

# The Religious Spaces of Filipino Au Pairs

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Master Thesis submitted for the Degree in

Master of Philosophy in Religion and Diversity: Conflict and  
Coexistence

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Spring 2019

# Acknowledgements

I want to express my utmost gratitude to people and organizations that have supported and had faith in me writing and finishing this master thesis.

I thank my partner, Jemiah, for the encouragement; my daughter, Jenica, for always inspiring me; to my sister, Pinky, for the unwavering support on my endeavor and to my family back home in the Philippines.

I thank my informants for the trust; to Josh Acapulco for the help and to the Filipino Christian Church for welcoming me as its own.

I am particularly grateful to my supervisor, Kaia Rønsdal, for treating this thesis as her own. I do not know if I could finish this without her.

I am also thankful to the leader of this master program, Marianne Kartzow, for the motivation and to Trygve Wyller for introducing to us valuable insights on how to experience and treat others.

I thank my church, Vålerenga Baptist Church, for all the support and to the Faculty of Theology at the University of Oslo for the opportunity to be accepted in this master program.

To my classmates at the faculty, thanks for sharing and to my friends, thanks for the fun.

Honor and Praise to the Almighty.

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## **I.0 Introduction**

A popular maxim says, “...looking for greener pasture”. Though it is quite a cliché these days, for some it is a reality that entails a lot of things: compromise, sacrifice, passion, risk, failure, success, etc. Even though there is no guarantee to get that greener pasture, the allure of it could easily get people moving. That is why, I think, it is inherent for humans to gaze at the horizon to seek what is over there on the other side. To put this into context, there is a current exodus of people from the global south looking for better opportunities moving towards the more affluent part of the world, specifically to the so called ‘west’. There are many things that could be attributed to this: to escape from wars and atrocities, economic reasons, to study, marriage, etc. The most underlying and fundamental motive, however, may be that the imagined destination is seen as something that could provide stability in many aspects. This is the main orientation of Filipino au pairs. Although it might be inscribed to the Filipino culture to go abroad, their decision to migrate is essentially centered on economic reasons. Furthermore, Filipino au pairs are one of the most suited examples for this. This being said, the whole au pairing scheme seems to be refigured by the influx of non-European au pairs. The original intention of au pairing is to facilitate young women to live with host families abroad in order to learn other languages and for cultural exchange (Martinsen 2014). The original purpose of au pairing, and the primary aim of non-European au pairs, maybe different. Given this kind of condition, Filipino au pairs with the primary reason to earn a living are vulnerable to abuse might exercise roles attributed to nannies or domestic helpers which host families can utilize to their own advantage. In addition to this, European au pairs are considered workers and thus protected by the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (ibid). In case of conflict between non-European au pairs and their host families that would result in au pairs finding another host families, there are no clear or concrete provisions under Norwegian immigration laws. They cannot just go to the social welfare office to ask for assistance. The Norwegian authority seem to let au pairs and their host family settle things themselves. In this seemingly precarious situation of Filipino au pairs where the Norwegian welfare system does not apply, there is also another narrative which some of the Filipino au pairs might have been able to get through in this process of migration. In the intersection of St. Olav’s gate and Frederik’s gate in Oslo one can easily notice the herd of Filipinos walking every Sunday afternoon. They are going to the building of Filadelfiakirken where the Filipinos Christian Church is also situated. The church, which I will sometimes refer to as the FCC, hosts a considerable number of either former or current au pairs. The membership is of course mixed: some non-Filipinos, Filipino students, workers, etc. It is on this background

this study is based upon. The main question of this study is: *How can Filipino au pairs develop their agency in this religious space?*

As my case study is situated in a church, I used the work of the Norwegian theologian Trygve Wyller. In his book chapter “ *A spatial Power that dissolves itself: Space, Empathy and Theology – when the Colonized Enter the Empire* (2016), he interrogates pastoral power and contends that it is more than just discipline and control if it is concerned with and aware of the space of the other. He calls this a counter conduct hospitality. He postulates that the church could truly claim that it is helping those who are in need in our society if it provides spaces of others anchored on empathy. Wyller interprets empathy as the recognition of the otherness of others and the understanding of the life world of precarious others. In addition, Wyller states that this is a theology from below whereby church’s pastoral power seems to dissolve. As a result of this dissolution of pastoral power, the space of others is given prominence. In this study, I focus on how others use such given space to develop their agency, even though that space might still be imbued with pastoral power. Furthermore, I will also use Michel Foucault’s theory of *heterotopias* or spaces of others. In his analysis, he delineates the concept of space into two. One is utopias, which are perfect yet unreal places and the other one is heterotopias, which are the real spaces. According to Foucault, these real spaces have the ability to invert, counter and reflect or mirror the outside spaces in our society. Filipino au pairs inside the religious space of the FCC seem to invert, mirror and contest the outside space – the space of their host families and their legal status instituted by the Norwegian government through UDI (The Norwegian Directorate of Immigration) - by doing and assuming other roles not prescribed by their status as transitory migrants. In discussing the concept of agency in this study, I will be using Frantz Fanon’s dissection of colonialism. In his book *The Wretched of the Earth* (1961), he criticized colonial powers’ exploitation of the natives, the colonized. But despite of the apparent adverse position of the colonized, he still found something that gave the colonized the fighting chance to level the playing field: violence. For the colonialist the use of violence by the colonized was like a catharsis. For Fanon, however, it was tool and an outcome because the colonized discovered how unequal their world was. They discovered that they were capable of determining the affairs of their own lives. In the same way Filipino au pairs are also able to navigate in the quite challenging terrain they are traversing. Lastly, in order to further examine the precarious situation of Filipino au pairs, I use Giorgio Agamben’s theory of the state of exception. In his book *State of Exception*, he puts into question the paradoxical interpretation and imposition of the law by

the government called the state of exception. This state of exception is the paradigm most governments around the world utilize when something occurs which is not covered by the law or is otherwise difficult to comprehend, particularly in times of crisis. The current legal and political status of Filipinos au pairs is apparently ambiguous - as they are not workers, nor students. Someone that is difficult to categorize and therefore, because of this ambiguity, are left in state of exception in relation to the Norwegian welfare system.

The methods used in collecting data for this study are focus group interviews and participant observation. There were six informants interviewed. All of them Filipino women who were all au pairs during the time of the interview as well as members of the Filipino Christian Church. The simple participant observation was conducted one Sunday afternoon for about three hours.

The discussion part is divided into two main chapters. The first relates to the connection of space and agency and the other to how au pairs develop their agency in a religious space.

Wyller states of the connection between space and agency “ (T)he church (almost) dissolves itself as a traditional church by developing a space where the subjectivity and the agency of the other counts more than usual” (2016, p.70). In the connection between these two concepts, the most crucial element is that church almost dissolves. What if the church remains intact, seemingly in all its traditional form? Can we not find traces of the church enhancing agency of others even though it does not dissolve itself? The FCC is an explicitly Pentecostal church. The worship service is filled with the usual songs accompanied by a band, dancing and the usual order in the service: sermon, testimony, giving of tithes and offerings. It can still be characterized as very traditional Christian church. It looks like to what Foucault refers to as heterotopia of compensation. To explain this heterotopia he uses the example of the colonies in South America in the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries where the lives of the people there were perfectly ordered (1986, p.27). The same can be claimed for the Sunday worship in the Filipino Christian Church. It is ordered from the worship service itself and the small gathering in the church cafeteria. The connection of space and agency might not only mean the dissolution of the traditional form of the church but by extension religious space could still enhance agency by letting others become protagonists in the ordering of that space. I remember one person said to me once when we passed the area where the Filipino Christian Church is, that it is the church of au pairs. He might be correct in some ways. When I

conducted my fieldwork in that church, I noticed how prominent the presence of au pairs. The one who gave the sermon, those giving testimonies, as well as the members of the worship team were either former or current au pairs. Even the passive participants of the worship service could still play a role in the ordering of space by giving tithes and offerings, and by dancing and singing along with the worship team. The point here is that by taking charge of the ordering of the space, even though they still perform their roles along the traditional forms of the church, they could still act towards attaining for their own agentic agenda.

The second discussion chapter focuses on how au pairs might develop agency by using FCC's space. Before doing so, I first explore the dimension of the concept of agency as not only action but also as a mind work, a project that develops cognitively in the mind of agents, as described by Federico Settler (2018). This chapter is divided into two parts, one discussing aspects of familial extension and the other discussing the idea of the church as breathing space. Filipino au pairs develop their agency by ascribing or using FCC as their family here in Norway. In Filipino culture family ties seem to be an essential part in the development and nurturing of the individual as the government is weak in assuring social survival (Yu 2009, referring to McCoy). There are two important elements present in the Filipino family setting: food and responsibility. My informants have taken these elements as something that they could utilize to develop their agency inside the FCC's space. The first element is food that they prepare and eat in their lifeline group that has different meanings: satisfaction, energizer and a coping mechanism. Although they are provided with food in their host families, they have no say what to eat and what to prepare. As such, eating and preparing food becomes contested, which is why I interpret this activity in the lifeline group as heterotopic. The second element is the responsibilities or tasks given to the members of the FCC. As an ascribed familial extension of my informants, FCC gives roles to its members that seem to impede their agency. However, a closer look might reveal something else. Although these given roles that they play are born out of the pastoral power of FCC to command, it might be interpreted as something that might hone their potential skills and talents.

The second section of this chapter explores how the Filipino au pairs develop their agency by using the FCC as a breathing space. While the first part of the chapter focuses on how agency is interpreted as mind work, here in this section it is explored as action. I will focus primarily on the actions of au pairs during the Sunday worship service and the following gathering in the church cafeteria. In these contexts they seem to display agency through for example their

giving of tithes, their roles as ushers, cooks, singing in the worship service, etc. In the church cafeteria, where the FCC provides food which some au pairs are also part of preparing, they share the same delight for the food that they miss eating, they interact, talk the same language and they experience the normalcy of life that they have back in the Philippines. This might be an important space for someone who is navigating in a liminal space or someone who are excluded from the overarching welfare system of the state that is normally and readily available for its legal residents.

The thesis is organized in the following manner. The second chapter, following this introduction, will present the background of au pairing, the history of Filipino au pairs in Norway and the Filipino culture of working abroad. The third chapter presents methodology where I give an account for the methods I used in my data collection. I also reflect on my role as a Filipino student-researcher who is also Christian and a former au pair. The fourth chapter is where I present the theories I use in discussing and analyzing the data I collected. In chapter five explore the connection of religious space and agency as something that is not only founded by the dissolution of the pastoral power but also by compensation of others in that space which produce new ways of ordering. In chapter six, I will elaborate on this seeming use of space by others through which they develop their agency. In the following conclusion I will point to the most important findings and answer to the main question.

## **2.0 Background of the Study**

### **Brief History of Au Pairing**

The history of au pairing is traced back to Switzerland in the end of 19<sup>th</sup> century as an arrangement between family acquaintances or common family contacts that facilitated young women to live with host families abroad with the purpose of learning another language and cultural exchange (Martinsen 2014). The French term au pair is literally defined as “on equal terms” (Bikova 2008). According to The Norwegian Directorate of Immigration (UDI) the au pair scheme is “to give young people aged between 18 and 30 an opportunity to learn Norwegian and become acquainted with Norwegian culture through living with and participating in the daily life of a Norwegian family” (UDI’s Contract for cultural exchange between au pair and host family 2018). Furthermore, it states that the au pair is entitled to receive monthly pocket money and in exchange can carry out light domestic work, such as looking after kids and pets but they are not domestic helpers. Rather, the au pair should be



part of the family. This is in line with EU's Articles 2 and 9, European Agreement on Au Pair Placement (1969). As of a 2008 survey 63 percent of au pairs in Norway is coming from the Philippines (Bikova 2008).

### **Current Status of Filipino as Au Pairs**

European au pairs are considered workers and thus have the right to convenient mobility within the European borders and are protected as workers under the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (Martinsen 2014). Non-European au pairs on the other hand, are not considered as workers nor students and, therefore, are more vulnerable than their European counterparts (ibid). This is the context in which Filipino au pairs navigate. This seeming state of falling outside of laws and regulations contributes to the challenges they are facing as they are left under the mercy of their host families. My contention is not to present host families in the bad light as the majority are treating their au pairs very well. My point is that because of the ambiguous status of Filipino au pairs as non-workers and non-students can lead to their abuse and they thus become victims. As stipulated in the UDI au pair contract - they are part of the family and should not be used or treated as domestic workers. They are, however, expected to do some light houseworks and in exchange receive monthly pocket money. However, there might be certain discrepancies in the understanding of what light housework means between the au pair and the host family that may trigger conflicts of interest (Bikova 2008). Another challenge is the clause in the contract stating that au pairs as 'part of the family'. To what extent this is really enacted in practice contributes to the ambiguity of the au pair status in the family (ibid). If one is part of a family then doing housework, whether light or heavy is not really a big deal. For example, it is a non-issue for a family to do things together in the house. So, does it atomically offset the issue of work, as the au pairs part of the family? Provisions in the au pair contract blur the line what is allowed and what is not. The EU agreement on non-European au pairs may be is a product of the understanding that they are part of the family and thus are naturally attributed protection through their host families. This is, however, not always the case as there are power imbalances and instances of abuse that may be disregarded by the au pairs themselves. I think the EU provision on Au Pairs has failed to capture the reality of the modern dynamics of this enterprise. Particularly with the influx of non-European au pairs that may have refigured the whole au pairing scheme. The EU sees the racial or national differences, of Europeans and non-Europeans, but may have missed the complexities of the trend brought about by the non-European au pairs. They seem

to be geared towards segregation and may thereby neglect the lived experience of non-European au pairs.

### **Au Pairing in the Philippine Context**

Sometime in the early 2000s, the Philippine government imposed a ban on Filipino au pairs going to Norway. Despite of this, there were still Filipino au pairs who decided to go to Norway by way of illegal transaction in the Philippine immigrations office. They were welcomed in Norway, as Norwegian authorities cannot change their laws based on another country's prohibition (Bikova 2008). Eventually, in 2012, the ban was lifted and the flow of Filipino as au pair migrants has increased dramatically.

### **Philippine Culture of Migration**

The Philippines has a long history of migration. This can at least be traced back as far as the Spanish colonial era in the country. In the waning years of the Spanish rule, in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, there were already Filipino students who studied in Spain. During the American colonial periods (1898-1935 and 1936-1946), Filipinos migrated to the U.S. either to work or study. In a more contemporary context, 10 percent of the Philippine population works abroad and their remittances, as of 2014, amount to 8.5 of the country's' gross domestic product (Straiton, Ledesma, Donnelly 2017).

### **EU and Norwegian Immigration Provision regarding non-European Au Pairs**

As non- Europeans, Filipino au pairs have to endure more than their European counterparts. EU regulation has posed some challenges for non-European au pairs that could result in their exposure to abuse and eventually lead to their victimization. As what Martinsen states "(T)he core dilemma of construing 'au pairs' as cultural exchange participants and not recognizing them as workers sets them under the concept of 'precariousness' " (2014, p.11). While the dilemma has been acknowledged by EU, the concept of cultural exchange in the Au Pair scheme is still, as far as I know, the position and the same in the context of au pairing in Norway as there is still no amendment in the ruling. UDI has only gone as far as tapping the Caritas Norge, the Catholic church's aid organization, in helping solving conflicts between au pairs and host families and other practical matters. However, there is not yet concrete provision in the Norwegian immigration law for the protection of au pairs. For example, in cases of breach of contract, au pairs and host families could only report to police in cases of termination of contract. There is no specific provision on accommodation and food of au pairs for the period that they are waiting to search for another host family. This is of course a

scenario where the safety of the au pairs is at hand. To make things worse, this is only possible when Au Pairs have still valid visa to stay here in Norway. In cases that their visas are about to expire they are advised to leave the country. Many au pairs from the Philippines have used substantial amount of money coming here in Norway. This further contributes to the difficulties au pairs are facing. Another aspect that needs careful consideration is, as noted earlier, what happens to au pairs who opted to leave the host family because of grave exploitation and abuse? They can go to police and report the incident but they cannot just go to social services (NAV) to for ask assistance in getting temporary place to live and food allowance while searching for another host family as they do not have the same rights as regular workers. The legal solution to this according to the Norwegian immigration law, that the host family is obliged to pay for the plane ticket back home. This is a common argument in this whole migration issue, the invocation of legal means and thus sidelining the ethical and moral aspect of it resulting in the neglect of migrants' life worlds. As I have discussed already, Filipino au pairs pay a lot of money to venture abroad. They are also with the pride in experiencing living in a foreign land. The most important motivation, however, is often to help and support their families back home through their remittances. It is easy to imagine how shameful and financially difficult can be if they return without anything.

'Cultural exchange' is still the legal position of the Norwegian immigration in the au pair scheme despite the obvious discrepancy of what is often happening in reality. They thereby may become oblivious to the possible or often ongoing precarious situation of au pairs, as they represent a unique scenario happening in some parts of the Norwegian society. Many Filipino au pairs have found a way to stay here in Norway after their contracts have expired. The common migration trajectory of Filipino au pairs is to stay at least within the borders of Europe by way of marriage, by getting permanent work related to their education as most them have at least university-level education, or the most viable way is to be students, I myself took the latter option.

### **Possibility of abuse by Host Families**

Again, I just want to reiterate that my intention is not to imply that host families are the antagonists in this narrative. However, what I am trying to highlight is that the UDI's provision concerning the role of au pairs in the household work facilitates possible abuse. There have for example been reports of abuse wherein Au Pairs have been asked to do tasks not stipulated in the contract. It can be the context and understanding of 'cultural exchange'

provision on which the UDI bases the status of Filipino au pairs. As mentioned earlier, au pairs are considered members of the family, which outweighs or recompense the issue of what can be conceived as light housework.

Another contributing factor to possible abuse is the demand of domestic labor from more affluent countries particularly in western and northern Europe. Globalization has provided the context of migration that has directed towards this part of the globe. Along with this societal change in a broader sense, the basic unit of society, the family, also has changed. In the west both parents are mostly working which has changed the traditional understanding of family, where the father is the provider and the mother is the homemaker. The current set up in most Western Europeans families has increased the demands of domestic helpers and the supply can not be substantially met within the bounds of Western Europe but from abroad (Martinsen 2014). Though this is more prevalent in Western Europe than in Nordic countries (ibid), this has not stopped the increasing demands of domestic work in Norway. Consequently, au pairs have become the substitute because of their cheap labor cost. Thus, traditional mechanisms of employing and doing domestic work have been applied to au pairs. The result is strains between host families and au pairs. However, this tension cannot only be attributed to host families' misconception of au pairs scheme and the power imbalance this entails. It can also be attributed to the au pairs themselves, as many perceive themselves as workers.

In what follows is the presentation methods used in the gathering of data and the reflection of my position that entails a lot of ethical considerations during fieldwork and writing of this thesis.

### **3.0 Methodology**

#### **3.1 Choice of Method**

This research project investigates on how Filipino au pairs may develop agency in FCC's religious space. In this regard, qualitative method seems to be the suitable approach to explore it. The initial plan was to conduct one-on-one interviews but I was advised to do focus group interviews, as they may facilitate natural conversations about a range of topics. As it will not make sense to ask anyone about their "agency", for example, conversations about everyday experiences may touch upon events that could be interpreted within the framework of agency. In my ethical reflections, I will also discuss certain aspects of this research project that would

make one-on-one interviews particularly challenging. Another consideration in choosing focus group discussion is the fact that it could capitalize on existing groupings in the FCC, called “life line” groups. These are intended for Bible study and functions as support group as accounted for more thoroughly in the previous chapter.

In order to deeply investigate the concept of agency, I have also used the technique of participant observation. I conducted a simple fieldwork in the church service in which I tried to look for traces of agency through the three units of observation: actor, act and place, which I will explain throughout the chapter.

### **3.2 Role of the Researcher**

As I explained in the previous chapter there are many reasons why I chose the topic of Filipino au pairs and their religious space when I wanted to explore agency development within religious spaces. First and foremost is the fact that they are migrants and that they are members of a Christian church. I came to be acquainted with migration through one of the compulsory courses in the master program “ Religion and Diversity”. This course was on religion, migration and citizenship, and we explored issues that revolve around migration and how religion plays a possible role in enhancing the agency of both irregular and regular migrants. Secondly, I am myself a Filipino migrant, and a former au pair with a Christian background. Lastly, my personal fascination with geography, which was reinforced when I came across spatial theory in the above-mentioned course. On top of all these, the underlying motive is to articulate the Filipino au pairs’ sentiment to the seeming lack of protection from the Norwegian government because of its obsolete conception of au pairing.

I think it is of great importance to explore why researchers choose certain fields of interest or data to work on. All knowledge is situated knowledge (Neumann and Neumann 2015, referring to Haraway). Researchers cannot escape from themselves; they cannot get away from their set of identities and experiences and exceptionally objective researchers. There is always something inside that engenders the choice of topic to work on and theories to utilize. Humans are relational beings and are, thus, already situated (ibid). My choice of investigating the religious spaces of au pairs and how these spaces may enhance their agency is not a random subject that suddenly appeared to me out of nowhere. It was born out of the fact that I am a Christian who was once an au pair, who happened to stumble upon spatial theory in the study program I was taking. Although my encounter with spatial theory seems to appear

serendipitous at first glance, it turns out not to be the case at all. Long before I came to know the concept of space, I was already interested in some parts of it, namely geography. I have always been inquisitive of where places are located and how they are ordered, as mentioned previously. There have been many theories I have encountered in this program but they have not captivated my interest in the same way that this spatial turn in my academic journey formats me as a student and a researcher.

Moreover, the less random the data production is, the better the data production will be (Neumann and Neumann 2015) because it guides and forewarns researchers if they already breached the threshold of subjective knowledge production. Although my choice of the topic of the religiosity of Filipino au pairs and the theory of space already has subjective elements, pitfalls of relativism may still be avoided if I as the researcher am aware of where I am coming from. Neuman and Neumann state, referring to Harding, “(...) it is the sociological aspect of the knowledge production that is relativistic – our assumptions of specific topic and our specific gaze, the relational gathering and analyses of data – but the knowledge produced may have what Harding calls stri(o)ng objectivity if the research process and its presumptions are clearly accounted for” (2015, p. 803). This process of accounting for my presumptions and apparent biases in the course of my research is achievable through constant checking, balancing and awareness of my position as a researcher.

Nina Hoel in her article “Embodying the Field” (2013), also drawing on the work of Haraway, examines the potential operations of power in various research relationships in relation to three concepts the researcher should take into consideration. These are accountability, positioning and partiality. While Hoel writes from a feminist perspective these must be employed in all research, which also makes them essential in my own work. Accountability refers to the commitment by researchers to make an explicit reporting of the contextual power relations working when producing knowledge. Positioning means giving account to how various power relations might have made significant effect during research interaction. Lastly, partiality refers to different subjectivities and views that may occur in research encounter and research sample in order to avoid generalization (Hoel 2013). As I explain these three concepts in relation to my project. I will briefly mention certain ethical challenges. Some of these, as well as others, will be pointed out and discussed more elaborately in my subchapter on ethical reflections.

Taking this into consideration, the above-mentioned concept of accountability outlined by Hoel, I understand how I may be in danger of reinforcing the difficult situations of au pairs by for example interjecting my own experiences. For example, that certain chores were not hard for me, may indicate an idea of the female au pairs' sometimes physical limitation as women. This of course not my intention or opinion. Rather, I always attentively noted situations I may have imposed my own experiences, whether in the conversation or in my interpretations. Otherwise, if not properly reflected on, such issues may reinforce stereotypes about Filipina au pairs as weak.

During the group discussion, it was quite apparent how their relationships with their host families were riddled with power imbalances. Most of them narrated how they endured extra hours of babysitting in the weekends or of walking the dog for several hours without even discussing it with their host family. They felt like treated as nannies or domestic helpers and being so, they were expected to do all these chores. One of the ways these power relations were ostensibly understood was through the discussion of the role of the church as a space to strengthen their faith, provide comfort and support in times of loneliness and hardships as au pairs.

Thinking thoroughly about positioning in this study, I was of course aware of my own position as a male Christian researcher who used to be an au pair. I will further reflect on this in my subchapter on ethical challenges. I had the assumption of being an insider in this church, as I know some of the leaders, members and the senior pastor. I have visited there several times during my time as student in their Bible school, which is also owned by the mother church - Filadelfiakirken. However, as it turned out, it was clear that this assumption was not right. I thought it would be easy for me to navigate the field given the fact that I am acquainted with some of the people in the church, for example - the leader who was also my contact. The hurdle that I needed to overcome in recruiting my respondents was one of these realities that may have been borne out of the power relations at play that influenced and foregrounded my interaction with the research field. My presence there as a researcher and the reason I was there was not seen as something that was part of the normal occurrence during Sunday service. Rather, it was something as a favor that placed my contact in a position of power as a gatekeeper to entertain my request or not. However, I later found out from some of the people who helped me that my contact forgot that I would conduct the interview during that Sunday. The seeming inattention to my request was understandable

because of contact's other commitments and priorities. On the other hand, I think it is also prudent to assume that there was some kind of need to be in control on the part of my contact.

Reflecting on partiality in my research project, the questions in my interview guide were informed by own experiences. I had an idea as an au pair that the questions would capture and invoke the informants' innermost feelings because of my assumed status as an insider. Thinking on it more deeply, it was not informed only by me being as former au pair but it was a product of a set of categories and identities within my self. As Hoel says "a researcher is never fully an insider, nor, never fully an outsider. By moving like a pendulum along the insider/outsider continuum, a shifting interactional process in which the relationship between researcher and the respondent is formed, there is an opportunity to explore the multiple subjectivities of both researcher and respondent" (2013, p.32). Aside from the fact that I was an au pair before, and that I am a Christian and a Filipino, I am also a male researcher who has an interest in exploring the informants' present situation of which I am an outsider in many ways. This is something that I tried to be constantly aware of throughout the whole process of this project. Moreover, these different set of identities and the binary of insider/outsider are all present and operating during my interaction during the stages of my research. My own experiences of this constant trade-off and shift of position were evident during my fieldwork. I was so conscious and at the same time nervous during my interview about whether I would be able to capture and reach my objective. I was so concerned if I was ready to assume the identity of researcher devoid of any partial tendencies towards my respondents. Especially when they called me "kuya" which literally means big brother in Filipino language. Every time they addressed me with that term, which happened constantly during the group discussions, it impacted by implying familiarity and difference at the same time. Familiarity in the sense that it reminded me that I was in the midst of fellow Filipinos which means a lot when it is in the context of our experiences as migrants in Norway. A feeling of solidarity influenced the way I interacted by seemingly letting them vent out their sentiments about the challenges they experiences as au pairs, which may blur the line between subjective and objective nature of my research. There is also a difference in the gender relation between me, a male researcher, and my female respondents. It became apparent when they called me big brother. There are certain things that might not have been discussed because of my presence there as a man. Furthermore, one of the aspects that influence my interaction with my respondents is my subjective identity as their big brother. This relation of power that is deeply inscribed in the culture of respect and patriarchy in Filipino society was



quite evident during my interaction with my respondents. It might be likely easy for them to agree with what I said, even if it is otherwise opposite of what they really think if I was not an older Filipino researcher. Along with my own multiple sets of subjectivities, my respondents also carry with them their own identities that could influence the dynamics of the group discussion. It was not only about au pairing with its challenges that was talked about. The discussion also revolved around their future plans as professionals who could practice their profession here in Norway rather being au pairs. Some seemed to be even excited to go back to the Philippines to get married, some did not even intend to stay in Europe. We also talked about their assumed responsibility of sending money to their family back home. All these subjective positions as au pairs, as Christians, responsible and loving members of their respective families, lovers and friends have played out in the dynamics of the group discussion along with my own.

### **Participant Observation**

As one of the major aims of my research is to investigate the religious spaces of Filipino au pairs and how it may contribute to their agency, I conducted a modest empirical fieldwork using the method of participant observation. Harvey, in his book chapter, *Participant Observation*, postulates that “ (T)he ideological justification of fieldwork strongly indicates that scholars should focus most observable activities, actual events and practice, rather than on what texts, preachers or even ‘ordinary’ participants assert people ought to do” (2014, p.217). However, observing people who participate in an activity or who are part of the observed culture would mean that researchers do it at a distance resulting in an objective analysis instead of subjective impressions or experience (Harvey 2014). Moreover, to really capture the full richness of people’s lives require more than observing from the margins (ibid). That is, moving from the margins wherein the researchers observe the participants in an activity or culture, researchers themselves choose to become participants. This method was first introduced by Bronislaw Malinowski, an anthropologist, who insisted the need for researchers to live among people for an extended period of time in order learn about them and their culture (ibid).

My own version of being a participant and an observer is of course not as extensive as what Malinowski suggested in terms of staying in the field for much longer period of time. However, my participation to the Filipino Christian Church’s worship service and meal on one Sunday afternoon somehow provided me a glimpse about this religious space and the

practices of its religious actors including Filipino au pairs. This was not only the first time I visited this church, as I also went there when I conducted my focus group interviews and, as mentioned, I have been coming to this church numerous times on other occasions.

The following section is divided into two parts. In the first part I reflect on my role as participant in the data collection and the second part I give an account of the four units of observation (acts, actors, materials and place) I use to acquire data.

### **The Role of the Researcher as a Participant**

Approaching the field for the second time seemed quite undemanding unlike the first time. When I informed my contact that would I do another round of fieldwork, I again received the usual welcoming tone to my request. This time I had the time to have a chat with my contact a bit before the worship service started. We met inside the main church hall but my contact decided that we talk to the church cafeteria. While talking I was very conscious of what was happening inside the hall. I knew that the worship service was about to begin because I could hear that the worship leader was already speaking on microphone. Without being rude I moved to signal that I was about to get off the chair to signal to my contact that I wanted to end the conversation to participate in the worship service to which she immediately understood. I was preoccupied and thought I already missed some part of the service that I was supposed to observe. Thinking of this now, I seemed to forget one unit of observation: acts (this will be elaborated on later). My contact's act of accommodating was something I literally disregarded then. I forgot that she was willing to miss something of the worship service to accommodate my query. I also noticed that in the cafeteria where we were talking there were some people preparing for later. Though I was cognizant that the worship service was not the only part to which my observation and participation may revolve, I put much value on the event as it is something that I, as a Christian, would naturally ascribe more importance. That in turn reinforced my assumption that I could gain or gather more insights from the participants and their actions during the worship service.

There are, according to Harvey, different methodological positions in fieldwork for the study of religion: methodological atheist, agnostics, fools, children, guests, ludists, neophytes, etc. (Harvey 2014). The terms atheist and agnostic do not seem to denote belief in religious actors' divine claim regarding the basis of their religious belief or faith. Rather, they are positions in which researchers of religion intend to bracket out the veracity of truth-claims

relating to deities and other non-falsifiable postulated alternate realities (ibid, referring to Smart 1973 and Cox 2010). While I could be a fool, a child and a neophyte, I may never be an atheist or an agnostic. I happen to be a Christian who obviously believe in the event or practice of worshipping. I was moved several times during the worship service through songs, preaching and testimony. The bracketing out of truth-claims of religion based on the belief of the divine for me to seem to impede my purpose or focus of my study. By suspending my own belief I was not only true to myself but I am also ascribing unreliable truth-claims to the people I was observing. On the other hand I was also conscious that was I was not there to verify if God really works in the lives of the participants during the worship service or not, regardless of what I myself believe. My subjective positioning as a Christian believer may still have engaged to what Harvey calls “sociological data” (2014, p.225). The focus of phenomenologically informed fieldwork focuses on the way people tell stories, not the veracity of it, neither does it ignore the cultural and sociological that influence the story-telling, the relationship between experience and interpretation, symbolically constructed realities and their consequences (Harvey 2014, quoting from Ezzy 2004). The sociological data and consequences resulted from the symbolically constructed realities i.e. the raising of hands, the singing, the giving of tithes and offering and the dancing during the worship service became acutely apparent to me. This is not because I suspended my own belief or that I was methodologically atheist or agnostic that can only be attained through bracketing, but I assumed seeming insider position that may have happened naturally because I am Christian. At the same time I was also well aware of my position as someone who was doing field work. In terms of religious positioning, as described by Harvey, the insider-outsider binary becomes minor, as I in many ways felt like an insider. However, there are dimensions of my participation where the binary may be more prominent, for instance that I am not a member of this particular denomination. I will, however, not elaborate on this here.

The constant shift of my position became even more evident during the small gathering after the worship service at the church cafeteria where there was some simple Filipino food, drinks, coffee and tea. I was accommodated by one of the members of church, a friend of mine who is also a student at the university. As I was about to take my coffee I was approached by some people I know from before and saw some familiar faces and even talked a little bit with my informants. After that I went to a spot where I could get a good view of the whole cafeteria to see and observe what is happening. The feeling of discomfort kicked in, as I was standing there alone. As I tried to look for somebody to talk to in order to defuse that feeling, I met my

schoolmate again and had a chat with her until the end of the gathering. My outsider position in this instance was marked not only by the fact that I was there as an observer but also because I am not a member of the church. Although I know some people there, it was still quite challenging for me to engage with. This explains the feeling of discomfort when I was suddenly alone. While my insider position was not only evident during some of my talks to the people I know but also with my familiarity with the food and the dynamics present in that space. It was a typical Filipino gathering where men would seem to give their seats to women and the way Filipinos would give importance to food in a gathering. This was manifested when I talked to a friend there. At the end of our conversation she did not forget to remind me to get my own food. My position there was not rigidly predetermined between either insider or outsider. Field research is an experience where researchers can have multiple subjectivities (Hoel 2013). These subjectivities in which I went back and forth during my encounter in the field were brought into play as a Filipino, Christian, guest, student-researcher, and friend.

### **Units of Observation and Recording Material**

Michael Stausberg, in his book chapter, “Structured Observation” (2014), suggests four units of observation: “acts, actors, objects, places or settings” (2014, p.386-387). In this project I did not thoroughly observe and reflect objects in my fieldwork as my research pertains more on the religious space or place, actors and acts not on material religion.

The day after my field research I wrote down a 5-page observation in my journal. As mentioned, I did my simple participant observation for one Sunday afternoon for about 3 hours. Based on what I remembered from that day, I was able to focus on two major events. One is the worship service and the other one is the gathering in the church cafeteria. In these two locations or settings, I observed the actors and their acts. The worship service seemed to be organized and ordered by the members themselves. The entrance leading to the main hall was manned by young Filipinas who were readily welcoming visitors. The door to the main hall was also watched by someone in order to control the entry of people before the start of the worship service. During the worship itself, members seemed to be an integral part of the ordering. Some were part of the worship team, they were singing, giving tithes, testimonies, dancing during the worship, etc. In the church cafeteria some of them had been given the tasks of preparing and cooking the food, cleaning. All were socializing and eating simple and familiar Filipino food. My observation was not solely limited to these places. I was also aware of the street leading to the church and the building itself. The above-mentioned description

presents how the three units of observation, namely the acts, actors and place -were connected based on my observation.

### **3.2 Organizing, Recruiting and Selection Criteria of Respondents**

As mentioned previously, I know this church because I was once a student at Filadelfia Bibelskolen, which is owned, and managed by Filadelfiakirken, a Pentecostal church located in Oslo - where the Filipino Christian Church (FCC) is one of its daughter churches or affiliate churches. My contact at the FCC was my former teacher who also happens to be one of the leaders of the FCC. The focus group interviews were conducted in the fall 2018. I was advised to conduct the interviews as soon as possible after clarifying the project with NSD. This also let me maximize the time for transcription.

I began communicating with my contact early in 2018 during the writing process of my project proposal. At the start of the fall semester, I informed my contact that my project proposal was approved and asked when would be the best time to meet and conduct group discussions with my possible informants. I initially proposed that I could meet the informants on a Saturday. The reason why I was a bit hesitant to do it on a Sunday was that I could make the possible informants uncomfortable by my presence in the service. The church is a place not only for worship but it is also a place to relax, socialize, or a space where they are themselves, a safe space. By going there, I might invade that space which in turn makes them uncomfortable or jeopardizes their sense of safety. As I found out that Saturdays are the time when some of them would have their bible study as part of their lifeline activities, I chose instead, as suggested by my contact, to Sunday after the church service to conduct my group interviews. As mentioned, it did not go as planned because of some miscommunication. I began to worry when I was not able to contact her a few days before the interview. Fortunately she informed me that she had arranged two lifeline groups in case one lifeline was not enough for my target of six to eight au pairs. We were able to push through and agreed that Sunday, after the worship service, was the best time to conduct the group interview. Once again things never went as planned. Some of my informants left early after the worship service. Nonetheless, I was lucky enough to be able to get other informants to supplement and complete my target of six au pairs from another lifeline group with the help of other people from the church.

All of my informants fulfilled the criteria of being Filipino, current au pair, and member of the FCC and belonging to a lifeline group. Though some are part of other groups they are still considered part of the big lifeline group that constantly meet and know each other. It was suggested to me by my contact that I could include former au pairs, but I preferred to recruit current au pairs for the reason of reliability. It is easier for current au pairs to articulate their experiences than those who were au pairs a few years back to recall their situation. Aside from the criterion of being current au pairs for the reason of reliability, I also looked for all Filipino au pairs because of my familiarity of societal and cultural context in which young Filipinos decide to go abroad as au pairs. Another criterion was that they are members of the FCC; the reason for this is the focus of this study, namely that of religious space and its connection in enhancing agency. My last criterion is that they belong to one lifeline group, which was practical for me and less work for my contact. Lifeline group is a ready-made group and quite easy for her to gather and recruit.

### **Participants**

I was able to recruit 6 informants from two lifeline groups that are under the big lifeline group. They are aged from 20 to 29 years old. I met them for the first time during the time I conducted the focus group interview, which was after a Sunday worship in September 2018, inside one of the rooms in the church building. The focus group interview lasted for 58 minutes and was conducted only once.

### **3.4 Interview Guide**

I have an interview guide, which was, as I have said, informed by own experiences as an au pair. The questions in my interview guide were diversified from their experiences and challenge as au pairs, to their relationship with their host families, the role of the church and their future plans. In order to start the group discussion, the first question was “What are the challenges and difficulties that you face as au pairs?”. Then it was followed by “How do you deal with these challenges?”. The goals for the follow-up questions were to elicit verbal responses regarding agency. The third question was “Does the church play any role in dealing with these challenges and difficulties?”. This question was intended to gather data from the au pairs themselves, though verbally, how the church support or help them. Then, in order to dig deeper and attain specific modes of assistance or support from the church, the follow-up question was “In what ways does the church has supported you, if there is any?”. The next question was “What are your future plans?”. This question aimed at exploring the specific and

unique experience of my informants. In this way, I could avoid generalization, which sometimes paint a negative image of host families. Many, if not most, of the host families contribute a lot in the extension of visas of the au pairs for example by lending show money for the student visa and offering free lodging. The last two questions: “What are your future plans?” and “Do you intend to stay in Norway after your contract end as an Au Pair?” were specifically aimed at investigating their agency through which the religious space they are part of may have contributed.

Substantial part of the focus group discussion tackled the topic on how they deal with challenges as au pairs and how the church plays a role in it. It is clear that the way I organized my interview guide played a major part in how the discussion developed. We also discussed their future plans and how they intend to do it. When we talked about how they deal with the challenges, it was seemingly automatic to attach value on the role of the church. One of the things that was almost quite consistent in their view of the church is that it is like a family. From a cultural standpoint, Filipino society put so much emphasis on family that could even extend to many degrees of sanguinity, which is inscribed with care and support. My informants who mostly have no relatives in Norway found a space that could offer care and support in the situation they are in. The care and support that is supposed to be established in their host families are quite insufficient if not non-existent and is substituted by the church which give them space to navigate this unfamiliar terrain. I was also very aware of trying to not insinuate, imply or suggest that my informants were really in a difficult situation, as my first question seems to have bad experiences as obvious starting point.

The question of their future plans is the one that elicited much discussion about agency of au pairs. Some of them even specified what they are going to do in order to stay at least within the border of Europe. The conversation seems to imply that the church plays substantial role through the care and support it has extended to au pairs. The space it has offered gives the au pairs the breathing room to wiggle around. As an alternate family in this unfamiliar environment, it provides some sort of site of rest for them to think and plan their next move in life. They work from Monday to Friday. During the weekends they meet in their lifeline group and they attend worship service in the church. This thus becomes the space where they can ask for ideas on how to extend their visas, get referrals for extra work (often illicit work), keep mentally and emotionally healthy by talking to their fellow au pairs and church mates.

The church itself, based on my experiences, even conducts seminars on how to secure a permanent job here in Norway.

### **3.5 Transcription**

I used approximately 10 hours to transcribe the data that I gathered by writing down every word recorded through a voice recorder. I used Tagalog (Filipino language) during the interview. I did the translation from Tagalog to English. I chose the most important elements of the data that I gathered based on my research focus and question, and that is related to the agency of migrants in a religious space.

### **3.6 Ethical Considerations**

I was quite nervous before conducting the interview because it was my first time doing it. Although I had received advice on how to do it and had familiarized myself with literatures on how to conduct focus group interviews, I still had doubts in my mind on how to do it. I was also worried about whether I would be able to gather the data I wanted to work on related to my research focus. I also worried about some technical glitches with my voice recorder. These were the things that I thought about before doing the fieldwork.

I did not notify the NSD because I do not ask about or save my any personal information about my informants that makes them directly identifiable. The only information about them is that they are Filipina au pairs who are members of the Filipino Christian Church. As these are the traits shared by many, my informants 'anonymity' is protected.

As mentioned previously, I had quite a hurdle to overcome before starting my interview. I am not quite sure whether my contact was aware of her role as the gatekeeper as we have known each other quite well. I assumed that she did not consider me as a total outsider because of the way she welcomed my idea to conduct a study about au pairs in the church. I sensed that she wanted me to succeed on my own endeavor. I have had a relationship with her even after my time as a student in the Bible school. An ethical challenge related to the finding of informants is that I do not know how the au pairs were asked to participate. Or whether they were asked at all. There is a power relation between my informants and with my contact as one of the church leaders. A leader exercises some degree of power, whether consciously or subconsciously, in relation to members. The informants may not have felt that they could choose to participate in my research project. Not because they were forced in any way, but



simply because they would like to please. As this is in the context of a religious space where religious leaders sometimes are inscribed with pastoral power, which has the ability to command and is seldom questioned by its flocks. There maybe some au pairs who did not want to join the focus group interview because they did not want to share their story but just gave in because the leader ask them to do. This blind spot in research where the researcher has no control over but could deeply impact the research design and the analysis of data. As a researcher I must strive to become aware of such blind spots, and make sure I take them into account, both while conducting research and a writing about it.

Another ethical challenge in my project is the issue of gender. Conducting interviews with female informants as a male researcher may present challenges that I must be conscious and aware of. There maybe some female informants who are not comfortable sharing their sentiments or stories with a male or there are parts of their experiences that men may not grasp because of the lack of the embodied perspective of being a woman. Aside from the gender difference that might create a lack of perspective on my side or hesitation of my informants to give more information, the culture of patriarchy in Philippine society might have also played out during the interview. It could be that, since I am a man who might have higher education than them, my informants might have became subservient by just agreeing to what I said during the discussion. Thus, impeding to what they really feel and experience as au pairs. The fact that, as noted earlier, they called me “kuya”, which means big brother in English, may indicate such imbalances in the relationship. In Filipino families, older siblings are always accorded with certain degree of respect. I had experienced this my self as an older brother to my own siblings. My father would always instruct them to show respect. It might that this cultural norm was present that could affect the dynamics during the group discussion. This means that I have to keep these aspects in mind in my interpretations and analysis of the discussion.

The data gathered was in Tagalog and important parts are translated for analysis. Besides being a challenge for me, a translation always have ethical implications, as the translator can alter what was said and has the power to interpret what the speaker meant. There are some words in Filipino that are impossible to translate in English and even if it were to be translated would create new meanings, which in turn will not do justice to the experiences and narratives of my informants. As many readers may not know any Tagalog, I become the one who

decides what I think is important, which may not be what the informants meant. This is also an aspect that I have to remember throughout my writing and analysis of the research.

There are at least two crucial ethical aspects of participant observation. One concerns the overt nature of it wherein researchers ask the consent of the participant and the other covert observation where researchers observe from the margins without consent (Harvey 2014). In discussing the usage of covert Harvey (2014, p.236) states that there are ‘soft cases’ wherein covert observation may provide rich data in semi public gathering or setting. Moreover, in presenting other researchers’ stance that justifies this technique, he explains that there are instances where it is nearly impossible ask everyone’s consent in large events, and even if this is done it can affect the dynamics of the event (Harvey 2014). In my case there were probably only two participants who knew that I was there in the church to observe – my contact and my schoolmate. I do not know if my contact informed the church members of my intention during that Sunday, and if my contact informed them. Based on my conversation with my contact and my own estimate during the worship service, the participants in the worship in that particular Sunday numbered around 300-350. With this number of participants, it would not be feasible for me to ask for individual consent. Obtaining consent also has to do with the nature of the research. Observing the service and what roles certain participants played in framework of agency is one thing. If, for instance, my aim were to observe and discuss something more controversial or vulnerable, such as experiences of healing or emotions during silent prayer, it would be another case.

#### **4.0 Theories**

The main research question in this study is: “*How Filipino au pairs develop their agency in this religious space?*”. The following concepts: religious space, agency and marginality are the main topics to be discussed. In analyzing religious space, I will use the work of the Norwegian theologian Trygve Wyller wherein he interrogates pastoral power. Through this interrogation, he contends that pastoral power becomes more than just control and discipline when it is concerned and aware with the space of other, which he calls a counter-conduct hospitality. Furthermore, I will use Michel Foucault’s theory of heterotopia that discusses other spaces. These heterotopic spaces stand in contrast to the imagined perfect space, a ‘utopia’. The study takes these spatial perspectives to theorize the case of au pairs who are members of a religious space, namely the Filipino Christian Church. In analyzing the agency

of Filipino au pairs, I will be using the Franz Fanon's work where he dissects the dynamics of the colonial world and thus postulates an idea of the agency of the colonized as capable of thinking and executing his own fate. Lastly, in my exploration of the seeming marginality of Filipino au pairs, I will be utilizing Giorgio Agamben's theory of state of exception wherein he expounds that individuals are being put in ambiguous situations or liminal spaces when state laws are imposed. This may paradoxically leave them to become only objects on the receiving end of the pure de facto rules. In the following, I will present and give account for these contributions.

#### **4.1 The Heterotopic Religious Space**

The Norwegian theologian Trygve Wyller, in his book chapter "*A spatial Power that dissolves itself: Space, Empathy and Theology – when the Colonized Enter the Empire* (2016), contends pastoral power as more than just control and discipline. He refers to pastoral power as an ability of the church to govern its adherents through its mode of techniques to produce control and discipline. In order to follow Wyller's line of thought, I will first give a short account of the concept of pastoral power, as it is understood by Foucault. According to him "(C)hristianity is the only religion which has organized itself as a church...it postulates in principle that certain individuals can, by their religious quality, serve others not as princes, magistrates, prophet (etc)...but as pastors" (1982, p.783). And as such, it can hold a special form of power: assuring individual salvation in the next world, command and sacrifice itself for the sake of the flock, looking after the whole community and individuals, and have knowledge of the conscience and ability to control it. However, even though these pastoral powers have lost some of its influence since the 18<sup>th</sup> century, they have also spread out and expanded outside the confines of the church (Foucault 1982). Foucault further notes that as this power moved to the outside world, it produced a new phenomenon through a new organization – the modern state- with individualizing power. The modern state that acquired some modes of pastoral power that in turn produced a new kind of power called individualizing power. Foucault defines individualizing power "as a very sophisticated structure, in which individuals can be integrated, under one condition: that this individuality would be shaped in a new form and submitted to a set of very specific patterns" (1982, p.783). This fusion where ecclesial techniques and the modern state were seemingly pitted for each other created not only a new way of conceptualizing man to specific patterns of leading him to salvation for example but also produced a new form of pastoral power. Foucault elaborates three things on this new form of pastoral power. First, it no longer views salvation as a thing

of the future but rather something that happens in the present where it assumes a different form: health, well-being security, etc. As Foucault states: “ (a) series of (worldly) aims took place of the religious aims of the traditional pastorate. Second, this pastoral power increased its officials. Periodically, this power was wielded by state apparatus through the police and in some occasions utilized by private ventures, welfare societies, philanthropist, etc. This power was also translated and used by institutions: hospitals, medical industries and economic structures. Lastly, because the scope of this pastoral power became increasingly wide, it included its focus on the development of knowledge or conception of man based on two roles: globalizing and quantitative which concerns the overall population and analytical that regards the individual resulted from the individualizing power of the modern state (1982, p. 784). For Foucault, this pastoral power that was once utilized in ecclesial order now permeates in society at large through institutions like medicine, education, family, psychiatry and business. Foucault wanted to emphasize the expression of power that deeply influenced the emergence of modern welfare states (Sander, Villadsen and Wyller 2016). Before receiving the gift of social welfare in the secular context per se or salvation in religious sense, in which these two acts of giving became acutely interlinked, individuals have to submit leading them to be controlled and disciplined (ibid).

Building on this analysis from Foucault concerning pastoral power, Wyller contends that the church can become more than just discipline and control if it is concerned and aware with the space of the other, which he calls counter-conduct hospitality. This is the point where the church moves from its traditional assumption and controlling space where individuals have to submit to its technology of continuous care in order to receive the gift of salvation (Sander, Villadsen and Wyller 2016). Building on the work of Calvo (2014) he compares this to what occurs in hospital and home where there is also hospitality but at the same time it becomes a controlling space and not other-oriented. This is due to the fact that in hospitals, persons or patients must act according to the rules or regulations and therefore hospitals are not totally geared towards understanding these people besides them being as patients (Wyller 2016).

Wyller develops the concept of counter-conduct hospitality in response to the concept where hospitality is intrinsically tied to control and discipline as mentioned above. Such spaces of hospitality, like hospitals, become controlling spaces based on their specific spatiality. That is, hospitals as places for cure and care. Therefore, people inside these spaces must act accordingly if they are to receive help. The same can be said sometimes to churches where

they exercise such controlling hospitality, by only welcoming people who participate the way the church wants them to. However, Wyller argues that the church could provide other-oriented hospitality if it will do away from its traditional controlling space.

Wyller (2016) draws on the case of the Rosengrenska project. This is a project for the undocumented that is situated in Bergsjøen Church, a Lutheran church in Gothenburg, Sweden. I had the opportunity to visit myself, as part of master course, so some of the following presentation is also based on my experience there. Rosengrenska is a non-profit organization of professionals such as lawyers, doctors, nurses, dentists, etc. It helps the undocumented in providing basic social and health needs in collaboration with the Bergsjøen church. The church is a 20-minute drive from Gothenburg, Sweden. Bergsjøen area where the church is located has a high number of immigrants and immigrants also attend the Sunday service. The collaboration started when Rosengrenska needed more space to accommodate undocumented migrants. This coincided with the Bergsjøen congregation's struggle to find its purpose in an area with fewer and fewer traditional Lutherans. It decided to support Rosengrenska, a secular organization, by opening its door for the undocumented migrants. Once a week, on Wednesdays, the project runs a very effective program that resembles normal activities that one can find in institutions provided by the state. This project situated in the confines of a traditional Lutheran church provides a semblance of what a supposed normal life should be. In the same way it mirrors how the Scandinavian welfare states provide social and health services to its citizens or legal residents. The church becomes as a clinic, a gathering in the cafeteria, a meeting place and it has a mini kindergarten.

Using this church space and its connection to counter-conduct hospitality, Wyller explores what kind of space this project is providing for the undocumented migrants, the concept of the meaning of empathy and, as this project is situated in the church, develops a spatial theology of heterotopia.

Wyller first explores what this space means by talking to the volunteer. He finds out finds out that the primary motivation of the volunteers is more than the belief in human rights, Christian compassion and ethical involvement but 'something more'. This happened during a workshop with the workers of the church, the Rosengrenska organization and undocumented where the aim was to discuss and interpret the profile of this project. In order to make sense of that 'more', Wyller employs what Foucault calls heterotopia, another space that in this case

maybe the outside conception in Swedish society. I will present the concept of heterotopia more thoroughly in the proceeding subchapter. The project offers something to the undocumented migrants that the Swedish government cannot. Undocumented migrants have not had rights to access the basic public social and health services until 2013 when the law was softened, and included undocumented migrants. This project offered a space where they could get support in a way that reflects or mirrors the normal spaces in society, the Swedish welfare system for example. The project has remained active also after the law was changed, with almost as many visitors, so there still seems to be a need for it. However, for Wyller the implication of providing space for others cannot only be understood in the way one is helping or being hospitable but also a recognition that they are other, bodies outside of ourselves that are different (Wyller 2016) In this case, the legal or illegal otherness that is embodied among the undocumented migrants. Aside from being others, part of their being are also the status as people who have no legal basis to stay in Sweden. That being said, the church has passed one of the criteria of counter-conduct hospitality. It seems to transgress or offer something aside from a usual understanding of what the church should be.

After establishing one of the criteria of pastoral power that results in a counter-conduct hospitality, Wyller picks up where he left off in exploring and conceptualizing more profoundly the meaning of the phrase ‘something more’ previously mentioned. He interrogates what it really means that the space of others is recognized. With Foucault’s warning in mind regarding people who may claim helping others but may still be subconsciously exercising, or having another agenda of discipline and control, Wyller asks the question of how we could trust that the other is really recognized. Wyller refers to the Danish phenomenologist Dan Zahavi’s work on other-experience and empathy. For Zahavi, Wyller explains, empathy is an important part of the other-experience and this otherness is embodied, Wyller reiterates what Zahavi criticizes regarding empathy as only subjective feeling. Zahavi, according to Wyller, counters the notion that empathy is not an outside phenomenon and thus only a pure subjective feeling. For Wyller, Zahavi argues otherwise, however, and theorizes empathy as more than just a subjective feeling but also a sense of recognition that there are bodies outside of myself. It has something to do with the way we react in our body through our senses. He points out that this is very important because it gives other embodied situations where they may be heard and experienced by us and as such becomes evident in a given space, such as a church space.

Drawing on this analysis, Wyller hints that part of that phrase ‘something more’ might imply a real feeling of empathy. In his talk with both the volunteers and workers, he gathers narratives that may allude to traces of empathy, such as a feeling of being nude or as what he interprets it as an embodied reaction of being emotionally exposed to undocumented migrants’ embodied situation (2016, p.64). They may endure a quite brutal experience as persons who are outside the social welfare program of the Swedish government. As a result of this exposure to the embodied otherness, one is challenged for a response and presence that would in turn creates moments of connectivity. It means that empathy is not only an experience or consciousness but becomes a ‘we-experience’ because you and the other have connectivity through explicit activities (Wyller 2016, p.65). In this case the activities through which the workers and undocumented migrants are connected and exposed to each other are consultations, the kindergarten, the gathering in the cafeteria, the worship service, etc. Wyller refers to Zahavi’s assertion of empathy and otherness being related. What the undocumented migrants may experience in this project is something different from what they have experienced in other places providing aid and care (Wyller 2016). For Wyller one of the criteria for a church to be called heterotopic is that it shuns away from its traditional controlling space of discipline and control. A hospitality that lets the spaces of others become evident and where the interest of the church is suspended for the sake of the people in distress. When a church lets the spaces of others become evident, withdrawing itself as the center for the sake of others, it may provide what Wyller calls counter-conduct hospitality in his analysis. Empathy at its purest sense wherein the other that is different from you is accepted and therefore this experience is not only purely a subjective experience but becomes the “we-experience “(Wyller 2016, p.64).

The point Wyller makes is that Rosengrenska organizes their health clinic in a church space that lets him interpret it as a counter-conduct hospitality. He introduces the idea of a heterotopic theology. He argues against the notion of undocumented people as being victims. The victimization of migrants is often argued with the notion of Jesus as migrant, as well as the sacrifice he made. Through his analysis the Bergsjøen church becomes a church space in which its pastoral power is dissolved to provide counter-conduct hospitality - a living heterotopic space where people share embodied hospitality (Wyller 2016). Consequently, it enhances the agency of the undocumented migrants. Their presence in Bergsjøen church during Wednesdays enables them to move in that space and they may experience something similar to normal lives: socializing, talking, trying to learn the Swedish language, children

have their own kindergarten, etc. Far from places where they have no rights to avail these kinds of precious and basic social services that reflect a normal existence and maybe remotely different maybe from any other space they are in. Maybe even different from other places they have lived before.

Furthermore, he points out that equating Jesus' sacrifice and migrants' journey is a quick analysis of theology "from above" by applying traditional biblical terminology that fails to look at theology "from below" where migrants' experience and life worlds are the starting point of discussion. If the latter is to be further explored it would result to a theology where God builds life and not only viewed as the God who is victimized. This is what heterotopic theology is, according to Wyller: when the theology from below is from the spaces of others, those space may be interpreted as heterotopic, and a heterotopic theology may be developed.

This is why Wyller's contribution is relevant to my project. I want to discuss what happens when the space is given to others. I want to explore how others develop agency when their space became prominent in a given religious space. In my own study, I will analyze how Filipino au pairs develop their own agency in FCC's religious space. A space that may look like or display traces of empathy that Wyller interprets in the Bergsjøen church.

## **4.2 Agency**

Frantz Fanon, in his book *The Wretched of the Earth* (1963), surveys the brutal reality of the colonial world marred by segregation, exploitation and violence. In the following, I introduce and give an account for his ideas in this particular publication. At an early age Fanon already experienced anti-black racism in his native country of Martinique, a French colony. During World War II he joined the French Army before studying medicine and becoming a psychiatrist eventually. During the period of his academic work and practice as psychiatrist, he was actively involved in the Algerian War of Independence from the French colonial rule. Based on these series of personal experiences he observed the colonial the world as something generally contested by two groups: the colonialist and the colonized. The former being the one with the upper hand in this power struggle and the latter as the one on the receiving end of this relationship in this power struggle. Fanon's line of thought is considered a reaction and criticism to the idea persisting through out the Colonial era. Exploitation and compartmentalization were not the only existing realities of the day but also there was a wide consensus among the colonialists' sector that the colonized were not capable of building and



deciding for themselves. Fanon's idea is situated in the context of the process of decolonization where postcolonial analysis of colonialism was given and infused new ways of conception.

In order to undertake his endeavor, Fanon introduces the epoch of this process and transition towards decolonization when the colonized starts to realize this reality of inequity in material terms. The colonized subjects begin to dream of the world where they may share the delights of the things the colonialists enjoy. That dream fuels their demand to have land to toil in so that they can bring bread to the table (Fanon 1963). In response to this demand, the colonial masters, instead of heeding to the call of their subjects, act to repress this request with violence. When the colonized responds in the same way, it is interpreted by the colonialists something like a cathartic act stemming from his brute and barbaric nature (Fanon 1963). Not as an expression of a valid action because of the obvious reason of injustice and negation of the right to live as equals. This cycle of violence from both sides creates a shift in the relation and the state of affairs in the colonial world. The colonized who was once impervious to his state where he is exploited and subjugated in his own native land, begins to think for himself. According to Fanon, the consciousness of freedom and national liberation instantaneously become the more pressing concern of the day for the colonized. However, it proves too much for the colonized to deeply reflect upon this new concept of nationhood because of too much reliance to their mere brute and physical strength. As Fanon comments regarding the colonized understanding of national liberation “ (...) as long as he believed in the mirage sustained by his unmediated physical strength (...). His consciousness remained rudimentary. We have seen that the colonized subject fervently engages in the struggle, especially if it is armed” (1963, p.88). The colonized need something to make sense of this state of affairs. But even the colonized intellectual, in this process of liberation, miss the bigger picture. In their attempt to counter the relentless onslaught of the colonialist propaganda framing the colonized as someone without culture and an uncivilized, the colonized intellectual digs deeper in their history. They try to find something from the glorious past of their native land that could match the civilization and culture of the colonialist or by imitating (1963). For example, Fanon observes that the content of stories composed by the colonized intellectuals seem to always allude to or imply that they also know prominent intellectuals of the occupiers such as Voltaire, Rousseau, etc. for Fanon, however, this does not help in the struggle for freedom because the colonized intellectuals become intelligible and thus alienated from their people. The story that could rival the history of the colonialist is the one that is happening

now, the present story of those who are in the forefront of struggle for national liberation such as the skirmishes yet significant move by the Algerian militant forces against the superior French military (1963).

Although Fanon emphasizes the cracks in the colonized's struggle for self-determination, he is very clear on one thing and that is their ability to achieve it. At first glance they may appear as victims in this colonial scheme but a closer look may reveal a different story, a narrative that presents them as agents in this journey. Agents capable of dictating their own fate despite the fact that the colonialists are seemingly superior both economically and militarily. Fanon's analysis finds a way to turn the whole situation where the colonized is at par in relation to the seeming superiority of the colonialist. In my research for a possible agency for the au pairs, Fanon's theories of the agency for colonized people become relevant.

While it can be said that the case of Filipino au pairs is far from that of the colonized subjects during the colonial period in terms of space and time. The idea of agency that Fanon explicates may still be relevant, as I will explore in my analysis. Filipino au pairs can sometimes be victimized in the process of migration the same way as the colonized was during the colonial period. Fanon explores a different angle in which both are examined thus becoming agents by analyzing certain categories and actions that could proffer them to rise above a very daunting situation. This is evident in his analysis on violence. Seemingly, for Fanon, the violent actions displayed by the colonized are justifiable because it is a causality of the recognized reality of injustice through which the colonized acted upon. Their actions are not unconscious products of their cognitive disturbances or any other instinctual repression but a conscious act because they are capable of understanding their basic right to pursue their own happiness and their understanding that they have a place under the sun (Fanon 1963). Their violent actions and their category as someone who are violent are dissected by Fanon as something that are not given but only a product of the realization of their world riddled with fair amount of the unthinkable conduct of their fellowmen (1963).

Of course violence is not the instrument or means of the Filipino au pairs by which they act on their conscious effort to better their lives. However, they may choose to look for brighter opportunities and stay in course in the migration process despite of limited rights in comparison to other migrants. It is their conscious actions by which they are able to navigate this apparent difficult terrain. A majority of them still find a means on how to continue to live

here in Norway after their au pair contract through marriage, studying, finding permanent jobs. Some of these options are also being assisted by connections in the church, friends and acquaintances. All of these actions are borne out of the fact that they are not just lambs relying on the dictates of someone else or the situation they are into but an understanding that they are drivers of their own destiny. This is what Fanon is so adamant in pushing namely for the agency of the colonized through which they can build a world where they are the ones pulling the strings of destiny, unshackled by the influence of foreign colonialists. A world where they progress not in relation to the standards of their former colonial masters but a world where equality reigns supreme, where man is able to walk in the company of man (1963).

### **4.3 Heterotopia**

The previous subchapter presented the concept of agency that derives from Fanon's analysis to which I will employ on how Filipino au pairs are able to navigate in the process of migration. In this section I will now present how that ability may be enacted in a given space.

In order to analyze the term 'space' used in this research, I will be using Foucault's analysis of space. In delineating between different sites through their cluster and network of relations, Foucault discusses spaces that "have the curious property of being in relation with all other sites, but such in a way as to suspect, neutralize, or invert the set of relations that they happen to designate, mirror, or reflect" (1986, p.24). In his theory there are two main types of space: utopia and heterotopia. Utopias are perfect places and as such not real. Heterotopias on the other hand are related to real places in society by way of reflection or mirroring. Utopias per se are the envisioned and dreamed place people longed to achieve but cannot be totally attained and yet people continuously seek and work for it that in turn produces some caricatures and shadows of it. That is why, although utopias are not real places, they are sites that are related and reflected to real places in society in the same way as heterotopias function. Heterotopia on the other hand also reflects the real spaces in society in such a way that it became an enacted utopia but is in itself a real place. Just like what Foucault terms as "counter-sites, in which other sites (...) are simultaneously represented, contested, and inverted" (1986, p.24).

In discussing this other spaces, he elaborates six traits or principles of heterotopia. The first principle is called crisis heterotopia that can be considered as places for the privileged, sacred,

forbidden or reserved for individuals in a state of crisis, such as adolescents, menstruating and pregnant women, the elderly and many more. In my interpretation, the word “crisis” may also refer to transgressions or fundamental changes, so maybe another example could be marriage or other rituals such as circumcision for male children in the Philippines. Aged ten to twelve or older they are taken or encouraged by their parents, especially their fathers, to go to a known person in the village to conduct this sort of ritual passage to adulthood. The second trait is the heterotopia of the cemetery. A place that is connected to all other sites in a certain community because many people have relatives in the cemetery. In addition, cemetery is connected to all of us because that is the place where almost everyone go at some point after thier existence ends in this world. The third principle is a kind of heterotopia that has the capability to juxtapose several spaces that may appear incompatible in one single place. An example of this would be the traditional Persian garden because, according to Foucault, within its rectangular formation is a representation of the four parts of the world where one can find the center of the world. Furthermore, the fourth trait of heterotopia is its ability to accumulate time like museums and libraries where we could visit a compilation of different eras in our society. In contrast to this accumulation of time but still linked to the nature of time is the opposite: the transitory and fleeting aspect of festivals, the circus and watching movies for example. Heterotopias such as these operate as a break in the usual or linear aspect of time that traverses form point A to B. For Foucault Polynesian vacation villages are good example of this because the usual existence of people vacationing there comes to halt. They experience something new such as primitive and eternal nudity that never happens everyday in their usual everyday lives. The fifth trait of heterotopia is its ability for opening and closing. It is not an easily accessible place but requires some sort of permission that could only be determined and given by your purpose in entering that space. According to Foucault, these can be prisons, military barracks and saunas. I think this means that there are spaces/places that somehow are “available” to all, they are not secret, but still they are not places everyone can go at any time. Maybe schools could be an example, as its open to teachers, enrolled children and their parents, but it would be questioned when an unfamiliar adult entered. I am also thinking of government offices when one needs certain permission or at least concrete reason to go there. These are also places that are sometimes heavily guarded. In this study I will focus on the sixth principle. Foucault separates this in two kinds of heterotopias. The first is the heterotopias of illusion where human life is partitioned and the second is heterotopias of compensation where it creates real space for others or, as what Foucault specifically terms it, “space that is other” (1986, p.27). The existence of this

particular space is regulated in every turn. It is in reason why the sixth trait – the heterotopia of compensation – is employed in this study. The Filipino Christian Church, which is a religious space, accommodates and welcomes Filipino au pairs. Then maybe this space becomes the space that is other? One could easily notice the herd of young Filipino women every Sunday walking along the street of Frederiks gate that leads to the building of Filadelfiakirken. It seems that majority of the members of this church are either au pairs or were once were au pairs.

In addition to Foucault's examination of the sixth trait of heterotopia that creates the real space that is other, he also examines how it compensates in a way that exposes society as messy, ill constructed and jumbled. He then set the example of the Jesuit colonies founded in South America during the seventeenth century as the perfect other places. They were well regulated in every turn from its physical arrangement of buildings that encompassed the colonies to its daily routine and schedule of the very people inhabiting that place (1986, p.27). It is within this backdrop where my analysis will lie regarding FCC. How it regulates Filipino au pairs activities during Sunday and lifeline groups that will be analyzed as compensation. How the convergence of Filipino au pairs in that religious space may also produce a new kind of arranged reality

Their Sunday schedule of going to church and their Saturday or Friday evenings of attending to lifeline groups seem to be regulated by the church itself. However, it is more than that; it also provides them with transitory structure that prepares them for uncertainty that may lie ahead after their au pair contract expires. Filipino au pairs' membership or attendance in the Filipino Christian Church may appear as not only packed with religious activities such as: worship service, prayer meetings or Bible study. It also becomes a place where they may experience many things like job referrals, support, venue to use their skills, provide familial care and many other things that do not have any other explicit religious overtones.

Within this line of thought the Filipino Christian Church, a religious space, may have the potential to become a counter-site that create spaces that are other. And as such, the apparent regulated ordering of the FCC on Sundays, can be interpreted to counter, reflect and invert the larger Norwegian society? Or is it also compensating because the outside space – the Norwegian Immigration office – makes the legal status of au pairs as ill conceived?

#### **4.4 State of Exception**

The preceding sub chapter is presented to theorize regarding the religious spaces of Filipino au pairs. In the following, I am going to present a concept on how to theorize in relation to the outside space that Filipino au pairs are also navigating.

The Italian philosopher Giorgio Agamben, in his book entitled *State of Exception* (2005), tries to explore and investigate the concepts and theory of the state of exception. My account is based on Agamben's publication although the concept first appeared in the works of Carl Schmitt, a German jurist and political theorist whose work formed the basis that seemed to justify the action of Nazi Germany to suspend the Weimar Constitution (Agamben 2005). The articles of this constitution that protected the personal liberties of all German citizens were suspended when Hitler proclaimed a Decree for the Protection of the People and the State (Agamben 2005). So therefore, according to Agamben, the Third Reich was under the state of exception that lasted for twelve years. During this these years the decree that suspended personal liberties was never repealed (Agamben 2005). Since the Third Reich maintained this state of exception, it gave mechanisms that allowed Hitler to physically eliminate not only the enemies of the state but of entire categories of citizens that cannot be politically integrated in its system (Agamben 2005). Hence the slaughter of the Jewish people and other citizens whose identities were no fully accepted in German society during that time when the Nazi party came into power. Even after the demised of Nazi Germany, this technique has spread out even in democratic when they perceive imminent danger that threatens the very existence of the state. Although, as what Agamben notes, they have not declared or formally used the term state of exception but rather state of emergency, nevertheless operate under this principle. However, Agamben points out that wars have its rule but the state of exception, as he terms it "... is not a special kind of law (like the law of war); rather, insofar as it is a suspension of the juridical order itself, it defines the law's threshold or limit" (2005, p.4). That is, the state of exception exists outside of law.

Agamben designates state of exception into different headings or specific situation in which there is a seeming paradoxical application of the law. First, state of exception, as a paradigm of the state or country, can be invoked in times security and economic crisis wherein the basic human rights are suspended. According to Agamben, one example of this was the US government's detention of suspected terrorists in the after math of 9/11 without any other concrete legal basis. They had not committed any crime under US law but were not either

considered prisoners of war, they were simply detainees. In Agamben's term " they are the object of pure de facto rule...entirely removed from the law and judicial oversight" (2005, p.2). This is similar to Jews' situation in the Nazi camps. They had lost their legal identity including their citizenship but still had their identity as Jews. The state of exception can also be interpreted as force of law in which it represents to be applied, but is not formally applied in times crisis. This means that state of exception is a space where there is breakdown of norms and values that is why the force of law is applied with out a law (Agamben 2005). This is because state of exception operates outside the fringes of the juridical order. Agamben also defines state of exception as an *Iustitum*. This is a term originated from the Roman legal system that can be invoked during situations where the nation-state is in danger from foreign and domestic invasion. It calls upon the tribune of the people and all citizens to do what is necessary to protect the nation. What is distinct in this definition is that the law is suspended and abandoned in favor of expediency (2005).

In this study, the state of exception as paradigm of the state will be mostly used as it closely relates to my study. The Norwegian government, that prides itself in promoting human rights, suspends the overarching welfare state program for the non-European au pairs, which puts them in the margins of the law. For example if there are conflicts between the Filipino au pairs and their host families, both parties are only encouraged by The Norwegian Directorate of Immigration (UDI) to patch things up through the mediation of Caritas Norge, a non-profit religious organization. There is no concrete provision to make both parties act in a way that is under a specific guideline provided by the law. This puts the non-European au pairs outside or removed from the law.

The state of exception does not only happen in times of war or crisis. It could also pose a juridical problem that cannot take a juridical form simply because of its position at the limit of law and politics which create the margins in our society whereby the law is not applied and yet fully in control of its existence (Agamben 2015). An example of this, as mentioned previously, is the Filipino au pairs who are not included in the Norwegian welfare system and yet the Norwegian immigration laws are in full control on how to handle their affairs. There are political realities in our society that the law cannot fully deal with and integrate into the system, so the logical thing to do is to suspend the law that puts them in a state of exception. How can the government, or someone who decides on the state of exception, act in situations devoid of any juridical measures? It is by acting outside of the law – a paradox that is hard to

crack and becomes the only option to something that cannot be fully understood or accepted. Acceptance or admittance to certain conventions, in this case a society through its law, is the one that actually poses the most difficult obstacle to overcome. Just like the Jews during the Nazi regime where they cannot possibly integrate into the German system simply because of their Jewish identity. There are certain criteria to follow before admittance. In the case of Filipino au pairs it is impossible for them to acquire the criteria set by the Norwegian Immigration authority. One must either be a resident or citizen in order to receive the gift of the Norwegian welfare system.

The state of exception or in contemporary time called state of emergency gives government in a way a free-hand to deal with the supposed crisis in the fringes of the law. This puts human beings in ambiguous zones where laws are not applicable to them. Yet, because the government or someone who acts in the state of exception must deal with crisis in accordance with the law, their personal liberties are suspended. This is similar to what happened when President Duterte of the Philippines declared martial law in the southern part of the island of Mindanao on May 23, 2017. It was a response to protect the people from an attack by an ISIS-inspired group that planned to put up a caliphate in one of the cities on the island. Under the Philippine constitution, citizens can refuse the military and the police to search their homes without search warrant or cannot be arrested and detained without search warrant. Under Martial Law, however, these rights are suspended. The government has more power than the people. The immediate question here is not only about power but the issue on which this power produces. The government in times of state of emergency or the president has extraordinary power over the people. It puts individual liberties in a perilous situation where people or suspected individuals are stripped of their rights in order to be contained in a state where the law is suspended or not applicable. Philippine security forces can act on their own without any other judicial supervision that has the role to protect these rights. Almost ironically it is the same judicial institution that gives permission for the executive power to declare martial law. As Agamben states, “the state of exception is the preliminary condition for any definition of the relation that binds and, at the same time, abandons the living being to law...no-man’s land between public law and political fact, and between the juridical order and life” (2015, p.3). It is on this framework where my analysis of the status of Filipino au pairs will build upon. They are in a way in no-man’s land between the overarching welfare laws of the Norwegian state and their political status as non-students and non-workers. A paradigm utilized by the Norwegian government to someone as non-students and non-workers



that it cannot fully comprehend thus leaving them in an ambiguous situation where the law is applied through another state department – the Norwegian Immigration office.

## **5.0 The Connection of Space and Agency**

As I will discuss later in this chapter, I claim that agency is inherent in every human being. However, it can be developed in many different ways. In this thesis the main contention is that agency can be developed by people implicated or involved in a religious space, in this case the FCC. My discussion regarding agency of Filipino au pairs does not hinge entirely on the assumption of abuse of Filipino au pairs. In fact there are many host families who provide assistance to their au pairs that might contribute to their agency. The reports of seeming power imbalances with their host families of my informants are only one of the experiences that could result from their legal status that puts them in liminal space. As noted, the original purpose of au pairing is cultural exchange but it has been practiced disparately because of the influx of non-European au pairs who intend to earn a living. Therefore, it can be said that some Filipino au pairs are domestic helpers in disguise who are supposed to be entitled of salary much higher to what they receive monthly. This is evident from the narratives of most of my informants. However, despite this challenge, they stay on course in this process of migration. One of the ways, as I will show later in the next chapter through the interpretation of my material, is involving themselves or becoming members of the FCC. This religious space becomes one of the venues for my informants to develop their own agency. In this chapter, I will first present the possible connection of religious space and agency.

Wyller points out this idea “ (T)he church (almost) dissolves itself as a traditional church by developing a space where the subjectivity and the agency of the other counts more than usual” (2016, p. 70). In his interpretation, the Bergsjøen church dissolves its pastoral power to provide space so that the agency of others is given prominence. Although in another instance, using another material, Wyller seems to suggest a softer version of that dissolution by stating “ ... what happens in the Sunday services is that the migrant people themselves become more powerful, whereas the church itself becomes reduced and sometimes dissolved” (2016b, p. 53). What he refers to in this case is the two Congolese Churches in Durban, South Africa that are being assisted by two South African ministers. As mentioned earlier, for Wyller the dissolution of the Church means that it suspends its pastoral power, which has been traditionally attributed to discipline and control . To receive the gift of salvation, one has to submit to the technology of continuous care (Sander, Villadsen and Wyller 2016). But going

back to the relation between space and agency, Wyller nonetheless concludes that traditional religious space should dissolve in order for it to claim that it also renders agency for others by suggesting that “ (T)he original ecclesial space is vanishing, another lived space develops, and this forms the core of a heterotopic ecclesiology” (2016b, p.56). In my discussion, the connection between these two concepts will be in line with Wyller’ dissolution of the church’s pastoral power or the stepping back of church so that the agency of the others is enhanced. However, the contextual question remains, what if the church is still intact with all its traditional form? Can we find traces of agency even though people acts in a space wherein pastoral power pervades?

As mentioned, some refers to the Filipino Christian Church as the church of *au pairs*. It might be correct in some ways. When I conducted my own fieldwork in that church, I noticed how prominent the presence of *au pairs* were in that church. The ones who gave the sermon, testimonies, and members of the worship team were either former or current *au pairs*. The Filipino Christian Church is an explicitly Pentecostal church. The worship service is filled with the usual songs accompanied by a band, dancing and usual order in the service: sermon, testimony, giving of tithes and offering. It could still be characterized as very traditional form of Christian church. It looks like to what Foucault refers as heterotopia of compensation like the colonies in southern America in the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries where the lives of the people were perfectly ordered (Foucault 1984). The same can be claimed for the Sunday worship of the Filipino Christian Church. It is ordered from the worship service itself to the small gathering in the church cafeteria. All the activities are familiar, following the same patterns as always, and routinely done by the churchgoers. They know what is going to take place in the church, as they have been there many times before, and have learned how to participate. The actions and dynamics mentioned above that occur inside the FCC’s space may seem trivial. However, following Wyller in his interpretation of the Congolese people’s actions during the worship service where they pray, dance, sing, etc. to perform embodied powerful and joyful agencies (2016b, p.52), a different picture would probably emerge. Members of the FCC seems to perform the same joyful and powerful agencies when they sing in the worship team, give testimonies of trials that they overcome, the clapping and singing, the ushering, the giving of tithes, etc. These actions and activities are performed under that church space that is explicitly and traditionally Pentecostal, and can be said to be as something that does not dissolve from its original form. Thus, connection of space and agency might not only mean the dissolution of the traditional or original form of the church, in this case at least.

Furthermore, by extension, the relation could also involve depending on how others use of that particular religious space's activities, I am going to elaborate on this later and on the next chapter. Others in this particular space produce practices that may indicate them as agents especially when they are the main actors in ordering that space. Even the churchgoers who are just participating in the service could still perform agency by raising their hands as if to claim something from the heavens. The point here is this: by taking charge of the ordering of the space, even though the Filipino au pairs still participate in the activities that can be said to be along the traditional form of the church, their actions could still display marks of agency. By doing mundane and simple actions, one could not totally discount their agentic qualities. Even if FCC appears to maximize the talents and skills of its members in order to be a church every Sunday, nevertheless facilitates practices where participants emerge to be the dominant figures in that space. There were those who play the music, sings, in charge of the sound system, preaching, leading, cooking, etc. This sort of employing its members could be interpreted as traces as one of the effects of the church's pastoral power. FCC organizes itself by assigning tasks to lifeline groups. I am not quite sure who is deciding in these matters in the church. My point is that there are certain rules that members have to adhere to or commitments to fulfill in order to be part of the church, as what Foucault states " a form of power that commands" (1982, p.783). FCC may not only command but it also permeates in this space or to put it simply it does not dissolve from its original form. This might be a given consequence as the FCC is actually the one that initiated in organizing people to be a church. It looks like this religious space, by receiving and employing others, provides a space where the others have the chance to advance for the next stage in life. Hence, the Filipino au pairs seem to be able to have a breathing room provided by FCC in order for them to plan or envision their next step after their au pair contract expires. That planning or envisioning might be enhanced and developed through the above-mentioned church activities to which they are not only active participants but also active architects.

It is challenging to empirically establish the connection between church activities or ordering and how it contributes to the agency of au pairs. However I use my empirical material to theoretically discuss how there may be traces of the au pairs being capable of deciding for their own purpose in life, especially if one focuses on the actions or lived space of others (Wyller 2016, building on Lefebvre). In Wyller's observation in the Congolese church, he notes the embodied practices and how it compliments to the agency of the others involved in that religious space. Consequently, these practices where the encounters between people

happen in such a way that the embodied experiences also enhances the agency of the people (2016b, p. 52). Wyller is specifically referring to the religious practice of worship service where the embodied practices and experiences of singing, dancing, testimony, the content of a particular song was repeatedly sang for emphasis, the bodies that go with the rhythms of the songs, etc. Filipino au pairs do more than this. They are actually in charge of facilitating of the whole worship service until the gathering in the church cafeteria.

When I conducted my fieldwork I came there a little bit ahead of the worship service. I noticed there were already some young Filipinas standing at the entrance of the church building. I suspected they were au pairs who are members of the of the lifeline group assigned during that Sunday to ushering guests, usual churchgoers and members. As mentioned previously, based on my talk with one of the members of the church the work and activities there are routinely assigned to lifeline groups. In this section I will explore how practices within this religious space may contribute to the development of the capacities of participants. For instance by given the task to usher one may develop self-confidence to meet and greet other people or a sense of responsibility and ownership of that space. The act of welcoming visitors for example might signify that they are part of the inside space or group and as such they are responsible for maintaining the ordering of the space that furthers their sense of ownership of it. This may shade their everyday routines with their host families. Here, they may also have responsibilities that may provide opportunities. However, the difference is that their participation in this religious space may provide another kind of subjectivity. They were not only au pairs in FCC but they are someone capable of doing things aside from the usual tasks that their work as au pairs entails. In this religious space they are singers, dancers. Some are even becoming to develop leaders in church, worship leaders, etc.

It seems that pointing out how the church withdraws itself from the center may not be the only direction to pursue to find the connection between space and agency. The point is that even though pastoral power still permeates in certain practices in the FCC, I still think it could provide agency for the au pairs, as I have tried to show. In the following three sub chapters I will point out alternative propositions and interpretations to the trajectory of “dissolution”.

### **5.1 Heterotopia of Compensation**

In my theory chapter I gave an account of Foucault’s introduction of heterotopia of compensations where he describes well-ordered and regulated spaces. That detailed

description of a well-ordered and regulated space seems to illustrate the Sunday worship service of FCC. It was also well organized in some ways, from the moment one enters the building you could notice that there are young Filipinas standing near the door of the church that appeared to wait for the door of the main hall to open. They knew when was the right time for them to enter. While at the same time, in order maybe to strictly ensure and regulate the entry of people inside the main hall, there were some young Filipinos also in charge who were allowed to go inside. The reason for this was that the worship team was rehearsing before the service starts. The entry to the main hall was regulated until the worship starts at 2:30 pm when everyone can go in. The service itself was rigorously ordered. Like in most church services, there were rituals and routines to go through. The worship leader welcomed everyone; there was singing, opening prayer, giving of tithes and offering, preaching, testimonies, announcements, then closing prayer. Afterwards there was a small gathering at the church cafeteria where some simple Filipino food and drinks prepared by one particular lifeline group in charge in that particular Sunday was served. During the gathering in the cafeteria it was quite noticeable how members group themselves. At the entrance of the door there were men standing close to where their wives and children were, at the left side corner from the counter most young Filipinas also converged and at the side of the cafeteria's counter there were different groups of people. I do not imply that the FCC is controlling the space in a negative manner, as it is apparent that any space of gathering needs certain order. What I am trying to describe and contend here is that FCC's ordering of the Sunday service displays some similar features comparable to that of Foucault's description of the Jesuits colonies in South America in 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries. However, Foucault did not indicate the role of the people in the Jesuit colonies. There is no description of how the people there used the space. Although the FCC may seem to routinely and rigorously organize these two main activities –the worship service and the church gathering – participants themselves also participate in the construction of the above-mentioned practices. Moreover, they may use this religious space for other reasons that could be interpreted to develop their agency. At first look one may see the dominating presence where the participants adhere to the norms of the FCC. And, therefore, maybe the space of compensation FCC provides for the Filipino au pairs manifests in its Sunday worship service and the gathering in the church cafeteria. There is more to this, participants seem to compensate in that regulated religious space and not only the FCC. In most Pentecostal churches and some Christian denominations, worship service and the church gathering are typical features. But it may have another significance on the way participants or churchgoers use these spaces. I will further elaborate on this utilization of

space in the proceeding sub chapter. However, my contention here is that Filipino au pairs make a decision to participate in this religious space. That decision is born out of the awareness that disruption from their daily work as au pairs is a necessity as well based on some of the narratives of my informants. It could be that this is a way of compensating to whatever reasons that emerge from their migratory experiences and processes. It appears that the process of compensation here is two-fold. The first is the way the FCC organizes on Sundays and the small meetings in lifeline groups. Second is the way Filipino au pairs compensate through these activities or programs. One of informants stated: “(...) *when I was invited by my friend here at FCC (...) I said to myself: they are approachable (...) they call you always. When I joined the lifeline, we gather together every weekend. That is why you must have a plan before the weekend so you would not be bored in your apartment (...) When I was able to join a lifeline group I did not only have some people to hang out with but they ask how are you doing (...) they take care of you. Even though you are not with your family, there are people who take care of you*” (my own translation from Tagalog to English). To quote Johnson, regarding heterotopias, “(it) they interrupt the discontinuity of time (...) offer a protected space, haven or sanctuary” (2013, p. 799, quoting De Cater and Dehaene, 2008). Filipino au pairs work from Monday to Friday. Their weekends especially Sundays, from around 2:30 to 5:30, are often spent in the church and some hours during Saturday evenings are with spent for lifeline groups.

Though their weekdays might not be ill constructed or messy as what Foucault suggests in relation to the outside space of the colonies. Their status as au pairs could nonetheless be considered ill constructed. For example by how the Norwegian Immigration Department, through its provision of non-European au pairs, removes them from the overarching welfare system. This exclusion from particular rights in the system could be interpreted as Agamben’s state of exception, where he explains this kind of legal exclusion of particular groups. Therefore, these interruptions they experience on weekends at FCC seem to compensate for their legal status as au pairs that may be understood as messy. Yet this compensation, as mentioned previously, cannot be interpreted solely from the way the FCC organizes its space. The au pairs themselves appear to figure prominently in the process of compensating. This is unlike what happens in the Jesuits colonies that Johnson characterizes as almost like prison (2006, p. 79). It may be rightly so when one’s existence is regulated in every turn (Foucault 1982). As I have stated earlier in this section, my interpretation posits that there are two levels of compensation. First, the members of FCC compensate through being active

participants in the church activities but they are also the ones creating and doing these activities. These acts like dancing, singing and the giving of tithes provide some sort of stability that can be ascribed to what Foucault refers to as compensation because the outside space is 'messy and ill constructed' characterized by their legal status with out stable provision from the overarching Norwegian laws. Second, as these actions occur in a religious space that gives opportunities for Filipino au pairs to construct their own "modes of ordering" (Hetherington 1997), it turns out that FCC seems to provide alternative stability. This will be discussed later in the next chapter that presents the legal otherness of Filipino au pairs. Yet this religious space cannot be totally paralleled to Foucault's heterotopia of compensation he never specified the role of people in that space. It only illustrated them as subservient to that space similar to the confines of prison wherein constellation of controlling power pervades in every facet of existence.

The following is the explication of another possible connection of religious space and agency, namely - new modes of ordering. Although quite similar to the idea of heterotopia of compensation in relation to the connection of religious space and agency, it differentiates how people in margins or, in this case, the Filipino au pairs, utilize space.

## **5.2 New Ways of Ordering**

In his book *The Badlands of Modernity* (1997). Kevin Hetherington works with the concept of heterotopia in a comprehensive way. In his concluding statement about the role of the Palais Royal, one of the examples that his introductory analysis of heterotopia revolves around, suggests that: "(T)he Palais Royal, then, was not in itself utopia; it was not the model of a new society but contained within its walls, arcades and coffeehouses a transitional moment, or point of passage (...) a space in which new processes of social ordering were tried out" (1997, p.18). To put Hetherington's statement in context, what he is referring to here is the role Palais Royal, as heterotopia, played during the French revolution. It was in this place where people gathered to talk about politics, envisioned and planned for the new ordering. The Palais Royal itself offered an alternate ordering the moment people gathered at its space, a transitional moment or point of passage (Hetherington 1997). They were under the power of the physical structure of the Palais Royal, its arcade, cafe, etc. in which they converged to do other activities such as talking, debating and planning. And I wonder whether it could be the same in the case of FCC and the Filipino au pairs. The FCC offers a space for its members under the auspices of its pastoral power. The same as the way Palais Royal was planned and

constructed. People inside its space must literally act and conform in particular ways according to what it offers: gardens, arcades, shops, theaters, opera, etc. However, these specific spaces that are located inside the Palais Royal do not only offer something based on their specific spatiality such as eating, entertaining, shopping, etc. They also provided opportunity for people to do other activities than the space was constructed and intended for, once they enter the space. And these 'other activities' - the planning, plotting and debating - that people did were the ones that transformed French society in the onset of the French revolution. The same can be somehow claimed to the way Filipino au pairs utilize the space given or provided to them by the FCC. Although Filipino au pairs move around in this religious space through which one might observe as under seeming influence of pastoral power, they use this submission to that power to their own advantage. As my informant claims regarding the church as her second family, she says that, and I quote verbatim, “ *this is my first time to be separated from my family (...) it is so far from home (...) lifeline is a big help, it seems like I found my own sisters in Christ (...) it really seem they consider you as a family (...) you have an accountability partner to whom you can (also) share your secrets (...) it is also a requirement in the lifeline (group) but it depends on you if you share (...)*”. This seeming negotiation of that requirement to be fully or completely recipient of the gift of care from the group or the church apparently confirms the contention that dissolution of pastoral power is not the only connection between religious space and agency. There is also the utilization of space by people involve in a particular space. It produces new dynamics that in turn produces alternate orderings of space. As Rønsdal states “ (...) even strongly regulated spaces are constantly being negotiated; this negotiation creates a potential for new practices (...) socialities, and other realities, where the person considered other is not solely a victim calling out for aid” (2018, p. 43). The above statement of my informant is of course taken as a verbal claim but the fact that she is involved in activities in the church in which she participated to create realities that still perform in a normal and conventional ecclesiology is a testament of her agency. As I will explicate thoroughly in the next chapter, agency is foregrounded first as a project that is cognitively planned before executed through actions. There is nothing new in these church activities but they take another meaning if they are interpreted in relation to Filipino au pairs' weekday experience in the work with their host families.

Another significant idea of this new or alternate modes ordering in a heterotopic space Hetherington suggests is his contention that heterotopia, in this case the Palais Royal, is a



transitory space or a point of passage where new processes of social ordering were experimented (Hetherington 2016). As I have mentioned, this section appears to be related to the previous one that Foucault's heterotopia of compensation exposes the jumbled mess that we tend to live in (Johnson 2006, p.79). Both points of view regarding heterotopia tend to compliment each other employed in connection to Filipino au pairs' utilization of religious space provided by the FCC that in turn seem to reinforce their agency. The status of Filipino au pairs, as immigrants tend to be transitory in nature. They only have a two-year contract but this period seems to be used by many Filipino au pairs as a "stepping-stone", to use the popular term, or a mechanism to reach their envisioned place or status. As mentioned earlier in the introductory and background chapters, their objective to work as au pairs is not only primarily based on learning other culture or language but may be most importantly to achieve stability beyond that two-year period: as students, permanent workers, some even find their life partners, etc. This envisioning of some sort of utopia is born out of the recognition of the fact that their lives may be not as orderly hence the act of compensation by way of venturing to go abroad. This is further enhanced when they choose to participate in this religious space that gives new subjectivities or simply rekindles it during the transitory period of two years. Therefore, if this line of analysis is to be further pursued, the 'dissolution' as the only possible connection of religious space and agency appears to become only as one of the links and the proposal that agency intrinsically exists in human beings may be developed. This is not to contend that the dissolution of the church is not a crucial in enhancing the agency of others as what Wyller (2016) contends. However, it could be placed in the periphery not as the center or the dominant trajectory to pursue in the discussion that pastoral power must be dissolved in order to provide agency to others. Because if this is so, if the conversation of religious space and agency would only rely on this one particular perspective, is it not curtailing the agency of others?

The following section is the last discussion regarding the relation between space and agency that could lead to the discussion on this subject.

### **5.3 Agency as Intrinsic**

The trajectory I am now taking in the discussion on the relation between religious space and agency focuses and lends another dimension to the dissolution of the pastoral power. As such I have tried to contend that even though the power of the church appears not to be dissolved, Filipino au pairs could still assert their agency. Federico Settler, in his essay "A Postcolonial

Perspective on Religion and Migration”, suggests “the mind work components of agency as of crucial importance in migratory processes (...) much of what people actually do is foregrounded by imaging, planning and strategizing” (2018, p. 111, quoting from Pessar and Mahler). Settler further states, “ Deliberation, planning, and collaboration predates that of the makeshift church” (ibid). What Settler is referring to here is the case of the Jungle church built by refugees in the refugee camp in Calais, France. In this case Settler introduces migrants beyond the discourse of being either villain or victim and thus contend for their agency by invoking their religious belief through which they were able to build this structure with careful planning and strategizing in the context of a very difficult situation of their migratory experiences and processes. In view of this, it appears that agency naturally emanates from human beings regardless of what space they are in. In the case of the FCC that provides space for Filipino au pairs, their relationship cannot only be discussed spatially. There are certain elements involved in this, and as mentioned it is also about power- pastoral power to be more specific. I am not saying that this is not essential prerequisite in order to provide space for others, in fact I definitely agree with the position of the dissolution of church pastoral power. But what I am trying contend is that even if the church does not dissolve, people inside there could still make means to use that pervading power of the church for their own advantage. Settler states “agency as a form of power (...) and agency as project – a form of intention and desire, as the pursuit of goals and the enactment of projects” (ibid, quoting from Ortner). My objective here is not to criticize FCC in relation to its seeming control of Filipino au pairs but to present another dimension in the conversation of religious space and agency. I have built on Settler, and have as starting point that people, also on those margins, have in them intrinsic agency that enables them also within strictly regulated spaces. Moreover, they are able to use the spaces they are in for their own advantage. Even if that space is in the midst of a pervading power that commands, they may still be asserting their agency. For instance, based on my conversation with one of the lifeline leaders in the FCC, the church organizes life line groups to do different tasks in the church: making food every Sunday, welcoming committee, cleaning the cafeteria after, sing in the worship service and many other activities in the church. These activities that may be said to have marks of that commanding power may impact Filipino au pairs differently when it is used for their own agentic agenda (Wyller 2016b). This is not necessarily because the pastoral power dissolves but the Filipino au pairs have their own power, not necessarily to resist it, but they have the ability to transform these power dynamics for their own end. To refer to Fanon might be a fitting way to culminate this section, in his concluding statement regarding his call to the

colonized world he says “ (W)e must shake off the great mantle of night which has enveloped us, and reach for the light. The new day which is dawning must find us determined, enlightened and resolute” (1963, p. 235). What Fanon is referring to here is the struggle of the colonized against colonial powers but as credence of the ability of the marginalized to become masters of their fate is relevant also to Filipino au pairs’ intrinsic agency.

## **Conclusion**

In this chapter I have identified the possible connection of religious space and agency by drawing on the work of Wyller in which he suggests that the dissolution of the pastoral power of the church is an essential part of enhancing the agency of others or the marginalized in our religious organizations or communities. My point of departure is not to contend against this but to offer a situation where the church does not seem to be dissolved and yet the interpretation still shows traces of agency among those who may at times be vulnerable. In order to support this premise I have presented three sections: the heterotopia of compensation drawn from the work of Foucault, new ways of ordering from Hetherington and lastly the suggestion that agency is intrinsic in people which was drawn from Settler and Fanon.

In the section of heterotopia of compensation I discussed that even in the most regulated spaces, others are not totally devoid of agency if they are the ones producing those regulated activities or they play an active role. In the section on the new ways of ordering, I discussed that even though others must submit to the spatial requirements in order to participate in that particular religious space, they might still perform or assert their agency because it depends on how they utilize space. In the last part of this chapter I stated that agency is intrinsic to human beings because they themselves have this kind of power that drives them to go beyond what is expected of them from outside world.

In the next chapter, I will discuss on how Filipino au pairs develop agency by using the religious space of FCC.

## **6.0 Developing Agency**

The previous chapter discusses the possible relationship between agency and religious space. The main premise is that the relation is not only the dissolution of the religious space but also how the au pairs utilize, compensate and ultimately how they may perform agency in that particular religious space. Wyller appears to end his argument on the supposed connection of

agency and religious space with the contention of the dissolution of the church pastoral power. He concludes with what counter-conduct hospitality might look like in a religious space. That is, how the church steps back and let the spaces of others become central in order to enhance the agency of others. So, my question is, how do others act after space is given to them? Or, *How Filipino au pairs develop their agency in this religious space?*

The question posed above, which is a slightly reformulated version of the main research question of this paper, is not a simple one to answer. In the case of Filipino au pairs and maybe also in the case of the Bergsjøen church that Wyller and I use as material, the space that is given to others is not totally detached from those that provide them. There is still power at play there and that is the power to give the space that eventually dissolved in order to enhance the agency of others. In the case of the FCC, the power seems not to be dissolved but apparently permeates in this religious space. The contextual question might thus be: how do others develop agency in a tightly or regulated religious space? In the previous chapter I have tried to establish the supposed relation of agency and religious space. I have argued that even in the situation where power pervades the agency of others might still develop because of their inherent capacities. They develop this inherent agency through the utilization of the space.

In the following sub chapters I will elaborate on how they pursue their agentic agenda through their use of this religious space. The first part is the discussion on how they utilize this space as their familial extension. The second part is the how they utilize this space as a breathing room to plan for their next move in this migratory process.

### **6.1 Familial Extension**

Migration is a challenging decision or task to pursue even for those migrants who might have relatively better conditions in their countries of origin. However, there may be at least two levels to look at it. One entails the adverse effect of the process arriving and living in a new environment, the other is the dimension of intentionality of venturing to a foreign land. Filipino au pairs, as other foreign workers, have this desire or intention to look for better opportunities abroad, which in itself shows an agency. Sherry Ortner, in her book *Anthropology and Social Theory: Culture, Power and the Acting Subject* (2006), discusses the importance of intentionality in relation to agency by saying that it is the “(...) heart of what agency means. “Intentionality” here is meant to include a wide range of states, both cognitive

and emotional, and at various levels of consciousness, that are directed forward toward some end (...) intentionality as a concept is meant to include all the ways in which action is cognitively and emotionally pointed *toward* some purpose” (2006, p, 134). Following this line of argument regarding the crucial role intentionality plays in the concept of agency, it seems that there are two dimensions of agency. It is not only about acting but it is also foregrounded by planning and strategizing, or as Settler states regarding agency, that it is “mind work” (2018, p.111). Applying this to Filipino au pairs, their agency does not only signify concrete actions that will result to some future goals. But can also be interpreted first and foremost as the way they envision or plan things out through verbal claims. This is clearly a methodological issue but the excerpts from the interviews would serve as a compliment. The following discussion addresses this kind of dialectical order: first planning and then acting.

Aside from the two dimensions of agency, Filipino au pairs’ process of migration might seem to be manifested into two levels. It is first the concrete journey from their country of origin and the new country, the abstract process of attaining the goal of finding a better opportunity. In order to sustain the second part of the migration process, one has to be even more intentional because this is where the real challenge lies. This is the situation where reality bites because of homesickness, loneliness, etc. (Straiton, Ledesma & Donnelly 2017). Despite these apparent hurdles they face as migrants, they have found ways how to stay on course. The FCC is one spaces where they are able to have this opportunity of maybe feeling that they have a chance of pushing through with their plans. Filipino au pairs utilize this religious space as extension of their family back home. Almost all of my informants affirm this impression of their use of FCC. One of them says “ (...) *I have a friend who invited me here in the church. When I came here I realized that they are approachable (...) they (lifeline leaders) would always check on you if you are okay, you have someone to talk to (...) they (lifeline leaders) also share a Word for you. When I have my own lifeline, we gather every weekend that is why you must already have a plan so that you will not be bored (...) They (lifeline leaders) will take care of you even though you are not with your family (...) That is my impression of the church*”. Although they were all invited to join the FCC, there is a realization that this space could offer something more, something that is beneficial for them and that is the familial care they need. There is some sort of intentionality through which they might develop their agency by their use of this religious space. In other words, they use this religious space with the intention that there is something inside. There is mind work involved. They have a choice not

to go there but because they are cognitively and emotionally capable of recognizing that there is something useful in going to the church, they chose to accept the invitation.

My informant's familial ascription regarding FCC can be said to be culturally and historically predetermined. In Philippine society family plays an important and crucial role. Xiaojiang Yu, in her article *Influence of Intrinsic Culture: Use of Public Space by Filipina Domestic Culture in Hong Kong* states that "In the Philippines... a weak state and powerful political oligarchies have combined to make familial perspective on national history relevant" (2009, p. 105 referring to McCoy). She further states "The Philippines has a long history of a strong family system, assuring social survival (because)... The state also failed to provide the social services that many other nations provide (ibid). The interpretation regarding my informants' familial ascription to FCC might not be incidental but an intrinsic predisposition. A recognition that this religious space, that for them displays familial qualities, might provide something that might help them pursue their plans that resembles how the family system in the Philippines works. This is not because the Norwegian welfare system is weak but not applicable to them.

As Filipino au pairs chose to be part of this religious space through intentionality, they are implicated in the micro politics and power play in this religious space. This is not to say that they are totally detached from any other relations of power before they decided to be involved in FCC's space. This is the reason why I am discussing agency in the first place. But I will return to this discussion later in this chapter.

As noted earlier, FCC's pastoral power seems not to dissolve entirely but rather it pervades. But although this might be the case, it still somehow demonstrates marks that could be interpreted as empathy. These marks are the preparation of food for the Filipino au pairs or they themselves prepare, share and provide for each other, support and share responsibility in which they readily avail or do. In the following I will discuss these three traces of empathy: food and responsibility or doing things together that manifest in FCC's spaces which are the lifeline groups, the gathering in the cafeteria and the Sunday worship service that the Filipino au pairs consider as resembling as family.

## Food

I believe that there is a link between family and food. Helena Schmidt, in her master thesis on the meal and contemporary citizenship, claims that “(F)ood was associated with power and social organization, family (...)” (2013, p.77, referring to Counihan). In Filipino culture, family gatherings and all forms of socializing revolve around food. It is an important aspect when we meet to socialize. The quality of the gathering often depends on how good the food is, or if there is food, not only how one interacts with others in the party or how the host entertains its guests. One of my informants displayed this cultural aspect in relation to her lifeline group’s ascribed value. When I asked them how they deal with challenges, she says “*When we meet as a group, we decide, just like yesterday (they usually meet on Saturdays), they told me what are we going to have for dinner. I suggested to them ‘bulalo’ (a kind Filipino soup made of ox tail or bone marrow). Then we went to the Asian store. Then we headed to my apartment and we cooked*”. One of them interjects “*so that we could recharge*”, the other one says, “*so that we could forget our problems*”. In one instance I ask them how important the church is for them, one answers, “*food is important*”. My informants of course are also provided food by their host families as stipulated in their au pair contract but the food that they eat and experience in FCC has a different meaning to them.

Before I will explore this topic further, I want to make a distinction between two spaces in which food is of significance. First is the food that they themselves prepare when they gather in their lifeline group, and second is the food that the FCC provides and that is prepared by different lifeline groups every Sunday at the church cafeteria. In this section I will discuss the food that the au pairs prepare for each other in the lifeline group.

The FCC is responsible for organizing lifeline groups through which my informants must submit to its continuous care. There is leader assigned in every group, FCC is the one determining when to have lifeline group and which lifeline group au pairs are to be included into. For short, the FCC is the one regulating this space. It is, however, a different story when the au pairs act in these spaces provided to them for specific activities. One reason is the food that they themselves prepare to make them recharge and forget their problems. It is in this space they experience the sharing of food that might resemble a family gathering in the Philippines. The reason for this is that they cook and eat Filipino food when they gather in their lifeline group. This kind of food is not what they usually prepare and eat with their host families. In this case this space seems to become what Wyller calls “counter-sites” (2016, p.

68, quoting from Foucault). To put this in context, Wyller interprets the Rosengrenska/Bergsjøen church project as a counter-site because it offers something that the Swedish welfare state does not provide for to the undocumented migrants. They thus contest the outside space. In the same way the Filipino au pairs do in this space. It thus contests what is usually happening in their host families from Monday to Friday through making and eating different food. However, it is the au pairs themselves who are contesting, whereas in Wyller's case study it is Rosengrenska project/Bergsjøen church doing the contestation. Although one could also claim that the undocumented migrants, by being the primary participants in this contesting practice are also participating in the contestation.

This act of contestation by Filipino au pairs happens because of the seeming dissolution and at the same time apparent regulation of FCC's space in the lifeline group. This may appear contradictory but it may not be so. Although the FCC provides the space for lifeline groups for au pairs, it has no say over what they do inside the space. They are not just recipients of this space. They are also the ones taking charge of what happens inside. But at the same time they are also somehow under the control of the FCC's pastoral power because it is still the church that organizes this space. Therefore, to claim that the counter-conduct hospitality should be founded on the idea of the dissolution of the church ecclesial and spatial power should maybe not be the only perspective to be pursued and discussed. Power always involves spaces but these are not stable because they are either challenged or unchallenged by the use of the people implicated in that power relation. Wyller also admits that there is power within counter-conduct hospitality is power although it seems to dissolve in Bergsjøen church (2016, p.76). In the case of FCC's pastoral power, it is capitalized by Filipino au pairs for their own good because they themselves take the power and transform it by using the space provided for them for what they need, regardless of the intention behind providing it. The dissolution part of FCC's pastoral power might be might mean only as a limit. It has no total control over to what Filipino au pairs do, especially during lifeline groups.

### **Preparing Food as Power**

The previous section discusses about how Filipino's act through food preparation in a space that is born from a power that has the ability to organize and regulate. In the following I will address how this food preparation could counter and resist powers that Filipino au pairs in the FCC experience with their host families during the weekdays. All of my informants have issues regarding what they eat during the meals with their host families. They complain about



the kind of food they are preparing or eating. It is a cultural challenge that this happens within the home, which for Filipinos is associated with comforts, and food is one of the most important comforts. The term “host family” might only be strictly formal or legal label for au pairs. This is fairly evident when they always refer to the FCC as their family here in Norway. As such it is presumably fair to assume that the employee-employer relationship is the one that prevails (Martinsen 2014), though this is not always the case as there are many host families who develop deeper relationships with their au pairs. If the employee-employer relationship is the dominant relationship that the au pairs experience, then I think it is also safe to suspect that there is considerable amount of power imbalance in that relationship.

This power imbalance is somehow aggravated because of the way the au pair scheme is practiced and viewed by both the au pairs and their host families. According to Martinsen “attributes of domestic work are all present in ‘au pair’ work” (2014, p.34). If this is the recurring practice among au pairs and their host families where the cultural exchange rubric is non-existent, then basically au pairs are domestic workers in disguise. Most of my informants often report of working more than the hours agreed in the contracts. Even those who have no issues with the amount of work they do still attribute their being au pairs as workers, not fully participating in cultural exchange. It is apparent when some of them express how surprised they were when they first saw the size of the house of their host families. Their amazement was not out of appreciation but because they realized the enormous amount of work it would entail. The space that au pairs inhabit may not actually become a home for them but a work place (Martinsen 2014). Thus, au pairs are in a very unique position because the food that they prepare and cook, as part of their work, is also the food that they eat. The most basic dialectic here is that the worker cannot dictate what kind of work to do but it is the employer in charge for whatever task to be done. Although in some instances, subordinates in workplace could sometimes give suggestions, it is still common that the leader is the one calling the shots. Especially in the Philippines where culturally the power relation index between employer and employee is wide. This kind of thinking, I believe, might be carried over by most of the Filipino au pairs where they are subservient to their employers.

The discussion above serves as a starting point to why food becomes a crucial part of au pairs’ life, particularly the situation of my informants who are members of the FCC. Why their experience of food in their lifeline group, and also during the gathering in the church cafeteria every Sunday, seem to invoke essential element regarding their journey as migrants

and how they develop agency in a religious space. As noted earlier in this section, the narratives imply how important the food is for the au pairs. It is a way to recharge or energize and as a coping mechanism. However, for Schmidt, “food become(s) potential ways of acting against the system (...) a powerful expression of culture and identity” (2013, p. 82 referring from Ugelvik). The contextual interpretation of this claim is that in enclosed situations like for example prisons, food becomes either a form of oppression or resistance. Prisoners are sometimes served food that is not in compliance with their perception of how food should be prepared (ibid). Like for example they make other innovative ways to do it by using other means such as heat from the light bulb for frying or heater for steaming food (ibid).

My own interpretation of the material regarding food is not only anchored on its expediency to the au pairs but also in the kind of food they make and eat that differs from what they experience in their host homes. By doing so, I am hoping to be able to explore how my informants use the space of the lifeline group to develop an argument of their possible exercise of agency. In their lifeline group they make Filipino food that they like and miss eating. It gives them satisfaction, energy and some sort of empowerment to cope with their problems. In this space, they have the power to choose what food to prepare and eat. Although my material is not determined whether au pairs have a say in what food to prepare for their host families. But I assume that they have not because, as noted previously, making food is part of their work. As such, in an employee-employer relationship, the employee has a limited amount of power to influence the work to be done, especially in this line of work – domestic work. Consequently, in this interpretation, the lifeline becomes a heterotopic space where the concepts of food making and food itself are contested and inverted. My informants contest by making a different food, a Filipino food, in this space. Au pairs are making Filipino food that is very different from what they probably prepare for and eat with their host families. I am particularly familiar with the dish referred to above. It takes a long time to cook it, probably 2 to 3 hours. The reason for this is that the meat is hard and needs time to soften by boiling. This is really different from what my informants experience when they cook and eat with their host families. Two of them describe this difference, “ *when I saw their food for the first time, is this their food? This is only snack for us, I never thought that pasta is already a heavy meal form them* ”. The other one also has the same perception, she says “ *They (her family) asked me when I went home for vacation: what are you eating there (Norway)? (I only eat) boiled potatoes and broccoli. They told me: will you be satisfied? Because usually we eat boiled (vegetables) then meat* ”. Moreover, my informants invert the understanding of

food; that it is more than just something that gives you nourishment or that you eat for the sake of eating. It is also enjoyment of completely forgetting your problems for a while, or to reinvigorate ones lethargic feeling.

Foucault's fourth principle of heterotopia is often associated with slices of time by way of accumulating it or its opposite nature of transitory or fleeting nature of time (1986, p.26). The examples that he presents whereby accumulation of time occurs are the heterotopias of library and museum. He also exemplifies with festivals, vacation villages and circuses where time is fleeting. It breaks the traditional or linear concept of time. This maybe what happens in the lifeline group. It breaks the ordinary schedule of my informants as au pairs. The concrete break from their mundane or usual work schedule is the preparation and eating of food. Foucault's use of festivals, where time seems to be in its transitory or fleeting nature, as an example become particularly interesting in this context, as festivals play an a particularly important role in Philippine culture. In the Philippines a very important part of festivals, both religious and secular is food, specifically in small towns and villages. Almost every family and household would prepare food for their visitors and accommodate even those whom they do not know or someone who just happens to pass by. People in villages would use great sums of money to prepare for that one particular day of the year. In discussing this trait of heterotopia, Foucault states that there is a precarious aspect in the mode of festival. The element of uncertainty in Filipino festivals is that of financial terms. There is a risk whether they have something to live on after spending much money for that one occasion. In the case of my informants the uncertainty there may be is that this lifeline group does not last. It only happens once a week. But it is the same fact that gives them comfort because they intend to do it every week. The crucial element is not the interval of time but what is happening inside. The preparing and eating of food together give them not only a break in time but most importantly break from the usual occurrence with their work.

The religious space of this lifeline group may display similar elements of the examples given by Foucault such as festivals or vacation villages. However, this space manifest something a little bit more than relaxation or break. It could be interpreted as something that reveals a more complex meaning for the au pairs. They develop their agency in this religious space because they have the freedom to choose the food that they want to prepare and eat and share with people they may consider as family here in Norway. The food might seem to play an

important role in this process of migration because it gives them the opportunity to recharge and makes them cope with challenges they face as migrants.

### **Responsibility as a Form of Power**

As discussed earlier in the previous chapter, members of the FCC are given certain responsibilities or tasks in the church. During my field work in the church, as mentioned, former au pairs played prominent roles in the ordering of the space of the church during worship service, in the preparation of the food for the gathering and during the welcoming of visitors. In a familial setting, to some degree, it can be presumed that members have different roles, for instance parents are the providers and children are expected to do minor tasks of cleaning their rooms or washing the dishes. These roles entail and constitute some sort of responsibility to be performed regularly like parents should have monthly income to maintain the stability at home and children may be assigned to their tasks weekly or daily. Aside from the perceived benefits that Filipino au pairs may have experienced, such as food, to which the au pairs ascribe value in relation to FCC' familial quality, performing tasks is also a prominent feature in this religious space.

As I have discussed, the tasks or activities performed by the members of the FCC are born out of power to command by the church itself. However, if these tasks are to be interpreted in a different light it might probably give some different perspectives. I have tried to present this discussion shortly in the previous chapter by noting that even though au pairs do these activities under the pervading pastoral power of the FCC, they could still pursue their own agentic agenda, which I interpret as a way for them to become agents. This is not necessarily because they want to resist this power but they simply use the space how they want to.

In what follows I will discuss more thoroughly how this may be interpreted in such a way that agency is not dissected against the backdrop of resistance to power. This might be possible not because there are no powers to resist but FCC is not conceived as the ultimate source of power structure that might restrict. Rather the FCC may also be a space wherein this interpretation I can claim contributes to Filipino au pairs' agency. The power that I will be referring to later in this section is the power outside of FCC's space to which Filipino au pairs and FCC contest. But in what follows I will discuss how Filipino au pairs maybe using this permeating pastoral power in FCC's religious space to their own advantage.

Saba Mahmood, in her essay entitled *Feminist Theory, Embodiment, and the Docile Agent: Some Reflections on the Egyptian Islamic Revival*, postulates “agency not as a synonym for resistance to relations of dominations, but as capacity for action that historically specific relations of subordination enable and create” (2001, p.203). Mahmood draws on the case of the Egyptian Muslim women in Cairo who became involved in the mosque’s movement that was part of the Islamic revival in Cairo, Egypt. In this movement Muslim women studied Islamic scriptures, social practices and proper conduct of women according to Qur’an. This was a new development because the study of scriptures had always been the associated with men. Mahmood further notes that this may not be as appealing to the secular feminist movement, especially in the West that contends for the agency of women around the world in which resistance against subordination and domination, particularly from religious structures is the dominant discourse.

There may be some parallels between Filipino au pairs in the FCC and the Egyptian women. Both seem to be implicated in the power relations pervading in their respective religious institutions. Mahmood situates the Egyptian women’s active support for the mosque movement as detrimental for their own interests and agenda in a time where emancipatory mechanisms were available (2001, p. 202). This assertion is due in part of the critique about Islam’s patriarchal tendency where women seem to be subordinated to men. This criticism is exactly what Mahmood wanted to challenge because it seems that external perception, particularly from the western liberal feminist movement, has taken the agency from Muslim women. The Egyptian women in Mahmood’s work actively supported Islam revival to which they seemed to reassert women modesty and piety. The immediate and external consequence of this is the donning of their veil. At first glance these women may be seen as dominated by the power of Islamic predisposition to limit women’s rights and movements within the larger Islamic society. For Mahmood there are also other ways to look at this. Drawing on the example of pianist who is willing to undergo rigid submission of disciplinary practices in order to master the craft of playing the piano, Mahmood adds another layer to the concept of agency (2001, p. 210). She infuses the docility of the subject to learn the piano with his or her own agency. By doing so, Mahmood opens up the discussion that being docile is actually a requirement for learning. There is an element that does not only imply passivity but also being flexible to undertake a struggle to achieve a certain goal (ibid). This is somewhat similar to Ortner’s conception of agency where it is delineated into two forms: power and project.

Filipino au pairs in the FCC each have their role to play in the ordering of the church. They are given responsibilities that may seem to bind them in the pastoral power of a church that commands. But these responsibilities that I have also claimed to be interpreted as detrimental to their agency are being performed with the goal of achieving something. I mentioned in the previous chapter how FCC seems to employ the talents of its members from preaching, singing, playing of musical instruments, ushering, cooking, etc. Following the discourse of western liberal conception regarding agency, it may appear that members in the FCC are subordinated under the ecclesial power of the church to which agency is non-existent because subjects are not challenging or resisting this power that made them do these responsibilities assigned to them. However, by interpreting these activities in an opposite direction, we may see another angle whereby people use these roles and responsibilities to their own advantage. For example one could develop confidence in public speaking when ask to preach, sing in the worship service. Even the giving of tithes and offering could contribute to the development of their sense of pride. They are not always the recipient of help but also capable of giving – that they have something to offer. These supposed responsibilities are performed in a perceived familial milieu wherein doing things together may not really be a big issue, but rather a foundational aspect of achieving something beyond liberation and freedom. This was manifested in one of my informants’ narrative “ *(T)he church is really a big thing, for us, because we have one goal and that is to grow more in relationship with God. We did not expect this in the Philippines, we have opportunity here (in Norway) and there is another purpose. I admit that these past few weeks I have been struggling with depression (...). We tried to connect to the sermon to celebrate*”. Despite all the seeming utilization of the church of their members’ services or skills, it still impacts them in a more different way. In Mahmood’s interpretation of the Egyptian women involved in the mosque movement, they became active supporters of the Islamic revival to reassert Muslim women’s purpose or goal to be pious and modest. In my case, my informant’s goal is to have a deeper relationship with God. The opportunity she has found here in Norway appears to be the secondary goal. It seems she still needs God to survive in this opportunity she is pursuing. This might show the complexity of the concept of agency. It has a diverse implication in different contexts.

## **6.2 Breathing Space**

The first part of this chapter discusses how Filipino au pairs use the religious space of FCC as an extension of their family through which they might be able develop their own agenda. In

this section, I will discuss how they use FCC as a space or what I call here as ‘breathing space’ while staying on course or their next move in the process of migration. I will particularly pay attention to the space during worship service and the gathering in the church cafeteria, but I will also refer to the narratives of my informants. As noted, the first part of this chapter focuses on the aspect of agency as mind work whereby agents cognitively create their projects in their mind. This is interpreted through the narratives during my focus group interview. In this section I will try to interpret the actions of people during my fieldwork at FCC particularly the Sunday service regarding responsibility or roles of the members of the FCC.

In the gathering at the church cafeteria I personally experienced the dynamics in that space. It was a space where many things happened. It was not only a place where one avails free food offered by the church but also where one would socialize and where I interpret caring or empathy exists in the space. I had first-hand experience of this kind of perceived emotional ascription in this space. During my fieldwork there I was assisted by one of the members of the church who happens also to be my friend and a schoolmate at the university. During my conversation with her I notice how willing she was to answer all my queries regarding the church set up. She explicitly told me I could just ask everything that I needed to know. In response I was unconsciously also asking about her studies. After that she guided me to take my own food. When I was there lining up to get food, I met some acquaintances asking how I was doing. I was able to have a short conversation with a friend about life here in Norway. I was even asked by one of my informants how my thesis was going. In short, I was involved in that space. As student-researcher subject I was there to gather and observe data but that is only one of my categories operating in that encounter. I was also being touched emotionally by the encounter I experienced people as caring. As Wyller states “ (R)eligion is more than we think it is. It is also about skin, about being touched, about tracing the transcendent through the embodied, among other things” (2018, p. 87). This methodological technique informed by phenomenology introduces the researcher subject into the process of data collection with conscious experience (Wyller 2018 and Spickard 2014). Drawing on this, my interpretations of the space at the gathering in church cafeteria did not confirm empirically if there were really actions involving caring or empathy but through my experience with people there I assumed subjectively that there was. And I wonder if others have the same experience in that space.

In one instance I noticed that my friend who assisted one of the mothers by carrying her baby so as to seemingly help her, the food that was prepared to feed the people there and the men standing to seemingly give the sips for other visitors are actions that can be interpreted as empathy or care. There seemed to be awareness that there are people around them. Wyller defines empathy as an implication that “there are bodies outside of myself” (2016, p. 66, referring to Zahavi). That may be why my friend who helped me during that day was more than willing to do so because she was aware that there was another body that needed assistance. One does not need for spectacular acts of empathy or caring to be touched or moved. It only needs a simple gesture to feel that one is recognized in a particular space.

In this regard, the gathering at the church cafeteria might offer something that may contribute to the development of agency for the Filipino au pairs. A space wherein their embodied legal or social otherness, as someone who is put in a liminal space is given recognition.

### **Au Pairs Legal Otherness**

As mentioned au pairs are in a unique position. They are not workers and not students either. They are in an ambiguous zone, a space whereby the overarching Norwegian welfare laws are suspended from them. This is in a way similar to what Agamben calls a state of exception wherein law is defined based on its limitation or threshold (2005, p.5). The immediate implication of the suspension of the law, as a paradox, it abandons the living being to the law (Agamben 2005). In the case of the non-European au pairs, including Filipino au pairs, they are referred to another state department, the Norwegian Immigration office. In this office they are seemingly put under the control and mercy of their host family. One example of this is according to Martinsen is that a residence permit issued to a non-EU/EEA au pair is directly dependent on the host family's placement application and is conditional in nature (2014, p.31). As a result the residence permit impliedly allows host families to influence 'au pair' working conditions in ways advantageous to them (ibid). Furthermore, as foreign non-workers they are not registered in the agency for foreign workers and therefore not entitled to the basic welfare program of the receiving state, in this case Norway. An immediate and concrete implication of this judicial ruling is that in instances of conflict between host families and au pairs, they are encouraged to settle things through a non-government organization namely Caritas Norway. There is no concrete provision in the au pair contract that they could ask for assistance from the welfare office for example for financial help while waiting or looking for another host family or employer.



### **When Au pairs Act**

Earlier in this chapter I discussed agency as a mind work, a project. Drawing on the work of Ortner, I tried to look for signs of agency in the narratives of my informants where they formulate their plans cognitively with intention. And that there is something beneficial in the church, particularly in their lifeline group. In what follows I will discuss the other aspect of agency as power, an action. There are of course many ways and spaces where the agency of au pairs maybe asserted. What I am going to discuss here is the interpretation of the spaces in FCC: the gathering in the church cafeteria and the worship service wherein they might develop their agency, which I mentioned briefly in the early part of this subchapter.

Fanon interpreted the violence used by the colonized as an act to counter the colonizers' oppression, which was also plagued with violence. He did not indicate that the colonized are inherently violent rather that violence is used as a tool, a form power or the last course of action. He says, in pushing the colonized to realize their independence from foreign occupiers, "(W)e are powerful in our right and the justness of our position" (1963, p. 60). Violence is of course not the tool through which the Filipino au pairs in the FCC develop their agency but through other activities they are involved in or initiate. What Fanon may have tried to contend is that the colonized were capable of dictating the destiny of their own nation, an innate ability for national consciousness regardless of what obstacles that may hinder achieving this goal. In the same way Filipino au pairs act on their project despite the limited rights they have. My interpretation shows that this agency is also developed in FCC's space.

In the latter part of the preceding subchapter, I discussed agency as something that is not necessarily a form of resistance to power but a requirement to achieve something, which is also a negotiation to power. Here in this section, agency is explored as direct opposition to power that resides outside of this religious space. The Norwegian government excludes them from the welfare system. As noted earlier, Filipino au pairs navigate in a liminal space because of their legal status as non-workers and non-students at the same time. Through the involvement in the church, they have access to spaces that they may use as a breathing space. The FCC does not offer anything the welfare system does but the simple act of providing space where they gather, eat, and socialize might mean something for the au pairs. Wyller contends the importance of such act evident in his borderland religion reflections by supposing that what counts the most is the "(...) mingling, (...), being together, speaking the native language, reporting from the week's events, (...), and simply being together and

sharing when the service is over” (2018, p. 94). The lived space in the gathering at the church cafeteria at FCC is not a magnificent space where au pairs receive the gift of the welfare state. Rather, in this space they act as if they are part of something that resembles the normalcy of life that they have back in the Philippines. They eat simple Filipino food, they socialize with fellow Filipinos, and they might get information regarding other options on how to stay longer in Norway, job referrals, something that may not be available outside of this space.

Furthermore, the roles they have in the ordering of the Sunday worship might also have particular meaning. They are given responsibilities during Sunday service - they are ushers, singers, cooks, etc. These tasks that they perform may not be essentially interpreted as exploitation of their labor but a way in which they might hone their other skills and potentials. Part of the welfare program is teaching people develop their own skills or acquire one through social welfare office. This program is not available for au pairs because of their legal otherness. However, in this space they have the chance to assert their own will.

In Agamben’s work, he seems to dismiss that people in very precarious situations can develop a sense of agency. In his examples of Jews during the Nazi regime in Germany and the detainees in Guantanamo, they are simply bodies ready to be either executed or given sentences. He might be right when living beings are abandoned to laws or outside of the laws that legitimize their placement in that liminal place. Still the question remains, what if human beings under the rigid implementation of laws act? Not necessarily to escape that place, but to do other things that might be seen as refusal as persons in the particular space? In other words, what if the detainees or the Jewish prisoners invoke other identities than just detainees or prisoners? What if Filipino au pairs assume other subjectivity than that of au pair? Using Fanon’s interpretation of the agency of the colonized people’s actions against the colonizers, I claim Agamben’s view is limiting the potential for humans to act, even in the most precarious situations. It may appear that the colonizers have the upper hand and underestimate the will of the colonized to challenge their power. Considering their military and economic might. Nonetheless human beings must not be underestimated when this is the only ‘weapon’ left.

## **Conclusion**

In this chapter I have pointed out and discussed how Filipino au pairs in FCC use this religious space in order to develop their agency. I interpret their membership and involvement

in FCC as something that may be attributed as their familial extension here in Norway. As such, there are characteristics that constitute FCC as family such as making and eating Filipino food and responsibilities similar to what occurs in the family setting in the Philippines. Food is a very important feature in Filipino families and gatherings. This has implications in relation to what they experience with their host families. Their making and preparing food is part of their job. This is the same food that they themselves eat and they might not have power to decide what kind of food to prepare and eat. What they experience in their lifeline group is something else. They have the power to choose what food to prepare and eat. This does not only give them what they need physically but also fulfills other needs, such as coping skills and emotional energy. Another feature of au pairs' ascription of the FCC as their family is responsibility. They might develop their agency by accepting roles and responsibilities from the church. In the second part of the chapter, I focused on the Sunday worship service and the gathering at the church cafeteria as possible breathing space for au pairs and pointed out how they in this space might develop their own agency. I interpret their actions in and use of these two separate spaces, both imbued with care and empathy on how they might utilize these spaces, imbued with care and empathy, as a way of asserting their own power.

## **7.0 Conclusion**

In this thesis I have tried to add another supposed connection between religious space and agency that centers on the discussion of the dissolution of pastoral power of the church posited by Trygve Wyller (2016). The aim has been to attempt answering the main question: How can Filipino au pairs develop their agency in this religious space?

The question can be answered in many ways, and it cannot only have one answer. In order to find answers I presented three suggestions by drawing on Foucault's concept of heterotopia of compensation, Hetherington's heterotopic spaces that created new ways of ordering and agency as intrinsic to human beings discussed by Settler, Ortner and Fanon. Through my interpretation of the FCC's worship service and the gathering at the church cafeteria, I was able to argue that Filipino au pairs may act to try to compensate in this religious space because of their supposed ill-conceived status by the UDI. They are excluded from the Norwegian welfare state because of their legality that may somewhat be considered to be in a liminal space, someone who is not a student and not worker at the same time.

As Filipino au pairs involved themselves in FCC, they became part of the power dynamics of this religious space. However, the pastoral power of the FCC was not challenged but was used by the Filipino au pairs to pursue their agentic agenda. Drawing on the discussion of Hetherington regarding his interpretation of the Palais Royal in which people utilized its space to do other things than the expected of them to do, I was able to interpret also that Filipino au pairs do the same way. They might just acted according to what the specific spatiality of the FCC but they capitalized activities inside that space that could benefit them.

Another dimension of the supposed connection of religious space and agency that I presented is the explication of agency as intrinsic to humans. Even in strictly regulated spaces, may it be in religious space or any other spaces, people are still capable to develop their agency as it is inherent for them to maybe dictate the terms of achieving their plans in life in whatever condition they are into.

Furthermore, after establishing the supposed connection of religious space and agency, I explored how Filipino au pairs develop their agency in FCC by using this religious space as a familial extension and as a breathing space. Using the dialectical order regarding agency as foregrounded first by verbal claims and then execution through acting, I was able to explore and present how Filipino au pairs used FCC's religious space in a more nuanced manner.

Filipino au pairs develop their agency by ascribing FCC as its family. In Filipino culture, the primacy of family is crucial for the development of individual. Through the interpretation of my empirical data, there are two things that I was able to look into in order to sustain the argument about the ascribe familial value of Filipino au pairs towards FCC. First is the importance of food that they prepare and eat in their lifeline group. The argument that I made was that since family might be associated with comfort, food might have played an important role in this religious space. In the lifeline group, my informants had the chance to choose what kind of food to prepare and eat. It gives them the energy, not only physically, but maybe mentally and emotionally in order to cope. Unlike to what they experience in their host families' homes where they might have no control what to prepare and eat. As result this religious space might became heterotopic because Filipino au pairs invert and counter the concept of food in relation to what they usually have with their host families. Second are the tasks that are assigned to them. As they attribute FCC as their family here in Norway, they are doing their part by performing tasks inside its space. By doing so, they were able to develop

skills that might contribute to enhance their agency. The pastoral power of FCC that commands them was not necessarily challenged but was used to their advantage.

Furthermore, FCC's religious space became a breathing room for the Filipino au pairs. This is where they experience normalcy that they have back in the Philippines. During the Sunday worship service and the gathering in the church cafeteria they socialize with fellow Filipinos, talk in their native tongue, sharing of food, etc. They experience empathy and care that might be lacking outside of this religious space.

There are many things that are not fully explored in this thesis, particularly how the concept food making and consuming could be fully understood as heterotopic in relation to the development of agency or empowerment migrants.

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### **Interview Guide**

1. What are challenges and difficulties that you face as an Au Pair?
2. How do you deal with these?
3. Does the church play any role in dealing with these challenges and difficulties?
4. In what ways the church has supported you, if there is any?
5. How is your relationship with your host family?
6. What are your future plans?
7. Do you intend to stay here in Norway after your contract end as an Au Pair?