

# Visual Communication Quarterly

**Decision Letter (HVCQ-2023-0019)**

**From:** lawrence.mullen@unlv.edu

**To:** juhri.selamet@uts.edu.au

**CC:**

**Subject:** Visual Communication Quarterly - Decision on Manuscript ID HVCQ-2023-0019

**Body:** 17-Apr-2023

Dear Mr Selamet:

Ref: Visual autoethnography of daily sounds

I have considered your portfolio and have recommended publication in Visual Communication Quarterly. I am pleased to accept your portfolio in its current form which will now be forwarded to the publisher for copy editing and typesetting.


You will receive proofs for checking, and instructions for transfer of copyright in due course.

The publisher also requests that proofs are checked through the publisher's tracking system and returned within 48 hours of receipt.

Thank you for your contribution to Visual Communication Quarterly and we look forward to receiving further submissions from you.

Sincerely,  
Lawrence Mullen, Ph.D.  
Editor in Chief, Visual Communication Quarterly  
lawrence.mullen@unlv.edu

**Date Sent:** 17-Apr-2023

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### Visual autoethnography of daily sounds

Journal:	<i>Visual Communication Quarterly</i>
Manuscript ID	HVCQ-2023-0019
Manuscript Type:	Portfolio
Keywords:	design, visual communication, sound, visual autoethnography, Dayak
Abstract:	Sounds exist, coexist, and inhabit the world with us, even though we cannot see them. This project explores how sound can be visualized and what it might look like. Through autoethnography, it emphasizes Tim Ingold's concepts of correspondence and creation to deploy visual autoethnography of daily sounds. This work discusses different levels of micro, meso, and macro inquiry, focusing on the design and visual communication context as a form of visual expression, creation, and reflection.

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## **Visual autoethnography of daily sounds**

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## Visual autoethnography of daily sounds

Sounds exist, coexist, and inhabit the world with us, even though we cannot see them. This project explores how sound can be visualized and what it might look like. Through autoethnography, it emphasizes Tim Ingold's concepts of correspondence and creation to deploy visual autoethnography of daily sounds. This project discusses different levels of micro, meso, and macro inquiry, focusing on the design and visual communication context as a form of visual expression, creation, and reflection.

Keywords: sound; design; visual communication; autoethnography; visual expression

### Introduction

Sounds around us have become a significant part of contemporary design. Nykänen et al. (2015) suggested that sound design is a conversation with sounding material, crucially dependent on listening informed by sketching to create sound. Soylu et al. (2017) enriched sound design idea by creating happy sound objects through multi-sensory design, and Monache, Misdariis, and Özcan (2022) studied sound-driven design as a practice informed by technology and listening in the multisensory dimension of interaction. Wildevuur & van Dijk (2011) positioned sound design for social connectedness in healthcare, focusing on its functional aspects. On the intersection of sound and culture, Vieira de Oliveira (2019) examined the deployment of sound bombs to weaponize quietness in Brazil.

Building upon above richness sound studies examples, I attempt to contribute creatively to the discussion about sound by revisiting a creative probe I encountered more than a decade ago, during my undergraduate studies, called "visualize sounds you hear." In this project, I intend to explore and experiment with how sound can be visualized, and what it might look like. My approach in this exploration is through the lens of autoethnography, using visuals to represent and reflect on my own experiences with everyday sounds.

I employ a visual autoethnography approach, which uses visual expression to engage with personal experiences and connect them to a wider context (Chaplin 2011). Pope (2016) emphasizes the usefulness of visual autoethnography in

excavating deeper, nuanced insights into the embodied practices of the experience under study by enmeshing narrative with personally meaningful images. In this work, I apply this autoethnographic inquiry inside my house, located in a Dayak village, drawing from Tim Ingold's concepts of *correspondence* and *creation* (Ingold 2021). These two interchangeable concepts can help me understand my connection to the sounds I hear and how I interpret them visually.

### **From Correspondence to Creation**

Tim Ingold, an anthropologist, has contributed significantly to the theoretical development of contemporary design anthropology (Pink 2014). He offers the concept of *correspondence*, which refers to the dynamic relationship between the world and the people who inhabit it (Ingold 2021). According to Ingold, the world is not a passive backdrop to human activity, but an active participant in it. Correspondence, therefore, refers to the ongoing dialogue and exchange between humans and the world around them. Ingold argues that correspondence is not a one-way relationship where humans impose their will on the world, but rather a two-way relationship where humans and the world co-create each other through their interactions. He suggests that our actions and perceptions are shaped by the environment around us, and that the environment, in turn, is shaped by our actions.

I observe this concept of correspondence to understand and interpret my relationship with the everyday sounds I hear in the environment I live in, specifically in an Indigenous Dayak village called Long Lanuk (Figure 1) in East Kalimantan. This small village is located far from the big city, in a remote area next to the rainforest and Karst rocks in the Nyapa mountains. An elder of the village kindly allowed me to stay in his house, which had plank walls, a tin roof, and no ceiling. I could hear familiar sounds such as the neighbour's next-door chickens crowing, the sound of birds in the morning, and the sound of rain. From my room inside the house, I lived in, I recorded these sounds in the morning and at night, capturing the correspondences of the world around me as a form of dialogue that gave me a sense of place distinct from anywhere I have ever lived.



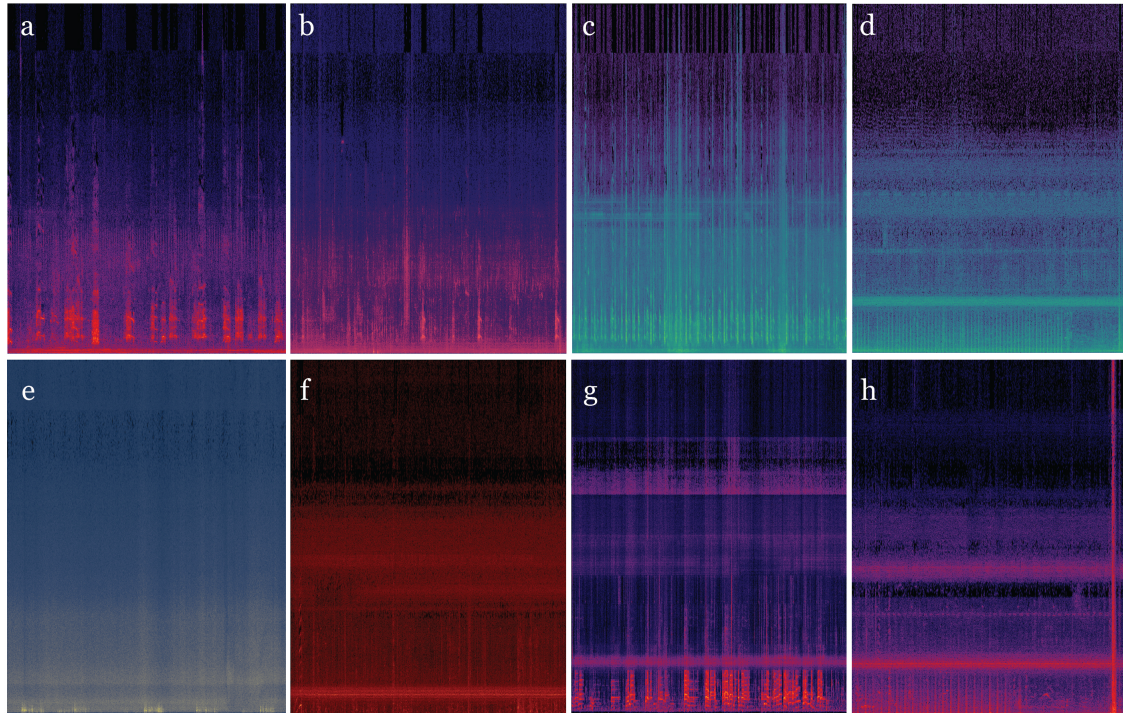
**Figure 1.** Indigenous Dayak Long Lanuk Village. Long Lanuk is located under the administrative area of the Sambaliung sub-district, Berau district, East Kalimantan province, Indonesia. Kampung Long Lanuk is adjacent to other Dayak villages, such as Tumbit Dayak and Dayak Merasa. Photo: Author

My interpretation of the dialogue correspondence with the environment is an act of imagination. I imagine how the sounds from the environment around me can be visualized, translated into visualizations through the process of *creation*. In Tim Ingold's idea, creation is not about producing something out of nothing, but rather shaping and transforming materials that are already present (Ingold 2021). The foundation of my creation here is the sound material that is voiced by the environment around me. I position the creative process of transforming sound into visuals as a beginning, as Ingold suggests that creation is an ongoing process that involves continuous growth and transformation.

### **Visual Autoethnography of Daily Sounds**

Translating sound to image involves two steps. First, I convert the audio into a spectrogram (Figure 2), and then I design my creation by following the basic pattern of the spectrogram. Two groups of images depict morning and night, based on when the sounds were recorded. The morning group includes pictures

labeled Ayam berkokok (Figure 3), A morning (Figure 4), and Another morning (Figure 5), while the night group includes pictures labelled Emping (Figure 6), Rain (Figure 7), Another night (Figure 8), A song (Figure 9) and Evening (Figure 10).



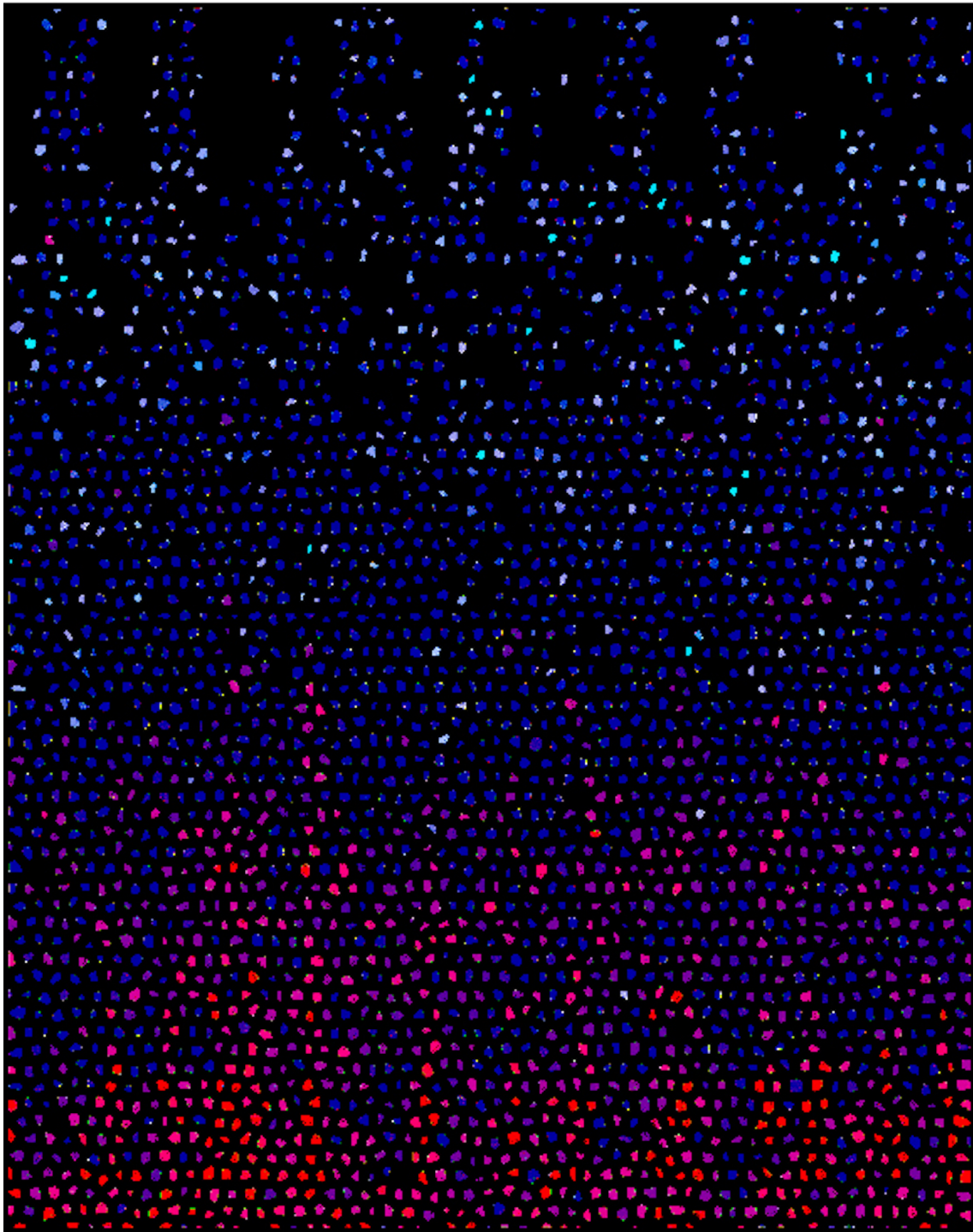
**Figure 2.** Spectrogram. Spectrogram images showing various audio recordings: code a) Ayam berkokok, code b) A morning, code c) Another Morning, code d) Emping, code e) Rain, code f) Another Night, code g) A Song, and code h) Evening. Image: Author

I reflect on the dynamics of this experience at the micro, meso, and macro levels, where I situate this practice in a design context and position my creation of visual autoethnography of daily sounds as visual communication resources. At the micro level, I focus on the daily sounds of my immediate personal experience, built on my corresponding understanding. At the meso level, I attempt to bring this experience to my professional creation practice with design and visual communication communities. Finally, at the macro level, I aim to understand my creative experience in relation to wider global communities and prompt dialogues on how local daily sounds can be visualized attempting to inform global audiences. Additionally, I hope that this visual autoethnography of daily sounds can contribute to new forms of visual expression, creation, and reflection. In this

context, visual autoethnography is useful in facilitating the exploration of how sound can be seen and what it looks like. This approach provides visual expression to engage with my personal experiences and connect them to a wider design studies and visual communication context.

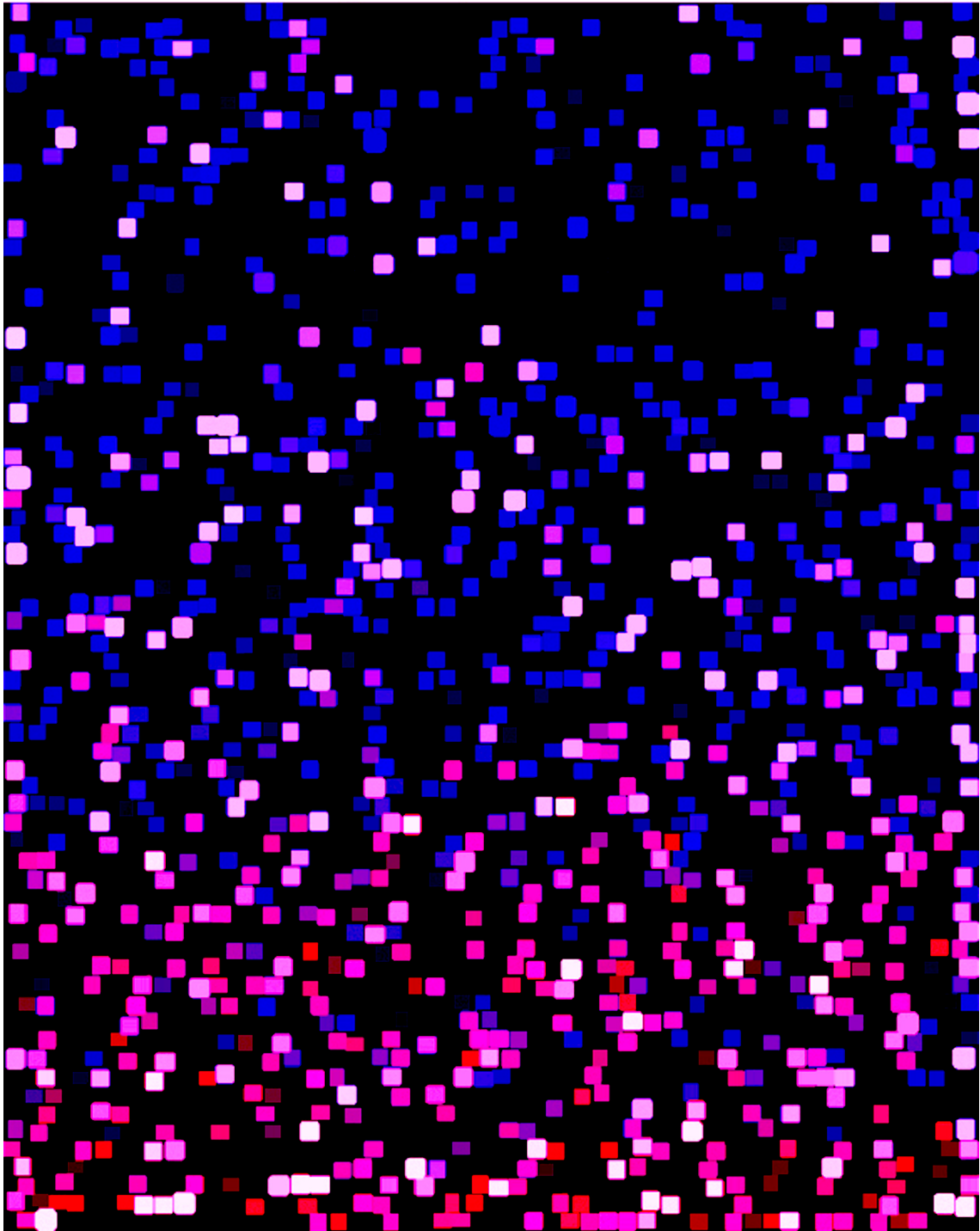
While many studies on the process of transforming sound into visual form are dominated by technical understanding, this project offers a new interpretation by centralizing visual autoethnography in the process. I hope in the future, sound visualization studies continue to explore the relationship between sounds and visual patterns, enriching the repertoire of visual communication in various design contexts, such as fabric design, visual interfaces, and other forms of design.





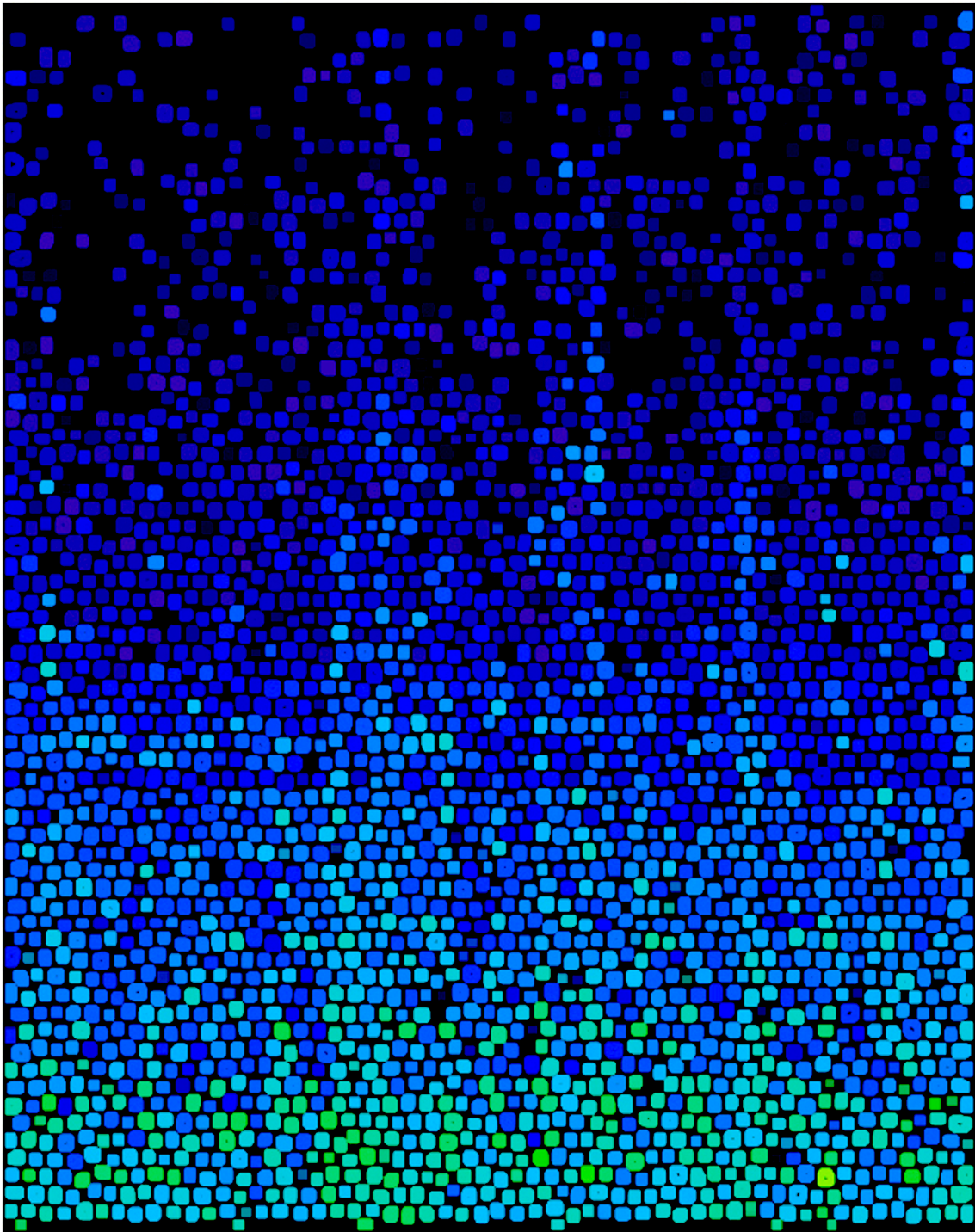
**Figure 3.** Ayam Berkokok. Every morning, the loud sound that replaces the sleep alarm is the crowing of roosters. Almost every house in Long Lanuk village has chickens that roam freely in residential areas and bushes, coexisting with human. Figure 3 is my interpretation of the spectrogram image (Figure 2, code a) to visually represent the sound. The original sound of ayam berkokok can be heard here:

<https://doi.org/10.6084/m9.figshare.22638244>. Image: Author



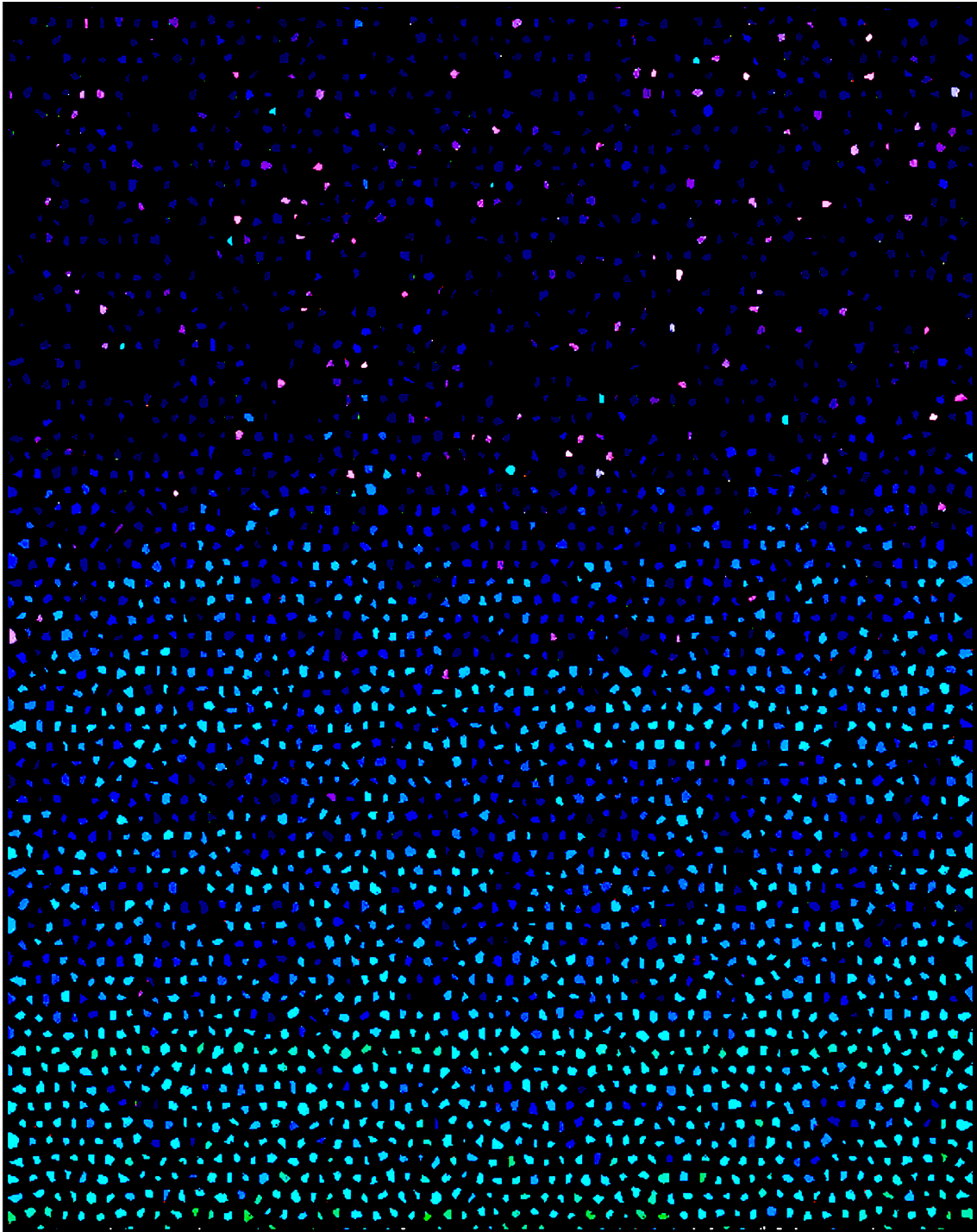
**Figure 4.** A morning. "A morning" was a recording taken from my bedroom in the morning, capturing the sounds of birds and other animals. The spectrogram image (Figure 2, code b) is translated into Figure 4, and the original recording can be heard here: <https://doi.org/10.6084/m9.figshare.22638247>. Image by Author





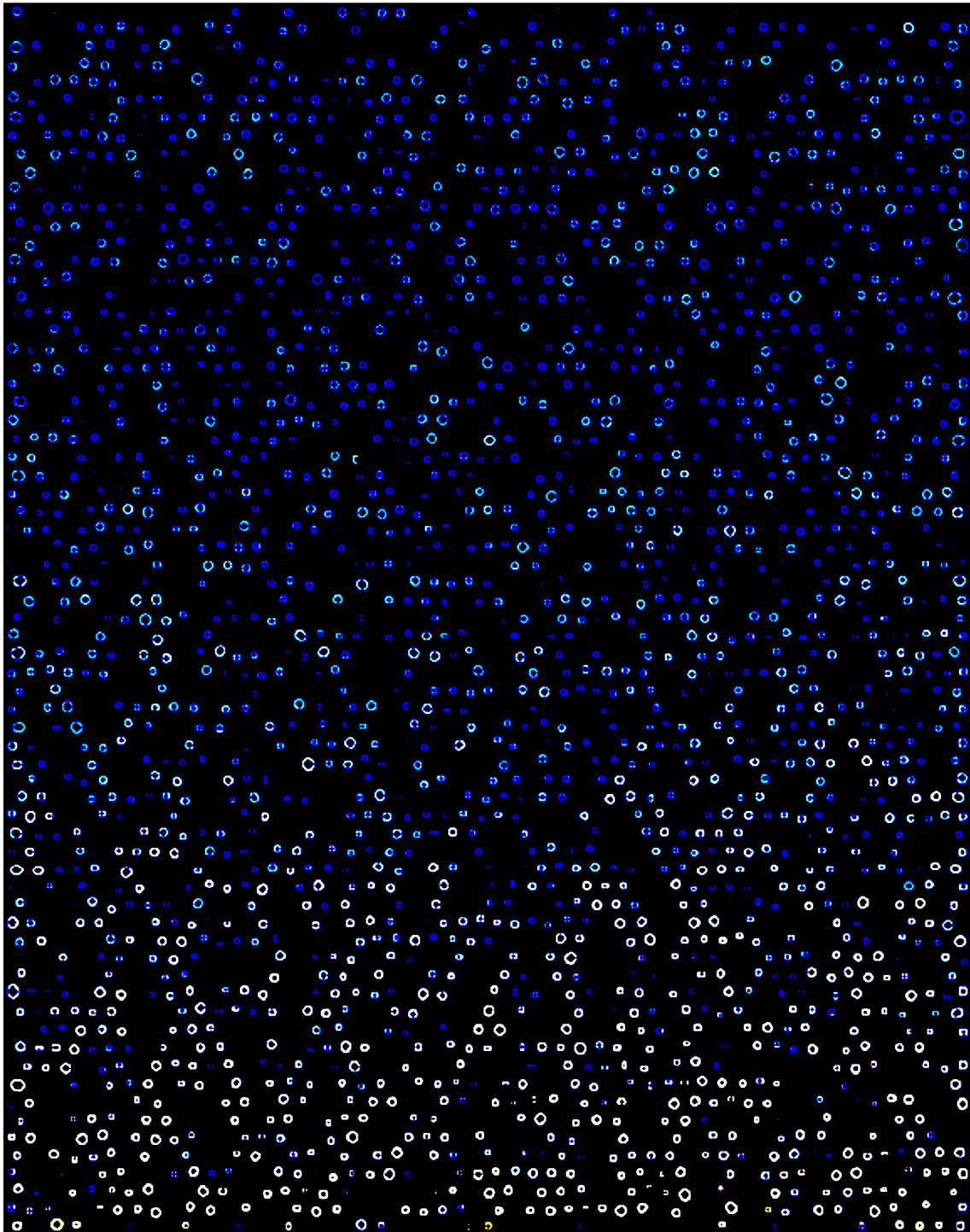
**Figure 5.** Another morning. "Another morning" is similar to the sound recording in Figure 3, capturing the sounds of the surrounding environment in the morning, filled with the crowing of roosters, birds, and other animals. Figure 5 is derived from Figure 2, code c. The recording can be heard here:

<https://doi.org/10.6084/m9.figshare.22638250>. Image by author



**Figure 6.** Emping. "Emping" is the name of a local traditional food made from glutinous rice. The crashing sounds heard in this audio are the sounds of collisions from neighbors making emping. Spectrogram image Figure 2, code d is transformed into "Emping". The sound of "Emping" can be heard here:

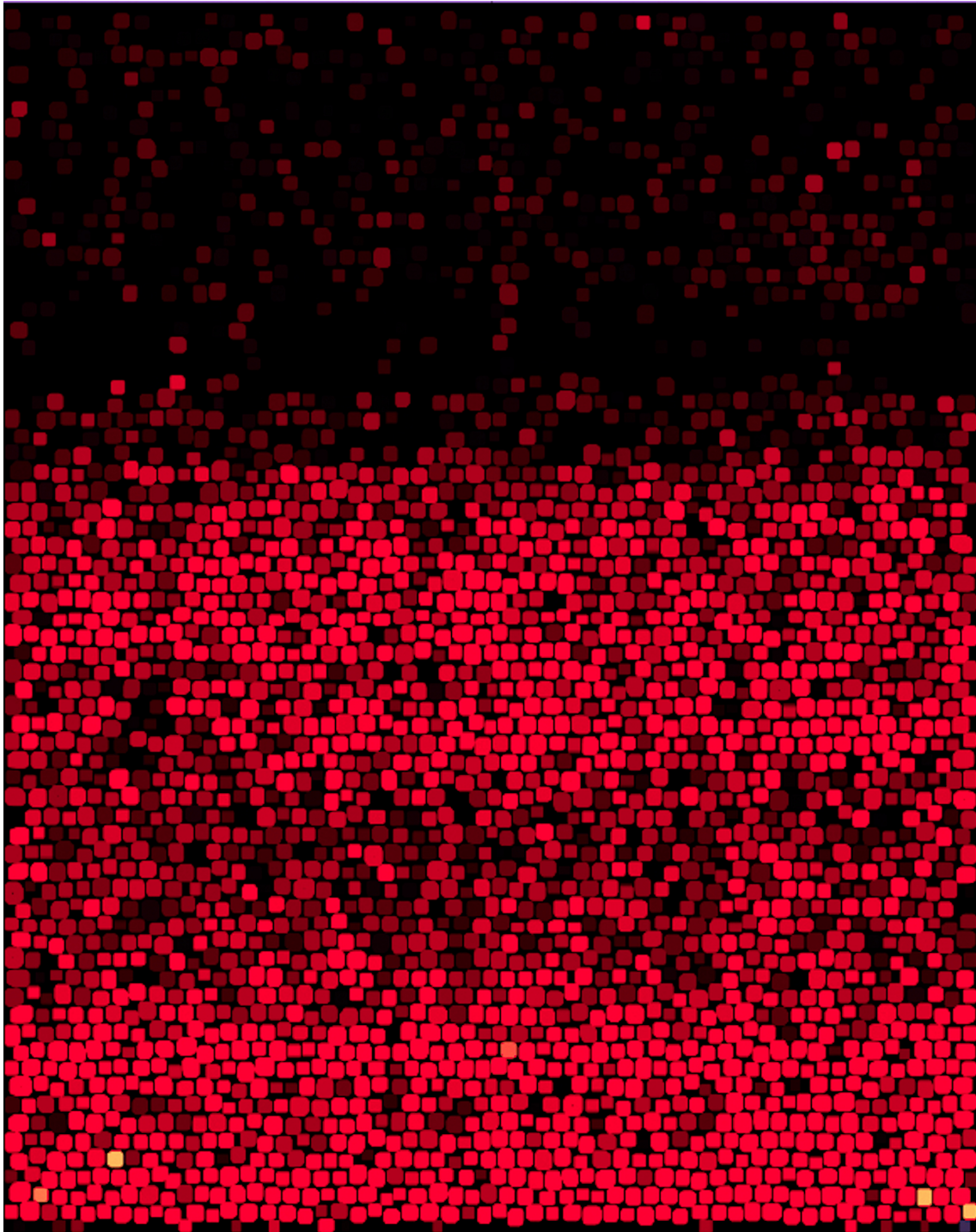
<https://doi.org/10.6084/m9.figshare.22638295.v1>. Image: Author



**Figure 7.** Rain. Rainwater is one of the sources of clean water in Long Lanuk village, as there are no clean water facilities from the government due to its remote location.

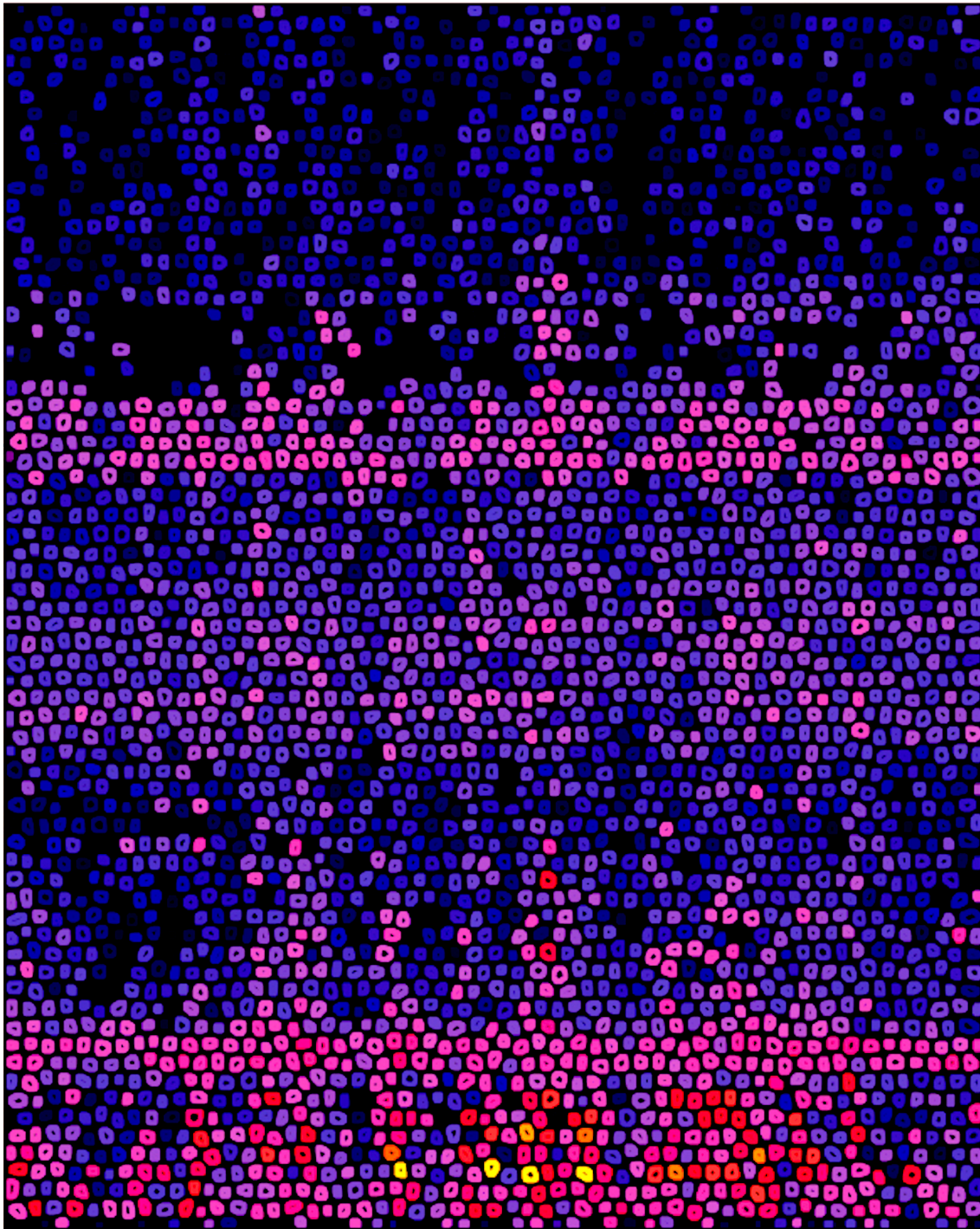
Figure 7 is from a recording of heavy rain that fell and could be clearly heard from my room, as the house doesn't have a ceiling. Figure 7 is an interpretation of the spectrogram image Figure 2, code e, and the recording of the sound of rain falling can be heard here: <https://doi.org/10.6084/m9.figshare.22638259>. Image: Author





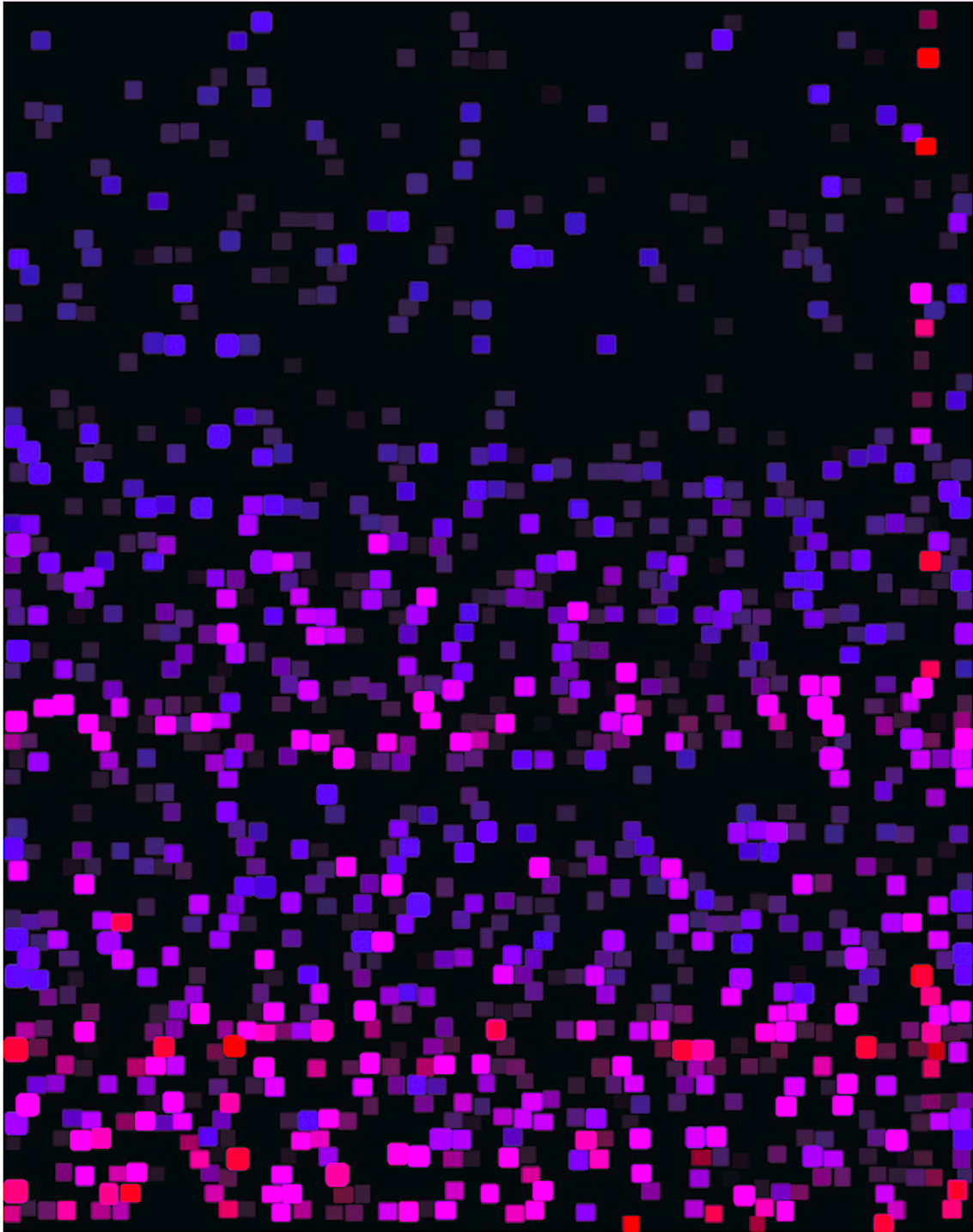
**Figure 8.** Another night. "Another night" was a recording taken at night, where human voices were mixed with sounds of crickets and other animals. "Another Night" is a transformation from Figure 2, code f. The recording can be accessed here:

<https://doi.org/10.6084/m9.figshare.22638268.v1>. Image: Author



**Figure 9.** A song. Figure 2, code g is transformed into "A Song". "A Song" was a recording of local people singing in my neighbour's house in front of mine, which I heard from my room. The singing can be heard here: <https://doi.org/10.6084/m9.figshare.22638253>. Image: Author





**Figure 10.** Evening. "Evening" is recorded at dusk, and the recording is processed into the spectrogram Figure 2, code h. The sound of "Evening" can be heard here: <https://doi.org/10.6084/m9.figshare.22638262>. Image: Author.

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