
SOUNDS OF THE CITY

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Guide: Ravi Pooviah



VOICES OF
A TRADE
CULTURE

**NEW
DELHI**

**VOICES OF
A TRADE
CULTURE**

APPROVAL

Design Research Seminar

By Neha Alice Kerketta

is approved as partial fulfilment of requirement of post-graduate
degree in Animation.

Prof. Ravi Pooviah
[Project Guide]

Internal Examiner

External Examiner

Chairperson

DECLARATION

I declare that this written submission represents my ideas in my own words and where others' ideas or words have been included, I have adequately cited and referenced the original sources. I also declare that I have not misrepresented or fabricated or falsified any idea/date/fact/source in my submission. I understand that any violation of the above will cause a disciplinary action by the Institute and also can evoke penal action from the sources which have not been properly cited or from whom proper permission has not been taken when needed.

Signature:

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Date:

ACKNOWLEDGE- MENTS

I would like to thank my guide Prof. Ravi Pooviah for his support and guidance throughout the project.

I would also like to thank the wonderful people of New Delhi who added their voices for my project and made it a memorable experience of revisiting delhi for me.

I would like to thank my batchmates and friends for their unconditional support.

And finally to my family, thanks you for your support.

Signature:

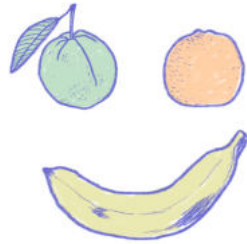
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Information Visualisation, Classification of Sounds,
Street Audio.

TOPIC



The scope of this special project is to document, classify and then explore and experiment with information visualisation of sounds from the street or as part of a cultural festival or event in India.

BRIEF



Sound of the city is a sound mapping experiment that revolves around identifying, collecting and visually interpreting of significant sounds of any city in India. Sounds that would significantly characterise the city and would help the listener identify these peculiar sound information that makes a city's sound environment.

INTRODUCTION



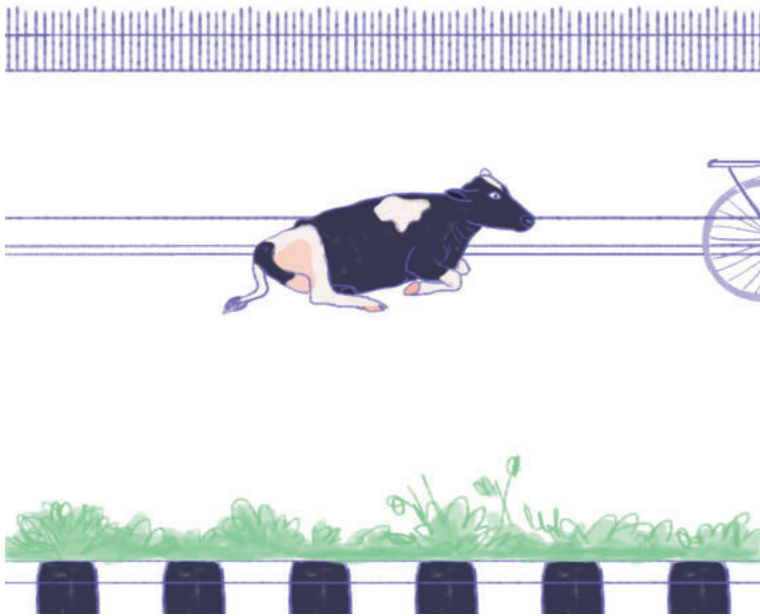
The city

For this project I decided to pick the city of New Delhi, the nations capital where I spent 8 years studying and working. The city is very close to my heart and I decided to collect and document the sounds I had forgotten about after moving to Bombay.

I retraced the places I had visited. Instead of the tourist spots and government of India's peculiar prominence, I dwelled into the everyday life of a Delhiite. The urban villages and Thursday markets, from places of worship to modern commutes, I tried to collect the sounds of everyday Delhi.

Duration

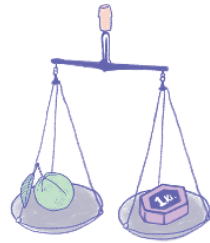
One month spent in the city of Delhi travelling. From
1st December to 31st December



Climate / weather / political situation



I landed in Delhi at the peak of winter season in North India. Morning fogs and roadside bonfires were a common site. Though the afternoons were slightly sunny. Delhi's air and sound pollution was at its peak amidst a roaring debate on applying the act of Odd and Even number cars only on the street to curb the air and noise pollution.



To begin with I decided to record the essence of Delhi by collecting things like core sounds of the city. Something distinctively unique about it like metro announcements, railway announcements, bus drivers etc. I envisioned creating an environment of this historically significant city with particular sounds that bring out the very essence of the 'New' and 'Old' parts of the city. While recording sounds at the ISBT bus station I walked past some bus conductors yelling the destination names that inspired me to re-direct my research.

ABSTRACT



I surveyed the places and what makes those places, the people. At the bus stand I listened to the conductors speaking in some familiar and unfamiliar tones. Hearing the various conductors coming from various regions around Delhi I could easily understand where they belonged. For example the way a conductor from Uttarakhand yelled destination names was quite significantly different from someone from Punjab, Himachal, Haryana , Jammu, Uttar Pradesh and so on.



I realised how much the dialect and manner of verbal communication influences the particular sound of the city. I decided to record the way people converse and communicate with each other in the city. Which helped me understand the variety of people in Delhi and gives an immersive idea of the majority of people who live and thrive here and give a audio essence of the way people communicate. From old Delhi masjids to gurudwara, I went to farmer markets and bars. I came to the conclusion that I should try and find out more places where “BOLI” is used in terms of public or private conversation in the city along with a corresponding visual environment.



But since the task was to uncover the “sounds’ I decided to completely rely on sound environment than collecting visual clues. I wanted to figure out is there a correlation between the sounds of different kinds of places or are they completely isolated from each other. To study that in particular and after going through collecting sounds like in public transports, places of worship, sound ambience around a house in an urban village I narrowed down to market places as they had interesting backgrounds and distinguishing characteristics. The beauty of it all was how Delhi’s immense trade history that plays a major role in shaping the multiversity of the city is brought out in the form of ‘dukaandaar’.



PLACES VISITED

Sound of the city is a sound mapping experiment that revolves around identifying, collecting and visually interpreting of significant sounds of any city in India. Sounds that would significantly characterise the city and would help the listener identify these peculiar sound information that makes a city's sound environment.

LIST OF PLACES

- > ISBT Kashmere Gate
 - > Delhi Railway Station
 - > Metro Station, Yellow Line
 - > Chandani Chowk Market
 - > Hazarat Nizamuddin
 - > Nehru Place Market
 - > Sarojini Nagar Market
 - > Masjid Moth Market
-

PLACES IN DETAIL

Bus station, Kashmiri Gate

The Kashmere Gate or Kashmiri Gate is a gate located in Delhi, it is the northern gate to the historic walled city of Delhi. Built by Military Engineer Robert Smith in 1835, the gate is so named because it used to start a road that led to Kashmir. In consultation with Delhi Development Authority and Govt. of Delhi in March, 1993 Delhi Development Authority renamed Inter State Bus Terminus Kashmere Gate to Maharana Pratap Inter State Bus Terminus, Kashmere Gate. It is the oldest and one of the biggest Inter State Bus Terminals in India, operating bus services between Delhi and 7 states, Haryana, Jammu & Kashmir, Punjab, Himachal Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan and Uttarakhand states.

Bus station, Kashmiri Gate



It opened in 1976 and now serves as the main entrance to the city by road connecting Delhi with all neighbouring states and is well connected by the metro stations including a dedicated station for the passengers heading to the bus station from all corners of Delhi. Earlier in a pathetic state, the station was recently transformed owing to the commonwealth games hosted in Delhi in 2010.

SOUNDS COLLECTED

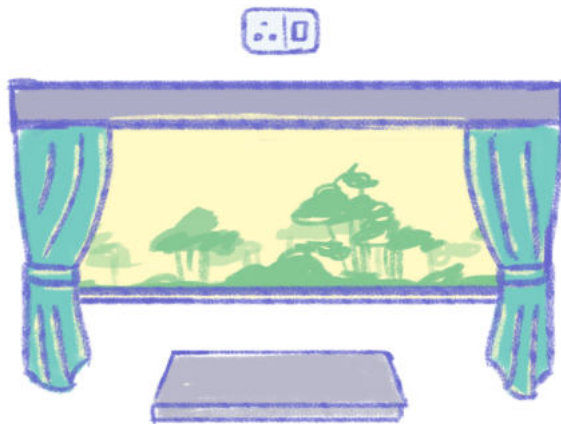
Conductors yelling out names of the cities from surrounding states give a distinct sound scape. The roadways buses and the DTC busses amplify the buzz while the station's acoustic environment give the sense of size of the newly built station structure.

PLACES IN DETAIL

Railway Station, Ajmeri Gate

New Delhi Railway Station (station code NDLS) is situated between Ajmeri Gate and Paharganj is the main railway station in Delhi. The historic Ajmeri gate is one of the gates into the city. The Gates of Delhi were built in Delhi, India, under dynastic rulers in the period that could be dated from the 8th century to the 20th century. Ajmer gate built in 1644, on the road, through this gate, leads to the city of Ajmer in Rajasthan, and hence its name. Paharganj is a neighbourhood of Central Delhi, located just west of the New Delhi Railway Station. Known as Shahganj or King's ganj or market place during Mughal era. Between these two areas exists the New Delhi railway station with its hustle bustle being the busiest and largest railway station in India. It handles over 350 trains and 500,000 passengers daily with 16 platforms.

Railway Station, Ajmeri Gate



The trains also bring along tonnes of product goods and also IRCTC's main operating station. The New Delhi railway station holds the record for the largest route interlocking system in the world. Most eastbound and southbound trains originate at New Delhi Railway Station. However, some important trains to other parts of the country also touch/originate at this station. Most Pair of Shatabdi Express originates and Terminates at this Station. It is the main hub for the Rajdhani Express hence making it the biggest and busiest railway station of the Indian Railways.

SOUNDS COLLECTED

One can easily understand the convergence of various cultures in the air and the announcements made at the station highlight this event through public chatter.

PLACES IN DETAIL

Metro Station, Yellow line

The Yellow Line is one of the lines of the Delhi Metro. It consists of 37 metro stations. The line with a length of 48.8 km is mostly underground and has been laid under one of the most congested parts of Delhi. It is the 2nd longest metro line on the Delhi Metro network. This line covers Outer Delhi, North Delhi, through Central Delhi and South Delhi and finally Gurgaon. The construction of metros gave the daily commuters a cheaper, faster and convenient mode of transport. Replacing the blue line buses that used to run havoc on the streets of Delhi and were discontinued after the metro lines were opened hence significantly decluttering the Delhi roads as well as ensuring safety for passengers.

Metro Station, Yellow line

It is the most favoured means of commute in Delhi today and with introduction to atm and toilets as well as small shops in the station have become the lifeline of Delhi's workforce.

SOUNDS COLLECTED

The sounds I collected at the station were the beeping of security check machines, chatter in the women's coach and station name being announced along with various safety instruction in the station, spoken in the warm and familiar voices of Mr. and Ms. Metro.



Auto rickshaw

Delhi is very well marked by the CNG autos, notoriously famous for their hard to bargain with drivers who seldom go by meter. The important bus stands and train stations however have pre-paid autos and taxi stands available for the passengers. Bargaining the auto fare is the first step to start the day in Delhi, most people believe although the drivers can be sternly nudged to follow the meter which many people being unaware of end up not doing an hence pay a heavy amount. The auto unions were a big part of Arvind Kejriwal's successful campaigning during the Delhi elections as many drivers incorporated the "AAM AADMI PARTY's " logo onto their autos and even wore the party's cap for promotion.

PLACES IN DETAIL

Chandani chowk market

Chandni Chowk is a market place in Old Delhi that dates back to the foundation of the capital city of Shahjahanabad when the Mughal emperor Shah Jahan established the Red Fort on the banks of the River Yamuna beside his newly founded capital. It is one of the oldest and busiest markets in India and is located close to Old Delhi Railway Station. Built in the 17th century by Mughal Emperor of India Shah Jahan, and designed by his daughter Jahan Ara, the market was once divided by canals (now closed) to reflect moonlight, and it remains one of India's largest wholesale markets. Chandni Chowk's speciality is the variety of its markets and their Indian-ness: from authentic Indian food, delicacies and sweets of more than 1,000 kinds, to sarees with chikan and zari work.

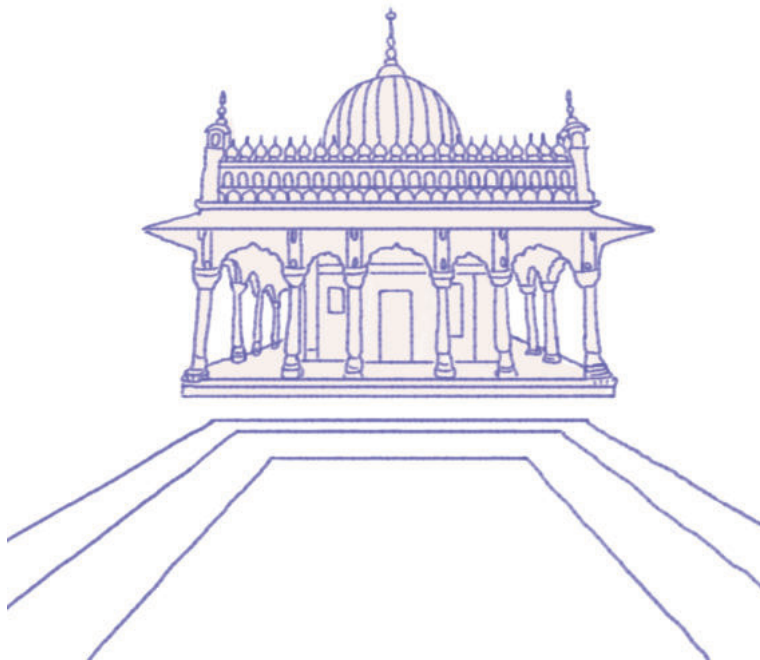
Chandani chowk market

There are many narrow lanes with shops selling books, clothing, shoes and leather goods, electronic and consumer goods and whatnot. As one moves from part of Chandni Chowk to the other, the lanes and by lanes house the biggest wholesale markets of Delhi.

SOUNDS COLLECTED

In the market I came across various conversations between traders and customers. Some skilled usual customers bargaining prices while the adamant persistent wholesale dealer manages to keep his ground. The conversation puts the audience in the front seat for experiencing this market.

Dargah Hazarat Nizamuddin



Nizamuddin Dargah is the mausoleum of one of the world's most famous Sufi saints, Nizamuddin Auliya (1238 - 1325 CE). Situated in the Nizamuddin West area of Delhi, the dargah is visited by thousands of Muslims every week, and sees a fair share of Hindus, Christians and people from other religions. The tombs of poet Amir Khusro and Mughal princess Jehan Ara Begum are also located within the Nizamuddin Dargah complex.

SOUNDS COLLECTED

The reason why I explored the dargah is because of it's peaceful atmosphere, live musical prayers and religious unity displayed under one roof. The markets around the dargah lined with mostly food and flower shops sends you back in time into the streets of Delhi Sultanate. the sense of size of the newly built station structure.

PLACES IN DETAIL

Nehru Place

Widely regarded as the centre for small-scale IT services, Nehru Place is a hub for all forms of IT hardware, such as personal computers, servers, networking equipment, software, documentation services, and all allied services. Several manufacturers of computer hardware have their authorised dealerships located here, and as such, it is often considered as a computer enthusiasts' shopping area. Several businesses also build custom-specification personal computers and servers to order on-site, and many businesses are dedicated to hardware servicing. There are also firms that deal exclusively in used and second-hand computer hardware, as well as small, one-room shops that sell software titles.



Nehru Place

Surprisingly, the market also has been a hub for digital printing and photocopy services.

SOUNDS COLLECTED

The highlight of my trip to Nehru place has always been looking at the street vendors yelling out names of various softwares whose pirated CD's are sold all over the market place. From CD's , Softwares, games to phone covers, the street trained voices of Nehru Palace is a peek into the modern times.

PLACES IN DETAIL

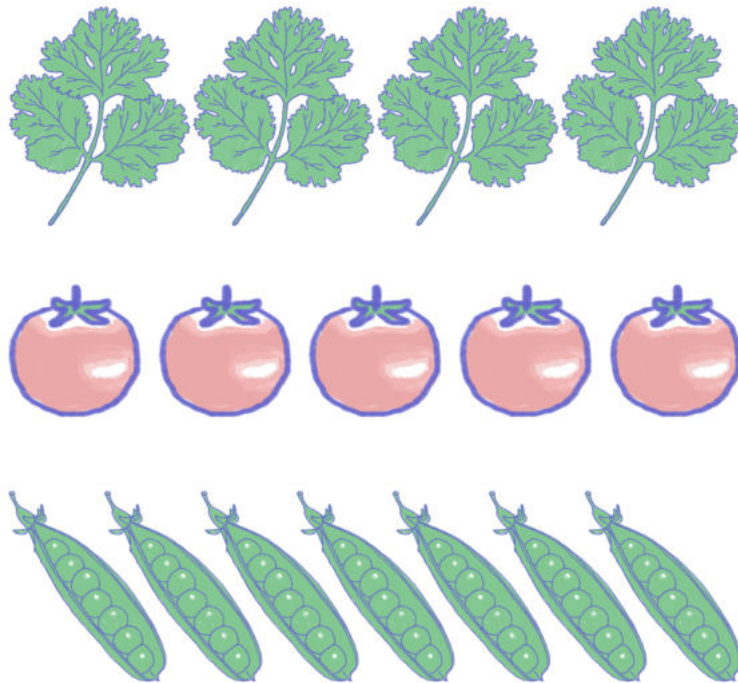
Thursday Market, Masjid Moth

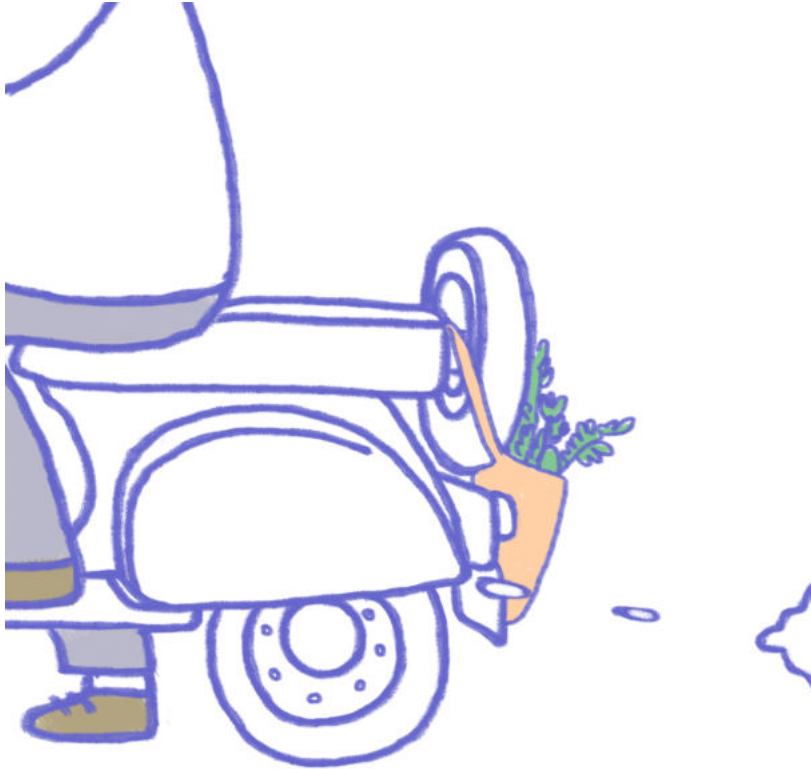
Moth Ki Masjid is a mosque located in Delhi, and was built in 1505 by Wazir Miya Bhoiya, Prime Minister during the reign of Sultan Sikander Lodi (1517–26). It was a new type of mosque developed by the Lodi dynasty in the fourth city of the medieval Delhi of the Delhi Sultanate. The name of the mosque literally translated into English language means 'Lentil Mosque' and this name tag 'Lentil' has an interesting legend. This mosque was considered a beautiful Dome (Gumbad) structure of the period. The mosque is now completely enclosed within the modern locality of South Extension Part II, Uday Park and Masjid Moth comprising residential and commercial establishments in the urban setting of South Delhi.

Thursday Market Masjid Moth

SOUNDS COLLECTED

Every Thursday, the local and area vendors organise a market for the residents of the area. The variety of the products range from kitchen and household to clothes and vegetables. The main highlight however is the perishable goods where vegetables range from baby corn, mushrooms and broccoli to pulses and salad. The market takes on heaps of crowd coming to stock up vegetables on the weekend and offer great prices for purchases. The shopkeepers yelling not just the prices but also the variety of products they have making it another interesting study for 'boli'.





Masjid moth urban village

Apart from the urban South Extension Part II colony the masjid moth area houses many middle class income group residents. I spent a day recording the fruit sellers that carry goods on the cart to a marriage procession travelling through the street. The small shop owners and the ongoing building construction mixed with the thumping sounds of a Royal Enfield bikes, autos, scooters and children at play gives an insight of the daily atmosphere of the place. A lot of house owners rent out their houses for tenants and hence these urban village colonies are where the people from outside Delhi who work in the metro live because of the low and subsidised rents making it a window of urban existence for the work force of Delhi.

PLACES IN DETAIL

Sarojini Nagar market

Sarojini Nagar is one the best known flea markets in India, Located in South Delhi. Named after freedom fighter Sarojini Naidu, the area has government residence quarters and the markets primarily were established to cater to them. Early it was known as Vinay Nagar market but now it is called Sarojini Nagar in general. At the Sarojini Nagar Market you get fashionable clothes at affordable prices. Export-surplus garments as well as rejected export clothing come to this market at throwaway prices. That is why product of even reputed brands available here at cheap prices.

Sarojini Nagar market

There are different areas within the market. Babu Market houses several sweet shops. Subzi Mundi offers the freshest and choicest fruits and fresh vegetables.

SOUNDS COLLECTED

Being the city's biggest 'thrift shopping' centre, there are several vendors selling exceptionally cheap clothes in the market. The entire atmosphere is filled with sellers yelling prices of the good and the change in Delhi seasons is reflected in the goods sold. When I scoured the market in the month of December I came across many winter wear clothes seller having developed their own unique voices for attracting clients.

PLACES IN DETAIL

INA Market

INA colony is a residential colony maintained by the Airports Authority of India for their employees. It was named after a former private airline, Indian National Airways, which was amongst those nationalised and merged to form, Indian Airlines in 1953. It is often confused to be name after Indian National Army (INA). The INA market also has shops selling varieties of imported foodstuff and wines for expatriates.

SOUNDS COLLECTED

I was unable to record any verbal sales in the market since its a quiet place part from the sounds of meat chopping and chatter. But nonetheless, explored the export food market of delhi , considered a boon for exotic food lovers.

Concepts explored

CONCEPT IDEA 1:

This concept occurred to me while analysing this short clip I recorded in the shops of Old Delhi, in chandani chowk. Here a conversation, a business transaction taking place in a characteristic north indian dialect. Since the conversation is about striking a deal on an item but the item in discussion is never revealed, I thought of making a humorous collection of items that they could be talking about.

FINAL CLIP DESIGN

Concepts explored

CONCEPT IDEA 2:

Audio story of a day in Delhi markets, inspired from all collective sounds. The idea is to collect, analyse and archive, thereby creating a repository of sounds of a city on the map of Delhi. Instead of taking direct images I also thought of creating some doodles synonymous with the sounds and explore sound-image relationship further.

FINAL CLIP DESIGN

Concepts explored

CONCEPT IDEA 3:

Inspired only from the shop calls in sarojini nagar market, this concept revolves around creating an audio edit that takes you on a virtual tour of Delhi with sound/word beats from various vendors of different market places in the city. This piece would include the sounds I collected apart from the main theme of 'boli' for example ambience, crowd, meat shop animals ,Street food, bus drivers, Inside an auto sound of engine, Street wedding sounds etc.

FINAL CLIP DESIGN

Final concept

The final idea that appealed to me the most was archiving and creating a visual sound travelogue of the market place and trade culture of Delhi. While the visuals explored a New Delhi's guide to the 'homesick', featuring all the sounds one would experience living in Delhi, The audio would explore the dialects of the trade culture coupled with a fortunately collected piece of sufi songs whose lyrics go delightfully well with the intentions of my project.

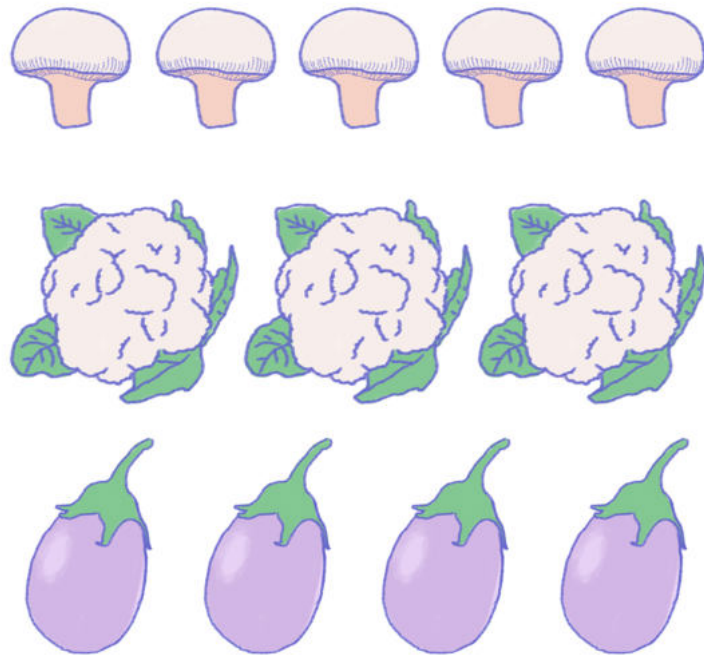
FINAL CLIP DESIGN

Stage 1, Audio Design

CREATING AUDIO CLIP FOR SOUND EXPERIENCE

The audio story starts with the announcement inside Mumbai Rajdhani, (the most popular train joining Delhi and Bombay). We arrive at the railway station amidst the sounds of railway announcements. A brief ride in the auto takes us through the congested lanes with cows and kulfi sellers and the first deal of the day with the fruit seller is made.

FINAL CLIP DESIGN



Further the Thursday market is explored with all its vegetable varieties from broccoli to mushrooms, tomatoes to coriander. After some food search the audio takes you to soul search with the azaan call of Nizamuddin Dargah. The sufis chant a harmonious song , the lyrics of which signal at having a conversation. As the drums pull you into spiritual calls, the software sellers join in drawing a parallel of melodious calls signifying the spiritual world and the material world. The sing song ways of pirated software sellers with the lyrics of the sufi song addressing how technology has now engulfed us felt like the right placement for the collected audios.

The tunnel sounds of the metro transports the audience to Kashmiri gate bus stand, where a stream of conductors yell out destination names in their typical way, summoning the travellers. Inside the buses the foot salesmen sell simple snacks and even small items like socks. Which I felt was of great convenience as many travellers face the need to buy new socks after arriving to the bus stand either because of wear and tear or since they forgot to pack them. Similarly many people come to the travellers waiting in the buses selling small items like water, handkerchief and locks.



From Kashmiri gate we head to Sarojini Nagar market, one of the most popular markets in India, through a shared auto. The atmosphere is built up with the Delhi police announcements about being careful with the rules of the market. We dive into the sales calls right away varying from item to item and item cost to cost, addressing both the madams and the sirs. The callers creatively improvise on the content of their calls with various tones and methods, some use little rhymes to attract attention, some use english to attract city kids.



A few token machine beeps later we are back in the metros with the familiar sounds of Mr and Ms. Metro who now take us to Chandani Chowk, one of the oldest and the biggest wholesale market of India. A conversation with the sales people and some wholesale buyers who then sell the same items in their own shops. As the audience tries to figure out the 'red coloured' item being bargained for we go back to Nizamuddin Sufis singing one of the most famous songs about Lal Shahbaz Qalandar, a Sufi philosopher-poet called Lal (Diamond) after his usual red attire, who worked for the unity of Hinduism and Islam. The audio then fades into the rest of the chatter of everyday life of Delhi.

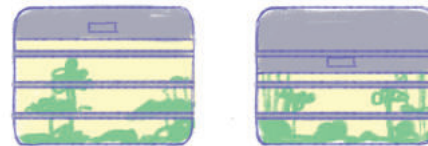
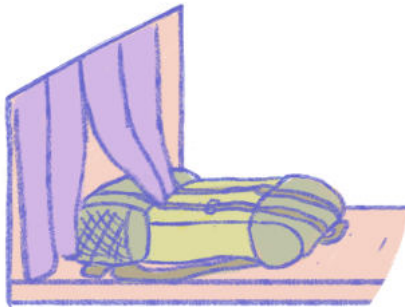
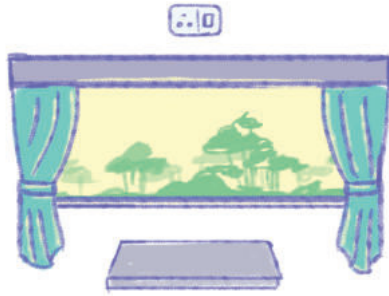
Stage two

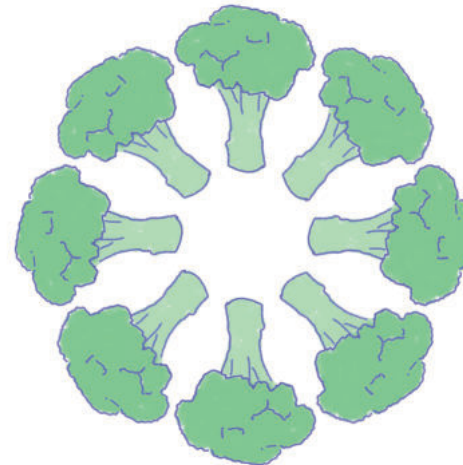
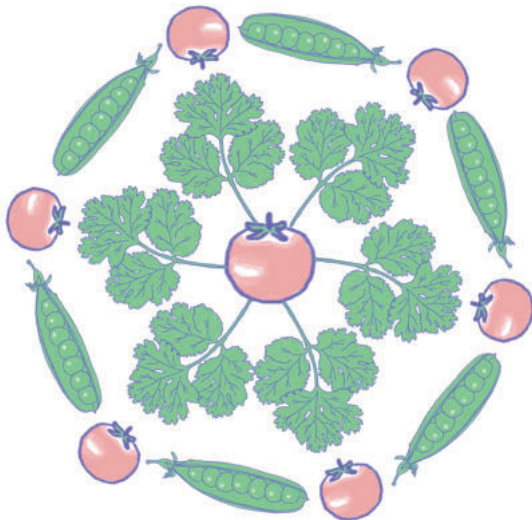
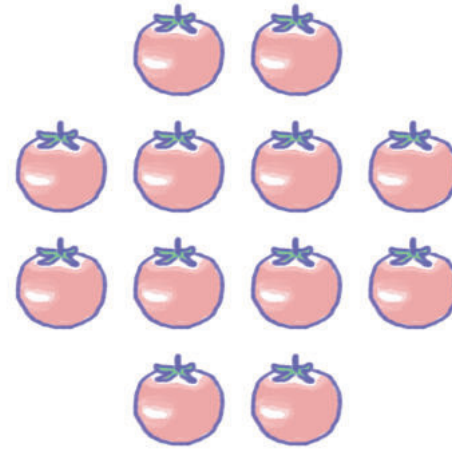
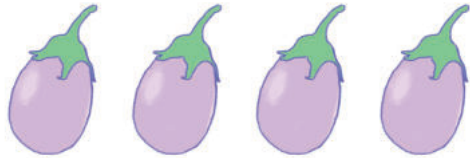
VISUAL EXPLORATIONS

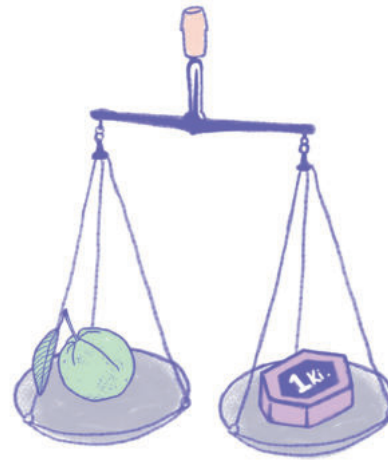
As part of the visual experience I decided to handcraft some illustrated gifs to make the experience visually engaging. Using words and cues from the final clip I created the following illustrations.

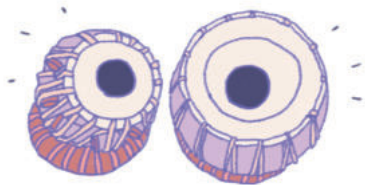
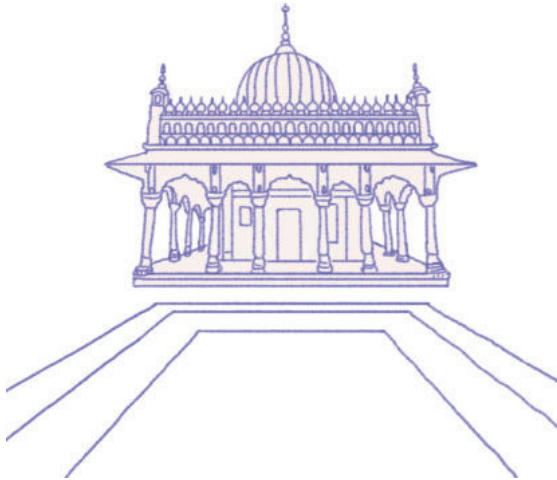
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CONCLUSION

Observations and learnings

As I went through the project I was able to restore my connection with the sounds of Delhi. The sounds that reunited me with my memories of the city. Delhi is unique city of india where one can experience the multiversity of the entire country. With Its some of the biggest markets in Asia, it has managed to converge the entire India into one string of pearls. It's the city where Sikh butchers sell meat next to Muslim butchers, North eastern colonies have 'jaat choupaals'. The major challenge was to create meaningful transitions from one area to another in the audio which semantically highlight a way of life for Delhites.

Unfortunately my project ended on the day of new year's eve. On the first day of new year 2016 Delhi went to a standstill. The roads were empty and vehicle noises down to a low you would only see on national holidays. Because of the Odd Even rule many places experienced a quieter atmosphere which I wasn't able to capture but I wish to record the changed environment in the future to do a comparative study of before and after.

The overall project gave me a broad insight into the history of trade and culture in the capital city. It helped me find familiar sounds and also helped me create a collection of sounds for further use in my films. It also gave me good insights in experiential sound designs and allowed me the freedom to experiment with sound picture relationship which has enriched my design process and film design aesthetics.

Further

I also decided to publish all the sounds collected onto a collaborative portal I intend to create making all the sounds available for anyone to use for their own personal projects as well as contribute to this digital sound bank.

THANK YOU FOR READING
