"Hearing Images, Seeing Sounds": Disturbance as Pedagogy

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Abstract

This article is an ethnographic account of a course I designed and taught in my university to mostly non-humanities, engineering and science undergraduate students from diverse backgrounds. In it, I consider the possibility of a pedagogical approach to teach what it means to construct a field in anthropological terms during a classroom based teaching module. I suggest that one can approach the construction of a field within the classroom by using disturbance as a pedagogical tool. Drawing from Anna Tsing's formulation of "disturbance as an analytical tool" I demonstrate how we can construct a field pedagogically by disturbing the certitude of the known and by reimagining the modes of seeing and hearing the familiar. The ethnographic elucidation of this paper is essentially work produced from this class – images created from within the university, influenced by a question asked by students and accompanying soundscapes produced by students' themselves – which demonstrates the possibility of constructing a field by, in a sense, hearing images and seeing sounds.

Keywords: Disturbance, Field, Image, Soundscapes, Anthropological Pedagogy.

Introduction: Disrupting the Familiar

Anthropology in its forays into ever new terrains of inquiry, whether of the human and the non-human (Barad 2003, Bennett 2010), the material and the symbolic (Kohn 2013), the known versus the unknown, the atmospheric and the earthly (Povinelli 2016, Tsing 2017) has constantly carved methodological innovations to enable these tropes of inquiry. More often than not, these methodological interventions, in response to the specificity of a context creates a conceptual frame that not only helps understand the context with depth and clarity but also brings to light a possibility of thinking about the seemingly known and the familiar in absolutely unexpected and novel ways. It is now well acknowledged how a training in the discipline of anthropology allows us to recognize the extraordinary in the everyday (Stewart 2007), the special in the mundane and the latent in the manifest (Rosaldo 1989). However, in what ways can the goal of anthropology aiding the revelation of the known and the familiar be imagined pedagogically within the classroom? As practitioners of the discipline, we may have had the privilege of having done fieldwork and creating access to a field (Goswami 2007, 2016) thereby enabling us to understand the contours and dilemmas of constructing a field.[1] But can we teach the art of constructing a field while being confined to a university classroom within a teaching semester? How can we pedagogically approach the fundamental anthropological project of 'noticing' all that is special around us? Noticing for the intricacies and details that may be hidden in plain sight? This paper, in presenting a case study of a taught course, argues that the realm of constructing a field in the anthropological sense can be pursued if one breaks the certainty of the known by using disturbance or disruption as a pedagogical tool.

Anna Tsing's (2015) emphasis on a reinvigorated "art of noticing" in tracing linkages of the capital complex, ecological degradation and economic precarity, through the pursuit of an elusive fungi, presents the concept of "disturbance" as an analytical tool to think through conditions of instability and change. Thinking about the changing dynamics of ecological landscapes along both humanist and non-human interventions, Tsing speaks about how "disturbance opens the terrain for transformative encounters, making new landscape assemblages possible" (Tsing 2015: 160). Working with multiple temporal registers of varying conditions that demonstrate how the elusive fungi – the matsutake mushroom, grows and thrives in disrupted eco-systems, Tsing argues how we need to think of human survival against the backdrop of human created conditions of insecurity and precarity and how the critique of capitalism is not necessarily its negation but the recognition of a "patchiness" – "a mosaic of open-ended assemblages of entangled ways of life, with each further opening into a mosaic of temporal rhythms and spatial arcs" (Tsing 2015 :4). Disturbance as an "analytical tool" then, argues Tsing "requires awareness of the observer's perspective – just as the best tools in social theory. Deciding what counts as disturbance is always a matter of point of view" (Tsing 2015: 161). Thinking along Tsing's proposition, this

paper in recollecting and reflecting back on an undergraduate taught course, contends that the art of noticing and unearthing what lies hidden beneath the veneer of unseen connections can be pedagogically addressed by disturbing the status quo of the seen and the visible. This paper further argues that these disturbances or dissonances can be created by reimagining the modes of looking and hearing all that is around us.

The pedagogical experiment I draw upon to demonstrate this is a course titled "Hearing Images, Seeing Sounds" that I designed and taught to a mixed cohort of science, engineering and a few humanities and social science students at Shiv Nadar University. Although not officially coded as an anthropology course, the intent and rationale of it was absolutely anthropological.[2] The explicit aim of the course was to carve an understanding of how one "writes the world" or creates a "world of representation" from a context that one carefully builds and crafts – the notion of a field – whether it be from a space that one occupies and is familiar with or the never seen and heard empirical location out there. In this course we worked with the former – the physical familiar space of the university itself. This choice was not for any other reason but the constraints of this course being a short teaching module where one could not have taken time out to visit any other locations or spaces. Working within the larger university landscape, both social and physical, was a way for me to extend the dialogical space outside the physical confines of a classroom. Using images and sounds was a way of enabling distinct new imaginaries of seeing and hearing, while writing and creating a representative register from this world of the familiar. Images, in my experience, have always animated a classroom and in this case since students created images of spaces familiar to everyone, the discussion that it produced was rather engaging and intimate. Once students brought images back to the classroom, the act of seeing the same image as seen by others, opens up the image to diverse trajectories. The patchiness (in the way Tsing suggests) of what the image contains increases and that pushes the observer to re-imagine what they had observed in the first place. Sometimes that led to creating another set of images from the first image and so forth. The course thus engaged in this implicit anthropological endeavour of writing the world, albeit through images and sounds by disturbing the terms of the known and in turn constructing a field out of the familiar for their own modes of inquiry. While images can be one register of making meaning, this is extended by combining images with sound – recorded live or downloaded, made using any device or even music, which worked towards adding a very specific and unique dimension of seeing and reading these images. It was as if suddenly the images were speaking or there was a different sensorial connection with the image. The soundscapes complementing the images inflected the viewing of the images further in significant ways and aided the process of knowing and thinking about the research questions that students chose to work with. Work in this class thus entailed students being interlocutors, literally as observers speaking in between their own contexts and how they choose to look and hear their contexts anew. Dissonance as a matter of design enabled this process of re-seeing and re-hearing all that was familiar around them. This paper, as an ethnographic elaboration of this process of disruption, is an invitation for readers to access this process.

Theoretical Departure

The pedagogical methods adopted in this course could be construed as a multi-media sensorial teaching approach, although I would be cautious to use broad strokes to brand it as that. Most of my students were accessing an anthropology/sociology[3] oriented course for the first time while some of them were doing a social science course itself for the first time. Shiv Nadar University, is an inter-disciplinary research focused university with a commitment to research oriented work not only by faculty but also by students. This informs the pedagogy of taught courses as well. Given this impetus, we as faculty work on designing courses which are inter-disciplinary and Core Common Curriculum (CCC) courses are specifically meant for this purpose. The students who took my CCC course, which was optional, were from the university itself, mostly pursuing Science and Engineering disciplines with a few exceptions and all of them had very diverse social and cultural backgrounds being from regions across the country. Given this cohort of students, I chose not to discuss the question of the sensorium or what could be termed sensorial or mixed media ethnography since I was only beginning a prefatory conversation on ethnography and what it entails. For me, introducing the basic fundamentals of the discipline to a set of students who may or may not take up anthropology was a challenge and yet very exciting. It is for these reasons that I focused more on the pedagogic approach of disturbing the realm of the familiar by using images and sounds to provoke a realm of questioning. This was done with two goals in mind. One, to break the fixity and sometimes the monotony of writing. Second, to use this practice oriented method to talk about how disciplines like anthropology/sociology work with a method called ethnography in working out their objects of inquiry. In doing so, subsequent discussions on constructing a 'field' as an integral part of doing ethnography and how what we think we know is not that straightforward but is processual, became evident. In laying out the history of sensory ethnography, Karen Nakamura (2013) proposes that "Although mere words may have limitations, the emotions and images inspired by them do not" (Nakamura 2013: 134). My pursuit in this course,

in a similar vein, was to enable the articulation of what images may 'speak' to us of, or what one may 'see' in a soundscape, and arrive at a discursive understanding of the field by juxtaposing the disruption between the two.

However, in writing about this course retrospectively, in the form of this paper, I realise how the approaches adopted here could add to discussions on the use of sensorium within the making of ethnography or be seen as an illustration of a mixed media approach. Anthropology has certainly realised the limits of relying on the predominance of the written word to create a register of the ethnographic. This course has the potential to add to this discussion on how the senses are premised in the production of ethnography (Stoller 1989); move towards realizing how one can write ethnography by being a "sensory apprentice" (Pink 2009); think about the body as a corporeal image (MacDougall 2005); consider what it may mean to visualize theory (Castaing-Taylor 1994, Grimshaw 2001); or reflect on what it means to work out theory itself in pictures and images (Mithcell 1994). Questions of which constitutes olfactory (Seremetakis 1994), aural (Bull and Back 2003) and/or auditory cultures (Pinch and Bijsterveld 2004) could also have been a mode to analyse the notion of sound or smell speaking out from an image, or how sound captures the unspoken of an image. In recollecting the varied approaches of this course, I do think along and think with some of these arguments, but the larger objective of this paper is to demonstrate the specific pedagogical value of these approaches rather than substantiate it as a mixed media approach or as a work on sensory ethnography. Instead, I use this backdrop as a theoretical departure and argue that introducing a component of the sensorial is a valuable pedagogical technique to allow those new to the discipline of anthropology to carve an imagination of what constitutes a field.

Pedagogical Frames: Breaking Certitudes

In this section I lay out the broad pedagogical frames adopted for the course and the ways in which we set the contours of crafting a field out of the familiar by disrupting the seen and the heard. The focus here is not necessarily on how one creates a field, which has been dealt with at length in anthropology, but the pedagogical possibility of working out a way of seeing and hearing the familiar anew. Kim Fortun (2009) in a somewhat candid reflection on teaching research design within the confines of an anthropology classroom, emphasises the significance of joking and play to revitalise the research endeavor or the process of figuring out the close at hand, which often may be lost in the din and clamour of looking for the particularly significant and seemingly important. Fortun says, "Research design always, inevitably, is an anxious endeavor. Joking along the way, about the process, about oneself, about the world in which research happens and, one hopes, makes a difference, is important" (Fortun 2009:180). Anxiety of stepping into an experimental pedagogic space was true of this course, not only for my students but for me as well. I had in fact made this explicitly clear to all my students, how in this class we will figure out a way, collectively and with consensus, to think about what the discipline of anthropology/sociology allows us to work with; viz. a way of imbibing the skill or art of noticing the special in the ordinary, the significant in the mundane and how that can help answer larger questions that are important to be addressed and questioned. "Ethnographic eyes and ears" concurs Fortun, "have been as vital in the classroom as in the "field"" (Fortun 2009:180). In this course, training to not turn a blind eye to everything around one's self was the focus, and the possibility of doing that emerged when we decided to work with questions each of us were interested in asking. The various experimental approaches adopted in the course were of course complemented with a discussion of a few concepts, crucial to lay the grounds of what it means to think through images and work with the realm of the visual and the aural conceptually. We therefore discussed the likes of Berger (1972), Mitchell (1994), Barthes (1977, 1981) and Debord (1983). Discussing these readings in class was meant to frame an understanding of the politics of the visual analytic (Barthes), and how the visual is implicitly tied to the verbal (Mitchell), while realizing how the act of creating a spectacle (Debord), destabilises the relationship between seeing and knowing (Berger). In the sub-sections below I lay out the approaches adopted to build up to students creating images and sounds from their distinct chosen field sites

Questioning as a frame

Conversations in this class began with a non-descript and innocuous set of questions. In my first class with an eager group of mostly science, engineering and few humanities students, I asked what they would like to know more about or "find out" generally, and how would they proceed with finding this out if it was posed as a research question. I asked – what would you like to know and in order to know what should you ask? The responses in the class ranged from inquisitiveness about how artificial intelligence functions to questions like why are a few things more important than others, why do we feel, why do grades matter and so on. While I did begin by asking what they would like to know I consciously flipped the process of asking questions and persuaded students to think about whether one could ask questions of what one already knew? For instance, I asked if they knew where they were when they were five years old, who was their best friend's mother, what

colour do they like or what taste are they inclined toward? In placing these questions, the immediate response was in the affirmative. They said they knew answers to these questions. However, in probing further, one realized that the basis of this knowing varied and one could not lay claims to a certitude of how they knew what they did. Asking questions of what one presumably knows or has seen, smelt, heard, tasted and experienced, the class conferred was absolutely possible but at the same time they agreed that figuring out the familiar was not as simple as it seemed. Discussing these questions in detail led them, for instance, to realise how the sociality of food and individual taste was determined by religion or caste or how a favourite experience of childhood may have been influenced by ideas of leisure, and how the possibility of leisure was not equally available to all. They finally reckoned with the notion of how most questions of the experiential were a process of the 'social' influencing their choices and actions. Students soon realised it could be stimulating to break the certitude of the known and how researching the realm of the known could be exciting and challenging.

Thus, from childhood to asking seemingly factual questions about the functioning of artificial intelligence, to asking about the experiential, students moved to questioning and discussing their life as a student. They discussed how their student experiences were determined by algorithms in their ability or inability to choose courses, and questioned their status and "identity" as a student vis-à-vis their allotted roll number – which identifies them as a number and subsequently as a student because of this numbering. The everyday lived and the mundane suddenly achieved new meanings through these discussions. It was at this moment that the class arrived at a consensus to work on these larger questions as a framework in order to carve out a research project for themselves. They decided on researching these questions using distinct sites chosen from the university as a field site. We had discussed how, in order to experimentally approach a research question, they should think of a site where they could literally and figuratively find 'answers' to these questions. If that was the motive, what site would they choose? The final set of questions that each group worked with – ambitious in its scope and consciously kept broad– were "what is value?" "what is experience?" "is choice freedom?" and "what is a state of consciousness?" When I taught the course to a different set of students another time, other questions, although similar in intent had come up, like "what is a fact?" "why do we feel?" and even something as broad as "what is knowledge?" Once these questions were decided, the whole class divided themselves into smaller groups of five or six students, with each group working on one question to investigate ethnographically from within the precincts of the university itself or their chosen field site. They would essentially address these questions by creating images and layering those images with sound. The following are some of the other pedagogical techniques I had adopted.

Transect Walk

One of the earliest exercises we did to instil an acute eye for observing one's immediate surrounding beyond the apparent and the manifest, was a "transect walk." "Transect walk," or a community mapping exercise (https://catcomm.org/transect-walk/, Rojas, Nomedji and West 2021) is often used by development practitioners to complement physical maps with local and lived conditions of these spaces. While their rationale is specific, I had borrowed this exercise to instil a sense of how the mundane, seemingly dreary surroundings that one occupies and moves around in everyday, could in fact hold sights and sounds that often go unnoticed and unacknowledged. We did these walks as a class during class hours, although everyone was responsible for their own mapping and observations individually. The whole class walked around two to three different routes noticing and writing what they saw while walking or choosing to write after a walk was over.

Following the walks we undertook two specific kinds of writing exercise. First, students simply wrote an account of what they saw. Specific instruction were to write down and literally list what they saw, an exercise titled "observation narrative." This exercise done as a collective was interesting because students who walked along the same route at the same point wrote different instances of what they saw while the same thing seen was written as something else by different students. In exchanging these listings and observational notes everyone realised how limited perspectival vision is and how what we sometimes choose to see determines how we see our surroundings. Suddenly reading Berger (1972) who argues "looking is an act of choice" became self-evident and apparent. While this was one part of the exercise the other part asked students to narrativise their observation in a section called "narrativising observation" which essentially meant that this time round they should not simply list what they saw but write *how* they saw what they did and narrativise the whole act of observing. Just for the element of play, I suggested four words as frames along which students had the option of structuring this second piece of writing. The four words I threw at them were – 'sight', 'frame', 'projection' and 'interpretation.' The pedagogical rationale of these broad frames was meant to push everyone to draw a connection between how we see everything within a context whether as a priori or as a condition of seeing, and think about how these conditions of seeing project our own vantage points of vision and become an interpretive act. In narrativising an

account of their observations and the walks, we suddenly saw how registers of identifying spaces and thinking about what one simply saw changed. Some students wrote how they found the "tea stall" (a listed observation) as "embodying work" or how the "corridors of the building" made them feel the "weight of education", or how their own backyard, the lake behind D and C block was a "natural splendour." What someone may have simply listed as a tea stall, wide corridors or a lake suddenly got a perspective and a view point assigned to them. Sharing these narrativised writings led the class to reckon how our act of seeing and observing is biased and how recognising these vantage points of viewing could be crucial to begin the process of researching – whether of the known and the visible or that of the unseen and the seemingly invisible.

Relationship to the Question

The next piece of work that followed, again in consensus and discussion with the students, was to write a short 500 to 700 word write up on why they decided to work with the question they did and what meaning the question held for them individually, given that the frame of the questions were particularly broad and not necessarily anthropological in scope and possibility. The aim of this exercise, titled "relationship to the question," was to evoke an understanding of how a question does not necessarily work with an a priori framework, but is rather expansive and amenable to interpretation and re-imagination while working on it. Various students wrote about differing reasons for their association with the question ranging from how it allowed them to think of their immediate surrounding in a new way or how they thought their life was seen as being restrictive (in working on the question of freedom) while it may not necessarily be so, or how the terms of the experiential are not just personal but constructed and shaped through various influences.

I want to cite the example of Economics major student, Lavanya Fulzele[4] to speak about this exercise who worked on the question "is choice freedom?" Lavanya drew an interesting analogy with how freedom for most young people in India is associated with the figure of Gandhi as he epitomised the "freedom struggle" against the colonial regime and how Gandhi as a figure was always there for all to see – portraits of Gandhi hanging in school classrooms, in public spaces, office buildings and so forth. Thinking through sociological frames she then went on to argue that freedom is not necessarily only that which is given to you. Instead, the real lived sphere of the everyday has a relationship with freedom as well, composed of varying registers that could also be restrictive. In her own words, Lavanya says, "Freedom, I was taught, was a basic human right that the freedom fighters of the past fought and won for us. As such, life without this freedom seems like a bygone era. However, with a developing education and experience of the world, I realized that the way freedom plays out in real life is through the range of limitedness." This concept of what she in her own words had termed "limitedness" was interesting because she flipped the generalist understanding of freedom that one was exposed to as a school student or as a young person. Many other students also spoke about how these questions although broad allowed them to rethink certain basic concepts that one always took for granted.

Free Writing and "Nonsense"

Another pedagogical tool we worked with for students to think beyond what an image contained was an exercise that I termed – 'free writing exercise.' This was done once students had shared images they had created from a chosen site in class. This exercise had two parts to it and was meant to be an in-class activity. I asked students to carefully examine the images they had created, think about it, play with it while examining it and then undertake a timed free writing exercise, all in one go, for five to ten minutes drawing impressions from the image. The pedagogical rationale of this free writing exercise was to demonstrate how each image that students' may have had a personal relationship with or a deep connection in creating could be diverted, deflected and almost inverted in its meaning if one allowed oneself to do so, and in turn demonstrate how research primarily works in accepting and acknowledging subjective influences. This writing was meant to be uninhibited, free flowing and the idea was to write without the pressure of making an argument or connecting ideas in order to recognize this subjective position and break the fixity of an image. This was followed by an even more experimental form of writing that I termed 'non-sense writing'. I encouraged students to write a piece of writing that they thought was non-sense, nonetheless drawing from the image. This second piece could be a piece of writing as just about anything, in any format whatsoever except gibberish. This was the element of play that I described earlier, which is good to think through conceptions of the field and acts of doing research. Once the students did both these writing exercises in class, drawing from their own images, they distinctly felt the meaning of the image shift and see it displaced along divergent frames of meaning. Some students wrote details of an image in the minutest possible manner, others wrote along an emotional register, and some wrote a bunch of discrete ideas. However, in talking about this presumed randomness, it turned out how these free flowing pieces conveyed an emotion that stemmed from the image itself previously unrecognized. Most students were amazed to see what they thought was free flowing and 'nonsensical' were actually quite poignant and meaningful. The impetus of creating

images, if done as a demand of a class or a course, may have restricted them to truly engage with the images in their full potential. This exercise helped break this constraint and allowed everyone to develop a relationship between them and their own images along registers that were unexpected. A writing exercise that was quick, nonsensical and within a time frame liberated the images from a singular observational framing and that is exactly the pedagogical value I was looking for through an exercise like this.

Two examples come to mind to illustrate what I mean when I say the images moved beyond a singular interpretative frame through this free writing exercise. Sparsh Piyush Agarwalla, a Computer Science Engineering student, decided to work with an image of a screenshot, stating availability and non-availability of courses restricted through an algorithm that enables students to opt for courses. In itself the image of a screenshot was intriguing, but in his free writing exercise, Sparsh drew on the image to write a short essay with a very precise argument demonstrating how a question of choice is always about limits and an impingement on unbridled freedom.[5] Another Computer Science Engineering student, Ananjay Chagti, had taken a picture of the wide corridor of one of the academic blocks (Figure 1) to work on his piece. In the free writing piece and the accompanying nonsensical writing, Ananjay brought out a rather insightful perspective on how photographs are necessarily detached from a photographer's perspective. He questioned the rationale of every little detail contained in the image itself and introspected on a photographer's complicity in the act of creating an image and how we need to recognize that. Ananjay meditating on his image writes, "Maybe it's a photo taken by an amateur photographer who couldn't keep his/her camera straight. Maybe it is just a photo taken
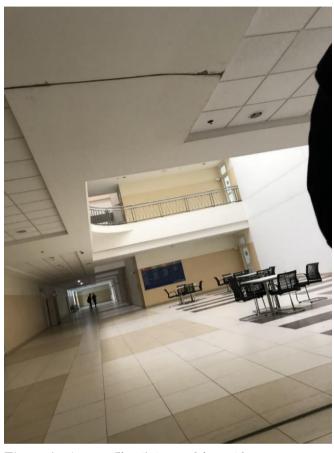

Figure 1. *Ananjay Chagti's image of the corridors*

blindly or by mistake and has no meaning. Maybe the tilt and the lack of a centered perspective signify that even in a well-organized structure one can find a hidden madness, a route to chaos." His writing was a poignant reflection on the act of creating images itself or how the act of creating images disrupts uniformity and could be seen as a decent to chaos.[6]

Most of these writings and the pedagogical approaches I have mentioned above reflected how an image always contained more than what it depicted and how this layer of meaning becomes apparent in questioning an image; placing it in context with another image; or writing about the image anecdotally or reflectively. The free uninhibited format of writing brought these aspects out vividly and the entire class was pleasantly amused at their own revelations. To reiterate, the pedagogic approaches I had adopted to enable students to disrupt the realm of the familiar began by asking questions and using the act of questioning itself as a frame to locate a physical site within the university to work as a field site. In order to facilitate looking and hearing anew, we engaged in a transect walk, writing observation narratives based on the walk, and then stretched this further through class activities – writing individual associations with the questions they decided to work with, and free writing exercises meant to draw and build an instinctive connection with images that students had created. All of these pedagogical approaches prepared students to produce their own image and soundscape as an answer to the question that they chose to work on as a research question. In the next section I present and reflect on some of these images, writings and sound pieces that students put together as their final piece of work.

Ethnography of the Seen and the Heard

Working with a physical site within the university surprisingly led a lot of students to venture into areas of campus which were under construction. Although not officially barred from entry, these spaces I suppose

presented students with the excitement of an area that seemed to be shot with potential even though they were located within the university itself and familiar. These sites filled with construction material like sand, bricks, mortar, gravel and other debris including waste also offered a distinct visual contrast to the manicured university buildings and spaces and that might have been inviting for them to create images from. Some students claimed they went to these under construction sites when their group decided to work on "what is value?" or when someone wanted to work on the notion of freedom and so forth. As a culmination of this research oriented, experimental course, students produced diverse kinds of images and soundscapes. The last pedagogical tool I had deployed, which took shape as the final assignment, asked each student to layer one chosen image with a soundscape and then use this combination of sound and images as an impetus to write a short creative piece. The creative writing could be in any form, whether someone wanted to write a story, a poem, a fictionalized account of an event, or a piece of non-fiction. For me the pedagogical merit of working through a creative piece was the uninhibited nature of its form and I thought it would allow the realm of the expressive to be kept alive as we had done through all the other pedagogical techniques adopted for the course. To encourage reflection on the particular chosen creative form and what it meant for each of them, the final assignment also had to be accompanied by a 750 word explanation of why they had written what they did. Although brief, the aim of the accompanying explanation was to see what learning outcomes were achieved through this course – was there any understanding of how one can write the world or create the world of the representative through images and sounds? Let us very briefly look at a few of these works to get a sense of the kind of representative registers students worked with and produced.

Figure 2: *Apoorv Walia's image of an under construction building. All soundscapes can also be viewed online: https://teachinganthropology.org/2021/11/30/hearing-images-seeing-sounds-disturbance-as-pedagogy/*

This is an image (Figure 2) taken by a Computer Science engineering student Apoorv Walia, who decided to click a picture of a building under construction on campus with a large closed door in response to his groups question on what is value or valuable in society. Accompanying this image he created a haunting piece of music on his piano and wrote a fictive story in three parts as three distinct depictions of time – each story written in the form of a mystery, influenced by what may lie behind the closed door. His three stories were about three kind of values – what he calls pre-value, peak value and post value. He used the concept of value as learnt from his Economics courses to talk about how what is of worth depends on its own growth and recession over time. The image of a large door closed with bars is what triggered the trope of mystery for him. Reflecting on his own image, he says, "My picture is a mystery to me. I never really went inside that door and I do not know what lies behind. It is this mystery that haunts me. It is this mystery that continues to draw me to the picture. My text is an answer to that mystery." Apoorv's sound accompanying the image, a haunting lyrical piece that he composed and played on the piano exacerbated this idea of the unknown qualitatively.

This image (Figure 3) was taken by a Physics major student Suvendu Barik, who eventually wrote a paper titled "An Encapsulated World", which to him conveys the idea of how what we see is always within a frame and how that structures our ways of seeing the world. Being a Physics student, Suvendu said how "a mathematical way of looking at the world around himself" enabled him to extend and complement Berger's duality between seeing and knowing. In developing a mathematical model to substantiate his argument, Suvendu's paper was remarkable in developing an entirely original conceptual frame which he called "reality space" in mediating his image with a sound. As he articulates – "The relationship (between seeing and knowing) further conjugates to make us realise that what we see and what we think we see demarcates reality into two parts. I describe reality as a space where everything we know and we don't know coexist together, and I give a nice term to that space as "Reality Space"". Suvendu's soundscape records him walking from an external environment to an internal environment and in speaking with him I recall him mentioning how the discrete set of sounds in walking from outside to inside, with disturbance of the wind mediating it, is for him like a set of images. As he writes himself, "I chose to use sounds as collection of images, which changed my interpretation".

🔊 Click to hear Suvendu Barik's soundscape

Figure 3. *Suvendu Barik's image of the construction site on campus*

🔊 Click to hear Inaayat Sachdev's soundscape

Figure 4. *Inaayat Sachdev's image of waste and debris*

A student of Management Studies, Inaaayat Sachdev wrote a paper titled "metamorphosis of value" accompanying this image (Figure 4) of debris and waste at the same construction site. Through this image which was taken to answer the question "what is value?" Inaayat wrote a very intimate account of her own personal relationship, how she fell in love, why she got out of it and where does she exist now that she is not in love anymore. I never asked her whether the story was fictional or personal as she wrote it in first person. But in explaining her reasons for writing this story she wrote how she drew an analogy with the construction site about what seems like waste today must have been something of value at some point. The sound accompanying had three distinct layers to it. As she says: "The sound is actually a compilation of 3 different sounds all recorded together. The sound of a piano accompanied by vocals and a clap. Initially they don't exactly sit together perfectly, but within a couple of seconds, the beats align. The clap fades away because it just doesn't sound as good as it was supposed to." In working with the register of sound this way, Inaayat wanted to convey how beats never align and that is precisely the way the material artifacts of the world around us seem to project themselves as. Something is of value at a certain point in time and that can change entirely at another given moment. Values for her do not align and the sound of the three uncoordinated rhythm was meant to work out this particular representative register.

Swati Ganeshan, a Civil Engineering major student took this image (Figure 5) of the students' residential blocks on campus and accompanied it with interior sounds of doors closing and opening as her final piece of work. At a first glance, the image and the sound did not project anything out of the ordinary, however that changed in her final mediation of why she wrote what she did. In her final piece of writing, Swati wrote a fictive story about a girl leaving the residential block on her final day at campus recalling the time

Figure 5. *Swati Ganeshan's image of the student's residential block on campus*

she was suspended because of being in the boy's residential block. The residential blocks are gender segregated and the protagonist in Swati's story was caught leaving the boy's residence after she had spent a night there. The story eventually ends with the protagonist questioning her own identity of whether she considers herself to be a girl or a boy. In the mediation of why she wrote this story, Swati wrote using Barthes' (1981) conception of 'studium' and 'punctum' to argue how at a first glance the building looks like any other regular image of a living quarter, however in closer inspection and this was the reason for her to use the sound, Swati writes how sounds of door opening and closing is meant to metaphorically represent the impact of institutionalization in an individual's life. She speaks about the generalist image – the 'studium' as that which is reflective of residential blocks for young people in a campus while the 'punctum,' that which stands out or projects itself outwards from an image, is about complete institutionalization not only within a university structure but also within heteronormative norms of society at large. She used this piece to critique existing binary categories of slotting one's individuality along straight-jacketed tropes of gender. Here is her soundscape.

An image that I want to cite for its accompanying soundscape is this image below (Figure 6) of Ayushi Mer – an Electrical and Electronics major student. Ayushi worked with an image of the lake on campus and her soundscape is revelatory for the detail it captures in order to work out an experiential register of walking by the lake. Her sounds move from footsteps on concrete to walking on twigs and leaves around the lake, to capturing sound of the water both of the lake and water in a pipe that is used to water the lawns around the lake to tapping

Figure 6. *Ayushi Mer's image of the lake on campus.*

of the steel notice boards that spell out information about the lake restoration process and the sound of birds chirping and winds blowing to finally the sound of the lake water itself. Ayushi's sounds unlike many of her classmates was a literal recording of the site she worked with but was remarkable for the details it captures and how such a register of sound complementing an image creates a register of the experiential.

Another image that became interesting for its accompanying sound is this image below (Figure 7) taken by a Mechanical Engineering student, Aman Khatkar, of the 'study room' in his hostel block. At face value the image is a general everyday picture of a room, however the sound was rather interesting and also humorous as Aman recorded himself with a sound of mumbling and kind of reading out sentences from a text to emulate what studying would sound like and how the general atmosphere of the room is filled with this aural quality when occupied. However suddenly there are spoken words berating others who are talking and not 'maintaining silence' in the 'study room' in between his mumbling and faint sounds of reading. The sound of a television overriding this faint sound brought in another layer. It was interesting and almost funny to hear this very specific sound created and subsequently recorded by Aman to communicate an experience of a space which was also insightful about the dynamics at play within a room which only students have access to. I did enjoy listening to this sound and cherished the passion with which students thought about emulating the seen with a realm of the aural.

Figure 7. *Aman Khatkar's image of the hostel study room*

Another student pursuing English major, Shubhangi Verma, took an image of the popular tea stall on campus (Figure 8) to answer her question on states of consciousness. The sound accompanying her image was kind of direct but it was created from another context, of water boiling in her room, of course inspired by the tea stall. She eventually wrote a poem which was about a recipe for writing as writing she argued draws on the literal and the imaginary at the same time. The picture of the tea shop was the literal for her while the sound of water boiling provided the imaginary impetus of creative writing and she feels textualisation from an image is a mode of critical reflection. In her paper she writes "For me, the common point between the image and the sound is a sense of continuity… I wrote a poem here because it is the literal interface between the image and the sound. But it is also a creative junction. What we get from a tea shop as an end product; is the same as what we get from creative labour. This poem likens the physical labour of making tea to the creative labour of writing a poem." I would like to end the paper with this poem but before doing that let me conclude by reiterating how I wish to frame the kind of work we got a glimpse of trough these registers of work and what insights can we draw from it.

Figure 8. *Shubhangi Verma's image of the campus tea stall*

Conclusion

In these brief instances cited above, the conceptual responses that the class as a whole produced through images and sound varied in their articulation and expression. Neither I nor the students claimed to have arrived at answers to these large philosophical questions that we had used as a framing structure to chalk out a research exercise. Locating the questions asked within the university and using this location as a field site enabled a reflection on how there always is a possibility to re-imagine and re-frame our spaces of the familiar and in turn break the terms of certitude about spaces and our relationship with it. The harmony of a known space was now shot through a dissonance, both temporal and spatial. The mediation of the lived, everyday spaces with this kind of a discursive reflexivity allowed for an entire new register of meaning to emerge from a known space and these meanings also constantly kept changing as new imaginaries of the visual and the aural disturbed the familiarity of the known. Complementing images with sound made visible the muted within the image and enabled the altering of the known physical site in ways that one did not imagine before the process took shape. Each conceptual framing for every student was absolute in its own terms and yet relative to its own framing. The accompanying written piece was cohesive yet fragmentary just like any conceptual proposition is. This way of keeping a concept open leads to the possibility of its own critique in the future as well as the possibility of complementing an earlier understanding of a concept. The classroom experience of teaching "Hearing Images, Seeing Sounds" enabled the creation of clandestine anthropologists amongst mostly non-anthropology students by enabling each one of them to re-imagine and re-frame a physical site both empirically and conceptually. This was essentially achieved through disrupting the terrain of the familiar by enabling new modes of seeing and hearing. The thrust of this paper has been to demonstrate the pedagogic possibility of realising this goal within the classroom.

I think it is appropriate for me to end this paper by quoting Shubhangi Verma's poem. The course, retrospectively for me, was simply an experiment in devising a recipe for the doing and teaching of anthropology.

Recipe for a Poem

In an empty head,
Bring 3 cups of imagination together
Add ½ cup inspiration and crush them like in a mortar

Transfer the crushed and mixed pieces into
A small saucepan filled with metaphors and gooey emotions
Bring to a boil till the similes start smiling back at you and the imagery stares back

When alliterations appear, pen them down immediately
Add reason in, along with one spoon of memories and anecdotes
Put pen to paper, stir and edit one more time; serve hot and fresh directly into paper.

Notes

1 I use "field" here as field site and not as an epistemic field of inquiry or 'field' as a field/discipline of study.
2 Courses in my university are coded according to disciplines, say for example an English course will begin with ENG, Physics with PHY and so forth. However, apart from disciplinary courses there are certain courses that cross cut disciplines meant for students across the board titled Core Common Curriculum (CCC) courses. This course that I write about here was a CCC course and hence the challenge of teaching and working with anthropological ideas to a largely non humanities and social science set of students.
3 I use anthropology and sociology here interchangeably because within the context of India, a distinction between the two disciplines does not exist as it does elsewhere in the world. What we teach as Sociology here is mostly what is considered social and cultural anthropology in 'the west' with a focus on ethnography and non-quantitative methods. For instance, I have been trained in sociology and I am a part of the Sociology department in my university but the content of my training and pedagogy is more attuned to social and cultural anthropology. Anthropology within India is mostly confined to physical anthropology given the colonial history of anthropometry. For a larger discussion on the politics of constructing the difference and overlap between the two disciplines in India please see (Srinivas and Panini 1973, Sundar, Deshpande and Uberoi 2000)
4 I consider all the students who have been a part of this course as equal participants and collaborators with me and would like to acknowledge that. I had always shared how I may write about this course at some point and could use some of their work as examples. All the images, soundscapes and words that I have cited here have not been anonymized as I sought explicit consent

from my students to use their material. They were all comfortable sharing their names and did not want me to use pseudonyms. I want to thank my students for this trust they had so graciously expressed.

[5] I have not included Sparsh's image here as it is a screenshot and has names of many courses and individual instructors. I have not sought permission to show the instructors' names and if I blur them including the course listings, there is hardly anything left of the image.

[6] Please note that I have not included Ananjay's soundscape as it is not relevant to the discussion.

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