Social Dreaming Matrix: Dreaming research; researching dreams

Proposal to ISCL Conference 2014
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I am proposing a Social Dreaming Matrix (SDM) as a session in the 2014 ISCL conference. I know that ‘leadership’, like all relations of authority, is a topic with rich associations, not all of them conscious or communicable in standard scientific language. The aim of the SDM is to share dreams and associations (with a view to questions of research method and practice) in the unconscious associations of the community of conference participants.

The Social Dreaming Matrix is a meeting where the members of the Conference can share dreams and associations to those dreams. Dreams have long been associated with indigenous wisdom (Lawrence 1998; Gosling and Case 2013), but the sharing of dreams in a ‘Matrix’ was first developed by the originator of Social Dreaming, Gordon Lawrence. ‘Matrix’ refers to a web of mental processes and emotions and to a space where something may grow. This proposal aims to explore the possibilities, potential and limitations of Social Dreaming in academic research at a time of renewed interest in the method, following the recent passing away of its ‘discoverer’, Gordon Lawrence (Manley 2014). It is a process through which we may all learn something about the unconscious themes for the conference as a whole since the dreams are understood to be representations of the community or group. As such they bring to the surface issues that are buried in the community of the conference membership. In particular, this matrix will be a space to explore the relationship between dreams and research, and dreams as research.

The purpose of social dreaming is to note the imagery and themes which are present in the dreams. This is rather different to a therapeutic or interpretative approach to dreams: The focus is not on the individual dreamer, but on how the images and feelings expressed in the dreams might inform us all of unrecognised aspects of experience within our academic or practice communities, as represented at this conference. We will invite all conference participants to consider their dreams as information relevant to the work of the conference.

The purpose of the Matrix is to freely associate to the dreams that are made available, so as to make links and find connections in thinking (Lawrence 1998). Each dream sparks off associations among participants that lead to a creative pool of new knowledge for the collective; as such it is a unique transitional space.

Dreams may often seem to be confusing, apparently contradicting what we know of reality. Sometimes only fragments of dreams remain in memory. All dreams, and parts of dreams, are potentially relevant to the matrix.

Process
The Social Dreaming Matrix would take place on one of the conference days, corresponding with another conference also running a SDM, in a large room at the conference hotel or the conference venue, containing only chairs. It will take the form of a 45 minute/ one-hour open matrix, followed by a 20-30 minute dream reflection dialogue [TIMES TBC] in which dreams and associations shared
in the matrix are thought about. In the matrix itself, the chairs are arranged in a ‘snowflake’ pattern (Lawrence 2005) to minimize individual personal connections and allow each participant to occupy his or her own space, encouraging an alternative to the group dynamics that can emerge from sitting in a circle, for example. Participants do not talk directly to each other, but offer dreams and associations into the matrix as a whole. You do not have to remember your dreams to participate, (ideas or associations to others’ dreams are also part of the process), but anyone who has a dream(s) is free to report it at any time that feels appropriate to the participant. These might be dreams from the previous nights or a dream which comes to mind as we sit in the matrix. All reported dreams are potentially relevant. Participants are encouraged to freely associate to the dreams, making links with experience, thought, feeling, memory or images that come to mind. However, interpretation is to be avoided, as it can interrupt/prematurely close down the emergent process of association and discovery.

For the dream reflection dialogue following the matrix, the chairs will be re-arranged into a large circle, (or two smaller circles depending on numbers), to facilitate a more conscious process of thinking and reflection, to which everyone will be invited to contribute. Notes may be taken on a flipchart or similar by the host(s).

The facilitators’ role is as ‘hosts’ to the whole process, to make associations and links, to ask questions, identify themes and suggest working hypotheses which occur to them. If this proposal is accepted, I will move to recruit a co-facilitator and one or more other ‘hosts’ from amongst the conference participants.

The Social Dreaming Matrix will be transcribed in real time by one of the hosts (or another person who volunteers to take up this role) – but not who said it – and to write this up for the participants. Members of the SDM will be sent this transcription at a later date and have the opportunity to amend this account, which will then, in its amended form, constitute ‘data’ (in a more traditional sense) for a research paper on the themes and methods relevant to this conference and its associated journals.

We are also proposing to compare the experiences and data gathered from this conference event with that of another similar event at The Association for Psychosocial Studies conference, taking place in the UK on the same dates. There may also be a link to an online gathering of dreams to run roughly in parallel with the two conferences, (see below).

**The Online Dream Matrix (Proposal)**

**Dreaming voices: Global dream sharing online**

**Aim**
To offer an opportunity for colleagues located anywhere in the world to share a voice recording of a recent dream, and to hear dreams shared by others, over a 24 hour period.

To compare these collected dreams with the SD matrices held live at two conferences in December.

To use the data for the purposes of writing up an academic article.
Attendees at the 2014 APS Conference may have the opportunity to hear and explore the dreams prior to or after participating in a social dreaming matrix. The same opportunity could be offered to participants in the ISCL conference.

**How it works**
In the 24 hours prior to the APS and ISCL Conference matrices, participants recount a dream using a voice memo application, either on a smartphone or on their computer, and send the resulting audio file to an email address.

So, for example, if the APS and ISCL matrices were held at 9am UK time/10am DK time on 16th December, participants in Australia would have from 6pm on 15th November to 6pm on 16th December Australian time to record a dream.

Once received, the file is automatically uploaded to a website with other dreams. Dreams can be replayed by visitors to the website. The site can be password-protected if desired.

**Requirements**
Colleagues interested in participating would need to register their name and email address one week prior to the conference.

**Future developments**
If the event is successful, it could evolve to be more interactive and to extend over a longer period. For example, as the dreams build up on the website, online participants could listen to the dreams as they are uploaded and contribute a dream or association of their own that may emerge from listening to other uploaded dreams.

**References**

