

From Celebration to Continuation

“Common Diversities: Junge Filipin@s im deutschsprachigen Raum” Was Just the Beginning

Ralph Chan, Christiane Gotz, Christian Namiss,
Bianca Weninger, Marina Wetzlmaier

Opening new horizons

Some journeys do not simply lead to a destination; they broaden horizons in ways once unimaginable. Such was the effect and influence of the 2022 anthology *Common Diversities: Junge Filipin@s im deutschsprachigen Raum* edited by Arlene D. Castañeda and Ralph Chan. This groundbreaking publication opened long-overdue spaces where young Filipinos in German-speaking communities could finally share their stories—many for the very first time.

The signs had long been present. Wherever the editors and contributors spoke about the project, they were met with genuine enthusiasm. Across the Filipino diaspora, countless groups had envisioned documenting their lived experiences. Yet for many, the idea remained—and may continue to remain—just that: a dream. The topics explored in *Common Diversities* are both expansive and deeply layered. With limited time and resources, such aspirations often faded before they could take shape. Yet each story is profoundly personal, while also resonating with the shared experiences of the collective.

Community response and growing momentum

Members of various Filipino community groups, along with partners from other diaspora communities, offered their congratulations and encouragement. In the time between the publication of the first volume and the writing of the second, many asked about the next steps: When is the next reading? When will the next book be published? The momentum was undeniable. And so, we came together once again to create a second volume.

The concept of collective storytelling arrived at just the right moment. What began as a flicker of inspiration quickly grew into something real, resonant, and transformative. The idea of creating a second volume emerged early on, as the book project team organized readings—both in person across Austria and Germany, and virtually with audiences around the globe. The response was immediate and powerful: enthusiastic voices, heartfelt feedback, and an overwhelming sense of connection.

Centering second- and third-generation voices

It quickly became clear that there was a deep and growing desire within the community, particularly among second- and third-generation Filipinos, to uncover their own narratives and embrace their Filipino identity. Contributors expressed a desire to share their own stories, explore individual perspectives, and narrate the everyday experiences they had lived and witnessed.

As with the first volume, the guiding principle remains: to provide a platform for diverse voices within the Filipino diaspora. This second volume of *Common Diversities* centers the experiences of second- and third-generation Filipinos, offering space for both personal reflections and collective narratives. It spans a wide range of themes—from questions of identity and the transformative power of art to expressions of solidarity with Filipinos in the Philippines.

Yet this time, we felt it was essential to expand the lens. To enrich the dialogue, we invited contributions from outside the German-speaking world. These stories, though rooted in different geographies, echo many of the same struggles, hopes, and truths. They remind us that the Filipino diaspora is vast, interconnected, and full of voices waiting to be heard.

But first: who are the Filipinos—and why do we want to tell their stories to the world?

Love for the homeland, found abroad

Filipino historian Ambeth Ocampo once remarked in his book *Rizal Without the Overcoat* (1990), “It is ironic that many Filipinos only learn to love the Philippines abroad, not in their homeland.” This paradox resonates deeply across the diaspora. For many Filipinos living overseas, national consciousness and appreciation for Filipino culture, history, and society often grow stronger than among those residing in the Philippines itself.

This irony stems from the realities of life in the homeland, where daily struggles and systemic challenges can obscure the beauty and richness of Filipino identity. At home, pride may be muted by routine hardship. Yet abroad, in unfamiliar cultural landscapes, Filipinos often find themselves reconnecting with their roots in profound ways.

Distance offers perspective. Removed from the Philippines, individuals begin to see their culture, traditions, and history with fresh eyes—more objectively, and often more appreciatively. Nostalgia and longing awaken a deeper emotional connection, while the contrast with foreign customs and values highlights the uniqueness of Filipino ways of life. In these new environments, Filipino communities tend to form strong, supportive networks. Through shared stories, cultural events, and collective experiences, they cultivate spaces where identity is not only preserved but actively celebrated. These communal bonds reinforce cultural pride and deepen ties to the homeland.

The search for identity across generations

For second- and third-generation Filipinos, this process is especially significant. Navigating identity in a foreign context often prompts a deliberate search for meaning and belonging. In doing so, many discover a renewed sense of national pride—one that is shaped not by proximity, but by reflection, resilience, and reconnection.

Ultimately, it is the very act of leaving that can lead to rediscovery. The challenges of living abroad—cultural displacement, language barriers, and the need to define oneself—can become catalysts for a more profound and enduring appreciation of the Philippines. The irony, as Ocampo notes, is that love for the homeland often blooms most vividly from afar.

The Filipino diaspora in Europe

According to the Commission on Filipinos Overseas¹, the estimated number of Filipinos living and working abroad is 10.8 million. Nearly half reside in the Americas, while approximately six percent—or 654,000—are registered in Europe. Major countries of destination include Italy, the United Kingdom, Germany, and Spain, with significant communities also found in cities like Athens (Greece), Antwerp (Belgium), and Paris (France). Recent developments show that more Filipinos are accepting jobs in Eastern European countries such as Poland, hoping these opportunities will serve as gateways to other destinations in Europe. More than half of Filipino migrants in Europe are women. Their legal status varies widely—from undocumented workers in precarious conditions to permanent residents.

Migration histories and motivations

Filipino migration to Europe dates back to the mid-19th century, when affluent Filipinos—intellectuals, artists, and businessmen—traveled to study. However, the more significant wave began in the 1960s and 1970s, when European countries recruited professionals and workers to address labor shortages. German-speaking countries, in particular, saw a demand for healthcare workers and nurses (cf. Pascua, 2016).

At the same time, the Philippine government actively promoted overseas labor migration in response to economic instability. Today, economic hardship and unemployment remain the primary drivers of migration. Overseas Filipino Workers (OFWs) seek better job opportunities to support their families or fund their children's education. They work as professionals in the health sector, domestic workers, factory and dock laborers, or *au pairs*. Others migrated for political reasons—to escape persecution under the Marcos dictatorship or to avoid red-tagging under the Duterte administration. Activists sought asylum,

¹ <https://cfo.gov.ph/>

particularly in the Netherlands, and joined Filipino solidarity groups across Europe.

This book attempts to depict various aspects of Filipino communities in different country contexts: the United Kingdom, France, Italy, Switzerland, Germany, and Austria—with a brief comparative excursion to the United States. Through these stories, we aim to illuminate the diversity, resilience, and creativity of Filipinos in Europe and beyond.

From publication to participation

Common Diversities received a warm and enthusiastic reception not only within the German-speaking Filipino community but also among Filipino Europeans across the continent. Its significance is reflected in its inclusion—both in print and digital formats—in a wide array of prestigious library catalogues worldwide. Institutions such as the University of Vienna, Heidelberg University, Rizal Library at Ateneo de Manila, De La Salle University Manila, the Vienna Chamber of Labor Library for Social Sciences, Humboldt University of Berlin, the Ethnological Museum of Berlin, and the National School of Government in Pretoria, South Africa, all recognized its value. In the United States, nineteen university libraries—including Cornell, Harvard, Princeton, Stanford, Yale, and the University of Chicago—added the book to their collections. It is also accessible in thirteen universities in Germany and eleven in Turkey.

Beyond the bookshelves: public engagements

The book's reach extended well beyond library shelves. Throughout 2022, the editors and authors were invited to present *Common Diversities* at various events in Austria and Germany. While this meant extensive travel, it also opened doors for meaningful networking and increased visibility. Presentations were held at venues such as the University of Vienna, the Embassy of the Philippines in Vienna², the Philippine General Consulate in Frankfurt³, the Goethe-Institut Manila (in collaboration with the German Embassy), and cultural hubs in Bonn and Zurich—effectively covering the Germany, Austria, and Switzerland region.

A platform for untold stories

What became strikingly clear through these engagements was that the narrative of second- and third-generation Filipinos in Europe remains largely untold. For many young people with Filipino heritage, the book offered something deeply personal: a platform to share their stories. It gave them a voice—one that had long been missing and was profoundly empowering. Through *Common Diver-*

² <https://www.zentrum-oep.at/?p=1596>

³ <https://frankfurtpcg.de/category/cultural-events/page/5>

sities, they were able to articulate their journeys, identities, and experiences in ways that resonated across borders and generations.

Some selected responses from the community to the first edition served as an incentive to initiate a second book project:

"This book was simply missing. A book that takes an in-depth and critical look at us Filipinos doesn't even exist in German-speaking countries."

"Finding out that there is an intensive examination of all the issues that have plagued me since childhood and that I am not alone in this was the strongest feeling (...) while reading."

"I had to be almost 40 years old before I realized that there were so many more like 'me' and before such an important book was published (...) To feel less alone, to feel seen and noticed all at once (...)."

"I received this gem from the post office yesterday.

I'm thrilled that something like this even exists!

I immediately felt like joining a reading circle (...)."

Common Diversities 2: Filipino Europeans remaking the past, shaping the future

Expanding the vision

While *Common Diversities: Junge Filipin@s im deutschsprachigen Raum* focused primarily on themes of migration, identity, and culture, *Common Diversities 2: Filipino Europeans Remaking the Past, Shaping the Future* aims to provide an outlet for young Filipinos across Europe to showcase their unique perspectives and valuable contributions to society—while remaining rooted in their Filipino heritage. English was chosen as the language for this second volume to reach a broader readership and foster wider dialogue across borders.

A rich tapestry of themes

This volume explores a wide range of themes, shedding light on the diverse arenas where second- and third-generation Filipinos are making meaningful contributions. In many cases, they are carving out paths distinct from those of the first generation.

From identity formation and community engagement to entrepreneurial ventures in Europe and the Philippines, their stories reflect a dynamic evolution. Readers will encounter powerful narratives rooted in sports, artistic expression across multiple disciplines, and political activism—each offering a glimpse into how younger generations are shaping their own voices and visions within and beyond the Filipino diaspora.

The ripple effect of volume one

Since the publication of *Common Diversities*, a wave of connection and recognition has swept through the German-speaking Filipino community. The anthology sparked dialogue, inspired emerging leaders, and connected young community builders across Austria, Germany, and Switzerland. Many readers found mirroring stories—familiar recounts of experiences that prompted a desire for exchange. What unfolded was extraordinary: young Filipinos, many of whom had never met before, began attending every reading.

Building community through storytelling

Throughout the book tour, authors read from their chapters and shared the background stories and research behind their contributions. These presentations were followed by open discussions and audience interaction. New faces appeared, new connections were made, and similar stories were shared. Networks began to form. These gatherings became deeply emotional spaces—filled with heartfelt reflections, shared stories, tears, and eyes lit with recognition. For many, it was the first time they felt truly seen and understood in their personal journey toward identity. Connections blossomed: phone numbers and emails were exchanged, meet-ups were planned, and collaborative projects took root. As the word spread—both in person and online—audiences found common ground in exploring identity, heritage, representation, and the quest for belonging.

Emerging networks and creative movements

This amplification of Filipino voices planted the seed for new communities, especially among those growing up and living between two worlds. Groups and networks were formed, comprising individuals with Filipino backgrounds or strong ties to the Philippines, as well as to Austria, Germany, or Switzerland—each with a story to tell. New art collectives, cultural associations, and fashion labels celebrating Filipino heritage have emerged, each a reflection of growing self-assurance and expressive power. Young Filipino voices are increasingly present at cultural festivals, in the arts, and across media platforms—bringing fresh perspectives and dynamic energy into the public sphere.

From Ugat to Halo-Halo: a transnational network

From the momentum sparked by *Common Diversities*, the initiative Ugat in Bonn evolved into the Halo-Halo network⁴ (referred here as HH). It began with a simple yet powerful idea: a group of individuals learning Tagalog together in Germany hoped to connect with other second-generation Filipinos. Through this shared linguistic and cultural exploration, they discovered a striking reality—many second-generation Filipinos existed across the region, yet remained

⁴ <https://halo-halo.de/>

scattered and disconnected, with no shared space, online or offline, to come together. While Switzerland already had the Noi-P. group—a loosely organized network supporting youth with ties to the Philippines—Austria and Germany had seen various attempts, both formal and informal, to establish similar communities. Initiatives like Sentro (Zentrum für Österreichische und Philippinische Kultur und Sprachen) in Vienna and philippinenbüro e.V. in Cologne laid important groundwork but faced challenges.

The pandemic brought a unique opportunity. With the rise of video conferencing, the possibility of building a transnational community across the German-speaking region became a reality. One of HH's core activities is the monthly Ugat (root) meeting, where members gather virtually to explore themes closely aligned with those in this book: identity, belonging, heritage, and the complexities of living between cultures. As of August 2025, over three hundred individuals from across nine countries, affectionately called Halo-Halos, have joined the community. They share stories of their Filipino roots, ask questions about identity, reflect on life in both the Philippines and their countries of residence, and engage deeply with topics ranging from language and history to psychology, art, and cuisine. For many, HH has become a cornerstone in their lives—a space of affirmation and solidarity.

KUBŌ: a cultural catalyst

The readings and presentations sparked a wave of self-confidence among participants. Many felt empowered to step forward, share their stories, and claim their place in society. This momentum led to a new initiative: the creation of a platform to showcase the creativity and voices of second- and third-generation Filipinos.

In September 2021, Sentro launched KUBŌ – Kultur Bayanihan Österreich⁵, in collaboration with young Filipino creatives in Vienna. Debuting in 2022, the festival has since been held three times, celebrating the full spectrum of Filipino culture in Europe—including music, dance, visual arts, film, workshops, and cuisine—welcoming participants and speakers from across the continent.

KUBŌ has become a catalyst for young creatives in the diaspora. New names and faces have emerged, and initiatives and art collectives have been established, particularly in Austria and Germany. It is inspiring to witness how this renewed sense of identity and confidence continues to fuel action, creativity, and connection.

Intergenerational dialogue and future possibilities

The wave of expression sparked by *Common Diversities* has resonated beyond the younger generation. Members of the first generation have embraced this cultural resurgence with admiration, recognizing the importance of reclaim-

⁵ <https://www.kubo-austria.com/en/>

ing one's roots, speaking out, and fostering intergenerational dialogue. The exchange between past and present is deepening, and meaningful bridges are being built.

Common Diversities 2: Filipino Europeans Remaking the Past, Shaping the Future aims to spark further dialogue, inspire emerging “next” generations, and awaken new “first” generations—those just beginning to explore their Filipino identity within the European context. The journey of self-discovery and cultural affirmation is far from over. The possibilities ahead are as rich, diverse, and evolving as the community itself.

Chapter overview: what you can look forward to

The book is structured into three thematic sections (1) *Diaspora and Belonging*, (2) *Participation and Advocacy*, and (3) *Transnational Connections and Contributions* that reflect the core concerns and perspectives of the contributors.

The book starts with the first section on the topics of *Diaspora and Belonging*. The stories explore how people who live outside their ancestral homelands of their families navigate identity, culture, and community in unfamiliar environments. It's a rich and layered section that touches different aspects and personal experiences. The first story is “Learning to Transgress: Being Born and Growing Up Overseas”, in which the author Kim Valerie Calingasan Vilale explores the relationship between pain and care. In her chapter, she examines how and why power relations constitute and transform subjects by exploring the ways in which mechanisms of cultural, social, economic, and gender oppression produce not only self-sacrifice and suffering but also desire and change.

In Anton Miguel D. De Vera's chapter “The Relational Diasporic State Of Mind of Children of Diplomats”, the author shares a perspective that only some of us ever experienced: a life as a child in a diplomatic family. It is a very personal perspective. Drawing on his own experiences, he reflects on the complex interplay of privilege, identity, cultural uprooting, and belonging. The chapter offers an intimate account of growing up between two worlds and the ongoing search for stability, identity, and home.

“Following my Duende” traces Kerstin Liwayway Dopp-Rexrodt's personal and artistic career as a filmmaker with Filipino-German roots and explores the tensions of hybrid identity through storytelling, mythology, and cinematic practice. Drawing on personal experiences and critical theory, she reflects on how Philippine mythology, the philosophy of *Kapwa*, and the work of artists such as Kidlat Tahimik and Lav Diaz opened up ways for her to reconnect with ancestral memory and cultural belonging.

In “Prince Charming is White: The Effects of Marriage Migration through the Eyes of a Second-Generation Filipina German”, Jennifer Lagbas Merx uses autobiographical reflection to examine the gender-specific and racist constructions of Filipino marriage migration to Germany. Starting from the author's

identity as the daughter of a Filipino marriage migrant and a white German father, the chapter places personal narratives in a broader historical and structural context.

Sarah Revivis Smith's chapter, "When Reality is Still All We Have to Love" examines the personal impact of what Catherine Ceniza Choy calls the "Empire of Care," namely the migration of nurses from the Philippines to countries such as the United Kingdom and the United States. Drawing on her personal family history, she establishes a connection between the concept of time as a spiral, the contradictory stories and hidden truths that shape both the English and Filipino sides of her family, and the works of English art critic John Berger and Filipino American writer Elaine Castillo.

"Spread Wings, Soar High, Serve Well: A Narrative of UP Alumnae Journey Abroad Redefining the Global Iskas" is the title of the chapter written by Gialynn A. Yebron-Capate, in which she delves into the personal narratives of University of the Philippines (UP) graduates who have built lives and careers beyond the Philippines and illuminates their experiences. While not representative of the entire UP alumni community nor intended to promote specific educational ideologies, her study reflects on how UP's progressive values like critical thinking, multicultural respect, and service to the nation continue to shape its graduates. By celebrating the journeys of UP Iskas abroad, the chapter also considers how the ethos of "Tatak UP" manifests in diaspora, particularly in their efforts to give back to the Filipino community from afar.

In "Perspectives of Young Filipino Adults in the German-Speaking Diaspora", Ralph Chan examines how young Filipino adults in the German-speaking diaspora navigate major societal shifts from climate change and the COVID-19 pandemic to mental health, artificial intelligence, war, and economic uncertainty. Rather than presenting a scientific analysis, he invites readers to engage with the lived experiences and personal insights of these individuals, highlighting why their perspectives matter for understanding the future of society. By centering narrative over theory, the chapter encourages open listening and deeper appreciation of the complexities shaping diasporic young adults today.

In the second section, the main themes are *Participation and Advocacy*. The stories of the authors are linked to civic engagement, social justice, and community empowerment.

It starts with "Tracking Rizal's Alluring Lights: In Search of Elsewheres (or, Why should Filipinos in Europe bother with the Philippine National Hero?)" in which Camilo C. Antonio revisits the legacy of Dr. Jose Rizal through a deeply personal and scholarly lens, questioning why Rizal's relevance seems diminished among younger Filipino migrants in Europe. Drawing from his doctoral research and lived experience, Antonio offers a cultural palimpsest, a layered conceptual model to reframe Rizal as an activist literati whose writings remain strikingly pertinent. He argues that Rizal's poetic critique of colonial systems,

grounded in Enlightenment values and diasporic consciousness, continues to resonate amid today's global migrations and imperialist structures. Antonio's reflection invites readers to rediscover Rizal's heroic poetics as a call for civil liberties, human rights, and cultural renewal across generations.

In Birgit Axler-Cohnitz "Pinoy ako! The Postmigrant Artistic Process as Self-Empowerment Through Reappropriation of One's Own Filipino Origin and Identity", she presents the possibilities of interdisciplinary aesthetic-political and practical art education for the Filipino diaspora and how to work with everyone on topics such as personality development, potential development and empowerment using methods and means from the visual arts (visual and performing arts, music, literature).

"Music, Activism, and Identity in the Philippine Diaspora" is contributed by Yvonne Mrukwa. Her story examines how second-generation Filipinos in Germany use Filipino music—from traditional folk music and protest songs to contemporary hip-hop—as a means of cultural reclaiming and for feminist, anti-colonial, and anti-imperialist activism. These reflections are enriched by academic literature and exhibition materials from current exhibitions in Berlin dealing with Filipino protest music and cultural resistance.

"Journeying Towards Solidarity: Engaging with Human Rights in the Philippines" is a chapter written by Hannah Wolf and Mirjam Overhoff, who have been involved in solidarity work with Philippine civil society organizations for around 20 years. Their experiences in the Philippines have shaped their lives, and their perceptions of society, social (in)justice, and solidarity. The article presents important memories and reflections by Hannah Wolf on why she has been committed for so long, including the process of her own positioning, her own and others' perceptions, and her understanding of solidarity that have shaped her journey. Interwoven with these reflections are anecdotal memories by Mirjam Overhoff, who looks back on the year of her internship.

Mary Rose Montemayor's chapter, "The Stealth Revolution: Exploring Community Organizing and Ethnic Movements within the Second Generations of the Filipino Diaspora", examines community organizing among second-generation Filipinos in the United States and German-speaking countries, with a focus on identity formation and cultural preservation. She uses the concept of a "secret revolution"—a quiet but powerful form of resistance rooted in cultural self-assertion and personal exchange—and argues that these organizing efforts are reframing the question of belonging itself and opening new avenues for promoting visibility, identity, and solidarity within and beyond the diaspora.

Marina Wetzlmaier grew up with an interest in politics. Exploring her Filipino roots meant learning more about the history and politics of the Philippines. Her chapter "The Impossibility of Being Nonpolitical: Politics and Second-Generation Filipinos" examines the political interest and engagement of people who have Filipino parents and grew up in German-speaking countries in Europe. The chapter focuses on the European context, taking into account

the rise of right-wing and nationalist propaganda, which has a direct impact on migrant communities. How do second-generation Filipinos feel about these developments and how do they assert their place and political voice in the societies in which they live?

In “The Value of Our Narratives: Ten Lessons from over a Decade of Community Work by and for Second-Generation Filipinos”, Lenny Kaye Bugayong and Stephanie Heid reflect on their experiences in both transnational and local Filipino associations, weaving together insights from their community engagement and personal lives. Their chapter offers a multifaceted perspective on second-generation identity shaped through charitable work and everyday realities.

In Arlene D. Castañeda’s chapter “Empowering Filipino Youth in the Diaspora through Bayanihan: Reflections and Insights”, the author reflects on how the Filipino value of *bayanihan*—collective support and unity—shapes youth empowerment in Europe. Drawing from her work with Sentro and personal experiences, she highlights the importance of inclusive spaces for second-generation Filipinos to build identity and belonging through active participation.

The final section is *Transnational Connections and Contributions*. The chapter refers to the ways individuals and communities maintain relationships, share resources, and influence societies across national borders. It is a concept deeply tied to migration, globalization, and identity. It highlights how people can belong to and shape multiple places at once.

Sheree Domingos’ “About Filipino Labor Migration in Comics” explores the deeply personal and political dimensions of Filipino labor migration from the perspective of autobiographical comics. Drawing on works by the author such as “Mango Tree,” “Long Distance Call,” and “Wealth Tastes Like Pineapple,” the text weaves personal family history with the broader socio-political context of Filipino migration. These illustrated stories show how the legacy of colonization, global economic inequalities, and institutionalized care infrastructures have shaped the lives of Filipino migrant workers for over a century. The article highlights the power of comics not only as a means of self-discovery and healing, but also as a critical tool for challenging dominant political narratives and amplifying the voices of migrants in contemporary discourse.

“To Give and Not to Count the Cost?: A Reflection on the Changing Importance of Remittances and Balikbayan Boxes Among Transnational Filipino Families” is narrated by Maria Karlene Shawn I. Cabaraban. The author reflects on the changing meaning of remittances and *balikbayan* packages in the context of transnational family solidarity. By examining the asymmetries in the ways different generations maintain cross-border relationships, she provides insights into the complexity of intergenerational solidarity in transnational Filipino families.

In John Rueth’s first chapter, “Entrepreneurship in the Philippines: Experiences and Challenges of a Second-Generation Filipino”, he reflects on entrepre-

neurial ways to get involved in the Filipino community. He will discuss questions such as: What are the cultural, legal, and economic challenges? How are people with a Filipino background perceived by the “native Filipinos” in the country? Why might it be a good idea to “take the plunge” and start a project or business in the Philippines?

In their chapter “Cultivating Family Flourishing Among Filipino Entrepreneurs Through Intergenerational Storytelling”, Marijo Eleazar and John Eleazar examine how intergenerational storytelling helps Filipino migrant families in Austria to flourish. Their aim was to show how shared narratives; family heritage and family culture shape the identity of these families.

The book closes with the second chapter by John Rueth “Swim, Bike, Run in the Philippines”. The author focuses in this chapter on the growing number of endurance sports events and related sports such as running, cycling, and swimming, which are often recommended by health insurance companies, ministries, and other important institutions for disease prevention. Further, he examines the significance of these events for sports tourism.



Castañeda, A. D., & Chan, R. (Eds.). (2022). *Common Diversities: Junge Filipin@s im deutschsprachigen Raum*. regiospectra.

Ocampo, A. (1990). *Rizal Without the Overcoat*. Anvil Publishing Inc.

Pascua, H. (2016). *Evolution of Filipino Migration Flows to Austria*. <https://www.servus-pinoy.at/?p=118>