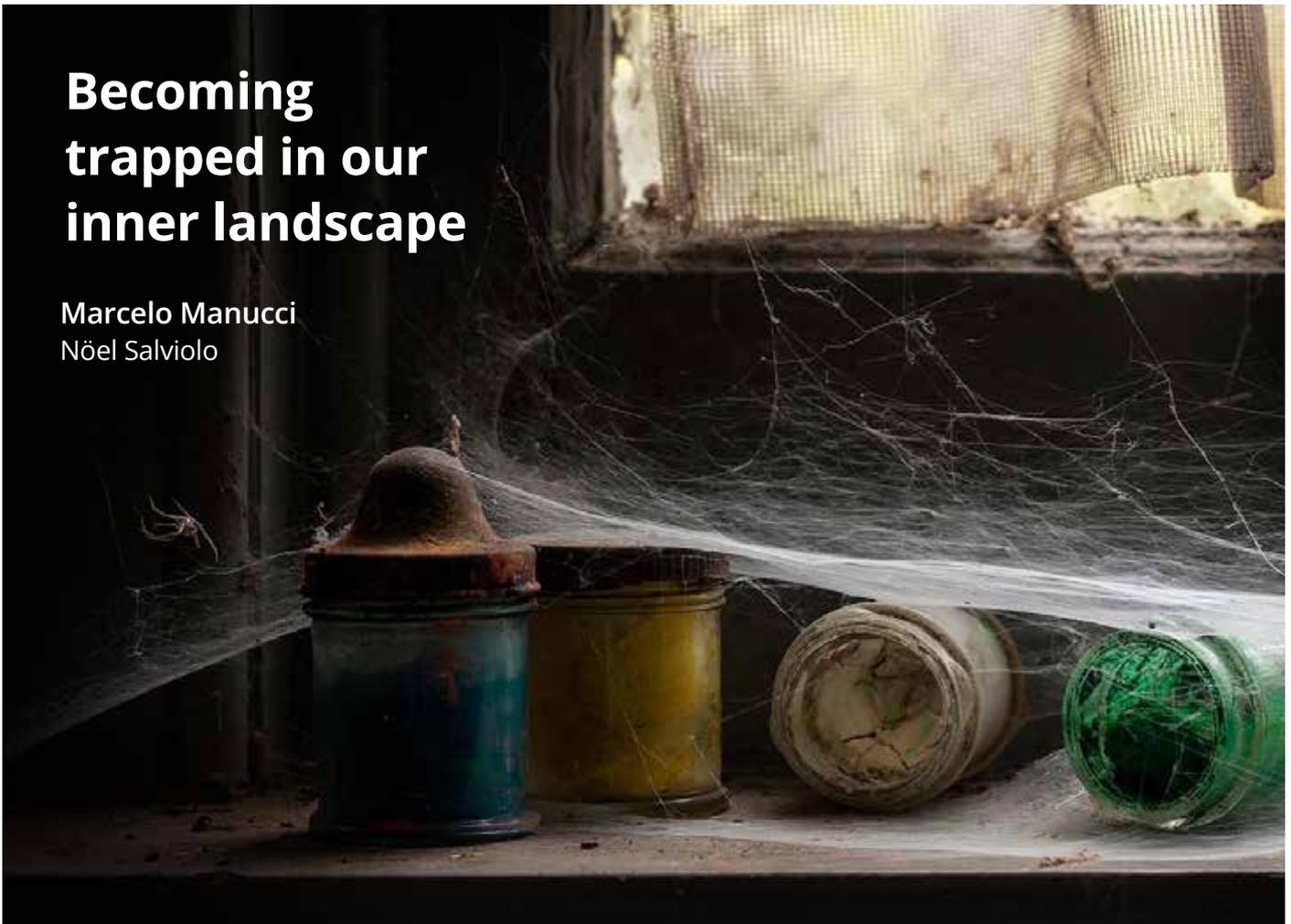


Becoming trapped in our inner landscape

Marcelo Manucci
Nöel Salviolo



Many times in our personal lives, we assume, with profound certainty, a specific perception of reality and we defend it vehemently. However, we do not realize that our perception is only a picture which has particular colors (that can be bright, warm, dark or gray) depending on our personal emotional framework. What you see around you depends on your emotions. These emotions influence the design of your daily landscape. We address daily events from the perspective of a personal image that takes on a particular color according to the emotional connection one has to the situation.

We lead our own personal landscape. We are the owners of our (wide or narrow) territory upon which we make decisions every day. These places have nothing to do with physical features. Our personal territory refers to the choices and possibilities you are open to and that you implement in your everyday movements, decisions, and relationships. Your inner landscape is a metaphor for your subjectivity and it encompasses many dimensions. Your inner landscape has a neurobiological support which thrives on mental processes; but it is also referenced in a symbolic universe, a cultural heritage, and on your personal history.

You live inside your creation. The options you choose in your life open or close your territories. It is interesting to note though that, within these 'inner landscapes', it is that we tend

to fall into specific and automated patterns which can have both positive and negative aspects. Many people could live their whole entire lives without ever becoming aware that they even live life through an 'inner landscape', let alone question it or even less consider to attempt modifying it.

A comparison that comes to mind is when we speak one language (a language being a tool created by man, to, amongst other things, help understand the world around us) where, just as in the case of the 'inner landscape', it isn't a construction that is set in stone, but rather a subjective one. You might speak English, Portuguese or Chinese, but whilst you only speak one of these languages you only have one way of describing the world. In it, there are variables to create descriptions and interpretations, such as different words and styles but they will always remain within the same framework. A limited one at that, considering that according to the UNESCO there are approximately 7000 languages in the world and there are words for certain things that you can find in one language that you cannot find in others. To think about what one is missing out on linguistically translates to the equivalent of what we are missing out on perceptively in our 'inner landscapes': the risks and losses of having one set outlook on life, when in this case there are not only another 7000 possible outlooks on life but, in fact, the amount is actually endless.

The trap of the trap

The key to this question lies within the word 'trapped' because of two aspects. On one hand, it is an automated process that we subconsciously create and repeat. On the other hand, on this compulsive repetition we can keep negative and harmful patterns for our life.

At a first glance, becoming trapped may be due to lack of awareness: one cannot change what one does not know; the reason could be to mitigate risk: once you know a pattern or that a certain way of doing things works, why risk losing that comfort of apparent guarantee? Or it could be that in search of efficiency when faced with a permanent endless amount of stimuli, having certain processes 'automated' (from driving to dealing with fights) saves time.

But, it also fundamentally has to do with the way that, although as humans we may continuously feel that we are being spontaneous, many of our thoughts and actions are in fact much more automated than we think. This can be a scary thought; an unexpected one. Even when we picture an artist, a writer or an adventurer, and think that their actions are completely unpredictable, that is not the case.

This automated process of the 'inner landscape' is based on the fact that we have the need to make sense of the world around us to understand the changes in our context and to understand and frame the behavior of other group members. In short, we live within our internal explanations of the world that we created to contain and manage our emotional reactions that involve "living with others."

In addition to what was mentioned earlier about why people maintain their inner landscape despite it possibly being negative or harmful, one also can't help but ask why these 'inner landscapes' are maintained when they are personal explanations of reality, not reality itself:

"Why do we protect our explanations of reality beyond the true circumstances?"
"What is the benefit of this self-deception?"



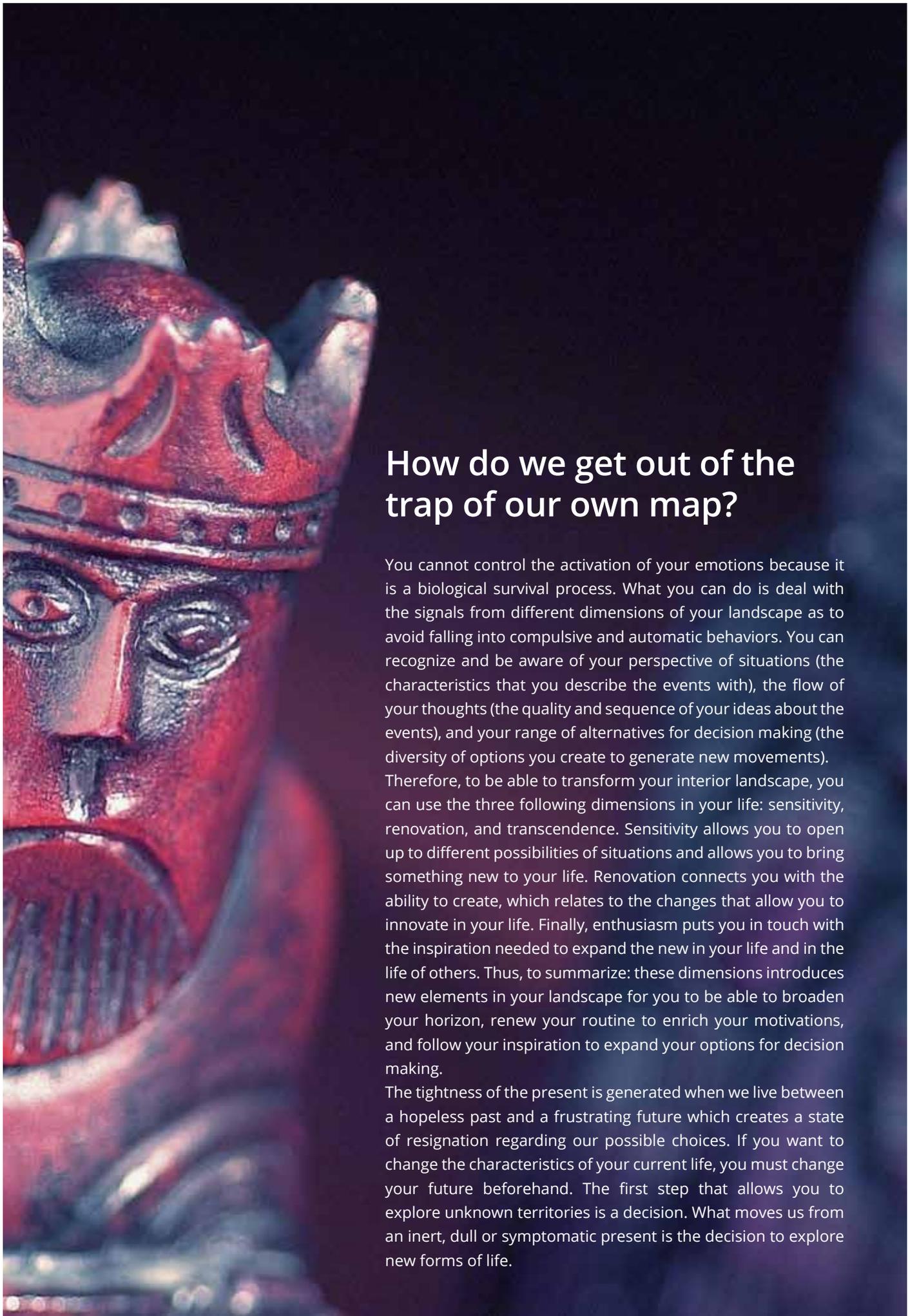
Probably it is because self-deception is less emotionally traumatic than disappointment. Put in other words: disappointment is more costly for our emotions than accepting our own/personal deception. It is more costly for people to disarm their personal map of reality because it involves transforming their reference points when dealing with diverse situations. We have become locked in a survival and automatic mode because we have become addicted to our landscape; addicted to the chemical composition of our frameworks. To this statement one could continue to question a further philosophical aspect on whether or not one true separate reality (disconnected from everyone's inner landscape) actually exists but that would be entering into a separate ball game.

Why do we cling to our interpretation of reality?

We do so because our emotional connections (chemical process) constitute the primary reference for our behaviors; it guides us depending on what gratifies us and pushes us away from what threatens us or scares us. We cling to our narratives to preserve the emotional intensity of particular stimuli. In this way, we become addicted to our inner landscape to maintain the chemistry (emotions) that gratify and protect us.

Your daily landscape is not limited by the living conditions of

your present but rather in the potential of your future. We negotiate with our present based on the boundaries we have drawn for our future. If you are overwhelmed by your present conditions, it is because you have run out of an outlook on life which includes diverse options and possibilities. On a daily basis, you trim emotionally the land you live in. You create a picture that defines your possibilities of action. The oppressive present is due to a blocked landscape of development.



How do we get out of the trap of our own map?

You cannot control the activation of your emotions because it is a biological survival process. What you can do is deal with the signals from different dimensions of your landscape as to avoid falling into compulsive and automatic behaviors. You can recognize and be aware of your perspective of situations (the characteristics that you describe the events with), the flow of your thoughts (the quality and sequence of your ideas about the events), and your range of alternatives for decision making (the diversity of options you create to generate new movements). Therefore, to be able to transform your interior landscape, you can use the three following dimensions in your life: sensitivity, renovation, and transcendence. Sensitivity allows you to open up to different possibilities of situations and allows you to bring something new to your life. Renovation connects you with the ability to create, which relates to the changes that allow you to innovate in your life. Finally, enthusiasm puts you in touch with the inspiration needed to expand the new in your life and in the life of others. Thus, to summarize: these dimensions introduces new elements in your landscape for you to be able to broaden your horizon, renew your routine to enrich your motivations, and follow your inspiration to expand your options for decision making.

The tightness of the present is generated when we live between a hopeless past and a frustrating future which creates a state of resignation regarding our possible choices. If you want to change the characteristics of your current life, you must change your future beforehand. The first step that allows you to explore unknown territories is a decision. What moves us from an inert, dull or symptomatic present is the decision to explore new forms of life.