#VOTEVER

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MFA DESIGN FOR SOCIAL INNOVATION
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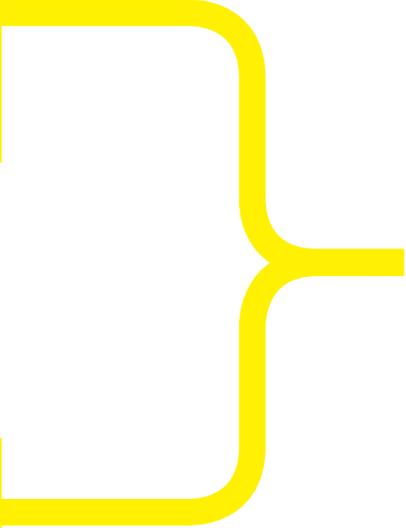
SOCIAL MOVEMENTS

POLITICS

At the beginning of this journey into thesis, I was interested in two things - Politics in India and Social Movements. At the time, I was frustrated by the thought of choosing only one, till I realised that these can actually go hand in hand. And I've stuck to it since then.

The opportunity to explore politics arises from my want to create change in India, a country I love and am proud of. And social movements were exciting to me because I had seen a lot of them in my time and wanted to explore them further.

I AM CREATING SMALL SCALE SOCIAL MOVEMENTS ON COLLEGE CAMPUSES IN INDIA TO IGNITE DISCUSSION, INTEREST AND ACTION AROUND THE GENERAL ELECTION 2014.

MOVEMENTS THROUGH SPONTANEOUS PROTEST

Protest beyond the law is not a departure from democracy; it is absolutely essential to it.

- Howard Zinn

It all started in December 2012, with the brutal gang rape of a 23 year old girl in New Delhi. Almost in my backyard. The environment was tense and people were saying 'it's not safe to go out right now'. Like it's ever safe to go out. On the screens I was seeing large numbers of people out on the streets to protest against this injustice, in hopes that the rapists would be hung.

The energy, the anger and the tension in the air made me crave to be outside and do the same thing because I was as angry as they were. But who was really listening to them? The police men who were spraying them with water cannons? The politicians sitting inside the parliament building? The thousands of men in India who commit crimes like this everyday?

http://www.nytimes.com/2012/12/23

And this made me think about all the times in India's history when people had come together in large groups to protest against something that they felt wasn't right. Right from the freedom movement to environmental protests to gender equality laws.

I wanted to find out how these protests start.

I wanted to find out who starts them and who shows up.

I wanted to know how I could take the energy and theory of protests and movements to apply it somewhere substantial.

I wanted to make real change that wasn't triggered by anger, but by pride and the feeling of responsibility towards our democracy.

http://ibnlive.in.com/photogallery/4615

Occupy Wall Street by David Hatfield

The Theory: I delved into a variety of material, ranging from theory behind social movements and protests, how to start your own movements, movements in history and whether they succeeded or failed, newer digital movements that allowed room for 'slacktevism'.

After pulling out many observations from the text, I realised that the key takeaway was to not just talk about it, but actually **do something about it**. And that while people are talking about it, **if you choose to lead, they will follow.**

The following are a few examples of text that I went through, along with videos, news articles and blogs:

- The Sociology of Social Movements by James M. Jasper

- The Emotions of Protest by James M. Jasper

- Digital Activism Decoded by Mary Joyce

- The True Believer by Eric Hoffer

- The 8 Stages of Successful Social Movements by Bill Moyer

- How to Spark a Movement by Scott Goodson

- Social Movements (1768-2008) by Charles Tilly

- Tribes by Seth Godin

- 10 Most Powerful Movements by Purvi Malhotra

- Social Movements in India: Poverty, Power & Politics by Raka Ray

- History of Social Movements in the USA by Building Movement Project

- 10 Protest Movements That Changed America by Blithe Gillespie

While there were many prescriptive 'movement making' scenarios, I pulled out a few key essentials that need to be a part of every movement. These steps don't necessarily happen in a linearly, but are more organic - allowing room for adaptation along the way. These are:

TRIGGER: The first person to say 'let's do something about this'. He or she is the one who plants the idea and brings everyone together.

ORGANIZE: Figuring out the plan for how any movement will play out. Getting the key players in their places and assigning tasks that everyone needs to be doing. An important element of organize is to also establish some sort of identity that will keep the movement together.

INFORM: Providing the correct information in an accessible way and making sure that there is no confusion about the goals of the movement.

ACT: Making sure that people show up, making it easy for people to do the thing they are required to and making it possible to create real change.

TRIGGER
ORGANIZE
INFORM
ACT

THE YOUNG FIRST TIME INDIAN VOTER

This is a time for bold measures. This is the country, and you are the generation.

- Bono

I started focusing my energy on the people that were present in large numbers at these protests - the youth. Starting at their legal voting age, I was targeting **18 to 23 years old students living on college campuses** at the time.

My hope was that these first time voters would continue to believe in the democratic process and convert to lifetime voters.

Getty Images / Daniel Berehulak

"THE 2014 ELECTION WILL PROBABLY BE THE FIRST LOK SABHA POLL DECIDED NOT ONLY ON CASTE, RELIGION AND REGION (THOUGH THOSE WILL PLAY AN IMPORTANT ROLE) BUT BY A COMBINATION OF YOUNG FIRST-TIME VOTERS AND THE URBAN AND SEMI-URBAN MIDDLE-CLASS."

The Economic Times, India | September 20th, 2013

"I SHOULDN'T HAVE TO CHOOSE BETWEEN THE DEVIL AND THE DEEP SEA JUST BECAUSE I HAVE NO OTHER OPTIONS."

To get a lay of the land, I conducted an online survey and some interviews with people within that age group. I got about 100 people to fill out my online survey and the replies I got were insightful starting points for me.

WHAT WILL MAKE YOU WANT TO VOTE?

" I want to vote, but so far I have never been around my voting centre at the time of elections. and mailing my ballot is a pain. they should have some kind of online system maybe. "

" I think an easier registration process, specially for people who aren't living in their hometown would help greatly "

" Voting is important, but how important ? The real depth of it and not just the surface problems. If I know this, I'll vote. "

" A better education system that gives us a better idea of what the vote will be used for. No point voting for the good guy, if most of the remaining crowd will vote for the bad guy. "

" Peer pressure from my friends. "

" More information about candidates over parties. Not their promises, but their past performances. "

" If the "none of the above" option is included in the voting machine for sure by next elections then I shall vote. "
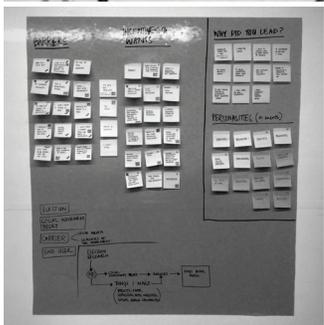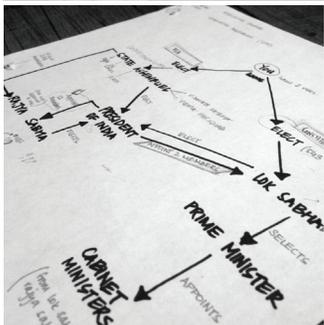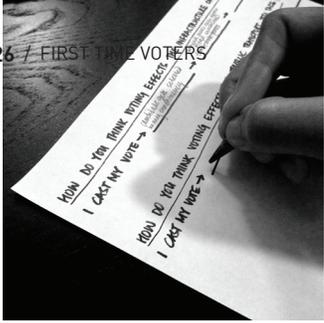
INFORMATION THAT WAS MISSING

From my research & prototypes I had found a framework of information that young people wanted before they would engage in any political processes.

This framework of ACTION, SYSTEM and SOCIAL CONTEXT would prove to be extremely important in the later stage of my thesis.

ACTION

Where, when and how do I go and vote? What is the process of registration? Where is my nearest polling booth and what days are the elections on?

SYSTEM

How does the system of elections actually work? Where do these elected candidates go and how does the prime minister finally get elected?

SOCIAL CONTEXT

Why does my one vote matter in a country of a billion people? Does it have any effect on my immediate surroundings or my community or city?

COLLEGE CAMPUSES & NATURAL LEADERS

The people are the only ones capable of transforming society.

\- Rigoberta Menchu

College campuses in India become like home for almost all students after being there for a while. You live, eat, work and play alongside each other for almost 3-4 years, only going home to your parents a couple of times in the year.

The kind of community that is formed while on these campuses is very tight. These students effect each others lives in a lot of ways and for me that was an excellent starting point.

These are also students from various cities around India and have larger networks in those cities which could be of potential use later on.

Batch of 2012, MIT Institute of Design, Pune, India

THE LEADERS

Among this community, there are always some people who always seem to emerge as **leaders.** I know this because me and a group of my peers seemed to emerge as the natural leaders. We found it easy to gather people and get stuff done.

I decided to actively search for these kinds of people on various campuses in India. Once I had found and engaged with them via emails, I started conducting some surveys with them to find out why they decided to take on this role of leadership.

THE SURVEY WAS CONDUCTED WITH 18-23 YEAR OLD COLLEGE STUDENTS WHO AT ONE POINT OR THE OTHER HAVE BEEN LEADERS ON THEIR CAMPUSES.

IN YOUR OPINION, WHY DO SOME PEOPLE TAKE THE ROLE OF LEADERS AND SOME TAKE THE ROLE OF FOLLOWERS ON COLLEGE CAMPUSES?

People take the role of leaders and followers because there are very few people who tend to question the set norms. They want to learn something new and test themselves.

SAHIL / 20 / BITS, Pilani

Ideally, I think a person who has sufficient knowledge of a field and believes in a particular 'idea'/ 'opinion' takes the role of being a leader. And a person who believes in a certain person (who is taking up the role of a leader) becomes a follower.

NAMAN / 23 / MIT ID, Pune

Some are more willing to take on the initiative and lead than others. Also depends on how much time you can dedicate to a particular activity.

SANTOSH / 23 / IIT, Guwahati

Some people feel more strongly about things than the others, and are willing to come in the line of fire. Often, the followers are the ones with strong great ideas, and the leaders are the more neutral ones who can take the different ideas, and put them together better. Also, some people are better at being followers than leaders, and really contribute better that way.

JAYATI / 22 / FLAMES, Pune

Some people enjoy the backstage and some people enjoy the final show. From the few experiences I have had as an organizer, I think some people get a kick out of the planning and how-do-we-do-this sessions, they like to solve the puzzle and take the risks; while the others are more interested in what they have built, and they do not mind things given to them in a platter - in fact they would rather have it in a platter than take trouble and pain to build it.

KISHORE / 23 / MIT ID, Pune

In my (limited) experience, it's always been that people have assumed lead roles because some of them could lead naturally and hence natural choices to helm the deck. a few were elected leaders by force, or by virtue of being the next in a hierarchical structure. but even these guys have done their jobs with ease. however, the best ones for me have been the ones who are great organizers.

CHAITANYA / 23 / FLAMES, Pune

Some take the role of leaders because no one else is taking it, some take it because they don't like being led by idiots and some take it because it feels natural or they are supported by their batch mates to take up the role. People may follow because they are shy to lead or are convinced of the idea the leader proposes.

NAVIN / 21 / MIT ID, Pune

DESCRIBE THE KIND OF PEOPLE YOU INTERACTED WITH DURING A TIME WHEN YOU WERE A 'LEADER' ON YOUR COLLEGE CAMPUS.

DOERS

TALKERS

HARD WORKERS

THINKERS

IDEATORS

CRITICS

SELFISH

SOCIALIZERS

FREELOADERS

INFLUENCERS

CONTRIBUTERS

PASSIVE FOLLOWERS

LAZY ONES

INTROVERTS

TIME WASTERS

Leveraging the abilities of these natural leaders on college campuses, I wanted to trigger a movement about politics that resonates within the rest of the community. When this information comes from their own peers rather than the media or an authority figure, it seems genuine and worth paying a bit of attention to.

These leaders know how to get the attention of their peers and also understand what makes things work in the environment that they are in.

Rafiq Maqbool for Associated Press

The idea was to find that one person who would be interested in this sort of a project. And that one person would find five of their friends who are very much like them. And these initial people would take this movement and spread it amongst their network like wildfire till it breaks the college campus bubble and lives outside in the world, waiting to be picked up by another student on another campus.

#VOTEVER

THE INTERVENTION

VOTEVER IS A D.I.Y. STUDENT MOVEMENT ON COLLEGE CAMPUSES WHERE A GROUP OF STUDENTS DOES VOTEVER IT TAKES TO GET THEIR PEERS TO ENGAGE WITH THE PROCESS OF ELECTIONS IN INDIA.

The mark was derived from the idea of a shareability. Using the structure of the hash tag as a framework, I created the body such that it stood out. This way, we were building the #votever right into the logo. The dot in the centre of the hash tag is to represent your vote.

I pulled this movement together with a brand identity and a word mark that would be recognisable and bring people together. This was then tied up with language which is friendly, non-judgemental and enthusiastic.

FFFF00
R: 255, G:255, B:0
C:0, M:0, Y:100, K:0

000000
R: 0, G:0, B:0
C:0, M:0, Y:0, K:100

#VOTEVER

WHATEVER

Derived from the idea of 'whatever it takes to get people excited about politics', I named it VOTEVER. It was just punny enough to work while not being over the top or a mouthful. The font used for the logo type is **DIN Black.**

COME BE A PART OF THE CHANGE

GET YOURSELF REGISTERED TO VOTE AT OUR VOTER REGISTRATION DRIVE!

VENUE: MANET MAIN LOBBY

DATE: 27th APRIL 2014

TIME: 3:00 PM — 7:00 PM

BRING COPIES OF YOUR PHOTO ID, 2 PASSPORT SIZED PHOTOS AND A WHOLE BUNCH OF FRIENDS! WE'LL PROVIDE YOU WITH ALL THE INFORMATION YOU MIGHT NEED.

 # VOTEVER

votever.in
facebook.com/votever
instagram.com/votever

I created a toolkit that gives all of the information any student group might need to start their own movement on campus. It includes a DIY voter registration drive section, stickers, posters and all the forms that one might need. It also includes an FAQ sheet and ideas for organizing your team.

WEBSITE

Clean, simple and easy to navigate. Only the most basic non-partisan information, links and any forms that are needed.

SOCIAL MEDIA

Facebook and Instagram accounts with friendly language and good quality photographs to keep people interested.

#VOTEVER

Creating, Informing and Voting at MIT Institute of Design, Pune, India.
General Election 2014, here we come.

HOME   ABOUT   CONTACT   INSTAGRAM

I WANT TO REGISTER TO VOTE ONLINE

WHEN AND WHERE DO I GO TO VOTE?

A FIRST VOTER

DOES THE ION M WORK?

I WANT MORE INFO ABOUT POLITICIANS

I WANT THE LATEST NEWS

VOTEVER

33 posts   137 followers   246 following

+ Follow

Votever
Creating, informing and voting at MIT Institute of Design, Pune, India. General Election 2014, here we come!
www.google.co.in/elections/ed/in/districts

http://www.votever.in/
http://instagram.com/votever
https://www.facebook.com/votever

The website is aimed for first time voters to remove all logistical barriers that stop them from casting their votes.
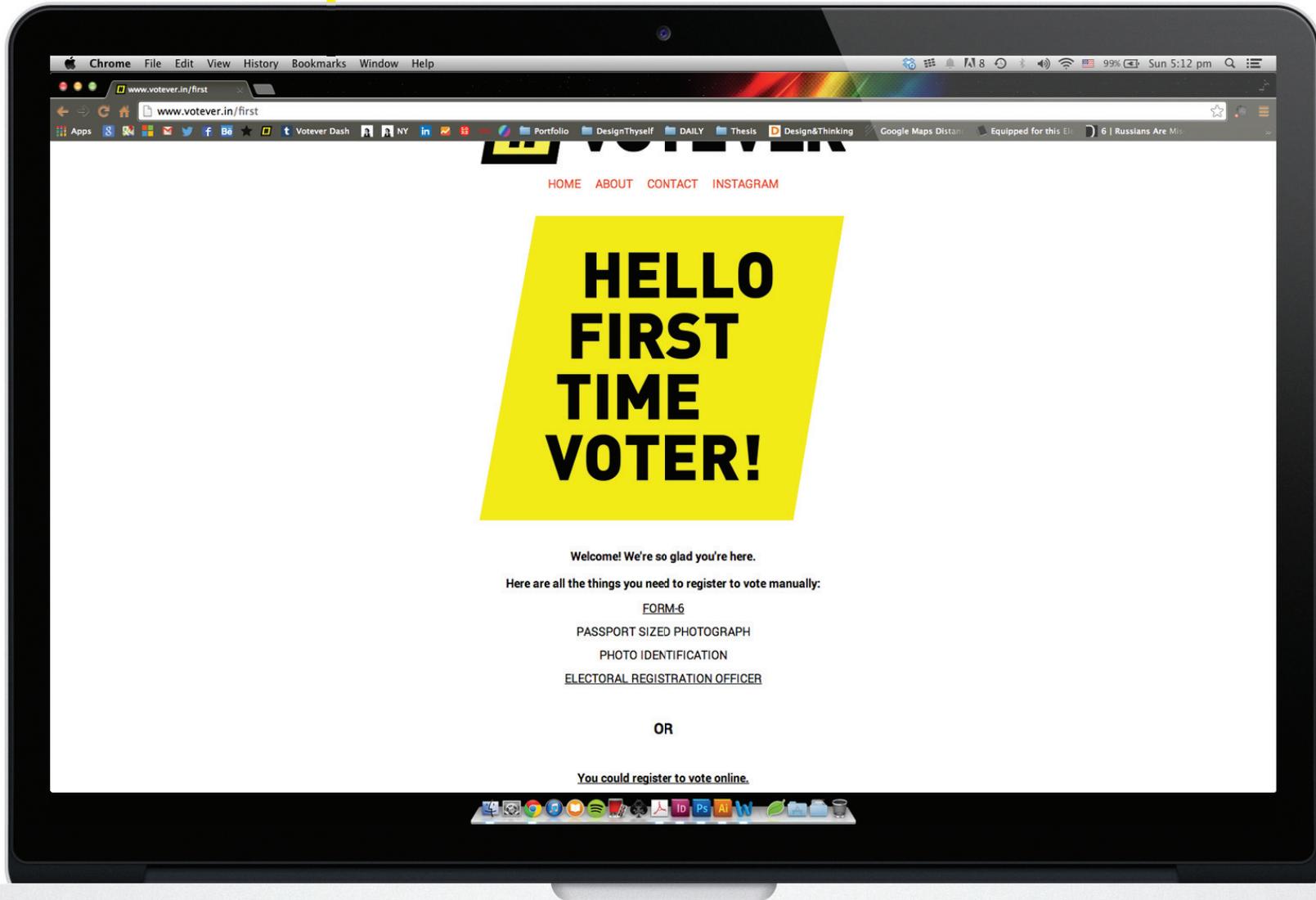
SOMEWHERE IN LONI

MIT Institute of Design
Loni - Kalbhor
Pune, India

I piloted #votever at MIT Institute of Design in Pune, a small city outside of Mumbai. This campus is massive but outside of the actual city with very limited access. This is also where I did my undergraduate program from.

THE TEAM

In this case, I was acting as the trigger. I started contacting people whom I knew and pitching this idea to them. I gave them incentives of being able to build some cool stuff and also be a part of the bigger change.

Initially I got about 5 to 6 people and as the news spread that pool of people grew. These were the first followers. We formed a Facebook page where we would communicate with each other and they would have weekly meeting where I could skype in.


JOYDEEP
HARSH
MALLEKA
MAANAS
ARPIT
HIMANSHI
RITU
CHIRAG
SARAH
AKHIL
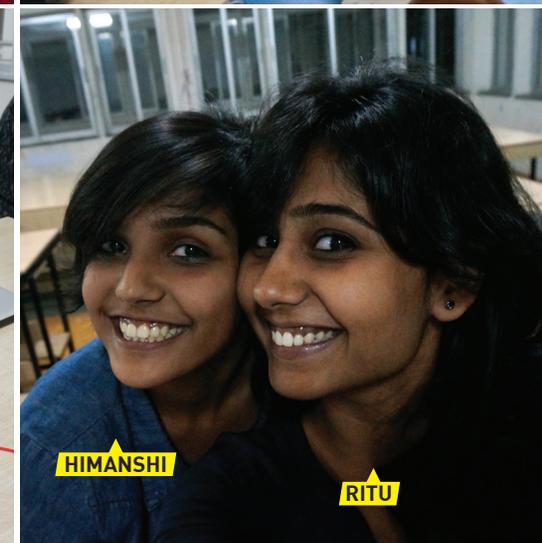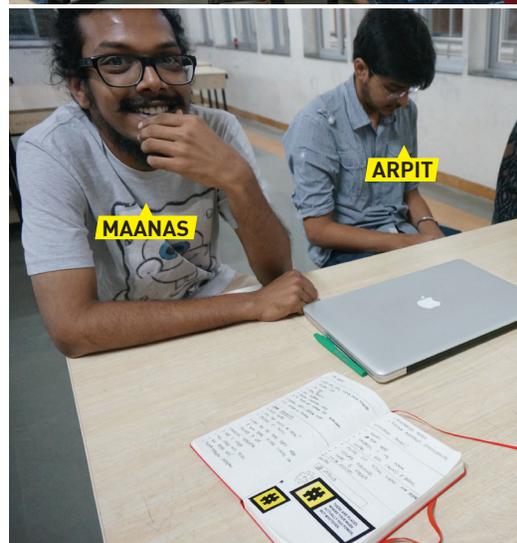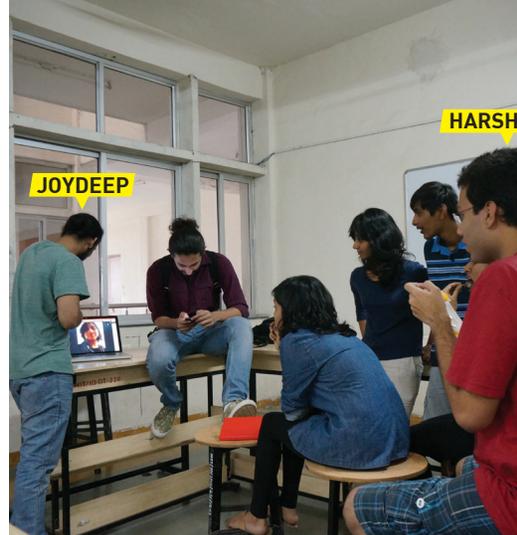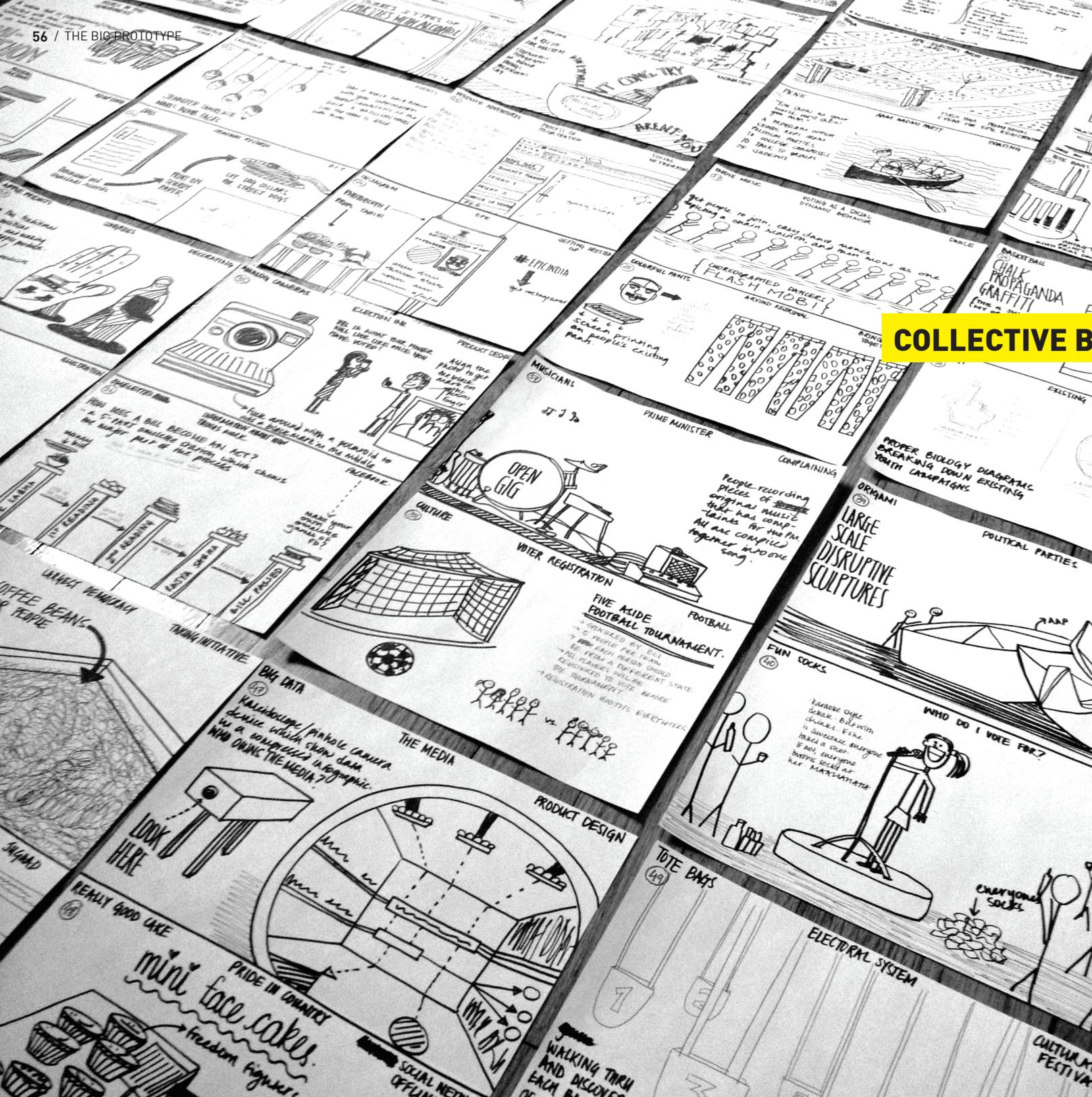
COLLECTIVE BRAINSTORMING

I had ideated a variety of ways (both ridiculous and feasible) to get students attention towards politics. During the first few weeks of our conversation, I had posted some of the most viable ideas from these to the group as a starting point for them to jump off. They took these ideas and brainstormed around them, coming up with newer and better things.

We were still working within the framework of 'Action, System and Social Context'.
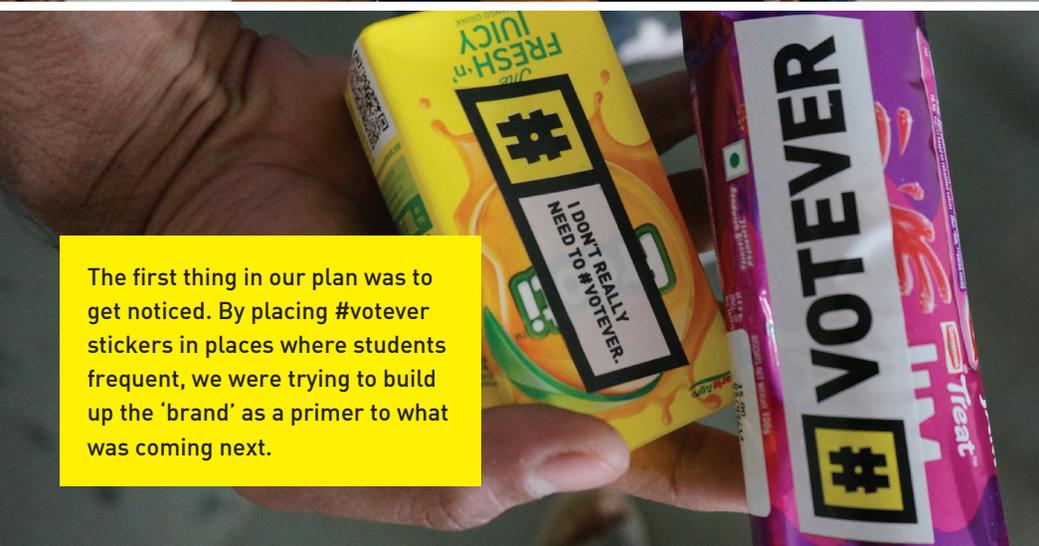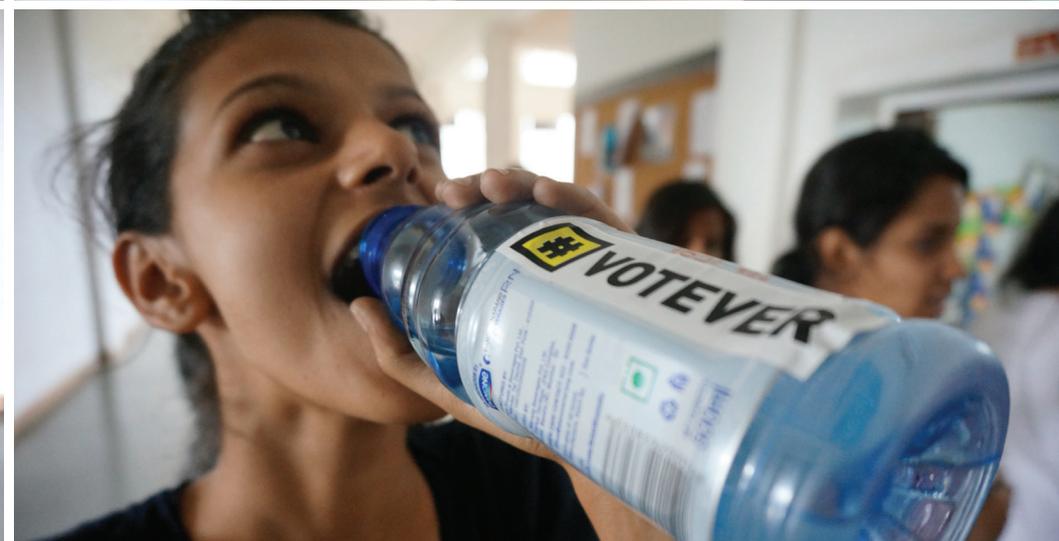
The first thing in our plan was to get noticed. By placing #votever stickers in places where students frequent, we were trying to build up the 'brand' as a primer to what was coming next.

VOTER REGISTRATION

Registering these students was one of the most crucial parts of the process. The team started putting out more information on the campus so as it get many people to show up on the days that they would be setting up the registration tables.

This was a call to action, and in an ideal world there would have been a few more steps from the initial launch to the voter registration, but the dates of the elections were announced and they were sooner than we expected.

Within a span of a day, the team had been able to organize the registrations, get all the prints they needed and also spread the word through their personal networks and social media.
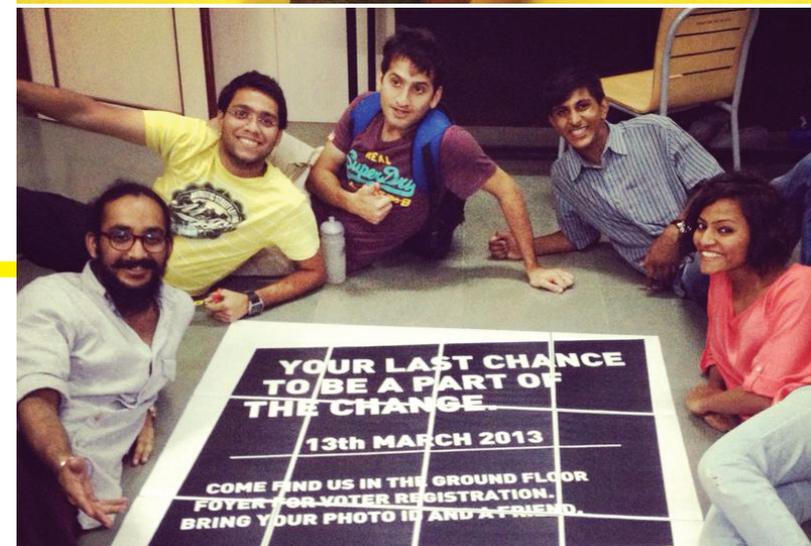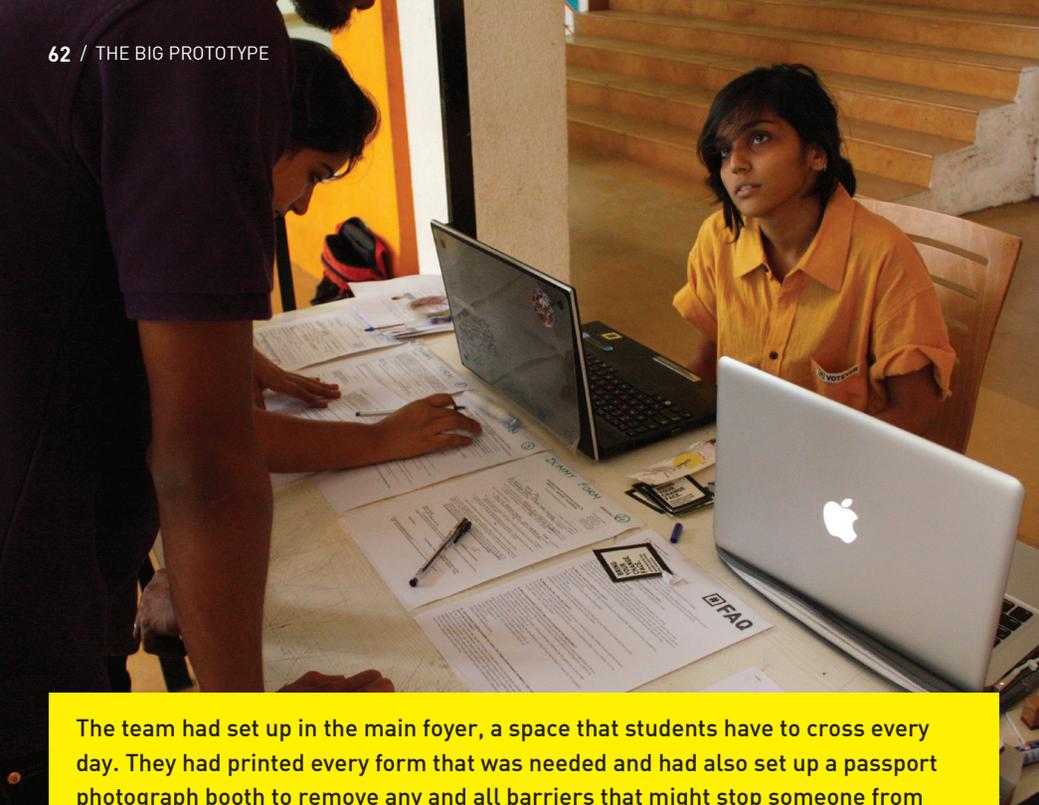
The team had set up in the main foyer, a space that students have to cross every day. They had printed every form that was needed and had also set up a passport photograph booth to remove any and all barriers that might stop someone from registering. Each one of the team members had been educating themselves on the system of the elections to help them answer an FAQ's that they could. I had provided them with all the print material that they would need for the promotion.

160 REGISTRATIONS IN 8 HOURS OVER 2 DAYS

INDIAN ELECTORAL SYSTEM 101

NEXT STEPS...

Once the registrations were completed, we had about three weeks till the final election date. We had done the 'Action' part of our framework and now needed to move on the 'System' and 'Social Context'.

Going back to our brainstorm, we picked three things to make that would keep students engaged and excited about the upcoming election.

The first one of these was a stop motion animation that I created. This animation explains the electoral system through easy icons and storytelling. It was put online and through our social networks, we were able to get a lot of views. This was also motivating for the team to see and it helped them build the rest of our media pieces.

Link: https://vimeo.com/91486038

every

5 YEARS

MLA
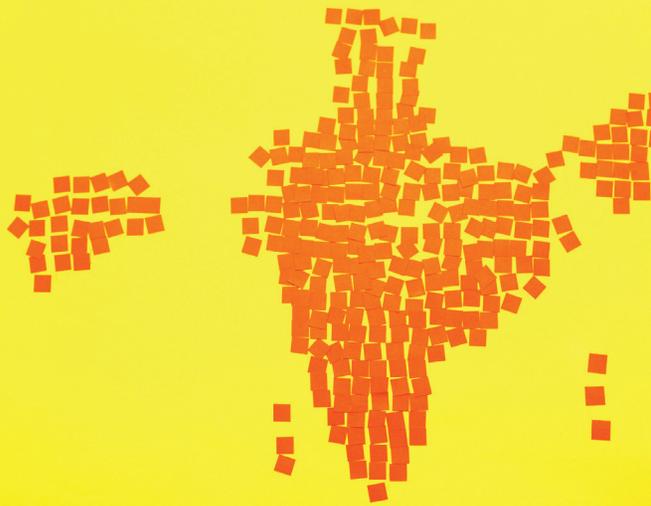
VIDHAN SABHA
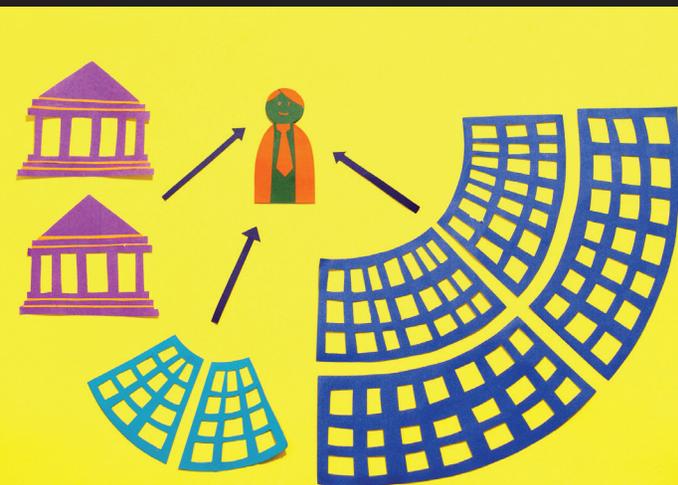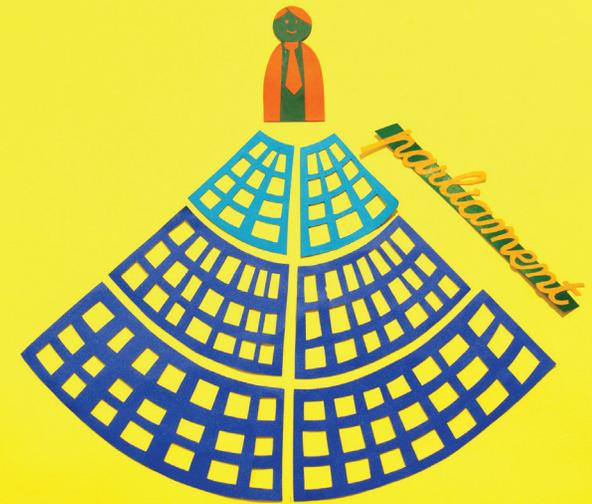
lok sabha

BROUGHT TO YOU BY

#VOTEVER

INSTALLATION #1
POLITICIANS ALWAYS SAY YES

A cuboidal bobble head that depicts the three key players in the election 2014. This acts as an introduction to the parties and their manifestos while also giving a brief history about the three prime ministerial candidates.
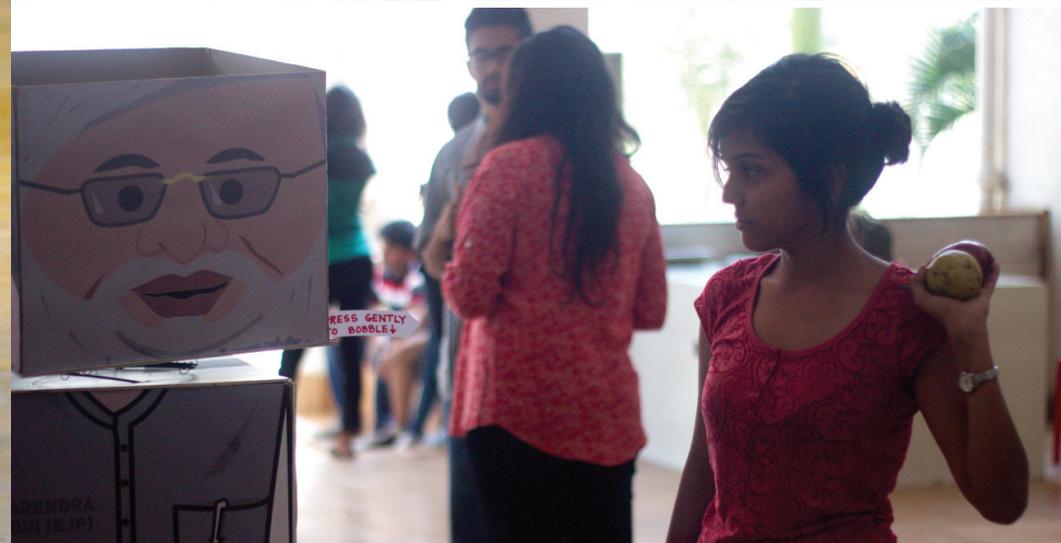
INSTALLATION #2
LIGHT YOUR VOTE

This installation is a light map that explains the path of your vote as it goes through the system. You can cast your vote in the first boxes for either the state election or the national election by pressing a button. This subsequently lights up the seats in other houses, and the colour depends on the colour you had chosen.
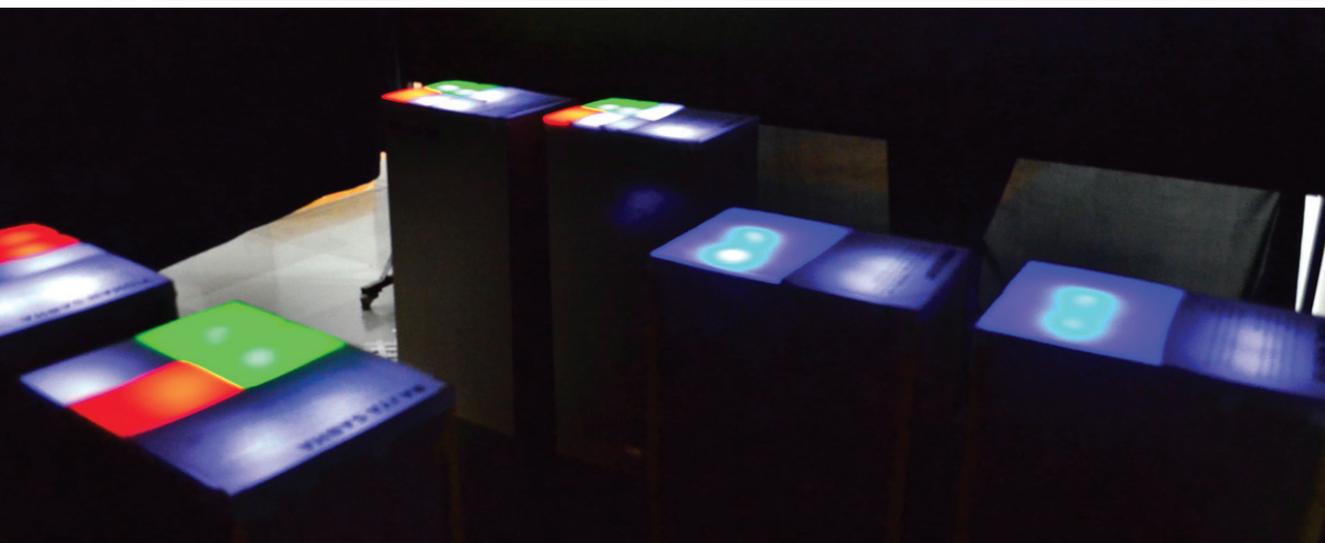
FEEDBACK

From the list of students who registered to vote, I found about 20 of them to interview and get some feedback for #votever. They also gave us invaluable insight into the kind of information they are looking for as young first time voters.
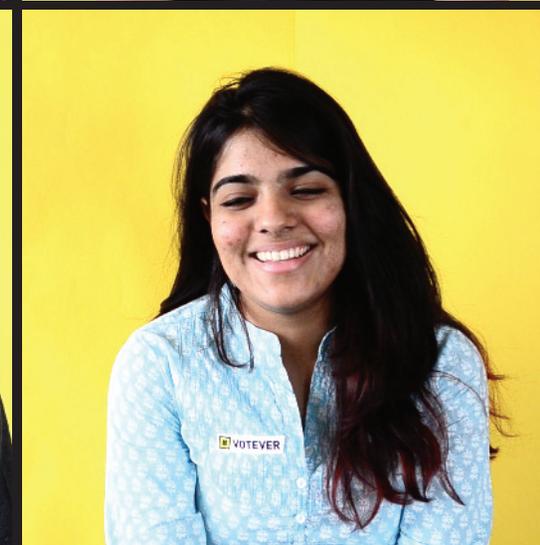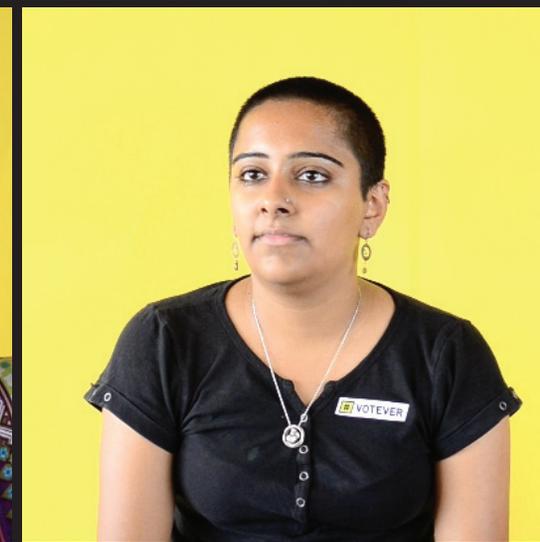
APRIL 17th, 2014 - ELECTION DAY

The morning of the election, we saw all the people who had registered with us at the local school where the election was being held. They came in groups or alone but they were all enthusiastic about turning up.

When they were done voting, all of them seemed to be proud, happy and felt like they had done their part towards creating change.

They were also grateful about #votever for bringing this opportunity for them and very interested in knowing what the next steps for this were.
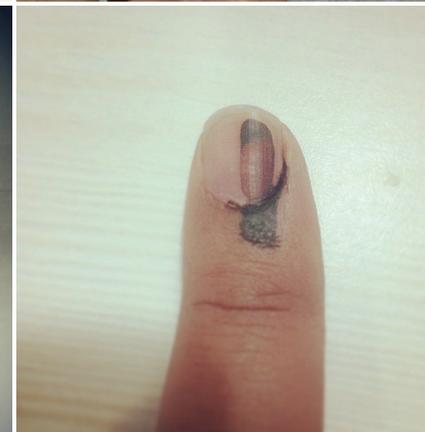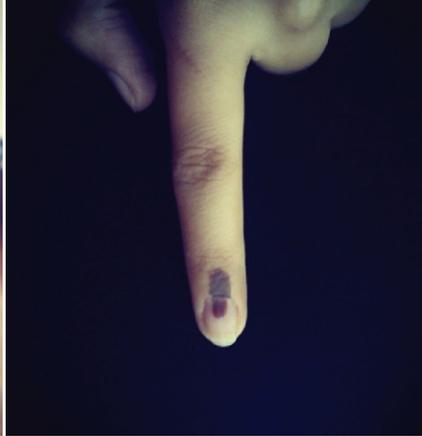
THE MARK OF A VOTER

The most valuable thing for me that day was to see how much of this people were sharing on their social media pages with the #votever in their comments sections. This meant that their extended networks in various cities had access to this and were getting introduced to the idea of #votever.

THE BIGGER PICTURE

The great thing about social movements is everybody gets to be a part of them.

- Jim Wallis
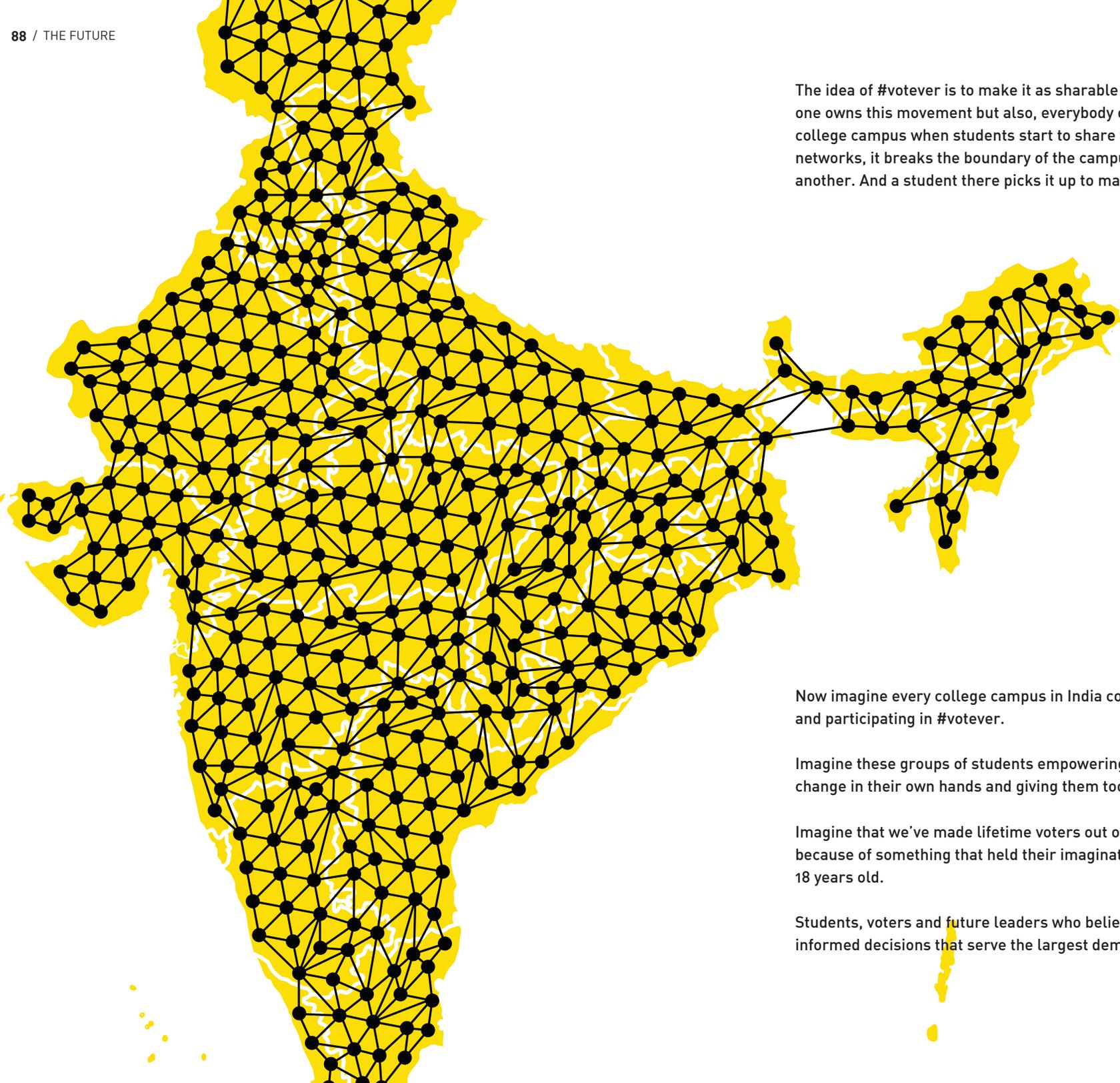
The idea of #votever is to make it as sharable as possible. No one owns this movement but also, everybody owns it. From one college campus when students start to share this out into their networks, it breaks the boundary of the campus and extends into another. And a student there picks it up to make it their own.

Now imagine every college campus in India connected in this way and participating in #votever.

Imagine these groups of students empowering their peers to take change in their own hands and giving them tools to do this.

Imagine that we've made lifetime voters out of these students because of something that held their imagination when they were 18 years old.

Students, voters and future leaders who believe in making informed decisions that serve the largest democracy in the world.

SPECIAL THANKS TO:

VOTEVER TEAM ZERO

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SARAH DAS
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DHRUV MEHRA
MANIK HUNDGENN
SHWETA PATIL

THESIS PROFESSORS

MAGGIE BRESLIN
TINA PARK
ARCHIE LEE COATES IV
JEFFREY FRANKLIN

" THERE IS SOMETHING UNIQUE IN THIS SOIL, WHICH DESPITE MANY OBSTACLES HAS ALWAYS REMAINED THE ABODE OF GREAT SOULS."

"इस मिट्टी में कुछ अनोखा है जो कई बाधाओं के बावजूद हमेशा महान आत्माओं का निवास रहा है।"

- Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel

SVA NYC
DSI
Design for Social Innovation