

de San Eugenio-Vela, Jordi

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Approaches to the study of individual–landscape interaction as an evocation of intrapersonal communication

Aproximaciones al estudio de la interacción individuo-paisaje a modo de evocación comunicativa intrapersonal

Jordi de San Eugenio-Vela / jordi.saneugenio@uvic.cat
Universidad de Vic, España

Abstract: Analysis of the interaction between landscape and the individual opens up many research avenues linked to the generation and interpretation of symbolisms and imaginaries. The capacity of landscape for significant and/or communicative evocation finds in intrapersonal communication a relevant argument for the construction of a theoretical framework to study the process of appropriation and experience of the landscape in terms of communicative expression. The principal aim of this paper is to set up the theoretical framework that enables us to interpret the language of landscape and to decode its intangible discourse.

Key words: landscape, intrapersonal communication, appropriation, experience, interaction.

Resumen: El análisis de la interacción entre el paisaje y el individuo proporciona un amplio abanico de posibilidades relacionadas con la generación e interpretación de simbolismos e imaginarios. La capacidad de evocación comunicativa del paisaje encuentra en la comunicación intrapersonal un argumento relevante para la construcción de un marco teórico interdisciplinario, que facilite el estudio del proceso de apropiación y experiencia del individuo respecto a un determinado paisaje en términos de expresión comunicativa. En este sentido, el objetivo principal de este artículo consiste en desarrollar un aparato teórico para la interpretación del lenguaje del paisaje y de su discurso intangible.

Palabras clave: paisaje, comunicación intrapersonal, apropiación, experiencia, interacción.

Introduction, justification and method

This paper is based on the hypothesis that any process of individual interaction with landscape has communicative connotations that should be clearly differentiated. To this end, analysis parameters must be set up in order to interpret the processes of experiencing and appropriating landscape as a communicative expression and, more specifically, from the perspective of intrapersonal communication.

In the first place, the author proposes to lay down the theoretical foundations for the consideration of landscape as an active element of communication, in order to subsequently demonstrate the experience/appropriation of landscape (individual-landscape interaction) as an intrapersonal communicative process.

This paper is a theoretical essay that aims to contribute in some small way towards the recognition of the landscape experience process as intrapersonal communication. It is hoped to further understand the symbolisms in landscape, and to bring into play the theoretical bases from disciplines such as psychology, communication theory and geographic thought, which may lead to the discovery of a new communicative vision of landscape.

In this context, the main focus of the research (i.e., providing theoretical underpinnings for an approach to the phenomenon of experience/appropriation of landscape as intrapersonal communication) and the phenomenon of individual-landscape interaction itself both beg the need to delve deeper into a type of human communication that has received scant attention in the field of communication theory: intrapersonal communication.

With regard to research methods, the construction of a theoretical model for approaching landscape from an eminently communicative perspective requires bringing into play auxiliary disciplines (geography, psychology and communication in our case) in order to visualise a logic of relationships within the same system of analysis. A systemic approach was used, developing theoretical or deduced hypotheses along with an eminently theoretical work model. The systemic concept is not so much induced from experience as constructed out of abstract reasoning from deductions, analogies, oppositions, implications etc., although necessarily inspired by the behaviour and existing knowledge of real objects (Quivy and Campenhoudt, 1988).

The growing need for a study about the links between communication and landscape or, in other words, the path that may lead towards a

communicative treatise on landscape, justifies the in-depth theoretical reflection required for a symbolic approach to landscape as an active element of communication. It makes sense, therefore, to undertake this research paper in a deliberately theoretical and argumentative mode. The paper is thus based on an interpretative paradigm, epistemologically focused on understanding the phenomenon of individual-landscape interaction in terms of meaning and/or intangible, non-verbal communicative expression. At an ontological level, we have to resort to relativism and so the methodology is essentially ideographical and qualitative. In order to develop a non-empirical approach, a threefold theoretical process was employed, based on contributions from environmental psychology, human geography and communication theory.

The analytical methodology involves combing through the bibliography for a convergent interdisciplinary approach to the process of experience/appropriation of landscape in terms of intrapersonal communicative expression. From the aforementioned factors (perception, cognition and subsequent interpretation of landscape) it will be seen the implications from the perspective of psychology, the subjective study of the individual, and the discovery of the personal inner world. The analysis of the construction process of meaning from the individual interaction with the landscape can therefore be placed within the field of communication.

We understand that the social and/or academic relevance of this paper is based on the possibility of providing an interdisciplinary theoretical corpus to one of the types of communication (intrapersonal communication) with the least relevant theoretical and applied background in communication studies. Likewise, the paper suggests, in addition to the aforementioned theoretical approach, an applied use of intrapersonal communication from interaction and internal reasoning which emerge from personal experiences from the landscape. The communication of places is habitually studied within the sphere of induced communication, by means of the use of persuasive discourse (touristic promotion and marketing, environmental communication and education, place branding, etc.). However, this paper aims to shed light on a wealth of knowledge related to the analysis of non-induced or spontaneous communication that emerges from the places, in this case as the direct result of individual interaction with the landscape.

Intrapersonal communication

A preliminary overview of the bibliography on intrapersonal communication reveals the scant interest traditionally shown for this subject. The literature

on this mode of human communication arose little initial enthusiasm among academics specialised in the communication phenomenon. However, in the second half of the 20th century there was an increase in academic publications on the subject (Goss, 1996), even including some interpretation models at an intrapersonal communicative level (Barker and Wiseman, 1966; Barnlund, 1971). It is true that communication sciences have focused much of their research and publications on phenomena directly related to mass communication (discourse, reception, contents, etc.).

It is also true that many communication theorists do not include the intrapersonal variable as a legitimate mode of human communication. One reason is that it is not seen as communication, according to the precept that any communication process must come from an emitter and reach a receiver. If this is not the case, all possibility of communication is denied; the intrapersonal level is simply a neologism. Nevertheless, other communication theorists devote much of their research production to the subject of human intrapersonal communication; for example: Vocate (1994), Cunningham (1995) and Goss (1996).

McQuail (1983: 37-38) includes the intrapersonal communication variable as part of human communication: “there are more and more varied types of communication network, based on some shared features of daily life: an environment (such as a neighbourhood), an interest (such as music), a need (such as the care of small children), or an activity (such as sport). (...) At the intrapersonal level, communication research concentrates on the processing of information (for instance, attention, perception, attitude formation, comprehension, recall and learning), the giving of meaning and possible effects (e.g. on knowledge, opinion, self-identity and attitudes)”. McQuail summarises the concerns of communication theory and research in the Table 1.¹

The academic community is divided, however, in regard to the communicative implications inherent in the internal processes experienced by individuals on interacting with their immediate surroundings or, more specifically, with the landscape. An “intra” level of communication causes a certain amount of surprise, given that communication, by definition and by etymology, implies sharing and exchanging. An approach to communication as a lineal monologue generates controversy. Intrapersonal communication goes beyond the interior monologue, in which the emitter is also the receiver of his own message.

¹ The table and figures are at the end of this article (Editor’s note).

Intrapersonal communication can be conveyed by a deep, intimate symbolic conversation that is achieved through implicit verbal symbols or imaginary representations. This is essentially “talking to oneself” which, needless to say, involves inner reflection. Indeed, intrapersonal communication occurs inside the person and is carried out by codifying a message which, in our case, is the very thought. Intrapersonal communication occurs inside each communicator and takes different forms, such as self-talk, inner speech, imagined interaction, daydreaming, listening, and even emotional stock-taking (Stacks and Sellers, 1989).

On the other hand, Goss (1996) claims that intrapersonal communication involves how people process messages. He considers that the emphasis should be placed on the psychological and physiological dimension of the individual. It does seem clear that intrapersonal communication is necessary and prior to interpersonal communication. We cannot communicate with others without having previously communicated with ourselves. Indeed, it can be said that intrapersonal communication turns into a type of conscious reflection in which our mind addresses our feelings (and vice versa), in an effort to rationalise our emotions (or to sensitize our reasoning). Both parts exchange messages in the interests of sorting out feelings and/or ideas in order to take a decision about somebody or something. Intrapersonal communication assumes complementary or conflicting internal reasoning. The codifying and interpretation of this reasoning implies a determined processing of the information, which is becoming one of the most relevant characteristics of intrapersonal communication.

This type of communication is thus positioned as a deep, personal, self-referential conversation. The emitter becomes the receiver of his own message; the speaker is also the listener. What we think, feel or reflect has its own importance; it is only when we come out of ourselves and connect with the world that true dialogue happens.

Intrapersonal communication could legitimately be argued as being a mode of human communication by arguing that communication with our surroundings and with other human beings occurs due to our capacity for interiorising and expressing our relationship with the environment, without need for a receiver as such. The symbolisms, imaginaries and evocations that come from a given landscape take on personal meanings which are processed (at a philosophical and psychological level) and interpreted (at a communicative level) without the necessity of a receiver to interpret them. Communication assumes a human role when one of the interlocutors is human; the interlocutor needs only to interiorise and formalise what they

see around them. Indeed, general communication science should accept the intrapersonal mode, given that expression, perception, cognition, evocation and interpretation, in spite of being unipersonal, are also human expressions with clearly communicative connotations.

There are few academic publications on intrapersonal communication in the field of communication theory; the subject is of major importance in the field of psychology nevertheless, partly due to the cognitive, perceptive and sensorial implications included in this type of communication.

As previously stated, human intrapersonal communication is a controversial field, in which the main cause for dissent is whether it even exists. If we begin with the postulate that communication, by definition, requires a minimum of two co-producers (emitter and receiver) in order to occur, where does this leave intrapersonal communication? Is it disqualified before crossing the starting line?

What seems clear is the existence of a perceptive dimension in which the individual relates to his surroundings. The theoretical model drawn up by Gerbner (1956) points out the existence of a perceptive dimension in which the individual relates to his environment. Cunningham (1995); on the other hand, it refers to the major mental operations inherent in intrapersonal communication: attribution of meanings and perceptions, thoughts, conflict solving, memory, awareness, dreams, imagination, feelings, emotional states, and so on.

Vocate (1994) remarks the huge complexity involved in the study of intrapersonal communication, and points out the need for an *a priori* theory enabling users to find their way around. She also notes that this type of human communication includes physiological, neurological, cultural, psychological, linguistic and social variables, as well as any other discipline that may be “signed on” for a transversal approach.

The same author insists throughout on the importance of analysing what she calls *self-talk*. She points to the need for a theoretical paradigm to underpin the bases of intrapersonal communication in its exploration of self-talk. Vocate states that intrapersonal communication is engendered by symbolic interaction and arises from the mental creation of inner speech. A certain amount of confusion surrounds the concepts related to intrapersonal communication and inner speech/dialogue, which are not always easy to distinguish. The writer sustains, in an ontological sense, that intrapersonal communication makes all other modes of human communication possible; intrapersonal communication is the starting point or trigger for all other

types of communication (interpersonal, cultural, mass media, etc.), and a key resource to our understanding of our selves and our surroundings (Barker and Edwards, 1980).

Cunningham (1995) points out some operations and properties associated with intrapersonal communication. The most interesting aspects refer to how individuals interact with and adapt to the environment, by perception processes through which they receive and assign meaning to their experiences. Roberts *et al.* (1987) write in a similar vein when they state that intrapersonal communication affects the whole physiological and psychological processing of messages within individuals, at conscious and unconscious levels, as they attempt to understand their own personal reality and that of their surrounding environment.

Aladro (2004) makes an interesting contribution with regard to the links between mass communication and internal communication within the individual (intrapersonal communication). The author states that all dimensions of communication are interconnected in a sort of interface, the feedback processes of which have been analysed by many disciplines. In her opinion, the search for clear connections between the microscopic, individual (intrapersonal) and the macro-social (mass-media) levels of communication opens up new ways of understanding mass culture and its collective communication processes.

The generation of social or collective imaginaries from intrapersonal communication processes is the first possible level of communicational interaction. Symbolic interaction and individual production of imaginaries are among the most usual expressions of intrapersonal communication (Honeycutt *et al.*, 2008). The imaginaries generated in the individual sphere are first transmitted at a face-to-face (interpersonal) communication level and later, through technological devices, transposed to the field of mass communication. This communication sequence situates intrapersonal communication at the core of human communication, all other forms of which spring from the source of individual internal communication processes (intrapersonal communication).

Aladro states that “to understand communication, it is essential to realize that mass communication processes are structurally analogous to intrapersonal cognitive processes” (2004:120). Indeed, the study of the interfaces existing between intrapersonal, interpersonal and social communication is basic for the transversal approach to communication processes. Aladro (2004: 121) understands communication as a “sympathetic process, insofar as the

possibilities of reaching other communicative experiences are boundless". She develops the theory of "contagion" between different types of human communication, according to which communication is an interconnected organism that is fed into by the simpler levels (intra and inter-personal communication) until it reaches the level of mass communication.

The projection-identification dynamics of the mass media is constantly renewing how to export perceptions and cognitions from the private (intra- and inter-personal) world into the collective, social world. This is based on the human facility for projecting cognitions and adopting (or identifying with) external positions and situations (Aladro, 2004: 124). Aladro (2004) does not use the different scales of communication (from intrapersonal to mass communication) to compare the nature of a phenomenon (intrapersonal communication) to a phenomenon of the next scale (mass communication), which would be a common error in theorizing exercises. The aim of the author is to establish a comparative analogy to further extend her theory of communicative vessels, which is based on the connection between mass communication and internal individual communication.

Communication is thus based on a sympathetic phenomenon insofar as it integrates processes from different dimensions (internal cognitive processes, interpersonal processes and mass social processes) which interact with each other by means of the contagion effect. On this point Aladro (2004: 124) points out that "the associative and spontaneous adherence to all types of representational or symbolic processes is a defining characteristic of communication". Aladro (2004) concludes her stance by stating that exchanges between the intrapersonal world and the mass-collective world involve the development of new transmission techniques and, by extension, the furthering of transversal communication studies that go beyond the study of mass communication.

Therefore, intrapersonal communication, which we understand as internal dialogue and as a process of encoding and subsequent interpretation of interaction with the outside world, represents the quintessence of the process of human communication, which originates, in some way, through an auto communication structure. We will see by means of an example the relationship which can be established between landscape and intrapersonal communication, which leads to a double aim: firstly, to analyze the power of communicative evocation of landscape without the intervention of persuasive strategies; secondly, the creation of an applied scene of intrapersonal communication resulting in symbolic individual-landscape interaction.

The concept of landscape

The inherent complexity of the landscape concept largely comes from the difficulties of establishing a universally accepted definition. The “gaze upon the landscape” is what ultimately determines and underlies any definition, which will inevitably be controversial. In this paper, landscape has not been employed to mean a context or environment (studied at length in the general theory of communication). Landscape has been defined as exerting a symbolic role of the place, representing its metaphor, face, transition; in short, from space (with neutral content) to place (highly symbolically charged). Therefore, in our opinion, landscape is becoming a great vessel of meaning for decoding through a process of intrapersonal communication.

There follows a summary of well-known definitions of landscape by geographers, with the aim of situating a concept which really requires individualized treatment. The definitions show how landscape has been approached by geography over recent years.

Nogué (2007: 378) states that “landscape is both a physical reality and the cultural representation that we make of it; the external, visible physiognomy of a certain portion of the surface of the earth and the individual or social perception that it generates; a geographical tangible and its intangible interpretation. The landscape is at once the signifier and the signified, the container and the content, reality and fiction. We are on the right track if we understand landscape as a natural scene mediated by culture”.

Daniels and Cosgrove (1988) define landscape as a cultural image, a pictorial way of representing, ordering or symbolizing our surroundings. On the other hand, Lowenthal (1975) discusses the concept of landscape from the theory of geographical perception. Duncan and Duncan (1988) link literary theory to landscape analysis, with the concepts of textuality, intertextuality and reception analysis of fundamental importance in reading the landscape as literary texts.

Appleton (1986: 9) says that “landscape is what people make of their surroundings after nature has placed it in their hands”. González Bernáldez (1981) divides landscape into two basic concepts: landscape as the perceived images of a territory (similar to the “gaze upon the landscape”), and landscape as a set of easily-defined, interrelated visible elements.

On the other hand, Bertrand (1968: 249-272) claims that the indissoluble character of landscape is “the result of dynamic and at times volatile combinations of physical, biological and anthropological elements

which, in dialectical terms, make landscape a single inseparable body in perpetual evolution”.

Martínez de Pisón (1998) understands landscape in terms of form and meanings, place and image, “the formal expression of geographical reality” or “the configuration of terrestrial space”. Inevitably, therefore, he also refers to the cultural meanings, representations and images of such geographical forms; we are faced here with a concept that includes objective reality, perceived reality and added meanings, with man as a re-shaper and perceiver of space (Mata and Sanz, 2003: 16). Other theorists such as Díaz Pineda (1973) and Muir (1999) also link the psychological (perceptual, symbolic, identitarian, etc.) connotations inherent in landscape with the more strictly physical or real aspects of landscape itself. Finally, the European Landscape Convention (2000) defines landscape as “an area, as perceived by people, whose character is the result of the action and interaction of natural and/or human factors”.

Landscape is becoming the *par excellence* place symbolic element. Its tangible value (physical), in addition to its intangible value (identitarian, religious, and spiritual) provide an extraordinary opportunity to explore, from the ambit of intrapersonal communication, its communicative value, hence the existing relationship between landscape (which brings together the symbolism of the geographical area) and intrapersonal communication (which contributes, from an individualistic point of view, to interpreting this symbolism).

Contributions from geography, psychology and communication theory to the interpretation of individual-landscape interaction as an intrapersonal communicative mode

Modern geographical approaches to landscape

Geography has been among the disciplines that have contributed the most to developing the science and culture of landscape. Landscape has always been considered in a territorialised way, as well-defined physical territories with definite values. At its most traditional, geography provided the characterisation and delimitation of landscape units prior to the ordering of any given territory (Gómez Mendoza, 2004).

In a study of the evolution of geographical approaches to landscape, Gómez Mendoza (2004) underlines the importance of fieldwork and

direct observation for an integral understanding of landscape. She proposes a communicative approach to landscape through contributions from geography and communication, linked to the cultural dimension and to representations which tell us much about landscapes. Landscape does not merely reflect culture, but is part of culture, an active expression of an ideology (Lash and Urry, 1994).

This is the most up-to-date geographical approach to landscape, going beyond mere aesthetic description and the concept of landscape as the result of a cultural tradition applied to a given area (Barnes and Duncan, 1992; Mitchell, 1994). Many authors are now expressing the need for academic progress in the field of the intangible symbolisms inherent in geography and landscape (Davidson, Bondi and Smith, 2005; Cosgrove, 2008; Pike, 2009; Nogué, 2009).

To a certain extent, modern geography charts a vision of landscape in which the scientific perspective dovetails with the more comprehensive, cultural perspective, whereby we enter the realm of qualities, values and meanings (Ortega Cantero, 2006). Nowadays there is need for more knowledge on the symbolism arising from landscape (Gómez Mendoza, 2004). We are thus faced with the challenge of making our everyday (metropolitan, urban, suburban and rural) landscapes intelligible and assessable through the interpretation of the rhetorical power of landscape, understood as a text which can be read and interpreted.

We can now recover the “narrative capacity” of landscapes and, by extension, their ability to convey meanings. In such context, landscapes become a clear manifestation of nature and culture. The aesthetic landscape, the beloved landscape of artists, has always been seen in terms of its intangible or evocative potential of expression on canvas. Over the past five years, however, the shift towards the consideration of landscape as meaningful has generated an increase in academic literature in the field of landscape imaginary and its associated values and symbolisms.

The bulk of geographical contributions to the subjective dimension of landscape has come in the wake of the 1960s subject geographies, which heralded the emergence of subjectivity in geography as opposed to former positivist tendencies. The geography of perception and environmental behaviour, humanistic geography and post-modern geography have contributed most on the intangible dimension of landscape.

In recent years, the dominant trend in the geographical approach to landscape has relinquished taxonomy in favour of the symbolic variables

of landscape and, in particular, of methodologies that lead to meaningful interpretation. The study of the links between people and their spaces (landscape) includes the geographical-communicative approach to landscape analysis from the communication field. Modern contributions to landscape and the much-lauded subjective geographies, together with the more comprehensive, structuralist and interpretative tendencies within communication theory, will substantially contribute to the interpretation of the communicative meanings and links between people and their landscapes.

Landscape experience/appropriation may involve the attribution of meanings to a given space, by means of which a *space* is singled out to become a *place*. The geographical framework of space appropriation, together with individual (intrapersonal communication) and group (interpersonal communication) attributions of meaning, opens up avenues of research into the experience/appropriation of space as a sequence of intrapersonal, interpersonal, group and mass media communication expressions. Vidal (2002: 134) states that “space participates in the construction of the self (leading to the dimension of identity and identification in which the right place communicates this identity to others and to me). This exteriorisation (communication with others) and interiorisation (assimilation) of meanings becomes filled with content” (see Figure 1).

The contribution of psychology to the communicational approach to landscape

Vidal and Pol (2005) claim that space appropriation can be identified with the generation of links with places. Once a space has been “appropriated”, it plays a major role in cognitive processes (knowledge, categorization, orientation, etc.), affective processes (place attraction, self-esteem etc.), identity and relationship processes (involvement and responsibility sharing). Our surroundings may account for behavioural dimensions beyond the merely functional.

The transition from *space* to *place* incorporates a symbolic load which in itself produces the transformation. A major point of interest for humanist geography is how *spaces* (territories that have not been laden with symbolisms) become *places* (territories that have acquired a singularising symbolic load). Space appropriation, place attachment, symbolic urban space, urban social identity and place identity are all aspects arising from the transition from *space* to *place*.

At this point the concepts of place identity and place attachment should be highlighted. By place identity we understand the process by means of which the surroundings become involved in a larger context of constructing social identities, i.e., spatial social identity (Valera and Pol, 1994). The links between individuals or groups and their environment must not be solely understood in terms of physical surroundings; attention must be also paid to the symbolic dialogue between space and individuals, through which meanings are generated and later interpreted. This is precisely the basis of social identity associated with the environment (Valera and Pol, 1994; Hansen, 2010).

Droseltis and Vignoles (2009) identify four major concepts linked to place identity. Firstly, the notion of “self” appears, understood as a part of the cognitive experience of our individuality. Secondly, there is a discussion on the “ecological self”, or identitarian relationship with the environment, in which people develop a subjective sense of belonging to their physical surroundings. There follows an analysis of the concordance existing between “self” and place, i.e., the degree of similarity established between a place and the values and personality of an individual. Finally, place identity is related to the emotional links established by people with places, which in turn leads to the concept of place attachment, loosely defined as the affective link between people and places (Hidalgo and Hernández, 2001).

At this point we should introduce the concept of experience/appropriation of space as an intrapersonal communication process. If we recall the definitions of intrapersonal communication and we situate landscape contemplation in a context of individual-landscape interaction, then everything that landscape evokes in the individual through psychological, geographical or other mechanisms also warrants a communicative interpretation. People talk about “what the landscape says”, “what the landscape tells us”, “what the landscape expresses”, or “the message of the landscape”: these expressions have a communicative basis which should be included in the field of experience/appropriation of space.

The symbolic interaction between landscape and the individual incorporates a message that should be separately approached from the perspective of communication theory. This does not only further the study of landscape by introducing the concept of meaning: the inherent symbology of landscape has certainly been studied, but the subject has not been approached specifically from the field of intrapersonal communication.

The new approach to landscape intangibles provides an opportunity to develop intrapersonal communication studies and to analyse the values

attributed by people to their landscapes, beyond a mere taxonomy of physical or tangible preferences for one particular landscape.

Individual-landscape interaction, understood as an intrapersonal communicative expression, can contribute to the comprehension of the links between people and their spaces. The attempt to perceive the meanings of symbolic space will enable us to decode the deposits of meanings implicit in landscape with a view to understand identity issues and increase awareness of the emotional load that society pours into its landscapes (Proshansky, Ittelson and Rivlin, 1976; Gifford, 2002; Bechtel and Churchman, 2002; Duncan and Duncan, 2004; Vidal and Pol, 2005).

In this context, Valera (1993; 1996) indicates two mutually compatible approaches to symbolism. The first approach considers symbolism as a property inherent in the perception of spaces, in which meaning can be derived from the physical-structural features; from the functionality linked to social practices; and from the symbolic interactions among people. Vidal and Pol (2005) point out the similarity to Gibson's concept of *affordance* (1977), which emphasises perception of surroundings as a function of possible usage or environmental opportunity afforded.

The second approach attempts to determine how a given space acquires meaning, including the process of space appropriation. Pol (1994) refers to a double symbolic load, coming either from above (*a priori* symbolism) in an attempt by the authorities to endow a public space with political significance, or from within the community (*a posteriori* symbolism) in a reworking of the former by means of a process of space appropriation.

At this stage, we should reflect on experience/appropriation of space in terms of intrapersonal communication. Vidal and Pol (2005: 287) state that "(symbolic urban) space becomes an expression of identity, which leads on to wider social identity processes", whereas Valera and Pol (1994) explicitly develop the concept of "urban social identity". The authors conclude (2005: 287) that it is "linked to space appropriation and place rootedness, defined as the dynamic behavioural and symbolic interaction of people with their physical surroundings, a process by which a *space* develops into a meaningful *place*, perceived by the person or the group as their own, as a representative feature of their identity". Finally, according to Vidal and Pol (2005), the construction of *space* symbolism can be understood in terms similar to appropriation or creation of a sense of *place*.

In this context, phenomenological and holistic research on the links between people and their surroundings (place rootedness) should be

mentioned, in particular *Place Attachment* by Altman and Low (1992). This paper sustains that these links contain an implicit message and, therefore, a process of intrapersonal communication.

The holistic vision of place attachment focuses on affections, emotions, sentiments, beliefs, thoughts, actions and behaviours with regard to variables of time and place, people and social relationships. Indeed, most studies on place attachment have concentrated on the individual affective links with a given place. Priority is given to analysing emotional and affective variables linked to places. Vidal and Pol (2005) consider the process of space appropriation in order to explain the meaning of places in a context of identity and rootedness.

While intrapersonal communication has a relatively short history in traditional communication theory, psychology, and in particular environmental psychology, it has been effective in analyzing the relationship of appropriation and attachment individual to the surrounding geographical area. Thereby, the cognitive interpretative process of individual interaction with landscape is genuinely psychological in nature, and is inescapably associated with a process of intrapersonal communication (see Figure 2).

Communication theory and the study of landscape

Farré (2005: 24) states that “despite the epistemological battles raging around communication theory, it is actually beyond interdisciplinary positions and is closer to indisciplinary”, thus reflecting the disorder resulting from the wide variety of contributions to the subject. In the opinion of Farré, this has inevitably given rise to a “confederation of ideas” in detriment to the construction of a “coherent perspective”.

However, a glimmer of hope emerges from the certain degree of institutionalisation of communication theory which consolidates the subject under consideration, i.e. the study of meaningful and subjective human action (McQuail, 1983; DeFleur and Ball-Rokeach, 1989; Mattelart and Mattelart, 1995; Saperas, 1998; Rodrigo, 2001; Farré, 2005).

In a level-headed approach to the main issue at stake when the subject borders on the metaphysical, Farré (2005: 29) states that “communication curiously becomes shakier, more volatile and less scientific whenever it approaches the blurred borders between the objectively visible world and the world of symbolic processes, construction of meaning and emerging forms of subjectivity. Nevertheless, it is here that communication regains

its ontological identity as a research field on how meaning comes about. Communication is made up of the universes of meaning that guide individuals through their culture and their social life". Farré clearly states the difficulties we face when we dare to approach interaction and symbolic construction as a communicative expression, since communication as a discipline has not yet gained a firm grasp on the many aspects of its theoretical tradition.

Communication theory also has an interpretative perspective (Mattelart and Mattelart, 1985; DeFleur and Ball-Rokeach, 1989; Rodrigo, 2001; Bove and Martin, 2007) that attempts to organise the epistemology of a discipline seeking its place (not its space) as a formal, legitimate "science". Two main interpretative schools of thought provide the theoretical underpinnings for a communicative interpretation of individual-landscape interaction.

The first school of thought is represented by symbolic interactionism, deriving from the works of G. H. Mead (1934), later developed by Blumer (1969). Symbolic interactionism explains how people construct the meaning of everyday social situations through permanent interaction with symbols. In its day, this represented a rupture with the lineal concept of communication and aimed to describe and interpret human actions, and to analyse their meaning. Symbolic interactionism focuses on how people construct meaning and knowledge of society (Berger and Luckmann, 1967; DeFleur and Ball-Rokeach, 1989; Estrada and Rodrigo, 2008).

The second school of thought is constructivism, which is pertinent to construct a communicative theory of landscape within the field of socio-phenomenology. In essence, constructivism sustains that, at an individual and group level, people construct their own ideas about their physical, social and cultural environment. It attempts to explain how society constructs meanings, and to delimit the symbolisms generated by social interaction *per se*.

Indeed, constructivism is based on the beliefs that social reality is a construct; that language represents and constructs the world; that interpretations are subjective; and that all truth is relative because it is deeply rooted in our personal history and in collective historical conventions (Berger and Luckmann, 1967). In its analysis of the phenomenon of experience, constructivism takes on clear shades of phenomenology. The constructivist school of thought claims that reality cannot be known independently from the subject by which it is observed. In this sense, constructivism devotes much of its attention to the study of daily life and the symbolic universe and, by extension, the processes of cognitive construction. The leading exponents of constructivism are Berger and Luckmann.

The intelligibility of symbolism, subjective interpretation, experience and the construction of meanings out of individual or group interactions with landscape provide the ideal theoretical framework for approaching the communicative production of landscape at an intrapersonal level (see Figure 3).

Conclusions

The conceptual ambiguity of intrapersonal communication has received numerous criticisms (Vocate, 1994; Cunningham, 1995) over the years. Whereas the physical and psychological basis of human communication is generally accepted, it has always been hard to specify and exemplify everyday social expressions of intrapersonal communication processes.

The intrapersonal communication model, apart from the ambivalence of the term, is out of step with other models of human communication, especially when we recall that the transfer of messages within an individual does not exactly correspond to the classic molar concept of communication. We are dealing here with a dissident, anti-system and counter-theoretical type of human communication (Cunningham, 1995).

The study of our inherent inner communication has often remained at the anecdotic level of a philosophical concept associated with the mind. However, some authors claim that intrapersonal communication is the starting point for all other levels of human communication (Barker and Edwards, 1980; Vocate, 1994). This paper leads to several conclusions, the first and clearest of which is the emergence of a new avenue of research that prioritises the communicative analysis of landscape.

The possibilities arising from this are significant, especially if we bear in mind the current expansion of communication strategies developing out of the territorial reality. The subject of individual/group interaction of society with landscape has been addressed by anthropologists, psychologists and historians, but no clear approach to landscape has emerged from the perspective of communication. The phenomena of appropriating and endowing a given landscape with meaning (in environmental psychology terms) at an individual and group level, become expressions of human communication.

We have seen that intrapersonal communication is also an expression of human communication (without the classic “emitter-channel-message-receiver” sequence) by demonstrating that interaction between individuals

and landscape generates symbolisms that are interpreted by the *self* (intrapersonal communication) and later transmitted to the community (interpersonal communication). The “self-talk” process as described by Vocate (1994) and the term “inner speech” are the conceptual bases for intrapersonal communication, in which the main issue is not so much the self-talk process *per se* as the creation of meanings as the result of a previous symbolic interaction (e.g., with the landscape) by the emitter.

According to the contributions from psychology to intrapersonal communication, perception and cognition (experience) processes give rise to an appropriation of landscape and an immediate attribution of meanings. This in itself is an exercise in interpreting and/or decoding the symbolisms inherent in landscape and, by extension, an exercise in communicative intelligibility.

Thinking of landscape in terms of the communication sciences enriches the possibilities of an interdisciplinary approach and helps us to perceive a “landscape language” in our attempt to clarify the meaning of landscape. A paradigm of “landscape discourse” is when publicity agents design a TV advertisement in which landscape is not merely a backdrop but is deliberately used to provide atmosphere and suggest something more, in a “landscape suggestion” exercise that incorporates sensations (the emotion for landscape) in order to reach a certain type of audience.

The symbolic reading of landscape as a social construct, or attribution of meanings shared by a community, results from symbolic interaction processes, which start at an individual level (intrapersonal communication), progress to a group level (interpersonal communication) and finally reach cultural and macro-social levels (mass media communication).

Consequently, the methodology and theoretical framework also suggest a qualitative epistemological approach, focused on the extraction of meanings from the relationships between the individual and/or the community and the landscape. The existing psychological, anthropological, historical and artistic interpretations may now be completed with a communicative perspective, going beyond the obvious statement of “what the landscape communicates”. This is precisely why we propose a theoretical model of a communicative approach to landscape.

The idea of a communicative model of landscape also contributes to increase the knowledge on the intangible aspect of landscape, in an attempt to decode its meanings and its associated symbolic values. Analysis of the communicative connotations in landscape does not exclude analysis of the

symbolic interaction between the individual and the landscape (intrapersonal communication), in terms of appropriation and attribution of meaning. This provides us with a wider context in which to interpret the message or the communicative evocation of landscape.

In communication theory, intrapersonal communication is the smallest figure in the set of matryoshka dolls, as aptly expressed by Rodrigo (2001: 52), due to the scant amount of academic attention focused on the subject. This article provides an interpretation of individual landscape experience as an intrapersonal communication expression. Our aim is to produce research from a genuinely communicative perspective that will contribute to a definitive legitimisation of the intrapersonal field as an expression of human communication. The construction of meanings arising from the landscape, the highlighting of its inherent intangible dimension and the analysis of landscape experience processes can all be greatly enriched when seen through the prism of intrapersonal communication.

Therefore, the creation of a communicative proposal, enabling approach of individual-landscape interaction by means of intrapersonal communication, takes place through the integration of various “learnings” which prepare the multidisciplinary approach of the object of interest of the present paper. In first place, the contribution of geography is specified from the point of view of the space experienced individually; in second place, the contribution of environmental psychology is shown, from an analysis of the symbolism inherent to the perception of space, or according to the process in which a space is charged with meaning; finally, the contribution of communication theory linked to landscape study is divulged, from which a possible communicative dimension of landscape from the context of intrapersonal communication can be defined.

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Council of Europe (2000), *The European Landscape Convention*. Available at: <<http://conventions.coe.int/Treaty/EN/Treaties/Html/176.htm>> [April 22nd, 2011].

Annex

Table 1

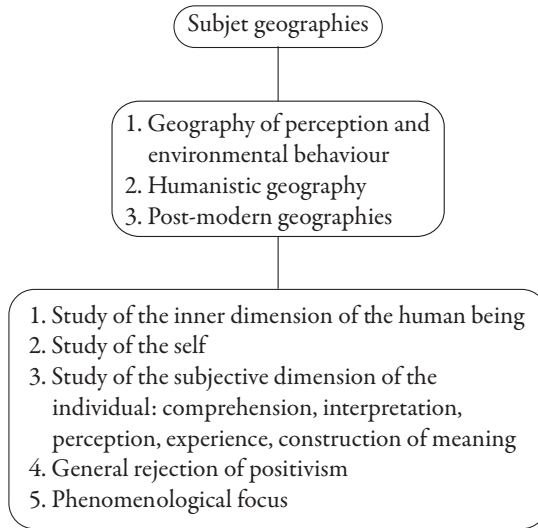
Questions for communication theory and research

Who communicates to whom? (sources and receivers)
Why communicate? (functions and purposes)
How does communication take place? (channels, languages, codes)
What about? (content, references, types of information)
What are the outcomes of communication, intended and unintended? (ideas, understandings, actions)

Source: McQuail, D. (1983), *Mass Communication Theory. An Introduction*.

Figure 1

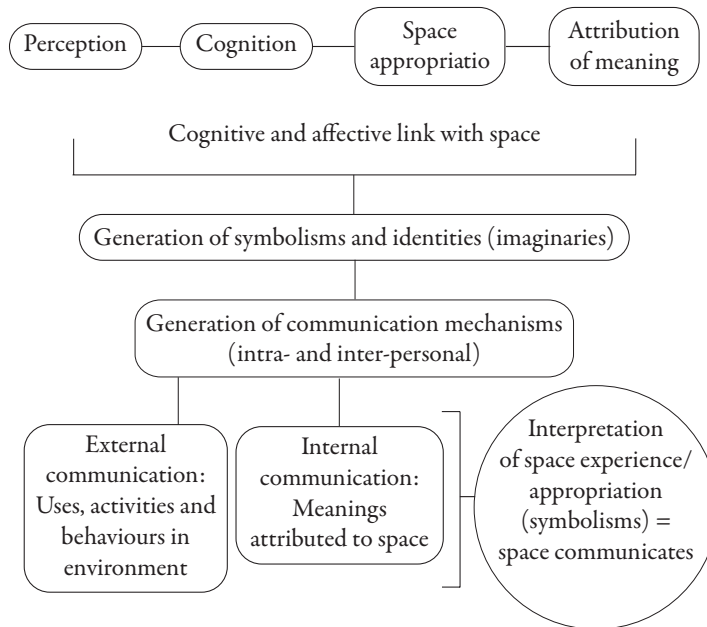
Contributions from geographical theory to the communicative study of landscape



Source: Author's own elaboration.

Figure 2

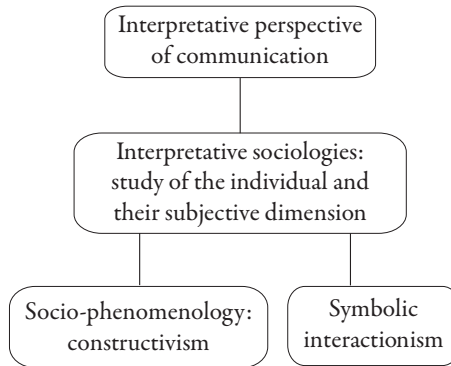
Contributions from the field of psychology to the communicative variable of landscape



Source: Author's own elaboration.

Figure 3

Approach to the symbols and meanings of landscape from the field of communication theory



Source: Author's own elaboration.

Jordi de San Eugenio Vela. PhD in Social Communication. Full-time professor at the University of Vic (Catalonia, Spain). His research interests include place branding, public diplomacy, environmental communication and humanistic geography. Recent publications: “Fundamentos conceptuales y teóricos para marcas de territorio”, in *Boletín de la Asociación de Geógrafos Españoles*, no. 62 (2013); “Del Estado-nación al Estado-marca. El rol de la diplomacia pública y la marca de país en el nuevo escenario de las relaciones internacionales”, in *Revista de Estudios Sociales*, no. 46 (2013); “La construcción de la marca ‘Qatar’ a partir del deporte: ‘sports place branding’ y prensa deportiva catalana” (co-authored), in *Estudios sobre el Mensaje Periodístico*, vol. 19, no. 1 (2013).

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