

## PARTICULARITIES OF THE COMMUNICATIVE NETWORK WITHIN MAJOR SEMIOSIC NON-VERBAL CONSTRUCTIONS

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### Abstract

Specialized literature differentiates a wide variety of communication forms, based on the diversity of their criteria of classification. Starting from the statement that biosemiotics - a relatively new science situated between biology and semiotics that studies the prelinguistic *meaning-making*, communication, production and interpretation of signs and codes in the biological realm - the author, using a biosemiotic approach, aims to point out the complexity of the communicative network in the garden space, which is considered by biosemioticians as *major semiosic non-verbal construction*, representing a place of convergence between semiosis, that is any form of activity, conduct, or process of communication that involves signs, and which are present within plant kingdom and human intentional activities as well. Communicative processes of the garden are performed by a wide range of mechanisms and signs: iconic, indexical, conventional/symbolic or artefacts and the constitutive elements of any garden – be they natural or artificial, are involved more or less in this communicative network. Thus, we may differentiate two main levels in the communication processes, starting from biological communication up to cultural symbolism. The author comes to the conclusion that the garden, being a cultural phenomenon designed by humans to induce certain feelings, is suited for an interdisciplinary research and a combined semiotic approach, the communicative network within major semiosic non-verbal constructions being very complex.

**Key words:** : non-verbal communication, biological communication, cultural communication

Any garden exhibits a high semiotic heterogeneity due to the fact that it represents the result of the nature's involvement and man's intentional activity, as he projects and designs it, so we can say that the garden is a cultural alive phenomenon, continuously modifying itself. The garden may be considered a spatial structure or a stage which facilitates a dialogue between nature and culture, in other words a place of communication between people and nature, or humanity and universe, where art, science, and nature become most intimately interlocked. Many mechanisms and signs are involved in these processes of communication, frequently reflecting the result of the interaction between biological and cultural communication.

### MATERIAL AND METHOD

Communication (from Latin *commūnicāre*, meaning "to share" ([www.wikipedia.org](http://www.wikipedia.org))) is the act of conveying meanings from one entity or group to another through the use of mutually understood signs and semiotic rules. In communication process, a sender (encoder) encodes a message and then using a medium/channel sends it to the

receiver (decoder) who decodes the message and after processing information, sends back appropriate feedback/reply using a medium/channel. Based on the communication channels which are used, there are two types of communication: verbal communication and nonverbal communication.

Verbal communication is the spoken or written conveyance of a message and it refers to that form of communication which uses spoken and written words for expressing and transferring views and ideas. Language is the most important tool of verbal communication and it is the area where cultural difference plays its role.

Nonverbal communication is a very wide concept and includes all the other forms of communication which do not use written or spoken words. Nonverbal communication usually describes the processes of conveying a type of information in the form of non-linguistic representations.

Studies of communication and meaning evolve from Semiotics, a multidisciplinary science which adopts a philosophical approach that seeks to interpret messages in terms of their signs and patterns of symbolism.

In 1998 the first articles of eco- and biosemiotics appeared in *Sign System Studies* –an

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academic journal on semiotics edited at the Department of Semiotics of the University of Tartu and published by the University of Tartu Press. Since their appearance eco- and biosemiotics have developed significantly and have been considered subfields belonging to the Semiotics of Nature. One can say that the Semiotics of Nature was born as a result of the increased interest of the biologists for the activity of the sign system, and bound to it the assumption of the communicative character of the natural processes. American semiotician and linguist, Thomas A. Sebeok (1920-2001) was the one who argued for introducing semiotics into all areas of biology.

According to *Oxford Dictionary of Biochemistry and Molecular Biology* (1997), biosemiotics is "the study of signs, of communication and of information in living organisms" (Oxford Dictionary). Today, its main challenge is the attempt to naturalize *biological meaning*, in the belief that signs are fundamental, constitutive components of the living world.

Witzany Guenther in his work *The biosemiotics of plant communication* (2008), has shown that plants communicate with a great variety of symbiotic partners, above and below ground. Constant monitoring of signals of biotic origin as well as abiotic environmental influences allows plants to generate appropriate response behavior. These communication processes are primarily sign-mediated interactions and not simply an exchange of information. They involve active coordination and active organization of a great variety of different behavioural patterns – mediated by signs (Witzany G., 2007).

Communication is observed within the plant organism, i.e. within plant cells and between plants of the same or related species, and between plants and non-plant organisms, especially in the root zone. Plant roots communicate with rhizome, bacteria, fungi, and insects within the soil. Recent researches have shown that most of the plant communication processes are neuron-like. Plants also communicate via volatiles when exposed to herbivory attack behaviour, thus warning neighboring plants. In parallel they produce other volatiles to attract parasites which attack these herbivores. (Baluška F, Volkman D, Mancuso S., 2006, *Communication in Plants: Neuronal Aspects of Plant Life*) (Bladwin I. et al, 1983).

Taking into account that gardens have two founding poles: culture and nature, it is evident that the complexity of the communicative network of the garden results from the interaction between biological and cultural communication.

Garden art and culture have always been profoundly interactive – and we could say that each shapes the other. As Lévi-Strauss claimed in his work *Structural anthropology* (1968), any spatial structure is the crystallization of a society's socio-cultural reality: in spatial structures there have been articulated the social, cultural,

cosmological, cosmogonic and other often purely semiotic structures.

From semiotic perspective, culture may be defined as a type of human symbolic activity, creation of signs and a way of giving meaning to everything around, in other words culture is understood as a system of symbols or meaningful signs ([www.wikipedia.org](http://www.wikipedia.org)).

To understand better what we mean by garden as a *cultural* phenomenon, here are some definitions of culture as we have found in the dictionaries, but nevertheless culture is more than the sum of its definitions (Pânzaru Olga, 2016).

Culture refers to the cumulative deposit of knowledge, experience, beliefs, values, attitudes, meanings, hierarchies, religion, notions of time, spatial relations, concepts of the universe, and material objects and possessions acquired by a group of people in the course of generations through individual and group striving.

Culture is a way of life of a group of people - the behaviors, beliefs, values, and *symbols* that are passed along by *communication* and imitation from one generation to the next.

Dialogue between different disciplines studying culture has been hindered by the absence of a unified theory of culture in world science. It was important to bring together the diversity of contemporary cultural processes and the possibility of studying them from unified scientific positions. Semiotics of culture has the makings of becoming into such methodologically connecting discipline for these trends.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Biosemiotics, a relatively new branch of general semiotics, can be seen as a contribution to the general theory of evolution, involving a synthesis of different disciplines, building a bridge between communication sciences, biology, philosophy, and linguistics. According to the biosemiological conception, all organisms are born into a world of meaning and communication. This world possesses constraints or boundary conditions upon species populations since they will have to master a set of signs of visual, acoustic, olfactory, tactile and chemical origin in order to survive. These non-verbal signs can produce many complex symbols and hold multiple meanings and biosemiotic findings have evidenced that every information exchange between living organisms - that is transmission of signals that involve a living sender and receiver, can be considered a form of communication (Sebeok T., 2002).

The researches in the field of biosemiotics have demonstrated that all living organisms are systems producing "meaning" with the help of signs. These signs acquire the ability to transfer information, and communication can be defined as

an interaction based on complex sign relations (Mustață G., 2006). Biosemiotics has facilitated a better understanding not only of the complexity of the living world, but also of the communicative force based on these sign relations within plant kingdom.

The semiotic view of culture assumes the multiplicity, diversity, stratification and intercorrelation of sign systems which are investigated on various levels from that of technology to social, economic, and expressive behaviour to ideologies and it encompasses all communicative behaviour that is cultural - meaningful, shared, organized, and dynamic.

The relationships between humans and nature have been always connected to deep cultural processes. Culture consists of patterns, explicit and implicit, of behavior acquired and transmitted by symbols, constituting the distinctive achievement of human groups, including their embodiments in artifacts, reflecting differences in natural conditions, historical origins, social environments, cultural backgrounds and religious factors (Sebeok T., 2002).

In ancient times, individuals lived in harmony with nature, either in East or West. However, mankind's aesthetics has changed profoundly in that the development of productive forces enabled mankind to overcome nature, making people go against nature. Human beings tended to believe that "man dominates nature" and "mankind is the dictator of nature", showing or signalling man's contempt for nature. In this respect, human beings separated themselves from nature and went to the opposite direction to realize their existence. Thus the Western classic gardens of geometrical style have reflected and exemplified this trend of thought, while the garden makers in the East (we have in view especially Chinese gardens), regarded beautiful nature as an aesthetic object, and their aim was "to study from nature, to recreate through artistic sublimation", creating landscape gardens (Zhou W., 2005).

The Eastern garden promotes natural beauty, focusing on the beauty of nature. It is inspired by the notion of humans as a part of nature. The garden respects nature: the nature cannot be controlled or changed, because nature has its own law and its ongoing track. Nature is always the ideal one must strive for in an Eastern garden. Nothing overly fancy or against the natural flow we see in nature will fit well in such a garden. The gardens demonstrate the wisdom, experience and the mystery, the unique relation between man and nature, when the human being is able to improve the nature, by showing its essence, by not pressuring, but relating to its laws. The Eastern

garden promotes natural beauty, demonstrating people's profound understanding and appreciation of nature.

On the contrary, the Western traditional nature philosophy believes that man can conquer nature, emphasizing the idea that humans are nature's masters. The Western gardens demonstrate man's ability to tame and control nature, or the triumph of man over the environment, and the new scientific understanding of space as infinite. For example, Versailles, in its gardens and palace, communicates a visual story of power of Louis XIV. It is a symbol of the system of absolute monarchy, which Louis XIV espoused.

Western-style gardens pay attention to architectural order and organization of geometric patterns, presenting the style of uniform layout and order. The line and geometry have been thought as the aesthetic standard. Western style gardens stress the beauty of artificial creation and skills of mankind. The style laid emphasis on artificial beauty or geometrical beauty, rather than natural beauty.

## CONCLUSIONS

Biosemiotics attempts to bring together separate findings of the various disciplines of biology into a new and more unified perspective on the central phenomena of the living world, including the generation of function and signification in the living systems from the beginnings of life to its ultimate meanings.

Biosemiotics has triggered revision of fundamentals of both biology and semiotics: biology needs to recognize the semiotic nature of life and reformulate its theories accordingly, and semiotics has to accept the existence of signs in animals, plants, and even individual cells (Zhou W., 2005).

Biosemiotics has become in this way the leading edge of the research on the fundamentals of life.

Culture is *symbolic communication*. Some of its *symbols* include a group's skills, knowledge, attitudes, values, and motives. The meanings of the *symbols* are learned and deliberately perpetuated in a society through its institutions.

Usually gardens communicate or in other words inform us about people's attitude towards nature which has full expression in the styles used in their gardens. Due to the differences in natural conditions, historical origins, social environments, cultural backgrounds and religious factors, the gardens in the East and the West developed in a diametrically opposite way from the very beginning. The former has been seeking natural

beauty, and the later was in pursuit of artificial beauty.

Within a garden, the culture, the internal nature (the biological organism) and the external nature (organic and inorganic environment) are interacting in a complex way. The confluence between signs and interpret, between cultural and natural processes, the perceived beauty and logical knowledge, all these aspects define gardens as places of communication, real major semiotic non-verbal constructions.

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