

THE SOUND DIAGRAM, A VIVID CONTRIBUTION TO THE PRA EXERCISE

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Introduction

In the Vietnam of old, a traditional “prosperous” family could be characterised by the notion of the “three sounds”(Tam thanh): children playing, silk weaving and reciting poems.

* Children playing: This means the family has a lot of children. When children play in a Vietnamese family, it marks happiness and an easy and comfortable life, because the children do not need to work. To have children also means that the family has successors, thus the future generation of this family is secure.

* Silk (cotton) weaving: The family has enough clothes or enough money to buy or produce cotton for weaving, a work done by the women. It indicates that the woman is present in the family. Women play an important role in family life. Their specific role is normally reflected in the type work they do. In this case the woman has enough time for weaving. She does not need to do any other hard work, such as working in the field.

* Reciting poems: A leisure hobby for men, especially in an educated family.

The method

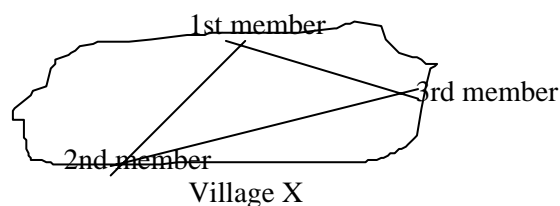
Sound in a community provides an important key to help determine its characteristics. For a long time PRA team members have searched for ways to collect most information in the shortest possible time. Hopefully, a new “method” called the *Sound diagram* can help to realise this aim.

The objective of the *Sound diagram* is to get an idea of the “prosperity” of the people and the “virginity” of nature in a study area. These recordings are best made early in the morning, when life begins in a village. The sounds are illustrated in a *Sound diagram*. In our experience, this method is a vivid contribution to the PRA methodology. It can also be used to get a quick idea about the biodiversity in a new area, and in a RAB (rapid assessment of biodiversity) survey.

How to record the “sound” of a village:

Members of the PRA group need to locate themselves in at least three appropriate positions to record the sounds of a village. Normally this is in or nearby the family-house where he/she staid overnight. Early morning sounds, of the awakening village and nature, have special characteristics. At a later stage, the individual recordings will be mixed into a single one and then be validated.

The recording positions are triangulated in the following way:



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The person recording can be a village member; the villagers themselves have more experience of their own region and can often “detect” sounds that an outsider cannot recognise. This is especially true for the sounds from nature: different birds singing, deer barking or other wildlife sounds. Recordings can also be made during the PRA exercises, or whenever there is time available for recording. Each person who records will have his own “*Sound record sheet*” (see table 1), where he notes all sounds he hears, preferably with its intensity. This enables drawing of the Sound Diagram at a later stage.

Table 1: Proposal for sound diagram record sheet

Nr/Time	SOUNDS TYPES		NOTE
	from the Village/intensity (**)	from the Nature /intensity (**)	
I-From 3 am to 3h59’ am	- People speaking/3 - Music from radio/2	- Junglefowl singing/1 - Wind blowing/3	* Wind stops blowing
II-From 4 am to 4h59’ am	- Rice preparing/1 - Firewood splitting/2 - Motorbike /?...	- Birds singing/2	
III-From 5 am to 5h59’ am	- Men speaking/2 - Pig crying/2 - Dog barking /2	- Wind blowing/1 - Gibbon singing/2 - Birds singing/?	
IV-From 6 am to 6h59’am	- Motor bike/2 - Children playing/2...	- Birds singing/2	
V- From 7 am to 7h59’am	- Children playing/3 - Cow crying /2 - Motorbike/3	- Birds singing/1	

Note: (**) the intensity will be noted from 1-5 following the intensity increase

What information does the sound diagram provide?

Through the sound “picture“ the following data can be analysed:

- **The socio-economic level of life:**
The level of welfare is reflected in sound characteristics of the village: are there radios, televisions, water pumps, cows (the number of cattle will determine the living standard in a village), etc.
- **The quality of the house:**
Another way to determine the quality of life: is the house made of bamboo, can the wind easily blow through it, etc.
- **The traditional culture:**
Among ethnic minority groups, traditional musical instruments typify the cultural character of the community: if it still has its own traditional culture or if much is influenced by “modern” life. Sometimes the traditional music is used to express the productivity of the crop, especially in the rice-harvesting season.
- **The environment, the biodiversity or the weather:**
Sounds reflect the condition of nature in which the community lives: singing birds or other wildlife sounds can be easily recorded in a place where nature is still in a “good or healthy” condition. Absence of such sounds can be an indication of disturbance. A “virgin” area always has prevalent sounds: deer barking, primates howling, birds singing, etc. Hearing the early morning song of a gibbon is *the* sign to know that the area has remained quite untouched.

- **The access to the village:**
The sound from engines (from e.g. motorbikes, boats or cars) can reflect the access to the area.
- **The community features:**
Discussions going on, or the call to go to work together illustrates if the village is a compound community or if people are living in separate clusters. It can also show the characteristics of the relationships between community members or people within a single family.

Naturally, these suggestions depend on the tradition and habits of a country or a region. Through sound diagrams, different villages can be compared for the parameters mentioned above (see table 2).

Table 2: Case of study (in Ethnic minority groups) in three areas of Vietnam (Long&Tam, 1995, 1996)

Sites	Ta lai village-Cat Tien national park-Dong nai province	Le R'mam village-Kontum province	Dak O village - Soâng Be province
Sound - Activities recorded during the same time (same month, different year)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Singing of junglefowl * Singing of birds * Pigs crying * Wind blowing through the bamboo wall * Water pump 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Oxen calls * Rice pounding * Gong sound * Junglefowl singing * Bird singing * Rice meal * Rice husking * Speaking, conversation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Car motor * Water pump * Bike motor * People discussing * Music from radio * Sound from television * Pig crying