

## **Social Dreaming, Social Photo-Matrix, Role Biography and Social Dream-Drawing: Structure, facilitation capacities and fundamental value to organizations**

Rose Redding Mersky  
Pfaffenberger Weg 268  
42659 Solingen  
Germany  
[rosemer@earthlink.net](mailto:rosemer@earthlink.net)

“...so the thoughts have to be worked on to make them available for translation into  
action.”  
(Bion1988: 184)

“The thinking of the people involved is to maintain its viability in relation to a changing  
environmental market. Thinking is essential for its continuance both ‘out there’ as an  
objective, shared fact and ‘in here’ as a subjective experience.”  
(Lawrence1999b: 4-5)

### **INTRODUCTION**

“Transformation, building on the past, recovering what is important, evolution and  
supporting the next generation” – this phrase from the call for papers for this symposium  
(ISPSO Annual Meeting Melbourne 2011) prompted me to submit this evolving study to  
the organizing committee.

These themes have been central concerns of mine for some time, both in relation to  
ISPSO and to our field as well. It seems to me that it has been difficult for us to find the  
balance between honoring our esteemed senior thinkers and making a legitimate space for  
the following generations to take up their own intellectual paths in this field.

One way to think of a regeneration in our organization and our field is to note the number  
of methodologies for accessing unconscious processes in groups and organizations being

developed and utilized internationally. This paper is my attempt to build on our theoretical base and my own experience using these methodologies. To my knowledge, this is the first plenary paper on practice presented at ISPSO, at least since the advent of parallel papers in 1995 in London, and I would like very much to acknowledge and thank the organizing committee for taking this brave step.

In this paper, I am presenting three conceptual frames:

1. An overarching way of thinking about the design of these activities and the role of those who host or lead them. My main question is: What are the necessary and appropriate design elements and facilitation capacities for methodologies that seek to uncover and understand unconscious processes in organizations?
2. A theoretical argument for the fundamental value of these methodologies to organizations,
3. A suggested new paradigm for the role of consultant in bringing these methodologies to organizations.

This paper has two starting points. In developing my own methodology of Social Dream-Drawing, I realized how significant an act it is for a participant to bring into a group something generated from his/her own unconscious, such as a drawing of a dream. What makes a participant take the risk of exposing his/her unconscious “product” to a group? What are the design elements that would facilitate this risky act? What would be the nature of the boundary between the private and the public domain?

The second major catalyst for this paper has been the thinking I have been doing on Social Dream-Drawing. I have been exploring at length issues such as what kind of theme is most appropriate, how recording is best done and the roles of the facilitator and the process consultant. Having extensive experience in hosting similar methodologies, I naturally began to think in a broader way about how they are structured and implemented.

At present there are at least eight methodologies that would be appropriate to include in this study. They are: Social Dreaming (Lawrence 1991, 1998a/b, 1999a, 2000, 2001, 2003, 2005), Organizational Role Analysis (Newton, Long and Sievers 2006; Sievers and Beumer 2006), Role Biography (Long 2006), Role History (Chapman and Long 2009), Organizational Constellations (Hellinger 1998; Weber 2000), Organizational Observation (Hinshelwood and Skogstad 2000; Lazar 2008), Social Photo-Matrix

(Sievers 2007, 2008, 2009), and my own evolving Social Dream-Drawing (Mersky 2008).

For this paper, I have decided to focus on four: Social Dreaming (SD), Role Biography (RB), Social Photo-Matrix (SPM), and Social Dream-Drawing (SDD).

## **METHODOLOGIES EXPLAINED**

### **Social Dreaming (SDM)**



Table 1: Social Dreaming, 2004 ISPSO Annual Meeting, Coesfeld, Germany

This methodology, developed by Gordon Lawrence in the early 1980's (1998a) and familiar to most ISPSO members, is based on the assumption that dreams have a social meaning and belong not only to the individual. Lawrence's insight is that organizations have an unconscious that can be accessed through associations to and amplifications of organizational role holders' dreams. The 'container' in which these dreams are shared and associated to is termed the Matrix (see Table 2).

Participants in the Social Dreaming Matrix are invited to share their dreams and to offer free associations and amplifications to dream material presented. Free Association comes from psychoanalysis and is anything that comes to one's mind during the course of the

Matrix, for example an earlier experience related to the content of a dream, such as an accident or an exam. Very often associations are recent dreams.

Amplifications are those cultural and political elements that come to mind, such as current events, music, literature and film. For example, at last year's annual meeting there were associations to a recent exhibit at the Tate Museum in London.

The role of the hosts is to make links between the dream material and to identify emerging themes, as well as offer their own associations and amplifications. The host opens each Matrix with a general introduction and explains the task of the event.

A Matrix is often followed by consultation sets in smaller groups, where individual case material is presented and worked on, being informed by the process of the Matrix.

### **Social Photo-Matrix (SPM)**



Table 2: Social Photo-Matrix Workshop, Cologne, Germany with the theme 'Transitional Spaces'

The Social Photo-Matrix was developed by Burkard Sievers (2007), beginning in 2004. Participants are invited to take photos of their own organization or that relate to a pre-identified theme, such as transitional spaces (see Table 3), women's leadership or immigration. These photos are entered into an archive on a laptop in an anonymous way,

so that photographers are not identified. Participants (including the hosts) offer associations and amplifications to the photographs, not to the photographer. The Matrix usually takes one hour, during which approximately six to eight photos are shown.

A reflection session follows after a break, usually in a smaller group. The task of the reflection session is to reflect on the experience of the Matrix and to think about the topic, based on the work done there. People sit in a circle and the session is facilitated by one of the hosts.

### **Role Biography (RB)**



Table 3: Role Biography Workshop, Utrecht, Netherlands with the theme ‘Women’s Leadership’

Role Biography, developed by Susan Long, is based on the idea that all role holders have “a history of taking up different roles in different systems: family, community and work” (Long 128) and that awareness of this history helps them better understand how it is being enacted in the current role. As with Organizational Role Analysis (Borwick 2006; Reed & Bazalgette 2006), participants are asked to draw the various roles they have taken at different stages in their personal lives, i.e. aged 6, aged 16 and when they took their first job (see Table 3). By opening up long dormant memories, participants may discover a pattern of role taking over time, i.e. as members of sports teams, church groups or within their own family.

We work intensively in small groups for an hour with each drawing. First the drawings are presented and described. Then participants offer associations and amplifications, while the drawer sits at a distance. The drawer later joins the group and offers his/her responses to the work of the group and a general discussion ensues.

### Social Dream-Drawing (SDD)

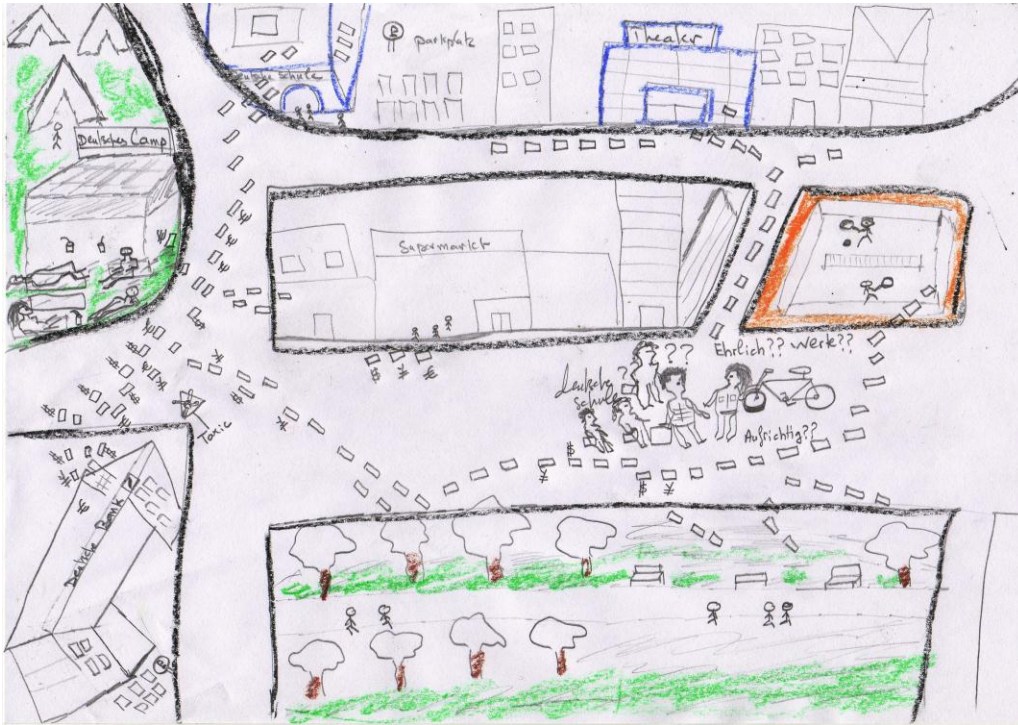


Table 4: Social Dream-Drawing Workshop, Solingen, Germany with the theme ‘What do I risk in my work?’

Social Dream-Drawing is a methodology I am currently developing (Mersky 2008). Participants are asked to bring a drawing of a recent dream. After telling one’s dream, the dreamer shows a drawing. We work on each dream drawing for approximately an hour, offering associations and amplifications, as with Social Dreaming and the Social Photo-Matrix. After 20 minutes, we stand up and switch chairs and think about the theme, in light of our previous associations and amplifications.

## **CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK**

### **Socio-Analysis**

Naturally I am looking at these methodologies from a Socio-Analytic perspective (Bain 1999), which is based on the principles and concepts of psychoanalysis applied to organizations and society. All of these methodologies aim to bring unconscious thinking to light and involve groups or other social systems and not dyads. Key concepts from my perspective are:

1. Free association from psychoanalysis
2. Christopher Bollas' (1987) concept of the "unthought known", defined by Lawrence (1999) as "that which is known at some level but has never been thought or put into words, and so is not available for further thinking."
3. Containment, i.e the capacity of any entity to keep within itself parts that arouse anxiety (Nunkevitich 1998). These events are not designed to provide a retreat; we want participation. As they all deal with the infinite, it is not possible to know what will arise. We know that what lurks in the unconscious and can often be "released" in such events is the violence, the force and the unpredictability of the unconscious. So it is important that the event (which often includes unfamiliar experiences for the participants) is experienced as safe and sufficiently contained. That is the role of the host. We want participants to be able to regress sufficiently to associate, but also to stay to the task and, most importantly, to learn.

### **Socio-Technical**

The socio-technical perspective was developed at the Tavistock Institute in the 1960's (Trist and Murray 1993) and holds that there is an interrelatedness between the social and technical components of organizations. The technical components that it most emphasizes are role, primary task, organizational structure and boundaries.

Over the years, Socio-Technical theory has been adapted to look at issues such as work design, job enrichment and process improvement (Emery 1993; Trist and Bamforth 1993) and has, in a sense, fallen out of favor with socio-analytic thinkers (although I was very pleased to see that it was offered as a workshop this year by Jim Krantz and Wendy Harding). Socio-technical thinkers based their view of the social aspect of organizations very firmly on psychoanalytic thinking, particularly that of Bion and Klein. Some of

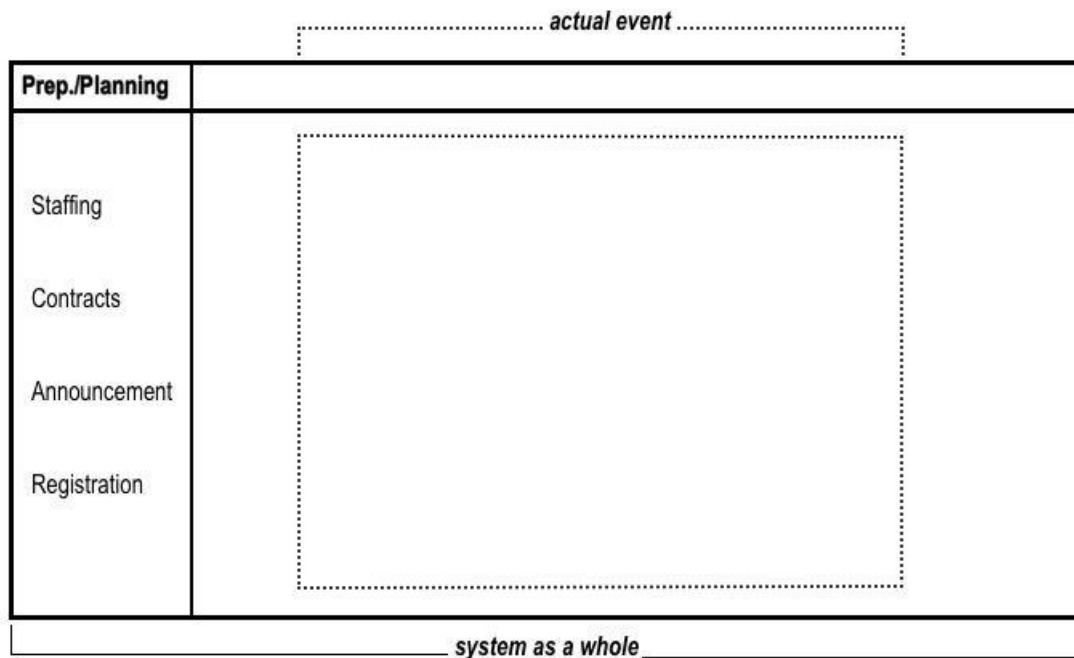
them (Miller and Rice 1967) went on to found the group relations way of learning from experiences in groups.

The drawing of clear time and task boundaries is essential in mounting these methodologies, in order that participants experience the leadership as clear, responsible and competent. There is a direct relationship between the ability to safely regress during the Matrix, for example, and the experience of the leadership as being able to take their roles in a clear and competent way.

## METHODOLOGY MODEL

What follows is a series of slides showing the elements of these methodologies, ending with a formulation of the tasks of the hosts and the experiences of participants.

### **Step 1. Preparation/Planning**



This first simple drawing is designed to show that the actual event itself (in dotted lines) is embedded in a larger context (system as a whole). An organization's authorized body decides to hold such an event and determines who they wish to staff it and makes the invitation. Once the invitation is accepted, contracts are developed. The hosts develop a description of the workshop/event to be advertised by the sponsoring organization, which manages the ongoing marketing, application and registration processes, whatever they

may be. At one point, either the event is sufficiently filled to take place or it is cancelled. Once the event is confirmed, the hosts often send a letter directly to the participants, outlining in more detail the purposes of the workshop and giving an assignment to create something (such as a dream drawing or a photo) to bring to the event. This is the first direct link between hosts and participants.

These events may take place as stand-alone workshops or as offerings in professional conferences or training programs. Sometimes they are incorporated into group relations conferences. They may also be part of an organizational diagnosis or intervention when deemed to be helpful either to explore a key issue hitherto problematic or to deepen an understanding of an existing dynamic.

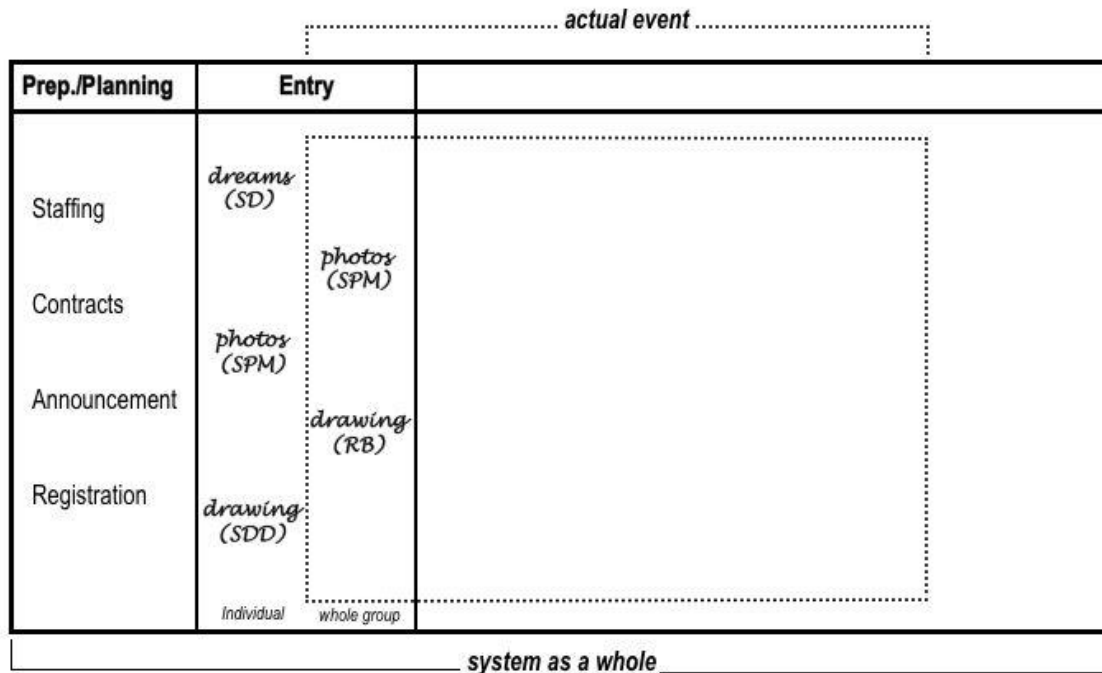
Naturally, the relationship between the sponsoring organization and the hosts of the event must be very carefully understood (see for example Sher's study "concerning the relatedness of group relations to its host organisation" 2009: 152.). Usually a key relationship between one of the hosts and someone in the organization forms around the various tasks associated with mounting the event. As goes this relationship, often goes the event as a whole.

In a sense, the sponsor needs to sufficiently authorize the hosts to undertake their work in good socio-technical fashion. On the other side, however, the workshop hosts need to take their leadership by sufficiently integrating the sponsoring organization's hopes and needs to sponsor such an event. As Miller and Rice (1967) formulate it: "leadership ... is required to relate what is inside the group to its environment; that is, leadership of the group, like that of the individual, is a boundary function that controls transactions between inside and outside" (ibid.: 20). These transactions need to have the quality of "consistency" (ibid.: 21).

Containment is everyone's responsibility in mounting such an event. Sponsors need to be clear in their communications and in taking a role that supports the hosts and participants. Contracts and time boundaries, etc. are all elements that need to be clear.

Except for Role Biography (which focuses on the presenter's particular role history) these methodologies usually have themes. When such events are held in conjunction with conferences as part of a professional development offering, the theme can relate to the overall theme of the conference. One important value of a theme is that it provides a kind of containment to the scope of the work, which helps the system and participants contain anxiety relating to the regressive experience in the Matrix. In addition, the theme provides a focus for discussion and learning in the reflection session.

## Step 2. Entry



In these methodologies, participants are asked to create something either before the event (i.e. a dream), which they then bring into the event and is used as the ‘raw material’ for the work or at the beginning of the event (i.e. a role biography drawing), after the welcome and introductions. In either case, the way the boundary between the creation of these elements and the group experience is drawn and experienced is extremely important.

Once someone has registered for the workshop/program and is asked to take a photograph or draw a dream, they have already psychologically crossed the boundary into the event. One could therefore say that the boundary between the participant and the actual workshop is a permeable one, since the experience has already begun.

### Step 3. Matrix

		..... actual event .....	
Prep./Planning	Entry	Matrix	
Staffing	<i>dreams (SD)</i>		X
Contracts	<i>photos (SPM)</i>	free association	X
Announcement	<i>photos (SPM)</i>	amplification	X
Registration	<i>drawing (RB)</i>		X
	<i>drawing (SDD)</i>		X
	Individual	whole group	whole group

..... system as a whole .....

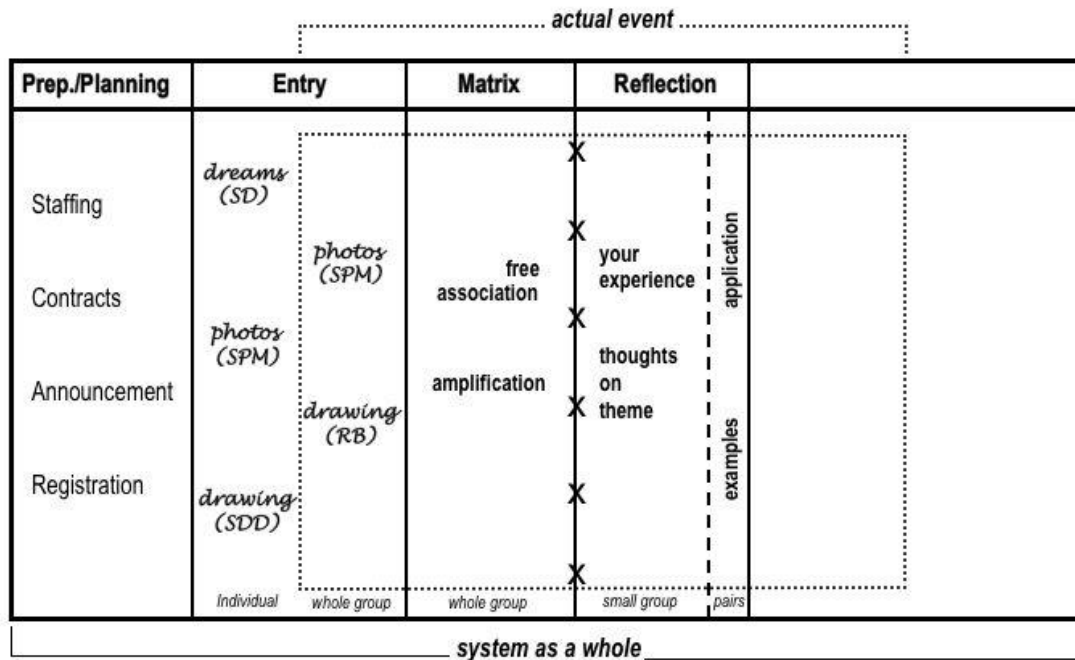
For Social Dreaming and the Social Photo-Matrix, this step involves free associations and amplifications relating to dreams and photographs and includes the whole group together. It is generally one hour.

For Role Biography and Social Dream-Drawing, drawings are placed on a table with participants sitting around them.

In either case, in the matrix/associative part of the program, one does not focus on the identified theme.

Lawrence’s concept is that the matrix is not a group and that therefore group dynamics issues are not the focus. But that does not mean that they do not take place.

## Step 4. Reflection



For Social Dreaming and the Social Photo-Matrix, the Reflection Group takes place after each Matrix, often in smaller groups. It often takes place in a separate break-out room, in order to make clear that this is a separate activity with a separate task. The purpose of the reflection group is to think about the theme, in light of the experience in the Matrix.

The Social Photo-Matrix Reflection Dialogue Session is directed at finding the meaning and significance of the photos of the Matrix. We set out three tasks: First, the participants are asked for their immediate feelings about the experience of the Matrix. Second, they are asked to identify those photos that were most significant to them. Third, they are asked to think directly about the theme in the light of the experience of the Matrix.

While there is an effort not to focus on group dynamics issues, this is the place where experiences such as exclusion and anxiety can be talked about. Often at this point questions arise specifically about the methodology (how it is used, etc.), which we defer to the closing session.

With Role Biography and Social Dream-Drawing, the reflection session is about 15 minutes long and takes place at the end of each hour-long session devoted to an individual drawing.

In Social Dream-Drawing, I have drawn the boundary between the Matrix and the reflection session by asking participants (including myself) to stand up and move to another seat. I want to make the clear distinction between the associative task of the Matrix and the more familiar task of the reflection group (therefore the rather dramatic vertical line with crosses between the two events.). This small change also offers physical relief from the stress of the associative task.

In the Social Photo-Matrix, especially when working with a heterogeneous group, we sometimes create a space for pairs to meet after the last reflection session to discuss particular examples of the theme (e.g. transitional spaces) in their own organizations. We believe that pair work is often a relief from the demands of working in a group and an opportunity to link up with someone in a more intimate way.

### Step 5. Closure

Prep./Planning	Entry	Matrix	Reflection	Closure		
Staffing	<i>dreams (SD)</i>		X		reflections on workshop & methodology questions concerns applications learnings	
Contracts	<i>photos (SPM)</i>	free association	X	your experience		application
Announcement	<i>photos (SPM)</i>	amplification	X	thoughts on theme		
Registration	<i>drawing (RB)</i>		X			
	<i>drawing (SDD)</i>		X			
	<i>Individual</i>	<i>whole group</i>	<i>whole group</i>	<i>small group</i>	<i>pairs</i>	<i>whole group</i>
<b>system as a whole</b>						

The closing plenary is an opportunity for participants to reflect with the whole group on their experience as a whole, to ask specific questions about the methodology and to solicit from the hosts and from one another examples of how they are using the methodology. This session is designed to give participants a transitional experience between the event and their familiar worlds.

### Step 6. Post-Workshop

..... actual event .....						
Prep./Planning	Entry	Matrix	Reflection	Closure	Post-Workshop	
Staffing	<i>dreams (SD)</i>		X	reflections on workshop & methodology questions concerns applications learnings	Administrative follow-up  Transcripts  Literature	
Contracts	<i>photos (SPM)</i>	free association	X			your experience  thoughts on theme
Announcement	<i>photos (SPM)</i>	amplification	X			
Registration	<i>drawing (RB)</i>		X			
	<i>drawing (SDD)</i>		X			
	Individual	whole group	whole group	small group	pairs	
..... system as a whole .....						

Administrative follow-up after the event may include giving credits or issuing certificates of participation, fulfilling financial obligations to the hosts and/or reporting to the larger system in which it is embedded.

I have found that distributing literature (both articles and bibliographies) after a workshop is more effective than doing it beforehand, because the participant now has his/her own experience to relate to the articles. In addition, one can then enter the workshop and participate “without memory and desire” and have one’s own unique experience.

For all of these methodologies, it is possible to produce a transcript. This can be undertaken in many different ways. Sometimes participants themselves write the transcripts (SDD). Other times we ask students to take this as a special role (SPM; SD).

Tape and video recording can also be used, but the task of transcription is enormously time-consuming and can be extremely expensive to pay for. And, in any case, one must receive the consent of all participants in advance.

Often transcripts are distributed after the event, but I am not clear to what extent they are reviewed and appreciated. Past participants have noted that the workshop in the document does not seem to match the one they experienced. When a workshop is held on a weekly basis, however, the transcripts help participants stay connected to the ongoing experience. A colleague has made the excellent point that producing a transcript might be quite inhibiting when used as part of an organizational diagnosis or intervention, where issues of confidentiality are paramount. In general, I see their value as a record of the experience and as a kind of containment, reassuring us all that nothing will be “lost”.

### Key Tasks of Hosts

Prep./Planning	Entry	Matrix	Reflection	Closure	Post-Workshop	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Negotiate terms</li> <li>• Communicate</li> <li>• Design</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Welcome</li> <li>• Present theory &amp; methodology</li> <li>• Give directions</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Contain</li> <li>• Associate &amp; amplify</li> <li>• Link &amp; hypothesize</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Facilitate</li> <li>• Set clear tasks</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Transition work to participants</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Be available</li> </ul>	
Staffing	<i>dreams (SD)</i>		X		reflections on workshop & methodology questions concerns applications learnings	
Contracts	<i>photos (SPM)</i>	free association	X	your experience		Administrative follow-up
Announcement	<i>photos (SPM)</i>	amplification	X	thoughts on theme		Transcripts
Registration	<i>drawing (SDD)</i>		X			Literature
	<i>drawing (RB)</i>		X			
	<i>Individual</i>	<i>whole group</i>	<i>whole group</i>	<i>small group</i>	<i>pairs</i>	<i>whole group</i>
	<i>New</i>	<i>Unfamiliar</i>	<i>Familiar</i>	<i>Intimate</i>	<i>Transitional</i>	<i>Integrative/Reflective</i>

With this chart, I am exploring the nature of the key tasks of hosts in relation to the experience of participants. Note that the hosts' tasks for each phase are written above the chart and the participants' experiences are identified under the chart. Note also that for each phase, the participants are in different groupings, i.e. individual, whole group, small group or pairs.

As with any organizational role, hosts of these events have both formal and informal tasks. On the formal side is writing the description, designing the event, preparing schedules, and – in general – managing and leading it.

As to informal tasks, one critical one is to lead the event by keeping in mind the delicate balance between the need for clarity of task and boundaries and the fluidity and regression necessary for unconscious processes to emerge. And hosts must also be sensitive to group dynamics issues that may arise and to recognize, as Long (2010) writes, “when the group dynamic is taking over and whether it can or cannot be contained within the work of accessing the matrix”.

In a sense, while facilitators/hosts have an expertise in running these events, they also – like the participants – are entering something totally new and infinite each and every time. They associate and amplify, as well as contain and lead.

Therefore, I would say – both for their own self-management and for the management of these methodologies as a whole – they must maintain both clarity about task in each element and a capacity to contain, meaning to be able to absorb and live with the anxieties present in the group without being defensive or punishing.

Particularly in the Matrix phase, containment also means not being judgmental. One often may say: “there is no right or wrong association”. The trick is not to make this sound like a criticism of the last speaker. One realizes that whoever is raising questions or becoming anxious is being mobilized unconsciously by the group, and it is important to respect this anxiety.

This raises the question of the special influence of the host when seeking to elicit unconscious processes. When does one speak? The hosts should, on the one hand, be careful not to be the first speaker, but sometimes – especially when a methodology is totally new to a group – that is necessary. There is always the risk that any association or hypothesis may be experienced as an attempt to guide the group, rather than a contributing thought (Eden 2010). We have seen anxieties emerge in many different ways, such as interpreting a particular dream or drawing (or dreamer or drawer), the inability to allow oneself to learn and skepticism about application.

Through this process, participants begin gradually to take responsibility for the event and how it is conducted. But it is the nature of how the “hosts” themselves first take their role that matters. If done in a “good enough” way, by the end of the event participants can allow themselves to make their own transition into this methodology. One could say, therefore, that the hosts begin in a highly containing and active way and gradually become more and more passive, as participants themselves take on more of the experience, become more comfortable and proficient in free association and allow themselves to learn and think new thoughts.

## **FUNDAMENTAL VALUE TO ORGANIZATIONS**

As these methodologies are becoming more and more sophisticated and popular in our professional community, the question becomes how can we do more to “make the case” for their value in organizations. It seems to me that we ourselves must first solidly understand what they offer.

In simple terms, I see the value of these methodologies – when implemented and used thoughtfully – as helping organizations to increase their capacity to think about the difficult realities they are facing, rather than suppressing them or allowing them to be acted out in parts of the system – and to take actions and make decisions based on these insights.

My thinking begins with the work of Burkard Sievers (1999; 2006) and his concept of the psychotic organization. Sievers applies to organizations Bion’s concept of the psychotic and non-psychotic parts of the personality. He theorizes that psychotically-functioning organizations unconsciously project their psychotic parts into those departments, sections or environments with the most valency for introjection. Thus, either that section of the organization becomes the problem -- rather than a signal that there is something out of order in the system as a whole -- or the ‘problem’ is displaced into the outer world. One example from my own practice was the demonization of the head of the leasing department of a corporate rental organization. Due to the financial crisis, the market was shrinking drastically and she was being blamed for not being effective enough in getting new rentals. Soon after, the entire organization was closed down.

Following Bion (1957), Sievers, like Lawrence (1999b), posits that psychotic processes prevent thinking and also – for individuals and organizations alike – prevent entities from seeing reality, mourning losses, working them through and taking appropriate action.

Lawrence (ibid.) further hypothesizes that the non-psychotic personality (and presumably the non-psychotic part of any system) is always located in the unconscious, as consciousness is tasked with “encountering of the fateful vagaries of life”. Thus the psychotic situation can be “rectified, put into touch with reality, once the individual rescues his thinking from the unconscious, or infinite, i.e. from his non-psychotic personality”

So how does one or how does an organization undertake this “rescue”? My thesis is that utilizing any of the described methodologies would be one means of doing so. We think of the Matrix sections of these methodologies as a “space for the unconscious to emerge” (Eisold 2011) But this is a collective unconscious, not an individual one. Susan Long (2011) describes it as an ‘associative unconscious’ -- “a matrix of thought that links members of a community at an unconscious level”. She is referring here not just to “the repressed unconscious” but “to out of awareness generally”. So that the matrix parts of these methodologies are, in her words, “an attempt to link in with this matrix of thoughts to see what is occurring (sic) in the community.”

In the matrix, at least one and sometimes two forms of unconscious thinking, as posited by Lawrence (1999b), emerge. One form – dreaming as thinking – is made available in the SDM and SDD catalyzed by the dream material brought in by participants. The other form – the unthought known – is made available, through associations and amplifications to the participants’ dreams, drawings and photos. The individually-created third objects (RB, SDD, SPM), along with the dreams in the SDM, function as catalysts for associations and amplifications, which themselves reveal the unthought known from the unconscious.

What makes the Matrix experience important is that – according to Lawrence (ibid.) – these non-psychotic thoughts arise only in interactions. For all these methodologies, one must have a ‘collective’. As Lawrence puts it:

Thinking as dreaming and thinking as the unthought known point to the existence of the quantum self. This is the self that exists because of relationships; is brought into being through interaction. The idea that we are autonomous is erroneous and arises from narcissistic preoccupations.

However, these methodologies are effective precisely because of and only with the combination of both the Matrix and the reflective session. Bion (1988: 179) wrote that thinking is the result of “two main mental developments. The first is the development of thoughts”, which I see as arising in the Matrix and in the associative processes in other

methodologies. The second, which he calls thinking, is the “apparatus to cope with them”.

The reflection group is the setting for this apparatus of thinking to undertake its task of transforming these thoughts from the infinite into thinking relating to reality, i.e. the chosen theme or the organization itself. From Bion’s perspective “thinking is a development forced on the psyche by the pressure of thoughts and not the other way around” (ibid.), meaning that we cannot call thoughts into being by the act of thinking, but we can only think once thoughts arise.

To further expand this line of argument, Bion viewed these arising thoughts as not just random ones. Instead “(a)...they in some form contained or expressed a problem, and (b) ...were themselves felt to be undesirable excrescences of the psyche and required attention, elimination by some means or other, for that reason” (ibid.: 184). Here he makes two important points, I think. The first is that these thoughts are clues to the problems underlying any system and secondly that they reflect what has been projected as unwanted from the rest of the system.

But what does it matter if these thoughts relating to a problem are made available for thinking? I believe Lawrence (1999b) helps us here when he writes that when an organization is able to think, it is able “to maintain its viability in relation to a changing environmental market. Thinking is essential for its continuance both ‘out there’ as an objective, shared fact and ‘in here’ as a subjective experience”. Thus the capacity to think is necessary to survive and be effective.

So, to summarize, these methodologies – when utilized properly – help organizations think, survive and thrive. In the Matrix section of all these methodologies, the non-psychotic unthought known arises, through the associations and amplifications. They arise in that section as seemingly random and chaotic (yea, infinite). But they reflect – even in this inchoate form – the collective anxieties of the group and the problems underlying these anxieties. In these methodologies, an as-yet unconceptualized but felt frustration begins to be clear. The subsequent reflection section is the place to cope with this and begin to sort it out. Thus, accessing the unconscious, less psychotic aspects leads to a better ability to think in a realistic way, to contain this frustration and later to act.

## **CONCLUSION**

There are without doubt major challenges in bringing these methodologies to organizations (unfamiliarity with our way of working; complications regarding

confidentiality; complexities about who should participate; anxieties regarding drawing and other creative forms, etc.).

First off, they are not for everyone, as Robert Lipgar noted in the ISPSO list serve (2010) “social dreaming is not only space for reflection, it is, I believe, by design an invitation to regress and therefore should be available to, and engaged in under particular conditions and with particular purposes in mind for particular populations.” Burkard Sievers (2011) learned this when he undertook a SPM in a juvenile prison in Wuppertal, Germany. Not only was the methodology unknown, but the act of free association was almost taboo in such a totalitarian institution.

The decision to risk mounting such an event would be largely based on the existing relationship between the consultant and the client organization. With the prison, Sievers worked with the Catholic Chaplain of this institution. It is the consultant’s responsibility to articulate how and why such an event would be of benefit to the system. It is extremely important that those who are hosting the event clearly communicate to the sponsor what the risks might be and work closely with the sponsor in describing and designing the elements, such as length, place, design, etc.

Both in terms of containment and as a focus for later organizational work, a theme relating to the presenting problem (i.e. turnover, merger, conflict) should be identified. This process, in and of itself, is a consultative process, as the host of the event and the internal contact work through this decision. It is best if the theme does not take a position one way or another on whatever the problem is. It must be focused enough to provide a direction, but open enough to encourage creativity. There is a very delicate line between a theme that stimulates unconscious thinking and one that feeds underlying splits or promotes someone’s organizational agenda.

Sometimes a theme can be too general, as we learned at the recent Social Photo-Matrix workshop in Budapest. Our chosen theme, “Budapest – The City in the Mind”, was actually too broad for the allotted time of work. Participants experienced a kind of confusion at the end (which to be fair could be seen as the normal and expected experience of unresolved questions). Perhaps “Budapest – City in Transition” or “Budapest –Under the Surface” would have been better choices. Thus, as we are ever learning, the theme must, in a sense, properly “fit” not only the participating system but the length of the event.

The consultant must be able to evaluate which methodology (if any) is appropriate for any given need and to explain why to the client. (For example RB may be valuable for a team or a working group and Organizational Observation for a systemic analysis). In

order to do that he/she must first be able to understand their value. Sometimes the methodology itself may need to be slightly modified to suit a particular time-frame or institutional need (Sievers, *ibid.* 15). The ultimate task is to design and implement them carefully and ably in the system.

Even once all this has been accomplished, the next important question is “What next?”. I can imagine the next step would take the form of an application event a few weeks or months later, whose task is to apply the thinking from the workshop to specific organizational issues (followed perhaps by a smaller group designing action steps from there). This gap in time between the workshop experience and an application event is supported by Bion’s (1970) observation that it is necessary to separate thought and action, for each to be separately contained “in a mutually exclusive commensal state” (121). So, using Bion’s terms, this application event would be the opportunity for the thoughts “to be worked on to make them available for translation into action” (1988. 184).

Here the consultant’s role would be to support the client in making this transition and, in Bion’s (1988:80) words, “to bridge the gulf of frustration between the moment when a want is felt and the moment when action appropriate to satisfying the want culminates in its satisfaction”. I think what Bion is saying between the lines here is that, while it may be tempting to immediately act once a frustration is felt or a problem is identified, the better course is to take time for this learning to be worked through. Here the consultant may help the organization bridge that gap by designing processes by which the client can use the thinking in the reflection section to focus on the organization itself.

Bringing these methodologies to organizations requires a different model of consulting than the series of steps we have come to know as organizational consultancy, i.e. entry, data collection, diagnosis, feedback, intervention, etc. Even when conceived as ever repeating processes, this way of working, as David Armstrong (2010:112) notes, is “too one-sided, too much the consultant’s property and too little the emergent property of a lived exchange”. What is paramount, in his view, is the joint “understanding that emerges out of the continuous, shared interplay with the client” (*ibid.*).

Working with methodologies such as the ones I have been describing puts us in the role of helping the client come into contact with its own unconscious self, through the thoughts of its role holders. It helps organizations find the voices and wisdom within their systems and is “a kind of doing, a practical skill of becoming aware of something not yet fully grasped or known, in which the consultant and client gradually learn to collaborate” (*ibid.* 113). This joint understanding is a product of trust, which must exist in order for any client to take the risk of using our methodologies.

I sincerely hope that these thoughts on the practical application of our ever-growing number of methodologies will find its resonance with you today, and I look forward to your responses. Thank you.

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