labor' must not be ignored; however it should not be limited to this alone. The need to recognize the competencies of the au pairs must also be established.

## **Looking back**

Writing my master's thesis was both fun and frustrating. But the whole learning process was incredibly beautiful. It was beautiful in the sense that I was given trust, and to be trusted by the participants with their personal experiences was simply immeasurable. It was fun, because I met a lot of my fellow Filipinos and taking part of the social and cultural gatherings felt like being home. It was also frustrating, since it felt that I would never be able to finish writing it on time. There were always problems, for example, searching for a contact as I didn't know anyone in Denmark, selection of participants, the endless search for relevant theories and articles. Also, not all of the participants were able to give responses, and even follow ups with them proved to be unsuccessful. I was as well struggling with my thoughts regarding how my research would be taken by the Filipino community, if it would be a help for them or not. Nevertheless, I am pleased with what I have accomplished; I have gained insights about the socio-cultural lives of my fellow Filipino migrants. The whole process made me appreciate the value of research in creating public opinion, advocacy, and social change. All in all, it was a worthwhile experience.

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<sup>1</sup> Erliza Lopez Pedersen grew up in Manila, Philippines, where she received her Mass Communication education both within the four corners of a well-known university and along the streets of the metropolis, with her colleagues from various social movements. Before she started her own company,

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she worked, for a brief period, at her parents' trading business. In 2004, she moved to Sweden with her Danish husband and started a family. She completed her Master's Degrees in English at Höskolan Kristianstad, and in Communication for Development at Malmö Höskola. At the moment, she is doing research for an Estonian company and participates actively in Filipino organizations both in Denmark and Sweden. E-mail: [erliza.pedersen@gmail.com](mailto:erliza.pedersen@gmail.com)