

SOCIAL DREAMING MATRIX AND LVT – A METHODOLOGICAL COMPARISON

SYSTEMATICS	DIALOGUE	SOCIAL DREAMING	INTEGRATION
TRIZ	LVT	CONSTELLATIONS	INNOVATION
GOLDRATT	DEMOCS	CYNEFIN	ANALYSIS
TECHNICAL SYSTEMS	CONVERSATIONAL SYSTEMS	NATURAL SYSTEMS	

Social Dreaming Matrix

The Social Dreaming Matrix was developed by Gordon Lawrence. He discovered – or rediscovered – that dreams could be dealt with as a source of information on the *collective* situation of a set of people and not merely as an indication of *personal* deep-seated issues. The term *matrix* derives from the work of Foulkes and refers to the connected field of meaning associated with a collection of people. In Group Analysis, a distinction is made between the *relational* and the *semantic* field. Whereas the relational field concerns the relations between the people in a group, the semantic field concerns how they are making sense of their involvement in common issues. According to Lawrence, we are in matrices already and meeting for social dreaming is a way of eliciting what is latent in the matrix the collection of people represent.

The material presented in the form of dreams is used to develop *new thinking* by *association* and *amplification*. Free association is the standard tool of psychoanalysis and although it appears to be ‘random’ always has some kind of relevancy. Amplification is where a story or image is ‘amplified’ by drawing on myths, movies, current events and so on to bring out its deeper implications. Once a dream has been described, it is no longer an expression of the dreamer’s personal psyche but owned by all members of the matrix. There is *no interpretation* of dreams as it is known in the popular mind. Dreams initiate association and amplification.

It is taken as axiomatic that the dreams brought forward in a matrix are related to each other. Association is intended to bring out the threads connecting them and also to produce thoughts that reveal underlying insights into issues being faced by the people in the matrix. A typical application is for people in an organization facing change. This may tie in with Stacey's drawing attention to the 'shadow' side. Lawrence once worked in Shell and often wondered about the dreams people brought into the organization everyday and which would remain unvoiced.

Though the conduct of a social dreaming matrix may seem 'loose' it has some characteristics that relate it to LVT. The dreams correspond to the 'molecules of meaning' (MMs) used in LVT (brought together in Gathering). They are the raw material for the development of new thinking, which proceeds by looking into their *mutual relevance*. In LVT, finding such mutual relevance between MMs is called 'Organising'. The emergence and recognition of insights into the pattern of events (assumed to be reflected in the dreams) would then correspond to the LVT stage of Integrating.

In a recent development, Lawrence has looked towards a further stage of processing the material generated in a matrix. The threads of connection are understood as *themes* and the participants split into sub-sets to explore how themes might coalesce into integrative insights (private communication, 2005). This is to give 'Integrating' a separate and definite form, which has become increasingly recognised as important in applying LVT itself.

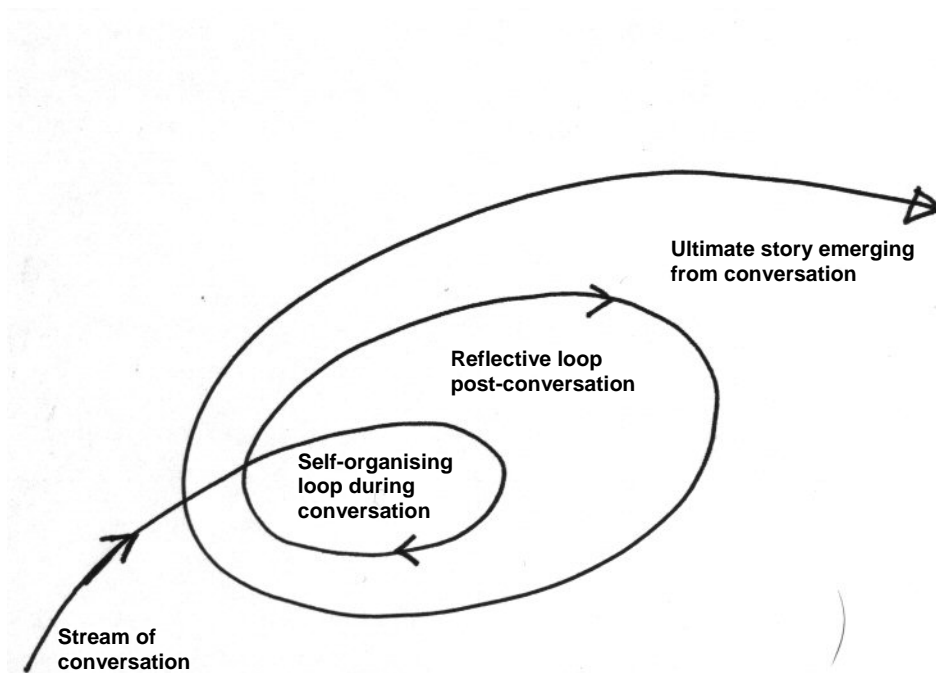
Social dreaming is of value for understanding LVT in basing itself firmly on a special source for MMs – namely dreams. By doing this, people are already displaced from their habitual and 'rational' ways of dealing with information, which tend to limit their thinking. By having to process unusual information they are already in a better position to think in new ways.

It is striking that Lawrence is looking for a further step of processing to address what LVT calls Integrating. Research with LVT has shown that a new demand comes into play at this stage, which requires a different approach to that of Organising. Organising looks for mutual relevance between MMs, whereas Integrating looks for global structures or the 'natural systems' through which missing elements and underlying principles can be discerned.

Conversation and Writing

What can be done through conversation has certain limits because it is not easy to register, remember and reconstruct all that takes place. There is a limit to the *degree of organisation* that can be sustained. When writing is used, participants are to some degree relieved of the task of remembering what has been said. At the same time, writing tends to slow or inhibit the flow of associations.

One way of dealing with these difficulties is to introduce a separate stage that involves writing after a period of conversation. The model introduced in the comparative study of LVT with Cynefin makes it clear. In the case of the social dreaming matrix, the stream of conversation issues from associations to the dreams of the participants.



The Efficacy of an Indirect Approach to Critical Issues

By drawing on dream material, the members of the Matrix are freed from having to present a 'rational' front and this makes it possible for emotional content to be surfaced. This emotional content contains real information on the psychological and social forces involved in the present moment, usually associated with anxieties about the future. As this content is presented in the form of dreams and dissociated from those who offer their dream material, individuals cannot be blamed or judged for what they say.

It is widely known that the way in which problems are articulated and discussed is, for the most part, governed by avoidance of the underlying psychological and social forces and that any attempt to bring people to confrontation of deeply felt issues is fraught with dangers of personal exposure. The Social Dreaming Matrix bypasses the identification of content with individuals and addresses the characteristics of the Matrix. It therefore enables people to operate in a 'neutral' and relatively impersonal field of discourse.

The Generation of MMs

The LVT method builds on the MMs that are produced in the initial steps. The Social Dreaming Matrix exemplifies a *human process* that is intelligently designed for generating source material or MMs that contains potent meaning. The involvement of the unconscious is a primary feature: it is supposed that the unconscious can be more intelligent than the conscious mind, since the latter is constrained by language, linearity, social mores and expectations – especially rushing to conclusions – while the former is not.

It is important to consider how the source material of MMs might be made true to *experience* rather than to *concepts*. Experience that has not been put into boxes, labelled or attached to known models is of greatest value. We do not so much bring out the meaning of isolated experiences as find their threads of connection: *meaning is discovered between experiences* rather as Patrick de Mare says 'mind is between brains'.

What Can be Discovered

In the set of hypotheses listed below, the fourth says, "A Matrix exists to discover what only a Matrix can discover." Similarly, in LVT, the people involved can only discover the meaning that is latent in them. LVT concerns what an ensemble of people are able to reveal from their own resources. It is not concerned with importing any idealised models of what *should* be the case.

Working Hypotheses of Social Dreaming

<http://www.socialdreaming.org/default4.asp?stid=8&did=37>

The theory can only be expressed as working hypotheses (WH) for they are emerging from the reality of being in Social Dreaming Matrices.

So far, there are:

1 WH. It is possible to have dreams that can be understood in terms of their social content and significance. This was substantiated in the first Social Dreaming Matrix convened in 1982 at the Tavistock Institute of Human Relations.

For example people in companies dream about the system of the company and their roles in the context of their business. They dream about issue and conflicts that cannot be voiced and debated publicly.

Evidence: Simultaneity and parallel process: an on-line applied social dreaming Matrix. (Maltz, M. & Walker, E.M., in Lawrence, 1998).

2WH. If the social dreams were to be received in a group rather than a matrix the focus would be on the relationships between participants and the group processes rather than on the dreaming which is the "currency" of the Social Dreaming Matrix. In order to "see" the significance of the dreaming and dream-work the Social Dreaming Matrix has to be "blind" to group dynamics. The result has been that more and more is seen in the Matrix than would be possible in a group.

3WH. Dreaming in a Matrix arises from the matrix of emotional experience and social thinking that is present in every social configuration, like group or system of organization. By having the dreams free-float the focus of the matrix is on the thinking-dreaming-emotional processes that lie behind the words used to narrate the dream.

4WH. A Matrix exists to discover what only a Matrix can discover.

5WH..In a group issues of transference and counter-transference are located in the relationship, real or in fantasy, between the consultant, or conductor, or taker of the group. In a Matrix the transference is not to the individual but between the participants and the dream. John Byng-Hall discovered in family therapy that the transference was not between the family and the consultant, but to each other as members of the family (Whiffen & Byng-Hall,-----). Similarly in a Social Dreaming Matrix the transference is to the dream and the dreamer.

6WH. There is also the “meta-transference”. This is about the parentage of Social Dreaming. One dreamer in the early days of the Social Dreaming Matrix dreamt of having to swim between two islands. One was marked Social Dreaming and the other the Tavistock Institute of Human Relations. In actuality, although Social Dreaming is grounded in the experiences of the Group Relations Education Programme of the Tavistock, it takes a different perspective on dreaming and dream-work.

Evidence: Lawrence, W. G. (1991). *Won from the void and formless infinite*. Free Associations. Vol., Part 2, No.22. Also Chapter One in Lawrence, W.G. (1998). *Social Dreaming @ Work*. London: Karnac Books.

Lawrence, W.G. (1996). Socialt drommande och varadgsliv. In Boethius, S., & S. Jern, eds. *Den Svarfangade Organisationen*. Stockholm: Natur Och Kultur

Lawrence, W.G. (1998). *Soziales Traumen und Organisationsberatung*. Freie Assoziation. Heft 3/98.

6WH The Matrix for Social Dreaming alters the nature of the thinking process and of how social meanings are arrived at. The group, in general, is concerned about a universe of meaning whereas the matrix celebrates a multi-verse of meaning. To have only one meaning for a dream is simplistic, which is further enriched by the dreams-in-association.

7WH. The experience of Social Dreaming places the participant in the world of “sphinx”, and not that of Oedipus. Sphinx refers to ‘problems of knowledge and scientific method’ (Bion, 1961: 8).

8WH. Social Dreaming brings about refraction between the infinite that we are aware of inside each of us as individuals and the infinite “out there”, i.e. the infinite we all share, or at least, can intuit.

Evidence:

Lawrence, W.G. (1998). *Thinking refracted in organizations: the finite and the infinite/the conscious and the unconscious*. ISPSO Paper

Lawrence, W.G. (In press) *Dreaming the infinite in Ormay*, T. and Clarkson, P.

Lawrence, W.G. *Centring of the spinx for the psychoanalytic study of organizations*. *Socio-Analysis: The Journal of the Australian Institute of Socio-analysis*. Vol. 1, No.2.

Lawrence, W.G. (2002). *Narcissism v. socialism governing thinking in social systems*. In Pines, M. & Lipgar, R. eds. TITLE

Lawrence, W.G. (1999a) A mind for business. In French, R. and R. Vince, eds. *Group Relations, Management and Organization*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

9WH. The potential of the Social Dreaming Matrix, with dream communicating with dream, provides opportunities for re-vivifying beta-type elements for transformation into alpha-type elements for consideration through dreams, dream-work and dream-thinking. There are as many associations to a dream as there are participants in a matrix.

Evidence: Bion

10WH. Social dreaming questions the notion that dreams are personal possessions. The idea of the social dream had led to a variation on Bion's thought that there are thoughts in search of a thinker to suggest that there are dreams in search of a dreamer.

11WH. The hypothesis is that social dreaming alerts the dreamer to the tragic aspects of life and intimate the horrendous that is to come. Such issues can rarely be spoken of directly because they are so frightening.

Evidence;

Clare, (2002, in press). Dreaming the future. In Lawrence, W.G. Experiences in Social Dreaming. London: Karnac Books.

Elrich- Ginor, 2002, in press). Sliding houses in the Promised land. In Lawrence, W.G. op.cit.

Balamuth, 2002 in press). Childreamatrix: botleggingdreams into school. In Lawrence, W.G op cit.

12WH. Dream expressed in the Matrix are a threat to ordinary awareness. The dream, and the matrix, has its own logic, which questions the rational, logical perspective with which we view life.

Evidence: Lawrence, W.G. (1998). *Social Dreaming @ Work*. London: Karnac Books.
Lawrence, W.G.(2002). *Tongued With Fire*. London: Karnac Books.

13WH Provided we can remember our dreams, we can have confidence we are in touch with our unconscious. If we can associate to our dreams and use the method of amplification, we are on speaking terms with our unconscious. If that is made possible we can minimize the possibility of being caught up in psychotic-like social processes.

14WH. Miguel de Unamuno wrote in the *Tragic Sense of Life* (New York: Dover Press, 1954) that human beings are 'a dream, a dream that dreams'. There is sufficient evidence in the literature to show that inventors and discoverers dream the answer to whatever it is they are puzzling about. The Australian Aborigines have the myth that their land, gods and its people were dreamt into existence in the beginning.

15WH. Social Dreaming is a tool of action-research. Action-research is a method of research, which is done in collaboration with the partner-client.

Lawrence, W.G. (1998). *Social Dreaming: consultancy and action-research*. In Lawrence, W.G. *Social Dreaming @ Work*. London: Karnac Books