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To cite this article: Jenny Helin, Matilda Dahl & Pierre Guillet de Monthoux (2022) The power of daydreaming: the aesthetic act of a new beginning, Culture and Organization, 28:1, 64-78, DOI: [10.1080/14759551.2021.1986505](https://doi.org/10.1080/14759551.2021.1986505)

To link to this article: <https://doi.org/10.1080/14759551.2021.1986505>



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Published online: 04 Oct 2021.



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The power of daydreaming: the aesthetic act of a new beginning

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ABSTRACT

What can we learn from a better understanding of the process of daydreaming in an organizational context? That is the main question underpinning this study. Based on a field study with a rural entrepreneur that uses daydreaming as her main strategic tool in the development of her farm, and a reading of Bachelard's work on the phenomenology of 'reverie,' we come to understand daydreaming as an embodied act that emerges at the intersection between relational materiality, vertical temporality and aesthetic space. This conceptualization of daydreaming reminds us that rather than focusing on how to make dreams come true, which is the traditional way of relating to dreams in organizational life, there is a need to enable people to dream anew, because that is when new beginnings can be born, and the particular will to act, through daydreaming, can be released.

ARTICLE HISTORY

Received 4 March 2020
Accepted 20 September 2021

KEYWORDS

Daydreaming; poetics; time; space; materiality

In times of great discoveries, a poetic image can be the seed of a world, the seed of a universe imagined out of a poet's reverie. (Gaston Bachelard, *The poetics of reverie*)

Dream, daydreaming and action: beyond heroic vision

We live in a society that values visionary people: people who dream big and turn their dreams into reality; people who achieve their grand ambitions. Think, for instance, of the super-dreamer Steve Jobs, is he not an excellent representation of the American hero myth? When Isaacson (2011) wrote a biography of Steve Jobs he cut the context of Steve Jobs's story; that is what you need to do if you want your hero to seem to be a solo dreamer. His story, just like other stories about the 'great man' who 'did it,' follows the narrative of the visionary person who first dreamt big and then did whatever was needed to make the dream come true. However, what if this heroic mythology of dreaming in organizations is misleading? What if there is more to be said about the role of dreaming in organizational creation?

In *The imagined organization*, Kostera (2020) discusses questions such as these as she points at the pivotal role of dreaming in organizational studies. By focusing not only on the finished dream, but also on how dreaming happens, her processual outlook emphasizes the importance of our everyday dreaming activities: daydreaming. This study joins forces with Kostera's work. Based on a field study with a business woman who owns a farm, and who uses daydreaming as her most significant

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strategic tool, we start from the question: what can we learn from a better understanding of the process of daydreaming in an organizational context?

From studies of philosophy, we know that daydreaming is necessary for our imagination and the formation of new ideas where '[i]magination is a laboratory of the possible inviting us – through reverie and poetry – to give a future to the past' (Kearney 2014, xxi). That is how, through daydreaming, the present reality can be expanded as new life-worlds take shape. In recognizing the significance of the actual process of engaging in dreaming, our aim is to learn more about daydreaming as a phenomenon in its own right, rather than to primarily evaluate it or to conclude about its 'effects.'

Dream, dreaming and daydreaming in organization and management studies

In current organization and management studies, dreams tend to be associated with success-stories. The success of Fordism and massproduction, for instance, is usually associated with the realization of the 'American dream' (Schiavone 2013). At the same time, 'the concept of dream is often used indirectly in many branches of management and organization studies,' rather than the primary research focus (Schiavone 2013, 635). Along those lines, an early study was carried out by Gabriel (1995), who brought attention to dreams in relation to fantasy. Dreams have also been acknowledged within the field of organizational aesthetics (e.g. Guillet de Monthoux 2004). In inquires of organizational hope, dreams have been noted as significant for the realization of grand ideas (Brunsson 2006). In another study, Moxnes (2013) elaborated upon the hero dream as an 'archetype' to understand hidden dimensions of organizational life and human interactions in organizations. And, in relation to leadership, there has been a call to 're-engage with our dreams, not as separate from our leadership but as fundamental to it' (Adler and Delbecq 2018, 126).

There have also been some studies around night-dreams. Muhr and Kirkegaard (2013) found out that dreams could function as a coping strategy for consultants operating under high pressure. Furthermore, in a special issue about 'Dreams and the Organization,' published in the *Journal of Organizational Change Management* in 2013, classical 'Freudian (night)dreams' were used to analyze the psychological dimension of an organization (Desmond 2013).

However, inquiries into the process of dreaming are not as common. Notable exceptions are those by Valtonen et al. (2017) and Salmela, Valtonen, and Meriläinen (2020), which focused on the bodily experiences of sleep and dreaming in relation to organization. In contrast to the emphasis on 'finished dreams,' and the success stories that tend to be connected, this body of work shows other sides of dreaming, including the vulnerability of the dreaming subject, and the potentially disrupting qualities that dreaming can entail. Through this focus, they contributed to greater understanding of the hidden terrains of organizations that are rarely covered in general management literature. In relation to academic writing, Helin (2019b) explores how the process of night-dreaming can enable a writing through vulnerability as a gift from the dreaming-writing-body.

In terms of daydreaming, Dane's (2018) article stands out. Using the term 'mind-wandering,' Dane proposed several hypotheses of whether and when daydreaming can be a fruitful management activity, leading to a higher task performance over time. Dane's study is based on a literature review and proposed that when an organization has multiple goals or the task at hand does not require attention, daydreaming might not hinder efficiency, whereas if the task at hand requires cognitive attention or, as he calls it, 'monitoring,' then daydreaming might have detrimental effects. For instance, a therapist who starts daydreaming when listening to their patient risks doing a lousy job, whereas a CEO who spends time daydreaming about a potential solution to a problem may contribute to a higher efficiency.

Taken together, even though the process of dreaming has been included in research, there has been a tendency to study this phenomenon not as a subject in its own right. One potential reason is that the act of dreaming, as something other than the explicit blueprint of some lonely hero, seems

such an elusive and complex dimension of life that it is simply taken for granted (Kearney 1991). Furthermore, daydreaming has traditionally been looked upon as 'unproductive, impractical and so completely unempirical as to be considered almost immoral in a society oriented toward pure and sometimes mindless action' (Russell 1969, v). Consequently, on the one hand, discourses on action uphold the relevance of 'dreams' for a variety of reasons, on the other hand, they drop deeper inquiries into daydreaming because it is too complex and vague to investigate unless we reduce dreams to 'ambitions,' 'intentions' or 'plans' to be realized by the acting subject. Underlying this way of analytically separating daydreaming from action is a dichotomized thinking that daydreaming is something other than doing; daydreaming is looked upon as a form of immaterial, inactive drifting away from reality where 'not much happens' (Ehn and Löfgren 2007).

The result of all these aspects is that even though current research in management and organization, philosophy, as well as ethnology and social psychology, has emphasized that daydreaming plays a significant role in human action (i.e. Ehn and Löfgren 2007), we still do not know how it matters in an organizational context. As one of the reviewers of this article reminded us: even today, the amount of research that acknowledges the disrupting, disorganizing and even uncanny potential of dreams and dreaming in organizations continues to be minor. Given this, our wish is to contribute to the understanding and conceptualization of daydreaming as a significant practice in organizational life, and through that, also bring light to the shadowy realities of organization, that tends to be neglected (Salmela, Valtonen, and Meriläinen 2020).

Outline

The text unfolds in the following way. We will next turn to Gaston Bachelard's work on daydreaming and, in particular, his conceptualization of 'reverie' as the most dynamic form of an act: a relation between an imaging consciousness and the world. Bachelard was a French philosopher known for finding it impossible to account for any human action in science, everyday existence, as well as in working life without taking daydreaming seriously. To Bachelard, daydreaming can be seen as a fundamental human right, all humans should have the *Right to dream*, to paraphrase the title of one of his books (Bachelard 1990). Over several publications, he developed a phenomenology of daydreaming; what he teaches us, broadly speaking, is that daydreaming is an important, difficult and vulnerable act which needs poetic circumstances to unfold. Furthermore, daydreaming can be seen as a special kind of act; an aesthetic process that creates newness and a multiplicity of previously non-existing images that build up a will to act.

Having introduced the concept of reverie, we then introduce our field study with farm owners and how they relate to dreaming, including daydreaming, in their organizational life. The empirical material reported on here is part of a larger study, where interviews have been carried out with 20 owner managers in rural Sweden. However, we will focus our empirical investigation for this paper on the work carried out by one of them, Birgitta du Rietz, owner manager of Stora Gåsemora Farm in Sweden. Based on close fieldwork encounters with her, we have written what we call a portrait of Birgitta, which offers an account of how daydreaming can take place in an organizational setting.

From Bachelard's work on reverie, together with the portrait of Birgitta, we elaborate upon how daydreaming can be understood as an embodied act that emerges at the intersection between relational materiality, vertical temporality and aesthetic space. This inquiry into daydreaming brings us to the conclusion that besides the emphasis on how to make dreams come true – what we call 'dream-catching' – which is the traditional way of relating to dreams in organizational life, there is a need to also enable people to also dream anew, what we elaborate upon as 'dream-making.' This is of significance, because of the inherent power in dream-making, where new beginnings can be born, and the 'poetic intentionality' in the daydreaming act can be released (Bachelard 1969, 5).

Daydreaming as aesthetic action: Bachelard's notion of 'reverie'

Having pursued a career within philosophy of science where he had advanced the theory of epistemological rupture, which has been widely picked up by the scientific community, Gaston Bachelard later developed a phenomenology of daydreaming in which he worked toward a bridging between art and science. The problem with science, according to Bachelard (1969), is that new discoveries always need to be put in the context of already acquired bodies of knowledge; thus, it is a retrospective way of thinking that hinders the emergence of novelty. Daydreaming, on the other hand, is about opening up to that which is unknown – the not yet – which creates a particular will to act.

Bachelard developed his understanding of reverie through a number of books, where *The poetics of reverie*, originally published in 1960 and translated into English in 1969, offers a gateway to his writings on the subject. From the outset, he emphasized that 'poetic reverie,' and its capability for 'an expanding consciousness,' was of particular interest (Bachelard 1969, 6).

According to Bachelard, we can all 'dream well' if only we have the right poetic circumstances. Here, poetics is not referred to in a literal sense, but rather should be understood from a wider perspective drawing upon the etymological meaning of *poiesis* – meaning to make with our full body – since it 'is about hearing and feeling as well as crafting and shaping' (Kearney 2014, xix). The beauty of the poetic is that it rejects principles, systems and proofs. In this poetic moment, the body is at the core of reverie and it is 'in the flesh and organs that the first material images are born' (Bachelard, in Kotowicz 2018, 95). During reverie, all our senses are awakened and the reverie 'listens to this polyphony of the senses' (Bachelard 1969, 6). In our daydreaming body, our eyes act in an interplay with all our senses in such a way that we have a capacity not only to see but also to deform that which is clear and distinct. In this way, our own poetic images are not based on what we see, as in a sensory activity, rather, what we see is shaped by our imagination. Thus, the imagination of images enters before thought, which is why 'poetry, rather than being a philosophy of the mind, is a phenomenology of the soul' (Bachelard 2014, 14). With this as a background, let us elaborate on three characteristics of reverie that will be of importance for our inquiry: materiality, temporality and space.

In a series of books on the elements of earth, air, water and fire, Bachelard explored how our encounters with different forms of 'materialities' can, in a poetic moment, provide a pathway to reverie (Macauley 2005). This approach to materiality emphasizes that 'the world is not a backdrop to human action; rather, human action is always part of, and in participation with, matter' (Lundberg 2008, 3). When in contact, the materiality enables a sensory feeling that makes it possible to 'grasp the image as it emerges, as it is co-constituted with the subject, before it is split into a distinct object by thought' (Hans 1977, 318). From that, spontaneous creation has already begun (Bachelard 2013). In this way, when our body is interacting with the materiality at hand – when we work with the resistance of matter – it does something to us; the reveries offer themselves as thoughts because we can think in, and through, reveries. But, not only that, 'beside those reveries which offer themselves as thought, there are also reveries which wish; and I might add that they are very comforting reveries, very comforting because they prepare a wish' (Bachelard 1969, 211). The beauty of the reveries of the will is that they build up our energy and capacity to meet the world in its creation.

Second, poetic reverie has a particular relationship with temporality in that a poetic opening can create a temporal rupture. This rupture enables a break from chronological time because time no longer flows, 'it shoots up' (Bachelard 1988, 175). When time shoots up we can start to explore vertical movements in the present moment, enabling us to 'fly high' and 'dig deep' to encounter that which is of utmost importance to us. According to Bachelard (2013), it is along the vertical axis that we experience our most vital, existential moments; the vertical moment becomes the ground for authentic creation. A sentence, an image, a poem, a touch of the materiality at hand, are all things that can make us 'take off' vertically in daydreaming. In emphasizing the verticality, the poetic moment not only offers another direction of time, from horizontality to verticality, but also an embodied experience of a moment that makes it possible to enlarge what is possible for us to

even think, see or feel as time no longer moves from a certain past to an uncertain future, '[I]f life does not flow along a slope of the axis of objective time that would serve as its channel' (Bachelard 2013, 12). In short, whereas clock time is horizontal and continuous, this is time as discontinuous and disruptive. In this vertical moment, time as we usually know it stops and we can imagine new images that brings us to ideas, thoughts and places not previously visited.

There is, last, a special connection between reverie and space that we want to acknowledge. Bachelard (2014) was interested in spaces that shelter daydreaming and protect the dreamer. His attention was on lived space, rather than geometric space. His book on this subject, *The poetics of space*, addresses 'those settings we live in, and finally die in, with the lightness of why we live in the first place' (Danielewski 2014, viii). In this book, Bachelard painted an intimate, yet vast, canvas, portraying where we will feel at home and free to engage in reverie. He takes us on vertical tours from the underground cellar to the attic via staircases, drawers and other nests. In this way, the poetics of space 'is about hide-and-seek places where the mind can go on holiday for a while and think about nothing – which means everything' (Kearney 2014, vxiii). Bachelard was, in particular, interested in spaces that allow a pause, in silence, where we can get into a mode of reverie. In the wake of big projects, big houses and big dreams, he thereby reminds us of the importance of the small and the intimate, spaces that enable us to pay attention to ourselves and the world that dreams, if only we could listen. Or, as Kearney (2014, xxv) puts it in the foreword to *The poetics of space*, 'To dream otherwise – even if it is for the moment of a reverie or poem – is to exist otherwise.'

By way of summarizing, Kearney (1991, 4) noted that Bachelard's treatise of reverie is about 'the human power to convert absence into presence, actuality to possibility, what-is into something-other-than-it-is.' In other words, reverie has the fundamental possibility to transform our present moment so that it reaches out beyond our current concerns.

Poetics of fieldwork

From the beginning, this study about daydreaming was not planned. It came to us. It is a continuation of a research project that was initiated a couple of years ago with local farm owners. At that time, the dairy farm crisis with falling milk prices hit farmers on an almost global scale and many farmers were driven out of business. We wanted to learn from those that survived; how did they go on? Our inquiries brought us to farms on the island of Gotland, in Sweden, where we live.

When these rural entrepreneurs told us about their life and how they make a living, often under tough conditions, they talked about a life different from the here and now. We heard stories about better days that are still to come. In explaining their ordinary work with their dairy cows, cattle and the soil, they touched upon how they could daydream about other things as they went on doing what they had to do for the time being. At first, we did not know how to make sense of what we heard and we talked about it in terms of 'life,' in broad terms. Eventually, we understood that it was something around daydreaming that was of significance to them. This theme was unexpected, yet it felt important to continue to explore. The question was how to do that: how can we do research about something as elusive as daydreaming, which cannot be touched, seen or held in our hands? Particularly if we are not primarily interested in making a content analysis of people's daydreams but would rather pay attention to how daydreaming happens and what it does.

A poetic approach – finding our seashell

Our methodological approach was guided by issues such as how it is possible to create a moment for collaborative inquiry about daydreaming; a moment where we can meet and jointly explore life and important matters through our experiences of daydreaming. During method development, we were inspired by aesthetic orientations to fieldwork in general (De Molli 2021) and research around poetics and organization studies in particular (Van Amsterdam and van Eck 2019). We intensively

read Bachelard's (2014) book, *The poetics of space*, where he draws connections between space, poetics and daydreaming.

In this book, Bachelard (2014) emphasized the importance of small intimate spaces, such as a seashell, as a catalyst for daydreaming. A seashell, according to Bachelard, houses some particular features in that it is providing shelter, yet it is fragile. This way, an 'empty shell, like an empty nest, invites daydreams of refuge. [...] And since the inhabitant of a shell can amaze us, the imagination will soon make amazing creatures, more amazing than reality, issue from the shell' (Bachelard 2014, 126–127).

We had already decided to make interviews with the farm owners and in reading this work, we wanted to conduct the interview-conversations from our own seashell, thereby enabling another time–space configuration that breaks from the hurly-burly of the everyday. However, where could we find our shell? And how would that work in practice? Eventually, we decided to buy a caravan, as a seashell for research encounters, where we could invite farm owners for interview-conversations about daydreaming. This means that we still went to their premises. However, we met in a different space as we parked on their yard, prepared for coffee and cakes, and invited them into the caravan rather than stepping into their home. Moreover, the caravan was helpful in the sense that it helped us to build up our capacity to pay attention differently, including how we approach dreaming, and in a new light. Stepping into the caravan, and thereby getting out of our everyday spaces, sheltered the moment of seeing each other which brought forward another kind of attention, uninterrupted thinking and receptivity in the conversations (Helin, Dahl and Guillet de Monthoux 2020).

All interviews were recorded. In order to make sense of the field work material we listened and re-listened to the recordings, read and re-read the transcribed conversations, read our field notes and Bachelard's work on reverie, and talked about how we could better understand daydreaming. As a way to get further in our inquiries, we decided to write what we came to call a 'portrait' of the farm owners we had met and to read the portrait aloud with/for them.

The empirical context – Birgitta at Gåsemora Farm

We are here focusing on the field work we have carried out together with Birgitta du Rietz. Her farm is located on the peninsula of Fårö, north of the island of Gotland, in Sweden. Except for a couple of months in the summer, the island of Fårö is scarcely populated with 500 inhabitants on a yearly basis. Over the years, Birgitta has turned her old farm into a business within the hospitality industry. The aesthetic quality of the location and the buildings are of key importance to Birgitta. She has transformed Gåsemora Farm from a milk farm to place made up of 15 different buildings that are a combination of old restored farm buildings and contemporary architecture dwellings. After inheriting the farm from her late husband, who died from cancer, leaving her with a newborn baby, dairy cows and bank loans, she has over time developed the farm into what it is today. Of importance for our inquiries here is that Birgitta presents herself as a person for whom her capacity to daydream is key to developing her farm.

We are here including the full portrait that we wrote for reading with Birgitta. In including it at length, we hope it will offer a contextualized understanding of how daydreaming can happen, and what it can offer an entrepreneur as she is developing her business. We decided to include Birgitta's portrait as she explicitly talks about daydreaming in a way that makes daydreaming visible, and therefore understandable. Her portrait also shows how her business is entirely intertwined with other aspects of her life. Without recognizing this, central aspects of how daydreaming matters would be missed out. A significant question, when conducting this kind of field work, is if we should reveal the real names of the research participants. In this case, we have found that the portrait would miss out on important contextual details if we were to make the empirical account anonymous. Furthermore, we wanted to share the portrait in the form that we read it for Birgitta. That is why we have decided to use the real name of her and her farm, of course with full consent from her.

As we wrote the portrait, it was important to us that it would feel ‘true’ to her, and that it would resonate with her, in the sense that the portrait would have the ‘ability to evoke images, memories and emotions’ (Meier and Wegener 2017, 194) through including emotional, fleshy and even messy aspects of mundane life (Huopalainen and Satama 2019, 18). We also wanted the text to ‘give wing to the imaginative’ and to offer a thoughtful piece (McNamee 2000, 16). Working toward these aims we first wrote the text in Swedish, our native language. During the writing process, we jointly read the text out loud several times between ourselves in research team and made changes to get the right rhythm and flow in reading.

When we were pleased with the text, we booked a meeting with Birgitta. Just as Cunliffe (2002) noted in her work on social poetics in management inquiry, this encounter gave us possibilities to further explore the subject of daydreaming, together with Birgitta, once more. Thus, we did not write the portrait or do the reading in an attempt to have the last word, but rather as an utterance for further dialogue (Helin 2019a). Even so, having read, Birgitta looked at us and said: ‘This is how it is. This is exactly how it is.’

Birgitta du Rietz at Gåsemora Farm

Silence. The only audible sound is the creak from the wide floorboards when Birgitta moves around the room. The sheets have been stripped off, to be replaced by new, white, ironed ones. Outside, all is still and, across Gåsemora Farm, the mist is beginning to rise on this slightly bleak November morning.

We are on Fårö Island. A short time ago, the last weekend guests left the farm and the rustling of the solitary junipers to return to the mainland and the clamor of the city. Another working weekend is over. The guests have been riding, practicing yoga and conferring.

This is the best time for Birgitta, who owns and runs the large facility. During her mute domestic toil, with nothing to disturb her, her thoughts can take her very far away. She gazes into the distance.

‘People think I look crazy,’ she says. ‘I kind of stare empty into space. I’m not there.’

Making the beds, cleaning and forever painting: skirting boards and moldings, doors and window frames ... there is no end to her diligence as a painter. When she is left in peace, free from other people and phone calls, life is at its best. Her visions can then transport her, letting her escape from reality’s monsters, death and betrayal. Ideas for converting the property then also take shape. How many panes should the windows of the new house have – four, six or eight? What really looks best? Then, too, fantasies about what happened on the farm several centuries ago can come to life. She speculates about the builder of the stone wall that surrounds the farm, wondering whether he was in love and happy.

These things happen when nothing else is going on.

Birgitta has always daydreamed a great deal. During her first few years of life, she lived alone with her maternal grandmother on a small farm. Life was dull and there were no other children around. That was when the daydreaming started. Since then, it has been her strategy for transcending reality and creating new realities. Later in life, it served to comfort a despairing daughter whose parents had separated. It enabled her to build a new enterprise on an old agricultural estate. It inspired a brilliant gift for her neighbor. But, most of all, it has been her way of coping with life, living and surviving.

What worked fine to pass the time was sometimes a problem in school.

Are you sitting there daydreaming again, Birgitta? Stop it!

Her daydreaming is constantly interrupted. She dislikes interruptions.

I go crazy when the phone rings while I’m doing the housework, because sometimes my daydream is so darn good, Birgitta explains.

How can that be, then? What is so good about it? Well, she explains, it is like watching a good movie in which she herself decides on the action.

Or, as Birgitta expresses it: 'In my head I read, think, ponder ... I play movies in my head.'

Inside her mind, no outsider can come in and mess things up. There, she has control. It is Birgitta who decides what her inner movies are about, how they start and how they end. And there are only happy endings. Nothing boring or horrifying gets a look-in: 'Only good things.'

Using the daydreams, it is even possible to hide the unpleasantness. The man who betrayed her is shut into a cold room, with the door locked. There is no way he can get out and into her dreams. If he intrudes, he is shooed away: 'So there – so much for you! Now I'm locking you in.'

In the vision, the invalid recovers. The husband – the eldest daughter's father, heir to the farm – never died of cancer. In the inner daydream that took place at the same time as the nightmare out there, he would recover and all would be well. In her mind's eye, everyone who once lived on the farm is still around and she is not alone there.

I know everyone who has lived on this farm in the past is with me, Birgitta says.

This gives her strength to move on, especially when grim reality is unbearable: the invalid stopped being part of it, and disappeared from the reality in which she had been living. He left Birgitta alone with an eight-month-old daughter on a huge hereditary estate that she came close to losing in a foreclosure.

Where the dairy used to be, there is now a farm complex of a partially modern design, used for conferences, concerts and weddings. Birgitta has prioritized a focus on developing the farm's aesthetics, with new buildings and extensions to the old ones. Nothing has been left to chance. Everything is handsome and in harmony with the landscape, the color scheme and the siting of the various buildings. Here, Birgitta works hard all year round and makes sure that she is left in peace to daydream.

You shouldn't be doing the domestic chores. You're the boss here. That's no good at all, people say to her. But she disagrees.

It's terrific, I think. I just want to do it. Then my dreams can carry me away (...). It's like living two lives, more or less: the usual and a dream life.

The dreamed reality can confuse the reality in which she lives. The two easily become conflated. What happened where? Did it happen out there or in here?

Sometimes I don't know if I'm daydreaming or have been. I usually say, 'I've been dreaming again.' I can also get comments about it: 'Oh, you're such a flipping liar,' my ex used to say. 'You tell lies and make things up.' No, I don't, but sometimes it's really hard to know where I am.

Still, daydreaming is something that solves problems rather than creates them. When Birgitta moved back into her family home, she related her fantasies instead of reading to her siblings.

I told them stories I'd made up – ones I'd daydreamed about. There were lots of crazy things in them. My siblings thought it was totally awesome. They just longed to go to bed so I'd tell them stories.

In there, the sun shines; out there, it is dark and cold. But the dreadful reality must not get in. It must stay out there because Birgitta has 'no filter,' as she describes it.

I can't take it. Everything gets to me. It goes straight in. When the hurt goes straight in and has its destructive effect – well, something else has to take its place. Then your own creation of reality, through daydreaming, becomes the way to keep the rest away. Creating something new, that's possible to control and steer in a direction that you yourself want.

The stuff of her visions often relates to building projects and colors. Should there be a sliding door? What shade of yellow? How many windowpanes? What would be good or beautiful?

Imagine if the big manure pit that is no longer used wasn't there any longer, in the middle of the barnyard. What might be there instead? A spa? A restaurant? No ... no.

Yes, and I always wanted to do something [about the manure pit]. I stuck to that. But then I thought no, that would cost a heck of a lot of money. I'm not sure it'll be OK. Then I see it in front of me. Darn, it smells of manure down here. Oh no, it won't work. It'll never be possible to get rid of the manure that's in the walls. But what about just leaving it there, then?

No, that wasn't an option. Once a project has started in your mind, it has to be finished. I just have to see it through, so that I can let go of the thing. Otherwise it will keep on popping up in my head, Birgitta explains.

In the event, the big round concrete block became neither a spa nor a restaurant. It suffered a harsher fate: being removed altogether.

I thought and thought. Heck, should I do it or not? I'll regret it ... I'll think ... maybe I'll be disappointed ... it may not turn out well at all. I have to think about whether I'll be sad ... because, after all, I put it there. We worked hard to install it. It's part of the farm. Should I get rid of something so wonderful? I remember when I got it, and I was so keen to have it, so that the manure didn't get out and spoil our groundwater. I remember what it cost and what a slog it was to set it up.

Getting away from farming meant a complete upheaval, from working in the barn to doing completely different things. When Birgitta's husband fell ill three months after their youngest daughter was born, she milked the cows herself – and simultaneously breastfed her baby.

I had to milk them all the time (...), and, for a year and a half, I did the milking myself and breastfed at the same time. I had 52 cows.

Later, when she faced the big decision to sell the cows and leave the farming behind her, she imagined a bovine existence.

Sure, I thought about that before selling the cows. I'd visualize life as a cow or some other animal. I could fantasize about that as I walked around there: How I'd want things to be if I were an animal, and what should be done.

What drives Birgitta lies outside herself, in her self-image as a link in something bigger – the chain of generations. The people in this chain are also her 'team.' She feels a kinship and connection across time with people who lived before her and those who are to come after her. What binds them all together – predecessors, herself and her successors – are matter, space and the estate. The sense of fellowship is a real presence in her thoughts. Her link in the chain must not be broken, she feels, even if things have not gone according to plan, and although she has been left alone. But there is more to it than that.

Her children ask: Mom, if you sold up you could live in luxury and travel round the world. Why do you keep going?

The response comes quickly: Put your Mom in an apartment and she'd die.

The power of reverie

Since childhood, Birgitta has used daydreaming as a 'tool' and she uses it for pleasure, child upbringing, in the nurturing of friendships, as well as for work. In short, daydreaming is part of her life, just as her life is part of her daydreaming. In developing a deeper understanding of how she uses daydreaming, we will discuss it in relation to three dimensions central to Bachelard's work on reverie: relational materiality, vertical temporality and aesthetic space.

Relational materiality

Birgitta tells us that particular kinds of work tasks are of importance for her capability to daydream. The tasks involve repetitive work that she can carry out by herself without having to think about

what she is doing, for instance cleaning the hotel rooms and maintenance work, such as painting windows and walls. These are the work tasks that she prefers to do and while she is engaged in these activities she can simultaneously make imaginative dream-films. Accordingly, there seems to be a form of imagination which is released in the interplay between her body and the materiality she works with. In this imaginative act, her films make her see different kinds of pictures. Seeing should here be understood as an embodied act involving different senses where she, for instance, can 'see the smell' as Birgitta told us when she talked about the remaking of the manure pit.

What Birgitta also tells us is that not all forms of materiality work. For instance, she loves to do needlework, but it does not work for daydreaming as this is a form of materiality in which she has to think about what she is doing. To daydream, she needs to be in relation with a materiality that she likes to work with, and that puts her body in a repetitive mood in which she can simultaneously dream-think-do other things at the same time. This resonates with Bachelard's (2002) finding that draws our attention to how different materialities have different energies, thereby different energizing dynamics. For our daydreaming, these differences, thereby, set their own conditions and experiences. Furthermore, we have to find what materialities that speak to us, like Valtonen and Pullen (2020) do when they write *with* rocks. To them, rocks are a particular form of affective materiality that bring them 'toward the possibilities of engaging the force of imagination in its materiality' (Valtonen and Pullen 2020, 507). Interestingly, as is evident in reading their poetic essay, this is not an imaginative force that just goes anywhere, rather, it provokes depth: 'matter and material imagination invite us to seek for the depth of the world and ourselves when we confront ambivalence and indeterminacy, and consequently they bring us activity and engagement' (Gao 2019, 80).

Vertical temporality

It is not only ongoing relationships between the body and materiality that are at play during daydreaming, but also an intertwining with temporality. In ordinary situations, we tend to separate the 'dreamt world' from the 'real world.' Usually, the real world is supposed to happen in the now, as well as in the past, while the dreamt world is pictured as something else, something that might happen in the future. What Birgitta teaches us is that upholding this separation becomes problematic, as well as unnecessary, for the daydreaming body. To her, these two life-worlds are inter-related to the extent that it is difficult for her to separate them, and both unfold in the now. By being in silence and not disturbed by social others, in the now, a particular form of temporality opens up. Birgitta explains that she does not listen to the radio or watch television and she does not under any circumstances want to be interrupted by her mobile phone, because that breaks the special moment that is needed for her daydreaming to take off. During these moments in solitude, she utilizes her full capacity to be in reverie. Bachelard (2013, 63) explained how we can understand these special moments as a vertical temporality, which is important because it is 'in vertical time of an immobilized instant that poetry finds its specific dynamism.' The power of this specific dynamism, which is experienced as an instant, is that it enables what Bachelard (2013, 67) referred to as 'pure spontaneity' and a 'pure beginning.' Birgitta tells us how she, during these moments, can create the new; she sees it and tries it out in different ways. In order to achieve this, she pays attention to every detail she is 'working on' in her daydreaming. If she is haunted by the past, for instance by the husband who betrayed her, she first has to lock him firmly in (imaginatively), in order to be able to daydream well.

Aesthetic space

There is a direct relationship between the aesthetic space of Gåsemora Farm and Birgitta's daydreaming. In her expression, 'Put your Mom in an apartment and she'd die,' she declares the existential importance of being at Gåsemora for her daydreaming to take place, and even for her to live. At

the same time, her dreaming is about how to continue to develop Stora Gåsemora as an aesthetic space. All the decisions made are firmly rooted in how to keep the aesthetic dimension of the space. That is how her dreaming-life and her universe are expanded where '[a] world takes form in our reverie, and this world is ours. The dreamed world teaches us the possibilities for expanding our being within our universe' (Bachelard 1969, 8). Through daydreaming her universe is expanded in such a way that nothing is subordinate to something else that is primary; the opposite is true, everything exists together and how the door in a particular room fits with the design in that room is as important as the aesthetic feel of the farm as a whole.

The interplay between relational materiality, vertical temporality and aesthetic space helps in understanding how daydreaming, in an organizational setting, is a particular form of embodied action, with unique features and characteristics. This is what we call 'dream-making'. The implications of this conceptualization of the process of daydreaming will be elaborated upon next.

From dream to dreaming

Recently, Parlamis and Monnot (2019) called for a renaming of what is usually labeled 'soft skills' in management. According to them, the 'soft stuff is actually the hard stuff,' which is why there is a need to rethink these skills that are undervalued yet necessary in management (Gioia, in Parlamis and Monnot 2019, 225). Through our inquiries, we have explored one such soft skill, namely daydreaming, which we have come to understand as an embodied act that emerges at the intersection between relational materiality, vertical temporality and aesthetic space. Through this conceptualization, we can reconsider the habitual approach to daydreaming in an organizational context, where it is no longer understood as a mindless drifting away, but rather as a valuable organizational practice.

First, when addressed, daydreaming has traditionally not been associated with 'productive work' in organizational settings (Dane 2018). In today's organizations, where there is pressure to work efficiently, there is an emphasis on doing things to reach a final end, to deliver output in relation to predefined goals (i.e. Jones 2018). In that way, our 'what gets measured gets done' society tends to hold a narrow view of what counts as useful things to do, with an emphasis on the completion of tasks. In this setting, daydreaming is understood as inactive and unproductive and therefore as a disturbance. In contrast to this set view, this study shows that we have the capacity to create 'memories of the future,' in the present, through the act of daydreaming (Vinther Larsen and Willert 2018, 246). What is of significance for Birgitta in her daydreaming is that she creates a beautiful world. Hence, this is not any form of act, it is something she does that has aesthetic qualities. In that sense, daydreaming is a generative act where Birgitta expands on that which is beautiful for herself, the farm, and visitors to Gåsemora. In the language of Taylor (2013, 72), daydreaming can be understood as moments of 'little beauties,' which, according to him, means that beauty is 'associated with a rich, aesthetic experience.' This resonates with Bachelard's (1969, 13) understanding as he emphasized that '[p]oetic reverie is an opening to a beautiful world, to beautiful worlds.'

Second, in contrast to the mundane understanding of daydreaming as a purely mental act, we can here see that it is an act involving the full body. For instance, for Birgitta, her capacity to see is of significance to her. As she is moving her arm up and down, painting a window frame, she starts to see imaginative films in her daydreaming. Thus, in the repetitive vertical movement, in touch with the materiality at hand, it is as if she breathes the dreaming through her body. Her 'film-making' needs this rhythm as well as absence of other disturbing elements (including other people) for her to be in this embodied daydream mode.

Third, from our study, we can conclude that daydreaming can have an escapist function, but not only that. Importantly, daydreaming also has an existential purpose. Birgitta tells us that if her daydreaming, as she operates Gåsemora Farm, were to be taken away from her, she would 'die.' This goes hand in hand with Bachelard's (1990) understanding of daydreaming, viewing it as central to our existence as human beings. Even though these existential questions are organizational

aspects that tend to be difficult to research, as we are lacking words and comprehension of these experiences, it is nevertheless important to continue to explore and learn more about these 'shadowy realities of organizational life' (Salmela, Valtonen, and Meriläinen 2020, 33).

These findings have organizational implications. Taken together, we propose what we have come to call a 'dream-making' practice in organizations, where we are sensitive to the inherent power in the act of daydreaming itself, but also realize its fragility. A 'dream-making' practice emphasizes the importance of continuous, on-going dreaming, rather than the usual, entitative, focus on 'finished dreams.' Let us expand a bit further.

The portrait of Birgitta shows us how a dream-making logic can be pivotal in today's organizations. Rather than focusing on how to make dreams come true – in line with 'American dream' – what we call a 'dream-catching' logic – this study shows us how important mundane daydreams can be as an organizing practice. That is how we can make use of the verticalizing forces in dream-making, where new beginnings can be born, and the particular will to act, through daydreaming, can be released. This is a deeply connected way of working, where the creation is happening in resonance with the place, the materiality at hand, and the dreaming body. Given this way of working, it is a way of getting deeper, and higher, in relation to that which matters the most. Therefore, let us not automatically look down on intimate and 'small' dreams as an escape from 'real' organizational work.

By viewing daydreaming as a fundamental human act, it might also be revealed as something that needs to be promoted, safeguarded and explored in, and by, organizations. At the same time, as we have seen, daydreaming is a fragile activity that needs particular circumstances. The most important being: time in solitude. Bachelard (2013) called this time 'vertical,' the time that enables a dimension of depth and height in life (Helin 2020). Put in this light, does the act of organizing, in itself, contradict daydreaming? Organizing tends to be about control, predictability and order. In contrast to contemporary work-life that is organized along chronological time, this points towards the importance of organizing time in verticality, enabling vertical expansion in the organizational everyday. This can be understood as a form of anti-organization, by releasing the chronological order, whenever possible. By that, we mean that even if we can never take daydreaming as a given, because it cannot be programmed or planned, we can limit the risk of destroying the circumstances needed to make dreaming take off. With these lines, we join in with Bachelard (2002, 70) who hopefully predicted that: 'Ah! The time will come when every profession will have its appointed dreamer, its oneiric guide, every factory its Bureau of Poetry.'

Still, we intuitively know that we have a long way to go before we are there. Even after years of being deeply engaged in this study, we find ourselves struggling when we are to articulate how daydreaming matters. Our words fail us and we become vague, unclear. During the course of publishing this text, both reviewers rightly pointed out how we in a confusing way used the words 'dream' and 'daydreaming' interchangeably. As if we ourselves did not fully manage (or dare?) to separate ourselves, even just temporarily, from the big D dream.

We realize we have to daydream ourselves. In so doing, we are tasting the words, the words that will put an end to this paper. And we just let them flow, as they come, wishing them to come across, all the way, to you:

Daydreaming in the making

Making dreams come true
Is not the only thing
It's also about
Making dreams – dream making
Awakening, seeing, being
What is to be
What used to be
What is

In silence in contact with the material world

Daydreaming
An everyday duty
Of a committed business woman
But how then?
Birgitta and Bachelard
Pave the way

To poetic spaces
Birgitta knows the practice
Bachelard writes about

Two worlds
Philosophy and mundane moments
Merging into a new management materiality?

Moving beyond time and space
As we use to think about it

We cannot learn from Heroes
They are too far away from the everyday
Anyway the American Dream has failed
There is no promised land

By opening up to us
Birgitta gave us a gift to be cherished
Her pain her joy
The vulnerability of her inner daydreaming life

Proving to us it is quite possible indeed
To have daydreaming as a business philosophy

With her help
We try to open up a poetic space
To us, to you
New worlds of meaning can emerge
Of what management and organization
could be(come)

Acknowledgement

Our heart warmest thanks to Birgitta du Rietz, for her generosity in sharing what's most important to her in her work. We would also like to express our gratitude to the editor and the two reviewers for engaging in the review process in such a dialogic way. Your compassion and energy certainly made a difference when we worked with this text.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).

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