

# Jungian socioanalysis, social dreaming and the emerging complexity of Europe<sup>1</sup>

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**Abstract:** This paper presents central elements of what we have termed Jungian socioanalysis – an emerging theory combining analytical psychology, complexity theories, sociological theories, socio- and psychoanalysis, social dreaming, group analysis and affect theories consisting of five assumptions (see also Odde & Vestergaard 2021). Jungian socioanalysis develops a process approach, as opposed to a systems approach, to sociality. In this paper we focus mostly on one of the five assumptions, namely that Jungian socioanalysis explores social fields ‘from within’ through smaller groups, treating group processes as a vehicle to gain a psychosocial and cultural understanding of larger social entities. We give an example of this approach with a presentation of two local social dreaming experiences in Denmark, focusing on Europe in transition. We show that the most significant outcome doesn’t rely on the specific content of the dreams, but rather on the engagement in the social dreaming process itself, resulting in transformative image-affects. The paper ends with reflections on how these social dreaming experiences inform a Jungian socioanalysis, pointing to enabling intersubjective meetings, or present moments, opening for a deeper understanding from within the group as opposed to a systems approach. The paper is a revised version of a presentation at the 2018 European Congress in Avignon.

**Keywords:** associative unconscious, complexity theory, group analysis, matrix, metaphors, rhizome, social dreaming, socioanalysis

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## Introduction

The authors of this paper are members of a Danish group of Jungian Analysts (which was inaugurated in 2016) that, since 2018, has been established as The Society for Jungian Socioanalysis (SJS). SJS has so far been carrying out practical experiments, for example, with social dreaming, and by exploring and supervising cases from our practice, letting sociality be the focus, for

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<sup>1</sup> This paper arose out of a presentation at the IV European Congress of Analytical Psychology: *Bridging the Familiar and the Unfamiliar in the Europe of Today: Cultural and Clinical Perspectives*, 30 August - 2 September 2018. It is also published in the *Revue de Psychologie Analytique*, 2021, n° 10.

example, in group, organizational or societal processes. With this article as well as another article (Odde & Vestergaard 2021), the authors explore what we perceive as a fertile transdisciplinary ground between analytical psychology, complexity theories, sociological theories, socio- and psycho-analysis, group analysis and affect theories as well as social dreaming, developing what we have named: Jungian Socioanalysis. The work suggests an expansion of the focus of analytic psychology from within the clinical setting to encompass processes outside the consulting room<sup>2</sup>.

In Odde and Vestergaard (2021) we sketch a theoretical foundation, structured around five assumptions, of which we, in this article, particularly focus on the third assumption, namely that ‘Socioanalysis explores social fields from within through smaller groups’. We assume that group processes can be a vehicle to gain psychosocial and cultural understanding of larger social entities. We give an example of our methodological perspective through a presentation of our experiences from two local social dreaming experiences in Denmark focusing on ‘Europe in transition’. Before we turn to this, we give a short review of the history of socio- and group analytic thinking as well as social dreaming, rethinking it in the perspective of complexity theory.

### Socio- and group analysis – history in brief

Outside Jungian circles, socioanalysis has a long history. One often-cited definition of socioanalysis by the originator of the term, Alistair Bain is that:

Socio-analysis is the activity of exploration, consultancy, and action research, which combines and synthesizes methodologies and theories derived from psychoanalysis, group relations, social systems thinking, organizational behaviour, and social dreaming. Socioanalysis has at its heart a query as to what is the psychological truth for an individual, group, organization, or other social system, and how may this best be brought to light.

(Bain 1999, p. 14)

Querying and bringing to light psychological truth about sociality also constitutes a Jungian socioanalysis. However, we prefer process and field metaphors instead of system metaphors. Rather than social systems, we suggest *sociality as never-ending processes* as the focus of Jungian socioanalysis. We will return to this later in the article.

<sup>2</sup> We assume no dividing line or compartmentalization between socio- and psycho-analysis. Our theoretical perspective is that of ‘double-aspect monism’: ‘psycho’ and ‘socio’ are two perspectives on (as well as of) one and the same reality (see also Odde & Vestergaard 2021).

It is generally assumed that socioanalysis took its form decades ago, even though the specific term was applied years later.<sup>3</sup> One of the founding figures was the psychoanalyst Wilfred Bion (Bion 1961), because of his pioneering work with groups of traumatized soldiers at Northfield Hospital during the Second World War. One of Bion's contributions concerned unconscious group processes, and he developed theories about anxiety and unconscious defence mechanisms on the group level relating them to 'the elements of the emotional situation ... so closely allied to phantasies of the earliest anxieties that the group is compelled, whenever the pressure of anxiety becomes too great, to take defensive action' (Bion 1955, p. 456).

Bion differentiated between two fundamental mentalities<sup>4</sup> in groups, co-existing and shifting as the dominating pattern of actual groups: a 'basic-assumption mentality', understood as recurring regressive patterns defending the members of the group from anxiety; and a 'work-group mentality' characterizing the life of a group, where its members are able to contain anxiety related to tensions and uncertainties characterizing the life and work in the group.

This perspective of Bion's on groups can be related to what C.G. Jung called complexes. In our reading, Bion and Jung both address the question of coming to terms with complexity. When psychological truth about complexity is denied or otherwise avoided, for example, by one-sidedness or compartmentalization, it severely affects the functioning of the individual or group, though it may feel good for the moment. Singer and Kimbles (2004) suggested the concept of the cultural complex and linked the concept to the (dis)ability of a culture to integrate 'otherness' into the cultural identity. The more the conflict and uncertainty – that is, the complexity – is avoided, the more severely a cultural complex constellates: 'cultural complexes can provide those caught in their potent web of stories and emotions a simplistic certainty about the group's place in the world in the face of otherwise conflicting and ambiguous uncertainties' (Singer & Kimbles 2004, p. 7).

Bion called this social defence a basic-assumption mentality; from a Jungian socioanalytic perspective we call it a *complexity complex* (Vestergaard 2016). Jung's concept of individuation is the lifelong process in which complexes are worked through and integrated. We suggest, in Jungian socioanalysis, that the perspective of individuation not only applies to individuals, but also is a fruitful perspective for exploring marriages, organizations, families, societies,

<sup>3</sup> Bain (1999) was the first to suggest the term Socioanalysis, and a journal and training on Socioanalysis was started in Australia. In 2012, socioanalysis was brought into play as a (political) resource in understanding and criticizing 'Money, Finance and Capitalism' (Long & Sievers 2013). And in 2013, Susan Long edited 'Socioanalytic methods' (Long 2013), a book that formulated the theoretical foundation and collected approaches and methods from the field and as such gave a portrait of the 'state-of-the-art' of socioanalysis.

<sup>4</sup> French and Simpson (2010) use the term 'mentality'.

cultures etc. The individuation of a group would then be recognized as, for example, its ability to come to terms with complexity (see also Odde & Vestergaard 2021).

Sigmund Heinrich Foulkes was another central pioneer (Foulkes 1964). As a psychoanalyst, he started experimenting with psychoanalysis in groups, instead of the one-to-one setting, in the late 1930s. He switched ‘from the couch to the circle’ (Schlapobersky 2016), working with psychotherapy with groups of soldiers at the Northfield Hospital. Foulkes and colleagues developed this work further in the following years, leading to the foundation of a particular variant of group therapy named group analysis: ‘Group analysis views man’s social nature as basic to him and individuals emerge as the result of developments in the community’ (Foulkes 1964, p. 109).

Foulkes saw groups as basic to human existence, and in group analysis, the healing of mental illness takes place in, by and of the group. He meant that a group would be able to reflect and explore the processes of the wider society, institution or organization to which they belonged. He saw the individual as an artificial construct: ‘Only by abstraction we can separate individual and group’ (Foulkes 1975, p. 252). Instead, Foulkes and group analysis focused on the connectedness of people, and developed concepts for processes in groups like the matrix, social field, mirroring, resonance, displacement and more. Jungian socioanalysis shares the assumption of our basic connectedness and social nature.

Later developments in group analysis included the continued integration of psychodynamic thinking and systems theory, leading to an interest in *system-as-a-whole dynamics* and the *social unconscious*, as organized in Group Relations conferences at Leicester University and the Tavistock Institute. Isabelle Menzies Lyth developed a perspective regarding excessive control systems and fixed organizational procedures in complex health care organizations, understood as social defences against anxiety (Menzies Lyth 1960, 1988). In socioanalytic terms, social defences defend against realizing the psychological truth of social and organizational complexity.

From 1982, Gordon Lawrence’s discovery of social dreaming (Lawrence & Daniel 1982) gave much inspiration to the field, and for many today this approach is the ‘prototype’ of socioanalytic methods. Lawrence believed with Bion that ‘the capacity to be available for discovery’ was central for this aim, as ‘[s]uch a posture is one that yields the kind of original and intense insights that are “Won from the void and formless infinite”’ (Lawrence 1998, p. 11). This is a central aspect of Jungian socioanalysis as well: a group of people that set out to ‘be available for discovery’ opens for exploring how larger and global sociality affects us, which queries psychological truth. In the preface to a 2019 book, social dreaming is construed as ‘an intervention in social wellbeing, rather than simply a means for gathering and analysing data from dreams’ (Long & Manley 2019, p. xix). Transforming the experience

from within the group process is the specific contribution of the Jungian socioanalytic approach (Odde & Vestergaard 2021) as we will see later in this paper, when we present the social dreaming from Copenhagen and Aarhus.

Socioanalysis has developed into a well-defined approach and set of methods for consultancy work, for example, with organizations and companies<sup>5</sup>, presented in Susan Long's state-of-the-art book (Long 2013). Jungian socioanalysis analyses *sociality as process* (rather than as a system), including both societal changes, politics and humanity; but also as a foundation for a more explicit inclusion of social dynamics in the analytic work with individuals. Perhaps we could say that Jungian socioanalysis studies psyche both *in context* and *psyche as context*.

Ralph Stacey and colleagues (Stacey 2007) have over the last decades attempted to develop a theory about organizations, conceiving them as complex responsive processes of relating. In this view, organizational patterns of interaction emerge unpredictably from everyday interactions. From this perspective, it is not possible to investigate organizational processes from an outside vantage point only; they must be explored from the inside, by engaging in the processes of sociality in all its possible chaotic and messy condition.

Long and Manley introduce the non-systemic metaphor of the *rhizome* in their analysis of social dreaming (Long & Manley 2019). The rhizome is also used as a metaphor for the complex dynamics of sociality that they describe, and on which we focus in socioanalysis (Odde & Vestergaard 2021). The rhizome is a self-organized, uncontrolled, invisible, disorderly, unpredictable process, a 'circulation of states' without a central authority and without a master plan (Deleuze & Guattari 1987). Empathy, subjectivity and imagination are the keys in the attempt to understand our social world 'from within', by being available for discovery of affects – not only as objective, neutral observers<sup>6</sup>. The process of socioanalysis, as well as offering insight, is thus more affective than cognitive, (inter)subjective more than objective.

In the following, we conceive sociality as a rather dynamic, never-ending process – contrary to the notion of 'the social' as a structure, system or thing. Sociality has mass-character: it works by contagion, imitation, attraction and repulsion as well as affect and is in many ways unpredictable, but also innovative (Odde 2001). We do not deny that the systemic perspective has value, but we find the metaphor 'system' too limiting and complexity-reducing. With a Jungian socioanalytic methodology, we want to clear ground

<sup>5</sup> Perhaps this bias is the reason for the central role in socioanalysis of system metaphors and systems thinking.

<sup>6</sup> For a more elaborate argument about sociality, see Odde and Vestergaard (2021).

for the emergence of images, metaphors and symbols which are sufficiently complex for portraying the psychological truth of sociality *in all its complexity*.

### Social dreaming as a socioanalytic group approach to sociality

As mentioned above, social dreaming was discovered by W.G. Lawrence (see Lawrence 1998). It was a re-discovery in the sense that the ritual of social dreaming in different forms has existed throughout history, often serving as a way of understanding and coming to terms with both personal life and collective life; for example, the ancient Greeks and Native Americans used dreams as a collective expression. Social dreaming has a long history and is well-described in several books and articles from the last three decades, and more volumes were added in 2019 (e.g. Long & Manley 2019). Social dreaming matrices have been held all over the world, starting in Britain at the Tavistock Institute. According to Lawrence, social dreaming is:

an opportunity to share one's dreams with others in a matrix. The focus is on the dream, not the dreamer. The dreamer recounts his/her dream to the others in the matrix, but the dream is not a personal possession, for it captures the social, political, institutional, and spiritual aspects of the dreamer's social environment. The meaning of the dream unfolds through the use of free association and amplification to give form to the echoes of thinking and thought that exist in the space between the minds of individuals living in the social environment.

(Lawrence 2005, pp. ix-x)

Social dreaming illuminates the complex life and implicit knowledge in institutions, groups and organizations; it could be hospitals, educational institutions, enterprises or professional groups of people, such as students, nurses and bakers among others.

In social dreaming, dreams are used in a different way and with different purposes and foci from the typical psychoanalytic approach to dreams. First and foremost, while the focus is on the individual dreamer in psychoanalysis, in social dreaming the focus is on the dream itself and its social and collective meaning, leaving the dreamer in the background. This difference is emphasized by the joint and simultaneous engagement in several dreams from different dreamers.

A second difference concerns interpretation. Social dreaming differs from 'the classical psychoanalytic interpretative stance, which assumes an obscurity of meaning in the manifest content of the dream' (Noack 2010, p. 30). Instead, Lawrence explicitly turned to Jung and his view that 'the dream, the dreamer and dreaming have to be celebrated and all valued in their own right' (Lawrence 1998, p. 30). He applied 'the Jungian phenomenological approach, which, by using association and amplification to disentangle and translate the

dream's symbolism, always keeps the dream itself in focus' (Noack 2010, p. 675).<sup>7</sup> According to Lawrence: 'The dream is an imaginative replay of our state of being in our social world and a rehearsal of how we are to become in relation to our environment' (Lawrence 2005, p. 28).

The central responsibility of hosting a social dreaming matrix<sup>8</sup> is to ensure that dreams, associations and working hypotheses are allowed to flow throughout the process and to avoid premature and forced conclusions and interpretations. Manley describes the role of the host as to support 'associative thinking, contain the associative unconscious, and create a space of absolute freedom of movement of thoughts and feelings through minimum intervention in the process' (Long & Manley 2019, p. 34). This freedom of thought, he continues, allows for the self-organized and rhizomatic circulation of affect and emerging imagery. This collective meaning-making process is called a 'transitional phenomenon' in Winnicott's sense (Noack 2010).

The social dreaming process is 'associative, not interpretive in the classical, psychoanalytic sense' (Lawrence 1998, p. 30)<sup>9</sup>. Winborn (2018) and Manley (2019 [in Long & Manley 2019]) emphasize metaphor and poetic sensitivity as constituents of the possibility for new ideas and new meaning to emerge from sharing and associating dreams without interpreting the single dream. Winborn focus on Jungian psychoanalysis, while Manley focus on social dreaming and socioanalysis. According to Manley 'there is no sense to much of the social dreaming matrix except through a poetic sensitivity to metaphor or figurative language in general, for the dream is better understood in this way' (Manley 2019 [in Long & Manley 2019], p. 28).

Associative thinking is carried by metaphors and imagination, and relates to embodied states of consciousness where affect is central. The social field affects us and the affect is registered in the body and obliges the organism to engage with the outside world (Solms 2019, p. 9). From the associative process emerge not only imagery of affect but also of context. The emerging image-affects associate and interconnect in a self-organized and rhizomatic

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<sup>7</sup> In that sense, Jungian analysis and social dreaming are not that different. In Jungian analysis, one also approaches dreams from a phenomenological perspective, focusing on amplifications and trying to understand the dream in its own right.

<sup>8</sup> Lawrence deliberately chose the term 'matrix' for the social dreaming processes to distinguish it from those therapeutic group processes he and his colleagues had facilitated at Tavistock with the focus on transference and a Freudian understanding of dream-interpretation. According to Long (2019) the social dreaming matrix is different from a group process 'insofar as the focus is not on interactions between the members but on the dreams and the associations and connections arising' (Long 2019 [in Long & Manley 2019], p. 13). Matrix means 'uterus' in Latin, signalling the capacity of social dreaming to contain and hold complex human processes and letting them grow and transform. For us the term matrix also points to a network of complex relatedness in a non-hierarchical way.

<sup>9</sup> See Winborn (2018) for a revised version of interpretation, where the metaphorical attitude can be included.

process with no 'predestined direction, no centre, no hierarchy or guidance from any authority' (Manley 2019 [in Long & Manley 2019], p. 33).

In Jungian socioanalysis we assume that a group of people setting out to 'be available for discovery', in Bion's sense, can create a socioanalytic field, analogous to the psychoanalytic field in psychoanalysis (Odde & Vestergaard 2021). In the socioanalytic field, image-affects and metaphors that emerge in a small group simultaneously express aspects of the psychological truth of the larger sociality. This assumption is the background for the 'Dreaming Europe' social dreaming sessions we held in Denmark.

### Dreaming Europe

The social dreaming project took place in two different cities in Denmark, respectively Aarhus and Copenhagen, in 2017-18. In Copenhagen we held 12 matrices, and in Aarhus 5 matrices were held from August 2017 - May 2018. Each matrix consisted of a 1-hour dreaming matrix, followed by 30 minutes reflective dialogue: a move from matrix to the reflective group modality. The events were open to anybody wanting to participate. In the beginning there was no registration, but later registration was needed in Aarhus. The entrance fee was set as low as 6-7 Euros.

In Copenhagen the matrixes had 5-13 participants from a total pool of roughly 20 people of whom most were not known to each other beforehand. Most attended more than once, and a few participated in most sessions. In Aarhus there were 4-9 participants, one-third of them participated twice. Each matrix had from a few up to 15-20 dreams. In Aarhus there was only one host, in Copenhagen it was mostly the same person hosting. In Copenhagen the participants primarily came from the Jungian community, in Aarhus primarily people with no connection to this community came to the matrixes and were from quite diverse backgrounds.

Our aim was to explore social dreaming as a model for a Jungian socioanalytic approach, and subsequently to contribute our experiences to the IV European Congress of Analytical Psychology, *Europe in Transition*, 2018, in Avignon.

The invitation to 'Dreaming Europe' went to mailing lists and the members of 'Jung Community Copenhagen', DSAP, the wider psychodynamic community and, through social media, to a broader audience. It was important for us also to include people knowing only a little or nothing about Jungian analysis or socioanalysis. In the invitation to the social dreaming series we wrote:

With this dreaming matrix, we attempt to explore the unconscious, collective and cultural streams, that are constellated by the changes we witness in Europe at the moment, including uncertainty and conflict between the familiar, old and the new, unknown. The purpose is, on the one hand, to understand better the way in which the developments in Europe affects us and, on the other hand, to find new ways to



express and influence the developments. We hope that the dreams will clarify central problem areas and show us possible paths of development for Europe and for its populations. Social dreaming gives a special experience of participation in a community and being together in trying to understand and create new meaning. Often, participants in social dreaming afterwards feel mentally and emotionally renewed.

On arrival at the matrix, the seating was arranged in a snowflake pattern, where chairs are placed not in a circle but, for example, in groups of four, like crystals, in a way that prevents eye contact – or at least prevents individuals from feeling obliged to have eye contact. The host greeted and invited participants to take a seat. There was no formal presentation, only an introductory speech by the host of the evening about the frame, the task, and the time and purpose of the matrix. A co-host took notes of dreams as well as associations, amplifications and reflections. The frame was presented, including five ‘rules’:

- The dream is the focus, not the dreamer.
- We attend to social and collective aspects of dreams, not personal dramas.
- When told, the dream is ‘our’ dream to explore.
- We seek new thoughts and perspectives of the world we share, not of the individual self.
- We embrace uncertainty, not knowing and multiplicity rather than seeking agreement, certainty and rationality.

After this presentation, we all waited for the first dream to emerge, followed either by silent reflection, another dream or associations to the dream.

The intention behind this unconventional physical arrangement and way of starting was to support the specific purpose expressed in the five rules just mentioned above. The snowflake seating downplays, if not directly hinders, eye contact. As a participant, you are less affected by being observed and your sensation is directed away from the normal, dominant, visual one towards auditory channels. It is our experience that this set-up supports attention focusing on the shared world and the social context aspects of dreams and less on ego and individual aspects.

In ‘Dreaming Europe’ we intended to establish what could be called an enabling constraint<sup>10</sup> for the sessions: to constrain ego attention and enable attention on the matrix, and to constrain a preoccupation with what is conscious and known, enabling exploration of what is vague, unconscious and not yet unknown.

<sup>10</sup> Constraints can either be *governing* or *enabling* (Jurrero 1999). Governing constraints hinder actors to do something or only allow them to do it in a certain way. Enabling constraints make it possible for actors to do something that would not be possible otherwise.

We deliberately tried to set a far-from-agreement and far-from certainty context for the matrices, creating a situation of high social complexity. As a result, the question of coming to terms with social complexity not only characterized the ‘analysed’ (Europe in transition) but also the ‘analyser’ – in this case the social dreaming ensemble in Aarhus and Copenhagen. Will the struggles and the creations that the local group experienced through ‘Dreaming Europe’ actually parallel psychological truth about the familiar and the unfamiliar colliding in our continent?

### Social Dreaming in Aarhus

We are each sitting on our chairs, spread out in the room creating a random pattern like the first snowflakes on the ground in wintertime, sitting quietly waiting for the small Japanese bell to ring, opening up the social dreaming matrix. The ceiling is tall, the walls are made of concrete and outside the window one can see a wooden playground reminding one of green bamboos; children are playing and people are walking by, watching us through the glass doors, wondering what we are doing.

We are located in DOKKI, the new public library and cultural centre, which is also the headquarters for the European Cultural City 2017 – a new building in Aarhus, reminding one of a strange mix of a star-ship and the Spanish Steps in Rome, neatly located on the harbour, almost in the water, with a perfect view onto Aarhus Bay.

Anyone can start telling a dream or dream fragment, but the atmosphere is not only excited and curious but also tense. The setting is unconventional in more than one way: the chairs are organized in snowflakes, there is no presentation, and everyone is somehow anxious, being in such a setting for the first time and with a particular task and with people they do not know beforehand. In such situations, questions of the role of hosting and leadership are often actualized, more or less consciously in a group. The above-mentioned ‘basic assumptions modality’ (Bion 1961) may affect the group and nourish unconscious fantasies about a leader taking charge and thus defend from the anxiety related to uncertainty and complexity. This puts emotional pressure on the host – a countertransference, if you will – that may result in the host finding himself or herself in a dilemma between doing something to reduce or to merely contain the anxiety in the room.

Hosting social dreaming can be done in more than one way. The host can, for example, be rather passive in the matrix, refraining from telling dreams themselves or giving any comments. Or hosting can be more active, for example, by sharing one’s own dreams and giving comments. As it happened in Aarhus, the host started the very first matrix with one of her own dreams:

There are two crocodiles; it could be a mother and her baby animal. They are earth coloured and dark green, situated on the shore of a lake. They are trying to snatch each other's tails in a deadly serious way. Nearby, I am walking around with my husband. We are carrying sacks on our backs with all our belongings searching for a place to live.

In retrospect we see this as an attempt to reduce the anxiety in the room – an anxiety stemming from the participants, but also from the host thinking: is this matrix turning out to be a failure altogether, will it be impossible to connect and co-create in a meaningful way? Does this anxiety reflect an anxiety that is also elicited when facing Europe in transition? What if Europe fails in connecting across countries, cultures, languages, interests? Will countries turn out to be able to come together and co-create paths forward, and find solutions to common international problems such as climate change, pandemics, and migration? For example, might the fear that this will fail lead to leadership approaches that may well reduce anxiety, but also risk closing down what might have emerged?

In social dreaming, hosts can be helpful in such situations, not by reducing but by containing the anxiety. In psychoanalytic organizational theory there is a notion of 'optimal frustration'. Too little anxiety may indicate superficiality, where too little is invested, nothing is at stake and no risk is taken. Too much anxiety may indicate that the perceived risk of involvement is so high that participants are unable or at least unwilling to express what they experience, think and feel. In both cases – too much or too little anxiety – psychological truth is avoided and change and development is unlikely to happen.

In Jungian socioanalysis we intend to understand the process from inside, bracketing any pre-formed judgment and letting image-affects and metaphors emerge from the field. Perceived in hindsight, telling a dream was perhaps a paradoxical way of trying to contain a sense of loneliness, even nothingness or void followed by anxiety, something the host perceived was in the matrix from the very beginning. A strong, deep, abyss-like feeling of: what are we doing here, how do we do this? Somehow with the host's dream being told, a process began, a level of frustration had been found, making it possible to recognize a deep sense of the void.

The response to the first dream was another dream:

I am in a bunker – like those during WWII – made of concrete. It is slowly being filled with a lot of stones. I am afraid I will not survive. I call my dad for help from a cell phone, but my father is just babbling about unimportant things and I say: STOP! Help me, we are dying! Then we are in a kiosk, the owner of the kiosk gives me a very candy-like cake. I think to myself that such a cake doesn't have any nutrition in it, yet it is formed like a ring and that is important.

In the matrix we wondered about the stones, one participant associated to feelings of being imprisoned and some associated to institutions being demolished, falling apart. Another noted the similarity of the shape of the

crocodiles in the prior dream and the cake: both circular. There was talk about the soldiers of WWII who, being inside the bunker, had maybe felt themselves imprisoned. Then a third dream was told:

The dream is strangely impersonal and somehow shapeless. There are no people, no pictures, no time. There is only this heavy feeling: I am waiting for a 'yes' or a 'no' and it turns out to be a 'no'. The dream feels very tough – like a heavy cloud cover.

As we were approaching the end of the matrix, one of the participants said that she felt there was an atmosphere of 'disconnection' amongst the people participating in the matrix, and in the dreams.<sup>11</sup> That particular metaphor rang very much true to the matrix – it was felt to be spot on, resonating with the depth and complexity of the matrix that evening: an *image-affect* (Manley 2019 [in Long & Manley 2019]) had emerged.

As it turned out, the series of social dreaming matrixes in Aarhus focused on degrees and ways of being disconnected, but also ways of trying to get around the sense of disconnection, trying to establish some sense of connection. For example, in this dream in the last matrix – a matrix with dreams and comments focusing on sexuality and the body:

There are a number of women and I am supposed to cater for them sprinkling some white powder on their bodies. One of them cries and calls me and I crawl under her blanket telling her how to do it herself.

We could say that a continuum of 'disconnection – trying to connect – connection' emerged as a central theme, both in the dreams and in the atmosphere of the matrices. However, this theme did not emerge as a pleasant development in the dreams, depicting a process going from disconnectedness to connectedness; there wasn't any progress in the dreams in that sense or in the atmosphere of the series of matrices. But some sort of development happened: a certain consciousness of this phenomenon became present. The whole continuum of the theme existed in many dreams and ran as a red thread through the series of sessions without any definite resolution. An atmosphere of disconnectedness constellated and was present in almost all five matrices mingling with feelings of being connected at moments.

Disconnection also seems to be an apt metaphor for the whole form of the matrix series that took place in Aarhus: as in Copenhagen, we had planned to have 13 matrices in Aarhus; however at a couple of matrices in the beginning

<sup>11</sup> There is a difference between abandonment (a central notion in psychoanalytic literature, e.g. Asper 1993), and disconnection: when you experience abandonment, there is generally speaking still somebody or something to relate to, but when you experience disconnectedness, you are totally alone and without anybody or anything to relate to. For that reason, we might say, the experience of disconnectedness is even more difficult to contain.

no-one came. After that we decided that people had to sign up, which resulted in there being only five matrices. Furthermore, the people attending were different for every matrix, a new constellation of people – except for two sessions where one person attended more than once.

The experience of disconnection seems to be a very difficult, painful experience since it cannot be related to any meaning: it is, in a sense, the ‘Ground Zero’ of meaning, very much like ‘black matter’, no meanings or symbols can or will emerge from it. Disconnection is as such the opposite of meaning and symbolization; it is *non-sense* and therefore very hard to make sense of (sic!). Paradoxically, however this ground zero of meaning is also where new meaning and new signification, in short creativity, can take place. The alchemists termed it *prima materia*: a potential, fertile place of not-knowing and not being able to relate, yet at the same time being a position to renew oneself, letting go of old convictions and starting afresh. Disconnection and connection are related to each other: in the unconscious depths of disconnection the possibility of new connections reside.

The matrix in Aarhus shows that when connecting through social dreaming, unconscious social processes of disconnection can emerge and be expressed. And once they emerge, there also seems to be a desire to relate to them, letting us see complex, and maybe shadow sides of connectivity.

Seeing the matrix as a parallel process to the larger process going on in Europe, the anxiety and feeling of disconnection, may also very well have been an anxiety of the present Europa, an anxiety of it all falling apart, becoming disconnected – emotionally, geographically and socially/politically.

We can also speculate whether this theme of disconnectedness that we tapped into in the social dreaming series in Aarhus is the shadow side of the enormous amount and degree of connectedness we are witnessing these days: we have never been more connected than today through the social media and globalization. This focus on the connectedness, related to the present technological and societal development, possibly constellates a new awareness of situations and relations where we are not connected. And it gives us a new, potentially critical perspective on what it means to connect or disconnect.

### Social Dreaming in Copenhagen

In general, it was a hard struggle for the group to stay with the socioanalytic intention of co-creating new understanding in contrast to expressing and debating opinions and already held positions. The host repeatedly found it quite difficult to keep the frame. Opinions could be attached to political and ideological standpoints, related to ‘truths’ or dogmas based on, for example, religion, to an over-identification with Jung’s thinking, or notions about the ‘right’ way of doing social dreaming.

Social dreaming has a subversive potential, as it portrays and challenges *doxa*, the meaning of things and phenomena as defined through dominant discourses in society and everyday life: the norms we live by and the type of knowledge we accept as truth. Doxa is also a means to control ourselves and others, as well as the world, forming expectations of how the world and others influence us. In the social dreaming process, doxa is bracketed and the possibility of a new and deeper understanding of myself, the others and the world – including doxa itself – can possibly emerge. Social dreaming paradoxically destroys and constructs meaning at the same time. Not knowing what to expect and letting meaning (and non-sense) emerge however, can be experienced as very discomfoting; it can very easily be experienced as loss of control and pointless – or even absurd.

Letting go of certainties and well-known, agreed positions was certainly a challenge for us; also for the host wanting the matrix to be ‘right’, representing a threat of loss of control and identity. As a consequence, the process of the matrix fluctuated between discussions and abductive exploration. Between, on the one hand, attempting to sort right from wrong and, on the other hand, listening and letting emerge unfamiliar, novel imagery, surprising perspectives, while attempting to associate, link, make sense and formulate hypotheses and possible new insights. Perhaps this was an embodied and here-and-now felt experience of, or at least aspects of, what it is like to live together in Europe at this time of history.

The difficulties and anxieties related to letting go of certainties and a sense of control may also lie behind another characteristic pattern in the Copenhagen series, namely, the eagerness or temptation to associate directly from the single dream or single image or symbol to Europe in transition. Probably this tendency was a more or less conscious attempt to reach a new certainty and reduce anxiety, but it was too fast, too premature and often felt sort of flat. Regularly, it led to debates, eliciting advocacy for and against well-established positions. In contrast, the experience was quite different when associations and sense-making were linking several dreams or images. In the latter, the matrix avoided falling into right-wrong discussion or polarity, in favour of exploring co-existence or plurality.

On more than one occasion, participants reflected that the dreams presented tended to be very polarized, overwhelming and explosive in the earlier sessions, but becoming more peaceful in the dreams that were presented in later sessions. In the initial stage, it was as if opposing forces in the dreams led to violent collision, leading one or both forces to destruction or extinction.

I saw two airplanes flying towards each other – and they fall/crash. They were passenger flights.

Water is coming over us. We are flooded by water.

Beside aeroplanes crashing and tsunamis, war and torture were examples of images at the start. In the reflective dialogue after one of the first sessions this was associated to the transition theme, raising the question of whether collision is a necessity in the process of major change.

In the middle of the series, after the sixth session, the reflections and associations circled around the appearance of 'the third' in conflicts and fights. Dreams were more frequent, this somehow portrayed not only situations where there were colliding forces, but also contained a third position, an observer, or even an observer of the observer, a fourth position:

A crowd of people are gathered in a large hall. There is an unsettling atmosphere. On a balcony a man is standing, frowning, as he observes the people. I watch him. While I watch, his frowning slowly lessens and he looks relieved, wrinkles straighten one after the other.

The dreams towards the end of the series portrayed a variety of situations, where opposing forces were still present, but not necessarily leading to the choice of one or the other. Instead, the dreams portrayed in different ways some degree of reconciliation or bridging. From a classical Jungian perspective, this might suggest a movement from an either-or attitude towards 'holding the opposites' and clearing the way for the transcendent function. Or, in psychoanalytic terms, it may suggest a movement from a schizoid-paranoid position towards a depressive position.

Parallel to the development in the dreams, there was in the matrices a similar though less outspoken tendency towards containing and accepting the differences and tensions in the group. On the final evening, participants expressed gratitude to the group. The social dreaming as a frame or method was experienced as a very special, strange but also precious way of being together and meeting opposing views and standpoints. The series of social dreaming was experienced as an extraordinary frame or container for disagreeing, listening and talking about important and complex issues. One of the participants went as far as stating that 'we have been in therapy'.

From a Jungian socioanalytic perspective, the red thread we are hypothesizing here might express an increasing containment of anxiety related to transition and emerging social complexity. The containing of anxiety opens the door for a coming to terms with the complexity of a world, a Europe, that changes in unpredictable ways, opens doors but also new conflicts and uncertainties. The order of things, the patterns of interaction and the way things are arranged among and around us, transform, and transform us, as portrayed in the following dream from the last dreaming session:

I dream that I wake up. Everything is changed. My carport is in another place. My clothes are moved to somewhere else. It is all there. It is quite confusing. When I wake up, I think that it is about the dreaming matrix.

At this stage, the social dreaming matrix may have struggled with coming to terms not only with, first, polarity and then, with plurality, but also finally with paradox. It seemed to enable us to connect to not only the threats perceived in the unfamiliar but also its potentials. And it enabled us to connect not only to the loss of the old order but also to the potential redemption in its destruction. An early dream in the process may have anticipated and portrayed it this way:

I am in a WWII concentration camp. Garbage piles up everywhere. A woman demands that the guards remove some of it. Some guards are fed-up with the situation and encourage us to leave the camp by singing 'Auschwitz, Auschwitz, Alles ist vorbei' (It is all over now), while passing the gates. We are a small group that escapes this way. Most stay. One man stays because his baby needs special care, as it is very fat. As we go on, I think that the fat baby could survive for a while on very little food.

The guards felt imprisoned in a situation they hated. The prisoners trapped their guards, and escaped. Paradoxically, both prisoners and guards were imprisoning and imprisoned at the same time. The situation is good and bad at the same time as some leave and some stay. The dream portrays a potential creative solution, that can only be thought the moment that paradox is embraced. The dream may portray that the group, despite all its difficulties, had gradually expanded its capacity for associative thinking and coming to terms with complexity.

In afterthought, the above-mentioned remark about the social dreaming process being like therapy catches interest: in what way was the social dreaming process therapeutic? It is tempting to think in terms of group analysis: analysis in the group, by the group and of the group. A process in a socioanalytic field in which we dreamed about, for and with the processes in Europe and through that process gradually healed our tendency to splitting and one-sided social defences. Instead, an increased containment of complexity and related anxiety emerged. Maybe it is the letting go of premature, automatized responses to the expected vulnerability and loss of control that can be compared with therapy. On the edge of dis-integration we found not only confusion and irritation, but also a small hope, even though it took the host some time to recognize, digest and acknowledge it.

### Reflections and conclusion

We have presented an example of what we have named a Jungian socioanalytic approach, where a local group set out to make themselves available for discovery, thereby letting psychological truth about the larger social field emerge. The social dreaming series in Aarhus and Copenhagen exemplify this approach in an aim to contribute to understanding developments in, by and of Europe 'in transition'.



Its unique contribution seems to be the emergence of affect-images and embodied understandings 'from within' the group and the socioanalytic field. In Aarhus the 'result' was the letting happen of deep affects of disconnectedness and the process of finding ways of making these affects conscious. In Copenhagen a process of coming to terms with first, polarity and then plurality, and finally with paradox took place, connecting not only to the unfamiliar but also to potential new perspectives and affects in the social dreaming process. Together, the two series of social dreaming matrices enabled an exploration of emotional experiences of letting go of connection, certainty, opinions and doxa, and also of the emotional experience of letting new imagery emerge in uncontrolled and surprising ways. In socioanalysis, we assume that these local emotional experiences are reflections of more global processes and as such represent a 'knowing from within' about transitions in the wider social field, as in this case, Europe.

In the course of the process, it became clearer that the value of sharing and associating to dreams in the group was not primarily related to the specific content, imagery and language of the dreams told. In psychotherapy it has been said that finding new meaning is not transforming in itself, but that *the process of sharing emerging meaning with others* may be (Alberdi et al. 2015). Similarly, we experienced that the process of sharing dreams and associations transform (inter)subjective experience of the socioanalytic field, and supplement an affective understanding 'from within' to more cognitive understandings 'from outside' about what happens in and with Europe. Meaning may emerge from the matrix, if we manage to *let it happen*, and if we refrain from forcing or trying to *make it happen* and thus moving too fast towards concluding *what the dream says*. Clare and Zarbafi formulated this paradox very well: 'By not trying to get anywhere, we do in fact arrive to somewhere new' (Clare & Zarbafi 2009).

In the series of social dreaming matrices, we more than once had the experience of oscillating between making sense and/or making non-sense. A central part of the approach is to bring several dreams and several subjective perspectives to the table at the same time. A sudden and seductive enthusiasm about new-found meaning in the dreams and the associations was at times followed by a silence, a numbness, like having arrived at an empty space or a dead-end. We think that it may be a consequence of meaning being an emergent process. When a meaning is formulated as the right one, we make sense but also non-sense because we turn away from the ever-present moments of giving birth to new patterns and meaning. The co-creation of meaning and sense in the matrix is never-ending, and all knowledge about the social world is always on the way to becoming non-sense.

The work was not always easy. Perhaps this had to do with the fact that we had invited participants to the social dreaming with a predefined theme. With such a predefined theme, we had set the scene for a play in which we were all already engaged, and on which we had opinions and views of 'Europe in

transition' that were difficult to suspend. During that winter, we all followed news and publications on the developments in Europe. As a result, sometimes the matrix modality was left in favour of a political discussion, elicited by one of us taking a dream as immediate support of his or her opinion about the developments on the continent.

These difficulties probably parallel difficulties on a large scale when it comes to collective action in relation to urgent, complex problems, for example, in relation to the pandemic, migration and climate crises; and it may be an unavoidable aspect of bringing socioanalysis into play in collective problem-solving and transformation. This is an aspect of the socioanalytic mission of including more psychological truth into decision-making processes in groups, organizations and society that we can only try to embrace. Attachment to opinions, and with that the anxiety related to expected conflict and loss of connection and certainty, seems part of a psychological truth that must be accepted and contained in social and political life. Jungian socioanalysis may have a contribution to make in social fields when it comes to letting image-affects emerge that help contain the anxiety from, and the coming to terms with, the unavoidable complexity and paradoxes of society, and in this case Europe, in transition.

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TRANSLATIONS OF ABSTRACT

Cet article présente des éléments centraux de ce que nous avons appelé la socioanalyse Jungienne – une théorie émergente qui combine la psychologie analytique, les théories de la complexité, la sociologie, la socioanalyse et la psychanalyse, le 'social dreaming', l'analyse groupale et les théories de l'affect. Elle consiste en 5 postulats (voir aussi Odde et Vestergaard 2021). La socioanalyse Jungienne élabore une approche de la socialité fondée sur le processus, contrairement à l'approche des systèmes. Dans cet article nous nous concentrons principalement sur l'un des cinq postulats: la socioanalyse Jungienne explore les champs 'de l'intérieur' au travers de groupes plus petits, considérant les processus de groupe comme un moyen d'obtenir une

compréhension psychosociale et culturelle d'entités sociales plus grandes. Nous donnons un exemple de cette approche par une présentation de deux expériences de 'social dreaming' au Danemark, en rapport avec l'Europe en transition. Nous montrons que le résultat le plus significatif ne s'appuie pas sur le contenu spécifique des rêves, mais plutôt sur l'implication dans le processus du 'social dreaming' lui-même, aboutissant à des affects-image transformateurs. L'article termine par des réflexions sur comment ces expériences de 'social dreaming' façonnent une socioanalyse Jungienne, allant dans le sens de faciliter des rencontres intersubjectives, ou des moments présents, ouvrant un espace pour une compréhension plus profonde venant du groupe lui-même, par contraste avec une approche systémique. Cet article est une version révisée d'une présentation au Congrès Européen de 2018 à Avignon.

*Mots clés:* socioanalyse Jungienne, analyse groupale, théorie de la complexité, le 'social dreaming', métaphores, rhizome, inconscient associatif, matrice

Dieser Beitrag präsentiert zentrale Elemente der sogenannten Jungianischen Sozioanalyse - eine entstehende Theorie, die Analytische Psychologie, Komplextheorien, soziologische Theorien, Sozio- und Psychoanalyse, soziales Träumen, Gruppenanalyse und Affekttheorien kombiniert und aus fünf Annahmen besteht (siehe auch Odde & Vestergaard 2021). Die Jungianische Sozioanalyse entwickelt im Gegensatz zu einem Systemansatz einen Prozeßansatz für die Sozialität. In diesem Artikel konzentrieren wir uns hauptsächlich auf eine der fünf Grundannahmen, nämlich daß die Jungianische Sozioanalyse soziale Felder 'von innen' durch kleinere Gruppen untersucht und dabei Gruppenprozesse als Mittel behandelt, um ein psychosoziales und kulturelles Verständnis größerer sozialer Einheiten zu erlangen. Wir geben ein Beispiel für diesen Ansatz anhand der Präsentation von zwei lokalen Erfahrungen mit sozialen Träumen in Dänemark, die sich auf Europa im Wandel beziehen. Wir zeigen, daß das wichtigste Ergebnis nicht vom spezifischen Inhalt der Träume abhängt, sondern vom Engagement im Prozeß des sozialen Träumens selbst, was zu transformativen Bildeffekten führt. Der Beitrag endet mit Überlegungen darüber, wie diese sozialen Traumerfahrungen eine Jungianische Sozioanalyse beeinflussen, in Richtung auf die Ermöglichung von intersubjektiven Treffen oder Gegenwartsmomenten deutend, die, im Gegensatz zu einem Systemansatz, ein tieferes Verständnis innerhalb der Gruppe ermöglichen. Der Text ist die überarbeitete Version einer Präsentation auf dem Europäischen Kongreß 2018 in Avignon.

*Schlüsselwörter:* Sozioanalyse, Gruppenanalyse, Komplextheorie, soziales Träumen, Metaphern, Rhizome, assoziatives Unbewußtes, Matrix

Questo articolo presenta elementi centrali di quella che abbiamo chiamato socioanalisi junghiana –una teoria emergente che combina la psicologia analitica, le teorie della complessità, teorie sociologiche, socio- e psicoanalisi, il social dreaming, l'analisi di gruppo e le teorie degli affetti che consistono di cinque assunti (si veda Odde & Vestergaard 2021). La socioanalisi junghiana sviluppa un approccio di processo, opposto ad un approccio ai sistemi, alla socialità. Nel presente articolo noi ci

focalizziamo soprattutto su uno dei cinque assunti, in particolare che la socioanalisi junghiana esplora i campi sociali dal “di dentro” attraverso piccoli gruppi, e tratta i processi di gruppo come un veicolo per acquisire una comprensione psicosociale e culturale delle più ampie entità sociali. Offriamo un esempio di questo approccio presentando due esperienze di social dreaming fatte in Danimarca, e focalizzate sull’Europa in transizione. Mostreremo che il risultato più significativo non sta nella specificità dei contenuti dei sogni, ma piuttosto nella partecipazione allo stesso processo di social dreaming, che risulta nella trasformazione delle immagini degli affetti. L’articolo chiude con delle riflessioni su come queste esperienze di social dreaming informino una socioanalisi junghiana, puntando a sollecitare incontri intersoggettivi, ed aprendo ad una comprensione più profonda dal “di dentro” al gruppo in opposizione ad un approccio sistemico. Questo lavoro è la revisione di una precedente versione presentata al Congresso Europeo di Avignone 2018.

*Parole chiave:* socioanalisi, analisi di gruppo, teorie della complessità, social dreaming, metafore, rizoma, inconscio associativo, matrice

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В статье представлены основные элементы дисциплины, которую мы назвали юнгианским социоанализом – зарождающейся теории, соединяющей аналитическую психологию, теории сложных систем, социологические теории, социо – и психоанализ, групп анализ и аффективные теории, состоящие их пяти посылок. Юнгианский социоанализ развивает процессуальный подход в противоположность системному подходу социальности. В данной статье мы сфокусируемся преимущественно на одной из пяти посылок, а именно на том, что юнгианский социоанализ изучает социальные поля «изнутри» малых групп, воспринимая групповые процессы как средство достижения психосоциального и культурного понимания больших социальных организаций. Фокусируясь на Европе в переходном состоянии, мы приводим пример такого подхода и описываем два примера социальных сновидений, которые случились в Дании. Мы показываем, что наиболее значимый результат не зависит от конкретного содержания сновидений, но в большей степени определяется вовлеченностью в сам процесс социального сновидения, что приводит к возникновению преобразующих аффектов-образов. Статья заканчивается размышлениями о том, как опыт социальных сновидений обогащает юнгианский социоанализ, указывает на возможность intersубъектных встреч или моментов в настоящем, открывает возможность более глубокого понимания изнутри группы в противоположность системному подходу. Статья является обновленной версией доклада, прозвучавшего на Европейском конгрессе в Авиньоне в 2018 году.

*Ключевые слова:* социоанализ, групп анализ, комплексная психология, социальное сновидение, метафоры, ассоциативное бессознательное, матрица

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El presente trabajo presenta elementos centrales de lo que hemos denominado Socio análisis Junguiano – una teoría emergente que combina la psicología analítica, teorías de la complejidad, teorías sociológicas, socio y psicoanálisis, análisis de grupo, y teorías de las emociones, y consiste de cinco fundamentos (ver también Odde &

Vestergaard 2021). El socio análisis Junguiano desarrolla un abordaje de lo social, basado en el proceso, como opuesto a un abordaje sistémico. En el presente trabajo, nos focalizamos principalmente en uno de los cinco fundamentos: el socio análisis Junguiano explora campos sociales ‘desde adentro’ a través de grupos pequeños, tratando procesos grupales como una vía para alcanzar una comprensión psicosocial y cultural de entidades sociales más amplias. Ofrecemos un ejemplo de este abordaje con una presentación de dos experiencias locales en Dinamarca con la red de sueños, cuyo foco fue Europa en transición. Mostramos que el resultado más significativo no recae en el contenido específico de los sueños, sino en el involucramiento en el proceso mismo de la red de sueños, resultando en transformadoras imágenes-emociones. El artículo culmina con reflexiones sobre cómo estas experiencias con la red de sueños, informa un socio análisis Junguiano, posibilitando encuentros intersubjetivos, o momentos presentes, que abren a una comprensión más profunda desde el interior del grupo, en oposición a un abordaje sistémico. El trabajo es una versión revisada de una presentación llevada a cabo en el Congreso Europeo en Avignon, en el 2018.

*Palabras clave:* socio análisis, análisis de grupo, teoría de la complejidad, red de sueños, metáforas, rizoma, inconsciente asociativo, matrix

文章呈现了我们称之为荣格学社会分析概念的核心元素——这是一个整合了分析心理学, 情结理论, 社会学理论, 社会和心理分析, 社会梦, 团体分析及情绪理论的, 这一新兴的理论包含了五个假设 (Odde & Vestergaard 2021)。荣格学社会分析发展了一个研究社会性的过程性的方法, 这与系统性的方法不同。这篇文章我们主要关注五个假设中的一个, 即荣格学社会分析, 由更小的群体从内部探索社会领域, 把团体过程看作是一个交通工具, 用以获取对更大的社会整体的心理社会和文化的理解。我们将给出一个使用了这一方法的案例, 其中包含了两个在丹麦的本土社会梦经验, 这个经验关注的是欧洲的变迁。我们会呈现最重要的意义获取不是来自于梦的特定内容, 而是来自于对社会梦过程本身的投入, 其结果是转化性的意象情绪。文章结尾反思了这些社会梦经验如何为荣格学社会分析提供有用的经验, 指向了如何促使人际间的相遇, 或是当下的时刻, 从团体内部打开了更深层的理解, 而不是使用了系统的方法。这篇文章是2018年阿维翁尼欧洲年会论文的修订版。

关键词: 社会分析, 团体分析, 情结理论, 社会梦, 隐喻, 根基, 联合的无意识, 矩阵