Social Dreaming Matrix: researching futures

Jonathan Gosling, Stefano Pascucci, Sasha Maher, Brad Jackson

We will host a Social Dreaming Matrix (SDM) on Tuesday morning of the ISLC Conference. The sessions will run from 8:15am until 9:15am. Everyone is invited and there will be time to grab some breakfast immediately following the SDM before the Keynote Plenary at 9:30.

'Leadership', like all relations of authority, is a topic with rich associations, not all of them conscious or communicable in standard scientific language. The same can be said – but more so – about the prospect of social collapse, which might have special significance where this is the outcome of human activity (including leadership) in relation to 'Nature'.

The aim of the SDM is to share dreams and associations 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. 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. This might be particularly relevant to researching hard-to-imagine futures.

Each of the SDMs will start with a 45 minute 'matrix' at which participants will tell the dreams they had overnight, and also thoughts or images prompted by hearing those dreams – one's own or others. Then we will pause, stand back and reflect on the material and the method.

Dreams that you have in the run-up to the Conference – while it is itself an imagined future – might be just as apposite as those dreamed during the Conference, so if you intend to join us, start recording them now.

Participation is open to anyone, but it is important to arrive in time for the start at 8:00am. If you are not used to remembering your dreams, and want to do so for this event, here are some tips:
- Go to sleep with the intent to dream and to remember
- Keep a pad and pen close by the bed
- If you wake from a dream, lie still and recall it before moving
- Then write it down as quickly as you can
- Come to the SDM as directly as possible, as if still half asleep …

If you wake but have forgotten your dream, or think you did not dream, come to the Matrix anyway: it is sometimes remarkable how much is recalled in that setting. 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 SDM.

Background

The purpose of social dreaming is to note the imagery and themes that 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. 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. We will invite all conference participants to consider their dreams as information relevant to the work of the conference.

Dreams have long been associated with insight and intuition (Lawrence 1998; Gosling and Case 2013), but the sharing of dreams in a 'matrix' was first developed by Gordon Lawrence (1998; Long & Manley, 2019). 'Matrix' refers to a web of mental processes and emotions and to a space where something may grow. Social Dreaming International is a hub for new developments in this approach.

Process

In the social dreaming matrix it is the dreams, not the dreamer, that is the object of interest. Seats are arranged 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 (Lawrence, 2005). Participants do not talk directly to each other but offer dreams and associations into the matrix as a whole. 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 reflective 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.

The facilitators' role is as 'hosts' to the whole process, to make associations and links, to ask questions, identify themes that occur to them.

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). Members of the SDM will be sent this transcription (with all names removed) 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.

Jonathan@pelumbra.com
+44 7770347939

References
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