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TAKING PLACE AND MAKING PLACE: A STUDY ON THE  
ROLE OF SPACE IN FILIPINO CATHOLIC RELIGIOUS  
(RE)PRESENTATION IN FLORENCE, ITALY

Master's thesis

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Hereby I declare that this thesis has been composed solely by myself and that it has not been submitted, in whole or in part, in any other academic degree or diploma. Except where states otherwise by reference or acknowledgement, the work presented is entirely my own.

Prague, Czech Republic

15 May 2023

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Kimberly Mapanao', written in a cursive style.

Kimberly Mapanao

## **Abstract**

Filipinos are known as harbourers of their faith wherever they go. In the case of Catholic Filipino migrants, they play an active role in the revival of churches with deteriorating and ageing attendance through their participation in the liturgical activities of the church. The use of space becomes vital not only in the practice of Filipino Catholic religious traditions but also in the representation of Filipino cultures by the migrants. This research focuses on the study of the role of space in the presentation and representation of Filipino Catholic religious traditions by the Filipino Catholic migrant community in Florence, Italy. Using the spatial triad proposed by Lefebvre in his book *The Production of Space*, the descriptions and usage of space by the Filipino Catholic community of the Church of San Barnaba in Florence, Italy were analysed to see how each aspect of space – the perceived, conceived, and lived space, is being fulfilled in their practice of rituals and religious traditions. Interviews were conducted by the researcher with members of the Filipino Catholic community in Florence, Italy to collect data on their descriptions of space and their performance of Catholic religious traditions at the Church of San Barnaba. Also, participation-observation was performed over a two-month long fieldwork with the community to further support the responses collected during the interviews and to expand the descriptions of the activities organised and participated by the community in Florence, Italy.

Keywords: space, religious traditions, Roman Catholic Church, Filipino migrant community, Florence, Italy, Lefebvre, spatial triad

## **Abstrakt a klíčová slova**

Filipínci jsou charakterističtí vazbou na vlastní náboženství, což je příznačné i v jejich migrační zkušenosti. Katoličtí migranti z Filipín hrají aktivní roli při ožívování kostelů se zmenšující se a stárnoucí návštěvností, a to prostřednictvím své účasti na liturgických aktivitách církve. Využití prostoru se stává zásadním nejen při praktikování filipínských katolických náboženských tradic, ale také při reprezentaci filipínské kultury ze strany migrantů. Tento výzkum se zaměřuje na studium role prostoru při prezentaci a reprezentaci filipínských katolických náboženských tradic komunitou migrantů ve Florencii v Itálii. S využitím prostorové triády, kterou navrhl Lefebvre ve své knize *Produkce prostoru*, byly analyzovány popisy a užívání prostoru filipínskou katolickou komunitou kostela San Barnaba v italské Florencii s cílem zjistit, jak se jednotlivé aspekty prostoru (vnímaný, pojatý a žitý) naplňují v jejich rituální praxi a náboženských tradicích. Studentka vedla rozhovory se členy filipínské katolické komunity ve Florencii v Itálii, aby shromáždila údaje o jejich popisech prostoru a jejich naplňování katolických náboženských tradic v kostele San Barnaba. Během dvouměsíčního terénního výzkumu bylo také provedeno zúčastněné pozorování, které mělo dále podpořit odpovědi získané během rozhovorů a rozšířit popisy aktivit, které komunita ve Florencii v Itálii organizuje a kterých se účastní.

**Klíčová slova:** prostor, náboženské tradice, Římskokatolická církev, filipínská migrantská komunita, Florencie, Itálie, Lefebvre, prostorová triáda

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## Chapter I. Introduction

The social construction approach employed in the study of space and place merits peoples' social interactions, feelings, memories, and even imaginations that occur in their environments. This approach examines the meanings, relationships, and representations that people have associated with the space they utilise and occupy. Moreover, it has become increasingly important to include not only the original, inherent elements of space that affect people but also the changes that take place in their physical environment. Following Low in her study of the social construction of space, the idea of space as socially constructed conveniently signifies the transformation of space through people's symbolic use and experience of it. The said uses and experiences may be in the physical forms of social exchanges and usage of the material environment, or they may rather be in mental forms such as the recovery of memories linked to specific settings and association of images with spaces.<sup>1</sup> The transformations that occur in space affect how people perceive their space, their sense of inclusion within the environment and in relation to others, as well as their ability to use and manage space to satisfy their needs.

The theory of social constructionism was initially introduced in the book *Mind, Self, and Society: From the Standpoint of a Social Behaviourist*, which was posthumously published in 1934 after the death of George Herbert Mead. The book is composed of unpublished manuscripts of Mead and course notes written by his students on subjects like philosophy and social psychology. Even though Mead was a professor of Philosophy, he became widely influential in the field of sociology for his theory on symbolic interactionism which argues the construction of one's identity, i.e. the self and the others, through symbolic interaction. Therefore, humans are able to construct their own identities and also help form the identity of others through symbolic social exchanges that occur in space.<sup>2</sup> Social theorists like Michel de Certeau, Henri Lefebvre, and Pierre Bourdieu examined the relationship of space in the social life of humans. In his book *The Practice of Everyday Life* (1984), de Certeau examined the spatiality of everyday experience and people's appropriation of space based on their habitual practices, putting emphasis on their social and cultural techniques.

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<sup>1</sup> SETHA LOW, "Spatializing Culture: The Social Production and Social Construction of Public Space in Costa Rica," *American Ethnologist* 23 (1996): 861-862.

<sup>2</sup> DANIEL HUEBNER, "The Construction of Mind, Self, and Society: The Social Process Behind G.H. Mead's Social Psychology," *Journal of History of the Behavioral Sciences* 48 (2012): 134-136.

Meanwhile, Lefebvre considered space as a social product that always embodies a meaning assigned by its users.<sup>3</sup> Space is sustained and filled with social relations. It is a product and, at the same time, a producer of social relations. Pierre Bourdieu, on the other hand, focused on the spatial characteristics of everyday behaviour that are transformed into embodied experience. His key concept habitus relates to the reproduction of existing structures as both a ‘structured structure’ and a ‘structuring structure’. Habitus refers to socially acquired dispositions that influence a person’s sense of place and role in his/her lived environment and these dispositions are based on the person’s previous experiences, the resources available to them, and the existing power relations.<sup>4</sup> In the examples presented above, space actively participates in the everyday social life of people and departs from the idea of space as passive, fixed, and empty. Through the social construction approach, space can be seen as more than a mere location of social interactions. Instead, space is constructed through the symbolic use of people and the social relations that they form in it. In addition, space becomes influential in the transformation of existing practices and relations as well as in the creation of new ones.

Before spatial revolution took place in the 1960s, particularly in the field of geography, many social scientists of that time considered space as a neutral and passive background wherein social and economic processes happen. The concepts ‘space’ and ‘place’ were generally considered separate and sometimes unrelated from each other, the former neutral and objective while the latter subjective and cultural. They are analysed at different levels and each with a different focus. Space was used to generally refer to the physical characteristics of an environment that contains social and economic processes, therefore empirical methods were heavily utilised in the study of space and spatial phenomena. Meanwhile, place is related to the subjective meanings and social associations attached by people to specific locations. Humanistic geography concerned itself with the unique experiences of individuals and their interpretations of their environment. As social scientists believed space to remain neutral, they considered place as filled with experiences, values, or even emotions inscribed by its users. As a result, the two concepts were perceived as two opposite ways of

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<sup>3</sup> Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, trans. Donald Nicholson-Smith (Oxford and Cambridge: Blackwell, 1991).

<sup>4</sup> Pierre Bourdieu, “Cultural Reproduction and Social Reproduction,” in *Knowledge, Education, and Cultural Change*, ed. Richard Brown (London: Tavistock Publications).



understanding spatiality rather than being considered as two associated conceptions.<sup>5</sup> Despite these differences, space and place remain interconnected in the holistic understanding of the social and cultural dynamics of the environment. The primary goal of the spatial revolution in the 1960s was to challenge the traditional approaches to geography and to put greater emphasis on the inclusion of space as a fundamental aspect in economic, social, cultural, and environmental phenomena. Moreover, the spatial revolution argued against the passivity attached to space. Instead, it promoted space as an active participant in social relations and cultural practices that it contains.

Space has taken over place in the sense that place was considered a thing of the past – an outdated concept of spatiality, while space concerns and relates to modernity.<sup>6</sup> Beginning this shift, space evolved from a fixed category carrying specific attributes to a geographical scale of social relationships. Spatial studies increased their focus on the social, economic, and even political processes that produce spatial patterns from the associations and interactions between the people, objects, and events in space. Interdisciplinary approaches to the study of space were further promoted through the spatial revolution which challenged the traditional disciplinary boundaries which existed in the social sciences. As a result, it had a profound impact on several disciplines like geography, sociology, and anthropology which led to the development of new theories, methodologies, as well as research prospects that continue to influence scholarship today.

The spatial revolution was an expansive movement that emerged from several disciplines of social sciences during the 1960s and 1970s. David Harvey is a British geographer considered one of the most influential scholars and proponents of the spatial turn in social sciences. In his work *Explanation in Geography* published in 1969, Harvey underlined the importance of spatial analysis in understanding and explaining social phenomena. He also pointed out that social processes are shaped by spatial relationships between social groups and institutions that share meaningful exchanges.<sup>7</sup> The inclusion of the study of space into Western social and cultural theory was pioneered by intellectuals such as Edward Soja, Michel Foucault, Henri Lefebvre, Pierre Bourdieu, and Michel de Certeau and it was further developed at the

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<sup>5</sup> John Agnew, "Space: Place", in *Spaces of Geographical Thought*, ed. Paul Cloke and Ron Johnston (London: SAGE Publications Ltd., 2004).

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, 83-85.

<sup>7</sup> David Harvey, *Explanation in Geography*. (London: Edward Arnold, 1969).

beginning of the 1980s.<sup>8</sup> Michel Foucault discussed in a lecture in 1967, published posthumously in 1984 essay *Des espaces autres* [Of Other Spaces, trans. Jay Miskowiec], space and its relationship to power and social control. Foucault argued that space is not neutral but is continuously shaped and defined by social processes of power. Also, he introduced the concept of “heterotopias” which opens spatial discourse to resistance and subversion relevant to the existing dominant power structures. Since they exist in opposition to dominant power structures, heterotopias offer space that can accommodate transformations and changes outside the norm. In the end, Foucault posited that different spaces have different meanings – they are constructed differently and are contested for various reasons. Thus, understanding the meanings attributed to spaces is crucial to fully grasp power relations and social processes which shape the space that either sustains or rejects them in return.<sup>9</sup> Henri Lefebvre propounded in his book *The Production of Social Space* (1974) that space is a product of social processes and that it serves both as a means and a result of production. Pierre Bourdieu, on the other hand, described humans as both biological beings occupying physical space and social agents relatively positioned in social space. He related his concept of *habitus* in space where humans, as social agents, possess economic and social capitals which influence their location in space.

Taking into account the relevance and importance of the aspect of space in the analysis of various social and cultural phenomena in both past and contemporary times, the inclusion of the analysis of space adds credence to the contemporary discourse on variety of topics such as identity, globalisation and diaspora, and placemaking. These themes relate to the scope of this research, which offers to examine the concept of space as a dynamic aspect in the practice of Catholic religious traditions by Filipino parishioners of the Church of San Barnaba in Florence, Italy. The application of religion in the study of space proposes a definitive perspective for this research to investigate the relations of Filipino churchgoers in Florence with space through religious practice. Discussions regarding access, usage, and transformation of space remain central in this study, accompanied by the descriptions provided by the parishioners of the Church of San Barnaba and the observations made by the researcher during the fieldwork.

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<sup>8</sup> Mike Crang and Nigel Thrift, *Thinking Space*. (London and New York: Routledge, 2000).

<sup>9</sup> Michel Foucault, “Of Other Spaces: Utopias and Heterotopias,” trans. Jay Miskowiec *Architecture/Mouvement/Continuité*, (1984).

### *Understanding space through religion*

Religions are regarded as institutions and organised communities bound by the belief and practice of traditions, sustained by what Danièle Hervieu-Leger described as a ‘chain of memory’.<sup>10</sup> From this perspective, religious activities are more likely to be analysed using temporal lens rather than spatial. The temporality of religious traditions influences the manner in which it is studied over the years. However, scholars like Lefebvre and Foucault noted the relationship between space and time which suggests the link between the two notions rather than their polarisation. For Foucault, modernity is dominated by space and not time.<sup>11</sup> Space serves as the domain of knowledge and power, which are considered to be the most important concepts of modernity along with the interaction between them. On the other hand, Lefebvre focused on the production of space within which time can be experienced. As he expressed in one of his books, “*In nature, time is apprehended within space – in the very heart of space [...]*”.<sup>12</sup>

Additionally, it is important to note the value of both memory and space in religion, particularly in ensuring its continuous presence in our modern society. As Halbwachs posited, religion reproduces the past in various forms. In Christianity, the life of Christ is continuously reproduced in rituals and commemorations are observed for the saints who contributed to the establishment and propagation of the Christian doctrine.<sup>13</sup> As an example, for the Catholic religion, the Christian life is embodied throughout the liturgical year through the reproduction of events of the Passion of Christ.<sup>14</sup> These acts of commemoration and remembering ensure the survival of the Christian religion as a permanent institution up to modern times. Relating space to memory, Halbwachs also highlighted the link between remembrances with places preserved by a group of people who believe in its continuous existence. Holy places exist not only because people live on the land where they practise their religious beliefs, but also because the believers’ ideas and images exist and are shared throughout the space. In places of worship like churches, convents, and mosques, symbols and images are constantly present as a form of remembrance of religious meanings that

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<sup>10</sup> Danièle Hervieu-Léger, *Religion as a Chain of Memory*, trans. Simon Lee (New Brunswick, New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 2000).

<sup>11</sup> Michel Foucault, “Of Other Spaces: Utopias and Heterotopias,” trans. Jay Miskowicz *Architecture/Mouvement/Continuité*, (1984).

<sup>12</sup> Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, 95.

<sup>13</sup> Maurice Halbwachs, *On Collective Memory*, trans. Lewis A. Coser (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1992), 88.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, 92.

influence the actions and thoughts of the worshippers especially as they enter these sacred spaces.<sup>15</sup>

Religion, to a varying degree, can become an influential part of any of its adherents' lives wherein its ideologies and teachings can be integrated into their beliefs, routines, and daily lives. Consequently, religion has become an important subject of studies concerned with cultural and social phenomena, including the social production of space. The various ways in which religious adherents relate their faith and religious beliefs and practices to the meanings and uses of space reflect the creation of sacred spaces that contain both sacred and secular elements which reflect the influences of their religious beliefs. For example, the Hindu caste system and the segregation of people is observed to practise the 'preservation' of purity of people and of the rituals they observe. In the case of Muslim belief, adherents practise *pardah* wherein women are secluded from public observation through clothing and the use of walls and enclosures in places where they pass through and/or occupy. Pilgrimages are also performed by individuals who partake on a journey which highlight their religious or spiritual experience, often including visitation to recognised shrines or sacred places. These examples show how religion can influence and even remain as a key consideration in the social construction of space as well as the meanings that can be interpreted from such spaces.

Despite the depiction of religious systems as forms of universal truths, religious beliefs and practices are observed by devotees in specific local contexts they currently live. The contextuality of beliefs and practices manifests unique variations of the commonalities of larger religious traditions which are a result of the combination between the shared 'universal' belief among all devotees regardless of their location and the conditions of the devotees' communities. In some cases, the intentional adaptations applied to beliefs and practices are made for the acceptance or at least tolerance of others who may be considered the dominant group or in order to avoid encounters of disapproval from outsiders.<sup>16</sup> These recognise that religious groups and devotees do not simply exist in space; they construct and appropriate the practice of their faith as well as the beliefs and rituals that come with it.

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<sup>15</sup> Maurice Halbwachs, *The Collective Memory*, trans. Francis J. Ditter Jr. and Vida Yazdi Ditter (New York: Harper Colophon Books, 1980), 137-139.

<sup>16</sup> Roger W. Stump, *The Geography of Religion: Faith, Place and Space* (Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2008).

The scope of this research includes the analysis of space based on how a religious community composed of migrant members perceive and utilise space according to their backgrounds and motivations. This research aims to contribute to the study of the role of space in the visibility, representation, and ultimately the recognition of the Filipino migrant population overseas. This can be achieved by identifying the role of space in the presentation and representation of the religious traditions and activities organised and participated by the Filipino Catholic community in Florence, Italy through the Church of San Barnaba, which serves as the primary case study of this dissertation. The use of space by the Catholic Filipino migrants is analysed through observations and consultations with the community in order to determine how space mediates in their practice of religious traditions.

*Filipino migrants: “smugglers of the Catholic faith”*

Europe has been experiencing a dynamic transformation of their religious landscape especially in larger cities. In the last decades or so, transformations in the European religious spaces reflect the changes in the cities’ socio-spatial developments, including rapid urbanisation, an ageing population, as well as increasing human mobility.<sup>17</sup> From Habermas’<sup>18</sup> discussions on post-secularism, the characterised increase in the awareness of the roles played by religion and their influence in the religious sphere caused a renewed engagement in the discussion of the relationship between religion and socio-political themes like migration. The idea is that in the post-secular present, religion has returned with more important roles within the multicultural and democratic modern space. This can be exemplified by the possibility of existence and interaction among different faiths, with the same faith practised differently, and even the non-religious within a public arena. Moreover, faith-based organisations and church institutions now fulfil roles that are motivated by both religious and secular reasons.

Arjun Appadurai is an anthropologist whose works extensively included the topic of migration and contributed to the study of globalisation. In his book *Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization* published in 1996, he described globalisation as a

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<sup>17</sup> Lily Kong, “Religious Landscapes,” in *A Companion to Cultural Geography*, eds. James S. Duncan, et al. (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2004), 365.

<sup>18</sup> Jürgen Habermas discussed post-secularism and the renewed and strengthened presence of religion in the present post-secularist period in several articles. See: Jürgen Habermas, “Religion in Public Sphere,” *European Journal of Philosophy* 14 (2006) and Jürgen Habermas, “Notes on Post-secular Society,” *New Perspectives Quarterly* 24 (2008), 17-29.

complex and multi-dimensional process that includes not only economic integration, but it involves social, cultural, and political dimensions as well. This statement supports his opinion that the contemporary global cultural economy can no longer be inspected solely through the previously presented centre-periphery, surplus and deficits, or consumers and producers models since these categorically highlight solely the economic aspects of globalisation. On the other hand, he includes the importance of specific historical, social, and cultural contexts which affect the ways in which globalisation is experienced by individuals and groups who participate in this particular phenomenon. Through globalisation, the world people live in is continuously reshaped causing ‘disjuncture’ between economy, culture, and politics. Such disjuncture creates the ‘flows’ which refer to the movement of people, goods and ideas across boundaries and borders. Together, disjuncture and flow within the globalised world create new forms of social and cultural interactions that can challenge traditional notions of identity, belonging, and citizenship which are relatively more associated with permanence and definitive boundaries.<sup>19</sup>

In order to understand the disjuncture, Appadurai offered five dimensions of cultural flow, namely ethnoscaples, mediascaples, technoscaples, financescaples, and ideoscaples. The suffix -*scapes* represents the fluidity of these landscapes/dimensions and their subjectivity based on the historical, linguistic, and political dispositions of actors. Among these dimensions, the most relevant to this research is the ethnoscaples dimension, which refers to the landscape of people who move across (geographical) borders and boundaries driven by several factors like economic motivations, security and asylum, and tourism. In this dimension, ‘*ethno*’ goes beyond the strict definitions of ethnicity and refers to people, particularly those who are mobile like tourists, immigrants, refugees, exiles, and guest workers.<sup>20</sup> The Filipino migrant population can be considered part of the ethnoscaples. Appadurai made a thought-provoking statement saying, “*There is no doubt that migrants today; like migrants throughout human history, move either to escape horrible lives, to seek better ones, or both.*”<sup>21</sup> It is a very common, if not the primary reason for Filipinos to move to foreign countries that are able to provide them with better work opportunities and compensation to improve not only their own

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<sup>19</sup> Arjun Appadurai, “Disjuncture and Difference in the Global Cultural Economy”, *Theory Culture Society* 7 (1990): 295-297.

<sup>20</sup> Arjun Appadurai, *Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization*, (Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press: 1996).

<sup>21</sup> Arjun Appadurai, “Traumatic Exit, Identity Narratives, and the Ethics of Hospitality,” *Television & New Media* (2019) 3-4.

lives but also their left-behind families in the Philippines. With them, overseas Filipinos carry local knowledge and memory and try to maintain connections to their home through various forms of media while at the same time attempt to adapt to the new cultural, economic, and political influences found at their host countries.

Migration is an important factor considered in the diversification of cultures and ethnicities throughout the world. However, migrants may be presented with challenges while in the process of integrating into their new host communities. Several literature and studies demonstrate that formal institutions and faith-based organisations like the Catholic church help in the adjustment and eventual integration of migrants into the community and, at the same time, in the preservation of the migrants' connection with their countries of origin. In the case of the Church of San Barnaba and the Filipino Catholic community in Florence, both the church and the religious community play an active role in helping the Filipino migrants integrate into their new host country which is Italy. The Filipino Catholic community in Florence aids in the maintenance of social relations among the Filipino migrants living in Florence and in the continuous practice of the local Filipino cultures even when abroad, through the performance of Filipino Catholic religious practices and of the Filipino culture in general. As stated by one of the members of the Filipino Catholic community in Florence, the Filipino community of the Church of San Barnaba is their "home away from home."

The transnational migration of Filipinos has a long history that dates back to the 16th century during the Spanish colonial period when the city of Manila, where the headquarters of the Spanish governor was located, opened its seaports for the Acapulco-Manila Galleon trade in 1565. The Galleon trade established commercial ties between the Philippines and Mexico while uniting the three separate continents of Asia, Europe, and the Americas. This trade route not only became a means of exchange of material goods, but it served as an avenue for cultural exchange and interaction among people from different countries including the Philippines. Filipinos during this time were hired as deckhands, cooks, and cabin transporters on the galleon ships which travel between Manila and Acapulco. The sea-based workers of the galleon trade were considered the first Filipino migrant workers, some of them staying in Mexico after working on the ships. The opening of the Suez Canal in the 19<sup>th</sup> century facilitated the Filipino migration to Europe through the Mediterranean Sea. In the context of Philippine history in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the middle to an upper-class intellectual circle called *Ilustrados* [the Enlightened ones] travelled to Europe, to Spain in particular, to receive further

education. They were familiarised with European nationalist ideas which inspired the erudite group to work on their demands of economic and political reform during the Spanish colonial period in the Philippines.<sup>22</sup> In the 20<sup>th</sup> century and particularly during the colonisation period of the United States in the Philippines, Filipinos were sent to the United States as agricultural and service workers particularly in Hawaii's sugar plantations. During this time, the typical Filipino migrants were single male Filipinos who were employed in the agricultural sector.

This trend of the Filipino population migrating to overseas countries has seen constant growth since the introduction of trading routes and ease of travel between countries. From the beginning of the 2000s, a culture of migration can be observed through a consistent increase in the number of Filipinos travelling abroad which is mainly due to economic reasons. In the year 2000, there was an estimated number of 978,000 overseas Filipino workers.<sup>23</sup> This number maintained a consistent increase that in the latest available record of the Philippine Statistics Authority on Overseas Filipino Workers (OFWs), there is an estimated number of 1.83 million Filipino overseas workers during the period of April to September 2021, wherein 96.4% or 1.76 million of OFWs have existing work contracts with their overseas employers.<sup>24</sup> The number of OFWs increased in 2021 by 3% after a slight decrease in numbers in 2020 (1.71 million) due to the Covid-19 pandemic which caused a significant decline in the number of Filipino workers abroad by 18.6% from 2.18 million in 2019.<sup>25</sup>

The phenomenon of Filipino migration has not gone unnoticed as the term 'Overseas Filipino Worker,' or simply OFW, became a common appellation to Filipino migrants abroad who are partaking in economic activities, generally to provide financial support to the families they have left behind in the Philippines. These OFWs are commonly described as "*bagong bayani*" [new heroes] not only for their sacrifice of leaving their homes in pursuit of a better future for their families but also because of their contribution to the country's economic

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<sup>22</sup> Noel Teodoro, "Rizal and the Ilustrados in Spain," *Asian and Pacific Migration Journal*, 8 (1999). 65-80.

<sup>23</sup> Philippine Statistics Authority, "2000 Survey of Overseas Filipinos," October 4, 2001. Accessed May 24, 2022, <https://psa.gov.ph/statistics/survey/labor-and-employment/survey-overseas-filipinos/title/2000%20Survey%20of%20Overseas%20Filipinos%20%28SOF%29>.

<sup>24</sup> Philippine Statistics Authority, "2021 Overseas Filipino Workers (Final Results)," December 2, 2022. Accessed January 15, 2023, <https://psa.gov.ph/statistics/survey/labor-and-employment/survey-overseas-filipinos>.

<sup>25</sup> Philippine Statistics Authority, "2020 Overseas Filipino Workers (Final Results)," March 7, 2022. Accessed May 24, 2022, <https://psa.gov.ph/statistics/survey/labor-and-employment/survey-overseas-filipinos/title/2020%20Overseas%20Filipino%20Workers%20%28Final%20Results%29>.



development through the remittances they send back to their left-behind families.<sup>26</sup> Between the period of April to September 2021, the total remittance sent by OFWs to the Philippines amounted to 151.33 billion pesos or around 2.59 billion euros<sup>27</sup>. The remittances sent by Filipinos abroad significantly contribute to the country's gross domestic product at 9.3% in 2021 based on World Bank's data on the Philippines' personal remittances.<sup>28</sup>

In a study conducted by Saint-Blancat and Cancellieri, they described the Filipino migrants as the “perfect invisible migrants” because of their professionalism and valuable skills, as well as their positive demeanour causing fewer problems to their foreign employers.<sup>29</sup> This research conducted by Saint-Blancat and Cancellieri focused on the use of public space during the Filipino procession of *Santacruzán* in Padua, Italy. Familiar to what is being analysed in this research, the study conducted by Saint-Blancat and Cancellieri presented and analysed the different characteristics of public space which can influence the practice of religious activities. As will be further discussed in the succeeding chapters, this research focuses as well at the concepts of space, religious rituals, and the Filipino migrants who use space in order to practise their religious rituals. It is very important to highlight, however, that this research is not limited to the analysis of public space and a particular religious ritual or celebration similar to the study by Saint-Blancat and Cancellieri discussed above. Instead, the researcher intends to examine both public and private spaces in terms of physical space as well as other forms of spaces that are entailed in the framework of Aspects of Social Space by Henri Lefebvre. This framework is applied in order to analyse the role of space in the religious practice and representation of Filipino migrants in Florence, Italy. The researcher draws inspiration from Saint-Blancat and Cancellieri's paper in terms of its ethnographic approach to data collection, which are drawing direct observations and data at the terrain and conducting interviews with the Filipino migrants who participated in the religious ritual of *Santacruzán*. The temporary appropriation of public space by Filipino migrants in Padua, Italy in Saint-Blancat and Cancellieri's study remains relevant to this research and can be a

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<sup>26</sup> Jean Encinas-Franco, “The language of labour export in political discourse: “modern-day heroism” and constructions of overseas Filipino workers (OFWs),” *Philippine Political Science Journal* 34, 1 (2013): 97-98.

<sup>27</sup> Estimated conversion used 9 February 2023 currency exchange rate of 1 Euro = 58.5 Philippine Pesos

<sup>28</sup> World Bank, “Personal remittances, received (% of GDP) – Philippines,” last updated 22 December 2022. Accessed January 15, 2023,

<https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/BX.TRF.PWKR.DT.GD.ZS?locations=PH>.

<sup>29</sup> Chantal Saint-Blancat and Adriano Cancellieri, “From Invisibility to Visibility? The appropriation of public space through a religious ritual. The Filipino procession of Santacruzán in Padua,” *Italy, Social & Cultural Geography* 15,6 (2014): 649.

point of comparison as to how a more permanent setting available to the Filipino migrants, in this case the Church of San Barnaba in Florence, Italy, can affect the visibility and representation of the Filipino Catholic community in Florence.

The Philippines remains as a predominantly Catholic country wherein 79.5% of its population (80.3 million out of 100.98 million) are followers of the Roman Catholic Church based on the latest data provided by the Philippine Statistics Authority Yearbook in 2021. Islam comes second with 6% of the population affiliated with the religion. The independent Christian church *Iglesia ni Cristo* follows with 2.6%, then the Evangelicals with 2.4%. The remainder of the population falls on other Christian groups and independent religions like Aglipay, Bible Baptists Church, Jesus is Lord Church, and Seventh Day Adventist.<sup>30</sup> The influence of religion is a common phenomenon to the Filipino population regardless of location, whether they reside in the Philippines or when they have migrated abroad. Religion is a vital part of the Filipinos' social identity and Filipinos are known to harbour their faith wherever they go. As an example of Filipino migrants' demonstration of Catholic faith abroad, Filipinos in Europe, particularly those who are based in Italy, are known to revive deteriorating church attendance due to the decreasing number of local congregations by becoming regular church attendees particularly during the liturgical activities like the Sunday mass.<sup>31</sup> The dedication of the Filipino migrants in professing their faith has been recognised by the Catholic Church as expressed by Pope Francis who referred to the Filipino migrants as "smugglers of faith" during his speech in 2019 after a mass celebration dedicated to the Filipino Christmas tradition of *Simbang Gabi*.<sup>32,33</sup>

In an article written by Julia Norlan on the practice of Filipino religious traditions by Filipino migrants in Norwich, Norlan expressed how participation in popular religion helps in the socio-civic engagement of the migrant Filipinos in their new environment, i.e. host country.

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<sup>30</sup> Philippine Statistics Authority, "2021 Philippine Statistical Yearbook, p. 65, Table 1.10 Household Population by Religious Affiliation and by Sex: 2015". Accessed January 17, 2023, [https://psa.gov.ph/sites/default/files/2021%20PSY\\_final.pdf](https://psa.gov.ph/sites/default/files/2021%20PSY_final.pdf).

<sup>31</sup> John Silva, "In Rome, Doing as the Filipinos Do," *Positively Filipino*, November 10, 2013. Accessed May 6, 2022, <http://www.positivelyfilipino.com/magazine/in-rome-doing-as-the-filipinos-do>.

<sup>32</sup> *Simbang Gabi* is a nine-day series of dawn Masses usually at four o'clock in the morning attended by Filipino Catholics leading up to Christmas Eve.

<sup>33</sup> CNN Philippines Staff, "Pope Francis hails Filipinos on 500<sup>th</sup> year of Christianity in PH," *CNN Philippines*, March 14, 2021. Accessed May 6, 2022, <https://www.cnnphilippines.com/news/2021/3/14/Pope-Francis-Filipinos-500-years-Christianity-Philippines-.html>.

In the case of migrants, Sunday mass service attendance and participation in various church activities help them in establishing a support system that lets them interact with others and gain visibility in their host countries. In Europe, which experiences an ageing Christian population and decline in service attendance, Filipino migrants have taken active roles in revitalising the church life in places where the practice of religion has significantly declined. Additionally, the Filipino migrants expressed their desire to have Filipino mass celebrations in order to gather the Filipino community into one place. In this case, the Catholic Filipino migrants are able to gather themselves as a united congregation that is able to conduct religious rituals with their fellow Filipinos and, if permitted, in their desired language (i.e. mother tongue). The success of Filipino mass service regularly attended by the Filipino migrants led to the introduction and organisation of other Filipino Catholic religious traditions in their host communities. These traditions include *Simbang Gabi*, the feast of *Santo Niño* [Holy Infant Jesus], *Santacruzán* which is a festival celebrated every month of May to commemorate the finding of Holy Cross by Queen Helena (or more commonly referred to as *Reyna Elena*), the Marian feast of Peñafrancia every September which includes a fluvial procession of the sacred image of Mary, and the annual Palm Sunday pilgrimage during Easter.<sup>34</sup>

The introduction and practice of religious traditions by Filipino migrants in their host communities further their visibility in their host communities not only through their practice of religious rituals but also in their practice of Filipino cultures that are deeply ingrained and go together in several Filipino religious traditions. In this research, we will be able to see how the Filipino Catholic community in Florence use the space available to the community not only in their practice of religious traditions but also in the practice and representation of their Filipino heritage. The church, as a religious space, provides the Filipino community with the opportunity to practise their faith, integrate into their host community, and maintain a transnational relationship with the Filipino culture.

#### *Research aims and motivations of the researcher*

The principal goal of this research is to identify the role of space in the presentation and representation of Filipino religious traditions in Florence, Italy. The researcher wants to

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<sup>34</sup> Julia Norlan, "Strengthening Filipino Migrants' Faith through Popular Religiosity," *Mission Studies* 33 (2016): 352-375.

analyse how Florence, Italy, as the host community of Catholic Filipino migrants, affects the lives of the members of the Filipino Catholic community particularly in their practice of religious rituals and in the expression of their faith outside the Church. This aim is achieved by observing how the Filipino Catholic migrants utilise their space to achieve their spiritual, religious, and even social goals inside and outside the Church of San Barnaba and also by learning about their respective perceptions of the space they occupy through the descriptions they provide of their places of residence, the surroundings of the Church of San Barnaba, and of Florence, Italy in general.

In the presentation and brief discussion of the presence of Filipino migrant communities who actively practise their faith in their new host communities, it is evident that this type of phenomenon is a relevant and appropriate topic of study to learn more about the socio-spatial developments of places that are experiencing transformations and even revitalisation of their religious landscapes. The researcher is especially interested in learning about the Filipino migrants' experiences in practising their faith, the Catholic faith in particular, in a setting wherein traditional Catholic practices is predominantly observed. Although Italy has been experiencing a decline in religious participation for the past years, it is still predominantly Catholic. In Florence, the Filipino Catholic community has the Church of San Barnaba where they can organise liturgical services as well as secular, cultural activities related to the migrants' Filipino heritage. The presence of a designated space for Filipino parishioners is an important element for this study, since the Church of San Barnaba serves as the central place for the religious activities of Catholic Filipinos in Florence, Italy. Moreover, given the Catholic background of Italy, it is a point of exploration to see how the similarity of faith between the Catholic Filipino migrants and their Catholic host community mediate, i.e. help, in the adjustment and integration of the Filipinos in Florence.

### *Statement of the problem*

This research focuses on the study of space as used by the Filipino Catholic community in Florence, Italy in their practice of Catholic religious rituals as well as other secular activities organised by the Filipino Catholic community at the Church of San Barnaba. The researcher draws inspiration from existing studies on sacred space, religious rituals practised in secular spaces, and particularly studies on migrant communities' practice of faith in their (new) host communities. This research is supported by theoretical concepts which serve as a guide in the

analysis of space – its role and its usage by the Filipino Catholic community in Florence, Italy, to ultimately answer the main problematic of this study. The Aspects of Social Space theorised by Henri Lefebvre is used as the primary framework in analysing how the parishioners of the Church of San Barnaba sense, observe, and utilise space through their observance of religious rituals. For the theoretical framework of this research and as a guide in conducting an ethnographic inquiry, the researcher uses Henri Lefebvre's Aspects of Social Space, a concept which was introduced and discussed in his book *The Production of Social Space* published in 1974. In consideration of the aforementioned specificities, the researcher ultimately intends to answer the question: *Based on Henri Lefebvre's theory on the Aspects of Social Space, how are the aspects of space fulfilled by the Filipino Catholic community in Florence, Italy through their use of space during their practice of Catholic religious traditions and based on their descriptions of their environment?*

In his theory of the Aspects of Social Space, Lefebvre proposed a spatial triad which posits space as a product of social process, they are: spatial practice (perceived space), representations of space (conceived space), and representational space (lived space). This research uses the terminologies 'perceived space', 'conceived space', and 'lived space' to easily differentiate the three aspects from each other. These three aspects of social space serve as a guide in the formulation of initial questions that will finally answer the main research problematic presented earlier. The initial questions are as follows:

1. How do the Filipino migrants in Florence, Italy describe their space based on the physical characteristics that they can observe in their environment (e.g. their description of Florence, their neighbourhood, the local community, and the church community of San Barnaba to which they belong to)?
2. What elements influence and/or affect their practice of religious traditions? Do these elements help in the practice of rituals or do they cause changes/deletion of practices?
3. How do the Catholic Filipino migrants use space to achieve their goals especially in practising Filipino Catholic religious traditions? How do the Filipinos describe the role of space in either the fulfilment or failure of their objectives?

The analysis of space based on Lefebvre's theory can be outlined separately using the initial questions listed above. By highlighting each of the three aspects of space in the formulation of initial questions, the researcher provides more opportunities to explore each aspect further in order to determine the themes and proper interview questions that relate to the actual experiences of the Catholic Filipino migrants in Florence. It is nevertheless important to note that Lefebvre's triad offers a multi-dimensional rather than comprehensive view of space. This means that, in the analysis of space, the triad should not be considered a synthesis of three separate spatial aspects, but as coexisting aspects that interact, compete, or complement each other. The methodology applied and questions asked during the interview are discussed in greater detail in the succeeding chapters of this research.

## Chapter II. Theoretical framework and related literature

The inclusion of religion as one of the focal points in understanding our society and the attention given to it has increased over the last few decades, although arguably it still has not been as widely explored as the topics of race, class, and gender which have already been at the forefront of geographical analyses several years prior. Nonetheless, earlier researches on geography and religion were present, particularly in the identification and mapping of sacred and/or religious places. In the context of Christian religion, earlier geographic studies on the subject included the analysis of how Christianity spread in different parts of the world through the signs of progress of several Christian missionaries. The Bible became an important document in specifying places and names that are important not only in Christianity as a religion but also as part of geographic scholarship. Existing studies on the spatiality of religion include a focus on the spatial diffusion and expansion of religious groups through missionary activities and pilgrimages, for example. Also, the influence of religions and religious groups on the physical form of landscape were explored relating to human ecology. At present, studies on religion recognise the intersection between the sacred and secular, as well as the growing involvement of social and political themes in studying and understanding religious communities.

In the diversification of ways to analyse religion and involved (religious) communities, scholars have deviated from examining religions and sacrality in isolation and instead moved forward in exploring several ways of studying religion through different lenses. In a way, this opens up the topic of religion to rich possibilities of analyses that are yet to be explored. In this research, the spatiality of religion is analysed through the Filipino migrant community in Florence, Italy who actively organises activities in line with their Catholic faith through the Church of San Barnaba. In this section of the thesis, key concepts related to the research are defined and discussed. This allows us to establish a general frame based on the available literature which relates to this current research.

### *Henri Lefebvre and his work on The Production of Space and the Spatial Triad*

Henri Lefebvre was one of the most prominent scholars of the 20<sup>th</sup> century French intellectual circle. He was highly regarded as a humanist French Marxist theorist who had written a great quantity of literature on several topics such as metaphilosophy, everyday life, social space, social struggles, structuralism, and the life and philosophies of Karl Marx. He was born on

the 16<sup>th</sup> of June 1901 in Landes which is a region in the southwest of France. Lefebvre studied philosophy in Sorbonne in 1920 and worked with his contemporaries including Georges Friedmann, Georges Politzer, and Paul Nizan in a small group commonly referred to as *Philosophie*. Their group, although relatively small, did not fall short on their intellectual influence. During his presence in Paris, Lefebvre was exposed to the realities and malaise of the general French population who suffered the cold, hunger, and even alienation after the first World War. The social struggles of the people motivated him to learn about the philosophies and social criticisms shared by Karl Marx and Georg Hegel, which eventually led him to join the *Parti Communiste Français* in 1928. Lefebvre worked as a professor at the University of Strasbourg at the beginning of the 1960s and then he returned to Paris and became a professor at the new university in Nanterre in 1965. During his professorship at Nanterre, Lefebvre examined the cultural construction of stereotypical notions of cities, nature, and regions.

He was considered an important contributor to a wide range of disciplines such as geography, sociology, architecture, and psychology – all of which relate to the study of space and human geography. In his three-volume work entitled *Critique de la vie quotidienne* [The Critique of Everyday Life] published between 1947 to 1981, Lefebvre examined everyday life and how it has influenced and continues to influence the construction of modern society through people's social, economic, and political engagements. For him, 'everyday' is a space wherein all life activities occurred. It is repetitive, habitual, and mundane in nature. However, he expanded this description by describing the complexity and dynamism that occurs in each social and cultural phenomenon participated by people. Ultimately, Lefebvre argued in this specific work that 'everyday' is a space wherein social relations, structures of power, and dominant ideologies are reproduced and concretized. Meanwhile, his book *Le Droit à la ville* [The Right to the City] published in 1968 argued for people's "right to the city" in the sense that, more than access to urban space, they should have the ability to participate in shaping and transforming their environments. He believes that urbanization has led to the commodification of space and the concentration of power and resources to the hands of the powerful and wealthy few, thus limiting the access of the city to the marginalised population. He believes that the city is a space of struggle for democracy and therefore people should actively participate in politics so that they can ensure that their interests are represented and respected in the creation and management of urban space.



In his chef-d'oeuvre *La Production de L'Espace* [The Production of Space], first published in 1974 in French language and 1991 in English<sup>35</sup>, Lefebvre described space as a product and encouraged the study of the process of its production. Space is not simply a passive location of human activities. Rather, Lefebvre posited that space is a result and, at the same time, an active participant in any social process that can influence and even directly affect the social process currently taking place in it. Lefebvre's concept of space as an active participant in social processes is central to this study, which puts focus on the role of space in the practice of Catholic religious traditions by Filipinos in Florence, Italy. Since the Filipinos are included in the migrant population in Florence, negotiation of space is central to them as they try to perform and adapt their practices in their host community. Moreover, the Church of San Barnaba, which serves as the main place of worship for the Catholic Filipinos in Florence, can be considered not only a passive location of rituals and religious activities but also a place which constantly influences the practice of rituals and the activities of the Filipino Catholic community. The fact that the Church of San Barnaba is under the Archdiocese of Florence means that it has an immense influence as to how the Filipino community can practise their faith. This demonstrates that the Church of San Barnaba, acting as a religious establishment representing the Catholic Church as an institution, becomes an active participant that can directly affect the processes related to the practice of religious rituals, and in this case, of the Catholic Filipino migrants of Florence.

In the same book, Lefebvre proposed a spatial triad: spatial practice, representations of space, and representational space (perceived space, conceived space, and lived space, respectively). These aspects refer to the ways in which people perceive, conceive, and live in space. Additionally, these aspects are not simply typologies of space that are separately observed from each other. On the contrary, they are interconnected and can exist simultaneously with each other and thus reveal a multifaceted characteristic of social space. The three aspects relate space to different social processes that are integral to people's lives. Through the spatial triad, Lefebvre enables the analysis of space in ways that may not be obvious to the people who occupy and use space in their everyday activities. For this research, the spatial triad serves as a guide in examining how the Catholic Filipino migrants use their space through the observations of the researcher during the activities that take place at the Church

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<sup>35</sup> This research will use the English translation of Lefebvre's book, *The Production of Space*, by Donald Nicholson-Smith and first published in 1991 by Blackwell: Oxford UK and Cambridge USA

of San Barnaba. Moreover, the spatial triad was used in the formulation of interview questions to learn about the descriptions and observations of the Filipinos about their environment, particularly related to the Church of San Barnaba and their practice of religion in Florence. The section below discusses each aspect of space introduced by Lefebvre. It does not seek to overextend the definition of each concept. However, it is helpful to establish a common understanding and to demonstrate how they relate to the research and how they are applied to the study of the Church of San Barnaba and the Filipino Catholic community in Florence.

*i. Perceived space*

The first aspect is *pratique spatiale* or perceived space which refers to the setting where individuals live and where they are influenced by the existing elements and stimuli within the reality of everyday life. As expounded by Lefebvre in his work, “*the spatial practice of a society secretes that society’s space; it propounds and presupposes it, in a dialectical interaction; it produces slowly and surely as it masters and appropriates it.*” The reality experienced by society is what produces the space that people occupy through gestures and body movements which take place in both physical and social spaces. However, the different experiences of people also affect how the same space is perceived based on their (previous or ongoing) personal experiences and a priori reasoning. Without any symbolism and personal experience attached to space, everything can only be defined through statistics. The aspect of perceived space represents the means people generate space based on their spatial practices – in their everyday lives and their embodied experiences.

In this research, descriptions of the Church of San Barnaba were collected from the members of the Filipino Catholic community in Florence. During the interviews, each of the respondent’s personal background was asked, including their age, marital status, educational attainment, current profession, including the role that they currently play in the Church of San Barnaba and the Filipino Catholic community in Florence (e.g. affiliate group coordinator, pastoral council member, regular churchgoer, etc.). The personal background of each respondent was taken into consideration in recording their descriptions of Florence as their host community and also of the Church of San Barnaba. Their influences and reasons for attending the activities of the Church of San Barnaba were also collected to determine

how their personal motivations affect how they describe the Church of San Barnaba as well as the Filipino Catholic community.

*ii. Conceived space*

Second, *représentations de l'espace* or conceived space is the space of intellectuals who identify all three aspects of space. Conceived space is described as the “*space of scientists, planners, urbanists, technocratic subdividers and social engineers, as of a certain type of artist with a scientific bent – all of whom identify what is lived and what is perceived with what is conceived.*” Conceived space is focused on the existing physical and technical representations of space which can be mapped and replicated since these spaces have been institutionally and scientifically organised by intellectuals who claim knowledge of space. Moreover, it is constituted of dominant representations of lived space that are created and promoted by people who claim mastery of spaces by ideology, knowledge, and/or power. Additionally, conceived space is not limited to physical spaces and built environments as it can also be in the forms of laws, ceremonies, discourses, etc. Therefore, the conceived space becomes the space of the dominant order wherein they have the capacity and means to manipulate the space and the people who use space through their conception of the representations of space with dominant ideologies.

As the study focuses on space as utilised and experienced by a migrant population, some qualities concerning the similarities between the Filipino migrant community and Florence, Italy as the migrant population’s host community remain as focal points to determine how conceived space is fulfilled in the practice of Filipino religious traditions in an Italian setting. It can be observed that Florence as a host community is welcoming to the Filipino Catholic community by providing them with their own space for liturgical activities which is the Church of San Barnaba. This example demonstrates the recognition made by the host community of the spiritual and social needs of Filipino migrants. Moreover, the Filipino community is encouraged to participate in some events organised by the municipality of Florence like the *Cavalcata dei Magi* [The Cavalcade of the Three Kings] to celebrate the Epiphany every 6<sup>th</sup> of January. This ancient tradition of procession dates back to the 15<sup>th</sup> century. At the present, migrant communities like the Filipino community in Florence are consistently invited to join such traditional events while wearing their own traditional

costumes particularly during the parade. These events serve to demonstrate the diverse migrant population existing in the city and, at the same time, allow the different migrant communities to present their local cultures in different ways, e.g. dresses, accessories, performances.

The conceived space surrounding the Church of San Barnaba and the Filipino Catholic community also involves examining the ability of the Filipinos members to adapt to the space of their host community. In the bigger context of Italy and even of the municipality of Florence, Filipinos have to learn the ways the Italian society is constructed, be it politically, socially, and culturally. Norms and discourses that may not be explicitly presented in Italian societies also affect the space which Filipino migrants occupy and even have to negotiate as part of the foreign population. Even under the Catholic Church and the Church of San Barnaba, Catholic Filipinos are affected by the teachings and rules of the Catholic Church that they have to abide by as parishioners. Despite the fact that the Church of San Barnaba was given to the exclusive use of the Filipino community, they still have to constantly follow the rules of the Parish of San Lorenzo where the Church of San Barnaba is under. Also, the presence of leaders in the Church of San Barnaba – Father Reynold Corcino, Father Giovanni Guida, and Sister Ma. Erlita Bautro, means that the community rests under the supervision of religious leaders who are considered authorities of the church. The exploration of this aspect of space allows us to gain information of how the churchgoers of San Barnaba and members of the Filipino Catholic community in Florence practise Catholic religious rituals while adapting to their Italian host community, respecting the rules and teachings of the Catholic church, and following the leadership of the church authorities.

### *iii. Lived space*

Lastly, *espaces des représentations* or lived space is the aspect of space which exists within human use particularly mediated by culture. It is concerned with how people actually use the space embedded with images and symbols, as well as how they are able to reject existing expressions of power and dominant orders by modifying space for their own use and fulfilment of objectives. Lived space happens in between perceived and conceived space where, as described by Lefebvre, “*space is directly lived through its associated images and symbols, and hence the space of ‘inhabitants’ and ‘users’, but also of some artists and perhaps of those, such as a few writers and philosophers, who describe and aspire to do no*

*more than describe.*” With the existence of the same symbols and stimuli in an environment that affects people, lived space is differentiated from perceived space with the mediation of culture in the aspect of everyday experience in physical space.

For this aspect of space, the practice of religious rituals and the achievement of the goals of the Filipino Catholic community are at the centre of analysis. The exploration of lived space includes the study of how space is used, transformed, and navigated during the practices of religious traditions. Participants in the interview undertaken for this research were asked to share their motivations for coming to the Church of San Barnaba and becoming a member of the Filipino Catholic community in Florence. In particular cases, participants who performed leadership roles in the community were also asked about their reasons as to why they decided to become actively involved in the organisation of activities and in the overall management of the community. The opinion of the community leaders and the members of San Barnaba’s pastoral council is an important part in the analysis of lived space which is considered to exist in between perceived space and conceived space. These leaders are at the forefront of managing and negotiating the accessibility and usage of space for the Catholic Filipino migrant community, especially within the Church of San Barnaba. Moreover, their goals go beyond personal reasons because their goals also represent that of the entire community. Also, it is in the lived space where the role of San Barnaba and the Filipino Catholic community in the achievement or failure of the goals of member-participants are explored further. Since lived space deals with how a person experiences and interacts with the elements present in a given space, the ways in which Filipinos practise religious rituals, perform their specific roles in the community, and ultimately realise their personal goals are set against the background of the Church of San Barnaba and of Florence, Italy as host community to determine the role of space in either the success or failure of their objectives.

#### *Related literature and the application of Lefebvre’s theory in studying the spatiality of religion*

The conception of this research was inspired by already existing studies on the role of space in the practice of religious rituals. The consultation of such studies helped the researcher not only in her introduction to the research topic but also to the theoretical and methodological design of this work. In this section, we are able to explore some examples of studies focusing on space and religion, as well as several discussions relating Lefebvre’s works in the practice

of religious rituals. Finally, this section informs its readers of the wide availability of spatial studies on religion and that this work aims to become a contribution to the growing number of scholarly works to demonstrate the importance of space in the discussion of religion, sacredness, and even secularity.

Spatial studies have been applied not only in analysing the construction of space but also in exploring how existing spaces are organised. Watkins, in his pursuit to analyse the organisation of space in theatre production, utilised Lefebvre's spatial triad in the examination of the social, physical, and mental spaces in a theatre performance. Watkins used this particular case in his study since he realised that the theatre actors and staff possess remarkable understanding and insight of their space of the processes required in theatre performance. First, Watkins discussed the conceived space of stage production. This includes the script, the composer's score, and the various notes given by the director, producer, designer, etc. – people who are considered as experts. The technical aspect of production such as actors memorising their lines, being in the right spot at the right time, or following the cues of their fellow actors, provide the actors a kind of framework on how their performance should be done. Next, the perceived space of the theatre performance focuses on the routines and common understanding that were established so that the members of the theatre production are able to participate effectively according to their roles. This includes mastering the script, giving the right cue to fellow actors, moving from one part of the stage to the other, and making sure not to upstage other actors. Finally, lived space in theatre involves the actual theatre performance of the actors on stage. Actors are dressed in their proper costumes and are provided with props that are necessary in their performance. They utter their lines with their fellow actors and move around the stage. Despite the guidelines provided to the actors, they are given the freedom to make the performance their own – a degree of artistic freedom. The stage, as lived space, is a space filled with rules, instructions, and limitations. Nevertheless, it is also a space of possibilities for the actors during their performance.<sup>36</sup> Watkins' study is just one example of how Lefebvre's spatial theory can be applied in the analysis of the social world. In examining the different dimensions of space within a theatre performance, Watkins has provided an illustration of the significance of space in the social experiences of people.

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<sup>36</sup> Ceri Watkins, "Representations of Space, Spatial Practices, and Spaces of Representation: An Application of Lefebvre's Spatial Triad," *Culture and Organization* 11 (2005).

Meanwhile, Kim Knott applied the spatial approach in the analysis of sacred spaces which she discussed in her book *The Location of Religion* first published in 2005. With reference to Lefebvre and his theories on the production of space and the social aspects of space, Knott analysed space intending to specify the actual location of religiosity, particularly the practice of religion, within the society of contemporary the West. The use of religion as a medium in Knott's study allowed her to inspect contemporary everyday spaces which are unlikely to be labelled as religious.<sup>37</sup> She analysed the features of non-religious, secular spaces (social, cultural, and physical spaces) wherein religion is practised, up to the extent that it becomes a means to demonstrate the dominance of a social/religious group, resistance (e.g. resistance to ideologies or rejection of the dominance of a particular social/religious group), or liberation of an individual/groups from dominant groups/ideologies. In the examination of secular spaces which are used as settings for religious practices, Knott suggested the presence of classical dualism between Christianity and secularism wherein things that are supposed to be unlabelled are constantly produced and reproduced as either sacred and/or secular. Finally, Knott hypothesised in a rather philosophical manner that religion is always present in many ways which may not be externally visible or easily observable to people, and that sacred elements are also present even in ordinary secular spaces.

The practice of religious traditions in public spaces allows for the identity representation of the actors away from any predominated norms and social conventions imposed by a dominant social group or category. As expressed in her work discussed before, the practice of religion in everyday, secular spaces can be interpreted as a form of resistance by the group from rules and even unspoken norms that are present within the society. Chivallon's study of the Caribbean religion as a means of Caribbean diasporic identity representation in the United Kingdom shows that the practice of Caribbean religious traditions in public spaces provides them the opportunity to produce space for their integration into the British society. The practice of the Caribbean religious traditions permits the Caribbean population living in the United Kingdom to have an alternative reaction to the challenges brought by living in their new host country. Chivallon also referred to Lefebvre's spatial triad wherein she considered conceived space as the dominant aspect of space. Lefebvre's conceived space supports Chivallon's idea that any physical space is linked to power through the systematisation of

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<sup>37</sup> Kim Knott, *The Location of Religion* (London and New York: Routledge, 2014).

space by defining its specific use and users, as well as through the existence of the notion of the “other”. In contrast, the two remaining aspects of the triad, the perceived space and lived space, were described to be less rigid since they relate more to the daily use of space by individuals. They include the use of personal imagination which may affect the meanings attached to space rather than being institutionalised by dominant social actors. In concluding her study, Chivallon suggested that the practice of religious traditions in public spaces by the Caribbean diaspora is a means to deconstruct the racial order in British spaces through the creation of spaces of resistance that is used to maintain the social diversity in the United Kingdom.<sup>38</sup>

The studies undertaken by Knott and Chivallon examine spaces where elements linked to religion can be identified and/or where religious rituals are practised. Both authors discussed how religious spaces contribute to the representation of their users in order to express dominance over other groups or to demonstrate resistance to the dominant groups and norms present. Moreover, both of the studies utilised Lefebvre’s concepts of space and incorporated his proposed spatial triad in examining the characteristics of sacred and secular spaces as a setting for the practice of religious traditions. These elements relate to the current objectives that this research aims to fulfil and, at the same time, can serve as points of comparison when it comes to the differences in the design of this research. Knott expressed the dualism between Christianity and secularisation wherein sacred spaces carry secular elements while secular spaces carry sacred elements. This dualism is specifically interesting in the case of this study wherein Filipino religious traditions are practised both in sacred spaces, specifically at the Church of San Barnaba, and in secular spaces like the streets, open fields, and public spaces of Florence, Italy where the research terrain is located. In addition, this dualism of space allows for the flexibility of the Church when it comes to the non-religious expressions of the Filipino Catholic migrants who use the Church of San Barnaba and the Filipino Catholic community for social, cultural, and even political representations. Since the migrant community has a rather limited space where they can openly practise Filipino traditions in their host community, a religious space like the church becomes a space that is open to carry secular images and symbols.

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<sup>38</sup> Christine Chivallon, “Religion as space for the expression of Caribbean identity in the United Kingdom,” trans. Karen Belorgane and Denise Ganderton. *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 19, (2001): 461-483.



In contrast to Chivallon's study of the practice of Caribbean religious traditions by the Caribbean diasporic population in the United Kingdom, the community of Catholic Filipino migrants focused in this study is hosted by a largely Catholic host community of Florence, Italy. For the Caribbean population, their practice of the Caribbean religious traditions becomes a form of resistance to the racial order and existing norms of British space. For this research, it is possible to compare how the Filipino community of San Barnaba negotiates their use of space with their similarly Catholic host community. This can be done by examining the accessibility of space to the Filipino community and the reception of the locals towards the performance of Filipino Catholic religious rituals in the spaces of Florence, Italy. It is important to note, however, that there are also non-Catholic Filipino groups present in Florence, Italy. This can be an opportunity to determine whether similarities in religious beliefs play a role in terms of the accessibility of space for the Filipino migrant community and in the ways in which they appropriate space for their respective religious representations.

The negotiation of religious space was analysed by Nissilä in her research about the Awakening movement, which is considered as one of the largest revivalist communities of the Protestant Evangelical Lutheran Church in Finland. In this study, she also examined how young people negotiate and construct their own space through their participation in the movement. For the author, she considers the Awakening movement as a "space within space," created within the conceived space, i.e. Lutheran Christianity. According to the youth members of the movement, the dominant ideology of Lutheran Christianity, faith, and dogma influence their experiences and their own definitions of being a *Körtti*, which is used to refer to a follower of the revival movement. The young *Körttis*, however, are able to appropriate the beliefs of the state church and negotiate the production of specific social space, particularly those which involve them. For example, they challenge the public expectations and stereotypes attached on being a *Körtti* by expressing their lack of religiousness despite their involvement to the movement. Nissilä even noted one statement of a participant who identified as an atheist but values the membership to the movement and the fact that he/she belongs to a social group.

Rituals, on the other hand, represent both the perceived and lived spaces in Nissilä's analysis. The annual gathering of the movement involves the singing of hymns which reproduce the identity of the community. For Lefebvre, this is commonly attached to lived space. Each year, the revival of services during their performance in the gathering becomes a means to

reproduce the past in the present. The youth, however, shows disinterest in these types of intergenerational services and this can also be categorised under Lefebvre's lived space as the young *Körtlis* express their resistance from participating in the rituals of the movement. On the other hand, the physical elements of the space wherein the rituals are held contribute in the symbolic function of the revival of the services. For example, it is a tradition for the *Körtlis* to build a gate in the celebration area. This particular habit during the annual gathering becomes part of the perceived space as the gate symbolises the sacred threshold which the participants of the gathering cross from the secular space towards the celebration area. Several signages are also attached to the gate such as "Be as you are" which inform people of the sacred characteristics of the place they are entering. Nissilä concluded in her research that through the membership of the people to the Awakening movement and their participation in its rituals, the *Körtlis* create social space. She also highlighted the importance of both perceived and lived space in the performance of rituals. The reproduction of the past requires a space that is able to hold symbols and ensure the continuity of the rituals and also of the movement.<sup>39</sup>

In a study conducted by Saint-Blancat and Cancellieri on the use of public space in the practice of the Filipino Procession of Santacruzán, the authors analysed how the Filipino migrant community in Padua, Italy uses the Santacruzán procession as a means of asserting their presence in the city by their temporary use and appropriation of public space. The main argument proposed by the two researchers is that the Santacruzán procession is a tool used by the Filipino Catholic community in Padua to express their Filipino identity and culture while at the same time creating a sense of belonging to their (new) host community. Considering the statements provided by the Filipinos interviewed for this research, Saint-Blancat and Cancellieri noted that the procession allowed the Filipino community to claim public space even for a limited time and assert their presence in the city by allowing themselves to be subjects of observation during the procession. Additionally, they discussed the three main characteristics of public space which allow for the practice of religious rituals and its role in providing visibility to its participants. First, accessibility of space with typically low thresholds contributes to its availability not only to people who want to use the space, but the accessibility provided to the observers as well. Second, public space is a space for visibility

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<sup>39</sup> Paula Nissilä, "Everyone who wants to, can be a *Körtti*: how young people negotiate the religious space of a revivalist movement," *Culture and Religion* 20 (2019).

and, therefore, any type of performance or symbols attached to it becomes subject to visibility. Lastly, public space can only allow for temporary appropriation by the users into a defined, bounded space based on what the temporary users wish to communicate for a limited period.<sup>40</sup> It is in public spaces where people can attempt to become visible to an audience and receive recognition. However, even though public spaces carry no normative prejudice, implicit norms and social standards may affect the reception and acceptance/rejection of social groups.<sup>41</sup> It is thus unavoidable for conflicts to arise among people who have contrasting beliefs which may affect the integration of the social actors in their environment.

In the context of Filipino Catholic religious traditions, many of its themes and practices include the public space in their fulfilment. Most notable are the processions commonly organised and performed during the feast days of patron saints like the *Sinulog* festival in Cebu, Philippines which celebrate the Holy Infant Jesus, the procession of the Black Nazarene called the *Traslación* in Quiapo, Manila which is participated by hundreds of thousands of Filipinos every ninth of January, and the public penance and crucifixion performed by some devotees in Pampanga, Philippines during the Holy Week. The public space becomes an arena where religious traditions are observed.

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<sup>40</sup> Chantal Saint-Blancat and Adriano Cancellieri, "From Invisibility to Visibility? The appropriation of public space through a religious ritual. The Filipino procession of Santacruzán in Padua," *Italy, Social & Cultural Geography* 15,6 (2014).

<sup>41</sup> Martin Baumann, "Temples, cupolas, minarets: public space as contested terrain in contemporary Switzerland," *Religio: revue pro religionistiku*, (2009) 141-153.



### **Chapter III. The Church of San Barnaba and the Filipino Catholic Community in Florence, Italy**

One of this research's motivations is to contribute to the study of the role of space in the visibility, representation, and finally the recognition of the Filipino migrant population overseas. In the first part of this chapter, we will explore the topic of Filipino migration with a presentation of information and statistics about their movement around the world, as well as their motivations to move and work overseas. Afterwards, a closer look at the foreign population in Italy and of the Filipino migrant population in Italy will be discussed. This allows us to have an idea of the social conditions of the Filipino migrants abroad, especially in Italy where the case study of this research is located. Also, it is a means to support the choice of the researcher to include the Filipino migrant population as a key part of the study. By highlighting the presence of the overseas Filipino workers abroad, the researcher demonstrates that they are a significant population that can be considered as a relevant subject of inquiry in the field.

The Filipino migrants are an important part of the population in the Philippines. They are recognised for the sacrifices they make for their families, motivated to provide a better life for the people they have left behind at home. They are valued for their labour and positive disposition towards work, which is the reason why Saint-Blancat and Cancellieri described them as the “perfect invisible migrants”. This “invisibility” may be attributed to a number of reasons. First, Filipino overseas workers are known to possess good work ethics that help them create positive relationships with their employers. Compared to other migrant populations, Filipinos are rarely subject to workplace disputes or issues outside work in general. Additionally, they are able to maintain amicable relationships with their colleagues, and neighbours, therefore gaining their trust and confidence.<sup>42</sup> Second, many of them are employed in elementary occupations as service workers like cleaners, domestic helpers, and machine operators – jobs that are easily overlooked. The nature of their jobs can easily go unnoticed up to the point that the Filipino migrants themselves become invisible in the eyes of the society. The description “perfect invisible migrants” can be interpreted positively since the phrase can be seen as a reflection of the good work ethics of Filipinos even in foreign

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<sup>42</sup> Chantal Saint-Blancat and Adriano Cancellieri, “From Invisibility to Visibility? The appropriation of public space through a religious ritual. The Filipino procession of Santacruzán in Padua,” *Italy, Social & Cultural Geography* 15,6 (2014).

environment. However, invisibility can also entail neglect. Filipinos are mostly credited for their agreeable attitudes and labour, but recognition rarely exists beyond that.

### *Filipino migration and the Overseas Filipino Workers*

Following the long historical record of Filipino migration since the Spanish colonial period from the mid-16<sup>th</sup> until late 19<sup>th</sup> century and the continuing overseas movement of the population, it cannot be denied that migration has now been deeply ingrained in the Filipino culture. In the 1970s, the Marcos administration established the labour export program (LEP) in order to encourage Filipinos to migrate overseas and seek employment to help the Philippine economy through remittances. LEP was launched in the middle of an economic crisis during the Martial law when job loss and unemployment affected thousands of Filipinos. Meanwhile, oil-rich countries in the gulf region were suffering from labour shortage in their infrastructure projects. This motivated the Marcos administration to create policies such as the LEP to facilitate the migration of Filipinos as ‘labour exports’. At the same time, this directly addressed the labour shortage in the Gulf region by supporting Filipino migration to the Middle East which was predominantly participated by men employed in the construction industry.<sup>43</sup> This phenomenon of Filipino men coming to Middle East, particularly in Saudi Arabia, became prevalent and widely recognised that the phrase “*Katas ng Saudi*” [Fruit of Saudi] is popularly used up until the present, especially in popular culture, to refer to material possessions and the overall improved quality of life achieved through the compensation received by the Filipino workers while working in the Middle East.<sup>44</sup>

From the 1980s, a shift in the demographics of migrant workers began in the Philippines. More women began to take on jobs overseas as domestic workers in nearby Asian countries like Hong Kong, Singapore, Taiwan, and Japan but also in European countries such as Italy, Spain, and Greece. Moreover, the health sector opened opportunities to employ female migrant workers and the Philippines is one of the first countries which took advantage of this

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<sup>43</sup> Ana P. Santos, “Philippines: A History of Migration,” Rappler, July 1, 2014. Accessed February 1, 2023, <https://www.rappler.com/moveph/62055-history-migration-filipinos/>.

<sup>44</sup> The theme of Filipino men going to the Middle East became very popular in the Philippines that it spread even in the Filipino popular culture especially in films and songs. One of them is a famous song performed by Roel Cortez in 1992 entitled *Napakasakit Kuya Eddie* [I am hurting, Eddie]. This song is about a Filipino migrant worker in the Arab region who was expressing his sorrow to Eddie, a radio personality who gives advice to his show callers/listeners. A film of the same title and theme was released earlier in 1986.

prospect. The demand for Filipino migrant workers continued to increase through the years, and job opportunities diversified to skilled labour sectors in engineering, information technology, and health care. The increase in the number of female migrants was motivated by opportunities for teachers, nurses, domestic workers, and entertainers/performing artists. Due to the increase in demand for migrant workers abroad, Filipinos became strongly encouraged to study courses related to on-demand labours and careers. School and training centres also began to emerge in great numbers in order to meet the demand for such institutions that can improve the employability of those who seek employment overseas. From this, several issues emerged including the appearance of illegal recruiters who promise work overseas for Filipino job seekers by requiring an initial payment, however the recruiters will disappear with the money. Also, some recruiters and agencies promise the job seekers employment in esteemed institutions. But upon arrival at their workplace abroad, Filipino migrant workers are faced with unpleasant working conditions contrary to what their job agencies stated.

Laws and bilateral policies and agreements were established by the Philippines government in order to ensure the welfare and protection of Filipino migrants. For example, Republic Act no. 8042 known as “Migrant Workers and Overseas Filipinos Act of 1995” was passed in June 1995 as a policy to establish a high standard of welfare and protection provided to Filipino migrant workers and their families. This act stipulates that the government shall only allow deployment of Filipinos to countries wherein laws and rights that can protect Filipino overseas workers exist. Also, this act prohibits illegal recruitment and ensures that all activities related to illegal recruitment shall be penalised according to the law.<sup>45</sup> In terms of services offered by the government for Filipino overseas workers, several government institutions were established in order to focus on specific roles and services such as Philippine Overseas Employment Association (POEA) for programs related to employment overseas, the Overseas Workers Welfare Administration (OWWA) which ensures the welfare and protection of Filipino workers abroad especially during the times of crisis, and the Philippine Overseas Labour Office (POLO) which is primarily concerned with the verification of employment contracts and employment-related documents of Filipino migrants.

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<sup>45</sup> Republic Act No. 8042 “Migrant Workers and Overseas Filipinos Act of 1995,” June 7, 1995. Accessed February 3, 2023, <https://www.officialgazette.gov.ph/1995/06/07/republic-act-no-8042-2/>.

The latest statistics on Overseas Filipino Workers (OFW) released in December 2021 present that there were about 1.83 million Filipino migrant workers between the months of April to September 2021 when the survey was made. This number increased by 3% in 2020 when 1.77 million migrant workers were recorded. In 2019, an estimated number of 2.2 million Filipino overseas workers were recorded. The significant decrease in 2020 can be linked to the Covid-19 pandemic causing worldwide lockdowns. During the height of the pandemic, countries all over the world restricted non-essential travel. Several companies also suffered due to the minimised activity of people, affecting the jobs of people including migrant workers. By sex category, a slight gap between sexes can be observed over the past years. Out of the 2.2 million OFWs in the year 2020, 1.23 million or 56% were female while 0.97 million or 44% were male. In 2020, a slightly bigger gap can be observed wherein there are more women (1.05 million or 59.6%) than men (0.72 million or 40.4%) Filipino workers abroad. A considerably large gap between the female-to-male ratio of OFWs can be observed in 2021. The majority of Filipinos working overseas accounts for 1.10 million or 60.2% of the total record of OFWs, while there are 0.73 million or 39.8% Male OFWs in the same year.<sup>46</sup>

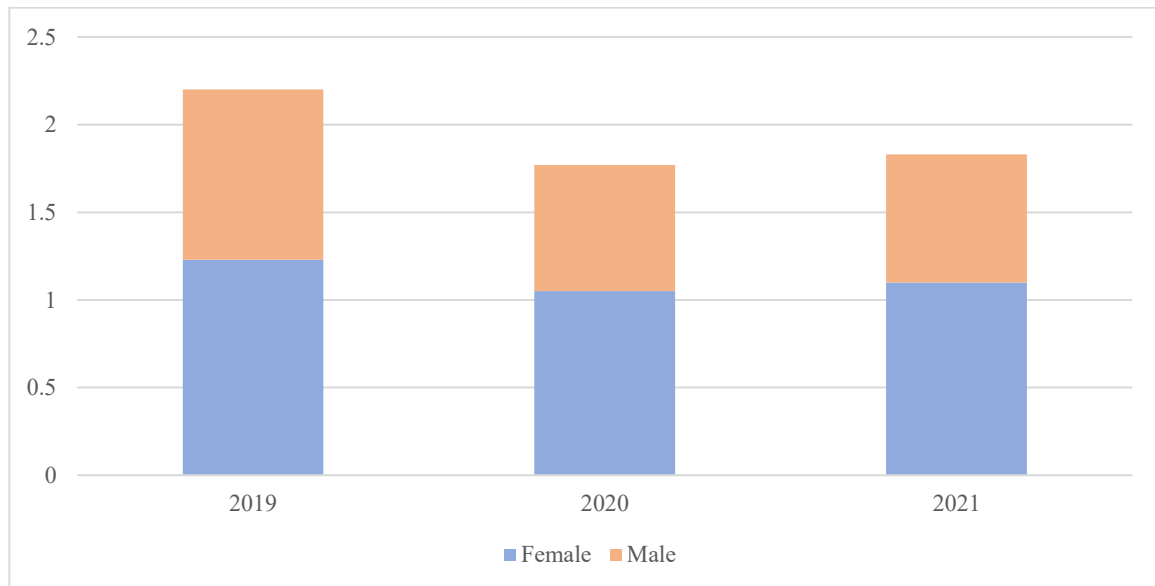


Figure 1. Distribution of Filipino migrant population by sex from 2019 to 2021. Source: Philippine Statistics Office.

<sup>46</sup> Philippine Statistics Authority, “2021 Overseas Filipino Workers (Final Results),” December 2, 2022. Accessed February 3, 2023, <https://psa.gov.ph/statistics/survey/labor-and-employment/survey-overseas-filipinos>.

Philippine Statistics Authority, “2019 Survey on Overseas Filipinos,” August 2020. Accessed February 3, 2023, <https://psa.gov.ph/sites/default/files/2019%20Survey%20on%20Overseas%20Filipinos.pdf>.



The majority of OFWs are in the productive ages from 30 years old until the ‘45 and over’ age group. From 2019 until 2021, the majority of OFWs are between the age range of 30 to 34 years old with an average of 43.3% for the past three years of available data. They are followed by the age range of 45 and over with an average of 39.7%, and 35 to 39 years old at 37.7%. The majority of male OFWs fall under the 45 and over age range while most of the female OFWs are between the 30 to 34 years old, consistently from the year 2019 to 2021.<sup>47</sup>

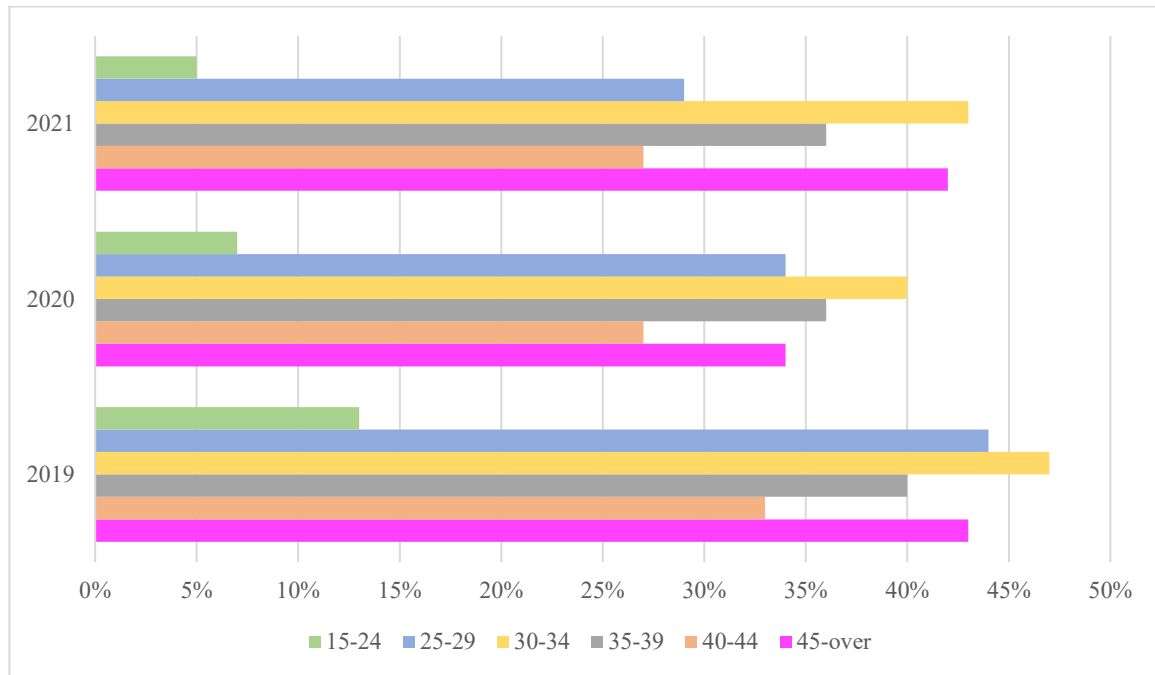


Figure 2. Distribution of Filipino migrant population by age from 2019 to 2021. Source: Philippine Statistics Office.

According to the 2021 report on OFWs, Asia remains as the top destination for OFWs at 78.3% followed by Europe (9.3%), the Americas (8.9%), Australia (2.2%), and Africa (1.3%). In 2019, 81.1% of OFWs went to Asian countries for work and 83.6% in 2020. From the three most recent reports of leading country destinations of OFWs, Saudi Arabia is at top one followed by United Arab Emirates, Hong Kong, Kuwait, Singapore, and Qatar. These countries have consistently been the top destinations of Filipino migrant workers since the 1980s, particularly when the Gulf region began hiring a massive number of migrants to work on their infrastructure projects related to oil and petrol production. The type of work available in the Gulf region also reflects the demographics of the majority of migrant workers, or in this case the OFWs, by gender and age. According to the 2015 report about new hires on the

<sup>47</sup> Ibid.

OFW Deployment per Country and Skill released by the Philippine Overseas Employment Administration, 56.7% of an estimated 189,000 OFWs in Saudi Arabia were male. More specifically, the male OFWs were employed in the production-related work, transport, equipment operators, manual and technical labourers. In these areas, the Filipino male migrant population was significantly dominant.<sup>48</sup>

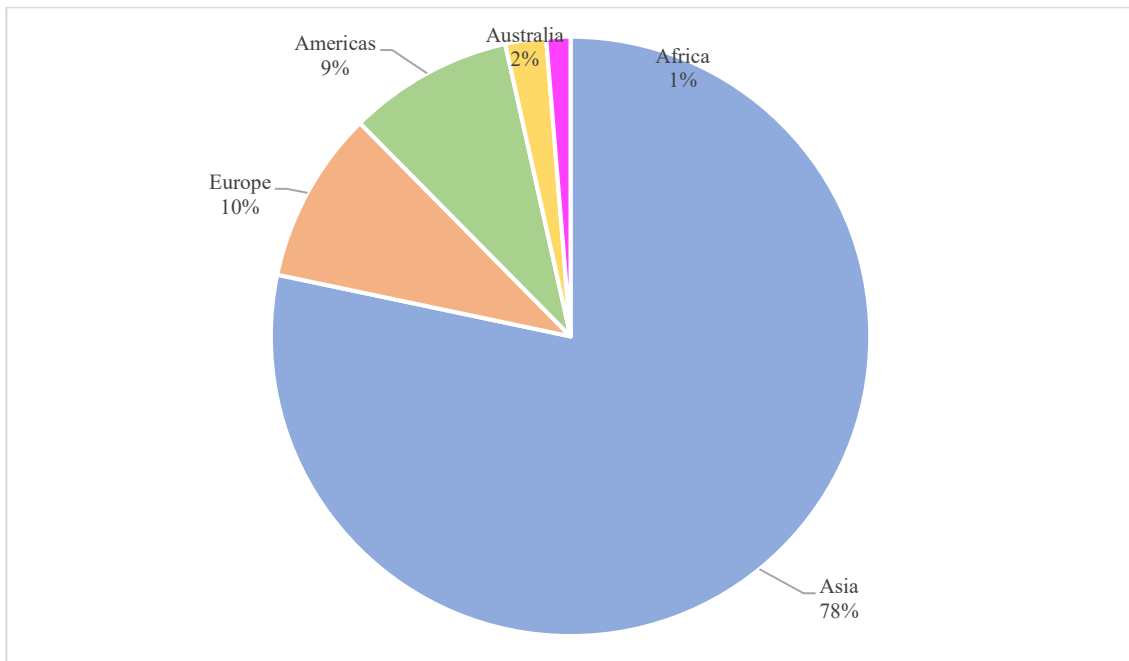


Figure 3. Distribution of Filipino migrant population by country-destination in 2021. Source: Philippine Overseas Employment Administration.

After Asia, Europe is the second most common destination among Filipino migrants. From 2019 to 2021, more than 458,000 Filipinos went to Europe as registered overseas Filipino workers. As of the latest Survey released on Overseas Filipino Workers by the Philippine Statistics Authority, there are 170,000 OFWs in Europe which is 9.3% of the 1.83 million total documented Filipino migrant workers worldwide in 2021. Among the countries in Europe, Italy, Spain, Germany, United Kingdom, and Greece are the top destination countries for Filipino migrants.

<sup>48</sup> Philippine Overseas Employment Administration, “OFW Deployment per Destination, Skill and Sex – New hires. For the Year 2015,” Accessed February 3, 2023, <https://www.dmw.gov.ph/archives/ofwstat/percountryperskill/2015-2020%20NH%20per%20Country%20per%20Skills%20%20per%20Sex.pdf>.

There are also instances wherein Filipinos settle permanently in foreign countries, motivated by the career opportunities and overall improved quality of life that are available to them in these countries. The Commission of Filipinos Overseas (CFO) classifies Filipinos who leave the Philippines to settle permanently abroad as emigrants. From 1981 to 2018, there are a total of 2.43 million Filipino emigrants recorded in 138 countries. The majority of Filipino emigrants are found in the United States of America (60.54%), followed by Canada (20.12%), Japan (6.21%), Australia (6.21%), and Italy (1.68%).<sup>49</sup> In most cases of Filipino emigration, Filipinos first went independently overseas for employment leaving behind their families at home. After years of working and once they are able to sufficiently present documents to support a family member or family members in their host destination countries, Filipino migrants begin to petition their families living in the Philippines to join them. In the data presented by the CFO on Philippine emigration, the most dominant age group for Filipino emigrants is the 14 or below comprising 21.13% of the total number of emigrants recorded between the years 1988 until 2018. A large margin can be observed for the second largest age group which is 25 to 29 years old at 11.83%. In terms of sex, there are more female Filipino emigrants recorded at 59.64%

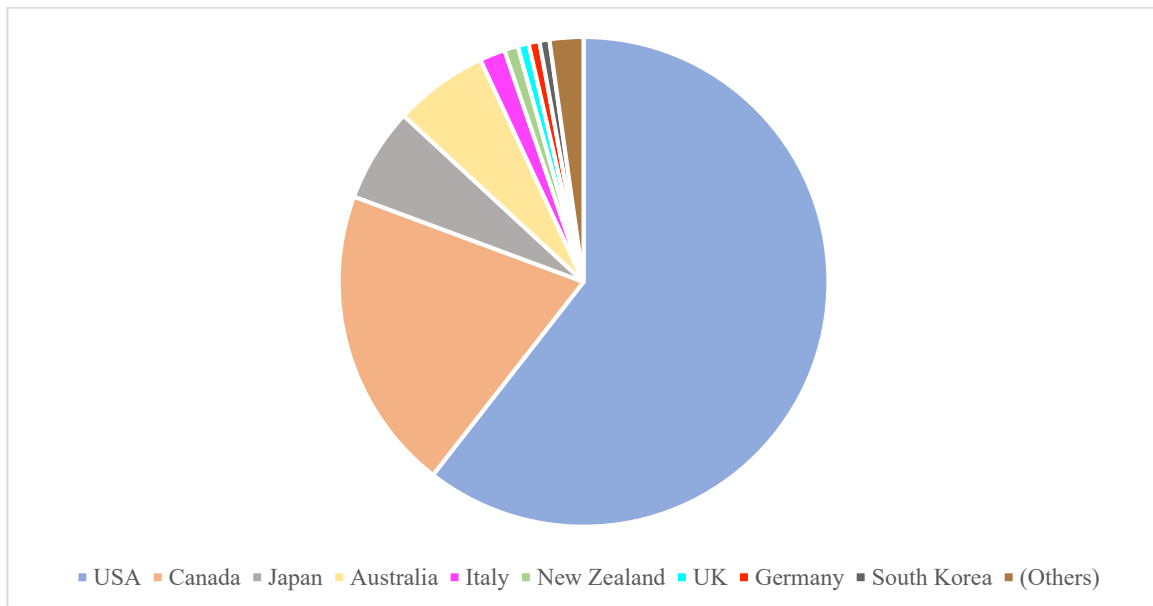


Figure 4. Distribution of Filipino emigrant population per country of destination from 1981 to 2018. Source: Commission on Filipinos Overseas.

<sup>49</sup> Commission on Filipinos Overseas, “To A Better Life: Filipino Migration Through the Years,” Accessed February 5, 2023, <https://cfo.gov.ph/to-a-better-life-filipino-migration-through-the-years/>.

### *Filipino migrant population in Italy*

Italy remains as the top country destination in Europe for both Overseas Filipino Workers and Filipino emigrants. The Filipino migrant population in Italy is the largest in Europe, followed by Spain and Germany. The researcher asked the assistance of the Honorary Consulate of the Philippines in Florence, Italy to gather information about the Filipinos living and working in Italy. On the 2<sup>nd</sup> of February 2023, the researcher was provided records of the Filipino community in Italy collected by the *Direzione Generale dell'Immigrazione* [General directorate for immigration and integration policies] which is under the *Ministero del Lavoro e delle Politiche Sociali* [Ministry of labour and social policies]. In addition, the Honorary Consulate provided records of the general foreign population in Italy. Since this research focuses on the Filipino Catholic community in Florence, Italy, the researcher took particular interest in the foreign population of the region of Tuscany and of the metropolitan city of Florence.

There are 158,997 Filipinos legally residing in Italy as of the 1<sup>st</sup> of January 2022 which places the Filipino community as the eighth most populous migrant community in the country. The Filipinos represent 3.2% of the total foreign population in Italy, most of them registered as residents in the region of Lombardy with a specifically high concentration in the city of Milan. The regions of Lazio, Emilia-Romagna, Tuscany and Veneto follow, respectively.

*Table 1. Ranking of Italian regions by the number of Filipino residents present as of 2022<sup>50</sup>*

Region	Filipino Male	Filipino Female	Total
Lombardy	24,738	31,058	55,796
Lazio	17,627	24,746	42,373
Emilia-Romagna	6,442	7,790	14,232
Tuscany	5,516	6,830	12,346
Veneto	2,843	3,587	6,430
Piedmont	2,608	3,435	6,043
Sicily	2,105	2,780	4,885
Campania	1,306	2,244	3,550

<sup>50</sup> Based on survey results of *Istituto nazionale di statistica* [National institute of statistics] in 2022. "Filippini in Italia," Accessed February 7, 2023, <https://www.tuttitalia.it/statistiche/cittadini-stranieri/filippine/>

Calabria	1,037	1,417	2,454
Sardinia	862	1,075	1,937
Umbria	861	1,039	1,900
Apulia	714	1,107	1,821
Marche	650	923	1,573
Liguria	592	874	1,466
Friuli Venezia Giulia	385	496	881
Abruzzo	276	484	760
Trentino- South Tyrol	171	248	419
Basilicata	13	48	61
Aosta Valley	19	26	45
Molise	6	19	25

In the region of Lombardy, the metropolitan city of Milan has the biggest Filipino migrant community in Italy with 46,151 Filipinos – the third largest foreign population after Egyptians (63,305) and Romanians (49,952). The Filipino community, however, is the most populous Asian community in Milan province followed by the Chinese P.R. (41,091) and Sri Lankan (21,186). In Lazio, the greatest number of Filipinos was recorded in the capital city of Rome with a total of 40,259 which is 95% of the total number of Filipinos living in the region. In Emilia-Romagna, the greatest number of Filipinos was recorded in Bologna with a total of 5,856 which covers 41% of the total number of Filipinos in the region. For Tuscany, the metropolitan city of Florence has the largest Filipino population at 6,368 which is equivalent to 51.6% of Filipinos residing in the region. In Veneto, most Filipinos declared residence in the province of Padua with a total of 2,077 or 32% of Filipinos in the region.

The latest information provided by the *Istituto nazionale di statistica* [National institute of statistics] in 2022 presents that there are currently 6,368 Filipinos living in the metropolitan city of Florence, equivalent to 5% of 125,022 total foreign population in the province as of January 2022. Based on the survey, the majority of the Filipinos live in the municipality of Florence – that is 4,432 or 69.6% of the total Filipino population in the metropolitan city of Florence. The rest are living in nearby areas like Empoli, Impruneta, and Bagno a Ripoli which are all easily accessible from the municipality of Florence. The sex composition of the Filipino population in Florence, Italy is dominated by women making up at least 60% of the

Filipino population in Florence which can be similarly observed in Italy in general. In most cases, Filipinos are employed as unskilled manual labourers in public, social, and personal services. According to a document published by the Philippine Overseas Employment Administration that shows the type of occupations OFWs participate in per country-destination, most Filipinos are hired in elementary occupations as service workers like domestic, hotel, and office cleaners and helpers.<sup>51</sup> Moreover, the majority of Filipino women in Florence work as domestic helpers and caregivers to Italian households/employers. They also represent the majority of the age group of '45 years old and above'. The demographic composition of the Filipino migrant population in Florence, as well as in Italy in general, greatly reflects the current sex and age categories of the majority of parishioners of the Church of San Barnaba. An overview of the demographic composition of the parishioners of the Church of San Barnaba and the members of the Filipino Catholic community in Florence is more thoroughly discussed in the succeeding sections of this chapter.

In Italy, one important indicator of a foreign population's integration into their host community is their participation in the local social and political associations present and active in the country. There are currently 23 Filipino diaspora associations in Italy that were originally founded to assist in the integration process of Filipinos living in Italy. Aside from that, part of these associations' motivations and goals include the valorisation and promotion of the Filipino culture, intercultural mediation between the Philippines and Italy, as well as raising awareness and fighting against discrimination as a migrant population in Italy. The majority of the Filipino diaspora associations are found in the region of Lombardy which has the highest concentration of Filipino migrant population, particularly in the metropolitan city of Milan. Out of the 23 Filipino associations in Italy, there are no registered groups in the region of Tuscany where the case study for this research is located. Moreover, and relating to one of the themes of this research, there is only one Filipino association whose purposes include religion which is the Bicol Saro – Associazione Filippina in Milan, Italy.<sup>52</sup>

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<sup>51</sup> Philippine Overseas Employment Administration, "OFW Deployment per Destination, Skill and Sex – New hires. For the Year 2015," Accessed February 3, 2023, <https://www.dmw.gov.ph/archives/ofwstat/percountryperskill/2015-2020%20NH%20per%20Country%20per%20Skills%20%20per%20Sex.pdf>.

<sup>52</sup> The list of registered diaspora associations in Italy can be accessed in the Ministry of Labour and Social Policies website at <https://www.integrazionemigranti.gov.it/en-gb/Ricerca-Associazioni>.

Groups participated by Filipinos in Florence, Italy are not limited to social and cultural associations. Additionally, many of them were established informally by Filipinos who share commonalities in religious beliefs, interests, and even origin in the Philippines. Filipino provincial groups are common in Florence, Italy. They are medium-sized groups of twenty to about one hundred members of Filipinos coming from the same provinces in the Philippines like the *Ilocanos* of North Luzon, *Kapampangans* of Central Luzon, and the *Mangyans* from the island of Mindoro located in the southwest of Luzon. There are also religious groups like the Filipino Catholic community in Florence, Filipino El-Shaddai Community<sup>53</sup>, and smaller Christian groups. Membership in these groups is not restricting, and it is possible for most Filipinos to participate in more than one organisation. For example, it is common for many Filipinos to actively participate in both their provincial groups and the religious community they belong to. Several members of these groups already know each other while living in the Philippines, and newcomers in Florence are either family, close relatives, or even friends who were invited to move to Florence either for work or family reunification reasons. As early as the 1970s, Filipinos began coming to Italy for work and most of them were employed in the service and hospitality industry, like restaurants, hotels, and offices. Also, the majority of the women work as domestic workers and caregivers in either part-time or full-time schedules. Once they are able to secure employment and a stable stream of income, some Filipinos begin the process of petitioning their spouses and/or children to come to Italy. In 2020, 1,266 out of 1,502 (84.3%) long-term residence permits provided to Filipinos indicated ‘family’ as the purpose of stay followed by ‘religion’ (7.6%), and ‘work’ (4.3%).<sup>54</sup> This was a common topic of conversation that the researcher had with the members of the Filipino Catholic community in Florence. Aside from coming from the same hometowns, some Filipinos are also connected by family relations. In the case of members who did not have families in Florence prior to their arrival, they were invited by friends or former colleagues to move to Florence for work and better compensation.

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<sup>53</sup> The El Shaddai is the biggest Catholic charismatic movement in the Philippines. It is also popular among Filipinos overseas, with an estimated 2 million Filipinos participating in El-Shaddai groups abroad.

<sup>54</sup> Ministero del Lavoro e delle Politiche Sociali, “Tavola 3 – Ingressi di cittadini non comunitari per cittadinanza e motivo di ingresso. Serie storica 2017-2020 (v.a.). Dati al 1 gennaio 2021,” Accessed February 7, 2023, <https://www.lavoro.gov.it/documenti-e-norme/studi-e-statistiche/Documents/Rapporti%20annuali%20sulle%20comunit%C3%A0%20migranti%20in%20Italia%20-%20anno%202021/zz-Appendice-statistica-rapporti%20comunita-2021.pdf>

Meanwhile, the Filipino community in Italy is considered the largest Filipino diasporic community in Europe. There has been a steady stream of Filipino migration since the 1980s and now Filipinos represent 3.2% of the total foreign population in Italy. Aside from work opportunities, Filipino migration to Italy is motivated by family reunification, study, and religion. Owing to the strong presence of the Catholic religion and faith in Italy, several members of the Filipino Catholic clergy go to Italy to study theology and eventually work for the Catholic Church all over the world. Moreover, the Catholic community in Italy recognises the presence and active participation of Filipinos in their expression of faith by attending Church activities and in the general revival of churches which are experiencing a decline in attendance for multiple reasons (e.g. ageing population, decline in the number of devotees, migration of local parishioners). The similarity in the Catholic faith of the Filipino Catholic believers in Italy allowed them an easier access to spaces wherein they can express their faith and practise religious traditions, which is not always the case for all migrant populations. In Florence, Italy, the Catholic Filipino migrants were provided their own space, the Church of San Barnaba, to organise activities that fulfil their spiritual needs. This is an opportunity that the researcher has recognised in analysing how the migrants use the space provided to them in realising their goals and motivations as members of the Filipino Catholic community in Florence, as well as the ways they describe the surroundings of their host community and appropriate them in their practice of Catholic religious traditions.

#### *The Church of San Barnaba and the Filipino Catholic community in Florence*

The Church of San Barnaba, also referred to as Chiesa di San Barnaba in Italian, is situated on the corner street of via Guelfa and via Panicale in Florence, Italy. Outside the church, there are only a few signages present that direct to the Church of San Barnaba. There is a small commemorative plaque on the history of the Church of San Barnaba by the entrance gate. The church structure was built in 1322 as a dedication to St. Barnaba in memory of the battle of Campaldino where the Guelphs, mostly composed of Florentines and armed with weapons produced in Florence, defeated the Ghibellines from Arezzo on St. Barnaba's feast day on the 11<sup>th</sup> of June 1289. From the 14<sup>th</sup> century when the church was constructed, different religious orders settled in the Church of San Barnaba such as the Augustinians in the 14<sup>th</sup> century, the Carmelite friars during the 16<sup>th</sup> century, as well as Carmelite nuns in the same period.<sup>55</sup>

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<sup>55</sup> Historical Marker, *Chiesa di San Barnaba*, Church of San Barnaba, Via Guelfa, Florence, Italy





Figure 5. Church of San Barnaba in via Guelfa, Florence, Italy (Photograph by KM, February 20, 2023).

The exclusive use of the Church of San Barnaba by the Filipino migrants in Florence was granted in 1988 after the initiative of Sister Carolina Ganzon of the *Suore Oblate dello Spirito Santo* [Sisters Oblates of the Holy Spirit], with the help of other interested Filipino migrants, who recognised the need for a place in Florence where the Filipino migrants can fraternise with their fellow Filipinos. They forwarded this concern to Monseigneur Angelo Livi who was the Parish Priest of the Basilica of San Lorenzo, with whom the Filipinos expressed their desire for a church where Filipinos can meet, organise, and celebrate the Holy Eucharist and a place where their spiritual and social needs can be fulfilled. Monseigneur Livi positively received the community's request which he forwarded to the Archbishop of Florence, Cardinal Silvano Piovanelli. Cardinal Piovanelli offered to the Filipino community the use of the Church of San Barnaba in Via Guelfa for the pastoral activities of the Filipino migrants in Florence. The early organisation of the Church of San Barnaba was assisted by the priests of *Pontificio Collegio Filippino di Roma* [Pontifical Filipino College of Rome]. As the Church community of San Barnaba developed and grew in numbers, various affiliate groups and commissions were formed to animate the activities of the Church community of San Barnaba that will enrich the personal and spiritual growth of its members.

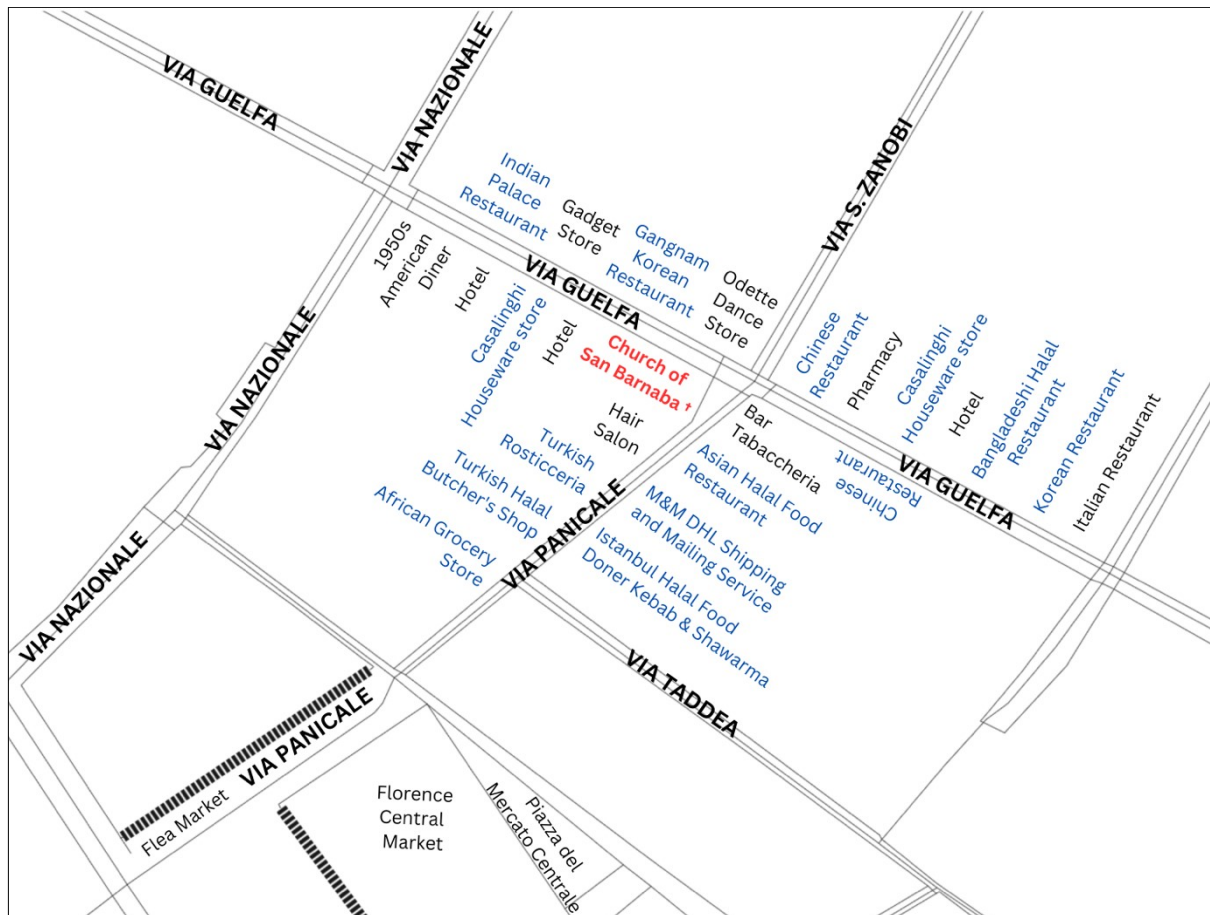


Figure 6. Map of the surroundings of the Church of San Barnaba.

There are various commercial establishments surrounding the Church of San Barnaba. There is a *bar tabaccheria* in front of the church where a number of Filipinos stay before attending the liturgical services. The bar became a place for Filipinos before entering the church where they can greet their friends and ask for updates about their lives. Conversations varied in topics such as work, family, and vacation plans. There are also ethnic stores: Indian, Middle Eastern, African, and Asian. The stores offer different types of products and services like food, cargo shipping, wire transfer, as well as beauty and spa treatments. However, and despite the regular presence of Filipinos in the area, there are no Filipino stores and restaurants nearby.<sup>56</sup> There is a continuous flow of pedestrians in the area, especially since

<sup>56</sup> Filipino migrants are not widely recognised as migrant populations that set up businesses in their host communities. Filipino migrants are usually employed in companies or business establishments, or more commonly as domestic workers. However, there is a stereotype for Chinese migrants setting up businesses in their host neighbourhood. *Cinese* in Italian commonly refers to a local supermarket that sells a wide variety of products in retail, usually ‘made in China’. *Indiano* refers to Indians selling fresh produce – fruits and vegetables in the market. Meanwhile, the term *Filipina* in Italian popularly refers to middle-aged Filipino women working as domestic helpers in Italian households.



the street of via Panicale leads to the Central Market. Most people who pass by the Church of San Barnaba are unassuming of the church and the activities, and there are very few instances where they go inside the church when it is open.



Figure 7. Some Filipinos enjoying drinks in a bar tabaccheria in front of the Church of San Barnaba. They are talking to each other while waiting for the Sunday mass to begin. Florence, Italy (Photograph by KM, May 22, 2022).



Figure 8. Establishments surrounding the Church of San Barnaba. Several ethnic shops are located along the streets of via Guelfa and via Panicale. Florence, Italy (Photograph by KM, February 20, 2023).

There are an estimated 300 Filipinos who attend the masses and other activities organised by the Church of San Barnaba. It is difficult to get the exact number of attendees since there is no formal registration required to attend the gatherings of the Church. Also, some of the Filipinos who live in Italy and visit Florence join the activities of San Barnaba since they are also aware of the presence of the Filipino Catholic community in the city. Out of the total parishioners of San Barnaba, there are about 150 active members who participate in the existing affiliate groups and commissions of the church. They have organised themselves when it comes to the roles and delegation of tasks for the activities of the church. The Church of San Barnaba is headed by Father Reynold Corcino who serves as the Filipino Chaplain of San Barnaba. He is joined by Don Giovanni Guida, chaplain priest of the Archdiocese of Florence, and Sister Ma. Erlita Bautro of the *Suore Oblate dello Spirito Santo* who acts as one of the main coordinating liaisons between the Church of San Barnaba and the Parish of San Lorenzo.

The parishioners of the church have also established a pastoral council made up of seven officers: overall coordinator, assistant coordinator, secretary, assistant secretary, treasurer, assistant treasurer, and auditor. These seven officers take care of the administrative activities of the church and serve as the main point persons for the activities of the church and also when it comes to the concerns raised by the parishioners San Barnaba. Aside from the pastoral council, they also have nine church affiliates including apostles of the holy spirit, altar servers, adoration, lectors and commentators, legion of Mary, Mary spouse of the Holy Spirit, music ministry, and lastly ushers, greeters and collectors. Finally, the community of San Barnaba has five different commissions, namely worship, education, socio-cultural, temporalities, and youth and family. Each of this group has their own elected coordinator who serves as the leader overseeing the activities of the entire group as well as the tasks delegated to each person. All affiliate and commission coordinators report to the overall coordinator of the pastoral council, who is currently Rosel Bautro. The selection of pastoral council officers and group coordinators is mediated by Father Reynold Corcino. Before the election of officers and coordinators, nominations are made among the parishioners of the Church of San Barnaba. They are evaluated based not only on their willingness to serve the parish and their overall involvement at the Church, but also their personal affairs. Once Father Corcino has finalised the list of nominees, they are presented in front of the entire church congregation. Pastoral council officers and coordinators are elected through secret ballots, and they hold their positions for two years.

The archdiocese of Florence offered the Church of San Barnaba to the Filipino Catholic community for their spiritual needs which are fulfilled through liturgical and pastoral services organised by the leaders of the Church of San Barnaba in order to foster the spiritual life of its patrons. There are regular mass services each week on Thursdays, Saturdays, and Sundays. The Novena mass is held every Thursday evening at 6pm. In the Philippines, Novena mass is usually held every Wednesday. However, most of the Filipinos in Italy have their day-off every Thursday and so the church decided to hold the Novena mass every Thursday so that more people are able to attend and participate in the mass. The Novena mass is held in English except for the third Thursday of the month where the mass is in Italian. At the beginning, the Church of San Barnaba held the third Thursday of the month's Novena mass in Italian to invite their Italian Catholic fellows in celebrating the mass with the community of San Barnaba. There were Italians who attended but they were very few, and they eventually stopped coming. However, Father Corcino decided to continue to use the Italian language every third Thursday of the month so that the Filipinos can practise their Italian language skills through the readings and responses during the mass. The anticipated mass every Saturday is in Tagalog, attended by those who are not able to attend the regular Sunday mass. The majority of the attendees of the anticipated mass have to go to work on Sundays, particularly those working in healthcare and hospitality. Most of the Filipinos attend the Sunday mass since it is a non-working day for them. The mass is celebrated in Tagalog language.

As the Filipino chaplain, Father Corcino leads all of the mass in San Barnaba and they are co-officiated by Father Giovanni Guida. The mass follows the structure of a typical Roman Catholic mass in the Philippines. At the beginning of the mass, prayer intentions and mass sponsors are announced by the commentator. This is followed by the observance of the holy mass. Finally, acknowledgements are expressed and announcements are made by the end of the liturgical mass. There are additional activities incorporated to the mass depending on the liturgical calendar and also the dates when feasts are celebrated. For example, there is a flower offering to the Blessed Virgin Mary every week for the month of May. Also, to mark the Lenten season, the Novena mass is preceded by a prayer of the Stations of the Cross to commemorate Christ's suffering and sacrifice. Usually, this is done outdoors as a pilgrimage-like activity but since the Filipino community of the Church of San Barnaba have limited access to spaces outside the church, the prayer is done inside of the church instead.

Years ago, the church organised processions like *Santacruzán* [Holy cross, literal translation], *Palaspás* [palm fronds] during the mass celebration on Palm Sunday<sup>57</sup>, and Stations of the Cross, and other religious feasts where gazebos are put up in open fields to provide space for the celebrations. According to Rosel, the current overall coordinator of the Church of San Barnaba, the events were even coordinated with the police especially during the processions where they helped manage the traffic. However, they decided to stop organising such events because it has become difficult to organise them especially since they had to secure many permits from the municipality of Florence. Additionally, since Father Corcino's appointment as Filipino chaplain of San Barnaba, unnecessarily flamboyant activities were halted since the participants forget the real reason for commemorating the sacred events and instead focus on the aesthetic performance of the event. As a migrant community that yearns for social activities that let the Filipinos spend leisurely time together, the pastoral members try to organise activities other than those related to spirituality that can strengthen the bond of the Filipino community in Florence.

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<sup>57</sup> Palm Sunday is an important Christian tradition observed on the first day of Holy week and the Sunday before Easter. Palm Sunday commemorates the event in the New Testament wherein Jesus Christ entered Jerusalem and was greeted by people waving palm branches. In the Philippines, *palaspás* [palm fronds] are more popularly artistically woven in intricate patterns and designed with religious symbols like images of Jesus. Unlike the typical Filipino *palaspás*, the Italian Catholic church communities use olive branches for Palm Sunday. This was also adopted by the majority of attendees of the Church of San Barnaba since the traditional *palaspás* is difficult to find in Florence.



*Figure 9. Flower offering to the Virgin Mary observed weekly for the month of May. People kneel in front of the altar before placing their flower offerings by the foot of the Shrine of Virgin Mary. Florence, Italy (Photograph by KM, May 22, 2022).*





*Figure 10. Prayer of the Stations of the Cross inside the Church of San Barnaba before the Thursday Novena mass. Prayer of the Stations of the Cross will be done every Thursday at 5pm during the Lenten season. Florence, Italy (Photograph by KM, February 23, 2023).*



## Chapter 4. Research methodology

During the initial development of the topic and scope for this study, the researcher assessed the available literature and existing studies related to the topic, as well as locations which can serve as terrain for observation and data collection. Consultations with colleagues and personal affiliations were made in order to choose a specific terrain for this research. In Italy, the Filipino migrant community is well-known as active participants in many religious activities and has been recognised as one of the most active communities in reviving church attendance, of the Catholic church in particular, due to the declining participation by the locals. During these consultations, the Church of San Barnaba was recommended because of its active and recognised presence in the Catholic community in Florence. The Church of San Barnaba is also exclusively used by the Filipino Catholic community which is an additional element that can serve as a point of reflection in this research, especially when it comes to the ways the Church, as a religious space, is appropriated with secular symbols of Filipino cultures whenever non-religious activities are organised by the community.

The existing literature on spatial studies also served as inspiration in designing the methodology used for this research. The importance of fieldwork in spatial analysis was also presented by Setha Low in her analysis of the social production and construction that take place in two public plazas in San José, Costa Rica – Parque Central and Plaza de la Cultura. The ethnographic descriptions presented in this research was based on a long-term fieldwork conducted by Low from 1972 to 1974, highlighting the utilisation of several methodologies in the process of data collection. First, observations and thorough recordings of activities were performed to capture all activities that take place in the field. Next, interviews were conducted by Low following a set of questions she gathered from the observations she made at the plazas. She interviewed relevant members of several local institutions who were able to provide her with architectural, historical, social, and cultural data which can aid her inquiry. Finally, she sought available historical records like newspaper articles, novels, and television presentations which provided her with a broader cultural perspective of public life participated by the locals of San José.<sup>58</sup> The methodological process she performed enabled her to generate a rich understanding of the social processes and the power dynamics involved in the physical production and social construction of public space in Costa Rica.

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<sup>58</sup> Setha Low, "Spatializing Culture: The Social Production and Social Construction of Public Space in Costa Rica," *American Ethnologist* 23 (1996): 861-862).

More relevant to this research is the study of the traditional Filipino procession *Santacruzán* every month of May performed by Catholic Filipino migrants in Padua, Italy. The researchers conducted an ethnographic inquiry every month of May for three consecutive years between 2010 to 2012. Moreover, they conducted observations on other religious rituals participated by the Filipino Catholic community in Padua like the procession of Saint Anthony every 13<sup>th</sup> of June and the celebration of all Catholic migrants in Padua at the Basilica of Saint Anthony. Alongside the ethnographic inquiry performed by Saint-Blancat and Cancellieri, they also conducted interviews with members of the Catholic Filipino community in Padua, Italian and Filipino priests of the chaplaincy, as well as the observers of the religious rituals conducted in the public spaces of Padua.<sup>59</sup> The combination of several research methodologies allowed the authors to collect qualitative data that can be used to analyse how Filipinos use their performance of religious rituals to negotiate their access to the space of their host community and to present and communicate their religious and/or Filipino identity to the local society.

*Data collection: participation-observation and interviews*

To recall, this research aims to identify the role of space in the presentation and representation of Catholic religious traditions by the Filipino migrants in Florence, Italy. Furthermore, the researcher wants to analyse how Florence, Italy, as the host community of the Catholic Filipino migrants, affects the lives of the members of the community of the Church of San Barnaba particularly in their practice of religious rituals and in the expression of their faith outside the church. This is supported by the utilisation of Henri Lefebvre's theory on the spatial triad in order to determine how the aspects of space are fulfilled by the Filipino Catholic community. To supplement the observations made by the researcher, interviews with some members of the Filipino Catholic community were conducted to hear their opinion about the Church of San Barnaba and their descriptions of their environment (e.g. place of residence, the city of Florence, the surroundings of the Church of San Barnaba).

In order to fulfil these aims and to answer the research questions proposed, observations were made at the Church of San Barnaba and interviews were conducted with the members of the Filipino Catholic community in Florence. The researcher visited the research terrain on three

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<sup>59</sup> Chantal Saint-Blancat and Adriano Cancellieri, "From Invisibility to Visibility? The appropriation of public space through a religious ritual. The Filipino procession of Santacruzán in Padua," *Italy, Social & Cultural Geography* 15,6 (2014).

separate occasions. The first fieldwork happened from the 22<sup>nd</sup> to the 22<sup>nd</sup> to the 24<sup>th</sup> of May 2022. The researcher decided to come to Florence early on in the research process because there was not a lot of information about the Church of San Barnaba and the Filipino Catholic community in Florence available on the Internet. In order to learn more about the terrain, the researcher reached out to her primary contacts in San Barnaba, William and Erin, to schedule a meeting with them. On the 22<sup>nd</sup> of May, the researcher met with William and Erin who shared information about the Church of San Barnaba and the Filipino community in Florence. On the same day, the researcher visited the Church of San Barnaba for the first time where she was able to observe the church and its surroundings and attend the May flower offering event and Sunday mass. The researcher was also introduced to Father Corcino and Sister Erlita. The researcher also introduced herself to the Filipino community of San Barnaba after the mass. It was an opportunity taken by the researcher to explain her research and to kindly ask for the community's support during the data collection and interviews that will be conducted in the following months. On the 24<sup>th</sup> of May, the researcher was able to talk to Sister Erlita who shared the story of how the Church of San Barnaba was given to the Filipino community in Florence. She also expressed her opinion on the presence of Filipino migrants in Florence and their continued practice of the Catholic faith, as well as how the Church of San Barnaba works to help the Filipinos not only foster their Catholic faith but also to provide a space for Filipinos where they can fraternise with their *kababayans* [compatriots].

The second fieldwork took place on the 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> of December 2022. The Church of San Barnaba celebrated the Feast of the Immaculate Conception on the 8<sup>th</sup> of December with a flower offering and a mass celebration officiated by Father Guida. Moreover, members of the St. Joseph Mareello Filipino Catholic community in Milan, Italy visited the Church of San Barnaba as part of their mini-pilgrimage to celebrate their community's founding anniversary. Aside from Florence, they visited Pisa which has a present Filipino Catholic community as well. Similar to the first visit, the researcher observed the execution of the activities at the church. The following day, the researcher met with Rosel, who is the overall coordinator of the pastoral council of the Church of San Barnaba. We discussed the pastoral council and the specific roles performed by each officer, the year-round activities of the church and the Filipino Catholic community, and how the organisation of activities usually takes place.



*Figure 11. Mass celebration for the Feast of the Immaculate Conception at the Church of San Barnaba attended by Filipinos in Florence and some members of the Filipino Catholic community in Milan . Florence, Italy (Photograph by KM, December 8, 2022).*

From the 1<sup>st</sup> of February 2023, the researcher began the third part of her fieldwork wherein she stayed in Florence for two months to perform participation observation at the Church of San Barnaba and to conduct interviews with Filipinos who attend and/or organise the activities of San Barnaba. The researcher decided to stay in Florence for several weeks to have a longer period of observation of the liturgical services taking place at the Church of San Barnaba and to be able to spend time with the Filipino migrants in Florence. For the researcher, her continued presence in the Church of San Barnaba helped in building confidence as a newcomer in their community. It helped the researcher gain the Filipino community's trust by becoming a familiar face in the Church of San Barnaba. Also, the two months provided a sufficient amount of time for the researcher to conduct the interviews with the parishioners of San Barnaba. Although unforeseen, the researcher's stay in Florence allowed her flexibility after encountering schedule limitations from the interview participants and even unanticipated illnesses during this phase of the research.

The researcher regularly attended the mass services at the Church of San Barnaba every Thursday and Sunday evening at 6 pm. This regular presence in the church helped establish relationships between the researcher and the parishioners of San Barnaba. It has also become an opportunity for the researcher to introduce herself and her research to Filipinos who might be willing to participate in the research. The researcher's attendance at the activities helped her not only to become familiar with the activities of the Church of San Barnaba, but it also helped the members of the church to become familiar with the researcher. Aside from attending mass services, the researcher also observed the meetings of the church commissions and affiliates of San Barnaba. Here, the researcher was able to learn more about the behind-the-scenes of the church activities and how the tasks are delegated to the members of each affiliate group or commission. The administrative affairs of the church, meanwhile, are discussed every first Sunday of the month during the pastoral council meetings which are usually presided over by Father Corcino and Rosel, the overall pastoral council coordinator. They are joined by the coordinators of each affiliate group and commissions.

The researcher conducted a series of interviews, twelve in total, with members of the Filipino Catholic community of the Church of San Barnaba. Initially, the researcher did not expect the limited availability of Filipinos to participate in the interviews. Since many Filipinos work as domestic helpers, they work at least six days per week with a day off every Thursday or Sunday which they use for personal errands. Most interviews were conducted after attending the Thursday Novena mass and the Sunday mass, which was the most convenient time for most interview participants. The interviews were conducted at the basement of the Church of San Barnaba which is used as a recreational space for the members of San Barnaba. Here, activities of the church are conducted like pastoral meetings, bible study, catechisms, counselling, etc, but also after-church activities that are considered not purely religious like birthday celebrations and *salu-salu*<sup>60</sup> wherein they share homemade meals, usually Filipino dishes.

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<sup>60</sup> *Salu-salu* is a Filipino practice of gathering and eating together, usually among a group of people who are closely related to each other by kinship or social relations



*Figure 12. Filipinos during an after-mass salu-salo at the basement of the Church of San Barnaba. Florence, Italy (Photograph by KM, February 19, 2023).*

The participants of the interview were randomly selected through a snowball-referral sampling method. Through the key informants with whom the researcher is already familiar, participants were selected on their availability and willingness to be interviewed. Based on their profiles and schedule availability, the researcher chose twelve participants that reflect the overall composition of the Filipino Catholic community in Florence. Based on the observations made by the researcher and the consultations made with the officers of the pastoral council, the majority of the parishioners of San Barnaba are women between 45 to 65 years old. The twelve participants are between the ages 25 to 69 years old at the time of the interview, out of which ten were women and two were men. Six interview participants were married, two are separated from their spouses, and the remaining four are single. Eight participants have children. Out of the fifteen children that were recorded during the interview, nine of them currently live in Florence while the rest are in the Philippines. All interview participants are employed, out of which two work on a part-time basis. The majority of the participants work as domestic and service workers employed in Italian households or hotels, with only one working in retail as pharmacy assistant. There are a lot fewer men, most of them spouses of the female Filipino migrants of Florence. Meanwhile, the presence of youth

is minimal at the Church of San Barnaba. Thus, it is quite difficult to find participants with a lower age range and it is also not representative of the selected research sample to interview more younger participants than older ones. In the absence of a definitive list of regular church attendees and members of the Filipino Catholic community in Florence, interview participants were selected in a purposive manner. The researcher did her best to keep the sample of this research representative of the Filipino Catholic community of San Barnaba. Aside from schedule limitations to participate in the interview, the researcher did not face a lot of external issues in seeking willing participants for the study. On the contrary, all of the Filipinos that the researcher met during the fieldwork have been very open in discussing their personal lives and religious participation while living in Florence whether it was during the interview or over informal conversations. Listed below is an overview of the interview participants' profiles. It should be noted that the names of the interviewees were changed for confidentiality.

*Table 2. Overview of interview participants' profiles*

Name (pseudonym)*	Age	Gender	Marital status	Children (Philippines) (Florence)	Occupation (full-time) (part-time)	No. of years in Florence	No. of years in CSB <sup>61</sup>
1. Date: 28 January 2023				Location: Residence			
Ellen	63	Female	Married (FI)	1 (PH); 1 (FI)	Caregiver (PT)	21 (2002)	21
2. Date: 2 February 2023				Location: Church of San Barnaba			
Maria	51	Female	Separated (PH)	2 (PH)	Domestic helper (FT)	14 (2009)	14
3. Date: 4 February 2023				Location: Church of San Barnaba			
Marco	42	Male	Married (FI)	2 (FI)	Driver (FT)	7 (2016)	7
4. Date: 5 February 2023				Location: Church of San Barnaba			
Anna	40	Female	Married (FI)	2 (FI)	Cook (PT)	10 (2012)	7
5. Date: 16 February 2023				Location: Residence			
Laura	50	Female	Single	0	Domestic helper (FT)	16 (2007)	16

<sup>61</sup> Number of years of attendance in Church of San Barnaba

\*The names of the interview participants were changed for confidentiality



6. Date: 17 February 2023				Location: Residence			
Regina	69	Female	Single	0	Domestic helper (FT)	18 (2005)	18
7. Date: 19 February 2023				Location: Church of San Barnaba			
Teresa	53	Female	Married (FI)	2 (FI)	Domestic helper (FT)	31 (1992)	31
8. Date: 23 February 2023				Location: Church of San Barnaba			
Jenny	50	Female	Separated (Ph)	3 (Ph)	Domestic helper (FT)	18 (2005)	18
9. Date: 25 February 2023				Location: Residence			
Carlos	48	Male	Married (FI)	1 (FI)	Pharmacy assistant (FT)	18 (2005)	18
10. Date: 25 February 2023				Location: Residence			
Irene	46	Female	Married (FI)	1 (FI)	Domestic helper (FT)	20 (2003)	20
11. Date: 12 March 2023				Location: Church of San Barnaba			
Ryan	25	Male	Single	0	Hotel receptionist (FT)	7	7
12. Date: 16 March 2023				Location: Church of San Barnaba			
Sarah	34	Female	Single	0	Kitchen staff (cook) (FT)	10	10

The interviews conducted utilised a semi-structured format using the initial questions formulated by the researcher earlier in the research process. The interviews were conducted between the months of February and March, following the Filipino participants' schedule availability mostly after work and after the mass at the Church of San Barnaba. The interviews took place either at the church or at the respondents' residences, as the researcher followed the participants' preferences regarding the time and location of the interview. The researcher conducted the interview in the Tagalog language, which provided ease of expression for both the researcher and the interviewees. In the discussion of the interviewees' responses, the researcher used certain terms and phrases in Tagalog language and translations were provided for general comprehension. The interviews lasted for about an hour each and the participants were generous in sharing their responses to the questions posted by the



researcher. Additionally, during the interviews, the researcher remained open in discussing themes that remain relevant to the topic of the Filipino migration and the Filipino Catholic community not only in Florence but overseas in general. In the table below are the questions that the researcher prepared for the interview. Some diversions were made for follow-up and curiosity questions during the interview.

*Table 3. Overview of guide questions used for the interview*

<b>Initial questions</b>	<b>Interview guide questions</b>
<p>1. How do the Filipino migrants in Florence, Italy describe their space based on the physical characteristics that they can observe in their environment?</p>	<p><u>Personal Background</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Name, age, and hometown in the Philippines</li> <li>● Occupation in the Philippines (past) and in Florence (present)</li> <li>● Number of years living in Florence</li> <li>● Where do you live in Florence? Can you describe the type of neighbourhood you live in?</li> <li>● How do you feel about living in your neighbourhood? Do you feel integrated into your neighbourhood and interact with your neighbours?</li> <li>● Why did you choose Italy? What or who motivated you to move here?</li> </ul> <p><u>Church of San Barnaba</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● How long have you been participating in the activities of the Church of San Barnaba? How did you get introduced to the church and the community?</li> <li>● Do you (or did you) play any specific role in one of the groups of the Church of San Barnaba? If yes, please describe your role. Were there instances when you had to perform your ‘leadership’ role outside the realms of the church?</li> <li>● If not, what are the types of activities that you participate in?</li> <li>● How can you describe the physical characteristics of the Church of San Barnaba and its surroundings?</li> </ul>

<p>2. What elements influence and/or affect their practice of religious traditions? Do these elements help in the practice of rituals or do they cause changes/deletion of practices?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● What role does the Church of San Barnaba play in your life?</li> <li>● Who are the leaders of the Church of San Barnaba? What are your reasons for saying so? What do you think are their roles in the church and the community?</li> <li>● What are the similarities and differences you can think of and have experienced in doing traditional Filipino religious rituals in Florence?</li> <li>● What factors help in the facilitation and practice of religious rituals? What are the factors that make it difficult?</li> <li>● How can you describe the reception or reaction of other people (e.g. Italians and tourists) towards the activities of San Barnaba? Do you think their opinion matters in your case?</li> <li>● What are the examples, if any, of your interaction with the non-Filipino and/or non-Catholic communities in Florence? What are the themes that connect you with the other groups?</li> <li>● How do the Parish of San Lorenzo and the locality of Florence mediate in the organisation of the Church of San Barnaba?</li> </ul>
<p>3. How do Catholic Filipino migrants use space to achieve their goals, especially in practising Filipino Catholic religious traditions? How do the Filipinos describe the role of space in either the fulfilment or failure of their objectives?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● What are your reasons/motivations for participating in the activities of the Church of San Barnaba?</li> <li>● How do the Church of San Barnaba and the Filipino Catholic community in Florence help in the achievement or failure of your motivations/goals as a participant and member of the community?</li> <li>● Do you find any difficulties in maintaining your participation as a parishioner of the Church of San Barnaba as well as a member of the Filipino Catholic community? If yes, how do you resolve them?</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● What are the most important activities/events organised by San Barnaba in recent years, especially those you looked forward to the most? Can you briefly describe how it went with the organisation and execution? Do you consider the event as successful? Why or why not?</li> </ul>
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Although these aspects of space are presented and discussed as three separate categories, Lefebvre noted their interconnectedness to each other. Similar to the three aspects of space, the interview questions listed by the researcher may be grouped separately based on their relevance to a particular aspect of space. However, the researcher recognises the overall connection of the questions to each other. They can and will be used separately and together in the analysis of space as used by the Filipino migrants during their performance of religious practices in Florence, Italy. Following these questions and the responses collected during the interviews, supplemented by the observations made in the terrain, the researcher analysed the role of space in the performance of Catholic religious traditions by the Filipino Catholic community of the Church of San Barnaba. In the proceeding part of this paper, we will explore the findings of these analyses and ultimately respond to the main research problematic raised by the researcher at the beginning of this study.

## Chapter V. Presentation and discussion of results

To reiterate, the analysis of the role of space in the practice of Catholic religious traditions by the members of the Filipino Catholic community in Florence was realised through the combination of methodologies including participation observation and interviews. Both methodologies helped the researcher identify the motivations of the community members in their continued practice of Catholic faith in Florence, as well as get their opinion on how their surroundings, particularly the city of Florence as their host community, affect them while doing so. The presentation is mainly divided according to the three aspects of space by Lefebvre. A brief review of definition is provided for each aspect of space followed by the discussion of results which are supported by the observations made by the researcher and the statements provided by the interview participants.

*Perceived space: The description of space provided by the Catholic Filipino migrants*

All things produced exist in space, however space cannot be reduced to the materials that are enclosed in it. However, the materials, images, and symbols that are found in space have the capacity to impact the form of spaces as well as facilitate the function that such spaces serve. Lefebvre's *pratique spatiale* [spatial practice] or perceived space, is what propounds and presupposes a society's space through the daily realities of people. As perceived space is concretised from the habits and routines of people, perceived space also provides structure to the [daily] lives of people through their repeated gestures and journeys. The 'common sense' understanding entailed of the perceived space is primarily composed of the logically rationalised milieu and the taken-for-granted everyday life.<sup>62</sup>

At the first part of the interview, the researcher inquired the members of the Filipino Catholic community and regular church-goers of San Barnaba of their descriptions of the church and of the community. When speaking about perceived space, the daily lives and routines of the people are put into focus since they shape how people sense, observe, and finally appropriate their surroundings. During the interviews, the researcher asked about the participants' personal background, such as their marital and familial status, educational attainment, profession in Florence, as well as the role that they currently play in the Church of San Barnaba. This is an important point in learning about the descriptions provided by the

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<sup>62</sup> Rob Shields, *Lefebvre, Love and Struggle: Spatial dialectics* (London: Routledge, 1999) 162.

Filipinos since their personal lives and experiences, both in the past and the present, affect how they experience the same space that they share with other people. An example of how previous experiences affect people's perception of the space they currently use is when the female participants of the interview noted the safety and security that they feel living in Florence when they are asked about their description of Florence. The theme of safety in Florence was not discussed in the two interviews conducted with the men who participated in the interview. The female participants explained the safety that they feel in the city through the example of feeling safe to walk in Florence even during the late hours of the evening, something that they were not used to doing while living in the Philippines. We can say then that the level of safety that they feel now in Florence was compared to their previous experiences while living in the Philippines.

*i. Catholic Filipino migrants in Florence and the activities of the Church of San Barnaba*

All respondents have been living in Italy for several years already, between seven to thirty-one years. Out of all the interview participants, Teresa has been in Florence the longest for 31 years. At the young age of 18, while she was still at the university in the Philippines, her sister asked her to apply for a passport and seek the assistance of an agency to come to Florence as a tourist. When she arrived, her sister introduced her to employers where Teresa worked as a domestic helper. Since then, she has lived in Florence and did the same job. Teresa's story is not a particular one in the Filipino community in Florence and even in the rest of Italy. On the contrary, all interview participants had been invited by someone they already knew, either family or friends, to come to Florence for family reunification and/or work opportunities. At the beginning of the invitation process to come to Italy, it is easier to petition family members of the Filipino migrants in Italy for family reunification reasons. To recall, in the year 2020, 84.3% of over 1,500 residence permits issued to Filipinos were marked with 'family' as purpose of stay.<sup>63</sup> Like Teresa, Irene was first invited by her sister to come to Florence to work as a domestic helper. In the Philippines, Irene worked as a bank teller. Irene mentioned that she was initially motivated by the money she could earn in Florence, at least three times of what she was earning working at a commercial bank.

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<sup>63</sup> Ministero del Lavoro e delle Politiche Sociali, "Tavola 3 – Ingressi di cittadini non comunitari per cittadinanza e motivo di ingresso. Serie storica 2017-2020 (v.a.). Dati al 1 gennaio 2021," Accessed February 7, 2023, <https://www.lavoro.gov.it/documenti-e-norme/studi-e-statistiche/Documents/Rapporti%20annuali%20sulle%20comunit%C3%A0%20migranti%20in%20Italia%20-%20anno%202021/zz-Appendice-statistica-rapporti%20comunita-2021.pdf>

Eventually, once Irene settled in Florence and earned enough to rent her own apartment, she petitioned her husband, Carlos, to join her in Florence. At that time, Carlos was working as a teacher in their hometown in the Philippines. He was petitioned by Irene for family reunification reasons, but he was also very motivated by the economic opportunities that exist in Italy. As Carlos mentioned, working in Florence let him support not only his family in Florence but he is also able to financially support his left-behind family and relatives in the Philippines. All interview participants have been living and working in Florence for several years now and most of them are living with family. Additionally, they all possess either a long-term or permanent *permesso di soggiorno* [residence permit] which allows them to stay and work in Italy for as long as they want and are allowed to.

Seven of the respondents live with their families, four live with fellow Filipinos, and one lives at the house of her employer. It has become common for Filipino migrants to share an apartment with *kababayans*<sup>64</sup> once they are able to afford to move out of their employer's houses, especially for domestic helpers. This means a lot for them, since they feel that they have more freedom to move by having a space of their own. Maria arrived in Florence in 2009 and became a stay-in domestic helper at her employer's house for the first four years of employment before getting her own room in a shared apartment with fellow Filipinos. She expressed her delight when she was able to get a place for herself, mentioning that she can design her space and move however she pleases. She said that she does not have to worry about other people's preferences for running a household – she just needs to go to work during the day and relax when she gets home. For the Filipinos who live with their families, their idea of Florence as home is stronger. They expressed their desire to stay in Florence for a longer period, especially those who have their children with them, or until they reach their retirement age.

The routines and daily life of Filipino migrants in Florence usually revolve around their work, their household, and the Church of San Barnaba especially for the interview participants who hold a position at the church. For example, Regina currently occupies a coordinator position at the pastoral council of the Church of San Barnaba. During the day,

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<sup>64</sup> The word *kababayan* [lit. trans. compatriot] refers to fellow Filipinos. It is more commonly used to refer to Filipinos overseas as a way to connect and fraternise with other Filipinos living in another country. In more specific and deeper cases, *kababayan* is used to refer to Filipinos who come from the same province or town.

she works as a domestic helper for an Italian family who is living thirty minutes away from the city centre. Regina is mostly responsible for cleaning the house and tending the children while the parents are working. After work, she goes straight home to rest, to organise the house, or to prepare for the next day. Regina lives in an apartment in via Santa Reparata, which is a 5-minute walk from the Church of San Barnaba in via Guelfa. On days when liturgical services, pastoral meetings, or activity preparations are scheduled, she can be found in the church. During the interview, Regina mentioned that church became an important part of her life (“*Naging buhay ko na ang simbahan*”) and how the activities of the church became integral in her weekly routine. Unlike Regina, Sarah does not hold any position in the church community of San Barnaba. However, she described herself as a regular churchgoer. At the present, Sarah works as a kitchen staff at a hotel located in Florence city centre. Since her work schedule does not allow her to participate in most activities during the weekday, Sarah is only able to attend the mass every Sunday evening. The difference between the two respondent’s work schedule and availability to participate in church activities reflect each of their perceptions of the church. Considering the difference between Regina’s and Sarah’s work schedules and availability to participate in various church activities, we are also able to see the difference of how they perceive church in their lives. Particularly for Regina, the church is an important part of her life as such that she is able to attend most, if not all, of the activities organised by the Church of San Barnaba. In addition, it is important to note that her position as coordinator of the pastoral council requires her to become visible to the church community.

It can be observed that the most present participants of the Church of San Barnaba are those who are active in the church community and especially those who hold positions in the pastoral council, affiliate groups, and church commissions of San Barnaba. In a way, the religious aspect of their lives has affected how they build their routines and spend their time. Laura shared that the non-active members of the community, particularly those who are not able to attend catechisms and formations at the Church of San Barnaba, are more difficult to invite to participate in the activities of the church. For Laura, the attendance at such activities increased her knowledge and understanding of the activities that the church organises for its adherents. She became motivated to participate because she has now a deeper understanding of the rituals, which helped her connect better to the practices and foster better relationships with her fellow adherents.

The Church of San Barnaba has a regular schedule of liturgical activities throughout the week. The novena mass is held every Thursday evening at 6pm, when most of the Filipinos have gotten off of work or are on their day-off. The Thursday novena mass is conducted in English language, except every third Thursday of the month which is held in Italian language. According to one member of the community, there were Italians who used to participate in the Thursday novena mass of San Barnaba which motivated them to conduct the mass in either English or Italian but they eventually stopped coming. However, Father Corcino decided to continue with this practice to encourage the Filipinos to practise their Italian and English language skills through the observance of the mass. Most of the Filipinos in Florence speak Italian especially because it is necessary for their jobs. The Church of San Barnaba, then, extends their proficiency of the language to their Catholic practice. For example, the Filipinos become familiar with the readings, psalms, and responses in the Italian language as well. Anticipated mass is held every Saturday evening at 6 pm in Tagalog, attended by Filipinos who are not able to attend the regular Sunday mass. During the researcher's attendance at the anticipated mass, she was able to speak with some attendees after the service. As she learned, the anticipated mass every Saturday is mostly attended by those who cannot join the regular Sunday mass because of their work. For example, Ryan works as a hotel receptionist in the city centre. Sometimes, he is scheduled to work on Sunday and have a day off on Saturday. Since his work schedule changes depending on his manager, work demands, and the volume of tourists in the city, the availability of liturgical services during the week allows him to attend them during his free days. The majority of the Filipino Catholic community attends the Sunday mass at 6pm since it is a non-working day for them. The mass is celebrated in Tagalog, officiated by Father Corcino and Father Guida.

*ii. Physical description of their host community: Florence and the Church of San Barnaba*

Following Knott's idea, the display of religious symbols in secular spaces can be used as a means to demonstrate dominance of social or religious groups, resistance from, or even rejection of dominant orders. In this case, considering the widespread influence of the Catholic church that remains in Florence, the display of Catholic images around the city can only be assumed as a type of demonstration and to serve as a reminder of the continued importance given to Catholicism in the city of Florence. The Duomo and the Cathedral of Santa Maria del Fiore have become a strong symbol not only of the Catholic Church in Florence, but as a cultural landmark of the city. It goes without saying that, at the present,



Italy remains as a Catholic-dominated country. The presence of the Vatican Church and the Pontifical College in Rome secure Italy's place in the Catholic religion despite the ongoing decline of religious adherents and church attendees in the country, wherein the decline has been particularly faster among younger generations.<sup>65</sup>



Figure 13. The Baptistery of Saint John, the Cathedral of Santa Maria del Fiore, and the Duomo in Florence, Italy. (Photograph by KM, March 3, 2023).

Perceived space does not intrinsically contain religious or secular elements about it.<sup>66</sup> However, people have the capacity to attribute religious meanings to space through the process of rituals. This includes doing the sign of the cross when entering the church, reciting prayers and saying grace before meals, or participating in liturgical activities like prayer meetings and rosaries, etc. Furthermore, the gestures and bodily movements that people perform associated with the rituals and practice of religion are some of the ways which

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<sup>65</sup> Cristiano Vezzoni and Ferruccio Biolcati-Rinaldi, "Church Attendance and Religious Change in Italy, 1968–2010: A Multilevel Analysis of Pooled Datasets," *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 54, (2015). It should be noted that the study conducted by Vezzoni and Biolcati-Rinaldi relied on church attendance to measure the religious changes in Italy.

<sup>66</sup> Kim Knott, *The Location of Religion* (London and New York: Routledge, 2014), p. 39.

transform a space into a religiously meaningful space. This is complemented by the physical characteristics of the church, and the images and symbols that are displayed inside the church, which facilitate the function of the church as a sacred space and help the people in the practice of rituals during the liturgical services. Inside the Church of San Barnaba, there are multiple images of saints, the Blessed Virgin Mary, and of Jesus Christ. In front and at the centre of the altar, there is a sculpture of the Crucifixion of Jesus Christ while at the background there is a painting of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary to heaven. The tabernacle is also visible at the altar. This type of images stimulates a religious atmosphere inside the church and encourages the people to recover religious memory and state that influences the actions of the people, especially of the adherents, as they enter the church. When Catholic adherents enter the church, it is normal, almost automatic, for them to perform the sign of the cross or also kneel to show reverence to the holy place.



*Figure 14. The altar of the Church of San Barnaba in Florence, Italy. (Photograph by KM, March 9, 2023).*

Aside from the religious images present, there are also materials present inside the Church of San Barnaba which aid in the practice of religious rituals of the adherents. This includes the sound system so that everyone is able to hear the priest and the commentator during the mass. The light illuminates the interior of the church, allowing the people to see everything clearly. Also, the Church of San Barnaba utilises a screen projector which is placed in front of the altar and facing the church congregation. The screen displays the prayers, readings, responses, lyrics of the songs being sung, as well as reminders before the mass like turning

cellular phones on silent mode so as to not disturb the mass. There are also kneelers in front of the seats which the people can use during the parts of the mass when kneeling is necessary.

When asked about their physical description of the Church of San Barnaba, the Filipino participants responded that the church building reminded them of the Spanish colonial buildings in the Philippines, especially the Baroque-style churches that were built in the Philippines during the Spanish colonial period. One of the respondents, Maria, mentioned that the Church of San Barnaba and its surroundings remind her of Intramuros in Manila, which is a Spanish conclave that was built in Manila in 1571. For Maria, the old buildings that can be found in Intramuros draw semblance to the churches and buildings in Florence, including the Church of San Barnaba. She added that despite the fact that the buildings are old, they have “life,” meaning that they are still being used. The parishioners do not feel estranged from the Church of San Barnaba since the architectural style and interior design of the church is familiar in the Philippines. There are sculptures and images of saints all around the interior of the church, seats for the people, and an altar in front of the church. The surroundings of the Church of San Barnaba, however, is a different story. The descriptions of the respondents were mostly negative, particularly about their complaints about the trash that gets left by the commercial establishments near the church. All of the interview participants talked about this problem, and as a newcomer in the community the researcher can also attest that this issue is not easy to ignore since the garbage is left beside the Church of San Barnaba.



*Figure 15. Garbage bins beside the Church of San Barnaba along the street of via Guelfa. (Photograph by KM, February 2023).*

Teresa and Ellen, who have been in Florence for many years among the interviewees, remarked that this was not always the case about the surroundings of San Barnaba – the streets of via Guelfa and via Panicale used to be proper and clean. However, the issue of the trash and pollution began when the stores opened and the people who managed the establishments refused to clean their areas regularly. The researcher asked all of the interviewees if they did something about it, and all of them gave the same response that the leaders of San Barnaba community filed a formal complaint to the Municipality of Florence years ago. The Municipality’s solution was to put a surveillance camera along the streets of via Guelfa, near the designated garbage cans, to see what and who causes the disorder around the area. Unfortunately, the solution provided by the municipal government did not solve the problem and when the cameras stopped working, the municipality ignored the issue altogether and the community of San Barnaba stopped filing for complaints as well. At this point of the interview, Marco mentioned a very interesting phrase pertaining to his opinion of how the officials at the municipality consider the Filipino community in Florence. He said that for them, the Filipino community are still “strangers” even though they are residents of Florence. When exclusively talking about the religious activities of the Filipino community in Florence, the interviewees gave positive comments about their host communities and highlighted their positive reception of the Filipino community. However, when we talked about the particular issue on the garbage, the Filipino parishioners expressed their opinion of being an “other” who cannot demand too much from the officials in the municipality of Florence. As mentioned earlier, the community of San Barnaba stopped filing for complaints in the municipality. They eventually just got used to their environment – the garbage bins, the disorder from the stores surrounding the church, and the noise coming from the traffic outside the church.

Also, we discussed the religious lives of the participants in Florence. All of the respondents expressed positive attitudes towards the Church of San Barnaba and the Filipino Catholic community in Florence. Moreover, as Catholics, some of them remarked the convenience to observe their faith not only in Florence but also in Italy in general. As Ellen remarked, “*kaliwa’t kanan, may simbahan*” [Wherever you turn, left and right, there is a church], describing the abundance of Catholic churches in Italy. These churches in Florence are open to everyone who wishes to enter, either to say a prayer or just to observe, as long as people respect the sanctity of the building. On some occasions when the researcher went around



Florence and entered some churches, several people inside were curious tourists who interestingly gaze at the images inside the church and some are even taking photographs of them. The city of Florence is also famously known for the Cathedral of Santa Maria del Fiore which is visited by thousands of tourists each day. Aside from the church, there are several religious (Catholic) images spread around the city of Florence, some in busy streets while others in rather quiet neighbourhoods.



*Figure 16. Tabernacolo delle Fonticine [Tabernacle of the Fonticine] located along the street of via Nazionale in Florence, Italy. The sculpture inside displays Madonna and the Child Jesus, a young Saint John along with four other saints Barnaba, Luke, James and Catherine. Above them is God, the Holy Spirit, and angels. (Photograph by KM, April 10, 2023).*

Ellen mentioned that the presence of images around the city of Florence became a reminder of her faith as a Catholic. Even while she was still living in the Philippines, Ellen was a devout follower of the Blessed Virgin Mary. She recalled how she regularly attended the novena mass every Wednesday afternoon after working as a public school teacher in her hometown in the Philippines. However, in Florence, she is not able to attend the novena mass anymore because her job requires her to work until late in the evening. Instead, the image of Blessed Virgin Mary that she sees on her commute to work became the silent reminder of her devotion to Mary. The Catholic images built-in and displayed around the city of Florence is an example of the earlier presented concept by Kim Knott in inspecting religiosity in

contemporary everyday spaces.<sup>67</sup> The presence of these images shows the ability of non-religious, secular spaces to carry sacred symbols. Along a busy pedestrian street in Florence near the main train station of Santa Maria Novella, a sacred image is found. Unfortunately, it is difficult to know the effect of such images on people, mostly passers-by, who barely interacted with it. When the researcher stayed for a while to observe these areas with religious images, there were not many physical interactions observed between the people and the images aside from people taking photos of the place. However, the researcher recognises that her inability to observe any physical interaction between the people and the images does not mean that the religious images did not have any effect at all on the viewers/observers. Just like what Ellen described, the effect of the images to her are more spiritual. The reactions of the viewers/observers can be limited to the mental/imagination and not transform to bodily reactions.

To reiterate, perceived space is neither intrinsically religious nor secular in itself. Following Lefebvre's explanation of this aspect of space, perceived space focuses more specifically on how its users sense space which may lead to the impression that it is only concerned with the visual representation of space without considering how space is experienced at all. But, spatial practice, as Lefebvre called this aspect of the triad, is an active element in the production of space. In fact, spatial practice pertains to the actual physical space wherein objects and activities are located. It is then up to the users of the space to put meaning not only to the space being occupied but to the practices that are being performed, which, at the same time, produce the space that they occupy. And just as places are produced from spatial practices (perceived space), so are religious places like the church. The Church of San Barnaba used to be an abandoned church until the Catholic Filipinos in Florence requested to have a place for their community where they are able to fraternise and practise their Catholic faith with their fellow Filipinos. Before the community took over the church, the building can still be considered sacred since it is a church after all. However, the presence of not only a Catholic community but also the practice of rituals heightened the religious meaning of the church. Furthermore, this reasoning can also be applied to a deemed religious activity like pilgrimages. For example, the Filipino Catholic community of San Barnaba regularly organises pilgrimages not only within Italy but also overseas like Portugal, Greece, and France. Travelling is not essentially a religious activity. In fact, it is categorised more

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<sup>67</sup> Kim Knott, *The Location of Religion* (London and New York: Routledge, 2014).

commonly as a tourism activity rather than religious or spiritual. However, it is the actors of the spatial practice who provide this type of activity with a religious characteristic.

*Conceived space: the representations of space in the Filipino Catholic community*

As the fulfilment of perceived space put more focus on the physical and material aspects of space which surround the Church of San Barnaba and of the Filipino Catholic Community in Florence, the conceived space emphasises the knowledge and ideologies that are attached to the production of space. Conceived space, in its core, is the dominant space of the society as it is founded on the prevailing rules, laws, notions of what currently secretes the space of the society. Conceived space, unlike the physicality and materiality of perceived space, is totally abstract. It is survived through the combination of ideology, which we can consider abstract and possibly dominant depending on its relevance and influence, as well as understanding (*connaissance*). Despite the abstract characteristic attached to conceived space, it plays a significant influence in the social and political practices and in the establishment of relationship between people and objects.<sup>68</sup>

Relating this aspect of social space to the research, Lefebvre explained that space is necessary for an ideology to exist and survive because an ideology needs space that it describes using its specific codes and vocabulary.<sup>69</sup> Through space and the materials that can be found enclosed in it, an ideology can be applied and persist through time. Here, religion comes in. “*What should remain of a religious ideology if it were not based on places and their names: church, confessional, altar, sanctuary, tabernacle? What would remain of the Church if there were no churches? The Christian ideology has created the spaces which guarantee that it endures.*”<sup>70</sup> This quotation from Lefebvre greatly exemplifies the need for space for ideologies and religion to survive. In Christianity, there are several references made to places that, up until now, remain relevant to the subject of religion: Jerusalem, Galilee, Mount Sinai, or even heaven and hell. The altar, confessional, tabernacle inside the church were all identified and conceptualised by the principal members of the church. Churches were created and designed in a way that can be mapped and replicated since they were organised according to the knowledge and practice of those who claim mastery of it.

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<sup>68</sup> Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, p. 41

<sup>69</sup> Lefebvre, p. 44

<sup>70</sup> Ibid.

There are several factors that we can consider in the examination of this aspect of social space. Since the primary subject of this research is the Filipino Catholic migrants in Florence, the population can be subject to multiple dominant orders like of their host country which is Italy and also Florence as their host community, more specifically. Next, as a religious community, the parishioners of the Church of San Barnaba become under the influence of the Catholic Church as an institution and also the Christian ideology and teachings that are being communicated through the church and its activities. Furthermore, inside the Church of San Barnaba, the Filipino parishioners may seek the advice of their religious leaders. In the following sections of this analysis, let us explore how the Filipino parishioners of San Barnaba practise their Catholic faith while simultaneously respecting their host community, the Church, and the identified authorities of their religious community. Conversely, we may also find out through this discussion how the members of the community reject the dominant order through their practice of religious rituals.

*i. Florence as host community to Catholic Filipino migrants*

There are more than 6,000 Filipino migrants registered living in the metropolitan city of Florence, out of which more than 4,000 live in the municipality of Florence. The Filipino migrants are very positive towards Florence as their host community. Here, they comment on the safety and security, the atmosphere of the place due to its rich culture and history, as well as the economic opportunities that are open to the Filipinos as migrant workers in the city. With regards to the relationship between the Church of San Barnaba and the Municipality of Florence, the Filipino community mentioned that they receive support from the municipality and, more importantly, they gain recognition due to their active participation in the practice of Catholic religious activities in the city. When asked about how Municipality of Florence affects the activities of the Church of San Barnaba, the interview participants stated that their interactions with the municipality were more on the administrative organisation of the activities, including asking for permission to organise events in some public parks in Florence, the following of protocols issued by the government, and so on.

For example, the Church of San Barnaba organised a celebration of the church's 30<sup>th</sup> founding anniversary in 2018 and the Feast of Mary in a nearby plaza, Piazza dell'Indipendenza. According to Rosel, who serves as the overall coordinator of the Church of San Barnaba's pastoral council, they have to seek multiple permits from the municipality



in order to organise an event in the said plaza. They had to provide a detailed schedule of activities during the event, the number of people who will participate in the activity, as well as recommendations from the Parish of San Lorenzo to provide support for their application for permit. Aside from that, the Filipino community is asked to follow the protocol required by the municipal office of Florence with regard to the use of sound systems, lights, and even decorations to ensure that they are able to maintain the order of the place throughout the said activity. Another example is the procession of *Santacruzán* done in the month of May to commemorate the discovery of the Holy Cross by Queen Helena. In the Philippines, *Santacruzán* is a common religious activity organised during the Flores de Mayo as an expression of the Catholic Filipino population's devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary. At the Church of San Barnaba, the parishioners organised the *Santacruzán* a couple of times years ago. However, some of them expressed how laborious it is to organise the procession. Since the procession will take place along the busy streets of Florence, they had to obtain a permit from the municipal office months prior from the event. Also, they had to coordinate with the police and traffic enforcement since some of the roads had to be blocked for the event. It was only after the church was able to obtain the permission from the municipality that the participants of the *Santacruzán* can officially prepare since it requires a lot of time, effort, and even money.

There are a lot of religious traditions in the Philippines that are practised in public spaces – processions, stations of the cross, re-enactment of flagellation and crucifixion during the Holy Week, and *fiestas* of the saints. However, the rules imposed by the municipality of Florence and the work that is attached to getting their permission limits the Filipino church community of San Barnaba to organise activities that are usually done outside the walls of the church. Consequently, some of the activities are still possible to be practised inside the church – only less grand and eventful than it usually is celebrated in the Philippines. When asked about the difference about how religious celebrations are organised and practised in the Philippines and in Italy, specifically in Florence, respondents commented on the grandeur that can be observed especially in the festivals celebrated in the Philippines. For Laura, in the Philippines, people are more able to express themselves artistically in observing their faith. During *fiestas*, there are street dances, parades of images, and decorations all over the place. They dance and sing along the streets, they prepare huge floats that are presented to the audience during the parade, and they put colourful decorations like *banderitas* (small party flags), flowers, and religious images in front of their houses and on the streets. Moreover,

celebrations last longer in the Philippines than in Florence, based on the experiences of the parishioners of the Church of San Barnaba. Usually, the most important religious celebrations in the Philippines last for three days up to the entire month. A good example of a month-long religious festivity is the *Sinulog* in Cebu, Philippines which celebrates the Holy Child Jesus, more commonly referred to as *Santo Niño* among its Filipino devotees, every month of January. At the Church of San Barnaba, the feast of *Santo Niño* is observed over a celebratory mass, usually on a Sunday, followed by a *salu-salo* dinner at the basement of the church.

Because of the lengthy administrative processes of seeking permission to organise events outside of the church, members of the Church of San Barnaba like Laura, Regina, and Teresa preferred to organise the activities inside the Church of San Barnaba. All three of them are active members of the pastoral council, and so they are the people responsible for managing the administrative aspect of the activities like securing necessary documents for the church, seeking permits from the municipal office, securing instruments and paraphernalia like lights, speakers, tables, and chairs. Even so, it can be said that the Filipino Catholic community in Florence remains active when it comes to the religious celebrations and traditions organised by the church. They remain open to the opportunities to practise their faith inside the Church of San Barnaba, or whenever they get invited by the Parish of San Lorenzo to participate in the activities of the basilica.



*Figure 17. Celebration of Palm Sunday started with the blessing of palm fronds at the entrance of the Church of San Barnaba. (Photograph by KM, April 9, 2023).*

More recently, during the Covid-19 pandemic outbreak and lockdown, all activities were halted in order to contain the transmission of the virus among people. These included work, school, sports, and even religious activities. From March 2020 until May 2021, churches in Florence were not allowed any in-person activity which meant that all of the activities of the Church of San Barnaba were stopped for more than a year. The confinement was a difficult time for everyone. For the Filipino community in Florence, it was a tough time since they were away from their family in the Philippines during a global health crisis and the opportunity to spend time and socialise with their fellow Filipinos were prohibited due to the health measures imposed by the Italian government. However, from the month of June in 2021, church activities were allowed again in Florence but in a limited capacity. Churches were reopened and activities resumed, however, only a limited number of people are allowed to participate at a specific time. The first activity that the Church of San Barnaba resumed was the Sunday mass. In order to manage the number of people and to allow more Filipinos to have the chance to attend, they decided to schedule one anticipated mass every Saturday evening at 6pm and two Sunday mass at 9am and 6pm. Aside from the limited capacity

allowed inside the church, the people also had to follow the health and safety restrictions that were imposed during the height of the pandemic like social distancing, wearing of masks especially while staying indoors, frequent use of hand sanitizers, etc.

*ii. The Catholic Church as conceived space: designing the church and the practice of faith of the Filipino parishioners*

In the case of the Church of San Barnaba, the Filipinos do not experience unfamiliarity towards the structure and form of the church since it is very similar to the churches they went to while still living in the Philippines. The physical characteristics of the churches in Italy, even in the entire Europe in general, are very similar to the churches that can be found in the Philippines. The architecture may be different depending on the era of when the churches were built, but the floor plan inside the church remains the same. The knowledge of the designers and builders of the church is physically manifested through the actual physical space that is being used by the parishioners. Inside the Catholic church, in our specific case, Christian ideologies and teachings are spread through different religious activities and liturgical services like the mass, bible study, catechism, rosary, confessions, etc. These activities are based on the Christian ideology and, at the same time, their performance ensures the continuity of the Christian ideology. Without their continued practice, such ideologies would remain as an abstraction without any opportunity for actual application.

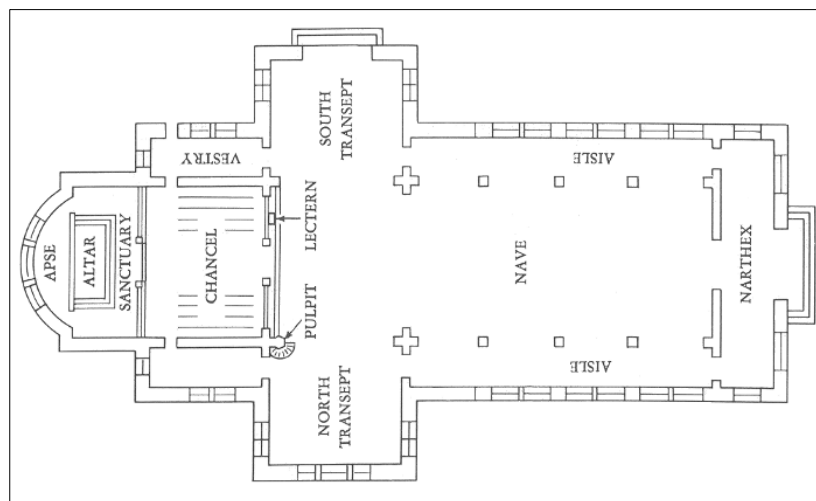


Figure 18. An example of a typical floor plan of a Catholic church. The left side of the image is the front part of the church where the altar is located. Photo grabbed from <https://www.pinterest.com/pin/1829656085248436/>.

Going back to the description that conceived space is the space of dominant order, our experience of space is highly influenced by people of power, laws and rules, or even

ideologies. They affect not only the physical design and characteristics of space which we, as users, perceive through our senses but also, and ultimately, how we experience space in our daily lives with or without the consciousness of their influence.

The ideologies and the teachings of the Catholic Church also shape how people create and experience space. We can assume, based on Lefebvre's description, that religion exists predominantly as conceived space. Religions like the Roman Catholic, Islam, or Buddhism represent certain ideologies and philosophies which they aspire to be lived by and disseminated by their devotees. Within the context of the Roman Catholic Church, the Ten Commandments is a good example of a set of "rules" which influence how the people, followers of the Roman Catholic Church, experience and live their daily lives. In a way, the conceived space can be considered as a disciplining agent that requires people to behave and act in a certain way, as well as influence their way of thinking through the ideologies and interpretations provided by the authorities of the Church. For example, the third commandment of the Ten Commandments of the Lord says "*Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days you shall labour, and do all your work; but the seventh day is a sabbath to the Lord your God; in it you shall not do any work.*"<sup>71</sup> In this example, the commandment tells the religious followers of the Church to attend to the Lord every sabbath day, which is Sunday. Therefore, it is every parishioner's responsibility to participate in the Eucharistic celebration of the Sunday mass and to not attend any unnecessary activities that will prohibit them from fulfilling their obligation to the Church.

The example mentioned above is very relatable to the case of members of the Church of San Barnaba community. As migrant workers, Filipinos try to maintain a good reputation at their workplace and towards their employers. They work and fulfil their work hours diligently during the week, however, Sunday is the day wherein the parishioners of the Church of San Barnaba offer their time to the Church. Erin and William are part of the Music Ministry of the Church of San Barnaba. At present, Erin serves as the officer-in-charge of the Music Ministry while William works as the trainer of the group. During the interview, they shared that the choir of the Church of San Barnaba also performs at the Basilica of San Lorenzo, which is the parish wherein the Church of San Barnaba belongs to. Every Sunday at 9 am in

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<sup>71</sup> Catechism of the Catholic Church, The Sabbath Day, The Holy See. Accessed in April 10, 2023, [https://www.vatican.va/archive/ENG0015/\\_P7N.HTM#:~:text=2168%20](https://www.vatican.va/archive/ENG0015/_P7N.HTM#:~:text=2168%20)

the morning, the Music Ministry participates in the Sunday mass of the Basilica as their choir. William mentioned that the Basilica invited them to sing every Sunday after witnessing their performance at the Church of San Barnaba. They are inspired by the talent of the Filipino choir, and how their music improves the atmosphere of the holy mass. Afterwards, every Sunday evening at 6 pm, the Music Ministry performs at the Sunday mass of the Church of San Barnaba. They are also present in all other liturgical activities of the church, since the group ensures that there are members who are available during these scheduled activities throughout the week.

Similar to all interview participants who work full-time during the week, Marco expressed the importance of attending the Sunday mass in order to fulfil his obligation as a Catholic. Marco has worked as a company driver in Florence for seven years now. From Monday to Friday, he dedicates his time to his work without failure and so, for him, it is important that the weekend is focused on his family and the church. He stated “*Kulang ang linggo kung hindi magsisimba tuwing Linggo*” [The week is incomplete if we don’t attend the mass every Sunday]. Also, religious attendance of church activities is a recurring subject that Father Corcino includes in his homilies. Father Corcino constantly reminds the parishioners that it is important to attend, at the very least, the Sunday mass. He mentioned in one of his homilies that nowadays, people are more interested to meet friends, travel, and participate in events instead of giving a few hours of their day to hear the mass every Sunday. The holy mass serves as an important ritual in the fulfilment of conceived space in the Catholic religion. During the mass, the liturgy is read in front of the congregation which shares the teachings of the bibles to the listeners of the Word. Also, during the mass, people are expected to behave in a certain way that respects the sanctity of the church as a holy place. People are asked to remain silent, to dress appropriately, and to participate in the mass by singing and stating the responses. These things are not necessarily explicitly asked for by the church or of the officials of the church, but they can be considered the unspoken rules that the parishioners are already aware of and follow automatically. Nonetheless, the Church of San Barnaba utilise tools to remind the parishioners how to behave inside the church. For example, before the mass, the screen in front reminds people to turn their cellular devices off or in silent mode so as not to disturb the mass. And then, during the mass, the screen shows the readings, responses, e.g. responsorial psalm, and cues to invite people to participate actively during the mass.

*iii. The leaders of the Church of San Barnaba as agents of the Christian ideology*

Going back to Lefebvre's statement that space is necessary for an ideology to exist and survive, the Church of San Barnaba serves as a space for the Christian ideology to continue to exist specifically within the Filipino Catholic community in Florence. The images displayed inside the church, the religious rituals practised by the Filipino parishioners, and even the leaders of the church such as Father Corcino, Father Guida, and Sister Erlita help in the maintenance of the Catholic practice and the Catholic faith among the Filipino migrants in Florence. Through the Church of San Barnaba, Filipinos are given a space where they can express their faith together with their fellow Filipinos. This is mediated by the figures whom the Filipino parishioners of the Church of San Barnaba consider as their leaders, they are Father Corcino, Father Guida, and Sister Erlita. For the Filipino Catholic community in Florence, they serve as the second set of parents of the community in Florence. Depending on the situation and their needs, the members of the community come to either the three of the leaders of the church. Father Corcino, who currently serves as the Filipino chaplain priest of the Church of San Barnaba and the parish priest of *Chiesa di Santa Lucia a Settimello* [Church of Santa Lucia in Settimello] in Calenzano, Florence, is the primary person whom the Filipinos go to in case of queries and problems related to the church and the Catholic community of San Barnaba. They seek his advice when it comes to the projects and activities that can be carried out in the church. Also, Father Corcino mediates in cases wherein some members of the community meet disagreements. Meanwhile, community members go to Sister Erlita when it comes to dealing with the behaviours of their fellow members of the community. Also, Sister Erlita is the primary liaison of the Church of San Barnaba with the Parish of San Lorenzo and the Sisters Oblates of the Holy Spirit. In cases in which the Church of San Barnaba needs to communicate with these two institutions, they reach out to Sister Erlita. Meanwhile, Father Gianni is approached by Filipinos for spiritual guidance. After the mass, many Filipinos greet Don Gianni, as how the Filipinos refer to him, and request a blessing or silent prayer from him. Despite being an Italian, the Filipinos fondly consider Father Gianni as a Filipino at heart after spending so many years with the Filipino community of San Barnaba.

The presence of religious leaders such as Father Corcino implies that the Church of San Barnaba and the Filipino Catholic community in Florence remains under the direction of authorities of the Catholic church. In deciding the activities of San Barnaba, Father Corcino

is at the forefront in making sure that the activities organised by the community focuses on the Catholic faith of the members. For Father Corcino, it is imperative that the activities organised and participated by the community focus on bringing the people closer to God. For this reason, even one of the most popular and coveted religious celebrations of the community, the *Santacruzán*, was cancelled by Father Corcino. Aside from the demanding, months-long preparation and long list of permits needed to secure in order to allow the procession to take place, the *Santacruzán* has a great tendency to take people's focus away from the essence of the event: the commemoration of the Holy Cross and the May celebration of the Blessed Virgin Mary. Instead, Filipinos prioritise the flamboyance and unnecessary grandeur that they desire of the procession – from the gowns and dress suits of the participants to the decorations of the arches. In the past instances where the Church of San Barnaba organised *Santacruzán*, the participants all felt tired and uncomfortable after the procession and they were not in the capacity to participate in the mass that followed the procession. For these reasons, Father Corcino decided not to do the *Santacruzán* in the following years since it does not serve the religious meaning that the activity should relay to the participants.

Aside from the religious leaders of the Church of San Barnaba, the presence of the *Pontificio Collegio Filipino* [Pontifical Filipino College] in Rome helps the Filipino Catholics in Italy maintain their church communities in the Philippines. The Pontifical Filipino College was established in 1961 as the official college for diocesan priests from the Philippines who are pursuing studies at pontifical universities located in Rome, Italy. As diocesan priests, they are assigned to specific areas where they are ordained as priests of a particular diocese. For Filipino priests of the Pontifical College in Rome, this means they can be sent back to the Philippines to serve as a priest in a town back in their home country or they can be assigned to one of the dioceses in Italy, similar to the case of Father Corcino who remained in Italy after finishing his studies in Rome. The Filipino priests of the *Pontificio Collegio* are very active in maintaining relationships with the Filipino church communities all over Italy. At the Church of San Barnaba, they conduct catechisms for the children, bible study for the adults, and even group counselling and training for the commissions and church affiliates of San Barnaba. Through the formations that the College provides to the Filipino Catholic community, the members are able to serve the church in line with the Catholic teachings. Recently, the Ministry of Lectors and Commentators of the Church of San Barnaba celebrated their 28<sup>th</sup> founding anniversary on the 16<sup>th</sup> of April 2023. The ministry invited



Father Peter Ayaso of the *Pontificio Collegio Filipino* in Rome who conducted a talk about the vital role that the church lectors play in the dissemination of the Word of God in the community. He stated that as members of the Catholic church, they are all responsible in sharing the teachings in the Bible to enlighten not only others but also themselves of the lessons that can be learned from the Bible. After the talk, several members of the community participated in the Bible Quiz Bee organised by the Ministry of Lectors and Commentators as part of their foundation celebration. Father Peter served as the quiz master for the event, which turned out not only as fun but also full of learning experience to those who participated.



*Figure 19. Bible quiz bee last April 16, 2023 at the Church of San Barnaba organised by the Lectors and Commentators affiliate. (Photograph provided by Lenie D., Florence, Italy).*

The spatial aspect of the representations of space, or conceived space, within a social space is supported by the existence of an abstract space which remains active and dynamic in the production of space. The abstract and mental conceived space, as Lefebvre posited, is the “dominant” space of the society within which prevailing ideologies, knowledge, and, above

all, power come to play. They influence the design and experience of the users of space since conceived space is made up of dominant representations of space which are created and imposed by people in authority. The representations of space require space where it can be mentally, materially, and/or physically manifested and also, in the long run, sustained. This is applicable to the context of this research which studies the role of space in the practice of religious traditions by the Filipino migrants in Florence, Italy. The Christian religion and the Catholic Church, as religious institutions, necessitate space where they are able to apply their Christian ideologies. The Church of San Barnaba and the Filipino Catholic community in Florence can be considered spaces that are constantly influenced by an authority. First is Florence, Italy as their host community. The Filipino migrants are subject to the laws, rules, and norms that are observed in the community. Despite being given exclusive use of the Church of San Barnaba, the community still has to respect the rules imposed by the authorities in Florence in their practice of religious traditions. In effect, some practices had to be adapted based on the limitations that are being encountered in Florence. Also, the Catholic Church is an ever-present authority that controls how Filipino parishioners of the Church of San Barnaba practise their religious rituals. In the practice of rituals by Catholic devotees, the ideologies and teachings of the Church are exhibited and continued. However, there are a set of rules and instructions that should be followed in doing so. This is where the religious figures of the church come in to ensure that the rituals and activities organised in the church respect the teachings of the Catholic Church. At the Church of San Barnaba, Father Corcino is at the forefront in ensuring that the activities of the Church of San Barnaba are in line with the rules and teachings provided by the Catholic Church. Moreover, the members of the community of San Barnaba seek for advice from their leaders in matters related to their religious and personal life which ultimately affect how they conceive and experience space in their daily lives.

*Lived space: the practices and experiences of the parishioners of the Church of San Barnaba*

The third and last aspect of space is lived space, which is the space of inhabitants and users. According to the definition provided by Lefebvre is his proposed *espaces des représentations* (lived space), it is the space directly lived and experienced by people, wherein the space people occupy is embedded with images and symbols that may or may not intervene in their everyday lives. In comparison with the perceived space which is concerned with the physical characteristics of space and with the conceived space which highly prioritises the dominant

order from which space is conceived and aspired to be sustained, lived space is distinguished from the other two aspects of space due to the involvement of culture on the everyday usage and experience of space by humans. Through the mediation of culture in lived space, people are given the capacity to confirm the existing images, symbols, or norms in their environment, as well as deviate from them in a given social experience. This may be done so individually or as a collective group. The last part of inquiry undertaken in this research follows the practice of religious rituals of the Filipino Catholic Community of the Church of San Barnaba. This allows us to inspect how space is actually used and, if necessary, transformed/appropriated by the Filipino parishioners in their practice of religious traditions. Furthermore, their motivations and goals are highlighted in this aspect of lived space because their personal reasons influence how each person aims to use and transform space, ultimately affecting their experience of space, in order to fulfil their goals through their practice of religious traditions and their membership to the Filipino Catholic community in Florence.

*i. The practice of Filipino Catholic faith at the Church of San Barnaba*

The Church of San Barnaba was built in 1322 at the corner street of via Guelfa and via Panicale. According to Rosel, the overall coordinator of the Church of San Barnaba's pastoral council, the church was not being used and had been abandoned years prior to 1988 when the church was given to the Filipino Catholic community in Florence. Before having the Church of San Barnaba, the Filipino migrants in Florence gathered in plazas, their homes, and other public spaces to meet with fellow Filipinos living in the city. They attended liturgical services in regular Italian churches or visited other cities in Italy where Filipino church communities have already been established, like in Milan and in Rome. The Filipino Catholic community's desire to have their own church where they can practise their faith with their *kababayans* was granted by the Parish of San Lorenzo in 1988 by giving them the exclusive use of the Church of San Barnaba. Since then, the church has been central to the observance of Catholic faith by the Filipino migrants in Florence. From an abandoned Italian church located in the city centre of Florence, the Church of San Barnaba was transformed to become the church of an active Filipino Catholic community. Here, the Filipino migrants are able to practise religious rituals that are also observed in the Philippines. Also, they are able to transform the space based on the requirements of their activities – whether religious or secular in nature.

The existence of the Church of San Barnaba and the foundation of the Filipino Catholic community from 1988 invited more Catholic Filipino migrants in Florence to join the community as it grew into what it is at present. Teresa, who was the first to arrive in Florence in 1992 out of all the interview participants, mentioned that the church community of San Barnaba was already there when she arrived. She was encouraged by her mother, who was working as a domestic helper in Florence until the early 2000s, to participate in the activities of the church just like what she used to do while living in the Philippines. Similar to Teresa, all of the interview participants were invited by their families or friends to go to the Church of San Barnaba. Also, reiterating the migration chain of petitioning family members from the Philippines to Italy that is common among several members of the Catholic community of San Barnaba, the majority of the people that the researcher talked to during her stay with the community stated that their family was the reason they got introduced to the Church of San Barnaba. Within the subject of the Filipino migrants' motivations to join the Church of San Barnaba, their responses can be grouped based on three recurring themes, namely religious/spiritual, social, and cultural. The religious space that was provided to the Filipinos became not only a space wherein they can perform religious activities, but it also became a place where Filipinos can satisfy their needs to socialise with their fellow Filipinos and to connect to their Filipino roots even while in Florence.



*Figure 20. Washing of feet observed on Maundy Thursday of the Holy Week. Twelve male parishioners of the Church of San Barnaba participated at the sacred event on the 6th April 2023. (Photograph provided by Danny G, Florence, Italy).*

The primary motivation of the Filipinos to go to church is their Catholic faith. For them, it is necessary to participate in the activities of the church to fulfil their responsibilities as Catholics. Their regular attendance to the mass each week is one of the ways they express their devotion to God and serve the church. In particular, the Filipinos value that the liturgical services at the Church of San Barnaba are done in Tagalog. The majority of the liturgical services done at the Church of San Barnaba is done in Tagalog language, except the Novena mass every third Thursday of the month which is in Italian. The use of Tagalog language in the activities of the Church of San Barnaba is one great example of the involvement of the Filipino culture in the experience of lived space by the Filipino parishioners in Florence. The use of Tagalog language, however, does not necessarily reject the dominance of the Italian language but instead the Church of San Barnaba deviates from it to allow the usage of Tagalog within a space used and appropriated by the Filipinos through the rituals and activities performed in the church.

Language plays a crucial role in shaping the way people perceive and interact with their physical environment, which in turn influences the social construction of space. In Low's discussion about the impacts of language and discourse on space, she argues that language is a tool that mediates in people's understanding of the physical space that they occupy and the social space that they construct.<sup>72</sup> For the Filipino Catholic community, the use of Tagalog language during the Sunday mass, for example, helps reinforce their Catholic faith because they are more able to understand the passages in the Bible and the teachings of the Church. Anna, who regularly attends the Sunday mass, expressed her preference for hearing the mass in her native tongue stating "*Iba pa rin kapag yung misa ay Tagalog*" (It is different when the mass is in Tagalog [language]). For her, the homilies given by Father Corcino becomes more effective and relatable to her personal life because of the language used during the mass. She does not need to translate everything she hears in Tagalog. Also, she is more motivated to participate actively during the mass because she is already familiar with the responses, songs, and prayers in Tagalog. Through language, the Catholic Filipino migrants in Florence are able to shape how their space is used and experienced. They chose to use Tagalog language in performing religious rituals since they are a predominantly Filipino migrant community. It is the common language used by the majority of Filipino migrants in Florence, facilitating communication among them. More importantly, reading, hearing, and speaking Tagalog reinforces their identity as Filipinos which ultimately aids in strengthening the presence of Filipino community not only inside the Church of San Barnaba but also in Florence in general.

The transformation of roles and space can also be observed within the Church of San Barnaba and the Filipino Catholic community in Florence. First is the presence of the Pastoral Council of the Church of San Barnaba composed of seven positions which are fulfilled by seven parishioners of the church. The pastoral council officers are responsible with the administrative organisation of the church which include the archiving of documents, certifications, and permits, managing the finances collected from the church through offerings and donations, and also the maintenance of the equipment, furniture, displays, and the surroundings of the church. The pastoral council is also able to delegate tasks to the members of the community to ensure the efficiency of managing the programs organised by the church. Here, the pastoral commissions come in as they serve the Filipino Catholic

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<sup>72</sup> SETHA LOW, *Spatializing Culture. The Ethnography of Space and Place*, (London: Routledge, 2016) 120.

community of Florence in several aspects. There are five pastoral commissions in San Barnaba, namely Worship, Education, Socio-cultural, Temporalities, and Youth and Family. In the different activities organised by the community, the members desire to infuse them with themes which relate to their Catholic faith. Myrna, who serves as the coordinator of the Youth and Family commission, explained that their group exists to motivate Filipino families to become closer to the church and to engage them more in the activities organised by the community of San Barnaba. Together with the Education and Worship commissions, they offer catechisms and bible study for children and adults. Their aim in organising such activities is to deepen the knowledge and understanding of people of the values and sanctity of family according to Christ. In strengthening their faith, they also hope that Christ becomes at the centre of Filipino families.

Aside from the pastoral commission, there are also nine pastoral affiliates established within the community of San Barnaba. Similar to the two other groups, they are also created to serve the church according to their desires and motivations. At the present the nine pastoral affiliates are the following: Apostles of the Holy Spirit, Altar Servers, Adoracion Nocturna Filippina, Lectors and Commentators, Legion of Mary, Mary Spouse of the Holy Spirit, Music Ministry, Youth Ministry, and finally Ushers, Greeters and Collectors. The Music Ministry is responsible with the choir of the Church of San Barnaba, while the Lectors and Commentators affiliate take care of the schedule of lectors, as well as coordinating the liturgical readings for each mass. Meanwhile, the altar servers ensure the church's cleanliness before and after each activity and they also assist the officiating priest/s during the mass and other religious events. The Legion of Mary, on the other hand, offers their services to the priests so that they may fulfil their duties of performing spiritual works and pastoral care in the Church of San Barnaba. The affiliate also leads the recitation of the Holy Rosary in front of the image of Fatima in order to foster a deeper devotion to Mary within the Filipino Catholic community in Florence.

The provision of the Church of San Barnaba to the exclusive use of the Filipino Catholic community allowed the members to create these aforementioned groups that can facilitate the organisation and practice of religious rituals. The creation of and membership to these groups were also motivated by the Filipinos' desire to serve the church and fulfil their religious obligations as Catholics. The Filipino parishioners were able to create spaces in the form of the pastoral commissions and affiliates, which can be considered as sacred spaces, based on



their actions and intentions that also define the conventions that members have to follow and even the boundaries from other groups. The Filipinos were able to modify an existing space in order to fill the gap and serve the needs of the church. They learned to use and adapt the different materials and capabilities of their members, adding their creativity, in the creation of the Filipino community's religious space and experience.

*ii. The Filipino value "Pakikisama" and fostering social relationships at the Church of San Barnaba and the Catholic community in Florence*

The religious motivation of Filipinos to join the Church of San Barnaba also helps them relieve the emotional distress that they experience at work and/or the fact that they are separated from their families in the Philippines. The church became a place where they can express themselves more openly and seek the comfort of the fellow Filipinos. Maria specifically mentioned that the church is her refuge as she goes through some problems particularly of homesickness. Moreover, the leaders of San Barnaba like Father Corcino and Sister Erlita are able to provide her advice and guidance as she needs them. Earlier, it was noted that the Overseas Filipino Workers, in general, are commended for their positive attitude and work ethics. However, that does not mean that they do not have bad experiences and grievances at their workplaces. It is typical of the Filipino culture to suffer in silence, to become resilient. But, in cases wherein they feel most vulnerable, the Church of San Barnaba offers refuge and support to the community. As the researcher has observed during after-mass gatherings, a lot of the parishioners reach out to Father Gianni to specifically pray for them and bless them for "*lavoro*" (work), family, and even for their upcoming trips to the Philippines. Here, we can see that the Church of San Barnaba has expanded its purpose not only as a location where religious activities take place but also as a place of refuge for a lot of Filipino migrants in Florence.

As the activities within the Church of San Barnaba diversifies, so do the motivations of the Filipino parishioners in coming to church. Aside from performing religious rituals and attending liturgical services organised by the church, they are also motivated to participate because of social reasons. After years of staying in Florence and spending time with their fellows in the community, the Filipino migrants of the Church of San Barnaba have built friendships within the community. One recurring word during the interviews conducted for this research is the Filipino term "*pakikisama*" which expresses the desire to get along with others. *Pakikisama* is a Filipino trait which is helpful in keeping amicable relationships with



other people. During the interviews, the participants were asked about any difficulties they have encountered in fulfilling their roles in the Filipino Catholic community. As most of them mentioned, there were instances wherein disagreements happened due to differences in opinion and behaviour. In organising religious activities at the church, for example, not everyone agrees on the same thing and sometimes this can lead to disagreements. As Marco described, even though they are all Filipinos, it does not necessarily mean that everyone has the same outlook on life. In order to maintain the harmonious relationship within the community, the Filipinos have to learn how to accept each other's difference and also learn how to "*makisama*" [get along with other people]. The Filipinos of San Barnaba do not fall short in ensuring that they remain active and tight as a community. Through the activities that they organise like bible studies, pilgrimages, catechisms, religious feasts, they are able to enrich not only their spiritual lives but also their social lives.

Additionally, their ability to infuse the activities with the Filipino culture further invites them to participate in the activities of the Church. As the parishioners of the Church of San Barnaba described, they are very tied with the religious traditions of the Philippines even though they are in Florence. For example, the Church of San Barnaba observe some religious festivals connected to the provinces in the Philippines, like the feast of San Isidro Labrador [Saint Isidore the Labourer] celebrated in Quezon Province every month of May, the feast of *Poong Nazareno* [Holy Black Nazarene] in Quiapo, Manila every January, and the feast San Lorenzo Ruiz de Manila the patron saint of overseas workers celebrated every September. The songs that are performed by the music ministry of the Church of San Barnaba are also in Tagalog, which are familiar to the majority of the parishioners and therefore encourage them further to participate and sing along during the mass.

*iii. Presenting and representing the Filipino culture and religious traditions in the Italian setting*

In the study conducted by Chivallon on the representation of the Caribbean diasporic identity through the practice of Caribbean religious traditions in the United Kingdom, we are able to see how the use and appropriation of space by the Caribbean diasporic community attempts to challenge the dominant racial orders present in their host community through the practice of their own religious traditions especially in the public space. For the Caribbean diasporic community, their lived space has become one of their means to reject the existing norms of British space. However, and in contrast with Chivallon's case study, the Filipino Catholic

church community is set in a predominantly Catholic country. Thus, despite the fact that the community of the Church of San Barnaba incorporates several elements of Filipino culture in the practice of their Catholic faith, their host community can be observed to accept or at least tolerate these differences. In fact, the Filipino community in Florence, Italy is recognised as an active Catholic community in the city. The Basilica of San Lorenzo has sought the help of the music ministry of the Church of San Barnaba for their Sunday mass. Also, the Filipino Catholic community is constantly invited by the Parish of San Lorenzo, nearby parishes, and even the municipality of Florence to talk about and showcase the Filipino culture in front of Italians and other migrant communities in Florence.

During the past years, the Church of San Barnaba and the Filipino Catholic community in Florence participated in several activities together with other Catholic and migrant communities in Florence. For example, the Parish of San Lorenzo organises a celebration of World Migrants Day every third week of September. Here, several migrant communities gather in the Basilica to witness and perform cultural presentations and also to attend the eucharistic celebration presided over by the church. Also, the Filipino community participates in the *Cavalcata dei Magi* [The Cavalcade of Three Kings] to celebrate the Epiphany every 6<sup>th</sup> of January. During these activities, the parishioners of the Church of San Barnaba are given the opportunity to not only represent the Filipino Catholic community in the practice of religious traditions and cultural performances, but they are also able to express themselves artistically through performances. Aside from the music ministry who share their talent of singing to several religious occasions, the socio-cultural pastoral commission is also active in organising performances on Filipino traditional dances. Through these artistic performances, the Filipino migrants are able to present another side of them which may be different from what they are usually required of at work. The majority of the members of the Filipino Catholic community of the Church of San Barnaba are female domestic helpers. This profession is commonly attached to the stereotype of submissiveness and being under the authority of their employer. They are required to follow specific rules and instructions in order to fulfil their jobs properly. However, through these initiatives and activities inside and outside the Church of San Barnaba, they are able to transform themselves as active participants and even community organisers who are able to design and decide for themselves the type of presentation they would like to give. Being active organisers in their host community can become a symbol of transformation and an opportunity to display, even temporarily, a type of power that is not usually attributed to migrant communities. In a way,

the church allows for this transformation. Within a conceived space of rules and ideologies that still exist and persist during performances, the Filipinos together with other migrant populations are provided the freedom that facilitates deviations from some strictures of the perceived and the conceived space – all with the inclusion of culture within the lived space.



Figure 21. The Filipino community in Florence actively participates in the parade of The Cavalcade of Three Kings wearing Filipino traditional costumes around the city of Florence. (Photographs from the Church of San Barnaba archives).

To further understand the inclusion of Filipino culture and the practices at the Church of San Barnaba, the researcher asked the members of the community about the reception of the Italians and, in general, other people who were able to observe their religious performances. The respondents said that most people that witness the activities of the Church of San Barnaba were impressed by how active the church community is, “*humahanga sila*” [They are impressed] as Irene described. At the present, it is a rare occasion to see a church full of people attending the mass. However, this is a normal, weekly instance at the Church of San Barnaba wherein Filipinos religiously attend the Sunday Mass. Given that there is a current decline of attendance in a lot of churches in Italy, the example of the Church of San Barnaba to other Catholic communities in Florence is a feat for the Catholic Filipino migrants. By

opening the Church of San Barnaba to anyone who wishes to enter the church during liturgical services and by participating in several events organised at the public spaces in Florence, the Filipino Catholic community puts itself in the gaze of others and in their opinions as well. When the researcher asked them if they cared about the comments or reactions of other people who observe them, most of them said that they did not care at all. However, for them, it can be considered as an added “bonus” each time they witness people giving positive feedback to the community. Nevertheless, the Filipino community remains open to share the Filipino culture and showcase their heritage whenever they are invited by other Catholic communities and migrant communities in Florence.

*iv. Opening the Church of San Barnaba to the secular activities of the Filipino Catholic community*

We have discussed above the religious activities that are performed by the Filipino community at the Church of San Barnaba and also with other Catholic communities in Florence. However, there are also several instances wherein the Filipino Catholic community engages in events that are not particularly sacred/religious in nature. The transformation of sacred space to a rather secular space is not an uncommon phenomenon as backed up by Kim Knott in her inquiry of religiosity about contemporary everyday spaces. In a very brief summary of her book, she explained that everyday spaces contain both sacred and secular elements. Furthermore, sacred spaces are able to carry secular elements within their realm similar to how secular spaces are able to contain sacred symbols. In the earlier sections of this chapter, examples of how the public places of Florence display Catholic images were presented. This is an example of how a secular space is used to display sacred images. However, the researcher wants to reiterate the dominance of the Catholic religion in the city. And so, the public spaces of Florence which are secular in nature can be considered more tolerable in accepting sacred symbols and images related to the Catholic Church compared to, for example, images from Islam and Buddhism. We can see here how the lived space is influenced by the conceived space. The history of Florence is heavily Catholic and, up to the present, Italy is still recognised as a Catholic country. Thus, the creation and also the transformation of space is easier for the Catholics than those of other religious adherents.

Inside the Church of San Barnaba, the transformation of space from sacred to secular can be observed with how the parishioners use their space. The Church of San Barnaba is primarily used for the rituals, liturgical services, and other religious activities organised and



participated by the members of the community. However, several activities take place inside the church that can be considered more social. Filipino celebrations are very common examples.



Figure 22. Some celebrations organised at the Church of San Barnaba: (left to right, up and down) Birthday ng Bayan for the month of March, Filipino Catholic community 2022 Christmas Party, Renewal of Vows in January 2023, and Father's Day Celebration in March 2023 (Photographs provided by Danny G., Florence, Italy).

During the researcher's time with the community of the Church of San Barnaba, she had been invited to several after-church activities that mostly included food. For them, it is important to nourish the soul and the body. Commonly referred to as *salu-salu*, the Filipinos bring potluck meals with them to the church which are to be shared with the entire community after the mass. Whenever the researcher gets invited to these *salu-salu*, she asks the members of the community for the reason behind the celebration. The reasons vary from a birthday celebration, a death anniversary, or even just a simple urge to prepare a home-cooked Filipino meal to be shared with their friends. In a more organised fashion, the Filipino community organises a monthly *birthday ng bayan* [town birthday] wherein birthday celebrants of each month collectively celebrate their birthdays on the last Sunday of the month. During the Sunday mass, they are prayed over and blessed by the entire congregation

of the Church of San Barnaba led by Father Corcino, and afterwards people go straight to the activity hall of the church where a big birthday feast is set up. Of course, Filipino food grazes the table at each *salu-salo* that is not only able to satisfy the hunger of the Filipino community but also their longing for typical Filipino food - several types rice cakes, *lechon* [roasted pork suckling], *lumpiang shanghai* [spring rolls], *pancit* [noodles], and a lot more. During these celebrations, the Filipinos are able to spend time with their *kababayans* and have fun by eating, drinking, singing, and dancing together. The Church of San Barnaba, for others, is a regular church used by the Filipino Catholic community in Florence. However, for the Filipino parishioners, the same church is their “*pangalawang tahanan*” [second home] where they can meet fellow Filipinos, attend liturgical activities in Tagalog language, organise social events, all while deepening their connection with their Catholic faith. For many Filipino Catholic migrants in Florence, the above-mentioned elements of the church being a place where they can spend time with fellow Filipinos, speak with them in Tagalog, celebrate festive occasions, or simply share a meal prove their impression that the Church of San Barnaba is their home away from home.

## Chapter VI. Conclusion

It is evident that interest towards space and its relevance to the study of culture and society has significantly increased over the past decades, particularly from the 1960s spatial revolution when the application of spatial analysis diversified further to include social, economic, and political processes participated by people in their everyday lives. The shift of the meaning of space from a passive location to an active participant of meaningful social processes served as an essential foundation to many studies of the production and construction of space in our modern society. This research focused on the analysis of space using Lefebvre's spatial triad which allowed for the examination of space in different perspectives during the practice of religious traditions by the Catholic Filipino migrants in Florence, Italy. The spatial triad provided the present thesis a straightforward and guided approach to study the role of space utilised by the Filipino Catholic community in Florence. Moreover, the application of the spatial triad proved useful in understanding the physical, abstract, and social characteristics of space that influence and also intervene not only in the practice of religious traditions but also in the maintenance of social relationships among the Catholic Filipino migrants. The theoretical framework and approach applied in this research ensured a credible foundation of the analysis and conclusions drawn from this study.

Space in itself is not inherently sacred. Nevertheless, it can carry images and symbols that communicate (religious) meanings to its observers or users. In addition, the routines and day-to-day experiences of people allow them to attach meanings to space they occupy and shape the same space according to their habits, needs, and goals. The analysis conducted at the Church of San Barnaba and the Filipino Catholic community in Florence is an interesting case which allowed us to inspect the role of space in the religious practice and dynamic social exchanges that it contains. Overall, the different aspects of space are fulfilled by the Catholic Filipino migrants in their practice of religious traditions. In the preceding chapter, we discussed how each aspect of Lefebvre's proposed triad is realised through the Church of San Barnaba and the activities of the church community. To recall, Lefebvre theorised that space is produced and sustained by social relations. The interviews conducted with parishioners of the Church of San Barnaba revealed that aside from religious motivations, their participation to the church and its activities is also highly encouraged by social reasons. The Church of San Barnaba is a place where they can practice their faith and also where they can socialise with fellow Filipinos in Florence. Thus, the creation of the Filipino Catholic community in

Florence became a means to sustain the relationships that were established among the parishioners of the church. As a consequence, the community maintains its presence thanks to the social relationships among the Filipino migrant members. Since the community of Catholic Filipinos is thriving through the participation of the members, the same atmosphere of enthusiasm can be observed in the Church of San Barnaba. This is also witnessed by other non-Filipino Catholic communities in Florence which admire the plentiful attendance and vivacity of the Filipino church.

While the following realisation is limited to the observations made within the Filipino Catholic community in Florence, the access to (religious) space of migrant communities can be observed to be facilitated by their mutual faith and adherence to the Catholic Church with their Italian host community. First, the provision of the Church of San Barnaba to the Catholic Filipino migrants is a great example of how their mutual Catholic devotion allowed the Filipino to have their own space in Florence. Next, several activities of the Archdiocese of Florence and the Municipality of Florence showcase the migrant population present in the city. These activities, although short-lived and in public spaces, provide space to the participating Catholic migrants where they can represent their local cultures and present particular traditions to the public. Third, due to the abundance of churches in a predominantly Catholic city, the Archdiocese of Florence is able to provide several Catholic migrant communities with designated spaces, e.g. churches and convents, where they can gather and attend church ceremonies. During the fieldwork conducted for this research, it was easy to locate the churches used by Catholic migrant communities. However, it was not the same for other religions. Mosques and temples were not visible around the city. At the present, there are 70 prayer rooms and Muslim centres available for an estimated 100,000 Muslim migrants in Tuscany.<sup>73</sup> They were unoccupied, sometimes abandoned rooms that are transformed into prayer spaces used by Muslim migrants living in the city of Florence and in nearby neighbourhoods. Also, the researcher stumbled upon a Nontrinitarian Christian church *Iglesia ni Cristo* largely attended by Filipino migrants in Florence. The church is located in Via Gran Bretagna which is a 30-minute bus ride from the city centre of Florence.

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<sup>73</sup> Mary Gray, "Izzedin Elzir: Unmasking the Mosque," *The Florentine*, September 5, 2018. Accessed May 10, 2023 [https://www.theflorentine.net/2018/09/05/izzeddin-elzir-imam-florence/#:~:text=Some%2070%20prayer%20rooms%20are,Sorgane%20neighborhoods\)%20host%20Friday%20prayers.](https://www.theflorentine.net/2018/09/05/izzeddin-elzir-imam-florence/#:~:text=Some%2070%20prayer%20rooms%20are,Sorgane%20neighborhoods)%20host%20Friday%20prayers.)



Moreover, during the interviews conducted, the challenge in accessing space was mentioned but it was limited to use of public space for some religious traditions and festivities of the Filipino Catholic community. The rules imposed by the Municipality of Florence and the laborious process of seeking permits were the most mentioned reasons of limitations to space provided by the interview participants. They are still, nonetheless, provided with designated spaces which is essentially used for Catholic worship. Transformation of space is not necessary to adapt to the Filipino Catholic community's religious belief. On the other hand, they are able to adapt their Filipino Catholic traditions into their practices at the Church of San Barnaba. As long as these adaptations still adhere to the teachings of the Church and are approved by the church leaders of the Church of San Barnaba and the Parish of San Lorenzo, the Filipino parishioners can continue to practice Filipino Catholic traditions in Florence. The exclusivity of the Church of San Barnaba to the use of Catholic Filipino migrants also allows them to transform this particular sacred space to carry secular elements and activities of the Filipino migrants. Without a long-term space available to them, it can be difficult for the Filipino parishioners to incorporate Filipino traditions and practices, be it religious or socio-cultural, into the church. Smaller groups have also been created within the Filipino Catholic community and the Church of San Barnaba. There are church commissions and religious affiliations that exist and are participated by Filipino migrants depending on their interests and ways of fulfilling their responsibilities as members of the Catholic church. Additionally, non-religious provincial groups were formed by members of the community bound by their common origin and shared local culture in the Philippines.

The Filipino churchgoers of the Church of San Barnaba consider the church as their 'home away from home or *pangalawang tahanan* [second home]. Moreover, some of the Filipinos interviewed for this research consider the church leaders, i.e. Father Reynold Corcino, Sister Erlita Bautro, and Don Gianni Guida, as their *pangalawang mga magulang* [second set of parents]. These appellations can be regarded as a reflection of the transnational connection that the Filipino parishioners who mentioned these descriptions maintain with the Philippines. First, the phrases 'home away from home' and 'second home' imply that they have an image of a 'primary home' that is inaccessible and away from them and one can only infer that this refers to their homes in the Philippines. They consider the Church of San Barnaba as an extension of home wherein they can perform Filipino practices like they were in the Philippines. This sentiment shared by the community can be attributed to several factors. First, the ease of communication and exchange of information nowadays help the

Filipinos maintain relationship with people in the Philippines. They also have several means to access information through television, the Internet, as well as various social media platforms that keep them up to date with the current affairs of the Philippines while they are in Italy. A specific example of the transnational connection maintained by the Church of San Barnaba with the Philippines is their subscription and use of *Sambuhay* Sunday missalette published by the Society of St. Paul based in Makati City, Philippines. Third, the exclusivity of the Church of San Barnaba gave them the privacy and freedom to “feel at home” in the space that they use. The community is able to organise activities not only related to the church but also some social events like birthday parties, anniversaries, feasts, ceremonies, etc. that may not be readily possible if they did not have their own church or if they had to share with other communities, e.g. other Catholic communities, other migrant communities.

The social aspect of space as well as the social motivation of the members of the Filipino Catholic community are further emphasised through the repeated acknowledgement of the Filipino social trait *pakikisama*, or the ability to get along with others, in maintaining a harmonious and successful space for the Catholic Filipino migrants. During the interviews and conversations of the researcher with the parishioners, they were asked about instances of struggles or conflicts during the organisation and/or performance of religious practices. In several cases, they recognised their differences from each other when it comes to behaviour, beliefs, ways of serving the church, etc. However, this type of statement is often followed by them preferring to accept other persons’ differences and to practice *pakikisama* instead of provoking conflicts and arguments with their fellows. Since space is filled with social relations and processes, we can infer then that a ‘good’ space is filled with good social relations of people. The members of the church community strive to maintain a healthy environment for everyone since the social atmosphere can affect the organisation of the church as well as the performance of the members. In fact, the activities organised by the Church of San Barnaba and the Filipino Catholic community accomplish not only the spiritual needs of the people but they also encourage and strengthen the relationships within the community. Through the participation in religious rituals, practices, and their membership to the community, the Filipinos acquire greater sense of identity, belonging, and purpose as Catholic Filipino migrants in Florence.

In the end, some questions arose from this research that go beyond the scope of this inquiry. The researcher acknowledges these questions as points of interest for further discussion or

even future research that can contribute to the growing body of research that focus on the study of space, religious space in particular, by migrant communities. First, it will be interesting to investigate the experiences of other non-Catholic Filipino communities in Florence, Italy to determine how their experiences differ from that of the Filipino Catholic community at the Church of San Barnaba. For example, a Nontrinitarian Christian church *Iglesia ni Cristo* attended mostly by Filipino migrants is located in Florence. However, they are not located at the city centre of Florence and they also have different rituals, norms, and ideologies from the Catholic church. It is possible to conduct the same analysis to their community and explore how Lefebvre's spatial triad is fulfilled through their rituals and other religious/secular practices. The same inquiry can also apply to other migrant Catholic communities in Florence who participate in the activities that are organised by the Archdiocese of Florence and the Municipality of Florence and joined by the Filipino Catholic community as well. We can start by determining if they have their own designated places of worship or if they have to share with other Catholic communities in the city. From there, we can try and analyse their own perceptions and experiences of space. Moving beyond the religious activities participated by the Filipino migrant community in Florence, the researcher is also curious to know about the routines and day-to-day habits of Filipinos that shape their space. Particular focus can be given to the domestic helpers who provide their labour to Italian employers who may have the capacity to influence how the Filipino domestic helpers perceive their environment and transform them according to their personal goals and motivations. Indeed, there is a vast opportunity to improve the quality and scope of this research. Ultimately, the primary motivation of the researcher is to contribute something to the study of space and to put into focus the Filipino migrant population in the academic discussion not only as subjects of research but also as an important migrant population that is able to participate not only in the economic aspect of globalisation but also in terms of social and cultural diversification of the world.

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