

Social Dream-Drawing: A Methodology in the Making

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Abstract: This article describes the theoretical and experiential development of a methodology designed to access the unconscious of role holders through drawings of their dreams. Based on the pioneering work of Gordon Lawrence and his Social Dreaming-Matrix, this methodology holds the assumption that dreams belong not only to the dreamer but are expressions of the collective unconscious from which important meaning for the organization can be gleaned. Research on the use of drawings in organizational consultation and research illustrates the important value of these projective methods, and two Social Dream-Drawing sessions are described in depth. The article closes with an elaboration of two aspects of this new methodology that differentiate it from Social dreaming: the potential for deeper access to unconscious material (due to the combination of both visual and verbal data) and the role of the drawing as a “third eye” on the process, giving the drawer some distance from the dream material and the possibility to associate with the group. In this process, original dream material emerges more and more, and collective associations deepen. The article emphasizes the important role of the facilitator to clearly communicate the purpose of the methodology and to both contain anxieties regarding regression and encourage creative thinking and deeper understanding. It is also the role of the facilitator to help participants link the material to larger organizational issues.

“All representations are transformations.” (Bion, 1965, 140)

Dreams offer “...transitional space for discussion, finding other ways beyond denial and splitting, which are integrative and healing.” (Bain 2005, 9)

Introduction: From the Depths to the Drawing Pad

The use of individual dreams and dream material to illuminate social processes was pioneered by the work of Gordon Lawrence and his Social Dreaming methodology (1999). Participants in the matrix are invited to share recent dreams, and members of the matrix make associations to them. The hosts of the matrix ‘take’ these dreams, offer hypotheses that link the dreams thematically and suggest possible underlying meanings relating to the social or organizational world of the matrix. It is this use of dreams to explore the underlying issues of social systems that has led to my interest in developing a related methodology, Social Dream-Drawing.

As one's original dream experience makes its journey from a totally unique internal experience to its 'presentation' to the world through drawing, it becomes transformed. The delicate and mysterious 'decision' of the dreamer to attempt to recall – usually while still in bed and just awoken - begins this process. The dream material becomes lodged imperfectly into some sort of disconnected narrative 'in the mind'.

From this first 'achievement' comes the opportunity to transform it yet again, either through language (by telling another or by writing it down) or through drawing. Sometimes, it is drawn and further elaborated by the written word. When the fleeting, often chaotic 'pictures' in the unconscious are represented on paper, they enter an arena of transformation. It is there that the dreamer has brought to physical reality what has already uniquely emerged from the unconscious. For every immediately forgettable bit, rejected fright, illogical and therefore impossible 'lost' dream fragment, come those that we somehow feel able to refine, reframe, and represent to others.

One can say that any step in bringing the dream from the original is an act of transformation. Bion (1965), in his theory of transformations, uses the example of the artist who paints a field of poppies. When he/she does so, elements of the original field (what he terms "invariants" [ibid., 4]) remain unaltered (i.e. the red coloring), in order for the painting to be recognizable as a representation of that particular landscape. Just so, the transformation of the original dream material contains invariants that link the original dream material to the drawing and make it recognizable. In this process, one can say, a kind of transformation in the psyche of the dream drawer takes place.

But there are challenges. How can one possibly 'match' the experience of the dream with the materials of drawing, especially if one does not see oneself as a good enough artist? One must somehow translate a 3-dimensional experience into a 2-dimensional one. Does the paper resist the easy flow of the images? Can one's colored pencils really capture the colors? Must a 'story' (as a cartoon) be made out of unrelated images? Will the effort overtax one's artistic abilities? How can one stay 'true' to one's original dream experience?

Stephen Hau (2002; cf. 2004), a psychologist and member of the research staff at the Sigmund Freud Institute, Frankfurt am Main, Germany, did an experiment designed to compare what were termed "free-imagination drawings" and "dream drawings" He and his colleagues asked sleepers to wake up and immediately draw what, if anything, they had just dreamt. He later asked them to make "free-imagination drawings" during a conscious state. Then he compared the two kinds of drawings.

Hau noted that dream drawings have a childlike quality and represent a regression into earlier childhood stages (the average age for dream drawings being 8.6 years and for free imagination drawings being 10.2). The dream images, he says, are from earlier developmental stages, even though they may represent much more complex material.

Hau sees dream drawing as being mainly concerned with drawing a story and creating some kind of connecting cord. The line of thoughts from the remembrance and the

sequence of images of the perceived and remembered dream experience are supposed to be brought together and shown. Breaks, summaries, changes of perspectives, sequences of action, the space and time of the dream are condensed in the image, which doesn't give room or space for perspective representation. What happened in the dream is condensed.

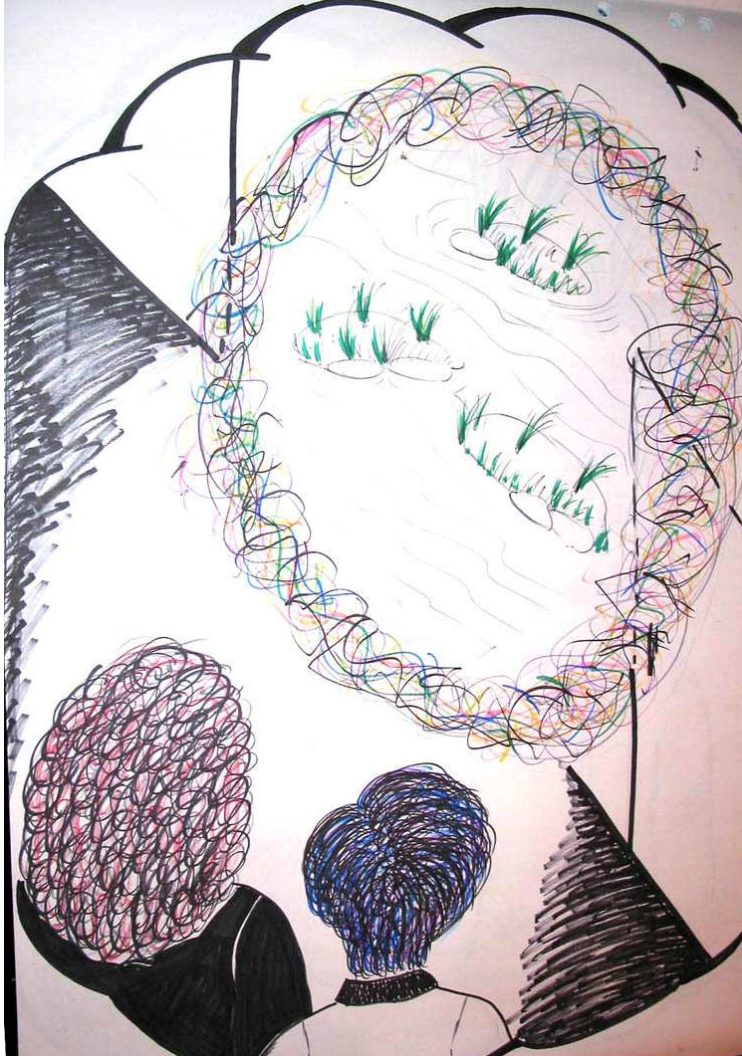
Despite these limitations, however, Hau and his colleagues make the important observation that by drawing a dream, one is closer to the original experienced image (Hau 2002, 199). At the same time, the potential for distortion or, for what Karien van Lohuizen (personal communication 2007) termed 'the sophistication of the process of getting things lost', lies in overly elaborated drawings, ones that are meant to show good drawing or good imagination, that are not well linked to the original experience. Nevertheless, by using a methodology that encourages these drawings, the question becomes 'What is facilitated by this effort and what possibilities for learning does it offer?'

Dead Babies In the Mud – Group associations to a dream drawing of my client

The first time I recognized the power of the drawings of dreams for my work was in 2003. In April of that year I gave a presentation to a university class about a consultation with a client who would only work with me over the telephone (Mersky, 2006). The client is a very ambitious female in her mid-40's, who is very fastidious about her appearance. A few days after the presentation, 'J', a student in the class, had a vivid dream about my client. One part is as follows:

We ['J' and my client, Leslie] are now standing hip-deep in brown, muddy water and there are small, soft and wet looking little islands with some sort of grass on it like in a moorland. Here everything including our former business-like clothes are in brown and pale green colours. There actually is no horizon or sky; it is all white, bright and a bit foggy. Leslie is at my right side and now I can see her for the first time. She looks a bit like Winona Ryder, big eyes, short brown hair and a desperate look on her face. She is close to tears, pulls my sleeve at the right arm and is trying to tell me something. She seems afraid I could punish her or be angry with her, but she wants to tell it no matter what. Then I can make out what she is constantly saying: "I killed all the babies, hear me? I killed them". At first I do not understand what she is talking about, but then I can make out many little baskets swimming near the islands. Leslie grabs such a basket and shoves it over to me and in it is a dead baby, pale, dead and cold with mud and grass on it. In the dream I have the impression that she killed them a time before by pulling the whole basket under water. Surprisingly I do not feel any anger or that she should be punished. In fact I sort of expected this and take it as a plain fact. I just want to tell her that it is no surprise to me that she did this and that everything in her appearance tells this, as if it was written in her forehead and that I wonder why she is making such a big deal out of it...as the dream ends...

'J' emailed me the dream and offered to bring pictures of the dream to a subsequent class for our reflection. She brought four big drawings of this dream and 'talked' us through it and them. Her picture of the above dream segment is below:



The associations to this picture dealt in large part with the mud and dirt of the dream and also on Leslie's deep shame for having killed babies and covered them with mud. We tried to connect these associations to two important facts about her: she is a pediatrician and, though married, has no children. The drawing of the dream was noted as being 'cleansed' in a certain way, as if the material was just too difficult to look at.

My experience was that I was discovering parts of Leslie that I would never otherwise have accessed. In my work with her over the past few years, I knew that she was very concerned about how she looked, what impression she made, and how she was seen – whether she had, for example, the right expression. She would often discuss preparations for upcoming unstructured situations, where she would be quite visible, i.e. office parties, workshops. She was also terrified of those times when she was tired and would lose her temper or do something destructive in her interactions with others. She had been more than once reprimanded for being unable to work well with other people.

The idea of being covered with mud for having done some unforgivable act (that must always be covered) was an important metaphor for my subsequent work with her. I was confirmed in my ongoing hypothesis that her self-representation was strongly influenced by an early trauma of some sort. To be clean, fresh, not dirty, with the right expression and – especially – to be kept pure by the distance of the phone line made more sense and also helped me to accept that, for her, this was the closest intimacy she could handle. I became less judgmental of her choice to work only by phone.

The associations to this dream picture provided a kind of ‘third eye’ on the consultation. A great deal of space was opened for me to work with Leslie, not in the sense of sharing this experience with her, but in the sense of being able to develop and hold more hypotheses about her and her inner world. I grew open to the idea that Leslie’s unconscious had somehow met ‘J’ in her dream, and that ‘J’ had actually had a dream on behalf of the consultation. I felt identified with the figure of ‘J’ in the dream, who heard my client’s deeply shameful confession and saw the evidence of my client’s terrible deed. What was especially important was that ‘J’ offered her forgiveness and acceptance. Though I had never articulated it, I realized that, as a consultant, I was taking a similar role with Leslie and that ‘J’s’ dream provided a further reinforcement for this stance. I felt reaffirmed in my professional role and re-invigorated in my consultation work (which is still ongoing).

Understandably, I became quite excited about the possibilities for exploring drawings of dreams for future work.

Psychoanalysis and Dream Drawing

The value of the drawing of dreams has historical and contemporary support in psychoanalysis. Freud wrote about the Wolf Man’s drawing of his childhood dream about wolves, and he also acknowledged that latent content was revealed in the drawings of dreams undertaken by Marcinowski (Hau 2004; Fischer 1957).

Bion (1965) considers the painter’s representation of a field of poppies similar to an interpretation of a patient’s unconscious material, wherein “the facts of an analytic experience (the realization) are transformed into an interpretation (the representation)” (ibid., 4), whether by patient or analyst. From his perspective, the key aspect of this transformation is that “an experience, felt and described in one way, is described in another” (op.cit).

Bion’s notion that the painter’s representation transforms the original landscape in the same way that an interpretation transforms analytic material suggests support for the idea that the dream drawer is also transforming unconscious material. Not only is unconscious material made available to the dreamer (and the group), it is being worked on, worked through and elaborated in the course of bringing it into the social arena.

Based on his work with patients' drawings, Charles Fisher (1957), a psychiatrist at Mount Sinai Hospital in New York, believes that the act of creating images of one's dream evokes dream images that would otherwise not come to awareness. He writes:

It is an interesting feature of these experiments that some of the latent content of the dream emerges and becomes evident through the process of drawing the dream. It is very likely that this content would not become evident if the dreams were reported only verbally and not drawn....There is no doubt that because dreams are largely visual in structure the usual purely verbal analysis results in the overlooking of significant latent content (Fisher 1957, 36).

Linda Brakel, a psychoanalyst and faculty member at the Michigan Psychoanalytic Institute, proposes that dream drawing be officially integrated into analytic treatment. She compared patient verbal-only reports and associations to their dreams to their verbal associations to drawings of these same dreams. She documents the greater depth of material and detail revealed by the combination of "verbal association and pictorial renderings" (Brakel 1993, 368). In her view this combination provides greater access to the time in the patient's life when pictorial representations were more dominant and thus tap into earlier material that would otherwise not be accessed by purely verbal means. Furth (1998, 12) takes another step when he notes that "pictures from the unconscious represent primitive, raw material taken directly from the unconscious, undeveloped, yet filled with the unconscious content closely connected to the individual's complexes".

Unconscious revealed: Using drawings in consultation and research

In the traditional organizational development field and in the field of Socio-Analytic research and consultation, the use of drawings has proved extremely useful. The risk one takes in using this methodology is client resistance due to a fear of infantilization and a skepticism that anything practical can truly be gained by such a methodology. Because one is engaged in an activity associated with childhood, there is a natural fear of regression and of appearing too childish or of revealing something that is better kept private. Very often, the success in convincing a client or research subject to undertake such an activity is based on the existing trust between consultant/researcher and client/subject, perhaps through previous work projects or previous participation in training programs, workshops or group relations conferences. And, because this activity often produces anxiety in the client system (inside and outside the group), the role of the facilitator in explaining the purpose of such an exercise and conducting the intervention in a well bounded and contained way is extremely important.

In terms of methodologies, a common assignment is to ask a group to draw a picture of an animal or a machine that represents one's organization (Morgan 1993) or, simply, to make a picture of their organization. One way these drawings are then worked with is as follows (Beumer/ Sievers 2006): Finished pictures are mounted and displayed around the room. Each one is explored in depth. The first step is for the drawer to explain the drawing. After initial clarifying questions are answered, group members associate to the picture, while the drawer remains silent. After a period of 15 or so minutes, the drawer

responds and shares his/her reflections. From that experience, a general discussion or set of associations at the group level may take place, facilitated by the consultant or the researcher. Often this is an opening exercise with a group that will subsequently be working at a concrete level in a change management or a strategic planning process.

Practitioners and researchers using pictures are trying to elicit material that lies out of awareness and that generally underlies current problems and challenges. Whether approached from the perspective of Jungian analytic art therapy (Furth 1988; Broussine 2007), psychoanalysis (Fisher 1957; Brakel 1993) or Socio-Analysis (Gould 1987; Nossal 2003), access to “unknown and unconscious material” (Furth 1998, 9), which is brought “to the attention of the consciousness” (Furth 1998, 12) is the goal.

In describing the methodology Mental Maps, Larry Gould notes that the idea is “namely, to make unconscious or covert experiences, conflicts and fantasies conscious, and thereby available for interpretation, explication and insight” (Gould 1987, 5-6) and to “elicit previously inchoate, unorganized and/or preconscious assumptions and fantasies, and to give them sufficient form for scrutiny and analysis” (Gould 1987, 3). In order to make this possible, adults are encouraged to playfully regress by drawing, which is in the service of the overall task of bringing this material to awareness. It is the work of the consultant in an ongoing way to help the client group link this material to their organizational reality. This is often done by identifying themes that emerge from the material, by making links between drawings and by offering what appear to be contradictory hypotheses reflecting the data.

At the group level such work offers the possibility to develop a shared understanding of one’s organization, as associations to individual pictures become linked with one another and themes begin to emerge in the discussion. Gareth Morgan (1993, 11) finds this a critical advantage. As he puts it:

The challenges in times of change is to find shared meanings that are themselves in flux, so that people are encouraged to find an intelligent place in the world around them.

A well contained group environment, with a clear task and well bounded facilitation can become a place for creativity and new thinking, as well as a safe environment to experiment with other sides of one’s identity and personality in role. Brigid Nossal (2003) terms such an environment a “‘thinking space’ where there is openness to sharing and exploring in a different way” (Nossal 2003, 3). In this space, which is “characterized by a great deal of individual and collective creativity, and a spirit of playful competitiveness among the participants” (Nossal 2003, 6) there is the possibility to explore serious ideas and problems.

She continues:

There is something in the inherently playful and sensual nature of drawings that helps to create a working space where there is the freedom to engage with the real

experience of people in organisations in a way that enhances people's capacity to think creatively together, to learn and to 'breathe new life' or 'fresh air' into a space that has become saturated in a way that people feel stifled or so anxious that they are no longer able to think (Nossal 2003, 19).

Through this playful and creative methodology, complex data (often too complex to completely process at once) emerges. Often contradictory images and deep anxieties are reflected and participants are awash in the complexities of their organization. This is one major advantage of working with both visual and verbal data so that “the brain is able to both store and give expression to far more complex data in a visual form, such as a picture, than it is able to do verbally” (Nossal 2003, 4). More parts of the brain are stimulated and are also required to sift through what emerges.

There is also an important benefit to focusing on something separate from the individual (i.e. a drawing) as opposed to what is being said at the moment. Once the picture is drawn (as my colleague Martina Joachem points out), it cannot be revoked. One cannot change one's mind and 'take it back'. On the other hand, it leaves the drawer and the group with something that is outside and which all can relate to together. This is termed the “third factor”, i.e. the drawing as “a mediating or an intermediary device...[that]...enables the data to be out there in the drawing rather than in the immediate exchange between individuals and in this way it allows difficult material to be explored in a way that is less threatening” (Nossal 2003, 7).

That fact that working with drawings helps to “contain the playful as well as the serious” (Vince/Broussine 1996, 17) is well illustrated by the following example from colleague Stephanie Segal:

It was through my first exposure to her [Virginia Satir] work that I saw how powerful using drawings can be in an organisational role. One of the workshops that I attended encouraged a group of public sector professionals to spend an hour each drawing their work roles. Lots of lovely huge sheets of paper and colourful pens were placed around the room. One of them, a Head teacher, who was feeling very jaded, drew a cruise liner with herself at the helm of the wheel on the top deck with lots of teachers peering out of all the cabin holes. There was not one child in sight. When the facilitator asked the Head teacher what she saw in the picture, she was unable to see the absence of the children (the primary task of the school) and only when others in the group pointed it out, did she realise how managerial and bureaucratic her post had become, why she was disliking it so much and how removed she felt from the children. It was so dramatic and she was very choked. It really was an enormous moving point for her, she eventually resigned as a Head teacher and moved to a position as a locum where she had far more contact with the children which was the part of the work she adored (2007 email communication).

Ultimately, the true value of such a methodology lies in its effectiveness in organizations. Morgan (1993, 9) documents the advantage and the learnings such a request can bring.

Perhaps he does not state the case too dramatically when he writes "...imagery can be used to create breakthroughs on organizational problems and find new initiatives in difficult situations".

Access to the unconscious feelings of groups and organizations serve as a prime motivation for the use of drawings in research. In a soon to be published book entitled "Creative Methods in Organizational Research", Michael Broussine (2007, 8) summarizes the many advantages:

...the use of art as a research approach enables people to communicate multifaceted information and feelings about their experiences in organizations and other social settings. It legitimises the expression of complex, subtle and possibly irrational facets of organizational experience. This may be important within certain settings where it is 'not done' to give voice to feelings and irrational aspects of life....It is the dialogue, reflection and sense-making that is provoked in an individual or in a group by the production of expressive images that can be as important as the images themselves.

So for those organizations that wish to know more about and make use of the underlying dynamics in their systems, pictures are a well-researched and well documented source of valuable information, and provide a non-threatening and often playful/serious look at what is going on. Documenting these events by taking photos of each picture and perhaps providing a written record of the associations are ways to allow clients/subjects to return to the material again and again over time and to continue their integration of the possibilities and insights.

Dream- and Photo-Matrix with Associations and Amplifications

My work with the drawings of dreams is heavily based on the pioneering work of Gordon Lawrence and his development of Social Dreaming. The critical insight that dreams have a social meaning and that this social meaning can be uncovered in an environment where association and amplification are possible (the matrix) is a major underpinning of the work on dream drawings. As Alistair Bain (2005) points out: "There is a waking life relationship with the Organisation, and a dream life relationship to the Organisation." (Bain 2005, 1) and "...the dreams of members of an organisation contribute to an understanding of that organisation, and its unconscious" (Bain 2005, 5).

Lawrence's work is based on the assumption that people "...live in an ecosystem in which there are linkages that have been unimagined hitherto, that they exist in a 'wholeness' that can be but dimly perceived because of their own experiences of fragmentation" (Lawrence 1999, 38-39). Through his work and his many publications, he has demonstrated that these disconnected and fragmented parts can be brought to some sort of larger consideration in the work of a Social-Dreaming Matrix and can be made sense of, at least in providing material for possible organizational hypotheses.

The use of Social Dreaming as an organizational intervention to bring about not only consciousness and awareness but also important change is more and more being documented. The work of Burkard Sievers (Sievers 2007b) with the Austrian Social Democratic Party and that of Tom Michael (Michael 2007) with a community mental health center in the U.S. are two good illustrations.

Lawrence's pioneering work, developed in conjunction with colleagues from around the world, including Burkard Sievers, has formed the basis for Sievers' own elaboration, the Social Photo-Matrix. Here the matrix associates to and amplifies thoughts in relation to photographs taken by the participants themselves, often of an organization they have in common, such as a university. They work to create links between photographs. This is an experience that grows in meaning over time. Sievers' innovation emphasizes photos as a collective representation, rather than belonging to the individual. Thus "the photograph – and not the photographer – is the medium of discourse" (Sievers 2007a, 3).

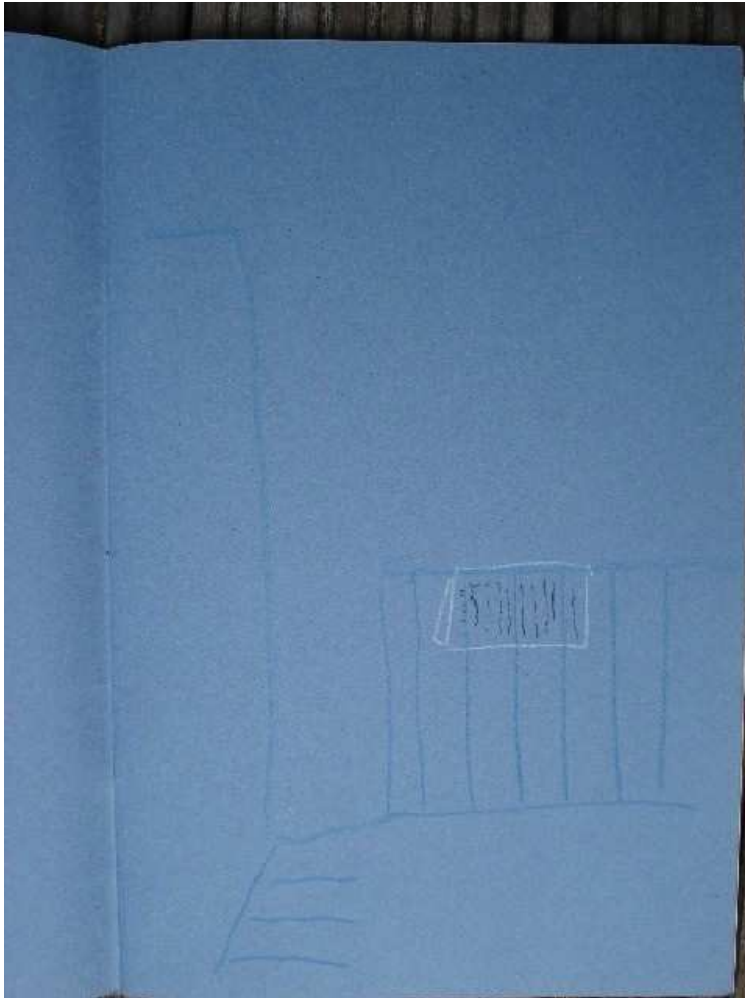
Associations to a Dream Drawing with Colleagues: From a few lines to layers of complexity

Inspired by the experience of associating to J's dream about my client and its impact on my consultation, I invited four Dutch colleagues to join me in exploring this methodology. In the spring of 2007, we met for a day and a half, and each colleague brought a drawing of a recent dream. We sat around a small table, where we could lay our dream books and other implements and on which we later displayed our drawings.

We began with a 'vernissage' of our drawing materials and some pictures. 'M' commented that her drawings were always from the top and were only a few lines. She did white chalk-like drawings on blue paper. 'GS' drew on both sides of regular white paper with crayons or pencils belonging to her son. She had created a kind of 'drawing ritual' of sitting in a certain chair at a certain time of day. 'K' expressed dissatisfaction with her drawing experience. She used colored chalk pieces on rather rough paper in a book she already owned and remarked that when she saw the way others had chosen their materials, she thought she might make different choices the next time. 'GVR' surprised us all with his computer generated 'drawings'.

I would like to share in depth our session with one of these dream drawings. Unfortunately, I have no direct notes from that session, only my post-session notes and my memories, so this description will only be a pale representation of this experience. What follows is as close an approximation as I can make, which I hope will sufficiently capture our experience and learning.

'M' brought what she called a 'simple drawing' done with white chalk on blue paper, and which appeared as a few lines (see photo below).



In the dream, she came up the stairs (on the left of the drawing) into a house that reminded her of the house of her grandmother, where she grew up until she was six. To the right of the stairs, there were some papers lying on a banister, that faced the front of the house.

The first set of associations related to the structure of the house and the empty space in the drawing. As one participant wrote to me later:

I remember that I did see different rooms and spaces, nearly nothing round, all the lines, the things like tables. They were all there but not really connected, and there was not very much life in it.

Then 'M' made a connection between the drawing and her work role, which is director of an organization that owns and maintains a number of historic houses. Her associations were to the complicated document that must be negotiated and agreed upon by many parties in order to renovate properties. She pointed out the modern complexities (papers)

of owning and maintaining historic properties and the contrast between the present and the past, in terms of methodologies and procedures.

'GS' asked the group what this drawing had to do with us. The focus of our associations turned to our profession as organizational consultants using a Socio-Analytic approach. Inspired perhaps by the contrast between old and new, the first set of associations related to the difficulty of working in a new and different way (the papers) with organizations that had a more old-fashioned or traditional view of how this work is undertaken (more traditional OD and training) and how difficult it was to negotiate these divides in seeking and undertaking consulting work. We then reflected on how the process of contracting has changed as a result of the speed of changes in our client organizations, i.e. internal contacts leaving, contracts being cancelled, impossibly late or incorrect payments, etc. Often negotiated and signed contracts become irrelevant and agreements are not met. In that sense, the 'concept' of written contracts began to be questioned, as they don't always guarantee that future work (even agreed-upon work) will take place.

In retrospect I realized that the most primitive and least detailed drawing among us brought us to a series of associations and insights about 'M's' organization and our profession. I felt very encouraged by this experience and also appreciative of the colleague who asked us to link our associations to ourselves. Taking a suggestion from Alistair Bain (2005), who emphasizes the importance of the container of the Social Dreaming-Matrix and the value of identifying a task for the Matrix, we have agreed to focus on the following task when we next meet: "What do I risk in my work?".

Concluding Thoughts....

In retrospect, it has been a great advantage for me to write this article at a time that I am beginning my exploration of this methodology. All the research I have done has confirmed the importance of working with visual data and has also guided me in a 'real time' way in developing this methodology. I recommend this to anyone who is in the process of developing something new, to develop it in the context of existing research.

From my research and experience so far, I would say that the strongest basis for advocating this methodology is its capacity to access deep unconscious material. The challenge is to develop a sufficiently containing methodology to make use of this data. In attempting to do so, I naturally see the Social Dreaming- and the Social Photo-Matrix as my models. While it has important elements of both, Social Dream-Drawing has at least two aspects that make it unique: The distance between dreamer and dream material and an increased access to unconscious material. In closing, I will briefly discuss these two elements and elaborate some concerns.

In comparison to the dream sharer in the Social Dreaming-Matrix, I think the dream drawer can be said to be less close to the dream material and thus -- by implication -- less personally vulnerable. One is offered distance through the previous creation of a drawing, which -- by that act alone -- places the material more 'outside' the personal reality of the dreamer, thus creating a kind of buffer or 'third factor'.

Somewhat freed from the immediate experience of the dream, the dream drawer is able to take a role as a member of the group and to offer associations and amplifications. In this way, the drawing lives in two worlds: the world of the dreamer and the world of the group undertaking its task. As such it takes on an important mediating role between the unconscious of the individual and the underlying dynamics of the system. The drawer, as part of the group, can use his/her own capacities for association and thinking.

It seems to me that all methodologies stimulate their own particular anxieties. In the Social Dreaming-Matrix, at least in my experience, I have often felt swamped with issues of competition for the 'best' dream and have had anxieties, after offering a dream, about whether it will be considered worthy enough for associations. While Lawrence conceives of the matrix as a uterus, rather than a group, group dynamics do not disappear.

The presence of group dynamics and, thus, inevitably, social defenses in a Dream Drawing-Matrix is a concern that must be acknowledged. Susan Long (2008), in a recent personal communication, articulates this concern as follows:

...where you talk of the gradual loss of bits of the dream, it seems you are referring to what Freud describes as secondary elaboration of unconscious material. This is seen by him to have a defensive motive. Does this method run to the danger of elaborating the defense rather than the unconscious repressed? Through using the group and the matrix, is it elaborating the culture that is built from a social defense.

This is a valid point that the facilitator needs to keep in awareness. While it is not possible to hold social defenses at bay, one can attempt to help the group hold contradictory associations and puzzling fantasies that represent collective defensive positions about to be exposed or challenged. The process is not so much to come to an agreement or consensus, but to hold the hope that dream material (no matter how represented) contains "invariants" of truth now ready to become available to the group for its learning. All of us – clients, consultants, researchers, dreamers – know that dreams never have one meaning or one certain association; a dream can be interpreted in as many ways as there are people in the room. The possibilities for learning are infinite.

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