



# HOME

Don't you still remember  
Khirki, It was full of  
strangers.  
I still remember many of  
them.  
My friend from Saket  
called to say her Dog is  
missing.

Today is the longest day of the  
year.

If you want to picture  
Khirki, picture it as an  
island covered with  
houses.  
Picture the kind of tin  
houses that a little  
girl living in a slum would  
draw.

After you live anywhere  
long enough  
a house,  
an apartment, a nation  
it just seems too small.  
Thats what becomes  
home.

Today is the longest day  
of the year—but anymore,  
every day is.



# Contents

HOME

KHIRKEE

AFRICAN MIGRANTS

THE HOMLESS GIRL "IFFE"

THE OPERATIVE MECHANICS

URBAN MAPPING

VERSIONS OF THE GAME

THE 10 SHORT STORIES

QUESTIONS

ABOUT



# HOME

Gaming as a framework to explore urban thinking.

Gaming can deal with urban issues easily because it is an interactive framework designed to deal with multiple parameters.

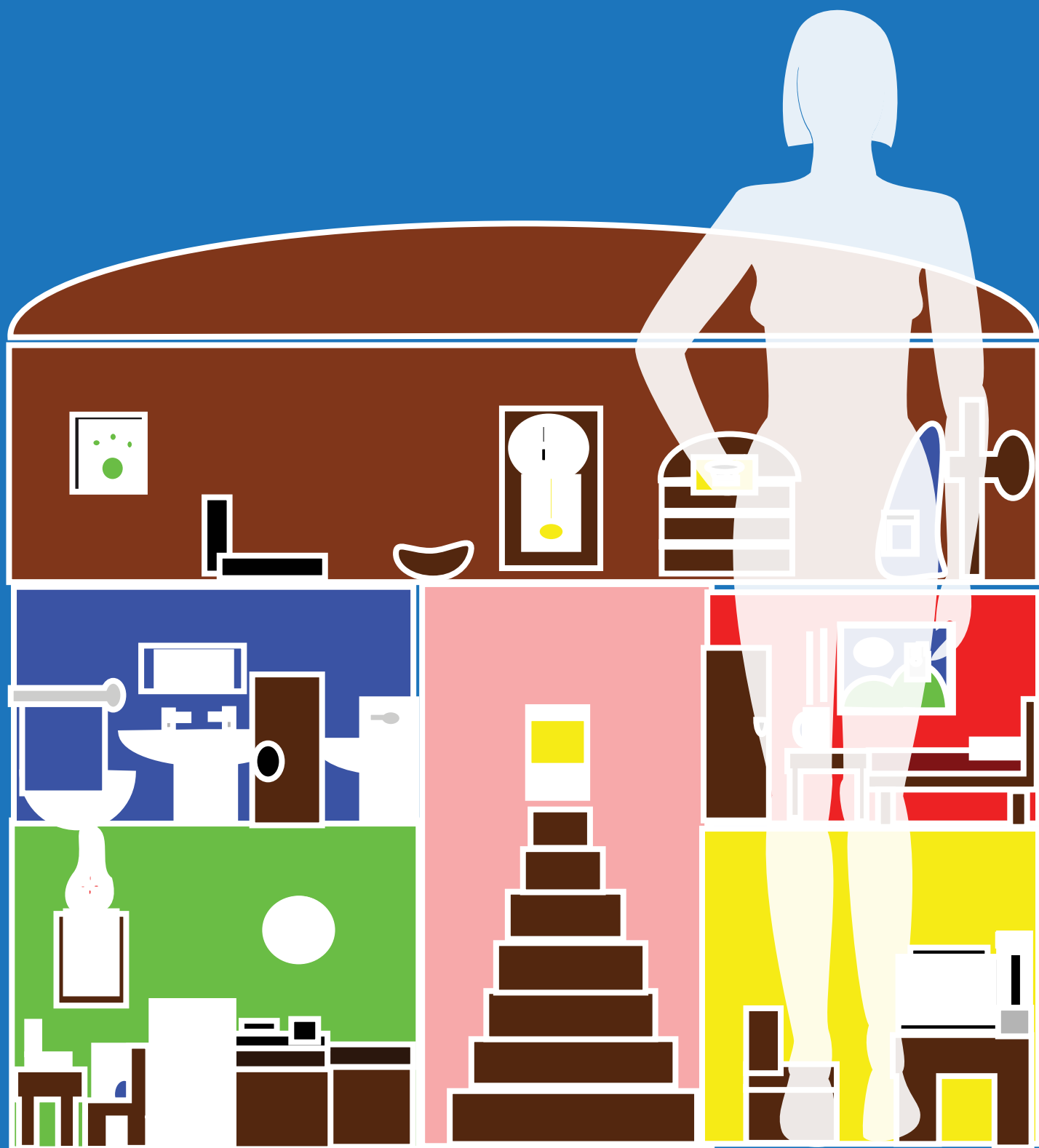
A gaming framework thus becomes a better tool for engaging with the people as it seems to be an inclusive and less intimidating tool for planning of the city realm.

The project deals with the Indian Street realm which is always in a constant flux orchestrated by urban actors, activities on the street, social infrastructure etc. The player has the immersive experience through the act of walking.

Collecting responses of the participants to the scenarios created by the game and analysing them can create newer insights about the way we can think of answers to complex urban systemic issues.







# KHIRKEE

Khirkee Extension's recent claim to fame is through the Somnath Bharti incident. Three Ugandan women were wrongfully accused of indulging into prostitution by the AAP Party Minister. But before we go deeper into the issue of race politics and gender issues; we need to closely look at the spatial layout of Khirkee. In spite of being neighbours - The Saket Mall and the Urban Village of Khirki hate each other. The Mall acts like a magnet which attracts everything important - in contrast to the informal urbanism of the Village. Rather than cultivating a relationship to its immediate surroundings - it conjures an invisible imaginary wall around itself.

The inclusion of Khirkee into the Lal Dori area by the British led to the absence of even basic amenities like sanitation and electricity. The original inhabitants of Khirkee Village were agricultural farmers according to Delhi based historian Sohail Hashmi. Their farms were located across Khirkee village on the other side of the street. The farming activity went on till 1995 after which the lands were acquired by DDA. The farmers who sold their lands to DDA received a handsome compensation and moved out of Khirkee. DDA in turn sold them to private developers. Some of them put their newly found monies to buy property in Gurgaon and Noida. They rented out their houses in Khirkee to anyone. Thus began the first wave of migration.

The first migrants were construction labourers who came here from Bihar and UP and Assam. These migrants found easy work on the large construction sites created by the Mall. The construction of these malls went on for almost 5-7 years. The migration increased in intensity during the construction of the Mall and post that the construction labourers were semi assimilated into the large Mall monster in capacities like watchmen and drivers etc. Newer migrants - women from North East came - they were primarily employed into the hospitality industry. This continues with the inset of migration of International migrants from Africa and other smaller nations of Southeast Asia and Arab Nations.

Some of the migrants are here as students to benefit from the Delhi University system. Other migrants are here for cheap medical treatment. It is not uncommon to find an African Kitchen in the lanes of Khirkee, you can also find Afghan bakeries selling the afghani bread. The migration from Africa and other parts of the world is just increasing. In one simple audio survey done - we found about 17 different languages spoken in the byelanes of Khirkee. Upon interviewing a few Afghans we found out Khirkee is the cheapest accommodation available in the city of Delhi. Afghan refugees get a UN stipend of 400 dollars per month. In this scale of remuneration one can only find accommodation in Khirkee Extension.





# AFRICAN MIGRANTS

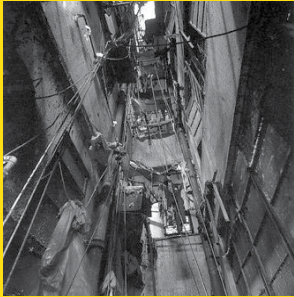
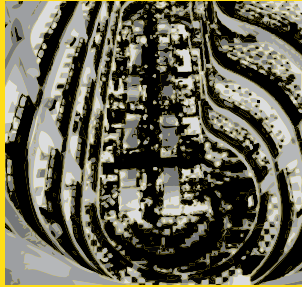
It is not uncommon to find Africans being heckled on the streets. The local slang for a person with dark skin is "Hapshi". Hapshi in hindi for People of Ethiopian origin. The term is a derivative of the Ethiopian merchants who came to trade in the Mughal courts. Kids from the ages of 9-16 seem to be the worst offenders

The local slang for a person with dark skin is "Hapshi". Hapshi in hindi for People of Ethiopian origin.

The friction between the migrants and the locals occurs due to the cultural differences. Most of them get branded as drug dealers. All women of African descent get easily branded as sex workers. The lack of communication amplifies the problem - till it reaches a conflict level of sorts. This is what happened in the Somnath Bharti incident - in a spate of night moral policing - the locals picked up 3 Ugandan women in the night and charged them of engaging into prostitution.

Migration is aspirational. Migrants from all across the world arrive in India for educational purposes citing the lack of affordable education. India also offers some of the best quality health care provisions at affordable rates. Some of them visit for durations of 9 months to 2 years for medical treatment in the hospitals located on Press Enclave road. Khirkee looks at women on its streets with the same masculine gaze that is prevalent in any Indian small city. The gaze of consumption and suspicion. Women of foreign origin on the streets are often labelled as prostitutes.

This prolonged stay opens them up to the dealing with Indian people and culture. The cheapest accommodation in Delhi can be found Khirkee.



# THE HOMELESS GIRL "IFFE"

The game has been built mainly around the central character "Iffe" through whose lens we navigate the game.

As a part of the documentation and mapping exercise - we conducted several interviews with the African migrants who live on this street. The character of Iffe is modelled on a true interview conducted with a girl who lives down the street in Khirkee extension near the Afghan bakery. The girl is a second generation migrant from Uganda. She had come to India in 2003 with her father. She has no idea about her mother as her father never speaks about her. She has schooled in India in a Hindi Medium School and is fluent with Indian Culture. The game uses her perspective to tell the story of racism and isolation.

"Iffe lived in Khirki extension - in the Yellow Dori area. The Yellow Dori area is the marked neighbourhood of second generation African migrants. Her father came to India in 2003 for work and stayed back. She has lived in Khirki all her life and speaks in Hindi and has been schooled here.

She loved collecting patches of Indian textiles since childhood. She started putting them together and started making her own outfits. She and her boy friend Kabir ran a small fashion Boutique. Kabir was a friend from design school. Together they set up a small design store in Khirki. This was in the good times when there was a great demand for the neo- african prints.

This was before it all happened in 2027. The race riots changed everything. A group of Patriot Indians burnt 3 women alive in a car among a spate of randomly targeting first generation migrant kids. Retaliations from the Indian-Africans soon followed. Days of curfew followed by months of no business. Then the government intervened. She hadn't married Kabir and everyone without an Indian looking face were forcibly removed from their houses and put into a questioning camp. It was hailed as a mass purification exercise by the patriots. The Ministry for Preservation of Indian Culture - Department of Race Relations declared a sanitising program. It was hailed as a mass purification exercise by the patriots. The Ministry for Preservation of Indian Culture - Department of Race Relations declared a sanitising program. She frequently goes to the Embassy to argue her case. The Ministry does not want to allow anyone to come back. It has been 3 years since she was deported back. Her brother who is just 14 is starting to forget what Home was."



# IFFE



Her father came to India in 2003 for work and stayed back. She has lived in Khirki all her life and speaks in Hindi and has been schooled here.

Iffe lived in Khirki extension - in the Yellow Dori area. The Yellow Dori area is the marked neighbourhood of second generation African



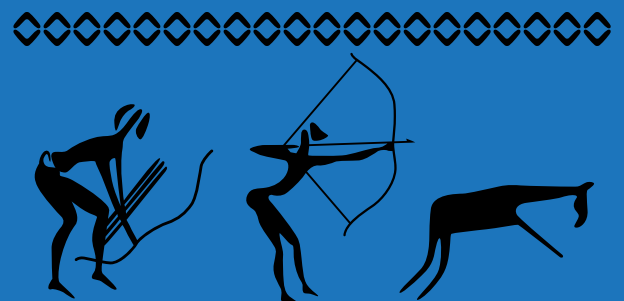
Kabir was a friend from design school. Together they set up a small design store in Khirki.

This was in the good times when there was a great demand for the neo- african prints.

This was before it all happened in 2027.

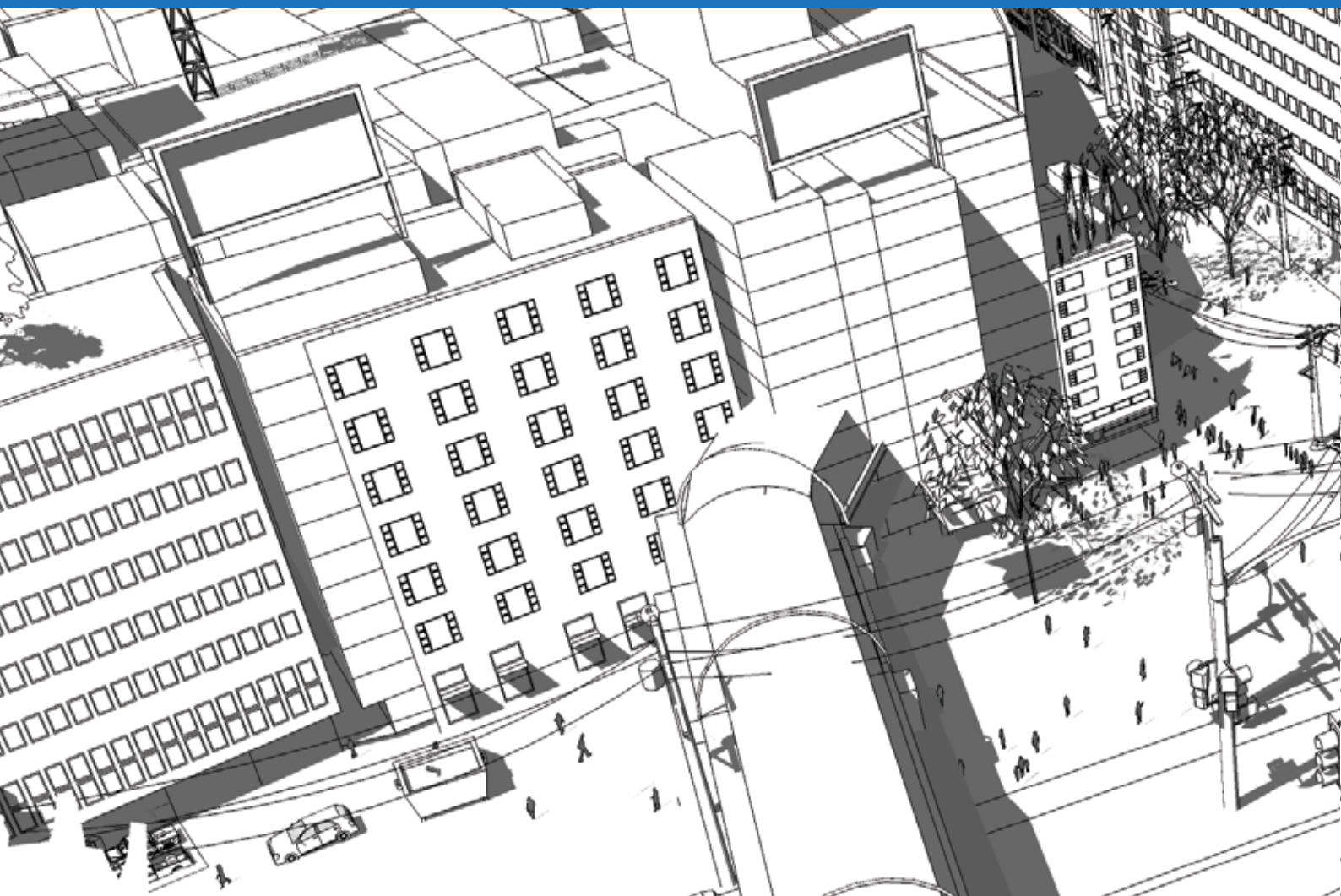


She loved collecting patches of Indian textiles since childhood. She started putting them together and started making her own outfits. She and her boy friend Kabir ran a small fashion Boutique.



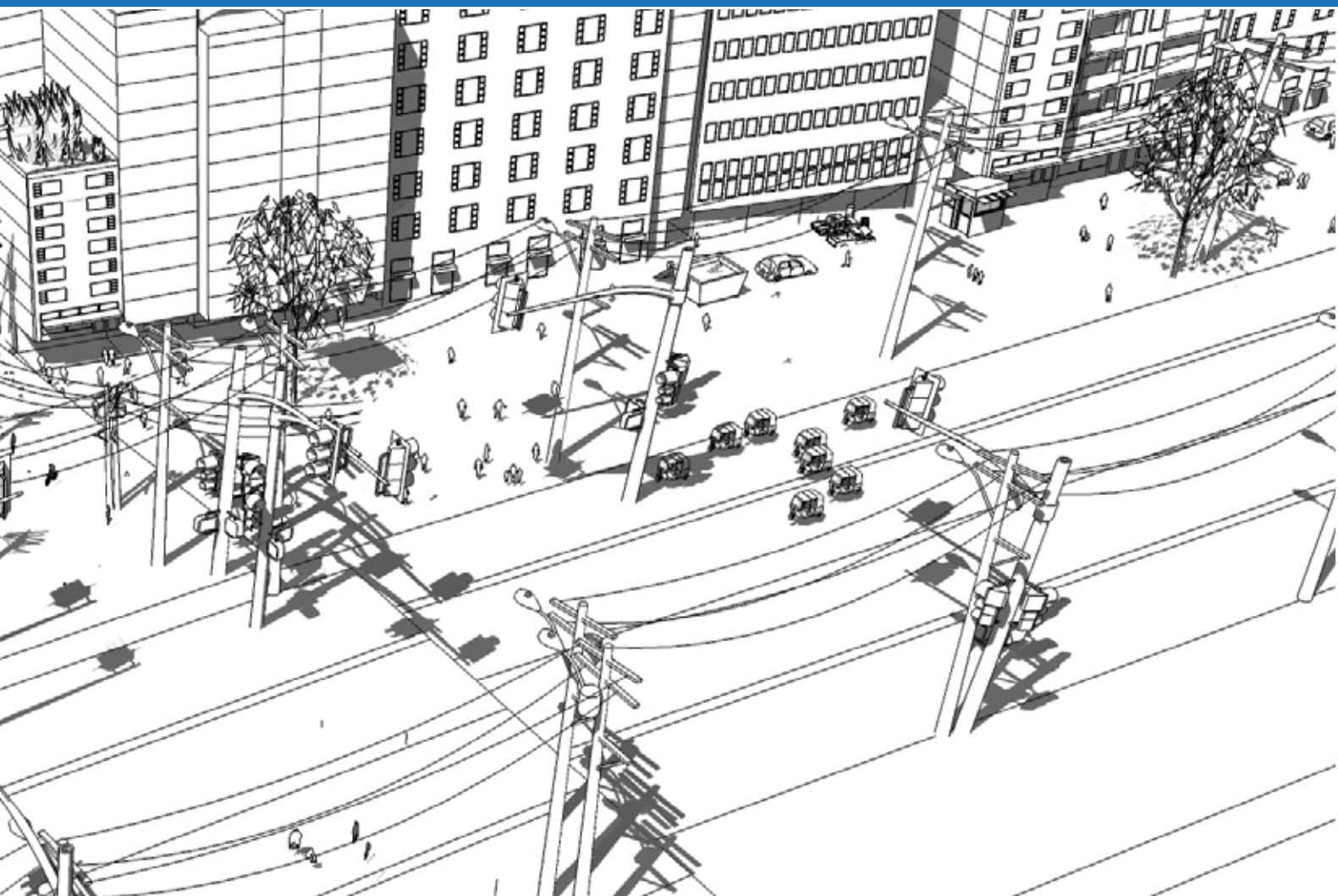
# THE OPERATIVE MECHANICS

The player is immersed in the story of the girl at the initiation of the game play. We begin our game play directly in the dreams of Iffe. The story unfolds such that Iffe has to be deported back to her country of origin Senegal - a country which she has never seen. Her brother Henri is starting to forget Home. The game starts around the moment when Iffe is trying to close her eyes and remember what Khirkee HOME is ? The game unfold in the dreams of Iffe. The unfinished red gloomy graphics of the game create



# Moving in the Game.

The game uses walking as a main means of navigation. Walking/wandering are used as replacements to the dice. Information in the form of text and images work with the landscape of the game to create a fragmented narrative . The only action the player can perform apart from walking in the act of jumping. The slow pace of wandering in the game space creates a very delusional and dreamy





# VERSIONS OF THE GAME

## Version 001

The project was initiated as a design intervention app. The app would allow the users to add layers of information on the image of the street. This would be done by pre programming functions and visual ideas like light poles and benches into the selectable tools of the app.

The user then can see a hyper real imagination of that part of the city with the added infrastructure. This can pass the authorship and the ownership of the project the creator of the image. This increases the sense of ownership of the community. However because this platform was constructed in a planar flat environment, it allowed for only for limited interactivity.

PLAY  
GAME

## SELECT SCENARIO



THE SHIT-DATE  
GAME



# VERSIONS OF THE GAME

## Version 002

The second version of the game is more spatial with a 2d side scroller. This version has a playable landscape of the game based on the context of a generic Indian street. The player would have to navigate the landscape of the game in a linear manner having to deal with all the parameters of the game. The parameters would be physical like road narrowing, it could be passing or opposing hurdles and obstacles etc. The mechanic of the game is based on a central character who wanders through the landscape of the game.

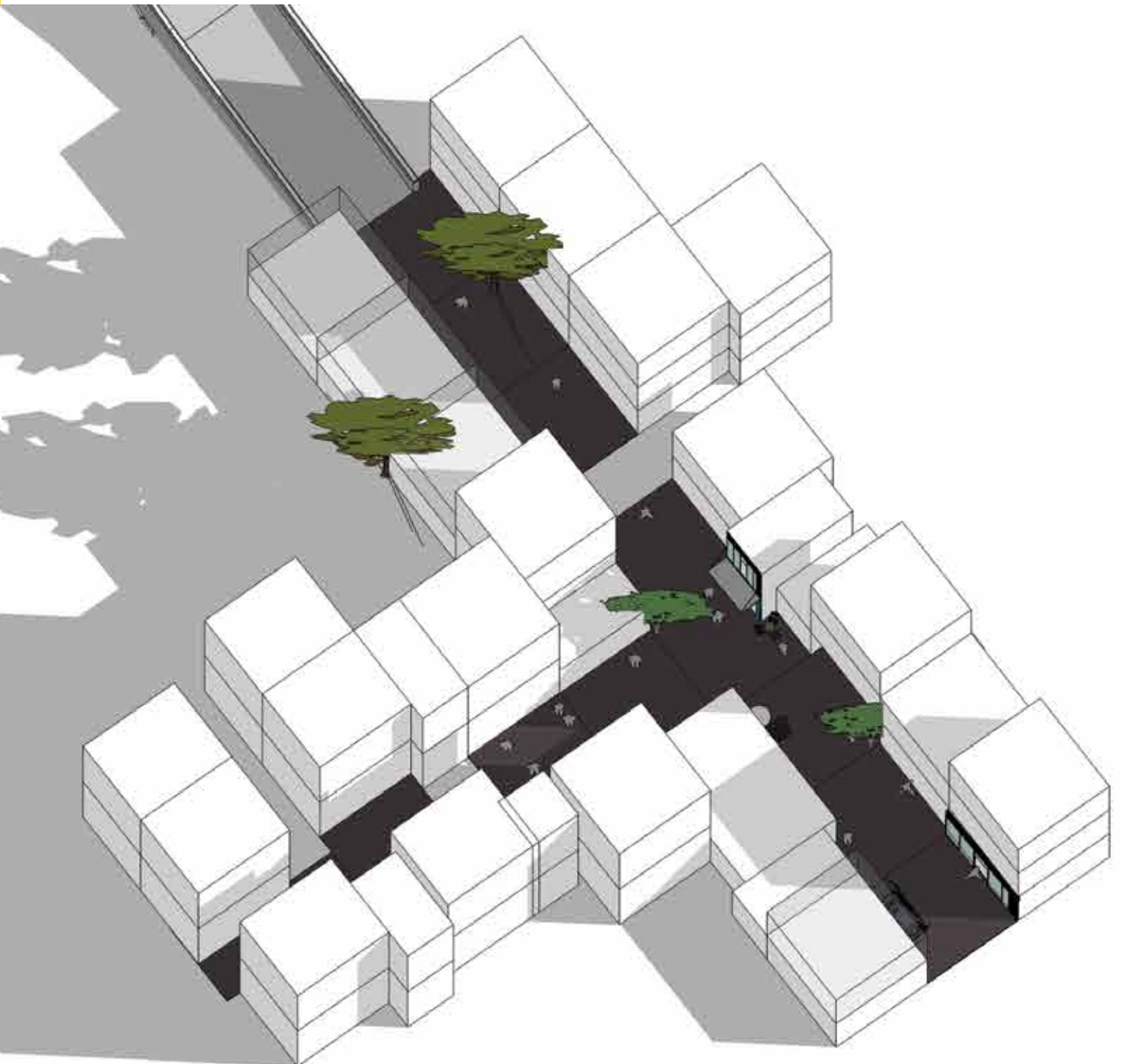
The operative logic would be to finish a certain task assigned to him/her. But since this task deals directly with a urban issue, completing the task puts him/her in a state of conflict.

The Heckler's Run : One of the task of the pre-designed roleplaying character was that he/she was queer and she has to pass through the narrow streets getting heckled at his/her manners and his/her dressing sense. This heckling would come from characters in the narrow streets as well as from the windows above.

The Shit Date Game: The main character that you play as is a guy who has to meet his girl friend in the mall for a date. As the main character you start wandering in the Khirkee Village side - and you have to cross over from this side to the other side to actually find her. Throughout this process to constantly keep on continuing - you have to take a crap/shit somewhere in the landscape of the game while wandering through it. The game hence becomes a mechanism to map and analyse behaviour by the players. Some of the players chose to crap behind trees and female players chose to do in a separate alley and then do it. The player who engages with the game had to do this action if he/she wants to move ahead in the format of the game.

Projected Use of the Medium : As a derivative of maps. As a system that collates and tries to read cognitive and natural instinctive decision making patterns in urban areas. The system can be used to simulate a certain aspect of





# THE 10 SHORT STORIES EMPLOYED IN THE LANDSCAPE OF THE GAME

The Stories embedded into the landscape of the game deal with the projected realities. They are unfold and open up based on the players level of interaction with the environment of the game. The stories are as follows

## 001 The Mall that Ate Itself

The Mall began with hope and by propagating economic revival by creation of jobs and services. Based on this fallacy it was allowed to be built - to exist. It has sadly done exactly the opposite. "The Mall that Ate Itself" is a text that tries to deal with the promise of the built environment.

## 002 The Little Africa Street

The Little Africa Street is a real space in the playable landscape of the game. It is an african neighbourhood formed by the intensifying of migration.

## 003 The Red Day

The Red Day is the story of the day the riots happened in The Little Africa Street in Khirkee. It is a story of how a simple fight between 2 groups of street vendors turns to burn an entire neighbourhood.

## 004 Debt Levels

This text deals with capitalist economic model that has now collapsed and holding land investments in the city is no longer considered to be important. The city is now filled with random pieces of devalued land in prime locations leading to massive public debts for prominent landowners.

## 005 Do you remember ?

Don't you remember we used to make out in that parking lot in the basement of the mall. They never liked us on the streets. How could they have ever allowed us to kiss. "Do you remember ?" is a text based on the spaces Iffe and her friends inhabit to build their teenage worlds.

## 006 Of Love and Desire

This text deals with the Iffe's separation with her boyfriend. It also tries to deal with an interracial relationship and the gaze of the society towards it.

## 007 Of Conversations One

Of Conversations is a text that is made up of excerpts of conversations of Iffe with her neighbours, friends and people living in Khirkee.

## 008 Of Conversations Two

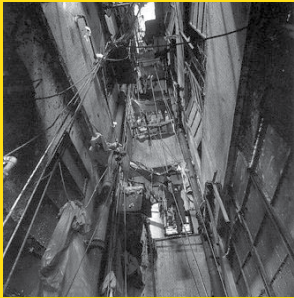
Of Conversations is a text that is made up of excerpts of conversations of Iffe with her neighbours, friends and people living in Khirkee.

## 009 Khirkee 2027

Khirkee 2027 is a text that lays out the way Khirkee is laid out in the playable landscape of the game. It projects various urban scenarios in the environment of the game based on extrapolations of current demographic data and mappings of density and housing.

## 010 Of Her

"Of Her" is a first person narrative about spatial experiences of Iffe - the central character of the game.





# Questions that the Project tried to deal with.

## COMMUNITY ART AND INTERACTION

When designers intervene in any community project they project ideas with using aids such as drawings. The solutions treat user participation only as a means to validate preconceived design intentions. The drawings generated for such a process fail to acknowledge the complex dynamics and un-mappable factors like weddings, festivals, use of rickshaws etc. This demands for the deployment of interactive framework like gaming through which user decision patterns and social behaviour can be understood.

## DREAMS OF IFFE

The project becomes a surreal environment generator for Iffe. It becomes a generator of stories based on the navigation pattern chosen by the user. The landscape of the game is filled with people and objects of Iffe's memories. These are embedded in various ways into the playable field of the game. They almost act as a series of cues offered by Iffe to you to put the whole puzzle together. Some of them are very easily seen. Some others have to be navigated and found out.

While wandering into the game - Iffe talks to you. She starts giving you pieces of information, random letters and bits of conversations - all of which clubbed with the dispersed objects in the landscape. The game then starts working with you to piece the idea of her home together - along with these multiple strands of information that are opened up to the player.

## FREEZING ACTIONS IN TIME AND SPACE

The game has a tool that has been built into the interface of the game - this tool allows for players to input their responses according to their location in the field of the game. This allows for text as a player's response to be floated in the air forever. When the player has finished playing the responses stay in the game space. The next player will always see the responses by the earlier player's piece of input text floating at the same point the entry was made. This allowed for the population of the game space with people's personal responses and narratives. This also tied in with an earlier version of this idea which dealt with the idea of the players being in perpetual loop - the loop would be generated by the player's spatial wandering path generated by his gameplay. This allows for a new world to be built within the world already existing - by the additions of text as responses and mechanisms of communicating. The idea of keeping the modification as a permanent act - was also decided from the fact that the player had to be a very conscious inhibitor of the and that his presence itself is a part of the problem.

This is a mechanism that allows for back end data collection of mapping the paths of the people who play the game. The maps and the text input mechanism are always building up in the backend of the game. This allows for user thinking and wandering paths to be layered and understood. There is a permanent Modification of the Game by the player through the act of gameplay.

## NARRATIVE

The game has been programmed with Iffe's narrative. It follows you in the game. It is programmed according to your spatial navigation. The narrative has spatial cues and markers to lead the player deeper into the realms of her memories.

# HOME



PLAY

# URBAN MAPPING

The landscape of the game is based on the mapping of the precincts of Khirkee. The playable scape revolves mainly around a few streets - where all the narratives of the gameplay have been sited. The time frame of the gameplay has been set in 2027 and hence there have been modifications to the existing heights of many buildings based on a projected density. Some of the references for the modelling of this new environment are the understanding of the spatial configurations of the Kowloon city, graphic novel frames of Akira and films like Take on Kreet. Conventional systems of mapping and documenting cities and neighbourhoods fail to capture the liveness of an urban environment. The potential of a gaming framework allows for the use of sounds and narrative to be embedded into the landscape - this creates





# VERSIONS OF THE GAME

## Version 003

Home - the game is the a real world environment modelled on the Urban Village of Khirkee in Delhi,India.The spatial scenarios are the drivers of the narrative and situations in the game.

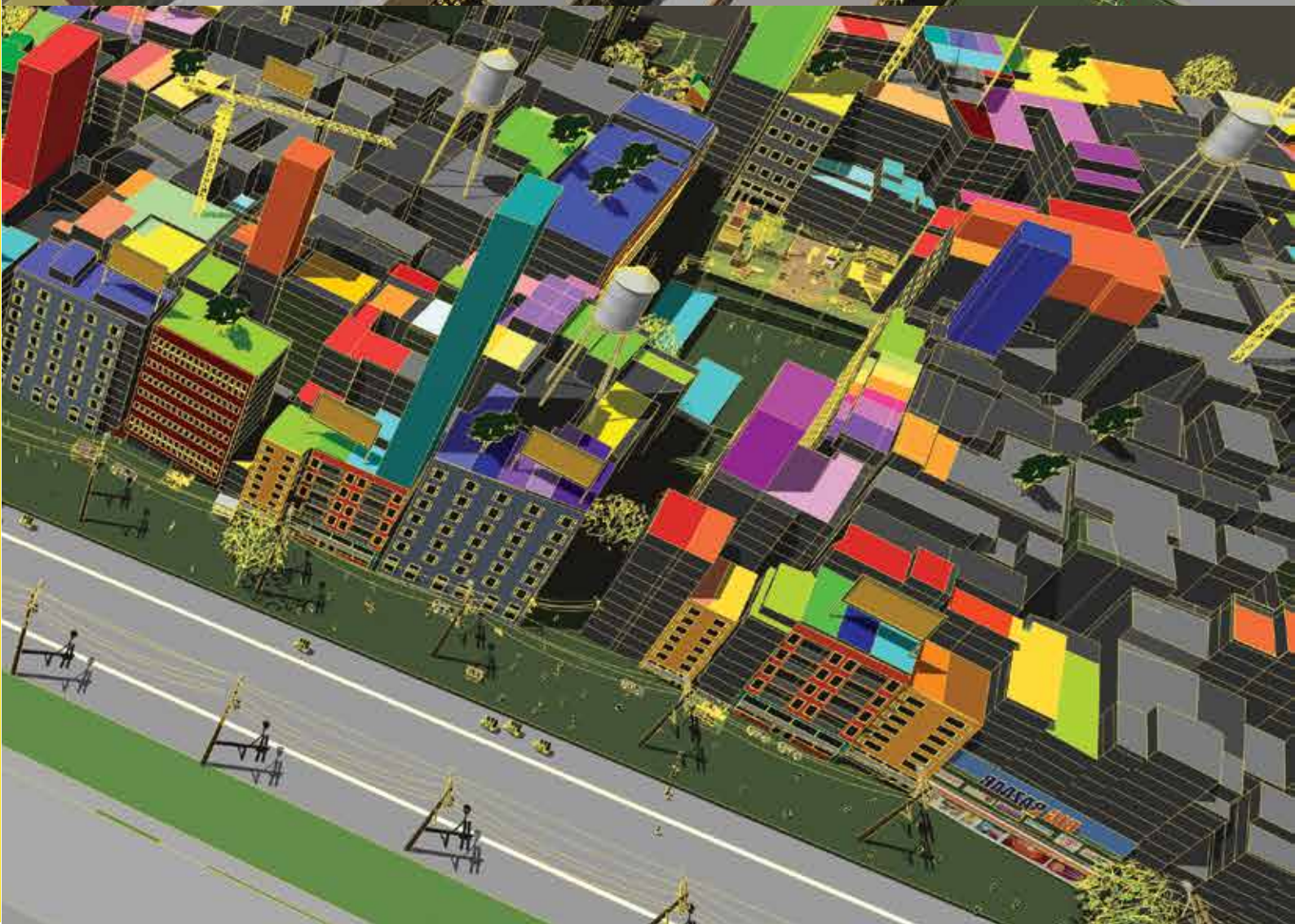
Wherever you live in a country or city and neighbourhood long enough - it becomes home. The project works with the notion of how we define our home as.

This is the last and the most evolved version of the game so far went beyond a few of the direct questions that a system like gaming could investigate into by the act of participation. This version also tries to directly deal with issues like race and identity. There is pent up communal tension between the Indian migrants and the African migrants. This is very visible in the way both the communities treat each other. The name calling and heckling had led to the visible simmering of the tension. It was not uncommon for me to find young jat kids who roamed through the street in the afternoon and evenings after school, calling the African people names like "Hapshi and Negro/Kaale".

This version of the game actually was fully formalised into a playable version after the brief interaction with Iffe - the central character of the game. The game deals with her idea of home - which for her is Khirkee.

Use of the Medium : The possibility of storytelling through the use of sound and visuals - prose has been used almost like the cinematic medium. The infused interactivity makes the space of the project a navigable book that tells you the story that you are looking for based on your interaction pattern with the logic of the game.







# About

This document is only a draft and is incomplete. It is still in the process of being finished. The citations and references are being examined and upon completion shall be updated in the same.

# Credits

Thanks to Khoj for supporting the project. Thanks to all the lovely people at Khoj including Promona, Sitara, Pooja, Arun, Manoj, Suresh and the rest. Thanks to all my fellow artists - Mohini, Shraddha, Krishnaarjun and Zuleikha and to Prayas Abinav.



# VINIT NIKUMBH

After you live anywhere long enough — a house, an apartment, a nation — it just seems too small. That's what becomes home. Home as a game works around these ideas of displacement, racism and a sense of communal isolation.

Our story opens in 2027, when pink, red and beige dreams capture Khirki. If you want to picture Khirki in 2027, picture it as an island covered with houses.

Picture the kind of tin houses that a little girl living in a slum would draw — with a forest of chimneys, a mountain range of different roof-lines. And picture the malls as a machine which ate itself.

We start with the story of Iffe. She is a second generation African - Indian who came to India when she was 3. After the race riots she has now been deported back to Senegal, a country she knows nothing about. She has lived in India for more than 24 years. The Ministry for Preservation of Indian Culture - Department of Race Relations does not want to allow anyone to come back. It has been 3 years since she was deported. Her brother who is just 14 is starting to forget what Home is.