

9 Social Dreaming Matrix: Covid-19 a year on Notes from 13th May 21
Hosts and Notes: Rachel Kelly, Heather Stradling, Martha Mens, Susan Long

29 dreamers
6 dreams
51 associations
Themes:

Polarities and splits: life and death, heaven and hell, the frozen and the fire, war and freedom, the haves and have nots, dreams and reality.

The Matrix felt heavy – as if the dark side of the split held the most power – mentions of care, love and desire seemed overwhelmed by the fear and hopelessness represented in dreams and associations. And a sense that hope could not be held and a complex, complicated reality, with light and dark, could not be envisaged.

Hopelessness and repetition – very few dreams were shared, a compulsion perhaps not to let ourselves be fed by the unconscious – but propelled by the comfort of the rational reality we all know – repeating old patterns of control, judgement and destructiveness. Jung: “until you make your unconscious conscious, it will direct your life and you will call it fate”. Something similar happened in a previous matrix.

The Male – in both dreams and associations, men were prominent and women largely invisible. Something about men holding destructiveness and space for kindness, creativity and generativity could not be accommodated, typically seen as the domain of the female. So again splitting...

The presence of war throughout seemed to speak to fears around the future beyond the pandemic, which for many in the world is far away. Little space for play and no humour – Israel and Palestine were strongly present in the Matrix as war currently is going on there, but a sense that our hopes (dreams) for change out of the pandemic will be dashed by our rush to make war with the freedoms we will regain.

Klein – the long spoon, scooping out of envy. A difficulty in feeling gratitude and of sharing – a greed. If we don't have our consumables, our cat coat – where is our dignity? Who are we fundamentally, without our trappings of success, prestige?

But there was the boy, the potential for learning and change – the pandemic is not over and neither needs to be our hope. The curious boy in the dream and the boy washed up on the beach as an association.

We didn't speak about this but the weather was there a few times as well. Perhaps there is something around the hopeless feelings in how we meet this crisis. And maybe with it not being mentioned, there is something about the rush to leave the crisis of the pandemic and get back to 'normal', but we may be myopically and conveniently forgetting that the back to normal has consequences beyond humanity.

Being lost – in the matrix, outside of the matrix, confused with where we should be and time zone differences, what was a dream and what was reality, finding it difficult to locate oneself and the other, clarity not present, like looking through frosted glass but really knowing

nothing about the other's experience, so far apart. The lost and half-eaten, the not digested and the can't be digested nor seen/heard...

The Matrix

D1: I'm in a café – there's food near the cash desk where you pay for it. In a row, where there's a counter – the food top looks ok but underneath it is eaten. I'm looking for something else to eat, it was a pastry I had overlooked, a box of pastries, eaten underneath. The person behind me has a very long spoon and is eating a pastry with it, the cashier says "you can't do that". Still holding their spoon, they move off. I look inside to see what I can get – beautiful delicate pastries, all been tasted. I'm annoyed, a) because I've not tasted, and b) the other person has gone off to taste others. This spoon is long and thin.

A1: I feel overwhelmingly sad about the spoon, just the feeling of the dream

A2: A word comes up in my mind – pristine. I'm thinking about me and the person in the dream, with a feeling of keeping myself pristine, while everything out there has been tasted, touched in some way. So, what is there for me? If I want something that is pristine, am I going to do the same as I always seem to? I have a long spoon, should I use it like everyone else?

A3: What comes up for me, something sweet, something sour,

A4: Monday I was having a difficult day, stopped at a bagel shop in town, just before they closed, I was surprised because it was early afternoon, near 2. I opened the door for another woman behind me and thought Oh! Since Covid I haven't been able to do this for people – to be so close, but she was happy. There were bagels on the counter, I walked up at a covid distance from her. She said "I'll have 2 bagels", then looked at me and then she said "no I must have 10 of them". I didn't think anything of it, but then when it was my turn, there were only 2 left. Something about courtesy, politeness and no bagels being left.

A5: A surreptitious illicit pleasure, opening the door, passing by, small smile exchanged.

A6: The door opening, what was left, the long spoon, brings to mind a story I have read. Someone asking what is heaven and hell? Are they different things and the answer is no, the conditions are the same but they respond differently. Show me, so he is taken to a table by the side, laden with food, but the elbows can't bend. What's the use of all this food if they can't eat? Obviously people putting food in mouth but it misses, but in another one, they had a long handed spoon, to feed the people opposite and then they get fed.

A7: I'm wondering perhaps if there are not enough dreams left? Has something happened there's not enough dreams?

A8: I recently went back to work in London, was wonderful to see my clients, to see them face to face again. Went out at lunch on a favourite walk to favourite restaurant for pastries, was closed, favourite health food shop was closed. The big stores, the little one offs, the big stores, Boots, M&S are there. The guy in the shop, I liked him and it's gone. I know they will come again. But its' like my teeth are missing. Also the beginning of the pandemic, the social side of holding the door, there was no toilet paper, everyone scrambling for masks and now we're coming back together, strange.

A9: To the first dream, eaten all the pastry, the second dream, person took most of bagels. Had a discussion last night about the gift economy – it works best in regions. One person mentioned it is sad to realise that amongst the poor we share and gift, those that have do not share and gift. So I wonder why every pastry was eaten and none was left. Second story was reality [not a dream as previously said] – someone grabbed bagels and moved on with it.

A10: The grabbing pastries so no one can use them, reminds me of another matrix – man grabbing a big fish and not sharing with others. Also dreams have dried up, the book next to me, I had read outside a café, called Master of Insomnia, Boris Novak, I think I had a pastry.

D2: Where I see my son, but he's not the age right now, he's 1.5 years, 2 years older now, I hold him and he's scared looking over his shoulder, it's 6 o'clock now, I'll make sure nothing hurts him. Then he's around 3 years old in a market, he's running ahead of me, it's a crowded place, I'm worried I will lose him. He turns into a shop, large green door, big inside but old looking shop. Old man in entrance with laptop. My son is about to run in and suddenly the man's laptop catches fire, I realise the shop will light up and catch fire. I don't know whether to help douse the fire or go and pick my son up. I do the latter, he's looking at clothes, I pick him up and go to door, tell other people a fire is about to happen, I pick him up and go out.

A11: The Old Curiosity Shop...

A12: fires are often said to consume, its often said a fire will consume things. Making a link between consumption of food and consuming fire.

D3: I dreamt that I was in front of a container, within a shop, and it was actually a freezer with a glass door at the top and it was full of frozen lettuce, like a normal lettuce, which shouldn't be frozen, it doesn't work being frozen. It shouldn't be frozen, it was bright green in colour.

A13: Making association with flames of the laptop, and the vibrancy of the frozen lettuce, fire from one place, frozen life from another one

A14: The frozen very vivid lettuces links with my anxiety. I've been shielding because I am medically vulnerable – and quite anxious about returning to life and wondering how I am going to be when I emerge from my safety of my house where I've been very alive.

A15: The room I am in this moment, is cold and I'm kind of freezing and that's strange because the weather outside is warm and this is supposed to be warm and it's not, so I'm wondering whether it is cold or hot, what is the weather?

D4: I had a dream this week that I was brushing my lovely cat who's 17 years old. He gets knots in his hair, in the dream it's a big knot in his hair and I realise I can take his coat off and I begin trimming away his fur. Then I find a secret zipper under his arm and then I can take his hair off and it came off like a little coat and then I looked inside and it said – made in Japan. Then I looked at him and he had a horrible look with bare skin. Looked like he had lost his dignity.

A15/D5: day before yesterday, it was a very very strange dream. I have been dreaming about my cat. In the dream, I was tired, going to bed and my cat was attacking me, was really aggressive, was hurting me. So aggressive I had to react and I was trying to kill the cat with my hands. Strangely, in reality I fell asleep on the sofa. My cat was sleeping beside me and

probably at that point, the dream ended, because the real cat probably was scared about what I was dreaming and decided to scream and to jump out of the sofa. There was a connection between my dream and the real cat.

A16: The cat can't weather, got its coat ready...

A17: Cat has 9 lives.

A18: I believe this is the 9th Matrix.

D6: In this dream, I give up my life. I give up and I return to my old life. I've had enough, I don't want to play strong anymore, I'm going back and I move back in this house with my ex-husband and I go up a hill, the house is there, it is dark, but a house and then I see on the way friends and I don't; recognise her and I call her Rachel, Rachel, I have several friends called Rachel and I don't recognise her face, she is silent, doesn't speak. Another friend comes along in the dream and I recognise her, and then another one, they are silent, don't speak, I say why don't you speak? Why don't you answer me? Then I am in the car with these silent friends and I give up my plan to give up. I have no alternative and go off in the car.

A19: Association with fire, cats with 9 lives and the idea of not giving up – a fire in University of Cape Town 2 weeks ago. It reminded me of Notre Dame too, but I want to stay with university fire, the association or leap I want to make, is the library burned down there, and the San and Khoi people archive burnt down too. A people who don't exist anymore. History was mainly oral, but was written down as a protest against the colonial project. Now it is destroyed and needing to find a way of accessing information that is lost.

A20: With last sharing, recently I contacted some of the elders, remaining elders on my father's side of the family. Wanted to know where are they from? Then realised it is an oral history, nothing written down. Syrian/Afghan histories passed on orally, so first generation of writing down what have heard from grandparents.

A21: To last comment and before that, the opposite, inverse – I think of my grandfather who fought in the first world war and never spoke of it. He died very young but we knew nothing of his experience in that war.

A22; About the war, brings back this friend who's told me – things happening in Palestine now, how all social media is banned, stories are not getting out, we have this biggest sense of helplessness, if we don't come to know what is / might be happening

A23: My father fought in the war, and said how difficult it was. Tried to interview him but he became too emotional, so we never got to hear it.

A24: My father wrote something about my family history. What I remember he wrote about his father and grandfather, grandfather had an opportunity to fight in first world war, and my grandfather then said – if he fought, when he returned he'd be able to get work, on a railway line in Western Cape. My grandfather answered it was not his war, he was not going to fight for another man, he stays in his place.

A25: Makes me think about connection, discussion we had a few days ago about war and the pandemic, and how much the Spanish flu during first world war, was called like that because

you couldn't talk about the pandemic while you were in a war. Question whether the pandemic can stop the war in a sense or if the war and the pandemic and the communication are connected to each other. For example what is happening in Palestine and Israel, is this connected to the end of the pandemic or not?

A26; Sitting with so much sadness about the loss of the history of these people from the library and so many comments about personal family histories that people know or don't know, what we're told or not told, whether that helps us. Thinking about the laptop and going to get the boy, to protect him and how we protect each other, and what war means, protecting us, people we know or don't know. Some other person's war, whose war it is? I don't know.

A27: Dreams /reality, pastry being eaten, bagels being taken away, wars that kill, people that don't have heritage anymore, things are being taken away. Question in my mind, should we break with the past and start new again? Have to hold on to the past?

A28: Thinking about the Fires, skies on fire, library burning on fire

A29: Word that came to my mind is care.

A30: Find myself thinking much about a particular quote can't get out of my head – sometimes we must lose ourselves to find ourselves.

A31: Now you are all lost to me

A32: Someone is sharing a screen – Martha – lost and trying to be found.

A33: Noticed my eyes were closed and light because the screen shifted, colour, but carried on.

A34: Hearing war, just 4 days ago, my brother lives in Tel Aviv, he shared the video of him rushing with children to the shelter, he's Jewish, I'm not, he said this is trouble for Israelis but far worse for people living in Gaza.

A35: Had this just now when the screen went off and something happened, I thought I may accidentally have shut something, it felt like my reality and for a moment I was very confused until I heard voices. I experienced confusion and felt lost.

A36: Don't know what's going on with technology

A37: Staring at the laptop and it's on fire.

A38: Have a metaphor that comes to my mind – the fire, the flames, the burning, the ash, and experience of being in hell, pastries, on the other side, the heaven, the bagels, the sweet pastries, the haves have that in heaven, the have nots in hell, this war between each other, the good and the evil. What's happening with the pandemic across the world, the haves and have nots, that's what on my mind, the continuous struggle, this war.

A39: Fire came to mind, the sound of the rain needs no translation

A40: I keep hearing the images, toggle between the frozen lettuce, the burning laptop, kept looking for the water, either frozen or burning, but no water.

A41: I'm wondering if it's because we can't cry. If we can't cry, there's no water.

A42: I feel myself irritated. Some of the early dreams were very much in the present moment, about something happening with the food, with the child, and then further along associations seem to be sharp, intellectual, philosophical, places so far away and that made me feel slowly disconnected. I just want to be with the present. What is happening?

A43: What is happening? And that brings me back to the image in my mind since the image of the frozen lettuce behind the glass doors and how confusing it is to me to open those glass doors and close them. Sometimes there's a sense of a suction, somehow built into the freezer. Don't have any idea if I have a hallucination of that or whether when it shuts, it sucks and closes it off even more. Have sense of something closed off.

A44: I'm associating the difference between hot and cold, frozen, burning, in a dream when you dream of fire, it can denote anger and associating to the angry cat, instincts, how to be present with our anger at the same time taking in the warmth of people.

A45: Last night being aware of dreams I have had for most of this year which I have rarely spoken about because they seemed very personal. It's as if they are constantly presenting the same dreary things of my life, the things I feel I've done amiss or haven't learnt, the same things over and over again, what it links to now is the same old story is going to be told. Nothing will change, the horror of the association to the end of the pandemic. That the war between Israeli and Palestinians will reoccur – a loss of hope. We talk about the cat having 9 lives, but it also has 9 deaths. We've learnt nothing.

A46: A counter to the nothing takes me to the association to fire and the song by Bruce Springsteen, I'm on Fire, Adele, Rolling in the Deep, connection between fire and desire, so also wondering about being consumed for the fire for the other, the longing for the other, even a war is a conversation with the other, even if it is in a very destructive way.

A47: Now associating to The Doors – Come on baby light my fire, in terms of desire

I have the picture of the phoenix that comes out of the ashes, linking to the we didn't learn anything, to repeat it endlessly.

A48: It is scary to be angry, scary, can lead to retaliation.

A49: This – the anger conversation is bringing to my mind – anger can also be a force for good if used properly – Coming to my mind: are we angry with anger?

A50: Angry for change, angry for movement.

A51: I'm feeling so tired we have to learn it all again, every time, all over again.

A52: Also, a little boy – 1 and a half and then 3, caught up in the curiosity shop. What's between that feeling, that hopelessness, nothing learned, and yet this learning ahead of the little boy, even if similar things were learned again? The little boy is there, he's in the dream.

A53: He's in the dream but in real life I remember he was washed up on a beach.

A54: Who cares about the little boy when the adults are all consumed with their fears?

Matrix closed.

Dream Reflections Dialogue – Themes, feelings, patterns

I wasn't there during the whole matrix, very strange experience, had to be there at 12.45, but lost time so wasn't present at that time, felt silly and awkward, when I came in it resembled what I was feeling. Let people down, wasn't present, felt uncomfortable, felt so silly. Couple of things, feeling heavy, ennui, not sure if anything can happen, notice the push and pull between fire and ice, blowing hot and cold. This feeling of do I have to choose one? I'm not able to- anger that is frozen lettuce, the feeling, don't know what to do, shall we freeze and pass over, or burn. Let things move and see where it goes?

Had resonances of fire, but also weather, it's been steadily raining, something maybe rebirth, not like the cat, groundhog day relearning, felt there is rain waiting to happen and it can provide.

Life and death, and hope and fear, think we have been moving from one extreme to the other, recursively

The theme of reflections – our societies are highly polarised, this continuous struggle between good, evil, what does it really mean? How can the other be right? Reflecting about life that comes with hope, we need rain to sustain the earth and to give rise to rebirth, renewal of some sort. War may be destructive, something gives rise to it. Being angry about anger, find that quite interesting, this life and this death – something – how am I working with the good and the not so good?

Thinking so much about the half-eater, also things half-digested, how we try to make so much sense, how we try to make sense in a matrix, but it's all half-digested, so much we don't know – moving between hopelessness and hope.

Matrix like eating the other half – the dark side, struck by the phrase in a dream that captures the dream, the big knot in the cat dream, thinking KNOT but also the NOT, the not looked after, what's feared rather than hoped. It's not the only side but it's really useful to me that the matrix links to the other side.

Interested in the splits, the lost, the found, anger desire, thinking rupture repair, can we really stop the repetition of wars etc.

Yes, theme of repetition, again and again – dream meeting at the clock, number 6 stayed with me, age is such a time for learning, time for learning, at that age kids can lose their imagination. How can we educate and not repeat?

How convenient the pandemic has become a reason to blame for our inability to live.

Mention of the Old Curiosity Shop – wonder if we can let the laptop burn, let the data, the analytical bit burn and let the curiosity guide? What are we curious about? In India, so many things are happening, on social media. Non Indians will write to me on Facebook, LinkedIn but messages of care they send as private messages. I don't know what to make of it, they say we care and pray for you and for India, but that's via the back door. Are we afraid, we can talk of war, but we can't talk of love?

So struck everything described as a binary, one or the other. I'm holding it as more complicated than that. Not criticising but it's coming up for me.

What's the good-enough food? The tussle today, the dark side, sometimes we go to a restaurant, we need to see a lot of cutlery on the table to know the food's ok, we don't need to see a lot of cutlery on the table.

Dream started in a museum, wonder whether the matrix was wandering through museum of now.

Have the impression of an exhibition within matrix, thinking about fear of the encounter – are we going to encounter again after separation?

Do you mean an exhibition? A museum of now?

Yes in some ways, a showing, so much difference, lots of polarities and differences. The session finished at 1.15, but here it is finishing at 10.15 and all sorts of other times, how experience is complex and varied. Museum has many artefacts and lots of different pieces. Thinking about preserving history and living today, living today with transformation.