

Landscapes of the Mind - Confer 25-27 September 2009

Social Dreaming Matrix

Saturday 26 September @ 9.00 – 10.15am

and Sunday 27 September @ 9.00 – 9.50am in The Pod (rear of lecture hall)

Hosted by: Laurie Slade

This is good country. We are good dreamers

(Napangarti – Australian Western Desert)

'Social dreaming' is a way of working with dreams, developed by Gordon Lawrence and others at the Tavistock Institute in the 1980's. Since then, its applications have been explored extensively, in a variety of organisational and conference settings.

Traditionally, Western culture regard dreams as 'asocial'. We dream by ourselves, for ourselves. In many other cultures, such as the Kukatja in the Australian Western Desert, dreams and dream narratives have a deeply embedded social dimension, providing meaningful connections within the community, and for each member of the community with their cosmological and natural surroundings. For Napangarti and her people, for example, 'dreaming is a way of thinking, caring, feeling and relating to the country that, in turn, is sensitive to such human attention and might respond positively' (Poirier in Lohmann 2003 p.113). The potential for connections of this kind underlies the practice of social dreaming.

We meet in what is called a matrix. This is to distinguish the gathering from other kinds of group. Participants in the matrix have a specific task, which is to share and associate to dreams, making connections where possible. We own the associations we make, as our own. There's no right interpretation or response. 'Once a dream is offered, there can be as many associations as there are people in the room,' says Gordon Lawrence. At times we may sense a common theme or pattern emerging, what Lawrence calls 'a social meaning', but we don't aim for that in the matrix. We don't have to reach agreement on the significance of the dreams, either for the dreamer, or for the rest of us.

After the matrix, a period of reflection may then enable us to begin making more specific or purposeful connections, between our experience in the matrix, themes in the conference which has brought us together, and external issues concerning us. We will not be concerned exclusively with dreams dreamt at the conference, although these will obviously be of particular interest.

It isn't necessary to have previous experience of social dreaming, in order to participate in and enjoy a matrix. All that is needed is a readiness to share and be open to what is offered...

Further reading

Gordon Lawrence W (ed) (1998) - Social Dreaming @ Work – Karnac Books.

Gordon Lawrence W (ed) (2003) – Experiences in Social Dreaming – Karnac Books.

Gordon Lawrence W (2005) – Introduction to Social Dreaming – Karnac Books.

Lohmann R I (2003) – Dream Travelers – Sleep Experiences and Culture in the Western Pacific – Palgrave Macmillan

Social Dreaming Website - www.socialdreaming.org