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**What makes organic agriculture move –
protest, meaning or market?
A polyocular approach**

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Argument and conclusions - 1

- Many different actors have hopes and aspirations for the future of organic agriculture.
- They have different perspectives on organic agriculture with different understandings of what it is and what makes it move.
- We say that these perspectives show different aspects of the dynamical object “organic agriculture”.
- A single perspective may seem efficient in the short run,
- but in the long run the dynamical object of “organic agriculture” will kick back and reveal the shortcomings of any chosen perspective –
- we do not interact with organic agriculture as we represented it,
- we interact with the dynamical object of “organic agriculture”.

Argument and conclusions - 2

- No perspective shows all there is to show about “organic agriculture” – it has a surplus of possibilities for new perspectives and understandings.
- Therefore we need to handle more than one perspective.
- A polyocular approach enables us to do just that,
- and thereby to understand and maybe resolve conflicts between different perspectives –
- in order to better understand and influence the dynamics of “organic agriculture”.

Claim:

There are different perspectives on organic agriculture

- There is no one right perspective that fully reveals organic agriculture.
- Each perspective offers some insight on organic agriculture.
- It will always be possible to take on a new perspective.
- No perspective is an island (e.g., you may hold different perspectives in succession).
- Different perspectives cannot be merged.

- This means that we can try to observe several perspectives in one (second order) polyocular approach
 - but the different perspectives cannot be merged to one.
- But it does *not* mean that:
 - any perspective is as useful as any other.
 - we cannot approach a better, or fuller, or more balanced, or more subtle understanding.

Fundamental conditions for seeing something - 1

- What we see depends on how we see it – and the same thing may therefore be seen in different ways.
 - Any cognition is necessarily a reduction since it is based on a specific context.
 - Any dynamical object has a surplus of possibilities for cognition – there is no complete cognition.

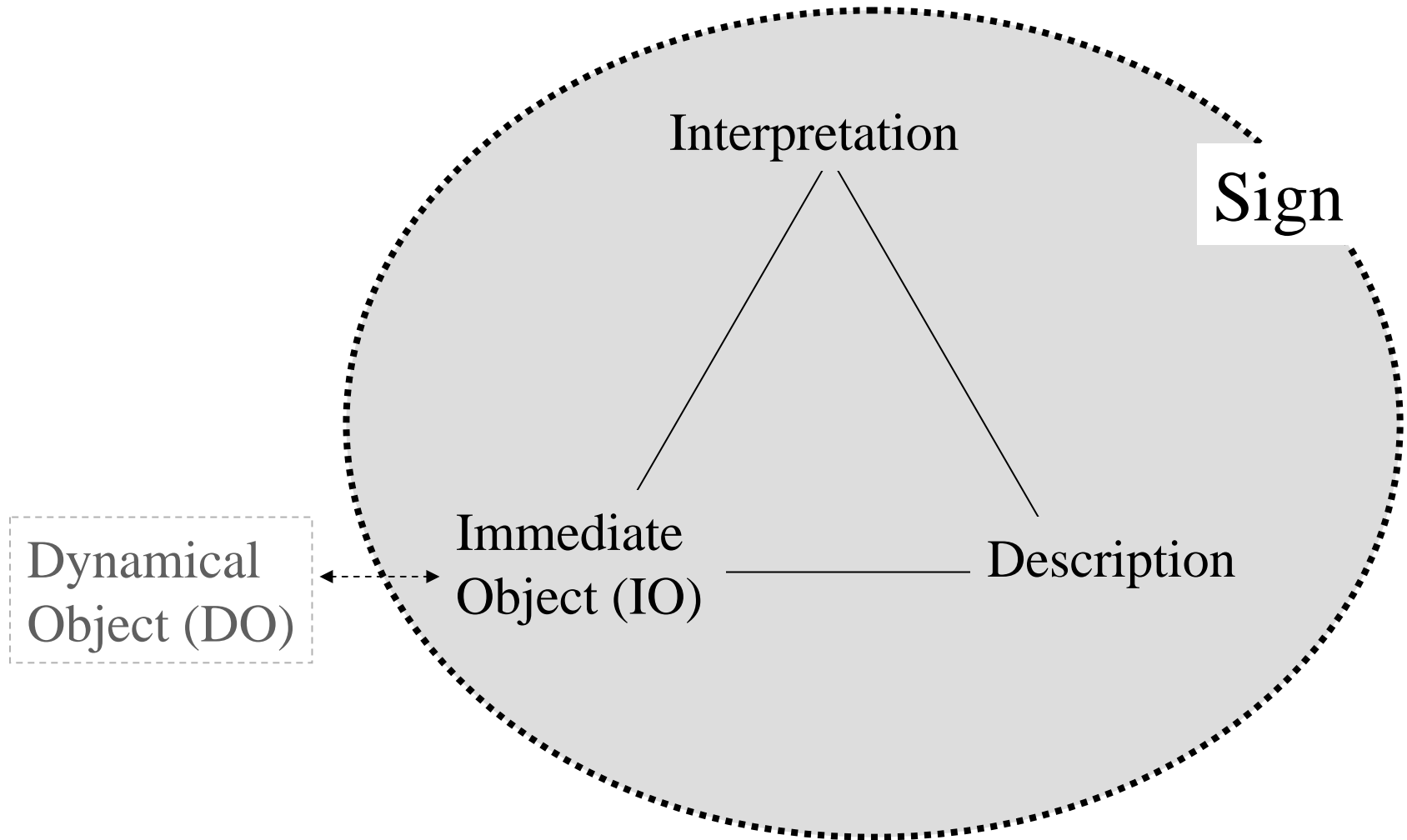
Three levels of cognitive context

<i>Level of context</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>Examples</i>
<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 10px; margin-bottom: 5px;"> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; margin-bottom: 5px;"> <p>Observational context</p> </div> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px;"> <p>Intentional context</p> </div> </div> <p>Societal context</p>	<p>Conceptual and technological tools for observing the phenomenon</p>	<p>Cognitive schemata, concepts, models, instruments, labs, etc.</p>
	<p>Motivations for observing the phenomenon</p>	<p>Values, principles, aims, goals, problems, etc.</p>
	<p>Those who want to observe the phenomenon</p>	<p>Particular social groups, organisations, ‘the sponsor’, ‘science’</p>

Fundamental conditions for seeing something - 2

- We cannot be sure that we see the same thing – even though we say we do.
 - A name or a description creates different interpretations or understandings of different immediate objects for different people – or for different perspectives.
 - Immediate objects refer to objects in themselves, and dynamical objects ‘kick back’ in our interaction with them.
 - But none of the immediate objects as they are represented in the various perspectives are the same as the dynamical object in itself.

Peirce's semiotics



Three perspectives on what organic agriculture is and what makes it move

- A protest movement against the mainstream
 - A logo-poietic system based on shared meaning
 - A market niche.
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- We do not at all claim that no other perspectives can be found
 - By focusing on the three perspectives above we have already neglected other possible perspectives
 - We trust this can be amended in future discussions –
 - provided that they are polyocular 😊
 - The main thing is to consider what the consequences are of one perspective dominating the discourses on the future of organic agriculture, and of neglecting other perspectives.

A protest movement

- *Focusing on conflicts, which are arranged around an oppositional contest over food and farming.*
- It is defined merely through its negation of the mainstream
- The environment of the protest moved is the mainstream
- It cannot be separated from the mainstream
- Mainstream activities and developments makes it move
- Challenges: the antagonistic relations can be a barrier for the mainstream to learn from the alternative (and vice versa);
- when the mainstream improves on a protest issue the protest movement must move to another issue or die out

A logo-poietic system

- *Creates itself and holds itself together by the continuous reproduction of a common meaning (or meaningfulness)*
- This meaning is expressed in shared worldviews, core principles, goals, standards and practices.
- It is not dependent on the mainstream
- The environment is its own world as it sees it and interacts with it – its Umwelt
- The driving forces are the internal processes of meaning, not the external conditions or the mainstream
- Key challenges are how to mobilise new actors and technologies – and how to be mobilised into global markets, multinational corporations and agricultural policies – without erosion of the common meaning and loss of internal coherence and integrity

A market niche

- *Organic agriculture is a niche in the global market system, based on*
 - standards that specify the special conditions for production and processing (to define the market niche)
 - certification and control of the production and processing methods (to avoid unfair competition)
 - and branding of the products as alternative brands (to aid consumer recognition and choice)
- The environment of the market niche is the globalised market
- Driving forces in focus are differentiation from other brands, barriers to trade, and consumer preferences and perceptions.
- Key challenges are the pressures from power relations in a globalised market and to maintain consumer trust and loyalty

Future prospects

We hope that you will find this polyocular approach sufficiently interesting to

- react on it,
- protest against it,
- or start using it 😊
- comment on the three perspective that we have outlined,
- propose other ones,
- or in some other way enter into a polyocular discourse on organic agriculture.