**Who Speaks the Language of Space?**

The processes of making spaces are entwined with the processes of breaking spaces up into various divisions. Within this, Fanon asks whether the veil is used to break up spaces thereby relegating the feminine into a hidden, dark, unidentifiable place from which she needs to be ‘saved’ by the colonizer, or is it used by the wearer to make her own space in order to fight the colonizer? Fanon looks at the role of the Algerian woman in the course of the revolution, in an attempt to redefine the potency of the private space – the place within a veil and the place within the home. A strong relationship to the space of the ‘home’ can therefore not simply be seen as a passive withdrawal but an active rejection of the imposed structures of colonialism, wherein the home transforms itself into a space which breeds a revolutionary consciousness. A veil is often dismissed as a mode of control asserted by patriarchy, but one forgets that it also inherently resists and obstructs several forms of surveillance of the state. *The woman who sees without being seen frustrates the colonizer,* Fanon writes. They form the mobile elements within an immobile space, the unseen element within an over-exposed space, the untraceable elements within a surveyed space. This is what makes it so difficult to articulate the agency of the Algerian woman in the vocabulary of revolution, which has inherently been biased to the public roles and public duties of men. Similarly, Elyacher looks at the difficulty of understanding women’s labour in the vocabulary of work, which is also inherently biased to the work performed by men. Several channels of sociality used by women in Cairo has not been seen as economic vitality, despite the amount of time and skill that goes into the maintenance of infrastructure of communicative channels, which plays a significant role in maintaining class structure. *Phatic communion*, as Malinowski asserts*, is a form of social action*.

Expanding these languages of space, *The Owners of Space,* seeks to look at the entangled notions of mobility, immobility and mobilization, as nouns, adjectives and verbs, through the study of the motor-cycle taxi drivers operating quasi-legally in Bangkok. Beyond the lens of the local, this ethnography employs mobility not simply as a subject, but also as a structuring mechanism for its own methodology, thereby producing an *ethnography in motion,* which is not afraid to move from spatial analysis to participant observation, from archival research to cartographic mapping, from social history to visual analysis. When the Red shirt protesters descended into Bangkok, the study of mobility moved towards the study of mobilization, wherein public demonstration uses tools of immobility such as strikes, in order to bring a city to a haul, or rather, to a state of immobility.

The language of the book creates an experience of being *moved* – its affective component tied up with its corporeal sensation. Each chapter produces images, which are poignant yet discontinuous, thereby making one feel a sense of being simultaneously present yet removed from the field, thereby challenging the fixity of what anthropologists regard as ‘field’ in the first place. This brings to mind a statement made by Akhil Gupta and James Fergusson (1997), who deconstruct the notion of a field, arguing that in fact *‘one does not study the field; one simply studies in the field’.* Another interesting pattern that emerges for me, is the changing pace of the book, almost as if being inside a vehicle negotiating through various densities of spaces that affect its speed in the most predictably unpredictable ways (also creating within me a strange nostalgia for Delhi). It seems as though the book is set the rhythm of the traffic, therefore perfectly capturing the experience of the taxi driver, whose time is organized across space. The language plays with the speed within the motorcycle in terms of the automated movement of hands and legs of the driver, and the speed of the city across the course of the day, and over the changing historical circumstances of Thailand. The element of pace is so perfectly captured through the literary metaphors, be it the opening imagery of the broken thermometer spilling out its inquisitive grains, or the description of urban chaos blending in with the uncertainties of the lives of taxi drivers regarded as good-for-nothing, create a spell so strong that if one reads the book too fast, one might experience motion-sickness!

The book also seeks to explore space through a navigation of the ways in which the planners structure the city, as well as the practical logic or drivers and city dweller. These two frameworks, similar to de Certeau’s planned and inhabited city, are not mutually exclusive but in a state of dialogue with each other, constantly reshaping each other. Within this dynamic discourse, mobility and immobility cannot be separated, as the act of waiting becomes a form of skill, or labour, for the driver, thereby recognizing the embodied experiences of labour. It is important to not limit ones understanding of the lives of these drivers to their mobility, but also to long periods of boredom mediated with cultivated skills of sociality that forms vast networks between roadside shop owners, local restaurants, police officers and street vendors. Furthermore, the book explores the paradoxical condition of the driver’s location in society, which is invisibilised in times of proficiency, and abruptly recognized in times of failure. This is why immobility becomes a crucial element to study, for being immobile is also an act of becoming visible, to being not mobile but instead, becoming *mobilized.*